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# Bolamaia



**tourism**

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**G20**

SOUTH AFRICA 2025



Solidarity

Equality

Sustainability



# Solidarity

A connected world, built on  
a people-centred and  
inclusive future

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South Africa's G20 Presidency, December 2024 - November 2025



#G20SouthAfrica | [www.g20.org](http://www.g20.org)

# SA'S G20 PRESIDENCY



*South Africa stands on the cusp of leading the global south on the international stage as it assumed the presidency of the Group of Twenty (G20). This promises a boost for the tourism sector as South Africa will host a series of engagements over its presidency.*

Tourism is recognised for its immense potential and its significant contribution to the economy and it plays a critical role in the global economy.

With the theme “Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability,” South Africa’s term commenced on 1 December 2024 and ends on 30 November 2025. South Africa will host the G20 Leader’s Summit on 22 to 23 November 2025 at NASREC in Johannesburg. It will be the first time the G20 is hosted in the African continent.

The G20 is an international forum of both developing and developed countries which seeks to find solutions to global economic and financial issues. G20 members include the world’s major economies, representing 85% of global GDP, 75% of international trade, and two-thirds of the world’s population.

Given this significant heft, the role of G20 in creating the foundation for global economic stability, a vital catalyst for economic development and implementing consequential global commitments such as the Pact for the Future and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) cannot be overstated.

# A BIG WIN FOR TOURISM

The G20 economies represent approximately **85% of the global gross domestic product (GDP)**, over **75% of the global trade**, and about **two-thirds of the world population**. In 2023, the G20 welcomed **69% of all international tourists** and accounted for **71% of tourism exports** worldwide. In 2023 Tourism Direct GDP reached **3.1% of the G20 economies**.

Tourism is one of the vital economic sectors contributing significantly to socio-economic development. For many countries, the tourism economy is growing faster than most other economic sectors. With its extensive value chain and labour absorption capacity, it is acknowledged as a tool for inclusive economic development, playing a significant role in responding to socio-economic challenges.

To kick off the chairship to the G20, South Africa is hosting a much-anticipated series of Working Groups to chart a path forward for the advancement of the world informed by the themes and priorities of South Africa's presidency. Championing the tourism agenda, the Tourism Working Group (TWG) was hosted by the Department of Tourism and included senior officials, authorities and experts in the sector.

The G20 TWG meeting is a first of a series of engagements that will take place throughout the year, ahead of the G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting in September, to foster an exchange of knowledge and best practices among the member countries with a view of crafting actionable deliverables that are informed by the following G20 Tourism priorities:

- People-Centered Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Innovation to enhance Travel and Tourism Start-Ups and SMMEs;
- Tourism Financing and Investment to Enhance Equality and Promote Sustainable Development;
- Air Connectivity for Seamless Travel, and
- Enhanced Resilience for Inclusive, Sustainable Tourism Development.

The first TWG meeting took place virtually on 5 March 2025 and approved the tourism



priorities for 2025. The schedule for the upcoming 2025 G20 Tourism Meetings in South Africa is as follows:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> G20 Tourism Working Group Meeting - 11 till 13 May 2025, KwaZulu-Natal Province
- 3<sup>rd</sup> G20 Tourism Working Group Meeting - 10 till 11 September 2025, Mpumalanga Province
- G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting - 12 September 2025, Mpumalanga Province

The TWG is among the 16 working groups of the G20 tasked with finding multisector policy driven solutions to advance global socio-economic and political stability. As the first African country to preside over the G20 presidency, South Africa will utilise its term to drive a developmental agenda that will benefit the continent. This Working Group will continue to meet throughout 2025 to facilitate the crafting of actionable deliverables on the G20 Tourism priorities.

Tourism's economic significance will take centre stage as around 135 meetings will be held throughout 2025. This event presents an opportunity to highlight the nation's unparalleled hospitality, world-class infrastructure, quality-assured accommodation and experiences, and ability to host global events.

During the year G20 delegates can engage with and experience South Africa's diverse tourism experiences in all nine provinces; its rich heritage and cultures through its vibrant cities, "dorpies" and townships as well as its arts and crafts allowing G20 delegates to leave with a lasting memory while contributing to the South African economy.

*By Natasha Rockman*

# G20 TOURISM WORKING GROUP MEETING AGREES ON FOUR PRIORITIES FOR 2025



On 05 March 2025, South Africa hosted a successful first G20 Tourism Working Group meeting virtually from the Head Office of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation (DIRCO) today.

The Director-General of the South African Department of Tourism, Mr Nkhumeleni Victor Vele chaired the first Tourism Working Group meeting which was attended by senior officials and experts in the tourism sector of the G20 countries, invited guest countries and international organisations. Delegates deliberated on and agreed to work on four priorities for the year, namely:

- 1. People-Centered Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Innovation to enhance Travel and Tourism Start-Ups and SMMEs;**
- 2. Tourism Financing and Investment to Enhance Equality and Promote Sustainable Development;**
- 3. Air Connectivity for Seamless Travel, and**
- 4. Enhanced Resilience for Inclusive, Sustainable Tourism Development.**

The meeting was the first of a series of engagements that will take place throughout the year, ahead of the G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting in September 2025.

Minister of Tourism, Ms Patricia de Lille welcomed the delegates through a video-recorded message. She said: "South Africa is excited to welcome all G20 delegates, member states and organisations to our beautiful country and proud to host the G20 for the first time on African soil. As you convene during the first Tourism Working Group, I implore on all delegates to focus on how we can use tourism to change people's lives, communities and the world."

*"As you convene during the first Tourism Working Group, I implore on all delegates to focus on how we can use tourism to change people's lives, communities and the world."*

The Tourism Working Group will exchange knowledge and best practices among the

member countries with a view of crafting actionable deliverables.

The Tourism Working Group is among the 16 working groups of the G20 during South Africa's Presidency focusing on solidarity, equality and sustainability. As the first African country to preside over the G20 presidency, South Africa is utilising its term to drive a developmental agenda to benefit the African continent.

Going forward, the following G20 Tourism Meetings are planned in South Africa:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> G20 Tourism Working Group Meeting – from 11 till 13 May 2025, KwaZulu-Natal Province
- 3<sup>rd</sup> G20 Tourism Working Group Meeting – from 10 till 11 September 2025, Mpumalanga Province
- G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting – on 12 September 2025, Mpumalanga Province

The G20 economies represent around 85% of the global gross domestic product (GDP), over 75% of the global trade, and about two-thirds of the world population. In 2023, the G20 welcomed 69% of all international tourists and accounted for 71% of tourism exports worldwide. In 2023 Tourism Direct GDP reached 3.1% of the G20 economies.

Tourism plays a critical role in the global economy and is one of the vital economic sectors contributing significantly to socio-economic development, but it remains vulnerable to natural and manmade hazards. For many countries, the tourism economy is growing faster than most other economic sectors. With its extensive value chain and labour absorption capacity, it is acknowledged as a tool for inclusive economic development, playing a significant role in responding to socio-economic challenges.

Tourism is an important economic sector in Africa. In 2023, the continent's Tourism direct gross domestic product reached **85 US billion** representing **3.5% of the region's GDP**. This value is still below the pre-pandemic **US billion 94** reached in 2019 (**4.3% share**).

The challenges facing the African travel and tourism sector include air connectivity, limited investments, financing for tourism development, positioning and marketing, social and environmental sustainability, as well as safety and security amongst others.

South Africa's tourism priorities for the 2025 G20 Presidency are aligned with the continental priorities as expressed in Agenda 2063 as well as with the core objectives contained in the UN Tourism Agenda for Africa – Tourism for Inclusive Growth, the strategic roadmap guiding the promotion of sustainable tourism development across the African continent.

This meeting also appreciated South Africa's intention to build on the efforts and successes of the last three G20 Presidencies of the Global South and to champion Africa's developmental agenda.

*Ministry*





This year's Meetings Africa took place from 24 to 26 February 2025 at the Sandton Convention Centre. The event brought together Africa's top thought leaders and tourism experts to foster deeper connections and collaborations within the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events (MICE) sector.

The proceedings began with a vibrant burst of energy. Hundreds of business event professionals attended the Business Opportunity Networking Day (BONDay). BONDay serves as an educational and networking platform for both emerging businesses and seasoned players in the tourism sector, providing an opportunity to share ideas, engage and collaborate.

During the welcome address, Prof. Gregory Davids, Chair of the SA Tourism Board, extended a warm welcome to delegates from over 60 countries, including first time exhibitors from Morocco, Madagascar, Guinea, and Chad. He underscored the growing importance of Africa's MICE sector, highlighting its pivotal role in job creation and economic growth.

"Every event we host is an opportunity to showcase our collective strength. For too

long, others have controlled our story - today, we take ownership of our narrative.

*"Every event we host is an opportunity to showcase our collective strength. For too long, others have controlled our story - today, we take ownership of our narrative. This is a story of strength and resilience."*

This is a story of strength and resilience," Davids declared. BONDay saw industry leaders reinforce the importance of unity in positioning Africa as a continent ready for investment and innovation.

The morning plenary session kicked off with an insightful and lively discussion, and

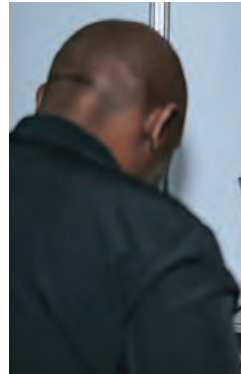
highlighted the exciting G20 Summit, set to be hosted in Africa for the very first time. Key players in the tourism and conference industry, including Sthembiso Dlamini, CEO of the Gauteng Tourism Authority; Mpumi Mabuza, General Manager of Stakeholder Relations at Brand SA; Glenton de Kock, CEO of the South African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI); and Nombulelo Guliwe, CEO of South African Tourism, shared their perspectives on this historic event and its potential impact.

"Meetings Africa is deeply rooted in fostering connections and promoting business events across the continent. Our commitment extends to ensuring an inclusive industry that benefits all players, from small businesses to large enterprises," said Guliwe.

The panellists strongly affirmed that Meetings Africa not only highlighted South Africa's world-class business events and facilities, but also amplified the continent's global presence through its growing media influence. They stressed that a flourishing MICE industry creates substantial economic benefits for local communities, opening opportunities across the entire value chain.

**By Sifiso Halama**







# MEETINGS AFRICA 2025

## - SHAPING AFRICA'S FUTURE AS A GLOBAL LEADER IN THE MICE INDUSTRY

*The Meetings Africa trade floor officially opened on 25 February 2025, with the ceremonial ringing of the bell setting the tone for this significant event.*

Delivering the keynote address, South Africa's Minister of Tourism, Ms Patricia de Lille, emphasised the importance of this year's gathering, noting its historical significance as South Africa chairs and hosts the G20.

"This is an even more exciting event this year as South Africa chairs and hosts the G20, a historic occasion taking place on African soil for the first time. Africa is not just rising – it is ready. Across our vast continent, we have the talent, the resources, and the vision to host the world's most influential business events," Minister de Lille stated.

Her sentiments positioned Meetings Africa as more than just a trade show, but as a movement dedicated to establishing Africa as a global leader in the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) sector.

Mr Lebogang Maile, Gauteng's Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Economic Development and Finance, acknowledged Gauteng's growing status as a global meeting point. "The 2025 edition of Meetings Africa takes place during a historic moment in a province that has cemented its place as a meeting point of the world," Maile said.

He also highlighted Gauteng's significant economic contributions, which account for 33% of South Africa's GDP, and underscored the province's youthful, innovative population as the driving force behind Africa's economic revival.

The ceremony was brought to life with vibrant performances from the Soweto Gospel Choir, while Ntombhi ya Mutsonga's poetry painted a vivid picture of South Africa's majestic landscapes and skies. The

ringing of the bell was not only a ceremonial gesture but also a powerful signal that Meetings Africa 2025 is officially open for business, ready to forge meaningful connections that will propel Africa's MICE industry to new heights.

A key feature of this year's agenda was the Trusted Tour Operator Scheme (TTOS) session, which focused on promoting South Africa to Chinese and Indian tour operators. Led by Minister de Lille, Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Leon Schreiber, and the CEO of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA), Mr Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa, the session emphasised trust as the foundation for the scheme's success. The panel stressed that TTOS is instrumental in streamlining visa processes while ensuring that tour operators adhere to the highest safety and accountability





standards. To this effect trust is vital in today's interconnected world.

Other highlights included a global editorial briefing on the role of film, TV, and sport in promoting the African continent as well as Boma talks and the Meetings Africa Inspiration & Green Stand Awards.

The event concluded on 26 February 2025, marking a resounding success, with over 410 exhibitors, including debut participants from Chad, Guinea, Morocco, and Madagascar, as well as 85 first-time exhibitors. With these impressive figures, it's clear that Africa's tourism is on the rise. Meetings Africa 2025 has therefore once again proven itself as a pivotal platform for driving the continent's global influence in the MICE industry.

*By Sifiso Halama*



# SOUTH AFRICA'S TOURISM REBOUND GAINS MOMENTUM

The latest international arrivals data from Statistics South Africa confirms that South Africa's tourism sector continues to grow, with total arrivals reaching **8.92 million** in 2024, marking an impressive **5.1% increase** compared to 2023. Africa continues to drive the majority of arrivals, contributing **76% of all tourists** from January to December 2024, while growth from other regions signals steady recovery.

Although the sector has yet to fully recover to pre-pandemic levels (2019), it now contributes **8.8% to GDP** and supports **1.68 million jobs**, according to World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates. This positive momentum underscores the resilience of the sector, despite global economic pressures.

"It is encouraging to see that despite economic uncertainties in various parts of the world, the global tourism sector is growing. It is even more encouraging that our country follows the same trend and trajectory," Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille said.

The African continent remains South Africa's largest source of tourists, with **6.8 million tourist arrivals** in 2024, making up **76% of total arrivals**.

- Zimbabwe remains the top source market, **growing by 3.6%** compared to 2023 to **2,183,260 arrivals** in 2024.
- Ghana recorded an exceptional **149.0% increase** from 2023, reaching **36,656 arrivals** in 2024, largely driven by availability of airlift and the introduction of a visa waiver in November 2023.

Minister De Lille expressed appreciation for the continued growth from the African continent, particularly Ghana.

"Ghana's immense performance can be attributed to the fact that travellers between Ghana and South Africa no longer need visas to travel between the two countries. This, coupled with increased airlift targeted marketing initiatives by South African Tourism, makes for a winning formula for the growth of our sector," Minister De Lille said.

The visa-free travel agreement between South Africa and Ghana, implemented in November 2023, has played a pivotal role in attracting tourists, allowing travel for up to 90 days without a visa for business or tourism purposes.

Tourist arrivals from the Americas saw a strong **10.9% growth** from 2023, reaching **505,579 arrivals** in 2024.

- The United States remains the top market in the region and is the top overseas market, with **372,362 tourists**, reflecting a **5.2% increase** from 2023 to 2024.
- The increase in direct air connectivity from Brazil, combined with improved marketing efforts, has contributed significantly to a **94.2% rise in arrivals** from Brazil from 2023 to 2024, totalling **49,855 tourists** for 2024.

This consistent growth highlights South Africa's appeal among long-haul travellers and the effectiveness of strategic partnerships with airlines and trade.

Tourist arrivals from Europe reached **1,258,706** in 2024, reflecting a **1.1% increase** compared to 2023.

- The United Kingdom remains the top European source market, with **349,883 arrivals** in 2024, though this was **1.8% lower** than 2023.
- Germany experienced strong **growth of 4.0%**, with **254,992 arrivals** in 2024.
- The Netherlands is performing better than France and saw a **0.8% increase**, totalling **132,422 arrivals** in 2024.

While Europe's growth is slower compared to other regions, the region is a bedrock with regard to having the most overseas arrivals and has emerged as a strong-performing market, largely due to focused marketing campaigns showcasing South Africa's culture, people and attractions.

Tourist arrivals from Asia **surged by 4.2%**, with **207,718 tourists** recorded in 2024.

- China saw an **11.4% increase**, totalling **41,651 arrivals**, driven by targeted promotions and increasing flight connectivity.
- India recorded **75,541 arrivals**, a **5.3% decline**, primarily due to visa processing backlogs and the absence of direct flights.
- South Africa saw a phenomenal **31.8% growth** from Japan reaching **17,370 arrivals** in 2024.
- Australia also posted steady gains, with strong travel demand from the region expected to fuel further growth in 2025.

The Middle East saw a **decline of 16.1%**, with total arrivals **dropping to 45,602**. However, Saudi Arabia changed the trend,

increasing arrivals by **12.1% to 18,333 arrivals** to South Africa in 2024. The United Arab Emirates contributed **6,717 arrivals** to South Africa in 2024. While the overall performance in this region faced setbacks, strategic efforts to increase connectivity and enhance trade engagement in other markets in the region will be crucial to future recovery.

Among key direct competitors, South Africa ranks third in tourism's contribution to GDP. South Africa's year-on-year **growth of 5.1%** shows steady progress, but more consistent investment in air connectivity and global marketing is needed to remain competitive.

To accelerate recovery, South Africa has implemented strategic marketing and policy interventions:

- **Expanding Airlift:** Efforts are underway to restore key routes, increase airline partnerships, and improve direct access to a variety of cities in South Africa and access to the globe. A key development is that on 4 December 2024, Cabinet approved the Route Development Marketing Strategy to be implemented by the Department of Tourism, SA Tourism and the private sector.
- **Targeted Market Campaigns:** Promoting unique South African experiences in key markets such as China, India, and the Americas.
- **Boosting Digital & AI-Powered Travel Planning:** Enhancing traveller experiences with personalised digital platforms.
- **Growing Sustainable & Cultural Tourism:** Capitalising on eco-tourism, cultural and heritage-based experiences.
- **Enhancing Safety & Security Measures:** Working with law enforcement and industry partners to enhance traveller confidence while ensuring the safety of local communities.

"The tourism sector is a strong contributor to the economy and job creation. We are determined to continue with this momentum and push the numbers much higher so that we can grow our contribution to economic growth and job creation even further. South Africa remains attractive and accessible for all travellers to enjoy and we thank all international and domestic travellers for exploring our beautiful country and contributing to the tourism sector's performance," Minister De Lille concluded.

*Ministry*

# #TravelWise in Mzansi

There's so much to see, and so many uniquely South African experiences to explore.

Whether you are traveling in a group or alone, we want to ensure you have an unforgettable stay as you explore our beautiful country responsibly.

Information on our top tourism attractions and activities is available at our Visitor Information Centre (VIC) in all our airports, and on [www.southafrica.net](http://www.southafrica.net)

Our tourism offerings are best explored with the aid of certified tourist guides. We have more than 10 000 certified tourist guides across the country that can easily be identified with their unique badge and identification cards. Visit [www.tourism.gov.za](http://www.tourism.gov.za) to access information on guides near your destination.

**It's your country, Enjoy It!**



## #ResponsibleTraveller Tips



### LOCATION:

- » Update the GPS App on your mobile device to accurately navigate through our country



### CLIMATE:

South Africa's climate can get extremely hot and dry

- » Wear sunscreen and a hat
- » Wear the appropriate clothing and foot wear for outdoor activities
- » Carry enough water to stay hydrated
- » Avoid drinking water from rivers and streams



### BE WATER WISE:

- » Only swim in designated areas

- » Read and follow the signs to ensure an enjoyable experience at the Beach
- » Take care when swimming as rip currents can pull you out to sea
- » Lifeguards are on call to ensure your safety



### PERSONAL SAFETY:

**We care about your safety**

- » Ensure your personal possessions are with you at all times
- » Keep important documents in a safe at your hotel, and carry a copy whilst out and about
- » Do not share your banking details or pin code with anyone
- » Alert your hotel before going for a walk alone, or an excursion

**Useful contacts: Should you require support or find yourself in distress, contact the authorities for assistance:**

**Police (SAPS):** (T) 10111 | **Ambulance/Fire:** (T) 10177 | **Covid-19 emergency no:** 0800 029 99

**Tourism Complaints:** (T) 012 444 6000 or 0860 686 747, E-mail: [complaints@tourism.gov.za](mailto:complaints@tourism.gov.za)



**tourism**

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Tourism  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM**

# LIMPOPO'S **MARULA FESTIVAL** AN ECONOMIC BOOSTER



Limpopo Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET), in partnership with the Limpopo Tourism Agency, Ba-Phalaborwa Municipality, Limpopo Economic Development Agency and other government departments and organisations, reloaded the Limpopo Marula Festival back to its original hosting period. The festival took place from 21 February to 2 March 2025, which is the prime season for harvesting of the renowned Marula fruit.

The Limpopo Mukumbi Industries was officially launched on 4 March 2006 during the annual Marula Festival, hosted in collaboration with the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) at the Muti wa Vatsonga Museum. The Limpopo Mukumbi Industries (Pty) Ltd has been the official supplier of the home-brewed Morula/Mukumbi/Vukanyi beverage from 2006, to date. The involvement of registered cooperatives have positive spin-offs in

terms of investment in the industry, and on the employment of rural community members who assist with harvesting and transportation of the fruit annually depending on the orders from the organisers of the Marula Festival.

The much-anticipated annual Marula Festival took centre stage at Phalaborwa's Impala Rugby Stadium, where it achieved far more than bringing locals together: it greatly boosted the town's economy. The festival is a strategic initiative that encourages social cohesion in the province, while giving local entrepreneurs a chance to grow their businesses as well. Phalaborwa is well positioned to welcome and accommodate guests, visitors and tourists as it is the entry point for visitors into the Kruger National Park. The town is situated in the Limpopo Province along the western border of the Kruger National Park.



Having been declared as the permanent home of the Limpopo Marula Festival, Phalaborwa has the potential to grow the economy through Mukumbi and related products. This, in turn, attracts a wide range of interest groups from the tourism

industry, civil society, local Ba-Phalaborwa communities, small and medium businesses, and travellers at large, including those from neighbouring countries like Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Swaziland. The idea is to make this a truly international event because of its tourism profile and proximity to other major tourist destinations.

This annual event is far more than a few self-proclaimed dancers busting their best moves, it is a creative and inclusive platform that aims to preserve the beautiful indigenous culture of the province, drive economic growth, and boost tourism. This is done by celebrating the thousand-year-old fruit, the Marula, which has become synonymous with cultural identity in parts of Limpopo.

Local businesses such as street vendors, accommodation providers, and others thrive on, and benefit from the jovial celebration. Lastly, the festival offers local and international visitors the opportunity to learn about the marula fruit and its brewing process.

People danced the night away and enjoyed live music from artists including the BET award winner Makhadzi, the sensational Zonke, Reverend Benjamin Dube, Pleasure Tsa Manyalo and many more.

*By Annah Mashile*



# A SAFER DESTINATION

## - PROMOTING SAFE EXPLORATION THROUGH A JOINT TOURISM SAFETY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN IN MOGALE CITY

The Department of Tourism successfully hosted a Joint Tourism Awareness Campaign in Mogale City, Gauteng from 4 to 6 March 2025 to promote tourist safety and enhance the experiences in this beautiful part of Gauteng.

During this three-day programme, the Department collaborated with the Gauteng Department of Community Safety, Gauteng Tourism Authority, North West Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism, South African Police Service, Road Traffic Infringement Agency, Cross Border Road and Transport Agency, the Lion and Safari Park, Women of Value Southern Africa, Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, and Mogale City Local Municipality.

Mogale City, known for its stunning natural beauty and rich historical significance, remains a top destination for both domestic and international tourists. Visitors can explore the awe-inspiring Magaliesberg Mountains, which is excellent for hiking, birdwatching, and outdoor adventures. This area is also home to the renowned UNESCO World Heritage site of Cradle of Humankind where tourists can uncover ancient fossils and delve into the story of human evolution.

Beyond its natural wonders, Mogale City boasts quaint towns, a rich cultural heritage, and picturesque landscapes, making it an ideal destination for nature enthusiasts and history buffs alike.

The first day of the campaign featured a Community Members' Information Sharing





*The Joint Tourism Safety Awareness Campaign was a resounding success, fostering valuable engagement with local communities, youth, and business owners.*

Workshop focussing on the importance of tourism safety and its impact on the tourism value chain, as well as the benefits it brings to the community. It also addressed Domestic Tourism Awareness, aiming to combat the recorded decline in tourism trips and tackle challenges identified in the National Tourism Sector Strategy, such as seasonality and geographic concentration.

For the next day, a tour was arranged to expose community members to tourism services and products in Hekpoort and Magaliesberg. A key component of this excursion was social tourism, where community members, including unemployed youth, graduates, aspiring tourism business owners, and people with disabilities, were introduced to tourism experiences in their own backyard.

The campaign concluded with a joint Roadside Tourism Safety Awareness Blitz, particularly targeting popular routes frequently travelled by tourists. This effort enabled officials to directly engage with both tourists and local communities, encouraging better safety practices and raising awareness of responsible tourism.

The Joint Tourism Safety Awareness Campaign was a resounding success, fostering valuable engagement with local communities, youth, and business owners. It sparked important conversations about tourism safety, promoting not only the importance of safety, but also a collective responsibility to maintain a welcoming and secure environment for all visitors.

**By Sifiso Halama and Stanley Montsho**





# DEPUTY MINISTER SOTYU VISITS GUGULETHU TO DISCUSS TOURISM GROWTH

On 5 February 2025, the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms Makhotso Soty, led a delegation of Deputy Ministers to the Tourism Stakeholder Engagement Programme held at JL Zwane Memorial Church in Gugulethu, Western Cape. Alongside her were the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Rosemary Capa, and the Deputy Minister of Public Service and Administration, Ms Pinky Kekana. This engagement formed part of the Department of Tourism’s pre-State of the Nation Address activities, aimed at addressing tourism growth opportunities in Gugulethu.

Gugulethu, a vibrant township in Cape Town, offers visitors a rich cultural experience and a lively music scene, making it a significant attraction for tourists seeking an authentic glimpse of South Africa’s diverse culture and local cuisine.

The event saw hundreds of community members actively participating and raising a variety of issues for the Deputy Ministers’ attention. Key topics included increasing inclusivity in tourism offerings, addressing the negative impact of crime on tourism growth, and the need for funding to support Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs).

Mr Thozzi Mciki praised the Department of Tourism for organising the engagement and called for greater focus on tourism accessibility for people with disabilities. “Deputy Minister Soty, I urge you to ensure that your department works towards improving inclusivity in tourism, so that people with disabilities are better catered for by tourism establishments,” he said.



Mr Buntu Matole pointed out the detrimental effects of crime on township tourism. “Some car rental businesses advise tourists against driving to townships due to fears of crime. However, Community Policing Forums are making strides to reduce criminal activities, and credible tour operators ensure that tourists have a safe and enjoyable township experience. How can the Department of Tourism assist in spreading the positive message of these efforts?” Mr Matole asked.

The Deputy Ministers acknowledged these concerns and encouraged the community to remain resilient in striving for tourism growth in the area. Deputy Minister Soty assured the community that the Department of Tourism would continue with projects focused on destination enhancement and route development to diversify tourism offerings and enhance the overall visitor experience in priority areas.

The Deputy Minister also encouraged community members to take advantage of various departmental programmes designed

to foster tourism growth, including the Tourism Equity Fund, Tourism Transformation Fund, Green Tourism Incentives Programme, and the Market Access Support Programme.

Deputy Minister Soty further emphasised the vital role that communities play in growing township tourism. “This Metro exemplifies the potential of our tourism sector - when we work together, when we build partnerships, and when we embrace the responsibility of sustainable tourism, the rewards will be endless,” she remarked.

“We are dedicated to creating policies and initiatives that not only benefit tourists but also empower local communities. Our priority is to foster an industry that celebrates the richness of our diverse heritage while promoting lasting economic prosperity,” concluded Deputy Minister Soty.

The event also featured exhibitors, which included the Robben Island Museum and the Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality, Sports Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA). Representatives from the Robben Island Museum encouraged the community to visit the museum, which holds great historical significance for South Africa’s democracy. CATHSSETA representatives provided information about available programmes and how community members can apply.

The engagement proved to be a successful and constructive day, filled with insightful conversations about stimulating tourism growth in the region.

*By Sifiso Halama*

# SOUTH AFRICA WELCOMES FIRST VISITORS FROM CHINA PROCESSED THROUGH THE GROUND-BREAKING **TRUSTED TOUR OPERATOR SCHEME VISA INITIATIVE**



On 22 February 2025, together with the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Leon Schreiber, Minister Patricia de Lille and other government and tourism stakeholders welcomed the first group of visitors from China at the Cape Town International Airport, who arrived in South Africa through the new digital Trusted Tour Operator Scheme (TTOS) visa initiative.

In an exciting and truly South African welcome, the Ministers were delighted to

welcome the first group of 15 tourists and a tour guide who arrived in South Africa only a few days after their visas were processed through the new TTOS visa initiative by the Department of Home Affairs.

"This was an exciting moment in this ground-breaking initiative where the TTOS is providing a faster and more seamless process for visas for travellers from India and China. Together with the Department of Home Affairs we have worked tirelessly to

make this happen and I commend Minister Schreiber and the team in the Department of Home Affairs for the swift implementation of this new and improved visa initiative," Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille said.

Last year, an Inter-Ministerial Committee with the Department of Tourism, the Department of Home Affairs, the State Security Agency and Operation Vulindlela in the Presidency was established to tackle the visa regime issues. The Department of Home Affairs announced the ground-breaking Trusted Tour Operator Scheme which will significantly ease the process and allow for a seamless visa application process for travellers and tour operators from India and China.

From 12 February 2025, the first group of approved 65 tour operators from South Africa, India and China started processing visa applications through the TTOS. India and China have been identified as two key source markets for South Africa to grow arrivals due to the high number of tourists who travel internationally from these countries. Currently, South Africa only receives 41 600 arrivals from India and 79 700 from China, a minor share of our total arrivals for 2024 which stood at 8.9 million total international arrivals.

"The TTOS is a massive win for the tourism and business events sector and the Department of Tourism will use the new visa initiatives as enablers to grow tourism arrivals to South Africa which will in turn drive inclusive economic growth and job creation," Minister de Lille added.

Through targeted outreach engagements in India and China, we have also been sharing the developments of the TTOS, the Electronic Travel Authorisation and Digital Nomad Visas with these two key source markets to ensure that more tour operators register and use these new and enhanced visa processes.

"We are extremely excited about these visa developments and what it means for the growth of the tourism sector. We have no doubt that the TTOS will exponentially increase arrivals from India and China which will stimulate demand across the tourism and services sector," Minister de Lille concluded.

**Ministry**

# EXPLORE THE **WINE ROUTES OF THE WESTERN CAPE**, SOUTH AFRICA



*The Western Cape of South Africa is the heart of the country's wine industry, home to some of the world's most renowned vineyards. The region is not only celebrated for its exceptional wines but also for its vibrant culinary scene, offering a feast for the senses.*

**W**ith over 20 wine routes to explore, the Western Cape invites wine lovers, food enthusiasts, and travellers to immerse themselves in a unique experience of fine wines, gourmet cuisine, engaging wine tourism experiences and scenic landscapes.

## **CAPE TOWN**

### **Constantia Wine Route**

The Constantia Wine Valley offers a unique blend of centuries-old homesteads and stylish new boutique wineries in spectacular mountain countryside just 15 minutes from Cape Town's city centre. Here you can sample a wide range of premium wines, take a stroll through beautiful greenbelts, enjoy a sensational taste experience at one of the many restaurants, sip champagne on the lawns of the wineries or in the boutique hotels, and view fine art made by local artists.

### **Durbanville Wine Route**

Visitors who choose to visit the Durbanville Wine Valley are welcomed with warm hospitality by each of the 12 farms that make up this unique area situated on the urban edge of Cape Town, just 30 minutes from the city centre. Warm hospitality, rich flavours, exceptional wines and engaging experiences are interwoven into the core of what the Durbanville Wine Valley is all about. Sauvignon Blanc is the signature varietal of this cool-climate wine region.

## **CAPE WINELANDS**

### **Breedekloof Wine Valley**

The lesser-explored Breedekloof, a valley of slow-ripening vines, is home to farming families with a long tradition, some reaching back over three centuries. This wine hamlet, situated just over an hour's drive from Cape Town, offers expansive and dramatic

mountain views, as well as a range of activities that cater to all tastes, whether it is a thirst for the outdoors, or for something a bit more literal in the form of wine, craft gin or craft beer.

### **Franschhoek Wine Valley**

Breath-taking scenery, world-class cuisine, fine wines and a village atmosphere. These are the hallmarks of the beautiful Franschhoek Valley, settled more than 300 years ago by the French Huguenots. Experience the Food and Wine Route, the Artisan Food Route, the Rond en Bont cultural route or the Cap Classique Route; treat yourself to a special Mystery Weekend; or go to one of the festivals covering food and wine, art, literature and music.

### **Paarl Wine Route**

Proudly positioned, the famous Paarl Rock greets you when visiting this valley. Paarl Wine Route is one of the oldest in the country

and several of South Africa's historic cellars are found here. The tranquil wine region is renowned for its rich, full-bodied, spicy reds (Shiraz is a speciality) and crisp whites. The town of Paarl, which dates back to 1657, offers nature, history, culture and food – explore it by foot, bicycle, horseback or car.

### Robertson Wine Valley

Satisfy your wanderlust with a mere 2-hour scenic drive from Cape Town to explore the country life on Route 62. Be captivated by the producers rich history that led to this valley's authenticity and quality. Celebrate Chardonnay, Cabernet and Cap Classique from this diverse terroir region. Discover the stories behind the bottle and come taste the lifestyle.

### Stellenbosch Wine Route

In 1971, Stellenbosch became the first wine region in South Africa to establish a wine route as an organised network of wineries for visitors. Today the town – with its compelling mix of world class wine and

food offerings balanced with history, culture and spectacular natural beauty – provides a coordinated network of more than 100 wineries, each offering a unique cellar-door experience for the wine lover and visitor. The five sub-routes each has its own wine styles, climates and geographic location.

### Tulbagh Wine Route

A scenic 90-minute drive from Cape Town, the rural village of Tulbagh nestles in a serene valley surrounded by magnificent mountains. The Tulbagh Wine Route is dotted with graceful old estates that have been home to generations of the same families, interspersed with new vineyards and state-of-the-art cellars belonging to more recent micro-producers and boutique wineries. One of the attractions of Tulbagh is Church Street with its 32 provincial monuments that transport visitors back in time.

### Wellington Wine Route

If you seek the road less travelled then there is no wrong turn when visiting the

picturesque town of Wellington, declared a 'Top Wine Area' in the 2016 South African Terroir Awards. Surrounded by wine estates, fruit orchards, buchu plantations and olive groves. It's also home to South Africa's first indigenous distillery. Here's where visitors meandering off the beaten track can discover artisanal produce and scenic routes and even game reserves set among the fynbos and indigenous Renosterveld.

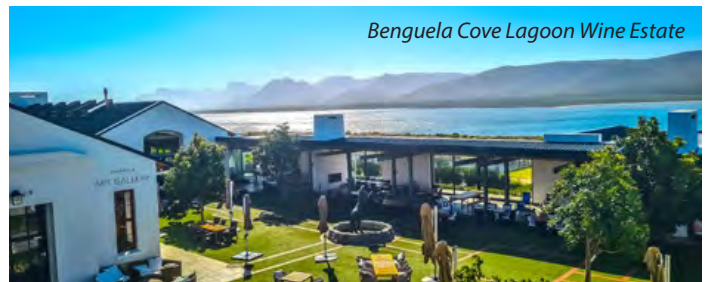
### Worcester Wine & Olive Route

The Worcester Wine & Olive Route, about 150 kilometres from Cape Town, is home to 12 wine cellars and an olive estate, offering an unforgettable experience to all food and wine lovers, from novices to connoisseurs. This region, known for its value-for-money products, also boasts plenty of bistros and restaurants, plus a range of accommodation options for those who want to make it a relaxing getaway. A highlight on the annual calendar is the Nuy Valley Feast taking place in May.

### WESGRO



Jordan Wine



Benguela Cove Lagoon Wine Estate



Idiom Wine Estate



Creation Wines



Winelands Vineyards



Ernie Els Wines



Bosjes-Chapel

# NELSON MANDELA BAY TO HOST **AFRICA'S COASTAL MARINE TOURISM TRADE MARKET 2025**

*Nelson Mandela Bay is set to host Africa's Coastal Marine Tourism Trade Market 2025, a landmark event poised to elevate the region's tourism profile.*



Scheduled for 15 to 16 April 2025, this expo will bring together industry leaders, innovators, and stakeholders to explore sustainable coastal and maritime tourism opportunities. It will be held at the historic Feather Market Centre in Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth).

## **Gateway to the Big Seven**

Gqeberha, situated on South Africa's Eastern Cape coastline, is renowned for its rich biodiversity and is one of the few places where visitors can encounter the 'Big Seven'. This unique grouping includes the traditional

Big Five (lion, leopard, buffalo, elephant, and rhinoceros), as well as the southern right whale and the great white shark, thanks to the region's expansive marine reserves.

The Addo Elephant National Park, a short drive from the city, is the only national

*Gqeberha, situated on South Africa's Eastern Cape coastline, is renowned for its rich biodiversity and is one of the few places where visitors can encounter the 'Big Seven.'*

park globally that offers sightings of all seven species. Visitors can traverse diverse landscapes, from dense bushveld to pristine coastlines, experiencing wildlife both on land and at sea.

### **Distinguished Speakers and Thought Leaders**

The event features an impressive line-up of speakers who will share insights on marine tourism and sustainable development:

- **Dr Lynn Jonas:** A leading marine biologist from Nelson Mandela University, who dedicated her career to marine conservation, will discuss innovative strategies for preserving marine ecosystems.
- **Septi Bukula:** Founder of Rendzo Network Africa, is a champion of entrepreneurship in Africa. His talk will focus on empowering local communities through sustainable tourism initiatives.
- **Dr Rosemary Manyevere:** Also from Nelson Mandela University, specialises in environmental management and will address the balance between tourism growth and ecological preservation.
- **Babalwa Lobishe:** As the Executive Mayor of Nelson Mandela Bay, Lobishe will highlight the region's commitment to becoming a premier marine tourism destination.
- **Ms Nonkqubela Ntomboxolo Pieters:** The MEC of Economic Development, Pieters will outline governmental support for sustainable tourism projects and economic development in the coastal regions.



### **Catalyst for Regional Tourism**

Hosting Africa's Coastal Marine Tourism Trade Market 2025 is a strategic move to position Nelson Mandela Bay as a key player in the global marine tourism industry. The expo aims to attract entrepreneurs, investors, and tourists, showcasing the region's unique offerings; from its rich cultural heritage to its unparalleled natural beauty.

By shining a spotlight on the Big Seven and promoting sustainable tourism practices,

Nelson Mandela Bay is not only enhancing its own economic prospects but also contributing to the broader goals of environmental conservation and community empowerment.

As delegates gather in Gqeberha this April, they will personally witness how the fusion of land and sea, culture and nature, creates a compelling narrative for tourism development in South Africa.

*By Itumeleng Magongoa*



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