



**MINISTER
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**BUDGET VOTE 38 SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF TOURISM, PATRICIA DE LILLE,
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES, PARLIAMENT, CAPE TOWN
24 JUNE 2026**

House Chairperson,
Deputy Minister of Tourism, Maggie Sotyu,
Committee Chairpersons,
Honourable Members,
Director-General, Mr Victor Vele,
Leadership of South African Tourism,
Captains of Industry
Members of the Media
Distinguished guests,
Fellow South Africans,
Sanibonani, Good Morning, Molweni.

Chairperson, this evening, at 23:34, flight UX 1-5-7 will depart from Madrid's Barajas International Airport in Spain and land at OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg at 09:50 tomorrow morning. It will be Air Europa's inaugural flight between Madrid and Johannesburg, operating three times a week.

This expression of confidence in our travel market growth, comes on the back of the cabinet-approved Tourism Route Development Marketing Plan.

Our strategy seeks to increase direct connectivity, while ensuring marketing support and alignment with provincial route development structures.

Chairperson, when those passengers from Spain disembark from the Boeing 7-8-7 Dreamliner, they will be welcomed by one of the innovations that reflects our vision for tourism growth: the Smart Visitor Information Centre.

This paperless, technology-driven tourism hub serves as a one-stop gateway to South Africa's diverse tourism offerings.

Launched just before the G20 leaders' summit last year, the Smart VIC showcases experiences from all nine provinces, ensuring that visitors are introduced not only to our major destinations but also to the many hidden gems that make our country so unique.

Provincial Tourism Authorities regularly submit tourism products and experiences to the platform, enabling us to promote a broader range of destinations to both domestic and international visitors.

With a record-breaking 10.5 million international arrivals recorded in 2025, initiatives such as the Smart Visitor Information Centre form part of our commitment to ensure that the benefits of tourism are shared more widely across the country.

Chairperson, we remain resolute that Tourism Policy is Economic Policy.

Through the R2.54 billion budget allocation for the 2026/27 financial year, we want to ensure that more provinces, more townships, more small dorpias, more villages benefit from the opportunities that tourism creates.

During the State of the Nation Address earlier this year, President Cyril Ramaphosa instructed that: *“We must now promote our unique cultural, historical and natural attractions that reflect the country’s identity. This can include traditional festivals, local crafts, historical sites and natural landscapes across our country and in rural areas as well.”*

I am pleased to report that we are already making progress in this regard.

Through our quarterly MinMEC engagements, I encourage all provinces to submit their annual events calendars.

The Department of Tourism and South African Tourism then package and promote these events as part of South Africa's diverse tourism offering.

This week, for example, visitors attending the Kirkwood Wildsfees in Nqweba in the Eastern Cape will experience the value of this collaboration firsthand.

Festivals such as these attract travellers to destinations that are often overlooked.

They bring new economic opportunities to local communities who have more unique offerings.

Chairperson, our flagship tourism trade shows continue to play an important role in showcasing provincial tourism products to the world.

At Meetings Africa 2026, all nine provinces were represented, together with municipalities and tourism businesses from across the country.

Similarly, Africa's Travel Indaba continues to provide a global platform for provincial and municipal tourism offerings.

When President Ramaphosa officially opened Africa's Travel Indaba this year, we committed ourselves to modernising and repositioning this iconic trade show for a changing global tourism market.

We have since invited industry stakeholders and members of the public to submit ideas to ensure that this more than 30-year-old platform remains relevant, innovative and globally competitive.

Chairperson, the South African National Convention Bureau continues to secure major international and regional conferences for our country.

In the 2025/26 financial year, the Bureau secured 66 international and regional conferences which will be hosted across multiple provinces and municipalities, including Bela-Bela, Cape Town, Durban, Grabouw, Hermanus, Johannesburg, Makhanda, Mbombela, Polokwane, Skukuza, Sun City and Tshwane.

These events are expected to contribute more than R1.2 billion to our economy between 2025 and 2030.

But these are not merely statistics. They represent jobs for South Africans, opportunities for small businesses and income for local communities.

According to Statistics South Africa's Tourism Satellite Account, tourism sustained over 954 000 direct jobs in 2024 and contributed 4.9% to GDP, outperforming sectors such as agriculture, utilities and construction.

Chairperson, Economic growth and job creation remain central priorities of the Government of National Unity.

The tourism sector has aligned itself with this objective through the Cabinet-endorsed Tourism Growth Partnership Plan.

One of the ways we are advancing this agenda is by unlocking investment in tourism infrastructure.

Last year, we launched the Tourism Infrastructure Investment Summit, showcasing eight bankable projects with a combined investment value of approximately R1 billion.

I am pleased to report that three of these projects have already secured funding.

Building on this momentum, we have opened submissions for the second Tourism Infrastructure Investment Summit, which will take place in Gauteng on 30 September and 1 October this year.

To date, 22 projects from both the public and private sectors have been submitted and are currently undergoing screening to ensure they are investment ready.

Chairperson, government is demonstrating confidence in the tourism sector through continued investment in tourism infrastructure.

In the 2026/27 financial year, the Department will handover various infrastructure tourism projects that it has invested in.

These include:

- The R19 million for the development in the Nyandeni Chalets in the Eastern Cape. The work included the completion of an entertainment area, a new lapa for recreation and outdoor activities, ceilings and thatching to buildings, an outdoor seating area, laundry, parking and walkways.
- In the Northwest at the Lehurutse Trophy and Bird Hunting camp, the Department injected R20 million for the construction of among others, new chalets, the erection of a security fence and the revamp of the access gravel road.
- While in KwaZulu-Natal, at the Isibhubhu event facility, the Department spent close to R30 million for the refurbishment of a pavilion; construction of two new ablution blocks and a change room; refurbishment of a tennis court, construction of a guardhouse, and a mechanical room, among others.

The private sector is equally demonstrating confidence in South Africa's tourism future.

Next week, luxury French tourism brand Club Med will officially open its R2.5 billion Safari and Beach Resort in KwaZulu-Natal.

This investment is a powerful vote of confidence in South Africa and in the long-term prospects of our tourism economy.

The launch will come just a month before the 46th Ordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government which will take place in eThekweni, Durban.

Chairperson, domestic tourism remains the foundation of a resilient tourism sector.

Through our annual Sho't Left Travel Week campaign, tourism businesses submit discounted travel offers aimed at encouraging South Africans to explore their own country.

With 719 deals last year, this campaign continues to stimulate travel demand while supporting tourism businesses across all provinces.

In 2025, South Africans undertook 44.7 million overnight trips, generating R111.6 billion in tourism revenue.

What is particularly encouraging is that some of our traditionally lesser-visited provinces are recording the strongest growth.

The Northern Cape recorded the highest growth of 58.4% reaching 1,9 million overnight trips, followed by the Northwest which achieved 34% growth, with 4.2 million overnight trips.

These figures demonstrate that collaboration between national government, provincial authorities, municipalities and the private sector is beginning to unlock new tourism opportunities beyond our traditional destinations.

Chairperson, as travel patterns evolve, we are also embracing new forms of accommodation.

Short-term rentals are increasingly becoming part of the tourism ecosystem, creating opportunities not only in major cities but also in townships, small dorpies and villages.

Earlier this year, we gazetted the Draft Code of Good Practice for Short-Term Rentals for public comment. The response was significant, with more than 6 700 submissions received. This level of public participation demonstrates the importance of creating an inclusive framework for this growing segment of the tourism economy.

Once the analysis of public submissions has been completed, I will gazette the final Code of Good Practice.

Chairperson, South Africa's natural beauty, rich history and vibrant culture continue to attract film and television productions from around the world.

Film tells stories. And when those stories are told against the backdrop of South Africa's iconic landscapes, they can also inspire travel.

A study by the Basis Research Institute found that audiences who have watched South African content are three times more likely to select South Africa as a preferred travel destination.

This demonstrates that film and television are no longer merely cultural products.

They are powerful tourism assets that shape perceptions, influence travel decisions and introduce international audiences to destinations they may never have previously considered.

For example, according to streaming service Netflix, the local production *The Polygamist* attracted 7 million viewers within the first two weeks of release.

Chairperson, that's organic soft power.

Every viewer is a potential visitor.

Every local location featured on screen is a potential destination waiting to be discovered.

As we continue welcoming tourists to our shores, let us also welcome film crews, content creators and storytellers.

Because when South Africa's story reaches the world, tourism follows.

Thank you.

THE END

For streaming links, images, videos and further information please scan the QR Code and join the Tourism Department's National Multimedia WhatsApp Group.



Media Queries:

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