



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Private Bag X424, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa. Tel. (+27 12) 444 6780, Fax (+27 12) 444 7027  
Private Bag X9154, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa. Tel. (+27 21) 469 5800, Fax: (+27 21) 465 3216

**Speech delivered by The Minister of Tourism at the launch of Tourism Month 2015, Euphoria Golf Estate - Limpopo**

**16 August 2015**

Thank you for making the time to join us here today in Limpopo.

What an amazing province! It is packed with diversity: from bushveld and majestic mountains, to indigenous forests and unspoilt wilderness. It has important sites that tell the story of our heritage and culture. And it is home to warm, welcoming people.

Ladies and gentlemen, each September we celebrate Tourism Month in South Africa, and we celebrate World Tourism Day together with the rest of the world on September 27th. What makes the month of September so special in our South African calendar, is that we are also celebrating our heritage, culminating on National Heritage Day on September 24th, a day when many of our attractions are open to the public free of charge.

This is very important for domestic tourism in our country, where the majority of our citizens are struggling to survive on their meager incomes, and just don't have enough money to enjoy our rich natural and cultural heritage. This deprives our young people, future consumers and professionals, of the experiences and appreciation of the arts, theatre, dance, music, outings to museums, national gardens and parks. Going forward we must creatively develop programmes to enable access for those who would otherwise be unable to participate in all that our country has to offer.

Tourism, and culture and heritage tourism in particular, brings people together and promotes mutual understanding and a real sense of a common humanity, despite what are mostly quite artificial differences

In the words of Maya Angelou, the author, poet, dancer, actress, and singer:

"Perhaps travel cannot prevent bigotry, but by demonstrating that all people cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die, it can introduce the idea that if we try and understand each other, we may even become friends."

In addition to serving this higher social purpose, tourism that is centered around the places, people and stories that represent our heritage presents us with a rich and valuable economic asset that gives us an edge in the highly competitive global market.

During Tourism Month, we focus our efforts on promoting domestic tourism. It's a time for us to encourage all South Africans to get on the road and explore this unique, beautiful land of ours. We are launching tourism month here in Limpopo, but in truth all our provinces are interconnected and interdependent. It is our collective challenge to collaborate in the interests of growing tourism with all its attendant economic and social benefits.

International and domestic tourism are also intertwined. The business tourist arriving in Cape Town and taking the cable car up Table Mountain must be persuaded to spend a day or two more in our country, enthralled at the prospect of visiting the Mapungubwe World Heritage Site; the sport tourist arriving at OR

Tambo international airport planning to watch the rugby must be bombarded with information about Oppikoppi and the Marula Festival; the beach goer arriving at King Shaka international airport must find the prospect of buying the acclaimed works of visual artists, textile weavers, beaders, potters and wood carvers from the far north of our country irresistible. And so the tourist in Durban creates opportunity for women in Thohoyandou.

This tourism month we must commit ourselves to building collaborative marketing going forward, prolonging the stay of the international visitor, getting a higher number of return visits, and growing the culture of travel by South Africans in our own country.

We are also launching our new Domestic Tourism marketing campaign, A Million New Experiences Are A Sho't Left Away. This is our way of saying there is always a first time for everyone to discover and enjoy a new tourist experience, whether you are new to travelling or are a seasoned traveller. And there is lots to see and experience in all parts of our country.

We launch Tourism Month with a media event, because it is the media who share the positive messages and inspiring stories with everyone in the country and all over the world. We appreciate your presence here today. It shows that you have bought into the importance and the significance of travelling, and that you understand how it changes lives. Your writings and broadcasts share the excitement of travelling with all our fellow South Africans.

Domestic tourism provides long-term growth and sustainability of South Africa's tourism industry as well as our economy. We have ring-fenced R100 million to invest in growing this sector through our marketing efforts. With this investment, we are committed to ensuring that the wonders we boast of, and the unique heritage we have been endowed with, are shared by more and more South Africans.

It is very important that all South Africans become ambassadors of their own country, and the first step is for them to travel through it, to discover it, learn about it, and fall in love with all its beauty and diversity.

As more of our people discover more about our country, they will feel a sense of pride and belonging. There is nothing like direct contact and interaction between people to break through artificial social barriers and allow us to share the things we all have in common.

In 2014, tourism accounted for close to ten percent of all employed people in South Africa. Domestic trips increased by 11% in 2014 to reach 28 million. The revenue generated by Domestic Tourism alone in 2014 was R26,8 billion.

To reach our target of 18 million domestic tourists by 2020, as set out in the National Tourism Sector Strategy, we will have to work hard to make tourism more affordable and more accessible to all South Africans.

We are therefore very keen to work with the trade to make travel a reality for millions of South Africans. This includes getting insights into what South Africans seek in a leisure travel experience, and sharing these insights with the travel industry to make domestic travel more affordable. All members of the trade are encouraged to upload their value-for-money deals onto the Sho't Left website and to provide a variety of packages and options to suit all budgets.

World Tourism Day, which, as I said, takes place on 27 September 2015, will be celebrated under the theme of "A billion tourists, a billion opportunities". This theme provides a platform to examine how communities around the world work to grow tourism through unearthing new opportunities.

The potential of tourism to develop communities is significant. Around the world people are increasingly searching for authentic experiences. Today's traveller is quite unlike the traveller of a few years ago, who simply wanted to come to South Africa and experience a luxury safari, with minimal interaction with the local communities.

Increasingly, travellers want to come to South Africa not only for our natural wonders, wildlife and bush experiences, but they also want to engage with the communities in the areas they visit. They want to leave with meaningful, memorable experiences.

We will be celebrating World Tourism Month here in beautiful Limpopo, our host province, the province which is home to the Mapungubwe World Heritage Site, South Africa's first city of gold, which flourished in the 12th century, and home to the Kruger National Park, which is known throughout the world.

I hope you will all take the opportunity to travel through this amazing province, if you have not already done so, meet its people, and experience their culture, history and heritage.

Allow me to leave you with some words of wisdom from the great South African singer, Miriam Makeba:

"I look at a stream and I see myself: a native South African, flowing irresistibly over hard obstacles until they become smooth and, one day, disappear -- flowing from an origin that has been forgotten toward an end that will never be."

I hope that the many streams and rivers we see in our travels around this province and throughout our country, remind us of this: we in South Africa have the enduring capacity to overcome obstacles, wherever we find them.

By working together, we can ensure that the tourism industry continues to grow and thrive, and continues to transform the lives of all South Africans.

Thank you.