



**MINISTER
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**MINISTER PATRICIA DE LILLE KEYNOTE ADDRESS
WORLD TOURISM DAY
LEGEND GOLF AND SAFARI RESORT
27 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Avuxeni (AvuuSheni) Khotsong (GggoTsong) Ndaaa!!! Good Morning

It is a pleasure to join you in Limpopo as we mark World Tourism Day 2026. I have just returned from Geneva where I served as the Co-Chair of the inaugural Beyond Tourism Day, convened by Alois Zwinggi, President and CEO of the World Economic Forum.

I am so proud to say that at the WEF headquarters, it was very clear to me that South Africa is highly revered as a tourism destination.

Our country's input into some serious decisions affecting the tourism sector globally is highly valued.

This is all thanks to the work that you, as a broader tourism sector, do to continue showcasing our Mzansi.

It is good to be back home and of course to be here in Limpopo, a fitting host for World Tourism Day.

This province brings together many of the strengths we want tourism growth to unlock: iconic nature and wildlife, rich cultural heritage, vibrant music and food, rural and community-based experiences, and tourism opportunities beyond our traditional gateways, including golf.

Growing tourism is a shared responsibility. Government must create the enabling environment; industry must invest and innovate; provinces and municipalities must strengthen destinations; and communities and tourism businesses must participate in the opportunities that growth creates.

This partnership is now even more important. President Cyril Ramaphosa in August, announced that Mining, Infrastructure, Agriculture and Tourism are NOW the four key sectors identified to drive inclusive economic growth, job creation and build confidence under Phase three of the Government-Business Partnership Operation Vulindlela.

The immediate target of this newly launched phase is to lift South Africa's economic growth above 3%.

Our cabinet-endorsed Tourism Growth Partnership Plan gives us a shared programme of action around ease of access, destination marketing, safety and security, product development and job creation.

The cabinet-endorsed Tourism Route Development Marketing Plan is also taking shape, as we secure more direct flights through a coordinated approach with provinces.

Our quest to attract more visitors have been further enhanced through the recently launched Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), which is an important part of this shift: one application, one answer within 24 hours.

That's why this year's theme, "Growing South Africa's Tourism Sector in the Digital Era," is particularly timely.

Technology is fundamentally changing how travellers discover destinations, plan journeys, make bookings and share their experiences.

Modern marketing propels DMO's globally to move towards the digital era, to capture minds and hearts of travellers.

For South Africa, the opportunity is clear: we must use technology and AI tools to make our destination more visible, accessible and competitive and ensure that tourism translates into investment, jobs and opportunities for more South Africans

Our digital strategy must go beyond promoting beautiful images of South Africa. It must convert interest into travel and return visits.

Travellers must be able to discover, compare and book South African experiences easily.

At the same time, storytelling through digital platforms must bring greater visibility to rural destinations, hidden gems, townships, small towns, community experiences and emerging tourism businesses.

This is particularly important for MSMEs.

Technology can give a small tourism business in Limpopo access to customers anywhere in the world. Digital transformation must therefore support both tourism growth and economic inclusion.

But as we embrace artificial intelligence and new technologies, we must remember that tourism remains fundamentally human.

Technology may help someone discover and book South Africa; it is our people, hospitality and experiences that they will remember.

But ladies and gentlemen, tourism begins at home.

Before we ask the world to discover South Africa, we must continue encouraging South Africans to explore their own country.

Domestic tourism strengthens the resilience of our sector and supports businesses and livelihoods throughout the tourism value chain.

Our message remains simple: Take a Sho't Left. It's your country — enjoy it.

Explore a neighbouring town, another province or an experience close to home.
Even better invite neighbouring countries to come and visit South Africa.

In the digital era, every South African can become an ambassador for our destination.

This is also the story we want South Africans to see and share.

I invite you to tune in to SABC 1 every Thursday for the four-part series, *What We Know series*, where South Africans tell their own stories through our small towns, reminding us that compelling tourism experiences are found across the country, not only in our major cities.

With South Africa hosting the Cricket World Cup, it presents an opportunity to leverage on the power behind the Southern Region, the call to action is very simple: “Come for the cricket. Stay for the culture”.

Major sporting events bring visitors, stimulate spending and showcase destinations to global audiences.

As we speak about welcoming visitors, we must also speak about safety at home. The tourism sector joins South Africans in condemning the continued violence against women. There can be no thriving tourism economy in communities where women do not feel safe. Safety, dignity and respect must define the South Africa we build and the South Africa we invite the world to experience.

Later this year, the Department of Tourism will host a fundraising golf day, so that the shelters that have become havens for victims of Gender Based Violence and Femicide can keep their doors open.

We stand with the women of this country who also make up the majority staff in the tourism sector.

And to all the workers in the industry, we want to say “Thank You Thank You”, it’s because of your hard work that South Africa celebrated a record 10.5 million international arrivals in 2025.

Between January and July this year, South Africa welcomed 6.5 million visitors marking an increase of 12,4% increase.

We have just seen what this confidence can look like with the opening of Club Med South Africa Beach and Safari in KwaZulu-Natal, a major new tourism product that combines a premium beach experience with a Big Five safari, while supporting jobs, local suppliers and skills.

We want this investment to be a catalyst for more tourism investment across South Africa.

That is why, next week on 1 October, we will host the second edition of the Tourism Infrastructure Investment Summit in Gauteng under the theme “*Invest in Tourism Infrastructure, Invest in Growth*”.

We will showcase bankable projects from public and private sector and make a clear call to domestic and international investors: come and build with us.

These are projects from our provinces, including Limpopo's Framora Hotel from right here in the Waterberg District Municipality.

Ladies and gentlemen, Tourism policy is economic policy. We are turning tourism growth into investment, jobs, thriving businesses and opportunities for communities across South Africa.

The future of tourism will be increasingly digital, but its heart will always be human. Take a Sho't Left. Discover Limpopo. Discover South Africa.

Miyakhensa, 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.



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