



**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

**Remarks by the Minister of Tourism, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, at the AAVEA  
Conference (AAVEA 2019), Cape Town**

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**Programme director**

**Tom Vandembroucke Education Manager at the Europe, Middle East and Africa office of IAAPA**

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

**The importance of attractions to South Africa**

It's rather an interesting coincidence that this conference focusing in part on visitor experiences is hosted at this Hotel. It's interesting because even though I am yet to enjoy a stay here at the Radisson Red Hotel, I have heard so much about it. My two advisors, one with whom I am traveling with today, Dr Mokoka, have been raving about it.

As you know, ministers and their support staff must travel from Pretoria to Cape Town almost every week when Parliament is in session primarily so that we can account to Parliament. When they are in Cape Town my advisors stay in Hotels, and after their stay in this hotel, for the first time in the period that we have worked together they told me about their wonderful experience. So the first time they stayed here, they wanted to experiment with the idea of working from 'home'.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

You asked me to talk to you about the importance of attractions to South Africa. As you know, my role as the Minister of Tourism is to tell the world that South Africa is the world's best tourist attraction.

When I speak about South Africa being the best tourist attraction, in effect I am really speaking about the various tourist attractions that are found within our country. Without these attractions we would have no tourism sector and by extension my portfolio as a Minister would be non-existent.

Fortunately, our country is not only blessed with magnificent natural tourist attractions, it is also endowed with an incredible diversity of attractions. In this connection, the department of tourism strives to improve the country's competitiveness and attractiveness in offering an authentic tourist experience, and to increase demand. We recognise that diversified product offering enables the country to respond to varying market needs.

Those who have visited our country from abroad and South Africans who taken time to explore their country can attest to the beauty and diversity of tourist attractions in our country.

Few destinations illustrate this diversity better than the Camdeboo National Park found in Graaf-Reinet. In it, visitors would not want to miss the view of the sunset at the Valley of Desolation. Shaped by a violent volcanic shift over 100 million years ago, the Valley of Desolation comprises cliffs and precariously balanced giant dolomite rocks that is glorious to witness. The park also has over 220 recorded species of birdlife, 336 plants and 43 mammals. In this park, tourists can still marvel at what still survives of the

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endangered Cape Mountain Zebra, the vibrant Kudu, Buffalo, the majestic Black Eagle and the Kori Bustard - the heaviest flying bird in the world.

The Camdeboo National Park is just but one attraction out of the many attractions that make South Africa an attractive destination for tourists.

The vastness of the natural endowment that finds itself within our borders, places on all of us South Africans a huge responsibility to nurture and sustainably preserve what we have.

In the coming months we will intensify our marketing campaign, to ensure that we increase the number of international arrivals into South Africa. Ultimately, our efforts will be aimed at doubling our international arrivals to 21 million by 2030.

Similarly, we will also be intensifying our marketing programmes on domestic travel. We would like to get South Africans, of all ages and income levels to develop an interest in exploring their own country. We are cognisant that our economic difficulties as a country have placed a huge strain on South African households, but we are convinced that affordable innovative products can be developed that can entice South Africans to travel. We believe that we can make travel and tourism for South Africans an inclusive exercise.

The success of our international and domestic programmes will depend on how attractive our attractions are. More importantly, the tourists who heed our call to visit our country and our various attractions, will require the market to provide enough tourist attractions to meet the demand.

We also believe that the quantity of these attractions is just as important as their quality. In this regard, we will continue to encourage establishments to be graded through the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa whose mission is "To establish a recognisable and credible globally benchmarked system of quality assurance for accommodation and venues experiences..." We are pleased to note that TGCSA's membership has been on the increase and we hope that this trend continues. Grading is an important way of ensuring that our attractions deliver the quality experience expected by international and domestic tourists.

Our government has made it a priority, to get our economy on a growth trajectory. In the order of priorities for achieving this mammoth task, tourism enjoys the status of being the second most important sector. We recognise that the tourism sector is a private sector driven sector and our responsibility, as government, is to create an enabling environment for tourism business to prosper. To this end, we will continue encourage and guide investment in relevant infrastructure development and maintenance and we are inviting the private sector to work closely with us so that we can grow the economy.

For the tourism sector to grow while sustainably preserving our attractions, all of us will need to work together to ensure that:

- we protect our flora and fauna;
- we protect our rivers and seas;
- we develop the transport infrastructure;
- we protect the great African heritage in the arts, culture and architecture;
- we create a safe environment for tourists;
- Each of us become our country's ambassador wherever we go

South Africa is able to attract tourists not only because of the beauty and the diversity of its tourist attractions, but also because of its rich history. We demonstrated to the world that yesterday's enemies can reconcile and live together in peace. This is part of what makes us who we are as South Africans. We are a welcoming people and we are always ready to interest our guests in our diverse cultures and give them the most authentic experience.

After his first visit to South Africa, in 2013, the late American Chef, author and travel documentarian, Anthony Bourdain, summarised his visit with the following remarks: "What did I know about South Africa before I came here? Exactly nothing, as it turns out. But I think based on what I've seen is that if they can get it right here, a country with a past like South Africa's, if they can figure out how to make it work here for everybody, absorb all the people flooding in from Africa, continue to make Mandela's dream a reality, maybe there is hope for the rest of us."

**South Africa is a beautiful tourist destination with beautiful attractions, but as Anthony pointed out, South Africa offers more than just attractions it offers hope for humanity.**

*I thank you*