



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
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New Tourism Minister wants to transform SA's airports

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Cape Town - Tourists must be made to feel welcomed and safe from the moment they set foot in South Africa, newly appointed Tourism Minister Derek Hanekom has told Rapport (<http://www.rapport.co.za/Nuus/Nuus/Hanekom-wil-toeriste-welkom-laet-voel-20140705>).

In the report Hanekom says he is thrilled with his new portfolio and plans to put key emphasis on managing the foreign perceptions of the country starting with the country's airports.

Tourists need to feel safe enough to take a taxi straight from the airport and not feel like the driver is a villain out to harm them said Hanekom.

While The Guardian and The New York Times named Cape Town the no. 1 vacation destination for 2014, with a total of 9.6 million tourists (2.7 million from overseas) visiting South Africa in 2013 - negative events such as Marikana, violent service delivery protests and the Dewani case all too easily deter tourists, according to Hanekom.

Feedback from international tourists has however highlighted the warm and friendly manner of South Africans and he wants to build on this - ensuring tourists experience it from the moment they step off the plane.

Hanekom questioned why there were only special cultural activities, using Zulu dancers as an example, during high profile events such as the World Cup and Indaba saying, Why can we not have this every day?

And while the weak rand is a blow for the economy, Hanekom believes it is a strong point for overseas visitors adding emphasis to the importance of tourism in the face of areas such as mining and agriculture that have been hard hit recently.

Hanekom says the aim is to send tourists home happy, so they can be the ones telling their friends and family how wonderful South Africa is.