



**MINISTER
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF TOURISM, PATRICIA DE LILLE,
BUDGET VOTE 38
GOOD HOPE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT
26 MAY 2026**

PROTOCOL LIST

House Chairperson,
Deputy Minister Maggie Sotyu,
Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Tourism,
Honourable Members,
Director-General Mr Victor Vele,
Leaders of South African Tourism and entities,
Captains of Industry
Owners of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in the tourism sector
Distinguished guests, members of the media
Fellow South Africans,

Good Morning, Goeiemôre, Sanibonani, Salam alaikum

Chairperson

It is with humility, honour and deep responsibility that I rise today to table Budget Vote 38.

And I do so during Africa Month; a month in which we celebrate not only our shared heritage as Africans, but also our shared future.

Earlier this month, South Africa marked 30 years of our Constitution: a Constitution built on dignity, equality and opportunity.

Today, I want to state clearly, tourism is one of the most powerful tools we have to realise those constitutional promises in the daily lives of our people.

Because tourism is not only about travel. Tourism is about jobs. Tourism is about small businesses. Tourism is about dignity. Tourism is about economic inclusion. Tourism is about putting food on the table.

That is why we say tourism is part of South Africa's growth engine in action

Chairperson, for the 2026/27 financial year, the Department of Tourism has been allocated R2.54 billion, with R1.278 billion is to be transferred to South African Tourism for destination marketing and sector growth.

But let me put this on record: Tourism Policy is Economic Policy.

And the numbers now prove it.

According to Statistics South Africa's Tourism Satellite Account, tourism contributed 4.9% to our GDP in 2024 outperforming sectors such as agriculture, utilities and construction.

And critically tourism sustained 954 000 direct jobs in our economy in 2024.

That means tourism now supports 1 in every 18 jobs in South Africa.

And for every 13 international tourists who arrive in our country one job is supported.

That is why President Ramaphosa was absolutely correct when he said at Africa's Travel Indaba earlier this month, *"Tourism distributes economic activity across communities ... Tourism is beneficial to the fortunes of a country, in that it has mass employment potential as a sector."*

Chairperson, in 2025, South Africa welcomed a record 10.5 million international arrivals.

And in the first quarter of this year alone, we welcomed more than 2.9 million inbound travellers, representing 12,6% growth compared to the same period last year.

Domestic spend at R111.6 billion outweighing international spend of R102.2 billion, reinforcing domestic tourism is our bedrock

This means more jobs. More investment. More opportunities for South Africans.

Chairperson, to accelerate this growth, government and industry have jointly adopted the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan.

This is not another strategy document gathering dust on shelves.

It is a working compact between the public and private sectors with measurable targets, shared accountability and clear implementation plans.

Together, we are pursuing ambitious but achievable NDP goals by 2030:

- Increase domestic tourism spend to R139.4 billion
- Increase international tourist spend to R115.2 billion
- Increase international tourists arrivals to 15 million
- Increase annual domestic trips to 45.1 million
- Increase direct employment to 1 million
- Increase indirect and induced employment to 1.5 million

Government will have a mid-term review next year.

Chairperson, the Tourism Business Council of South Africa is funding the Project Management Office which has a dashboard that is able to track implementation of the 5 pillars of the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan.

PILLAR NUMBER ONE: EASE OF ACCESS

Because if tourists cannot get here easily they will simply go elsewhere.

We have therefore prioritised visa reforms and air access.

We have been working closely with Home Affairs in the Inter Ministerial Committee on Visas.

I'm happy to report that the Electronic Travel Authorisation system is now live in China, India, Indonesia and Mexico.

Today, travellers from these source markets can receive visa outcomes digitally within 24 hours from the comfort of their homes and cellphones.

This is no longer a vision. It is happening.

And once fully rolled out, the ETA system is expected to increase arrivals that can lead to creating between 80 000 and 100 000 jobs.

At the same time, we continue expanding air connectivity.

New routes have been launched between Johannesburg and Perth, Cape Town and Mauritius, and soon Madrid and Johannesburg through Air Europe.

In Angola earlier this year, we also secured a breakthrough agreement to remove passenger and cargo flight restrictions between our two countries.

Chairperson, the ongoing conflict in the Middle-East has had knock on effect.

For instance in South Europe, the crisis has resulted in airfares rising over 20%.

This impact is also felt locally, which has also led to increase in airfares.

We continue to pray for peace in the Middle-East.

THE SECOND PILLAR OF THE TGPP: COORDINATED DESTINATION MARKETING.

In today's world, perception shapes travel decisions.

And social media now influences tourism more than traditional advertising ever did.

When English singer Dua Lipa, posts photos from her Kruger National Park vacation, telling her 87.4 million followers on Instagram "I just had the most incredible trip of my life in South Africa" she becomes an authentic ambassador for our country.

That visibility translates into economic activity.

It translates into bookings. Into flights. Into restaurants filled. Into township tours booked. Into jobs sustained.

That is why we are increasing investment in digital destination marketing and global brand positioning.

Chairperson, South Africa is Insta-ready and we must clock it.

It's evident in the Top Billing Presenter search, where contestants like Homba Mazaleni, bring to the fore our hidden gems like Wakkerstroom.

THE THIRD PILLAR OF THE TGPP: TOURIST SAFETY

Every tourist, whether domestic or international, must feel safe in our country.

Chairperson, I would like to take this moment to send my condolences to the friends and family of Dina and Ernst Marais from Mossel Bay.

It is the first time in the history of 100-year old Kruger National Park that such a regrettable incident happened.

While crime prevention is not the direct mandate of the Department of Tourism, we continue working closely with law enforcement agencies and stakeholders through the National Tourism Safety Forum, chaired by our deputy Minister of Tourism.

THE FOURTH PILLAR OF THE TGPP: TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT.

And this is where tourism becomes visible in communities.

Last year, together with the European Union, we launched the R120 million Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre in the Free State. More than 90 000 people have already visited the site, where the world's oldest dinosaur embryo was discovered.

This focus on tourism investment will help diversify tourism geographically and spread economic benefits into smaller towns and rural communities.

Last month, we officially opened the R82 million Agulhas Lighthouse Precinct at the southernmost tip of Africa where the warm Indian Ocean and cold Atlantic Ocean meets.

Following the devastating floods in Limpopo and Mpumalanga earlier this year, the department is allocated R56.3 million through EPWP to support mop up operations at public and private tourism facilities in both provinces.

R36,4 million of this amount was allocated to SANParks towards rehabilitation efforts in the Kruger National Park.

This is how the government is leading by example by investing in infrastructure.

But the private sector too is showing confidence in tourism sector.

At the recent South African Investment Conference, the country secured record investment pledges. The V&A Waterfront announced a R24 billion expansion. A R10 billion investment is underway in the Cape Winelands Airport.

And in KwaZulu-Natal, Club Med will launch its R2.5 billion beach and safari resort later this year, which is another example of a successful Public Private Partnership.

To accelerate this work further, we have established a Tourism Infrastructure Facilitation Unit to help remove barriers faced by investors.

This year in October, we'll host the second installation of the Tourism Infrastructure Investment Summit, in Gauteng.

It comes on the back of the inaugural investment summit last year in Cape Town, where 8 projects worth R1 billion were unveiled, from both public and private sectors. 3 projects have already secured funding.

THE FIFTH PILLAR OF THE TGPP: JOB CREATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Tourism growth means nothing if it does not create opportunities for our people, especially our youth and our women.

During the previous financial year, the Department rolled out multiple demand-led skills programmes focused on youth, women, guides, artisans, MSMEs and culinary training.

Through partnerships with Harambee and the Youth Employment Service, we placed more than 800 TVET students into workplaces to complete practical training required for graduation.

As part of our digital transformation strategy, the Department will continue with the G20 legacy project, the Tourism Hackathon.

Last year 48 youth, representing 21 institutions of higher learning, competed in generating Artificial Intelligence solutions that will drive job creation and inclusive economic growth in the tourism sector through digital innovation.

Chairperson, business events also remain a major growth opportunity for South Africa.

The South African National Convention Bureau secured 66 international and regional conferences, expected to contribute over R1.2 billion to our economy between 2025 and 2030.

The secured MICE events are scheduled to take place across a range of cities and towns, including Bela-Bela, Cape Town, Durban, Grabouw, Hermanus, Johannesburg, Makhanda, Mbombela, Polokwane, Skukuza, Sun City and Tshwane.

Chairperson, as travel trends evolve, government must also adapt.

That is why we recently gazetted the Draft Code of Good Practice for Short-Term Rentals for public comment.

We received over 6 700 submissions, showing strong public interest in ensuring sustainable and fair growth in this rapidly changing part of the tourism economy. The submissions will now be analysed and processed before I gazette the Code of Good Practice.

Stakeholders and the public can find more information on this process by going to tourism department's website or our newly launched podcast, Tourism Talk.

Chairperson, this podcast is just another way that we are keeping with the times and communicating with our clients and stakeholders wherever they are.

On the first episode of the podcast, focusing on the Department's Market Access Support Programme, we featured among others Twin Venture, which is a proudly 100% black women owned adventure enterprise.

They are joining in the House this morning. Also in the House is family-run boutique tour company, Winelands Guide, which is currently going through the Market Access Support Programme.

They specialise in exclusive guided wine tours including e-bike tours, vineyard walks and guided hikes all with local knowledgeable guides.

It's evident that tourism empowers women. It supports young entrepreneurs. It grows small businesses. It attracts investment. It creates hope.

Tourism is part of South Africa's growth engine, and I have illustrated how we are in action.

Chairperson, South Africa is the cradle of humankind. The cradle of culture. The cradle of possibility. And to the world, we proudly say: Welcome Home.

I 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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