



**MINISTER  
TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF TOURISM, PATRICIA DE LILLE,  
SMART VIC LAUNCH**

**Venue: OR TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

**Date: 19 November 2025**

**Deputy Minister of Tourism, Maggie Sotyu  
Gauteng MEC for Economic Development, Lebogang Maile  
Executive Mayor of Ekurhuleni, Nkos-indi-phile Xhakaza  
South African Tourism  
The CEO of ACSA, Mpumi Mpofu  
And the Chairperson of the Tourism Business Council of South  
Africa, Jerry Mabena**

Colleagues and Friends, Good morning, Goeie môre, Sanibonani, Salamalekum, bonjour

Today we gather at Africa's busiest airport, O.R. Tambo International, a gateway through which millions of travellers enter our country every year.

It is therefore fitting that, ahead of the G20 Summit, we launch a facility that reflects the South African Tourism sector we are building. It is modern, digital, accessible, and globally competitive.

I am proud to officially unveil the Smart Visitors Information Centre, an investment of R2.344 million, designed to fundamentally transform how visitors experience South Africa from the moment they arrive. It is more than an information desk. It is a paperless, tech-driven, integrated tourism hub, a one-stop shop that showcases the diversity and richness of all nine provinces.

Colleagues, this VIC embodies four thematic pillars that guide the future of South African tourism.

First, Accessibility. This centre ensures that information about our attractions, public transport, accommodation, and services is easy to access for everyone, including domestic travellers.

Second, Digitalisation. We are deliberately shifting from brochures and pamphlets to digital, real-time information.

Visitors can learn about destinations, experiences, heritage sites, and travel options through interactive platforms that keep them engaged and informed. They can also scan the QR code and browse through the information at their leisure.

Third, Sustainability. By going paperless and using modern energy-efficient systems, the VIC supports our broader commitment to responsible tourism. Sustainability is not just an environmental choice; it is an economic necessity.

Fourth, Creativity. Tourism is a storytelling sector, and this centre allows us to tell South Africa's story with innovation, imagination and pride. From culture to cuisine, from adventure to relaxation, we can now present our offerings in dynamic, compelling formats.

Friends, this launch comes at a significant moment. South Africa's tourism sector is no longer recovering, it is growing.

The latest data shows: In September 2025, South Africa welcomed 846 367 international visitors, an increase of 26.9% compared to September last year.

While in August 2025, international arrivals grew by over 30% year-on-year. And from January to September this year, we have welcomed 7.63 million international tourists, that is 1.1 million more visitors than the same period in 2024.

These numbers tell a powerful story: the world wants to experience South Africa. And we must ensure that from the moment travellers land, they experience efficiency, warmth, and world-class service.

This Smart VIC is also an investment in our future. In the long term, we are developing a smart visitor app that will integrate seamlessly with the centre offering digital navigation, curated itineraries, transport options, and province-by-province tourism content.

This will ensure that visitors carry South Africa in their pocket, throughout their stay.

Dear friends, Tourism is one of the sectors with the greatest potential to create jobs, support small businesses, and drive inclusive economic growth. But to unlock this potential, we must modernise, innovate, and compete on the global stage. That is exactly what today represents.

Colleagues, as we prepare to welcome the world for the G20 Leaders' Summit, it is important to reflect on what this means economically. South Africa has already hosted over 130 G20 meetings across the country this year. These include ministerial meetings, working groups, and engagement group sessions.

The economic benefits are substantial: These meetings bring thousands of international delegates into our cities, filling our hotels, restaurants, convention centres and transport systems. They stimulate local tourism supply chains, including small businesses providing catering, transport, logistics and hospitality services.

They boost destination marketing, putting our cities on the global map in real time. And most importantly, they create jobs and income in communities that need them most. Adding onto the 1.8million jobs that the sector is already sustaining.

The upcoming G20 Leaders' Summit will build on this momentum, showcasing South Africa as a capable host nation and positioning our tourism sector as a key driver of economic growth. This VIC is part of that story a symbol of readiness, innovation, and service excellence as we welcome the world.

Today's launch is one more step toward building the digital, inclusive and competitive tourism sector South Africa deserves.

I want to thank ACSA, provincial tourism entities, South African Tourism, TBCSA and all our partners who helped bring this important project to life.

Your collective efforts strengthen our tourism offering and advance our national priorities. To our visitors arriving today and those who will come for G20 Leader's Summit, I say: Welcome to South Africa and stay longer.

Discover our nine provinces. Experience our warmth, our landscapes, our flavours, and our stories.

Find your joy here.

It is now my honour to declare the Smart Visitors Information Centre officially launched.  
Siyabonga

-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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