



**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

**Speech delivered by Tourism Minister Derek Hanekom at the Attractions Africa
Conference in Cape Town**

9 June 2016

Organisers and delegates to this conference,
Attraction managers and operators,
My fellow explorers,

We are all explorers on this planet. And we are all on a journey of discovery.

There's something in the way that us humans are wired, something that makes us want to explore, to discover new places, meet new people and have new experiences.

It's within all of us, wherever we live in the world.

We are born to be travellers. We feel a sense of connection and solace from experiencing the natural splendour of the world, and we derive meaning from experiencing the culture and traditions of people we have never met before. We become part of the bigger family of humankind.

This fundamental human instinct forms the basis of the global tourism industry - an industry which is playing an increasingly significant role in the global economy, and in the social advancement of people.

Travel is about the fulfillment of dreams. It all starts with travellers having somewhere to go to: our attractions. Attractions are at the very centre of the global tourism industry, even a one-room museum in a small dorpie like Groot Marico. In this single room, the entire life of Charles Herman Bosman can reveal itself to visitors, and the story of a bygone era can remain just as alive today as it was all those years ago.

Last year, 1,2 billion tourists left their homes to seek out new experiences in other parts of the world. This amounts to over a billion interactions between tourists and their hosts, sharing their part of the world, sharing food, song and dance, and listening to stories told by locals.

About 9 million of these tourists came to South Africa last year. And it was not a good year for tourism in our country. We are expecting a lot more this year. The 19% improvement in arrivals in the first three months of this year, compared to the same period last year, points to a great year ahead for tourism. We have crossed most of the hurdles that tripped us up last year. Not all, but most. Overcoming the variety of obstacles in the way of tourism growth is continuous work.

Our success depends largely on the attractiveness of our attractions, and the whole experience that comes along with it. This includes our diverse and colorful cultural heritage, our incredible biodiversity, our magnificent beaches and scenic beauty, the range of adventures we offer, our fabulous cuisine, and of course, our rich history.

We have the most compelling attractions in the world. We have great transport and hospitality infrastructure. The exchange rate is giving international tourists incredible value for money. Continuous training is equipping our people to provide excellent service. We have everything going for us.

And, of course, we have attractions in abundance. Have you ever tried to Google the top 10 attractions in South Africa? Try it - it's quite an interesting exercise. The various travel websites and services all have their own top 10 lists, and they are quite different, although there are a few attractions they all share in common.

Our international and domestic tourists are spoilt for choice. We have an incredible variety of special places to offer tourists, including no less than eight unique World Heritage Sites.

They reveal the story of how life on earth could have started; how we evolved to become the people we are today, and how we were able to rise above injustice and move towards peace and democracy. They tell us about our extraordinary biodiversity that we are the custodians of. Mapungubwe reveals the story of an early advanced African Kingdom that existed long before colonial occupation began.

This conference is a wonderful opportunity to discuss how we can all work together to unveil and extract the full benefits of our attractions. You will be sharing trends and ideas, looking at case studies, and identifying best practice, as you work together to enhance and develop our attractions.

We have a gap to fill. While we have extensive data capturing and statistics on incoming international tourist arrivals, we do not have such a detailed picture of exactly how our local attractions are performing, and the precise shape of the overall domestic tourism market. We do have some very useful information, but it's not enough.

We need more detailed information for all categories of domestic market segments, and a catalogue of local and national attractions, so that we have a better understanding of how to satisfy the needs and desires of our people, and what we need to do to entice them to travel in their own country, within the range of what they can afford.

This is a challenge that requires a collaborative effort between all of you here, working with the Department of Tourism, SA Tourism, and Statistics South Africa. The department is strengthening its capacity to analyze statistics. This will improve our planning. Let's work together, and base all our planning on reliable and relevant information, so we can bring together the science of strategic planning with the art of hospitality as we develop and grow into the future.

We have already established that our attractions are absolutely central to tourism. The next question is: What kind of attractions do we want, and what more can we do to make our attractions even more attractive?

As you answer this question, allow yourselves to dream a little, to stretch your imagination and expand your thinking - to go beyond the ordinary, to venture into new territory, and explore new ways of doing things.

Here's my list of ten features that I would like to see in all our attractions:

ONE: Our attractions and their precincts are clean and in good shape.

This is an absolutely essential starting point. The Tourism Department is employing young people from local communities to work at 50 Blue Flag beaches, to keep them clean and safe for tourists. They will also monitor the water quality and provide information to tourists. It's a small start, but this programme can be expanded rapidly.

How can we achieve this at all our attractions? Yes, it's about having an appropriate budget for maintenance, and this responsibility may reside at a provincial or municipal level. But it's also about having the right attitude, setting a high standard and maintaining it with fortitude.

TWO: Tourists are welcomed to our attractions and served by warm, welcoming and skilled people.

Our people are known for their warmth and welcoming ways, so we are already half way there on this one. Sometimes, a smile is all it takes to say: "Welcome to my part of the world, I am so happy to see you here".

The department, through our Tourism Buddies program, is giving young people hospitality skills, and training chefs and sommeliers to provide a professional food and wine service. We are currently

conducting a skills audit to identify exactly what skills are needed, and where they are needed, so that we can offer appropriate training.

With proper training, our people can focus professionally on the needs of tourists. This customer-centric approach will improve the experience of tourists, and imbue them with the warmth of our people. If they want wi-fi, we should provide it, so they can connect to the world. If they want privacy, we should offer it, so they can take a break from the world.

THREE: People working at our attractions know about their site and tell the story well.

This is how we can make the experience of every visitor meaningful and memorable. As an example, we are training guides to tell the full story of Robben Island, with all the power of its history and the emotions it stirs up, so that visitors have a truly profound experience at one of our most iconic attractions.

They will tell others, who will want to experience it for themselves, and this will set off a word-of-mouth chain reaction all around the world.

FOUR: Our attractions are accessible and affordable for our own people.

This is the key to unlocking the full potential of domestic tourism. We must find creative and innovate ways to make it possible for ordinary South Africans to experience our attractions, for people from Mitchell's Plain to take the cable car up Table Mountain and enjoy the best view in the world, for people from Thohoyandou to overnight in the Kruger National Park and hear the distant roar of a lion in the middle of the night.

Let's put on our thinking caps and crack this one: our people will benefit immensely if we make it possible for them to gain access to our attractions, and there's huge potential for domestic tourism to contribute more to the national economy.

FIVE: Our attractions are sustainable: environmentally, socially and economically.

Through our Tourism Incentive Programme, we are helping some of our state owned attractions to become more environmentally and economically sustainable by retrofitting them with renewable energy sources like solar power. We are switching Robben Island over to solar power, so the island will no longer rely on a diesel generator, which is expensive and not friendly to the island's sensitive ecosystem.

We recently launched a donkey track route in the Cederberg, and the cottages that we built along the route are powered by solar panels. This eco-friendly concept is also creating much needed jobs for people from the local community.

How can we replicate a similar model elsewhere, and ensure that we protect our environment, create jobs and livelihoods, and generate additional economic activities that will grow tourism?

Transforming our industry to become more inclusive of all our people is essential for growth. It opens up a whole range of opportunities for individual entrepreneurs and small businesses to participate in the tourism economy.

With our recent history of racial division and oppression, and our heroic struggle for equality, fairness and justice, each one of us must now work harder to create an industry that represents the best of our society, black and white, women and men, straight and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-gender, young and old.

SIX: Local communities are involved in the operations of our attractions.

The most successful wildlife attractions across Africa are those that involve local communities at every opportunity, as workers and managers, suppliers of produce and providers of services like guiding and story-telling. How can we give local people a real stake in our attractions, so that they contribute to, and benefit from, their success?

SEVEN: Our cultural diversity and our heritage works for tourism.

Tourists from all over the world no longer want to simply view sites, they want to engage with the local people, experience their traditions, and understand their culture. This is what makes tourism so important as a contributor of social cohesion and world peace.

When people understand each other, and respect each other, they unite as citizens of the world. They forget about the superficial differences that divide us. We need to do more creative things to unlock the full potential of cultural tourism. We, in the country that has the Cradle of Humankind as one of its key attractions, need to bring people together, to celebrate cultural diversity, to unite humankind, and create a better world.

EIGHT: Our attractions are well marketed, especially through social media.

Once we have enhanced our attractions and trained our people, we depend on marketing to bring in tourists. The power of social media to market our destination, and all the attractions within it, is growing by the day.

We need to explore ways of fully exploiting social media and information technology for the benefit of tourism. The sky is wide open on this one: there's plenty of opportunity for entrepreneurs, innovators and inventors to get involved.

NINE: Our attractions never stop developing and evolving into the future.

The Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens enjoyed a boost in visitors after they installed the now famous Boomslang walkway. This shows what constant product development can achieve.

Attractions that are successful now must keep pace with the needs of tourists if they want to stay successful in the future. It is vital for attractions to regularly review their offer. Whether you want to grow first time visits, or encourage return visits, developing your product is the key to success.

TEN: Our attractions compete and collaborate for success.

This may sound like a contradiction, but it's not. Our attractions need to compete among themselves, and to compete with attractions in other destinations, for their share of tourists. Here, we rely on what makes each attraction unique and compelling to tourists, what gives them a uniquely South African flavour. But we also share insights and ideas across competing attractions. The attractive destination which is in close proximity to yours, makes yours even more attractive. Point your guests in their direction, and they will point their guests your way.

These are the top ten things I want our attractions to achieve, as we move into the future and improve the capacity of our attractions to grow tourism. The Department of Tourism will help as much as it can, but it will depend largely on your efforts and creativity.

The success of the tourism sector is tied to the well-being of our society. This puts a huge responsibility on how tourism operators engage with their markets as corporate citizens. Our businesses must be conscious of the broader social challenges that our country faces, without losing sight of the basic business principle to operate efficiently and profitably.

Our attractions are working for tourism, and tourism is working for our country.

Tourism is making South Africa, and the entire world, a better place. You, the people who are managing and marketing our attractions, are at the very centre of this effort.

I look forward to the outcomes from this conference, and to working with you to continue moving tourism, and our country, into the future.

Thank you.

Enquiries:

Mr Praveen Naidoo

Media Liaison Officer to the Minister
National Department of Tourism
Telephone: +27 (0) 12 444 6607
Cell: +27 (0) 71 677 5004

Email: pnaidoo@tourism.gov.za
Facebook: [DepartmentOfTourism](#)
Twitter: [@Tourism_gov_za](#)