



**MINISTER
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Tourism Minister Patricia de Lille's speech during policy debate on Budget Vote 38:
for the 2025/26 financial year**

House Chairperson

Deputy Minister Hon Ms Maggie Sotyu

Hon Chairperson of the Select Committee on Economic Development & Trade Ms Sonja Boshoff

Honourable Select Committee Members and Members of the NCOP Present

DG for the Department of Tourism, Mr Victor Vele

CFO for the Department of Tourism, Ms Malemane Maponya

SA Tourism CEO, Ms Nombulelo Guliwe

Entity Representatives, colleagues, and guests

Good Afternoon, Goeie Middag, Molweni, Dumelang, As-Salam Alaikum

I look forward to presenting the Tourism Budget Vote 38 for the 2025/26 financial year this evening, and also to listening, learning, debating, and working together to find solutions on how best to deliver to all nine provinces.

Tourism can truly be a force for good in the most remote communities, such as Kamiesberg in Namaqualand, Northern Cape, and Tisane in Sekhukhune, Limpopo and others.

Today, I will demonstrate how our R2.434 billion budget:

- Builds on the achievements of the last year of the Sixth Administration,
- How we are planning for the future, and
- How we are tackling head-on the Select Committee Members' concerns and recommendations.

I would like to first appreciate the concise and to-the-point Select Committee report, published in the ATC on Monday, 21 July 2025.

Under the leadership of Chairperson Boshoff, the Select Committee has identified key aspects where I, too, think the Department of Tourism and South African Tourism can sharpen their focus to deliver on our mandate to promote growth and development of the tourism sector so that people on the ground in each of the nine provinces can feel the impact.

This budget is based on the Government of National Unity's Programme of Action for the next five years.

Our mission is clear: to elevate the profile of tourism as a key driver of economic growth and job creation, as it is identified in the National Development Plan and the Tourism Sector Master Plan.

Together with the private sector and communities, and like the Select Committee says in its report, tourism can be the "leverage to accelerate economic growth, boost employment creation, and change incomes in rural economies".

BUDGET AT A GLANCE

House Chairperson, I am here today to discuss the future and what the Tourism Budget Vote of R2.434 billion will deliver to South Africans, as well as its impact on people's lives.

The main allocations of the budget are as follows:

- R1.3 billion to the Department's main entity - SA Tourism
- R331 million for Destination Development – the majority will go to the Working for Tourism Programme
- R331 million for Tourism Sector Support Services, which include tourism incentive programmes like the Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP), the Market Access Programme, the Tourism Grading programme, and the Tourism Transformation Fund (TFF).

ADDRESSING THE SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT

House Chairperson, the Select Committee Members were spot on when they wrote in their report about what the Department of Tourism and South African Tourism must focus on in the 2025/2026 financial year.

All these matters the Department is trying to address in its work, and the current Budget Policy is before the NCOP today for debate.

FUTURE PROOF TOURISM

For the Legislative and Policy Reviews, the Department will finalise and table the Tourism Amendment Bill, aligning it with the White Paper, with a focus on short-term rentals, grading enforcement, and governance.

We will review outdated strategies, including those on Heritage & Cultural Tourism, Domestic Growth, Rural Tourism, Service Excellence, and Climate Change.

We will enhance all new fund contracts for GTIP, TEF, and TTF to include clear deliverables. This will include 60-day approval targets and consequence management when we fail to meet these targets.

We will ensure the implementation of our Community Tourism Aftercare program, providing post-handover support to community lodges, including business mentorship, marketing linkages, governance training, and asset protection.

House Chairperson, we are focusing on the future through our Digital Transformation and Risk Management Initiatives, which include developing a Digital Maturity Roadmap, a real-time tourism dashboard, data analytics, and mobile tools.

We will implement the Sector Risk and Mitigation Plan, with a focus on climate change, health, safety, and governance.

We will enhance Governance and Oversight to ensure we meet the objectives outlined in the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan.

Other interventions to improve governance include quarterly public dashboards for EPWP placements, fund disbursements, policy reviews, and risk metrics.

We will strengthen internal controls, audit committees and contract and consequence-management frameworks.

TOURISM SECTOR GROWTH PARTNERSHIP PLAN

The Department of Tourism undertook a review of all its policy documents implemented during the Sixth Administration, including the ERRP, the Tourism Master Plan, the White Paper, and the National Development Plan targets.

House Chairperson, out of this, we set ourselves an ambitious and practical guide on how to jumpstart and sustain tourism growth.

The Tourism Growth Partnership Plan identifies five core pillars for sector-wide action:

- Ease of Access – visa reform, air connectivity, road transport
- Coordinated Destination Marketing – international, continental, domestic, and MICE segments
- Tourist Safety and Security – awareness campaigns, responsive support, and crisis management
- Tourism Product Development – quality infrastructure and immersive route/experience design
- Job Creation – youth employment acceleration and skills development pathways

The five-pillar Tourism Growth Partnership Plan sets targets for government, the sector and the whole of society to achieve by 2030.

The Department of Tourism, in collaboration with sector leaders, will host an Execution Lab next week to discuss practical approaches to achieving the targets outlined in the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan, including key stakeholders, timelines, and implementation strategies.

COORDINATED DESTINATION MARKETING

We are utilising data-driven decision-making and fostering better partnerships to plan and execute effective marketing campaigns in existing and growing markets.

We are also sharpening our game to remain Africa's premier hub for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions.

Hosting Meetings Africa and Travel Indaba 2026–2028 will be refined with a more effective business model to enhance sustainability and promote a 15% increase in exhibitor diversity.

We will support 105 MICE bid submissions, aiming to convert 25 into closed wins worth R120 million in economic impact, and host 10 events in villages, townships, and small dorpies for inclusive regional uplift.

We are also sharpening our focus on key source markets, such as India and China, as well as other BRICS+ partner countries, to increase arrivals.

I accompanied the Deputy President, HE Paul Mashatile, to China last week, and it was encouraging to hear from 150 tour operators about the positive impact the Department of Tourism's Trusted Tour Operator Scheme (TTOS) is having on sentiment.

Air Access has also improved from India and China, and it is expected to be even better with SAA planning to reinstate direct flights to these destinations.

It is now up to South African Tourism to sharpen its focus, show a return on investment, and market the country to grow arrivals exponentially.

TOURISM DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

In the Destination Development Branch, we have 17 community projects that are scheduled for completion this financial year.

Two of these projects are located in the Eastern Cape, specifically the Mthonsi and Qatywa Lodges. The Department is working with its implementing agent, the Development Bank of South Africa, to complete construction in the next three months.

The Department is also constructing, in collaboration with DBSA, the Qwa Qwa Guest House in the Free State and the Muzi Pan Project in KwaZulu-Natal.

Ten projects are situated in Limpopo, including the Mapate Recreational Social Tourism, Nandoni Dam, and the Phiphidi Waterfall.

These facilities are a combination of day and accommodation facilities, helping to diversify our products in rural areas. All these projects are expected to be completed within the current financial year.

At the Tisane Project in Limpopo we refurbished accommodation facilities and a restaurant and the local community has already held several functions there.

In Mpumalanga, we are working closely with the community to build a new cultural centre at Mdluli Lodge near Numbi Gate in the Kruger National Park. In the North West, the Manyane Lodge project is making progress and is expected to be completed this year.

There are five additional community projects in the advanced planning stage. These are the Vhatsonga Project in Limpopo, Nkambeni Project in Mpumalanga, Platfontein and Kamiesberg Projects in the NC and the Lotlamoreng Project in the North West.

We are also working to finalise condition assessments for five World Heritage sites.

These investments in infrastructure, including new construction and maintenance, have a lasting impact on tourism, consistently enhancing and diversifying our tourism options.

The best example of investing in infrastructure and destination development is the Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre at the Golden Gate National Park.

Since its launch on 22 June 2025, in just one month, nearly 18,000 tourists have visited the Dinosaur Interpretation Centre.

This demonstrates the power of partnerships; this project was funded by the the European Union, with the Department of Tourism working in close collaboration with the Department of Environment, Forestry, and Fisheries to complete the centre and exhibition, we can unlock the potential of tourism immediately.

INVESTING IN TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

Building on this success, I will host our first Tourism Investment Conference in September 2025 in Cape Town to showcase prioritised projects and attract five anchor investors, launching our Tourism Investment Booklet in collaboration with the UN Tourism.

We are collaborating with all nine provinces and metros to present investment-ready tourism infrastructure projects to potential investors from G20 countries and private sector partners.

We are also hosting a G20 Hackathon partnering with 18 higher education institutions. This competition challenges young students to find a digital solution for future challenges in the tourism sector.

CONCLUSION

House Chairperson, this vote represents our commitment to action—legislative, operational, and strategic.

We take note of the Recommendations listed in the Select Committee's report, including:

- Reporting on Key Tourism Funding, including the TTF and TEF
- Creation of a Consolidated Tourism Development Fund
- Accelerated Review of Legacy Tourism Policies
- Action Plan for Rural, Cultural & Wildlife Tourism

Together, we will create a resilient and inclusive tourism sector that powers South Africa's future.

I thank you.

ENDS