



**tourism**

Department:  
Tourism  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SPEECH BY MR FISH MAHLALELA, DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM ON THE  
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT TO PROMOTE TOURISM SAFETY AT NUMBI  
GATE IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE ON 02 SEPTEMBER 2022**

**Programme Director**

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<b>Esteemed Guests</b>	
<b>Fellow Countrymen</b>	

It is my honour and privilege to welcome you all in this very important engagement with various stakeholders in an effort to promote and sustain tourism safety in the Mpumalanga Province.

It is no coincidence that today our meeting takes place in September which is celebrated as Tourism Month in South Africa, World Tourism Day is celebrated globally on the 27 September.

September provides a heightened month-long focus on the importance of tourism to our economy. This year the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's World Tourism Day Theme is "Rethinking Tourism".

Post COVID 19, the world has the opportunity to reflect on tourism's social, cultural, political and economic contribution to reaching the UN sustainable development goals. The tourism sector measured against other industries contributed 3,7% to GDP in 2019 making the tourism sector larger than agriculture, utilities (electricity, gas & water), and construction.

Pre-COVID 19 tourism activities and their associated expenditure directly contributed R209 billion to the national economy in 2019. Tourism directly employed 4,7% of the total work force which is about 773 533 people employed in the formal sector in 2019, which translates to about 1 in every 21 employed individuals.

Within tourism, the biggest contributor to direct employment was road passenger transport, accounting for almost a third of all jobs within the sector. Road passenger transport mainly includes activities related to taxis and buses that ferry domestic and non-resident visitors along and across the length and breadth of the country.

Therefore, jobs in the tourism sector depend on a steady stream of visitors and their related tourism expenditure. Internal (non-resident and domestic) visitors spent R451,5 billion in 2019, providing much needed money for the industry.

Domestic visitors accounted for the largest chunk of internal tourism expenditure, contributing 73% of the R451,5 billion. Non-resident visitors exploring our shores accounted for 27%.

Non-resident and domestic visitors spend their money in different ways within the domestic tourism sector. The biggest expenditure items on domestic visitors' travel budget in 2019 were non-specific products, road passenger transport and air passenger transport.

International tourism trends indicate that personal safety and security issues are of high importance in potential tourist's choice of a destination. Biosafety has become increasingly important to tourists post COVID 19. Incidents of crime directed at tourists and tourism products create a negative perception and reputation about a destination and in turn, impact on both the visitor experience and visitor numbers.

As such, the reality and perception of whether a destination is safe has a significant influence on tourist decisions to visit destinations. Mobile digital technology allows for immediate cancellation of bookings in real time in the case of any event indicating that tourist safety may potentially be compromised.

In response, our Department has developed the National Tourism Safety Strategy with a view to foster public private sector partnership in addressing issues of tourism safety in a more coordinated manner in order to provide an enhanced visitor experience and in the long term to change perceptions of South Africa as an unsafe destination.

The National Tourism Safety Strategy is centred upon three key pillars which include, Proactive measures (***putting in place measures to ensure that tourists are safe before they embark on a trip***), Responsive measures (***mechanisms that ensure quick and effective turnaround time to attend to tourist in distress should an incident of crime occur***); and Aftercare Programmes (***providing care and comfort to a tourist in distress immediately after an incident has occurred and beyond***).

On 4 December 2019, the Director-General as well as the National Commissioner of Police, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on on collaboration towards the prevention, investigation and combating of crimes impacting on the tourism industry and the safety and wellbeing of tourists.

The MoU seeks to create a framework within which the SAPS and the Department can collaborate and jointly undertake projects to identify and address challenges that beset tourist safety as well as the tourism industry as a whole.

Some of the key actions identified in this regard, include, but not limited to, bi-monthly, identification and analysis of tourism hotspots; establishment of a database of crimes committed against tourists; participation in awareness and educational programme and information sharing. The Action Plan of the MoU is implemented in various Province including Mpumalanga Province.

Mpumalanga Province, in the past years had numerous incidences that were recorded here in Numbi Gate Road which, has since been identified as a main hot spot area. Some of the ongoing incidents that were reported included: hijackings, attempted hijackings, robberies, motor vehicle accidents, attack on tourists and break-in and theft at tourism establishments. These incidents continue to be a grave concern and has the potential to discourage tourism inbound in the province.

In addition, the condition of roads is poor. This creates not only road safety hazards but also serves as points where criminals target passing vehicles as they slow down to avoid potholes. Rehabilitation of the roads in the province is therefore highly recommended to tourism.

The Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency working together with the Kruger Lowveld Chamber of Business Tourism and various tourism safety stakeholders have formed the task team with the aim of combatting crime.

Hi-Tech security has been appointed to assist on patrolling the Numbi Road and the South African Police Service in the province have deployed the flying squad, K9 unit and increased police visibility along the Numbi Road.

The Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency has hosted a number of tourism safety awareness campaigns in response to rising number of crimes against tourists in the Numbi Gate route.

These campaigns were very effective and were supported by various safety stakeholders including business.

However, we still believe that more needs to be done in this regard including broader engagements with various communities to communicate the tourism value chain. Furthermore, there is a need for the identification and support of further product development in the area to promote job creation and economic development. The areas of importance are the projects supporting women and youth who are highly impacted by unemployment.

The Tourism Monitors Programme is one of the proactive measures of the National Tourism Safety Strategy. The Department launched the Tourism Monitors Programme in August 2017, as a pilot programme in partnership with the Gauteng Tourism Authority. This programme has since been implemented across the country. The Tourism Monitor is funded through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and is implemented by the Department of Tourism in partnership with the Provincial tourism Departments and their Agencies.

Qualified training providers are appointed periodically to manage the day-to-day implementation of the programme on behalf of the Department. VPK Business Venture is the service provider that was appointed by the Department to manage the implementation of the Tourism Monitors programme in Mpumalanga Province.

The Tourism Monitors were provided with Tourist Guiding and Environmental Practices Training prior to deployment. The Programme is part of the broader government intervention that involves training, mentorship and deployment of unemployed youth in tourism attractions and sites. The key objectives of the programme include the following:

- Enhance tourism safety awareness at key tourism attractions/sites;
- Provide skills and practical work experience to unemployed youth, utilising the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), to enable them to be employable;
- Raise awareness and reduce the number of crime incidents that are directed at tourists who are visiting provinces and the communities that host them;
- Reduce tourist vulnerabilities and eliminate opportunities for violent crime aimed at tourist operations; and

- Integrate current tourism safety initiatives into a strategy implemented by the public and private sectors, as well as communities.

The current number of Tourism Monitors deployed in Mpumalanga is two hundred and eighty-eight (288) and the number of Tourism Monitors deployed in Kruger National Park Numbi Gate is five (5).

Programme Director, as I conclude the issue of safety in tourism sector is the duty and responsibility of everyone. Our collaboration as stakeholders should give impetus to the tourism safety strategy in every tourism space in our country. Let's work together to grow tourism.

I thank you.