



MINISTRY
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Speech by Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille at the Launch of Tourism Month 2023

“Domestic Tourism – the bedrock of the tourism sector – goes beyond economic benefits, it fosters unity and understanding among our diverse population”

Date: 1 August 2023

Good afternoon, goeie middag, dumela, molweni

It is an honour and privilege to address you today at Thaba Legae Guest Lodge, nestled amidst the awe-inspiring and picturesque region of the North West as we launch Tourism Month.

As we gather here, we are reminded of the transformative power of tourism. This lodge stands as a shining example of the sector’s undeniable resilience.

We are here today to showcase domestic tourism and here in the North West apart from the Sun City Resort and the Pilanesberg Game Reserve, tourists can also visit World Heritage Sites.

Visitors can also enjoy sporting, adventure activities, take in the breath-taking natural attractions of the Hartbeespoort Dam, Magaliesberg Mountain range and The Cradle of Humankind.

Tourists are spoilt for choice in the North West with everything from enjoying the Valley of the Waves to partying, zip-sliding and safaris.

TOURISM AND GREEN INVESTMENTS

I am deeply grateful to have been warmly welcomed by the founder of this establishment, Millicent Shai, a Women in Tourism member.

Thaba Legae Guest Lodge began its journey with a humble offering of seven rooms and a 50-seater conference room.

Today, it proudly stands as a 4-Star graded venue, boasting 22 luxurious en-suite rooms, two expansive events halls accommodating 250 guests each, a 120-seat chapel, a bar, a boma, and a refreshing swimming pool with a captivating lapa.

Situated just 10 kilometres from the Rustenburg CBD, this serene setting caters to accommodations, weddings, and functions with unmatched charm.

What truly warms my heart is the lodge’s achievement of full sustainability, thanks to Millicent’s unwavering determination and our government’s invaluable support.

Millicent Shai stands as a testament to the success of the Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP), a vital initiative promoting responsible tourism practices and the sustainable management of energy and water resources.

This 100% black-owned, and 60% women-owned lodge is one of the beneficiaries of the Department of Tourism's GTIP which co-funds energy and water efficiency technologies in tourism establishments as part of our efforts to combat climate change, go green and help protect the planet.

Our location today is intentional as this year, World Tourism Month and World Tourism Day, observed on 27 September, is celebrated under the theme: "Tourism and Green Investments".

Thaba Legae chose to prioritise the installation of the solar photovoltaic (PV) generation modules, battery backup and inverter recommendations at and R646 000 was covered by the Department of Tourism's GTIP.

The energy generated by the solar PV system is projected to save Thaba Legae an estimated 60 473 KWh in electricity usage per year translating in an estimated reduction of around R120 000 in its annual utility bill.

Not only will the interventions ensure more responsible operations and environmental benefits with an estimated off-set of 4 700 tons in carbon emissions, but these energy security measures provide visitors with an uninterrupted experience as we navigate the challenges of climate change and energy constraints.

Other GTIP Beneficiaries in the North West include the Village Guesthouse, a three-star graded accommodation. The establishment is 100% black owned.

The Village Guesthouse was approved for GTIP support to cover 90% of the installation of the solar PV generation modules, battery backup and inverter with R154 000 was covered by GTIP.

Another GTIP beneficiary in the North West is the Harmony Place Bed and Breakfast, in Klerksdorp, a three-star graded accommodation establishment.

Harmony Place Bed and Breakfast was approved for GTIP support to cover 73% of the cost for a grid-tied 7.5 kilo watt power Solar PV system with an 8 kilowatt battery back-up as an alternative energy source.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are the green investments the department and these tourism establishment owners are making to ensure we grow tourism and keep tourism going with an uninterrupted visitor experience.

As we gather here to celebrate the launch of Tourism Month under the theme "Tourism and Green Investments," our focus on sustainability is paramount. This is critical for us to build a genuinely resilient tourism sector.

Protecting and preserving the natural wonders entrusted to us by previous generations is our collective responsibility.

By adopting eco-friendly and responsible tourism approaches, we can ensure that future generations inherit a South Africa that is as awe-inspiring as it stands today.

We must direct investments towards green technologies and adopt sustainable practices to foster an economically flourishing tourism industry that actively contributes to environmental sustainability.

As we confront the challenges of climate change before us, let us view them as opportunities to forge a tourism sector that thrives and excels, offering extraordinary experiences to both our cherished domestic travellers and esteemed international visitors.

Furthermore, sustainability is not merely a buzzword; it is a fundamental aspect of responsible tourism.

Adopting sustainable practices is imperative for safeguarding the unique ecosystems and wildlife that attract travellers worldwide.

We recognise the urgent need to prioritise our planet's and host communities' well-being.

To achieve this, we must encourage investments in promoting a greener, more resilient future for future generations.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has identified investments as a critical priority for our tourism sector's recovery and future growth.

Hence, today, as we launch Tourism Month and mark the start of Women's Month, we must partner as both the public and private sector and unite around a new tourism investment strategy.

TOURISM MONTH and TOURISM PERFORMANCE

Tourism Month is an opportune time to celebrate the rich tapestry of our nation's beauty and cultural diversity. It allows us to showcase the countless wonders that make South Africa a true gem of the African continent.

Today, we come together to reflect on tourism's vital role in our country's growth and development, particularly the often underestimated but equally crucial segment - domestic tourism. As we always say "Local is lekker".

Our industry relies on domestic tourism as its bedrock. It serves as the heartbeat that sustains our hospitality sector supports local businesses, and generates employment opportunities for our people.

Domestic tourism has seen a remarkable resurgence, with a 30.8% increase in domestic overnight trips during the first four months of 2023, this in comparison to the same period of 2022.

Although the average length of stay has decreased by 7.1% to 2.6 nights, domestic tourists are taking more frequent trips.

Day trips have also experienced a significant boost, with a 16.2% increase in the number of trips taken from January to April 2023, compared to the same period in 2022.

Domestic expenditure rose by 19.7% compared to 2022, showcasing the impact of the adventurous South African tourist.

When we choose to explore the wonders of our own land, we not only discover the breath-taking landscapes and vibrant cultures that define us but also contribute significantly to our nation's economic prosperity.

The impact of domestic tourism on our economy cannot be underestimated.

As South Africans, each journey we embark upon within our country's borders has a ripple effect on various industries. It sustains our hotels, lodges, restaurants, and countless small businesses that rely on our patronage.

According to Statics SA, in 2021, the travel and tourism sector contributed nearly 3.2 per cent to South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), surpassing agriculture, utilities, and construction.

The future looks even brighter. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), South African Travel & Tourism's GDP will drive the national economic recovery over the next decade.

The forecast from World Travel & Tourism Council's Economic Impact Report (EIR) shows the South African Travel & Tourism sector is forecasted to grow at an average rate of 7.6% annually over the next decade, significantly outstripping the 1.8% growth rate of the country's overall economy.

By 2032, the sector's contribution to GDP could reach more than R554.6 billion (7.4% of the total economy), injecting nearly R287 billion into the national economy.

The sector is also expected to create more than 800,000 jobs over the next decade, to reach more than 1.9 million by 2032, according to the WTTC forecast.

In addition to job creation and economic activity, when we venture out and experience the richness of our own heritage, we become ambassadors for our nation, promoting the warmth of our hospitality and the allure of our landscapes to the world.

Moreover, domestic tourism goes beyond economic benefits - it fosters unity and understanding among our diverse population.

As we traverse the vast landscapes of South Africa, we build bridges between cultures, break down barriers, and forge bonds that strengthen the fabric of our nation.

Every journey taken is an opportunity to learn about the histories and traditions of different communities, promoting social cohesion and appreciation for our shared heritage.

I recently spent an inspiring few days taking a Sho't Left to visit The Kruger and Kgalagadi National Parks in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape.

The plane to the Kruger was filled 90% with a group of American tourists and along the way, I met tourists from the UK, the Netherlands, all over Europe and South Africans.

My trip started in amazing fashion as my wish was to see a baby elephant and one hour into a game drive, my wish came true and I saw a baby elephant. I was mesmerised by the beautiful wildlife in the Kruger National Park including a pride of lions.

I also stayed at the lovely Nkhambeni Tented Lodge with the friendliest and attentive staff.

As I journeyed through these famous attractions, I stopped at little hidden gems and each experience offered a different and beautiful experience from the Graskop Gorge lift into the indigenous forest to the Blyde River Canyon and the quaint town of Pilgrim's Rest in Mpumalanga.

In the Northern Cape, I was captivated by a little area called Riemvasmaak and saw unique accommodation and natural hot springs nestled in the mountains.

The hospitality, warmth and unique cultural experience reached a peak for me with a sunset animal tracking led by local San trackers, sundowners and dinner by the campfire and under the stars in the Kalahari eating a home cooked meals and the best roosterbrood.

I can say with certainty that in every corner of our beautiful country, there is something exciting and unique and we must take more Sho't Lefts and see all the wonder SA has to offer visitors.

By exploring the wonders of all our other beautiful provinces, we discover the threads that weave us together, regardless of our backgrounds or languages. Our unity in diversity becomes a lived reality.

As we stand here in the North West province, we celebrate the spirit of Ubuntu that is so deeply ingrained in our South African identity.

TOURISM NUMBERS – INTERNATONAL VISITORS

Recently South Africa was also honoured by readers of the UK's Telegraph Travel Publication as we were named the "Best Country in the World" and Cape Town was named the "Best City in the World". Last week, StatsSA also released the latest tourism figures for South Africa and the tourism sector continues to exhibit strong recovery with the first half of 2023 recording more than 4 million tourist arrivals.

This is a significant increase from the 2,3 million tourist arrivals between January and June 2022.

The total number of tourist arrivals to South Africa between January and June 2023 showed a sizable 78.2% surge in the first half of 2023 when compared to the same period in 2022.

In 2019, we welcomed 10million tourists and I have already set the target to the department, SA Tourism, all MECs and provincial tourism authorities and the private sector that we must exceed 10million tourists by the end of March 2024.

The Africa region continues to bring the largest share of tourist arrivals to the country.

A total of 3 083 583 tourists that arrived in South Africa between January and June 2023 came from the rest of the African continent.

This is a 79.9% increase when compared to the same period last year when South Africa welcomed 1 714 501 visitors from this region.

Beyond the African continent, South Africa has welcomed more visitors from other regions too. Between January and June 2023, the Australasia region (mainly comprised of Australia and New Zealand) recorded an increase of 141 % with 50 882 visitors coming from this region compared to 21 108 arrivals in the same period last year.

The Asia region almost doubled its figures with a 99.5% growth, from 47 912 to 95 596 visitors.

Europe, the largest source of visitors outside Africa, also experienced solid growth of 66,8.1%, from 356 352 to 594 388 visitors when compared to the same period in 2022.

North America, Central & South America, and the Middle East also demonstrated strong growth trends with rates of 70.6%, 74.4%, and 75.8% respectively.

These robust figures showcase South Africa's charm and attractiveness as well as the work that we are doing in marketing South Africa as a tourist destination of choice.

This is all hugely welcomed because our sector contributes significantly to our country's economy.

SHO'T LEFT TRAVEL WEEK

I am excited about the upcoming and much anticipated Sho't Left Travel Week!

From the 4th to the 10th of September 2023, the Great South African Sale, the Black Friday of Tourism will bring an array of discounted travel deals and packages, offering up to 50% off!

This is great as it affords South Africans a chance to create unforgettable memories as they embark on great experiences, discover amazing accommodation deals, and embark on day trips and holiday adventures.

So far, nearly 500 establishments have signed up to offer Sho't Left travel deals and we need to ramp this up so I appeal to more tourism establishments to register on Sho't Left and lure travellers to your destinations.

Tourism establishments can register on deals.southafrica.net during the month of August to offer Sho't Left deals during Travel Week.

Travellers can find all deals on www.shotleft.co.za and make discounted bookings between 4 and 10 September but travel at any time.

The Travel Week and Sho't Left campaign will be promoted on numerous channels such as SABC, DTSV, major national and regional radio stations, national newspapers and on digital platforms.

Sho't Left Travel Week offers many possibilities for everyone to explore and enjoy.

I urge all South Africans to participate in the Sho't Left Travel Week 2023 and take advantage of the incredible travel deals and packages.

Let us explore our country's beauty, embrace nature's wonders, and support our local businesses during this exciting event.

As we look forward to this let us recognise the significance of initiatives like the Sho't Left Travel Week in overcoming the constraints of domestic tourism.

The Sho't Left Travel Week is a testament to our commitment to promoting local travel and unleashing South Africa's wonders.

While we celebrate the beauty and diversity of our country, we must also acknowledge the challenges that have hindered local travel.

The economic environment with rising fuel, food and inflation costs current makes the Sho't Left Travel Week 2023 critically important and offers immediate relief to overburdened domestic travellers.

Programme director, as we gather here today, I am delighted to share a significant milestone in our pursuit of a more inclusive and accessible tourism industry.

In May 2023, at Africa's Travel Indaba held in Durban, various tourism stakeholders, including South African Tourism and The Southern African Tourism Association united and signed the Inclusivity Accessible Pledge.

Stakeholders who signed the pledge also included the Hospitality Association of South Africa, The Disabled People of South Africa, among others,

This momentous occasion marked a turning point for our tourism sector, reaffirming our unwavering commitment to making tourism a welcoming and accessible experience for everyone.

The pledge encompasses a series of vital commitments that underscore our dedication to inclusivity:

Firstly, we are resolute in making all tourism products and services accessible to people of all abilities.

Ensuring the elimination of physical and social barriers allows every individual to partake in the wonders of our diverse tourism offerings, regardless of their abilities.

Secondly, the pledge emphasises promoting inclusive and accessible tourism marketing and communications.

Through inclusive language and imagery, we extend our invitation to all, reaching diverse audiences and showcasing the richness of our cultural and natural heritage.

Thirdly, we recognise the significance of providing training and education on inclusivity and accessibility to our tourism professionals.

By empowering our workforce with the necessary knowledge and tools, we ensure that they can cater to the unique needs of all travellers, enhancing their experiences.

As the greater tourism sector, we have pledged to promote inclusivity for all visitors by eradicating racism, sensitising stakeholders to LGBTQI+ needs, and tapping into disability tourism.

We are indeed serious about embracing diversity and creating a welcoming environment for all.

Tourism is more than the trips; it is about the life-time memories created but it is also about economic growth.

We must remain committed to prioritising education and upskilling to create more opportunities for women and youth. After all, in 2022, 52% of South African domestic travellers were female.

Domestic tourism provides economic benefits, such as job creation and contribution to the GDP, and fosters unity and understanding among our diverse population.

Exploring the wonders of our country builds bridges between cultures and strengthens the fabric of our nation.

In conclusion, let us embrace the spirit of adventure and explore the richness of our own land.

Let us be stewards of our natural treasures and ambassadors for our nation's warmth and hospitality.

Investing in a more sustainable and inclusive tourism industry creates a legacy of prosperity and environmental stewardship for future generations.

Together, we can forge a brighter, greener, and more vibrant future for South Africa and the world. Thank you all for being here today, let's explore SA and grow tourism even more.

God Bless.

Ends

NOTE TO EDITORS: The above speech was delivered by Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille at the official launch of Tourism Month which took place on the 1st of August at the Thaba Legae Guest Lodge in the North West Province

Related links

<https://wtcc.org/news-article/south-africas-travel-and-tourisms-growth-to-outpace-the-national-economy-for-the-next-10-years>

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1290545/contribution-of-travel-and-tourism-to-gdp-in-south-africa/>
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1290537/total-contribution-of-travel-and-tourism-to-employment-in-south-africa/>

<https://www.tourismupdate.co.za/article/domestic-travel-stats-exceed-pre-covid-q1-2023>

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