

Tourism is South Africa's and Africa's future

By  [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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South Africa is on a long journey with every day taking us closer to our dream of being a truly non-racial, non-sexist society and to our final destination of freedom, equality and prosperity. The South African Minister of Tourism, Derek Hanekom officially opened the Tourism INDABA on Saturday, 7 May quoting these words of late former President Nelson Mandela.



Image courtesy of INDABA via [Reg Caldecott](#)

He emphasised this point further by quoting Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa's who, earlier this week, described the South African story of "new and re-shaped lives, new hopes, new dreams, new opportunities and new adventures for millions of our people. It is the story of a new South African".

While there are challenges to overcome, Hanekom said tourism could achieve this for the country. "In South Africa we are investing in our key sites, and training our people to enhance the visitor experience at these destinations. We have started fitting selected attractions with solar energy to reduce their reliance on the national grid and reduce their operational costs."

He added that the country was also strengthening and adjusting its marketing efforts to keep pace with global trends.

Intrinsically linked to the continent

South Africa is intrinsically linked to the continent and if tourism succeeds then the continent succeeds. Minister Hanekom described Africa as "a vibrant melting pot for tourism: the diverse cultures, customs and traditions of our people, merged with the endless variety of our landscapes, blended with our unique biodiversity, tempered by our historical legacy, and fired by the spirit of freedom and equality".

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation projects international tourist arrivals in Africa to grow by 4% worldwide in 2016, with tourist arrivals in Africa estimated to reach 130 million by 2030 - more than double the 50 million current arrivals.

Investment in tourism across Africa is making the tourism sector a key economic driver for many destinations. “Emerging economies are shifting from their reliance on commodities and moving towards innovation and the services sector. Increasingly, tourism and hospitality are being recognised as huge contributors to growth,” he said.

However, he noted that if we are to be successful, everyone needs to pay more attention to the image and reputation of Africa. “Not only through effective marketing, but by putting on a really great show when tourists arrive. Their word of mouth will do our marketing for us when they return home.”

Across the continent, he said, we face similar challenges. “We also share similar potential for sustainable growth. We all stand to benefit from working together, instead of competing with each other.”

Indaba the ideal platform, expresses the soul of Africa

The Indaba provides the ideal platform to do this. “A successful Indaba contributes to the success of tourism in all our countries,” says Minister Hanekom. The opening was attended by the Ministers of Tourism from our continent: from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Lesotho, Namibia, Seychelles, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and to the MECs for Tourism from our provinces. The Indaba also boasts the highest number of African exhibitors - 18 in total – for any one event.

The Indaba is the premier African travel and tourism show in the world and expresses what the soul of Africa is all about says the Minister. “This is what it means to share what we have, and to work together to get what we want. This is how we exist, through the existence of those around us. We are bound together by our common past, and our future is intertwined.”

Indaba links every person in this room to each other. We feel a powerful sense of belonging when we come together to move tourism forward he said.

Central to the success of the INDABA is the interaction between exhibitors and buyers. This year, buyers have been sourced from key global markets, including the UK, USA, Germany, France, Netherlands, India, Japan, China, Australia, Canada, Kenya, Nigeria and Brazil. “During the next few days, business partnerships will be forged between product owners and buyers. And after the stands have been packed away, it will be about how our governments throughout the continent partner with industry and communities, and how we join forces to receive the next wave of tourists.”

The Minister also thanked South African Tourism (SA Tourism) and their partners. The opening was also addressed by the Mayor of Durban, the MEC for KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development & Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Michael Mabuyakhulu.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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