



UNLIMITED AFRICA: GROWING AFRICA'S TOURISM ECONOMY



WELCOME, MR PRESIDENT

The tourism sector welcomes President Cyril Ramaphosa to Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, in the city of Durban.

President Ramaphosa's presence here today underscores one undeniable fact, tourism policy is economic policy. His leadership reflects a government that understands tourism is a central pillar of growth, jobs, investment, and transformation.

This year's Africa's Travel Indaba theme, "Unlimited Africa: Growing Africa's Tourism Economy," is more than a slogan. It is a declaration that Africa's diversity, creativity, and economic potential are limitless when we work together.

With 22 African countries exhibiting, 16 African tourism boards represented, 1,225 exhibitors confirmed, including 18 airlines in the expanded Airline Pavilion, and 999 confirmed buyers from 44 countries, this is one of the strongest line-ups in Africa's Travel Indaba's history.

It is here at Africa's Travel Indaba where deals are signed, partnerships are formed, and Africa tells its own story to the world. And this year, we do so under a renewed sense of urgency; because Africa is not waiting for opportunity. Africa is creating it.

In testament to this, Minister De Lille hosted a dinner attended by fellow tourism ministers from across the continent.

The minister said deepening intra-African travel is not optional, it is essential for shared prosperity.

"African travellers remain the foundation of South Africa's tourism sector. In 2025, Africa accounted for the majority of international arrivals in South Africa, sustaining thousands of jobs and supporting communities across our provinces.

"We remain committed to ensuring that every African visitor, worker, student, and entrepreneur feels safe, respected, and welcomed in our country. Tourism thrives where there is unity, dignity, and mutual respect," the minister said.

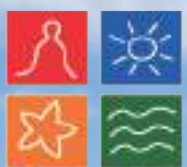
Tomorrow the Ministers will participate in a panel discussion on: "A Digital Future Driving Tourism Growth in Africa".

Today, President Cyril Ramaphosa will lead the signing of a pledge committing to building a tourism sector that is inclusive, sustainable, competitive and growth-driven for all.

Exhibitors, buyers, media, and partners are invited to sign the pledge during the duration of Africa's Travel Indaba 2026.

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SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM SHOWCASES INNOVATION WITH SIYANDA, THE AI TRAVEL ASSISTANT

Created by South African Tourism's North America Hub, Siyanda supports both travellers and the travel trade with real-time, personalised trip planning focused entirely on South Africa.

As artificial intelligence continues to reshape how travellers research and plan trips, South African Tourism is advancing its digital capabilities with Siyanda, a custom-built AI travel assistant developed for the North American market.

Created by South African Tourism's North America Hub in collaboration with Matador Network's GuideGeek platform, Siyanda was designed to support both travellers and the travel trade with real-time, personalised trip planning focused entirely on South Africa.

The launch comes at a time when North America remains a key growth region for South African tourism. In 2024, the United States became South Africa's largest overseas source market, while Canada also recorded strong year-on-year growth. This momentum continued into 2025, reinforcing the importance of engaging travellers through the digital platforms they increasingly rely on for inspiration and planning.

Justin Barnette, Head of Marketing & Communications for South African Tourism North America, said that "according to MMGY's 2025 Portrait of American Travellers study, around 40 percent of U.S. leisure travelers now use AI tools during their travel research and planning process."

Barnette added that "this shift is changing how destinations are discovered and considered, particularly in the early stages of trip planning."

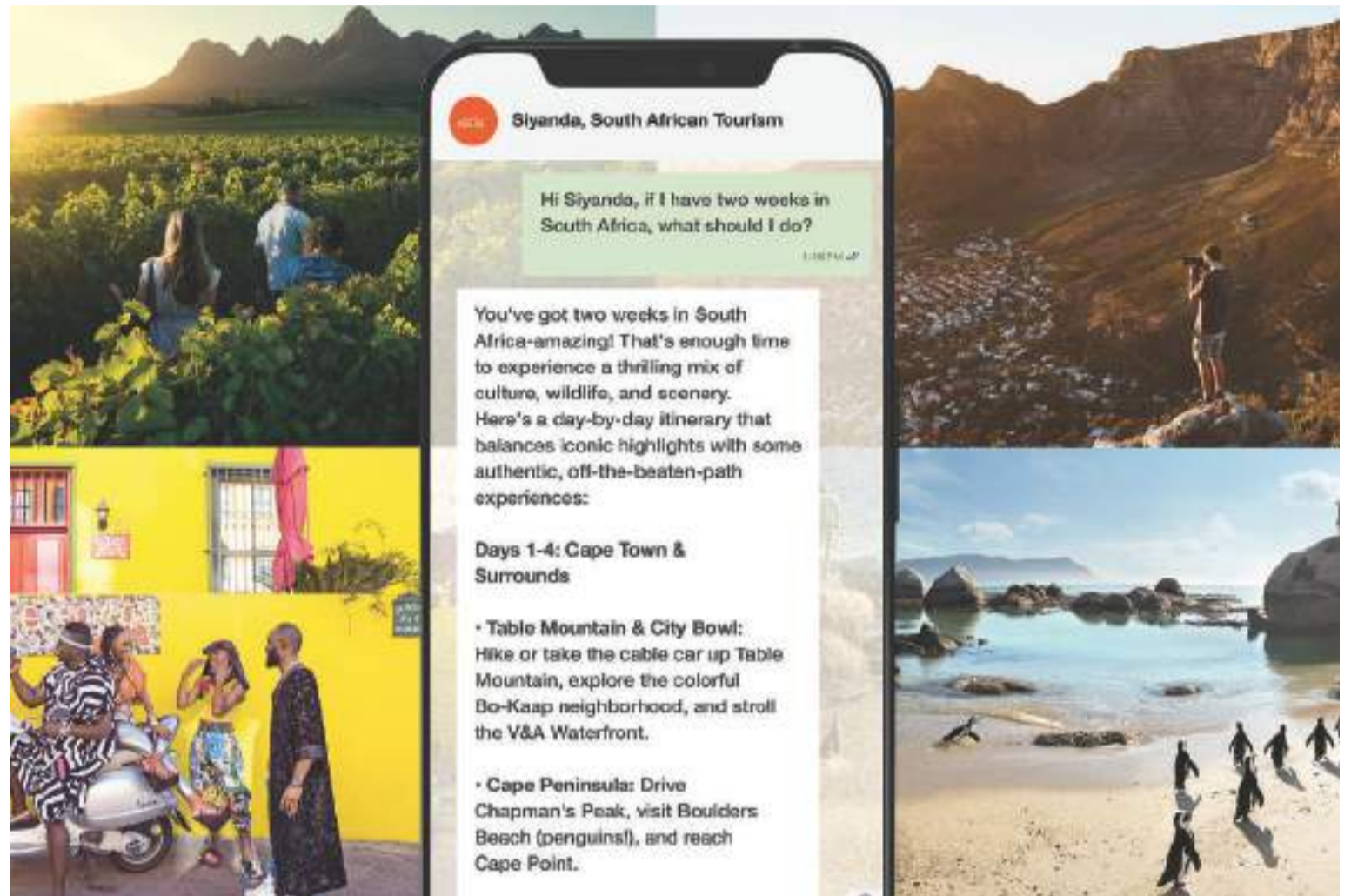
The name Siyanda, meaning "we are growing" in isiXhosa, reflects both the continued expansion of South Africa's North American market and the way travellers are now interacting with destinations in more dynamic and conversational ways.

Supporting the travel trade, not replacing it

South African Tourism sees Siyanda as a tool that supports, rather than replaces, the travel trade. As AI becomes more widely used in the industry, travel advisors are increasingly incorporating digital tools into their workflows.

Research from Travel Agent Central shows that AI adoption among travel professionals is growing year over year, particularly for itinerary development, destination research, and improving response times to client enquiries.

Siyanda is intended to complement this shift by providing an always-available destination resource that can support itinerary development, answer client questions quickly,



and strengthen destination knowledge.

It is designed to work alongside travel advisors and tour operators, not in place of them. Early results suggest that AI-driven tools are expanding the top of the funnel by encouraging earlier-stage inspiration and helping create more informed demand for the travel trade.

A more personal way to discover South Africa

Siyanda is available 24 hours a day and supports a wide range of travel interests and budgets. It helps users explore experiences across South Africa, including safaris, marine wildlife, wine regions, hiking, cultural attractions, and community-based tourism.

A key strength of the platform is its ability to offer more personalised recommendations, including local dining, boutique experiences, and community-led tourism options. This helps

travellers move beyond standard sightseeing and toward more meaningful trip planning.

Looking ahead: Phase Two expansion in 2026

Barnette added, "We are excited to build on the success of the initial launch phase through a second-phase digital program designed to increase reach and deepen engagement with North American audiences."

This next phase will extend distribution across the broader Meta ecosystem, combining organic and paid amplification. It will also include the repurposing of AI-generated itinerary content into shareable formats designed for social media.

An expanded video-led inspiration campaign will build on existing creatives such as "Siyanda AI" and "Planned by AI", while introducing new storytelling focused on South Africa's regions, seasonal experiences,

and signature journeys. Content will be aligned with peak travel planning periods, particularly in the third and fourth quarters.

Together, these efforts will further position Siyanda as an evolving digital platform that supports both travellers and the travel trade with accessible, always-on inspiration and planning support.

As global tourism continues to evolve, Siyanda reflects South African Tourism North America's broader approach to combining innovation with authentic destination storytelling.

Barnette closed by saying that "by bringing together artificial intelligence, creative content, and strategic media amplification, the North America team is strengthening how it connects with travellers at the earliest stages of planning, while also supporting the travel trade with new tools that enhance their expertise."

To chat with Siyanda, visit www.southafrica.net/us/en/travel



WHAT'S ON

Panel Discussion: Digitalisation for Our Tourism Growth

As the global tourism landscape evolves, digitalisation is becoming a critical driver of growth, competitiveness, and visitor experience. This panel discussion with Tourism Ministers from various countries on the African continent will explore how the tourism sector can harness technology to unlock new opportunities through digital marketing to reach and engage global travellers, digital visa systems to improve seamless travel, and data-driven digital tools that support smarter decision-making and destination management.

Date: Wednesday, 13 May 2026

Time: 11:00 to 12:30

Venue: South Foyer, Durban ICC

Participants: Tourism Ministers

DAY 1 PROGRAMME

Time	Event	Venue
08H00 - 09H30	Speed Marketing Session 1: Culture/Heritage and City Lifestyle	Meeting Room 21, ICC
10H00 - 11H00	Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 Trade Floor Opening	South Foyer, ICC
09H00 - 17H00	National Consultative Forum on Visitor Information Services and Tourism Complaints Management	Offsite, venue TBC
10H00 - 18H00	Exhibition Starts / Diary Meetings	Exhibition Areas
11h00 - 12h00	Minister's Walk-About	ICC, DEC & Walnut Road
BOMA TALKS		
11H00 - 11H30	Shaping Sustainability Session 1: Sustainable Hospitality in Practice – Driving, Efficiency, Profitability and Impact	Butterfly Wall - ICC Outdoor
14H00 - 17H00	Tourism Action Lab Sub-Committee Meeting	Meeting Room 11A, ICC
13H00 - 14H00	LUNCH Designated Venues	
14h00 - 15h00	Media Editorial Session: The role of film in promoting Tourism in destinations	Media Centre Presentation Room
BOMA TALKS		
15h00 - 15h30	Future Forward Session 1: – Unlocking the Tourism Value Chain – From Airports to Townships	Future Wheel - ICC Concourse
18h00 - 00h00	Africa's Travel Indaba Official Welcome Networking Event	Durban ICC North Plaza

*correct at time of printing



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KWAZULU-NATAL: THE HOME OF AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA

KwaZulu-Natal is proud to once again welcome Africa and the world, writes Musa Zondi, MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs.

KwaZulu-Natal is proud to once again welcome Africa and the world to Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 - hosted in the vibrant coastal city of Durban, a gateway to the Magical Zulu Kingdom.

As one of the continent's leading tourism trade platforms, Africa's Travel Indaba is far more than an exhibition. It is where Africa connects, where partnerships are forged, investment opportunities are unlocked, and the future of African tourism is shaped.

The presence of African and international



buyers remains critically important for KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa's tourism economy. Buyers create direct access to global markets for local tourism products, SMMEs, tour operators and hospitality businesses, while opening opportunities for investment, partnerships and long-term tourism growth.

This year's Indaba is expected to attract more than 10,000 delegates, including buyers, exhibitors, investors, airlines, media and tourism leaders from across the globe. More than 840 buyers from 71 countries, 600 exhibiting companies and representatives from 22 African countries are already confirmed to participate - reflecting the scale and commercial value of this important platform.

For KwaZulu-Natal, hosting Africa's Travel Indaba is both strategic and transformational. In 2025 alone, the event generated an estimated R574 million contribution to Durban's GDP, attracted delegate spending exceeding R232 million and drove hotel occupancy levels close to 90% during the event period.

These figures demonstrate tourism's ability to stimulate economic growth, support local businesses and create sustainable employment opportunities across hospitality, transport, retail, entertainment and the creative industries.

KwaZulu-Natal offers visitors an unmatched

mix of experiences - from the golden beaches of the Indian Ocean coastline and the dramatic scenery of the Drakensberg, to the wildlife of Zululand, the historic Battlefields and the creativity of the Midlands Meander.

It is a province where culture, heritage, adventure, nature and modern tourism infrastructure come together to create memorable experiences for both leisure and business travellers.

This year's Indaba will also spotlight the province's growing gastronomy and tourism-route offerings through the Taste of KZN activation and destination route showcases.

Delegates will engage with 15 over our very own emerging tourism entrepreneurs, tourism routes and big tourism businesses representing regions across the province, while experiencing the flavours, stories and cultural richness that define KwaZulu-Natal's identity and hospitality.

Beyond the exhibition floor, delegates are encouraged to explore Durban and the wider province - enjoying world-class hospitality, township experiences, arts, music, cuisine, shopping, sporting attractions and authentic cultural encounters that reflect the warmth and energy of our people.

KwaZulu-Natal's geographical diversity remains one of its greatest tourism strengths.

Africa's Travel Indaba gives delegates the opportunity to venture beyond Durban and experience the full breadth of the province - from the beaches of the North and South Coasts to the mountains of the Drakensberg, the wildlife of Zululand and the cultural richness of the Midlands and Battlefields.

Africa's Travel Indaba has called Durban and KwaZulu-Natal home for more than three decades - let that sink in.

With the province securing hosting rights from 2026 to 2030, our ambition is clear: to firmly position Durban and KwaZulu-Natal as the home of Africa's Travel Indaba and a leading gateway for tourism, trade and investment on the continent.

On behalf of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, I extend our sincere appreciation to South African Tourism, our partners, exhibitors, buyers and every delegate joining us for Africa's Travel Indaba 2026.

May your engagements be productive, your stay memorable, and your experience in KwaZulu-Natal truly exceptional.

Welcome to Durban. Welcome to KwaZulu-Natal. Welcome to the Magical Zulu Kingdom.

TWO YEARS ON: KZN'S TOURISM-FILM MERGER TAKES CENTRE STAGE AT AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA

The province is positioning its integrated tourism and film model as a key driver of trade, investment and destination growth.

Two years after KwaZulu-Natal took the bold step of merging its tourism and film entities, the province is using Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 to showcase how integrated destination marketing is beginning to unlock new tourism, trade and investment opportunities.

As thousands of global tourism buyers, exhibitors and media descend on Durban this week for the continent's premier leisure tourism trade show, the KZN Tourism and Film Authority says the merger between the former KZN Tourism and KZN Film Commission has created a more unified and globally competitive destination strategy.

The timing is significant.

Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 has positioned itself around the theme "Unlimited Africa: Growing Africa's Tourism Sector", with a strong focus on economic impact, trade partnerships, destination investment and ecosystem marketing.

Why tourism and film were brought together

For KwaZulu-Natal, the merger has become central to how the province presents itself to the world.

Acting CEO Sibusiso Gumbi said global tourism trends increasingly show that travellers are influenced not only by traditional marketing, but by stories, visual content and cultural experiences seen on screens across the world.

"The convergence between tourism and film is no longer theoretical - it is now a global economic reality," said Gumbi.

"When international audiences watch productions filmed in KwaZulu-Natal, they are also discovering our beaches, our mountains, our heritage routes, our cities and our culture. Film has become one of the most powerful tools for destination awareness and travel inspiration."

He said the merger was designed specifically to position KwaZulu-Natal

at the centre of that opportunity.

"Our objective was never simply to combine two organisations. It was to create a modern destination authority capable of marketing KwaZulu-Natal holistically - as a tourism destination, a film destination and an investment destination."

From integration to growth

Gumbi said the first two years of the merger focused on stabilising operations, integrating teams and aligning systems and processes under one institutional vision.

"Any merger comes with complexity, particularly when bringing together different operational cultures and mandates. But we have made significant progress in streamlining structures, improving collaboration and building a shared organisational culture that is focused on growth and delivery," he said.

The authority believes the benefits are already becoming visible through stronger collaboration between tourism and film programmes, improved destination packaging and more coordinated international marketing efforts.

At this year's Africa's Travel Indaba, KwaZulu-Natal is using that integrated approach to showcase not only tourism products, but the broader visitor economy linked to culture, storytelling, events and creative industries.

The province's activation includes curated tourism routes, gastronomy experiences, hidden gems and SME participation, while also positioning KwaZulu-Natal as a production-friendly destination with globally competitive locations and infrastructure.

Film tourism emerging as a strategic advantage

Film-linked tourism forms is an integral part of KwaZulu-Natal's long-term growth strategy.

Internationally, destinations such as New Zealand, Ireland and South Korea have demonstrated how film and television productions can significantly influence travel demand. KwaZulu-Natal believes its combination of natural scenery, cultural authenticity and tourism infrastructure gives



KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Rev. Musa Zondi, with Africa's Travel Indaba youth ambassadors during a walkabout along Durban's beachfront ahead of ATI 2026. The ambassadors will serve as frontline representatives welcoming delegates to KwaZulu-Natal during the continent's premier tourism trade show.

it a unique advantage within Africa.

"People no longer separate entertainment and travel experiences," said Gumbi.

"A single successful production can generate international curiosity about a destination for years. That is why integrating tourism and film allows us to build long-term destination value rather than short-term campaigns."

ATI reflects the future of destination marketing

This year's programme also reflects the growing intersection between tourism, media and digital storytelling.

Among the activations taking place during Africa's Travel Indaba are discussions on destination marketing through content creation, sports tourism, sponsorship impact and tourism-driven economic growth, further reinforcing the broader shift toward ecosystem-based destination marketing.

Gumbi said this aligns directly with the long-term vision of the merged authority.

"The future of tourism marketing is integrated, digital and experience-led. Visitors want authenticity. Investors want confidence. Buyers want destinations that are collaborative and market-ready. The merger has placed us in a



stronger position to respond to all three."

He added that the authority's next phase would focus on scaling film-induced tourism, attracting larger international productions and expanding tourism opportunities into more districts and local communities across KwaZulu-Natal.

"Our ambition is to position KwaZulu-Natal as Africa's leading tourism and film destination - a province where tourism, culture, storytelling and investment work together to drive inclusive economic growth," he said.

"As Africa's Travel Indaba demonstrates this week, the future of African tourism belongs to destinations that can connect experiences, partnerships and economic opportunity at scale. That is exactly the direction KwaZulu-Natal is taking."

'AFRICA'S TOURISM FUTURE IS BRIGHTEST WHEN WE COLLABORATE INTENTIONALLY'

BONDay at Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 opened with a call for a more unified African tourism narrative, writes Dominic Naidoo.

Africa is no longer waiting for a seat at the global tourism table; it is building its own. That was the message delivered during the BONDay opening plenary at Africa's Travel Indaba 2026, where tourism leaders gathered under the theme Unlimited Africa: Growing Africa's Tourism Economy.

Hosted by media personality Ziyanda Ngcobo, the session set an ambitious tone for the week ahead, positioning tourism not merely as an economic sector, but as a continental growth strategy capable of driving jobs, investment, cultural exchange and long-term development.

Opening the session, Ngcobo challenged delegates to rethink Africa's position in global tourism. "Africa does not join the race to compete in global tourism," she said. "Africa defines its region."

In her keynote address Deputy Minister of Tourism Makhotoso Soty called for stronger continental collaboration, deeper innovation and a more unified African tourism narrative.

"This is more than an opening programme," she said. "It is a celebration of Africa's collective potential and a reminder that Africa is stronger when we grow together."

Soty highlighted the resilience of Africa's tourism sector despite global disruptions and changing traveller behaviour. She noted that Africa is now among the fastest-growing tourism regions globally and said the continent has moved beyond recovery mode into a new phase of expansion and opportunity.

"Africa's opportunities are vast," she said. "But unlocking them requires collaboration over fragmentation, partnerships over isolation and innovation over outdated approaches."

The Deputy Minister repeatedly emphasised the need for tourism to benefit ordinary communities and small businesses; not only large operators and urban economies.

Tourism creates direct pathways for communities, entrepreneurs, artisans, food producers and cultural practitioners to participate meaningfully in economic activity, she said.

"Tourism connects shoppers to local experiences. It empowers communities and creates jobs while protecting our heritage and identity."

She also reflected on her own personal journey, speaking candidly about rising through different sectors of public service and leadership, reinforcing the broader message that tourism growth must remain tied to transformation, inclusion and opportunity creation.

A major theme throughout the keynote was the role of digital transformation in shaping Africa's tourism future.

Soty stressed that global destination marketing

has fundamentally changed, with platforms such as TikTok and other digital channels increasingly influencing traveller decisions and perceptions. She encouraged African tourism authorities and governments to embrace digital storytelling more aggressively to remain globally competitive.

"Digital platforms are transforming how travellers discover destinations and make travel decisions," she said. "Africa must embrace innovation, technology and authentic storytelling."

The session also explored the growing importance of sports, arts and culture as strategic tourism assets. Soty described major sporting events, heritage celebrations and cultural festivals as critical tools for increasing visitor arrivals, strengthening destination brands and driving economic activity.

"Sports and culture are among Africa's greatest tourism assets," she said. "They do far more than entertain; they tell Africa's story."

She added that collaboration between tourism departments and event organisers is essential, particularly in attracting international visitors and measuring tourism impact through arrivals and spending.

Importantly, the keynote framed tourism as a pan-African opportunity rather than a country-by-country competition. Soty repeatedly returned to the concept of collective growth, saying Africa's long-term success would depend on stronger partnerships across borders and sectors.

"Africa's tourism future is brightest when we collaborate intentionally and grow together," she said.

Tourism Leaders Champion a Unified African Story

A panel discussion titled "Africa's Narrative as the World's Tourism Powerhouse" brought together government leaders, tourism executives and destination strategists to unpack how Africa can strengthen its global tourism competitiveness through collaboration, connectivity, storytelling and investment.

Namibia's Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Honourable Indileni Daniel, highlighted sustainability and conservation as central pillars of Namibia's tourism strategy, noting that tourism growth must deliver direct community benefits.

"Our conservation is legally bound," she said. "It became everyone's responsibility to conserve what we have. Conservation is not only about protecting nature, but also about improving livelihoods. Communities benefit from natural resources and tourism contributes directly to small enterprises and local economies."

Daniel pointed to Namibia's diverse cultural and natural landscapes as key tourism assets,



from deserts and coastlines to mountains and community-based cultural experiences. "Culture is becoming a key component of tourism," she said. "People want to experience different cultures, gastronomy, customs and values. Namibia has a lot to offer through its diversity."

Angola's Secretary of State for Tourism, Dr Augusto Kalikemala, positioned Angola as one of Africa's emerging tourism frontiers and one of the continent's most significant untapped tourism investment opportunities.

"We are looking to tourism to help diversify our economy," said Kalikemala. "Angola has enormous tourism potential. We have coastlines, rainforests, deserts, safaris and diverse cultural offerings. Much of our tourism product remains untouched."

He highlighted Angola's participation in the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area and outlined ongoing investments in conservation infrastructure, including landmine clearing, national park development and preparations for future tourism investment.

"We present ourselves as one of the greatest opportunities for tourism investment because of our untapped natural resources," he added. Connectivity and visa reform emerged as recurring themes throughout the discussion, with panellists agreeing that accessibility remains one of the biggest barriers to intra-African tourism growth.

Kalikemala stressed the need for improved aviation cooperation and implementation of the Single African Air Transport Market initiative.

"It is still easier in many cases to fly out of Africa than within Africa," he said. "Travellers do not want bureaucracy. Africa is often seen internationally as one destination, but visitors should be able to move more easily between countries."

Tourism Business Council of South Africa Chairperson Jerry Mabena said Africa must respond strategically to changing geopolitical and economic dynamics reshaping global tourism flows.

"When there are conflicts in parts of the world, travellers still travel; they simply change where they go," said Mabena. "Africa is well positioned within the current geopolitical landscape. We must be prepared for that opportunity."

Mabena added that improving the ease of doing business, streamlining visa processes and strengthening investor confidence would be critical for long-term tourism growth.

"The perception of safety is often bigger than the actual issue," he said. "Other destinations face similar challenges, but they manage communication differently. Africa needs to become far more deliberate in promoting its strengths and changing outdated narratives."

Durban Tourism Deputy Director Winile

Mtungwa highlighted the importance of partnerships, digital storytelling and authentic destination marketing in reshaping global perceptions of African destinations.

"We have lived through difficult periods, but we are telling a different story now," said Mtungwa. "Tourism is not just a sector, it is infrastructure. When tourism strategies work, many other sectors benefit."

She described Durban's positioning as "Africa's Playground" and said modern travellers increasingly seek authentic and experience-driven tourism rather than traditional commodity-based travel marketing. "Tourism today is about experiences," she said. "Visitors want authenticity. They want stories that feel real and human."

The discussion also focused heavily on the role of youth, social media and digital creators in shaping Africa's tourism narrative globally. Ngcobo referenced the growing influence of African travel bloggers and TikTok creators who are exposing international audiences to destinations across the continent through real-time digital storytelling.

Minister Daniel agreed that technology and youth engagement are becoming essential tourism growth drivers. "The youth are the backbone," she said. "They are the ones who make destinations go viral. People first search online before travelling anywhere, and social media has become one of the strongest tourism marketing tools available."

Mtungwa added that partnerships with filmmakers, influencers and content creators are increasingly important in driving destination visibility and countering negative perceptions. "Bad news travels fast," she noted. "That is why we need stronger partnerships and more authentic storytelling through film, digital media and content creation."

She added that destination storytelling must involve communities themselves. "The community must understand that they are ambassadors for their destination," she said. "The more authentic the story, the more powerful the tourism narrative becomes."

Closing the session, panellists agreed that Africa's future tourism success will depend on greater continental collaboration, stronger destination branding and a shared commitment to presenting Africa as a unified and globally competitive tourism region.

"We need to control the narrative," said Dr Kalikemala. "We need a united vision for tourism development in Africa."

Mabena concluded with a call for simplicity and accessibility.

"Let's tell our story better," he said. "And let's make it easier for people to come."





NAMIBIA TOURISM BOARD BRINGS DESTINATION NAMIBIA TO LIFE AT AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA 2026

The Namibia Tourism Board (NTB) is set to make a bold and immersive impact at Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 with an enhanced pavilion experience designed to attract global buyers, media, and travel enthusiasts.

On the margins of this prestigious platform, Namibia will officially announce the launch of the Namibia Luxury Travel Market, a premier tourism expo scheduled for 8-10 December 2026. This flagship

initiative aims to elevate Namibia's high-end tourism offering, stimulate investment, and create a dedicated marketplace for luxury travel experiences within the country.

This year, NTB will exhibit alongside 22 Namibian tourism operators, SMMEs, including leading lodges, tour operators, an airline, and tourism service providers, collectively showcasing the diversity and uniqueness of Namibia's travel experiences.

Africa's Travel Indaba remains one of Africa's leading tourism trade platforms, connecting destinations with international buyers, media, and industry stakeholders. Through its participation, NTB aims to strengthen strategic partnerships, expand business opportunities, and enhance Namibia's visibility in key global tourism markets. The platform also provides an opportunity to engage international media and influencers in promoting Destination Namibia.

Namibia continues to position itself as a safe, peaceful, luxurious, diverse and premier sustainable travel destination, renowned for its breathtaking landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and world-class wildlife experiences. Through its participation at Africa's Travel Indaba 2026, NTB reaffirms its commitment to driving tourism growth, supporting local tourism enterprises, and strengthening Namibia's presence in the global tourism market.



GROWING AFRICA'S TOURISM ECONOMY

Africa's tourism economy is no longer in a phase of recovery. It is growing with purpose, writes Elcia Grandcourt, Director, Regional Director for Africa, UN Tourism.

Africa's tourism sector is steadily moving into a position of real economic significance, no longer seen as a supplementary industry but as a dependable source of growth, jobs, and national income. Across the continent, governments and private sector actors are paying closer attention to tourism's ability to diversify economies and reduce dependence on commodities. Increasingly, tourism is also being recognised as a platform for trade, business events and knowledge exchange, not just leisure travel.

Multiple recent data points show that tourism contributes about 6.8% to Africa's GDP, with projections indicating this could rise to 10.4% by 2030. In some countries, the sector already plays an even larger role. South Africa, for example, records tourism contributions of up to 8.9% of GDP, placing it among the country's leading economic sectors and reinforcing its role as a pillar of national economic planning.

Strong Performance

The UN Tourism January 2026 World Tourism Barometer highlights Africa's strong tourism performance, with 81 million international arrivals recorded in 2025 - an 8% increase overall, led by particularly strong growth in North Africa (+11%).

According to available data, Morocco, Africa's largest destination, welcomed 14% more international arrivals in 2025, almost reaching the mark of 20 million. South Africa (+19%), Ethiopia (+15%), Seychelles (+13%), Tunisia, Sierra Leone (both +10%) were also among the best performers in the first eleven to twelve months of 2025. This recovery is being driven not only by leisure travel, but also by renewed momentum in meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions, (MICE) as well as sports tourism which are helping to rebuild air connectivity, hotel demand and destination visibility.

The continent recorded about 85 million international arrivals in 2024, marking a return to and in some cases surpassing pre-COVID performance levels. For many destinations, this rebound has provided governments with renewed confidence to invest in tourism infrastructure, destination marketing and business events strategies.

GDP Growth

In financial terms, the scale is equally compelling. The continent's tourism industry is projected to generate between \$200 billion and \$250 billion annually, with expectations of reaching as much as \$1.6 trillion in tourism receipts by 2026. Beyond revenue, tourism has the capacity to add one to two percentage points to national GDP growth, offering a direct and

measurable boost to economic performance.

This recovery momentum continued into 2025. According to UN Tourism's World Tourism Barometer (May 2025), global tourism grew by 5% in the first quarter of 2025, with approximately 300 million international travellers recorded worldwide. Within this context, Africa outperformed all major global regions, recording a 9% increase in international arrivals compared to the global average of 5%.

The same report highlights that Africa is now 16% above 2019 levels, making it the strongest-performing region globally in early 2025. Key growth destinations include The Gambia (+46%), Morocco (+22%), Ethiopia (+7%), and South Africa (+6%). These figures underscore Africa's growing competitiveness at a time when global travellers are reassessing destinations based on value, experience and connectivity.

Female and Youth Employment

Across the continent, tourism is also becoming more inclusive in its labour impact. Women account for approximately 69% of Africa's hospitality workforce, highlighting the sector's importance as one of the most significant drivers of female employment and participation in the formal and informal economy. Youth employment is also heavily concentrated in tourism-related activities.

The sector is labour-intensive and inclusive, making it particularly valuable for a continent with a young and rapidly growing population

It is important to note that, at UN Tourism, we have supported Member States through a range of initiatives aimed at accelerating the remarkable growth trajectory of the tourism sector. These efforts span knowledge-sharing platforms and flagship programmes such as the Best Tourism Villages initiative, which recognizes villages that preserve and promote cultural and natural heritage while championing community-based values and sustainable tourism practices.

In addition, UN Tourism has developed tourism-focused investment guidelines that position tourism as a key driver of economic development within national economies. To date, we have supported and produced investment guideline publications for Tanzania, Mauritius, Cabo Verde, South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Morocco, Mozambique, and Zambia. Collectively, these initiatives continue to contribute significantly to the growth and sustainable development of tourism across the region.

At country level, the impact is already visible. In South Africa alone, tourism accounts for 953,981 direct jobs, representing 5.7% of the national workforce, or roughly one in every



eighteen jobs. When indirect employment is included, that number rises to nearly 1.9 million jobs. Notably, tourism in some markets now employs more people than traditional sectors such as agriculture and utilities. (Source: Statistics South Africa's Latest Tourism Satellite Account Report, April 2026)

Domestic Travel

Another defining feature of Africa's tourism growth is the strength of domestic travel. In South Africa, total tourism spending reached R779.2 billion, with domestic tourism contributing over R665 billion, far exceeding international visitor spending. This shows a critical reality - local travellers are not merely supporting the industry, they are sustaining it. Domestic tourism campaigns such as "Sho't Left" in South Africa, "Yamu Loko" in Zambia and "Nhaka Yedu" in Zimbabwe are among the initiatives helping to drive growth across the region.

Several factors are fuelling this growth. Cultural tourism continues to attract travellers seeking authentic experiences rooted in heritage, cuisine and local community life. Nature-based tourism also remains a major draw, while cities such as Cape Town, Kigali, Marrakech and Nairobi are gaining growing recognition as leading hubs for conferences, exhibitions and business travel, according to the ICCA 2024 Country Ranking. This growing prominence is helping extend tourism's economic impact well beyond traditional leisure markets.

However, progress is not without its challenges. Infrastructure gaps, visa restrictions, and limited intra-African connectivity continue to hold back the

sector's full potential. There are also persistent perception issues that affect how African destinations are viewed in global markets.

Growing Confidence

This growing confidence in Africa's business events capacity is underpinned by South Africa's recent track record as a host destination of G20. The country has delivered more than 135 international meetings and business events linked to the G20 hosting, reinforcing its reputation for large-scale event execution and investor readiness. This credibility feeds directly into platforms such as Africa's Travel Indaba, which converts reputation into measurable trade outcomes.

In 2025, Indaba generated R246.8 million in direct economic activity, contributed over R610 million to GDP, delivered R45.5 million in tax revenue and supported more than 1,100 jobs - clear evidence of how MICE tourism is translating policy confidence into real economic returns.

Looking ahead, the outlook remains promising. Tourism is expected to play a greater role in attracting investment into hospitality, transport, and the creative industries, while also strengthening Africa's position in global business events.

What is clear is that Africa's tourism economy is no longer in a phase of recovery. It is growing with purpose, supported by strong demand, expanding markets, and increasing recognition of its value. With the right decisions and sustained investment, tourism could stand among the continent's most reliable drivers of economic progress in the years ahead.

AFRICA'S TOURISM IN NUMBERS

81 MILLION
international arrivals in 2025

69% AFRICA'S HOSPITALITY WORKFORCE IS FEMALE

Africa's tourism industry is projected to annually generate between

\$200 - \$250 BILLION

KEY GROWTH DESTINATIONS

THE GAMBIA (+46%)

MOROCCO (+22%)

ETHIOPIA (+7%)

SOUTH AFRICA (+6%)

*Source: UN Tourism's World Tourism Barometer

WHAT'S ON

Panel Discussion: Digitalisation for Our Tourism Growth

As the global tourism landscape evolves, digitalisation is becoming a critical driver of growth, competitiveness, and visitor experience. This panel discussion with Tourism Ministers from various countries on the African continent will explore how the tourism sector can harness technology to unlock new opportunities through digital marketing to reach and engage global travellers, digital visa systems to improve seamless travel, and data-driven digital tools that support smarter decision-making and destination management.

Date: Wednesday, 13 May 2026

Time: 11:00 to 12:30

Venue: South Foyer, Durban ICC

Participants: Tourism Ministers

ANGOLA'S TOURISM TRANSFORMATION

Angola is undergoing a major transformation as it seeks to diversify its economy away from oil and position tourism as one of the country's key growth sectors.

Angola is undergoing a major transformation as it seeks to diversify its economy away from oil and position tourism as one of the country's key growth sectors.

According to the Secretary of State for Tourism Augusto Kalikemala, the transition has been challenging, but the government now views tourism as a strategic pillar for economic development, employment creation, and regional investment.

"It's not an easy process," Kalikemala said. "It needs to start from the leadership. And we have a great leader that has a vision about the country, about diversification, and has chosen tourism as one of the ways for that diversification."

Standalone Ministry

One of the biggest structural changes has been the establishment of a standalone Ministry of Tourism. Previously, tourism was managed under the culture and environment portfolio, but Angola has now separated the sector to give it greater focus and policy direction.

Kalikemala explained that the government is now reforming tourism regulations while also educating different ministries about the economic value of tourism.

"It's important that all the ministries understand that tourism should be prioritised," he said. "We are giving the first steps, not only by improving the regulation of tourism, but also creating awareness about Angola as a tourist destination."

The Rhythm of Life

As part of this strategy, Angola launched its international tourism brand, "Visit Angola – The Rhythm of Life," which is being used to market the country at major global tourism fairs

including ITB Berlin and FITUR. The campaign focuses on Angola's cultural identity, coastline, music, nightlife, and natural attractions.

Infrastructure investment has also become central to Angola's tourism ambitions. Kalikemala highlighted the construction of the country's new international airport as one of the government's biggest investments aimed at improving tourism connectivity and strengthening Angola's role as a regional transport hub.

"We started with the new airport," he said. "It was a big investment and it's good for connections to bring tourists to Angola and to help regional connections in Africa."

The government is also investing in roads, electricity, water supply, and utilities in tourism development corridors before encouraging private sector investment in hotels and resorts. Key areas targeted for tourism growth include Benguela, Cabinda, and the southern Namib Desert region near Namibia.

"We have 1,600 kilometres of coast and we need to create an offer based on this coast," Kalikemala said. "We have the desert with the sea and we believe there is a lot of potential."

International Strategy

Another major development is Angola's growing focus on business tourism and international events. As part of this expansion, Angola has also established a convention bureau aimed at attracting international conferences and positioning Luanda as a competitive African business events destination.

Kalikemala said the government has already invested heavily in a large convention centre in Luanda capable of



hosting more than 3,000 delegates.

International events are already becoming part of Angola's tourism marketing strategy. The upcoming UIM E1 World Championship race in Luanda is expected to attract global attention after Will Smith visited Angola to help launch the event.

"Will Smith coming to Luanda is part of an event that we are hosting," Kalikemala said. "It's a big event that we bring to Luanda because we have a great coastline and a very beautiful bay."

Strengthened Partnerships

Angola's participation at Africa's Travel Indaba is also playing an important role in the country's tourism growth. Through Indaba, Angola is strengthening partnerships with tourism stakeholders across Africa, increased visibility for the "Visit Angola" brand, and engaged directly with buyers, airlines, and tour operators.

Kalikemala noted that Angola is learning from more established tourism

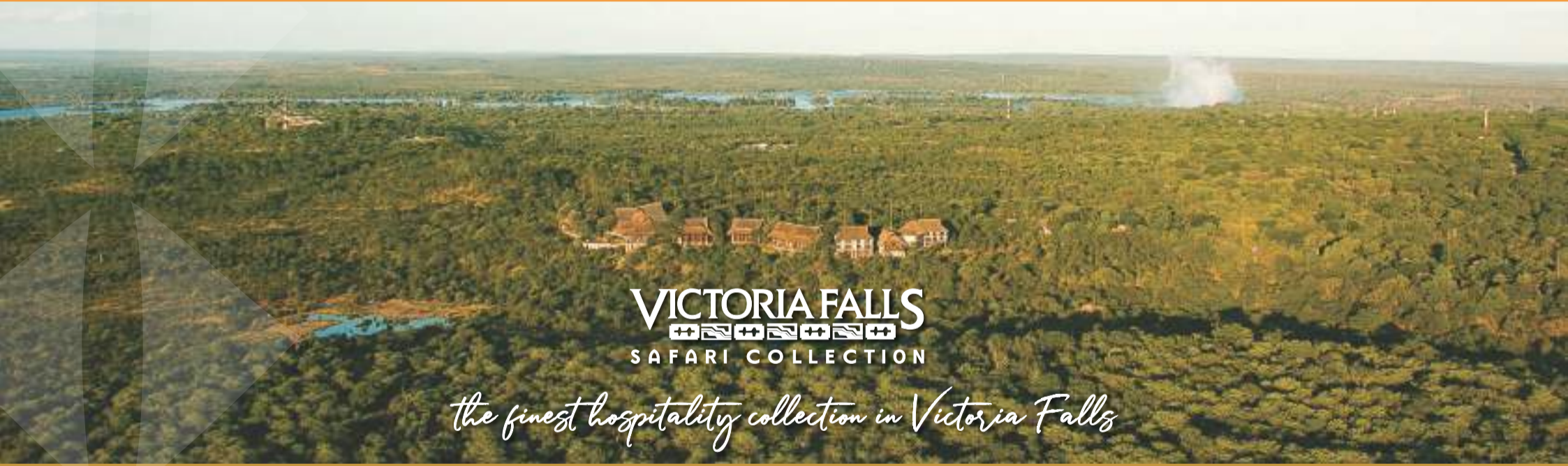
destinations such as South Africa and Kenya, particularly in leisure tourism, conservation, and tour operator training.

"We understand that South Africa and Kenya are more prepared for leisure tourism," he said. "And we need to learn from those countries to bring the same rhythm of tourists to our country."

Angola is also exploring conservation and ecotourism opportunities through the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area shared with Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Officials believe tourism can become a major source of conservation financing while creating jobs for local communities.

Looking ahead, Kalikemala says Angola's goal is to build a tourism industry that balances economic growth with cultural preservation and community empowerment.

"We want to see the impact on the lives of the people," he said. "We want to see increasing employment, investments in tourist areas, and opportunities for local communities."



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TOURISM SPEND IS GROWING, NOW SOUTH AFRICA MUST HARNESS THE OPPORTUNITY

Tourism growth is not only about visitor numbers. It is about jobs, investment, writes Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa, CEO of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA).

Tourism has long been one of South Africa's most powerful economic assets. But increasingly it is also becoming one of Africa's biggest growth opportunities.

As the tourism sector gathers in Durban for Africa's Travel Indaba 2026, the focus is not only on showcasing destinations but also on growing tourism as a significant economic driver for South Africa and the continent. Africa Travel Indaba remains one of the most important tourism trade platforms in Africa, bringing together buyers, tourism products and experiences, operators, and public officials to unlock new avenues to drive demand for African travel.

The latest South African Tourism Satellite Account figures highlight the scale at which the industry is performing. Tourism consumption in South Africa reached approximately R779 billion in 2024, with domestic travel

accounting for the majority of spend. The growth between 2023 and 2024 shows a sector that's rebuilding momentum and strengthening its contribution to the economy.

We must sustain the tourism spend trajectory to become a trillion-rand consumption industry in the coming years. Tourism already directly supports nearly one million jobs in South Africa, with one-in-eighteen people employed in the sector. The opportunity now is to expand that contribution even further.

Importantly, tourism growth is not limited to major cities. Its impact reaches rural communities, creating opportunities for small businesses, entrepreneurs and local economies. Every visitor who stays in a guesthouse, visits a local attraction, or supports a tourism business, contributes directly to livelihoods on the ground.

International tourism remains critical to growing overall consumption. Global competition for

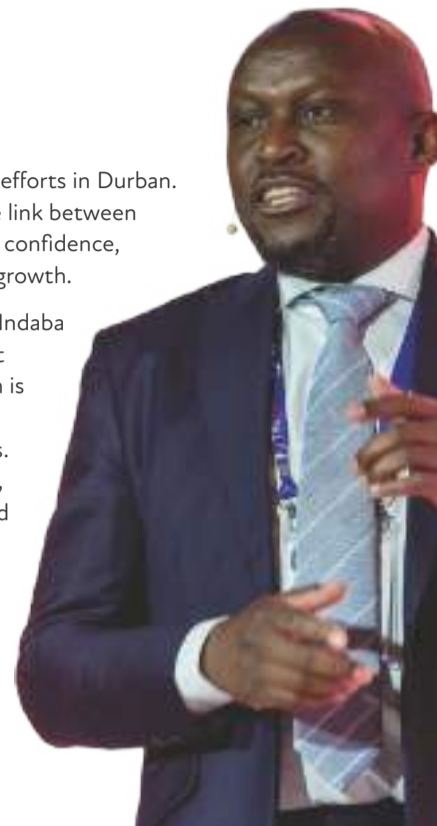
travellers is intensifying, and South Africa must continue to work hard to remain top-of-mind as a destination of choice. At the same time, domestic tourism continues to be the backbone of the sector, and there is significant room to stimulate even greater local travel demand.

Business tourism is another important growth area. Conferencing, exhibitions, and meetings continue to drive high-value travel and investment opportunities. Through initiatives supported by the TBCSA and its affiliate members, including participation in global business event platforms such as IMEX and AIME, South Africa's strength in this position is undeniable.

Tourism growth also depends on visitors feeling safe and welcomed in our destinations. On the sidelines of Africa's Travel Indaba 2026, the TBCSA and its partners will hand over patrol vehicles and metro police uniforms to

support safety efforts in Durban. Reinforcing the link between tourism, visitor confidence, and economic growth.

Africa Tourism Indaba reminds us that tourism growth is not only about visitor numbers. It is about jobs, investment, and ensuring that the sector continues to contribute meaningfully to South Africa and the continent's future.



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TOURISM INCREASINGLY GUIDED BY THE INFLUENCE AND ENERGY OF CULTURE

An expert panel of industry leaders participated in a rich dialogue on culture-led tourism and economic storytelling on BOND Day at Africa's Travel Indaba 2026.

Titled "Culture as Currency: How Music, Art, Fashion and Gastronomy Drive Travel" the discussion emphasised how creative expression is increasingly defining where and how people choose to explore the world.

Guiding the conversation was ECR media personality Darren Maule, while the panel featured acclaimed television producer Angus Gibson, whose work on Shaka iLembe has helped reframe African storytelling on screen; Manager of Productions Jacqueline Rainers Setai, bringing insight from the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism and Film Authority; and culinary entrepreneur Chef Thuladu, owner of Fresh Food Daily.

Adding a commercial and consumer lens, Woolworths Board Director Phanaso Mthethwa explored how retail and brand ecosystems intersect with lifestyle-driven travel trends. Rounding out the discussion, Sithembile Ndaba, Chief Marketing Officer of SA Tourism, highlighted how destination marketing is evolving in response to global demand for authentic, experience-led journeys.

Together, the panel revealed a travel economy and tourism potential that is evolving beyond geography, now increasingly guided by the

influence and energy of culture itself.

Asked if South African tourism is fundamentally an economic growth sector rather than simply a leisure industry, Ndaba said it is important to shift the narrative.

"South Africa has been synonymous with leisure tourism, but I think that with our diversity, we have a lot more to offer. The narrative has to move beyond tourism being a leisure to tourism being an economic driver. It is through tourism that we provide local jobs and boost the national GDP. Tourism is a driver of culture, it influences filmmaking, and reflects the food and culture of people," added Ndaba.

Mthethwa believes that major retailers can play a role in helping local producers and farmers access tourism-driven economic opportunities by reducing barriers to entry.

"As entrepreneurs, you have the skillset and capability but the problem is the access to the larger-scale market. It is a problem but there is a solution, retailers can fill that gap through supplier development programmes or ESPs to give them the visibility that they need. This is important because tourism is an industry that drives job creation – and when tourism leads the way and grows, other industries will follow," said Mthethwa.

Rainers-Setai is no stranger to large scale



productions and believes that film and television fits well with the tourism industry.

"With film and television, it's not just leisure tourism. You have leisure and business travel. Filmmakers use our locations, filmsets, crews, service providers and vendors – this brings alive an economy. This creates a demand for local businesses and boost tourism in the region, while also creating jobs."

Restaurant owner, Chef Thuladu wants townships to step up and take more space in the food industry. She believes that local township cuisine has a market with international tourism, and that street food can prove vital in travel and tourism.

"When we travel to the US or UK, we

look to experience their street food. Small startups have an opportunity today, as travellers have grown an interest in seeking authentic local and experienced foods. We can also have international travellers experiencing our local food such as Kotas and bunny chows. Let's not hide our traditional food treasures. When they arrive in South Africa, that is what they are looking for.

"Social media and technology makes it easier to reach customers; while tourism and gastronomy creates demand for unique African flavours and stories. These opportunities allow for collaboration, innovation, service delivery and turning cultural food into a business with real economic value."

YOUR JOURNEY JUST GOT SIMPLER WITH ANEW AND BLUU

ANEW Hotels & Resorts has entered an exciting new partnership with BLUU Car Rental, bringing together two local brands looking to open South Africa up to travellers. Connecting two important parts of the travel experience ANEW & BLUU aim to make your perfect travel experience more accessible and more affordable.

Travel often comes with too many moving parts. Accommodation, transport, timing and logistics all compete for attention, before a trip has even begun. This partnership is about taking that pressure away. ANEW and BLUU handle the details so guests can focus on enjoying quality stays at trusted hotels and resorts, and moving confidently between

destinations in safe, reliable vehicles.

Corné Alberts, National Marketing Manager at ANEW Hotels & Resorts, says:

"Immediately, we're hoping to significantly increase the value to both BLUU & ANEW customers and integrate the booking process for transport and accommodation services, creating a simple and dependable way to travel locally."

Nangamso Gxididi, National Sales Manager from BLUU Car Rental adds:

"Ultimately, the goal is simple. Less planning, fewer decisions and a smoother, more rewarding travel experience for our combined customers."



For more details on the partnership, including booking information and benefits, visit anewhotels.com and bluucarrental.com. Or come and visit us at Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 at stand ICC4 1912.

MARKET ACCESS SUPPORT FUELS GROWTH FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S TOURISM SMES

Small tourism enterprises participating in and engaging around Africa's Travel Indaba are increasingly viewing market access support programmes as essential tools for business growth, industry exposure and long-term sustainability within South Africa's tourism economy.

South Africa's Domestic Market Access Support Programme (DMASP), which supports emerging micro enterprises to participate in domestic tourism trade fairs, exhibitions and networking platforms, continues to create opportunities for broader inclusion, transformation and enterprise development across the sector.

For many small operators, access to tourism trade platforms remains one of the biggest barriers to expansion, particularly due to the high costs associated with exhibition space, accommodation, transport, branding and marketing.

First time at Indaba

Loyiso Mfuku of Khayelitsha Travel & Tours said this year marked the company's first application to participate in Africa's Travel Indaba and described the process as smooth and accessible.



"We likely would not have considered applying without the email invitation we received, so we would like to acknowledge and thank the communications team for keeping us informed and engaged," said Mfuku.

He added that the financial burden linked to tourism exhibitions and trade networking opportunities often limits participation for smaller tourism enterprises across South Africa. "Small enterprises often face challenges in accessing marketing platforms such as tourism trade fairs due to the prohibitively high costs involved," he said.

Mfuku noted that the programme's value extends beyond financial assistance, particularly in helping emerging businesses strengthen operational readiness and improve international market competitiveness.

"One of its most significant contributions is reducing operational costs while equipping participants with the capacity and skills needed to conduct business at an international level," he explained.

Beyond fostering stronger B2B relationships between local tourism operators, Mfuku said participation also exposes businesses to evolving tourism technologies and internationally recognised industry standards.

"As newcomers, even though we have met all the requirements, we recognise that there is still much to learn and room to grow," he added. "We approach this opportunity with humility, openness and a willingness to adapt as we gain experience."

Strengthen Market Presence

Gopolang Makgotho, CEO of Corrystroo3 Holdings PTY LTD, a 100% black woman-owned tourism and transportation enterprise operating across local and SADC markets,

said programmes such as DMASP create valuable opportunities to connect directly with buyers and strengthen market presence.

"Market reach, customer growth and brand credibility are all enhanced through participation in these platforms," she explained.

Makgotho added that increased bookings, stronger partnerships and future expansion into additional SADC destinations remain key growth objectives for the business.

Tour guide Sanele Mvuyane of Travel Bug Tours & Safaris said engagement with international travellers and tourism stakeholders has helped shape more inclusive and culturally responsive tourism products.

"I have learnt to interact with different cultures and beliefs from different countries and experiences of different travellers coming from various countries," he said. "That opens me more to build packages that suit every country's culture and beliefs."

Mvuyane added that networking with tourism professionals from different provinces creates opportunities for collaboration, referrals and improved destination packaging across South Africa.

Exposure to Tourism Buyers

In the North West Province, Injula Tours and Event Management is also positioning itself for growth through tourism trade participation.

Director Nogqibelo 'Gibby' Florah Memane said exposure to tourism buyers, schools, tour operators and government stakeholders creates valuable opportunities for cultural tourism, educational travel and local economic development.

"We are committed to growth, innovation and representing the North West Province as a



competitive tourism destination," said Memane.

Industry participants also highlighted the importance of mentorship and enterprise development ahead of major tourism trade shows.

Mfuku believes early recruitment and pre-event mentorship training could significantly strengthen small business participation and professionalism within the sector.

"Small enterprises should not be viewed merely as participants in need of handouts, but as businesses with the potential to excel when given timely guidance, mentorship and development opportunities," he said.

As Africa's Travel Indaba continues to connect tourism businesses, buyers and destinations from across the continent, emerging tourism enterprises are increasingly positioning themselves as key contributors to tourism growth, job creation, innovation and regional economic inclusion.



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THE KAVANGO-ZAMBEZI BIRDING ROUTE: UNLOCKING AFRICA'S TRANSBOUNDARY AVIAN TOURISM POTENTIAL

Birding tourism is rapidly emerging as one of Africa's most promising yet underutilized travel segments, particularly within the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA), a vast ecological landscape spanning five Southern African countries.

At the heart of this initiative is Dr. Nyambe Nyambe, Executive Director of the KAZA Secretariat, who believes the region is uniquely positioned to become a global leader in avian tourism.

Speaking on the potential of the sector, Dr. Nyambe underscores the extraordinary natural advantage the region holds.

"Southern Africa, particularly within the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area, holds one of the greatest concentrations of birdlife on Earth," he says. "We have barely scratched the surface of what this means for tourism."

He explains that birding is no longer a niche

interest but a fast-growing global tourism segment driven by younger travellers, women, and middle-income markets seeking meaningful nature-based experiences.

"Globally, Avi tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of nature-based tourism. Southern Africa has been underexploited in this space," Dr. Nyambe notes. "Birders are high-value travelers who stay longer, spend more, travel during the green season, and go beyond flagship parks into community areas."

This behavior, he adds, makes birding a strategic tool for tourism diversification, especially in destinations seeking year-round tourism flows.

What sets KAZA apart from global birding destinations such as Costa Rica or Ecuador is its sheer scale and transboundary structure.

"No other birding destination in the world is structured like this," Dr. Nyambe says. "We cover approximately 520,000 square

kilometres across five countries: Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe."

Within this vast conservation landscape lie 36 protected areas and important birding sites managed under a shared ecological vision. Unlike isolated reserves, KAZA functions as one continuous ecosystem.

Recent expedition data reinforces this potential. International birding teams documented more than 215 species along KAZA routes, with 43 species recorded for the first time by experienced global birders.

"These sightings are continuously uploaded to platforms like eBird, strengthening KAZA's global reputation as a premier birding destination," Dr. Nyambe explains.

The region has also invested in human capital development, training more than 50 certified birding guides to international standards and establishing over 100 route ambassadors across lodges and camps.

Species diversity is another defining strength, ranging from wetland specialists and woodland birds to unique endemics.

"We have species such as cranes and the Black-cheeked Lovebird, found in parts of Zambia, which demonstrate the ecological richness of this landscape," he adds.

One of the major enablers of transboundary tourism is mobility. Dr. Nyambe highlights ongoing efforts to ease cross-border movement through the KAZA Uni-visa system.

"Mobility is critical for a cross-border tourism product," he says. "For over 14 years, we have been piloting a KAZA Uni-visa system between partner states."

Currently, Zambia and Zimbabwe implement a unified visa arrangement, while Botswana allows structured day-trip access into attractions such as Chobe National Park. The long-term goal is full rollout across all five member countries.

"The objective is seamless travel across the region," Dr. Nyambe explains. "This is part of ongoing intergovernmental consultations."

A key strategic shift within KAZA is positioning the region as a single tourism destination rather than five separate countries.

"It is absolutely essential that we market KAZA as one destination," Dr. Nyambe states. "In 2024, heads of state reaffirmed this vision at the KAZA summit."

Under this approach, birding routes are not standalone products but part of a unified tourism offering.

"Tourists do not experience borders in nature but in landscapes. So, our marketing

must reflect that reality," he says.

This strategy reduces fragmentation and strengthens global competitiveness, similar to regional tourism models seen in Southeast Asia and other integrated destinations.

Far from being a niche interest, birding tourism is now a multi-billion-dollar global industry.

"Birding tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments, with a market value exceeding 70 billion US dollars in 2025 and projected to reach 117 billion by 2033," Dr. Nyambe explains.

Beyond economics, birding places tangible value on ecosystems that are often underfunded.

"Wetlands, for example, become economically justifiable for protection once they are linked to tourism revenue," he says. "It also ensures communities become custodians of biodiversity."

KAZA's birding routes also attract migratory species from across continents, including Arctic and Palearctic migrants such as the Pallid Harrier and Caspian Plover.

For Dr. Nyambe, conservation remains the foundation of the entire strategy.

"We have a dedicated bird conservation strategy aligned with tourism development," he says. "Tourism must support habitat protection, not exploitation."

The initiative spans river systems, floodplains, forests, and woodlands, ensuring ecological balance while supporting endangered species such as Wattled Cranes and African Skimmers.

Looking forward, Dr. Nyambe believes success will depend on investment, coordination, and integration. "African countries must invest in infrastructure, trained guides, and citizen science systems," he says. "We must also address seasonality by using birding to unlock green season tourism."

Digital integration is also key, with platforms such as Uncover KAZA helping unify the destination across all five countries.

Ultimately, success will be measured by growth in cross-border itineraries, increased green-season occupancy, stronger conservation outcomes, and improved community livelihoods.

Incredible Species Diversity Awaits

Zambia: 227 bird species documented

Zimbabwe: 214 species including both resident and migratory birds

Botswana: 196 species recorded

Namibia: 187 species identified





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A TIKTOK MASTERCLASS: HAVE YOU HEARD OF 'SUPERMARKET TOURISM' AND 'AIRPORT THEORY'?

There's no denying that TikTok has transformed the way people discover destinations and plan their journeys before they even begin.

For many travellers, inspiration now begins with a scroll. A fleeting 15-second TikTok video of breakfast in Paris can instantly place a destination on a traveller's bucket list. The era of carefully planned Google searches or notebook planning is slowly fading. Today, travel dreams are sparked in real-time, from discovering hidden cafés to searching for the perfect picnic spot beneath the Eiffel Tower.

Africa's Travel Indaba BonDay featured an engaging TikTok masterclass, hosted by ECR media personality Darren Maule. Titled From Bucket List to Booking, the session was led by

Zethu Mthethwa, TikTok Head of Sales SSA, who unpacked how digital storytelling and short-form content are reshaping the modern travel journey.

"TikTok has been integral in shaping how people travel. People rely a lot on community and the recommendations from the shared connections that they make on the platform and beyond. There is now this rise in travel that has been inspired by TikTok."

Mthethwa shared about how the "supermarket tourism" and "airport theory" has taken social travel enthusiasm by storm.

"Supermarket tourism is where people travel to different parts of the world to experience a different food culture and create content segments. We have seen the rise of this where it's all inspired by TikTok, and where some of your favourite and local supermarket brands have been at the centre of why people travel to South Africa. TikTok has made this possible."

"The airport theory is the idea that you cut it as fine as possible to see if the airport experience really needs as much time as we say it does. People go to the airport and give themselves 20 minutes to check-in and board their flight. This has now become a primary means of connecting with travellers on TikTok."

"These are very interesting things that take off as content buckets on TikTok that one would never expect to see or have never heard off before. Travellers want to travel more and content in real-time fuels and gives them an insight."

TikTok has transformed vision boards and wish lists into immersive, living experiences.

Through a blend of short- and long-form video content,



travel agencies and tourism boards are now able to capture and curate travellers' aspirations in vivid detail, offering real-time glimpses into dream destinations, curated itineraries and must-visit experiences.

In this evolving digital landscape, AT1 2026 presents a powerful opportunity for the travel and tourism sector to integrate these dynamic storytelling tools into their offerings, inspiring a new generation of experience-driven travellers.



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KRUGER NATIONAL PARK CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF UNFORGETTABLE WILDLIFE ADVENTURES

Celebrating an historic centenary, The Kruger National Park marks 100 years of unforgettable wildlife encounters and timeless adventures woven into the memories of travellers from around the world, as well as local adventurers experiencing the beauty of Africa.

On May 31, 1926, The Kruger National Park was officially proclaimed to prevent the depletion of wildlife and became South Africa's first national park. A year later, it became a tourist attraction accommodating several treasured wildlife. A century on, Kruger National Park stands as more than a symbol of survival in an era marked by economic uncertainty and climate change – it is a story of resilience, renewal and remarkable thriving.

The national park now covers more than 19 000 square kilometres and spans across the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces. It is an integral part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, which encompasses wildlife areas in Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

The Kruger National Park protects more than 147 mammal species, about 507 bird species and hosts the Big Five, as well as numerous other wildlife. The park also preserves cultural treasures such as the Bushman Rock Paintings and archaeological sites Masorini and Thulamela.

Kruger National Park is celebrating its centenary with a series of "Kruger Centenary" initiatives. Highlights include a fortnightly conservation webinar series running from March to September 2026, special commemorations focusing on the park's history, community involvement and promoting unique visitor experiences such as the Kruger Shalati train on the bridge.



The webinars aim to celebrate the iconic Kruger National Park and its sister national parks, engaging the public into dialogues about conservation, as well as foster a deeper understanding of conservation efforts.

The centenary celebration is an opportunity to connect staff, surrounding communities and visitors in honouring the park's history, while looking forward to the next century of biodiversity conservation. It is a profound reminder that even in an ever-changing world, there is room for nature and humans to both co-exist and thrive.

Each year, the park attracts about two million visitors to its gates and is a major contributor to tourism and conservation, injecting millions into the economy and providing local employment.

For a century, Kruger National Park has stood as the beating heart of South African conservation. It is a vast wilderness where nature reigns supreme and wildlife roams free. As the iconic park celebrates its centenary milestone, it reflects not only on a rich legacy of protecting Africa's extraordinary biodiversity, but also on its role in shaping eco-tourism and environmental awareness across the globe.

The national park has created unforgettable experiences for millions of visitors from around the world and South Africa. The park has become more than just a wildlife destination; it is a place where families bond over safari adventures, photographers capture breath-taking moments and travellers form an attachment with.

Londolozzi Game Reserve, bordering the western side of The Kruger National Park in Mpumalanga, shares an unfenced border with the national park and also celebrates its centenary this year.



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA'S NEW ETA SYSTEM

The Department of Home Affairs and South African Tourism are using the opportunity of Africa's Travel Indaba to conduct live demos of its innovative Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) system.

The ETA is a fully digital travel authorisation that enables eligible travellers from visa-required countries to apply online for tourism and visitor travel to South Africa without the need for traditional paper-based visa applications. Visa-exempt travellers may also apply for an ETA to benefit from faster processing at ports of entry.

The system allows applicants to complete the entire process digitally, including biometric capture, passport submission, application forms and payment. Once approved, the ETA is linked directly to the traveller's passport and supports multiple entries during its validity period.

Applications are currently available to travellers arriving through OR Tambo International Airport, Cape Town International Airport and Lanseria International Airport.

Developed by Home Affairs in partnership

with Tourism and State Security, the ETA allows home-based applications with facial biometrics and passport scans, delivering outcomes in 60 minutes to 24 hours. Approved applicants receive a 12-month multiple-entry authorization for up to 90-day stays, with fast-track port-of-entry processing.

The long-term objective is for the ETA to become South Africa's single digital entry platform for tourist visas across all visa-required markets, with future expansion planned for additional visa categories and automated

border processing across all ports of entry.

DMCs and interested parties are invited to a demonstration of the ETAs ease and efficiency. See details below

Electronic Travel Authorisation

Date: 13 May 2026

Time: 10am-11am

Venue: Room 21, Durban ICC



ELEPHANT WALK TENTED CAMP FINDS ITS STRIDE ON THE EDGE OF THE KRUGER

Elephant Walk Tented Camp Finds Its Stride on the Edge of the Kruger

Nestled right at the iconic Crocodile Bridge Gate, Elephant Walk Tented Camp is quickly establishing itself as one of the most exciting small safari camps in the Greater Kruger region. Since opening in November 2025, the camp has welcomed guests from the USA, UK, Europe, South America, and Australia — a testament to the growing global appeal of this intimate wilderness retreat.

Positioned in one of the park’s most wildlife-rich areas, Elephant Walk offers access to more than 120km of surrounding dirt tracks, creating exceptional opportunities for exploration and

game viewing. The area continues to deliver remarkable sightings, with regular encounters of wild dog, cheetah, and lion, while the local hippo pod has expanded to over thirty individuals along the river system bordering the camp.

Designed to embrace the romance of classic safari travel, Elephant Walk combines elegant simplicity with outstanding value. The camp’s luxury tents, created by the renowned Safari & Canvas, reflect decades of expertise in crafting authentic canvas safari camps across Africa. Spacious yet understated, the camp balances comfort and immersion in nature, offering guests an intimate safari experience without excess.

Small enough to maintain a warm and personal

atmosphere, Elephant Walk Tented Camp is equally well suited to couples, families, and small groups seeking a private safari escape.

The camp’s name carries special family significance. “Elephant Walk” was named by Cindy’s parents many years ago, inspired by the daily elephant herds that continue to cross the shallow sandy river point directly in front of camp — a timeless spectacle that remains at the heart of the property’s identity.



“We are incredibly grateful for the support we have received from our trade partners since opening,” says Cindy Walker. “To see guests from across the world embracing the camp and the experience we hoped to create has been hugely rewarding.”

Cindy and Dani will be attending ICC 1526 and invite trade partners and industry colleagues to visit the stand for more information about Elephant Walk Tented Camp and the wider Xitori collection.

Elephant Walk Tented Camp is a proud member of Xitori — a collection of family-owned lodges across Southern Africa dedicated to authentic hospitality and meaningful safari experiences.

For further information please contact:
info@xitori.com
reservations@elephantwalk.co.za
 +27 (0)137937543 or +27 (0)834144683
www.elephantwalk.co.za



'SPORT IS TOURISM'

Tumelo Selikane, CEO, Nielsen Sports, delivered a detailed masterclass on how sport is increasingly functioning as a powerful driver of tourism economies.

Sports tourism and sponsorship analytics were placed firmly in the spotlight at Africa's Travel Indaba, where Tumelo Selikane, Chief Executive Officer, Nielsen Sports, delivered a detailed masterclass on how sport is increasingly functioning as a powerful driver of tourism economies, destination branding and commercial investment.

Selikane emphasised that the sports industry can no longer be analysed in isolation from tourism, noting a growing convergence between the two sectors. He positioned sport as a central component of the global tourism ecosystem, where fans are increasingly behaving as travellers, consumers and economic participants.

"We are essentially at the centre of the sporting ecosystem," said Selikane. "All stakeholders are working together towards one goal: maximising the commercial value of sport."

A core theme of the presentation was the reframing of sports audiences as active tourists rather than passive spectators. Selikane highlighted that destinations which understand this shift are better positioned to unlock new visitor flows, extend length of stay and increase tourism spend.

"When you look at sport, you need to understand sport is tourism," he said.

Drawing on Nielsen Sports research, Selikane

revealed that 50% of South African sports fans indicate an intention to travel to attend sporting events. This insight becomes even more significant when broken down by sporting codes, with 60% of golf fans expressing a willingness to travel, alongside strong travel intent among cricket, cycling and school sport audiences.

These figures present clear opportunities for tourism stakeholders to develop targeted travel packages, event-led itineraries and destination-specific marketing campaigns.

Selikane explained that sports events generate value across a full tourism lifecycle, extending well beyond the event itself. The

pre-event phase builds anticipation through marketing, media engagement and ticketing activity, while the live event stage generates immediate visitor spending, accommodation demand and destination exposure.

The post-event phase, he noted, delivers long-term legacy benefits through media reach, destination branding and infrastructure utilisation. "There is a definite legacy story that happens beyond the sporting event itself."

He further outlined six key measurement pillars required to accurately assess sports tourism impact. These include:

Fan segmentation

- Infrastructure legacy
- Media exposure
- Behavioural change
- Investment attraction
- Baseline economic benchmarking

Together, these frameworks enable destinations and rights holders to quantify return on investment and demonstrate long-term value creation.

Selikane stressed the importance of establishing robust baseline data prior to any event activation. Without clear pre-event benchmarks, it becomes difficult to accurately measure incremental impact or justify future investment. He also highlighted the importance of understanding fan origin markets, spending behaviour and travel duration in order to build more effective destination strategies.

Beyond direct tourism spend, the wider economic effects of sports travel include brand visibility, destination perception shifts and foreign investment attraction. Sporting events, he noted, have the ability to reposition cities and countries on the global stage through sustained media coverage and storytelling.

He concluded by emphasising that successful host destinations are not defined by volume of events, but by strategic alignment and value fit. "A great host city is not one that hosts everything, but one that hosts what aligns with its strategy."



SPORTS TOURISM CREATES OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES TOO

Africa is now emerging as one of the most exciting growth markets globally for sports and events tourism, according to Illana Pereira, Managing Executive at TDM Sports and Events, an exhibitor at Africa's Travel Indaba 2026.

"Sport in Africa is far more than entertainment. It is culture, identity, passion, and community," Pereira said. "When combined with tourism, it becomes a powerful economic driver that creates jobs, stimulates local businesses, showcases destinations, and positions Africa on the global stage."

The impact of sports tourism extends far beyond stadiums and arenas. Major sporting events generate movement across multiple sectors of the tourism economy, including airlines, hotels, restaurants, transport providers, tour operators, retail businesses, and attractions. Visitors travelling for sports events often extend their stays to experience local culture, cuisine, nightlife, and tourism activities, creating additional economic benefits for destinations.

Pereira explained that sports tourism creates opportunities not only for large tourism businesses but also for smaller enterprises and local communities that benefit from increased visitor spending.

"Supporters travel to follow their teams, attend tournaments, experience new destinations, and be part of unforgettable moments," she said. "This movement of people has a direct impact on tourism economies while also creating opportunities for local businesses and communities to benefit."

For companies such as Pereira's TDM Sports and Events, the opportunities linked to sports tourism continue to grow as travellers increasingly seek complete travel experiences that combine sport with leisure, entertainment, sightseeing, and premium hospitality.

"Visitors don't only travel for the football," she explained. "They also experience the culture, hospitality, cuisine, entertainment, and tourism offerings of the destination."

That's where the broader tourism impact comes from," Pereira said.

"Sports travellers today are looking for complete experiences. That creates opportunities to develop tailored sports tourism packages that not only enhance the traveler experience but also increase tourism spend within destinations."

Despite the growth potential, Pereira acknowledged that some challenges remain, particularly around infrastructure, accessibility, and regional travel connectivity.

However, she noted that the momentum across the continent remains extremely positive as governments and tourism authorities increasingly integrate sports into national tourism strategies.

"Governments, tourism authorities, and sporting bodies are recognizing the role that sport and events play in driving economic growth, destination awareness, and regional travel," she said.



Pereira believes Africa has all the ingredients needed to become a leading global sports tourism destination.

"Africa has the passion, talent, energy, and destinations to become a leading global sports tourism hub," she said. "By continuing to invest in sport and events as part of broader tourism strategies, the continent has the opportunity to strengthen tourism, create employment, and position Africa as a world-class destination for unforgettable sporting and cultural experiences."

BEYOND THE SCOREBOARD: MEASURING THE REAL IMPACT OF SPORTS SPONSORSHIP

Successful sponsorships are about far more than placing logos on kits or perimeter boards, panellists agreed during a dynamic discussion on Africa's Travel Indaba BONDday.

At Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 BONDday programme, a dynamic panel unpacked one of the most pressing questions in modern sports tourism: how do destinations, brands and sporting bodies truly measure the value of sponsorship?

Moderated by broadcaster and facilitator Ziyanda Ngcobo, the session brought together leaders from tourism, cricket, football, basketball and motorsport to explore how sports sponsorship can move beyond logos and airtime to create long-term economic and destination impact.

Opening the discussion, Nielsen Sports South Africa CEO Tumelo Selikane framed the conversation around a central challenge facing the industry: sponsorship can no longer be measured only by visibility or media value. Instead, the focus must shift toward understanding broader tourism, economic and community impact.

South African Tourism Chief Quality Assurance Officer Bronwen Auret stressed that tourism should be integrated into sporting events from the earliest planning stages. "Tourism starts long before the fan arrives at the stadium," she explained, outlining how visitor experiences stretch from booking flights and accommodation to transport, attractions, restaurants and departure experiences.

Auret emphasised that collaboration between tourism authorities, sporting bodies and event organisers remains essential if destinations hope to maximise the full value chain created by major sporting events. South African Tourism, she explained, often works behind the scenes to coordinate multiple stakeholders and ensure events deliver broader destination benefits.

Cricket South Africa Brand and Marketing Manager Phila Nyandu echoed the importance of strategic alignment, particularly from a branding perspective. Speaking from Cricket South Africa's experience, he argued that successful sponsorships are about far more than placing logos on kits or perimeter boards.

"What is the meaningful exposure?" he asked. "How do we create value together?"

Nyandu highlighted the opportunity for sports and tourism to package cricket experiences more creatively, particularly around domestic competitions and international tours. He noted that South Africa already possesses world-class sporting products, but stronger collaboration is needed to transform fixtures into holistic tourism experiences.

NBA Africa CEO Zeph Masote provided insight



into the growing footprint of basketball across the continent and the broader economic ripple effects of major sporting events. He explained that large-scale tournaments generate benefits far beyond the arena itself, supporting hotels, restaurants, transport providers, local businesses and entertainment ecosystems.

For Masote, partnerships remain critical in transforming sporting events into impactful cultural moments. "The product can exist without tourism," he noted, "but it cannot reach its full potential without collaboration."

AmaZulu FC CEO Sinenjabulo Zungu-Ntuli unpacked the realities facing local football clubs when engaging potential sponsors. She described football as a uniquely powerful emotional and cultural connector that gives brands visibility, loyalty and community relevance.

Yet despite football's enormous popularity in South Africa, Zungu-Ntuli acknowledged that local clubs still face significant data limitations when trying to measure fan behaviour and sponsorship impact.

"We still do not have enough deep consumer

insights," she admitted, pointing to gaps around fan demographics, travel behaviour, purchasing patterns and digital engagement.

Her comments highlighted one of the recurring themes of the session: the urgent need for better data collection and integrated measurement systems across African sport and tourism sectors.

Seasoned motorsport professional Adam Brown brought a global perspective to the discussion, arguing that Africa must begin thinking beyond hosting events for a single weekend and instead focus on sustaining relevance throughout the year.

Using the example of Formula 1 and global motorsport properties, Brown explained that the future of sports tourism lies in fan engagement, storytelling and content ecosystems rather than simply staging races or matches.

"It's no longer just about the race," he said. "It's about the fan experience, the content and the value created around the event."

Brown also reflected on South Africa's proven ability to host mega-events

following the success of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, arguing that the question is no longer whether Africa can host world-class events, but rather how the continent maximises long-term returns from them.

The discussion repeatedly returned to the importance of collaboration between government departments, tourism authorities, sporting federations, sponsors and private sector stakeholders. Panellists agreed that sports tourism cannot operate in silos if Africa hopes to unlock its full economic potential.

Auret noted that events such as LIV Golf in Johannesburg demonstrated how sporting events can rapidly drive hotel occupancy, visitor spend and destination demand, often stretching infrastructure and accommodation capacity to its limits.

Panellists agreed that Africa already possesses the passion, audiences, talent and cultural energy required to become a global sports tourism powerhouse. The next step is building smarter partnerships, gathering better data and creating integrated experiences that extend far beyond the final whistle.

SOUTH AFRICA'S SPORTS TOURISM MARKET DRIVES R8.11 BILLION IN VISITOR SPEND

Sport is strengthening its role as a major tourism driver for South Africa, with new industry insights revealing the scale of visitor movement, spending and destination exposure generated by the country's sporting calendar in 2025.

Data presented by the SAT Insights Unit estimates that 12.34 million people attended sporting events across South Africa this year, contributing approximately R8.11 billion in tourism-related expenditure. The figures cover both local and international sporting events hosted between January and November 2025.

Soccer remains the country's most attended sporting code, accounting for 42% of total attendance with 5.1 million spectators and participants. Rugby follows closely with 4.8 million attendees, while cricket attracted 1.8 million. Marathons, golf, motorsport, basketball and athletics also contributed to strong nationwide tourism movement.

Gauteng recorded the highest provincial attendance at 4.2 million, followed by the Western Cape with 2 million and KwaZulu-Natal with 1.8 million, reinforcing the role of major urban centres and event infrastructure in driving sports tourism demand.

The country hosted an estimated 878 local sporting events and 122 international events during the year. While local events accounted for 77% of total attendance, international fixtures delivered substantial tourism value and destination visibility.

Among the highest-performing events by spend was The Rugby Championship clash between South Africa and Australia, which generated an estimated R89 million in tourism spend and attracted 110,000 attendees. The Two Oceans Marathon contributed an estimated R80 million, highlighting the growing value of endurance and experiential sports tourism.

Major domestic fixtures also delivered strong economic returns. Rugby Union matches involving the Ford Pumas and Griquas generated R76 million, while Premier Soccer League fixtures featuring Kaizer Chiefs consistently ranked among the country's top-attended events.

South Africa's leading stadiums continue to anchor sports tourism growth. Loftus Versfeld Stadium in Pretoria recorded estimated attendance of 1.1 million, while Cape Town Stadium, Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium, FNB Stadium and Kings Park Stadium all emerged as key tourism and event assets.

The findings also point to growing opportunities for integrated tourism packaging. Proposed strategic pathways include destination-led sports marketing campaigns, travel trade partnerships, fan-to-traveller conversion programmes and enhanced digital storytelling around major events.

WHAT'S ON



Launch: Gauteng Golden Fairway Golf Tourism Route

"Play the Journey. Stay One More Night in Gauteng." The Gauteng Golden Fairway Route reimagines golf tourism as a connected, immersive journey where golf, culture and technology work together to create a playable Gauteng, and driving longer stays, higher spend and deeper connection.

Date: Tuesday, 12 May 2026

Time: 15:00

Venue: Media Centre, Durban ICC

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THE THRILL OF MAGOEBASKLOOF CANOPY ADVENTURES

High in the heart of Limpopo's Magoebaskloof Mountains, where mist-laden forests meet dramatic mountain views, an unforgettable experience awaits: the Magoebaskloof Canopy Tour. This unique eco-adventure invites thrill-seekers to glide through a pristine forest canopy, offering a rare, close-up view of one of South Africa's most diverse ecosystems—all from a bird's-eye perspective!



Soar Through the Forest

The Magoebaskloof Canopy Tour is designed to make the most of the area's lush, elevated forest, with 11 thrilling zip-line platforms that carry adventurers above rivers and waterfalls and through indigenous trees. Each slide is a unique journey, showcasing different aspects of the forest's beauty while introducing an element of excitement. Some lines are slower, allowing participants to soak in the serene landscape, while others pick up speed, letting you feel the rush as you fly through the cool mountain air.

Guides accompany each group, providing interesting facts about the forest's ecosystem, the area's history, and its wildlife. Knowledgeable and passionate, they share insight into the surrounding flora and fauna, making each pause at the platforms

Plan Your Visit

Whether you're an experienced thrill-seeker or a first-time adventurer, the Magoebaskloof Canopy Tour promises an unforgettable day in nature. Open year-round, it's a perfect getaway for families, groups, or solo explorers. After your adventure, relax at one of the nearby forest lodges or charming guesthouses, where you can soak in the peaceful surroundings of this natural paradise.

Let the Forest Take You Higher

With its heart-pounding zip lines, scenic trails, and commitment to conservation, Magoebaskloof Canopy Adventures lets you experience nature like never before. Fly through the trees, marvel at the forest's beauty, and feel the rush of adventure in one of South Africa's most stunning landscapes. So what are you waiting for? The forest is calling—are you ready to answer?

Contact: +27 83 866 1546, www.magoebaskloofadventures.co.za



Adventure Beyond the Canopy

The adventure doesn't end with the canopy tour. Magoebaskloof Canopy offers several other outdoor activities for those looking to explore more of the area's natural beauty. Here's what else you can look forward to:

- **Abseiling:** For a thrilling descent down a rocky cliff, Magoebaskloof's abseiling options allow you to rappel down natural rock faces with sweeping views of the forest. This activity is perfect for anyone seeking a challenge with an adrenaline kick.
- **Kloofing (Canyoning):** Experience the streams and waterfalls of Magoebaskloof up close as you follow the course of a river. This adventure combines hiking, swimming, and jumping into natural pools—ideal for those wanting to embrace the wild side of the forest.
- **Hiking and Nature Walks:** After the high-energy activities, take a nature walk or a guided hike through the surrounding trails. Enjoy the forest floor's beauty, where ancient trees, delicate ferns, and rare birds like the Cape parrot make for a peaceful, immersive experience.
- **Tree-Hopping Course** is a must-try experience for the brave. Suspended high above the forest floor, this challenging course features a series of elevated obstacles—bridges, ropes, and platforms—that require balance, strength, and a touch of bravery. Tree hopping combines physical skill with exhilarating heights, providing an unforgettable way to move through the forest.
- **Tubing the River Rapids:** Cool off and feel the rush of the water with water tubing along Magoebaskloof's forest. Tubing is an adventure all its own, taking you through natural rapids, gentle pools, and scenic river bends. As you float along, you'll be surrounded by dense greenery, with sunlight filtering through the trees, offering a unique, immersive way to explore the forest.

HOW KENYA IS TURNING STARGAZING INTO ITS NEXT TOURISM FRONTIER

Kenya's night skies are becoming a new frontier, one that invites visitors to slow down, look up, writes Harriet Akinyi.

As experiential travel continues to rise, Kenya's night skies are becoming a new frontier, one that invites visitors to slow down, look up, and reconnect with a sense of wonder often lost in modern life.

In doing so, the country is not just adding another product to its tourism portfolio; it is reshaping the narrative of what a Kenyan safari can be.

Kenya is steadily positioning itself as East Africa's frontier for astro-tourism, tapping into a growing wave of experiential travellers seeking deeper, more immersive connections with destinations.

With the launch of the country's first dedicated astro-tourism experience in Samburu County, Kenya is not only diversifying its tourism portfolio but also redefining how visitors engage with its landscapes - by day and by night.

'Special sixth' element

"Samburu has always been known for its 'Special Five' wildlife," said Kennedy Ayoti, Chief Operating Officer at Sopa Lodges East Africa. "With Astro-Tourism, we now add a 'special sixth' element: the stars."

The initiative marks a significant shift in Kenya's tourism moving beyond traditional wildlife safaris to embrace niche, high-value experiences. Astro-tourism, an emerging global trend, combines stargazing, astronomy education, and the appreciation of unpolluted night skies. In Samburu, where vast open landscapes meet minimal light pollution, the conditions are near perfect.

Situated close to the equator, Kenya enjoys nearly equal day and night hours throughout

the year, offering consistent opportunities for celestial viewing. In regions like Samburu, the skies are remarkably clear, revealing a dazzling canopy of stars, planets, and constellations.

Visitors can witness the Milky Way stretching across the horizon, track meteor showers, and observe planetary alignments with striking clarity.

Fully immersive experience

"The new astro-tourism product is designed as a fully immersive experience. It includes guided night sky tours led by astronomers, astrophotography expeditions, educational workshops, and starlit camping. For travellers increasingly seeking meaning, stillness, and connection, this form of tourism offers a rare blend of science, serenity, and storytelling," he added.

Unlike conventional tourism activities that may strain ecosystems, stargazing is inherently low-impact. It requires no infrastructure beyond basic equipment, no interference with wildlife, and no significant energy consumption.

For the conscious traveller, this aligns with a broader shift toward sustainability, experiences that leave minimal footprint while delivering profound emotional and intellectual value.

What makes Kenya's approach particularly compelling is the seamless integration of astro-tourism with its existing safari offering. In Samburu, visitors can spend their mornings tracking elephants, Grevy's zebras, and reticulated giraffes across the rugged terrain, then transition into an entirely different kind of exploration at night—one that looks upward rather than outward.



This duality of wildlife by day, galaxies by night, creates a layered travel experience that few destinations can rival. It is further enriched by the inclusion of indigenous knowledge. For centuries, African communities have read the skies for guidance, using stars to mark seasons, navigate landscapes, and anchor cultural narratives.

In Samburu, this heritage is being woven into the astro-tourism experience, offering visitors not just a scientific understanding of the cosmos but also a cultural one. Storytelling sessions led by local guides bring constellations to life, connecting them to traditions, beliefs, and histories that predate modern astronomy.

Blending of science and culture

This blending of science and culture is central to Kenya's appeal. It transforms stargazing from a passive activity into an interactive, educational, and deeply human experience, one that

resonates with travellers seeking authenticity.

Beyond Samburu, astro-tourism is quietly taking root across the country. In Laikipia, private conservancies offer high-altitude stargazing paired with night game drives, creating a fusion of terrestrial and celestial adventure. In the Maasai Mara, known globally for the Great Migration, the open plains double as a natural observatory, with lodges hosting astronomy nights that draw on Maasai cosmology.

Amboseli, framed by the silhouette of Mount Kilimanjaro, offers dramatic nightscapes where the Milky Way appears in vivid detail, while the remote expanses of Lake Turkana provide some of the darkest skies on the continent. In the Rift Valley lakes of Naivasha, Elementaita, and Baringo, the still waters mirror constellations above, adding a reflective dimension to the experience.

WESTERN CAPE POSITIONS ASTRO TOURISM AS NEW "GROWTH FRONTIER"

The Western Cape is strengthening its position as a leader in sustainable tourism, with a growing focus on astro tourism as a driver of economic growth and job creation.

Western Cape MEC for Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism, Dr Ivan Meyer, highlighted the province's strategy during the graduation ceremony of a new cohort of Astro Night Sky Tourist Guides at the !Khwatsha San Culture and Education Centre last month.

Addressing the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDAT) and Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA) Astro Night Sky Specialisation graduation, Meyer congratulated the graduates for investing in specialised skills that will contribute to the province's evolving visitor economy.

"Tourism is integral to growth and job creation. By choosing to specialise and to keep learning, these graduates are helping the Western Cape

move from a tourism strategy based on volume to one focused on value, sustainability, and inclusive economic growth," Meyer said.

He said global travel trends are shifting away from traditional "sun, sea and scenery" offerings towards experience-based tourism that emphasises knowledge, authenticity and storytelling.

In response, the provincial government is investing in niche and special-interest segments, including heritage, nature-based, wellness and astro tourism.

"Astro tourism, particularly in the Karoo, the West Coast and the interior, allows us to turn our dark skies and low light pollution into a powerful economic asset. It encourages off-peak travel, draws visitors into smaller towns, and creates new income opportunities in rural communities. Skills and professional standards are key to unlocking this potential.

"We may have some of the darkest skies in the world, but these skilled and certified guides are helping to shine a light on this bold frontier of tourism. These graduates are the bridge between complex science, culture, and compelling storytelling. They turn a night sky into a lifelong memory for visitors," the MEC said.

The astro guiding programme is the result of a partnership between the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDAT) and Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA), aimed at building future-ready tourism skills and maintaining professional guiding standards.

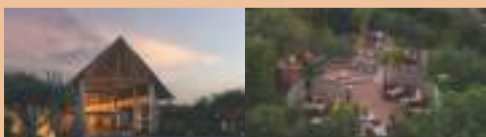
Meyer said the collaboration demonstrates how a

tourism strategy can be translated into real economic impact on the ground.

"You are now part of a tourism future that is smarter, more sustainable, and more inclusive. Use these skills well as ambassadors for our province and for the protection of our dark skies," he told the graduates.



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DANA TOURS BACKS MOZAMBIQUE BOOKINGS WITH \$2 MILLION LIABILITY COVER

Dana Tours has arrived at Africa's Travel Indaba with a full showcase of what this Mozambique DMC does best: transport and chauffeur services, curated holiday packages and an exclusive portfolio of day tours that have become firm favourites with travellers.

But the aspect Director Natalie Tenzer-Silva is most focused on this year is traveller safety and duty of care. As the exclusive Mozambique member of 1 DMC World, Dana Tours operates out of Maputo and backs every booking with \$2 million passenger liability cover through SATIB.

"They now also offer evacuation cover through SATIB24, which offers 24/7/365 access to a specialised incident management team for medical emergencies, security,

and evacuation," says Tenzer-Silva.

"We want to ensure our guests are always cared for, especially when we don't have direct access to their policies pre-purchased elsewhere. By opting into our liability protection, you can book your trip to Mozambique with us knowing that, in the event of a crisis, it will be handled appropriately and efficiently. That is what we are here for."

Reliability is one thing. Peace of mind is harder to deliver. In Mozambique, Dana Tours is making the case that it offers both. Meet the Dana Tours team at stand DEC2E07, or contact them directly: +258 84 40 40 710 / info@danatours.com



GABON POSITIONS ITSELF AS AFRICA'S 'LAST EDEN' AT INDABA

Gabon offers something increasingly rare in global tourism: untouched wilderness.

For many international travellers, Gabon remains one of Africa's least understood tourism destinations. Overshadowed by the established safari circuits of East and Southern Africa, the Central African nation is now working to reposition itself as one of the continent's leading eco-tourism and wilderness destinations.

At this year's Africa's Travel Indaba, Gabon is using the platform to showcase its extraordinary biodiversity, rainforest ecosystems, marine life, and conservation-driven tourism ambitions to international buyers and tourism stakeholders.

According to Grace Ntahinta Mboumba, Managing Director and CEO of Gabon Highlights Tourism, Beyond Afrika Travel Highlights, and Convener of the Gabon International Expo 2026, Gabon offers something increasingly rare in global tourism: untouched wilderness.

"Gabon's tourism identity is deeply connected to its extraordinary natural environment and biodiversity, earning it the reputation of Africa's 'Last Eden,'" said Mboumba.

"With nearly 80 percent of the country covered by equatorial rainforest and 13 protected national parks, Gabon offers an exceptional blend of rainforest, savannah, rivers, lagoons, and Atlantic coastline."

Immersive Jungle and Coastal Expeditions

Unlike the classic open-savannah safari experience associated with destinations such as Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, or South Africa, Gabon's appeal lies in immersive jungle and coastal expeditions. The country is home to western lowland gorillas, forest elephants, mandrills, whales, crocodiles, hippos, and rare marine ecosystems.

"What makes Gabon unique is the rare

combination of dense tropical rainforest meeting the Atlantic Ocean," Mboumba explained.

"One of the country's most extraordinary attractions is the opportunity to witness wildlife such as elephants, gorillas, and even hippos along the coastline, particularly during the rainy season."

The country's Loango National Park has become internationally known for its unusual "surfing hippos" and coastal wildlife encounters — images that have increasingly captured the attention of adventure and conservation travelers seeking destinations beyond traditional safari routes.

Premium Eco-Tourism Destination

Mboumba says Gabon is intentionally avoiding mass tourism and instead positioning itself as a premium eco-tourism destination built around sustainability and conservation.

"Gabon's tourism development is guided by its national 'Green Gabon' strategy, which prioritizes high-value, low-impact eco-tourism," she said.

"Rather than mass tourism, the country promotes sustainable travel through eco-lodges, small-scale tourism infrastructure, and conservation-centered experiences."

This conservation-first approach has become central to Gabon's tourism strategy as the country seeks to diversify its economy beyond oil while protecting its environmental assets.

"With nearly 90 percent rainforest coverage and approximately 26 percent of its marine territory protected, Gabon is positioning itself as a leading sustainable eco-tourism destination in Africa," Mboumba added.

Off-the-beaten-path Experiences

The country is now targeting eco-tourists, adventure travelers, birdwatchers, photographers, luxury nature travelers, and international visitors seeking off-the-beaten-path experiences.

"Gabon particularly attracts travellers seeking untouched nature and authentic encounters away from overcrowded tourism circuits," she said.

According to Mboumba, participation at Indaba forms part of a wider national strategy to reposition Gabon globally.

"Africa's Travel Indaba represented a major opportunity for Gabon to strengthen its global tourism visibility and position itself as an emerging eco-tourism destination," she said.

"Under the vision of President Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema, Gabon aims to become a globally recognized tourism hub by promoting its natural heritage, culture, and investment opportunities."

The country also used the event to promote the upcoming Gabon International Expo 2026, scheduled for November 27–28, 2026, under the theme: "Connecting Opportunities, Presenting Gabon to the World."

Beyond international marketing, Gabon is also looking to build stronger regional tourism partnerships across Africa.

"Regional tourism cooperation is essential for Gabon's long-term tourism growth and

economic diversification," Mboumba said.

"Partnerships across Africa can help improve infrastructure, increase destination awareness, encourage multi-destination travel, and facilitate knowledge sharing in sustainable tourism management."

Like many African destinations, Gabon is also trying to overcome outdated perceptions.

"One major objective is to reposition Gabon internationally from being known primarily as an oil-producing country to being recognized as one of Africa's leading eco-tourism destinations," Mboumba explained.

Through platforms such as Indaba, Gabon hopes to highlight its protected national parks, safe travel experiences, accessibility improvements, and unique wildlife encounters.

Long-term Ambitions

The country's long-term tourism ambitions are equally ambitious. Over the next five years, Gabon plans to expand tourism infrastructure, improve accessibility, attract international tourism investment, and strengthen destination marketing while maintaining its conservation priorities.

"Gabon hopes to strengthen its position as Africa's premier 'Last Eden' destination for eco-tourism and adventure travel," Mboumba said.

At a time when global travellers are increasingly seeking authentic, nature-based, and sustainability-focused experiences, Gabon may be positioning itself at exactly the right moment.



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