

Streamlining 2010 hotel bookings

By [Paul Vecchiatto](#), ITWeb Cape Town correspondent
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The Department of Tourism is banking on its upgraded contact centre and the Internet to help solve accommodation and other issues related to visitors who will attend the 2010 Soccer World Cup.

At a press briefing yesterday, Sindiswa Nhlumayo, deputy director for tourism at the Department of Tourism, said the Web address for the accommodation and listing portal will be <http://www.rooms4u.travel>. It will serve as a tool to service providers to get their stock on the market.

She said there will be no charge for the portal's services, but "a small fee will be levied for every successful transaction". It will also be an easy to use point of service for local and international travellers to locate and book accommodation in SA.

Tourism minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk appealed to all accommodation establishments to verify their details by the end of January 2010, and to use the facility to assist them with the sales of all available rooms.

Van Schalkwyk called the press conference to demonstrate there would be enough accommodation to meet the needs of the 480 000 visitors expected in June next year during the height of the Soccer World Cup.

Information for the booking portal will be provided by a database that was created as a result of an audit that used information gathered from all the provinces, the Federated Hospitality Association of SA and the Tourism Business Council of SA.

Nhlumayo said this had determined there were 202 712 rooms and 405 424 beds available for the event.

The contact centre, which will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, is an upgrade of the existing SA Tourism call centre, which is currently run by CCN.

"We now call it a contact centre and not a call centre because it has been significantly upgraded to use various communications technologies, and it is now able to offer English, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Portuguese and, by next year February, Spanish," Nhlumayo said.

Roshene Singh, chief marketing officer of SA Tourism, said CCN had been operating the contact centre on behalf of her organisation for the past three years, but was not able to give any value to the contract.

The number for the contact centre is +27 87 803 INFO 4636.

Jaime Byrom, executive director of Match, the official tour organiser for Fifa, said he wished some of this information had been in place three years ago, but was impressed it was now in existence.

"I must tell you there are very few countries in the world with this type of technology for their tourism sector. This will be a legacy for the country long after the World Cup," he said.