



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Private Bag X424, Pretoria, 0001, Tourism House, 17 Trevenna Street, Sunnyside, Pretoria
Tel. (+27 12) 444 6780, Fax: (+27 12) 444 7027, Email: ministry@tourism.gov.za
Private Bag X9154, Cape Town, 8000, 120 Plein Street, 3rd Floor, Cape Town,
Tel. (+27 21) 465 7240, Fax: (+27 21) 465 3216
www.tourism.gov.za

Minister Van Schalkwyk addresses the South African Tourism Trade Awards, Milan, Italy

3 October 2012

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome, and thank you for joining us tonight for our South African Tourism Italy Office's Trade Awards evening.

It is always a delight for me to visit your spectacular country, without a doubt one of the most incredible destinations on earth, and a leading country brand that all of us involved in destination marketing aspire to emulate.

It is also a pleasure for me to be here, surrounded by people that are passionate, highly skilled and committed to helping us grow the tourism market in South Africa.

Despite a changing world, where growth is being driven from emerging markets, Italy continues to be a very important market for South Africa.

As the country with the world's tenth largest outbound tourism market and the country with the sixth highest per capita disposable income, Italy - which recorded 21 million outbound trips in 2011 - remains a market with so much potential for us.

That is why it is so important for us to be here tonight to recognise those of you who are leading the way when it comes to promoting tourism to South Africa.

Your successes are inspiring to all of us as you continue to drive growth, to innovate and to keep up with the needs of a rapidly changing consumer in what is a fast-changing and highly competitive industry.

When we look at the growth out of this market in recent years, it's clear all of you involved with promoting, marketing and selling South Africa as a viable tourism destination have been very hard at work.

And while we reward the 'winners' this evening, I want to stress that every one of you here tonight are winners in our eyes and we immensely value the major contribution from all of you.

The Eurozone crisis has made the last few years some of the toughest economically in Italy's recent history. This has without a doubt made it harder for you to sell a long-haul destination like South Africa, as people choose to travel less and closer to home instead.

But remarkably, despite the tough economic climate, we have been extremely heartened by the performance of the Italian market. Sure, given that Italy is a giant of world football, we were not surprised to see an 8.7% increase in arrivals in 2010 over 2009, despite the very real impacts of the global recession.

But what we were thrilled to see was that Italian arrivals last year were at exactly the same levels as they were in 2010 and that close to 55 000 (54 641) Italian tourists travelled to South Africa in 2011.

And then when we look at the arrivals statistics for 2012, we are extremely excited by the results recorded since the start of the year.

For the first five months of this year, that is January to May, 20 248 Italians visited South Africa, a 17.6% increase over the same period last year, and significantly above the 10% increase in arrivals we have recorded for Europe as a whole during this period.

So clearly the partnerships we have built with you over the years are bearing fruit and we are very optimistic about the future.

That said, we understand that this market remains competitive and we look forward to working with you going forward to really set destination South Africa apart in this market. Because when you as tourism business do well, we all do well.

Together, we need to open the eyes of the Italian consumer to see South Africa as more than just a wildlife and adventure destination. Ours is a land of many cultures, home to a warm and welcoming people, a rapidly emerging food and wine destination, a country of art, music and design, and importantly a leader in responsible tourism - all of which we know are held in high regard by the Italian traveller.

It is heartening to see the work that many of you are doing to contribute to the sustainability of our tourism industry, clearly illustrating the positive impact the Italian traveler seeks to have on the destinations you travel to.

We are very excited that our collective efforts with you in the Italian market are paying off, but we also know we still have much to do. Together, we need to promote a much wider variety of South African products that suit all budgets, and we need to focus strongly on improving South Africa's poor reputation as a value for money destination in Italy.

Yes, we do offer the ultimate luxury in South Africa, but with budget a major consideration for all travelers nowadays, we also offer the most unforgettable, high-quality holiday experience at an affordable rate, so we need your help in getting this across to Italian consumers.

I won't keep you much longer, as I know this is not a night for long speeches, but I would like to conclude again by reiterating that we value your support and look forward to working with you for many years to come.

Please enjoy yourselves this evening and celebrate your successes with us. Importantly, please let us know what we can do to help you continue to build on your success in the coming years.

I thank you.

Melene Rossouw

Telephone: +27 (0) 21 465 7240

Cell: +27 (0) 82 753 7107

E-mail: mrossouw@tourism.gov.za

Issued by the Ministry of Tourism