

**STATEMENT BY THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER OF TOURISM,
MR MARTHINUS VAN SCHALKWYK**

**ROBUST FOREIGN ARRIVALS TO SOUTH AFRICA
DEFY WORLDWIDE TREND**

Tourism Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk: "Growth of 3.6 percent against an international decline of four percent reaffirms the vitality of our tourism industry"

SOUTH AFRICA outperformed most international markets in 2009 and recorded growth in foreign arrivals of 3.6 percent, Minister of Tourism, Mr Marthinus van Schalkwyk, announced today.

"This defies the decline of four percent that the global travel industry experienced last year as traveller markets reeled from the effects of the global financial crisis. I believe it strongly reaffirms the vitality of our tourism industry," Minister van Schalkwyk said at the announcement of South Africa's 2009 foreign arrival statistics in Sandton.

South Africa recorded a total of more than 9.9 million (9 933 966) foreign arrivals last year, compared to approximately 9.6 million (9 591 828) in 2008. "I regard this kind of growth in the context of international conditions as a resounding vote of confidence in our tourism industry and our destination," the Minister said.

"Our status as the FIFA 2010 World Cup host nation has, undoubtedly, played its part in arrivals growth to our destination. However, robust and committed marketing campaigns by our destination marketing organisation, South African Tourism, as well as by our industry have also driven growth. This has been achieved, amongst others through embedding destination awareness and growing the global desire to visit South Africa.

"We cannot deny that as a destination we saw declines in 2009 from some of our key markets in Europe and North America. But I am very encouraged by the signs of recovery that we have begun to see in the figures for December. As a whole the figures for 2009 are a feather in the cap of our entire tourism industry and I trust it will inspire everyone to pull out all the stops and put our special South African touch on the last preparations for the World Cup."

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) January 2010 World Tourism Barometer the global industry ended the year on a four percent decline in arrivals.

Arrivals growth to South Africa was driven by healthy increases in arrivals from central and South America (3.5 percent growth), Asia (3.7 percent growth), Africa air markets (3.3 percent) and Africa land markets (5.7 percent growth).

Those markets that ended the year in arrivals decline had shown recovery by late in the year. The Europe region, for example, had recorded a 15.5 percent decline year on year in March, but had ended the year on a 4.1 percent decline in arrivals. North America had recorded a 13.6 percent decline in March, but had ended the year on an 8.6 percent decline.

Arrivals from Africa followed a similar trend. Arrivals from the continent ended the year 5.6 percent up on 2008 arrivals after recording the lowest growth of the year at 1.5 percent in March.

In total 9 933 966 foreign visitors came to South Africa last year. This represented almost 20 percent of the 48 million visitors that visited Africa in 2009. Egypt and Uganda were the only other two destinations in Africa to record arrivals growth in 2009.

Thandiwe January-Mclean, chief executive officer at South African Tourism congratulated the industry on growth in a year that would be remembered as one of the toughest ever for the global

industry. It was a tough year not only because of the global financial crisis, she said. The H1N1 virus and the escalating price of oil took their toll on the market and the industry, too.

January-McLean added that South African Tourism's increased investment in marketing efforts in Angola, China and India were sure to deliver arrivals dividends next year.

"Our 2009 arrivals put us tantalisingly close to our 10 million arrivals target this year," she said. "We will continue marketing our destination aggressively to embed awareness, stimulate the desire to visit South Africa and ensure that arrivals to South Africa continue to grow ahead of global trends."

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