



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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## **Air China direct flight to SA welcomed**

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The Department of Tourism welcomes the launch of Air China's direct flight between Beijing and Johannesburg.

The flight will provide Chinese tourists with a wider choice of options to travel to South Africa. It will improve connectivity to the region, and the entire African continent, through code sharing with South African Airways.

The direct airlift will enhance relations between China and South Africa through tourism, trade, business and cultural exchanges.

South African Tourism, the country's destination marketing arm, regards China as a core source market. China is the fourth largest overseas source market for South Africa.

According to the China Tourism Research Institute, 61.9 million outbound tourists departed from China in the first half of 2015. This represents an increase of about 12 % compared to the same period in 2014.

The number of Chinese visitors to South Africa in this period was 35 551, compared to 51 079 for the same period in 2014, which indicates a decline of about 30 %.

But, with the newly announced concessions to South Africa's immigration regulations, Chinese travelers will no longer be expected to provide their biometrics in person when applying for a visa in China. Within the next three months, they will be able to apply for visas through accredited travel companies, and their biometrics will be obtained on arrival in South Africa. These concessions will make it easier for Chinese tourists to travel to South Africa.

"We will all need to work hard and claw our way back to regain our share of this important market," said Minister of Tourism Derek Hanekom today.

"By working together and pooling our resources effectively, the public and private sector can succeed in building strong bridges between South Africa and China, and the direct flight will help us to achieve this," said Minister Hanekom.

Of the Chinese travellers visiting South Africa in 2014, about 54 % has holiday as their purpose of visit, 33 % travelled for business related activities and about 9 % to visit friends and relatives.

Relations between the Governments of the Republic of South Africa and the People's Republic of China have remained cordial since bilateral relations were established 16 years ago.

China granted approved destination status to South Africa in 2001. The Department of Tourism and South African Tourism continue to work closely with the Government of China on several sustainable tourism development initiatives. One such initiative involves the Department of Tourism assisting local tourism operators to participate in workshops and exhibitions organized by China, providing business and investment opportunities for both countries.

Following the launch of the direct Beijing-Johannesburg flight, SA Tourism will arrange a trade familiarization trip for Air China officials to visit South Africa and experience the country's amazing

offerings. Ten invited travel agencies will promote the non-stop flight, design new products and upgrade their existing products in line with the new flight schedules.