



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**International tourist arrivals surpass 10 million**

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More than 10 million international tourists arrived in South Africa last year, 13% more than in 2015. This is well over the global average growth rate for the period. It is estimated that about 1.2 billion international tourists travelled the world in 2016, representing growth of 3.9% on 2015.

Tourism is a significant economic sector around the world, and it makes a substantial contribution in the developed and developing countries. Tourism now comprises 30% of all global service exports.

In South Africa, the role of tourism in the balance of payments has become increasingly important. In 2015, tourism's trade balance with the rest of the world was R36 billion, according to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). This is a major stabilising force for the national current account.

A total of 10 044 163 international tourist arrivals were recorded in South Africa in 2016, according to the latest Stats SA statistical release, representing an additional 1.1 million international tourists.

Overseas and regional markets fared well. Overseas markets are typically associated with leisure tourism and business tourism events. Regional markets, particularly cross-border land tourist arrivals, make an enormous contribution to the economies of many border towns, as well as major cities and popular tourist regions.

Together, the differing travel patterns and behaviours of the various travel markets sustain a large and diverse sector of businesses across South Africa.

Tourism Minister Derek Hanekom commended all the people who are working hard in the private and public sector to develop and promote tourism, and to provide visitors with excellent service and memorable experiences.

"The spectacular growth in tourist arrivals indicates that the close collaboration between various government departments, between the Department of Tourism and industry, and between suppliers and service providers on the ground has paid off," said Minister Hanekom. "We have done well to capitalise on our status as a value for money destination, offering an array of experiences for all tourist markets."

The latest Stats SA report indicates an increase in tourist arrivals in all months of 2016, compared to the previous year.

The United Kingdom remained the leading source market for overseas arrivals to South Africa in 2016 (447 840 arrivals) followed by the USA (345 013) and Germany (311 832).

China remained the leading growth market, with year-on-year growth recorded at 38%. Arrivals from India grew by 22%.

"The growth in tourist arrivals from China and India has been consistent over the year, following improvements in the visa application processes in those countries. We can build on this and attract even more tourists from these markets in the future," said Minister Hanekom.

The highest number of tourist arrivals from African markets came from Zimbabwe (2 028 881), followed by Lesotho (1 757 058) and Mozambique (1 268 258).

Lesotho was the fastest growing African source market in 2016, recording an increase of 26% over the previous year.

The monthly distribution pattern of African tourist arrivals indicates a peak in March 2016, due mainly to the Easter holiday falling in March last year.

Minister Hanekom said the robust performance of the tourism sector indicates its resilience and its enduring capacity to support jobs, a characteristic of the sector that is especially important for South Africa.

The latest Tourism Satellite Account indicates that tourism supported 711 746 jobs directly in 2015. The total number of jobs from tourism in 2015 (including direct, indirect and induced jobs) was estimated at 1.55 million, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council.

“Tourism touches the lives of all South Africans,” said Minister Hanekom. “Given its importance to our economy, we must continue to nurture the sector and drive increasingly impactful and collaborative strategies and programmes for sustained, inclusive growth.”

Table comparing total tourist arrivals between 2015 and 2016

(“Unspecified” refers to instances where no source country information was captured)

|                           | 2015      | 2016       | % growth |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|----------|
| Overseas tourist arrivals | 2 144 988 | 2 531 046  | 18 %     |
| Africa tourist arrivals   | 6 746 114 | 7 501 512  | 11 %     |
| Other (Unspecified)       | 12 671    | 11 605     | -8.4%    |
| Total tourist arrivals    | 8 903 773 | 10 044 163 | 13 %     |

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