



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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SA expects tourism surge from China

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The Minister of Tourism, Derek Hanekom, has completed a three-day working visit to China to engage with the country's travel and tourism business leaders.

The trade engagements in China are part of South African Tourism's promotional roadshow to key tourism source markets. The visit to China is being followed by a roadshow to India.

During the visit to China, Minister Hanekom and SA Tourism officials discussed the latest market trends, listened to the emerging issues raised by the local tourism trade, and shared strategies to grow tourism to South Africa.

China is a key source market for South Africa. In 2015 Chinese tourist arrivals in South Africa dropped by about 8% compared to the previous year. However, a resurgence in growth began in the last quarter of 2015, with November 2015 recording 58% growth over November 2014.

People from the Chinese mainland spent \$215 billion travelling abroad in 2015, 53 % more than in 2014, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council. This puts China ahead of the United States and other developed countries as the top global source of tourists.

The China National Tourism Administration and the United Nations World Tourism Organization report that Chinese tourists made a record 120 million trips overseas last year, which means that one in every 10 international travellers was from China.

The Minister had interactive sessions in Shanghai and Beijing with Chinese travel trade and media. Chinese tour operators believe there is great potential for further growth for Chinese tourism to South Africa and were very enthusiastic about South Africa as a most attractive tourism attraction.

The challenges brought to the attention of the SA delegation included the ease of access to South Africa, relating to visas and airlift. Other key issues raised related to language, which includes communicating with tour guides, signage at our airports and tourism sites, and the translation of tourism information.

Minister Hanekom said the visit to China would strengthen the already strong bilateral ties with South Africa, with an even greater focus on tourism, and will provide opportunities for further cultural and business exchanges.

"We have had very useful discussions with the tourism trade, and several constructive ideas and plans have emerged," said Minister Hanekom.

"Chinese travel and tourism leaders have welcomed the new visa application process and all the steps taken by South Africa to make it easier to travel to our country."

South Africa has implemented an Accredited Travel Company programme in China (through the Chinese Approved Destination Status program) to process visa applications on behalf of travellers. Chinese travellers to South Africa no longer need to make in-person applications at visa processing centres. In addition, Chinese nationals also no longer require transit visas to travel to neighbouring countries.

“We are confident that the number of tourists visiting South Africa from China will grow significantly this year. Our discussions with the Chinese travel trade have included measures on how to make the best of the expected boom,” said Minister Hanekom. “The trade responded very positively and have taken up the challenge to showcase more of South Africa’s hidden gems to the Chinese traveller.”

South Africa has opened two new visa facilitation centres in Chengdu and Guangzhou, in addition to the centres in Beijing and Shanghai, for travellers who want go to the centres directly. Five additional centres are expected to be opened at the end of April in Shenyang, Xi’an, Wuhan, Jinan and Hangzhou.

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