



Private Bag X424, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa. Tel. (+27 12) 444 6780, Fax (+27 12) 444 7027
Private Bag X9154, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa. Tel. (+27 21) 469 5800, Fax: (+27 21) 465 3216

MEDIA STATEMENT

DATE: 23 FEBRUARY 2025

South Africa welcomes first visitors from China processed through the ground-breaking trusted Tour Operator Scheme VISA Initiative

Last night, together with the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Leon Schreiber, Minister Patricia de Lille and other government and tourism stakeholders welcomed the first group of visitors from China at the Cape Town International Airport, who arrived in South Africa through the new digital Trusted Tour Operator Scheme (TTOS) visa initiative.

In an exciting and truly South African welcome, the Ministers were delighted to welcome the first group of 15 tourists and a tour guide who arrived in South Africa only a few days after their visas were processed through the new TTOS visa initiative by the Department of Home Affairs.

“This was an exciting moment in this ground-breaking initiative where the TTOS is providing a faster and more seamless process for visas for travellers from India and China. Together with the Department of Home Affairs we have worked tirelessly to make this happen and I commend Minister Schreiber and the team in the Department of Home Affairs for the swift implementation of this new and improved visa initiative,” Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille said.

Last year, an Inter-Ministerial Committee with the Department of Tourism, the Department of Home Affairs, the State Security Agency and Operation Vulindlela in the Presidency was established to tackle the visa regime issues.

The Department of Home Affairs announced the ground-breaking Trusted Tour Operator Scheme which will significantly ease the process and allow for a seamless visa application process for travellers and tour operators from India and China.

From 12 February 2025, the first group of approved 65 tour operators from South Africa, India and China started processing visa applications through the TTOS.

India and China have been identified as two key source markets for South Africa to grow arrivals due to the high number of tourists who travel internationally from these countries.

Currently, South Africa only receives 41 600 arrivals from India and 79 700 from China, a minor share of our total arrivals for 2024 which stood at 8.9million total international arrivals.

“The TTOS is a massive win for the tourism and business events sector and the Department of Tourism will use the new visa initiatives as enablers to grow tourism arrivals to South Africa which will in turn drive inclusive economic growth and job creation,” Minister de Lille added.

Through targeted outreach engagements in India and China, we have also been sharing the developments of the TTOS, the Electronic Travel Authorisation and Digital Nomad Visas with these two key source markets to ensure that more tour operators register and use these new and enhanced visa processes.

“We are extremely excited about these visa developments and what it means for the growth of the tourism sector. We have no doubt that the TTOS will exponentially increase arrivals from India and China which will stimulate demand across the tourism and services sector,” Minister de Lille concluded.

ENDS

Media Queries:

Zara Nicholson

Email: znicholson@tourism.gov.za

Mobile: +27 79 416 5996