

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF SOUTH AFRICA'S TOURIST ARRIVALS FOR DECEMBER 2024

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) has published data on the number of tourists for December 2024 and this report provides further analysis of the tourists that travelled to South Africa during this period as compared to the same month in 2023. This report also includes the analysis of annual tourist arrivals for 2024 compared to the 2023.

NB: Users are advised that some of the ports of entry/exit are missing data due to lack of network coverage at those ports; however, the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) is addressing this problem. Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) is constantly in communication with the department and more ports of entry/exit will have data and thus improve coverage. (Stats SA, 2025)

TREND ANALYSIS: DECEMBER 2019 – DECEMBER 2024

A total of 920 147 tourist arrivals was recorded in December 2024 which was an increase of 6,7% (+57 687) compared to the same month in 2023. Figure 1 below indicates tourist arrivals for the period December 2019 to December 2024. In December 2020, tourist arrivals recorded were 198 059 which was a decrease of -79,8% (-782 979) when compared to the same month in 2019 and this was related to COVID-19 travel regulation. However, in December 2021 there were 263 108 tourist arrivals recorded which was an increase of +32,8% (+65 049) compared to December 2020. Tourist arrivals then further increased from 263 108 in 2021 to 677 838 in 2022 which was an increase of +157,6% (+414 730). Tourist arrivals increased by +27,2% (+184 622) in 2023 compared to 2022. The tourist arrivals in December 2024 were at a level of -6,2% compared to December 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1: Total Tourist Arrivals December 2019 to December 2024



	Dec-19	Dec-20	Dec-21	Dec-22	Dec-23	Dec-24
Tourist Arrivals	981,038	198,059	263,108	677,838	862,460	920,147
Difference	(26,117)	(782,979)	65,049	414,730	184,622	57,687
% Difference	-2.6%	-79.8%	32.8%	157.6%	27.2%	6.7%

Source: Stats SA International Tourism Report. December 2024 and tourist arrivals data cuts

DECEMBER 2024 COMPARED TO DECEMBER 2023 BY REGION

Table 1 below indicates tourist arrivals by region for December 2024 compared to the same month in 2023. With regards to percentage growth, Australasia recorded the highest increase of +37,0% (+4 098) followed by Central and South America (+19,6%; +1 202), North America (+11,4%; +4 388), Europe (+5,5%; +7 137) and Asia (+0,3%; +47), whilst Middle East recorded a decline in percentage growth of -15,4% (-393) during this month compared to the same month of the previous year. Africa also recorded a growth of +6,3% (+41 099) and this region remains the main source of tourist arrivals to the country accounting for 75,7% (+696 866) of total tourist arrivals recorded during December 2024.

Table 1: Total Tourist Arrivals by Region: December 2024 vs. December 2023

	December 2023	December 2024	Diff	% Diff
EUROPE	130 584	137 721	7 137	5.5%
NORTH AMERICA	38 517	42 905	4 388	11.4%
CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA	6 130	7 332	1 202	19.6%
AUSTRALASIA	11 082	15 180	4 098	37.0%
MIDDLE EAST	2 560	2 167	-393	-15.4%
ASIA	16 811	16 858	47	0.3%
TOTAL OVERSEAS	205 684	222 163	16 479	8.0%
TOTAL AFRICA	655 767	696 866	41 099	6.3%
Unspecified	1 009	1 118	109	10.8%
GRAND TOTAL	862 460	920 147	57 687	6.7%

Source: Stats SA International Tourism Report. December 2024 and tourist arrivals data cuts

JANUARY-DECEMBER BY REGION FOR THE PERIOD 2019 TO 2024

Tourist arrivals for the period January-December 2019-2024 are indicated in figure 2 below. Total tourist arrivals went up by +5,1% (+436 037) for the period January-December 2024 compared to the same period in 2023. However, the tourist arrivals during January to December 2024 were at a level of -12,8% compared to the tourist arrivals recorded in the pre-COVID period of 2019 (Jan-December).

Figure 2: Total Tourist Arrivals January-December 2019 to January-December 2024



Source: Stats SA International Tourism Report. December 2024 and tourist arrivals data cuts

Table 2 further indicates that total tourist arrivals from overseas markets increased by +3,7% (+76 328). Central & South America (+60,4%) recorded the highest increase followed by Australasia (+12,4%), North America (+5,2%), Asia (+4,2%) and Europe with +1,1%. Middle East recorded a decline of -16,1% for the same period under review.

In Central and South America, Brazil recorded the highest increase in volume (+24 183; +94,2%) for the same period under review. In Australasia, Australia had the highest increase in tourist arriving in volume (+12 294, +14,3%). In Asia, China recorded the highest increase in volume (+4 254; +11,4%). In North America, United States of America has recorded the highest increase in volume (+18 387; +5,2%). In Europe, Germany led with the highest increase in volume (+9 733, +4,0%) for the period under review.

In the Middle East region, Israel recorded the largest drop in tourist numbers during January-December 2024, experiencing a decline of -12 540 (-62,9%) compared to the same period in 2023 and this could be related to the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Tourist arrivals from Africa increased by +5,6% (+360 272) during the same period under review and this region remains the main source of tourist arrivals to the country accounting for 75,9% (+6 770 664) of total tourist arrivals during January-December 2024.

In terms of volume, the increase recorded from the African continent was driven by an increase of (+250 714; +18,7%) from Mozambique followed by Eswatini (+108 369; +14,8%) and Zimbabwe (+76 320; +3,6%) as indicated in Table 3 below.

Table 2: January-December 2024 compared to January-December 2023/2019

	January-December 2023	January-December 2024	Diff: 2024 compared to 2023	% Diff: 2024 compared to 2023	January-December 2019	Diff: 2024 compared to 2019	% Diff: 2024 compared to 2019
EUROPE	1 244 877	1 258 706	13 829	1.1%	1 556 452	-297 746	-19.1%
NORTH AMERICA	409 031	430 419	21 388	5.2%	440 271	-9 852	-2.2%
CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA	46 870	75 160	28 290	60.4%	120 380	-45 220	-37.6%
AUSTRALASIA	105 888	119 036	13 148	12.4%	128 153	-9 117	-7.1%
MIDDLE EAST	54 339	45 602	-8 737	-16.1%	55 532	-9 930	-17.9%
ASIA	199 308	207 718	8 410	4.2%	311 371	-103 653	-33.3%
TOTAL OVERSEAS	2 060 313	2 136 641	76 328	3.7%	2 612 159	-475 518	-18.2%
TOTAL AFRICA	6 410 392	6 770 664	360 272	5.6%	7 600 843	-830 179	-10.9%
Unspecified	12 628	12 065	-563	-4.5%	15 591	-3 526	-22.6%
GRAND TOTAL	8 483 333	8 919 370	436 037	5.1%	10 228 593	-1 309 223	-12.8%

Source: Stats SA International Tourism Report. December 2024 and tourist arrivals data cuts

Table 3 below provides the rankings of the top ten African source markets for the period January-December 2024 compared to January-December 2023. Most of the top ten African source markets remained in the same position except for Malawi which moved up from 8th position in 2023 to 7th position in 2024. Zambia dropped from 7th position in 2023 to 8th position in 2024. Mozambique recorded the highest increase of +18,7% followed by Malawi (+17,9%) and Eswatini (+14,8%). Lesotho and Angola recorded a negative growth rate of -16,3% and -3,7% respectively for the period under review.

Table 3: South Africa's Top 10 African Source Markets: January-December 2024 vs. January-December 2023

Country	Rank: January-December 2024	Tourist Arrivals January-December 2024	Rank: January-December 2023	Tourist Arrivals January-December 2023	% Change
Zimbabwe	1	2 183 260	1	2 106 940	3.6%
Mozambique	2	1 591 751	2	1 341 037	18.7%
Lesotho	3	974 369	3	1 163 826	-16.3%
Eswatini	4	842 318	4	733 949	14.8%
Botswana	5	395 965	5	363 025	9.1%
Namibia	6	164 716	6	160 078	2.9%
Malawi	7	163 726	8	138 918	17.9%
Zambia	8	154 921	7	145 244	6.7%
Kenya	9	47 852	9	42 403	12.9%

Country	Rank: January-December 2024	Tourist Arrivals January-December 2024	Rank: January-December 2023	Tourist Arrivals January-December 2023	% Change
Angola	10	37 811	10	39 265	-3.7%

Source: Stats SA International Tourism Report. December 2024 and tourist arrivals data cuts

Table 4 shows the rankings of the top ten overseas source markets. Comparing January-December 2024 with January-December 2023. Most of the top ten overseas source markets remained in the same position for the period January-December 2024 compared to January-December 2023 except Brazil which replaced Belgium in the top 10 for the period under review. As indicated in table 2, the number of tourists coming from Brazil increased by +94,2%, leading the country to climb from the 16th position in 2023 to the 10th position in 2024. The rise in Brazilian tourists since January 2024 might be linked to the resumption of direct flights between Brazil and South Africa. With regards to volume, USA was the main source market from overseas recording a growth of +5,2%.

Table 4: South Africa's Top 10 Overseas Source Markets: January-December 2024 vs. January-December 2023

Country	Rank: January-December 2024	Tourist Arrivals January-December 2024	Rank: January-December 2023	Tourist Arrivals January-December 2023	% Change
USA	1	372 362	2	353 975	5.2%
UK	2	349 883	1	356 160	-1.8%
Germany	3	254 992	3	245 259	4.0%
The Netherlands	4	132 422	4	131 371	0.8%
France	5	125 823	5	119 974	4.9%
Australia	6	98 544	6	86 250	14.3%
India	7	75 541	7	79 774	-5.3%
Canada	8	58 057	8	55 056	5.5%
Italy	9	50 780	9	52 091	-2.5%
Brazil	10	49 855	16	25 672	94.2%

Source: Stats SA International Tourism Report. December 2024 and tourist arrivals data cuts

REFERENCES

1. Statistics South Africa 28 January 2025, December 2024 International Tourism report.