

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF SOUTH AFRICA'S TOURIST ARRIVALS FOR MAY 2025

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) has published data on the number of tourists for May 2025 and this report provides further analysis of the tourists that travelled to South Africa during this period as well as May 2025.

NB: Users are advised that some of the ports of entry/exit have 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: MAY 2019 – MAY 2025

A total of 804 163 tourist arrivals was recorded in May 2025 which was an increase of 23,8% (154 709) compared to the same month in 2024. Figure 1 below indicates tourist arrivals for the period May 2019 to May 2025. In May 2020, due to the closure of country borders and travel restrictions, there were no tourist arrivals recorded for the month. However, in May 2021, with the opening of country borders and travel permissions, there were 183 347 tourist arrivals recorded. Tourist arrivals then increased from 183 347 in 2021 to 407 262 in 2022 which was an increase of +122,1% (+223 915). Tourist arrivals increased by +54,7% (+222 838) in 2023 compared to 2022. Tourist arrivals further increased by +3,1% (+19 354) in 2024 compared to 2023. Tourist arrivals recorded during May 2025 was at +6,7% level of tourist arrivals recorded in 2019 pre-COVID period.

Figure 1: Total Tourist Arrivals May 2019 to May 2025



Source: Stats SA International Tourism report, May 2025 and tourist arrivals data cuts

MAY 2025 COMPARED TO MAY 2024 BY REGION

Table 1 below indicates tourist arrivals by region for May 2025 compared to the same month in 2024. Most regions experienced a growth in tourist arrivals except for Asia which had a decline of -11,7% during this month compared to the same month of the previous year. With regards to percentage growth, Central and South America recorded the highest increase of 16,8% (+997) followed by Middle East (7,9%; 222), Europe (6,8%; 4 343), Australasia (5,0%; 538) and North America (3,8%; 1 573). Africa recorded an increase of 29,9% (149 733) and this region remains the main source of tourist arrivals to the country accounting for 80,9% (650 661) of total tourist arrivals recorded during May 2025.

Table 1: Total Tourist Arrivals by Region: May 2025 vs. May 2024

	May 2024	May 2025	Diff	% Diff
EUROPE	64 045	68 388	4 343	6,8%
NORTH AMERICA	40 860	42 433	1 573	3,8%
CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA	5 944	6 941	997	16,8%
AUSTRALASIA	10 697	11 235	538	5,0%
MIDDLE EAST	2 815	3 037	222	7,9%
ASIA	23 067	20 364	-2 703	-11,7%
TOTAL OVERSEAS	147 428	152 398	4 970	3,4%
TOTAL AFRICA	500 928	650 661	149 733	29,9%
Unspecified	1 098	1 104	6	0,5%
GRAND TOTAL	649 454	804 163	154 709	23,8%

Source: Stats SA International Tourism report, May 2025 and tourist arrivals data cuts

JANUARY-MAY BY REGION FOR THE PERIOD 2019 TO 2025

Tourist arrivals figures by region for the period January-May 2019-2025 are indicated in figure 2 below. Total tourist arrivals went up by 11,1% (420 623) for the period January-May 2025 compared to the same period in 2024. Tourist arrivals recorded during January-May 2025 was at -3,2% level of tourist arrivals recorded in 2019 pre-COVID period.

Figure 2: Total Tourist Arrivals January-May 2019 to January-May 2025



Source: Stats SA International Tourism report, May 2025 and tourist arrivals data cuts

Table 2 further indicates that most overseas regions recorded an increase except for Asia which declined with -1,6% for the period January-May 2025 compared to January-May 2024, Total tourist arrivals from overseas markets increased by 4,5% (42 011). Central & South America (16,6%) recorded the highest increase followed by Australasia (14,2%), Europe (4,9%), North America (2,2%) and Middle East (1,3%) for the same period under review.

In Central and South America, Brazil recorded the highest increase in volume with an increase of +2 675 (13,4%) followed by Argentina (+1 330; 53,5%). In Australasia, Australia recorded the highest increase in volume with an increase of +5 669 (15,1%) followed by New Zealand (+653; 8,6%). In Europe, UK, has recorded the highest increase in volume (+13 946; 8,3%). USA recorded the highest increase in volume for North America region with an additional +2 183 tourists compared to January-May 2024. United Arab Emirates had recorded the highest increase in volume (+230; 26,9%) in the Middle East region for the same period under review.

Tourist arrivals from Africa increased by +13,2% (+378 495) during the same period under review and this region remains the main source of tourist arrivals to the country accounting for 76,9% (3 244 005) of total tourist arrivals during January-May 2025.

In terms of volume, the increase recorded from the African continent was driven by an increase of (+151 134; 34,0%) from Lesotho followed by Mozambique (+144 850; 21,9%) and Eswatini (+45 811; 14,1%) as indicated in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2: January-May 2025 compared to January-May 2024/2019

	January-May 2024	January-May 2025	2025 compared to 2024 Diff	2025 compared to 2024 %	January-May 2019	Diff: 2025 compared to 2019	% Diff: 2025 compared to 2019
EUROPE	577 985	606 076	28 091	4,9%	677 372	-71 296	-10,5%
NORTH AMERICA	172 740	176 485	3 745	2,2%	175 829	656	0,4%
CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA	30 371	35 400	5 029	16,6%	48 625	-13 225	-27,2%
AUSTRALASIA	45 245	51 650	6 405	14,2%	48 575	3 075	6,3%
MIDDLE EAST	14 066	14 253	187	1,3%	18 469	-4 216	-22,8%
ASIA	89 260	87 814	-1 446	-1,6%	130 401	-42 587	-32,7%
TOTAL OVERSEAS	929 667	971 678	42 011	4,5%	1 099 271	-127 593	-11,6%
TOTAL AFRICA	2 865 510	3 244 005	378 495	13,2%	3 255 469	-11 464	-0,4%
Unspecified	4 786	4 903	117	2,4%	5 903	-1 000	-16,9%
GRAND TOTAL	3 799 963	4 220 586	420 623	11,1%	4 360 643	-140 057	-3,2%

Source: Stats SA International Tourism report, May 2025 and tourist arrivals data cuts

Table 3 below gives the rankings of the top ten African source markets for the period January-May 2025 compared to January-May 2024. Most of the top ten African source markets remained in the same position during the period under review except for Malawi which moved from 8th to 6th position, , Namibia moved from 6th position to 7th position and Zambia 7th position to 8th position during the period under review. Most top ten countries recorded a positive growth except for Zimbabwe (-3,5%). Malawi recorded the highest increase of 55,0% followed by Lesotho (34,0%) and Kenya (22,2%).

Table 3: South Africa's Top 10 African Source Markets: January-May 2025 vs. January-May 2024

Country	Rank: January-May 2025	Tourist Arrivals January-May 2025	Rank: January-May 2024	Tourist Arrivals January-May 2024	% Change
Zimbabwe	1	946 449	1	980 814	-3,5%
Mozambique	2	807 628	2	662 778	21,9%
Lesotho	3	595 814	3	444 680	34,0%
Eswatini	4	371 575	4	325 764	14,1%
Botswana	5	158 733	5	149 475	6,2%
Malawi	6	93 408	8	58 201	55,0%

Country	Rank: January-May 2025	Tourist Arrivals January-May 2025	Rank: January-May 2024	Tourist Arrivals January-May 2024	% Change
Namibia	7	70 092	6	64 016	9,6%
Zambia	8	64 690	7	63 055	2,8%
Kenya	9	21 155	9	17 607	22,2%
Angola	10	16 959	10	15 999	5,5%

Source: Stats SA International Tourism report, May 2025 and tourist arrivals data cuts

Table 4 shows the rankings of the top ten overseas source markets. Comparing January-May 2025 with January-May 2024, all of the top 10 overseas markets remained in their same position. Most of the top 10 overseas markets recorded an increase in tourist arrivals except for France and India which declined with -0,3% and -9,5% for the period January-May 2025 compared to January-May 2024 respectively. Australia recorded the highest increase of 15,1%. UK remained as the main source market from overseas recording a growth of 8,3%.

Table 4: South Africa's Top 10 Overseas Source Markets: January-May 2025 vs. January-May 2024

Country	Rank: January- May 2025	Tourist Arrivals January-May 2025	Rank: January-May 2024	Tourist Arrivals January-May 2024	% Change
UK	1	182 340	1	168 394	8,3%
USA	2	149 277	2	147 094	1,5%
Germany	3	126 514	3	122 705	3,1%
France	4	57 020	4	57 189	-0,3%
The Netherlands	5	56 250	5	54 880	2,5%
Australia	6	43 264	6	37 595	15,1%
India	7	30 819	7	34 068	-9,5%
Canada	8	27 208	8	25 646	6,1%
Brazil	9	22 673	9	19 998	13,4%
Switzerland	10	20 156	10	19 102	5,5%

Source: Stats SA International Tourism report, May 2025 and tourist arrivals data cuts

REFERENCES

1. Statistics South Africa 24 June 2025, May 2025 International Tourism Report.