



tourism

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Tourism to SA is growing – Tourism Minister

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While the current statistics on foreign arrivals may not project a true reflection of the actual number of tourists visiting South Africa, they do still show that there is growth.

This is according to Minister of Tourism, Derek Hanekom. Speaking to Tourism Update at the eTourism Africa Summit in Cape Town, Hanekom said the tourism sector is interested in the actual tourism arrivals, i.e. those who visit the country for sport, business, leisure or cultural experiences and who spend time and money experiencing what South Africa offers as opposed to foreigners from neighbouring country who cross the border for 24 hours or less to do some shopping.

He said the Department of Tourism and SA Tourism were currently debating how to go about collecting stats that looked at tourism arrivals as the current definition of foreign arrivals was “a bit broad”. He added that although the numbers may be distorted a significant upward trend in all figures was evident. Hanekom said it was also important to look at growth in income and occupancy, which there had been.

Acknowledging that it is a challenge, he said he didn’t expect a drop in arrivals once the Immigration Act was implemented. He said the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and the Department of Tourism are appreciative of one another’s mandates and are working to find the best model. “Everyone wants an increase in arrivals, not cancellations. We need to monitor the situation,” he said.

Following the publication of the new regulations, Hanekom said two concessions had been achieved. Firstly, for the unabridged birth certificates, he explained that in countries outside of South Africa the normal birth certificates issued will be accepted even though they won’t look the same as the South African unabridged certificate. They also would not need to be translated.

The second concession relates to the issuing of visas in China, which Hanekom said presented the most challenges. He said the DHA will be adding visa centres in China to make the process easier, but he was unsure whether this was enough to address the challenge.

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