



tourism

Department:
Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Tourism destinations are in operation and safe to visit amid COVID-19 pandemic

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The outlook for South Africa's tourism sector is optimistic. International travel has resumed after more than a year of travel restrictions due to COVID-19, while domestic tourism activity resumed during Alert Level 3 of the lockdown restrictions. The country is now at Alert Level 1 making it easy for local travel. International and domestic tourists, be they leisure or business travellers, can expect a warm welcome from host destinations and the hospitality sector.

Responding to Parliamentary questions, Tourism Minister Lindiwe Sisulu said her Department had put in place response plans for the pandemic as per the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan (TSRP). "Through our initiatives, we will build traveller confidence and promote the structural transformation that is needed to build a stronger, sustainable and resilient tourism economy".

Over the long-term, the TSRP is poised to yield greater diversification of the supply side of the tourism market; increased focus on infrastructure investments in the tourism sector; protection and creation of jobs in the sector; a recovered sector characterised by greater inclusion; greater confidence in South Africa as a safe destination; an improved South Africa's Tourism Brand; and increased international arrivals.

Minister Sisulu also acknowledged that the vaccination campaign would further boost trade and market confidence in destination South Africa. "With all health protocols in place, we will continue to rise to the occasion in fighting COVID-19 including the anticipated 4th wave in the New Year". A Tourism war room has been established to expedite the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan implementation. Stakeholders in the war room include members of the industry and all relevant government departments.

The Minister said it is worth noting the significant achievements of the Recovery Plan, anchored on three pillars, namely: (1) protect and rejuvenate the supply of tourism products and services; (2) re-ignite demand; and (3) strengthen enabling capability for long-term sustainability.

Pillar 1: To ensure safe travel and re-build passenger trust, the industry will continue to implement approved Tourism Norms and Standards for safe operations across the value chain. Small businesses are being trained to guarantee full compliance.

One of the other major achievements is the development and maintenance of 100 state and community-based tourism assets across the country. This comprises 19 National Parks. The infrastructure maintenance programme will be expanded to Forty (40) provincial sites.

Pillar 2: During the epidemic, domestic tourism improved dramatically due to brief vacations. The Great South African Sale Travel Week Consumer Campaign drew significant attention from South Africans. Across the country, 670 direct deals were reported. This campaign's influence will be shown in forthcoming domestic tourism statistics.

Diplomatic engagements with key source markets resulted in South Africa being removed from the Red List. Most airlines have reinstated capacity to our destination. "Easing of travel bans has opened market opportunities, and paves the way for the launch of our **Global Brand Campaign** at the World Expo in Dubai in December," said Minister Sisulu.

South Africa has piloted an **E-Visa** system in Kenya and phase one activation will be extended to 15 other countries by March 2022.

Regarding MICE events, South Africa has already won seven bids for R64 million for events to be hosted between 2022 and 2025. Furthermore, other events linked to national policy priorities have been secured through bid support to hosting policy department. These events will be hosted in Johannesburg, Mahikeng, Gqeberha, Alice, Franschhoek, and Uitenhage. This initiative will help our provinces' economic activities and geographic spread.

Pillar 3: The department has identified distressed tourism assets that will form part of its Investment Promotion Support Programme. This initiative will help facilitate domestic and foreign investment to boost economic growth.

Indicative of our recovery plan, South Africa hosted the first ever African Travel and Tourism Summit in September this year. It afforded the Meetings Africa and Africa's Travel Indaba communities, a platform to engage the globe to address challenges created by the pandemic.

The SADC tourism strategy and Action Plan is also ready for consideration by the responsible SADC Committee of Ministers.

Regarding tourist safety, the Department, in collaboration with SAPS, have measures in place to ensure that all tourists are safe during their stay and travel within the country. "We would like to see people visit our shores without any threat to their personal safety," concluded Minister Sisulu.

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