



tourism

Department:
Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Tourism House, 17 Trevenna Street, Sunnyside. Private Bag X 424, PRETORIA · 0001
Tel (+ 2712) 444 6000· Fax (+ 2712) 444 7000. Call Center: 0860 121 929

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Minister van Schalkwyk visits China to celebrate a fruitful 2012 in which China became the fourth-largest overseas tourist market for South Africa

TOURISM growth from China to South Africa was phenomenal in 2012, rising by 63.5% from January to September 2012, as China became South Africa's fourth-biggest overseas tourist market.

To celebrate the value and potential of China as a major overseas tourist market to South Africa – and to build on the excellent tourism relationship between the two countries – Minister van Schalkwyk joined by South African Tourism embarks in Beijing today on a media road show of China.

Minister Van Schalkwyk will be accompanied by the Director General of the National Department of Tourism, Ambassador Kingsley Makhubela; Ambassador Dr Bheki Langa, South Africa's Ambassador to China, and Mr Thulani Nzima, Chief Executive Officer of South African Tourism.

Between January and September 2012, 96,747 Chinese tourists travelled to South Africa, up from the 59,187 Chinese tourists who visited the country over the same period in 2011, as China will by smashing through the 100 000 tourists per annum mark for the first time.

The major growth in tourist numbers from China is a strong indicator of the strengthening relations between the two countries, as Chinese tourists warm in greater numbers to South Africa's scenic beauty; friendly and welcoming people; and the variety of wonderful experiences South Africa offers Chinese visitors.

China is now one of South Africa's most important and valued partners for tourist arrivals and a market the South African government is committed to investing strongly in.

“Since our country took its place among Brazil, Russia, India and China in the BRICS in 2011, we have witnessed an increase in trade relations between China and South Africa, with considerable Chinese investment in South Africa and an increase in interest, awareness and understanding between our two countries. This period has also coincided, to the excitement of all of us in the tourism industry, with a strong increase in tourist arrivals from China, which has now become South Africa's fourth-biggest overseas tourist market,” said Minister Van Schalkwyk at the start of the roadshow.

“In 2012 we concluded joint marketing agreements with seven trade and marketing partners in China to build education and understanding of our destination here in

China, to package and promote a larger variety of products and experiences and to make South Africa as affordable and accessible as possible for Chinese travelers. In January, 2012, we also saw the introduction of non-stop flights between Johannesburg and Beijing as part of a code share agreement between South African Airways and Air China, providing Chinese tourists with convenient access to South Africa. We are also encouraged by the introduction of two new visa application centres in China, which has also considerably enhanced the tourism attractiveness of South Africa for Chinese travelers. We are confident of continuing our exciting growth in a market set to become one of the world's most important tourism markets in the future," Minister van Schalkwyk added.

The series of media engagements will include sharing details about South African Tourism's 2013 marketing plans in China. The South African dignitaries will also use the roadshow as an opportunity to thank the Chinese media for their continued support over the years and for the role the media has played in making South Africa one of China's best loved holiday and business event destinations.

Around 80 members of the media are expected to attend the road show - that will also include a visit to Shanghai.

Last year South African Tourism launched a series of promotional activities to enhance the brand-image and brand-awareness of South Africa in China. Significant media and trade awards have also been received, which propelled the huge success of South African Tourism in China.

These awards include:

- 2012 Top Luxury Destination for China by Voyage Magazine
- Best Partner Award from Sina Travel
- The Most Favoured African Travel Destination Award from Best Travel
- Gold List Award of China Tourism - Best Outdoor Travel Destination Award from National Geographic Traveler
- China Travel & Meetings Industry Awards 2012 - Editors' Special Honor Award - Best Nature Wonder Destination Award from Travel Weekly
- Hua Xia Route from National Geographic
- 2012 China Travel Award - "2012 The Next Travel Destinations" Award from Travel + Leisure Magazine
- 2012 Overseas Tourism Bureau Leadership Award from Top Travel

South African Tourism in 2012 also held their annual Trade Workshops to provide a platform to facilitate communication and cooperation between the South African tourism trade and their Chinese counterparts. Other trade initiatives included the FUNDI Competition in August, which attracted 1,986 participants and greatly enhanced brand-awareness of South Africa.

South Africa also participated strongly in tourism exhibitions in China, participating in the 2012 CIBTM in Beijing and 2012 CITM in Shanghai, where the organization communicated with domestic and overseas tourism practitioners and shared its current and future promotional strategies.

"We've received great support from the Chinese media and trade during the past year and I would like to express our sincere gratitude to them. This year, we will increase our efforts in digital marketing to better communicate with Chinese

consumers through online platforms. We are very confident that 2013 will be another prosperous year of tourism growth from China and that thousands more Chinese tourists will return from South Africa with unique and unforgettable memories of their visit,” said Minister van Schalkwyk.

To increase interaction and communication with Chinese tourists, South African Tourism launched the *DIY Sunny Holiday in South Africa* Online Consumer Campaign in December last year. This creative online campaign attracted huge interest and elevated the promotion of South Africa as a preferred long-haul destination among Chinese consumers, especially free independent travelers.

For further information, please visit SAT China’s official website:
www.southafricantourism.com

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Ministry of Tourism
Melene Rossouw
Media Director
Telephone: +27 (0) 21 465 7240
Cell: +27 (0) 82 753 7107
E-mail: mrossouw@tourism.gov.za

Natasha Rockman
Media Liaison
Telephone: +27 (0) 21 465 7240
Cell: 27 76 429 2264
E-mail: nrockman@tourism.gov.za