



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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MEDIA STATEMENT

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**MINISTER PATRICIA DE LILLE WELCOMES OPENING OF SAUDI ARABIA E-VISA
SYSTEM TO SOUTH AFRICANS**

Following a recent official visit to Saudi Arabia to strengthen tourism relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Minister Patricia de Lille welcomes the opening of the Saudi Arabia e-Visa system to South Africans.

A few weeks ago, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia announced that it was expanding its visitor e-Visa programme to travellers from eight more countries, taking the total up to 57.

Tourists from South Africa can now easily apply for an e-Visa for their travels to Saudi Arabia.

“I am extremely pleased with this development as South Africa also became the first African country to be added to the list. This will certainly bring immense benefits for leisure and Umrah travellers and for our efforts to grow tourism between South Africa and Saudi Arabia,” Minister de Lille said.

The multi-entry e-Visa is valid for one year and allows travellers to visit the kingdom for up to 90 days at a time. It costs 535 Saudi riyals, which also includes medical insurance.

In terms of the South African visa system, travellers from Saudi Arabia are part of the visa-exempt countries and do not require a visa to travel to South Africa for a period of up to 90 days.

Saudi Arabia is fast becoming an attractive tourist destination and is a key partner in our efforts to grow tourism between South Africa and the rest of the world.

The Department of Tourism also has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Tourism Department which outlines our joint objectives to grow tourism between our countries.

Minister de Lille recently undertook an official visit to Saudi Arabia to attend the International World Tourism Day conference where various engagements took place to strengthen tourism relations and cooperation with Saudi Arabian stakeholders.

Minister de Lille met with a range of Saudi Arabian stakeholders including the Air Connectivity Programme team within the Ministry of Tourism as well as the Saudi Tourism Authority.

Discussions covered actions needed to improve air connectivity between Saudi Arabia and South Africa and a joint marketing strategy to promote both destinations to travellers in both countries.

Saudia (Saudi Arabian Airlines) has also announced the recommencement of a direct flight between Jeddah and Johannesburg starting on 1 December 2023.

During our engagements, we shared research with the Saudi Air Connectivity Team to motivate for a direct flight between Jeddah and Cape Town.

"The e-Visa development is significant for South Africa as many Muslim citizens travel for religious purposes. Along with the direct flights, this will ease travel for many tourists but especially for religious tourism and pilgrimages," Minister de Lille said.

Through the fast and easy-to-use online portal, South Africans can apply for an e-Visa and discover the warm hospitality of Saudi people the rich heritage, vibrant culture, and diverse and breath-taking landscapes; from the mountains of Abha to the beaches of the Red Sea to the shifting sands of the Empty Quarter.

The e-Visa will be a one-year, multiple-entry visa, allowing tourists to spend up to 90 days in the country. The tourist visa allows you to participate in tourism-related activities such as events, family and relatives visits, leisure, and Umrah (excluding Hajj) and excludes other activities such as studying.

We will continue working with our counterparts in Saudi Arabia, through the Minister of Tourism, Ahmed Al Khateeb to look at new and innovative ways to grow tourism between our countries as this key sector is an important part of our countries' economies and a key job creator.

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