



Private Bag X424, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa. Tel. (+27 12) 444 6780, Fax (+27 12) 444 7027
Private Bag X9154, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa. Tel. (+27 21) 469 5800, Fax: (+27 21) 465 3216

MEDIA STATEMENT BY MINISTER PATRICIA DE LILLE

PROGRESS ON TOURISM SAFETY MEASURES BY GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

DATE: 29 AUGUST 2023

Following our second National Tourism Safety Forum held today, we are updating the media on progress on tourism safety measures.

The National Tourism Safety Forum includes all Tourism MECs, the South African Police, the National Prosecuting Authority, the Department of Tourism, the Department of Transport, the Tourism Business Council of South Africa and its members, the South African Tourism Services Association, Airports Company South Africa, Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa (FEDHASA), the South African Township and Village Tourism Organisation (SATOVITO) and other tourism sector bodies met today.

The Safety Forum aims to improve the visitor experience within South Africa.

South Africa receives millions of tourists per year, and the vast majority of visitors return home without any issues and a memorable experience of our beautiful country.

Our arrival numbers for 2023 are looking good, demonstrating that South Africa is still a favourable tourist destination and we are eager to welcome more tourists as we head into the busy summer season.

South Africa's tourism sector continues to exhibit strong recovery with the first half of 2023 recording more than 4 million tourist arrivals, according to the latest data from Statistics South Africa.

This is a significant increase from the 2,3 million tourist arrivals between January and June 2022.

The total number of tourist arrivals to South Africa between January and June 2023 showed a sizable 78.2% surge in the first half of 2023 when compared to the same period in 2022.

The Africa region continues to bring the largest share of tourist arrivals to the country with more than 3 million arrivals from the rest of the African continent in the first six months of 2023.

This is a 79.9% increase when compared to the same period last year when South Africa welcomed 1.7million visitors from Africa.

This is a testament to the marketing efforts that we have implemented to attract tourists from this region. Africa remains a key source market for us, and we are committed to collaborating as a tourism sector to make sure we welcome visitors from this region and that we cater for their needs and preferences.

Beyond the African continent, South Africa has welcomed more visitors from other regions too.

The Asia region almost doubled its figures with a 99.5% growth compared to 2022.

This year, Europe, the largest source of visitors outside Africa, also experienced solid growth of 66,8.1%, when compared to the same period in 2022.

North America, Central & South America, and the Middle East also demonstrated strong growth trends with rates of 70.6%, 74.4%, and 75.8% respectively.

These robust figures showcase South Africa's charm and attractiveness as well as the work that we are doing in marketing South Africa as a tourist destination of choice.

We are here to update the media and public today to say that we are gearing up for the busy summer season and we are ready to welcome tourists.

We will be launching the Summer Campaign in two weeks' time in the Eastern Cape.

Today was our second meeting of the National Tourism Safety Forum with the previous meeting held in May where all representatives agreed on clear actions to address tourism safety.

At the last National Safety Forum meeting in Sandton on 29 May 2023, we agreed to collectively confront these problems.

While the latest statistics from StatsSA reveal an upward trend in tourist arrivals, issues of safety are an obstacle in converting would-be tourists to visit our country.

The National Tourism Safety Forum's (NTSF) responsibility is the co-ordination and integration of safety response mechanisms for tourists in distress.

The Key Objectives of the Tourism Action Plan are to:

- Increase visibility at identified tourist attractions and sites;
- Train Tourism Monitors to ensure that they are safe when executing duties; and
- Facilitate integrated implementation and support of safety programmes.

As I said after the previous National Tourism Safety Forum meeting, crime is a matter which affects tourism in many parts of the world.

This has been echoed by several tourism ministers from all over the world. South Africa is no different and across the world, countries are grappling with these issues with instability and wars in some countries.

While it is the mandate of the SAPS to keep our citizens and visitors safe, we all have a role to play. A lot of progress has been made since we last met.

PROGRESS SO FAR

TOURISM MONITORS

Part of the National Safety Strategy is the deployment of Tourism Monitors by the Department of Tourism.

We have reviewed the training curriculum for tourism monitors.

The Departmental budget is R174.5 million, to train more than 2 200 Tourism Monitors across the country for this financial year.

The Tourism Monitors will be deployed to all provinces at top tourist attractions and national parks.

The key objectives to enhance tourism safety awareness at key tourism attractions and sites, upskilling of unemployed youth and reducing tourist vulnerabilities.

The key responsibilities of the appointed Tourism Monitors include patrolling within the identified attractions and site/ areas, raising tourism awareness and provide information to tourists and report any crime incidents to SAPS and other relevant enforcement agencies.

The tender has gone out for the training of more than 2 200 Tourism Monitors.

These young people will be equipped with an NQF 3 certification and receive a further training from the South African Police Service.

The Tourism Monitors will be deployed towards end of October to early November 2023, just in time for the summer tourist season.

OTHER UPDATES:

The Department of Tourism also now has a representative on the Stability Priority Committee at NatJoints.

In terms of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), the NPA informed the Safety Forum that the President has accented to the legislation on the use of the use of audio and visual link to present evidence in court.

This would entail the possibility of instituting Virtual Court proceedings, which would allow tourists to be part of the proceedings even if they had left the country before the conclusion of a case, and alternatively tourists could connect through audio-visual link at the South African Missions in their countries of origin.

Amendments have been made to the Criminal Procedure Act. The Act has been amended to include Section 51 C, which incorporates a provision for witnesses to testify virtually. This section came into effect on 5 August 2022.

TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE TOURISM SAFETY

We also received an update from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) on the C-More tracking device and how best this technology can be incorporated into the Secura app that has been set up by the Tourism Business Council of South Africa.

Through the use of technology. We are enhancing the tourist experience by offering technology and tourism monitors that assist tourists in various attractions as well as on-demand requests through an app.

The Secura app is now up and running and we are launching the operations centre in Sandton on Thursday.

The Secura App is already being used by tourists and aims to enhance the visitor experience and assist in many ways including roadside assistance and directing those who are lost.

This initiative is being led by the private sector – the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA).

The app integrates affordable emergency medical responses, breakdowns and crime-related incident assistance.

The Secura App connects travellers and tourism stakeholders to hundreds of emergency service providers when every second counts.

The service providers are ready and equipped to assist in any situation.

Since our last update to the media on this at the end of May, TBCSA has established a Tourism Operations Centre to guide and manage the SECURA Traveller technology to support the Tourism Monitors.

There are a number of apps in the market that all are geared towards tourist safety.

The Department of Tourism has also been working with SAPS and has developed tourist safety tips which have a QR-code that allows tourists to scan the tips and have them electronically.

The safety tips have also been incorporated into the MY-SAPS APP for easy access. SAPS indicated that they intend enhancing the features of its APP and are also looking at ways of creating more awareness about the APP.

CONCLUSION

We are also doing Tourism Awareness Campaigns in communities across the country. The teams will be in the Eastern Cape for this initiative later this week.

Communities must understand the value of tourism and be brought on board to help grow the tangible benefits of tourism in their areas.

I will also be meeting with the diplomatic community in the coming weeks to share our work to enhance safety measures so that they can share this with their countries.

This is why effective communication is so important. Today, we also agreed on a communication strategy and Standard Operating Procedure and single response from the sector when tourists fall victim to crime.

The National Tourism Safety Forum will meet again later this year and we look forward to continuing our partnership with all stakeholders and the private sector to enhance tourism safety measures and working with all stakeholders to ensure a safer visitor experience.

We will continue meeting on a regular basis to refine the plans and report back on the commitments.

Issued by the Ministry of Tourism

Zara Nicholson

Ministry Media Liaison Officer, Cell: +27 (0) 79 416 5996

Email: znicholson@tourism.gov.za