



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**

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### **South Africa's Tourism rising momentum continues**

The recent official release of international arrival figures by Statistics South Africa for January to December 2023 underscores the rising momentum of South Africa's tourism sector.

International tourist arrivals from January to December 2023 totalled 8.5 million, representing a remarkable 48.9% increase when compared with same period in 2022.

#### **Africa continues to lead the Way**

- South Africa welcomed 6.4 million visitors from the rest of the African continent between January and December 2023, marking a significant 75.6% of all arrivals.
- Zimbabwe and Kenya stood out for their remarkable growth, with Zimbabwe experiencing a 70.8% increase in tourist arrivals to South Africa when compared to 2022, totalling 2.1 million arrivals, while Kenya recorded a 99% surge when compared to 2022, reaching 42,403 arrivals for January to December 2023.

#### **Strong Momentum from the Americas**

- Tourist arrivals from the Americas registered at 455,901 reflecting a 39.8% growth compared to the same period in 2022.
- The United States of America saw 353,975 arrivals to South Africa, marking a 35% increase compared to 2022.

#### **Strength in European Markets**

- From January to December 2023, South Africa saw 1.2 million tourist arrivals from Europe, a 38.2% increase compared to the same period in 2022.
- The United Kingdom remains the top European source market with 356,160 tourists choosing South Africa, marking a 25.8% growth compared to 2022
- Germany experienced a 41.6% increase in arrivals compared to 2022, amounting to 245,259 tourists
- This was followed by the Netherlands which saw an increase of 45.5% when compared to 2022, amounting to 131,371 tourist arrivals between January and December 2023

- Russia exhibited a dramatic growth of 74.7% when compared to 2022, contributing 28,357 arrivals in 2023

### **Noteworthy growth from the Asia markets**

- Asian markets also showed significant growth with a total 199,308 arrivals from the region, representing an astounding 69.1% when compared to the same period in 2022.
- We welcomed 79,774 tourists from India, a 43.7% growth compared to 2022
- Notably, we saw 37,164 arrivals from China, a massive 204.9% surge in 2023 when compared to 2022

### **Robust Gains in the Middle East**

- The Middle East saw a robust increase with 54,339 arrivals in the January to December 2023 period — a 33.7% growth when compared to the same period in 2022. South Africa received 16,351 arrivals from Saudi Arabia in 2023, marking an increase of 42.6% when compared to 2022
- The United Arab Emirates saw 6,511 arrivals to South Africa, a remarkable 110% increase when compared to 2022

Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille expressed delight at the impressive numbers from the African continent and highlighted the strategic decisions that contributed to the growth in specific markets.

She adds “Kenya’s remarkable performance can be attributed to the strategic decision by government to simplify the visa regime in 2023 as well as targeted and effective insights-driven marketing campaigns”.

“This recovery can be attributed to consistent efforts to showcase South Africa as a welcoming, responsible tourism destination, highlighting experiences that align with intrepid, green economy conscious travellers,” the Minister said.

Minister de Lille emphasised the charm and magnetism of South Africa as a tourism destination, with specific mention of the reopening of the Chinese market and the resumption of direct flight routes in 2023.

Looking ahead, Minister de Lille emphasised the need to unlock barriers such as visa regulations and limited air access and airlift for sustained growth.

The Minister expressed commitment to working with partners and government colleagues to facilitate policy and regulation revisions.

In conclusion, Minister de Lille thanked all visitors for choosing to visit South African and likewise thanks South Africans for their continuous hospitality and warm welcome to visitors, expressing optimism for sustained charm, attractiveness, and relentless tourism growth.

### **For further information, contact**

**Zara Nicholson**

**Ministry Media Liaison Officer**

Cell: +27 (0) 79 416 5996

Email: [znicholson@tourism.gov.za](mailto:znicholson@tourism.gov.za)

**OR**

**Thandiwe Mathibela at South African Tourism**

**GM: Global PR, Communications and Stakeholder Relations**

Tel: +27 825 520979

Email: [mediaq@southafrica.net](mailto:mediaq@southafrica.net)

Website [www.southafrica.net](http://www.southafrica.net)