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## **MEDIA STATEMENT BY MINISTER PATRICIA DE LILLE**

### **SOUTH AFRICA TOURISM ARRIVALS ON THE RISE: JANUARY TO JULY 2023 DATA UNVEILED**

**DATE: 30 AUGUST 2023**

With the release of Statistics South Africa's official international arrival figures for January to July 2023, South Africa's rising momentum in the global travel industry is indisputably affirmed.

The numbers speak for themselves. South Africa remains an attractive destination, for both domestic and international travellers. The country draws travellers with its unique blend of nature, culture, and history.

In a promising sign for the country's tourism recovery, international tourist arrivals from January to July 2023 totalled 4.8 million. This represents a remarkable 70.6% increase when compared with the first seven months of 2022. While recovery towards pre-covid numbers is promising this is 19.0% lower compared to the same period in 2019.

Our goal is to surpass pre-COVID arrival numbers and exceed 10 million arrivals by the end of March 2024 and the numbers thus far as encouraging as we gear up for a bumper summer season.

#### **African Markets Lead the Way**

Tourists from the rest of Africa constituted a significant 75.8% of all arrivals, equating to 3.6 million tourists during the January to July 2023 period.

Within the African region, Zimbabwe and Kenya stood out for their remarkable growth. Zimbabwe saw an exceptional 115.6% increase in tourist arrivals, totalling 1.2 million, while Kenya recorded a 110.2% surge, reaching 21,851 arrivals for January to July 2023 compared to the same period last year.

#### **European Markets Show Strength**

Europe contributed to 14.3% of the total arrivals, with 682,828 tourists visiting in the first seven months of 2023. This marks a 61.5% increase when compared to the same period last year.

The United Kingdom remains the top European source market with 204,885 tourists coming into SA marking a 45.7% growth.

Germany experienced a 73.3% increase in arrivals, amounting to 132,302 tourists. This was followed by the Netherlands which saw an increase 60% amounting to 68 421 visitors from this country. Russia exhibited a dramatic growth of 140.8%, contributing 15,179 arrivals.

### **The Americas and Asia exhibit Strong Momentum**

Tourist arrivals from the Americas registered at 259,081, reflecting a 59.0% growth compared to the same period in 2022. The United States contributed the most, with 206,015 arrivals, marking a 54.5% increase.

Asian markets also showed significant growth with 112,243 arrivals —an astounding 91.2% increase over last year. In this region, India led the way with 47,905 tourists, a 70.6% growth, closely followed by China, which saw a massive 260.6% surge, amounting to 19,687 arrivals.

### **Middle East Registers Solid Gains**

The Middle East saw a robust increase in tourist numbers, with 32,016 arrivals in the January to July 2023 period —a 63.6% growth when compared to the same period in 2022. South Africa received 9,425 arrivals from Saudi Arabia marking an increase of 59.3%. The United Arab Emirates showed a remarkable 139.6% growth, accounting for 3,923 arrivals.

Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille said, “These latest figures underscore South Africa’s appeal as a sought-after leisure and business events destination. Africa as a source market continues to dominate in terms of arrivals and therefore solidified its position as a key contributor to our tourism industry.”

Minister stated, “The rest of the African continent has always been vital to our tourism landscape, and strengthened ties. It is clear that more reviews and revisions of the immigration regulations and visa requirements are required as evidenced by the surge in arrivals from Kenya. As of January 1, 2023, Kenyans enjoy visa-free travel to South Africa for a period of 90 days in a year. I look forward to continue working with the rest of my colleagues in government in this regard so that we can all attain mutual benefits of our collaborative initiatives.”

Kenya’s remarkable can be attributed to the strategic decision to simplify the visa regime earlier this year as well as targeted and effective insights-driven marketing campaigns.

“The continued strength of established markets like the UK, US, and Germany cannot be overstated. While numerous factors can be attributed to this, direct flights have bolstered these numbers, reflecting not only the ease of connectivity but also the deep-rooted travel relationships South Africa enjoys with these nations,” the Minister said.

A standout in the latest figures is the notable resurgence from China. “The re-opening of the Chinese market and the initiation of direct flight routes have catalysed a resurgence in arrivals from this region, highlighting the vast potential and significance of this market to South African tourism,” Minister de Lille noted.

### **DOMESTIC TOURISM**

Back home, domestic tourism continues to show phenomenal growth contributing significantly to the country’s economy.

In the first half of 2023, South Africans took 18.8 million domestic overnight trips, up 23.4% when compared to the same period in 2022. Overnight spend was also up by 21.2% to reach R52.2 billion during this period.

“We are so pleased that over the years, we have managed to showcase our country’s wide variety and increase its appeal to domestic travellers. It is clear from the numbers that there is an increase in the culture of travel among South Africans. Domestic travellers have truly showcased their commitment to exploring their own country. Their travels bolster the local economy and support our communities. This uptick definitely emphasises the significance of nurturing domestic tourism,” Minister de Lille said.

South Africa recently hosted the 15th BRICS Summit at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, where over 50 heads of state were welcomed. This marked the largest assembly of heads of state outside of any presidential inauguration. With more than 1,000 delegates in attendance, the incident-free event was celebrated as a phenomenal success.

Our dedicated efforts to address and streamline processes enhance connectivity, and nurture strategic partnerships are truly paying off.

Our country offers also undeniable breath-taking landscapes, cultural richness, and unique offerings. Here’s to South Africa’s undiminished allure on the global tourism map,” Minister de Lille concluded.

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**Issued by the Ministry of Tourism**

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