



MINISTRY
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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MEDIA STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF TOURISM, PATRICIA DE LILLE

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TOURISM ON THE RISE AS MORE THAN 4 MILLION TOURISTS VISIT SOUTH AFRICA IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2023

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.

There has also been a substantial increase across all regions in the same period. Although the current growth demonstrates signs of recovery, we are still operating at 80% of our pre-pandemic capacity. In 2019 South Africa welcomed more than 5 million tourists between January and June.

The Africa region continues to bring the largest share of tourist arrivals to the country. A total of 3 083 583 tourists that arrived in South Africa between January and June 2023 came from the rest of the African continent. This is a 79.9% increase when compared to the same period last year when South Africa welcomed 1 714 501 visitors from this region.

Africa land arrivals increased by a significant 81.6% while Africa air recorded a growth of 44.5% between January to June this year when compared to the same period last year.

We are pleased with the number of visitors that our country continues to receive from the rest of the African continent. 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. Between January and June 2023, the Australasia region (mainly comprised of Australia and New Zealand) recorded an increase of 141 % with 50 882 visitors coming from this region compared to 21 108 arrivals in the same period last year.

The Asia region almost doubled its figures with a 99.5% growth, from 47 912 to 95 596 visitors.

Europe, the largest source of visitors outside Africa, also experienced solid growth of 66,8.1%, from 356 352 to 594 388 visitors 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. The substantial increase, particularly from Australasia and Asia, underlines and reflects the global trend towards post-pandemic travel recovery. This is all hugely welcomed because our sector contributes significantly to our country's economy.

Through various tourism marketing strategies, South Africa continues to invite travellers worldwide to explore our diverse landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and unique wildlife and wide open spaces. These exceptional numbers illustrate South Africa's undeniable allure and the enduring impact it has on travellers.

The latest statistics by Stats SA is evidence that the implementation of the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan has gained traction and is contributing to sustained, accelerated economic growth.

We are growing stronger each day and we are determined to pass pre-COVID-19 arrival numbers. South Africa is open for tourism, and we are ready to welcome more tourists from across Africa and the globe to experience our diverse cultures and heritage.

South Africa was recently honoured by readers of the UK's Telegraph Travel publication, with the prestigious title of "Best Country," while its iconic city, Cape Town, claimed the coveted title of "Best City in the World."

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to all travellers who chose to explore our country and contributed to the tourism sector's growth and to our economy. The support of travellers, both domestic and international, has played a crucial role in revitalizing our economy and restoring the vibrancy to our tourism sector. I also wish to thank the tourism private sector across the country for all your hard work to grow our tourism offering, promote South Africa as a must-see destination and for your amazing hospitality in welcoming and hosting our visitors.

Issued by:

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