

# SA Tourism shines at WTM London, latest stats show continued growth

In a move to further boost the tourism sector, South Africa has sent a formidable delegation to the World Travel Market (WTM) London, taking place from 6 November 2023. Spearheaded by Tourism Minister Patricia De Lille, the South African contingent comprises 27 exhibitors representing the country's diverse tourism offerings. The delegation, encompassing provincial tourism authorities, destination management companies, tour operators, airlines, and accommodation groups and establishments aims to leverage the event to further bolster the country's tourism recovery.



Source: Supplied

South Africa is also promoting its hidden gems and little towns and dorpiess and the work that the South African Township and Village Tourism Association (SATIVITO) is doing in South Africa.

Representatives from the Mier and Khomani San villages in the Northern Cape are also taking part in a panel discussion at WTM London.

"WTM is pivotal for re-establishing connections, gleaning valuable market insights, and promoting our remarkable destination. As a highly competitive destination, we as South Africa, must show our partners that we know that travellers' needs have evolved and that in fact, we do have what they are looking for.

"Together as a greater tourism industry, we approach WTM with a singular goal: to connect with our various partners who are key in helping us achieve our goal of growing arrivals to our country. Our trade partners are key in putting together packages that attract visitors to our country while policy makers also play an important role in how South Africa is perceived by travellers.

"We are serious about growing arrivals to our country for our sector to have a positive impact on the South African economy and we are unambiguous in the stance that achieving this will take partnerships between the public and private sector," said Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille.

Minister de Lille participated at the annual WTM Ministerial Summit where she joined 40 tourism ministers from around the world at this event hosted in association with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).

## **Tourism sector education**

Minister de Lille's remarks at the summit were lauded as the Minister shared the need for the private sector to project the future needs of tourism, the skills and training that will be needed to support the growth and changes in the tourism sector so that young people are directed into the requisite fields of study in tourism.

During the Summit, Minister de Lille added: "There is a misalignment between the skills currently being taught and what is needed in the sector. The skills gap for the future of tourism can only be filled with a partnership between the public and private sector."

Minister de Lille also shared information on the Department of Tourism's skills and training opportunities provided to young people from across South Africa. These programmes targeting unemployed youth represent a multi-million investment into empowering young people to enter the tourism sector.

Following the hosting of the BRICS tourism ministers meeting in Cape Town in October, Minister de Lille will also be signing an Action Plan with Brazil's Minister of Tourism, Celso Sabino on joint marketing and collaborative efforts geared towards growing tourism between South Africa and Brazil, especially in light of the relaunch of SAA's direct flights from Cape Town and Johannesburg which took off in the past few days.



Source: Supplied

## SA attends WTM buoyed by tourism arrivals stats

Between January and September this year, South Africa saw a significant influx of tourists, with over 6,1 million visitors arriving in the country, more than 58.4% when compared to the 3.8 million arrivals to South Africa in the same period in 2022.

During this period, visitors from Africa represented 4.6 million of the total arrivals to South Africa, a 60% increase in Africa land arrivals and a 35% increase in Africa air arrivals.

South Africa welcomed more than 862,000 arrivals from Europe between January and September this year, a 50,9% increase on the more than 571,000 arrivals in 2022.

From Asia, South Africa welcomed more than 148,000 visitors in the first nine months of 2023, an increase of 82,6% from the 81,000 arrivals in the same period in 2022. Notably, China's arrivals to South Africa increased by 247% in 2023 when compared to 2022. India arrivals to South Africa increased by 57% in 2023, when compared to 2022.

All markets saw an increase in arrivals to South Africa of between 48 and 99%. During the first two quarters of 2023, total tourist foreign direct spend amounted to R48bn.

## South Africa's global appeal undeniable

The South African Tourism UK and Ireland Hub was recently honoured as the 'Luxury Tourist Board of the Year' at the Aspire Awards 2023, held in Manchester on 18 October. Aspire, a premier luxury trade magazine, presented this award.

Furthermore, in July, South Africa received recognition as the "Best Country in the World", while Cape Town was awarded the title of the "Best City" at the Telegraph Travel Awards as voted by The Telegraph readers.

South Africa's Tourism Minister Patricia de Lille engaged with key figures in the travel industry at the World Travel Market (WTM) in London, including the Telegraph Travel editor, Ben Ross, and representatives from CNN, Wanderlust magazine, and LonelyPlanet. Minister de Lille also received awards at the South Africa exhibition stand at WTM.

The LonelyPlanet team also handed over an award to Minister de Lille voting South Africa as a "Top Sustainable Destination" in the Best in Travel 2024 awards.

"Despite these wonderful recognitions and accolades, in a highly competitive global tourism landscape, we must continue to escalate our efforts to reassure travellers from all over the world that South Africa is the destination they must visit and explore. At WTM, we will also update our partners on our latest safety initiatives and reinforce our message that South Africa is an affordable destination where visitors can enjoy a range of diverse experiences and that these are all complemented by the warmth and welcoming posture of South Africa's people.

"As the summer season has begun in South Africa, we are also going to use that opportunity to invite the world to come to South Africa for summer," De Lille concluded.

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