

SA eyes air transport link to India

Tourism Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane says South Africa will look at creating an air transport link to India in a push to claim a bigger share of tourist arrivals from that region.



Daniel De Ciantis via [Unsplash](#)

Participating in a debate on the department's budget vote in Parliament on Wednesday, Kubayi-Ngubane announced interventions aimed at bolstering tourist arrivals from Nigeria and China, countries that, according to Statistics South Africa, attracted 53 000 and 96 000 tourists in 2018 respectively.

The Minister said South Africa's current share of these large outbound markets was low and that the department's efforts would bolster international arrivals to South Africa from China to over 9% of SA's total international tourist composition. She also eyed increasing tourist arrivals from India by over 7%.

"To achieve this, we will position South Africa as a China and India friendly tourism destination through relevant content-reviewed platforms and a comprehensive China and India readiness programme, developed in close partnership with the private sector. We plan to use technology platforms such as WeChat and Alipay for ease of access to the Chinese market.

"Establishing an air transport link between South Africa and India will receive our utmost attention. We will be engaging with various airlines to explore this possibility."

In 2018, South Africa recorded a total arrivals figure of 7.8 million from within the African continent, which represents the largest percentage of international arrivals to South Africa.

The department will create and share first-hand information to promote South Africa so that it becomes a destination of choice for the African continent and the diaspora.

"Initiatives will include partnering with online travel agencies, targeting the 'leisure' market, partnerships with South African product owners to drive affordable family packages and delegate boosting at exhibitions, association meetings and business chambers."

Kubayi-Ngubane said the European market remains an important market for SA's tourism sector. She said visitors from Europe can easily get Visas that allow them to stay for 90 days.

"The closeness of the time zone between South and European countries and our pleasant weather positions South Africa as a preferred destination for both business and leisure tourism for many Europeans. As for Americans, we have seen growth in the number of visitors and we expect the growth trend to continue."

Visa interventions bearing fruit

The department will work tirelessly to remove all obstacles that may stand in the way of tourists who want to enjoy their journey to South Africa.

"In this regard, we are happy to report that recent visa waiver for Russia and Angola had a positive impact on the number of international travellers who graced our shores.

"We are also encouraged by the announcement made by the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Aron Motsoaledi, that South Africa's new e-visa system is expected to launch within this financial year.

"These demonstrates that close collaboration between the two departments can lead to a positive economic impact, which augurs well with the priority of the sixth administration of working together to grow our economy," she said.

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