

Tourism sector working hard to recover

Tourism Minister Patricia de Lille says over the last two years, government has been hard at work to recover the tourism industry to what it was in pre-Covid-19 conditions.



Source: [Department of Tourism](#)

The Minister was speaking at the launch of the Africa Travel Indaba to be held in Durban in May.

"We are all working towards seeing our various economies return to the pre-Covid-19 performance levels and exceeding these. Through collaboration and partnerships, we have made great strides in the recovery. This is evidenced through the tourism performance numbers over the last year," she said.

The Minister highlighted that a comparison between the full calendar year last year and the same period in 2021, tourism to South Africa has increased by some 152%, with at least 5.7 million people gracing the country's shores.

"It is encouraging that arrivals from other African countries continue to be our most substantial source of arrivals, with just over four million arrivals during this period.

"Africa's Travel Indaba seeks to ensure that we, as the African continent, grow together collectively," she said.

Recovery

South Africa's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) places support for tourism recovery and growth as one of its key priorities in government's aim to stimulate equitable and economic growth.

Minister de Lille explained that the Africa Travel Indaba provides "strategic platforms in our powerful arsenal of tools that we can use to attain the goals" of the ERRP.

"Africa's Travel Indaba presents us with an opportunity to continue with the efforts we started last year when the industry met at this platform in person for the first time post the Covid-19 pandemic. We are committed to building our African tourism sector and reshaping our economy. No doubt over the past year we have done so in our various engagements.

"We know our sector was hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and in fact, at the time the pandemic reached our shores, the South African economy had experienced two consecutive quarters of a recession so our sector was already reeling from this.

"Many businesses in this sector folded and many people lost their jobs and now it is up to each and every one of us in this room to play our part to re-ignite the African economy. We win when we all win. Now is the time for us to gather once again to do business and put into action our plans," she said.

Airlift

Minister de Lille emphasised that a crucial component of economic growth is ensuring "trade and travel seamless across our continent and the various other markets" through air travel access domestically, regionally and internationally.

"Encouragingly, airlift to and from South Africa has seen continuous recovery. Last year we welcomed numerous direct flights from our key source markets into various parts of our country, such as the direct United Airlines flight from Cape Town to Newark in the United States of America," she said.

She announced that a significant milestone in air travel will be reached in South Africa tomorrow (Wednesday) when the first flight for group tours from China will arrive since the beginning of the pandemic.

"China is the most promising source market for South Africa. Just before the pandemic, South Africa received nearly 100,000 visitors from China. It is possible to push the number to [one million] by 2030.

"If we reach this target, more than R100 billion in Chinese tourism spend could be generated over a five-year period, and this could reduce unemployment significantly. The impact on the economy of South Africa will be positive and sustainable. For this reason, I will be working hard with our key stakeholders to remove key barriers such as airlift, visa and safety," she said.

De Lille praised the opening of new routes and new collaborations in the sector.

"Latam Airlines Group plans to re-launch a non-stop flight between São Paulo International Airport, Brazil, and OR Tambo International Airport, in July or August 2023.

"Last year, we also saw our national carrier, South African Airways, expand to various markets across the African continent. This is a major success for our country.

"I am very thrilled to see that there is indeed collaboration with our airline stakeholders as this is a major part of tourism recovery and beyond," she said.

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