

KZN leverages international trade fairs to attract more tourists

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (TKZN) is making significant efforts to recover and rejuvenate the province's international tourism sector, which has suffered a severe blow due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. To achieve this, TKZN is engaging with leading tour operators in several European countries to secure deals that will attract international tourists to the province ahead of the upcoming European Summer season. Recently, TKZN concluded a Northern European travel roadshow and participated in a five-day exhibition at Vakantiebeurs in the Netherlands in partnership with South African Tourism (SAT).



Source: Archive

The Netherlands and Belgium rank as the fourth and fifth largest European tourist markets for KwaZulu-Natal behind the UK, Germany and France.

"In-country initiatives and activations are an important part of international tourism marketing. They enable tourism destinations to engage directly with international buyers and tour operators who are responsible for bringing tourists to destinations. This is also where we gain valuable insight into the needs and perceptions of our target markets," says Sibusiso Gumbi, TKZN acting chief executive.

"Platforms like these allow us to lobby for KZN to feature in international brochures, distributed at various travel agencies around the world, ensuring that KZN is featured amongst must-visit tourism destinations.

"Relationships are critical in the tourism sector, and it is important to stay on top of the game and constantly engage with partners about new developments and changes taking place in our province. Later this year TKZN will participate in ITB Berlin and WTM London. In order to position KZN as a global player, it is vital for us to be where key decisions are made," Gumbi says.

Attracting mega business

KwaZulu-Natal's international tourist numbers are improving slowly, with the total number of international tourists rising by 22% in the first six months of 2023 compared to the same time last year.

As much as leisure tourism is important so is business and conference tourism and Kwazulu-Natal's Convention Bureau (KZN CB) and TKZN will be at Meetings Africa 2024 to market the province as a leading meeting and conferences destination. Meetings Africa attracts hundreds of international buyers from the African continent and across the globe.

"By attracting mega business events and many smaller conferences that can be hosted in some of our smaller towns ensures that the impact of tourism is felt across the province," concludes Gumbi.

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