

Changes to visa requirements just in time for summer holidays

After more than a year of lobbying and discussions, the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) has announced changes to visa requirements for people travelling in and out of South Africa. The department plans to communicate the new changes to the country's visa requirement with embassies and travel agencies across the globe says Tourism Minister, Derek Hanekom.



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FEDHASA Cape Chairman, Rob Kucera says, "The changes to visa requirements are significant, once again positioning South Africa as a preferred tourist destination of choice as the administrative burden linked to entering the country has now been lifted."

Over the next three months, the Department of Home Affairs will implement the following changes:

- The capturing of biometrics at ports of entry starting with a pilot at OR Tambo, Cape Town and King Shaka airports
- Look at introducing an Accredited Tourism Company Programme for countries like China, India and Russia
- Consider a long-term Multiple Entry visa for a period exceeding three months and up to three years for frequent travellers (for business meetings), business people and academics
- Principles will issue letters confirming permission for children to travel on school tours
- Extend the validity of the parental consent affidavit to six months

As the watchdog and lobbying body for the hospitality industry and with their members' best interest at the heart of FEDHASA Cape's mandate, the industry body welcomes the changes saying that they have come just in time for the summer holiday season. "We look forward to the suggestions and actions being implemented, making it easier for foreigners, especially tourists, to travel to and from South Africa."

Collaboration key to simplified tourism processes

At a workshop hosted earlier this year by Wesgro and the Department of Home Affairs, Kucera highlighted the fact that it is essential for the tourism and business sector to come together and engage in a spirit of collaboration, to examine the procedures that will assist in simplifying the admin systems and processes.

Following a successful Joint Association Members Meeting hosted in August themed, "Providing Leadership and Unity within the Industry and Growing the Tourism Economy" with the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) as guests, the Joint Association Member Partners - on a higher level - as well as the Chairmen of the Joint Associations committed to strengthening their partnership in the Western Cape.

"The Chairmen of this Joint Industry Association Partnership will be meeting on a regular basis to collaborate, share information, and connect with the relevant industry role players in an effort to speak as one voice within the Western Cape. Additionally, they will be providing updates and supporting the TBCSA, the combined tourism industry voice, on a national level," ends Kucera.

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