

Cape Town's tourism industry recovers to pre-pandemic levels

Tourism in Cape Town is close to reaching pre-pandemic levels a lot earlier than expected. This is according to Alderman James Vos, the City of Cape Town's mayoral committee member for economic growth.

Comparing the December 2019 festive period to the December 2022 festive period, Cape Town International Airport (CTIA) recorded a 72% increase in domestic visitors and a 98% increase in international visitors. "This impressive rebound in tourism can be attributed to the City's Tourism Bounce Back Strategy, which we developed with partners such as Cape Town Tourism in the midst of the pandemic and is aimed at stimulating supply and demand from specific source markets. Overseeing the formulation and subsequent implementation of this strategy involved weeks and long days of work with industry bodies and operators that have paid off this holiday period. The official figures show significant recovery and, in some cases, surpass pre-Covid-19 numbers," says Vos.



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Mark Maclean, regional general manager at Cape Town International Airport Cluster (CTIA), expressed gratitude to all passengers and visitors who used the airport over the festive period. "It has been a good festive season at CTIA with high reliability of operations. The airport had a festive feel, and we deployed additional staff to process the increased passenger volumes, supported by technology.

"We are pleased with the 98% recovery of international passengers compared to 2019, driven by the return of airlines and the start-up of new airlines into CTIA. We also recorded good domestic passenger demand, and we look forward to airlines adding additional capacity this year."

Cape Town Tourism chief executive officer, Enver Duminy said he's thrilled to witness such a steady influx of visitors to the region, with locals and tourists accelerating the Mother City's recovery following the devastating impact of unfair Omicron discrimination levelled last year at South Africa.

"It's remarkable to see our collective efforts to restore our beautiful city's international and domestic visitor performance to pre-pandemic levels paying off. We're grateful to the City of Cape Town, our Cape Town Tourism members and residents for sustaining our important sector so that our city remains the destination of choice in Africa."

Top attractions report impressive stats

In addition to the bounce back in air traffic, Cape Town Tourism's latest travel figures also reveal tourists' growing appetite for Cape Town attractions, which also experienced a significant recovery. Compared to 2019 figures, Groot Constantia reported a 71% recovery, Kirstenbosch was 76%, Robben Island was 89%, Chapmans Peak was 95%, and Table Mountain was almost 100%.

Wahida Parker, Cape Town Tourism chairperson and managing director of Table Mountain Aerial Cableway, said it's phenomenal that Table Mountain's magnetism continues to draw people in from across the globe over the holidays.

"The festive season was undoubtedly in full swing this December. The influx of visitors to our city had the opportunity to complement their beach visits and wine-tasting outings with a hike up Table Mountain or a ride in our cable car while taking in the superb views of the surroundings."

Reflecting this recovery, the largest entertainment destination of its kind in South Africa, Cape Town's GrandWest Casino and Entertainment World, reported a total footfall of 95% of its 2019 figures this festive season. The entertainment destination said its retailers' revenues surpassed 2019 numbers as they capitalised on the increase in traffic and extended trading hours.

General manager at GrandWest, Mervyn Naidoo, said the past fiscal showed strong signs of recovery. "We've hosted over 17 shows since July 2022, attended by more than 92,000 guests. Furthermore, our Grand Hotel was at 100% capacity this festive season with countless out-of-town visitors, we booked excess capacity into the City Lodge, and our retail outlets outperformed 2019 levels and continue to gain momentum."

Cape Town Tourism's survey of its members found that 85% said December's performance was much better than in 2019. The respondents said the primary international source markets were the U.S.A, Germany and the United Kingdom. The primary domestic markets were Cape Town, Gauteng, and KwaZulu-Natal.

Vos adds that he's thrilled that tourists can once again appreciate what the Mother City has to offer. "We've worked tirelessly to remind domestic and international visitors that Cape Town still has so much to offer. So, it's fantastic that even more visitors got to experience our breath-taking city this festive season, from our vibrant people and world-class experiences in our region that tourists repeatedly fall in love with. I am confident that our critical mission; to create a tourism-related job in every household across Cape Town; will reach even higher, if this festive season's stellar performance is anything to go by."