

Robust growth in SA's tourism with 2.4m arrivals in Q1

The recent release of international arrival data by Statistics South Africa for January to March 2024 highlights a strong and expanding tourism sector in South Africa. The figures show that international tourist arrivals totalled 2.4 million in the first quarter of 2024, a significant 15.4% increase compared to the same period in 2023.



Source: [123RF](#)

Africa leads the way

Between January and March 2024, South Africa welcomed 1.8 million tourist arrivals from the rest of the African continent, representing 74.5% of all arrivals, with Zimbabwe and Ghana showing remarkable growth.

Zimbabwe saw a 21.8% increase in tourist arrivals compared to the first three months of 2023, totalling 613,675, while Ghana recorded a 249.4% increase, reaching 7,904 arrivals for the same period.

Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille expressed further appreciation of the continued remarkable growth in arrival numbers from the African continent, especially Ghana.

She adds: "Ghana's immense performance can be attributed to the fact South Africa and Ghana announced a visa-waiver scheme on 1 November 2023.

"The visa waiver allows for travel for a period of up to 90 days within a calendar year, for purposes of business or tourism. This, coupled with targeted integrated marketing initiatives executed by South African Tourism to attract visitors from this market makes for a winning formula for the growth of our sector."

Travellers from other parts of the world also continued to show their appreciation and love for South Africa.

Strong momentum from the Americas

Tourist arrivals from the Americas registered at 118,194 from January to March 2024, reflecting a 12.4% growth compared to the same period in 2023.

Strength in European markets

From January to March 2024, South Africa recorded 420,727 tourist arrivals from Europe, marking an 8.6% increase compared to the same period in 2023.

The United Kingdom remained the top European source market with 125,420 tourists, showing a 5.3% growth from 2023. Germany and the Netherlands both experienced a 9.9% increase in arrivals, totalling 98,954 and 37,548 tourists respectively, while Russia also saw significant growth of 9.6%, contributing 9,329 arrivals.

Noteworthy growth from the Asia markets

In the first three months of 2024, South Africa saw significant growth from Asian markets with a total of 49,741 arrivals, an increase of 25.4% compared to the same period in 2023.

While arrivals from India slightly decreased by 0.9%, totalling 16,209 tourists, there was a notable surge from China with 11,017 visitors, marking a massive 82% increase from the previous year.

Middle East arrivals

In 2024, South Africa received 2,387 arrivals from Saudi Arabia, marking a 31.7% increase compared to 2023, alongside 321 arrivals from the United Arab Emirates during the period of January to March.

"The tourism sector is a significant contributor to the economy and job creation. We are determined to continue with this momentum. South Africa remains attractive and accessible for all travellers to enjoy," concludes Minister de Lille.

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