

Beit Bridge border traffic swells

Traffic has increased nearly 29% at Beit Bridge border post, Southern Africa's busiest inland port, as thousands Zimbabwean nationals living in SA make their way into the country to spend the holidays with their families, a border official said.

By [Ray Ndlou](#) 30 Dec 2013



Congestion at the Beit Bridge border post has eased this year with more officials on duty to process travellers' documents. Image: [My Landrover has a Soul](#)

The Beit Bridge border has handled 612,773 travellers since the start of the festive season, up from 484,307 in the same period last year.

Familiar scenes of congestion and border delays that are usually part of the festive season have been absent this year. Immigration officials increased the number of staff on duty as part of their decongestion drive and created makeshift clearance zones outside the border post to process travellers' documents.

The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority has 282 officers stationed at the border post. Immigration authorities on both the Zimbabwean and South African sides have created separate queues for commercial traffic and buses to ease congestion.

"(Zimbabwean) passports are now affordable and hence a lot of people are travelling legally," said Charles Gwede, assistant regional immigration manager in charge at the border post. "A lot of people started travelling in the first week of December while others have staggered their movement to avoid the last-minute rush.

"We handled a reduced number of travellers compared with the past few days when we had an increased volume of traffic particularly on the entry side, when people, mainly Zimbabweans working in SA, were coming home for Christmas."

Meanwhile, the Plumtree border post, which straddles Zimbabwe and Botswana, has seen an increase in traffic too. Operating 24 hours a day officials at the border indicated they were handling almost 12,000 travellers a day, as travellers now had a preference for the Plumtree border because of the relative speed of processing their documents.

"Since the opening of the border for 24 hours on 20 December ahead of the Christmas and New Year holidays, more than 6,000 people a day are entering the country. We have realised that travellers are shunning Beit Bridge because of congestion," said Nonhlanhla Nyathi, the principal immigration officer in charge of the western region.