

City of Gold the most popular city in Africa

Expected to welcome 3.6 million international overnight visitors in 2016, a 6.2 percent increase on last year's 3.39 million visitors, Johannesburg is set to be the most popular city in Africa for the fourth year, according to the [2016 Mastercard Global Destinations Cities Index](#).



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Cairo in Egypt is the second most visited African city with 1.5 million international overnight visitors followed by Cape Town (1.4 million visitors), Casablanca in Morocco (1 million visitors), and Durban (831,000 visitors).

“Tourism remains an important driver of South Africa’s economy, and the steady rise in visitor numbers indicates how the City of Gold’s fascinating mix of iconic attractions is proving ever more compelling to today’s international traveler,” says Mark Elliott, division president, South Africa, Mastercard. “Visitor spend is an increasingly important source of revenue for the city’s hospitality, retail, transport, sports and cultural sectors.”

The Index provides more than a ranking of the 132 most visited cities around the world. It projects visitor volume and spend estimates for the 2016 calendar year while delivering a deeper understanding of how people travel and spend around the world. The 13 African cities ranked in the Index are Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Cairo, Casablanca, Accra, Nairobi, Beira, Dakar, Kampala, Lagos, Maputo, and Tunis.

International visitor

Of Johannesburg’s expected international overnight visitors, 373,000 will travel from London in 2016. Harare (294,000), Frankfurt (233,000), Maputo (185,000) and Paris (163,000) round out the list of the top five cities that send visitors to Johannesburg. Only 18% of Johannesburg’s international visitors are from outside the Middle East and Africa region.

Johannesburg also comes out tops in Africa in terms of international visitor expenditure, with travellers expected to spend \$1.73 billion in 2016. Londoners are expected to spend the most (\$285 million), followed by visitors from Paris (\$155 million), Harare (\$106 million), Frankfurt (\$84 million), and Maputo (\$41 million).

The heartbeat of trade and economic activity

According to the City of Johannesburg, the Index rating affirms Johannesburg’s position as the economic capital and

heartbeat of trade and economic activity on the African continent. “As the strong numbers of visitors from our neighbouring countries show, Johannesburg is one of the continent’s most important business, cultural and economic hubs. Tourism is a priority industry for us and a pillar of our economic growth strategy for the years ahead,” says City of Johannesburg Executive Mayor Councillor Herman Mashaba.

“The index confirms Johannesburg’s status as a destination that attracts repeat visits due to its continually evolving tourism offering, from popular shopping destinations such as our malls to a wide range of lifestyle, sporting, and business events.”

Cape Town and Durban are ranked number three and eight in terms of expenditure in Africa, with international visitors expected to spend \$1 billion and \$288 million respectively.

New insights into purpose of travel and local spend

For the first time, the 2016 Index explores whether visitors travel for business or leisure and provides insights into how international visitors spend their time and money. It reveals that more than three-quarters (75.6%) of total visitors to Johannesburg are travelling for leisure, while just less than a quarter (24.4%) are travelling on business.

Shopping is one of South Africa’s key attractions for international tourists, accounting for nearly 44% of the money visitors spend in Johannesburg and Cape Town. This is a higher proportion than any other African city and on par with major world shopping destinations such as London (46.7%) and Tokyo (43.1%).

Visitors to Johannesburg will spend around 14% on accommodation and the same amount on food and beverages. A further 10% of international visitor expenditure will be spent on local transport, and 11.5% on local services.

The world’s top destination cities

Bangkok, the top-ranked destination city by international overnight visitor arrivals, is projected to receive 21.47 million international overnight visitors in 2016, just ahead of second-ranked London, with 19.88 million visitors. Paris (18.03 million), Dubai (15.27 million) and New York (12.75 million) complete the top five.

“The way people travel and spend across borders indicates just how interconnected and important the world’s cities are,” says Elliott. “As the planning and experience of the trip become increasingly important, Mastercard is bringing all these pieces together seamlessly through innovation and connections.”