

# Budget Speech focus on tourism promotion bodes well for inbound tourism

The Board of Airline Representatives South Africa (BARSA) says that Minister Pravin Gordhan's focus on tourism promotion in the annual Budget Speech bodes well for inbound tourism which has seen a 13% increase in tourist arrivals over the past year.



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According to Statistics South Africa, a total of 10,044,163 international tourist arrivals were recorded in South Africa in 2016, representing an additional 1.1 million international tourists in 2016 vs 2015.

The United Kingdom remained the leading source market for overseas arrivals to South Africa in 2016 (447,840 arrivals) followed by the USA (345,013) and Germany (311,832). China remained the leading growth market, with year-on-year growth recorded at 38%. Arrivals from India grew by 22%.

“Air transport plays a critical role in supporting the economic growth of a country, and with the additional international airline capacity we have seen in the past year, especially into Cape Town International Airport, tourist arrivals to South Africa will continue to be positively impacted,” says BARSA CEO June Crawford.

Minister Gordhan announced that there would be focused support on labour-intensive sectors, including tourism-related services, with an additional R494 million allocated to tourism promotion.

## Increased air access, improved connectivity

“We would encourage organisations such as South African Tourism that are involved in the inbound marketing of South Africa to work closely and collaboratively with the international airline community, inbound tour operators and travel agents to assess where the best return on investment can be achieved and further leverage their destination marketing efforts in key source markets.

“Enhancing the destination’s air access and removing obstacles to tourism, such as that which we have seen recently in Cape Town with the addition of new routes to London, Addis Ababa, Frankfurt, Doha and now Victoria Falls as part of Wesgro’s Project Khulisa growth strategy, not only increases tourist arrivals, but also create jobs in the tourism sector. The goal to add 120,000 additional jobs to the Western Cape as part of Project Khulisa is laudable, and increased air access is the key to its success,” adds June.

June says that liberalisation will assist in improving connectivity, giving airlines the ability to adjust capacity and add routes that meet market demand, which in turn boosts inbound international tourist arrivals.

“We have to make it as attractive as possible for tourists to visit South Africa, without compromising the safety of our borders. This additional boost to international marketing that Minister Gordhan has made provision for in his Budget will be a welcome contribution to stimulating inbound tourism demand.

“And an effort to remove as many obstacles as we can, to further encourage these visitors, as well as coordinated initiatives to promote inbound tourism together, will see us increase substantially the tourism growth that the South Africa economy needs.”

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