

# TBCSA presents its tourism recovery plan to parliament

On 9 June 2020, the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) met with Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Tourism to present its Tourism Recovery Strategy in hopes of reopening the industry sooner in order to rescue over half a million jobs in the country.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

The data-driven Tourism Recovery Strategy advocates for an earlier phased reopening of international tourism to South Africa as soon as September 2020.



## SA tourism industry lobbies for earlier reopening of inbound tourism

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While one of the comments raised by the Tourism Portfolio Committee was that the proposed September timing may be impacted by the predicted peak in Covid-19 infections (which experts estimate could happen around this time), the TBCSA highlighted that the reopening would be dependent on the development and roll-out of stringent and practical health-focused protocols by the travel and tourism value-chain to safeguard staff, travellers and guests.

The presentation to the Tourism Portfolio Committee was an important step in the "shoulder-to-shoulder" collaboration that private and public sector stakeholders have agreed is needed for tourism to reopen and contribute to South Africa's economic and job creation prospects.

"We acknowledge the good work being done by government to get tourism back on track. Tourism is a vital sector to South Africa's economy and accounts for 1.5 million jobs – many of those employed are young people. By nature of tourism's value chain, there are also significant benefits to other parts of the economy when tourism reopens. We are committed to doing this safely," says Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa, TBCSA CEO.

## Responsible opening of inbound tourism

The TBCSA's proposed Tourism Recovery Strategy acknowledges that a phased approach will be required for the responsible reopening of international tourism to South Africa. A "calculated, driven, aggressive and gradual" re-entry of

tourism into the economy is essential if South Africa is to save 1.2 million jobs, many of which are in rural areas – directly and indirectly linked to tourism – as well as the wider communities reliant on the tourism sector for their survival.

With the introduction of Level 3 lockdown, and with it the limited opening of business travel in South Africa, there is an opportunity to showcase the efforts and commitment that all aspects of the tourism value chain have made in developing and implementing protocols to instil confidence in the industry's ability to deliver a safe environment within which tourism activities can take place.

"As we see elsewhere in the world, the opening of domestic tourism is the first phase in ensuring that tourism starts to open slowly and leads the way in launching the various components in the tourism value chain. Business travel is the largest component in the formal travel industry. Its reopening provides us with an opportunity to see how we can further open domestic leisure within the context of the protocols in the very near future," explains Tshivhengwa.

## **Protocols for safe reopening**

The TBCSA's proposed phased Tourism Recovery Strategy provides for an initial 6-8-week Preparation Phase, followed by a Phase 1 trial where safe source markets with similar risk profiles and stages of the pandemic would be allowed to travel to South Africa. These travellers would be vetted, all stringent safety protocols would be in place, and the focus would be on low-contact product and low-risk areas.

In Phase 2, South Africa would further open key markets, expand the experiences on offer, until in Phase 3 air access is opened fully and the destination can restart its longer-term growth strategy.

Whilst the presentation focused on the recovery, various members of the committee also raised the very real issue of transformation in the sector. It was agreed that there would be an interaction on this matter in the future. Overall, the presentation was well received with many committee members acknowledging the role of tourism as well as the importance of reopening safely.

"We receive calls every day from tourism companies which are on the brink of having to retrench staff or close down. We have many, many jobs to protect in tourism. If we do not protect the value chain, it's going to be very difficult to reinstate it. And, if we do not do something soon, there are too many companies that will be beyond the point of no return," explains Tshivhengwa.

"We are committed to a safe and responsible plan to reopening our tourism sector. We know that the public sector and our private-sector tourism stakeholders are all equally as committed to this goal. This is our sector," concludes Tshivhengwa.