

# Tourism growth expected from Brics nations

By [Nick Hedley](#)

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The hotels in Durban might be teeming with visitors to SA for the Brics summit this week, but this is unusual.



Brics nations, despite high growth in tourist arrivals from these countries last year, remain an untapped resource for South African Tourism.

South African Tourism, the government agency tasked with marketing SA as a destination, is due to open its first office in Brazil within the next two months. In Russia, "we are going to start off with a trade-relations manager to develop the market - this will start in 2014".

Joint marketing agreements are also being signed with local travel agencies, tour operators and media houses.

Growth in tourist arrivals from Brazil, Russia, India and China has far outpaced growth from SA's traditional markets, says South African Tourism chief executive Thulani Nzima. Arrivals from Brics countries now probably equal arrivals from the UK - traditionally SA's top market.

There is a "growing business tourism component" in Brics arrivals - a good number of these business people can be seen at events such as the fifth Brics summit, under way in Durban, Nzima says.

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism says the number of inbound tourists from China grew 63.5% between January and September last year, making the world's second-largest economy SA's fourth-biggest overseas tourist market. Nzima says China is the top-performing country in the Brics group in terms of growth and arrival numbers, with 122,000 arrivals between January and November last year. However, this is still well below potential, given China's size.

## China's tourism growth

The Asian giant has about 83m outbound tourists a year - a number that grew 18% last year.

"South African Airways' newly introduced flight between Johannesburg and Beijing has helped drive this growth," Nzima

says. "Arrivals from India were about 97,000 for the same 11-month period, while 70,000 Brazilian tourists visited SA," he added.

Nzima says, Russia is "lagging a little" but there is no direct air link between Russia and SA, which might contribute why fewer Russians are coming to this country.

He says Brics tourists tend to spend more in SA than other tourists.

"On average, a visitor from China spends about R15,000 per trip, whereas our average from all markets is just below R9,000."

However, SA's inclusion in the Brics grouping was not necessarily the catalyst for the growth in tourism from the Brics countries.

Nzima says South African Tourism is focusing on expanding investments into emerging, high-growth markets and some of the Brics countries fall into that category as they have a growing middle class. He says India has the largest middle class in the world after America.

Laurent de Chorivit, general manager of Club Med's UK, South African and Nordic operations, shares this enthusiasm for Brics. He says the company - an international resort operator - has seen "huge increases" in the number of tourists from China, Brazil, Russia and SA, visiting Club Med destinations around the world .

De Chorivit says China is the country with the most potential, given that it is "a huge market".

Club Med has about 25,000 clients a year from China, although it is aiming to quadruple this to 100,000 within the next three years.

Source: *Business Day* via I-Net Bridge

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