

Cape Town tourism performance positive but sector needs sustained recovery

Cape Town Tourism has released its latest travel figures, which highlights a positive uptake of domestic travel during the festive period. The Mother City saw an increase in visitors with Cape Town International Airport reporting recovery of 66% for domestic arrivals and 29% for international when compared to December 2019.



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Across the board, tourism figures looked brighter for 'Dezember', despite ongoing travel bans and the discovery of Omicron. Fifty-seven percent of Cape Town Tourism's members indicated better performance in December 2021 than in December 2020 with 64% reporting an increase in domestic visitors and 18% reporting an increase in visitors from the UK.

Alderman James Vos, Mayoral Committee Member for Economic Growth at the City of Cape Town says: "2021 proved to be yet another challenge for our hospitality and tourism industries. But thanks to the success of our collaborative campaign efforts to attract local tourists, this past December holiday was much more positive for the local industry.

Judging by the demand that we saw, I believe that there will continue to be an upward trajectory for travel to Cape Town and South Africa. But we need to make good on this. By funding and working together with industry bodies such as Cape Town Tourism (CTT), we can drive further re-growth and development of this industry, particularly of the small businesses who make up the bulk of it.

This is an industry that traditionally supports hundreds of thousands of people with jobs. It also celebrates and reveals the diversity of our communities. We must make sure that tourism in Cape Town is as accessible as possible, both for those working in the industry and for those who buy into its experiences."

Enver Duminy, CEO of Cape Town Tourism, says: "We're delighted to see recovery in our visitor economy, with domestic and international tourists injecting some sorely needed capital into the city. We do understand that recovery will take a little longer than we had hoped but we are optimistic that this trend towards recovery continues in February, as we enter our 'second' peak season. While the numbers look better, we need sustained tourism to really impact our local small business sector and start turning the devastating blows dealt by Omicron-linked travel bans around.

Prior to the advent of Omicron, our Cape Town Tourism visitor study reported that 67% of South Africans intended to travel in December. In practice, just 47% went away, according to the latest retrospective study. That's a considerable decrease, and many of our local members reported experiencing drastic last-minute cancellations. Hopefully, February will bring a surge of guests to our shores to experience the best our beautiful city has to offer."

Here are some of the positive figures for December 2021:

More visitors for the city's best-loved attractions

All of Cape Town's famed attractions reported positive recovery when compared to 2019 figures. Cape Point at 33%, Chapman's Peak Drive at 77%, Groot Constantia at 60%, Kirstenbosch at 49%, Robben Island at 46%, Table Mountain at 57% and Two Oceans Aquarium at 76%.

The V&A Waterfront reported a year-on-year % increase of 31% and attributed it to increased footfall and eased restrictions. They also reported a strong influx of domestic travellers that helped drive the improved figures.

A stronger performance across all sectors

Cape Town Tourism's dipstick survey of its members found 57% indicated that their December 2021 performance was better than December 2020. 64% reported an increase in domestic visitors. 18% reported an increase in visitors from the UK, 25% saw an increase in visitors from the USA, and 25% from Germany.

One member, in the accommodation sector, said, "We received a lot of local travellers this past December 2021. We are just thankful to them all for supporting our industry."

Keep visitors coming

However, many entities remain in dire straits and desperately need international visitors to boost their businesses. One restaurant said: "I lost 60% of my December bookings and January has been slow. Holding on by a thread."

Another member in the accommodation sector added: "The current season was almost completely wiped out due to the travel restrictions from Europe. How is it possible to survive as a small business that is focussed on international guests?"

"Let's not lose sight of our wins. December saw a wonderful influx of local and international visitors to our city. It's been especially heart-warming to see so many South Africans passionately supporting homegrown businesses. Thank you! Hopefully, this is an upward trend, and we'll see more people coming to Cape Town to find their freedom in February.

"Cape Town Tourism will continue to champion our beautiful city locally and internationally. And if you haven't had the opportunity to travel over December and are in need of a good break, or you've fallen in love with Cape Town and want to come back to explore a little bit more, access our pocket-friendly deals on our [website](#)," concludes Duminy.

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