

Growing South Africa's inbound tourism

On day two of Meetings Africa 2019, South African Tourism CEO, Sisa Ntshona, and Tourism Minister, Derek Hanekom met with 16 hosted journalists from around the world to discuss the health of South Africa's tourism industry, and how the country intends to grow it.



In his State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa's said that the country intends to increase its tourist numbers to 2-million per annum by 2030, tourism authorities have taken measures to ensure the target is met. This target is linked to South African Tourism's five-in-five strategy: increasing international tourists by 4-million and domestic travellers by 1-million in a five-year period ending in 2021.

South Africa currently has 1% of the global tourism share and both Hanekom and Ntshona believe this can be improved. Ntshona suggests that South Africa can do this by transforming its visa regime into a world-class one, making it easy and predictable.



SA tourism industry looks to relaxed visa restrictions to boost arrivals

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Hanekom spoke about how visa requirements can shape a traveller's choice of destination.

"Two years ago [government] said Russians travellers to South Africa no longer need visas. In the first year, there was a 53% increase in tourist numbers. For some reason, we introduced a visa requirement for New Zealanders. In the first year, 24% decline in numbers coming to South Africa. It tells the story."

Positioning strategies, identifying markets

Currently, South Africa's core markets are travellers from the UK, the US and Europe. However, there are strategies in

place to attract the up and coming markets on India and China considering they have a rapidly growing middle class. "There is massive growth potential from these countries," adds Hanekom.

Ntshona warned against neglecting existing markets but at the same time, mentioned that India and China are definite targets for growth. "These emerging markets [India and China] are not large now but we are planting the seed for further down the line."

Ntshona said that to avoid over-tourism in South Africa's major cities, South African Tourism is trying to direct travellers to the smaller hidden gems of the country. Most of South Africa's smaller cities and towns have the capability to host small and medium-sized business events while also being attractive for leisure travellers. All tourists need to do to learn more about South Africa and its people is to explore more.

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