

Q1 tourism figures show Western Cape remains a leading destination, economic force

The Quarter 1 Tourism Figures (January to March 2017), released by South African Tourism, showed that 472,156 foreign tourist arrivals were recorded during this period, a 6% increase from the same time last year and resulting in a foreign direct spend of R5.7bn, a 1.2% increase from Q1 2016.



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The Western Cape came out tops for the number of formal bed nights, reaching 3,295,800. This was an 18.3% increase from the first quarter of 2016. The Western Cape was also the top province in terms of the average length of stay, with tourists spending an average of 12 nights in the province.

A breakdown of the share of international tourists to the Cape:

- 35,3% of all African tourists arriving in South Africa by air visited the Cape;
- 39,7% of all tourists from Asia and Australia visited the Cape;
- 60,0% of all tourists from the Americas chose the Western Cape;
- 61.7% of all European tourists visiting South Africa, opted to make the Cape their holiday destination.

All-in-all, the Western Cape accounted for 30% of South Africa's tourist spend during this reporting period.

The highest growth of source markets was recorded from Brazil, with a 147.8% increase in arrivals. Tourists from France, the Netherlands and Sweden all increased by double-digit figures.

The value of tourism to the Western Cape

These results show yet again why tourism is so essential to the Western Cape economy, especially during the more challenging economic times brought on by the drought.

Indeed, in 2016, the Western Cape tourism sector directly supported 319,227 jobs (direct, indirect and induced), up by 25,508 jobs in 2015. In the same period tourists spent R38.8bn in the local economy up by R10.2bn since 2014.

According to World Travel and Tourism, the sector employed 716,500 people (4,6% of all employment) nationally in 2016 while contributing R402bn to the national economy (9.3% of the entire economy). Tourism in the Western Cape also created a gross value add of more than R16.5bn. Exports as a result of tourism contributed R128bn while investment into the sector amounted to R68.9bn.

Stated differently, tourism presents nearly R1 in every R10 for the country's gross domestic product.

Accutely aware of water restrictions

Judy Lain, Wesgro's Chief Marketing Officer said: "We welcome these tourists to our beautiful province, and remind them to abide by water restrictions when visiting. Interviews conducted by Wesgro in Cape Town has made it clear that the vast majority of tourists are acutely aware of the water crisis, and are more than happy to be water wise."

"Given that these tourists only stay in the province on average for around 10 days, and are not all here at once, at any given time, international tourists only add 3.4% to the population of the Western Cape. Tourists should therefore not be viewed as a risk to our province, but as an important economic benefit that will help us through these more difficult economic times."

A leading leisure destination

The Western Cape Minister of Economic Opportunities, Alan Winde added: "The Western Cape continues to be a leading leisure destination for travellers, recording the highest number of formal bed nights in South Africa in the past quarter. Our region also reported the longest average stay during the period under review. This is because innovative tourism entrepreneurs and major attractions keep reinventing their offerings, giving tourists more reasons to visit.

"The latest report again demonstrates why we are focusing on tourism as part of our Project Khulisa growth strategy. Tourist spend totalled R5.7bn during the first quarter of this year, driving growth and job creation in our province. This is excellent news as we head into our traditional peak tourism season."

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