

Tourism soars in first quarter

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A total of 2,267,807 tourists arrived in South Africa in January, February and March. Overseas tourist arrivals grew by 17.8%. Van Schalkwyk described the figures as "wonderful".

It was an encouraging sign that growth in tourist arrivals had come from all regions. Emerging markets had continued their robust growth while traditional markets had bounced back.

Arrivals from Europe grew by 11.9% (394,716 tourists). The United Kingdom recovered from a decline in 2011 to post positive returns of 9.5%, delivering 133,729 tourists.

Germany maintained a strong positive growth trend. "With a 15.2% growth rate (77,768 tourists), the country was among the best-performing markets on the European continent."

Robust sales, marketing partnerships, South Africa's accessibility, and its value for money for European travellers contributed to the growth from Europe.

The United States also returned excellent growth of 16.1% (70,095 tourists).

"South Africa continued to enjoy fantastic growth from the emerging markets during the first quarter of this year."

Brazil posted 71.7% growth (19,133 tourists), India grew by 23.1% (21,138 tourists), whilst tourist arrivals from China increased by 67.7% (30,883 tourists).

In total, the regional Asian market returned tourist arrivals growth of more than 43%, delivering 85,189 tourists (against 59,549 tourists for the same three months last year).

Tourist arrivals from regional African tourist markets achieved positive growth rates of 7.9%.

Angola (up 48.5%, or 14,394 tourists), Nigeria (26.7% growth, or 17,066 tourists) and Tanzania (31.4% growth, or 8247 tourists) stood out as exceptional continental-market achievers in the first three months of the year.

This overall growth in tourism could be ascribed to significant investments in the local tourism industry, in time, energy and resources.

South Africa had hosted a series of trade workshops across key markets, numerous travel, trade and media familiarisation trips, and invested in ongoing research into consumer needs providing insight into campaigns which had paid off.

"We are extremely lucky to live in South Africa and to enjoy in our own backyard a destination that has grown tremendously in popularity and desirability all over the world," said Van Schalkwyk. "Let's work together and encourage each other to continue to make tourists feel at home, to travel South Africa ourselves... and to continue offering the excellent service, value for money and accessibility that have

delivered these exceptional results."

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