

South Africa: Tourism Industry to Cash in on 2010

The South African tourism industry is standing in wait to cash in on the 2010 FIFA World Cup which will be held for the first time in Africa.

Tourism Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk said the tournament, which kicks off in less than 100 days, would help to push up the number of tourists visiting the country to 10 million this year.



While the global tourism industry shrank 4 percent last year as a result of the global financial crisis, South Africa still ended up in positive territory, said Van Schalkwyk.

"What we will do this year is to achieve what many people said four, five years ago was impossible. This year we will receive 10-million foreign tourists and that, in our view, is a major achievement."

Van Schalkwyk was also confident that the country will be able to provide lodging for the expected 400 000 visitors between June and July. He reiterated that an extensive accommodation audit has shown there is space for everyone. "We are confident that we will be able to deal with whatever for the duration of the World Cup."

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There are almost 19 000 establishments ranging from large formal to small informal businesses. The 200 000 plus rooms roughly translate into 405 000 beds. The Western Cape leads the pack with over 7 000 establishments. A new database for all establishments is already operational.

While the FIFA World Cup will bring in visitors, Van Schalkwyk said all South Africans have a responsibility to help build tourism capacity. He said the World Cup would help entrench South Africa as an attractive destination for sports tourism, which presently accounts for 10 percent of all foreign arrivals.

"We have all this infrastructure to use after 2010 and we have to roll out the post-2010 (plan) because on July 12, that show will leave South Africa and we will have to continue to build this industry," he said.

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