

SOUTH AFRICA: TOURISM RATES FALL WITH THE NEW VISA ENTRY REQUIREMENTS



The visa requirements for the family tourism market of South Africa have undergone slight changes this year. Starting June 1st, new requirements have been placed on families who wish to travel to South Africa to spend their holiday there.

These new requirements have created a serious drop in the number of tourists coming to South Africa. **New international arrivals of families have dropped 9.8% since the new requirements have been put into practice**, according to a Forwardkeys study. Not only has the tourism industry for families been on the decrease, total international travels in general have also been on the decrease between 6.8 and 10.6%.

These new regulations are taking a toll on the South African tourist industry. While the family segment was the only tourism segment which was on the rise before the new requirements (+1.8%), the numbers are now dropping.

The new requirements state that anyone who travels with someone under the age of 18 must present an unabridged birth certificate at port entry as well as a passport and visa. These regulations are intended to counter human and child trafficking, but are now turning well-meaning visitors away.

In addition, a new requirement has been put into place which requires international visitors apply in person for their visa to South Africa. This is to gather biometric information through fingerprints. The processing centers for South African tourism, however, are often too far away from the residence of potential visitors to be a viable option.

All in all, South Africa has lost 150,000 international visitors as well as \$128 million when compared with the first quarter of 2014. According to the head of an industry body the new visa rules will cost the tourism industry \$540 million in yearly revenue. The new laws have been placed under review by Derek Hanekom, the South African tourism minister. The South African-based BRICS think tank has suggested regulations which are less stringent and encourages international tourism once again.

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