

VISITORS FROM AFRICAN COUNTRIES BOOST TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA



The South African tourism industry has experienced a significant recovery following three challenging years marked by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a particular effect on the country. While the situation gradually returns to normal in 2023, especially thanks to visitors from other African countries, figures are still far from the excellent numbers recorded in 2019.

South Africa was the leading tourist destination in Africa in 2003, with 6.5 million visitors, surpassing Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco. **However, the country is now in fourth place behind Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia.**

According to the South African Statistics Agency, the country welcomed 8.48 million tourists in 2023, representing a 48.9% increase compared to last year. Despite this increase, the country still needs to reach the level of 2019, where it received over 14 million tourists and earned 8 billion euros in revenue.

However, South Africa's tourism industry is unique compared to other African countries, as most tourists are African. Despite some xenophobia towards nationals from neighboring countries, 6.4 million of the 8.48 million registered visitors are Africans, accounting for 75.6% of total arrivals. Zimbabwe is the highest contributor, with almost 2 million visitors, followed by Mozambique and Lesotho. Tourists from African countries visit South Africa for shopping, nightlife, and business purposes. Regarding tourist arrivals from other continents, Europeans comprise the largest group with 1.2 million visitors, followed by those from the Americas and Asia with 455,901 and 199,308 visitors, respectively.

European tourists are among the main visitors to South Africa's natural attractions and game reserves. **One of the few African countries where people can observe the Big Five**—Africa's iconic mammals like the lion, elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo, and leopard—South Africa is a favorite destination for safari lovers. Kenya, Tanzania, and Botswana are other countries where one can experience the same.

Unfortunately, insecurity is a significant factor in the decline of tourist arrivals in South Africa despite its rich tourist heritage. On the other hand, shopping, nightlife, visiting game reserves, beach activities, and exploring natural attractions are among the most well-liked activities for tourists visiting the country.

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