

TOURISM TUESDAYS

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Dear Valued Partner

This edition of Tourism Tuesdays is an exciting one, as we celebrate some wins for our US market as well as Mandela Day here in South Africa.

Despite the curveballs thrown by the COVID-19 pandemic, for the first time since 1994, the US became our biggest overseas market. The data shows that this was driven mainly by first time travellers to South Africa, which signifies momentous growth for destination South Africa and once again is testament to our marketing efforts.

I trust that our trade partners will find the US traveller insights contained in this newsletter useful and that this will help in packaging relevant and appealing experiences and products for our travellers.

We are also so thrilled about the recent news that Delta and United Airlines will likely, later this year, fly directly to Cape Town. Delta will operate a non-stop flight three times a week between its hub at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and Cape Town International Airport. The airline already currently operates flights between Atlanta and O.R Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg. United Airlines will operate a non-stop flight three times a week between Washington Dulles International Airport and Cape Town International Airport. They currently operate non-stop routes between Newark Liberty International Airport to both Johannesburg and Cape Town.

Yesterday we commemorated Mandela Day – a day which urges us to celebrate Nelson Mandela’s legacy by doing good for others. In this spirit, South African Tourism released a TVC to promote active citizenship and nation-building. As we build together towards recovery, following the pandemic, it is important that our outlook as a country remains positive. [You can view the TVC here.](#)

Lastly, to all our South African trade partners - we’re on a mission to grow our domestic market, so South African Tourism is calling on you to become part of Sho’t Left Travel Week and come on board with special discounted travel offers for our domestic travellers! Visit www.shotleft.co.za for more information.

Have a great week and we look forward to receiving updates from you.

Regards
TK



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2021 A Bumper Year for US Travellers to South Africa

In 2021, the United States of America (USA) became South Africa’s number 1 overseas market, for the first time ever. Prior to this, the United Kingdom (UK) had been South Africa’s number 1 overseas market since 1994. Not only did the US market secure the top spot, but it also led in terms of growth in arrivals during the course of the year, with a total of 82 020 arrivals in 2021 up 14% from 2020 and was among the top growth markets. In 2019, pre-pandemic, the USA was 2nd with 373 694 arrivals behind the UK (436 559) and ahead of Germany (322 720).

SA clinches a spot on the USA’s Bucket list

South Africa is a top bucket-list destination, loved for world-class travel, a wide variety of experiences, including exclusive game reserves, and affordable-luxury accommodation options, among the US travellers. The destination is rich in active adventure, cultural, and historical offerings. It also puts tourists centre stage as they get immersed in the food, language, history, great music, fashion, arts and culture while also offering top-end wildlife, beach, and active adventure experiences that include the great outdoors, hiking trails, driving along the coastline, and other thrilling experiences. Add to this the welcoming and friendly people, great weather, value for money for travellers, and natural attractions and it is the perfect holiday destination. In 2021, as it was in 2019, eating out, shopping, wildlife viewing, natural attractions, and socialising were among the Top 5 activities and drove the demand that led to the bumper year of US arrivals.

USA was the top overseas market in 2021 (arrivals and spend)

The US market’s outstanding performance owes a lot to both United Airlines and Delta Air Lines who continued to service the destination during the November to December rise of the Omicron variant. This despite South Africa being placed on many nations’ red lists, alongside other Southern African countries. Both carriers are committed to the destination and have announced expanded services and new routes for 2022. In 2021, the USA also topped the tourist revenue among the overseas markets with R2.3 billion, which was driven by average tourist spending in South Africa being higher than pre-pandemic levels up to R31 100 from R22 900 in 2019. The increase in tourist spend from the USA was driven by leisure tourism activities (17%) and shopping (22%), with the share of wallet being maintained or increasing respectively from 2019, while other categories saw a declining share of wallet in 2021.

First-time travellers drove arrivals

The tourist profile and trends taken from SA Tourism’s Departure Survey showed that the US market was, and continues to be primarily driven by first-time travellers, who are under 45 years old and looking to explore South Africa on holiday for a week or two; either on a solo adventure or on vacation with a loved one. In 2019, more than two-thirds of tourists from the US were first-time visitors (68.3%), and this grew to 70.1% in 2021. Tourists travelling alone or with a spouse or partner in both years up from 75.1% in 2019 to 79.4% in 2021. More than half of tourists travel to South Africa on holiday (relatively unchanged respectively). With a majority of tourists aged over 45 (down slightly from 57.7% in 2019 to 52.5% in 2021).



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The pandemic caused booking cycles to be longer for travel in 2021

Close to three-quarters of arrivals to South Africa in 2021 had planned, decided, and booked their travel to South Africa more than a year in advance. This contrasts with pre-pandemic patterns in 2019, when South Africa saw shrinking decision and booking cycles among American travellers.

Pre-pandemic, consistently around 40% the US tourists booked their travel between 4 to 12 months ahead of travel. It is, therefore, anticipated that travellers will revert to the short booking cycle trend as travel normalises in the coming years.

Game Lodges grew in popularity

In 2021, the top accommodation choice was staying with friends and family (0.5 million bed nights - 41% share). However, game lodges had the most growth (with share of bed nights up 5% from 2019). Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) also grew significantly (up 13% from 2019).

This trend can be attributed to the need to reconnect, alongside health concerns brought about by the pandemic, and the comfort and peace of mind that comes from staying with people one knows and trusts. When it came to paid accommodation, hotels topped the list with 248 500 bed nights (19% share in 2021, down from 28% in 2019).

Exploring South Africa's regions

In 2019, the Western Cape overtook Gauteng as the most visited province, with 67% share of US arrivals. Western Cape province also led in terms of attractions with 9 of the Top 10 attractions visited. V&A Waterfront, Cape Point, Cape Town City Centre, Camps Bay, and Table Mountain were the most visited attractions in 2019 and have consistently been the Top 5 attractions for the American traveller in 2021. Gauteng received 46% of US arrivals in 2021, returning to its place as the top province for US tourists. Western Cape came a close 2nd with a 44% of arrivals and still led in total spend (down to 28% share of spend from 51% in 2019)

What trade should know

South Africa has been reopened for tourism since November 2020, and as of June 2022, proof of vaccination at all ports of entry is no longer required. Mask mandates have been removed, owing to the limited imminent risk and sustained lower rates of infections. The limitation on events and gatherings has also been lifted, which will have the greatest impact on the meetings and business event sector.



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What trade should know ...contd.

South Africa has reached 50% of the population at least on one dose of the vaccine and this justifies the dropping of social distancing requirements set in the regulations to mitigate COVID-19. Travel to South Africa from the USA is expected to recover to 2019 levels in 2027.

Knowing what tourists want and packaging great value, natural scenery, wildlife experiences with immersive cultural experiences and interaction with local food, active adventure, and friendly people can speed the recovery of this market. We see in our data, that American tourists seek wildlife, natural scenery, beach, and adventure activities and with restrictions being lifted we expect to see these become top activities again. After the disappointment of repeatedly cancelled trips and postponed celebrations, the American traveller is ready to make up for lost time, finally take that long-awaited holiday and go big. The US tourist is ready for their Greatest of All Trips (GOAT). They are putting themselves first and are out to get the trip of a lifetime with the affordable luxury experiences they feel they deserve. Americans are ready to *Live Again* and South Africa's recent campaign speaks to the themes that will resonate with the US market.

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SANCB Eastern Cape Provincial and Industry Engagements



In efforts to aid the recovery of the business events industry, the South Africa National Convention Bureau (SANCB), in conjunction with the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI), Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) – Africa Chapter and the Association of African Exhibition Organisers (AXXO), are embarking on a national roadshow. First on the list was the Eastern Cape, which kicked off with a full-day engagement session with the Eastern Cape Parks & Tourism Agency and Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism on Wednesday, 22 June 2022.

The objectives of the provincial visits, amongst others, include:

- Sharing of business events plans and activities, focusing on the priority areas for 2022/2023
- Presenting SA's bidding performance for the 2021/22 financial, including YTD Performance
- Discussing opportunities and plans for Meetings Africa 2023
- Providing an update to the business events industry on the destination's recovery progress for the meetings, incentives and exhibition segments
- Sharing data, trends and insights into the meetings, incentives and exhibition segments that can assist with accelerating the recovery of the local business events industry
- Identifying priority areas for each province for each segment (meetings, incentives and exhibitions) that require interventions from the public and private sectors
- Presenting an update on South Africa's bidding performance, including bidding insights

As part of the Eastern Cape leg of the roadshow, the team conducted academic workshops at the following universities:

- University of Fort Hare
- Rhodes University
- Nelson Mandela University

The main purpose of the academic workshops was to present the bid support services that are available to academics who want to attract regional and international association conferences to be hosted in South Africa as well as to present on the National Association project.

The SANCB team also conducted sales calls, provincial engagement with the Eastern Cape Parks & Tourism Agency and the Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism as well as a client dinner.

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The Ultimate Africa Trade Tour

The SA Tourism Africa team recently executed an exciting Africa MegaFam hosting from 16 - 26 March 2022.

On the 15th of March, 62 trade partners from 14 countries on the continent and began their ultimate journey in South Africa.

During their time in the country, the 62 trade partners were divided into six groups, each with their unique itinerary and together they experienced seven of our provinces in nine days.

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Tukha Guesthouse

Tukha Guesthouse is a female-owned business that provides bed and breakfast services in Bloemfontein to international and local travellers. The establishment is suitable for both leisure and business travellers.

Tukha Guesthouse is conveniently located close to the busy N1 freeway, within 4km of the Central Business District (CBD), Mimosa mall, Waterfront, universities, stadium and other tourist attractions and facilities.

Their value add services include flexible check-in & check-out times, use of gym equipment, exclusive use of the main kitchen where necessary, meeting venues, a pool table, with a hospitable reception providing a homely environment that is affordable yet convenient.

The facilities currently have 8 en-suite rooms with an occupancy of 17 guests. All rooms are equipped with necessary room amenities such as a bar fridge and flatscreen TV.

They also have an entertainment area with braai facilities, a swimming pool and kiddies play park across the road.



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