



UNLOCKING THE **RUSSIAN MARKET**

BY SAT INSIGHTS UNIT
(Based on 2025 Data & Insights)



SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

RUSSIA TO SOUTH AFRICA:

NO DIRECT FLIGHTS

As it stands, there are no direct air routes from Russia to South Africa.



NO DIRECT FLIGHT

Russia 1- South Africa



CONNECTING ROUTES

Via international hubs



CONNECTING HUBS

ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Turkish Airlines (TK)



DUBAI, UAE

Emirates (EK)



ABU DHABI, UAE

Etihad Airways (EY)



ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

Ethiopian Airlines (ET)



LAND MASS
17,098,242 km²



CURRENCY

Russian Ruble (RUB), symbol: **₽**

Exchange rate:

1 (RUB) = 0.22 South African Rand (ZAR)

As of Aug 2026



2026 POPULATION Estimate

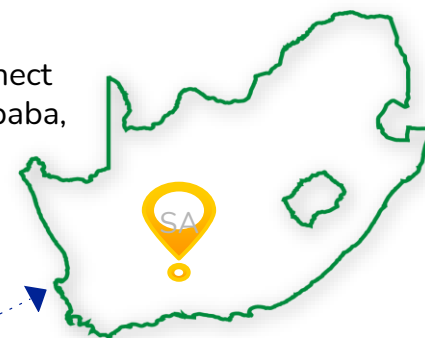
140 million

Russian facts



The official language of Russia is **Russian**

As it stands, there are no **direct air routes** from **Russia**. Travellers must connect through hubs such as Turkey, Doha, Addis Ababa, or Dubai.



A ready-made BRICS framework

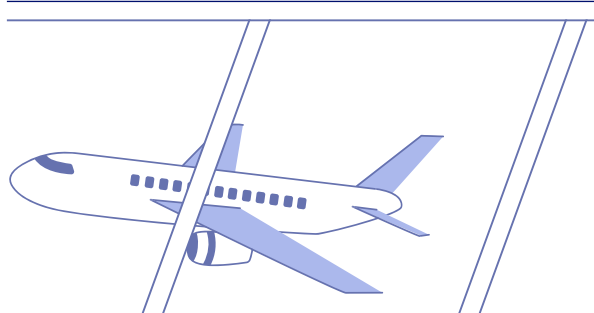
Russia and South Africa maintain strong diplomatic and economic ties through their participation in BRICS and broader Africa-Russia cooperation frameworks. Building on commitments made at the 2023 Russia-Africa Summit in St. Petersburg, this tourism initiative provides a practical platform to deepen bilateral relations, increase visitor arrivals to South Africa, and promote greater business, trade, and cultural exchange.

Tourism marketing collaborations

Easier travel arrangements

Increased visitor flows

BRICS countries represent significant source markets for tourism, closer relations create structural support for growth, not just goodwill.



South Africa arrivals
from Russia in 2025

41,708



Long-Haul potential 2025 -2026

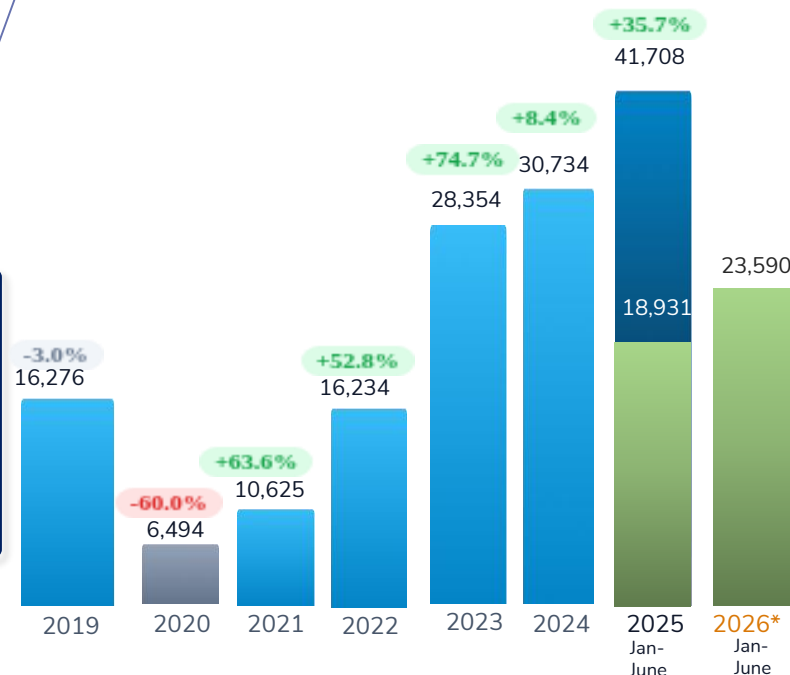
Long-haul travel YOY growth %

10,4%

Outbound long-haul travel projections

29,858

YOY Growth % from 2019 to June 2026



Russia Arrival trends

- Q2 2026 arrivals of **8,376** are **24.6% higher** than the **18,931** arrivals recorded in Q2 2025
- Russian arrivals to South Africa peak in the first three months of the year as well as the last quarter of the year, **each of the two quarters accounting for about 68% of arrivals in the year.**

Purpose of Visit

Holiday



#1

Business Traveller



#2

MICE



#3

- Holiday: 39.5% (largest segment)
- Business Traveller: 26.5% (second-largest segment)
- Holiday and business travel combined account for 66% of arrivals.
- MICE: 16.2%-These numbers Indicates that South Africa attracts Russian visitors for both leisure experiences and business-related

Sources: StatsSA Tourist Arrivals, Oxford Economics

*asterick shows that the year Is yet not complete

Total Tourist Foreign Direct Spend



+17.2%

growth in **average spend**

2024 → 2025

R27, 300 in 2024 → R32, 000
in 2025.

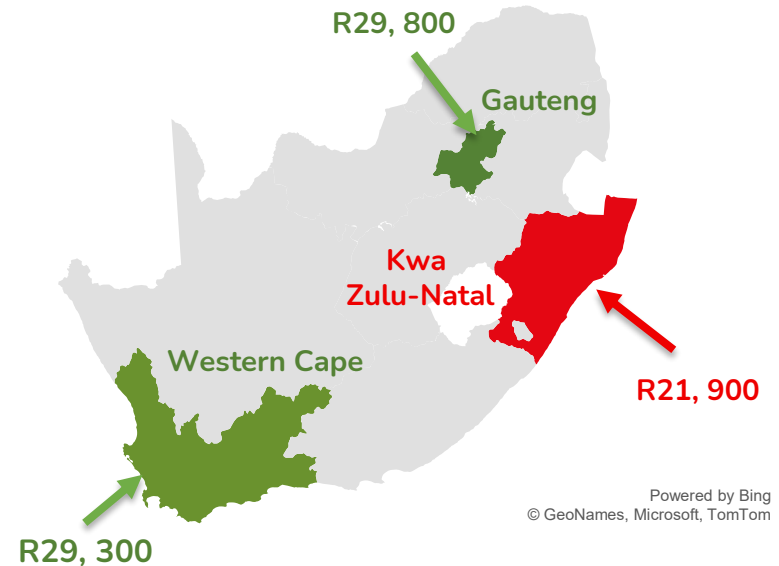


+61%

growth in **total** foreign direct
spend

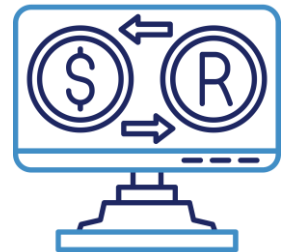
2024 → 2025

R780 Million in 2024 →
R1.26 billion in 2025.



Foreign direct spend totalled R1.26 billion in 2025, with spending heavily concentrated in Gauteng, which accounted for 50% of total spend. The Western Cape followed with 38%, while the Eastern Cape contributed 2.9%.

Gauteng and the Western Cape together account for approximately 88.5% of Russian visitors' direct spend, highlighting the strong geographical concentration of this market. While the remaining seven provinces collectively capture only 11.6% of spend, this pattern likely reflects the role of Gauteng as South Africa's primary international gateway and the Western Cape's appeal as a leading leisure destination for Russian travellers

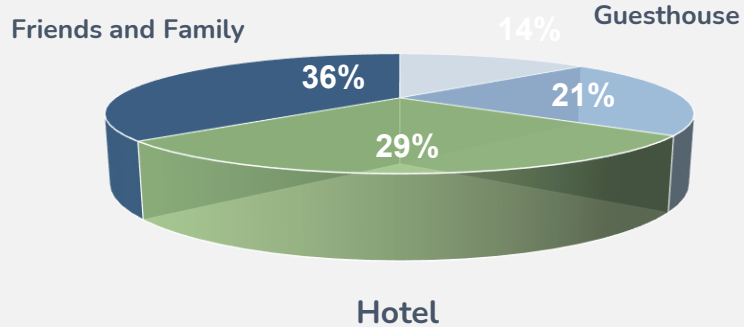


Insight for SA: Rising spend from Russian visitors presents an opportunity to sustain growth and spread visitor spend beyond Gauteng and the Western Cape.

Profile of Russian Travellers



Where do Russian travellers mostly stay?



Where They Go: A Cape Town-Centric Itinerary

V&A Waterfront 8.4K

Table Mountain 7.8K

Cape Point 7.5K

Cape Town Central City 7.4K

Sandton City / Mandela Square 7.3K

Activities of choice

#1

Eating out



#2

Shopping



#3

Visiting natural attractions



Repeat travellers dominate the 2025 traveller mix, accounting for **56,6%**, compared to **43.4%** for first-time travellers.



+74%

Growth in Russian travel to SA is now being led by the **female segment**, a **shift from the male-led growth** seen historically **2024 -> 2025**



Solo travel dominates, accounting for **50,4%** of travellers, followed by spouse travel at **25,1%**



74,2% are **25-40 year olds**, and 41- 60 year olds account for **21,10%**



Stays have shortened forcing tighter schedules. **(14 nights as of 2025)** **-2,6% from 15 (2024)**



Budget is playing an increasingly important role in travel choice, **Value for Money** as a reason for visiting increased by **37,3%** from 2024 to 2025.



Personal Experience (32%) and **Business Associates (22%)** were the leading sources of information influencing travel decisions.



The three biggest spend category when in South Africa was **Accommodation, Food and shopping.**



Russia primarily visit South Africa for **Holiday** or as **Business** travellers or for **MICE** travel.



Bookings for **accommodation and flights** is mostly booked directly with the place of accommodation or the airline via the internet.

Opportunities that would speak to the Russian Market



Business and Conference opportunities

Conferences and trade events open doors: high-level meetings at **Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square**, deal-making by the V&A Waterfront, with delegate excursions to **Addo Elephant Park** and **Kruger National Park**.



Attractions

V&A Waterfront, Sandton city and City of Cape Town are the most visited attractions.



Visa-free & easy access

Since 30 March 2017, Russian passport holders have been able to visit South Africa without a visa for tourism stays of up to 90 days.



Shopping

High spend on clothing, curios & crafts, and groceries,

Popular shopping destinations include **Sandton City**, **V&A Waterfront**, and **Canal Walk**



Activities

Eating out, shopping and visiting top attractions are the biggest activities.



Cultural, historical and heritage

Sites that trace South Africa's story: the **Nelson Mandela Museum** and **Mandela's Xhosa heartland (Eastern Cape)**, In Gauteng, the **Apartheid Museum**, **Mandela House** in Soweto and the **Cradle of Humankind**, plus **Robben Island** off Cape Town.

Bookings



Accommodation

1 - Self bookings: 40,8%
Direct with accommodation



Flights

1 - Self bookings: 62,6%
Direct with airline via internet



Key insights

Growing economic and trade ties through the BRICS partnership continue to support business travel and conference visits between both nations.

Total spending jumped **61% in 2025**, with each visitor spending an average of **R32,000**. A favourable exchange rate makes South Africa a high-value destination for Russian travellers.

Travel is highly seasonal, with roughly **68%** of all annual visitors **arriving during the warmer Q1 and Q4 months**

Repeat visitors dominate the market at **56,6%**. Leisure alone isn't the main draw either, **Holiday** makes up **just 39,50%** of visits, with **MICE & business** travel, already a South African strength, pulling in the rest.



Arrivals



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SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

