

Western Cape braces for record summer tourism season

The Western Cape provincial government, led by Finance and Economic Opportunities Minister Mireille Wenger, hosted her second annual 'Summer Tourism Readiness Dialogue' with key tourism stakeholders to discuss preparations for the upcoming summer tourism season. The meeting was aimed at ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned and that the province is ready to welcome a record number of international visitors.

Wenger noted that the Western Cape will have more than one million inbound international seats for the first time ever, breaking the record for travellers during the festive season.



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Stakeholders in attendance included representatives from the Airlines Association of Southern Africa, Airports Company South Africa, Air Access and Cruise Cape Town (both housed within Wesgro), the Federated Hospitality Association of Southern Africa (Fedhasa), the Cape Town Central Improvement District, The Culture, Art, Tourism, Hospitality, and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA), the Department of Home Affairs, the Border Management Agency, Cape Town Tourism and South African Tourism.

Opening the dialogue, Minister Wenger, said that: "Our collective efforts to prepare for the previous summer season certainly paid off. Leveraging our joint experience, learning lessons from other destinations and, especially, by working together, we laid the foundation for this success. And we have a lot of work to do for our upcoming season."

Summer 2023 projections

"Looking ahead, Cape Town International Airport's (CTIA) seat capacity for summer 2023/24 is estimated to increase by an impressive 25% compared to the same period last year. This means that inbound international seats this summer will exceed 1 million, for the first time ever," added Minister Wenger.



Western Cape shines at World Travel Awards, wins 8 awards

17 Oct 2023



Speaking about the recent international awards received by the sector in the province, Minister Wenger said, "We have

also celebrated the many significant international awards that seem to be streaming in weekly. This worldwide recognition has not happened by chance. It is the result of coordinated, collaborative, and very purposeful actions. And so, I'd like to thank our tourism and hospitality sector partners for their deep commitment to excellence, and for creating hope and prosperity for residents of the province."

Speaking to the work being prioritised to ensure a successful upcoming season, as well as the future seasons, the Minister noted: "We have indeed come far and achieved much but, as always, we have more work to do."

Visas

Specifically, on visas, Minister Wenger said: "At the top of my list is making it as easy as possible for international visitors to holiday in the Western Cape and South Africa.

"The inefficiencies relating to the visa system remain a significant deterrent to investment and expansion of existing businesses. And so, I am determined to work with our national government partners to fix the inefficiencies. I therefore welcome the commitment from the Department of Home Affairs that the long overdue Remote or Digital Nomad Visa will be live by the end of March 2024."

Safety

"On safety, we're pleased with the significant progress made over the past year in bringing the private and public sectors together to implement practical solutions to combat and pre-empt safety risks for our visitors. Over the 2023/24 season, 250 tourism monitors will be deployed across the Western Cape to identified hotspots and will be trained and equipped with mobile apps to link them to critical security services.

"In addition, DEDAT and Cape Town Tourism implement tourist-in-distress programmes which ensure that visitors have professional support available when they most need it. I am also pleased that the Department of Tourism has secured a commitment from SAPS that police reservists will be available during the summer season to assist with tourism safety," added Minister Wenger.

Skills

Ensuring the tourism and hospitality sector has access to the skills they need to give visitors the best possible experience is a key priority.

Minister Wenger noted: "Our quest to ensure that our sector and the people who make it up are skilled at the appropriate level for the visitors they are hosting remains a challenge. But I am very pleased with the work that has been done including the establishment of a skills forum, which now meets regularly to coordinate the activities of government, private sector and academia.

"This forum allows us to unpack the challenges facing the industry and to better align industry needs with the skills supply, which has led to new qualifications being developed."

Concluding her address, Minister Wenger said: "In all that we do, we cannot lose sight of why we continually strive to do even better than before. At the end of the day, more tourists mean more jobs."

"When tourism flourishes, so too does our economy, and so too do the people of the Western Cape and South Africa. This is what we are working towards, so let's get busy doing what we do best: welcoming millions of tourists to our outstanding, tenacious, and world-class home!"

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