

4 tourism trends to look out for in 2019

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), tourism is the fastest growing sector in South Africa and contributes close to 9% to South Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) and over 1,6 million people are employed in this sector.



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Despite the prevailing tough economic environment, the tourism industry in South Africa continues to provide a glimmer of hope, as one of the sectors that will continue to boost growth and job creation this year.

Here, Marcel Klaassen, FNB business executive shares four trends to look out for in tourism:

Bleisure Travel: A combination of "business" and "leisure", bleisure travel refers to the activity of combining business travel with leisure time. A lot of companies are seeing more of their executives and employees jumping on this bandwagon.

Technology: According to a Google Travel study, 74% of travellers plan their trips on the internet, while only 13% still use travel agencies to prepare them. The internet and mobile apps have changed and influenced the way we plan and do our travelling. Our mobile phones have become a one-stop shop for tour guides, travel agencies, best restaurant locators, maps, and so forth.

Three-generational holidays: There are a growing number of people who travel as a multi-generational family to spend more time together, this usually consists of grandparents, parents and children.

This is a great time to bond as a family and get to understand the wisdom and nuances of each generation.

Medical tourism: Medical tourism which is often overlooked, continues to contribute substantially to the growth of the sector in South Africa. There has been a significant increase in the number of tourists from neighbouring countries coming to the country for medical treatments.

The average tourist stays in South Africa for an estimated six days. This means hospitality services, tour operators, transport, retail, wildlife and seaside attractions, spas and wellness centres all have an opportunity to gain from a medical tourist visiting South Africa.

"In order for this sector to continue growing, more collaboration is needed with government and the private sector – improving regulation, policy, funding and infrastructure just to mention a few. We are optimistic that this sector will continue growing and employ more people this year," concludes Klaassen.

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