

# New trends emerge for travellers visiting SA from abroad

Tourism entrepreneurs, the Entrepreneurs' Organisation (EO) in Cape Town have identified new trends that are emerging for travellers visiting South Africa from abroad. According to EO, the local tourism industry is benefiting from international "revenge travellers" and a trend called regenerative tourism, all a direct consequence of the lifted restrictions around the world.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

According to the organisation, South Africa tourism will enjoy a boom despite fears of a global recession. The organisation also says that even if the current booking levels - which in many instances surpass 2019 levels and in at least some instances are at their highest ever levels - subside somewhat, all indications are that South Africa is hot property now, especially for American and European travellers.

Mary Rijnberg, who has a role within EO as recruitment expert for the Africa region and is managing director of upmarket travel boutique business Planet Africa Safaris, says that in the luxury segment, while numbers are substantially up, travellers are wanting to linger a little longer. "People are taking their time, staying an extra night and really getting to know a place before they move onto the next destination," she says.

## Rise of regenerative tourism

Rijnberg says that this is most likely the result of people reassessing what is important to them after the scare and disruption of the pandemic. "We are also seeing a big increase in regenerative tourism, where people want to know that they can make a positive difference and impact on their travels. What are lodges doing for local communities? How can I contribute to conservation? These sorts of questions are becoming more important and this is definitely a focus area for us, to facilitate this meeting between travel and conscience," she adds.

Ingram Casey, a judge for the Safari Awards who previously spent six years as Southern Africa Director for the African Travel and Tourism Association, is an EO member and founder of Escape+Explore, paints a positive picture for the South African tourism industry, especially for those who serve the international market.

## Demand for private experiences-based touring grows

"From where we are sitting, looking after mainly upmarket US and European travellers, figures very much confirm we are set for a busy second half of 2022 and into season. Despite hefty airfares and other factors that would typically hold back travel, there has not been any let up in demand for private experience-based touring in Cape Town."

He adds, echoing Rijnberg: "We are taking a cautiously optimistic approach to 2023. It's important to remember a good chunk of the current travellers are clients rolled over from 2020/21 [who were forced to postpone] and we are aware the current booking trend could be an extended revenge traveller bubble."



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"However, I feel the strong booking trend will continue as spending has shifted to experience over material things. We are also seeing more flights from Europe and US being added which is key to keeping the flow of international tourists and this helps balance out the skyrocketing flight prices."

"Africa generally, and South Africa specifically are in demand not only because of our favourable exchange rate but also for our variation and beauty, from forest to safari, from desert to beach, it is almost unmatched. There are very few markets with such diversity and beauty," says Rijnberg.

EO board member Anton Gillis, speaking on behalf of Platinum Hospitality Holdings, says that while local travellers showed incredible support to the local hospitality industry during the pandemic, they are being held back by exorbitant airfares while petrol prices have made road trips a lot more expensive meaning people can't do the same distances.

On the other hand, he says international travellers are raring to go and things are happening a lot quicker than before. "There has been an incredible uptick in current hotel occupancies and future business on the books. The booking window is a lot shorter than it was historically," he says, something echoed by Casey who says that whereas in the past they were working with six to 12-month lead times, that has now been slashed.

"We used to make 60-70% of our bookings for travel in six to 12 months' time. This has completely reversed with 68% of new bookings travelling within three months of confirming their booking," reveals Casey. It appears that people have realised just how short life can be hence the need to experience their bucket lists sooner than later.

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