

Tourism on the rise in the Eastern Cape

South African travellers took 3.2 million trips to the Eastern Cape and spent an estimated R3 billion total direct value in 2014, says the Eastern Cape Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (DEDET).

According to the inaugural Eastern Cape Annual Tourism Barometer 2015, this number was up by 1.2 million trips in comparison to 2013 and means that domestic tourism is on the rise in the Eastern Cape.

MEC for Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism Sakhumzi Somyo says the Eastern Cape now boasts a 1.6 fold increase in domestic tourism to the province or some 1.2 million more tourists.

The 304 888 foreign tourists who visited the Eastern Cape spent an estimated R2.4 billion, about R500

million more than in 2013, and stayed on average 9.5 days. This means that foreign tourists who made the effort to get to the Eastern Cape, put down their roots rather than passing by. Most of the arrivals came from Germany (15.4%) followed by the United Kingdom (14.7%) and United States of America (12.7%).

In terms of bednights sold in the Eastern Cape in 2014, international travellers accounted for 2.8 million bednights, which was a 3.5% share of the national total.

Domestic travellers accounted for 13.1 million bednights sold for an 11.3% share of the national total.

Travel and tourism employed 32 917 people directly in the Eastern Cape in 2014, 5% of the total number of 655 609 nationally.

The barometer, released last week,

says the Eastern Cape is now in 6th position for domestic and international travel.

The barometer, which is based on statistics drawn from a variety of sources, also noted the Eastern Cape accounted for only 4.4% of South Africa's 9 549 236 international tourist arrivals in 2014.

Gauteng took the lion's share, accounting for 49.4% of international arrivals but this is mostly driven by foreign tourists landing in OR Tambo Airport.

All other provinces - the Western Cape (18.6%), Mpumalanga (14.1%), Limpopo (13.0%), KwaZulu-Natal (11.8%), Free State (7.3%) and North West (6.6%) - had greater number of tourist arrivals.

The barometer will help the province's tourism bodies reflect on

“these weaker areas of our performance such as access, for foreign tourists. So we say we can and must do more to promote tourism in the Eastern Cape. The barometer which gives a detailed and graphic overview of tourism statistics, nationally and provincially serves as a guideline for the province when developing research focus areas.

Travel and tourism contributed R93.3 billion (3%) to South Africa's Gross Domestic Product in 2014.

The barometer is part of an effort by the department to design a framework for a provincial tourism information, data management system.

Currently provincial tourism statistics are sourced from nationally generated data, and some local ad hoc project research.

- Edited by Bev Mortimer

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