

Frequently Asked Questions & Insights: Geographic Diversity in South African Tourism

1. What is the current state of inbound tourism recovery in South Africa?

South Africa's inbound tourism has recovered to approximately 81.79% of 2019 levels. However, the recovery is uneven, with some regions like Cape Town and the Kruger National Park exceeding recovery, while other areas struggle to regain traction.

You can access recovery data [here](#).

Overall Performance: 2019, vs 2023 & 2024 (Jan – Dec)

Region	2019	2023	2024	Recovery 2019 vs 2024
Overseas Arrivals	2,612,159	2,060,313	2,136,641	81.79%

Overseas Arrivals	Recovery (2019 vs 2024)
Q1 (Jan-Mar)	87%
Q2 (Apr – Jun)	82%
Q3 (July – Sep)	74%
Q4 (Oct - Dec)	83%

Overseas Arrivals	Recovery (2019 vs 2024)
2023 YE	79%
Jan – Jun 2024 (HY)	85%
Jan - Dec 2024 (FY)	82%

2. Why is there an imbalance in tourism recovery across regions?

Several factors contribute to the uneven recovery, including stronger marketing efforts, established tourism infrastructure, and traveller familiarity with certain destinations. Limited connectivity, high travel costs, and lower promotional efforts for certain regions exacerbate the issue.

3. What strategies can be used to promote geographic diversity in tourism?

Key strategies include:

- Investing in infrastructure and accessibility in lesser-known regions.
- Developing unique tourism products to attract travellers off the beaten path.
- Encouraging collaboration between local businesses, DMOs, and tour operators.
Increased collaboration between the public and private sector.
- Strengthening digital marketing efforts to spotlight alternative destinations.

4. How can the industry encourage tourists to explore beyond Cape Town and Kruger?

A major challenge is shifting consumer perceptions. Industry stakeholders can:

- Offer multi-destination packages that include less-travelled regions.
- Enhance storytelling and content marketing to highlight hidden gems.
- Work with influencers and travel media to showcase new locations.
- Encourage longer stays by creating compelling itineraries that extend beyond traditional hotspots.

5. How can digital marketing and SEO play a role in tourism diversification?

SEO is evolving, with many travellers now relying on discovery platforms rather than traditional search engines. A broader approach, integrating SEO strategies alongside social media, content marketing, and travel forums, is necessary to promote lesser-known destinations.

6. What role do pricing and accessibility play in tourism recovery?

High flight costs, limited domestic connections, and travel logistics are significant barriers. Addressing these challenges through strategic airline partnerships, improved transportation infrastructure, and alternative travel routes can improve accessibility.

7. Are off-the-beaten-track destinations financially viable?

Many travellers are now seeking unique, authentic experiences. Off-the-beaten-track locations can thrive by focusing on value-for-money offerings, sustainable tourism models, and curated local experiences. Our mid-market has not recovered and these travellers are generally more intrepid, with the appetite to explore lesser-known regions.

Arrivals to South Africa: 2019 vs 2024 (Full Year)

Year	UK	USA	Germany	France	Netherlands	Australia	India	Canada	Brazil	China	Italy
2019	436,559	373,694	322,720	165,035	144,071	111,439	95,621	66,577	77,261	93,171	64,764
2023	356,160	353,975	245,259	119,974	131,371	86,250	79,774	55,056	25,672	37,164	52,091
2024	349,883	372,362	254,992	125,823	132,422	98,544	75,541	58,057	49,855	41,418	50,780
% Recovery 2019 vs 2024	80.14%	99.64%	79.01%	76.24%	91.91%	88.42%	79%	87.20%	64.52%	44.45%	78.40%

8. How can DMOs and tour operators support geographic diversity?

DMOs and tour operators play a crucial advisory role by guiding travellers towards diverse experiences. They can:

- Curate itineraries that include hidden gems and lesser-known regions.
- Educate travel agents on alternative destinations.
- Leverage FAM trips to promote underrepresented areas.
- Work with policymakers to enhance tourism investment in lesser-known regions.

9. What impact do international travel advisories have on South African tourism?

Travel advisories are not new, however can deter potential visitors. A collective effort is needed to reshape South Africa's narrative, emphasising safety measures, positive traveller experiences, and unique offerings beyond perceived risks. South Africa boasts one of the highest repeater rates globally and we need to leverage this as part of a unified and collaborative marketing and awareness strategy.

10. How can industry stakeholders continue this conversation and collaborate?

Stakeholders are encouraged to engage in ongoing discussions through SATSA's dedicated chat room on GlueUp, participate in upcoming webinars, and contribute ideas by emailing kim@satsa.co.za

If you are a DMC who would like to share your geographic spread data with us, please email david@satsa.co.za We are looking for a percentage breakdown of your turnover for 2024, across each Province.

You can join the conversation on the Geographic Diversity and Tourism Growth Community Channel [here](#).