

Record-breaking 2023 propels Cape Town Tourism's innovative 'Glocal' initiative

In the wake of a record-breaking year, Cape Town Tourism has announced an innovative plan for 2024 that aims to transform the global travel industry. As the official Destination Marketing and Management Organisation (DMO) for the city, they plan to build upon their historic accomplishments and redefine conventional limits with their groundbreaking 'Glocal' initiative.



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A year of unprecedented achievements

"2023 was a year where we shattered all expectations," reflected Enver Duminy, CEO of Cape Town Tourism. "Our visitor numbers soared to new heights, laying a robust foundation for the exciting journey ahead. As we step into 2024, we're not just riding on past successes but catapulting into a future where Cape Town becomes synonymous with pioneering tourism and enriching lives."

"Our city is already seen as a global destination of choice. In fact, Cape Town was just named the Second Best City in the World by Time Out Magazine, so 2024 is off to a great start!"

Alderman James Vos, Mayoral Committee Member for Economic Growth, said the robust recovery of Cape Town's tourism sector was a direct result of the City's partnerships and marketing programmes. "We are witnessing a remarkable resurgence in both domestic and international visitors that comes on the back of wide-ranging campaigns that penetrated multiple key and new markets."

"Additionally, our funding of and work with partners such as Air Access and Cruise Cape Town (both administered by Wesgro) and Cape Town Tourism saw us increase flights, cruise ships and city-to-city connections that helped to land more visitors. It's exhilarating to see our beloved city buzzing with tourists, affirming Cape Town's status as a premier global destination."

Reflecting on a successful 2023

Cape Town International Airport was bustling in December 2023, with a 20% increase in domestic visitors from the previous

year, totalling 354,025 arrivals. The number of arrivals for the month was 518,190, a 19% increase from 2022.

Mark Maclean, regional general manager at Cape Town International Airport, expressed his satisfaction with the passenger growth, highlighting the positive impact on tourism and trade. "We are very pleased with the passenger growth and thank all visitors for their cooperation and support when visiting the airport. As we focus on the coming weeks and the remainder of the peak season, we anticipate continued high passenger volumes as our visitors enjoy the summer."

The V&A Waterfront also had a record-breaking season in 2023, with significant increases in visits and trade from the previous year. Significant investments in food and retail offerings, hotels, and attractions, including the newly launched Time Out Market Cape Town and the relaunched Cape Wheel, contributed to this success.

David Green, CEO of the Waterfront, says, "The Waterfront has had its strongest festive season yet, with a record number of visitors and sales, living up to our billing as the country's leading tourist destination and a major contributor to the city's economic growth. We had over 3 million visits from locals, other South Africans, and many international tourists, who enjoyed the best of the city in our safe and vibrant neighbourhood."

"Our year-on-year visitor numbers climbed 25% from 2022, and we recorded bumper retail sales of R1.2bn, up 16% from 2022. Additionally, we hosted our biggest NYE event to date, with some 80,000 attendees. We continue to see strong growth prospects for the Waterfront, with tourism offering much-needed job creation, and economic growth within the City and province."

Despite some closures due to weather and fires, Cape Town's attractions saw a significant visitor increase. Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden reported a 6% increase when compared to December 2022, welcoming 112,400 visitors. Chapman's Peak Drive saw a 15% recovery compared to 2022, with 111,538 visitors. Groot Constantia, the oldest wine estate in South Africa, welcomed 72,476 visitors, a remarkable 55% increase from 2022. Table Mountain and Two Oceans Aquarium also reported substantial foot traffic, with 106,959 and 81,000 visitors, respectively.

Alderman Vos emphasised the transformative power of tourism in creating jobs and supporting the local economy. "Our goal is to create a tourism-related job in every household in Cape Town. This speaks to our mission under the banner of our Responsible Tourism charter which we are working on issuing this year to local industry operators.

"Responsible Tourism is about crafting and nurturing places that are not only captivating to visit but also enriching for those who call them home. This industry is not just about attracting visitors; it's about fostering an ecosystem that supports our local businesses and communities, driving forward our city's prosperity."

A strong show of local support

Cape Town Tourism's latest figures reveal a robust domestic travel market, with a significant percentage of South Africans choosing to explore their backyard. Intent to travel domestically was at a high of 94%, with an equal take-up rate, indicating that nearly all those who made local holiday plans followed through on those intentions.

"I had such a fun time experiencing everything Cape Town has to offer this December. The weather was fantastic, and even though it was a bit congested at times, we still got to experience everything we wanted. There really is no other place like Cape Town. I wish I could have stayed a bit longer," said Ciali Browne from Pretoria.

Local triumphs pave the way for global alliances

Following the unprecedented success of 2023, Cape Town Tourism is now actively pursuing groundbreaking initiatives to elevate the region's global presence. The DMO is strategically engaged in forging a transformative global partnership with prominent world cities, marking a pioneering collaboration that promises to extend the international allure of Cape Town.

This venture will redefine the partnership landscape, setting a new standard for cross-city collaboration. The DMO says it continues to build on the triumphs of the past year by committing to fostering relationships that go beyond borders and contribute to the sustained growth and prosperity of Cape Town as a global destination.

Duminy adds, "2024 is the year we embark on our groundbreaking 'Glocal' initiative, uniting VisitBerlin, New York City Tourism + Conventions, and Cape Town Tourism in a historic collaboration that transcends borders. We are propelling destination marketing and collaboration into uncharted territories."

This collaboration marks a milestone as three competitive DMOs join forces to showcase our individuality while highlighting our common bonds. We're weaving together our history and stories of freedom to send a powerful message globally."

Cape Town businesses forecast a fruitful 2024

The Cape Town Tourism Membership Survey for 2023, reveals the expectations of Cape Town's tourism businesses, painting a picture of resilience and optimism for 2024.

The survey revealed that almost all businesses anticipate improved 2024 performance compared to last year. For January 2024, 87% of respondents expect a better or much better performance, with similar expectations for February and March at 83% and 82%, respectively.

Alderman James Vos, Mayoral Committee Member for Economic Growth, said, "The remarkable recovery of our tourism sector is a testament to our stakeholders' resilience and hard work and the attractiveness of Cape Town as a global destination. We are grateful for the local and international support and the dedication of our tourism industry and look forward to building on this success to ensure that Cape Town remains a haven for generations of travellers, irrespective of ability or background, offering a tapestry of nature, cultures, and experiences that are beyond compare."

Join the journey: Cape Town awaits your arrival in 2024!

"Looking forward to 2024, we're seeing good signs that the number of tourists coming to Cape Town will keep growing. Our estimates, based on how well we did in 2023 and considering a slow economic growth, suggest a modest increase in visitor numbers by up to 3%. But if we follow the trends we saw last year, we could see a bigger jump — with up to 8% more international tourists and 11% more South African visitors compared to last year. This could mean tourists will spend about R11.6bn during our traditional international peak season from January to April," concludes Vos.

Enver Duminy sums it up: "We're expecting 2024 to be another great year with more people flying in and booking places to stay. South Africans are still excited about travelling around the country despite the cost of living going up. We're thankful for everyone who has helped make tourism across Cape Town a success. We'll keep making sure visitors have an amazing time so that Cape Town stays at the top of the list for local and overseas travellers."

Embark on a memorable adventure and be a part of Cape Town's vibrant journey in 2024.

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