

## Tourism numbers show impact of Covid

**Tourism is an important contributor to the South African economy. Before the Covid-19 pandemic it contributed about 3% to the country's GDP. This was a bigger contribution than that of agriculture.**

At the same time, about 4% of South Africans worked in the tourism sector. The number of South Africans working in tourism – before the Covid-19 pandemic – was higher than the number of people involved in the mining industry.

However, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the related lockdowns, and disruptions (both locally and internationally) saw a major decline in tourism.

This edition of *FreeFACTS* looks at recent trends with regard to foreign tourism in South Africa. It shows that while there has been a slight recovery in 2021 and 2022 foreign tourism numbers are still far below what they were before the pandemic.

Tourism numbers in the first three months of this year are far above what they were in the corresponding period last year. However, if we compare them with the same period in 2019 and 2020 there has been a significant drop.

For example, in January of this year, nearly 400 000 foreigners visited South Africa, nearly three times the number that visited in January 2021. But this is a significant decline compared to 2019 and 2020. In January of 2019 over 1-million people from abroad visited South Africa, a similar number as the same month in 2020.

As the Covid-19 pandemic becomes a memory South Africa must work hard to get tourism numbers back to where they were and improve them. Thought must be given to allowing more countries visa-free access to South Africa, and ensuring that major tourist attractions, such as the Kruger National Park, are well maintained and world class.

Tourism is an important area for South African development. It is a sector which can employ large number of unskilled people. In addition, tourism and jobs related to it can act as an important economic multiplier, creating a virtuous circle of economic activity and development.

— **Marius Roodt**

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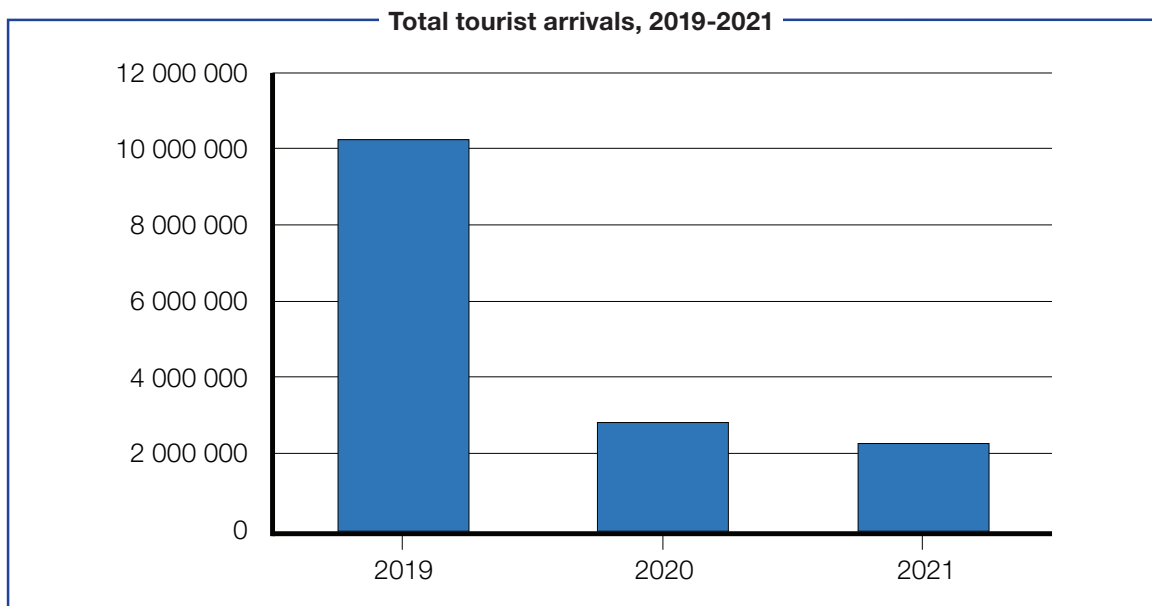
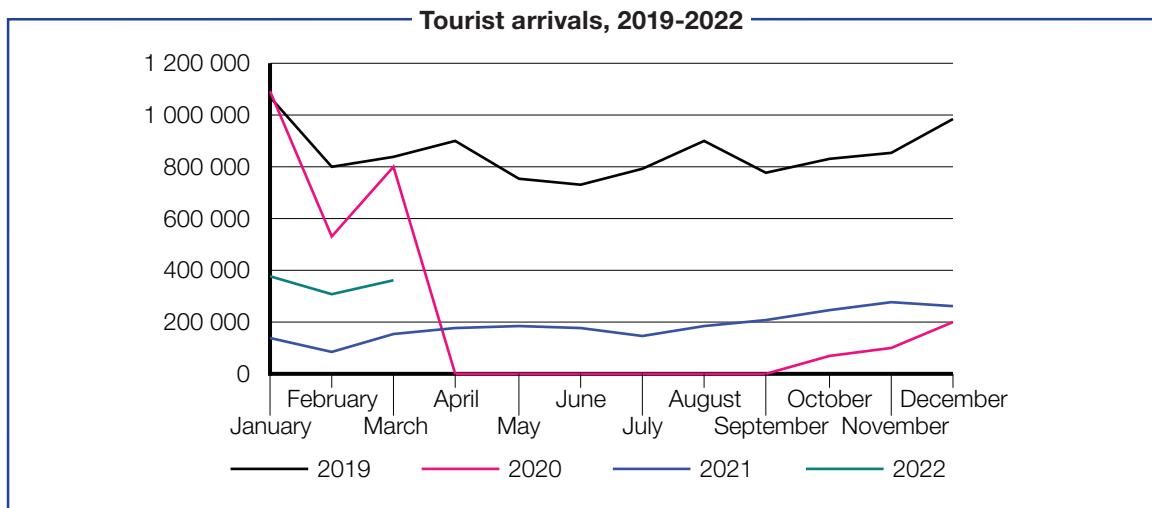
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# Tourism

Number of tourists, 2019-2022				
	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	1 068 190	1 093 268	139 134	377 165
February	797 181	800 815	90 165	310 173
March	838 696	535 094	157 638	359 734
April	903 059	0	177 251	
May	753 517	0	183 347	
June	734 554	0	178 727	
July	790 187	0	151 264	
August	896 978	0	185 637	
September	780 381	0	205 948	
October	834 275	73 988	247 833	
November	850 537	101 096	275 647	
December	981 038	198 059	263 108	
	<b>10 228 593</b>	<b>2 802 320</b>	<b>2 255 699</b>	

Source: Statistics South Africa, *Tourism 2020*, p11, monthly StatsSA releases on tourism, January-December 2021, January-March 2022



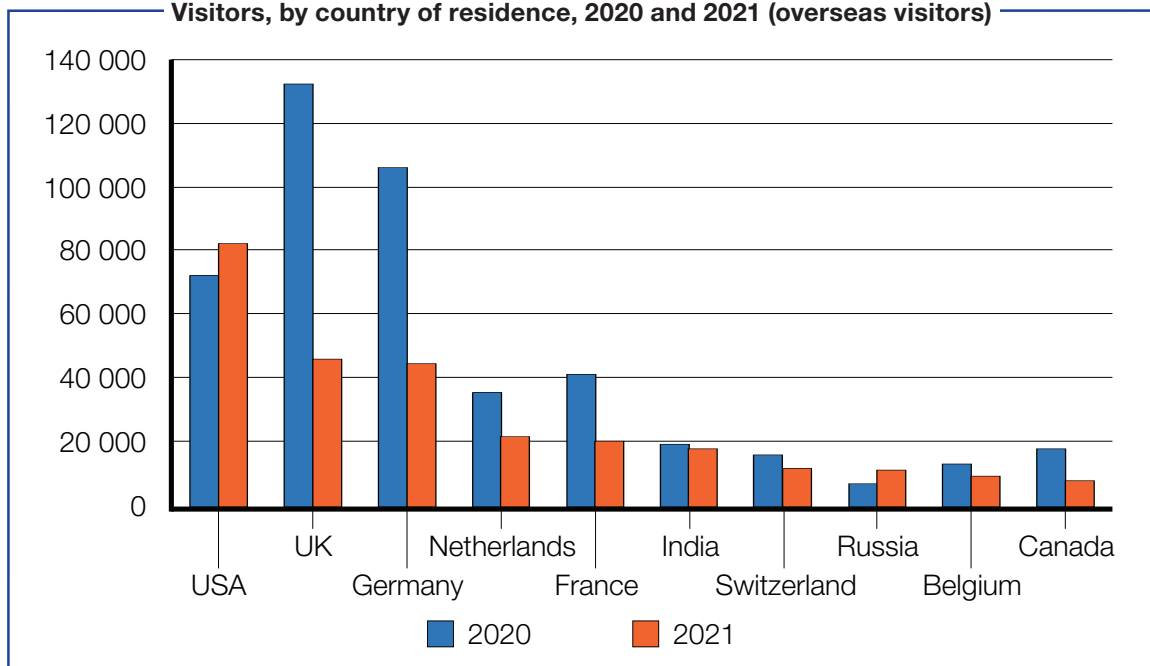
# Tourism

**Visitors, by country of residence, 2020 and 2021 (overseas visitors)**

Country	2020	2021
USA	71 959	82 020
UK	132 384	45 777
Germany	106 092	44 388
Netherlands	35 026	21 575
France	41 023	19 761
India	18 892	17 662
Switzerland	15 697	11 375
Russia	6 494	10 625
Belgium	12 726	9 106
Canada	17 545	7 494

Source: Statistics South Africa, *Tourism 2021*, p12

**Visitors, by country of residence, 2020 and 2021 (overseas visitors)**



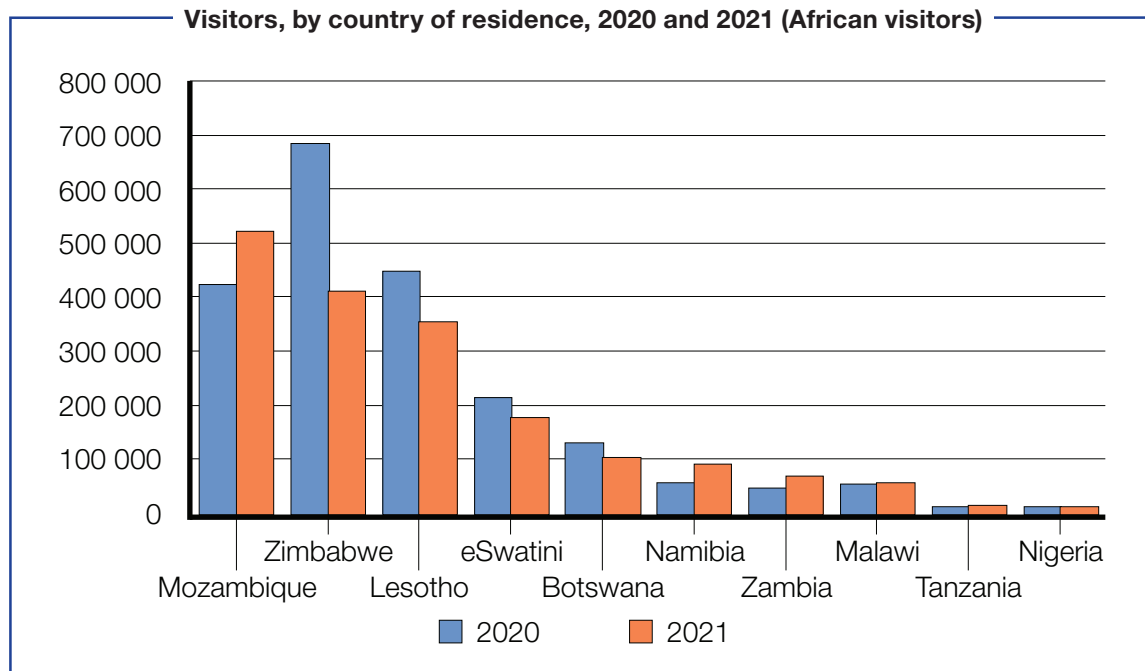
## Tourism

**Visitors, by country of residence, 2020 and 2021 (African visitors)**

Country	2020	2021
Mozambique	422 537	522 866
Zimbabwe	684 546	410 730
Lesotho	448 745	355 255
eSwatini	214 947	177 650
Botswana	129 467	103 158
Namibia	54 511	91 471
Zambia	46 486	68 669
Malawi	53 365	56 313
Tanzania	10 977	13 248
Nigeria	10 191	11 735

Source: Statistics South Africa, *Tourism 2021*, p12

**Visitors, by country of residence, 2020 and 2021 (African visitors)**



# Tourism

Ports of entry, 2021		
Port of entry	Number of visitors	Proportion
OR Tambo International	457 576	20.3%
Cape Town International	141 687	6.3%
King Shaka International	4 375	0.2%
Other airports	1 989	0.1%
<b>Total Air</b>	<b>605 627</b>	<b>26.8%</b>
Botswana border posts	183 537	8.1%
Zimbabwe border posts	258 840	11.5%
Mozambique border posts	596 683	26.5%
Namibia border posts	67 376	3.0%
Lesotho border posts	358 767	15.9%
eSwatini border posts	184 521	8.2%
<b>Total Road</b>	<b>1 649 724</b>	<b>73.1%</b>
Cape Town Harbour	231	0.0%
Durban Harbour	47	0.0%
Port Elizabeth Harbour	70	0.0%
<b>Total Sea</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 255 699</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Statistics South Africa, *Tourism 2021*, p14

