

To: All Media/News Editors
Media Advisory
19 JANUARY 2023

MEC DUMA EXPRESSES GRATITUDE TO THE HOLIDAY MAKERS FOR VISITING KZN DURING THE FESTIVE SEASON

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Mr Siboniso Duma, says the avalanche of people who visited the province of KwaZulu-Natal over the festive season is an indication that the Province remains the tourist destination of choice for both domestic and international markets.

“KwaZulu-Natal is by far the most popular domestic leisure tourist destination for South Africans and this past month was no different. We have no doubt that our efforts to revive the tourism sector will yield a positive outcome. The role of the tourism sector in the economic transformation of our country and our province is immeasurable,” said Duma.

During this period, KwaZulu-Natal welcomed 520 000 domestic tourists and 51 000 international tourists providing R2,4 billion injection to the provincial economy (Provincial Gross Domestic Product).

In early December, we projected an estimated 760 000 domestic trips and an estimated 58 000 international visitors over the entire summer season.

Duma added, “We are pleased with the festive season figures as they reflect the province’s tourism performance over one month of our summer season and note that the province’s summer season draws to a close at the end of March 2023. Therefore, I have no doubt that we will achieve this target.”

Hotel and other accommodation occupancy rates are a good indicator of how well tourism is doing.

At the beginning of December, Tourism KwaZulu-Natal research insights estimated that average hotel occupancy rates for KZN would reach 60% at Christmas and New Year. KwaDukuza was expected to peak at 80%, Hibiscus 78%, Umdoni 78%, Okhahlamba 70% and Umgeni 64%.

From 19 - 25 December 2022, KZN’s average hotel occupancy rate was 57% three percent lower than our projections. But from December 26 to January 1, 2023, average occupancy rates exceeded all our expectations reaching 81%.

Attesting to the above figures, the KZN tourism trade on the north coast, Durban and south coast has indicated that bookings have increased substantially for the Christmas week until New Year. From a slow start at the beginning of December, many upmarket hotels are seeing occupancies rise from around 70% to 90% to fully booked.

We concede that the reason for the initial low holiday bookings was caused by the closure of the Durban City beaches due to the contamination of water. We are working with eThekweni Municipality to ensure that all the beaches are fully functional as soon as possible.

Duma thanked the people of KwaZulu-Natal for receiving the guests with open arms and ensuring that they enjoyed the warm hospitality the province is renowned for.

"We are happy that there were no major incidents that spoilt what was, undoubtedly, once again a memorable experience for our visitors. All entertainment activities which took place in different parts of the province were also a resounding success," said Duma, who further acknowledged that favourable weather remains one of the positive considerations for holiday makers.

ENDS

ISSUED BY THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS.