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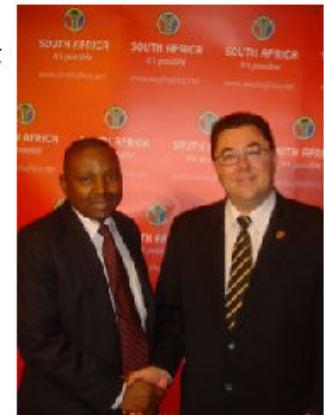
Jun 18, 2008

S. Africa Tourism to Benefit From S. Korea Flights

The signing of an aviation agreement between South Africa and South Korea on May 22 paves the way for more access to South Africa from Asia.

Bradley Brouwer, country manager Japan, South Africa Tourism, said the development will allow travelers, including those from Japan, to have better access to the country. While there are no direct flights between Japan and South Africa, travelers fly from Japan to South Africa via Bangkok, Singapore, Dubai and Hong Kong.

Korean Air (KE), with its wide network serving the major gateway cities as well as regional cities in Japan, is expected to begin service between Johannesburg and Incheon Airport in Seoul as early as autumn 2008.

Mahlalela (l),
Brouwer (r)

Meanwhile, South Africa is on record pace in the first quarter of 2008 as the number of Japanese visitors has reached 6,811, up 13.74%, bucking the downward trend seen in outbound travel from Japan since early 2007.

The first quarter figure is the highest ever, said Brouwer, expressing confidence that the annual total from Japan will reach 35,000, about 9.8% higher than the 31,855 posted in 2007.

He cited the introduction of promotions to Mpumalanga Province from March 2007 as a factor for the rise in arrivals in South Africa.

Sabelo Mahlalela, board member of the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency, said during his participation at the South Africa seminar-workshop in Tokyo that the province's greenery, natural attractions and appeal of the "Panorama Route" among Japanese visitors have contributed to the growth of tourism.

Between March and December, the province welcomed more than 7,000 Japanese visitors, he said.



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2010 World Cup Preparations

He added that the region is gearing up for the 2010 FIF World Cup as the province is building the Mataffin Stadium in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga in time for the March 2009 deadline.

It will join nine other venues for the World Cup for which some 95 billion rand are being invested for new construction and for erecting new stadiums. The Confederates Cup in 2009 will serve as a tune up for the World Cup, he said.

Each stadium in the host cities will feature Fan Parks which will serve as a gathering spot for fans featuring food, drinks, entertainment for pre- and post-matches.

Also, the Gautrain rapid rail transport will be completed in time for the World Cup and connect O.R. Tambo International Airport with Sandton, Rosebank and Pretoria. And the government will also introduce shuttle buses to operate between stadiums and hotels in host cities.

Construction of an additional 20,000 hotel rooms will be added to the current inventory of 35,000, bringing to 55,000 the total number of international hotel rooms that will be available by 2010.

Brouwer added that 10,000 bed and breakfast rooms have been approved by FIFA to be added on top of the new hotel rooms. "South Africa will be ready for the World Cup," he emphasized. "We are ahead of Germany at the same time four years ago."