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Japanese and South African travel trade interact at the SA Tourism road show.

SOUTH AFRICA'S profile in Japan and South Korea has been raised a few notches as a result of a recent four-city road show, which participants have hailed as their "best ever".

Legend Lodges Sales and Marketing Manager, Manuela Pallamar, says:

"It is not an easy exercise to visit four cities in one week, but the workshops were organised extremely well by the SA Tourism Japan team," said Pallamar.

The same could not, however, be said for several South African provincial tourism authorities, who, delegates say, withdrew from the road show at the 11th hour.

"People were eager to get news on South Africa because the SA Tourism team actually personally invited senior delegates to attend the road show, and then three of the provinces that were listed did not arrive, says Fairfield Tours MD, Ian Kleinhans.

Mpumalanga Tourism and

Parks Agency had planned in advance to be part of the delegation but had to cancel at the "last minute" due to unforeseen circumstances with CEO, Solly Mosidi, said Public Relations Officer, Kholo Khwinana. Limpopo Tourism and Parks, for its part, also blamed logistical problems for its failure to attend.

The Japanese market, says Pallamar, is equally important for Legend Lodges. "It is a difficult market to get into and one has to make a long-term commitment," she says, adding that once close relationships have been formed, they are loyal supporters of destinations and product.

Japanese tourist numbers to South Africa increased 17,2 per cent in 2006, from 27 284 visitors in 2005 to 31 989. The numbers are expected to be boosted with the launch of a new Korean Air thrice-weekly service to South Africa in November.

Natalia Thomson

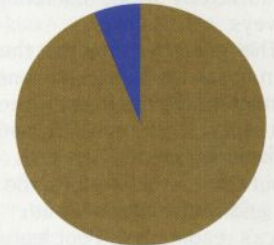
Crime stats could hit confidence in South Africa

MURDER AND aggravated robbery have both increased, according to the annual South African crime statistics released by the Minister of Safety and Security, Charles Nqakula. Murder is up 2,4 per cent and aggravated robbery (instances of robbery accompanied by violence and the use of a weapon) is up 4,6 per cent.

National Commissioner of SA Police Service, Jackie Selebi, says murder and aggravated robberies are "obviously a cause of concern to the SAPS" and that efforts will be made to combat this crime trend.

Other violent crimes, including common assault, common robbery, indecent assault, rape, assault GBH (grievous bodily harm) and attempted murder, all decreased.

READERS HAVE THEIR SAY ON THE STATS



- 94% felt crime was getting worse
- 6% were pleased that crime had decreased in some categories
- 0% said having the statistics was a step in the right direction

South Africa's tourism industry has voiced its feelings on the statistics, with Michael Tatalias, Chief Executive Officer of SATSA (Southern Africa Tourism Services Association) congratulating the SAPS on making the statistics public. "This will help the

creation of effective public/private partnerships to tackle crime and its impact on tourism," says Tatalias. "The increase in some categories is a concern but with the statistics now available, interventions can begin to bear fruit."

The Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) also applauded the SAPS for giving a clear and accurate picture of the crime situation in SA, but was disappointed that Nqakula did not divulge any details or strategy on safety and security measures for 2010.

"With no assurances from the Minister that special efforts will be made to ensure the safety of visitors to the country during an event of the magnitude of the World Cup, I am afraid that confidence in our country will be placed in serious doubt," said Reynold Thakuli, Spokesperson for the TBCSA.

The Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa (Fedhasa) says the "disappointing" statistics are an indication that the private and public sectors are not working together. Brett Dungan,

Chief Executive Officer of Fedhasa, says: "The tourism industry has a plan in place as far as crime is concerned but it needs to be a joint effort between all nationals and government." Sue Lewitton

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