

South Africa and Iran to grow tourism relations

Minister Derek Hanekom is currently on a working visit to Iran, to attend the 10th annual Tehran International Tourism Exhibition, at the invitation of Vice President Dr Zahra Ahmadipour who is also the Head of the Iranian Cultural, Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation.



From left to right: Ambassador A Whitehead (South Africa's Ambassador to Iran), Minister Hanekom, Dr Zahra Ahmadipour (Vice President of Iran and Head of Iran Cultural, Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organisation) and Morteza Rahmani Movahed (Tourism Deputy Iran Cultural, Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organisation).

During the visit, Minister Hanekom had bilateral discussions with Dr Ahmadipour on growing tourism bilateral relations between the two countries and engaged members of the tourism trade to discuss ways of increasing tourist arrivals from Iran to South Africa.

“We have a good base to work from and grow tourism between our countries,” said Minister Hanekom. “We have been very warmly received in Iran, and the government and tourism trade has responded very positively to our effort to promote further tourism ties.”

Iran is amongst South Africa's top three source markets for inbound tourists from the Middle East. More than 4,000 Iranian tourists visited South Africa between January and November 2016.

South Africa is among the most popular destinations in the world for Muslim travellers, according to the MasterCard-Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index for 2016, which covers 130 global destinations. About 117 million Muslim

visitors travelled the world in 2015, representing 10 percent of the entire travel market. This is expected to grow to 168 million visitors by 2020, according to the Index.

“South Africa and Iran already have a strategic partnership that will benefit the people of both our countries. The Department of Tourism is now working with our Iranian counterparts on finalising a Memorandum of Understanding on Tourism Cooperation,” said Minister Hanekom.

“We have a great opportunity to grow tourism between our countries, and we are working together with our Iranian counterparts to do this,” said Minister Hanekom.

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