

SA's domestic travel searches up by 22%

Global flight search and travel deals website, Cheapflights.co.za, has revealed the trending destinations for South Africans for 2021. From a 22% jump in domestic travel searches to interest in KwaZulu-Natal growing substantially, the data below shows a promising future for domestic tourism.



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With the borders remaining closed due to the pandemic, and no clear sign of when international travel will be brought back, South Africans have taken this opportunity to explore new places a little closer to home. From coastal weekends in the Cape, to bushveld escapes in the Lowveld, locals are spoiled for choice with holiday spots.

The top domestic destinations based on flight searches

"We are delighted to see the interest in local travel among South Africans", says Laure Borner, GM Kayak EMEA, which manages Cheapflights.

"South Africa has a lot to offer in terms of destinations with attractive nature and landmarks. Moreover, our data shows that prices for domestic flights this year are down by almost one-fourth when compared to pre-covid times of 2019. Now is the perfect time for exploring closer to home."

Among the flight searches done since the start of lockdown, these are the top ten cities in the country South Africans are interested in going to:

1. Cape Town, Western Cape
2. Johannesburg, Gauteng
3. Durban, KwaZulu-Natal
4. Gqeberha, Eastern Cape
5. George, Western Cape
6. East London, Eastern Cape
7. Bloemfontein, Free State
8. Nelspruit, Mpumalanga
9. Kimberley, Northern Cape
10. Mthatha, Eastern Cape

Many people flock to Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban not only for leisure but for business too. What is quite interesting to note is the presence on the list of smaller towns like Nelspruit and Kimberley, which are in some of the less-travelled regions of the country.

Small local towns attracting significant interest

What is particularly noteworthy is the great jump in searches for particular places in the country. These are the top five cities that had the highest rank jump from 2019 to 2021:

1. Hoedspruit, Limpopo - climbed 70 spots from 118 in 2019 to 48 in 2021
2. Upington, Northern Cape - up 49 spots from 94 in 2019 to 45 in 2021
3. Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal - climbed 46 spots from 95 in 2019 to 49 in 2021
4. Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal - up 47 spots from 97 in 2019 to 50 in 2021
5. Margate, KwaZulu-Natal - jumped 45 spots from 77 in 2019 to 32 in 2021

The above shows a clear increase in searches to KwaZulu-Natal towns, which could largely be attributed to people now feeling safer to visit their families after interprovincial borders opened up again.

Small towns like Hoedspruit are not travelled to very often unless of course, it's to visit the Kruger National Park - this may be the answer for the notable rise in South Africans wanting to fly there. With international travel still not open, a trip to the Lowveld for a safari is a great way to take a break with your significant other or loved ones.

People want shorter breaks

This may be attributed to being focused on work or being budget-conscious, but many South Africans are searching for domestic holidays with an average span of four days. People have been tightening their purse strings since the onset of the pandemic, but are still interested in entertainment and taking some time away. This is compared to last year this time when people were searching for visits to the same cities for an average of five days.

"These trends show that, although travel, in general, is not yet where it was before, there is still great interest in exploring whenever and wherever we can. The great interest in travelling locally shows hope for the domestic travel and tourism industry," says Bornet.

All searches were made on Cheapflights.co.za in the period between 1 January to 31 May 2021 for flights with departure between 1 January to 31 December 2021 from any South African airport. They were compared to the same search and travel periods in 2020 and in 2019.

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