



VoyagesAfric

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Africa's Leading Travel and Tourism Magazine

**Goodbye President
Dr Hage G. Geingob:
An African Tourism Icon pg 26**



UN Tourism
UNITED NATIONS
WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION

**UNWTO Becomes "UN
Tourism" to Mark A New Era
for Global Sector**



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VoyagesAfriq

Travel and Tourism Magazine

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Dear Reader,

As I present to you our inaugural issue for the year 2024, it is with great pleasure that I convey warm greetings from the VoyagesAfriq Team. The conclusion of 2023 marked a significant milestone for the tourism sector in African destinations, with a remarkable recovery evident. The latest UN Tourism World Tourism Barometer for the year substantiates this claim, indicating that international tourism reached 88% of pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2023, with an estimated 1.3 billion international arrivals.

This sets the stage for a new era that surpasses pre-2019 tourism figures. The year has commenced on a remarkable note, notably with the impressive turnout at travel trade shows, signaling the beginning of a flourishing year for tourism. FITUR and ITB, among other travel shows, have experienced a robust rebound and enthusiastic industry participation.

As reiterated by experts and industry leaders, the tourism sector is poised to surpass pre-2019 figures. However, it's crucial to recognize that the landscape of business has evolved over the past three years. Thus, the lessons learned during this time should serve as valuable guides as we navigate into this new era.

This edition provides insight into the new era that the UN Tourism has entered since January 19, 2024. It has rebranded from the former UNWTO name to the former.



Kojo Bentum-Williams

The Secretary-General aptly stated, "As society progresses, the tourism sector, much like many other sectors, needs to transform to serve as a catalyst for prosperity at a universal scale."

Our cover story celebrates the achievements of Sierra Leone's Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Nabeela Farida Tunis, examining her vision for the country's tourism sector and how her Tourism for All campaign will enhance Sierra Leone's competitiveness as a destination.

Additionally, the edition presents experts' predictions for Africa's tourism in 2024 and outlines strategies for maximizing the region's tourism potential. It's time for Africa to invest in key infrastructure to stimulate tourism development and growth. The issue also provides a glimpse into the 10th anniversary of WTM Africa, scheduled to take place in Cape Town, South Africa from April 10-12. Since its inception, the RX-run tourism marketplace has not only introduced Africa as a destination to explore but has also enhanced the sector through programs such as sustainability initiatives, SME training, and media engagement, aligning it with key source markets.

The region is abuzz with excitement with a multitude of events on the horizon. AviaDev, a

route development conference, which has been leading the conversation since its inaugural event in Rwanda in 2016, will be held this year in Namibia. Founder and CEO Jon Howell shares an article with our readers on how tourism should play an active role in route development. Our in-house aviation expert, Sean Mendis, as always, delves into the changing trends in African travel.

This issue is brimming with exciting developments in the African tourism scene, including detailed coverage of the commemoration of 200 years since the return of freed slaves to Janjanbureh Island in the Central River Region of The Gambia, Cabo Verde's rebranding of its tourism image, United Airlines' historic agreement with ONMT, Zambia's investment breakfast in Spain, and more.

We are delighted to welcome the new tourism ministers of Gabon (Ogowe Siffon Pascal), Ghana (Agyapa Mercer), and Botswana (Dumezdweni Mthimkhulu) to the tourism family.

As you peruse through this edition, you will be kept abreast of the sector's major stories and developments.

I wish you a great read.

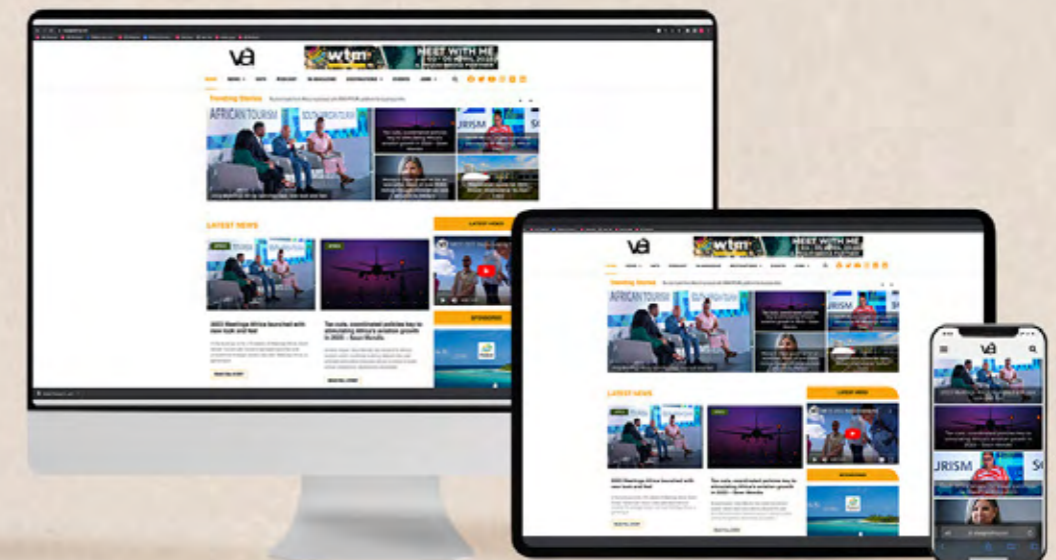


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Africa's leading Travel and Tourism Magazine



UNWTO Becomes “UN Tourism” to Mark A New Era for Global Sector



UN Tourism

UNITED NATIONS
WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has entered into a new era with a new name and brand: UN Tourism. With this new brand, the Organization reaffirms its status as the United Nations specialized agency for tourism and the global leader of tourism for development, driving social and economic change to ensure that “people and planet” are always center stage.

To achieve this goal, UN Tourism engaged the services of Interbrand, the leading global branding agency. Interbrand successfully translated the Organization’s renewed vision for tourism into a new visual identity and brand narrative.

This involved renaming the Organization, transitioning from UNWTO to UN Tourism. At the same time, a new brand narrative was meticulously crafted, one that seamlessly aligns with UN Tourism’s central mission and priorities. This narrative pivots around three main messages: the UN as a global altruistic organization, the notion of connecting humans around the world, and the concept of proactivity and movement.

By moving away from acronyms, UN Tourism adopts a more approachable stance and capitalizes on its strengths: the “UN”, signifying authority, and tourism, a simple and relatable concept

for all. This change has been endorsed by the Organization’s membership, highlighting its united support for the profound transformation and reinvention of UN Tourism in recent years, as it has become more agile, visible, and ever closer to its Member States, partners and the sector as a whole.

With 160 Member States and hundreds of private sector affiliates, UN Tourism has its headquarters in Madrid, Spain, and Regional Offices in Nara (Japan) covering Asia & Pacific, Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) for the Middle East, as well as forthcoming Regional Offices for the

Americas (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) and Africa (Morocco). Its priorities center on promoting tourism for sustainable development in line with the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Global Goals. UN Tourism promotes quality education, supports decent jobs in the sector, identifies talent and drives innovation and accelerates tourism climate action and sustainability with:

Member States – both as recipients of its services, assistance and as active stakeholders in the Organization’s Programme of Work.



Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of UN Tourism



Dignitaries clap to the unveiling of the new Logo

Individuals – specifically travelers and local communities whose lives flourish through the empowerment of the economy through tourism.

Private, semi-private, and public organizations – all engaging with UN Tourism’s work, including its data and insights, events and products.

Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of UN Tourism, said: “As society progresses, the tourism sector, much like many other sectors, needs to transform to serve as a catalyst for prosperity at a universal scale. Enhancing the well-being of individuals, safeguarding the natural environment, stimulating economic advancement and fostering international harmony are key goals that are the fundamental essence of UN Tourism. The organization takes on the role of driving a sustainable force that is now central to many economies.”

Borja Borrero, Executive Director at Interbrand, said: “Transitioning from UNWTO to UN Tourism marks a significant new phase for the organization. The revised nomenclature offers several advantages, including simplicity, enhanced comprehension, improved legibility and memorability. It also serves to clarify the agency’s sphere of influence within the global tourism industry. The new elements of the brand are the foundations of a distinct and proprietary image – one that is direct, relatable, and relevant for diverse

“*As society progresses, the tourism sector, much like many other sectors, needs to transform to serve as a catalyst for prosperity at a universal scale. Enhancing the well-being of individuals, safeguarding the natural environment, stimulating economic advancement and fostering international harmony are key goals that are the fundamental essence of UN Tourism. The organization takes on the role of driving a sustainable force that is now central to many economies*”

audiences.”

The new brand expression is not only limited to words and messages but also expands into a reinvented visual discourse. UN Tourism has a new design language starting from its symbol. “Bringing the world closer” is the new tagline that inspires the concept of a Pangea shaping a human figure in action. This drastic evolution from the former globe symbols reflects the Organization’s emphasis on the dynamic nature of tourism and on putting people first.

Beyond the symbol, the rebrand also includes a revamp of the entire visual system, which is now based on a grid of geographical coordinates meant to help people navigate the brand’s touchpoints, both offline and online, such as events, website, reports, social media channels and campaigns. This system unlocks a rich universe of elements including imagery, fonts, colors, and pictograms all designed to personalize social media campaigns, events, posts and videos.

The new brand will be gradually implemented across all UN Tourism touchpoints over the next few months, beginning with digital channels such as the website, social media accounts and newsletters, followed by physical spaces such as offices and events, and elements such as reports and stationary.



UN Tourism Celebrates High-Level Support after Productive FITUR 2024



UN Tourism SG receives the President of Ecuador H.E. Daniel Noboa at UN Tourism Headquarters

UN Tourism has celebrated the first major tourism event of 2024, FITUR travel trade fair in Madrid, advancing its priorities for the sector for the year ahead.

Ahead of FITUR, UN Tourism – the new name for the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) released its latest data. The first World Tourism Barometer of the year highlighted the sector’s recovery, with international arrivals back to 88% of pre-pandemic levels at the end of 2023. With full recovery expected in 2024, UN Tourism again served as the bridge between public and private sector leaders to build a more resilient and sustainable future.

Welcoming Leaders to UN Tourism

With the new UN Tourism name and logo officially announced to Members on the eve of FITUR, the Organization then welcomed a series of high-level visitors to its Madrid headquarters. The visit of the President of the Republic of Ecuador, His Excellency Daniel Noboa Azín underscored his country’s commitment to tourism as a source of growth and development, also reflected in Ecuador being the official partner country of FITUR 2024. Secretary-General Pololikashvili commended President Noboa and Ecuador’s Minister of Tourism Niels Olsen Peet, for making clear the role tourism can play in bringing hope and promoting understanding even in challenging times. In recognition of his

leading role, President Noboa Azín was presented with an honorary UN Tourism plaque.

Within the framework of FITUR Secretary-General Pololikashvili also held bilateral meetings with the Ministers of Tourism of Albania, Argentina, Colombia, Croatia, Cuba, Czechia, Dominican Republic, Gambia, Gabon, Haiti, Jamaica, Iran, Jordan, Palestine, Tanzania, Serbia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Focus on tourism investments

UN Tourism has identified investment as a key priority for transforming the sector. Within the framework of FITUR, UN Tourism hosted “Invest in Zambia”, bringing together public sector leaders from the country as well as from other African Member States, alongside high-level private sector representatives and investors.

Alongside this, UN Tourism further built on its partnership with the Investment Bank for Latin America (CAF). The two parties agreed to jointly publish “Tourism Doing Business” Investment Guidelines focused on Brazil, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico and Peru, while also re-launching the revised guidelines for investing in tourism in Ecuador.

Building a more ethical and sustainable sector

UN Tourism gathered together a

number of signatories of the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism. The side event reinforced the shared commitment to addressing climate challenges across the whole of the tourism sector, highlighting key challenges as well as opportunities to do better. Additionally, the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) formally welcomed its newest members, Nuevo León (Mexico) and Petén (Guatemala). They bring the global network to 44 members.

Also growing in size and impact is the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. UN Tourism welcomed three new private sector signatories, Piñero, Kuoni and Hotel Taimar to the Code, a comprehensive set of principles that helps to maximise the benefits and minimise the negative impacts that tourism development can have on the environment, cultural heritage and societies around the world.

Best Tourism Villages 2024 Launched

Continuing its work to grow tourism as a pillar of rural development, UN Tourism opened applications for the 2024 edition of its “Best Tourism Villages” initiative.

UN Tourism Member States are invited to submit up to eight candidate villages. Applications are open until 24 April 2024, with the selected villages announced in the third quarter of the year.



UN Tourism SG exchange pleasantries with the KING of Spain Felipe VI at FITUR



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International Tourism to Reach Pre-Pandemic Levels in 2024



Following a strong 2023, international tourism is well on track to return to pre-pandemic levels in 2024.

According to the first UNWTO World Tourism Barometer of the year, international tourism ended 2023 at 88% of pre-pandemic levels, with an estimated 1.3 billion international arrivals. The unleashing of remaining pent-up demand, increased air connectivity. A stronger recovery of Asian markets and destinations, are expected to underpin a full recovery by the end of 2024.

Middle East, Europe and Africa performed strongest in 2023

The latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer provides a comprehensive overview of the sector's performance in 2023, tracking recovery by global region, sub-region and destination. Key takeaways include:

The Middle East led recovery in relative terms as the only region to overcome pre-pandemic levels with arrivals at 22% above 2019.

Europe, the world's most visited region, reached 94% of 2019 levels, supported by intra-regional demand and travel from the United States.

Africa recovered 96% of pre-pandemic visitors and Americas reached 90%.

Asia and the Pacific reached 65% of pre-pandemic levels following the reopening of several markets and destinations. However, performance is mixed, with South Asia already recovering 87% of 2019 levels and North-East Asia around 55%.

Available data shows several destinations, including both large, established destinations as well as small and emerging ones, reporting double-digit growth in international arrivals in 2023 when compared to 2019. Four sub-regions exceeded their 2019 arrival levels: Southern Mediterranean Europe, Caribbean, Central America and North Africa.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili says: "The latest UNWTO data underscores tourism's resilience and rapid recovery, with pre-pandemic

numbers expected by the end of 2024. The rebound is already having a significant impact on economies, jobs, growth and opportunities for communities everywhere. These numbers also recall the critical task of progressing sustainability and inclusion in tourism development"

International tourism hit US\$1.4 trillion in 2023

The latest UNWTO data also highlights the economic impact of recovery.

International tourism receipts reached USD 1.4 trillion in 2023 according to preliminary estimates, about 93% of the USD 1.5 trillion earned by destinations in 2019.

Total export revenues from tourism (including passenger transport) are estimated at USD 1.6 trillion in 2023, almost 95% of the USD 1.7 trillion recorded in 2019.

Preliminary estimates on the economic contribution of tourism, measured in tourism direct gross domestic product (TDGDP) point to USD 3.3 trillion

in 2023, or 3% of global GDP. This indicates a recovery of pre-pandemic TDGDP driven by strong domestic and international tourism.

Several destinations reported strong growth in international tourism receipts during the first ten to twelve months of 2023, exceeding in some cases growth in arrivals. Strong demand for outbound travel was also reported by several large source markets this period, with many exceeding 2019 levels.

The sustained recovery is also reflected in the performance of industry indicators. According to the UNWTO Tourism Recovery Tracker, both international air capacity and passenger demand recovered about 90% of pre-pandemic levels through October 2023 (IATA). Global occupancy rates in accommodation establishments reached 64% in November, slightly above 62% in September 2022 (based on STR data).

Looking Ahead to 2024

International tourism is expected to fully recover pre-pandemic levels in 2024, with initial estimates pointing to 2% growth above 2019 levels. This central forecast by UNWTO remains subject to the pace of recovery in Asia and to the evolution of existing economic and geopolitical downside risks.

The positive outlook is reflected in the

latest UNWTO Tourism Confidence Index survey, with 67% of tourism professionals indicating better or much better prospects for 2024 compared to 2023. Some 28% expect similar performance, while only 6% expect tourism performance in 2024 to be worse than last year. Key considerations include:

There is still significant room for recovery across Asia. The reopening of several source markets and destinations will boost recovery in the region and globally.

Chinese outbound and inbound tourism is expected to accelerate in 2024, due to visa facilitation and improved air capacity. China is applying visa-free travel for citizens of France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia until 30 November 2024.

Visa and travel facilitation measures will promote travel to and around the Middle East and Africa with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to implement a unified tourist visa, similar to the Schengen visa, and measures to facilitate intra-African travel in Kenya and Rwanda.

Europe is expected to drive results again in 2024. In March, Romania and Bulgaria will join the Schengen area of free movement, and Paris will host the Summer Olympics in July and August.

Strong travel from the United States, backed by a strong US dollar, will continue to benefit destinations in the Americas and beyond. As in 2023, robust source markets in Europe, the Americas and the Middle East, will continue to fuel tourism flows and spending around the world.

Economic and geopolitical headwinds continue to pose significant challenges to the sustained recovery of international tourism and confidence levels. Persisting inflation, high interest rates, volatile oil prices and disruptions to trade can continue to impact transport and accommodations costs in 2024.

Against this backdrop, tourists are expected to increasingly seek value for money and travel closer to home. Sustainable practices and adaptability will also play an increasing role in consumer choice.

Staff shortages remain a critical issue, as tourism businesses face a shortfall in labor to cope with high demand.

The evolution of the Hamas-Israel conflict may disrupt travel in the Middle East impact traveler confidence.

Uncertainty derived from the Russian aggression against Ukraine as well as other mounting geopolitical tensions, continue to weigh on confidence.



Nabeela Tunis:

The Minister championing Sierra Leone's tourism renaissance

Sierra Leone's Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Nabeela Farida Tunis, spearheaded a delegation of dynamic tourism stakeholders to FITUR 2024 in Madrid, Spain. This significant event served as a platform for Minister Tunis to engage with international counterparts and the global tourism trade in hopes of attracting visitors and tourists to her country.

A key engagement was with the UN Tourism Secretary General, Zurab Pololikashvili, on an array of pivotal issues shaping the future of Sierra Leone's tourism sector.

In an exclusive interview with VoyagesAfric, Minister Tunis shared her positive impressions of Sierra Leone's participation at FITUR 2024. "We are here as policy leads, and it's been a very active and engaging five days. I am highly impressed with the visitors to the stand and the potential exhibited in terms of partnerships and visitations. FITUR has been a great opportunity for us to partner in a way that complements each other's efforts," she remarked.

The Minister shed light on the prevalent perception of Sierra Leone as a tourist destination, emphasizing the country's raw, unpolluted natural beauty. "People just speak about the beauty of Sierra Leone. That's what struck me because you are talking about raw unpolluted natural beauty," Minister Tunis stated, underscoring the need to promote this unique aspect.

Following her meeting with UN Tourism Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili, Tunis outlined the key takeaways, including a commitment to fostering partnerships and addressing crucial areas like tourism and peace, promoting women in tourism, and encouraging creativity and innovation within the sector.

The Minister who was appointed to lead the sector last August has already



hit the ground running with the introduction of the "Tourism for All" initiative which aimed at driving Sierra Leone's domestic tourism. Discussing Sierra Leone's ambitious campaign, the Minister explained its multifaceted approach. "The end game is basically to share knowledge about tourism in Sierra Leone, encourage movement within and outside of Sierra Leone, and foster partnerships. The campaign seeks to bring as many people onboard in Sierra Leone for them to understand what

tourism is and its value to individuals, communities, and the government."

On the crucial matter of increasing air access to Sierra Leone, the Tourism and Cultural Affairs Minister shared the government's dedicated efforts. "Tourism has been a priority for this government since 2018, and all efforts are geared towards making it as viable as possible. The Ministry of Transport and Aviation has been working hard to attract new airlines into Sierra Leone,



Nabeela Farida Tunis with the Secretary General of UN Tourism Zurab Pololikashvili after a meeting at the headquarters

Minister of the Western Region, she implemented transformative community development initiatives, showcasing the impact of people-centric governance.

As the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tunis played a pivotal role in rebranding Sierra Leone internationally, earning the country respect and recognition. Her proficiency in policy-making and strategic leadership was evident during her tenure as Minister of Planning and Economic Development, where she crafted crucial national development plans.

Now at the helm of Sierra Leone's tourism sector, Minister Tunis brings her exceptional track record to the forefront. Having already launched the "Tourism for All" domestic campaign, she aims to leverage her experience to transform the tourism landscape. With a commitment to inclusive growth, Tunis envisions a tourism sector that benefits all segments of society. Her strategic vision, honed through various ministerial roles, is expected to elevate Sierra Leone as a prominent tourist destination.

Beyond politics, Minister Tunis is actively engaged in philanthropy and mentoring initiatives, reflecting her passion for development and humanity. Married with three children, Tunis's unwavering love for nature and her innate talent for building are set to contribute to the rejuvenation and prosperity of Sierra Leone's tourism industry.

“The end game is basically to share knowledge about tourism in Sierra Leone, encourage movement within and outside of Sierra Leone, and foster partnerships. The campaign seeks to bring as many people onboard in Sierra Leone for them to understand what tourism is and its value to individuals, communities, and the government.”

About Minister Nabeela Farida Tunis

Nabeela Farida Tunis who was appointed Sierra Leone's Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs by President Julius Maada Bio in August 2023, is a distinguished leader with expertise in Development Management, International Relations, and Governance. Formerly the Regional

and we anticipate the entry of new airlines and chartered flights in the coming months."

Closing the interview, Minister Tunis passionately invited global travellers to choose Sierra Leone as their destination, emphasizing the country's minimal air pollution, low carbon footprint, and the unique atmosphere that embraces visitors. "People need to visit Sierra Leone to experience it because you can't experience it from outside; you have to actually be there," she urged.



The Minister poses with the team during the Budapest-Free Town Rally

UN Tourism reiterates need for resilience through diversity and investment in Jamaica

UN Tourism put the focus on building a more resilient sector during an official visit to Jamaica.

With the latest UN Tourism data showing international arrivals returning to 87% of pre-pandemic levels at the end of 2023, emphasis has now shifted to protecting the sector from future shocks. The official visit of the delegation led by Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili coincided with the second Global Tourism Resilience Day. A series of high-level meetings in Jamaica also advanced shared efforts around ethical, inclusive and sustainable tourism as well as the priorities of education and investment.

Investments and education to build resilience

Through the work of UN Tourism, Global Tourism Resilience Day (17 September) was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2023 with the aim of protecting the sector, including its businesses and workers, from future shocks. The second annual celebration was held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, itself one of the leading destinations in the Caribbean and Americas. UN Tourism Secretary-General Pololikashvili joined Jamaican Minister of Tourism Edmund

Bartlett and leaders from the public and private sectors for a special one-day conference on the theme. UN Tourism advanced work for greater resilience through:

Investments: As part of an ongoing collaboration with the Development Bank of Latin American and the Caribbean (CAF), UN Tourism will add to its collection of "Tourism Doing Business" investment guidelines with an edition focused on Jamaica. The guidelines will identify opportunities for investors in the country's tourism sector, with a focus on sustainable and resilient infrastructure.

Education: In Montego Bay, the UN Tourism delegation advanced plans to work with Jamaica's Centre for Resilience on a number of new, targeted education programmes. UN Tourism will also work with the Ministry of Tourism to explore plans to establish a Tourism Academy in Collaboration with UN Tourism. The Academy would serve the wider Caribbean region.

"Resilience takes many forms," the UN Tourism Secretary-General said opening the conference. "Every level of tourism must be ready to deal with shocks

and emergencies and able to adapt to whatever challenge comes our way. For many developing countries, including the least developed countries, small island developing states, countries in Africa and middle-income countries – we cannot allow the lifeline of tourism to be cut for too long."

Jamaica's Prime Minister welcomes UN Tourism

On the eve of the Global Tourism Resilience Day celebrations, Prime Andrew Holness, met with Secretary-General Pololikashvili to discuss shared priorities for growing tourism in size and impact across both Jamaica and the wider Caribbean region. The Prime Minister also invited the UN Tourism leadership to join the official opening of Parliament.

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Zambia launches Tourism Investment Guidelines at FITUR, highlights UNWTO's support

As part of concerted efforts at growing tourism in the country, the Ministry of Tourism, Republic of Zambia, has launched Zambia Investment Guidelines and Tourism Investment Promotion at the last FITUR expo in Madrid, Spain.

While performing the soft launch on January 23, 2024 at the global travel expo, Evans Muhanga, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Zambia, noted that the launch marked a significant milestone in the country's journey towards fostering sustainable tourism development.

He acknowledged the support of the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) in facilitating the development of the investment guidelines, saying that the UN agency's expertise and collaboration have been invaluable in shaping the guidelines, which will serve as a comprehensive roadmap for potential investors looking to contribute to the growth of Zambia's tourism sector.

Speaking on the rationale for the guidelines, the Permanent Secretary of Zambia's Ministry of Tourism Mr. Evans Muhanga said that, "The Republic of Zambia has given top priority to advancing the tourism sector in its development agenda, recognizing its potential to diversify and reduce reliance on traditional exports."

"In pursuit of this goal, various measures are being implemented, including simplifying procedures for conducting tourism activities, facilitating access to



UN Tourism Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili and Permanent Secretary of Zambia's Ministry of Tourism Evans Muhanga

prominent tourism sites, and developing essential infrastructure."

These initiatives are designed to attract investment to tourism destinations that are yet to be fully developed."

He noted that with its diverse landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and abundant wildlife, Zambia stands as a beacon of untapped potential in the global tourism arena. "Our government is committed to creating a conducive environment that encourages and supports investment in the tourism sector. "We firmly believe that strategic partnerships and investments will

not only contribute to the economic development of our nation, but will also play a pivotal role in the conservation of our natural and cultural resources," he assured at the launch.

The Permanent Secretary used the launch event to further invite all participants to look forward to the upcoming presentation, which promises to be an enlightening showcase of Zambia's tourism endowment and the myriad opportunities available for investment.

"Our nation boasts a wealth of attractions, from the iconic Victoria Falls to the untamed beauty of our national parks, providing a diverse range of possibilities for investors seeking to be part of our tourism success story."

Muhanga also announced that Zambia, in collaboration with the UNWTO, will host three significant events over the course of one week in April 2024. The events, according to him, include the UNWTO Dialogue with Chief Executives of National Tourism Organizations, the Tourism Investment Forum and the Travel, Hospitality and Tourism Education Summit.

The three events are intended to boost Zambia's priority for human capital in its tourism development agenda and as such has identified a location to



UN Tourism Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili



establish the country's first centre of excellence for tourism education, which is earmarked as a UNWTO Academy.

"We are further pleased to inform this gathering that the Government of Zambia in adherence to the UNWTO Tourism Education guidelines has successfully integrated tourism education in the school framework from early childhood to secondary school," Muhanga said.

In his opening remarks at the "Invest in Zambia: Tourism Investment Outlook, Trends and Opportunities" UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili was excited with the talks on investments, which he described as one of UNWTO's biggest priorities for tourism this year and beyond.

"The Government of Zambia recognizes the power of our sector to drive growth. I commend their vision to turn Zambia into one of the top five destinations in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030," he said.

He explained that in recent years, Africa has enjoyed a significant increase in announced greenfield tourism FDI projects, about 81 projects, totalling around \$USD 9 billion were announced between 2018 and 2022. Of this, more than \$3 billion came from European investors.

"I have every confidence Zambia can keep growing this number. We are proud to have worked with the Ministry of Tourism to create 'Tourism Doing Business: Investing in Zambia'. It is a shared success."

He disclosed that the guide being launched is the joint work of UNWTO, the Ministry of Tourism of Zambia, the Zambia Tourism Agency and the Zambia Development Agency.

"This guide will provide a reference point for investors, rich in information on Zambia's current investment climate.

"And it shows emerging investment opportunities in its tourism cluster. "As we plan to launch this report in April in Zambia, we invite investors, policymakers, and international partners to join us in this exciting journey".

Explaining the reasons investors should look to Zambia, Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said they include its stable political environment, its wide market access, and the pro-business reforms carried out by the government.

He also noted that tax relaxation measures, incentives and favorable policy frameworks contribute in making Zambia an investment haven.

All these, he said, can help attract foreign

investors to Zambian tourism, coupled with the great work the government is doing in promoting the country to tourists.

"Above all, by celebrating the rich and vibrant culture of Zambia, a hugely diverse country, home to over 70 ethnolinguistic groups.

"It is a country committed to the protection of its natural and cultural resources, with 30% of the land protected as National Parks and it is committed to sharing these wonders with the world," Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said.

He recalled that in recent years, effective marketing has driven recovery with the Yamo Loko campaign showcasing local destinations to reach new audiences.

Hand-in-hand with this, he said that Zambia has expanded its list of visa-exempt travellers for tourism and business purposes.

"Now, visitors from 43 countries, such as Canada, Australia, China, the US, Saudi Arabia, and the majority of EU nations can enter Zambia without visas.

"As it grows, as a destination for both tourists and investors, we will be there to support the country," he promised.

Gabon's Minister of Tourism unveils ambitious vision during UN Tourism headquarters visit



Gabon's Minister of Tourism and Crafts, Pascal Ogowe Siffon in a handshake with UN Tourism Secretary General.

In a significant move signalling Gabon's commitment to prioritizing the tourism sector, the Minister of Tourism and Crafts, Pascal Ogowe Siffon, paid a visit to the UN Tourism headquarters in Madrid, Spain. The Minister's meeting with UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili aimed to highlight the country's vision for sustainable tourism and seek international support for the sector's development.

"I am here to present the vision of the country for the tourism sector. My visit reinforces the commitment of the transition government. We want to develop a sector that is sustainable for economic transformation," affirmed Minister Siffon during the visit.

The Minister emphasised the conscious effort to assess Gabon's tourism potential since gaining independence, aiming to capitalize on the country's rich natural and cultural resources.

"We have taken stock of the tourism sector because we are aware of Gabon's tourism potential and want to emphasize it," stated Minister Siffon.

"I am here to present the vision of the country for the tourism sector. My visit reinforces the commitment of the transition government. We want to develop a sector that is sustainable for economic transformation"

Seeking collaboration and expertise, the Minister expressed the desire for UN Tourism's support to ensure Gabon is on the right path in developing its tourism sector.

During the visit, UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili welcomed the Gabonese delegation and pledged the organisation's unwavering support for Gabon's tourism development.

"I am honoured to meet HE Pascal Ogowe Siffon, Minister of Tourism and Crafts of Gabon. Our discussions on sustainable tourism, the promotion of natural spaces, and Gabonese culture

were very enriching," commented Secretary-General Pololikashvili.

Gabon, a member of UN Tourism since 1975, continues to actively engage with international organizations to foster sustainable tourism practices.

The Minister's delegation to the UN Tourism headquarters included Ambassador of Gabon to Spain Patrick Arthur Moukala, Liliane Nadège Ngari (Secretary-General of the Ministry), M. Yannick Loïc Mbadinga, M. Éloi Boussougou, and Mme Mélanie Ekiba.



Gabon's Minister of Tourism and Crafts, Pascal Ogowe Siffon and the Ambassador of Gabon to Spain H.E. Patrick Arthur Moukala in a meeting with the UN Tourism Team

President Ramkalawan pledges the commitment of Seychelles to ensure Sustainable Tourism



The President of the Republic, Mr. Wavel Ramkalawan

The President of the Republic, Mr. Wavel Ramkalawan joined several other world leaders at the World Governments Summit (WGS) 2024 currently held in Dubai where he delivered his main address focussing on Seychelles' Initiatives and Approaches to Ensure Sustainable Tourism and Balancing Preservation.

In his address to world leaders at the event, the Head of State underlined the pivotal role that Seychelles is playing in conservation, implementing various initiatives to promote sustainable tourism and safeguarding the nation's ecological balance and economic well-being. He touched upon the Blue Economy, Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label (SSTL), renewable energy sources and community involvement among other important initiatives.

"Central to Seychelles' approach is its commitment to the Blue Economy, which includes designating a significant portion of the country's marine territory as protected areas, including marine parks and reserves. These efforts are crucial in preserving biodiversity and safeguarding marine ecosystems for future generations. Furthermore, Seychelles has established the Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label (SSTL), a certification program that recognises tourism accommodations, operators, and services adhering to sustainable practices such as efficient waste management, energy conservation, and community engagement," said President Ramkalawan.

He continued, "In its endeavour to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and mitigate environmental impacts,

Seychelles has invested in renewable energy sources like solar and wind power. These initiatives not only contribute to reducing carbon emissions but also promote a more sustainable approach to tourism activities. Seychelles also emphasises community involvement and empowerment in tourism development, encouraging local participation in decision-making processes and implementing community-based tourism projects to ensure that communities benefit from tourism revenue."

The President also spoke about the significant strides that Seychelles has made in protecting its unique biodiversity through habitat restoration, invasive species control, and species protection programs, "Through such conservation efforts, Seychelles has achieved an enviable record of protecting 30% of its marine territory and 50% of its landmass. The nation has also implemented environmentally conscious policies such as banning single-use plastics and plastic straws, promoting glass recycling, and conducting regular beach cleaning exercises," he said.

"Central to Seychelles' approach is its commitment to the Blue Economy, which includes designating a significant portion of the country's marine territory as protected areas, including marine parks and reserves. These efforts are crucial in preserving biodiversity and safeguarding marine ecosystems for future generations."

The President also remarked that the Seychelles Government had imposed moratoriums on large hotel developments and temporary restrictions on room numbers on certain islands to ensure that future developments align with sustainability goals.

In regards to cultural tourism, President Ramkalawan spoke about Seychelles' initiative through the Creole Rendezvous brand, which offers visitors immersive experiences to appreciate the local culture.

"Preserving and promoting Seychellois culture and heritage are integral to future development plans. Incorporating vernacular architectural styles, supporting local arts and crafts, and integrating cultural activities into urban planning are key components of sustainable development. Furthermore, environmental education and awareness among tourists and locals are key priorities for Seychelles, fostering a culture of sustainability and responsible tourism," underlined the Head of State.

In its pursuit of sustainable development, President Ramkalawan said that Seychelles is investing in green projects across the islands, including eco-friendly buildings, renewable energy systems, waste management facilities, and smart technology solutions for infrastructure management and resource efficiency.

Regarding International Corporations and partnerships, the President further emphasized the need for the adoption of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and vulnerable countries. He also spoke about Seychelles' collaboration with the UN Tourism on the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) project, which has been instrumental in understanding the industry's contribution to GDP, employment, and foreign exchange earnings. He noted that through this collaboration, Seychelles' objectives are to align tourism strategies with sustainable development goals and accurately assess the economic benefits of tourism.

To conclude, President Ramkalawan reiterated Seychelles' commitment by focusing on sustainable governance, fostering international collaboration, and championing innovation. "Seychelles remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring sustainable tourism practices that balance the preservation of natural resources with the economic benefits of tourism. Through international cooperation, community involvement, and innovative initiatives, Seychelles aims to advance its island development objectives, build resilience against environmental challenges, and foster inclusive and equitable economic growth," he said.



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Data, Sustainability and Collaboration the Focus as UN Tourism Returns to ITB Berlin

UN Tourism returned to ITB Berlin, bringing its new name and look to the leading travel trade fair and uniting the sector around its focus on sustainability, investments and collaboration.

Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili joined the Governing Mayor of Berlin, Kai Wenger, and other public and private sector leaders in officially opening the 2024 event. He said: "Tourism's return means so much to so many people. Tourism is a great uniting force. Together, we are growing new areas of our sector, to build greater resilience and spread the benefits of tourism even wider."

Under its new look and name, UN Tourism once again made ITB Berlin a top platform for high-level collaboration and for advancing several of its key priorities for the sector:

Better data for deeper transformation

UN Tourism and the World Tourism Cities Federation (WCCTF) launched a joint report highlighting the need to measure the social and environmental

“Tourism's return means so much to so many people. Tourism is a great uniting force. Together, we are growing new areas of our sector, to build greater resilience and spread the benefits of tourism even wider.”

impacts of tourism in urban destinations in a more effective and harmonized way. The report stresses the importance of embracing big data and other forms of technology and looks ahead to the creation of a first global urban tourism database.

The launch of the publication comes in the same week that all 193 UN members adopted the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (MST).

Accelerating Climate Action

Continuing its leading role in the One Planet Tourism Network and the Glasgow Declaration, UN Tourism launched Policy Guidance to Support Climate Action by National Tourism Administrations (NTAs). The guide will assist NTAs everywhere to develop policies and create initiatives designed

to accelerate the shift towards a low-carbon sector. The guide, which also contains examples of best practice, was developed after consultations with Ministries of Tourism of Member States. The guidance is complemented by a Glasgow Declaration Engagement Pack, with practical recommendations on how to get started on climate action in tourism. Also at ITB Berlin, UN Tourism officials participated in a roundtable event on Reconciling Safety and Sustainability.

Additionally, bringing together its focus on rural development, gender equality and sustainability, UN Tourism also participated in a special side event, Sustainable Rural Tourism: A Foundation for Biodiversity Preservation and Gender Equality – Potentials and Interactions, providing insights and best practice recommendations.

Working closely with Member States

Within the framework of ITB 2024, UN Tourism Secretary-General Pololikashvili held a series of high-level bilateral meetings with Ministers of Tourism and other high-level representatives from Member States from across the world. The meetings served to advance plans for joint projects and for key upcoming UN tourism events.

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Tourism Seychelles Shines at FITUR 2024, Inspiring Global Tourism's Dynamic Growth



Tourism Seychelles took centre stage at the esteemed 44th edition of FITUR 2024, captivating audiences from January 24 to 28 at IFEMA MADRID. This monumental event underscored the dynamic evolution of the global tourism industry.

FITUR 2024 brought together an impressive assembly of 9,000 participating companies from 152 countries, boasting a total of 806 exhibitors. Affirming its status as the premier global trade fair, FITUR set new records for both participants and visitors, expanding its international reach to include 20 more countries compared to the previous year.

FITUR's unwavering commitment to fostering business relationships remains a cornerstone, dedicating three exclusive days to professionals and extending opportunities for engagement with travellers over the weekend. Sustainability took the forefront, aligning with the industry's steadfast commitment to environmental responsibility.

With a turnout of 150,000 professional visitors during the weekdays and an additional 100,000 general public attendees over the weekend, Tourism Seychelles attracted a substantial crowd, generating heightened demand for the destination.

The significance of the Spanish market for

Seychelles, closely aligned with Tourism Seychelles' policy of emphasising quality over quantity, was highlighted at FITUR 2024. This strategic approach resonates with the discerning Spanish audience, promoting sustainable and authentic experiences.

Expressing enthusiasm for the event, Mrs. Bernadette Willemin, the Director General of Destination Marketing of Tourism Seychelles, shared, "FITUR serves as a key tool for sharing knowledge and innovation and as a lever for promoting a more sustainable tourism model. Environmental, social, and corporate governance responsibility are intricately woven into the proposals offered by Tourism Seychelles throughout the event."

Tourism Seychelles takes pride in its collaboration with two major Destination Management Companies (DMCs), namely 7° South, represented by its General Manager, Andre Butler Payette, and Mason's Travel, led by its Product and Sales Manager, Ms. Amy Michel.

"7° South was proud to exhibit alongside Tourism Seychelles at FITUR in Madrid. Our participation has given us a renewed sense of excitement as we reengaged with our existing partners as well as finding new opportunities allowing us to share the Seychelles experience. Spain and the broader Iberian market

are ones which hold unprecedented potential for growth," stated Mr Payette.

Adding on, Ms. Michel shared, "Mason's Travel was delighted to attend Fitur this year, reconnecting with partners and fostering new relationships amid the rising interest in Seychelles travel. Observing the market's hunger for Seychelles, they are excited about the anticipated growth fuelled by upcoming product launches in 2024, making Seychelles a standout buzzword at the event."

The collaborative spirit extended to a prominent Cruise Operator, "Variety Cruises", actively contributing to the success of FITUR 2024.

Led by the DG of destination marketing, Bernadette Willemin, the delegation also included Mrs. Monica Gonzalez, Tourism Seychelles' Madrid-based Marketing Executive, playing a vital role in shaping the future of the global tourism industry.

As a pivotal event in the international tourism calendar, FITUR 2024 mirrored the recent upswing in the national and global tourism industry and is positioned to play a crucial role in consolidating the sector's momentum throughout 2024.



Mrs. Bernadette Willemin, Director General of Destination Marketing of Tourism Seychelles

Driving tourism for inclusive growth: UN Tourism vision for a prosperous Africa

The UN Tourism Africa department remains committed to its member states and the advancement of the **UN Tourism Agenda for Africa - Tourism for Inclusive Growth**. Over the past years, our member states have collaborated with us on key priorities to bring about transformative change in the African tourism sector.

Despite global challenges, our sector has shown remarkable resilience, with arrivals reaching 88% of pre-pandemic levels in 2023, and Africa itself surpassing expectations with 96% of pre-pandemic visitors in 2023, with robust demand from European markets, with Ethiopia (+30%), Tanzania (+20%) and Morocco (+11%) all exceeding their 2019 numbers through October or November 2023. Key themes such as branding, safety and security, digital transformation and investment promotion have remained central, underscoring our objective for sustainable growth. Through partnerships and strategic initiatives, we continue to pave the way for a brighter future for African tourism.

As we work towards consolidating tourism development in Africa, we are pleased to share some key strategic priorities which aligns with the core thematic areas of our agenda.

The transition of the new name and brand: **UN Tourism** represents a significant shift and the organization's aim to reaffirm its status as the global leader of tourism for development, driving social and economic change to ensure that "People, Planet and Prosperity" are central in all our activities. By placing people at the center, UN Tourism aims to ensure that local communities benefit directly from tourism initiatives, fostering economic growth, social inclusion, and cultural preservation.

In the past two years we have been strongly encouraging sustainable investment in the African tourism sector. Through targeted initiatives such as the production of Tourism Doing Business Guidebooks and strategic partnerships, we aim to create an enabling environment that attracts both domestic and foreign investment, fostering sustainable growth and development across the

continent. Education and human capital development remain a cornerstone of our strategy as we seek to empower individuals and communities within the tourism sector. We are redoubling our efforts to provide access to quality education and training opportunities, equipping stakeholders with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving industry. These two topics; investments and education will be further discussed and prominently covered within the framework of the 67th UN Tourism Regional Commission for Africa in Algeria in September 2024.

“By placing people at the center, UN Tourism aims to ensure that local communities benefit directly from tourism initiatives, fostering economic growth, social inclusion, and cultural preservation.”

Additionally, we will launch initiatives aimed at showcasing the diverse cultural heritage, natural wonders, and unique experiences that Africa has to offer, bolstering its reputation as a premier travel destination. Against this backdrop, Zambia and Zimbabwe are set to host two pivotal events for the region: the **2nd UN Tourism Regional Conference on Brand Africa** and the **1st UN Tourism Africa Regional Gastronomy Forum**, both to be hosted in July 2024. These high-level platforms are strategically designed to tackle challenges hindering the sector's growth and redefine Africa's brand narrative. By addressing persisting perceptual barriers and stereotypes, the conferences aspire to shift the narrative around the continent, ultimately aiming to unleash Africa's tourism potential. This concerted effort will continue to serve as the nucleus of our strategic

roadmap, marking a significant step towards reshaping the perception and maximizing the untapped opportunities within the African tourism environment.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are also integral to our agenda for inclusive growth. We continue to advocate and promote the expansion of women's participation and leadership in the tourism sector. Through UN Tourism Women in Tourism Leadership Africa Committee (WITLAC), driven by the Honourable Minister of Sierra Leone, we will be sharing some key initiatives that will help propel and empower women in the tourism sector.

Looking ahead, our vision remains resolute. It is imperative to emphasize our firm commitment and dedication to give the **UN Tourism Agenda for Africa - Tourism for Inclusive Growth** with a view to supporting our member states in fostering strong collaborations with key tourism stakeholders for the development of sustainable tourism projects with meaningful socio-economic impacts across the Africa region and guiding the sector towards a future of prosperity and shared benefits.



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Goodbye President Dr Hage G. Geingob:

An African Tourism Icon



The Late Dr Geingob in an elbow greeting with UN Tourism Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili in one of the many visits of UN Tourism visits to Namibia

“Namibia is a country that is renowned for the preservation of its rich biodiversity and natural landscapes. The preservation of our environment is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia. Therefore, our commitment to sustainable tourism development is central to our agenda of prosperity for the Namibian people.”

The above was an excerpt from the powerful speech Hage Geingob, the late Namibian President, delivered at the 25th Session of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) General Assembly in Samarkand, Uzbekistan in October, 2023.

The well-crafted speech, amid details of feats achieved in tourism, were part of the presentations by the late Namibian President to convince the General Assembly on why his country needs a seat on the United Nations

World Tourism Organization Executive Council, (now UN Tourism).

Under the late president, Namibian tourism forged far ahead, improving on old offerings, developing new ones and especially tourism infrastructure, engaging in several mutual partnerships, increasing tourist arrivals, among other feats.

Again, the country hosted many tourism events under him. From hosting the United Nations World Tourism Organisation Brand Africa Conference in Windhoek, the 5th edition of the Africa Youth in Tourism Innovation Summit and Challenge, in collaboration with UN Tourism, among others, the country opened its borders to African and global tourism.

The late president at the General Assembly reiterated the need for making concerted efforts at growing tourism in

the country, noting, “We are reminded of the immense potential that tourism holds in shaping our world and reaffirm our commitment to sustainable tourism development. In that vein, the goals of this important organization are aligned to those of Namibia.”

“As a member of the United Nations World Tourism Organization, Namibia believes in the organization’s efforts to promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

Sadly, lovers of tourism in Africa and the world woke up on February 4, 2024 to the news of the sudden passing of President Hage Geingob.

He would be remembered for his many strides in the Namibian and African tourism landscape. He was a pan-Africanist, tourism lover, people’s president, good leader, a loving husband and a father.

Of course, his death is a tremendous loss to Africa, especially his family and the people of Namibia.

A deep thinker, he was also one of the funniest presidents in Africa because of how easy he took life. More importantly, late President Hage Geingob’s memory, resolve, and intellectual depth were intriguing. He was truly a deep thinker.

While many were still scared, he braced the odds to restart Africa’s tourism sector post covid-19 with the hosting of the first in-person meeting of the UNWTO in Africa; a three-day conference in Namibia.

In his tribute, the UN Tourism Secretary General, Zurab Pololikashvili, commended the late Namibian president for his great support to the agency’s vision and tourism development in Africa.

Apart from his well-thought-out and practical policies that have aided tourism development in Namibia, Pololikashvili applauded the late president for his pan-African views and moves for continent-wide tourism development, which saw him hosting the first in-person meeting of UN Tourism (then UNWTO) in Africa.



“I extend my heartfelt condolences on the passing of Namibian President H.E. @HageGeingob, a dear friend. His unwavering leadership and commitment to his nation will be a lasting legacy. My thoughts are with the people of Namibia and his family during this difficult time,” the UN Tourism boss said on his Twitter handle @pololikashvili.

In the same vein, Kwakye Donkor, CEO, Africa Tourism Partners, the organizers of African Youth In Tourism Innovation

“**The late president at the General Assembly reiterated the need for making concerted efforts at growing tourism in the country, noting, “We are reminded of the immense potential that tourism holds in shaping our world and reaffirm our commitment to sustainable tourism development. In that vein, the goals of this important organization are aligned to those of Namibia.”**”

Summit and Challenge, also extended his condolence to the government and people of Namibia over the demise of their president.

In his tribute, Donkor particularly appreciated the late president whose support enabled the successful hosting of two editions of the African Youth In Tourism Innovation Summit and Challenge, with the third consecutive edition to be held this May in Windhoek.

“Africa Tourism Partners, BDO and all our partners would like to express our most sincere and heartfelt condolences to the family, relatives and friends of the late President; the Government and the people of Namibia on the untimely demise of the President of the Republic of Namibia, Dr. Hage G. Geingob who passed away on Sunday on February 4, 2024.

“President Dr. Hage Geingob was a unifier and dedicated Pan-Africanist and may his legacy as a modernizer live on.

“Africa Tourism Partners is honoured to

have interacted with the Government of the Republic of Namibia in tourism projects and contributed to the recovery and growth of tourism in Namibia.

“Our thoughts are with the nation of Namibia, and we pray God may give you the strength and courage at such a time as this,” Donkor said.

For Susan Akporiaye, president, National Association of Nigerian Travel Agencies (NANTA), President Geingob was a pan-African revolutionist in tourism, considering the huge support he offered to many projects across the continent and collaborations that have seen tourist traffic soaring in Namibia.

She lamented that Africa has lost a gem whose impact on the tourism landscape will last longer. She, however, consoled the government and people of Namibia, urging them to keep the late president’s legacies alive and grow tourism beyond where he left it at death.

For many others who met him, the legacy of the late president was crosscutting and the tourism sector benefited immensely from his leadership and support.

Profile:

He was Namibia’s first prime minister. A role he assumed in 1990, after the country gained independence from South Africa. He served as prime minister until 2002, and again from 2008 to 2012. He also served as president of Namibia’s ruling SWAPO Party (The South West Africa People’s Organisation), which formed as a liberation movement in 1960 when Namibia (then known as South-West Africa) was under the administration of South Africa.

Geingob was a respected anti-apartheid activist who spent nearly 30 years in exile in Botswana and the United States of America. In 1964, he was the SWAPO representative at the United Nations and to the Americas. He went on to be the founding director of the UN Institute for Namibia, an educational body set up by the United Nations Council for Namibia in 1976. Later, Geingob was elected chairman of the constituent assembly that was responsible for drafting the Namibian constitution.

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UN Tourism Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili inspects new Headquarters

The UN Tourism Secretary General has paid a working visit to the new headquarters of the Madrid based UN Tourism Agency.

Visiting in the company of Spain's Minister of Industry, Commerce and Tourism H.E. Jordi Hereu, and other senior officials of the Spanish government, the Secretary General was given an update on the progress of works done so far and also a small tour of where will be the new premises of the HQ of global tourism.

During the visit, Mr Pololikashvili said he was "delighted to have visited the new UN Tourism headquarters in Madrid together with Spain's Minister of Industry and Tourism H.E. Jordi Hereu. Together we have explored the potential of this space to drive global tourism initiatives."

The new headquarters to be housed in the former palacio de congress opposite the iconic Santiago Bernabeu Stadium is expected to open in the first quarter of 2025.



Expressing the Spanish government's commitment to the works and programs of UN Tourism was the minister of tourism.

"I have visited the works of the new headquarters of UN Tourism with its General Secretary Zurab Pololikashvili.

This UN Tourism building expresses the Government's will to promote our tourism industry, which is one of those that contributes the most to the development of the economy. It will be ready in 2025," the Minister maintained.









 @VoyagesAfric



Donald Payen,
Chairperson, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority

Mauritius excited with recovery of European source markets, amid good performance in 2023

The Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) has expressed excitement over the recovery of its two major European source markets of Spain and Portugal.

Expressing the excitement at the ongoing FITUR in Madrid, Spain, Donald Payen, chairperson of the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority noted that Portugal and Spain, its two source markets, are now almost to the numbers that they had before covid.

“So, the recovery of Spain and Portugal is much better than the average recovery for Mauritius, which is 93 percent. Spain and Portugal have reached 99 percent and recognized that even the 93 percent of the overall market is much better than what UNWTO just announced for the world market, which is 88 percent,” he said.



Mar Sanchez Villalta (left) and Berlinda Udhin (right)
- Tourism Promotion Officer of MTPA

The chairperson attributed the feats to the efforts that have been made over the past two years, especially last year with the arrival of former Air Mauritius representative Mar Sanchez Villalta, who is doing tremendous work in the country.

“This is due to partnerships with the travel trade, the influencers in the market and the confidence they have in Mauritius,” he said.

According to him, the country is very hopeful that with the initiatives that the Tourism Promotion Authority has taken, there will be more figures and more development in the two markets.

“We are blessed that today Avoris and Iberia Jet announced the over 15 flights they operated to Mauritius from Madrid and that they are adding 12 flights during the June to September session between Lisbon, Barcelona and Mauritius”.

The additional flights, he noted, would give another impetus to efforts to grow the two markets.

The markets are also feeling the offerings and responding accordingly.

“The response is tremendous from these markets for the new repositioning of Mauritius, which is ‘Go Beyond the Sun Sea and Sand.’ Beyond this, Mauritius

has got so much to offer as depicted by the new campaign we launched, which is ‘Feel Our Island Energy’”.

For him, the rationale for going after the two markets is because there is so much to do in Mauritius and the Spanish and Portuguese are now going out more than they used to.

Apart from the markets, the Tourism Promotion Authority is also promoting the combination between Africa and Mauritius, especially Kenya.

Of course, Donald Payen is happy with the 1.3 million tourists feat achieved last year, but he is setting another target for this year.

“We have been very transparent in Mauritius. We recognise what revenues we had in 2019, we did much more in 2023.

“But we wanted to be true to ourselves and we adjusted to inflation, which is not done worldwide. Worldwide they just take what they got in 2019 and what they have in 2023 without adjusting for inflation. We went beyond this and adjusted for inflation.

“We are doing better overall in spite of a lesser number of overall earnings from tourists for 2023,” he concluded.




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Malawi scraps visa requirements for travellers from 67 Countries in latest immigration amendment



Dr Lazarus Chakwera

In a significant stride towards fostering international relations and promoting tourism, Malawi has recently made sweeping changes to its immigration policy, liberating travel for citizens of 67 countries. The new amendments mark a paradigm shift as Malawi opens its doors wider, welcoming visitors from various corners of the globe without the need for a visa.

The updated immigration policy not only benefits the 67 newly exempted nations but also extends its hospitality to nationals from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), holders of SADC Laissez-Passer on official SADC business, holders of Common COMESA Laissez-Passer engaged in official COMESA business, holders of United Nations (UN) Laissez-Passer on official UN business, holders of African Union Laissez-Passer on official AU business, holders of African Development Bank Laissez-Passer on official ADB business, and all Diplomats and Government officials.

This strategic move aims to bolster Malawi's position as a tourist-friendly destination while facilitating seamless

travel for business and diplomatic purposes. By waiving visa requirements for a diverse array of countries and international organisations, Malawi underscores its commitment to promoting global connectivity and cooperation.

The move is expected to attract a more diverse range of tourists, leading to increased cultural exchange, economic collaborations and diplomatic engagements.

Commenting on the new visa-free policy on her official Facebook account, Malawi's Minister of Tourism, Vera Kamtukule said it was a bold step towards a brighter tomorrow

"This is nothing short of a bold leap towards a brighter tomorrow. This monumental decision isn't just about visas; it's about unleashing the untapped potential of our beloved Malawi and inviting the world to experience its wonders firsthand."

The Minister added that the scrapping of the visa requirements is an invitation for travellers to explore Malawi as the warm heart of Africa. "Picture this: Malawi, the radiant heart of Africa, now beckons travelers from every corner

of the globe with open arms. From the majesty of our landscapes to the warmth of our hospitality, every moment spent in our embrace promises to be an unforgettable adventure."

"As we chart our course towards Malawi 2063, envision a future where our nation stands as a beacon of hope and inspiration. With each visa waiver, we pave the way for new connections, cultural exchanges, and economic opportunities that will enrich our lives and empower our communities," the Tourism Minister emphasized.

The list of the countries covered by the new visa policy includes: Antigua and Barbuda; Australia; Bahamas; Barbados; Belgium; Belize/Papua; Brunei/Samoa (Western); Canada; China; Cyprus; Dominica; Fiji; Finland; France; Gambia; Germany; Ghana; Grenada and Guyana.

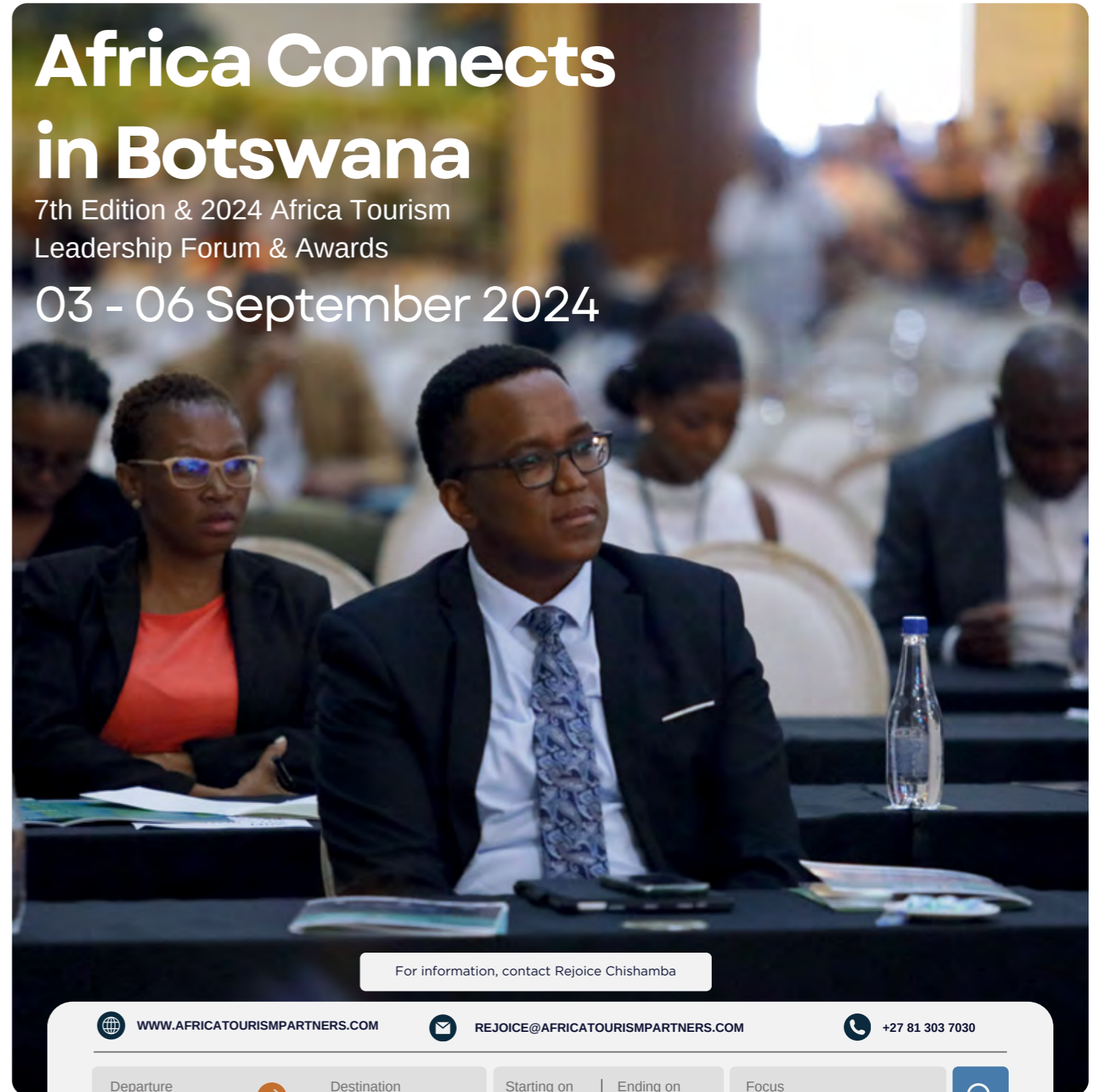
The rest are: Ireland; Israel; Italy; Jamaica; Kiribati; Malaysia; Maldives Island; Malta; Nauru; Netherlands; New Guinea; New Zealand; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Russia; Sierra Leone; Singapore; Solomon Island; Sri Lanka; St. Kitts and Nevis; St. Lucia; St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Sweden; Tonga; Trinidad and Tobago; Tuvalu; United Kingdom; and United States of America.



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Namibia Tourism Board spearheads innovative campaign for sector transformation

The Namibia Tourism Board (NTB) is leading a comprehensive campaign aimed at improving connectivity and expanding into diverse markets, with the goal of transforming the country's tourism sector through collaboration and innovation. This strategic vision was disclosed by Acting CEO of the Organization Bonnie Mbidzo in an interview with VoyagesAfric.

He stated: "Traditionally, the German market has been a cornerstone of our tourism industry, given our historical ties with Germany. However, as we assess the broader travel trade landscape, our focus is not only on maintaining but also on expanding our reach."

"While Germany remains significant, we are actively pursuing growth opportunities in emerging markets within Europe. Our engagement with the trade reflects a strategic shift towards diversification, with a keen emphasis on investing in markets such as French-speaking and Italian-speaking regions. It's all about offering a more diversified product to cater to the evolving preferences of travelers."

Bonnie emphasized that at the core of NTB's strategy lies the optimization of air access and connectivity, which stands as a pivotal factor in propelling tourism growth.

"We have received confirmation that Qatar will resume flights in August, after initially announcing plans for July. Unfortunately, the initial announcement didn't come from Qatar itself, and we extend our apologies to those affected,"



he said.

"With the upcoming AviaDev conference in June, the issue of air connectivity is at the forefront of our minds. Without adequate airlift, connectivity within Africa remains a distant dream. We are committed to turning these aspirations into reality; we want action, not just dreams."

Expanding on the upcoming AviaDev Conference, the Acting CEO of NTB highlighted Namibia's dedication to active participation and meaningful contribution to the event.

He stated: "With AviaDev, the Namibian Tourism Board is poised to reap significant benefits as we step into our role as a partner alongside other stakeholders. Our aim is not just to participate, but to actively contribute to ensuring the success of the conference in Windhoek. We are committed to this endeavor and will be signing a

memorandum of understanding with the main partners on Tuesday, March 12th. This underscores our dedication to being more than just a role player; we strive to be equal partners involved in decision-making processes."

As the Acting CEO, Bonnie expressed his commitment to building a strong and trained team as well as promoting domestic tourism.

"My predecessors have already created the platform and the foundation upon which I am building. As an acting CEO, I need to ensure that we have a focused and highly qualified team. That's why we're bringing in people who understand the market," he reiterated.

"Regarding domestic tourism, we are already engaged, and our partners in the private sector have offered discounted rates to entice travelers to experience Namibia."

Dumezdweni Mthimkhulu appointed Botswana's new Minister of Environment and Tourism

Botswana's President, Dr. Mokgweetsi Masisi has appointed Dumezdweni Mthimkhulu as the new Minister of Environment and Tourism in a latest cabinet change that was announced on February 26.

Mthimkhulu takes over from Philda Nani Kereng who has been designated by the President as Botswana's High Commissioner to Nigeria.

He is the current Assistant Minister for State President in Botswana, having been appointed to the position in 2019 and will be expected to build on the growth momentum initiated by his predecessor which has positioned the Southern African country as one the best-known tourism destinations in the region.



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Fascinating Heritage Sites and Cultural Offerings on McCarthy Island to Undergo Enhancement and Valorization

As the commemoration of 200 years since the return of freed slaves to Janjanbureh Island in the Central River Region unfolded on Saturday, January 6, 2024, President Adama Barrow of the Republic of The Gambia reassured the Islanders and other African residents that the island would continue to receive the attention of Gambian authorities. During the celebration, His Excellency President Adama Barrow was accompanied by various dignitaries, including Rt Hon Patricia Scotland, KC – Commonwealth Secretary-General; Amadou Bah, Prime Minister of Senegal representing President Macky Sall; and the UNWTO Secretary-General, represented by two of his directors. The event also saw the presence of diplomats, cabinet ministers, His Excellency the Vice President of the Republic of The Gambia, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, and Her Excellency Dr. Isatou Njie Saidy, Former Vice President of the Republic of The Gambia. The President emphasized the commitment to upgrading and valorizing all the fascinating heritage sites and

cultural products of the island. This initiative aims to generate employment through heritage tourism, foster national unity, and project a positive image of the people. Also in attendance, Governors, Mayors, NAMS, Councilors, Chiefs, and government officials. Welcoming everyone to the commemoration under the theme Celebrating Homecoming and Our Heritage, President Barrow announced that The Gambia will seize the McCarthy Island Bicentenary celebration to use its diplomatic, intellectual, and cultural advantage to promote the reparations agenda. Going through memory lane, he said “History teaches us that, about 200 years ago, the Island of Janjanbureh was transformed from a peaceful Gambian settlement to a trading center by the British, under Queen Victoria. It eventually hosted many French and British firms and was renamed McCarthy Island, with a part of it called Georgetown.



H.E Adama Barrow, President of The Gambia

“As we have it on record, thousands of Africans who were freed from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade bound for Freetown, Sierra Leone, were re-settled here in Georgetown. Therefore, we are in this historic town to celebrate its bicentenary on an island where hope was restored to captured Africans who were unjustly seized, unjustly treated, and unjustly removed from their homeland and families without any regard for their rights and dignity.”

“As a result, among other attendees, the Festival has brought together Gambians at home and those in the diaspora, in addition to friends of The Gambia, historians, and tourists to participate in the healing, re-connection, and reconciliation process through our shared history and heritage. Therefore, I am pleased that the organizers have involved not only artists in The Gambia but also those in the sub-region and beyond in the activities for peace and reconciliation.”

In his speech, he expressed that besides the objectives of the Festival, Africans are celebrating hope over despair and indifference, growth and progress over stagnation and submission, and unity in diversity over intolerance and instability, “This is an important message for everyone, especially the African youth.”

Notwithstanding, he said it is with mixed feelings that the historic festival was organised to remember the events of the mid-nineteenth century because of the cruel acts of that dark era, Africans have been forced to demand reparations from those who took part in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

“The African Union, for instance, has in the past two decades led a strong and persistent campaign on reparations for slavery as a basic human right for Africans,” he added.

Coming home, he said, in 2022, at its 73rd Ordinary Session held in Banjul, The Gambia, the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights agreed to set up a committee that would establish a case for reparations.

In this case, he noted that The Gambia will seize the McCarthy Island Bicentenary celebration to use its diplomatic, intellectual, and cultural advantage to promote the reparations agenda.

However, President Adama Barrow disclosed “Last October, I observed that it is rewarding for a nation to reflect on the past to chart the way forward for a better future. For this reason, my Cabinet worked closely with the National Organising Committee, stakeholders, and the communities of the area to hold this grand commemoration.

Festival, and it will not end here. We will build upon the lessons and success stories of the Bicentenary and further promote the heritage and artistic sectors for the gainful employment of the youth.”

Speaking on the continuous promotion of heritage, he said through support from UNESCO, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture has developed regulations for The National Endowment For Arts and Culture. The instrument will attract funding, through grants, for artistic and cultural projects.



In conclusion of his speech, the President once again expressed delight over the commemoration and thanked all the dignitaries that joined to celebrate this important occasion and also well reflected on the presence of the Senegalese high-level delegation to the commemoration which he said has “once again, manifests the bond of friendship and good neighbourliness President Macky Sall holds for The Gambia.”

Among other speakers who delivered powerful speeches in commemorating this unique event were Rt Hon Patricia Scotland, KC – Commonwealth Secretary General, Amadou Bah Prime Minister of Senegal representing President Macky Sall, Honourable Hamat NK Bah – The Gambia Minister of Tourism and Culture, Hon Ousman Bah Governor of Central River Region and others.

However, the event was marked by different cultural performances and other activities. The Westeners who landed in Janjanbureh two hundred years ago, he said, made the best out of a very bad situation and ended up building homes and careers for themselves and their offspring. So, “The lesson for our youths is that we must strive to succeed in the country. As we put it, Tekki Fi.”

By Mamou Suwaneh and Yunus S Saliu



Cabo Verde's new tourism brand is targeted at transforming each island into a Destination – PM



Ulisses Correia e Silva, The Prime Minister of Cabo Verde

The Prime Minister of Cabo Verde, Ulisses Correia e Silva, stated on Friday 16th February that Cabo Verde's new tourism brand, launched matches the country's ambition to transform each island into a genuine, differentiating and an authentic tourist destination.

"The genuine, differentiating and an authentic tourist destination makes Cabo Verde unique for its people, its nature, its culture, and its history.

"Therefore, I would like to congratulate the work done. Until it reaches this point", said Ulisses se Correia e Silva, Prime Minister of Cabo Verde.

The Prime Minister made the statement while presiding over the launch of Cape Verde's new tourist brand, a ceremony, which held at the Fortaleza Real de S. Filipe, in Cidade Velha, a location chosen for the symbolism it represents.

The new tourism brand, represented by a heart with bright colors depicting the 10 islands of Cape Verde and whose

ambassador is the artist Dino d'Santiago, is the identity that captures the diversity of the islands and promotes the country as a tourist destination, symbolizing the morabeza, origin, history, culture and authenticity of the Cabo Verdean people.

"It seems like they are mere drawings, but the important thing is the meaning, strength, message and the narrative it carries", explained the Prime Minister. He recalled the difficult periods from 2020 to 2022, caused by the covid-19 pandemic, and also the opportunities



and a different perspective the crisis provoked.

Ulisses Correia e Silva highlighted that Cabo Verde has an identity forged through a history of more than 500 years, a Creole identity, a vast diaspora, open to the world, which appears to be its greatest distinguishing factor.

The focus now must be on endogenous resources and the quality that requires continuous investment and diversification of the destination, so that it is not just sun and beaches.

"We have sun and beach tourism that still has room to develop with quality. We will continue to invest in sun and beach tourism, but we have other tourism to discover in terms of nature, culture, and various events. Each island presents itself in a different and diverse way," he noted.

He also recalled that several investments have been made, especially urban and environmental reconfiguration, restoration and rehabilitation of historical, religious and cultural heritage and reviving the history within the heritages.

He also spoke about the liberation of localities, many with tourist, agricultural and fishing potential, tourist signs, the tourist villages program and everything to make Cape Verdean cities and villages attractive for people to live, visit and invest.

If there were doubts about the impact of tourism as an economic activity, he noted that the doubts were dispelled with



Dr Carlos Santos, Minister of Tourism & Transport

the covid-19 pandemic when airports closed, the number of tourists dropped drastically and there was a return.

tourist paid 2.5 euros per day, money that is being used to improve people's living conditions.



"There was an impact not only in terms of employment, but also in reducing poverty", he said, stressing that each

Ulisses Correia e Silva also warned of the need to put quality in everything, from when tourists arrive until they leave so that they can return and recommend the country to others.

The above is a task he admitted that it is not easy, especially when it comes to tourism outside the resorts. In this sense, he challenged the presidents of municipal councils and professionals and the communities to ensure quality in everything they do.

Cabo Verde's new tourism brand aims to strengthen the destination's image, capture new market niches that are increasingly aware of the quality of the tourism product and interested in living environmentally sustainable experiences, in communion with local communities and in which Cabo Verdean families and companies -Verdianas can also be actors in the value chain.



SADC Business Council Tourism Alliance unveils ambitious tourism initiatives for Southern Africa at ITB Berlin

Natalia Rosa, Project Lead for Boundless South Africa and SADC Business Council Tourism Alliance, shared insights into the alliance's significant strides and ambitious initiatives during an interview with VoyagesAfriq at this year's ITB Berlin.

Rosa provided an overview of the engagement session held by the SADC Business Council Tourism Alliance with the general travel trade during ITB Berlin. She stated, "We held a session to provide progress on some of the tourism initiatives that we have been doing in Southern Africa on behalf of the SADC Secretariat and SADC Business Council Tourism Alliance."

On the broader context, Rosa explained, "What we were seeking to achieve yesterday was to provide an update on some of the initiatives that form part of the SADC programme 2020-2030, which is the guideline or the framework that we use to understand which activities we can create in Southern Africa to grow tourism arrivals and foster economic development and job

creation in the region."

Rosa also shed light on specific initiatives discussed during the engagement event, including the Air Access study, E-visa implementation, and the creation of the SADC Business Council Tourism Alliance. She emphasised the importance of collaboration, stating, "Yesterday was an opportunity for us to share updates on some of the activities we have been doing over the last year with our colleagues from the GIZ, journalists, the travel industry and national tourism organisations."

Commenting on the ambitious nature of the SADC programme, Rosa noted, "The program is a very ambitious one and also an incredible one because it really guides what it is that we do in Southern Africa to create economic development." She stressed ongoing initiatives as seeds planted for future growth, anticipating that they will be rolled out over the next decade and potentially beyond.

Rosa underscored the collaborative efforts between the SADC Secretariat and the SADC Business Council Tourism



Alliance, emphasizing their commitment as a private-public sector partnership. She stated, "We are working very hard to roll these initiatives out on behalf of the travel industry and our public sector counterparts."

Rosa revealed additional efforts, including a "train the trainer" pilot focused on customer service for immigration officials, crisis communication, and incident management. She also mentioned plans for the establishment of the Uni-Visa pilot, simplifying accessibility for inbound tourists to the Southern Africa region.

"Safari 2 Go" A revolutionary approach to planning travel in Namibia



Gondwana Collections, a prominent name in Namibia's tourism sector, has unveiled a groundbreaking product, "Safari 2 Go," during the ITB Berlin event this year. In an exclusive interview with VoyagesAfriq, Gys Joubert, the Group CEO, shed light on the platform's distinctive features and its mission to revolutionize Namibian travel experiences.

In response to increasing demand from smaller players and stand-alone adventurers, Gondwana Collections created Safari 2 Go, a comprehensive online travel platform. Joubert emphasized the significance of trust and

security in online transactions, stating that Safari 2 Go ensures a trustworthy background, backed by Gondwana Collection Namibia. The platform integrates global payment systems for secure transactions, distinguishing itself as a reliable alternative for travellers seeking more than conventional booking platforms.

He explained, "We've had so many requests over the years from smaller players, the stand-alones. We created a platform called Safari 2 Go, backed by Gondwana Collection Namibia. In terms of trust, which is crucial nowadays due to online risks, we provide that guarantee, that trust in the background for someone who provides the details. We work with global payment systems, ensuring a secure system."

Highlighting the platform's uniqueness, Joubert emphasised, "We provide more at Safari 2 Go in terms of real local information, information around the routes, information around the distances. There is also an itinerary as part of the

platform. We provide everything your big booking platform provides but more in terms of information. We have a dedicated team in our Windhoek office that provides support, and yes, you will speak to a human being via email or even by our telephone numbers; that support is there."

A platform like Safari 2 Go gives visitors the possibility to design their own Namibian journey. "Our mission is to make Namibian travel accessible to a digitized world. Making things happen at the click of a button. An online travel agent where holiday dreamers can enjoy instant availability and straightforward booking."

On the participation in ITB, Joubert reflected, "ITB has been very interesting; we have found it to be extremely productive but maybe not in terms of numbers, but in terms of business, it's been really productive. I am happy to say that the demand for destination Namibia is really high."

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Gambia explores new tourism frontiers, targeting Portuguese market at BTL Travel Market

In a bid to broaden its tourism horizons, Gambia is actively targeting the Portuguese market, aiming to unlock new opportunities for growth and cultural exchange. This strategic initiative comes against the backdrop of rising interest in Gambia's diverse attractions beyond its 'smiling coast' reputation. In an interview with VoyagesAfriq at this year's BTL - Lisboa the Director-General of the Gambian Tourism Board Abubacarr Camara, reiterated the significant potential of the Portuguese market, which is currently constrained largely due to air connectivity.

"Regarding the Portuguese market, it is performing very well. If I were to compare it with Spain, the only thing holding back the Portuguese market is the lack of direct flights. Although we have Tap Portugal, we wish to have more flights and frequencies available. Once this is addressed, Gambia will become an attractive destination for Portuguese tourists." He remarked.

The Director General also disclosed there are plans underway for Ethiopian Airlines to begin operations in Gambia. "There have been a lot of discussions and it's almost at the tail end. And surely very soon you will see Ethiopian flying to Gambia."

Adding on, Camara reiterated the great potential and diversified nature of Gambian tourism. This ranges from birdwatching to encounters with hippos and dolphins. Gambia is also deeply rooted in cultural experiences and has a rich history across its various regions. Additionally, there are community-based initiatives that provide real-world interactions and insights on customs and living in the area.

"In Gambia, we have a lot of potential. We are betting on showcasing the various attractions, from diverse bird species to other animals like hippos and dolphins. These dolphins, typically harmless, can be spotted in the River Gambia, which flows through different regions of the country, each offering unique attractions. In the West Coast region, you'll find a blend of nature and culture. As you travel up to the Lower River region, you'll encounter Mandinka



"In Gambia, we have a lot of potential. We are betting on showcasing the various attractions, from diverse bird species to other animals like hippos and dolphins. These dolphins, typically harmless, can be spotted in the River Gambia, which flows through different regions of the country, each offering unique attractions. In the West Coast region, you'll find a blend of nature and culture. As you travel up to the Lower River region, you'll encounter Mandinka settlements and plenty of natural beauty, including the Kiang National Park. Furthermore, there are numerous cultural activities to immerse yourself in. In the Central River region, you'll discover a lot of history"

settlements and plenty of natural beauty, including the Kiang National Park. Furthermore, there are numerous

cultural activities to immerse yourself in. In the Central River region, you'll discover a lot of history" he explained.

Also high on the agenda, the Director General said, was the promotion of community-based tourism. "In the communities we are promoting nature-based tourism and ecotourism in all those regions and even bird watching is very popular in Gambia we have over 570 species of birds" he added.

The West African country's presence at the 2024 BTL-Lisboa is bold step to strengthen its tourism sector by strategically leveraging on its international markets. Camara intimated that an increasing interest in Gambian tourism from Portugal led to the decision to give priority to BTL.

He maintained, "We are doing our best. This is the second time we are attending BTL. We have mostly concentrated on WTM, ITB, and FITUR but we are also focused on BTL because of the interest in Portugal. As a result, we decided to take on competitors who consider themselves to be market leaders, particularly Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau. But when one looks at it from the standpoint of West Africa, it's clear that The Gambia has a big place."






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ICCA and VoyagesAfriq announce partnership

In a groundbreaking move set to redefine the landscape of event coverage in Africa, the International Congress, and Convention Association (ICCA) has officially forged an exclusive partnership with VoyagesAfriq, designating the esteemed media outlet as the local media partner for the ICCA African Chapter throughout the entirety of 2024.

This strategic collaboration promises a host of benefits for both parties involved, aiming to elevate the coverage of ICCA events and activities in the region to unprecedented heights.

As part of the agreement, ICCA is set to provide VoyagesAfriq with a dedicated area at the ICCA Congress 2024, facilitating crucial meetings with members and associations. Additionally, VoyagesAfriq will be granted complimentary registration for the prestigious ICCA Congress in Abu Dhabi, an event that promises to be a focal point in the global meetings industry.

In recognition of their pivotal role,

VoyagesAfriq will be prominently acknowledged as the Local Media Partner on the Africa Chapter page of the official ICCA website. The partnership further extends to the usage of the ICCA logo by VoyagesAfriq on their various platforms, cementing their association and commitment to the collaboration.

On the flip side, VoyagesAfriq is expected to deliver an array of engaging content, including a dedicated article in their print edition covering select ICCA events and activities throughout 2024. The chosen events include ICCA's participation at Meetings Africa in March, an exclusive pre-event coverage of the ICCA Congress in Abu Dhabi in June, and insights into ICCA's Education portfolio and ICCASkills in September.

To add an auditory dimension to their coverage, VoyagesAfriq will host series of podcasts edition featuring interviews with the leadership of ICCA, addressing the regional perspectives on the association's meetings market for the upcoming years. The collaboration will



also feature a podcast edition directly from the ICCA Congress, providing an immersive experience for the audience.

In a move to keep their community well-informed, VoyagesAfriq will curate and publish four of ICCA's press releases on their website and newsletter, ensuring a wide dissemination of key information and updates.

This partnership marks a significant step forward in the synergy between global event associations and local media outlets, promising an exciting year of comprehensive coverage, insightful interviews, and unparalleled access to the dynamic world of international congresses and conventions in Africa.

Ethiopia: Gode Ugaas Miraad Airport Terminal inaugurated

The Ethiopian Airlines Group has announced the finalization of Gode Ugaas Miraad Airport Terminal building and aircraft parking with taxiway construction Project. The new state of the art airport terminal has been opened for service in a grand inauguration in the presence of H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed Prime Minister of Ethiopia and H.E Mustafe Mohammed Omer President of the Somali Regional State.

The project which took three years to complete has unveiled a new terminal building having a total built-up area of 3,500sq, a new apron having a capacity to handle four De Havilland Q400 or B737 aircraft at a time, ancillary buildings such as airport rescue and firefighting station, water reservoir, and parking areas among others.

Regarding the inauguration of the new passenger terminal, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mr. Mesfin Tasew said, "We are truly pleased with the launching of Gode Ugaas Miraad Airport Terminal building and aircraft parking with taxiway construction project as it will upgrade the airport experience of our

passengers traveling to/from the city of Gode. It is also a step forward in the work we do to elevate our domestic airport facilities to a higher level. The inauguration of this new terminal showcases our commitment to enhance our domestic operations alongside our international ones. Gode will neither be the only nor the last airport we will work on constructing and/or renovating. Construction of similar airport terminal is progressing well at Jinka, Kombolcha, Goba/Robe and Bahir Dar airports. It is with great honor and pleasure that we work on these projects and play our part in our country's tourism and socio-economic growth."

The new state of the art airport terminal is equipped with the latest technology airport facility amenities including a solar system to allow for a smooth and convenient travel via the airport. Ethiopian Airlines plays a significant role in regional connectivity with its more than 22 destinations in the country. Ethiopian Airlines operates daily flights to/from Gode. Gode being the third airport in Somali Regional State next to



Jigjiga and Kebridahar, passengers can travel between Jigjiga and Gode directly without having to transit via Addis Ababa.

Gode Airport has been among the airports that Ethiopian has taken a project on to enhance the facilities. Since the acquisition of the Ethiopian Airports Enterprise by Ethiopian Airlines Group as a Strategic Business Unit (SBU) in 2017, Ethiopian Airlines Group has taken over the administrative role including construction and renovation projects of airports in the country.

Namibia amplifies tourism outreach in FITUR



The Namibia Tourism Board has enhanced its marketing efforts with its participation at the just-ended FITUR International Tourism Fair in Madrid, Spain.

Since the year 2022, Namibia has been pitching the southern African destination to European markets, especially Spain, through various activations and engagements with the travel trade.

The Namibia Tourism Board along with 5 other private sector players manned the stand. The contingent included Gondwana Lodges, NWR, Oipuka Kalahari Tailor made Tours, and Matiti Tours. The stand welcomed over 180 buyers and visitors who engaged with exhibitors and delegates.

Speaking to VoyagesAfric from the exhibition floor, the Head of Marketing at the Namibian Tourism Board, Charmaine Matheus said, they were happy to once again be back in FITUR to service the market.

According to her, FITUR 2024 was a resounding success and a platform where they were able to showcase Namibia's unique tourism experiences to visitors from across the globe. "The interests shown by agents here and even consumer markets have been tremendous with over 200 travel agents.

"FITUR holds significant importance for tourism professionals and the inbound and outbound markets in Ibero-America. It facilitates a platform for industry partners to showcase their unique products, services, and experiences to a huge audience.

"It also provides numerous opportunities to promote the unique experiences available in Namibia and our tourism products, about the unique nature of the destination," she added.

As one of the leading travel fairs, FITUR provides a huge platform to disseminate the latest information on Namibia and individual properties featuring their new products and services.

Namibia is fast becoming one of Africa's most sought-after destinations and has attracted a mix of tourists from around the world. The latest figures released by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Tourism confirmed the recovery of the tourism sector from COVID-19 pandemic with a 98.1% increase

in international inbound tourist arrivals from 232,756 (2021) to 461,027 in 2022. This figure indicates a 28.9% recovery level towards the 2019 tourist arrival statistics.



Charmaine Matheus
Head of Marketing, Namibian Tourism Board

Africa Travel Week unveils

10th Anniversary WTM Africa Programme

Marking a decade of top B2B travel events, Africa Travel Week has revealed a packed schedule for its 2024 milestone edition of WTM Africa. Running from 07-12 April in Cape Town, the newly-announced programme spotlights real business-building opportunities.

"The tourism landscape in 2024 is characterised by growth and optimism, setting the tone for Africa Travel Week. It's a big year for our industry, and a significant milestone in our legacy," says Megan De Jager, Portfolio Director – Travel, Tourism at RX Africa.

Between 2014 and 2023, WTM Africa has experienced a total of 34 731 industry professionals in attendance. In that same timeframe, buyer numbers have seen a steady increase year on year to match the increase in exhibitors. In 2023, exhibitor numbers saw a major leap to 577 from 384 in 2022 – a figure De Jager and her team are looking to top this year.

This year's line-up features some familiar favourites, including speed networking and the Responsible Tourism Awards, in addition to a range of inaugural events and new opportunities for business expansion. De Jager highlights the following ten not to be missed:

1. Festival-style celebrations, with everything from wine tastings, live performances, product launches and immersive experiences.
2. The introduction of Brain Box, an interactive workshop space for industry players to engage in meaningful discussions with global professionals.
3. The Sustainability Village – a walk-through hub bringing together artisans, crafters, and thought leaders to highlight responsible tourism in action.
4. Live performance celebrations honouring Africa Travel Week's long-standing and loyal partnership with the City of Cape Town.
5. A new partnership with Tourism Investment Forum Africa (TIFA),



running alongside WTM Africa from 10 – 12 April. This well-established platform actively positions African destinations as attractive investment locations.

6. Now an esteemed Global Travel Hall of Fame Academy inductee, Harold Goodwin returns as Keynote speaker for the Responsible Tourism Conference and Awards ceremony. The multi-talented Mandisa Magwaxaza is also confirmed as the official MC.
7. Africa Travel Week's renewed alliance with IGLTA Foundation, a key partner for EQUAL Africa, which brings together travel suppliers and buyers targeting the LGBTQ+ community.
8. The launch of a dedicated Chinese buyer programme and content sessions exploring the full potential of this valuable client segment, which is also the world's largest tourism source market.

9. IBTM World presenting their annual report as an added value to IBTM Africa's content programme and Africa's business travel sector.

10. Official winners of the inaugural Africa Travel Week Media Awards to be announced and celebrated at WTM Africa.

Reinforcing the collaborative spirit propelling the show forward, De Jager highlights WTM Africa's official partners: Recycled Flip Flop Sculptures Studio (RFFSS) Southern Sun, Lift Airlines, and Gold Restaurant, the official venue for a hosted buyers networking event.

"As part of Africa Travel Week, interest and enthusiasm for WTM Africa remains unwavering and we are dedicated to ensuring that it lives up to its prominent reputation. Our mission continues to deliver an exceptional experience and high-value opportunities resulting in a tangible return on investment long after the show has ended," De Jager concludes.

On Show and ATTA launch Essence of Africa

...New travel show opens in Nairobi this October



On Show Solutions, a global organiser of roadshows and exhibitions and African Travel & Tourism Association (ATTA), a membership-driven trade association that promotes travel and tourism to Africa, have partnered to launch a travel expo in Africa.

Tagged 'Essence of Africa', the new travel show was launched at ITB Berlin on March 5, 2024, as part of the new offerings at the show this year.

The show, the first-of-its-kind on an African soil, will take place from October 2-4, 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Speaking to VoyagesAfriq in an exclusive interview on the launch at ITB Berlin recently, Amanda Margison Founder of Essence of Africa, explained that 'Essence of Africa' offers the organisers opportunity to look at something unique and very specialised.

"The reason we have done it this way is to offer people a platform without segmenting the industry.

The focus is on international buyers. We will invite them from around the world and focus on the best in the market," Amanda said.

Another unique selling point of the show, according to Amanda, is the focus on fam trips.

"If you look at a show like Indaba, it is organised by South Africa Tourism and for that reason, they would like to showcase South Africa as a hub and in the case of East Africa, the focus is on Kenya".

But the difference the new show brings to the table, according to her, is to offer fam trips from all over the region.

"So, we will have an Africa Showcase where we will invite pre-authorized and pre-qualified buyers to come to the show.

"We are looking for quality and not quantity. Those buyers will be able to select their fam trips in what is best for them.

A lot of them might know Kenya and South Africa well, but we will give them the opportunity to meet everyone on one platform.

"We can then do a fam trip to South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, which is different from all other international trade shows in Africa".

Speaking further on the need for the fam trip, she noted that WTM Africa offers fam trip to Cape Town and by hosting the show in Nairobi, Essence of Africa looks at East Africa as a hub.

"We have done a lot of work in Kenya, but we are not keeping the show restricted to Kenya specifics. However, Kenyans will have the opportunity to offer fam trips in their own country and it opens us to more exhibitors outside Kenya".

Offering details on the fam trips, she said that they would be post fam trips with hosted buyers coming into Nairobi, they would be hosted for three days and then handed over to DMCs and tour operators.

To participate in the show, interested participants are urged to visit the website, which is now open at www.essenceofafrica.travel.com.

There is also a portal to hook on as a buyer or exhibitor, while all the information is online and for more enquiries, buyers can email the organisers through hello@BOA.travel.

Also sharing her impression on the forthcoming show, she was excited that the exhibitor application, which opened before the ITB Berlin launch, has already got lots of interest as the main idea is to focus on one-on-one exhibitor meet buyer, with very qualitative exhibitors and qualitative buyers that are having one-on-one meeting for three days, amid table talk, speed networking events and others.

Also sharing her views on ITB Berlin 2024, she said, "ITB Berlin has been good, we have had a good show this year and all has been cool in the African section with about 20 countries participating.

We have Namibia Tourism, South Africa Tourism, Zimbabwe, Botswana among others".

Air Botswana CEO unveils revival plans at ITB Berlin

Despite going through lots of challenges, Air Botswana is set to hit the skies again and better this time with financial assistance from the Government of Botswana and a mindset change in the organisational culture.

This was revealed by the carrier's CEO Lulu Rasebotsa to VoyagesAfriq at the just ended ITB Berlin in Germany.

The country's government is ready to inject the needed finances to revive the ailing airline.

"We are onto a new path now government has funded us to increase our aircraft and that means we are going to expand our routes," she said.

Rasebotsa further stated that the airline would be acquiring an Embraer aircraft

to arrive in the not so distant future to enable it increase its footprint in Africa.

She said: "We are bringing back Johannesburg-Maun route. We are also connecting Cape Town with Maun and or Kasane direct and we are looking at Windhoek-Maun direct flight."

Certainly, the new CEO outlined her vision, which she articulated as being grounded on three pillars: financial sustainability, exceptional service delivery, and unwavering commitment to safety standards.

Furthermore, she emphasized the significance of ITB Berlin as the largest global travel expo, expressing excitement that Botswana had seized the opportunity to utilize the expo's platform

to engage and forge connections with the global tourism community.

"The experience has been breathtaking and quite exhilarating," a delighted Rasebotsa told VoyagesAfriq. "The reason we are here at ITB is that we are in the business of moving people and goods from point A to point B.

"Tourism is enabled by flying and by driving. So, we are a key stakeholder in enabling tourism and as ITB, being the biggest tourism fair in the world, it is appropriate we are here."

She also highlighted ongoing efforts to promote domestic tourism within the country, alongside initiatives aimed at attracting international visitors to Botswana.



Lulu Rasebotsa,
CEO, Air Botswana

Mexico to be FITUR Partner Country in 2025

Mexico will be taking a leading role at the International Tourism Trade Fair in 2025 as FITUR Partner Country, according to the announcement made today by José Vicente de los Mozos, Chairman of the IFEMA Executive Committee; Miguel Torruco Marqués, the Mexican Secretary of Tourism and Juan Enrique Suarez del Real Tostado, President of the Association of Tourism Secretaries of Mexico, in the setting of the second professional day of FITUR, taking place until Sunday 28th. The event was also attended by the Ambassador of Mexico in Spain, Quirino Ordaz Coppel, the Managing Director of IFEMA MADRID, Juan Arrizabalaga and the Director of FITUR, María Valcarce.

The collaboration agreement, which heralds Mexico as FITUR 2025 Partner Country during the 45th edition of the International Tourism Trade Fair, will allow the country to strengthen its global positioning, at the same time as boosting its promotional potential and international projection.

This alliance, announced in the framework of FITUR 2024, represents a

milestone in the extraordinary trajectory of Mexico in recent years in terms of tourism, managing to achieve a relevant footing on the world stage. This evolution by Mexico is especially significant after the pandemic and the massive efforts it has made at institutional and business level with the introduction of measures allowing it to recover its tourism activity swiftly, compared to other countries.

In addition, the growth experienced by Mexico now allows it to maximise its presence in large settings such as FITUR, and showcase the wealth of tourism, culture, heritage and gastronomy on offer in its 32 States and 177 'Magical Towns' and show the world, alongside the leading tourism trade fair and hub of the Latin American tourism industry.

In the words of José Vicente de los Mozos, "this alliance is going to tighten the bonds between Spain and Mexico even more, and establish a close collaboration to support the promotion of the tourism riches of each of the states comprising Mexico, under the brand of FITUR, recognised today as the world's premier trade fair in terms

of participation levels and international growth".

For his part, Miguel Torruco Marqués, the Mexican Secretary of Tourism underlined "the extraordinary value this collaboration with FITUR is going to mean for Mexico at a time when it is indispensable to align the interests of the entire country to project the tourism potential of each and every corner of Mexico onto the world stage and boost the visibility of the Mexico Brand, together with one of the world's leading references, FITUR".

Juan Enrique Suarez del Real Tostado, President of the Association of Tourism Secretaries of Mexico (ASETUR), also added that "this agreement is the result of a joint effort between all of the country's Tourism Secretaries and the Mexican Secretary of Tourism, which represents a huge achievement in enabling all of the interested parties to take a giant leap in Mexico's tourism promotion alongside the best possible ally, the International Tourism Trade Fair, FITUR".



Meetings Africa 2024 Ignites Collaboration and Sustainability (MICE)

Meaningful connections were made at Meetings Africa 2024, solidifying its position as the continent's go-to platform for the business events sector, with more than 380 exhibiting companies from 22 African nations participating.

Hundreds of industry professionals, including 371 international, regional and local buyers, converged in Sandton, Johannesburg, to strengthen Africa's position as a premier business events destination within the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) sector.

The three-day trade show concluded on Wednesday, 28 February, at the Sandton Convention Centre, marking a successful event with fruitful engagement and trade. Industry trends, including sustainable tourism, artificial intelligence (AI), and continuous sector professionalisation, were prominent themes at Meetings Africa 2024.

The trade show left a lasting impression on newcomers, who raved about the event's professionalism and rich future prospects.

Paul Chibwe from Willch Travel and Tours (Zambia), attending the event for the first time, expressed his high praise for the organisation of the event. "This event has not only met but exceeded our

expectations," he remarked. "Everything was impeccably organised, fostering a conducive environment for networking and exchanging thoughts and ideas. It has truly met our expectations." Another newcomer, Baitry Diaw, the Commercial Director for the Mangalis Group of hotels (Côte d'Ivoire), stated, "The experience has been really amazing. From as early as 9 am, we have been meeting people and building what I believe are very important relationships with future partners."

Meetings Africa also provided a platform for returning participants like South African businesswoman Lihle Mahlangu to showcase their work. "Business has been good," she said. "I have networked with some people from here and Europe. I see great prospects ahead."

With positive feedback from newcomers and returning participants, Meetings Africa 2024 cemented its role as a valuable platform for networking, professional development, and showcasing the diverse offerings of the African tourism industry.

This positive sentiment was echoed by Minister Patricia de Lille in her opening address. Emphasising Africa's readiness to host events of all sizes, she declared, "I have no doubt that even here at Meetings Africa, it will be clear for all

to see that the African continent is the best place to bring all meetings, events, expos, and indeed incentive trips."

At the show's educational programme, South Africa's Tourism Deputy Minister Mahlalela emphasised Meetings Africa's vital role in knowledge exchange and innovation within tourism. He highlighted the event's evolution as a premier platform, fostering crucial connections between buyers and exhibitors.

He underlined the essence of knowledge exchange as a driver for innovation, collaboration, and skills development. "The time has come for us to rewrite the narrative on Africa," the Deputy Minister said, advocating for a vision that portrays the continent not as a land mired in wars and poverty but as a vibrant and dynamic player on the global stage."

South African Tourism's commitment to sustainability shone through South African Tourism CEO Nombulelo Guliwe, who announced a partnership with the Event Greening Forum (EGF) to assess the exhibition's greening initiatives. This commitment extends beyond individual actions, as Meetings Africa features the Sustainability Village, showcasing locally produced goods fostering economic sustainability and environmental responsibility.



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Shifting dynamics in African Air Travel

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the entire world, and the aviation industry in Africa is no exception. Understanding how that change came about and how it will drive African aviation over the next few years is important for the industry to ensure that it doesn't continue living in the past and recognises new opportunities and challenges.

One of the most remarkable developments in African aviation over the past two decades has been the substantial improvement in safety standards. Not only has the average accident rate seen a notable decline, but more and more African airlines are signing on to the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) program, the global gold standard for aviation safety. Most importantly though, the perception of safety has improved from a passenger standpoint. Just 15 years ago, nearly 80% of African passengers cited “safety” as one of their top reasons for choosing a particular airline to fly with. Today that number is below 30%. It isn't that African travellers no longer value safety from their airlines, but rather that African aviation safety has improved so much that it is no longer a differentiator.

Passenger numbers for Africa as a whole continue to remain below pre-pandemic 2019 benchmarks by around 7%, dragged down by a sluggish recovery in South Africa - the continent's largest single market. The domestic market in South Africa performed particularly poorly, with only 2.4 million passengers during the peak month of December 2023, compared to 2.8 million during the same month in 2019. Interestingly though, while the main international gateway of O.R.Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg continues to lag behind its 2019 passenger figures by around 20%, Cape Town International Airport has seen actual growth in international traffic by almost 15%. Is this indicative of a larger share of tourist traffic into South Africa relative to business traffic compared to the last decade? Or is it simply a case of traffic flow adjusting to find more natural routings as South African Airways' former network hub in Johannesburg remains a mere shadow of its former self?

Another market in flux with regards to traffic flows from the African continent in 2023 was China. The Africa-China market had grown explosively from insignificance in the mid-2000s into a major force by the time the pandemic hit in 2020, but

“
One market that quietly seems to have snuck under the radar with respect to growth in traffic flows from Africa has been Canada. Seemingly driven by an increase in immigration, as well as in African students choosing to pursue an education there, there was nearly a 50% year-on-year growth in 2023 alone.”

delays with China reopening its borders to foreign travellers meant that both 2022 and 2023 figures remained well below their earlier peaks. In fact, we saw growth from most African markets to the Middle East and India in 2022 and 2023 as possible proxies for the trade opportunities that China once offered. Will 2024 see the China-Africa market rebound strongly in the first full year without border restrictions, or have we already seen the apex of a relationship that once seemed to define the “New African Century”. African airlines are certainly counting on a full recovery though - in March 2024 there are actually more direct flights between China and Africa than between China and the United States of America, a remarkable statistic considering that Africa still represents less than 3% of global air traffic.

One market that quietly seems to have snuck under the radar with respect to growth in traffic flows from Africa has been Canada. Seemingly driven by an increase in immigration, as well as in African students choosing to pursue an education there, there was nearly a 50% year-on-year growth in 2023 alone. This is particularly interesting because there still remains only one daily direct flight between Canada and Sub-Saharan Africa, operated by Ethiopian Airlines, despite this strong growth in traffic. Some markets like Nigeria to Canada have tripled in size to well over 200,000 annual passengers in just 5 years - but passengers are still forced to take connecting flights to travel between the two countries. The Canadian government's historical tendency to adopt a protectionist aviation policy seems to be stifling even more growth in this market, and we can expect to see it explode over the coming years as that liberalises.

There is also a dark side to explosive growth and that can be seen in the sudden bubble of increased travel between Africa and Latin America. In fact, most of the largest growth markets from Africa in 2023 were between hitherto obscure city pairs like Dakar to Managua (up over 500% year-on-year) and Nouakchott to Bogota (up by a staggering 5554% over 2022 figures). No, Senegalese tourists are not flocking to see Masaya Volcano Park, nor are Mauritians making pilgrimages to the Salt Cathedral of Zipaquirá. These flight routes, mostly on Turkish Airlines via Istanbul, are the latest tracks for undocumented migrants making their way to the US southern border, often under the guidance of human trafficking gangs. Other opportunistic immigration routes such as charter flights from Nigeria to the Caribbean also saw increased interest during 2023, and it was not traditional tourism driving the business. The Bahamas announced a waiver of visitor visas for Ghanaian tourists recently, and I am sure that island nation will soon see an influx of West Africans keen to explore its pristine beaches that are coincidentally located just 50 miles from the Florida coast.

So, as we fasten our seatbelts and prepare for take-off on our next flight in Africa, look around at your fellow passengers and try to guess where they are heading to. The answers are constantly evolving as our continent develops, but those who learn the answers earliest are best poised to capitalise on the new opportunities that the changing landscape offers.



Sean Mendis has two decades of experience in senior management roles within the aviation sector in Africa. He is presently based in Malawi, where he offers executive level consulting and intelligence to aviation stakeholders.



TIFA 2024: Fostering economic growth and global collaboration in Africa's tourism sector

The Tourism Investment Forum Africa (TIFA) is set to return for its second edition in 2024, aiming to bolster economic development and growth across the continent by facilitating investment and trade opportunities within the tourism and related sectors. The event will be held in conjunction with the continent's biggest tourism marketplace, WTM Africa at the Cape Town International Convention Centre from April 10-12.

TIFA serves as a unique platform, embodying the philosophy of "a global platform for local action," where participating African countries can showcase their investment potential and attract global interest. The forum seeks to position host locations and other participating destinations as attractive investment hubs and tourism hotspots, aligning with their economic development goals.

In its inaugural edition held in June 2023 in the Green Kalahari in Upington, Northern Cape, TIFA garnered substantial attention, hosting over 190 delegates. Representatives from 13 countries presented more than 50 investment projects and opportunities, totaling an impressive \$40 billion. Notable attendees included Development Finance Institutions, Private Equity and Venture Capital firms, and representatives from multilateral organisations such as the AfCFTA Secretariat, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, UN

Tourism and the South African Ministries of Tourism and Transport.

The 2024 edition promises an enriching three-day program featuring investment showcases, policy presentations, trend discussions and expert panels. Delegates will have the opportunity to conduct site visits to various investment project locations, fostering a hands-on understanding of the potential opportunities. Importantly, the event's collocation with WTM Africa offers delegates a chance to advance their strategic intentions by networking with industry experts and professionals.

The diverse array of attendees expected at TIFA 2024 includes project owners and sponsors, policy makers, tourism departments, promotion agencies, international and local speakers, investors, financial institutions, and representatives from various sectors such as hospitality, travel, construction and media.

The event's extensive three-day program covers a range of topics and discussions aimed at unlocking investment potential, embracing innovation and sustainability, and providing hands-on exploration opportunities. Day one focuses on unlocking investment potential, covering global investment trends, intra-Africa investment opportunities, ministerial policy dialogues and more. Day two delves into embracing innovation and sustainability, exploring technology and innovation, hospitality ventures, climate-smart investments and building trade



Miller Matola - CEO of Millvest Advisory

and investment bridges. The third day concludes with hands-on exploration through project site visits, providing delegates with a deeper understanding of investment opportunities on the ground.

By creating an environment for the exchange of insights, access to capital and networking opportunities, TIFA aims to contribute not only to the growth of the tourism and related sectors but also to the broader economic landscape of the participating countries.

TIFA 2024 is poised to be a catalyst for economic transformation, connecting global investors with emerging and established businesses, ultimately driving sustainable development across Africa, especially within the tourism sector with the ultimate aim of empowering businesses and propelling growth across economies on the continent.



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Africa Hospitality Investment Forum (AHIF) is the premier hospitality investment conference in Africa. Drawing the attention of top-tier international hotel investors, this conference serves as a pivotal platform connecting business leaders from both global and local markets. Its primary objective is to catalyze investments in diverse sectors, including tourism projects, infrastructure, and hotel development across the African continent.



AHIF 2023 Featured

500+ attendees	72% International delegates	40+ countries represented	16% Investors	90+ leading industry speakers	3 Days of business - critical networking	30+ sponsoring companies
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AHIF 2024 will offer participants exclusive access to inspection trips showcasing top-notch investment projects and tourist attractions in Namibia. These experiences are exceptionally valuable, as they set the pace for multiple days of networking opportunities with local and international senior level executives.



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FITUR 2024 wraps up 44th edition with outstanding attendance figures

The 44th International Tourism Fair concludes a successful edition whose data reflects the growth experienced by the global tourism sector in the past year, laying the groundwork for its consolidation in this 2024. FITUR has announced that throughout its five days, it has welcomed a total of 250,000 visitors, 153,000 has been professionals (from January 24 to 26) and 97,000 visitors attending during its two open-to-the-public days (Saturday 27, and Sunday 28). These figures, in line with the estimate provided by IFEMA MADRID, represent a 13.7% increase compared to 2023.

FITUR 2024 has also stood out for breaking the record for exhibition space, with a total of nine pavilions, one more than in 2023, as well as for the consolidation of its international character. It has gathered 152 countries and 96 official country participations.

Organized by IFEMA MADRID, the Fair, inaugurated on January 24 by Their Majesties the Kings of Spain, had Ecuador as the Country Partner of FITUR and the participation of all players in the tourism industry value chain, showcasing the sector's dynamism through

numerous business transactions, expanded networks, and the exchange of best practices and knowledge.

The official report of FITUR 2024 reveals record-breaking participation figures with 9,000 companies, 152 countries, 96 official representations (20 more than in 2023), 806 main exhibitors, 9 pavilions, 10 monographic sections for tourist segments—FITUR 4all, TechY, Cruises, Know-How & Export, LGTB+, Lingua, Screen, Sports, Talent, and Woman—and the work carried out by the FITURNEXT Observatory as a channel for the sustainable commitment of the International Tourism Fair.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the influx of visitors to FITUR is expected to generate around 430 million euros in revenue for Madrid.

Strong institutional and sector support

This 44th edition, like every year, in addition to the support of the international tourism sector, highlights the strong institutional support received. Alongside the Royal Family's demonstration of support for the tourism industry, with the presence of Their

Majesties King Felipe and Queen Letizia, FITUR had the participation of prominent leaders such as Daniel Noboa, President of Ecuador, who was the Country Partner of the International Tourism Fair this year. It also received the official visit of the Prime Minister of Spain, Pedro Sánchez; the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama; representatives from the UNTWO together with its Secretary-General, Zurab Pololikashvili, the Ibero-American General Secretary, as well as more than ten regional presidents of Spain. In total, the Fair brought together the presence of nearly 400 authorities, including Ministers, State Secretaries, ambassadors, business representatives, and mayors from different regions.

Media coverage and social media presence of FITUR 2024

The fair's growth is reflected in extensive media coverage, with over 37,000 news articles published about FITUR 2024 during its celebration in national and international media, and with the presence of nearly 6,800 accredited journalists at the fair, including 6,157 national and 607 international journalists from 53 countries.

Beyond Borders – ICCA's digital snapshot of how business events have shaped the world, and what's coming next?

In a radically different approach, ICCA publishes Beyond Borders – How Associations Business Events Bring the World Together... a digital report exploring the significant global impact of business events across 60-plus years.

Using video interviews, data, and animated graphs, Beyond Borders features expert opinion and analysis from inside – and outside – the international associations meetings industry. This innovative approach utilises ICCA's expertise, reach, and standing as the industry leader, and includes contributory input from key figures from IMEX, ASAE, Oxford Economics, the Associations, CVBs, Government, and the political lobby.

ICCA traditionally publishes major industry analytical reports on a 5-year cycle, but the world has changed significantly since 2018. The global

pandemic forced a radical review on how we think, plan, and do events. The creativity and intuition so crucial to the rebirth of our industry is evident in Beyond Borders, making it easily accessible – and shareable – to ICCA members, and the wider global community.

With a unique 60-plus year heritage, ICCA uses stats to show the irresistible rise of business meetings and events and the impact they have made in our countries, cities, and communities. But what we have done is only part of the story, the key significance of Beyond Borders is what comes next?

ICCA CEO, Senthil Gopinath: "Beyond Borders asks pertinent questions about the World Economy, the Economic Value of our Industry, Growing Industry Talent, Association Meeting Trends, and Social Sustainability so we get a tangible view



of the major concerns and opportunities facing us all. The stats tell one story, but the people tell another. ICCA is and always will be a people business... which is why Beyond Borders speaks to us all in a clear and distinctive way. This is our industry, this is our community, this is our moment to come together and seek common purpose."

Beyond Borders – How Associations Business Events Bring the World Together is made available to all who see and value the importance of our global industry as a driver for change at a social, political, and cultural level.

WTTC Launches Roadmap to guide businesses through the jungle of Sustainability Reporting in Travel & Tourism

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) today launched a pioneering readiness roadmap, aiming to simplify sustainability reporting in the Travel & Tourism sector.

Launched during ITB Berlin, WTTC and Oliver Wyman announced the Sustainability Reporting Readiness Roadmap, a strategic tool to guide businesses through sustainability frameworks, compliance timelines, and readiness assessments, simplifying the journey towards sustainable compliance.

This roadmap is more than just a tool; it's a strategic compass, enabling companies to decode sustainability reporting complexities, identify relevant compliance standards, and evaluate their sustainability data and platform maturity.

The call to action is clear: governments must offer sector-specific guidance and phased requirements to ease companies into this new sustainability era. This roadmap provides both the public and private sector the direction needed to begin their journey of sustainability reporting.

Alongside the Roadmap, WTTC and Oliver Wyman also release a new report "Navigating the Sustainability Journey: The Impact of Mandatory Reporting on Travel & Tourism", designed to tackle the sector's unique sustainability challenges.

The report explores the impact of the three most influential sustainability reporting frameworks on the sector – the Corporate Social Responsibility Directive (CSRD), the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Climate-Related Disclosures – and offers insights to navigate the changing regulatory landscape effectively.

According to the report, some Travel & Tourism companies are unprepared for the imminent sustainability compliance standards, with urgent action needed, especially concerning complex supply chains and Scope 3 emissions reporting.

Julia Simpson, WTTC President & CEO, said: "Sustainability reporting is no longer negotiable for Travel & Tourism businesses. It is a challenge we must confront head-on.

"Our Roadmap serves as the trusted navigator through the intricacies of sustainability reporting, acting as a guide and providing clarity. It is not merely about meeting regulatory requirements; it is about propelling businesses towards sustainable growth and resilience."

Dan Darcy, Principal with Oliver Wyman's Transportation & Services practice, said: "Sustainability reporting requirements are a significant challenge for Travel & Tourism companies – cross-border organisations with broad value chains who have weathered a pandemic and subsequent resurgence in demand.

"But these requirements are essential for protecting the destinations, ecosystems, and communities that inspire travellers. By setting ambitious goals and showing progress, we will prove our industry's commitment to sustainability."

As the sector embarks on this journey towards greater transparency and sustainability, the roadmap's diagnostic tools enable companies to pinpoint their sustainability standing, bridge gaps, and chart a path towards compliance and a sustainable future.



Waldorf Astoria Seychelles Platte Island unveils a New Era of Luxury Hospitality

A new chapter in opulent hospitality unfolds as Waldorf Astoria Seychelles Platte Island, the epitome of luxury, officially inaugurates its presence in the stunning Seychelles archipelago.

The distinguished opening event welcomed notable figures, including President Wavel Ramkalawan and First Lady Mrs. Linda Ramkalawan, along with prominent guests from the tourism sector, including the Principal Secretary for Tourism, Mrs Sherin Francis, the Director General for Destination Marketing at Tourism Seychelles, Mrs Bernadette Willemin, and Mr Glenny Savy, the Chief Executive Officer of the Island Development Company (IDC).

Hosted by Mr Guy Hutchinson, the Hilton President for Middle East and Africa, the event was marked with a ceremonial ribbon-cutting by President Ramkalawan at one of the luxury villas, followed by the symbolic planting of coco-de-mer trees.

During her speech at the opening ceremony, Mrs Francis emphasised that the inauguration of Waldorf Astoria Seychelles Platte Island Resort marks a bright future for Seychelles Tourism and the ongoing collaboration between Hilton and Seychelles.

“Embarking on this journey, from a visionary concept to the awe-inspiring reality we stand upon today, surpasses even the wildest dreams. As a witness to its evolution, from



the initial presentation at the Island Development Company board, I am taken aback by the remarkable end-product. Congratulations to the Hilton team and management for exceeding all expectations. As we marvel at Platte Island’s breathtaking shores, surrounded by the riches of the Indian Ocean, Seychelles’ outstanding natural beauty aligns seamlessly with the prestige of the Waldorf Astoria concept. Nestled in one of the world’s best sea safari spots, this location promises a wild and diverse marine treasure trove—a haven for nature enthusiasts seeking outdoor adventure and serenity.”

Mr Guy Hutchinson, Hilton President of the Middle East and Africa, expressed his excitement, stating, “We are thrilled to introduce Waldorf Astoria to the Seychelles – creating a unique destination that beautifully integrates luxury hospitality with the natural beauty of Platte Island. The resort provides unforgettable experiences for guests and features eco-programmes and partnerships led by the island’s specialist marine biologist, which aims to preserve and protect the surrounding nature and marine life at this outstanding resort destination.”

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”

Platte Island, located 130 km south of Mahe, enchants as a haven for nature enthusiasts, featuring palm forests, a coral reef, and a surrounding lagoon. Accessible by plane, the island boasts a diverse ecosystem, serving as breeding grounds for seabirds and a cherished nesting area for hawksbill turtles. The resort effortlessly blends Waldorf Astoria’s renowned service and luxury with the timeless beauty of Platte Island, providing an exclusive experience for discerning travellers.

The property features 50 seafront villas, each providing a sanctuary of lavish comfort and personal concierge services. From one-to-three-bedroom villas to a grand five-bedroom villa with expansive gardens, the resort caters to varied preferences.

Waldorf Astoria Seychelles Platte Island invites guests to indulge in the epitome of culinary excellence, with six restaurants and bars showcasing a fusion of international and local flavours. This gastronomic journey promises a sensorial delight for even the most sophisticated palates.

In line with the island’s ecological spirit, the resort has implemented initiatives to preserve and protect the diverse flora and fauna. Efforts include safeguarding the nesting grounds of hawksbill and green turtles on the sandy shores and recognising the underwater realm of Platte Island as an essential ecological cornerstone.

In her statement, Mrs Willemin, the

Director General for Destination Marketing, said, “Waldorf Astoria is poised to redefine the benchmark for indulgence in our destination, providing an exclusive retreat for travellers in search of the epitome of luxury. With its meticulously designed villas, exceptional service, and culinary excellence, the resort promises an unforgettable experience in paradise, further enhancing Seychelles’ reputation as surely another world.”

As the fifth tourism establishment by the Hilton group in Seychelles, Waldorf Astoria Seychelles Platte Island sets a new standard for luxury and sustainability in this pristine tropical destination.



Mozambique Tourism shines at BTL 2024 expo

The BTL (Bolsa Turismo Lisboa) Travel Market is renowned as a platform for industry professionals to connect, forge partnerships, and explore innovations while promoting products and services in the tourism sector and generating business opportunities. Mozambique was at this year's event in Lisbon, Portugal's capital to showcase its vibrant tourism products and forge strategic partnerships.

In an exclusive interview with VoyagesAfric, Mozambique's Minister of Culture and Tourism, Eldevina Materula highlighted the significance of the BTL and Portugal's pivotal role as one of Mozambique's primary source markets.

Eldevina emphasized, "BTL is a crucial market for us. Portugal stands as one of our main source markets in Europe, and our strong connection underscores the importance of our presence here. We aim to spotlight our offerings, from visa exemptions to enhanced connectivity, fostering tourism growth both within Europe and across Africa through our national initiatives."

Reflecting on fruitful discussions held during the BTL Conference, Eldevina highlighted significant engagements with key industry players.

"Our focus remains on fostering partnerships and creating enticing promotional packages. We envision collaboration with diverse groups, not only to attract investments but also to showcase the diversity of Mozambique's tourism offerings," she explained.

Eldevina emphasized Mozambique's focus on developing its natural parks and attractions, ensuring accessibility to all segments of society while emphasizing sustainability and community involvement.

"25% of Mozambique's area comprises natural parks, and we are heavily investing in their development. The president recently inaugurated a new lodge, Membene Lodge."

Community involvement remains a priority, Eldevina highlighted, "Tourism and sustainability are intrinsically linked, and involving local communities is essential. They serve as the primary

guides and hosts for our visitors, showcasing the beauty of our parks and attractions. Our vision for our parks is to create facilities accessible to all segments of society. Our goal is to expand further, ensuring everyone has access to opportunities and facilities."

Richard Baulene, Director General of INATUR, Mozambique's tourist board, echoed Eldevina's sentiments, emphasizing the paramount importance of the Portuguese market to Mozambique's outbound tourism endeavours.

"As you can see, Mozambique has actively participated in leading tourism fairs, from FITUR in Spain to the ongoing BTL in Lisbon, with future engagements slated for ITB in Germany and beyond. Our objective is to spotlight Mozambique's rich offerings, enticing investors to enhance our hospitality industry," Baulene remarked.

Adding on, Richard reiterated Mozambique's diverse tourism products and packages for the international markets.

He stated, "Mozambique, as we know, is a very rich country for tourism. Apart from beaches and forests, we also have a strong culture. We have three aspects of our culture that have been integrated as part of UNESCO's World Heritage List. So we are trying to put all these together in a package that we are selling here. If you visit our stand, you will see

the materials, brochures, and videos that we are selling. We also have our website which you can connect with using our QR codes. This is the way we are trying to sell it; however, the best way is definitely to go and see."

Challenges, particularly in enhancing airlift to Mozambique, were acknowledged by Baulene, who highlighted ongoing efforts to address this issue and foster strategic connections within Africa.

"We have a strong market in Africa. We are going to be in Durban, South Africa, which is one of the biggest fairs of tourism in Africa. We are going to be there. We have signed a memorandum of understanding in which we are planning lots of activities between Mozambique and Cape Verde, helping each other to promote these tourist destinations. And we are planning to do more memoranda with other countries because we know that if we coordinate the force as African continents, all countries can benefit from this," he stressed.

As Mozambique charts its path to recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism, Baulene remains optimistic as the country aims to surpass 4 million tourist arrivals.

"While we faced setbacks due to COVID-19, we are steadily recovering. Our resilience and dedication position us to reclaim our position as a top tourist destination," he concluded.



Zambia and Tanzania forge strategic alliance to elevate destination promotion at ITB Berlin

In a strategic move aimed at bolstering tourism in Zambia and Tanzania, Matongo Matamwandi, CEO of Zambia Tourism Agency (ZTA), convened a pivotal meeting with Damasi Mfugale, Director General of Tanzania Tourist Board, during this year's ITB Berlin trade show.

This collaborative effort played a central role in the ITB Berlin agenda, spotlighting the distinctive offerings of both destinations while fostering cooperation to attract a broader audience of travelers.

Minister of Tourism Rodney Sikumba led a delegation of 20 private sector tourism exhibitors, along with representatives from the Ministry of Tourism and the Zambia Tourism Agency (ZTA), at the ITB Berlin trade show in Germany.

Highlighting Zambia's unique attractions, Hon. Sikumba emphasized the significance of the German market as a major source market. Interactions with the travel trade at the show underscored the country's appeal to the German market and beyond.

Zambia's delegation to the global travel showcase included Minister Sikumba's meetings with other industry leaders, including tourism ministers from Zimbabwe, Seychelles, Namibia, among others.

In a productive exchange with Seychelles' Minister Sylvester Radegonde, Sikumba received a gracious invitation for collaboration in benchmarking on the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA).

This critical tool, jointly developed by esteemed organizations, including UN Tourism, OECD, Eurostat, and the UN Statistics Division, serves as a cornerstone for assessing the economic impact of tourism activities.

Simultaneously, Sikumba explored opportunities for strategic cooperation in investments while engaging with representatives of the Private Palace Hotel.

These discussions exemplified Zambia's proactive approach to cultivating mutually beneficial partnerships and securing funding essential for sustainable tourism expansion.



Under the enduring theme of ITB Berlin, "Define the world of travel," Tanzania and Zambia emerge as trailblazers in collaborative synergy within the travel and tourism industry.

The united front presented by Tanzania and Zambia stands as a testament to the transformative potential of regional alliances poised to reshape the global tourism landscape.

Experts Forecast: African Tourism Priorities for 2024

As we bid farewell to 2023 with a symphony of fireworks and festive revelry, the spotlight shines on tourism, proving that it's not just an industry but a resilient force on the rise.

In 2023, the tourism industry witnessed remarkable growth. Globally, it showcased an impressive resurgence, reclaiming 90 percent of pre-Covid levels by the year's end.

Also, at the global level, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) opened new offices in Africa and the Americas, apart from the ones opened earlier in Saudi Arabia and in Nara, Japan.

On the African continent, tourism gained

momentum in 2023, especially with more countries set to adopt visa-free model for other Africans as championed by Rwanda. With its landmark visa announcement for travellers in 2023, Kenya is free to all Africans from this January, Malawi is in the pipeline. Ghana and South Africa have also removed visa barriers to grow tourism and trade.

In 2024, more countries are expected to follow the positive trend to boost seamless and borderless Africa.

The visa-free African move probably impacted the Africa Visa Openness Report 2023. The report, published by the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the African Union, revealed some laudable policies with more countries

opening doors to more Africans.

It highlighted fruitful efforts made at eliminating the hassle of travelling for Africans and thereby enabling the "Africa we Want Agenda".

Again, African Tourism, for the first time, witnessed the rise of women Ministers of Tourism. Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Sierra Leone all have women Ministers of Tourism. The trend is expected to continue in 2024. But as has been the case in all spheres, resolutions will be the talking point as we plan for the year.

As a public-private venture, we solicited the opinions of experts, policy leaders, and media about how Africa's tourism sector should take in 2024.

Vera Kamtukule, Malawi's Minister of Tourism



Malawi's Tourism industry has had yet another resilient year in 2023. Coming back from the devastating effects of the cyclone Freddy and other economic challenges. In spite of it all, the sector continued on a steady path and registered a number of achievements that we are proud of. The September Tourism month saw some entities raising their occupancy rates from as low as 30% to as high as 90%. The greatest achievement in the year was therefore the renewed drive on domestic tourism. As we look forward with optimism to 2024; our main areas of focus will remain product development and destination marketing. The 20 year Tourism Investment Master plan will be in its third year in 2024 and we are hopeful that at least 3 projects therein will kick off as we continue in our quest to get as many investors as possible.



Jon Howell, CEO AviaDev Africa



Sustainable tourism development in Africa is inextricably linked with improving intra-African connectivity. 2023 saw many new regional routes and partnerships and I anticipate more in 2024.



Yoadan Tilahun, CEO, Flawless Events- Ethiopia



I believe Rwanda will continue to dominate as the preferred destination for the events and meetings sector for international organizers. I continue to be surprised by how hard it is to get around the continent so countries who prioritize ease of entry and invest in the right event properties will win in the long run.



Kwakye Donkor, CEO, African Tourism Partners



It's been an incredible year for Africa's Tourism sector with great wins for visa facilitation in Africa which is expected to give impetus to the intra Africa travels. Nonetheless, as we welcome 2024 with optimism, we need more collaborative efforts to walk the talk in tourism, while carrying the youth along. We need to make intra-African travels, seamless connectivity and borderless Africa a reality.



Folorunsho Coker, Director General- Nigerian Tourism Development Authority



The growth of Nigerian and African Tourism will be in 2024 Pan African. We must do so much more together with the limited available resources. We only see a little of 5% of the \$8 trillion income, others share 95%, whereas we represent 51 countries out of a total of 152 countries in the global tourism economies. There is neither room for politics in Tourism nor Tourism in politics. The Corporate Governance, Human Resources and Infrastructure Development, Events marketing and Single digit funding in a new Tourism Development bank must be our priority. We must open up African Skies and boarders.



Mohammed Hersi- Chairman Diani Hospitality Owners Association, Kenya



We are bullish in Kenya and the region on matters tourism. The abolition of Visa is one major move that is bound to make traveling to Kenya very easy including for our African neighbors as we strive to grow the number from our fellow African countries.



George Ayisi- Head of Sales, Labadi Beach Hotel, Ghana



It has been a great year even though we are still in a recovery mood and that is a testament that the market is responding to the demands of this industry. Going forward, I expect that there will be enhanced airlift in Africa and seamless Visa facilitation for a robust growth in the tourism sector.



Nic Sabula - CEO, Kenya Association of Travel Agents (KATA)



Travel and Tourism in Africa will fully recover to the precovid levels in 2024. Statistics at the close of 2023 are showing an industry that is headed to a full recovery. I am very optimistic that barring any unforeseen eventuality, 2024 numbers will exceed 2019 levels marking an earlier recovery compared to the predicted 2025. Africa is open for business.



Adele Mackenzie, Editor, Tourism Update



There is a clear, strong demand for tourism to Africa from all corners of the globe. If we can increase continental collaboration and align policies we can address barriers to tourism such as visas and increased regional and international air access - including lowering pricing around flights, I believe Africa will not only see great post-COVID recovery but growth beyond the 2019 numbers.



Mike Tavares, CEO, Ojimah



The end of the year is the perfect time to reflect and dream big for the year ahead. May 2024 be an opportunity for African Tourism to start things afresh, choose a more sustainable path forward, understand the need for more perspectives and diversity and lastly, an opportunity to embrace the rebirth of the Tourism era in the continent.



Gilbert Abeiku Aggrey, CEO, Kaya Management Services, Ghana



"In 2024, Africa's tourism promises a vibrant tapestry of cultural immersion and breathtaking landscapes. The continent beckons travelers with untold adventures, showcasing its rich heritage and natural wonders. As industry insiders, we anticipate a surge in sustainable tourism, forging a path that harmonizes exploration with conservation for a truly transformative experience."



Manteh Bugunde, The Daily Mail

“Uganda is about losing its position as the Pearl of Africa because of crude oil discovery. It shouldn't kill tourism, rather learn sustainability from Saudi Arabia and UAE. Tourism is gold.”



Lily Ajarova, CEO- Uganda Tourism Board



I believe to a large extent tourism and travel have recovered from the effect of covid 19. There are new trends set that require a lot of innovation and sustainable practices. Uganda is set and working hard to align its tourism offerings to the trends. Important too is improving domestic and regional tourism.”



Lebawit Lily Girma, Founder, TourismLens.com



My sense is that 2024 will be a year of growth and opportunity for African tourism. There's a fresh wave of excitement about experiencing the continent, from western source markets as well as from within the region as more visa restrictions are lifted. Morocco, Egypt and Rwanda are already on luxury travelers' radars and likely to benefit, but for destinations that heavily rely on safaris there's an opportunity to tie in major urban cultural events – amid a rise in solo and multigenerational trips – for a more diverse, sustainable tourism offering that travelers are increasingly seeking. Of course there will be challenges, such as air connectivity/cost, and tourists looking more closely than ever at destination safety and regional stability.”



Uche Amoge, CCTV Africa

“We will never see a year like 2023 again, it redefined political landscapes in Africa mostly for bad. “Nigeria in particular will suffer the ambush by political contractors for a long time and Africa weeps for her giant”



Andrew Kitema Managing Co-owner – African Adventure Specialists



Visitors from around the world will no longer require a Visa to enter Kenya from January 2024. This was announced by president Ruto on 12 December 2023. This is a bold move from which it will not only see arrivals into Kenya spiral up but also inject the much-needed foreign exchange into the economy.”



Obinna Emelike, Assistant Editor, Business Day



With Rwanda taking the lead in borderless Africa with its visa-free policy, Kenya joining from this 2024 and Malawi coming up with its 'Golden Visa' initiative, I see more African countries offering Visa free to other Africans. This is a starting point to seamless movement, boost to intra-African travels and economic growth. But giants such as Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt are still shying away from the noble initiative.”



Kingsley Uranta Assistant General Manager- Channels TV, Nigeria



In 2024, I envision Africa's tourism flourishing as a beacon of original beauty. With strategic development, cutting-edge technology, and powerful marketing, we will unveil the continent's hidden gems. Embracing its rich culture and warm hospitality, Africa will stand as the last frontier for unparalleled, awe-inspiring experiences, captivating the world.”



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South African Airways to return to Perth with Johannesburg service

Perth Airport has welcomed the announcement that South African Airways (SAA) will recommence services between Johannesburg and Perth from 28 April 2024. Perth Airport's Chief Commercial and Aviation Officer Kate Holsgrove said that it was great to see South African Airways back in Perth after three years following the impacts of the pandemic.

"The non-stop flight will operate three times per week on the airline's Airbus A340-300 aircraft delivering 78,936 seats to the Perth market.

"Once flights resume, we will continue working closely with South African Airways with the aim of rebuilding back

to a daily service.

"The return of South African Airways to Perth Airport is testament to the airline's resilient efforts and our continued partnership over 60 years. It remains our key focus to ensure we grow international aviation into Perth and Western Australia.

"This is great news for Perth and Western Australian residents who have family connections in South Africa and for those looking to tick-off a travel experience on their bucket list to such a vibrant country and explore the African continent.

"The return of South African

Airways' services between Perth and Johannesburg also provides an alternative itinerary for those travelling to South America with flights also available to Sao Paulo, Brazil from either Johannesburg or Cape Town with South African Airways."

South African Airways will operate the PER-JNB service on an A340-300 which has a total of 253 seats configured with 38 Business Class seats and 215 Economy Class seats.

SA280 will arrive in Perth at 12:20pm and SA281 will depart for Johannesburg at 14:40pm on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

Kenya Airways Partners with Air Europa to Extend its reach into Europe

Kenya's National Carrier, Kenya Airways (KQ) has signed a codeshare agreement with Air Europa, the third-largest Spanish carrier, to extend its reach in Europe and the United States of America. The new agreement will allow Air Europa passengers to fly to Nairobi from Amsterdam as well as allow Kenya Airways guests to fly to Madrid, Palma de Mallorca, New York, and Miami.

The agreement has significantly expanded customers' travel options by providing access and convenience as guests will enjoy benefits such as the purchase of a single ticket, a single check-in, and connections with minimum waiting times, among others. Kenya Airways will deploy its codes on four Air Europa routes, specifically from Amsterdam to Madrid, Madrid to Palma de Mallorca, Madrid to New York, and Miami while Air Europa will place their code on the Kenya Airways Amsterdam to Nairobi flight.

"We are excited about this partnership as it will provide our guests with more convenient travel options to Europe



and the United States. Air Europa has been our partner under the SkyTeam Alliance, and this agreement allows us to collaborate more for the mutual benefit of our guests giving them more access and connectivity." Said Martin Gitonga, Kenya Airways Head of Network Planning and Alliances.

This agreement reflects the growth of Kenya Airways partnership strategy, which was largely restored in 2022.

"We are very pleased with the partnership we have signed with Kenya Airways. In addition to working with one

of the most established and prestigious airlines in Africa, this alliance allows us to significantly expand our reach in a region with growing demand, which will certainly be of great benefit to our customers," said Estelle Leray, Air Europa's Director of Alliances.

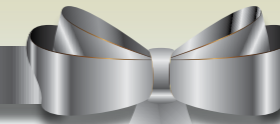
Kenya Airways takes pride in being at the forefront of connecting Africa to the World and the World to Africa through its Nairobi hub and is committed to exploring strategic partnerships and agreements that provide its guests with convenience, choice, and access to destinations across the world.



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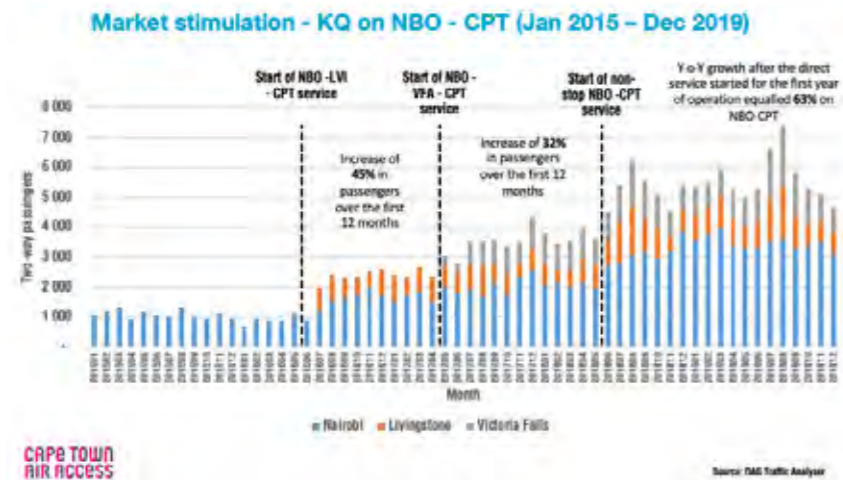
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Maximising the value of existing source markets through active air route development



When we think about route development, the imagery that often comes to mind is the water cannon salute when a new airline taxis into a destination for the first time.

Whilst this is indeed true, we often overlook the act of an existing airline adding additional frequencies on the same route or swapping out a smaller aircraft for a larger model, adding additional seat capacity.

I mention the above to highlight that in the pursuit of new airline partners, those airlines already serving a destination can be overlooked and taken for granted.

The last thing a destination wants or needs is an airline to unexpectedly cease or reduce service, especially to an established source market. Once an airline has announced its cessation date, it is already too late, which is why there needs to be proactive and regular engagement between the airline and local stakeholders to ensure everything is being done to maintain and grow the route.

To understand the value of an air route to a destination, allow me to offer an example.

Let's assume an airline operates a daily service to your destination with a Boeing 737-8 MAX offering 160 seats, with an 80% load factor (128 seats per day). Let's also assume the average passenger onboard spends \$500 in your destination. This equates to \$23.3 Million per year in spend. Losing this could be catastrophic, but on the flip side,

developing it could be transformative!

A great example of where an intra-African route has been supported and nurtured is Kenya Airways and their Nairobi to Cape Town route. In the 3 year period between 2016-2019, the number of passengers between the cities has increased more than fourfold.

This growth was delivered by a combination of active stakeholder support, improved visa conditions and increased frequencies. Notably, on some routes the aircraft used has been up gauged from a 96 seater Embraer 190 to a 234 seater Boeing 787. Kenya Airways have also added direct flights from Nairobi to Cape Town complementing existing flights via Livingstone and Victoria Falls.

With over 50% of all international tourists arriving at their destination by air each year, I would argue that the airlines are a destination's most important customer. Therefore, understanding what motivates an airline to launch or expand service is vital to the success of any African destination.

My question for all Destination Management Organizations reading this is: Are you putting as much effort into keeping the airlines you already have versus trying to encourage new airlines to serve the destination?

If not, perhaps now is the time to reconsider?

If you are a tourism authority or stakeholder that would like to get more

informed and involved, register to attend AviaDev Africa this June alongside your airport authority. In collaboration with the SADC Business Council, a workshop focused on the role of tourism boards in route development will be offered, along with the opportunity to meet with the airline representatives of over 40 airlines.

Happy landings

AviaDev Africa 2024 will take place in Windhoek, Namibia 19-21 June 2024.

Find out more at www.aviadev.com

BIO

Jon Howell, is the CEO and Founder of AviaDev, a division of The Bench.



Jon has dedicated the last 12 years to supporting the development of air connectivity to, from, and within the African continent by delivering live and virtual events and providing year-round content and insight into the industry.

The annual AviaDev Africa event was established in 2016 and is now regarded as the premier platform dedicated to supporting African Aviation development, having delivered 7 editions.

Jon established AviaDev Insight Africa, the only podcast dedicated to African aviation in 2018. To date, the podcast has over 100,000 listeners in 185 countries globally and over 275 episodes to its name.

Jon is passionate about empowering the next generation of aviators. He became a Visiting Professor at Coventry University in March 2022 and regularly delivers lectures to Undergraduate and postgraduate aviation management students.

Jon was also appointed a Global Ambassador for Gorilla Conservation for his fundraising efforts which include climbing the three largest mountains in the UK in a single weekend wearing a gorilla suit.

Ethiopian Airlines adds Freetown to its network from June 2024

Ethiopian Airlines from June 2024 plans further service adjustment to West Africa, with the introduction of new service to Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown. Planned routing changes feature the following.

Addis Ababa - Niamey eff 01JUN24 Increase from 4 to 7 weekly, 737 MAX 8 replaces 787-8. This service will become same day return service, and no longer extends to Ouagadougou

ET937 ADD0845 - 1230NIM 7M8 D

ET936 NIM1330 - 2115ADD 7M8 D

Addis Ababa - Ouagadougou - Conakry eff 01JUN24 Increase from 2 to 4 weekly, 787-8 (Conakry overall service increases from 5 to 7 weekly)

ET933 ADD1050 - 1350OUA1450 - 1650CKY 788 x245

ET932 CKY0830 - 1040OUA1140 - 2040ADD 788 x356

Addis Ababa - Ouagadougou - Freetown eff 31MAY24 3 weekly 787-8 (Freetown is a new destination. Ouagadougou overall service increases from 6 to 7 weekly)

ET943 ADD1050 - 1350OUA1450 - 1720FNA 788 245

ET942 FNA0835 - 1050OUA1150 - 2050ADD 788 356

Maun to Become Ethiopian's Second Botswana Destination

Ethiopian Airlines Group, one of the fastest-growing global airline brands and Africa's largest airline, would like to announce that it will launch a thrice weekly service between Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Maun, Botswana as of June 10, 2024. Maun will be Ethiopian's second destination in Botswana after Gaborone, which has been served since 2016.

The new thrice weekly service will be operational per the below schedule:

Addis Ababa (ADD) Maun (MUB) Ndola (NLA) Addis Ababa (ADD): on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday

The new route will provide convenient and seamless connectivity for travelers from Ethiopia and other parts of Africa

to the popular tourist destination of Maun, which is the gateway to the Okavango Delta, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's largest inland deltas.

Regarding the commencement of the new flight services, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mr. Mesfin Tasew said, "We are delighted to include Maun, the tourism capital of Botswana, to our ever-expanding African network. The addition of Maun into our African connectivity enables travelers from Maun to enjoy facilitated connectivity to Ethiopian vast global network that exceeds 135 destinations. Maun is a strategic addition to our network as it will enable us to offer our customers a unique opportunity to explore the

natural beauty and rich biodiversity of Botswana. Our new service does not only strengthen the tourism, trade and the overall socio-economic ties between Botswana and Ethiopian global destinations, it also enables us to strengthen our contribution in realizing the development of air transport in the African continent."

Ethiopian champions the largest network operating to more than 60 destinations in the continent. Ethiopian Airlines managed to establish a convenient intra- Africa and global connections via its main hub in Addis Ababa, playing its part in the growth of the aviation industry in Africa.





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A More Integrated Travel Ecosystem

It is known that a primary challenge for Africa's tourism is the shortage and fragmentation of data. These challenges affect travelers, destinations and local businesses.

In a tech-driven world, digitalization became key in guiding industries toward innovation and growth. However, that bright future is being disrupted by fragmentation, with different countries and companies developing technology standards that aren't compatible with each other. For that reason, the Travel industry is now and probably always will be fragmented.

Nowadays, we all have different travel apps on our smartphone – a few apps for hotel and flights, the experiences app, bus and train apps etc. This fragmentation can create barriers between markets and industries, making it harder for customers and SMEs to breakthrough into the digital economy.

The question I have asked myself was: "can fragmentation be eliminated"? The answer is no. However, we can somehow mitigate it. My natural skills and predisposition for problem solving were already quite strong and observing my brother working at Deloitte in Lisbon, in consulting, confirmed somehow that my future would look like that: professionally dealing with other companies' problems and finding solutions for them.

Holding a variety of positions within the industry was my way of observing and learning what the tourism industry is, does and achieves. My overall goal was to better understand the needs of the sector and acquire a broader view on its operations and way of functioning. The COVID-19 pandemic taught us how to do things differently. In my case, the pandemic provided me with the time and space

to finally present my own answer to many problems that the Travel and Tourism constantly faces.

At Ojimah, we believe in doing things differently. For us, the global Travel & Tourism ecosystem does not benefit the African market. With that in mind, we have developed a "Uniformed System" that brings together the industry main stakeholders while placing tourism spendings into the hands of local businesses.

Our "Ecosystem of Solutions" provides clear solutions to the main stakeholders of our industry, as well as to travelers. The "All-in-One" Travel and Tourism App allows USERS to save time and money; African SMEs to make money; and DMOs to gain back power and control over their Destination. In addition, for DMOs with an eye on the bottom line, moving away from fragmentation to an integrated system like Ojimah could be a sensible way forward.

Ojimah stands for "Collective Work and Responsibility". Why don't we unify our struggle and share a common space to showcase our diversity and pride? This can only grant us further recognition and inner gratification and will allow new markets to reach our countries in a different way. This is why Ojimah exists today, to create an alternative for the future.

Article by Mike Tavares, Founder CEO/Ojimah

Mike Tavares brings over eighteen years of experience in managing tourism and hospitality businesses from new hotel development and operations to dealing with private investors and African governments as a Senior Tourism & Hospitality Consultant.



Zimbabwe to host Inaugural UN Tourism Regional Forum on Gastronomy for Africa

Barbara Rwdzi, Minister of Tourism and Hospitality of Zimbabwe has confirmed the hosting of the first UN Tourism Regional Forum on Gastronomy Tourism for Africa. The event is scheduled to take place from July 26-28, 2024 in Victoria Falls.

The development follows an important meeting between the UN Secretary General and Minister Rwdzi, during which the planning for the Africa Gastronomy Conference was finalized. In addition to highlighting the possible impacts on Zimbabwe's tourism industry, Minister Rwdzi emphasized her excitement at being able to host such an important event.

She said, "The most significant highlight of the day was our meeting with the UN Tourism Secretary General this morning, during which we received confirmation for hosting the Africa Gastronomy Conference. The date is yet to be finalized, but we are thrilled to have secured this opportunity and eagerly anticipate hosting it in Victoria Falls. Additionally, fruitful discussions were held regarding the establishment of a Tourism Academy in Victoria Falls."

African Gastronomy tourism has garnered significant attention in recent times. The inaugural UN Tourism Regional Forum on Gastronomy Tourism for Africa aims to accentuate the new

“*The most significant highlight of the day was our meeting with the UN Tourism Secretary General this morning, during which we received confirmation for hosting the Africa Gastronomy Conference. The date is yet to be finalized, but we are thrilled to have secured this opportunity and eagerly anticipate hosting it in Victoria Falls. Additionally, fruitful discussions were held regarding the establishment of a Tourism Academy in Victoria Falls*”



image of Africa. The conference will highlight the unique local cuisine and culinary customs across the continent while fostering cultural exchange, economic growth, and sustainable travel practices. It seeks to present Africa's diverse culinary scene to encourage participation and collaboration throughout the continent.

During Last year's UN Tourism World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism in San Sebastián, Spain, Secretary of General of the UN Tourism Agency Zurab Pololikashvili recognized the efforts of the First Lady of Zimbabwe, Dr Auxillia

Mnangagwa, for "championing gastronomy tourism" in the country and region.

It would be recalled that last year, under the auspices of the First Lady Dr Auxillia Mnangagwa's, Zimbabwe held the SADC traditional meal cookout competition in Masvingo, which was colourful and a resounding success, attracting ministers from the SADC region who expressed eagerness to do the same in their home countries to ensure citizens benefit from the food's high nutritional value and medicinal properties.

HARMONIZING SEYCHELLOIS HERITAGE: Moutya dance takes centre stage, uniting cultures through rhythmic celebrations

Almost a year after earning its designation as a UNESCO Heritage Asset, Berno Cedras, a seasoned artist and the head of the Lecho band in Seychelles, passionately delves into the intricacies of the Moutya dance and its profound relevance to the people of Seychelles.

In an exclusive interview with VoyagesAfric, Berno Cedras the charismatic leader of the Lecho band, not only highlights the dance's artistic aspects, but delves into its historical roots, carrying a narrative of indomitable resilience, unwavering strength, and unity across generations.

"This isn't just a dance; it's a historical journey. Centuries ago, when our ancestors toiled as slaves on this island, enduring meager wages and oppressive conditions, Moutya became our voice. It's more than a dance; it's a song, a melody that encapsulates our pain and struggles," Berno passionately explains.

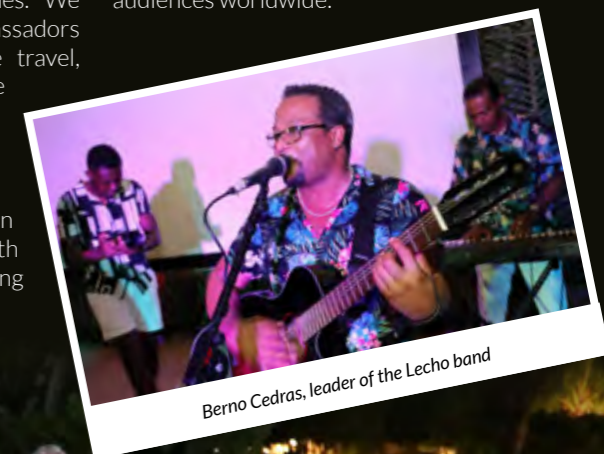
His love for storytelling and music, cultivated since childhood, led to the creation of the Lecho band. Reflecting on his early connection with music, Berno shares, "I fell in love with music at the tender age of 9 or 10. Every time I sing Moutya, it's transformative. It's like taking flight—a connection to my roots. With 25 years of experience in local music, I carry our stories wherever I go. I've traveled to 17 countries, sharing our culture through music."

Berno emphasizes the Lecho band's commitment to showcasing Seychelles as more than just pristine beaches. "We are not just a band; we are ambassadors of our culture. Whenever we travel, Moutya travels with us. We are dedicated to modernizing and fusing Moutya seamlessly into different cultures."

Moutya, deeply embedded in Seychelles' history, arrived with enslaved Africans, providing

an outlet for expressing sentiments about harsh living conditions and social injustice. Berno describes Moutya as a dance performed by a bonfire, accompanied by heated drums, rhythmic drumming, dancing, and soulful singing.

In conclusion, Berno's vision extends beyond entertainment; it's a mission to diversify Seychelles' global image. "We want Seychelles to be known not just for its breathtaking beaches but for its rich culture and arts," he affirms, underlining the band's dedication to a modern fusion of Moutya that resonates with audiences worldwide.



Berno Cedras, leader of the Lecho band



Tourism Calendar of Events

Tourism Calendar of Events

April
10-12
2024

WTM Africa
 Venue: Cape Town International Convention Centre, South Africa
 Contact: +265 991 608540 Email:
About: World Travel Market Africa is the leading exhibition for the inbound and outbound African travel & tourism markets., WTM Africa creates personal and business opportunities through its industry networks, global reach and regional focus, providing our customers with quality contacts, content and communities.

April
25-27
2024

Malawi International Tourism Expo (Takulandirani) 2024
 Venue: Lilongwe, Malawi
 Contact: +267 725 30 600 Email: takulandirani@tourism.mw
About: Takulandirani offers opportunities for patrons to acquire knowledge about different source markets, interact with travel media, meet other destinations, and engage in well-informed workshops.

May
14-16
2024

IMEX Frankfurt
 Venue: Frankfurt, Germany
 Contact: +44 (0) 1273 227311 Email:
About: IMEX Frankfurt is where the global meetings, events and incentive travel industry comes together annually for the largest trade show of its kind in Europe.

May
6-9
2024

Arabian Travel Market
 Venue: Dubai, UAE
 Contact: +44 (0)20 8271 2158 Email:
About: Arabian Travel Market, known as ATM, is a travel and tourism event, organized annually in Dubai to provide a platform for inbound and outbound tourism professionals in the Middle East and gives information on tourism destinations, accommodation options, tourism attractions and aviation industry in the Middle East and around the world.

May
28-31
2024

Africa Youth in Tourism Innovation Summit
 Venue: Windhoek, Namibia
 Contact: +27 813037030 Email:
About: The Africa Youth in Tourism Innovation Summit (AYTIS) & Challenge is hosted by Africa Tourism Partners in collaboration with UN Tourism and BDO. It is the "one and only" pan-African Youth and start-ups in Tourism Summit and innovation challenge in tourism on the continent.

June
7-9
2024

Karibu KiliFair 2024
 Venue: Arusha, Tanzania
 Contact: +255 754 560 180 Email: dominic@kilifair.com
About: KARIBU-KILIFAIR is the leading international Outdoor Tourism & Industry Fair in Tanzania, promoting and presenting companies based in the Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania, and East Africa as a destination.

June
13-15
2024

2024 Zambia Travel Expo (ZATEX)
 Venue: Lusaka, Zambia
 Contact: +260 211 229 087 Email: info@zambia.travel
About: Organized by the Zambia Tourism Agency in collaboration with private sector participation, ZATEX is more than just an exhibition—it's a platform designed to spotlight the best of Zambia's tourism products and services.

June
17
2024

Africa's Eden Summit 2024
 Venue: Livingstone, Zambia
 Contact: +267 725 30 600 Email: Summit@africaseden.travel
About: The summit is dedicated to showcasing best practices, addressing regional challenges, and seeking actionable solutions to ignite positive change in the tourism industry, benefitting both the region and the global sustainable tourism landscape.

June
19-21
2024

7th AviaDev Africa
 Venue: Movenpick Hotel, Windhoek, Namibia
 Contact: Email: mala.patel@thebench.com
About: AviaDev Africa is the premier platform dedicated to growing connectivity to, from, and within the African continent. Bringing together airports, airlines, tourism authorities, governments, and industry suppliers, AviaDev offers attendees the ability to pre-arrange meetings, learn from industry peers, and make those important connections.

June
25-27
2024

7th Africa Hospitality Investment Forum (AHIF)
 Venue: Movenpick Hotel, Windhoek, Namibia
 Contact: Email: mala.patel@thebench.com
About: Africa Hospitality Investment Forum is Africa's premier meeting place of leaders in the hospitality sector, attracting hotel and real estate investors, owners and developers, global hotel operator CEOs and prominent advisory services from across the African continent and beyond.

Sept.
4-6
2024

Africa Tourism Leadership Forum (ATLF)
 Venue: Gaborone, Botswana
 Contact: +27 813037030 Email: rejoice@africatourismpartners.com
About: is a Pan-African dialogue platform. It brings together key stakeholders of Africa's travel, tourism, hospitality and aviation sectors to network, share insights, and devise strategies for intra-Africa travel and tourism growth across the continent, whilst enhancing the brand equity of "Destination Africa".

October
2-4
2024

Essence of Africa
 Venue: Nairobi, Kenya
 Contact: +27833088839 Email: hello@eoatravel.com
About: Essence of Africa, curated by On Show Solutions and Experience Africa Events, is a private sector-led initiative focused on expanding the potential of tourism across Africa by bringing together the right global buyers and committed local sellers.

Travel & Tourism Blitz

Sierra Leone joins ATTA® demonstrating commitment to growing tourism

ATTA® welcomes the National Tourism Board of Sierra Leone as its newest member, as the destination is forging links with international partners and investing in its tourism future. This milestone demonstrates the commitment of the Sierra Leone government to expanding sustainable tourism under Minister Tunis' leadership.

"We feel privileged to welcome Sierra Leone into the ATTA® membership family at this important moment as they actively promote the country's reinvigorated tourism brand and offerings internationally," said Jon Danks, CEO of ATTA®.

"Together we'll use the power of our platforms and network to connect, support and promote the country's inspiring tourism brand to a worldwide audience. Sierra Leone now has valuable new channels to showcase its vibrant culture, wildlife, beaches, nature, and warm hospitality. Together we aim to support Sierra Leone's hard-working tourism industry to sustainably grow visitor numbers and benefit local communities for the long term."

Sierra Leone is determined to revitalise its tourism industry, with investments pouring into critical infrastructure and strategic marketing. New hotels and ecolodges, catering to international visitors, are springing up along stunning beaches and within nature reserves – a haven for eco-tourism activities like chimpanzee tracking.

The country is also spotlighting its rich cultural heritage, attracting the African diaspora and history enthusiasts interested in the transatlantic slave trade era and beyond. Authentic cultural experiences foster meaningful connections between visitors and local communities.

A recently launched 10-year tourism brand and strategy amplifies Sierra



Leone's global visibility, setting the stage for a surge in traveller numbers. With its natural attractions and warm hospitality, Sierra Leone's tourism prospects look promising.

The recent appointment of Her Excellency Minister Nabeela Tunis further signals the government's commitment to sustainable tourism development. Her background spans diverse sectors, including development, and international diplomacy, equipping her with a unique set of skills to champion Sierra Leone's tourism potential.

"This, along with the warm hospitality of the Sierra Leonean people, creates a foundation for the industry to flourish," adds Danks.

"During this important moment in Sierra Leone's tourism development, we are delighted to be joining ATTA® in this strategic partnership," Minister Tunis said.

"We feel honoured to be part of such an esteemed network of partners dedicated to promoting African tourism, and we're proud to be flying the flag for West

Africa, which is often underrepresented in the tourism sphere. We look forward to a productive and inspiring year ahead, connecting with ATTA®'s wealth of trade, media and industry members who share Sierra Leone's passion for responsible tourism in Africa."

Minister Tunis added, "Following last year's successful show, we also look forward to exhibiting at Experience Africa again in 2024."

ITB Berlin, the world's largest travel trade show, provides the perfect platform for Sierra Leone and ATTA® to solidify their partnership. This strategic move marks Sierra Leone's official entry into the ATTA® community, granting it access to valuable resources and a global network of industry leaders.

Through participation in events by ATTA®'s events division, Experience Africa Events, Sierra Leone will gain exceptional opportunities to showcase its diverse offerings to ATTA® members and influential media, paving the way for enhanced visibility for the destination.

Travel & Tourism Blitz

Tanzania property joins global hospitality brand



The Best Western Dodoma City Hotel in Tanzania has joined the BWH Hotels Brand as a new addition to its African properties.

The hotel comprises 95 rooms, from standard to executive, and presidential suites. The hotel's location caters for the needs of business and leisure travellers, with easy access to major landmarks and transportation hubs.

"The addition of Best Western Dodoma contributes significantly to our existing collection of 19 hotels across Africa, thereby establishing our presence in Tanzania. We are excited about expanding our portfolio within

this flourishing region," said Wytze Van den Berg, Vice President of BWH Hotels EMEA.

The hotel offers meeting facilities, a rooftop pool, as well as a rooftop dining experience with views of Dodoma's skyline. Guests can also access the wellness and fitness centre.

The hotel was built using eco-friendly materials and is designed to minimise its environmental impact, with energy-efficient fixtures for water conservation measures.

"Our vision was to create a welcoming space that reflects the essence of Dodoma while offering world-class amenities to our valued guests. We are excited to contribute to the growth of this community and look forward to welcoming travellers from around the world," said Director Aly Damji, Owner of Best Western Dodoma City Hotel.

The BWH Hotels Brand offers a collection of about 4 300 properties in over 100 countries and territories worldwide with 19 brands across every chain scale segment from economy to luxury.

Ghana's President names New tourism minister



In a latest cabinet reshuffle, Ghana's President, Nana Akufo-Addo, has nominated Andrew Egyapa Mercer for the position of Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture.

He takes over from Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Awal who has been the sector's Minister since 2021. Mercer who is the MP for Sekondi Constituency in the Western region and a Deputy Energy Minister will be expected to lead a sector which is building on significant gains post COVID-19. His appointment is subject to parliamentary vetting and approval.

Morocco National Tourist Office inks agreement with United Airlines



The Moroccan National Tourist Office (MNTO) and United Airlines have announced a groundbreaking initiative: the first direct flight route from New York to Marrakech by an American airline, set to begin in October 2024.

This strategic move introduces three weekly flights on a Boeing 767-300, highlighting Marrakech's direct access to American travelers and establishing United Airlines as the only American carrier connecting to North Africa.

This collaboration underscores

Morocco's enhanced visibility in the American market, with the MNTO aiming to draw one million tourists in alignment with its ambitious tourism goals.

This direct flight not only bolsters Marrakech's global tourism appeal but also complements existing services by Royal Air Maroc, enriching Morocco's connectivity. It marks a pivotal step in reinforcing Morocco's premium positioning in the American market, in accordance with the "Light in Action" strategy.



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Your blissful escape, luxury and comfort at the Protea Hotel by Marriott Gaborone Masa Square is designed as a beacon for comfort, class and to capture the essence of the elegance of Botswana, whether attending a conference in the center of Botswana or escaping for leisure.

Located in the iconic Masa Square poised to be the ultimate work, shop, play and stay center in the country. Boasting 152 stylish guest rooms and 30 long stay self-catering apartments, each accommodation is furnished in a classic, comfortable style. Dine in at Don Carlos restaurant or relax at the Carlitos Café while enjoying brewed coffee sourced specifically from renowned coffee bean regions throughout Africa filled with exotic and rich flavors.

Explore the rooftop pool and Gin bar for social moments. Featuring a conference center perfect for both big and small events and conveniently located in the CBD of Gaborone 20 minutes away from the Sir Seretse Khama International Airport. On-site amenities include a fitness facility, cinema in Masa Centre and golf course nearby.

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