

VoyagesAfric

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Africa's Leading Travel and Tourism Magazine

Tourism is set to return to pre-pandemic levels



Mozambique Exempts 28 countries in new visa policy

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Unravelling Cote d'Ivoire's cocoa route;
**a conversation with
Suzanne Kabane**





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Kojo Bentum-Williams

Consulting Editor
Ben Ohene-Ayeh

Content Editor
Samuel Obeng Appah

Editor at Large
Ridwan Ibrahim Asante

Francophone Editor
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Sustainability Editor
Mafalda Borea

Contributing Writers
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Obinna Emelike
Harriet Akosua Kwakye
Bill Bedzrah
Jenice Aidoo

Administration/Marketing
Symphorien Kouabile
Glaou Eddie Fortune
Michel Kouassi

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UNWTO
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Prince Charles Affum
WTM London
SA Tourism
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Editorial

Dear Reader,

As the first issue for this year, I, on behalf of the VoyagesAfric Team wish you a Happy and prosperous New Year and hope that our industry surpasses the pre pandemic levels this year. We are only in the third month of 2023 and as projected by UNWTO, the tourism sector is showing incredible signs of full recovery from tourist arrivals to destinations to tourism industry events returning to full blown business.

Our cover story is an important statement for our industry with the scenarios of tourism reaching an average of 65-85 percent pre 2019 levels. Even with the mitigating Russia invasion of Ukraine as well as the high inflation pummeling economies, especially for key source markets for Africa, the future is bright.

The return of the world's leading travel show ITB Berlin to a physical live event was a further boost to the recovery. It was almost certainly back to normalcy with leading destinations there to showcase their offerings.

The intra Africa travels which is a cardinal pillar to promoting trade and tourism continues to see strides on the continent. The latest to ease the movement for travels is Mozambique who have exempted 28 countries from visa to the country while bilateral agreement between South Africa and Uganda will see travels to South Africa for Ugandan passport holders, access the visa on arrival facility.

This issue also features the erudite Nigerian Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed who is celebrated by the UNWTO Secretary General for his dedication and leadership in the affairs of global tourism issues. As he bows out after 8 years of service, we would like to wish him the best in his future endeavours.

We also welcome new Ministers of Tourism in South Africa, Kenya, and Malawi who coincidentally are all women; what a month to cap off the celebration of the importance of women in the development and promotion of tourism.

Niger, a West African country is our destination profile. Director General of the Niger Tourism Agency, Anafi Souleymane takes us on a journey of the country and it's uniqueness as a destination.

Gastronomy is also featured prominently with focus on the amazing work of chocolatier, Suzanne Sawzan Kabbani, in shedding light on communities in rural Cote d'Ivoire.

This issue is filled with all the major news stories making waves in the African tourism scene and it is my hope that it offers our readers the opportunity to keep up with the most relevant happenings on the continent and beyond.

On behalf of the Team, I would like to express solidarity with Malawi which has seen parts of its southern region, ravaged by Cyclone Freddy. We urge the African and global tourism fraternity to show support by attending this year's Malawi International Tourism Expo (Takulandirani) which comes off in April.

Enjoy this edition as we bring you the latest updates in the world of Tourism.





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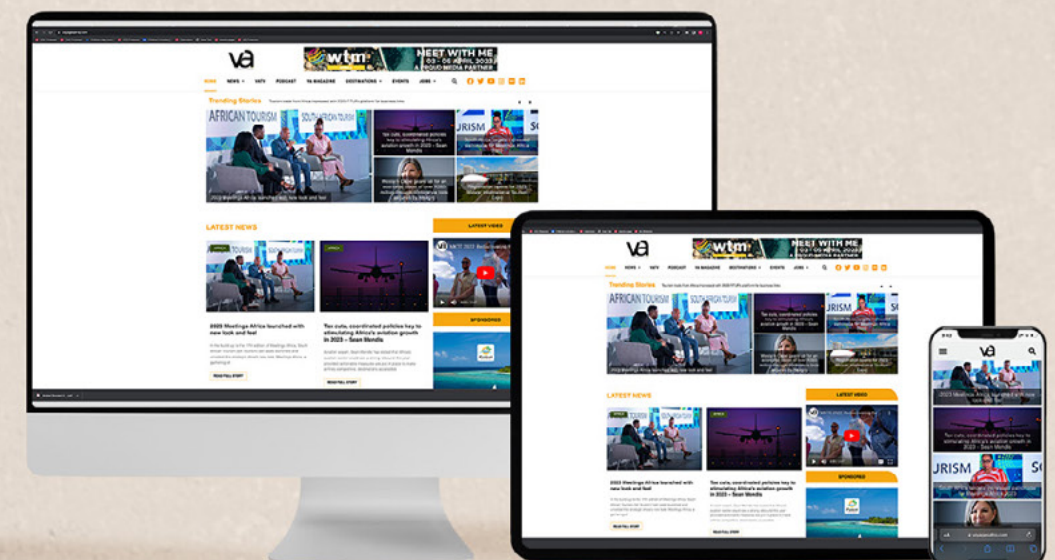


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UNWTO at FITUR 2023: Investing in a diverse and sustainable future for Tourism

At FITUR 2023, UNWTO served as the bridge between public and private leaders to advance plans to build a more diverse, resilient and sustainable tourism sector.

With the latest UNWTO data pointing to a return to pre-pandemic arrival levels in some world regions in 2023, Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili once again joined His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain in opening the major travel trade fair. Reflecting the Organization's priorities, UNWTO placed tourism investments, rural development, diversification, sustainability and accessibility centre stage over the course of four days.

Investment and building trust

Against the backdrop of FITUR, UNWTO and the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) strengthened their existing partnership to further advance UNWTO's work to attract and retain investment in tourism. The partnership will include the production of tourism investment guidelines, initially focused on Barbados, Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama and Uruguay. Both

organizations will develop frameworks to attract, promote and retain foreign direct investments in sustainable tourism initiatives across the Americas.

UNWTO recognized the progress made in rethinking the role of tourism in the economies and societies of the region. The President of the Republic of Guatemala, Alejandro Giammattei, and the Executive President of Banco Popular of the Dominican Republic, Christopher Paniagua, were formally recognized by UNWTO for their commitment to mainstreaming tourism in economic policy and financing, respectively. At FITUR, President Giammattei also confirmed the adherence of Guatemala to the UNWTO International Code for the Protection of Tourists.

Widening the scope of tourism

As part of UNWTO's work to diversify the sector and enhance its status as a driver of rural development, the Spanish province of La Rioja was announced as the host of the 7th UNWTO Global Wine Tourism Conference later this year. Secretary-General Pololikashvili, the President of La Rioja, Concha Andreu, and Spain's Minister of Tourism, Reyes Maroto, highlighted the importance of the growing wine tourism sector for protecting culture and supporting local jobs and businesses.

UNWTO also recognized the importance of shopping tourism, with particular reference to its close links to leisure and gastronomy. A Memorandum of Understanding, signed by UNWTO and WOW Concept, will see the two work together to promote responsible urban tourism through joint promotions and events as well as through shared efforts to monitor and share trends in tourism consumption. Further diversifying the sector's reach and impact, UNWTO also partnered with the Croatian National Tourist Board to announce the Second World Sports Tourism Congress, (26-27 April, 2023) in Zadar.



Tourism for all

To rethink accessible travel, UNWTO, Fundación ONCE and the Spanish Association for Standardization (UNE) co-organized a Seminar on Tourism for All, gathering national tourism administrations, destinations, companies and professional industry associations, underscoring the role of accessibility for social inclusion and business opportunity. The partners presented tools aimed at implementing the international standard UNE-ISO 21902 on Accessible Tourism for All, including a new guide to applying it in accommodation and hospitality businesses.

Sustainability: On land and in oceans

UNWTO continued to step up tourism's pace towards a more sustainable future. The Mexican State of Yucatán, home to some of the country's top tourism destinations, is the latest addition to the UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO). Already numbering more than 30 worldwide, INSTO monitors tourism's impact on local economies and habitats, allowing for smarter data-driven policymaking.

UNWTO concluded its week at FITUR by hosting a special meeting on Tourism for the Ocean and Climate Action at



its Madrid headquarters. Counting on the participation of Members of the European Parliament; Catherine Chabaut as well as Ruben Eiras, Secretary General, Forum Oceano, Paul Holhtus, Founding President, World Ocean Council, and Josiane Sadaka, CEO of Blue Carbon LLC, the event saw UNWTO confirm its support for the BlueCOP28 and Dubai Blue Pact initiatives. For his work leading tourism towards greater sustainability, Frédéric Degret, the Founder and CEO at NOAH ReGen was named as the UNWTO Special Advisor for Oceans and Climate Emergency.

Strengthening relationships

FITUR 2023 provided the opportunity for UNWTO to strengthen relations with public and private sector leaders. UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili held a series of bilateral meetings to keep servicing the Organization's Member States. The UNWTO leadership met with new Minister of Tourism of Jordan, Makram Mustafa Al-Qaisi, with the Minister of Tourism of Uruguay, Tabaré Viera; Deputy Minister of Tourism for Georgia, Mariam Kvrivishvili, the Minister of Tourism of Nigeria, Lai Mohammed, the Governor of Puerto Rico, Pedro Pierluisi as well as the Minister of Tourism of Puerto Rico, Carlos Mercado and also

with Dario Item, Ambassador to Spain of UNWTO's newest Member State, Antigua and Barbuda.

In a working meeting with Mariana Oleskiv, Chairperson of the State Agency for Tourism of Ukraine, Secretary-General Pololikashvili reaffirmed

UNWTO's firm support for Ukrainian's citizens and noted tourism's role for future recovery and as a pillar of peace. Meetings were also held with the Mayor of Madrid, José Luis Martínez-Almeida, Mayor of Skiathos Thodoris Tzoumas and the Israeli Ambassador to Spain, Rodica Radian-Gordon.



UNWTO's Best Tourism Villages in AlUla sets benchmarks

The Arabian ancient city of AlUla had the honour of hosting the second edition of UNWTO's Best Tourism Villages awards ceremony. Tourism importance for rural development was the message at the heart of the Best Tourism Villages Ceremony.

The initiative is one of the pillars of UNWTO Tourism for Rural Development Programme. Every year, Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO recognizes destinations which stand out for their commitment to sustainability in all its aspects – economic, social and environmental – and the preservation and promotion of community-based values.

The programme aims to ensure tourism contributes to reducing regional inequalities in income and development, fighting depopulation, progressing gender equality and women's and youth empowerment, advancing innovation and digitalization, improving connectivity, infrastructure, access to finance and investment, innovating in product development and value chain integration, promoting sustainable practices for more efficient use of resources and a reduction of emissions and waste and enhancing education and skills.

There couldn't have been any better way to celebrate this momentous occasion than at the Maraya Hall in AlUla, Saudi Arabia. The project still a work-in-progress has already seen exciting novelties incorporated into the program. The foyer of the Maraya Hall had an exhibition booth for all the thirty-two villages enlisted as this year's winners, affording them the opportunity to shed light on the developments and uniqueness of their respective villages.

In 2022, a total of 32 villages from 22 countries across the five world regions were awarded the recognition.

A further 20 villages will enter the Upgrade Programme. All 52 villages will also become part of the UNWTO Best Tourism Villages Global Network created in 2021 which from this date gathers 115 villages from the five continents. The Network provides a number of benefits including onsite and online training, sharing of good practices and international brand recognition and awareness.



Three villages from Africa Choke Mountains Ecovillage, Ethiopia, and Ksar Elkhorbat and Moulay Bouzerktoune both from Morocco made this year's list while four other villages from Cabo Verde (Fontainhas), Adaba-Ethiopia, Il Ngwesi, Kenya and Grand Baie of Mauritius will join the upgrade program.

Offering support for tourism's grass root is an inherent requirement to making tourism a force for good.

Preceding the awards ceremony was a cultural tour organized for media and delegates to understand the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's plan to preserve its culture and make it a pillar of its tourism drive.

The Chairperson of AlUla emphasized the point during one of the panel discussions when he said "We are coming late in the game but also, it offers us the best opportunity to make it better and sustainable."

Welcoming delegates to the magnificent Maraya Hall was the culturally enchanting northern group of Saudi taking patrons to the sound of the Alula culture.

Saudi Arabia's Minister of Tourism Ahmed Al-Khateeb in his opening remark said "We are delighted to host the UNWTO Best Tourism Villages 2022 Ceremony in Saudi Arabia this year. We look forward to sharing the rich history and heritage of the Kingdom with event attendees and participants."

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab

Pololikashvili expressed appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its immense support in making the event a success.

"For rural communities everywhere, tourism is a hugely powerful force for growth and opportunity. With Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO, we recognize and celebrate those destinations where this force is being truly embraced, whether it's creating jobs and supporting businesses or preserving local heritage. We look forward to keep growing with our Best Tourism Villages Network both in size and in influence," Zurab Pololikashvili said.

Alongside the ceremony itself, the First Annual Meeting of the Best Tourism Villages Network, a platform for sharing of knowledge and experiences, was held. During the meeting, the villages discussed their challenges and opportunities as well as their work plans for the coming year.

"It is a great honour that AlUla is among this year's award recipients. We look forward to continuing to raise awareness about the transformative role of tourism through our support for meaningful initiatives such as this," said H.H. Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Farhan Al-Saud, Minister of Culture of Saudi Arabia, Member of Board of Directors, and the Governor of the Royal Commission for AlUla.

Tourism is set to return to pre pandemic levels



After stronger than expected recovery in 2022, this year could see international tourist arrivals return to pre-pandemic levels in Europe and the Middle East. Tourists are nonetheless expected to increasingly seek value for money and travel closer to home in response to the challenging economic climate.

Based on UNWTO's forward-looking scenarios for 2023, international tourist arrivals could reach **80% to 95% of pre-pandemic levels** this year, depending on the extent of the economic slowdown, the ongoing recovery of travel in Asia and the Pacific and the evolution of the Russian offensive in Ukraine, among other factors.

All regions bouncing back

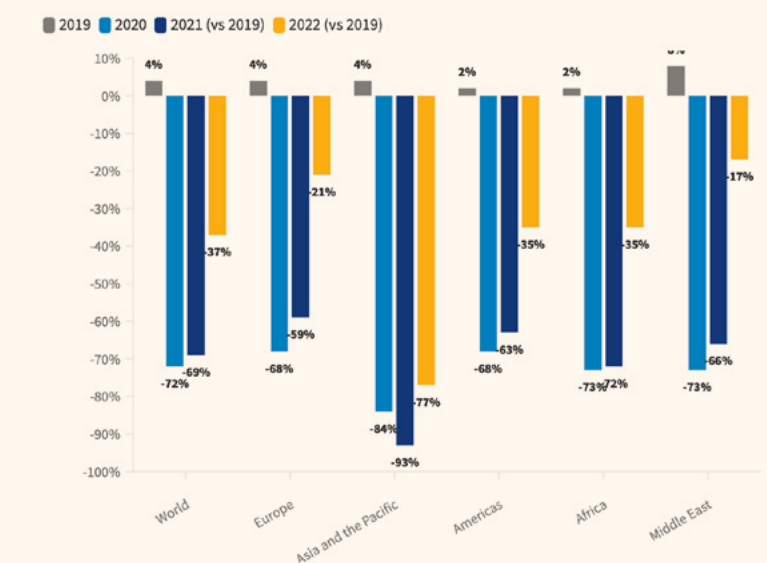
According to new data from UNWTO, more than 900 million tourists travelled internationally in 2022 – double the number recorded in 2021 though still 63% of pre-pandemic levels. Every global

region recorded notable increases in international tourist numbers.

The **Middle East enjoyed the strongest relative increase** as arrivals climbed to 83% of pre-pandemic numbers. **Europe reached nearly 80% of pre-pandemic levels** as it welcomed 585 million arrivals in 2022. Africa and the Americas both recovered about 65% of their pre-pandemic visitors, while Asia and the Pacific reached only 23%, due to stronger pandemic-related restrictions which have started to be removed only in recent months. The first UNWTO World Tourism Barometer of 2023 also **analyses performance by region** and looks at **top performers in 2022**, including several destinations which have already recovered 2019 levels.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab

International Tourist Arrivals, World and Regions



Pololikashvili said: "A new year brings more reason for optimism for global tourism. UNWTO anticipates a strong year for the sector even in the face of diverse challenges including the economic situation and continued geopolitical uncertainty. Economic factors may influence how people travel in 2023 and UNWTO expects demand for domestic and regional travel to remain strong and help drive the sector's wider recovery."

Chinese tourists set to return

UNWTO foresees the recovery to continue throughout 2023 even as the sector faces up with **economic, health and geopolitical challenges**. The recent **lifting of COVID-19 related travel restrictions in China**, the world's largest outbound market in 2019, is a significant step for the recovery of the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific and worldwide. In the short term, the resumption of travel from China is likely to benefit Asian destinations in particular. However, this will be shaped by the availability and cost of air travel, visa regulations and COVID-19 related restrictions in the destinations. By mid-January a total of 32 countries had imposed specific travel restrictions related to travel from China, mostly in Asia and Europe.

At the same time, **strong demand from the United States**, backed by a strong US dollar, will continue to benefit

destinations in the region and beyond. Europe will continue to enjoy strong travel flows from the US, partly due to a weaker euro versus the US dollar.

Notable increases in international tourism receipts have been recorded across most destinations, in several cases higher than their growth in arrivals. This has been supported by the increase in average spending per trip due to longer periods of stay, the willingness by travelers to spend more in

their destination and higher travel costs due to inflation. However, **economic situation** could translate into **tourists adopting a more cautious attitude** in 2023, with reduced spending, shorter trips and travel closer to home.

Furthermore, continued uncertainty caused by the Russian aggression against Ukraine and other mounting geopolitical tensions, as well as health challenges related to COVID-19 also represent downside risks and could weigh on

tourism's recovery in the months ahead.

The latest **UNWTO Confidence Index** shows **cautious optimism for January-April**, higher than the same period in 2022. This optimism is backed by the opening up in Asia and strong spending numbers in 2022 from both traditional and emerging tourism source markets, with France, Germany and Italy as well as Qatar, India and Saudi Arabia all posting strong results.

Rwanda announced as the next WTTC Global Summit host



Clare Akamanzi,
Rwanda Development Board, CEO



Julia Simpson,
WTTC President & CEO

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: During the closing session of the World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC) Global Summit in Riyadh, the Rwandan capital of Kigali, was announced as the host city for 2023, marking the first time the event will visit Africa.

Rwanda, the home of the International Gorilla Conservation Programme, will showcase the power of sustainable tourism to protect biodiversity and create thriving communities.

WTTC closed its largest ever Global Summit today with more than 3,000 delegates attending the event in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The global tourism body's Global Summit saw speakers such as former UK Prime Minister Theresa May, former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, and actor, filmmaker, and Golden Globe winner, Edward Norton.

As the most influential Travel & Tourism

event on the calendar, WTTC's record breaking Global Summit, was attended by more than 85 countries and over 50 ministers.

More than 250 media delegates from around the world attended the event, with many thousands of people around the world watching remotely.

During the event, WTTC and the Ministry of Tourism of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia launched the Environmental & Social Research (ESR) program.

This groundbreaking new data, details the climate footprint of the global Travel & Tourism sector, and in a world-first, this the research covers 185 countries across all regions, and will be updated each year with the latest figures.

WTTC also launched its Cities Economic Impact Report (EIR).

Sponsored by Visa, the report shows that

cities remain the powerhouses of global tourism and will drive the recovery of the sector and economies around the world.

Addressing delegates during her closing speech, Julia Simpson, WTTC President & CEO said: "Saudi Arabia will be the next major destination for visitors as it invests \$800 billion in showcasing the Kingdom to the world."

"From the Red Sea to snow-capped mountains, Saudi is full of surprises."

"We are incredibly excited that Rwanda will host our next Global Summit in 2023. An amazing country famous for its conservation work, Rwanda is building its reputation as a must-see destination."

Under the theme "Travel for a Better Future" the event in Riyadh focused on the value of the sector, not only to the global economy, but to the planet and communities around the world.



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UNWTO at ITB Berlin: Setting Priorities for Tourism

UNWTO returned to ITB Berlin with a clear message: Tourism is back and committed to delivering positive change that goes beyond the sector itself.

Tourism returns – why ITB matters

ITB Berlin is the world's biggest tourism and travel trade fair. This week's event was the first in-person ITB for four years and comes as the sector's recovery is well underway. According to UNWTO, international tourism could reach 80 to 95% of pre-pandemic numbers by the end of the year, with 70 million international arrivals recorded in January alone (more than double the number of January 2022).

The return of ITB was heralded by UNWTO as proof of strong confidence in travel as "the ultimate barometer of trust". UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili was invited to officially open the event, alongside Germany's Vice-Chancellor Robert Habeck, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, Berlin Mayor Franziska Giffey, and public and private sector leaders.

Education and Investment: Key Priorities for Tourism

At the official ITB opening, UNWTO reinforced the importance of education, training and investments for tourism's ability to deliver on its potential.

In Berlin, UNWTO announced a new partnership that will see the Organization work with Saudi Arabia to promote education and professional development in tourism.

Alongside this, UNWTO also signed a new agreement with the Business School of Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts to partner towards the creation of a new Bachelor of Science degree in International Sustainable Tourism.

The key message of investing in people was also stressed as UNWTO took part in a special Industry Roundtable. The event built on UNWTO's status as the bridge between the public and private



sectors. Recognizing the vital need for more and better-targeted investments to put transformative plans into action, UNWTO also confirmed that World Tourism Day 2023 will be celebrated around the theme of "Tourism and Green Investments".

Accelerating tourism climate action

Against the backdrop of ITB Berlin, UNWTO released a new report highlighting the progress that global tourism has made in measuring greenhouse gas emissions. "Climate Action in the Tourism Sector" was developed by UNWTO with support from the German Government and in collaboration with UN Climate Change (UNFCCC). The recommendations will help ensure more reliable measurements of GHG emissions towards fulfilling the commitments of the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism.

Tourism for all





ITB 2023 coincided with International Women's Day. To mark the occasion, UNWTO was joined by UN Women to present a summary of the achievements of the "Centre Stage: Women's empowerment during the COVID-19 recovery" project. The initiative made clear the extent to which women working in tourism were particularly impacted by the pandemic. And while tourism remains a leading employer of women, UNWTO and UN Women jointly stress that the sector is still to deliver on its women's empowerment potential.


Finally, to further advance the diversification of the sector and the growth of areas that can deliver new benefits, a special UNWTO Roundtable Discussion on "Connecting Sports Tourism to Health" was held at ITB ahead of the 2nd World Congress Tourism Congress in Zadar, Croatia (26-27 April).

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Gambia Tourism Board

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UEMOA and UNWTO sign MOU to deepen collaboration



The West African Monetary and Economic Union (UEMOA) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) have inked an agreement to strengthen their working relationship in Madrid, Spain.

The agreement is premised on a continued close working relationship between the two international organizations, with the latest engagement being the collaboration to develop a tourism satellite account and white paper on tourism and security in the UEMOA region.

Speaking at the signing of the agreement, the Secretary General of UNWTO, Zurab Pololikashvili recalled the excellent

working relationship his outfit has had with UEMOA in the previous years. He was confident the inking of the formal agreement will ensure the benefit of both parties and member states.

He outlined UNWTO's work in Africa and mentioned areas that they can collaborate to maximize the impact.

In a tweet, the Secretary-General said he was "very excited to sign this agreement with UEMOA and work together on renewed marketing strategies, risk management and statistics to create efficient tourism destinations in the continent."

The Commissioner in charge of Human Development at UEMOA, Mamadou

Serifo Jaquite, expressed appreciation to the UN Tourism Organization for its commitment to helping the region develop its tourism potential.

The Commissioner said that he hopes the challenges of UEMOA will be addressed with the white paper.

Serifo Jaquite added that the Union recognised the importance of tourism and creative industries to its member states and it was for this reason they are participating at this year's FITUR 2023.

Present at the signing ceremony were tourism ministers and ambassadors from the UEMOA region.

At the same ceremony, the International Code for the Protection of Tourists (ICPT) was presented to the UEMOA delegation.



Rwanda's envoy to France presents credentials to UNWTO SG



Francois Nkulikiyimfura presenting his credentials to the Secretary General of UNWTO, Zurab Pololikashvili

Rwanda's Ambassador to France and UNWTO Amb. Francois Nkulikiyimfura has presented his credentials to the Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Zurab

Pololikashvili in Madrid, Spain.

The seasoned diplomat is expected to advance Rwanda's role at the Madrid-based UN Tourism Agency.

Receiving the Ambassador, the Secretary General, Zurab Pololikashvili pointed out the fact that he was buoyed by Rwanda's very impressive efforts and constant hardwork at accelerating its tourism recovery.

"Rwanda means entrepreneurship, hospitality and beauty. We will keep on developing its tourism with the Ambassador of Rwanda to France, H.E. Francois Nkulikiyimfura.

I am delighted to receive your credentials to UNWTO. We're on our way to make tourism thrive in Rwanda. Let's get it done," the SG said.

He expressed appreciation to the Ambassador for the visit and applauded

the country's leadership on tourism development on the continent, particularly on its nature-based and sustainability approach as well as its leadership on Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE).

On his part, the visiting ambassador promised Rwanda's keen interest and support for the programs and activities of UNWTO.

"Known as the land of a thousand hills, Rwanda's stunning scenery and warm, friendly people offer unique experiences in one of the most remarkable countries in the world. It is blessed with extraordinary biodiversity, with incredible wildlife living throughout its volcanoes, montane rainforests and sweeping plains. Travellers come from far and wide to catch a glimpse of the magnificent gorillas, yet there is so much more to see and experience."



Zurab Pololikashvili pays glowing tribute to Nigeria's Outgoing Minister of Information and Culture



Lai Mohammed,
Outgoing Minister of Information & Culture

The Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Zurab Pololikashvili has paid a glowing tribute to Nigeria's Minister of Information and Culture Alhaji Lai Mohammed.

The Minister, who participated in UNWTO's activities at the recently held International Tourism Fair (FITUR), in Madrid, Spain, used the opportunity to express appreciation to the UN Tourism Chief and the organization for the unparalleled support he enjoyed as the minister of the African giant.

The Secretary-General applauded the efforts and leadership of the Minister, who he said was instrumental in the affairs of the organization. Mr. Pololikashvili cited the 61st CAF Meeting in Abuja (2018) and last year's UNWTO maiden conference on linking tourism and the creative industries as two major events, which define the exiting minister's commitments to the organization.

The Secretary-General further highlighted the role of the minister and

his wise counsel, which he offered the organization.

"Your determination and leadership in ensuring that Africa maximized its full potential in the areas of creative arts and education stand out," the secretary-general said.

He noted further that Alhaji Lai Mohammed's support for the works and programmes of the world tourism organization stands tall and will leave an indelible mark and a legacy for the organization and the African caucus will forever be grateful.

On his part, Alhaji Lai Mohammed expressed immense gratitude to the world tourism body and its leader for their continued support in growing Nigeria's support.

"We as a Ministry have also received a lot of support from the UNWTO in the last seven and half years. It is therefore pertinent for me to use this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to you, the Secretary-General, and your

entire staff, for the support given to me throughout my tenure as the Minister in charge of tourism.

"I also commend your commitment to the growth of the tourism sector in Nigeria, which has been demonstrated in so many ways," he said.

The Minister commended Mr. Pololikashvili for bringing "a lot of innovations to the organization and you have succeeded in carving a niche for yourself." By dint of his unrelenting efforts, he ensured tourism was given

“*Your determination and leadership in ensuring that Africa maximized its full potential in the areas of creative arts and education stand out*”



Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili
and Alhaji Lai Mohammed after a
meeting in Madrid, Spain

a voice at the highest political level and rallied the needed will to deliver a new and refurbished national theatre. This is among the many policies and wins that his good self and his office have fronted to bring transformation into the sector and enable private sector participation and foster job creation.

In 2018, he single-handedly ensured that Nigeria host the Commission for Africa (CAF) Ministers Meeting in Abuja, assembling a record number of tourism ministers as well as giving the world a taste of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage.

His support for UNWTO's work was admired by many who tapped into the wise counsel of the minister.

Lai Mohammed also led the mission of the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) as an Affiliate Member of UNWTO with the country's National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism also working on affiliate membership.

The Minister has also submitted the West African country's bid for the candidature of the UNWTO's Executive Council for the period 2023-2027.

This year, the minister has consolidated

one of the academies approved by the UNWTO in Africa, is expected to provide accessible, vocational managerial and transformative training for the tourism and hospitality sector.

It would be recalled that at his opening speech at the UNWTO Global Conference, which held at the remodeled National Theatre Lagos, Zurab Pololikashvili, secretary general, UNWTO, announced the plan to establish tourism academies in Africa, with assurance that one will be located in Nigeria.

Pololikashvili noted that part of his mandate in office is to make education a priority for UNWTO. "Our expanded online academy and partnerships with key universities are giving people the skills and knowledge that tourism needs.

"We will be siting tourism universities in Africa and one of them will be located here in Nigeria," he said at the global conference in Lagos.

Speaking on the reason for bringing the academies to Africa and Nigeria in particular, Pololikashvili noted that global tourism start-up competitions had been held for over 10 times and from each, UNWTO had generated great interest and wonderful ideas from across Africa, including from Nigeria.

As the outgoing Nigerian minister prepares to leave office on May 29th, when a new government would be sworn in, the UNWTO family, especially the secretary general prays for a successor that will drive Nigerian tourism at home and globally with passion like Alhaji Lai Mohammed.

The Lagos tourism academy, which is



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UNWTO FILES

“Kenya is tourism’s real deal,” says Minister ... as country targets millennials



Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Tourism, Peninah Malonza and John Chirchir, A/g CEO, Kenya Tourism Board

Kenya's Minister of Tourism, Wildlife, Culture and Heritage, Peninah Malonza has maintained that the country has got a lot to offer in tourism and is poised to make the world experience them.

In a conversation with VoyagesAfriq at this year's ITB Berlin, the Minister said that when it comes to tourists' sites and attractions, Kenya is the real deal.

“My vision is that Kenya becomes the leading destination not only in Africa, but around the globe because Kenya is the real deal. You will never get any other real deal out there,” she insisted.

The east African country has carved a name for itself as a wildlife safari mecca, attracting thousands of tourists each year. Malonza hinted that beyond the safaris, Kenya is diversifying its tourism products to cater to the needs of young travellers and tourists.

“We have committed ourselves in trying to create an environment that will encourage the young traveller - the millennial traveller to come to Kenya. And we know their preferences are very different from the old generation. They probably would be excited by the beach, by wildlife and that is why we are looking at diversifying both our infrastructure and products.”

She added that young travellers have become such an important part of the market mix for which reason they are

being targeted to travel to Kenya.

“If you look at millennials globally, they contribute about 65% of the population and that is where the tourism numbers are and that's where the numbers of tourists are going to flow from. So, we are focusing on that quantum in terms of putting up infrastructure, our road networks, our standard gauge railways, our expressways, our connectivity all over country, including cruise ships so that we can attract students even to the sea.”

The Minister also said they were looking to stepping up promoting Kenya to Africa as the continent has become a key source market.

She explained: “We are going to focus on Africa as a region to get our tourists. We cannot be selling to the rest of the world; yet, our own brothers in Africa has no clue what Kenya has and what God has given us in terms of heritage. So, we are opening ourselves to attract more people from Africa.

“We have seen Uganda lead as the number two globally after the US as the country we get most visitors. We have Nigeria, Sudan, Rwanda, Tanzania and many countries that visit us. We now have a free visa platform with South Africa and so, we are focusing on Africa as a region.”

Malonza underscored the significance of Kenya's President William Ruto's vision of making tourism a strong pillar of the economy through increased investments into the sector.

“We are also opening ourselves in terms of investments. Kenya has a good political will with our new president who is very active in terms of connecting the world to Kenya, and we are seeing that he is encouraging new investors into the country,” she posited.



Secretary-General of UNWTO, Zurab Pololikashvili in a family photo with Kenya's Delegation at ITB, Berlin

Meetings Africa charts path for accelerated recovery

Fish Mahlela, Deputy Minister of Tourism, South Africa



Africa's MICE and tourism sector's recovery efforts has received a remarkable boost in its quest to reach pre-pandemic levels signalling the business events sector as an effervescent for tourism.

With a new brand look and feel of its identity, organisers of Africa's leading MICE event and market South African

Tourism, went over and beyond to offer exhibitors, participants and buyers a remarkable event filled with quality sessions and an avenue for the industry to trade.

Themed on Africa's quality network connections, the 17th edition of Meetings Africa surpassed expectations of the industry. As the Acting CEO of South African Tourism Themba Khumalo said on the BonDay, the reinvigoration seen at this year's meetings Africa was inspired by its carefully curated theme to bring Africa in one place to use tourism to drive trade.

Quality network

Indeed, it was refreshing to see how the nearly two decades investments by South African tourism to create this critical marketplace and MICE showpiece has impacted many even beyond the region. The pandemic may have stifled the pace of the progress made by the MICE sector to some extent, but it is beginning to bear fruits in amorphous levels.

Exhibitor after exhibitor gave Meetings Africa an 8+ of the quality of meetings

and buyers that have expressed interests in their destinations. It was truly a whirlwind showing how Africa's MICE sector can be placed in the elite club of the business events place. There is still more room to improve but it's worth a celebration up to this date.

First-time exhibitor, Ikala Nala of IPS Tours, was overwhelmed by the beauty of African products and impressed by the connections made, with quality leads established.

Claire Kivedo, Managing Creative Director of Overall Events and Communication from South Africa's Nelson Mandela Bay echoed the same sentiments and waxed lyrically about the invaluable connections she made at the trade show.

Buyer Raymon Honings, Managing Director of Travelmediate Global from the Netherlands, was impressed by the diversity of exhibitors. Honings noted that the quality of meetings was higher than in the past, adding that he had access to an entire portfolio of potential suppliers showcasing what the African MICE industry can offer.



Phumeza Nywe Ndjock of Mankwe Gametrackers was ecstatic after scoring multiple confirmed bookings for her business, highlighting the success of Meetings Africa 2023.

"Meetings Africa is sure to have a long-term impact on the industry, benefiting local communities and the environment," she concluded.

HardTalk

The Bon Day session had in the previous 16 editions heralded the main trading days of the event. It offered a platform for the sector to peer review and be abreast of the ever-evolving trends of the business events sector. What however was the exciting novelty was the introduction of the Boma talks, B2B, speed marketing sessions and once again elevating the works of SMEs with support programs.

Speakers didn't mince words and where it needed to strike directed calls on authorities who needed to put in the right measures to get the sector going. Deputy Minister of Tourism, South Africa, Fish Mahlela in his speech was frustrated with governments departments who make it extremely difficult for small businesses to excel in their chosen fields.

He however, expressed delight at the 2023 Meetings Africa's focus on SMMEs.

"Quite extraordinarily it will be for the first time in the history of Meetings Africa, that access for SMMEs to participate in the trade show be so improved through the "plug and meet" pavilion which allows full access to Meetings Africa to businesses who would otherwise have," Mahlela Fish indicated.

The 17th edition of Meetings Africa was a resounding success, with delegates, buyers, and exhibitors applauding the organization, strategic content, and business opportunities.

According to Acting Chief Convention Bureau Officer at the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB)

Zinhle Nzama, the number of confirmed meetings is edging closer to pre-pandemic levels.

Nzama revealed that a whopping 7,000 meetings were confirmed using the online diary system this year, compared to only 3000 in 2022.

She added: "The trade show is all about buyers meeting suppliers (product and business owners), resulting in real business opportunities and sales, some of which materialize years later."

She emphasized the importance of sustainable tourism practices, explicitly mentioning the Green Stand Award and Sustainability Village. The former recognises exhibitors who meet green criteria and limit their environmental footprint, while the latter promotes the use of locally produced, recycled, and reused materials.

The business exchanges and connections made at Meetings Africa 2023 are expected to have a long-term impact, leading to policy changes, new partnerships, and increased business opportunities to benefit Africa's Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry for years to come.

Snapshots of 17th Meetings Africa



ITB Berlin's comeback excites Tourism Industry players



ITB Berlin 2023 came to a successful end with around 5,500 exhibitors from 161 countries, the World's Leading Travel Trade Show maintains its position as the leading platform for the global travel industry.

The industry expects 2023 to be a record year despite economic challenges – Fully booked halls on the trade show's return: Personal contact crucial for tourism as a people's business – Positive response to the three-day focus on B2B customers – Growth in leading international buyers – 24,000 convention attendees at the leading travel industry event of its kind

At ITB Berlin the international travel industry was delighted with the huge demand and people's desire for travel, despite the challenging market situation. Following the break due to the pandemic and taking as its slogan 'Open for Change', the World's Leading Travel Trade Show was back for the first time as an exclusively B2B event and confirmed its standing as the leading platform of the global travel industry. Over the three business days a total of 90,127 attendees from more than 180 countries were in Berlin.

ITB Buyers' Circle with its 1,300 members was also an impressive success. Membership of this exclusive circle was limited to leading travel industry buyers. Their sales volume increased noticeably, and international participation grew from 50 per cent in 2019 to 70 per cent overall. The international nature and diversity of the approximately 5,500 exhibitors from 161 countries was equally impressive.

ITB Berlin also attracted considerable media attention, with around 3,000 media members and 333 travel bloggers and high-profile international political figures at the event.

Big boost for the industry

At ITB Berlin the industry agreed that 2023 could become a record year – people's desire for travel is back in many parts of the world. Only the Asia-Pacific region is lagging somewhat behind – due among other reasons to China opening up its borders late. "Over the past few days the tourism industry has displayed incredible confidence despite the difficult overall situation and geopolitical crises", said Dirk Hoffmann, Managing Director of Messe Berlin.

Personal contact crucial for the people's business that is tourism

"This year's show was proof of the vital need to meet face-to-face. We are delighted with the trade show's spectacular comeback as a live event and the huge response from exhibitors and visitors. Our industry is a people's business, and not without reason – everyone at ITB Berlin agreed with that". Numerous networking formats including the ITB Speed Networking event, get-togethers and events on exhibitors' stands as well as evening events on the exhibition grounds and in Berlin's city centre were proof of the desire to meet in person.

The ITB Berlin Convention with high-

profile figures attending offered wide-ranging orientation on specialist subjects. At 18 theme tracks, 400 internationally recognised top speakers took part in a total of 200 sessions and discussed highly pressing topics as well as current trends including digitalisation, Artificial intelligence and the skills shortage. Under the heading 'Mastering Transformation', experts presented ways to turn the pressing global challenges facing the industry into opportunities. A total of 24,000 attendees visited the lectures, panels and discussions at the leading international thinktank of the travel industry.

Notwithstanding the joy and euphoria following the global recovery of the markets, the industry also agreed that having overcome the pandemic it now faced enormous challenges. Prior to the pandemic criticism had already been mounting that "business as before" would no longer really be possible and that growth could only be achieved by taking all aspects of sustainability into account. Socially responsible tourism has long been on the agenda of the World's Leading Travel Trade Show. This year it again offered a wide range of panel discussions, seminars and lectures, in order among other things to raise awareness for social responsibility in tourism. The Equality in Tourism Award, presented for the first time on International Women's Day at ITB Berlin 2023, aims to draw global attention to gender equality in tourism. Three candidates made the final – the award went to the tour operator Travel Excellence from Costa Rica, followed by Adventure Women from the USA and Etur from Ecuador.

Fully booked halls on the trade show's return

Fully booked halls also reflected the industry's positive mood. Exhibitor numbers were especially high in the Travel Tech and Cruise segments at this year's show. Among individual regions the Arab countries were particularly well represented. Overall, many exhibitors occupied noticeably larger stands this year and a lot of tourism companies were back after a long break. Others in turn were newcomers at this year's ITB Berlin. The new multi-purpose hall hub27 made a successful debut.

As well as ITB Berlin, the Official Host Country Georgia also welcomed visitors with open arms. Taking as its slogan 'Infinite Hospitality', the destination also presented its tourist attractions at a spectacular opening gala on the eve of the show, attended by both the host

country and high-profile figures from the industry and politics. Over the next few days, B2B customers visiting the new multi-purpose hall hub27, Hall 4.1, the south entrance and attending many activities and events throughout the exhibition grounds were able to gain

an insight into the wide-ranging tourist attractions the country in the Caucasus had to offer.

The next ITB Berlin will take place from 5 to 7 March (Tuesday to Thursday) 2024 on the Berlin Exhibition Grounds.

ITB Berlin presented us a good platform to market Botswana



The CEO of the Botswana Tourism Organisation (BTO), Tshoganetso Carl-Ponoesele has indicated that the 2023 ITB Berlin fair offered them a good opportunity to market and promote Botswana to the international tourism market.

At this year's event, where she led her country's public and private tourism trade stakeholders to exhibit at the fair, Carl-Ponoesele told VoyagesAfriq in an interview that ITB Berlin presented them access to the German market which is increasingly becoming strategic in accelerating their tourism recovery effort.

"Germany forms part of our top five markets. And it is the market that is quite important to us in terms of product

offering. So, looking at Germany right now, strategically, we see recovery being accelerated because of our access through this fair," she maintained.

The BTO CEO added that with the level of interest shown in Botswana, she hopes that the destination would attract more international visitors in the coming years.

Carl-Ponoesele explained, "So far, ITB Berlin has brought hope to us as Botswana tourism sector. We have also seen a lot of traffic coming to our stand, our operators are currently busy, even those who were not able to secure appointments pre-fair, they have already managed to meet a lot of buyers, and this is quite promising. We hope to see more arrivals in the next two to three years owing to this trade fair."

Rwanda Convention Bureau upbeat about MICE sector this year

Rwanda is looking to consolidate gains from the MICE sector this year. The country had a tremendous year in 2022 as it nearly reached 2019 pre-COVID levels with respect to meetings and events.

This was disclosed by Deputy CEO of the Rwanda Convention Bureau (RCB), Janet Karemera in an interview with VoyagesAfriq at the 2023 Meetings Africa in Johannesburg.

"We finished the year in 2022 very close to the 2019 numbers, we hope to achieve the same and even above for 2023. The Kigali Convention Centre is fully booked until the end of the year and we are very happy about that," she said.

Revealing some of the major events happening in the country this year, the Deputy CEO said Rwanda had been chosen to host them.

"We are looking at new segments such as sports tourism, we will have the Africa Basketball League in May, and Ironman is returning for the second edition in August. We are also looking at one-off conferences such as the FIFA Congress in March and we also have WTTC happening in Rwanda for and first time in Africa this year. So, we are really excited about all these major events that are very important in their respective fields and for having Rwanda as their chosen destination."

Karemera said the events have been spread across the entire Rwanda for all to benefit from the country's burgeoning MICE industry.

She explained: "We also encourage all delegates to embark on pre and post-tours. We've made it very easy for them to access tour packages and tour operators have got used to selling to



them and making it easy for them to travel in between their events. Also, we have local events such as Race Around Rwanda, and Tour de Rwanda which is a major cycling event that happens around the country. So really, we see the benefits of the events and MICE industry spread around the country and people realizing the importance of this industry."

KICC CEO COMMITS TO RESTORING ICONIC BUILDING TO ITS FORMER GLORY



Now in its fiftieth year, the Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC) has for years become an iconic monument that reflects Kenya's pride and vision for progress.

The conference facility of the building has assumed a more important role as the East African country has turned attention to MICE as a key driver of tourism growth.

As the clock winds down to KICC's golden jubilee in September, newly appointed Acting CEO of the Centre, Patricia Ondeng' shared in an interview with *VoyagesAfric*, her commitment to restoring KICC to its former glory.

"Being that it is an iconic institution, it is going to be celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, therefore what we are looking at is refurbishing it back to its former glory. We are hoping that by the end of this financial year, we would have started," she stated on the margins of this year's Meetings Africa in Johannesburg, South Africa.

While the rehabilitation works are not going to result in major changes to the building, Ondeng' maintained that



the plan is to reinstate KICC's status as a historical architecture of national importance.

"For us we are not going to change anything major because it is an iconic building, it's historical, it's part of Kenya; it is actually, Kenya. KICC is the eye of Kenya, so we will bring it back to its former glory, the Acting CEO emphasised.

In its latest Annual Tourism Sector Performance Report for 2022, MICE contributed 27.2% of international arrivals to Kenya. Ondeng' postulated that with new strategies being pursued, the KICC would play a significant role in

ramping up the numbers as the country also embarks on a new direction for the MICE industry.

She explained, "We are looking at the new modern way of doing things with the conferencing package. Probably we need to introduce online marketing as well, so that we can adapt to the needs of emerging business delegates.

"We are also, looking at devolving MICE, going to the counties, teaching them about MICE. We just don't have to have MICE at KICC in Nairobi, but we want to go as far into the counties and with our new system of government, we want to make sure we build capacities."

“*Being that it is an iconic institution, it is going to be celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, therefore what we are looking at is refurbishing it back to its former glory. We are hoping that by the end of this financial year, we would have started*”



Since the time of its separation from Gondwana until the present day, Seychelles has remained all but untouched by the ravages of modern living and its ever-increasing pressures.

Being literally 'a thousand miles from anywhere' and settled less than 250 years ago, has allowed Seychelles to retain its ecological integrity, its breathtaking natural beauty and much of its innocence.

For this reason, Seychelles has been branded 'another world' in recognition of one of the most pristine natural environments on the planet. Among these are what are widely regarded as the world's most stunning and uncrowded beaches. Imposing granite boulders stand like sentinels guarding the timeless national treasures of the spectacular strands of La Digue Island's Anse Source D'Argent, Praslin's magnificent Anse Lazio and many others besides.

Variety exists in more than just islands. Today, Seychelles continues to be a sanctuary for a unique array of flora and fauna that includes the Coco-de-mer, the world's heaviest nut that appears in the perfect form of the female pelvis, the Seychelles Black Parrot that inhabits the primeval Vallée de Mai, the Seychelles Magpie robin that has been rescued from the brink of extinction and the Jellyfish tree, of which only a handful remain in existence.

Not to be missed is the delicious Seychellois Creole cuisine – a sublime blend of eastern and western culinary traditions incorporating elements of European, Indian and Chinese kitchen and making full use of the bounty of the surrounding ocean.

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ITB Berlin in Pictures



Africa Travel Week:

More countries expected for exciting 2023 edition

Nearly fifty countries from four continents have confirmed participation for this year's Africa Travel Week scheduled to come off at the beautiful city of Cape Town, South Africa from April 3-5.

Now in its 7th edition, Africa travel week has grown to be one of the continent's major marketplaces for leisure, MICE and many segments of the tourism sector.

Speaking in an exclusive with VoyagesAfriq, the Portfolio Director at Africa Travel Week, Megan Jager said, already, there were an impressive number of countries that have signed up for this year's event.

"To date, we've got 49 different countries confirmed. And we have countries that were never represented at the show either, which are Malaysia, Armenia, Romania, Bangladesh, Pakistan, San Marino, and then from a team perspective, we have 19 countries represented. So far, 88% of these buyers are brand new to the event. We've also already got some great tourism boards signed up. We've got Maldives, SAT, Namibia Botswana, and Sierra Leone just to name a few," she revealed.

Recounting the success of the 2022 event, Megan said last year's Africa Travel Week had more meetings than it did in 2019, pre-Covid.

She emphasized, "We had, over 6,200 participants at last year's event, which we were very chuffed with being that it was in a pandemic world. This year, we're

looking to go up by an average of 20%, and I'm pretty sure we'll exceed that as well."

Previewing the 2023 edition of the event, Megan told VoyagesAfriq, "We've got ILTM Africa kicking off Africa Travel Week, and that is really our niche boutique luxury event. It's a tabletop event - invite only, and I'm really excited to announce that it's going back to Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens. We've also expanded into the luxury travel world as well as that into Equal Africa, which deals with the LGBTQ+ market.

ILTM Africa will feature one-on-one meetings, over the three days, with several networking events geared at creating experiences for exhibitors and patrons.

"It's looking at how do we actually merge all of our exhibitors in something that's completely different," Megan stated.

The Africa Travel Week portfolio comprises WTM Africa, IBTM Africa, ILTM Africa with events such as Africa Travel and Tourism Awards and African Tourism Investment Summit which according to Megan, "has proved to be really popular. And as part of this, we have the ministerial round table.

Africa Travel and Tourism Awards

The awards' ceremony will return to face-to-face format this year and will celebrate amazing industry success stories across diverse categories.

"We've got the most compelling tourism



story and that's open to national, regional, or city boards and marketing agencies. We've got the most compelling technology story, the most compelling agency story, the most compelling digital campaign story, most compelling responsible tourism story which will see winners actually go through to the Global Responsible Tourism Awards.

"The objective is really to honor those businesses that have gone above and beyond to do something that we can recognize and actually take learnings from," Megan disclosed.

She added that as a key focus, a sustainability pavilion will be introduced on the show floor.

The Portfolio Director explained: "As part of that, what we are very excited to announce is that we're going to have a pledge where you can come through and sign your need for zero carbon pledge at the actual event.

"Something that we are really excited about is we're actually going to be having lanyards that are made out of recycled plastic. And then we also have, the lanyard holders or the pouch holders for your badges that are made out of paper that has vegetable seeds in it."

A nexus for travel professionals across South Africa, the continent and the globe, Africa Travel Week plays hosts to various shows, conferences and award ceremonies focusing on leisure tourism, luxury travel, LGBTQ+ travel, MICE/ business travel, sport tourism as well as travel technology.



Tremendous success for Tourism Industry at FITUR 2023

FITUR 2023 has ended with a massive success that demonstrates the great dynamism of the entire value chain of the tourism industry and the good prospects for growth worldwide. In addition to the satisfaction expressed by the participating companies, countries and destinations for the business transactions and contacts made, the high figures of this edition have exceeded all expectations, reaching parameters already very close to the historical record of FITUR 2020.

In this regard, during the five days of the fair, FITUR attracted a total of 222,000 attendees, representing a growth of 99.6%, almost double that of 2022. In terms of the profile of these participants, 136,000 professionals have been registered, representing an increase of 68% and an estimated 86,000 visitors, after the closing of its two public days, which is practically three times more than last year's figure.

In terms of participation, the fair brought together 8,500 companies, 131 countries, 755 exhibitors in 8 halls of the exhibition centre, which represented a net exhibition area of 66,900 m², equalling the occupation of 2020.

It is estimated that this movement of arrivals at FITUR will generate an impact on Madrid's economy of approximately 400 million euros.

FITUR also registered a major milestone in the digital sphere, with traffic to the IFEMA MADRID website soaring exponentially on the first day of the fair alone, reaching an all-time record of 146,000 visits. In this same context, the FITUR LIVEConnect digital platform, which complements the fair with a hybrid format of greater temporal and

geographic scope, currently has more than 56,000 registrations, compared to the 31,000 total in 2022.

Organised by IFEMA MADRID, this year's edition had Guatemala as a FITUR Partner Country. Guatemala which has made an extensive promotional display at the fair under its new "Guatemala Asombrosa e Imparable" (Guatemala, amazing and unstoppable) brand. In addition, sustainable development, in its economic, social and environmental aspects, were the guiding thread of the major proposals from companies and destinations, as well as with the sections and activities of the fair.

Institutional support and visits by authorities from five continents

As with every other year, the strong institutional backing that FITUR has received is worth highlighting, with the support of the Royal Family which, once again, put the finishing touch to the opening day with the presence of Their Majesties the King and Queen of Spain, as well as the involvement of the Spanish Government. In addition, FITUR 2023 was visited by the President of Guatemala, Alejandro Eduardo Giammattei, Partner Country of this year's edition; the President of the Spanish Government, Pedro Sánchez; Secretary General of UNWTO Zurab Pololikashvili; 30 Ministers of Tourism from different countries; the Ministers of Economy and Social Affairs of Guatemala; 6 Spanish Ministers; 15 Presidents of Autonomous Communities and Tourism Councillors from 16 communities, and a hundred ambassadors and business representatives, and mayors from different towns and cities in our country.

A total of 400 authorities attended this year's edition of FITUR,

Other major figures from FITUR 2023

The impact of FITUR 2023 has also been reflected in the large press attendance and international media coverage recorded during the days of the fair, with 6,374 journalists accredited -58% more than in 2022 - of which 5,861 were national and 513 international journalists from 46 countries. To date, more than 169,000 news items have been published, 26% more than in 2022, and an audience of 43.8 million.

Regarding the social media environment, the first two days of FITUR saw a growth in the community of 3,724 followers, so that FITUR's profiles on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn now have a total of 288,557 followers. In addition, all the publications produced during these first days have obtained 1,676,316 impressions. FITUR's Twitter profile was the No. 1 Trending Topic in Spain for the two days the fair was held, with more than 500 mentions per day on this channel.

Ecuador, Fitur Partner Country in 2024

The Fitur Partner already has a protagonist for the next edition of FITUR, as was revealed during the celebration of the fair, which was announced by the Minister of Tourism of Ecuador, Niels Olsen and the Chairman of the Executive Committee of IFEMA MADRID, José Vicente de los Mozos, who signed the collaboration agreement whereby Ecuador will be 'FITUR Partner Country' at the next edition of the International Tourism Fair, to be held in January 2024.

Snapshots of FITUR 2023



Africa's Tourism trade impressed with FITUR's platform for business

Over 24 African countries participated in this year's Fitur International Tourism Fair in Madrid. The fair gave an opportunity to the participating countries to pitch their respective destinations' tourism offerings and products to a large number of patrons.

VoyagesAfriq had a conversation with some of the exhibitors and national tourism agencies with their personnel sharing their experiences on how that fair has helped to prospect tourists and strike strategic business deals.

Chavunga Lungu, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Zambia Tourism Agency is hopeful the level of engagement with the travel trade during the event would have a positive outcome.

"I think the market is ready to travel and they are passionate with renewed enthusiasm and desire to travel. It's about who remains in the face of travellers and offers different selling points of different destinations that we have.

So for Zambia, we are very clear about what we are offering from the different aspects of our tourism offerings, and so that's why we thought it was necessary to come back and still participate here in Spain and interact with the travel trade. We've had the opportunity to interact with buyers, travelers, and operators and other destination organizations and those that are agencies as well, and this opportunity is going to result in some fruitful result," he said.

In a news release to celebrate the success of their participation at the exhibition, the CEO of Zimbabwe Tourism Authority Ms. Winnie Muchanyuka said the exhibition was a success for destination Zimbabwe. "Firstly, we're happy to have been part of the show's physical re-opening since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's edition was attended by the tourism professionals and the key trade for inbound and outbound tourism from the globe and most importantly, the Spanish-speaking market," she said.



Anthea Cloete of Namibia-based hospitality giant, Gondwana Collection, stated that "We've been attending FITUR now for the second year, and I must say it was a very good show and we will definitely be back."

For Andrew Kitema, Managing Co-Owner – African Adventure Specialists, Fitur 2023 offered a fine opportunity to interact with agents from Europe and Latin America with a huge interest in the East and Southern African markets.

"We've managed to see lots of travel agents that have interest in Africa; East Africa and Southern Africa, especially from Latin America and here in Spain, as well as Portugal. So we are very excited to have met so many travel agencies who have a huge demand and potential of promoting East Africa in the coming days. So the experience has been great and we look forward to coming back next year," he emphasized.

Mark Williams, whose Ashanti African Tours operates from Ghana added that "This year's Fitur has been fantastic. You can tell that everyone is looking to travel again after COVID. And West Africa has become really popular for people who actually look to travel to. So Fitur has been excellent this year."

The Director General of Gambia Tourist Board, Abubakar Camara disclosed that

having attended the event for the first time, he was impressed with the level of engagement they had with the travel trade and the media.

"It's my first time at Fitur and I'm impressed with what I've seen so far. We've had a lot of meetings, and I think people are really interested in the destination Gambia. We have had a lot of partnership discourse with some of the media houses in Spain here, and in Madrid, we had a discussion with another magazine," he mentioned.

FITUR 2023 which was held on January 18 -22 provided a good avenue for both public and private African tourism and travel stakeholders to meet, interact and conduct business with the global tourism trade from Europe and Latin America.

A total of 8,500 participants, 131 countries and 755 exhibitors made up the 43rd edition of the International Tourism Trade Fair at IFEMA MADRID.

African countries who participated at this year's exhibition include Benin, Burkina Faso, Botswana, Carbo Verde, Congo DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, The Gambia, and Ghana. Others were Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Kenya, Mauritius, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Namibia, Niger, and Seychelles. The rest were Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Destination Zimbabwe looks to MICE, infrastructure to grow tourism sector



Amid its alluring tourism potential, especially wildlife, Zimbabwe is making concerted efforts at boosting its tourism offerings and positioning the country among the top tourism destinations in Africa.

One such effort is the special focus on the Meeting Incentive Conference and Events (MICE) sector, with the aim of attracting global businesses and visitors for result-oriented meetings and events in the country, as well as exposing them to the array of the country's enthralling tourism offerings.

Speaking on the development at this year's Meetings Africa, which held in Sandton, Johannesburg in South Africa, Winnie Muchanyuka, the CEO of the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA), disclosed that the bottom line for ZTA is to scale up the MICE sector with all the necessary incentives it needs to attract the world and boost tourism in general.

Marching words with action, ZTA, according to Muchanyuka, is working to

grow a fully-fledged convention bureau needed to make Zimbabwe a thriving MICE destination.

"The National Convention Bureau has been a department within the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority and remains so. But I think our desire is to grow it into a fully-fledged convention bureau. That probably runs independently in the area of engaging for MICE business to come to Zimbabwe," she said.

Explaining the rationale for the focus on MICE, Muchanyuka said that ZTA learned post Covid that MICE is where the mainstay of its tourism business would be; hence, the need to attract more businesses to Zimbabwe.

On the long term, from the ZTA perspective, and even from the government's perspective, the aim, according to the ZTA CEO, is to make sure that "we have infrastructure that boosts this drive that we are looking at".

To achieve the immediate and long-term

goals of ZTA on MICE, she noted that the country needs huge investments in conferencing infrastructure as current offerings are not enough.

"Currently we are limited to the size of conventions, and the size of conferences that we can have because the infrastructure we have in place will only take from 500 and maybe maximum 1,000 delegates. So, we need more building infrastructure for bigger spaces, presence and bigger audiences coming through for this type of business."

But she also highlighted some spaces where ZTA can participate as Destination Zimbabwe to include; Victoria Falls, which she described as iconic. "We have seen an increase in the demand for conferencing and convention requests coming through to Victoria Falls for us".

Others are Harare and also other smaller places like Kariba, and the Eastern Highlands among other places where smaller meetings can hold.

Muchanyuka led ZTA to Meetings Africa this year to showcase these spaces within Destination Zimbabwe.

At the Zimbabwe stand, some operators had time to showcase and talk about the properties they represent.

"We are hoping that we can pick up some businesses that can be channelled towards Zimbabwe from a meeting perspective," Muchanyuka said.

Talking on what she gained from Meetings Africa, she said there was the need to be cognizant of the fact that the desires or the wishes of the traveller have changed post-pandemic.

"But I think we need to go back and interrogate what our traditional market is and whether they still want the same sort of platforms, the same sort of facilities or services around MICE that we had before the pandemic," she concluded.



Ghana makes impressive showing at FITUR 2023

Ghana's Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister, Dr. Ibrahim Mohammed Awal led a delegation comprising officials of the Ministry, the Ghana Tourism Authority and tourism and travel businesses in the private sector to this year's FITUR in Madrid, Spain.

While there, the Minister had meetings with international entities and individuals with the aim of attracting investments into Ghana's tourism sector. Dr. Awal also participated in other industry related activities at FITUR

Speaking to VoyagesAfriq in Madrid, Dr

Ibrahim Awal said, "Ghana is seeking investment to raise the profile of its tourism and cultural attractions to higher levels in order to attract more tourists."

He added that areas of focus needing investment push include hotels, adventure, eco tourism, restaurants, cruises and kayaking.

The Ghana Tourism Authority led by its CEO, Akwasi Agyeman mounted a stand and is co-exhibiting with Ghanaian tour operators and agents as they introduce the country's tourism products and

offerings to patrons to promote the destination.

The Minister has been touting the success of the 2022 edition of 'December in Gh' which he said has become a major initiative for shoring up international arrivals; especially, in the last quarter of the year.

Part of the reasons for Ghana's presence at FITUR was to consolidate its Europe market and open the country up as an option for Spanish-speaking countries as it seeks to ramp up international tourists arrivals for this year.



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Westlands Business Park – Nairobi, Kenya

African Tourism: Sustained improvement on visa openness sets continent on robust intra travels, exchanges

If you consider the fact that Africa receives a mere 4.8 percent of the over one billion tourist arrivals in the world and 3.3 percent of the receipts, it means that the continent is not at the heart of the global tourist market, despite being taunted as the last tourism frontier of the world today.

The worst is that intra-African travels have not fared better until recently, when some concerned African countries, corporations, and tourism thought-leaders started making concerted efforts at growing tourism on the continent, starting from within.

The worry for most of them is that for the 1.4 billion people in Africa, (based on the latest United Nations estimates of 1.425, 078, 203), less than 10 percent travel within Africa for tourism, while the continent received over 45 million international visitors in 2022, almost double of 19.4 million in 2021 and about 65 percent of its pre-pandemic visitor numbers, according to the UNWTO barometer.

However, the efforts at growing tourism within are yielding results with improvements in intra-African travels as captured in the 2022 Africa Visa Openness Index Report.

The 2022 Africa Visa Openness Index (AVOI) report, released last December in Mauritius, revealed sustained improvements on visa policies across Africa, particularly progress in freedom of travel policies by many countries last year.

The feat is a welcome development, which in turn, is soaring intra-African travels.

The visa openness report, an annual publication, prepared by the African Development Bank Group in collaboration with the African Union Commission, tracks visa policies adopted by African governments on three main criteria: whether entry to citizens from other African countries is visa-free, if



a visa on arrival can be obtained, and whether travellers are required to obtain visas ahead of traveling to other African countries.

According to the AVOI Report, in 2022, 93 percent of African countries maintained or improved their score on visa openness relative to 2021; while two-thirds of African countries have adopted more liberal visa policies compared to six years ago.

The above, in practical terms, means that more Africans travelled around the continent in 2022, despite the lingering impact of the pandemic, almost till the last quarter of 2021.

But while African travel was more open to African citizens in 2022, with fewer restrictions, more people were encouraged to travel with visa-free and visa-on-arrival options, which were not available years ago.



Of course, Benin, The Gambia, and Seychelles made the most impact in the 2022 AVOI report with their generous visa-free entry to all Africans visiting their respective countries, while Burundi, Djibouti and Ethiopia, made the most progress in their visa openness, but did not issue a free visa.

Though just three countries out of 54 on the continent offer visa-free, it is an improvement from just one country that opened borders to all African countries in 2017.

While more countries are yet to follow Benin, The Gambia and Seychelles examples, there is an improvement on the offer of eVisa with 24 African countries offering eVisa, reflecting about five more countries than five years ago.

As well, visa openness is gaining more traction as 36 countries improved or maintained their index score since 2016, 50 countries have maintained or improved their index score relative to 2021, and 48 countries out of 54, now offer visa-free travel to the nationals of at least one other African country, while 42 countries offer visa-free travel to the nationals of at least five other African countries.

But it is not impressive that lower-income countries account for a large share of the countries that make up the top-20 ranked countries in 2022 with liberal visa policies as this trend implies that Africa's top economies such as

Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa are still restricting African visitors from entering their countries.

If not for tourism, most Africans will not visit Benin, The Gambia and Seychelles, which offer visa-free entry, but the many going for business, MICE, and holidays across the big economies will have to face visa challenges, a development that poses huge challenges to intra-African travel.

Despite the attitude of some big African economies towards visa openness, the African Union thinks the feats of the 2022 index are worth celebrating while attributing the improvements to key developments like the AfCFTA.

"This edition links free movement to the development of regional value chains, investments, trade in services, and the AfCFTA. There is greater recognition that human mobility is key to Africa's integration efforts," Monique Nsazabaganwa, deputy chairperson of the African Union Commission, said.

The African Development Bank Group attributed the feats in the 2022 index to supportive and enforced visa policies.

"This year's edition, the seventh, shows many African countries having greatly simplified their visa regime over the past year," Marie-Laure Akin-Olugbade, acting vice president in charge of Regional Development, Integration and Business Delivery, African Development Bank Group, said.

Also impressed with the 2022 index report, Jean-Guy Afrika, acting director in charge of the Regional Integration Coordination Office, African Development Bank Group, disclosed that the continent has returned to a level of visa openness last seen just before the pandemic began.

Corroborating the visa openness index report, African Airlines Association said local airlines had exceeded their 2019 pre-covid operation levels on international routes by 2.28 percent, meaning some have opened new domestic and international routes because of improved visa policies adopted by more African countries.

Again, ForwardKeys, United States of America airline web traffic firm, shows that Africa's -19 percent international inbound arrivals recovered faster than the global average of -30 percent in the last quarter of 2022 due to many factors, especially improved visa openness to many countries outside Africa.

According to UNWTO data, Africa is showing resilience and has recovered about 65 percent of its pre-pandemic visitor numbers following a more than doubling of international arrivals from 19.4 million in 2021 to 45 million in 2022.

In his views, Opeyemi Adigun, a destination manager, and hotelier noted that the improvements in visa openness cannot be achieved without technology as technology is the backbone of the e-Visa system.

He urged for sustained improvement and updating of the system to reduce the time of processing and eventual issuance of the visas at the entry points.

But no matter how fast a country fast-tracks the ease at which travellers can cross her borders, Adigun noted eVisa should be far cheaper than the normal process, to encourage more people to use it.

"To sustain the improvements on visa openness, African countries should shorn middlemen and agents like VSF, reduce cost, time of processing, and encourage more applicants for eVisa applications," he concluded.



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Tourism Investment Forum Africa
(TIFA) debuts in Northern Cape



South Africa's tourism and investment sector is well poised to take advantage of the improved global appetite for tourism, to optimise its contribution to the country's economic objectives.

As part of this heightened optimism, a new flagship event, will be added to the annual calendar. The inaugural Tourism Investment Forum Africa (TIFA) will make its debut in the Northern Cape from 7-9 June 2023.

The Forum will be held under the theme "Forging Global Partnerships for Inclusive Local Economic Development Through Sustainable Investment", at the African Vineyard Hotel on Kanoneiland, Upington, South Africa.

TIFA was conceptualised as a vehicle to promote trade, investment and finance solutions and opportunities between South Africa and the continent. As "a global platform for local action", the Forum also aims to afford the host destination the opportunity to promote investment into priority sectors of its economy and in particular the tourism sector, thereby contributing to inclusive and sustainable local economic growth and development, particularly job creation.

In addition to promoting investment projects and opportunities in the travel and tourism industry across the SADC and other regions, the TIFA will promote

transversal projects and investment opportunities in critical sectors such as infrastructure, transport, real estate and the green economy, which are key to the development and growth of tourism through their stimulation of development in related sectors.

A key pillar of the platform is the facilitation of meaningful business-to-business (B2B) and business to government (B2G) exchanges to facilitate investment, networking, sharing of knowledge and market insights as well as other trade development opportunities.

Why the Northern Cape?

The choice of hosting the Forum in Upington is strategic and aims to expose international and domestic delegates to what the Northern Cape has to offer investors, with a view to increasing the opportunities for investment, job creation and economic growth within the province.

This is aligned to the priority focus of South African Tourism (SAT) which aims to showcase all of what the country has to offer, and diversify the supply side of South Africa's tourism economy.

The Northern Cape is also considered the home of the San people who are also found in parts of Botswana, Namibia and southern Angola. The San are one of 14 known remaining "ancestral

population clusters" (to whom all known modern humans genetically relate). The southern group living in the Kalahari are the Khomani San and is the last remnant of the extensive indigenous San of South Africa.

The choice of Kanoneiland is also significant because it is the biggest river settlement in the country. In 1928, a group of 52 private settlers began to clear the land for cultivation. The irrigation scheme that has been set up now supports the thriving vineyards that contribute significantly to the economic objectives of the province.

Agriculture in the Northern Cape

Kanoneiland, with its thriving vineyards highlights a different side of the Northern Cape which is generally most well-known for its Kalahari Desert and |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park.

In fact, agricultural development takes place along defined corridors within the province. In the Orange River Valley, especially at Kakamas, Keimoes, and Upington, grapes and fruit are cultivated intensively. Again high-value horticultural products such as table grapes, sultanas and wine grapes, dates, nuts, cotton, fodder and cereal crops are grown along the Orange River. Wheat, fruit, groundnuts, maize and cotton are grown in the Vaalharts Irrigation Scheme in the vicinity of Hartswater.



High Hopes, Turbulent Skies

It's often said that if you want to become a millionaire by starting an airline, you need to begin as a multi-millionaire. Nowhere is this truer than in Africa, where the aviation industry has long been plagued by mismanagement, poor safety records, and protectionism. Despite these challenges, a new generation of African airline startups is always attempting to defy the odds and succeed where so many others have failed.

African airlines have long been considered a failed industry, with only a few carriers achieving success over extended periods. The primary challenge these startups face is a lack of access to capital. Entrepreneurs in Africa often struggle to secure funding from local banks or equity investors, and must instead rely on governments, high net-worth individuals, or business conglomerates – all of which can bring conflicting priorities to the table. In this environment, a good business plan often lacks the necessary financial backing, while those with the resources frequently lack aviation business expertise.

Sustainable growth is another hurdle for African carriers. This involves investing in the localization of human resources, particularly in technical and managerial roles, to reduce the overdependence on expensive and transient expatriates. Creating a pipeline of local talent is crucial for the long-term viability of

these businesses. Institutionalisation of corporate strategy (as opposed to individualisation) is also critical to ensure consistency.

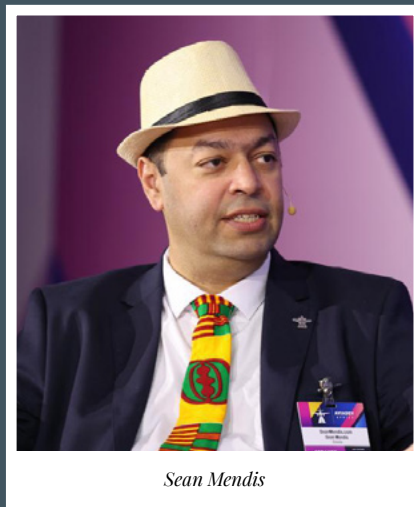
Startups must also avoid the temptation to expand too rapidly. It is important that airlines scale rather than simply grow as they expand. Operating outside of one's home region demands globalized business skills that aren't always easily acquired or transferred. Many airlines have found their entire business collapsing after attempting to ambitiously expand into capital and cash intensive long-haul routes, only to be burdened by exponentially larger losses.

Startup airlines, particularly those with government backing, have a troubling tendency to repeat the mistakes of their predecessors. The latest cadre of revived state-owned carriers consistently manages to acquire flashy new aircraft with taxpayer backing, while producing shockingly dismal financial results, only to feign astonishment at their failure. As the saying goes, insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting different outcomes.

Despite these challenges, not every African airline startup is doomed to fail. Successful examples from recent decades include Africa World Airlines (Ghana), ASKY (Togo), and FlySafair (South Africa) – all well-funded through private sources with minimal conflicts of interest, committed to sustainable

practices, and laser focused on their core operations model. Innovative newcomers like Green Africa (Nigeria) and LIFT (South Africa) are also introducing fresh business models that may eventually yield positive returns.

Nonetheless, my advice to most people looking to start an airline in Africa is to take half the capital you planned to invest and set fire to it instead. You are still more likely to come out 50% ahead than if you had actually pursued the project.



Sean Mendis

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.

Ethiopian Airlines Inaugurates second Aviation Academy Campus in Hawassa



Ethiopian Airlines Group has inaugurated a new aviation training center in the city of Hawassa. The new aviation training center in Hawassa will serve as the second campus for Ethiopian Aviation Academy and will be providing pilot trainee programs. The facility accommodates different types of classrooms, three training simulators, three aircraft parking and workshop hangars, trainees' and instructors' dorm rooms, a cafeteria and sports ground for various sport types.

Ethiopian Aviation Academy had been providing aviation training at its base campus in Addis Ababa to trainees from different parts of the world. The new training center will enable the academy to accommodate more trainees.

Regarding the new Aviation Academy campus, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mr. Mesfin Tasew said, "We are truly happy to see the inauguration of our Aviation Academy second training center in Hawassa. As Africa's giant in the aviation industry, we are determined to reach more people who dream of becoming aviation professionals and enrich our continent with qualified personnel who will take Africa's aviation to the next level. From the day it has been established more than six decades back, our aviation academy has been producing the best aviation professionals who are competitive at a global level. With our second training

center open now, more trainees will have the chance to realize their dreams and that is a huge achievement for us."

He added, "Apart from the basic Aviation courses, the training center will be offering various customer service and leadership trainings for companies in Hawassa and South regional states, contributing for their successes".

Ethiopian Aviation Academy (EAA) is the largest and most modern aviation academy in Africa recognized as ICAO regional Training Center of Excellence. The academy provides world-class training in different areas of aviation profession. Currently the academy offers Pilot, Simulator, Cabin Crew and Catering, Aircraft Maintenance, Commercial and Ground Service and Leadership Trainings at its headquarters in Addis Ababa.

Copenhagen back on Ethiopian's radar

Ethiopian Airlines is set to launch a new passenger flight to Copenhagen, Denmark on 22nd of May 2023. The new flight will operate five times a week except on Tuesdays and Sundays.

Regarding the new flight, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mr Mesfin Tasew said, "We are glad to open a new route to Copenhagen, Denmark which will be our 21st destination in Europe. With the launch of the flight, Copenhagen will become a crucial gateway for Ethiopian Airlines in northern Europe and southern Scandinavia. Thanks to the wide network of Ethiopian Airlines across Africa, the new flight will enhance the air connectivity

between Europe and Africa thereby facilitating trade, tourism, and diplomatic relations between the two regions."

Thomas Woldbye, Chief Executive Officer of Copenhagen Airport, said, "It has for a long time been our desire to improve the connection between Copenhagen and Africa. Therefore, it is really good news, that Ethiopian Airlines, who for the last 5 years have been awarded as the best airline in Africa, now will start flying to Copenhagen."

The airport in Addis Ababa has grown to become one of Africa's most important HUBs, with onward connections to more



than 60 different cities in Africa, thus this new route will be an amazing gateway to the whole continent for Copenhagen."

Ethiopian Airlines will deploy Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner on the route, with a 315 seat arrangement.

Ethiopian first started serving Copenhagen in November 1999 but the flight was suspended about four years later.

Ethiopian Airlines to start night flights out of Accra starting March 26

Ethiopian Airlines is to start night flights from Accra starting March 26, 2023. The introduction of four additional flights to their existing 7 flights per week, is to allow the Addis Ababa-based airline to connect Accra to more African destinations.

The additional flights will be operated on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.

The four times weekly additional flights, which depart Accra in the evening, will bring the airline's customers more convenient options to enjoy immediate connections to its vast intra-Africa network and to Middle East, the Asian cities.

Mr. Mesfin Tasew Bekele, Ethiopian Airlines CEO, speaking to the media in Accra, said: "We are increasing our frequency to Accra from seven to 11 flights. The seven flights will remain as they are. These flights provide connectivity for passengers originating from Ghana to the Middle East, Asia and Europe, because the flight departs from here (Accra) around mid-day, arrives in Addis Ababa in the evening, and all Ethiopian flights depart from Addis Ababa in the evening to Europe, North America Middle East and Asia.

"So the day flights connect Ghana with continents outside Ghana. However,

we have extensive operations in Africa and we want to connect Ghanaians to African destinations. Unfortunately, our flights to Africa from Addis Ababa depart in the morning and we are adding four more flights departing in the evening and arriving at Addis Ababa in the morning to provide connectivity to African destinations, that is the objective of these additional flights."

AviationGhana can confirm that the night flight schedule has been approved by the Ghana Airports Company Limited (GACL). The airline is expected to announce incentives for travel agencies and individual travelers next week.

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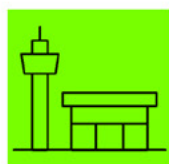
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HOSPITALITY

Labadi Beach Hotel is back on International Travel Expo



Ghana's premier 5-star hotel, Labadi Beach Hotel has returned to the international travel expos with the aim of showcasing the facility's unique offering to the world. The premier hotel's last participation at a major international travel show was a decade ago.

At this year's International Tourism Bourse (ITB Berlin), the hotel staged a comeback with multiple objectives to promote Ghana's indigenous brand as well as learn about the latest trends in the travel and tourism sector.

Exhibiting at the Ghana stand at the Africa Hall, the hotel's Acting Managing Director David Eduaful told *VoyagesAfriq*, about the decision to participate at the world's leading travel show.

"As an indigenous hotel, we are here to open ourselves to the international market and look to compete and maximize the opportunities that it offers.

"Opening yourself up to the international market so that you can compete squarely and fiercely with the international brands. So, coming here gives us that opportunity to market ourselves, to market to the international community and the travel industry," he said.

Maintaining a tradition of excellence

The Acting Managing Director reiterated the hotel's commitment to providing hospitality excellence for its guests and clients with focus on business and leisure.

Eduaful maintained: "My focus is business leisure and it's a unique combination that nobody can take away from us. It is the only hotel in Accra that combines business and leisure, let's say, the only five-star hotel that combines the two.

"It gives the clients opportunity to experience Ghana or the real hospitality in Ghana. We are the only hotel with a private beach in the city and spa in its environment, so you stay in Labadi Beach Hotel, and it's like you're in your home."

Eduaful, who is the first Ghanaian to lead a five-star hotel in the country said he is unfazed by the responsibilities of the post as they are extension of what he is used to doing at the hotel for the three decades that he has been there.

"Most of my life has been in leadership positions. I was a hotel manager, prior to my appointment as the acting managing director. So, what I do currently is not totally different and new from what I was doing previously. It's just a continuation in



David Eduaful, Ag. MD, Labadi Beach Hotel

trying to make sure that it's done better.

"As the first Ghanaian indigenous Ghanaian to be in charge, it gives the opportunity to others who are following or who are in the industry to know that of course, Ghanaians can also do it.

The Acting Managing Director said his major preoccupation is to bring the hotel up to a standard that is competitive and offers guests value for their spend.

"We have a lot of things to improve on what we have already. And my focus right now is to ensure that we do what is needed to bring the hotel up to a level that is never seen before," he emphasized.

Uganda Tourism Board identifies key areas for sector recovery

The Uganda Tourism Board is banking on its domestic drive and the potential of the east African community tourism market to drive its recovery towards pre-pandemic levels. The pearl of Africa had its recovery efforts suppressed with the Ebola crisis as it moved gradually to assuage the covid-19 plights on the sector.

The country has hit the ground running after the declaration of Ebola-free by the World Health Organization to recover its market. The Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) see it as the right omen to roll out its enticing offers for the tourism world.

The Deputy Chief Executive Officer of UTB Bradford Ochieng in an exclusive interview with VoyagesAfric in Johannesburg revealed the initiatives they are embarking on to get tourism going.

He singles out domestic and regional tourism as critical to the growth and recovery of the sector.

"We are right now crafting a strategy for domestic tourism and working with partners to make sure that we have this partnership strategy so that a lot of these things are intentional. But even before that, we dreaming," Ochieng revealed.

"Really, we speaking to the traveller that we had campaigns that we really targeting domestic travellers that Uganda is ready when you need to know your country you need to own your country and all that and within that mix to your new brand for the destination brand ID.

"So we use also that brand identity really to move out of the country. And this helped us a lot really to reach out to the numbers that we are talking about. So yes, it not being intentional, but I think what you need to do is to working on the bigger picture now all this strategy.

"Yes, again, as I said, I think when without going far the numbers are positive and what we're trying to really start with the low-hanging fruits, , domestic and regional travellers.



Bradford Ochieng,
Deputy Chief Executive Officer of UTB

"We are looking at this African community Kenya as a matter of fact as we talk now, the closest travellers are going from East Africa, which is good but also risky anyway, but good in the sense that takes a shorter period for them to plan their travel."

Uganda is buoyed by its national carrier Uganda Airlines which has in recent weeks announced route addition to its network thus offering seamless access to the country a critical element to propel tourism development.

Bradford is confident air connectivity will go a long way to make their target of tourism much easier.

POATE

"On the upcoming Pearl of Africa Travel Expo (POATE)," the deputy CEO added. "The target we are looking at is having 100 hosted buyers with over 300 exhibitors. Our emphasis again because of covid and the disruption it brought to the industry, we have more coming from the EAC region as well as from our key source markets such as US, UK, Germany, and Spain., if you're so coming from Spain, so that is that's the target and we want to see this 40 as one."

He averred that this edition of the expo will spur the industry to build a robust and resilient sector post pandemic. It is scheduled for 26-28 April 2023.



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Mozambique exempts 28 countries in new visa policy



*Filipe Nyusi,
Mozambique President*

The exemption applies to visitors holding ordinary passports and allows for a 30-day stay, renewable to an additional 60 days.

The model adopted by the Mozambican government is similar to the US visa waiver program in the sense that it requires travelers to register on a platform for pre-screening at least 48 hours before traveling and to pay a processing fee of MZN650 (+/- £8,50).

The list approved today includes the following countries:

Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore,

South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States of America

The visa exemption announcement follows the launch of a platform last December that allowed prospective visitors to apply for an electronic pre-authorization to travel into the country. The visa exemption comes after the introduction of the Mozambican e-Visa which reportedly has seen an increase of over 30% in the volume of travelers entering the country compared to the same period in the previous year.

The eVisa platform commits the country to respond to applications within 5 days, but general feedback places an average response at 24 hours and the few issues

reported are usually created by users not uploading the required documentation.

As Mozambique announces visa exemption for the 28 countries, it advances measure 13 (which proposes changes for the Visa regime) of the Economic Acceleration Measures Package (PAE) announced by President Nyusi on August 2022 containing 20 reform measures aimed to deliver a path for a more competitive and more accessible country to visitors and investors alike.

The stimulus package implementation is coordinated by a delivery unit created for the effect under the country's Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Story by Rafael Carvalho

Malawi strikes Tourism visibility pact with Spanish side Leganes



Club Deportivo Leganés, a professional Spanish football club, and its Africa partner Rainbow Sports Global are excited to announce a new partnership with the Malawi Government. As part of the partnership, the country's logo of "Malawi, The Warm Heart of Africa" will be prominently displayed on the front of the first team's kits for upcoming matches, as well as on different media platforms, both physical and digital.

This partnership aims to promote tourism to Malawi and raise awareness of the country among the sports community, while also marking the first step in a long-term commitment by C.D. Leganés and Rainbow Sports Global to invest in and develop the sports ecosystem in Malawi. Both parties are dedicated to working together to develop and promote sports in the country, with plans to invest significant resources into the development of local athletes and sporting infrastructure.

"We are thrilled to announce this partnership with the Malawi Government," said Jeff Luhnnow, President of C.D. Leganés. "This partnership represents a significant step in our long-term strategy to invest in and develop the sport in Malawi, while also promoting tourism. We are dedicated to working together with our partners

to achieve our goals and contribute to the growth and development of sports in Malawi."

James Woods, Partner and Director at Rainbow Sports Global, added, "This partnership is a great opportunity for us to invest in the development of football and other sports in Malawi. We are committed to a long-term strategy of developing the sports ecosystem in Malawi and this partnership is just the beginning."

Kingsley Pungong, Founder and CEO of Rainbow Sports Global, said "This partnership between Club Deportivo Leganés, Rainbow Sports Global, and the Malawi Government is a prime example of the transformative power of sport and investment. Not only will it bring significant benefits to the people of Malawi, but it also has the potential to positively impact the entire Southern and Eastern African region, whose population is heavily invested in the sport of football. We believe that with the right investment and infrastructure, Malawi has the potential to develop the next global stars. We are excited to be a part of this initiative and look forward to seeing the positive impact it will have on the development of sports and tourism in Malawi."



The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Wildlife of Malawi, Michael Usi, also commented on the partnership, saying "On behalf of the government of Malawi, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the President of Club Deportivo Leganés, Mr. Jeff Luhnnow and his management team for this great partnership. I believe this partnership will go a long way in enhancing Malawi as a tourism destination not only in Spain but also the rest of the world. This partnership also presents an opportunity for Club Deportivo Leganés to grow its fan base not only in Malawi but also the entire Southern and Eastern African region whose population is dominated by avid football lovers."



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Cell: +27 (081) 303 7030
Email: rejoice@africatourismpartners.com

TIFA Contact Boitshoko Shilakwe:
Cell: +27 (079) 561 8309
Email: boitshoko@millvest.co.za

SAVE THE DATES

Discovering the thrills of Niger's Tourism

Niger, like many of its West African neighbours has got huge tourism potential that is yet to be explored and tapped. This year, the country hopes to make its offerings more visible and accessible to the global travelling market. From business event spaces to historic monuments, sprawling wildlife and immersive cultural heritage, Niger presents travellers and visitors with options for a truly riveting experience.

In an exclusive interview with VoyagesAfric, the Director General of the Niger Tourism Agency, Souleymane Anafi revealed their plans for shoring tourism numbers while introducing us to the country's unique attractions, sights, and sounds.

Can you give us an overview of the destination Niger?

Niger is a landlocked country in West Africa located between Algeria and Libya to the north, Mali and Burkina Faso to the west, Benin and Nigeria to the south, and Chad to the east. With a surface area of 1,267,000 km², it is the largest of the West African countries. The population of Niger is estimated at 26,747,896 million in 2022, with a growth rate of 3.9% and a GDP/H of 213,450 FCFA with a growth rate of

10.8%. The main cities are Agadez, Diffa, Dosso, Maradi, Tahoua, Tillabéri, Zinder, Niamey.

The official language in Niger is French, and the currency is the CFA franc with an inflation rate of 0.5%. Niger is a landlocked country with a Sahelian climate that has only 3 months of rainy season per year. The capital of Niger is Niamey with 1,011,277 inhabitants.

The country's geographical position makes it a major crossroads for trade between Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab Maghreb countries.

Niger's most important mineral resources are gold, iron, coal, uranium, and oil.

Niger is easily accessible, particularly by air from Europe and from other African countries. There are thirteen (13) border crossings into Niger.

Niger, through its eight regions, contains cultural and wildlife riches, historical and archaeological remains, and magnificent tourist sites to discover. These include the Aïr Massif, the Ténéré, Termit and Tal deserts, the dinosaur cemetery, the Addax sanctuary, the last specimens of West African giraffes, the W Park,

traditional architecture and the rich and varied age-old craft industry, which has adapted to the current modern context.

What are the main tourist products of Niger?

Niger is divided into 8 regions: Niamey, Agadez, Dosso, Maradi, Tahoua, Tillabéri, Zinder and Diffa. Each of them has certain natural assets and comparative advantages in terms of the vestiges of age-old civilisations such as



archaeology, history, traditional architecture, culture, parks and protected areas, fauna, flora, arts and crafts, etc.

Niger's tourism product is centered on three destinations: "Saharan Tourism" in the North with the Blue Mountains of Aïr, the Oases of Kowar, the Citadel of Djado and the vast and mythical deserts of Ténéré, Termit and Tal, the Rupestral Engravings, the Dinosaur Cemeteries, the Sanctuary of Addax, the Mosque of Agadez, the Thermal Spring of Tafadek, the Crafts, etc.



This region is the main tourist attraction where one finds an authentic culture still entirely preserved (Festival of Aïr and the Salt Cure, the Bianou under the bewitching rhythm of the Touareg Téndé). A crossroads of exchanges and a meeting place where Tuaregs, Woodabé, Fulani, Arabs, Toubous and Haoussas rub shoulders, Agadez was one of the major stages of the Paris - Dakar Rally.

"Cultural tourism" is dominant in Central-Eastern Niger and presents a rich cultural and artisanal diversity. It is the land of great African empires such as Kanem Bornou, the Hausa city-

states and the Peulh empire of Sokoto, and of influential sultanates such as Damagaram. This region has a high concentration of typical architectural works, and the influence of the traditional chieftaincy is still very much in evidence.

"Endowed with magnificent tourist sites and numerous resources that can allow the development of all forms of Tourism, NIGER can rightly be considered as a Great Country of Tourism".

What are the Agency's plans to position tourism as a key economic driver in Niger?

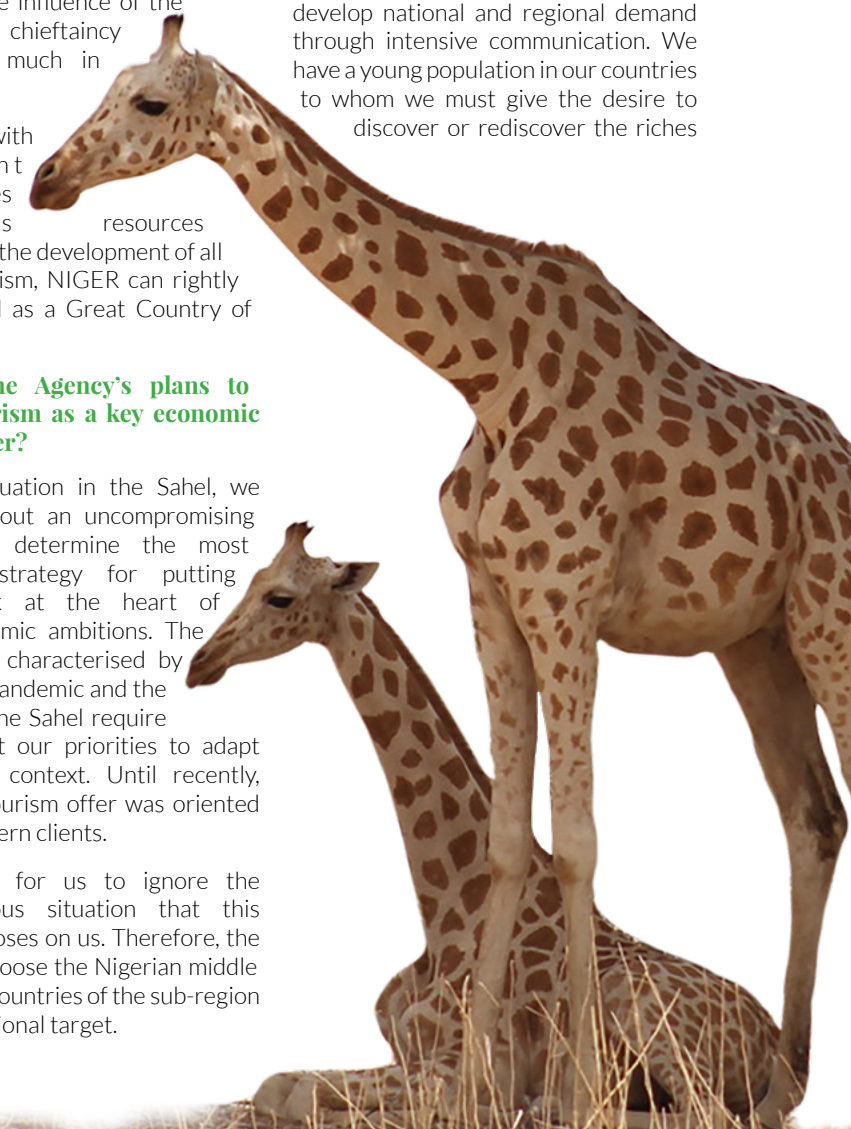
Given the situation in the Sahel, we have carried out an uncompromising diagnosis to determine the most appropriate strategy for putting tourism back at the heart of Niger's economic ambitions. The environments characterised by the covid 19 pandemic and the insecurity in the Sahel require us to reorient our priorities to adapt them to the context. Until recently, 78% of our tourism offer was oriented towards Western clients.

It is difficult for us to ignore the disadvantageous situation that this approach imposes on us. Therefore, the option is to choose the Nigerian middle class and the countries of the sub-region as our promotional target.

This realignment of our priorities requires us to review our offer to adapt it not only to the portfolios of our targets but also to their cultural and cultural concerns. This also implies acting in concert with private promoters to accompany them in redefining their commercial strategies which must imperatively be in line with the tastes and purchasing power of these new targets.

The second axis of our strategy is to improve the quality of the offer. Most promoters are not from the tourism sector and tend to employ family members who are trained on the job. The Niger Tourism Promotion Agency has a training centre for the tourism and hotel industry, whose purpose is to provide capacity building for the staff of tourism and hotel units in order to improve the quality of services to customers.

The third focus of our strategy is to develop national and regional demand through intensive communication. We have a young population in our countries to whom we must give the desire to discover or rediscover the riches





of Niger. APTN has started a digital marketing campaign which is focused on the Net and social networks in particular.

Our campaign to promote the destination is based on storytelling. Each site has a story to tell about the region in which it is located, the hidden beauties of its regions, and an experience to be had.

The fourth axis of our strategy is to organise eductours to allow travel prescribers and tourism information professionals to discover the products offered by Niger tourism and to collect their opinions in order to make the necessary adjustments to better respond to travellers' demands.

The fifth axis is to make all the national and international events organized in Niger into tourism products with a tour and discovery offers as well as adapted activities to enhance the participants' stays.

We are also planning to run communication campaigns in certain large-audience media to attract customers. We aim to reach a maximum number of target travellers.

“*Niger's tourism product is centered on three destinations: “Saharan Tourism” in the North with the Blue Mountains of Aïr, the Oases of Kawar, the Citadel of Djado and the vast and mythical deserts of Ténéré, Tèrmit and Tâl, the Rupestral Engravings, the Dinosaur Cemeteries, the Sanctuary of Addax, the Mosque of Agadez, the Thermal Spring of Tafadek, the Crafts, etc.*”

Finally, we plan to participate in trade fairs that we consider relevant to our objectives in order to engage with travellers and stakeholders in the sector.

What is your projection for tourism in Niger for 2023?

Our projection for tourism in Niger for the coming year is that it will be dominated by business tourism because Niger is showing a growth rate that is whetting the interest of investors. Niger has resolutely positioned itself as a hub for international events and our ambition is to make them niches to boost related tourism events.

Regions such as Zinder and Agadez have tourism potential for a revival of tourism in secure environments. National events such as the Aïr Festival, the Bianou, the salted wax; the Gueréwol and the hotoungo which take place in secure environments will be niches which will be programmed to welcome charter flights of tourists.

Niger offers a different product from those offered by most destinations in the UEMOA region. We believe that a good partnership between travel agencies in this area could boost the promotion of inter-state tours, which is dear to the UEMOA

The year 2023 will be the start of the domestic tourism development programme “Nigeriens rediscover Niger”.



New tourism Minister on task to unveil Malawi as world's best kept secret

Described as the ‘Warm heart of Africa’ Malawi boasts of some of the continent's best tourist attractions ranging from abundant wildlife, dramatic landscapes and a plethora of other exciting attractions that are sure to allure any visitor.

For the country's newly appointed Tourism Minister, however, there is something more that distinguishes Malawi as a must-visit destination. Speaking to *VoyagesAfriq* in Germany at this year's ITB Berlin Tourism Expo, Vera Kamtukule said the country's people and their rich cultures are what define Malawi as the “Warm heart of Africa.”

“What is that that makes us stand out? It is our people, the culture and the stories behind our people which can never be compared to anything else. I can guarantee you that if anyone from America, Germany or any part of Europe comes to Malawi, their lives are never the same, because our resilience as a people is well documented.”

A key attraction of the Southern African country is Lake Malawi, the fifth largest fresh water lake in the world by volume, the ninth largest lake in the world by area—and the third largest and second deepest lake in Africa.

Kamtukule said that attractions like the Lake and many others remain undiscovered by Malawians and she is determined to change that to improve domestic tourism.

She posited, “We have one of the largest fresh lakes in the world with mountains and all the natural endowments, but we have a large part of the population; close to 10 million who have never seen the lake in their lives, and I consider that as obscene because the people who do not have the money are in the larger majority. So, if you can talk about the volumes, then you can boost local tourism.

“I feel it becomes a challenge for us to sell the country when we haven't seen the country ourselves. I believe everyone is a tourism officer, from the president to the lowest person possible. For Malawians, each one of us must be a tourism officer and for me to get there, we need to expose Malawi to its own people,” she added.



Vera Kamtukule,
Malawi's Tourism Minister

“*We have one of the largest fresh lakes in the world with mountains and all the natural endowments, but we have a large part of the population; close to 10 million who have never seen the lake in their lives, and I consider that as obscene because the people who do not have the money are in the larger majority. So, if you can talk about the volumes, then you can boost local tourism.*”

The former Labour Minister also averred that it was time for Malawi to open its vast and rich tourism offerings to the rest of the world.

“Malawi is touted as the world's best kept secret, but I feel like we cannot be secret forever, we are sitting on gold, so, let's unveil the secret, and that's one of my challenges as well, to say how do we unveil the world's best kept secret to

Malawians first and then to the entire world,” she maintained.

Although with a flexible visa regime, accessibility to Malawi remains a challenge as only a handful of airlines fly into the country. Tourism Minister Kamtukule disclosed that she is working closely with other ministries and stakeholders to come up with appropriate incentives to attract more airlines into Malawi.

“We have a limited number of airlines coming into our country and a limited number of direct flights and we are working towards that. So, the Ministry of transport, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Communication, and the airport development company are coming together to provide an incentive structure because if we don't sacrifice something, there is no way we can make something out of it. At the moment, what we are doing as a ministry with our counterparts is looking at a wholistic programme as far as airline accessibility is concerned,” the Tourism Minister emphasized.

Morocco announces partnership with Easyjet



Morocco's National Tourism Office, L'Office National Marocain du Tourisme (ONMT) has signed a historic five-year partnership agreement with British low cost airline Group EasyJet to strengthen the visibility of the destination Morocco among international travelers.

It plans to double its seat offering to 1.6 million by 2028 in 7 key markets such as the UK, France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, and Portugal.

In addition, easyJet Holidays will launch this summer a major communication campaign on Morocco, to promote the destination to European travelers.

ONMT Chief Executive, Adel El Fakir said: "This agreement with easyJet is historic for Morocco.

"The airline has real expertise in the European market, our main tourist source. EasyJet will thus be able to serve Morocco through additional direct

routes with a doubling of seat capacity by 2028.

"This reinforces our offensive strategy on our target markets. What's more, the growth of easyJet holidays is a fantastic opportunity for customers in the UK to experience dedicated package holidays to Morocco."

The airline's chief executive Johan Lundgren said: "EasyJet has doubled the number of services it operates to Morocco as its popularity continues to grow with our customers.

"We remain committed to our ongoing cooperation with the Moroccan National Tourism Office and look forward to working together now and in the coming years to promote Morocco and all it has to offer."

EasyJet Holidays Chief Executive Garry Wilson, said: "Morocco is a fantastic destination which our customers love and we're proud to have in our portfolio, so I'm very happy to be supporting its tourism growth for the future."

Bleak gender diversity figures for cruise companies don't tell the whole story

New research has revealed that the cruise industry is struggling to recruit women across the entire workforce, translating to only 3% of C-Suite spots being held by women. The study, which was carried out by private advisory firm Aptamind Partners drew on publicly available data from the world's largest cruise companies and online travel agents (OTAs) and travel companies. In the OTA sector, the news was more heartening; the majority of the workforce (56%) are women, with 36% at the senior management level and 16% in the C-Suite.

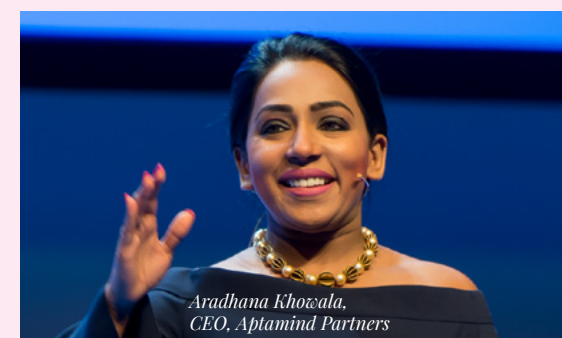
In both sectors, however, there is a sharp drop in female representation once you hit the highest echelons of leadership. There is one female CEO amongst the top ten publicly listed OTAs and no female board chairs. Meanwhile, in the cruise industry, where the overall workforce is 35% female, there are zero female CEOs or chairs within the major conglomerates.

This bleak picture, however, isn't the full one. As the cruise sector is highly consolidated, with a handful of large

corporations owning multiple well-known cruise brands, it is important to look at the businesses within the businesses. Amongst the smaller cruise lines, there are six female presidents or CEOs. The percentage of women on boards across the industry has also increased by 10% since 2007 from 12% to 22%.

Aradhana Khawala is the CEO of Aptamind Partners and the author of the report. She says, "There is plenty of positive news that can be taken from this research. The progress we have seen in recent years has been made possible thanks to high-level support from regulators and industry bodies, which are focused on promoting the cruise industry as an attractive career choice for women. They are now focusing on bringing more young women into the sector, which is the only way to sustainably build a pipeline of candidates for higher levels of management."

The report offers six steps the leisure sector can take to get more women into leadership positions across the travel and tourism sector, including



better disclosure and regular reporting, independent regulation and verification, and incentivising and holding leadership accountable for progress on gender diversity.

It particularly stresses the importance of insightful and robust gender diversity data, which, at present, is lacking across the entire travel and tourism industry. Public and private cruise and OTA companies are invited to share their data, to measure and benchmark DEI data in travel, tourism and hospitality, to help the industry develop an accurate picture of where things currently lie so meaningful progress can be made, together.

Spain high on Gambia's tourism radar



The Gambia is making inroads to capture Spain as a key source market for its international tourist arrivals.

The West African country was in Spain in January this year to showcase its tourism offerings and products to the mostly Latin American and European markets at the Fitur International Tourism Fair.

The Director General of Gambia Tourist Board, Abubakar Camara in an interview with VoyagesAfric revealed that Spain was of particular interest because it is almost becoming the country's second biggest source market.

"We are doing very well in Spain even though we have only one flight going in. If you look at the destination Spain, it's the third largest market as far as we are concerned. However, as we speak, it looks like it is competing with Holland which is the second largest source market for the Gambia, and it is competing very well. If we have more flights, I'm sure we would do very well in Spain," he said.

To maximize the opportunity presented by the Spanish market, the Director General added that the Gambia has already initiated several strategies to increase its visibility and arouse interest among prospective visitors and tourists.

He disclosed: "We have already appointed a Destination Manager which

we call, a Director of Tourism Promotion, and we are even trying to provide him with an assistant who is going to make sure that they work together and breakthrough a lot of barriers in terms of bringing tourists to Gambia.

"Again, we are involving the Gambian Embassy in Spain to mobilise all the diasporan Gambians who are staying here so that they organize events. There is nobody who can market Gambia other than the Gambians themselves. So those who are living here need to be mobilized and encouraged to sell the Gambia."

Camara also reiterated the country's ongoing talks with airlines to resume flights between Spain and Gambia, saying, "The only bottleneck we have is the air connectivity which we are working on, and I believe at some point, we will breakthrough.

The Gambia offers visa-on-arrival for tourists and has revised health protocols to exempt visitors from any form of COVID-19 tests or present any proof of vaccination.

The 'Smiling Coast of Africa' is welcoming to tourists all year round



and is undergoing diversification of its tourism products to add to the beach tourism its known for.

Director General Camara said, the variation is much needed to meet the changing demands of tourists.

"We've already started diversifying our tourism because we believe that tourism is moving and as times goes on and people's plans keep changing, we also must diversify our products. We are selling eco-tourism, river-based tourism, and community-based tourism, and we are also selling food tourism. So, we recognise that people's demands are changing, and we are also changing to meet these demands," he emphasised.



New MD of Tanzania Tourism Board commits to 5 million tourists by 2025

The newly appointed Managing Director of the Tanzania Tourist Board (TTB) has reiterated his commitment towards the country's target of achieving five million international tourist arrivals by 2025.

The President of the United Republic of Tanzania Samia Suluhu Hassan announced former Hospitality Association of Tanzania Head Damasi Mfugale as the new head of the TTB in early February this year, replacing Felix John who had been the Acting MD since 2021.

Mfugale led TTB to participate in this year's Meetings Africa in Johannesburg where he shared his alignment with President Samia Suluhu Hassan's target for driving up Tanzania's tourism numbers in an interview with VoyagesAfriq.

"You might be aware that the president has announced that we are supposed to reach 5 million tourists by 2025. So, you could see the pressure behind it; so, that is my initial KPI.

"Obviously, after you've done that, you are expected to boost the government coffers in terms of taxation, the well-being of the people and employment. So those are my KPIs," he emphasized.

In line with this, MD mentioned that his focus goes beyond tourism marketing and promotion to include developing existing and new products for the sector.

Also, of much importance to Mfugale is the MICE sector which he indicated



Damasi Mfugale,
MD, Tanzania Tourist Board



Felix John, Former Ag. MD of
Tanzania Tourism Board handing
over to Damasi Mfugale

presents an opportunity to diversify Tanzania's tourism product.

He posited: "MICE is a very emerging tourism product, and we also want to make sure it becomes an alternative tourism product for the country. Because as you know, we are famous for nature-based tourism, and we also want to grow MICE in terms of bringing meetings into Tanzania. Our focus is not only to bring it in, but also develop the infrastructure which goes hand in hand with the MICE to successfully facilitate those kinds of meetings."

Profile

Mfugale has a Master's in Arts (MA) in International Hospitality and Tourism Management from International Management Institute (IMI) Switzerland. Mfugale is a consultant for the African Chapter of EBI International Consulting Group in Canada.

With twenty years of professional tourism and hospitality experience in Switzerland, the USA, Tanzania and South Africa, Damasi has progressive

advancement and consistent achievement within the private sector and government-funded agencies and institutions. He has extensive work experience as a Chairman, Member of Boards, and Director in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Damasi has an excellent reputation in defining corporate direction, providing leadership by engaging employees, being customer focused, and promoting individual and institutional objectives attainment. An inclusive and collaborative leader and a manager that strives to build strong commitment, competence, and motivation; at the same time fixing success processes to safeguard productivity, efficiency, effectiveness, and quality to achieve the essential performance results and organizational mission.

Possessing extensive professional local and international networks supported by outstanding qualifications in building and managing business partnerships, Damasi helped organizations to relate better to the industry stakeholders.

Cape Town and the Western Cape gearing up for an economic boost of over R393 million through conference bids secured by Wesgro



Wrenelle Stander,
Wesgro CEO

Wesgro's Cape Town and Western Cape Convention Bureau secured 27 bids last year, which will take place in the destination between 2022 and 2024.

Following the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic - the destination will welcome an estimated 20 000 delegates from the bids secured over the next few years, with an estimated R393.4 million to be injected into the local economy as a result of the secured business events.

"The economic boost and job creation facilitated by large events is crucial to the growth of our local business tourism sector. We applaud Wesgro, and the strides that have been made to keep Cape Town and the Western Cape on the map as a premium business events destination. Every visitor is a potential investor. We look forward to hosting delegates from around the globe - providing us with the opportunity to showcase the capabilities of our local industries spanning a wide range of sectors," said Provincial Minister of Finance and Economic Opportunities in

the Western Cape, Mireille Wenger.

Conferences secured span aviation, engineering, entrepreneurship, green economy, investment, medical, manufacturing, veterinary science, as well as the tech sector.

Wesgro CEO Wrenelle Stander, adds: "I am proud to announce that large conferences are back. Business events from both the domestic and international markets have tremendous economic impact for the province. Moving beyond the economic boost, the events secured bring immeasurable value to our status as a knowledge hub on the continent - reaffirming our place as the destination where great minds meet."

Conferences secured with a focus on the African continent include the Africa Fintech Summit - which took place end of last year; the All Africa Exhibition, Africa Partnership for Growth, Africa Investment Indaba and the Chiropractic Association of South Africa (CASA) Congress as well as the African Chiropractic Federation AGM.

Assisting in the securing of bids, Wesgro continues to work alongside the South African National Convention Bureau as well as local organisations to build its bid pipeline. The Bureau's partnership with the Western Province Blood Services was instrumental in securing the International Society of Blood Transfusion Regional Congress, scheduled to take place in November this year.

Spotlighting gains to be made by the tourism value chain, Mayoral Committee Member for Economic Growth at the City of Cape Town, Alderman James Vos, concludes: "Business events are intrinsically linked to leisure tourism - creating a positive knock-on effect for local hotels, restaurants, and attractions. As such, I'm happy to say that the City of Cape Town through my department will fund the Conventions Bureau. We extend a warm welcome to the delegates expected to visit the Mother City over the course of the next few years, and encourage a return with family and friends to fully experience the rich experiences on offer in our city."

Travel & Tourism Blitz

Zambia Tourism Agency announces new CEO



The Board of the Zambia Tourism Agency has announced the appointment of Matongo Matamwandi as the new Chief Executive of the Agency.

Mr Matamwandi who was introduced to the management and staff of the agency will lead the country's tourism marketing efforts taking over from Chavunga lungu who until this appointment was the Acting CEO.

Matongo brings to this position a wealth of strategic leadership experience in private and public sector management, spanning over 30 years. He has worked and consulted in domestic and international marketing, brand management, sports administration, academia and tourism product development in various institutions which include Zambia Development Agency and several fast-moving

consumer goods (FMCG).

He has also lectured generations of undergraduate and postgraduate students at various universities. Additionally, he has consulted on several projects in tourism development in Zambia and internationally. He has written many papers on marketing and tourism that have been presented at international fora and published in many journals.

He holds several academic and professional qualifications, including a Bachelor of Arts degree from University of Zambia, a Master of Science in Marketing from the United Kingdom and a Master of Business Administration from Switzerland. He also has a post graduate in Leadership and Corporate Management from Japan. He is a Chartered Marketer and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM). He is also a Fellow of Zambia Institute of Marketing (ZIM) and its Past President. Matongo is also a member of the Economics Association of Zambia and the Institute of Directors – Zambia.

The Board used the opportunity to congratulate Matongo on this appointment and commit to supporting him as he provides strategic executive leadership to the Agency to enable it reach higher heights.

Ephraim Mafuru named new MD of Arusha International Conference Centre

President Samia Suluhu of Tanzania has appointed Ephraim Mafuru as the Managing Director of the Arusha International Conference Centre (AICC).

Prior to his appointment, Mr. Mafuru was the Head of Corporate Affairs of Kilombero Sugar Company Limited (KSCL) located in the Morogoro region.

He has 20+ years of experience in marketing. Holds MBA from UDSM. Worked as Head of Corporate Affairs at Kilombero Sugar and led marketing at Vodacom Tanzania and Serengeti Breweries.



He is expected to ensure the Arusha-based convention center is back on the rails in an increasingly changing convention tourism market.

Digu Naobeb takes a bow from Namibia Tourism Board



Digu Naobeb, the current CEO of the Namibia Tourism Board has announced he will step down as head of NTB when his current mandates end on June 30, 2023. Mr Naobeb who has been at the helm of affairs at NTB spanning nearly 2 decades confirmed this in an interview with local newspaper "New Era". He said, he had informed the Board of NTB that he no longer wishes to continue as CEO due to long aspired career opportunities he could not fulfil.

Mohamed Mchengerwa is Tanzania's new Minister of Tourism and Natural Resources



President Samia Suluhu Hassan has made a minor cabinet reshuffle by transferring the Minister of Culture, Arts and Sports Mohamed Mchengerwa to the Ministry of Tourism and Natural Resources. Mchengerwa replaces Dr. Pindi Chana who has been moved to the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Sports. According to a State House statement issued on Tuesday 14th February, the Head of State also transferred Culture, Arts and Sports Permanent Secretary Dr. Hassan Abbasi to the Ministry of Tourism and Natural Resources. Dr Abasi will take over from Prof Eliamani Sedoyeka.

President Buhari assents to new Tourism Act



The new tourism act, Nigerian Tourism Development Authority Act, 2022 in Nigeria expected to give the country's tourism push has been assented by President Muhammadu Buhari.

The Act repeals the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation Act, Cap. N137 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004 and enacts the Nigerian Tourism Development Authority Act, 2022, to develop and promote Nigeria as a travel and tourism destination.

Speaking to VoyagesAfriq on the development, the Director General of the new Nigerian Tourism Development Authority Folorunsho Coker said it was imperatively needed to develop and make tourism a key economic driver in Nigeria. He cited the success stories of the oil, banking, and telecommunications sectors as examples of how legal instruments can spur the growth of a sector.

"A Legal Framework was required for the Oil, Banking, and Telecommunications industries to flourish in Nigeria. Now Tourism can join the league of flourishing industries as well in this our great Nation" said Folorunsho Coker.

Benefits of the new Act include funding opportunities for tourism SMBs through the Tourism Development Fund public-private partnerships with state stakeholders and the private sector, and destination marketing through the Convention and Visitors Bureau

The Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation NTDC will now be known as the Nigerian Tourism Development Authority NTDA.OU

WTTC Announces Next Stage of its groundbreaking Hotel Sustainability Basics initiative

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has today launched the Hotel Sustainability Basics (Basics) verification scheme.

Announced at ITB Berlin, Basics will enable tourist accommodation providers from around the world, regardless of their size, to begin their sustainability journey.

Basics, an industry-wide supported initiative, is a globally recognised and coordinated set of criteria that all hotels should implement as a minimum to drive responsible and sustainable Travel & Tourism.

Basics emerged as a result of a clear demand from a group of influential global hotel brands and whilst there a great number of sustainability initiatives, Basics focuses on an achievable starting point.

It will encourage all hospitality businesses to begin their sustainability journeys and redefine the non-negotiables of sustainability in the industry.

Made up of 12 key criteria, the Basics are achievable for all hotels to implement as a bare minimum. They serve as a stepping-stone to more complex sustainability schemes and even greater sustainability.

Basics has also been recognised by the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance as the



starting point for a net positive industry, who announced the latest version of the Pathway to Net Positive Hospitality.

Verification Scheme

In order to ensure the validity of the programme, WTTC partnered with Green Key and SGS to develop a simple online verification system to allow hotels to provide evidence and ensure they are following the Basics.

The verification scheme enables hotels and other tourist accommodation to be officially verified for meeting eight of the 12 criteria in the first year and demonstrate their commitment to working toward all 12 of the criteria by year three.

Together, the criteria ensure the sector is eco resilient and adaptive to the changing needs of the planet.

Tourism Seychelles takes marketing activation to Kazakhstan

Tourism Seychelles and the national airline, #AirSeychelles, hosted the first-ever destination workshops in #kazakhstan last week in a bid to drive up business from that market now that there are direct flights linking the two countries.

The two workshops were held in the cities of Almaty and Astana, as ten companies from the local trade hit the road in a roadshow format to meet existing and new sellers.US

Unravelling Cote d'Ivoire's cocoa route; a conversation with Suzanne Kabane

In an era where raw materials taken from Africa return as high-end finished products, Les Douceurs de Suzanne, among other brands of African made chocolates, are being exported to the world from Côte d'Ivoire.

Credit goes to Suzanne Sawsan Kabbani, an Ivorian-born African Amazon, and master chocolatier, who since opening her company in 2006 has promoted her country as the world's leading producer of cocoa and chocolates, amid huge exposure for the cocoa farmers.

Join VoyagesAfric in this interview as we engage Suzanne in a conversation that unravels Cote d'Ivoire's cocoa route, her business and related issues.

What led you to start producing chocolate?

I would say in all truth that it was out of love for my country and our planters too, because it was inconceivable that we were the world's leading cocoa producer without having an exceptional quality of chocolate. It draws attention that we were the first producer of cocoa and not a manufacturer of quality chocolate because the Ivorian does not consume chocolate. Nowadays this is changing as our lifestyle and way of seeing things are different. We have become aware that consuming Ivorian chocolate is a vital and valid option and that is why we are educating the youngest in this sense to value our local products which are of good quality.

“We had to show the Ivorians that we can process our products and that they are of good quality, and push other countries to respect our products and also to buy them.”





what do you consider to be the highs and lows of this illustrious career?

The first thing I had to endure was the opinion of people on my struggle, yes I say struggle.

To put forward Ivorian cocoa and also the farmers who, like all the other farmers in the world, were subject to the vagaries of the market, because 80% of the world's cocoa production comes from all these poor small farmers.....

We had to show the Ivorians that we can process our products and that they are of good quality, and push other countries

to respect our products and also to buy them. But the road was very long. After 16 years with positive results, we still have a lot to do.....

who is suzanne kabbani?

I consider myself to be a very small and simple person who wants to leave a mark before leaving. To mark a change for the better in a world that is a bit raw on the power of money....

I am a mother and grandmother and I am at the head of my chocolate factory today which employs about twenty people and I am a partner in an Ivorian federation which groups together 377 cooperatives and 800 thousand planters. In fact, I am very proud of this and it has been my constant occupation over the years.

I have set up a foundation which will open its doors soon. Its focus will be on providing solar panels for the farmers, drinking water, building schools, food crops, cocoa nurseries, plantations and of course the setting up of health centers. I have crazy dreams in my head and I intend to make them come true.



You have recently undertaken a new trip to discover the cocoa route in Côte d'Ivoire. Tell us more and what is your goal?

I have traced different trips of the cocoa route because for me it is important to discover a country not only for its



Si vous rentrez dans cette maison c'est que vous avez laissé derrière vous vos races, vos couleurs, vos opinions, vos religions ainsi que vos rangs sociaux car ici il n'y a que l'égalité, l'amour et le partage notre quotidien tout simplement.

Suzanne

tourism but to discover the regions, the people, our different ethnic groups, to bring people towards us to show our capacity of work, our way of being, how we produce cocoa and how is our contact with our planters. Also their lifestyle in simplicity and not to forget that it is thanks to us that the whole world eats chocolate!

I want them to love us and discover our country in all its splendour, its hills, its greenery, its fauna and flora, its fields, its rivers, its 66 ethnic groups etc. It's only happiness, it's my country, Côte d'Ivoire, the country of hospitality, quite simply.

Do you think that the ecosystem around cocoa production is well taken care of?

Sorry, I would say more to preserve biodiversity because we should not only look at the producer but the whole cocoa-chocolate chain.

In recent years, the government has been multiplying its actions in this sector with the aim of achieving zero deforestation.

For me, the greatest concentration on this is to train cocoa producers on how to plant without deforestation with new agricultural techniques that must be implemented and executed throughout the territory. By then, we will have made some

improvements in this area. We will also increase the protective plants that we have in our heritage that can allow us to reduce the threats of diseases around our cocoa plants. This will allow us to cut down sector by sector to replant over the interval of 5 consecutive years the deforested part and we will have solved a big part believe me.

What do you think can be done to use cocoa to promote Côte d'Ivoire as a tourist destination?

Participate in various fairs to present Côte d'Ivoire, which is the world's leading cocoa producer with 40% of the world's production. Cocoa is not only the farthest product of our agriculture but the product for which Côte d'Ivoire is known.

How is your company trying to change the discourse on cocoa and chocolate in Côte d'Ivoire?

I prefer that you use Suzanne and her farmers instead of my company because it is thanks to them that we are fighting this battle.

Soon our cooperatives will pass the 500 mark and so our team will be bigger and better.... We will produce competitively priced chocolate to encourage greater consumption.

We intend to create products that have never been made in Côte d'Ivoire. But I will tell you next time, I promise.

Thank you



Wines of South Africa, An Optimistic Look into West Africa and Market Growth in Ghana and Nigeria.



Bill Bedzrah

However, it's worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the wine industry, and it's possible that it has affected the growth of South African wine exports to Ghana. Supply chain disruptions, trade restrictions, and changes in consumer behavior have all contributed to a challenging business environment for wine exporters.

The wine industry in South Africa has long been a significant player in the international market, with a rich history dating back to the 17th century. However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused disruptions in the wine trade, with many markets facing decreased demand and logistical challenges. One market that was particularly affected was West Africa, where the importation of South African wines declined due to pandemic-related restrictions and economic downturn.

As the pandemic subsides and international trade starts to recover, the wine industry in South Africa is looking to return to the West African market. With the lifting of restrictions and the rollout of vaccination programs, the wine trade is slowly regaining its momentum, and

South African producers are eager to expand their reach to West Africa once again.

West Africa has long been a significant market for South African wines, with countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Cameroon importing large volumes of wine from South Africa. However, the pandemic caused a sharp decline in imports, as lockdowns and border closures made it difficult to transport goods and maintain supply chains.

Despite these challenges, South African wineries are optimistic about the future of the West African market. Many are investing in distribution channels to streamline the process of exporting their wines to West Africa.

Wines of South Africa Grand Tasting Festival, which is held annually in Lagos and Accra celebrates South African wines and has helped to raise awareness of the quality and diversity of South African wines among West African consumers.

Speaking to VoyagesAfriq, Bill Bedzrah the official representative of Wines of South Africa in Ghana and Nigeria Markets is optimistic about the return of



South African wines have been gaining popularity in international markets in recent years, and Ghana is one of the markets where South African wine exports have been increasing. South Africa is the ninth-largest exporter of wine in the world and has a strong reputation for producing high-quality wines at relatively affordable prices.

Ghana is a growing market for wine, and there is increasing demand for imported wines as the country's economy continues to develop. South African wine exporters have recognized this trend and have been working to increase their presence in Ghana and other African markets.

the WoSA flagship Grand Tasting Event in 2023 as an opportunity for South African wineries and local merchants and businesses to showcase their products and make new business connections in Ghana and Nigeria beyond the traditional consumer base to tap into the promising development for the wine industry in Ghana and Nigeria.

Furthermore, Mr. Bill Bedzrah enumerated the Unique competitive offering of Wine Tourism in South Africa and imploring the Travel & Tourism sector stakeholders in Ghana and Nigeria to leverage the favourable Trade and Investment climate in South Africa.

SUMMARY ON SOUTH AFRICA WINE TOURISM

To cater to the growing demand for wine tourism, many wine estates have

diversified their offerings beyond wine tasting, with options such as wine and food pairing, vineyard tours, and outdoor activities like hiking and cycling. Some estates also offer accommodation

As the pandemic subsides and international trade starts to recover, the wine industry in South Africa is looking to return to the West African market

options, from luxury guesthouses to rustic cottages, allowing visitors to stay on-site and fully immerse themselves in the wine culture.

In recent years, South Africa's wine

tourism industry has also been leveraging digital marketing and social media to reach a wider audience and promote their offerings. Wine festivals and events are also popular, with the annual Stellenbosch Wine Festival drawing thousands of visitors each year.

As the world emerges from the pandemic, there is a renewed sense of optimism and opportunity for international trade, and the wine industry is no exception. With the right investments and strategies in place, South African wineries can continue to thrive in the West African market and beyond.

The 2023 editions of Wines of South Africa Grand Tasting Events in West Africa are as follows:

Lagos, Nigeria 13 July 2023 and Accra, Ghana 15 July 2023



Tourism Calendar of Events



April 2023	Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo (POATE) Venue: Kampala, Uganda Contact: +256 41 4342196 Email: poate@utb.go.ug About: The Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo (POATE) 2023 will bring together tourism and travel trade partners from Uganda and all over the world to meet new clients, network, and discuss tourism business deals.	
Mar - Apr 31-2 2023	ILTM Africa 2023 Venue: Cape Town International Convention Centre, South Africa Contact: +27825588214 Email: papy.luzala@rxglobal.com About: Whether you're looking to break into the African market or you've been working in the region for some time now, ILM Africa is an essential sales and marketing opportunity for travel specialists.	
April 3-5 2023	WTM Africa Venue: Cape Town International Convention Centre, South Africa Contact: +27825588214 Email: papy.luzala@rxglobal.com About: World Travel Market Africa brings the world to you, and promotes Africa to the world, allowing you to explore a world of opportunities, all under one roof	
April 26-28 2023	Malawi International Tourism Expo - Takulandirani Venue: Bingu Wa Mutharika International Convention Centre (BICC) in Lilongwe Contact: Email: About:	
May 9-11 2023	Africa's Travel Indaba Contact: +27 (0)11 476 5104 Email: exhibitor@indaba-southafrica.co.za Venue: Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre, Durban, SA About: Africa's Travel Indaba is one of the largest tourism marketing events on the African calendar and one of the top three 'must visit' events of its kind on the global calendar. It showcases the widest variety of Africa's best tourism products and attracts international buyers and media from across the world	
May 16-18 2023	118th UNWTO Executive Council Venue: Punta Cana, Dominican Republic Website: www.unwto.org About: The Executive Council is the top governing body of UNWTO and meets twice a year.	
May 23-25 2023	IMEX Frankfurt Venue: Frankfurt, Germany Contact: +44 1273 227311 Email: itb@messe-berlin.de About: IMEX in Frankfurt is the largest trade show in Europe for the meetings and events industry. We bring together global event planners and buyers with significant buying power	

Tourism Calendar of Events



May - June 31-2 2023	Africa Youth in Tourism Innovation Summit Contact: +27 813037030 Email: rejoyce@africatourismpartners.com Venue: Windhoek, Namibia About: The Summit is established to nurture African youth, start-ups, small enterprises and accelerator initiative to pursue opportunities across the global tourism ecosystem to become industry change-makers and future industry leaders.	
June 8-9 2023	Sustainable Tourism Africa 2023 Contact: +254705283658 Email: comms@sttkenya.org Venue: Mombasa, Kenya About: The 2023 Sustainable Tourism Africa Summit will focus on strengthening tourism value chains in Africa. The two day event will feature keynote speakers, panel sessions, workshops and exhibitions	
June 14-16 2023	AviaDev Africa 2024 Contact: Mala Patel, +44 7930 573621 Email: mala.patel@thebench.com Venue: Radisson Blu Hotel, Upper Hill, Nairobi- Kenya About: 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 7-9 2023	Tourism Investments Forum Africa (TIFA) Contact: Email: +27 813037030 Venue: South Africa About:	
July 26-28 2023	66th UNWTO Regional Commission for Africa (CAF) Contact: rdaf@unwto.org Email: Venue: Mauritius About: The UNWTO Regional Commission for Africa is the major institutional platform where ministries in charge of tourism discuss the latest trends of the sector at the continental and global level and the implementation of their program of work. The Commission of Africa Meeting is held every year as part of UNWTO's statutory events.	
September 28-29 2023	Africa Associations Summit 5 (AAS5) Contact: +254 722 376 224 Email: info@afsae.org Venue: Cape Town, South Africa About: Africa Association Summit is an annual congregation of African and international not-for-profit executives drawn from professional and trade Associations, Civil Society Organizations, the Travel and Tourism industry, the Events industry, Industry suppliers, Government agencies and Pan African organizations such as Africa Union among other stakeholders.	
October 18-20 2023	Africa Tourism Leadership Forum (ATLF) 2023 Contact: rejoyce@africatourismpartners.com Email: +27 813037030 Venue: GICC, Gaborone, Botswana About: Africa Tourism Leadership Forum 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".	



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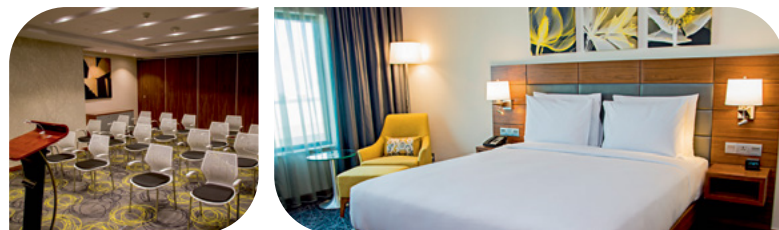
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