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Global icons unite at Kwita Izina as UNWTO Secretary General joins Rwanda's conservation celebration



Exclusive Interview with Deputy Prime Minister of Mauritius, Steven Obeegadoo

Tourism Leaders Place African Focus On Global Challenges



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Travel and Tourism Magazine

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**Voyages Afriq
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Dear Reader,

It's another pleasure to visit you again in your homes, offices, and wherever you find yourself as we bring our 25th issue of your authoritative tourism news source, VoyagesAfriq Travel Magazine.

Since our July Issue, the Industry has experienced and seen remarkable developments.

From the latest report by FDI and UNWTO on the accelerated return on tourism investments to the latest barometer detailing how the sector felt under the pandemic and its quick return. It seems to be a lot of work to be done particularly in Africa's Tourism sector. In this special issue which coincides with the 25th session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), we take a sneak peek at the pressing issues that the assembly seeks to tackle in order to chart a pathway to a sustained and robust tourism sector. Key highlights to follow of which VoyagesAfriq will be covering include the education and investment fora to be held under the framework of the assembly. The twin topics are key ingredients for building a solid future for our sector.

This issue also reports on the highlights of the 19th edition of Kwita Izina in Rwanda. It is an initiative, which has gone beyond Rwanda and a celebration of conservation in order to make tourism a real force for good.

Global leaders including the Secretary General of UNWTO Zurab Pololikashvili and Director General of UNESCO Audrey Azalai as well as sports and film icons such as Idriss Elda, Invincible Sol Campbell, Winston Duke, Cyril and many others graced the occasion and committed themselves to the tenets of conservation.

Rwanda ought to be celebrated for sharing one of Africa's incredible strengths in the area of conservation in a smart way. The UNWTO Commission for Africa at its 66th meeting in Mauritius committed to ensuring that good governance, partnerships and collaboration are central to tourism administration on the continent.

Tourism for all its proven economic and social force is still lacking the needed commitments to catapult it to its needed place. It's been heartwarming to see how institutions such as the World Bank and AfDB among others, have shown the way by placing it on top agenda.

It is important to highlight how the upcoming first training for media and member states will help push the tourism agenda and ensure it is communicated in a manner that makes the world understand its power.

In its 6th edition, the pan-African platform Africa Tourism Leadership Forum has created an opportune platform and marketplace for the continent's travel businesses, especially SMMEs to network and therefore create businesses that go beyond tourism. We need to celebrate Kwakye Donkor and his team for carrying the lead inspite of the challenges.

As a tradition, we would like to welcome our new female tourism ministers to the tourism family. Nigeria's Lola Ade-John, Sierra Leone's Nabeela Tunis, and Zimbabwe's Barbara Rwdzi to their portfolios and hope they will use the opportunities given to them to make tourism a top national agenda.

In this edition, we also have an exclusive chat with ICCA's president Marta Gomes, and her plans for Africa and how business events can elevate Africa's overall tourism earnings.

Our destination feature is a conversation with Mozambique's Eldevina Materula on her country's burgeoning tourism sector.

The business of music tourism is given a voice by the CEO of Down Town Music Hub and AAVEA President Mpume Mabuza.

As you page through this special edition, you will be updated on the sector's major stories and developments.

We wish you a great read!



Kojo Bentum-Williams



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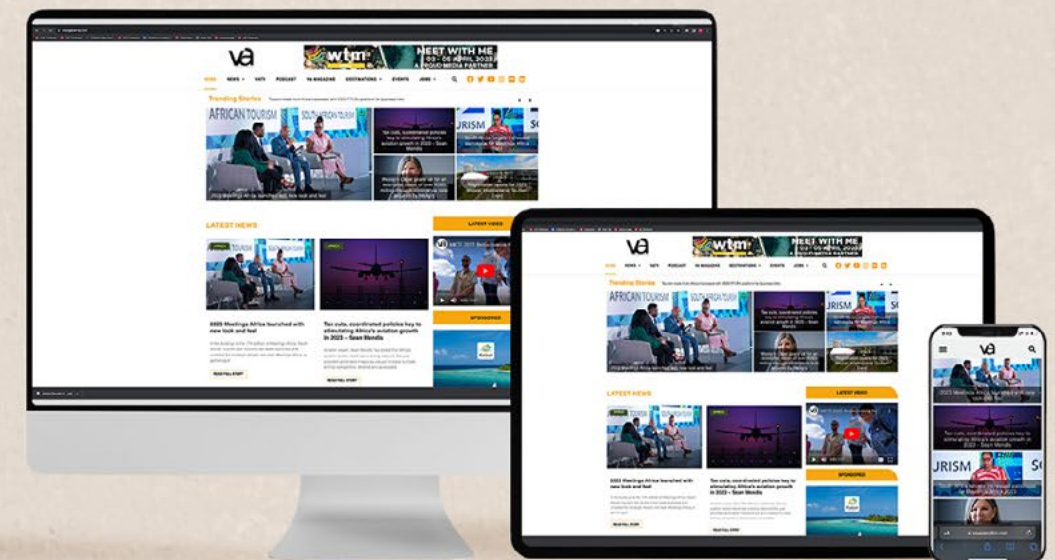
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Global icons unite at Kwita Izina as UNWTO Secretary General joins Rwanda's conservation celebration



Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili addressing the gathering at the Gorilla baby naming ceremony in Kinigi

The 19th edition of Kwita Izina, the Rwandan tradition of giving a name to a newborn baby gorilla witnessed a remarkable moment when the Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Zurab Pololikashvili, participated in naming a newly born mountain gorilla. This event marked a significant fusion of global leaders, celebrities, and conservationists, all coming together to celebrate and contribute to the conservation efforts of these magnificent creatures.

The event, which took place at the packed Kinigi Stadium, saw Mr. Pololikashvili alongside 22 other international personalities from various fields, including Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO, British Actor Idris Elba, legendary basketball star, Joakim Noah, Black Panther star, Winston Duke and other prominent figures from politics, business and Hollywood.

Pre-event trekking: A memorable encounter with gorillas

Visiting Rwanda for the first time, Mr. Pololikashvili, accompanied by his spouse, Tamara and a delegation, embarked on an awe-inspiring journey

to explore the Volcanoes National Park. The anticipation was palpable as the Secretary General eagerly awaited the opportunity to not only trek through this lush landscape but also to meet the mountain gorilla he would have the privilege of naming the next day.

A three-and-a-half-hour trek, accompanied by ever-changing weather conditions, provided Mr. Pololikashvili with an up-close and personal encounter with the gorillas, allowing him to immerse himself in their natural habitat. Overwhelmed by the experience, he commended the people and government of Rwanda for their leading role in conservation efforts and their approach to environmental preservation, which also supports the livelihoods of many Rwandese.

"This is a special experience that will stay with me forever and I would like to congratulate the people and Government of Rwanda on the leading role in conservation efforts and using the environment in ways that offers livelihoods to many," the Secretary General said.

The act of witnessing gorillas in their



The Secretary General poses with his baby gorilla during a trekking of the Volcanoes National Park

natural habitat serves as a poignant reminder of the responsibility that comes with naming these extraordinary creatures, prompting all namers to better appreciate their role in preserving these species.

Gorilla naming day: A vibrant celebration of conservation

The Gorilla Naming Day ceremony at Kinigi Stadium was a jubilant affair, with an enthusiastic audience representing diverse backgrounds and walks of life. The atmosphere was charged with traditional Rwandan music, and as the distinguished guests arrived, they were greeted with cheers and applause.



The UNWTO Delegation in a Family photo with the President of Rwanda H.E Paul Kagame after a courtesy call at the state house

Before the naming ceremony commenced, all namers were given the opportunity to experience a traditional Rwandan village setting, gaining insight into the culture and significance of the event.

Taking his turn to name his gorilla, Mr. Pololikashvili chose the name "Inshingano," emphasising the significance of responsibility in tourism and its role in promoting environmental stewardship, peace and prosperity worldwide. "This name was given to showcase the character of Rwanda's leadership that takes responsibility and is accountable. These values have ensured the success of wildlife conservation especially for mountain gorillas."

He reaffirmed UNWTO's commitment to supporting Rwanda's efforts to make tourism a major economic force and encouraged fellow namers to invite their friends, families, and business associates to experience the wonders of Rwanda.

First Lady's praise and conservation success

Rwanda's First Lady, Jeannette Kagame, praised the efforts of all stakeholders for organising another incredible Kwita Izina event, showcasing Rwanda's credentials as a conservation-friendly country.



The Secretary General with his wife Tamara (next to him) and Regional Director for Africa Elcia on a hike in the Volcanoes National Park

"To us, mountain gorillas represent more than a source of tourism or adventurers' entertainment. To us, our gorillas are custodians of a nature we truly cherish," the First Lady maintained.

CEO of the Rwanda Development Board, Clare Akamanzi, in her address, highlighted the event's achievements, revealing that it

has generated over 10 million dollars since its inception and contributed to the remarkable growth of the mountain gorilla population, from 410 to 620 individuals. Akamanzi noted, "Today, we gave a name, an identity, and a future to 23 new baby gorillas, who only a few decades ago, would have been threatened by extinction."

Conservation means life: A global imperative

Under the theme "Conservation Means Life," Kwita Izina featured a thought-provoking fireside chat on the importance of conservation as a collective responsibility. The event emphasised that conservation should be everyone's business, as it not only safeguards wildlife but also sustains life on Earth.

Collaboration with President Kagame

During a meeting with President Paul Kagame, Mr. Pololikashvili expressed his gratitude for the warm hospitality extended to him and his team. He congratulated Rwanda on its election to the UNWTO Executive Council and pledged UNWTO's support for the development of tourism in Rwanda and the wider region. President Kagame reciprocated the sentiment, expressing his delight with the Secretary General's visit and Rwanda's commitment to supporting UNWTO's efforts in the field of tourism.

The 19th Kwita Izina event not only celebrated the naming of newborn gorillas but also underscored the importance of global collaboration in conservation efforts. It served as a testament to Rwanda's dedication to environmental preservation, wildlife protection and sustainable tourism, with the UNWTO Secretary General leading the way in promoting these vital causes on the global stage.

"Today, we gave a name, an identity, and a future to 23 new baby gorillas, who only a few decades ago, would have been threatened by extinction."



British Actor Edriss Elba and wife naming a gorilla at Kwita Izina event



Mr Pololikashvili laid a wreath at the Kigali Memorial in honour of the victims of the genocide



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19th Kwita Izina Photo Gallery



UNWTO SG Zurab Pololikashvili, Rwanda's Ambassador to France François Nkulikiyimfura and UNESCO Director General, Audrey Azoulay



The First Lady of Rwanda Jeanette Kagame was the Guest of Honour for the occasion



Former Arsenal Legend "Invincible Sol Campbell" with the UNWTO Secretary General



Director General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay addressing the gathering



Secretary General and spouse Tamara in a selfie pose at the Volcanoes National Park



CEO of Rwanda Development Board, Clare Akamanzi



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Tourism Leaders Place African Focus On Global Challenges

The Conference on Rethinking Africa: Rethinking Tourism for Africa: Addressing global challenges; Promoting investment and partnerships brought expert from African perspectives to global challenges, highlighting the need for investments towards a greener tourism sector and access to finance within the sector and the need to further strengthen public-private collaboration at every level.

Tourism Ministers set out visions

Reflecting the heightened relevance of tourism as a solution to a range of global challenges and pillar of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Conference was structured around two thematic sessions with a Ministerial Panel on Addressing Global Challenges followed by a second one: "Promoting Investment and Partnerships in Tourism for Economic Development." His Excellency Steven Obeegadoo, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing, and Land Use Planning and Minister of Tourism for the Republic of Mauritius and the Vice-Chair of the UNWTO Executive Council joined Albert Muchanga, Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals at the African Union, delivered the keynote address.

A special Ministerial Panel Session focusing on global challenges featured contributions from the Ministers of Tourism of DR Congo Didier Mazenga Mukanzu, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Ghana, Hon. Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Awal, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Kenya Peninah Malonza, and Cabinet Secretary for Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage of Zambia, Rhodney Sikumba. Others were Ms Lisa Singh, the UN Resident Coordinator for Mauritius and Seychelles and Prof Nazia M Habib, Head, Centre for Resilience and Sustainable Development at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom.

Advancing investments and partnerships

In line with UNWTO's priorities for the sector, the second session put the focus on the importance of building strategic relations and partnerships, as well as the vital need for more and better-targeted investments in tourism,



building tourism intelligence particularly in projects with the potential to deliver greater sustainability, resilience and inclusivity. UNWTO Executive Director Natalia Bayona opened the session with an overview of the tourism investment climate followed by presentations by Mr. Kevin Ramkaloan CEO Business Mauritius and messages from Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, Secretary General of The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and Leila Farah Mokaddenm, Director General, Southern Africa Region, African Development Bank.

Botswana's Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Conservation and Tourism Philda Kereng, and Hon. Siandou Fofana, Minister of Tourism, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, also contributed their unique and expert insights into rethinking tourism investments and partnerships. They were joined by Ms. Amanda Serumaga – Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme for Mauritius and Seychelles, Ms. Michaela Rugwizangoga, Chief Tourism Officer, Rwanda Development Board and Mr. Mamadu Serifo Jaquite, Commissioner in charge of the Department of Human Development of the West African Monetary and Economic Union

The Mauritius Declaration

The conference culminated with the presentation of the Mauritius Declaration by the host country and UNWTO. The program of actions proposed in the Mauritius Declaration, aims to promote sustainable and resilient tourism ecosystems through multi-

sectoral partnerships, ethical practices, investment promotion, nature-based solutions, decarbonization, coordination of public health, policy alignment and data-driven decision-making. This program includes a range of measures such as:

- Encourage partnership and tourism ethics;
- The promotion of investment, innovation and accessibility to financing;
- Public health coordination and crisis management;
- The integration of internal and regional tourism;
- The encouragement of responsible and solidarity tourism;
- The implementation of blue tourism;
- Partnerships between public, private and community actors and models of governance; and
- Pan-African Fund for Sustainable Tourism;

To enable this programme to be carried out under the best possible conditions, the Declaration also calls for support in accordance with the respective mandates, of the Member States of the UNWTO, the African Union Commission, the regional economic communities, organizations, regional aviation institutions, banking institutions, the African Development Bank, international aid partners, donor communities and financial institutions.

Snapshots of 66th CAF Meeting



Deputy Prime Minister of Mauritius, Steven Obeegadoo



Regional Director for Africa, Elcia Grandcourt



Mohammad Salim Joomun, Senior Chief Executive, Ministry of Tourism, Mauritius



Minister of Tourism of Cote d'Ivoire, Siandou Fofana, chairing the commission



UNWTO Executive Director, Natalia Bayona



A family Photo of the 66th UNWTO Commission for Africa Meeting



Mauritius Prime Minister showcases sustainable tourism recovery model at 66th UNWTO CAF Meeting



Prime Minister of Mauritius, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth

During the 66th Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for Africa, Prime Minister of Mauritius, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, presented Mauritius as a prime example of a country charting a path towards sustainable tourism recovery amid the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking to formally open the three-day meetings at the Le Meridien in Pointe aux Piments, Mauritius, he emphasised Mauritius's commitment to building a resilient, inclusive and environmentally conscious tourism industry that sets a benchmark for the entire African continent.

Sharing Mauritius's journey in tourism, the Prime Minister traced its growth from humble beginnings in the 1950s to becoming a significant economic pillar, with 1.4 million visitor arrivals and 1.8 billion USD in tourism earnings recorded in 2019.

However, he acknowledged that the pandemic brought Mauritius's tourism sector to a halt, causing negative impacts on related industries such as retail, transport, and agriculture. He highlighted the swift actions taken to protect citizens by closing borders to foreigners from March 2020 to September 2021. Nonetheless, the government provided financial assistance to tourism operators, demonstrating its commitment to preserving the industry during

challenging times.

"To prevent the industry from collapsing, the government provided financial assistance to tourism operators. Our strategy to revive Mauritian tourism has paid off and the industry is on a strong recovery path today as indicated by the latest figures. From July 2022 to June 2023, tourism hit a recovery rate of 86.8% of pre-pandemic levels. Tourism earnings increased to 1.54 billion USD for the period July 2022 to April 2023, compared to 1.52 billion USD during the same period in 2018/2019," Prime Minister Jugnauth revealed.

He attributed this success to the effective collaboration between the public and private sectors through a Joint Public-Private Sector Working Group, which devised safe re-opening measures and strategies to relaunch the tourism sector.

Highlighting Mauritius's ongoing efforts towards sustainability, the Prime Minister shared plans for a 10-year Blueprint for the tourism sector, developed in collaboration with the World Bank.

He also drew attention to the urgency of addressing climate change, and acknowledged the challenges faced by small island nations like Mauritius. He reaffirmed the nation's commitment to sustainability by mainstreaming eco-friendly policies and striving to

achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

"Our aim is to position Mauritius as a sustainable island destination by 2030. Moreover, the rebalancing of the tourism activities with a shift from traditional coastal tourism to inland tourism is being promoted with a view to relieving pressure on our fragile coastal areas," he said.

The Prime Minister again underscored Mauritius's efforts in promoting investment and business in the African tourism sector. With a conducive business environment, predictable policies, and a bundle of facilities, Mauritius serves as a platform for channeling investments into the region's tourism industry.

Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth encouraged African leaders to unite and work together as "One Africa" to enhance the continent's tourism potential.

He postulated, "For 'One Africa' to gain momentum, we, African leaders, have to join forces and work together. To increase tourism within Africa, we can build on and extend partnerships such as the collaboration of the Indian Ocean Islands under the 'Iles Vanille' partnership and the arrangements between Southern and Eastern Africa.

"For instance, we can combine these initiatives into a "Beach and Bush" concept by twinning the attractions of the "Iles Vanille" with African safari and wildlife. In parallel, we can develop medical tourism, business tourism and MICE. We can further develop this collaboration through enhanced air and sea connectivity.

The UNWTO Secretary-General, Zurab Pololikashvili in his speech, praised Mauritius as a shining example of resilience and a symbol of the unwavering spirit and strength that characterises African tourism.

The Secretary-General acknowledged the challenges faced by the tourism industry due to the pandemic's impact but lauded Africa's ability to emerge strongly, thanks to its collective

determination and unity. He emphasized that now is the opportune moment to look towards the future and embark on a transformative journey by rethinking tourism for Africa.

Central to this vision is the UNWTO Agenda for Africa, which has been adapted to address the region's specific needs and potentials. The Secretary-General outlined key objectives, including the promotion of innovation, advocacy for Brand Africa, facilitation of travel and unlocking growth through strategic investment and public-private partnerships.

"Our vision for African tourism is also one of strong governance, more education and better jobs," Pololikashvili emphasised.



UNWTO Secretary General and Deputy Prime Minister of Mauritius pose for the cameras after the Post event Media briefing



Zimbabwe to host UNWTO Media and Communications Training

Zimbabwe will host the UNWTO Communication, Media and Tourism Training in Africa workshop in November.

This will boost the country's efforts to host global events.

Winnie Muchanyuka, Chief Executive of Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA), signed a hosting agreement with UNWTO Secretary General

Zurab Pololikashvili during the 66th Commission for Africa Meeting in Mauritius.

The workshop is scheduled to take place from 13-15 November in Victoria Falls.

The training session is expected to provide knowledge and skills to effectively engage with local and international media, equip delegates

with techniques to develop effective messaging and storytelling strategies among others.

The target audience will include communication specialists, public relations officials of National Tourism Boards and Ministries of Tourism as well as journalists covering the tourism sector.

World Travel & Tourism Council & UNWTO Sign Historic MOU



In an historic first, the world's two leading Travel and Tourism organisations representing the global public and private sectors agreed to work together across a number of key objectives.

The Memorandum of Understanding, signed today by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and the World Tourism Organization of the United Nations (UNWTO) at the G20 Ministerial meeting (Goa, India), focused on advancing public-private sector cooperation at the global level whilst promoting job creation, talent development and business opportunities around the world.

Together, WTTC and UNWTO will promote tourism in the global and national agendas while working to progress skills, innovation,

entrepreneurship, and investment as well as the transition towards a more sustainable and resilient Travel & Tourism sector.

The two parties will also foster community empowerment and inclusion, and collaborate around crisis preparedness, management, and recovery, building on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Julia Simpson, WTTC President and CEO said "Through this signing of an historic new MOU, WTTC and UNWTO embark on a new chapter of collaboration together, uniting our expertise to pave the way for a prosperous future for the Travel and Tourism sector.

"Together, we can create a powerful synergy that will shape the global

landscape, opening doors to endless opportunities and benefiting travelers, businesses, and destinations alike."

Zurab Pololikashvili, UNWTO Secretary-General, underscored that "We are only stronger if we work together to respond to the interconnected challenges facing our sector. Strong public-private partnerships are the foundation to transform tourism and build resilience, and consolidating our partnership with WTTC will achieve exactly what we need – joining efforts to build a better future through tourism."

The MOU was signed by WTTC President and CEO Julia Simpson and UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili, alongside representatives of the public and private sectors.

New Data Shows Investment Returning to Global Tourism Sector

Investment in the global tourism cluster has started to bounce back from the lows it touched during the pandemic off the back of the steady recovery of international tourist arrivals, according to a newly released report jointly produced by UNWTO and fDi Intelligence.

The report, which is based on data from fDi Markets, fDi Intelligence's proprietary database of greenfield FDI projects, as well as international tourism data from UNWTO, provides a broad overview of the ongoing investment cycle in the tourism sector, breaking down investment figures by region, segments and companies. Key findings include:

Both FDI project numbers and job creation rates in the tourism cluster grew by 23% from 286 investments in 2021 to 352 in 2022. Job creation in tourism FDI also increased by 23% over the same period, to an estimated 36,400 in 2022.

The leading destination region for tourism FDI projects in 2022 was Western Europe with 143 announced investments at a combined estimated value of \$2.2bn.

The number of announced projects into the Asia-Pacific region increased marginally by 2.4% to 42 projects in 2022.

The hotel and tourism sector accounted for almost two-thirds of all projects in the tourism cluster between 2018 and 2022. FDI projects increased by 25% from 2021 to 2022.

"Greenfield FDI into the tourism sector is showing signs of life after all but vanishing in the pandemic years. With Covid-19 behind us, the sector has no time to waste in addressing the biggest challenge of our times: climate change and the resulting sustainability imperative," comments Jacopo Dettoni, the editor of fDi Intelligence.

"To ensure the growth and competitiveness of the sector, significant investments must be made in education and talent by upskilling the professional workforce and implementing vocational and technical programmes. Only in this way can we equip young people – of whom only 50% have completed secondary education – with the knowledge and capabilities they need to thrive in the sector. These investments will then pave the way for a skilled workforce that can deliver exceptional

growth, drive innovation and, by embracing digital technologies, enhance the competitiveness and resilience of the tourism sector," argues Zurab Pololikashvili, UNWTO Secretary-General.

"As the sector steers its course towards recovery and growth, UNWTO now, more than ever, prioritises innovation, education and strategic investments as the pillars for recalibrating and adapting to these ever-evolving market dynamics. Spearheading a series of initiatives, we equip the professional workforce with new skills through upskilling and vocational workforce programmes, creating quality job opportunities, and raising average wages across the entire tourism value chain," says Natalia Bayona, executive director of the UNWTO.

The North America and Asia-Pacific regions each contribute three companies to the top 10 investors list for tourism foreign direct investment (FDI) between 2018 and 2022. The rest of the top 10 comprises companies from Europe, with Spain-based Melia, UK-based Intercontinental Hotels Group, France-based Accor and UK-based Selina all featuring.



World Bank Regional Vice President highlights tourism's role in Africa's sustainable development agenda amidst COVID-19 challenges

In a recent address to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 66th Commission for Africa Meeting in Mauritius, Victoria Kwakwa, the World Bank Regional Vice President for Eastern and Southern Africa, underscored the multifaceted challenges and opportunities faced by the tourism sector in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Kwakwa's speech emphasised the importance of sustainable and inclusive growth in the industry, and acknowledged the significant hurdles that countries have encountered.

"I don't have to remind you of the significant challenges countries have faced since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic," She remarked. "These include global shifts in demand, a rise in fragility, social unrest and conflicts and a growing urgency to address climate risks and growing inequality." She highlighted the sector's struggles with access to energy and digital connectivity which continue to hinder progress.

Drawing attention to the World Bank's

"Acknowledging the need for strategic planning, Kwakwa stated, "Tourism must be carefully planned and managed to avoid harming the very assets that make our countries attractive for visitors"

commitment to addressing these challenges, Ms Kwakwa shared that the number of World Bank tourism projects in Africa has nearly doubled since 2019 and with 20 active lending projects across the region in 14 countries, the World Bank has invested approximately \$1.55 billion in Africa. These projects, she explained, are designed to align with green and Paris Agreement principles, focusing on inclusivity, community benefits and conservation.

Kwakwa further elaborated on the intricate connection between poverty and climate, stating, "There is now



widespread agreement that poverty and climate are inseparably linked." She shared the World Bank's updated vision of eradicating poverty within the framework of a sustainable planet.

The speech highlighted the tourism sector's potential as a driver of job creation, particularly for women, youth, and rural communities. "The tourism sector provides significant opportunities to advance this vision through the creation of jobs," Kwakwa noted.

"Tourism can also attract new customers to local markets which trigger broad spillovers to other sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, and the protection of natural and cultural heritage," Kwakwa explained.

In the context of the pandemic, Kwakwa recognised the increased significance of domestic and regional tourism in boosting demand and reducing carbon emissions from long-haul visitors. However, she cautioned that not all forms of tourism are conducive to a sustainable future.

Acknowledging the need for strategic planning, the Regional boss said, "Tourism must be carefully planned

and managed to avoid harming the very assets that make our countries attractive for visitors."

Reflecting on the post-pandemic landscape, Kwakwa highlighted the World Bank's commitment to charting a sustainable path for the tourism industry. She revealed a substantial increase in World Bank tourism projects in Africa, emphasising green initiatives, inclusivity and community benefits.

While acknowledging the strides made, the World Bank Regional boss acknowledged the tourism sector's ongoing struggle with carbon emissions, resource consumption and waste production. She called for collaboration between the public and private sectors to unlock further opportunities for sustainable growth.

Closing her address, Kwakwa commended the collaborative efforts emerging from the pandemic, with various stakeholders uniting to share expertise and resources. She highlighted successful initiatives in Sierra Leone, Sao Tome and Principe, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia, demonstrating the tangible impact of collective action.



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Samarkand readies to host Tourism's biggest gathering at 25th UNWTO General Assembly

Uzbekistan's citadel of cultures, Samarkand, is set to showcase the city's immense cultural heritage as it gets set to host tourism's most important gathering.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) General Assembly is the supreme forum for the UN Tourism organization. The general assembly meets every two years and its 25th session is set for the 16-20 October at the Silk Road Samarkand Congress Centre.

The country since day one when it won the bid to host the event during the 24th general assembly in Madrid in 2021 has been preparing something unique and exciting to receive the over 1500 delegates including 175 Members states, affiliates, the private sector and the media who will participate in this august gathering.

Major announcements will be made at the event. Among them is the choice for the host for the 26th General Assembly.

What makes Samarkand a special place?

The city of Samarkand has been at the crossroads of world cultures for over two and a half millennia and is one of the

most important sites on the Silk Routes traversing Central Asia. Located in the Zerafshan River valley, in south-eastern Uzbekistan, the city enjoys the benefits of abundant natural resources and settlements in the region which can be traced back to 1,500 BC.

Samarkand has long been a central point for trade across the region and was a substantial city renowned for its craft production, with a citadel and strong fortifications, several centuries before it was conquered by Alexander the Great in 329 BC. From the late antique and early medieval period, the city and the surrounding areas were inhabited by the Sogdians, a people of Iranian origins renowned for their skill at trading.

Samarkand is a city in south eastern Uzbekistan and is among the oldest continuously inhabited cities in Central Asia.

The city has carefully preserved the traditions of ancient crafts: embroidery, goldwork, silk weaving, copper engraving, ceramics, wood carvings, and wood painting. In 2001, UNESCO added the city to its World Heritage List as Samarkand – Crossroads of Cultures.

Modern Samarkand is divided into two parts: the old city, and the new city, which



was developed during the days of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. The old city includes historical monuments, shops, and old private houses; the new city includes administrative buildings along with cultural centres and educational institutions. On September 15–16, 2022, the city hosted the 2022 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit.

Visit by UNWTO Team in Samarkand ahead of GA

As has been the custom for any host of the general assembly, the UNWTO Team led by the Secretary General embarked on a working visit to the country to familiarize with the preparations ahead of the big gathering.

Meeting with the country's President, Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili

was impressed with the preparations for the assembly and said, Uzbekistan is opening a new chapter in its tourism and economic development.

UNWTO Tourism Video Competition

The 25th session of the General Assembly will feature the 4th edition of the UNWTO Tourism Video Competition.

Program

The event kicks off with statutory committee meetings such as the Committee on statistics, Affiliate meetings corner, program and budget committee, and a special regional commission for Europe within the context of the Assembly.

Forum

Investments and Education fora would also be held with experts, public and private stakeholders to chart a pathway for sustained global tourism sector.

Best Tourism Villages

The fourth edition of the Best Tourism Villages ceremony will be celebrated at tourism's important gathering. Recognition of the next batch of winners will be announced. The Best Tourism



Village is a global initiative by UNWTO to promote the role of tourism in rural development.

World Tourism Day Hosts and Themes

The 25th session of the General Assembly is expected to ratify the recommendations of the 118th session of the UNWTO Executive Council and the proposals of the aforementioned Regional Commissions. Designates the following countries to host the official World Tourism Day celebrations in 2024 and 2025, with the respective themes:

2024: Georgia, "Tourism and Peace"
2025: Malaysia, "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation"

UlyssesPrize

The UNWTO Ulysses Prize for excellence in the creation and dissemination of knowledge is awarded to a distinguished scholar for his/her remarkable contribution to the tourism sector. Established in 2003, the Prize is given to a prominent representative from academia with outstanding achievements. Its 16th edition will take place on the occasion of the 25th session of the UNWTO General Assembly to be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, on 16-20 October 2023. Dr. Jigang Bao has been named as the winner of this edition.

Below is the provisional program for the event.

25UNWTO

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SAMARKAND

UZBEKISTAN

16 - 20 OCTOBER 2023

UNWTO

25th session of the General Assembly

16- 20 October 2023, Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Silk Road Samarkand Congress Center

Provisional Programme (as of 08/09/2023)

A/25/Prov.Prog.

		Monday, 16 October	Tuesday, 17 October	Wednesday, 18 October	Thursday, 19 October	Friday, 20 October
AFTERNOON	09:00		09:00- 11:00 Cmte. on Matters Related to the Affil. Membership		09:00- 09:45 Credentials Committee Venue: Zircon	09:00- 09:45 Associate Members Meeting Venue: Zircon
	10:00	10:30- 13:30 Cmte. on Statistics Venue: Zircon	09:30- 11:00 Cmte. on Tourism & Sustainability Venue: Zircon	10:00- 13:00 GENERAL ASSEMBLY- FIRST PLENARY <i>(Opening of the Online Education Academy)</i> Venue: Grand Hall	10:00- 13:00 EDUCATION FORUM <i>Ulysses Prize</i> Venue: Grand Hall	10:00- 12:00 120TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL Venue: Ballroom
	11:00	11:00- 13:30 Plenary of Affiliate Members Venue: Diamond		10:00- 13:00 INVESTMENT FORUM <i>(Mega-events competition)</i> Venue: Expo Center	10:00- 13:00 BTU Meeting Venue: Diamond	
	12:00	11:30- 12:30 Programme & Budget Cmte. Venue: Ballroom	12:00- 13:30 Cmte. Tourism& Competitiveness Venue: Zircon <i>(En)</i>			12:00- 12:30 Programme & Budget Cmte. Venue: Ballroom
	13:00					
	14:00	Lunch Venue: Sun Hall	Lunch Venue: Sun Hall	Lunch Venue: Sun Hall	Lunch Venue: Sun Hall	Lunch Venue: Sun Hall
	15:00	14:30- 16:30 Cmte. on Statistics	15:00- 18:00 119TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL Venue: Ballroom	15:00- 18:00 GENERAL ASSEMBLY- SECOND PLENARY Venue: Grand Hall	15:00- 18:00 GENERAL ASSEMBLY- THIRD PLENARY <i>(Ceremony of adherence to the ICPT)</i> Venue: Grand Hall	15:00- 18:00 Half day tour
	16:00	15:00- 18:00 Plenary of Affiliate Members Venue: Diamond	15:00- 18:00 Affiliate Member's Corner Venue: Diamond			
	17:00	15:30- 18:30 REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR EUROPE Venue: Ballroom				
	18:00					
EVENING	19:00					
	20:00		Welcome Cocktail Venue: Sun Hall	Gala dinner & Best Tourism Village Awards Venue: Eternal city	Dinner Venue: Sun Hall	
	21:00					
	22:00					

Nigeria's Lai Mohammed appointed Special Advisor to UNWTO Secretary General



Alhaji Lai Mohammed receiving a plaque from UNWTO Secretary-General, Zurab Pololikashvili

The immediate past Minister of Information and Culture of Nigeria, Lai Mohammed has been appointed as Special Advisor to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Secretary General, Zurab Pololikashvili.

The announcement of the appointment was made during the opening session of the 66th UNWTO Commission for Africa (CAF) held in Mauritius. Mohammed brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to his new task having consistently played instrumental roles in the affairs of the world tourism body for the past seven years.

He led the organisation of the 61st UNWTO CAF Meetings in Nigeria in 2018 and the maiden UNWTO Global Conference on Linking Tourism, Culture and Creative Industries in Lagos last year. He is expected to help Pololikashvili pursue his objective of making Africa a key region for the global tourism economy through his Agenda for Africa programme.

Accepting the new role, Lai Mohammed expressed his gratitude, saying that he was inspired by the confidence reposed in him by the Secretary-General.

"I stand before you, deeply touched and inspired by your generous words of confidence and trust. With so much

gratitude for the confidence placed in me by the Secretary General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili and with an unswerving resolve to honour that trust, I humbly accept the appointment as the Special Advisor on Tourism to the Secretary General of this great Organization.

"This would mark the first time that I would be attending a function of the UNWTO as a private individual having for the past seven (7) years, served as the Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. I wish to extend my deepest respect and appreciation to all the leaders of the member states, particularly those from the Africa region; for their support and friendship," he maintained.

Mohammed added that "I am deeply honoured to become the first Nigerian to serve in this capacity. Nigeria is dynamic and diverse in terms of natural and human resources in the areas of tourism, culture, creative industries, technology and other aspects of our national economy. Having come so far and rising still, the Nigeria and Africa region, in general, is living and shaping the full range of achievements and challenges of our current times. It is

therefore inspiring to take on more responsibilities that will guide the development of tourism in a more responsible and sustainable manner."

The mandate of the Special Advisor straddles several responsibilities including assisting in developing a strategy for restarting sustainable and safe tourism post-COVID-19 and advising the UNWTO Secretary General on issues related to information and culture. Lai Mohammed is also expected to prepare relevant reports and research documents in line with UNWTO's principles, accompany and offer advice to the Secretary General in his visits and propose relevant actions of public relations in line with the world tourism body's priorities.

"I stand before you, deeply touched and inspired by your generous words of confidence and trust. With so much gratitude for the confidence placed in me by the Secretary General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili and with an unswerving resolve to honour that trust"



Alhaji Lai Mohammed

Jaime Ibrahim Mayaki Ascends to Leadership Role in UNWTO's Technical Cooperation Department



Jaime Ibrahim Mayaki

In a landmark appointment, Jaime Ibrahim Mayaki has been selected to head the Technical Cooperation Department at the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Transitioning from his former role as Deputy Director of the Africa Department, Mayaki will oversee this pivotal department from the UNWTO's headquarters in Madrid, Spain.

Mayaki's appointment is historically significant; he becomes not only the first African to direct the Technical Cooperation Department but also the first African currently leading any of the UNWTO's knowledge departments. This milestone was officially communicated by UNWTO Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili in an organizational bulletin.

Tasked with managing an expansive range of projects in partnership with member states at the global level, the Technical Cooperation Department

collaborates closely with multinational entities and financial institutions. This key unit is instrumental in advancing UNWTO's mission and promoting member engagement across diverse programs and initiatives.

Since joining the UNWTO in 2016, Mayaki has earned a reputation for his strategic acumen, innovative approach, and global perspective. He also brings a wealth of leadership experience from his tenure as Chief of Staff at the Ministry of Economy and Finance in his home country of Niger. His extensive career also involves collaborations with major financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Millennium Challenge Account.

As Africa is home to a considerable share of UNWTO's ongoing initiatives, Mayaki's leadership is keenly anticipated to enhance the continent's robust engagement with the organization.

"Tasked with managing an expansive range of projects in partnership with member states at the global level, the Technical Cooperation and Silk Road Department collaborates closely with multinational entities and financial institutions. This key unit is instrumental in advancing UNWTO's mission and promoting member engagement across diverse programs and initiatives."

In an exclusive conversation with VoyagesAfriq, Mayaki expressed profound honor and gratitude for the opportunity to lead the Technical Cooperation and Silk Road Department. He extended his heartfelt thanks to Secretary General Pololikashvili for entrusting him with the helm of this critical unit within the UNWTO.

2023 Africa Tourism Leadership Forum and Awards: Shaping the Future of African Tourism

In a much-anticipated gathering set to take place from October 4th to 6th, the 2023 Africa Tourism Leadership Forum and Awards (ATLF) is set to once again, bring together a diverse range of global industry experts, leaders, policymakers and stakeholders from over 30 countries. Hosted at the prestigious Gaborone International Convention Centre (GICC) within The Grand Palm Resort, this year's event promises to be a ground-breaking occasion, featuring the inaugural AfCFTA Forum on Tourism Creatives and Cultural Industries.

Business Exchange and Training Day

ATLF2023 will be heralded by the Intra-Africa Travel & Tourism Business Exchange and Exhibition on October 3. This offers bespoke intra-Africa travel and tourism opportunity for marketing, sales, business development and networking in



President of Botswana, Dr Eric Masisi addressing delegates at last year's event



professional and personalised setting for suppliers (accommodation and service providers) to do business with travel trade (DMCs, tour operators, online travel agents (OTAs) in structured and business environment).

Setting the Stage for Sustainable Growth

The vision of the 2023 ATLF is clear: to provide a permanent platform for innovative leadership dialogue aimed at driving sustainable growth within Africa's tourism economy. With a mission to promote sustainable growth across the continent and stimulate intra-Africa travel through innovative leadership, dialogue and collaboration, the forum seeks to shape the future of African tourism.

Advocacy, Learning, and Recognition

The primary rationale behind the ATLF is to serve as a Pan-African event where industry leaders can advocate, learn, share experiences and knowledge while devising actionable strategies to stimulate intra-Africa travel growth and development. ATLF2023 will act as a gathering of industry thought leaders, advancing entrepreneurship, empowering women and youth and recognising industry changemakers through the prestigious Africa Tourism Leadership Awards.

Unifying the Voices of African Tourism Leaders

Notably, the ATLF stands as a unique platform—the single voice for unified advocacy among Africa's tourism leaders. This platform puts a spotlight on Africa's burgeoning tourism economy, highlighting its potential and the opportunities it presents.

A Diverse and Influential Audience

With over 600 delegates expected from more than 38 countries over three days, the 2023 ATLF will attract a wide array of influential figures, including UNWTO Secretary-General, CEOs of leading organizations, officials from the African Union and many others. The event's attendees will also include key players in the aviation industry, hospitality and related sectors, representing a broad spectrum of stakeholders committed to advancing African tourism.



Kwakyie Donkor dancing to a successful hosting of the event in 2020 in the midst of the covid-19 pandemic

Celebrating Change-Makers in African Tourism

A highlight of the ATLF is the Africa Tourism Leadership Awards, the only pan-African industry awards of its kind. These awards recognise and celebrate change-makers and innovators who have pioneered developments in African travel, tourism, hospitality, and aviation. Notably, the awards honour individuals, small enterprises, countries, leaders and organisations that have demonstrated their commitment to leadership through sustainable tourism practices and policymaking.

The 2023 Africa Tourism Leadership Forum and Awards will provide the stage for intensive dialogue, collaboration, and recognition within Africa's dynamic tourism landscape. This event will explore the potential to shape the future of African tourism and foster sustainable growth across the continent, making it a must-attend for anyone with a stake in Africa's tourism industry.

SPEAKERS

PROGRAMME



The 2nd edition of ATLF in Durban, South Africa

The Africa Tourism Leadership Forum: The journey so far

Since its inception in 2018, the Africa Tourism Leadership Forum and Awards (ATLF), has created the much-needed platform for Africans to engage each other from business to business, thought-leadership fora, business networking exchange and offering African youths the opportunity to showcase innovative craft.

Held in Accra, Ghana for its inaugural event, the ATLF led by Africa Tourism Partners, its convener in collaboration with UNWTO, Marriott International, BDO and Ghana Tourism Authority, the Forum brought together private and public sector leaders to dialogue and find solutions to some of the basic problems confronting the sector. It went beyond that as many industry persons connected for the first time and got the conversation going.

It has not been hunky dory, but some important wins and businesses at least have been done by participants. Business breakfast meeting, tourism masterclasses, which has been a constant feature helped in sharpening the skill set for the sector as well as the opportunity to have industry leaders' mentor young fellows. The key achievement of the 2018 edition the high-level intra-Africa travel Business-to-Business sessions. This created the first-ever private-public sector marketing place for travel, tourism, hospitality and aviation

In addition to this, the Ghana Tourism Authority used to reposition the country as an emerging MICE destination and has since then capitalised on milestone to set-up its MICE division, join ICC Membership and strengthen its presence in the global market place.

Durban, South Africa 2019

The event true to the mandate it set for its self-generated massive interests and moved from west coast to Durban in the Kwazulu-Natal province of South Africa. It continued from where it left off and paired young tourism leaders with veterans to dialogue on the pressing challenges thwarting efforts to drive tourism on the continent mainly from



CEO of Rwanda Development Board Clare Akamanzi at the 2020 ATLF

the private sector. Discussions upon discussions took place and we can refer to some of the lessons taken from the summit. This help to elevate Durban in particular and South Africa as a whole as intra-Africa travel destination. Further to this, 2019 Forum gave birth to Africa Youth in Tourism in Innovation Summit and Challenge.

To date, this Youth Summit and Challenges has supported over 300 tourism and travel tech start-ups and entrepreneurs through mentorship, capacity building and partnership development across more than 30 countries.

Kigali, Rwanda 2020

In a year, projected to see a leap growth in Africa's tourism eventually was the sector's devastating year with Covid-19 bringing every movement to a stop. Great thing about the event is that it moved from West Africa to Southern Africa and now to the thousand hills in East Africa. It was run in collaboration with Rwanda Development, Rwanda Convention Bureau and East Africa Tourism Partners.

“To date, this Youth Summit and Challenges has supported over 300 tourism and travel tech start-ups and entrepreneurs through mentorship, capacity building and partnership development across more than 30 countries”

Even in those extremely difficult periods, the vision of Africa Tourism Partners, organisers of the event, continued to be pushed and eventually held an online/virtual summit in Kigali, Rwanda. The organiser, against all odds, made a bold decision not to cancel and heeded to the WHO/national regulations to organize a virtual event. It went beyond just seeing the event held but a major statement and leadership to say, ATLF was here to stay. It was well attended virtually by over 1000 online delegates



with over 120 physical participants from over 38 countries. It has come a long way and needs to be celebrated. It attracted massive support from the UNWTO Secretary General, ICCA and Mastercard Foundation.

This gave birth to the Rwanda Travel Week in 2022. It also supports more youth in tourism innovation.

Kigali, Rwanda 2021

Still having to confront the dreadful Covid -19 with Rwanda proving its capability of hosting an event in a new era of virtual meetings had a second bite at the cherry and true to their words set a new tone for ATLF in the Covid era. The event grew in leaps and bounds coming from an unprecedented time. Africa Tourism Leadership Forum has not only attracted the best minds the continent can boost off but also the massive support of the Africa

Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA Secretariat), IATA, Marriott Kigali and Mastercard Foundation and his team for the invaluable support.

Gaborone, Botswana 2022

Last year's event, which was a watershed moment for the event in so many ways, had its first Head of State, His Excellency, Dr Mokgweetsi Masisi, The President of Botswana gracing the event and ensuring that tourism is a major priority for Botswana and Africa as a whole.

More so, the event led to the establishment of Africa Tourism Private Sector Alliance, the apex body of all African tourism private sector associations in collaboration and support of AfCFTA. This body will be endorsed by AfCFTA on the margins of the inaugural AfCFTA Forum on Tourism, Creative and Cultural industries.

Also, through the Africa Tourism Leadership Awards, the Forum recognises nine (9) African travel, tourism and aviation industry change-makers and thought-leaders annually. These awards are now the most sought-after Pan-African travel and tourism accolades on the continent by Africans, for Africans and in Africa.

Family photo of the inaugural event in Accra, Ghana



‘We have an open investment regime with a bundle of facilities in tourism’, says Steven Obeegadoo, Deputy Prime Minister, Mauritius

Since 2017, the government of the Republic of Mauritius has doubled efforts at making tourism a priority in its economic development with the introduction of a number of measures.

In this interview, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, Steven Obeegadoo, speaks to VoyagesAfric on the feats and further efforts at making the island a sustainable destination by 2030, among other related issues.

The CAF meeting of the UNWTO emphasized the role of tourism as a driver of development in Africa. How does Mauritius plan to leverage its tourism sector for sustainable development and job creation?

Mauritius is already placing sustainability at the core of its policies and strategies.

The Mauritius Tourism Authority has won international awards for its efforts and we are working, with the support of the World Bank, towards the certification of the island as a sustainable destination by 2030.

To achieve this ambitious objective, the government has introduced a number of measures since 2017. This includes collaboration between the Ministry of Tourism and the United Nations Environment Programme on “Transforming Tourism Value Chains”, which will assist Mauritius transition to a low carbon tourism economy whilst providing a unique experience for visitors and ensuring an inclusive, clean and safe environment for our citizens.

We have partnered with hoteliers to support the adoption of eco-friendly practices such as the use of energy-saving devices and encouraging renewable energy, waste composting, installation of recycling and desalination plants and rain water harvesting.

In 2018, we launched the Sustainable Island Mauritius project, funded by the European Union under the SWITCH Africa Green programme, with the aim of promoting sustainable tourism in Mauritius. Results were achieved through demonstration and scaling up of self-sustaining mechanisms for

improving impacts along the value chain as well as creating awareness and promoting sustainable tourism products.

The project also provided the operators with the opportunity to move to more resource-efficient and environmentally sound business practices with the objective of increasing profitability, creating green jobs and hence reducing poverty.

Moving forward, the government is creating a Sustainable Tourism Unit to assist the industry towards Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Certifications by 2030.

With international arrivals bouncing back to nearly pre-pandemic levels, what strategies does Mauritius have in place to ensure this growth is sustainable and beneficial to both the local economy and the environment?

We are promoting a more sustainable and inclusive tourism sector by diversifying our product offering. In addition to our pristine beaches and turquoise water lagoons, we are promoting water-based activities such as kitesurf and deep-sea fishing. We are also shifting the focus to inland tourism, inviting our visitors to explore our rich history and blend of cultures as well as our beautiful mountain ranges and tropical forests. Sports tourism is also gaining momentum with activities such as golf and trail.

You have been presented with a new set of Investment Guidelines by the UNWTO, designed to connect investors with tourism projects in Mauritius. Could you provide some examples of these projects and explain how they will contribute to the sustainable development of the country?

Mauritius offers investors a conducive environment for doing business, which guarantees predictability, certainty and security. We also have an open investment regime with a bundle of facilities such as technology, internet, premium visa, easy access to residence and work permits, 100% company ownership and access to land.

The Investment guidelines provide investors with useful information for example on the tax regime, investment opportunities, recruitment of labour and information on the regulatory framework.

Specific tourism projects open to foreign investors include hotels, casinos and marinas, and we are moreover open to business proposals that would broaden the goods and services sought by tourists. The investment guidelines also set out parameters for public-private partnerships for the effective management of cultural and heritage sites. In this connection our Economic Development Board is launching a call for proposals to develop, while preserving, the Citadel fortress, a landmark historic site in Port Louis.

With the focus on gender equality and youth empowerment, could you share some of Mauritius’s plans or initiatives aimed at promoting women and youth in the tourism sector?



“In 2018, we launched the Sustainable Island Mauritius project, funded by the European Union under the SWITCH Africa Green programme, with the aim of promoting sustainable tourism in Mauritius. Results were achieved through demonstration and scaling up of self-sustaining mechanisms for improving impacts along the value chain as well as creating awareness and promoting sustainable tourism products”

There are broad measures that have been taken by the government of Mauritius to promote gender equality and youth empowerment. For example, it is a prerequisite for listed companies to have a minimum of 25% of women on their boards. To encourage women entrepreneurship, women owned Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) benefit from a 10% increase in the margin of preference for public procurement of goods. In the 2023-2024 budget, the Mauritian government has made provision for a monthly contribution of 330 USD, applicable for a period of two years, to the salaries of newly employed women or those who have been unemployed for at least a year under the “Prime à L’Emploi” Scheme. This financial aid is being extended to all youth being recruited under the same scheme. Government is also coming up with a vulnerable youth programme that will cater for some 6,000 students.

Furthermore, the government has introduced new projects such as ‘SheTrades Mauritius’ to encourage the participation of women-led businesses and young women graduates in trade in Mauritius.

Considering the impact of extreme weather events, could you elaborate on Mauritius’s plans to incorporate climate action into its tourism strategies?

Climate change is indeed a pressing challenge that we are addressing urgently. Although our greenhouse gas

emission is negligible as compared to large advanced economies, we are facing the dire consequences of climate change in terms of droughts, flash floods, rise in sea levels and destruction of the marine eco-system, particularly corals.

To address this challenge, we have reviewed our tourism model by mainstreaming sustainability into our policies and strategies to accelerate the achievement of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). As stated earlier there are a number of initiatives that Mauritius has introduced to adapt to climate change such as the ‘Sustainable Island Mauritius’ project and the “Transforming Tourism Value Chains” project.

We have also made provision for the setting up of Climate Change Units within Public and Private institutions to coordinate action on climate change issues. We have set the example by committing to reduce our emission by 40% by 2030, in spite of contributing less than 0.01% to global GHG emissions. We are urging the international community to support our efforts through institutional capacity building, technology transfer and simplified and scaled-up access to concessional financing and grants.

The IMF estimates at 200 million USD per year the amount required to bridge the gap between our aspirations and commitments under the Paris Accords and our financing capacity. Moreover, because of high debt, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine War, the IMF advocates that this gap to be largely met by international financial facilities made available on concessional terms to avoid us facing the risk of debt distress. Our Ministry of Finance is working with the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, the African Development Bank and the World Bank to mobilize the required concessional financing by way of joint efforts with other tourist dependent small states.

We have also introduced a legal framework to make Mauritius a climate-change resilient and low emission country.

Mauritius’s villages of Le Morne and Old Grand Port have been recognized among the Best Tourism Villages by the UNWTO. How will this recognition influence the



future tourism development strategies in rural areas of Mauritius?

Mauritius has a myriad of attractions and, in this respect, relies on tourism for its economic development. The award of the “Best Tourism Village by UNWTO” to Vieux Grand Port and Le Morne will contribute in enhancing the visibility of these villages as a tourist destination and in increasing their attractiveness as well as that of the country.

Through the Best Tourism Village initiative, Vieux Grand Port and Le Morne are currently part of a network that aims at providing a platform for exchanging experiences and good practices, learning and opportunities. It includes representatives of the villages that have been awarded the ‘Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO’, the villages participating in the Upgrade Programme as well as experts, public and private sector partners engaged in the promotion of tourism for rural development.

Mauritius is also expecting to benefit from technical assistance and capacity building provided by the UNWTO to the inhabitants of the award-winning villages in relation to tourism development and upgrading of their skills as entrepreneurs.

With the benefits derived from being recognised as a ‘Best Tourism Village’, many other villages that were isolated from tourism development will be motivated to join the network and also promote tourism development in their village to benefit from the multiplier effects and economic benefits.

Africa Rising: Meet continent's new female tourism ministers



Lola Ade-John,
Nigeria's Minister of Tourism



Nabeela F. Tunis,
Sierra Leone's Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs



Barbara Rwodzi,
Zimbabwe's Minister of Tourism & Hospitality

As Africa rises, its tourism is rising too, especially now with women leading the way. Excitedly, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe tourism industries have all welcomed new ministers of tourism to lead their countries respective sector recovery and drive.

Intriguingly, the three are all women. President Bola Tinubu of Nigeria has for the first time had a dedicated ministry of tourism with respected IT expert and banker Lola Ade-John, appointed as the minister for the portfolio. Expectations are high for her to lead the renaissance of the industry and chart a new path for its tourism sector.

It came weeks after the African giant secured a seat on UNWTO's Executive Council and vice presidency of the Commission for Africa at the organization following the restoration of the Ministry of Tourism.

Meanwhile, stakeholders in the Nigerian tourism industry have also commended the creation of a stand alone Ministry of Tourism by President Bola Tinubu, while assuring that the development would reposition tourism and its overall impact on the nation's gross domestic product.

Sierra's Leone Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Nabeela F. Tunis has been appointed as the country's new Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs in President Julius Maada Bio's new cabinet. She replaced Dr Memunatu Pratt, who held the portfolio in the last cabinet. Mrs. Nabeela F. Tunis served as the country's Foreign Minister from May 2019. Minister Tunis has vast experience in Development Management, Diplomacy, Political Analysis and Governance, Conflict Prevention and Mediation, Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming, Environmental Governance and Human Rights issues.

Tunis has a Bachelor of Arts in political science from Fourah Bay College and English and a Master's in Rural Development from Njala University, both part of the University of Sierra Leone. She worked as Program Manager of the Women's Network for Environmental Sustainability and as a Senior National Officer within the United Nations office in Sierra Leone. Tunis was appointed the Minister of Planning and Economic Development on 8 May 2018. In this role she helped produce the president's National Economic Development Plan.

Zimbabwe's Former Deputy Minister of Tourism and Member of Parliament Barbara Rwodzi has been elevated to a substantive Minister of the reconfigured Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality. Ms Rwodzi was named in the new cabinet announced by President Emerson Mnangagwa on Monday, September 11 following his reelection last month. She will be supported by Tongai Mafidhi Mnangagwa, as the Deputy Minister.

Barbara Rwodzi is a Zimbabwean entrepreneur and politician. From December 2021 to August 2023, she served as Zimbabwe's Deputy Minister of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality. As an entrepreneur, Rwodzi was the CEO of House of BarRue Knitwear - a successful business that exports handmade garments. She was part of the African Women's Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP) where she had the opportunity to meet other businesswomen from Africa. During the exchange visit, she met American entrepreneurs, including designers like Diane von Furstenberg, as well as American business owners.

Kenya unveils ambitious plans for state of the art Convention Centre

The Government of Kenya has recently revealed its ambitious intention to construct a cutting-edge convention center in Nairobi, the capital city. This strategic move aims to solidify Kenya's role as a significant player in the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry, while also enhancing its diplomatic and commercial prominence within the East African region.

In an official press release following a cabinet decision, the government articulated its vision with clarity: "To establish Kenya as the preferred hub for MICE Tourism and reinforce its status as a thriving diplomatic and commercial nucleus, the cabinet has granted approval for the establishment of the Bomas International Convention Centre (BICC)."

This proposed ultra-modern convention center is poised to be a multi-faceted facility, featuring an expansive conference center, an exclusive presidential pavilion, and a cluster of at least five luxurious hotels. Notably, this

groundbreaking initiative comes fifty years after the inauguration of Kenya's inaugural international convention center, the KICC (Kenya International Convention Centre). The venture is anticipated to catalyze the expansion of various sectors including conference tourism, hospitality, events, and aviation – all of which align seamlessly with the overarching objectives of the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA).

Expressing her enthusiasm about the decision, Peninah Malonza, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Tourism, Wildlife, and Heritage, took to Twitter to declare, "Our focus is on enhancing Kenya's capacity to become the sought-after destination for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE). Today, the cabinet's approval of the Bomas International Convention Centre (BICC) underscores our commitment to foster MICE tourism growth as an integral part of #BETA."

It is worth noting that the MICE sector, constituting Meetings, Incentives,

Conferences, and Exhibitions, played a pivotal role in Kenya's tourism landscape, contributing an impressive 13.5% to the total annual arrivals exceeding two million in 2019. This bold move to establish the Bomas International Convention Centre (BICC) promises not only to further amplify these figures but also to position Kenya as a dynamic epicenter for global conferences, high-profile events, and diplomatic gatherings. With its multifaceted facilities and strategic location, the BICC seems poised to redefine Kenya's footprint in both the regional and international arenas.



Rwanda signs five-year deal with Bayern Munich

Rwanda has signed a five-year partnership with German football club, Bayern Munich to promote tourism and set up a football academy.

According to a press release from the Rwanda Development Board (RDB), the "Visit Rwanda" logo will appear on the illuminated panels around Bayern Munich's home pitch, Allianz Arena.

"We are delighted to be partnering with FC Bayern to support the development of football for boys and girls in Rwanda. We are looking forward to creating the FC Bayern Academy where their expert coaches will be able to share their knowledge of the game with local coaches and players," said Rwanda's Minister of Sport, Aurore Mimosa Munyangaju, in the statement.

"Africa is a continent of opportunities. For FC Bayern, it is the next important step in our internationalization," said Bayern Munich CEO Jan-Christian Dreesen.

For the past five years, Rwanda has



invested heavily in the sporting sphere, with the aim of attracting tourists and investors and raising the international profile of the country.

Rwanda signed a partnership with Arsenal in 2018 and with PSG the following year. It has also embarked on organizing international sporting events, such as the World Road Cycling

Championships in 2025, and in March this year, hosted the 73rd Congress of the International Football Federation.

Partnerships with Arsenal and PSG have generated more than 160 million U.S. dollars and attracted a million visitors, generating an additional 445 million U.S. dollars according to Clare Akamanzi in March.

Botswana Fashion Week eyes investments into Industry

The 2023 edition of the “Batho Fashion Week” has been held in Botswana’s tourist haven of Kasane.

The fashion week featured an array of activities including masterclasses by industry experts, networking opportunities and a showcase of Botswana’s varied fashion industry.

From captivating designs to vibrant expressions of heritage, it was a celebration of style like no other. The 3-day clothing show celebrated fashion designers, models, and creatives from all over the world.

“Batho Fashion Week” is the only fashion week in Botswana.

The first night of Batho Fashion Week, which is the only fashion week in Botswana, dazzled with an extraordinary display of fashion and culture that left patrons in awe.

The show is aimed at diversifying the economy of Botswana (tourism sector) by tapping into fashion tourism, an area that remains very limited.

The event is held annually in Kasane, where four countries meet (Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Zambia), which is also the most-visited tourist town by

international travelers because of its diverse wildlife.

At this year’s event, Botswana’s Minister of Tourism, Philda Nani Kereng called on the “Batho Fashion Week” organisers to tap into the power of fashion tourism and turn Botswana into a premier destination for fashion enthusiasts from across the world. According to her, the event can be a powerful force for economic diversification and sustainable development as it has done in other economies around the world including the African continent.



“This momentous occasion speaks to our revised Tourism Policy which seeks to expand our tourism products across sectors of the economy including the fashion industry,” the Minister stated.

Philda Kereng also indicated that her Ministry is currently developing the



MICE strategy aimed at promoting Botswana as a destination of choice for international event thus the event is in line with the pending strategy.

Organisers of the event maintained that “Batho Fashion Week” is not merely a celebration of fashion, “but a revolution towards economic diversification. Our mission is to tap into the yet unexplored realm of fashion tourism and turn it into an economic powerhouse for Botswana.”

“The event encapsulates the rich cultural heritage of Botswana and Africa while fostering fashion sustainability and cultural preservation.” Our unique approach integrates traditional craftsmanship with contemporary fashion, promoting knowledge transfer and ensuring that our traditional textile wisdom transcends generations,” the organisers said further.

This year’s edition had 16 designers comprising of 10 locals and 6 internationals, who came from the USA, Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa, and Kenya. There were also 30 models introducing the spring/summer collection.

“Batho Fashion” was founded in 2021, as a platform to empower local communities to benefit from tourism in a lasting way and diversify the economy from wildlife only to fashion tourism. Part of the proceeds from the annual event go towards supporting families that have been affected by human-wildlife conflict.

The global fashion industry is valued at \$1.53 trillion as of 2022 (Statista, 2023).



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The Seychelles Islands:

Once-in-a-lifetime refuge from a frantic world

The modern world relaxation techniques invite tourists/travellers to close their eyes and dream of a place where tired spirits can be refreshed. But why dream when Seychelles transcends imagination? Creation has blessed Seychelles with perpetual summer, space to breathe the purest air and room to unwind on the powder-soft sand of endless beaches.

Seychelles comprises 115 pristine, tropical islands between 4 and 10 degrees south of the equator and 1600 km from the east coast of Africa. With a near-perfect climate, this beautiful archipelago is practically disease-free and situated well outside the cyclone belt, earning it the name 'land of perpetual summer'.

This archipelago, containing the only mid-ocean, granitic islands on the planet and certainly known to the early Arab sea-farers, was a favourite pirate haunt before being colonized by the French in 1769 and the British in 1814. Seychelles became an independent republic within the Commonwealth in 1976.

The islands are predominantly Roman Catholic with an ethnic mix every bit as diverse as the makeup of its islands. In an ecologically compromised world Seychelles offers sanctuaries for numerous endemic species of flora and fauna that are amongst the rarest on earth. The islands are also home to two UNESCO World Heritage sites: The Vallée de Mai, upon whose ancient palms grows the wondrous Coco-de-mer and fabled Aldabra, largest raised atoll in the world.



Throughout the islands are to be found unparalleled opportunities for sailing on bare-boat or skippered yacht, deep-sea and fly-fishing as well as a broad diversity of dive experiences. Seychelles also boasts excellent eco-holidays, walks & trails, spa & wellness vacations, island-hopping and golf.

From Mahé, principal island of the Seychelles, the nation's islands extend 100 km north and 1000km to the south-west. Between 15 minutes and 1 hr flight time from Mahé, several of our select island getaways offer accommodation in well-appointed lodges and resorts ranging from sumptuous five-star luxury to elegant-beachside bungalows.

Our islands enjoy a rich variety of affordable hotels and guesthouses with the charms and rhythms of an authentic, island lifestyle.

Long known as the islands of love, Seychelles offers a naturally romantic backdrop for weddings and honeymoons, as well as being an enticing destination for select incentive groups and the elite of the business world.

Never before has the discerning tourist seeking tranquility been offered such a diverse choice of authentic, island-style experiences in one destination.

All this and more besides is there for travellers to discover to the most beautiful islands on the planet.



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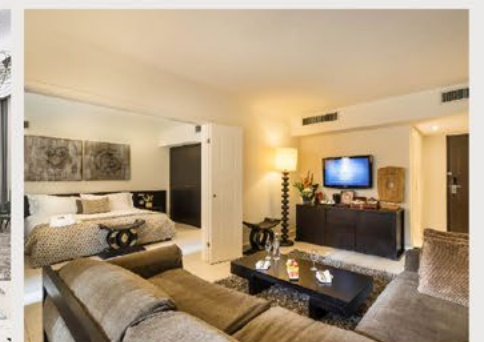
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Ghana unveils events for December odyssey

The Ghana Tourism Authority and the 'Beyond the Return' Secretariat have unveiled a preliminary list of events and activities endorsed for the upcoming 'December In GH' celebration in 2023. This tourism brand started in 2019 during the 'Year of Return' campaign, aims to promote African renaissance and unity while showcasing the rich cultural heritage of Ghana.

Out of 128 event proposals received by the 'Beyond The Return' Secretariat, 91 have been selected for inclusion in this year's 'December in GH' event calendar, spanning various regions and themes.

Annabelle Mckenzie, the Manager of the 'Beyond The Return' Secretariat, revealed the regional distribution of the endorsed events. The Greater Accra Region will host seventy-eight events, while the Eastern, Northern, Central, Upper East and Volta Regions will collectively hold twelve events. Additionally, the Ashanti and Western Regions will each feature one event. This diversified lineup promises to create a nationwide platform for both development and cultural celebrations.

'Beyond The Return' is a continuation of the successful 'Year of Return' which invited members of the global African diaspora to reconnect with their

roots by visiting Ghana. Professor Esi Sutherland-Addy, Chairperson of the Endorsement Committee, emphasised the significance of 'December in GH' as an occasion for networking and unity between Ghanaians and the diaspora. She encouraged viewing the event as an opportunity for development rather than just a festive period.

Akwasi Agyeman, CEO of the Ghana Tourism Authority, highlighted Ghana's global recognition for its showcase of rich African culture and commitment to Pan-Africanism.

The CEO pointed out that the event has not only bolstered the state's revenue but also benefited various industries in both the private and government sectors. He emphasized how the influx of visitors injects revenue into the economy, stimulates local businesses, and creates short-term employment opportunities, particularly during the festive season.

Agyeman urged all Ghanaians to participate actively in transforming Ghana into a welcoming home for those who wish to experience the country's rich cultural ecosystem. The 'December in GH' celebration aligns with the seven pillars of the 'Beyond The Return' initiative, which include experiencing



Ghana, celebrating Ghana, investing in Ghana, branding Ghana, giving back to Ghana, facilitating diaspora pathways to Ghana, and promoting Pan-African heritage and innovation.

As 'December in GH' continues to gain momentum, it promises to cultivate a constant atmosphere of African heritage and Ghanaian unity through its endorsed events. The diverse and engaging lineup will provide opportunities for both Ghanaians and visitors from around the world to partake in this cultural extravaganza that resonates with the spirit of 'Beyond The Return'.

As of today, the Beyond The Return Secretariat has opened another window of opportunity until first week in September, for event organisers to submit their events for review, possible endorsement and to update the current list.



The role of the AfCFTA Agreement in Africa's Tourism drive

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement, as one of the flagship projects of the African Union's Agenda 2063: "the Africa We Want", entered into force on 30 May 2019 following the deposit of the twenty-second (22nd) instrument of ratification of the Agreement. Following the decision of the 13th Extraordinary Session of the African Union Summit that was held virtually in December 2020, trading under the AfCFTA commenced on 1 January 2021. The AfCFTA Agreement intends to increase and facilitate intra-African trade and foster industrial growth by establishing a single market that facilitates the movement of people, investment, goods, and services on the Continent. The AfCFTA Agreement seeks to create a single Services market through the progressive liberalization of services on the Continent.

The Protocol on Trade in Services is an integral part of the AfCFTA Agreement, and under its auspices, a hybrid approach is taken to liberalization, with commitments being undertaken by State Parties through Schedules of Specific Commitments on the one hand, and broad regulatory frameworks, in specific priority services sectors. At the 31st Ordinary Session in Nouakchott – Mauritania in July 2018, the African Union Summit adopted five (5) priority services sectors: Business Services; Communication Services; Financial Services; Transport Services and Tourism and Travel-related Services, including their subsectors such as: leisure travel; business and professional travel; visiting friends and relatives; religious travel and pilgrimages; and health and wellness travel.

The Tourism sector accounts for most AfCFTA States Parties' trade in services. It therefore seems to offer the greatest opportunity for quickly trading of tourism services; however, with relatively open markets already established in many States Parties, the tourism market under the AfCFTA as it stands from the decision of the 18th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union held in Niamey, Niger, the 25th November 2022, is constituted of the markets of the following 22 countries who have agreed to liberalize their

tourism market: Djibouti; Democratic Republic of Congo; Eswatini; Egypt; Lesotho; Namibia; Malawi; Mauritius; Seychelles; Zambia; Zimbabwe; the combined schedules of the East African Community (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania) and The Central African Economic and Monetary Community (Gabon, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, the Republic of the Congo and Equatorial Guinea).

“Against this background, there is everything to play for the African Tourism Industry in the AfCFTA space. Indeed, the AfCFTA Agreement is a tool that can be used effectively for sustainable growth and wealth creation for all African businesses and professionals of the Tourism Industry.”

The above mentioned countries have opened up a vast set of tourism subsectors: hotel and restaurant services (including catering), travel agency and tour operator services, tourist guide services, as well as other tourism services such as: tourism management services; tourism transport services; tourism training Institutions; tourism-related conventions; institutional food service caterers (with the exception of Airport Catering Facilities, which are confined only to the national air carriers). Tourism investors, Tourism services suppliers and Tourism companies and Tourism professionals can therefore access those markets and develop trade operations, through cross border suppli-ance of tourism services, consumption abroad of tourism services, establishment of commercial presence tourism companies, and movement of tourism professionals, based on the level of liberalization committed by the concerned countries.

In this regard, the establishment of a single continental tourism market by AfCFTA Agreement specifically



contributes to: greater market access in the tourism sector of these 22 countries for tourism businesses and operators; economies of scale in production and quality suppli-ance of tourism services; better opportunities for networking and complementarity for the tourism industry; reducing tourism services costs; facilitating investment in vital tourism infrastructure like road, lodge, hotel, guest houses, restaurant, airports etc...; and enhance collaboration among tourism businesses and operators and their eventual participation in regional tourism value chains.

Against this background, there is everything to play for the African Tourism Industry in the AfCFTA space. Indeed, the AfCFTA Agreement is a tool that can be used effectively for sustainable growth and wealth creation for all African businesses and professionals of the Tourism Industry. But... "a tool is only as powerful as the hands that wield it". If the provisions of the AfCFTA Agreement can be leveraged for the benefit of the Tourism Industry, the possibilities are truly endless for African Tourism sector in the AfCFTA space.

Desire Loumou
Head of Division Intellectual Property Rights
AfCFTA Secretariat – Accra – Ghana





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DESTINATION NEWS

Investment in Cultural Tourism Will Expand Economic Opportunities - President Ruto

The government is keen on promoting cultural tourism to generate more tourism revenues.

President William Ruto said the Government will exploit Kenya's rich cultural heritage to diversify tourist attractions.

He argued that tourism is no longer just about sights and sounds but also about the people.

He noted that the Government will partner with Counties to support cultural preservation initiatives.

He cited the provision of funds for Maa Cultural Festival that will be celebrated annually.

"Today's tourist is drawn to authentic cultural experiences; therefore, today's



President William Ruto of Kenya dressed in Maasai style during the Maa Cultural Festival

tourism must meet a higher standard," he said.

He made the remarks on Tuesday during the Maasai Cultural Festival at Sekenanie Gate, Narok County.

He was accompanied by Cabinet Secretaries Peninah Malonza (Tourism) and Soipan Tuya (Environment), Governors Patrick ole Ntutu (Narok), Joseph Lenku (Kajiado) and Jonathan Lati Leliliit (Samburu) and a host of MPs.

He noted that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation has identified induction of boys ahead of initiation, shaving of morans and meat-eating ceremony that marks entry into adulthood as Intangible Cultural Items.

"I extend my gratitude to the Maasai

community for their unwavering commitment to the preservation of Maa traditions and culture. Your resilience has given Kenya a global identity and enriched our nation's cultural mosaic," he said.

The President said Government will start ceding 50 percent of revenues from national parks to host communities as part of efforts to transform their lives.

He said the move was aimed at benefiting host communities, through projects aimed at uplifting their lives.

"I have directed that all revenues from our national parks and game reserves should be divided equally between the host counties and the national government," he said. - Presidential Communication Service.



Mozambique's Tourism catapults with ringing policy changes



“Last August, my President launched a package of 20 measures to incentivize the economy to develop.

Those measures cut across all sectors of our economy and they have changed things and we can feel the difference”

Mozambique in the last year and half has been in the news for good reasons. The positive development is seen as a beautiful paradigm shift with the opening of the country to tourism and trade.

The southern African country, which had been working to bring to focus the nation's immense tourism potentials has had the achilles heels of the security concern in Cabo Delgado taking the spotlight. But the security issues have seen improved conditions. Also, Cabo Delgado is about 2500 kilometres from the capital.

The country's rising tourism credentials is largely attributed to the ringing changes the government and partners have rolled out to ensure that the alluring beaches, gastronomic and immersive cultural offerings reach their maximum potential.

First was the announcement by the President of the country, H.E Felipe Jacinto Nyusi, in not only signing the decree to waive visa for certain category

of countries, but concurrently rolling out the e-visa program to ensure the first point of business/travel is hassle free. (Not entirely seamless but a great progress). It made a whole difference because the decree didn't need another six (6) months to years to be effective as it kicked in albeit some countries could not access the program.

The singular act snowballed into its natural cyclical spiral seeing investors and other interests choosing Mozambique as a destination.

Excited with the feats achieved so far in the tourism space, Mozambique's Minister of Culture and Tourism, Eldervina Materula, said tourists are visiting the country because of its rich culture and entertainment offerings with each of the eleven (11) provinces of the country blessed with something to offer from music, gastronomy, culture and more.

"We are happy for the 11th edition of our National Festival of Culture that took place in Maputo," she said.

"We had over 1500 artistes from across the country and the audience for five days and the festival was a huge success.

"There were also delegations from Eswatini, Canada Brazil and Joko Widodo, President of the Republic of Indonesia, who came as a special guest of Filipe Nyusi, our President".

Speaking further on the National Festival of Culture, the Minister said that the event came in a special moment for the country, because the 11th edition which was supposed to take place in 2020 was cancelled because of Covid-19 pandemic and was the first biggest culture event that the government organised since then.

"We look forward to expanding the festival in the future by inviting more countries for more exchanges".

On air access, she noted that the Portuguese-speaking country has an international air fair, which is taking place from November 30 to December 3, 2023.

According to the Minister, her ministry will host a conference on air connectivity in conjunction with the Ministry of Transport to boost air connectivity. Mozambique national airline recently launched new routes; Johannesburg-Vilankulu, and Vilankulu- Iyambane.

"We recently launched Maputo-Harare and Harare-Lusaka. Soon we will be flying to Lisbon and we are very aggressive on this because it is a very big issue.

"We are seeking more partnerships to do this, Air France will soon be flying into Mozambique and we are also in talks with the Emirates to start flying into Mozambique soon," she assured.

She noted further that air access is very crucial in the region, hence she is working and talking to her colleagues in the region as they have the same vision. She also highlighted some incentives for businesses and would-be investors in the country's tourism sector.

"Last August, my President launched a package of 20 measures to incentivize the economy to develop."

"Those measures cut across all sectors of our economy and they have changed things and we can feel the difference".

Meanwhile, the Minister is happy with the feats, while assuring that Mozambique looks forward to double the numbers of 2019.

Since the rollout, it has seen a growing new market for the Portuguese-speaking nation. The Americans, Chinese, French, Canadians and other core source markets have increased travels to the country.

Coupled with gradually improving air access, the destination is poised to become the region's new tourist haven amidst other opportunities as such as MICE, music tourism and birding as niche markets worth consideration.

Mozambique continues to be active in the affairs of international tourism.



Its presence and active participation in tourism's highest authority, the UNWTO has seen it serve as Executive Council Member at the UN Tourism Organisation. Minister of Culture and Tourism, Eldervina Maretula in an interview with VoyagesAfric in May during Africa's Travel Indaba in Durban, South Africa, re-emphasized the role of the country to join forces with colleague African countries to make tourism a real economic player in national affairs thus making it an inherent part of national agendas.

During the national cultural festival, President Nyusi touted Mozambique's cultural heritage as part of a tapestry of offerings that it is endowed with and also a reason to visit the country.

Air access will be crucial in sustaining the gains the visa policies have unlocked so far. It will require yet another out-of-the-classic to deliver yet another opportunity for the Mozambican economy and people.



NAMIBIA:

More alluring on coastline

If you are a globetrotter and haven't been to Namibia, then you must add this South-West African country to your bucket list.

Though one of the driest and most sparsely populated countries on earth, Namibia is an endless adventure awaiting discerning visitors.

While Windhoek, its capital city is like a beautiful lady, very shy but flirtily inviting, its coastline cities are the deal for the 'adventurous'.

Spanning 1,572 km from the southern border with South Africa, until the northern border with Angola, the coastline is rich in geographic diversity, natural beauty, sights and activities, as well as sprawling coastal cities, harbours and ports.

Of course, a visit to the coastline of Namibia is never complete until one's bare feet and hands touch the high sand dunes of Namib Desert, the oldest desert in the world. While frolicking on the desert dune, wining and dining as well, there is a must-visit portion on the desert.

The Sandwich Harbour, where Namib Desert meets the Atlantic Ocean, is a rare sight, just one in the whole world and top among the reasons Namib Desert is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

From the harbor, Swakopmund beckons with more thrills. The gracious flamingos, thunderous ocean waves and magical sand dunes make Swakopmund the coastal city to bet in Namibia.

The city, which sits in the west of Windhoek, allures with sandy beaches facing the Atlantic Ocean, amid eternal beauties, tranquility and very hospitable inhabitants that will leave you breathless.

One cannot afford not to fall in love with Swakopmund at the first meeting with this eternal city, where with nature, all things are possible.



“Again, another major highlight of the Namib Desert safari is the night party, where tour guides use headlamps of their SUVs to light up the desert in late evenings, amid dances, wining, dining and photo shoots.”

On a city tour, Madam Sepe, a custodian of the Herero heritage, who also adorned herself in colourful traditional attire, amid cow horn shaped scarf, will usually go down the history lane with her visitors.

The 82-old woman, with some of her grandchildren surrounding her, noted that originally the city was not Swakopmund, but took the name in 1892 with the arrival of Germans who named it from their language, and meaning 'mouth of Swakop', alluding to historic overflow and flooding of the Swakop River.

But apart from the expansive, alluring Atlantic Ocean shore, and sand dunes, Swakopmund offers other attractions.

In reflection of its German colonists, the city has some colonial landmarks worth visiting. They include; the Swakopmund Lighthouse and the Mole, an old sea wall, the Swakopmund Museum, Swakopmund Railway Station, now a hotel, among others.

As expected, food is not a problem for visitors. Namibia is rich in culinary offerings.

While there are many places to dine and wine in the coastal city, a visit to Heinrich Hafeni Restaurant in Swakopmund is rewarded with delicious local cuisines.

After a visit, you will realize how African food and culture tell stories; an experience that visitors take back to their countries.

Beyond Swakopmund, Namibia coast cities abound.

From Luderitz, Walvis Bay, holiday villages of Wlotzkas Baken and Henties Bay, Cape Cross and Terrace Bay, there are more to explore along the country's 1,572 km coastline.

The cities offer water-based tourist attractions, moderate accommodation facilities, desert adventure, fishing, among others.

One of the major activities along the coast is desert safari, which has seen many safari companies dot the Namib Desert with many 4x4 SUVs full of visitors on adrenalin show.

On such adventures, the visitors are at the mercy of nature, while the tour guides do less as nature speaks volume of its beauties to the visitors, the drivers crisscross the undulating dunes in seeming careless manner that makes the drive adventurous.

Again, another major highlight of the Namib Desert safari is the night party, where tour guides use headlamps of their SUVs to light up the desert in late evenings, amid dances, wining, dining and photo shoots.

Like Ludwig Handers, an American tourist said of his visit to the country, "I have seen beaches in the world, swarm in ocean shores across the world, but the coast of Namibia is different, it offers rare trappings, and pairs two nature bodies in an uncommon union".

While Namibia awaits your visit, its coastal cities lay ambush for more indulgence and thrills for visitors.





NAIROBI DECLARATION:

Africa's Demands And Aspirations In The Climate Fight

The Nairobi Declaration, born out of the Africa Climate Summit, outlines a set of key demands and aspirations that reflect Africa's urgent need to address climate change challenges and carve a sustainable future. This historic summit marks Africa's unified voice in the global climate discourse.

Global Carbon Tax Regime: A Call for Climate Finance

One of the pivotal calls in the Nairobi Declaration is for global leaders to support the establishment of a comprehensive carbon tax regime. This regime would encompass taxes on fossil fuels, maritime transport, and aviation, augmented by a global financial transaction tax (FTT). Such a system would make financing for green growth more affordable and accessible. Importantly, it could shield climate-related investments from tax fluctuations influenced by geopolitical and domestic political pressures. While the concept of a global carbon tax has faced resistance, several countries have already adopted similar measures.

\$600 Billion for Renewable Energy: Bridging Africa's Energy Gap

Africa grapples with a vast energy deficit, with 600 million people lacking access to energy and over 900 million without clean cooking solutions. The Nairobi Declaration issues a clarion call for a massive investment of \$600 billion to achieve an ambitious renewable energy

target of 300 Giga Watts (GW) by 2030, a significant leap from the current capacity of 56 GW. This declaration underscores the importance of aligning global financial resources to support sustainable utilization of Africa's abundant natural resources, facilitating increased investment in renewable energy. Historically, Africa has attracted only a fraction of global renewable energy investments (\$60 billion out of \$3 trillion) over the last decade. To attract more funding and expand generation capacity, the declaration encourages the scaling up of demand for renewable energy and the relocation of energy-intensive primary processing to the continent.

Restructuring the International Financial System: Reform and a New Charter

The Nairobi Declaration advocates for reforms in the multilateral financial system and the creation of a Global Climate Finance Charter by 2025. It urges multilateral development banks to increase concessional lending to poorer nations and calls for more effective utilization of the IMF's special drawing rights mechanism, which issued \$650 billion as part of the Fund's COVID-19 response. Additionally, the declaration proposes measures to help highly indebted countries avoid default, including instruments that could grant 10-year grace periods and extend sovereign debt tenors.



Green Minerals and Economic Transformation

While the summit deliberated on the role of Africa's key mineral resources in driving economic transformation, the Nairobi Declaration does not prominently emphasize these strategic minerals or integrate them into the vision for green growth.

A New Beginning for Africa's Climate Politics

The Africa Climate Summit signifies a ground-breaking moment as it is the first time the continent has united specifically to address the climate crisis, focusing on challenges and solutions on its own terms. In closing, President Ruto, the summit's host, aptly stated, "The cradle of humanity, Africa, is also its future. What Africa wants is what the world needs." The Nairobi Declaration serves as a testament to Africa's determination to shape its climate destiny and contribute meaningfully to global climate action.

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Over 1,500 graduate from
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Ethiopian Aviation University, the largest aviation center of excellence in Africa graduated 1,551 aviation professionals in pilot training, aviation maintenance, cabin crew, commercial, and hotel operations professionals on August 5, 2023 at a graduation ceremony held at the newly upgraded Ethiopian Aviation University, Commercial Building.

Congratulating the aviation professionals, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mr. Mesfin Tasew said, "Human capital development is one of the key pillars in Ethiopian Airlines growth strategic road map; and today's graduation is a testimony of our commitment to ensure that we invest a lot on our aviation brainery. As part of our continental commitment, we will continue to provide Africa with skilled aviation professionals. We are delighted to see today's youth from seven African countries completing one chapter and opening another in their aviation endeavours. We believe in the potentials of Africa's youths to shape the continent's aviation and continue to educate them at our center of excellence. Today the industry welcomes 660 male and 891 female graduates."

Since its formation in 1956, Ethiopian Aviation Excellence Center has been offering various aviation courses, mainly to African youth. Today youth from Rwanda, Togo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Uganda and Sudan completed their education.

Currently, the University offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs in aerospace and hospitality fields. Courses being offered at the University include: BSc in Aeronautical Engineering, Aviation Maintenance Engineering, Aviation Management & Operations, BA in Tourism & Hospitality Management, MSc in Data Science, MBA in Aviation Management. The University also offers Diploma and Certificate Programs in Aircraft Maintenance Technician and Pilot Training, Cabin Crew and Commercial Training, Leadership & Career Development, Catering Training in addition to ICAO Courses and Online Courses.

Ethiopian also owns training facilities in regional cities including in Hawassa, Dire-Dawa, Bahir-Dar and Mekelle.

AVIATION NEWS

Fly Safair offers more access to
Southern African destinations

Award winning low-cost airline FlySafair is continuing to grow its network with the announcement of four additional regional routes. The airline's growing list of regional routes will help bring Africa closer together, giving travelers low-cost options when visiting South Africa's neighbours. The newest additions include Harare, Livingstone, Victoria Falls, and Maputo.

"Plans for these routes have been in the pipeline for several months now," says Kirby Gordon, Chief Marketing Officer at FlySafair. "We are so pleased to finally be able to announce the addition of these routes and more importantly begin operations just in time for the festive season."

The first batch of new routes will be launched on the 2nd of October 2023 and are between Johannesburg and Harare and Johannesburg and Livingstone. The Harare flights will operate daily with prices starting at R1,000*. Flights between Johannesburg and Livingstone are scheduled for four times weekly on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday with tickets starting at R2,000*.

The next batch of routes will take off on the 3rd and 5th of October 2023. Respectively, these include Johannesburg to Victoria Falls which will operate three times per week with tickets starting at R1,400*, and Johannesburg to Maputo which will operate four times per week with tickets from R1,400*.

Bookings for all new routes opened on the 3rd of August 2023.

"The introduction of new routes to our schedule is always exciting," says Gordon. "We are happy to offer customers our low fares and on-time services on these additional routes. Tourism in Africa is definitely on the road to recovery. We hope to help play our part in growing the tourism industry both at home and abroad by connecting people through our passion for aviation."

FlySafair has undergone a period of rapid growth, increasing the number of flights they operate by 47% between 2019 and 2022. This number is set to increase even further as the airline continues to add new aircraft, routes, and frequencies throughout 2023. To accommodate this growth, FlySafair has also increased hiring, adding new staff to help maintain the airline's award-winning customer service in the face of increased operations.

"Despite our rapid growth we have managed to maintain our customer focus with hassle-free travel and on-time performance remaining a priority. This is something our entire team are determined to continue as we navigate the new challenges that come with new routes," concludes Gordon.





Redefining Luxury Safari

In a world where travel has become synonymous with haste and crowds, African Adventure Specialists (AAS) beckons you to embrace a slower, more exclusive, and utterly bespoke safari experience.

Imagine traversing the heart of Africa with the assurance of absolute comfort. We've carefully curated a selection of breathtaking locations across Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Zanzibar, allowing us to craft the most convenient and unforgettable itineraries.

AAS takes luxury to new heights – quite literally! From charter flights to private jets, or even exhilarating helicopter tours offering bird's-eye vistas of the most picturesque regions, we offer exclusive ways to explore the continent. Perhaps you'd fancy a proposal 7,000 feet above Mount Kenya, an unforgettable memory etched against an awe-inspiring backdrop.

Our journey extends from private conservancies in Maasai Mara, through all the heavenly places East Africa has to offer, to the otherworldly Mnemba luxury private island in Zanzibar. We comprehend the true essence of luxury, ensuring you indulge in a world that pampers your senses.

At AAS, our signature activities are as exceptional as our destinations. Glide gracefully above the African savanna in a hot air balloon, absorbing the magnificence of the untamed wilderness. Embark on exhilarating helicopter tours to explore remote corners where few have ventured. As the day wanes, savour sundowners against breathtaking landscapes, a moment of tranquillity amid the vastness of Africa. Exclusive game drives through the most beautiful locales that Mother Africa offers are just the beginning of your adventure.

At AAS, we redefine luxurious travel, ensuring that your journey is a masterpiece of comfort, excitement, and exclusive indulgence.



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AVIATION NEWS

ASKY takes delivery of two Boeing 737-8 MAX

Following the signature of a lease for two Boeing 737-8 MAX aircraft with AerCap, the world's largest commercial aircraft lessor, ASKY, the Pan-African Airline, is proud to officially announce receiving its two Boeing 737-8 MAX aircraft, registered ET-BAQ and ET-BAR, with a capacity of 160 seats, including 16 seats in Business Class and 144 seats in Economy Class.

The ceremony took place on September 1, 2023 at Lomé's Gnassingbé Eyadema International Airport, in the presence of the Minister of Road, Air and Rail Transport, airport authorities, Togo CAA, Aviation Stakeholders, ASKY Top management, travel agency representatives, the media and other guests.

The features of the Boeing 737-8 MAX include cutting-edge technology enabling reduced fuel consumption, thus reducing the environmental footprint while maintaining optimum flight performance. It is spacious and modern interiors are designed to offer enhanced passenger comfort, with flexible seating options and state-of-the-art in-flight entertainment systems.

These two Boeing 737-8 MAX aircraft reflect ASKY's commitment to modernizing its fleet and offering its passengers an exceptional travel experience with the latest advances in aircraft technology.

ASKY's CEO, Mr. Esayas Woldemariam Hailu, expressed his pleasure with this crucial addition to the company's fleet: "We are delighted to welcome these two new Boeing 737-8 MAX aircraft to the ASKY family. These aircrafts embody our commitment to providing superior air transport services to our customers. In addition to strengthening our ability to serve a wide range of expanding destinations, these aircrafts reflect our commitment to enhanced custom service."

The Minister of Road, Air and Rail Transport in his speech was keen to congratulate the cooperation between ASKY and Ethiopian Airlines. "Aviation is more than just a means of transport. It is a bridge to the world, a link between cultures and people. I would like to take this opportunity, which represents an important milestone in the history of Togolese civil aviation, to congratulate ASKY warmly."



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ICCA's Africa focus; a chat with Marta Gomes

Having served and still serving the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) in various capacities and in different countries, Marta Gomes, president of the ICCA Board and deputy executive director sales for the Viparis Group, is a veteran in the international event hosting sector.

In this interview with VoyagesAfric, the ICCA boss talks on why ICCA is seeking to expand membership, especially from the Africa region, the dynamics of the MICE industry, ICCA feats under her, plans for Africa, among others.

Can you introduce yourself to our audience and your role at ICCA

I joined ICCA in 2006 serving as Chair of the France Benelux Chapter (2009 – 2015), Board member and Vice President (since 2015). Last November members voted me President of the ICCA Board at the 62nd ICCA Congress in Krakow.

I am also Deputy Executive Director Sales for the Viparis Group, consisting of 12 major event venues in the Paris region, hosting over 800 exhibitions, association and corporate events annually.

Give us overview of ICCA's works (Highlights)

ICCA is a global community and knowledge hub for the international association meetings industry. Founded in 1963, ICCA offers unrivalled data, education, communication channels, as well as business development, and networking opportunities. With over 1000 members in over 100 countries, ICCA helps members and associations create and host effective and successful meetings. In doing so, we drive societal change at a local, regional, and global level.

How has it been for you in assuming the role as President of ICCA?

Intense and exhilarating! In early 2023 we launched an extensive Presidential Survey to evaluate member needs and objectives and incorporate these specific goals in our strategy and value proposition. It has shaped much of what we've done this year, leading towards our member-led It Starts With Us themed 62nd Congress in Bangkok (12 – 15 Nov). Congress will facilitate industry-relevant outcomes so we can transform the way we do business events in 2024 and beyond.

“Tourism is a positive outcome of the international events industry but the MICE sector brings other more important benefits to economies and societies, providing opportunities to showcase innovation, advance scientific progress, create business contracts and growth”

What are the plans/Initiatives of ICCA in Africa?

Taking our industry forward and giving Africa a global stage as a major platform for international meetings and events.

Bringing new members into the ICCA community remains another key objective because new members mean new ideas, new perspectives, and new opportunities. We are also keen to enhance the level of engagement of our members in the region and having a higher level of participation in industry events and contributing to sector knowledge and thought leadership, reaching into many new countries and regions.

Do you think Africa's MICE sector can be the game changer for its tourism and general economic boom?

I do. Tourism is a positive outcome of the international events industry but the MICE sector brings other more important benefits to economies and societies, providing opportunities to showcase innovation,

advance scientific progress, create business contracts and growth. Africa is in a unique position to build on its human capital, young and dynamic population to create inclusive growth for the continent.

How does Africa address the skills gap currently facing the business sector in our industry?

The need to develop talent – both young, and more experienced, professionals – is paramount in all regions of the world. ICCASkills - the first Global certification for our industry – has been created by industry experts for our industry and will help build the talent pool and create a competitive advantage. The events industry is a people business, and education is the best investment. I am delighted that ICCASkills continues to grow in prominence in Africa and believe it will greatly benefit our professionals, their individual companies, and the sector as a whole.



Marta Gomes

Zambia gets nod to host 1st evergreening alliance gathering

Zambia has been selected as host destination for the Inaugural Global Evergreening Alliance Conference slated for March next year.

During the Global EverGreening Alliance Conference Media launch, Tourism Minister Rodney Sikumba said as the inaugural host of the Convention in March next year, the event is expected to attract approximately 1,500 delegates over its week long deliberations.

“We are here to ceremoniously hand over this event to the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment who will be moving forward be the Lead Liaison Ministry in the hosting of the said congress,” said Hon. Sikumba.

Meanwhile, Global EverGreening Alliance CEO Mr. Chris Armitage said the Alliance brings together many of the world's most capable NGOs and technical organisations to collectively implement massive scale land restoration programmes.

And Minister of Green Economy and Environment Hon. Eng. The Collins Nzovu MP said the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment is spearheading the Tourism Development Project (TDP) which aims to enhance



nature based economic opportunities in emerging tourism destinations in Zambia.

“Therefore, on behalf of the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, allow me to express our gratitude to the Global EverGreening Alliance for selecting Zambia as the host destination for their inaugural conference scheduled

for March 2024 in Livingstone. The conference is built on the conversation of massive-scale environmental restoration and sustainable agricultural intensification projects,” he said in a speech read for him by Ministry of Green Economy and Environment Permanent Secretary Dr. Douty Chibamba.

Nzovu said there is urgent need for effective mitigation and adaptation measures to make climate change one of the most important existential issues not only for Zambia but also the world at large.

The Honourable Minister said land restoration is key for climate change mitigation and adaptation and therefore, welcomes the multi sectoral conversation that will serve as a great platform to share strides as Zambia and the ambitions in Land Restoration and the Environmental Protection Agenda.

He said environmental, social and economic goals can only be met when the country has healthy land resources.



Abidjan Exhibition Centre inaugurated to elevate business events in West Africa

The recently inaugurated Abidjan Exhibition Centre, situated near the Félix Houphouët Boigny International Airport, is set to transform the landscape of Business Events in the West Africa sub-region.

With its state-of-the-art infrastructure and expansive facilities, the Abidjan Exhibition Centre promises to be a game-changer for the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry.

The Vice-President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Koné Tiémoko Meyliet, led the official inauguration ceremony on Monday, July 17, 2023. The Center, spanning 30 hectares and developed in three phases, marks a significant milestone in the country's efforts to bolster commercial activities on a large scale.

Phase I of the project features the Convention Center, a versatile multi-purpose hall covering 14,400 square meters and capable of accommodating up to 11,000 individuals, with seating for 5,000 and standing room for 6,000. Additionally, Hall 1, an exhibition hall covering 7,200 square meters with 640 exhibition stands, and the spacious 11,000 square meter Piazza, create a conducive environment for hosting a diverse range of events.

The Abidjan Exhibition Centre not only provides world-class infrastructure, but also boasts an entrance pavilion housing essential amenities such as ticket offices, an orientation center, administrative offices, a press room, first aid facilities, restroom facilities, technical and logistics areas, and catering zones.

Moreover, the center offers 800 parking spaces, ensuring convenience for attendees. With an investment of over 75 billion FCFA, Phase I of the Abidjan Exhibition Center meets international standards, reflecting the State of Côte d'Ivoire's commitment to fostering economic growth and attracting national and foreign investment. Vice-President Meyliet hailed the centre as a major achievement within the National Development Program (PND) 2021-2025, presenting immense opportunities for the private sector to drive commercial activities on a grand scale.

The Abidjan Exhibition Centre serves as a catalyst for the structural transformation of the Côte d'Ivoire diverse economy, showcasing the nation's creative and productive genius. Vice-President Meyliet emphasized that the centre empowers the private sector to play a pivotal role in driving economic growth, aligning with President Alassane Ouattara's vision of modern infrastructure to enhance competitiveness and attract investments.

Minister of Trade, Industry, and Promotion of SMEs, Souleymane Diarrassouba, highlighted the significance of the Abidjan Exhibition Center as the largest facility of its kind in French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa and West Africa. The center is poised to revolutionize Business Events in the sub-region by providing cutting-edge facilities and fostering an environment conducive for networking, innovation,

and economic development.

Phase II of the project will witness the construction of Halls 2 and 3, along with multiple meeting rooms, further expanding the center's capabilities. Phase III, driven by private sector initiatives, will introduce additional amenities such as hotel receptions, restaurants, mall-type shops, and recreational areas. This comprehensive approach ensures that the Abidjan Exhibition Centre becomes a one-stop destination for business events, enabling seamless interactions and collaborations.

The Trade and Industry Minister highlighted the versatility of the Abidjan Exhibition Center, which can accommodate various event types, including commercial, political, public, cultural, artistic, religious, and sporting events, conventions, and congresses. This adaptability positions the center as a premier choice for organizers seeking a dynamic and modern venue to host their events.

By providing an array of state-of-the-art facilities, strategic proximity to the airport, expansive capacity, and value-added services, the Center aims to boost Côte d'Ivoire's rate of capturing major international events. It serves as a crucial tool for marketing the country as a prime tourist destination and contribute to its economic growth.

Diarrassouba emphasized that the Abidjan Exhibition Center's impact extends beyond the MICE industry. "The Centre plays a vital role in professionalizing event organisers, revitalizing commerce and services, and promoting Ivorian handicrafts. It acts as a platform for SMEs, startups, and the cultural and creative industry to showcase their offerings, thereby contributing to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)," he maintained.



inside the auditorium of the newly built convention centre



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Africa Showcase; a boost to continent's international travel and business connections

Africa Showcase, a boutique and dedicated Africa specialists and top-producing agents, including boutique operators, consortiums, consolidators, and independent contractors have continued to create market for the trade in key source markets.

Operating across North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia since 2009, Africa Showcase transforms traditional sales and marketing approach by offering a more targeted and impactful solutions tailored to each market's dynamics.

Meticulously designed to forge international travel connections and accelerate business growth for African tourism companies, Africa showcase is one of the products of Onshow Solutions under the leadership of co-founders Amanda Margison and Jacqui Reynolds. Onshow Solutions use multilevel approach mainly roadshows and participation in key trade market shows such as ITB Berlin, WTM London, IBTM among others to match the continent's leading carefully chosen DMC's with their partners in key source markets.

“Our dedicated facilitators are the driving force behind our events, enabling us to stay in tune with the pulse of each market. We have collaborated extensively with our facilitators to carefully curate the 2024 schedule, ensuring an exciting line-up of cities and dates”

Now in penultimate stage of its roadshows, participants mainly from the region have been impressed with the growing interests shown in Africa and importantly deals which have been written in the course of the event.

It started with connecting the travel trade in the region with dedicated roadshows in Southern and East Africa. These events connected the industry and inspired product managers, operators, leisure, and corporate consultants, unveiling a wide array of remarkable



African experiences and properties to cater to their discerning clients.

In between those shows, the Africa Showcase caravan was available to the trade at WTM Africa and Africa's Travel Indaba to be abreast with happenings in the region's expos.

Right after these successful shows, it offered the travel markets in Australia a taste of what Africa has got as Aussie travellers looked at long haul destinations after the dreadful Covid-19 pandemic.

Testimony of participants

"I enjoyed the Africa Showcase. It was well organized and I like the designated times for each coast. Also, it was very easy to identify and submit to meet instead of scheduling a time to meet. Well done! And I look forward to the next showcase," said Vicky's Travel.

"Thank you very much for having me on the Africa Showcase. I am trying to delve into this destination to better market and promote to clients and prospects alike, so this is indeed a magnificent opportunity," Dream Vacations.

Next year

It has already announced the highly

anticipated roadshow dates for 2024. Africa Showcase, their renowned international roadshow series, will visit key cities connecting exhibitors from African safari lodges, hotels, experiences, and tourism authorities directly with the discerning global travel trade.

Exhibitors gain direct access to pre-qualified buyers, carefully identified by Africa Showcase's global team of market experts.

Jacqui Reynolds, co-owner of OnShow Solutions, emphasises the significance of their in-country facilitators in delivering exceptional roadshows. "Our dedicated facilitators are the driving force behind our events, enabling us to stay in tune with the pulse of each market. We have collaborated extensively with our facilitators to carefully curate the 2024 schedule, ensuring an exciting line-up of cities and dates," Reynolds said.

Amongst the portfolios of its roadshows include, Africa showcase South Africa, East Africa, Australia, Latin America among presence at key trade expos.

This roadshow is your gateway to connecting with a diverse and eager travel market. Save the date and join the train for an unforgettable experience!



UNWTO Chief presents Best Tourism Village award to Kenya's Olergesailie

The inaugural winner of the 2021 Best Tourism Village in Kenya, Olergesailie has been presented with a certificate and a plaque of recognition by the UNWTO Secretary General, Zurab Pololikashvili.

He gave out the award, which was received by Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage, Peninah Malonza during the 66th UNWTO Commission for Africa Meeting in Mauritius last month.

Congratulating the winners, the Secretary General said on his Twitter handle that, "Social, economic and environmental sustainability is the goal of tourism at every level and also from rural communities like the Best Tourism Village of Olergesailie, Kenya."

About Olergesailie (The Home of the Masaai)

Olergesailie is a village located in the Southern region of Kenya, close to the sedimentary basin in the East African

Rift Valley. Olergesailie is famous for its Prehistoric Site, located on the floor of the Great Rift Valley between two extinct volcanoes, Mt. Olergesailie and Oldonyo Esakut to the south-west of Nairobi. Hand axes have been unearthed here, many of which date back almost one million years and are some of the

oldest ever found. Most of the axes are egg-shaped with razor sharp edges for cutting and hewing – perfectly formed tools to fit a human hand. Due to the settlement of the first humans in this area, there is a large number of tools categorized as belonging to the Acheulean period.





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Accra City Hotel: 35 years of exceptional service and a new commitment to sustainability

Accra City Hotel, the renowned 4-star establishment in the heart of Ghana and West Africa, is marking a significant milestone as it celebrates 35 years of delivering unparalleled hospitality excellence. This milestone underscores the hotel's unwavering commitment to providing exceptional service to its diverse local and international clientele.

In an exclusive interview with VoyagesAfriq, Divine Matey, the General Manager of Accra City Hotel, reiterated the establishment's dedication to environmental sustainability and its ongoing efforts to minimize its carbon footprint. As part of this commitment, the hotel has partnered with the Ghana Wildlife Society and taken steps to protect endangered bird species. Bird cages have been thoughtfully installed atop select trees within the hotel's premises, creating a haven for these birds while offering guests a unique birdwatching adventure.

While Accra City Hotel has long been a favorite among regional travelers from West Africa, it has witnessed a surge in interest from local guests, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This trend reflects the hotel's adaptability and continued appeal to both business and leisure travelers.



Matey explained: "Ghanaians are known for their inherent hospitality, so, receiving a warm greeting from them evokes a sense of familiarity and comfort. In our operational procedures, we strive to accommodate guests with specific requests by making efforts to find a mutually agreeable solution. The quality of service plays a crucial role in attracting our guests."

To further enhance its offerings, the hotel is embarking on various infrastructure projects. These projects aim to increase the hotel's capacity to host large-scale events, reinforcing its status as a premier business-oriented hotel and a sought-after destination for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE).

In commemoration of its 35th anniversary, Accra City Hotel recently hosted a lavish cocktail event on September 15, extending its gratitude to loyal clients and welcoming new guests into its fold. The event served as a testament to the hotel's enduring commitment to creating memorable experiences for its patrons.

Looking ahead, General Manager Divine Matey envisions Accra City Hotel evolving into an iconic urban oasis at the heart of the capital city, that pays homage to traditional Accra with artifacts, delivering superior services and experiences to its cherished guests and clients.

"In the coming five years, our

"Ghanaians are known for their inherent hospitality, so, receiving a warm greeting from them evokes a sense of familiarity and comfort. In our operational procedures, we strive to accommodate guests with specific requests by making efforts to find a mutually agreeable solution. The quality of service plays a crucial role in attracting our guests."

establishment, known as the 'Accra City Hotel', will establish a strong association with the city of Accra. Upon arrival, one will experience a strong sense of being situated in Accra. The intention is to renovate the lobby space by including cultural artefacts from the Ga Traditional Area. The experience of being in Accra can be evoked when one visits Accra City Hotel. A survey was conducted to investigate the factors that contribute to client retention. The study focused on analyzing the impact of pricing and customer service on client loyalty. According to the General Manager, the customer service exhibited exceptional qualities.

Accra City Hotel's 35th anniversary celebration not only marks a remarkable journey but also sets the stage for an exciting future of hospitality excellence, sustainability, and memorable guest experiences in Ghana and West Africa.



Divine Matey,
General Manager of
Accra City Hotel

African Sustainability: Whose Agenda Is It Anyway?



“If you want Africans to travel sustainably across their continent, it is far more environmentally friendly to build 3 kilometers of runway than it is to lay 2000 kilometers of railway track or build 2000 kilometers of road.”

Sustainability has become a buzzword in global aviation, with countries and corporations around the world pledging to reduce their carbon footprint and support environmentally friendly initiatives. While these efforts are essential, and indeed commendable in concept, it is equally critical to scrutinize the practicality of these Western-driven sustainability initiatives in Africa.

A few years ago, when I was Chief Operations Officer of an airline based in Africa, I received an email from an environmental group based in Europe. It basically accused me of being a “terrorist” and “stealing the lives of future generations” by allowing our little airline to expand its routes. It really highlighted to me the flawed perception of aviation in Africa and its impact on climate change.

Aviation is critical to the development of Africa. In a vast continent where ground infrastructure is concentrated only in disparate pockets, there is often no option to “take a train” without actually building the tracks first. Trade, mobility, development and so many other things that the developed world takes for granted are dependent on aviation to facilitate them. If you want Africans to travel sustainably across their continent, it is far more environmentally friendly to build 3 kilometers of runway than it is to lay 2000 kilometers of railway track or build 2000 kilometers of road.

Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) are an admirable initiative that many aviation entities are adopting, and many governments are considering mandating. However, SAF production is not a zero-sum game, at least not yet. Converting agricultural production from food to fuel production means less food available at the bottom end of the food chain in developing countries. Is that a cost Africans should be paying to appease the conscience of polluting developed countries? The additional financial costs of SAF also drive airline costs upwards, thus increasing prices and putting air transport out of the economic reach of millions of Africans at a time when the exact opposite should be happening.

Africa will also bear a disproportionate burden of well-meaning emissions schemes such as ICAO’s Carbon

Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA). These schemes set arbitrary baselines for carbon emissions (2020 in the case of CORSIA), which penalizes smaller airlines from developing markets that are growing, to the benefit of larger Western airlines who have already grown and achieved critical mass hundreds of times larger. While Africa is already feeling the largest impact of climate change due to minimal fault of its own, should it also be expected to foot the bill for absolving the developed world’s sins?

Forcing Western ideals of sustainability on African aviation is basically the first steps towards a new genocide of Africans. Every African traveler forced onto the unsafe roads due to higher airfares is 300% more likely to be killed in a vehicular accident. Every African field converted to produce SAF is another African child destined to die of famine and malnutrition. The emissions from African aviation are a fraction of the emissions from African cows, yet nobody is calling for abandoning dairy production as a solution. Call it neo-colonialism and be honest rather than hiding behind an environmental fig leaf.

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.



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Mozambique celebrates “XI Festival Nacional da Cultura”



A family photo with representatives of the 11 provinces

The 11th National Cultural Festival of Mozambique (XI Festival Nacional da Cultura) has successfully ended in Matola, in the Maputo Province.

The biennial event was opened by the President of the country H.E. Felipe Jacinto Nyusi in the company of visiting President of Indonesia Joko Widodo as well as the Minister of Culture and Tourism, Eldervina Materula.

Organised by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the three-day festival is the biggest cultural artistic event in the country, exhibit different Mozambican cultural expressions. Among many, the main objective of the festival is to preserve, and develop the arts, culture and traditions of the different Mozambican communities, create a platform for interaction and exchange and dissemination of the rich and diverse cultural heritage of the country. It is placed at the service of society and progress.

The mega event assembled more than 1500 artistes from across the country, who exhibited various artistic expressions, namely: visual arts, handicrafts, music, cinema, dance, gastronomy, photography, fashion, literature, theatre and

other manifestations imbued with an inestimable symbolic value and, impregnated with secular knowledge that, more than providing fun and leisure, participate in the socialization process.

This year's event was held under the theme “Culture, the Force that Unites the Nation towards Development”.

The groups were drawn from the 11 provinces of Mozambique namely Cabo Delgado, Gaza, Inhambane, Manica,

Maputo City, Maputo, Nampula, Niassa, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia. In addition to the provinces, groups were invited from Canada, Brazil, Eswatini and South Africa.

The event among many things also served as a moment to reinforce cultural relations between Mozambican and foreign delegations.

The pomp and pageantry displayed by the performing groups got the patrons



President Nyusi addressing the audience at the opening of the festival.



The XI National Festival of Culture is a mechanism for implementing policies and strategies contained in various reflections focused on culture as an important dimension of development.

In its varied expressions, the National Culture Festival reflects the Mozambican socio-cultural mosaic, one of the greatest riches of Mozambicans and which proudly distinguishes Mozambique in the concert of nations.

It is the highest moment of celebration and exaltation of Mozambican culture, in which the rich and diverse millenary cultural traditions reflect the greatness and strength of Mozambique, at the same time that they constitute a prodigious contribution to the history and civilizations of Humanity.

roaring from the beginning to the end at the packed Black Bulls Association field, in Tchumene 5000-seater stadium. On display on the opening day was the rich artistic mosaic of the different phases of the national culture festival.

The village of the event was replete with traditional singing and dancing, choral singing, light music, gastronomy, plastic arts, poetry, and theater as some of the cultural manifestations that make up the province's strong dish.

In his address to the packed and enthusiastic patrons, President Nyusi urged Mozambicans to use the rich cultural diversity to develop and spur national unity. He added that the people of Mozambique should be proud of the unparalleled tapestry of culture which it has to offer.

The Guest of Honour at this year's event was President Joko of Indonesia. He said he was deeply honoured to have witnessed the rich display of

Mozambican culture during his two-day official working tour of the Southern African country. He reiterated the power of culture and said “Let's use cultural diversity to strengthen and spur development for our people.

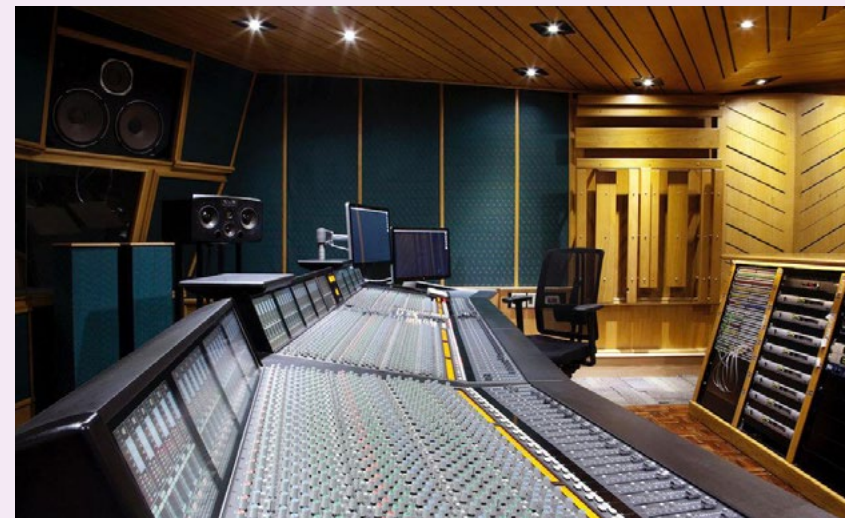
A mosaic of President Felipe Jacinto Nyusi was presented to him at the start of the event.



Gallery of the Festival



Unleashing the Power of Music Tourism: Africa's Untapped Potential



Africa's Vibrant Music Scene

Africa, celebrated for its cultural diversity and stunning landscapes, is on the cusp of a musical revolution akin to Austin and Nashville in the US. Johannesburg, with its rich musical heritage, is one of the leading African cities in the charge. In this article, we explore Africa's potential in music tourism—a must-read for global and African tourism leaders.

African Musical Diversity

Music flows through Africa's veins, creating a harmonious tapestry that transcends borders and languages. From West African drumming to South African jazz, African music resonates universally. This deep connection between music and culture presents an extraordinary opportunity—the burgeoning business of music tourism.

Music tourism has gained global traction in recent years, attracting millions of enthusiasts who travel not just to see but to feel the beats and melodies of their favourite artists. Africa, with its multifaceted musical heritage, is poised to capitalize on this immense potential.

Africa's music diversity is astounding, from Nigeria's infectious Afrobeats to South Africa's AmaPiano vibes, influencing music genres worldwide. Festivals like Bushfire in Eswatini and Sauti za Busara in Zanzibar have already captured international attention, showcasing a fusion of traditional and contemporary African music.

One prime example of music tourism success is South Africa's Cape Town International Jazz Festival, the largest music event in sub-Saharan Africa. It unites

“*Music flows through Africa's veins, creating a harmonious tapestry that transcends borders and languages. From West African drumming to South African jazz, African music resonates universally.*”

global artists, fostering cultural exchange, boosting tourism, and promoting emerging talents.

Economic Potential

Music tourism offers substantial economic rewards. In 2019, the sector contributed over \$600 billion to global GDP, with Africa's share being a mere fraction. However, the growth potential is substantial.

Infrastructure development in Africa has made the continent more accessible to tourists. Strategic investments in music venues, promotion, and cultural preservation can tap into the burgeoning demand for authentic experiences, bolstering local economies and creating jobs.

Community Empowerment

Music tourism in Africa can empower local communities. Tourists engaging with local musicians and cultural traditions directly support community livelihoods. By championing local talent and preserving indigenous musical heritage, music tourism becomes a catalyst for sustainable

development, contributing to societal well-being and destination sustainability.

Challenges and Solutions

While the potential for music tourism in Africa is undeniable, challenges like infrastructure development, visa regulations, and safety concerns must be addressed through collaborative efforts.

Investments in music infrastructure, such as concert venues and recording studios, can enhance the music tourism experience. Simplified visa processes and improved security measures will encourage more tourists to explore the continent.

The Time is Now

The world is increasingly drawn to Africa for fresh and authentic experiences. The success of the Black Panther movie and the global popularity of African musicians like Burna Boy and Black Coffee underscore the growing interest in African culture. Music tourism has the potential to amplify this interest and usher in a new era for the continent.

As CEO of Downtown Music Hub in Johannesburg, I've witnessed the transformative power of music firsthand. Our city's thriving music scene attracts tourists from every corner of the globe, yet this potential extends far beyond our borders. The time has come for Africa to unite and harness the incredible power of music tourism.

In Conclusion

Music tourism is a burgeoning industry with immense potential in Africa. It can stimulate economic growth, empower communities, and showcase the continent's rich musical heritage. By addressing challenges and seizing opportunities, Africa can ascend as a global hub for music tourism, captivating travellers worldwide with its irresistible melodies and rhythms. The stage is set—let's make Africa the ultimate destination for music enthusiasts globally.



Written by Mpume Mabuza,
President & Chairperson
of the African Association
for Visitor Experiences &
Attractions (AAVEA) & CEO
of Downtown Music Hub

Africa's Tourism:

Shifting paradigms for an accelerated growth and recovery.

Samuel Obeng Appah - Content Editor, VoyagesAfric

Africa's tourism industry has exhibited a remarkable resurgence following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The region has seen a positive upswing in tourism activities, possibly spurred by governments recognising the vital role of the tourism sector in economic revival.

From the formulation of comprehensive tourism masterplans to the launch of domestic and international tourism campaigns, Africa is showcasing a promising trajectory of growth. Streamlined visa acquisition processes, alongside successful e-visa platforms, have further fuelled this recovery.

Remarkable increases in tourism figures have been reported, with countries like Mozambique, South Africa, Seychelles, Kenya, and Ghana experiencing significant growth. Earlier this year, Mozambique's Minister of Culture and Tourism, Eldevina Materula indicated that since the introduction of the country's e-visa program, "we have seen a weekly average of 500 American

travellers visiting the country along with other European countries such as France and the UK. Chinese travellers have also developed an interest in our country as well. This is well beyond tourism as it is helping drive investments to Mozambique."

Notably, trade shows and events have returned across the continent, signaling a robust revival in the tourism sector.

A game-changer on the horizon is Rwanda's hosting of the 2023 World Travel and Tourism Council Global Summit this November, poised to significantly boost tourism in the country. According to the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer and Statistical Annex of May 2023, Africa and the Americas have reached nearly 85% of 2019 tourism levels during the first quarter of 2023, underscoring the robustness of the sector's recovery.

As post-COVID travellers increasingly view Africa as a captivating destination,



replete with diverse cultures, stunning landscapes and unique wildlife, the continent stands at the precipice of a transformative opportunity. However, to fully harness its potential, Africa must embrace a paradigm shift within its tourism industry. Sustainability, local empowerment, and technological integration must become core tenets of this shift, driving both recovery and growth.

Promoting Sustainable Tourism Practices

Africa's breathtaking natural beauty and ecological treasures have consistently attracted global tourists. Nevertheless, the rapid growth of mass tourism raises concerns about its impact on fragile ecosystems and wildlife. To preserve these invaluable assets, African nations must adopt sustainable tourism practices. This entails encouraging eco-friendly accommodations, minimising waste and carbon footprints, and advocating responsible wildlife tourism. Embracing eco-tourism and community-led conservation initiatives safeguards the environment while offering distinctive experiences for nature-conscious tourists.

Empowering Local Communities

Tourism possesses the potential to spur socio-economic development within African communities. It can create jobs, boost incomes and invigorate local economies. Nonetheless, the benefits of tourism often elude local populations, favouring large corporations and foreign interests. Addressing this disparity requires prioritising community empowerment through tourism. Nurturing community-based tourism enterprises, promoting indigenous craftsmanship and involving local communities in decision-making processes are pivotal steps. By fostering



genuine partnerships between tourists and host communities, Africa can ensure that tourism becomes a catalyst for poverty alleviation and inclusive growth.

Leveraging Innovation and Technology

The dynamic evolution of the world hinges on technology and its role in shaping the future of tourism is



undeniable. African nations must embrace innovation to enhance visitor experiences, bolster infrastructure and enhance tourism management. Leveraging digital platforms and mobile applications can streamline travel, provide real-time information about attractions and connect tourists with local guides and experiences. Moreover, harnessing technology to address issues like waste management and sustainable practices can significantly benefit the environment.

Promoting Cultural Exchange

Africa's rich cultural diversity is one of its most prized assets. Encouraging cultural exchange between tourists and local communities foster a deeper appreciation for the continent's heritage and nurtures mutual understanding. Promoting cultural festivals, heritage tours and immersive homestays offers

tourists the chance to engage with African culture authentically, while also supporting local artisans and communities. Respectful engagement with local customs ensures that tourism amplifies cultural pride instead of commodifying it.

Enhancing Air Transport Liberalisation

Revitalising air connectivity lies at the heart of Africa's tourism resurgence. Removing barriers to air travel through air transport liberalization can revolutionise tourism by opening up new exploration avenues. The benefits are multifold: improved accessibility to hidden gems beyond popular destinations, increased affordability due to heightened competition among airlines and the potential for multideestination travel packages that facilitate comprehensive African adventures.

Streamlining Visa Acquisition

Visa acquisition has long posed a deterrent to potential tourists. Simplifying visa processes can be a game-changer, facilitating hassle-free entry and exit from African countries. This offers numerous advantages, including higher visitor numbers, repeat tourism and a boost for both leisure and business travel. Streamlining visa processes would ensure that challenges associated with travelling within and between countries on the continent are eliminated to ensure a truly connected Africa.

Collaborative Approach for Sustainable Recovery

Realizing Africa's tourism potential necessitates a united effort from governments, airlines and the private sector. Collaboration can expedite policy changes that encourage air transport liberalisation and streamlined visa processes. While challenges like security concerns and administrative hurdles exist, the rewards—job creation, economic growth and global recognition for Africa's cultural heritage and natural wonders—are monumental.

The need for collaboration is critical to realising the strategies mentioned. And as Prime Minister of Mauritius, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth said during the 66th UNWTO CAF Meetings, "For 'One Africa' to gain momentum, we, African



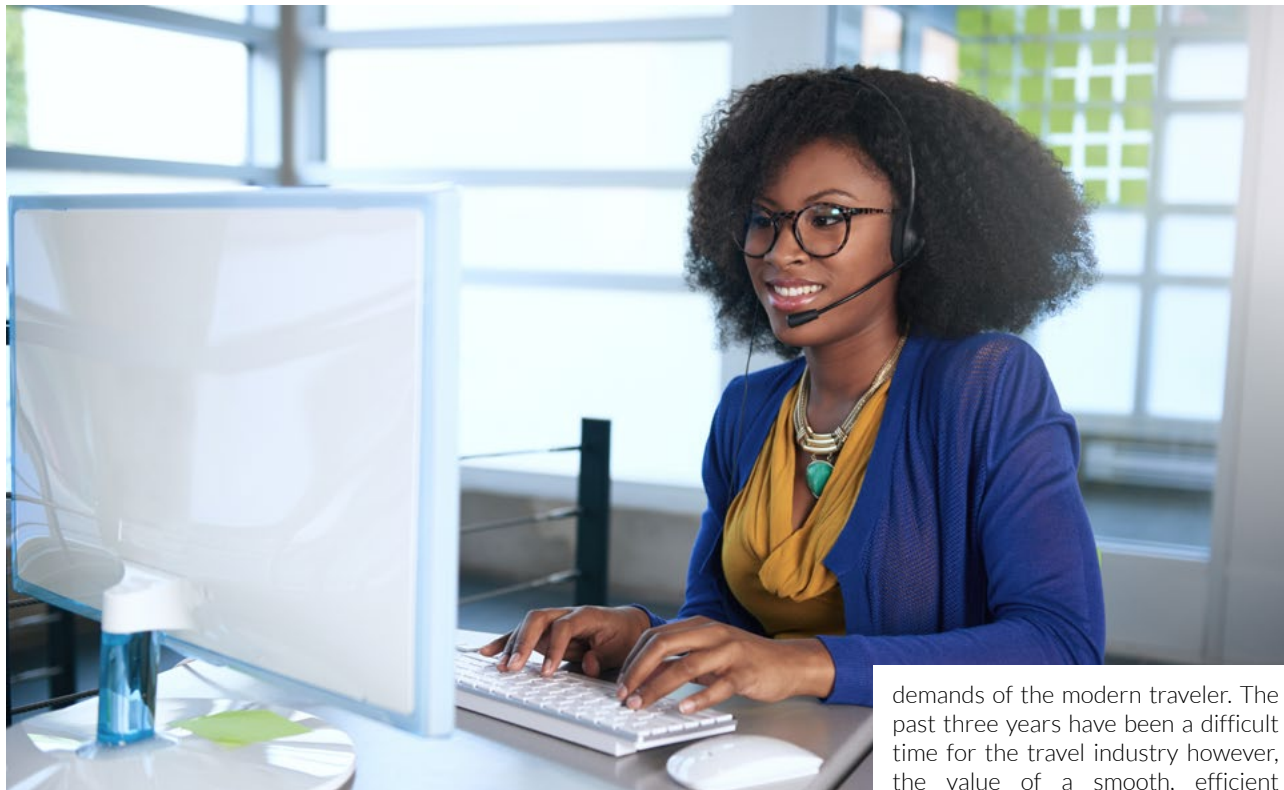
leaders, have to join forces and work together. To increase tourism within Africa, we can build on and extend partnerships such as the collaboration of the Indian Ocean Islands under the 'Iles Vanille' partnership and the arrangements between Southern and Eastern Africa."

A Transformative Future

Africa stands at a crossroads, shaping the destiny of its tourism industry. By embracing sustainability, local empowerment, technology and cultural exchange, the continent can unlock its tourism sector's true potential. This approach magnetises more visitors while establishing an economically robust, socially conscious, and ecologically sustainable tourism landscape that benefits present and future generations.

In the midst of the post-pandemic tourism revival, the significance of air travel liberalisation and streamlined visa procedures cannot be overstated. These strategies not only fuel economic resurgence but also shine a spotlight on Africa's captivating allure worldwide. Embracing these advancements positions African nations as premier travel destinations, ready to warmly welcome the world to their diverse and captivating landscapes.





The Essence of CUSTOMER SERVICE

A while ago, I had the pleasure of lecturing the Master students at the International School of Hotel Management, Les Roches Marbella in Spain. Whilst on the Rooms Division Management class, we discussed the importance of Customer Service or, as I call it, Customer Care!

Whilst running my own business and coaching my clients on setting up and managing theirs, I constantly stress the importance of effective and high-quality customer care. This is because in our super-competitive economy, finding an alternative supplier is only a Google search away, the best and most long-lasting way to differentiate yourself from your competitors is by providing unique and outstanding customer care.

At my management consulting company, United Consulting (www.aunitedconsulting.com) I have defined "Problem Resolution" as one of our main KPIs. Every business faces problems, however, how you resolve them is

what matters the most. A customer with a complaint should turn out to be your most loyal customer. This is an opportunity, not a problem and should be viewed as such!

Providing excellent customer care starts with a genuine desire to delight your customers. Your team must be empathetic, and service orientated. Expect to deal with people at their worst but have the goal of returning them to a state of happiness, or at least to satisfaction.

Both leisure and corporate customers are looking for more than a hotel room, an air ticket, or an activity. They are looking for value, not just how much they are paying, but in what they EXPERIENCE while on their trips. According to the Customer Service Benchmark Report, the travel sector currently offers one of the lowest standards of customer service. Travel companies are often ignoring customers and therefore, failing to meet the

demands of the modern traveler. The past three years have been a difficult time for the travel industry however, the value of a smooth, efficient customer service function at times like these cannot be underestimated.

Online Travel Agencies are tech companies operating in a different industry – in this case the travel industry. In most cases, automation is used as a way to avoid personal interaction with customers. Being a customer-centric guru, I've decided to do things differently and build a travel platform from the customer's perspective.

The pandemic provided me with the time and space to finally present my own answer to many problems that the travel industry constantly faces. My answer to these was the creation of Ojimah (www.ojimah.com), a Pan African Travel Ecosystem built by the industry for the industry.

As Maya Angelou once said, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel".

By Mike Tavares, OJIMAH



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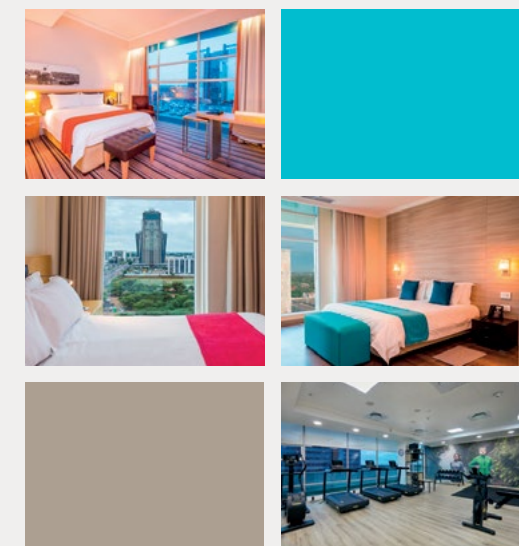
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DISTANT RELATIVES ECOLODGE:

A Beacon of Sustainable Tourism and community Empowerment in Kilifi

In an era where travellers increasingly seek meaningful experiences that benefit both the environment and the local community, Distant Relatives Ecolodge and Backpackers stands out as a shining example.



Mwanase Ahmed, the CEO and Co-owner of Distant Relatives Ecolodge and Backpackers

In a conversation with Kojo Bentum-William for the VA Tourism Podcast, which delved into the world of sustainable tourism, Mwanase Ahmed, the CEO and Co-owner of Distant Relatives Ecolodge and Backpackers, unveiled the lodge's remarkable journey in uniting eco-conscious travellers and nurturing the local community as a driving force. With a passion for sustainable practices and a vision for responsible travel, Mwanase shared her insights on the lodge's innovative approach and its potential to invigorate domestic tourism while promoting environmental stewardship.

Mwanase Ahmed's extensive global background, spanning various continents and enriched by her

qualifications in Sociology, International Studies, and Political Economy, has uniquely positioned her to champion sustainable tourism. Hailing from Lamu Island and having traversed the United States, France, Central America, and Senegal, Mwanase's return to Kenya was accompanied by a deep-rooted commitment to fostering responsible and community-driven tourism.

Central to Distant Relatives Ecolodge's ethos is its unwavering dedication to environmental preservation. Mwanase

passionately affirmed, "Environmental conservation is really important because it has a lot of positive financial implications as well." She emphasised the significance of freshwater, highlighting how its scarcity during extended dry periods can have dire consequences. "When we start to feel the effect of the pressure on our natural environment... it is extremely expensive," she elaborated.

Mwanase's interview also spotlighted the lodge's proactive stance on sustainable water management. "Installing rainwater

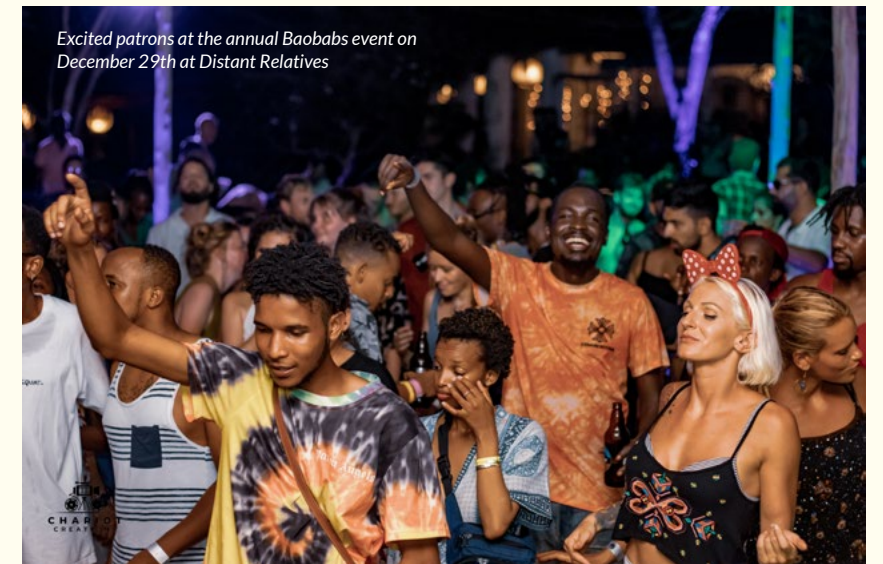


Mwanase fire hula hooping alongside The Scrapers Band during a Friday evening musical event at Distant Relatives

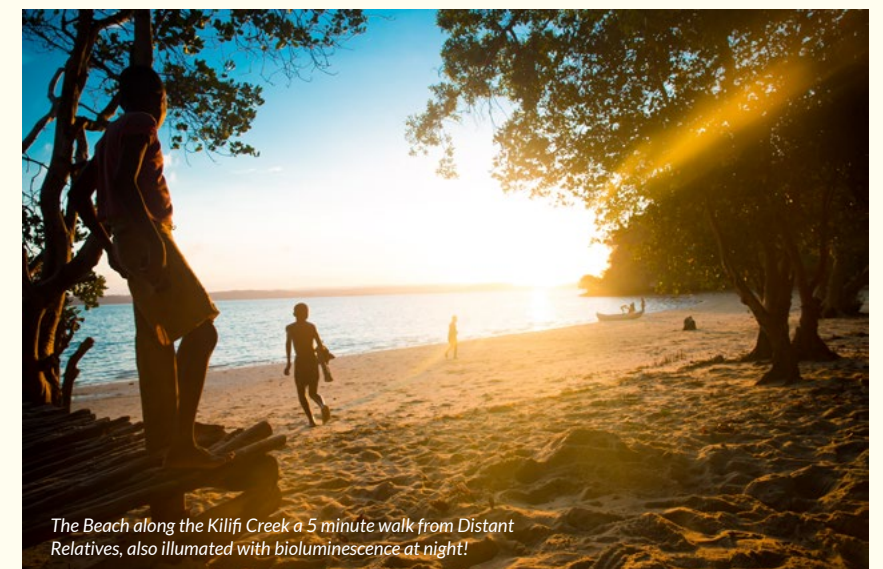
catchment gutter is something that is not only environmentally sustainable but also financially sustainable," she noted. By anticipating climate challenges, Distant Relatives Ecolodge showcases a comprehensive strategy that harmonizes ecological and economic considerations.

“Central to Distant Relatives Ecolodge's ethos is its unwavering dedication to environmental preservation.”

In response to evolving traveller preferences, Mwanase stressed the allure of unique and authentic experiences. "Travellers are also looking for more unique memories rather than



Excited patrons at the annual Baobabs event on December 29th at Distant Relatives



The Beach along the Kilifi Creek a 5 minute walk from Distant Relatives, also illuminated with bioluminescence at night!

big-screen TVs and ACs," she observed. The lodge has woven local community engagement into its fabric, co-creating distinctive experiences with community members, allowing guests to engage deeply with the local culture and lifestyle.

Mwanase's call for ethical and innovative tourism practices resonated throughout the interview. "We need to grow and have a dynamic service, not keep the same activities and styles for 20, 30 years," she asserted. She highlighted the dual impact of responsible tourism: "You are also teaching and educating those who come through - whether composting toilets actually save a lot of water instead of sewage."

Established in 2010, Distant Relatives Ecolodge stands as a living testament

to unity, sustainability, and community upliftment. Inspired by Nas and Damian Marley's song, the name embodies the mission to foster connections among global citizens. Mwanase's vision extends to families, with the lodge offering an array of family-friendly activities that celebrate togetherness and exploration.

The conversation with Mwanase Ahmed illuminated Distant Relatives Ecolodge's pivotal role in advancing sustainable tourism and empowering local communities. Through its innovative model and holistic approach, the lodge sets an inspiring precedent for the industry, showcasing that responsible practices can drive positive change while enhancing the essence of travel.

Tourism Calendar of Events



October
12-14
2023

Sanganai Hlanganani World Tourism Expo

Venue: Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Contact:

Email:

About: The annual event brings together key players and stakeholders in the global tourism industry, providing a platform for networking, collaboration, and showcasing the best of Zimbabwe's rich tourism potential.

October
16-20
2023

UNWTO 25th General Assembly

Contact: +34 91 567 81 00

Email: comms@unwto.org

Venue: Samarkand, Uzbekistan

About: The UNWTO General Assembly is held every two years and gathers the top representatives of the Organization's Member States, as well as world tourism leaders from the public and private sectors, local authorities, academia, and media.

November
1-3
2023

WTTC Global Summit

Venue: Kigali Convention Centre, Kigali

Contact: +44 (0) 207 481 8007

About: WTTC's annual Global Summit is the most influential Travel & Tourism event on the calendar, and this 2023 to support the sector's recovery and move beyond to a safer, more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future.

November
6-8
2023

WTM London

Venue: Excel Exhibition Centre, London

Contact: +44 (0)20 8271 2171

Email: info@rxgglobal.com

About: WTM London brings together the international leisure travel community; providing inspiration, education, sourcing, and benchmarking to travel professionals while providing exhibitors a place to do business and showcase their services to the international press.

November
12-15
2023

ICCA Congress 2023

Contact: +

Email: registration@iccaworld.org

Venue: Bangkok, Thailand

About: ICCA Congress brings the world of international meetings and events together to discuss, share, and inspire new ways of making what we do, matter more.

November
22-24
2023

7th UNWTO Global Conference on Wine Tourism

Venue: La Logroño (La Rioja), Spain Contact: +34 91 567 81 00

Email: info@unwto.org

About: This annual Conference represents a unique opportunity for experts from across the growing field of wine tourism to work together to find concrete solutions to make tourism an enabler of the way forward towards a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient future for communities.

Tourism Calendar of Events



Nov - Dec
24-2
2023

Seychelles Fashion Week

Contact: +248 2510 014

Email: seychellesfashionweek@gmail.com

Venue: Mahe, Seychelles

About: The Seychelles Fashion week is a Platform for the world fashioners, pioneers and creatives can congregate to develop fashion on the continent and the Indian Ocean Islands, with the main focus on Seychelles as a the world top tourism destination.

November
28-30
2023

IBTM, Barcelona

Contact:

Email:

Venue: Barcelona, Spain

About: IBTM World inspire event producers and associations to deliver exceptional experiences by bringing together the whole international MICE industry to meet, network, connect and do business at IBTM World in Barcelona.

Nov - Dec
29-3
2023

Botswana Travel & Tourism Expo

Contact: +267 72 788 119

Email: mmatolela@botswanatourism.co.bw

Venue: Kasane, Botswana

About: The annual tourism expo provides an opportunity for the global tourism industry to meet on a one-on-one basis with their Botswana tourism industry counterparts to trade and agree on future tourism packages for our global tourists.

January
24-28
2024

FITUR International Tourism Fair

Contact:

Venue: IFEMA, Madrid- Spain

About: Fitur is the global meeting point for tourism professionals and the leading trade fair for inbound and outbound markets in Latin America.

Nov - Dec
29-3
2023

Fikani International Tourism Fair

Contact: +258 82757 9950

Venue: Maputo, Mozambique

About: Fikani is considered the most prestigious point of business and meeting point between companies and national tourist institutions with their counterparts in the southern region of Africa and other parts of the world.

November
20-22
2023

3rd East Africa Regional Tourism Expo & MKTE

Venue: Nairobi, Kenya

Email: info@ktb.go.ke

About: The East Africa Regional Tourism Expo (EARTE), is an annual regional travel fair showcasing the region's diverse tourism offering to consumers, and trade, hosted by the East African Community partner states on a rotational basis.

Travel & Tourism Blitz

WTM London 2023 Conference program announced

World Travel Market 2023, the world's most influential travel & tourism event, has announced details of its conference programme, with high-profile speakers and seminars.

More than 60 conference sessions are lined up, empowering the global travel community, and reminding them they have the Power to Change travel.

The conference programme will include eight new tracks across three stages over three days, taking place at ExCeL London, from 6-8 November 2023. In a move away from previous years, the 2023 conference stages will be named Discover, Elevate and Innovate – a reflection of their goal.

Furthermore, in response to the demand in 2022 – which saw 9,102 visitors

attend the WTM London Conference sessions – stage sizes have been increased, and rather than one main stage, WTM will host three equally important stages across the event.

The eight conference tracks will be titled Sustainability, Technology, Geo-Economics, Emerging Markets, Consumer Trends, Marketing, Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) and Experience which aim to help the global travel community succeed and thrive, by informing, entertaining, and influencing their business decisions.

In another first, the Discover Stage will feature a new layout designed to support networking. Table-based seating, rather than traditional conference-style chairs, will promote networking



between sessions, which will also include icebreakers, storytellers, and socialising during breaks.

Some of the key sessions taking place, listed by day, are:

Ethiopian adds London Gatwick to its UK Network

Ethiopian Airlines, the largest network operating carrier in Africa is pleased to announce that it will commence a thrice weekly services to/from London-Gatwick starting from November 21, 2023.

The new service will be operational every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday as per the below schedule

Regarding the commencement of the flight Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mr. Mesfin Tasew said, "We have a 50-year relation with UK. We give high regards to our Heathrow services and now we are excited to add Gatwick to our vast global network. We are ready to stretch our reach to Gatwick and provide our renowned, award-winning services. History has it that we last served Gatwick in 2005 and 2006 using the Boeing 757. Now the route will be served by the most modern Airbus A350-900 aircraft. Over the years, we have established commendable partnerships with over 100 UK based companies in the aviation sector. Our expansion in the UK, among others, will enable us to nurture this cooperation and partnership to a higher level."

The new service by Ethiopian will offer a direct flight between London-Gatwick and Addis Ababa onboard Airbus A350 with Business Class and Economy cabins, providing seamless connectivity to Ethiopian Airlines' vast global networks stretched across Africa, Far East, the Americas and Asia.

Mr. Henock Woubishet, Area Manager UK & Ireland commenting on the new service said, "The UK is a strong and important market for Ethiopian. Adding London-Gatwick to our UK schedule is truly great news as it will enable us to provide much-needed capacity not only for our passengers but also for our cargo services carried in the belly hold. Ethiopian will now serve London Heathrow, Gatwick, and Manchester Airports."

Uganda Tourism Board resumes hotel grading classification

Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) has started to undertake a nationwide grading and classification exercise. This was revealed at a press conference at UTB headquarters addressed by Lilly Ajarova CEO (UTB), Uganda Hotel Owners Association (UHOA) Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, Board of UTB, Susan Muhwezi, Broadford Ochieng, Deputy CEO (UTB) and Jean Byamugisha, Executive Director (UHOA). The exercise will be conducted in phases to cover the entire country. The first phase took place on 1st August to 4th September, 2023 and was conducted around Kampala, Entebbe, Jinja, Masaka, Mbarara, Fort-portal and Mbale.



Treaty. In the treaty, Tourism is one of the identified sectors where partner states work together in a coordinated manner, to develop the quality of accommodation and catering facilities for visitors within the region.

Ms. Lilly Ajarova revealed that the exercise is in fulfillment of one of UTB's mandates to carry out Quality Assurance of the tourism sector as enshrined in the Tourism Act 2008. "Section (J) UTB enforces and monitors standards and (K) mandates us to register, inspect, license and classify tourism enterprises," she said. The exercise aligns the country and tourism players to the provisions of article 115(2) of the East African

Mrs. Susan Muhwezi explained that UHOA and the private sector were fully in support of the exercise and urged hoteliers to participate for the good of the industry. She said grading will add value to their investments through increased marketing of the facilities within the accredited grades. She explained that the exercise is a vital component of marketing Uganda as a competitive tourism destination that observes good standards for visitor enjoyment.

Hanno Barkhoff joins Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City Accra as General Manager

Ghana's finest five-star luxury hotel located in the heart of Accra is well poised to elevate its high standards of luxury hospitality with the appointment of Hanno Barkhoff as the new General Manager of the Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City Accra.

With over 20 years of experience within the luxury industry, Hanno Barkhoff is no stranger to the Kempinski family, having started in Event Sales & Food & Beverage in 2002 at the Hotel Adlon Kempinski Berlin, Germany. After gaining experience at several renowned hospitality brands across the globe, he returned to Germany in 2016, heading two of Kempinski's flagship European hotels in Berlin and Munich as Hotel Manager over the past seven years.

Now, the German national brings a wealth of knowledge, a strong understanding of luxury hospitality and experience to the



Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City Accra in his new role as General Manager. Particularly, his savvy, hands-on and dynamic approach will be a great asset for the successful implementation of the ambitious food and beverage concept designed to elevate guests' dining experience at the hotel.

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IDC supports the aspirations of the AfCFTA by enabling and funding inter-continental trade.

As the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) continues to entrench new trade agreements, grow intra-continental collaboration and boost Africa's standing in the global market, the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) is helping to pave the way for African companies to establish a strong presence on the continent and beyond.

With a portfolio of investments in excess of R27 billion across 17 countries and multiple sectors, the IDC demonstrates its confidence in the opportunities and potential for long-term benefits that can be derived for business. Our funding not only catalyses the development of cross-border infrastructure, incentivising economic diversification, but proliferates access to new markets, expands industrial capacity and creates jobs.



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