

VoyagesAfric

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Africa's Leading Travel and Tourism Magazine



**1st UN Tourism
Africa & Americas Summit**

October 2 to 5, 2024
Punta Cana, Dominican Republic

1er Encuentro de Alto Nivel de Turismo para
África y las Américas

**Africa and Americas Unite at
Landmark Summit to Plan
Shared Tourism Future pg. 8**

**Cartegena de Indias readies to
host 122nd UN Tourism Executive
Council Meeting pg. 26**



Luis Carlos Reyes Hernández
*Minister of Trade, Industry,
and Tourism*

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Step into Namibia's Unique Blend



Namibia Tourism Board

As the world's travel enthusiasts begin to circle their destinations for the next big adventure, we're reminded of the country's vast and breathtaking expanse of space, where the stars shine bright, and the night sky is a canvas of endless possibilities.

The Namibia Tourism Board (NTB) together with the Namibia tourism stakeholders plays a crucial role in the success of Namibia's tourism industry by promoting and enhancing the country's authentic experiences, cultural heritage, and natural beauty.

Namibia offers a serene refuge for tourists looking for quiet, a vibrant cultural heritage, and a strong commitment to peace.

Time stands still in this enchanting land, where the rhythms of nature and the warmth of the African sun conspire to slow down the pace of life. Whether you're trekking through the majestic dunes of Sossusvlei, exploring the ancient rock art of Twyfelfontein, or simply basking in the golden light of sunset, Namibia's unique blend of space, peace, and time is sure to leave you feeling refreshed, rejuvenated, and ready to take on the world.



Space: The Vast Expanse of the Desert

Imagine standing at the edge of the world's oldest desert, where the sky stretches out in every direction, seemingly without end. The Namib Desert is a haven for astronomers, with some of the gloomiest skies on the planet. Watch the sunset over towering dunes, and then gaze up at the star-filled night sky, feeling the vastness of the universe unfold before you.

Peace: Serenity in a World Gone Mad

In an increasingly fast-paced and hectic world, Namibia offers a tranquil escape from the hustle and bustle. From the gentle rustle of the desert grasses to the soothing sounds of the Atlantic Ocean, every moment in this country is an opportunity to unwind and reconnect with nature. Take a leisurely drive through the rolling hills of the Khomas Hochland or stroll drive along the peaceful shores of Etosha Pan National Park and let your worries melt away.

Time: A Journey Through Ancient Landscapes

Namibia's rich history and diverse cultures are waiting to be discovered. Visit ancient rock art sites, where centuries-old paintings tell stories of long-forgotten civilizations. Explore the Namibian capital, Windhoek, with its German colonial architecture and vibrant markets. And step into the world of the San Bushmen or Ovahimba, who have lived in harmony with this land for thousands of years.

many other activities November to March for mostly surfing and swimming

Accommodation: Ranging from luxury lodges to budget-friendly guesthouses and camping sites.

Safety: Safer than most African countries but familiarize yourself with the Namibia Tourism Board safety brochure at the website: www.visitnamibia.com.na

Practical Information

Getting There: Fly into Windhoek Hosea Kutako International Airport (WDH)

Language: English is widely spoken, but German and Afrikaans are also common.

Currency: Namibian Dollar (NAD), but credit cards are acceptable

Best Time to Visit: Namibia is an all-year destination but from May to October pick sessions for game, landscape viewing, and

Namibia Tourism Board invites you to experience Namibia's unique blend of space, peace, and time. To capture the essence of Namibia's unique attractions the importance of slowing down and appreciating the country's natural beauty. Namibia Tourism Board highlights the value of disconnecting from technology and reconnecting with oneself and nature.

So why wait?
Book your trip to Namibia today!

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Travel and Tourism Magazine

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the final edition of VoyagesAfric Travel Magazine for 2024, a celebration of travel, tourism and the stories that connect us across borders and continents. This issue is a reflection of the triumphs, innovations and challenges that have defined the year in global tourism—and as always, we aim to keep you informed, inspired and excited for the road ahead.

Our cover story takes you to the sunny shores of Cana Punta, Dominican Republic, where the inaugural UN Tourism Africa and Americas Tourism Summit unfolded in spectacular fashion. This groundbreaking event set the stage for fruitful collaborations between Africa and the Americas, with a shared goal to uplift tourism and attract vital investments. As the summit concluded, Zambia proudly secured the rights to host the next edition in 2025, bringing the momentum back to African soil.

In this issue, we also spotlight key developments shaping tourism diplomacy. The Democratic Republic of Congo's Minister of Tourism, Didier M'pambia Musanga, led a high-powered delegation to the UN Tourism headquarters in Madrid. This engagement underscores the DRC's determination to amplify its global tourism footprint.

On the sustainability front, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTTC) revealed some promising news from their 24th Global Summit in Perth (Boorloo), Western Australia: travel and tourism climate emissions are finally on a downward trend. This report reaffirms the sector's commitment to greener and more sustainable operations.

Africa's transformative tourism story continues with Angola, where the government sees the industry as a cornerstone of economic revival. In an in-depth interview, Minister Márcio De Jesus Lopes Daniel shares insights into Angola's ambitions to reposition itself



Kojo Bentum-Williams

as a tourism powerhouse.

Meanwhile, Kenya's President William Ruto has rolled out progressive policies aimed at attracting travellers and digital nomads alike. His introduction of a Transit ETA and Digital Nomad Work Permit reflects the country's bold aim of welcoming 5 million visitors by 2027.

This edition also delivers a rich collection of expert opinions and op-eds. Industry thought leaders such as Kamil Abdul-Karrim of PAM GOLDING Tourism & Hospitality Consulting, Hamza Farooqui of Millat Group, and our regular contributors, Sean Mendis and Akwasi Obeng-Adjei, share their analyses on tourism trends shaping Africa's future.

In South Africa, tourism leaders gathered at the 2024 Tourism Business Council of South Africa Leadership Conference in Sun City to map new paths for growth, and we've captured the key takeaways in detail.

We're also excited to share news of the African Travel and Tourism Association (ATTA®) appointing Kgomotso Ramothea as its new CEO. In an exclusive conversation, Kgomotso outlines her vision for driving ATTA® memberships and fostering sustainable growth within Africa's tourism ecosystem.

In aviation, Africa's skies are opening up like never before. Our coverage explores the positive developments giving travellers more flight options, a clear indication of renewed momentum in the sector.

Whether you're an avid traveller or someone just beginning

to explore the wonders of Africa, you won't want to miss our curated feature on "Ten Must-Visit Destinations in Africa: A Traveller's Guide." From hidden gems to world-renowned landmarks, this guide offers inspiration for your next adventure.

We also take a deep dive into Namibia's rich culinary traditions, showcasing the unique flavours and dishes that make the country's gastronomic offerings unforgettable.

To round things off, we've included previews of major industry events happening across the continent and beyond, along with our Travel and Tourism Blitz, a section delivering a quick but thorough snapshot of the latest happenings in the industry.

As the year draws to a close, this final edition is the perfect companion to wrap up 2024 on a high note. Whether you're reflecting on your personal journeys or measuring business successes, we hope you find this issue both insightful and inspiring.

From me and the entire VoyagesAfriq team, thank you for being part of our journey this year. May the rest of 2024 bring you joy, fulfilment and fresh aspirations for 2025.

Have a great read and a wonderful end to the year!

Best wishes,

Kojo Bentum-Williams
Publisher

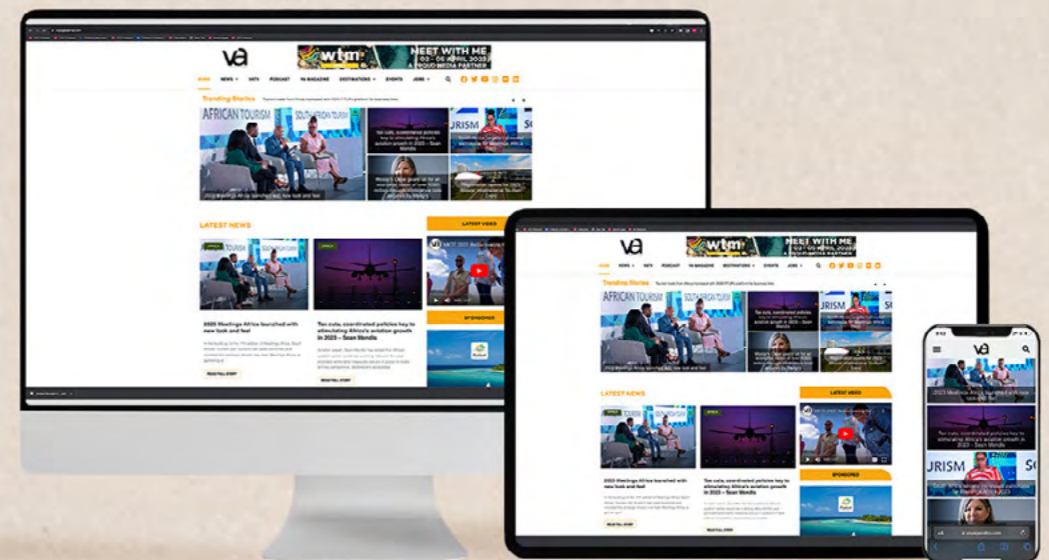


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Africa's leading Travel and Tourism Magazine





Africa and Americas Unite at Landmark Summit to Plan Shared Tourism Future

Tourism leaders from both Africa and the Americas have jointly committed to working together to make the sector a pillar of collective sustainable and inclusive development across both continents.

The “Punta Cana Declaration” was adopted at the conclusion of the very first joint meeting of UN Tourism’s Regional Commissions for Africa and the Americas and followed two days of shared dialogue around the key themes of education and investments into the sector. Recognizing the historic ties between the two regions, as well their unique and complementary cultures, the Summit served as a landmark platform for strengthened cooperation, capitalizing on innovation, education, investments and creative industries for the future development of tourism.

Welcoming around 200 high-level participants among them 14 Ministers, representing 27 countries (15 from

the Americas and 12 from Africa), UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “This summit offers a unique platform to forge connections and build bridges between Africa and the Americas, create strategic cross-regional partnerships, foster South-South cooperation projects, all for the benefit of the tourism sector of the two regions.”

Joining the UN Tourism leadership in welcoming delegates and encouraging the building of bridges between the two regions were David Collado, Minister of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, Dominican Republic, Chair of the Regional Commission for the Americas, and Auxillia Mngangwa, Patron for Tourism in Zimbabwe, the First Lady of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

UN Tourism Executive Director Natalia Bayona said: “Africa and the Americas are endowed with rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and profound

historical connections. Yet, we recognize that due to multiple challenges—such as limited connectivity, regulatory and administrative barriers, and a lack of mutual market awareness—our cross-tourism relationship is not as strong as it could and should be.

Our goal today is to address these challenges head-on, fostering collaboration that will drive economic development, promote cultural exchange, and encourage sustainable practices benefiting all our communities.”

The Punta Cana Declaration

As a clear signal of South-South cooperation, the Punta Cana Declaration set out a set of shared commitments for the development of tourism as a driver of inclusive development. Through the Declaration, tourism leaders from both regions recognize the important need to “intensify joint efforts to promote sustainable development” through tourism, with a firm focus on “strategic

investments, education, innovation and the creative industries”. Embodying the spirit of the landmark Punta Cana Summit, the Declaration also emphasizes the importance of tourism as a tool for the preservation of shared and unique culture and heritage.

The signatories of the Declaration signalled their intention to “redouble their efforts”, most notably in the following areas:

Strategic investments: To strengthen public-private partnerships, stimulate investments into the sector, and prioritize investments through effective policymaking. Also, to boost connectivity between the two regions, both in terms of improved air links as well as strengthened cultural exchange.

Skills development and training: To prioritize investment in tourism education and training, to expand access to online and offline learning and to promote the use of innovation and new digital skills to enhance the knowledge of the tourism workforce.

Innovation: To support competitions for start-up enterprises and entrepreneurs in both regions, to better support MSMEs, including in rural communities, and to promote innovative solutions focused on sustainability and climate action.

Creative industries: To promote the role of the cultural and creative industries in the tourism sector, including through funding for projects with the potential to attract tourists and grow new and diverse destinations and cultural routes, and to ensure the benefits the sector delivers are focused on social and inclusive development.

Inter-regional cooperation: To support market analysis and other research to identify potential areas of shared growth and opportunity, to develop shared strategies for tourism development, including through digital media, new products and international tourism trade fairs.

Investments and Education: “Building a better tomorrow, today”. In line with UN Tourism’s wider focus on investments

in tourism, the Summit brought together public and private sector leaders, alongside key representatives of financial institutions to assess the current landscape and trends and outlook for Africa and the Americas.

The high-level speakers noted the huge potential for joint investment initiatives between the two regions, emphasizing the growing role of public and private banks. The Summit also focused on the vital importance of investments for driving the green transition of tourism in both Africa and the Americas, most notably in infrastructure and in the hotel sector.

Alongside innovation, the Summit also placed the spotlight on education and training, noting the urgent need for skilled workers in both regions. With the focus on “Young Talents Leading the Transformation, tourism leaders recognized the need for joint capacity-building initiatives, curriculum development, and partnerships between academic institutions, industry stakeholders, and governmental bodies.





Dominican Republic Tourism Minister impressed by success of maiden Africa & Americas Tourism Summit, hails outcomes

The Minister of Tourism for Dominican Republic has expressed delight at the success of the inaugural Africa and Americas Tourism Summit held in Punta Cana.

David Collado also hailed the many discussions and subsequent outcomes of the three-day event which brought participants from over 30 countries in both continents.

"These were very fruitful debates that will have an impact on our tourism in the short, medium and long term. Without a doubt, this summit of Africa and the Americas could not have been more successful," said Collado.

Punta Cana Declaration

One of the key outcomes was the "Punta Cana Declaration" which the Minister posited is a firm commitment that has been achieved between the countries of Africa and America, which will help to jointly promote a South-South development agenda.



In this respect, representatives of the member states of the United Nations Tourism of the Americas and Africa reaffirmed their commitment to promote South-South cooperation, with the aim of advancing sustainable development between the two regions and achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

They also embraced the responsibility of intensifying joint efforts to promote

sustainable development with strategic investments in tourism infrastructure and its enabling factors, such as education, innovation and creative industries.

In addition, the countries present at the Summit committed to making joint investment agenda focused on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals that have a direct impact on tourism.

"This is a milestone, because it will allow for a channel of cooperation that had never existed before, so that tourism is the weapon that unites our peoples, that we develop cultural, gastronomic and ecological tourism agendas and that our diversity and our similarities are the fundamental support for the development of our peoples through tourism," explained, Collado.

The Secretary General of UN Tourism, Zurab Pololikashvili, described the summit as a great meeting between ministers and other actors in the sector, which will help promote a common agenda between the two continents.

He emphasised the need to promote investments, since "without investments there is no development of tourism."

Pololikashvili thanked the Dominicans for their hospitality during the summit and highlighted what he defined as the great work of Minister David Collado and his leadership in the sector at an international level.

Sustainability Agreement

In the framework of the Summit, the agreement was signed to mark the beginning of a project to develop a Sustainable Tourism Policy and Strategy for the Dominican Republic.

The agreement was signed by the Minister of Tourism, David Collado, and



"This is a milestone, because it will allow for a channel of cooperation that had never existed before, so that tourism is the weapon that unites our peoples, that we develop cultural, gastronomic and ecological tourism agendas and that our diversity and our similarities are the fundamental support for the development of our peoples through tourism"

the Secretary General of UN Tourism, Zurab Pololikashvili, in the presence of the President of Asonahores, David Llibre and Anabel Bueno, Ambassador of the Dominican Republic to UN Tourism.

The agreement will promote the formulation of a Sustainable Tourism Policy and Strategy, aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

It includes a comprehensive approach with capacity building, collaboration of key actors, communication and innovation for the development of sustainable tourism throughout the entire value chain.



Tourism is a bridge across continents – UN Tourism Chief, Zurab Pololikashvili

The 1st UN Tourism Africa-Americas Summit concluded in Punta Cana with an ambitious call for collaboration and transformative partnerships between the two regions, marking a historic milestone for global tourism.

Held from 2-5 October 2024, the summit brought together ministers, tourism experts, academics and industry players to explore opportunities for sustainable growth and economic prosperity through cross-regional cooperation.

Zurab Pololikashvili, the Secretary-General of UN Tourism, opened the summit with an emphatic speech that highlighted the importance of building bridges between Africa and the Americas, while celebrating the cultural and economic strengths of both regions.

"This is a historic occasion. For our organization and for our sector," Pololikashvili stated in his opening address. "The first UN Tourism Africa-Americas Summit shows our commitment to collaboration, across

borders and across an ocean. It is wonderful to be back in beautiful Punta Cana for this very special occasion. This is a place that shows what is possible if we have the vision and determination to make it happen."

Pololikashvili emphasized the complementary nature of Africa and the Americas, highlighting shared roots, historical connections and their parallel potential as world-class tourism destinations. "Africa and the Americas are diverse and complementary at the same time. Both are blessed with natural wonders and rich cultural heritage. They share common roots and historical ties. And their futures are also closely linked, especially in the field of tourism."

He noted the regions' impressive tourism recovery post-COVID, sharing key data from the latest World Tourism Barometer: "In 2023, African and American destinations recorded 267 million international tourist arrivals between them. And these numbers are expected to grow. Our latest barometer



underscores the remarkable results achieved by both regions, which have fully recovered and even exceeded pre-pandemic levels."

The summit, Pololikashvili said, offered an unprecedented opportunity to foster "South-South cooperation" and build strategic partnerships. "This summit offers a unique platform to forge connections, create strategic

"Africa and the Americas are diverse and complementary at the same time. Both are blessed with natural wonders and rich cultural heritage. They share common roots and historical ties. And their futures are also closely linked, especially in the field of tourism"

cross-regional partnerships, and foster South-South cooperation projects for the benefit of the tourism sector of the two regions."

The UN Tourism Chief acknowledged that both Africa and the Americas face challenges related to misconceptions that portray them as unsafe destinations. He stressed the need for a unified narrative to reshape global perceptions and better position the regions within the international tourism marketplace.

"Building a common roadmap to reshape the narrative is fundamental to heal their image and enhance their visibility," he said. "But this is possible only if we equip the professionals of our sector with the skills

to advocate and brand their countries."

He also stressed the importance of empowering youth and investing in human capital development, saying, "We must prioritize access to tourism education to ensure a well-trained, empowered, and qualified workforce. The youth will innovate, inspire, and drive change."

Highlighting the economic potential of tourism investment, Pololikashvili shared figures from the last five years, noting that between 2018 and 2023, Africa and the Americas attracted 470 greenfield Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects in tourism, resulting in capital investments of \$37.4 billion and the creation of over 130,000 jobs.

"This must be just the beginning," he said, reaffirming UN Tourism's commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment that encourages further investment. "UN Tourism is fully committed to the creation of an environment which facilitates tourism investment flows and strengthens interregional economic relations."

The Secretary-General also highlighted

the significance of the UN Tourism Doing Business Guidelines, which provide investment roadmaps tailored to specific destinations in both regions. "To date, we have put our focus on Africa with Guidelines for Mauritius, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, and on the Americas with Guidelines for Chile, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay."

Pololikashvili also shared his vision of unlocking new opportunities in education, innovation, and the creative industries through greater regional cooperation. "This summit represents the beginning of transformative partnerships that will promote economic and cultural prosperity for both Africa and the Americas."

The summit featured three days of high-level meetings, presentations and discussions on key issues such as sustainable tourism, accessible travel, investment opportunities, cultural heritage, and innovative practices. Participants included government ministers, tourism boards, private sector representatives, and thought leaders from both continents.

Vice President Raquel Peña affirms Dominican Tourism as a model for the Americas

The Dominican Republic's tourism industry continues to shine as a beacon of success, setting a standard for the rest of the Americas. Vice President Raquel Peña, has said, praising the nation's flourishing tourism sector, describing it as a leading example of growth, innovation and resilience within the region.

Highlighting the industry's impact on the economy and its role in attracting global attention, Peña underscored that the Dominican Republic has become a model for other countries aiming to bolster their tourism sectors.

While attending the first UN Tourism Summit for Africa and the Americas, which took place in Punta Cana, the Vice President stressed that the achievements in the sector must serve as fuel to continue moving towards action.

"Now is the time to continue promoting the policies necessary to raise our tourism to the level we project," she emphasized.

In this regard, she stressed that, to continue promoting tourism, the Government has proposed to diversify the tourist offer with new modalities such as health tourism and ecotourism, while expanding the real estate and service offer, such as adventure parks, shopping and gastronomic centers.

Vice President Peña stressed that tourism has proven to be a key driver for economic recovery and growth worldwide, generating employment, investment and comprehensive development for all.

She congratulated the Minister of Tourism, David Collado, and applauded the holding of the the summit, which she defined as a symbol of what countries can achieve when they unite with the purpose of continuing to transform the tourism sector into a means for cultural exchange and sustainable development.

The event was organized by UN Tourism at the initiative of the Dominican Republic under the theme: "Promoting South-



Raquel Peña,
Vice President of The Dominican Republic

South Cooperation Through Investment in Education, Culture, Creative Industries and Innovation."

1st Africa-Americas Summit in Pictures

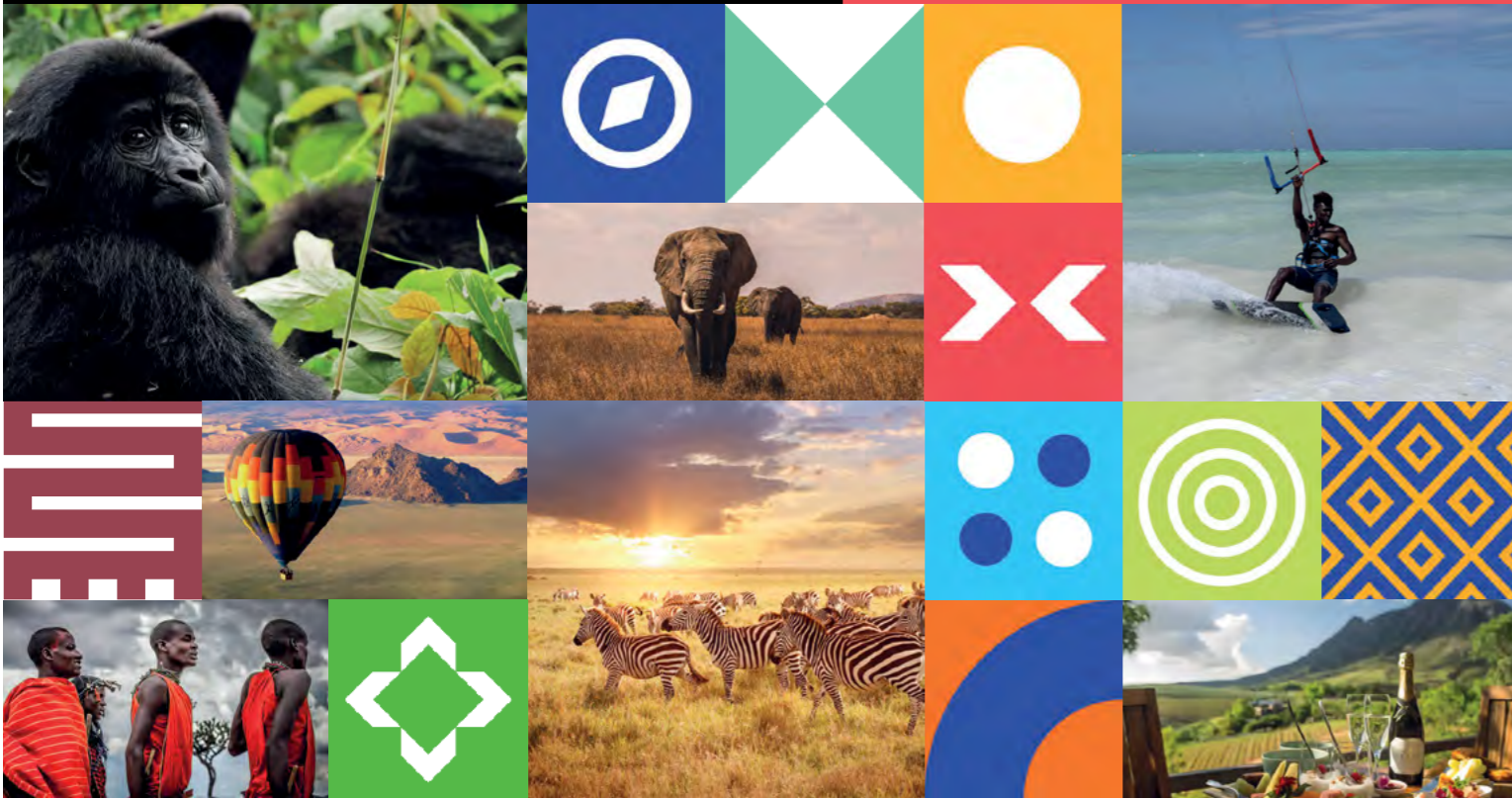


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2nd Africa-Americas Summit Heads to Zambia: A Landmark Moment in Global Tourism Cooperation



In a significant step towards uniting Africa and Latin America through tourism and trade, Zambia is set to host the 2nd Africa-Americas Summit in 2025. Building on the momentum from the first-ever Africa-Americas Summit in Punta Cana, this upcoming event is more than just a high-profile gathering, it's a call to action to consolidate partnerships, strengthen economic ties, and foster sustainable tourism between the two continents.

With Africa and Latin America ramping up efforts to bolster intercontinental cooperation, this summit comes at a critical juncture. Tourism has become a pivotal channel for bridging economies, preserving cultural heritage, and driving sustainable development. Zambia, known for its iconic Victoria Falls, awe-

inspiring landscapes, and rich cultural heritage, offers the ideal backdrop for this milestone event, capturing the essence of Africa's allure while spotlighting the region's vast potential for foreign investment.

Zambia's Minister of Tourism, Rodney Malindi Sikumba, expressed the nation's excitement, remarking, "Zambia will host the 2nd UN Tourism Commission for Africa & Americas Summit in 2025, boosting South-South cooperation and tourism development across both continents!" His message echoes Zambia's ambition to become a leading advocate for collaboration in tourism, fostering a new era of growth and unity between Africa and Latin America.

Hosting this summit gives Zambia a chance to amplify its influence within global tourism circles, promoting not only its own attractions but also advocating for shared economic prosperity. The event's thematic focus will center on creating resilient tourism sectors, exploring sustainable tourism practices, and expanding investment opportunities. From joint tourism routes to cultural exchanges, the summit aims to turn aspirations into actionable strategies that benefit both regions.

The inaugural Africa-Americas Summit was a groundbreaking success,

setting the stage for further dialogue and collaboration. Zambia's hosting of the second summit represents a commitment to solidifying these initial gains, allowing both continents to reflect on achievements, refine strategies, and advance shared goals. It's not just about creating a tourism dialogue but about cementing sustainable pathways to economic and cultural exchange.

The summit will feature high-level discussions on innovative financing mechanisms, public-private partnerships (PPPs), and foreign direct investment (FDI), all aimed at accelerating tourism infrastructure development. Key players across sectors, including policymakers, industry leaders, and investors, will gather in Zambia to discuss how tourism can drive economic growth and foster cultural understanding.

With Zambia at the helm, the 2nd Africa-Americas Summit aims to deepen the bonds of South-South cooperation, presenting innovative solutions that enable tourism to be a force for sustainable development. From the potential for joint tourism packages to targeted cultural exchanges, this event will serve as a powerful catalyst for collaboration, building bridges that extend beyond tourism and create a broader ecosystem of mutual benefit.

The 1st UN Tourism Africa & Americas Summit: My impression

By Elcia Grandcourt

It is very obvious that a key milestone has been achieved in global tourism with the launch of the 1st UN Tourism Africa & Americas Summit organized by UN Tourism and the Ministry of Tourism of the Dominican Republic.

Tourism leaders from Africa and the Americas came together in mutual collaboration from 2 to 5 October 2024 to initiate and solidify a significant step in South-South cooperation.

The focus is also appropriate; a shared vision of sustainable tourism as a driving force for economic growth, cultural exchange, and environmental preservation.

During the summit, participants from both regions came together sharing meaningful dialogue, exchanging best practices and exploring opportunities for collaboration to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It was not all about talks because the summit culminated with the unanimous approval of the Punta Cana Declaration, which symbolized the shared commitment of Africa and the Americas to strengthen ties and build a more sustainable and inclusive tourism sector.

The Punta Cana Declaration reaffirmed the importance of tourism as a powerful driver of socio-economic development. It emphasized the sector's critical role in creating jobs, improving infrastructure, fostering cultural exchange, and promoting gender equality. Tourism was highlighted as a vital tool to help achieve several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including poverty reduction (SDG 1), quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), and sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11).

Moreover, the discussions during the summit underscored the common challenges as well as strong commitments and willingness to improve on issues related to connectivity between Africa and the Americas, the need for more green investments in the tourism sector between the regions

and enhancing cultural exchange to accelerate economic growth for both regions.

Also, public-private partnerships and strategic investments in infrastructure and enablers of tourism, such as education, innovation, and creative industries, were highlighted as essential pillars for long-term sustainability. These initiatives aim to unlock the vast potential of both regions in sectors like gastronomy, crafts, and creative industries, while enhancing local identities and promoting innovation and prosperity, especially in areas where Africa's unique offerings can shine on the global stage.

Ahead lied a better future for both regions as the summit laid the groundwork for future collaborations in 2025 and beyond. Key focus areas include promoting community-based tourism, enhancing the resilience of the sector through sustainable practices, and fostering investments in green technologies. By working together, the two regions will continue to explore multidestination tourism products that link Africa and the Americas, creating unique tourism routes that celebrate cultural diversity and natural heritage.

The Punta Cana Declaration called for a renewed focus on inclusive growth, innovation, and sustainability. As such members from both regions in recognising the importance and the need to tap into the strong bonds that exists between the continents, have committed to meet again next year in Zambia to build on the core points encapsulated in the Punta Cana Declaration. Through collective efforts

and strategic investment, the tourism sectors of Africa and the Americas aim to not only contribute to economic growth but also preserve peace, cultural diversity, and environmental sustainability for future generations.

The 1st UN Tourism Africa & Americas Summit concluded successfully having achieved the common objectives set out by the two regions and we are confident this first step in bridging gaps between Africa and the Americas, is also setting the stage for a transformative partnership between these two dynamic regions, paving the way for a brighter and more prosperous future through shared goals in sustainable tourism, economic growth, and cultural exchange.

Elcia Grandcourt, the writer of this article, is the Director of Africa at the UN Tourism, Madrid, Spain.



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Africa and the Americas Poised to Explore New Frontiers in Tourism – Gustavo

From October 2-5, 2024, the Dominican Republic came alive as it hosted the 1st UN Tourism Africa & Americas Summit at the prestigious Paradisus Palma Real Golf & Spa Resort in Punta Cana. The event brought together key tourism leaders and ministers from both regions, sparking new conversations on strengthening cooperation, cultural exchange, and sustainable tourism development.

Gustavo Santos, Regional Director for the Americas at UN Tourism, described the summit as a milestone that could unlock new opportunities for tourism. "The collaboration between Africa and the Americas offers immense potential to diversify tourism offerings, attract more tourists, and promote deeper cultural understanding," he said. Discussions focused on building strategic alliances, sharing best practices, and developing joint tourism routes, with an emphasis on culinary traditions and common cultural heritage.

One major outcome of the summit was the proposal for a tourism exchange programme to facilitate cross-continental travel. This initiative would promote travel packages featuring a blend of cultural, culinary, and natural experiences, offering visitors a richer perspective of both regions. Additionally, the need to invest in tourism infrastructure and human resource training was stressed, with a commitment to enhance service quality through targeted skill development.

Sustainability emerged as a central theme, with leaders agreeing to implement responsible practices to protect the environment and preserve cultural assets for future generations. A joint declaration signed at the close of the summit reaffirmed the commitment of Africa and Latin America to collaborate in making tourism a cornerstone of economic and social development.

Santos also highlighted ongoing UN Tourism initiatives, such as customized

investment guides and key upcoming events, including the Regional Conference on Women's Empowerment in Tourism and the release of the Travel Trends and Outlook 2024 report. UN Tourism continues to support tourism innovation ecosystems and cultural exchanges to boost entrepreneurship and culinary tourism.

On the issue of air connectivity, Santos emphasized that enhancing flight routes and frequencies between the two regions is essential for unlocking tourism potential. "We will work closely with IATA to establish negotiation platforms that increase connectivity and facilitate seamless travel," he added.

"The summit marks the dawn of a new era, building a bridge between two continents and offering unforgettable experiences to travelers from around the world," Santos concluded.

Gustavo Santos, Regional Director for the Americas at UN Tourism



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World Tourism Day 2024: A Global Message of Tourism for Peace

Tourism has committed to embrace its unique role as a pillar of peace and understanding. On World Tourism Day 2024, UN Tourism brought sector leaders from every global region together around a common vision and commitment to building a “peace-sensitive sector”, recognizing its potential to build bridges and foster understanding.

The official celebrations in Tbilisi, Georgia, welcomed almost 500 participants from 51 different countries, including 13 Ministers of Tourism. Reflecting its firm commitment to the day and its theme of “Peace and Tourism”, the host country was represented by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze as well as seven other Ministers, showcasing tourism’s cross-sectoral importance.

Welcoming delegates, UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili, stressed that “without peace, there is no tourism”. He said: “I call on all of you to help build a ‘peace-sensitive tourism sector’, one that plays a key role in building peace and ending conflicts, provides tourism stakeholders with tools to realize this potential, promotes tourism education as peace education, and links tourism to other peace building initiatives”.

Building bridges through tourism

Reflecting on the theme of World Tourism Day 2024, “Tourism and Peace”, the official celebrations featured a Ministerial Debate focusing on what this looks like in action. Ministers representing Georgia, Uzbekistan, Sierra Leone and Bahrain, made clear how peace and security are the foundations for prosperity, providing examples from their own countries and personal travels of how tourism connects people and promotes understanding. Key takeaways include the important role of tourism in combatting disinformation and mistrust, and the essential need to ensure the benefits tourism delivers are enjoyed fairly and equally across societies.

To complement the public sector view, the day also featured a private-sector



panel. The dialogue explored the private sector’s potential and responsibility and to leverage its strengths and capabilities to promote peace and stability through tourism, and how it can work with the public sector to achieve these essential goals. And from the field of entrepreneurship and digital innovation, panellists highlighted the potential for tourism to rebuild in post-conflict and create resilience against future shocks.

Summing up the dialogues, Minister of Tourism of Jamaica Edmund Bartlett said: “Tourism recognizes differences, it embraces similarities. Tourism has a place for you and embraces you. That’s the essence of the power of tourism to make peace.”

Investing in tourism, investing in peace

Natalia Bayona, Executive Director of UN Tourism, set out the case for tourism investments as key to both growth and peace and opportunity. She said: “We have seen time and again how tourism can transform post-conflict regions, provide employment and foster entrepreneurial initiatives. The private sector must remain committed to using its resources to build peace and create opportunities in emerging and vulnerable regions.”

On the occasion of World Tourism Day,

UN Tourism launched the latest edition of its growing portfolio of investment guidelines. “Tourism Doing Business: Investing in Georgia” showcase the immense potential of the country as an investment destination. With an average GDP growth rate of 5% over the last decade, Georgia also received Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows surged of USD 2.3 billion in 2022, marking the highest investment inflow ever recorded. In spite of a challenging international environment, in 2023 FDI inflows reached USD 1.9 billion in 2023.

The Guidelines also outline the key factors making Georgia and its growing tourism sector an attractive destination for international investors, including:

The rich tapestry of natural beauty and cultural heritage, featuring over 12,000 historical monuments and four UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Significant growth in the hospitality and real estate sectors. In 2023, it welcomed 6.2 million international visitors, generating USD 4.1 billion in revenue. The expansion of international brand hotels and robust real estate market, attracting over USD 500 million in FDI in recent years.

Transparency and regulatory efficiency. Economic reforms, such as the Association Agreement and DCFTA with the EU, and recent EU Candidate Status.



Welcome Message from the Minister of Trade, Industry, and Tourism



Dear esteemed guests,

In the past two years, Colombia—the country of beauty—has emerged as a key tourist gateway to Latin America, attracting those seeking unique experiences that blend our rich biodiversity with a deep connection to our history and vibrant communities.

As we gather for the 122nd edition of the Executive Council of UN Tourism, I extend a warm welcome to you all. You are entering a land of extraordinary fauna and flora, diverse seas and rivers, lush rainforests and arid deserts. Colombia is a tapestry woven with gastronomic richness and multiculturalism, and we are proud to showcase our emerging and non-traditional destinations.

This meeting represents an invaluable opportunity for global tourism authorities to explore the initiatives we are undertaking with our communities. Strengthening the tourism sector is vital for our economy, especially as we prioritize environmental stewardship and sustainability—core tenets of our government’s mission.

At the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Tourism, we have collaborated closely with local communities to foster productive projects that enhance the tourism value chain while preserving our natural heritage. This commitment is part of President Gustavo Petro’s vision, which we are dedicated to fulfilling.

We recognize the significant challenges

ahead. I hope that this UN Executive Council serves as a platform for promoting sustainable, responsible, and regenerative development across our regions. Together, we can support economic transitions that protect our natural environment.

It is our conviction that tourism can be a catalyst for peace and development, allowing us to share our knowledge and cultural wealth. Through your visits, you will take home a piece of what makes us uniquely Colombian.

Once again, welcome to Colombia, the country of beauty.

Luis Carlos Reyes Hernández
Minister of Trade, Industry, and Tourism

Colombia: The Country of Beauty



Colombia is a land of unparalleled beauty and diversity. With its stunning beaches, tropical jungles, high moorlands, majestic mountains, and snow-capped peaks, Colombia is not just a destination; it’s an experience. The warmth of its people, rich traditions, and vibrant cuisine makes it a truly inviting place.

From the biodiverse regions of the Colombian Pacific to the unique landscapes of La Guajira, Colombia stands out as a remarkable tourist destination. This is a nation that is continuously establishing itself as one of the most attractive in Latin America.

Colombia is the second most biodiverse country in the world. To the north, the Caribbean Sea meets the Sierra Nevada, while the south is home to the Amazon rainforest. To the east lies the lush Pacific rainforest, where humpback whales come to give birth each year. To the west, the vast plains stretch into the horizon, greeting each dawn with a promise of beauty. In the heart of Colombia,

the páramos serve as vital sources for the major rivers that crisscross our geography. This incredible variety—natural and cultural—makes Colombia a land like no other.

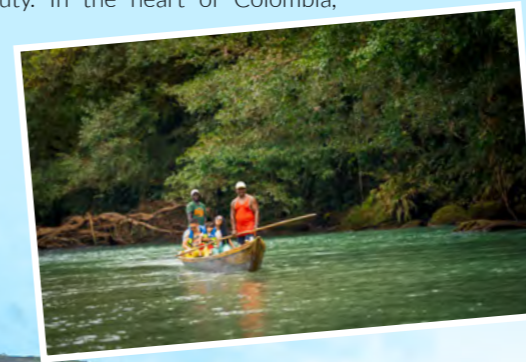
Beyond our breathtaking landscapes, it is our people who truly define Colombia. Their resilience, empathy, and commitment to responsible and sustainable tourism create an enriching environment for visitors. When you visit, you will not only witness stunning vistas but also engage with the vibrant communities that call this land home.

During the recent COP16 in Santiago de Cali, Valle del Cauca, the world learned about Colombia’s dedication to promoting sustainable and environmentally responsible economic initiatives. We are actively working to protect our most precious resources, ensuring that the beauty of our country remains a constant yet evolving experience for generations to come.

“ *Beyond our breathtaking landscapes, it is our people who truly define Colombia. Their resilience, empathy, and commitment to responsible and sustainable tourism create an enriching environment for visitors. When you visit, you will not only witness stunning vistas but also engage with the vibrant communities that call this land home* ”

If you haven't visited Colombia yet, what are you waiting for? Discover the charm of a walled city overlooking the sea, explore the intact ancestral cultures of indigenous communities, and savor the aroma of our world-famous coffee.

Colombia, the country of beauty, is waiting for you.



Cartegena de Indias readies to host 122nd UN Tourism Executive Council Meeting

Colombia's port city of Cartegena de Indias is set to welcome global tourism leaders to the 122nd Executive Council session of the World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism).

The Executive Council meeting is scheduled for 13-15 November to be held at the Cartegena Convention Centre.

The Executive Council is UN Tourism's governing board responsible for ensuring that the organization carries out its work and adheres to its budget. It meets at least twice a year and is composed of members elected by the General Assembly in a ratio for one for every five full members.

Saudi Arabia is the current chair of the council with Democratic Republic of Congo and Jamaica as First Vice and Second Vice respectively.

Cartegena is a city that is located on the shores of the Caribbean Sea, in the northwestern part of the South American continent. If you are wondering where is Cartegena in Colombia, it is located in the north of the country and is the capital of the Bolivar region. The city has several archipelagos and islands around that are paradises for true rest. Among these are Tierra Bomba Island, Múcura Islan, and Barú Island, among others.

Cartegena de Indias is known, brings together the charm of colonial architecture, the excitement of a vivid

night life, fascinating cultural festivals, and lush landscapes, to bring you the perfect vacation experience. The city's beaches beckon, inviting you to unwind and enjoy yourself in the refreshing breeze and warm waters of the sea.

But that's not all Cartegena has to offer—the city also has excellent cuisine and a thriving hotel and tourist infrastructure.

This fabulous destination holds the secrets of history within its walled city, on its balconies, and in the narrow stone walkways that inspired author Gabriel García Márquez, who was received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1982.

Framed by its stunning bay, Cartegena de Indias is one of the most beautiful, well-preserved cities in the Americas; a treasure that is currently one of the most heavily frequented tourist destinations in Colombia.

What is there to do in Cartegena de Indias?

During your stay, you should definitely take advantage of the opportunity to learn about Cartegena's architectural and cultural heritage, starting with a visit to the city's historic center. Cartegena's historic center, whose beauty and cultural importance caused it to be declared a World Heritage Site by Unesco in 1984, is surrounded by miles of ancient walls that form the walled city.

In addition to the hundreds of years of



history behind the area's cobbled streets, you can explore the Castillo de San Felipe de Barajas, a magnificent castle dating back to the 17th century. Also, during this tour, you will be very close to some of the best restaurants in Cartegena.

There are also a number of ancient churches and popular monuments that you can tour, such as the monument dedicated to India Catalina, los Zapatos Viejos, and los Pegasos. Another activity that you can consider if you are wondering what to do in Cartegena is visiting the Naval Museum or the Serrezuela Shopping Center.

On your walks around the city, you'll be able to enjoy the pleasant weather in Cartegena along with the local music and rhythms that fill the streets and the handicrafts that adorn the local shops. On the other hand, if you are wondering some of the things to do in Cartegena, we encourage you to enjoy a graffiti tour in the Getsemani neighborhood.

When night falls over the city, the charm of Cartegena's colonial area is perfect for taking a horse drawn carriage ride, an experience that will take you back in time.



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Members of the delegation at a working session at the UN Tourism HQ

DR Congo's Tourism Minister Leads a Delegation on a Working Visit to UN Tourism Headquarters

The Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) Minister of Tourism, Didier M'pambia Musanga has led a high-level delegation to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UN Tourism) headquarters in Madrid, Spain.

The delegation, which included senior officials from the Ministry of Tourism, the Office Nationale du Tourisme (ONT), represented by its CEO Jolie Yombo Mukendi, and representatives from the DRC Embassy in Madrid, was at the UN Tourism headquarters to confirm the country's bold strides to position itself as a sustainable tourism destination. This working visit marks a pivotal step in the country's ongoing efforts to rejuvenate its tourism sector and harness its vast cultural and natural assets.

During the visit, the delegation engaged in extensive discussions aimed at strengthening partnerships and securing support for the DRC's tourism agenda. Minister Mpambia emphasised the importance of collaborating with international organisations, such as the UN Tourism to build a sustainable ecosystem that can attract global visitors while benefiting local communities. The



UN Tourism Secretary SG Zurab Pololikashvili showing DRC's Minister of Tourism Didier Mpambia around

focus was on developing strategies that would enhance DRC's visibility on the world stage, aligning with the country's broader vision of using tourism as a catalyst for economic growth and social development.

A central feature of the talks was the introduction of the "touristic village"

concept, a comprehensive infrastructure model designed to integrate essential services, such as energy, healthcare, education, and hospitality with tourism. This initiative seeks to create vibrant, self-sustaining hubs that will not only attract tourists but also improve the quality of life for local residents by providing jobs and access to critical

services. Inspired by globally recognised tourism destinations, such as Victoria Falls, DRC aims to leverage its vast resources, such as the iconic Congo River and the biodiversity-rich Virunga National Park. These sites, along with the country's diverse cultural heritage, offer immense potential for eco-tourism, adventure tourism, and cultural exploration.

The delegation also worked with UN Tourism officials to develop a comprehensive global marketing strategy that will showcase the DRC's unique natural and cultural attractions. The strategy will aim to position the country as a top destination for eco-conscious travellers, adventure seekers, and cultural enthusiasts. Recognising the competitive nature of global tourism, the DRC team discussed ways to craft compelling narratives and campaigns that would resonate with international audiences, and help to redefine the country's image on the global tourism map.

Another critical aspect of the discussions was the need for resilience in the tourism sector. The delegation addressed the importance of establishing robust crisis communication mechanisms to safeguard the industry against potential disruptions, including security concerns and environmental challenges. By building a strong communication

framework, DRC aims to ensure the long-term stability and growth of its tourism sector.

In terms of product development, the delegation explored ways to enhance existing tourism offerings while creating new experiences that align with international standards. The goal is to maintain the authenticity of DRC's rich cultural and natural assets while meeting the expectations of global tourists. This includes developing new eco-tourism experiences, wildlife conservation programmes, and cultural heritage tours that will attract diverse groups of travellers.

Natalia Bayona, Executive Director, UN Tourism, expressed her full support for DRC's vision, emphasising that the organisation is committed to providing technical assistance and expertise to help the country achieve its tourism goals. UN Tourism departments shared various programs and projects designed to assist DRC in developing its tourism infrastructure, building capacity, and promoting sustainable practices.

The visit also underscored the importance of technical assistance in supporting the DRC's long-term tourism development. The delegation explored opportunities for infrastructure projects, workforce training, and the adoption of sustainable tourism practices that will enhance the country's capacity

to manage and expand its tourism industry. These projects, supported by international partners, will play a crucial role in helping DRC build a competitive and sustainable tourism sector.

H.E. Zurab Pololikashvili, UN Tourism's Secretary-General, praised the DRC delegation for taking the time to visit the organisation's headquarters and for their commitment to understanding how UN Tourism can collaborate to maximise the DRC's tourism potential. He highlighted the significance of the touristic village concept as a cornerstone of DRC's tourism strategy, noting that its implementation could have a transformative impact on local communities by creating jobs and improving essential services.

The delegation's working visit to the UN Tourism Headquarters signals a new chapter in the DRC's tourism journey. By focussing on sustainable development, global marketing, crisis management, and community empowerment, DRC is positioning itself to become a leading destination for eco-tourism, adventure, and cultural exploration. The collaboration with UN Tourism and other international partners will be instrumental in helping the country realise its ambitious vision for tourism, ensuring that it becomes a key driver of economic growth and social progress for the nation.



Beka Jakeli, External Relations Director at UN Tourism and Natalia Bayona, Executive Director at UN Tourism

Fostering innovation and shaping the future of global tourism: A conversation with Natalia Bayona

From breaking barriers as a young leader in Colombian tourism to spearheading global initiatives at the UN Tourism, Natalia Bayona has dedicated her career to transforming the tourism landscape through innovation, education and investment. As the Executive Director of UN Tourism, Bayona's work connects entrepreneurs, governments and investors to create a more resilient and sustainable sector.

In this exclusive interview with *VoyagesAfric*, she shares insights on the importance of collaboration, the evolving role of technology and her vision for the future of tourism.

VA: *You started your tourism career promoting Colombia in the MERCOSUR region. What were the biggest challenges you faced as a young professional, and how did they shape your approach to innovation in tourism today?*

Natalia: My experience at ProColombia gave me a deep understanding of the sector and the importance of collaboration within it. Collaboration is essential at all levels, from local and regional to supranational.

At UN Tourism, I have taken this approach to a global scale, looking for ways to foster cooperation between

countries to drive a new understanding of tourism, where investment, education and innovation are a very important part of the way.

One of the biggest challenges was overcoming the preconceived notions about Colombia. As a young professional, I had to work hard to change the narrative and highlight the country's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty.

This experience taught me the importance of doing the things differently if you want to change the way that they are working. I think that is in the basis of why I understood very young that education and innovation are crucial in tourism. That time shaped my approach to always look for creative ways to present destinations and to leverage technology, which at the end of the day has proved to be important to enhance the travel experience.

VA: *At just 27, you became the youngest manager responsible for promoting Colombian tourism globally. How did you navigate such a significant leadership role at a young age, and what advice would you give to young women aspiring to lead in the tourism sector?*

Natalia: Navigating this role required a lot of resilience and a willingness to

learn continuously. My advice to young women is to believe in their capabilities, seek out mentors, and never stop learning. Education is key to building a successful career in any sector, and tourism is no exception.

But also keep in mind that tourism is the most human economic sector there is because it is a sector of people working directly with other people. In this case more than in other industries, leadership is about vision and the ability to inspire others, regardless of age, so I will advise that is important get educated, listed what the sector is saying, follow your intuition and work hard.

VA: *Your work at UN Tourism has fostered a dynamic innovation ecosystem that includes thousands of entrepreneurs and investors. What are some of the most impactful innovations you've seen in the tourism industry, and how do you envision technology shaping the future of travel?*

Natalia: When I arrived at UN Tourism in 2018, it was to lead the innovation area and that happened at a time when nobody was talking about innovation in the tourism sector, but there were already people working on projects that are now changing the sector.



In these nearly six years working on innovation, we have organized 15 Startup Challenges and 8 Innovation Challenges. In total, more than 20,000 innovators from 150 countries participated. Collectively, through these competitions, start-ups raised approximately USD \$2.19 billion, demonstrating the scale and impact of these initiatives.

I have seen wonderful initiatives from all the regions across the world. In the case of Africa I remember the work of startups as Ifarm Agritech, from Kenya, finalist of our Global Startup competition for SDGs, that works on digitizing the food supply chain giving support to small farmers.

“ *My experience at ProColombia gave me a deep understanding of the sector and the importance of collaboration within it. Collaboration is essential at all levels, from local and regional to supranational.*

At UN Tourism, I have taken this approach to a global scale, looking for ways to foster cooperation between countries to drive a new understanding of tourism, where investment, education and innovation are a very important part of the way.

”

Or Women for Wild, from South Africa, that were finalists on our Awake tourism challenge. They have created a community for learning and empowering women providing the knowledge or resources to conserve and preserve the environment.

I have seen impactful innovations that include the use of artificial intelligence to personalize travel experiences, blockchain for secure and transparent transactions, and virtual reality for immersive travel planning. Technology will continue to shape the future of travel by making it more personalized, efficient, and sustainable, but we also need from social innovation, as those startups do. Local communities need to be involved in the development for it to be sustainable and benefit directly from tourism.

VA: *The launch of the UN Tourism Online Academy has been a groundbreaking initiative. What inspired you to prioritize education in your work, and how do you see this initiative transforming the tourism workforce in the coming years?*

Natalia: Education is the foundation of everything, but specially for innovation and sustainable growth. From UN Tourism we have developed several programmes to boost education in the sector. UN Tourism Online Academy was inspired by the need to equip the tourism workforce with the skills required for the digital times. The access to quality education is one of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the challenge becomes an opportunity: how were we going to build a more talented workforce and a more innovative sector?

As a result, we created this initiative that will transform the workforce by providing accessible, high-quality education and fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptation. And I can proudly say that now, UN Tourism Online Academy serves more than 30,000 students from 150 countries, reflecting the broad reach and accessibility of tourism accessibility of tourism education.

VA: *With more than 15 global entrepreneurship competitions under your belt, what patterns have you noticed among successful tourism startups? Are there specific qualities or strategies that set them apart?*

Natalia: Technology is rapidly changing the way we understand the world and, of course, the way we travel and work in the sector. There is no need to imagine what the future will look like, because there are technologies that are already transforming the world now. Innovations in artificial intelligence, virtual reality and digital platforms are creating new ways to explore and experience tourism destinations.

Successful tourism startups often share qualities such as a strong focus, the ability to leverage technology effectively, and a commitment to sustainable development. They are also agile and able to pivot quickly in response to market changes. These startups understand the importance of creating unique and memorable experiences for travelers.

Now we have data, the management of Big Data to predict behavioral trends or act in real time, which is also changing the reality of tourism in many places. Technology is there and it is entering all sectors, and this is no exception. I believe that these technologies have a lot to contribute when it comes to improving the traveler's experience and promoting more resilient and sustainable tourism.

VA: *You've worked extensively in both the public and private sectors. How has this dual experience influenced your strategies for advancing tourism, particularly in your current role at UN Tourism?*

Natalia: My experience in both sectors has given me a comprehensive understanding of the tourism ecosystem. It has taught me the importance of collaboration between public and private entities to drive innovation and growth.

At UN Tourism, I leverage this experience to create partnerships that foster tourism development. These public-private partnerships are essential to make progress on boosting tourism investments and to ensure that investments are also sustainable and that they are conducive to innovation and the development of the regions.

In order to move forward, we need all actors in the sector to be involved. Only in this way can we ensure that the sector achieves a future in which it continues to stand out for its resilience and that it helps the development of communities



Natalia Bayona,
Executive Director of UN Tourism

and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage.

VA: Given your background in innovation and digital transformation, what are some untapped markets or regions in global tourism that you believe could benefit most from these trends?

Natalia: We are in this point in which we can say that the future is now, but regions with rich cultural heritage and natural beauty but limited infrastructure could greatly benefit from digital transformation. By leveraging technology, these regions can enhance their tourism offerings, improve accessibility, and attract more visitors.

But also, mature destinations can benefit from technology to monitor the flow of visitors or have the data to analyze and seek for more effective and sustainable practices. Technology is a tool, is in our hands use it in different ways.

VA: The tourism industry is incredibly dynamic, with shifts caused by geopolitical, environmental, and technological factors. How do you stay ahead of these changes, and how does the UN Tourism's Innovation Department plan for such unpredictability?

Natalia: As I always say, tourism is the most human economic sector, and because of that, sometimes the sector faces the challenges that human do. Pandemics was an enormous challenge

for the sector, but the data says that now we are in the same numbers as in pre-pandemic times. According to our barometer, In the first seven months of 2024, international tourism reached 790 million tourists globally, recovering 96% of pre-pandemic levels (11% more than in 2023).

If we look to the different regions, Middle East is 26% above 2019 levels, and Africa, 7% above. Europe have recovered 99%, Americas, 97% and Asia-Pacific: 82%.

Staying ahead requires continuous monitoring of global trends and being adaptable. And the tourism sector has proved that it is. At UN Tourism, we work on monitoring and boosting innovation with our programs, our innovation network and startup competitions. Because entrepreneurs are leading the path to the future of the sector.

VA: Being named one of the 10 most influential Colombians residing in Spain is a major recognition. How does your Colombian heritage influence your leadership style and your vision for global tourism?

Natalia: My Colombian heritage instills in me a deep appreciation for diversity and resilience. It influences my leadership style by emphasizing inclusivity, empathy, and a strong sense of community. As a good Colombian, I

have determination, which helps me to achieve everything I set out to do. I also have tenacity and hard work.

This is something that I also apply to the projects that I lead. In Santander, my hometown, citizens have a reputation for entrepreneurship, and although my work now takes place on the side of organizations, this taste for entrepreneurship also translates into a proactivity that has led me to head the Innovation, Education and Investment department for 5 years and to carry out such ambitious projects.

Now, in a few days, we are going to have our Executive Council in Colombia and I am sure that my fellow countrymen will show that these features of which I speak are also features of a land of which I am very fond and of which I speak with happiness and pride.

VA: As a regular lecturer at prestigious institutions like Harvard and MIT, what key insights do you aim to share with future tourism leaders, and how do you think education needs to evolve to keep up with the rapidly changing industry?

Natalia: I aim to share insights on the importance of innovation, investments and education in tourism. Education needs to evolve by incorporating more interdisciplinary approaches, focusing on digital skills, and fostering a mindset of continuous learning.

Tourism is the main employer of young people, with more than 50% of its workers aged 25 or younger. We need to consider that right now 16% of the world's population is made up of young people. Nevertheless, at the beginning of this decade more than 1 in 5 young people were not in education, employment or training. We need to give tools to this generation to understand that tourism is more than travel, is an economic sector, an open door to a future in which they can create, develop and succeed with their projects.

Innovation is crucial to foster prosperity, and we need from targeted investments to develop a resilient and sustainable sector. Because future leaders must be equipped to navigate the complexities of the tourism landscape and drive positive change. Because, as I said, and the end of the day, we are talking about people working with and for people.



Kenya's envoy to Spain presents credentials to UN Tourism Chief



Kenya's Ambassador to Spain, H.E. Amb. Nairimas Ole-Sein with the Secretary-General of UN Tourism.

Kenya's Ambassador to Spain, H.E. Amb. Nairimas Ole-Sein has presented her Letters of Credence to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Tourism Zurab Pololikashvili as the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to UN Tourism.

The Secretary-General on receiving the

Ambassador said that "UN Tourism is happy to receive her and happy to join forces with her and team to work around tourism around education, capacity building to advance the works and, and promote sustainable tourism." "You have our full support!" he assured.

Kenya has been an active member of

UN Tourism since its inception in 1975. The Mission is accredited to the UN Tourism and acts as a key facilitator and representative of the government of Kenya in the organization. Kenya is a member of the Committee of Tourism and Competitiveness, Program and Budget Committee, and Tourism and Sustainability Committee. Kenya is also a vice-chair of the Regional Commission for Africa.

Profile

Nairimas Sharon Ole-Sein is the current Kenya's Ambassador to Spain from March, 2024. On May 16, 2024, Ambassador Nairimas Ole-Sein presented her Letters of Credence to His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain, accrediting her as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Kenya to the Kingdom of Spain. She has a long career as a diplomat, which began in 1997, when she was the head of Chancery at the Kenyan Embassy in Stockholm and was previously also assigned to the Embassies in Washington and Tokyo.

WTTC Reveals Significant Decrease in Travel & Tourism's Climate Footprint Emissions

The World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC) 24th Global Summit in Perth (Boorloo), Western Australia, kicked off today with an update to its groundbreaking environmental footprint data.

WTTC's latest Environmental & Social Research (ESR), created in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism of Saudi Arabia, reveals that in 2023 Travel & Tourism accounted for 6.7% of all emissions globally, down from 7.8% in 2019, when Travel & Tourism was at its peak.

The research showcases a important achievement with the sector's economic contribution growing faster than its environmental impact.

Last year, Travel & Tourism's contribution to global GDP almost reached pre-pandemic levels at US\$9.9TN, just 4% shy of the sector's peak.

However, in 2023 global GHG emissions were 12% below the 2019 peak, with GHG intensity (emissions per unit of GDP) falling 8.4% during this period. This demonstrates the sector's growth is

becoming cleaner.

"Our sector is proving that we can grow responsibly," said Julia Simpson, WTTC President & CEO. "We're decoupling growth from emissions – Travel & Tourism is expanding economically while lowering its environmental footprint.

"This is a defining moment, proving that innovation and sustainability go hand in hand in shaping the future of global tourism. However, while we are decoupling our sector's growth from the increase in GHG, our aim is absolute reductions. We must accelerate this progress significantly to meet the Paris climate targets. We're on the right track, but we need to up our game."

A key driver of Travel & Tourism's emissions is the energy used to power its operations.

Although 2023 showed positive trends compared to 2019, it's clear that there are still significant opportunities to accelerate the green transition.

The increases in renewable energy use

and reductions in fossil fuel reliance remain relatively modest, highlighting the need for more decisive action.

In 2023, the sector's reliance on fossil fuel energy sources (oil, coal, and natural gas) dropped to 88.2% from 90% in 2019.

The share of low-carbon energy sources (nuclear and renewables) increased from 5.1% in 2019 to 5.9% in 2023, reflecting ongoing efforts to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

The resurgence of the global Travel & Tourism sector is also mirrored in tax revenues that accrue to Governments from the direct taxes paid by our businesses.

In 2023, total Travel & Tourism tax revenues amounted to US\$3.32TN. This equates to 9.6% of total global tax revenues.

Governments must use these additional revenues to reinvest in decarbonising infrastructure, expanding renewable energies and supporting businesses in their green transition.

REVITALIZING ANGOLA:

Márcio De Jesus Lopes Daniel discloses audacious plans to transform country's tourism landscape

Angola's Minister of Tourism, Márcio De Jesus Lopes Daniel, reveals the country's ambitious plans to transform its tourism sector into a vital pillar of economic diversification in an insightful discussion with **VoyagesAfric**. With strategic initiatives aimed at revitalizing the sector, Lopes Daniel highlights Angola's commitment to reducing its oil dependency and positioning tourism as a key driver of sustainable development.

From significant infrastructure projects to a game-changing visa exemption policy, the minister details how Angola is set to emerge as a vibrant and competitive destination on the African tourism map, inviting both domestic and international travelers to explore its rich cultural heritage and breathtaking natural landscapes.

VA: Can you tell us about the state of tourism in Angola?

Márcio: Tourism in Angola is currently undergoing a crucial transformation, guided by strategic frameworks outlined in the National Development Plan (PDN) 2023-2027 and the National Tourism Promotion Plan (PLANATUR)

2024-2027. These plans represent a bold vision to shift the country's economic away from oil by diversifying the economy and positioning tourism as a key pillar for sustainable development.

In recent years, the tourism sector has faced significant challenges, particularly highlighted by the sharp decline in its contribution to GDP – from 1.3% in 2016 to just 0.01% in 2022. Revenues from tourism also decreased, from USD 628 million in 2016 to USD 24 million in 2022, reflecting the need for urgent revitalization and strategic investment.

However, Angola's government has set ambitious goals through its Long-Term Strategy (ELP), aiming to increase tourism's contribution to 1.9% of GDP by 2050, with a substantial rise in international arrivals from 129,000 visitors in 2022 to 2 million per year by 2050.

Growth and Investment:

- **Infrastructure Development:** Significant efforts are underway to enhance tourism infrastructure, including the construction of hotels and the improvement of key tourism sites. A key milestone is the upcoming inauguration of Dr. Agostinho Neto International Airport in Luanda, which will serve as a major gateway for international visitors.
- Additionally, the certification of airports in Benguela and Huila is expected to be completed by the end of this year, positioning Lubango and Benguela as strategic hubs for both domestic and regional

tourism. This will significantly enhance accessibility and connectivity, making Angola more attractive for travelers.

- **Capacity Building:** Several initiatives are focused on training tourism professionals to improve service quality and enhance the management of key tourist sites. This ensures that visitors have enriching and memorable experiences.
- **International Promotion:** Angola is actively promoting the "Angola Tourism" brand, participating in major tourism events and enhancing its digital presence to position the country as a unique and desirable destination on the global tourism map.

Challenges and Opportunities:

Angola still faces challenges related to international visibility and accessibility, which are critical to attracting more tourists. Additionally, modernizing the legal framework remains a priority to facilitate investments and tourism operations.

The recent visa exemption policy for 98 countries, implemented under Presidential Decree No. 189/23, is a game-changing reform. This policy aims to simplify travel to Angola, encouraging international visitors and reducing entry barriers. As these efforts progress, we expect a steady increase in tourist arrivals, contributing to the overall growth of the sector.

Economic Impact:

Tourism remains a sector with significant potential to become a key driver of economic growth in Angola. Our efforts are focused on increasing its contribution to GDP and ensuring that the industry becomes a sustainable and inclusive economic force. Additionally, the tourism sector is crucial for job creation, particularly for young



Angolans, with continuous investments in education and professional training to prepare the next generation of tourism professionals.

VA: Tell us about your vision for the sector and how quickly are you moving to make travelling to Angola a seamless adventure.

Márcio: Our vision for Angola's tourism sector is to position the country as a leading destination in Africa, offering visitors an unmatched combination of cultural richness, natural beauty, and authentic experiences. Tourism will play a pivotal role in the diversification of Angola's economy, helping to reduce the dependence on oil and driving sustainable development through travel and hospitality. This vision aligns closely with the National Development Plan (PDN) 2023-2027 and the National Tourism Promotion Plan (PLANATUR) 2024-2027.

We are committed to transforming Angola into a seamless and attractive destination, ensuring that every stage of the visitor's journey, from arrival to departure, is smooth, efficient, and memorable.

Steps to Make Travelling to Angola a Seamless Adventure:

1. Visa-Free Travel for 98 Countries:

A significant step toward facilitating travel was the introduction of the visa exemption policy for 98 countries, implemented under Presidential Decree No. 189/23. This measure allows visitors

to enter Angola without a visa for up to 90 days, streamlining entry procedures and reducing bureaucratic hurdles. We are already seeing a positive impact with increased international arrivals, making it easier for travelers to explore Angola's diverse landscapes.

2. Infrastructure Development:

O. Dr. Agostinho Neto International Airport: A major milestone is the upcoming inauguration of the Dr. Agostinho Neto International Airport in Luanda, which will begin receiving commercial flights in November 2024. With advanced facilities and increased capacity, this airport will serve as Angola's primary gateway, enhancing international connectivity and cementing Luanda's position as a regional hub for tourism and business.

O. Airport Certification in Benguela and Huila: In addition, the certification of airports in Benguela and Huila is expected to be completed by the end of the year. These developments will transform Lubango and Benguela into key regional hubs, providing seamless air connections for domestic and regional tourism.

3. **Transport Connectivity:** We are actively improving transport networks, integrating road, air, and rail systems to ensure smooth connections between key tourism sites. This will allow visitors to explore multiple destinations across the country with ease.

4. **Digitalization and Technology Integration:** To enhance the travel experience, we are embracing online visa services, digital platforms for booking accommodations and tours, and real-time travel information systems. These efforts will simplify trip planning and ensure a smooth journey for every traveler. Additionally, Angola's expanded digital presence will attract more tourists by providing detailed travel guides and insights into our destinations.

5. **Capacity Building and Service Excellence:** Exceptional hospitality is essential to a seamless adventure. We are training tourism professionals and frontline staff to ensure high service standards, creating a visitor experience that reflects the warmth and hospitality of Angola's culture.

6. **Sustainable Tourism Practices:** We are committed to promoting sustainable tourism, encouraging responsible travel and eco-friendly practices to preserve our natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

Timeline and Progress: Our progress has been swift and deliberate. The visa exemption policy is already in effect, and the Dr. Agostinho Neto International Airport will begin commercial operations in November 2024. Additionally, the certification of the Benguela and Huila airports will be completed by the end of this year, further enhancing travel experiences and regional accessibility.

Our purpose is to transform Angola into a complete and engaging tourism experience, where every moment of the journey flows seamlessly, from arrival

“Our vision for Angola's tourism sector is to position the country as a leading destination in Africa, offering visitors an unmatched combination of cultural richness, natural beauty, and authentic experiences. Tourism will play a pivotal role in the diversification of Angola's economy, helping to reduce the dependence on oil and driving sustainable development through travel and hospitality.”

Márcio De Jesus Lopes Daniel, Angola's Minister of Tourism

at the airport to exploring our most authentic destinations. By investing in modern infrastructure, implementing strategic legal reforms, and maintaining consistent international promotion, we are confident that Angola will establish itself as one of the most attractive and competitive tourism destinations in Africa, offering visitors unforgettable and genuine experiences.

VA: How do you intend to diversify Angola's economy with tourism?

Márcio: Tourism plays a central role in Angola's strategy to diversify its economy, as outlined in the National Development Plan (PND) 2023-2027 and the National Tourism Promotion Plan (PLANATUR) 2024-2027. Our objective is to transform tourism into a pillar of economic growth, reducing the country's reliance on oil revenues and driving sustainable development through cultural, natural, and adventure tourism.

Our approach to diversifying Angola's economy with tourism is built on four key pillars:

1. Promoting Domestic and Regional Tourism:

We are committed to developing domestic tourism, encouraging Angolans to explore the country's diverse cultural and natural attractions. Through affordable packages and improved transport connectivity, we also aim to attract visitors from neighboring countries.

Efforts to certify the Benguela and Huíla

airports, along with the development of the Lubango hub, will significantly improve regional connectivity. Furthermore, the inauguration of the Dr. Agostinho Neto International Airport in Luanda, scheduled to begin commercial operations in November 2024, will position the capital as a key gateway for both regional and international travelers, boosting both leisure and business tourism.

2. Diversifying Tourism Offerings: Our goal is to provide a broad range of tourism experiences that celebrate Angola's cultural and natural treasures. Key attractions and areas of focus include:

- **Music and Dance Tourism:** Angola's vibrant musical heritage, including Kizomba, Semba, and Kuduro, attracts fans and dancers from around the world. We are developing festivals, workshops, and events to showcase these traditions, making music and dance central elements of our tourism strategy.

- **Cultural and Heritage Tourism:** Angola offers unique cultural experiences, such as the Kulumbimbi site in Mbanza Kongo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which gives visitors a deep understanding of Angola's historical roots.

- **Adventure and Nature Tourism:** The Namibe Desert provides thrilling opportunities for adventure seekers, from dune safaris to stargazing and camping. Birdwatching enthusiasts will find Angola's rich ecosystems

teeming with birdlife, while initiatives in Kissama National Park and along the Okavango Basin cater to eco-tourists.

- **Water and Beach Tourism:** Angola's stunning coastline, including the beaches of Cabo Ledo, is perfect for beach lovers and surfing enthusiasts. Cabo Ledo is fast becoming a hotspot for water sports, attracting surfers from around the world.

- **Waterfalls and Natural Wonders:** The Kalandula Falls, the second-largest in Africa, are among Angola's most breathtaking natural attractions. This iconic site offers a majestic backdrop for both adventure tourism and photography, drawing visitors eager to experience Angola's natural beauty.

By diversifying our offerings, we aim to attract a variety of market segments, from music lovers and cultural enthusiasts to adventure travelers and eco-tourists, ensuring Angola stands out as a diverse and dynamic destination.

3. Stimulating Investments and Job Creation: Tourism is a vital sector for job creation, especially for young people, offering opportunities across hospitality, transportation, and cultural industries. We are fostering private sector investments through tax incentives and streamlined business licensing processes, making it easier for investors to engage in tourism projects.

Developing hotels, resorts, and eco-lodges is a priority to meet growing accommodation demand and strengthen the tourism value chain. We are also investing in professional training programs to ensure that Angola has a skilled workforce capable of delivering world-class service and hospitality.

4. Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Environmental Preservation: We are committed to sustainable tourism to ensure that economic growth does not compromise Angola's natural and cultural heritage. Eco-friendly practices and community-based tourism initiatives are central to our strategy, ensuring that tourism benefits local populations while preserving Angola's rich biodiversity and heritage.



Culture & Heritage - a Tourism Development Catalyst

The COVID pandemic left global tourism in dire straits. Apart from directly halting global movement, travel patterns have significantly changed. We see a stronger recovery in leisure travel, a focus on sustainability and community-based trips, and a longing for new experiences. Tourism has been slow to respond, with concentration instead on recovery to pre-COVID traveller numbers, which has meant that existing experiences have persisted for tourists at the expense of new experience development. Old experiences attract existing markets, but new experiences can potentially attract both existing and new markets. So called 'developing countries' are generally awash with old experiences. These territories require a strategy to drive new development. The African continent is no exception.

Cultural Tourism is regarded by the UNWTO as one of the fastest growing major tourism segments. Cultural tourists tend to stay longer and spend more than other tourists, including spending more in other tourism segments. However, territories such as Europe and the Far East tend to dominate cultural travel while Africa has lagged. Critically, places such as Europe tends to portray heritage as an uninterrupted influence on modern life, while African cultural progress is shown as relegated to the past.

Africa's history is mainly told from a colonial perspective, playing the part of a conquered continent, with our history essentially starting from European intervention. As such, Africa's past advancement and sophistication has been untold or underplayed. Africa has a vibrant and rich history, and countered many places as global hubs of learning, culture, and trade.

Culture, history and heritage can



provide a sound foundation for the development of new mixed-use, immersive destinations in Africa that combine traditional tourist activities, subtle education and inspirational awe. The incorporation of state-of-the-art technology combined with engaging content can bring these experiences to modern audiences, but ultimately, it is the values of those people's culture that must be communicated, and it is critical that experiences preserve historic activities, such as storytelling, to create rich cultural interactions. After all, cultural diversity can be celebrated through embracing common heritage and values. All people ultimately come from Africa.

This must tap into the expansive African diaspora market. Underserved diaspora populations, notably across the Americas and Europe, do not have destinations

that resonate with their heritage and identity. These destinations must take control of the historic narrative, by retelling the true African history as an influence on a bright African future in which all are welcomed.

This approach can create unique, immersive destinations capable of drawing new and existing markets from global, regional, and domestic segments. It offers Africa a way to tell its own story in its own way, helping it reclaim its past and build a new future for the benefit of its people and tourists the world over.

We are the custodians of our African History – let's tell it through Tourism.

Kamil Abdul-Karrim B.Compt (UNISA), PDM (WITS), MBA (BOND, Australia)
Managing Director, PAM GOLDING
Tourism & Hospitality Consulting (Pty.) Ltd.

A New Era for Tourism Collaboration between Africa and the Americas

By Hamza Farooqui, Founder and CEO of Millat Group

When tourism leaders from around the world come together to discuss the future of the industry, we often start by reflecting on the challenges. Yet, despite the hurdles we have faced over the past five years, these moments have shaped our resilience and driven us forward. At the 1st UN Tourism Africa & Americas Summit, there was a noticeable shift—our conversations were no longer defined by obstacles but by the incredible progress we have made in turning challenges into opportunities.

I participated in a panel titled “Unlocking Tourism Investment Potential for and between Africa and the Americas” and I could only speak for the African tourism landscape, but my fellow panelists’ perspectives often aligned with my own. We are all grappling with issues like visa delays and infrastructural hurdles, but hearing about the progress being made across these regions—and the spirit of innovation driving it—was truly exhilarating.

During the panel, I highlighted three key challenges facing Africa and proposed actionable solutions to address them. Our key issues are a lack of collaborative entrepreneurship, an expectation for government solutions, and insufficient access to finance. The hospitality industry’s success relies on innovation, yet a stigma surrounding failure hampers entrepreneurship.

Leaders must address this stigma by providing mentorship, and support to foster a culture of entrepreneurship that allows innovation to thrive.

“During the panel, I highlighted three key challenges facing Africa and proposed actionable solutions to address them. Our key issues are a lack of collaborative entrepreneurship, an expectation for government solutions, and insufficient access to finance.”

There also needs to be a shift in the relationship between government and the private sector. We cannot expect the government to save the industry. Leaders in the sector must move past complacency and take the initiative to put Africa back on the map ourselves. This brings me to the final hurdle – access to finance. Local banks often lack an understanding of how hotels and key tourism infrastructure operate, and multilateral organisations meant to provide financial support frequently fall short. To address this, we need to focus on overcoming the first two hurdles to promote tourism as an asset class.

Overcoming these obstacles requires not just local leadership but also collaboration across borders. This is why the 1st UN Tourism Africa & Americas Summit was such a valuable platform, highlighting the potential of South-to-South partnerships between our regions to highlight our unparalleled offerings. My fellow panelist Daniel Scioli, Secretary of Tourism, Environment and Sports in

Argentina put this sentiment perfectly when he said America and Africa have it all—areas of peace, cultural diversity, excellent gastronomy, and natural wonders.

We have much to offer but getting the ball rolling requires the kind of collaboration that only summits like these can provide.



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Powering a Visa-Free Africa: The Future of Seamless Travel on the Continent



Recent news that Nigeria will introduce \$170 surcharge fees for biometric capture during the Visa process¹ will no doubt frustrate proponents of the “visa-free Africa” concept. The African Union’s longstanding goal may seem out of reach with Africa’s sheer size and pressing security needs, due to wars and terrorism, posing significant challenges.

The perennial challenge for African governments is maintaining or increasing security standards while simplifying travel processes.

Fortunately, today’s technology enables governments to pre-screen all travelers for security risks before they arrive, improving entry processes and facilitating travel. Huge advancements in the border security sector have made these systems more accurate and effective than ever before and the advancements in facial recognition, AI and Advanced Passenger Processing systems are key enablers.

Earlier this year Kenya, one of Africa’s major economies, decided to leverage these technological advancements and proudly became Africa’s largest visa-free nation. Today, Kenya provides hope and a vision for the way forward for the African continent.

Making seamless, secure travel a reality

Traveler data is the undeniable key enabler of this future. Systems, such as API-PNR (Advanced Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record) and Electronic Travel Authorizations (ETA), are revolutionizing how governments

screen visitors ahead of travel.

When real-time information about who plans to travel, when, and for what purpose is made available to border authorities, they are empowered to make informed approval decisions, identify persons of interest before arrival and prevent undesirable individuals from traveling. With the advent of new technologies such as AI and facial biometrics, these systems are increasingly sophisticated and targeted, and able to operate efficiently at scale.

Perhaps more importantly, access to these systems has been democratized with new providers offering innovative commercial models that allow even budget-conscious nations to participate. Travizory Border Security, a BorderTech firm offering next-generation solutions to governments, supported Seychelles’ tourism recovery and bolstered security measures, at no direct cost to the government. Since launching, Seychelles has seen record tourism numbers and reduced arrival processing

“Fortunately, today’s technology enables governments to pre-screen all travelers for security risks before they arrive, improving entry processes and facilitating travel.”



times by 84%. This unique approach has garnered several more customers across East Africa and leaves Travizory well-positioned to shape the future of visa-free travel across the continent.

Similarly, Kenya’s ETA system has reduced travelers’ application processing times from 5 days to just 20 hours on average and streamlined the entry process.

Defining the Future of Travel in Africa

The time for a visa-free Africa is now and as more African nations embrace modern travel technologies, Travizory has a crucial role in building the infrastructure to enable seamless, visa-free travel across the continent. Our unique value proposition delivers for governments and travelers - helping to manage security risks while promoting ease of movement and seamless border crossings.

Our work with major African economies demonstrates the potential of these solutions to drive the continent toward a future of unrestricted travel and these technologies will not only enhance border security but also boost intra-African tourism and trade. What was once thought to be a distant dream will become reality in the near future, all that remains is for governments to take the first step and embrace the change.

¹ https://immigration.gov.ng/visa_class/visiting-visa-single-entry/

Clive Chinwada discusses growth and future prospects of Zimbabwe’s tourism

In a recent discussion on the VA Tourism Podcast, Clive Chinwada, President of the Tourism Business Council of Zimbabwe (TBCZ), provided an insightful overview of Zimbabwe’s tourism sector, focusing on its recovery, growth, and future opportunities.

A Positive Recovery Path

Reflecting on the post-pandemic recovery, Chinwada emphasized the significant progress Zimbabwe has made in bouncing back: “We have been and are on what I would call a tremendous recovery path... We’re delighted with the profound recovery and tremendous numbers that are flowing into Victoria Falls, which is our tourist capital. Currently, we are at an all-time high occupancy of around 60 percent since the beginning of the year, which really represents solid recovery if not actually growth for that matter.”

While major destinations such as Harare and Bulawayo are experiencing robust growth, Chinwada highlighted the challenges in smaller areas like Kariba and the Eastern Highlands. “We still have got pockets of areas where there is still a little bit of wobbling around and a bit of more work needed to ensure that recovery eventually happens,” he noted.

Visa Access: A Work in Progress

Access remains a crucial factor for the continued growth of Zimbabwe’s tourism. Chinwada discussed ongoing efforts to simplify the visa process for tourists: “We do believe that access is critical to tourists... We’re not yet there in Zimbabwe and it’s work that we need to do to ensure that it is as simple and as convenient as possible for our tourists to easily get visas when they come through.”

While progress is being made, with several key source markets able to obtain visas upon arrival, Chinwada recognizes the need for more streamlined procedures to compete with neighboring countries like South Africa, which offers visa-on-arrival to 132 countries.

Preserving Nature and Diversifying Products

Zimbabwe’s tourism remains deeply tied to its natural heritage, with a focus on wildlife and conservation. “Our tourism really has been nature-driven. The key resource that we have is our wildlife, our nature, our environment, and to as much as possible, we want to ensure that we preserve and conserve that aspect because that is an area where we derive our uniqueness from,” Chinwada explained.

Efforts are underway to preserve iconic sites like Victoria Falls while promoting other destinations such as Mana Pools and Gonarezhou, where conservation plays a critical role in attracting international visitors.

MICE: A Critical Growth Area

Chinwada also spoke about the importance of the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) sector for Zimbabwe’s tourism strategy.

“MICE brings in numbers and brings people who come initially for business but then want to return once they’ve enjoyed an experience in a destination,” he said, emphasizing that Zimbabwe has previously been dominant in this area and has the potential to regain its position.

However, infrastructure remains a challenge, particularly in Victoria Falls. Chinwada noted the need for investment in both conferencing facilities and

accommodation to handle larger events.

“We need to invest more in the capacity of that particular destination... not just in terms of conferencing space but also in terms of accommodation so that we are able to handle bigger numbers than we currently can,” he stated.

Looking Ahead to 2025

As Zimbabwe looks towards 2025, the TBCZ is optimistic about continued growth in tourism. “We are optimistic that the growth path that we currently are on will be sustained into the next year... the appetite for people to travel seems to be increasing,” Chinwada remarked, pointing to growth from key markets like the Americas, Oceania, and Europe. With numbers from these regions rising by 50-70%, Zimbabwe is well-positioned to build on its resilience and maintain this upward trajectory.



Clive Chinwada, President of the Tourism Business Council of Zimbabwe (TBCZ)

3rd TBCSA Tourism Leadership Conference charts new frontiers for tourism growth



Ms Makhotso Magdeline Soty, South Africa's Deputy Minister of Tourism

The 2024 Tourism Business Council of South Africa Leadership Conference concluded successfully in Sun City, in the North West Province. In its third year, the Leadership Conference brought together stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as dignitaries, guests, and delegates who contribute to the local and global tourism industry value chain. For two days, delegates engaged, debated, and discussed urgent matters in the South African tourism sector, under the theme Tourism Matters.

South Africa remains on track to achieve its goal of 15.6 million annual arrivals by 2030 – and there has been considerable progress in getting more people to visit the country and explore all its splendour. Public-private partnerships have particularly been key to ensuring smoother operations in the industry.

“We have held fruitful discussions in the last two days. As always, we will collate the information gathered here and put together an action plan. Some issues will keep coming up until a resolution or a way forward is found. Our goal and mission is to ensure that the gathering is more than just a talk shop.”

“We have held fruitful discussions in the last two days. As always, we will collate the information gathered here and put together an action plan. Some issues will keep coming up until a resolution or a way forward is found. Our goal and mission is to ensure that the gathering is more than just a talk shop,” says TBCSA CEO Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa.

Since the last Leadership Conference, there have been developments in the issuing of visas and the related legislative framework. Our partnership with the Department of Home Affairs has yielded positive outcomes that will benefit the industry and the country. Minister Leon Schreiber and his team have been working tirelessly to ensure South Africa is on a path to improved and automated visa regimes. The Home Affairs department has committed to clearing the backlog in the issuing of outstanding visa applications for skilled workers and others – and recently announced South Africa's new remote working visa in response to evolving global work trends. Minister Schreiber and his team remain committed to supporting us in reaching our goals of growing tourism while ensuring that national security is not compromised.

Tourism Master Plan

The tourism industry will also benefit greatly from the Tourism Sector Master

Plan which has the support of the Cabinet, highlighting yet again the importance of the support from the public sector in our collective goal of inclusive growth. With Tourism Minister Patricia De Lille at the forefront, the gains achieved in the last year are nothing short of remarkable. As an industry, we are eagerly anticipating the gazetting of the Tourism White Paper – an important guideline in the creation of an enabling regulatory environment.

On the transport front, discussions continue on how best to increase South Africa's aviation capacity. In our quest to bring more visitors to the country, there has to be a concerted effort to ensure those visitors have various options in terms of modes of travel. The good news for tour licence operators is that the backlog in the issuing of operating licences has been cleared. Deputy DG of Public Transport at the DOT, Mathabatha Mokonyama has re-affirmed the department's commitment to roll out an online application system. This will make it easier to alleviate delays and other impediments to the issuing and renewal of tourism vehicle operating licences. Work continues to support the National Public Transport Regulator, which adjudicates the applications for tourist transport operating licences and the accreditation of tour operators. As an industry, we stand ready to lend a hand to ensure seamless operations.



Chairperson of TBCSA, Jerry Mabena



Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa, TBCSA CEO

and approach and take the initiative to position South Africa as an important destination for major events. For sports fanatics, the minister provided feedback on the developments regarding bringing Formula One (F1) to South Africa.

“We have been in talks with the relevant stakeholders, and I am happy to say those engagements have been fruitful. They have given us a list of requirements that need to be fulfilled. And when we next meet in Doha, we will have an update on where we stand in terms of securing those rights,” says McKenzie.

The TBCSA remains committed to playing its part in ensuring partnerships with the government in areas of interest. Our priority is to ensure that the private sector can do its work effectively and ensure that the environment is conducive for operation. We also

recognise that continuous engagements and partnerships with our public partners are important in helping us reach our goals.

Our national air access initiative continues to be a work in progress, and we will need all our partners to support local and global air access fully. We will play our part in educating communities about the benefits of tourism and seek their collaboration in partnering with us. When we contribute to the development of infrastructure and invest in tourism development, we also foster relations and create ecosystems that aid in ensuring the safety and security of tourists, while empowering their communities as well. We remain committed to investing in tourism marketing, and strengthening our private-public partnerships, especially in key growth markets.

On a positive note, amendments to the National Land Transport Regulations now provide tourist operators with a 21-day grace period when applying for renewals of operating licences. Operators and prospective applicants are now also able to apply for accreditation and operating licences simultaneously. Applicants may now request an extension of 30 days to submit the requested documents and load their operating licences per the regulations.

Re-imagining a new future

As the industry finds new frontiers to unlock potential, sports and events tourism has become a critical space for opportunity. Sports, Arts, and Culture Minister Gayton McKenzie has invited the tourism industry to lead the way in unlocking opportunities in sports and events tourism. He says the industry ought to re-imagine its role, potential,



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Seychelles Strengthens International Cooperation on Tourism Statistics in Madrid

The Seychelles delegation, led by Principal Secretary for Tourism, Mrs. Sherin Francis, recently participated in a high-level series of meetings in Madrid, Spain, focusing on the future of tourism statistics and sustainable tourism development.

Mrs. Francis was accompanied by the Director for Strategic Planning, Mr. Chris Matombe, the Director for Industry Planning and Policy Development, Mrs. Bernice Senaratne, and the Principal Statistician from the National Bureau of Statistics, Mrs. Kirsten Arnephy.

The meetings, hosted at the UN Tourism headquarters, brought together global tourism leaders and statisticians to discuss the evolving role of data in shaping the tourism industry.

During the 20th Meeting of the UN Tourism Committee on Statistics, Mrs. Francis delivered a presentation on the future of tourism statistics in Seychelles. She highlighted the importance of Seychelles' ongoing commitment to strengthening its Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), which provides essential data for informed policy-making.

Mrs. Francis emphasised that accurate and timely statistics and real-time data are vital for shaping the long-term sustainability of the tourism sector, especially in island nations like

Seychelles, where tourism plays a central role in economic development.

Addressing the challenges Seychelles faces in producing robust tourism data, she underscored the limited resources available and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted both the collection of data and the development of the TSA. However, she reiterated Seychelles' dedication to improving data accuracy and quality through innovative tools, diversifying its data sources, and having greater collaboration with international partners.

The Seychelles delegation also actively contributed to discussions during the 5th Meeting of the Expert Group on Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (MST). Mrs. Francis shared Seychelles' experience with integrating sustainability metrics into its tourism strategy, with a focus on measuring the environmental and social impacts and enhancing visitor satisfaction.

She highlighted the importance of developing global standards for measuring sustainability in tourism, which will help countries like Seychelles make informed policy decisions that balance economic growth with environmental conservation and the resulting social impacts.



Seychelles was re-elected by its African counterparts to represent Africa on the UN Tourism Statistical Committee at the 66th UN Tourism Commission for Africa held in Mauritius. Mrs. Francis' participation in these meetings underscores Seychelles' leading role in promoting sustainable tourism and improving tourism statistics at the global level.

The discussions in Madrid will have long-term implications for how Seychelles and other African tourism nations continue to develop their tourism sector, particularly in relation to enhancing data collection, improving the TSA, and adopting sustainable practices that align with international standards.

Seychelles remains committed to working with global partners to ensure that its tourism industry remains competitive, sustainable, and resilient in the face of global challenges



Digital Nomad Work Permit: Kenya sees initiative as a game changer in boosting tourism numbers

Kenya is not slowing down in its efforts to ramp up its tourism numbers. Since the beginning of the year, the East African country has introduced several initiatives aimed at boosting visitor numbers. Among the most popular is the introduction of the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), allowing visitors from around the world to travel to Kenya with greater ease.

During the opening of this year's Magical Kenya Travel Expo, President William Ruto announced the introduction of the Transit ETA, which permits passengers in transit to step out of the airport terminals and explore the country as much as their layover allows.

In addition to this, the government has rolled out the Digital Nomad Work Permit. In his speech, President Ruto emphasized the permit's significance, stating that it is "specifically designed to welcome global digital professionals, allowing them to live and work in Kenya while enjoying the country's natural beauty and high-quality lifestyle."



Who Are Digital Nomads?

Digital nomads are remote workers who choose to live a nomadic lifestyle, often moving from one location to another while staying digitally connected. They use technology and communication tools to work remotely, enabling them to travel both domestically and internationally. This new frontier of travelers relies

“ Kenya is touted as the Silicon Savannah. The government has invested heavily in ICT infrastructure, particularly in fibre connectivity, ensuring access to every part of the country. This means that every corner of the country is essentially a hotspot. We are working closely with co-working spaces and innovation hubs across Kenya to ensure that digital nomads can seamlessly plug in and work wherever they are, while continuing to enjoy their holidays ”

heavily on digital infrastructure, making it essential for host countries to provide robust connectivity to accommodate them wherever they go.

According to the International Data Corporation (IDC), the global digital workforce is expected to reach over 50 million by 2025, marking a substantial opportunity for countries like Kenya to attract these professionals.

Bold Vision for the Digital Nomad Market

With the introduction of the Digital Nomad Work Permit, Kenya is determined to tap into this growing market. "As a country, we believe that we are ahead of the curve in terms of capturing the workforce of the future," said June Chepkemei, CEO of the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB), during a media interaction at the 2024 Magical Kenya Travel Expo.

Last year, Kenya welcomed 2 million visitors, and the country aims to increase that figure by 25% by the end of 2024,

with projections reaching 5 million visitors by 2027.

Chepkemei is confident that initiatives like the Transit ETA and the Digital Nomad Work Permit are critical to achieving these ambitious targets, further supported by the government's continuous investment in ICT infrastructure.

"Kenya is touted as the Silicon Savannah. The government has invested heavily in ICT infrastructure, particularly in fibre connectivity, ensuring access to every part of the country. This means that every corner of the country is essentially a hotspot. We are working closely with co-working spaces and innovation hubs across Kenya to ensure that digital nomads can seamlessly plug in and work wherever they are, while continuing to enjoy their holidays," explained Chepkemei.

Creating a Digital Nomad-Friendly Ecosystem

In addition to collaborating with

providers of digital infrastructure, the Kenya Tourism Board plans to work with tourism stakeholders, particularly accommodation providers, to design special rates tailored for digital nomads.

Chepkemei explained: "The workforce of the future does not want to be confined to a physical office. They seek a balance between work and life, preferring to work from any location that offers good connectivity and affordable, decent accommodation. We will be partnering with key players in the tourism sector to ensure that we showcase accommodations that cater to these digital professionals. We will be offering tailored packages and informing nomads about where they can stay and work effectively."

MKTE 2024: A significant success

The 14th edition of the Magical Kenya Travel Expo (MKTE) took place at Uhuru Gardens in Nairobi from October 2-4, drawing a diverse and impressive array of attendees. According to the CEO of the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB), the 2024 event attracted over 4,000 delegates, 180 high-quality international buyers, and 471 exhibitors representing 35 countries.

"It was the most successful to date," declared CEO Chepkemei.

The expo provided a dynamic platform for industry stakeholders to come together under one roof, not only to conduct business but also to learn, network, and share ideas. Participants were updated on emerging trends in

the tourism sector through specially curated seminars led by industry experts and thought leaders.

One of the notable additions to this year's event was the involvement of academic institutions, which presented their research findings on key topics such as sustainability and innovation in the tourism sector.

A significant highlight of MKTE 2024 was the signing of a route marketing agreement between the Kenya Tourism Board and AirAsia X. This partnership is set to facilitate the launch of four new direct flights from Kuala Lumpur to Nairobi each week, beginning on November 15, marking a major milestone in enhancing connectivity and boosting tourism between the two regions.

South Africa's Department of Home Affairs Gazettes Remote Work Visitor Visa And New Points-Based System For Work Visas

The Department of Home Affairs has officially gazetted two groundbreaking reforms: the Remote Work Visitor Visa and a new Points-Based System for Work Visas. These reforms are set to overhaul South Africa's visa regime, delivering on President Cyril Ramaphosa's July 2024 mandate to attract skills and investment while growing the tourism sector.

In just three months, Home Affairs has made significant strides toward modernising the visa system, with the new regulations being lauded as pivotal in positioning South Africa as a leading global destination for both investment and tourism.

The Remote Work Visa is aimed at highly paid individuals employed abroad who do not compete with the local workforce but can still contribute to the South African economy. By living and working remotely in the country, these individuals will spend their foreign earnings on local goods and services, pay Value-Added Tax (VAT), and boost the domestic tourism and hospitality sectors.



In parallel, the new Points-Based System for Work Visas seeks to reduce corruption and inefficiency by streamlining the visa application process. The system introduces a transparent points scale to objectively evaluate Critical Skills and General Work Visa applicants. A notable change includes a threshold of R650,796 in gross annual income for General Work Visa applications, which is intended

to protect jobs in the lower end of the market while attracting high-end talent.

As the Department of Home Affairs moves towards a fully digital system for visa applications, applicants for the Remote Work Visa, Critical Skills Visa, and General Work Visa will continue to apply through existing service providers and South African missions abroad in the interim.

The infusion of technology capabilities with tourism startups

I am currently mentoring a young startup who procures and distributes TV Boxes and other digital television products. What started as a small-scale business gained momentum in a very short pace of time. As demand grew, he realized that he had no systems or processes to manage the orders. Most importantly he did not have a well thought out approach to manage distribution. An attempt was made to employ more people to manage the business but soon realized that the staff and operational cost was steadily rising and was beginning to affect the bottom line. What started as a profitable business was soon becoming a heavily capital intense business. Revenue from sales was soaring but profits were down. One could argue that you a measure of the company's health is through metrics such as revenue growth, profit margins, customer satisfaction and operational efficiency. In the case of this startup, it became evident that while revenue was increasing, the rising costs and lack of streamlined processes were hindering overall profitability. What happened and what went wrong? This article sheds light on the impact of technology.

The tourism industry, with its vast potential for innovative solutions, is increasingly becoming a playground for technological advancements. Startups in this sector can harness digital tools to streamline operations, enhance customer experiences, and broaden their market reach. By integrating technologies such as AI-driven customer service, virtual reality tours, and personalized travel recommendations, these startups can offer cutting-edge solutions that distinguish them from traditional players.

Take, for instance, a fledgling travel company that leveraged AI to create customized travel itineraries based on user preferences. This approach not only heightened customer satisfaction but also optimized the company's resource allocation. The rapid adoption of these technologies enabled the startup to establish a significant market presence swiftly, surpassing competitors who were slower to adapt.

This trend is not isolated. Many startups

“ In essence, the infusion of technology should be a mindful, ongoing process that aligns with the startup's strategic goals and market dynamics. By doing so, startups can position themselves at the forefront of their industries, ready to seize new opportunities and navigate the complexities of a digital future ”

are now exploring the use of blockchain for securing transactions, drones for aerial tours, and big data analytics for understanding travel patterns and preferences. These technological infusions are transforming the tourism landscape, making it more dynamic and responsive to the evolving needs of travelers.

However, it's crucial to recognize the cost of late technology deployment. Startups that delay integrating these advancements may find themselves at a competitive disadvantage, missing out on efficiency gains, customer engagement, and market opportunities. The timing of technology infusion is critical, and those who act swiftly can reap substantial benefits in an increasingly digital world. Given the evolving competitive landscape and the rapid pace of technological advancements, startups should aim to incorporate technology at the earliest viable stage. Early adoption allows startups to build a strong foundation, leverage operational efficiencies and enhance customer experiences from the get-go. However, the timing must align with the startup's readiness and capacity to integrate new systems without disrupting core operations. It's not merely about being first but being prepared to implement technology in a way that complements the existing business model. A strategic approach entails a careful assessment of the startup's specific needs, the potential return on investment, and the scalability of the technology.

In essence, the infusion of technology should be a mindful, ongoing process that aligns with the startup's strategic goals and market dynamics. By doing so, startups can position themselves at the forefront of their industries, ready to seize new opportunities and navigate the complexities of a digital future. Incorporating technology into startups offers numerous benefits that can significantly enhance their efficiency, competitive advantage, and overall success. One of the primary benefits is the optimization of operational processes. By leveraging digital tools and automated systems, startups can streamline their workflows, reduce manual tasks, and improve productivity. This increased efficiency allows them to allocate resources more effectively and focus on core business activities. Additionally, technology enables startups to deliver superior customer experiences. With advancements such as AI-driven customer service, personalized recommendations, and virtual reality engagements, companies can offer tailored and immersive experiences that meet the unique needs and preferences of their customers. This not only boosts customer satisfaction and loyalty but also drives repeat business and positive word-of-



mouth referrals. Furthermore, technology facilitates market expansion and scalability. Digital platforms, online marketing, and e-commerce solutions provide startups with the tools to reach a global audience and scale their operations seamlessly. The ability to analyze big data and gain insights into consumer behavior also allows startups to make informed business decisions, identify new market opportunities, and adapt their strategies to stay ahead of the competition. Startups that embrace emerging technologies can quickly adapt to changing market dynamics, experiment with new business models, and bring innovative products and services to market faster. Moreover, startups should remain agile, continuously evaluating and adapting to emerging technologies that can further their competitive edge. Whether through incremental upgrades or transformative innovations, staying abreast of technological trends is crucial for sustained growth and relevance in the market. This agility is crucial in today's fast-paced business environment, where staying ahead requires continuous innovation and responsiveness.

As an added benefit, technology can enhance collaboration and communication within startups. Cloud-based tools, project management software, and virtual communication platforms enable teams to work efficiently, regardless of their physical location. This fosters a collaborative work environment, improves decision-making, and accelerates project timelines.

In conclusion, the tourism industry is ripe for technological infusion. The benefits of incorporating technology into startups are manifold, from operational efficiency and superior customer experiences to market expansion and enhanced innovation. In the case of the mentee described in this article, implementing digital solutions earlier could have transformed order management and distribution channels, driving down costs and enhancing efficiency. In his case, it is all not lost. Better late than never.

Akwasi Obeng-Adjei is the Director of Absa Group Internal Audit: Investment Management and Insurance and an academic with a vested interest in Future and Digital Transformation

Essence of Africa Mentorship Programme: Empowering the next generation of tourism leaders

Recognising the importance of supporting new businesses, the Essence of Africa Mentorship Programme will empower these emerging leaders to make their mark on the industry leading up to, during, and after the Essence of Africa event in Nairobi from 2 - 4 December 2024.

Africa's tourism industry holds immense potential to contribute to the continent's economic development and global prominence. Maximising this potential means creating pathways for emerging professionals to enter and thrive in the industry - and this is where mentorship plays a leading role.

Essence of Africa 2024 is proud to launch a dedicated mentorship programme, led by Leanne Haigh of Lemala Camps & Lodges and backed by the Essence of Africa advisory board. This initiative connects industry veterans with emerging tourism and travel businesses in Africa, encouraging a collaborative environment for growth and innovation.

"Mentorship provides invaluable guidance, support, and knowledge transfer, empowering new entrants to navigate the complexities of the tourism landscape and reach their full potential. Mentors, with their experience and insights, can act as a shortcut to success, helping mentees avoid pitfalls and capitalise on opportunities," says Chris Mears, Co-Founder of Essence of Africa and CEO of ATTA® Events.

The Essence of Africa Mentorship Programme

The Essence of Africa mentorship programme goes beyond networking, offering participants tangible benefits and actionable insights. It includes:

- A complimentary participation package worth US\$4,000: This package comprises pre-show marketing coverage, online category entry, one exhibitor badge, and a designated meeting point with essential amenities.
- Pre-event training: An online training session with industry mentors provides practical tips on maximising meetings and navigating the event.



- Tailored meeting schedule: Mentees receive support in planning a full Essence of Africa appointment schedule, with up to 36 meetings with relevant buyers.
- Networking and learning opportunities: Access to networking events and seminars provides further opportunities to connect with industry leaders and gain valuable insights.
- Ongoing support: Mentees receive feedback from mentors and ongoing support in following up post-meetings to ensure they're equipped to make the most of the connections made.

Benefits for the broader industry

The programme's impact extends beyond the individual mentees, benefiting the African tourism industry as a whole:

- Fresh perspectives and innovation: New entrants bring unique ideas and challenge conventional approaches, encouraging a culture of creativity and adaptability.
- Enhanced digital capabilities: Many emerging professionals from younger generations possess advanced digital skills, contributing to the modernisation and efficiency of the industry.
- Deeper understanding of evolving consumer preferences: In many

instances, mentees can offer valuable insights into travellers' changing needs and expectations, giving the broader industry a leg-up.

- Championing eco-conscious practices: Due to evolving regulations, legislation, and consumer demands, many new enterprises prioritise eco-conscious tourism practices, contributing to the long-term health of the industry, the environment, and local communities.
- Increased job creation and economic diversification: The growth of new tourism businesses leads to job creation and economic diversification, benefiting local communities and contributing to the overall prosperity of the region.

Ultimately, the Essence of Africa mentorship programme strives to level the playing field for emerging businesses, providing them with the tools, knowledge, and connections they need to succeed. This initiative is working to create a more inclusive and dynamic tourism sector, ensuring its continued growth and relevance in the global market.

Applications for the 2024 mentorship programme have now closed. Essence of Africa is currently reviewing the applications received and will be selecting 10 up-and-coming businesses in due course.

An African Perspective from the ICCA Congress: Challenges and Opportunities in the MICE Industry

The 63rd ICCA Congress in Abu Dhabi has marked a significant milestone as the largest ever in the association's history, with over 1,500 delegates from 76 countries converging in the UAE from 20-23 October 2024. This year's Congress not only set records in attendance but also featured 176 speakers across 93 sessions, 11 ministers and undersecretaries, 100 association representatives, and close to six dozen university students.

The 2024 ICCA Congress offered African representatives in the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry a chance to reflect on the continent's growing presence on the global stage. In a series of interviews with key African industry leaders, the theme of potential and progress was clear, but so too were the challenges. With representation from countries such as South Africa, Rwanda, Kenya and Zambia the discussions focused on how Africa can carve out a stronger space in the global MICE sector.

Rwanda's MICE Journey: A Decade of Progress

Janet Karemera, CEO of the Rwanda Convention Bureau, highlighted Rwanda's dedication to establishing itself as a key MICE destination. "This year marks 10 years of the MICE journey in Rwanda," she said. Over the decade, Rwanda has seen considerable growth, but there remains a disconnect between the destination's achievements and global awareness. "Even though we're ranked second in Africa, many people are still unaware of what we offer," Karemera noted.

Rwanda's participation in the ICCA Congress underscores the importance of visibility for African destinations. Karemera shared that Rwanda hosted a breakfast event at the Congress for around 30 association executives. "We wanted to take stock of how far we've come and present what we've achieved," she explained. However, she expressed frustration that Africa remains underrepresented in the global MICE conversation, with only 500 of



the 22,000 meetings facilitated by ICCA taking place on the continent. She emphasized that changing this perception is critical: "People don't realize the incredible venues we have, like in South Africa and Rwanda."

The Private Sector's Struggle and Commitment

Doris Parsons, Managing Partner at SRC Agency echoed Karemera's sentiments but from the private sector perspective. She highlighted the challenges faced by African Professional Conference Organisers (PCOs) in competing globally. "African participation is abysmal. Where are the other 52 countries?" she asked, stressing the need for African governments to prioritize MICE development. According to Parsons, only South Africa and Rwanda consistently participate in these forums, leaving a gap in leadership and vision across much of the continent.

However, Parsons remained hopeful, emphasizing the need for investment. "It's not cheap to attend events like this, but it's cheaper in the long run to invest now than to suffer the costs later," she said, calling on African PCOs to recognize the importance of honing their skills

at events like the ICCA Congress. The learning and networking opportunities, she added, were invaluable for staying competitive in the global market.

Innovation on the Global Stage: A New Congress Model

The 63rd ICCA Congress itself was innovative in design, introducing a hub-and-spoke model that allowed participants to craft their own experience. "You create your own Congress," explained the ICCA CEO Senthil during an interview. The model provided flexibility for attendees, with thematic hubs that allowed participants to tailor their experience based on their interests. "End of the day, after three days, when they finish the Congress, they see what they achieved throughout by creating their own program," he said. This approach resonated with attendees, as it allowed them to directly engage with the content most relevant to them.

For African MICE representatives, this model was especially significant, providing a more dynamic platform for engagement and exchange. The participation of nearly 80 countries and the involvement of global leadership, including ministers and



undersecretaries, made it an ideal opportunity for African nations to showcase their potential.

Building Continental Cohesion

Frank Murangwa, Director for Africa at ICCA, expressed pride in the increased participation of African countries at this year's Congress. "We've seen growth, with over 35 members from across Africa attending," he said. However, he also acknowledged the need for more collaboration among African MICE players. "We discussed in the Africa chapter meetings how we can create more business events for our members by our members."

Murangwa's key takeaway from the Congress was the potential that Africa holds, but which remains untapped. He emphasized the importance of platforms like ICCA in creating opportunities for African nations to come together, exchange ideas, and grow collectively. "Our objective is to bridge the gap and ensure that we can collectively grow the continent's presence in the global MICE industry," he said.

The Silent African Voice: Glenton de Kock's Insights

Glenton de Kock, CEO of the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI), reflected on the Congress's content and the need for a louder African voice. "The last three days have been fascinating to see the ability of content and knowledge sharing," de Kock noted, but he also expressed concern about Africa's underrepresentation in content discussions. "While we've got good African representation here, the Africa voice is a little bit silent. Going forward, we want to see more conversations relating to the aspects that we are dealing with on the continent."

In his view, building a unified narrative is essential for advancing Africa's position in the global MICE sector. "Many of us at the association level have a voice to drive activities for our members and the continent, but we need one narrative," he said. De Kock emphasized the importance of African countries collaborating to showcase their unique

destinations and drive the message of why hosting meetings on the continent is impactful. "Associations need to look at destinations individually, and therein lies our opportunity."

De Kock also highlighted the role of technology and human interaction in the MICE industry. "The utilization of technology, like event apps and signage, has been impressive, but we mustn't lose sight of the importance of human contact. AI may be on the rise, but nothing beats the speed and connection that human conversations bring."



Senthil Gopinath, CEO ICCA & Marta Gomes, President of ICCA



Frank Murangwa, Director for Africa at ICCA

Glenton de Kock, CEO of the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI)

Janet Karemera, CEO of the Rwanda Convention Bureau

Doris Parsons, Managing Partner at SRC Agency

Business Tourism: A Catalyst for Global Solutions

In line with Africa's growing role in the business tourism sector, global leaders at the ICCA Congress emphasized the importance of using business tourism as a driver for global cooperation and sustainable growth. Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of UN Tourism, noted the broader potential of the meetings industry to address critical challenges, resonating with Africa's ambitions to become a significant player in the global landscape.

"Business Tourism is more than a meetings industry," Pololikashvili said. "It is the engine that powers connections, partnerships and solutions to the

challenges of tomorrow. It shapes the future of work, creativity and global cooperation, ensuring tourism remains a resilient and sustainable force for good for generations to come." He emphasised that the business tourism sector is integral to fostering human connections that drive economic progress and cultural exchange, cornerstones of global prosperity.

Conclusion: The Road Ahead

The 2024 ICCA Congress highlighted both the strides made by African countries in the MICE industry and the challenges that still lie ahead. Leaders like Karemera, Parsons, and Murangwa stressed the importance of visibility, collaboration, and investment

in positioning Africa as a competitive force in the global market. While progress is being made, it is clear that greater participation and commitment from governments and private sector players across the continent are needed to fully realize Africa's MICE potential. The message from the Congress was clear: Africa's time is now, but it must be prepared to seize the moment.

The 2024 edition has set the stage for future gatherings, with Porto, Portugal hosting the next ICCA Congress in November 2025. For Africa, the challenge now is to amplify its voice and ensure the continent's dynamic offerings are central to the global meetings and events agenda.



A group photo of Africa's delegation at the 63rd ICCA Congress

FITUR to celebrate 45th anniversary in 2025 edition from January 22 to 26

Organised by IFEMA MADRID, the International Tourism Fair will be held with good prospects and in a positive context for the industry.

With Mexico as a Partner Country, FITUR 2025 is committed to generating business and exchanging knowledge as the backbone for boosting the tourism industry.

FITUR, the International Tourism Trade Fair, is bringing together the global tourism market together from 22 to 26 January at IFEMA MADRID in a context of tourism recovery. Thus, according to UNWTO, in the first quarter of 2024 more than 285 million tourists travelled internationally, around 20% more than in 2023, figures that allow us to forecast an excellent 45th edition of FITUR in which the records registered in all parameters in 2024 will be consolidated.

With a strong professional focus, FITUR will represent the entire tourism value chain and countries and destinations, the accommodation sector, agencies and tour operators, technology companies, means of transport and institutions from all over the world, and will be a showcase for the latest industry trends.

Business and knowledge, the cornerstones of FITUR 2025

In this new edition, with Mexico as a Partner Country, FITUR is presented as a fundamental tool at the service of boosting the global tourism business, also committed to the generation and exchange of knowledge as a key driver for innovation, competitiveness and sustainability.

FITUR 2025 will be a multifaceted event that will offer a variety of benefits

for destinations and companies in the tourism sector with a consolidated focus on networking, global visibility, direct sales and the training of its professionals, boosting not only the participating businesses, but also increasing the growth and innovation of the entire industry and laying the foundations for the next tourism year.

In addition, as part of its strategy to be a key platform for accelerating business and know-how, in 2025 the International Tourism Fair maintains its commitment to specialisation. In this respect, it will be offering high quality content in tourism segments and announces the renewal of its ten monographic sections: FITUR 4all, which in its second edition is taking another step forward with the publication of the 'Guía de Buenas Prácticas en Accesibilidad en el turismo by Fitur4all' (guide to best practices in tourism accessibility); FITUR Cruises, devoted to the world of cruising; FITUR Know-How&Export, aimed at promoting the internationalisation of tourism knowledge of Spanish companies; FITUR LGTB+ and its focus on diversity and inclusion in destinations; FITUR Lingua, which centres on the challenges and opportunities of language tourism; FITUR Screen and the increasing popularity of film tourism; FITUR Sports, with sports as the motivation for travel both for attending big sporting events as well as for partaking in sports; FITUR Talent, with the accent on people, talent management and professional training as key factors in the growth of the sector; FITUR TechY, with the spotlight on tourism technology and innovation; and FITUR Woman, which addresses equality and the role of the women in tourism employment.



These ten spaces are complemented by FITURNEXT as a channel for the responsible commitment of both the event and the industry as a whole, whose challenge this time focuses on how tourism can contribute to sustainable food management. Also with Travel Technology, which brings together travel technology companies from all over the world and which, after its 23% growth in 2024, is expected to maintain a more sustained increase.

Good prospects for the 45th edition of FITUR

María Valcarce, Director of FITUR, stressed that "after a 2024 where the trade fair broke records in all its parameters, we hope that at this new edition, which is so special because it is the 45th anniversary, we will continue to consolidate our global influence thanks to the support of the public and private sector and that of all the players in the value chain. Opening the annual calendar of tourism trade fairs is a privilege and a challenge, and the figures from international organisations for the first half of the year allow us to be optimistic."



Mahi Tadesse: Forging Hallpax's path to elevate African MICE and empower communities

In this intriguing interview with **VoyagesAfric (VA)**, Mahi Tadesse, the Founder and CEO of Hallpax, shares her inspiring journey from accidental event planner to industry trailblazer. Established in Addis Ababa 14 years ago and rebranded in 2018 with a base in the US, Hallpax has grown into a formidable player in the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) sector across Africa.

Mahi offers insights into the company's unique role in addressing challenges faced by African tourism boards and convention bureaus, promoting sustainable event practices, and collaborating with local communities to ensure fair economic participation.

Through candid reflections, Mahi reveals the heart of Hallpax's mission—providing accessible resources for organizations hosting events across the continent, empowering local businesses, and contributing to the growth of Africa's MICE industry. Join us as we explore her bold vision, the company's impact, and the exciting prospects for 2025.

VA: Kindly tell us about Hallpax and your role within the company

Mahi: Hallpax is an event management company. We were founded in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 14-years ago, in 2018 we rebranded and moved the company to the US. We now mainly execute events in east, west and southern African countries.

VA: Walk us through Hallpax's footprint in Africa and what makes you unique

Mahi: Even though by definition we are an event management company, we are driven to promote African destinations for MICE. Most governments in the continent don't yet have the necessary marketing strategy to promote their respective destinations. The countries that have strong convention bureaus/tourism boards don't yet have the bandwidth to offer the necessary support required to institutions that host events.

We see multiple institutions struggling to narrow down possible event venues within their own cities or understanding



their own country visa regulations. This is because tourism boards & convention bureaus have very little resources available on their website and aren't yet easily accessible. Most tourism boards/convention bureaus in the continent

“Our industry has the potential to lift a nation out of poverty but without proper regulation most of the profits generated from the industry will go to international hotel chains. It breaks our heart when a casual waiter's daily wage is \$5.00 at an international brand hotel our delegates pay \$200.00 + per night. Leakage in tourism is a serious issue, governments must step in and ensure the local community is getting a fair share from the development of the industry.”

are new and are still in the development phase. This is where we are stepping in as we wait for these government bodies to come out of their cocoon.

We have developed resources to guide organizations, companies & associations plan events in multiple African cities. We are seeing this guide and resource being consumed mainly by institutions that have a footprints in the continent. For example, most of our resources about Nairobi are being consumed by Kenyans, this is a clear indication to us the information gap on how to execute events in African cities isn't just for foreigners visiting either from the region or outside of the region but also for local institutions.

Anyone that comes to us for guidance will get a free consultation on how to plan an event in any African city we cover. We also offer a free budget estimate and connection with local venues and suppliers. This isn't something we do to gain clients, it is a service we offer 100% free of charge because we believe when one city in Africa gains an event we will all gain in the long term.



We have also recently started collaborating with government owned convention centers and tourism boards to submit bids to host international events in their cities, we are hoping to continue to do so with multiple countries.

These are some of the roles we are currently playing among some interesting ones in the pipeline for 2025.

VA: As a foremost event management, what do you think can be done to make events sustainable from an environmental and local community perspectives

Mahi: Our industry has the potential to lift a nation out of poverty but without proper regulation most of the profits generated from the industry will go to international hotel chains. It breaks our heart when a casual waiter's daily wage is \$5.00 at an international brand hotel our delegates pay \$200.00 + per night. Leakage in tourism is a serious issue, governments must step in and ensure the local community is getting a fair share from the development of the industry.

Tourism is unlike any other export product; the “country” is the main product. Ensuring local communities' livelihood is improved and natural resources are conserved is the most important aspect of sustainable tourism.

We at Hallpax understand travel & tourism is responsible for more than 5% of the world's carbon emission. We take offsetting carbon footprint very seriously, we actively discourage our clients from printing and add tree planting as an activity for delegates to help offset our carbon footprint.

We also try to find unique ways to involve local businesses & young people in our events. For example we recently did an event in Kampala where we had a visually impaired artist paint the backdrop banner & our client sold the art at the end of the event as a fundraiser. We are working with UNHCR in Malawi to get a special permit to hire young refugees to work as casual event staff at events we execute in Lilongwe. We believe in fair wage compensation for the casual young people we work with.

Even though we are still a very small company we have 5 core values that guide us in every decision we take as a company; people, nature, culture, history & service. We value the people &



culture of every destination we service and love to show it off at every event we work on. Preserving the nature & history of the destinations we service is our top priority, and the only way we can move forward.

VA: Tell us about the role Hallpax wants to play in contributing to the growth of MICE in Africa

Mahi: We love the continent and see tremendous potential in Africa. We are consistently overwhelmed by our vendors' flexibility, dedication and excellence. The culture of hospitality is embedded in the service of most of the small businesses we work with. Most of the vendors we work with aren't on google and don't have a fancy website but they are run by dedicated local entrepreneurs. We want to create tools for our vendors to be discovered easily and resources for anyone to plan an event in Africa.

We currently have a number of resources available & we are open to help guide anyone planning an event in Africa. That is definitely something we are committed to do in the long term as well.

VA: Finally, share with us your own journey

Mahi: I became an event planner accidentally. Someone saw me volunteering at a charity fundraiser and asked me to volunteer for an event UNIDO Ethiopia was planning when I was in college. I was hooked, I loved it so much I dropped out of college and started my first event management company with just \$150.00 as a working capital. 14-years later, we operate in 19 African cities and based on demand we execute events in Europe, Asia & the US.

I founded Hallpax but it is no longer only my journey or vision. I am lucky to have met wonderful people I get to work with everyday that are shaping the direction we are taking. The team we are building and the unique superpower they all possess motivates me everyday.

WTM Africa 2025 to 'Ignite Africa' with fresh focus and strategic content



RX Africa has announced "Ignite Africa" as the official theme for its WTM Africa 2025 event, taking place from 9 to 11 April in the Host City of Cape Town at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC). Next year, WTM Africa promises a revamped format with a laser focus on actionable insights and strategic networking, making it a must-attend for anyone invested in the future of African tourism.

Expect a content-rich programme at WTM Africa structured around critical themes such as aviation, responsible

tourism, and marketing. Curated by industry experts, sessions will move beyond theoretical discussions to deliver practical solutions and tangible strategies. The "Brain Box" will also offer interactive workshops and discussions, providing opportunities for attendees to gain practical knowledge and develop new skills.

In addition, WTM Africa will launch a renewed trend report packed with the latest industry statistics and insights. This State of the Industry report will serve as an essential resource for stakeholders, offering data-driven perspectives on current challenges and opportunities in African tourism.

WTM Africa 2025 will also feature a reimagined Media Awards programme, designed to raise standards in travel journalism across the continent. A panel of leading industry judges will recognise excellence in reporting, setting a new benchmark for media coverage of African tourism. Press conferences, media briefings, and

exclusive opportunities for interviews with top industry spokespeople will be scaled up, allowing the media to access crucial stories and insights directly from the source.

"This isn't just an update to our annual event. We're completely reimagining how we can drive African tourism forward," said Megan De Jager, Portfolio Director for RX Africa. "The new format and content are designed to give attendees practical tools and knowledge they can immediately apply to their businesses. With 'Ignite Africa,' we're bringing together the sharpest minds, the latest trends, and actionable strategies in a way that's never been done before. This is an event that professionals across the tourism industry won't want to miss."

WTM Africa is positioned as the definitive event for those looking to stay ahead of the curve in African tourism. This event will be the flashpoint for new strategies and collaborations that will shape the future of the sector.

Agenda revealed for IBTM World's Forum for Advocacy

Defining how the global events industry better communicates its economic and social value, while identifying areas that require more support, will be key priorities for IBTM World's Forum for Advocacy, in partnership with The Business of Events, when it takes place next month.

With widespread support for the forum from leading organisations across the events industry, it is ideally placed to be a catalyst for change and amplify the existing conversation around advocacy issues. PCMA, ICCA, the events industry council, and The Strategic Alliance of The National Convention Bureaux of Europe are amongst the associations welcoming the initiative, as are the Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC), City Destinations Alliance, and The Iceberg.

Bringing together an international group of senior leaders, policymakers and influencers, the Forum for Advocacy will be opened by IBTM World Exhibition Director, Claudia Hall, on Monday 18 November 2024. Taking place at the Torre Melina Gran Melia Hotel, it will

be a powerful prelude to IBTM World, which celebrates its 20th anniversary in Barcelona the next day.

Sherrif Karamat, President and CEO of the PCMA, will speak on the industry's role, position and purpose. His address will be followed by key findings from the latest Global Destination Report, analysed by Sarah Fleming, MD of SFA Connect.

American Express Global Business Travel's Head of Global Sustainability Meetings & Events, Eloisa Urrutia, and Barcelona Convention Bureau Director, Christoph Tessmar, will then discuss how business events can counterbalance the challenges of over tourism and climate change by contributing positively to local economies.

The forum will close with a policy agenda discussion to agree what the business events industry is advocating for and where it can unlock further potential.

"We look forward to supporting the long-term growth of the business events sector and ensuring it remains



on its journey towards a sustainable and diverse future, which is inclusive and accessible to all, and which continues to have a positive impact on global communities and the world it inhabits," said IBTM World Exhibition Director, Claudia Hall.

Following the forum, guests will have an opportunity to continue informal talks at the Meetings Leadership Network Reception. The outcomes of the Forum for Advocacy will then be explored further from 3pm on Tuesday 19 November on the Impact Stage at IBTM World.

Revolutionizing Travel: How Women and Gen Z are Redefining the Future of Tourism



Velma Corcoran, Director of Policy for Airbnb across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa

The 2024 TBCSA Leadership Conference kicked off with a series of stimulating discussions around the future of the tourism sector, but as the event unfolded, one message became clear: more diverse voices are needed if the industry is to move forward effectively. Velma Corcoran, Director of Policy for Airbnb across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, weighed in on this issue during her address and in an interview, pointing to a glaring gap that demands immediate attention.

While the conference covered a wide range of topics, Corcoran emphasized the underrepresentation of key groups—namely women and Generation Z—who are crucial for the tourism industry's growth.

"Yes, what I would love to see from this conference is actually more young people on the stage, really showcasing those who are driving innovation. One of the key things that I spoke about was a key trend that we need to tap into: how do we appeal more to women, and how do we appeal more to Gen Z? I'm not seeing many women and Gen Z individuals participating in this conference," she remarked.

Corcoran elucidated that women, in particular, are driving significant changes in how tourism operates globally. She highlighted how over 55% of travel research is now led by women, marking 2024 as "the year of the woman." The influence of female consumers on the industry has never been greater, and Corcoran underscored this with a fascinating example:

"The major travel phenomenon

of this year was a woman, Taylor Swift... The tour delivered \$5 billion in incremental spend in the destinations where it was in one night."

According to her, this staggering figure points to a significant trend that tourism stakeholders must pay attention to: women aren't just influencing where we go; they're shaping how we travel. She is hopeful that these gaps can be addressed, particularly in Africa's developing tourism sector.

Corcoran highlighted the importance of evolving policies within the regulatory landscape to support sustainable tourism growth. She pointed to the challenge of over-tourism in Europe as a key issue that needs to be addressed, she said,

"You know, as South Africans, and I think people in Africa, we often feel, we say, well, we should be so lucky. Over-tourism doesn't apply to us. But while right now that is true, the thing with over-tourism is that it happens in a specific space at a specific time."

In Corcoran's view this is a critical opportunity for Africa. The continent has the chance to anticipate and sidestep the pitfalls that have plagued other regions. Instead of waiting for crises to occur, Africa can prioritize sustainable tourism models now, ensuring that its growing sector remains balanced and beneficial for all.

Ultimately, the themes of innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability were at the heart of Corcoran's address. As she put it, "We need to do things differently if we want different results." According to her, if this year's conference is any indication, those results will be driven by the very groups that have been sidelined for too long—women and the youth, ready to take the industry into the future.

Nairobi To Host Africa Youth In Tourism Innovation Summit And Challenge From 2025 To 2027.

Kenya reinforces its position as a hub of African tourism as its vibrant capital city of Nairobi has been selected to host the Africa Youth in Tourism Innovation Summit and Challenge (AYTIS) for the years 2025, 2026, and 2027. This prestigious Pan-African event is dedicated to promoting and uplifting innovative entrepreneurs within the tourism sector across the continent.

The announcement follows the successful 2024 AYTIS held in Windhoek, Namibia, which attracted over 500 delegates. The event brought together 300 entrepreneurs, in addition to senior government officials, and industry leaders from across Africa, fostering collaboration and showcasing the continent's burgeoning tourism potential.

Tourism Events Advisory and Management Services Africa (TEAMS Africa), a joint venture between esteemed travel industry professionals Barry Clemens, Joram Mwinamo and Håvar Bauck, will host the upcoming summits in Nairobi. The exact dates and venue for the 2025 Summit will be announced later this month.

"Tourism has the potential to be a leading driver of economic growth and job creation in Africa for decades to come. Our goal is to showcase and uplift the innovators that are building tomorrow's travel industry and can transform tourism in Africa. By empowering young entrepreneurs and embracing innovation, we can reshape the narrative of African tourism" says Håvar Bauck.

It is crucial for African destinations to build a tourism narrative that goes beyond wildlife and beaches, highlighting the continent's rich cultural heritage, dynamic cities, and diverse experiences. We also need to reach beyond traditional tourism source markets and segments to attract a new generation of global travelers and position this continent as the world's fastest-growing tourism region. AYTIS is the forum that brings together the innovators who will make that happen", added Havar Bauck.

Barry Clemens: "It is with immense pride that I welcome the African Youth in Tourism Innovation Summit and Challenge (AYTIS) to Kenya, a nation at the heart of Africa's tourism evolution. Having been part of AYTIS since its inception, I am thrilled to see it come home to a country that reflects the spirit of youth, innovation, and entrepreneurship in tourism.

Tourism is far more than hotels, tour operators, and flights—it is a catalyst for transformation across the entire value chain. From technology startups to local artisans, agri-businesses, and environmental conservation initiatives, tourism creates endless opportunities for African entrepreneurs to thrive. It is essential we support and nurture the next generation, whose ideas will propel this industry into new and exciting directions, ultimately driving economic growth and inclusive development across the continent.



Woman in Tourism Leadership:

Spotlight on Mrs. Alisa Osei-Asamoah, President of the Tour Operators Union of Ghana

In a dynamic and evolving industry, few names resonate as strongly as that of Mrs. Alisa Osei-Asamoah, a visionary leader whose passion for tourism and unwavering dedication have transformed Ghana's tourism landscape. As the President of the Tour Operators Union of Ghana (TOUGHGA), she has elevated the Union from a dormant association to one of the most vibrant tourism trade organizations in the country, ushering in a new era of growth and collaboration.

Transforming TOUGHGA and Shaping Ghana's Tourism Industry

Since taking office in 2020, Mrs. Osei-Asamoah has redefined what leadership in tourism looks like. Under her stewardship, TOUGHGA has become a symbol of innovation, positioning itself at the forefront of Ghana's tourism ecosystem. One of her landmark achievements was the launch of a domestic tourism campaign at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, an ambitious move that revitalized local tourism at a time when international travel had ground to a halt.

"We saw the pandemic as both a challenge and an opportunity," she recalls. "If Ghanaians couldn't travel abroad, we could encourage them to explore the treasures right here at home. The response was beyond our expectations," Alisa told VoyagesAfric in an interview.

Her campaign sparked a newfound enthusiasm for domestic tourism, with TOUGHGA members, actively engaging in tours across the country, inspiring ordinary Ghanaians to follow suit. This initiative not only kept tourism afloat during challenging times but also rekindled local pride in Ghana's cultural and natural heritage.

A pivotal aspect of Alisa's achievements lies in her ability to foster strategic collaborations that elevate Ghana's tourism sector. Under her leadership, TOUGHGA worked closely with the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) to launch the 'See Ghana, Share Ghana' domestic tourism campaign, which successfully promoted local travel across the country.

Additionally, she represented TOUGHGA at the Destination Ghana launch in 2022—a high-profile event in London, graced by the President of Ghana. This initiative was aimed

at positioning Ghana as a premier destination for the UK and European markets, further solidifying the country's global tourism appeal and opening new avenues for growth.

Strengthening Intra-Africa Tourism

Beyond Ghana, Alisa's leadership extends across the continent. She has spearheaded a pan-African travel movement, fostering collaboration with tour operators from Nigeria, Cameroon, Togo, Benin, and South Africa. Her efforts culminated in initiatives like the NANTA/TOUGHGA Conference, held at the University of Johannesburg in 2023, which brought together operators from Ghana and Nigeria to share knowledge and build business synergies.

"This is about building bridges across Africa," Alisa explains. "We need to tell our own stories and travel within the continent to understand one another better."

Her ability to foster cross-border partnerships has contributed to the broader objective of promoting intra-Africa travel, which is seen as a crucial driver for the continent's tourism growth.

Recognition and Awards

Alisa Osei-Asamoah's tireless efforts have not gone unnoticed. She has earned multiple accolades, both locally and internationally, solidifying her position as a leader par excellence. Her achievements include:

- Africa Tourism Leadership Award (Botswana)
- International Travel Awards – Best Travel Company in Ghana (2021)
- West Africa Business Excellence Award (2022)
- Inspiring Female Personality in Tourism Award (2022)
- Global Leadership Award (2024)



Her company, Riali Consult, which she leads alongside her role in TOUGHGA, has also garnered numerous recognitions, reflecting her ability to successfully balance multiple demanding roles.

A Journey from Humble Beginnings to Global Influence

With a Master's degree in Tourism from the University of Cape Coast and nearly 25 years of experience, Mrs. Osei-Asamoah's journey is one of grit and ambition. She has risen through the ranks, serving TOUGHGA as Treasurer and Vice President before being overwhelmingly elected as President. In 2022, she was re-elected by popular acclamation, a testament to the trust and admiration she commands within the tourism industry.

As a member of the prestigious Ghana Club 100, which recognizes the country's most influential CEOs, and an active participant in global tourism

associations such as the African Business Travel Association (ABTA) and the Africa Tourism Board, she continues to make significant contributions to shaping tourism policy and practice in Africa.

Alisa also serves on the boards of key institutions and committees within Ghana's tourism sector, lending her expertise to help steer the industry towards a sustainable future.

A Legacy of Leadership and Empowerment

Through her journey, Mrs. Osei-Asamoah embodies the values of hard work, dedication, and vision. Her leadership has not only uplifted TOUGHGA but also inspired countless women in the tourism industry. Her Women in Leadership Award (2023) and Ghana Women of Excellence Award (2024) are further acknowledgments of her role as a trailblazer for women in tourism.

Having served her two-term tenure as President, Alisa will step away from her leadership role at the end of the year. As a capstone to her tenure, she led the development and launch of a five-year Strategic Development Plan for TOUGHGA, ensuring the Union's continued growth and relevance long after her departure.

Though her time at the helm concludes, Alisa's dedication to the industry remains unwavering. She looks forward to working closely with key stakeholders to help the tourism sector realize its full potential as a vital engine of Ghana's economic growth.

"Tourism is not just about destinations; it's about experiences, culture, and people," she affirms. "My mission is to ensure that Ghana becomes a top-tier destination, not only for international travellers but also for Africans exploring their own continent."



At the Front Seat of Adventure!

Embarking on a journey through the heart of Africa promises an odyssey of unparalleled beauty, rich culture, and awe-inspiring encounters with nature's majestic creatures. Amidst this vastness lies a gem, African Adventure Specialists (AAS), the home of luxury and comfort in the realm of safari experiences.

In the vibrancy of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Zanzibar, AAS stands tall as the epitome of opulence, curating experiences that redefine the essence of adventure. At AAS, we understand that discerning travellers seek not just exploration, but immersion, comfort, and exclusivity.

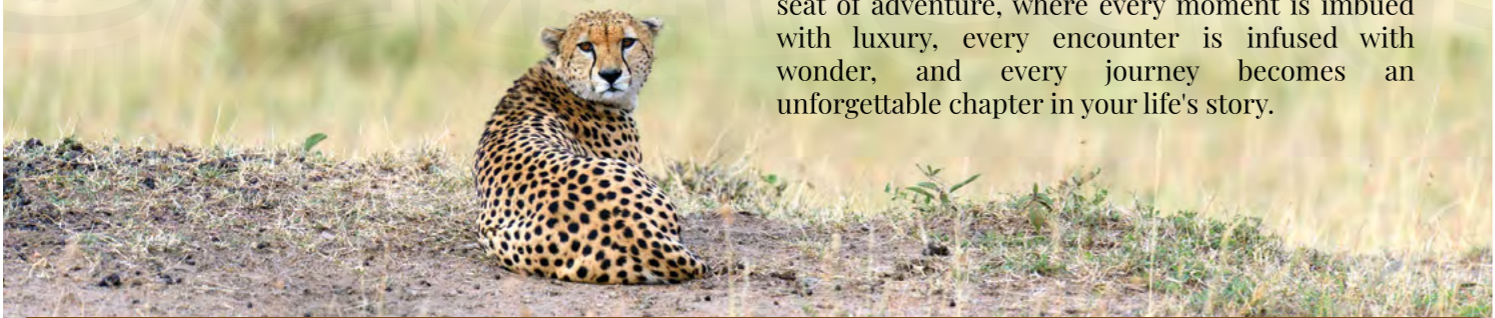
Picture yourself on a luxurious safari, where every moment unfolds like a chapter in a captivating novel. With our meticulously crafted itineraries, AAS ensures that every element of your journey is steeped in elegance and sophistication. From a choice of indigenous or executive accommodations nestled amidst the wilderness to bespoke cultural encounters that unveil the essence of each destination, we redefine the boundaries of luxury travel.

Our safari packages span across East Africa, offering a harmonious blend of adventure and indulgence. Whether it's witnessing the Great Migration on the plains of the Serengeti or trekking through the misty forests to encounter mountain gorillas, every experience with AAS is crafted to leave an indelible mark on your soul.

But luxury with AAS transcends beyond the confines of safari. We specialize in corporate retreats and group wellness escapes, offering a sanctuary where productivity meets tranquillity amidst the backdrop of Africa's unparalleled beauty. Imagine strategizing under the vast African sky, rejuvenating your spirit with wellness retreats that nurture both mind and body.

What sets AAS apart is not just the destinations we explore, but the experiences we create. Our commitment to excellence extends to every aspect of your journey – from our expert local guides who share their intimate knowledge of the land to our sustainable practices that ensure our footprint remains gentle on the earth.

At AAS, we invite you to take your place at the front seat of adventure, where every moment is imbued with luxury, every encounter is infused with wonder, and every journey becomes an unforgettable chapter in your life's story.



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Kgomotso Ramoetha appointed CEO of ATTA®

Memberships, outlines vision for African tourism growth

The African Travel and Tourism Association (ATTA®) has announced the appointment of Kgomotso Ramoetha as the new CEO of ATTA® Memberships. Ramoetha steps into the role with a clear mission to promote African tourism and position ATTA® as the leading network for its members across the continent and beyond.

In an interview with VoyagesAfriq, Ramoetha expressed her excitement about the opportunity, emphasizing her dedication to fostering collaboration within the tourism industry. "I am honoured to take on this role, promoting African tourism and positioning ATTA® as the leading network for our members," she said.

Ramoetha will work closely with Chris Mears, CEO of ATTA® Events, who oversees the association's flagship event, Experience Africa, set to take place in June next year. "While Chris focuses on events, my priority will be to manage and grow our membership. We are excited to collaborate and bring added value to our members," she explained.

One of Ramoetha's primary goals is to ensure that ATTA® membership delivers measurable value to tourism businesses. To achieve this, the association is launching a member-wide survey to better understand its members' needs and challenges. "Listening to our members will be critical to shaping the future of ATTA®. Our aim is to work together for the success of

African tourism," she said. Her vision also includes new initiatives that provide members with valuable industry insights, research, and resources. "These tools will empower our members to respond effectively to global and consumer travel trends, ensuring the future success of the African tourism industry."

Ramoetha revealed strategic plans to grow ATTA®'s membership base, particularly by reducing membership fees for buyers, making the network even more attractive. "ATTA® is uniquely positioned to build connections between suppliers, tourism boards and key buyers and we are committed to expanding our network," she noted.

Enhancing media relations is also high on her agenda. "We are working on new ways to boost media engagement, and I will soon announce initiatives aimed at strengthening our media presence," she said.

Ramoetha promised open communication with members, ensuring their voices are represented within

Kgomotso Ramoetha, CEO of ATTA® Memberships



the broader tourism sector. "My commitment is to work closely with all of you and take ATTA® from strength to strength" she affirmed.

Airlines Association of Southern Africa elects new Chairperson and Deputy at 54th AGA

The incoming Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Airlines Association of Southern Africa's (AASA) were elected at the body's 54th Annual General Meeting and will serve for the next 12 months.

Ms. Lulu Rasebotsa has been elected as AASA's Chairperson. She is the CEO of Air Botswana, with Interim CEO of South African Airways, Prof. John Lamola, chosen as the Deputy Chair.

"Lulu and John will provide guidance and support to AASA in our ongoing engagements with governments,

tariff, licensing and safety regulators, airport operators, air navigation service providers and other role players in our advocacy work. Our goal is that policy, regulations and standards promote competitive, affordable, economically and environmentally sustainable, secure and safe air transport with comprehensive intra-African connectivity," said AASA CEO, Aaron Munetsi.

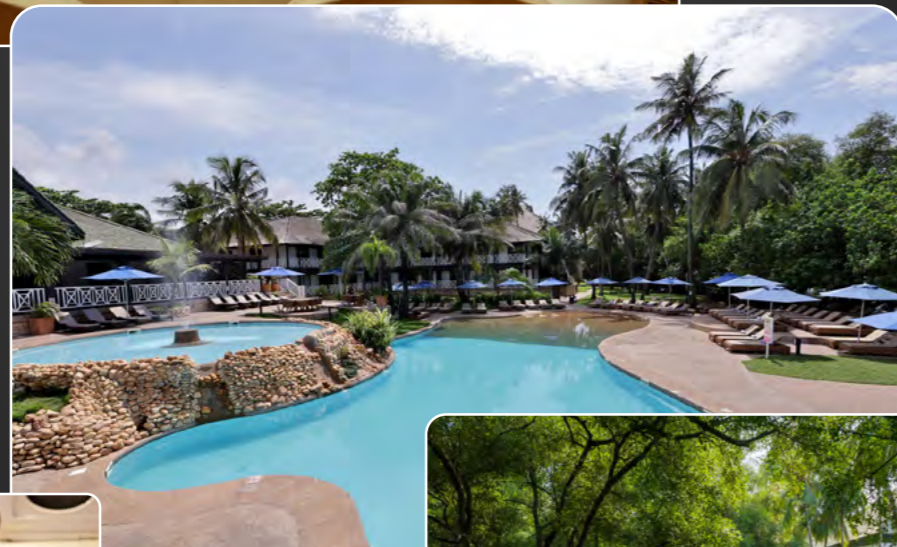
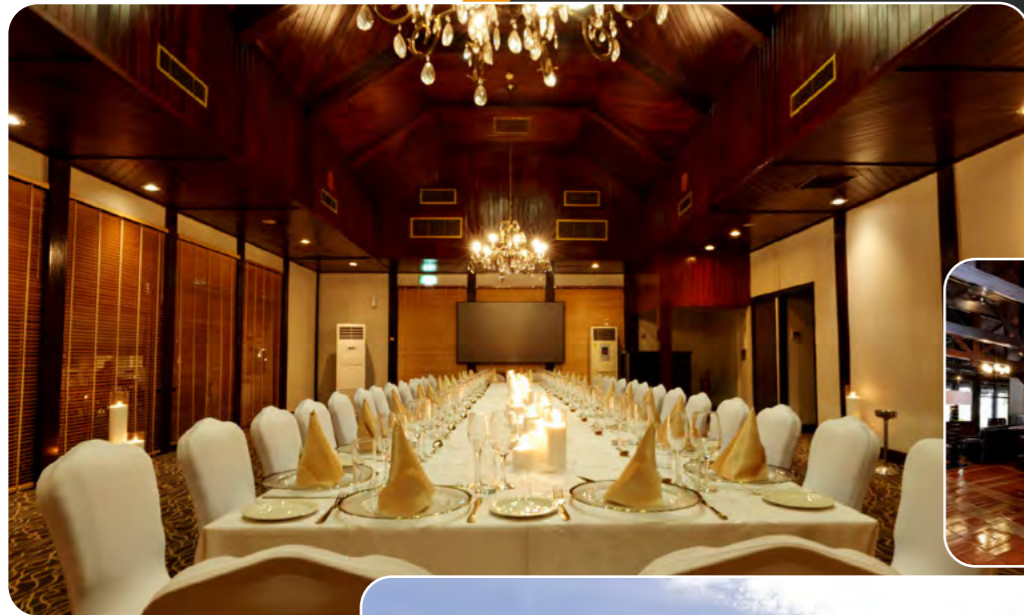
AASA's annual general assembly was hosted by FlySafair and held in Paarl near Cape Town, South Africa. It was attended by over 200 delegates representing



airlines, airports, air navigation and weather services, aircraft and engine manufacturers, industry suppliers and other stakeholders.

LABADI BEACH HOTEL

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Emirates deepens presence in South Africa and adds fourth daily flight to Johannesburg



Emirates, the world's largest international airline, is bringing even more choice, connectivity and premium travel options to Johannesburg, by adding a fourth daily flight on the in-demand route. This follows the recent announcement of the second daily A380 between Dubai and Johannesburg, which launched on 1 September, reaffirming the importance of South Africa on the airline's extensive global

network.

The fourth daily service will begin on 1 March, 2025, and will be operated on a three-class Boeing 777-300ER, offering an additional 708 seats in and out of South Africa's largest and busiest international airport every day, broadening options for leisure and business travellers alike. EK767 will depart Dubai at 00:10hrs, arriving in Johannesburg at 06:20hrs; the return flight, EK768, will depart Johannesburg at 10:15hrs arriving in Dubai at 20:15hrs, expanding the airline's schedule to introduce a morning departure from Johannesburg.

Adnan Kazim, Emirates Deputy President and Chief Commercial Officer said, "South Africa has long been a highly popular destination for both leisure and business travellers connecting to and through Dubai, and the fourth daily flight enables us to better serve the growing demand for

travel to and from the market. We'd like to extend our thanks to the South African authorities for their partnership and support in securing this new service, which reinstates the capacity we offered South Africa pre-pandemic, with 49 weekly flights, across three gateways. As we reflect on nearly three decades of operations to the market, we remain committed to driving inbound travel to South Africa, supporting the government as they aim make tourism the leading economic contributor and vehicle for transformation, as well as encouraging more inwards investment to the country."

The fourth daily flight further supports connectivity across Emirates' global network of over 140 destinations, optimising schedules to key destinations including Dubai, Thailand and India as well as European hotspots such as UK, France, the Netherlands and Germany.

Proflight Expands Fleet With New 50-Seat Aircraft Investment

Proflight Zambia has expanded its fleet with the purchase of a 50-seat Dash 8-300 turbo aircraft, as part of its continuing drive to build market share in the regional aviation sector.

The Zambian owned and operate airline expects to take delivery of the aircraft in Zambia in the next few months following delivery from Canada, which is the headquarters of the aircraft manufacturer, Bombardier Aerospace.

The purchase means Proflight joins the league of top-tier regional airlines operating the Dash 8, including Ethiopian Airlines, QantasLink, Flybe, SA Express and Cemair in South Africa.

The investment is the latest step in Proflight's strategy of buying bigger planes that can accommodate more passengers, realising economies of scale and enabling it to operate more efficiently.

It currently operates a 50-seater Bombardier CRJ-100 jet, three 29-seater Jetstream 41 aircraft and two C208 Caravans, all of which are Zambian

registered with the Zambia Civil Aviation Authority (ZCAA).

"The new Dash 8-300 aircraft will increase Proflight's capacity and enable us to expand our network of destinations throughout the southern African market, explained Proflight Director of Flight Operations Capt. Gerald Tembo.

Proflight boosting its fleet with the Dash 8 increases the opportunities for the airline to open more destinations, both domestically and internationally, adding to its three existing regional routes, from Lusaka to Durban, Harare and Lilongwe.

The new aircraft will also free up the productive time of Proflight's 50-seater CRJ 100 Jet aircraft, which will also allow the airline to look at more new routes domestically and regionally.

Flights to Johannesburg, Gabon, Entebbe and Dar-es-Salaam are all being evaluated by the airline, which celebrates 27 years of operation this year.

The Dash 8 type covers a family of twin turbo prop aircraft, ranging from 37 seats to 78 seats. Proflight's new Dash



8 is a 50-passenger seat aircraft. The interior of the Dash 8 is very similar to that of Proflight's existing 50-seat CRJ 100 jet, which is also used on its Ndola and Livingstone services.

Zambia has a long history of using Canadian aircraft. The airline's CRJ plane is also manufactured by Bombardier in Canada.

"We are very proud to continue the strong ties with the Canadian aircraft industry," added Capt. Tembo.



The UN Tourism SG and officials of Dominican Republic draped in Chacabana in an official signing ceremony at the recently held CAF- CAM event in Punta Cana

CHACABANA IN FOCUS:

How the Dominican Republic's Iconic Shirt is Winning Over Tourists

Steeped in tradition and cultural pride, the chacabana is synonymous with Dominican elegance. Typically made from lightweight fabrics like cotton, silk, or linen, this increasingly popular shirt is renowned for its iconic pleats and seamless fusion of style, tradition, and modernity. More than just a garment, the chacabana embodies a rich cultural heritage, making it a must-have for tourists who visit the Dominican Republic.

In the Dominican Republic, the guayabera is commonly referred to as the chacabana. While it shares similarities with the traditional guayabera found in other Latin American countries, the chacabana often features unique local designs and variations that reflect Dominican culture. This shirt remains a significant symbol of national identity and is

widely worn for both casual and formal occasions throughout the country.

Distinguished by its four front pockets and vertical pleats or embroidered stripes, the chacabana has long been a staple in Caribbean and Latin American wardrobes. In the Dominican Republic, it serves not only as clothing but as a proud symbol of identity, blending comfort and cultural significance. As tourists discover this piece of Dominican heritage, they find themselves drawn to its timeless appeal.

While the chacabana has its roots in the broader guayabera tradition, it has evolved into a beloved fashion statement, resonating far beyond local shores. For visitors, wearing a chacabana is more than just adopting a new look; it's a way to immerse

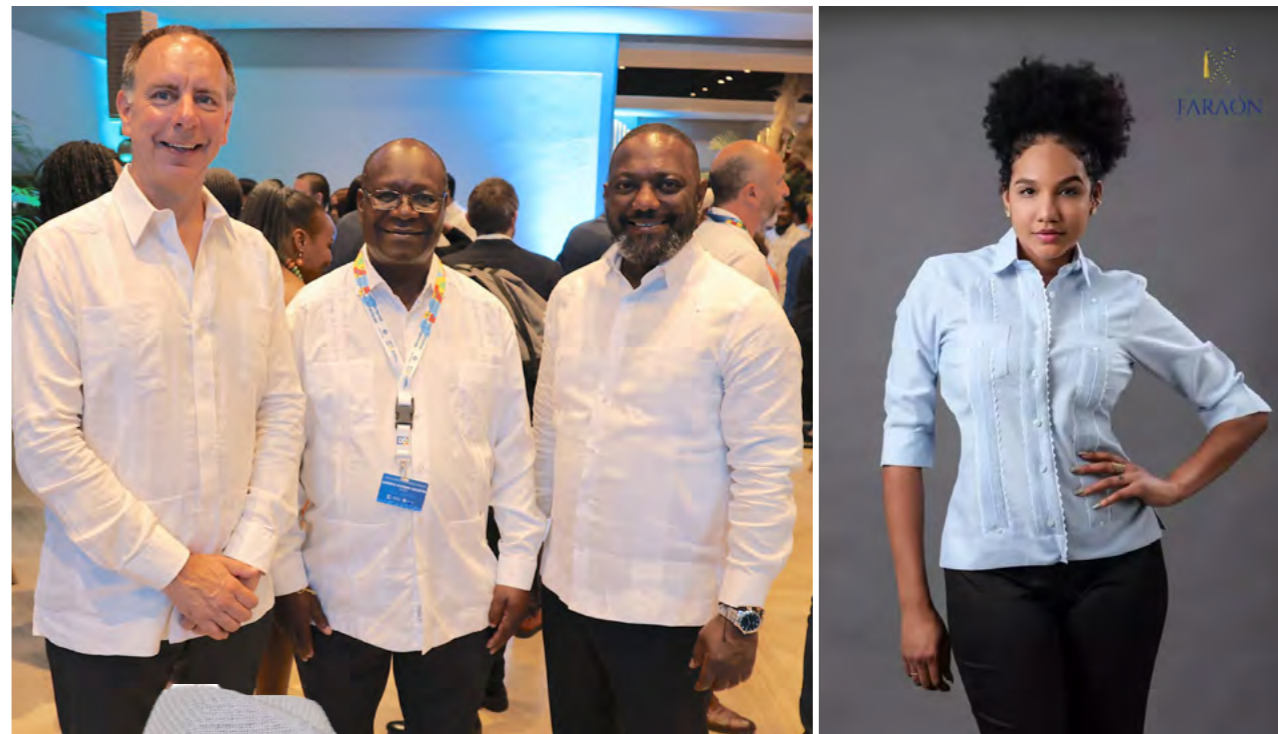


Photo credit: Chacabanas Faraon

themselves in the island's story. The shirt's lightweight fabric makes it perfect for the tropical climate, while its intricate pleating and tailored fit add a touch of sophistication that appeals to tourists seeking both style and cultural engagement.

The chacabana isn't merely a souvenir—it's an embodiment of the Dominican way of life, representing warmth, hospitality, and history in every stitch. Its blend of casual and formal appeal makes it versatile, with tourists donning the shirt for everything from beachside relaxation to evening gatherings.

The cultural prominence of the chacabana took centre stage at the recent 1st UN Tourism Africa-Americas Summit held in Punta Cana, where foreign delegates were captivated by its understated elegance. The shirt's presence at such a high-profile event demonstrated the Dominican Republic's commitment to celebrating and preserving its cultural heritage on a global platform.

For many attendees, the chacabana was not just a piece of clothing, but a reflection of Dominican pride and a way to showcase the island's unique cultural identity. Its reception at the summit only highlighted its growing status as a cultural ambassador, attracting international attention and solidifying its role as a Dominican icon.

As the Dominican Republic continues to establish itself as a top destination in the Caribbean, the chacabana plays an increasingly important role in promoting the island's rich culture. For many, the pleats, pockets, and stripes of the shirt are imbued with meaning—representing the warmth, tradition, and enduring history of the Dominican people.

Wearing a chacabana offers tourists a tangible connection to the island's heritage. Whether they leave with memories of sun-drenched beaches or vibrant cityscapes, they also take home a piece of Dominican culture that lives on in this iconic shirt. The chacabana is no longer just a local treasure; it has become a global emblem of the Dominican Republic's vibrant cultural tapestry.

A Celebration of Culture and Tradition at the 2024 Oktoberfest Beer Festival in Accra

The Oktoberfest Beer Festival 2024 made a remarkable return this year, lighting up Accra with an electrifying two-day celebration on the 4th and 5th of October. The Adesa Pavilion of Labadi Beach Hotel, Ghana's proud host of this iconic global festival, once again proved to be the epicenter of excitement, drawing enthusiastic patrons each night. As the only venue in Ghana to have sustained the global Oktoberfest tradition in the capital, Labadi Beach Hotel cemented its place as the ultimate gathering point for a truly international crowd.

At the heart of the festival's vibrant atmosphere was the Bayern Boys Band, flown in from Munich, Germany, to provide the authentic musical experience synonymous with Oktoberfest. Their lively Bavarian tunes filled the air, setting



The Managing Director of Labadi Beach Hotel David Eduaful addressing the enthusiastic patrons at the event



played vital roles in ensuring the event's grandeur and seamless execution. Their involvement highlighted the significance of corporate partnerships in preserving and promoting cultural festivals like Oktoberfest on such a large scale.

As the Adesa Pavilion buzzed with excitement over the two-day celebration, it was evident that Oktoberfest in Accra has become much more than just a festival. It's a symbol of cultural continuity, an event that connects Ghana with the rest of the world through the shared love for beer, music, and tradition. The festival's growing attendance year after year proves that the spirit of Oktoberfest transcends borders, bringing together people from all over to celebrate unity in diversity.

the stage for a night of revelry, laughter, and unity. Beer lovers from all corners of the world came together under the same roof, dancing and raising their glasses in celebration of culture, music, and tradition.

The attendance of hundreds of patrons each night speaks volumes about the festival's growing popularity. People from diverse nationalities, including diplomats, expatriates, and locals, gathered to experience what has become not just a German tradition, but a global cultural phenomenon. The Oktoberfest in Accra truly reflected the spirit of togetherness, with the crowd representing countries far and wide.

The festival was officially opened by Ms. Reike, the Representative of the German Ambassador to Ghana, who welcomed the enthusiastic crowd and emphasized the cultural significance of Oktoberfest. She expressed her pride in witnessing how this celebration has continued to thrive in Ghana, fostering not just joy and camaraderie, but also cultural exchange. Ms. Reike's words resonated with the crowd, who shared her appreciation for the festival's ability to bring together people from various walks of life.

The success of this year's Oktoberfest in Accra would not have been possible without the invaluable support of its key partners. Brussels Airlines, Multimedia Group Ltd, Media General Ltd, and the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC)





Pyramids in Egypt

Ten Must-Visit Destinations in Africa: A Traveller's Guide



Deadvlei of Namibia

Africa, a continent of unmatched diversity and beauty, offers an extraordinary array of experiences for travellers. With over about 1.4 billion people spread across 54 countries, this vast land boasts rich cultures, ancient civilisations, azure blue beaches, stunning landscapes, and unparalleled wildlife. Africa is often called the last frontier of global tourism, where hidden gems await discovery. From the sun-scorched dunes of the Namib Desert to the tropical beaches of the Indian Ocean, every corner of the continent holds a unique blend of natural wonders, cultural heritage, and adventure.

Tourism in Africa has been growing steadily over the past decade, with the continent attracting 73.4 million

international visitors in 2023—a 4.5% increase from the previous year. Beyond its wildlife safaris and majestic landscapes, Africa is becoming a sought-after destination for history enthusiasts, cultural explorers, and adventure seekers alike. The continent offers world-class destinations for every kind of traveller, from luxurious resorts and vibrant cities to UNESCO World Heritage sites.

As the world increasingly turns its attention to Africa as a prime travel destination, we've curated a list of 10 must-visit African countries that showcase the best of what this incredible continent has to offer. Whether you're drawn by Egypt's ancient pyramids, Kenya's iconic wildlife, or the Seychelles'

idyllic islands, these destinations promise experiences that will leave a lasting impression. Here's a guide to some of Africa's top travel spots you should consider for your next adventure.

1. Egypt

Often called the cradle of civilisation, Egypt remains one of the most visited destinations in Africa. In 2023, it attracted 13.1 million international tourists, drawn by the country's iconic pyramids, ancient temples, and Nile River cruises. Beyond its historical allure, Egypt also offers luxury beach resorts, bustling bazaars, and stunning desert landscapes. Visitors can explore World Heritage sites, follow the trail of the Pharaohs, and experience the

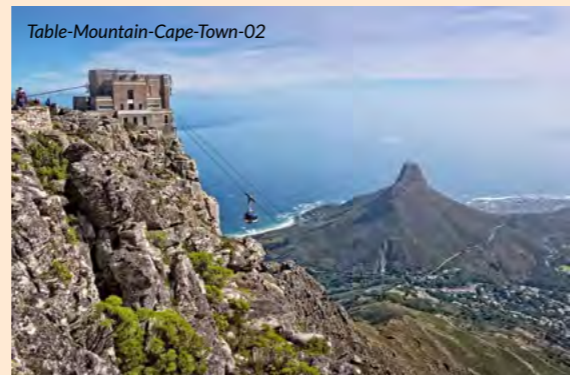


Table-Mountain-Cape-Town-02



Mountain Gorillas of Rwanda

spiritual significance of Egypt's timeless monuments.

2. South Africa

Known as "Rainbow Nation," South Africa is a paradise for every type of traveler. With a mix of stunning urban beaches, wildlife safaris, and cultural heritage, the country's diverse offerings cater to all tastes. From the majestic Table Mountain and bustling Cape Town Waterfront to the wildlife-rich Kruger National Park, South Africa guarantees adventure. Visitors can also explore its 10 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Robben Island and the Cradle of Humanity, while enjoying its cosmopolitan cities and rich cultural history.

3. Morocco

Morocco's unique blend of dynamic landscapes, vibrant cities, and rich history earned it 9.5 million international visitors in 2023. The country's four imperial cities—Marrakesh, Fes, Meknes, and Rabat—boast ancient palaces, bustling markets, and stunning Islamic architecture. Whether you're wandering through the medinas of Marrakesh, relaxing on the sun-drenched beaches of Essaouira, or trekking through the Atlas Mountains, Morocco offers an irresistible mix of culture, adventure, and beauty.

4. Kenya

Kenya is famed for its breathtaking wildlife and awe-inspiring landscapes, with the Great Migration through the

Masai Mara being one of the world's most spectacular natural events. Tourists flock to see the "Big Five" (lion, elephant, buffalo, leopard, and rhino), while also enjoying Kenya's stunning coastline along the Indian Ocean. The bustling cities of Nairobi and Mombasa offer rich cultural experiences and vibrant nightlife, making Kenya a dream destination for both nature lovers and urban explorers.

5. Tanzania

Home to Africa's highest peak, Mount Kilimanjaro, and the Serengeti's world-famous wildlife, Tanzania is a haven for eco-tourists. The country has set aside 38% of its land for wildlife conservation, providing visitors with incredible opportunities to experience Africa's natural beauty. The idyllic island of Zanzibar offers crystal-clear waters and pristine beaches, while Da es Salaam serves as a gateway to the region's vibrant Swahili culture and lively city life.

6. Seychelles

An island paradise in the Indian Ocean, the Seychelles boasts some of the most beautiful beaches in the world. The archipelago's 115 islands are home to unique wildlife, stunning coral reefs, and two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Vallée de Mai and Aldabra Atoll. Visitors can explore the islands' natural wonders while enjoying the warm hospitality and rich cultural history of the Seychellois people. From luxury resorts to serene nature trails, the Seychelles promise an unforgettable experience.



La digue beach, Seychelles

7. Ghana

West Africa's tourism powerhouse, Ghana effortlessly attracts international tourists with its warm hospitality, vibrant culture, and stunning natural beauty. The capital city, Accra, is a bustling hub of modern African life, while the beaches of Cape Coast and the cultural heartland of Kumasi offer deeper connections to Ghana's rich history. The country's national parks, like Mole National Park, provide opportunities to encounter African wildlife, making it a well-rounded destination for both cultural exploration and outdoor adventure.

8. Namibia

Namibia's vast landscapes, diverse wildlife, and advanced infrastructure make it a dream destination for



Djema el-Fnaa, is a square and market place in Marrakesh's medina quarter



Blackrhinos in Kenya

adventurers. The country is home to the Namib Desert, the world's oldest desert, and the Fish River Canyon, the second-largest canyon on earth. Visitors can explore the stunning sand dunes at Sossusvlei, witness the dramatic Skeleton Coast, and experience the thrill of game drives in Etosha National Park. With its good road network and low crime rates, Namibia offers a safe and exciting travel experience.

9. Mauritius

Famed for its postcard-perfect beaches and turquoise waters, Mauritius is a tropical paradise that enchants visitors with its natural beauty and warm hospitality. The island's 160 km of coastline is dotted with coral reefs, making it a haven for beach lovers and snorkelers. Beyond the beaches, Mauritius offers a treasure trove of cultural experiences, from exploring Port Louis' bustling markets to discovering historical sites like the Balaclava Ruins and Labourdonnais Orchards.

10. Rwanda

Known as the "Land of a Thousand Hills," Rwanda offers stunning natural landscapes and unforgettable wildlife experiences. Tourists come from all over the world to see the endangered mountain gorillas in Volcanoes National Park. Beyond gorillas, Rwanda's clean and vibrant capital city, Kigali, is rapidly emerging as a top destination for meetings, incentives, conferences, and events (MICE). With its remarkable transformation since the 1994 genocide, Rwanda is now a symbol of progress, peace, and natural beauty.



Ghana's Independence Arch



Mount Kilimanjaro

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Each of these destinations offers a unique window into the beauty, culture, and adventure that Africa holds. Whether you're seeking ancient history, thrilling wildlife, or serene beaches, these top 10 African destinations guarantee unforgettable experiences.

This guide was expertly curated by Ghanaian travel writer and columnist Francis Doku and Nigerian travel writer Obinna Emelike, bringing you the best of Africa's must-visit destinations.



Sega dance in Mauritius



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A TASTE OF NAMIBIA: Exploring the Culinary Gems of the Desert

From Mopane Worms to Game Meat: The Flavours of Namibia

Namibia, a land of sweeping deserts, vibrant cultures, and rich history, offers an equally unique gastronomic experience. For those eager to explore one of Africa's lesser-known culinary landscapes, Namibian cuisine is a perfect fusion of traditional flavors and influences from its colonial past

Traditional Cuisine: A True Taste of Namibia

At the heart of Namibian gastronomy is its array of game meats, prized for their quality and unique flavors. Visitors can savor dishes made from kudu, oryx, and springbok, which are often grilled, roasted, or stewed. These meats are widely available due to the country's expansive farmlands and game reserves, and they provide an authentic taste of Namibia's landscape.

For the adventurous, Namibia's northern regions offer local delicacies like mopane worms—a caterpillar often dried or fried and typically served with porridge (oshifima), a doughy staple made from maize or millet.



Traditional dishes often reflect the self-sustaining lifestyle of the Namibian people. Staple ingredients such as millet, maize, and beans are prepared in a simple yet flavorful manner. A notable example is ombidi, a spinach-based dish often mixed with beef or chicken to create a hearty and nutritious meal.

European Influence: A Colonial Legacy on the Plate

Namibia's colonial history, particularly under German occupation, has left an indelible mark on its food culture. Cities like Windhoek and Swakopmund boast a variety of eateries serving up traditional German fare like sausages, bread, and schnitzel alongside Namibian classics. The fusion of local and European styles can be experienced in places like Joe's Beerhouse in Windhoek, where a plate of bratwurst might come with a side of oryx steak, offering a uniquely Namibian twist on German classic.

On the coast, the cold Atlantic waters provide fresh seafood, which is a staple in towns like Walvis Bay and Swakopmund. Dishes like west coast lobster, oysters, and prawns are widely celebrated for their quality, often featured in high-end restaurants and local shacks alike.

Namibian Delicacies: Gifts from the Desert

While the Namibian desert may seem barren, it produces some rare and exquisite delicacies. One of the most sought-after is the Kalahari truffle, a desert fungus that blooms after the rains. These truffles add a rich, earthy flavor to many Namibian dishes, especially in fine dining establishments.



Another delicacy that draws both locals and tourists is the omajova mushroom, found growing on termite mounds after the rainy season. These large mushrooms are typically grilled or stewed, bringing a hearty and meaty texture to local dishes.

dishes, serving mopane worms and stew's that provide a deep dive into the country's rich culinary heritage.

Conclusion: Discover Namibia's Culinary Treasures

Namibian cuisine offers a profound connection to its land and people. From game meats and foraged delicacies to seafood and German-influenced pastries, Namibia's gastronomic offerings are as diverse as its landscapes. Whether you're exploring bustling city eateries or tasting wild foods in rural areas, every bite tells a story of tradition, adaptation, and creativity. A journey through Namibian gastronomy is one of adventure, history, and unforgettable flavors.

Restaurants to Experience

Namibia's evolving culinary scene features a mix of traditional and contemporary restaurants. For fine dining, Leo's at the Castle in Windhoek showcases local ingredients prepared with global techniques, offering an elevated culinary experience. On the more traditional side, eateries like Pepata in Windhoek specialize in Oshiwambo-style

Tourism Calendar of Events

Nov 18-19 2024	9th Global Gastronomy Forum Venue: Manana, Bahrain Contact: Email: About:
Nov 21-23 2024	IBTM Barcelona 2024 Venue: Barcelona, Spain Contact: Email: About: IBTM World is the leading global event for the meetings, incentives, conferences and events (MICE) industry, taking place annually in Barcelona. Our event has one goal; to inspire the events industry to deliver exceptional experiences for their customers.
Nov 28-29 2024	3rd World Sports Tourism Congress Venue: Santiago Bernabeu, Madrid Spain Contact: Email: About: The Congress, under the theme "Tourism and Sport Creating a Lasting Legacy for Destinations" will once again bring together high-level stakeholders from these sectors to share innovative ideas, best practices, and insights into sports tourism, including its economic impact, contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
Nov - Dec 29-3 2024	Botswana Travel and Tourism Expo (BTTE) Venue: Botswana Contact: Email: About:
Dec 2-4 2024	Essence of Africa Venue: Sarit Expo Centre, Nairobi, Kenya Contact: hello@eoa.travel Email: About: Africa's premier meetings-driven tourism event connecting the continent's vibrant tourism industry
Jan 22-26 2025	FITUR International Tourism Fair Venue: IFEMA Madrid, Spain Contact: +34 91 722 30 00 Email: About: FITUR is the global meeting point for tourism professionals and the leading fair for inbound and outbound markets in Ibero-America
Mar 4-6 2025	ITB Berlin Venue: Berlin Exhibition Grounds, Germany Contact: Email: About: The World's Leading Travel Trade Show ® will take place at the Berlin Exhibition Grounds
Mar 12-16 2025	Turismo Lisboa Travel Market (BTL) Venue: Feira Internacional de Lisboa -Lisboa Contact: Email: About: Fostering new contacts and promoting the best business is one of BTL's premises. We count on you! The BTL is an event for professionals in the tourism sector which is an opportunity to find professional buyers. Analyze market trends and position their offer in an innovative and competitive way

Tourism Calendar of Events

Apr 9-11 2025	World Travel Market-Africa Venue: Cape Town International Convention Centre, South Africa Contact: +27 82 5588214 Email: About: World Travel Market Africa brings the world to you, and promotes Africa to the world, allowing you to explore a world of opportunities, all under one roof.
Apr 10-12 2025	Kriol Jazz Fetsival 2025 Venue: Praia, Cabo Verde Contact: Email: About: The Kriol Jazz Festival is a fusion of music from different origins all on one stage. Discover a selection of the best artists from the creole world for a program based upon exchanging as much on a musical level as on a human level.
May 1-14 2025	FIFA Beach World Cup, Seychelles 2025 Venue: The Seychelles Island Contact: Email: About:
May 20-22 2025	IMEX Frankfurt 2025 Venue: Messe Frankfurt, Germany Contact: +44 (0) 1273 227311 Email: enquiries@imexevents.com About: IMEX Frankfurt is where the global meetings, events and incentive travel industry comes together annually for the largest trade show of its kind in Europe
June 6-8 2025	Karibu KiliFair 2025 Venue: Magereza Ground Arusha, Tanzania Contact: +255 (0)767 668 245 Email: info@kilifair.com About:
June 17-19 2025	Africa Hospitality Investment Forum 2025 Venue: The Westin Cape Town, South Africa Contact: Email: About: The Africa Hospitality Investment Forum (AHIF) is the leading hospitality investment forum on the African continent.
June 21-23 2025	8th AviaDev Africa Venue: Golden Tulip Zanzibar Airport, Tanzania Contact: mala.patel@thebench.com Email: About: AviaDev Africa is the premier platform dedicated to growing connectivity to, from, and within the African continent. Bringing together airports, airlines, tourism authorities, governments, and industry suppliers, AviaDev offers attendees the ability to pre-arrange meetings, learn from industry peers, and make those important connections
Nov 9-12 2025	64th ICCA Congress 2025 Venue: Porto, Portugal Contact: Email: About: When our global community unites, the energy is unstoppable. The 64th ICCA Congress in Porto, Portugal, will offer unparalleled opportunities to connect, collaborate, learn and innovate.

Travel & Tourism Blitz



Uber launches Safari in South Africa



Uber is launching a once-in-a-lifetime experience for its customers in Cape Town, South Africa. The latest experience in Uber's 'Go Anywhere' series of limited-edition travel products, Uber Safari is a wildlife adventure offering travelers and locals alike effortless access to one of Africa's most iconic experiences.

Available exclusively in the Uber app from October 4 – January 25, Uber Safari is the perfect day trip for people in Cape Town looking to see the big five (lions, elephants, buffalos, cheetahs, and rhinos). In partnership with Aquila Private Game Reserve, one of South Africa's most popular wildlife conservancies, riders will have the chance to book an affordable, luxurious and seamless safari.

"We've designed our 'Go Anywhere' series to help our customers book bucket list adventures with the Uber convenience they know and love," said Frans Hiemstra, Regional General Manager of Uber in the Middle East and Africa. "With Uber Safari – one of our most wild offerings to date – our Reserve technology makes it easier than ever to unlock an epic South African travel experience."

The day trip includes a pickup in Cape Town in an Uber Safari-branded vehicle, so riders can sit back and relax as they head out of the bustle of the city. Upon arrival at Aquila, guests will enjoy a welcome toast and lunch before boarding a traditional safari vehicle with experienced game rangers and field guides. During the game drive, guides will ensure guests have the best opportunity to see the big five. After the adventure, riders will have access to Aquila's picturesque grounds before heading back to Cape Town.

UN Tourism and easyJet holidays advance partnership towards ESG Framework

UN Tourism and easyJet holidays have stepped up their collaboration as they develop a groundbreaking ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) Framework for businesses across the sector. According to the latest UN Tourism data, international tourist arrivals have returned to 96% of pre-pandemic levels, with full recovery likely by the end of the year. With further growth anticipated, there is a pressing need to look beyond economic impacts of the sector and measure metrics relating to environmental dependencies, community impact, employee wellbeing, and much more. However, the sector currently lacks a unified Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting framework, making it difficult for tourism companies and stakeholders to measure, compare, and meaningfully communicate their sustainability efforts and impacts. To address this, UN Tourism, in collaboration with the University of Oxford (Oxford SDG Impact Lab), has been developing the first harmonized ESG Framework for Tourism Businesses. easyJet holidays has been part of the project from its inception and is now scaling up its support to accelerate the next critical phases.

South Africa: TBCSA pays tribute to Tito Mboweni



The Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) mourns the loss of Tito Mboweni, who served as Chairman of the TBCSA Board for two years, beginning in 2016. Mboweni played a key role in amplifying the voice of the private sector tourism industry, including highlighting the sector's significant contributions to the country's economy.

The sitting TBCSA Chairman, Jerry Mabena says, "Mboweni's extensive experience from his roles in public service, academia, and the private sector, gave us invaluable insights in not only guiding our industry but also fostering collaboration across all spheres of the economy, for the benefit of the nation." The TBCSA Board, Executive team, and staff express their deepest condolences to Mboweni's family during this difficult time.



Irene Murerwa is RDB's new Chief Tourism Officer

Irène Murerwa has been appointed President Kagame as the Chief Tourism Officer at the Rwanda Development Board. Ms Murerwa has held senior roles, including Chief Commercial Officer at Bank of Kigali Insurance and Deputy Managing Director at Polyclinique du Plateau in Kigali. She takes over from Micheala who until October was serving in that role.

Angolan airline eyes increased traffic to Americas

State-owned TAAG Angola Airlines has entered into a partnership that will advance the airline's aims to capture traffic between Africa and the Americas.

The airline is the newest member of the Latin American and Caribbean Air Transport Association (ALTA) with a membership list including 50 airlines and 124 industry partners. From its headquarters in Luanda, TAAG operates domestic and international flights, including strategic routes to Cuba and Brazil, fostering connectivity between Africa and the Americas.

"Joining ALTA empowers the company's reputation within the industry and is a strong statement of TAAG's growth footprint. In the long term, we intend to capture and facilitate traffic between the Americas and Africa, providing passengers from those regions with a value-added alternative for connecting with Europe, and vice versa, via the Luanda Hub," Nelson de Oliveira, CEO of TAAG, said. Source- TourismUpdate

Travel & Tourism Blitz



Uganda Unveils the 'Explore Uganda App' to Transform Travel Experiences

In an exciting development for the tourism sector, the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), in partnership with Total Energies EP Uganda, has launched the highly anticipated Explore Uganda App. This innovative tool is set to enhance the travel experience for both national and international tourists venturing into the heart of Uganda, a country renowned for its breathtaking landscapes, rich biodiversity, and vibrant cultural heritage.

The Explore Uganda App is not just a digital guide; it is an essential travel companion designed to make exploring Uganda seamless and enjoyable. With this app, travelers can easily plan their journeys and access comprehensive information about Uganda's diverse attractions. From the majestic mountains of the Rwenzori to the enchanting shores of Lake Victoria, the app provides an interactive platform for discovering the country's natural wonders.

The app boasts an array of features tailored to enhance the travel experience:

- Detailed Destination Guides: Users can explore in-depth information

about Uganda's national parks, cultural sites, and hidden gems, allowing them to immerse themselves in the local experience.

- Real-Time Event Updates: Stay informed about local events, festivals, and activities happening throughout the country, ensuring that every visit is filled with vibrant experiences.
- Interactive Maps: Navigate Uganda effortlessly with interactive maps that guide users to attractions, accommodations, and dining options, making exploration both intuitive and engaging.
- Personalized Itineraries: Travelers can create tailored itineraries based on their interests, preferences, and travel styles, ensuring a unique journey that resonates with their desires.

This initiative is part of a broader strategy to position Uganda as a top global tourism destination. By leveraging technology, the Explore Uganda App aims to make Uganda's rich offerings more accessible

and engaging for tourists. UTB's commitment to innovation signifies a shift in how the tourism industry can harness digital solutions to enhance visitor experiences.

One of the most inspiring aspects of this project is that the Explore Uganda App was developed by a talented team of women software developers. Their dedication and expertise not only highlight the importance of inclusivity in the tech industry but also demonstrate UTB's commitment to uplifting communities and promoting gender equality. This initiative serves as a beacon of hope, showing that women can lead in technology and innovation.

The launch of the Explore Uganda App is more than just a technological advancement; it represents a commitment to revolutionizing travel in Uganda. By creating opportunities for all tourists and locals alike, this app will undoubtedly contribute to the growth of the tourism sector, showcasing the beauty and warmth of Uganda to the world.

Moroccan National Tourism Office Launches direct flight between Reykjavik and Marrakech

The Moroccan National Tourism Office (MNTO) has unveiled the first direct flight between Reykjavik and Marrakech, operated by Play Airlines, marking a major milestone in expanding Morocco's global connectivity.

The new route, effective from today, strengthens links between Morocco and both Scandinavian markets and North America through Reykjavik's strategic hub.

This development aligns with MNTO's strategy to diversify markets and improve accessibility. The new connection is expected to attract a broader range of visitors, reinforcing Morocco's growing reputation as a premier global tourism destination.

Moreover, air capacity from Scandinavia has doubled for the winter 2024 season, thanks to MNTO's historic partnerships with major airlines in Northern Europe. These collaborations reflect the tourism office's commitment to increasing Morocco's appeal in new markets.

Earlier in 2024, MNTO launched the Light Tour, an initiative that engaged over 150 Scandinavian travel operators to promote Morocco as a top destination. This campaign significantly boosted the country's visibility and paved the way for enhanced tourism ties with the region.

Seychelles and South Africa explore cultural exchange opportunities for artists

Seychelles and South Africa are exploring opportunities for cultural exchange programmes for artists to participate in festivals and exhibitions in both countries and share expertise in arts, crafts, fashion and performance. According to a press statement from the Seychelles National Institute for Culture, Heritage and the Arts (SNICHA) the discussion took place on the sidelines of the 11th Golden Shield Heritage Awards recently at the Artscape Theatre in Cape Town, South Africa.

A delegation from the SNICHA led by the permanent secretary for Culture, Cecile Kalebi, participated in the award ceremony. The visit is part of the ongoing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between

Seychelles and South Africa's National Heritage Council, to enhance cultural collaboration and exchange.

In her remarks at the ceremony, Kalebi reflected on the deep cultural and historical ties between Seychelles and the African continent. She also acknowledged the Golden Shield Heritage Awards as a beacon of excellence in recognising the dedication of heritage activists and practitioners.

"Coming from Seychelles, a small island nation in the Indian Ocean with deep cultural and historical ties to the African continent, I am deeply inspired by the achievements being honoured today," she said.

Source: Seychelles News Agency

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