

VoyagesAfric

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Africa's Leading Travel and Tourism Magazine

**25th UNWTO General
Assembly sets clear vision
for Global Tourism - pg. 8**



**Seychelles' affordable for all -
Tourism Minister,
Sylvester Radegonde - pg. 22**

**Zimbabwe Tourism sets
US \$5 Billion economy
target - pg. 26**

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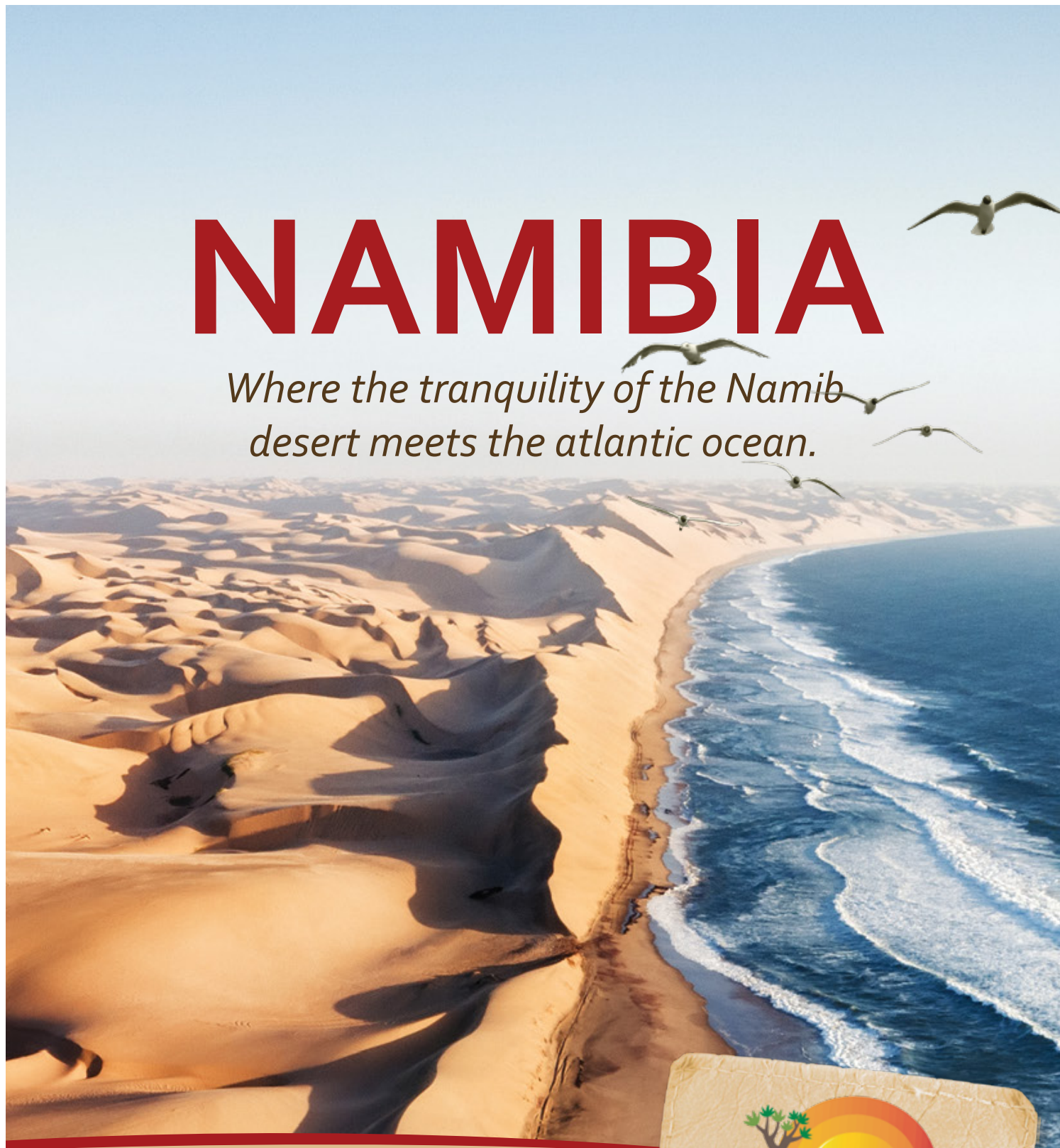


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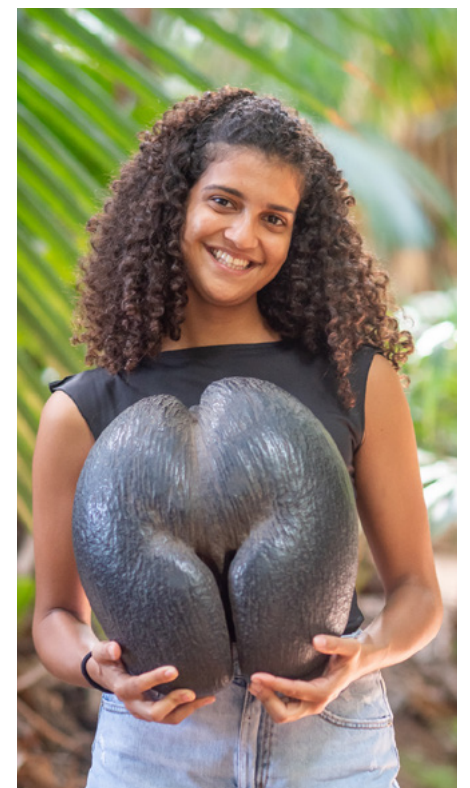
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Dear Reader,

I am delighted and honored to present you with a recap of what has been an extraordinary year for the tourism sector. As you go through the pages of our final issue of the tourism guidebook, whether in the comfort of your homes, offices, during flights, or wherever you may find yourself, let's take a moment to pause, reflect, and collectively contribute to making tourism an even better sector for all, as emphasized by the Principal Secretary of Tourism, Seychelles, Sherin Francis.

Adhering to our core ethics, we aim to celebrate the achievements and advancements within the African tourism sector. This final issue of 2023 begins with Samarkand, Uzbekistan's hosting of the 25th UNWTO General Assembly. The event, hosted in the cultural citadel for the first time, marked numerous milestones achieved by the organization. Secretary-General Pololikashvili garnered overwhelming support from member states as he presented UNWTO's accomplishments over the past two years to the supreme organ of the agency.

The list of the many commendable projects includes the inauguration of UNWTO regional office in Brazil, along with the expanding network of tourism education centers. There were the establishment thematic offices such as the Tourism Academy and UNWTO Silk Road office; and significant strides were also made in tourism education, the promotion of rural tourism and gastronomy.

Many of the delegates who were making their first visits to the Central Asia nation were wowed by the commitments of the country to position tourism as a driving force of its economy. President Shavkat Mirmonovich Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan showed immense commitments of UNWTO's activities and graced the august occasion.

In this edition, Zimbabwe's Minister of Tourism and Hospitality, Barbara Rwodzi, shares her vision for building a US\$5 billion economy for the southern African country in an exclusive interview with VoyagesAfric. She outlines the tourism sector's contributions to the country's economy and reveals campaigns aimed at consolidating and further expanding the industry.

A notable shift occurring in African Tourism is the emphasis on experiential offerings by destinations. Leading tourism havens, such as The Seychelles Islands, renowned for pristine beaches, are increasingly introducing cultural and heritage experiences, home stays, and culinary expeditions as compelling reasons to visit. Sylvester Radegonde, the archipelago's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tourism, elaborates further on this trend in our interview.

This final issue of 2023 features exciting articles covering the latest Africa Visa Openness Report, achievements at the Ethiopian Airlines Training School, highlights of the 6th African Tourism Leadership Forum, UNWTO Media Training in Zimbabwe, and the latest trends shaping the tourism industry. We also capture the successes of Mauritius Tourism, the taste of South African Wines, and voices from WTM London 2023.

Take your time to peruse further and enjoy our detailed reportage colorful capturing, and well-presentation of tourism and travel across our print, online and podcast offerings.

But we cannot thank you enough for the patronage over the passing year.

Enjoy a happy read and Happy Holidays!

Warm regards,



Kojo Bentum-Williams



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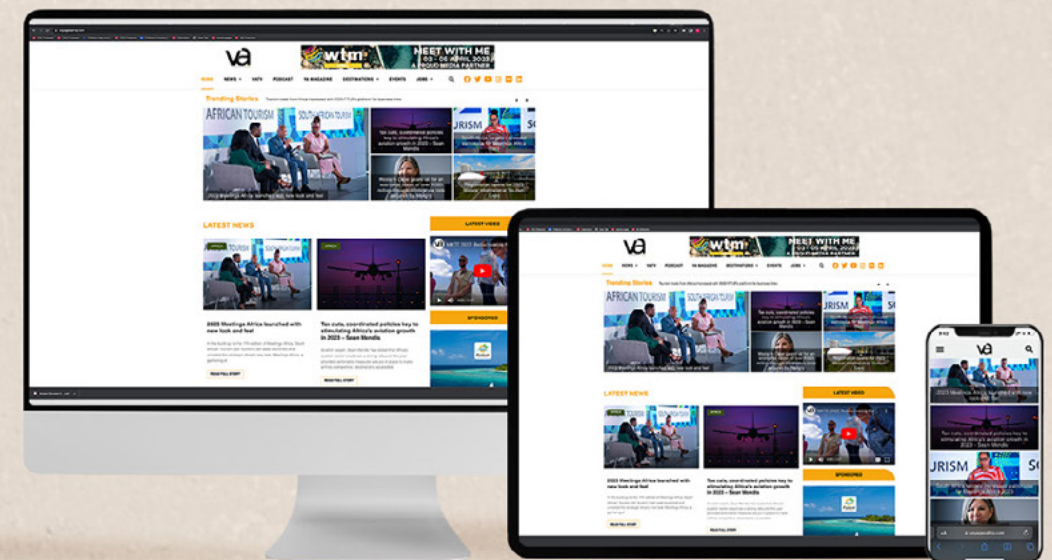


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25th UNWTO General Assembly sets clear vision for Global Tourism



The Secretary General exchanging pleasantries with the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirmonovich Mirziyoyev

Global tourism leaders have further advanced plans for a more ethical, diverse sector led by a growing UNWTO. The 25th session of the UNWTO General Assembly convened for a second day to examine, discuss and approve the Organization's work, with a focus on expanding its global presence, ethics and legal frameworks and the role of public-private partnerships.

New Regional and Thematic Offices

UNWTO's commitment to moving closer to its Members and being on the ground in every region was further emphasized as the Assembly was given an update on work to establish new Regional and Thematic offices. Members heard:

The Regional Office for the Middle East, opened in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2021, is an established hub for tourism education and tourism for rural development. From here, UNWTO has opened the Riyadh School for Hospitality and Tourism, launched a first Education Toolkit for high schools, and also launched the Best Tourism Villages initiative.

UNWTO signed an agreement with the Government of Brazil to establish a Regional Office in Rio de Janeiro, to be focused on investments.

The planned Regional Office for Africa in Marrakesh, Morocco, will focus on the priorities of innovation and investments in tourism.

The hosts of this Assembly, Uzbekistan, presented its proposal to establish a

Thematic Office for Tourism on the Silk Road. The proposal was approved by the 119th session of the UNWTO Executive Council.

Ethics Committee

The General Assembly further built on UNWTO's leading work to create a more ethical and accessible sector, while also increasing confidence in travel and



tourism. The Global Code of Ethics were the foundation for UNWTO becoming a UN agency. In Samarkand, the Assembly approved new members to serve on the World Committee of Tourism Ethics, with a clear commitment to diversity. Members also looked ahead to the International Conference on Accessible Tourism, due to take place in San Marino in November.

During the Plenary Session, UNWTO formally welcomed those Members that have already agreed to adhere to the International Code for the Protection of Tourists. To date, Argentina, Brazil, Lebanon, Lithuania, Portugal, Senegal, Thailand, Uruguay and Venezuela have all agreed to adhere to the landmark legal instrument. The Code was designed during the pandemic, with the first harmonized international legal framework set to play a key role in restoring consumer confidence in travel.

World Tourism Day Report

Just three weeks after World Tourism Day 2023, Member States were given an update on UNWTO's work growing the sector's global day of observance. The Secretary of the Assembly provided a recap of the past two events and looked ahead to the two years to come.

World Tourism Day 2022 was hosted in Bali, Indonesia, around the theme of Rethinking Tourism, with the 2023 celebrations – the biggest to date – held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, around the theme of Tourism and Green Investments. The General Assembly agreed to adopt the "Tourism Opens



Minds" pledge, introduced by UNWTO that day, and recommends that the Secretariat takes steps to advance the initiative, including through the funding of relevant programmes and campaigns.

Members of the General Assembly approved the themes and the hosts for the next two years. For 2024, the theme will be "Tourism and Peace", to be hosted by Georgia, and then Malaysia will host World Tourism Day 2025 around the theme of Tourism and Sustainable Developments.

Strong, stable Organization

In his report to the General Assembly during the First Plenary, Secretary-General Pololikashvili highlighted the ongoing work to strengthen and modernise the Organization. Members of the Assembly agreed to Extend the mandate of the Task Force on

Redesigning Tourism for the Future until the 26th session of the General Assembly. The Task Force aims to reinforce UNWTO's role in guiding the global sector forward through long-term strategy and vision. Nine Member States were approved to serve on the Task Force for the next two years. Members were provided with an update on the reforms to reinforce UNWTO's compliance with UN standards, most notably through the Joint Inspection Unit.

The General Assembly voted with 73% in favour of Secretary-General Pololikashvili being permitted to present his candidature for a third mandate.

Affiliate Members

UNWTO's Affiliate Members represent the broad diversity of the sector, counting on representatives from business, academia and civil society. The Report of the Chair of the Board of Affiliate Members gave the Assembly an update on work done over the past two years, with a clear focus on growing the Affiliates' role in the mission of the Organization as a whole. Members welcomed the achievements of the Affiliate Members network, including in efforts to grow new areas of tourism to promote economic diversity and resilience.

Saudi Arabia to host the 26th General Assembly

To conclude, Members agreed that the 26th session of the UNWTO General Assembly will be held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.





Tourism Education the Focus as UNWTO Hosts Ministers Summit in London



The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) celebrated the biggest Ministers Summit on record as it brought tourism leaders together on the opening day of the World Travel Market in London to focus on education and skills development.

Welcoming a record 40 Ministers of Tourism, representing every global region and destinations of all sizes, UNWTO Executive Director Natalia Bayona underscored the vital importance of investing in education.

The Summit, hosted at WTM for the 17th time, also featured inputs from key private sector players and from co-organizer the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).

Education for a better tourism

According to UNWTO with 1.2 billion people worldwide aged between 15 to 24, tourism can establish itself as a top employer of youth and driver of youth empowerment. However, according to the Office for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) around 10% of that demographic are unemployed and 14% hold only basic qualifications.

Outlining how UNWTO is leading the way in promoting tourism education, Executive Director Bayona emphasised the need to support education and skills development at every stage.

UNWTO launched its Education Toolkit

in October 2023. The landmark resource will enable countries everywhere to introduce tourism as a high school subject.

The Bachelors Degree in Sustainable Tourism Management offered by UNWTO and the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts will welcome its first students in 2024.

Currently, 30 universities worldwide contribute content to the UNWTO Online Academy. And on the ground, the Riyadh School of Hospitality and Tourism in Saudi Arabia and the Tourism Academy in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, train thousands of tourism professionals.

Ministers share education policies

The United Kingdom's Minister for Tourism, Sir John Whittingdale, stressed the importance of platforms like the Ministers Summit to provide a dialogue on how different countries are tackling common challenges, including advancing tourism education. With more than double the number of Ministerial-level participants than 2022 highlighting the strong interest in the topic, participants shared their insights on the place of education in the future of tourism.

The Ministers of South Africa, Egypt, the Philippines and Jordan all made clear the importance of supporting education at every stage. For example, South Africa has launched a tourism equity fund to bridge the gap between student

skills and employer needs, and in the Philippines, tourism education extends from high school to vocational degrees. At the same time, Jordan is working to boost the abilities of tourism workers, including in language skills.

The Ministers from Mauritius, Malta and Indonesia stressed the vital need to upskill new and existing tourism workers. Mauritius noted that all Least Developed Countries were hit hard by the pandemic and face a challenge to boost literacy and numeracy rates, potentially with bilateral and multilateral support. For Malta, a new Skills Card will aim to elevate professional standards in the sector for better career prospects for workers and service for tourists, while Indonesia will prioritise innovation and adaptation as it creates 5 million tourism jobs in the next decade.

Highlighting the vital importance of education for tourism sustainability, the Minister for Colombia outlined how the sector is bringing peace, jobs and youth opportunity to areas afflicted by insecurity, while Ethiopia shared its work investing in young people as well as in tourism infrastructure.

Alongside the Ministerial voices, the private sector was represented by leaders from Riyadh Air and JTB (Japan Tourism Bureau) Corp. They echoed the Ministers' focus on the importance of public-private partnerships, stressing that governments need to work with businesses to ensure training meets the needs of employers.

Ministers takeaways from Summit

On the back of the expert inputs from tourism leaders from every global region, Ministers were able to take away key lessons from the London Summit. Chief among them was the shared nature of the challenges facing destinations everywhere, with a common need for more and better-skilled workers. Concluding, UNWTO Executive Director Natalia Bayona noted the urgent need to make tourism an aspirational sector for young people everywhere, with public-private partnerships essentially for bringing the current skills gap in the sector.



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President of Uzbekistan addresses 25th UNWTO General Assembly: Proposes global safe tourism code & more

Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of Uzbekistan



The 25th session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization kicked off in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, with an inaugural address from President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. The President welcomed delegates from across the globe to the historical city of Samarkand, lauding its rich cultural heritage and role as a significant tourist center in Uzbekistan.

President Mirziyoyev acknowledged the challenges faced by the tourism sector due to the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the importance of tourism's contribution to the global economy. He stated, "Tourism is one of the most rapidly developing and promising sectors of the world economy, accounting for about 10 percent of the world's GDP and 7 percent of its exports before the pandemic."

The President highlighted the resilience of the tourism industry, with nearly one billion tourists traveling internationally last year, representing 70 percent of the pre-pandemic levels. He expressed hope for further growth in the sector this year.

In his address, President Mirziyoyev underlined Uzbekistan's commitment to developing its tourism industry, with a focus on creating jobs and enhancing cultural exchanges. "Every dollar invested in the sector will bring 3-4 times as more profit in the future," he said.

The President also shared Uzbekistan's efforts to promote tourism, including visa-free access for citizens of approximately one hundred countries and a simplified electronic visa system for citizens of 55 other countries. The government has provided various incentives for tourism businesses, leading to the implementation of 800 infrastructure projects despite pandemic restrictions.

Furthermore, Uzbekistan has doubled the number of foreign tourists visiting the country, with revenues from tourist exports increasing fourfold. The President has ambitious plans to attract even more tourists, with a goal of 15 million visitors by 2030.

In terms of infrastructure development, President Mirziyoyev announced a strategy for comprehensive tourism development, with a particular focus on modernizing transport infrastructure. He emphasized the creation of more high-speed trains and the construction of new railroads, as well as upgrading airports and increasing the number of flights.

To further promote cultural tourism, the President revealed plans to increase the number of cultural heritage sites attracting tourists, restore hundreds of cultural heritage sites, and establish "open-air museums" at 20 monuments.

President Mirziyoyev also made several proposals to deepen international cooperation. He suggested the development of a Global Safe Tourism Code to address tourists' security issues, the creation of the International Program of Action for the development of Green Tourism, and the declaration of 2025 as the "World Inclusive Tourism Year."

Moreover, the President proposed the establishment of a Council of Historical Cities for Tourism under the World Tourism Organization and the initiation of a Global Youth Tourism Summit in Tashkent. He invited international participation in the Global Media Campus for journalists, bloggers, and media representatives.

In a significant gesture, President Mirziyoyev called for Samarkand to be declared the World Cultural Tourism Capital. This designation, he believes, would be a fitting tribute to the ancient city's historical significance and its enduring legacy of tolerance and hospitality.

The 25th UNWTO Assembly, attended by Tourism Ministers and stakeholders from member states, promises to be a platform for discussions on the state of the global tourism industry and its future direction. President Mirziyoyev's address and proposals highlight Uzbekistan's dedication to tourism development and its commitment to the sector's growth and sustainability.



UNWTO Secretary General appoints Haitham Mattar as Special Advisor



The UNWTO Secretary General, Zurab Pololikashvili has appointed IHG's Managing Director for South West Asia, Middle East and Africa, Haitham Mattar as Special Advisor for Sustainable Tourism Development.

The announcement of the appointment came at the just-concluded 25th UNWTO General Assembly in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Pololikashvili stated that he is counting on Mattar's "rich experience and expertise in our pursuit of a tourism sector that delivers for all."

In a brief statement to accept the new role, Mattar said that he looks forward to continue supporting the UNWTO Secretary-General in an advisory role and collectively work towards creating a better and more sustainable future for all," Mattar said.

"Tourism industry presents a vast potential, globally, for economic growth and job creation, which can transform societies and improve millions of lives.

"For long term sustainability of the sector, it is crucial that we are conscious of the environmental, social and economic impact of the industry

and make a commitment to drive positive change for a better tomorrow. This requires collective action from governments, industry bodies and the private sector.

As IHG's Managing Director for South West Asia, Middle East and Africa, I am fortunate to work with a company that is so passionately helping to shape the future of responsible travel. Through IHG's 'Journey to Tomorrow' commitments we are driving positive change for people, communities and planets and I am proud to be a part of this journey," he added.

The excited Mattar looks forward to continue supporting UNWTO Secretary-General in an advisory role and collectively work towards creating a better and more sustainable future for all.

Haitham Mattar is Managing Director, India, Middle East and Africa (IMEA), responsible for driving the growth and strength of IHG and its hotels across the region. He is currently leading the operations and performance of more than 180 hotels as well as overseeing the strategic development of IHG's plans with a pipeline of over 130 hotels. Key to his role is maintaining and fostering relations with government stakeholders, tourism bodies and owner community across markets.

Previously, he served as Senior Advisor to the Saudi Ministry of Tourism, advising on the National Tourism Strategy and the execution of the commercial tourism strategy to position Saudi Arabia as one

of the world's top, emerging tourism destinations.

Prior to this, Haitham was the CEO of the Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, where he successfully repositioned Ras Al Khaimah to become one of the fastest growing, adventure destinations in the world.

With more than 27 years of experience in global destination and hospitality management and marketing, Mattar has also held senior roles within IHG, as well as Marriott and Hilton Worldwide.

Mattar continues to serve as an advisor to several travel and tourism organizations. Having been involved with UNWTO for several years, in 2023, he was re-appointed as a Special Advisor to the Secretary General of the UNWTO for Sustainable Tourism Development. Additionally, he serves as an advisory board member of the Arabian Travel Market, Global Thinkers Forum (GTF), the Al Marjan Development, Ras Al Khaimah and is a member of the Steering Committee of the Ras Al Khaimah Department of Economy.

Named 'Tourism Promotion CEO of the Year' at the Global CEO Excellence Awards, Mattar was featured in the Arabian Business 'most powerful Arabs' list, in addition to being named 'Leisure and Tourism CEO of the Year' at the prestigious CEO Middle East Awards and 'Business Leader of the Year' at the Hospitality Excellence Awards in 2018.



UNWTO Regional Office for the Americas takes off in Rio de Janeiro



UNWTO Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili, President of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Brazil's Minister of Tourism Celso Sabino after a meeting with the Presidency

On December 15, 2023, just three months after the ratification of the UNWTO Regional office for the Americas during the 25th General Assembly in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, the Federal Republic of Brazil, in collaboration with UNWTO, inaugurated the office in Rio de Janeiro.

The beautiful edifice in Rio, which is 500 metre square, becomes the second UNWTO Regional office to be established after the Middle East regional office in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in 2021.

The inauguration was graced by Brazil Minister of Tourism, Celso Sabino, the Secretary General of UNWTO, Zurab Pololikashvili as well as the President of Embratur, Marcelo Freixo, among other Ministers of tourism from the region.

Elated at the development, Sabino said: "Today, all of us Brazilians are very honored to welcome the UNWTO in our country and I would like to thank Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili for the support he has given to the development of tourism in South America.

"With the UNWTO office here, we will have the best technicians in the world thinking about planning, tourist qualification, promotion, discovery of

“With the UNWTO office here, we will have the best technicians in the world thinking about planning, tourist qualification, promotion, discovery of new routes and destinations and also ways to attract more investments. Let us make our entire region experience transformation through tourism”

new routes and destinations and also ways to attract more investments. Let us make our entire region experience transformation through tourism.”

"It is a great day for tourism in the Americas," said Pololikashvili. "Many countries wanted to open a regional office, but Christ wanted the UNWTO to be here and Rio de Janeiro is a great example, with many opportunities to grow. That is why we are committed and will work to boost the sector and create new tourism jobs, which is our biggest objective.

"This is a very emotional day and I thank the entire Brazilian government and we will do many things together to improve

the lives of those who work in tourism."

However, the regional office, which is located in a Fecomércio building, in the center of Rio de Janeiro, in front of the Banco do Brasil Cultural Center, will have 24 individual workstations for the team of consultants, meeting rooms and also private rooms to the director of the Brazil office and the UNWTO representative in the country.

While the regional office is expected to significantly bolster tourist activities in Brazil and the entire region, same is expected in the Kingdom of Morocco when a proposed regional office opens there.

It would be recalled that the decision to host UNWTO offices in the Kingdom of Morocco and the Republic of Brazil was thoroughly discussed during the 24th General Assembly held in Madrid, Spain. The matter was subsequently referred to the executive council, which outlined the necessary modalities for the establishment of new offices.

The Assembly ratified the resolution to establish the offices in Morocco and Brazil, paving the way for an agreement to be signed between the world tourism body and the latter.



UNWTO Workshop Puts Focus on Modern, Dynamic Tourism Communications for Africa



Barbara Rwodzi, Minister of Tourism, Zimbabwe



Winnie Muchayanka, CEO, ZTA



Elcia Grandcourt, UNWTO Regional Director, Africa



Marcelo Risi, Director of Communications, UNWTO

UNWTO brought together top tourism and travel practitioners of 20 countries from across Africa to explore ways to deliver more effective tourism communications and showcase the sector's role as a pillar of development.

The first Communications, Media and Tourism Training Workshop in Africa (Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 13-15 November) recognized the heightened relevance of tourism and the current opportunity to gain greater visibility outside of the sector itself. Based on this premise, the three-day event focused on the opportunities for placing tourism in the mainstream conversation as well as the ongoing challenges facing communities, destinations and Africa as a region.

"Leaning by doing"

Reflecting UNWTO's collaborative approach to communications, the workshop prioritised active learning among both participants and trainers. To gain a better understanding of why tourism matters and of how this needs to be communicated, the first day began with visits to three case studies in and around Victoria Falls.

Tourism for Wildlife Conservation: A visit to the Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust provided an opportunity to see community-led conservation in action, offering a better understanding of where

tourism is supporting wildlife protection and where it can do more.

Tourism for Development: Face-to-face meetings with the leaders and members of Umuzi Village made clear the challenges small destinations face in gaining access to the benefits tourism can offer, particularly with regards to outreach, communications and promotion.

Tourism for Nature: The rainforest inside Victoria Falls National Park served as an example of tourism's ability to support the preservation of ecosystems, though again making clear how the sector's full potential is not always realized.

The field trips provided the basis for the interactive learning sessions and workshops of the following two days. The 50 participants, drawn from 20 countries and from communications, destination management and tourism governance, were tasked with addressing three of the key challenges facing tourism communicators today: pitching to the media, building and curating media relations, and focusing the narrative on tourism for development.

The workshop was informed by presentations from experts from UNWTO as well as from across the media spectrum (Meta, Channels TV, TraveMedia Ireland) and from top content creators. The interactive

presentations again focused on the most relevant issues, including ways to place tourism in the mainstream media, harnessing the power of social media for tourism for development, working with the media, and effective communications to showcase tourism's importance for culture, heritage and communities.

Solutions and debates

With the focus of the Field Trips as the foundations, participants were tasked with presenting their solutions to the three main challenges outlined. With the focus again on interactive learning, the different backgrounds and viewpoints informed discussions around how best to pitch tourism to the wider media, how to work with media in an ever-changing landscape, and how to move beyond tourism as just a leisure activity. The discussions both highlighted the shared goals of diverse destinations while also making clear the gaps in knowledge that still need to be filled, with UNWTO standing ready to deliver further media training.

Alongside exploring the solutions to growing tourism as a media topic, the workshop also focused on crisis communications, again utilizing the diverse expertise of participants and the examples of the field trips to identify ways to be more proactive and build readiness.

Resilience and Growth: Elcia Grandcourt's insights on African tourism at FIKANI International Tourism Fair



At the opening of the 9th FIKANI International Tourism Fair in Maputo, Elcia Grandcourt, UNWTO Regional Director for Africa, delivered a keynote speech addressing the current state and promising future of tourism on the continent.

In her opening remarks, Mrs Grandcourt expressed immense honour and pleasure in joining the festivities, extending appreciation to Mozambique for its warm hospitality. She expressed eagerness to explore the wonders of the country, remarking, "It is indeed an immense honour to discuss current challenges, future perspectives and trends of our industry in the African continent with key stakeholders gathered for this important event."

Elcia painted a vivid picture of the global tourism landscape, emphasising its resilience despite the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Tourism, one of the fastest-growing socio-economic sectors, faced unprecedented consequences, transforming the worldwide landscape. However, after a period of economic decline and standstill, tourism has demonstrated its

to attract tourism, business, and investment to the country.

Connectivity challenges in Africa were not overlooked. Grandcourt emphasised UNWTO's collaboration with key partners, including the African Union, ICAO, IATA, AFRAA and AFCAC, to address these issues. "The collaborative approach with national administrations, airlines, and organisations is critical to pursue the ambitious 'open skies project.'"

Grandcourt underscored the importance of attracting investments and fostering private-public partnerships for sustainable tourism development. She introduced UNWTO's investment guidelines and, in collaboration with Mozambique, launched the "Invest in Mozambique" guidebook.

Digitalization and innovation took centre stage as Grandcourt highlighted UNWTO's Digital Futures Programme, aiming to support SMEs in the tourism value chain through mentorship and online training. "Harnessing innovation and digital advances provide tourism with opportunities to improve inclusiveness, local community empowerment, and efficient resource management."

Education and human capital development were identified as key to Africa's tourism evolution. Grandcourt emphasised UNWTO's initiatives, including Tourism Education Guidelines, Education Toolkit, and the UNWTO – HSLU Bachelor of Science in International Sustainable Tourism.

Mrs Grandcourt announced upcoming key events, including the 2nd UNWTO Regional Conference on Brand Africa in Zambia and the 67th UNWTO Regional Commission for Africa in Algeria. She thanked participants for their commitment, stating, "A more sustainable development for our sector is possible only if we join our forces and work together to shape the future of Africa's tourism."

Samarkand Tourism Academy adds to UNWTO's education network



Uzbekistan's Minister of Economy and UNWTO Secretary General

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has further enhanced its status as the global leader in advancing education and skills development for the tourism sector. As one of the top priorities of the Organization's leadership, and fully endorsed by all Member States, education serves as the foundation for building more resilience and accelerating the shift to greater sustainability.

Against the backdrop of the 25th General Assembly (Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 16-20 October 2023), Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili visited the new Tourism Academy Samarkand in Collaboration with UNWTO. The

Academy will train students new to the sector as well as those already working in tourism, giving them the skills they need to grow their careers. The Secretary-General praised the commitment of President President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Minister Aziz Abdukhakimov to investing in education and professional training and for recognizing the role both can play outside of the tourism sector itself.

The Samarkand Academy is just the latest in a growing network of education initiatives spearheaded by UNWTO. Just one month before the General Assembly, against the backdrop of this year's World Tourism Day (27 September), the Secretary-General visited the newly-opened Riyadh School for Hospitality and Tourism in Collaboration with UNWTO. The school has already welcomed its first students and aims to welcome many thousands more, both from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia itself as well as from across the wider region and the world.

Alongside its Academies, UNWTO is transforming tourism education at every

level. The Education Toolkit, launched out of the UNWTO Regional Office for the Middle East, is designed to support Member States everywhere introduce tourism as a high school subject. This stands alongside the growing UNWTO Tourism Online Academy, the UNWTO Students League and now the Bachelor's Degree in Sustainable Tourism Management offered by UNWTO in partnership with the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and the Arts of Switzerland, in supporting people at every stage of their educational journey in tourism.



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Seychelles not beyond the ordinary person as wrongly perceived,

Tourism Minister clears the air



While Seychelles, the archipelago country, has all the trappings of leisure that keep wooing global tourists to its shores, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tourism, Sylvester Radegonde, says the country is positioned to host more visitors, amid improved offerings.

Reeling out feats, targets and outlook of the country's tourism industry during a recent encounter with VoyagesAfric, the Tourism Minister said Seychelles is also making strategic efforts to grow tourism, protect the environment, diversify offerings, especially cultural experiences, while addressing connectivity issues in line with expected increase in tourist arrivals.

In his review of the passing year, Minister Radegonde described 2023 as a very good year, considering all the circumstances, though the country could have done better. Some markets, according to him, did well, while a few others did not meet their expectations such as Israel being a market Seychelles had bent so much on.

"I think it was one of the lucrative markets we had identified for this year. Unfortunately, with the circumstances there, we have lost that market completely. "But, notwithstanding, overall, it is a good year. I think we are going to achieve our target, in terms of arrivals and yield," the Minister explained.

Of course, there is a drive to offer tourists excitement beyond the beaches and readily appeals to visitors are cultural experiences.

Explaining the rationale for the drive, the Minister said, "We want every visitor who comes to Seychelles to go with the experience you do not get only on the beach, on the sea, however beautiful it is. So, we are pushing cultural activities.

"We have identified activities in districts where tourists can go and participate in cultural activities. We have dance classes, language classes and cooking classes," he said.

The development, according to him, is

a win-win for all as visitors enjoy the experience during their stay, while also the local population benefits from the revenue accruing to their country from the visitors' spending and the economy of the country is boosted at the long run

However, the Minister reiterates that Seychelles is for everyone, and he is working alongside all the stakeholders in the tourism industry to ensure that and in line with a new direction.

The new direction offers level playing ground for all players in the tourism industry; small hotels or five-star, government or private sector.

But the big message from the Minister is that Seychelles is for everyone and all budgets.

"We need to work on the perception that people have of Seychelles out there. When you talk to somebody, they perceive Seychelles to be a five-star destination, expensive and beyond the means of the ordinary person. It is not so.



"We have a range of accommodation, five-star plus, but also we have the small guest houses, which we are pushing.

We have over 700 small hotels and this is a focus that I have put on since my appointment over the past three years. I have visited over 300 of those small hotels because I want to see what the product is like, see what the challenges are and see how we can improve".

He does not see reason for competition as products and services the hotels offer differ, yet complementary to destination branding of the country.

“We need to work on the perception that people have of Seychelles out there. When you talk to somebody, they perceive Seychelles to be a five-star destination, expensive and beyond the means of the ordinary person. It is not so

Again, the Minister took his time to explain the Environmental Tax and how it works, saying Seychelles is not the only country that applies it.

"What we have decided is that we would ask visitors who come to Seychelles to help us protect the environment. "We are doing a great job of protecting the country. We want to continue to do that. So, visitors are asked to make a little contribution, depending on the hotel they stay at, to help us to fund certain specific projects. Visitors will, during the course of next year, see where their money goes. We are going to put online all the projects that are being financed with the tax," he explained further.

At present, the tax, according to him, is not embedded in what visitors pay at the hotels or other outlets and there is no particular reason for that.

"We have opted for this. It does not mean that it is cast in stone. Maybe the time will come when we will combine it in the price of the hotel. At the moment, we have made it separate, so that people see the price of the hotel, but then what they need to pay as the environmental benefits".

While he prepares to bid farewell to 2023, the Tourism Minister has expectations and targets for next year, top among which are to pursue and forge ahead with the strategy that the Ministry put in place.

"Basically, we are going to diversify our source markets. We know we cannot continue to depend on Western Europe. We need to look at other markets and work on connectivity, which is not easy.

"Markets like India and China have huge potential. But between seeing the potential and getting these tourists here are two different things. So, we need to continue doing all that.

"Over here, we need to continue to diversify the range of products we offer, continue to raise our services, level of the service, and continue to work on giving that value for money".

These are the targets for next year, which the Minister hopes to achieve with his team and support of relevant stakeholders.



The Call to Leadership:

A conversation with UNWTO Advisor Anita Mendiratta on her new book



UNWTO Secretary General and Anita Mendiratta pose with a copy of the book during the General Assembly

On the sidelines of the UNWTO General Assembly in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Anita Mendiratta, Special Advisor to the UNWTO Secretary General, shared insights into her latest book, "The Call to Leadership: Unlocking the Leader Within in Times of Crisis." In a candid interview with VoyagesAfric, Mendiratta reflected on the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergence of leaders who stepped up during these challenging times.

As the world grappled with the uncertainty of a global shutdown, Mendiratta observed the varying responses of leaders across different industries. She remarked, "When COVID-19 started and the world was shutting down, regardless of what industry we were in, we were all in a state of panic and confusion as to what was happening."

Anita emphasised her belief that the pandemic's onset was not a random occurrence, stating, "I don't think mother nature did it randomly; there had to be a reason. It's almost one of the situations where it was so hurtful, there had to be a reason, it couldn't be random."

In her book, Mendiratta explores the concept of leadership during crises, drawing inspiration from leaders who demonstrated resilience and courage. She noted the dichotomy in responses, where some leaders instinctively donned their metaphorical capes, while others remained unseen for months. This observation led her to question, "What is it that makes these leaders heroic, and how can we learn from them?"

The genesis of Mendiratta's book arose from her desire to express gratitude to the leaders who worked tirelessly to navigate through the crisis. She reached out to 25 leaders personally, conducting intimate interviews to delve into their personal experiences. The overwhelmingly positive response, with over 80 percent agreeing to participate, allowed Mendiratta to uncover untold stories of hardship and sacrifice.

Reflecting on the interdependence revealed by the pandemic, Mendiratta stated, "We went into 2020 all confident about the roaring 20s, but the pandemic showed us how integrated and interdependent the tourism industry is." She highlighted the importance of collaboration and shared experiences,

noting that the ecosystem must work together for the industry to thrive.

Mendiratta commended the proactive approach of the UNWTO Secretary General in reaching out to relevant organizations at the onset of the crisis. "In any crisis, no one should ever feel alone; it is so important that no one feels alone," she emphasised.

The book, available on Amazon in various formats, goes beyond being a mere reflection on tourism during COVID-19. It serves as a guide for navigating personal and professional crises, offering insights into problem-solving, resilience, and the importance of collaboration.

Mendiratta concluded, "We've learned lessons from COVID, whether in tourism policy development or personal relationships. The scariness has been the best source of intelligence on how to move forward."

"The Call to Leadership: Unlocking the Leader Within in Times of Crisis" is now available on Amazon in hardcover, paperback, e-book, and audiobook formats.

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We want to achieve a USD5 billion tourism economy by 2025 - Zimbabwe Tourism Minister Barbara Rwodzi

With keen interests at opening and making domestic tourism more affordable to her people and also going after tourists' dollars with roadshows in key source markets, Barbara Rwodzi, Zimbabwe's Minister of Tourism and Hospitality, is out to walk the talk. In this exclusive interview with VoyagesAfriq, the new minister, one of the few female Tourism Ministers in Africa, who is the pride of her family and Constituency, unveils strategies at achieving high arrivals, domestic boom, country's offerings, impact of UNWTO event, among other industry issues.

Congratulations once again on your appointment as Minister of Tourism and Hospitality of Zimbabwe. What does it mean to you?

Thank you very much for having me. Being appointed a Minister means a lot to me and my family. We have been respected by the people who chose to vote for me in our Constituency and subsequently the President has recognized me and chose me amongst many other voted MPs. For me, that is humbling and it means I should just perform at the best of my ability to return this recognition and to honor the voters and those who appointed me.

What is the state of tourism in Zimbabwe and what is the rate of the recovery of the industry from Covid-19?

Zimbabwe is on a growth trajectory with a marked increase in tourist arrivals, tourism receipts and investments. Statistics for the year 2022 revealed that international tourist arrivals into the country rose by 174% from 380 820 in 2021 to 1 043 781 in 2022. The sector is estimated to have generated about US\$911 million during the year 2022, a 129% rise from US\$397 million in 2021. Accordingly, total investments for 2022 indicated a 120% change, with US\$325.5 million worth of investments realised as compared to US\$142.1 million in 2021. So far, from January to September 2023, tourism has contributed 12.1% to the GDP, which is a great sign of growth in our sector.

What is your vision for Zimbabwe's tourism sector?

Our vision is improve the growth of the Tourism Economy in our country through best in class practices in the Government system as mandated by our laws. We want to achieve the USD5 billion tourism economy by 2025, and to achieve this, we have put in place new strategies to ensure that every Tourism Cluster is given the attention it deserves and we have a new government ICT infrastructure coming in place to ensure that every tourism operator is registered and pay the tourism levy that

we will use to develop and promote the tourism sector at the level that is expected, which is our mandate, according to the Zimbabwe Tourism Act.

Recently during an interview with you at WTM London, you mentioned how Zimbabwe is looking to diversify its tourism with gastronomy tourism culture and experiences, can you espouse on that?

Gastronomy Tourism has a huge potential of growing our tourism sector in Zimbabwe.

Our special gratitude to our First Lady, Her Excellency, Dr Auxilia Mnangagwa, who has made strides in reintroducing our Zimbabwe food to our society, which has been swept away by other Western foods, She is the patron of our Ministry and for the past four years that she started the Zimbabwe Gastronomy Competition, we have introduced and promoted the Zimbabwe food in the hotels, restaurants and in homes. We are now conversing with airlines to start serving our own food on the flights.

Next year we will have roadshows in the countries, which are our lead markets for tourism.

We will carry our own Zimbabwean food to be served during the road shows and other events outside the country. This whole strategy for Zimbabwe Gastronomy is aimed at growing our tourism sector in both international and domestic markets, as well as creating employment for the people of Zimbabwe particularly those in the rural communities through farming of the raw materials.

Zimbabwe had the honour of hosting the first UNWTO Communication Media & Tourism Workshop in Africa earlier this month. What were the learnings for you from a destination standpoint?

Hosting the training workshop in the beautiful destination of Zimbabwe was an honor. The session provided valuable insights, best practices, and tools for enhancing communication skills in the tourism sector. It also facilitated networking and idea exchange among tourism communication professionals, both locally and internationally. The

“ We will carry our own Zimbabwean food to be served during the road shows and other events outside the country. This whole strategy for Zimbabwe Gastronomy is aimed at growing our tourism sector in both international and domestic markets, as well as creating employment for the people of Zimbabwe particularly those in the rural communities through farming of the raw materials. ”

workshop aligned with the UNWTO's 10-Point Agenda for Africa, which focused on branding Africa as a destination and emphasized the significance of communication and media in shaping the African tourism narrative.

One of the workshop's objectives was to facilitate peer reviews among UNWTO Member States regarding image and perception management. The aim was to equip participants with current media and communication trends and strategies, particularly crisis communication preparedness. We discussed the role of technology as a key aspect in the global tourism sector, emphasizing the need to effectively use it in destination message development and deployment.

The training successfully enhanced the communication abilities and media literacy of tourism stakeholders in Zimbabwe and the rest of Africa. We covered crucial topics such as strategies for media engagement and interaction, effective messaging techniques, crisis communication preparedness and management, social media utilization for tourism promotion, and the art of storytelling to enhance the tourism narrative.

It is essential to tell Africa's narrative from an authentic perspective, reclaiming our space and tell our story and showcasing the vibrant cultures, stunning landscapes, and remarkable achievements the continent has to offer.



With amazing initiatives such as the Urip Domestic Campaign as well as other international tourism activities to drive tourism, what is the outlook of tourism for next year?

URIPI/UNGAPHI is focused on domestic tourism promotion for both Zimbabwe people in the country and in the diaspora. As you may know, we have a significant population of about 3 million people in the diaspora.

The tourism sector in Zimbabwe has done so well post Covid19 pandemic. However, we noticed that it has been attributed to the international tourists arrivals and a little domestic tourists combined with local MICE gatherings.

As such, we initiated a domestic tourism campaign to remind the Zimbabwe

people that our country is beautiful and we have to promote our own destinations like what other countries do. We are seeing a great vibe and response to this and I promise you, the numbers of domestic tourists this festive season and beyond shall surpass other years.

We will not end with festive season campaigns, but we shall push them throughout the year until our society responds satisfactorily. The heritage we sell as Destination Zimbabwe is ours as Zimbabweans and we want every Zimbabwean who can afford a holiday to experience our God-given destinations before they visit other countries.

We are working tirelessly together with the operators to ensure Domestic Tourism in our country is affordable to our locals, that is very key. So, 2024 and going beyond, tourism will boom in Zimbabwe with Zimbabweans also enjoying our products and our hospitality.

Finally, as a female thought leader, what advise would you offer to those in the tourism sector who look up to you as a role model?

To all of us in the Tourism Industry leadership particularly Ministers, let us be as humble as we can, experience the beauty of our countries while offering the best hospitality ourselves. I believe in leading from the front and by example, and just know that honesty hard work is always rewarded.



Minister Barbara Rwodzi showcasing Zimbabwe's offerings at WTM London

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Nabeela Tunis highlights the critical role of Tourism to Sierra Leone's economy

Sierra Leone's Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Nabeela F. Tunis, has emphasised the critical importance of the tourism sector to the West African nation's economy. Speaking at this year's World Travel Market London, Minister Tunis highlighted the potential of the tourism sector to provide employment opportunities, particularly within the creative and cultural sub-sectors.

In an exclusive interview with VoyagesAfric, Minister Tunis underscored the economic strengths of Sierra Leone and outlined five key priorities for the country. She stressed the significance of youth employment, envisioning the creation of 500 jobs, especially in the creative arts and culture.

As a former Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Minister Tunis revealed her role in crafting the current medium-term national development plan, where tourism was identified as a key growth sector.

"When I was the Minister of Planning and Economic Development, I authored the current medium-term national development plan, which expires next month. And one thing that we did was to highlight tourism as one of those growth sectors. And we still believe that tourism has a lot to offer to us as a country in terms of projecting economic growth for Sierra Leone," Minister Tunis stated.

She outlined the government's mission to position tourism as a significant income earner, focusing on human capital development, technology and innovation, public sector reformation, and youth employment.

Tourism Masterplan and Legal Framework

The Minister discussed ongoing efforts to elevate the tourism industry, including the development of a 10-year strategic master plan, set to be finalised early next year. The government is also actively working on a legal framework to foster trust between the public and private sectors, essential for driving private sector-led tourism growth.

To enhance private sector relations, research, communications, monitoring and evaluation and creativity will be focal points in the expanded ministry structure. Minister Tunis expressed the importance



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

“When I was the Minister of Planning and Economic Development, I authored the current medium-term national development plan, which expires next month. And one thing that we did was to highlight tourism as one of those growth sectors. And we still believe that tourism has a lot to offer to us as a country in terms of projecting economic growth for Sierra Leone”

of focusing not only on natural assets but also on the people, promoting cohesion, regional integration, and religious tolerance.

"Exploring freedom is exploring our people, exploring our assets, and enjoying our products," she added.

Focus on People and Unique Offerings

Tunis highlighted Sierra Leone's unique

offerings beyond its stunning landscapes and beautiful beaches. She stressed the need to focus on people, promoting cultural exploration, adventure, community integration, and volunteer tourism.

"Aside from having the products, aside from having the assets of lovely beaches, beautiful landscapes, lovely topography, a beautiful environment, we're also focusing on the people and what people have to offer," Minister Tunis explained.

Participation at WTM London

Minister Tunis shared her impressions of the World Travel Market London, describing it as a great experience. She expressed enthusiasm about exploring potential partnerships with other countries to share and preserve cultural assets and products.

"Being here today and seeing the different stands and stores also show you the world is just one global place," she noted, emphasising the importance of learning from other countries and creating collaborations to benefit the global tourism industry.

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Senegal becomes first African nation to sign International Code for Ethics



The Ambassador of Senegal to Spain H.E Mariame Sy (middle) signed on behalf of the country

Senegal has taken a pioneering step as the first African nation to sign the International Code for the Protection of Tourists, reinforcing its commitment to ensuring the safety and rights of travellers in the post-COVID era.

At the 25th General Assembly held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary General UNWTO extended his warm congratulations to the West African nation and several others for their commitment to the International Code for the Protection of Tourists (ICPT). The ICPT is a groundbreaking international legal framework that aims to rebuild consumer confidence in the travel industry and create a more equitable balance of responsibilities among tourism stakeholders.

The Ambassador of Senegal to Spain H.E Mariame Sy signed on behalf of the country.

Addressing the assembly, Mr. Pololikashvili highlighted the essence of a harmonized international legal framework in restoring trust among travellers. He stressed the necessity of clear, transparent, and efficient

frameworks to safeguard tourists as consumers, asserting that the ICPT would deliver precisely that.

"This is a landmark first," Mr. Pololikashvili declared, emphasising the uniqueness of the ICPT as a legal instrument created by UNWTO. Its primary objective is to ensure the protection of tourists and their consumer rights. By doing so, it aims to boost confidence within the tourism sector.

The success of the ICPT, as Mr. Pololikashvili underlined, depends on governments worldwide actively adhering to its provisions. He commended eight countries, Argentina, Brazil, Lebanon, Lithuania, Portugal, Senegal, Uruguay, and Venezuela, for taking the pioneering step of adhering to the code and hoped they would serve as exemplars for other nations.

"Your leadership is essential for addressing some of the biggest challenges that our sector is facing. It means we are placing the wellbeing of the tourists at the heart of what we do," the Secretary General maintained.

Mr. Pololikashvili also stressed the

essential role of leadership in addressing the challenges that the tourism sector is currently facing. Placing the well-being of tourists at the heart of their efforts, he urged nations to work collaboratively to ensure a better recovery for the industry.

The International Code for the Protection of Tourists (ICPT) sets forth a comprehensive set of international standards for the protection of tourists in emergency situations. Furthermore, it addresses consumer rights of tourists in a post-COVID-19 world. The code builds upon the work done by UNWTO and has been adapted to the unique circumstances created by the ongoing pandemic. It offers a coordinated approach to assisting international tourists during emergency situations, with the ultimate goal of fostering a safer and more secure environment for travelers.

The adherence of nations to the ICPT represents a significant step forward in ensuring that the tourism industry emerges from the challenges of the pandemic more resilient and responsive to the needs of tourists worldwide.

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Namibia Tourism energized with Eastern Europe market



Head of Marketing at Namibia Tourism Board Charmaine Matheus addressing the travel trade

In a strategic move to invigorate tourism in Namibia, the Namibian Tourism Board (NTB) has set its sights on Eastern Europe. Over the past 5 months, NTB has embarked on an extensive marketing campaign, aimed at boosting its visibility and engaging with the travel industry. The goal is to solidify its existing market presence while simultaneously exploring new avenues to attract adventurous travellers.

Fresh off their successful participation in the Africa Showcase during a U.S. Roadshow, where they effectively promoted Namibia as a must-visit destination, the NTB has now concluded a pivotal engagement with travel agents and specialists in Central and Eastern Europe.

This comprehensive roadshow took the Namibian tourism team to key Eastern European cities, including Warsaw, Poland; Prague, Czech Republic; and Budapest, Hungary. The program encompassed a series of workshops, seminars, and networking sessions.

Charmaine Matheus, Head of Marketing, emphasized the significance of the European market as a longstanding

attraction for Namibia. She underscored the importance of maintaining and expanding their presence in this market, especially in light of the changes brought about by the pandemic. These Roadshows serve as a vital platform for the Destination Management Organization (DMO) and key stakeholders to explore opportunities for growth and collaboration in the post-pandemic landscape.

Matheus explained that the roadshow helps identify potential bottlenecks and addresses critical aspects such as airlift and access, which are essential for fostering strong trade relationships. The engagement successfully involved approximately 500 stakeholders in Warsaw, Prague, Bucharest, and Budapest, who actively participated in this important initiative.





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DESTINATION NEWS

Morocco aims to attract 14 million tourists by year-end despite earthquake scare



Fatim-Zahra Ammor, Minister of Tourism, Handicrafts, and Social and Solidarity Economy

Despite an earthquake that shook Morocco last September, the country's Minister of Tourism, Handicrafts, and Social and Solidarity Economy, Fatim-Zahra Ammor, remains optimistic about the nation's tourism prospects, setting a target of 14 million tourists by the end of 2023.

In an exclusive interview with VoyagesAfric, conducted on the sidelines of the 25th UNWTO General

Assembly in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Fatim-Zahra Ammor highlighted the remarkable resilience of Morocco's tourism industry.

Amid initial uncertainty following the earthquake, September unexpectedly emerged as a record-breaking month for Moroccan tourism. This success was attributed in part to the country's effective crisis communication efforts and the solidarity shown by tourists.

Minister Ammor recalled the initial concerns: "When the earthquake arrived in early September, we were worried about what was going on and how we would end the year in Morocco. We were especially concerned as we were on track for very good numbers. But we showed strong resilience because we began communicating with international partners promptly to reassure them about the real situation in Morocco."

She maintained that this was crucial because "the earthquake was not in Marrakech, as it was said in the beginning but rather 70 kilometres away. Therefore, for the tourists, the destination remained safe. Even tourists present at the time in Morocco shared their experiences on social media, providing testimonials about the actual situation."

Minister Ammor expressed confidence in Morocco's ability to achieve its ambitious tourism target, stating, "we did quite well. We had the best September ever and are planning to reach 14 million tourists by the end of the year, which is an all-time record."

Kenya declares visa-free entry for global visitors from January 2024

In a landmark announcement made during the 60th Independence Day celebration in Nairobi, President William Ruto declared that Kenya is set to become a visa-free country, welcoming travellers from around the world without the need for a visa, starting January 2024.

President Ruto, in his address, underscored Kenya's significance as the cradle of humanity, a scientific fact that fills the nation with pride and emphasises its rich heritage. The decision to remove visa requirements is seen as a strategic move to position Kenya as an extraordinary destination and promote global unity.

"That Kenya is the human of humanity is a scientific fact that fills us with pride and underscores our rich heritage. It is with great pleasure as president of this extraordinary country to make a historic announcement of the decision of the government of Kenya. Beginning January 2024, Kenya will be a visa-free country,"

he emphasised.

To implement this groundbreaking policy, the government has developed a sophisticated digital platform. This platform will ensure that all travellers to Kenya are identified in advance through an electronic system. President Ruto highlighted that travelers will obtain an electronic travel authorization as they enter Kenya, streamlining the process and enhancing security measures.

"To implement this new policy, we have developed a digital platform to ensure that all travelers to Kenya are identified in advance on an electronic platform. Consequently, all travelers will obtain an electronic travel authorization as they come to Kenya," the President disclosed.

Kenya's decision places it among a select few countries globally and on the African continent that offer complete visa-free access to citizens from all corners of the world. This move is anticipated to have far-reaching effects, including a



potential boost to the tourism industry, improved international relations, and an enhanced global image for Kenya.

The digital platform not only streamlines the visa process but also serves as a forward-thinking measure to ensure efficient tracking of visitors while maintaining security standards. As Kenya opens its doors wider to the global community, the government aims to create an environment that fosters cultural exchange, economic growth and diplomatic ties.

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South Africa and Brazil sign trade marketing agreement



Brazil and South Africa have signed an agreement to foster collaboration between the two countries in their tourism initiatives.

The agreement, which proposes the sharing of tourism-related information and the identification of the challenges the sector faces in each country, was signed by the Ministers of Tourism of both Brazil and South Africa – Celso Sabino and Patricia de Lille, respectively – at the 2023 edition of the World Travel Market London, on Tuesday 6 November.

The Minister of Tourism for South Africa said there were many similarities between the people of both nations, which is driving the investments in the joint promotion.

Minister de Lille said talks had been ongoing since 2014 but the agreement between the two countries was ratified three weeks ago in Cape Town during a meeting of BRICS Tourism Ministers meeting in Cape Town.

The Action Plan was signed by Minister de Lille and Brazil's Minister of Tourism Celso Sabino on joint marketing and collaboration efforts geared towards growing tourism between South Africa and Brazil.

The agreement coincides with the relaunch of national airline SAA's direct flights from Cape Town and Johannesburg to Sao Paulo after three years. The Cape Town service launched on 31 October 2023 and the Johannesburg on 6 November, the first day at WTM.

Minister de Lille said: "What's included in the marketing action plan does not just cover tourism. We're working together to get more trade between our two countries and boost both economies.

"One area we will be looking at together is what aspects of Brazil's tourism offer can we market to our travellers other than Carnival. And similarly, other than safaris and wildlife, what can we show to Brazilians to persuade them to visit South Africa," she said.

Culinary tourism is one area which would appeal to both, she suggested, along with city breaks and sports.

Meanwhile, Minister de Lille said the South Africa Government has signed an agreement with Google to highlight and promote its tourist attractions, including 3,000 adventure activities and "help us put on the Google Map".

She said: "We want to begin to attract the world to our communities, different cultures, different food. We want people to experience the real people of South Africa."

Between January and September this year, South Africa welcomed over 6.1 million tourists, up 58.4% on the same period in 2022.

During this period, visitors from Africa represented 4.6 million of the total arrivals to South Africa.

South Africa welcomed more than 862,000 arrivals from Europe between January and September this year, a 51% increase on the same period last year.



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Ghana woos UK & global tourism market at WTM London

The Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) is radiating optimism about the prospects of the United Kingdom (UK) market as it participated in this year's World Travel Market (WTM) London showpiece, which took place from November 6 to 8. The Ghanaian contingent is leveraging its extensive efforts in the market to solidify Ghana's position as a premier travel destination.

For this year's event, the GTA boasts its most significant presence yet with an expansive stand covering 45 square meters. Joining forces with the GTA in the Ghana booth are eight tour operators representing the private sector. The primary aim is to entice travelers to explore the vibrant and culturally diverse tapestry of Ghana showcased at their stand.

Several compelling reasons were presented to draw the attention of potential visitors:

Warm Hospitality: Ghana is famous for its hospitality and warmth, and friendly representatives are eager to share insights about the country and its people.

Beautiful Landscapes: Ghana offers

breathtaking landscapes, from the lush rainforests of Kakum National Park to serene beaches along the Gulf of Guinea. Visitors can explore eco-tourism opportunities and partake in outdoor adventures.

Historical Significance: Known as the "Gateway to Africa," Ghana plays a crucial role in the transatlantic slave trade. It is home to historical sites such as Cape Coast Castle and Elmina Castle, both UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Culinary Delights: Ghana's cuisine, including Jollof rice, Banku and tilapia, and palm wine, offers a tantalizing taste of the country's culture.

Business Opportunities: Visitors can explore potential business partnerships and investment prospects in Ghana, given its growing economy and welcoming business environment.

Art and Crafts: Ghana showcases exquisite craftsmanship, including colorful Kente cloth, intricate beadwork, and beautifully carved woodwork, making for unique souvenirs and gifts.

Festivals and Celebrations: Ghana's

vibrant festivals and cultural events offer a glimpse into the nation's rich heritage and traditions.

Sustainability Initiatives: Ghana remains committed to sustainable development, with initiatives promoting responsible tourism and conservation efforts.

The GTA's participation at WTM London aimed to connect visitors with Ghana's culture, people, and business prospects.

For some of the private sector players, WTM London was a good platform to showcase Ghana's product offering and do so real good business.

According to Mark Andrews, CEO of Ashanti African Tours, it was "the most productive day" they've experienced at WTM in the past decade, with numerous meetings and heightened interest in West Africa, particularly Ghana, which seems to be thriving.

Kwame Ansong, CEO of Sunseekers Tours, added that the interest in Ghana wasn't limited to the UK alone; it extended to the rest of the world. The surge in interest is a testament to Ghana's growing appeal as a travel destination.





Kenya Tourism Board recognises key partners in destination marketing efforts



The Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) has attributed the growth of tourism business in the country to a strong partnership from the private sector.

According to KTB, the joined partnerships with the private sector especially in familiarization tours to key attractions across the country and trade forums has greatly assisted in minimising direct expenditures in light of budgetary constraints.

Speaking during the inaugural Magical Kenya Loyalty Rewards Program held on the sidelines of the 3rd edition of the East African Regional Travel Expo (EARTE), KTB chairperson Francis Gichaba observed that brands are not built in isolation and that tourism numbers cannot grow without synergy within the sector.

"The Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) is ready to work with all stakeholders to ensure that we show value to potential travellers. Our goal is to reach 5.5 million tourists in the next five years, and everyone has a role to play in this," said Gichaba.

"This is why we have initiatives such as the Magical Kenya loyalty Rewards Programme, vital in appreciating the role that tourism stakeholders and our

partners play in growing tourism business whilst laying the foundation for further growth of our tourism product. Some of the partners have been critical in providing us discounts in travel and accommodation which has played an important role in our marketing efforts," he added.

The Magical Kenya Loyalty Rewards program is aimed at recognizing and appreciating stakeholders who support and participate in KTB led initiatives every financial year including travel exhibitions and expos, trade workshops, trade and media familiarization trips among other activities.

At least 44 partners were recognized in the maiden scheme that is ranked based on a tier system with Kenya Airways emerging top in the Platinum category, whereas a host of hospitality and tour and travel firms were awarded silver and bronze recognition categories respectively.

Kenya Airways General Manager for Africa Rose Kiseli said joined partnerships between KTB and the national carrier have boosted the number of arrivals from key tourist source markets.

"The joint roadshows we have had especially in Europe, East and West Africa has availed us an opportunity to grow numbers and intra-Africa Network," says Kiseli. She pointed out that a return in leisure tourism was a major boost to travel business disclosing that the national carrier currently records 30 flights weekly from Europe ahead of the holiday season.

"We also have a high demand for domestic travel and we are ready together with our subsidiary airline-Jambojet to offer

adequate capacity for our domestic connections," said the General Manager.

KTB CEO Ag. John Chirchir said that KTB has partnered with hoteliers, tour operators and airlines to drive demand for Kenya's Tourism products noting that the Magical Kenya Experiences (MKSE) programme is anchored on partnerships with facility and product owners.

He noted that marketing partnerships enable brands to reach out directly to travellers and tailor messages accordingly and hence the need to intensify and creating efficiencies.

"International travellers are now more aware of the experiences they desire, they are able to research and piece together a map of their own desirable destinations that can be self-fulfilled," said Chirchir.

"Through partnerships we are able to design experiences and even reach to travellers with the right information and hence create interest," he noted.

The loyalty awards scheme marks KTB's renewed focus on working closely with travel trade partners both locally and internationally as part of efforts to drive sustained tourism growth.



Ghana's First Ghanaian MD of Labadi Beach Hotel reflects on pioneering role

It's been nearly a year since David Eduaful took the helm as the first Ghanaian Managing Director of Ghana's premier five-star hospitality facility, Labadi Beach Hotel, and in an intimate conversation with Kojo Bentum-Williams for the VA Tourism Podcast, Eduaful shares his insights and the ambitious vision he holds for the future.

With over three decades of experience working at Labadi Beach Hotel, Eduaful's rise to the uppermost managerial position was somewhat inevitable. In his own words, the role isn't entirely new for him. He has a background as a hotel manager, and prior to being confirmed as the substantive MD, he had been serving in an acting capacity for six months where he was responsible for day-to-day operations. The significant change is that he now reports directly to a Board of Directors rather than a Managing Director.

Despite the shift in hierarchy, his core responsibilities, particularly in terms of operations, remain largely consistent. However, the role demands a more strategic approach, envisioning how to propel the hotel's growth and success. Eduaful stated, "I was the one running the show in terms of operations, so it's not so different from what I used to do, and I am enjoying it. Now I report directly to a Board of Directors, previously I used to report to a Managing Director, so that is the change in terms of the hierarchy. But in terms of my duties, the operational side is still the same, but now I am a strategic thinker, thinking through how to grow the hotel and things like that."

The fact that Eduaful is the first Ghanaian to manage a five-star hotel in the country doesn't weigh him down. He embraces this historic responsibility as an opportunity to inspire fellow Ghanaians and demonstrate that they are capable of achieving such feats. His primary focus is to set a benchmark for excellence and prove that Ghanaians can excel in leadership positions within the hospitality industry. Eduaful maintained, "For my fellow Ghanaians to know that it is doable and we believe in ourselves because being the first

Ghanaian Manager of a five-star hotel is a testament that we can do it."

Eduaful emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance between technology and human interaction in the hotel industry. While technology plays a pivotal role in modernizing services, he asserts that the human factor remains crucial. Labadi Beach Hotel prides itself on a well-trained and dedicated staff, providing top-notch service. Eduaful's confidence in the culinary excellence of the hotel's kitchen is evident, stating that once you've dined at the Labadi Beach Hotel, you'll find it difficult to dine elsewhere. He stated, "No matter how technologically advanced you are, the human factor is always crucial because we are dealing with human beings."

One of the standout accomplishments of the hotel under Eduaful's leadership is its capacity to cater to large events. Notably, they successfully served over 3,700 dishes each day in June this year during the Afrexim Bank Meetings in Ghana, demonstrating their ability to handle large-scale events.

Labadi Beach Hotel is fiercely committed to both local and global recognition, positioning itself as a "proudly local and fiercely global brand."

Continuous investment in staff training, including local and international exchanges and collaborations with recognized training bodies, is central to their strategy. Eduaful acknowledges that well-trained staff are essential to the hotel's success. He stated, "If you don't invest in your staff, they'd crash the business...if something happens to the guests because the staff is not well-trained, it comes back to haunt me."

Environmental sustainability is also a priority for Labadi Beach Hotel. They have implemented measures such as recycling wastewater for garden irrigation and are actively seeking alternatives to single-use plastics. Energy conservation measures, especially in guest rooms, are challenging due to the hotel's oceanfront location but are being implemented in other areas of the establishment.



As the year draws to a close, Eduaful anticipates a bustling fourth quarter, partly attributed to the government's "December in GH" tourism campaign. Labadi Beach Hotel has an array of activities lined up, including the celebration of Oktoberfest, the lighting of the Christmas tree, Christmas Day lunch, New Year's festivities, and the popular Christmas Eve Dinner Dance. These events promise to make the end of the year a memorable experience for visitors and locals alike.

Eduaful concludes with a call for the establishment of a world-class hospitality school in Ghana, emphasising the importance of technical skills in service delivery. He believes that by creating a practical and comprehensive training program, Ghana can further enhance its reputation as a hospitable and world-class tourist destination.

He noted, "I'd love stakeholders to start thinking through this so that we will have a proper world-class hotel school where practicals would be infused, and the students come out already cooked, and they understand the business."

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6th Africa Tourism Leadership Forum and Awards surpasses yet another record, sets new benchmark for success

Hosted by the Government of Botswana through the Botswana Tourism Organisation in collaboration with Africa Tourism Partners, UNWTO and AfCFTA, the 6th Africa Tourism Leadership Forum and Awards was a resounding success.

Held from 04 to 06 October at the Grand Palm International Convention Centre in Gaborone Botswana, ATLF 2023 was preceded by Intra-Africa Travel and Business to Business Exchange meetings, Women in Tourism and Tourism Entrepreneurship Masterclasses that were delivered by UNISA and international MICE knowledge partners.

As part of the ATLF 2023 success story, it is worth noting that the AfCFTA hosted inaugural AfCFTA Forum on Tourism, Creatives, and Cultural Industries simultaneously with the Africa Tourism Leadership Forum and Awards 2023. The AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services is a platform that celebrates dynamic sectors, recommend solutions and advances Africa's economic competitiveness through sustainable tourism and cultural development and seeks to ignite intra-African trade and empowerment, reinforcing a unified vision for a culturally enriched Africa.

Officially opened by His Honour, the

Vice President of the Republic of Botswana, Mr Slumber Tsogwane, UNWTO Secretary General- Zurab Pololikashvili, the Minister of Environment and Tourism, Hon. Philda Nani Kereng and H.E. Elias Mpedi Magosi, SADC Executive Secretary, the Forum was attended by Pan-African and globally renowned travel and tourism industry thought-leaders, policymakers, investors and key stakeholders. Over 700 physical and over 1200 virtual delegates over the three (3) days from over 42 countries attended ATLF 2023.

Among the lead partners are BDO, Millvest Advisory, Industry Development Corporation (IDC), Marriott International, Protea Hotel Gaborone Masa Square, ICCA, South Africa Airways, Air Link, Avani Gaborone Resort & Casino, Hilton Garden Inn Gaborone, Grandeur Rentals.

Over 78 renowned faculty members delivered transformational speeches, interactive panel discussions and insightful presentations. Shabnam Vadachia, South African Airways, Manager Market South Africa had this to say, "The event was of an exceptionally high standard, akin to those I have attended on a global stage. My special commendation is to the young lady who managed the time and coordination of the program, she was in my books, your

unsung heroine as it's never easy to time-keep a huge event and she did a stellar job."

About 30 buyers and tourism associations from across the globe participated at the event. Zaim Muhammad, Travel & Tourism Consultant from Dubai echoed his sentiments about the Forum. "ATLF gave me substantial experience. Since I am already promoting Africa as a Destination in the Middle East, my meetings with the African key players have enhanced my relationship and it will take us to the long-term collaboration. It has given more insights to highlight the diverse and unique tourism offerings in Africa with a focus on the cultural, historical, and natural attractions."

More than 20 international and continental media houses provided coverage of the event. The media houses include BBC News, SABC, Botswana Broadcasting Corporation, Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation, Tanzania Safari Channel, TV3 Ghana, Newzroom Africa, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation and Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, Business Events Africa, Africa.com, ATA, Voyages Afriq, Channel Africa, ATC News, Gallivant Africa, WeniGlam Travel Magazine, Daily Southern and East Africa Tourism Update and Jet Sanza.



Slumber Tsogwane, Vice-President of Botswana



Philda Nani Kereng: Botswana's Minister of Environment and Tourism



WTM Global Report: Domestic tourism leading Africa's post pandemic recovery

Major destinations and source markets across Africa are expected to end 2023 ahead of pre-pandemic values in terms of value, with domestic tourism performing strongly, reveals new research published today.

The WTM Global Travel Report, in association with Tourism Economics, is published to mark the opening of this year's WTM London, the world's most influential travel and tourism event.

For 2023, the report predicts that African international inbound leisure will be down in volumes, but up in value compared with 2019.

This year an estimated 43 million people will visit the continent, a 13% drop on the 49 million guests welcomed in 2019. However, despite the drop in volumes, the value of these trips is 103% ahead of what 2019's business was worth.

As the report states, "the range of diverse countries has resulted in a varied picture" across the continent, and the inbound return for the three biggest markets illustrates the differences.

Market leader Egypt is slightly ahead, with 2023 at 101% of 2019 in value terms; Morocco "has made a strong recovery" and will end the year 130% ahead of pre-pandemic levels. South Africa is the region's third largest inbound market and the one taking longest to recover – 2023 will come in at only 71% of 2019.

Domestic tourism for the region in 2023 is positive across the board, with all the top ten domestic markets, other than Nigeria, ahead of 2019 for value. South Africa is the biggest domestic market, and is ahead 104%. Number two Egypt is 111% up; third placed Algeria 134% up with Morocco completing the top five domestic markets, registering a 110% increase. Nigeria, which comes in at number four, is at 93% of 2019.

Next year will see the region build on its post-pandemic recovery although South African inbound will continue to fall short of 2019. However, the long-term picture for the region's biggest market is positive. By 2033, the report expects that the value of inbound leisure to South Africa will be 143% ahead of



2024.

It also identifies Mozambique, Mali and Madagascar are high-growth markets, with increases of 161%, 167% and 162% respectively in the value of inbound leisure travel by 2033.

Juliette Losardo, Exhibition Director, World Travel Market London, said: "Africa has so much to offer domestic and inbound visitors and its importance as a source market for outbound visitors to other destinations is growing all the time.

"WTM London has always supported the region's tourism industry, and we're determined to step up our efforts across the board and to reinforce our message that tourism can be a global force for good, and nowhere is this truer than for Africa."

Vickie Muyanga joins Westmont Hospitality Group as Commercial Director for Africa

Vickie Muyanga, long known to be the face of Radisson Hotels in Kenya and across Eastern and Southern Africa, has after 9 successful years with Radisson as Regional Director of Sales for Africa left the company to take up a new challenge as Commercial Director for Africa for the Westmont Hospitality Group.

Prior to joining Radisson in 2004 did Vickie work for nearly 9 years at Fairmont Hotels and Resorts as Director of Sales for Kenya.

She had studied at Limkokwing University in Kuala Lumpur and attained a Bachelor of Science in International Business before taking a course at Cornell University more closely related to the hospitality industry.

The Westmont Hospitality Group was founded in 1975. What started with a single hotel in North America, has grown to become one of the largest privately-

held hospitality organizations in the world. Throughout the years, Westmont has had an ownership interest in and operated over 1,100 hotels. Currently this stands at over 500 hotels across three continents. Westmont has formed strategic alliances with many of the world's largest hotel brands. These include Fairmont, InterContinental Hotels Group, Hilton, Accor, Starwood, Wyndham, Choice Hotels, Renaissance, Radisson and Best Western.

The company is one of the largest franchisees and co-owners of IHG hotels and Hilton hotels worldwide. Westmont has a very diversified portfolio ranging from budget and aparthotels to mid-market business and large conference hotels to boutique hotels and luxury resorts.

Vickie will as of today take charge of the commercial aspects of Westmont



Hospitality in Africa, looking after numerous properties while searching for added new opportunities for the company.

Story by Prof Wolfgang Thome



African Ministers of Tourism discuss expanding travel opportunities on the continent at WTTTC Global Summit

During a panel discussion at the 2023 WTTTC Global Summit in Rwanda, African Ministers of Tourism from Kenya and South Africa highlighted the need for increased connectivity and visa liberalization to promote travel within the continent.

The panel, titled "Clearing the Pathway," emphasized the importance of facilitating travel for African citizens and the benefits of a visa-free regime for intra-African travelers.

Alfred Mutua, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary of Wildlife and Tourism, shared insights into Kenya's commitment to open its doors to all Africans, stating, "You need to come to where you come from, you need to come to where your ancestors come from. So, why do you need a visa

to come home?" Building on an earlier announcement by Kenya's President William Ruto, Mutua revealed that, "By the end of this year, all African passport holders can travel to Kenya without any visa requirement." He also added that Africa is the "Cradle of Humankind."

Furthermore, Kenya is launching a new marketing and promotion campaign focusing on its identity as the "Cradle of Humankind." Mutua added that the country's tourism industry has made a strong recovery post-COVID-19 and is on track to achieve a record-high hotel occupancy rate of at least 90% this year.

Patricia de Lille, South Africa's Tourism Minister, underscored the importance of strong government policies and private sector partnerships to boost intra-

African travel, saying, "Governments must facilitate the policy around connectivity, but we can't do it without the help of the private sector."

She highlighted South Africa's commitment to visa waivers, with 34 countries already enjoying such privileges. Notably, South Africa's 90-day visa waiver agreement with Kenya and increased air connectivity has resulted in Kenya becoming the fastest-growing market for South Africa.

De Lille expressed the desire to strengthen tourism markets with all countries in Africa, emphasizing the significance of open access, "We would like to strengthen the market for all countries, especially for our sisters and brothers in Africa."

The panel concluded that opening up to the world is a more lucrative approach for African countries and encouraged governments to work in collaboration with the private sector to ensure robust and accessible tourism policies. "Don't look at the small amount of money you're losing, look at the bigger pot – you gain much more, by opening up to the world," Kenya's Mutua stressed.

The event also featured insights from Paul Griffiths, CEO of Dubai Airports, who shared Dubai's successful strategies in leveraging increased air connectivity to boost tourism numbers.



WTM London 2023 sees attendance soar by 22% Voices from the Floor

World Travel Market-London, the world's most influential travel & tourism event saw attendance numbers rise by more than a fifth year on year. The three-day event took place from Monday 6th – Wednesday 8th November, with 43,727 attendees – an increase of 22% on the 35,826 who attended in 2022.

The event hosted 4,560 qualified buyers, and facilitated 29,077 pre-booked meetings, enabling the industry to plan, network and do deals for 2024 and beyond. Over three days at London's ExCel, World Travel Market London welcomed 1,976 representatives of the world's media – up by 31% on 2022. The number of exhibitors rose by 23% year on year, up to 3,875 – and the event was 5.3% larger than the pre-pandemic show in 2019.



**Ariella – Rwanda
Head of Tourism and Conservation,
Rwanda Development Board**

Rwanda's tourism thrives on ecotourism, our primary driver, fueled by the rich biodiversity and warm hospitality. Crucially, our community-led conservation policy ensures that local communities benefit directly from the park revenues generated across the country, making conservation integral to our tourism development strategy."



**Hamid Bentahar - National Tourism
Confederation of Morocco**

Our ambition is to double the number of tourists by 2030. Morocco's ambitious goal is to double tourist numbers by 2030, aiming to create 200,000 jobs and welcoming 26 million tourists. With a remarkable 58% increase in arrivals compared to last year, Morocco's thriving tourism is further boosted as it co-hosts the World Cup in 2030.



**Juliette Losardo, WTM London
Exhibition Director**

Juliette Losardo, WTM London Exhibition Director, said: "We're thrilled to see delegate numbers rise by more than a fifth on last year. It is a really encouraging reflection of the confidence and optimism in travel and tourism. "The challenges we all face were debated at many sessions but, despite these issues, there was a very positive mood among visitors and exhibitors. "I'm delighted that our innovations over the three days have helped improve the visitors' experience. "These figures confirm that WTM London is the best place for executives in our sector to network, find out about the latest trends and seal deals that will help travel and tourism flourish in 2024 and beyond."



**Natalia Bayona - Executive Director,
UNWTO**

Tourism, a top employer for the youth, underscores the need for focused education. With half of youth in tourism having only secondary education, investing in training and education becomes imperative for building a robust workforce and ensuring sustainable growth."



**Arvind Bundhum - Director General,
Mauritius Tourism Promotion
Authority:**

Mauritius, more than an island, emerges as a diverse destination. Beyond its natural beauty, our unique selling proposition lies in legendary service, a cornerstone of our marketing strategy. Excitingly, we now offer direct daily flights from Gatwick, enhancing accessibility."



Julia Simpson - WTTC

Today's tech-savvy travelers, especially the youth, are drawn to the global connectivity that travel and tourism offer. Beyond traditional roles, our industry seeks professionals in engineering, finance, and AI, making it a dynamic field with improved salaries and diverse opportunities.



**Barbara Rwdzi - Minister of Tourism,
Zimbabwe:**

Zimbabwe prioritizes cultural tourism, particularly rural tourism, emphasizing environmental and cultural sustainability. Our vision for the next five years is centered on growing arrivals and fostering sustainability in our culture, gastronomy, and environment.



**Matongo Matamwandi - CEO, Zambia
Tourism Agency:**

Zambia, with its natural wonder—the Victoria Falls, stands out for its authentic and hospitable people. Beyond its breathtaking wildlife, Zambia offers a unique experience in the natural habitat, distinguishing itself as an all-natural destination.



**Farai Chimba - General Manager, The
Victoria Falls Hotel**

Zimbabwe, focusing on emerging stronger post-COVID, aims to rejuvenate tourism, especially from major markets like the United Kingdom. The World Travel Market serves as a crucial platform to share our story and re-establish Zimbabwe as a global player.



**Abubacarr S. Camara - Director
General, Gambia Tourism Board**

Gambia, renowned as the 'smiling coast of Africa,' stands out as a top-of-mind destination. Our presence at the World Travel Market reflects our commitment to staying updated on industry trends and engaging with partners for the future of destination Gambia.



**Sarah Kagingo - Vice Chair, Private
Sector Foundation Uganda**

Uganda, the pearl of Africa as Winston Churchill described, showcases its tourism products at the World Travel Market. As our number one export, tourism is pivotal for business growth, and we are proud to partner with global entities to support its development.



**Susan Muhwezi - Chairperson, Uganda
Hotel Owners Association**

While marketing destination Uganda, it's heartening to witness the strong representation of our private sector at the World Travel Market. Our focus is not only on attracting visitors but also on showcasing Uganda as the best country in the world, backed by a wealth of business opportunities.

Africa Showcase Latin America 2023: It's time for Africa



Africa Showcase, the renowned global roadshow promoting African tourism, has marked a historic milestone with its inaugural launch in Latin America from 16 – 24 October 2023. The roadshow opened to a warm reception in Brazil followed by successful events in Argentina and Mexico. The dynamic Latin American trade embraced an unprecedented array of African companies seeking to establish a presence in this burgeoning market.

Jacqui Reynolds, co-owner of On Show Solutions, expressed her enthusiasm about the response from the trade: "It's inspiring to receive such positive feedback on the rising appetite for African travel on this side of the world. A massive thank you to all of the passionate buyers who met with our exhibitors across Latin America."

Since its establishment in 2009, Africa Showcase has nurtured business connections across North America, Asia, Australasia, Africa and Europe. These events provide a unique blend of networking opportunities, valuable insights into destinations and meaningful business interactions. Africa Showcase gathers a diverse range of African operators, safari lodges, hotels, and experiences, all carefully curated to meet the unique needs of the source market. Buyers are pre-qualified as Africa specialists, or top-producing agents and operators capable of promoting Africa to their long-haul clients.

To cater to the growing demand from the Latin American market and to nurture relationships with the travel trade, On Show Solutions invited a range of exhibitors who could provide offers from Botswana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Seychelles, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This sentiment was reinforced by Mohanjeet Brar of Gamewatchers Safaris: 'Talking to agents, one thing I've heard over and over is how happy they are that for the first time they have Africa here; and not just South Africa but having East Africa and so many countries exhibiting here.'

From final consumers to retail sales, from agencies to tour operators, all indicators suggest that interest in Africa is on the rise from Latin America. This demand is expected to grow, making it crucial for the market to prepare for this unprecedented wave of interest.

The topic of airlift is a major point of discussion between Africa and South America. Direct flights are once again in operation with airlines like TAAG, and recent launches by LATAM and South African Airways have set the industry abuzz with excitement. In East Africa, travellers have multiple options with airlines like Ethiopian Airways and carriers from the Middle East, further enhancing connectivity. Ryan Roach of Newmark Hotels & Reserves elaborated on this significance: 'The Latin American

market is very important for Newmark and has always been a good market for us. As the flights return, specifically from Brazil to Cape Town and Johannesburg, we just see this market continuing to grow and adding value to the wonderful properties in our portfolio.'

Across the three cities, exhibitors engaged with 185 top leisure operators and agents, who immersed themselves in the African ambience and hospitality to discover more opportunities for their clients. Latin American travellers increasingly seek unique experiences, particularly in areas such as honeymoons, family holidays, gastronomic adventures, cultural immersion and photographic expeditions. African companies focusing on such experiences are poised to capture the interest of these markets.

Sustainability and environmental concerns are becoming critical factors in travel decisions. Travellers are increasingly conscious of the impacts of over-tourism and climate change. They are seeking sustainable and purposeful travel experiences.

While Latin American travellers can be price-conscious, they are willing to increase their budget for a better travel experience. Africa excels in offering some of the world's finest accommodation and gastronomic experiences, often in remote and unique settings. With continuous education and increasing awareness, there are also promising opportunities for the development of Africa's 4-star market. Travellers can immerse themselves in nature and disconnect from the everyday, making Africa a top choice for discerning Latin American travellers.

This is Africa's moment to shine in Latin America.



FITUR 2024 anticipates occupying more than 1.5 million square feet of space across 9 halls and will bring together more than 9,000 companies and 150,000 professional visitors from the world tourism industry from 145 countries.

Organized by IFEMA MADRID, the 44th edition of FITUR, the international tourism trade fair, is set to take place January 24-28, 2024, at Madrid's trade fair center. According to FITUR's director, María Valcarce, the outlook for the next edition is looking bright and everything points to the trade fair expanding to occupy more than 1.5 million square feet of space across nine halls, bringing together more than 9,000 companies and over 150,000 professional visitors from the world tourism industry across 145 countries. It is also estimated that around 100,000 people will visit FITUR over the weekend.

"The role played by IFEMA MADRID as one of the major players and promoters of international tourism is important, as is the special significance of FITUR, which has become IFEMA MADRID's main ambassador in the world and a major reference point for the Spain Brand," said Jose Vicente de los Mozos, Chairman of IFEMA's Executive Committee. "We are immensely proud of FITUR's world leadership. It is the only tourism fair that ran uninterrupted



during the pandemic, surpassing every other major event on the international circuit, in terms of participation”.

Tightly focused on business, the common thread of the major proposals from companies and destinations, as well as the specialised sections and activities at FITUR, will be centred on sustainable development, in its economic, social and environmental aspects, as well as on innovation and all the cutting-edge content that will mark the development of the tourism industry. FITUR continues to advance in its line of specialisation, helping to

promote the different industrial sectors that have an impact on tourism and which have developed an entire tourism strategy around their activity.

In addition to all of this are the wide range of activities organised by FITUR Next, FITUR's sustainability Observatory, which this year is highlighting how tourism can contribute to the revitalization of territories, through a packed programme of presentations and by recognising the best tourism initiatives that, in line with the SDGs, contribute to alleviating depopulation by promoting employment and local consumption, reducing inequalities in rural areas and fostering the balance between the rural and urban relationship and sustainable development.

Ecuador has presented its attractive proposal as a 'FITUR 2024 Partner Country' at IFEMA. The connection between Spain and Ecuador remains strong, with almost 75,000 visitors per year up to 2023, and Ecuador's Minister of Tourism, Niels Olsen, stated that "FITUR 2024 offers a golden opportunity to show the world all the wonders that Ecuador has to offer". He remarked that "our commitment is to the Ecuadorian families who make a living from tourism; to our natural and cultural wealth and, naturally, to all our visitors,"



INSPIRING GROWTH POWERING INVESTMENT

25-27 June 2024 | Mövenpick Hotel, Windhoek, Namibia

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



AHIF 2023 Featured

500+ attendees
72% International delegates
40+ countries represented
16% Investors
90+ leading industry speakers
3 Days of business - critical networking
30+ sponsoring companies



AHIF 2024 will offer participants exclusive access to inspection trips showcasing top-notch investment projects and tourist attractions in Namibia. These experiences are exceptionally valuable, as they set the pace for multiple days of networking opportunities with local and international senior level executives.



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2024 Meetings Africa to welcome new African Exhibitors

Excitement is steadily mounting for Meetings Africa 2024, with the inclusion of four new dynamic African exhibitors. These additions promise to enrich the diverse array of proudly African products and services showcased during the event.

Meetings Africa is the premier trade show within the meetings, incentives conference and exhibition (MICE) sector on the African continent. The event is a critical platform for industry professionals to network, share best practices and explore the latest trends and innovations within the sector.

The 2024 Meetings Africa event is scheduled to take place at the Sandton Convention Centre from the 26th to the 28th of February next year. Amongst the exhibitors for Meetings Africa 2024 are new entrants Egypt, Cote D'Ivoire, Tanzania and Zambia.

These include the Galaxia Group from Egypt with offices across the Middle

East; the Mangalis Hotel Group from Cote d'Ivoire; MICE Solutions DMC from Tanzania, and Willch Travel and Tours from Zambia.

Their participation will further enrich the Meetings Africa line-up as they join 17 other exhibiting product from African countries, including Nigeria, Uganda, Togo, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Swaziland and Senegal to name a few.

Zinhle Nzama, Acting Chief Convention Bureau Officer at South African Tourism, welcomes the four new exhibitors, adding that this will help to showcase the continent's dynamic offerings in the business events sector.

"We are thrilled to welcome these new exhibitors, their addition proves what we have been saying: that this upcoming edition of the event is poised to be the most substantial and dynamic one to date. These exhibitors bring a treasure trove of exciting and top-notch products and services. Their presence will thus



enhance the already impressive diversity of offerings at Meetings Africa. These exhibitors will infuse the event with fresh perspectives and opportunities for the delegates, making it a not-to-be-missed occasion for anyone in the business events sector," said Nzama.

Albania announced as ITB Berlin Host Country for 2025

Albania and the World's Leading Travel Trade Show announce close collaboration for ITB Berlin in 2025

A huge stage for an ambitious country: Albania and ITB Berlin have just announced a close collaboration for the year 2025. At a ceremony held on 3 November 2023 in Berlin, both sides signed a memorandum of understanding. As a result, the Southeast-European country will be the Official Host Country of ITB Berlin 2025, which will take place from 4 to 6 March 2025 as a pure B2B show.

The memorandum of understanding was signed by H.E. Vilma Bello, Deputy Minister of Tourism, and by ITB Berlin Director, Deborah Rothe. In addition, Herida Duro, Director of the Development of Tourism Programs, and Edlira Zyfi, Advisor to the Minister of Tourism, and the ambassador of Albania in Germany, H. E. Mrs. Adia Sakiqi attended the ceremony.

"As the World's Leading Travel Trade Show for the tourism industry, ITB Berlin is an exceptional platform that brings together stakeholders from numerous countries in the German capital," commented Deputy Minister Vilma Bello on the signing. "Albania has exceedingly

great plans in the coming years and decades. The partnership will certainly give us an invaluable boost and bring us closer to a wide audience."

"ITB Berlin has always had its finger on the pulse and it recognizes trends and the potential of countries and regions," Dirk Hoffmann, COO Messe Berlin, commented. "Albania is a nation with this very potential and we are very pleased to jointly lift the country's great treasure and provide it with an international stage."

"A few months ago, I had the honour of personally experiencing Albania's great hospitality and ambitious spirit on site," added ITB Berlin Director Deborah Rothe. "I am all the more pleased that our talks are now bearing fruit. The host country Albania will certainly enrich ITB Berlin 2025 enormously and win over numerous new enthusiasts for the country."

Albania has seen remarkable increases in guests in the recent past and is enjoying ever-increasing popularity. With its colourful and lively capital Tirana, the country scores as well as with the sea, turquoise bays and its authentic and unspoiled backcountry. Furthermore, Albania is very popular with travellers who have a passion for hiking. With all



its advantages, Albania also offers an exceptionally good price-performance ratio.

As the Official Host Country of ITB Berlin, Albania will be presenting itself to the B2B audience in several ways. To kick off the trade show, Albania will host the festive opening gala in the CityCube Berlin on the eve of ITB Berlin, on Monday, 3 March 2025. Among other things, it will present its traditional folklore and culinary offerings to guests. During the trade show, Albania will have an extensive stand on the fair ground. Last but not least, the country is also expected to play an important role in the program at the ITB Berlin Convention, which will take place parallel to the trade show.

Africa Visa Openness Index 2023:

Progress in visa openness in Africa to ease cross border travel, boost trade, investment and regional integration

Africa is making strides in visa openness policies boding well for cross border travel, ease of movement and trade in 2024 and beyond. The Africa Visa Openness Index 2023 (AVOI), published on Tuesday, reveals much progress since the seventh edition of the report published in December 2022.

The visa openness achieved its highest score ever in 2023, surpassing levels last seen prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Africa Visa Openness Index measures the extent to which African countries are open to visitors from other African countries.

Over the period 2020-21, massive border closures to curb the spread of COVID-19, affected travel and tourism and such, causing stagnation in 2022.

In 2023, data from the report shows that 50 countries improved or maintained their 2022 score, with only 4 countries scoring lower. Since the first report published in 2016, 36 countries have improved their score on the index. Forty-two countries extend visa-free entry to citizens from at least 5 other African countries, while 33 countries do so to citizens of at least 10 countries. Four countries – up from three last year, – have eliminated all visa requirements for African travelers. They are Rwanda, Benin, The Gambia, and Seychelles.

All key overall matrices have shown improvements in 2023. In 28% of all intra-Africa travel scenarios, African citizens do not require a visa (an improvement from 27% in 2022 and 20% in 2016). Visa is still required in 46% of travel scenarios on the continent – down from 47% in 2022 and 55% in 2016.

“It makes it easier for Africans to visit their families, pursue education and business interests abroad, and discover Africa as tourists. It also contributes towards a prosperous, integrated continent where people can develop their potential unhampered by overly restrictive visa regimes,” noted Jean-Guy Afrika, Acting Director of the African Development Bank’s Regional

Integration Coordination Office.

Highlights of the AVOI:

- The AVOI reached its highest level in 2023, slightly exceeding the previous peak of 2020
- The continent now features 4 champions; Rwanda, Benin, The Gambia and Seychelles, which have abolished visas for citizens from all African countries
- 24 countries now offer an e-visa, almost three times as many as in 2016
- 15 countries improved their score in 2023, 35 maintained their scores, while only 4 scored lower
- West African countries continue to lead the rankings with 7 out of the continent’s top 10 performers.

“As we delve into the eighth edition of the AVOI and assess progress made since 2016, we take pride in the complete removal of travel restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the surpassing of pre-pandemic levels in visa openness,” said Marie-Laure Akin-Olugbade, Vice-President for Regional Development, Integration and Business Delivery at the African Development Bank. “Freer movement of people could help galvanize the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), bringing us closer to the realization of our shared goal of an integrated Africa where goods, services, capital, and people move freely,” Akin-Olugbade added.

Rwanda emerges as a new champion in 2023, following a progressively more liberal visa regime pursued over the past 8 years. In 2016, the country allowed the citizens of nearly 90% of African countries to obtain a visa on arrival; with citizens of the remaining countries being able to enter the country without a visa. It later abolished visa fees for African citizens, and in 2023, Rwanda dropped visa requirements for the citizens of the entire continent. “This has eased the burden of travel for the citizens of 35 African countries that had until recently



still required a visa on arrival,” the report notes. In another positive development, news reports state that Kenya plans to remove visa requirements for African travelers by the end of 2023.

The report also measures average visa openness within the AU-recognised Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and finds that average visa openness has improved in 6 of the 8 RECs over the past year. RECs continue to be important drivers of visa openness through regional initiatives aimed at dismantling barriers to the movement of people.

In this respect, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) scores highest with African citizens enjoying the highest levels of freedom to move across borders. ECOWAS has taken a progressive stance on visa openness for decades, formalizing it in 1979 with a protocol on the free movement of persons, residence and establishment.

In addition to boasting the highest average regional AVOI score on the continent, ECOWAS also records the highest visa-free reciprocity rate: this is the rate at which the visa-free policies of individual countries within the REC are reciprocated by its member states. In 97% of travel scenarios, citizens can enter another country within the same REC without the need for a visa.

What’s next for Africa? Despite the many improvements, there are still hurdles to overcome. In nearly half of country-to-country travel scenarios (46%), Africans are required to obtain visas ahead of departure to travel to other African

countries. Visa restrictions are notably pronounced in northern and central Africa. Sustaining the momentum on visa liberalization is crucial for realizing the vision of the ‘Africa We Want.’ Embracing liberal visa policies will not only facilitate seamless travel but also contribute significantly to enhanced trade in goods and services, cross border investment and shared prosperity.

Recommendations:

- Implementing any outstanding commitments on visa-free movement within regional economic communities,
- Extending visa-free travel policies to all AU member states,

- Streamlining and simplifying any remaining visa procedures and associated cross-border processes,
- Implementing and expanding e-visa systems that use secure, reliable, mobile-friendly platforms

One key area progress on visa openness is crucial, is the AfCFTA.

“Freeing the movement of people across Africa’s borders is not only an important objective in its own right, but is also essential to continental integration,” the report notes. With 3 more African Union member states ratifying the AfCFTA in 2023, bringing the total to 47 ratifications, the lasting impact of the negotiations, ratification, and

execution of the AfCFTA depends to a significant extent on people’s ability to cross African borders, unhindered by excessive administrative barriers.

“The flourishing of trade in goods is intricately linked to the liberalization of trade in services, both of which hinge on the smooth movement of people across Africa’s borders without excessive bureaucratic hurdles,” said Minata Samate Cessouma, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development at the African Union Commission. “We have never been closer to realizing AfCFTA’s potential to integrate the continent. The African Union is proud of countries’ progress on freeing the movement of people.”

The ‘warm heart of Africa’ hits London streets



In a bid to position Malawi as one the best tourism destinations in the world, the country’s Minister of Tourism, Vera Kamtukule, launched a ‘Visit Malawi’ branded taxi in London.

“This endeavour is not merely about putting a taxi on the streets of a foreign city. It’s a symbol, a tangible

representation of our unwavering commitment to employ innovative destination marketing initiatives. Initiatives like this branded taxi play a crucial role in our ongoing efforts to build the Malawi brand,” said Kamtukule.

The Minister added that the story Malawi was telling the world was not just

about its stunning landscapes, its warm-hearted people, or its rich culture – it is about a country on the rise, a nation that believes in its potential, and people who are united in their determination to showcase country’s greatness.

“Our ‘Visit Malawi’ taxi isn’t just a mode of transportation; it’s a mobile ambassador. As it cruises through the vibrant streets of London, it carries with it the hopes, dreams, and promises of Malawi. With every passenger it transports, it whispers tales of the Warm Heart of Africa. It shares the magic of Lake Malawi, the splendour of Mulanje Mountain, and the cultural richness of our land.”

Kamtukule also emphasised that it was not just about reaching international audiences, it was also about connecting with them. “When a Londoner steps into this taxi, we want them to feel a part of our world. We want them to see Malawi as an inviting, vibrant, and accessible destination.”

The Minister further noted that the ‘Visit Malawi’ taxi was just one step. “There are many more to come as we work hand in hand with our partners, our people, and the international community to make our vision a reality.”

She said the Malawi Government planned to launch similar taxi services in Manchester and other cities.



Shining stars of African Tourism:

The 2023 Africa Tourism Leadership Awards' winners

It was a night of glamour and celebration as the crème de la crème of Africa's tourism industry gathered for the prestigious 2023 Africa Tourism Leadership Awards. The event took place at the Gaborone International Convention Centre and was attended by dignitaries, industry leaders, and celebrities from across the continent, marking the end of this 2023 Africa Tourism Leadership Forum and Awards.

As the evening unfolded, the stage was set for a remarkable display of talent, dedication, and innovation in several fields of tourism. The awards ceremony began with a warm welcome from the host, a renowned African actor, who set the tone for an evening of recognition and inspiration.

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Minister's Special Award Presented by Philda Nani Kereng Minister Philda Nani Kereng presented the "Minister's Special Award" to two remarkable individuals, Kinson Kgaga from the Botswana Guides Association and Mrs. Mmankudu Glickman from Bahurutse Cultural Village.

The 2023 Africa Tourism Leadership Awards were not just about recognizing excellence; they were a testament to the passion, innovation, and dedication that drive Africa's tourism industry forward.

The night concluded with a festive gala dinner, where attendees networked, shared stories and looked forward to a brighter future for African tourism.

THE AWARD WINNERS	
Leading in Progressive Policies Award	Affairs under the Office of the President of Ghana.
Outstanding Entrepreneurship Award	Lizanne Du Plessis, Eco Africa Digital – South Africa
Outstanding Africa Tourism Media and Marketing Award	CNBC Africa, South Africa.
Women in Leadership Award	Lizanne Du Plessis, South Africa
Championing Sustainability Award	African Wildlife Foundation, Kenya
Most Innovative Business Tourism Destination Award	City of Cape Town, South Africa
Outstanding Accommodation Facility/Group Award	The Four Seasons Resort in Seychelles
Outstanding Tourism Transportation Award	Ethiopian Airlines
Destination – Africa Lifetime Award	Philda Nani Kereng, the Minister of Environment and Tourism in Botswana
Special Recognition Award	Emeritus Prof Ernie Heath, South Africa



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

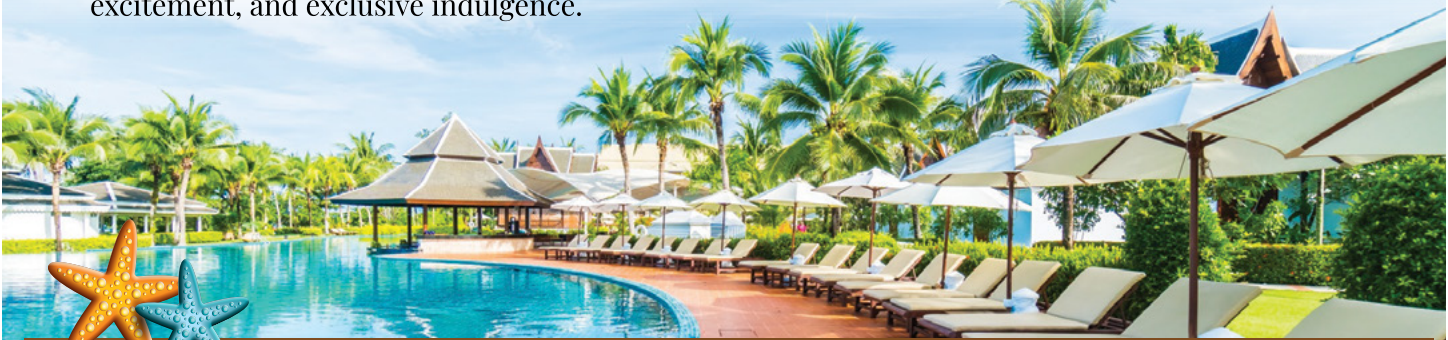
Imagine traversing the heart of Africa with the assurance of absolute comfort. We've carefully curated a selection of breathtaking locations across Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Zanzibar, allowing us to craft the most convenient and unforgettable itineraries.

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

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

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

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



2023 Festival Creole illuminates on Culture and Diversity



The city of Mahebourg came to a standstill as the island celebrated the grand finale of events of the Festival International Creole. The festival, a week-long event, is a celebration of the Mauritian culture and Creole language, a symbol of the past and present, through music, dance, arts, crafts and cuisine.

The event run from December 2-10, 2023 with activities spread across the island.

The Festival International Creole got off with the Sware Poezi along with an exhibition of creole artworks and opened by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Planning and

Minister of Tourism, Steven Obeegadoo.

He paid a glowing tribute to Dev Virahsawmy by saluting his fight for the promotion of "Langaz Kreol Morisien". "Nou Langaz li siman nou linite. It is the "langaz kreol Morisien", which allows us to live, develop and progress together. It is also a tool of social justice for those who have not had the chance to have an advanced education. They can still express themselves and assert their identity thanks to "Langaz Morisien", pointed out the Deputy Prime Minister.

The Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage, Avinash Teeluck, "it is important to celebrate Mauritian culture and language because they represent our identity". "They are the cement that



unites us all and that has allowed us to build modern Mauritius.

It continued with comedy and cinema shows spread across the island to ensure no one is left behind in the culturally defining event.

Another marquee feature of the festival was the Segga dance, which heralded an exciting weekend in Le Morne. The event named Sware Tipik; UNESCO inscribed segga dance, witnessed ten traditional groups showcasing the best of the island in the Le Morne. The folkloric dance is the musical expression of the Mauritian way of life: joy and liveliness.

With the event anticipating a fever pitch, a heavy downpour in many parts of the island and an anticipated unfriendly

weather forced organisers to cancel all six concerts slated for Saturday night.

Yesterday's climax could only be described as "a grand return" of the 17-year event after the pandemic. A record 32,000 participants graced the triumvirate events of Regatta, Mauritian Cuisine festival.

As early as 10:00am, the Mahebourg waterfront was buzzing with plethora of activities with patrons readying to embark on the boat sail.

The regatta was a scenic beauty as over 15 boats set sail to become this year's winner. The regatta is an – exciting and colourful boating events held every month. With their colourful sails and folkloric names, these boat races attract local Mauritians of all ages and are a fun day out for the whole family.



Speaking to VoyagesAfriq on the return of this year's festival, the Director General of the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Agency, Arvind Bundhum expressed excitement about the return of the event and was highly impressed with attendance.

He doubled down on the relevance of the creole festival, noting that they wanted to showcase a diversified offering beyond the beaches.

"Basically, you know, we want to show that Mauritius is not uniquely a beach destination. Mauritius has a lot to offer. And our offerings are very diverse. There are very few countries in the world whereby people come from different continents, and they live in peace and

harmony. When they came along, they brought around gastronomy, culture, tradition, and religion. And this festival is extremely important for us because it is a great platform for us to show the cultural diversity that we have".

He added that, "Our principal role is to promote Mauritius as a platform for cultural and sports events. Next week we have the golf events coming up and these events that we organize during the week focusing on culture and language are ways to showcase Mauritius as a big platform for events".

Notable big names of Mauritius music scene who performed included Alain Ramanisum, Koko Faya, Laura Beg, Eric Triton, Erian Bottesoie, Alain Auriant, among other bands and groups.



Our strategy is to build a better Tourism Sector for Seychelles - Sherin Francis



Bernadette Willemin and Sherin Francis

Tourism Seychelles has revealed its commitments to building a tourism industry, which will be premised on high impact value for its tourists.

The archipelago country's tourism sector has seen major changes to its offering as well as an incredible growth of new markets for the destination. Notable amongst the tourism offering is the introduction of ecotourism, hiking trails, mainstreaming the rich cultural heritage among others.

Welcoming over 65 travel and media partners to the inaugural Tourism Seychelles mega fam trip, the Principal Secretary of Tourism Seychelles Mrs Sherin Francis revealed the plans of the island going forward with emphasis on product and market diversification.

"50 percent of our landmass are today protected, and 30 percent of our sea territory are also today protected because we are not just safeguarding this for the future generation, but we are also making sure we are taking care of

our bread and butter." Mrs Francis said. We want the future generation also to be future tourists, your children, grandchildren to be able to come and visit Seychelles and experience the same thing that you are about to discover in the next few days. And our strategy, going forward, is to build a better kind of tourism for Seychelles. Higher value, lower impact. And when I say higher value, I mean people who really add value to the destination when they visit. Not just luxury clients here. You can have higher value tourism, lower impact as well.

Highlighting on the wide range of accommodation offering, the Principal Secretary said, "You would know we have a wide range of accommodation in Seychelles. We have beautiful resorts like this one, the Constance Ephelia, but we also have homegrown properties, self-catering apartments and guest houses. We want them to provide exceptional services, we want their products to be of higher standards,



so that they can attract better kinds of visitors that will benefit the whole destination at the end of the day.

The kind of visitors that will want to go out and discover, and go out and do an excursion, go to a hiking, experience a cultural product, living more than just, the waste that it would probably produce like we all do when we travel and also lower impact." She assured of rich cultural experiences on the itinerary of every visitor.

"Today, with, focus on product diversification, having more cultural experiences, We have also, encouraging our visitors to make time to discover more of the Seychellois culture.

"The gastronomy, arts, dance, crafts, artisan, all this today are on offer, and you are able to experience and immerse yourself in more cultural experiences, activities, entertainment in general.

"Again, going back, you'd be able to tell

your clients and the world that we are not just a country as small as we are as a population, as young as we are as a nation, we only just celebrated 250 years, two years ago, very young nation, but we still have a very beautiful story in terms of our past and we are known to be the melting pot of cultures, you've probably noticed how distinctively different we are," she concluded.

Moreover, in her address during the media fam trip briefing, Director General for Destination Marketing at Tourism Seychelles Bernadette Willemin, underscored the importance of working together to showcase destination Seychelles to the world. She expressed immense appreciation to partners local and international for their dedication and commitments to the Seychelles project.

"So as professionals in the travel trade, you understand the transformative power of exploration. You are the architects of dreams, crafting unforgettable experiences for those seeking adventure, relaxation and cultural enrichment. This evening is a salute of your dedication and passion for creating moments that linger in the hearts of the travelers. And we do hope as well that when you go back there, you will be able to craft and create and propose the best sessions moment for your potential visitors," Mrs Willemin said.

Touching on the objectives of the maiden mega fam trip, The Director General for Destination Marketing said the mega fam trip was to showcase the diverse product offering to the travel trade and media.



"This familiarization trip is intended to showcase aspects of intellectual discoveries, cultural discoveries, which our destination has to offer.

"It is not just a trip. It is an immersive experience designed to deepen your understanding of our unique offerings.

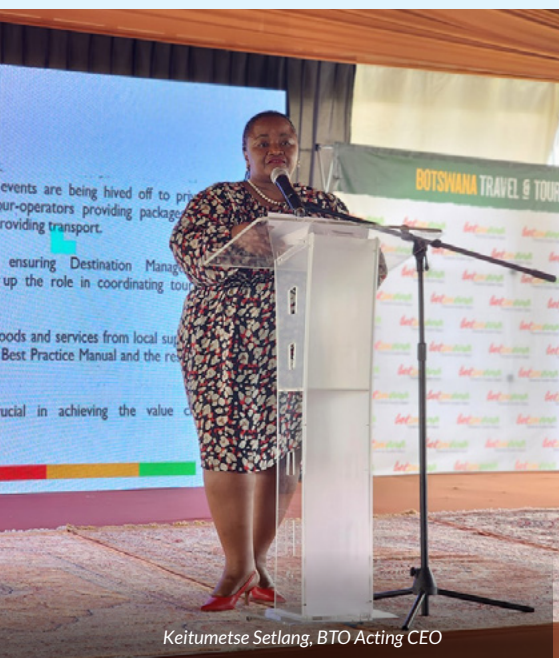
"Apart from picturesque landscape to vibrant culture, this trip aims to inspire and equip you with first-hand knowledge that will elevate your ability to create extraordinary journeys for our visitors. In the realm of travel, knowledge is the currency that enriches experiences. It is our shared commitment to staying informed," she said further.

She was also optimistic the mega fam trip will be the catalyst for new connections, fresh ideas, and a renewed passion for the incredible world of travel.

Tourism is the top contributor to the economy of Seychelles, an archipelago in the western Indian Ocean. The event, which took place from November 29 to December 2, 2023 and had representatives from 46 travel agencies and 19 press partners. The participants came from United Kingdom, France, Germany, Austria, Scandinavia, the Americas, the Middle East, China, Japan, India, Saudi Arabia, and countries from the Indian Ocean, and Africa.



BTTE raises bar for sustainable tourism, spotlights Botswana offerings to global audiences



Keitumetse Setlang, BTO Acting CEO

Riding on the successes achieved at various global outings and campaigns to position Botswana as the preferred destination for tourists in Africa, especially the just-concluded World Travel Market in London, the Botswana Tourism Organisation (BTO) is not relenting.

The apex tourism body successfully pulled off this year's edition of the Botswana Travel & Tourism Expo 2023 (BTTE). As expected, the event was a gathering of global tourism and travel stakeholders, including travel buyers and sellers, governments and the private sector tourism industry in the Southern African country.



In her opening remarks at the expo, Acting Minister of Environment and Tourism, Hon. Nnaniki Wilhemina Tebogo Makwinja, said that Botswana is determined to share her magic with the world, while encouraging all the stakeholders, both domestic and international, to work with BTO in achieving the goals.

"We are open to collaboration, innovation, and new ideas that can help us protect and promote Botswana as a leading sustainable tourism destination.

"I encourage all participants in this Expo to engage in meaningful discussions, network, and share your knowledge and ideas on how we can collectively make tourism in Botswana more sustainable and resilient," the Acting Minister of Environment and Tourism, said.

Also in her remarks at the Botswana Travel and Tourism Expo, Ms. Winney Ramaphoi, Botswana Tourism Board Chairperson, described the expo as an eagerly anticipated annual event where industry professionals and enthusiasts converge to celebrate and promote the nation's beauty and diversity.

She noted further that the expo emphasizes sustainable tourism, highlighting Botswana's landscapes, cultures, and wildlife while committing to conservation and community engagement. "Despite challenges from the global pandemic, there is a resilient and optimistic spirit, with a focus on adapting, innovating, and collectively navigating turbulent times for the industry's recovery.

"The expo serves as a networking platform, fostering collaborations, connecting local businesses with international markets, and providing opportunities for entrepreneurs and travelers. I would like to express my gratitude to partners, sponsors, and exhibitors, and urge attendees to use the event to showcase Botswana, forge partnerships, and inspire memorable journeys within the country," BTO chairperson commented.

Earlier in her presentation on the tourism update, BTO's Acting CEO Keitumetse Setlang gave an overview of the key points in the Tourism Value Chain of the country.

According to hereto, BTO actively supports government and private sector initiatives across various tourism domains, cultivating both new and existing cultural, heritage, sports, adventure, gastronomy, and handicraft offerings.

She noted that these events, covering sports, cultural activities, and more, prioritize community participation and generate economic benefits.

"BTO ensures private sector involvement in event services, promoting local transport, tour operators, and Destination Management Companies.

In line with Eco-Tourism practices, BTO advocates for sourcing goods and services locally, aligning with the Eco-Certification Programme. Recognizing the pivotal role of the private sector, BTO is committed to unlocking the full potential of the tourism value chain," she explained.



Mozambique Prime Minister challenges tourism industry to embrace innovative solutions

Prime Minister Adriano Maleiane spearheaded the official opening ceremony of the 9th edition of the International Tourism Fair (FIKANI), emphasizing the crucial role of innovative solutions in fostering the development and sustainability of the tourism sector in the country. Maleiane underscored the need for a comprehensive approach that considers socio-cultural factors in promoting tourism.

During the ceremony, Prime Minister Maleiane issued a challenge to all stakeholders in the sector, urging entrepreneurs, investors, and local communities to actively implement sustainable tourism measures. He emphasized that the growth of national tourism should be guided by responsible environmental resource exploitation, ensuring the preservation of natural ecosystems and providing tangible benefits to local communities.

In her opening speech, Minister of Culture and Tourism, Eldevina Materula, highlighted the event as an opportunity to rethink the country's tourism strategy. She stressed the importance of offering new and innovative solutions, aligning with the overarching theme of the ninth edition: "FIKANI for Sustainable Tourism."

A major highlight of the event was the launch of an Investment guidebook "Tourism doing Business Investing in Mozambique" prepared by the UNWTO



Adriano Maleiane, Prime Minister of Mozambique

in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. UNWTO African Department Head, Elcia Grandcourt who did the launch in conjunction with the Prime Minister said the document highlights key areas of investment in the tourism sector in Mozambique.

The book, she added, is part of a series of guidebooks that UNWTO launched since last year. For the African region, the guidebook has been launched in Tanzania and Mauritius. The book contains an extensive information on the economic outlook, FDIs into the country as well existing opportunities for investment and doing business in Mozambique's tourism.



The International Tourism Fair of Mozambique- Fikani, hosted 215 exhibitors, including representatives from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Namibia, and eSwatini. The event showcased diverse offerings and fostering collaborations within the international tourism community.



Federal Air takes delivery of new planes, poised for enhanced luxury service



South Africa's leader in air travel to and from key Safari and Game Reserve destinations in South Africa has introduced the latest addition to their operational fleet: six (6) brand new, state-of-the-art Cessna® Grand Caravan® C208B EX aircraft, that sets a new standard in passenger comfort, reliability and safari travel experience.

During the corporate media event held on October 31, Federal Airlines celebrated a major milestone in the company's ongoing commitment to redefine air travel. The new aircraft allows FedAir to focus on and provide its guests with enhanced overall fleet reliability, improved cutting-edge technology, and overall passenger well-being.

The new fleet is set to improve the travel experience for FedAir guests and customers travelling to and from the

various luxury safari lodges across the region and from key tourism gateways in the country.

The new C208B EX aircraft is known

for its dependable and efficient performance and is currently operated by several worldwide regional airlines, safari and charter operators and cargo carriers.

Key Features of the Cessna Caravan C208B EX include:

- **Advanced Operating Features:** The new aircraft comes with cutting-edge flight avionics and control systems, with enhanced graphics, split-screen capability, faster hardware and various other additional new features.
- **Ultra Efficient Pratt & Whitney PT6A-140 engines:** The new aircraft are equipped with a more powerful and fuel-efficient engine, providing improved cruising speeds, payload and range.
- **Enhanced Passenger Comfort:** Experience a new level of comfort with redefined interiors and comfortable seating, making the transfer journey to the safari lodge as enjoyable as your ultimate destination.

- **Options on Cabin Interiors & Configurations:** Multiple Configurable interiors, providing options that provide flexibility and enhanced comfort for our shuttle and charter customers; offering VIP interiors with seating for 8 passengers and up to a 12-seater standard seating commuter option.

Speaking at the event, FedAir's CEO, Mark Hurst, expressed the company's overall excitement, saying, "This new fleet of six C208B EX aircraft represents a R350,000,000 investment by us into our business and the country's key exclusive safari tourism industry, and will provide at least ten years of safe, reliable and enhanced air travel for our guests and customers. We are proud to be at the forefront of the tourism travel industry, delivering air connectivity and exclusive shuttle and charter services whilst continuously striving to improve the overall travel experience for our guests and international travellers visiting South Africa from all corners of the globe".

The Group Chairman, Rashid Wally, commented, "The Caravan C208B EX embodies our commitment to sustainability, passenger comfort, and overall safety. The new aircraft will enable us to continue to offer our customers the highest levels of service and reliability, and we are grateful and encouraged by the continued support of our loyal industry partners and clients".



Kenya Airways Soars to New Heights: A Tale of Innovation, Sustainability, and Global Connectivity



Julius Thairu, Chief Commercial and Customer Officer of Kenya Airways

In an innovative move toward sustainable growth and enhanced connectivity, Kenya Airways is undergoing a remarkable transformation, positioning itself as a key player in the aviation industry. The airline has adopted a strategy of replacing smaller aircraft with larger, more fuel-efficient ones, aiming to connect all cities within Africa, capitalizing on the liberalization of the continent's airspace.

At the heart of this evolution is a commitment to sustainability. Kenya Airways is investing in new-generation aircraft with more efficient engines, actively participating in initiatives such as the SkyTeam Sustainability Flight Challenge to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among airlines.

Kenya Airways is making waves in innovation with its dedicated Innovation Hub. The airline is rolling out innovative products such as a roaming solution to reduce costs for travelers and a comprehensive loyalty program, Asante Rewards, extending beyond travel

to include partnerships with various businesses.

"Chief Commercial and Customer Officer, Julius Thairu, summarizes the airline's philosophy," stating, "Our aim is not just to fly; it's to create an experience that becomes a seamless part of our passengers' stories. It's about creating a network of connectivity within Africa, forming links that go beyond borders".

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Kenya Airways reports operational viability with the best results in the last six years. The airline is on a path to recovery, posting strong half-year results and surpassing pre-pandemic flight frequencies, particularly on the London route.

Internationally, Kenya Airways has expanded its reach through collaborations with esteemed airlines from Europe, Emirates and Asia, offering passengers unparalleled global travel experiences with a touch of luxury.

Kenya Airways has made a lasting

impact in strategic markets, notably Nigeria and Ghana, where it also serves as a catalyst for regional ties. With two daily flights, the airline is committed to making travel effortless, working closely with governments to streamline visa processing and ensure passengers can explore without hindrance.

The airline aims to connect Africa with a Pan-African airline group, where every airline contributes to seamless travel.

"We need to collaborate more in Africa by finding areas of operation that allow consolidation but still maintain national airlines with their identities because that is what pulls people, and eventually address the cost of traveling within Africa".

Kenya Airways is an exceptional airline, connecting Africa to the world with innovation and collaboration in the aviation industry. The journey of the airline is a remarkable story of growth, sustainability, and an unwavering pursuit of excellence.

Ethiopian Aviation University Graduates more than 600 Aviation Professionals



The Ethiopian Aviation University, the largest aviation center of excellence in Africa, graduates 627 aviation professionals in a ceremony held at the newly upgraded Ethiopian Aviation University. The graduates were trainees in the University's Pilot, Aircraft Maintenance Technician, Cabin Crew & Catering, and Commercial & Ground Services programs.

At the graduation: 88 pilots, 125 aircraft technicians, 150 cabin crew, and 264 commercial trainees begin the aviation career path.

Congratulating the aviation professionals, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mr. Mesfin Tasew said, "Human capital development is one of the key pillars in Ethiopian Airlines' growth strategy. As the largest aviation center of

excellence in the continent, we are keen to provide Africa with skilled aviation professionals. We are delighted to have graduates from other African nations in today's ceremony and to add 228 male and 306 female aviation professionals to the aviation world."

The Ethiopian Aviation University has been accredited by Ethiopian Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency to offer undergraduate and graduate degree programs in various aviation and hospitality fields.

Currently, the University offers various aviation courses such as a BSc in Aeronautical Engineering, Aviation Maintenance Engineering, Aviation Management & Operations, BA in Tourism & Hospitality Management, MSc in Data Science, MBA in Aviation Management. The University also offers Diploma

and Certificate Programs in Aircraft Maintenance Technician, Pilot Training, Cabin Crew and Commercial Training, Leadership & Career Development, Catering Training in addition to ICAO and Online Courses.

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



TAAG Angola airlines to increase flights to São Paulo

TAAG Angola Airlines will provide greater mobility options to its passengers and customers by increasing to 6 weekly flights the Luanda (Angola) – São Paulo (Brazil) connection, effective December 11, 2023. More than a point-to-point link, São Paulo and Luanda are connection hubs between Latin America, Africa, and Europe, with growing transatlantic demand for passengers, from tourists, families, and corporate segments.

Thus, São Paulo is a strategic route for TAAG Angola Airlines, as a gateway to multiple domestic destinations in Brazil and Latam due to the codeshare agreement signed between TAAG and GOL in April, this year. The Luanda/São Paulo route is operated by a Boeing 777-300 aircraft, with daily flights (excluding Wednesdays), from December 11, ahead. TAAG is committed to continually improving customer service and connectivity complying with market demand.



FlyNamibia launches WDH-Vic Falls route



FlyNamibia is to launch a Windhoek to Victoria Falls route, starting April 4 next year.

Flights will operate on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays between Hoseo Kutako International Airport and the Zimbabwean resort town of Victoria Falls.

"This new route is a key element in Zimbabwe's regional network expansion strategy which aims to enhance regional connectivity, promote tourism within Namibia, and position Windhoek as an alternative gateway to the region," said FlyNamibia

MD, Andre Compion in a statement.

Through its partnership with Airlink, and access to the GDS, FlyNamibia can promote its new flights and packages to markets that were previously beyond reach.

Meanwhile, Tourism Update understands that FlyNamibia is to unveil new routes to Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Angola, broadening its regional destinations and bolstering tourism connectivity across Southern Africa.

This was revealed by Compion on a recent AviaDev Insight Africa podcast.

Compion said the new flights would connect Windhoek to Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, Maun in Botswana, and Luanda in Angola. This will effectively more than triple FlyNamibia's current schedule of regional destinations.

While specific schedules are yet to be released, the anticipated launch of these new routes is April next year. Compion also revealed that the airline was entering the final phase of preparations for the introduction of Luanda flights.

FlyNamibia currently operates domestic routes from Eros Airport in Windhoek to Ondangwa, Rundu, Katima Mulilo, Lüderitz and Oranjemund, as well as a regional route between Hosea Kutako International Airport and Cape Town International Airport.

The airline recently became a member of IATA.

Story by Adele Mackenzie and Gaongalelwe Dinale

Etihad launches daily flight to Nairobi starting May 2024

Etihad Airways has announced the resumption of its flights to East Africa with daily flights to Nairobi set to start on May 1st, 2024.

The new route connects Kenya's capital with Etihad's growing global network, and will help foster important cultural and economic ties between the UAE and the East African powerhouse.

The flights will restore commercial non-stop passenger connections between the two cities, and guests from Kenya

will be able to connect with Etihad flights to the GCC, the US, Europe, India and South-East Asia.

Etihad will operate daily flights to Nairobi, utilising a modern Airbus A320, featuring both Business and Economy cabins as well as the airline's award-winning service.

"We are thrilled to be re-starting flights to Nairobi. Equally, we will be delighted to welcome guests from Kenya to our extraordinary home as well as offering

them access to our growing global network," said Antonioaldo Neves, Chief Executive Officer of Etihad Airways.



Attitude at Altitude

- African Aviation in Review 2023

Another year is ending, and it is time to review the progress and stagnation of African airlines during 2023. Unlike previous years, the specter of pandemic-related restrictions no longer cast a shadow on air traffic, exposing the true mettle of players in the absence of the convenient COVID fig leaf that particularly badly run airlines used to hide behind. The general trend for 2023 has been that the well-run airlines are doing even better, but the badly run ones are sinking even faster. What a surprise?

“*Unlike previous years, the specter of pandemic-related restrictions no longer cast a shadow on air traffic, exposing the true mettle of players in the absence of the convenient COVID fig leaf that particularly badly run airlines used to hide behind.*”

Ethiopia is often called cradle of civilization and so it is appropriate that any narrative of African aviation starts there too. Ethiopian Airlines has grown from strength to strength, slowly becoming a global player rather than just an African one. Yet, in a perfect nod to its African trader roots, the management team decided to head to Dubai to go on a monumental shopping spree. They placed orders for approximately 50 Boeing and Airbus aircraft at the Dubai Air Show, signaling an ambitious agenda for fleet replacement and expansion over the coming decades.

Even Ethiopian Airlines' subsidiaries in Togo, Malawi, and Zambia experienced relatively positive years. Togo's ASKY boldly introduced multiple Boeing 737 Max aircraft and expanded its reach with new routes, including its inaugural flights to Eastern Africa with a Nairobi connection. Meanwhile, in the southern part of the continent, Malawi Airlines added a third aircraft to its fleet, while Zambia Airways welcomed its first Boeing jet.

However, the South African aviation landscape faced significant challenges in 2023, trailing behind the rest of the continent in recovery. The bankruptcies of Comair and Mango during the pandemic have left a void that has yet to be filled completely. South African Airways itself navigated the year with a mix of accomplishments, reintroducing intercontinental flights to Brazil and launching multiple new African routes, albeit while contending with financial and governance issues. The "privatization" deal with the Takatso consortium that was announced as ready to complete by

"end of June" will soon celebrate its third anniversary of "end of Junes".

Meanwhile, Airlink and flySafair are quietly carving up the spoils within the region as SAA tries to figure out its existential crisis. Airlink seems to be adding a new plane or new route every time I look at their social media, and their fleet of regional aircraft makes expansion into marginal markets a much less risky proposition than airlines stuck with vanity widebody jets. flySafair have also dipped their toes into the cross-border markets for the first time. Notwithstanding, South Africa remains the last major market in Africa to have not yet reclaimed their pre-COVID traffic levels.

In Francophone West Africa, the ambitious plans of Air Senegal collided with the harsh reality of financial constraints. Government shareholders often come with deep pockets, but short arms. The ridiculously optimistic business plan there has come crashing down to earth and seems to have been reimagined as part of a strategic alliance with Air Cote D'Ivoire. Sorry, but taking two hapless state-subsidized destitutes and combining them will just create an even larger state subsidized destitute.

Nigeria's aviation scene witnessed the unfolding soap opera of Nigeria Air, marked by the questionable charade of outdoor an Ethiopian Airlines plane painted in Nigerian colors amid much fanfare. Despite the Super Eagles' aspirations, the national airline appeared more like a Super Ostrich - running in circles making noise but failing to take

flight. Meanwhile Air Peace continues to find new excuses as to why they make a complete hash of every new international route that they start. Only Ibom Air seems to have a clear vision and a strategy to implement that vision in the Nigerian market.

In the East, Kenya Airways grappled with having a recovery plan but struggled to execute it due to overwhelming debt. Next door in Uganda, wholesale changes in senior management seems to have fired up the team to ensure that their Airbus fleet, hitherto the world's most expensive paperweights, are finally flying to different places, even if not profitably yet. Their cousins in Tanzania could not even achieve that during the year. The "criminal enterprise masquerading as an airline" called Air Tanzania took delivery of multiple new aircraft this year yet did absolutely nothing of note other than get embroiled in even more financial scandals.

Still, as the curtains fall on the aviation narrative of 2023, I cannot help but marvel at the industry's resilience, innovation, and ability to persevere through occasional turbulence. Here's to hoping that the coming year will see continued growth, increased professionalism, and much needed profitability. Safe travels, African skies!



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

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Exploring the World of South African Wines:

A Conversation with Matome Mbatha, Market Manager (Africa) of Wines of South Africa

For wine enthusiasts, the allure of sipping on a glass of fine wine is not just about the taste but also the experience that comes with it. In a recent interview with Gilbert Amankwa Ampofo of Voyages Afric during a wine tasting tour in Cape Town, Matome Mbatha, the Market Manager (Africa) of Wines of South Africa, shared insights into the fascinating world of South African wines, their global significance, and their role in promoting local tourism and social responsibility.

The Quest for Authentic Experiences

Mr. Mbatha began by emphasizing the importance of exposing people to the actual places where wine is made. He expressed the desire to provide Ghanaians with a virtual taste of the South African wine experience, with the hope that they would eventually have the opportunity to visit South Africa in person. According to him, the wine-tasting tours in Cape Town offered not only a chance to enjoy fine wines but also to savor delicious food, explore vineyards, and delve into the historical background of South Africa's wine industry.

Quality Reigns Supreme

When asked about how South African wines compared to those from other renowned wine regions worldwide, Mr. Mbatha proudly stated that South

African wines ranked seventh in terms of volume production globally. However, he believed that the real measure of their success should be the quality they offer, where South Africa should rightfully be number one. With over 360 years of wine production experience, South African wines are considered a "new world wine," a term that reflects their relatively recent entry into global markets. Despite their new world status, South Africa's rich historical legacy of winemaking has positioned it as a world leader in producing high-quality wines.

Regions That Define Excellence

The significance of regions like Stellenbosch, Franschhoek, and Robertson in South African wine tourism cannot be overstated. These areas, among others, contribute immensely to the wine tourism experience. Many tourists visiting South Africa make it a point to explore these renowned wine regions and taste the wines that originate there. The regions offer an extension of what the Western Cape has to offer, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the scenic beauty and rich history that accompanies South African winemaking.

Wine, Tourism, and Social Responsibility

Mr. Mbatha also touched on the social responsibility initiatives undertaken by

wineries in South Africa. He explained that there is a transformation agenda within the industry, with wineries encouraged to participate in corporate social responsibility activities. While progress has been made, there is still work to be done to ensure previously disadvantaged individuals are integrated into the wine industry. Tourists visiting wineries in South Africa often have the opportunity to engage with these programs and witness the positive impact on local communities.



Challenges and Opportunities

Despite its success, the South African wine industry faces challenges, notably its capital-intensive nature. Running a winery is a costly endeavor, and ensuring a return on investment can be a struggle. However, many winemakers remain passionate about their craft, and efforts are ongoing to make the industry more profitable. One major challenge is the lack of profits, which underscores the importance of premiumization – focusing on selling higher-value wines – to sustain the wine business in the long run.

In conclusion, South African wines are not only about what's in the glass but also about the stories, experiences, and commitment to quality that come with each bottle. Through conversations with industry leaders like Matome Mbatha, we gain a deeper appreciation of the role of South African wines in the global wine landscape and their contribution to local communities and tourism.



Hollywood Actor, Winston Duke appointed UNWTO Responsible Tourism Ambassador

The Hollywood superstar is the latest to be appointed Responsible Tourism Ambassador by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). Winston who is famous for playing the role of M'Baku in the Black Panther and Wakanda Forever movies is now part of a growing number of celebrities, global icons and stars who are serving in various ambassadorial roles by the world tourism body.

UNWTO Secretary General, Zurab Pololikashvili said he was thrilled to welcome Duke as a Responsible Tourism Ambassador. "The power of tourism is enormous, and it needs to be sustainable and inclusive. Thank you Winston Duke for joining our mission," he added.

Duke on his part said he looked forward to performing his new duty. "It is indeed my great honour to serve in this role and I look forward to doing the work," he stressed.



Maiden Spain-Africa Business Forum convenes in Gran Canaria for trade integration, investment opportunities



Luis Padron, President of Cámara de Comercio de Gran Canaria addressing the gathering

With eyes set on establishing contacts and exploring business and investment opportunities, the Chambers of Commerce of West Africa and the Spanish Chambers of Commerce have met on the Spanish Island of Gran Canaria.

The maiden forum is further aimed at brainstorming ways to improve partnership and trade among the chambers in Spain and predominantly West Africa.

Being held for the first time under the auspices of the Cámara de Comercio de Gran Canaria the forum assembled the national chambers of commerce of eight West African states, multilateral institutions, academia, the private sector and the media to dialogue on ways to consolidate the trade relationship between Gran Canaria & Spain with the African members.

The forum was attended by several chambers from the neighbouring West African countries including; Ghana, Ivory Coast, Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria, Senegal and Mauritania. The large African participation enabled Canarian companies to cover key countries for potential investments across the chambers and the two continents.

With tourism being one of the priority areas, the speakers included the Regional Director of Africa at the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Elcia Grandcourt and the Director

of Membership at World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Adolfo Reyes.

The forum is first of many between Africa and Spain to explore ingenious ways of encouraging trade among the chambers, with more than a dozen Spanish chambers of commerce in attendance.

Addressing the gathering, the President of Cámara de Comercio de Gran Canaria, Luis Padron said Africa is taking its place in the international business circle. He said the coming into force of AfCFTA is an added reason to the attractiveness of Africa.

"With this event, we pursue a double purpose, that Spanish companies make the Canary Islands visible as a reference place for their businesses on the African continent, and that African companies make the Canary Islands visible to their business with Spain," Padrón explained.

Speaking further, the Cámara de Comercio de Gran Canaria President said on the other hand, the forum, "promotes rapprochement between the Spanish and African chamber structures, establishing solid, stable and highly professional relationships, which allow us to identify and take advantage of business opportunities between our two regions."

He said presently the island is connected with 10 direct flights to Africa and it also bears testament to the strong linkages between the two; Africa and Spanish

chambers of commerce.

"I will like to urge all institutions to harness the strategy of making Gran Canaria the gateway to Africa," he said, noting further that there are strategies to better capture funding from EU to support projects under the forum.

Reflecting on the strength and credibility of the Chamber, he said, "We have 50,000 companies as members of the chamber. This is backed by the law of the island, which mandates all the companies to be members of the chamber.

"We are also a member of the Latin America Chamber of Commerce, FEWACE and World Trade Organisation".

According to him, "The main activity of the chambers is to represent the interests of the companies at various government levels".

On the objective of partnership with African chambers of commerce, he explained that the move is aimed at, "improving flight connections between the island and African countries to enable more business exchanges".

There are also 21 maritime connections and 21 African ports on the island to facilitate more mutual exchanges.

The areas of investment include; training, health, tourism and consultancy. They also hope to help the African hotel sector with management, training and consultancy to increase their business.

To woo Spanish investors to Africa hospitality sector, he advised that, "Tourism Ministries in Africa must do urbanistic planning for tourism to enable Spanish companies to come and invest.



"Spanish companies need clarity on investment procedures, safety of their investments and returns to invest in Africa".

However, the choice of African chambers of commerce, according to him, is because, "I trust in the African market because it is easier to enter and establish your company than in other continents like Europe and Latin America".

On the choice of the seven chambers of commerce that participated in the meeting, he noted that, "We chose the seven countries based on their political and economic stability.

He hopes to visit Africa in February, starting with Ghana and Ivory Coast to meet the chambers, exchange and brainstorm on areas of mutual interests and

Meanwhile, the forum, which is the first meeting of chambers of commerce of Spain and West Africa, makes the Canary Islands visible as a business hub between both regions.

Apart from the eight African chambers of commerce, the forum was attended by a dozen Spanish chambers of commerce and more than 70 companies from both continents.

Speaking at the maiden edition of the forum president, president of the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce, Farman Toure, indicated that the meeting would help strengthen cooperation both in business and in training.

"We do not have to look far for what we have so close. The African continent has the need to industrialize its raw materials and, to do so, they need

investors. The ideal is to do it with close partners," Toure concluded.

Highlighting the critical role in building a robust tourism sector for the Africa region, Elcia Grandcourt encouraged the actors in the tourism sector to prioritize sustainability, innovation and tourism education to drive the economies. "We must Promote and prioritize sustainable tourism practices anchored on economic, social, and environmental impacts. Emphasize the importance of the triple bottom line: people, planet, and prosperity" she noted.

Added to the institutional representation at the forum were more than 40 Canarian and 30 African companies, which participated in B2B meetings and networking activities as an ideal platform to establish contacts and explore business and investment opportunities.

Mauritius Tourism on the rise, anticipates further boom in 2024

With over one million visitors since January, and more to add to that number at the end of this December festive season, Mauritius tourism is on the rise.

The growing tourist arrivals has also signalled a further boom in the coming years, starting from 2024, which is knocking on the door.

Speaking during an interview with VoyagesAfriq, Director General, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, Arvind Bundhun said, "Over this calendar year, I think we will be very close to 1.3 million tourists, which was our objective, and let us keep fingers crossed for next year. When I look at the forecast, I am quite optimistic."

Accrding to Bundhun, Mauritius is optimistic about maintaining its status as the premier and most preferred destination in the Indian Ocean.

He also announced his optimism about 2024 looking at the laudable feat this year. Explaining the details of the achievements, he said that in 10 months; from January to October 2023, the island has welcomed over 102, 6771

tourists. The exciting development, according to him, lays the foundation for an even brighter future in 2024.

The anticipated boom in 2024, according to Bundhun is possible because Mauritius possesses great potential and capacity, which will continue to position it as a leading force in the tourism sector.

"I think Mauritius has got the potential. First of all, we have got very good connectivity. Secondly, we have got, as you are aware, excellent accommodation, and good hotels. So, these are all the ingredients that will help us to position ourselves as a platform for events in the Indian Ocean," he assured.

The Managing Director also hinted that strategic plans are underway to sustain and build upon the current success in the coming year. He also reiterated commitment to position Mauritius as a preferred platform for cultural and sports activities.

"Our principal role is to promote Mauritius as a platform for cultural and sports events. Next week, we have the golf events coming up and these events



that we organize during the week focusing on culture and language is actually a way to showcase Mauritius as a big platform for events".

Added to their strategic plans is the incorporation of diversity by fostering inclusion in other regions.

"We are trying to diversify our tourism markets. We are very Eurocentric as a destination. But, we are diversifying to the Middle East and India. I believe Africa has an enormous potential as well and, that is one of the reasons we are really diversifying our portfolio," Bundhun concluded.

Tourism Calendar of Events

January 24-28 2024	FITUR International Tourism Fair Venue: Feria de Madrid, IFEMA, Madrid- Spain Contact: Email: About: Fitur is the global meeting point for tourism professionals and the leading trade fair for inbound and outbound markets in Latin America.
February 27-28 2024	Meetings Africa Contact: +27 11 895 3000 Email: convention@southafrica.net Venue: Sandton Convention Centre, South Africa About: Meetings Africa is a 2-day trade show with a dedicated Educational Day which is executed in conjunction with the key global, continental and national industry associations.
March 5-7 2024	ITB Berlin Venue: Berlin Exhibition Grounds, Germany Contact: Email: About: The world's leading travel trade show.
April 10-12 2024	WTM Africa Venue: Cape Town International Convention Centre, South Africa Contact: About: World Travel Market Africa is the leading exhibition for the inbound and outbound African travel & tourism markets. WTM Africa creates personal and business opportunities through its industry networks, global reach and regional focus, providing our customers with quality contacts, content and communities.
May 6-9 2024	Arabian Travel Market Contact: +44 (0)20 8271 2158 Venue: Dubai, UAE About: Arabian Travel Market, known as ATM, is a travel and tourism event, organized annually in Dubai to provide a platform for inbound and outbound tourism professionals in the Middle East and gives information on tourism destinations, accommodation options, tourism attractions and aviation industry in the Middle East and around the world.
May 28-31 2024	The Africa Youth In Tourism Innovation Summit Venue: Windhoek, Namibia Contact: About: The 6th and 2024 Youth in Tourism Innovation Summit & Challenge will be hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Namibia. The key focus areas will include but not limited to youth entrepreneurship, and students' immersion in innovation, small enterprise development, personal transformation, and self-actualization.
June 19-21 2024	7th AviaDev Africa Venue: Movenpick Hotel, Windhoek, Namibia Email: mala.patel@thebench.com About: AviaDev Africa is the premier platform dedicated to growing connectivity to, from, and within the African continent. Bringing together airports, airlines, tourism authorities, governments, and industry suppliers, AviaDev offers attendees the ability to pre-arrange meetings, learn from industry peers, and make those important connections.
June 25-27 2024	7th Africa Hospitality Investment Forum (AHIF) Contact: mala.patel@thebench.com Venue: Movenpick Hotel, Windhoek, Namibia About: Africa Hospitality Investment Forum is Africa's premier meeting place of leaders in the hospitality sector, attracting hotel and real estate investors, owners and developers, global hotel operator CEOs and prominent advisory services from across the African continent and beyond.



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Travel & Tourism Blitz

IBTM welcomes Event Director



IBTM World has announced the appointment of Claudia Hall as its new Event Director ahead of the 2023 edition of its flagship global trade show.

With over 14 years' experience in the meetings and events industry, Claudia brings a wealth of knowledge, creativity and dynamism to the position. Taking the helm at the beginning of November, Claudia will assume responsibility for the management and final strategic planning of IBTM World which is returning to the iconic Fira de Barcelona from November 28 to 30.

Commenting on her new role, Claudia said: "I'm thrilled to take the reins at IBTM World and look forward to contributing to the continued success of this esteemed international trade show, which plays a pivotal role in steering the events industry's future towards greater strength and prosperity.

"I'm excited for the challenge and

determined to use my insights and experience to bring innovative ideas to the table and take IBTM World from strength to strength. I can't wait to meet all our wonderful exhibitors, buyers and delegates, and share in this vibrant, thriving and creative hub of possibilities with them."

Claudia has a proven track record for inspiring the events world to deliver exceptional experiences having worked as Exhibition Director for both Gulf Traffic & Transpo Tech and Middle East Energy during her time at Informa, an international events and digital services business. Based in Dubai, these roles saw Claudia manage, plan, and stage the operational, logistical and financial aspects of both large-scale international trade shows.

Vasyl Zhygalo, IBTM World Portfolio Director, said: "It is an absolute pleasure to be welcoming Claudia into our incredible team here at IBTM World. As a steadfast champion of the business events sector with extensive knowledge of the industry, I know her boundless enthusiasm, tenacity, and passion for creating unforgettable events will take the show to new heights year-on-year. We can't wait for all visitors to this year's show to have the chance to meet Claudia in just a few weeks' time."

Claudia takes over as Event Director from David Thompson, who held the role for five years.

Cornell empowers African female leaders

Cornell University in the US has launched an exclusive offer and invitation to women in executive leadership and women in leadership positions to enrol for its two-and-a-half-month online Executive Women and Women in Leadership certificate programmes.

To be delivered through Cornell University's eCornell platform, the main thrust of this programme is to drive women's inclusivity across the African travel, tourism and hospitality value chain.

This is one of the key outcomes of the annual Africa Tourism Leadership Forum held in Botswana in 2022 and 2023, as well as a critical component of the Africa Tourism Innovation Hub initiative being pursued by Africa Tourism Partners and key stakeholders.

Ultimately, the programme aims to foster leadership and professional growth for women in executive and management positions. This special offer gives participants an almost 90% discount on the university's standard programme fees due to a partnership forged between the university and Africa Tourism Partners.

The programmes are mainly for African women's professional and executive development in leadership and executive management positions.

We Are Victoria Falls launches Destination Portal

We Are Victoria Falls has launched a new website to appeal directly to travellers, media, trade and residents. The site, hosted at www.wearevictoriafalls.com is a rich source of information, tips and news covering the range of accommodation, activities, new openings and events, as well as details on how to get to Victoria Falls, entry requirements and more. "As travellers increasingly look online for inspiration and information, having a dedicated destination portal for Victoria Falls is essential" says Tinashe Farawo, Public Relations Manager from Zimbabwe National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority. "It allows us to talk about the whole destination, not just the highlights – showing off the lesser known and more immersive experiences we can offer."

Victoria Falls has an ambition to increase the length of stay in the famous resort city, and attract a more diverse range of visitors. Promoting the full range of different neighbourhoods, products, and activities will help inspire travellers to spend more time in the destination. "It will also help boost more opportunities for smaller players", said Mr Moyo, Executive Director of We Are Victoria Falls. "We have an opportunity to drive more inclusive economic development in our tourism sector."

International Tourism to end 2023 close to 90% of Pre-Pandemic Levels



International tourism is on track to recover almost 90% of pre-pandemic levels by the end of this year. According to the latest data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), an estimated 975 million tourists travelled internationally between January and September 2023, an increase of 38% on the same months of 2022.

The newest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer also shows:

World destinations welcomed 22% more international tourists in the third quarter of 2023 compared to the same

period last year, reflecting a strong Northern Hemisphere summer season. International tourist arrivals hit 91% of pre-pandemic levels in the third quarter, reaching 92% in July, the best month so far since the start of pandemic.

Overall, tourism recovered 87% of pre-pandemic levels in January-September 2023. That puts the sector on course to recover almost 90% by the end of the year. International tourism receipts could reach USD 1.4 billion in 2023, about 93% of the USD 1.5 billion earned by destinations in 2019.

Namibia Tourism Board appoints Bonnie Mbidzo as interim CEO

The Namibia Tourism Board has announced the appointment of Bonnie Mbidzo as Acting Chief Executive Officer; effective December 1.

Mbidzo has been with NTB since 2014, serving as a senior executive member prior to his current appointment. "His focus during his tenure would be to utilise his significance experience in the tourism sector to improve stakeholder engagement and unlock new opportunities," a statement issued by the Board said.

The Acting CEO is expected to collaborate with the board and all stakeholders to enhance operational efficiency and drive stakeholder value. "The board supports the interim appointment and believes the Namibia Tourism Board will be well served by Bonnie's ability to take advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead," the statement added.

NTB says its Directors will soon commence with the recruitment process of a substantive CEO.



Jerry Mabena is the new Chairman of TBCSA



The Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) has elected CEO of Motsamayi Tourism, Jerry Mabena, as its new Chairman of the Board. Mabena takes over the reigns from Mr Blacky Komani who served two terms in the position. Komani showed skill and exemplary leadership for the Council and the tourism sector as a whole when he steered the industry through the difficult period of the COVID-19 pandemic, fostering greater collaboration between the private and public sectors.

The newly minted TBCSA Chairman, Jerry Mabena, will be deputized by Ms Lindelwa Isabelle. The appointments

come on the back of our recent Annual General Meeting (AGM). Both Mr Mabena and Ms Isabelle bring a wealth of experience in the tourism industry having held key positions in the sector, which makes them the perfect team to help the association achieve its strategic objectives over the next two years.

CEO of the TBCSA, Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa, says the new board will help guide the tourism sector toward realizing its goal of boosting economic growth by maximising South Africa's attractiveness to source markets.

Experience Asa Baako One - Dance 2024 - The Ultimate Afro-Dance Music Festival

6th – 10th March 2024, Busua, Western Region, Ghana

Get ready for the return of Asa Baako - One Dance 2024, a five-day festival experience taking place from 6th to 10th March 2024, alongside Ghana Independence. This internationally loved music festival promises to deliver an unforgettable experience filled with live music, sound-systems, parties, dance classes, surfing, treks, tours, yoga, beach games, drum workshops, and much more.

The highlight of the festival is the legendary Jungle Party on Saturday, 9th March, attracting festival goers from across Ghana, West Africa, and beyond. With a diverse line-up of talented DJs and live artists, the festival will showcase various genres including Afrobeats, Amapiano, Afro-EDM, AfroHouse, Afrobeat, Hip-Life, kwaito, and more.

Spanning across ten zones, including Abyssinia, Alaska, AfroShrine, Ahanta Eco Lodge, Africa Rainbow, Busua Beach Resort, Coconut Dream, Kangaroo Pouch, Laughing Goat, Sankofa, Scorpion Lodge, Swingers bar, and the Jungle Party, Asa Baako - One Dance 2024 aims to bring people together from all over the world in one uplifting afro-dance experience.

But Asa Baako is more than just a music festival. It is a movement with a purpose. "We've all been waiting for Asa Baako - a truly magical festival experience



that has its own unique style rooted in Ghanaian culture, bringing everyone together into one dance!" says M3NSA, UK-Ghanaian hip-hop artist. The festival aims to create an oasis of relaxation, enjoyment, togetherness, and fun, while also promoting social and economic empowerment in the region.

Since its inception in 2011, Asa Baako - One Dance has been managed by a dedicated team of event managers, marketers, and producers in Ghana and the UK. They work closely with the local community to ensure that the festival positively impacts the region and

creates opportunities for growth and development. The festival's management team includes producers Kofi Debrah and Yemisi Mokuolu, chairperson Nana Nketsia V Omanhene of Essikado, and ambassador Reggie Rockstone. Key volunteers such as Nii Cheiku, Ebenezer Felix Bentum, Anthony Kobinah Tawiah, Philomena Essel and Missi Biney Esifaah, also contribute to the success of the event.

Asa Baako - One Dance is not just about bringing the world to Africa, but also about showcasing the vibrant culture and talent of Africa to the world. The festival's founder and co-producer, Mr. Kofi Debrah, states, "We are passionate about how music and the arts can create positive social change. Over the past few years, we've been working closely with the local community to deliver programs that promote the region economically and socially." Last year, Asa Baako brought GH3,000,000 of tourism spend into the region, making a significant impact on the local economy.

Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity to be part of the Asa Baako One Dance 2024 experience. Join us in Ghana from 6th to 10th March 2024 for a festival that celebrates music, culture, and unity.

For more information and ticket purchases, visit www.asabaako.com.



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