

# SA Tourism workshop connects SA product owners with travel trade in Ghana

South African Tourism recently hosted a successful trade workshop at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Kumasi City, Ghana, which saw approximately 100 members of the local travel trade meeting with some of the best South African product owners. It was the first of five workshops, held in partnership with Ghana Tourism Federation (GHATOF) and Tour Operators Union of Ghana (TOUGHGA), covering two cities in Ghana and three in Nigeria.



Speaking at the end of the first day of engagement, Evelyn Mahlaba, regional director for Africa at South African Tourism, had nothing but praise for GHATOF and TOUGHGA who had worked with South African Tourism to drive interest of trade in Ghana and delivered the exceptional turnout. “We are completely humbled and, excited by the turn out from the first trade workshop. It was made possible because of relationships forged over the years with the GHATOF and TOUGHGA organisations who have been pivotal to driving the success of this tradeshow. We thank them profusely for guiding us and being our eyes, ears and voice in a market where we are not physically present,” explains Mahlaba.

## Travel appeal

The high turnout at the workshops, she continued, is a clear demonstration that despite the continuing economic challenges the tourism industry is experiencing globally, tourists still yearn for a destination that is affordable, offers variety and is easily accessible.

“To have in excess of one hundred members of trade present is an indication that people want to travel and that South Africa appeals to what the Ghanaian traveller is looking for. The support and enquiries from the local trade are testimony to this. We are confident that the South African product owners with us provide a glimpse of the variety of our offering, to enable tourists to make decisions about their next holiday,” explains Mahlaba.

## SA product owners find growth potential in West African market

Mahlaba is in Ghana with a delegation of South African product owners who have come to meet and do business with the local travel trade. Products including South African Airways, Sun International, Tsogo Sun and Gauteng Tourism Authority, had visited before, whilst others, like the Saxon Hotel, Robben Island, and the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board, were taking part for the very first time.

“Our South African product owners are so passionate about the West African market not only because they realise the lucrative potential the market offers but also because they understand that the growth of their business lies in encouraging inter-regional travel and collaboration and participation,” explains Mahlaba.

This sentiment is echoed by Didier Bayeye-Mbombo, market manager for West Africa and Indian Oceans at Sun International. “We participate in these roadshows and countless others on the continent because we have identified the rest of the continent, including Ghana, as offering the best growth potential for tourism businesses. Since we started participating, we have seen a growing interest in some of our key properties in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban,” he says.

“The trade workshops, organised by South African Tourism, are a valuable business platform and go a long way towards strengthening existing relationships with the trade industry, our partner agents, tour operators and the other corporates here,” he explains.

## **SA Specialist online training programme**

The day’s event culminated in the awarding of certificates to the SA Specialists who had successfully completed South African Tourism’s online training programme. This is a stringent online training programme that provides the trade with the information required to confidently sell the destination better.

At the awards ceremony, Issac Amoah, Anthoniet Quayson and Owusu Boayake Frank, each won an all expense trip to South Africa, courtesy of South African Tourism.

“Our SA specialists really work hard to drive further interest and ultimately sell South Africa to tourists looking for a fulfilling holiday destination. It is a job which requires astute knowledge about the country coupled with an unbridled passion for the work. The SA Specialist programme and the annual fam trips the trade go on, is just one of the ways we try to empower our trade members and now, three of them will be able to enjoy the fruits of their labour with a business and leisure holiday to South Africa,” concludes Mahlaba.

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