

African tourism set for take-off after Covid-19

At the official launch of Africa's Travel Indaba 2023, South Africa's Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille, discussed the value of the sector, emphasising the necessity "for collaboration and innovation to drive growth in the sector." The Minister said competition is essential for destination marketing and tourism. However, "it should be balanced with collaboration to avoid unhealthy practices and foster healthy competition based on quality and innovation."



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

Indaba boasts exhibitors from 21 African countries, including 10 tourism boards and 123 Small Businesses sponsored by the Department of Tourism at R11.7m to feature at the trade show as part of transformation efforts.

She noted that harmonising visa regimes and simplifying the application process is vital for unlocking Africa's tourism potential.

Driving growth through collaboration

According to de Lille, collaboration across the value chain is necessary to make it easier for visitors to move from one country to another within the continent. South Africa, she added, "is leading the way with visa waivers for several African countries and the rollout of an e-visa system to countries like Kenya, Nigeria, and Egypt." She promised that the goal "is to expand the e-visa system to 20 more countries, making Africa a more attractive destination for Africans and international travellers."

For South Africa, we have seen, she said, "encouraging growth in our tourist arrival numbers between January and December 2022, where it reached nearly 5.8 million with over 4 million of those arrivals from African countries." This represents an overall inbound increase of 152.6% for South Africa compared to January to December 2021.

She bemoaned the dearth of celebrating together as Africans, calling for a special event to bridge the chasm of geography, language and culture amongst Africans. "We must stop bickering," she added firmly.

"Our people across the continent of Africa are our greatest asset. As Africans, we must do more to break down the stereotypes by promoting cultural exchanges, celebrating excellence and diversity through song and dance and sharing various cuisines that make Africa the magnet of international tourists," she insisted.

According to the Minister, the future looks bright; "we have, collectively, weathered the Covid-19 hurricane and it should only propel us to exceed our targets."

She said Africa's Travel Indaba offers an opportunity to "honour the African people's incredible ingenuity, fortitude, and magnificence".

Mayor of Durban Councillor Mxolisi Kaunda told audience members that Durban was honoured to host the 2023 Africa's Travel Indaba, a premier trade show in Africa. Kaunda said eThekweni Municipality has identified meetings, conferences, workshops, exhibitions, and business travel as its area of focus for post-Covid recovery. Recent statistics, he revealed, "show that the sector [in Durban] will recover to 95% of the 2019 job levels".

In addressing safety and security concerns, he announced that the city has implemented tough security measures to increase safety, including recruiting 400 Metro Police Officers annually and partnering with community crime-fighting structures and business forums.

"Major investment projects, such as the R600m Platinum Walk at Oceans Mall and the R8 billion Westown development, are expected to boost local tourism," he said.

Call for cooperation and partnership with the private sector

"The city is working closely with product owners to offer affordable prices to boost tourism. Major international events, such as the World Table Tennis Championship Finals and the Hollywoodbets Durban July Experience, are expected to attract thousands of visitors and boost the sector's recovery," he added.

KwaZulu-Natal Premier Nomusa Dube-Ncube underscored the importance of tourism in driving the province's economic recovery, creating job opportunities, and narrowing the gap between the rich and poor. She welcomed all visitors to KwaZulu-Natal and wished them a pleasant stay in the province. She received the greatest ululation when she announced that Durban would soon become the permanent home of Africa's Travel Indaba 40 years after its launch.

Siboniso Duma, KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism, and Environmental Affairs, said, "Africa's Travel Indaba presents a unique opportunity to shape the future of Africa through the connections made over the next three days."

He added, "This event plays a vital role in expanding tourism across the continent while putting South Africa and the KwaZulu-Natal province on the map of Africa and the world."