

Indaba 2012 news wrap

Thousands of travel professionals from across the globe gathered in Durban, South Africa, this month for Indaba 2012, Africa's largest travel trade show that aims to demonstrate there is more to destination marketing on the continent than luxury safaris and adventure tourism.



(Image courtesy www.andBeyond.com)

Africa as a destination is proving to be increasingly popular with the non-traditional feeder markets such as South America, the Far East, India and Eastern Europe.

Another attractive feature boosting corporate travel is many African countries are bucking the global economic trend and experiencing substantial growth. Viable and expanding regional business hubs are developing, the so called *African Lions*, that are increasingly being seen as emerging markets in line with BRICS (the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South African alliance of emerging market powerhouses).

Nigeria is a prime example; it is the continent's largest country by population and second largest by GDP. What makes Nigeria attractive is not limited to possessing precious natural resources such as oil, minerals or tourist attracting landscape. An analysis of GDP across the region shows much of the recent growth coming from sectors such as telecommunications, transport, distribution, agriculture and manufacturing.

Infrastructure growth attractive to international hoteliers

This sort of growth across the continent also makes it increasingly attractive to international hoteliers, many of whom hope in the next decade to mount a viable challenge to the continent's largest hotel company, the Protea Hospitality Group (PHG), for market dominance.



Last month PHG announced an extensive expansion campaign that will see 10 new properties opening under the Protea Hotels and African Pride Hotels banners in Nigeria, Zambia and Uganda in 2012/2013, bringing to more than 140 properties the company's portfolio across eight African countries.

South Africa, too, is emerging from a post Fifa World Cup slump with Tourism Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk recently announcing a year-on-year 3.3% tourist arrival growth in 2011, with more than 6.3 million tourists visiting the country.

Asia grows as a market



(Image courtesy www.andBeyond.com)

The growth in tourism arrivals was in largely due to a 14.6% growth in the emerging markets of Asia - with a 24% increase in arrivals from China and 26% increase in arrivals from India.

He added that the upcoming 2013 African Cup of Nations soccer tournament was a major opportunity for the country to drive arrivals from the African continent.

More than 13 000 travel professionals were in Durban this weekend for Indaba 2012, which is the largest global trade showcase for sub-Saharan Africa, organised under the auspices of South African Tourism.

Quoted before the start of the massive trade show, Thulani Nzima, chief executive officer of South African Tourism, said to be successful in the industry required the joint effort, hard work and cohesion of all partners to achieve continued tourism

growth.

It's no time to relax

"Our industry has done extremely well with our 2011 tourist figures... Now, it is up to everyone in all parts of the tourism value chain - in both the public and private sector - to be united in continuing to aggressively defend our core markets and to pursue new markets which show rich potential," Nzima said. "At the very heart of Indaba is facilitating the best platforms and matchmaking opportunities to conduct business, and to this end senior representatives of influential tourism industry stakeholders, along with over 200 international hosted buyers, are again important guests at Indaba."



Speaking as head of Africa's largest hotel company, Protea Hospitality Group CEO Arthur Gillis said key critical at Indaba this year had been demonstrating the desirability of the African continent to both corporate and leisure inbound operators.

"Africa is open for business and the world needs to know that we won't stand back for anybody. This continent offers a wealth of travel experiences and it is a desirable destination in its own right. The travel and hospitality industry faces a bright future under the African sun."

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