

Travelstart opens in Tanzania

South African company Travelstart has opened an operation in Tanzania to take advantage of Tanzania's emerging online capability, together with its increasing popularity as a destination.



Stephan Ekbergh: "Tanzania's a fantastic leisure destination."

The total Tanzanian travel market is valued at about US\$860 million (more than R6 billion), said Stephan Ekbergh, CEO and founder of Travelstart. In addition, six airlines have recently started flying into Dar es Salaam: Egyptair, Zambezi Airlines, Oman Air, Turkish Airlines, RwandAir and Fly540 (on the Nairobi/ Dar Salaam/Nairobi route). Last year Tanzania earned US\$1.2 billion (about R8.4 billion) from 714 367 foreign tourists and authorities there have strategies in place to increase arrivals to a million by 2012.

"This is a destination and a market that we have been watching for some time," Ekbergh said. "The launch the Travelstart service in Tanzania is driven by the health of the industry and good stability in general. Ever indication is that the Central and East Africa regions are growing in both Internet penetration and technological maturity."

Keen travellers



Tanzanian nationals are keen travellers. Besides travelling domestically, the most popular destinations abroad for Tanzanians are Dubai, London and Mumbai. Online connectivity in Tanzania is good, with half of the 50 million-strong population owning cellphones and with more than a million people having access to the Internet.

"More than half of Tanzania's inbound tourists are business travellers," said Ekbergh. "However, the leisure market is growing and the Tanzanian government has estimated that the economy will make US\$1.7 billion (about R11.9 billion) from the industry next year. It's a fantastic leisure destination, with Kilimanjaro, the Zanzibar islands, and the magnificent Ngorongoro and Serengeti game parks being among its chief visitor drawcards."