

Fit for the future: The 4th E-Tourism Africa Summit launched in Cape Town

The 4th Annual E Tourism Africa Summit was launched today, 16 March, in Cape Town at the quarterly Joint Association Membership Meeting (JAMM) of Cape Town Tourism, FEDHASA Cape, SAACI and SATSA Western Cape.



Damian Cook (left), CEO E Tourism Frontiers, Mariette Du Toit-Helmbold, CEO of Cape Town Tourism and William Price, global emarketing manager for South African Tourism

The JAMM session brought together over 200 delegates to hear about how the tourism industry needs to become Future Fit to benefit from advances in technology and changing global travel trends.

The future sustainability of tourism will be a strong theme at this year's E Tourism Africa Summit, which will take place on 15-16 September at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. South African Tourism is the title sponsor of the summit, with Cape Town Tourism as the host sponsor.

Building on the success of last year's summit, and on valuable feedback from the industry, this year's summit will feature an all-new programme format, with a soon-to-be-announced line up of international speakers from leading travel firms, social networks and best practice destinations from around the globe.

The latest innovations and technologies

During the first day, a selection of international speakers will present not only the latest innovations and technologies, but will also be challenged to demonstrate the opportunities that technology creates for the sustainability of economic growth in a market defined by slow economic recovery, alternative energies and changing demographics.

The second day of the summit will offer delegates the option of attending a full practical online tourism seminar that will help bring tourism stakeholders up to speed on digital marketing, e-commerce management and using social media to promote their businesses. Alternatively, delegates can attend a series of specialised panel discussions - moderated by leading international experts - on key issues for the ongoing development of online tourism across Africa. These sessions will include discussions on the roles of destination managers, travel agents, tour operators, wildlife managers and airlines.

Online tourism growing

Damian Cook, the CEO and founder of E Tourism Frontiers, the company organising the summit, said online tourism was still growing rapidly across the world. "Online travel continues to grow, last year the sec

recorded 7% growth and stands at well over US US\$160 billion (about R1120 billion) in sales. Statistics show that 55% of travel sales are completed online and more than 95% of travel research is done online. Mobile is also a growing area with 28% of mobile users in the UK using their phones to access the internet every day," said Cook.

The E Tourism Frontiers CEO went on to say, "With figures like these, it is clear that online is now the area of choice for travel sales, but we need to look at how we can also use technology to build growth in challenging markets and make our industry more sustainable. This is especially true in Africa, where we are only beginning to realise the full potential of technology for tourism. South Africa and Cape Town are leading in this respect and therefore a logical host country and city for this event, where we will explore ways of working together with both the public and private sector to ensure sustainability and a future fit environment for tourism in Africa", said Cook.

William Price, the global emarketing manager for South African Tourism, said that the Summit will be a great opportunity for the tourism sector to catch up with all the latest online technology. "It is vital that destinations and tourism companies in Africa wake up and smell the cyberspace if they want to gain their rightful share of the vast \$160 billion plus online travel market business. We need to start making online a priority. In Africa we have some of the richest, most diverse and dramatic destinations on the planet and the limitless world of the web to tell our stories", said Price.

Mariette Du Toit-Helmbold, CEO of Cape Town Tourism, said that hosting the E Tourism Africa Summit in Cape Town for the second year running served to highlight the commitment of the city's tourism industry to embracing technology and building on Cape Town's global competitiveness.

"As a destination Cape Town has made great strides in terms of our digital presence. E-marketing is the cornerstone of Cape Town Tourism's marketing strategy. Our website, www.capetown.travel has grown rapidly since its launch in 2008 and our Facebook fan page, [I love Cape Town](#), is widely regarded as a best practice example of effective social networking, with one of the largest groups of destination fans in the world. We also make extensive use of Twitter, Flickr, blogs and e-Newsletters. This year will see the introduction of our real-time booking system and a strong focus on converting web traffic into transactions. We'll also be increasing our online activity with the launch of the new Cape Town brand position, which will be rolled out predominantly via our digital platforms. This year's E Tourism Africa Summit will give us, as an industry, valuable insight and tools to create a more sustainable future in tourism", said the Cape Town Tourism CEO.

The E Tourism Africa Summit will be held at the Cape Town International Convention Centre on 15-16 September 2011.

Registration for the E Tourism Africa Summit is open now: www.e-tourismfrontiers.com

For additional information go to www.e-tourismfrontiers.com or contact info@e-tourismfrontiers.com