

Airbnb announces \$1m investment in community-led tourism projects in Africa

As part of Airbnb's vision to empower communities through home sharing and to promote people-to-people tourism that benefits local families and their communities, the online marketplace has announced a \$1m investment over the next three years to promote community-led tourism projects in Africa.



Chris Lehane (Image Supplied)

The announcement made by Chris Lehane, Airbnb global head of public policy and public affairs, at a press conference in Johannesburg City Hall together with Mayor Herman Mashaba and Hermione Nevill, World Bank Group' Senior Travel Specialist, followed the presentation of a study demonstrating how Airbnb hosts in Africa have welcomed 1.2 million guests to the continent in the past year, while earning a combined \$139m in host-income.

The investments will be put to work in 2018 and will focus on three main areas:

Empowering townships through hosting

As part of Airbnb's belief that home sharing can support greater economic and social empowerment, Airbnb ran a pilot programme earlier this year - together with local partners - to support training in hospitality and technology for residents from townships across the Western Cape. Given its success, Airbnb will expand the programme - which is especially targeted at women and young people from underserved communities - to 15 more township communities across South Africa and scale the programme to other countries in Africa in 2019.



Airbnb empowering communities, spreading the benefits of tourism

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Promoting sustainable and inclusive tourism through technology

Airbnb's vision is to use technology to help spread the benefits of tourism, previously kept in the hands of a few, to the many. In May 2018, Airbnb will host the Africa Travel Summit and bring together 80 thought leaders from across the continent, in Cape Town, to share best practices, exchange ideas and to co-create a vision for how technology can best be used for inclusive and sustainable tourism growth.

Potential attendees - such as governments, tourism boards, development agencies, technology companies, incubators and individuals - can apply to attend the Africa Travel Summit as of today through January 31, 2018. The University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business (UCT GSB) will serve as the Summit's learning partner and organisations such as The World Bank Group (WBG), The United Nations World Travel Organisation (UNWTO) and The Cape Innovation and Technology Initiative (CiTi) will also take part in the event.

Supporting locals and non-profits through Airbnb travel

As part of Airbnb's vision to promote people-to-people travel that helps generate new revenue streams for more communities, Airbnb will expand the Airbnb Experiences offer across the Western Cape. This will help more locals to turn their passions into economic opportunities and showcase the best authentic experiences that guests might otherwise miss. Airbnb will particularly focus on increasing social impact experiences - the proceeds of which go directly to a non-profit organisation.



Image Supplied by Airbnb

Building a new economic engine

Lehane said: "Africa is home to some of the most welcoming communities and breathtaking landscapes on earth. By leveraging technology to boost people-to-people tourism in Africa, we can help build a new economic engine for local families and their communities, while helping more guests enjoy magical travel experiences through the eyes of locals. Airbnb travel is already delivering significant economic benefits for Africa and today's investment will help kickstart new benefits for more people across Africa."

Taleb Rifai, secretary-general for UNWTO said: "UNWTO welcomes this initiative by Airbnb, a UNWTO Affiliate Member, as an effective means to promote development in Africa."

Hermione Nevill, senior travel specialist at the World Bank Group, said: "Tourism in Africa is expected to continue its rapid growth. It is vital to ensure this growth occurs sustainably and drives poverty reduction across the continent. It is encouraging to see travel technology platforms such as Airbnb investing in Africa, and piloting more inclusive forms of tourism growth."

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