

African tourism expected to grow further in 2017

 By Josephine Wawira

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During the first half of 2016, worldwide international tourist arrivals increased by 4% according to United Nations World Travel Organization (UNWTO), as compared to the period between January and June the previous year. Specifically, Sub-Saharan Africa is noted to be on an upward recovery curve at +12%. This is a promising growth trend in Africa's tourism which shows incomparable nimbleness to persistent challenges such as terrorism threats and a negative portrayal of the continent by international media.



Image: By Anna Om

The World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC) Economic Impact 2016, Africa Report shows that domestic travel spending generated 62.3% of direct travel and tourism GDP in 2015 compared with 37.7% for international tourism receipts. Domestic travel spending was expected to grow by 3.8% in 2016 to USD80, and rise by 4.5% per annum to USD123.8bn in 2026.

This boost in African tourism is simultaneous to the economic growth being experienced across many parts of the continent. The WTTC report predicts that direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP will increase by 4.8% per annum, to USD121.3bn which is approximately 3.2% of GDP by 2026. "Such encouraging estimates are a big boost to industry players' confidence to incessantly foster Africa as a top tourist destination, to achieve its competitive advantage against other regions," remarked Cyrus Onyiego, country manager for Jumia Travel Kenya.

Primary contributors to the exciting growth include travel agents, hotels and restaurants, leisure service providers, and airlines among others.

2017, International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development



Image: Tharin Kaew kanya

Africa is also on the forefront in promoting sustainable tourism, in line with the UNWTO's universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this milieu, 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development aims at supporting change in consumer behavior, business practices, and policies towards more sustainable tourism as stated by the World Tourism Organization.

While African Tourism still has a great deal of goals to achieve, we cannot overemphasize the milestones accomplished in the past decade. A resilient spirit engulfs the copious obstacles that stand in the way for success. So yes, while the African tourism has been one of the most promising sectors in the continent, more growth is still expected in 2017.

ABOUT JOSEPHINE WAWIRA

Josephine Wawira is a consultant in communication and public relations with over six years of progressive writing and broadcast experience. She is currently a writer for Africa's online hotel booking portal, Jumia Travel, focusing in the areas of travel, tourism, and hospitality as it relates to Africa.

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