

13 000 meet to discuss tourism deals, strategies, prospects



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9 May 2011

More than 13 000 delegates from all over the world have convened since Friday, 6 May 2011, in Durban at the 2011 Tourism Indaba - Africa's top travel show - to discuss tourism prospects, strategies and deals, as South Africa begins 'aggressive' marketing to lure 15 million foreign tourists to her shores, and increase tourism's total contribution to the economy to R499 billion by 2020.

A 'Leave behind ordinary' advert, which began airing Saturday night in global TV networks, including CNN and BBC World, is set to be viewed by over one billion people.

"When we talk about tourism, we often talk about policies, statistics and objectives. Tourism is much more than that. Tourism is about people," tourism minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk told delegates at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre Durban on Saturday night.

Grew phenomenally in 2010

Tourism, which grew phenomenally in SA by 15.1% in 2010 due to the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, has been described by the minister as a central pillar of the country's development.

As the minister spoke, the exhibition halls downstairs in the main foyer and a few metres away from the auditorium were bustling with people, products and discussions, with interested parties wandering along various stands - and making enquiries - and looking forward to closing deals which they believe will help them take their businesses to the next level.

An estimated 2000 exhibitors, including SADC countries, provinces and municipalities, and accommodation, hospitality and marketing organisations, are currently exposing their products and services in the hope of catching the eye of inquisitive visitors and tourism investors.

With nearly 3000 international hosted buyers and visitors attending Indaba 2011, Van Schalkwyk stressed that the gathering remained Africa's most important tourism and business networking event, with thousands of meetings taking place expected to inject millions of rands into the tourism economy.

Job-creation potential

President Jacob Zuma said last week in Cape Town that his country was taking tourism very seriously, given its job-

creation potential. "That is why we have identified tourism as one of the six job drivers in our New Growth Path framework," the 68-year-old head of state said.

"More significantly, this sector has become a fertile environment for entrepreneurs and small, medium and micro enterprises."

"Historically disadvantaged people are increasingly making their careers in tourism, creating jobs for others and building their own businesses. This is particularly true in terms of job creation in rural areas, as well as among women and the youth. We have ambitious but achievable plans."

SA Tourism said it has introduced at this year's Indaba a unique multitouch table surface, allowing multiple users to view and engage with SA destination information, video content and social media platforms, which can be viewed at its stand.

Further innovations

The Indaba TV channel, as well as new networking platforms and a focus on minimum standards in promoting responsible tourism, are also some of the innovations.

SA Tourism CEO Thandiwe January-McLean said: "Our key marketing strategy will continue to entrench our work in our core tourism markets, while also paying particular attention to emerging markets which have shown considerable potential, in the Americas, Asia and Africa in particular."

SA Tourism's additional global campaigns this year include the continuation of the National Geographic Adventurers Wanted campaign, aimed at entrenching SA's leadership as an adventure destination in seven key markets (Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and the UK), as well as a new Sho't Left campaign encouraging domestic travel by South Africans.

For more:

- Bizcommunity Search: [Tourism Indaba](#)
- Official website: www.indaba-southafrica.co.za
- Twitter Search: [Indaba2011 OR "tourism indaba" OR #indaba](#)
- Google News Search: [Tourism Indaba](#)

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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