

Tourism key to Africa's growth

By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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Opening this year's Africa's Travel Indaba, which took place between 1-3 May, South African Minister of Tourism Derek Hanekom quoted the words of Nelson Mandela, when he opened the first Indaba in a free South Africa: "It is in tourism that nature and humankind meet most equitably and profitably. It also provides resources for the conservation of our natural heritage. Tourism is making an important and valuable contribution to the South African economy." Twenty-four years later, these words still echo through the tourism sector, says Hanekom.



Image via [Travel Indaba](#)

Tourism, he says, can make a positive and meaningful contribution to Africa. "We must work together to replace the often negative narrative of Africa with the real stories of nations on the move."

In 2018, 67 million international tourists visited Africa, a growth of 7% – more than the global average of 6% – and 8.5% of Africa's GDP, supporting 24 million jobs, and/ or 6.7% of all jobs on the continent.

Last year, Ethiopia was the fastest growing destination in Africa – increasing by 48.6%. This growth can be attributed to the country establishing itself as a regional travel hub, with Air Ethiopia bringing a number of tourists to Africa. Kenya grew 37% in 2018, surpassing the two million mark for the first time.

This is impressive the Minister says, but overall travel GDP contribution to Africa is still below the global average of 10,4%. This means there is huge potential to unlock. "By 2030 1.8 billion people will be travelling the globe and Africa will increase its current share of 5% to 7% of all global arrivals. This is 126 million arrivals – double what we have now. To achieve this, we will have to achieve 5% of growth every year."

Africa has the base of what travellers are seeking, says Hanekom. "China and US travellers are seeking new experiences and Africa can offer them this with scenery, wildlife, culture, food and adventure. Tourists are looking for meaning experiences and that is what we offer."



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Hanekom also drew attention to the fact that our continent is also our own market. "All countries in Africa have the potential for domestic growth. Intracontinental tourism from Africa's rapidly growing economies and a rapidly growing middle class is an opportunity begging to be exploited."

To achieve this, we need improved collaborate efforts between our countries.

"We need to action the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, especially with respect to the free movement of people everywhere on the continent and easing or dropping of visa requirements in the next years to establish this. Africa's governments need to work together, and all countries need to sign the Single Africa Air Transport Market, signed only by 23 countries to date."

“ In closing, collaboration is key! We need to come together as a continent and market our countries and our continent collectively. [#AfricaMovesYou](#) [#Indaba19](#) pic.twitter.com/UN4QBfsvM8— Travel Indaba (@travel_indaba) [May 4, 2019](#) ”

It intends to drive down airfares by allowing more airlines to freely access and increase the frequency of flights to more countries. "We need to be united in our aspirations to build and brand Africa as a continent of success and opportunities," says Hanekom.

He believes that the call by President Ramaphosa to double the number of visitors to South Africa from 10.5 million to 21 million by 2030 is doable. "The private sector is aligned to this and has identified the actions steps to achieve this. The 2019 indaba will help us to achieve this goal which will create two million additional jobs, which is significant to our economy."

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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