

ZIMBABWEAN TOURISM RISES FROM THE ASHES



Finance Minister Samuel Mumbengegwi claims that Zimbabwe's tourism industry is on a recovery path and that it will considerably grow this year. "The tourism sector is expected to grow by 34% this year because tourist arrivals have grown to 1.4 million people this year from 1.1 million last year," the finance minister said.

The tourism industry is vital for the Zimbabwean economy. It earned US\$300 million in 1999 but than the earnings dropped below US\$50 million in 2003. Zimbabwe has to face image problems. The country is considered unsafe and unstable. Zimbabwean authorities deny the country to be risky and they have started a huge marketing campaign to change the perception of their country. The Government's massive tourism marketing program was successful and it has managed to lure tourists from Far East, and from the traditional markets of Europe and North America.

"The world is starting to dismiss the whole notion about Zimbabwe's safety," Zimbabwe Tourism Authority chairman Mr. Shingi Munyeza said. He also claims that Zimbabwean prices are competitive. "This is one of the main reasons why Zimbabwe's tourism industry would come back right soon," Mr. Shingi Munyeza added. The numbers confirm the positive development of the Zimbabwean tourism industry. The tourism sector reported a growth of 45 percent in 2006 and it is already up 34 percent since January. Some companies even plan to build new hotels as they expect the demand to rise continuously. Hotel group Zimsun, for example, will construct three new hotels in Beitbridge, the Eastern Highlands and Harare early in 2008, which will add an estimated 1 000 rooms.

There is plenty to see in this African country. The main attractions are the Victoria Falls, the Great Zimbabwe, Hwange National Park and the Eastern Highlands. Tourists can also enjoy their time in numerous Zimbabwean facilities for sport and recreation.

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