

KENYA REGAINS STABILITY AND LURES INTERNATIONAL HOTEL BRANDS



Kenyan tourism received a serious blow recently due to the post-election violence. Nevertheless, the situation has calmed down and new investors are considering Kenya a good destination for their operations. More international hotel brands want to invest in this African country. Among them there are Kempinski, Sheraton, Marriott and the Accor Group of France. Some known hotel brands, like for example Hilton, Intercontinental or Serena, are already present in Kenya.

Mike Macharia from the Kenya Association of Hotel Keepers and Caterers hopes that the presence of international hotels will improve Kenya's image as a world class tourist destination. Rose Kwena from Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) expects the big hotel brands to lure wealthy tourists.

Kenyan tourism is slowly recovering from the recent decline when the numbers of tourists dropped by 73 per cent. In July and August the numbers of visitors increased. They were, however, still 40 per cent down when compared to the previous years. The improvement was caused also by the fact that several airlines have resumed their flights to the country. For example the Blue Panorama, Eurofly, Air Italy or First Choice have resumed flights to the coastal town of Mombasa. Some people, nevertheless, think Kenya should not be dependent on foreign airlines. They claim a Kenyan airline should take care of tourists willing to visit the country.

Last year, 1.8 million tourists visited the country. Kenyan officials hope to bring in 3 million visitors annually by 2012. The expected steady growth in numbers of visitors makes Kenya an ideal spot for hotel investors. However, the Kenyan tourism industry needs to overcome still many obstacles. There is the global economic recession, growing oil prices as well as fierce competition in Africa. Therefore marketing is important and the arrival of known international hotel brand could be used as a part of an effective marketing campaign.

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