

EAC: New Initiatives to Help the Tourism Sector

In an effort to attract more tourists and tap into new markets, both locally and globally, East African Community leaders have agreed to jointly market Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda as a single tourism attraction entity at the approaching expos and key events in the East African Community and globally.



Citizens came to learn of these incentives from the national co-ordinator of the tripartite initiative, Monica Mukaruliza, when she was reporting on the development of the marketing initiative at the ministerial meeting where they were discussing “Modalities of the

Implementation Directives of the Northern Corridor Integration Projects”.

In addition, Ms Mukaruliza told the meeting that the foreign initiative was already marketing the three countries as a single tourist destination.

To showcase their dedication and commitment to this course, the three East African countries; Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda at the Indaba Fair in South Africa held a joint exhibition and promotion at the travel trade show.

To tap into the local markets, Ms Mukaruliza brought to the attention of citizens at the meeting that the three countries were separately carrying out campaigns in bid to create awareness about the single tourist visa that is to grant tourists permission to cross borders without the need to further look for travelling documents. For only \$100, tourists will be able to travel between Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda without much hustle. This was arrived at after further and lengthy consultations between the heads of the states.



The cross-border visa is a relief to many tourists given that before the introduction of it, tourists used to pay \$50 to cross the Kenyan-Ugandan border and \$30 more while moving in and out of Rwanda. This

initiative is expected to attract a big fraction of 50 million tourists who annually visit the continent to each member country.

Sharing the same faith, Kenyan interior Cabinet Secretary Joseph Ole Lenku confirmed that through integration of services like tourism, the East African Community stands a great chance of increasing its trading capacity and compete effectively with the rest of the world. Another thing the three states are working on to ensure that tourism sector is salvaged is the liberalization of services such as transport.

Liberalization of transport sector is to ensure that there is easy movement of people and goods across the region. To show commitment, Cabinet Secretary Ole Lenku agreed to draft a plan on how liberalization will work before presenting it to the leaders of the member countries for further guidance.

Meanwhile, discussions are still underway as to whether to allow citizens of member countries to use their national ID cards and Voters card as a form of identification during movement within the region. Burundi and South Sudan have also shown interest and were incorporated into the group and even asked to come up with ideas and incentives they would like to take part in.



Other thing discussed in the meeting was the peace initiative, which is intended to bring order and ensure that everyone is safe regardless of where they are in the region. To answer this call, the member states agreed to cautiously work together in ensuring that their states are free from terrorism threats and other local threats such as robbery. It was agreed that for tourism sector to not only survive but thrive, tourists need to feel safe and so every member state agreed to work on security in their respective countries.

Improvement in tourism sector is expected to create a lot of employment opportunities to local citizens and as a community, the member states agreed to liberalize labor market with the aim of granting citizens the freedom to work in any country within the region without being subjected to the never ending and tiring unnecessary barriers.

Date: 2014-06-30

Article link:

<http://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-east-africa-new-initiatives-to-boost-the-tourism-sector-article2438>