

Wellness Tourism in Sub-Saharan Africa

Steadily Developing

Africa's image suffers, and it has been suffering for ages. The rest of the world only hears about Somali pirates, Ebola outbreaks, the poverty, violence and famine that plague the continent. However, Africa is going through changes, much like any other region on the planet. And many of these changes are for the better.



The Global Wellness Institute has shown, in their yearly report, that Africa and especially the Sub-Saharan region became the market with the fastest registered growth when it comes to wellness tourism. And it managed to do so in only a couple of years.

The most recent report on the region reveals a great increase in revenue from wellness tourism. From the year 2012 to 2013 there is a reported growth of 57 percent, from USD 2 billion in 2012 to USD 3.1 billion in the following year. The amount of trips has registered a spike as well, going from 2.2 million a year to 4.2 million, showing a 90 percent increase, so nearly double in the span of only one year.

The growth trend also affects the number of spas. The year 2007 saw only 14 Sub-Saharan countries having spas, yet by 2013 that number increased to 42. Between 2007 and 2013, the total number of spas went to 1554, showing a 300 percent growth in only 6 years.

Inspired Citizen founder, Anthony Berklich, underlined the fact that the Sub-Saharan region received bad press, talking about the rickety political context, the infrastructure or lack of, the presence of terrorists and illness, however he gained a positive outlook as he's seen countries that make a substantial effort in improving Africa's image. He praised Gambia and Gabon especially.



Berklich mentioned the signing of a deal between Aman Resorts and the government of Gabon for

developing hotels and bringing in the know-how needed for wellness tourism and ecotourism, a five year-long process. It all starts with Gabon's capital, Libreville only to later expand in the whole country. He explained that Gabon's stability is what makes the process easier, allowing for the large investments and attempts at bringing in the market of luxury travel.

Gambia is not far behind Gabon, and having access to the ocean and a coastline certainly helps. Bijilo Beach hosts the Coco Ocean Resort and Spa. Private pools, villas, royal suites and 14 rooms designed for treatment, and a spa that as good as any out there. BomBom Island Resort brings Principle Island into contention, according to Berklich. He highlighted the idea of seclusion, the wellness and yoga practices at the resort.

Global Wellness Institute's most recent yearly report also mentioned Senegal, Namibia, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Mauritius and Seychelles as countries that register an increase regarding wellness tourism. Alongside them, there's South Africa, an already veteran player on the market.

The head of research for the Global Wellness Institute, Beth McGroarty, pointed out that safari lodges now have a much higher level of comfort, with spas, yoga and massage on the menu. She also stated that, although the flights can be costly, often ranging between USD 1000 and 2000, once there, things and services become quite affordable, the perks of a growing, young market.

Tourists can expect an emphasis on nature, adventure in the great outdoors, safari, but also massages, yoga, spa and healing practices rooted in the many Sub-Saharan traditions. McGroarty said that Africa had a plethora of practices and ingredients that are native to the region.



Wellness Travel Media co-founder, journalist and wellness coach, Dena Roche praised the Cape Town One and Only resort for their skin exfoliation and wrapping techniques, involving sea salt and seaweed. She also mentioned the use of Rooibos for treatments targeting stress. Also in South Africa, Roach vouched for the Johannesburg Saxon Hotel, a staple of luxury that blends modern and ancient methods in their treatments and facials.

Insiders, although acknowledging the effort and progress that the Sub-Saharan region registered regarding wellness tourism, underline the need for patience. They estimate a decade-long process until tourists go there just like in any other already well-established destination.

Berklich's opinion revolves around the ideas of informing and educating the public, but also rebranding, all necessary actions in bringing tourists to an otherwise almost virgin land, from a wellness perspective.

Only then would tourists be inclined to spend so much on airline tickets and rejuvenate in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Date: 2016-03-28

Article link:

<http://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-wellness-tourism-developing-fast-in-africa-article2680>