

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA TO LEAD WORLD TOURISM GROWTH?



In recent decades, African history has been littered with events, which have put off many tourists from visiting. There was the horrific Rwandan genocide of 2004, in which almost 1 million people were brutally murdered, and the Kikambala terrorist attacks in Kenya. Perhaps the most famous unpleasant events occurred in South Africa during the country's apartheid period. However, these countries have now more than recovered in the tourism sector and are expected to show the biggest growth rate amongst all the countries in the world this year.

This prediction is based upon recent figures, new tourist activity and a report from the United Nations World Tourist Organisation. The beginning of last year saw a world all-time record 806 million tourists visit all countries worldwide. The most significant improvement came in Kenya and South Africa, where 10.6% more visitors were welcomed than in the previous year. This figure was derived from the amount of tourists arriving to these countries by air and by land. For example, in Kenya's case, 1.6 million tourists more arrived in 2006 than in 2005. These were people passing through the border passes with Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia. The increase in the amount of tourists arriving by air was similarly significant.

The reasons behind these positive changes are thought to lie in the fact that Sub-Saharan Africa is now considered to be a much safer destination with a lot more to offer. Let's not forget that exchange rates are extremely favourable for the European and North American visitor. Gone are the days whereby people consider Africa to be nothing more than an opportunity to take a closer view at wildlife and experience safari trips at first hand. Africa seems to have been discovered again, this time by tourists. Visitors are now sky diving in Tanzania, travelling to Uganda to taste the local tea and coffee and going on religious holidays to the churches of Ethiopia. South Africa has similarly become a popular destination for township tourism, as more and more people wish to taste the atmosphere of real South Africa. The country has also become popular for sports tourism, a factor certain to increase at the 2010 World Cup as football fans are bound to aid the country's growth.

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