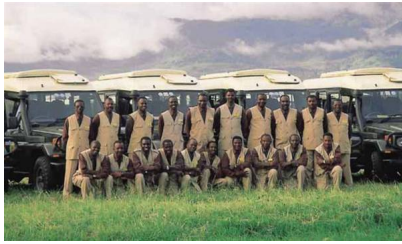


KENYA PLANS TO ATTRACT 3 MILLION TOURISTS BY 2015



It is now official that the government of Kenya is eyeing 3 million tourists by the year 2015 up from the current average of 1 million.

Ibrahim Mohamed, principal secretary in the East African community, tourism and commerce ministry indicated that both Kenya tourism board and the private sectors players had changed their strategies so as to make the country top tourist destination.

Apart from the traditional tourists from Europe and the USA, the country is seeking more tourists from the East and from within Africa. **The principal secretary further indicated the country's plans to increase the number of tourists from Nigeria to about 50,000 this year.** With the current direct flights between Lagos and Nairobi, there was a better access to Kenya by the visitors from Nigeria.

On the other hand, the country will seek to create awareness in the East and more specifically in Kuwait. The numbers of tourists visiting from Kuwait are way too low, and this has been attributed to the improper awareness in the region.

At approximately 12 percent of the country's GDP, tourism is one of the main boosters of the country's economy. In a statement released, Ibrahim Mohamed said that most of these tourists were actually choosing other destinations with similar facilities as Kenya. This could all be attributed to the low level of awareness.

With 1.78 million tourists in 2012, the country recorded a 0.3 percent decline from the previous year. This has been attributed to several factors such as Euro zone crisis as well as insecurity. Unfortunate incidences such as the recent west gate mall attack have been negatively affecting the tourism sector. However, the acting marketing manager of the tourism board, Fatima Bashir assured tourists that Kenya was a safe destination to take their holidays.

Reiterating on security issue, she said the country had now set a tourism police unit. The unit had been deployed in all major cities around the country. Adding to the same point, she talked of the 24-7 call center in all tourist vehicles that kept them in touch with the Nairobi police unit.

The current expansion of the JKIA airport and the establishment of a single visa for the East African countries was a step forward to make this region a number one destination, she insisted. The Terminal four completion will increase the number of passengers by 2.5 million. These were among the many strategies put forward that will enable the country utilize its full potential in the tourism sector.

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