

MADAGASCAR PLANS TO ATTRACT 1M VISITORS BY 2020



After years of turmoil Madagascar has finally found political stability and the Ministry of Tourism announced a plan to attract 1 million tourists by 2020. In order to achieve the goal minister Ramarcel Benjamina Ramanantsoa has launched a project that includes a number of measures to prepare the island to accommodate this massive number of arrivals.

The plan includes \$10 million investment in establishments that are safe, have attractive environment for business infrastructure and development. **The government has launched an offer for major international hotel chains to make investments particularly intended to attract high-end tourism.**

The promotion focuses on other Indian Ocean islands including Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles, La Reunion and Mayotte.

The Royal Beach project is one of the examples that involved national and international investors and has received the support from the new government. Promotion of the destination is one of the main aims of the Government tourism development plan. Minister has suggested increasing the available budget to USD 300,000.

The promotion involves a diversification of tourist attractions with an enhancement of ethnographic and cultural attractions of the country. The authorities also invest in training to ensure a high level of hospitality services to the visitors.

Madagascar seeks to leverage its traditional resources, nature and unique ecotourism at the pristine beaches. Minister Ramanantsoa said: "We will put the emphasis on cultural tourism, starting from the rural destinations, creating 'cultural villages' and involving local population." **The first two 'villages' will be created in Sainte-Marie and Nosy Be island, north of Madagascar, which is very well known as a tourist destination among Italians.**

According to the minister, the involvement of locals in the project of 'cultural villages' should, increase the safety of tourists. The local population will be at the forefront in protecting tourists because it will become a serious source of income.

The ministry launched the promotion of twenty-one national parks and reserves which will be given concessions for investors. Madagascar has also started the creation of training centers to increase the level of services to the international standards.

The minister is also planning to diversify the offers on the island. Madagascar is unique because of the diversity of species on the island and beaches, but these two offers are not sufficient to enhance the 'entire territory. The country has opened a new front by joining the International Surfing Association, which represents top destinations for surfing. Such a move brought good response both from private investors and traditional tourist markets such as Australia.

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