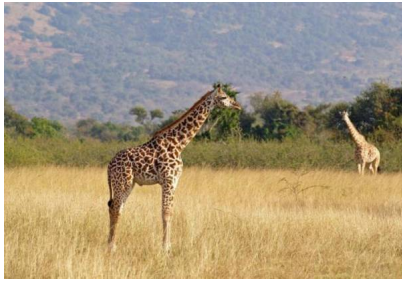


RWANDA LAUNCHED NEW MASTER PLAN TO DIVERSIFY ITS TOURISM OFFER



The numbers of incoming tourists to Rwanda have dropped in recent years. This has left the Rwandan development board with no choice but to make a long-term plan to improve the situation, Rwanda's international reputation and make some money.

Many people think of Rwanda as a distant African wilderness with a history full of wars and conflict. It is most often juxtaposed with the infamous slaughter of almost a million people in 1994. There has been some success in changing the national reputation and switching the bloodstained machete to images of stunning nature and Rwandan gorillas yet **there is still a long way to go for Rwanda to enjoy mass success on an international scale.** One problem is its accessibility as only the capital Kigali is accessible by air and going through surrounding countries is less than ideal.

Traditionally, Rwanda has focused on its gorillas and luring nature enthusiasts to observe these magnificent creatures in their natural habitat. This has, however, often been a poorly organized area of tourism and, again, has to come through Kigali. The Rwanda Development Board recently launched a detailed master plan focusing on the promotion of other Rwandan regions and other areas of nature tourism. This will hopefully help to eradicate a situation like last year, when visits to Rwanda dropped by 6%.

So what else does Rwanda have to offer? Firstly, **there is a great number of volcanic areas, including the Nyungwe area, which has often been described as the most inspiring volcano area of Africa.** It is also hoped that the Rwandans can promote bird watching and forest walking trips. There is also the possibility of "tree top walking", which is a certain lure for those without the problem of being afraid of heights.

The master plan however also includes intensive promotion of the country as a MICE destination. The meetings industry represents a very attractive market for the country's economy. Therefore a number of venues has been opened or are currently being constructed.

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