

KENYA, SOUTH AFRICA, AND GAMBIA COMPETE FOR NIGERIAN TOURISTS



As the tourism industry contributes more and more to the GDP, African countries discover new markets to try to bring in more revenue from tourism. UNWTO says that tourism is now among the biggest and most quickly-growing economic sectors globally, with growth of arrivals in Sub-Saharan Africa at roughly 5 percent.

In response to this trend, countries like Kenya, South Africa, and Gambia are beginning to target Nigerian tourists to increase their foreign profits. **Currently, tourism has contributions of 11 percent to Kenya's GDP, 3.6 percent for South Africa's GDP, and roughly 16 percent for Gambia's GDP.**

The department in charge of marketing South Africa as a tourist destination, SAT (South Africa Tourism) built a new regional office last year in the city of Lagos. According to the Tourism Minister Schalkwyk, this decision was a result of the realization that, out of all African countries, Nigeria contributes the highest number of tourist arrivals in South Africa.

SAT statistics say that, in the year 2012 alone, 73,282 of all tourists who arrived in South Africa were from Nigeria. Nigerian tourist arrivals in South Africa grew in 2013, expanding by a whopping 15.4 percent compared to the previous year. This leaves the total number of Nigerian arrivals in South Africa at 84,589. Schalkwyk is optimistic that these numbers will continue to expand in coming years.

It should be noted that South Africa is not the only African country to target Nigeria as a primary source of tourist arrivals - Kenya has also pinpointed the country as a prime opportunity for tourism growth. A recent survey on international, local and regional travel with data gathered from 2014 bookings revealed that Nigeria currently contributes the highest numbers of African tourist arrivals in Kenya.

KTB, the Kenya Tourism Board, says that tourist arrivals to this East African country in 2012 came in at 15,029 arrivals. Of these arrivals, 1,340 were visiting on business, 968 were there for conference, and 9,682 were there on vacation. **Since the year 2013, KTB says that they have been aiming at 50,000 tourists.**

To make this goal a reality, the Kenyan government began a new visa system that permits Nigerian visitors to get a visa at their entrance point, which makes the process a lot faster. Kenya is also making access to their country easier for Nigerians through Kenyan Airways, their national carrier which offers direct flight to Lagos (and recently Abuja) from Nairobi.

Gambia also found Nigeria to be an opportunity for significant growth in tourism. Gambian Tourist Minister suggests that Nigerians should pick Gambia as a prime business and holiday stop, because of both the country's friendliness and because of Gambia's opportunities for ecotourism.

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