

KENYA HOPES TO ATTRACT 1M CHINESE TOURISTS ANNUALLY



More Chinese tourists are expected to visit Kenya according to a senior tourism official. There are two essential reasons: the direct flights from mainland China to Kenya introduced recently and efforts put in to market the East African nation as a tourist destination.

According to Muriithi Ndegwa, managing director, Kenya Tourist Board, more and more Chinese tourists are contacting the local tour operators in China and tour marketers from Kenya who are based in China to enquire about planning a visit to the renowned Masai Mara National Park as well as other places in the country.

The board, responsible for promoting the East African nation as a tourist destination across territories, expects that **the launch of direct flights by China Southern Airlines and increased activities of the local as well as international hotels in Kenya would drive a larger number of Chinese tourists into the country.**

Ndegwa said that Chinese tourists in large numbers will visit the country because of China Southern Airlines' enviable fantastic track record around the world. In August, China Southern Airlines introduced three weekly flights to Kenya. According to Ndegwa, the growth potential is very high because the number of outbound travelers from China is 110 million.

In order to showcase the different tour packages offered to travelers, Kenya held the Magical Kenya Travel Expo for the fifth time in October 2015 (from 15 to 17), hoping that it would attract at least 1% of the 110 million Chinese travelers annually.

Ndegwa added that the goal of the Expo was to bring to the attention of the Chinese tourists the varied attractions available at the 59 national game parks in the country. He added that Kenya's safari product is known all over the world for its diversity. The Kenya Tourist Board official also said that facilities at the airport are being expanded in order to accommodate the increase in the arrival of international tourists.

In fact, **the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport located in Nairobi is being upgraded to handle as many as 20 million passengers annually.** Additionally, the hotels are also being pushed to upgrade their facilities by the tourism authorities. For this purpose, a hotel grading system, including the creation of additional market segments within the tourism sector, has also been introduced. According to Ndegwa, a new system of pricing for national game reserves is also being planned to attract more premium visitors.

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