

TOURISM IN SENEGAL: REVENUE ACCOUNTS FOR 300 BILLION



A recent report by the hotel association Jovago estimated that tourism in Senegal contributes to the local economy 300 billion CFA francs (EUR 453.5 million), according to its authors, an indication of the sector's improving condition.

Tourism in Senegal is doing well according to the figures in the report, said Guillaume Pepin the general manager of the association.

The objective of this report is to make reliable and useful data available to journalists and professionals in the tourism and hospitality industries, explained the authors in the research.

"The study offers a positive portrayal of Senegal's tourism placing it on the top of West African countries," said Mr. Pepin.

"A single tourist spends EUR400 on average when visiting Senegal and the tourism sector currently earns around 300 billion CFA francs, " he added.

Over the period 2013-2014, Senegal benefited from the average hotel occupancy rate of 35% across the country, with 3.5 days average stay compared to the 20% seen in other countries, according to Mr. Pepin, citing data of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

"Dakar holds 51% of the accommodation capacity compared to 20% for the Petite-Côte (small coast) and the Sine Saloum, 14% for Casamance and 15% for other areas of the country," he noted.

The driving force behind Dakar's tourism lies in the fact that the Senegalese capital is where business and leisure tourism meet. The area notably has several meeting and conference venues as well as beaches and historic sites.

However, it does give rise to certain challenges to be overcome for tourism to keep its promise, namely more than 50 thousand jobs in the current year according to Mr. Pepin.

Among these challenges are the lack of skilled labor in the hospitality and tourism sector, the lack of tour guides with extensive knowledge of Senegal's history, the lack of infrastructure, especially in the interior of the country, the lack of promotion of Senegal as a travel destination, and the Senegalese people's own lack of awareness when it comes to their tourist sites/attractions.

According to the head of the Jovago association, stakeholders should also focus on the 7 Senegalese sites included on the UNESCO's heritage list to further promote tourism in Senegal.

The Stone Circles of Senegambia (Kaolack), the Saloum Delta's national park, Gorée Island (Dakar), the Bassari country with its Bassari cultural landscapes, peul and Bedik, the National Bird Park in Djoudj and the Niokolo-Koba National Park are all inscribed on the list.

The development of nature tourism in Casamance, would bring a lot more to the Senegalese economy, if the area had a better equipped healthcare infrastructure, reported the Jovago officials.

They also believe that Senegal can count on e-tourism, since 7.5 million people have access to the Internet, as well as over 50% of the hotels, highlights the report, whereby efforts are needed as only 11% of transactions are made online, compared to 98% of payments made at the hotel.

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