

THE GAMBIA INVESTS IN TOURISM



The Gambia has been trying to attract visitors and improve its international profile. A financial injection is coming in order to help local tourism sector revive and grow.

The Gambia is not a spectacularly large country, but local people have gained the reputation of being one of the most welcoming folk in Africa and the country is often called the 'Smiling Coast'. **Tourism has been growing and is now a major source of income for the Gambian economy, accounting for approximately 12% of local GDP.** It is also significant for the job market, as nearly 100,000 people are currently employed in tourism and related industries. Local government recently introduced an ambitious plan for tourism in The Gambia, as President Jammeh along with the Hon. Minister of Tourism & Culture revealed the new marketing strategy and tourism logo. According to the official announcements, a major investment will be made in order to support the new aspiring plans to revive Gambian tourism.

The aim of the new strategy seems fairly straightforward; **present the country at its best and highlight its unique features from natural attractions, the arts, ecotourism and bird watching to wondrous cultural variety and friendliness of local people.** The Gambia is also seeking financial assistance from the World Bank, having announced \$ 3 million investment to be made to support the sector. President Jammeh also revealed plans to establish a National Theatre Complex which will become a platform for the performing arts industry and will help promote local unique cultural heritage.

The hospitality sector is also growing and the country has recently participated in numerous international projects, festivals and conferences in order to promote itself. **One issue which is still being addressed** in the light of all these efforts **is safety and security.** The President emphasized the importance of improving the country's reputation and admitted this is one of the main priorities for immediate future.

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