

Tourism in Africa: Harnessing Tourism for Improved Growth and Livelihoods

Key Messages

1. **Tourism is an effective tool for job creation, development and economic growth.** There are currently more than 200 million unemployed young people in Sub Saharan Africa and 10 million more job seekers every year. With one in 20 jobs in the region already being in travel and tourism, the sector has the potential to create 3.8 million more direct and indirect jobs in the next 10 years. When sustainably managed, tourism can fuel economic transformation, accelerate reform, trigger infrastructure improvements, diversify exports, and empower women and minorities.
2. **Tourism destinations are dynamic and their needs change over time.** As destinations grow and change, different solutions are needed to ensure continued prosperity. Destinations that are initiating tourism need strong public support, access to land, improved infrastructure and transport, and strategic plans. Those scaling-up tourism need to invest in promotion and marketing, enhance their image, and provide sector incentives. Finally, those deepening and sustaining success need to disperse tourism through product diversification, address seasonality, and manage growth strategically. To become competitive worldwide, African governments and the private sector must work together in planning tourism infrastructure, promotion and financing. Competitiveness also requires the ability to successfully manage growth.
3. **Africa is on the move.** Africa is poised for real growth. Africa has experienced unprecedented economic growth over the last five years. Real GDP rose 4.9% each year from 2000 to 2008, faster than the 3% global average. Democracy is on the rise, macroeconomic conditions have improved and microeconomic reform is underway across the region.
4. **Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing sectors of the world economy.** The tourism sector in Africa is ripe for development. Arrivals to Sub Saharan Africa have grown over 300% since 1990 with 33.8 million tourists visiting the region in 2012. Receipts from tourism in 2012 amounted to over US\$36 billion and directly contributed just over 2.8% to the region's GDP.
5. **Destinations must address their constraints to tap tourism's full potential.** While the benefits of tourism development are many, the possible approaches and strategies for development number even more. How can tourism be best developed to address persistent constraints in Africa? This work analyzes persistent constraints and how to resolve them through policy and business reforms that have unleashed tourism potential across other regions of the world. Africa destinations must address their unpredictable business environments, institutional weaknesses, inadequate access, low level of linkages and a price/value mismatch in order to attract serious investors and travelers.

6. **Tourism developers must learn from the examples of other destinations.** Destinations must consider the successes and failures of past tourism development initiatives. The lessons offered from these cases are important tools that can smooth the path for tourism development in Africa and assist governments in avoiding the pitfalls or missed opportunities that will arise.

7. **From experience, we now know the keys to effectively executing tourism development include:**
 - Focusing on value of product
 - Garnering strong political support
 - Developing a good enabling environment for the private sector
 - Creating infrastructure and connectivity
 - Liberalizing air policies
 - Increasing transparency of land tenure
 - Seeking financing for tourism
 - Understanding constraints to development
 - Managing growth and scale of development
 - Understanding the four pillars of sustainability
 - Engaging with donors