

WTM Africa 2024 opens to 53% increase in attendees

WTM Africa, which takes place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) from 10-12 April, opened its 10th edition with a remarkable surge of 53% in attendance compared to the previous year. The increase in participation, with preliminary figures suggesting representation from 88 countries globally, heralds a bright future for the African tourism industry.



Source: Supplied

Africa Travel Week, under which the World Travel Market is a part also comprises shows like the Tourism Investment Forum Africa (TIFA), and Equal Africa among others. The show also features seven networking events and the support of 53 partners.

Carol Weaving, managing director of RX Africa, comments: "We are incredibly proud to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Africa Travel Week with such a phenomenal turnout. This growth is a testament to the resilience and rising global appeal of the African tourism industry. We're excited to contribute to the continued success and positive transformation of travel on the continent."

The addition of first-time participants, including Greece, Iran, Switzerland, Lithuania, Tunisia, Benin, Philippines, Singapore, New Zealand, Japan, Colombia, and Peru, brings fresh energy and diverse perspectives to the event.

Minister Patricia De Lille, though unable to attend in person, officially opened the conference via video call. She welcomed attendees and highlighted the need for collective efforts to continue the momentum of tourism in Africa: "This year represents a year where we can take measures to break new ground and achieve exponential growth in our numbers."



Source: Supplied

Charting a sustainable future

Minister De Lille emphasised the importance of safety, sustainability, and expanding tourism beyond well-known destinations to include the hidden gems of lesser-known towns and villages across the continent. She also noted: “Tourism is one of the most significant contributors to our economy, but we can do much more. One of the areas where the department is investing in supporting economic sustainability is through our various tourism incentive programmes.”

A highlight of the opening day was the lively content discussions, where topics like responsible animal interactions sparked crucial ethical debates. Cathrine S. Nyquist, Co-founder of Panthera Africa, made a powerful statement: “Just because it’s legal does not make it right.”

The day also featured a dynamic Responsible Tourism session hosted by Harold Goodwin, World Travel Market’s Responsible Tourism Advisor. Three of the five African winners from the 2023 Responsible Tourism Awards shared their inspiring stories, demonstrating the continent’s commitment to sustainable travel practices.

The conference day closed with the **inaugural Media Awards**, recognising excellence in African travel journalism. **Winners included:**

- Sustainability Feature Award: Alexander Okere – Illegal Animal Trade

- Visual Tourism Award: Kelly Hammond
- Destination Feature Award: Phoebe Smith
- Tourism News Award: Adele Mackenzie – Tourism Update

"Africa Travel Week 2024 serves as a testament to the continent's vast potential in tourism. It highlights the collective commitment to fostering growth, innovation, and sustainability. As Minister De Lille declared, 'We are open for business. We are open for tourists', extending an invitation to the world to experience the rich diversity and beauty of Africa," concludes Weaving.

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