

Africa's Travel Indaba 2024 to boost economy with R1.2bn contribution

Africa's Travel Indaba (ATI) 2024, which will be held from 13 to 16 May at Durban's ICC in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), is set to exceed the success of last year's event.



Source: Supplied | Deputy Minister, Fish Mahlelela

The trade show has secured 990 exhibitors from 26 African countries, with more expected to join.

Additionally, over 1,000 buyers and 120 Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) are participating, and local hotels are projected to reach 85% occupancy rates during the event.

Deputy Minister of Tourism, Fish Mahlelela, together with KZN MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA), Siboniso Duma, confirmed that the upcoming ATI 2024 would have a significant impact on both the provincial and national economies.

Celebrating pan-Africanism in tourism

This year's ATI, which Mahlelela described as proudly pan-African, is themed *Unlimited Africa*, emphasising the vast array of experiences and products available across the continent.

Mahlalela pointed out that, according to a South African Tourism survey, ATI 2024's predecessor made a total economic contribution of R1.2bn to the national fiscus. This included a direct contribution to the South African economy of approximately R408.6m and an additional indirect contribution of R776.4m.

ATI 2023 also created or sustained 2,295 jobs and contributed R75m to national government taxes.

"Despite the subdued economic environment, we are optimistic that the 2024 instalment will match or surpass these figures. ATI remains one of the top four global trade travel and tourism trade shows. The sheer scale and the number of delegates that attend is not only a testament to this but also speaks to the value that this trade continues to provide to all delegates," he said.

Duma pointed out that ATI's value came from targeted opportunities for networking and connecting to advance meaningful business for buyers and exhibitors. He said the province was exceptionally proud to host this world-class and internationally recognised travel trade fair and would soon bid to continue hosting this iconic event from 2025 onwards.

"Over and again, the Durban ICC has proved itself more than capable of handling mega-international events and this is a key part of KZN wanting to make our province the permanent home of ATI," he said.

Economic and promotional benefits

With a direct economic impact of around R130m on the province last year and the growth in the number of participants estimated to increase from 8,000 to 9,000 this year, he noted that the ATI played an important role in tourism growth.

The destination marketing and publicity value of ATI is immeasurable. The impact of the arrival of hundreds of international visitors from as far as the USA, UK, Europe, India, Asia and the East would be extended as many elected to spend additional time exploring.

This year, 36 countries will be represented at the ATI, including newcomers Burkina Faso, Eritrea, and Guinea.

Duma noted that South Africa's international tourist numbers were growing rapidly, boosting international visitors to KZN. Over the past year, 646,234 international visitors came to the province and KZN is expected to welcome over 800,000 international visitors in the coming year, surpassing 2019 arrivals.

"More tourists means more people spending money on accommodation, transport, restaurants and food, entertainment and sightseeing. This not only maintains the estimated 161,000 direct jobs in the KZN tourism sector, but leads to the expansion of tourism, creating more jobs for local people and opportunities for entrepreneurs to start their tourism businesses," he said.

Investment and development in KZN

He added that a thriving provincial tourism sector created an appetite for investment. An integrated investment of R157bn, which includes Transnet, the eThekweni Municipality and Ithala Bank, would result in the development of the Durban Bay Waterfront and completely change the face of Durban and KZN.

The KZN Logistics Hub programme includes the development of the Island View, Container Terminal, Bayhead, Maydon Wharf and the Point Recreation precinct. More than 570,000 jobs will be created.

This will encompass overhauling and redeveloping the marina and its transformation into a world-class economic, tourism,

water sports and recreation asset.

Mahlalela described the ATI 2024 as a proudly pan-African event.

"As the continent's premier travel and tourism tradeshow, it is clear ATI, is an expression of a continent that has been hard at work to addressing various challenges and barriers to promote seamless travel. The Indaba is a critical platform for showcasing Africa's diversity and fostering collaboration among its nations. Contrary to outdated stereotypes portraying Africa as a 'dark continent,' the African story is one of resilience and growth - ATI showcases this story best."

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