

Celebrating 10 years of industry growth and collaboration

 By [Robin Fredericks](#)

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Africa Travel Week recently celebrated its 10th-anniversary edition of WTM Africa from 10 to 12 April in Cape Town at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC). The milestone event featured new partnerships, business-building opportunities, and interactive networking sessions. Attendees enjoyed a diverse lineup of events, including workshops, awards ceremonies, and live performances, highlighting the industry's growth and collaboration.



The programme prioritised practical opportunities for building business connections, reflecting the event's commitment to making meaningful interactions among industry professionals.

Between 2014 and 2023, WTM Africa experienced a total of 34,731 industry professionals in attendance. During that same time, buyer numbers rose year-on-year to match the increase in exhibitors, with exhibitor numbers growing from 384 in 2022 to 577 in 2023.

We caught up with Penny Fraser, sponsorship and sales director of Africa Travel Week, during this year's event to discuss WTM Africa's achievements and changes in the industry.

From the past decade, what stands out are the achievements and changes in the industry?

The greatest achievement is unquestionably the show's rapid growth. We launched back in 2014, and despite the recent pandemic, that growth has been remarkable. Our inaugural show welcomed around 500 to 600 people with 30 exhibitors. Today, we're proud to host 779 exhibitors and had 4,000 visitors on the very first day – that's nearly matching the 4,200 trade visitors we saw across three days in 2023.

This growth highlights not only the success of the show, but also the significant business connections it fosters, benefiting both South Africa and the wider African tourism industry. Year after year, we've attracted increasingly high-quality buyers and exhibitors from a truly diverse range of countries. Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Dubai, Saudi Arabia, and major airlines like Emirates are just a few of the participants fueling this expansion. It's also exciting to see the phenomenal growth within South Africa itself, solidifying Cape Town's reputation as a world-class event destination.

Our commitment to social responsibility is evident through initiatives like the Sustainability Village and Responsible Tourism Awards. These demonstrate our dedication to promoting sustainable travel practices and giving back to the community.

Further, the strong growth and interest in our Equal Africa programme, focused on the LGBTQI+ segment, is another mark of success.

These accomplishments prove our commitment to not only grow the tourism industry, but to do so sustainably and inclusively, further elevating Cape Town and Africa on the global travel stage.

WTM Africa's content programme and trends report also offers a platform for the travel and tourism industry to have a voice and be represented, ensuring its growth benefits everyone involved.



Penny Fraser, Sponsorship and Sales Director, Africa Travel Week



WTM Africa 2024 opens to 53% increase in attendees

12 Apr 2024

■ ***When it comes to factors contributing to the steady increase in industry professionals collaborating with Africa; could you elaborate on how this trend reflects Africa's growing significance as a travel destination?***

Certainly. Several factors contribute to the steady increase in industry professionals collaborating with Africa. The continued growth of our show, fuelled by positive word-of-mouth from satisfied participants, plays a significant role. Additionally, the expansion of air capacity, with numerous airlines now serving Cape Town and Africa, makes the region more accessible. This accessibility, along with partnerships between industry stakeholders and a focus on digitalisation, enhances the ease of doing business and attending events like ours.

These efforts collectively showcase Africa's growing appeal as a travel destination and reflect its rising significance on the global tourism stage. Importantly, the networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities fostered by WTM Africa allow the industry to develop a unified vision and advocate for Africa's interests.

■ ***Considering the destination's vision, how do you envision World Travel Market Africa's impact on shaping the future of African tourism, especially in terms of cultural diversity?***

World Travel Market Africa's impact on shaping the future of African tourism lies in its ability to bring Africa to the world stage, making it more accessible through partnerships and connections forged at our event.

By facilitating agreements that increase air access and promote sustainable tourism practices, we aim to uplift and protect destinations while celebrating the cultural diversity that makes Africa unique. Through initiatives like the Sustainability Village and Responsible Tourism awards, we endeavour to create lasting positive impacts that benefit both tourists and local communities, ensuring a sustainable and culturally enriching tourism experience for all.

Furthermore, the platform WTM Africa provides allows for diverse voices and cultural perspectives to be shared, ensuring the future of tourism encompasses and celebrates Africa's rich heritage.

■ ***Reflecting on the past decade, how has World Travel Market Africa adapted to the evolving tourism landscape, particularly in terms of digitalisation and sustainability?***

Over the past decade, World Travel Market Africa has embraced the evolving tourism landscape by prioritising digitalisation and sustainability initiatives. We've leveraged technology to streamline processes, such as online registration and digital networking tools, reducing paper usage and increasing efficiency.

Moreover, our focus on sustainability has led to the implementation of eco-friendly practices, such as using electric vehicles and promoting community empowerment and conservation efforts. By staying at the forefront of digital innovation

and sustainable practices, we've adapted to meet the changing needs of the industry while fostering responsible tourism that preserves Africa's natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

■ ***Moving forward, what are your hopes and aspirations for World Travel Market Africa's future, especially considering its impact on Africa's tourism industry and its celebration of extreme diversity?***

Our hopes and aspirations for World Travel Market Africa's future are centred on facilitating continued growth in the tourism sector by bringing together key industry players to conduct business effectively.

We aim to showcase Cape Town and Africa as premier travel destinations, attracting new markets and buyers each year while nurturing relationships with existing ones. By doing so, we seek to bring Africa to the world stage, fostering inbound and outbound tourism and cultivating partnerships that contribute to the sustainable development of tourism across the continent.

ABOUT ROBIN FREDERICKS

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