

Festival to market Africa during World Cup

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The kick-off of the 2010 FIFA World Cup on 11 June will coincide with the inaugural Festival of Africa.

The Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa (RETOSA) will run the festival with Adele Lucas Promotions at Melrose Arch until the final match of the tournament on 11 July.

RETOSA executive director, Francis Mfune said they are a tourism marketing arm of 14 countries making up the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region.

New perceptions

"The Festival of Africa will be Africa's signature event during the World Cup and to show that the continent is ready to welcome the world for tourism, business and cultural exchanges.

"The Festival will help change perceptions of Africa, conveying a positive image about our diverse people, cultures and unrivalled landscapes and wildlife.

"The Festival is also endorsed by the African Union and NEPAD, who see it as an important 2010 Legacy Project," he said.

All African culture

Mfune said the Festival of Africa offers visitors a month of vibrant and authentic African culture, art, music and dance and the opportunity to explore Africa's tourism and investment opportunities in a secure setting.

Added to these the fan fair of live football match broadcasts on giant screens at the Square and Piazza, are the many world-class restaurants, bars and shops, and fan rides to and from stadiums for an experience as memorable as the tournament itself.

Toby Chance, Director at Adele Lucas Promotions said: "The Festival will feature a full programme of live entertainment drawn from all over Africa, filling the streets, piazzas and walkways of Melrose Arch with music, dance and performance art all day and long into the night."

Exhibition

At least 12 African countries as well as top Southern African tourism destinations have taken up exhibition space in purpose-built stands, woven into the fabric of the Melrose Arch Galleria shopping mall so as to create an organic, African sense of space in a stylish setting.

It will combine the 'wow' factor with intimate experiences of the sounds, smells, sights and tastes of Africa for local and international visitors.

Chance said they want to use the event as a platform to show that Africa match any international entertainment offerings, as well as marketing Johannesburg as a world class destination.

The South African department of Tourism has also offered its support to the Festival, and is encouraging organisations with an interest in promoting the continent to get involved.

Tourism Deputy Minister, Thokozile Xasa, will launch the festival for media and other stakeholders on May 31 at Melrose Arch.

SME development and workshop

Other sponsors include Gauteng Tourism and SEDA, the agency of the Department of Trade and Industry with a focus on small enterprise development.

Through SEDA's involvement, the Festival will ensure the interests of the small business sector are catered for.

A workshop focusing on trade and investment opportunities in Southern Africa will take place on 24 June.

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