

What AFCON means for African tourism and hospitality

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AFCON 2017 kicked off this week, bringing together 16 of Africa's finest footballing nations to Gabon for the 31st edition of the continent's greatest football showpiece. Pre-tournament favorites such as Senegal, Egypt, and Ghana have high hopes of taking away the ultimate prize while defending champions Cote D'Ivoire hope to retain the trophy they won two years ago.



For businesses however, football is secondary. The primary focus will be to make as much revenue or reach as many new clients as possible. With various cultures on display, what does this tournament mean for the tourism and hospitality sector in Africa? Online hotel booking website, Jumia Travel looks into the various ways that this tournament will benefit Ghana, as well as the entire continent in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

1. **A better international appeal and outlook** - This tournament presents another opportunity for Africa to show the world a better image; a chance to show the vast improvements in technology and infrastructure; the quality of service and the revamp of our many amazing tourist sites. It is another great opportunity to change the mindsets of many international visitors who may have had a previously negative experience or perception by what many media outlets portray Africa to be like. A successful AFCON 2017 with all the euphoria that comes with it will only show the whole world what a peaceful and amazing continent Africa is and that they are welcome anytime to enjoy a safe, free and interesting vacation.
2. **Increase of foreign visitors** - When such tournaments arrive, it is often greeted with so much enthusiasm because of the increase of foreign visitors. With many officials from FIFA, international media, observers, and other external visitors flying in, there is bound to be increased spending leading to an increase in foreign exchange. Hotels will be filled, restaurants, taxis and other transport means will also see a vast increase in sales for an entire month. Sometimes this may even last for a few extra days as even after the tournament, a couple of people stay to visit other countries and do some business.

3. **Increase in hotel bookings** - Although the tournament is being held in Gabon, the countries close by as well as the participating countries have the opportunity to do big business in terms of hotel bookings. Many football teams like to pitch camp around the host country many days before the tournament starts in order to be acclimatized to the weather, food, and other factors that may influence their performances. This means the teams together with their handlers and officials have to book hotels in these neighbouring countries for many days. This represents big revenue for these hotels and countries. Also in their domestic countries, teams prefer to group in hotels in order to concentrate and prepare well for the tournament. Tourists who come for the tournament also may decide to visit a few countries once they find themselves on the continent. Certain beautiful tourist destinations are likely to have a great month with the influx of tourists.
4. **Showcase of culture** - Africa generally represents culture, style, tradition, and colour. The AFCON is always a great platform for many countries to show the continent and the whole world the richness of their domestic culture. A time to show the world what your country has in store for them. Many countries such as Ghana and Nigeria have made a name for their interesting dance moves, while others like Senegal and Mali also boast stylish haircuts and unique fashion. When a goal is scored and the whole world is watching, this is definitely a great dance to show the world some of the electrifying dance moves your country has in store. The tournament is also a great platform for smaller countries, like Guinea Bissau, who may not be popular around the world to make a huge statement and announce their presence. It is always great for tourists to find a new travel destination.
5. **Networking** - Among the many dignitaries usually present at these games are Presidents, Foreign Affairs Ministers, Tourism Ambassadors, and other major stakeholders. This is a great way to foster strong foreign relations. Businesses are born, deals are discussed and sealed while contacts are exchanged for future purposes. Many investors from around the world also take the opportunity to meet some of these leaders to discuss business opportunities and ways to develop the tourism and hospitality industries. People naturally feel more comfortable doing business with you when they are in a good mood and can relate with you on one or more hobbies or activities, and which other ambience is more comfortable for such discussions than a packed stadium with lots of happy fans clad in beautiful and colourful outfits?

The 2017 AFCON in Gabon is about football. It is about who wins and who plays good football. However, it carries more importance than just the football on display. Africa will benefit greatly from this with the tourism and hospitality industries the more likely beneficiaries.

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