

Retosa, Arta partnership to find more responsible tourism success stories

The Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa (Retosa) - the Southern African Development Community (SADC) body responsible for destination marketing of the region - has partnered with the African Responsible Tourism Awards (Arta) to encourage more entries from the SADC. The aim of the awards is to inspire change in the tourism sector by showcasing examples that tourism providers can learn from.



Coffee Shack Backpackers (South Africa). 2017 winner of Best Accommodation for Social Inclusion. Image Source: [Better TourismAfrica](https://www.bettertourismafrica.com/)

Growing responsible tourism efforts to educate, inspire

Retosa's acting chief executive officer, and a judge in the 2018 African awards, Thembi Kunene-Msimang says: "One of our objectives is to mainstream responsible practices across all Retosa member states. The African Responsible Tourism Awards not only recognises the efforts of tourism organisations to operate responsibly, it also demonstrates the difference that taking responsibility can make. It can educate and inspire others to be more responsible. Highlighting individual achievements can help SADC achieve theirs."

Thus far, there have been no shortages of responsible tourism award winners from SADC. In the three years that the African Responsible Tourism Awards has been running, 46 awards have been handed to tourism organisations from SADC countries. Winners have flown flags from Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Tanzania.

Tourism organisations from SADC countries have also gone on to shine against stiff competition in the global challenge – the World Responsible Tourism Awards – with SADC countries racking up 11 wins since 2015.

Reaching new candidates for award entries

Despite the success of tourism organisations from SADC in the African and world awards, there are still many responsible tourism champions that are yet to step into the spotlight. The partnership between Retosa and Arta aims to increase the number of candidates entering the awards from SADC countries. As a representative of 14 Southern African countries, Retosa is in a good position to publicise the awards and reach new candidates.

Founder of the African awards and director of the organisers, Better Tourism Africa, Heidi van der Watt is enthusiastic about the partnership: "Some stories of responsible tourism from South Africa, Namibia and Botswana are very well-known. But there are thousands of tourism organisations in SADC, and we are sure that there are other responsible tourism champions among them.

"We're hoping that this partnership will help us find new responsible tourism success stories, particularly from the lesser-represented countries. We look forward to hearing of exemplary workplace practices in Malawi or innovation in energy management in Zimbabwe."

Entries for the 2018 African Responsible Tourism Awards are now closed and will be reviewed by the judging team. Winners will be announced at a ceremony that will be held on Wednesday, 18 April 2018 at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. The ceremony is part of the responsible tourism programme at WTM Africa, which takes place from 18 to 20 April 2018.

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