

Africa's top leisure destinations for business travellers

By Jenna Berndt

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Biz Community's #AfricaMonth couldn't have come at a better time. The South African government has prioritised domestic tourism as a means to improving the country's tourism product and growing foreign arrivals and investment while renewing its commitment to increasing visa-free travel in Africa. These priorities are vital to the sustainability of our tourism industry and emerging outbound markets on the continent.



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The International Air Transport Association [forecast in April projected](#) that Africa's aviation sector will grow close to 5% per annum over the next 20 years, making it one of the fastest-growing aviation regions in the world. Air connectivity has already improved in leaps and bounds, and Addis Ababa, Nairobi and Johannesburg are major transport hubs, connecting South Africa with Africa and the world.

Why intra-Africa travel should be a priority

For business travellers, in particular, air connectivity is vital for growth but also provides an opportunity to brand Africa and establish new tourism markets on the continent. South Africans who step out and travel in Africa (sustainably, please) contribute positively to market growth, boosting economies and encouraging job creation. (After all, tourism is credited for creating [1 in 10 jobs worldwide](#)).

Adding a leisure component to your next business trip in Africa is a simple way individuals can prioritise intra-Africa travel. 'Bleisure' trips (that combine a leisure holiday element with a business trip) are ideal for companies looking to incentivise and attract staff, particularly Millennials, who value experiences over things.

Africa's Meetings, Incentives, Conference and Events (MICE) industry also holds vast potential. It's currently valued at R2,8tn and up to 38% of MICE travellers are likely to become repeat leisure travellers, according to a report by [The Business Tourism Company](#) published in May.

So, step out of the meeting room and enjoy a host of bleisure-friendly, no-visa-needed African destinations and experiences.

Johannesburg

Fostering a culture of intra-Africa travel starts at home. According to South African Tourism, 15.2% of total domestic trips in 2018 were for leisure purposes.

"Add a day or two onto your next Johannesburg business trip to explore and bookmark experiences for your next holiday," suggests Sue Garrett, general manager marketing and product at the Flight Centre Travel Group.

"Visit the trendy Maboneng Precinct with its hipster markets, museum and cafés, or get your adrenalin pumping bungee jumping, abseiling or zip-lining at the Soweto Towers."

Garrett also recommends the Welgevonden Game Reserve, a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Johannesburg. "The number of vehicles are restricted in the park (self-drives aren't allowed), so it is less crowded than other reserves," she adds.

Namibia

Namibia is another easily-accessible and affordable travel incentive destination. More and more lodges and bush camps are opening, and South Africa is a priority source market. While five-star lodges appeal to high-end international travellers, there are many attractive mid-range options for budget-conscious South Africans. No visa is required for tourism or business-related trips of up to three months.

Ideal for the adventurous explorer, head to Walvis Bay to see the local marine life or the Namib Desert from the coastal city of Swakopmund for adrenalin-pumping adventures.

Kenya

Nairobi remains one of the most prominent business travel hubs on the continent. Outside of the city, there are plenty of bucket-list experiences found nowhere else on Earth.

"A guided holiday is a great option for an incentive or leisure trip in visa-free Kenya," says Teresa Richardson, Managing Director of The Travel Corporation in South Africa, the parent company of guided holiday brands Trafalgar, Costsaver and Contiki, amongst others. Trafalgar recently launched three new itineraries for Africa departing in 2020, one of which is a nine-day journey through Kenya.

"A guided holiday is hassle-free for the travel booker and mitigates corporate safety concerns," adds Richardson.

"Travellers can meet the Maasai, tour a local village, learn about Kenya's threatened elephant and rhino populations at the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust's Orphan's Project, and visit a coffee cooperative in the highlands. These immersive experiences are a priority for today's traveller," she says.

Mozambique

Mozambique is very much open for business after a devastating cyclone season earlier this year, but the destination needs visitors' support now more than ever. A popular MICE and bleisure option, corporates can easily add on a day tour.

"Soak up the history, art and culture of Maputo on a half-day art and culture tour and sample the flavours of Mozambican cuisine on a half-day food tour," recommends Natalie Tenzer-Silva, Director of Dana Tours, a Maputo-based DMC and tour operator offering [day tours](#). "Or swap your suit for a swimsuit and visit the stunning Santa Maria, Inhaca and Portuguese Islands," she adds, no visa required.

Victoria Falls

Just this month, Harare ranked fourth in a list of the [fastest growing business travel destinations](#), according to Flight Centre Business Travel. The EY Africa Attractiveness report for 2018 also rated Zimbabwe as the second-most-popular foreign investment destination in southern Africa.

Victoria Falls is an ideal incentive and conferencing destination, whether your business is in Harare or Livingstone. Visas are not required for short stays in either Zimbabwe or neighbouring Zambia.

Botswana

Visiting Gaborone for business? Add a few days to disconnect and recharge. Botswana has bucketloads of wildlife and blissfully Wi-Fi-free areas with services to suit the premium traveller.

Check into a luxury lodge and explore the Okavango Delta and the Kalahari Desert, as diverse as they are gorgeous, no visa required.

Zanzibar

If you've got business in Dar es Salaam, or even Addis Ababa or Nairobi, extend your stay with a trip to Zanzibar. Four days or more is ideal for relaxing at the hotel, exploring UNESCO World Heritage Site Stonetown, and getting your fill of sun and sea in the exotic, spice-tinged air. South African passport holders do not require a visa for stays of up to 90 days. Zanzibar is also perfect for a romantic getaway.

On the mainland, in the not too distant future, there might even be [a cable car to access Mount Kilimanjaro](#).

Parting thoughts

As individuals and proudly South African travellers, we can – and should – be reforming our personal travel lists and prioritising domestic and intra-Africa travel. To strengthen brand Africa in leisure and business circles, this #AfricaMonth, let's think, book and travel Africa.

ABOUT JENNA BERNDT

With a curious mind and a love for travel and tourism, Jenna Berndt has over nine years' marketing experience in the travel industry. She is currently a brand owner for leisure travel brands at Big Ambitions, a specialist Cape Town-based travel content marketing consultancy.

Jenna has a journalism degree specialising in graphic design, a keen eye for visual and written communication and is focused on achieving brand goals through content creation and PR, marketing strategy, SEO copywriting and social media.

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