

All that Africa has to offer

By  Danette Breitenbach

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Wowing the world with what Africa has to offer. That is the purpose of Meetings Africa. "This (Meetings Africa) is not a one-sided experience, but rather the advancement of the continent through collaboration and that is what 2018 is all about," says Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo, the chief convention bureau officer at South African Tourism.



Image Source: [YouTube SA TravelTrade](#)

Kotze-Nhlapo adds that there has been significant growth in the African representation at Meetings Africa: "Of the 30 countries the hosted buyers represent, over 20 are African (this number includes both countries and convention bureaus), while the number of exhibitors has increased with countries such as Kenya and Nigeria joining."

Kotze-Nhlapo says this follows an aggressive strategy to grow the African numbers. "The goal is bigger than Meetings Africa, it is to grow meetings on the continent."

With an increase in queries on Africa, South Africa also collaborates with other African countries, such as Rwanda which has its own convention bureau. "We encourage buyers to visit other African countries, and include African countries in our briefings, with specific people focusing on the African exhibitors."

Another aspect they focus on is to make sure Africa meets with Africa, and so grow African meetings in Africa; so that, like Paris, France, which hosts 80 to 90% of all the European meetings, Africa hosts African meetings. Currently, Africa only

hosts 10% of its own meetings and of the 12,000 association meetings held around the world a year, Africa only hosts 340. “There is huge potential, but the first step is to get the African associations to rotate in and around Africa.”

Kotze-Nhlapo says it is in our best interest to help each other. “One bad meeting in one county and the entire continent is viewed as bad. Therefore, it is important we have a standard.”

Extending the focus

Promoting African experiences is also part of the Meetings Africa focus. While in its infancy stage, this year will see some township venues introducing themselves.

In a deliberate move into the meetings space, the Gauteng Tourism Authority has, over the past four years, been working on the leisure side to build township experiences. This includes the hosting of small conferences.

The Soweto Convention Centre has been adopted as a pilot site. “By developing the township infrastructure and working with the Sandton Convention Centre, we can fill in the gaps. It is all about people wanting authentic South African experiences and that is what we want to give them,” explains Barba Gaoganediwe, head: destination promotions and marketing, Gauteng Tourism Authority.

“But it is far more than townships; it is about bringing new and innovative products to market. Wanderers Cricket ground now has a meetings venue. It is about having the competitive edge by developing different experiences through diversification.”

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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