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News

ILTM Africa opens doors for luxury tourism

Posted on: May 2013



Hosted buyers and exhibitors show confidence in Africa's luxury travel market

THE first ILTM Africa closed its doors having established the scene for the continent's luxury travel industry, in a niche event that focused on two days of business.

"The value of ILTM Africa has been incredible," said Mark Lakin of Epic Road – a US hosted buyer who joined 71 international planners from 31 countries who are pre-qualified to produce luxury travel itineraries for high net worth individuals from across the world.

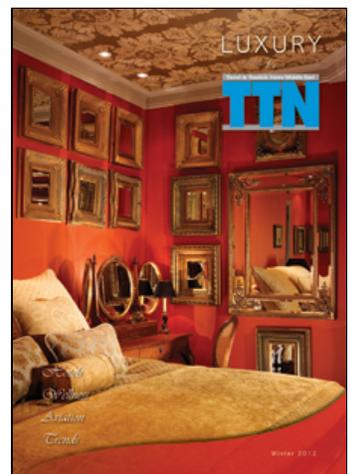
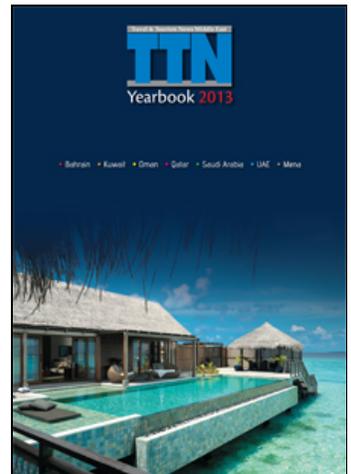
ILTM Africa opened with a forum that brought speakers from the continent to discuss such diverse issues as the economic and political overview of South Africa and what faces the African luxury travel industry of the future, including their needs and the expectations of the international consumer.

An economic and political overview was presented by Clem Sunter, formerly chairman of the Anglo American Chairman's Fund – the premier corporate social responsibility fund in South Africa. He talked about how Africa is no longer seen as the "hopeless continent" but how it is now regarded as "a continent of immense commercial opportunity to which US and European companies are turning." According to the World Bank, in the next five years, seven of the top ten fastest growing economies are African. Sunter also talked about how they have seen spectacular growth from tourists in the Far East and how he views the resort of Sun City as "Macau with Lions".

The issues facing the luxury travel industry in Africa was the subject for a panel discussion that included Tony Romer Lee, CEO The Collection by Liz McGraw; Adrian Gardiner, founder and CEO Mantis Group and Beks Ndlovu, CEO African Bush Camps. The debate addressed the change in the guest demographic from the early days of British travellers to the evolving impact of diversity and global reach that have also meant a change in the tourist's expectations. The panel though, believed "We have the depth of product to offer everyone and meet all expectations on this continent".

Adrian Gardiner agreed that what makes Africa "hot" is "experiences, experiences, experiences". He said that Africa is "an amazing-value destination" and that experiential travel is booming to such a degree that Mantis has launched Mantis eXtreme for those who want to paraglide off Cape Town's Table Mountain, or go shark diving, whale watching in the Western Cape or diving the sardine run in Eastern Cape. Looking ahead, he predicts that Zimbabwe will become the jewel of southern Africa's tourism industry.

A one-to-one interview about the evolution of the luxury travel industry in Africa with Colin Bell, one of the pioneers of sustainable travel in the continent and founder of Wilderness Safaris also took place. Bell talked about how luxury tourism can be a solution to supporting conservation projects if tourism companies and luxury hotels integrate with local communities. He also argued that "Perhaps luxury travel should embrace smaller numbers of people at higher prices, but supreme levels of service?"



This was followed by intense one-to-one meetings between 71 suppliers of elite African product and the global buyers – some 2,591 appointments over the two days.

Simon Mandy, marketing and operations manager for The Royal Portfolio was delighted with the quality of the buyers and also found so many he had never met before. "We are so appreciative of what ILTM is doing. We have traditionally travelled to all corners of the world to find these buyers, but to have them here is remarkable. It's a great opportunity to sell to those we haven't met before and has given us a great platform."

Simone Scarapicchia, partner and sales and marketing director of Hideaway of Nungwi Resort & Spa Zanzibar said, "It's been very interesting and so far the buyers have been really good quality. I will generate lots of business and I have met people from South America, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. It's a great event and I will definitely be back next year".

Alison Gilmore, exhibition director, ILTM Portfolio said, "Strategically this first event has delivered what we wanted to create for our buyers and suppliers. However, there is more to come and we are now planning for 2014 on the back of so many satisfied exhibitors. We will no doubt be able to produce more products as well to ensure our international buyers find exactly what they want from Africa for their clients".

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