

Africa Travel Week creates opportunity for businesses to rebuild market segments

In celebration of Tourism Month, Africa Travel Week (ATW) has launched its Meetings & Masterclasses: a virtual offering set to keep the industry engaged and connected during the build-up to its live event at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) from 7-9 April 2021.



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ATW comprises World Travel Market Africa (WTM), International Luxury Travel Market Africa (ILTMA), EQUAL Africa, ibtm Africa and Travel Forward, and a series of B2B trade shows expected to generate an estimated \$451m worth of business at the 2020 edition, which was postponed until April next year.

"At the heart of our efforts to reimagine the live shows lies a common goal of #makingtravelhappenagain. In other words, giving tourism a real chance to recover, and offering stakeholders every opportunity to rebuild their business ties and networks within the sector," explains Megan Oberholzer, Reed Exhibitions' portfolio director: travel, tourism and creative industries.

The result is their online platform, [Africa Travel Week Connect](#), and Meetings & Masterclasses – a series of virtual sessions running from September to October.

"We've moved away from panels and PowerPoints. Instead, we're tapping into our solid network of industry experts and experienced travellers who can share their insider tips and help businesses strike the right balance between implementing necessary safety measures and delivering authentic experiences," she explains.

Connecting African tourism

Part one will focus on how businesses can better position themselves within new or often overlooked market segments predicted to travel first to Africa as restrictions ease. It kicks off with The Luxury Traveller on 9 September, led by luxury traveller and consultant, Anthony Berklich, who is currently visiting Kenya and whose travels average around 200,000 miles

per year and tally to over 80 countries.

This session will be followed by The African Diaspora traveller on 15 September with Naledi Khabo, CEO of the African Tourism Association and The LGBTQ+ traveller on 16 September with Tanya Churchmunch, the founder of MuchPR, an independent PR firm focusing on travel, lifestyle and LGBTQ markets.

The post-Covid traveller on 17 September will be hosted by special guest, Anita Mendiratta, strategic advisor to the secretary general of the UNWTO, The World Bank Group, WTTC, IATA and ATAG in Tourism, Aviation and Development.

In addition to ATW's Meetings & Masterclasses, the travel and tourism community can also sign-up for WTM Virtual. This two-day event organised by WTM London will run from 2–4 November, which comprises virtual networking sessions, conferences, and roundtable discussions.

"Designed for those who can't travel to the live show in London, this virtual show will be based on one platform, leveraging the global reach of Reed Exhibitions, and welcoming all of the WTM shows' exhibitors and buyers," says Oberholzer, "It is set to be one of the largest gatherings of travel professionals from around the world."

While the digital experience of ATW's Meetings & Masterclasses will bring together a range of travel operators, lodge owners, media and travel marketers seeking to learn, engage and connect this Tourism Month, Oberholzer emphasises that it is not meant to replace live trade shows, but rather enhance the synergy between physical and digital events and opportunities.

"The conversations with our international buyers from South Africa and Africa's top source markets have been ongoing, and the feedback as to their attendance at the live show is a resounding 'yes'. It all just depends on the travel advisories in place during that time."

Oberholzer explains that while Reed Exhibitions is working hard to ensure that the venue retains all the magic of the travel marketplace feel, the safety of the attendees remains their number one priority.

The format for the 2021 trade shows is expected to change, allowing for greater distance between stands and seating areas. "We are fortunate," says Oberholzer, "that a venue like the CTICC in our host city of Cape Town offers multiple venue spaces and facilities in one location for ease of access and greater networking opportunities."

"We hope that Tourism Month coinciding with our industry's gradual recovery at the start of spring, along with our Meetings & Masterclasses will give our industry a much-needed boost to become travel and trade show ready," she concludes.