

Africa Travel Week trends report reveals tourism drivers for 2023

Leisure travel, and particularly safari, is driving the recovery of travel and tourism in Africa. This according to the Africa Travel Week Trends report released this week at World Travel Market Africa, being held at the Cape Town International Convention Centre this week. Data released by research firm ForwardKeys highlighted in the report reveals that all the top destinations on the continent are showing a marked improvement in Q1 2023, from 2022, with the improvement continuing into 2023.



Source: [123RF](#)

From adventure tourism in Africa and green-hushing to faith-based tours and why pronouns matter, according to the report, these trends are what are driving travel decision-making and behaviour, as well as how we as experience providers are hitting the sweet spot of consumer demands.

The report highlights that four out of the top 10 destinations are in East Africa and Tanzania is on track to exceed pre-pandemic levels in Q1 2023, illustrating the critical role that East Africa will play in the recovery of travel in Africa.

When it comes to flight searches, the presence of South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya in the top half of the list suggests interest in safari holidays heading into Q2. This is further supported by the increase in the share of searches for South Africa and Kenya.

Further highlights revealed in the trends report include:

- **The rise of adventure tourism:** Namibia is a top performer in this regard, with Germany, France and Spain being key drivers of inbound tourism. For adventure tourists, it's not just about taking risks but also about connecting with new cultures and landscapes while being physically active.
- **Netflix to promote tourism and travel:** After exposure to South African content on Netflix, viewers were 3.1 times more likely to consider it as their top travel destination. The exposure has sparked niche tourism offerings like "marine safaris," including kelp forest snorkelling.
- **Travelling light:** According to World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and the Trip.com Group: 69% of travellers are looking for sustainable travel options in 2023. In response to this trend, eco-conscious travellers are now choosing to travel almost luggage-free to reduce CO2 emissions, with many purchasing holiday clothing and essentials from local suppliers and donating these items to charities and communities in need before their return flight.
- **Accessible travel:** The untapped market of accessible travel and tourism has the potential to expand significantly given that 1.3 billion people, or 16% of the world's population, live with disabilities. Safaris and other travel experiences are becoming more accessible to people with disabilities, with a multisensory approach that capitalises on other senses like hearing, smelling, and tasting.
- **Greenwashing vs green-hushing:** The opposite of greenwashing, the term green-hushing refers to the fact that fewer companies are publicising their eco goals and accomplishments. This leads to a lack of accountability, missed opportunities, and lack of knowledge sharing.
- **The luxury traveller is young:** The 2023 luxury traveller is significantly younger than in previous years, looking for a more immersive travel experience, connecting with the local community, and wanting to stay longer in one place.
- **Faith-based tourism:** One of the trends identified in the report is the potential for marketing faith-based tours or experiences, which has proven popular among committed pilgrims or the culturally curious. Countries such as Morocco, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, and Egypt have popular religious sites, and South Africa's faith-based tourism market has a 2-4% share in the global market. The Muslim travel market also shows tremendous potential, with the number of international Muslim travellers set to grow from 160 million to 230 million by 2028.
- **The rise of digital nomads:** While Namibia has already introduced a digital nomad visa, other countries like Mauritius and South Africa are still in the process of developing similar programmes. Digital nomads seek a sense of community and want to fully immerse themselves in local cultures.
- **LGBTQ+ and inclusivity:** The LGBTQ+ market has been instrumental in leading the global tourism recovery after the pandemic. This travel market has significant purchasing power, and Africa is looking to attract this market. However, while progress is being made, there are still misconceptions and challenges that need to be addressed.

The Africa Travel Week Trends Report was released at the official opening of World Travel Market in Cape Town and can be downloaded [here](#).