

Climate Change and Tourism; Beyond the COP21 to Individual Responsibility



The ongoing United Nations Paris Climate Change Conference and the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) seeks to deliver both short and long-term models to curb escalating carbon emissions and global warming; both detrimental aspe

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Spokespeople

Bankole Cardoso
Head of Communications at
Africa Internet Group
bankole.cardoso@africainternet
group.com
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The sector continues to be a vital component of the global economy and a vital driver in realizing the Millennium Development Goals considering it holds an estimated 1 in every 10 jobs in the job market. Despite a number of recent challenges, the sector has still managed to stand out as a major contributor to the global economic recovery, poverty alleviation and land environmental protection through advocating for ecotourism and responsible tourism as well as promotion of multicultural understanding and cohesion.

The increasingly troubling records of unstable ecosystems and changing weather patterns as a result of global climate change have had serious effects on the tourism sector in many detrimental ways from unpredictable wildlife migration due to drought and changing habitats to changing breeding patterns and unsustainable food chains that threaten to decrease and even cause the extinction of already endangered species.

Another aspect of tourism that faces dire consequences of climate change is the winter holidays, mountaineering and beach recreation. *"It's no longer a far-flung effect"* as Estelle Verdier who heads Jovago.com, a leading online hotel booking website, explains while outlining the effects of climate change on tourism, *"we encourage our hotel partners to take the eco-tourism campaign seriously and our guests to travel responsibly because it is high time we realized that the environment is facing a battle for existence; a battle which if lost could well mean the trip they are on could be the last they enjoy"*

Her sentiments are evidently closer home than we think. We are now, with every passing year, observing new troubling trends in terms of the legendary attractions to the East African region such as the reduced numbers of wildebeests in the seasonal migration, disruptions in the birding seasons in Uganda, drying lakes and watering holes as well as rising sea waters which are taking up more and more beach and disrupting marine life.

Adoption of simple practices such as water recycling, use of organic fertilizers, agroforestry and investing in solar energy are some of individual responsibilities that each of us can take up easily and effectively. Stakeholders in the tourism industry must now take into consideration environmentally friendly ways to preserving our ecosystem. They must be more proactive in seeking effective measures to curb carbon emission and discouraging irresponsible practices such as littering and dumping and general interference with habitats during visits.

The ongoing COP21 in Paris seems to have on its agenda two emotive issues namely the pricing of carbon based fuels and the development of alternative energy and secondly, a compounded look at urban developments and its contribution to climate change. While the keynote addresses seek to drive the signing of the INDCs by listing down consequences, effects and long-term measures that may not sit well with the attendees, each individual is none the less called upon and bears the responsibility of ensuring they play their part; whether through applying environmentally friendly measures or by upholding sustainable tourism practices

About Jovago

Jovago.com is an online hotel booking service with offices in Lagos (Nigeria), Nairobi (Kenya), Dakar (Senegal) founded by Africa Internet Group and has MTN and Millicom as investors. Jovago.com, Africa's No.1 booking portal, facilitates the booking process for its users to provide them with the best hotel booking experience with fast, transparent and easy-to-use services.

Jovago.com has over 20,000 local hotel listings across Africa and over 200,000 hotels around the world.

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