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BETHIA IDOKO:
**From Childhood
Dreamer To
Award-Winning
Globetrotter**

**Experiencing
Paradise:
Dodeye Takes
Mauritius**










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Kenya: Tourism Revenue Surges On African Visitors

Business Day Africa [Nairobi]

Kenya's tourism revenue rose by 31 percent to Ksh352.5 billion last year, buoyed by a surge in African visitors, according to the latest data from the government.

Statistics reveal that among the top ten countries in each region, Africa took the lead with 679,012 visitors, followed by Europe with 477,526, the Americas [319,220], Asia [182,027], Oceania [26,265], and the Middle East with 14,173 visitors, out of a total of 1.9 million tourists who visited the country last year.

Uganda topped the list of countries contributing tourists to Kenya, with 201,623 visitors, followed by Tanzania at 157,818.

Despite this, the United States maintained its position as Kenya's primary tourism market, with visitor numbers reaching 265,310 during the review period.

The influx of arrivals drove revenue to its highest levels since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, with numbers rising by 32 percent to 1.95 million in 2023, according to the government's Tourism Research Institute.

Of the total tourist arrivals, 1,351,438 [69.3 percent] and 154,203 [7.9 percent] entered Kenya through Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi and Moi International Airport in Mombasa, respectively.

Other significant entry points contributing to the numbers were Busia with 147,125 [7.54 percent], Namanga at 109,050 (5.6 percent), and Malaba with 47,132 [2.4 percent].

tourist destination in East Africa, drawing visitors from around the globe to its wildlife reserves and stunning Indian Ocean coastlines.

However, despite the increased number of visitors in 2023 compared to 2022, the average spending per person in US dollars declined, attributed in part to the weaker shilling against major currencies in the review period.

Notably, China emerged as the most improved source market, recording a remarkable 161 percent increase, followed by Italy with 121 percent, South Korea with 99 percent, and Australia with 89 percent.

The primary purposes of travel were holiday trips, accounting for 45 percent, visiting family and relatives [VFR] at 24 percent, and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions [MICE] also at 24 percent.



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St. Peters Catholic Church

Unfortunately, the unkind to history. What fascinated the early Catholics as I tried to subsume as an undercover agent, strapping my emotional self in a submarine kind of thought line? What would have reduced me to a mere kindergarten of ancient history books? What fascinated them was the intense atmosphere of Ekeya and its people. The old houses and courtyards of old, the nar-

row lanes and the slow-paced deliberate scene of daily life. Here, the artists in the mission were among their own kind, creating for the 'High Society' experience a replica of space and pace elsewhere.

St. Peter's Catholic Church Ekeya is a museum that displays traditional costumes from the West, leaving footprints in the sands of time. That should be

the location of the TV footage today, rolling out today and future films. It hosts high-ranking religious festivals and musical rituals that provide an annual rendezvous. With an open-air theatre production, St. Peter's Catholic Church was traditionally built to act as a magnet for the public.

example of such contemporary cultural activities of the art mile, but not the case in St. Peters Catholic Church, Ekeya. If only its were an individual, I will address the drive a failure. You have not only failed Ekeya here, but you failed this early arrival of Catholic nomads and their mission. Allowing such an edifice swallowed up by gully is a shame. You wasted a place designed by plans of a national art form. The relics that conjured images of the 19th and 20th centuries that Nigeria should have been known still stands out. Betraying the ones upon a time monastery. That is the story of St. Peter's Catholic Church in Ekeya.

The drive of The Catholic Mission around the world represents and is an

Hilerus Edet
Public Commentator and Rural Tourism Consultant

Tanzania: Hotels Given Green Light To Engage In Currency Exchange Business

Tanzania Daily News [Dar es Salaam]

The Bank of Tanzania [BOT] has called upon all tourist hotels in the county, ranked three-stars and above, to open bureau de change or foreign exchange windows to bring the services closer to their visitors and minimize black-market business.

BoT Governor Emanuel Tutuba made this week during a one-day engagement/meeting with hoteliers and high-class tourists' owners, on foreign exchange operations in the country, urging them to open the business by July 1st this year.

"The aim is also to track the foreign money not in proper channel, which normally end in black market so that it can enter into proper channel to meet the current demand of foreign currency, particularly the US dollars," he said at the meeting held at the BoT sub-headquarters in Zanzibar City.

He said the green light given to the bureau de change follows the recent review and implementation of the Foreign Exchange [Bureau De Change] Regulations of 2019, and that the central bank identified several challenges that affected the provision of foreign exchange services in the country.

Mr Tutuba said among the challenges included many investors failing to meet the regulatory requirements, especially the minimum capital requirement of 1bn/-, resulting in presence of few foreign exchange service providers, which led to the lack of the services in some important areas with high demand of the service.

"This challenge also led to the growing of illegal foreign exchange business [i.e. black market], and now we have relaxed some of the requirements so that more investors

can be encouraged to commence or resume foreign exchange business," he explained.

The governor told the hotel people "I am pleased to inform you that the bank has published the revised Foreign Exchange [Bureau De Change] Regulations, 2023 in the Government Gazette number 729 dated 6th October 2023."

He said the regulations have several changes including the reduction of the minimum capital requirement, which was a challenge to many Tanzanian investors to open bureau de change.

In addition, the new regulations have established provisions that allow tourist hotels with ratings of three-stars and above to provide foreign exchange services to their customers.

He warned people who are still owning the US dollars illegally or hide them, that they will experience great loss in the future because by opening up doors for the business means soon the availability of the foreign currency is going to stabilise as the government gets more money from tourists and Tanzania records admirable economic growth.

He said that the minimum capital to start a bureau de change is now: Category A is 1bn/- for foreigners, while 500m/- for Tanzanians, then categories which include 3-Star hotels and above, the capital is 200m/- and below, requirements to enable hotels with the above-mentioned criteria to obtain a license to operate bureaux de change.

"The Bank of Tanzania continues to encourage banks and financial institutions to improve the provision of foreign exchange services. As of February, this year, 37 commercial banks with a network of more than 900 branches spread throughout the country were providing these services. In addition, a total of 18 bureaux de change has been licensed, and they

have a total of more than 96 branches across the country," he said.

But the governor said, despite this improvement, there is still a challenge that foreign exchange services are not available when people are in need especially in the evenings, weekends, and holidays.

This also contributes to the existence of illegal foreign currency exchange services, the governor said, "Thus, the Bank of Tanzania calls upon stakeholders of this business to look at this issue in order to further improve the availability of foreign exchange services in the country."

He said BoT will continue to provide financial education to the public on the impact of obtaining foreign exchange services through non-authorized service providers and that in addition, the bank will continue to cooperate with relevant authorities in the country in combating all those who are involved in foreign exchange business without having a license.

The Bank recognizes hotels as important trackers of foreign money and calls upon the stakeholders to cooperate, including providing information when they find out the existence of illegal foreign exchange business," he said.

The Deputy BoT Governor Ms Sauda Kassim Msemu, cleared worries about the economy, saying that the economic situation in the country is good and that BOT is making efforts to have enough reserve of the US dollars and other foreign currency.

"BOT is aware that the tourism sector is the key driver of the economy of Zanzibar and its stability depends on the availability of a lot of foreign currency. We ask you to increase cooperation and when you see signs of some people doing illegal business, do not hesitate to contact us," she emphasized.

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Wakanow Holds Forum In Kano

Wakanow Agency Forum, held in Kano on April 25th, 2024, at Tahir Palace Hotel, surpassed all expectations, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to prioritizing our customers. What was initially planned as an event for 100 Affiliate and Sub-agency partners saw an impressive turnout of 192 attendees.

This overwhelming

response underscores the success of our incentive and reward program, which has empowered our trade partners to achieve unparalleled success.

The event featured presentations from four esteemed airline partners: Royal Air Maroc EGYPTAIR Air Peace Limited United Airlines. These partners showcased their latest products and offerings, further strength-

ening our collaborative efforts.

In addition to informative sessions, attendees participated in engaging activities such as a "spin the wheel" raffle, where lucky winners received prizes ranging from free domestic tickets to complimentary hotel stays in Doha.

Furthermore, our Waka Care CSR initiatives were highlighted, with pallia-

tive giveaways serving as a testament to our commitment to social responsibility.

The forum provided an invaluable opportunity for networking and relationship-building, leaving our trade partners feeling appreciated and valued.

As we continue to foster these connections, we are confident that our partnerships will flourish, driving mutual success and growth.

UN Tourism And Hotelschool The Hague To Drive Innovation In Hospitality Europe

UN Tourism and HotelschoolThe Hague, have agreed to partner around the development and execution of pioneering projects in the hospitality industry.

A new Memorandum of Understanding [MoU]

aims to stimulate innovation and fresh ventures within the hospitality industry, promoting entrepreneurship and education while engaging in open innovation projects that can enhance the tourism industry, with a particular

focus on hospitality. Currently, 20 per cent of entrepreneurs of the UN Tourism Network are directly related to hospitality and are the most dynamic projects including a variety of stakeholders of the industry.

Building on the UN Tourism's established innovation network, this agreement will further facilitate connections between startups and potential investors, as well as promote knowledge and skills through

joint events, communication channels, and media interactions. This partnership not only underlines a commitment to a more sustainable future for the industry but also signifies a shared commitment to providing inclusive opportunities and memorable global student experiences, demonstrated through HotelschoolThe Hague's global Sustainable Hospitality Challenge.

Strong Foundations For Innovative Future

Ms. Natalia Bayona, Executive Director of UN Tourism, expresses: "Unfortunately 90% of startups within the hospitality sector eventually do not succeed. A decent tourism education and knowledge of the hospitality sector is necessary to develop a disruptive and well-functioning product. Through our collaborative efforts, we aspire to alter this trajectory by offering a more robust foundation, fostering invaluable connections, and providing a conducive testbed for emerging startups. Given that technology now permeates 70% of tourism enterprises, it is imperative that these startups are seamlessly integrated into the ecosystem, connected with pertinent stakeholders, and afforded the opportunity to validate their solutions in real-world settings before embarking on a larger scale.

Ms. Regine von Stieglitz, President of the Board of Directors of HotelschoolThe Hague says: "At HotelschoolThe Hague, we provide our students with the perfect

continues on page 5



Ganvie: The Floating Village Of Benin Republic

Ganvie is a unique village located in the West African country of Benin. What makes it so unique is that it is situated entirely on water. Often referred to as the "Venice of Africa," Ganvie is home to around 20,000 people and has a long history dating back to the 16th century.

Ganvie was founded by the Tofinu people who were looking to escape the slave trade that was rampant in the region at the time. Legend has it that the Tofinu people were inspired to build their village on the water after seeing a vision of a serpent that instructed them to settle in a lake. This is why the village is sometimes called "the village

on stilts."

The village is situated near Cotonou on Lake Nokoué, which is the largest lake in Benin. The Tofinu people constructed their homes and businesses on stilts that rise above the water, creating a network of canals that serve as the village's main transportation system. The villagers use canoes to navigate around the village, and visitors can take boat tours to explore the waterways.

Despite its unusual location, Ganvie is a thriving community with its own schools, markets, and places of worship. The people of Ganvie rely heavily on fishing for their livelihood, and many of the homes in the village have fish farms beneath them. The villagers

also cultivate crops such as maize, cassava, and vegetables on small plots of land.

Tourism is a significant industry in Ganvie, with visitors coming from all over the world to experience the unique lifestyle of the village. However, the village's popularity has also led to some challenges, such as overcrowding and pollution of the lake. Efforts are being made to address these issues, such as the construction of a waste management system and regulations on boat traffic in the village.

For those who are yet to visit Benin there is no doubt that, Ganvie is a fascinating and vibrant village that offers a glimpse into a way of life that is unlike any other.

“
Despite its unusual location, Ganvie is a thriving community with its own schools, markets, and places of worship. The people of Ganvie rely heavily on fishing for their livelihood, and many of the homes in the village have fish farms beneath them.
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St. Peters Catholic Church- Ekeya: *The Cradle Of Catholicism In Akwa Ibom State*

With the flow of time, since the year dot that generations of people lived here, the monastery, cathedral and the ancient popular spiritual habitat have placed their stamp on nature and cultural activities of Ekeya.

Favoured by nature with a mild climate, protected from the wild winds, and a manageable size, with the river providing an ideal means of transportation and trade to early dwellers.

Around 1904, the first Catholic nomads arrived on Akwa Ibom State soil along the steep slopes from the ancient capital city of Calabar to introduce the inhabitants to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They also stopped the killing of twins, like Mary Slessor also did in most parts of the then Cross River State. What a renaissance of a colonial footprint it has turned out to be for history

to reckon with.

Witness to this ancient history of a community-based church is an exceptional architecture and an 11cm high limestone monument to savour this historic piece of relics. It was only within years that St. Peter's Catholic Church gave birth to St. Mark's Catholic Church, Oron and St. Paul's Catholic Church, Amamong and St. Joseph Catholic Church, Anua-Uyo were the hospital replicated after the early days' missionaries journeyed.

The church structure, finally completed in 1905, was acknowledged worldwide as the existing statuette and remains a stone sculpture in the modern Akwa Ibom State. A replica can be admired in the Vatican and the English Westminster models, which have original natural historical lineage.

Following the chaos of the emigration of nations, this monastery shaped the economic and cultural life of Ekeya and, by extension, the entire Catholic community in Akwa Ibom State. By the end of the 20th century, almost three-quarters of the vineyards were owned by the church. At a time, it became a center point for other monasteries within the suburbs. Its wine-growing, fishing, exploration, and trade flourished with woods and seafood transported by barge to Europe, and in return, other goods arrived in Ekeya.

Beyond the spiritual, pathways were created on the riverbanks, laying sea routes to water resources and trade ways. Many world monasteries did not survive the reforms of 18th-century secularization, but the mendicant order monasteries of later dates, like St. Peter's Catholic Church, did. It survived the times:

the hardships and the betrayals. On the other hand, Unaffected was St. Peter's Catholic Church, Ekeya, which displayed the natural history of the old town.

This supposedly living world cultural heritage connects the exemplary revitalization of an old town with an old-time religion. As I strolled across the lawns, I got lost in thoughts, dolling out accolades through its medieval lanes, romantic arcades, convivial cafes, and spiritually seduced into secluded tavern gardens that help one stroll and pass the time.

On its vantage account of fantastic positioning high on a cliff hill that creates a magnificent view of the MataShaw building along Calabar Marina, the abbey of the eastern end impresses with its monumental imperial stairs and the frescoes of saints-like trowelled dust

plasters. The building is a true treasure for festive moods and occasions, as if her bonnet were made of brocade and hand-formed tips. If, in the past, church structures were used to underscore social status, St. Peter's church in Ekeya is likened as magnificently constructed during the Baroque era by the best architects of their time. Even with the maintenance failures, that tower still makes its mark on the cliff and is a much-visited cultural centre with regular exhibitions and music festivals pre-independence.

Even the caricature museum like Krantz biting contemporary satire, images from the deepest depths of the Catholic soul. It forces the observer to confront questions concerning aesthetics and modern art. Great scripts and sensual thrilling worship theatre with a unique atmosphere of the cliff and lowland forests. All ingredients may guarantee a fascinating day after day. Traditional and contemporary are united here, offering impressive settings of worship session cultures. Centred in a picturesque Renaissance building. The First. The most renowned work of art from two centuries.

Please excuse my emotions. Since time immemorial, the St. Peter's Catholic Church Ekeya has inspired painters and thinkers. Photographers and filmmakers would love its enchanting river valley. That is the essence and QED of rural tourism, captured in a house of worship. Ancient as it is, archaic as it may look, its modern accents are set by the cultural actions of today's individuals. The 19th-century Catholic missionaries discovered Ekeya in Akwa Ibom State, which is the movement's genesis. History is kind. Man is,

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Morocco Is Making Giant Strides To Become Africa's Aviation Manufacturing Hub

Despite some promising developments, Africa's aviation industry has yet to realize its potential compared to other continents. One key strategy to unlock this potential is for Africa to become a key manufacturer in the aviation space.

Morocco is now one of many countries competing for contracts with major manufacturers looking to speed up production and deliver more planes to meet demand, the AFP reported.

Companies such as Boeing and Airbus, along with their component manufacturers, are subcontracting design, production, and maintenance to countries spanning from Mexico to Thailand.

In its efforts to develop

the country's \$2 billion-a-year aerospace industry, Morocco has implemented measures such as providing subsidies to manufacturers of aircraft. This strategy is intended to support the expansion of Moroccan airlines, including the state-owned Royal Air Maroc.

"The needs are huge and we are in a very good position," Hamid Abbou, the airline's CEO told AFP. "Most of the big suppliers in Europe are struggling to get people to work in this industry. We don't have that issue."

Manufacturers are expanding their search for new locations to build and repair parts due to increased demand, stretching from Eastern Europe to Southeast Asia.

For example, Safran Aircraft Engines, a French manufacturer, sends engines for Boeing 737s and Airbus 320s to a repair plant outside of Casablanca every six to eight years and then sends them back to airlines from countries including Brazil, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The company is among 130 in the sector active in Morocco, where parts ranging from wings to fuselages are produced in an industry that employs 42% women.

While many companies see Morocco as a destination for affordable labour, the industry and government have collaborated to train skilled workers at IMA, an institute for aeronautics professionals

located in Casablanca.

Morocco recently became the first country in North Africa and the Middle East

to manufacture suicide drones, placing it in the elite of club of drone manufacturers. The drone is said to have some impressive capabilities with the intent of reconnaissance and attack.

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...Hotelschool The Hague To Drive Innovation In Hospitality Europe

balance of theory, real-world experience and applied research to prepare them for a career in the hospitality industry. We develop leaders who shape our global industry and drive it to give back more than it takes. We are proud to join forces with UN Tourism. We fully embrace their vision to Foster Innovation in the Hospitality Industry. In fact, our Sustainable Hospitality Challenge is a student competition designed to enhance the evolution of sustainable practices in hospitality, aligning

seamlessly with the objectives of UN Tourism."

Hotelschool The Hague, founded and funded by the hospitality industry in 1929, provides high-quality education and cutting-edge research in the field of international hospitality management, with an emphasis on the transformation of sustainability and digitalization and on developing students into sought-after hospitality graduates who excel in leadership roles worldwide.

Ekiti To Enjoy Full Cinematic Experience Soon – Professor Ojo-Bakare

Arrangements are in top gear to ensure full take-off of cinema business in Ekiti State. The State Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Creative Economy, Professor Rasaki Ojo-Bakare who hinted this said the ministry had concluded deal a world class Cinema Company, Mentcoom Cinemas to commence entertainment activities in the State.

Speaking with newsmen after inspecting the facilities at the civic centre in Ado-Ekiti, Ojo-Rasaki said the Biodun Abayomi administration is commitment to creating conducive environment for business to thrive in the State, including the entertainment sector.

The Commissioner explained that the initiative is part of efforts to



Prof. Ojo Bakare

reducing capital flight and boost the entertainment sector.

Professor Ojo-Bakare

also disclosed that the Chief Executive Officer [CEO]/Mentcoom Global Investment Ltd and

Mentcoom Cinemas, Fatoyinbo Olaniyi Temitope has acquired some facilities at the Obafemi Awolowo Civic Centre, Ado-Ekiti for the full take off of the entertainment and relaxation business.

The commissioner noted that the initiative would compliment the Sunday-Sunday Show earlier initiated by the ministry.

He said "we are here with some officials of Metcoom to conduct a joint facility tour to ensure that the cinema business take-off without any hitch. We trust Metcoom cinema. It is a company with a proven track record, we know them. I have acted for Metcoom before. We know they have the capacity to deliver. No doubt, we are going to have the

best Cinema culture in Ekiti.

Cinema is an element of culture because every form of entertainment is a cultural practice. As part of the programme of the creative economy stature of the Ministry, a movie too, is an act of creativity and a means of relaxation, leisure in the culture industry.

What we are telling the people of Ekiti is that they don't need to travel to other neighbouring states any longer to catch fun. We have enough entertainment to keep them here. We want Ekiti money be spent in Ekiti. And this is a good step in the right direction. We are also encouraging other cinema companies to partner with us.

Big Daddy Dune: Namibia Angered By Tourists Posing Naked In Dune Safari

The authorities in Namibia have condemned tourists who posed naked in one of the country's top attractions - the Big Daddy dune in the Namib desert.

Visitors told a local newspaper they were shocked by the behaviour and called for action against the tourists.

The unnamed foreigners might be blacklisted from entering any of Namibia's parks, a spokesperson from the tourism ministry told

local media.

Photos and a video have been widely shared, sparking sharp reactions.

Kenneth Nependa, vice-chairperson of the Federation of Namibian Tourism Associations, told the Namibian Sun news website that the behaviour risked attracting tourists "who think anything goes in Namibia".

"It is very sickening, and it really [creates] a bad image for Namibia," Nependa said, adding that

the Big Daddy dune was not just a relaxing place for tourists but for families too.

It is not clear who took the photos and the video of the three male tourists, who are seen stark naked in the sandy dune, next to their clothes.

The authorities did not immediately respond to BBC enquiries about the identity of the tourists.

Romeo Muyunda, spokesperson for the ministry of environment, forestry and tourism, termed the behaviour "extremely

shocking" in a statement cited by local media.

He said it was public indecency punishable by Namibian law.

"We appeal to that section of tourists to summon the conscience so that they do the right things," Mr Muyunda added.

The tourists had left the country by the time authorities received the reports, he said.

He appealed to Namibians to report violations of park regulations immediately for swift

action.

But some social media users said there was "nothing wrong with sunbathing".

"Why are they in trouble? They bothered no one," an X user posted.

The Big Daddy dune is one of the three largest dunes in Namibia's enormous Namib-Naukluft National Park, one of the largest in the world.

The dunes are popular with tourists who hike to the top to have a stunning view across the crests.

Experiencing Paradise: Dodeye Takes Mauritius

In September 2022, I embarked on a trip to Mauritius, a picturesque island paradise nestled in the Indian Ocean. It is a destination I had always wanted to visit and when I decided to visit on a special occasion 'my birthday' Despite grappling with motion sickness during the long flight, the anticipation of what awaited me on the other end kept my spirits high.

Upon arrival, I was greeted by the warm embrace of Address Boutique Hotel, where every detail seemed to be meticulously crafted to ensure a memorable stay. The sight of my room with delightful birthday decorations instantly made me feel cherished and set the tone for an unforgettable week ahead.

My experience in Mauritius unfolded like a dream, with each day offering new adventures. Throughout my stay, I had the pleasure of experiencing three wonderful accommodations.

Address Boutique Hotel screamed luxury, with its opulent amenities and impeccable service.

Voile Blue Hotel, on the other hand, welcomed me with its cozy ambiance and stunning poolside and beach views, providing the perfect setting for relaxation. Lastly, Astreo Beach Resort captivated me with its pristine shoreline and an array of exhilarating water activities, making it an ideal retreat for beach enthusiasts.

Exploring Mauritius was a feast for the senses, with a plethora of both land and water-based activities to indulge in. From immersing myself in the underwater world at Odysseo Oceanarium to strolling through the vibrant streets and markets of Port Louis.

The Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden pro-



vided a tranquil environment where I marvelled at the diverse plants, flowers, and the array of animals. The La Vallée des Couleurs is one to remember as it captivated me with its kaleidoscopic landscapes, offering thrilling adventures like ziplining, quad biking, amidst breathtaking scenery.

While my palate didn't quite align with the local cuisine, I enjoyed the meals served at the hotels.

One of the highlights of my time in Mauritius was the genuine warmth and hospitality of its people. Everywhere I went, I was met with smiles making me feel welcomed.

Thankfully, my journey to Mauritius was nothing short of magical. Whether you're seeking a romantic getaway, an adventure-filled escapade, or simply a place to unwind and soak in the beauty of nature, Mauritius offers it all.

It's a destination that beckons travellers to indulge in the finer things in life, leaving them with memories to cherish for a lifetime.



First storey building in Nigeria.

Sanwo-Olu Embarks on Historic Tour, Promises Development In Badagry

Lagos State Governor, Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu has again promised to embark on more developmental projects in Badagry in order to preserve the State's rich cultural heritage and boost tourism within the ancient town.

The Governor made the promise today during a tour of the historic city where he unveiled plans to elevate Badagry as a premier tourist destination in the country.

During the tour, the Governor visited restored landmarks such as the Slave Market Museum International Vlekete and the Badagry Heritage Museum, underscoring

the commitment to safeguarding the region's cultural legacy.

Sanwo-Olu also identified notable sites like the Point of No Return and Nigeria's first-storey building as pivotal chapters in Badagry's historical narrative.

The Governor emphasized infrastructure improvements, including road networks and public amenities, aimed at enhancing accessibility and comfort for tourists.

He said: "The collaborative effort with the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission and state officials signals a unified endeavor to transform

Badagry into a world-class tourist hub, promising economic growth while cherishing the country's cultural identity.

Badagry's transformation into a vibrant tourist destination reflects a broader vision of inclusive development and historical preservation, positioning Lagos State as a beacon of heritage tourism in Nigeria.

The Governor who also had an interactive session with the staff of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture at the Point of No Return in Badagry and painstakingly listened to the con-

tributions from the members of staff, promised improved attention on the Ministry.

It should be noted that the Chairman, Lagos State House of Assembly Committee on Tourism, Arts and Culture, Hon. Solomon Bonu, the Honourable Commissioner for the Ministry, Mrs. Toke Benson-Awoyinka, the Special Adviser on Tourism, Arts and Culture, Hon. Idris Aregbe and the Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Oloruntoyin Atekoja were among the top government officials that accompanied the Governor during the visit.

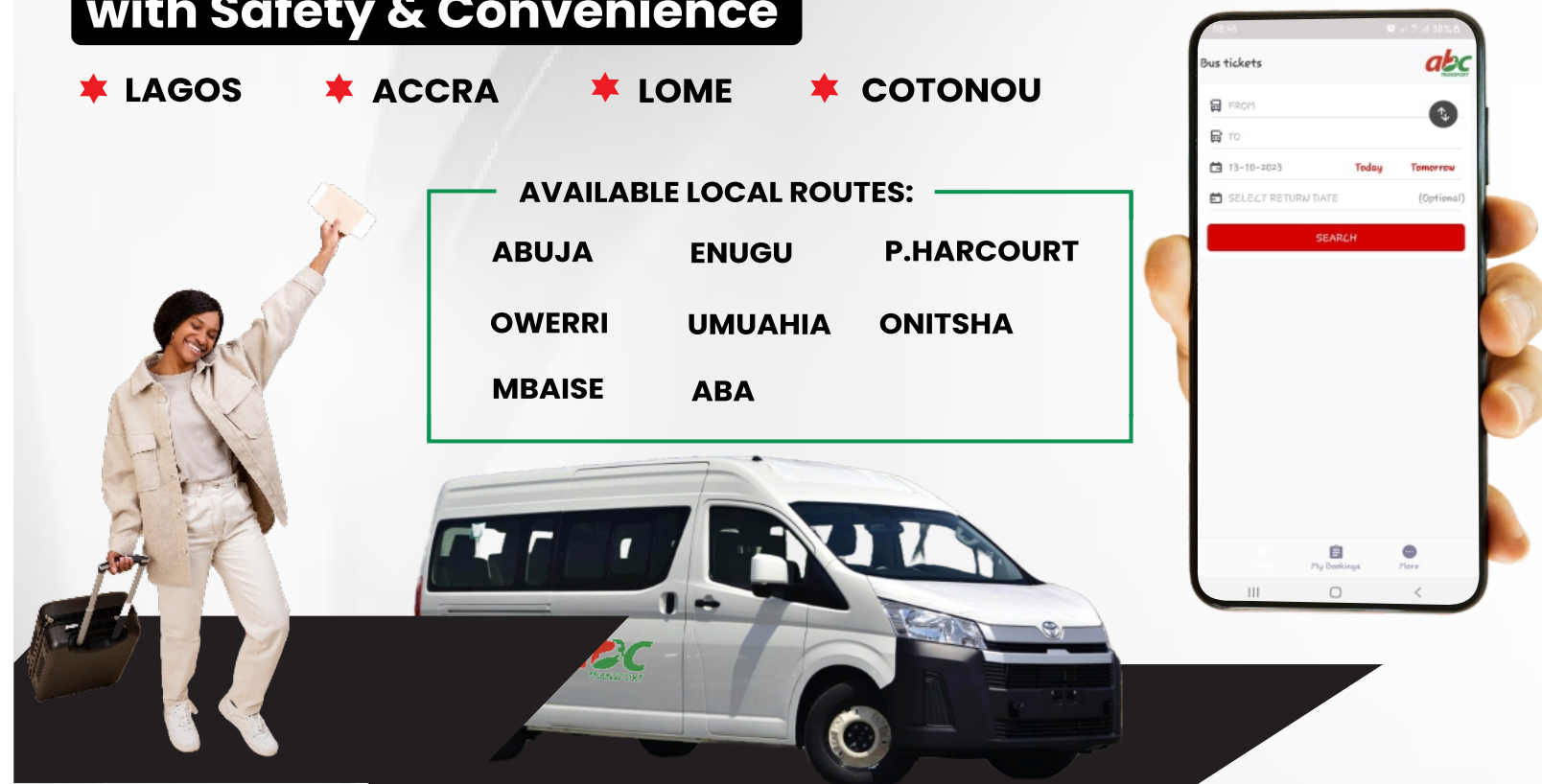
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Badagry's transformation into a vibrant tourist destination reflects a broader vision of inclusive development and historical preservation, positioning Lagos State as a beacon of heritage tourism in Nigeria.
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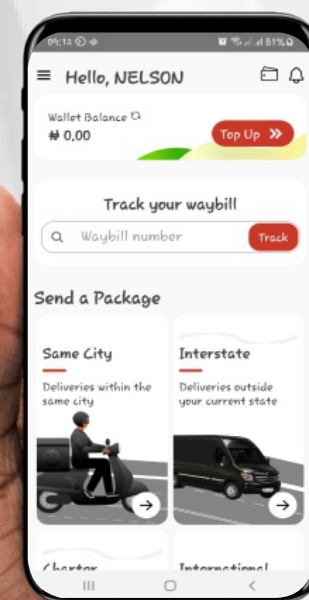
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A TRUE GHANAIAN EXPERIENCE



EU Approves Major Overhaul Of Migration Rules

...Last year saw the highest number of irregular migrants arriving in the EU since 2016

After years of negotiations, the European Parliament has approved a major reform tightening the EU's migration and asylum rules.

The EU Asylum and Migration Pact has been in the works since 2015. It will come into force in two years' time.

It is designed to speed up the asylum process and boost the return of irregular migrants to home countries.

It will also require EU member states to share responsibility for asylum seekers.

Last year saw some 380,000 people illegally crossing the EU's borders - the highest number since 2016.

The EU said the pact combined "mandatory solidarity" between member states with flexibility. Although some EU states remain opposed to parts of the agreement, it is expected to receive full

approval at the end of April under majority voting.

Under the proposed rules, the EU's 27 countries will be required to either take in thousands of migrants from "frontline" countries, such as Italy, Greece and Spain, or provide extra funding or resources instead.

The pact also says that asylum claims with "low chances of being accepted" should be examined rapidly, without necessarily admitting the applicant into EU territory.

The agreement also aims to deal with asylum requests within a maximum of 12 weeks. In case of rejection, asylum seekers would have to be returned forcibly to their home country within the same period.

Migrants will be subject to a toughened pre-entry screening procedure within seven days, which would include identification and health and

security checks.

Biometric data for any migrant aged six or older will be collected and there will be a mechanism to respond to sudden increases in arrivals.

The migration pact has been backed by the two main political groups - the centre-right European People's Party Group [EPP Group] and the centre-left Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats [S&D]. Both groups are trying to fend off a strong challenge from the right in parliamentary elections in June.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz praised a "historic, indispensable step" and Roberta Metsola, the president of the European Parliament, said it struck a "balance between solidarity and responsibility".

"It will not solve everything overnight but it is 10 giant leaps forward," she said.

Hungary has vowed not

to take any irregular migrants "regardless of any migration pact", and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk has rejected as "unacceptable" the mechanism of taking in some asylum seekers or paying into an EU fund for frontline states. Although many MEPs welcomed the result, several also noted that the agreement was not "perfect".

"It is a compromise we can work with," said Slovenian MEP Matjaz Nemeč, while Belgium's Hilde Vautmans said the legislation was "not perfect" but that she had voted for it nonetheless.

However, left-wing and far-right groups opposed the agreement.

Jordan Bardella of France's far-right National Rally said the migration pact was "terrible" and urged Europeans to vote against President Emmanuel Macron, who backed the agreement, at the upcoming European

elections on 9 June.

At one point, protesters disrupted the vote, chanting "this pact kills, vote No" and throwing paper planes.

Many NGOs also urged MEPs to vote down the reform, with Amnesty International warning the pact would lead to a "surge in suffering" for asylum seekers.

One common objection from NGOs is that asylum seekers with low chances of being accepted would have their claims processed either on small border islands or in detention facilities in frontline states and have less access to fair procedures.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies [IFRC] said it was worried by both "the normalisation of detention and speedier processes at borders". Quick decisions risked sending back people who should be granted asylum, it warned.

explanation from them, just a dismissive comment on my Instagram page when the post went viral.

Q: Have you encountered similar issues with other airlines in the past, or was this an isolated incident?

A: This is an isolated incident! In the 70 countries I have visited so far, I have always been treated with warmth and kindness.

Q: What steps do you plan to take in response to this situation with Turkish Airlines?

A: I'm reaching out to the necessary agencies and government bodies to demand accountability from Turkish Airlines. We should not be discriminated against as paying clients.

Q: How do you think airlines should handle cases like yours to ensure compliance with regulations and

fair treatment of passengers?

A: Airlines should not sell layovers longer than 8 hours to passengers from countries where a transit visa is required. If they do, they should provide visa assistance and accommodation.

Q: Can you provide any insights into the criteria or processes airlines use to determine passenger accommodation in situations like yours?

A: I should have been given accommodation at the airport. Ethiopian Airlines provides a great example of how layovers should be handled, with complimentary hotel stays and transportation.

Q: Have you contacted any regulatory authorities or consumer protection agencies regarding this incident?

A: Yes, the NCAA reached out to me, but nothing has been resolved yet.



Amman, Jordan



Luxor, Egypt

Q: What advice would you give to other travelers who might find themselves in a similar situation with an airline?

A: Speak up against discrimination and unfair treatment. Do not let airlines take advantage of you.

Q: Aside from traveling, what other interests do you have?

A: I'm a real estate consultant and head of business development for Giditrafic.

Q: What are your local travel experiences like, if any?

A: I have travelled to 22 states in Nigeria, and Nigeria is a beautiful country with amazing destinations.

Q: Since when did you start travelling?

A: I have been traveling for about 10 years now.

Q: When you are not on the road, air, or sea, what else do you do?

A: I keep planning my next trip, going to the beach, dancing, and researching countries and destinations.

Q: How do you finance your trips?

A: All my trips have been self-funded from my jobs and businesses.

Q: Awards or recognitions?

A: I have had live TV interviews, received an award from African Travel Times Magazine, and was recently recognized as one of the top 100 tourism personalities in Nigeria

BETHIA IDOKO:

From Childhood Dreamer To Award-Winning Globetrotter

...Lone Traveller Reflects on 70-Country Journey and Advocates for Fair Treatment in Air Travel

Bethia Idoko, an award-winning lone traveller who recently reached her 70th country milestone, sat down with Lucky George, publisher of African Travel Times, to discuss her adventurous journey and the challenges she faced along the way.



Bali, Indonesia



Hugarda Egypt

Q: Congratulations on visiting your 70th country! What inspired you to embark on such an extensive travel journey?

A: Since I was a little girl, I have always wanted to travel

the world. I spent a lot of time poring over encyclopedias just to read about different countries. So, when I finished university, I started to travel, and I have not stopped.

Q: Can you share with us some of the most memorable

experiences you've had while travelling to these 70 countries?

A: One of my best travel memories was when I travelled with my siblings to Cancun, Mexico. Snorkelling in the very clear waters and feeding fishes of all colours was so amazing. Sleeping under the stars in the

Sahara Desert was also very epic.

Q: What motivated you to continue exploring new destinations even after visiting so many countries already?

A: The plan is to visit every country in the world, so my constant motivation is seeing how many more countries I'm yet to visit.

Q: How do you typically plan your trips to ensure you get the most out of each destination?

A: I always plan my trip ahead and everything I'm doing in a particular country before I visit. However, sometimes, when I arrive, there could be slight modifications, so I leave a little room for that. I Google the destination and basically plan off what I see. Travel is very visual for me.

Q: Have you noticed any common themes or similarities among the countries you've visited, or do you find each one to be uniquely different?

A: A lot of the countries in Europe are a bit similar even though with their own uniqueness. But visiting different regions of the world, I see the difference and diversity in culture, food, and behaviour.

Q: With such a diverse range of cultures and landscapes encountered, how do you approach immersing yourself in each new place you visit?

A: Each new country carries its own diversity and uniqueness. I usually can't wait to experience it all. This, for me, is one of the most exciting things.

Q: What challenges have you faced during your travels, and how have you overcome them?

A: Recently I had a very bad experience with Turkish Airlines. I fell victim to deceptive marketing by the airline and



Aruba

was promised a hotel stay for my 21-hour layover flight, only to be denied accommodation upon arrival. It was a very bad experience for me, the worst ever in all my travels.

Q: Do you have a favourite country or destination that holds a special place in your heart, if so, what makes it stand out to you?

A: Zanzibar in Tanzania will always have my heart. It has some of the most beautiful waters, and the vibe of the country is so chilled, no rush at all. The Seychelles is also very beautiful; I'd love to visit again.

Q: Have you noticed any personal growth or changes in perspective because of your travels to so many different countries?

A: I embrace other people's culture more with a lot of respect, and I see that we are all unique and different in our disposition to life. Your country is just a piece of the world, not the whole world.

Q: What advice would you give to someone who is considering embarking on their own journey to explore the world?

A: I'd say go for it; traveling is such a beautiful thing, and it is very liberating. You learn so much, and your mind opens up in a way that a classroom can never show it. It's one of the best forms of education that can only be experienced and not taught.

Q: Can you share with us the experience that led to Turkish Airlines denying you accommodation despite having visited your 70th country?

A: Recently I had a very bad experience with Turkish Airlines. I fell victim to deceptive marketing by the airline and was promised a hotel stay for my 21-hour layover flight, only to be denied accommodation upon arrival. It was a very bad experience for me, the worst ever in all my travels.

Q: Were you aware of any specific International Air Trans-

port Association [IATA] rules or aviation regulations that Turkish Airlines may have violated in denying you accommodation?

A: Yes, according to IATA laws, no passenger should be left at the airport for longer than 9 hours without accommodation. They left me without accommodation for 21 hours.

Q: How did you handle the situation when Turkish Airlines refused to accommodate you?

A: I made a video and posted it, and it went viral. It was picked up by numerous blogs and social media platforms. The Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority [NCAA] reached out to me and summoned the airline, but nothing has been concluded yet.

Q: Did you receive any explanation from Turkish Airlines regarding their decision?

A: No, I did not receive any



Palm Island, Aruba