



**AFRICAN TRAVEL COMMISSION [ATC]  
IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE  
NIGERIAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY [NTDA]**

Invite All African National Tourism  
Organisations and Federations to

# AFRICAN TOURISM SUMMIT **20 26**

**FEB. 11TH-12TH, 2026**

**Eko Hotel & Suites  
Lagos, Nigeria**

**+234-803 354 6608 | +233-546526740**

[contact@africantravelcommission.org](mailto:contact@africantravelcommission.org)  
[www.africantravelcommission.org](http://www.africantravelcommission.org)

Partners:

ENGLISH

# AFRICAN Travel Times

Tourism-Travel-Leisure News Undiluted Vol. 14 ISSUE 109 NOVEMBER 2025 ISSN: 2276-8319 \$5.00, ₦3,000



**UN Tourism: Shaikha Nasser  
Al Nowais Confirmed As The  
New Secretary General**








Plot 1415 Adetokunbo Ademola Street, PMB 12724  
 Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria, Tel: +23412772700-5  
 (ext,6124) +23414606100 -29 Fax +234 1 2704071  
 sales@ekohotels.com, reservation@ekohotels.com  
 banquet@ekohotels, www.ekohotels.com

...nesting international standards with African hospitality

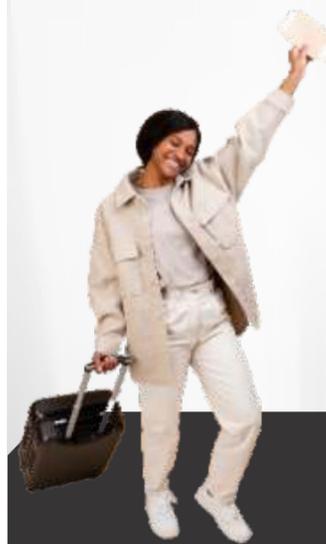
# Travel to the WESTCOAST

with Safety & Convenience

★ LAGOS ★ ACCRA ★ LOME ★ COTONOU

### AVAILABLE LOCAL ROUTES:

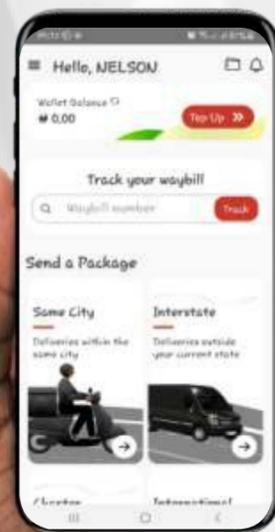
ABUJA	ENUGU	P.HARCOURT
OWERRI	UMUAHIA	ONITSHA
MBAISE	ABA	



Get the App



Reach new customers  
**SAVE UP TO 40%**  
 On Shipments, sign up to  
 e-commerce



**60+ Centres for Nationwide delivery**

Download the ABC Logistics App



Contact: 0813 986 2090  
 email: contact@abctransport.com

DOWNLOAD THE ABC LOGISTICS APP ON:  



Cont'd from pg 17

**4. Toronto**

Toronto in Canada ranked fourth among the most popular international city destinations for travellers departing Nigeria by air, with approximately 60,300 passengers, representing 2.9% of outbound traffic. Flights to Toronto Pearson International Airport [YYZ] are operated by Air Canada, providing direct services, along with other verified carriers offering connecting options.

Nigerians travel to Toronto for education at world-renowned universities and colleges, business opportunities, seeking a better quality of life, tourism, and family visits. The city's strong economy, safe environment, and multicultural society make it a popular destination for both short- and long-term travel.

Toronto's cultural and lifestyle appeal includes the CN Tower, Royal Ontario Museum, multicultural neighbourhoods, and entertainment districts. The city is known for its diverse urban environment, educational opportunities, and vibrant cultural scene, providing visitors with a mix of leisure, learning, and professional experiences.

**5. Manchester**

Manchester in the United Kingdom ranked fifth among the most popular international city destinations for travellers departing Nigeria by air, with approximately 59,800 passengers, representing 2.9% of outbound traffic.

The city is served by Manchester Airport (MAN), the primary international airport in the region. Flights are operated by British Airways and other verified carriers, providing direct and connecting services.

Nigerians travel to Manchester for education,



business, tourism, and family visits, attracted by the city's universities, cultural events, and economic opportunities.

Manchester's cultural and lifestyle appeal includes Old Trafford stadium, the Museum of Science and Industry, and vibrant arts and music scenes. The city is known for its sporting heritage, industrial history, and dynamic cultural life, offering visitors both leisure and professional experiences.

**6. New York**

New York in the United States ranked sixth among the most popular international city destinations for travellers departing Nigeria by air, with approximately 47,200 passengers, representing 2.3% of outbound traffic.

The city is served by three major airports, John F. Kennedy International Airport [JFK], Newark Liberty International Airport [EWR], and LaGuardia Airport [LGA], with JFK a notable mention. Flights on this route are operated by verified carriers such as Delta Air Lines and United Airlines, providing direct and connecting options.

Nigerians travel to New York for business, education, tourism, family visits, and emigration, attracted by the city's economic opportunities, world-renowned universities, and prospects for a better

quality of life.

New York's cultural and lifestyle appeal includes the Statue of Liberty, Times Square, Broadway theatres, and Central Park, alongside vibrant neighbourhoods and diverse culinary experiences. The city is known for its global influence in finance, culture, and education, offering visitors a mix of professional, leisure, educational, and long-term settlement opportunities.

**7. Madinah**

Madinah ranked seventh among the most popular international city destinations for travellers departing Nigeria by air, with approximately 45,500 passengers, representing 2.2% of outbound traffic. Saudia operates direct flights to Prince Mohammad bin Abdulaziz International Airport [MED], with other airlines providing connecting services.

Located in Saudi Arabia, the city is a primary destination for religious travel, particularly for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims, attracting Nigerian visitors seeking spiritual experiences and Islamic education.

Madinah's cultural and lifestyle appeal centres on the Prophet's Mosque and other historic Islamic sites. The city is unique for its religious and historical focus, providing a

calm environment for worship, reflection, and learning.

**8. Johannesburg**

Johannesburg ranked eighth among the most popular international city destinations for travellers departing Nigeria by air, with about 45,200 passengers, representing 2.2% of outbound traffic. South African Airways operates direct flights to O. R. Tambo International Airport [JNB], with connecting options via other carriers.

Situated in South Africa, Johannesburg is a major economic and business hub, attracting Nigerians for commerce, education, and tourism. Its role as a gateway to the region makes it an important destination for professional and leisure travellers.

Johannesburg's cultural and lifestyle appeal includes the Apartheid Museum, Soweto township tours, and a dynamic urban environment. The city is known for its mix of modern urban life and historical significance, giving visitors a chance to explore South Africa's recent history while experiencing a bustling metropolis.

**9. Washington**

Washington, D.C., ranked ninth among the most popular

international city destinations for travellers departing Nigeria by air, with approximately 43,000 passengers, representing 2.1% of outbound traffic. Airlines such as United Airlines and Delta Air Lines operate regular flights to Washington Dulles International Airport [IAD] and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport [DCA].

Located in the United States, the city is a key destination for Nigerians travelling for business, education, tourism, and family visits, offering a mix of professional, academic, and cultural opportunities.

Washington's cultural and lifestyle appeal includes landmarks like the White House, Smithsonian museums, and national monuments, alongside vibrant neighbourhoods and public spaces. The city stands out for its concentration of historical and civic sites, providing visitors with both learning and leisure experiences.

**10. Cairo**

Cairo ranked tenth among the most popular international city destinations for travellers departing Nigeria by air, welcoming about 37,400 passengers, representing 1.8% of outbound traffic. EgyptAir operates regular flights to Cairo International Airport [CAI].

The city, located in Egypt, serves as a transit hub, linking Africa to the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. Many Nigerian travellers visit Cairo for education, tourism, and trade, taking advantage of its connectivity.

Cairo's cultural and lifestyle appeal includes landmarks such as the Pyramids of Giza, the Egyptian Museum, and historic districts like Islamic Cairo. The city offers a blend of ancient history and modern urban life, where busy streets, markets, and contemporary facilities sit alongside historic sites.



## UN Tourism Executive Council Announces Full Roster Of Member States

The United Nations Tourism Executive Council, the governing body responsible for guiding the strategic direction and oversight of UN Tourism, has confirmed its full slate of member countries representing all global regions. Meeting at least once a year, the Executive Council ensures the implementation of

decisions adopted by the General Assembly and plays a vital role in shaping the future of international tourism.

Strong African Representation  
The African region continues to demonstrate a robust presence on the Executive Council, with the following countries currently serving as elected members:

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea

**Middle East:**

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

These members

Angola, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The number of African seats may vary by election cycle, reflecting the rotational system designed to maintain fair regional balance.

Other Member Countries with Voting Rights

In addition to the African contingent and Spain, which holds a permanent seat as the host country of UN Tourism's headquarters, the Executive Council includes elected member states from all world regions. All elected members hold full voting rights throughout their four-year terms.

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea

**Middle East:**

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

These members

collectively contribute to a globally balanced governance structure, ensuring that diverse tourism priorities, from sustainable development to digital innovation, are represented in decision-making processes.

The number of African seats may vary by election cycle, reflecting the rotational system designed to maintain fair regional balance.

Other Member Countries with Voting Rights

In addition to the African contingent and Spain, which holds a permanent seat as the host country of UN Tourism's headquarters, the Executive Council includes elected member states from all world regions. All elected members hold full voting rights throughout their four-year terms.

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea

**Middle East:**

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

These members

collectively contribute to a globally balanced governance structure, ensuring that diverse tourism priorities, from sustainable development to digital innovation, are represented in decision-making processes.

The number of African seats may vary by election cycle, reflecting the rotational system designed to maintain fair regional balance.

Other Member Countries with Voting Rights

In addition to the African contingent and Spain, which holds a permanent seat as the host country of UN Tourism's headquarters, the Executive Council includes elected member states from all world regions. All elected members hold full voting rights throughout their four-year terms.

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea

**Middle East:**

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

These members

collectively contribute to a globally balanced governance structure, ensuring that diverse tourism priorities, from sustainable development to digital innovation, are represented in decision-making processes.

The number of African seats may vary by election cycle, reflecting the rotational system designed to maintain fair regional balance.

Other Member Countries with Voting Rights

In addition to the African contingent and Spain, which holds a permanent seat as the host country of UN Tourism's headquarters, the Executive Council includes elected member states from all world regions. All elected members hold full voting rights throughout their four-year terms.

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea

**Middle East:**

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

These members

collectively contribute to a globally balanced governance structure, ensuring that diverse tourism priorities, from sustainable development to digital innovation, are represented in decision-making processes.

The number of African seats may vary by election cycle, reflecting the rotational system designed to maintain fair regional balance.

Other Member Countries with Voting Rights

In addition to the African contingent and Spain, which holds a permanent seat as the host country of UN Tourism's headquarters, the Executive Council includes elected member states from all world regions. All elected members hold full voting rights throughout their four-year terms.

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea

**Middle East:**

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

These members

collectively contribute to a globally balanced governance structure, ensuring that diverse tourism priorities, from sustainable development to digital innovation, are represented in decision-making processes.

The number of African seats may vary by election cycle, reflecting the rotational system designed to maintain fair regional balance.

Other Member Countries with Voting Rights

In addition to the African contingent and Spain, which holds a permanent seat as the host country of UN Tourism's headquarters, the Executive Council includes elected member states from all world regions. All elected members hold full voting rights throughout their four-year terms.

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea

**Middle East:**

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

These members

collectively contribute to a globally balanced governance structure, ensuring that diverse tourism priorities, from sustainable development to digital innovation, are represented in decision-making processes.

The number of African seats may vary by election cycle, reflecting the rotational system designed to maintain fair regional balance.

Other Member Countries with Voting Rights

In addition to the African contingent and Spain, which holds a permanent seat as the host country of UN Tourism's headquarters, the Executive Council includes elected member states from all world regions. All elected members hold full voting rights throughout their four-year terms.

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea

**Middle East:**

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

These members

collectively contribute to a globally balanced governance structure, ensuring that diverse tourism priorities, from sustainable development to digital innovation, are represented in decision-making processes.

The number of African seats may vary by election cycle, reflecting the rotational system designed to maintain fair regional balance.

Other Member Countries with Voting Rights

In addition to the African contingent and Spain, which holds a permanent seat as the host country of UN Tourism's headquarters, the Executive Council includes elected member states from all world regions. All elected members hold full voting rights throughout their four-year terms.

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea

**Middle East:**

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

These members

collectively contribute to a globally balanced governance structure, ensuring that diverse tourism priorities, from sustainable development to digital innovation, are represented in decision-making processes.

The number of African seats may vary by election cycle, reflecting the rotational system designed to maintain fair regional balance.

Other Member Countries with Voting Rights

In addition to the African contingent and Spain, which holds a permanent seat as the host country of UN Tourism's headquarters, the Executive Council includes elected member states from all world regions. All elected members hold full voting rights throughout their four-year terms.

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea

**Middle East:**

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

These members

collectively contribute to a globally balanced governance structure, ensuring that diverse tourism priorities, from sustainable development to digital innovation, are represented in decision-making processes.

The number of African seats may vary by election cycle, reflecting the rotational system designed to maintain fair regional balance.

Other Member Countries with Voting Rights

In addition to the African contingent and Spain, which holds a permanent seat as the host country of UN Tourism's headquarters, the Executive Council includes elected member states from all world regions. All elected members hold full voting rights throughout their four-year terms.

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea

**Middle East:**

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

These members

collectively contribute to a globally balanced governance structure, ensuring that diverse tourism priorities, from sustainable development to digital innovation, are represented in decision-making processes.

The number of African seats may vary by election cycle, reflecting the rotational system designed to maintain fair regional balance.

Other Member Countries with Voting Rights

In addition to the African contingent and Spain, which holds a permanent seat as the host country of UN Tourism's headquarters, the Executive Council includes elected member states from all world regions. All elected members hold full voting rights throughout their four-year terms.

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea

**Middle East:**

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

These members

collectively contribute to a globally balanced governance structure, ensuring that diverse tourism priorities, from sustainable development to digital innovation, are represented in decision-making processes.

The number of African seats may vary by election cycle, reflecting the rotational system designed to maintain fair regional balance.

Other Member Countries with Voting Rights

In addition to the African contingent and Spain, which holds a permanent seat as the host country of UN Tourism's headquarters, the Executive Council includes elected member states from all world regions. All elected members hold full voting rights throughout their four-year terms.

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea

**Middle East:**

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

These members

collectively contribute to a globally balanced governance structure, ensuring that diverse tourism priorities, from sustainable development to digital innovation, are represented in decision-making processes.

The number of African seats may vary by election cycle, reflecting the rotational system designed to maintain fair regional balance.

Other Member Countries with Voting Rights

In addition to the African contingent and Spain, which holds a permanent seat as the host country of UN Tourism's headquarters, the Executive Council includes elected member states from all world regions. All elected members hold full voting rights throughout their four-year terms.

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea

**Middle East:**

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

These members

collectively contribute to a globally balanced governance structure, ensuring that diverse tourism priorities, from sustainable development to digital innovation, are represented in decision-making processes.

The number of African seats may vary by election cycle, reflecting the rotational system designed to maintain fair regional balance.

Other Member Countries with Voting Rights

In addition to the African contingent and Spain, which holds a permanent seat as the host country of UN Tourism's headquarters, the Executive Council includes elected member states from all world regions. All elected members hold full voting rights throughout their four-year terms.

**Americas:**

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica

**Europe:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania

**Asia & the Pacific:**

China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea



## ATC Announces Inaugural Pan-African Tourism Summit And Exhibition To Hold In Lagos, Nigeria

The African Travel Commission [ATC], Africa's oldest pan-African non-profit travel and tourism organisation, has announced the Inaugural African Travel Commission Tourism Summit and Exhibition. The event will take place from February 11–12, 2026, at Eko Hotels & Suites, Lagos, Nigeria.

The Summit will be held under the theme: “Accelerating Africa's Tourism Growth through Innovation, Partnerships and Sustainable Investments.” It will convene Tourism Practitioners, Aviation, Heads of National Tourism Boards, Airlines, Development Partners, Investors, and the Media. They will discuss new strategies to advance Africa's tourism and travel economy.

According to Lucky Onoriode George, Executive Director of the African Travel

Commission, the event will serve as a continental platform for policy dialogue, collaboration, and investment promotion to unlock the full potential of Africa's travel and hospitality industries.

“Africa's tourism industry stands at a defining moment. The ATC Summit will unite public and private stakeholders to reimagine the continent's tourism narrative, anchored on innovation, sustainability, and strategic partnerships,” said Lucky George.

The Summit is being organised in collaboration with the Nigerian Tourism Development Authority [NTDA] and with the strategic support of key development partners and several leading regional tourism institutions.

The two-day event will feature: heads of national tourism organisations heads

and chief executive officers Roundtables on Tourism, Aviation, and Sustainable Investment; B2B Exhibition Marketplace connecting destinations, airlines, tour operators, and investors; Capacity-building Workshops for travel professionals and SMEs; Networking Gala and Awards Night recognising excellence in African tourism and aviation and Investment Pitch Sessions for tourism infrastructure and hospitality projects.

The African Travel Commission [ATC], headquartered in Accra, Ghana, has been at the forefront of continental tourism advocacy for over two decades. It continues to promote intra-African travel, policy coordination, and destination marketing, aiming to position Africa as a unified, competitive tourism region in

the global marketplace. The Lagos Summit will mark a milestone in Africa's tourism evolution, offering a unified stage for both Anglophone and Francophone Africa to strengthen regional cooperation and align tourism development strategies with the African Continental Free Trade Area [AfCFTA] and the UN Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs].

ATC is inviting corporate sponsorships and partnerships, targeting tourism boards, airlines, hotel groups, investment agencies, and related organisations that share the vision of a connected and prosperous African tourism industry.

Sponsorship categories, Platinum, Gold, and Silver, offer tailored visibility, brand exposure, and networking privileges across multiple event platforms, including

digital campaigns and the ATC Summit Exhibition.

To ensure extensive coverage and storytelling reach, the African Travel Commission is partnering with eTurboNews [eTN], as an Official International Media Partner, alongside other major African and international media outlets. The partnership aims to provide real-time coverage, expert analysis, and global visibility for the Summit and its outcomes.

### About the African Travel Commission [ATC]

The African Travel Commission is a continental, non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism, investment, and regional cooperation across Africa. Established six decades ago, ATC serves as a catalyst for policy dialogue, destination marketing, and capacity development for tourism professionals across all African regions.

For the record, ATC was instrumental to the transformation of International Union of Official Travel Organisation [IUOTO], to World Tourism Organisation [WTO], now UN Tourism, a specialised agency of the United Nations [UN], since 2003 following the UN General Assembly approval with the December 23, 2003, resolution A/RES/58/232 and initiated 27th of every September as World Tourism Day [WTD] since 1971.

ATC works with governments, regional economic communities, tourism boards, and the private sector to foster a unified and competitive African tourism brand on the global stage.

Participation in the Summit is open to government agencies, corporate organisations, tourism practitioners, investors,

## London Is Top Destination For Nigerian Travellers, Followed By Accra, Johannesburg, And Cairo, Reveals IATA Data

New data from the International Air Transport Association [IATA] has unveiled the top 10 international destinations Nigerians are flying to, highlighting the United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, and United States as leading choices.

The report underscores Nigeria's growing outbound travel demand for business, education, and leisure despite economic pressures.

According to nairametrics.com, the country is served by five major international airports: Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos, Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja, Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport, Port Harcourt International Airport, and Akanu Ibiam International Airport in Enugu. Lagos handles the bulk of outbound traffic, followed by Abuja and Port Harcourt.

This ranking is based on IATA's 2023 origin-destination data, published in The Value of Air Transport to Nigeria, released a few weeks ago. In 2023, international flights accounted for 23% of Nigeria's total departures, equal to 2.1 million passengers, led by Europe with 780,700 passengers or 38%, Africa with 485,400



passengers or 23%, and North America with 373,000 passengers or 18%.

Nigerian outbound flights represented 0.1% of global international traffic and 2.9% of regional traffic, with cumulative growth over the last decade at -7.2%.

Providing more context, data from the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, obtained by Nairametrics, show that in 2024, MMIA in Lagos handled 4.3 million international passengers, 150 million kilograms of cargo, and 40,250 aircraft movements, while Abuja averaged 2,871 international passengers daily with 19 international flights per day.

Port Harcourt recorded 111,846 international passengers and 1,638 aircraft movements.

### 1: London

London ranked first among the most popular international city destinations for travellers departing Nigeria by air, with approximately 421,300 passengers, representing 20.3% of outbound traffic. Airlines such as British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, and Air Peace operate flights to London Heathrow [LHR] and London Gatwick [LGW] airports.

Located in the United Kingdom, London attracts Nigerians for business, education, tourism, sports,

and family visits, serving as a global hub for finance, culture, and international connections.

London's cultural and lifestyle appeal includes the British Museum, Tower of London, West End theatres, Premier League football clubs such as Arsenal and Chelsea, and vibrant neighbourhoods. The city is known for its blend of history, modernity, sports culture, and international diversity, offering a wide range of opportunities and experiences for visitors.

### 2: Accra

Accra ranked second among the most popular international city destinations for travellers departing

Nigeria by air, with approximately 122,300 passengers, representing 5.9% of outbound traffic. Flights to Kotoka International Airport [ACC] are operated by several airlines, such as Air Peace and other verified carriers providing direct and connecting options.

Located in Ghana, Accra attracts Nigerians for business, education, tourism, and family visits, reflecting strong economic and cultural links between the two countries.

Accra's cultural and lifestyle appeal includes Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum, Jamestown historic district, Makola Market, and Osu nightlife, offering visitors a mix of history, commerce, and vibrant city life. The city is known for its friendly, cosmopolitan environment and rich West African cultural experiences.

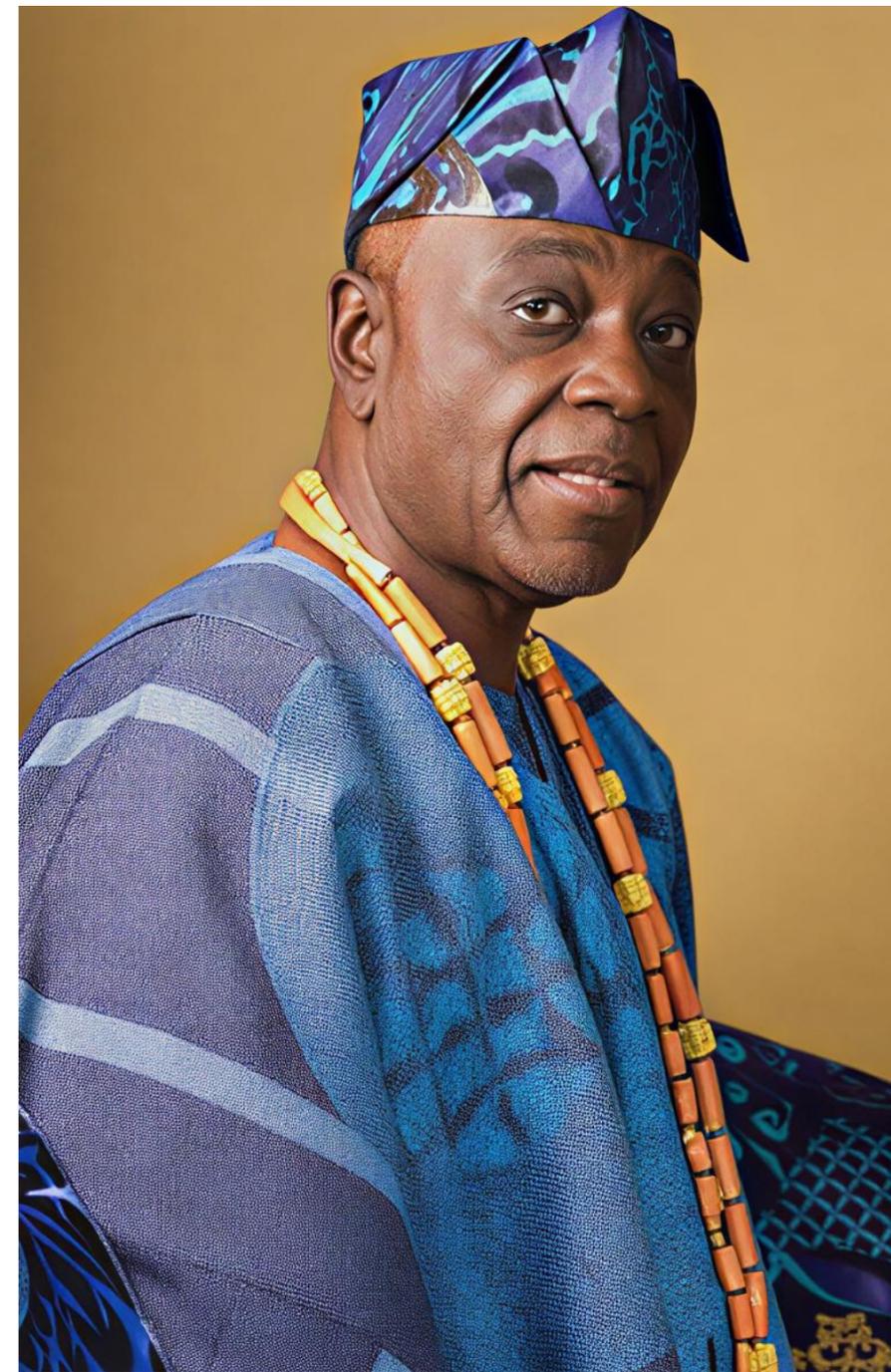
### 3: Jeddah

Jeddah ranked third among the most popular international city destinations for travellers departing Nigeria by air, with approximately 92,100 passengers, representing 4.4% of outbound traffic.

Flights to King Abdulaziz International Airport [JED] are operated by several airlines, including Saudi Airlines and other verified carriers, providing direct and connecting options.

Located in Saudi Arabia, Jeddah is a major gateway for religious travel, particularly for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims, and also attracts Nigerians for business, tourism, and trade.

Jeddah's cultural and lifestyle appeal includes the historic Al-Balad district, the Red Sea Corniche, and modern shopping and entertainment centres. The city combines religious significance with vibrant urban life, serving both pilgrims and leisure visitors.



Tajudeen Owoyemi

## Tajudeen Owoyemi From Plumber To Billionaire Owner Of Radisson Blu Hotel

The son of a petty trader, Alhaji Tajudeen Owoyemi, grew with minimal education and 4-year apprenticeship in plumbing to become a construction contractor. Today, the silent Nigerian beat the odds to

become one of the wealthiest luxury hotel owners in Nigeria. He is the billionaire-owner of The Radisson Blu Hotel in Nigeria in the early 2000s. "I love to live a quiet life and I don't really like paparazzi exposure. That is how God has created me from the onset and that is how I have lived my life," he said in an interview sometime ago.

"I was raised by a petty trader who instilled the spirit of hard work in me. I remember after school I would hawk 'Ekuru' for my grandmother. And I used to go to the construction sites with a group of friends to assist in carrying sand and all that. In those days, we would pack sand from the river and stack it up to a certain level before we got paid. It was our own little contribution to our families. The physical struggle continued till I finished secondary school and moved to Kaduna.

"I wanted to go to school but there was no money. In Kaduna, I learned a trade. I am an artisan who was trained as a plumber. And I learnt it for four years. From there, I went to Kaduna Polytechnic where I did a part-time study in Civil Engineering. I will do plumbing in the morning and go to evening classes. I did that for three years and obtained a National Diploma in Civil Engineering."

With his experience, he established his company at age 22 in 1978 and started contract jobs when Alhaji Shehu Shagari came into power. "We had a lot of people; a lot of friends who gave us their projects to supervise because of the trust they had in us. We weren't too ambitious as a company. We concentrated on our strength and the work started growing," he added.

His company soon started enjoying patronage from institutions such as Command and Staff College Jaji, Nigerian Ports Authority [NPA], Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency [NIMASA], Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria [FAAN], Nigeria Communication Commission [NCC] and several other Federal Government

Agencies and Parastatals.

"We did so many contracts. The biggest project we started then was in Staff College in Jaji, Kaduna. We did the Nigerian Army of School Infantry. We did the remodelling, reconstruction of the Nigerian Army School of Infantry head office in Jaji. It was around 1991 we did it and it was very successful," he recalled.

With strength in the north, he moved to Lagos in 1985. "It was this contract job, building construction. The late Haladu, a General from Kano, invited me to Lagos. He said they wanted to build Police barracks for Nigerian Ports, they had their board meeting and they approved it and they wanted me to do it.

So he sent for me from Kaduna. He insisted that I must come to Lagos immediately. That was how we got the first flight coming to Lagos. I now found out that it was another establishment where once you do your job satisfactorily you get paid.

That was how I started coming to Lagos constantly before I and the family finally moved in 1993," he told ThisDay.

In 2003, he went into hospitality business birthing Protea Hotel, Victoria Island [renamed Park Inn by Radisson].

Internationally branded hotels currently owned and operating under the auspices of Avalon Intercontinental are Park Inn by Radisson, Victoria Island, Radisson Ikeja Hotel and Radisson Blu Ikeja Hotel.

He was born on April 16, 1956, in Offa, Kwara State.

**Credit: Ethnic African Stories**



Superstar Khaby Lama with UN Tourism Officials.

## UN Tourism Welcomes Tiktok Superstar Khaby Lama As Ambassador, Recognizing Pivotal Role Of Creative Economy

...UN Tourism has welcomed Khaby Lama, the world's most-popular TikTok creator, as its newest Ambassador.

With digital creators and influencers now central to the tourism conversation, the new partnerships reflect UN Tourism's commitment to reaching diverse digital-first audiences around the world.

As a UN Tourism Ambassador, Lama will use his unique platform to promote responsible tourism, support cultural heritage, and advocate for sustainable practices. His work will focus on showcasing the power of tourism as a vehicle for development, job creation, and unity. Lama's first collaborations with UN Tourism will be announced in the coming weeks, focusing on youth engagement and highlighting "hidden gem" destinations.

UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili says: "Khaby Lama has brought joy to many millions of people, in every corner of the world, and from every walk of life. His openness and readiness to connect with people across borders and languages represents what tourism is all about. I am proud to announce Lama as our newest Ambassador."

"Khaby Lama has brought joy to many millions of people, in every corner of the world, and from every walk of life. His openness and readiness to connect with people across

borders and languages represents what tourism is all about"

Khaby Lama says: "I am incredibly honoured to become a UN Tourism Ambassador. My journey started with just a desire to make people smile. Now, I want to use my platform to share my passion for the world, to promote responsible travel, and to build a global community that cares about our planet and the people in it. We (creators) have a huge responsibility. I am excited to start this new adventure and show everyone how we can make the world a better place through travel."

## Nigeria: Awakan Assumes Office As NTDA Director General

The newly appointed Director-General of the Nigerian Tourism Development Authority [NTDA], Olayiwola Awakan, has assumed office at the Authority's Headquarters in Abuja, pledging to usher in a new era of innovation, collaboration, and renewed commitment towards repositioning Nigeria's tourism industry.

Upon his arrival, Awakan was received by the Management Team of the Authority, led by Ovie Esehwaye, the Director overseeing the Office of the Director-General, who presented the official handover note. The new helmsman thereafter met with the Directors, toured the NTDA offices, and addressed the general staff at the NTDA Village Hall.

In his maiden address, Awakan expressed deep appreciation to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, for the confidence reposed in him to drive the Renewed Hope Agenda through tourism.

"I'm happy to be here; this is a new dawn. There's a lot to be done and by the grace of God, it will be done," he stated.

"Let me start by appreciating the President of Nigeria, His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to drive the Renewed Hope Agenda through tourism."

Awakan also acknowledged the Honourable Minister of Arts, Culture, Tourism and

Creative Economy, Hannatu Musa Musawa, for her visionary leadership and tireless efforts in repositioning the sector despite limited resources.

"The responsibility bestowed on her is weighty, and even with the limited resources, she has been able to push ahead. I am here to complement her efforts," he noted.

While commending the achievements of his predecessors, the Director-General pledged to consolidate on their successes and build a more vibrant, efficient, and responsive NTDA capable of attracting tourists and investors to Nigeria.

"My predecessors have done excellently well to the best of their ability, and the baton of leadership has been passed to me. I will take it up from here," he affirmed.

He further emphasized the importance of teamwork, innovation, and inclusivity in achieving the Authority's mandate.

"We need newness, freshness, and I can't do it alone. We need collaborative effort," he said.

"I operate an open-door policy; no idea is a bad idea; it can be refined into a fantastic one. Let's make history together and make Mr. President proud."

Olayiwola Awakan is an award-winning journalist, thespian, dramatist, poet, and culture and tourism enthusiast. His appointment reflects President Tinubu's continued commitment to leveraging creativity, culture, and tourism as key drivers of national economic diversification and growth.



Zurab Pololikashvili, UN Tourism outgoing Secretary General with his team.

## UN Tourism: Shaikha Nasser Al Nowais Confirmed As The New Secretary General

The United Nations Organisation [UNWTO] has confirmed Shaikha Nasser Al Nowais as the new Secretary General, a position she will assume in January 2026, becoming the first woman to lead the institution in its nearly 50-year history.

Hailing from the United Arab Emirates, Al Nowais is a recognised figure in global hospitality, with more than 16 years of corporate experience. Her career ranges from overseeing owner relations at the Rotana Hotels group to leadership roles in business and tourism bodies in Abu Dhabi.

Her confirmation represents not only a symbolic advance in gender equality, UNWTO has never before had a woman at the helm of the Secretariat, but also signals a

strategic shift toward World Tourism inclusion, innovation, and sustainability across the global tourism sector.

According to Al Nowais, tourism must “move from being reactive to being transformative,” driving a model capable of generating shared prosperity while respecting both the environment and host communities.

The new leader arrives at a decisive moment. During the aforementioned Executive Council session, UNWTO presented its global barometer: more than 300 million travellers crossed international borders in the first quarter of 2025, an increase of about 14 million compared to the same period the previous year.

These figures underscore tourism's strategic relevance to today's global economy and

the responsibility that visionary management entails. Al Nowais has indicated that her term will be structured around three main pillars: the ecological regeneration of destinations; digital equity, ensuring communities and small businesses share in technological transformation; and inclusive governance that promotes women's leadership as well as the representation of youth and rural areas.

Her hands-on experience across multiple regions and deep familiarity with the private sector position her as a leader capable of connecting with tourism's diverse stakeholders—from governments and multilateral organizations to companies and local communities.

The fact that UNWTO is headquartered in Spain—the only United Nations agency with a permanent base on

Spanish soil—adds an extra layer of symbolism to Al Nowais's appointment, opening an opportunity to further strengthen global tourism policy from a perspective of international cooperation.

At the same time, her Emirati nationality highlights the growing prominence of the Middle East in global tourism affairs, while underscoring the need for a truly global approach encompassing Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America.

Zurab Pololikashvili, the immediate past secretary general who began his mandate in 2018, prioritised placing tourism at the center of the international agenda, focusing on education, investment, rural development, women's empowerment, technology, and global expansion.

Now, the transition to Al

Nowais's leadership opens the door to a stage in which these priorities can be deepened and more explicitly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The confirmation of Al Nowais as Secretary-General marks not only a milestone for UNWTO but for the entire tourism sector, which faces challenges such as accelerated digitalization, post-pandemic recovery, pressure for sustainability, and the need to ensure tourism's benefits reach all communities. Her vision proposes precisely that tourism should be not only a generator of income or jobs, but a driver of inclusive development that respects the environment.

Her leadership formally begins in 2026, but the announcement has already sparked expectations about the direction that global tourism policies may take.

## Brand USA Revived By US Congress As U.S. Travel Industry Navigates Political Tensions

The VISIT USA Act would restore funding to Brand USA as the nation works to rebuild its global image ahead of major events. With lingering negative perceptions of U.S. travel policies and political sensitivities around past funding threats, supporters say stable resources are essential to attract international visitors and strengthen the economy.

As the United States enters a decade marked by major global events including the 2026 FIFA World Cup, America 250 commemorations, and the 2028 Summer Olympics, lawmakers on Wednesday introduced the VISIT USA

Act, legislation designed to restore crucial funding to Brand USA, the nation's destination marketing organization.

Brand USA was created through the Travel Promotion Act of 2009 as a public-private partnership intended to increase international visitation at no cost to U.S. taxpayers. Funded through fees collected from



cont'd on Pg 8



## Africa's Empty Skies: A Mirror Of Our Policy Deficit And Lost Opportunities

That viral image showing hundreds of flights over Europe and only a handful over Africa tells a deeper truth, Africa is missing from the global aviation map, not because it lacks the potential, but because it lacks the policy courage.

Africa makes up nearly 18% of the world's population but contributes less than 2% of global air traffic. For a continent this vast and disconnected by road, air transport should be the backbone of integration. Instead, restrictive government policies, high taxes, and a lack of regional cooperation have kept African skies largely grounded.

Most African countries grant generous route rights and concessions to foreign carriers often multiple daily frequencies while restricting their own neighbours. Turkish Airlines, Emirates, Qatar Airways, and Air France operate across dozens of African cities, but few African airlines can fly reciprocally into their markets or even across borders within Africa.

We have effectively outsourced our connectivity.

Add to this the high cost of flying, driven by excessive government levies, fuel surcharges, and taxes that make up as much as 40% of ticket prices. Intra-African travel is so expensive that it's often cheaper to fly from Lagos to London than from Lagos to Nairobi. Visa restrictions worsen the situation; Africans still face some of the toughest visa regimes when traveling within their own continent.

The Single African Air Transport Market [SAATM] was meant to fix this, but progress has been painfully slow. Many states signed up in principle, but very few have implemented in practice. Protectionism continues to trump progress.

The result is visible and embarrassing. The skies above Europe buzz with movement, trade, and opportunity. Africa's skies remain quiet, waiting for policy makers to wake up.

Aviation is not a luxury; it's critical infrastructure for

economic growth. When we liberalize our skies, harmonize taxes, ease visas, and empower African carriers to collaborate and compete fairly, we will see a transformation in trade, tourism, and investment flows.

Africa's empty skies are not destiny; they are a reflection of choices. We can either keep defending airspace as political turf, or open it as an engine of prosperity. The day we choose the latter; Africa's aviation will finally take off.



Kemi Nanna Nandap, Comptroller-General of the Nigeria Immigration Service [NIS]

## Nigeria Immigration Service Hosts Stakeholders' Sensitization Seminar On Evolving Patterns In Smuggling Of Migrants: Towards A Coordinated National Response

The Nigeria Immigration Service organised a Stakeholders' Sensitization Seminar theme “Evolving Patterns in Smuggling of Migrants: Towards a Coordinated National Response” at the Service Headquarters, Abuja. The seminar brought together representatives from key government institutions, international partners, and civil society organizations to discuss emerging trends in migrant smuggling and strengthen inter-agency collaboration.

Declaring the seminar open and in her keynote address, the Comptroller-General of Immigration, KN Nandap, PCC, MMIS, FSMN, described Smuggling of Migrants as a growing transnational threat to national security and human dignity, stressing that “it is our collective duty to ensure no Nigerian is left vulnerable to exploitation or deception.” She noted that Nigeria's socio-economic diversity makes it a source, transit, and destination country for Migration, and called for a coordinated national strategy built on partnership, vigilance, and shared responsibility among all stakeholders.

The Comptroller-General further revealed that the Service's renewed operational alertness has continued to yield tangible results. Recently, Border Patrol operatives at Seme Border denied entry to 332 migrants who lacked valid travel documents, while 294 Nigerian nationals suspected to be irregular migrants attempting to leave the country under the “Japa Syndrome” were refused exit. In addition, 36 victims of human trafficking and child labour were rescued at the same border. She attributed these successes to enhanced border surveillance measures, including the installation of new CCTV cameras.



Festus Keyamo Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development of Nigeria

Cont'd from pg 13

is affordable and frequent. largest and most profitable carrier. Addis Ababa has become a major hub. The airline employs thousands of Ethiopians. Tourism grows. Business thrives. The economy shoots.

Rwanda is following a similar playbook, positioning Kigali as an emerging hub with transparent, competitive charges. RwandAir is growing. Connectivity is improving. The country is reaping benefits far beyond what it would collect from predatory taxation.

Imagine a different Africa. One where a young developer in Nairobi can afford to attend a tech conference in Lagos. Where a farmer in Burundi can visit an agricultural exposition in Dakar. Where families routinely cross borders for weddings, graduations, and funerals. Where Africans can tour each other's countries, explore and appreciate each other's beauties, because travel

This isn't fantasy. It's the reality in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. regions that recognized aviation as economic infrastructure, not a cash cow to be milked dry through taxes.

The Single African Air Transport Market [SAATM] promises to create this reality. But implementation is slow, partly because governments are reluctant to give up lucrative tax revenue.

The solution isn't eliminating all charges, airports need funding, and legitimate costs should be covered. But reform is possible: We can work on eliminating fuel taxes. Following international norms, most countries don't tax aviation fuel. African countries that continue this practice make their airlines globally uncompetitive.

We can also simplify fee structures. Instead of ten different charges collected by

seven different agencies, create one transparent passenger fee that covers actual costs. Ethiopia and Rwanda also show that moderate charges enabling aviation growth can generate more total benefit; economic activity, employment, tourism revenue, than maximizing short-term tax extraction.

We can also coordinate fee reductions among RECs like EAC countries, where everyone will benefit from increased travel and trade.

Airlines complain about African taxes, but their voices can be dismissed as corporate politics. Your voice, as a consumer and citizen, carries a different weight. When governments hear that citizens care about aviation costs, when civil society demands reform, change becomes possible. The current system persists partly because most people don't understand why African flights cost so much. Now you know.

## Air Peace Domestic Operations In Chaos Over Lessor Withdrawal Of Aircrafts

**A**ir Peace, Nigeria's flag carrier, has attributed sudden disruptions in its domestic operations to the "unlawful" withdrawal of three aircraft by its wet lessor, SmartLynx Airlines, resulting in a \$15 million financial loss.

According to NAN, Nowel Ngala, the airline's chief commercial officer (CCO), spoke on Friday at a press conference in Lagos, explaining that the withdrawals caused flight delays and cancellations.

Ngala said Air Peace had entered a wet-lease agreement with SmartLynx because 13 of its aircraft were undergoing scheduled maintenance abroad.

He said the airline leased aircraft from SmartLynx to

prevent service interruptions and ensure Nigerians could continue to travel conveniently.

The airline official added that the unexpected withdrawal of the three aircraft was illegal and violated the terms of the contract.

Ngala noted that the withdrawal caused both financial losses and reputational damage to Air Peace and disrupted travel for the Nigerian public.

This withdrawal was done without prior notice. It is a clear violation of industry standards and of an agreement between both parties," he said.

What makes this even more concerning is that SmartLynx had collected money upfront from Air Peace."



Allen Onyema, Air Peace boss.



Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Governor of Lagos State, Nigeria.

## Tourism: Lagos Governor Reiterates Commitment To Badagry's Transformation Into An International Heritage Site

**L**agos State Governor, Babajide Olusola Sanwo-Olu, has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to transforming Badagry into a world-class heritage and tourism destination—one that preserves Africa's rich history while driving economic growth and cultural exchange.

The Governor made this known at the 5th Edition of the Door of Return Ceremony, held on Saturday, October 18, 2025, in Badagry. He was represented at the event by his Special Adviser on Tourism, Arts and Culture, Idris Aregbe, who emphasized that the state government remains dedicated to positioning Badagry as a global centre for historical tourism and diaspora reconnection.

Sanwo-Olu described the Door of Return as more than a solemn commemoration into remembrance of history, a global platform for cultural

calling it "a vibrant festival celebrating how far Africa and her diaspora have come, and the incredible potential we have to grow together." He noted that while Badagry once symbolised pain and separation during the transatlantic slave trade, it has now become "a sacred space of triumph, unity, and renewal."

"Through this Door of Return, we are not just retracing our steps into history; we are stepping boldly into our destiny," the Governor said. "We return not as the lost children of Africa, but as proud bearers of her greatness, scientists, artists, innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders whose talents are shaping the modern world."

Sanwo-Olu emphasised that the event has evolved from a best of who we have become." The Governor also commended key figures

diplomacy, tourism, and economic collaboration between Africa and its diaspora communities. He further disclosed that the Lagos State Government is currently constructing a permanent Door of Return Monument in Badagry as a lasting symbol of unity, while also revitalising the Badagry Heritage Corridor to preserve historical landmarks and empower local communities through tourism, culture, and entrepreneurship.

"We aim to ensure that the story of the African journey, from hardship to strength, from departure to return, is shared here with dignity, creativity, and pride," he added. "This celebration is not just about coming home; it is about bringing back the very best of who we have become."

The Governor also commended key figures

driving the heritage movement, including Nobel Laureate Prof. Wole Soyinka, whose leadership of the Heritage Journey 2026 project underscores the importance of identity as a guiding force for growth and international performer Jeffrey Daniels, whose global artistry reflects the enduring rhythm and creativity of Africa.

He further acknowledged the presence of Ambassadors from Cuba and Brazil, highlighting the deep historical and cultural ties that unite Africa and the diaspora through shared ancestry and resilience. Governor Sanwo-Olu called on Africans across the world to see Lagos as a

"vibrant centre of innovation, investment, and inspiration."

"Whether it is in the creative sectors, digital technology, climate initiatives, or youth empowerment, Lagos is forging connections with the diaspora – transforming shared memories into shared success," he stated.

The Governor, however, described the Door of Return as a gateway to mastery, partnership, and pride, symbolising Africa's collective journey from adversity to greatness. "The narrative of the African journey has never been one of defeat; it is a tale of transformation," he declared.

"To our brothers and sisters across the oceans, we say, welcome home. Let us rebuild, reinvest, and reimagine Africa together." It should be noted that the annual Door of Return ceremony, organised in collaboration with the Lagos State Government, celebrates the resilience of the African spirit and strengthens cultural bonds between Africa and its diaspora.

## Lagos Showcases Cultural Excellence At African Marketplace Place Dubai 2025

**T**he Maiden Edition of the African Marketplace Dubai 2025, a global stage for African and Caribbean excellence kicked off at the Exhibition Centre of the Grand Hyatt Hotel, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on Tuesday, 12th November 2025.

The event which will run through Saturday, 15th November 2025, received strong support from the Lagos State Government, through the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, as part of the Ministry's commitment to promoting the State's rich cultural heritage and showcasing Africa's creative and entrepreneurial potential on the global stage.

Representing the Lagos State Commissioner for Tourism, Arts and Culture, Mrs Toke Benson-Awoyinka, at the African Marketplace is the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Mrs Adebopo Oyekan-Ismaila, who led a delegation of senior management staff to the event.

The African Marketplace Dubai, an initiative of the Ibukun Awosika Leadership Academy [IALA], serves as a curated platform that brings together African and Caribbean brands to engage international buyers, distributors, and investors. The platform also celebrates the continent's vibrant culture while expanding multicultural markets and creating investment opportunities for the global diaspora community.

The 2025 edition featured over 150 participants from Lagos State, including representatives from the Nigeria Association of Tour Operators [NATOP], Lagos State Chapter, led by Bolaji Mustapha, alongside other key stakeholders and entrepreneurs. The participation of Lagos State in large numbers at the event further reaffirms the State's position as a leading cultural and economic hub, committed to building global connections and advancing Africa's creative economy.



Patrick Torrent, new President of the UN Tourism [UNWTO] Affiliate Members Board.

## New UN Tourism Affiliate Members Board

Within the framework of UN Tourism's 26th General Assembly held in Riyadh; the Affiliate Members today elected their new board. According to information shared by participants in the plenary, and pending the Organization's official communiqué, Patrick Torrent, representing NECSTouR, The Network of European Regions for a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism, was elected president. Elected as vice presidents were Horacio Repucci, representing the Argentine Chamber of Tourism, and Abdullah Alhagbani, representing the Saudi Tourism Authority.

The election took place during the 45th Plenary of Affiliate Members, part of the General Assembly's program taking place this week in Riyadh, a gathering that has brought together public and private delegations from

across the global tourism ecosystem. From the start of the day, the agenda focused on public-private collaboration, innovation, and the role of artificial intelligence in destination management, in line with the strategic priorities set by UN Tourism for the next biennium.

The Affiliate Members' meeting is also the forum that determines the representation of the private sector and academia before the governing bodies, reinforcing its advisory role alongside the Organization's Secretary-General.

Patrick Torrent, who has extensive experience leading the Catalan Tourist Board and is closely linked to NECSTouR, brings well-known European expertise in sustainability, competitiveness, and multi-level tourism governance. His election underscores the

relevance of European regions in shaping policies for a more resilient and greener tourism model.

For his part, Horacio Repucci embodies the perspective of Latin American business chambers, with a focus on coordinating tourism SMEs, connectivity, and destination promotion.

Representing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Abdullah Alhagbani, an executive responsible for partnerships and regulatory affairs at the Saudi Tourism Authority, will strengthen the bridge with the dynamic Middle Eastern market, a central player in investment, product development, and major industry events.

Cont'd from pg 6

### ...U.S. Travel Industry Navigates Political Tensions

The VISIT USA Act would restore funding to Brand USA as the nation works to rebuild its global image ahead of major events. With lingering negative perceptions of U.S. travel policies and political sensitivities around past funding threats, supporters say stable resources are essential to attract international visitors and strengthen the economy.

As the United States enters a decade marked by major global events including the 2026 FIFA World Cup, America 250 commemorations, and the 2028 Summer Olympics, lawmakers on Wednesday introduced the VISIT USA Act, legislation designed to restore crucial funding to Brand USA, the nation's destination marketing organization.

Brand USA was created through the Travel Promotion Act of 2009 as a public-private partnership intended to increase international visitation at no cost to U.S. taxpayers. Funded through fees collected from international travellers under the Visa Waiver Program and matched by contributions from U.S. travel companies, the organization has long been credited with generating billions of dollars in economic impact and supporting tens of thousands of American jobs.

Despite its strong return on investment, Brand USA has faced periods of uncertainty. During the Trump administration, several federal budget proposals sought to eliminate the organization's funding, a move ultimately rejected by Congress, but one that highlighted its vulnerability and created instability for long-term planning.

Today, advocates say the stakes are even higher. The

United States is not only competing for visitors; it is engaged in active image-building on the world stage. International surveys and market research indicate that evolving U.S. immigration and border-security policies, including visible enforcement actions by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement [ICE] have contributed to negative perceptions among some potential visitors.

While these policies are framed around national security and immigration control, global media coverage has at times created uncertainty about whether the United States is welcoming, easy to enter, or appealing as a travel destination.

Travel industry analysts note that even modest shifts in sentiment can significantly affect demand, with consequences for airlines, hotels, restaurants, attractions and local economies nationwide. Brand USA is seen as a key tool in countering those headwinds; communicating accurate travel information, highlighting diverse communities and regions, and presenting a broader picture of the country beyond polarizing political headlines.

At the same time, political dynamics around Brand USA remain delicate. The program was previously targeted for elimination by the Trump administration's budget proposals, yet now depends on broad, bipartisan support to restore and secure funding. As a result, many industry advocates and state and local partners are careful in how they discuss past funding threats and the Trump administration's role, focusing instead on the program's strong return on investment, its non-partisan economic benefits, and its importance to communities in both Republican and Democratic states. Behind the scenes, stakeholders



## Why Your Flight Across Africa Costs More Than Flying To Another Continent

Have you ever wondered why it's less expensive to fly from Nairobi to Dubai than from Nairobi to Lagos? Yet they are nearly the same flight distance. Or why visiting a neighbouring African country can be more expensive than jetting off to Europe? One of the contributing factors lies in three little letters that most travellers have never heard of: TFC, Taxes, Fees, and Charges.

Here's a startling reality: In some African countries, like Gabon and Sierra Leone, taxes, charges, and fees on international tickets are as high as \$290, according to a study done by AFRAA, 2024. That \$480 ticket? Over \$200 of it never goes toward actually flying you anywhere. Instead, it's collected by governments, airports, and various agencies before your plane even takes off.

Looking into the African sub-regions, the Western Africa region has the highest average amount of \$109.5 in TFCs. The East Africa Region

has an average of \$63.32 in

taxes, charges, and fees paid per passenger for international departures. For intra-African flights, we pay an average of \$68 on TFCs, with the most expensive regional departures paying above \$250.

In some short flight routes within Africa, taxes represent up to 74% of your ticket. Compare this to flying within Europe or the Middle East, where taxes might represent 10-20% of your ticket, having an average of less than \$35 on TFCs. Now you understand why Africans often joke that it's cheaper to leave the continent than to explore it.

### Your typical flight ticket might include:

**Passenger Service Charge:** For using the terminal [even though the airport exists to serve passengers]

**Departure Tax:** A government levy for the privilege of leaving the country

**Security Fee:** To fund the screening that international

law requires anyway

**Airport Development Fee:** To build infrastructure that should attract airlines naturally

**Insurance Surcharge:** Because apparently basic safety needs its own line item

**Fuel Levy:** Taxes on jet fuel that most countries worldwide don't charge

**Tourism Development Fee:** At certain airports, to promote tourism (which high fees actively discourage)

This is truly frustrating as high taxes make flying expensive. Given our low purchasing power as Africans, expensive flights mean less passenger demand. Fewer passengers mean airlines can't fill planes. Airlines respond by reducing service, flying smaller aircraft, or abandoning routes entirely. This eventually leads to monopolies or duopolies on many routes, hence no competition, and poor services.

The result? Less than 20% of air travel between African cities is on direct flights at least once a week. You want to

fly from Lusaka to Abidjan?

Route through Addis Ababa, or Istanbul, or even Paris. What should be a straightforward journey becomes an intercontinental odyssey.

Governments, seeing reduced traffic and airline revenues, often respond by increasing taxes to make up the shortfall. It's like treating a bleeding patient by removing more blood. According to governments, we need to pay TFC because: "We need revenue."

Aviation is seen as a luxury service for wealthy people. If you can afford to fly, you can afford to pay taxes, the thinking goes. This logic ensures flying remains a luxury only the wealthy can afford.

"We must fund infrastructure": African airports desperately need modernization. Development fees seem like a logical way to fund this. Except that expensive, empty airports don't attract airlines or generate economic growth. It's like building a shopping mall in the desert and

wondering why no one comes.

"Everyone else is doing it": When neighboring countries charge high fees, there's pressure to match them. A rare case where peer pressure makes everyone worse off.

Recently, Tanzania introduced a Passenger Service fee of \$45; this week, Kenya followed suit.

In reality, we need to ask: where does all that TFC money actually go? Passengers pay these fees thinking it's going toward better air traffic systems, upgraded technology, finance subsidiary airlines or smoothen operations, but there's little transparency about how these funds are actually spent. Why don't government publish what they do with such collected amounts? Are they really supporting the aviation industry or just crippling it?

Exceptional cases that prove the rule are Ethiopia and Rwanda. Ethiopia offers a fascinating counterpoint. Recognizing that Ethiopian Airlines is becoming a continental champion, the government kept charges relatively moderate. Today, Ethiopian Airlines is Africa's

# Elevate your Events

Naccas Abuja, the ultimate event destination



- Ideal for:**
- Lectures
  - Gala dinners
  - Panel discussions
  - Summits
  - Training sessions
  - Award ceremonies

**Book now:** [www.boulevardhotelgroup.com](http://www.boulevardhotelgroup.com), [Naccasabuja.com](http://Naccasabuja.com)

**For Enquiries:** +2348074090980 [Sales@naccasabuja.com](mailto:Sales@naccasabuja.com)

**NACCAS KM 10, Along Aya Kubwa Expressway-Asokoro, Abuja, FCT**  
(Right After the Polo Club)



## NACCAS Conference And The Timeless Charm Of The Armed Forces Officers' Mess And Suites, Abuja

Abuja, Nigeria's purpose-built capital, is known for hosting many of the nation's most significant national and regional gatherings. Yet beyond the familiar rhythm of policy discussions and official meetings lies a quieter story, one of architecture, hospitality, culture, and the graceful interplay between Nigeria's civic and military heritage.

The Nigerian Army Conference Centre & Suites [NACCAS] offers a serene environment for lodging within the historic yet contemporary Armed Forces Officers' Mess & Suites, one of Abuja's most quietly impressive hospitality establishments.

Located in Asokoro, one of

Abuja's most secure and tranquil districts, NACCAS has long been valued for its professional ambience. Designed with government and institutional events in mind, the centre features spacious halls, breakout rooms, and technical facilities that meet international standards. Delegates moving through its polished corridors encounter a venue that operates with precision: smooth registrations, sessions that start on time, and consistently reliable audiovisual support.

For many event planners, NACCAS provides exactly what the modern conference traveller needs, a space that enables business without unnecessary complications.

Just a short drive from the

conference venue stands the Armed Forces Officers' Mess & Suites, a property that blends tradition with contemporary comfort. Originally established as an exclusive retreat for military officers, it has evolved into one of Abuja's best-kept secrets for travellers seeking a welcoming, unpretentious stay.

Guests checking in experience an atmosphere that reflects both discipline and warmth: spotless rooms, attentive staff, and a tranquillity unusual for a hotel so close to the city's administrative heart. The suites and rooms are generously sized, offering modern amenities, quiet work areas, and the sense of privacy that delegates particularly

appreciate after long days of high-level discussions.

What distinguished this conference experience was the synergy between the venue and the accommodation. Mornings began with the ease of a short, traffic-free drive. Evenings ended with the comforting routine of a well-run hotel; perhaps a refreshing swim in the pool, a quick workout in the gym, or a quiet dinner at the in-house restaurant, where Nigerian dishes share the menu with international favourites.

Abuja is often praised for its orderly design: wide roads, defined districts, and a layout that supports seamless movement. Both NACCAS and the Officers' Mess benefit from this urban planning,

situated within secure neighbourhoods surrounded by embassies, government ministries, and leafy, well-maintained avenues.

The military heritage of both facilities provides an added layer of security and protocol management, which many international participants appreciated. For conferences involving high-ranking officials, sensitive topics, or global delegates, this assurance is often a key consideration.

Beyond the conference, Abuja reveals its softer side. The National Mosque and the National Christian Centre, whose towering architecture highlights Nigeria's spiritual harmony, are nearby. Also within reach is the famous Jabi Lake, where cafés, boat rides, and serene sunsets offer a surprisingly relaxed escape.

Arts and crafts markets in Wuse and Garki are ideal for finding handmade souvenirs and local artworks.

Abuja may be administrative at its core, but it is far from soulless. Travellers who step beyond the conference hall often leave with a deeper appreciation of the city.

The combination of a reliable conference venue and welcoming accommodation creates an ecosystem that business travellers value. NACCAS provides structure; the Officers' Mess & Suites provides comfort; and Abuja completes the trio with its calm efficiency.

For meeting and event planners, this pairing demonstrates how Abuja can deliver business tourism experiences that are smooth, secure, and memorable. For delegates, it highlights the capital's understated charm, a blend of order, hospitality, and cultural depth.

# I will Take Golf To The Nigerian Youth - Runsewe

From journalism, the National Orientation Agency, to heading national tourism and cultural institutions, and now the President, Nigeria Golf Federation [NGF], Lucky Onoriode George, Publisher of African Travel Times, engages Otunba Segun Runsewe, who shares insights on his renewed mandate and his expectations for golf development in Nigeria.

**How did you become the President, Nigeria Golf Federation [NGF]?**

Thank you for asking. To be honest, my emergence was born out of passion for the game. Nigeria has many golf courses, and I also have my personal course, which shows my genuine interest.

Succinctly put, golf reflects my commitment to health and wellness, it is the first of its kind in West Africa. As to how I became the President, Nigeria Golf Federation [NGF], stakeholders needed someone who could drive development within the sector. My colleagues from the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory elected me unopposed, and I was recently re-elected in the same manner.

So far, I have been able to build networks for the promotion of golf nationally and internationally. Recently, a group in Scotland donated equipment to encourage youth participation in Nigeria. This will help nurture young talents who may eventually reach global tours. Nothing about my involvement is accidental; it is rooted in dedication and commitment.

**Many believe golf is a game for the wealthy due to the cost of equipment and course membership. Won't this hinder your efforts?**

Not at all. That belief is outdated. Today, the gap has narrowed significantly. For

instance, people use iron studs, rubber studs and fibre studs, just like children start football with canvas shoes. You buy what you can afford; the same applies to golf.

Equipment now comes at various price points depending on brand, just like cars. In golf, we have soft, hard and super-hard balls; the choice depends on experience and professionalism. I don't know anyone in West Africa who owns a Rolls-Royce golf cart, but I do. It is simply a matter of preference and affordability.

For your information, I introduced tie-and-dye materials for golf wear, which are very affordable. I am promoting them nationwide as my brand. Some African countries are already requesting them. At the Goodluck Ebele Jonathan Golf Club, members are now encouraged to wear local fabrics. I also have my course; the Otunba Segun Runsewe Course [OSRC], registered and patented globally because of my passion.

Looking ahead, there is considerable potential in golf, and we are partnering with organisations to supply equipment at affordable rates across Nigeria.

**How extensive and engaging is golf across Nigeria?**

There are not fewer than 50 kitties across the country. These operate like regular league matches for golfers.



Otunba Segun Runsewe, President, Golf Association of Nigeria [GAN]

**Given your background in tourism, how are you positioning golf as a tool for sport tourism?**

Golfers are the biggest tourists in the world. A few months ago, two teams from abroad came to play kitty matches with their Nigerian counterparts. Do you know that golfers generally do not pay for their kits on airlines? That shows the influence and global respect for the sport. Unfortunately, some have abused this privilege recently by packing personal items in golf bags. A player must understand core foundations:

Golf is also the easiest way to make new friends, at motor parks, airports, or any gathering.

**What is the level of golf awareness in Nigeria?**

The challenge is not unique to

Nigeria; it is similar across Africa, except South Africa. Because many people pick up the sport late, youth development will be my main focus in my second term. Like other sports, golf requires stamina and energy, which is best developed from an early age. Those playing for leisure or fitness can start even at 30 and still enjoy it. For one to enjoy or excel in the game, what fundamentals must be mastered?

A player must understand core foundations:

#### Foundational Mechanics

- **Grip:** Properly holding the club ensures control and consistency.
- **Stance & Posture:** Essential for balance, power and alignment.

#### The Golf Swing

- **Backswing:** Sets the club on the correct path.
- **Downswing:** Generates and transfers power.
- **Impact:** Determines direction, spin and power.
- **Follow-through:** Ensures balance and smooth release.
- **Swing Path:** Influences flight and curve.
- **Clubface Control:** Affects accuracy and direction.

#### Shot Execution

- **Driving:** Distance and accuracy.

- **Iron Play:** Precision for approach shots.
- **Putting:** Stroke, pace and green reading.
- **Chipping/Pitching:** Delicate short-game control.

#### Broader Technical Areas

- **Equipment Optimisation:** Choosing clubs and balls suited to skill and physique.
- **Physical Fitness:** Core strength, flexibility and endurance.

Like every sport, improvement comes with practice and increasing technical proficiency. Golf enhances mental health, you forget worries once on the course. It also instils discipline and sportsmanship because you cannot win all the time.

#### How many professional golfers are in Nigeria?

At the moment, we have more than 2,000. Our professional body is recognised and headquartered in Port Harcourt, and examinations are conducted annually. Golf is one of the cleanest sports in the world and one of the most disciplined. It moulds leaders, not just entertainers.

#### What is the level of women's participation, and are they part of your association?

There is only one governing body for golf in Nigeria. Women are fully part of it. However, some who obtained certificates abroad behave as if they are exempt from local structures. Every foreign qualification, law, medicine, architecture, pharmacy—requires local recertification; sport is no exception. Those who do not align with the constituted body cannot join our league or our kitties.

**Apart from youth** Otunba Segun Runsewe



**development, what are your other priorities?**

I have more than ten ideas, but pursuing all simultaneously would hinder success. I will focus on a few achievable ones. Youth development remains central, alongside efforts to bring affordable golfing materials to Nigeria.

There is a new brand in the United States, the Tomorrow Golf League [TGL], spearheaded by sports executive Mike McCarley and professional golfers Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy in partnership with the PGA Tour. It is a modern, high-tech league aimed at making golf faster and more appealing to younger audiences. If it succeeds globally, Nigeria will be among the first in Africa to tap into it. I have already initiated contact.

#### Any message for Nigerians?

Golf is a healing sport. If you take an angry person to play, by the end of 18 holes, he or she will be emotionally lighter, having released tension and negative energy.

During Nigeria's hosting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting [CHOGM], I was privileged to serve on the committee. Out of the 60 leaders who attended, 33 were golfers. They all told President Olusegun Obasanjo they wanted to play golf, none requested other sports. That experience changed my life.

A golfer entering any new environment will ask: *Where is the nearest golf course?* Once that need is met, the person is happy. What better way to promote a country's image?

I have submitted a proposal to revive the President's Cup, played globally. We can reintroduce it here, alongside the Nigeria Open and the Nigeria Close. With a Nigeria Open today, at least 15 countries would participate. I am grateful that my journey cuts across journalism, tourism, culture and now golf. I cannot ask for more.