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EXCLUSIVE COVER INTERVIEW

PHILLIPE HITTI

Leading The Pelican Hotel
to New Heights of
Hospitality Excellence



Ghana Tourism Authority
Boss Now Vice Chairmanship
of African Travel
Commission



WTTC Brings Global
Tourism Leaders to
Valletta as Malta's
Travel & Tourism
Sector Continues
to Thrive



Twins Marry Twins in Joyous Nigerian
Wedding Celebrating Love and
Yoruba Heritage








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Festus Keyamo, Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Nigeria.

Why Tinubu Government Is Not Reviving a National Carrier - Keyamo

...unveils plans to support indigenous airlines says, they are the future

The Federal Government says it is not interested in establishing a national carrier, insisting that experience has shown that state-owned airlines are difficult to sustain and often become a drain on public funds.

Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, stated this in Lagos at the unveiling of United Nigeria Airlines' Boeing 737-800NG aircraft, saying the government's priority is to strengthen indigenous carriers rather than invest in a national airline under a bureaucratic structure.

"Let me be very clear about it. All governments in

the world are divesting away from national airlines. It is not reasonable. It is not possible. To run a national airline under a bureaucratic setup. It will collapse".

According to him, most successful global airlines, including Lufthansa and British Airways, are privately run, while previous attempts to sustain Nigerian Airways consumed huge resources without commensurate returns.

"Go and ask Obasanjo how much they had pumped into Nigerian Airways. It is like pouring money into a bottomless pit. One minister will say, five of my children are travelling, give them tickets. One governor will say, three of my girlfriends are travelling,

give them tickets. The plane wants to take off by seven o'clock, they say the minister of aviation is coming by ten, you cannot fly while minister is still sleeping in his house".

"A flight is scheduled for seven. Until the minister arrives by ten, that flight will not take off. I am just giving you graphic instances of why a national airline cannot succeed under a bureaucratic, under a political leadership".

He said supporting local operators remains the most viable way to grow the sector and retain a greater share of the international passenger market.

Keyamo said the administration spent its first months in office engaging stakeholders and resolving

disputes before rolling out policies designed to favour domestic airlines.

The minister noted that reforms, including implementation of the Cape Town Convention and related aircraft financing frameworks, have restored confidence among financiers and leasing companies, leading banks to resume funding aviation businesses.

He disclosed that the Federal Government is finalising plans for a Nigerian aircraft leasing company backed by government guarantees to help indigenous carriers acquire aircraft under dry lease arrangements.

Adding that the government is also allocating more international routes to local airlines, including opportunities for United Nigeria Airlines to expand operations to destinations such as New York, Canada and Dubai once additional aircraft become available.

Keyamo further revealed that work is ongoing to develop Lagos into a major transit hub, while private-sector driven airport projects in Abia and Enugu are being encouraged.

He announced that discussions are at an advanced stage for the commencement of direct cargo flights from Guangzhou, China, to Enugu in December to boost trade activities in the South-East.

The minister appealed to Nigerians to continue supporting local airlines, assuring that the government would keep working with operators behind the scenes to address delays and service challenges while ensuring higher operational efficiency.

NTDA, NIPR Join Forces To Advance Tourism Using Nigeria's High Score In Culture Reputation Index

Nigeria's rich culture has yet again been identified as a catalyst for tourism development.

Nigeria came out tops in culture amongst other global indices deployed by the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations via the Nigeria Reputation Management Group [NRMG] to measure Reputation Perception of the country according to its President and Chairman of the Governing Council, Dr. Ike Neliaku.

Dr. Neliaku while receiving a delegation from the Nigerian Tourism Development Authority led by the Director General, Ola Awakan agreed that culture remains the cornerstone of tourism development revealing that Nigeria's culture scored highest among 7 pillars used to measure reputation index by his institution.

He commended Awakan for engaging storytelling as a way of promoting Nigeria's vast culture and tourism potentials saying both were intertwined and inseparable.

The PR expert noted that his institute will collaborate with NTDA to redefine the narrative admonishing Nigerians to be good ambassadors of the country.

"Tourism is a soft power of influence that we must take full advantage of and I will like to charge NTDA to always be at the forefront of setting the agenda especially when engaging celebrities and influencers who have the capacity to run with wrong narratives about the country", he opined.

On his part, Ola Awakan thanked the NIPR for hosting him saying Nigeria has a pivotal role to play in Africa.

Mrs. Maame Efua Houadjeto, Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana Tourism Authority [GTA], has formally accepted her appointment as Vice Chair of the African Travel Commission [ATC], reaffirming Ghana's commitment to advancing tourism integration and sustainable development across Africa.

Her acceptance came during a high-level strategic meeting with the leadership of the African Travel Commission on the sidelines of the 2026 Hotel Managers Conference [HMC], held from July 11-12, 2026, at the Lagos Continental Hotel in Lagos, Nigeria. The meeting was attended by Mr. Olayiwola Awakan, Director General of the Nigerian Tourism Development Authority [NTDA] and Chairman of the African Travel Commission; Dr. Lucky Onoriode George, Executive Director of the ATC; and Prof. Wasiu Babalola, a member of the Commission's Board.

Expressing her appreciation for the confidence reposed in her, Mrs. Houadjeto described the appointment as both an honour and a significant responsibility. She pledged to work diligently with the Commission's leadership and tourism stakeholders



Dr. Lucky Onoriode George, Executive Director, African Travel Commission [ATC] and Mrs. Maame Efua Houadjeto, Chief Executive Officer, Ghana Tourism Authority [GTA]

Ghana Tourism Authority Boss Now Vice Chair Of African Travel Commission

across the continent to promote greater collaboration, strengthen regional partnerships, and advance Africa's tourism agenda.

She observed that Ghana occupies a unique place in Africa's tourism history as the host nation of the continent's oldest travel and tourism organisation, the African Travel Commission. According to her, this historic legacy places a responsibility on Ghana to continue providing leadership in fostering regional integration, cooperation, and sustainable tourism development.

Accepting the Vice Chairmanship, Mrs. Houadjeto said she

would work to bridge gaps between West Africa and other regions of the continent while encouraging stronger collaboration among African nations to unlock the continent's immense tourism potential. She noted that increased cooperation would stimulate intra-African travel, attract greater investment, create employment opportunities, and support sustainable economic growth through tourism.

Speaking during the meeting, Mr. Olayiwola Awakan, Director General of the Nigerian Tourism Development Authority and Chairman of the African Travel Commission, commended the Ghana Tourism

Authority Chief Executive for accepting the appointment. He described her acceptance as a significant boost to the Commission's continental vision, noting that greater cooperation among African countries remains essential to building a stronger and more competitive tourism industry.

"Ghana has always played an important role in African tourism, and I am confident that with Mrs. Houadjeto serving as Vice Chair, the Commission will benefit immensely from her experience and leadership. Ghana, West Africa, and indeed the entire continent stand to gain when we work

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Rebecca Miano, Kenya Cabinet Secretary, Tourism & Wildlife with Gloria Guevara Manzo, President/Chief Executive Officer, World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC].

WTTC Brings Global Tourism Leaders to Valletta as Malta's Travel & Tourism Sector Continues to Thrive

Valletta will take centre stage this October as the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) brings together the world's most influential Travel & Tourism leaders for its Global Summit, taking place from 7–9 October 2026.

The Summit will convene CEOs, government ministers, investors and key stakeholders to discuss the opportunities and challenges shaping the future of global travel, strengthen public-private collaboration, and explore pathways for sustainable growth and investment.

As Malta prepares to host a major Travel & Tourism event, the country's own tourism success story provides a compelling backdrop. According to WTTC's latest Economic Impact Research, Travel & Tourism is forecast to contribute US\$4.9 billion to Malta's economy in 2026, accounting for

16.9% of GDP and supporting 72,200 jobs across the country - equivalent to more than one in five jobs nationwide. These figures reinforce Malta's position as one of Europe's most dynamic and tourism-driven economies, while highlighting the important role Travel & Tourism continues to play in driving growth, investment and opportunity across the country.

Over the past decade, Malta has emerged as a reference point of how destinations can balance strong tourism growth with quality, sustainability and year-round value creation. International arrivals have increased from 2.75 million in 2019 to four million in 2025.

This success is underpinned by a resilient and well-diversified demand base. In 2025, Malta's international visitor mix was led by the United Kingdom (21%), followed by Italy (15%) and Poland (10%), with France and Germany

each contributing 7%.

International visitor spending is projected to surpass US\$4 billion this year, up from US\$3.9 billion in 2025, when it accounted for 91% of total Travel & Tourism expenditure. It is forecast to rise further to US\$5 billion by 2036. Domestic visitor spending is also set to maintain its upward momentum, reaching US\$378.5 million in 2026. Looking ahead, WTTC forecasts that by 2036 Travel & Tourism will contribute US\$6.5 billion to Malta's economy and support more than 90,000 jobs, accounting for almost a quarter of all employment nationwide. Valletta becomes the global stage for shaping the future of Travel & Tourism

From 7–9 October, Valletta will become the meeting place for the world's most influential Travel & Tourism leaders. CEOs, government ministers, investors and innovators from across the sector will gather in Malta to discuss the opportunities and challenges shaping the future

of travel, share insights on growth and investment, and strengthen collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Gloria Guevara, President & CEO of WTTC, said: "Valletta provides an extraordinary setting for the conversations that will define the future of global Travel & Tourism. As one of Europe's most historic and vibrant capitals, it offers the ideal backdrop for leaders to come together and explore the opportunities and challenges shaping the sector's future and unlock new opportunities for sustainable growth.

This event will be hosted in collaboration with the Malta Tourism Authority and the Government of Malta.

Malta represents exactly the kind of destination that is helping shape the future of Travel & Tourism. The country stands not only as a host nation, but as a destination that demonstrates how Travel & Tourism can drive prosperity, create opportunities and deliver long-term value for

communities and businesses alike.

With the sector set to support one in five jobs and contribute close to 17% of GDP, Malta demonstrates the transformative power of Travel & Tourism when it is guided by strategic vision, collaboration and innovation. We look forward to welcoming leaders from across the global Travel & Tourism sector to Malta this October for WTTC's Global Summit."

Hon. Ian Borg, Malta's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Health, said: "When Malta committed to hosting WTTC's Global Summit, it reflected our confidence in the strength of our tourism sector and our belief in its importance to our country's future prosperity. The remarkable growth highlighted in WTTC's latest numbers demonstrates the success of Malta's long-term vision and the strong collaboration between government and industry. We look forward to welcoming global leaders to Valletta this October and showcasing Malta's unique ability to combine economic success, sustainability and world-class visitor experiences."

Dr. Jo Etienne Abela, Malta's Minister for Tourism, said: "Travel & Tourism is one of Malta's great success stories and a vital driver of jobs, investment and opportunity across our islands. As we prepare to welcome delegates from around the world for WTTC's Global Summit, we have a unique opportunity to highlight Malta's achievements while engaging with industry leaders on the future of the sector. We look forward to hosting the world's foremost Travel & Tourism event and demonstrating why Malta continues to be one of Europe's most dynamic and attractive destinations."

Wedding Pictures:

A Pair of Twin Brothers - Taiwo and Kehinde Oguntoye - Married Twin Sisters Taiwo and Kehinde Adediran in Ibadan, Nigeria.





Taiwo and Kehinde Oguntoye and their wives.

Twins Marry Twins in Joyous Nigerian Wedding Celebrating Love and Yoruba Heritage

Guests who gathered in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State in south-west Nigeria, recently witnessed an extraordinary celebration of love, family and culture as twin brothers, Taiwo and Kehinde Oguntoye, exchanged vows with twin sisters, Taiwo and Kehinde Adediran, in a colourful joint wedding ceremony.

While the Yoruba people are globally renowned for having one of the highest rates of twin births, weddings involving two sets of twins remain exceptionally rare, making

the ceremony a remarkable cultural event that attracted widespread admiration.

For the grooms, the union represents the fulfilment of a long-held dream.

"We know many twins, but this marriage feels like it was arranged by God. We have always dreamed of marrying twins," Taiwo Oguntoye said during an interview with BBC Yoruba.

He added that the couple's greatest wish is to continue the family's twin tradition.

"By God's grace, we pray for twins as our first and second children. That is our heart's desire."

The remarkable journey began more than a decade ago while all four were students at the University of Ibadan.

A university lecturer, aware that the Oguntoye brothers hoped to marry twins, suggested they meet a pair of twin sisters she knew. Although intrigued, the first attempt at an introduction was unsuccessful as the Adediran sisters were not interested and initially ignored the lecturer's calls.

Eventually, the four met. "We visited them and had a conversation, but they were not interested in a

relationship then," Taiwo recalled.

Rather than pursuing romance, they developed a friendship that would quietly endure the test of time.

Soon after, life took each of them in different directions. The Adediran sisters relocated overseas to pursue further studies after completing their master's degrees, while the Oguntoye brothers built careers that took them to several countries, including the United States and South Africa.

Years later, the brothers reached out once again. This time, what had begun as friendship gradually blossomed into love, proving that timing can sometimes be the missing ingredient in destiny.

The relationship quickly won the approval of both families.

According to Taiwo Oguntoye, meeting his future in-laws felt remarkably natural.

"Everyone was so happy to see us. It felt like we had known them all our lives. We were treated like sons in our own father's house," he said.

The wedding itself reflected the close bond shared by both families. Proud relatives arrived elegantly dressed, while the two couples coordinated their traditional and ceremonial outfits in a spectacular display of colour and unity.

Adding to the uniqueness of the occasion, several other pairs of twins attended the ceremony in celebration of the newlyweds.

The twin grooms are already well known in south-west Nigeria for promoting Yoruba twin heritage and culture. Popularly known as the Oguntoye Twins, they

actively support initiatives that celebrate twins while promoting cultural tourism.

Although the brothers are fraternal twins with noticeable physical differences, their wives are identical twins.

"Our wives look so alike that even members of their family sometimes confuse them," Kehinde Oguntoye said with a smile.

"We don't mix them up. We know our own wives very well."

The brothers also describe themselves and their wives as ambiverts—comfortable being either reserved or outgoing depending on the situation, which they believe contributes to their compatibility.

Among the Yoruba, twins occupy a special place in society and are widely regarded as symbols of blessing, prosperity and good fortune.

Their names are traditionally determined by birth order rather than by parental choice. The first child born is named Taiwo, meaning "the one who tastes or tests the world," while the second is named Kehinde, meaning "the one who comes after." Yoruba tradition holds that although Kehinde is born second, the child is spiritually regarded as the elder, having sent Taiwo ahead to explore the world.

This rich cultural heritage has made the Yoruba people internationally recognised for their reverence for twins and the unique customs surrounding their birth.

Although the couples share an extraordinary bond, they do not intend to live together after marriage.

"We have our unique plan about that. In time, people will get to know about it," Taiwo explained.

... Vice Chairmanship of African Travel Commission

cont'd from page 3

together towards common goals," he said.

Also speaking, Dr. Lucky Onoriode George, Executive Director of the African Travel Commission, described Mrs. Houadjeto's acceptance as a major milestone in the ongoing revitalisation of the Commission and a reaffirmation of Ghana's historic leadership role as one of the founding members of the ATC.

He noted that Ghana's active participation in the Commission's leadership would strengthen ATC's vision of building a more united, competitive, and globally respected African tourism industry.

Dr. George further stated that the Commission remains committed to deepening collaboration among governments, the private sector, development partners, and tourism stakeholders to accelerate tourism growth, improve air connectivity, promote research and innovation, attract investment, and position Africa as one of the world's leading tourism destinations.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to advancing a common continental tourism agenda through strategic partnerships, regional integration, and sustainable development initiatives.

Participants expressed confidence that Ghana's leadership within the African Travel Commission would further strengthen the organisation's efforts to drive inclusive and sustainable tourism growth across Africa.



ECOWAS Air Travel Reform Stalls As Only One Country Implements 25% Tax Reduction

The International Air Transport Association [IATA] said the decision by the countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to reduce airport and travel charges by 25 per cent would help to address the region's major structural hurdles.

IATA's Regional Vice President for Africa and the Middle East, Kamil Alawahdi, in an interview with Aviation Metric at the IATA 82nd Annual General Meeting [AGM] in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, welcomed the idea and lauded the initiative, describing it as an amazing job done by ECOWAS.

He, however, expressed disappointment that only one country in ECOWAS had so far adopted what it noted could derail the sweeping air travel reform in the region.

He said, "First of all, ECOWAS did an amazing job. It's up to 25% reduction in taxes, fees, levies, and all that, which is perfect. Only one

country so far in ECOWAS has adopted it, which is a shame, but I praise the country, but I'm not going to mention it. It's literally on my agenda to discuss when the other countries are going to apply this ECOWAS consideration, and the prices should drop, all right. But it's from ECOWAS to ECOWAS that has to drop."

"There's no point in saying, I'm going to operate from the ECOWAS state and land in Tanzania and pay \$45 APIS, and I charge one way or the other. The price will remain the same or increase. So, what would be nice is if I can get all of Africa to sit down and say, look, ECOWAS did this, that will solve the problem we are having about high charges in Africa".

"They're really smart. They thought about it. They understand the importance of aviation and its value for Africa, and they made this tough decision. You want the rest of Africa to do the same thing. You don't want a state like Tanzania coming up and saying, I want \$45 for APIS, and I'll charge one way, which makes no sense to me. In the end, they're going to

harm themselves."

In aviation, APIS is a security system that collects detailed passenger data, such as passport information, before international flights.

While many countries fund this internally, some nations, such as Nigeria, pass the cost to the traveller as an APIS fee or levy added to the cost of an international airline ticket. ECOWAS sweeping aviation tax reform, officially titled "Supplementary Act A/SA. 2/12/24 Relating to the Common Policy on Aviation Charges, Taxes and Fees", was scheduled for full implementation on January 1, 2026.

The policy addresses a major structural hurdle: West African regional flights have historically been among the most expensive globally, with non-aviation taxes and government levies accounting for 60% to 70% of a typical ticket price.

The core objective of the Supplementary Act is to align West African aviation with International Civil Aviation Organisation

[ICAO] standards [specifically Article 15 of the Chicago Convention], which mandate that charges remain fair, transparent, and strictly cost-related.

Four major statutory levies that are not directly linked to the provision of aviation services have been marked for total elimination across all 15 member states.

These levies are Ticket Sales Tax (or Ticket Tax), Tourism Tax / Tourism Levies, Solidarity Tax and Foreign Travel Tax. For the remaining core charges, the bloc mandated a flat 25% reduction in Passenger Service Charge [PSC] and Security Fees/Charges.

ECOWAS and the African Airlines Association [AFRAA] project that full compliance could reduce total ticket costs by up to 40%, making regional travel far more accessible and boosting intra-regional tourism and trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area [AfCFTA].

While Supplementary Acts are legally binding on all ECOWAS member states, translating the regional directive into local enforcement has hit a two-speed reality.

Months passed the January 1, 2026, deadline, and the policy is facing significant turbulence on the ground.



Ms. Benedicta Ogar, Cavodah Hospitality Chief Executive Officer; Olugbenga Sunday, Hotel Managers Conference [HMC] Africa Convener and Mr. Karl Hala, Continental Hotels Group General Manager at the presentation of the "Best Luxury Business Hotel in Nigeria 2026" award to Lagos Continental Hotel during the Hotel Managers Conference in Lagos

Continental Hotel Sets Benchmark For Luxury Business Hospitality

Mr. Karl Hala, Group General Manager of Continental Hotels Group has said Lagos Continental Hotel is setting the benchmark for luxury business hospitality in Nigeria after it was named Best Luxury Business Hotel in Nigeria 2026 at the Hotel Managers Conference [HMC] Africa.

The award was presented by the Convener of HMC Africa, Mr. Oluwagbenga Sunday, during a ceremony held at Lagos Continental Hotel, which hosted the 2026 edition of the conference.

Presenting the award, Sunday said Lagos

Continental Hotel earned the recognition for its exceptional service, world-class facilities, and operational excellence.

He noted that the hotel combines comfort, modern technology, and professional service to meet the needs of business travellers, adding that its prime location and consistent quality have helped raise hospitality standards in Nigeria.

Receiving the award on behalf of Lagos Continental Hotel, Hala said the recognition reflects Continental Hotels Group's commitment to excellence, innovation, and outstanding customer service.

Innovation Key to Transforming Ghana's Tourism - Chief of Staff

Innovation remains the most critical factor in repositioning Ghana's tourism sector to compete effectively on the global stage, Mr. Julius Debrah, Chief of Staff at the Presidency has said.

He explained that

innovation in tourism goes beyond infrastructure to include branding, digital engagement and the creation of immersive visitor experiences.

Mr Debrah, therefore, called for a shift from conventional approaches to more creative

"This award is a testament to the passion, professionalism, and dedication of every member of our team. Together, we continue to demonstrate what true hospitality excellence looks like," he said.

Hala added that the recognition shows Nigerian hotels can compete with the best globally through investment in people and consistent service delivery.

"Our frontline staff who welcome our guests and our back-of-house teams who ensure smooth operations are the reason we are celebrating today. Every member of our team is an outstanding ambassador of Continental Hotels Nigeria," he said.

and forward-looking strategies to unlock the sector's full potential.

He made the call at a high-level stakeholder consultative meeting in Accra on Wednesday, attended by Ms. Dzifa Abla Gomashie, Minister of

Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts and heads of agencies within the tourism and creative arts industry.

The meeting discussed key challenges confronting the sector and explored practical measures to improve its performance and competitiveness.

Mr. Debrah said tourism success was largely driven by perception, stressing the need for Ghana to tell compelling stories that resonate with international audiences.

He urged stakeholders to rethink how the country's history, festivals and creative arts were presented, noting that countries that excel in tourism invest significantly in crafting appealing narratives around their identity.

He also underscored the need to align efforts between the public and private sectors to drive innovation-led growth, and called on agencies to collaborate in developing marketable concepts capable of attracting both tourists and investors.

Mr. Debrah reaffirmed the government's commitment to promoting creativity and innovation, expressing confidence that with the right mindset and strategy, Ghana could emerge as a leading tourism destination in Africa and beyond.

For her part, Ms. Dzifa Abla Gomashie, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts emphasised that the sector was at a critical turning point and required urgent reforms, strategic investment and stronger collaboration to realise its full potential.

She stressed the need for decisive action to address persistent challenges affecting growth and global competitiveness.

Ms. Gomashie noted that although significant policy initiatives had been introduced, including the Ghana National Cultural

Policy and the Culture Indicators Programme, effective implementation and coordination among stakeholders remained the real challenge.

She identified weak integration between tourism and sectors such as agriculture and the creative industry as a major constraint, warning that without deliberate linkages, the sector would continue to underperform despite its vast potential.

The minister also cited infrastructure and logistical deficits, particularly in transportation and tourism services, as major obstacles to enhancing visitor experience, and called for increased private sector participation to improve service delivery across the country.

She further expressed concern about the shortage of skilled personnel in the hospitality industry and advocated the establishment of world-class training institutions, alongside expanded internship opportunities.

Ms. Gomashie also warned of a growing disconnect between young people and Ghana's cultural heritage, urging intensified cultural education and engagement.

Moreover, she underscored the importance of reliable data in shaping policy and attracting investment, highlighting tourism satellite accounts and international visitor surveys as critical tools for informed decision-making.

Ms. Gomashie reiterated the need for stronger public-private partnerships to mobilise investment, expand tourism offerings and drive innovation, with the aim of transforming the sector into a major pillar of economic growth, job creation and national identity.

Source: Ghanaian Times



Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa.

South African Anti-Immigrant Protests Spark Fears For Regional Tourism

South Africa's latest anti-immigrant protests are raising concerns across Africa's tourism industry. As regional travellers reconsider business and leisure trips, tourism experts warn that recurring xenophobic violence could damage the country's international reputation, reduce visitor confidence, and threaten one of Africa's most important tourism economies.

South Africa, one of Africa's leading tourism destinations and the continent's largest hub for international and regional travel, is facing growing concerns over the impact of anti-immigrant protests on its tourism industry.

The latest wave of anti-immigrant demonstrations in several urban centres has raised alarm among African travellers, tour operators, and tourism stakeholders, who fear that the country's image as the "Rainbow Nation" could suffer long-term damage if tensions continue.

South Africa has built its tourism brand on cultural diversity, world-class attractions, wildlife, and modern infrastructure.

However, repeated outbreaks of xenophobic violence over the past two

decades have periodically undermined that image, prompting travel advisories, cancellations, and concerns over visitor safety.

The current protests have intensified in parts of Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, and other urban areas, where demonstrators have accused undocumented migrants of contributing to crime, unemployment, and pressure on public services. Although the demonstrations are primarily directed at foreign nationals living in South Africa, tourism experts warn that international visitors often perceive such unrest as a broader security risk.

Several tour operators serving African markets have reported inquiries from travellers concerned about safety, while some business and leisure trips have reportedly been postponed or cancelled pending improvements in the security situation.

Tourism Relies Heavily on African Visitors

South Africa remains Africa's largest destination for intra-African tourism.

According to official tourism statistics, visitors from other African countries account for approximately 75 percent of all international tourist arrivals.

These travellers support hotels, restaurants, transportation services, conference facilities, shopping centres, entertainment venues, and thousands of small businesses operating throughout the tourism value chain.

The tourism sector contributed approximately R361.7 billion [about US\$23 billion] to South Africa's economy in 2024, making it one of the country's largest employers and foreign exchange earners.

Industry analysts warn that any sustained decline in regional travel could have significant economic consequences, particularly for small tourism enterprises that depend heavily on visitors from neighbouring countries.

Cape Town Remains a Tourism Jewel

Cape Town continues to rank among Africa's premier tourist destinations and serves as an international gateway to Southern Africa.

The city is internationally recognized for its

spectacular coastline, Table Mountain, vineyards, wildlife experiences, and rich multicultural heritage. It also hosts the annual World Travel Market [WTM] Africa, one of the continent's leading travel trade exhibitions.

Cape Town's history dates back to the Age of Discovery, when Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias reached the Cape in 1488, opening one of the world's most important maritime routes between Europe and Asia. Later, the city developed into a strategic port and today welcomes millions of international visitors annually.

Despite Cape Town's continued popularity, tourism experts caution that negative headlines originating elsewhere in South Africa can affect perceptions of the country as a whole.

A History of Xenophobic Violence

South Africa has experienced several waves of xenophobic violence since 2008. Major outbreaks occurred in 2008, 2015, 2019, and again in recent years, with migrants from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other countries frequently targeted.

These incidents have resulted in deaths, injuries, destruction of businesses, and displacement of thousands of foreign nationals.

International media coverage of the violence has repeatedly prompted concern among governments and travel organizations, with some countries issuing travel advisories or urging their citizens to exercise caution when visiting South Africa. Tourism researchers note that perceptions of safety play a decisive role in destination choice, particularly for first-time international visitors.

Government Condemns Vigilantism

South African Minister of

Justice and Constitutional Development Mmamoloko Kubayi has warned that vigilantism and attacks targeting foreign nationals damage the country's international reputation, investment climate, arts sector, and tourism industry.

She said the government would not tolerate individuals taking the law into their own hands and emphasized that law enforcement agencies must address criminal activity within the framework of the Constitution and the rule of law.

Tourism organizations have echoed those concerns, arguing that restoring visitor confidence will require visible security measures, community engagement, and consistent messaging that South Africa remains open and welcoming to international visitors.

Historic Regional Solidarity

The current tensions stand in contrast to South Africa's history during the anti-apartheid struggle.

During the decades-long fight against apartheid, neighbouring African countries, including Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Angola, and Mozambique, provided sanctuary, military training facilities, diplomatic support, and educational opportunities for members of the African National Congress [ANC] and other liberation movements.

Nigeria also became one of the strongest financial supporters of the anti-apartheid movement, contributing millions of dollars through the Southern African Relief Fund, scholarships, humanitarian assistance, and diplomatic campaigns that helped sustain South African liberation organizations during their years in exile.

Political analysts say those historical ties have long strengthened South Africa's position as the continent's economic and tourism leader. However, repeated outbreaks of anti-immigrant violence risk straining regional relationships that have supported both trade and tourism for decades.

As South Africa seeks to maintain its position as Africa's leading tourism destination, industry leaders say preserving visitor safety, strengthening community cohesion, and protecting the country's reputation will be essential to sustaining future tourism growth.

Written by Apolinari Tairo



Donald Trump, US President.

Nigeria: Weeks After Launching \$750 Fast-Track Visa Interviews, U.S. Mission Warns Nigerians to Respect Visa Conditions

The United States Mission in Nigeria has reminded Nigerian travellers to strictly comply with U.S. immigration laws, warning that respecting visa conditions is essential to preserving future opportunities to travel, study and work in the United States.

The reminder comes just weeks after the U.S. government unveiled a new premium visa interview programme that allows eligible applicants to pay an additional \$750 for expedited B1/B2 visitor visa interviews.

In a message posted on its official X handle on Thursday under the hashtag #VisaWiseTravelSmart, the U.S. Mission stressed that compliance with immigration laws protects both individual

travellers and the integrity of the American visa system. "Staying compliant with U.S. immigration laws isn't just the right thing to do; it protects your future and keeps opportunities open for Nigerian travellers," the Mission stated.

It urged Nigerians travelling to the United States for study, work or tourism to honour the conditions attached to their visas by staying only for the authorised period, keeping their documents up to date and avoiding actions that could affect future visa eligibility. "Whether you're studying, working, or visiting the United States, always honour the terms of your visa. Follow the rules. Stay only for as long as you are authorized. Keep your documents updated. Make choices

that safeguard your dreams," the Mission added.

According to the Mission, respect for immigration rules benefits both travellers and bilateral relations between Nigeria and the United States. "When you respect the process, everyone wins," it said.

The latest advisory is part of a broader U.S. effort to curb visa overstays and strengthen immigration enforcement, particularly among countries with relatively high rates of visa non-compliance. In recent months, the administration of President Donald Trump has introduced several measures affecting Nigerian travellers.

In January 2026, Washington partially suspended the issuance of B1/B2 visitor visas, F, M and J student and

exchange visas, as well as immigrant visas for Nigerians outside the United States who did not already possess valid visas. The decision followed official data indicating a 5.56 per cent overstay rate for visitor visas and an 11.90 per cent overstay rate for student and exchange visas.

Earlier, in 2025, the United States reduced the validity of most non-immigrant visas issued to Nigerians to three months with single entry, citing visa overstays, reciprocity concerns and documentation deficiencies.

The U.S. has also tightened visa screening procedures. Applicants are now required to disclose their social media usernames as part of the vetting process, while individuals found guilty of visa fraud risk criminal prosecution, visa revocation and lifetime bans from entering the United States.

According to the U.S. Mission, these measures are intended to protect the integrity of the visa system while ensuring continued access for legitimate travellers.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of State has introduced a new premium processing option for applicants seeking B1/B2 visitor visas. Under the pilot programme, applicants who pay an additional \$750 will be eligible for visa interviews within 10 business days at participating U.S. embassies and consulates. According to a notice published in the Federal Register on June

9, the pilot programme will run from July 1 to December 31, 2026, with the possibility of an extension depending on its outcome.

The initiative is expected to provide an option for travellers facing lengthy interview waiting periods amid tighter immigration controls and growing demand for visa appointments.

In Nigeria, the U.S. Embassy in Abuja currently has an average waiting time of approximately 11.5 months for B1/B2 visa interview appointments.

While the standard B1/B2 visa application fee remains \$185, applicants who choose the expedited interview option must pay the additional \$750 separately.

The State Department, however, emphasised that payment for the premium service does not guarantee visa approval. Applicants must still satisfy all legal requirements and successfully complete the visa adjudication process.

The Department has yet to announce the list of embassies and consulates that will participate in the programme.

The introduction of the premium interview service comes against the backdrop of broader U.S. immigration reforms. Some African nationals, including Nigerians, may be required to post visa bonds of up to \$15,000 when applying for B1/B2 visas, while several African countries remain subject to partial U.S. travel restrictions.



Abiy Ahmed Ali, Ethiopia Prime Minister

Tourism as Ethiopia's New Economic Motor: What the Numbers Show Under Abiy Ahmed

In a recent exclusive interview with NBC Ethiopia [June 30, 2026], Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed positioned tourism as one of Ethiopia's five strategic economic pillars and a powerful "new economic engine" [or "new economic motor"] for sustainable growth, job creation, investment attraction, and global integration. This marks a deliberate shift toward economic diversification.

What the Numbers Actually Say

While tourism shows promising growth and high-level ambition, the data reveals both encouraging momentum and the scale of the challenge ahead. Here's a

breakdown based on recent official and international reports:

Revenue and Arrivals Momentum: Strong short-term gains. The sector generated USD 1.4 billion in Q1 2025/26 (surpassing targets with 376,000+ international visitors, +36% YoY). In the first half of the fiscal year, revenue topped USD 2.6 billion from over 700,000 visitors. International arrivals grew 15% in 2025, placing Ethiopia among the world's fastest-growing destinations.

GDP Contribution: Modest but growing in total impact. Travel & Tourism's total contribution [direct + indirect + induced effects] hovered around 5.6–5.8%

of GDP in 2022–2023 [roughly USD 6.3–6.8 billion]. Direct contribution is lower [2.2% in some estimates]. This is solid for a developing economy but far below global leaders or even some African peers. Ethiopia's overall nominal GDP is estimated around USD 110–125 billion in recent years [projected USD 121.5 billion in 2026], so tourism remains a supporting rather than dominant player.

Employment: Significant but not yet transformative at scale. Direct jobs numbered 645,000 in 2022 [1.2% of total employment], with total supported jobs reaching 1.8–1.9 million [around 3–4% including multipliers]. This supports youth and small enterprises effectively, but tourism still trails agriculture [which

employs the majority of Ethiopians].

Pre- vs. Post-Pandemic Recovery: The sector rebounded but has not fully surpassed peaks. 2019 saw higher spending [USD 3.5 billion in some metrics] and stronger contributions before COVID collapsed arrivals. Recent quarterly billions are impressive in absolute terms amid currency and economic reforms, but sustained double-digit growth is needed for tourism to meaningfully shift the economic structure.

Key Takeaway

Tourism is delivering tangible foreign exchange [often 40%+ of services exports in strong years] and outpacing some sectors in recovery speed, with 40%

growth reported over two years in certain metrics. However, it currently accounts for a single-digit share of GDP and employment. To become a true "motor," Ethiopia would need to scale arrivals toward 2+ million annually, boost average spends per visitor, and deepen linkages to local supply chains. Global tourism is a USD 12.6 trillion industry; even capturing a tiny additional percentage point could be transformative given Ethiopia's low base.

Ethiopia's Unique Assets and Strategic Initiatives

Ethiopia offers rare diversity: Simien Mountains, Lalibela's rock churches, Danakil Depression, Lake Tana, Gondar castles, Bale Mountains, and vibrant cultures. PM Abiy highlighted biodiversity, microclimates, and the ability to package history, nature, and living culture. Initiatives like "Dine for Sheger" have upgraded infrastructure and urban appeal.

Global Context and Forward Path

PM Abiy contrasted Ethiopia with high performers [e.g., France >100 million visitors, US USD 215 billion revenue]. Tourism's multiplier effects, stimulating agriculture, manufacturing, hospitality, and FDI, are a key advantage. Challenges include infrastructure, skills, branding, and security perceptions in some areas. Success hinges on private-sector partnerships, digital marketing, and an integrated ecosystem.

This vision aligns with long-term goals of middle-income status. Early numbers show proof-of-concept through rapid revenue gains and visitor growth. With disciplined execution, tourism could evolve from a promising sector into a genuine engine, driving forex, jobs, unity, and sustainable prosperity for generations to come. The data says progress is real; the coming years will determine if it becomes revolutionary.



- Girma Wake, Albinus Chiedu

The Right Way To Run An Airline Business

83-year-old Ato Girma Wake has more than five decades experience in airline business. He was Chief Executive Officer of Ethiopian Airlines from 2004 to 2011, during which he spearheaded its expansion into Africa's largest and most profitable carrier. He was Chairman, Board of Directors for RwandAir from 2012 to 2017. The current Acting Chief Executive Officer [CEO] and Technical Advisor of Uganda Airlines was appointed into this position on February 13, 2026. His tenure is a short-term, transitional mandate directed by Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni to rectify management weaknesses. He is scheduled to hold the position until a substantive, permanent CEO is recruited in July 2026. This veteran, whose experience has been helpful to aviation in Ethiopia, Rwanda, DRC and Togo, shares perspectives on airline business in Africa in this exclusive interview.

From your many years of experience in airline business, there are obviously certain things that airlines ought to do to succeed. what are some of such things that airlines ought to do that they are not doing?

I believe first of all, they have to plan everything they

do. You don't just wake up one morning and say you are running airline. There must be proper planning; planning based on data, on market studies. Then, the execution has to be thorough. It is not touch and go. They have to really continue to work on it.

The third is financial discipline. Many carriers spend as if there is no tomorrow and at the end, they find themselves where there is no money to buy parts. There is no money to service aircraft. So, yes, they have to spend all they have to spend but they must

really evaluate it before they put their hands on the money and spend it.

There must be a cost control and financial discipline in the organization. Anything that does not have financial discipline will not work. The only area where I don't push to cut cost is in training. They have to support training. Even if they have to borrow money to train people, they should do that because a trained manpower is what gives you the returns. A trained manpower is what keeps the customers. A trained manpower is the one that keeps your aeroplane flying. So, don't cut that.

There has been this argument about airline model that best suits national interest. there is a model of a national carrier run by government, a flag carrier run by a private concern, and a joint stake national airline with government and private concern shares. based on your experience, which of the three options would you recommend for a country?

It is not a question of whether it is owned by government, by individuals or a group of individuals. It is the way such airline is run. Ethiopian Airlines is 100% government but the airline is run on commercial basis.

It doesn't operate anyway different from a private airline because they are responsible for the workforce. They are responsible for the growth. It is the way it is run. If it is commercially run, government airline could be good. If it is privately run and is done well, it is also good.

In Africa, there are very few private people who can start a decent airline; very few. For me, for at

developmental stage, you don't build your own road. An airline is a road to progress. Any airline that is not fully supported by an own government would have a difficulty at succeeding.

So far, for me, in Europe, maybe private airline is always good. Don't forget. All the airlines you see in Europe today-the British Airways, Lufthansa, Air France, Alitalia were all owned by the government. It took time for them to go from government to privatization but they were built as a government organization.

Why shouldn't we do it in Africa? We started late but let us evolve gradually. To me, whether it is private or government, it is the way the business is run that matters. If it is run on a commercial basis, I don't care who owns it.

In Africa, there is this challenge of aviation professionals leaving the continent massively for other climes. What is your advice on how to retain Africa's aviation professionals in Africa?

That will continue to happen because first, even if you offer them the same type of salary; let me take as an example, the Gulf carriers. They are the ones taking bulk of African professionals. In our continent, for the senior job like that, there is 30% to 35% tax. Even if you pay the same salary that they pay in the Gulf, there is no tax there.

So, they are automatically 35% more than what they would get at home. So, for me, as long as they serve you for sometime, 15 years, 20 years, 30 years; I believe you should try to keep them but if they go, you should have other people ready to take their place.

Get younger people to

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Luggage at an airport

Africa Records Highest Global Baggage Mishandling Rate Despite 23% Drop, SITA Report

The global aviation industry is making significant strides in tackling baggage mishandling, but Africa continues to lag behind, recording the highest baggage mishandling rate of any region globally.

According to the newly released 2026 SITA Baggage IT Insights Report—the 20th annual edition of the industry benchmark, airlines and airports worldwide slashed global mishandling rates by 23% in 2025.

However, Africa remains a stark outlier, recording an alarming 12.1 mishandled bags per 1,000 passengers.

The report attributes Africa's high mishandling rates to a combination of capacity pressures, ageing infrastructure, and the complexities of international travel. Journeys involving

multiple airlines, airports, and baggage handlers (interlining) continue to create significant loopholes for baggage disruption across the continent.

Despite these challenges, SITA identifies Africa as the region with the greatest opportunity to leapfrog current limitations.

The report suggests that the continent can drastically improve its baggage performance by adopting end-to-end baggage tracking, real-time data sharing, Biometric solutions and AI-powered predictive routing.

A solid foundation for this transition is already underway. Industry-wide baggage tracking under IATA Resolution 753 has now surpassed 50% globally, with full compliance targeted by 2027.

While the global industry celebrated its

strongest progress outside the pandemic era—even as passenger volumes surged to 5 billion in 2025—the financial drain remains staggering.

Baggage mishandling still costs the global aviation industry \$6.3 billion annually, averaging \$260 per mishandled bag.

With the industry's net profit averaging a razor-thin \$8 per passenger, the economics are brutal: one mishandled bag wipes out the profit of more than 30 seats sold, while five mishandled bags completely erase the profit of an entire flight.

According to SITA, delayed bags account for roughly 70% of these total costs (mostly operational recovery, rerouting, and delivery), while lost or damaged bags consume the remaining 30%, driven primarily by passenger compensation. Transferring bags between flights remains the primary culprit, accounting for 39% of all mishandling

cases in 2025.

What drove the 23% global reduction in 2025 was a fundamental shift toward digital interconnectedness. Technologies like real-time data sharing, biometric bag drops, and AI routing are redefining the passenger experience.

“Baggage is shifting from a logistical problem to a digital service,” said Nicole Hogg, Portfolio Director of Baggage at SITA. “Passengers expect to know where their bag is at every moment... The next phase is about bringing the technology we already have to every transfer, every handler, and every airport.”

As passenger volumes rise faster than airport expansions can keep up, aviation executives are turning to tech over concrete.

David Lavorel, CEO at SITA, noted: “Airports are operating closer to their physical limits every year, and the answer isn't always more concrete. Data, AI, and predictive operations let us get more out of the airport we already have. Solutions such as Total Airport Management take the same approach across the whole lifecycle, so airports can absorb growth without expanding their footprint.”

The trajectory moving forward is clear: three in four airlines plan to invest in AI over the next two years, and half plan to provide passengers with real-time baggage updates. For Africa, accelerating the adoption of these digital tools will be critical to lowering its double-digit mishandling rate and protecting airline margins.

...Way To Run An Airline Business

Cont'd from page 8

move in their place. It is a way of life. You cannot change it but find a way of really replacing them fast. Prepare always, some people, who are trained in that area to be ready to take over.

Don't count on stopping them because you cannot stop them. Just train more people. We have the same thing. We had lots of pilots in the gulf, in America, in Singapore, flying for carriers but still produced more pilots.

The more you produce, the better for you because the young ones want to move up for you; and Africa needs it anyway. Don't complain about them. Try to keep them but when they go, get a replacement.

What is your advice to airlines that have had disruptions in their operations due to change in aircraft delivery dates by suppliers?

Unfortunately, in the last few years, aircraft shortage has gone beyond anybody's expectation. Even if you have aeroplane, what about the logistics of getting parts? Many airlines have their airplanes grounded because they could not find parts.

Secondly, there is the problem with engines. The engine manufacturers are not producing enough and they are not servicing enough. Because of that, many carriers, including African carriers, have grounded their airplanes.

It is a very critical issue. What I suggest to African carriers is to get together and really talk in one voice and challenge those organizations, those manufacturers, who are not supporting their own equipment because this is a very dangerous trend. It should be pushed as much as possible through the governments and the airlines to bring them to be more reasonable.



A suite at The Pelican Hotel.

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Strong partnerships are built on transparency, communication, and mutual accountability. We evaluate suppliers regularly based on quality, reliability, service delivery, and value. Long-term relationships often result in better consistency and cost efficiencies.

What technology platforms are critical to the hotel's daily operations?

Our Property Management System, revenue management tools, point-of-sale systems, financial platforms, guest feedback systems, and communication technologies are all vital to our operations. These systems provide the data and efficiency required to operate effectively.

How has technology improved efficiency in areas such as reservations, housekeeping, revenue

management, and guest services?

Technology has significantly enhanced speed, accuracy, and decision-making. Automated reporting, real-time room status updates, dynamic pricing strategies, and digital guest communication tools enable us to deliver more efficient and personalized service.

How do you monitor and control operational costs without compromising the guest experience?

We focus on eliminating waste, improving efficiency, and optimizing resource utilization in every department. We are committed to running smart and efficient operations while maintaining exceptional service and quality standards.

What initiatives have delivered the greatest improvements in operational efficiency

over the past few years?

The integration of technology, enhanced forecasting, improved procurement processes, cross-training of teams, and advanced performance management systems have all contributed significantly to operational efficiency and overall hotel performance.

How do you prepare the hotel to handle unexpected operational challenges such as power outages, supply chain disruptions, or emergency situations?

Preparation is key. We maintain detailed contingency plans, backup power systems, emergency response procedures, and alternative supplier networks. Regular drills and scenario planning ensure our teams are prepared to respond effectively.

How do you measure the performance of department heads and

ensure accountability across the management team?

Each department head operates against clearly defined KPIs covering financial performance, guest satisfaction, team engagement, and operational efficiency. Regular reviews ensure accountability while also providing support and coaching where necessary.

22. What role does sustainability play in daily hotel operations, particularly regarding energy, water, and waste management?

Sustainability is increasingly important for both operational efficiency and environmental responsibility. We actively focus on energy conservation, water management, waste reduction, and sustainable procurement practices while educating both employees and guests on responsible consumption. **How do you work with**

the ownership group and management company to align operational goals with financial objectives?

The Pelican Hotel benefits from a strong partnership between Devtraco Plus as owner and Aleph Hospitality as operator. Alignment is achieved through advanced reporting, regular strategic reviews, shared performance objectives, and collaborative decision-making focused on long-term value creation.

What operational opportunities do you believe exist to further improve the performance of The Pelican Hotel?

As one of Accra's newest hotels, there are significant opportunities to differentiate our hospitality offering, including through our food and beverage offerings, corporate partnerships, digital guest engagement.

If you could implement one major operational improvement over the next 12 months, what would it be and why?

"I look forward to further elevating our food and beverage offering. With our diverse dining venues, this represents a significant opportunity to further elevate the guest experience."

At The Pelican Hotel Cantonments, our vision is to establish ourselves as one of Ghana's leading hospitality destinations by combining exceptional service, operational excellence, and genuine Ghanaian warmth. Supported by the expertise of Aleph Hospitality and the commitment of Devtraco Plus, we are focused on delivering memorable experiences while contributing to the continued growth of Ghana's tourism and hospitality industry.



Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Governor, Lagos State.

Sanwo-Olu's Mounting Refuse Crisis: A Major Threat to Lagos' Tourism Ambitions

Lagos has always been celebrated as Nigeria's commercial nerve centre, a city of dreams, opportunities, innovation and resilience. It is home to Africa's largest concentration of businesses, a major financial hub, and an emerging tourism destination competing with cities such as Cape Town, Kigali, Cairo and Casablanca. Yet, beneath the glittering skyscrapers, luxury estates and ambitious infrastructure projects lies an uncomfortable reality that can no longer be ignored. Today, Lagos is battling what many residents increasingly describe as an epidemic of dirt and refuse.

The situation has deteriorated to the point where heaps of decomposing waste have become permanent features on major highways, road medians, residential neighbourhoods and commercial districts. In many parts of the metropolis, the stench from unattended refuse has become so overpowering that residents jokingly, but painfully, remark that one cannot even

swallow saliva without inhaling the nauseating odour.

Sadly, this is no longer an exaggeration but an everyday experience for countless Lagosians.

A drive through many parts of Lagos tells a disturbing story. Mountains of refuse welcome motorists at strategic intersections. Overflowing bins line busy roads. Blocked drainage channels filled with plastic waste contribute to flooding during rainfall, while open dumps attract rodents, flies and disease-carrying insects. For a state that aspires to become one of the world's leading smart cities, the contradiction is glaring.

The environmental crisis raises fundamental questions about governance, planning and accountability. Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu has acknowledged residents' concerns and directed the immediate evacuation of refuse across affected communities, deploying the Lagos Waste Management Authority [LAWMA], the Lagos State

Environmental Protection Agency [LASEPA] and other agencies to intensify waste clearance operations.

While the directive is welcome, emergency evacuations are not substitutes for a sustainable waste management strategy. The recurring refuse crisis suggests deeper structural failures that go beyond temporary clean-up exercises. Operational bottlenecks at disposal sites and inefficiencies in waste collection have left refuse uncollected for prolonged periods, creating a public health and environmental emergency.

Beyond the environmental concerns, many residents have become increasingly frustrated by what they perceive as the Lagos State Government's slow and inadequate response to the worsening refuse crisis. Sadly, Governor Sanwo-Olu appears, in the eyes of many Lagosians, to have failed to demonstrate the urgency and decisiveness that the situation demands. As refuse continues to pile up across

major roads and communities, many residents have begun questioning whether the administration possesses the capacity and political will to effectively tackle one of the most fundamental responsibilities of government, keeping the city clean, healthy and habitable.

Whether this perception is entirely justified or not, it reflects a growing crisis of public confidence. Leadership is judged not only by infrastructure projects but also by the ability to respond swiftly and effectively to challenges that directly affect the daily lives of citizens. Allowing the refuse crisis to persist for months risks creating the impression of an administration that is disconnected from the everyday realities confronting ordinary Lagosians.

Poor waste management poses serious public health risks. Rotting refuse generates offensive odours and creates breeding grounds for mosquitoes, flies and rats. Contaminated drainage systems increase the likelihood of waterborne diseases during flooding. Air quality deteriorates as decomposing organic waste releases harmful gases, while illegal burning of refuse exposes residents to toxic smoke.

For visitors arriving in Lagos through its airports or major highways, first impressions matter. Tourism thrives on cleanliness, safety and a pleasant urban experience. Investors equally pay attention to environmental quality when making decisions about where to establish businesses.

No global city has attained excellence while allowing waste to dominate its streets. Singapore, Kigali and Dubai did not become clean by accident. They invested in efficient waste collection

systems, enforced environmental laws consistently, educated citizens and held institutions accountable. Cleanliness became a culture supported by effective governance.

Government alone cannot shoulder the responsibility. Residents must also abandon indiscriminate waste disposal. Markets, businesses, transport operators and households all have important roles to play. Environmental sanitation is a shared responsibility requiring cooperation between government, the private sector and citizens.

When waste collection systems function efficiently, illegal dumping reduces significantly. When regulations are enforced fairly and consistently, compliance improves. When institutions perform their responsibilities effectively, citizens respond positively. The current refuse situation should therefore serve as a wake-up call, not merely for the Lagos State Government but for every stakeholder involved in environmental management.

Lagos generates enormous economic wealth every day. It should not simultaneously generate mountains of unmanaged waste.

The city deserves cleaner streets, healthier neighbourhoods and an environment worthy of its status as Africa's leading economic powerhouse.

History will not judge any administration solely by the bridges it built or the roads it commissioned. It will also remember whether ordinary citizens could walk their streets without covering their noses, whether children grew up in healthy surroundings, and whether the environment reflected the aspirations of a modern global city.

The refuse crisis confronting Lagos is not merely an environmental issue.

In this exclusive interview with **Dr. Lucky Onoriode George**, Publisher of *African Travel Times*, **Phillipe Hitti**, General Manager of The Pelican Hotel, Accra, shares the vision behind one of Ghana's newest hospitality landmarks and explains why the property is rapidly emerging as a preferred destination for both business and leisure travellers. **Excerpts:**

Strategically located in the prestigious Cantonments district of Accra, The Pelican Hotel features 134 elegantly appointed rooms and suites that seamlessly combine contemporary comfort, functionality, and personalised service. Guests also enjoy a rich culinary experience through four distinctive food and beverage outlets, including an all-day dining restaurant, specialty cuisine, a vibrant atrium lounge, and in-room dining services.

Hiti also highlights the hotel's extensive business and leisure facilities, including two fully equipped meeting rooms, a modern fitness centre, and an outdoor swimming pool, making it an ideal choice for corporate events, conferences, and relaxing getaways.

Owned by Devtraco Plus and professionally managed by Aleph Hospitality, The Pelican Hotel blends internationally recognised hospitality standards with the warmth and authenticity of Ghanaian hospitality. Since opening its doors, the hotel has remained committed to delivering exceptional guest experiences, achieving operational excellence, and establishing itself as one of Accra's most exciting new

hospitality destinations.

What are the key operational priorities you focus on daily to ensure the hotel runs efficiently?

My daily priorities revolve around three pillars:



guest satisfaction, team performance, and financial results. I closely monitor operational readiness across all departments, review guest feedback, assess occupancy and revenue performance, and ensure that every team is aligned on the day's objectives. As a relatively new hotel in Accra, consistency and attention to detail are critical to building our reputation.

Which operational KPIs do you monitor most closely, and why?

The key KPIs I monitor include Occupancy, ADR [Average Daily Rate], RevPAR, GOP, RGI, guest satisfaction scores, online review ratings, labor cost percentage, food cost

percentage, and employee turnover. These indicators provide a comprehensive picture of both guest perception and business performance, allowing us to

make informed operational decisions.

How do you balance guest satisfaction, service quality, and profitability?

These three elements are interconnected. Satisfied guests generate repeat business and positive reviews, which ultimately drives profitability. Our approach is to focus on delivering quality and value. We invest in team members training, efficient processes, and smart technology to deliver a great guest experience.

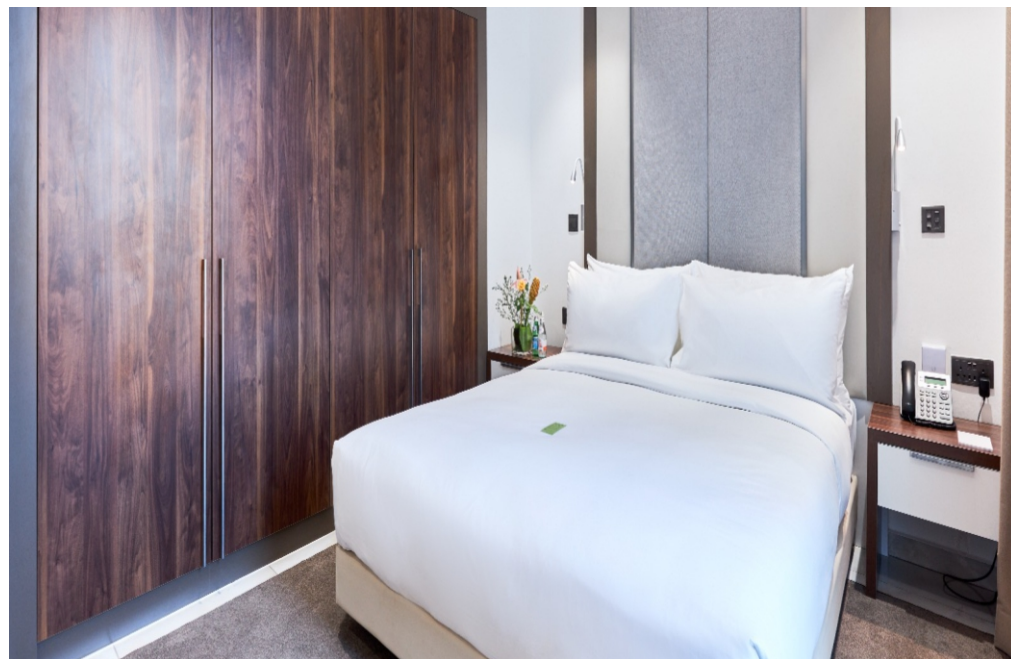
What processes are in place to ensure consistent service delivery across all departments?

We operate with clearly defined Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), daily departmental

briefings, management meetings, quality audits, and ongoing training programs. Consistency comes from having clear standards and ensuring

every team member understands and follows them.

How do you manage communication and coordination between Front Office, Housekeeping, Food &



Beverage, Maintenance, and Sales teams?

Communication is fundamental. We conduct daily operations meetings involving all department

smooth service delivery. **What operational challenges are unique to managing a hotel in Accra, and how do you address them?**

"Rather than focusing on challenges, managing a hotel in Accra's rapidly growing environment is about staying up to date with the latest market developments, local suppliers, and industry

trends. We proactively analyze local data, monitor shifting guest preferences, and engage deeply with the local business ecosystem. By discovering new vendors and premium local service providers, we build strong partnerships that allow us to keep pace with the city's rapid growth and consistently set the standard for modern luxury and innovation."

How do you ensure that guest complaints are resolved quickly and effectively?

We empower our team members to take immediate ownership of any guest concerns. Every complaint is logged, investigated, resolved promptly, and followed up personally whenever necessary. Our goal is not only to resolve issues but also to turn dissatisfied guests into loyal advocates.

What systems do you use to monitor and improve guest satisfaction scores and online reviews?

We actively monitor guest feedback through post-stay surveys (Medallia), online review platforms, social media channels, and direct guest interactions. Regular analysis helps us identify trends, opportunities for continuous improvement and service optimization, and to recognize areas where we exceed expectations and celebrate that with our team.

How do you manage staffing levels during peak and low-demand periods?

Workforce planning is closely aligned with forecasted business levels. During peak periods, we utilize flexible scheduling and cross-trained team members. During slower periods, we focus on training, maintenance projects, and productivity improvements while maintaining our service excellence standards.

What strategies have been most effective in attracting, retaining, and developing hotel employees?

Team members are attracted to organizations that offer growth opportunities and a positive culture. We focus on career development, structured training, recognition programs, competitive benefits, and creating an environment where people feel valued and respected.

How do you maintain staff motivation and productivity while controlling labour costs?

Clear communication, recognition, accountability, and empowerment are essential. Productivity is achieved through our detailed workforce planning, efficient scheduling, and ensuring team members understand how their individual contributions impact overall success.

What role does training play in your operational strategy, and how frequently is it conducted?

Training is one of our core pillars. We conduct regular departmental training sessions, cross-training initiatives, leadership development



Phillipe Hitti

programs, and service culture workshops. Learning is continuous and forms part of our daily operational routine.

How do you ensure compliance with health, safety, security, and regulatory requirements?

Compliance is non-negotiable. We conduct regular audits, safety inspections, emergency drills, and ongoing training programs. We also maintain close

collaboration with local authorities and ensure all certifications and licenses remain up to date.

What measures are in place to maintain the hotel's physical assets and prevent operational disruptions?

We operate a comprehensive preventive maintenance program supported by modern maintenance management systems. Regular inspections, scheduled servicing, and proactive asset management help minimize disruptions and extend the lifespan of our facilities.

How do you manage relationships with suppliers and service providers to ensure consistent quality and cost efficiency?