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**Aleph Hospitality
Appoints Rob Kucera
As Regional Vice President
For East & South Africa**

DINE BOURAIMA
**Appointed Co-Chair Of The
African Travel Commission**

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE:
**The Envoy Hotel's Vision For
Nigeria's Hospitality Industry**










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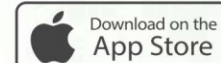
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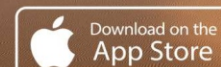
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LOGISTICS

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...The Envoy Hotel's Vision for Nigeria's Hospitality Industry

to obtain and inexpensive. Unfortunately, some countries are more successful than others. This should be managed and protected by the top-performing countries.

Where do you see The Envoy Hotel and Silk Road Hospitality over the next few years, and what milestones would define success?

Our organisation should move towards a wider reach at a higher standard. We want to establish ourselves as a destination of choice and an employer of choice.

We are building an improvement of The Envoy in Lugbe, The Envoy Gateway Hotel. It will be a beautiful escape out of town, with large and interesting rooms, modern architecture and private spaces.

It will be a conference and business destination with 110 bedrooms, a main hall capable of accommodating 850 delegates and six further meeting rooms.

There will also be outdoor spaces to enjoy and relax, multiple pools and lawns to relax and reconnect with family and friends.

Finally, if you had the opportunity to advise policymakers across Africa on creating a thriving hospitality and tourism industry what would be your top three recommendations?

Regulation is good. However, greater attention to safety and security, coupled with fewer government restrictions, would help. Other priorities include a reliable and affordable power supply, friendly and efficient immigration procedures, a broader range and improved quality of imported and locally produced goods and services, greater efficiency at the ports, and more cost-effective tariffs.

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...The New Tourism Jewel of West Africa

African history and the role of women in the continent's political and military past.

The development of new cultural infrastructure, including the Musée des Rois et des Amazones du Danxomè, could further strengthen Abomey's position as an international heritage destination.

The strategy is clear: preserve the past, interpret it properly and transform it into a meaningful visitor experience.

Ganvié: Life on Water

Few experiences in West Africa are as distinctive as Ganvié.

Situated on Lake Nokoué, the settlement is built largely on water, with houses on stilts and canoes providing an essential means of transportation.

The community developed as people sought refuge from slave raids, creating a unique way of life based around fishing and commerce.

Today, visitors can travel by boat through the settlement, observe fishing activities, explore markets and experience a community whose relationship with the lake remains central to everyday life.

Ganvié has enormous potential as an international tourism attraction because it offers something that cannot easily be replicated elsewhere.

The challenge is to ensure that increased tourism brings meaningful economic benefits to residents while protecting the lake and the community's traditional way of life.

Porto-Novo's Cultural Renaissance

Porto-Novo, Benin's political capital, provides yet another dimension to the tourism story.

The city's distinctive Afro-

Brazilian architecture reflects centuries of historical connections between West Africa and Brazil.

Its Grand Mosque, museums, royal heritage and traditional neighbourhoods provide an important

A successful cultural destination combines heritage with food, entertainment, festivals, shopping, creativity and interaction with local communities.

Porto-Novo has the potential to become one of

destinations such as Grand-Popo provide opportunities for leisure, eco-tourism and wellness tourism.

Further north, the landscape changes dramatically.

The Atakora Mountains and the savannah provide a completely different tourism experience, while Pendjari National Park offers wildlife tourism, including elephants, lions, hippos and other species.

Traditional architecture, including the distinctive Tata Bètamaribè, adds another layer to the northern tourism product.

This diversity gives Benin a significant competitive advantage.

It offers culture, history, spirituality, beaches, mountains and wildlife within one national destination.

Connecting the Tourism Circuit

One of the most important benefits of Benin's infrastructure investment is the opportunity to develop integrated tourism circuits.

A destination becomes easier to sell when a visitor can comfortably undertake a multi-day itinerary involving several attractions.

Improved roads make it easier for tourists to move between Cotonou, Porto-Novo, Ouidah, Abomey and other destinations, while better accommodation makes longer stays more practical.

For tour operators, this is critical.

Instead of selling a single attraction, they can sell a complete experience.

A visitor could arrive in Cotonou, explore the city, travel to Porto-Novo for its architecture and culture, continue to Ouidah for its history and Vodun heritage, proceed to Abomey to discover the legacy of Dahomey.

Dr. Lucky Onoriode George, Executive Director, African Travel Commission [ATC], presenting a letter of appointment to Mrs. Maame Efua Houadjeto, Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana Tourism Authority [GTA], as Vice Chair of the ATC, recently in Accra, Ghana.

Ghana Tourism Authority CEO Appointed Vice Chair of African Travel Commission

The Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana Tourism Authority [GTA], Mrs. Maame Efua Houadjeto, has been formally appointed Vice Chair of the African Travel Commission [ATC] for an initial two-year term.

Mrs. Houadjeto received the official letter of appointment during a meeting at her office in Accra on Thursday, August 20, 2026. The letter was formally presented to her by Dr. Lucky Onoriode George, Executive Director of the African Travel Commission.

The appointment reflects the African Travel Commission's confidence in Mrs. Houadjeto's leadership, experience and commitment to the development and promotion of tourism in Ghana and across the African continent.

Speaking following her appointment, Mrs. Houadjeto said: "I'm delighted to announce that I have been appointed Vice Chairman of the African Travel Commission. I am deeply honoured to take on this role and look forward to contributing to strengthening Ghana's position within Africa's tourism landscape, while fostering greater collaboration, connectivity, and opportunities across the continent's travel and tourism sector."

As Vice Chair, Mrs. Houadjeto will work closely with the Chair and other members of the ATC leadership to strengthen cooperation among African tourism authorities, promote intra-African travel and tourism, and advance initiatives aimed at unlocking the continent's vast tourism potential.

Presenting the appointment letter, Dr. George congratulated Mrs. Houadjeto and expressed confidence that her experience and leadership at the Ghana Tourism Authority would contribute significantly to the Commission's efforts to foster greater collaboration among African tourism stakeholders.

"Ghana has always played an important role in the history and development of the African Travel Commission, and the appointment of Mrs. Maame Efua Houadjeto further strengthens that relationship. We look forward to working closely with her in advancing the Commission's Pan-African tourism agenda," Dr. Georgesaid.

The appointment also further strengthens the longstanding relationship between Ghana and the African Travel Commission. Ghana was among the founding members of the Commission, which was established in 1965 by African Heads of National Tourism Organisations to promote cooperation and the collective advancement of tourism across the continent.

Mrs. Houadjeto's appointment is expected to provide additional impetus to the Commission's efforts to promote intra-African travel, strengthen regional tourism cooperation, improve connectivity and position tourism as a key driver of economic development and sustainable growth across Africa.

Europe Captures One-Third Of Global Leisure Travel Spending As Southern Europe Dominates The Summer Travel Season

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Federal Government Declares Bonny Island [Okoloama Kingdom] A Tourism Destination

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Dine Bouraima, Co-Chairmen of African Travel Commission [ATC]; His Majesty, Daagbo Hounon Hounan II of Quidah and Mr. Ola Awakan, Co-Chair and Director General, Nigerian Tourism Development Authority [NTDA].

Dine Bourama Appointed Co-Chair Of The African Travel Commission

The African Travel Commission [ATC] is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Dine Bouraima, President of the Benin Republic Tourism Federation, as Co-Chair of the African Travel Commission [ATC].

The appointment, which takes immediate effect, was approved by the leadership of the Commission in recognition of Mr. Bouraima's outstanding contribution to tourism development in the Republic of Benin and his commitment to advancing regional and continental tourism cooperation.

Mr. Bouraima is widely respected within West Africa's tourism and hospitality industry for his leadership in promoting sustainable tourism, private-sector participation, cultural heritage preservation, and destination marketing. His extensive experience in

tourism administration and stakeholder engagement is expected to further strengthen ATC's mission of fostering a more integrated, competitive, and prosperous African tourism industry.

Announcing the appointment, Dr. Lucky Onoriode George, Executive Director of the African Travel Commission, described Mr. Bourama as "a distinguished tourism leader whose experience, vision, and commitment to African tourism development will add tremendous value to the work of the Commission."

"Mr. Dine Bouraima has consistently demonstrated exceptional leadership in promoting Benin as an emerging tourism destination. His appointment as Co-Chair reflects ATC's confidence in his capacity to contribute meaningfully to the continental tourism agenda and to support stronger collaboration among African

tourism stakeholders," Dr. George stated.

In his acceptance remarks, Mr. Bouraima expressed appreciation for the confidence reposed in him and reaffirmed his dedication to promoting tourism as a catalyst for economic growth, job creation, cultural exchange, and regional integration across Africa.

"I am honoured by this appointment and look forward to working closely with the leadership and members of the African Travel Commission to advance intra-African travel, strengthen tourism partnerships, and position Africa as a leading global tourism destination," he said.

As Co-Chair, Mr. Bouraima will support the Commission's strategic initiatives, including policy advocacy, tourism investment promotion, destination branding, research, capacity building,

and the implementation of programmes aimed at enhancing cross-border tourism and regional connectivity.

Speaking, Mr. Ola Awakan, the Co-Chair of the ATC and Director General of the Nigerian Tourism Development Authority [ATC], Nigeria's national tourism agency praised the section of Mr. Dine to work with him in expanding the frontier and building bridges that will propel the tourism sector to prosperity.

According to him, Benin, Nigeria and indeed Africa have the potential to make tourism as a preferred driver of many more national economies across the continent.

Mr. Dine letter of appointment was presented to him by the duo of Mrs. Susan Akporiaye, Board member of the ATC and Mr. Christian Pascal Couthon, Technical Adviser for Tourism and Hospitality who

represented Mr. Olushegun Adjadi Bakari, Minister of Tourism and Foreign Trade, in charge of Industry and the Promotion of Private Investment of Benin Republic.

Before the presentation, Mr. Couthon made a brilliant presentation of what Benin Republic has been doing, what has been put in place and the plan for the future of how the West African country has transformed the country infrastructure and the general upgrade of all major tourism attractions, whilst some are still on going and call on Africans to take advantage of the free visa policy to all Africans to visit the country.

In attendance was His Majesty, Daagbo Hounon Hounan II of Quidah, Mr. Kazeem Balogun, Vice President for Communication and International Relations of Africa- International Tourism and Economic Council [AITEC World] and some executive members of the Consortium Touristes Par Millions Au Benin amongst others.

The African Travel Commission believes that his appointment will deepen collaboration between public and private sector tourism stakeholders across West Africa and the wider continent, while reinforcing Benin's growing role in Africa's tourism landscape.

The African Travel Commission [ATC] is a pan-African tourism organization dedicated to promoting tourism development, research, marketing, investment, and regional cooperation across Africa.

The Commission works with governments, tourism boards, private-sector operators, development institutions, and international partners to advance sustainable tourism growth and enhance Africa's global tourism competitiveness.



Festus Keyamo, Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development.

...Don't Tell Passengers About Flight Compensation

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unforeseeable. To European judges, a technical failure is normally part of running an airline. Maintaining a fleet, replacing parts and dealing with aircraft defects are part of the carrier's ordinary activity.

The Court has recognised narrow exceptions, among them a hidden manufacturing defect disclosed by the manufacturer or a competent authority, or damage resulting from sabotage or an act of terrorism. But these remain exceptions to the rule, not the rule itself.

In the ordinary run of cases, "technical problem" is not an answer. It is the start of a discussion.

Weather, but not as a blanket excuse

A weather event can genuinely amount to an extraordinary circumstance. Nobody

controls fog, severe storms or dangerous winds.

But the airline still has to explain how the weather affected the flight in question and what reasonable measures it took in response.

A general reference to deteriorating conditions in a region is not enough. The relevant question is what happened to that particular flight. The fact that other aircraft were operating from the same airport may be relevant, but it does not by itself settle the issue.

The same logic applies to bird strikes, which courts have recognised as external to the carrier's activity, without exempting the airline from showing what it actually did in response.

Strikes: it depends on the circumstances

One of the more

revealing categories is industrial action.

A strike by air traffic controllers or airport staff may be external to the airline, which suffers the consequences. A strike involving the airline's own employees sits closer to its own management, although the case law does not treat every staff strike as automatically excluded from the category of extraordinary circumstances.

In the TUI fly case, joined cases C 195/17 and others, ruling of 17 April 2018, the Court found that a mass, spontaneous sick leave movement among cabin crew, following a surprise restructuring announcement, did not qualify as an extraordinary circumstance. The announcement had come from management, and the social risks arising from such a measure were considered inherent to the normal exercise of the airline's activity.

It is a strong precedent, not a blanket rule, and each case still turns on its own facts.

What this means for passengers

None of this requires legal training. Three steps matter.

Ask for the exact reason, in writing. A letter that only repeats the standard formula, without naming the actual event or explaining why it qualifies, gives the passenger very little to assess or challenge.

Check whether the reason fits the category. Technical failure, schedule reorganisation, crew shortage or an aircraft being positioned elsewhere generally require closer examination because these situations can fall within the normal operation of an airline.

Remember that extraordinary

circumstances do not cancel every passenger right. Depending on the circumstances, rights to care, including meals, refreshments, hotel accommodation and transport, can remain applicable. So can the right to reimbursement or rerouting.

A question of burden, more than of law

What makes the phrase "extraordinary circumstances" so effective in practice is not its legal scope, which is narrow, but its deterrent effect. It closes a conversation that most passengers never open.

Yet the burden of proof rests with the airline, not the traveller. It is for the carrier to establish the event, its external nature and why the disruption could not have been avoided despite reasonable measures. Until it has done so, a standard reference to "extraordinary circumstances" is not the end of the analysis.

It is also worth noting that the rules themselves are now being revised. In June 2026, the European Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement on a revision of EU air passenger rights, including clearer rules on extraordinary circumstances and claims procedures. The new rules have not yet replaced Regulation 261/2004, which remains the applicable law today.

The current compensation levels remain €250, €400 and €600 depending on distance. But the debate over how strictly airlines should be held to account is now live in Brussels as well as in the small print of airline refusal letters.

On routes where compensation can reach €600 per passenger, and where families rarely travel alone, that gap can amount to thousands of euros on a single disrupted journey.

It deserves to be challenged, not simply accepted.

The author, Saint-Yves Kodjo, is the founder of Robin des Aïres, a service specialised in recovering compensation for air passengers on Europe-Africa routes.



Saadia Zahidi, Director General, International Air Transport Association [IATA]

What Airlines Don't Tell Passengers About Flight Compensation

When a flight is delayed, airlines routinely dismiss compensation claims with two words: “extraordinary circumstances.” Yet under EU law, this phrase is narrowly defined, and the burden of proof rests with the carrier. On Africa-Europe routes, thousands of passengers accept refusals that wouldn't withstand scrutiny, often forfeiting up to

€600 per person. In this article, Saint-Yves Kodjo* explains what compensation EU law grants passengers and how they can successfully claim it.

It is the phrase almost every passenger receives after asking an airline for compensation following a flight delay. It sounds like the end of the conversation. Legally, it is the beginning of one, because “extraordinary circumstances” is one of the

most narrowly defined notions in European air passenger rights law, and many refusals based on it would not survive serious scrutiny.

A passenger writes to an airline after a flight lands five hours late. The reply comes back, polite and brief: the delay was due to extraordinary circumstances, so no compensation is owed. In the vast majority of cases, the matter ends there.

It deserves to be

reopened, because the phrase covers far fewer situations than its constant use suggests, and because on West and Central Africa routes, where connections through European hubs are frequent and delays common, thousands of passengers accept a refusal that a closer reading of the rules would not support.

What EU Regulation 261/2004 actually says

EU Regulation 261/2004 sets fixed compensation for qualifying flight delays, cancellations and denied boarding: €250, €400 or €600 depending on distance. It applies to flights departing an EU airport, regardless of the airline, and to certain flights arriving in the EU from a non-EU country when operated by an EU carrier, under the conditions set out in the regulation.

The regulation gives airlines a specific exemption: the disruption must result from extraordinary circumstances that could not have been avoided even if all reasonable measures had been taken.

Two questions therefore matter. It is not enough for an event to be unusual. The airline must also prove that the disruption could not have been avoided even if all reasonable measures had been taken. Evidence of what the airline actually did is therefore central to any refusal based on extraordinary circumstances.

The Court of Justice of the European Union set the standard as early as 2008: the event must be external to the normal exercise of the carrier's activity and beyond its actual control. Abstract wording, with very concrete consequences. Because this is an exception to a passenger's right to compensation, the Court has repeatedly required it to be interpreted strictly, with the burden of proof resting on the airline that invokes it.

Technical failure: rarely extraordinary

This is one of the most common reasons given for refusing flight compensation, and usually one of the weakest.

A plane develops a fault. To the passenger waiting at the gate, it may look

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Aleph Hospitality, the largest independent hotel management company in the Middle East and Africa, announces the appointment of Rob Kucera as Regional Vice President for East & South Africa. Based in Nairobi, Rob joins Aleph Hospitality as the company continues to expand its regional presence and grow its hotel portfolio across the continent.

In his new role, Rob will oversee the operation of 25+ hotels, six brands in 20 destinations across nine countries in East and South Africa. He will also lead the development of future hotels for the group, growing Aleph Hospitality's portfolio in the region. Rob's mandate includes driving the region's financial, commercial and operational performance, strengthening relationships with the hotel owners, overseeing regional HR to grow talent and build high performing teams, while driving investment in the communities surrounding each of the group's hotels.

With more than 20 years' experience in hospitality management, Rob previously served as Complex General Manager and District Director for East Africa at Radisson Hotel Group, where oversaw properties across Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopia and South Sudan. Earlier in his career, he was General Manager of the Radisson Blu Bosphorus Hotel in Istanbul, the Pearl of Africa Hotel by Radisson Hotels in Kampala, and the Westin Cape Town, among other premier and luxury brand properties. He also served as Chief Operating Officer of the Hospitality Property Fund, South Africa's dedicated hotel REIT, and



Rob Kucera, Regional Vice President, Aleph Hospitality for East and South Africa.

Aleph Hospitality Appoints Rob Kucera As Regional Vice President For East & South Africa

as Chairman of the FEDHASA Cape Board.

Bani Haddad, Founder and Co-CEO of Aleph Hospitality, said: "East and Southern Africa is one of the fastest-growing markets for Aleph Hospitality, and this is a truly strategic appointment for the group as we deepen our presence in the region. Rob brings a rare combination of regional expertise and operational excellence, having led some of the most respected hotels across East Africa and beyond. His leadership will be instrumental as we scale our portfolio, strengthen relationships with our owners, and

continue building strong, community-focused teams across the region."

"It's an extremely exciting time to join Aleph Hospitality. The company's portfolio across East and Southern Africa is growing at an impressive pace, and I look forward to contributing and building on that momentum, supporting our General Managers and delivering outstanding results and building stronger teams for our owners and stakeholders across the region", said Rob Kucera.

Headquartered in Dubai, with regional offices in Riyadh, Casablanca, Abidjan, Cape Town and Nairobi, Aleph Hospitality is the first and largest independent hotel

management company in the Middle East and Africa. Aleph Hospitality manages over 50 hotels, representing 7,000+ rooms across 23 countries and 39 cities. Working for hotel owners, either with a franchise for branded properties or as a white label operator for independent hotels, Aleph Hospitality handles all aspects of hotel operations at any stage of development - from site and brand selection to technical assistance, pre-opening and day-to-day operations. Aleph Hospitality's regional expertise has earned the trust of leading brands such as Marriott, Hilton, IHG, Accor, Best Western, Rotana, Wyndham and Onomo.

AFCHAT Signs Membership Agreement With African Travel Commission To Strengthen Pan-African Tourism Collaboration

The Africa Centre for Hospitality, Aviation & Tourism [AFCHAT] has formally joined the African Travel Commission [ATC] as a **Full Institutional Member**, following the signing of a membership agreement between the two organisations in Accra, Ghana, yesterday.

The agreement marks a significant step towards strengthening collaboration among African stakeholders in the hospitality, aviation and tourism sectors, while creating new opportunities for knowledge exchange, investment, research, advocacy and destination promotion across the continent.

The membership agreement was signed on behalf of the African Travel Commission [ATC] by its Executive Director, Dr. Lucky Onoriode George, PhD, and on behalf of AFCHAT by its Chief Executive Officer, Akwasi Agyeman.

Under the agreement, AFCHAT becomes a full institutional member of ATC and will participate in the Commission's conferences, summits, forums, exhibitions and other official programmes.

The agreement also provides AFCHAT with opportunities to collaborate with ATC on tourism promotion, advocacy, research, training, investment initiatives and destination marketing, as well as to engage with tourism boards, airlines, hospitality institutions, investors, development agencies and other industry stakeholders across Africa.

Speaking on the development, Dr. Lucky George described the agreement as an important addition to the

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Gloria Guevara Manzo, President/Chief Executive Officer, World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC].

Europe Captures One-Third Of Global Leisure Travel Spending As Southern Europe Dominates The Summer Travel Season

...Europe accounted for \$1 in every \$3 spent on leisure travel globally in 2025, capturing \$2TN and reinforcing its position as the world's leading leisure tourism region

As millions travel during the summer holiday season, Southern Europe continues to lead growth, with Italy, Spain, Türkiye and France set to outperform global trends into 2026

As millions of travellers head abroad during the peak summer holiday season, Europe has reinforced its position as the world's leading leisure travel destination, capturing one-third of all global leisure travel spending in 2025, according to new 2026 EIR data from the World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], sponsored by Chase Travel, Lead Research Partner.

The latest figures show that global leisure travel spending reached \$6.15TN in 2025, up 3.5% year-on-year and accounting for 80.5% of

total global travel expenditure. Of this, Europe attracted \$2TN, equivalent to \$1 in every \$3 spent worldwide on leisure travel, highlighting the region's enduring appeal as travellers embark on this year's summer holidays.

Southern European destinations continue to be at the heart of this success. France, Spain, Italy and Türkiye remain among the most sought-after summer destinations globally, benefiting from strong international demand, diverse source markets, world-class tourism offerings and robust connectivity.

As Europe experiences another busy summer season, the region's tourism performance reflects not only strong seasonal demand but also its longer-term competitiveness. Leisure spending growth remained resilient across key destinations in 2025, with France expanding by 3.6%, Spain by 2.6% and Italy by

2.2%.

Looking ahead, Europe's growth momentum is expected to continue beyond the summer months and into 2026, when the region is forecast to expand by 3.7%, outpacing the global average of 3.1%.

Italy is projected to lead this next phase of growth with a 4.7% increase in leisure spending, followed by Spain [+4.3%], Türkiye [+4.1%] and France [+2.6%], reinforcing Southern Europe's position as a powerhouse of global tourism demand.

This sustained growth is also being supported by evolving global travel patterns, with Southern European destinations increasingly benefiting from demand redirected from other regions, further strengthening their competitive positioning.

According to Gloria Guevara, WTTC President and Chief Executive Officer, "With summer travel at its

peak, Europe continues to set the pace for global leisure tourism, capturing one-third of all spending worldwide and demonstrating the strength, diversity and resilience of its tourism sector".

Southern Europe remains the engine of this

growth. Destinations such as Spain, Italy, France and Türkiye continue to attract strong international demand thanks to their unique visitor experiences, excellent connectivity and competitive tourism offerings.

global Travel & Tourism."

...To Strengthen Pan-African Tourism Collaboration

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growing network of institutions working with ATC to advance African tourism.

He said the partnership would provide a platform for both organisations to leverage their respective expertise and networks in promoting sustainable tourism development, stronger intra-African travel and greater investment in the continent's tourism economy.

According to him, "Africa's tourism development requires stronger partnerships among institutions, the private sector and governments. AFCHAT's membership of ATC provides another important platform for collaboration, knowledge sharing and collective action towards building a more competitive and integrated African tourism industry." The agreement identifies several potential areas of cooperation, including tourism, hospitality, aviation, investment promotion, cultural exchange, research, training and diaspora engagement.

AFCHAT is expected to participate actively in ATC programmes and support the Commission's objectives of promoting sustainable tourism, aviation and hospitality development across Africa.

The agreement further

provides that specific joint initiatives between the two organisations may be developed through separate memoranda of understanding, partnership agreements or project-specific arrangements.

The signing in Accra comes at a time when African tourism stakeholders are increasingly calling for stronger continental cooperation, improved connectivity, increased investment and greater collaboration among public and private sector institutions.

The ATC said AFCHAT's admission as a full institutional member further demonstrates the Commission's commitment to building a broad-based network of African tourism institutions and industry organisations capable of contributing to the continent's tourism growth. The membership agreement is governed by the laws of the Republic of Ghana, while recognising the pan-African character and operational scope of the African Travel Commission. With the formalisation of the membership, ATC and AFCHAT are expected to deepen their engagement and explore practical initiatives that will contribute to the advancement of Africa's travel, tourism, hospitality and aviation sectors.



Dewald Kruger

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premium service standards?

Certainly, the cost of energy is a major issue. It puts Nigerian rates among the highest in our competitive set.

All hotels are equally

Security perceptions can influence travel decisions. What more should government and the private sector do to boost traveller confidence?

One incident, even

but sincerely, NGOs will delay and even cancel.

International guests will not send representatives. Online and hybrid meetings are here to stay.

The government should modernize the military and

“We should create pockets of excellence and, through hard and smart work, dig ourselves from our current position to the next level.”

affected, so prices are adjusted to take care of these costs. From an outsider looking in, it offers no value for money. So, comparing the price for a bedroom in the same class from city to city, Nigeria stands out.

one rumour of an incident, will send cautionary travel bulletins to many embassies and high commissions, warning citizens not to travel.

Surely, we have internal travellers and guests who will wonder what the drama is all about,

police profile. Twenty-vehicle-strong car cavalcades with attack groups and even ambulances create a scary scene.

Enough is said about this issue. It starts with the immigration process, arrival at the airport and the drive

through town to your destination.

Compare it to your journey to Kampala, Addis Ababa, Accra, London, New York or Dubai. Evaluate it critically. The private sector is doing its best to navigate through many obstacles.

Access to long-term financing remains difficult for hospitality investors. What policy reforms would you like to see to encourage greater investment in the sector?

Nigeria remains an unfriendly investor destination. We should develop from within. Without being too elaborate, we need to build trust and reliability in ourselves.

Developments should start on a small scale and build from one success story to another. Once there is momentum, one can then launch a public share issue and invite investors to participate.

We should create pockets of excellence and, through hard and smart work, dig ourselves from our current position to the next level.

There are many schemes to lose all your money with little effort, and few schemes to make money that takes time and effort.

Nigeria has enormous tourism potential but still lags behind many African destinations. What practical steps are needed to unlock the country's tourism economy?

All elements should work in synchronization with each other, as mentioned earlier. People need to travel. They have always travelled, and they will always travel.

Destinations, options and reasons for travel have expanded. For Nigeria,

there are many options: business, leisure, medical, education, sport and so many others. People flee from danger; they flee to safety.

The Tourism Authority or Ministry should arrange for a think tank and educational study tours to places and countries with successful destinations. International tourism practitioners should be part of this effort. Recommendations and budgets should flow from it.

How do you see the relationship between hospitality, aviation and tourism evolving in driving Nigeria's economic diversification?

The potential of tourism is always there, but it is competing with the low-hanging fruits in the basket.

Hospitality, aviation and tourism are a tight group, but immigration and foreign affairs, agriculture, education, infrastructure development and almost every other sector have an input into the success of the tourism and hospitality sector.

We all know about the high cost of flying up and down the West Coast. There was an effort for all these countries to drop commissions on these flight charges, with a saving of 35 percent envisaged.

These are the types of ease-of-travel arrangements that the Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS] and wider communities should implement. Ease of border crossing is also key here.

What opportunities does the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) present for the hospitality industry across Africa?

Honestly, I don't really have an opinion on this at the moment.

With more African countries embracing visa reforms and regional integration, how optimistic are you about the future of intra-African travel?

Visa control is important. If you don't control your border, you don't have a country.

The controls should be easy

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Front view of The Envoy Hotel, Abuja.

As mentioned before, one doesn't always get it right from the start, and the market might have moved to something else along the way. We value all comments, use what is useful, and move on with it.

We were lucky that we had space to manoeuvre. It is not always possible to build in redundancies.

As Director of Silk Road Hospitality, what is your long-term vision for the company in Nigeria?

The future is not certain, as ever, so we prefer to build solid platforms from which we can take riskier decisions and actions.

We see an upswing in hospitality and property proposals and spending. We trust this will go along with spending in the complete hospitality ecosystem. If not, things will fall apart.

Are there plans to replicate The Envoy Hotel model in other Nigerian cities or even across Africa?

The model is scalable, and we see our base of seven hotels expanding well in the future. We will add two properties in Abuja in 2027, and have five projects in the pipeline. Locations include Lagos and Akure.

As mentioned, the market is buoyant, and we expect to make more welcome announcements. We are definitely looking at properties in Ghana and South Africa.

What distinguishes Silk Road Hospitality's management philosophy from that of other hotel management companies operating in the region?

As mentioned before, it starts with a good plan, a good team and a forward-thinking owner or investor. We use guest-centred layouts, designs, amenities,

products and services. A shout-out to HMC 2026, where it was condensed into an easy question: "What are you doing to make life easy for my guests, and what are you doing to frustrate my guests?"

How important is innovation and technology in delivering memorable guest experiences across your properties?

Technology can only bring you so far. If available,

"Technology can only bring you so far. If available, it should be best-in-class and work every time. It is more about the staff member behind the technology."

it should be best-in-class and work every time. Working only now and then is no option. You have wasted your money and frustrated your guest. It is more about the staff member behind the technology.

Some owners also buy technology that will never be used. Technology needs upgrades, licence fees and

training. These are not one-time purchases, and then the technology fails.

What role does staff training and talent development play in maintaining international hospitality standards?

This is a problematic area. There seems to be a disconnect between what the education sector delivers to industry and what industry requires.

The hospitality industry

is young, vibrant and technology-driven, while we remain a warm, person-to-person industry as well.

Staff don't respect work the way we used to have. Staff don't respect guests the way they used to. All guests still expect full-service, friendly service from hotels and their staff.

Somewhere, we still

expect our educational institutions to deliver the standard of staff we need. Staff shy away from taking responsibility, taking charge of things and giving instructions to others. These are still all part of the job.

The hospitality industry in Nigeria continues to face challenges ranging from infrastructure deficits to rising operating costs. Which of these has had the greatest impact on your operations?

The cost of hotel building, construction and finishing is a further cost element that influences final rate setting. Development cost per room also puts Nigeria at the top end of the scale.

The cost of property and materials, with the final 40 percent of costs needing to come from imports, is affected by currency movements. This is an ever-moving target, but it is on an upward trend.

Staff costs are still relatively low. If we want to deliver real international standards of service, this will have to rise.

The supply chain is very limited and expensive if we want to deliver an international range and standard of goods, especially food and beverage items. Import duties, commissions and National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control [NAFDAC] costs all contribute to the final price to the guest.

Government charges, levies and taxes all play their part. We now have to levy guests an entertainment tax, with no idea what will happen to this tax.

Energy remains one of the biggest operational expenses for hotels in Nigeria. How is The Envoy Hotel addressing this challenge while maintaining

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Chief Tajudeen Owoyemi, Chairman, Avalon Group.

Radisson Group, Owoyemi To Be Honoured At 2026 ANJET Conference

The Association of Nigerian Journalists and Writers of Tourism [ANJET] is set to hold the 2026 annual ANJET Conference and Awards with the theme 'Nigerian tourism industry and Tinubu administration's immigration reforms.' The event is billed for end of October this year at Radisson Blu Hotel, Ikeja, Lagos.

As part of the activities for this year's conference and award, international hospitality

giant, the Radisson Group and the Chairman of the Avalon Group, Chief Tajudeen Owoyemi and others will be honoured. ANJET President Okorie Uguru explained that the awards to both Chief Owoyemi and Radisson Group is in recognition of their contributions in the Nigerian hospitality ecosystem in the last close to 25 years. He said both Owoyemi and the Radisson Group have made so much positive the hospitality industry in Nigeria.

On Chief Owoyemi,

the ANJET President said: "For close to 25 years, Chief Tajudeen Owoyemi has quietly, but steadily influenced and shaped the Nigerian hospitality landscape with his conceptualization and building of top hospitality outfits that have helped to redefine hotels' services and infrastructure.

"In 2005, when there was dearth of privately owned top hospitality outfits outside Lagos and Ibadan, Chief Owoyemi changed the landscape by opening the Avalon Hotel Offa under the management Trevor Ward's

W Hospitality. Avalon Hotel became the reference point in hotel's excellence in facilities and excellent services."

He said despite the massive investment and contribution to the growth of the hospitality industry in Nigeria, Chief Owoyemi always stays under the radar: "Chief Owoyemi works quietly. After Avalon, he embarked on even bigger projects, adding the Radisson Hotel, Radisson Blu Ikeja, and Park Inn by Radisson in Victoria Island, Lagos. Currently, he has other hospitality developments in the pipeline.

"Chief Owoyemi, through his investments, has employed thousands of Nigerians and created job opportunities for others through ancillary services to these hotels.

By investing in the country's hospitality landscape, Chief Owoyemi has helped the profile of the Nigeria as a business and leisure destination."

Okorie Uguru also spoke on the contributions of the Radisson Group in Nigeria which has earned the company an award. He said Radisson Group has shown such much consistency and belief in Nigerian economy making it expand so its property portfolio in the country. He continued: "The Radisson Group made its footfall in Nigeria in 2011 when it started managing the Radisson Blu Anchorage Victoria Island, Lagos at the hotel's inception.

"In the last 15 years it has added Radisson Hotel and Radisson Blu Ikeja, Park Inn by Radisson Victoria Island, Park in By Radisson Abeokuta, and has about five other properties in the pipeline in Lagos, Abuja, Benin, and Aba.

"Over the last 15 years, the Radisson Blu has shown so much loyalty to the Nigerian economy by continue to expand the number of bed spaces it is managing even during difficult economic turmoil.

"As a means passing knowledge, Radisson Group has opened a hospitality academy to bridge the skills gap in the Nigerian hospitality industry. "It is for these and other positive services to Nigeria that ANJET is honouring the Radisson Group."

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"It is for these and other positive services to Nigeria that ANJET is honouring the Radisson Group," he added.



Barr. Hannatu Musawa, Minister of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy.

Federal Government Declares Bonny Island [Okoloama Kingdom] A Tourism Destination

Bonny Island has the history, culture, natural beauty and people to become one of Nigeria's standout tourism destinations. The conversation now is about turning that potential into a destination that people can visit, experience, invest in and proudly call their own.

This was at the heart of the 2026 Bonny Island Tourism and Investment Summit, organised by the Bonny Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture [BCCIMA], under the theme, "Bonny Island: Transforming into a Premier Global Destination." Representing the Honourable Minister of Arts, Culture, Tourism and the Creative Economy, Barr. Hannatu Musa-Musawa, Ola Awakan, Director-General of the Nigerian Tourism Development Authority [NTDA], reaffirmed the Federal Government's

commitment to working with the Bonny Kingdom, Rivers State Government, traditional institutions, communities, investors and development partners to unlock the island's tourism and investment opportunities.

Bonny's island setting, maritime history, traditional institutions, cultural expressions, festivals, cuisine, waterways, beaches and coastal and mangrove ecosystems offer the kind of assets that established destinations have spent years developing.

The challenge, as highlighted at the summit, is to deliberately connect and develop these assets into memorable visitor experiences, supported by better connectivity, accommodation, visitor services, entertainment, events, cultural experiences, safety and security, digital visibility and investment

opportunities.

Sustainability must remain at the centre of this development. Bonny's fragile coastal and mangrove ecosystems, land, waterways, traditions and cultural heritage must be protected as tourism infrastructure and investment grow.

For the people of Bonny, tourism should mean more than visitors coming in. It should create jobs, support local businesses, empower young people, preserve culture and heritage, attract infrastructure and create new opportunities for the community. The people must be beneficiaries, custodians and ambassadors of their destination.

His Majesty, King Edward Asimini William-Dappa Pepple III, Amanyanabo of Grand Bonny Kingdom, highlighted the kingdom's long history of trade, diplomacy and

maritime relations, noting that its waterways, beaches, festivals, regattas, historic sites, cuisine, music, arts and traditions provide a strong foundation for a vibrant tourism economy.

He also stressed the importance of ensuring that investment and development go hand in hand with responsibility, respecting Bonny's land, waterways, traditions and community values.

During the panel session, the Director-General also emphasised the importance of telling Bonny's story from the perspective of its people and heritage. He noted that Okoloama Kingdom should be used more in describing Bonny Island, as the name represents the true story and identity of its people.

The President of BCCIMA, Dr Constance Nwokejiobi, also pointed to Bonny's significant tourism potential and strategic position, noting that tourism can drive local economic growth, create jobs, preserve culture and attract investment.

The summit also provided an opportunity for the official launch of [Discover Bonny](#), an initiative focused on telling Bonny's story, showcasing its culture, heritage, experiences and opportunities, and helping to change the way the destination is seen by audiences at home and around the world.

There is a bigger story to tell about Bonny, one of culture, heritage, resilience, enterprise and hospitality. The journey towards positioning Bonny Island as a premier global destination has begun. Through collaboration, responsible investment, community participation and sustainable destination development, Bonny can take its place among Africa's remarkable tourism destinations.

Angolan President Authorizes \$73 Million Investment in the Okavango Tourism Hub

The Angolan government will invest seventy-three million dollars in the construction of integrated infrastructure at the Okavango Tourism Development Hub, in accordance with Presidential Order 270/26 of August 5. According to the Ministry of Tourism, the project entails conducting technical studies and preparing the corresponding detailed designs, as well as implementing primary utility networks for power, water supply, sanitation, and telecommunications. It also includes the construction of key and secondary road infrastructure, drainage systems, pedestrian walkways, viewpoints, areas for tourist enjoyment, and other infrastructure supporting tourism activities. The ministry states that this investment represents a commitment to the sustainable development of the tourism sector and reinforces the Executive's dedication to diversifying the national economy, creating jobs, and leveraging local potential. Classified as an Area of Tourism Interest and Potential [AIPT] of national strategic importance, the Okavango region is one of Angola's most significant natural assets, offering unique conditions to establish the country as a competitive and sustainable tourism destination, the Ministry of Tourism highlights. It notes that realizing this initiative will create the necessary conditions to attract private investment, develop hotel facilities, expand tourism offerings, and strengthen sector-related value chains, thereby driving economic growth and creating opportunities for local communities. In the Presidential Order, the Head of the Executive reaffirms tourism's role as a primary driver of the country's economic and social development, directing the project's inclusion in the 2026 Public Investment Program [PIP] and tasking the Ministry

From its beginnings as an ambitious hospitality project in Abuja, The Envoy Hotel has grown into one of Nigeria's distinguished luxury hotels, earning a reputation for quality, professional management and a strong commitment to guest experience. Its continued investment in new accommodation, conference facilities and innovative hospitality offerings reflects growing confidence in the future of Nigeria's business and tourism markets.

In this exclusive interview with Dr. Lucky Onoriode George, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief of African Travel Times, Dewald Kruger, General Manager of The Envoy Hotel, managed by Silk Road Hospitality, reflects on the philosophy, people, and professional discipline that have driven the hotel's success. **Excerpts:**

The Envoy Hotel has established itself as one of Abuja's leading luxury hotels. What has been the secret behind its success?

When I saw the drawings and proposals, I knew The Envoy Hotel project was going to be a special project. It started with a good concept, good architecture, quality construction and finishing, the right location and a sound business case. A professional team was assembled, and the work started. Everyone knew what was expected of them. Big kudos to that team! They made my work easy. We had professional implementation teams, induction teams and trainers. I know there is a push away from international associations, but you get the best results when you fuse the best of multiple worlds.



Dewald Kruger, General Manager, The Envoy Hotel, Abuja.

Building For The Future: The Envoy Hotel's Vision for Nigeria's Hospitality Industry

We selected the best talent available, both in qualifications and skills. We also took some chances on people with no skills or qualifications, recognizing passion, enthusiasm and attitude. We do not relent on maintenance. To a point, we over-maintain,

improve and correct. Yes, everything was not perfect at the start. We add new inventions, materials and technology. We push forward into the future. We want to remain a relevant project 10 and 20 years from now.

I think we apply trusted and scientific principles to the process, starting with

planning, organizing, leading and controlling.

The hotel recently unveiled new wings and expanded its facilities. What informed this major investment, and what new experiences can guests expect?

We have since added

eight new bedrooms as The Envoy Hotel Annex. Here, we celebrate Nigeria through colours, icons, heroes and achievements. All finishes are in soft greens and whites, creating a calming colour palette.

At the top end, we present the Emerald Suite, a two-bedroom apartment decorated in rich greens and luxury, and the Michika Suite, featuring traditional elements and finishes. It is a two-bedroom apartment in a calm and serene environment. We needed additional rooms to address the residential conference market.

How does the expansion position The Envoy Hotel within Nigeria's increasingly competitive hospitality market?

We extended our meetings and hall inventory, adding three more boardrooms and three halls, making The Envoy Hotel campus a serious meeting and conference space.

There is an ever-growing demand for professional meeting spaces. We were fortunate to repurpose some space on our property to create these venues.

Sustainability is becoming a key consideration in hotel development. What sustainable features have been incorporated into the new wings?

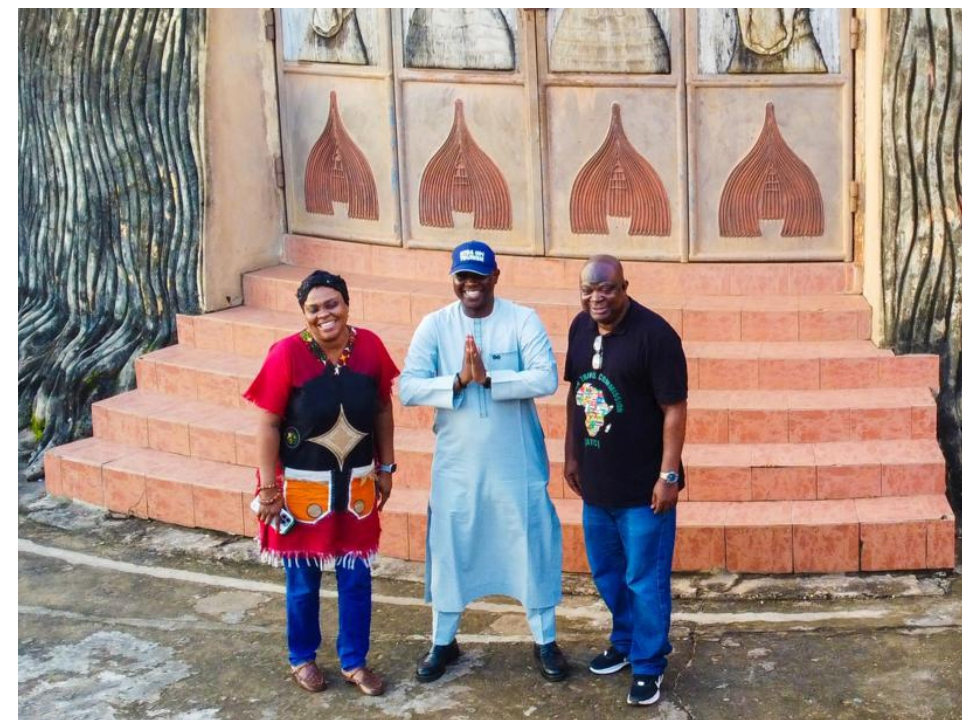
The new wing has a small footprint. It will lean on the established engineering and service practices already embedded in The Envoy Hotel operation.

Cost per room will be softer as we have more rooms to draw revenue from. The Envoy Hotel remains a small, compact hotel where large-scale sustainability initiatives can be uneconomical. We will, however, drive our waste separation and find a market for the different waste streams.

How has guest feedback influenced the design and services offered in the expanded facilities?

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The signing of Africa Centre for Hospitality, Aviation & Tourism [AFCHAT] Membership of African Travel Commission [ATC] between Dr. Lucky Onoriode George and Mr. Akwasi Agyeman.



L-R: Mrs. Susan Akporiaye, Mr. Ola Awakan and Dr. Lucky Onoriode George.

Benin Republic: The New Tourism Jewel of West Africa

From a relatively overlooked destination to one of West Africa's most promising tourism markets, Benin Republic is undergoing a remarkable transformation driven by investment in roads, hotels, heritage sites, culture and tourism infrastructure.

For decades, Benin Republic was better known across West Africa as a neighbouring country, a commercial corridor and a destination for cross-border traders than as a major tourism destination.

Over the past eight years, however, Benin has undergone a remarkable transformation, with sustained investment in roads, hotels, public spaces, tourism facilities, and the rehabilitation and redevelopment of major historical and cultural attractions.

The result is a country increasingly positioning itself as one of the new tourism jewels of West Africa.

Benin has always possessed the raw materials

for a successful tourism industry: the history of the ancient Kingdom of Dahomey, Ouidah and its powerful slave-trade heritage, Vodun spirituality, the remarkable lakeside community of Ganvié, Porto-Novo's Afro-Brazilian architecture, Cotonou's growing hospitality and creative industries, Atlantic beaches, traditional communities and wildlife reserves in the north.

What has been missing, to a large extent, was the infrastructure and investment required to transform these attractions into a competitive tourism destination.

The most significant development in Benin's tourism story, therefore, has been the deliberate investment that has taken place since 2016.

Roads have been constructed and rehabilitated, making important tourism destinations more accessible. Hotels have been built, upgraded and

expanded. Public spaces have received major facelifts. Heritage sites have been rehabilitated, while new museums and cultural facilities are being developed. The government has increasingly placed tourism, culture and the creative industries at the centre of its economic development strategy.

A magnificent historical site is of limited economic value if tourists cannot reach it comfortably. Similarly, a beautiful destination cannot compete internationally without quality hotels, restaurants, transport, electricity, telecommunications, trained personnel and effective visitor services.

Today, Benin's tourism authorities are increasingly presenting the country not simply through individual attractions, but as a network of experiences that can be combined into integrated tourism circuits.

A visitor can arrive in Cotonou, travel to Porto-Novo, continue to Ouidah and Abomey, explore Ganvié and then venture north towards Natitingou and Pendjari.

That emerging

connectivity is one of the foundations of Benin's new tourism story.

Cotonou: The New Gateway

Once regarded primarily as a commercial city, Cotonou is developing a stronger identity as a tourism and hospitality destination.

Hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues, public spaces and cultural attractions are contributing to the city's changing image.

The Amazon Monument and its expansive esplanade have become among the city's most recognisable landmarks, connecting contemporary Cotonou with the history of the former Kingdom of Danxomè.

The city's hotel sector has also strengthened considerably, with international and local properties providing accommodation for business travellers, tourists, conferences and events.

Hotels such as the Sofitel Cotonou Marina Hotel & Spa, Golden Tulip Le Diplomate, Novotel Orisha and Benin Royal form part of a hospitality environment that is becoming increasingly capable of supporting international tourism.

This is significant because hotels are not merely places where tourists sleep. They employ people, purchase local goods and services, host conferences, support restaurants and entertainment, and help create the confidence required by international visitors and investors.

Ouidah: History, Memory and Vodun

If Cotonou is the gateway, Ouidah is arguably the spiritual and historical heart of Benin's tourism proposition.

The city is closely associated with the transatlantic slave trade and offers visitors an opportunity to confront one of the darkest chapters in human history.

The Route des Captifs leads towards the Atlantic and the Door of No Return, creating a powerful journey of remembrance.

For the African diaspora, the significance is even greater, as Ouidah provides a physical connection to a history that shaped communities across the Americas and the Caribbean.

But Ouidah is not only about the past. It is also a living centre of Vodun, one of the most important spiritual traditions in Benin.

The Temple of Pythons, Kpassè Sacred Forest and other cultural sites form part of an increasingly sophisticated tourism proposition.

The development of Vodun Days has further elevated the country's cultural profile, attracting international attention to Benin's music, spirituality, arts and traditions.

The opportunity is enormous, particularly among the African diaspora.

However, the success of this tourism product will depend on maintaining authenticity and ensuring that local communities remain at the centre of the story.

Abomey: The Legacy of Dahomey

From Ouidah, the tourism trail leads to Abomey, the historic capital of the powerful Kingdom of Dahomey.

The Royal Palaces of Abomey, a UNESCO World Heritage site, provide one of the most important windows into pre-colonial West African statecraft.

The palaces, royal traditions, artworks, bas-reliefs and historical collections tell the story of a sophisticated African kingdom that exercised considerable influence in the region.

The international interest generated by the history of the Dahomey Amazons has also provided Benin with a powerful opportunity to attract a new generation of visitors interested in

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African Travel Commission's engagement and tour of the Songhai Centre with the Nigerian-born founder, a Dominican Priest and Scientist, Father Godfrey Nzamujo in Porto Novo, Benin Republic.



Presentation of letter of appointment to Mr. Dine Bouraima as Co-Chair of the African Travel Commission [ATC] at the Benin Royal Hotel, Cotonou, Benin Republic.

