



Gambia prepares to host ATA 2010 world congress

[Africa](#) » [Gambia](#)

Wednesday, 11 November 2009

On August 3, 2009, in New York, the honourable minister of Tourism and Culture, Nancy Njie, and Edward Bergman, executive director of the Africa Travel Association (ATA), agreed for The Gambia to host the African Travel Association's (ATA) 35th annual congress in Banjul in May 2010.

This international event will help to promote the Gambia in new markets and attract new investment in the tourism sector. It is also anticipated that ATA 2010 congress in the Gambia would help the country reach its goal of bringing in more tourists and facilitate further industry investment.

The Gambia, known as the “Smiling Coast of Africa,” is famous for its luxurious beach resorts, quaint fishing villages and magnificent coastline, but there is much more in the affordable and safe West African country, including peaceful and friendly people, eco-tourism, sports fishing, bird watching and safaris, music, dancing and traditional wrestling matches, and visiting trans-Atlantic slave trade sites.

Edward Bergman, executive director of ATA confirmed in a press briefing last Friday that, The Gambia will host the ATA 2010 35th annual congress. He said further that the Gambia has made amazing progress with its travel and tourism industry by building public and private-sector partnerships, in which the government creates the conditions for the private sector to invest in the industry.

According to him, in view of The Gambia and ATA's ability to attract tourist arrivals and engage diverse travel professionals from around the world, particularly in North America and across Africa, the Gambian congress will be another source of inspiration and marketing and also for turning tourism into a continental economic driver. The four-day event, according to the ATA boss, will engage delegates in discussions on a range of industry topics, such as public-private sector partnership, marketing and promotion, tourism infrastructure development, industry trends, and social media.

He added further that the ATA member countries will also organize a few evening networking receptions and ATA's Young Professionals Network will meet with local hospitality professionals and students. The congress will include a marketplace for buyers and sellers

specializing in Destination Africa. Delegates will also have the opportunity to explore the country on pre- or post- congress trips, as well as on the Host Country Day.

To begin preparations for the congress, ATA will send a delegation to Banjul in November for a site inspection. During the visit, the team will meet with representatives from the public and private sectors and ATA-Banjul chapter members. The team will also visit the proposed conference, lodging and entertainment venues.

ATA, in cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and the Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA), organized the 2009 congress at the Conrad Cairo Hotel in Egypt in May 2009. Under the banner "Connecting Destination Africa," the event brought travel specialists and experts to Egypt to help shape Africa's tourism agenda during the global economic downturn. Kaliba Senghore, permanent secretary at the ministry of tourism and culture, thanked ATA for choosing the Gambia to host ATA's 35th annual congress. He said his department is being inspired by the strong partnership between the public and the private sector. He said all the African countries will take part in the event and that they are expecting delegations from North America, Europe and Asia.

The Gambia, described by many as the smallest country on the African continent, has an estimated population of 1,600,000. With the exception of a small shoreline, the English-speaking country is surrounded by Senegal. Approximately 120,000 charter tourists, mainly from Europe, arrive annually. The ministry of tourism has plans to attract up to about 500,000 arrivals by 2012, targeting the US marketplace and "upmarket" tourists, and to lengthen the tourist season to all year-round.

The 2010 congress builds on the success of the West African country's longstanding ties with ATA. In 1984, ATA held its ninth congress in Banjul, immediately following the eighth in Cairo, Egypt. About ATA The Africa Travel Association (ATA) was established as an international travel industry trade association in 1975, with its mission of promoting travel, tourism and transport to and within Africa, and to strengthen intra-Africa partnerships. As the world's premier travel industry trade association, ATA provides services to a broad range of members including tourism, diaspora, culture, and sports ministers, tourism boards, airlines, hoteliers, travel agents, tour operators, travel trade media, public relations firms, consulting companies, non-profit organizations, businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises, and other organizations engaged in tourism promotion.

The African tourism ministers and industry experts representing tourism boards, travel agencies, ground operators companies, airlines, and hoteliers are expected to attend the 2010 ATA's hallmark international event in Banjul. Many participants from the travel trade media and the corporate, non-profit and academic sectors are also expected to attend.

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