

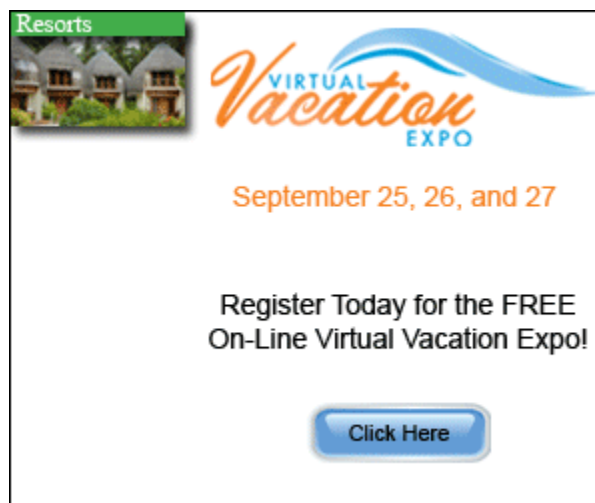
## DESTINATIONS

# AFRICA TRAVEL ASSOCIATION HOLDS CONGRESS IN TANZANIA

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Africa Travel Association's 33rd Annual Congress, May 19-23, in Tanzania attracted more than 300 tourism industry experts from Africa, the U.S., Canada, Europe and Asia under the banner of Africa's competitive advantage in tourism. Tanzania's Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism hosted the event at the Arusha International Conference Center (AICC) in the northern tourist town of Arusha. Also known as the Safari Capital, Arusha is a gateway to the country's leading travel destinations: Mount Kilimanjaro, the Serengeti Plains and the Ngorongoro Crater. Tanzanian President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete opened the event, highlighting the important role tourism plays in promoting socio-economic development across the continent, but said that tourism in Africa is still at an infantile stage of development, with great potential for growth.

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Hon. Shamsa Selengia Mwangunga, Tanzania's Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, emphasized the need to promote responsible tourism by supporting initiatives that promote conservation and economic growth, while minimizing the negative impacts that the tourism industry often yields. ATA Executive Director Edward Bergman spoke of Africa as a destination full of potential, presenting Tanzania as an example for African nations to turn to when developing national tourism strategies. Bergman explained that in only a short period of time, tourism has become Tanzania's leading economic sector, expecting to earn \$1 billion this year, and to overtake agriculture, the leading contributor to the country's economy for decades.

The five-day program included topics such as "A Decade of Progress in Tanzania," showcasing Tanzania's hotel industry, national parks, ICT development and business travel. Delegates also participated in panels on travel trends, sustainable tourism, airlines media and hospitality and lodging. Tour operators from Sierra Leone, Nigeria and the U.S. participated on a panel focused on packaging Africa, highlighting their expectations of tour operators.

Another panel focused on how tourism can benefit communities, building on the Tanzanian Tourism Minister's opening remarks. Lelei LeLaulu, president of Counterpart International, said that tourism is the largest voluntary transfer of resources from the rich to the not-so-rich in history, more than official aid. Congress delegates included tourism ministers, tourism board heads, hotel and airline executives, travel agents, tour operators and business executives from Angola, Belgium, Benin, Bermuda, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, China, Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malta, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, the U.S., Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Under the umbrella of ATA's Young Professionals Network, a delegation of young professionals and students from the U.S., South America and Africa also participated in the congress. The network was created at ATA's 10th Eco and Cultural Tourism Symposium in Calabar, Nigeria. ATA media partners. The Africa Channel premiered a short video special on ATA at the congress, receiving an enthusiastic

and positive response from the delegates.

In addition to the Tanzania Tourism Ministry, sponsors included Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority, South African Airways, Tanzania Tourist Board, and the National Bank of Commerce. For the second year, Ethiopian Airlines served as the congress's official carrier. ATA member countries such as Tanzania and Togo also sponsored networking receptions. The Africa Travel Association (ATA) is a travel industry trade association promoting tourism to Africa and intra-Africa travel and partnership since 1975. ATA members include ministries of tourism and culture, tourism boards, airlines, hoteliers, travel agents, tour operators, travel trade media, PR firms, NGOs and SMEs. For more information, visit [www.africatravelassociation.org](http://www.africatravelassociation.org).

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