

For any Africa, Caribbean, U.S. or world travel questions – ask the Travel Editor; either by fax (818) 760-8403 or write: The African Time/Travel Editor, 5155 West Rosecrans Avenue, Suite 213, Hawthorne, California 90250 or e-mail: [trvleditor@aol.com](mailto:trvleditor@aol.com)

# TRAVEL

## Tourism's Socio-Economic Recovery Power

Commentary by R.S. Mracky, Editorial Board of The African Times/USA

With the African Mediterranean tourism in shambles and different states of disarray, it will take a concerted effort to get the socio-economics of each country back to a semblance of normalcy, and it may be tourism that can provide the essential recovery-power.

For many of these countries, especially Tunisia and Egypt, tourism is their major industry. Both countries are counting the financial cost of the extraordinary revolution and its economic affect on tourism, the backbone for their recovery.

To understand the full impact on tourism of the “people revolt” take a look what it means to Egypt.

As the 18-day “people revolt” started to reach its climax over 1.2 million foreign tourists fled Egypt, leaving hotels empty and over 1.8 million Egyptians, the core of Egypt’s tourism industry without any income! If you count in their families and those who help make tourism function, you have additional 5 million people who depend upon tourism for their income.

The Egypt and Tunisia events not only effected their economies, but the global tourism industry as well – the tour operates, airlines, cruise lines that bring the tourists to Egypt and Tunisia. This is the economic intricacy of tourism – international tourism brings economic benefits to those who send the tourists and those who take care of them, and when there is a problem or a disaster both sides suffer.

It is too early to estimate the full cost of the “people revolt” on Africa’s Mediterranean economies and their tourism. It will run into billions of dollars when you realize that just over three months, the third quarter of 2010, and Egypt realized \$3.7 billion income from foreign tourism – that averages to over one billion dollars a month. The recovery can easily take several months, unless the global tourism industry steps up and helps these countries with programs,

promotions and getting the tourists to restart, the losses will be staggering and years to recoup to what existed in 2010. There needs to be a concerted effort by all institutions, and the global tourism industry to addresses “RECOVERY” by sending their clients back to enjoy and experience the beauty of Mediterranean Africa.

There already is a start. Many U.S. and European tour operators are putting together and starting to promote new tours to Egypt and Tunisia, with special pricing and extras that could induce those more “adventurous” travelers to come and visit or re-visit Egypt and Tunisia.

Getting the economy back on its feet, including the revival of tourism, should become the major task. Egypt’s middleclass young who used the Facebook to mobilize the demonstrations that ended the 30-year suppressive rule have accepted the challenge. The revival of the country’s beleaguered economy has become the new focus of their revolutionary energy, as they have launched a campaign to revive the country’s crucial tourism sector.

One of their Facebook pages – “Support the Tourism in Egypt” – is collecting thousands of comments, which they intend to use for a collage that will be sent to international tourism sources.

With life returning to normal, officials have begun lobbying western countries to lift warnings telling tourists to stay away. The British embassy is no longer against visits to Luxor but still warns against non-essential travel to both Cairo and Alexandria and in Tunisia, a new Minister of Tourism has taken his post!

We encourage the tourism industry here in the U.S. and Europe to do their part in the socio-economic recovery of Africa’s Mediterranean and start an aggressive marketing effort to be the Recovery-Power that is needs right now! ■

### **International Travel Meetings in Africa**

**Zambia International Travel Expo (ZITE)** is being held in Lusaka, under the theme of “achieving Zambia’s tourism prosperity through local cooperation”. The Expo runs from March 24-26 and will address the issue of what Zambian businesses, communities and people can do together to achieve more for the Zambia tourism industry. It is a high-profile event and participation can bring benefits like brand awareness and quality networking opportunities with attending foreign travel industry professionals. The Zambia International Travel Expo is an annual event presented under the auspices of the Zambia Tourism Board and the Zambia Tourism Council.

**36<sup>th</sup> Africa Travel Association World Congress.** This year a major event of African tourism is coming to Dakar, Senegal. The 36<sup>th</sup> Annual World Tourism Congress of the Africa Travel Association (ATA) is taking place May 24 through 29, 2011. The agenda includes the participation of the African Union Commission and a planned conclave of African Union member countries’ Tourism Ministers.

The ATA Congress is the principal tourism event that formulates and provides direction to African tourism. Attended by tourism and travel industry professionals from the U.S., Europe, Asia, Australia and of course heavy contingents and delegations from the African countries. Attended by Ministers of Tourism and their Tourism Board senior staffs, plus the support industries – the airlines, cruise lines, hotel and resort groups, incoming tour operators and international media.

**South Africa Indaba Expo 2011.** This is the largest travel trade show in Africa. Again being held in Durban. This is a massive show that mostly features Southern Africa’s travel and tour products. The dates for this year are May 07 through May 10, again held in the vast Inkosi Albert Luthuli Convention Centre (Durban ICC), Durban, South Africa.

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