



## **Accessible Tourism Emerges as a Vital Growth Opportunity for Africa's Travel Industry**

**Cape Town 19 April 2024** – The untapped potential of inclusive tourism to drive the growth of Africa's travel industry was in focus at this year's Africa Travel Week 2024 part of WTM Africa. A diverse panel of advocates, experts, and tourism suppliers engaged in a discussion, highlighting the significant economic benefits that travellers with disabilities can bring to the continent.

Inclusive travel is a billion-dollar industry that Africa can tap into, and the panellists emphasised the unique spending patterns of this market segment. Travellers with disabilities often spend more, travel with companions, and stay for longer periods, making them a lucrative target for the industry.

According to the World Health Organisation, over 1 billion people worldwide, or 15% of the global population, live with disabilities. This vast demographic encompasses a range of visible and invisible conditions, from mobility issues to cognitive and sensory challenges. As the world's population ages, with the number of people over 60 expected to double by 2050, the need for accessible travel is only expected to grow.

"It's not just a social imperative, it's a financial one," said Tarryn Tomlinson, CEO of LiveAble. "The onus is on property owners to make their facilities as accessible as possible."

Panellists highlighted the unique challenges faced by travellers with disabilities, from a lack of information about accessible amenities to physical barriers that limit their ability to fully enjoy their travel experiences. "Disability doesn't mean the same for everyone," said Lois Strachan, host of podcast A Different Way of Seeing. "Needs are different, and we need to engage with them to find out what they need. Information about how you can accommodate their needs is the most important thing for travellers with disabilities." She stated that guesthouses and hotels should incorporate this into their marketing to attract differently abled travellers.

Jabaar Mohamed, the Provincial Director for DeafSA Western Cape, shared the specific challenges faced by deaf travellers, such as being offered wheelchairs at airports despite their hearing impairment. "It's important for all those that work in hospitality to be trained to ask individual travellers what their needs are, rather than making assumptions," he said.

Panellists shared inspiring success stories and best practices from destinations and businesses that have embraced inclusive tourism. Briony Brookes, representing the City of Cape Town,



highlighted the city's "Limitless CT" initiative, which includes features like braille QR codes at street art and audio options on the tourism website.

"We want to appeal to all travellers, not only those that are fully abled," Brookes stated. "We've seen fantastic results since we made small changes to showcase how we are a welcoming and inclusive destination."

The session concluded with a call to action for the African tourism industry to recognise the significant opportunities presented by the accessible travel market and to work towards making the continent a more inclusive and welcoming destination for all.

**-ENDS-**

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**World Travel Market (WTM)** Portfolio comprises leading travel events and online portals across four continents. The events are Arabian Travel Market, WTM London, WTM Latin America and WTM Africa.

**WTM London** is the world's most influential travel & tourism event for the global travel community. The show is the ultimate destination for those seeking a macro view of the travel industry and a deeper understanding of the forces shaping it. WTM London is where influential travel leaders, buyers and high-profile travel companies gather to exchange ideas, drive innovation, and accelerate business outcomes.

Next in-person event: 5 to 7 November 2024 at ExCel London

<http://london.wtm.com/>

**Arabian Travel Market (ATM)**, now on its 31<sup>st</sup> year, is the leading, international travel and tourism event in the Middle East for inbound and outbound tourism professionals. ATM 2023 welcomed over 40,000 attendees and hosted over 30,000 visitors, including more than 2,100 exhibitors and representatives from over 150 countries, across 10 halls at Dubai World Trade Centre. Arabian Travel Market is part of Arabian Travel Week. #ATMDubai

Next in-person event: 6 to 9 May 2024, Dubai World Trade Centre, Dubai

<https://www.wtm.com/atm/en-gb.html>

**Arabian Travel Week** is a festival of events taking place from 6 to 12 May, within and alongside Arabian Travel Market 2024. Providing a renewed focus for the Middle East's travel and tourism sector, it includes Influencers' events, GBTA Business Travel Forums, as well as ATM Travel Tech. It also features the ATM Buyer Forums, as well as a series of country forums.



<https://www.wtm.com/arabian-travel-week/en-gb.html>

**WTM Latin America** takes place annually in the city of São Paulo and attracts around 20,000 tourism professionals during the three-day event. The event offers qualified content together with networking and business opportunities. In this its ninth edition – there have been eight face-to-face events along with a 100% virtual one, which was held in 2021 – WTM Latin America continued to focus on effective business generation, and achieved the advance booking of six thousand meetings that were held between buyers, travel agents and exhibitors in 2022.

Next event: 15 to 17 April 2024 – Expo Center Norte, SP, Brazil

<http://latinamerica.wtm.com/>

**WTM Africa** launched in 2014 in Cape Town, South Africa. In 2022, WTM Africa facilitated more than 7 thousand unique pre-scheduled appointments, an increase of more than 7% compared to 2019 and welcomed more than 6 thousand visitors (unaudited), the same number as in 2019.

Next event: 10 to 12 April 2024 – Cape Town International Convention Centre, Cape Town <http://africa.wtm.com/>

**About ATW Connect:** Africa Travel Week's digital arm, is a virtual hub packed to the seams with interesting content, industry news and insights, and the opportunity to hear from experts on a variety of topics in our new monthly webinar series. All with the aim to keep all of us in the travel and tourism industry connected. ATW Connect focuses on inbound and outbound markets for general leisure tourism, luxury travel, LGBTQ+ travel and the MICE/business travel sector as well as travel technology.

<https://atwconnect.com/>

**WTM Global Hub,** is the WTM Portfolio online portal created to connect and support travel industry professionals around the world. The resource hub offers the latest guidance and knowledge to help exhibitors, buyers and others in the travel industry face the challenges of the global coronavirus pandemic. WTM Portfolio is tapping into its global network of experts to create content for the hub. <https://hub.wtm.com/>

## About RX

RX is a global leader in events and exhibitions, leveraging industry expertise, data, and technology to build businesses for individuals, communities, and organisations. With a presence in 25 countries across 42 industry sectors, RX hosts approximately 350 events annually. RX is committed to creating an inclusive work environment for all our people. RX empowers businesses to thrive by leveraging data-driven insights and digital solutions. RX is part of RELX, a global provider of information-based analytics and decision tools for professional and business customers. For more information, visit [www.rxglobal.com](http://www.rxglobal.com).

## About RELX

RELX is a global provider of information-based analytics and decision tools for professional and business customers. RELX serves customers in more than 180 countries and has offices in about 40 countries. It employs more than 36,000 people over 40% of whom are in North America. The shares of RELX PLC, the parent company, are traded on the London, Amsterdam and New York stock exchanges using the following ticker symbols: London: REL; Amsterdam: REN; New York: RELX.

\*Note: Current market capitalisation can be found at <http://www.relx.com/investors>

