

Over 5 000 appointments connect tourism professionals at inaugural WTM Africa

04 May 2014

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The inaugural World Travel Market (WTM) Africa concluded on, 3 May, at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), delivering an impressive economic impact on the continent's tourism sector, with 500 qualified buyers attending with 5 386 pre-scheduled appointments between qualified buyers and exhibitors reported (subject to an independent ABC Audit).

Over the two days of the event, some 4 500 travel and tourism professionals leveraged real business opportunities and engaged in valuable business conversations, met new contacts, exchanged ideas, shared best practice and learned and networked in a fresh new environment.

Suppliers and buyers have praised the event as an excellent opportunity for Africa's business development, knowledge enhancement and exclusive networking in the region but with global relevance. Feedback from buyers and exhibitors alike has been extraordinarily positive, says WTM Africa Exhibition Director Polly Magraw. "We are overwhelmed by the positive responses we have heard from suppliers and buyers alike. Exhibitors have fed back how impressed they were with the quality of buyers," says Polly.

Local exhibitor, SW Africa was exposed to many potential clients they had never met before, says Henk Graaff. "Our diary has been full and we have seen a lot of new faces."

Mike Richardson, Big Game Parks Swaziland agrees: "The caliber of buyers has been incredible. WTM Africa has been a very successful event. The level of person we've seen seems to have been the decision maker and they've asked well-researched questions. This is very heartening for Swaziland," says Mike.

Buyers Club Member Marianne Strydom from XL Boland praised the inaugural event for its seamless organisation. "Reed and Thebe Reed have been very helpful and very organised.

The product on display completely exceeded our expectations and we made some great contacts. I especially enjoyed the technology conference sessions.”

WTM Africa was classy and professional, adds Ian Harris, Coffeebeans Routes. “The show has been very refreshing from an image perspective. I’ve enjoyed that it’s focused and not overwhelming, but realise that it’s going to grow.”

The Speed Networking session held on both days was immensely successful and the conference programme phenomenally popular, adds Polly. “In most sessions there was standing room only, and the digital technology sessions were particularly well attended,” says Polly.

Travel technology featured highly on the show’s agenda over the two days, with several conference sessions dedicated to looking at digital trends and challenges, including the mobile revolution in tourism and the increasing role of travel bloggers and travellers in marketing tourism products and destinations.

A further focus was Environmental Responsibility and Responsible Tourism, high on the agenda for WTM Africa, which culminated in the first-ever Responsible Tourism Speed Marketing event in South Africa. “WTM Africa has sustainability as its foundation and this was the perfect event for Responsible Tourism product to showcase itself,” says Heidi Keyser, International Sustainable Tourism Advisor, who coordinated this pioneering event.

Polly says this inaugural event would not have been possible without the enthusiasm and support of City of Cape Town, the CTICC and Wesgro. “We are really appreciative of their support and would like to thank them for their hospitality and for offering such a beautiful backdrop for the inaugural WTM Africa. We will certainly return.”

Dates for WTM Africa: 15 – 17 April 2015

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