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Media Conference: World's First Fair Trade Travel Packages

What is really new with Fair Trade Travel?

Interview with Jennifer Seif, Executive Director of Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA)

What is new with the Fair Trade Travel packages?

The launch of Fair Trade Travel (FTT) packages in Zurich on 28 October 2010 marks a new chapter in the Fair Trade movement. To date, Fair Trade has worked to give agricultural producers, mainly of commodities, a better deal from global trade. Now Fair Trade is being extended to a service sector for the first time, in the format of Fair Trade Travel packages that will be offered on the Swiss market from today.

What is new compared with FTTSA?

Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA) has pioneered new concepts and models for sustainable tourism for nearly ten years. In 2003, FTTSA launched a product label for tourism, awarding the use of the FTTSA certification mark to tourism suppliers in South Africa that adhere to specific standards and criteria. The FTTSA mark guarantees fair wages and working conditions, fair distribution of benefits, fair operations and respect for human rights, culture and environment. Despite the pioneering nature of FTTSA certification, as a destination-based initiative FTTSA was still not able to address aspects of the trade in tourism services that disadvantage South African business owners, in particular small businesses. Wider advocacy for equity, justice and sustainability is now possible within the broader value chain with the introduction of Fair Trade Travel certification. Ultimately this will help South Africa to capture additional benefit from tourism growth post World Cup.

What is new resp. more comprehensive with FTT compared with other certification systems and labels for products in destinations? For enterprises? For tour operators?

The vast majority of the hundred or so sustainable tourism certification schemes in operation today are predominantly environmental in nature. This is slowly changing, as schemes align with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria¹. However even well balanced sustainable tourism certificates focus on only part of the tourism value chain. On the

¹ The GSTC are grouped into four main areas: sustainable management, socio-economic development, cultural impact, and environmental management. Future accreditation of sustainable tourism certificates by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council will be dependent on the extent to which local schemes incorporate the GSTC, amongst other factors. FTTSA already meets most accreditation standards, according to research commissioned by the Council.

www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org

one hand, product-focused schemes (including FTTSA) measure local impact, while on the other hand tour operator-orientated schemes are concerned largely with corporate social responsibility. Neither approach addresses trading terms or commercial ethics, which are also part of the sustainability equation. Fair Trade Travel combines product and company labelling with an audit of trade relations resulting in perhaps the most integrated tourism certification programme to date.

Which steps were necessary to achieve the FTT packages?

For the elaboration of the first Fair Trade Travel packages we had to implement concrete steps such as:

- Standard setting
- Audits
- Convincing of tour operators
- Market research
- Networking and compatibility with other certification systems

However, the process to achieve the launching of the first Fair Trade Travel packages dates back to 2006 when the international Fairtrade Labelling Organizations (FLO) commissioned a study to evaluate the feasibility of developing a worldwide Fairtrade label for tourism. FTTSA along with *arbeitskreis tourismus & entwicklung (akte)* in Switzerland and EED-Tourism Watch in Germany and other tourism and Fair Trade experts served as advisors to FLO throughout this process, which culminated in 2008. At this stage FTTSA volunteered to lead a pilot project from South Africa, to develop and test standards as well as auditing and reporting tools and procedures. FTTSA was able to leverage the growing portfolio of FTTSA-certified products in South Africa along with its existing relationships with the Swiss travel trade and other Swiss partners to support this pilot, resulting in auditing and now certification of two packages by Reise Service Imagine and Kuoni Travel Ltd, respectively.

And what are the future perspectives of the FTT project?

In partnership with tour operator partners and advocacy organizations in source markets, FTTSA will now be able to gauge consumer demand for Fair Trade Travel. Market information most especially willingness of the consumers to pay a premium (and how much) is needed to test the business case. If the first packages prove to be commercially viable, this will pave the way for certification of additional holiday packages to South Africa and in turn replication of the model in other developing countries. This will be based on much wider consultation with tourism development and Fair Trade experts and organizations to affirm elements of the South African-led pilot and also respond to additional experiences of injustice and unsustainability located in the global South.



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