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World's First Fair Trade Travel Packages

Why is Fair Trade Travel important?

Tourism has been identified by the South African government as a key sector for achieving post-apartheid development and transformation imperatives. Foreign tourist arrivals to South Africa have grown three-fold since the early 1990s, reaching 9.6 million in 2008. Strong international demand is accompanied by a robust and diverse domestic market. The sector's contribution to GDP (currently 8%) and employment is expected to increase in the next decade due in no small part to the "World Cup Effect" which is expected to amplify international arrivals by 500,000 annually up to 2015.

Yet tourism growth carries costs to the destination and to people living in places that are attractive to tourists. Tourism is a highly consumptive sector, drawing large quantities of electricity and water and generating significant volumes of waste. The sector is also a fairly poor employer, with working conditions characterized by low pay, long hours, gender inequality and a strong dependency on casual (non permanent) labour.

The global Fair Trade system, which dates back to the 1960s, is predicated on the realization that commodity and other producers in the global South are unfairly disadvantaged in international trade. Fairly traded goods, in contrast to conventionally traded counterparts, guarantee a minimum price and terms of trade for the producer while also assuring the consumer that certain socio-economic and environmental standards are in place. Fair Trade labels differentiate fairly traded consumables and services in the marketplace and help to connect ethically minded and environmentally aware consumers to a wide and growing range of products and services.

Since 2003, Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA), a non profit organisation registered in South Africa, has operated the world's first, and still only tourism Fair Trade label. FTTSA certifies tourist accommodation, activities and attractions in South Africa (tourism products) against a standard comprised of labour, socio-economic, management and environmental criteria. To date, more than seventy-five products have qualified for FTTSA certification including established and emerging operators.

To build on this pioneering work within South Africa, FTTSA together with arbeitskreis tourismus & entwicklung (akte) in Switzerland and EED-Tourism Watch in Germany pilot-tested standards and audit tools to measure the most prominent aspects of a travel package for adherence to the principles of Fair Trade. The pilot, funded by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) under the economic development cooperation and endorsed by the Fairtrade Labelling Organiza-

tions (FLO) International, resulted in the certification of two package holidays developed by Swiss tour operator partners, Kuoni Travel Ltd. and Reise Service Imagine, and a packages holiday developed by the German tour operator SKR.

Benefits to owners and workers in tourism establishments, especially small and emerging products, from FTT include:

- A fair share of the profits from tourism;
- Fair wages and working conditions;
- Long-term trading security;
- Community development opportunities through the Premium Fund; and
- Access to new markets

Coffee Shack Backpackers has created jobs in the community so that as more tourists come, more members of our community benefit. It is our environment that we live in that is attracting the tourists here: we are surrounded by green hills, valleys, trees and of course the warm ocean! My community is now uplifted in so many ways. The tourists spend their money on village dinners and cultural daytrips. There are those scholars who are getting sponsorships from Coffee Shack Backpackers and our guests.

Nomandla Xakatha, Coffee Shack Backpackers

The launch of the FTT packages on the Swiss and the German market marks the first time in the history of the global Fair Trade movement that a defined, integrated travel experience is offered to consumers as a Fair Trade product. Activities in South Africa, Switzerland and Germany to date are expected to form the basis of a model for Fair Trade Travel globally, as the Fair Trade Travel pilot process expands to incorporate both new source markets and new tourist destinations.



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