

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Africa is next destination headed for a luxury travel surge

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Niche tourism and luxury travel are fueling the growth. Image credit: Four Seasons

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

Africa is gaining importance in the luxury travel industry as a top destination, with many high-end hospitality brands expanding into the area.

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With hotel conglomerates as well as luxury travel brands entering into Africa with bullish strategies, the area is poised to become a significant travel spot. The growth of these brands in this area is a reflection of a jump in tourism.

"Similar to other industries, travel in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is also seeing an emergence of a new breed of luxury travelers," said Christy Tawii, senior research analyst at **Euromonitor**, Cape Town. "Although traditional tourists continue to dominate the industry, the emergence of these luxury travelers is entering a new phase.

"Many industry players within the travel market continue to introduce products that suit luxury travelers' specific requirements and needs by offering chartered airline services, private yachts, luxury spas, safari camps and lodges, whose facilities are the equal of world-class cities," she said.

Travelers to Africa

International travel to Africa is expected to reach 18 million travelers this year, marking a significant increase in tourism to the continent.

According to Euromonitor, digitalization and niche tourism are driving travel to Africa in greater numbers than usual this year, presenting an opportunity for travel companies to capitalize on the increased interest. Travel to Africa has grown by almost 7 percent over the last year, signaling a boost in popularity for Africa's many resorts and hotels ([see more](#)).



Listing from Knight Frank in Capetown, South Africa

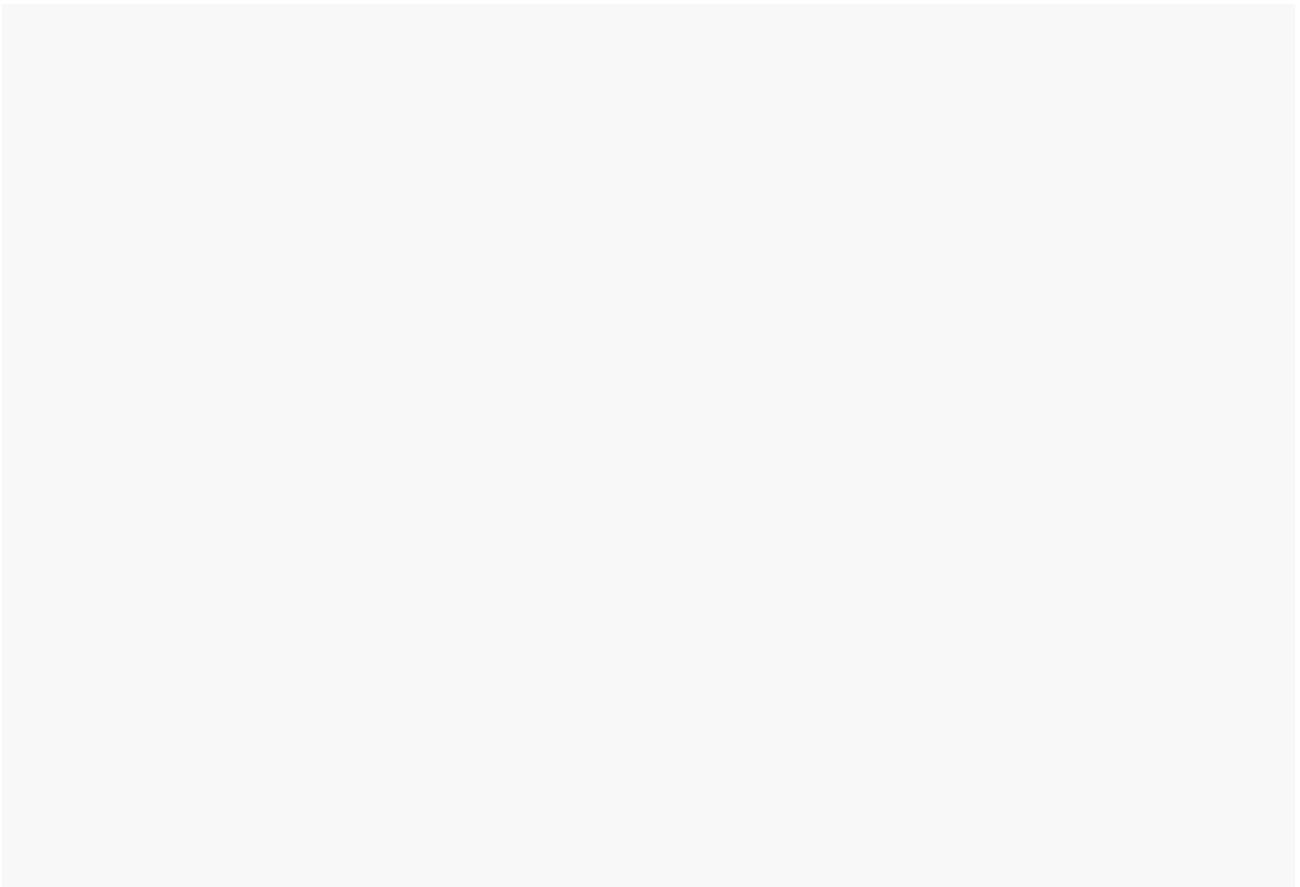
These numbers have spurred major luxury hotel brands such as Marriott to take a strong stance in the market.

An island off the coast of Africa in the Atlantic Ocean, St. Helena, is one of many new destinations that are gaining attention. The island has recently finished its airport and will allow limited flights to the area and will see a luxury hotel open its doors.

St. Helena's exclusivity is likely to attract affluent travelers who are looking for unique destinations.

The Ritz-Carlton will be joining four other hotel brands in Zanzibar at a new luxury resort that will feature high-end properties for non-citizens to stay.

Marriott recently acquired Protea Hotels and will be taking over an estimated 200 hotels in the area.



A picturesque view of the Western Cape

Since 2014, super luxury accommodation value sales have seen a significant increase.

Hilton Worldwide is also expanding into Africa substantially with a \$50 million investment that will add 100 hotels under its umbrella on the continent.

Additional insight

While Africa is growing in travel interest, another report finds that the gap between the average traveler's vacation spend and that of an affluent individual is widening, with luxury vacationers outspending the rest by more than six times the typical amount.

According to EyeforTravel's "The Global Luxury Travel Consumer" report, the average traveler spends around \$1,690 per trip, but the luxury consumer's budget is approximately \$5,365 per vacation. As the cost and frequency of affluent trips increases, the hospitality sector will need to respond by curating exclusive experiences and amenities to ensure affluents continue to be enticed and not become bored by standard stays ([see more](#)).

"Luxury shopping is another major driver for many wealthy tourists to visit countries such as South Africa," Euromonitor's Ms. Tawii said. "South Africa is also one of the leading destinations for shopping in Africa due to its well-developed retail landscape.

"Luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, Prada and Burberry have a presence in South Africa with stand-alone stores," she said.

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