

Victoria Falls records a 13% increase in tourist visits

According to leading tourism industry figures, Zimbabwe's resort town of Victoria Falls is enjoying a rise in tourist visits, with bookings indicating the boom in numbers is set to continue.



Hospitality group Africa Albida Tourism (AAT) chief executive Ross Kennedy said monthly measurements across 10 hotels in Victoria Falls revealed a 13% increase in occupancy - with more than 5,000 additional rooms sold - over the first three months of 2018 compared to the same period last year.

"Talking to colleagues in the town it is clear that forward bookings are much stronger than usual for the rest of 2018 and all indicators for 2019 reflect continued growth. These bookings suggest that Victoria Falls is heading towards becoming a year-round destination, so high season all year, with a few short troughs here and there," said Kennedy.

Other indicators included a 25% growth in revenue across the ten hotels over the first three months of this year, compared to the same period last year, as well as an 11% increase in RevPAR (revenue per available room).

"The number of new rooms either under construction and/or about to open adds further evidence of the confidence that existing and new investors are showing in Victoria Falls as a tourist destination. Victoria Falls was not alone in drawing large numbers of tourists, with nearby Hwange National Park enjoying a busy year last year, and, also experiencing significant growth and new investment into new camps and lodges.

"There are four or five new camps and lodges that have opened or are about to open in the Hwange area, as well as two or three new investors into existing National Parks' concessions. On the back of this very clear demand for Victoria Falls and the region, airlines such as SA Airlink are increasing capacity on the Cape Town – Victoria Falls route from July 2018," continued Kennedy.

Reports from Matopos, Mana Pools and Kariba also suggest that arrivals and interest are significantly up, but air access needs to be improved to these destinations, and the self-drive market – local, regional and international – to return.

"Together with this growth trend the industry looks forward to the day when our national airline, Air Zimbabwe, is flying tourists around Zimbabwe to most of our incredible destinations, with improved access for domestic tourists and visitors alike. A reliable and affordable national airline would support the Zimbabwean Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry Priscilla Mupfemira's initiative for a greater domestic tourism campaign," added Kennedy.

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