

# Kenya losing competitive edge in global tourism market

Kenya is losing its competitive edge in the global tourism market to less endowed destinations due to failure to adapt and innovate in line with global trends. This is according to the government, which has also cited over-reliance on seasonal foreign tourists and a perception that Kenya is an expensive stop.



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Speaking during the official opening of the Tourism Research Institute's Board retreat at Pride Inn Resort in Mombasa, Cabinet Secretary Najib Balala also blamed old accommodation facilities as a challenge facing the sector.

"Other challenges include the concentration of tourism activities in only a few parts of the country, weaknesses in tourism training resulting to unsatisfactory service delivery, lack of proper research and data management systems for the sector," Balala said.

The Tourism Research Institute is mandated to undertake and coordinate research that informs government policy on tourism as well as business decisions by investors.

"The year 2017, despite being an election year, recorded an upward trend in terms of arrivals, domestic bed nights, as well as earnings. This shows how resilient the sector has become and is proof that there is huge potential... However, due to a number of challenges, we are losing our competitive edge in the global tourism market to less endowed destinations," Balala said.

## Open skies

When asked about the issue of open skies policy where flights can land in Kenya without being charged, Balala said it is a question he cannot answer.

Hoteliers at the coast have been lobbying for the policy which they say will ease air transport through Moi International Airport and attract more tourists. Tourism players have often cited lack of international direct flights to Malindi and traffic jams at Kibarani towards Mombasa's airport as a major stumbling block to their business.

Kenya has been working on its adoption to encourage more airlines to fly into the country.

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