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Africa: Cape Town Still Tops for Business Events in Africa

By Carin Smith

Cape Town has retained its position as the number one destination for business events in Africa, according to the latest International Congress and Convention Association (Icca) Country and City rankings.

The destination moved up by 11 rankings in terms of worldwide performance to number 41. Cape Town hosted 58 international association meetings, up 13 from the previous year. Johannesburg is in second position in Africa, followed by Marrakech (Morocco) in third and Durban in fourth spot.

Tim Harris, CEO of Cape Town and the Western Cape's official tourism, trade and investment promotion agency Wesgro - of which the Cape Town and Western Cape Convention Bureau is a strategic business unit - said the business events environment is extremely competitive, so it is a considerable achievement to retain the number one spot.

"Cape Town has remained on top because of our collaborative approach, our excellent service offering, and our levels of professionalism. The Cape Town city region has global appeal, and our world class infrastructure - including the award-winning international convention centre and airport - combine to make us the first choice conferencing destination in Africa," said Harris.

To further enhance the rankings in the Western Cape, Stellenbosch bettered its 2013 results, moving up five spots to seventh position in South Africa.

South Africa - with 124 meetings - maintained its number one spot in Africa in the country rankings, moving up two rankings worldwide to number 32.

Because Cape Town is a long haul destination it can be a challenge when various options for international business events are considered, Corne Koch, head of the Convention Bureau of Cape Town, told Fin24 on Tuesday.

However, she pointed out that Cape Town still has an international appeal as a not-to-be-missed destination experience. Furthermore, the city's infrastructure is well developed to handle business meetings: the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) is top class and there are great hotels within walking distance. The proximity and standard of Cape Town International Airport also plays a part.

"Once delegates have visited Cape Town, we hope they will return one day with their families," said Koch. "The concerted effort by all stakeholders in the industry makes Cape Town such a popular destination."

CTICC CEO Julie-May Ellingson cautioned that "we cannot afford to rest on our laurels".

"The CTICC must remain internationally competitive. Our expansion, funded by the City of Cape Town and Western Cape government, will continue to raise the global competitiveness of Cape Town as a premier world class meeting and events destination," she said.

"This in turn allows us to meet the City's Integrated Development Plan's objective of establishing Cape Town as Africa's business events destination."

In relation to its other global partners in the BestCities Global Alliance, Cape Town, in 41st place with 58 meetings, finished hot on the heels of Vancouver (38th, hosting 60 meetings) and Melbourne (37th, hosting 61 meetings).

More international accolades for SA

In an historic first for South Africa, the destination has bagged three global awards at the world's biggest business event trade show, Imex 2015. More than 14 700 delegates from 150 destinations attended the trade fair in Frankfurt.

Anzelle Vorstman, a tourism and hospitality student at North West University, won first place in the Imex-MPI-MCI Future Leaders Forum International University Challenge.

Joburg Tourism won the Destination Marketing Humanitarian Award that recognises the destination marketing organisation which best demonstrates leadership and community support.

Pieter Swart Conference Consultancy South Africa won the PCMA Global Meetings Executive of the Year Award.

"The awards send a strong message to the global business events market that South Africa is home to people and organisations that are business events pioneers, and that hold significant intellectual capacity and practical know-how in the profession.

"The accolades work to elevate South Africa's standing as a business events destination of choice globally," said South African Tourism CEO Thulani Nzima.

Source: **Fin24**

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