

## **Tourism in Mauritius**

The Ministry of Tourism and External Communications has adopted a customer-centric approach with a view to rejuvenating the tourism industry and repositioning Mauritius as a leading island destination.

The tourist industry is evolving in a very competitive world and in order to continue to grow sustainably, meeting the expectations of our customers should be a priority, be they in our traditional markets or in emerging ones. Responding to the expectations of a wide range of segments, namely families, couples, weddings, sports, culture, heritage and adventure holidays, as well as catering for the tastes of European, Asian and African tourists, has become more important than ever.

The ultimate aim of the tourism industry is to ensure that tourists experience, as far as possible, the perfect holiday in Mauritius. This requires a collaborative effort from all stakeholders. A number of stakeholders are directly involved with respect to the state of cleanliness of the island in general. Particular attention needs to be paid to the following;

- Maintaining cleanliness of beaches and tourist sites;
- Provision of appropriate taxi and bus services;
- Ensuring safety and security including food safety;
- Preserving the lagoons;
- Combating beach erosion;
- Providing adequate shopping facilities;
- Putting in place appropriate road signs and street lighting; and
- Providing high quality entertainment and nature parks.

The Ministry of Tourism and External Communications, after consultations with different stakeholders, is implementing the following plan of action which pivots around enhancing the product, improving accessibility, revitalising the marketing strategy and restructuring institutions.

## 1. **Enhancing the Product**

- i. *A Sense of Place:* A renewed sense of place must be instilled in the tourism sector. This is achieved through a symphony of wildlife, vibrant heritage, unique local assets, local cuisine, music and various traditions of the numerous religions present in Mauritius. A new focus on cultural tourism in Mauritius will thus embrace the distinctive sights, sounds and experience that are rooted in the country. The tourist will be led to experience the pulsating culture of Mauritius through its rich heritage. These unique and memorable qualities will resonate with both the local people and visitors at various levels.
- ii. *The Environment:* It is imperative that tourist sites are maintained in an exemplary condition. There is need to uplift the attractiveness of major iconic places around the island. Having clean beaches, pristine lagoons and attractive tourist sites is a top priority.
- iii. *Prompting excitement and adventure:* Mauritius is one of the few tourist destinations which can simultaneously offer breathtaking experiences such as scuba diving, deep sea fishing, zip-lining, trekking, and parachute-jumping, alongside a more peaceful experience at its pristine and inescapable beaches. Consequently, the tourism industry should step up its game to further develop those aspects, whilst ensuring sustainability.
- iv. *Leveraging nature and wildlife:* Mauritius is a volcanic island which is endowed with wonderful nature, fauna and flora. More and more tourists visit Mauritius to experience wildlife and the natural environment through numerous activities such as trekking in untouched nature parks or participating in nature trails dedicated to secluded destinations.

- v. *Embracing responsible tourism:* Sustainability of the destination remains one of the key aspects of the tourism industry. Green tourism encompasses responsible travel to places that conserve the environment, sustain the well-being of the local people, and involve interpretation and education at the same time. Concurrently, the tourist of today is conversant in green tourism initiatives, and as such Mauritius must keep in line with green expectations of the millennial tourist. Measures to promote eco-friendly tourism include a better monitoring of nature activities by land, sea and air, the enforcement of regulations towards the protection of natural assets and promotion of innovative methods for further development of green tourism initiatives.
  
- vi. *Human Resources - Our greatest asset:* Human capital remains the greatest asset of the tourism industry in Mauritius. The quality of service and warm hospitality is an essential part of the product offering. As such, providing an enabling environment for personnel working in the tourism industry is a must. Tourism employees must be given recognition, equal opportunities and excellent training to encourage and motivate them, and to enable them to gain the skills required to propel the industry forward.
  
- vii. *Accommodating emerging markets:* With the influx of tourists from emerging markets such as China and India, creating a homely feeling for the people from these countries visiting the island is essential. A key way of achieving this is to ensure that tourism professionals acquire appropriate language skills while adequately catering for the cultural and culinary habits of visitors.
  
- viii. *MICE- Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions:* With three large conference centres and a large variety of medium-sized facilities, the MICE segment is promoted primarily through a dedicated desk at the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA). In conjunction with private operators, the MTPA organises special promotional activities and programmes to boost this important sector, which also includes weddings.
  
- ix. *Evolving into a tropical hub for medical tourism:* Whilst the tourism industry has always been associated with travelling away from home in search of pleasure, leisure, adventure and discovery, there is a growing trend from travellers for holidays incorporating health care and medical procedures. Medical tourists seek a wide range of medical services from cosmetic, dental and plastic surgery, to hair-grafting procedures and infertility treatments, amongst others. Positioning Mauritius as a tropical hub for medical tourism is feasible thanks to

to the quality and diversity of treatments available locally, which are combined with the attractiveness of the island. Promotion of high quality and professional medical services will serve to diversify the tourism industry.

- x. *Rekindling the low season*: A seasonal strategy is adopted to give a boost to the tourism industry in Mauritius during the months of May, June, July, August and September with a view to eventually eliminating the 'low season'. Special activities promoted for these months give yet another reason to visit Mauritius.
  
- xi. *Improving tourist amenities*: Additional facilities such as pedestrian streets and the duty-free shopping concept would rejuvenate the tourism product offering. Better control of hawkers, food sellers, canvassers and other vendors on beaches and tourist sites is also required.
  
- xii. *Developing a hotel classification system*: Increasing numbers of tourists book their holidays via the internet. The new hotel classification system has been introduced to facilitate tourists to make informed decisions about their accommodation in Mauritius. It also encourages hoteliers to upgrade their product and make quality investments.
  
- xiii. *A 2 year moratorium on opening of new hotels*: Only hotels which are presently under construction (representing around 130 rooms in total) would be allowed to open until the end of 2016. This will help restore a sustainable balance between supply and demand. Existing hotels would be encouraged to refurbish their premises and take necessary measures to improve on their quality. This would also encourage new foreign direct investment in the takeover of existing flagging properties. This measure will not affect investment in construction given that construction of any hotel takes a minimum of 24 months.

## 2. **Improving Accessibility**

Measures are required to bridge the mismatch between air seat capacity and hotel rooms as well as to improve overall accessibility to Mauritius as a holiday destination. During the high season, the following new flights have been programmed:

- Twice weekly flights by Lufthansa from Frankfurt;
- An additional weekly service by Condor also from Frankfurt;
- Twice weekly flights by Austrian Airlines from Vienna;
- A direct weekly service, with a possibility of a second one, by Air Mauritius from Chengdu in China; and
- A new weekly flight by TUI from Poland.

## 3. **Revitalising our Marketing Strategy**

- A harmonious approach:* In line with the continued enhancement of the tourism product, we are ensuring that the approach in the way Mauritius is portrayed to different target markets is harmonized.
- Using Media and Social Networks:* We aim to make maximum use of technology for e-marketing/digital marketing including travel websites, Facebook, travel blogs etc.
- Penetrating new markets:* An appropriate strategy for Asian and African markets is being further developed for a more pronounced exploitation of the potential of these source markets. This will ensure that Mauritius remains an inspirational destination, rather than a cut-price one, in all market segments.

## 4. **Establishing a Complaints Service**

Our tourists now have an interactive platform through which they can voice out their experiences in Mauritius. This platform has been set up through the MTPA and can be accessed via the following link: <http://www.tourism-mauritius.mu/en-int/report-problem>.

## **5. Restructuring for Revival**

The MTPA and the Tourism Authority (TA) have been restructured to be able to perform more efficiently and meet the objectives set out for the tourism industry.