

The land of Kilimanjaro and Zanzibar beckons Indian tourists

Pointing to Kilimanjaro, the highest freestanding mountain in the world, and spice isle Zanzibar, Tanzania is beckoning Indian tourists by promising an experience they will cherish forever.

'Tanzania has emerged as a good standalone destination and attracted 724,000 arrivals of this variety. Only 15,000 of them were Indians and we hope this will increase significantly,' Tanzanian Tourism Minister Shamsa Selengia Mwangunga told reporters here Thursday.

Toward this end, Mwangunga, who is on a two-city roadshow tour with a large delegation of tourism ministry officials and tour operators to showcase the east African nation, met her Indian counterpart Ambika Soni Wednesday.

'We thought it would be useful to sign a MoU (memorandum of understanding) on tourism development. We will now work on this and hopefully, will sign it soon,' Mwangunga said.

'Tanzania recognises India's booming economy as a means of increasing tourist flow to our country,' she added.

'I can assure you of an experience you will cherish forever. Apart from all that we have to offer there is a large Indian community and so you can even eat your own kind of food,' the minister said.

'You will feel absolutely at home and perhaps will not want to return home,' she added.

Detailing the various attractions the country had to offer, Tanzania Tourist Board managing director Peter Jmwenguo said: 'We offer diverse tourism products including adventure tourism through game viewing, trekking, deep sea fishing, snorkelling and scuba diving, coupled with cultural tourism.

'One of our most recognisable brands is Mount Kilimanjaro, the second highest peak in the world, the highest in Africa and the highest free standing mountain in the world.

'It is also the only mountain in Africa that is snow-capped throughout the year so a visit to the peak is quite an experience,' the official added.

This apart, there is the Serengeti National Park that has been declared one of the new Seven Wonders of the World, the Ngorongoro Conservation Area that has the world's largest unbroken volcanic crater, and the Selous Game Reserve - the largest such in Africa.

'Then, of course, there is Zanzibar, a magical spice island with white, palm-fringed beaches,' Jmwenguo added.

According to the official, Tanzania was targeting mid- to high-end Indian travellers with an annual income of Rs.5 million and more.

'We have segmented the Indian market into three sections: leisure travellers in the age-group of 35 and above, high end MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) comprising of lower numbers but higher disposable incomes, and travellers who are seeking an absolutely-close-to-nature experience,' the official stated.

As for costs, \$2,200 (Rs.95,000) will get a week's holiday in Tanzania, inclusive of return airfare on the Mumbai-Dar-es-Salaam.

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