



The Fazendin Portfolio, LLC ::: 2010 African Travel Outlook :: December 2009

2010 African Travel Outlook :: Insights for the African Travel Industry

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While 2009 is a year most travel companies are anxious to leave behind, it appears that as we approach the end of the year after many months of putting off travel, Americans are starting to make plans to travel in 2010. At The Fazendin Portfolio, we actively support, educate and assist travel agents and tour operators selling travel to Africa, acting as liaisons between the travel trade and our partners, a collection of African safari camps, private villas, and safari operators, on the ground in Africa. Understanding that the pulse of the travel industry was changing rapidly heading into December 2009, we took the opportunity to survey these American travel agents and tour operators to better understand emerging trends heading into 2010. Respondents of this survey, 2/3 of whom indicated that African destinations make up 50% or more of their business, painted an interesting picture for the year to come.

Most importantly, over 70% of respondents reported seeing an increase in inquiries for travel to Africa in the last quarter of 2009.

Additionally, 50% of these respondents reported that current booking inquiries could be classified as “long term”, meaning for travel commencing 6-12 months out. This is a drastic departure to what we saw back in April 2009 when we surveyed the same audience. At this time the majority of respondents were seeing bookings that we classified as “short term”, meaning for travel commencing 0-3 months out. As a result in April 2009 our travel trade partners were crystal clear about what they needed from suppliers in Africa in order to effectively sell last minute travel; 24-hour turnaround on all booking requests and a serious embracing of online technology (for uses such as online availability, sharing last minute deals, product updates etc).

As a result of this demand back in April 2009, many African travel suppliers have in fact improved processes to ensure inquiry response as quickly as possible, and have also embraced online technology to share news and information with the US travel trade at lightening speed. Despite slightly longer lead times on booking inquiries, in the December 2009 survey again we saw over 50% of respondents indicating that quick turnaround on booking inquiries as well as itinerary development support were how suppliers can most help them succeed moving into 2010.

Our observation is that the challenging economic environment of 2009 in fact helped force efficiencies across the supply chain from which the entire African travel industry will benefit moving forward into 2010. New processes and technologies that were implemented in 2009 will continue to support travel agents and tour operators selling travel to Africa as we head into a new decade and a new economic climate.

A clear and developing trend, not only for Africa, but for the travel industry as a whole, is travel to celebrate life's milestones. This could be a honeymoon, destination wedding, anniversary celebration, birthday celebration, graduation celebration, etc. Industry experts agree that the market for milestone-driven travel among American travelers will continue to grow as far as the eye can see. This is important for the African travel industry because these travelers tend to stay longer in the destination, bring more people along on the trip, plan longer in advance and spend more money per person – all key aspects to planning a safari in Africa.



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While our travel trade partners reported that inquiries have picked up in the last quarter of 2009, converting inquiries into bookings remains a challenge. As one respondent said, the greatest challenge for the year ahead is going to be to “just get guests to say yes let’s go!”

One of the single most important factors driving the growth of milestone-driven travel is the fact that Americans continue to suffer from an extreme case of “time poverty”. Americans are currently working a 48 hour work week on average (the longest of any country in the world) and only have 19 days of vacation on average (again, an extremely low number when compared to most other countries in the world), of which 1/3 of Americans don’t even utilize 6 or more of these 19 vacation days annually. So, when a milestone occurs often American travelers can finally justify a big trip as a good use of piled up vacation time, and rationalize the time and expense if it’s for a life milestone celebration vs. “just another vacation.”

Understanding this rapidly growing trend for milestone-driven travel will undoubtedly be the key to planning and booking outstanding African safaris travelers in 2010.

So as the African travel industry begins to return to a more traditional sales cycle, leaving behind the extreme last minute bookings we saw in 2009, professionals throughout the supply chain, from camps and lodges on the ground in Africa to outbound travel agents and operators in North America, should not forget the lessons learned in 2009. It will be critical to embrace supplier partnerships, draw on shared insight and product knowledge and together stay focused on closing sales now to ensure a strong 2010.

About Sarah Fazendin: Travel is truly a passion and a way of life for Sarah Fazendin. After a successful career in advertising, she managed all marketing and representation activity in North America for the Kenya Tourist Board. Despite significant market challenges, Sarah led Kenya to a North American market rebound with year-on-year growth at nearly 50% in 2004 and 2005. With this impressive record, she developed key relationships and great respect in the travel and tourism industry.

Since founding The Fazendin Portfolio in 2006, Sarah has worked tirelessly to generate critical, long-term relationships with top travel agents, tour operators and members of the media for the company’s clients. She values efficiency and sincerity in business and strives to open as many doors as possible for her African partners while implementing cost-effective, results-oriented integrated marketing programs on their behalf. Sarah and her team travel to Africa several times annually to inspect new properties and safari experiences. As a result, The Fazendin Portfolio maintains the most up-to-date, valued insight for travel agent and tour operator partners

About The Fazendin Portfolio: The Fazendin Portfolio provides travel industry representation and services including marketing, sales and public relations consulting to African travel companies. For years the company has worked with top travel agents and tour operators in North America to drive incremental tourism numbers to the continent of Africa. By combining passion for extraordinary journeys with a clear understanding of international travel markets, The Fazendin Portfolio helps the world’s best travel organizations develop and manage imaginative, strategic and profitable marketing plans.

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