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Africa Middle East Insight

South Africa a hive of trade activity in April and May

By [Dorine Reinstein](#) / March 25, 2016

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South Africa is gearing up to host no less than six trade shows in April and May this year, leaving travel agents who sell the continent scratching their heads, wondering which event to attend.

The trade show marathon kicks off on April 4 in Cape Town with Africa Travel Week. This event runs until April 8 and comprises three co-located shows: WTM Africa, IBTM Africa and ILTM Africa.

Less than a week after Africa Travel Week wraps up, Cape Town will welcome the 33rd annual Global Convention of the International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA) from April 14 to 16.

Just two weeks after that, We Are Africa opens its doors in Cape Town and will run from May 2 to 5 and will focus on high-end travel brands. Finally, South Africa's Tourism Indaba will be held in Durban from May 7 to 9. The show offers networking opportunities for industry players from across the continent as well as international buyers.

With so many trade shows on the calendar, it can be hard for travel agents and buyers to make the right choice of which to attend. "We try and attend as many trade shows as we can, either as exhibitors or buyers, but this year it is particularly busy," said Melissa Hordych, general manager for Micato Safaris.

Hordych suggests that while these trade shows are all valuable shows in their own way, it might be more effective if they could be spaced out over the year. "That way there is less of a 'crunch' in the U.S. spring," she said.

That idea was echoed by Dave Herbert, chief experiential officer at Great Safaris. He explained that he would much rather see the trade shows spread out during the year in order to be able to participate in more than one.

Others however have indicated they would like to see less trade shows in South Africa. Diane Lobel of African Portfolio said: "I would reduce the number of shows and streamline the time, effort and resources to improve the quality and relevance of one show."

Marcia Gordon, president and co-founder of Extraordinary Journeys, said her company puts a huge premium on having its staff go to Africa and experience as many properties firsthand as possible.

"We feel the trade shows bring value to us in several ways," Gordon said. "In addition to the obvious opportunities to learn about new product, meet new owners and operators, renew friendships with those we've long worked with, hear about their missions and goals and explain ours and strategize about ways to help each other, we also enjoy networking amongst our competitors, which can be a valuable way to learn about trends in the industry and ways that others are dealing with some of the challenges we face."

However, Gordon said that although all the trade shows are relevant, the number of trade shows in Africa is really hurting the participating companies. She said: "Each show is very expensive for the suppliers and the value is really diluted. I would like to see one show for the whole market and one for the more exclusive market."

For Craig Smith, managing director of New Frontiers, the number and timing of the trade shows isn't a problem. He explained that if the trade shows compete directly with each other in content and format, then the space is currently too crowded. However, if they are able to differentiate themselves and offer a different angle, then they actually complement each other, and placing them close together time-wise enables buyers to combine multiple trade shows and benefit to the maximum.

Also Serge Dive, CEO and Founder of We Are Africa, explains that Indaba and We Are Africa, which run successively over eight days in early May, are two shows that perfectly complement each other. Indaba focuses on the entire travel market for Africa, whereas We Are Africa only zeroes in on the luxury travel market. "The

shows are perfectly aligned, and form a good combination for travel buyers across the world,” Dive said.

Meanwhile, Carol Weaving, managing director of Thebe Reed Exhibitions, said that as organizers of Africa Travel Week, Thebe Reed realized the importance of bringing all segments of the travel industry together under the same roof at the same time with networking opportunities for both exhibitors and buyers in order to maximize their participation at the event.

She explained that the show is also governed to some extent by the availability of dates at the Cape Town International Convention Center. Weaving added: “Most importantly, the industry has indicated that April is a preferable time for contracting at the show.”

Neither Weaving nor Dive said they are considering changing the dates of the shows. Said Weaving: “This is the third year that Thebe Reed Exhibitions will be showcasing our events in Cape Town, and early April works well for the show.”

Dive added: “These shows have been running on the same dates for three consecutive years and remain successful. This might be an indication that it’s not as big a problem as one might think.”