

The Potential For Maritime Tourism: An African Perspective

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Abstract : The African continent is rich in coastal history, heritage, and culture presenting immense potential for the development of maritime tourism. Shipping, and its related components, is generally associated with the maritime industry and tourism's link is to the various forms of nautical tourism. Activities may include cruising, yachting, visits to lighthouses, ports, harbors, and excursions to related sites of cultural, historical, or ecological significance. There have been hundreds of years of explorers leaving a string of shipwrecks along the various coastal areas on the continent in their pursuit of establishing trade routes between Europe, Africa, and the Far East. These shipwrecks present diving opportunities in artificial reefs and marine heritage to be explored in various ways in the maritime cultural zones. Furthermore, decades of African countries being under colonized rule has left the continent with intricate cultural heritage that is enmeshed in European language, architecture interlinked with, in many instances, hard-fought independent littoral states. There is potential for coastal trails to be developed to follow these historical events. Further to the colonized history of the African continent, there is an uncomfortable heritage of the slave trade heritage. To a certain extent, these coastal slave trade posts are being considered attractive to a niche tourism audience however, there is potential for education and interpretive measures to grow this as a tourism product. Notwithstanding these potential opportunities, there are numerous challenges to consider such as poor maritime infrastructure, maritime security concerns with issues such as piracy, transnational crimes including weapons and migrant smuggling, drug and human trafficking. These and related maritime issues contribute to the concerns over the porous nature of African ocean gateways, adding to the security concerns for tourists. This theoretical presentation will consider these trends and how they may contribute to the growth and development of maritime tourism on the African continent. African considerations of the growth potential of tourism in coastal and marine spaces are needed, particularly with a focus on embracing the continent's tumultuous past as part of its heritage. This has the potential to contribute to the creation of a sense of ownership of opportunities.

Keywords : coastal trade routes, maritime tourism, shipwrecks, slave trade routes

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