



INDUSTRY EXPERTS PREDICT THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL TO AFRICA

Tourism will eventually return but when it does, we may travel less but travel better...

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended our lives in incalculable ways. As most of the world practices social distancing, holidays have been cancelled, attractions are closed, and the tourism industry is suffering. African Bush Camps CEO and professional safari guide, Beks Ndlovu remains optimistic for the survival of travel to African safari destinations and hopeful for the continent's recovery.



Beks Ndlovu (African Bush Camps CEO and professional safari guide), Juliet Kinsman (sustainability expert and journalist) and Nigel Vere Nicoll (ATTA founder and President)

Leading a discussion in African Bush Camps' (ABC) latest online broadcast 'Safari Talk', Ndlovu spoke with Africa Travel & Tourism Association (ATTA) founder and President Nigel Vere Nicoll, and leading hotel and sustainability expert and journalist Juliet Kinsman on the topic of the future of travel to Africa.

"Although we don't know exactly when it will happen, travel will eventually become part of normal life again, but this is not going to happen quickly," says Vere Nicoll who has seen the continent recover from many tourism crises over the last 3 decades. In 2019 wildlife tourism in Africa was worth \$29.3 billion and employed 3.6 million people*, an industry vital to the continent's economy and the conservation of many of the world's most iconic wildlife species.

"Tourism relies on open skies, and access to the continent will play a huge part in how Africa travel will recover," Vere Nicoll said. Air travel will almost certainly change with prices escalating, less routes in operation, long queues and additional health procedures at airports which might make the option prohibitive for many travellers. *"It's not just about getting tourists back to Africa but how this pandemic is going to impact people's behaviour to travel in general",* he said.

With tourists firmly grounded for the foreseeable future, like many operators, ABC is facing financial challenges. Currently employing over 600 people in four countries the company has decided to keep all personnel employed during what they have called a 'curl up' period. They have reduced their staff's time by at least 25 percent and put a rotation schedule in place to ensure all employees can work. *"The*



vast wilderness areas in which we operate will become quite vulnerable without tourism. Our staff are still in camps acting as custodians of wildlife and ensuring the conservation of these areas,” Said Ndlovu. The protection and preservation of wildlife resources as well as local communities are not only essential to ABC’s operation but significantly contribute to conservation. *“The consequences of not being able to look after these environments could be larger than that of this virus.”*

Tourism is an industry that directly distributes wealth into a country like no other. Sustainability expert Juliet Kinsman was one of the journalists behind the ‘*postpone don’t cancel*’ message asking consumers to reschedule their travel to allow the industry wheels to keep turning. Kinsman believes that when we do start travelling again, we will travel less but travel better. *“Quality travel experiences will still be in demand and that demand may outweigh supply. When travellers invest in a quality experience their money provides economic nutrition to the local area and communities”,* she says. *“The COVID-19 travel ban has shown us the value of booking through reputable travel agents and tour operators. A safe pair of hands will be needed more and more.”*

During this downtime ABC is taking the opportunity to undertake camp maintenance and upskilling their staff. Their expert guides have been taking waiters and cleaning staff out on games drives to give them an understanding of guests’ experiences. They have also been sharing skills such as gardening, cooking and the announcement of dinner which is a much-loved signature at all 16 of their camps and lodges across Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

The company’s sales and marketing teams have been looking at how dynamics have changed and working on new plans for what recovery might look like over the coming months. *“Due to rescheduled trips, our camps and lodges are looking remarkably busy for 2021”,* said Ndlovu. Their *book now, pay later* deal with the added reassurance of new terms and conditions are seeing increasing interest from travellers willing to take the leap and make a booking in the next few weeks.

If there are some positives to be taken from this global crisis then it has been an opportunity for tourists and tourism providers to assess their part in travel and how they can improve practices. Travel is a force for good, so perhaps it might shift towards a more responsible and thoughtful way of travelling that will reduce over-tourism, fight carbon emissions, and increase contribution to local communities.

When we do start to travel again, the experience will undoubtedly be a vastly different one, but hopefully one in which we all make better decisions and more responsible choices.

To listen to the full broadcast recording click here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blDCmq1VgxQ>



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Visit: www.africanbushcamps.com

About African Bush Camps

African Bush Camps (ABC) is a 100% owner-run, African-based safari company designed to delight adventure travellers with authentic safari experiences amid untamed wilderness across Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. Operations are always focused on the guests, with 15 luxury tented bush camps and lodges, offering seamless safari experiences with internal flights, food, drinks, and activities included. **African Bush Camps** promotes and influences travel to Africa on a global scale while operating with a strong focus on conservation, and an environmentally sustainable footprint that celebrates the culture of communities in the areas in which it operates.

The **African Bush Camps Foundation** is a nonprofit organisation focused on conservation, education, and empowerment for the communities that surround the company's camp locations. Launched in 2006, the Foundation operates through a multi-faceted partnership with the company, which donates USD10 to the Foundation for every bed night accommodated in each of its camps. All donations go directly to community-based development projects initiated by the Foundation. Since opening, the Foundation has spearheaded 72 community projects across Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia; 42 of those projects are currently in operation under the Foundation's wing.

African Bush Camps was founded in 2006 by **Beks Ndlovu**, a professional safari guide born and raised in the village of Lupanie on the outskirts of Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe. From the start of operations, Ndlovu's mission has been to operate a portfolio of luxury tented camps and lodges across Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia that reincarnate the fantasy of 'Old Untouched Africa,' while treating guests to authentic and adventurous professional guide-led experiences and bespoke safaris that can only be found in the bush.

*Source - The World Travel and Tourism Council