

Counties dash to woo tourists at Diani travel fair



BRIAN MWANGI | NATION

Kwale governor Salim Mvurya (centre) receives an award from East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism CS Phyllis Kandie and Kenya Tourism Board Managing Director Muriithi Ndegwa (left) in Kwale yesterday after its beaches were voted the best in Africa.

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Counties from outside the Coast region are taking advantage of ongoing international tourism conference in Diani, Kwale to attract tourists.

They are showcasing various attractions at the ongoing Magical Kenya Travel Expo (MKTE) as they bid to attract tourists from Europe, the US, Asia and from across Africa, who are attending the expo.

The MKTE, Kenya's largest annual travel show, is taking place in the region for the first time. It started on Wednesday and concludes tomorrow.

At its stand, Meru County displayed traditional attires and artifacts. Tourism officer Tony Kimathi said the county is also taking advantage of the event to showcase the famous Rutundu Log Cabins where Prince William of UK proposed to his wife Kate.

Other sites on display included Ngare-Ndare Forest, Nyambene National Reserve and the rock of circumcised girl, Mr Kimathi said.

"Our aim is to woo visitors from the UK market as we bank on Prince William's visit," Mr Kimathi added.

"We are also showcasing our rich culture and artifacts that our forefathers cherished," he told the *Nation* at Leisure Lodge Resort in Diani which is hosting the expo.

Turkana was showcasing the Nariokatome archaeological site. Also on display were springs and white sand beaches on Lake Turkana.

Tourism officer David Naenyo said the county is also displaying three crater islands on Lake Turkana which are breeding areas for crocodiles, tilapia and flamingoes.

The county is also showcasing its culture and traditional items such as shoes, chairs, hats and milk gourds.

Meanwhile, Lake Magadi, Ngong Hills, Amboseli National Park and Nguruman Escarpment are top on the list of attractions in Kajiado

County. The county also displayed the caves at Mt Suswa and Ol Donyo Orok.

At the same time, shoes, bags, menu and ipad covers made from Nile Perch skin put Kisumu in the limelight.

The county also showcased fish from Lake Victoria including tilapia, omena, mud fish and smoked tilapia.

Attires used by Luo community traditional dancers, a traditional hat and cultural items are also on display.

County director of tourism Elizabeth Oduor said they are focusing on value addition to better products make from Nile Perch to pull tourists from around the world.

Ms Oduor said their products have impressed Italian tourists. "We hope to get foreign markets for the products. We are also showcasing products made from water hyacinth such as table mats and furniture," she said.

Kwale County is showcasing its popular Diani beach, Kisite-Mpunguti Marine Park where tourists can swim alongside dolphins.

The county has displayed their cultural heritage such as the kaya forests the Mijikenda elders have treasured for ages, Shimba Hills, a game reserve and eco-tourism.

Meanwhile, Lamu County is showcasing its popular Swahili culture, alluring white sand beaches and artifacts.

Kenya Tourism Board Managing Director Muriithi Ndegwa said some 35 countries from around the world were expected to participate in the fair.

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Tony Kimathi, Meru Tourism officer