Fair Trade Tourism joins forces with Botswana’s Ecotourism Certification System

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Fair Trade Tourism’s expanding footprint in southern Africa has been given a boost with the signing of a ground-breaking mutual recognition agreement (MRA) with Botswana Tourism Organisation’s Ecotourism Certification System.

Under the terms of the MRA, Fair Trade Tourism’s approved travel trade partners and tour operators can now incorporate the BTO’s Ecotourism certified businesses in their listings regarding products that can be included in Fair Trade Holidays - holiday packages that represent global best practice in responsible tourism.

The BTO Ecotourism certified products includes but is not limited to some of the world’s leading safari lodges and globally lauded African safari operators including Wilderness Safaris, &Beyond and Great Plains Conservation. Currently, the available products are:

- &Beyond Sandibe Okavango Safari Lodge;
- &Beyond Xaranna Okavango Delta Camp;
- &Beyond Xudum Okavango Delta Lodge;
- Abu Camp
- Banoka Bush Camp (Wilderness Safaris)
- Chobe Game Lodge (Desert & Delta Safaris);
- DumaTau Camp (Wilderness Safaris);
- Jacana Camp (Wilderness Safaris);
- Jao Camp (Wilderness Safaris);
- Kalahari Plains Camp (Wilderness Safaris)
- Kings Pool Camp (Wilderness Safaris)
- Kwetsani Camp (Wilderness Safaris);
- Leroo-La-Tau Lodge (Desert & Delta Safaris)
- Little Vumbura Camp (Wilderness Safaris);
Machaba Camp
Meno-A-Kwena Tented Camp
Mombo Camp (Wilderness Safaris);
Savuti Bush Camp (Wilderness Safaris);
Seba Camp (Wilderness Safaris);
Selinda Camp (Great Plains Conservation)
Selinda Explorers Camp (Great Plains Conservation)
Xigera Camp (Wilderness Safaris);
Zarafa Camp (Great Plains Conservation)

Designed to encourage and support tourism businesses in Botswana which demonstrate responsible and sustainable environmental, social and cultural ethics, the Botswana Ecotourism Certification System embodies a stringent set of performance standards founded on Botswana’s National Ecotourism Strategy of 2002.

The five pillars the system is built on are: minimising negative social, cultural and environmental impacts; maximising the involvement in and equitable distribution of economic benefits to host communities; maximising revenues for re-investment in conservation; educating both visitors and local people as to the importance of conserving natural and cultural resources and delivering a quality experience for tourists.

The system’s development was guided by the Botswana Tourism Policy (1990) and the Botswana Tourism Master Plan (2000) - which call for tourism in Botswana to be both ecologically and economically sustainable - and involved close co-operation with Botswana’s thriving tourism industry.

The Ecotourism level of certification is the highest of the system’s three tiers and reflects the products’ commitment to and involvement with local communities in developing tourism, conserving nature and managing the environment.

Fair Trade Tourism is a leading Southern African non-profit organisation promoting responsible tourism development. It grows awareness about responsible tourism to travellers, assists tourism businesses to operate more sustainably and facilitates a globally recognised certification programme. In 2011 its certification standard became the first in Africa to be recognised by the Global
Sustainable Tourism Council.

The organisation’s steady expansion into Africa through direct product certification and partnerships is positioning it at the forefront of the sub-continent's sustainable, responsible tourism efforts, showing both travel trade partners and independent travellers in key source markets that it is now possible to travel the "Fair Trade way" through direct product certification in Madagascar, Mozambique and South Africa, as well as through mutual recognition partnerships in Seychelles, Tanzania, Namibia and now Botswana.

“Fair Trade Tourism is delighted to be formally associated with the Botswana Tourism Organisation and its robust Ecotourism Certification System through this MRA,” says the organisation’s managing director, Nivashnee Naidoo.

“The products certified by the system are recognised the world over for their commitment to people and planet and for their work helping to conserve Botswana’s incredible natural and cultural heritage. So it is exciting that these products can now be featured in Fair Trade Holiday packages,” she adds.

“As pioneers in sustainable and authentic ecotourism, we are extremely proud to have worked closely with BTO over the years to develop these high ecotourism standards, and look forward to the further promotion of responsible tourism that this new MRA with Fair Trade Tourism will encourage”, says Wilderness Safaris Chief Marketing Officer, Chris Roche.

“Both BTO and Fair Trade Tourism’s efforts mirror our ongoing commitment to our 4Cs sustainability ethos of commerce, conservation, community and culture, and we are fully supportive of all efforts that promote and pioneer best practice in our industry”.

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