

CELEBRATING WORLD TOURISM DAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2024 WITH MEMORIES OF BAVARIA

On World Tourism Day, we should consider peace, coalition, destination development and the continuous creation of a common good and balance for the future.

There is no topical word these days other than 'sustainability'. During this month, Sustainable Tourism Enthusiasts from the East African countries of Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda visited Bavaria. This was by invitation of Bildungswerk der Bayerischen Wirtschaft (bbw) an educational institution based in Bavaria, who invited East Africans in the tourism sector to attend a technical seminar on Sustainable Tourism. EAC participants paid their air tickets and visa fees while bbw covered the rest of the costs.

A seminar like this will create a common understanding between East Africa's host countries and European tourist-source countries by exploring the concept of sustainable tourism together, as demonstrated in the prosperous state of Bavaria.

Bavaria combines beautiful landscapes with a prosperous economy characterised by diverse large industries such as BMW, Siemens, and Audi. The state has famous vibrant festivals and cultural events, with Oktoberfest being the biggest and most renowned worldwide. Traditional Bavarian cuisine is also a highlight, featuring dishes like pretzels, sausage, and beers.

I was a participant in the seminar, and I would like to list a few of the things I learned during the seminar. One was the experience of long destination flights. There was advanced infrastructure development and diversity of attractions which work to enhance visitor tourism enjoyment. Observation of image formation, including the value of Bavaria's stunning landscapes and comparing them to East Africa's Lake Victoria, the Masai steppes, and the Mountains of Western Uganda. We also learned of the power of domestic tourism and the contribution of the private sector and government in enhancing sustainable development of the massive domestic tourism, which stands at 80% compared to international tourism, standing at 20%. People and tourists are increasingly concerned about climate change and have a big interest in sustainable tourism.

We visited the town of Bodenmais to hear about its tourism development and learnt how they started from scratch in the not-too-far past. The community turned to developing tourism after the glass industry, its source of income collapsed. The government and the community worked together by bringing in tourists on the train to the remote area, and the farmers would take tourists to their homes from where they stayed but went to visit neighbouring attractions. This way tourism money went directly into the community.

We saw an emphasis on ecological behaviour, including large-scale harnessing of solar energy from extensive fields of solar panels along roadsides and on roofs of houses. We saw examples of avoiding food and energy waste inc. examples of smaller menus in hotels and at celebrations to avoid extravagant waste. We saw the emphasis and use of public transport. In the Bavarian Forest, we saw tree top walks as a combination of public and private sector investment and exemplary ecological behaviour. In the Bavarian Forest, we experienced information dissemination through well-researched museums and local walks to visit animal enclosures and learn the history of the bark beetle menace. The various tourism offers helped to avoid over tourism in one area of the forest.

We also saw competition and cooperation between Bavaria and neighbouring countries Austria and the Czech Republic. We attended talks on the value of marketing, Fam tours of big tour operators, the value of tourism associations, and the importance of helping the youth grow. We also saw tourism benefits going into the local communities.

At the end of the seminar, we received certificates of participation. We came back home inspired, empowered, and networked. I see the SGR train and large new ships like the upcoming MV Mwanza on Lake Victoria as catalysts to enhanced tourism development. The concept of inviting tourists to stay in the homes of local families was also an eye-opener to explore new ways of inexpensive tourism destination development. In conclusion, as East Africans, we need a unifying concept to market the region and Africa in general.

HAPPY WORLD TOURISM DAY AWOTTA!

Mary Kalikawe

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