

## Tourism revival possible

The government's Sh11 billion package to revive tourism is a godsend to an ailing industry. After a particularly bad period compounded by insecurity and travel advisories by Western nations, the industry is beginning to look up. Coastal tourism, which has been at its lowest ever is now witnessing some excitement.

There has been an increase in tourist arrivals, with the visitors defying warnings against travel to our coastal resorts. The ongoing annual wildebeest migration has been a huge boost to the Maasai Mara, with spillovers into other game parks. Recent high-profile meetings in Nairobi, including the Tokyo International Conference on African Development and Unctad, have been a boon to hotels and tour operators.

A fund to offer affordable loans for hotel renovations and the pledge to pump Sh1.5 billion into marketing are laudable initiatives. However, the biggest lesson is the need to diversify the sector. Reliance on coastal and game attractions and foreign tourists is rather risky. Other streams must be explored. These include the potentially lucrative western circuit, the northwestern region to Lake Turkana, and domestic tourism. Encouraging Kenyans to visit tourist attractions and travel to other places to know their country better is a potentially more reliable and sustainable source of earnings.

### A PUBLICATION OF THE NATION MEDIA GROUP

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Published at Nation Centre, Kimathi Street and printed at Mombasa Road, Nairobi by Nation Media Group Limited  
POB 49010, Nairobi 00100  
editor@ke.nationmedia.com

Registered at the GPO as a newspaper



**MBUGUA**

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The new rules published this week, which require cigarette manufacturers to publish graphic health warnings on the effects of tobacco use on their packs will no doubt go a long way in discouraging smoking, especially among the young and impressionable.

However, for them to be effective, agencies will need to enforce them robustly if we are to create a healthier and tobacco-free society.

Studies have shown a direct correlation between an increase in smoking and a reduction in life expectancy. Prof Angus Deaton, author of *The Great Escape: Health, Wealth, and the Origins of Inequality*, warns that lung cancer "is most strongly associated with cigarette smoking because very few people who die of lung cancer did not smoke".

He also points out that lung cancer cases start showing up about 30 years after an increase in smoking trends.

"The mortality from smoking continues long after the behaviour has changed," warns the scholar, who won the Nobel Prize for economics last year and who has also linked smoking to a rise in cardiovascular diseases.

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