

FHTA-MDF partnership to support sustainable tourism in Fiji

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The Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association (FHTA) and Australian Government's Market Development Facility (MDF) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to support national efforts to grow sustainable tourism opportunities.

Despite the global challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Fiji's tourism industry has shown remarkable resilience, with tourism arrivals surpassing pre-pandemic figures in 2023. Amidst this recovery, a key emerging trend among travellers is the desire for more sustainable travel and experiences.

While tourism is essential to Fiji's economy, it remains vulnerable to natural disasters. To strengthen the sector's resilience, investing in climate change adaptation by resource owners and the private sector is vital. The increasing demand for eco-friendly tourism also presents an opportunity for operators to invest in climate change mitigation, which can benefit them in the long run.

Through the MDF partnership, the FHTA will conduct an assessment among its members to better understand the current state of sustainable practices, their level of awareness and demand for green certification.

"We're pleased to collaborate with MDF on this important initiative, which will provide invaluable insights into the awareness, challenges, and opportunities for growing Fiji's sustainable tourism sector in line with our Fiji Tourism Sustainability Plan," said CEO of FHTA, Fantasha Lockington, at the signing.

"As an industry, we must adapt to meet the demand for travel while also ensuring we preserve our natural and cultural heritage. By embracing sustainable tourism practices and aligning with international standards, we not only safeguard our environment but also create memorable and authentic experiences for travellers," said Ms Lockington.

According to a recent sustainable travel report by popular online travel agency Booking.com, around 76 per cent of global travellers desire more authentic, eco-friendly and sustainable experiences.

Fiji's Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation also recently announced the development of the National Sustainability Framework, with its strategic foundation established through stakeholder consultations. The 10-year framework aims to provide a roadmap to revitalise and enhance the Fijian tourism industry's competitive positioning and anticipate future needs.

The Australian Government recognises the important role that tourism plays in Fiji's economy. "We are pleased to be working with government and the private sector to build a sustainable tourism sector, with increased resilience to climate change", said Emily Wilson, Acting Counsellor, Australian High Commission, at the signing.

"As the leading industry body representing hotels, resorts, and other tourism stakeholders such as activity providers, marinas and yachting agents, FHTA plays a crucial role in informing and implementing the framework. The findings of this assessment will provide extensive insight from tourism stakeholders to support this work, informing actions to protect ecosystems, promote cultures and nurture sustainable investments", said Ms Wilson.

"Access to key data and insights is vital to inform strategic industry decisions to maximise opportunities to grow Fiji's sustainable tourism offering based on the emerging trends post-pandemic. We are delighted to partner with FHTA to support this work," said MDF Country Director Kelera Cavuilati.

The assessment is expected to begin in May.

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