



AZTA NEWSLETTER

Celebrating Collaboration & Progress

END OF YEAR EDITION



WELCOME NOTE

Dear AZTA Members and Industry Partners,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this end of year edition of the AZTA Newsletter. As we reflect on the past few months, I am encouraged by the collaboration, dedication, and resilience shown across our travel and tourism community. Our industry continues to evolve, and AZTA remains committed to representing your interests and fostering unity across all sectors.

This season has seen us actively engaging with key stakeholders through various meetings and consultative platforms, ensuring that the voice of the travel agent remains present and heard. We celebrated excellence at the AZTA Awards, added our voice to meetings with our Ministry of Tourism, ZIDA, ACZ to name just a few, participated in the vibrant Sangana/Hlanganani Expo, and proudly represented Zimbabwe as we hosted AESATA 2025 Conference in Harare at the Rainbow Hotel. These engagements remind us of the strength we have when we come together with a shared purpose.



We also contributed to the national budget discussions, advocating for policies that support sustainable tourism growth. The recent reduction of tourism levies by government is a positive step for our industry, and we remain hopeful that continued dialogue will lead to further reforms that benefit both operators and travellers.

As we look ahead to 2026, AZTA remains focused on strengthening partnerships, promoting professionalism within our sector, and creating platforms that add value to our members. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to each of you for your continued support, commitment, and contribution to the growth of our industry. Together, we will continue to build a strong, collaborative, and forward-looking travel community.

I wish you all a happy festive season and a great year ahead,
Happy selling!!!

JOYCE NYABVURE
AZTA CHAIRLADY



2025 EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

AZTA AWARDS 2025

This year's AZTA Awards brought the vibrant spirit of the 80's Disco Fever theme to life, making it another memorable celebration of excellence within Zimbabwe's travel industry. We were thrilled by the strong turnout and deeply appreciate the participation and enthusiasm from all our members and partners.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to the success of the AZTA Awards 2025. Your energy and support made the evening truly special. Congratulations to all our winners — your dedication, professionalism, and commitment to service continue to inspire the entire industry. We are proud to celebrate your achievements.

We extend our sincere appreciation to **all our sponsors**, whose generous contributions enabled us to deliver a remarkable event. Your support also helped make the raffle one of the best and most anticipated in the country.

Our gratitude also goes to all the service providers who played a part in bringing this event to life. Thank you for helping us create a night to remember.



80'S DISCO FEVER



SANGANAI TOURISM EXPO



For travel agents, the expo offered meaningful engagement with airlines, hotels, tourism boards, and destination partners, helping strengthen product knowledge and broaden market access. AZTA held several conversations around improving collaboration across the value chain, enhancing booking efficiencies, and ensuring that travel agents remain central to distribution channels.

This year's Sanganaai/Hlanganani Expo marked an exciting new chapter as the event was hosted for the first time in Mutare at the Mutare Sports Club. The new venue brought a fresh atmosphere to the expo, with exhibitors and delegates gradually warming to the space. While it may take a bit more time for the setting to fully settle into the identity of Sanganaai, the positive reception and strong participation signaled a promising start for future editions in the Eastern Highlands.



AESATA CONFERENCE 2025-ZIM EDITION



Zimbabwe Hosts the AESATA 2025 Conference in Harare

Zimbabwe proudly hosted the 2025 Association of Eastern and Southern Africa Travel Agents (AESATA) Conference from 3–4 October at the Rainbow Towers Hotel in Harare. The event, hosted by the Association of Zimbabwe Travel Agents (AZTA)— brought together about 180 delegates from 17 countries, including participants from Eastern and Southern Africa, the United States, Germany, and Nigeria.

Held under the theme “Connect, Collaborate and Co-Create,” the conference provided a dynamic platform for industry leaders to exchange insights, strengthen partnerships, and explore innovative strategies for advancing regional tourism. Discussions centred on collaboration, digital transformation, and building a shared vision for Africa’s travel future.



The conference was officially opened by the **Honourable Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry, Barbara Rwodzi**, who applauded AZTA and AESATA for bringing this prestigious gathering to Zimbabwe and emphasized the importance of innovation and partnership in driving destination growth.

As a proud member of AESATA, AZTA continues to represent Zimbabwe’s travel agents and currently has nearly 100 member agencies, with a commitment to growing and strengthening the local travel trade. AZTA extends heartfelt appreciation to all partners and sponsors, especially our platinum sponsor Stanbic Bank Zimbabwe, whose support was instrumental to the success of the event.



Hosting AESATA 2025 showcased Zimbabwe’s renowned hospitality and reaffirmed the nation’s capacity to host major international tourism events — a proud milestone for AZTA and the wider tourism industry.



AESATA CONFERENCE IN PICTURES



AESATA CONFERENCE IN PICTURES



MEETINGS ATTENDED



Parliamentary Portfolio Committee Meeting

Through the Tourism Business Council of Zimbabwe (TBCZ), AZTA took part in the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee discussions on the Tourism Bill and the mid-term budget review. Key issues relevant to the travel trade were highlighted, including:

- High operating costs driven by multiple licences and taxes, which continue to burden formal travel agents.
- Growth of the grey market, which distorts sector data and creates unfair competition for compliant agencies.
- Airline access challenges, with high parking and landing fees limiting airline presence and affecting route diversity available to agents.
- Infrastructure gaps, particularly roads and airports, which hinder destination connectivity and reduce itinerary options for travellers.

The Committee recognised the need for stronger engagement with industry players and signalled plans for capacity-building sessions for parliamentarians. AZTA will continue working through TBCZ to ensure the travel agency sector remains well-represented as the Tourism Bill progresses.

CEAV 8th Summit – Jaén, Spain

AZTA was honoured to participate in the CEAV 8th Summit of Travel Agencies Associations held in Jaén, Spain, from 5–7 November 2025. Hosted with the support of the Andalusian Regional Government, the Jaén County Council, and the Jaén City Council, the summit brought together travel associations from across the world. The gathering provided a valuable platform to exchange global experiences, share best practices, and engage in discussions on key issues shaping the travel industry today. AZTA's participation ensured that Zimbabwe's travel sector remained represented in conversations around emerging challenges, strengthening collaboration, and advancing the future of travel worldwide.

Meeting with ZIDA

AZTA engaged with the Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency (ZIDA) to discuss several industry matters affecting the travel agency community. The conversation focused on promoting a fair and orderly operating environment for all travel service providers, including the need for consistent standards in market conduct.

AZTA highlighted concerns regarding the rapid increase of foreign-based agencies and the impact this has on local market dynamics, data accuracy, and long-term sector stability. The emphasis was on the importance of clear regulatory frameworks that support genuine investment while ensuring that local travel agents operate within a competitive and transparent landscape.

The discussion was constructive, with both parties acknowledging the need for continued collaboration to strengthen the sector and maintain the integrity of Zimbabwe's travel ecosystem.



MEETINGS ATTENDED CONT'

ACZ & NHS STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

AZTA participated in the Airports Company of Zimbabwe (ACZ) Strategic Workshop, where we contributed perspectives from the travel trade and reaffirmed the importance of collaboration across the aviation and tourism ecosystem. Our submission acknowledged the progress being made at various airports, including ongoing improvements at RG Mugabe International, Charles Prince, and others. We encouraged continued focus on key priorities such as expediting the Kariba Airport upgrade, extending operating hours in Bulawayo and Victoria Falls, and ensuring stronger alignment among government agencies when engaging international airlines. We also emphasized the importance of service excellence and continuous customer-care training across all airport touchpoints to enhance the traveller experience.

AZTA also engaged with the National Handling Services (NHS) at their stakeholder meeting. While commending NHS for ongoing improvements, we highlighted areas that require further attention to ensure seamless passenger processing. These included peak-hour congestion at security and check-in, the need to uphold service integrity, and safety concerns relating to certain toilet door locks near check-in areas. We also noted issues around baggage handling, especially delays and inconsistencies in priority tagging, and encouraged continuous customer service refresher programmes to maintain professionalism at every stage of the traveller journey.

AZTA remains committed to working closely with ACZ, NHS, and the wider aviation and tourism partners to strengthen accessibility, enhance service quality, and position Zimbabwe as a competitive and welcoming travel destination.

HAZ CONGRESS 2025

AZTA attended the recently concluded Hospitality Association of Zimbabwe (HAZ) Congress, which brought together sector leaders to reflect on the future of tourism in Zimbabwe. The discussions centred on collaborative approaches to sustainable tourism development, with participants highlighting the importance of working collectively to strengthen the entire tourism value chain.

Key conversations also explored emerging industry trends and the growing role of technology in transforming travel and hospitality. Speakers underscored that while the sector has no shortage of ideas, real progress will depend on deliberate action and consistent execution. AZTA remains committed to contributing to these industry-wide efforts and ensuring that travel agents continue to play a meaningful role in shaping the future of tourism.





Tourism Levies and Licensing Fees Reduced

In late August, the tourism sector welcomed government's decision to significantly reduce a range of levies, taxes, and permits — with some set to be lowered by up to 50% and others removed altogether. This move is expected to improve Zimbabwe's competitiveness and ease some of the cost pressures faced by operators.

From a travel industry perspective, these adjustments are viewed as an important step toward strengthening viability across the sector. The reduction of multiple fees that had previously weighed heavily on operators will help improve the operating environment and enhance the country's appeal in comparison to regional destinations.

Industry leaders also noted that the full benefits will be realised once the new measures are formalised through the required Statutory Instruments. Stakeholders remain hopeful that this process will be completed promptly to allow operators to experience tangible relief.

There is also continued advocacy for broader improvements in tourism infrastructure — particularly in key access routes and airports — to support seamless connectivity and drive increased domestic and international arrivals.

The sector has expressed its readiness to work closely with government in shaping the forthcoming Tourism Policy (2026–2030), ensuring that future frameworks are inclusive, practical, and aligned with the needs of the **industry**.

Tourism Tops National GDP Growth

Tourism has emerged as Zimbabwe's strongest economic performer, a milestone highlighted at the 2025 Hospitality Summit. Speaking on behalf of the Minister of Tourism and Hospitality, Hon. Barbara Rwodzi, Permanent Secretary Mr. Takaruza Munyanyiwa noted that the sector has reached "a historic moment," strengthened by global recognition such as **Forbes Magazine naming Zimbabwe the Best Country to Visit in 2025**.

With tourism now surpassing mining and agriculture in its contribution to GDP growth, the call to action is clear: the industry must continue innovating, collaborating, and investing in service excellence to sustain this momentum. The recent accolades reflect Zimbabwe's rising profile on the global stage — and underscore the collective responsibility to maintain the country's competitive edge.

ASB Hospitality set to expand footprint in Zimbabwe

According to a recent Herald article, ASB Hospitality LLC of the United Arab Emirates is set to deepen its investment in Zimbabwe's tourism sector after signing a share purchase agreement with First Capital Bank to acquire its stake in Makasa Sun (Pvt) Ltd — the company that owns the former Kingdom Hotel in Victoria Falls. This follows ASB Hospitality's earlier investment in 2019, when it purchased and upgraded The Meikles Hotel, now operating as Hyatt Regency Harare – The Meikles.

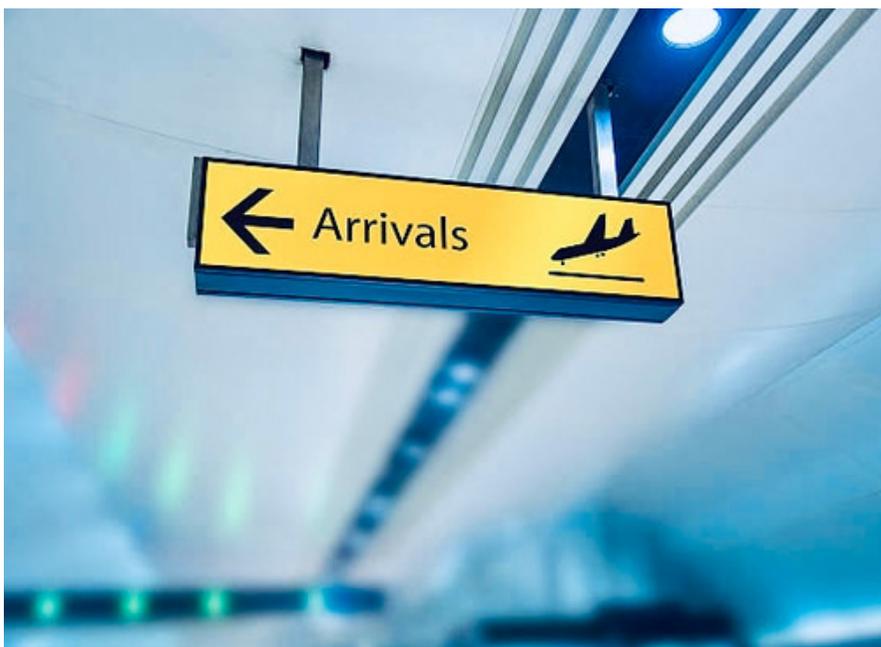
The acquisition positions ASB to take full ownership of the Victoria Falls property, which has been closed since early 2023 and is expected to reopen under a new brand once the deal is finalised. The move reflects growing investor confidence in Zimbabwe's tourism industry, which is experiencing strong post-pandemic recovery, improved international arrivals, and renewed global recognition.

NEWS UPDATES CONT'

Tourist Arrivals Show Strong Rebound

Zimbabwe has recorded an estimated 1.6 million international tourist arrivals so far this year – one of the fastest post-Covid recoveries in the region. This growth reflects renewed global confidence in Destination Zimbabwe, especially compared to the pandemic low of 375,799 arrivals in 2021.

The United States has now emerged as Zimbabwe's leading source market, surpassing the UK and Germany, driven by increasing interest in the country's wildlife, culture and natural attractions. With improving air connectivity, infrastructure investments and stronger marketing efforts, the tourism sector is entering a decisive growth phase. Authorities expect a surge in festive-season travel as government activates a coordinated approach to ensure smooth visitor experiences.



CONGRATULATIONS

to

HON. BARBARA RWODZI

ON HER APPOINTMENT AS

**VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE
UN TOURISM GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**



**REPRESENTING
AFRICA**

Harare–Beitbridge Highway Upgrade Enters Home Stretch, Authorities Report

Authorities confirmed that the Harare–Beitbridge Highway rehabilitation is now in its final stages, with just 53.2km left to complete. The Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development announced the opening of a newly completed 3km four-lane stretch at Ngundu, bringing the total finished distance to an impressive 528.8km.

The ministry highlighted this progress as a major milestone in government's infrastructure modernisation efforts, noting that the long-awaited project has now entered the home stretch. The newly opened Ngundu section is already easing movement along this crucial regional corridor.-(source - Newsday online)

2026 UPCOMING EVENTS

As we move into a new year, AZTA is pleased to share a **preview** of a few events scheduled for 2026 (Dates to follow). These form the foundation of what promises to be an active and engaging calendar, focused on strengthening our industry and creating meaningful platforms for collaboration. Beyond these listed activities, members can look forward to additional workshops, stakeholder engagements, and sector-wide initiatives that will be announced in due course – all designed to support growth, elevate professionalism, and address emerging needs within the travel community.

As we prepare for the 2026 AZTA Awards, we invite our members to share any suggestions regarding award categories or improvements they would like to see. Your insights help us shape an event that truly reflects the evolving landscape of our industry. Please send your contributions to info@azta.co.zw.

With your continued support and participation, 2026 promises to be a year of progress, innovation, and collective impact for the travel and tourism sector.

FEB	BSP TRAINING
MARCH	AZTA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
MAY	AZTA CHARITY GOLF DAY
JUNE	AZTA WINTER DRIVE
SEPT	AZTA ANNUAL AWARDS

COMPLIANCE REMINDERS AHEAD OF THE NEW YEAR

REMEMBER TO COMPLY

As we approach the new year, it's important to take a moment to ensure that your business is fully compliant with the necessary regulations. Here are key compliance reminders to help you start the coming year on the right foot:

- **City Health Certificate:** The City Health Certificate, which can also be paid in ZWL at the bank rate of the day. Please ensure your certificate is up to date for operational compliance.
- **Fire Compliance:** Ensure your business meets fire safety regulations, including the provision of fire extinguishers and other required safety measures.
- **ZIMRA Tax Clearance:** It's essential to display your valid tax clearance certificate to avoid penalties. Also, confirm that your information has been migrated to the new ZIMRA TaRMS system for full tax compliance.
- **ZTA Licenses:** Timely renewal of your Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) licenses is crucial, as late payments will result in penalties.
- **AZTA Membership:** Don't forget to renew your AZTA membership for \$150usd.

CODE OF CONDUCT



A reminder to all AZTA members to uphold the Code of Conduct, ensuring ethical behavior, professionalism, and adherence to legal requirements. Display your AZTA, IATA, and ZTA certifications prominently, and ensure all advertised prices include VAT and related charges in line with Zimbabwean law. Let's collectively maintain the highest industry standards.

**WE WISH YOU A GREAT FESTIVE SEASON
AND A PROSPEROUS 2026**

*Happy
Holidays*

