

# 2023

## World Africa Day

Improving Intra-African  
Mobility for Greater Good



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READ



**Why is it so difficult for Africans to travel within Africa?** Thursday May 25th, 2023 was the World Africa Day; and doubles as the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the African Union (AU). The 2023 World Africa Day (hashtag #OurAfricaOurFuture) was another opportunity for Africa and Africans globally to reflect on the major successes, milestones, challenges, and way forward for the continent; from AfCFTA to [Agenda 2063](#). With an estimated population of over [1.4 billion](#) people (17% of the global population) across 54 countries, the need for intra-African resource mobility has become elevated. Africans living in Africa face peculiar travel restrictions within Africa, with many African countries ranking very low on the AU's Visa Openness Index. Africans still require a visa for [47% of intra-African travel](#). Recent (2016) research by the African Development Bank (AfDB) concluded that North Americans have easier travel access to the continent than Africans themselves. The [Africa Visa Openness Index 2022](#) revealed that only three African countries – Benin, The Seychelles, The Gambia allow visa-free access to all Africans; whilst 24 countries offer e-visas compared to nine countries in 2016. Amidst the obvious challenges of poverty, insecurity and infrastructure bottlenecks, the economic gains of facilitating easy movement of people across the continent are enormous.

Africa will reap great economic development gains from improved interconnectedness. The progress made in digital interconnectedness (internet penetration rate grew from 1% in 2000 to 36% in 2021) must now be complemented by easing the restrictions to free movement of people and resources within the continent. A [study](#) on the benefits of liberalizing air transport between 12 African countries showed that complete air connectivity would add US\$ 1.3 billion to Africa's GDP, create over 155,000 new jobs and fare savings of between 25% to 35% (worth US\$ 500 million); in addition to creating five million new passengers, greater convenience, and time savings. The table below highlights the key economic benefits of hassle-free intra-African travel:

<b>Economic growth and job creation</b>	Increased intra-African travel stimulates tourism-related businesses, leading to the creation of employment opportunities and economic growth.
<b>Cultural exchange and diversity</b>	Intra-African travel encourages cultural exchange, fostering greater understanding and appreciation of the diverse cultures and traditions within Africa.
<b>Regional Integration, peace, and stability</b>	Intra-African travel strengthens regional integration efforts, promoting closer economic ties, cooperation, and collaboration among African countries.
<b>Infrastructure development</b>	Promoting intra-African travel drives the need for improved transportation infrastructure, including airports, roads, rail, and public transportation systems, benefiting both travellers and local communities.
<b>Knowledge and skills exchange</b>	Intra-African travel facilitates the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and skills among professionals, researchers, and students, fostering innovation and capacity building.
<b>Diaspora engagement</b>	Intra-African travel provides opportunities for the African diaspora to reconnect with their heritage, invest in local businesses, and contribute to the development of their home countries.
<b>Tourism revenue retention</b>	Encouraging intra-African travel allows African countries to retain tourism revenue within the continent, reducing dependence on external markets and boosting local economies.
<b>Sustainable Development</b>	Intra-African travel can support sustainable development initiatives by encouraging responsible tourism practices, environmental conservation, and community empowerment.

**Why do people travel?** Globally, people travel for many reasons depending on one's interests, age, circumstances, and personal preferences, from leisure and adventure purposes to mandatory business or health related trips. People take time off work and daily routine and take trips to a desired destination (natural landscapes, beaches, spas, resorts, etc.) where they can relax, explore, unwind, and rejuvenate. People sometimes need to travel for business and professional reasons such as conferences, meetings, trainings, networking, projects implementation, or seeking opportunities in different locations. Many people also take trips to historical sites, museums, and landmarks to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the past. Exploring the world's heritage and historical places can be both educational and enriching. Other reasons why people travel include sports, education, religion, cultural immersion, family reunification, amongst others.

Africans travel to experience the continents stunning landscapes, diverse ecosystems, and abundant wildlife (in countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, Zambia); experience stunning beaches and coastal retreats (destinations like Zanzibar in Tanzania, Seychelles, Mauritius, and the Cape Peninsula in South Africa). Festivals and cultural events such as Cape Town Jazz Festival in South Africa, the Timkat Festival in Ethiopia and the Calabar Carnival in Nigeria attracts travellers from different parts of the continent. Also, Africa has multinational companies that have operations in several African countries necessitating work-and business-related travels. Some of these companies include Dangote Group (operates in Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania, etc), MTN Group (operates in South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, etc.), Standard Bank Group (South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Angola, etc). Egypt is significant for various religious related travels. The country is home to many important religious sites, such as the Coptic Christian monasteries in Wadi El Natrun and the Mount Sinai pilgrimage route. Additionally, Egypt is visited by many Muslims who come to see mosques like Al-Azhar Mosque and the Mosque of Ibn Tulun in Cairo.

Here are some of the major reasons why intra-African travel has been a nightmare for Africans.



## 1. Poor road and air infrastructure

Africa faces significant challenges in terms of road and air infrastructure, which have far-reaching implications for the continent's connectivity and development. Notably, the lack of dependable cross-border paved highways poses a major challenge to road travel across the continent. Most airports in Africa need expansion and equipment upgrades, hence the issues of congestion, safety concerns, flight delays, cancellations, and inconvenience for passengers. Additionally, limited connectivity between airports within the continent hampers intra-African travel, tourism, and trade. The ambitious Trans-African Highway (launched in the 1970s) is yet to record impressive progress due to lack of funding, poor coordination among multiple countries, security concerns, and geographical obstacles.



## 2. Ambiguous visa policies

Visa policies across most African states are characterized by ambiguity, inconsistency, and complexity, leading to less optimal outcomes for travel, trade, and regional integration. Travelers often encounter challenges when crossing the border due to vague documentation requirements for visa processing, corruption, and exploitation by immigration officers. This lack of clear visa regulations inhibits the movement of professionals, investors, and tourists across borders. Some countries have recognized the benefits of relaxed visa policies and have implemented visa-free or visa-on-arrival arrangements for citizens of specific African countries or regions. These laudable initiatives often experience limited success due to traveler identification challenges and implementation bottlenecks that often limit effectiveness.



## 3. High visa costs and lengthy processing times

The fees associated with obtaining visas for intra-African travel can be substantial, particularly for multiple-entry or long-term visas. When visa costs are excessive and processing times are prolonged, potential tourists may choose to visit other destinations that have more accessible and efficient visa processes, resulting in missed economic opportunities. Obtaining a visa for African countries often involves a complex application process, including gathering various documents, submitting applications to embassies or consulates, and waiting for approvals. Delays in visa processing can lead to missed opportunities, disrupted travel plans, and frustration for individuals and businesses alike.



## 4. High flights cost

The cost of air travel within the continent is often considerably higher compared to other regions of the world. This poses significant challenges to regional connectivity, tourism, and economic growth. For [example](#), flights between two of the continent's biggest commercial cities - Lagos and Kinshasa, – require at least one connecting flight with tickets costing as high as \$1,000. In contrast, flights from Europe to most African cities are cheaper despite the longer distances. Out of Africa's 54 countries, only 13 have [direct flights](#) to at least 20 African countries. Reasons for the high flight costs range from high operational costs due to poor airport infrastructure, limited competition, connectivity challenges, foreign exchange risks, amongst others.



## 5. Security challenges

Most Sub-Saharan African countries score low on various safety and security parameters which in turn has negatively affected their relative attractiveness for leisure, study, and business travel. Cross border road travel in some countries is practically impossible due the fear of kidnapping, armed robbery, and terrorism; even as the airports are dotted with multidimensional security issues. These challenges are compounded by endless inter and intra state conflicts and political unrest.

**What is Africa doing collectively to promote intra-African travel?** Africa's [Agenda 2063](#) ("The Africa we want") has some interesting policy initiatives such as the [Single African Air Transport Market \(SAATM\)](#) which aims to create a single air transport market in Africa to advance the continent's social, economic, and political integration. The SAATM agreement has been signed by [35 African countries](#) and currently has 15 African airlines as partners. As a result of this initiative, Ethiopia currently offers visa on arrival to all Africans, even as Ethiopian Airlines flew to more than 60 destinations across Africa in 2018. Agenda 2063 also has the Free Movement Protocol which intends to birth the African Union Passport that gives the owner visa-free access to the continent's 54 countries. As of [January 2021](#), 32 African countries had signed the agreement while four countries had fully ratified the Protocol. Furthermore, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) kicked off on 1st January 2021, and aimed at enabling free flow of goods and services across the continent. As of October 2022, only [eight out of 54](#) African countries have started trading under the AfCFTA agreement while [46 countries](#) have ratified the agreement as at June 2023. Another notable progress was the Africa Visa Openness Index (AVOI) which measures the extent to which African countries are open to visitors from other African countries. The index analyses each country's visa requirements to showcase countries on the continent that facilitate travel to their territory.



## What more can African states do to promote Intra-African travel?

Whilst the African Union continue to drive initiatives contained in Agenda 2063, each African state must be deliberate about implementing complementary policies that facilitate connectivity, integration, cultural exchange, and regional cross-border travel. We suggest six key policy priorities that African countries may drive to help build a more connected Africa through travel.

**1. Accelerate digital transformation and high-speed internet penetration.** Digital transformation has the potential to revolutionise the travel and tourism industry in Africa, enhancing visa issuance process, visitor identification, payments processing, communication, security, and general visitor experience. Strategic intervention areas include expansion of 3G/4G broadband coverage, geo-mapping of the continent, investment in digital talents, etc. The resultant transformative impact would come in the form of efficient e-visa platforms, secured online flight booking and payment systems, online destination discoveries, fast and reliable internet connections in both the cities and rural areas, digital platforms for effective destination marketing, mobile applications and virtual experiences for travellers, digital security systems, and many other upsides.

**2. Invest in regional transportation infrastructure, particularly air, road, and intermodal connectivity.** Governments need to improve local airport facilities, expand regional airport hubs to international standards, invest in high-speed rail transportation, and build efficient road networks to connect border towns to major cities and remote regions. Innovative financing mechanisms (such as Public-Private Partnerships, climate finance, non-interest finance, electronic tolls, etc.) can be deployed towards transport projects that aim to improve cross-border transportation links. Joint and coordinated critical transport infrastructure projects can be executed at regional levels (such as ECOWAS, SADC, EAC) to facilitate connectivity within the sub-regions and help open opportunities for broader inter-regional connectivity.

**3. Eliminate ambiguities and bureaucracies in visa application and processing:** There is need to simplify visa procedures and eliminate artificial barriers Africans face when making a visa application. More visa on arrival for Africans, visa-free regional blocs, multi-year visas, simplified visa application processes and improved access to visa application information will go a long way. Also, African states need to support the implementation of the African Union passport which should eliminate traveller identification bottlenecks during visa processing. Governments can also review visa fee structures and consider lower fees for tourism, study, and business-related visas where applicable. Simplifying application processes, implementing online visa application systems, and improving the efficiency of visa processing can help reduce delays.

**4. Develop and promote the tourism sector.** While tourist facilities are fairly developed in some African countries, the sector is neglected across most African countries. Africa's growing middle class and its soaring population of young travellers are hungry for adventure. African governments need to invest in the tourism sector and create an environment that is conducive for private sector players to innovate and flourish. Africa has rich natural beauty, history, and culture around which a vibrant tourism industry could be developed as a boost to the relative attractiveness of many African cities. Governments across Africa need to focus on developing local tourist destinations and market them to international audience, collaborate with international partners to host festivals, invest in tourism infrastructure through private partnerships, and preserve the continent's natural and cultural heritage.

**5. Build stronger regional partnerships and stakeholder collaboration.** Governments need to collaborate actively with other African countries, tourism boards, airlines, travel agencies, insurance companies, international organisations, and other stakeholders to develop joint strategies and initiatives for promoting intra-African travel. This will facilitate more multilateral funding, strategic partnerships, more flight routes and knowledge-sharing platforms that will drive infrastructure development, learning and visa-free travel.

**6. Address poverty and income inequality.** Poverty in Africa is multidimensional and its impact on livelihoods is crucial for dealing with the issues of travel affordability, local community participation, safety issues and sustainability. As at 2021, Sub-Saharan Africa's GDP per capita was [\\$1,633.2](#), with an estimated 490 million people living under the poverty line of 1.90 PPP\$/day. Poverty and inequality restrict the ability of individuals from low-income backgrounds to engage in travel and tourism. Government must continue to empower the local communities with improved education, market access, better infrastructure, and employment opportunities so that more Africans can afford to explore the continent as they climb the income ladder.

Connectivity is an essential key to economic and political integration in Africa, and easy travel plays a strategic connectivity role. By addressing the challenges of poor infrastructure, regressive immigration policies, high visa costs and lengthy processing times, African countries can unlock tourism, trade, investment, and growth opportunities over the next decade. As Africans continue to reflect on "Our Africa Our Future" and the opportunities easy intra-African travel offers, it is instructive to always consider the travel needs of Africa's future generations who must be offered the opportunities to explore the continent and collaboratively innovate towards solving Africa's development challenges.



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## About Verraki

Verraki is a proudly African company partnering with enterprises and governments to accelerate the development and transformation of Africa by providing business solutions designed for Africa. We build and implement technology solutions for seemingly intractable challenges, provide advisory services to drive the capacity and motivation for change, and curate innovative ventures to unlock new sources of growth across our continent.

A fusion of two words: 'Versorium' (Latin for Turn Around) and 'Meraki' (Greek word used to describe the action of doing something with soul, creativity, pouring oneself into a task), Verraki aptly captures the essence of our company; to turn around African enterprises and governments via smart, future-focused solutions and business insights, new growth opportunities, helping to unleash their potential, turnaround their performance and achieve the seemingly impossible, with the sole goal of creating a better future for Africa.

We are committed to enabling the African (start-up) story by supporting high-impact socially-conscious entrepreneurs and catalysing self-sustaining enterprises and governments within the continent to deliver affordable services across critical sectors.

## Our Growth Optimisation Offering

The contemporary business environment is dramatically different from what it was ten years ago, and it continues to evolve at an increasing rate. Consumer trends, macroeconomic shifts, technological advances, changing competitive dynamics, climate change, supply chain disruptions, digitalisation and pandemics are accelerating the pace of change, leaving many businesses struggling to grow amidst the turbulence.

At Verraki, we understand client needs and provide innovative new approaches that help enterprises and governments to explore new market opportunities including expansion into new regions, identification of new channels, targeting of new customer segments, or even the creation of new product categories in a way that moves them from "surviving" to "thriving." Verraki develops and delivers the practical tools, frameworks, and organizational capabilities required to gain competitive advantage, and achieve sustainable growth, utilising customer insights, big data, and proprietary knowledge to achieve a deeper understanding of demand, customers, competitors, and opportunities.

Our seasoned executives and team have a broad range of multibillion-dollar P&L experience delivering long-term growth and optimisation vision, strategies, and management at global Fortune 500 companies.

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