

Zim hotels lure locals to make up for low international traffic

By [Dumisani Ndlela](#)

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Zimbabwe's hotel groups have embarked on an aggressive marketing campaign to woo locals into their hotels and lodges, as international concern on the country's crisis remains a major threat to international tourist arrivals.

The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority this year confirmed that 80% of hotel bookings in April alone had been cancelled after the US, the UK, Japan and South Korea issued warnings discouraging their citizens from visiting Zimbabwe due to tension and incidents of violence after the 29 March elections.

As talks for a political settlement between the ruling party and the opposition MDC led by Morgan Tsvangirai tottered on the brink of collapse, fears were that the tourism industry would again become the biggest casualty of the political and economic crisis, now in its ninth year.

As a result, most of the country's major hotel groups have launched special promotions targeted at locals, with discounts or prizes being offered to Zimbabweans staying at local hotels, as they seek to increase revenue streams affected by low international arrivals.

The Cresta Hospitality group of hotels, a subsidiary of the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange (ZSE)-listed TA Holdings, is offering a 20% discount on accommodation for locals staying at its hotels in Zimbabwe during the month of August.

The Rainbow Tourism Group (RTG), listed on the ZSE, has launched a competition, offering 5% accumulative discount on room rates per night. For example, for two nights, a visitor gets 5% off the previous discounted rate on the second day. The Accumulator Package, as it is called, is also offering a number of packages for visitors during the month of August.

African Sun, also listed on the ZSE, has launched a "Sun Power" promotion, in which Zimbabweans joining the Sun Rewards Club and making a minimum of 40 room night accommodation bookings at any of their local hotels and lodges stand a chance to win prizes, which include holidays to Dubai and South Africa, kitchen appliances, electrical gadgets and grocery hampers. The promotion is running from June 1 to November 30, 2008. The group is also offering discounts at most of its lodges and hotels during the month of August.

RTG, African Sun and Cresta Hospitality have recently increased their hotel investments across Africa to hedge themselves against the continued economic meltdown in Zimbabwe.

ABOUT DUMISANI NDLELA

Dumisani Ndlela is a Zimbabwean journalist specialising in business and financial reporting, with experience reporting on commodities, stock and financial markets, advertising, marketing and the media. He has previously reported from a number of regional countries as well as from the UK and Germany on commodities and regional integration. He can be contacted on dndlela@yahoo.co.uk.

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