



ARRIVALS · REVENUE · INFRASTRUCTURE GAP · 2030 TRAJECTORY

9-MONTH ARRIVALS

1.2M · tourists · April 2026

9-MONTH REVENUE

\$2B · Ministry of Tourism confirmed

ARRIVAL GROWTH

15% · 2025 · UN Tourism / BBC

2030 REVENUE TARGET

\$5B · vs \$2.49B in 2025 (Statista)

GOOD NUMBERS. REAL GAPS. BIG AMBITIONS.

Ethiopia's Tourism Sector in 2026: The Dine Initiative, the Revenue Gap, the Infrastructure Deficit, and What Genuine Competitiveness Actually Requires

<p>~\$1,667 Per-visitor spend <i>9-month data; competitive with Kenya and Rwanda</i></p>	<p>5x revenue Morocco comparison <i>On 16x arrivals; yield vs scale is Ethiopia's frame</i></p>	<p>Growing Hotels pipeline <i>But concentrated in Addis; thin outside capital circuits</i></p>	<p>\$4.8B GDP Pre-COVID peak <i>UNECA; what Ethiopia already achieved once before</i></p>
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KEY INDICATORS AT A GLANCE

1.2M International arrivals (9 months) <i>July 2025-March 2026; Ministry of Tourism, April 1 2026</i>	\$2B+ Tourism revenue (9 months) <i>Ministry of Tourism confirmed; ENA, April 1 2026</i>	15% Arrival growth in 2025 <i>UN Tourism data cited by BBC; April 2026</i>	\$2.49B Statista 2025 revenue projection <i>Full-year; 8.67% CAGR to \$3.77B by 2030</i>
~\$1,667 Per-visitor spend (est.) <i>Competitive with Kenya (\$1,950) and Rwanda (\$2,083)</i>	\$4.8B Pre-COVID tourism peak <i>GDP contribution; 1.4M arrivals (UNECA); already achieved</i>	\$5B+ UNECA 2030 target <i>Annual tourism contribution; 2 million+ arrivals</i>	\$13B Morocco revenue 2025 <i>19.8M visitors; 5x Ethiopia on 16x the arrivals</i>

01 THE HEADLINE AND WHAT IT ACTUALLY MEANS**1.2 Million Visitors. \$2 Billion Revenue. And the Distance to Real Competitiveness.**

The Ethiopian Ministry of Tourism reported on April 1, 2026, that the country had attracted more than 1.2 million international tourists in the first nine months of the fiscal year, generating upwards of \$2 billion in revenue. UN Tourism data, cited by the BBC in early 2026, confirmed Ethiopia as one of the world's fastest-growing tourism destinations, with international arrivals surging 15% in 2025. The WTTC has placed Ethiopia among the most promising tourism development countries globally. By any reading of short-term momentum, the numbers are genuine.

- ▶ **THE CONTEXT THESE NUMBERS NEED** Ethiopia's pre-COVID peak was not 1.2 million visitors and \$2 billion in revenue. It was 1.4 million arrivals and nearly \$4.8 billion in GDP contribution, according to UNECA. The 2026 nine-month figures, annualised, project a full-year arrival total around 1.6 million and a revenue figure approaching \$3.2 billion, which would represent a genuine recovery and then some. But it also means that seven years of the Dine initiative, six years of disruption recovery, and 15% growth rates are delivering a full-year revenue run rate that is roughly in line with where the sector was before COVID and conflict erased the gains.
- ▶ **THE PER-VISITOR YIELD PICTURE** The \$2 billion over 1.2 million visitors implies an average spend of approximately \$1,667 per international tourist over their Ethiopia visit. That figure is competitive: Kenya's international visitors spend approximately \$1,950 on average; Rwanda's approximately \$2,083. Morocco's visitors spend considerably less per head at approximately \$657 but Morocco attracts 19.8 million of them. Ethiopia's yield per visitor is not the problem. The problem is that the arrival base is still too small to generate the revenue scale the sector's ambitions require.
- ▶ **THE GROWTH RATES IN PERSPECTIVE** 15% growth in international arrivals sounds strong. It is, within the recovery context. But 15% of a 1.1 million base is 165,000 additional visitors. Morocco grew its arrivals by 14% in 2025 and added 2.4 million visitors. Tanzania attracts roughly 1.7 million visitors a year and earns around \$3 billion in revenue. Ethiopia at 1.6 million annualised visitors and \$3.2 billion in revenue is broadly comparable to Tanzania's scale, with a higher yield per visitor. The ceiling question is how Ethiopia grows from comparable-to-Tanzania to competitive-with-Kenya in the next four years, which is what the 2030 target implies.

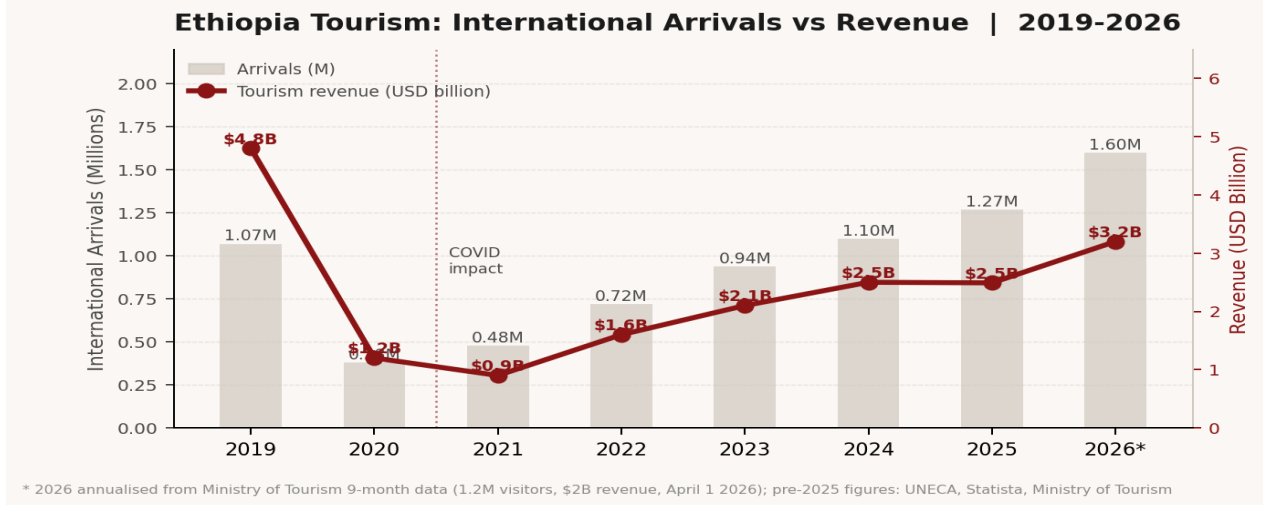


Figure 1: Ethiopia Tourism: International Arrivals vs Revenue | 2019-2026 | Sources: UNECA, Statista, Ministry of Tourism, ENA (April 1, 2026)

02 THE DINE INITIATIVE: WHAT SEVEN YEARS BUILT

Three Phases, Fifteen Sites, One Coherent Strategy and Its Limits

The Office of the Prime Minister marked seven years of the Dine initiative on January 18, 2026. Across three phases — Dine for Sheger, Dine for Nation, and Dine for Generation — the programme has constructed and refurbished a portfolio of tourism destinations that did not exist, or did not function at international standard, before 2019. The PMO described the initiative as anchored in the Medemer philosophy of shared ownership and collective benefit, prioritising sustainability, local materials, job creation, and heritage preservation. What has actually been built is worth assessing on its own terms.

- ▶ **DINE FOR SHEGER: THE ADDIS ABABA TRANSFORMATION** The first phase concentrated on the capital. Unity Park, Entoto Park, Friendship Park, the Sheger Riverside renewal, and the Science Museum converted Addis Ababa from a functional but aesthetically limited capital city into a destination with genuine attractions. Unity Park, which encompasses the Grand Palace, draws an estimated 500,000 visitors annually. Entoto's forested hillside provides the kind of accessible eco-tourism proximity to a capital that few African cities can offer. These are real assets and they explain why Addis Ababa now features in itineraries that previously used the city only as a transit hub.
- ▶ **DINE FOR NATION: CONNECTING THE CIRCUITS** The second phase took the model beyond Addis. Gorgora on Lake Tana in Amhara, Wonchi crater lake near Addis, the Elephant Paw Lodge at Koysa in the Omo Valley, Beynouna Village near Metehara (inaugurated by the PM in November 2024), and the Halala Kela historical site are the headline completions. These represent genuine additions to Ethiopia's tourism product: the Elephant Paw Lodge, built to international standards within Chebera Churchura National Park, is the kind of luxury wildlife accommodation that generates the high per-night yield that the sector needs more of. World Bank Country Director Maryam Slim commended its construction and its community benefit model.
- ▶ **DINE FOR GENERATION: THE ONGOING PHASE** The third phase is the least complete. Denbi Eco Lodge, which opened January 18, 2026, is the most recent inauguration. Located in a biodiversity-sensitive zone, it positions Ethiopia for the nature-based, ecologically conscious visitor segment that is growing fastest in the global outbound market. Shebelle, Lake Logo, a second phase at Gorgora, and a pipeline of sites under feasibility and construction are the remaining components. The pace of delivery in phase three is slower than the earlier phases, partly because the easiest locations have already been developed and partly because site-level security constraints are now more present in the planning process.

THE HONEST ASSESSMENT OF THE DINE PROGRAMME



The Dine initiative has done something real. It converted a country with world-class raw tourism assets and almost no tourism infrastructure into a country with some infrastructure and growing arrival numbers. That is not nothing. The limitation is that the programme has focused primarily on supply-side construction, and Ethiopia's binding constraint for the \$5 billion 2030 target is not the absence of destinations. It is the road access to existing destinations, the domestic aviation connectivity between them, the hotel capacity adjacent to them, and the trained hospitality workforce to serve visitors once they arrive.

Lalibela, the Simien Mountains, the Omo Valley, the Danakil Depression — these were extraordinary tourism assets before the Dine programme began. They remain extraordinary today. The gap between what they could generate and what they currently generate has more to do with a charter flight dependency, a thin accommodation base, and inconsistent service quality than with a shortage of prime ministerial initiatives.

Ethiopia's Dine Initiative Scorecard: Three Phases of Tourism Development

DINE FOR SHEGER 2019-2021 Addis Ababa	DINE FOR NATION 2022-2024 Regional sites	DINE FOR GENERATION 2024-ongoing New destinations
<p>Unity Park 500k+ annual visitors; flagship attraction <i>Completed</i></p> <p>Entoto Park Mountain forest eco-tourism <i>Completed</i></p> <p>Friendship Park Cultural + recreational centrepiece <i>Completed</i></p> <p>Science Museum STEM and public education <i>Completed</i></p> <p>Sheger Riverside Urban waterway + pedestrian renewal <i>Completed</i></p>	<p>Gorgora Lake Tana resort; Amhara region <i>Completed</i></p> <p>Wonchi Crater lake eco-resort; near Addis <i>Completed</i></p> <p>Koysha/Chebera Elephant Paw Lodge; Omo Valley <i>Completed</i></p> <p>Beynouna Village Near Metehara; PM inaugurated Nov 2024 <i>Completed</i></p> <p>Halala Kela Historical site; Rift Valley corridor <i>Completed</i></p>	<p>Denbi Eco Lodge Opened Jan 18, 2026; biodiversity focus <i>Open</i></p> <p>Shebelle Somali region; cultural + natural <i>Developing</i></p> <p>Lake Logo Rift Valley; under development <i>Developing</i></p> <p>Gorgora Phase 2 Expanded lake tourism capacity <i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>Pipeline Multiple sites in feasibility/construction <i>Forthcoming</i></p>

Sources: ENA (Feb 21, 2026); PMO social media (Jan 18, 2026); GCS.gov.et (Jan 18, 2026); Ministry of Tourism; AllAfrica; Fana Broadcasting

Figure 2: Ethiopia's Dine Initiative Scorecard: Three Phases of Tourism Development | Sources: ENA Feb 21, 2026; PMO Jan 18, 2026; GCS.gov.et Jan 2026; Ministry of Tourism

03 REVENUE, PEERS, AND THE 2030 GAP

The Math of Getting from \$2.5 Billion to \$5 Billion in Four Years

Statista projects Ethiopia's travel and tourism market at \$2.49 billion in 2025, with an 8.67% compound annual growth rate through 2030, implying a market volume of \$3.77 billion by 2030. UNECA's projection is more ambitious: \$5 billion in annual tourism contribution to GDP by 2030, with international arrivals exceeding 2 million. The government has adopted the UNECA framing as its stated target. Getting there requires either doubling arrival volume or significantly improving the value captured per visitor, or both.

- ▶ **THE ARRIVAL VOLUME SCENARIO** If Ethiopia grows arrivals at 15% annually from a 2025 base of approximately 1.27 million, it reaches approximately 2.56 million by 2030. At \$1,667 per visitor, that generates approximately \$4.27 billion, short of the \$5 billion target. Reaching \$5 billion on volume alone at current yield levels requires approximately 3 million visitors by 2030, implying average growth of approximately 18% annually for five consecutive years. Morocco managed that growth rate in 2025 on a much larger base. Ethiopia has never managed it for more than two consecutive years.
- ▶ **THE YIELD IMPROVEMENT SCENARIO** The more realistic path to \$5 billion runs through yield improvement rather than arrival volume alone. Ethiopia's current \$1,667 per visitor compares to Rwanda's \$2,083. Rwanda has invested heavily in long-haul luxury and business tourism, in conference infrastructure, and in high-margin gorilla trekking as an anchor product. If Ethiopia increases its per-



visitor yield to \$2,500, which Rwanda is approaching, then \$5 billion requires approximately 2 million visitors rather than 3 million. That yield improvement depends on more higher-category hotel capacity, longer average stays, and multi-destination circuit tourism replacing the current Addis-Lalibela-single-site pattern most budget itineraries follow.

- ▶ **THE CONFERENCE TOURISM OPPORTUNITY** Ethiopia hosts the African Union headquarters, over 100 international organisations, and more diplomatic missions than almost any African country. Conference and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) tourism is a segment where Ethiopia has a built-in structural advantage that the Ministry of Tourism has identified but not yet fully converted. According to the International Congress and Convention Association's 2023 report cited by the Ministry, Ethiopia, despite being the third most diplomatic country in the world, significantly underperforms its peer group in conference arrivals. This segment generates high per-night yields, fills mid-week hotel capacity, and creates reputational spillover into leisure tourism when delegates extend their stays.

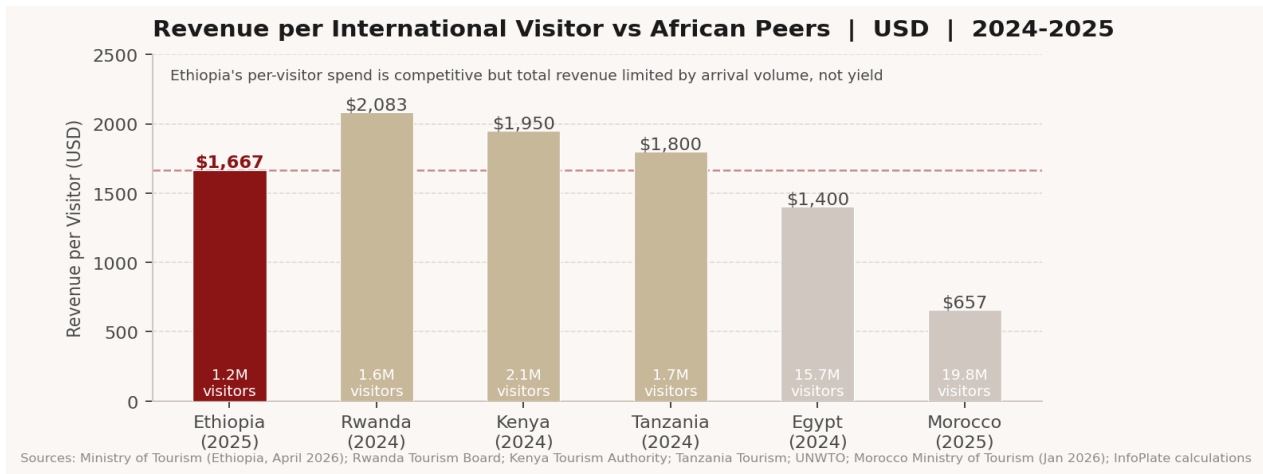


Figure 3: Revenue per International Visitor vs African Peers | Sources: Ministry of Tourism; Rwanda Tourism Board; Kenya Tourism Authority; Morocco Ministry of Tourism Jan 2026; UNWTO

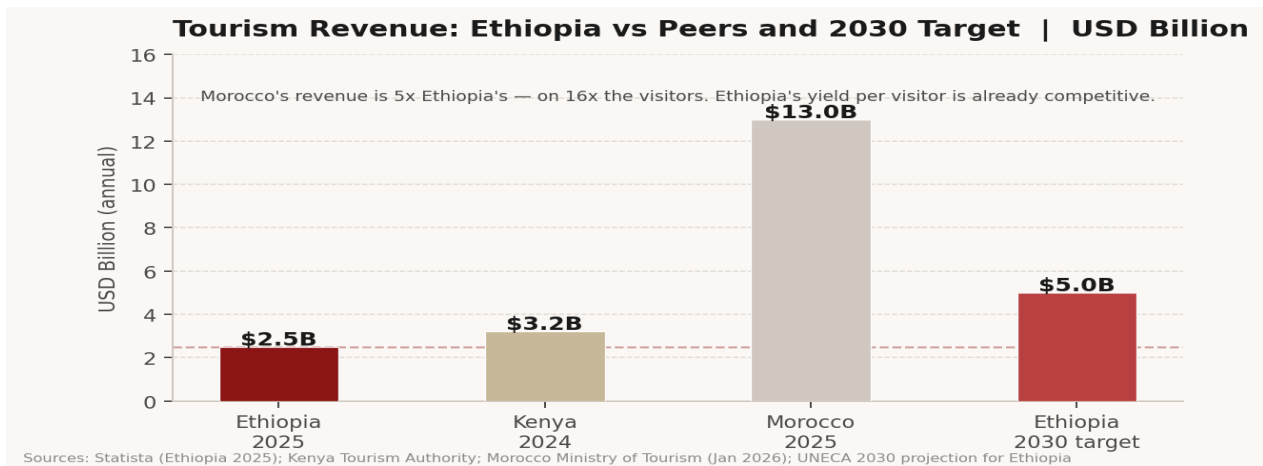


Figure 4: Tourism Revenue: Ethiopia vs Peers and 2030 Target | Sources: Statista; Kenya Tourism Authority; Morocco Ministry of Tourism Jan 2026; UNECA 2030 projection

04 THE INFRASTRUCTURE DEFICIT

Five Constraints That Determine Whether the Growth Trajectory Holds

Africa Risk Control's September 2025 assessment of Ethiopia's tourism and hospitality sector described the country as being at 'a pivot point.' The phrase captures exactly the risk: momentum that is real but not yet self-sustaining, dependent on structural improvements that are known, documented, and not yet delivered.



The five constraints below are not new observations. They appear in every serious assessment of Ethiopian tourism going back a decade. That consistency is itself a signal.

- ▶ **ROAD ACCESS TO PRIME SITES** Lalibela is reachable by charter flight from Addis Ababa for approximately \$300-400 return, putting it out of reach for the mid-market international traveller who forms the volume base of Kenya’s safari industry. The Simien Mountains and Bale Mountains require multi-day road journeys on roads that are improving but remain variable. The Omo Valley, home to some of Ethiopia’s most compelling cultural tourism, is three to four days overland from Addis or a charter flight away. These sites are extraordinary. Their accessibility costs compress average length-of-stay and raise the per-visit cost in ways that limit arrival volume independent of how many lodges the government builds.
- ▶ **DOMESTIC AVIATION CONNECTIVITY** Ethiopian Airlines is genuinely world-class and its hub role at Addis Ababa Bole is a comparative advantage that no Ethiopian tourism strategy takes seriously enough. The domestic network, however, covers fewer than 20 routes with limited frequency. A tourism circuit covering Addis, Lalibela, Axum, Gondar, and the Simien Mountains currently requires careful sequencing of flights on a network that operates with minimal redundancy. When a flight is cancelled — which happens — the circuit collapses. Kenya Airways and Precision Air run domestic networks that support tourism circuits at a frequency and reliability level Ethiopia’s domestic schedule does not yet match.
- ▶ **HOTEL CAPACITY OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL** The hotel development pipeline is growing and includes international brand entries, according to Travel and Tour World’s March 2026 report. But the pipeline is heavily concentrated in Addis Ababa. The northern historical circuit — Lalibela, Axum, Gondar — has insufficient four-and-five-star inventory to accommodate the international travellers that the Dine programme’s marketing materials target. A safari operator designing an Ethiopia itinerary to compete with Kenya’s product needs to be confident that accommodation across the circuit meets a consistent standard. Currently, it cannot offer that confidence outside the capital.
- ▶ **THE TRAINED HOSPITALITY WORKFORCE GAP** Front-of-house, food-and-beverage, and hotel management shortages are documented across four-and-five-star properties in Ethiopia. This is not a reflection of workforce quality. It is a reflection of training infrastructure that has not kept pace with hotel construction. The Dine programme has built lodges faster than the vocational training pipeline has produced people to operate them at international standard. Service inconsistency is the single most common complaint in international visitor feedback for the Ethiopia market, above security concerns and above price.

Ethiopia Tourism: Five Structural Constraints on Scale and Revenue		
CONSTRAINT	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHY IT MATTERS FOR SCALE
Road access to prime sites	Lalibela, Simien, Omo Valley — most accessible only by charter flight	High per-visit cost; long length-of-stay; limits repeat bookings
Domestic aviation network	Ethiopian Airlines is world-class; domestic network below 20 routes with limited frequency	Reduces repeat tourism and multi-destination visits
Hotel capacity outside Addis	Pipeline growing but concentrated in capital; growth capacity in tier 1 cities	Reduces repeat tourism; forces day-trip structures
Trained hospitality workforce	Front-of-house and F&B staff shortages concentrated in 4-5 star properties	Service inconsistency; top complaint in international visitor feedback
International marketing spend	Ethiopia undermarketed vs coastal safari and North Africa beach holiday destinations	Product quality — the product is stronger than the reach

Sources: Africa Risk Control / New Business Ethiopia (Sep 2025); UNECA; Ministry of Tourism; International visitor surveys; InfoPlate assessment

Figure 5: Ethiopia Tourism: Five Structural Constraints on Scale and Revenue | Sources: Africa Risk Control / New Business Ethiopia Sep 2025; UNECA; Ministry of Tourism; InfoPlate assessment

05 WHAT GENUINE COMPETITIVENESS REQUIRES

Getting from a Fast-Growing Small Market to a Sizeable Regional Player



Africa Risk Control's conclusion in September 2025 was that 'turning those gains into scale, receipts and sustainable jobs requires systematic action: infrastructure, skills, product packaging, and international marketing.' That framing is precise. The question is not whether Ethiopia can grow its tourism sector. It already is. The question is whether it can grow it at the pace and depth that the 2030 targets imply, and whether the structural conditions for self-sustaining growth are being built alongside the lodges.

- ▶ **DOMESTIC AVIATION AS A POLICY PRIORITY** Ethiopian Airlines' decision to limit domestic network expansion in favour of international route growth is commercially rational for the airline and strategically unhelpful for tourism. A dedicated domestic tourism shuttle network — perhaps a partnership between the national carrier, the Ministry of Tourism, and private operators — on the Addis-Lalibela-Axum-Gondar circuit would be the single highest-impact infrastructure intervention available. The aircraft exist. The demand is there. The frequency is not.
- ▶ **CIRCUIT PRODUCT PACKAGING** Kenya does not sell individual attractions. It sells the Kenya safari circuit, which packages accommodation, transport, wildlife viewing, and cultural experiences into a product that a travel agent in London, Seoul, or Chicago can place without doing bespoke research for each booking. Ethiopia sells individual attractions. The combination of the northern historical circuit, the Omo Valley cultural experience, the Danakil Depression geological spectacle, and Addis Ababa's food and culture scene is a compelling regional circuit package. It is not yet packaged or marketed as such internationally. Developing that packaged offer — including standardised pricing, consolidated booking platforms, and consistent transfer logistics — is a commercial problem that the private sector can solve with the right regulatory support.
- ▶ **HOSPITALITY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT** The training gap will not close through general education investment. It requires specific vocational programmes in hotel management, food-and-beverage service, and front-of-house standards, delivered in partnership with the international hotel brands that are entering the market. IHG, Marriott, and Radisson entering the Ethiopian market create an opportunity to use their global training infrastructure to accelerate local workforce development. Making that partnership a condition of operating licences, or providing tax incentives tied to verified training delivery, would convert commercial entry into structural capacity building.
- ▶ **CONFERENCE TOURISM AS THE ANCHOR SEGMENT** The MICE opportunity is the most directly actionable near-term revenue improvement available. Ethiopia's diplomatic capital is its most underleveraged tourism asset. An African Union summit, an IGAD ministerial, a UN Economic Commission for Africa conference: each generates hundreds of visitors at \$250-500 per night in accommodation, uses fixed conference infrastructure that the government has already invested in, and happens regardless of security perception because the attendees are travelling on official mandates. Building the conference production and hosting capacity to serve this permanent institutional demand more completely is a shorter path to \$5 billion than trying to double leisure arrivals.

THE INVESTOR LENS

Ethiopia's tourism sector is genuinely investable in 2026 for the first time at significant scale. The demand signal is real: 15% arrival growth confirmed by UN Tourism. The yield signal is competitive: \$1,667 per visitor is in line with Rwanda and Kenya. The pipeline is active: international hotel brands are entering. The government has demonstrated consistent political commitment across three initiative phases spanning seven years.

The risk profile is specific. Properties outside Addis that depend on domestic aviation frequency for access carry an operational risk that Addis properties do not. Properties targeting the conference segment carry lower security exposure than those targeting leisure circuits in the north or south. High-grade heritage destinations like Lalibela carry long-term brand equity but near-term operational complexity. The opportunity is real. The due diligence must go beyond the arrival figures.

EDITOR'S OUTLOOK



THE BOTTOM LINE

Ethiopia attracted 1.2 million international tourists and \$2 billion in revenue in nine months. Both figures are genuine. Both represent a recovery that has gone further than most expected. And both sit below what the sector achieved before COVID and the Tigray conflict combined to reset a decade of progress.

The 2030 target of \$5 billion in annual tourism revenue requires roughly doubling the current run rate in four years. That is achievable if domestic aviation connectivity improves, hotel capacity scales outside the capital, hospitality workforce training accelerates, and conference tourism is properly commercialised. It is not achievable through lodge construction alone. The Dine initiative built the attractions. What comes next is harder, less photogenic, and more decisive: the infrastructure behind the infrastructure.

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Sources: Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) April 1 and April 5, 2026; Ministry of Tourism (Teshome Teklu statement, April 2026); Travel and Tour World (April 2-4, 2026 and March 5, 15 2026); Government Communication Service, GCS.gov.et (Jan 18, 2026); PMO social media (Jan 18, 2026); AllAfrica (April 6, 2026); ATQ News (April 7, 2026); UNECA Ethiopia Tourism report; Statista Travel and Tourism Ethiopia Market Forecast 2025-2030; World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC); Africa Risk Control / New Business Ethiopia (September 9, 2025); ACE Advisors Ethiopia Tourism Landscape (April 2024); Morocco Ministry of Tourism (January 2026); Rwanda Tourism Board; Kenya Tourism Authority; UNWTO; ICCA 2023 Convention Industry Report; AllAfrica November 2024 (Beynouna Village); Fana Broadcasting | Published May 25, 2026