

Adventist Hospitality Business in Kenya

NATHAN GITONGA

Nathan Gitonga

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kenya operates a number of guest houses, canteens, and a resort. Unlike what is common elsewhere in Kenya, the Adventist hospitality business promotes healthy living through vegetarian cuisines and healthy lifestyles. The main Adventist hospitality facilities are the Adventist LMS Guest House and Conference Center, Watamu Adventist Beach Resort, and Adventist Guest House, Eldoret.

Adventist LMS Guest House and Conference Center

The East Kenya Union Conference runs the Adventist LMS Guest House and Conference Center. Located in the heart of Nairobi City, the capital of Kenya, it forms one of the institutions that operate from the Adventist Compound, the current site of the East Kenya Union Conference Headquarters. The facility started in 1998 after the then president of the General Conference Robert S. Folkenberg inaugurated it.¹ The guest house's main objective wasn't to run an elaborate hotel per se. It began as a Literature Ministry Seminary (LMS) to train literature evangelists and others involved in the publication ministry in Kenya.

Since then, Adventist LMS Guest House and Conference Center has grown to a hospitality facility serving both Adventists and non-Adventists alike. It has 55 accommodation rooms with a total capacity of 120 guests. The facility also has four conference halls, the largest seating 200 delegates. The center operates two vegetarian restaurants, one open to the public and the main one normally serving residential guests²

Watamu Adventist Beach Resort

Watamu Adventist Beach Resort is a premier hospitality facility also managed by the East Kenya Union Conference. It is situated in Watamu, a small coastal town on the northern coast of Kenya and featuring white sandy beaches and coral reefs in the India Ocean.³ Along with the Watamu Marine National Park, they have made the place an international tourism center. The resort began operations in 2009 though it functioned as a youth camp before the construction of the resort facilities.⁴

The resort operates 52 standard rooms and one suite. All the rooms and the suite have ocean views and are well lit with natural light during the day. The complex also runs three vegetarian restaurants and kitchen that serves both residential and walk-in guests. In addition, it offers professional conference services. One large

conference hall has a seating capacity of 200. Team-building exercises can also be conducted in a camping site.⁵

Adventist Guest House, Eldoret

The Adventist Guest House, Eldoret, managed by the Greater Rift Valley Conference of the Western Kenya Union Conference, opened for business in 2010. The facility has 40 guest rooms and a restaurant seating up to 100. It also has a large 300-seat conference hall and two other smaller meeting rooms.⁶

The complex is situated in Eldoret, one of the main cities in Kenya. The capital of Uasin Gishu County, it lays south of the Cherangani Hills,⁷ offering a cool climate almost throughout the year. Its gardens making it ideal for events such as weddings and team-building.

The Business

Although the Adventist hospitality business is thriving, it does have challenges. Traditionally non-vegetarians, Kenyans prefer eating meat when they travel and stay in hotels. The fact that Adventist hospitality facilities in Kenya do not serve meat or alcohol greatly reduces its clientele base. Nevertheless, a large market exists among Adventists whose membership stands at 999,444 as of June 30, 2018.⁸ The church has employed qualified individuals who are able to employ modern management and marketing skills to make the institutions profitable.

The Church Mission

Apart from being business entities, Adventist hospitality facilities help in fulfilling the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—to make disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His loving witnesses and proclaim to all people the everlasting gospel of the Three Angels' Messages in preparation for His soon return (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Rev 14:6-12).⁹ Watamu Adventist Beach Resort, for example, is located in the middle of other international resorts that do serve meat and alcohol. People who hear about the resort or pay a visit there often wonder how the facility has managed to stay afloat. That becomes an opportunity for its staff to explain the importance of healthy living and how God can lead in all situations. The situation is the same with the other facilities as well.

Outlook

A vegetarian-based diet in Kenya is on the increase,¹⁰ a good trend for the future of the Seventh-day Adventist hospitality industry not only in Kenya but the world over. The more people appreciate a meatless diet, the more clientele the industry will have and the more successful the business will become. Therefore, the sustainability of the industry is almost guaranteed provided that it has good management and customer satisfaction.

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