

Newcomer Angola raises new awareness of Africa

“Visit Angola – The Rhythm of Life” encapsulates the young, dynamic and self-confident Host Country at the 60th anniversary edition of ITB Berlin 2026

By Sabine Neumann and Horst Schwartz

What an opportunity for the newest star on the tourism horizon! Angola is the Host Country of ITB Berlin 2026, and is also representing the African continent. The republic has just celebrated 50 years of independence, and now its tourism officials are travelling to Berlin for this major travel exhibition. ITB Berlin is celebrating its own anniversary, namely 60 years as the Leading Travel Trade Show on the Berlin Exhibition Grounds. The third African host country to date, this newcomer is setting an example for all 54 African countries and competitors on the international tourism stage.

A strong signal

"The countries of Africa are probably looking to Angola with curiosity and admiration," says Hanna Kleber, member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Travel Association (DRV) and president of the Kleber Group, which represents Angola as a travel destination in German-speaking countries and other international markets.

After many years cooperating with African countries, the tourism expert and entrepreneur is confident that Angola's role as the host country at the 2026 anniversary edition of ITB Berlin "offers a great opportunity to correct the one-sided view in industry and travellers' minds of Africa as a continent of 54 travel destinations with diverse cultures and people."

New awareness of Africa

Angola is also boldly breaking new ground here. Led by Julia Kleber, the international Kleber Group is now the official representative of the Angolan Tourism Board in German-speaking countries, Poland, the UK and South Africa. A five-year partnership has given the experts and their team scope for genuine creative, developmental and conceptual work. As bridge builders, they are supporting Angola to enter the global tourism market and

develop sustainable tourism. Together, the partners aim to put Africa on the tourism map and create a new awareness based on respect.

Following Albania's example as the host country of ITB Berlin 2025, ITB Director Deborah Rothe is once again impressed by the "incredible energy of an up-and-coming host country that confidently combines tradition and modernity and is going its own way. A young generation rethinking tourism with a clear focus on sustainable development, nature conservation and involving local communities. It is precisely this combination of a new beginning, cultural identity and responsible growth that mirrors the values of ITB Berlin."

ITB's contribution is to "create spaces where new partnerships can be forged and tourism can be seen as a force for positive change". For Deborah Rothe, this year's partnership is "a strong and sound signal reflecting six decades of ITB history and pointing towards the future".

Africa – an up-and-coming continent

It is precisely these spaces for encounters and positive examples of change in tourism that Angola aims to occupy at ITB Berlin 2026. "Angola will show the world how welcoming Africa really is," says Julia Kleber. Visitors from many countries, including Germany, can enter the country for 30 days without a visa.

"We will make use of this opportunity to show the tourism world the diversity, culture and natural beauty of our country," promises Márcio de Jesus Lopes Daniel, Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Angola. His enthusiasm is genuine, his approach engagingly sympathetic: "We invite travellers from all over the world to experience the rhythm of Angola with all their senses."

The Rhythm of Life

Angolan tourism professionals, artists and politicians – including Minister of State, Minister of Economic Affairs of the Republic of Angola, José de Lima Massano, and Secretary of State Dr Augusto Kalikemala – are travelling to Berlin, bringing "The Rhythm of Life" with them. Each in their own unique way, they embody how young, dynamic and vibrant the country is today.

In Hall 21 on the Angola stand, Visit Angola will be presenting its new brand identity as an emerging responsible and sustainable tourism destination,

together with 21 tourism companies. The event "A Taste of Angola – Happy Hour" will round off the day in a relaxed manner with The Rhythm of Life.

At the Speed Dating session, a B2B event on Thursday at 12 noon, trade visitors can meet representatives from hotels, DMCs, the national airline TAAG and Iona National Park in person and hold initial discussions. TV journalist and media expert Sven Klawunder will host a TV studio with live interviews, talks and social media broadcasts.

One of the youngest populations in the world

The opening gala organised by Angola on the eve of ITB Berlin 2026 will provide an opportunity to experience the country's "Rhythm of Life" – and Hanna Kleber can well imagine that "the minister will start dancing when he hears the infectious sounds of kizomba, semba and kudoro from his homeland." She is convinced that the Angolan band and kizomba dancers "will get the CityCube hall rocking". Star chef Helt Araujo is also travelling with the delegation to provide an authentic culinary experience influenced by Portuguese and Angolan cuisine. He runs a restaurant in Luanda and in cooperation with Messe Berlin Catering is responsible for culinary delights.

The average age of the population is one of the lowest in the world. One in two inhabitants are under 15 years old. Only three per cent are 65 years or older. This is still below the average of other African countries – the consequence of a long and gruelling civil war.

The people of Angola are proud to have overcome this part of their history more than 20 years ago, observes Hanna Kleber. She can see the spirit of optimism among young people and the self-confidence of Angolan women. Traditionally, they play an important role in Africa, including in politics. They are often the family breadwinners, earning from handicrafts, small guesthouses and Airbnb accommodation.

Historical connections and cultural diversity

The historical ties between Angola and Portugal continue to shape the culture and language to this day. Portuguese is the official language and connects Angola with the international community in the Portuguese-speaking world. Angola has a diverse, young and dynamic society. There is a particularly lively exchange between Angola and Portugal. Many young people take advantage of educational and studying opportunities in Portugal and maintain close family and cultural ties between the two countries.

From the late 15th century until independence, now 51 years ago, Angola was a Portuguese colony. Among other things this resulted in a high proportion of Christians in the country. The capital Luanda quickly became a vital port for the slave trade. Millions of Angolans were taken to Brazil and the Caribbean on transport ships.

Visitors to Angola can encounter evidence of the slave trade and, above all, buildings reminiscent of the Portuguese colonial era throughout the country. The Fortaleza de São Miguel fortress in the capital, where many buildings from the colonial era have been preserved, houses exhibitions on military history and the slave trade.

The Museu Nacional da Escravatura is devoted entirely to this aspect of Angolan history. It is located south of the capital, directly on the sea – the place from which the slaves were shipped. Visitors can also find impressive evidence and architecture from the colonial era in the cities of Namibe, Lobito, Benguela and M'Banza Kongo. The former capital of the Kingdom of Kongo is on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Over 100 ethnic groups with over 40 languages

Geographically, the People's Republic of Angola is situated on the south-west coast of Africa, south of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Angola borders Namibia to the south and Zambia to the east. It is the sixth largest country on the continent and, at over 1,246,000 square kilometres, as large as Germany, France and Spain combined. This vast area is home to 37 million inhabitants, well over 25 million of whom live in cities. Almost nine million people live in the vibrant capital city of Luanda.

Over 100 ethnic groups have found a home or established their roots in Angola. Many still preserve their centuries-old traditions, languages and ways of life. Over 40 different languages are spoken. A glimpse of life here is more authentic and original than in many other, more tourist-oriented places in Africa.

For most travellers to Angola, meeting face-to-face with traditional cultures is one of the most enduring experiences, as journalist Sven Klawunder discovered on his first trip. He recounts mythical and mystical moments in breathtaking natural surroundings and his visit to "King Chimbila of Humpata, probably the oldest monarchy in the world". A "goosebump encounter" that "deeply affected" him as a person and journalist.

Artistic hairstyles and clicking sounds

Further impressive evidence of living traditions can be found in the hairstyles of the Mwila women in southwestern Angola. They are famous for their artistic hairstyles, formed with a mixture of ochre earth, butter and herbs, and decorated with shells and beads. These hairstyles are social codes: they reveal age, marital status and social role.

Among the Himba women too, hairstyles with artistic jewellery made of iron and shells indicate social status. The semi-nomadic Himba live in small groups on the border with Namibia. To protect themselves from the sun and insects, they smear red ochre paste on their skin and hair.

The several hundred members of the San people in the far south are equipped with a fundamental, traditional knowledge of plants, animals and survival in the savannah. As descendants of the Khoisan, one of the oldest population groups on the continent, they live as hunter-gatherers in mobile communities. They communicate using gestures, facial expressions and signals while hunting, as well as strange clicking sounds.

Alexander Krombach finds "the people all very, very friendly. They welcome visitors with open arms." He compiled the guided tour of Angola that Marco Polo is publishing for the first time this year. Since not many visitors speak Portuguese, "communication is often difficult, unfortunately." A local tour guide is therefore necessary or advised.

Huge emergent potential

Two trips with interested tour operators in order to take a closer look have already taken place in the run-up to ITB Berlin 2026, reveals Hanna Kleber: "Everyone came back surprised by the huge potential this newcomer has." Likewise, everyone agrees that the country is still in an early stage of development that needs to be built on and expanded.

To this end, the Angolan Minister of Tourism and his colleague from the Ministry of Economy are focusing on two investor forums, among other things, in addition to the government's own measures, which are laid down in PLANATUR 2024-27, the national tourism development plan.

A smaller-scale investment meeting is being held on 3 March at ITB Berlin 2026. From 7 to 9 May, the World Tourism Forum Institute (WTFI), together with the Kleber Group and Visit Angola, is hosting the four-day Global Tourism Forum – Investment Summit Angola 2026 in the capital Luanda. The event is expected to attract 1,000 delegates, global investors, political decision-makers, development agencies, industry leaders and 100 speakers from more than 60 countries.

Angola's focus is on investment

The hope is for a similarly high volume of private sector and public-private partnership investment in the hotel industry, tourism services, transport and leisure activities. Since 2024, the government itself has already been investing in flagship projects based on four strategic pillars, part of its tourism development plan PLANATUR 2024-2027. All four are interlinked.

Initially, the focus is on training and qualifying skilled workers to secure domestic jobs and participation in tourism. PLANATUR funds are also being invested in international communication and branding, sustainable tourism planning in seven to eight selected regions with high tourism potential, and the reclassification of existing services. The aim is to bring them up to international standards.

The government's goal is to create a resilient, service-oriented and internationally competitive infrastructure. "Only that way can tourism growth succeed in the long term," explains Julia Kleber. With a focus on sustainable, socially responsible tourism, she also wants to create added value for regional communities.

Sun and beach holidays on the Atlantic coast are a priority

Angola has a 1,650-kilometre long Atlantic coastline with numerous beaches, bays and natural attractions. The Ministry of Tourism is investing primarily in the expansion of access roads, hotels, supply systems and tourist hubs in this region in order to make beach holidays internationally attractive and competitive as quickly as possible. Journalist Sven Klawunder visited Benguela and Lobito, among other places, on his trip. In addition to historical architecture, casinos, entertainment and shopping, he was impressed by "golden beaches that are part of a coastal culture and relaxed holidays in the sun, offering the guarantee of a paradise without the crowds."

Angola also wants to be part of the booming cruise market. To this end, the government has defined targets for arrivals and revenues by 2027 in its Maritime & Cruise Tourism Programme and plans to expand its port and logistics infrastructure. Investment is to be stimulated via a simplified licensing and investment procedure as well as financial incentives and breaks for private tourism companies.

An insider tip for adventurers and Africa lovers

In terms of attracting international tourism, Angola has so far been a hidden gem on the African continent – visited only by a few who love adventure and are willing to forego the comforts of a package trip. Sven Klawunder describes the country as "an insider tip full of positive surprises and human encounters". Felix Willeke, founder of Lernidee-Erlebnisreisen, who has been actively bringing guests to Angola via Rovos Rail since 2019, sees this as Angola's unique selling point in the immediate future: attracting individual travellers, adventurers and, above all, Africa lovers and very curious guests.

Market competitor Diamir, a pioneer in Angola for over 12 years, focuses on small group tours with German-speaking tour guides. "It is precisely the unspoilt nature and remoteness that is so fascinating," says managing director Jörg Ehrlich. "We love to venture into regions where there are no hotels. Our guests may experience somewhat unconventional overnights, but they return with truly authentic experiences from regions virtually untouched by tourism." For Diamir, "this is precisely where Angola's focus and opportunities in tourism lie in the near future."

The capital Luanda alone is worth a visit. This is where tradition and modernity meet. There are upmarket international hotels and a new International Congress Centre. Angola is also gaining a foothold in the MICE segment.

"The vibe of Luanda captivated me immediately," says Sven Klawunder, CEO of Flying Media. "The combination of good humour, culture, history and modern nightlife is what makes up the city's charm." As a journalist and media expert, he has conducted tourist interviews and shot films in many countries. He has been observing Angola's growth since his first business trip there.

An important player in southern Africa

On the international stage, the country is playing an increasingly important political and economic role. On the first visit of a German Federal President, Frank-Walter Steinmeier respectfully acknowledged Angola's journey "from decades of conflict to stability and growth". He described Angola as an "important player in southern Africa" and praised the country as a "partner one can rely on". Emphasising the economic and infrastructural prospects, the Federal President signed three cooperation agreements, one of which was on commercial aviation. Among other things, Lufthansa Consulting will advise the national airline TAAG Angola Airlines on its restructuring plans.

Since October 2025, the airline has been operating all its flights from the new international airport around 40 kilometres southeast of Luanda. The new main airport, with two parallel runways, opened in November 2023. Named after Angola's first president, Dr António Agostinho Neto International Airport AIAAN, the international airport is intended to cement Angola's position as a regional air transport hub in southern Africa. It can handle 15 million passengers a year, ten million of whom are estimated to be from abroad. The target is two million international arrivals by 2050.

With good local roads still under construction, Sven Klawunder takes a domestic flight when exploring the country, and is impressed: "From the new international airport in Luanda you can fly several times a day to just about any of Angola's other main regions," he says, adding, "my flights were excellent and on time."

There are a total of 14 airports in Angola, eleven of which operate domestic flights only. Popular local connections include Luanda to Cabinda, Lubango, Huambo and Benguela. International car rental companies can be found in the capital. The roads between major cities are good, according to information provided by the Kleber Group, but in rural areas they are often difficult to navigate. Train services are "now more reliable and relatively modern". Not all destinations can be reached by train. The number of modern coaches available is increasing.

Good cooperation – open and willing to learn

Felix Willeke from Lernidee-Erlebnisreisen praises "the noticeable efforts to improve safety" in cooperation with local authorities and partners. Overall, his experience and that of his competitors is overwhelmingly positive. "The cooperation is characterised by an openness and willingness to learn." "Everyone is very motivated," adds Alexander Krombach, "but there is still a lack of experience."

Jörg Ehrlich from Diamir considers the cooperation to be "very good". One thing deserves particular mention: "Some local providers speak German, which they learned during their training in the former GDR many decades ago. For local experts on the country this is a great basis on which to build in order to become German-speaking tour guides."

The most important European source markets with a growing interest in Angola are the German-speaking countries, the UK, Spain and Poland, along with South Africa.

The handful of German tour operators who currently list Angola in their programme are focused on personalised, small group tours with guides.

Their experience has been positive. "We have very good partnerships and send more visitors each year," says Jörg Ehrlich, "the feedback is great too, so naturally a growing number of travellers who have Angola on their wish list are making the trip."

Individual tourism in three to five years

There are plans to expand individual travel. Training is important for this. "Tour guides, chefs, drivers, waiters and hiking guides," lists Jörg Ehrlich, "everything is still in its infancy and has great untapped potential. In three to five years, this could also include individual tourism", he says. It would mean a livelihood for many people, even in structurally weak regions.

Katrin Knapp, product manager for Hauser Exkursionen, and Felix Willeke also emphasise the huge potential. "However, it will take time to build a tourism infrastructure capable of sustaining greater visitor numbers," he says. He does not expect a huge boom in numbers "in the short term".

It goes without saying that, given the size of the country, the variety and complexity of travel experiences and the distances involved, a single holiday trip is not enough to gain even a basic understanding of the country and its people.

Studiosus Managing Director Alexander Krombach: "People who have already seen a lot of Africa and want to experience not only wildlife but also spectacular landscapes and meet friendly people will be richly rewarded." Sven Klawunder knows he will return. He promised King Chimbala that he would. To report on how his messages of peace have been received around the world. The journalist already has his sights set on the next places he wants to visit.

Almost every attraction is a journey in itself

In addition to the friendliness and warmth of the people and unforgettable encounters with traditional ethnic groups, Angola's potential as a travel destination also lies in its many breathtaking natural attractions. Almost every one is worth a trip in itself and "depending on the time of day, different, intense and uniquely impressive," is how Sven Klawunder describes his own experience. Here are a few examples:

The Kalandula Falls in the country's northeast are the second highest in Africa after Victoria Falls, with a drop of 105 metres. "Compared to Victoria

Falls, they are more freely accessible and seem much more unspoilt," says Alexander Krombach.

Jörg Ehrlich quotes a whole list of "attractions not be missed": "the winding Serra da Leba road near Humpata, the Lagoa dos Arcos lagoon with its sandstone arches in the province of Namibe, the canyons of the Colinas do Curoca hills in the far south, the lunar landscape of the Miradouro da Lua viewpoint south of Luanda, the breathtaking Tundavala Gorge, up to 1,000 metres deep, situated on a 2,000-metre high plateau near Lubango..."

The Atlantic coast is very diverse, featuring everything from lively beach stretches to quiet, secluded parts. There is something for everyone here. Beaches with shallow, calm waters for swimming and relaxing, and others with mighty waves for surfers. Many of the beaches are less tourist-oriented than typical seaside resorts in Europe, but offer peace and quiet and a more intimate experience of nature.

National parks in Angola also invite visitors to go on safaris. Zebras, antelopes and giraffes populate Kissama National Park near the capital. Animal sightings, for instance of reintroduced giraffes, are rarer in Iona National Park in the southwest of the country than in Kenya or South Africa, destinations which traditionally offer safaris. In return, visitors here can enjoy an authentic and natural safari experience in unspoilt nature. Even larger and boasting more wildlife is Luengue-Luiana National Park near the border with Namibia and Zambia. It is one of Africa's largest wildlife reserves, home to buffalo, giraffes, zebras and various antelopes, to name only a few. Lions can also be observed from time to time.

The list is endless, with a host of cultural and historical sites and attractions waiting to be discovered.

Visible efforts

What do tour operators want to see in the near future? What would they put on the to-do list for stakeholders and decision-makers? Lernidee boss Willeke sums it up: "The quality of service could be improved, as well as the availability of good vehicle transport and qualified guides." Also, "another challenge is the high price of accommodation that meets international standards." Jörg Ehrlich would like to see "a greater number of appealing small hotels outside Luanda and better flight connections to Germany". Alexander Krombach would like to see less of a language barrier in communications.

Sven Klawunder praises the "progress already noticeable in a short period of time." Tourism in the country is "making great strides," he observes. "A lot has been achieved, which I would say is a great effort and represents the clear implementation of a strategy."

Angola at ITB Berlin 2026

ITB Berlin opening press conference: Monday, 2 March, 10 a.m., CityCube Berlin, Hall A3, with Angola's Minister of Tourism, Márcio de Jesus Lopes Daniel

ITB Berlin Opening Gala featuring a grand Angola show programme: Monday, 2 March, 5.30 to 7.30 p.m., CityCube Berlin, Hall B (by invitation only)

ITB Berlin opening tour with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on the **Angola stand** (Hall 21, Stand 112) on 3 March at 9.30 a.m. High-ranking representatives from politics and tourism will attend.

Visit Angola press conference on Tuesday, 3 March, 2 to 3 p.m. at the CityCube Berlin, Room A1, with Angola's Minister of Tourism, Márcio de Jesus Lopes Daniel

Investor meeting on 3 March

Angola will also feature prominently at the **ITB Berlin Convention** on 3 March at 3.35 p.m. in Hall 7.1a (Orange Stage). Together with representatives from UN Tourism and the WTTC, the country will take part in the [Global Roundtable](#) session 'The Global Roundtable: Leading Tourism into Balance'.

4 March: Angola Night

Speed dating session for tour operators with DMCs on the Angola stand, Thursday, 4 March, 12 – 1.00 p.m.

TV studio and kizomba dance classes on the exhibition stand

On all three days of the show a dedicated Angola-branded TV studio on the exhibition stand will provide additional media visibility. Studio recordings, live interviews and talk shows with Angolan partners and international guests on current Angola topics will take place there. TV journalist and media expert Sven Klawunder will be the host. Content will be produced on the spot, processed directly and broadcast via social media channels and the tourism news network. In addition, the studio will provide ongoing news and background information about the host country's appearance.

Every day at 5 p.m., dancers from Angola invite visitors to short kizomba workshops. Participants can learn the rhythms and movements of this popular Angolan dance and gain a direct insight into Angolan dance culture.

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