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# COMPETITION

2016 NATURE'S BEST PHOTOGRAPHY AFRICA



GANI LUIGI FORMARI LANZETTI / NATURE'S BEST PHOTOGRAPHY AFRICA



## Expedition in the marsh

In this striking photograph by Gian Luigi Fornari Lanzetti, a lioness is a mere pinprick on a sea of green in the Ndutu area of Tanzania's Serengeti National Park. "After a while, the solitary lioness appeared... walking through the long, green grass that covered the swamp," Lanzetti said. "Her fur was shining visibly against the contrasting green of the field below, while her curved tail added a unique quality to the shot. Later on we understood the reason she had gone to that swampy area – to breastfeed her two 20-day-old cubs that she had hidden in there."

This image was the Second Runner Up in the 'Wildlife as Art' category of the 2016 Nature's Best Photography Africa competition, with which we are very proud to be associated. To view the full collection of winning entries, visit [travelfricamag.com](http://travelfricamag.com) or download our free special issue on the *Travel Africa* app. [naturesbestphotographyafrica.com](http://naturesbestphotographyafrica.com)



# KARIBU

ISSUE 75, JULY-SEPTEMBER 2016



NECO WILLS

## Spacial awareness

When British astronaut Major Tim Peake returned from six months on the International Space Station a few weeks ago, he said that he was suffering from the "world's worst hangover". I'd like to imagine that his feeling was not all that dissimilar (albeit in a much milder form) to the one you experience when you arrive home after a spell in the African bush, and every ounce of your being pines to be back in the wilderness.

The subtle theme of 'space' permeates this edition of *Travel Africa* – not Major Peake's Space, but the terrestrial kind. The kind of space that stretches for miles and miles, seemingly to the end of the world and back. The kind that is so boundless that the sky appears disproportionately big and you can actually see the curvature of the Earth's surface. The kind that makes you very aware of being one tiny speck on this planet. But although the vastness can cause you to feel somewhat insignificant, it also stirs an overwhelming sense of joy. You feel connected with nature, which calms your soul. For space is the greatest tonic of them all.

But Africa's spaces are under threat. With a burgeoning population, human encroachment seems inevitable, so the continent's wildlife reserves urgently need our protection in order to survive.

On page 106, Sue Watt reports on African Parks' phenomenal work at Liuwa Plain, one of Zambia's last remaining truly wild areas. This issue also celebrates the 50th anniversary of Botswana's independence, with a compilation of 50 insider secrets to help you plan the most extraordinary trip (page 42). This southern African country is home to some of the world's greatest spaces, such as the Kgalagadi, the Central Kalahari and the Makgadikgadi Pans. Our contributors have roamed the stark lands around Tanzania's mystical Lake Natron (page 84), walked with camels in northern Kenya (page 64) and explored the parched expanse of Namibia's Etosha National Park (page 114). And earlier this year I, too, was fortunate enough to gallop across the wide-open valleys of Uganda's Lake Mburu National Park (page 58).

We hope that this edition will leave you feeling energised, inspired and ready for your next great adventure.

**LAURA GRIFFITH-JONES**  
EDITOR



### ON THE COVER

**Baby elephants**, by Mike Dexter / Shutterstock

**FOOTNOTE** Recognising the importance of protecting one of Africa's most iconic animals, a lion's pawprint appears at the end of every feature. 🐾

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To Dave Southwood, Phil Clisby and Tracy Green: valued members of the *Travel Africa* family

### PRICES

Any prices mentioned are accurate at the time of going to press. They are minimum, low season costs (rounded up or down to the nearest five), unless otherwise specified.

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## WHAT'S INSIDE

ISSUE 75, JULY-SEPTEMBER 2016

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An elephant on Botswana's Nxai Pan, accompanied by a herd of springbok and some Burchell's sandgrouse



ARADNE VAN ZANDERGEN



STEVE AND ANN TOON



WILL BURROUGHS-LUCAS

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**In among the Samburu** The thrill of walking with camels in northern Kenya will linger forever in your heart and memory. Go before it's too late, urges Lucia van der Post

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**The lonely snow leopard** British explorer Ash Dykes' recent trip to Madagascar was his first in Africa. He tells Paul Seligman about his latest escapade

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SHINY MATT PHOTOGRAPHY

## Canoeing with kids

The thrill of negotiating rapids and getting up close to the wildlife makes a canoe trip along the Zambezi the perfect adventure for older children (and their parents, too). David Rogers recalls the adrenalin, joy and memories of paddling this river with a group of kids in tow.



DAVID ROGERS



## Carrie's Cape Town

In the first of a new series of blog posts, Carrie Hampton takes herself out of her comfort zone and joins a Secret Sunrise group for an early morning of yoga, silent disco and dance. Her experience leaves her feeling rejuvenated and reconnected with the world around her. Read more of Carrie's insider tips on our website.

## Southern Africa in a Toyota

Niamh Sacramento and her husband, Giles Brooke-Hollidge, have embarked on the trip of a lifetime. They have left their old life in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, to explore southern Africa in an old Toyota Hilux. Follow their adventures online.



GILES BROOKE-HOLLIDGE

## A DESERT PARADISE

Julie Edwards sets off into the great expanse of the Namib, one of the oldest deserts in the world, and tells us just what makes this landscape a photographer's dream. Read more and see her pictures at [travelfricamag.com](http://travelfricamag.com).



JULIE EDWARDS

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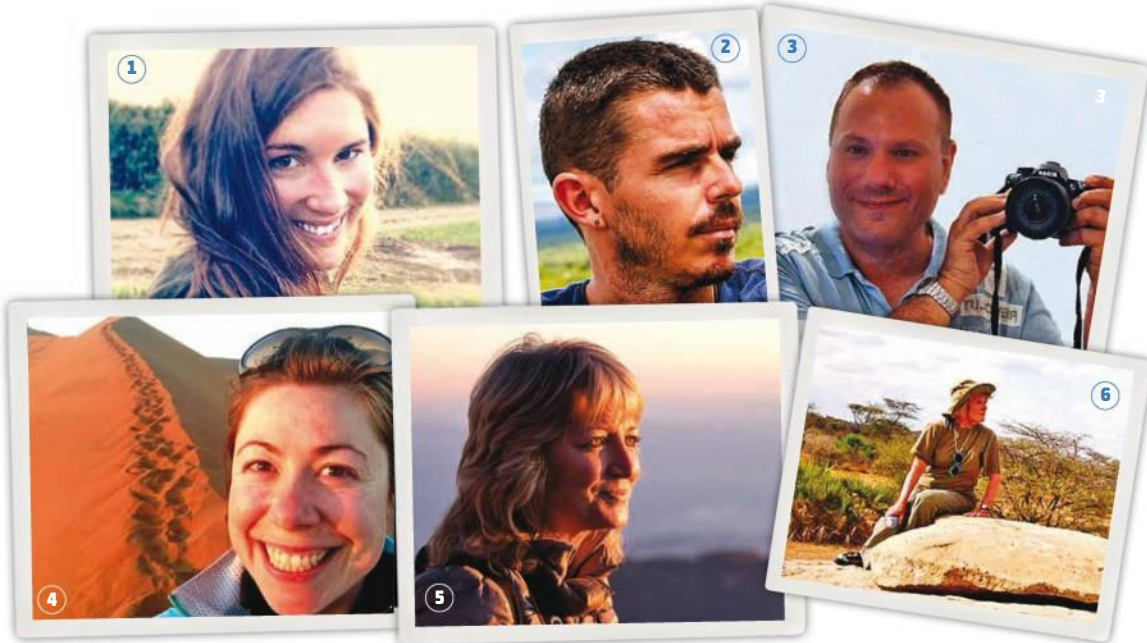
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## STORYTELLERS

OUR CONTRIBUTORS SHARE TALES FROM THEIR TRAVELS



**1** Rose Gamble  
Namibia, page 114

"Driving down an empty, dust-swept track toward an isolated edge of the Etosha saltpan, we came across an enormous bull elephant munching on a mopane tree. We made several cautious attempts to creep past it, each one met with an angry hoot from the hefty beast. Eventually, we had to reverse back up the track, the pachyderm in hot pursuit."

*Rose has written for The Sunday Times, the Financial Times and The Guardian, among others.*

**4** Emma Thomson  
Guinea-Bissau, page 126

"It was our captain's first sailing from Ilha de Poilão to Rubane — in the Bijagós archipelago — and the hot sun had made a mirror of the sea, leaving not a single feature by which to navigate. A three-hour journey turned into a seven-hour odyssey. Down to our last can of fuel, we were eventually saved from a *Cast Away* fate by a group of fishermen."

*Emma is a freelance writer based in Belgium, and writes for several UK nationals.*

**2** Christopher Clark  
Tanzania, page 84

"Above our tents was an acacia branch that was just the right height and shape for pull-ups. I made the mistake of challenging the young Maasai boys who had helped us set up our camp to a competition. All three left me, and the rest of my burly companions, comprehensively beaten and in need of an afternoon nap, while they hadn't even broken a sweat."

*Christopher has contributed to CNN, Rough Guides, Fodor's Travel, The Times and more.*

**5** Sue Watt  
Zambia, page 106

"I developed a new respect for hyenas at Liuwa, where they are the apex predators. Watching 20 of them devour a wildebeest was fascinating. But they like to scavenge, too: around a dozen joined us for a bush dinner, growing bolder and more inquisitive as the evening progressed, eventually sauntering around nonchalantly like a pet labrador, hoping in vain for scraps."

*Sue has been travelling to Africa for 16 years and writes for The Independent and The Telegraph.*

**3** John Malathronas  
Mozambique, page 100

"Never let your guard down in Africa. During a gentle mangrove walk, Jelly and I brushed by some leaves that had been sewn into a nest by tailor ants. Fierce defenders of their territory, they emerged in droves. Unsure whether we would convince them that we weren't ravenous caterpillars, and aware that their bite is excruciating, we ran for dear life."

*John contributes to CNN and Which? Travel and writes a blog called The Jolly Traveller.*

**6** Lucia van der Post  
Kenya, page 64

"Prior to your walk with Samburu tribesmen in northern Kenya, you arrive from Nairobi expecting to change into your hiking attire in some privacy, only to find yourself on a dusty hilltop with Helen and Pete, the camels, the warriors and the kit all ready for the trek — so there's nothing for it but to change behind a bush while the Samburu children giggle away at one's ineptitude."

*Lucia is Associate Editor of the Financial Times' How To Spend It magazine and author of three books.*



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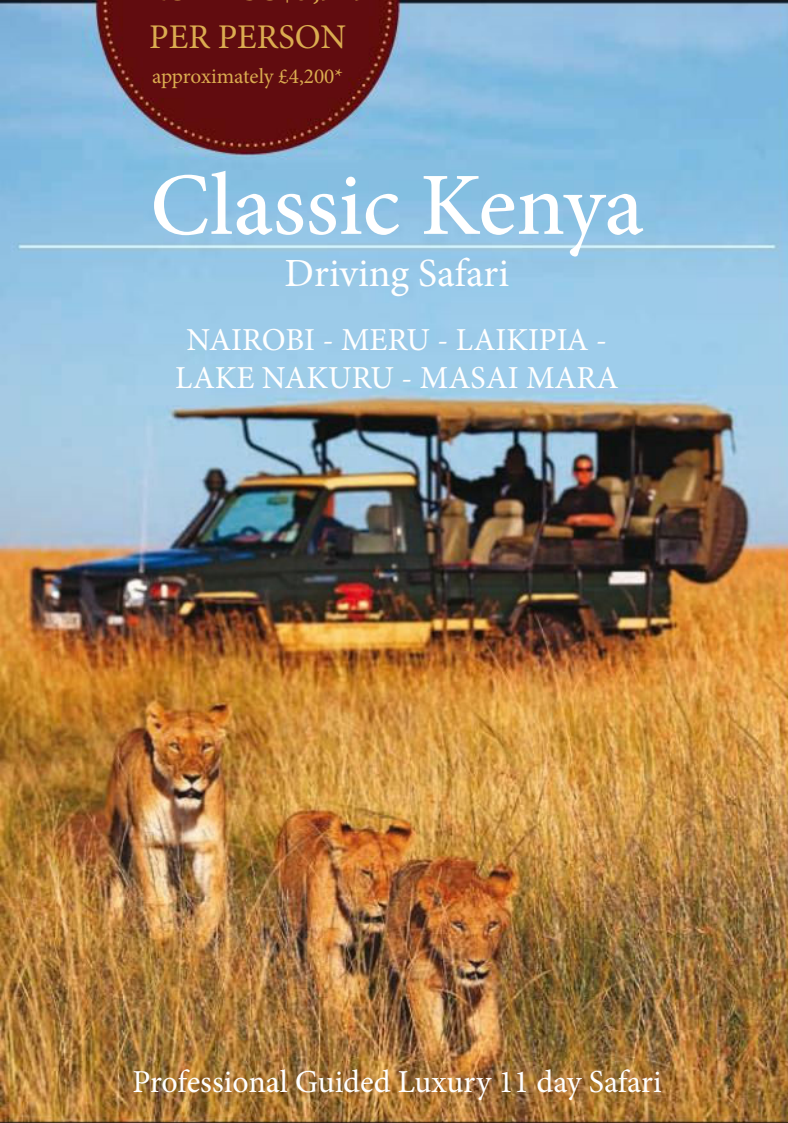
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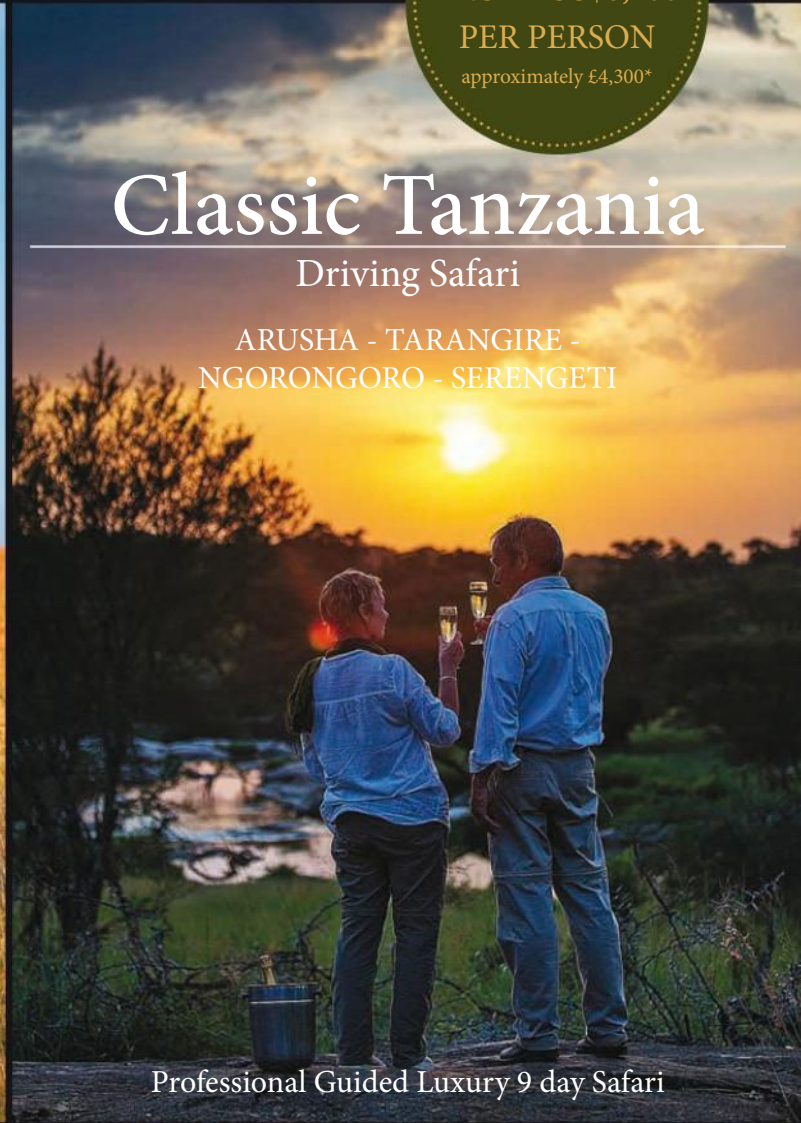


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Photo: anBeyrand

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East  
Africa  
with kids  
**Page 22**

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**MY BUCKET LIST**

## Rwanda's Virunga

### Mountains Tony Proud

"My appetite for wildlife has taken me into the beautiful desert and delta regions of Botswana, the wilds of Etosha in Namibia and the endless plains of East Africa. But I have a burning desire to trek in the volcanic, misty Virunga Mountains in search of the gorillas that live there on the edge of extinction. These beautiful creatures are so special and so rare. A chance encounter with a majestic silverback and his family group would be my ultimate African experience."

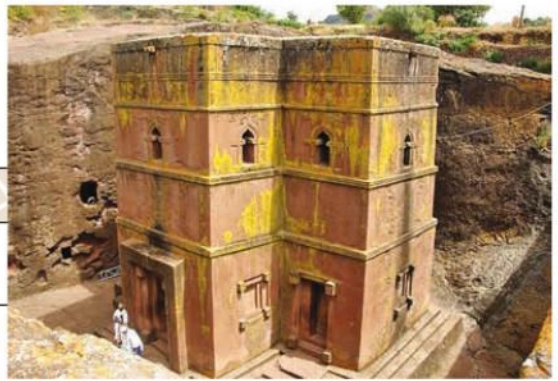
TONY PROUD IS A LONG-STANDING READER OF TRAVEL AFRICA.

ROBERT HARDING

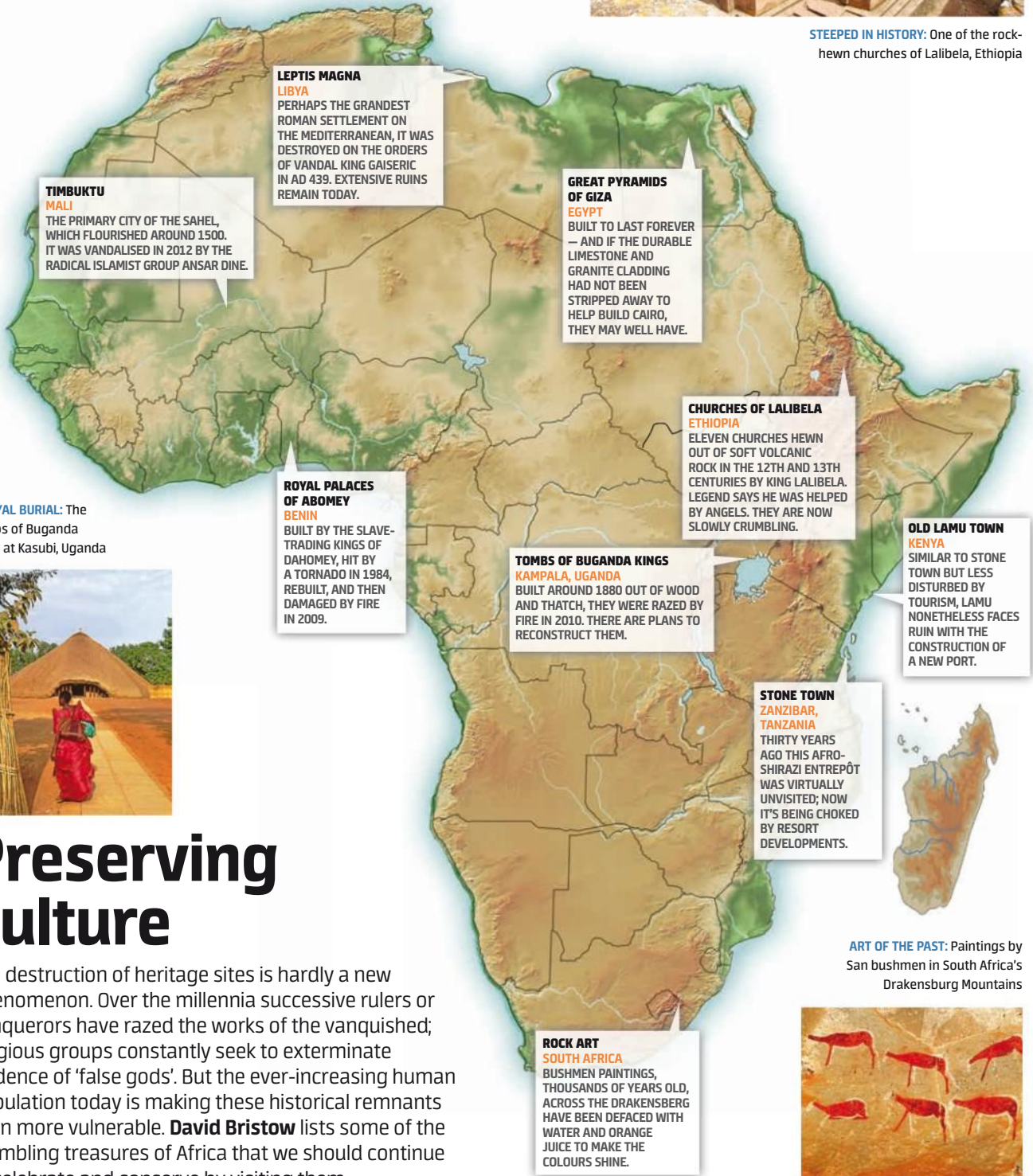


## PERSPECTIVE

THE MAP THAT TELLS A STORY



**STEEPED IN HISTORY:** One of the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, Ethiopia



**A ROYAL BURIAL:** The Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi, Uganda



**ART OF THE PAST:** Paintings by San bushmen in South Africa's Drakensberg Mountains

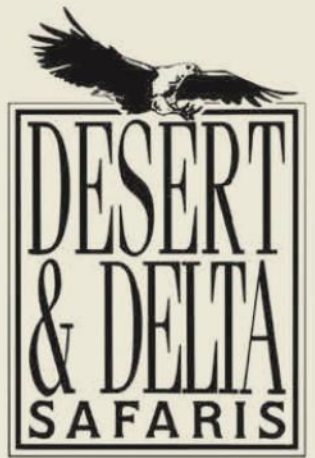


# Preserving culture

The destruction of heritage sites is hardly a new phenomenon. Over the millennia successive rulers or conquerors have razed the works of the vanquished; religious groups constantly seek to exterminate evidence of 'false gods'. But the ever-increasing human population today is making these historical remnants even more vulnerable. **David Bristow** lists some of the crumbling treasures of Africa that we should continue to celebrate and conserve by visiting them.



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## CHARACTERS

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE STORIES

# Fifty years free

Co-founder of the Born Free Foundation Virginia McKenna OBE tells **Paul Seligman** why, 50 years on, she is still fighting the unethical treatment of African wildlife



NOELTHI KARUKU

29 August to 9 September this year. You can find out more at [bornfree.org.uk](http://bornfree.org.uk) or [chelipecock.com](http://chelipecock.com).

### WHAT PLANS DO YOU HAVE FOR THE FUTURE?

Born Free grew organically and, hopefully, will continue to do so without losing the very personal relationship we are lucky enough to have with our supporters. That close connection is hugely important to me.

### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST EXCITING WILDLIFE ENCOUNTER?

That is hard to answer! Once we were in the bush watching some sleeping lions, when suddenly they looked up, rose and walked past our vehicles to a distant tree. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, came a stream of elephant of all ages and sizes. More and more arrived – in front of us, surrounding us – until they stopped in a swampy area a few yards ahead. Here the little ones splashed and rolled and they all drank deeply. We spent an unforgettable few hours quietly observing them until they moved on.

### DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE NATIONAL PARK?

Kenya's Meru is my favourite, because it holds the legacy of the *Born Free* story and the return to the wild of Elsa, the famous lioness, with the help of George and Joy Adamson.

### FINALLY, WHAT TIPS DO YOU HAVE FOR READERS LOOKING TO PLAN THE PERFECT SAFARI?

Travel with a company you know or one that has been recommended to you. Spend at least two nights in each place; this is a holiday you shouldn't rush. Remember a sun hat, long sleeves, anti-malaria pills, sun cream and little gifts for children you meet along the way. Binos are perfect! Take photographs but also just sit and watch. The memories will never leave you.

**Seemingly out of nowhere came a stream of elephant of all ages and sizes. More and more arrived – in front of us, surrounding us – until they stopped in a swampy area a few yards ahead**

### HOW DID THE BORN FREE FOUNDATION COME INTO BEING?

In 1968 I worked on a film with a young elephant who had been gifted to London Zoo. We asked to buy her for Daphne and David Sheldrick, which was granted, but we were warned that another one must be captured as a result. Unthinkable. Many years later, we were told that she had become difficult and might be destroyed. The authorities would not allow us to rehome her in a South African reserve, but agreed to move her to Whipsnade Zoo. However, this never happened, as after standing in her travelling crate for hours, she collapsed, damaged a leg and was put down. This was the catalyst that started our charity in 1984.

### HOW DID THE CHANGE FROM ACTRESS TO ACTIVIST TAKE PLACE?

The turning point in my life was when my husband, Bill Travers, and I were asked to play George and Joy Adamson in the film *Born Free* in 1964. We quickly became completely fascinated by wildlife conservation.

### WHAT INFLUENCE HAS THE FILM HAD?

It has reached a wide audience and raised issues some people had never considered.

### CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT SOME OF YOUR CURRENT PROJECTS?

We are actively opposed to poaching and the illegal wildlife trade, and engaged in rescuing animals from wretched lives in zoos and circuses across Europe. We rehome them in our sanctuaries in South Africa, Ethiopia and Malawi. We also have

an education arm: our Global Friends Project supports 13 schools in seven countries.

### ARE ALL THE ANIMALS YOU HELP RELEASED INTO THE WILD?

Many are, but not the big cats. They live in large, natural bush enclosures.

### ARE YOU STILL ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE CHARITY?

Absolutely: travelling, accompanying rescued animals, giving talks and answering letters. I am happiest when we have helped expose the exploitation of creatures in captivity and in the wild, and then done something about it. The individual rescue is the best experience of all.

### HOW CAN OUR READERS CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR WORK?

By backing a particular project, sponsoring an animal through our adoption scheme, joining our Activate letter-writing programme or by attending one of our *Born Free* anniversary safaris that my son Will Travers and I will be hosting from



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- Balloon Adventure, Masai Mara





YOUSSEF AMAADU

**MOROCCO** Experience Berber culture at the intriguing Imilchil Marriage Festival, which takes place in September.



## CALENDAR

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN AFRICA THIS QUARTER

# The greatest migration



### JULY-SEPTEMBER, MASAI MARA, KENYA

It's that time of year again, when more than a million wildebeest, zebra and other ungulates head for the lush grasses of Kenya's Masai Mara. Depending on the rains, this part of the cycle can start as early as July. The herds gather, waiting to traverse the Mara River, before eventually choosing a crossing point and taking the plunge. What follows is one of the world's great spectacles: a rush of flailing hooves pounding through the water in a desperate attempt to reach the other side, while all around crocodiles attack in a feeding frenzy. Once on the grasslands of the Mara, the herds spend a few months feeding and fattening before heading south again.

### MOUNT MULANJE PORTERS RACE

#### 9 JULY, MOUNT MULANJE, MALAWI

Now in its 20th year, Malawi's only recognised extreme sport proclaims itself to be 'Africa's ultimate challenge'. It's a bold statement, but few could argue with this. Run over 25km of gruelling terrain through spectacular scenery, it's a serious test of endurance. The race, which started out life as a 'fun' event for local porters and guides, now attracts a few hundred athletes from around the world.



DERIUS ERASMUS

### OPPIKOPPI FESTIVAL

#### 5-7 AUGUST, NORTHAM, SOUTH AFRICA

Featuring around 150 acts across multiple stages, Oppikoppi claims to be South Africa's answer to Glastonbury. It's certainly one of the country's largest music events, attracting some 20,000 people. It is defined by its location, nestled among the hills (the name is derived from the Afrikaans 'op die koppie' meaning 'on the hill') in the northernmost state of Limpopo. The bushveld offers a harsh but beautiful setting, and nearby Kruger National Park provides the opportunity to combine a safari with your revelry.



## NUMBERS GAME

YOUR SHORTCUT TO GREAT ADVENTURES IN GREAT PLACES

# 5 'KIDYLLIC' HIDEAWAYS IN EAST AFRICA

Safaris with children needn't be a terrifying prospect.

**Melissa Kay**, an East African resident for almost a decade who has a young son herself, shares some of her favourite places to go and top tips for travelling with kids

**W**ith proper planning, young children can enjoy exploring Africa just as much as you. Avoiding long journeys is a good place to start. Safari vehicles may not have air-conditioning, roads are often uncomfortable and dusty, and loo stops are generally behind bushes.

But when you do need to spend time on the road, don't forget the obvious kit (toys, entertainment and games); and plenty of snacks and treats come in handy, too. Top tip: grab extra rolls, pastries and fruit at breakfast and bring them with you in the vehicle for munchies throughout the day.

When it comes to making reservations, plan to stay at least a few days in each place to avoid too many big moves (two destinations is ideal, perhaps combining beach and bush) and always go for accommodation with a swimming pool. The sun can really take it out of little ones and it does everyone good to have a refreshing dip at the end of a long and action-packed day.

There are hundreds of options in East Africa for family-friendly visits: it's a vibrant land of *Lion King* landscapes, fruit fresh from the trees, wild animals and calm seas. To help choose the location that's best for you, here are my top spots for adventures with kids.

NOMAD-TANZANIA.COM (2)





1

### THE SERENGETI OR MIKUMI, TANZANIA

The famous Serengeti (pictured) is a key reason to visit Tanzania, but getting there and exploring this vast area means a lot of driving. One option is to fly in and base yourself at the new **Mkombe's House Lamai** (above), run by Nomad Tanzania. It's a private house designed specifically with families in mind. Alternatively, break from the pack and try a different park. Just a few hours from Dar es Salaam, **Mikumi National Park** is ideal. Here you are never far from a lodge when you need to stop; plus, there are plenty of picnic spots, viewing points and waterholes where wildlife can be observed from outside the vehicle.



CARNELLEY'S CAMP

### 2 NAIVASHA, KENYA

Just a few hours' drive from Nairobi, this stunning area is home to varied wildlife, flower farms and well-known tales such as *Born Free*. Here you can stay right among the animals without paying park fees. A walking safari on Crescent Island is a must — something even little ones can do. Rent a private house on the Lake, book a budget stay at **Carnelley's Camp** (above), complete with a fantastic pizza oven, or try one of the more exclusive venues such as **Naivasha Kongoni Lodge**, which also houses an animal sanctuary where kids can lend a hand. The property has its own land for safaris and offers night drives, a rare treat and well worth keeping the children up late for.

### 4 VIPINGO AND WATAMU, KENYA

Each bay along this coastline has a unique personality, but two that are great for families are **Vipingo** and **Watamu**. In Vipingo, **Neem Tree** is a great self-catering option with an infinity pool and its own stretch of beach. Some rooms have space for cots and bunk beds, and nearby, there's a small yacht club and a scenic golf course. Meanwhile, Watamu is famous for turtles, especially around hatching time, but families can also sail in glass-bottom boats, ride camels, visit the snake farm and enjoy some snorkelling. There is a number of child-friendly restaurants and a big pool with shallow water.

### 5 MAFIA ISLAND, TANZANIA

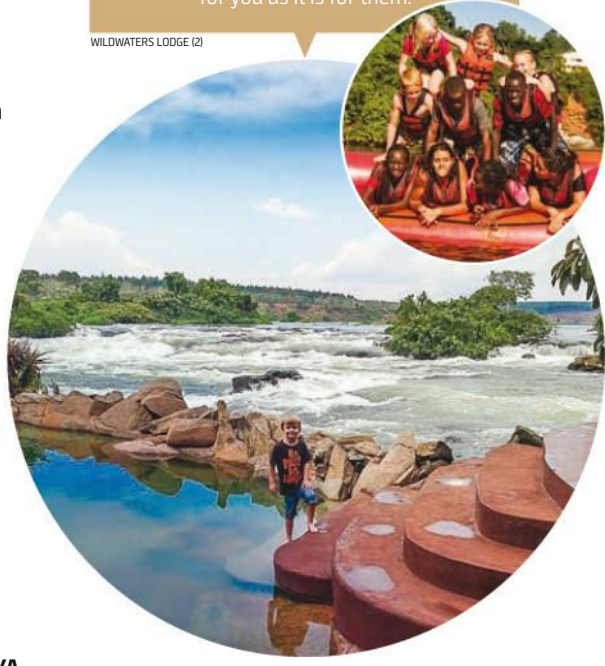
This is a little-known island in the Zanzibar archipelago, offering the perfect safe environment for children to explore. Stay at **Butiama Lodge** and get a room within earshot of the restaurant. They'll even place a guard on your verandah so you can enjoy dinner while the kids sleep. Long stretches of sandy beach and a protected marine park mean there's lots of fun to be had chasing crabs and swimming with wildlife. To top it off, the hotel's meal times and food options are brilliantly flexible and the ice cream is complimentary!

3

### JINJA, UGANDA

Jinja, famous for its white-water rafting and extreme sports, is a great spot for families with teenagers, but there's also plenty for younger children to do. Go on the Nile River Explorers' **Family Float trip**, try jet-boating, or enjoy a sunset barbecue cruise. You can even take a helicopter ride. Stay at the comfortable **Wildwaters Lodge** on a private island surrounded by the rushing waters of the Nile, where kids can enjoy a bath on the balcony and watch monkeys by the pool — as much of a treat for you as it is for them.

WILDWATERS LODGE (2)



# STOP DREAMING START LIVING

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## IMPRESSIONS

THE EMOTIVE IMPACT OF AFRICA



### Black rhino on foot

"Ker-chunk!" My camera shutter goes off like a gunshot. Immediately the browsing stops and the head comes up, radar ears swivelling and nostrils flaring. The calf huddles closer. Wedged into a thorn thicket, with an edgy female black rhino and her baby just 30 metres away, my every nerve screams 'run'. But Thulani gestures at me to stay put:

the rhino can't see us and the wind is in our favour. After an interminable time, the rhino resumes her demolition of the thorn bush. I calm my breathing and try to drink in the experience: the huff of her breath; the rhythmic crunch of her jaws; the flies swarming her broad battleship-grey flanks. Head hidden by foliage, she could be just a

boulder in a bush. And yet I know this boulder to be one of supreme vigilance, speed and power, one that could spin on a sixpence, crash through our thicket and wield that deadly horn like a rapier. My memory card full, we back slowly out the way we came in, leaving her none the wiser. It is a good 200m before my pulse stops racing. **MIKE UNWIN**

## Art of Ethiopia

"Our culture is rich with religious iconography, and this visual language taught me the importance of the artist's ability to communicate with the viewer," says young Ethiopian painter **Yonas Degefa** (pictured below).

"The work must talk by itself. I frequently use the motif of an eye, as I think it speaks loudest, as well as other traditional symbols and qualities. In this way, my art explores my country's heritage while simultaneously reflecting my personal view of modern-day Ethiopia."

YONAS DEGEFA'S ART IS AVAILABLE TO BUY AT [BLUENILEART.COM](http://BLUENILEART.COM).



YONAS DEGEFA (3)



# Experience THE NORTHERN CAPE

Majestically reaching over 360 000 sq kilometres from the world-renowned Kalahari Desert to the arid plains of the Karoo, along with its lifeblood, the 2000km-long Orange River, the Northern Cape, South Africa, offers visitors unique adventure experiences. With its open spaces, friendly people, rich history and unique cultural diversity, this land of the extreme promises an extraordinary holiday adventure experience.

The Northern Cape is a land of many diverse cultures, frontier history and brave missionaries. It also has countless challenges for the adrenalin junkies, hikers, and 4WD adventurers. It has impressive national parks, with endless game and some of the most unique flora in the world.

Much of life and adventure in the Northern Cape is dependent on the sweeping tide of the Orange River, a 2000km stretch of natural magnificence, known as the *!Garib* (great river) by the local Khoisan. With constant ribbons of green along its banks that contrast with the arid surrounds,

at some points it can be a 6km-wide, impassable torrent and at others scarcely a stream.

The Kalahari Desert can be likened to a colossal sweeping river of another kind. Its red shifting sands that once rippled and moved are now mostly stable and home to hundreds of diverse species of flora and fauna.

A place of vastness and silence, the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park extends across much of the Kalahari. Every now and again the unmistakable cry of an African fish eagle rings out, or the gut-wrenching roar of a black-maned Kalahari Lion carries across the landscape.

The openness continues to the vast koppie-strewn plains of the Karoo and Namakwa, where hardy succulents complement sweet grasses, and the clean, clear air is bedecked with stars at night.

Photographers, writers and orators fail to adequately communicate the experience. After watching springbok prong through the veld, hundreds of wildebeest migrating, a wild cat stalking its prey and shooting stars sprinting across the sky, you will realise that this is a destination that you can't just read about or just drive through, but a place that you have to participate in.



For more information, please visit: [www.experiencenortherncape.com](http://www.experiencenortherncape.com) or email [marketing@experiencenortherncape.com](mailto:marketing@experiencenortherncape.com)



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ALAN PALMER (2)

## Road to Imelghas

**Alan Palmer** has travelled to Morocco around 30 times since his first ascent of Jebel Toubkal nearly 40 years ago. Here he recalls a visit to a Berber village in the High Atlas Mountains

*Near Reader,*

There are no buses to Imelghas, so we squeeze into a communal taxi at Azilal. There are six of us in all, each one anxious to reach Ait Bou Guemez (about 100km east of Marrakech as the Bonelli's eagle flies) before the sun sets and the High Atlas Mountains plunge into freezing darkness. As is the norm these days, we must either share the four passenger seats or walk. Long ago we did walk, but that was before the new tarmac strip joined the concrete towns of the northern plains with bustling Souk el Had, our valley's precious weekly market.

Imelghas' physical isolation testifies to the stories of the earliest settlement of Ait Bou Guemez, 'the people of the scratching man'. Legend tells of one who, cursed by a terrible skin condition, left his own folk and sought this remote, uninhabited corner of the Atlas to avoid spreading his affliction. There are

**I gaze across the flat, fertile valley floor towards gaudily dressed men, their children skipping in circles, waving sticks above their heads. Laughter rings out as they drive their mules, tethered together with simple, twisted rags**

certainly no signs of such suffering here today. Indeed, French trekkers have aptly nicknamed the place 'la vallée heureuse' ('the happy valley').

By the time we arrive the mountains are reduced to mere silhouettes. We stumble through unpaved lanes towards a chink of light escaping through a partly open door, the simple, traditional *pisé* home of our host. Once within, we are warmly welcomed in customary Berber style. Mohammed introduces us to the four generations of his smiling family. They are all seated together on the floor around their evening meal, spread across a blanket in the middle of the room. We are invited to join them and we tear hungrily at the goat meat and chicken. An open fire crackles at our side.

The place is simple but comfortable. I chuckle inwardly as I remember a previous trip when, lacking shelter, I was forced to sleep in a cave. In the middle of the night a goat herder lay down without ceremony and cuddled up beside me. The following day he declared himself to be the cave owner and charged me 10 dirhams (about US\$3) in rent.

Most people come here to trek, and we are no exceptions: Ighil

n'Oumsoud, standing proudly at 4068m (only 99m short of Jebel Toubkal, the highest mountain in North Africa), is in the next valley.

This morning, from the elevation of my room's balcony, I gaze across the flat, fertile valley floor towards gaudily dressed men, their children skipping in circles, waving sticks above their heads. Laughter rings out as they drive their mules, tethered together with simple, twisted rags. Dancing, whipping up clouds of yellow dust, they almost incidentally thresh the fresh grain underfoot.

Not all the girls are so engaged, however. I take an evening stroll down the valley to a natural, steep-sided conical hill just beyond the village. An ancient circular stone structure stands on top of it: the curious *agadir* of Sidi Moussa. Outside, four small girls, the youngest perhaps just 11 years old, wear their best dresses. They sit in the dust, chatter and wait.

I knock on the huge oak door, held together by rusting rivets the size of tent pegs. The hinges creak open to reveal the silhouette of an old man, a shaman perhaps, who silently beckons me to enter.

I stumble across each family's granary chamber, fortified to withstand the raids of yesteryear by neighbouring tribes. At last comes the inner sanctuary. With the aid of a flickering candle I faintly decipher a small earthen mound, the tomb of Sidi Moussa himself, the saint still empowered to bestow fertility upon the barren from beyond the grave. My thoughts turn to the innocent girls outside, patiently hoping for his blessing.



**TEMPTED TO HIKE?** The fruit of Alan Palmer's multiple Moroccan adventures is his *Moroccan Atlas the Trekking Guide* (Trailblazer Publications, 2014). It is possible to book bespoke walks and tours for individuals and small groups in Morocco through his company, Trek.



## JOURNAL

READERS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES



# Inner beauty

**Sage Baisden** muses on her recent journey of self-discovery to the underrated Moroccan city of Fez and the seaside city of Essaouira

**A**part from the Kairaouine Mosque and University, all the buildings in Fez have the same tan exteriors. Our tour guide, a local man wearing a *djellaba*, the traditional Moroccan brown, hooded robe, explains that their decidedly bland facades are in keeping with the teachings of Islam. The smooth stucco structures of this once capital city are meant to be the great equalizer.

"This way, there is no outward difference between the rich and the poor," he says, gesticulating with his left hand, as he takes a drag from his cigarette. "Everyone is equal on the outside, just as everyone is equal in the eyes of Allah."

The statement makes me pause. As we continue our tour, I begin thinking about the beauty that this teaching holds. The obvious compassion of this religion seeps into every corner of Moroccan life:

**The smooth stucco structures of this once capital city are meant to be the great equalizer**

it climbs up the unadorned outer walls, creating an unseen splendour that cannot be matched by any ornamentation. In that moment, I am sure I've never seen or felt anything quite like the buildings of Fez.



Jessie and Judith Hui are Australian exchange students accompanying me on my journey. Both spent the entire summer travelling through Europe and fancy themselves veteran backpackers, open to any experience. I am not quite as free yet. We sit on the roof of the riad, a traditional Moroccan structure with an internal courtyard, and watch the sun set over the Old City. A half-eaten plate of vibrant strawberries bought in the medina earlier that day, sits in front of us. We pass them around to the others sitting at the table, not wanting to hoard our spoils. A pot of sweet mint tea, the leaves floating on top of the amber liquid, is in the middle of the table. Directly across from me, there's a German woman holding a bag full of something resembling earwax.

"It's soap," she informs me in a thick accent. "It's for the hammam."

Hammams are Turkish baths and an integral part of Moroccan life. They are popular with tourists who enjoy the rather comic experience of being scrubbed and bathed in this traditional way. My travel buddies look excitedly at each other, eager to try something new that they can document in their travel journals. I, on the other hand, look down at my lap, trying to hide my horror at the prospect of stripping off in front of strangers. "What do you guys think?" Judith asks. "Should we do that tonight?" Jessie nods enthusiastically, ready to follow her sister into the unknown. "I think I am just going to stay here," I state quietly, feeling ashamed.



After four and a half hours driving along perilous roads cutting through the Moroccan countryside, we arrive in the beachside city of Essaouira. It has a booming fishing industry and unadorned, whitewashed buildings that look as if they've been plucked from a Grecian landscape.

One popular street of restaurants allows you to handpick the fish you would like to eat. There are about 10 eateries on the edge of town facing the beach. As you stroll along, the proprietors shout at you in the hope that it'll be them and their fish you choose over their neighbour's catch.

We ignore them and head to the beach instead, sitting on our towels and sharing another bag of strawberries. The strong winds blow the sand in every direction and I decide to walk towards the water. The shoreline had seemed close, but after five minutes, I realise that I may be further away from my companions than I am comfortable with. Wishing to dip my toes into the freezing water, though, I carry on.

I reach the ocean and allow the salty sea to wash over my feet.



**WI-FI ON THE GO:** tep is a handheld device that provides you with internet access wherever you go. [tepwireless.com](http://tepwireless.com), from £6.50 per day

Looking back, I can no longer see my friends. There's nothing before me except the watery turquoise expanse kissing the azure sky. A smile creeps across my face as my sense of independence slowly builds inside like a mosaic being laid out tile by tile on the inner walls of a mosque.



A few days later, we sit inside the riad in Fez, perched on the edge of the indoor fountain as our henna dries, sharing a shisha pipe and listening to the call to prayer reverberate throughout the Old City. Two boys we know approach and share it with us. The five of us sit for hours and talk as the staff brings out dish after dish and pot after pot of sugary cookies and tea, and slowly the day turns to night. Wishing for a moment

of calm in the midst of the chatter, I close my eyes. In the darkness, I focus on the noises that surround me: the bubbling of the fountain, Judith's quiet breaths as she draws on the hookah, the scattered voices that have managed to travel from the medina into the riad, the soft 'meow' of a stray cat and the clinking of glasses as we enjoy the ancient tradition of sharing a cup of mint tea with friends. I open my eyes and a love for this simple Moroccan custom swells inside me like the waves of the icy ocean and wraps tightly around me like the rich fabrics that cover the inside of the riad.



There was a time when I believed I had never seen anything like the unadorned buildings of Morocco.

### What's in a name?

**WHERE DID THE WORD 'ANTANANARIVO' ORIGINATE FROM?**

**Antananarivo** [AHN-tah-nah-nuh-REE-voh]  
Noun. The word for this Madagascan city means 'The City of Thousands' in the language of the ethnic Merina people. They made it their capital in 1610 and the 'thousand' is thought to refer to the soldiers used to capture and guard it. During French colonisation in the late 1800s, it was renamed Tananarive but the original name was restored after independence in 1960.

Looking back, I'm not sure this is true. In moments of clarity that only hindsight can bring, I have come to realise that there is an inner beauty behind tall, plain buildings, just as there is in the faces of those I pass every day in the street or sit next to in class. I see this in the face that looks back at me in the mirror — one that has somehow returned home appearing exactly the same on the outside and yet has managed to become new and unexpected on the inside. We all carry our experiences within us and hide behind the mask of the humdrum, the expected. It is only when the doors to our internal worlds are thrown open that we can see the fountains of insecurity, the mosaics of independence, and the fabrics of new-found love that lie within.

## MY #ODETOAFRICA



SARA ESSOP

**"AFRICA IS MORE THAN A PLACE; IT'S A FEELING. I LOVE THE SMELLS, SOUNDS, PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE. THEY GET INTO YOUR SOUL. AFRICA BECOMES PART OF YOU. AFRICA IS WHERE MY MIND GOES WHEN I NEED TO ESCAPE. AFRICA BRINGS ME JOY AND PEACE."** MARY CAMPBELL, USA

**"THE FIRST TIME I SET FOOT ON AFRICAN SOIL, I FELT SOMETHING SO POWERFUL I CAN'T DESCRIBE IT. I FELT A HURRICANE OF EMOTION BEING CREATED IN MY SOUL AND MIND. WHEN YOU ARE IN AFRICA, YOU EXPERIENCE FREEDOM IN ITS PUREST FORM. YOU WONDER WHETHER THAT'S THE WAY IT WAS AT THE BEGINNING OF TIME. IT MAKES YOU QUESTION WHO YOU ARE AND WHERE WE ARE GOING. EVERY BREATH I TAKE WHEN I'M IN AFRICA MAKES ME FEEL ALIVE."** JUAN PABLO BONILLA GARÍN, CHILE

**"IF YOU CAN ONLY VISIT TWO CONTINENTS IN YOUR LIFETIME, VISIT AFRICA — TWICE", SAID R. ELLIOT. HE WAS INDEED A WISE MAN. AFRICA HAS AMAZING BEACHES, ENTHRALLING GAME RESERVES, STUNNING WATERFALLS, ANCIENT HISTORY AND SPECTACULAR SCENERY TO RIVAL THE BEST IN THE WORLD. IT ALSO HAS THE WIDEST SMILES, THE MOST DIVERSE SET OF PEOPLE AND THE BEST WEATHER IN THE WORLD. IT IS TRULY A WORLD IN ONE CONTINENT."** SARA ESSOP, SOUTH AFRICA



# Hide and treat

Photography is such an intrinsic part of a modern-day safari, your decision where to travel is all the more important. In Madikwe, you have an exceptional wildlife destination, tailored specifically to support photographers

With wild dog, the Big Five, brown hyena, and an abundance of other species, the appeal of Madikwe Game Reserve for wildlife enthusiasts is obvious. So it is no surprise that it has become a popular destination for photographers.

“We have worked hard to ensure that Jaci’s offers every opportunity for photographers – amateur or professional,” explain Jan and Jaci van Heteren, who co-founded Jaci’s Lodges in Madikwe.

The recent opening of the new Terrapin Hide is their latest initiative to support photographers. Situated within a waterhole, the Terrapin

Hide provides incredible water-level photographic opportunities, 24-hours a day. Access is gained through an underground tunnel, and it is equipped with red LED interior lights, spotlights and a radio link back to the main camp.

You can stay up late to view nocturnal animals coming for a drink or to capture the star-filled night sky. With the Terrapin Hide facing west, you are guaranteed soft morning light and warm, dusty, backlit silhouettes in late afternoon.

“Combined with our daily drives with a photographic guide, use of professional level DSLR cameras and telephoto lenses, custom-built Gimpro game-viewer arms and

single/double pano heads, you can be assured of access to state-of-the-art equipment and expert tuition,” said Jaci.


Outside of its standard operations, the van Heterens have enlisted renowned photographers Roger de la Harpe, Andrew Aveley, David Rogers and the team at Pangolin Photo to lead specialist photographic trips, including some aimed at children. Few places could be more inspiring.

Most guests link Jaci’s with the Grand Daddy boutique hotel in Cape Town and the charming Cheetah Plains in the Sabi Sands, which is connected by daily flights from Madikwe.

- Visit [jacislodges.co.za](http://jacislodges.co.za) for the full range of photographic safaris, including:
- Wild wine photo workshop, with Roger de la Harpe and Painted Wolf Wines
  - Photo safaris with resident expert Andrew Aveley
  - Childrens’ workshops with David Rogers
  - 7-night Chobe & Madikwe photography course
  - 10-night Madikwe, Victoria Falls & Chobe photo safari
  - Cats & Dogs exclusive photographic safari

For more images, video and information about photographic safaris at Jaci’s Lodges, scan this page with Layar, tap on your tablet, visit [www.jacislodges.co.za](http://www.jacislodges.co.za) or email [reservations@jacislodges.co.za](mailto:reservations@jacislodges.co.za)





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**GRAHAM BOYNTON**  
MUSINGS ON TRAVEL MATTERS



## Onwards and upwards

One major sign that tourism to Africa is on an upward trajectory is the raft of recent announcements of international flights to the continent, says **Graham Boynton**

**A**s everyone knows, air links are the lifeblood of modern tourism. The market has been gloomy for some time: South Africa, the continent's biggest aviation market, continues to report stagnant international passenger numbers. Its national airline, staggering under a mountain of debt, has been forced to cut its prized Cape Town-Heathrow slot and shed partnerships with Etihad and other airlines. Despite this, the broader picture may offer a glimmer of hope for an industry that many believe is not growing fast enough.

Scheduling changes are on-going, but (to name but a few) British Airways will begin direct flights from Gatwick to Cape Town in November, adding to its established twice-daily

flights out of Heathrow. Abu Dhabi's Etihad has started a daily service between Abu Dhabi and Dar es Salaam, and Qatar Airways has announced routes to six new African destinations, starting with Marrakech in July, Windhoek in September, the Seychelles in December and Cameroon, Gabon and Zambia next year.

The third Gulf airline, Emirates, has long been committed to Africa and currently operates more than 370 flights a week between Dubai and 27 cities. According to an Emirates spokesman, the airline "has a strategic focus on Africa and we see it as a very important anchor of our future network".

This show of international support and faith in Africa's future must be accompanied by the internal links, which have been so lacking in the past. With more than a billion people in

Africa and just 3% of the world's aviation business, it is clear, as fastjet's former CEO Ed Winter observes, "that the continent remains in desperate need of improved and affordable aviation connectivity".

The new Airlink service between Cape Town and Maun, launched in March, is a good sign, and many look forward with anticipation to the expected traffic growth at Zimbabwe's new Victoria Falls Airport. The Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe is apparently in talks with six international airlines and it is just a matter of time before this outstanding new airport becomes a massive regional hub drawing in international travellers from all over the world.

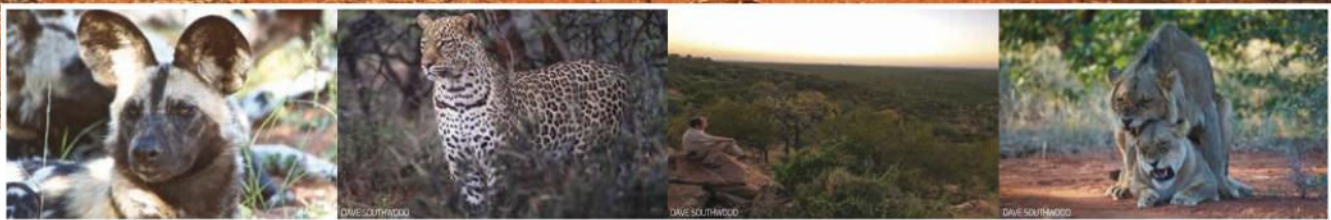
The future seems bright for African tourism, and we are now waiting for the next tranche of air connections to fulfil their promises. We shall see.

**JOIN THE DISCUSSION**  
Please tell us your thoughts on this subject at [travelfricamag.com](http://travelfricamag.com) or email [editor@travelfricamag.com](mailto:editor@travelfricamag.com).



**GRAHAM BOYNTON** has written for numerous newspapers and magazines, including *Vanity Fair*, *Esquire* and *Condé Nast Traveller*, and was the travel editor of *The Daily* and *Sunday Telegraph* between 1998 and 2012. A regular visitor to Africa, where he grew up, his current consultancies include work as media director for the African Travel & Tourism Association (Atta). The views expressed in this column are his own.

# How being part of Africa contributes to the preservation of wildlife



**R**eaders of *Travel Africa* magazine clearly have an intrinsic love for Africa and its wildlife, culture and diverse landscapes. Many of you will have visited multiple times, lured, perhaps, by the smell of the rain, the vast skies or the thrill of seeing wildlife in its natural environment. No doubt you will share anxiety about the threat to many of Africa's most remarkable creatures.

It is this deep passion for this remarkable continent that prompted us to become co-owners of a vast tract of land in southern Botswana. And we're inviting you to join us in our exciting project.

As co-owners of a 20,500 hectare reserve in the Tuli Block, we each have our own private lodge and the freedom to explore and enjoy safaris in this big game region in our own way. It is a fabulous privilege.

Most significantly, our investment helps to fund the conservation projects that have seen several of Africa's most sought-after species reintroduced and protected. Here are two examples:

**WHITE RHINO** There are only about 100 white rhino left in Botswana so a real effort needs to be made to revive the population. In 2007 we started a breeding programme. Our first calf was born on 9 April 2011, and is probably the first to be conceived and born and survived in Tuli since the early 1900s. This is a significant step forward to accomplish the legacy we want to leave.

At our Rhino Rescue Project (RRP) the focus is around a pro-active approach to anti-poaching. The intention is to destroy the economic

value of the rhino horn by making it unsuitable for human ingestion (which represents about 95% of the market) so that the desire to poach the animals is taken away. Treatment includes techniques such as: ear notching, DNA management, toxic horn treatment, dying of horn, pregnancy testing and implanting of microchips. The cost per treatment is about US\$ 1000 per animal.

**WILD DOG** In August 2008 we were asked by Botswana Wildlife to adopt nine wild dog puppies whose parents have been poached, and reintroduce them back to the bush. We are excited that they have been successfully trained and released to do their own hunting, since May 2010. We also bonded them with another pack and together they had their first litter of seven puppies in April 2011: a second generation that would not have been there if we were not able to help save them.

Extensive veterinary work is conducted on the reserve to help research and monitor conservation and breeding programmes. This includes collaring and performing of vasectomies.

The goal is to work with other breeding projects in Botswana to re-establish endangered species firstly in the Tuli block and then further in Botswana.

These are just two excellent examples of the way co-owners contribute to the bigger picture of wildlife conservation. We hope you will embrace our work and allow yourself a unique opportunity to be a Part of Africa.

For more information visit [www.partofafrica.com](http://www.partofafrica.com) or contact [sylvia@partofafrica.com](mailto:sylvia@partofafrica.com) or [paul@partofafrica.com](mailto:paul@partofafrica.com) directly



See a gallery of images of Part of Africa at [travelfricamag.com](http://travelfricamag.com)



**PARTofAFRICA**



## What's cooking?

We asked **Selelo Nteda** (or Cry), Senior Barman at Tuli Safari Lodge, to tell us about himself and his role



### What was your childhood like?

I had a traditional upbringing in a family of nine children in the village of Mathathane near Tuli.

### Tell me about your career

I started working at Tuli in 1982, at the age of 19. I've been here ever since. My first job was cleaning dishes but I gradually migrated to cleaning the bar and gardening as well as tracking. In 1986 I became a barman and have stayed happily in this role for 30 years.

### What are the highlights of your job?

I really love my job, particularly talking to guests at the bar, which is at the heart of the lodge and built around the trunk of a 500-year-old Nyala-berry tree. I also enjoy bush dinners, when the bar moves to somewhere secluded such as a hide or a sandstone kopje.

### What cocktails can you make?

I love experimenting with new combinations. I would highly recommend Tuli's signature non-alcoholic drink, a Rock Shandy (soda, lemonade and bitters). For something alcoholic, I'd suggest a Screwdriver or Green Mamba (beer and peppermint liqueur).

### Where are the ingredients sourced?

From our nearest town, Selebi-Phikwe, which is about a five-hour round trip. We go there once a fortnight to restock.

### What is your favourite drink?

Carling Black Label.



## FLAVOURS OF AFRICA

### Nita Ragoonanan outlines some of the top dishes to try on your travels

It isn't surprising that the world's second-largest continent is home to an enormous variety of culinary traditions. As you stroll along the streets of South Africa, you may find yourself inhaling the sweet aroma of *koeksisters* (1) – meaning 'cookies' in Dutch – those sticky donuts; or

perhaps whiffs of the delectable curry-filled bread rolls known as 'bunny chow' (2), a popular Indian-influenced street food. In Ethiopia, you may feast on a lip-smacking plateful of chickpea stew (3), a vegetarian dish laced with *beriberi* (also known as 'peri peri') and served with crusty bread. And in West Africa, rich, spicy goat curry (4) is typical hearty fare, usually served with yams, bananas and plantain.

### A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

## GHANAIAN GOAT CURRY

- 4lb goat, in pieces
- 1 cup cilantro, roughly chopped
- 3 spring onions
- 1 knob fresh ginger
- 10 cloves of garlic
- 1 habanero pepper
- 1 onion, sliced
- 2tbsp curry powder
- 1tsp turmeric
- 1tbsp salt
- 1ts black pepper
- 1tbsp oil
- 2 cups fresh coconut milk

Serves 4-6

### METHOD

Place the cilantro, spring onions, garlic, ginger, turmeric, salt and black pepper into a food processor and pulse until a smooth paste is formed. Place the goat into

a large bowl and add the paste, reserving 1tbl for the following day. Cover and marinate overnight.

Heat the oil, onion and habanero pepper in a heavy iron pot on a medium heat. Sauté until they're soft. Meanwhile, mix the curry powder, remaining paste and 2tbl of water in a small bowl. Add this to the onion and fry for two minutes, stirring so that it doesn't burn. Then toss in the goat. It will release its own juices, so allow these to cook off and pour in the coconut milk and enough water to cover the meat.

Place the lid on and simmer until the goat is tender, periodically checking that there is enough water. Remove from the heat once the meat is tender. Season and serve with rice, yams and bananas.

FOR MORE RECIPES, VISIT  
[TASTEPPICY.COM](http://TASTEPPICY.COM)





## BOOK CLUB

READING THAT'S WORTH SHARING

### BOOK WORMS!

Welcome to the **Travel Africa Book Club**, a valued resource for all readers with an interest in African wildlife, culture and travel. We'll let you know about new releases, dig out some interesting old favourites and invite guests to recommend and review titles. Most importantly, we call on you to share your own suggestions and reviews of books you've particularly enjoyed. We are developing this online and send out regular updates, so please visit us at [travelfricamag.com](http://travelfricamag.com) and sign up to our newsletter.

*Happy reading!*

Laura Griffith-Jones, Editor

### Featured book

#### The Desert: Lands of Lost Borders

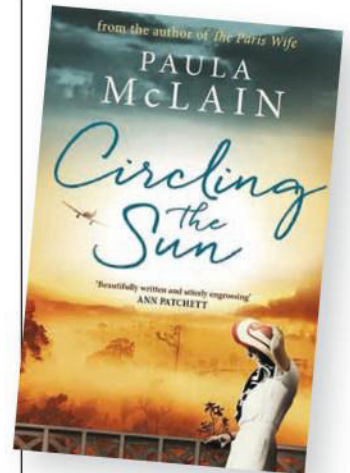
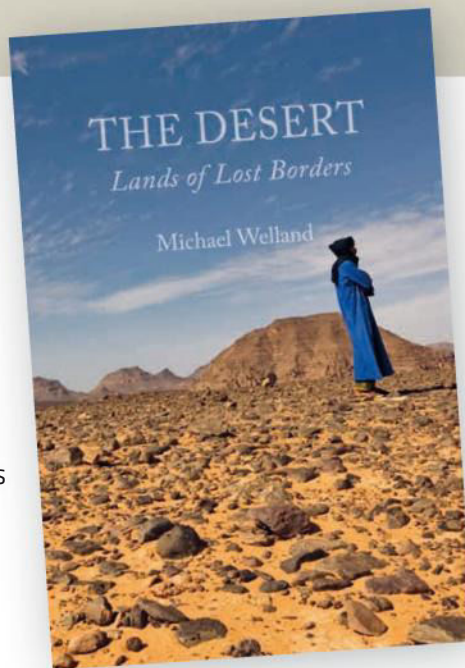
Michael Welland

In *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad depicts barely explored southern Africa on a mid-19th century world map as a "blank space of delightful mystery – a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over". Deserts retain an element of mystery. They are some of the world's few remaining white spaces.

In this expansive work, geologist Michael Welland describes these empty places with palpable enthusiasm. He indulges to a degree the romanticised perception of the desert as hostile yet exotic and adventurous. The possibility of drowning in the Sahara, he writes, is "paradoxical, absurd, but ... a fate that is not uncommon". Yet he also emphasises that deserts, though frontiers to some, are homelands to others. He describes the Himba in the Namib, and examines the history of human occupation of these barren lands through images and anthropological records, underscoring mankind's remarkable ability to adapt and survive.

Welland quotes the words of environmentalist Edward Abbey: "You cannot get the desert into a book any more than a fisherman can haul up the sea with his nets." Despite this, he's made an impressive attempt. With varied chapters on subjects including ancient civilisations, myths, art and film, poetry, colonial exploitation and the erosion of rocks, this tome is a fascinating, encyclopaedic work.

Reviews by Rose Gamble



### Reader review

**CIRCLING THE SUN**  
Paula McLain

Beryl Markham and Karen Blixen were such strong, independent women, in many ways ahead of their time. This historical novel is wonderful, highlighting the relationship of Blixen (and Markham... and oh so many others) with the equally fascinating Denys Finch-Hatton. With him, Blixen was not so strong or independent (it seems he turned all women into adoring puddles of jelly!). Great writing and a fabulous story.

Nancy McDaniel,  
Chicago, USA

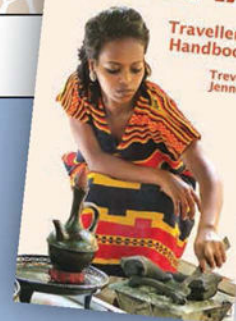


#### IN YOUR POCKET

Short on packing space? *Out of Africa*, Karen Blixen's passionate account of her time running a farm in Kenya, is part of a brand-new collection of colourful, pocket-sized Penguin Classics.

## ETHIOPIA

Travellers' Handbook  
Trevor Jenner



## FIVE GREAT READS

Travel Africa reader **Carrie Burhenn** has been collecting books on exploration, natural history, wildlife and photography for nearly 30 years. She reveals her favourite books



### 1 THE LAST HERO

PETER FORBATH

This epic adventure novel is based on the great explorer Henry Morton Stanley's dangerous military mission into the heart of the Congo in 1885 to rescue Emin Pasha, the mysterious governor of Britain's only province in Central Africa. It's a long book (about 700 pages) but reads like a thriller, despite its surprising lack of exposure when it was first published.



### 3 OUT IN THE BLUE

VIVIENNE DE WATTEVILLE  
The British travel writer and adventurer went on safari with her father who was collecting animals for the Natural History Museum of Bern, Switzerland. When he died after being mauled by

a lion, she took command and finished the journey. She was a strong, determined lady who showed great courage and resourcefulness in a time when women were regarded as 'the weaker sex'. In this book she writes eloquently and accurately of her experiences.

### 4 THE POWER OF ONE

BRYCE COURTENAY

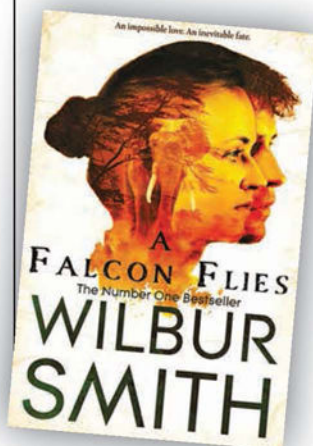
This book was made into a movie of the same title in the 1990s and is an account of a young British South African boy who is bullied by his schoolmates. He perseveres,

determined to make a life for himself and help others who are similarly affected. Eventually, he becomes a champion for the rights of the 'unseen victims' of discrimination. The storytelling here is some of the best.

### 5 A FALCON FLIES

WILBUR SMITH

The author tackles the history of Zimbabwe through this story of a family known as the Ballantynes. Many of his books were banned in the country because they were not favourable to the government. This is the first of four novels in this series.



### 2 THE BLACK JOURNEY: ACROSS CENTRAL AFRICA WITH THE CITROËN EXPEDITION

GEORGES-MARIE HAARDT

This book does not describe your average overland trip. It records a journey undertaken in the late 1920s by Citroën. The company crossed the Sahara in eight unreliable trucks. There were no roads and few gas stations. The team's adventures are reported with almost light-hearted candour as they bump, grind and slide through the bleak and hostile landscape.

## 4 top picks

### GREAT GUIDE

**ETHIOPIA: TRAVELLERS' HANDBOOK**

TREVOR JENNER

Two decades of interest in Ethiopia and multiple trips to the country are the inspiration behind this comprehensive guidebook. Suggested itineraries, off-the-beaten-track ideas and concise accounts of the country's history, plus colour images and descriptions of flora and fauna, demonstrate Jenner's extensive knowledge of this fascinating place.

### NEW NOVEL

**SHAME**

MELANIE FINN

Finn's second novel tells the story of a woman who exiles herself to a remote village in Tanzania after an accidental killing. Her descriptions of East Africa (she grew up in Kenya) are startling in their directness.

### MODERN CLASSIC

**DON'T LET'S GO TO THE DOGS TONIGHT**

ALEXANDRA FULLER

Fuller's first novel describes, with wit and honesty, a childhood spent moving from one remote farm to another in Rhodesia (later to become Zimbabwe). She stretches and plays with language to emulate the voice of the girl she once was, and the effect is immediate and emotive.

### ADVENTURE ROMP

**DODGING ELEPHANTS**

ALICE MORRISON

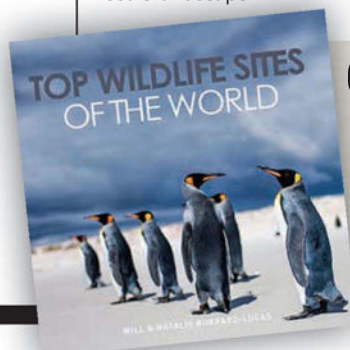
This is the story of a journalist who cycled 12,000km from Cairo to Cape Town in the Tour d'Afrique, the longest bicycle race on earth. Morrison's adventures through burning sands and dizzying mountains are gripping, but it's the account of an 'ordinary woman' overcoming fear, doubt and exhaustion that is so inspiring.

## On the coffee table

**TOP WILDLIFE SITES OF THE WORLD**

WILL AND NATALIE BURRARD-LUCAS

The photographer and his wife pick 32 of their favourite wildlife destinations, including 12 in Africa, ranging from the Mara and Serengeti to harder-to-reach places such as Odzala-Kokoua National Park in the Congo or the Bale mountains in Ethiopia. Knowledgeable descriptions and breathtaking images.





# Kalahari

## ▼ DELTA CAMP, OKAVANGO DELTA

Overlooking the confluence of the Boro and Metsematsweu channels of the Okavango, Delta Camp is well elevated to command a spectacular vista of swamp, riverine forest and wildlife that lies before it. The camp offers twice-daily walking safaris and mokoro (dug-out canoe) excursions in the Moremi Game Reserve.

[www.deltacampbotswana.com](http://www.deltacampbotswana.com) | [info@lodgesofbotswana.com](mailto:info@lodgesofbotswana.com)

# Okavango



## ◀▲ DECEPTION VALLEY LODGE, KALAHARI

A pristine oasis deep in the Kalahari Desert, Deception Valley Lodge offers a novel guest experience. But, what makes the lodge truly special, is the rare opportunity to meet and explore this remarkable environment with Bushman guides of the Naru-speaking tribe, one of the oldest cultures in Africa.

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As Botswana celebrates its 50th anniversary, we invite you to explore its wildlife-rich floodplains, waterways and savannahs... sitting at the hub of the most exceptional safari region in Africa

**W**here is the best place to visit in Africa? This is one of the most frequently asked questions by travellers to Africa. Although there is no definitive answer, since it depends what visitors are looking for from the experience? Is it big game, iconic animals, culture, World Heritage sites, adventure activities – or a combination of all of these things?

The Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA) lies at the wild heart of five African countries: Botswana, Angola, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. KAZA encompasses arguably the greatest safari travel destination in Africa – and The Kaza Collection is at the centre of it all, where it provides visitors with an exceptional choice of activities, service and accommodation.

The Kaza Collection is a group of like-minded safari travel people, who cherish old, soul-restoring values, while catering for the needs of modern travellers through the provision of luxury accommodation, gourmet food and exceptional guiding.

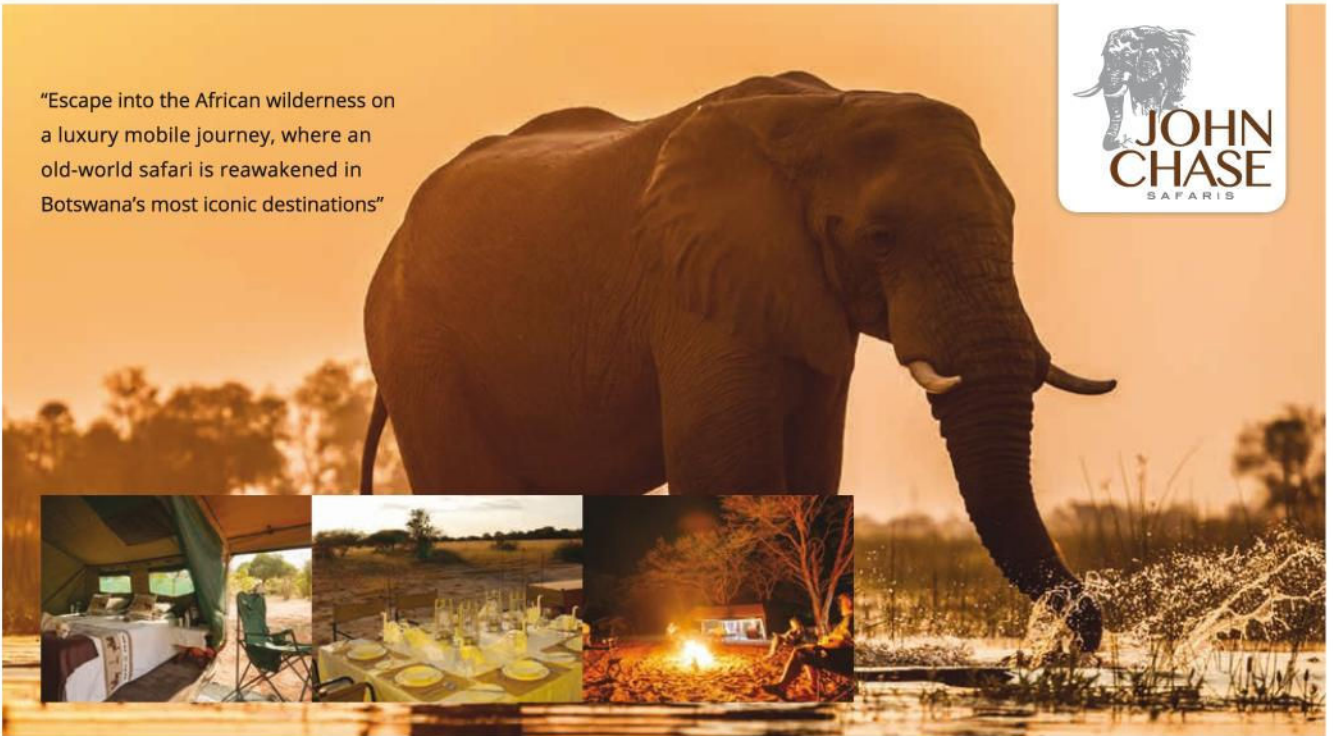
**PARTNERS IN THE KAZA COLLECTION INCLUDE:**

- Camp Kuzuma**, Kazuma Pan Forest Reserve
  - Kaza Safari Lodge** (NEW), Impalila Island, Chobe and Zambezi rivers confluence
  - Chobe Water Villas** (NEW), on the banks of the Chobe River
  - Cascade Island Lodge** (NEW), Impalila Island, Chobe and Zambezi rivers confluence
  - Waterberry Lodge & Farmhouse**, Livingstone, near Victoria Falls
  - Jackalberry Tented Lodge**, Linyanti Lagoons, Nkasa Rupara NP
  - Ghoha Hills Safari Lodge**, Savuti area
  - Imvelo Safari Lodges**, Victoria Falls and Hwange National Park
- Flame of Africa, tour operator.



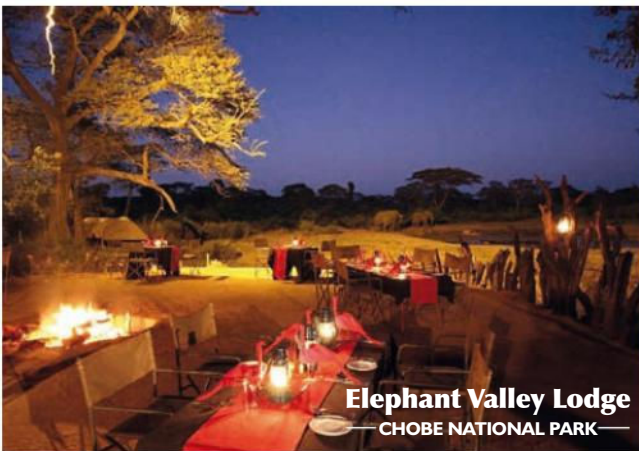
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**Elephant Valley Lodge**  
— CHOBE NATIONAL PARK —

Elephant Valley Lodge lies between the Chobe National Park in Botswana and the equally impressive Matetsi wildlife conservancy, south of the Kazangula border crossing and within the Kasane Forest Reserve. Sturdy acacias reach high above the camp, forming large canopies of shade, under which you will find 20 custom-built meru-style luxury safari tents.

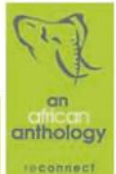
All guest areas are focused on an active waterhole, which provides an almost endless procession of animals. Activities include daily safaris and boat cruises into Chobe, while the lodge's unique lodcation provides guests with game viewing opportunities throughout the day and night.



**Kadizora Camp**  
— OKAVANGO DELTA —

The Okavango Delta represents one of the last truly unspoilt wilderness areas in Africa, and remains one of nature's marvels. It is here, on the bank of an expansive lagoon, that the magnificent Kadizora Camp has been created.

Kadizora presents 10 luxury tents, each with generous living spaces, sophisticated furnishing and a full en suite bathroom. In addition to open vehicle and walking safaris, mokoro excursions provide the ideal position from which to explore the Okavango's endless flow of rivers and tributaries. This tranquil experience permits close encounters with an abundance of bird and wildlife.



For more information: +27 11 568 2799 • res@africananthology.co.za • www.anthology.co.za

# 50 secrets about Botswana

To celebrate the country's 50th anniversary since independence, we asked experts for their insight and advice to help you plan an extraordinary trip

COMPILED BY LAURA GRIFFITH-JONES AND JESSICA MAYHALL

## Why Botswana?

**His Excellency The President of the Republic of Botswana, Lieutenant General Dr Seretse Khama Ian Khama tells us what makes his country so special:**

Botswana has been named Lonely Planet's top country to visit in 2016. While we very much appreciate and agree with this accolade, we think we have been such for many years and will continue to be for many more to come. So what do I think makes Botswana special?

First, our people: they are welcoming, peaceful and love to show off their hospitality. Our slogan is 'Botswana: our pride, your destination'. Second, our focus on conservation: 20 per cent of the country consists of reserves and national parks. Third, our wildlife: for example, nowhere else in the world will you find as many elephant. Fourth, our diversity: sand dunes and arid savannah desert in the west, huge salt pans in the centre and the largest inland delta in the north-west. Fifth, our weather: 300 days of sunshine a year should meet most people's needs. And sixth, our success: we are Africa's oldest and arguably most successful democracy. Visit now or visit later. Just make sure you visit. →



SIMON FRASER





**T**he Bechuanaland Protectorate gained its independence from Great Britain on 30 September 1966. At this time, it was one of the 10 poorest countries on the planet. Governed remotely by South Africa, it did not even have a capital city. With more than 84 per cent of its land made up of Kalahari sands, Botswana seemed destined to remain a harsh, inhospitable place with little apparent value and few prospects. Fast-forward to today and it is a thriving nation with a booming economy, bustling towns and cities, and large tracts of untouched and wild land. It is testament to the country that this transformation has occurred while sustaining the balance between the needs

of a developing nation and its abundant wildlife. This, and the advancement of tourism, has been achieved through the quality leadership of Sir Seretse Khama, Quett Masire Festus Mogae and Ian Khama. Once reliant on its resources (including diamonds, coal, cattle and copper), Botswana's tourism industry now provides much needed foreign exchange and rural employment, putting food on the tables of around 60 per cent of the people who live in and around the Okavango Delta. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the independence of Botswana, *Travel Africa* has compiled 50 secrets to help you plan your next trip.

**COLIN BELL**, AFRICA'S FINEST



### 1 Witness action in the Savuti Channel

In 1983 the channel dried up for a quarter of a century, giving it the adage 'the vanished river'. Only in 2008 did the water return. As a result, it offers some of Africa's most thrilling up-close wildlife interactions, with wild dogs being particular lures. The best ringside seat is Savuti Camp, where visitors can also try fly-camping, night safaris and walking tours.

■ MICHAEL POLIZA, PHOTOGRAPHER



JAMES GIFFORD

### 2 How to use a sausage tree

Who would have thought it but those strange-looking trees with giant saucisson-shaped seed pods can be very helpful for spotting a leopard kill. In late August and September, this elusive big cat develops a clever way of catching its prey – by sitting and waiting patiently in a sausage tree for impala, duiker and bush pigs to come and feed on the fallen fruits. So all you have to do is wait patiently, too.

■ DEREK AND BEVERLY JOUBERT, FILMMAKERS

### 3 Sip a sundowner with an elephant shrew

My favourite Botswana secret, in fact my favourite place in the world, is a rocky sandstone outcrop in the Northern Tuli Game Reserve. It must be the only spot where it's possible, if not probable, that you will see elephant shrews and herds of their giant cousins in the same place at the same time.

■ VIKKI THRELFALL, TULI SAFARI LODGE



TULI SAFARI LODGE

### 4 Go birding at Lake Ngami

This water body has a remarkable history: it transformed from dry grassland to a spectacular lake in excess of 200sq km. It is never the same from year to year, and (at the time of publication) is shrinking again, so now is the time to go. The area is a certified IBA (Important Bird Area) and visitors are treated to magnificent flocks of thousands of pelican, flamingo and duck.

■ GRANT REED, LETAKA SAFARIS

HANNES LOCHNER

### 5 Travel to Moremi after the floods

As the Okavango River overflows into the sands of the Kalahari Desert to create the largest inland delta in the world, Moremi Game Reserve provides the perfect setting to take in the abundant wildlife from the confines of Mombo Camp. You're almost certain of a hippo, leopard, lion or elephant sighting when the flooding reaches its peak around the end of June to August.

■ MICHAEL POLIZA, PHOTOGRAPHER

### 6 See a white rhino at Khama

This sanctuary in central-eastern Botswana was established in 1992, with the aim of protecting and growing numbers of white and black rhino. The patch of Kalahari sandveld is also home to 30 mammal species and more than 230 kinds of bird.

■ STEVEN STOCKHALL, EARTH ARK SAFARIS

### 7 Visit the Kuru Art Project in D'kar

The settlement is home to the Red People, hunter-gatherers driven off their home ranges over the past 200 years. The project seeks to provide desperately needed income to these people, while aiding them to regain their soul. The older artists' paintings and prints provide a collective memory of plants, animals and traditions; their younger associates juxtapose this with contemporary life.

■ ANN GOLLIFER, BOTSWANA-BASED ARTIST



GRANT REED / LETAKA SAFARIS





**8 Catch sight of a secret zebra migration**

Botswana is home to one of the least-known but longest mammal migrations in the world, first documented in 2011. Every year in the dry season, thousands of zebra congregate on the Chobe floodplains before a mammoth 250km trek south to Nxai Pan.

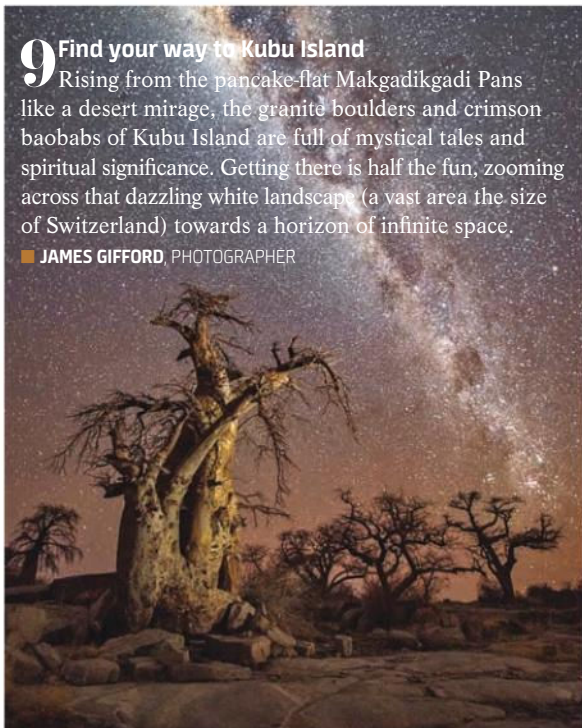
■ **KELLY LANDEN**, ELEPHANTS WITHOUT BORDERS

JAMES GIFFORD

**9 Find your way to Kubu Island**

Rising from the pancake-flat Makgadikgadi Pans like a desert mirage, the granite boulders and crimson baobabs of Kubu Island are full of mystical tales and spiritual significance. Getting there is half the fun, zooming across that dazzling white landscape (a vast area the size of Switzerland) towards a horizon of infinite space.

■ **JAMES GIFFORD**, PHOTOGRAPHER



REMS CARIN

**10 Discover ancient rock art**

The petroglyphs of Matsieng are intriguing. Created by southern African Bushmen, the images range from spoor and animals to abstract designs. If you spot a human footprint, you are at a 'creation site', where man first emerged onto Earth.

■ **MIKE MAIN**, AUTHOR

**11 Cross a remote saltpan**

Arriving on Nxai Pan, formerly Paradise Pan, you are welcomed by the sight of endless space broken by scattered acacia trees. Most of the action takes place around a waterhole. Giraffe, springbok and impala may be the first mammals you see, but the resident lion pride has swelled to 19. Cheetah hunt in the open plains and huge bull elephants, white from mud bathing on the pan's salty crust, gather here to drink.

■ **STEVEN STOCKHALL**, EARTH ARK SAFARIS

**12 Get lost in the Aha Hills**

Located on the Namibia-Botswana border, this remarkable place is little visited. The hills are frequented by Bushmen and are formed of dolomite, a remnant of the ancient sea. There are two solution caves here that are tens of metres deep; hardly anything is known about them.

■ **MIKE MAIN**, AUTHOR

**13 Be transformed in the Delta**

This may not be a secret, but the only way to explore the Okavango Delta is aboard a mokoro. Away from motorboat engines and at peace with the flowing water, you will feel connected to all living things. It is a transformative experience that feels like a pilgrimage — and one we all should take.

■ **DR STEVE BOYES**, EXPLORER

## 14 Stay on a houseboat

For an alternative style of accommodation, swap a traditional lodge for the floating serenity of a houseboat. It is a fantastic and comfortable experience, and there is a smaller vessel on hand for morning and evening excursions.

■ JAMES GIFFORD, PHOTOGRAPHER



TOM VARLEY

## 15 Shelter under baobabs

Because of their enormous size, Africa's famous 'upside-down trees' are landmarks in the flat Kalahari landscape and serve as pools of welcome shade to travellers. Baines' Baobabs, a cluster of ancient trees in Nxai Pan National Park, have sheltered the famous artist himself, his companion James Chapman, Dr David Livingstone and, more recently, the heir to the British throne. Many bear the names and initials of famous explorers.

■ MIKE MAIN, AUTHOR

DERECK AND BEVERLY JOUBERT

## 16 Be captivated by the Tsodilo Hills

Rising dramatically from the Kalahari and inhabited for about 100,000 years, the Tsodilo Hills (called Male, Female and Child) captivate and mystify. The spiritualism and significance of these hills saw them declared a World Heritage Site in 2001. Take one of the walking trails at sunrise or sunset, accompanied by a San guide, to see some of the 4500 or so rock paintings.

■ DAWN WILSON, BOTSWANA TOURISM

## 17 Take your time. Give yourself 20 per cent more time than you think you need to explore this country. Take 20 per cent less luggage (basics are best) and take 20 per cent more deep breaths. Stop and look around you.

■ MAP IVES, GUIDE

## 18 Sleep on an Elephant Pan SkyBed

In the middle of the 200,000-hectare Khwai Private Game Reserve is an extraordinary new facility that opened earlier this year. There are just six beds on three sleep-out platforms, which are passed by up to a thousand elephant each day at the height of the dry season (mid-June to early November), in addition to all the area's regular wildlife. Sleeping out here under the stars, surrounded by the roaring of lions and the trumpeting of the elephant, will be one of those life-changing memories that will stay with you forever.

■ COLIN BELL, AFRICA'S FINEST

## 19 Travel in the green season

The first rains arrive in Botswana at the beginning of summer, producing a carpet of short green grass and beautiful flowers. Apart from a few weeks either side of Christmas and New Year, it is not high season – and hence not crowded, and at this time of year the varied clouds provide ideal photography conditions. Visiting migratory birds add to the indigenous multitudes and baby animals are everywhere. Shallow pans hold water and in the heat of the day elephant visit to drink and splash mud around.

■ RICHARD DU TOIT, PHOTOGRAPHER



**20 Eat like a local in Maun** ▼  
 Drink palm wine, munch on dried mopane worms (more protein-rich than beef) and journey into the back roads of the town to find street stalls selling seswaa and papa.

■ SIMON DURES, ZSL'S INSTITUTE OF ZOOLOGY



STEVEN STOCKHALL / EARTH ARK SAFARIS

**21 Immerse yourself in local culture**

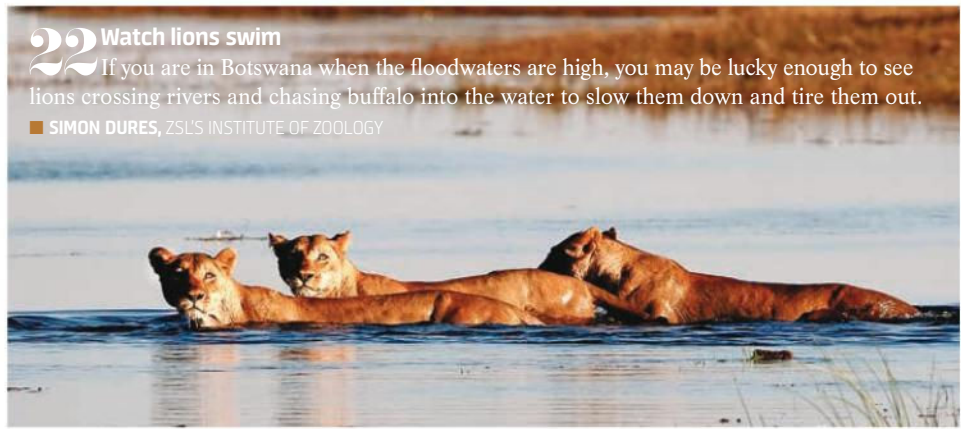
Learn about Tswana ways of life at Bahurutsho Cultural Village in Mmankgodi, near Gaborone. Here you can watch traditional ceremonies, observe arts and crafts in progress, and try local cuisine. Another enthralling experience is the Kuru Dance Festival in D'kar, where you can celebrate the traditional dancing of Botswana's first people, the Basarwa. It takes place in August each year.

■ DAWN WILSON, BOTSWANA TOURISM

**22 Watch lions swim**

If you are in Botswana when the floodwaters are high, you may be lucky enough to see lions crossing rivers and chasing buffalo into the water to slow them down and tire them out.

■ SIMON DURES, ZSL'S INSTITUTE OF ZOOLOGY



MARCO NAGEL

**23 Travelling by mokoro in the Okavango Delta is a fun and informative experience. As your baYei poler propels the narrow dugout canoe along with a long tool called a ngashi, ask him to share his knowledge and learn as much as you can.**

■ DR KAREN ROSS, ZSL'S INSTITUTE OF ZOOLOGY

**24 Explore Drotsky's Caves**

The six dolomite Gwihaba Hills protrude from the ancient dunes of the northern Kalahari. Within them lie a number of spectacular caves furnished with stalactites and stalagmites and connected by a labyrinth of tunnels. The caverns are inhabited by thousands of bats and their emergence at dusk is quite a spectacle.

■ GRANT REED, LETAKA SAFARIS

**25 Discover secret islands**

The best thing about the Delta is its constant transformation: the same place month on month can be completely different. The local baYei polers know the routes through the maze of waterways and can find pristine, magical islets that will take your breath away.

■ RYAN GREEN, PHOTOGRAPHER

**27 Take Chobe's road less travelled**

How could Chobe National Park possibly be associated with 'secrets'? When driving between Kasane and Ngoma, there is a lesser-known way to the Savuti Marsh that takes you into the Botswana of yesteryear. Nogaatsa is for more seasoned self-drivers: the tracks are difficult and the going slow, but you can find some beautiful salt pans and interesting game. A new road is planned to connect Nogaatsa to Mababe and make it more accessible. It may soon be hot property, so go now!

■ CLIVE MILLAR, SAFARI & GUIDE SERVICES

**28 Seek out the Green Desert**

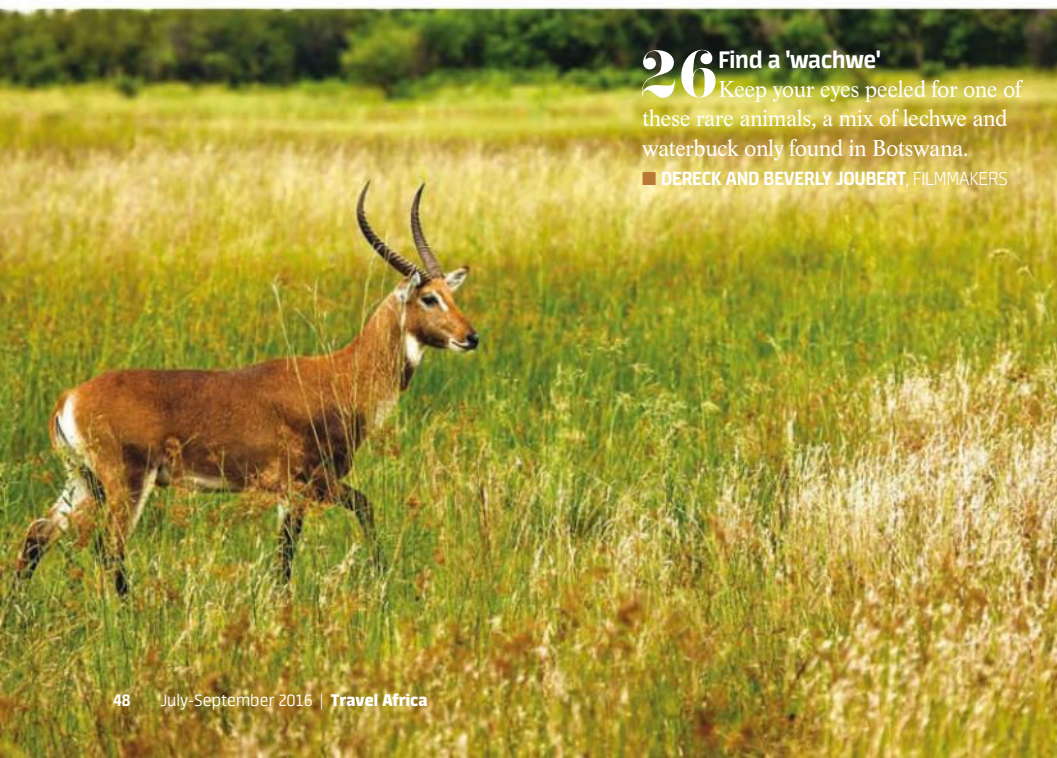
This paradoxical name is used for the Central Kalahari Game Reserve during the few months a year when this normally arid region becomes disguised under rolling green hills and apple-leaf trees. Between December and March (or thereabouts), the park, which is brimming with history and wildlife, becomes a stunning spectacle of verdant grass and baby animals beginning their lives on wobbly legs.

■ BRETT THOMSON, SUN DESTINATIONS

**26 Find a 'wachwe'**

Keep your eyes peeled for one of these rare animals, a mix of lechwe and waterbuck only found in Botswana.

■ DEREK AND BEVERLY JOUBERT, FILMMAKERS



DEREK AND BEVERLY JOUBERT

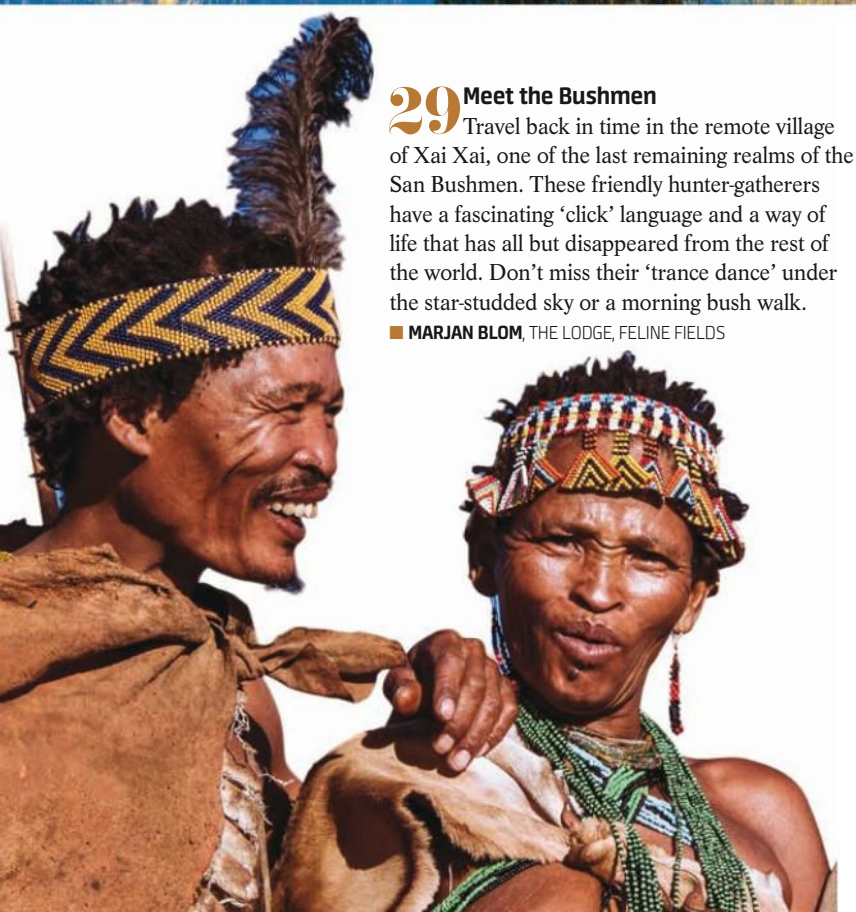


ROGER DE LA HARPE

### 30 See Botswana from the sky and water

The best way to see the country properly is by air and boat, so if you can, try both. Only by flying can you see the majesty of it; only by boat can you feel its rhythm.

■ SIMON DURES, ZSL'S INSTITUTE OF ZOOLOGY



### 29 Meet the Bushmen

Travel back in time in the remote village of Xai Xai, one of the last remaining realms of the San Bushmen. These friendly hunter-gatherers have a fascinating 'click' language and a way of life that has all but disappeared from the rest of the world. Don't miss their 'trance dance' under the star-studded sky or a morning bush walk.

■ MARJAN BLOM, THE LODGE, FELINE FIELDS

### 31 Spend time in hidden hides

What better way to relax than in a hide with comfy chairs and incredible wildlife views? There are two notable spots in northern Botswana: one at Kings Pool in the Linyanti Swamp and the other at Chitabe Camp in the Delta. The toing and froing of the animals will entertain you for hours.

■ STEVEN STOCKHALL, EARTH ARK SAFARIS

### 32 Embrace your festive spirit

The Overthrust Winter Metal Mania Fest is a great way to experience some modern Botswana culture. Taking place each year on the May Day holiday weekend in the remote Kalahari town of Ghanzi, it was established to raise money for disadvantaged children.

■ JAMES GIFFORD, PHOTOGRAPHER

### 33 Explore Gaborone

Go on an official tour of the capital city's largely unknown sights such as the Three Dikgosi (meaning 'chiefs') Monument, which commemorates the visit three Botswana chiefs made to England in 1885 to accept British 'protection'. Make time for the Mogonye Gorge outside the city, where you can learn about traditional architecture, dress and food.

■ FRED MORTON, THE BOTSWANA SOCIETY, AND MIKE MAIN, AUTHOR →

FELINE FIELDS

### 34 Follow the Selinda Adventure Trail

Designed with the more energetic guest in mind, this four-night experience exploring the Selinda Spillway offers the opportunity to retrace safaris of old through a combination of flying, walking and canoeing (depending on water levels). With intimate wildlife encounters and a rustic camp that travels with you, this is about as authentic and eco-friendly as it gets.

■ JAMES GIFFORD, PHOTOGRAPHER



GREAT PLAINS CONSERVATION



HANNES LOCHNER

### 35 Waterhole-hop in Kgalagadi ▲

Off-the-beaten-track Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park is well worth a visit, particularly if you know where to go when you get there. There is always a lot of action at Polentswa and Kij waterholes, as all predators, especially lion and jackal, frequent this location to drink and hunt. Make sure you get there at sunrise though, when the light is at its best.

■ STEVEN STOCKHALL, EARTH ARK SAFARIS, AND HANNES LOCHNER, PHOTOGRAPHER

### 36 Have brunch with elephants

If you have a soft spot for ellies, head to Sanctuary Stanley's Camp in the Delta to enjoy a morning walk followed by a bush brunch with these gentle giants.

OLIVER GREENFIELD, NATURAL WORLD SAFARIS

### 37 Fishing the Barbel Run

Sometime between August and November each year, the receding floodwater in the Okavango Panhandle triggers a little-known angling phenomenon known as the Barbel Run. Barbel, tigerfish and bream are joined by a bounty of birds to gorge on huge shoals of baitfish trapped in the shallow waters. The ensuing spectacle will delight any rod or fly-fisherman.

■ JAMES GIFFORD, PHOTOGRAPHER

### 38 Cycle in the Limpopo Valley

Mashatu Game Reserve is home to the largest herds of elephant on private land in Africa. Situated on the eastern fringes of the Kalahari Desert, they move daily between food, water and shade, creating gently undulating and hard-packed trails perfectly suited as cycle paths. You should also visit the nearby Mmamagwa Ruins, a scenic area made up of craggy, sandstone ridges and dotted with ancient baobabs.

■ DAVID AND TANYA EVANS, MASHATU GAME RESERVE



JAMES GIFFORD

#### 40 Don't miss the floodplains

Everybody has heard of Chobe's boat cruises and riverfront, but few people are aware of its floodplains. The Chobe River starts to flood in March when water flows into it from the Zambezi at Kazungula. A huge lake forms and hundreds of zebra gather on the floodplains – a staggering sight.

■ JAMES WILSON AND WALTER SMITH, CHOBE GAME LODGE, AND SHAUN METCALFE, MUCHENJE SAFARI LODGE

#### 41 Visit the 'other Moremi'

Don't stick to the classic areas (the Okavango Delta, Moremi Game Reserve and Chobe National Park). There is much more to Botswana than just the north. Visit Moremi Gorge in the Tswapong Hills in the east, with its unique ecosystem, birdlife, endemic butterflies, hiking opportunities and scenic waterfalls.

■ ANDY RAGGETT, DRIVE BOTSWANA

#### 42 Fly in a helicopter

One highly recommended thing to do in the Okavango Delta is to take a scenic helicopter flight at sunrise or sunset. As the landscape is so flat, this offers the absolute best vantage point to take in its magnificence.

■ RYAN GREEN, PHOTOGRAPHER

#### 43 Trek for charity

Not many people know that Y Care Charitable Trust organises two- to three-day sponsored treks every year in some of the most beautiful and interesting areas of Botswana. One option is the Tsabong Dunes and Camel Walk, which involves hiking 33km across sand dunes on the first day before continuing 20km with camels on the second day. During the journey, you camp out under the stars. It's challenging but hugely rewarding.

■ ULF NERMARK, BOTSWANA SOCIETY FOR THE ARTS

#### 39 Migrate with the carmine bee-eaters

Travel in the month of August to witness these beautiful birds arriving from Equatorial Africa. At this time of year, tens of thousands of these migrants will nest on and around the banks of the western side of Chobe River, at Shinde in the Delta and along the Okavango Panhandle.

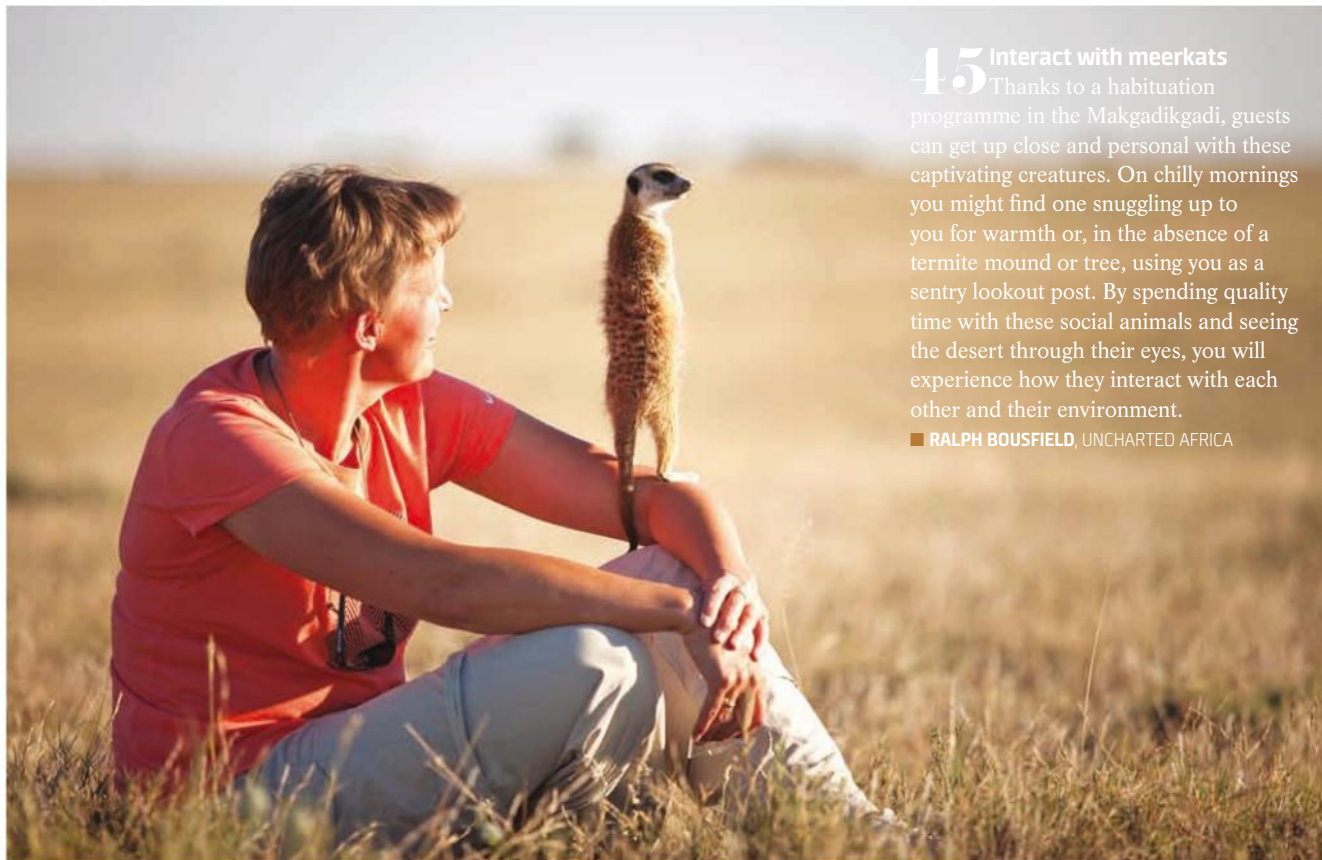
■ STEVEN STOCKHALL, EARTH ARK SAFARIS

#### 44 Balloon the Delta

Floating silently over Botswana is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. But at Kadizora Lodge it is possible to do just that. During the hour-long balloon flight, you observe the Delta's waterways, wildlife and hippo channels from the sky, and then celebrate with a glass of Champagne when you land.

■ CHRIS ANAGNOSTELLIS, AN AFRICAN ANTHOLOGY →





STEVEN STOCKHALL / EARTH ARK SAFARIS

**45 Interact with meerkats** Thanks to a habituation programme in the Makgadikgadi, guests can get up close and personal with these captivating creatures. On chilly mornings you might find one snuggling up to you for warmth or, in the absence of a termite mound or tree, using you as a sentry lookout post. By spending quality time with these social animals and seeing the desert through their eyes, you will experience how they interact with each other and their environment.

■ RALPH BOUSFIELD, UNCHARTED AFRICA

**46 Go deep into the Kalahari** With an intriguing name like Deception Valley, this Central Kalahari gem can't help being a 'secret'. Joking apart, it is a great place to go for silence and space, home to black-maned lions, cheetah and large herds of oryx and springbok. At dusk, the barking geckos' calls punctuate the evening before everything falls silent.

■ STEVEN STOCKHALL, EARTH ARK SAFARIS

**47 Spot a leopard in the desert** Be up with the sparrows in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park to increase your chances of seeing one of these shy cats, and be sure to check the sightings boards at every camp. Scan the calcrete ridges in the south of the park for silhouettes in the early morning – they love to use these ridges as a vantage point for hunting or to hide their cubs. Another tip is to sit in the hides at Nossob and Mata-Mata rest camps, as leopard frequently come here to drink during the dry months. The most likely place to encounter this mammal is a small cliff about 50m wide, about 1km south of Leeudrill waterhole.


■ HANNES LOCHNER, PHOTOGRAPHER

**48 Sleep in a traditional court** Spend a night or two at Kgotla, an open-air camp inspired by the traditional Botswana courts of old. These places were once used for meetings headed by the village chief, which could last from hours to days. The beds are set out on the original grounds and encircled by leadwood logs in a *kraal* (circular) formation under big, shady trees.

■ LAURA DOWINGTON, LIMPOPO HORSE SAFARIS

**50 Go to the private concessions** If your budget allows it, focus on Botswana's private concessions around the Okavango Delta and Kwando-Linyanti. The game is at least as good, and your guide will have a lot more flexibility to go off-road.

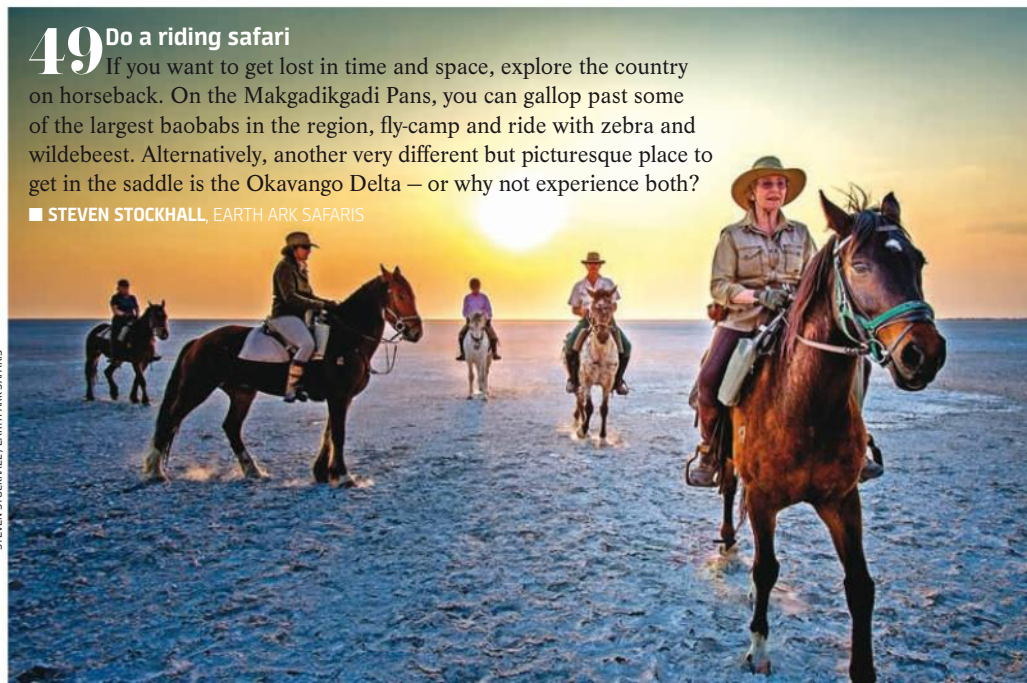
■ CHRIS MCINTYRE, EXPERT AFRICA →

 For more Botswana secrets, visit [travelfricamag.com](http://travelfricamag.com).

**49 Do a riding safari** If you want to get lost in time and space, explore the country on horseback. On the Makgadikgadi Pans, you can gallop past some of the largest baobabs in the region, fly-camp and ride with zebra and wildebeest. Alternatively, another very different but picturesque place to get in the saddle is the Okavango Delta – or why not experience both?

■ STEVEN STOCKHALL, EARTH ARK SAFARIS

STEVEN STOCKHALL / EARTH ARK SAFARIS





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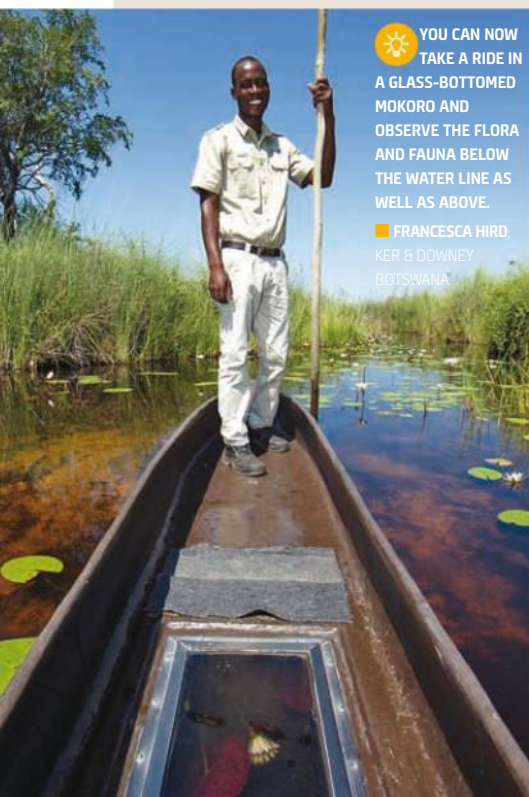
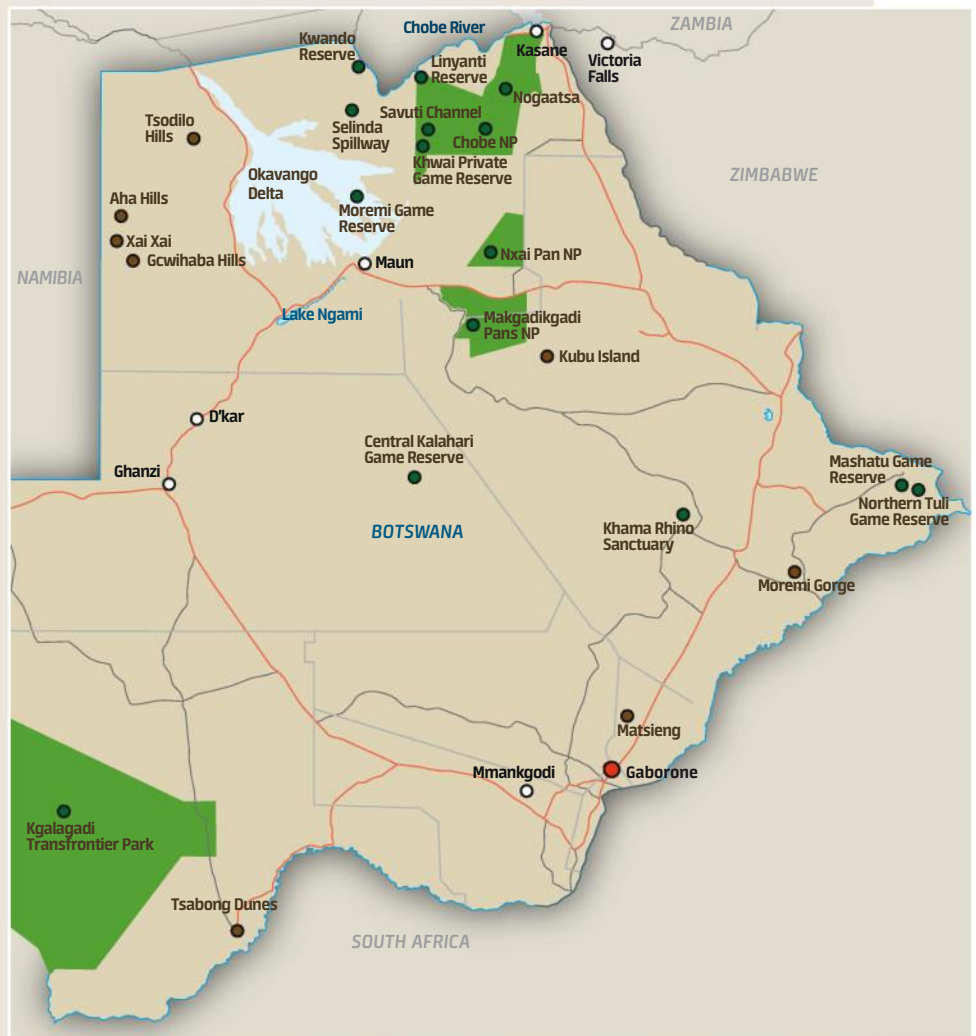
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## SAFARI PLANNER

■ **Getting there** Johannesburg is the best gateway to Botswana, offering good connections to Maun with Air Botswana and to Livingstone, Zambia, and Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe with British Airways and South African Airways.

■ **Getting around** The country's main towns and centres are linked by an excellent network of roads, making self-drive trips a great way to explore. You can cover large distances relatively fast and cheaply, especially if you're sharing a vehicle. While a 2WD car can get you to the fringes of the Okavango Delta and the Tuli Block, and into parts of Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park from Upington in South Africa, you'll need to arrange 4WD transport to delve into most national parks and wilderness areas. You'll also need to be equipped with food, fuel and camping equipment. Bush experience is also crucial, so you know how to use the 4WD properly. Alternatively, there are plenty of good tour operators who can arrange everything for you, including your accommodation and transfers.

■ **Health** Proof of a yellow fever vaccination may be required when entering Botswana from elsewhere in Africa, but not by those coming directly from Europe or North America. Malaria is present in most parts of the country and prophylactic drugs are strongly recommended.



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■ **FRANCESCA HIRD, KER & DOWNEY BOTSWANA**

KER & DOWNEY BOTSWANA

■ **Money** The unit of currency is the Botswana Pula (BWP). Foreign currency can be changed at any bank. Traveller's cheques add security, but they take an inordinate amount of time to be cashed. ATMs that accept foreign bankcards and credit cards are found in most large towns.

■ **Costs** This will depend on the places you want to go and the standard of guiding and accommodation you choose. The government has implemented a high-value, low-volume policy for tourism to protect their natural spaces. This means costs are more than elsewhere, but it also means standards are high and the experiences are almost exclusive. If you want to get the most out of the country's wild spaces and stay in the top camps you'll need to budget at least £350/£1000 per day per person in low/high season. Bare bones backpacking will cost you up to

£75 per day for food, accommodation and transport but this won't get you into the remote wildlife locations that Botswana is known for. Spend £150 per day and you should be able to experience the Okavango and other protected areas in basic camps. A great way to explore on a relatively low budget would be to rent a 4WD and do a self-drive camping safari (about £200 per person per day, based on two people sharing a vehicle).

■ **Further reading** *Bradt Guide to Botswana* (3rd Edition) by Chris McIntyre; *Lonely Planet's Botswana & Namibia* (2nd Edition) by Matthew Firestone and Adam Karlin; the Botswana Tourism website ([www.botswanaturism.co.bw](http://www.botswanaturism.co.bw))

*We would like to give our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has been so generous with their time in helping us compile this article. 🐾*

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**KER & DOWNEY**  
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# Riding in the Pearl of Africa

Lake Mburu National Park's diverse landscape is home to plentiful plains game and birds. **Laura Griffith-Jones** dodges warthogs and termite mounds on an exhilarating horseback adventure in this undervalued jewel



I am galloping across a wide-open valley in Lake Mburu National Park. Water droplets spray up from beneath the horses' thudding hooves, refracting the light like a prism. Nostrils flared, our mounts draw heavily on the hot, damp air. It is May and the emerald season is in full swing: the wild grasses in this miniature Ugandan jewel are luscious and tall, the vividness of the greens breath-taking.

This 370sq-km reserve is usually passed through en route to the country's better-known tourist hotspots in the south-west, such as Bwindi Impenetrable National Forest and Queen Elizabeth National Park, but it has much to offer as a destination in its own right. "Lake Mburu is a very special place; every part of it is alive with variety, interest and colour," says Eric Edroma, Director of Uganda National Parks. "It contains an extensive wetland area and harbours mammal and bird species found nowhere else in the country. Its landscape has a varied mosaic of habitats, including rolling grassy hills, lakeshore, forest, swamps and rich acacia-wooded valleys, which all support a wealth of wildlife."

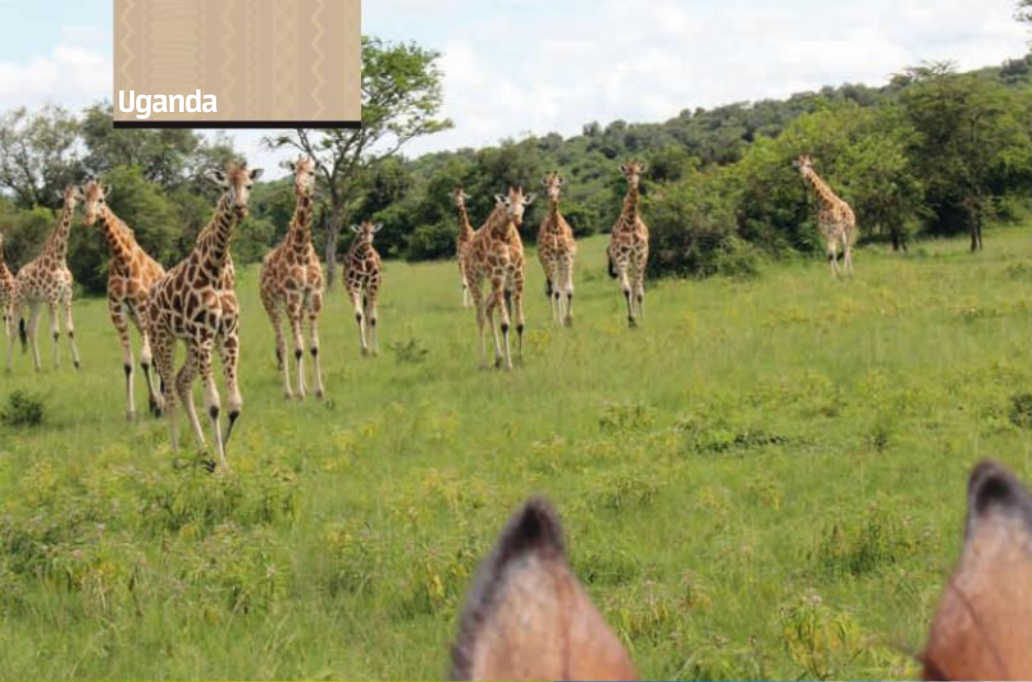
Lake Mburu is also the only Ugandan park where you can go horse riding – which is why I am here. Accompanied by the Stables Manager, Joseph Warui, and his assistant Charles, I set off from Mihingo Lodge's stables just after dawn. Toofan, my trusty steed, is a handsome and (at 17 hands) huge chestnut thoroughbred. He's also an ex-racehorse from Nairobi, Joseph tells me, so this was bound to be fun. Leaving the paddocks behind us, we meander through dense thicket, past acacia, wild fig and African olive trees aplenty. The acacias are in bud and the sweet perfume of their pretty yellow and white flowers permeates the air. There are termite mounds, puddles and bushes to outmanoeuvre, and I duck beneath spiny branches and tangled tendrils. Sharp thorns snag my linen shirt, a reminder that we are heading deep into the African bush.

We stop for a hearty breakfast high on a *kopje* with magnificent views stretching for miles. Soon after, we descend into a wide valley. The purple skies above, filled with rumbling storm clouds, powerfully juxtapose the emerald savannah below. Away from the thicket, we move freely, side by side, chatting easily. We pass defassa waterbuck grazing up to their knees in water. Impala are feeding on succulent grasses nearby, some with babies, typical of this season. They see us and sprint away, gracefully leaping shrubs. The Burchell's zebra are wary, too, but the buffalo are braver. With muscles rippling, ears flapping and an inquisitive stare, they slowly approach.

We keep our distance. A family of skittish warthogs – tails upright like television aerials – bursts out from behind a bush, spooking our steeds and interrupting my reverie. You can't relax for long: at any moment, something might appear out of nowhere.

Lake Mburu may not have the Big Five but the plains game is prolific all year round. There are 68 mammal species here, of which three (the impala, slender mongoose and bush rat) are found only in this Ugandan park. Sadly, the hunting dog, elephant, black rhino and giant forest hog →

Uganda



CLOCKWISE FROM THIS PICTURE: Sunrise over a misty Lake Mburu National Park; a Cape buffalo; Joseph the Stables Manager at Mihingo Lodge strokes Elgon, one of the horses; a crowned hornbill; coming face to face with a herd of giraffe; a baby zebra is skittish in the lush grass



are now extinct here, although this is perhaps not surprising considering the park's turbulent history. Since becoming a conservation area in the 1930s, it has suffered from sleeping sickness, rinderpest and nagana outbreaks, and wildlife-human conflicts. Tsetse-fly-control programmes and ranching schemes have solved some problems, but not all.

The region was formerly part of the Ankole Kingdom and home to nomadic Bahima pastoralists. Furious that they had been evicted, they tried to reclaim their land in 1986. The Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) established a Task Force in 1987 and a compromise was found: the park was reduced by 60% to allow the pastoralists to remain, with limited permission to use natural resources. Another major concern was their poisoning of predators to protect domestic animals. As a result, there is now just one lion left, a very elusive male often heard roaring at night. The Community Conservation Unit, set up in 1991, and the Mihingo Conservation Foundation, strive to maintain stability by building schools and clinics, educating herders to value conservation and tourism, and providing compensation for loss of livestock.

By now, we are in the heart of the reserve, exploring areas impossible to reach by car – one of the advantages of travelling on horseback. At last the clouds are lifting, and hot rays of glorious sunshine light up the floodwater like an Impressionist painting. “The valleys are seasonally flooded and drain into the swamps and lakes, and eventually Lake Victoria,” says Joseph. He describes the magical moment when the rains come and the parched lands burst to life. Before me, wild flowers speckle the savannah – splashes of purple, white and yellow against a sea of green. Lilac and turquoise butterflies flutter around us, reminding me of *Bambi*.

Spring is also the best time for birds. Lake Mburu has 350 avian species. Forest, water, grassland, marshland and woodland birds all thrive here. Twitchers gather to spot the rare shoebill, papyrus yellow warbler, African finfoot or Abyssinian ground hornbill. We spot a black-faced go-away bird (with its comical ‘Go away! Go away!’ call) as we trit-trot to an orchestra of babbling black-lored babblers, chattering Rupell's long-tailed starlings and whistling tropical boubous.

Back in the thicket again we begin to climb, dodging branches until we reach a grassy plateau. From here we have 360° vistas of rolling hills dotted with eland, topi and impala, and encircled by deep valleys. We rein our horses in as we approach another formidable herd of buffalo, cooling off in a murky waterhole. Once again, the muscular beasts are captivated by these strange centaur-like creatures, and move towards us. Giving them a wide berth, we continue on our way.

We slow to a halt at the edge of the ridge. In the distance is Lake Mburu itself, surrounded by pancake-flat plains. It is one of 14 lakes in the area, linked by a 50km-long swamp fed by the Ruizi River. Only five of these lakes are in the park. We pause, breathing it all in. I am reluctant to leave, but before long, it's time to loop back towards the lodge.

Once out in the open valley again we set off at a gallop, hooves thudding on the sodden earth with a sound like a herd of stampeding wildebeest. Red-necked spurfowl fly out of the long grass as we hurtle by, and we catch a glimpse of a solitary bushbuck. At times, the zebra seem to be running with us and it's thrilling to feel in harmony with these wild animals.

Joseph suddenly points eagerly into the distance, and my eyes hone in on a Rothschild giraffe. Then another, and another – 15 in all, their long slender necks reaching into the upper branches and tough, blue tongues tearing off thorny mouthfuls. These four bulls and 11 females were introduced last year, and have not yet encountered horses. They fix their docile eyes on us and begin to amble over. Two of the horses panic, rearing up on their hind legs and spinning on their hocks. Charles and I have our equestrian skills sorely tested, but once they settle down, are able to savour this extraordinary wildlife experience.

After 25km, we have come full circle back to Mihingo Lodge. After five hours in the saddle, there is nothing better to sooth your aching limbs than to have a massage in the spa or soak in the infinity pool. It is the end of another astonishing day in Africa and I laze on a lounge, watching the mirror-like water turn pink under the setting sun and imagining those giraffe quietly roaming in the dying light. 🐾

## SAFARI PLANNER

- **Getting there** South African Airways flies to Entebbe Airport. From there, it's a three-and-a-half hour drive to Lake Mburu National Park. The writer travelled with Journeys Discovering Africa, which can make all your arrangements for you, including a car and driver-guide.
- **Where to stay** Riding safaris are arranged by Mihingo Lodge (doubles from US\$500, full board), which is a magical place to stay. Set in 99.5 hectares, it has 12 spacious tented rooms with private terraces. There's a spa, a tennis court, a hide, an infinity pool and a bar and restaurant. As well as offering horse-riding, it can arrange hiking and mountain-bike safaris, game drives, boat trips and nature walks.
- **Riding tips** The lodge offers anything from a half-hour jaunt to a four-day equestrian adventure. Beginners can go on short outings and must stay on the tracks. The longer rides are only suitable for more advanced riders and a certain level of fitness is required. Overnight riding safaris are available, on which you sleep in comfortable mobile camps, serenaded by whooping hyenas, piping tree frogs or hooting Verreaux's eagle owls.
- **When to go** The two rainy seasons are March to June and September to December. At this time of year, the landscape is fresh and green, and the birdlife is particularly prolific. July and August are the hottest months.
- **Further reading** *Bradt Guide to Uganda* (7th edition) by Philip Briggs



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# In among the Samburu

The thrill of walking with camels in the stark lands of northern Kenya will linger forever in your heart and memory, says Lucia van der Post



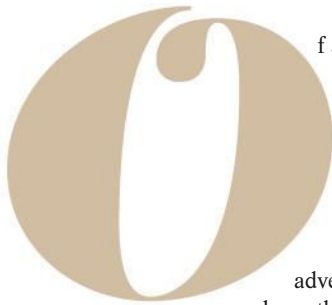
PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL POLIZA





**STARING CONTEST:** A Samburu child stands before a mud hut. Villages in the region are home to traditional tribespeople who are mostly subsistence herders

## The days take on a leisurely rhythm all of their own. You wake at dawn in time to see the stars begin to fade as the sun creeps over the mountains. Later, as you walk, the views are awesome, the air awash with the sounds of the bells, the songs of the woodpecker and the dove



Of all the journeys I have been lucky enough to make to Africa, four particularly touched me. Of those four, three of them are now either impossible to do or have changed so much that the experience is much diminished.

The first of my most memorable adventures was a five-day canoeing trip down the Zambezi Valley some 30 years ago.

Way back then the crocodiles and the hippos were still timid and unused to man, but today they have lost their fear and there have been too many tragic incidents for it to be something I would allow any of my nearest and dearest even to contemplate.

Then there was the wild-camping trip in Niger, right up in the Aïr Mountains, to see the deserts and to interact with the nomadic Tuareg people. Today the threat of terrorism and kidnapping is so real the Foreign Office advises against all but essential travel in the region.

And finally, there was the wonderful escapade up the Omo River. In these lands the Mursi, Kara, Hamar and other tribes still practise their ageless rituals. They abide by strict tribal taboos and use body-painting, elaborate hairdos and scarification as a means of identification and self-expression. Today the peoples of the Omo valley that we were so privileged to encounter are being moved to make way for biofuels and cash crops. They are losing their ancient lands and their special way of life is under threat.

But, dear reader, there is one all-time treat of an African adventure that can still be had – immutable, unchanged, unforgettable. This adventure is to walk with Helen Douglas-Dufresne, her partner Pete, some 50 odd camels and her group of noble and beautiful Samburu tribesmen high up in northern Kenya, in among the Mathews Range and the Ndoto Mountains. Walking may not sound very exciting or unusual, but believe me, it is quite unlike a little amble in the Cotswolds, a hike up Ben Nevis or even a serious scramble to bag a Munro.

What makes it special is the terrain – it is vast, wild, with breath-taking horizons and skies that stretch forever, wide and blue – and the company of Helen, Pete and their gloriously robed and bejewelled Samburu helpers. Here is something infinitely more precious than swanky lodges and posh grub; here is an austere beautiful land populated only by the indigenous peoples to whom it belongs, who live easily and naturally among the lion and the elephant as well as the goat and the cow. Through these remote lands wander some of Kenya's most

traditional and noble tribes, the Samburu, the Rendille and the Gabra. Here is a chance to catch a glimpse of how things once were and how perhaps they may be again. To go deep into this land is to witness an Africa that has vanished almost everywhere else and which one fears will not be there forever.

Helen and Pete waste no time. You arrive by charter plane, which lands on a dusty hill. From there it is on with the shorts, the boots, the sun hat, not forgetting the sun cream, and you're off. The days take on a leisurely rhythm all of their own. You wake at dawn in time to see the stars fade as the sun creeps over the mountains. After a cup of hot tea and a biscuit or two, it's off up into the hills or into the wide, wide *luggas* (dried-up riverbeds). The views are awesome, the air awash with the sounds of the bells, the songs of the woodpecker and the dove, and later, much later, when the main camel train carrying all our tents and camping equipment catches up with us, the deep and musical voices of the Samburu. As they walk, they sing their tales of glories past and present.

At about 9am you breakfast under the shade of an acacia tree – fresh fruit, yoghurt, newly baked bread and eggs to order – and then you continue onwards, accompanied always by some of the most beautiful men on Earth. They are there to keep you company and to ensure you are safe by keeping an eye out for animals. You move with them through their exquisite lands, where every bush and every mound has a story to tell, and where the spirits of their ancestors still linger.

At about 2 or 3pm you arrive at another campsite, where the camels and the Samburu have already pitched the tents and whipped up some lunch ready for your arrival. Then it is siesta time: you read or snooze until it's time to climb a small hill, grab a glass of something light and chilled, and watch the sun go down. After dinner, eaten around the campfire, it is time for bed.

The days pass. Although elephants are returning to the Ndoto and Mathews mountains in ever greater numbers, there is little wildlife to see. You nevertheless grow increasingly aware of what a privilege it is to spend time in such extraordinary landscapes. You begin to feel the deep rhythms of the land and to understand something of the hardships and splendour of the lives of the people who make it their home.

You realise, too, how brilliant are the skills of Helen and Pete. They have got to know every inch of this land and forged such a special relationship with the Samburu. Their nomadic way of life and the austere nature of their surroundings have made them courageous, resilient and →

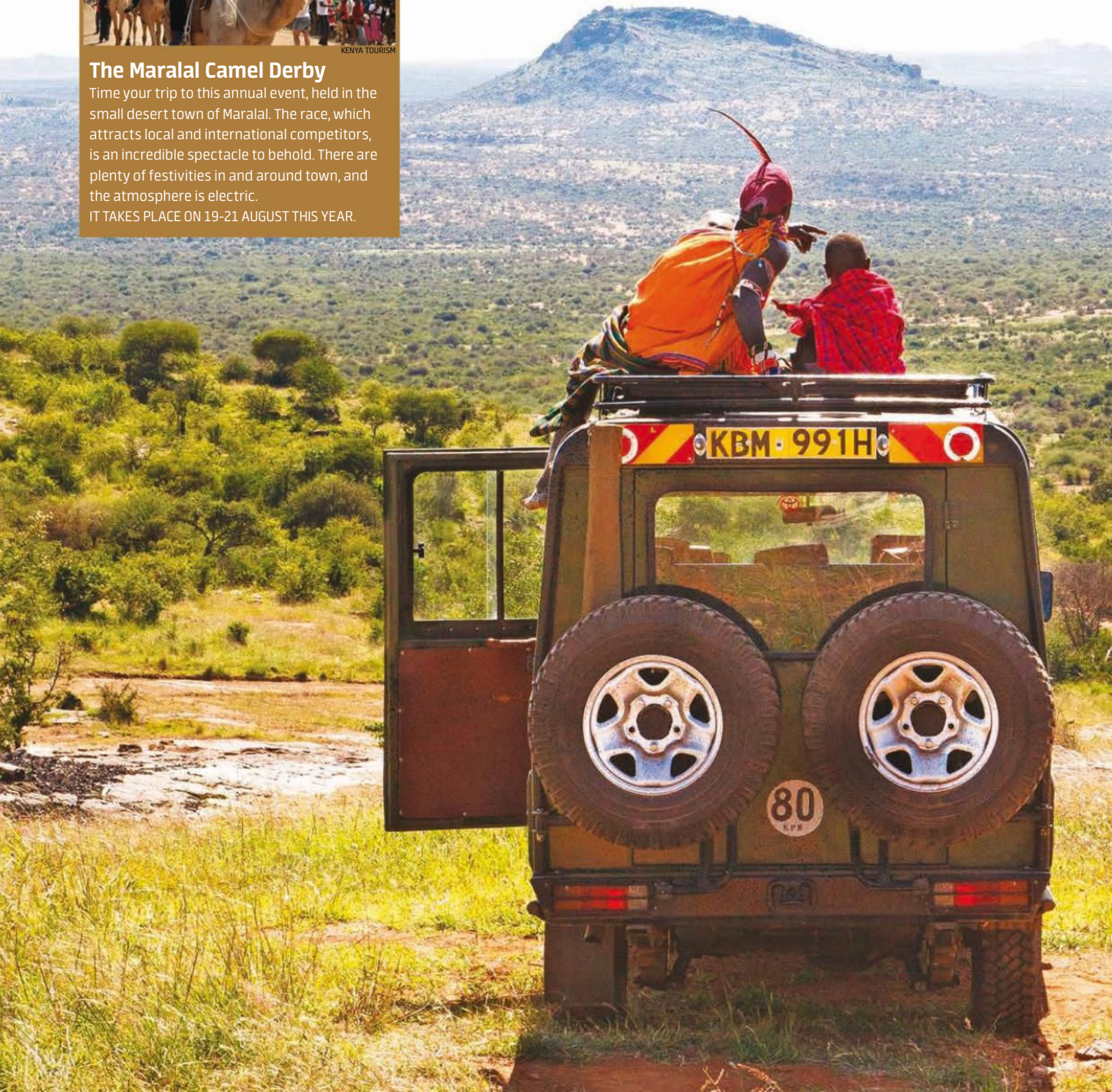


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strong, perfect companions on what is the adventure of a lifetime. They are expert at tailoring the walk to suit the tastes and physical strength of their guests: some want to pound up the mountains, others prefer a leisurely stroll along the luggas. And always a small group of camels and their Samburu keepers accompany us to carry the daypacks and offer a ride for anyone too tired to go any further.

Some days we covered about 15km, others more and others less. Best of all is to come for six to ten days and amble all round the Ndotos, head over the mountains with porters or up to Lake Turkana. But this isn't for everybody; as Helen puts it, "It's particularly not for people who want to do a bit of this and a bit of that." It's a deep, immersive experience. However, it is curiously addictive and many find something so compelling, so meaningful in these lonely places that they return time and time again. One visitor summed it up perfectly: "Aching feet and smiling hearts... We couldn't have felt more privileged." 🐾

## SAFARI PLANNER

■ **Getting there** Both British Airways and Kenya Airways fly direct to Nairobi. From there, you can travel by private charter to The Milgis Trust in northern Kenya. The writer's journey was arranged by Africa Travel, which offers a seven-night package from £5870 per person sharing, including British Airways flights, transfers, internal charter flights, one night at House of Waine in Nairobi and seven nights' walking safari with Helen Douglas-Dufresne and the camels.

■ **When to go** This is an all-year-round destination; it is a dry desert area so gets very little rain. But should you happen to be there when the heavens open, you're in for a treat as the landscape bursts to life.

■ **Health** Visit your GP or travel clinic to ensure you have had all the necessary vaccinations and antimalarials.

■ **Further reading** *Samburu* by Nigel Pavitt; *My Kenya Days* by Wilfred Thesiger



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# What lies beneath

Warm water, superb visibility and a clutch of excellent diving schools make Lake Malawi the ideal choice for a scuba holiday, says **Fiona McIntosh**

**H**overing in the warm, clear water of Lake Malawi, we train our cameras on the multi-hued cichlid and wait for the little fish to perform its party trick. Sensing danger at our approach, the female opens its mouth for its fry to swim in to safety. If we keep still long enough, the process should be reversed, and the rare sight of the tiny babies re-emerging will amply reward our patience.

We're diving the appropriately named Aquarium, near Cape Maclear. The conditions are so calm it feels as if we're diving in a massive glass bowl. We can see for miles, or so it seems, through a filter of tiny, colourful fish – splashes of blue, purple, orange and yellow that envelope the boulders and dart in and out of the fissures. Lake Malawi, the ninth largest lake in the world, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the world's first freshwater marine reserve. About 1000 types of cichlid have been identified here, more than 500 of them unique to the area, so we're in for a treat.

In the dive briefing we are alerted to some of the 'specials', learning to identify them by their unique patterns of dots and bars. I am intrigued by the unusual behaviour exhibited by some of the species; in particular, I want to photograph a mouthbrooder with its fry.

Chelle McLean, our eagle-eyed divemaster from Danforth Lodge, points in the direction of a shadowy crevice in a large boulder. Initially we see nothing, but then there's a flash of movement. An innocuous-looking predatory cichlid – its blue-and-brown hue providing the perfect camouflage in this rocky habitat – has just ambushed its prey. We keep our eyes peeled, hoping to spot another 'special': the 'play dead' fish, which lures its next meal by lying motionless in the sand.

To fully appreciate the aquatic life of Lake Malawi you have to know what to look for, move slowly and exercise patience. Even so, diving here is easy and very different to venturing out into the ocean. It's a superb location for beginners to get certified and intermediates to notch up new qualifications. There's virtually no current, and the water's warm, clear and fresh, so it won't sting your eyes during mask-clearing exercises. In addition to the 'wow' factor of the ubiquitous fish, there's plenty to while away surface intervals, with kayaking, water skiing and Hobie-cat sailing on offer. Equally, hours can be spent strolling along the lakeshore or chilling out on beaches.

We spend the next couple of days diving around Thumbi West Island, admiring the magnificent underwater topography and the staggering variety →

## WHAT TO SPOT

Lake Malawi contains a greater variety of indigenous cichlids (around 1000 types) than any other lake in the world. Researchers have identified more than 500 to date that are unique to the area – more than all of the freshwater species found in all the waters of Europe and North America combined.

■ **MBUNA** This rock-dwelling fish is a type of cichlid that lives among large piles of rocks along the shoreline. It is usually seen in large groups but is not a schooling fish. In some areas of Lake Malawi, finding 20 fish per square metre is not uncommon.

■ **HAPS** This cichlid species is a piscivore (meaning it eats other fish). It has a slender, torpedo-like body, which allows it to burst suddenly into speed and cruise the open water. Most are silver or grey when small, but the males become brightly coloured as they mature. At least two types of haps lure their prey into range by feigning death and lying motionless in the sand, which can be amusing. This behaviour has given them the nickname of the 'play-dead fish'.

■ **KAMPANGO** This large, territorial and predatory catfish endemic to Lake Malawi is found everywhere from the lower reaches of rivers to the deepest habitable parts of the lake. It feeds at night on small cichlids.

■ **CHAMBO** There are three endemic species of chambo. In general, they reach a maximum length of around 39cm and feed on algae, detritus and zooplankton. They are maternal mouthbrooders, keeping their fry in mouth cavities until they are able to fend for themselves.

of colourful cichlids and whiskered catfish. Although the location lacks the magnificent corals and sponges that characterise most ocean sites in Africa, the granite boulders are riddled with caves and swim-throughs. For the more adventurous, there are some deep dives on pinnacles such as Zimbabwe Rocks, as well as a steel hull lying in 30m of water that was deliberately sunk as an artificial reef and penetration wreck dive.

After three days of diving the Cape Maclear region, the next adventure begins: a liveaboard jaunt. We board *Mufasa*, a luxury catamaran skippered by lodge owner, Captain Howard Massey-Hicks. The 38ft, ocean-going yacht sleeps eight guests in four double cabins.

Our route takes us to the eastern shores, where we drop anchor in Chiofu Bay. With its sandy beach and small fishing village backed by a vegetated hill, it's typical of the picturesque coves that line the lake. The underwater landscape is astonishing, with some steep drop-offs patrolled by menacing-looking kampango catfish. Sitting out on the deck, G&Ts in hand and the braai lit, we toast another blood-red sunset.

Next we enjoy some exciting dives among the weird vertical columns surrounding Mbenji Island; and the following day we cross to Chizumulu and Likoma, two inhabited Malawian islands, which, due to a twist of historical fate, lie deep in Mozambican territorial waters. When this part of Africa was divided up by the colonial powers at the end of the Second World War, the presence of the British on Likoma ensured that the isles were assigned to Malawi rather than Mozambique.

If the diving in the south of the lake was impressive, here it is mind-blowing. We descend the vertiginous walls of Masimbwe Island, just off the Mozambique coast. There's a slight current here, hence the varied marine life in this area. And there's a surprise in store: a submerged etching, resembling the shape of a Hovis loaf, carved into a 27m-deep boulder. "Its presence indicates that the lake level was once much lower than today," Chelle explains, back on the surface.

After an easy shore entry from the beach in front of Likoma Island's Kaya Mawa on our penultimate day, we fin gently over the boulders surrounding Honeymoon Island, sighting another trophy: the gorgeous blue-and-black endemic Likoma barred. A night dive off Ndomo Point, during which we glide through the inky-black water picking out a nest of baby catfish in our torch beams, rounds off a perfect day.

The week has flown by too quickly, but the wily Howard has saved the best until last. Just north of Chizumulu Island is Taiwanese Reef, a seamount rising some 250m from the lakebed. We follow Chelle into a dark tunnel that starts near the surface and emerges at 35m deep. The remoteness, crystal-clear water and the number of cichlid species that we see on this remarkable site leave us wanting more.

As Howard and his crew sail *Mufasa* back to base, we check in to Kaya Mawa for some pampering before flying home. It has been a thorough immersion in the Warm Heart of Africa, and a trip I'd recommend to novice and experienced divers alike. 🐾

**PREVIOUS PAGES:** Scuba diving off Likoma Island.  
**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Snorkelling by Mumbo Island; kayaking nearby; a team of divers and kayakers at Mumbo; one of the 1000 or so species of cichlid that inhabit Lake Malawi; Mumbo Island from above



ARND BRONKHORST





## SAFARI PLANNER

- **Getting there** Ethiopian Airlines, Kenya Airways and South African Airways all fly to Lilongwe and Blantyre.
- **Dive logistics** There are PADI-registered dive centres at Cape Maclear, Nkhata Bay and Likoma Island. Companies include Danforth Yachting, Cape Maclear Scuba, Kayak Africa and Aqua Africa. All offer dives, equipment hire, scuba courses and accommodation on site or with lodge partners.
- **When to go** Diving around Cape Maclear and Nkhata Bay is best between March and November. Diving around Likoma is pleasant all year round, but the best visibility is between June and December.
- **Where to stay** There are plenty of options to suit all budgets. Kaya Mawa on Likoma Island is a high-end retreat (doubles from US\$650). Kayak Africa offers romantic escapes on Domwe Island (self-catering safari tents from US\$120) and Mumbo Island (en-suite chalets from US\$460). Danforth Lodge is the luxury option at Cape Maclear (doubles from US\$370, full board) and also offers liveaboards; a trip on *Mufasa* costs US\$225 per person per night, full board.
- **Health** Visit your travel clinic to ensure you have had all the necessary vaccinations.
- **Further reading** *Bradt Guide to Malawi* (6th Edition) by Philip Briggs



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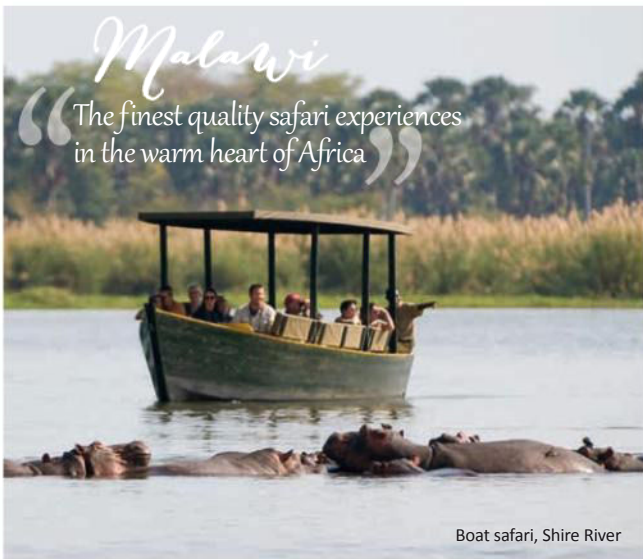
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# PORTRAITS OF ADDIS ABABA

The Ethiopian capital is changing fast.  
We went in search of the people who  
are forging the city's future

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY STUART BUTLER

The old man in a dapper jacket and sunglasses watches the skaters doing kickflips off the metre-high wall and racing off down the hill. "When I was young," he says, "I used to do this same thing with my friends. Back then, though, there were no buildings here. There were no tarmac roads and that hill was just a grassy slope. We didn't have these skateboards either. Instead we took the thorns off cactuses and slid down the hill on the cactus leaves."

I am in Addis Ababa, the booming capital of Ethiopia, hanging out with a small group of local skateboarders. Their presence is testimony to how much this city has changed in the nearly quarter

of a century since the Derg, a brutal junta, fell from power. I first travelled to Addis in 1993, less than two years after its collapse. Back then the city was desperately poor and underdeveloped. Since those first glimpses I have returned often and seen the city expand and mature beyond all recognition. The current building frenzy is so overwhelming that parts of the city are barely recognisable from my previous visit two years ago. With Addis transforming so fast it is time to sit down with some locals and get them to paint a portrait of a city likely to shape East Africa for years to come.

This is Addis Ababa through the eyes of the people who live there.

**LEAP OF FAITH:** A member of Ethiopia Skate, a grassroots community working to promote the accessibility of skateboarding in Addis



## THE SKATEBOARDING DOCTOR

**M**ike Baheru is a well-spoken and successful hospital doctor. He probably doesn't fit most people's idea of a typical skateboarder, but he's a passionate, talented and key member of Ethiopia Skate, "a local grassroots community working to empower youth and promote the accessibility of skateboarding".

Grand statements aside, Mike explains how the introduction of this sport to Addis hasn't been easy. "Ethiopian culture is very reserved so it can be hard to start something new," he tells me. "This has made it difficult to blend skateboard culture with our own, but when people watch us skate they like it. If someone shows a lot of interest, then we let them have a go and eventually we will try and find them a board of their own. There's no skate shop in Addis, though, so everything has to come from abroad. That's where Ethiopia Skate helps because we are able to use it as a way to communicate with people in other countries.

"If skaters come, we show them the best places to go and they often leave gear for people here. There are now about a hundred skaters in Addis, 10 of whom are girls. People come from all different backgrounds."

■ **Mike's top skating tips** "Sunday is the big day for skating when people from across the city come to Sarbet, which has good street skating. We've also just finished building the first skatepark in Ethiopia, which has halfpipes and other ramps. It's at Old Airport, just behind the tennis club near the Laphto Mall." →



## THE AZMARI

**N**ext I go to Fendika Azmari Bet, amid the sparkling new glass office blocks and glitzy business hotels of Zewditu Street. Stepping through the door and into the red-lit gloom is like returning to the Ethiopia of the past. The walls are covered in handicrafts, musical instruments and sepia-tinged photos; the chairs, goat skins. It is early and the bar is empty save for owner and legendary azmari performer Melaku Belay (pictured above).

What exactly, I first want to know, is an *azmari bet*? “Bet means house and azmari is a type of musical expression,” Melaku explains. “It’s poetry, music and dance, and the azmari tells stories about what is happening. In a way, it’s like a newspaper. It’s satire about daily life, politics and married life.

Amharic is a complex language and azmaris play on words. They can say one thing but mean another. During the war with the Italians in the 1930s, azmari was used as a way of passing messages to the resistance. The Italians knew this so they killed about 70 performers. During the Derg we were banned but we continued underground. It’s a very old form of entertainment. Azmaris were common in the royal courts and played a similar role to court

jesters in Europe. We use poetry rather than singing and our performances are spontaneous. We feed off the audience and talk about what they want to hear.”

Not that long ago, an azmari bet was almost the only form of evening amusement for many Ethiopians. Today, television and the internet have reduced its popularity. Melaku tells me how just three or four years ago there were 17 on Zewditu Street alone. Today only Fendika remains. “The rest have all been knocked down to make way for offices and hotels. I try to fight to keep this one open but the government wants to build a seven-storey block here. But slowly people are starting to show more interest in the art again. I get performers from all over to come here. I bring artists in from the rural areas to play, but also from Norway, the US and elsewhere. Even Flea from the Red Hot Chili Peppers has played here. He performed with my band and some traditional village musicians.”

■ **Melaku’s top music tips** “For live music, definitely try the Coffee House on Fridays. Mama’s Kitchen has EthioJazz on Monday nights. The Ghion Hotel on Wednesdays can be good. But things change fast in Addis, so ask around when you get here.”





## THE ACROBATS

Internationally, perhaps one of the most famous Ethiopian cultural groups is Fekat Circus. One evening, shortly before the cityscape is bathed in sunset gold, I visit their training ground on the edge of the old Piazza neighbourhood. I arrive during one of the 'community classes', to which anyone can come to be trained in various gravity-defying stunts.

For more than an hour I stand transfixed, as Ethiopian and expat children as young as 10 spin and twist upside down from hoops and poles many metres above the ground. As I watch I get talking, through a translator, to acrobat and all-round talented bloke Berhanu Tadesse (left).

"My father was an alcoholic and used to fight with me when I was small," he tells me. "When I was just seven years old he had me sent to prison because I was 'different'. After three years in jail I was moved to an orphanage, but after five years it ran out of money and closed down. It was about this time that I was introduced to Fekat Circus who used to come and work at the orphanage. They realised I had some talent and now I work full time for them. The organisation works a lot with street kids, orphans and in hospitals and prisons, and some other members of the troupe are also from this kind of background. We now perform all over Africa and Europe."

■ **Berhanu's top circus tips** "On the last Sunday of every month we perform a public show here at our training centre. It costs Birr60 (about US\$3) and starts at around 4pm. We can also put on spectacles for groups and this summer we will be touring in Europe again." →



## THE DANCER

**J**unaid Jemal Sendi is one of the founders of the DESTINO Dance Company. One morning, after I have watched the group run through their high-energy moves during a practice session led by Michael Courtney (right), Junaid tells me how they use dance to change lives. "We run workshops for street kids, orphans and young offenders in prisons," he explains. "Some of them are starting to make a living from this." He tells me how traditional Ethiopian dance is known for its bizarre 'shoulder-popping' movements called *eskista*, but it's not an art form widely known outside Ethiopia. "Until we came along with DESTINO, nobody had ever tried fusing it with international and contemporary styles to take it to a bigger audience."

■ **Junaid's top dance tips** "If a visitor wants to see us perform, they should look on our website or Facebook page. We perform often at the Alliance Ethio-Française and sometimes at the German and Italian cultural centres. At the cool Galani Cafe we offer weekly classes that expats and tourists can join. These are held on Saturday mornings and cost Birr120 (about US\$5). To see local dance, go to the tourist 'cultural' restaurants such as 2000 Habesha; or for something more authentic try an *azmari* bet such as Fendika."



## THE ARTISTS

**F**or centuries Ethiopian art has been limited to the bright religious works that adorn church walls. But change is afoot. Tucked away in leafy Piazza, the Guramayle Art Center is a gallery and workshop for a collective of exciting artists who use tribal culture to inspire their very contemporary work. I meet with photographer Leikun Nahusenay and painter Tamrat Gezahegn (left) to find out more.

"We have worked as a collective for 11 years," Tamrat says. He takes much inspiration from the country's tribal styles. "Everything people wear has a meaning and a purpose. I like to work with these decorations in my creations."

Leikun, known for his unusual double-exposure photographic images, interjects: "We have taken our art to the Omo Valley, where I set up a workshop so the people could try painting, drawing and photography." "Art isn't understood really in Ethiopia yet," Tamrat adds, "but it's getting better."

■ **Tamrat and Leikun's top art tips** "To see good contemporary art in the city, visit the Guramayle Art Center, Addis Fine Art, Asni Gallery, the Modern Art Museum and the National Museum of Ethiopia." 🐾

*The writer travelled to Ethiopia with Ethiopian Airlines and Addis Ababa-based Abeba Tours.*



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# Sea of salt and soda

Lake Natron is one of the last truly authentic destinations on Tanzania's northern circuit, but the forces of change are bearing down on it and tourism is set to burgeon. Go there before the masses do, urges **Christopher Clark**







THE AIR SEEMS HOTTER AND DRIER WITH every passing minute. The golden savannah and flat-top acacia trees, images so synonymous with a Tanzanian safari, soon give way to parched, rocky semi-desert. In the back of the Toyota Land Cruiser we're slowly wilting like old spinach.

We pass a number of Maasai bomas, with fences of thorny branches wrapped around them in perfect circles. These enclosures bear testimony to the semi-nomadic people's centuries-long defiance of this harsh and inhospitable environment. Long lines of cattle and goats kick up clouds of dust around us. Barefoot children run towards the car in excitement as we pass.

When we stop to stretch our legs, we are instantly enveloped by a crowd of women who seem to have materialised from the earth beneath our feet. They hold up colourful beads and cloth for sale, and ask us to take photos of them in their traditional garb in return for a small fee. One woman pulls a baby from her back and thrusts it towards me shouting, "Baby picture! Baby picture!"

It quickly becomes apparent, then, that although the Lake Natron area remains irresistibly isolated, we are not the first tourists to tread here. Nor will we be the last. A growing number of tour operators are looking to tap into Lake Natron's hitherto underexplored offerings and have started to include it on their northern circuit itineraries. We are, after all,

just a few bumpy hours' drive from safari icons such as the Serengeti and Ngorongoro Crater, as well as the ever-expanding transport hub of Arusha.

As we continue along our route we see Ol Doinyo Lengai, Maasai for 'Mountain of God', rising serenely ahead of us. It is an active volcano and last erupted as recently as 2007. A solitary cloud hovers directly above the summit like a halo.

After skirting the rugged escarpment of the Great Rift Valley, Lake Natron finally comes into view, its soda and saline surface akin to a great shallow ocean coruscating in the harsh light of the early afternoon. At more than 1000sq km in size, the lake stretches all the way to the Kenyan border somewhere beyond the haze on the horizon. It's home to more than two million crimson-winged lesser flamingos and, as such, is this nomadic bird's most important breeding ground. Remarkably, between 65 and 75 percent of the entire lesser flamingo population is native to Lake Natron.

As unforgiving as much of the parched landscape that wraps around the lake might seem, it's not only the local Maasai who have come to call it home. Large herds of zebra, wildebeest and various different species of antelope are easily spotted crossing the wide-open plains, as are occasional loping giraffe. There are also sightings of elephant and black rhino, though these are less common. Happily for the local population, both human and otherwise, bigger

predators generally don't bother to leave the ample food supplies on the other side of the escarpment, though our guide, Taher, says that cheetah are sometimes seen here.

**WE PULL UP AT OUR CAMPSITE FOR THE NIGHT**, which has plenty of shade and raised views right across the lake. Taher tells us the property is owned by an enterprising Maasai businessman who was born in the area and has great faith in its tourism potential, as evidenced by the various new developments – a pool, a conference centre and safari tents – dotted around his property. Today, though, we are his only guests.

A few lean Maasai teenagers, with large knives on their belts, emerge from one of the outbuildings and help us set up our tents. Every so often, one of the boys pauses and pulls a mobile phone out of his robe, typing furiously for a moment or two before resuming his work. I wonder how similar their electronic conversations are to those of teenagers back home in Cape Town. I wonder, too, what impact this technology has had on a way of life that otherwise seems to have changed little over the past hundred years or more. Will they still be here, living this way, in another 10 years?

It's impossible to deny that the world outside draws ever closer, and that the area's rich biodiversity and cultural heritage are increasingly threatened by

climate change, modernisation, deforestation, and oil and gas exploration. A proposed soda ash plant has been in the pipeline for a number of years, which conservationists fear will disturb the flamingos and their delicate breeding patterns.

"I guess Lake Natron is a ticking time bomb," Taher says. "Change is inevitable. . . It's just a matter of time. But if the soda plant factory goes through, then BOOM!"

Much of the expansive network of Rift Valley lakes, running from Ethiopia in the north all the way to Malawi in the south, faces a similar threat. For example, a new hydroelectric dam in Ethiopia looks set to have detrimental effects on Kenya's Lake Turkana, the world's largest desert lake, and on the local people's way of life. But, as is often the case, the impact of such development on ethnic groups and communities has been largely ignored.

Unfortunately, this is nothing new. Tanzania's Maasai have been on the wrong end of a long and chequered history of forced removals, exploitation and attacks (both direct and indirect) on their way of life. For Taher, this is what makes protecting the region so important. He considers it to be the last truly authentic destination on Tanzania's fêted northern circuit. In a country where wildlife and humans have generally been segregated from one another as much as possible, Taher says the lake is "a reminder of how traditional tribes and the →



CHRIS DUNN/CORBIS

**KEEP ON MOVING:** A herd of cattle belonging to the semi-nomadic Maasai people cross the remote plains near Lake Natron

wild can co-exist, like they always have done from the beginning of time”.

In June last year, the villagers signed a deal with the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) that they hope might go some way towards securing both Lake Natron's future and their own existence in this increasingly contested area. The deal will see villagers being encouraged and trained to play a more active and sustainable role in conservation.

If carefully and ethically managed, more tourist footprints could also make a positive impact, in part through increasing awareness of Maasai culture and the importance of preserving the area's astonishing natural endowments.

**L**AKE NATRON AND OL DOINYO LENGAI WILL also form part of sub-Saharan Africa's first Geopark, which has already received close to 2 million euros in initial funding from the European Union. Aside from encouraging more tourism, the project provides for the protection and use of the region's geological heritage in a sustainable way, while also improving the social and economic wellbeing of the local people. Whether or not it will have the clout to halt industrial encroachment remains to be seen.

The early evening temperature is less oppressive and, after a quick nap, we make our way down to the lakeshore to get a closer look at the flamingos. These, it turns out, don't smell half as pretty as they look, even from some distance. We can't get too close, anyway – the high alkalinity of the shallow water in Lake Natron can seriously burn the skin, ensuring the birds' safety from any predators that might decide to wander in their direction.

Revvng high, we take the Land Cruiser up to the top of a nearby hill and set up a table and chairs, drag the cooler box out of the boot and settle in for a cold sundowner. We look out over the perfectly still surface of the lake, its fringes densely studded with pink. In the softer light, the ancient, undulating Rift Valley escarpment looks greener, less hostile, and even more striking. We have this view all to ourselves.

Down at water level a small dazzle of zebra breaks into a canter. They fly from a lone Maasai herder as he walks across the dry, cracked earth into the distance, presided over by the Mountain of God. What the future holds for him and his region remains to be seen, but it's not hard to see why many around here are in no great hurry for change. 🐾

## Ol Doinyo Lengai, Maasai for 'Mountain of God', rises serenely ahead of us; it's an active volcano and last erupted in 2007

CHRISTOPHER CLARK

### SAFARI PLANNER

■ **Getting there** Kilimanjaro International Airport is the main gateway to Tanzania's northern circuit, and is situated an hour's drive from the town of Arusha, which also has a small domestic airport. Lake Natron is roughly five hours' drive from Arusha. The first two hours from the city are on a good tarmac road. After that you'll hit the gravel road, which can be slow and bumpy in parts. Tanzania Experience runs a seven-day camping safari that includes an overnight stay in Lake Natron and the chance to visit a waterfall and Maasai village, before carrying on to the Serengeti and other regional highlights. This itinerary costs US\$1880 per person, full board. The tour operator can also include a Lake Natron and Ol Doinyo Lengai hike in its tailor-made safaris.

■ **Where to stay** Moivaro's Lake Natron Tented Camp offers safari tents, Maasai-style bandas and a basic self-catering campsite, and Lake Natron Hali Camp provides a more rustic experience.

■ **When to go** The area is hot and dry throughout most of the year, but the coolest months are usually between June and August. The rainy season usually sets in around November, and January and February tend to be particularly humid. The highest number of flamingo is usually found between October and December.

■ **Health** Visit your local GP or travel clinic to ensure you have had all the necessary vaccinations and antimalarials.

■ **Further reading** *The Bradt Guide to Northern Tanzania* (3rd Edition) by Philip Briggs



### 3 SPECTACULAR RIFT VALLEY LAKES

**1 Lake Turkana** Found in the northern reaches of Kenya, Lake Turkana is the world's largest desert lake, a veritable inland ocean. It's a long way from Kenya's more beaten paths, and therein lies much of its appeal. Known to locals as the Jade Sea for the colour of the water, it is home to hippo, crocodile and a wide variety of fish species. Its bounties sustain a significant population of the fascinating Turkana ethnic group; a number of settlements are found along the banks.

**2 Lake Tanganyika** Bordering Tanzania, Zambia, Congo and Burundi, this is the world's second-largest and second-deepest freshwater lake. It's an excellent spot for diving and snorkelling, with more than 350 species of fish. Boat trips and kayaking are among the other available activities. It's also a good spot for a secluded beach holiday. On the Tanzanian side, you can see chimpanzees in Gombe Stream National Park. On the Zambian side, Ndole Bay Lodge is a favourite with anglers, and allows access to Nsumbu National Park.

**3 Lake Nakuru** Flanked by rocky escarpments, forests and an occasional cascading waterfall, the perennially picturesque Nakuru, a small and shallow soda lake, sits at the heart of one of Kenya's flagship national parks. It is particularly well-known for its populations of flamingo and rhino (both black and white). Lion, hippo, buffalo and a handful of leopards are among the park's other inhabitants. It is an easy two hours' drive from Nairobi, and a popular day-trip destination, though there is also some handsome accommodation within the park.



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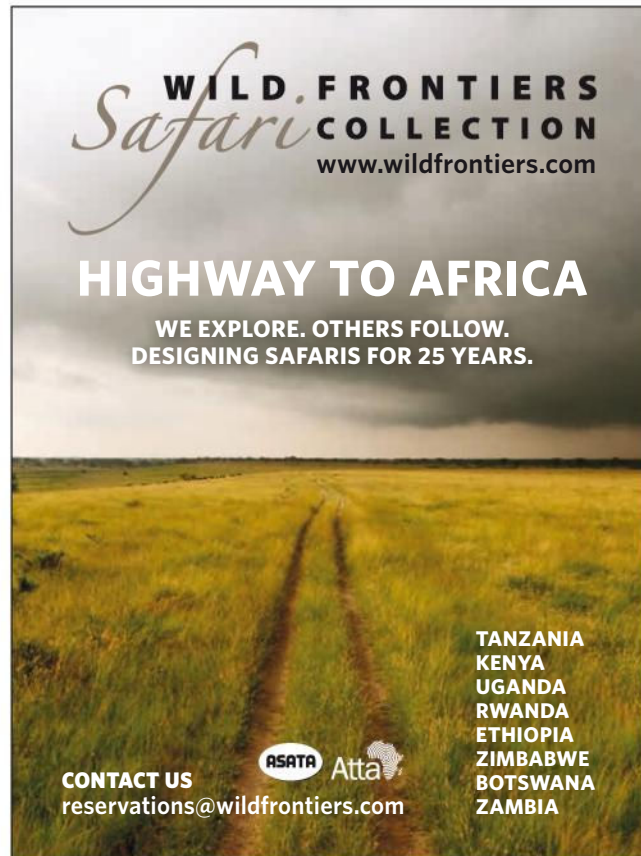
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**THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS LION:**  
In July last year, Cecil was killed  
on the outskirts of Hwange  
National Park, Zimbabwe

PHOTOGRAPH BY TOM VARLEY



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# Pride of place

A year after the killing of Cecil the lion in Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park, **Shelley Cox** reports on what his death taught us

**T**he earliest recorded depictions of lions were painted on the walls of caves some 32,000 years ago. Ancient Greek storytellers used this majestic big cat in fables to represent bravery and courage. The species has been used for centuries as a symbol of power, royalty and stateliness.

But the human connection to the so-called 'king of beasts' is far more than emblematic. In the late Pleistocene era, an estimated 10,000 years ago, the lion was one of the most widespread large land mammals after humans. Today, there are just over 20,000 lions in Africa, a population decline of an estimated 42% over the past 21 years alone – a frightening statistic. The reality is that in another 20 years or so, we could be facing their extinction.

## Keeping a balance

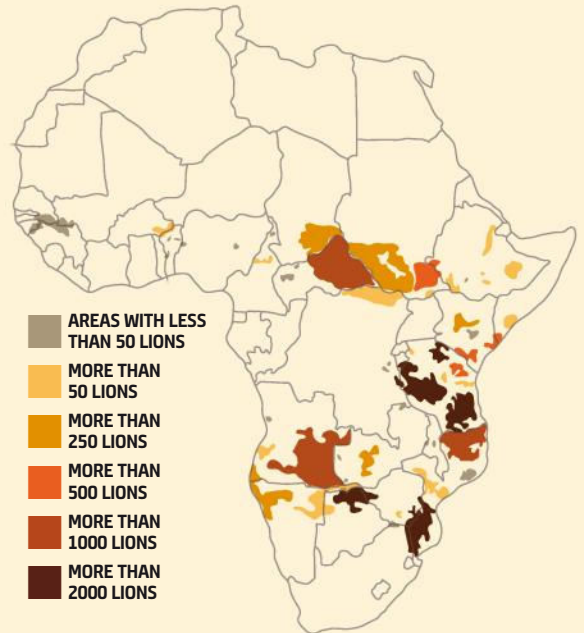
Losing the lions would have a devastating impact on the balance of Africa's fragile ecosystems. Lions are predators. Their elimination would result in a potential overpopulation of prey and herbivores, leading to the obliteration of vital vegetation upon which other species rely to survive.

The extinction of this magnificent species would also have an equally serious effect on our ability to learn from our natural surroundings. Through research and experience with animals, people can absorb valuable lessons about survival, compassion and empathy. In 2005, for example, three lions rescued a 12-year-old girl from abductors in south-west Ethiopia, and this tale does not sit in isolation. Dr Jane Goodall believed that science had to become more empathetic or it would miss crucial aspects of what we were actually studying.

## Social studies

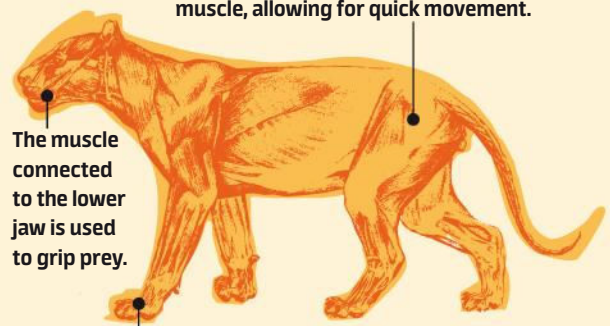
Like humans, lions are social and dynamic. A long-term study in Hwange National Park, headed by →

## 2012 AFRICAN LION POPULATION STATUS

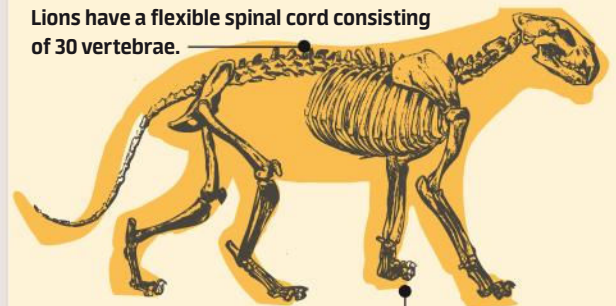


## A LION'S ANATOMY

Lions are made up almost entirely of muscle, allowing for quick movement.



Lions have a flexible spinal cord consisting of 30 vertebrae.



Dr Andrew Loveridge of the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), shows that lions tend to gather in family units called 'prides'. A pride is comprised of closely related adult females (led by one or two adult males) who develop complex bonds that allow them to cooperate in territorial defence, hunting and cub rearing.

Loveridge and his team have reported that the size of a pride's territory depends on the quantity of prey available: small where game is abundant, and expansive when wide areas are required to hunt for their next meal. The number of lions in each pride is similarly determined by the richness of food and water sources. Lions use waterholes as a series of larders, moving constantly from one to another to avoid emptying their food store, which is why the best place to observe them is close to a large waterhole.

A pride generally includes a couple of males, referred to as a 'coalition', who will oversee the protection of their fellows and territory. Unlike young lionesses, most males must eventually leave in search of a new unit in a process known as 'dispersal'. The Hwange Lion Research Project's findings suggest that most leave their pride at around 36 months old, but they might depart earlier if the pride's social system is disturbed, for instance, if the dominant male is killed.

### Group dynamics

If the dominant male lion is removed, either by human conflict or by a trophy hunter, the resulting cascade of consequences can result in the demise of many more lions in the pride. The destabilisation of the initial coalition can trigger the infanticide of cubs as well as the death, or eviction, of the surviving males. Professor David Macdonald, Director of WildCRU, refers to this process as the perturbation hypothesis of unintended consequences. The theory postulates that the killing of individuals may negatively affect the whole pride in various behavioural, physical, immunological or other ways. This draws attention to the devastating impact of sport and trophy hunting on pride dynamics and the species as a whole.

### What we learnt from Cecil

In July 2015, on the outskirts of Hwange, the death of one male lion – shot using a bow and arrow and later a rifle by an American big-game hunter – forever changed the voice and face of conservation. Cecil had formed a coalition with another male lion called Jericho, and together they maintained a large territory in the central-eastern section of the park (see the 'Lion Territories' illustration opposite). His death drastically affected the pride's relations and



**TOP:** Socialites. A pride of lions includes a group of related females who form a strong bond.

**INSET:** Lions usually have 30 teeth and can open their jaws to an impressive 10.5cm wide

territorial extent. There now appears to be a crossover of boundaries between five or six groups. Jericho has formed a new pride; the pride's original females have moved into a smaller territory; and Cecil's seven surviving cubs live precariously with no male to protect them.

Considering Macdonald's perturbation hypothesis, it is something of a miracle and a story of hope that the pride's females have been able to keep their cubs alive and their group intact. They have also managed to avoid conflict with other lions by continuing to move up to 30km a day.

### Under threat

Using the lion as a point of study, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has identified three major threats to Africa's wildlife: habitat loss, the bush-meat trade and human-wildlife conflict. All three are inextricably linked to our exploitation of natural resources.

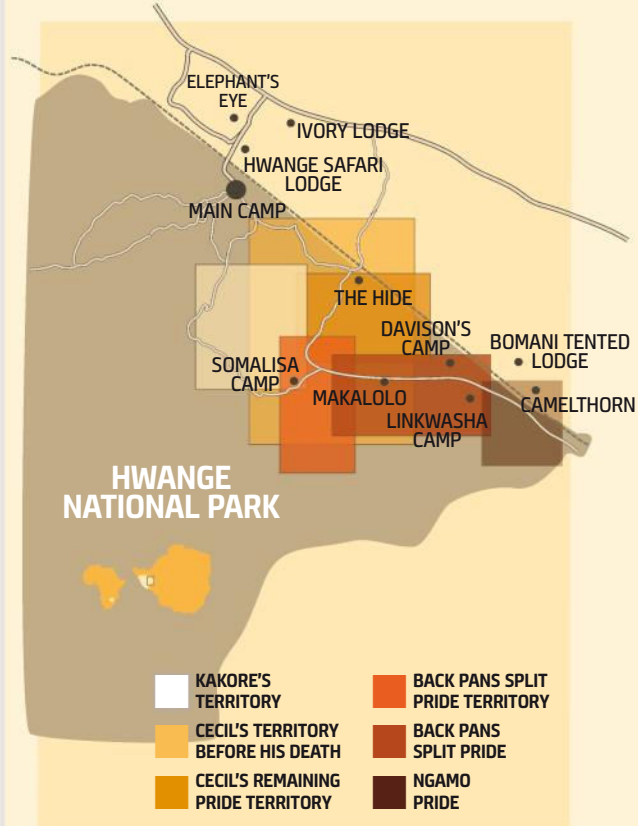
An article released last September by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS) shows that the number of African lions is declining in all but four countries: Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Data from the study revealed that populations in these countries survived partly "because of the proliferation of reintroduced →



ARNDNE VAN ZANDBERGEN

# LION TERRITORIES & PRIDE DYNAMICS

The diagram below illustrates the impact of Cecil's death on Hwange's lions. Before he died, he and Jericho controlled a large territory. But today there is a crossover of boundaries between five or six groups, and his pride's original females roam a smaller area.



BRENT STAPELKAMP (4)

**ABOVE:** Elephant attack. Taking on an ellie is a challenge for any lion, requiring great skill and determination. Therefore, they will often target babies, which are vulnerable. It was not a happy ending for this chap

## Team bonding

Lions nurture strong relationships, which they strengthen by caressing one another and licking. The head rub is used commonly as a greeting. They are also very vocal, communicating with a series of purrs, snarls, miaws, hissing and roars.





STEPHANIE PERIQUET

lions in small, fenced and intensively managed and funded reserves.”

It concluded that increased intervention efforts were required to maintain populations in most large lion conservation units, and warned that “unless political and funding commitments are scaled up to address the mounting levels of threat, lions may disappear from most of Africa.”

### International change

Cecil’s death has had a large impact on wildlife conservation as a whole. A number of policies were swiftly brought about as a result of his killing, which could potentially have a long-term effect on curbing illegal hunting and poaching activities across the globe:

**August 2015** More than 42 airlines place bans on wildlife trophy shipments on their carriers.

**September 2015** The CECIL Act (Conserving

**ABOVE:** Half-brothers Lucky and Tommy share a buffalo carcass with other members of their pride. **RIGHT:** Three lions fight to become the dominant male

Ecosystems by Ceasing the Importation of Large Animal Trophies Act) is introduced in the United States House of Representatives. The Act prohibits the import or export of any animal under consideration for inclusion on the threatened or endangered species list.

**November 2015** The United States House of Representatives passes the Proposal of the Global Anti-Poaching Act.

**November 2015** The French government announces a ban on the importation of lion trophies.

**January 2016** The African lion becomes protected under the United States Fish & Wildlife Service’s Endangered Species Act.

While many saw Cecil’s death as an opportunity to increase the debate on the sport and trophy hunting of wild animals, others have recognised that the global outcry has the potential to bring about a more holistic approach to conservation.

## Blood Lions

Another global outcry is the call to end canned hunting (where lions are bred for the bullet and kept in a confined area to be pursued and killed) and cub petting (where they are kept in captivity for leisure activities such as walking with lions and cuddling cubs). According to the Blood Lions campaign, there are currently about 8000 predators held in cages or confined areas, with no evidence that this is contributing to the long-term protection of the species. On the contrary, according to Blood Lions, the facts suggest that the captive-bred industry is promoting the illegal trade in lion bones, a growing alternative to the use of tiger bones in traditional Chinese medicine.

In an effort to shut down the captive-bred lion industry, Ian Michler of Blood Lions has been recruiting the support of key players worldwide, such as Ker & Downey Botswana, African Bush Camps and Africa Albida Tourism, to oppose the above-mentioned activities.

## The fight goes on

Never before has intervention on a global scale been more necessary to fight the extinction of a species. As lion researcher Brent Stapelkamp states: "The future of our most iconic animal requires the assistance of the international community to provide adequate funding for policy change to ensure the survival of Africa's endangered wildlife." To this end, a new initiative, called World Heritage Species, is fast gaining momentum in its efforts to protect certain species through a World Heritage status. 🐾

*Shelley Cox works for the Conservation & Wildlife Fund. Huge thanks go to African Bush Camps, Andrew Loveridge at WildCRU and Brent Stapelkamp for their support and help with compiling this article. All photographs are taken at Hwange NP, Zimbabwe.*

## The future of our most iconic species requires global assistance to provide adequate funding for policy change

## FACTS ABOUT LIONS

**HEIGHT** 1.2m (males)

**LENGTH** About 3m (males). 45cm for the head, 150cm from the neck to the tail and 90cm for the tail

**WEIGHT** 330-500lb (150-227kg) (males). In general, female lions are smaller than males

**LIFESPAN** 10-14 years

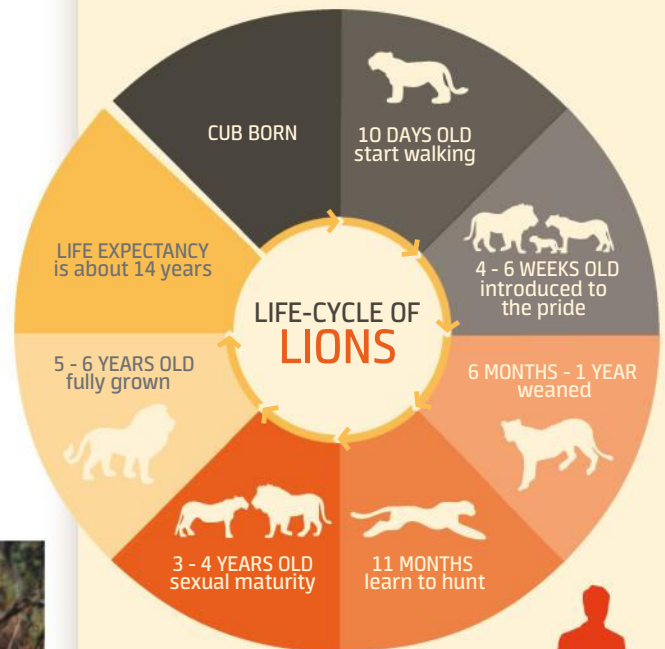
**TOP SPEED** 50mph (81km/hr), for short distances

**STATUS** According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: West African lions are Endangered; South African lions are Threatened

**ORDER** Mammal

**DIET** Carnivore

**GROUP NAME** Pride



**SIZE RELATIVE TO A 6FT (1.8M) MAN**



**MATING SEASON** Throughout the year

**GESTATION** Around 110 days

**LITTER SIZE** 3-4 cubs

Young cubs are vulnerable to predation by hyena, leopard and black-backed jackal. They begin hunting at about 11 months but remain with their mother for at least two years.



BRENT STAPELKAMP



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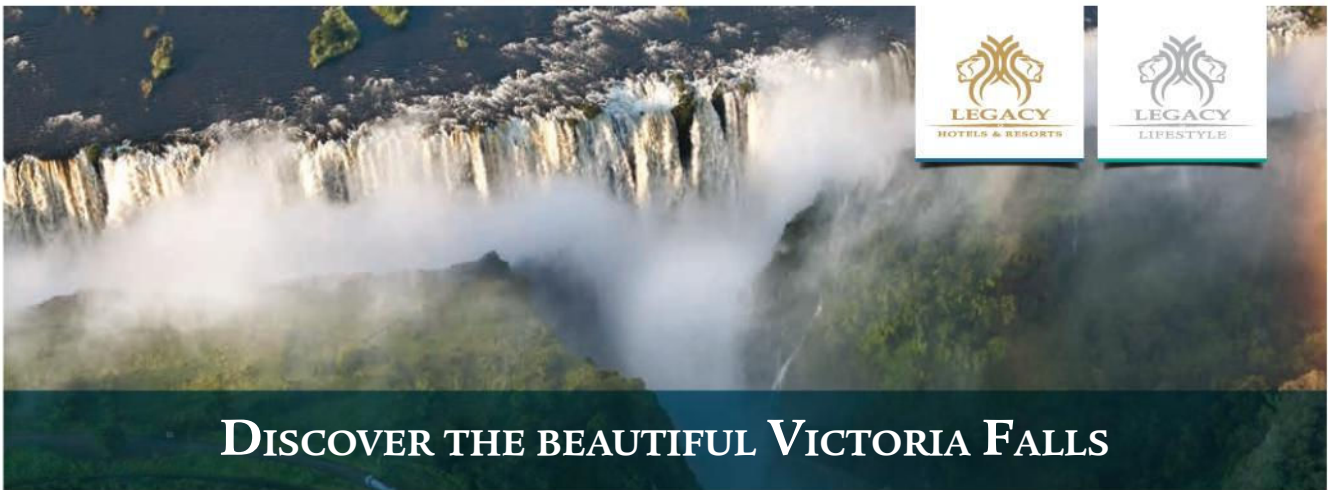
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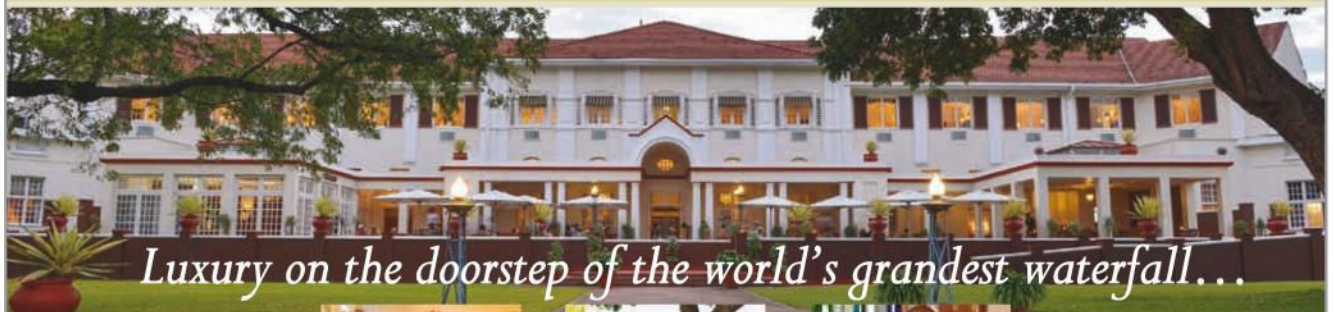
  
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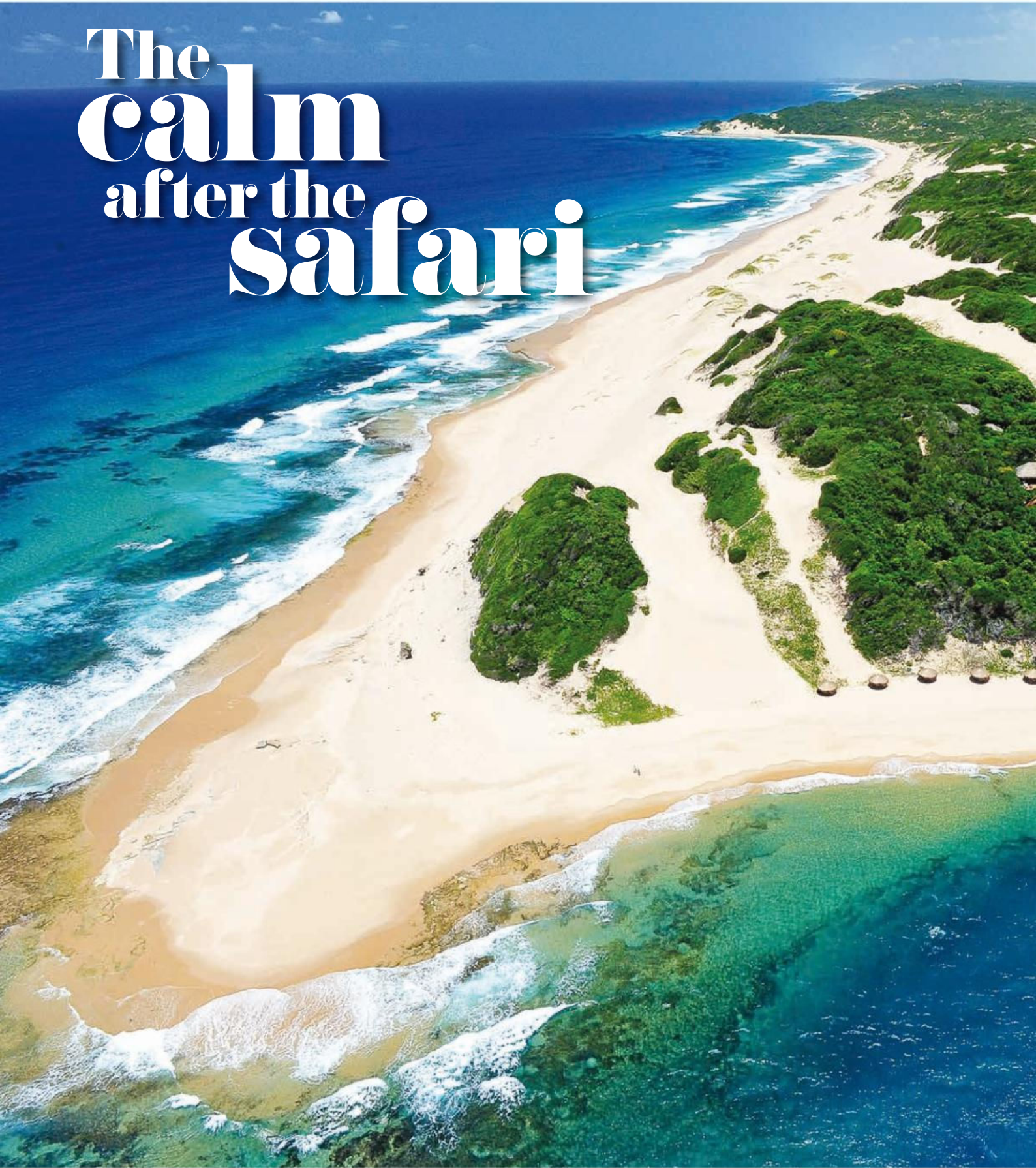


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# The Calm after the Safari





## Relax after the buzz of a South African wildlife adventure with a few days on the Machangulo peninsula. Even in a storm, it's paradise

WORDS BY JOHN MALATHRONAS

**A** landscape can look utterly magnificent in a tempest, and the view from my villa at Machangulo Beach Lodge is exemplary. I'm perched on top of a giant dune at the tip of Mozambique's Machangulo peninsula, looking across to the island of Inhaca over the narrow straits of Santa Maria village. The roaring swell is strong and steady, the surf spectacular, and the gloomy sky brings out Africa's more sinister face. When the storm lets rip, the rain plunges perpendicularly outside my verandah, as if I'm allowed only to peek at the cataclysm through vertical blinds. The downpour lasts just a few hours but it was worth it for the drama — and the natural air-conditioning the storm brings in its wake.

Once normal sun service resumes, I find myself lying on one of those empty stretches of Mozambican coastline that are the stuff of legend among beach cognoscenti: sugar-fine sand and translucent sea that starts off yellow-green on the water's edge and turns emerald halfway to the horizon before disappearing into a lapis lazuli-blue. A family from Hamburg, lying next to me, explains why they chose to combine their Kruger safari with a week at Machangulo. I'm not surprised: Maputo lies just over a hundred kilometres away from Kruger National Park, and the peninsula is a mere hour away from the capital by speedboat. A South Africa-Mozambique combination is a good alternative to the beach-and-bush holidays offered by Kenya and Tanzania.

To add to its allure, the region is a biodiversity hotspot, part of a wider conservation area. Jelly, our blonde, athletic diving instructor, birding specialist or frisbee expert, depending on the circumstance, takes me to the coral reef for a 'snorkel safari', while the Germans slip into kayaks for a paddle. Ours is one of several pristine sections protected in a single transfrontier marine park, which stretches all the way down to Kosi Bay in South Africa. Unlike other coral reefs that caress pelagic coastlines, this one is secluded in Inhaca's Saco (Pouch) Bay, as safe and tranquil as a children's pool.

Yet it is no less spectacular. A shoal of moonies mills in the shallows while, further up, flathead mullet scoop up the sand. Jelly points at a yellowtail gliding in and out of the anemones; a pink parrotfish follows, its colours shimmering under the sun's rays, which wrap around the reef's ridge like curtains. Big-eyed kingfish look surreptitiously at us, perhaps disturbed by the green turtle nose-diving on my left. I can't stop gazing at the fleshy lips of the giant clams: some are Day-Glo yellow and others silky purple, while a cobalt-blue colossus seems to smirk at us deeper down.

The ocean side of Machangulo has a far bigger and dive-worthy reef than ours, but it's a kilometre offshore and the eastern wind is prohibitive. Despite the weather, →

though, thousands of leatherbacks are decamping on to the coastline to lay their eggs in one of southern Africa's biggest turtle sanctuaries. I'm here in the right season and I'm mightily tempted to go on a nocturnal exploration, but in the end, the dread of disturbing a vulnerable species is stronger than my curiosity.

It's much more fun to tag along with the Germans, anyway. As Machangulo is not an isolated islet or self-contained resort, it offers a golden opportunity to visit a Mozambican community. Jelly takes us for a hike to Santa Maria, a fishing village on the western side of the peninsula. The walk itself is an hour's ramble along a sandy shoreline under the shade of mangroves, dune sweet thorn and guarri trees. The bay is kept in constant flux by the shifting sands, but this allows birdlife to flourish. Plovers, sandpipers and whimbrels wade in the mudflats, elegant Cape cormorants pose on rocks, while far away a flock of flamingos appears to float ethereally, standing on a sandbank hundreds of metres from the coast. The only alien feature in the landscape is a line of casuarinas on the dunes' edge, planted there to stabilise the soil.

The vigorous thud of *marrabenta*, Mozambique's indigenous music, welcomes us to the village. Its beat grabs you by the waist and doesn't let go. The kids see us first and start twerking their tiny bodies in our path. We reply in good spirits, raising chuckles from the locals. Having broken the ice, we are left free to observe village life unhindered. Shells of dhows, either newly built or cannibalised for lumber, dot the periphery. Women, half submerged in the sea, are busily laying fish traps – a zigzag of netting that fish navigate through at high tide but can't escape as the water recedes. Shops here range from the familiar to the exotic and the utterly baffling: a bakery, where the smell of fresh bread baking in a wood-fired oven has my German friends in raptures; a *loja* ('store') that sells *capulanas*, the main female article of clothing, where we spend much time enchanted by the patterns; and, ahem, a hut that stocks nothing but sacks of cement or flour. It was hard to tell.

Beyond Santa Maria, the inner core of the peninsula comprises the Maputo Elephant Reserve. Most of the fauna here was slaughtered during the country's civil war. It's not exactly a leading safari destination: the main animals are antelope and about 200 elephant, still skittish near humans and dispersed over 50,000 hectares. Machangulo's inhabitants have only recently re-occupied their old villages. Maybe that's why the corrugated iron of the houses has not yet rusted, or why the reed *barracas* ('shacks') are still almost vertical. Maybe that's why there are smiles and optimism all around in a part of the world finally emerging from war.

But with its proximity to Kruger, its top-notch coastline, world-class reef and friendly villages, I believe that Machangulo's time has come. 🐾

**PREVIOUS PAGES:** Paradise found. An aerial view of Machangulo Beach Lodge. **CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** The island's pristine waters are part of a marine reserve, so good for snorkelling; the old lighthouse on the nearby island of Inhaca, from where you can see the remains of *M/S Tecumseh*, shipwrecked here in 1932; a baker in Santa Maria; children play frisbee on the beach



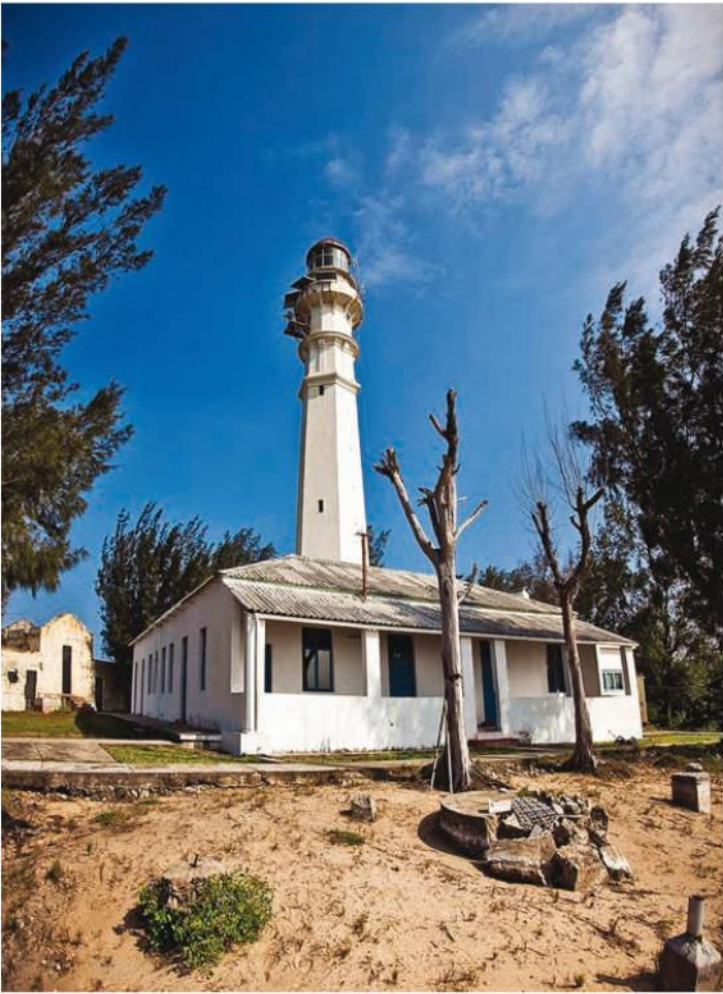
JOHN MALATHRONAS (4)

**Our walk is an hour's ramble along the sandy shoreline under the shade of mangroves, dune sweet thorn and guarri trees**





MACHANGULO BEACH LODGE



## THE CAPULANA

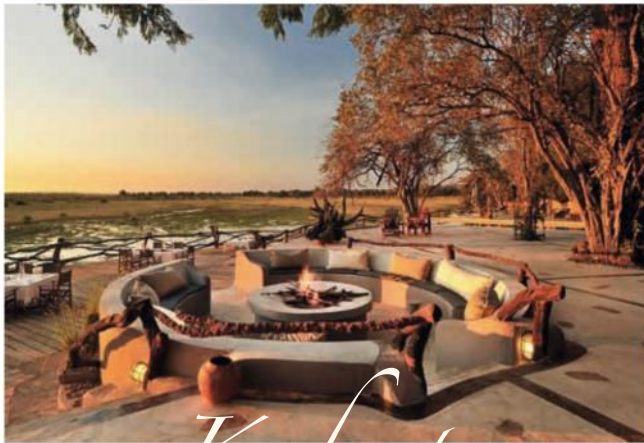
This women's garment typifies Mozambique. Usually made of cotton or silk, each has an individual coloured pattern. Back in 1954, Virgílio de Lemos, a liberation poet, called the Portuguese flag a "plain red-and-green capulana". The authorities charged him with disrespect, but at the trial he claimed he had not meant to denigrate but exalt the flag – for the capulana was the most significant piece of clothing in Mozambique for the most important members of the family: the wife and the mother. A lady used it to make herself beautiful, to carry her baby, to set the table and to make a bedspread for love at night. Not only did his half-ironic, half-truthful defence convince the judge, who set him free, but from then on the Portuguese authorities demanded that indigenous women wore red-and-green capulanas at official functions.



## SAFARI PLANNER

- **Getting there** South African Airways flies from London to Maputo daily via Johannesburg. The Machangulo Beach Lodge arranges boat transfers from Maputo for US\$150 return per person and minibuses from Kruger Airport for US\$150, one way.
- **Where to stay** The writer stayed at Machangulo Beach Lodge, where villas cost about US\$350 a day, sleeping two (full board); children pay reduced rates. For a cheaper option, Bemugi's Place near Santa Maria offers two large self-catering chalets (sleeping four to six) for about US\$115 a day per chalet.
- **When to go** Although you can snorkel on the Maputo side of the peninsula all year round, if you want to visit the ocean side, reef conditions are best between January and September when the wind dies down. To whale-watch, come between July and November. The turtle season is between November and March.
- **Health** Be sure to consult your GP for the relevant vaccinations and antimalarials.
- **Further reading** *The Bradt Guide to Mozambique* (6th edition) by Philip Briggs





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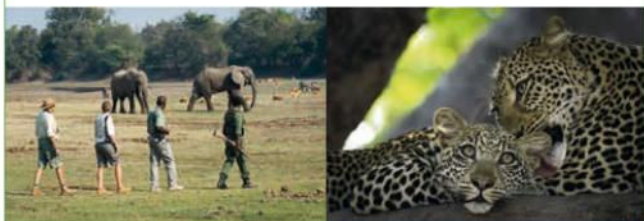
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# Anything but plain

In the far west of Zambia lies a vast land of golden savannah, flower-filled lagoons and plentiful wildlife: Liuwa Plain National Park. **Sue Watt** reports on this conservation success story



In the afternoon heat we found Lady resting in the shade of shrub. She raised her battle-scarred head, gazed sleepily in our direction with amber eyes full of leonine wisdom, then promptly lay down again, oblivious to our hushed excitement.

Lady is a legend in Liuwa. For nine years she was the only lion in this vast national park. Today, she heads a pride of five, but in those lonely years she showed no desire to leave and who could blame her? She must have realised what a special place this is.

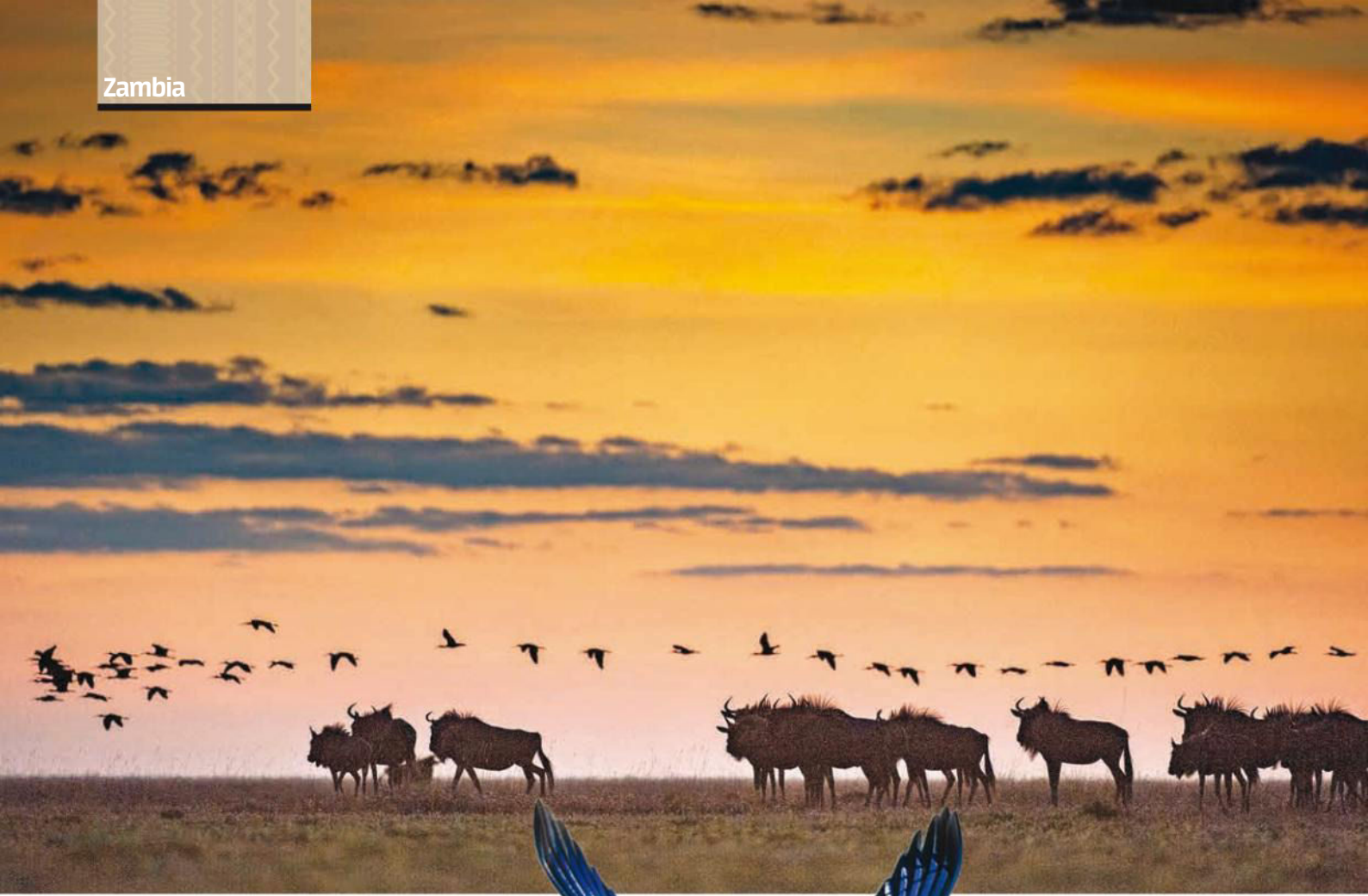
This secret wilderness has long been fêted by safari connoisseurs, but despite this publicity welcomes few visitors. It's remote and raw, taking time and effort to get here. Our journey involved a two-and-a-half-hour flight from Lusaka to Kalabo, a pontoon across the Luanginga River and a two-hour drive to our camp, Matamanene,

the only one in the park (for now). But it was well worth the ride: Liuwa is a land of surprises.

Spanning 3660sq km in Zambia's Western Province, Liuwa is home to Africa's little-known yet second-largest wildebeest migration. 45,000 of the animals roam its expansive plains. This represents a true conservation success story: when non-profit organisation African Parks started their 20-year management tenure in 2003, the wildebeest numbered only 15,000. Wherever we looked now, there were wildebeest, whether in herds of several hundred braying restlessly or solitary bulls ambling across the landscape. Liuwa usually floods from December to May, and this is the principal draw for these alluring animals. As the floods recede from the southern plains, they follow the water north, usually from June to July, and then start their return journey around September. By →

PHOTOGRAPH BY WILL BURRARD-LUCAS / NORMAN CARR SAFARIS





DAVID ROGERS (3)

November, as the rains recur, the southern plains once again teem with wildebeest and game.

“Look at them all,” our guide Brian Mukumbuta commented, as we found yet another herd. “This place is just one huge meat pot for the hyena!”

Here, unusually, hyena aren’t scavengers. They’re predators, and they attack in style. The single, small lion pride poses no threat to them, so populations are thriving, with some 700 hyenas living in clans of up to 50. We watched in awe as a pack of 21, with bloodstained jowls and fat, full bellies polished off a wildebeest, crunching the remaining bones. Two young, inquisitive hyenas sauntered up to our Land Rover checking us out, with fluffy saucer-shaped ears and teeth that looked too big for their mouths.

As dusk fell, we waited at the ‘South Clan’ den, where five tiny black cubs emerged, their pink ears and white eyebrows suggesting they were under six weeks old. Mischievous and playful, they squealed and stumbled on little legs as they explored their surroundings, only to be carried in their mothers’ mouths back to the safety of their lairs.

Surprisingly, the Lozi people are as much a part of this landscape as the wildebeest and their predators. Liuwa only gained national park status in 1972, yet it is one of Africa’s oldest protected regions. Located in the kingdom of Barotseland, the king (or Litunga) declared it a royal hunting ground in the late-19th century. Villagers were tasked with protecting its wildlife in exchange for land use and fishing rights, which still continue today. Some 20,000 Lozi now live in 432 villages within the park and its buffer zone, adding a complex dimension to conservation.



In a unique, three-way relationship, Liuwa is managed by African Parks through a public-private partnership with Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) and the traditional authority representing the local people, the Barotse Royal Establishment (BRE). “BRE invited African Parks to get involved,” explained Simon Pitt, AP’s Operations Manager. “Without their support, particularly at the early stages, this project would never have worked.”

Inevitably, the project has faced challenges. African Parks’ law-enforcement role includes ranger patrols to impede poaching and enforcing seasonal fishing bans for sustainable fishing. “The communities appreciate us being here,” Simon continued. “But there will always be conflict. We have to find ways to overcome that.” These ways have included building school classrooms, computer labs and housing for teachers, establishing conservation clubs focusing on the environment and employment, and sponsoring children to attend secondary school. African Parks has also built wells, clinics and campsites with all profits going to communities. And the organisation contributes monthly payments to Community Development Funds, rewarding reductions in poaching levels.

Over 12 years, anti-poaching activities and animal reintroductions have helped Liuwa’s wildlife flourish. On game drives, we watched dazzles of zebra grazing on the plains. Around a thousand skittish red lechwe scattered as we approached. Small, speedy oribi constantly played ‘chicken’, running and jumping in front of our vehicle. Buffalo, eland and lions have also been reintroduced into the park. It’s also a fabulous destination for birders, with 330 species including →



WILL BURRARD-LUCAS / NORMAN CARR SAFARIS

**PREVIOUS PAGES:** Apex predators. There are about 700 spotted hyenas at Liuwa Plain, living in clans of up to 50. **CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:** Lady, once the only lion here; the park’s lily-filled lagoons make it a photographer’s heaven; a lilac-breasted roller; wildebeest roam the plains at sunset



## LADY LIUWA

For all the wildebeest and hyena that populate this remote park, Lady is the true star of Liuwa. In 2010 National Geographic filmed a documentary about her called *Lady Liuwa: The Last Lioness*, relating her life as the only lion in this vast national park. The population had been wiped out due to poaching, human-wildlife conflict and illegal trophy hunting, and for nine years, she was its solitary lion. “She’s amazing, a true survivor,” our guide Brian Mukumbuta told us. But it seemed Lady had spent her last years alone in the wilderness.

African Parks’ conservationists set about finding her a family to restore Liuwa’s lion population. In 2009 two males were introduced and the coalition seemed strong and healthy. But danger lay ahead. The two males moved on to Angola, where one was killed by locals. The other, Nakawa, returned to the relative safety of Liuwa.

In 2011 two females were introduced from Kafue National Park, only for one of them to die in a snare. Traumatized, the surviving sister, Sepo (meaning Hope), headed towards Angola but was recaptured and airlifted back to Liuwa. She was kept in a boma alongside Lady, and the two females bonded. Lady took the young lioness under her wing and they have remained together ever since.

On being released from the boma, Nakawa was regularly seen mating with the young lioness and in December 2013, three little cubs were born, a male and two females. It seemed Liuwa’s lion population would now be stable. Tragically, however, their father was found dead in September last year. The circumstances remain unexplained, but he is believed to have been poisoned.

**For more on lion behaviour,** turn to page 92.



**PLAY-FIGHTING:** The flat landscape of Liuwa is the ideal habitat for cheetah



WILL BURRARD-LUCAS / NORMAN CARR SAFARIS

huge flocks of pelicans, elegant crowned cranes in their hundreds and endangered wattled cranes.

Liuwa's tourism is also enjoying a new lease of life. Norman Carr Safaris (NCS) opened Matamanene in May 2015, and plans to establish a luxury camp in early 2017. In the meantime, with five ensuite tents set in shady woodland, Matamanene is stylish and unpretentious. It has a lovely relaxed vibe, so relaxed that even the lions have been caught playing on sofas in the open *chitenge*.

Activities here offer a deeper appreciation of life in Liuwa. The park is a photographer's dream, with endless vistas of amber savannahs and lily-strewn pools as backdrops to wildebeest in their thousands, migrating birds, charismatic hyena, leaping cheetah and famous lions, and NCS has started photography safaris with expert guide and photographer Ed Selfe.

An evening presentation and dinner with Teddy Mukula from the Zambian Carnivore Programme gave us a fascinating insight into their research and history. The following afternoon, their manager Graeme Ellis accompanied us on a game drive, as we tracked wildebeest, hyena and lion using GPS and telemetry, learning about their relationship to each other as predators and prey.

In the cool early morning, I had the privilege of going on NCS's very first walking safari. We had 360° views of nothing but plains, vivid blue pools and just one lone palm tree piercing the horizon in the distance. And on our last evening, we feasted on a fabulous bush dinner under a full moon and starlight.

With golden plains and flowers by day, glittering stars by night and lightning from miles away dancing across the sky, Liuwa has an aura all of its own. No wonder Lady never wanted to leave. 🐾

## SAFARI PLANNER

■ **Getting there** Kenya Airways and South African Airways offer flights to Lusaka via Nairobi and Johannesburg respectively. Some tour operators offer tailor-made trips to Liuwa Plain, including Expert Africa and Natural World Safaris. The writer travelled as a guest of African Parks and Norman Carr Safaris.

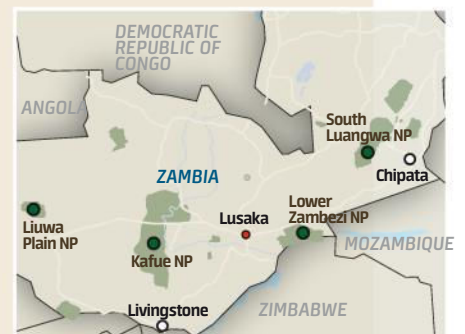
■ **Where to stay** Matamanene is the only lodge in the park; it's run by Norman Carr Safaris. A new property called Mambeti is set to open in early 2017, after which management of Matamanene will revert to African Parks. There are five campsites, from which the local communities retain all profits.

■ **When to go** Matamanene is open from May to July and October to December. The campsites are open June–December. From December to April/early May, rains can make the park inaccessible, although this is the best

time to see migratory birds. From May to August, the climate is cool but usually sunny, warming up towards October (the hottest month). The rains start to return around November.

■ **Things to do** Activities include game drives, walks and spending time with Zambian Carnivore Programme researchers.

■ **Further reading** Read the *Bradt Guide to Zambia* (6th Edition) by Chris McIntyre or visit the websites of the Zambia Tourism Board and African Parks.



# Life-changing *journeys...* with Wilderness Safaris



Wilderness Safaris is an ecotourism company that specialises in creating life-changing journeys in some of the most pristine areas in southern Africa. Based in Namibia for more than 20 years, it offers guests from all over the world private access to the country's beautiful places – from the enormous dunes of Sossusvlei in the south, through the stark desert landscapes and unexpected wildlife of Damaraland and the Skeleton Coast, ending at the Kunene River in the remote north.

By showcasing these diverse areas through a variety of experiences, Wilderness Safaris endeavours to ensure the future protection of Africa's spectacular wildlife heritage, while sharing the benefits of ecotourism with local communities. Fiercely committed to its 4Cs ethos of Conservation, Commerce, Community and Culture, the company firmly believes that its single most important achievement to date is to have built a sustainable business model that does not compromise environmental principles and which provides jobs, training, skills, hope and a realistic alternative to less sustainable development.

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# A great white place

Blown away by the harsh beauty of Etosha National Park, **Rose Gamble** recounts her adventures in this vast wilderness

PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANS LANTING







DANA ALLEN

As the sky purpled into evening, we drew up alongside a deserted waterhole. We had barely rolled down the windows onto the warm air when eight elephants ambled out of the bush. We watched as they drank, the two tiny calves half submerging their faces in the violet water, tails in the air. The sun sank lower and Aperol-orange tendrils crept across the horizon.

After spending half an hour or so splashing and slaking their thirst, the group's matriarch eyed our 4WD at some length, ears flapping questioningly. The octet then proceeded to march slowly back into the thorn scrub, walking a mere 10m from where we were parked. My fingers hovered near the ignition keys. Once the last elephant had vanished into the darkening mopane trees we raced back to camp before night descended. The disappearing sun burnt red behind us while the hot, dusty air whipped through the open windows. I felt totally and utterly alive.

Etosha National Park, covering a whopping 22,912sq km, is the ideal place to self-drive. Characterised by a saltpan the size of Holland, Namibia's largest government-owned park, is, in the main, bleached pale by the scorching heat and so dry that waterholes usually act as magnets for large concentrations of animals. Wildlife sightings are guaranteed, even for the most inexperienced of visitors.

The park has four points of entry, or 'gates', two of which are named after the European explorers, Francis Galton and Charles Andersson, who stumbled across the saline expanse in the 1850s while trekking with copper traders. Various tussles over the

enormous area ensued. European settlers traded with the Ovambo for tracts of land, one swapping 170sq km for 25 firearms, a salted horse hide and a cask of brandy (tellingly, no park gate bears his name). The third entrance to Etosha recalls the governor of then German South-West Africa, Dr Friedrich von Lindequist, who, in 1907, proclaimed it a reserve (later elevated by the Republic of South Africa to the status of a national reserve) to protect the land and its seasonal migrations.

A dazzling-white pan dominates central and eastern Etosha, accessed by Andersson's Gate. The surrounding landscape is flat and blanched with salt-dust. Driving through this otherworldly landscape, I imagined we could be on the moon. This is part of the Kalahari Basin and was formed around 60 million years ago. Once a huge lake fed by the Kunene River, it dried up and filled repeatedly over time, creating layer upon layer of green-grey clay and sparkling salt.

The name Etosha (spelt Etotha in early literature) comes from the Oshindonga word meaning 'great white place'. The Hai//om San, the original inhabitants of Namibia and southern Africa, named the pan Khubus, which can be translated as 'totally bare, white place with lots of dust'. An endless, desert-like expanse may seem an unlikely home for wildlife, but the park is teeming with game. As we weaved through the open plains on the edge of the pan, we saw swathes of springbok skipping through the dust. Large herds of Burchell's zebra wandered close to our car, their striped flanks gleaming in the scorching sun. Eland and blue wildebeest formed dark silhouettes against the sky.

**PREVIOUS PAGES:** The 'great white place'. A herd of wildebeest trek, in single file, across the 5000sq-km saltpan. **ABOVE FROM LEFT:** A lioness cools off at the Newbrownii waterhole, a few kilometres from Okaukuejo Rest Camp; some of Etosha's desert-adapted elephants are huge and ancient; an aerial view of the park



NWR (2)

Making our way north, a little inland from the saline desert, the bush became denser. Here, black-faced impala, endemic to the park, appeared frequently between the mopane trees and kudu hovered in clearings before disappearing, shyly, back into the scrub. Turning a corner, we saw a roan antelope and caught a glimpse of its bright eyes as it bolted back into the bush. Later, a tiny Damara dik-dik, flushed out by the rumble of our engine, dashed across our path.

According to the literature that accompanied our increasingly dusty map Etosha is home to 114 mammals, 340 birds, 110 reptiles and 16 amphibian species. With animals appearing on every corner, it was not hard to believe. The 170km route between the centre and north of the park roughly traces the perimeter of the pan, and curls, helpfully, back and forth between bush and desert landscapes, ensuring a variety of wildlife. The loose gravel track is easy to drive and is interspersed with a series of natural and man-made waterholes. These pools, along with the well-constructed roads, make game viewing in Etosha unusually effortless. In the long dry season, you can simply stake out next to a waterhole and wait for the animals to come to you.

We developed a rhythm: we would sling on our shorts and espadrilles as the first threads of pink dawn inched blearily across the sky, and then we would race to the nearest waterhole to watch giraffe, gemsbok and oryx feeding in the cool morning. At midday we would escape from the sweltering sun before venturing out again in the late afternoon, biltong, salted almonds and bottles of Windhoek beer crammed into the side-pockets of our 4WD in preparation for sundown.

After a tip-off that a pride of black-maned lion, stars of the recent BBC documentary series, *The Hunt*, were loitering near the →



## ETOSHA VOICES

### Shayne Kötting

Game warden, Okaukuejo, Etosha National Park

■ **When to go** "The best time to visit is between May and August: it's cooler and the game viewing is particularly good, since animals are forced to drink at artificial waterholes as most of the water has dried up. However, for bird lovers, the wet season (January to March) is the most gratifying, as many vagrant species are present then. Moreover, these months are also when many antelope give birth, so there are lots of sweet little animals running around – if you can find them."



### Mufaro Nesongano

Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR)

■ **Where to stay** "One of the best places to stay is Onkoshi Camp. In the past, guests weren't able to drive themselves there but this has recently changed, making it suitable for self-drive travellers."



### David Cartwright

ATI Holidays

■ **Take your time** "Patience is a virtue, and Etosha is all about going slowly. Choose one of the permanent pumped waterholes, park under an old acacia tree and let the game come to you. Once the instant-gratification seekers have left disappointed and the dust has finally settled, the leopard that has been biding its time all morning will finally take its chance."



### Jimmy Marais

Karibu Safaris

■ **Which waterhole?** "I like to stop at the Newbrownii waterhole at midday, particularly on warmer days when the animals need to drink. Here you are likely to encounter elephant bulls that come to bathe in the calcite mud pool. Okondeka is another favourite. Situated on the western edge of the Etosha Pan it is one of the best places to spot lions – and, if you're lucky, witness a kill."



### Rob Moffett

Ongava Game Reserve

■ **Etosha with kids** "Anderssons Camp and The Mushara Bush Camp are both good for families. Download an app such as Star Walk and carry some fun science books to keep the children's inquisitive minds busy on those long stretches between waterholes."

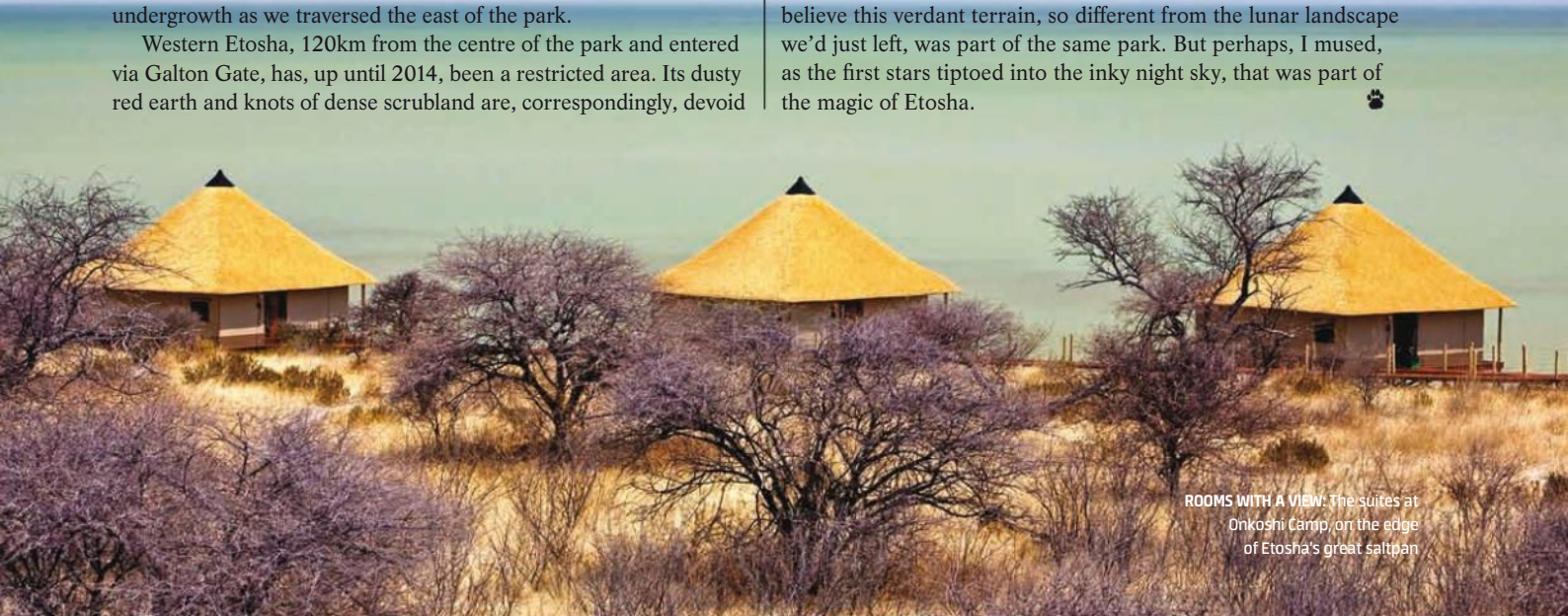
Okondeka waterhole we spent a large part of one evening parked close by. Eventually, two lionesses strolled nonchalantly out of the gathering gloom, their hides glowing rusted-orange in the rays of the retiring sun. The hairs on my arms prickled.

Etosha is also home to cheetah, leopard and the elusive caracal, along with being one of the world's most important sanctuaries for black rhino. Numbers are strategically kept secret in order to protect the threatened species, but sightings are frequent. In recent years, about a dozen white rhino have been introduced. Two huge males, skin wrinkled like crumpled paper, crashed happily out of the undergrowth as we traversed the east of the park.

Western Etosha, 120km from the centre of the park and entered via Galton Gate, has, up until 2014, been a restricted area. Its dusty red earth and knots of dense scrubland are, correspondingly, devoid

of visitors. On this side, a dazzle of Hartmann's mountain zebra fled from us in clouds of terracotta dust. Enormous elephants emerged so frequently from the thick bush that slamming on the brakes to avoid them became a common occurrence. In among the iridescent flashes of lilac-breasted rollers, we spotted the rare violet wood hoopoe and a pink-bellied lark. Black-breasted snake eagles posed, imperious, on mopane branches. Kori bustards, black korhaans and pairs of secretary birds stalked the stretches of grassland.

Perched on a rocky outcrop at our camp one evening, miles of undulating scrubland stretched out below, I found it hard to believe this verdant terrain, so different from the lunar landscape we'd just left, was part of the same park. But perhaps, I mused, as the first stars tiptoed into the inky night sky, that was part of the magic of Etosha.



ROOMS WITH A VIEW: The suites at Onkoshi Camp, on the edge of Etosha's great saltpan

NWR

## SAFARI PLANNER

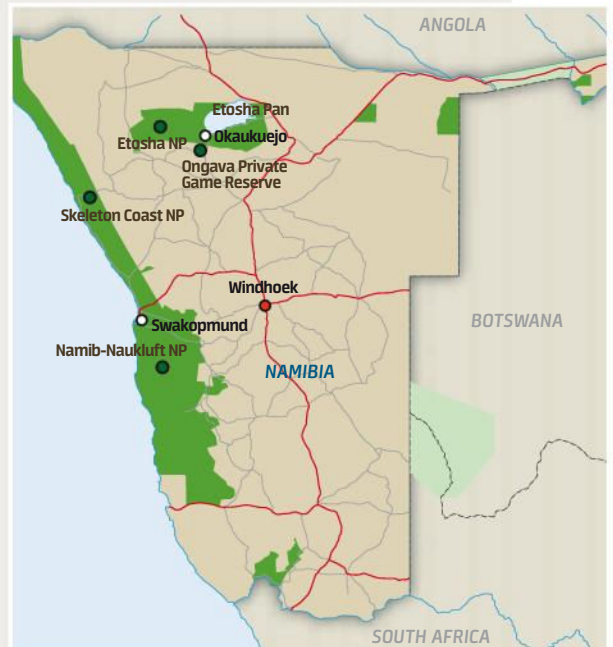
■ **Getting there** Air Namibia flies to Windhoek. In the city you can hire a car through Namibia Car Rental (from £50 per day for a double cab Toyota 4WD; camping equipment is extra). Chameleon Holidays & Travel can compile a personalised itinerary for self-drivers, including directions, maps and excellent background information.

■ **Where to stay** There are plenty of accommodation options, including several affordable, government-owned campsites and lodges within the park (all found at [www.nwr.com.na](http://www.nwr.com.na)). In the east and northern Etosha, Okaukuejo Camp (doubles from £35) offers camping and wooden chalets, and Onkoshi Camp (doubles from £65), set on a secluded peninsula, has breathtaking views. In the west, Dolomite Camp (doubles from £55) provides chic tented

chalets. Alternatively, you can book rooms in the new Olifantsrus Camp (doubles from £11). There are also various private lodges outside the park: Ongava Lodge (doubles from £110) holds one of the largest rhino custodianships in Namibia; The Mushara Outpost (doubles from £160) is elegant, peaceful and serves food that's second to none; Hobatere Lodge (doubles from £150), situated on its own 32,000-hectare concession, feels wilder and emptier than most other options. In Windhoek, family-run Villa Vista (doubles from £65) provides a peaceful pit stop.

■ **Health** Visit your travel clinic to ensure you have had all the necessary vaccinations. Antimalarials are recommended but not essential.

■ **Further reading** *The Bradt Guide to Namibia* (5th Edition) by Chris McIntyre

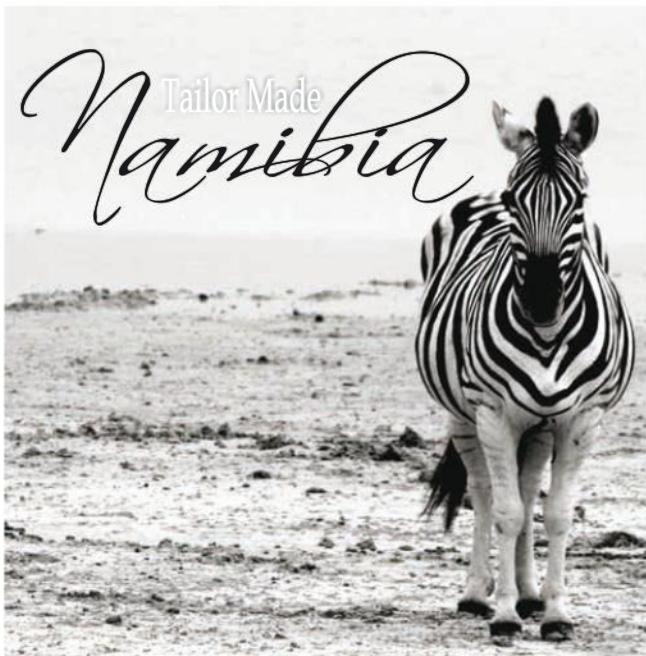


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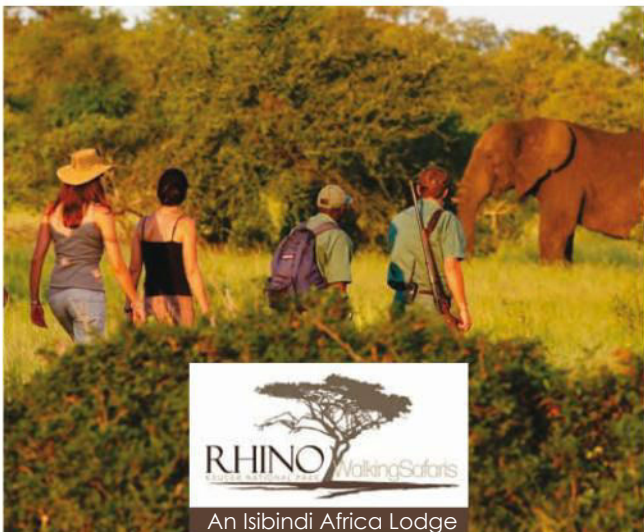
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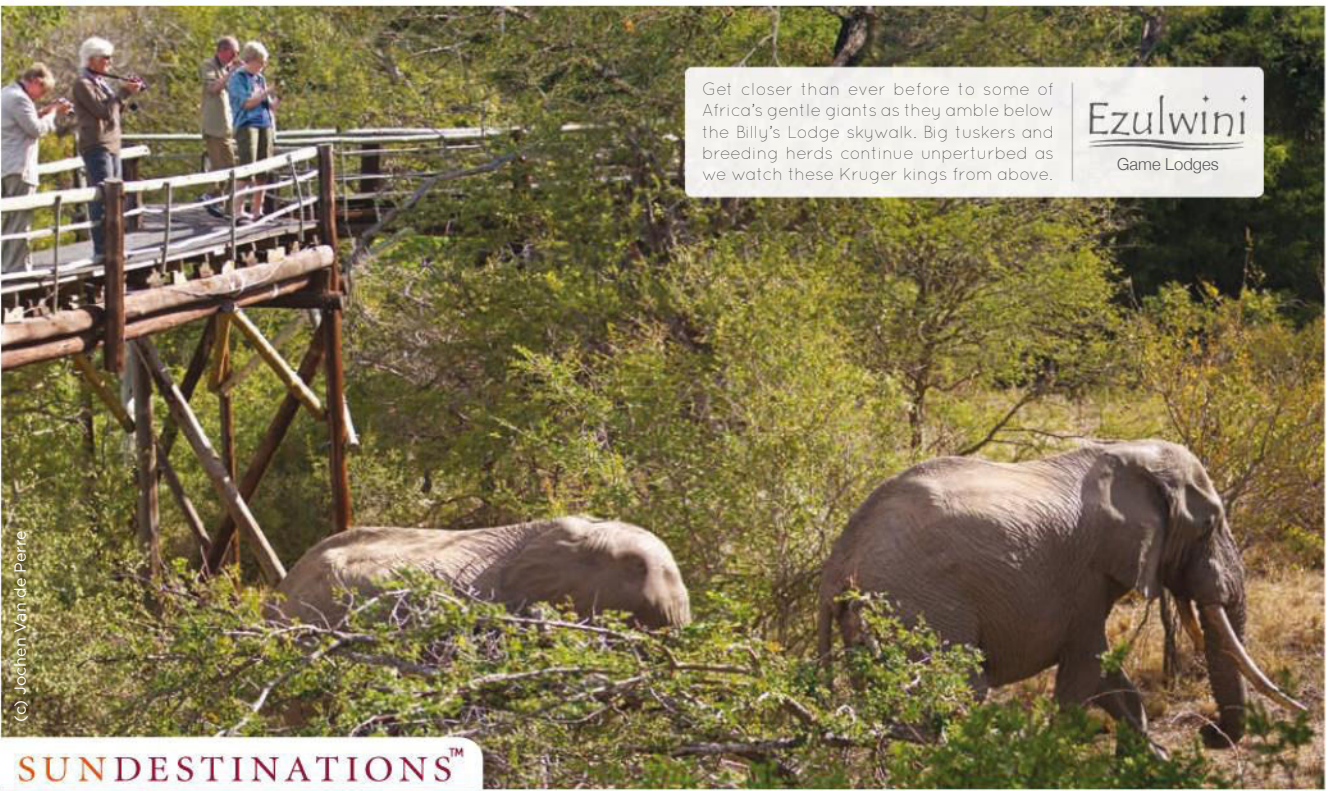
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# Blooming dales

If you thought the Netherlands was the bulb capital of the world, think again. Follow the Northern Cape's colour-popping wild flower route in spring

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE AND ANN TOON

A box of M&Ms, a Pixar movie, a dazzling paint chart? How do you describe the eye-watering colours of the gorgeous flowers spread before us? They stretch as far as the eye can see – Fanta orange, fuchsia pink, sunshine yellow, sky blue, violet, vivid purple and, every now and then, big hits of brilliant white. Yes, this really is South Africa's arid Northern Cape region, but not as you know it. Watered by good winter rains, the vast, barren landscape has become vibrant, clashing, blooming dales.

It's not the first time we've experienced this amazing transformation, but this season has to be one of the best spring flower shows we've witnessed. What better place to begin our trip than the bulb capital of the world? Nieuwoudtville – never heard of it? Neither had we until we stumbled across the endless swathes of colour lining the road one year when we were driving from the Kalahari to Cape Town. How could wild flowers have such intense shades? We had to see more of the 'Serengeti of the floral kingdom' and today, several springs later, we're back for another fix.

For 10 months of the year, Nieuwoudtville's a sleepy little *dorp* (Afrikaans for 'hick town'). It goes about its business – sheep-farming, growing wheat and rooibos tea – with little regard for the outside world. The place is charmingly low-key: there's not much here save a ribbon of low-rise stone cottages, faded shutters closed against the Northern Cape's infamous heat and dust. Nevertheless, this town is legendary. For a small spot like this, 1350 plant species is an impressive tally. Of these, 80 are unique to the area and a third, threatened with extinction, are pretty rare. The place is so flower-filled that it's not uncommon to find as many as 2500 bulbs and 50 different species in a single square metre. Even in the town centre, colourful blooms are everywhere in August and September, poking through cracks in the pavement, colonising cast-off tyres and resplendent around rusting farm machinery.

Come the spring, a number of local farms open up their land to tourists in addition to the town's special reserve and botanical garden. We're staying at Papkuilsfontein, a farm owned by the van Wyk family. It has a short public flower route, which costs just a handful of rand to drive and is brimming with blooms. Alrie van Wyk, daughter-in-law of owners Willem and Mariëtte, runs a →



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restaurant on the farm during this season. “The flowers are just amazing this year. You must go there straight after lunch. Just follow the signs,” she says. “I have been fortunate to see some really good years, but this is really up there. They look wonderful right now, and the afternoon light will be perfect for them.”

She’s right. The veld is crowded with colourful flowers, so densely packed you can’t see the earth between them. The profusion and diversity of species is partly explained by the fact that within a space of 20km there are four different types of soil. And, with so many blossoms to go at, nobody minds if you walk among them to take pictures or simply marvel at their intricate, delicate structures close-up. Picking them, of course, is a no-no.

Basing yourself on a farm has many advantages. Papkuilsfontein, for example, has further routes for guests to explore that are not open to the general public, as well as rock art, hiking paths and a 180m waterfall. And you don’t really need to go far from your doorstep to find more flowers. The lands surrounding our converted farm cottage look like a scene from *The Wizard of Oz* because we’re completely surrounded by the tall spikes of banana-yellow bulbinella. It’s enough to make your eyes ache. There’s also the chance to enjoy more of Alrie’s cooking: she and her team will deliver a hearty three-course dinner to your cottage after dark if you book ahead.

An African flower safari may not have quite the thrill of the Big Five, but it does have one advantage over your conventional wildlife-watching trip: a lie-in is obligatory. There are no 5am starts here, because many species unful only

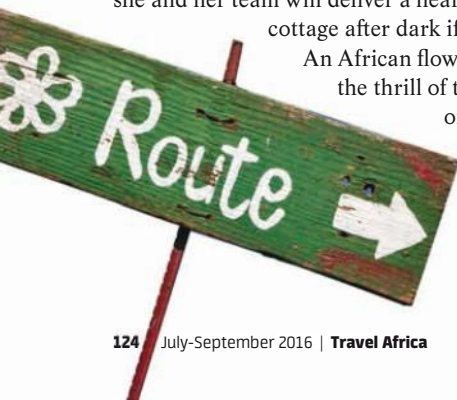
when the sunlight hits them. Head out early and your experience will be much poorer than if you delay your drive. Drive too late in the day, and the blooms may have gone to bed.

Although there are enough flowers here in Nieuwoudtville to keep us busy for several days, the different spots on the route each have their own highlights, so we press on. Our next stop is the Skilpad section of Namaqua National Park – another floral gem – about a three-hour drive north.

When we first visited Skilpad several years ago, there was no accommodation on the reserve. Flower lovers, painters and photographers alike based themselves at the old-fashioned Kamieskroon Hotel. Skilpad is now part of a growing national park, which stretches to the coast and has a handful of well-equipped chalets (book them a year ahead). You can drive the main sections of this reserve in a 2WD sedan, but (if you’re feeling intrepid) there are 4WD routes, coastal camping spots and annual camps, providing increasing access to remote areas.

The park is famous for its carpets of orange Namaqualand daisies. If the season is good, you’ll already have seen hundreds of them along the main road, yet nothing quite prepares you for the profusion of them on the reserve. Located on a ridge some 700m above sea level, the area is watered by mists and rainfall blowing in from the coast. As a result, the pulsing orange blooms seem to jump right out at us as we drive in: it’s as if the whole terrain has been ‘Tangoed’. But, though all these orange daisies may seem ubiquitous, there are 3499 other species to spot in Namaqualand, as many as 1000 of them unique to the

**ABOVE:** Fields of gold. Yellow bulbinellas surround the guest cottages of Papkuilsfontein Farm. **OPPOSITE FROM TOP:** Spring flowers near Nieuwoudtville; vivid purple blooms carpet a section of the surrounding veld; driving past orange Namaqualand daisies





area. As well as endless orange, you'll also see lots of white-and-yellow annual daisies, gazanias (orange again, sorry) and lots of what the locals call 'vygies' – mesembryantheums to you and me – in all sorts of psychedelic shades.

It's hard to pull yourself away from each hotspot on the route, but there's always more to see. We make Springbok, our next stop, by nightfall. It is a typical Northern Cape town, encircled by rocky outcrops that glow copper as the sun sets. There's always a trickle of people passing through, but flower tourism brings a larger crowd. We're staying at Springbok Lodge. It's basic but has bags of character, and a night in one of its many period cottages will give you a real feel for the area. There's a buzz in the retro bar and diner, and when we enter, the well-informed owner is busy directing visitors to various reserves. Here you'll also find excellent books, maps and guides, as well as a fascinating display of minerals.

Tomorrow we will pack our flower guides and cameras once again and head for the Goegap Nature Reserve, about 15km south-east of the town. It's one of the biggest and best spots for seeing the spring blooms and the surreal, stunning quiver trees, which dot the landscape in this particularly arid part of the Northern Cape. The reserve is known for the eye-watering purple vygies that fill the veld and appear to fluoresce in the noonday sun. We're excited about the change from all-over orange, but first, of course, we'll enjoy another lovely, long lie-in. 🐾

 For a short flower-gazing guide by the Toons and to see more of their photographs, visit [travelafricamag.com](http://travelafricamag.com).

## SAFARI PLANNER

■ **Getting there** Self-drive flower safaris are simple to arrange.

Fly into Cape Town, hire a car and drive north along the N7 to Namaqualand through the Western Cape. Key stops include the West Coast National Park, the Cederberg, Calvinia, Nieuwoudtville, Namaqua National Park and Springbok. Alternatively, many tour operators can organise everything for you. During the flower season, there's plenty of information about what's coming into bloom where, so chat to lodge owners for the latest gossip.

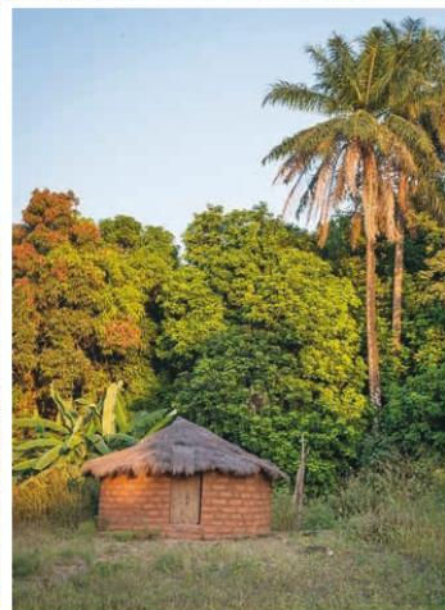
■ **Where to stay** There's a broad range of accommodation, but you need to book well in advance (up to a year for national parks) for peak flower season. South Africa National Parks (SANParks) now runs a series of annual camps; details are on its website.

■ **When to visit** The flowers bloom in South Africa's spring, generally from the middle of July to late September.

■ **Health** Visit your GP for advice on vaccinations.

■ **Further reading** *Pocket Guide: Wild Flowers of South Africa* by Braam van Wyk; *Photo Guide to the Wildflowers of South Africa* by John Manning





# WHY GUINEA- BISSAU?

This oft-overlooked, tiny West African country has much to offer, maintains **Emma Thomson**, from sacred islands and fascinating traditions to a warm welcome from kings

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **DIANA JARVIS**

**G**uinea-Bissau, a Switzerland-sized republic squeezed between Senegal and Guinea in West Africa, celebrated 40 years of independence from Portugal in 2014. Yet travellers know very little – if anything – about Africa's 16th-poorest country, which has no dedicated guidebook and is serviced by only one airline. "You might call her the Cinderella of African tourism," laments our guide, Alberto. Indeed, in 2013 the future of the country looked bleak when Ebola claimed around 11,300 lives in neighbouring Guinea. Incredibly, Guinea-Bissau never had any confirmed cases and in January the World Health Organisation declared an end to the epidemic. Now this biodiverse country is moving away from its reliance on cashew nut exportation and positioning itself as an ecotourism destination.



### Saltwater hippos on Ilha de Orango

I'm being watched. A pair of unblinking eyes locks onto mine. Just 50m away is a group of beady-eyed 'boulders' (hippos) grunting contentedly, except for the female eyeballing me across the water. "It's a mother," whispers Belmiro, our guide from Orango National Park. "Her calf must be just below her." I spy a flip-flop floating nearby, and wonder if it belongs to an earlier victim.

The park is one of 23 inhabited islands among the 88 making up the Bijagós archipelago, and is one of the few places where you can see saltwater-adapted hippos. Flies buzz as we surreptitiously snap pictures. And then the mood changes. A low growl escapes from the hippo's thin lips and her entire bulk starts to rise out of the water, nostrils flaring. "Back away, back away!" instructs Belmiro, and we leg it out of the slimy pond, hearts hammering.

#### CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

In deep. Saltwater hippos on Ilha de Orango in the Bijagós archipelago; a lady with her great-granddaughter in the village of Elia; hiking on Orango; a performer in the Vaca Bruta ceremony on Ilha de Uno; children in Bassarel village; a traditional mud hut; a fisherwoman near Elia

### Turtles on Ilha de Poilão

A three-hour boat ride from Orango, we spy Ilha de Poilão. Part of the Parc National Marin de João Vieira-Poilão, it's a sacred isle kept deserted for initiation ceremonies, but its empty beach has some special visitors: green turtles – and lots of them. Poilão is the most important nesting site in Africa. Between June and January, up to 30,000 turtles return to its shores to lay their eggs. Only a dozen hatchlings in every thousand survive, so four rangers take turns camping on the island to measure the adults, count babies and guard them from poachers and palm-nut eagles. Joining them, when we visit, is 19-year-old Quintino Mancebo Victor, a local volunteer who takes the conservation message back to his village. To reduce environmental impact, just 15 visitors per day can watch the egg-laying spectacle.

We wait for darkness to fall. At 7pm, under a half moon, we head out, scanning our torches across the beach. It is littered with already-hatched eggs. Before long we spot the telltale flipper marks in the sand. We follow them to the treeline and there she is, a large female, determinedly digging a burrow. A beam of light flashes in the distance. One of the rangers is signalling for us to come and see the first little ones emerging from another nest. As they flounder out of the sandy hole, he scoops them into a bucket, counts them, and then releases them. They immediately stir into action and drag their bodies, inch by inch, towards the dark sea.

### Traditional ceremonies

Cut off from the mainland, the Bijagós Islands (meaning 'perfect people' in Bidyogo, the local language) have kept their customs despite five centuries of colonisation. One of the most impressive is the Vaca Bruta initiation ceremony on Ilha de Uno, where young men don carved wooden masks bearing the horns of a *vaca* ('bull') and compete to see who is the best fighter.

We arrive as the afternoon sun shafts through trees. We strike up broken conversations with the women until the beating of drums announces the arrival of the vaca. They pace in circles, sizing each other up. Then the pounding intensifies and they kick up dust, pawing the dirt on all fours, locking horns. The kids run away squealing whenever the vaca mock-charge them. By the end, the men are glistening with sweat but standing proudly, basking in the admiring glances of the ladies.

Once on the mainland, we pile into a minibus bound for the village of Bassarel. "We are the pioneering tourists – we're still discovering things, so sometimes we stop to see," says Alberto. And, as if on cue, we pass a village where a gathering of people beneath an ancient Sibu tree catches his eye. He goes over to investigate and is met by a man wearing jeans, a grey waistcoat and a beaded necklace with a plastic skull dangling on the end. He says his grandfather has just passed away. We turn to leave him in peace, but not before Alberto points out two elderly men on a high platform, beating drums to signal the start of the funeral. "On special occasions they use these *bombolones* to communicate with each other. There are always two: a high tone and a low →

tone. The sounds act like a binary code used on a computer. By combining different tones, they create messages. It's a skill passed down by certain families."

On the outskirts of Bassarel, we stop again. Alberto wants to show us two *pecab*, wooden poles sculpted to hold the soul of a departed family member, which lean against the outer wall of a mud house. "Here, art isn't decoration. It's a spiritual medium linking the deceased and the spirit world," Alberto explains, as we approach.

A woman with greying curls comes out to meet us and we learn the statues represent her husband and father-in-law. To pay our respects, we pour a dash of the potent local spirit *babok* at their feet. She rests her hand tenderly on the head of her husband's statue and gazes down at the small face affectionately. "See how she's communicating with him," says Alberto, smiling.

### A royal encounter

In Bassarel we meet a king. Dressed in an orange polo shirt and cropped jeans, King Pedro Mendez Nai is not what I had expected. He rules 11 villages, but misses the old days under Portuguese rule. "Back then I was recognised by the government, had a salary and people worked for me, but after independence that disappeared. We're not important anymore," he laments.

We follow him along a thin dirt trail, passing tall palm trees with sawn-off plastic bottles strung up like lanterns to catch the sap for palm wine, and red termite mounds tiered like sandcastles. Eventually we reach a simple wooden bench beneath a tin roof in the shadow of a 500-year-old kapoc tree strangled with lianas. At its base there's a patch of bare earth, scraped clean by the hooves of the goats and pigs that have been sacrificed here. Here to call on the souls of his relatives, we offer the king shot glasses of *babok* and red wine. He takes a sip, crumbles tobacco onto the ground and then taps his metal thumb ring onto a bent piece of iron, calling on the ancestors to provide us with protection, before spilling the libation onto the earth.

Of all the kings, Pedro has the most visitors. "And how do you feel about tourists coming to see you?" I ask. "Feel free to come – we are all the same family," he replies, warmly.

### The golden ticket

Like other African countries, Guinea-Bissau faces corruption and drug smuggling from South America. It is also recovering from a civil war and several coups d'état. Tourism is one of its few alternative-income tickets – but it's a golden one. This compact country has much more to offer than just kings, cashew nuts and grumpy hippos. In return, foreigners' dollars have the potential to create jobs and fund conservation. Travellers should reset their opinions of West Africa and go now. Guinea-Bissau has been overlooked for too long: it's time this Cinderella went to the ball. 🐾



## Other must-see sites

### Slave fort, Cacheu

Discovered by Portuguese explorer Nuno Tristão in 1444 and colonised, Guinea-Bissau became part of the historical slave-trade triangle. The town of Cacheu was one of the earliest European outposts in sub-Saharan Africa. A 16th-century slave-trading fort still remains, its ground littered with footless statues and its rusted cannons looking out over the empty sea.

### Bolama

Once the capital of Portuguese Guinea, it was built in 1871 and abandoned in 1941. It has since been re-inhabited by a small population of poor Guineans who have made homes out of the buildings, and is fascinating to explore on foot.

You'll find a monument to Mussolini near the dock, commemorating the time one of his aeroplanes fell there. There are good examples of colonial architecture (**above**) with balustraded balconies and an art deco concert hall. The statehouse, once home to the governor, is still regal despite its crumbling green doors.

### Ponta Anchaca, Rubane Island

The country's only four-star resort, this retreat offers enormous chalets overlooking a golden beach and calm waters. A cocktail bar, swimming pool and fine-dining restaurant on stilts overlook the ocean. Activities such as fishing are on offer. It's a great way to wind down at the end of a trip.

## SAFARI PLANNER

■ **Getting there** Royal Air Maroc flies from London to Bissau via Casablanca and a brief stopover in Conakry five times per week. A 90-day visa can be purchased on arrival for US\$120. The writer travelled as a guest of Explore Worldwide, which offers a 10-day

trip from £1999 per person, including eco-lodges, accommodation, most meals, transport and the services of a tour leader and driver.

■ **Where to stay** In Bissau the best choice is the Malaika Hotel. Inside Orango National Park the only option is the excellent Orango Parque, run by a not-for-profit organisation that reinvests in micro-projects chosen by the islanders.

■ **When to go** Tropical Guinea-Bissau is warm all year round, but is best visited between November and February when the ground is drier and road travel is easier. The monsoon season arrives in June and lasts until October.

■ **Further reading** The only guidebook to cover it (albeit briefly) is Lonely Planet's *West Africa*.





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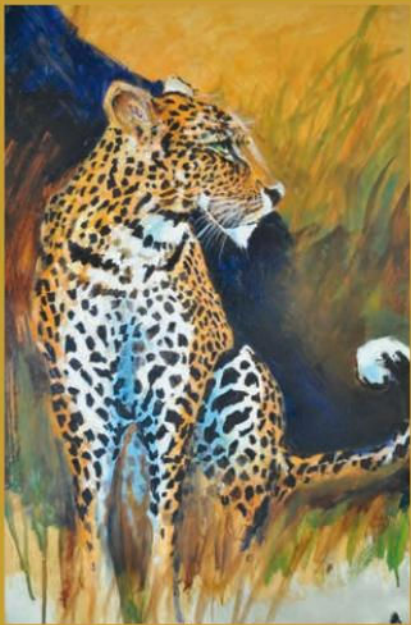
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# The lovely snow leopard

British explorer Ash Dykes has crossed Mongolia on foot, cycled the length of Vietnam and lived with a hill tribe in Burma — but his recent trip to Madagascar was his first in Africa. He tells **Paul Seligman** about his latest escapade, and how he came by his mysterious nickname

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUZANNA TIERIE



**ASH, YOU HAVE ORGANISED AND COMPLETED SOME INCREDIBLE EXPEDITIONS. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR LATEST CHALLENGE?**

Thank you! It was a world-first expedition: to walk the entire length of Madagascar, from its most southern to northern tip, including summiting the eight highest mountains on the island.

**WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE TO UNDERTAKE SUCH A GRUELLING TRIP, AND WHY MADAGASCAR?**

I did it for the challenge, adventure and to explore somewhere unfamiliar. I chose Madagascar while I was doing my solo, unsupported walk across Mongolia. I thought to myself: "I want my next expedition to be in a country where I'll constantly come across locals." I didn't know much about the island at that point, but I was curious and wanted to explore it first-hand at a walking pace.

**MADAGASCAR'S WILDLIFE AND JUNGLES ARE WORLD-FAMOUS. DID YOU HAVE ANY UP-CLOSE ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS ON YOUR JOURNEY?**

I did indeed, I came across six different species of lemur in the wild, including the northern sportive lemur (one of the world's rarest primates) and the pochard duck (the world's rarest bird). There was an abundance of wildlife, and often I would wake up to the sound of lemurs howling in the forest.

**DID YOU TAKE SUPPLIES WITH YOU OR DID YOU LIVE OFF THE LAND?**

I took supplies, but I lived off the land as well. I carried enough food to make it to the next village, where I could hopefully stock up on supplies. Sometimes this was tough and I'd have to go hungry.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO PEOPLE TRAVELLING TO MADAGASCAR?**

Get out there and explore as much as you possibly can. It's a unique country, and one of the most beautiful in the world. It's so diverse, with every African

environment imaginable: desert, savannah, mountains and jungle, and it has an incredible amount of wildlife.

**DO YOU HAVE PLANS ANY FOR MORE AFRICAN ADVENTURES?**

I absolutely do hope to visit Africa again. I loved the place from the start, and now I want to return because there is so much more to learn about, explore and discover. I'll be back for sure.

**AS SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN CALLED 'ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST FEARLESS OUTDOORS MEN', DO YOU DO ANY CONSERVATION WORK TO MAINTAIN THE ENVIRONMENTS THAT YOU EXPLORE?**

I partnered up with the Lemur Conservation Network on my trip across Madagascar, and one of the aims of the expedition was to help spread awareness of the island's unique biodiversity and the threats that it faces. The stories are often hard to believe: for example, they are discovering new species every week, and more than 10,000 trees were planted in just one year on the northern part of the island. Amazing!

**YOUR NICKNAME, 'THE LONELY SNOW LEOPARD', IS A GREAT ONE. WHERE DID THAT ORIGINATE FROM?**

The Mongolian locals called me that because the wolves kept their distance from me. The only other creature that they keep away from is the snow leopard, which is also the only predator in Mongolia that wanders alone. It's a really cool nickname, which I hope will stick with me.

**WHAT PLANNING TIPS DO YOU HAVE FOR ADVENTURE TRAVELLERS WHO WANT TO SEE PLACES THAT ARE OFF THE BEATEN TRACK?**

Don't plan too much, it's an adventure, and adventures change all the time. Work out where you're going, what you want to do, maybe




Get out there and explore as much as you can. Madagascar is a unique country, and one of the most beautiful in the world. It's so diverse, with every environment imaginable: desert, savannah, mountains and jungle. It also has an incredible amount of wildlife



some local contacts along the way and a backup in case you need help. Then go for it!

**WHAT'S NEXT FOR 'THE LONELY SNOW LEOPARD'?**

It's a very exciting time now that I'm back. I have a theatre tour coming up and I'm working on a book. While I was out in Madagascar I also took a lot of footage, which I am hoping to turn into a documentary. Finally, I do have another major expedition coming up in the near future. I can't reveal any details just yet, but will be announcing the plan soon on my website and social media pages, so watch this space... 🐾

 To read more about Ash's adventures, visit his website: [ashdykes.com](http://ashdykes.com). You can also keep track of what he's up to by following him on YouTube and other social media platforms.

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# Conservation

Understanding and protecting our natural heritage



All about owls  
Page 136

## Counting cheetahs

A new study has criticised current estimates of the number of wild cheetah as being merely 'guesswork', and argues that the true figure is far lower than previously thought. Using a new method of assessment, researchers from the Kenya Wildlife Trust's Mara Cheetah Project, the University of Oxford and the Indian Statistical Institute have calculated that in the Masai Mara the approximate total is 30 animals – almost half the original claim. Scientists hope that with this more accurate picture they will be able to better identify threats to the species and potential conservation initiatives. **CHARLOTTE COULSON**



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## PETER BORCHERT

A MATTER OF OPINION

# High-tech conservation

A little more than a generation ago, a notebook and pencil were the main tools for field science and wildlife monitoring. How times have changed, says **Peter Borchert**

**P**ortable computers coupled with advanced cell and satellite communication are now the driving force behind conservation strategies, enabling innovative scientists and wildlife protection authorities to act more swiftly.

An alarm goes off deep in South Africa's Kruger National Park, in a command centre with 300 CCTV monitors. A red light flashes on one of the screens. An operator zooms in and sees a thermal image of several humans. Within minutes a drone takes off. Guided unerringly by precise coordinates, its thermal software soon has the suspects in 'sight'. The suspects can hear the UAV but cannot see it. Alarmed, they move quickly, seeking the cover of thicker bush, but the continuing thermal glimpses are all the drone needs to keep up. Meanwhile, a police helicopter team has arrived. The chopper's powerful searchlights pin the men to the spot. Minutes later it is all over: the armed intruders are under arrest before they have tracked and killed a rhino.

In the deep gloom of Korup National Park's rainforest in Cameroon, a burst of automatic fire is muffled by the acoustic screen of the arboreal canopy. But the forest has ears, not only those of the forest creatures but also highly specialised microphones designed to 'hear' rifle fire and triangulate its precise origin.

As in Kruger, a signal is received and a highly trained anti-poaching patrol, funded by a global NGO, is deployed by helicopter. Well-armed men rappel into a small clearing no



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**Technological innovation gives new hope for averting the planet's environmental collapse and reversing its accelerating rates of habitat loss, animal extinction, and climate change**

more than 20m from the pinpointed gunfire intelligence. Nearby they find three elephants lying in a pool of blood, their tusks brutally hacked from their faces. The six poachers, are no match for the team's tracking skills and are quickly arrested.

The above two accounts are fictional but certainly not beyond the bounds of fact. The systems required to re-enact them are already being tested in the field. In Kenya, the WWF has developed infrared cameras that can spot poachers from afar. The equipment picks up the thermal footprint of humans and animals within lens range; the inbuilt software has even 'learnt' to distinguish between people and wildlife. This is a groundbreaking solution for detecting poachers moving illegally across park boundaries, allowing them to be arrested before they harm rhino, elephant and other creatures. Pilot projects based on this technology have been set up in the Masai Mara Game Reserve, and if successful, conservation authorities across Africa could be adding this tool to their anti-poaching arsenal.

Of course, thermal imaging in vast impenetrable forests such as Korup would be nigh on impossible. But where you can't see you can still hear. Witness the efforts of an international team of scientists there, which recently completed a two-year study to find out where and when gunshots were being fired. The results make for fascinating reading and have created an invaluable database for park management. For

example, they found that hunting is at its most prolific early in the week when poachers gather produce for the Saturday markets; and that the peak is during the November-March dry season. There are also noticeable increases before major holidays. Preferred hunting locations were also found. Taking this one step further, the same acoustic monitoring systems that have been successfully tested to pin-point trouble in urban areas of high gun-related crime could prove invaluable to protecting great apes, rhino, elephant and other heavily targeted forest species.

As Jon Hoekstra, Chief Scientist at the World Wildlife Fund, says: "We can now monitor entire ecosystems in nearly real time. We can use remote sensors to map their 3D structures, satellite communications to follow elusive creatures such as the jaguar and the puma, and smartphones to report illegal logging. Such innovations are revolutionising conservation in two key ways: first, by revealing the state of the world in unprecedented detail; and second, by making more data available to more people in more places."

He does warn, however, that technology carries risks. In the hands of wildlife traffickers, the same systems providing information about animal whereabouts could be disastrous. And advances in biotechnology, especially, could have consequences beyond those that were intended. "Yet on balance," says Hoekstra, "technological innovation gives new hope for averting the planet's environmental collapse and reversing its accelerating rates of habitat loss, animal extinction and climate change." I couldn't agree more.

To read the full version of this story, visit [traveafricamag.com](http://traveafricamag.com).



**PETER BORCHERT**, founder of *Africa Geographic* magazine, is an independent writer and commentator on and about Africa, and is passionate about protecting the continent's natural resources. You can read more from Peter at [untoldafrica.com](http://untoldafrica.com).



## WILDFILE

GETTING TO KNOW OUR FLORA AND FAUNA

# Silent assassins

Africa is richly endowed with owls and any safari is likely to encounter a number of species, even if many are more often heard than seen. **Mike Unwin** takes a closer look



The appeal of owls reaches well beyond birders. Something about these enigmatic night-time hunters commands attention and has long cemented them in the popular imagination, from Greek mythology to *Harry Potter*. Our fascination is perhaps not surprising. These nocturnal birds embody the mysteries of darkness and their almost supernatural hunting skills fill us with awe. What's more, their large, forward-facing eyes give them more of a 'face' than other birds — one upon which we can't resist bestowing such human qualities as anger or surprise.

**SHADOWS OF THE NIGHT:** Southern white-faced owls are common in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, South Africa

RICHARD DU TOIT



Across much of Africa, however, owls are more feared than loved. Traditional societies have long associated these birds with evil spirits. In Swahili culture, they are traditionally thought to bring illness to children, while in parts of West Africa an owl calling over your roof is believed to foretell a family death. Many communities, sadly, actively persecute them.

Owls, of course, are not evil spirits but simply birds uniquely adapted to a nocturnal lifestyle. Their huge eyes have evolved to allow acute low-light sensitivity and binocular vision; their hearing is estimated to be 10 times more powerful than ours. Add to this their sound-proofed plumage, which enables them to ambush prey like silent assassins, plus a lethal combination of hooked bill and crushing talons, and you have a formidable predator indeed.

By day most owls hide away in a roost, trusting in their camouflage to escape detection. As darkness falls, they set out to hunt – either by swooping from a perch or flying slowly over open ground and dropping upon prey below. Technique varies with diet. Some species capture moths, bats and birds in flight; others pluck insects from foliage, or even plunge into shallow water to capture fish. Whatever they eat, the indigestible parts – bones, fur, feathers – are coughed up later in sausage-shaped pellets.

Being nocturnal, many are more often heard than seen. Their calls, however, are not simply the 'too-wit too-woo' of nursery rhymes: they vary from eagle owl hoots to barn owl shrieks and scops owl chirrups. Male owls are most

vocal at the start of the breeding season, as they re-claim territories and re-establish pair bonds. Most species form life-long pairs.

Nest sites vary from tree holes and crevices to the abandoned stick nests of other birds. Parents defend them fiercely. The female incubates the eggs, joining the male to hunt once the hatchlings have grown strong enough to be left alone. Youngsters leave the nest before they are fully fledged, hanging around for a while to perfect their flying and hunting skills.

Some 50 species of owl are found across Africa. Savannah and bush country has the richest variety, ranging from the massive Verreaux's eagle owl to the diminutive African scops owl. Less widespread species include the African marsh owl of open grasslands, the pharaoh eagle owl of arid deserts, the bizarre-looking maned owl of tropical rainforest and the piscivorous Pel's fishing owl of undisturbed wetlands. Some are very highly restricted in their distributions, such as several scops owls species that are endemic to the offshore islands São Tomé and Pemba. Other species of owl, however, including the versatile barn owl and spotted eagle owl (**top right**), can find a home almost everywhere – even in suburbia.

Today, many of Africa's owls are under threat. They are vulnerable to deforestation, rodenticides and manmade obstacles such as power lines and road traffic. They may not be to everybody's taste, but as key indicator species of a healthy environment, it is their disappearance rather than their appearance that should fill us with fear. →



## LOUD AND CLEAR

An owl's amazing hearing is perhaps the most important weapon in its sensory arsenal. The concave facial disc – the circular arrangement of feathers that gives an owl its distinctive face – works like a satellite dish, capturing sound and directing it to the ears. The ears themselves, hidden from our view beneath the feathers, are large vertical openings. Unusually among vertebrates, they are positioned asymmetrically: one is higher than the other. This produces a time lag in the auditory signals arriving in both the vertical and the horizontal plane, giving an owl an exceptional ability to pinpoint a noise. Laboratory experiments have proven that a barn owl can locate and strike prey in pitch darkness by sound alone. Don't be fooled by those 'ear tufts' on an owl's head; these are simply feathers. They enhance the bird's camouflage by increasing its 'broken stump' appearance, and can also express its mood.

**TOP:** The southern white-faced scops owl has a facial disc that channels sound directly to its ears, hidden beneath tufts of feathers. **RIGHT:** A Verreaux's eagle owl





## WILDFILE

GETTING TO KNOW OUR FLORA AND FAUNA

# Fit for purpose

### WINGS

The wings of many owls are very broad, giving them the body weight to wing area ratio necessary to stay airborne while slowly quartering the ground for prey.

### LEGS

Most owl species have tarsi (legs) feathered right down to the toes, which helps protect them from the bites and claws of their struggling prey. Fishing owls have bare lower legs to prevent the plumage becoming waterlogged.

### TALONS

Powerful feet and long, needle-sharp claws grip, crush and kill prey. The talons of some eagle owls may exert a pressure upwards of 300lb per square inch — around the same as the bite of a Rottweiler. Their toes have a zygodactyl arrangement, with two facing forward and two facing backwards. In contrast, most birds have three forward and one back.

### PLUMAGE

Uniquely among birds, the flight feathers of most owls have special soundproofing modifications. Fine feather filaments dampen onrushing air, and a downy surface layer absorbs high-frequency sound. These enable them to flap noiselessly as they approach their prey.

### MARKINGS

Owls' cryptic camouflage patterns (typically a complex tapestry of spots, bars and streaks in tones of brown, grey and cream) serve to replicate their background and break up their outline. The ear tufts, sported by many species, are thought to enhance this disguise.

### EARS

An owl's ears are not the feathered tufts on top of the head of some species but large vertical openings at either side of the facial disc, hidden from view by feathers. Unusually among vertebrates, they are also positioned asymmetrically: one is higher than the other, which helps pinpoint the direction of a sound.

### EYES

An owl's eyes are proportionally the largest of any bird, designed to enhance low-light sensitivity. Forward-facing, like ours, they also provide the binocular vision essential for targeting prey. An owl cannot rotate its eyes in their sockets but can turn its head by up to 270° to view objects behind it.

### BILL

An owl's bill is longer than it appears, partly concealed behind a spray of fine hair-like feathers that provide additional tactile sensitivity in tackling prey. It is set a little below eye level and tilts downwards to avoid impeding binocular vision. The hooked tip serves both to kill prey and tear it into pieces.

### FACIAL DISC

This circular arrangement of feathers, bordered by a raised rim, is vital to the owl's powerful hearing. It works like a satellite dish to capture sound and direct it to the ears. Fishing owls, which have no need of hearing to capture their fishy prey, have a much less distinct facial disc.



RICHARD DU TOIT



## Which owl?

Owls make up the *Strigiformes* order and are unrelated to diurnal birds or prey such as eagles and hawks (these belong to the order *Falconiformes*). Worldwide they comprise some 250 species, depending on which authority you follow. Of these, 49 occur in Africa. These vary in size from the bijou African scops owl, smaller than a starling, to the cat-sized Verreaux's eagle owl. The following are five of the best known:

▪ **VERREAUX'S EAGLE OWL** (*Bubo lacteus*)

Also known as the giant or milky eagle owl (**below**), this is the fourth largest owl on the planet, capable of taking prey as large as monkeys. It is widespread in savannah and bush habitats and fairly easily seen in most large game reserves. Listen before dawn for its telltale grunting courtship calls.



MICHAEL POLIZIA

▪ **PEL'S FISHING OWL** (*Bubo peli*) This large, elusive, ginger-coloured owl is a 'bucket list' species for birders. Restricted to wetland habitats, it feeds almost entirely on fish, which it plucks from the water at night. Large riverine trees make favourite roosts.

▪ **PEARL-SPOTTED OWLET** (*Glaucidium perlatum*) This feisty little owl (**below left**)

belongs to the pygmy owl genus and is widespread in bush country across the continent. Best-known for its piercing, whistle-like call, which has an incendiary effect on other small birds, it is often active by day.



▪ **AFRICAN SCOPS OWL** (*Otus senegalensis*)

The soft, mechanical chirrup of this small, common owl (**above**) is a definitive sound of the African night. Spotting the bird, however, is a different matter, as its cryptic camouflage renders it almost invisible by day. Much of its diet comprises large insects.



▪ **AFRICAN MARSH OWL** (*Asio capensis*)

This medium-sized, long-winged owl (**above**) frequents open grasslands, where at dusk and dawn it quarters the ground in search of rodents. Pairs perform wing-clapping aerial display flights and nest on the ground.



PIRE UNWIN

### HOW TO SPOT OWLS

Owls, unsurprisingly, are among the more difficult birds to see. However, the following tips may help:

- Be alert to any daytime commotion among smaller avian species. Songbirds such as bulbuls, sunbirds and drongos will gather to mob an owl if they discover it at its roost, often forcing it to reveal itself. The pearl-spotted owl is often thus exposed, especially when it calls by day. Be careful, though: birds will also mob snakes in much the same way.
- On safari, take night drives wherever possible. Species elusive by day, such as African scops owls, are often easily seen at night — and some, including marsh owls, may land in the road. Remember that binoculars work perfectly well along a spotlight beam.
- Listen after dark for calls. Many owls are most vocal shortly after sunset and just before dawn. Birding apps will help you to identify each species.
- In open environments with fewer trees, such as the Kalahari, take time to scan the branches of any isolated shady trees. An owl (or two) will often be roosting there.
- Many rest camps have resident owls. These are often overlooked, though easily seen if you know their regular spots. Your guide may be able to direct you.
- For Pel's fishing owls, try the Okavango Delta and Panhandle (Botswana) and South Luangwa National Park (Zambia). Tell your guide that you'd like to see one.
- If you do find an owl by day, don't approach too close and scare it. This interrupts its valuable down-time.

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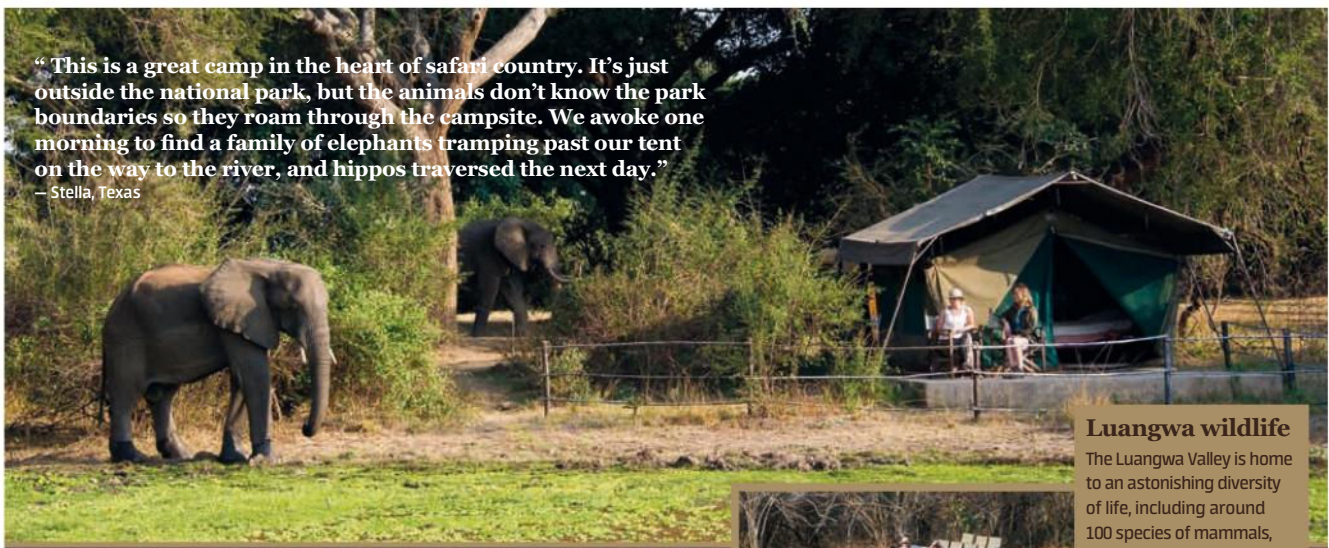


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## WILDFILE

GETTING TO KNOW OUR FLORA AND FAUNA



ALEX WALKER'S SERIAN

# A wild life

Some of Africa's best guides share their love of the bush

### Gladys Letoluo

**Where:** Alex Walker's Serian, Masai Mara, Kenya  
**Time guiding:** 3 years

#### What animal are you most excited about spotting on safari?

Matebele safari ants – because of the way they travel in single file and the fact that they use a certain scent to find each other.

#### What is their population?

Unknown, but it's very large!

#### Can you give us a fun fact?

Processionary moths are very slow movers. To fool their predators

(mainly birds, such as cuckoos), they create one big long line that resembles a snake or a stick, so they don't get eaten.



### Jean-Paul Mirengo Remezo

**Where:** Wild Frontiers, Uganda  
**Time guiding:** 10 years

#### What animal are you most excited about spotting on safari?

The aardvark. It is rare to see, but can sometimes be observed at night searching for food.

#### JOIN THE DISCUSSION

**What is your favourite creature, and why?**

Please email us your answer at [editor@travelfraticamag.com](mailto:editor@travelfraticamag.com).

#### What enables them to succeed in their environment?

Their pig-like snout enables them to sniff out food. Sharp claws and powerful legs allow them to create burrows in which they stay during the day, and the female also uses it as a nest for her young ones.

#### What is the most amazing wildlife encounter you have had?

I once saw a banded mongoose having a ride on a warthog.

#### Can you give us a fun fact?

When hippos are upset, their sweat turns red.



### Moses Elijah Teko

**Where:** Okavango Delta, Ker & Downey Botswana

**Time guiding:** 11 years

#### What animal are you most excited about spotting on safari?

African wild dogs. They are very sociable, which enables them to have a high success rate when they hunt and to protect each other from bigger predators such as lions and hyenas.

#### Is there an animal that you want to see but have yet to do so?

Damaraland mole rat.

#### Please tell us a short anecdote

On a morning game drive, I saw some baboons in a jackalberry tree. Little did they know there was a two-metre-long black mamba hidden in the branches. As a few of the troop hopped from one branch to the other, the snake lost its balance and dropped to the ground right in front of some of the baboons at the base of the tree. They promptly fainted. A few minutes later, when they woke up, the serpent was still in the same spot because it was hurt from the impact of its fall, and they fainted again.

## Why does a skimmer skim?



**Godfrey Mathebula** of Motswari Private Game Reserve tells us

Skimmers have distinctive uneven red bills with yellow tips. They are often called 'scissorbills' because the lower mandible is 2-3cm longer than the upper, and from the side they look just like a pair of scissor blades. This clever adaptation allows them to fish in a unique way, flying low and fast over water, with their lower mandible skimming the surface, ready to snap shut on any small fish unable to dart away. Although similar in some ways to gulls, they are closely related to terns. They're agile in flight and gather in large flocks along rivers and coastal sandbanks.





## CONSERVATION: AWF BULLETIN

SUPPORTED BY AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION



# A promising landscape

Dubbed 'Africa in miniature,' Cameroon offers a microcosm of the continent's faunal and floral diversity, but also its challenges too

Cameroon has often been called “Africa in miniature” because it mirrors so much of the continent’s diversity. That’s especially true from an ecological standpoint. Like its mother continent, Cameroon boasts a coastline, mountains, savanna, desert and tropical rainforests. Though just larger than Sweden in terms of geographic size, this Central African nation hosts roughly 90 percent of all the ecosystem types found in Africa.

The country is home to savanna species such as lions and giraffes and primates such as chimpanzees and western lowland gorilla. More than 8,000 species of plants can be found in Cameroon.

So it is no coincidence that not just one, but two, AWF teams visited Cameroon this past February. CEO Patrick Bergin explored the southern part of the country. With him

were Jef Dupain, our technical director for Central and West Africa, and a trustee who has been a strong supporter of our African Apes Initiative. Vice presidents Daudi Sumba and Charly Facheux, meanwhile, headed north, accompanied by AWF’s Cameroon country director and a security consultant. Their destination: Faro National Park.

According to Facheux—who is Cameroonian, hailing from the mountainous western part of the country—Cameroon offers a promising landscape for AWF involvement. There is the appealing biodiversity, of course. But the Cameroonian government also genuinely needs conservation support. Like all African wildlife authorities, resources and capacity are big challenges. And threats are considerable. In the north, armed pastoralists enter protected areas at will and kill wildlife for meat. In the south, there’s logging and infrastructure development and, again, bushmeat hunting.

Finally, AWF already has a foothold in the country. We have been providing technical and financial support to wildlife authorities in Dja Faunal Reserve and Campo Ma’an National Park. We have an AWF advisor based in Dja and AWF has been assigned by the park authority to focus on Campo.



Faro National Park serves as a natural next step for AWF engagement in the country.

### SCOPING MISSION

“Faro is essentially a transfrontier area that spans over to Gashaka Gumti National Park in Nigeria,” explains Facheux. “It also has savanna wildlife, unlike Dja and Campo Ma’an, which are both forest habitats.”

Unfortunately, Boko Haram is a real, if occasional, danger in northern Cameroon—to the point that the U.S. Department of State issued a travel warning to American citizens in December, urging them to avoid the northern part of the country. AWF’s February visit therefore served as a scoping mission for AWF personnel to realistically determine the area’s security levels and get a better sense of how we could support conservation efforts there.

What the team found was not quite what they had imagined. On the one hand, security conditions were not as bad as feared. Two members of a Special Forces team escorted AWF staff while they were in the national park, but Facheux says no visible security threats existed. Team members found the area safe enough to operate without a military escort.

On the other hand, work in the park was practically nonexistent. “We determined that the Faro warden was not even based on site and was just coming in from time to time. The rangers had very little discipline and did minimal patrolling in the park due to lack of equipment,” relays AWF’s Sumba. The road conditions also contributed to the situation: Of the 500-km route into the park, only the first 30 km from the main entrance are useable. “Less than 10 percent of the park is really monitored,” Facheux adds.

### DOORSTEP OF MODERNIZATION

Monitoring is more routine at Dja and Campo Ma’an, thanks in large part to AWF efforts over the past two years. Under the African Apes Initiative, we have provided wildlife authorities in both locations ecological monitoring equipment and training. Handheld devices equipped with CyberTracker software allow rangers to enter data during their patrols. The Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) is an application that then collates the CyberTracker data into easily digestible reports.

CEO Bergin, Dupain and the AWF trustee visited these two protected areas to gauge how the CyberTracker/SMART work was proceeding. In the process, the trio got a firsthand immersion into a modern Africa that faces difficult

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** With 90 percent of the ecosystem types found in Africa, Cameroon boasts both forest-dwelling primates, such as chimpanzees, and savanna wildlife, such as lions.

## A TEST OF ENDURANCE

To work in Cameroon is to engage in a test of endurance. For starters, travel across the country is hardly a breeze. For the AWF scoping team that traveled to Faro National Park in February, the journey involved taking a train overnight from the capital city of Yaoundé to the city of Ngaoundere, then driving 298 km to the small city of Garoua, and then driving another 180 km to get to Faro. The total travel time from Yaoundé: 18 hours.

Naturally, on-the-ground staff would be based in or near the park. But any AWF staff traveling from our headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, to provide support in Faro would have to allot four travel days.

They’ll also want to make sure they have A/C on their journey there. When the scoping team visited, temperatures were a minimum of 42°C, or 107.6°F. “A minimum of 42 degrees,” emphasizes AWF Vice President Charly Facheux.

Apparently southern Cameroon is no less hot. “In 30 years in Africa, I have never been so hot in my life,” says AWF CEO Patrick Bergin, recounting his experience visiting Campo Ma’an National Park. When the group he was with took a hike in the forest, “each of us quickly became drenched in sweat as if we’d had buckets of water poured over our heads.”

decisions about how to balance biodiversity conservation with development.

“Africa is on the doorstep of being completely modernized and overwhelmed by development. And Cameroon is on the frontlines of this trend,” explains Dupain. “Railways, road construction, palm oil plantations, human population sprawl—we witnessed everything.”

Take Campo Ma’an, where a deep-sea harbor is being developed just 80 km away. Dupain says the development will quadruple the number of people living in the area. With it could come increased poaching in the park.

Campo Ma’an is a vast 2,640 sq. km. (Dja is twice that geographic area, at 5,260 sq. km.) “The park sizes are far too great for the authorities to be able to manage the poaching right now,” Dupain says. AWF will therefore work with the wildlife authority in each park to secure a smaller designated area.

In Faro, AWF is hoping to start work sometime in the coming year. AWF will initially focus on developing general management and business plans for the park, upgrading the first 150 km of the main road and developing ranger capacity. Later will come conservation engagement with and alternative livelihood development for surrounding communities.

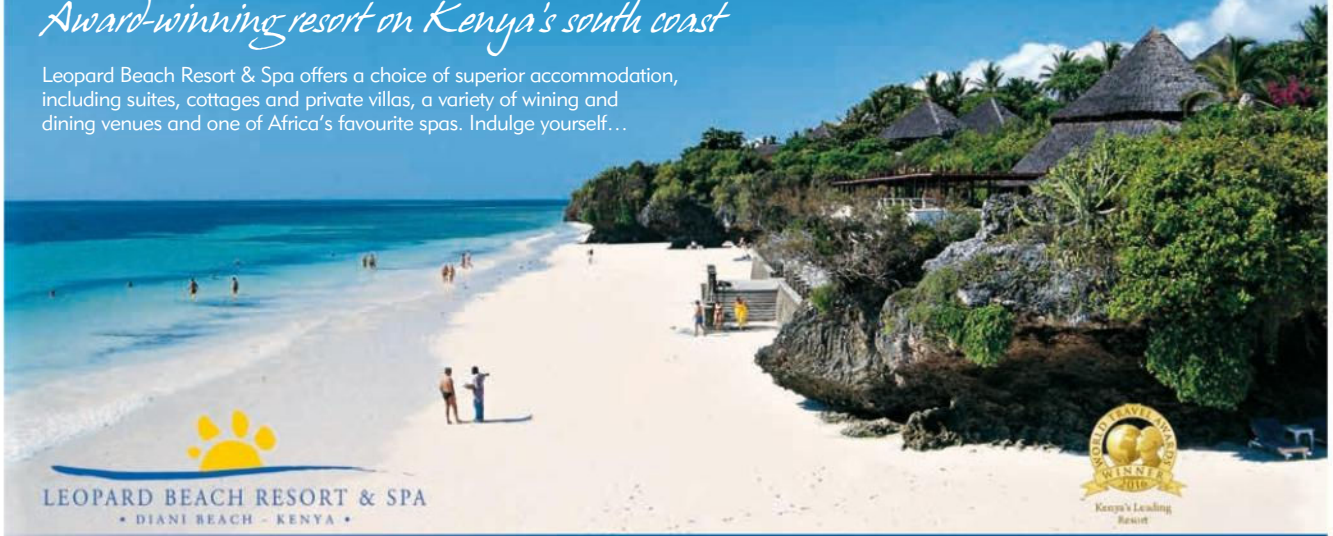
It won’t be easy, says Facheux, but ultimately efforts in Cameroon will strengthen AWF’s ability to engage leaders at the regional policy level. “Between Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo—where AWF has been working for more than a decade—you have 85 percent of the Congo Basin,” he points out.

“We need to say to governments that conservation is not a luxury—it is a part of people’s livelihoods and a country’s overall well-being,” Facheux explains. And with our growing experience in “Africa in miniature,” AWF will be in a good position to get them to listen.



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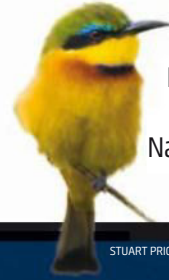
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# Safari

Ideas and advice to help you plan your perfect trip



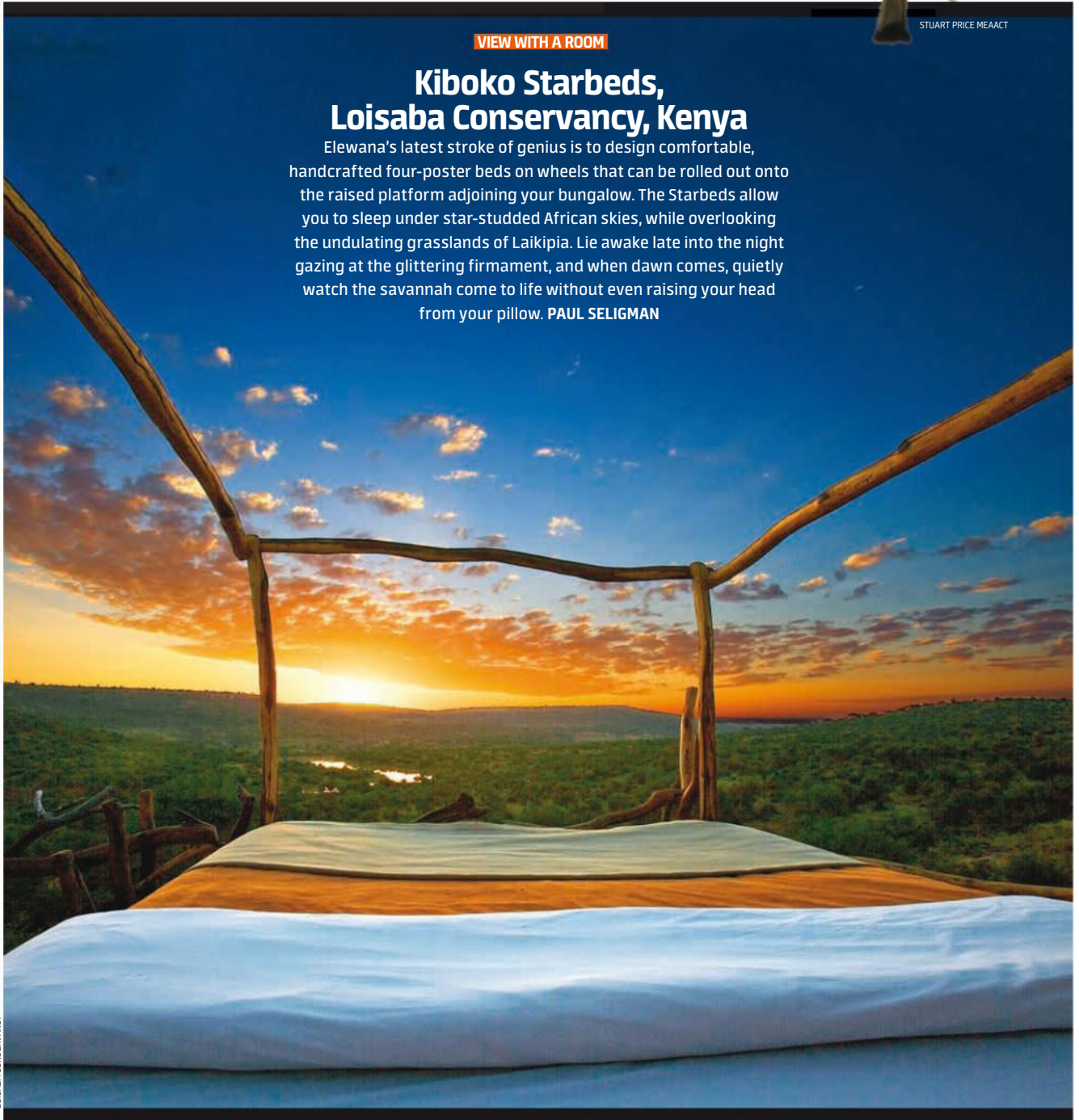
Inside track  
on Nairobi  
National Park  
**Page 156**

**VIEW WITH A ROOM**

## Kiboko Starbeds, Loisaba Conservancy, Kenya

Elewana's latest stroke of genius is to design comfortable, handcrafted four-poster beds on wheels that can be rolled out onto the raised platform adjoining your bungalow. The Starbeds allow you to sleep under star-studded African skies, while overlooking the undulating grasslands of Laikipia. Lie awake late into the night gazing at the glittering firmament, and when dawn comes, quietly watch the savannah come to life without even raising your head from your pillow. **PAUL SELIGMAN**

STUART PRICE MEACT



LOISABA CONSERVANCY



## THORNTREE

ACCOMMODATION NEWS

COMPILED BY JESSICA MAYHALL

### BOTSWANA

**Camp Okavango, Okavango Delta**  
Relaunched in April, this intimate camp offers accommodation for just 24 people and has an infinity pool, open-air fire pits and comfortable lounges. It is also designed to be environmentally sensitive and benefits from a 24-hour solar-power plant. There are also new family rooms here as well as at two of Desert & Delta Safaris' other properties – Camp Moremi and Savute Safari Lodge.

### Beyond Nxabega Okavango Tented Camp, Okavango Delta

This property reopened in May after a refurbishment. The new interiors maintain a safari feel while offering a more glamorous look. The nine tented suites have private terraces and are configured so that the generous king-size beds face out toward the sensational, watery landscape.



GREAT PLAINS CONSERVATION

### Duba Expedition Camp, Okavango Delta

Great Plains Conservation's new Duba Expedition Camp is set in a 77,000-acre private concession in the heart of the Delta. It has six rustic-chic tents, each one with its own verandah. The lounge and dining area is open on all sides. Duba prides itself on its wildlife experiences, with opportunities to see many species, including large herds of lechwe, kudu and tsessebe.



### ZIMBABWE

#### African Bush Camps

The company is proud to confirm that its Somalisa and Somalisa Acacia camps were awarded Gold certificates from Green Tourism, the largest programme of its kind. Qualified, independent assessors graded them on-site against a rigorous set of criteria.

AFRICAN BUSH CAMPS

### MOZAMBIQUE

#### Travessia Beach Lodge, Cumbana Agricola

The Mozambique Collection has expanded to include this unique barefoot beachside ecolodge. Situated among palm trees and coastal forest, it consists of four secluded *casa* built on raised wooden decks, with 180° sea views. With no one else around for miles, guests can relax in the infinity pool, paddle out to sea or laze in the shadows of the palms.

#### Anantara Medjumbe Island Resort & Spa, Quirimbas Archipelago

Set on a private island in the Quirimbas Archipelago, this adults-only hideaway has recently undergone a major refurbishment.

The 12 thatched villas open up onto powdery sands and each has its own splash pool. Various unusual experiences are on offer, including a romantic stay in a *Robinson Crusoe*-style star bed.

### KENYA

#### Leopard Beach Resort and Spa, Diani Beach

At the World Travel Awards in Zanzibar this April, the property was voted best in five categories, including Africa's Leading Family Hotel, Africa's Leading Spa Resort and Kenya's Leading Resort. It is situated in prime position on Diani Beach, offering a range of accommodation as well as a large free-form pool and a golf course.



ANANTARA MEDJUMBE ISLAND RESORT & SPA



**RIP** Peter Njoroge of Governors' Camp Collection has sadly passed away. He was a major figure in Kenyan hospitality, a friend to everyone he ever met and a great example to all. We give our heartfelt condolences to his colleagues and family.



ILA SAFARI LODGE

## ZAMBIA

### Ila Safari Lodge, Kafue National Park ▲

Set on the banks of the Kafue River, this tranquil eco-lodge hosts up to 24 guests and lies in an area of abundant wildlife. It also has an open-air restaurant and bar, a boat jetty, a fire pit area and a lovely swimming pool, so you can decide whether to kick back and relax with a book or explore the wilderness — or both.

### Three Rivers Camp, South Luangwa National Park

This seasonal camp is set to open this month. It will comprise just five tents, each one featuring its own stargazing deck. This is the only camp situated at the point where the Kapamba, Luzngazi and Luangwa rivers meet, so offers a unique experience in this unspoilt part of the valley.

## SOUTH AFRICA

### Little Bush Camp, Sabi Sand Game Reserve

Sabi Sabi's relaunched Little Bush Camp lies on the banks of the Msuthlu River. The new rooms have floor-to-ceiling windows to allow the light to flood in, and each suite boasts a private deck.

### Singita Lebombo Lodge, Kruger National Park ▼

Reopening this month, this stunning property is reaching new levels with its nature-focused, cutting-edge lodge design. The 13-suite hideaway also has a holistic approach to food, wine and wellness, and is partnering with Liam Tomlin, one of Cape Town's most renowned chefs.

### Ulubisi House, Mossel Bay

Gondwana Game Reserve added this property to its portfolio in April. The understated, Afro-chic house has 180° views of grassy plains and a dedicated ranger to accompany you on bush picnics, fishing trips or walks as well as mountain-biking or trail-running adventures.

## TANZANIA

### Kilimanjaro Halisi Retreat, Moshi

The recently launched Kilimanjaro Halisi Retreat is located between Moshi and Mweka on the 350-acre Machare Estate at an altitude of 1400 metres above sea level. This relaxing refuge, in the shadow of Kilimanjaro, offers guided coffee and tea tours, interesting wildlife and delicious homemade food.

### Entamanu Ngorongoro

Opening in August, Nomad Tanzania's new camp boasts exceptional views of both the crater and the Serengeti. It has impeccable environmental credentials: no cement has been used in its construction and, while permanent, it is also 100% removable.



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## THORNTREE

NEWS ON THE BUSHWIRE

COMPILED BY JESSICA MAYHALL

### Historic ivory burning

On 30 April, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta set fire to 105 tonnes of illicit wildlife goods in Nairobi National Park as part of a statement against poaching. The 12 rhino and elephant ivory towers were each 10ft high by 20ft wide, and the audience included heads of state from several nations.



CARL DE SOUZA / STRINGER / GETTY IMAGES

### Land & Life

This May saw the launch of the Land & Life Foundation, the new charitable face of Cheli & Peacock Safaris. Building on the work of the former trust, it will continue to work with communities and environmental projects in Kenya. Its flagship scheme, the Wildlife Warrior Program, educates local schoolchildren in wildlife protection through fun and interactive activities.

### ATTENBOROUGH TURNS 90

The legendary broadcaster and naturalist recently reached his 90th birthday. The BBC ran a season on his career highlights to celebrate this milestone, featuring (among other favourite moments) an encounter with Nicky, the blind, orphaned black rhino he met while filming in Kenya's Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.



BBC

### KAYAK THE ORANGE RIVER

Desert Kayak Trails hosted their first large group of participants in March, travelling down this magnificent river located in the /Ai/Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park. The experience includes tranquil stretches of still water as well as exhilarating rapids, and local guides, trained by the park authorities, accompany you.



DESERT KAYAK TRAILS

### WILD HORSES

THE FERAL PONIES OF THE SOUTHERN NAMIB ARE IN DANGER OF EXTINCTION BECAUSE OF THE ONGOING DROUGHT IN THE AREA. WEAKENED BY THE DIRE SCARCITY OF FOOD, THEY ARE ALSO VULNERABLE TO PREYING HYENAS. ESTABLISHED IN 2012, THE NAMIBIA WILD HORSES FOUNDATION FEEDS THE REMAINING POPULATION AND RELIES ON DONATIONS IN CASH AND IN KIND, ESPECIALLY FODDER. READ MORE AND DONATE AT WILD-HORSES-NAMIBIA.COM.

### KEEP KILIMANJARO CLEAN

A CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN LAUNCHED TO CLEAN AND CONSERVE THIS WORLD HERITAGE SITE AND BIOSPHERE RESERVE. "WE WANT TO BE SUCCESSFUL AND SENSITISE CLIMBERS TO ENSURE THEY RESPECT AND CONSERVE THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE KILIMANJARO NATIONAL PARK," STATES SA'ID SADIC, THE KILIMANJARO REGIONAL COMMISSIONER.



**SOUTH AFRICAN STAR** The singer Lira has released a new collection. *Born Free* follows on from her previous five multi-platinum albums, which have made her one of the country's best-selling acts.



## Safari with a difference

Marvel at the beauty of Africa from above by chartering a private plane through Scenic Air Safaris. You will fly over some of the continent's most picturesque landscapes in a VIP Cessna Caravan, stopping at some of the best available lodges and camps set in glorious wildlife reserves. An unforgettable experience.

SCENIC AIR SAFARIS (2)



## RING OF FIRE

IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE IN TANZANIA FROM 27 AUGUST TO 3 SEPTEMBER, YOU MAY HAVE A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE AN ANNULAR ECLIPSE OF THE SUN. THE BEST PLACES TO VIEW THIS NATURAL PHENOMENON ARE KATAVI AND RUAHA NATIONAL PARKS, BOTH LOCATED IN THE COUNTRY'S SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS.



## SKY NEWS

■ **AIR MAURITIUS** HAS ADDED WEEKLY FLIGHTS TO TWO NEW AFRICAN DESTINATIONS: MAPUTO IN MOZAMBIQUE AND DAR ES SALAAM IN TANZANIA.

■ **BRITISH AIRWAYS** HAS INCREASED ITS LONDON-NAIROBI FLIGHTS THIS SUMMER THROUGH THE INTRODUCTION OF A BOEING 747-400.



■ **AIR INDIA** IS LOOKING TO REINSTATE ITS FLIGHTS TO KENYA AND TANZANIA, WHICH WERE DISCONTINUED A FEW YEARS AGO.

■ **AIRLINK** HAS BEGUN OPERATING DIRECT SERVICES FIVE TIMES A WEEK BETWEEN CAPE TOWN AND MAUN, BOTSWANA'S SAFARI HUB.

■ **SAINT HELENA** THE FIRST BUSINESS JET LANDED AT THE NEW AIRPORT IN APRIL CHARTERED BY AIR SAFETY SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL. THIS WAS PART OF A PROJECT AIMING TO FULFILL THE UK GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO MAINTAINING ACCESS TO THE ISLAND AND PROVIDING IT WITH A REAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH.

■ **NAIROBI AIRPORT'S** TERMINAL 1E HAS NOW OPENED. HOPEFULLY, THE NEW BUILDING WILL HELP BOOST TOURISM.



ZAMBEZI.COM'S INSIDER GUIDE TO...

## Okavango Delta

The Okavango Delta is regarded as one of Africa's best year-round safari destinations. It has a very special wildlife diversity and, although it comes with a high price tag, you will enjoy an exceptional experience.

The private reserves in the Delta are the focal point of the majority of safaris in Botswana. There's plenty of big game, and some of Africa's most prestigious lodges and camps provide boating safaris, day and night game drives, and walking trails. It's here, on the private concessions, that you'll experience the true African wilderness and escape the crowds.

The Okavango Delta has the full plethora of wildlife with the exception of black rhino, which are a rare sighting anywhere in Africa these days. Birding is sublime with close-up sightings of water birds, including a large heronry near one of the camps.

The Delta is a superb safari option at any time of year due to the seasonal flooding, but the best time to visit depends on what interests you.

Okavango offers camps and lodges of an exceptional standard, but demand is high for the private concessions so our advice is to plan in advance. To get it right requires knowledgeable safari consultants and organisation – early booking is essential.



*John and Trish*

@Zambezi\_Safaris  
Zambezi.com



John and Trish Berry loved travelling around their native Zambezi Valley so much they started Zambezi Safari and Travel. Nearly 21 years later the company prides itself on its specialist knowledge of the region's national parks. Read their personal advice on this and other parks at [Zambezi.com](http://Zambezi.com) or [travelfricomag.com/parksguide](http://travelfricomag.com/parksguide)



## THORNTREE

EXPERTS HELP YOU PLAN YOUR TRIP

# Ask the trade

Your questions answered by those who really know



ELIZABETH LONER

### ADVENTURE

**Q I'm an experienced traveller to Africa, and I am looking for something out of the ordinary. What would you suggest?**



**JENNIFER COLE, WILD FRONTIERS**  
In Tanzania, the isolated Mahale Mountains

bordering Lake Tanganyika offer a rare opportunity to spot some of the last remaining wild chimps in Africa. Getting here is all part of the adventure, as is camping on the beautiful lakeshore. Forest walks, kayaking, snorkelling and fishing combine with exhilarating primate trekking. Or how about accompanying legendary guide Peter Comley on a trip to the remote rainforests of Central African Republic? Track western lowland gorillas and encounter elusive bongo antelope and forest elephant. For

birding enthusiasts, the chance to spot the extremely rare picathartes is something special. Travel in small fixed-wing planes, 4WD vehicles, pirogues powered by tribesmen and on foot into the wildest parts of the jungle.

### FAMILY

**Q I'm planning a safari with my seven- and 13-year-old children in the UK summer holidays. We want to see animals as well as experience African culture. I'd also like some time to myself. Where would you recommend?**



**DD KINGSCOTE, OUTPOSTS TRAVEL AFRICA**  
Kenya is the perfect place for kids to be thrilled by nature and inspired by new things, especially experiencing different cultures. I recommend an outdoorsy, hands-on holiday that the whole

**ABOVE:** Kenya is a wonderful country to take the whole family, boasting a wide range of activities to keep all ages happy. **BELOW**

**LEFT:** A female chimpanzee and her baby in Tanzania's remote Mahale Mountains

family can take part in together. Start at Olepangi Farm, near Nanyuki in Laikipia. You stay in comfortable, characterful cottages in a beautiful area, fully catered at very sensible prices. You can ride, do game walks, meet and spend time with the locals, go on safari and, best of all, go wild camping under the stars. There are also plenty of quiet spots around the farm to enjoy. You could couple the Olepangi Farm experience with a similar stay in the Masai Mara. House in the Wild is a private 12-bed lodge, perched on the banks of the Mara River on a 1000-acre private estate within the Enonkishu Conservancy. Here you can surround yourself with the rich traditions of East African life, while having direct access to some of the world's best wildlife viewing.

### VOLUNTEERING

**Q I'm interested in going on a volunteering holiday, but don't know where to start. Please can you advise me?**



**RACHEL NORTHOVER, AFRICAN ADVENTURES**  
First of all, decide what type of volunteering you want to do – community work, teaching, conservation or construction; there are many options. Knowing how you want to offer your skills will allow you to narrow down the number of companies and projects to choose from. It is important to seek out an organisation that is ethical in its operations. A responsible one will work closely with the local people and have sustainable practices that are worthwhile and make



**IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION** that you would like answered by one of our experts in the field, please email us at [editor@travelfricamag.com](mailto:editor@travelfricamag.com). We look forward to hearing from you.



a difference. Finally, look for a company that cares about you, too — it should support you along your journey and welcome and value your contribution.

#### ETIQUETTE

**Q** I've never been to East Africa before and I'm worried about inadvertently appearing rude. Do you have any tips regarding etiquette?



GARY BALFOUR, ARP TRAVEL GROUP

East Africans are friendly and welcoming, and most will offer their hand in greeting. They dress conservatively, so you should stick to modest attire and avoid public displays of affection. The most common Kiswahili greeting you'll hear is 'Jambo!' But if you want to be completely correct, the actual phrase is 'Hujambo?', which translates as 'Do you have any worries?'. The reply would be 'Sijambo', meaning 'No, I don't have any worries'. If you are greeted with the respectful phrase 'Shikamoo' (pronounced 'shick a mo'), the appropriate reply is 'Marhaba'. The polite way to attract someone's attention is to put your hand up, with your palm facing them. Snapping your fingers or whistling is rude. It is also impolite to use your left hand to give something to someone.

## WHY SHOULD I GO ON SAFARI?

The bush is great for our wellbeing. We wish we could bottle the magical moments we've experienced and revisit them when we return to our normal lives. Tuli Safari Lodge's **Vikki Threlfall** reveals five reasons why the wilderness is so good for your soul:

**1 BEING IN THE MOMENT** On safari, we seem to be able to live more naturally in the present, immersed in whatever is or isn't happening minute by minute. Just like it does when practising mindfulness, yoga and meditation, being more in the moment delivers great benefits for our mind, body and soul.

**2 SLOWING DOWN** Because our days in the wild follow a more natural circadian rhythm and we're existing more in the moment, we function at a much slower pace. This adds to our sense of wellbeing and means we have more time to appreciate the little things.

**3 BEING OUTSIDE** We spend a lot more time outside than normal. As well as the benefits of breathing in lots of fresh air and absorbing some vitamin D, our souls are fed by being in much closer touch with our simpler, more primitive needs — food, shelter and warmth.

**4 ENGAGING OUR SENSES** The safari environment is more multi-sensory than our everyday lives. We're engaging (and relying on) our senses much more than usual, and this makes us feel more alive.

**5 GAINING PERSPECTIVE** All of the above helps to put ourselves and our lives into perspective, enabling us to take a step back and see things with fresh eyes.



## THE TRADE VIEW

IS IT TIME TO GIVE AFRICA A CHANCE?

**Nigel Vere Nicoll is Chief Executive of Atta, The African Travel & Tourism Association, which serves travel companies in the African travel sector in 37 countries around the world. For more information visit [www.atta.travel](http://www.atta.travel).**



There is nothing the media likes to do better than paint the picture of deepest, darkest Africa. The Ebola crisis was an ideal platform for that image, with the media hype successfully devastating tourism across the continent, even in destinations often thousands of miles from the outbreak.

As a result, jobs connected to our tourism industry — including waiters, chefs, porters, laundry assistants, even the lady who walks miles to deliver the eggs each day — all went out of the window unnecessarily. Tourism feeds up to about one in seven mouths across Africa, and when tourism collapses millions go hungry.

Many of the corporate decision makers in the West still see Africa as nothing more than a charity case, not worth a second look, and certainly a risky investment. Barclays Bank announcing the sale of its African subsidiaries after more than 100 years on the continent seems to highlight that perception.

But surely Africa is not a wise investment, I hear you say? Well, let's consider the facts. The continent's GDP is rising by more than 4% each year and its expanding and increasingly affluent middle class harbours a growing wealth that offers extensive opportunities to do business, not just internationally but across countries' borders. Africa is on the move; it is rising and changes are afoot, so perhaps rather than pulling out, is it not time to invest in this continent no longer darkened but brightened by innovation and aspiration?

Now it is time for Africa to take the baton from Asia, which has held the limelight over the past two decades. The continent remains the last region that is largely unexplored in terms of resources, and its future and prosperity will extend far beyond commodities. It remains a place where wages are low and there is easy accessibility, with its vast coastline far closer to the Americas and Europe than Asia.

Kenya, for example, is now leading the world, not just in the tea and coffee trade — its traditional market — but in surprising sectors such as multimedia communication. The Swahili word for money is *pesa* and nearly a decade ago, Vodafone, on behalf of the two East African networks Safaricom and Vodacom, invented and launched M-Pesa. This is a phone-based money transfer system allowing users to deposit, withdraw and transfer funds through their mobiles — a massive success that's changing the lives of thousands.

So, give Africa a chance. Certainly, some are looking in that direction. With Barclays pulling out, Bob Diamond (aka 'Safari Bob'), its former leader, with his aptly named US-based Atlas Mara Group, is launching a joint venture to swallow the whole of Barclays Africa in 10 countries, which could herald the biggest takeover in the continent's history.

A broad vision giving Africa an opportunity, retaining employment that directly and indirectly feeds thousands, is truly something to be welcomed. Although I guess it is costing him more than a bob a job.



## THORNTREE

HEALTH AND OTHER USEFUL ADVICE

### IS TUNISIA SAFE?

Following the terrorism attack in June last year, **Daniel Wheeler** considers whether this North African country is risk-free yet

Tunisia has so much to offer, but the security situation remains fluid in light of the on-going threat posed by terrorism. The targeted attack on foreign tourists last year has led to an increased presence of government forces at popular resorts, but unfortunately the threat remains high. The UK FCO advises against all travel to the Chaambi Mountain National Park area due to Tunisian soldiers conducting operations against suspected militant groups in the region. Security at the borders with Libya and Algeria also remains heightened due to cross-border terrorist activity. Before visiting this wonderful country, it is advisable to check the latest security advisories issued by your government's foreign office.



### BILHARZIA: THE DOS AND THE DON'TS

**Ben West** explains how the infection is spread, the symptoms and how best to lessen the chance of catching it on your travels

Schistosomiasis, more commonly known as bilharzia, is an infection caused by a parasitic worm that lives in fresh water in subtropical and tropical regions in Africa. Common ways to pick it up are by swimming, paddling, washing or walking in streams, ponds, reservoirs, canals, rivers, dams and lakes. Showers with unfiltered water from such sources can also spread it.

The worm burrows through the skin and finds



its way through the blood to areas such as the bladder or intestinal wall. They produce large numbers of eggs, which if untreated, cause bleeding, itchy bumps on the skin, fever, abdominal aches, joint and muscle pain, cough, diarrhea, ulceration and, in the long-term, severe liver damage, kidney failure and cancer of the bladder. If you develop any of the above symptoms or suspect you have had contact

with infected water, seek advice from your doctor or a tropical disease clinic. Treatment is simple, with a short course of the medicine praziquantel.

In order to reduce the chances of becoming infected, as well as avoiding suspect water sources you should also boil or filter water before drinking and wear waterproof trousers and boots if crossing a stream or river. If in doubt, check the map that is on offer on the TravelHealthPro website, which details where schistosomiasis exists.

### WHAT TO PACK ON A TREK

■ **STAY HYDRATED** Lack of access to clean drinking water is one of Africa's leading problems. Bottled water can be costly, inconvenient and damaging to the environment. The Water-to-Go bottle has an inbuilt filtration system allowing you to drink from any non-salt water source. You can fill it up from your hotel bathroom tap or even from a dirty puddle outside. [waternogo.eu](http://waternogo.eu), from **£12.99**



■ **STAY POWERED** Africa is referred to by some as the 'sun continent'. Using solar energy to power your smartphone, DSLR or tablet can be very useful and, best of all, is free. The PowerMonkey Extreme 12V is a portable solar charger that can be attached to your rucksack. If you're travelling to a country where electricity is sporadic, this is well worth considering. [powertraveller.com](http://powertraveller.com), **£120**



■ **STAY MOBILE** Wearing high-quality walking boots is fundamental to preventing injury. Being comfortable will impact on how far you walk and affect the enjoyment of your travel experience. The Merrell Moab Mid GTX is a midrange boot offering great ankle support, waterproof Gore-Tex material and excellent underfoot grip. They also happen to be a favourite of the US and UK Special Forces. [merrell.com](http://merrell.com), **£125**





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## ESSENTIAL GUIDE

A DESTINATION ON A PAGE BY CRAIG RIX

THE INSIDE TRACK ON...

# NAIROBI NP

### UNIQUE APPEAL

Few evenings have been so poignant to me as those spent by the campfire at Nairobi Tented Camp. I look forward to these moments more than any other on safari. Gazing into the flames, losing my thoughts in their crackle and pop, I find a peace that disconnects me from everyday life and draws me closer to nature. Sitting quietly with loved ones and ruminating on the experiences of the day, it is easy to realise how insignificant so many of the pressures of modern life are.

There were three reasons why our evenings by the flames at this camp were more memorable than usual. First, we were enjoying a very special family holiday, and those placid hours sitting tranquilly with our teenage daughters will be treasured forever. Second, late every evening we were serenaded by a leopard, its saw-like rasp in the darkness a reminder that we were very much in the wild. And third, it was remarkable that, despite this, we were still within the city boundaries of Nairobi. Here we were, enjoying the calm that only wilderness can offer, while just a few miles away one of Africa's fastest-growing cities hummed with activity.

This is the genius of Nairobi National Park, which sets this city apart from every other in the world: it has a wildlife reserve established within its confines. As a result, Nairobi offers a rare and extraordinary opportunity to step away from the hustle and bustle and immerse oneself in nature. Nor is this a glorified recreational park or open-air zoo: make no mistake, this is the real deal.

### THE EXPERIENCE

Every morning we awoke to a chorus of birdsong. I could recognise the resounding call of a Hartlaub's turaco, but wished I could identify more. At night we could hear unidentifiable snaps and rustles in the forest or a sudden alarm call, and one morning I was

convinced I heard the snarls of big cats on a kill. The forest was bursting with life.

We weren't sure what to expect from our game drives, but were never disappointed. On three occasions we followed lion and witnessed two abandoned hunts, once when two eager cubs alerted a warthog too soon and another when, after about 10 minutes' stalking, a trio decided the Thomson's gazelle were too far away to bother with.

On every outing bar one we saw rhino — both black and white — but this is perhaps unsurprising, as the park is a well-known sanctuary for breeding this endangered animal.

It was, however, the spectrum of plains game and birdlife that most surprised me, and there were many highlights. We watched a male ostrich courting his prospective mate with an elaborate dance. On the final morning I enjoyed a quiet hour at the Impala Observation Point with our guide Saruni Kamwaro, trying to identify as many birds as possible.

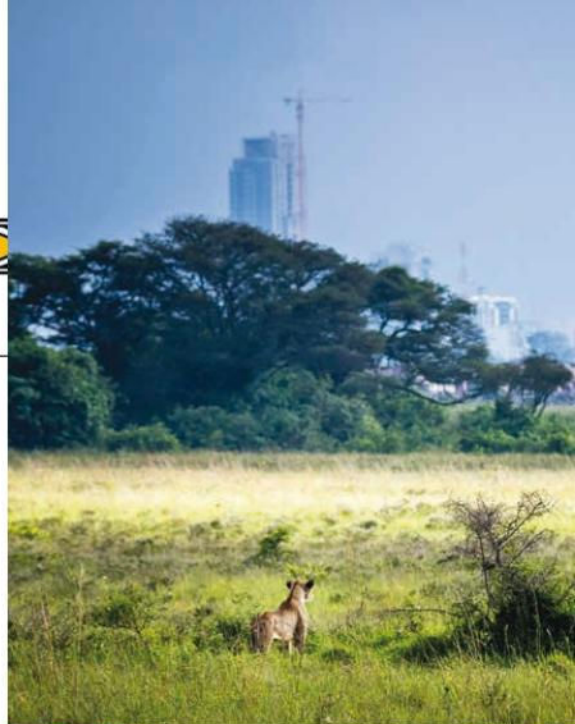
There are more than a hundred mammal species present in the 117sq-km park, and 520 recorded types of bird — that's greater biological diversity in an area comprising one sixth of Nairobi's municipal zone than in some whole countries.

### WHY VISIT?

I would encourage visitors to schedule a day or two in Nairobi at the beginning or end of their safari. It is arguably the most cosmopolitan city in Africa, and abounds with restaurants, cafes and other attractions.

The metropolis is growing at an insatiable rate. While this energy is almost palpable, it does result in notorious congestion. New highways might ease the flow, but it means that your choice of accommodation is important.

For me, staying at Nairobi Tented Camp is a no-brainer. It is located just 10 minutes into Nairobi's biggest tourist destination, but is also a short drive from The David Sheldrick Wildlife





STUART PRICE MEACCT (3); NAIROBI TENTED CAMP, CRAIG RIX



STUART PRICE MEACCT

**DID YOU KNOW?** 2016 marks the 70th anniversary of the inauguration of Nairobi Royal National Park in December 1946.

Trust, the Giraffe Centre, The Carnivore, the Karen Blixen Museum, Utamaduni Craft Centre, Bomas of Kenya, several shopping malls, the Kitengela Glass and Kazuri Beads factories and Kibera, as well as being conveniently close to Wilson Airport. So there's no need to spend long on the roads, yet you can still retreat to the sanctuary of the wilds every night.

One evening we shared the campfire with a Kiwi couple who were here for two days at the end of a long journey around many of Kenya's parks. They said it was a master stroke, allowing them time to enjoy the safari experience a little longer, including seeing rhino as well as some animals they hadn't spotted elsewhere (such as the kongoni antelope). Like us, they had been sightseeing during the day, but spent their early mornings and evenings in the bush.

### AN URBAN WILDERNESS

We've all seen pictures of Nairobi National Park showing wildlife against the background of the city skyline, and we were concerned this proximity would diminish the wilderness experience, especially as we were fresh off the plane from the Masai Mara.

The reality is that urban growth is most prevalent along the north-eastern perimeter. Beyond the south-western boundary some domestic housing can be seen. Forested hills form a barrier to the west and the southern reaches are open to the Kitengela corridor and the main migration route to the south. From large areas of the park, however, no buildings can be seen, especially in the central and southern regions, where undulating short-grass plains dominate and escarpments are broken by rocky gullies.

Regardless, I quickly embraced the closeness to the city as one of the park's attributes. I loved that you could be on a 'proper' game drive, watching lions on a hunt, within just a few miles of the metropolis. Knowing that the urban scramble was happening nearby reminded me how precious the natural world is; it made me appreciate the experience more consciously. The varying habitat, the silence, and every bird or animal seemed more valuable, to be treasured and protected.

In a world where the greatest threat to our natural resources is human population

growth, Nairobi National Park reminds us that man and nature can and must live peacefully alongside each other. We must fight to preserve this balance. Every city should secure such tracts of unspoilt land within its boundaries. These areas serve as 'lungs', replenishing atmospheric oxygen and soaking up pollutants, supporting crop pollinators and providing somewhere to nurture our spiritual well-being. The benefits of such spaces to millions of people are often underappreciated.

The fear is that development around the park will continue uncontrolled, and will eventually choke the natural migration corridor through the open southern borders to the Athi Plains beyond. This will impede the movement of wildlife — especially the lion, which not only attract visitors but also help maintain the ecological balance — and could compromise the survival of the park itself.

Never has it been more important for local residents to ensure that Nairobi National Park remains a treasured part of their way of life. But it is equally essential that tourists support the reserve by going there, showing one and all that it is an asset worth fighting for.

### SAFARI PLANNER

- **When to go** The park is open from 6am to 6pm daily, all year round.
- **Visiting** A single entry park fee of US\$50 applies for foreign day visitors. Self-drive is permitted but game drives are easily arranged by most tour operators. With advance booking, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) offers special activities such as night drives, walking trails, fishing and horse trails.
- **Where to stay** The only catered overnight accommodation within the park is Nairobi Tented Camp (Gamewatchers Safaris), and there are a few lodges based on the southern borders, including The Emakoko and Ololo Lodge. Overnight camping is possible at three KWS sites within the park.
- **Further information** Friends of Nairobi National Park (FoNNaP) has produced an exceptional *Natural History Guidebook*.



# Safari Planner

The following is a list of all the advertisers in this issue. They are there to help you plan your next safari, so please contact them for more information – and let them know you saw them in *Travel Africa* magazine. More information on these companies is also available on our online Safari Planner, at [www.safariplanner.co.uk](http://www.safariplanner.co.uk) or [www.travelafricamag.com](http://www.travelafricamag.com)

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THE IMAGES THAT NEVER LEAVE US



### Silence in Shali

"I was drawn to this bicycle rental shop in the old town of Shali in Egypt's Siwa Oasis by the vibrant colours, lines and shapes, and the dilapidated bikes dangling there. A sense of mystery permeated the scene. There was something eerie about it; perhaps it was the isolation of this settlement, buried in the Western Desert region of Egypt, about 550km west of Cairo, 305km south-west of Mersa Matruh and 50km from the Libyan border. The town holds a special appeal for many travellers on account of this very remoteness and because of its natural beauty, unique character and historical associations."

**PHOTOGRAPH AND WORDS BY YASSER ALAA MOBARAK**

*Yasser is a 23-year-old, award-winning amateur photographer based in Alexandria, Egypt*

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50 SECRETS ABOUT

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CRAGR SHOLLEY

## CREATING A NEW REALITY

It is an unfortunate reality in Africa that the people who have the greatest immediate impact on the continent's natural resources are often the least engaged in discussions around their management. I am talking, of course, about rural communities—but also more specifically about Africa's women and children.

Women in rural areas are often involved in natural resource extraction, such as collecting firewood for cooking. Yet sensitization around conservation matters typically starts with men. Planning and policy around natural resource management starts and ends with men. Wherever possible, therefore, the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) involves women specifically in our outreach efforts.

Such is the case in our Congo landscape, where communities living in the Congo Basin often depend upon the forest for an array of needs. AWF has made sure that the women at the heart of these communities are trained in sustainable farming methods, given business coaching to launch alternative enterprises and more. I invite you to read about these efforts on page 6.

Meanwhile, one of AWF's biggest initiatives continues to be our Classroom Africa program (formerly called African Conservation Schools). Through this program, AWF is working to establish quality primary schools across Africa—schools that also have a distinct conservation connection. These schools allow us to build a conservation foundation within the next generation of African leaders.

To achieve this goal, however, we needed to first tackle more immediate matters. For example, how do we create comfortable learning environments in locations that suffer from extreme climatic conditions but lack in modern construction materials such as insulation and electricity? Read our cover feature (pages 7 - 11) to learn how



These schools  
allow us to build  
a conservation  
foundation

COMKIDE DUSHIRIKANA

our Classroom Africa team is creatively addressing these challenges.

Engaging women and children in conservation will be even more important as Africa continues to develop. But that does not mean we're forgetting our still-critical mission of fighting wildlife trafficking. To keep you updated on all the advances that have been made in this battle—by AWF as well as by governments—we've devoted the first two pages of our "News" section in this issue to trafficking stories. You'll find all the latest information on pages 2 and 3, including news about the history-making ivory burn conducted by the Kenyan government at the end of April.

We are very grateful for your support—you are helping to create a new reality and, ultimately, a better future for people and wildlife alike.

With heartfelt thanks,

PATRICK J. BERGIN, PH.D.  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

# WHAT'S INSIDE

How your assistance is helping to drive conservation across Africa



PETER CHIRA

## 02 News roundup

Wildlife trafficking special, including: ivory burning, detection dogs, an Oscar-winning actress lending her support, and much more from across the continent.

## 06 Empowerment

**Game changer** AWF is actively involving women in natural resource management, helping the rural poor to escape poverty through sustainable development.



ALISON LANGEVAD / WWW.ALISONLANGEVAD.COM

## 07 Classroom Africa At the extremes

Building schools in rural Africa comes with many challenges, such as climatic conditions and lack of materials. We take a look at the design ingenuity needed to overcome them.

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MULUWEECHAW

# News

The latest conservation and project updates from across Africa



NIGEL DENNIS/WWW.NIGELDENNIS.COM/INWDP@MWEB.CO.ZA



PETER CHIRA

## Detection dogs find pangolin scales, ivory and more

**THE AWF-TRAINED DETECTION DOGS** have clearly been trained well, if their track record is anything to go by. As of June 2, the dogs have reportedly been involved in at least 26 busts, including a fairly sizable shipment of ivory uncovered in April.

And, though they have technically only been trained to detect ivory and rhino horn hidden in luggage and cargo, their noses are clearly sensitive to other wildlife products as well. In March, the black-and-white Spaniel named Asja showed a change in behavior while sniffing luggage at Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport—typically an indication there is something of interest inside. Upon investigation, 36 kgs of pangolin scales were discovered inside the suitcase, which was scheduled to head to China from Nigeria. (Pangolins are among the most trafficked animals on Earth.) Asja has helped uncover a number of smuggled wildlife products over the past few months. Her handler, a KWS ranger named Erica, aptly calls Asja her "superdog"!



© AWF/ERICHE, SAMANTHA OWEN

## WORLD'S LARGEST IVORY BONFIRE

On April 30, the Kenyan government burned a record 105 tons of ivory, along with 1.35 tons of rhino horn, in what was billed as the world's largest ivory bonfire. The event, which not surprisingly attracted significant media attention and was attended not just by the president of Kenya but also the presidents of Gabon and Uganda, was a public declaration that wildlife is worth more alive

than as trinkets for human use or consumption. AWF, which supported the move, was represented by President Kaddu Sebunya. During the event, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Director General Kitili Mbathi gave special recognition to AWF, which helped sponsor the burn and also seconded an AWF employee to KWS for several weeks to assist with communications efforts around the burn.

**36** CRITICAL POPULATIONS OF **ELEPHANTS, RHINOS, CARNIVORES** AND **GREAT APES** SUPPORTED THROUGH AWF'S **URGENT RESPONSE FUND** IN 2015

Discover what else your support has achieved: [www.awf.org/2015AR](http://www.awf.org/2015AR)





KRISTIAN SCHMIDT FOR WILDAID

## Uwindaji haramu unatuibia sote

That was the message (in English: Poaching steals from us all) being spread on April 27, when AWF and partner WildAid launched their joint Kenya anti-poaching campaign. Because the Kenyan general public has a relatively high awareness of the wildlife trafficking issue, the campaign serves not to educate audiences so much as to urge them to act when they see wildlife crime taking place. The campaign aims to use public service announcements (PSAs), billboards and social media to urge support for the reporting of wildlife crime.

"Many of us know about the poaching crisis, but too many assume that someone else will take care of it," observes Daudi Sumba, vice president for program design for AWF and himself a Kenyan.

AWF and WildAid were joined at the launch by popular afro-pop band Sauti Sol and local radio personality Caroline Mutoko, who are scheduled to appear in upcoming PSAs. The campaign's first PSAs feature Oscar-winning actress Lupita Nyong'o.

AWF and WildAid have previously partnered on demand-reduction campaigns in China and Vietnam. [Check out the first PSA: www.awf.org/lupita-ivory](http://www.awf.org/lupita-ivory)

## Kenya seeks permanent ban on ivory

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is tasked to enforce an international treaty that governs the international trade of wildlife products. While the South African government was weighing whether to request the legalization of rhino horn trade at the next CITES meeting (see page 12), the Kenyan government was apparently weighing whether to request a permanent ban on the ivory trade. At the April 30 ivory burn hosted by the Kenyan government, President Uhuru Kenyatta announced that Kenya will seek the highest level of protection for the African elephant and, ultimately, a permanent ban on the ivory trade, at the next CITES meeting.

Though international trade in ivory is currently illegal, CITES has previously allowed two one-off sales of African governments' ivory stockpiles. Most mainstream conservationists believe that the one-off sales helped spark the current demand for ivory.



PETER CHIRIA

## Domestic bans gain traction

China announced in March that it would continue its bans on African ivory carvings (such as those below) and ivory hunting trophies until 2019. They were initially implemented in 2015 as one-year bans. Meanwhile, France announced in early May that it would join the likes of China, the United States and Hong Kong in banning its domestic ivory trade. Though the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (or CITES) regulates the trade of ivory across national borders, it has no authority to regulate domestic trade within countries.



PETER CHIRIA

## East African judicial workshops continue

AWF continues with its judicial workshops to sensitize magistrates, prosecutors and others in law enforcement to the seriousness of wildlife crime and the wildlife laws in their country. In December, 51 law enforcement officers in Tanzania gathered for an interagency law enforcement workshop by Tanzania's Wildlife Division, the UN Development Programme and AWF. The workshop was moderated by AWF Tanzania Country Director John Salehe. More recently, AWF and Kenya's Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions hosted a wildlife trafficking workshop for prosecutors and investigators in Voi, Kenya. These workshops help ensure that, when traffickers are caught, they are appropriately held accountable for their crimes.

## Making space for giants

Just ahead of the historic ivory burn in Kenya, the presidents of Kenya, Gabon and Uganda, together with a senior representative from the government of Botswana, gathered in northern Kenya for the Giants Club Summit to discuss the wildlife trafficking issue. A number of the attendees made commitments toward elephant conservation. Among them: Gabon plans to double its staff at its national parks agency from 750 to 1,500; Uganda will construct an electric fence around Murchison Falls National Park to reduce human–elephant conflict; Botswana will form an intelligence-led special operations unit to support wildlife rangers; and Kenya will launch a National Conservation Endowment Fund, with profits going toward conservation.



KRISTIAN SCHMIDT FOR WILDLIFE

## Zambia's elephants: Are they doing OK?

Though elephant populations have suffered significant losses in some African countries such as Tanzania, one country where anti-poaching efforts seem to be working is Zambia. The Great Elephant Survey, which is conducting an elephant census in 20 African countries to get a better sense of the continent's population, reportedly found that Zambia's elephant population is stable.

Even so, the survey warns of declining numbers in some areas of the country, including the Lower Zambezi Valley. AWF has been providing Urgent Response Fund grants to partners in the Lower Zambezi Valley for this very reason. It is also providing support to the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, as the Lower Zambezi Valley spans between Zambia and Zimbabwe.



KATHLEEN GARRIGAN

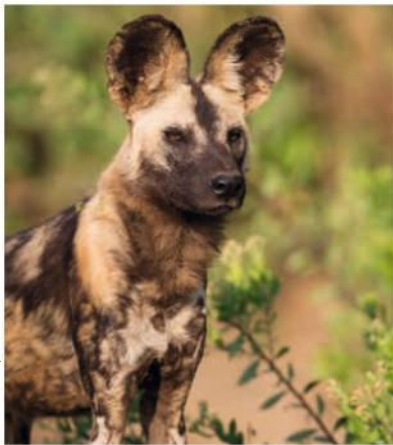
## Bees for conservation

We all know bees assist with pollination and agriculture. But who knew they could also encourage conservation? As we briefly mentioned in the fall 2015 issue, AWF is implementing beekeeping projects that do just that around two forest reserves in Uganda: Kalinzu Forest Reserve in the east and Budongo Forest Reserve in the north. Through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)/Uganda Biodiversity Program, AWF and the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI) are working with homesteads around both forests to do beekeeping and protect those forests.

At Budongo, for example, AWF and JGI in 2014 provided 10 beehives each to 40 households and taught them how to care for the bees and beehives. In return, community members are conducting patrols in the nearby forest and monitoring illegal activities such as tree cutting. Each beehive annually produces about 30 kg of honey, and 1 kg of honey sells for about 16,000 Ugandan shillings. With two bee harvests taking place each year, beekeepers are therefore likely to earn up to 10 million Ugandan shillings (US\$3,000) per year—a clear benefit that community members are getting from engaging in conservation.

## A new dawn for Hwange, Zimbabwe

**HWANGE NATIONAL PARK** in Zimbabwe has seen its share of bad news recently. It was the area where Cecil the lion was illegally hunted by American dentist Walter Palmer,



AULSON LANGEVAARD/WALSON LANGEVAARD.COM

and the park where elephants died from cyanide poisoning. But a new dawn has arrived for the park, according to Edwin Tambara, conservation planner for AWF. In 2014, AWF began working with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and local stakeholders to develop a new management plan for the park. This past February, the government of Zimbabwe approved the plan.

"Hwange National Park is one of Zimbabwe's most valuable resources, contributing significantly to tourism and biodiversity conservation," says Tambara, who helped oversee the plan development process. "The plan offers a consistent approach to managing a protected area and offers proven wildlife-based revenue-generating ideas for the parks authority to implement."



COMMODE DUSHIMWANA

## No. 9 on the best places to visit

**ETHIOPIA IS TOUTED** for its cultural tourism, but its natural wonders are not as often acknowledged. That's starting to change, however. Take the latest issue of *Outside* magazine, which listed Ethiopia as one of the 28 best trips to take in 2016. *Outside* goes on to suggest a booking at Limalimo Lodge, which is located in the Simien Mountains and is supported by AWF subsidiary African Wildlife Capital. For those visitors who do come to

the Simiens, they'll find a national park that is continuing to be improved, thanks to AWF's work there. With the U.S. Forest Service, AWF is developing an ecological restoration plan for the areas of the park that are degraded and will eventually design walking trails. Training for 60 trekking guides also took place in May, covering wildlife management and conservation principles, customer service, communications and more.



RASHID ABDUL

## Water harvesting in southern Kenya

In the Kilimanjaro landscape, expanding human settlement and rapid development is resulting in wetlands suffering water shortages and trees being cut down. To counter this, AWF has installed water storage tanks at 28 households in two group ranches in the southern Kenyan landscape. The benefits are multifold: Women who once had to walk upwards of 12 hours for

water are now getting clean H<sub>2</sub>O right at their doorstep. People no longer have to take water from the area wetland, whose water levels have already been lowered over the years due to water being diverted for agriculture. And, women are able to spend more time on their small businesses, such as selling their handiwork to tourists.

## THANK YOU!

■ What a year 2015 has been! With your support, we successfully protected 24 wildlife corridors; contributed US\$5 million in direct financial benefits to communities living in key wildlife areas; and put 164 million acres of land under improved conservation management. Explore our interactive 2015 annual report to see how else your support has helped protect Africa's wildlife and conserve Africa's wild lands.



Check out the report: [www.awf.org/2015AR](http://www.awf.org/2015AR)

## IN THE MEDIA

AWF has been garnering increased coverage in the media, on a range of conservation issues. Check out the following media mentions:

■ During a trip to Beijing, China, in February, AWF CEO Patrick Bergin sat down with a *New York Times* reporter to talk about China's role in African development. The discussion was captured in the *New York Times* Sinosphere blog, and re-posted following Kenya's historic ivory burn on April 30.

<http://bit.ly/ChinainAfrica>

■ On the day of Kenya's ivory burn, the regional newspaper *The East African* published an OpEd by AWF President Kaddu Sebunya, urging African leaders to commit to shutting down the illegal wildlife trade.

<http://bit.ly/EastAfrican>

■ A new NBC News show, "On Assignment"—an offshoot of "Dateline"—premiered on May 8. The premier episode included a story on chimpanzee conservation, particularly AWF's efforts in the Bili-Uele Protected Area Complex in northern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

<http://bit.ly/Bili-chimps>





INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE

# Game Changer

Involving women in natural resource management has ripple effects for the environment, individual livelihoods and, ultimately, entire communities

In rural Africa, women and natural resources are inextricably intertwined. Women are the ones who visit the local streams and wetlands to fetch water for drinking, cooking and cleaning. They enter the forest to collect firewood for cooking and heating their homes. And they clear wild lands to farm, so they can feed their families.

Yet for all their reliance on the natural environment, women inevitably are left out of discussions around the management of natural resources.

AWF is working to change that dynamic in many landscapes, including the Congo landscape. The Congo landscape is one of the poorest parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, one of the poorest countries in Africa. AWF has long targeted women in its capacity-building efforts here, knowing that educating women in conservation issues and training them in more sustainable ways to manage natural resources will lead to a significant positive impact on the environment.

Because so much of the rural population grows crops, both for their own consumption and

for sale, AWF provided training in sustainable agriculture and agricultural intensification. In 2015, as part of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (or USAID's) Central African Forest Ecosystems Conservation grant:

- Partnering with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, AWF involved 150 local associations in agricultural intensification interventions, ultimately engaging 1,497 members. Nearly half, 612, were women.

- We provided training in group management, treatment and storage of seeds, commercialization of agricultural products, seed multiplication and processing of agricultural produce and health and nutrition for 602 farmers. A third of these, 218, were women.

## EMPOWERING THE INDIVIDUAL

AWF also worked with a local partner, *Reseau Femmes Africaines pour la Developpement Durable* (REFADD), to train 595 people in community-based natural resources management. More than half—355—were women, who received additional training in female leadership and group dynamics. Five women “relay” organizations—where

members relay the information they've learned to others—were established in key locations in the landscape. They received 300 kg of improved cowpea and groundnut seeds, 82 improved chicken breeds, 130 ducks and 150 machetes to carry out sustainable agro-pastoral activities. The 150 female members also participate in forums related to the conservation and development of their land.

AWF and REFADD selected an additional 32 women involved in the bushmeat trade for other intervention. These women received literacy classes and learned more about the sustainable management of natural resources. “Women who could not read or write, or count or calculate, are now composing simple sentences. And they can count from 1 to 100 and solve simple addition and subtraction calculations,” explains Hugues Akpona, AWF Congo landscape manager.

Finally, as mentioned in the spring 2016 issue of *Travel Africa*, the women also learned business skills to establish and operate a soap production micro-enterprise. Their soap businesses have done well. Local soap tends to be white and odorless, but these women are essentially marketing a “designer” variety that comes in a bright color and is perfumed. Their success is not going unnoticed. Other women have since requested membership into the microenterprise.

“Community-based natural resource management is a game changer for sustainable development, because it enables the rural poor to overcome poverty through knowledge sharing and local stakeholder participation,” explains Akpona. “It’s a bottom-up way of organizing community activities—such as farming, trading and producing—that empowers individuals as well as the collective.”

**ABOVE:** Training on sustainable agricultural practices, such as this one with women in the Djolu territory in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ultimately makes a significant impact on the environment.

**BELOW:** This white bean harvest resulted from training conducted by AWF on sustainable farming.



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE

AWF's Classroom Africa is making use of innovative design features—such as these earth bags that will help moderate classroom temperatures in Ethiopia's Simien Mountains—to ensure a comfortable learning environment for students.



MARIO BALDUCCI

# AT THE extremes

Building schools in rural Africa requires design ingenuity to account for climate challenges and the paucity of ideal construction materials

**I**n Ethiopia's Simien Mountains, where elevations reach some 3,600 m (11,811 ft.) above sea level, the climate often veers to the extremes. During the dry season, the days can get hot while the nights can dip down to freezing temperatures. During the rainy season, days and nights alike are chilly.

The climate poses a particular challenge for the local community. After all, building methods remain rudimentary. Electricity doesn't exist. And poverty is prevalent. Explains AWF supporter Leila Straus, who has visited the Simiens a number of times: "The children are dressed in torn clothes or clothes that have worn thin. When you ask a teacher if

they've seen a particular child in another outfit, they say no. It's the only outfit that child has. And some are wearing a pair of plastic shoes. But some have just one shoe, and some have no shoes at all."

It's a similar story in certain other parts of Africa as well, making climate a key consideration in the work of AWF's Classroom Africa (formerly the African Conservation Schools) team. The Classroom Africa program works to enhance conservation through education, and does this in part by building or rebuilding primary schools.

When AWF meets with communities to determine residents' wish lists for a school, climate typically finds its way into the discussion. "Communities will often point out the climate-related problems they've experienced at their existing school," observes Commode Dushimimana, infrastructure and design manager for the Classroom Africa program and a registered architect. "They will say that it's too hot or too cold in the classrooms, too noisy during rains and so on." →



TONY BARNETT PRODUCTIONS

**ABOVE & RIGHT:** Features such as woven screens at Lupani Community School and the curvature of the building at Ilima Primary School help circulate air in hot climates such as Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, respectively.

According to the Whole Building Design Guide, a program of the National Institute of Building Sciences, “More than other building types, school facilities have a profound impact on their occupants and the functions of the building, namely teaching and learning.” Indeed, a literature review by the organization Room to Read concluded there was a link between school infrastructure and factors such as student enrollment, attendance and attainment. Proper ventilation, lighting and noise control in particular seem to have a significant correlation to student learning.

### A ‘COMFORTABLE’ SCHOOL

Similar features are touted by the Whole Building Design Guide, which serves the U.S. building industry. It suggests due consideration be given to visual, acoustic and thermal comfort; “excellent” indoor air quality; and safety and security in order to build a comfortable elementary school.

“In the developed world, all of this would be addressed with insulation, air conditioning and electrical considerations,” observes Brian McBrearity, managing director of Classroom Africa. Lacking such options in Africa, building a “comfortable” school requires a little more ingenuity in design.

Take the new school being built in the Simien Mountains, with financial support from the Straus Family Foundation. The school is being constructed using an earth bag method, where sacks are filled with soil and stacked to form the walls of each building. The bags have high thermal mass—a material’s ability to absorb and store heat—allowing the



AWF

classrooms to remain cool during the day when outside temperatures soar. The earth bags then release heat in the evening. The walls will be plastered over with a light-colored, lime-and-cement mixture to ensure smooth walls and a bright classroom.

Meanwhile, the truss design, which supports the roof, allows natural light in, adds aerial space to the classroom and incorporates ventilation to ensure a comfortable, consistent

**“Each of those four schools exists in a unique climatic landscape. So we have quite a few challenges that we’ve used design elements to address.”**

—Brian McBrearity, managing director, AWF Classroom Africa program

temperature throughout the day. Though roofs will be the galvanized iron roofing typical of construction in rural Africa, they will be padded with a layer of lightweight straw insulation. The straw will be fitted between trusses to further mediate temperatures. It will also serve to muffle noise during the rainy season. (The straw, incidentally, was purchased from the local Adisge households.)

The previous school, in contrast, was not conducive to learning. The structures were made of unevenly plastered mud and timber and corrugated iron roofs. Inside, walls were rough-hewn and crumbling in many places. Holes in some of the walls were large enough to provide an unintended view of the outdoors. Doors did not shut properly within their frames. The low-ceilinged classrooms were dark and cold during certain seasons. Children often sat in classrooms with blankets around their shoulders.

### HEAT, COLD, SUN AND WIND

“Every school we build takes climate into account. It’s part of our design ethos—but the lack of electricity for air conditioning and lighting also necessitates that we do so, for the sake of natural lighting and comfortable temperatures inside the classrooms,” McBrearity says.

“It’s amazing what can be done design-wise to compensate for too little or too much sun and wind,” adds McBrearity, who has witnessed Dushimimana going back and forth with project architects on different options that could be used to address specific climatic challenges. “For example, the roof overhangs over the windows may be much longer on some sides of the building because of the sun, and on other sides, much shorter.”

Landscaping can also be used to adjust for wind or sun. Tall trees may be planted on some sides of a building, while the architect may plan for shrubs or shorter plants elsewhere.

At an elemental level, factors the Classroom Africa team considers include the choice of building material—such as what is being done with Adisge Primary School in the Simiens—and design strategy. Some general rules:

- **Building materials must be chosen based on their thermal mass, resistance to moisture, sustainability and local availability.** Using construction materials with a thermal mass inappropriate to the climate could result in a school that is too hot or too cold, making for an unproductive learning and teaching experience. Material durability and maintenance must also be weighed with the climate in mind. Wood, for example, may work in some places, but may not be ideal in terribly humid locations or regions where termites are common.

- **Buildings must be placed with optimal orientation relative to the sun.** “Otherwise, the school will be too dark or unevenly lit, where it is dark in some areas but has a glare in others,” says Dushimimana. “In places close to the equator, for example, you want to make sure the windows and other openings face north and south. This way, as the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, the amount of light that is entering the classroom is uniform throughout the day.” →

**RIGHT:** Leila Straus, whose family foundation funded the construction of the new Adisge Primary School in Ethiopia’s Simien Mountains, says she was moved by the welcome she received during the Adisge dedication ceremony.

## ‘A SPECIAL PLACE IN MY HEART’

For most people, their first job out of college is unremarkable. Not so Leila Straus. Her first job out of college took her to Ethiopia, where she worked on a tourism study for the Ethiopian government. Political upheaval in the 1970s eventually put an end to the work. “But Ethiopia had made such an impression on me,” Straus recalls. “It was a beautiful country that at the same time had so much poverty.”

Years later, as a donor to AWF, Straus learned from Vice President Craig Sholley that AWF was doing work in Ethiopia. Straus and her husband had been looking to support schools in Africa. “The two things,” she says, “came together.”

The result is Adisge Primary School, a once-dilapidated set of buildings in Ethiopia’s Simien Mountains that—thanks to support from the Straus Family Foundation—is being rebuilt into a beautiful new school. The school is part of AWF’s Classroom Africa program.

### OVERWHELMING RECEPTION

Earlier this year, Straus and six friends visited the Simiens to attend a dedication ceremony for the new school. Straus still remembers the greeting she received upon her arrival. “I was just overwhelmed. All the children converged at the entrance to the school. They had posters that said, ‘Welcome to our school.’ One lovely little girl presented me with a bouquet of wild flowers. We were all so moved,” she says.

Some 200 chairs had been lined up outside for the ceremony, and all the students and parents attended. A number of people made remarks, including the local minister of education and the head of the village. One boy read aloud a poem he had written in Amharic.

Though construction was still ongoing, Straus and her friends got a good look at the first classroom, which featured white walls, newly constructed desks and a pristine blackboard. When completed, Adisge School will feature bright and airy classrooms for grades 1 through 8, on-site teacher housing and landscaping that emphasizes the area’s native flora.

“I think education is the key for everything, but this part of the Simien Mountains is so remote and neglected. There is such a need here that we really felt, here was a place where we could make a difference,” says Straus. “Ethiopia has always had a special place in my heart, going back 40 years. This was a great opportunity to contribute to the development and conservation of this part of the world.”





CRAGR SHOLLEY

**ABOVE:** A unique roof design (still under construction in this photo) ensures indirect lighting, good air flow and a feeling of space in the new Adisge Primary School. Here, donor Leila Straus (on right, in purple jacket and scarf) and her guests get a tour of the school.

**RIGHT:** Thoughtful school design is ensuring that students attending AWF-supported schools feel a connection to the local environment and wildlife, like the Gelada monkey in Ethiopia.



CRAGR SHOLLEY

■ **Buildings must be optimally oriented for wind and ventilation purposes.** Wind patterns help determine the orientation and sizes of building openings and the orientation of buildings relative to one another. Such considerations are needed to ensure proper cross-ventilation, which can help eliminate damp and hot air, bad odors, airborne germs and so on.

■ **The design must weigh topographic and geographic features for optimal building placement and construction.** Without proper consideration of topography or geographic features, erosion or accessibility issues could result.

### UNIQUE CLIMATIC LANDSCAPE

Four schools currently round out AWF’s Classroom Africa portfolio:

- Adisge Primary School in Ethiopia’s Simien Mountains;
- Lupani Community School in southern Zambia;
- Ilima Primary School in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and
- Manyara Ranch Primary School in northern Tanzania.

“Each of those four schools exists in a unique climatic landscape,” explains McBrearity. “Adisge has high altitudes, wind and cold. Lupani presents a riverine setting that bounces between dry and humid. Ilima is in a rainforest, so it’s wet,

humid and hot. Manyara Ranch, though a dry, savanna landscape, suffers from erosion from the rainy season. So we have quite a few—and different—challenges that we’ve used design elements to address. Some features are common across all the schools, and some are unique to each school.”

There were the earth bags at Adisge School to help regulate classroom temperatures, for example. Similarly, Lupani School required building materials with a high thermal mass to regulate against hot daytime temperatures. When AWF broke ground on an addition to the school last year, it chose clay bricks that would create thick walls and guard against classroom overheating. The expansion was completed earlier this year, featuring an extra classroom, a principal’s office and a community room. “The school was

already thriving due to our support over the years. But it has truly become a model for other schools in the district, and the education board secretary is thrilled,” says McBrearity.

For Ilima, the school’s location in the middle of a tropical rainforest presented ventilation concerns. The solution: a curved building that encourages the movement of air from one end to the other. Here, too, earthen bricks with a high thermal mass ensure that the indoors remains cool.

And then there’s Manyara Ranch School. Due to a combination of severe rainy seasons and long dry seasons, the foundations on the Manyara Ranch School buildings had eroded over time. Manyara Ranch is located near a small fault line; the existence of low-level earthquakes must therefore be taken into account.

“The persistent concern here is the small tremors that can be felt frequently. The existing buildings were not framed and were only built of cinderblock, so they’re subject to this constant level of vibration, which begins to rattle the buildings apart,” says McBrearity.

AWF is in the process of overhauling the buildings on campus, using light-gauge steel to frame out each building. “This method of framing and the lightweight nature of the walls will make the buildings very safe in the event of an earthquake,” explains Dushimimana, noting that having minimal joints helps maximize wall strength.

### CRITICAL CONSERVATION MESSAGE

One common concern: access to water. AWF incorporates rain catchment features with many of the Classroom Africa schools to accommodate this need. In fact, one of the reasons the architect kept the galvanized iron roof in the Adisge School was to enable rainwater to easily be collected into a gutter, which could then flow into a water storage tank.

And if all of these climatic factors weren’t enough, there’s also the need to ensure the schools supported by AWF’s Classroom Africa program fit into their context—and convey a conservation image. The former is achieved through the use of local materials; the latter, through the use of signage talking about the ecosystem, landscaping that makes use of endemic vegetation, nature trails and playground equipment that may be wildlife themed.

Thankfully, the thoughtful design of the Classroom Africa schools—in combination with strategic teacher training and conservation education programming—appears to be cementing that critical conservation message.

“The kids at Adisge do seem to value education and they do seem to value the conservation of Simien Mountains National Park,” relays Straus, who attended a dedication ceremony for the new school at the beginning of the year. “The community members seem to want to conserve the park. They are proud of it, and they want more tourists to come see the wildlife and see the wildlife thriving. These are the same people that, not too long ago, were throwing stones at the gelada monkeys in the park. It’s a tremendous difference.”

**RIGHT:** Carpenter Tapy Bokwa, pictured here with his oldest son and a certificate of work, gained not only employment but also skills training when he worked on the AWF-supported Ilima Primary School construction in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

## MORE THAN A SCHOOL

*Providing skills training to community members is not an explicit goal of Classroom Africa. Even so, locals hired to assist on these projects often come away having acquired more advanced skills. Tapy Bokwa is one of them:*

Located about 970 km northeast of Kinshasa, Djolu territory is in one of the poorest parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. News travels a lot by word of mouth in these parts: the wedding of a neighbor’s daughter or son, the death of a community elder, the successful crop of a group of subsistence farmers or, a couple of years ago, the coming of a new project. That’s how Tapy Bokwa got word that a new project was hiring carpenters about 100 km away from his home in Djolu town. The project: AWF’s Ilima Primary School.

The father of eight, who has been good with his hands since his school days, told his wife that he would be gone for a few days, a few weeks at most, to apply for the job at Ilima. “She wasn’t worried,” he says. “I move around looking for work when I have to.”

### MUCH ADO ABOUT EVERYTHING

The journey took two days by bicycle. Following an interview and test, Bokwa got the job. Those few days turned into weeks, then months, in the blink of an eye. For more than a year, the Ilima community hosted an influx of labor from towns situated up to 90 km away, and community members received on-the-job training to build a school like no other. The effervescence created by the project inspired local initiative, stimulated the local economy and developed local capacity.

“I learned so much through the project. Things that I had studied in theory at vocational school and never applied before, now I had to at Ilima,” Bokwa chuckles, adding: “The precision of a single nail... hammered down to the millimeter!”

The Ilima School was completed in spring 2015. More than 70 percent of the school was built using local materials, and the project ultimately trained four carpentry team leaders. Bokwa, for his part, is back home and intends to pass on what he has learned on the job. Posing for a photo with his eldest son and his certificate of work, he says: “I will teach him.”

—Yao Bongoma



YAO BONGOMA

# To sell or not to sell?

For AWF, selling rhino horn is out of the question. But there are some who want to consider it

**T**he question had caused anxiety for months. Will they or won't they? The international trade in rhino horn had been banned since the 1970s. But at the next meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the international body that regulates the trade in wild animals and plants, would the South African government put forward a proposal to lift said trade ban?

In February 2015, the South African government announced that it had appointed a panel of experts to look into the pros and cons of a legalized



**BELOW:** Some countries' desire to legalize the rhino horn trade could spell disaster for Africa's rhinos.



rhino horn trade. The 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties to CITES was taking place in September 2016. Based on the panel's recommendations, the government would consider requesting that the international trade in rhino horn be made legal once again.

## CIRCLING BACK TO LEGALIZATION

Rhino poaching shot up in the late 2000s when, seemingly overnight, an increasing number of rhinos in Africa began being killed for their horn. Rumor had it that a Vietnamese politician had claimed consuming rhino horn had cured him of cancer and black market demand for rhino horn had reportedly erupted in Asia as a result. Whatever the exact cause, rhino casualties in South Africa—home to the majority of the world's rhinos—escalated from 17 poached in 2007 to 1,175 in 2015.

The South African government has directed significant resources to anti-poaching efforts, but with rhino poaching continuing to climb, discussions have circled back to legalizing trade. Proponents say that legalized trade offers a market-based solution to saving rhinos. They argue that flooding the market with legal rhino horn could undercut black market prices and reduce the attractiveness of this industry for criminals. Because rhino horn grows back, governments and private rhino owners could periodically "harvest" the horn to ensure a continual supply to legal markets. Finally, governments could take revenue from rhino horn sales and reinvest it back into rhino conservation efforts.

Most mainstream conservation organizations are firmly in the anti-trade camp, and AWF was among those who filed arguments against

legalization with the Committee of Inquiry evaluating the trade. There are three main reasons why legal trade is a bad idea:

**1 Slow reproduction, but almost limitless demand.** The rhino population in Africa currently numbers around 25,000, and rhinos reproduce slowly, giving birth to a single calf every three to four years. But in the largest demand markets of China and Vietnam, a growing number of people can afford to buy rhino horn. Already the Chinese middle class is said to number more than 500 million people—and counting. Demand would soon outstrip supply and inevitably lead again to the poaching of rhinos to feed an insatiable market.

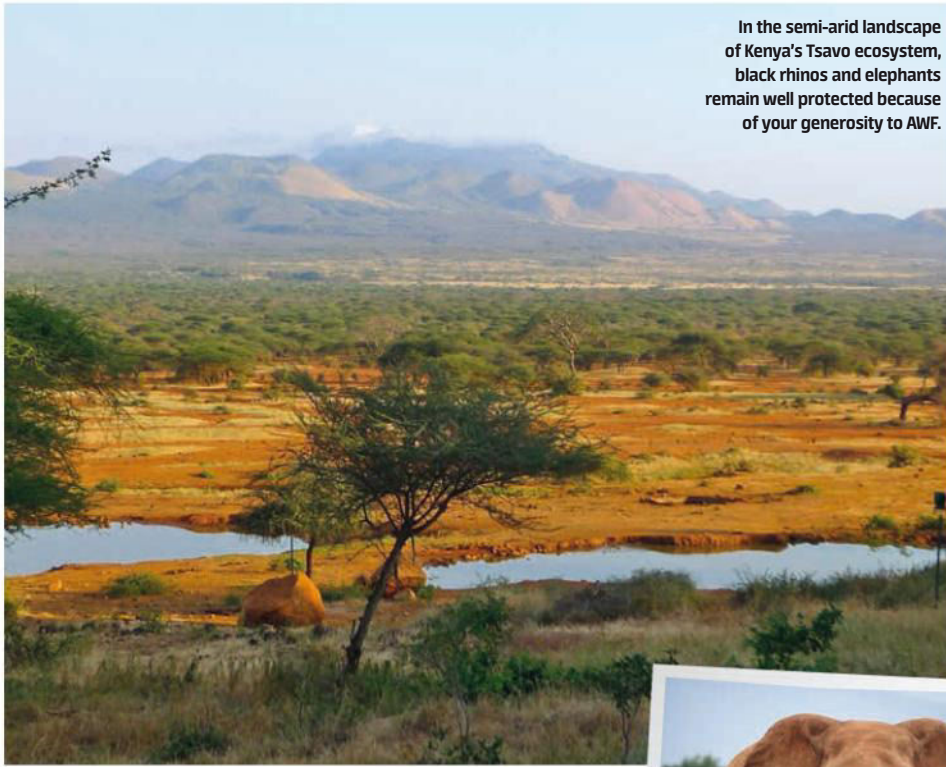
**2 Legalization as tacit endorsement.** Rhino horn is falsely reputed to cure an array of diseases, from hangovers to cancer. A rhino horn trade made legal could be construed as an endorsement of the medical claim and further stimulate demand.

**3 Law enforcement complications.** Experience with the elephant ivory trade, where one-off ivory sales were allowed by CITES in 1999 and 2008, showed that legalization may actually stoke, not stop, demand. Legal ivory sales have further provided cover for the laundering of illegal ivory, complicating law enforcement efforts.

In the end, the panel recommended against legalization, and in late April, the South African government announced it would not make a proposal to CITES to legalize the rhino horn trade. In a new twist, however, news later leaked that South Africa's neighbor Swaziland had lodged a formal proposal with CITES to sell its own 330-kg stockpile of horn. It's highly unlikely that Swaziland's proposal will pass. But it's clear the legalization battle is not yet over.

**Experience with the elephant ivory trade, where one-off ivory sales were allowed by CITES in 1999 and 2008, showed that legalization may actually stoke, not stop, demand.**

In the semi-arid landscape of Kenya's Tsavo ecosystem, black rhinos and elephants remain well protected because of your generosity to AWF.



BRENNA THOMPSON

BELOW: AWF

## WATER & SECURITY WILDLIFE SECURITY



Your support has meant steady access to water and greater safety for rhinos and elephants in Kenya's Tsavo Conservation Area

**FOR THE RHINOS AND ELEPHANTS LIVING** in the Tsavo Conservation Area, water is a key driver of their movements—and their problems. Rains aren't always plentiful in this semi-arid area, and droughts have fallen upon the region more than once in the past few years.

Elephants readily take their search for water to village lands outside of protected areas, raiding farmlands and spurring human-wildlife conflict. Rhinos don't tend to wander as far, but their search for water is still cause for concern, given the threat of poaching in this part of southern Kenya.

The Tsavo Conservation Area is home to the Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary and the surrounding Intensive Protection Zone (IPZ), established by the Kenyan government in the 1980s to protect a dwindling Eastern black

rhino population. Today, sanctuary rhinos share a 90-sq.-km, fenced-in area with other wildlife. Older rhinos are eventually moved out to the IPZ, a non-fenced area around the perimeter of the sanctuary. A corps of specially trained rhino rangers, stationed at higher densities than in a typical national park, ensure that rhinos continue to enjoy heavy protection in the IPZ.

But significant resources are required to maintain a rhino sanctuary and effectively protect species that are at risk of poaching. For the past two decades, AWF has been providing Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) with generous financial or equipment support for Ngulia and the IPZ. Thanks to our donors, we have been able to continue this support in recent years with Urgent Response Fund (URF) grants. These

grants have allowed KWS to address the water issue and enhance security in the sanctuary and the IPZ.

### OPERATIONS CENTER

A number of boreholes in Ngulia and the IPZ provide water to wildlife through diesel-generated pumps, but budget cuts had limited the amount of diesel available to power the boreholes. With a URF grant in 2015, KWS was able to refurbish a long-defunct borehole and outfit it with solar panels and a solar-powered pump. The wildlife authority additionally repaired a nearby water storage tank and pipeline that provided water to points 5 km away from the borehole.

The remaining funding was directed to help maintain security for elephants and especially for rhinos.

Increased poaching threats in the IPZ had prompted KWS to hire more rangers; the URF grant allowed KWS to purchase 12 binoculars and 30 GPS devices to outfit all rangers. These tools were put to good use during a recent rhino monitoring refresher course and a night-time census exercise.

Finally, though the sanctuary offices are meant to serve as an operations center for the area, they were in terrible repair. Termites had eaten away at the walls of the office building—including the wall to the armory where KWS stored weapons and confiscated ivory. Insufficient solar power meant that the operations center lacked radio power and access to rhino monitoring technology for at least 10 hours each day. With the URF funding, KWS rebuilt the Ngulia office. The new space—built with termite-proof materials—includes a newly secure armory, main office and radio room. Upgraded solar panels ensure 24-hour monitoring of the sanctuary and continued communications with rangers stationed in the IPZ.

"Neither the sanctuary nor the IPZ experienced any rhino poaching in 2015," reports Robert Obrein, assistant director in charge of Tsavo Conservation Area. "This is projected to continue due to the enhanced security measures in place."

**These grants have allowed Kenya Wildlife Service to enhance security in the sanctuary.**



# A promising landscape

Dubbed 'Africa in miniature,' Cameroon offers a microcosm of the continent's faunal and floral diversity, but also its challenges too

**C**ameroon has often been called “Africa in miniature” because it mirrors so much of the continent’s diversity. That’s especially true from an ecological standpoint. Like its mother continent, Cameroon boasts a coastline, mountains, savanna, desert and tropical rainforests. Though just larger than Sweden in terms of geographic size, this Central African nation hosts roughly 90 percent of all the ecosystem types found in Africa.

The country is home to savanna species such as lions and giraffes and primates such as chimpanzees and western lowland gorilla. More than 8,000 species of plants can be found in Cameroon.

So it is no coincidence that not just one, but two, AWF teams visited Cameroon this past February. CEO Patrick Bergin explored the southern part of the country. With him were Jef Dupain, our technical director for Central and West Africa, and a trustee who has been a strong supporter of our African Apes Initiative. Vice presidents Daudi Sumba and Charly Facheux, meanwhile, headed north, accompanied by AWF’s Cameroon country director and a security consultant. Their destination: Faro National Park.

According to Facheux—who is Cameroonian, hailing from the mountainous western part of the country—Cameroon offers a promising landscape for AWF involvement. There is the appealing biodiversity, of course. But the Cameroonian government also genuinely needs conservation support. Like all African wildlife authorities, resources and capacity are big challenges. And threats are considerable. In the north, armed pastoralists enter protected areas at will and kill wildlife for meat. In the south, there’s logging and infrastructure development and, again, bushmeat hunting.

Finally, AWF already has a foothold in the country. We have been providing technical and financial support to wildlife authorities in Dja Faunal Reserve and Campo Ma’an National Park. We have an AWF advisor based in Dja and AWF has been assigned by the park authority to focus on Campo. Faro National Park serves as a natural next step for AWF engagement in the country.

## SCOPING MISSION

“Faro is essentially a transfrontier area that spans over to Gashaka Gumti National Park in Nigeria,” explains Facheux. “It also has savanna wildlife, unlike Dja and Campo Ma’an, which are both forest habitats.”

Unfortunately, Boko Haram is a real, if occasional, danger in northern Cameroon—to the point that the U.S. Department of State issued a travel warning to American citizens in December, urging them to avoid the northern part of the country. AWF’s February visit therefore served as a scoping

**LEFT:** With 90 percent of the ecosystem types found in Africa, Cameroon boasts both forest-dwelling primates, such as chimpanzees, and savanna wildlife, such as lions. **BELOW:** Just as it mirrors the African continent in terms of its biodiversity, Cameroon also is heading toward rapid development, increasingly putting pressure on its natural resources.

mission for AWF personnel to realistically determine the area's security levels and get a better sense of how we could support conservation efforts there.

What the team found was not quite what they had imagined. On the one hand, security conditions were not as bad as feared. Two members of a Special Forces team escorted AWF staff while they were in the national park, but Facheux says no visible security threats existed. Team members found the area safe enough to operate without a military escort.

On the other hand, work in the park was practically nonexistent. "We determined that the Faro warden was not even based on site and was just coming in from time to time. The rangers had very little discipline and did minimal patrolling in the park due to lack of equipment," relays AWF's Sumba. The road conditions also contributed to the situation: Of the 500-km route into the park, only the first 30 km from the main entrance are useable. "Less than 10 percent of the park is really monitored," Facheux adds.

### DOORSTEP OF MODERNIZATION

Monitoring is more routine at Dja and Campo Ma'an, thanks in large part to AWF efforts over the past two years. Under the African Apes Initiative, we have provided wildlife authorities in both locations ecological monitoring equipment and training. Handheld devices equipped with CyberTracker software allow rangers to enter data during their patrols. The Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) is an application that then collates the CyberTracker data into easily digestible reports.

CEO Bergin, Dupain and the AWF trustee visited these two protected areas to gauge how the CyberTracker/SMART work was proceeding. In the process, the trio got a



ILLUSTRATION BY LILIANA PACHECO LICE

## A TEST OF ENDURANCE

To work in Cameroon is to engage in a test of endurance. For starters, travel across the country is hardly a breeze. For the AWF scoping team that traveled to Faro National Park in February, the journey involved taking a train overnight from the capital city of Yaoundé to the city of Ngaoundere, then driving 298 km to the small city of Garoua, and then driving another 180 km to get to Faro. The total travel time from Yaoundé: 18 hours.

Naturally, on-the-ground staff would be based in or near the park. But any AWF staff traveling from our headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, to provide support in Faro would have to allot four travel days.

They'll also want to make sure they have A/C on their journey there. When the scoping team visited, temperatures were a minimum of 42°C, or 107.6°F. "A minimum of 42 degrees," emphasizes AWF Vice President Charly Facheux.

Apparently southern Cameroon is no less hot. "In 30 years in Africa, I have never been so hot in my life," says AWF CEO Patrick Bergin, recounting his experience visiting Campo Ma'an National Park. When the group he was with took a hike in the forest, "each of us quickly became drenched in sweat as if we'd had buckets of water poured over our heads."

firsthand immersion into a modern Africa that faces difficult decisions about how to balance biodiversity conservation with development.

"Africa is on the doorstep of being completely modernized and overwhelmed by development. And Cameroon is on the frontlines of this trend," explains Dupain. "Railways, road construction, palm oil plantations, human population sprawl—we witnessed everything."

Take Campo Ma'an, where a deep-sea harbor is being developed just 80 km away. Dupain says the development will quadruple the number of people living in the area. With it could come increased poaching in the park.

Campo Ma'an is a vast 2,640 sq. km. (Dja is twice that geographic area, at 5,260 sq. km.) "The park sizes are far too great for the authorities to be able to manage the poaching right now," Dupain says. AWF will therefore work with the wildlife authority in each park to secure a smaller designated area.

In Faro, AWF is hoping to start work sometime in the coming year. AWF will initially focus on developing general management and business plans for the park, upgrading the first 150 km of the main road and developing ranger capacity. Later will come conservation engagement with and alternative livelihood development for surrounding communities.

It won't be easy, says Facheux, but ultimately efforts in Cameroon will strengthen AWF's ability to engage leaders at the regional policy level. "Between Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo—where AWF has been working for more than a decade—you have 85 percent of the Congo Basin," he points out.

"We need to say to governments that conservation is not a luxury—it is a part of people's livelihoods and a country's overall well-being," Facheux explains. And with our growing experience in "Africa in miniature," AWF will be in a good position to get them to listen.

# WHAT'S NEW **ONLINE**



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**WEB**

## Mountain gorillas under threat

Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is not only a World Heritage Site, but also one of the last strongholds for the world's remaining mountain gorillas.

Unfortunately, the Virunga landscape is under threat from potential oil exploration and activity. Though oil company Soco International gave up its oil license in Virunga National Park in November 2015 after an international outcry, the Congolese government has not said whether it will reissue the oil permit for that area. Meanwhile, the

Ugandan government received several bids in February of this year for oil exploration in the Lake Edward and Queen Elizabeth National Park areas, which border Virunga.

To drill in this area would not only threaten the ecosystem, but also put critical populations of mountain gorillas at risk. You can stand with AWF against the exploitation of this World Heritage Site and its surrounding landscape by adding your name to our pledge.

Sign the pledge: [www.awf.org/stop-extraction](http://www.awf.org/stop-extraction)



PHOTOGRAPHY

## STORIES WITH VISION

Do you crack open your *Travel Africa* in anticipation of being transported to Africa through the beautiful photography within? If so, you're going to love Exposure, our newest storytelling platform. Exposure helps AWF feature our amazing photography and tell engaging stories about the wildlife and people impacted by our work. Take a look: [www.awf.org/exposure](http://www.awf.org/exposure)

**WEB**

## SNIFFING OUT WILDLIFE CRIMINALS

In July 2015, AWF's first class of detection dogs graduated as part of an anti-trafficking initiative designed to detect illicit wildlife products in airports and seaports. Less than a year later, the eight dog-and-handler teams have already made 26 separate busts—and counting. This includes not only elephant ivory, but also pangolin scales and even bushmeat discoveries. The teams are stationed in Kenya and Tanzania. "Illegal traffickers will not be safe at any point, particularly at checkpoints," said Faustin Masalu, Tanzania Wildlife Division's head of anti-poaching.

We're currently training the next class of sniffer dogs (below) and handlers to spot more illicit wildlife products and catch more traffickers.

Get an exclusive look into the lives of these wildlife heroes: [www.awf.org/canine-units](http://www.awf.org/canine-units)



**E-COMMERCE**

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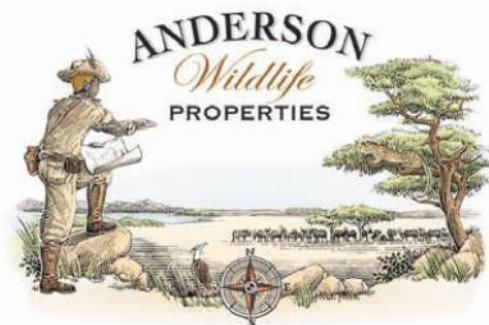
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