



*"God created Mauritius first, and then made a copy which he called Heaven."
Mark Twain*



Ecotourism in Africa's Offshore Islands

by Muguette Goufrani

While living in Cote d'Ivoire, I took a flight to the Adventure Islands of Madagascar, Reunion, Mauritius and Seychelles, all of which I've been raving about ever since. That's why a copy of the Canadian Offshore Investor Magazine caught my eye when it named both Mauritius and Seychelles as ripe for investment. One good reason is that they've done their homework with respect to Ecotourism.

The Magic of Mauritius

Mauritius Island is one of the Mascarene group, along with Reunion and Rodrigues. While this rugged, volcanic island has an area of only 1,860 sq. km, it is inhabited by over a million people. Since its discovery in the sixteenth century, Mauritius Island has seen the arrival of settlers from several ethnic origins. This unique, multicultural variety has become the island's pride -- here Indian, Chinese, Creole, African, European and Malagasy populations live together in perfect harmony, respecting one another's traditions while remaining true to their own. The island's three major sources of income are sugar cane, a flourishing textile industry, and tourism. Tourism is subject to strict regulation to avoid repeating the same mistakes made in countries where unchecked development of the tourism sector has led to catastrophic results. Air Mauritius was one of the first advertisers in Africa Travel Magazine, and we appreciate the airline's continued support. So our readers can become more familiar with this exotic destination, we will be adding flight information and tour contacts: www.africa-ata.org/mauritius.htm

Seychelles Ecotourism

As we focus on events preceding and following Africa Travel Association's 5th EcoTourism Symposium in Cameroon, I'm pleased to report that the Seychelles Islands group is in the forefront in conservation of land, culture and wildlife. While I have praised this beautiful part of the world to friends far and wide as a 'dream destination,' most travelers have yet to experience its pleasures. The Seychelles Archipelago, located in the Indian Ocean east of Kenya, has an fascinating history and culture. French is widely spoken, and the Seychelles is part of La Francophonie. The area includes 42 granite islands and 73 coral atolls, with tourism centered on the more easily accessible granite islands-especially Mahe, Praslin and La Digue. The latter are covered in lush tropical vegetation and are ringed by pristine white sand beaches. Here is some current information courtesy of the World Tourism Organization, who partnered with ATA at it's 24th Congress in Accra, Ghana.

"Conservation of the Seychelles' natural and cultural resources has been a cornerstone of tourism development on the islands."

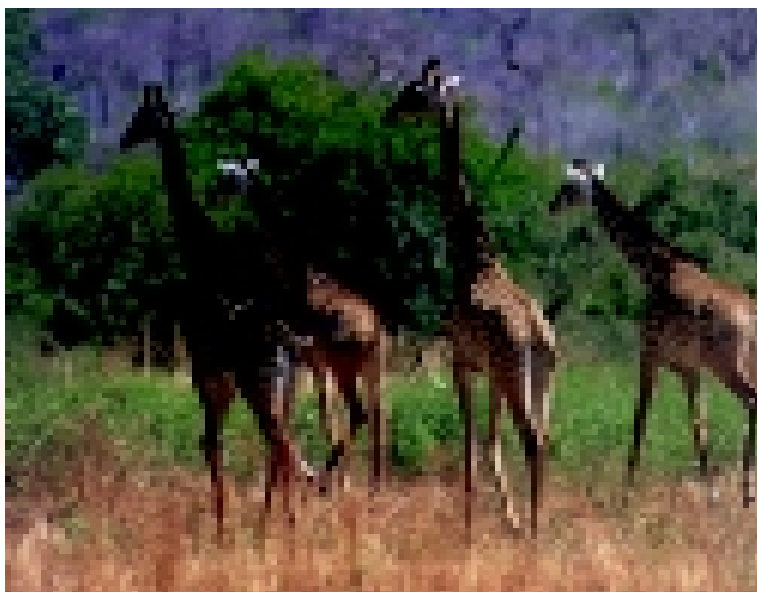
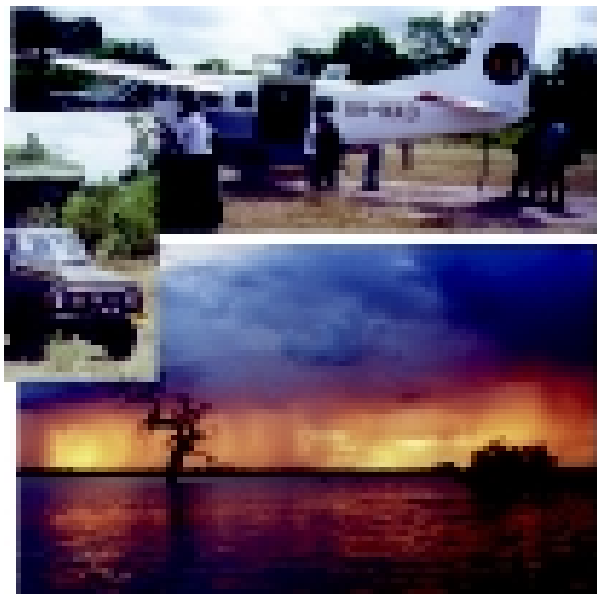
Conservation of the Seychelles' natural and cultural resources has been a cornerstone of tourism development on the islands. No buildings may be higher than a coconut tree, hotels must submit Environmental Impact Assessments, and great care has been taken to develop architecture harmonious with the landscape-all measures based on the islands' first Environmental Management Plan.

The Seychelles boasts hundreds of unique tropical plants and some of the planet's rarest birds. It has two Unesco World Heritage Sites: the Vallee de Mai on Praslin island-the world's only forest of coco de mer palm trees, with coconuts shaped like a female pelvis; and Aldabra, the world's largest coral atoll and home to 150,000 giant tortoises.

With nearly 50 per cent of its territory declared national park, wildlife reserve or protected area, the Seychelles is one of the most environment-friendly countries in the world. But its new Environment Management Plan for the first time includes a section on tourism taking conservation even further. (Visit www.africa-ata.org/seychelles.htm)

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Off the Beaten Safari Track

Tanzania "On The Fly" ... Selous to Kigoma

Photos and story by Karen Hoffman

Twenty four hours in the Selous (pronounced Se-loo) is certainly not long enough for a wildlife safari in the world's second largest protected area and Africa's largest game reserve! But thanks to Coastal Travel Services, a charter flight took our press group of ten journalists from Dar es Salaam for the one hour scenic flight over this 21,000 square mile park. Declared a World Heritage Site in 1982 and more than half the size of the state of Ohio, the Selous is three and three quarters times as large as the more famous Serengeti in Northern Tanzania.

We arrived at the air strip where the staff of the Selous Safari Camp met us. Game viewing began immediately as we spotted giraffe, zebra and impala on the way to the luxury tented Selous Safari camp (formerly the Mbuyuni Safari Camp). Each of the 12 tents has a wonderful view of the Rufiji river, which, as the largest in East Africa, divides the park in half. Each tent is well appointed with every convenience, while totally eco-friendly, including private bathroom facilities inside the tent and an enclosed outdoor shower. We enjoyed river sunsets from the quiet of our own porch or from the camp's 'dungu' style (raised covered structure), open-sided, dining, bar and lounge area.



One of the unique attractions of the Selous is that it is the only game reserve in Tanzania to offer the visitor the opportunity of a boat safari, walking safari and game drive! And in 24 hours we did it all. After a gourmet lunch on the day we arrived, we climbed into the open four-wheel drive vehicles for an afternoon game drive. And here is a major attraction of the Selous-no traffic jams in the bush. You go on a game drive, often encountering no other vehicles. What you do encounter are the herds of elephants (Selous has about 50,000), and the pride of lions feasting on their recent kill. Instead of the chatter of other tourists, you hear only the new and thrilling sounds of the bush.

We returned after four hours, hot and dusty, but cameras ready for our next venture: a sunset boat safari. We fanned out on the Rufiji River in small, open, outboard motor boats. Our game viewing continued- spotting crocodiles, hippos, buffalo, rhino and elephant- all from the water. Everyone becomes a bird enthusiast with the stunning colors and variety of bird species found along the river banks. While sunsets everywhere are 'breathtaking moments', the combination of the cloud formations and river

foliage called for quiet meditation to absorb the spectacular curtain of light mirrored in the water. The camaraderie of the bush evening at the bar area is followed by dinner. Sal Economos, an American from the New York area, is manager of the camp and is also responsible for these tasty menus! All meals are family style around a large table, which encourages friendships and of course, game viewing boasting! For those guests who have more than the 24 hour fast track and have time for a refreshing swim, the Selous Safari Camp has a lovely pool, with luxurious lounges and protection from the hot sun.

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At six in the morning our 'wake-up' call is a friendly 'jambo' (hello) from the tent porch where the Askari (guard) has left tea and biscuits. We gather at 6:30 am for the walking safari. All the guides are well trained and knowledgeable about their surroundings, but the guides' enthusiasm, respect and love of the wildlife, flora and fauna is what really makes the safaris so memorable. Being on foot and seeing the animals in the wild adds a frisson of excitement to the viewing. Two hours later we enjoy a hearty bush breakfast before we race to the landing strip for our flight back to Dar es Salaam. The bush experience was so intense and so remote, that it became a spiritual and totally uplifting experience.

The shores of Lake Tanganyika

Our flying safari then took us from Dar es Salaam on a scheduled Air Tanzania flight to Kigoma on Lake Tanganyika, the longest freshwater lake in the world (419 miles). The Lake, also the second deepest lake in the world (4,725 feet and more) runs north to south. Tanzania is on the eastern shore and the Congo is on the western shore.

Kigoma, a thriving port town, is also the final destination on the central railway line from Dar es Salaam. The lovely 82-unit Kigoma Hill Top Hotel, is literally perched on the hill overlooking the Lake and Kigoma harbor, serves as a wonderful base from which to explore this region. The one story units are attached and include a number of one bedroom suites. All have modern conveniences and porches offering guests a beautiful panorama of Lake Tanganyika and Kigoma Harbour. There is a lovely dining room and swimming pool set amidst the lush tropical gardens.

Gombe Stream National Park, famous for Jane Goodall's Chimpanzee studies and movie, can only be reached by boat. Located only 10 miles north of Kigoma, Gombe is a short (45 minute) boat ride and makes a perfect one day safari. Gombe is a small park of only 20 square miles. The steep mountain range that rises from the shores of the Lake, with peaks reaching altitudes of 2235 ft to almost 5000 ft, form part of the eastern wall of great Great Rift Valley escarpment.

Another remote park on the Lake known for its chimpanzees and other primate species is Mahale Mountains National Park. Like Gombe, there are no vehicles in the park, and the main attraction is to walk among the chimpanzees. The best way to see Mahale would be to charter a small plane. The 95 -mile trip south by boat to Kigoma would take at least seven hours.



A visit to the historic fishing village of Ujiji, four miles south of Kigoma on the way to the airport, is a must before leaving Kigoma. Ujiji is famous as the place where Henry Morton Stanley, upon finding Dr. David Livingston, uttered the now well known phrase "Dr. Livingston I presume?" But the real lure of the Village is the activity along the water. On a stroll along the lake front you can gain an insight into life along the Lake; the dhows (dugout boats with sails) being repaired and the fishermen busy with their nets. A large dhow, or Mumbwi in the local language, takes seven people one month to build, using cotton and palm oil between the planks to make them water tight.

Facts for Travel Agents

The Selous has six camps inside the park and two outside. The Selous Safari Camp is one of three small, luxury properties owned and managed by the Selous Safari company based in Dar es Salaam. Safety of the clients is a serious consideration of the Selous management. The guide on the walking safari, for example, was armed.

Ras Kutani is a charming and secluded beach resort located just south of Dar es Salaam and provide a perfect base to explore Zanzibar. Later this year, the Jongomero Camp will open in the Ruaha national Park, also part of the Southern Circuit. Frank Cary, who was in charge of the safari at Selous Safari Camp will manage the new Jongomero Camp.

Seasons in the Selous: Most camps are closed during the rainy season from March through May. June through November is dry season and the best time for game viewing. If you don't mind the heat, December through February are also good game viewing months.

Coastal Travels Ltd. has been operating out of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania since 1988, with extensive experience in Air Charter and Tour Operating in East Africa that span several decades. Anna Westh, a young, active lady and accomplished pilot is the managing director and pilot, takes care of customer relations, development of new routes and special flying Safaris. Coastal developed the "Scheduled Flying Safari", thus offering the opportunity, to small parties and single persons, to join an adventure which would otherwise have prohibitive costs. Coastal's flying operators cover mostly the southern circuit of Tanzania offering flying safaris that combine the Selous Game Reserve, The Ruaha National Park, and the exotic island of Zanzibar. Coastal's fleet consists of 9 aircraft, ranging from small three seats we use for very private Flying Safari, like honeymooners, to large (12 seats) turbine aircraft with high wing, to enjoy a better panoramic view.

Contact Information

Tanzania Tourist Board website:
www.tanzania-web.com

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Kigoma Hill Top Hotel:

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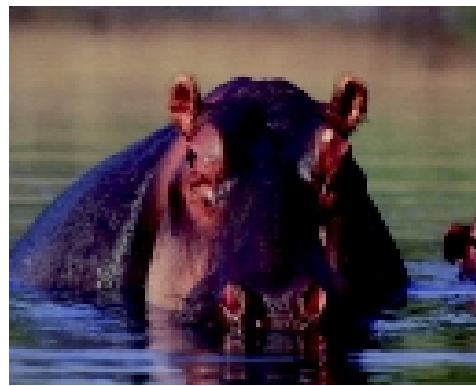
Sheraton Dar es Salaam: The 251-room Sheraton offers a downtown location overlooking the Gymkhana Club and golf course. Outdoor swimming pool. Tel (255) 22-211 2416 Fax (255) 22-211-3981
E-mail: sales.dar@starwoodhotels.com, www.sheraton.com

Hotel Sea Cliff Hotel: This 86 room hotel is located right on the Indian Ocean. Outdoor swimming pool and casino on property
Tel: (255) 22-2600380, Fax: (255) 22-2600476
E-mail: reservations@hotelseacliff.com, www.hotelseacliff.com

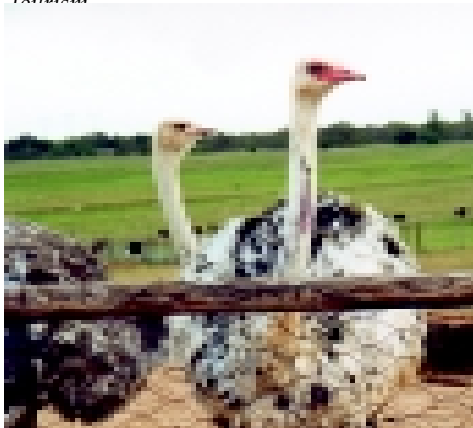
The Slipway- Sunset dining on the Indian Ocean. Formerly a boat yard, Slipway has 4 waterfront restaurants, upscale arts and crafts shops, fashion boutiques, a bookstore and bank. Tel (255) 22 260-893, fax (255) 22-260-0908

1st African Peace Through Tourism Conference

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga, South Africa, March 3-7, 2002



Some of the residents you may meet in Mpumalanga Province, which is near South Africa's famous Kruger Park in the Northern part of the country, which borders on Mozambique. Photos courtesy South African Tourism



Residents of an Ostrich farm we visited while in South Africa during our Cape Tour. Yes, you can take rides on them, so prepare to saddle up for a photo opportunity.

ORGANIZED BY THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR PEACE THROUGH TOURISM (IIPT) IN COLLABORATION WITH THE AFRICA TRAVEL ASSOCIATION AND MPUMALANGA TOURISM AUTHORITY

Louis D'Amore, (right) President and Founder, of the International Institute for Peace Through Tourism, organizer of the conference, Mira Berman, ATA Executive Director and Fiona Martin, Coordinator on behalf of the Mpumalanga Tourism Authority, South Africa, said in a joint statement, "the purpose of this historic conference is to foster African awareness of the social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits of tourism and the role it can play in facilitating an environment of reconciliation and peace on the continent."

ATA, as a founding member of IIPT's Coalition of Partners for Peace Through Tourism, has taken a leadership role in this African Peace Through Tourism Conference. Hon Michael A. Gizo, MP of Ghana, was named Co-Chair together with The Most Reverend Njongonkulu Ndungane, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town. Hon. Gizo, then ATA president, was a keynote speaker at both the IIPT Global Conference Glasgow, Scotland, October 1999, as well as the first Global Summit on Peace Through Tourism held in Amman, Jordan, November, 2000. An estimated 400 delegates, plus other international delegates with special expertise are expected.

Lou D'Amore expressed hope that the African Conference will build on the success of similar IIPT events, including one in Amman, Jordan, held under the auspices of His Majesty King Abdullah. The African initiative will be the first of a series of regional conferences and symposia leading up to the Second Global Summit that will take place in Geneva, Switzerland, October 14-17, 2002.

Fiona Martin of the Mpumalanga Tourism Authority, stated "Hosting this prestigious event will be the forerunner of other conferences throughout Africa, and the beginning of a wave of practical ideas that can assist in building a united, peaceful continent, through tourism." She also noted "the MTA's humble initiative should aim to bring our brothers and sisters of Africa together to share ideas on how to make our beautiful continent peaceful and economically sustainable. To use tourism as a catalyst for economic, environmental and human resource development is a unique concept and one that

has great potential to facilitate Small and Medium and Micro Enterprise (SMME) development in the tourism sector and contribute to poverty alleviation. The conference will be fundamentally 'African' in nature and the focus will be on practical and sustainable



outcomes that would benefit all delegates, in their own country." The conference is aligned to many of the Millennium African Recovery Programme (MAP) key objectives, as initiated by South African President Thabo Mbeki, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, especially those that relate to conflict prevention and human resource development. IIPT is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to fostering and facilitating tourism initiatives that contribute to international understanding and cooperation, improved quality of environment, preservation of heritage, and a peaceful, sustainable world.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

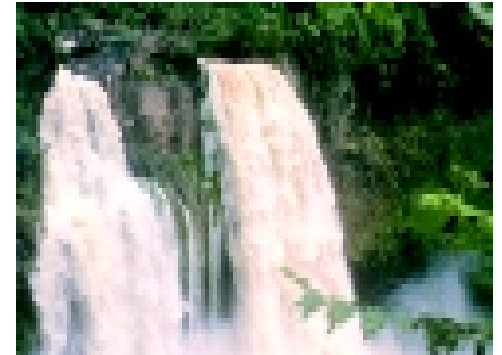
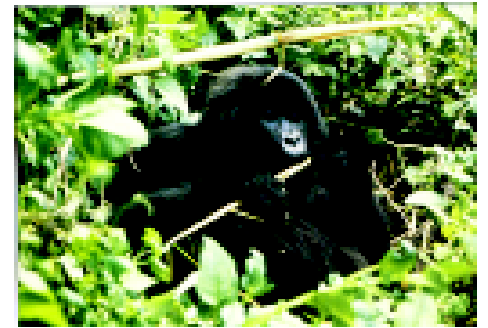
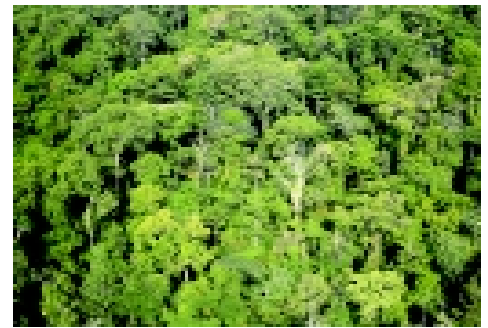
IIPT African Peace Through Tourism Conference Information
In the USA: IIPT website: www.iipt.org
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ATA website: www.africa-ata.org
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Watch for a 16 page Photo Gallery, featuring Cameroon Airlines destinations, highlights of the ATA 5th Ecotourism, Commerce & Investment Symposium and our tour of Cameroon.

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