

**AVIATION, TOURISM AND CONSERVATION NEWS from Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands.**  
*A weekly roundup of breaking news, reports, travel stories and opinions by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang H. Thome*



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#### **AFRICA TEN YEARS ON SINCE ETN DEBUT**



eTurboNews is this week looking back at a decade of success, having grown from strength to strength and established itself as a friend of those destinations which 10 years ago were not exactly in the constant spotlight of the media or if at all often being negatively reported about. Fair and balanced reporting, and the opportunity to 'talk back' and post comments including a direct line to the editors, has resulted in eTN become a focal point for many seeking news and information about Africa and the tourism destinations on the continent. Ten years ago social networks were literally unheard of and the internet, now doubling in size in rapid succession, was still the domain of the developed world, with Africa only gradually waking up to its potential and its enormous power to level the playing field and outsmart established destinations with creative e-marketing and novel approaches.

Websites from Africa, for Africa and about Africa have exponentially grown and state of the art search engines are helping to increase visibility. But it was the onset of the social media, the coming of age of Facebook, the relentless march of Twitter and the impact of YouTube, which I personally consider as the great equalizer, where my continent of Africa finally broke loose of colonial constraints and pushed into the new millennium as the first decade made way for the second one.

The onset of the social media, with people from all corners of the world travelling to our safari parks, combined with BlackBerries, smart phones and tablets, has made sure that we are suddenly seen as we were never seen before. *'The Battle of the Kruger'* became an instant hit, went *'viral'* as the language goes, taken by an amateur on his first attempt to shoot a video, before then uploading it on YouTube. Others send pictures via Twitter, literally instantly, while others yet instantly post their new wildlife photos, scenes from their balloon ride or their romantic beach dinner scenes on their Facebook pages. The world suddenly has access to Africa like never before, but in turn Africa too has gained access to the world like never before. Arrogant customs or security officials go into the global bad books the moment they turn their foul mood on passengers, by Tweet and by Facebook postings, often with pictures of the perpetrators attached, but more important, aggressions and assaults against the environment in Africa, especially where protected areas are concerned, are now going global in an instant too, galvanizing and energizing the conservation fraternities from around the world, united in a common cause.

When eTN broke the news in May 2010, of a principal decision having been taken by the government of Tanzania, to build a highway across the Serengeti's migration routes, that knowledge spread like wildfire and now has over 45.000 Facebook activists supporting the *'Stop the Serengeti Highway'* coalition, including the world's top names in conservation and from the environmental lobby. Attempts to conceal such plans are nowadays almost certain to fail, as it takes just one careless word uttered at a cocktail party, overheard by someone with a smart phone, and off goes the Tweet which triggers the first little stone, eventually turning into an avalanche. This brings on board pressure groups and lobbyists from all corners of the globe to lend a hand, expose such projects some more and name and shame the culprits in government and in the private sector. The stories are many, the Mabira saga in Uganda, the sad story of the Mau forest in Kenya, the now infamous *'Corridor of Destruction'* in Tanzania and the most worrying aspect of them all, the wildfire spread of poaching across Africa.

A decade ago, when eTN first launched in its current format, poaching was almost absent from our parks, apart from what one calls subsistence poaching where villagers go to hunt for food, so as to ensure the survival of their families. CITES, in an ill fated move, granted special dispensation to some countries in Southern Africa to sell their ivory stocks and later in the '*naught decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*' granted permission to China to trade in ivory. The flood gates were opened back then, to many unbeknown still until in 2009, then 2010 and finally in 2011 the full onslaught on the elephant and rhinos of Africa became apparent. Prestige and the misconception of healing powers of rhino horn powder, in particular in China, has fuelled a massive criminal, yet well commercialized underground pipeline, from the safari parks of Africa, over the sea ports, airports and trading routes into Asia, where the nouvelle riche are trying to gain face by displaying intricate ivory carvings, at the expense of the last great herds in Africa. Only weeks ago over 500 elephants were butchered for their tusks in Cameroon, while in Kenya the CEO of Eco-Tourism Kenya got arrested for publicly challenging the head of Kenya Wildlife Services over published poaching figures he disputed. That made for a wildfire story too. The social media, Twitter, Facebook and in often gruesome pictures YouTube send all of it out to the world today, and sharing translates often into caring, when support is rallied, suspects named and shamed and governments pressured to finally do something to protect Africa's wildlife assets for future generations. After all, tourism is big business and is expected to become an even bigger business in the future, as infrastructure grows, making travel to and across Africa easier.

So a decade on, eTN has maintained its place as a forum where news are often broken ahead of the mainstream media and has become a reference point for many who seek information on African tourism destination. It has also become a focal point for those seeking to expose crimes against the environment and the animal kingdoms, with the difference to 10 years ago that exposing such has become exponentially easier.

I extend to my colleagues in eTN, especially the staff in Hawaii but also my colleagues, in the region and around the world, my congratulations for having made a difference and continuing to make a difference. And as my saying goes, watch this space because here the news are told about aviation, hospitality, travel, tourism, conservation and much more, like in few other places. We are not market leader for nothing. And now, cake and champagne please, let the corks fly and celebrate with us this special anniversary edition.

## **Uganda News**

### **STROKING THE NATIONAL EGO WITH A NATIONAL AIRLINE**

As Kenya Airways launched their long awaited new share rights issue last Friday – the offer is active on the financial markets between April 02 and 27 – it became evident once more that '*The Pride of Africa*' has since its initial privatization in 1996 established itself as an African aviation force to be reckoned with and now has ownership from across the region. Their shares trade not only at the Nairobi Stock Exchange but also at the Uganda Securities Exchange and the Dar es Salaam Stock Exchange, with Kigali on the horizon it is understood.

As THE regional airline it connects East Africa like no other in part due to the close partnership with Tanzania's Precision Air, and many institutional and private investors from across the East African Community own shares. So does the Kenyan government by the way, holding 26 percent of the share capital.

The success story of the '*Pride of Africa*' has however also bred envy and of late taken on grotesque forms, with misguided politicians in the region calling for the return to the command economies of the 70's by forming '*national airlines*'. In the case of Tanzania it is a bottomless pit called Air Tanzania Corporation Limited, which gobbles up resources faster than the ink dries on the cheques written by government. With one single aircraft operational, and again only courtesy of government paying for the heavy maintenance the Bombardier Q 300 underwent in South Africa to pre-empt the plane from being auctioned to recover the outstanding dues for the MRO, ATCL is a mere shadow of what once used to be Air Tanzania, which covered the country and the region. Since then has Precision Air come up and turned into the predominant carrier of Tanzania, flying the flag across the sprawling country with more domestic destination than any other airline before them operated to and into the wider region.

Much was said here in the past over the way the Tanzanian government is lukewarm at best and hostile at worst to such private investment – incidentally echoed by leading economic professors speaking at an economic forum last week in Dar es Salaam, when they told amongst others President Kikwete that the time is now to embrace economic change – and their missed opportunity to emulate the way Kenya and Kenya Airways went along since 1996.

Precision Air had an IPO, well undersubscribed with the just over 43 percent of the shares sold late last year, and here the Tanzanian government could have made a point, to embrace the company and acquire a significant share portion of either under 25 percent or over 25 percent even, to make the airline a quasi national airline. Instead of making a sound investment, sure to pay dividends in years to come, they opted to discard the consideration of value for money and keep pouring money into ATCL, alongside depriving the nation of greater funding for the health and education sectors.

Move on to Uganda, where in recent weeks talk of reviving Uganda Airlines has emerged, causing some very controversial exchanges between those in the know of the subject and those peddling the idea as the new chapter of the bible, well almost anyway. Uganda Airlines attempted privatization ended with the company being put into liquidation in 2001, when vested interests, if not outright greed, combined with a serious lack of understanding how aviation works, drove away suitors like South African Airways, British Airways and others.

Now, over a decade down the line, and having seen repeated failed upstarts like in privately owned East African Airlines, followed by Victoria International Airlines in which notably government had invested against all advice at the time, sections in government seem hellbent to try it once again. The investment in VIA written off, and having caused egg all over the faces of the various promoters and backers, it seems that the already empty coffers of government may find that more mega bucks will be asked for by people with cloud nine ambitions, without fully appreciating how complex and complicated the airline business really is. Leave alone that there is need for greater budgets in Uganda too for education, health and social services, there is likely not nearly enough money to create a new national airline and attract the industry's brightest to run it, give it the planes to match say RwandAir and find the economic environment conducive for long term survival.

In 2007 did the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development launch Air Uganda, which has since stabilized following initially poor choices for aircraft made by hapless managers, until their powers that be finally realized that smaller jets were needed to create financial sustainability. That, by the looks of it, has now been accomplished under the immediate past CEO Hugh Fraser and now under Kayle Haywood, the two of them setting the airline on a cautious expansion course with more frequencies and more destinations. It is a fact that AKFED has given the Ugandan government the option to buy into the airline and become a partners, and future plans – in line with AKFED's general policy of seeking broader shareholdings when their investments have matured – include an IPO as and when the company is ready to do so. AKFED has the credentials and pedigree in the region, and in Uganda, with successful investments which have over the years and decades matured into market leaders, and would be a plum choice surely for any government to team up with, not the least to accomplish the vision of having at least a quasi national airline where government has a stake in.

But like with Precision Air, economic realities count apparently for little when egos need stroking and grandstanding takes over from making logical decisions based on fact. What East Africa ought to do is to embrace Kenya Airways as our all link to the world and have airlines in Uganda and Tanzania which add choices and give options in the nearer and wider region. RwandAir is such an example. That airline is of course a parastatal as their efforts a few years ago to privatize were also shelved when Kigali decided to go it alone, and provided the resources and injected expertise on management and board level to turn their vision into reality. Hence, RwandAir today is the number three jet airline in the region after Kenya Airways and Precision Air and going places. If and only if Tanzania and Uganda critically review their aviation policies and make decisions based on fact and not on fiction, could Air Uganda and Precision Air become quasi national carriers, fulfilling strategic requirements of connectivity while at the same time, run on private sector principles without political interference would make them sound, viable and profitable investments for the respective governments. Watch this space as only time will tell if cool minds prevail, perhaps prodded by empty pockets, or if megalomaniac schemes and ego trips will override common sense and economic forecasts.

## **2.000 PARLIAMENTARIANS ASSEMBLE IN KAMPALA**

About 2.000 members of parliament from around the world are expected to come to Kampala for the International Parliamentary Union meeting, which is going to last for 6 days. Delegates who came early have already taken advantage of seeing some of Uganda's spectacular sights in the national parks, boosting #VisitUganda2012, a tag line developed after the *Lonely Planet* guide book company elevated the *Pearl of Africa* as their global number one destination for the current year. Others have reportedly opted to take post conference tours to visit the mountain gorillas in Bwindi National Park, or else see chimpanzees in Kibale, take the launch rides on the Kazinga Channel in Queen Elizabeth National Park or see the Nile squeeze through a 7 metre wide gap in Murchisons Falls.

The meetings of the IPU will take place at both the Kampala Serena Conference Centre and the Commonwealth Resort in Munyonyo, where today the official opening will take place in the presence of President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni.

Uganda's tourism fraternity was needless to say excited and the Uganda Tourists Board was a key player in the preparation for the global conference, providing delegates and participants with material about where to visit and what to see. Other publications like *The Eye* ([www.theeye.co.ug](http://www.theeye.co.ug)) will also be availed to the visitors showing the great variety of restaurants, art galleries and places to visit Kampala now has on offer for tourists.

For more information on the country's tourism attractions see [www.visituganda.com](http://www.visituganda.com)

## SKAL KAMPALA RE-ELECTS KAINEMBABAZI SABITI TO ANOTHER TERM



The annual general meeting last evening of the Skal Club of Kampala saw Kainembabazi Sabiti re-elected as club president for another term of office. In her 'work life' Kaine is General Manager for Amadeus in Uganda, also overseeing Rwanda and Burundi. Vice President is James Rattos, Director of Sales and Marketing at the Kampala Sheraton Hotel and Club Secretary for the new year will be the Seychelles Tourism Ambassador to Uganda and Managing Director of UTB / Express Travel Pearl Hoareau. The membership also elected Mohit Advani as Treasurer, returned Marinka Sanc George as Programme Director for a sterling job done as always, and Mani Khan of Marasa Africa was elected a committee member again alongside Monalisa Aman and the former German Ambassador to Uganda Klaus Holderbaum, who is now a Senior Presidential Advisor to President Museveni. Congratulations to the new office holders and SKAL to all.

## UGANDA WILDLIFE AUTHORITY GETS NEW BOARD, FINALLY



The long wait to have a new competent board appointed, a year since the buddy appointment by former tourism minister Otafire of one Muballa and company came to a dramatic end when court declared him not competent enough to hold the position, is now finally over.

Former Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, Ben Otto, was formally unveiled as the new Chairman of the Board, injecting knowledge of the sector and expertise in all matters of wildlife and tourism on the strength of his long service as PS, where he did outstanding work and engaged successfully with the private sector.

Also appointed to the board was Mr. Mani Khan, Director of Tourism Operations of the Madhvani owned Marasa Africa company, which owns and operates three lodges in Queen Elizabeth National Park and Murchisons Falls National Park, representing the private sector. Mani Khan had previously served as a Director on the Uganda Tourist Board too, bringing with him decades of experience in the hospitality industry and intimate insights of serving on public boards previously.

Other notable appointees are John Emily Otekat, a former deputy CEO of Uganda National Parks and Uganda's link man to the East African Wildlife Society in Nairobi, Boniface Byamukama of Lake Kitandara Tours, Gladys Kalema of Conservation through Health and from the Ministry of Tourism the Commissioner Tourism Ms. Grace Aulo with Mr. Michael Aliyo added from the Ministry of Finance.

Prof. Ephraim Kamuntu, Minister for Tourism, was quoted to have said at the inauguration of the new board: ***'I challenge the new board to restore confidence in the authority [UWA] ... and the new board to be fair to all Ugandans as a public trustee'*** before adding that the public had lost confidence in the past over allegations of mismanagement and misappropriation of funds between October 2010 and now. This was seen as a thinly veiled reference to the misguided if not often outright vengeful actions of his predecessor in office Kahinda Otafire, aka the self declared minister of crocodiles and widely seen as a total disgrace while holding the tourism portfolio.

This brings a long standing saga to a preliminary end, as it is for the new board to get down to business, appoint a new permanent Executive Director and help reshape the future of UWA as a respected and forward looking conservation management body. Best of luck to the appointees and more important all the best to the Uganda Wildlife Authority management and staff as they return now to calmer waters and can finally concentrate once again on their mandate instead of fighting constant rear guard action with kangaroo courts, gone bonkers commission of enquiry chairs and politicians perceived to putting their own vested interests before conservation.

## EMIRATES SET FOR GRAND OPENING OF NEW A380 TERMINAL ON NEW YEAR 2013



A regular source from the Emirates Kampala office broke the news overnight that their new dedicated A380 terminal will be opened officially on the 01<sup>st</sup> of January 2013, taking the midnight fireworks Dubai has become famous for further into the New Year.

Built exclusively for Emirates as part of the ongoing airport expansion at a cost of over 3.5 billion US Dollars, a very significant figure considering the parallel development by Dubai of their new mega airport in Jebel Ali '*Al Maktoum International Airport, aka Dubai World International*' which when complete will be the world's largest airport, it also goes to show that providing crucial infrastructure on the ground goes hand in hand with giving the airline the facilities it needs to continue their aggressive expansion drive. This year alone will see the airline add 11 more A380 and 20 more B777 aircraft to their fleet.

Dubai in 2011 processed nearly 51 million passengers, a figure expected to rise again in 2012 alongside more destinations coming on line for Emirates and the ongoing expansion of the airport will catapult Dubai International into the top slot for international airports by next year, overtaking such rivals as Heathrow.

These developments of aviation infrastructure on a hitherto unprecedented scale in the Gulf region, from Dubai over Abu Dhabi to Doha, is shaping a new world order of aviation where the traditional powers of North America and Europe are left trailing in the wake of a massive expansion in the Gulf – of fleets and airport infrastructure – as a result of being unable to match the growing demand for flights around the globe with an expanded infrastructure at their own home hubs while at the same time also failing to match the cost structure of the Gulf airlines. This is a sore point between Europe's and America's large airlines and something which in the recent past led to some heated and at times unprecedented tit for tat exchanges on several platforms which bring the global aviation fraternity together. Fodder for thought for future articles but for now, we are just barely 9 months away from the official opening of the new A380 terminal and passengers from Eastern Africa will be able to then connect to the rest of the world with the largest passenger aircraft in operation in comfort previously unknown, especially when flying First or Business class. Watch this space.

#### **RUDE NEWS FOR GOVERNMENT AS OPINION POLL CLAIMS OVER 70 PERCENT DISSATISFIED**

Ugandans will be waking up to news today that the latest opinion polls carried out across the country peg the level of dissatisfaction and disillusionment by the people with the government's performance to well over 70 percent, a stark change from a year ago, when the country had just gone through a general election.

Most polled cited worsened living conditions, inflation, the state of the economy, constant power outages and the removal of subsidies, excessive spending by government on wrong areas and poor economic management overall. Surprisingly the opinions are almost identical in the city of Kampala, urban areas around the country and in rural areas, the latter the biggest surprise as in the past rural folks were strongly united behind government. Recent street skirmishes between police and opposition have also done little to bring the two sides closer as divisions in parliament seem to get deeper instead the gaps being bridged. Said a leading tourism stakeholder, not surprisingly on condition of strict anonymity: *'What we need is a national dialogue now, where all sides, all stakeholders come together for the good of the nation. One side cannot forever claim to be the only one knowing the way forward, claiming to be right all the time and everyone else is wrong. Tourism has for a very long time demanded better funding, and it is not about launching a tourism police, the second time by the way, it is about consistent support we can count on year in year out. This is supposed to be Uganda's year, we are turning 50 years as a state since independence, Lonely Planet has pushed us to the top of their rankings and in Berlin we just scooped 3<sup>rd</sup> place as best African exhibitors. What we lack is the funding, implementing the existing tourism policy, not talking about writing a new one when the present one has not been used to propel us forward. Other countries have taken our ideas and made them work. We need a new hotel and tourism school in Jinja, we need a stronger and better facilitated tourist board, we need UWA to get back on their feet after all the upheavals caused by the former minister of crocodiles and we need a permanent regime of sector incentives for safari vehicles, boats, equipment like tents, for the hotel sector, not just one off things. Government now has to put their money where their mouth has been for too long. Otherwise, this opinion poll shows where we are heading.'*

Sentiments upon sentiments, so watch this space to find out in coming weeks where we are heading as the country slowly counts down to this year's Independence Day, celebrating our Golden Jubilee of becoming a nation.



## JUMP IN MARA REVENUE COLLECTION EXPOSES LIKELY GRAND THEFT IN THE PAST

Figures availed to this correspondent during a current visit to Kenya, of revenues collected at the Masai Mara entrance gates since the introduction of electronic payment methods, suggest that grand theft has taken place in the past, when only a fraction of the present revenues were handed over to the Narok County Council.

Initially opposed, and it is patently clear now why, by a small section of individuals with *'connections'* who mobilized rabble rousers and went as far as raiding and destroying park gate offices, the scheme nevertheless went ahead, cutting those past *'beneficiaries'* off an endless stream of cash money, often paid in hard currency, but has now visibly benefited the council and the community at large.

Specific figures quoted by stakeholders in the know were such that for December 2011 an increase of 40 percent in revenue collection was established, while for January the increase was nearer to 50 percent. Still are opponents mouthing off it seems over the 10 year contract the council entered into, not a surprise of course now that the cash cow is giving the milk and cream directly to the council and no longer to others with little less entitlement than criminal greed. Said a regular contributor, who is also a senior stakeholder in the safari industry in Kenya: *'Those who agitated against the new method of payment should now that the facts are on the table, be asked what vested interest they had to incite mobs to come and burn park gates. Police should establish if or how they benefited from the disproportionately low collections in the past. If only half went to the council back then, that balance must be traced and accounted for. We enter a new period in our country now and impunity and stealing must no longer be accepted, tolerated. But that all said, only half of the road from Narok to Sekenani gate has been graded and we were promised a tarmac road last year already. Can we please also know when that is going to happen? Our cars are breaking down, tourists complain and when it starts raining after Easter you wait, vehicles will be stuck again. That also must see action and no more excuses from minister and bureaucrats'*.

True words as also ascertained when speaking with foreign tourists coming back from the Mara by road last weekend, giving fodder for thought for the industry what they will tell their new tourism minister when they have the first opportunity to meet Danson Mwazo. Watch this space.

## ETIHAD JOINS NAIROBI THROG



Ethihad, Abu Dhabi's national airline, has today joined the Gulf aviation who is who when the airline commenced nonstop flights between the UAE's capital city and Kenya's capital Nairobi. Etihad will as of April 01<sup>st</sup>, and this is NOT an April Fool's Day joke, operate daily services on an A320 aircraft in a two class configuration, joining Gulf Air, Qatar Airways and Emirates on the route, besides LCC Air Arabia which operates daily flights from Sharjah. There is now growing speculation also over Fly Dubai's intentions to expand their reach on the African continent although they have been constrained in their expansion by lack of enough aircraft.

Etihad has taken the fight to the market with launch fares of US Dollars 399 to Abu Dhabi and to Dubai – which can be reached by a regular coach service as well as by air, the latter a mere 15 minutes.

A senior management member of Kenya Airways, spoken to in length at the company's share rights issue launch last Friday, on condition of not being named said: *'This new arrival in Nairobi is good for the country. Competition in the airline industry is good for the market, affords many more travelers to go places they could otherwise not reach. And every airline has to fill those seats, so they will be promoting and marketing their new destination. When their passengers land in Nairobi, we as Kenya Airways cover the region like no other. Any of their passengers flying on beyond Nairobi to neighbouring countries, are likely to use our flights, so it is a win win situation for Kenya and for Kenya Airways too.'*

Magnanimous or spot on, though I am sure that the readers will have their own views too on this interpretation. What is true though is that Kenya, and the wider East Africa, has again been put on yet more maps and will undoubtedly benefit from the 7 added flights each week, adding a combined nearly 900 more seats into the market every week with all the related up- but also downsides. Watch this space for breaking news and regular updates from East Africa's aviation sector.

## MOMBASA BLASTS WELL AWAY FROM TOURIST HOT SPOTS

A regular source from the Kenyan coast, only met a few days ago at the e-Tourism Conference in Nairobi, was swift to make contact and get heard when he said: *'We had two separate but almost simultaneous explosions last evening in Mombasa. First we had an explosive device thrown into a congregation of Christians praying in Mtwapa, one of the outlying areas North of Mombasa, in which several people were seriously hurt. Then very*

*soon afterwards was a similar device thrown at a bar near the municipal stadium where again people were seriously injured. It seems the same tactic which was used in Nairobi when you were last there and reported that night and our police are already combing suspect hideouts and looking for the culprits. It is a very cowardly act but that is what these people do. We Kenyans cannot be scared off from what we are doing in Somalia, they should know that by now. But also to be honest, this is the week ahead of Easter and we expect a big inflow of visitors from upcountry. Such incidents are bound to have an impact on bookings and of course the anti travel advisories will be sure forthcoming again and bad for business.'*

Other sources in regular contact echoed these sentiments and expressed their fear that with such incidents spreading to the coast it could have a significant impact on tourism arrivals. Former Minister of Tourism, Najib Balala, who is in Mombasa at present, was swift to condemn the attacks and drew on the parallels of the Lamu situation of last year, which was also overcome by determined responses from Kenya's security organs while the tourism stakeholders presented facts and details without panicking.

The timing of the attack could not have been worse though as the local dailies in Kenya will needless to say of course provide full details in coming days and Easter at the Kenya coast will for many suddenly not be such a fancy proposition, in spite of no tourist attractions or facilities having been targeted.

While in Nairobi it was also evident that added security precautions are now in place in banks, public offices, shopping centres, restaurants, hotels and government offices as part of prevention but also to reassure the general public that indeed all is being done what can be done to keep them safe from Somalia's militant Islamist terror groups, which on the battlefield are now suffering one set back after the other as the combined forces of AMISOM, Ethiopia and Kenya continue their relentless advance on the remaining terror and piracy strongholds. Watch this space.

#### KENYA AIRWAYS' NEW SHARE ISSUE LAUNCH GETS PRESIDENTIAL NOD OF APPROVAL



The long awaited launch of Kenya Airways' share rights issue yesterday in Nairobi was graced by the presence of President Mwai Kibaki, who in his keynote address called this financial transaction the '**biggest ever in the history of Kenya and the Eastern and Central African region**' before soundly endorsing Kenya Airways' plans to embark on a major expansion drive, the intended 250 million US Dollars are expected to co-finance. He went on to say that Kenya Airways was the fastest growing airline on the African continent, prompting KLM's CEO Peter Hartman to publicly throw KLM / Air France's support into the public domain too: '**The decision by the government to take up [their] rights gave KLM [the] confidence to do the same**'.

The unequivocal support by President Kibaki, who threw the weight of his government behind Kenya Airways, resulted in an immediate result when shortly after the function the International Finance Corporation announced that it would fully subscribe to their 25 million US Dollar share rights, and in addition finance a further 80 million US Dollars in additional debt / loans to help '**The Pride of Africa**' accomplish their plans in doubling their fleet in the medium term before embarking on the next stage, which by 2020 would see the fleet size triple compared to the 34 aircraft now in operation.

This announcement follows the previous commitment of KLM / Air France, holding 26 percent of the shares, and the Government of Kenya, holding 23 percent of the shares, to fully take up their combined 49 percent as well as other institutional shareholders in the run up to the function, propelling the '**start up take up**' ahead of the sale commencing on Monday to over 70 percent already, leaving '**only 30 percent of the new shares on offer to be sold and that should be easy**' according to a staff member of Standard Investment Bank. Financial analysts and other bankers present at the function also expressed their confidence that they expected this share issue to be oversubscribed, in particular with key shareholders already expressing their confidence in the future of the airline by making public announcements in support.

Presently some 60 percent of all shares issued are owned by Kenyan institutional and individual investors and the company shares are cross listed on all three major East African stock exchanges in Nairobi, Kampala and Dar es Salaam. This is the first time Kenya Airways came to the capital market since its IPO in 1996, which was equally oversubscribed at the time.



While at the function it was also learned that KQ will increase their daily frequencies to Zanzibar with double daily flights on weekends, to meet growing demand for travel to the '*Spice Island*'. Within Kenya the airline will also commence daily flights to Eldoret, using one of their Embraer 170 aircraft, effectively then covering all four international airports namely Nairobi JKIA, Mombasa, Kisumu and from midyear onwards Eldoret. This will be the fifth domestic destination considering KQ is also flying daily to Malindi.

On the fleet development front a senior airline official confirmed that another Embraer 190 will join the fleet in May this year before from July onwards the delivery of 9 more E190 is expected in monthly intervals. 2013, according to the same official, will be the year of the B737-800 when 10 such aircraft on order are expected to be delivered to Kenya Airways, before in 2014 the big expansion drive with wide bodied aircraft commences, seeing the long awaited B787 Dreamliner and several more B777 boost Kenya Airways' long haul capacity.

Big plans by '*The Pride of Africa*' and big news for the readers as I report live from Nairobi. Watch this space.

## NAIROBI'S TOURISM FRATERNITY HEADS TO NGONG FOR MAGICAL KENYA SHOW



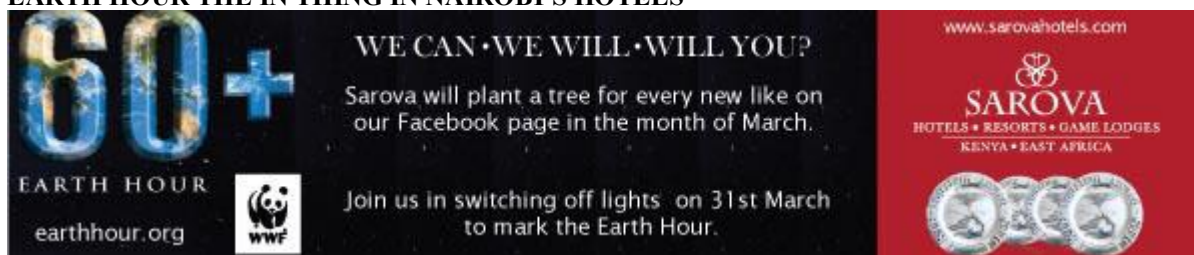
The Jockey Club of Kenya is partnering with the Kenya Tourist Board this weekend to bring Kenyans to the Ngong Race Course, to promote both horse racing as well as domestic tourism across the country, now generally known as #TembeaKenya.

The 'mini exhibition' will be well timed, a week prior to the long Easter weekend, to give Nairobiens the overview of what special deals are on offer for them, at the coast as well as upcountry, inside and outside the safari parks. Said a staff of KTB during the just ended e-Tourism Conference to this correspondent: '*#TembeaKenya is now entering a new phase. Domestic tourism has to be affordable for a broad section of Kenyans who want to see their own country. Horse racing at Ngong is popular already with Kenyans and visitors from overseas. But we still can get more people to participate in such activities. And the mini exhibition is aimed to promote both family outings to the Ngong race course and will give last minute offers for a mini vacation over the long Easter weekend.*'

It has become official policy that by 2015 half of Kenya's tourism numbers are to be generated through domestic and regional tourism, reducing reliance on the often volatile markets overseas when political or economic events dampen interest and financial ability to travel long haul.

The Ngong Race Course is expected to be packed to capacity especially on Sunday 01<sup>st</sup> April, when the annual Kenya Derby is being run, this year sponsored by Spur Steak Ranches. A winning combination for sure between the Kenya Tourist Board and the Jockey Club of Kenya. Watch this space.

## EARTH HOUR THE IN THING IN NAIROBI'S HOTELS



The annual *Earth Hour*, promoted by the World Wide Fund for Nature, in short WWF and others to raise environmental awareness, has clearly taken roots across the hospitality industry in Kenya, and the region for that matter.



At The Sarova Stanley, now 110 years old and located right in the heart of the city, posters remind guests that this Saturday night and every email sent out to clients has a header reiterating the message. Here the hotel group has gone a step further and committed to planting a tree for every 'like' they can generate on their Facebook pages and with only a day and a bit left in March, do go on to the site, click your heart out and make sure that corporate Kenya can play their role in keeping the future green. It also carries a message NOT to print mails unless absolutely necessary, so that reduced use of paper can translate in less cutting of trees.

A quick survey, at places like the InterContinental Hotel where the e-Tourism Conference is taking place, but also at other leading hotels visited and called to ascertain their participation in '*Earth Hour*' revealed that the response was a 100 percent thumbs up in support.

Back home in Uganda, the Kampala Serena Hotel and the Sheraton Hotel Kampala are both as usual committed to observing the one hour '*lights out*' as is Marasa Africa doing it in their 6 lodges, three in Uganda and three in Kenya, and for that one hour on Saturday night, when across the globe the lights are being switched off, it will be emergency lighting only, or candles to enhance a romantic Saturday night out on the town. For more information on *Earth Hour* visit [www.earthhour.org](http://www.earthhour.org) or as mentioned, find Sarova for their tree planting initiative via [www.facebook.com/SarovaHotelsKenya](https://www.facebook.com/SarovaHotelsKenya) and like them. Remember, any added like till 31<sup>st</sup> March midnight will add another newly planted tree somewhere in Kenya where it is much needed to keep the country green.

### NEW TOURISM MINISTER SAYS 5 BILLION SHILLINGS NEEDED FOR MARKETING KENYA



(New tourism minister Danson Mwazo [left] and the former office holder Najib Balala [right])

At the handover from Hon. Najib Balala – who had fallen victim to party politics and paid the price for standing up against his chairman Prime Minister Odinga – to the newly appointed tourism minister Danson Mwazo smiles were put on display for the cameras, but the words that followed made it clear that it was not business as usual at the ministry. Balala has already cautioned that 2012 would be at best a year of consolidation, following a record sectoral performance in 2011 with over 98 billion Kenya Shillings in earning and a record number of tourist visitors recorded at airports, the Mombasa port and land borders. The new minister was swift to promise he would ask the treasury for the equivalent of 5 percent of the sectoral annual earnings to be ploughed back into the industry for marketing, product development and for targeted sectoral support, a figure which could amount to 5 billion Kenya Shillings, if only the treasury would be able to follow this logic and comply. In past years, in spite of Balala's considerably persuasive skills, the Kenya Tourist Board always got less than asked for and had to adjust action programmes and visible presence from a global scale to existing, new and emerging markets selected for their potential to immediately '*pay back*' with significant visitor number increases.

That said, opportunities are there to target new markets as Korean Air is commencing flights into Nairobi in April as is the Gulf's third largest airline Etihad, all of which will do their own promotion and marketing to fill their seats and which will undoubtedly complement the efforts of KTB and the Kenyan tourism private sector. In addition will national airline Kenya Airways push ahead with a fleet expansion which will see new destinations in Africa and beyond come on line soon, which should also stimulate traffic and bring more visitors to the country. For now though, the new minister has his work cut out for him to restore confidence amongst the stakeholders, many of whom today at the launch of the e-Tourism Conference in Nairobi expressed strong sentiments about the change of guard at the helm of the tourism ministry at such a crucial moment in time, as the country counts down to a general and presidential election and struggles with sluggish market performances from the traditional markets like Britain, where a press release earlier in the week by Hayes and Jarvis painted a grim picture of forward bookings. Watch this space.

### E-TOURISM CONFERENCE KICKS OFF AT INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL NAIROBI



The third East African e-Tourism Conference, sponsored by the InterContinental Hotel Nairobi, The Kenya Commercial Bank, VISA and the Kenya Tourist Board has gone underway today in Kenya's capital Nairobi, with over 200 attendees filling the conference room to the brim. Keynote speaker on opening was IHG's Karl Hala, Director of Operations for Africa, as the Minister for Tourism – in view of the recent cabinet changes – was unable to attend what would have been Danson Mwazo's first opportunity to meet the who is who in the tourism industry and make an introductory impact on them. Others speaking during the opening session were KTB's CEO Muriithi, Damian Cook of e-Tourism Frontiers, then followed by Richard Trillo of 'Rough Guides' whose publications have become a 'must read' handbook for visitors to Kenya.

Other key presentations during the morning session were made by Victoria Delaney of TripAdvisor, Sally Broom of 'tripbod' and Louise Dreisig of Expedia, bringing key international e-commerce leaders into the room and sharing their expertise and insights of how best to tap into the fast growing social media segment of marketing services and products and catapult the tourism industry in East Africa truly into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

2 tightly packed days, inclusive of networking sessions over tea breaks and lunches, are now unfolding and an attentive audience is already glued to the multimedia presentations with questions and answer sessions showing just how keen the interest is amongst leading Kenyan stakeholders to adopt and embrace the new technologies and make an impact via the social networks.

The afternoon session was started with a 90 minute presentation and Q&A session by Justin Reid of 'betapond'. Justin, the former head of digital services at 'Visit Britain' was sharing his own work experience at one of the most visible tourism promotion bodies in the world while then giving hand on advice on how to create, build and manage a Facebook campaign for tourism businesses.

After the coffee break came two more captivating presentations from Rob McLean of SATPACK and by Michelle Vickers of RAS MBISI, a unique 'bare foot lodge' on Mafia Island, located in the Indian Ocean off the Tanzanian mainland. Michelle has embraced e-marketing via social media her main focus of promoting travel to Mafia island and by the look of it that strategy worked for her as Ras Mbisi has topped the TripAdvisor rankings persistently, earning her global recognition and attention.

A number of Kenyan and international speakers will make the programme for Friday when in particular case studies in a hands on fashion will be presented and discussed with participants to give them the understanding and skills to refocus their own companies' marketing and presence on the social media.

Visit [www.e-tourismfrontiers.com](http://www.e-tourismfrontiers.com) for more details or follow Damien on Twitter via @daminacook or on Facebook via [www.facebook.com/etourismfrontiers](https://www.facebook.com/etourismfrontiers)

## TRAVEL AGENTS RAISE SERVICE FEES

The Kenya Association of Travel Agents has just announced that their members will from 01<sup>st</sup> of April charge their clients an extra US Dollar 15 equivalent for consultations and bookings made on their behalf, a practice which goes back to around 2007 when airlines on a broad basis discontinued commissions paid for tickets sold via travel agents.

An association spokesperson attributed the rise to added costs incurred, inflationary trends and the need to remain 'state of the art' with technology requiring ever more competent staff to compete with online booking offers made by airlines, hotels and other service providers. It was also learned that companies making use of travel agents for their various need when putting business trips for executives together, can expect higher charges if the traveler uses business or first class, as according to the same source from Nairobi a lot more input and experience is required for frequent travelers to meet their every needs when in the air or on the road.

Airlines, hotels and car hire companies have in recent years aggressively promoted direct bookings to cut out any commissions or rebates but often resorted to then offering discounts anyway for bookings made on their websites.

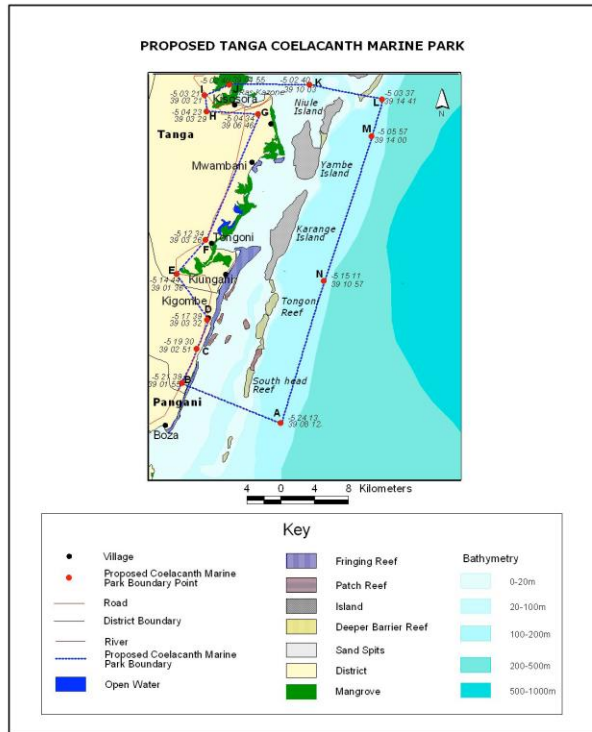
The main prerequisite, having a credit or debit card, is now also more widely seen amongst Kenyans and East Africans and the increase in internet usage and easy access to the web via USB modems at acceptable costs all over East Africa has driven internet based direct bookings to new heights and yet do in particular first time travelers often opt for the advice from experienced travel agents while companies like to have a competent and liable counterpart nearby when doing their transactions through conventional travel agencies, which are the ideal partners of course in case of sudden itinerary changes or to deal with periodic complaints when service providers along the way have messed up. In such cases the travel agency is a call away while more often than not one finds at the time of need that the help lines of hotels, airlines or car hire firms are either busy, or one has to brace for long waits, exhausting

mobile phone batteries and testing nerves, while a travel agent will sort all that out after one call and then gets back to the client by phone or mail with results.

It is a question of almost philosophical dimensions, to use a travel agent or to go directly to a service provider like an airline, a hotel or a car hire firm or theatre ticket agency but my choice would be to use a travel agent any time, and yes, pay for the services rendered just as one does for auditors and lawyers ... too much? Not at all, lawyers win legal cases and auditors help to get the books sorted out and avoid taxation where possible, and travel agents get the best deals and get one out of trouble in case of flight cancellations or sudden changes. Watch this space.

## Tanzania News

### LOCALS ACCUSE TANAPA OF LAND GRABBING



Locals between Tanga, via Mwambani to Pangani are up in arms since it became known that TANAPA is clandestinely scheming for the expansion of the Tanga Marine National Park right into the heart of Tanga before then incorporating swathes of inland locations, including villas and existing properties into a revised geographical area aimed to extort park entrance fees for anybody entering villages or residences or restaurants / resorts, be it family members, friends or acquaintances.

Intriguingly this is happening at a time when the Tanzanian government seems hellbent to construct a new port inside the same marine national park, where the Coelacanth prehistoric fish has its habitat. No amount of logical argument has yet moved the cast in concrete position by government, which insists that the new port must be built inside the marine park, instead of expanding the existing port in Tanga, reportedly much underutilized. The new traffic axis between Tanga to Uganda – the two countries have signed an MoU just before Christmas last year to develop a rail corridor from Tanga to the Lake Victoria town of Musoma from where rail ferries would take the wagons across to Uganda – is to develop two ports, one in Mwambani / Indian Ocean and another in Musoma / Lake Victoria, linked by a standard gauge railway and a vaguely mentioned routing which could see the railway take the most direct route across the most sensitive and fragile part of the Serengeti, after also linking Lake Natron where a soda ash factory is planned.

Looking at the two developments side by side it would appear that the various organs of government are clearly either NOT talking to each other, or in a worst case scenario attempting to dupe the public into believing that a protected area exists while major construction would be planned inside the marine park with very likely devastating consequences. While that is more distant in the future, though going by government mouthpieces about to happen any time from now, the threat to the locals by TANAPA's imperial ambitions to incorporate extra territorial land claims into their off shore marine park, is much more real. Said a regular reader and commenter in a direct message:

*'We have been told to apply in advance for any relatives, friends or acquaintances wishing to visit us or else they have to pay park entrance, even though they may not have the least interest of going down to the ocean itself or enter the present marina park. It smacks of desperation by TANAPA to extort money from the public. They claim there are not enough visitors to the marine park but that is all due to the constant rumours about a port being built right in the middle of it. In fact that is why no further tourist investments have come so far because if the area is spoiled by a harbour, there is no way tourists want to visit a national park here and therefore no big hotel groups will invest. But for now we are battling with a TANAPA gone wild, like they did last year when they held tourists and vehicles hostage at the northern parks trying to extort camp concession fees directly from tourists. It gave Tanzania a lot of very negative publicity and with Twitter and Facebook these days, tourists see something bad and it goes instantly on Twitter or they even take pictures of bad scenes and post them. There is no more hiding, it comes out like it or not. TANAPA has to sit down with stakeholders, not give 2 days notice of meetings and then try steamroll over everyone. They might do a lot of good about conservation somewhere else but here, they are the enemy number one now for trying to steal our land. Already the port area has displaced people with little or no adequate compensation, and now this? Where is it going to end, can government organs just decide behind closed doors about grabbing land rights and make our friends pay for visiting? This will go to court for sure and if the Tanzanian courts do not uphold the law, the East African Court of Justice will for sure.'*

The dramas in Tanzania surrounding terrestrial national parks and now even marine national parks just never seem to end and it explains why so many questions about the current government's commitment to uphold the principles of founding father Julius 'Mwalimu' Nyerere are circulating in the international arena and have brought vocal opposition to life like the 'Stop the Serengeti Highway' group on Facebook, which now is over 45.000 members strong, united in their desire to save the Serengeti from irreparable harm and destruction.

Watch this space as a new front is opening up in Tanzania, beyond the already known hotspots in the Serengeti, Lake Natron, the Selous, the Eastern Arc Mountains and now the Coelacanth habitat.

#### **TANESCO ADMITS THAT BEING BROKE AND UNABLE TO PAY TO BLAME FOR OUTAGES**

In a startling development it was learned overnight that TANESCO, Tanzania's power distributor, has run short of cash and was unable to pay independent power producers, in turn compelling them to switch off their plants as they could no longer buy fuel. This comes after weeks of strenuous denials by the company, when it was deliberately misleading the general public over the true extent of power cuts across the country, saying there was 'no rationing of electricity'. That now exposed as just another lie the latest twist in this saga has enraged business owners and in particular hoteliers, which have to resort to expensive stand by generators to keep their fridges and freezers running, their lifts operating and their pool plants turning over. *'This is a national shame. It is admitting they lied to us for a while, concealing what was going on and blaming everyone and everything else for their own problems. Of course in parliament they could no longer maintain their cover story. Our electricity sector is in a mess and the whole country is suffering. Our government has not invested in alternate sources of power like geothermal, wind and solar and our gas reserves could produce enough but are barely being tapped. Hydro plants are partly out of service, the transmission line system is breaking down too often because of old age and there are no tax incentives for industries or hotels for instance to generate electricity with their large back up generators, so it is very expensive and causing price rises for commodities and room rates in hotels or meals in restaurants. But is anyone listening?'* a regular source from Dar es Salaam wrote in an email.

Tanzania last year went through a series of nationwide power outages and experienced a crippling rationing regime when independent power producers were not paid and fuel ran out for thermal plants. Across Eastern Africa has this become a major issue, in Uganda where monopolist UMEME bears the brunt of public disaffection since tariffs rocketed earlier in the year after government dropped its subsidies due to lack of cash, and in Kenya too where KPLC is also in the public cross hairs for frequently switching off electricity at the most inopportune moments. As the budget for the 2012/13 financial year is now only weeks away from being published, it remains to be seen how the three governments intend to facilitate the electricity sector to keep industries running, tourists comfortable in air conditioned rooms and households and small businesses and enterprises powered up to generate economic growth. Watch this space.

#### **Rwanda News**

##### **AIRTEL LAUNCHES RWANDA OPERATIONS**

Africa's largest mobile network operator, in terms of countries served, is today launching operations in Rwanda, where it will be the third company after MTN and TIGO, stepping into the void left when RwandaTel, majority owned at the time by Gaddafi Libya, lost its license for not fulfilling terms and conditions and ignoring notices of compliance. The Rwandan government moved swiftly to restore competition when inviting

mobile companies to apply for a license and Airtel won that bid, allowing it to expand in East Africa from Uganda and Kenya to Rwanda, one of the region's most vibrant economies.

Airtel, the African arm of India's Bharti, is set to invest at least 100 million US Dollars as the company seeks to expand in Africa and offer services for voice and data. The operator is thought to rapidly roll out across the country with a 3.5+ data network, as they did in their other East African operations and will attempt to get back the nearly 600,000 subscribers RwandaTel had when the regulator threw the book at them.

Bharti is ranked as amongst the top five global mobile operators and with Rwanda coming on line today will be present in 17 African countries, serving notice of intent to continental market leader MTN of things to come. A source in Kigali recently put MTN's subscriber base to about 2.8 million with Tigo presently a distant second with about 1.5 million subscribers, but it is understood that many former RwandaTel subscribers and dissatisfied customers of the two present market leaders intend to switch to Airtel, as it offers regional roaming besides the undoubtedly attractive launch offers which will include subsidized state of the art phones, USB modems and low call tariffs. So when next coming to the Land of a Thousand Hills, there is a new kid on the block to make those calls home with and tell the amazing story of the Phoenix risen from the Ashes.

### **RWANDA DEVELOPMENT BOARD RESPONDS WITH BETTER SERVICE CAMPAIGN**

Hot on the heels of growing demands by the private sector stakeholders that Rwanda needs more training for staff working in the hospitality industry, has the Rwanda Development Board – Tourism and Conservation responded with a dedicated campaign launched yesterday in Kigali, promoting quality services at all levels.

Clare Akamanzi, COO of the RDB was on stage with Rica Rwigamba, Head of Tourism and Conservation, at the launch of the initiative called '*Na Yombi*' or loosely translated into English to receive clients with courtesy.

RDB has been at the forefront to support and facilitate more training in the tourism industry, not just for hotel personnel but also for guides, but has also acknowledged that capacity constraints must be overcome and more training opportunities be made available for more newcomers to the sector as well as for those already in the workplace. Towards that end RDB is working hand in hand with the private sector, the Workplace Development Authority and the Ministry of Labour to adequately address the growing need for qualified and well trained staff deployed in positions where they encounter local and foreign customers. '*Better service levels translate into better yields for the sector. The country has plenty of top rate attractions and while we develop more under diversification plans we also have to train competent and well spoken staff. Then we can fully exploit the earning potential from tourism because foreign visitors expect good services and are ready to pay for them*' a leading stakeholder said on condition of anonymity, not apparently wanting to take the attention and spotlight away from the two lead ladies from RDB. Only last week did Ms. Rwigamba say to this correspondent during a lengthy meeting on the future of tourism to Rwanda: '*We work with the private sector associations on all issues which can improve performance. We encouraged the private sector to get organized, speak through an association because it makes dialogue easier. In fact we meet with many of them several times a month when needed to resolve matters arising before they become problems*'. In the same conversation Ms. Rwigamba also stressed the board's commitment to support training and use monitoring mechanisms to establish, maintain and improve quality standards in Kigali and upcountry at the key tourism destinations of Volcanoes, Nyungwe and Akagera national parks but also along the birding trails outside the parks and along the Congo Nile Trail which was launched in December last year. Watch this space.

### **RWANDA'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TAKES AIM AT HOSPITALITY SECTOR**



Hoteliers in Rwanda have called upon the Workforce Development Authority to step up their training in the hospitality sector to equip staff already in the workplace with better skills and sensitize them to the needs of customer care, according to information received from Kigali yesterday. WDA is presently constructing a training facility for courses in hotel management and hospitality and has sent nearly a dozen trainers to Switzerland to acquire additional abilities then to be shared with colleagues and taught to students upon their return.

WDA presently has 12 trainers available in Rwanda with 11 more presently studying in Switzerland, but sections of the hotel industry feel that number needs increasing if the demand for courses is to be met. '*WDA says they have trained over 800 staff in Kigali and upcountry so far but it is clear that can only be a start. Many workers in the*



*hotel industry and in restaurants are not formally trained and then there are new hotels and lodges coming up all the time. Therefore existing staff must be given a chance to acquire proper skills and get their certificates and diplomas and those joining the industry should have to train before entering the workplaces. It is not the big hotels, they have their own training programmes to complement what is there, but it is the lot of smaller hotels which employ staff lacking certain skills. RDB has done a great deal to promote training and if tourism continues to grow like in past years we really need to do much more training now than before. We compete with our neighbours and service standards there are high, and we need to match that, and do better'* a regular source from the hospitality industry in Kigali said in a mail on this subject.

RDB's Rica Rwigamba, head of the department for tourism and conservation, has in the past repeatedly spoken out on the need to train staff and during last year's function awarding star ratings to a number of hotels and safari lodges also reiterated that those hotels, lodges and restaurants with poor services could be named and shamed if they do not train their staff and improve their skills. Visit [www.wda.gov.rw](http://www.wda.gov.rw) for more information on the institutional set up and mandate of the Workforce Development Authority or [www.rwandatourism.com](http://www.rwandatourism.com) for updates on the country's tourism developments.

## **Mauritius News**

### **MAURITIUS PRESIDENT RESIGNS, REJOIN ACTIVE POLITICS AS FIGUREHEAD**

In a surprise move, at least as far as the timing was concerned, has Sir Anerood Jugnauth, President of the Indian Ocean island state of Mauritius, tendered his resignation from office and declared his intention to re-join active politics as a figure head amalgamating and galvanizing the opposition to the present government. Close observers on the island however mentioned that this was not a total surprise as significant differences of opinion had appeared in the past between the President and his Prime Minister over the way the government of the day was running things and the deep concerns over many aspects in politics and the economy.

A regular source from Port Louis in fact mentioned that the President made special reference to Air Mauritius precarious financial state, besides mentioning other economic negatives and the need to up the fight on crime.

Sir Anerood, now in his 80's served previously twice as Prime Minister and his re-entry into day to day politics is seen as throwing down the gauntlet to the current government ahead of the next elections, but for sure increasing the political pressure on the coalition government which has in the past already seen substantial cracks between partners. His son Pravind Jugnauth presently is head of the MSN party, Sir Anerood founded, and the MSN and other coalition partners have pulled out of the present government leaving it with a small majority, but not enough it seems to weather the onslaught now coming its way with a new alliance being formed to take Mauritius politics into a different direction again.

*'Tourism is not expected to suffer in any way from this development, as long as the political differences are confronted in the right arena. But you are right, 2012 is a difficult year for long haul traffic from some of our core markets and it is also true that Air Mauritius is undergoing some severe cost cutting and re-orientation. This political development will perhaps trouble us more than we like to if the new opposition coalition and the ruling party in Mauritius cannot be civil about their differences. We depend on tourism and have seen what havoc political unrest caused in Madagascar, so the private sector can only appeal to the politicians to settle their issues and not let their supporters take to the streets'* said a regular contributor when mailed yesterday after the news reached. Watch this space.

### **PORT LOUIS SET TO ADD MORE PERIPHERAL CAR PARKS TO CREATE PEDESTRIAN ZONES**



(Map courtesy of Google)

Information was received from a source in Mauritius that plans are underway by the city council of the island's capital to create two more peripheral multi storey car parks as part of their efforts to create pedestrian only zones.

Some of the areas and streets named are Sir William Newton, La Corderie, La Reine and Remy Ollier though more are apparently targeted by the city fathers for 'conversion'. Although it could not be established immediately how extensive such car free zones will eventually be or if eventually much of the city centre will become pedestrian only, it will undoubtedly be a bonus for Mauritians as well as for tourist visitors to be able to stroll about, window shop or simply sightsee without having to watch out for vehicular traffic all the time.

Similar plans are being looked at in Victoria, the capital of Seychelles, where a pedestrian only zone would make sightseeing and shopping by tourists a lot more attractive while also relieving the local population from having to dodge traffic while crossing streets. Watch this space.

### **Seychelles News**

#### **SEYCHELLES TOURISM BOARD PUBLISHES NEXT EDITION OF 'FRIENDS OF SEYCHELLES'**

Just under a year ago, caught blissfully unaware of what Alain St. Ange and his merry maidens at the Seychelles Tourism Board had in store for me as I was busy taking pictures at the opening function of the Seychelles Regatta, he named me on behalf of STB as one of now probably 40 or so media personalities with close affinity and great sympathy for the archipelago. Indeed, there is much positive to write about the Seychelles, their innovative marketing and PR approach and their endless energy and friendly disposition towards any question asked, any fact requested, no matter how often or at what hour.

As a '*Friend of Seychelles – Press*' I get a regular news bulletin, tailored towards the writers out there seeking more than the usual PR release and media statements. For once I thought why not share it with my regular readers who otherwise only hear my views and see events on the archipelago through my eyes or read what comes out of my pen, these days aka keyboard.

Enjoy the variety of news and updates from the Seychelles, which continues to be not just a tag line but for me '*Truly – Another World*'.

# New Minister and CEO for Seychelles Tourism Board

Seychelles President James Michel made the appointment after the recent Council of Ministers major reshuffle propelling Alain St. Ange, then CEO of the Seychelles Tourism Board to become Seychelles' Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Until very recently Mr. St. Ange had been the well respected CEO of the Seychelles Tourism Board. A well known personality of the tourism world, he has in the past worked in tourism accommodation and has been a former Chairman as well as the Vice Chairman of the Seychelles Hospitality & Tourism Association (SHTA).

Famous on the international scene Mr. St. Ange is a well known advocate of the Seychelles tourism industry. Having turned the industry around, he has been tirelessly increasing the mid-ocean islands' visibility since taking office as the Director of Marketing and later as CEO of the islands' Tourism Board.

As a dynamic tourism leader, Mr. St. Ange's appointment as the Seychelles Minister of Tourism and Culture will no doubt lead the two departments to new heights.

As part of the cabinet reshuffle, President James Michel also promoted Elsie Grandcourt to the position of CEO of the Seychelles Tourism Board with immediate effect.



Minister St. Ange & Mrs. Grandcourt

Mrs. Grandcourt has been the right hand person of Alain St. Ange for the last one and a half years.

She obtained a Higher Diploma in Hotel Management at the Singapore Hotel Association Training and Educational Centre (SHATEC) and worked at the Hyatt Regency in Singapore for her attachment period.

Elsie Grandcourt also worked at the Coco de Mer Hotel on Praslin in Seychelles before joining the Air Seychelles onboard team as a Senior Flight Attendant. She also gathered many years of experience working at the Hilton Seychelles Northolme Resort & Spa and Creole Travel Services before joining the Seychelles Tourism Board as Deputy Chief Executive Officer.

For the last one and a half years Mrs. Grandcourt worked alongside Mr. St. Ange.

## THE 2nd EDITION OF THE 'CARNIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE VICTORIA' FINDS SEYCHELLES BASKING IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The 2012 Carnival of the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands that is staged in Seychelles annually by Seychelles and La Reunion, welcomed more than 80 members of the international press from all over the globe to experience and take part in the second edition of the 2012 Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands Carnival - 'Carnaval International de Victoria'.

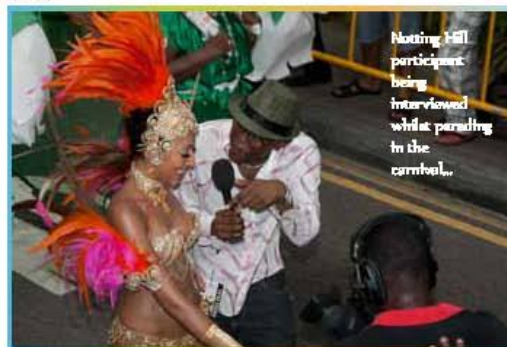
The impressive number of press came from different radio stations, TV stations and newspaper organizations such as the French TV5 Monde, Turkey Focus on Travel News, Australia CEO Magazine, China CCTV and Sina Weibo, South Korea KBS TV, UAE Al Riyadh Newspaper, MBC TV, South Africa SABC and Italian RAI TV, just to name a few.

The press armada landed in Seychelles just ahead of the official launch of the island's 2012 'Carnaval International de Victoria'. While in the country, they were able to witness firsthand the cultural diversity of Seychelles with its distinctive Creole flare.

The 2nd edition of the carnival has proven to be even more lively, colorful and entertaining with thousands of revelers taking to the streets of Victoria in a series of parades, displays and entertainment. Also performing were artists from different parts of the world alongside our very own Seychellois artists and artists coming from La Reunion. To date, many reports have come out on the event, and continue to do so, which will propel the two Indian Ocean islands

more into the spotlight, showcasing the possibilities of Seychelles and La Reunion as a twin centre holiday destinations.

The Seychelles Minister for Tourism and Culture, Alain St. Ange, has said that everyone involved and who understands the tourism industry appreciate the many press present in Seychelles as it means great publicity for the destination, as well as for Reunion Island in the four corners of the world.



Notting Hill participant being interviewed whilst parading in the carnival.





## SEYCHELLES ISLANDS NAMED BEST ISLANDS AS PART OF OUTSIDE'S INAUGURAL ACTIVE TRAVEL AWARDS

The Seychelles Islands have been selected by Outside, America's leading multimedia active-lifestyle brand, as a recipient of its first-ever Active Travel Awards. The Seychelles Islands was honored as BEST ISLANDS. The full list of award winners will be published in the April issue of Outside magazine, available on newsstands March 13, 2012 and online at Outside Online.

To select this year's awards, Outside tapped our global network of correspondents to showcase a definitive roundup of the best new adventures, exotic retreats, beaches, local food, bars with a view, on-time airlines, screaming deals, gorgeous islands, and more. The awards reflect more than just a collection of unforgettable trips—it's a road map to life-changing experiences. The issue also highlights a list of the best online travel tools as well as a roundup of Outside's all-time favorite destinations.

Alain StAnge, the Seychelles Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture said that his ministry and the islands' Tourism Board were thankful to the correspondents of Outside for choosing Seychelles as their Best Island.

"Seychelles prides itself as being the best in sun, sea and sand holidays. But we have more, we have diversity of islands with our collection of granitic and coral islands available to our visitors, we have the unique diversity of people which has brought about our Seychelles Creole cuisine and music, we have a unique mid ocean flora and fauna over and above diving, sailing, big game fishing, idyllic walks in an ornithologist paradise to name but a few unique selling points and it is good that these unique attributes have been noticed by readers of Outside" Minister StAnge said.

"Outside magazine has long been one of the world's most trusted advisors for active and adventurous travelers," says Outside editor Christopher Keyes. "This year we've bottled up 35 years of collective wisdom to select our first Outside Travel Awards, an annual edit franchise that honors the best trips, hotels, lodges, luggage, islands, and new destinations that will be an invaluable travel resource for years to come."

Seychelles is the land of perpetual summer, blessed with world-beating beaches and awesome diversity where a people with multi-ethnic roots continue to live in enviable harmony. Boasting some 115 sparkling islands, Seychelles offers almost a surreal contrast between towering granite islands with mist-clad peaks and low-lying coral islands surrounded by pristine, sapphire waters.

Situated between 4 and 10 degrees south of the equator, the mid-Indian Ocean tropical Creole islands offer a diversity of people who make up its population, rich culture, architecture, delicious Seychellois Creole cuisine and suite of activities that includes fishing, diving,

sailing, walks and trails, spa and wellness holidays, unbeatable romantic breaks, golf, island hopping, bird watching, honeymoon holidays to name but a few.

The Seychelles islands also host a broad choice of international events that includes the annual Seychelles Carnival International de Victoria in March, SUBIOS - the Seychelles Festival of the Sea in November, Festival Kreol in October, plus the Seychelles Eco-Friendly Marathon, Seychelles Regatta, the Seychelles Ball and the Miss Seychelles contest.

In celebration of the Outside Active Travel Awards, Outside will launch the "What Trip Are You?" Facebook promotion, which will allow members of the Outside community to take an adventure travel quiz to determine what type of vacation best suits their adventure style from five categories. The categories include: Enlightened Explorer, Powder Hound, River Runner, World Traveler, and Adrenaline Junkie. Participants will be able to choose between a series of travel favorites—Hotel or rustic lodge? Tropical escape or powdery heaven? Guide or no guide?—that will lead to their ultimate adventure travel escape.

Five grand prize winners (one per category) will get the chance to go on their dream adventure provided by Outside's travel partners. Trip options include: Dory or raft trip down the Grand Canyon with OARS, Heli-ski in AK's Chugach range with Valdez Heli Ski Guides and Tsaina Lodge, Safari in Botswana with Wilderness Safaris and South African Airways, Multi-sport in Machu Picchu and Galapagos with REI Adventures, and an Andes to Amazon multisport trip with BikeHike Adventures. In addition, participants who take the quiz can come back for daily adventure travel gear prizes.



Outside Travel Awards Logo

## Seychelles carnival of carnivals features in the Emirates Open Skies in-flight magazine

The 'Carnaval International de Victoria' promotional pictures can be seen in the February issue of the Open Skies In-flight magazine. The In-flight Magazine that sits in every seat pocket on all Emirates flights for the month of February has been raising awareness of the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands Carnival that is staged annually in the Seychelles.

The advert with "Carnival Time in the Seychelles" shows off the melting pot of cultures through the blend of international delegations that made up the 2011 edition of that unique carnival.

It is to be noted that Emirates are the partner airline for the 'Carnaval International de Victoria' and they were responsible for moving the large majority of the 80 plus press contingent who were in Seychelles for this year's carnival. Seychelles teamed up with La Reunion to organize this edition of the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands Carnival. Both the logo of the Seychelles Tourism Board (STB) and that of the La Reunion Tourism (IRT) are featured on the promotional page in the Open Skies of Emirates In-flight magazine.



Emirates In-Flight Magazine





## La Reunion Island awards Alain St. Ange of Seychelles with Certificate of Merit – Ambassadeur Ile De La Reunion

The Department of La Reunion Island (IRT) presented to Alain St. Ange, the newly appointed Seychelles Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture, with a Certificate of Merit as an 'Ambassadeur Ile De La Reunion' for his contribution to showcase La Reunion through the 'Carnaval International de Victoria', the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands Carnival.

The presentation ceremony took place in Berlin Germany at the ITB Tourism Trade Fair.

Mr. St. Ange was responsible for inviting La Reunion to be co-host alongside the Seychelles for the 2012 'Carnaval International de Victoria' and this has helped La Reunion be more visible in front of a large bank of press coming from the four corners of the world.

At the press briefing at the Kempinski Resort, held the day before the Official Opening of the 'Carnaval International de Victoria', after the promotional video clips of Seychelles and La Reunion were shown to the seventy plus press gathered, Mr. St. Ange spoke about La Reunion as the Indian Ocean Island that offered 'Swiss Like' Mountains and a gentle passive Volcano.

"Seychelles and La Reunion complement each other as ideal twin center holiday

options," Alain St. Ange said. He then asked the gathered journalists how many of them had visited La Reunion to which only three replied. This was in the presence of Mr. Azeddine Bouali, an elected representative of La Reunion and himself a Member of the La Reunion Tourism Professionals.

It must be remembered that President Didier Robert, the President of La Reunion personally led his island's 100 plus delegation to the Carnival in Seychelles. He was accompanied by Pascal Viroleau, the Head of the IRT (Ile de La Reunion Tourisme).

Both Seychelles and La Reunion form part of the Vanilla Islands Region in the Indian Ocean and both these islands have confirmed their willingness to

continue to cooperate in the field of tourism promotion as they seek to convince the other islands of that block to also embrace the 'Carnaval International de Victoria', the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands Carnival, as the event that will increase the visibility of the region.

The presentation of the Certificate of Merit – Ambassadeur Ile de La Reunion was made to Mr. St. Ange by Mr Azeddine Bouali in the presence of Mr Pascal Viroleau and other officials from the La Reunion Tourism.

Mr. St. Ange said that he was honored to have been awarded this Certificate of Merit by La Reunion.

"We had agreed to work together to strengthen our region and increase its visibility as an important tourism region where diversity exists. Inviting La Reunion to be a co-host of the Carnival was to help our region have a bigger carnival, but at the same time help put La Reunion at the forefront, in the eyes of the press, and to get them more known in the world of tourism. They have appreciated our effort and it pleases me. Seychelles always believes that a strong region will ensure a more consolidated tourism industry for all our Indian Ocean Islands" Mr. St. Ange said.



Minister St. Ange being presented certificate of merit from Ambassador of La Reunion

## SEYCHELLES AMBASSADOR IN CHINA KEEPS THE ISLANDS COVERED IN THE PRESS

Philippe Le Gall, the Seychelles Ambassador in China is striving to make Seychelles islands more visible in China now that the Tourism Board is increasing its presence in that key potential market.

Ambassador Le Gall was interviewed by the Chinese Version of Global Times, one of the daily newspapers with the largest distribution in the world.

Alain St. Ange, newly appointed Minister of Tourism and Culture, said that Ambassador Le Gall has been timely with his interview to the Press, coming out just a day before the Seychelles delegation travels to Hong Kong.

"We have a delegation of Hoteliers and DMCs (Destination Management Companies) travelling with the Tourism Board to Hong Kong who are serious in working to develop that big potential market. Seychelles needs to diversify its tourism markets as it

works to regain its traditional European markets. Times have changed and we need as a country to be proactive in our approach to opening ourselves to tourists coming from new countries," Mr. St. Ange said.

Seychelles earlier this year received a special Ethiopian Airlines flight from China. It has also been receiving regular groups from China through the regular carriers. Several of the local DMCs have been intensifying their efforts on the Chinese market attracting even the honeymooners and those looking to get married in paradise.

Ambassador Philippe Le Gall spoke about the beauty of the Seychelles in his article and spelled out to the Chinese readers that Seychelles is the new destination for them.



Philippe Le Gall, Seychelles Ambassador in China





## SEYCHELLES... MOVES ON THE INDIAN MARKET WITH FERVOUR

The Seychelles delegates taking part in the Outbound Travel Market (OTM) from 17 to 26 February in India, have returned in the country satisfied with the interest Seychelles gained as a holiday destination for the Indian market.

OTM is India's leading outbound show that brings together all segments of the global travel industry, from over 60 countries. It was held in the cities of Mumbai and New Delhi, with OTM Mumbai exhibition taking place on 17-19 February and the exhibition of OTM New Delhi on 24-26 February. Representing Seychelles at OTM were the Seychelles Tourism Board's senior marketing executive Amia Jovanovic-Desir and her marketing executive Stephanie Lablache, together with five local partners. The five local partners were Desroches Island Seychelles represented by Amanda Lang, Le Relax Resort with Robert Toussaint and Pravin Darad as this Hotel Group's Representatives, Raffles Praslin, represented by Shadi Karameh, Masons Travel with Jessica Giroux and SELECT-SEYCHELLES represented by Sharnita Palit.

Seychelles had an 18-square metre stand at both exhibitions, decorated with a destination-beach back-drop depicting the core image of our beautiful islands.

Members of the delegations have said that many visitors were attracted to the Seychelles stand with queries to increase their knowledge, while others were so eager and excited to share their experience with them after having been there on holiday. "Those who wanted to know more, to fulfill their thirst with more information and destination knowledge would listen attentively," they said. Indeed the Coco-De-Mer nut, which was on display, no doubt served its purpose to attract curious visitors.

"The interest was immense and all the trade partners who attended the fairs have acknowledged that Seychelles is a hot-spot destination for the Indian travel market segment," said Mrs Jovanovic-Desir. "Increasing our presence by conducting workshops, encouraging more agents and media groups to visit and experience the products and services will help to better position the destination in this market. Needless to mention the result and level of impact should a Bollywood star set foot on our shores," she added.

Seychelles is one of the hotspot destinations and it is the place to be as the Indians are looking for a change and shift in their taste, pointed out some of the Indian travel trade.

The destination is the 'Perfect' match for their taste, confirmed some sales agents.

OTM has crossed the 10.8 million mark and it is still growing rapidly at the rate of more than 17 % per annum. More, importantly with the growing middle class and the future economy which looks very promising, it is expected that the Indian outbound travel market will cross the 50 million mark by 2020 and educating the Indian Outbound Travellers about Seychelles will surely lead to a sound increase in the number of visitors from India to our shores.

As last year, the Seychelles delegation proudly clinched two awards; the Best Print Promotional materials in Mumbai and that of the Most Exclusive Leisure Product in Delhi.

On the 26th February, the Seychelles participants were hosted to a special dinner for a job well done by Waven William, the newly appointed Ambassador to India and Jean-Claude Adrienne, the First Secretary, who were both present at the opening Ceremony of the OTM New Delhi.

Alain St. Ange, the Seychelles Minister for Tourism and Culture has congratulated the private sector partners who accompanied the Tourism Board to India.

"You have shown that you want to work with the Tourism Board to open up this potential market. We shall support your initiatives and will assist you as we move with airline partners to break into this market," Minister St. Ange said.

Elsia Grandcourt, CEO of the Seychelles Tourism Board on her part said that India remains an important target market for Seychelles and that 2012 will continue to see new initiatives in that potential market.



## SEYCHELLES TOURISM LANDS RETOSA BOARD MEETING ALONGSIDE ROUTES AFRICA



The Midas touch of Seychelles' Minister for Tourism and Culture continues unabated, as he just announced, upon his return from the SADC and RETOSA meetings in Mauritius, that Victoria will be the venue of the next RETOSA board meeting, just ahead of the time when **Routes Africa 2012** is taking place between the 08<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of July.

This will give added weight to the **Routes Africa 2012** meeting, arguably increasing potential attendance and highlighting the importance of aviation to the tourism sectors of not just the islands but for the mainland countries on the continent of Africa. Airlines, Civil Aviation bodies and tourist boards will jointly map out how best in the future they can cooperate to increase traffic to Africa, which – with a billion tourists expected to travel in 2012 – receives only a minute percentage of global visitors, something urgently in need of changing.

Minister St. Ange also reiterated important points about the **Routes Africa** meeting when he said: *'Participants of the forum will include representatives from the Airline Industry, Tourism authorities and Civil Aviation Authorities and for this 2012 edition we are looking at the cruise ship businesses because our region remains an ideal venue for the fly-cruise business possibility options. Seychelles noted the importance to push forward the triangular approach to Tourism by consolidating the Tourism Authorities, Civil Aviation and Airlines with the added angle of cruise ship integration for this year's edition of ROUTES AFRICA 2012'*.

He also reportedly used his presence at the Mauritius RETOSA meeting to re-iterate the need for SADC countries to work hand in hand in fighting piracy, an issue where the Seychelles have been acknowledged to have taken global leadership with their robust and determined responses when pirates attempting to enter the Seychelles waters are detected by aerial surveillance and then relentlessly hunted down. For up-to-date news from the Seychelles do not look any further but simply watch this space.

### UPDATES ON ROUTES AFRICA IN SEYCHELLES GENERATE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FLOW

Regular reporting on the **Routes Africa** event which is scheduled for July in the Seychelles capital Victoria on the main island of Mahe has led to a flurry of additional information being availed, for the other **Routes Conferences** for the various regions around the globe. Following the regional **Routes Conferences** as shown below will the annual global **World Routes** then be held in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the UAE. Find the various important updates here below including links to the relevant websites.

### WORLDWIDE EVENTS BY ROUTES UPDATE ISSUED AS SEYCHELLES TAKES ITS PLACE FOR AFRICA

Air service industry professionals and world's leading Route Development experts are on the move when one looks at the planning just issued by Gerard Brown, the International Tourism Development Director for UBM Aviation Routes.

'Well, it's been a busy few months and I have been working with tourism authorities in SATTE Delhi, Seychelles, ITB Berlin and Cruise Shipping Miami. Its fair to say that the global tourism industry has had its fair share of knocks lately between the awful Concordia tragedy, Costa Allegra in the Seychelles, the continuing farce of APD and ETS, and yet the one constant is the need for all parties to sit down face to face in meaningful dialogue in order to continue development of our destinations. In many cases, particularly in Europe, our economies are so heavily burdened that increased tourism could in many ways be our savior and at Routes events every year, destinations are coming away with new air services all the time and pertinently, many destinations are losing air services'. If there is no dialogue with the airlines then it cannot always be assumed that all is going well. Better to be proactive, as anyone in aviation will tell you, it is practically impossible to win an airline back once they pull out' says Gerard Brown, International Tourism Development Director - UBM Aviation, Routes

#### [Are you Ready for Routes?](#)

The world's airlines all agree that tourism authorities and key stakeholders can provide essential market information which can help them to justify a new air service. If you are going to attend any Routes events this year and meet one



to one with the airline network planners in order to convince them to fly to your destination, it is essential that you understand exactly what they are looking for from you. After consulting with our airline contacts, we have begun working with the world's leading Route Development experts ASM, in order to provide a 1 day Route Development course designed specifically for Tourism Authorities and Stakeholders.

[Click here for more info on Route Development For Tourism Authorities](#)

#### [Routes Asia](#), 15-17 April, Chengdu

Route Exchange Live Briefings are set to grab the attention of the regions destinations yet again this year as Garuda Indonesia, Air China, Finnair, Emirates, Sichuan Airlines & Hainan Airlines all look to present their route network plans and strategies going forward. Last year, among others, Brussels walked away with a new Hainan Airlines flight. Will your destination benefit from new air services at Routes Asia this year? Scheduling of meetings for Routes Asia in Chengdu will close on Thursday 5th April, just two weeks from now! Register and get your meeting requests in as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.

[Register for Routes Asia](#)

#### [Routes Europe](#), 20-22 May, Tallinn

With Airline briefings from Aer Lingus and Easyjet among others, Routes Europe is set to be the event to meet all of the European carriers and convince them that your destination is underserved and that you have the evidence to support new air services. In addition, our Hosts, Tallinn Airport, together with their partners from the Estonian Tourist Board, Tallinn City Tourist Office & Convention Bureau, are keen that delegates attending this year's Routes Europe event in Tallinn should make sure that they take some time, before or after the event to really take in the sights of this small, cosy and easy-to-explore historic city. For delegates wishing to discover Tallinn on their own, Tallinn City is offering a complimentary Tallinn Card. The Tallinn Card is your all-in-one ticket to the very best the city has to offer and is accepted in nearly 100 locations. The card presents a simple way to explore Tallinn on your own, choosing the sights that interest you most whilst providing you with many benefits.

[Register for Routes Europe](#)

#### [Routes CIS](#), 24-26 June, Ekaterinburg

In addition to meeting the carriers from the CIS region, this second Routes CIS will also play host to a lively route development strategy summit. The topics to be discussed include:

- Accessing the CIS Market - Bilaterals and Barriers to Entry
- ◆ Attracting the Outbound CIS Leisure Market
- ◆ Investment, Infrastructure & Improvements - Airport Development in the CIS
- ◆ The CIS as the Cargo Gateway between Europe and Asia

The Forum is expected to be a lively event and the moderators will encourage debate between panel members and the audience. It is open to all Routes CIS delegates and promises to be a stimulating and enjoyable part of the event which should not be missed.

[Register for Routes CIS](#)

#### [Routes Africa](#), 08-10 July, Seychelles

**After attending their first Routes event in Berlin last September, Seychelles Tourism were quick to see the benefits which Routes events can have on a destination. Shortly afterwards, they placed their bid to become the host for Routes Africa and this week it was announced that they will host the event on 08-10 July. This will be the first time Routes Africa has been held in the Indian Ocean and it is anticipated that there will be a strong presence from the whole region.**

#### [World Routes](#), 29 Sep-02 Oct, Abu Dhabi

The 18th World Route Development Forum will provide more opportunities for air service industry professionals to meet and do business than ever before.

This year's event, which will take place later this year in Abu Dhabi, will see the addition of a third day of pre-scheduled meetings giving Chalet Owners and Exhibition Stand holders extra opportunities to meet with their target

carriers. During the afternoon of Sunday 30th September, from 14:00-17:00, stand holders and Chalet Owners will be able to take advantage of a pre-scheduled diary of 20 minute meetings which will take place in their respective Chalets or exhibition stands.

Speaking about these additional meeting opportunities Paul Winfield, Airline Relations Director for Routes explains: "The 17th World Route Development Forum in Berlin saw 500 key decision makers from over 300 of the world's leading airlines attend the event, and the overwhelming feedback was for further opportunity to visit the exhibitors to understand the market data and information they can provide."

Stand holders and Chalet owners will now have the ability to request five pre-scheduled twenty minute meetings that will take place on their stand, or in their chalet during Sunday afternoon and this reflects the demand for meetings which continues to grow. Since 2008 when World Routes took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, there has been a 31% rise in the number of pre-scheduled meetings.

The five extra meetings, which must be taken on the afternoon of Sunday 30th September, will be in addition to the number of strategic or double slot meetings which are already offered to Chalet and HNS holders at World Routes. Meeting with an airport or tourism authority at their hosted Networking Stand or Chalet can allow for more private and in-depth discussions to take place as there is more scope for airlines to grasp a real understanding of the destination through videos, images and stand activities. Larger meetings with more participants can take place away from the airline meeting tables providing the tourism authorities or economic development agencies with an opportunity to support their airport in their presentations. These meetings will provide airlines with a more rounded picture for a potential new market and supply the right information from the right contacts whilst ensuring that airports gain further opportunities to introduce their destination to their target carriers.