

AVIATION TOURISM & CONSERVATION

NEWS EAST AFRICA

A daily service from Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands of breaking news, reports, travel stories and opinions by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang H. Thome



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Africa News

AFRICA TRAVEL WEEK WELCOMES MEDIA PROFESSIONALS WITH FREE REGISTRATION

(Posted 27th February 2014)



World Travel Market Africa (WTM), the leading B2B exhibition for Africa's travel industry, has now opened the registration process for visitors and press.

The inaugural WTM Africa will bring the world to Africa and promote Africa to the world over the two day event on 02nd to 03rd of May, as part of the South African based Thebe Reed Exhibitions' *Africa Travel Week*, at the Cape Town International Convention Centre.

Both inbound and outbound travel professionals as well as **media personnel** can now register to attend the first ever World Travel Market Africa online at www.wtmafrica.com. *By registering ahead of the show visitors can avoid the onsite registration fee.*

Over the two day *WTM Africa*, attendees can take advantage of the excellent line-up of sessions which make up the Official Event Programme, featuring senior speakers from well-known organisations such as African Business Travel Association (ABTA), Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Digital Tourism Think Tank and Travel Bloggers Unite.

WTM Africa's own Responsible Tourism Programme will also form a key component of the sessions taking place over the two days of the event. The *Responsible Tourism Programme* will be brought together by industry leader and organiser of the World Travel Market Responsible Tourism Programme in London, Professor Harold Goodwin and includes speakers such as Fabrice Leclercq of T.R.I.P. Ghana and Heidi van der Watt from the ICRT South Africa.

WTM Africa continues to attract a lot of interest from senior buyers from around the globe, with a high number of travel businesses confirming their attendance and looking forward to sign deals with African and international exhibitors.

The WTM Africa Hosted Buyer Programme offers a unique opportunity for 300 senior level travel industry buyers with direct purchasing power to attend WTM Africa as VIPs, including complimentary accommodation, transfers and a contribution towards flight costs.

Kevin Bailey 'Chief Lion' at well-known South African company Lion Roars commented "We are delighted that the event is taking place in our favourite city, Cape Town. We applaud the decision to stage WTM Africa in Cape Town and we are sure the event will be a resounding success, allowing us a great platform to share our passion and pride for our portfolio and our fantastic country."

In addition to exhibitors from across Africa will some 30 destinations will be represented on the show floor from outside of Africa, including, France, Dubai, Germany, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Portugal, Norway, India, Thailand, Turkey, Italy, Singapore, Israel, Malaysia and many more.

Exhibitors from Africa including Namibia, Zambia, Swaziland, Reunion Island and Botswana along with top Destination Management Company Thompsons Africa, amongst others, will all be showcasing their destinations, products and services, taking full advantage of the networking opportunities available, including the WTM Africa Welcome Party where attendees will have the chance to network in a relaxed party environment whilst sampling the delights Cape Town has to offer.

A wide range of travel technology companies, hotel groups, safari operators and exciting tourist attractions will also form part of the first WTM Africa, including Amadeus, Hotelspro, Quadlabs Technologies, Timeless Safaris, City Lodge Group, TBO Holidays (Techmaster), Rezlive.com, Cango Caves, Three Cities, South African National Parks, Acacia Africa to highlight but a few. Dreams 4 Africa will be well represented on the exhibition floor with Kololo Game Reserve, Island's Edge Luxury Villas, Umlani Bushcamp, Marine Dynamics to name just a few as exhibiting partners.

WTM Africa Exhibition Manager, Polly Magraw said: ***'WTM Africa is progressing successfully and I am extremely confident the show will deliver high quality content for the growing African tourism market. We are delighted with the number of people that have shown an interest so far in WTM Africa. I'm sure this will be reflected in positive registration numbers and will lead to a highly fruitful event for all'***.

Africa Travel Week dates and events are:

- ILTM Africa 28 – 30 April 2014
- IBTM Africa 28 – 30 April 2014
- WTM Africa 2 – 3 May 2014

To register please visit for this event please visit <http://www.wtmafrica.com/registration>

East Africa News

EMIRATES STEPS UP FLIGHTS TO THE US WITH THE ADDITION OF BOSTON AND CHICAGO

(Posted 25th February 2014)



Emirates' announced their 9th destination to their network in the United States when setting the date of 05th August for the inaugural flight to Chicago. This follows in the footsteps of Boston as the airline's 8th destination, which is being launched next month as per an earlier announcement made and featured here. Emirates already flies to 7 US destinations, namely New York, Washington DC, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Houston and Dallas. Emirates proposes to use a Boeing B777-200LR for the Chicago service, and when launched this will offer travelers from Eastern Africa, where Emirates serves Entebbe, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, one of the widest options when flying to the United States using one carrier and one stop only enroute.

Operating a fleet of now 212 aircraft, among them the largest number of Airbus A380 any airline operates around the world, Emirates now serves 140 destinations in 80 countries and continues to roll out more destinations as more aircraft are being delivered, providing the capacity to do so.

Meanwhile it was also learned that Emirates has signed a wide reaching MoU with Ecuador's TAME airline, which will begin to uplift passengers and cargo originating from Emirates' nonstop flights from Dubai into both New York and Sao Paulo / Brazil and then fly them to Quito, Ecuador's capital city. Buenos Aires and Los Angeles, two cities where both TAME and Emirates are flying to, may be added at some time in the future to widen the range of connections from the UAE into South America, via Ecuador.

Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news with relevance to the Eastern African markets.

INAUGURAL WTM AFRICA DRAWS BIG NAMES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

(Posted 22nd February 2014)



International travel and hospitality heavyweight brands such as TripAdvisor, Hilton Worldwide, Starwood and the Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group are among the many exhibitors signed up already for the inaugural WTM Africa. TripAdvisor, one of the world's largest travel sites, which boasts more than 125 million reviews, is excited about participating in the show. ***'WTM Africa's inaugural event this year in Cape Town gives us a great opportunity to connect with a growing market. We hope to explain the value that TripAdvisor can bring to hospitality businesses in Africa that want to connect with our 260 million unique users globally, and how they can benefit from using TripAdvisor's online marketing services'*** said Doros Theodorou, Commercial Director, EMEA, TripAdvisor for Business.

Also amongst the confirmed exhibitors are Hilton Worldwide, featuring ten brands and 4,000 hotels across 90 countries and The Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group - one of the fastest growing chains in the world which offers brands such as Radisson Blu, Park Inn by Radisson and Hotel Missoni.

WTM Africa, which takes place on 02nd and 03rd of May in Cape Town, will also feature tourist office exhibitors from across the world, including Turkey, Dubai and France.

Exhibitors will hold business discussions with leading pan African travel industry buyers, and will include a 300 strong hosted buyer programme. WTM Africa, Event Manager, Polly Magraw, said ***'Africa is the next key region for international travel brands, meaning that global hotel groups, airlines, operators, agents and global technology firms are all keen to make their mark on the continent by participating at WTM Africa. Tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors on the African continent and it is set to continue to grow significantly over the next five years. The time is right for Africa to take a greater presence on the global stage and WTM Africa offers the perfect platform for this. Many international travel brands recognise the potential the region has and are keen to show their support for the event from the beginning. WTM Africa also offers an event programme designed to appeal to a broad spectrum of travel professionals, offering best insight into the industry and the exciting future prospects for this emerging region'***.

World Travel Market Africa is part of South African based Thebe Reed Exhibition's Africa Travel Week, which also includes IBTM Africa and ILTM Africa at The Cape Town International Convention Centre from 28th April –

3rd May 2014. Africa Travel Week encompasses Africa's inbound and outbound markets for general leisure tourism, luxury travel and the MICE/business travel sector. Three travel industry events in one week, under one roof.

- ILTM Africa 28 – 30 April 2014
- IBTM Africa 28 – 30 April 2014
- WTM Africa 2 – 3 May 2014

It is expected that a major contingent of hospitality and tourism businesses as well as tourism boards from Eastern Africa will be present at these events in order to not only tap into the market opportunities such a bundle of tourism trade fairs offer but also to make sure that the East African region is seen to be actively promoting their rich attractions, from beaches over game parks to the mountains, and from culture over art and fashion to cuisine. Watch this space for more upcoming updates on these three events.

Uganda News

UGANDA'S REPUTATION TAKES ANOTHER KNOCK AS JUDGE RETURNS BLOOD IVORY TO OWNERS

(Posted 28th February 2014)



Conservationists and the public at large were baffled when news broke two days ago that High Court Judge Musalu Musene had delivered a ruling which effectively returned a seized consignment of blood ivory coming from the Congo to the unknown owners. Immediate allegations of a corrupt ruling were made and calls emerged to the judiciary disciplinary body to take action against the judge, whose future now looks bleak if any improprieties can be pinned on him.

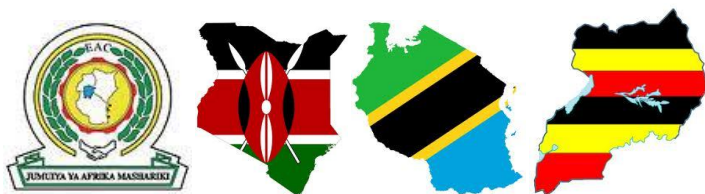
Top officials from the Uganda Wildlife Authority as well as from the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities also immediately vowed to prevent the consignment of over 850 pieces of ivory, seized in October last year, from ever leaving Uganda and it is understood that an appeal will be launched against the ruling, which according to one source at UWA *'stinks of malpractice and suggests the judge is either totally incompetent or was gotten to'*.

Tourism Minister Maria Mutagamba too expressed her outrage and disappointment with the judgment when she said in a media release received yesterday afternoon: *'We are very dismayed by the said judgment and the likely implications it has for Uganda as a contracting party to CITES Convention [but] most importantly the damage this has on tourism development and wildlife conservation in Uganda. A team of lawyers of the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and URA have already filed a notice of appeal to challenge the judgement. We shall decisively pursue the criminal prosecution of the suspects until they are brought to book. Security agencies continue to pursue these suspects who are at large'*.

Uganda, unlike neighbour Kenya, where a new wildlife law with fines up to 20 million Kenya Shillings and life in prison for poachers, smugglers and middlemen is now in place, Uganda has dragged her feet over putting an amendment of the current law before parliament, while however finding the time to incur global wrath and active decampaigning over two recently passed bills, the so called *'Anti Mini Skirt Bill'* and the *'Anti Gay Bill'*, which has already led to Norway withdrawing all financial support for Uganda and other foreign governments considering similar action. Leading human rights activists and bodies have already started to call for a boycott of Uganda as a destination, citing brutally harsh treatment for gays and the likely implication for female travellers wearing miniskirts or *'hot pants'*, especially after several women across Uganda were already attacked and stripped naked by mobs as a result of targeted and thinly concealed comments by politicians.

Tourism circles are concerned about the potential fallout for their business vis a vis the two bills and the latest damage done with the judicial ruling to release the seized ivory but only time will tell just how extensive and lasting the damage will be to Uganda's reputation abroad. Find more information about Destination Uganda via www.visituganda.com and about the country's national parks and game reserves via www.ugandawildlife.org. Watch this space.

KENYAN SAFARI OPERATORS DENOUNCE 'NEW AGREEMENT WITH TANZANIA' AS USELESS



The announcement of 'progress' and reaching an agreement between Tanzania and Kenya during last week's meeting in Arusha was quickly shot down in flames by significant sections of the safari operator fraternity in Kenya. *'A lot of hullabaloo about fundamentally nothing new'* wrote one regular source while another wrote *'Where is the breakthrough the media are harping on about. We were already able to drop clients in Arusha or Moshi, so that is not new at all. There are shuttle busses running between Arusha and JKIA and Nairobi, again, there is nothing new about that. Key issues like the Bologonja border were again omitted for the sake of political expediency. Balala raised these issues, but since he left his successors seem overly concerned not to ruffle feathers with their colleagues in Tanzania. Sort out Bologonja, sort out air access from Wilson to the Tanzanian parks, sort out access for our vehicles to the Tanzanian parks, and THEN talk about progress. This was just a political stage show, nothing else, Nothing has changed'*.

A Ugandan source summed up their sentiments with a comment on the EATP Facebook page when writing: *'In Tanzania, they don't allow tourist guides from other countries to access their tourist sites. They ask you to use a local Tanzanian guide or tour operator. In Kenya you pay up to \$300 per vehicle. But in Uganda, it is free entrance. What does this mean?'*

Criticism was also voiced over a common logo revealed at the EAC meeting in Arusha for being unprofessional and failing to highlight the main issue, marketing the region as one tourism destination with many attractions.



'This logo is non descript, there is a total lack of relevance and relationship to tourism. And borderless borders? Far from it in fact. Borders are there and enforced as the other hotly disputed issues show. As far as tourism, as far as aviation is concerned, the EAC is just a farce. Bottom line is it does not work and let me be frank, both Tanzania and Kenya are the main culprits with non tariff barriers. We in Uganda allow their aircraft to come in, their vehicles to come in and their guides to work here without any hindrance. No fees, no registration or vetting, nothing. Do they reciprocate us, NO WAY. It is time they reciprocate what we are giving or it is time to shut our doors in their faces too' added another Ugandan source late on Sunday when discussing the matter.

Time perhaps to face reality and look beyond the flowery statements made by our politicians in Arusha, which back home have no real effect at all. Watch this space.

Kenya News

PROCUREMENT OVERSIGHT AUTHORITY HALTS KAA DUTY FREE SHOPS TENDER AWARD

(Posted 28th February 2014)



The Public Procurement Oversight Authority has questioned the validity of the tender award by the Kenya Airport Authority to hand the duty free shops at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport over to a new operator, according to information received from a regular aviation source in Nairobi. It appears now that PPOA took issue with procedural aspects of the tender and now demands a fresh tender to be issued by KAA in line with public procurement regulations.

This will put, for now at least, a halt to the Nuance Group from Switzerland taking over the shops, after KAA initially decided in late 2013 that they won the bidding against several other competing companies. It could not be established if any of the disqualified bidders initiated the review by the PPOA, but suggestions have been made that at least one if not more voiced their grievances to the right ears and now got the result they wanted, a fresh tender bid to be issued under tighter control and oversight. KAA had, citing failures and shortcomings in the pre-qualification documents, disqualified all but Nuance from the bidding, leading already at the time to sharp protests and allegations of a rigged process.

KAA has made it a habit to get all the wrong publicity and attention and has been under the public spotlight over a range of allegations made in the past against the organization's CEO's, though the present Managing Director Ms. Lucy Mbugua has so far been spared of the often vitriolic attacks her two immediate predecessors had to endure over decisions they made. Nevertheless, this latest entry in the '*bad books*' will no doubt leave some marks on her hitherto spotless record too as she was at the time the decision was taken the Acting CEO before being confirmed in her position in mid January. Watch this space.

JAMBOJET FLIGHTS NOW OPEN FOR BOOKINGS

(Posted 28th February 2014)



Nairobi to Mombasa at Kenya Shillings 2.850 or the equivalent of 33 US Dollars, all taxes and regulatory charges included – flying does not come any cheaper in Kenya as even some bus companies now charge more than that. Bookings have yesterday gone '*live*' and from initial reports it is clear that bookings are coming in fast and furious already, as no one wants to miss out on such extraordinary deals.

Information received from Jambojet is that the inaugural flights of the airline will leave at 06.45 hrs on the 01st of April from Nairobi to Kisumu, and the second flight at 07.30 hrs from Nairobi to Mombasa, with Eldoret, the airline's other destination, operating in the afternoon at 14.30 hrs.

Jambojet will fly 5 times a day between Nairobi and Mombasa, twice a day to Kisumu and 10 times a week to Eldoret.

Willem Hondius, the CEO of Jambojet, had this to say yesterday as the booking system went operational: ***'I am pleased to announce that Jambojet.com is now live and customers can book flights using this convenient and accessible platform which complements our call centre and existing Kenya Airways' sales channels while also delivering our promise of affordable air travel'***.

It is widely expected that Kenya Airways will reduce their own flights between Nairobi and Mombasa, Kisumu and Eldoret accordingly, to '*make space*' for flights by Jambojet but retain key connectivity city pairs linking passengers arriving on international services and flying beyond Kenya's capital. The same is going to be the case for international passengers connecting from these three domestic destinations into Kenya Airways' continental and international network, so that '*branded flights*' on Kenya Airways are still available while the local market can take advantage of the substantially cheaper rates by Jambojet.

Aviation pundits are also presently eyeing the low cost competition in Kenya, which according to inside sources has been taken aback by the low fares Jambojet is offering, substantially below the fares these other LCC's are presently charging, ringing in the very likely scenario of a fare war, from which travellers will benefit.

Jambojet's concept is based on outsourcing services and leasing of aircraft from parent company Kenya Airways, allowing it to mitigate cost structures other airlines are stuck with.

Travel agency sources in Nairobi and Mombasa are already predicting a significant shift of traffic from rail and road to Jambojet, and while last minute bookings will be dearer, first come first served, or as the saying goes, the early birds will fly the cheapest of them all. For more information visit www.jambojet.com
Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news from across Eastern Africa.

KENYA OPEN GOLF TOURNAMENT GETS SPONSORSHIP BOOST FROM HEMINGWAYS

(Posted 26th February 2014)



Kenya's most important international golfing tournament, the Barclays Kenya Open, which will tee off next Thursday at the Karen Country Club, has received a major sponsorship boost when Hemingways came on board with their offer to accommodate tournament officials and administrators and is thought to be worth over 2.3 million Kenya Shillings. The Hemingways Nairobi Hotel is an all suite property, set in the woodlands of Karen and has made a name for itself since opening a year ago for superb cuisine and attention to the smallest detail, with each guest enjoying the services of a personal butler.

This year's Kenya Open is again part of the European Tour and as such an event which attracts major players, promising once again a hotly contested tournament from 06th to 09th of March inclusive. For more tournament information check out their Facebook pages via <https://www.facebook.com/KenyaOpenGolf> or go to www.kenya-opengolf.com



(Seen here from the left is Anne Murungi, Director of Sales and Marketing of Hemingways, Alastair Addison, Chief Executive of Hemingways Holdings and two officials from the Kenya Golf Union, handing over the symbolic sponsorship cheque)

Hemingways, besides their flagship property in Nairobi's Karen suburb, also owns and operates the Hemingways in Watamu, renowned as a base for deep sea fishing, and the Ol Seki Hemingways in the Masai Mara, a small and very luxurious safari camp set on a ridge overlooking the undulating plains of the game reserve and the adjoining conservancies. For more details visit www.hemingways-collection.com

EDELWEISS CONFIRMS WITHDRAWAL FROM MOMBASA ROUTE NEXT WINTER SEASON

(Posted 25th February 2014)



News swept the Mombasa tourism fraternity that the current Edelweiss charter operation, which serves both Kilimanjaro and Mombasa, will next winter season not return to Mombasa due to a lack of sufficient demand for seats.

This will add more concerns among the coast based hotel and resort operators, already suffering from several flights having been withdrawn from the route causing significantly lower occupancies this year compared to previous years.

Coast hoteliers have been battling a negative trend since late last year, when in the run up to the March general elections in Kenya key tour operators proved to be overly cautious in their contracting and shifted long haul traffic from Kenya's traditional markets to other destinations.

While the elections, as predicted by the way, went on peacefully and resulted in a new government, that government has since come under sustained criticism for increasing the tax burden on tourism products at a time when there was a downward trend in arrivals and for spending far less money on tourism marketing than the main gurus projected was needed to roll out a global recovery marketing campaign.

While KTB is trying to promote Kenya and the beach resorts, within their means that is considering their budget constraints, the coast resort operators in particular claim not enough is being done, while at the same time demanding open air access by foreign airlines to Mombasa, where presently only Ethiopian, Turkish Airlines, RwandAir and Air Uganda are flying scheduled services into Moi International Airport.

The announcement that Edelweiss will not come to Mombasa next winter is seen as another challenge the hotelier have to meet and there will no doubt be substantial lobbying when Kenya attends the forthcoming ITB Tourism Trade Fair in Berlin in March.

Watch this space for regular and breaking news updates from the entire East African region.

KTB – HERE THERE EVERYWHERE

(Posted 25th February 2014)



It was confirmed over the weekend that Kenya's tourism industry has extended its campaigns to Korea to attract tourists as the country seeks to increase her tourism pie from the emerging markets. Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) is leading a delegation of eight companies from the private sector for a two-day two city road show, scheduled to take place on 26th and 27th February in the capital Seoul and in the city of Busan.

KTB Managing Director Muriithi Ndegwa commented that Kenya as a destination is riding on the recent title as the World's leading safari destination as voted by the World Travel Awards (WTA) to showcase her tourism attractions. He added that the road show will provide a business networking forum for both the Korean and Kenyan trade so as to increase the penetration, awareness and distribution of Kenya's diverse tourism products.

Kenya has recorded a remarkable growth from Korea market in the past few years with a growth of 28% recorded in 2012 with 9,422 arrivals compared to 2011 which posted 7,351 tourists. The launch of Korean Air flying to Kenya three times a week, in code share with national airline Kenya Airways, has added impetus to the growth of the market Korea with Ndegwa further noting that the number of marketing activities planned for that particular market were on top gear. He concluded his statement by saying that being the 4th largest economy in Asia, Korea has the potential to boost tourism numbers to Kenya. ***'Korea is joining the league of emerging markets that we are keen on and we have put efforts to woo in more travelers'***.

Meanwhile, KTB continues to aggressively market golf as a key tourism product and participated in the Rhine Golf Fair in Germany. The Rhine Golf Exhibition in Dusseldorf is one of the largest golf fairs in Germany, which took place this year from February 21st – 23rd. 18,000 golf enthusiasts attended this three day event and exhibitors from 26 different countries showcased their golf courses and related facilities. The Kenya Tourism Board used this opportunity to showcase the destination's golf product in co-operation with the golf tour operator GolfCulTour and the Leisure Lodge Resort, one of the leading golf hotels in Kenya. This is expected to increase the variety of activities that tourists can engage in to supplement wildlife and beach experiences as well as position Kenya as a golfing destination.

In addition, KTB is currently on a mission to creatively position Kenya as the quintessential safari destination and enhance the professional standing in the industry through engaging the travel trade in the US market. The weeklong activity will see training of tour operators that is aimed at providing a platform for direct and targeted contact between the Kenya Tourism Board and travel trade throughout the U.S. to further develop existing relationships and conduct productive meetings with key decision-makers of the U.S. travel trade. Such partnerships and engagement with U.S. wholesalers is increasing opportunities to increase Kenya sales.

Watch this space for more upcoming news from Kenya and Eastern Africa, where tourism is one of the cornerstones of the respective economies.

JAMBOJET SIGNS MOBILE PAYMENT AGREEMENT WITH CELLULANT

(Posted 25th February 2014)



Kenya's latest kid on the aviation block, LCC Jambojet, is putting final touches to their logistics chain ahead of their inaugural flight on the 01st of April, when they earlier today signed a mobile payment solutions deal with Cellulant, one of Africa's leading mobile payment providers. The agreement paves the way for the airline, which is offering fares as low as Ksh2,850 (\$33) one way from Nairobi to Mombasa (all inclusive of applicable fees), to start selling tickets as of February 27th via a tailor made mobile payment platform developed by Cellulant.



Payment confirmation is sent to the customer via SMS within a few minutes of payment. It also has unique features such as the ability to remember every user and their mobile number making future transactions easier.

'The mobile payment platform is part of our strategy to keep costs minimal thus enabling us to deliver on our promise to offer customers affordable air travel. The system goes live on the night of Wednesday February 26th and therefore customers will be able to transact from their phones from Thursday February 27th when we begin selling tickets' said Jambojet CEO Willem Hondius.

Cellulant CEO Ken Njoroge added his own perspective: *'Cellulant has enabled Jambojet.com to offer a world first in convenience and simplicity in the ticket payment process. As a smart system, it eliminates the inconvenience of having to repeat the same information making subsequent bookings easier and faster'*.

He went on to say that Jambojet.com customers can pay from M-Pesa, Airtel Money and banks such as Barclays, Standard Chartered, CFC Stanbic, NIC, Faulu, Bank of Africa, DTB, Ecobank, I&M and First Community Bank using the platform which is riding on Cellulant's next generation Consumer Payment Gateway 5.0.

Jambojet, a 100 percent subsidiary of Kenya Airways, plans to commence operations with domestic flights from Nairobi to Mombasa, Kisumu and Eldoret before later venturing into the regional arena with flights to Bujumbura, Kigali, Dar-es-Salaam, Mwanza, Zanzibar, Kilimanjaro and Addis Ababa in due course, initially using two leased Boeing B737-300 aircraft which will be revealed shortly in the airline's new livery.

The entry of Jambojet is expected to shake up the domestic and regional aviation space currently dominated by the major airlines and a number of smaller air operators.

Cellulant operates in ten African countries namely Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique. It specializes in developing mobile payment systems for governments and businesses. For more details on the new airline visit www.jambojet.com

KENYA TOURISM BOARD WELCOMES CLUB TRAVEL CORPORATE TO NAIROBI

(Posted 25th February 2014)



Seven agents and one staff of Club Travel's Corporate Division enjoyed a happy '**48 Hour**' journey from Johannesburg to Nairobi over the weekend. The group of Club Travel consultants embarked from Johannesburg on a

four hour flight with South African Airways, touched down in Nairobi on Friday at 16.00 hrs and left yesterday, Sunday, back for Johannesburg again.

Club Travel's Corporate Division considered spending the weekend in Nairobi as a top priority for their agents to experience Kenya's capital city and provide their agents with the first hand knowledge to promote the destination with confidence. Nairobi is considered as a key business hub on the continent with several of Africa's largest companies headquartered in Nairobi and there is expanding travel from South Africa to Nairobi. In addition, the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) remains East Africa's main aviation hub and is presently undergoing significant expansion, modernization and refurbishment of the existing terminals.

The Kenya Tourism Board Managing Director, Muriithi Ndegwa told the travel agents that Kenya and KTB are delighted to host Club Travel Corporate Division. ***'There would not have been a better choice that to sample Nairobi, the only city that is also home to a national park, the Nairobi National park. Recent investments by international hotel brands in Nairobi confirm the growth of Kenya as a Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events (MICE) destination. This visit opens an opportunity to many corporate and families to itinerate Kenya for both business and holidays'***.

Nairobi is one of the most prominent city's in Africa, a key hub and will continue to experience growth and Club Travel will benefit from the knowledge gained over the weekend while in Nairobi.

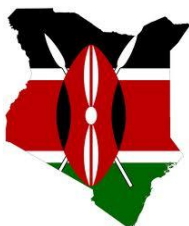
According to Deborah Magrath from Club Travel, Nairobi is identified as one of the key destinations in Africa. She said that ***'The agents experiencing '48 hours in Nairobi will be equipped with the knowledge to impart their valuable first hand experiences with their clients. The goal for the weekend was to conduct as many hotel site inspections as possible, visit popular tourist attractions and understand the logistics and distances in Nairobi'***.

Both Kenya Airways and South African Airways have multiple daily flights between Nairobi and Johannesburg, a sign for strong demand on the route.

For more information about Kenya visit www.MagicalKenya.com and for details on the country's national parks click on www.kws.or.ke

WEEKEND ACCIDENT ON EQUATOR CLAIMS THREE LIVES

(Posted 24th February 2014)



One Norwegian student was on Saturday afternoon killed on the spot and a second one succumbed to serious injuries it was learned yesterday morning. The driver of their vehicle was later also confirmed to have died of his injuries while several more of the students also remain in hospital, some in critical condition.

A group of over 20 Norwegian students was returning to Nairobi after spending time to hike and climb Mt. Kenya, when one of the vehicles they were travelling in was hit by a lorry which had collided with another vehicle in an attempt to overtake along the busy Nanyuki – Nyeri road. The second vehicle with 10 more students managed to come to a halt in time only to witness the carnage their friends and colleagues were involved in.

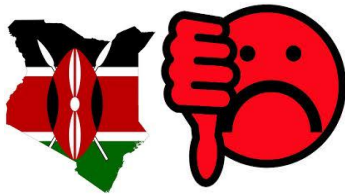
The Kenyan government has of late implemented a series of measures to reduce accidents in the country, as much attributed to badly maintained vehicles as to reckless drivers who often did not undergo formal training in particular when it comes to bus and lorry drivers.

Efforts were underway to airlift the accident victims to Nairobi with air ambulances for further treatment in hospitals better equipped but continued attempts throughout Sunday were unable to confirm that the medivac flights had actually taken place.

Condolences are expressed to the families and friends of the two students who passed away and best wishes extended to those still in hospital for a swift and full recovery.

SIX RHINOS KILLED IN KENYA AS SOUTH AFRICA'S POACHING TSUNAMI REACHES EAST AFRICA

(Posted 22nd February 2014)



‘There is nothing World Class about losing 6 rhinos in a week’ ranted a regular conservation source from Nairobi when passing the information that 6 rhinos were killed last week alone in Kenya. Lake Nakuru National Park, one of the main rhino sanctuaries, was just as affected as the Solio Game Reserve near Mweiga in Central Kenya with Ol Jogi also among those counting their losses. ***‘KWS is in the media for all the wrong reasons again and it is high time that the Minister now appoints a new board under the new law and not let the old board still meddle in affairs. In fact, some say her dragging her feet is one of the reasons why criminals are exploiting this period of transition perhaps to poke holes in the defences of KWS because no organization can function 100 percent without a fully constituted board’.***

Over 1.000 rhinos were killed last year in South Africa but the latest wave of killings in Kenya, unprecedented in such numbers, has rang the alarm bells among the conservation fraternity and raised surveillance and intelligence gathering to higher levels to prevent more such incidents.

Only two weeks earlier a rhino was brazenly killed in the Nairobi National Park, the horns hacked off and the poachers made a clean getaway, already then triggering questions for KWS over preparedness and effectiveness of their protective measures.

The news raised anger levels among conservationists, who had vested high hopes in the new deterrent fines and prison terms under the new wildlife law and calls are again emerging to introduce a shoot to kill policy for poachers and show them no mercy, even though this can be construed as extrajudicial killings.

It is yet to be seen how the new laws work in Kenya, and while the first ivory smuggling case resulted in the maximum fine of nearly 232.000 US Dollars for a Chinese man, subsequent cases inexplicably saw verdicts come in with only one million Kenya Shillings fine and, inspite of admitting additional offences, being let off the hook by a hapless magistrate, prompting immediate calls for a judicial enquiry.

Unconfirmed figures received from Nairobi speak of nearly 60 rhinos killed last year in Kenya for their horns, an alarming trend which if not halted may well wipe out the just over 1.000 rhinos in Kenya in just a few more years.

Tanzania News

ZANZIBARI RADICALS AGAIN TARGET CHURCHES AND RESTAURANTS

(Posted 26th February 2014)



A total of three grenade attacks were reported from Zanzibar’s main island of Unguja, raising concern levels among the tourism and hospitality operators, which have been doing extraordinarily well in recent months. One of the grenades was thrown on Sunday already towards an Anglican church, fueling suspicion that radical militants continue to inflict terror and inflame cross religious sentiments with their activities.

This was followed yesterday by two more incidents in the famous ***Stone Town***, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and as such hugely popular with foreign tourists, when another church was targeted before the Mercury Restaurant too had a grenade thrown towards their premises.

Last year were churches and Christian priests repeatedly targeted and two British tourists attacked in the Stone Town with acid, leading to a series of raids by security forces aimed to arrest the perpetrators. The December murder of a French couple, which had chosen to make Unguja their retirement home, while thought to be an ordinary crime and not related to radical militants, too had rattled the local expatriate and tourism communities, fueling their worries over the impact of negative publicity for the destination. Tourism operators are said to be particularly unhappy with these latest incidents, one regular source claiming it will harm the image of the ***Spice Island*** and could result in tourists staying away from Zanzibar over fears of sectarian violence, which could cost

hundreds of jobs if resorts would suffer from a sharp drop in occupancies. Watch this space for breaking and regular news from across Eastern Africa.

NYALANDU SACKS TWO SENIOR WILDLIFE OFFICIALS

(Posted 26th February 2014)



The Director of the Wildlife Division of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, Prof. Alexander Sogorwa and his deputy, Prof. Jafari Kidegesho, were yesterday relieved of their respective duties by the Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, Hon. Lazaro Nyalando. The minister had only recently returned from the UK where he attended the London Conservation Conference on Wildlife Crime and expressed his disappointment over the work output of the two when announcing their fate to the media in Dar es Salaam yesterday.

The two were clearly falling victims to the growing pressure building in the Tanzanian parliament where a number of scandals and failures in anti poaching measures have in the past led to the indictment of wildlife officials and the sacking of senior bureaucrats and ministers.

A Mr. Paul Sarakikya was named by Nyalando as Acting Director of Wildlife while the new Acting Deputy Director was named as Dr. Charles Mulokozi.

In a related development it was also confirmed by a source in Dar es Salaam that the minister gave his senior staff a 30 day ultimatum to prepare and submit a performance report about their departments or else also face the sack. Time to let action follow good intent and good words.

HOLLAND SIGN GRANT DOCUMENTS FOR 15 MILLION EUROS BOOST FOR AIRPORT WORKS

(Posted 22nd February 2014)



The visit by Dutch Development and Trade Minister Lillian Ploumen to Tanzania during the week saw pens put to paper with the signing of a grant agreement, under which the Netherlands will provide 15 million Euros to the Tanzanian government for the rehabilitation and expansion of Kilimanjaro International Airport near Arusha. The project, which is estimated to cost overall some 35 million Euros, will take several years to complete and expand not only passenger facilities but also introduce new equipment and security gadgets in line with the latest recommendations by the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Passenger numbers, but also cargo shipments in and out of JRO, have grown significantly in recent years and the airport is now served by several international airlines like KLM, which flies daily, Qatar Airways, Turkish Airlines, Ethiopian (if they do not by accident land at the Arusha Municipal field), Kenya Airways, Air Uganda and RwandAir, among others, while domestic flights in and out of JRO are operated by Precision Air and FastJet, besides other operators like Auric Air.

Main exports from the Arusha region are cut flowers – many flower farms are located not too far from the airport – but also fresh and often organic produce which is much in demand in the consumer markets in Europe and the Gulf. The Tanzania Airport Authority has in recent years embarked on a major initiative to improve airports and aerodromes across the country, including the two main airports, Julius Nyerere International in Dar es Salaam and Kilimanjaro International near Arusha and has last year completed the airport expansion at Mbeya which is now capable of handling larger jet aircraft, like FastJet's A319.

Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news from the East African region.

FASTJET APPOINTS JIMMY KIBATI AS NEW GENERAL MANAGER EAST AFRICA

(Posted 22nd February 2014)



In a breaking news development it has been confirmed that FastJet has landed Jimmy Kibati as General Manager East Africa, effective 17th March.

Jimmy Kibati is joining the airline from Kenya Airways where he last served as Acting Commercial Director for the past year.

Jimmy started his aviation career fresh out of Kenyatta University with Kenya Airways in 1992, and notably served as Country Manager for Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi for a while, based in Kampala. He left Kenya Airways in 2005 to join Virgin Nigeria at the time as Head of Network Planning before rising to the position of Chief Commercial Officer. In 2010 Jimmy Kibati returned to Kenya Airways as Head of Network Planning and Airline Strategy, where he oversaw the development of '*Plan Mawingo*', KQ's strategic plan covering the immediate future until 2022, which outlines the near tripling of the present fleet from 45 aircraft to 119 aircraft and the near doubling of destinations from presently 65 to 115, then covering all parts of the world.

Jimmy Kibati was appointed Acting Commercial Director when the position fell vacant in late 2012 after Mohan Chandra's departure, but decided to leave Kenya Airways to join fast rising FastJet, when KQ recruited a new Commercial Director recently.

The move is seen as a precursor for FastJet's intended direct entry into Kenya, though Jimmy Kibati will for the time being be based in Dar es Salaam, from where the airline presently flies to 4 domestic destinations, Kilimanjaro, Mwanza, Zanzibar and Mbeya and two international destinations, Johannesburg and Lusaka.

Ed Winter, CEO of FastJet based in London, when making the announcement was quoted to have said: '*I am absolutely delighted that we have recruited such a high calibre airline executive to spearhead FastJet's expansion in East Africa. Jimmy's vast experience in the East African aviation market will be invaluable as we fulfill our goal of becoming a truly pan-African low cost airline. Jimmy's appointment underlines the confidence which Fastjet's track record has generated within the industry*'.

With his wealth of experience, and the insight into Kenya Airways' strategy, which arguably includes the plans of in-house LCC upstart JamboJet, the deck of aviation cards in the region is being reshuffled and will make for interesting days ahead for aviation pundits and observers. Congratulations to Jimmy Kibati on his new appointment and all the best for the challenges ahead.

Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news from the entire Eastern African region.

Rwanda News

RWANDAIR NOW JUST A MONTH AWAY FROM DOUALA LAUNCH

(Posted 28th February 2014)



As Kigali is getting ready to receive RwandAir's brand new Bombardier Q400NextGen turboprop aircraft next Monday afternoon, are news emerging from the airline's corporate headquarters that the planned launch of flights to Douala, the carrier's 16th destination overall and 5th in West Africa after Brazzaville, Libreville, Lagos and Accra, will kick off with 5 flights per week. The first commercial flight will be launched on the 30th of March, expanding

RwandAir's footprint in West Africa significantly. Bookings can already be made via the airline's website www.rwandair.com or through the common CRS systems on which WB flights feature. Meanwhile was earlier today the new aircraft formally handed over to RwandAir at the Bombardier assembly plant in Toronto / Canada and it was the airline's Deputy CEO Jean Paul Nyirubutama who accepted the aircraft on behalf of RwandAir.



Bombardier and RwandAir subsequently just released the following statement:

Start quote:

Bombardier Delivers Dual-Class Q400 NextGen Airliner to RwandAir

Bombardier Aerospace and RwandAir of Kigali, Rwanda today celebrated the delivery of a dual-class *Q400 NextGen* turboprop airliner to the African airline.

RwandAir's order for the aircraft was announced on April 22, 2013.

Jean Paul Nyirubutama, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, RwandAir, accepted the aircraft during a delivery ceremony at Bombardier's Toronto site where the *Q400 NextGen* aircraft is manufactured. The ceremony was attended by Bombardier Commercial Aircraft executives and many of the employees involved in the production of the aircraft.

'We have been eagerly awaiting the delivery of this superb dual-class, 67-seat aircraft,' said

Mr. Nyirubutama. *'By offering similar cabin amenities on the Q400 NextGen aircraft and on our recently acquired dual-class Bombardier CRJ900 NextGen regional jets, the two complementary aircraft types will provide seamless passenger service, permitting us to align our total fleet strategy towards a unified passenger experience. The Q400 NextGen aircraft will position us well to offer increased capacity on popular routes that have been opened and serviced with our 37-seat Bombardier Dash 8-200 aircraft and is the right aircraft to develop our growing domestic and regional markets. The Q400 NextGen aircraft's modern cabin and superior performance will also help us build new markets where regional air service today is served by older-generation jets. The aircraft will firmly support RwandAir on our path towards growth and increased profitability'* added Mr. Nyirubutama.

'The Q400 NextGen turboprop has proven its capability, flexibility and ruggedness in many regions of the world and is operating with distinction in diverse environments. We are confident that it will serve RwandAir and its customers very well' said Mike Arcamone, President, Bombardier Commercial Aircraft. *'As one of our newest and fast-growing customers, RwandAir is serving Africa's expanding domestic and international markets and we are delighted that another Bombardier aircraft will be used to further develop the airline's network of short- and medium-haul destinations'.*

RwandAir is now one of 15 operators of *Q400* and *Q400 NextGen* aircraft in Africa, and its *Q400 NextGen* aircraft joins more than 55 *Q400* and *Q400 NextGen* aircraft that are already in service, or ordered for operation, in 12 countries in Africa. RwandAir is also now the fourth airline operating the dual-class *Q400 NextGen* aircraft among the five customers that have ordered this configuration to date.

End quote

Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news from across Eastern Africa.

SOON COMING TO AN AIRPORT NEAR YOU – RWANDAIR'S NEW BOMBARDIER Q400

(Posted 26th February 2014)



(Picture courtesy of RwandAir)

The latest acquisition by RwandAir, Rwanda's national airline, a Bombardier Q400 turboprop aircraft in a dual class configuration, will later this week commence its journey home to *The Land of a Thousand Hills*, where the new bird is expected to land on Monday afternoon.

RwandAir already operates a wet leased Bombardier Dash 8-200, which will upon arrival of the new aircraft be retired and returned to the lessors in Nairobi. The Q400 will join two Bombardier CRJ900NextGen already in service with RwandAir for over a year now, also purchased from the Canadian manufacturer with reportedly two more options for the same aircraft type on the books.



The next big event for RwandAir, after the delivery of the new aircraft, will be the launch of flights from Kigali to Douala, the airline's 16th destination, due at the end of March. The new destination will bring the number of RwandAir's West African connections to 5, after Brazzaville, Libreville, Lagos and Accra. For more information about schedules, fares and special offers visit www.rwandair.com

Vanilla Island News

Reunion News

IRT ROLLING OUT NEW COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE

(Posted 28th February 2014)



Reunion's tourism office is pulling out all the stops to make sure the island remains visible in the key French market with the signing of an agreement with France's Karavel Group.

IRT will have access to three communications platforms to get their messages across the social media and professional networks through Karavel's 'Promovacances', 'Go Cheap' and finally 'A World'. The present campaign will run until April 03rd and the partners expect additional traffic to be generated from new market segments in France which hitherto have not thought of visiting Ile de la Reunion, one of France's regions in the deep of the Indian Ocean.

It was additionally agreed to add 'Private Club Holidays' to the campaign for the week between 25th of March to 01st of April, adding yet more value to the cooperation agreement.



The sites will carry headline banners, ear pieces, showcase Reunion's colours and offer video links where Reunion's main attractions are highlighted. The island is renowned for both conventional beach holidays as well as for adventure holidays, where activities like white water rafting, abseiling, canyoning, hiking and paragliding are complemented by deep sea fishing or, depending on the season, watching whales and dolphins traverse the Indian Ocean off the Reunion beaches. For more details on the island's hotels, resorts and other facilities visit their website via www.reunion.fr

REUNION TOURISM SET TO GIVE LOCAL CRAFTS AND ARTS A BOOST

(Posted 27th February 2014)



Reunion's 400.000+ tourists visiting the island every year spend an estimated 44 million Euros on the purchase of art pieces and crafts. Subsequently has IRT, the island's tourism office, assisted to prepare a report on the integration of this crucial component into the overall tourism policy approach and some 54 proposals were now received from a wide range of contributors, aimed at accomplishing exactly that.

Presently only some 20% of sales in Reunion crafts come from local artists and are locally produced, which makes it, according to the report, essential to preserve and to enhance the crafts and art '*Made in Reunion*'. One of the key proposals made was the establishment of a dedicated local art and craft area in the departure lounge of Roland Garros International Airport at the capital St. Denis, which could help to increase the market share of locally produced curio and craft items beyond the meager share of only a fifth of the overall sales.

At the local level does Emmanuel Lemagnen want to see the Regional Council '*launch an operational study on the craft sector*' and so '*prepare a document on a five-year plan*'. Meanwhile, Ariane Loupy of IRT reiterated that Ile de la Reunion Tourisme '*contributes to publicize the Reunion craft through the living room or the agreement signed with the consular chamber to optimize highlighting artisanal product*'. The proposed agreement includes the acquisition by IRT of works of art that will showcase local talent.



(A selection of local craft and arts from Ile de la Reunion)

AND THE WINNER IS ...

(Posted 26th February 2014)



The winners of the annual '*Challenge des Agences Réceptives Partenaires 2013*' have been revealed yesterday in St. Denis, the capital of Ile de la Reunion, when IRT, the island's tourism office, announced who won the four available categories of the competition.

Throughout the last year did six incoming agencies Reunion Island Challenge Distributors participate in the competition which was set up by the IRT. The objective of this challenge was to boost the distribution network and increase sales partner agencies.

Connections Meeting

Papangue Tours

Bourbon Tourism

Mille Tours

Alizoa Travel

Counter Coral

These six agencies competed over the following categories:

Best turnover

Best progress made

Best seller

Best seller progression

Now were the results announced by IRT to the participants and their representatives were presented with trophies and prizes for the winners.

Results:

Best turnover: Papangue Tours

Best Progress made: Connections Meeting

Best seller: Christelle Mussard - Papangue Tours

Best seller progression: Sophie Catherine - Mille Tours

On this occasion, Papangue Tours and Connections Meeting were presented with a trophy created by Valérie Heinis of the Art Workshop Marquetterie.

Christelle Mussard of Papangue Tours and Sophie Catherine de Mille Tours were offered a PassKdo worth € 250.

Congratulations to the winners of '*Challenge Distributors 2013*'.

Meanwhile can a wealth of information about Ile de la Reunion be found on the IRT website by simply clicking on www.reunion.fr

REUNION SET TO CELEBRATE CONFIRMED ENTRY INTO GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS 2015

(Posted 25th February 2014)



The remarkable diving feat accomplished on the 01st of December last year – reported here at the time – when 110 divers created the longest human chain underwater in the bay of Saint Leu, was now formally recognized by the Guinness Book of Record and will feature in the 2015 edition.

Those participating and the tourism fraternity at large will celebrate the recognition on the 01st of March in a special dedication to be held at Saint Gilles les Bains. An extensive programme has been prepared for the day, including a photo exhibition, covering the event in December and an evening concert as a befitting roundup of the day.

Scuba diving is one of the island's main attractions for visitors from abroad, besides a range of other activities which await the intrepid travellers who chose to spend vacation time on this French Indian Ocean island.



For more information about the Ile de la Reunion visit www.reunion.fr where a number of links give insight about available hotels and resorts, tours and excursion and places to visit while on the island.

REUNION TOURISM BLITZES GERMAN MARKET

(Posted 22nd February 2014)



IRT, short for Ile de la Reunion Tourism, earlier in the week marketed the island's attractions in the German market, visiting 5 key cities in the process. Capital Berlin, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Cologne and Munich, where the team met invited guests from the travel industry, but also the media and travel bloggers to create linkages with individuals and publishing houses aimed to stimulate 'friendly reporting' about the island.

Workshops and presentations focused on, among other highlights, the routes of the whales which can be seen in the waters of the Indian Ocean off the Reunion shores, scuba diving, the Vanilla Island Organization cooperation with other key Indian Ocean islands, eco tourism, crafts, culture and of course the exotic blend of a French Indian Ocean island with the Creole influence and history.

Reunion Tourism (www.reunion.fr) will be present at the forthcoming ITB in Berlin in March and the team is according to information received looking forward to showcasing the Ile de la Reunion from its sunniest side.

Seychelles News

OUTGOING AIR SEYCHELLES CEO RECEIVES PRESIDENTIAL THANKS

(Posted 28th February 2014)



Cramer Ball, and his successor Manoj Papa who will take over on the 01st of April, were yesterday invited to State House in Victoria for a meeting with President James Alix Michel.

The president, in his State of the Nation Address a day earlier, had made reference to the miraculous turnaround of Air Seychelles fortunes, and was able to discuss the future of the archipelago's national airline with both outgoing and incoming CEO. Also present was the Minister for Home Affairs and Transport, Joel Morgan, who also serves as the Air Seychelles Chairman of the Board of Directors.

From information received late yesterday, President Michel thanked Cramer Ball for his achievements over the past two years, calling the work done a '**great job**', clearly in reference of turning around three years of losses into two consecutive years of profit, a consolidation of destinations and a sharp rise in code share operations and last but not least a complete fleet restructuring including orders for three brand new short haul Twin Otter's DHC6-400 and an Airbus A320 due for delivery later this year. The crowning accomplishment though must be the Skytrax ranking as a four star airline, which catapulted Air Seychelles to the top of the pack in Africa.

Cramer Ball thanked the President for his support and his vision to bring changes to the airline when he said: '**There have been some incredible moments, and I'm very proud to say, as the outgoing CEO, that I've been part of a wonderful team, a wonderful family with the Air Seychelles team...Air Seychelles has a huge opportunity and a very bright future**'.

President Michel also welcomed the incoming CEO Manoj Papa to the Seychelles and expressed confidence that he would create new partnerships for the national airline in order to expand its routes and consolidate its achievements so far.

'I'm quite excited to pick up on the results of the team. The results, the turnaround has been amazing and I think the challenge for me and my team is to build that to the next level. Although we are a four star airline, we need to behave like a five star airline in everything that we do. We have the chance of positioning ourselves as the best airline in Africa and as we grow, globally' responded Mr. Papa to the President's remarks.

Air Seychelles partners with Etihad, Abu Dhabi's national airline, which acquired a 40 percent stake just over 2 years ago when President Michel initiated the deal during one of his visits to Abu Dhabi. For more information visit www.airseychelles.com

PRESIDENT MICHEL'S STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS HIGHLIGHTS TOURISM CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATIONAL ECONOMY

(Posted 27th February 2014)



When President James Alix Michel delivered his 10th State of the Nation address yesterday, the Seychellois' eyes and ears were tuned to TV screens and radios to hear what the balance sheet for 2013 would look like and what outlook for 2014 there was for the nation.

Tourism's contributions to the national economy was a key topic for the president and the country's highest foreign exchange reserves ever, some 425 million US Dollars, was largely accomplished by the revenues and earnings of the tourism industry, which again proved to be the back bone of the economy.

The President highlighted that the Seychelles welcomed more than 230,000 visitors in 2013, an increase of 11% over 2012 and that at the same time, the country continued to attract investment, both local and foreign, in the tourism sector.

The number of guesthouses and hotels, according to President Michel, increased from 417 to 438, and room capacity increased from 4,200 to 4,500. Over 60% of these establishments are now owned or managed entirely by Seychellois, a significant turnaround from the time President Michel first took office. Two large hotels are currently under construction at Beau Vallon and Bel Ombre and when open they will increase the archipelago's room capacity by 300 rooms, and create in the region of 600 new jobs. The number of restaurants has also grown with 80% owned and managed entirely by Seychellois. The numbers of car hires, boat charters and diving centres have also increased.

The national airline, Air Seychelles, not only made a profit last year, but it also overtook many airlines to become the first 4-star airline in the region, and was counted amongst the best airlines in the world.

President Michel also created a stir when he announced the launch of a new national symbol by June this year which he described as '**A powerful symbol with the aim of removing certain rancour, which may still linger in our nation, and of consolidating national unity. You all know the importance that I attach to national unity and to harmony within our people**'.

It is clear that the launch of '**Brand Seychelles**' a few years ago had a major impact on the way how the country is now marketed abroad and how successful the changes brought about by President Michel's administration have been, empowering Seychellois to claim their rightful places without impeding or making more difficult foreign investments into resorts and hotels. The full text of the State of the Nation Address can be accessed via www.statehouse.gov.sc/news.php?news_id=2402 or www.statehouse.gov.sc/speeches/php

SEYCHELLES PORT AUTHORITY RESPONDS TO CHANGED MARKET CONDITIONS

(Posted 27th February 2014)



The regular consultative meetings between the Seychelles Hospitality and Tourism Association and the Ministry for Tourism and Culture in the past repeatedly focused on the need to improve facilities at the main jetties in Victoria, on Praslin and on La Digue. The accidental fall into the ocean recently of a passenger at the main jetty of the ferry in Victoria underscored the urgency of improving safety measures and resulted in a meeting of the Seychelles Port Authority management with a delegation from the tourism industry to update them on action already taken and planned to make the quays and jetties safer and more user friendly.

Lieutenant Colonel Andre Ciseaux, Chief Executive Officer of the Seychelles Port Authority in a presentation at Seychelles Port Authority's Head quarters explained that a proposed plan for maritime tourism related development at the Mahe Inter Island Quay has already been submitted to Planning Authority for approval. He said the key element of the plan is the construction of a dedicated passenger lounge which will allow passengers boarding at the Mahe Inter Island Quay to have a sitting / waiting area. It will also include a rest room, common area for Destination Management Companies (DMC) and a collecting point for baggage offloaded by the incoming ferry. Commenting on the proposed development project for Mahe Inter Island Quay, Alain St. Ange, the Minister for Tourism and Culture said in response to the announcement: ***'The pick-up area for luggage will curb down on congestion and chaos at the port. The dedicated pick up area for luggage is a much needed facility at the Inter Island Quay'***. The Mahe Inter Island Quay project is seen by the tourism trade as being urgent especially now that recently a passenger fell into the sea at the luggage collection point. A representative of the main ferry company, the Inter Island Boats - Cat Coco said that their vessel unloaded about 4 tonnes of luggage on its daily trips.



Tourism stakeholders welcomed the opportunity to hear about concrete plans to develop and in part relocate passenger facilities at the three main piers in Victoria, Praslin and La Digue and appealed to the Seychelles Planning Authority to speed up their approval process for the pending applications made by the Ports Authority, considering that tourism is the number one economic activity and that tourists, along with locals of course, are the main users of the ferry services and deserve the best facilities there can be.

John Stravens, the Chairman of Seychelles Hospitality and Tourism Association, at the end of the meeting spoke of the positive partnership between private and public sectors, which he said is fundamental in putting the tourism industry to the fore. ***'I would like to salute the initiative of Seychelles Port Authority to make known these projects to trade partners. It shows the true spirit of partnership between public and private sector. We should continue in our drive to further develop this partnership. I would like to congratulate Alain St. Ange, Minister for Tourism and Culture for his approach to continue to hear the private sector calls and for working to make this presentation possible'***.

SAVOY HOTEL OPENING POSTPONED

(Posted 26th February 2014)

The new Savoy Seychelles Hotel on Beau Vallon Bay has in spite of earlier indications to the contrary not yet been formally opened, leading to speculation over the reasons for the delay.

It is known that latest in March, the first phase of the beautification project of the Beau Vallon Beach side will be officially launched and there have been suggestions that the official opening of the hotel should perhaps coincide with that event to launch both, the new beach promenade and the hotel on the same day.

The new hotel, set back from the main beach but with easy access to it over the new promenade, is seen more than a mixed business and leisure hotel than a proper beach side resort though it offers all the facilities guests expect from a new property in the Seychelles, Spa, restaurants, pool and fitness centre.

Meanwhile it was also learned that this year's official carnival theme song has been chosen last weekend with Travis Julienne claiming the prize of 35.000 Seychelles Rupees for his creation '*Ole Ola, en sel lavwa*'. An earworm no doubt which visitors to the Seychelles, in the run up to and during the annual Carnival International de Victoria from 25th to 27th of April will be hearing time and again.

Watch this space for breaking and regular news from across the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands.

SIX SENSES ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR EXCLUSIVE RESORT ON FELICITE ISLAND

(25th February 2014)

Bangkok bases Six Senses Hotels | Resorts | Spas has this morning announced the planned opening of their first ever resort on the private island of Felicite / Seychelles. Located some 30 nautical miles north east of Mahe, the island can be accessed from the international airport by helicopter or by boat from either La Digue or Praslin islands.

Felicite is one of the 115 island of the archipelago and is a granite island measuring some 650 acres, offering a spectacular scenery to the guests once the resort has opened in last 2015.

The planned resort will offer 17 private residences, 2 two bedroomed villas and 28 one bedroom villas and be the only resort on the island in line with more recent government policy changes which are promoting a one island one resort set up.



Information availed this morning speaks of superior if not outright luxurious guest facilities, such as two themed restaurants, a recreation centre and at the heart of it all the Six Senses Spa.

Bernhard Bohnenberger, the president of the company, expressed his delight over the opening of their first resort in the Seychelles when he said: '*It is a great honour for Six Senses to be selected as the resort operator by Félicité Island Development Limited. The island of Félicité is absolutely gorgeous and we eagerly look forward to creating a rich Six Senses experience for our guests on this pristine private island*'.

Mr. Francis Savy, the director of the Felicite Development Company, added his own views when he said: *‘The development of Six Senses Zil Pasyon on Félicité Island is the result of visionary ambition of the shareholders and the Zil Pasyon team resulting in this rare luxurious and ecologically sensitive development offering. It will expose Six Senses values across all touch-points with a genuine unified message - delivering on the promise’*. The Seychelles islands are known around the world for some extraordinary resorts, matching the very best available elsewhere and the beaches are regularly making it into the global top ten when rankings are announced by leading travel magazines and travel channels.



The Seychelles’ are accessible by air with multiple daily connections of national airline Air Seychelles, in conjunction with partner Etihad, 12 flights a week by Emirates, four flights a week by Kenya Airways via Nairobi and added connections by Germany’s Condor and Sri Lanka’s Mihin Lanka. Air Austral from Reunion will also resume flights in June this year.

For more information on Six Senses visit www.sixsenses.com and for more details about the islands simply click on www.seychelles.travel

SEYCHELLES ECO MARATHON ONCE AGAIN A HUGE SUCCESS

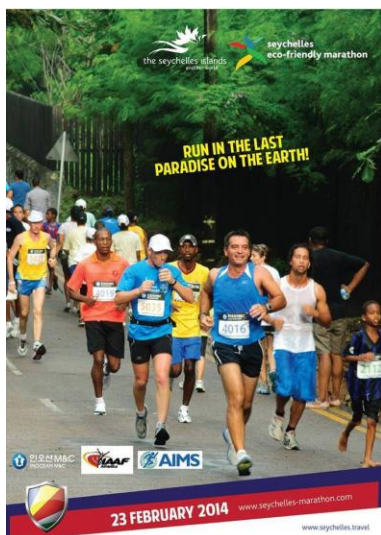
(Posted 24th February 2014)



1.465 runners participated in yesterday’s annual Seychelles Eco Marathon, run for the 7th time as its popularity has over the years grown and has every time drawn hundreds of participants from abroad, who fly to the Seychelles to participate in this key sporting event.

This year’s event featured a 5 km and a 10 km run, a half marathon and a full marathon in which 890 Seychellois and 575 runners from 35 countries participated, not counting the kids in push chairs who were brought to the event by their parents and equally completed the ‘drive’ rather than running on their own feet.

At hand at 07.00 hrs at the starting point at Beau Vallon Bay was the Seychelles Minister for Tourism and Culture to flag off the races, showing his full support for an event which has found a firm place in the annual calendar of events organized and supported by the Seychelles Tourism Board.



Seychelles' long distance runner Simon Labiche took the honours for the 6th time when he reached the finishing tape after 3 hours and 3.15 minutes while Swede Anneli Sodergards claimed the women's race in 3 hours 48.30 minutes. Mastermind and key sponsor of the marathon since 2008, Dong Chan Jeong, head of INOCEAN M&C, then hosted invited guests for a Korean Night at the Berjaya Beau Vallon Beach Resort and Casino, which doubled as prize giving ceremony. Said Minister St. Ange when commenting on the successful completion of this year's race: ***'Cooperation between [the Sports and Tourism] Ministries continues to bring positive results for Seychelles. This Marathon event sees the consolidation of Sports Tourism for Seychelles as it brings Marathon enthusiasts from all over the world together to participate in the event they all like and appreciate. But what a better place to run a Marathon than in paradise'.***

Visit www.seychelles.travel for more information on sporting and cultural events in the Seychelles, where literally every month a major festival or sporting event now takes place, adding extra attractions for visitors to the archipelago. ***Seychelles***, truly ***Another World***.

SEYCHELLES TOURISM ACADEMY SET TO GIVE FRENCH EQUAL STANDING

(Posted 23rd February 2014)



The Seychelles Tourism Academy, undergoing a fundamental transformation with phase one of the reconstruction of the institute going on schedule and due for its launch in a few months time, has committed itself to give French as the medium of instruction in classes equal priority with English, it was learned over the weekend.

Emphasis for a while was on the use of English to improve proficiency of the use of this global language but bilingual instructions are now coming back into focus again after a meeting between the academy management and the French Ambassador during the week.

France is a key overseas market for the Seychelles and with the country having three official languages, Creole, spoken widely in the day to day life of the Seychellois, English and French, equitable distribution especially at the Tourism Academy is thought to be important to promote the full command of both.

The academy's new language laboratory, when open, will also offer courses in German, Italian, Spanish and if correctly remembered Chinese as a new optional language, a smart move considering the increase in visitors from China over the past three years.

The Seychelles Tourism Academy is partnering with Shannon University College for degree programmes in hospitality and tourism management and has also signed agreements with hotel schools in Shanghai, Muscat and Malta, and when the second phase of reconstruction is complete will undoubtedly claim a top spot among Africa's hotel and tourism training academies in terms of academic performance and courses offered, while it is already the

most scenic such institute anywhere in Africa with a setting in La Misere, overlooking the shores of the Indian Ocean from high up in the hills more befitting to a billionaire's residence than a hotel school. Already are some foreign students taking courses at STA and when complete a significantly larger number of students from other Indian Ocean islands but also from the African mainland are expected to come to the Seychelles Tourism Academy to study in certificate, diploma and degree courses.



(Pictures taken during the last visit to the academy in October last year, showing from left to right a cooking competition in the main instruction kitchen, the progress in construction of the new buildings and the view from the academy across the Indian Ocean)

SEYCHELLES' CARNIVAL PROGRAMME GAINING SHAPE

(Posted 23rd February 2014)



The Notting Hill Carnival Company will once again thrill the spectators lined up along the parade route in Victoria after formally signaling their continued participation in this unique festival which brings together performers and groups from around the world.

'This year we will bring new costumes from five costumed groups, representing an array of themes, one being the 'Celebration of Mama Africa', another being 'Music of the Caribbean'. We will also be showcasing the world renowned samba group, Paraiso de Samba; the innovative moves from the men of Soca Jazz Dance; the melodious sounds of Caribbean Steel International and the hot and vibrant beats of DJ Antonn.

In terms of beauty, creativity, innovation and performance each year we aim to surpass previous standards and make an impression and meaningful contribution to the development of Carnaval International de Victoria, Seychelles which provides an unique and enriching experience for all participants by promoting carnival across borders' a representative of the Notting Hill Carnival Roadshow Company of the UK told the Seychelles news bureau.

Notting Hill has been at the Seychelles Carnival since its inaugural edition in 2011 and performed alongside other high profile carnival groups like from Germany's Duesseldorf, Rio de Janeiro, Trinidad and Tobago and well as participants from the Far East and Africa. The upcoming 4th edition, taking place between the 25th and 27th of April, promises to be again larger and better than any of the previous events and some 80 print and electronic media houses and travel journalists from around the world have been invited to cover the festival's programme and in particular the parade which marks the highlight of the celebrations as the juggernaut moves through the centre of Victoria.

It has also been confirmed that carnival enthusiasts from many countries now book a vacation to the Seychelles to coincide with the festival just the same as thousands flock to Rio de Janeiro every year, a sign that the Carnaval de Carnivals, the Carnaval International de Victoria has within just four years taken deep roots already in the global carnival movement.

Meanwhile have all three main sponsoring countries, the Seychelles, Ile de la Reunion and South Africa's Kwa Zulu Natal province nominated their respective MC's as this year's announcements will be made in three languages, Creole, English and French. For the Seychelles will Michelle Marengo take to the stage talking in Creole, Reunion has put forward the name of Marie Payet who will make her announcements in French and South Africa will send Angeline Gerber who will make her announcements in English.

Airlines flying to the island are Air Seychelles with partner Etihad, Emirates, Kenya Airways, Mihin Lanka and Condor among others with Air Austral from Reunion planning to re-commence flights soon. Visit the main website of the Seychelles via www.seychelles.travel and follow the links to the Carnival and other festivals like SUBIOS, Seychelles' Festival of the Sea or the Festival Kreol which are taking place on the archipelago every the year.



REOPENING OF 'CABANES DES ANGES' REVEALS LA DIGUE'S HOSPITALITY HISTORY

(Posted 22nd February 2014)



The long established roots of the involvement of the St. Ange family in the hospitality business on the island of La Digue became apparent for all to see a few days ago, when the '*Cabanes de Anges*' reopened next door to where the original small hotel built by Karl St. Ange in 1972 is located.

Earlier in the week did a large number of descendants of Karl St. Ange, including the archipelago's Minister for Tourism and Culture Alain St. Ange, congregate on La Digue to witness the opening of the '*new*' guest house, built by Carl and Sydney Mills, the sons of Myriam St. Ange, who have rebuilt the property that carries the name of the hotel that was owned by their grandfather Karl St. Ange. Myriam St. Ange is already managing the Chateau St. Cloud Hotel, once the family home of the St. Ange family of La Digue.

An excursion down memory lane reveals that originally the '*Cabanes Des Anges Hotel*' on La Digue Island was built in 1972 by Karl St. Ange when tourism was but being launched in the Seychelles. This iconic small hotel became an immediate success because of the personalised management approach of Karl St. Ange. He would for instance make sure that his visitors would sit on the beach every night, weather permitting of course, for their dinner. His bungalow styled establishment, constructed only in local timber, surrounded the property's main building that housed the reception, restaurant and a panoramic bar on the first floor overlooking the sea and the daily sunset.



The book '*Seychelles remembers Karl St. Ange*' published in 2011 writes 'Karl St. Ange was a people's person which made him a successful hotelier. His style of hotel management was focused on his guests and their wellbeing. His property was well covered by visiting foreign press and it was already offering to the Seychelles tourism industry, as far back as the 1970s, what Seychelles re-launched in 2010 – a Seychelles Brand of Tourism. The Cabanes Des Anges of Karl St. Ange was purchased by the Seychelles Government in 1983 and it became part of the adjacent La Digue Lodge of Gregoire Payet.



Alain St. Ange, the Seychelles Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture joined the St. Ange family on La Digue for the opening ceremony of the new Cabanes Des Anges Guest House. He posed for a picture with his sister and brother, Myriam and Marston St. Ange as well as one with his nephews **Carl and Sydney Mills** [shown above] and also for a family shot to mark the reopening of the hotel having the name of the famous property once owned by Karl St. Ange. In his address, after touring the bungalows and the property's swimming pool, he said: ***'I need to congratulate my sister Myriam and my nephews Carl and Sydney and their families for bringing back to life a hotel name coined by Karl St. Ange way back in 1972. I was also happy to see the logo of the original hotel being re-used as the logo of this new property. The new Cabanes Des Anges Guest House is excellent, it is modern and it will do well. Claiming back our tourism industry means more Seychellois getting involved in this industry that remains the pillar of our economy. We need to continue to encourage more Seychellois to be involved in the industry if we want our tourism industry to be consolidated for the long term, and my appeal is for Seychelles to continue to work even more with Seychellois to entice them to join the industry that remains the pillar of our economy'***.

Congratulations to the new owners and managers and looking forward to seeing this latest property on La Digue during one of my future visits to the archipelago.