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East Africa News

QATAR AIRWAYS NAMES ADDIS ABABA AS ITS 20TH AFRICAN DESTINATION



With additional East Africa destinations still on hold – the announced flights to Mombasa and Zanzibar are still on ice over suspected traffic right issues – has Qatar Airways now announced that they will commence daily flights to Addis Ababa from 18th September this year.

This was according to a source at the airline made possible following the conclusion of bilateral talks with the Ethiopian government. Qatar Airways intends to use their proven Airbus A320 on the route, which will mark the airline's 20th destination on the African continent.

Akbar Al Baker, Qatar Airways' CEO, has at the sidelines of the Arabian Travel Market, which opened in Dubai yesterday, commented on their new route developments as said: *'Yet again Qatar Airways is bucking the trend across the industry demonstrating that we are resilient in times of global economic austerity because while others are cutting back, we see the opportunities to expand our global footprint. Our three new routes we are announcing today show we have faith in expanding our operations across different continents. This year for example has certainly been the year of growth in the Middle East with five of our eight scheduled route launches in the region alone. We stepped up capacity to the United States, introducing Chicago as our fourth US gateway last month and will now add Philadelphia next year. Philadelphia is one of the major hubs of the soon-to-be-merged American Airlines / US Airways and will provide Qatar Airways' customers with onward connections to over 100 cities. With the implementation of code share agreements with American Airlines and JetBlue which offer numerous connections beyond our US gateways, Qatar Airways is making big strides to strengthen its presence in the United States to ultimately give our passengers greater travel options. Joining the OneWorld global alliance later this year will also present tremendous travel options and benefits to our passengers and to those of partner carriers in the alliance. We have been looking to fly to the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa for some time, and extremely delighted we will be able to do so later year as new aircraft join the fleet. And Clark International Airport in the Philippines provides us with great opportunities to boost our presence in the Greater Manila area and northern region of Luzon Island. This comes as good news for the well travelled Filipino community with ever increasing demand for flights to and from the country. We have had a well established operation in Pakistan for many years, but have always been looking to increase frequency and now thanks to new agreements in place between the relevant authorities, we can soon enjoy more capacity between Qatar and Pakistan. Our customers can expect more choice from next month when we increase frequency to three key cities in Pakistan.'*

Qatar Airways now operates a fleet of 123 aircraft, including 5 B787 Dreamliners and flies daily to Entebbe, Kigali, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Kilimanjaro, besides another 121 destinations worldwide. Qatar Airways currently has orders worth over US\$50 billion for more than 250 aircraft, including Boeing 787s, 777s, Airbus A350s, A380s and A320. In addition to winning Skytrax's prestigious *Airline of the Year 2011 and 2012*, Qatar Airways was named Best Airline in the Middle East for the seventh year in a row, and its Premium Terminal at Doha International Airport was recently named Best Premium Service Airport for the third consecutive year. Skytrax is the only global independent passenger survey monitoring airline standards and is considered the ultimate benchmark for excellence in the airline industry. In October 2012, Qatar Airways became the first of the major Gulf carriers to officially announce plans to join a global alliance having been invited into the **oneworld** group. For more information, visit www.qatarairways.com

Uganda News

UGANDA WILDLIFE AUTHORITY LAUNCHES ANTI POACHING UNIT ON THE NILE



The Uganda Wildlife Authority has recently launched the Semanya Marine Ranger Station on the banks of the River Nile, from where regular anti poaching patrols are now operating to monitor in particular the open access across Lake Albert into the Murchisons Falls National Park.

The station was built and equipped through financial contributions from a number of conservation supporters but in particular it was the effort of the Uganda Conservation Foundation (www.ugandacf.org) which has been working hand in hand with UWA to fight the poaching menace. Leading Ugandan corporates, like the Sheraton Kampala Hotel, Nile Breweries and Sadolin Paints, among others, equally gave donations as did the Murchisons Falls International Fishing Tournament, an annual event with proceeds going to conservation causes.

Nearly two dozen rangers are now based at the station and currently operate with one boat, though additional equipment is reportedly being procured to make the outstation even more effective.

Already on day one of operations were several poachers caught, reportedly posing as innocent fishermen but found with snares and other poachers tools, leading to their immediate arrest and now awaiting prosecution.

The Nile delta, where the Victoria Nile enters Lake Albert, is a maze of little islands and swamps, rich in game and as such a tempting site for poachers, who can access the national park side of the lake across the open waters with little opposition from rangers, until now that is.

Poaching has moved from subsistence level to take a more commercial outlook in recent years, as in particular elephant have been targeted in Uganda, though plains game is much sought after too to fuel a growing bush meat trade. However, as UWA emerged from the turmoil inflicted on the organization by the rash actions of the self-styled Minister of Crocodiles and his choice chairman of the board, both of them thankfully no longer in office, has the focus on antipoaching gained momentum once again. Thanks to the Uganda Conservation Foundation and all the donors to this immensely valuable and important addition to the Murchisons Falls NP infrastructure.



AIR UGANDA GETS THIRD BOMBARDIER CRJ 200



Air Uganda yesterday received their third Bombardier CRJ 200 aircraft, leased from American aircraft leasing company GECAS. This brings the total fleet of Air Uganda to presently four, including one remaining MD 87 aircraft, the only one on the fleet with a two class Business and Economy layout.

The leased aircraft is, like the two others, a 50 seater all economy configured aircraft and will allow the airline to back up their recently announced third daily frequency to Juba and the newly introduced flights from Entebbe via Kilimanjaro to Mombasa.

Air Uganda, which started up in 2007, is now flying from Entebbe, as quasi national airline of Uganda, to Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Kilimanjaro, Mombasa, Kigali, Bujumbura and Juba.

The next destination for Air Uganda will be Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, where Uganda has a large contingent of troops and where business opportunities are now opening up for Ugandan entrepreneurs and traders, requiring scheduled flights from Entebbe without having to travel via Nairobi or other airports in the wider region. Cornwall Muleya, who started to work at Air Uganda as CEO on April 01st, was quoted in a media release sent to this correspondent earlier today as having said: ***The new aircraft is going to facilitate our operations to the newly planned routes but also enable seamless service on our current network. We are therefore very excited about this acquisition and believe this to be part of the tremendous growth Air Uganda will experience this year.***

Visit www.air-uganda.com for more information on schedules, fares and to make bookings.

Kenya News

ROAD TO TANZANIAN BORDER AT LUNGA LUNGA CUT BUT FLOOD WATER DAMAGE



Reports have emerged from the Kenyan coast that a key road link between Mombasa and the Tanzanian border at Lunga Lunga has been disrupted, following biblical rainfalls which caused several culverts to be washed away. The road on both sides of the affected portion is now a major parking yard for trucks as well as busses, which are unable to pass the washed out sections of the road. One bus, attempting to cross before the entire stretch of road collapsed, was left hanging in suspense with the rear wheels dangling over the deep crater, before it was removed by a crane and tow truck.

Work is underway to repair the section, initially with a temporary bridge being put into place by the Kenya Defence Forces engineering corps, but full functionality may only be restored after reconstructing the culverts and bridges now damaged beyond repair, something which might take months to accomplish.

Saloon cars and 4x4's were able to use a detour but the rough terrain, in part through the Shimba Hills and Kwale, made the journey cumbersome and slow, according to a source based in Ukunda.

None of the tourist resorts along Diani Beach were affected though access to some of the more remote parts of the southern coast line of Kenya were inaccessible other than by boat.

Torrential rains have swept parts of Eastern Africa and only last week also caused the collapse of a section of a key highway from Kigali to Musanze, although there a workable detour was established within two days. The rains have led to serious flooding as a result of rivers bursting their banks, loss of crops, livestock, property and lives and made even access to some of the national parks difficult as roads and tracks have turned into mudways.

KENYA TOURISM BOARD AND KENYA AIRWAYS SIGN PARTNERSHIP DEAL



Two leading stakeholders in Kenya's tourism industry, the Kenya Tourism Board and national airline Kenya Airways, have yesterday put pen to paper to sign a one year partnership agreement, aimed to jointly promote the country's tourism attractions. While ***The Pride of Africa*** will inject 20 million Kenya Shillings in cash and kind into the deal, the Kenya Tourism Board will provide visibility for the national airline at trade shows, sales missions and in fact at every given opportunity, where KTB will be present over the coming 12 months.

Particular targets are a number of Kenya Airways' destinations in Africa, India, the Middle and Far East, from where joint promotional activities are expected to yield higher visitor numbers for the country, which is struggling to recover from a series of negative anti travel advisories issued by supposedly friendly countries in the run up of the general election, effectively ruining the run up to the Easter season for beach resorts and safari lodges at the time. Dr. Titus Naikuni, CEO of Kenya Airways, was in a media release available overnight quoted to have said on the occasion of signing the agreement: ***'This partnership fits in well with our strategy to expand into some of the fastest growing travel markets in Africa, India, Middle East and the Far East. We need to diversify into the huge African market for our tourists. We are seeking to give visibility and focus to our initiatives to market our country. We are delighted to join hands with KTB which will enable us to give added visibility to our business and the country'***. Kenya Airways had come on board similarly in 2008 with what was then called a Mega Fam Trip, where the airline flew over 200 travel agents and media persons from across Africa to Kenya, in what was then seen as rolling out a recovery programme for the tourism industry, but which has since then also helped the airline to strengthen their market position across the continent while bringing an increasing number of African tourist visitors to Kenya's shores and into the parks.

The Kenya Tourism Board is in the meantime awaiting a decision from the government on funding of the agency, after proposing an additional half a billion Kenya Shillings to be injected in marketing and sales missions, to kick start the sector after the slow start to 2013 as a result of pre election jitters in key producer markets.

Another regular source from Nairobi added: ***'I think it is only fair, if not entirely sensible, that KQ and KTB join hands. They are natural partners. Kenya Airways' inflight magazine promotes Kenya across the network. As national airline KQ must have a special status with KTB and in the approach how to sell our beaches and parks. KQ is part and parcel of how we market conferences, is a key sponsor of sporting events and is the single biggest provider of passengers for Kenya. For me I hope this goes beyond just one year and will be a permanent feature because united we stand but divided our competitors will take market share from us'***.

Stakeholders of Kenya's tourism industry have expressed cautious optimism for the current year in terms of arrivals and revenues, hoping that the second half of the year will help to make up for the lower numbers in Q1 and Q2.

Watch this space for regular and breaking news from the tourism sectors across Eastern Africa.

KENYA AIRWAYS AND RWANDAIR PLANES 'TOUCH' AT JKIA



Information is starting to emerge from an aviation blog www.Rwandan-Flyer.com that RwandAir's new B737-700, while taxiing at Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, appears to have ***'touched'*** wings with a Kenya Airways aircraft, the make of which was not immediately known but later confirmed to be an Embraer E 190. While apparently no passengers did come to harm, all of whom were deboarded normally after the incident and returned to the departure lounge to wait for another flight to Kigali, the RwandAir jet's grounding for the investigation by the Kenya CAA impacted on the subsequent schedules of the airline as the aircraft was unavailable for service in subsequent days.

The B737-700 was only acquired a few weeks ago from European holiday carrier TuiFly with a second such aircraft due to join the RwandAir fleet shortly, as the two older B737-500 which were leased, are being returned to the lessors at the end of their contract period.

There is no present confirmation on the level of damage either aircraft sustained or when the two birds will return to service for their respective airlines. Both Kenya Airways and RwandAir a few months ago signed a comprehensive cooperation agreement which covers such issues as codeshares, cooperation on handling and training but also aligning their respective frequent flyer programmes. Neither airline has made a public statement as yet and the local media in Kenya and Rwanda have up to now not reported the incident.

Watch this space for regular and breaking news from Eastern Africa's vibrant aviation scene.

HEMINGWAYS NAIROBI BRINGS A NEW LUXURY DIMENSION TO NAIROBI



'The increasingly growing profile of Nairobi as a premier business destination in the region has occasioned an increased demand for quality beds, fine dining and conference facilities. Hemingways Nairobi is keen on tapping into Kenya's sustained growth in business traveler and tourism arrivals. As optimism in the country's economic outlook continues to grow, we expect this trend to continue even further especially after the peaceful transition following the just concluded general election, which has significantly boosted investor confidence in the country. In setting up Hemingways Nairobi, our goal is not only to build an attractive building or to fill its rooms with visitors, but also to make a strategic investment which promises to produce a magnificent multiplier effect as its impact ripples through the local communities as well as Kenya's economy. We hope, in the medium and long term, the impact will also be measured by the returns it generates for the local hospitality industry. It will also be measured in the motivating effect a successful new enterprise has on other local enterprises' said Alastair Addison, CEO of the Hemingways Collection on opening of Nairobi's latest top end luxury hotel earlier this week. Located in the wooded suburb of Karen, not far from the Nairobi National Park and with a view to the Ngong Hills, immortalized by the Oscar winning film *'Out of Africa'*, the 45 all suite hotel indeed combines the classic setting of a superbly appointed country mansion with state of the art facilities and gourmet dining. Built at an estimated cost of more than 1.5 billion Kenya Shillings the latest kid on the block in Nairobi aims to capture both business as well as leisure travelers who demand simply the best and expect exceptional service levels, best described as *bespoke*. With every suite assigned a personal butler, who according to the hotel's management is at his client's beck and call and is, as it should be in this day and age, accessible via iPad, guests can expect their bags to be unpacked while they enjoy a cup of Kenya's finest tea or coffee on the terrace, enjoying the vista and to settle down from their long journey. An award winning chef will with his team provide delicacies and culinary delights matching the ambience of the hotel, offering Kenya's freshest ingredients from Lakes and Sea and from Ranches and Farms. Hemingways Nairobi has been admitted to be a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, which has a portfolio of some of the world's finest small luxury independent hotels. The Small Luxury Hotels of the World is comprised of 520 hotels in more than 70 countries. The *original* Hemingways was established 24 years ago in Watamu and is the oldest of the Hemingways collection. The resort features 76 rooms, all facing the Indian Ocean. Hemingways, true to its name, is regular host of the ILTTA World Championships, many ESPN, DSTV and SKY televised events and numerous other tournaments annually and is a focal point for aficionados from around the world who come to fish off the East African Coast. Watamu offers some of the best fishing on the globe, being one of very few places where three major types of Marlin, Sailfish, Broadbill Swordfish and Shortbill Spearfish are found. The group's second property, Olseki Hemingways Mara, is located on the private 200sq km Naboisho Conservancy adjoining the Masai Mara Game Reserve. The camp features 6 luxury, supersized double tents and two family tents and provides guests with a once in a lifetime opportunity of witnessing the big wildebeest migration that has been declared one of the 7 natural wonders of the world. Visit www.hemingways-collection.com for more details.

FLOODED POWER STATION CAUSES MALINDI / WATAMU POWER OUTAGE



The entire stretch of coast from Malindi to Watamu and beyond towards Kilifi was plunged into darkness yesterday, when torrential rains caused a power substation in Kilifi to flood, before it had to be taken off the grid to prevent damaging the equipment in the switch room. Resort operators and restaurants, already reeling from the current low occupancies, which extended from the election period – after a series of rash anti travel advisories told visitors to stay away from Kenya – to the current low season, were less than amused that they had to run generators to keep their hotels powered up, at a substantial cost considering that there are no tax or excise rebates when fueling privately owned generators.

The power station reportedly started to flood on Sunday night but was switched off on Monday morning, when the extent of damage became apparent. Kenya Power, already struggling with the worst spell of negative public opinion in years due to the large number of power outages experienced by businesses and domestic users, was quoted by local media in Nairobi as attempting to pump water out of the station and trying to secure it from further flooding, but by the time of uploading this article power was still off.

Kenya has of late been pounded with torrential rains leading to several rivers bursting their banks and causing large scale displacements of rural communities, though flooding has also struck Nairobi, Mombasa and other key towns across the country. A number of deaths have been recorded as a result of flash floods and subsequent accidents, a situation repeated in Uganda too, where over the weekend the western Ugandan town of Kasese experienced the worst flash floods in recent history, also claiming several lives. In Rwanda was a key road from Kigali to Musanze cut off by a landslide after days of torrential rain and while a detour has now been opened up, authorities are vigilant to monitor areas where there is potential for more damage.

Reservoirs of hydro power plants are either full or filling up fast during this rainy season, unlike in recent years when the rains failed, but the prospect of yet more heavy rains has agriculture experts worried about the current crop season being washed out, while tourism operators expressed concern over roads to and inside the parks becoming impassable. Climate change at work? Surely the evidence is mounting as extreme weather conditions, alternating between droughts and flooding, keep visiting upon Eastern Africa now in rapid succession.

JETLINK'S CREDITORS TO MEET IN COURT AS DECISION LOOMS



Information from Nairobi has confirmed that this Friday, 10th of May, will be a crucial day for Jetlink, once Kenya's leading private jet airline, as creditors will have their say on a winding up petition filed by the company's aviation fuel supplier Finnjet. While Jetlink has maintained their struggle to find a partner to resume operations, this has not yet borne concrete fruits and discussions with FastJet have reportedly ended when the British owned airline agreed with Fly 540 to bury their hatchets and end their mutual court cases in favour of a negotiated settlement.

Jetlink was financially crippled when South Sudan's Central Bank denied banks in Juba permission to remit Jetlink's ticket sales funds – Juba has been their foremost regional route with three flights a day – to Nairobi, and with over 2 million US Dollars stuck in South Sudan's banks the company eventually ran out of cash and had to halt operations. Interventions sought from the Kenyan government too apparently had little effect, as South Sudan was at the brink of being broke after halting oil exports in a dispute with Khartoum Sudan.

It is understood that Jetlink's lawyers will oppose the winding up petition vigorously on Friday, as hope is rising now that with the resumption of oil exports via Port Sudan, the South Sudan Central Bank may be in a position to approve the funds transfer, which in turn would permit Jetlink to start settling dues to creditors, which also includes an aircraft leasing company, Civil Aviation and airport authorities for navigation, landing and parking fees, suppliers and staff, among others. *'One can of course fault them for not more vigorously pursuing their remittances from South Sudan or opting for other means of payment for their tickets, but fundamentally Jetlink was a sound company before the South Sudanese messed them up. In fact, Jetlink is just one of many victims of Kenyan companies supplying goods and services and not being paid by Southern Sudan companies on grounds of their Central Bank refusing remittances. Our new government has to tell those chaps that they cannot join the EAC until they behave civil and meet financial obligations, because otherwise, what they did, is daylight robbery sanctioned by their state. Jetlink was an important element in domestic air operations and if and when they get their money back, maybe they can resume operations again. The problem will be to get some of their staff back because especially pilots and technicians are in high demand and from what I gather several of them have found new jobs and would not be available to fly for Jetlink again. I wish them good luck in court and hope all will end well for them'* contributed a regular aviation source from Nairobi, highlighting again the root causes for the unenviable situation Jetlink is now in. Watch this space for updated information on the ongoing court case as and when details are available.

Tanzania News

THE ADVANCE OF THE CORRIDOR OF DESTRUCTION DISPLACES MWAMBANI RESIDENTS



‘These evictions are illegal but legalities have never stopped this government from doing something. Land acquisition procedures under the current law, the Land Act of 1999, have been ignored because no ESIA has been conducted. It is also illegal because the value government has put on the land and buildings is completely unrealistic and a small fraction of the true value. The compensation forced on these people who are now going to be evicted, and we are talking at least 600 homesteads, will not allow them to rebuild a life elsewhere. They will become destitute, fall into poverty and instead of being productive self-sustaining members of our society will become a burden on society’ said a source from Tanzania yesterday when discussing the unfolding events near the planned Mwambani port area. Human rights activists in Tanzania, as well as the affected residents, have denounced the attempts to remove them from their ancestral land and vowed to fight back using all avenues open to them to pursue the matter in competent courts, while not leaving voluntarily and resisting peacefully any forced evictions the government may have planned for them.

Executing the paperwork for the evictions, in what has been called an evil scheme of government sanctioned land grabbing, is according to the source the Reli Assets Holding Company, which has handed cheques worth 1 million Tanzania Shillings to owners of ‘shambas’, aka small holdings farms, and up to 3 million Tanzania Shillings for land with homesteads on it. A previous similar exercise of eviction happened nearby at Ndumi some time ago, with evicted residents indeed having been turned from self sustaining fishermen and farmers to the proverbial basket case beggars.

To make matters worse, the cheques reportedly have a validity until 19th May only, after which they will lapse and as a result people may be forced off their ancestral land without any compensation at all, as has previously been alleged from the Ndumi evictions.

A conservation source in regular contact from Arusha, who is also involved in the ongoing court case to permanently stop the Tanzanian government from constructing a road across the migration routes of the great herds of wildebeest and zebras in the Serengeti, added his own voice when he wrote: ***‘We have gone to court with our grievance. All attempts by the Tanzanian government to stop the case from proceeding have been thrown out and in fact the East African Court of Justice registrar has made very public comments that they welcome any similar cases to be brought to them. What has happened is that our domestic legal system has failed us, so we went to the East African level. Our case is directly linked with Mwambani. As you wrote in your article, that corridor comes from Tanga / Mwambani to Musoma at Lake Victoria and the most direct route is through the Serengeti. The big mining interests need these highways and railways to export ore and soda ash. They need it to export timber from the forests of the Eastern Arc mountains and other forest systems along this route. Poaching of timber is even worse than poaching of elephant now. We know that law offices at the coast have been leaned on to reject taking the cases of those evicted. Besides, these villagers are poor and unable to afford good legal representation, that is another reason they have not been able to take matters to court. It is worth considering going straight to the EACJ for their case. You need to highlight the connection between the Serengeti highway and the railway link from Tanga to Musoma and how it impacts on conservation and biodiversity hotspots. Impacts on the Serengeti, the Lake Natron ecosystem and the Coelacanth Marine Park near Tanga. How can anyone seriously want to build a port in that marine park. Besides being too shallow, all the experts talk of better options to improve the Tanga port and not waste a lot of money to build a port in Mwambani just a few miles away. The number of berths I have found out, will make that harbour incapable to expand a lot but Tanga could be expanded more easily. There is a lot of corruption and external influence going on. When they hear billions of dollars, the sharks come out from the deep and a few hundred or thousand villagers are no obstacle for our government. This has to be stopped’***.

The East African Community has only recently endorsed the transport corridor between Tanga and Musoma, ostensibly following intense lobbying by the Ugandan and Tanzanian delegations at the EAC in Arusha, but in the face of railway experts which doubt the viability of too many railway routes from the Indian Ocean to Lake Victoria and beyond. While in Kenya the LAPSET project is due to connect a new deep sea port to be built in Lamu with South Sudan and Ethiopia, by railway, highway and pipeline – the latter to export South Sudan’s oil – the present

route from Mombasa via Nairobi to the Ugandan border is due to be upgraded to the international standard gauge format, as the current narrow gauge format limits both speed and weight carried.

Considering there are only these two main rail routes in Kenya – one existing and one planned – and Kenya being a much larger economy for that matter at present, it has been suggested for Tanzania to concentrate on rehabilitating the TAZARA line which connects Dar es Salaam to Zambia, and to speedily upgrade the two main rail lines connecting Dar es Salaam with the current lake port city of Mwanza and the central line up to Isaka, from where Rwanda intends to establish a rail link to Kigali and beyond. Establishing a third main line, as suggested from Tanga to Musoma, where incidentally no sufficient port facilities exist at present and which would require a new harbour to be built at considerable cost, is therefore seen by many as one too many, and international lenders will be reluctant to help finance all the proposed new routes.

Government sources in periodic contact with this correspondent have however dismissed these fears and pointed to the planned establishment of a BRICS development bank, to be set up by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, aimed to rival in scope and size the World Bank and International Finance Corporation. *'If World Bank does not finance our projects, the BRICS bank will when it is launched. After all, it will be Chinese firms building the railways and harbours and highways and Brazil's Odebrecht will build a new mega power plant at Stiegler's Gorge, financed by the BRICS development bank too. And Russia wants our Uranium, so they will be willing to finance whatever roads and rail is needed to get to the mining sites.* [sic: over 200 sq km's located inside the Selous Game Reserve but due to be degazetted to permit for mining to commence] *We expect the conditions attached to the BRICS loans to be much more in favour of our needs and with no political strings to them like we are getting from the West'*, comments made under condition of anonymity and signaling a new strategy how to pursue highly controversial projects without years of arguments 'inflicted on them' by the Western conservation and green lobbies.

These and related issues have previously been discussed in widely read articles, the links of which are inserted here for ease of access, resulting at the time in outraged protests of government mouthpieces and sycophants, but which have stood the test of time as ongoing developments only strengthen the case made two years ago, when publishing <http://wolfganghthome.wordpress.com/2011/05/01/tanzania-conservation-breaking-news-the-corridor-of-destruction-from-the-coast-to-the-lake/>

Additional articles then followed in January 2012 via <http://wolfganghthome.wordpress.com/2012/07/03/tanzanias-corridor-of-destruction-set-to-extend-into-uganda-too/> and in July 2012 via <http://wolfganghthome.wordpress.com/2012/07/03/tanzanias-corridor-of-destruction-set-to-extend-into-uganda-too/>

For more information on this complex and complicated issue readers can also access the following websites and contributions by others.

http://www.tnrf.org/files/E_INFO_MWAMBANI_DOSSIER_November.pdf

<http://www.tnrf.org/node/7066> "Does Tanga need a new port?"

<http://www.tnrf.org/node/10390> SWARA article

Rwanda News

RWANDA LAUNCHES PREPARATIONS FOR INAUGURAL *MISS TOURISM* EVENT



**2013
Miss
Tourism Rwanda**
Sustainable tourism for development

ORGANISED BY

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Rwanda's first ever *Miss Tourism* contest will go underway on May 10th, when the 15 finalists, selected from Rwanda's university and tourism colleges, will be revealed and introduced to the public at the Hotel Mille des Collines in Kigali by the event organizers. The Eureka Group, formed by www.newdawnassociates.com, www.eagle-ride.com and www.victoria-international.com, in conjunction with the Rwanda Development Board's Tourism and Conservation Department and national airline *RwandAir* will on that date formally launch the activities, which will culminate in a Grand Gala Final on June 01st held at the Kigali Serena Conference Centre. The participants will from 14th May undergo training in the shape of a '*boot camp*' to prepare them for the final sessions, where tourism knowledge and skills will feature high on the agenda and the score sheet of the judges.

Alongside the event have the organizers invited over 40 tour operators and travel agents from across Eastern Africa, as well as a small group of selected media houses, *eTurboNews* as a global industry leader included, to cover the event and participate in a familiarization tour of Rwanda's key attractions.

On the visiting schedule will be the '*Enchanted Forest, aka Nyungwe Forest National Park*', the shores of Lake Kivu with a visit to Kibuye and then along the route of the *Congo Nile Trail* to Gisenyi. Not to be missed is a rendezvous with the gentle giants of the Virunga mountains, the gorillas before returning to Kigali for the grand final when Rwanda's first ever *Miss Tourism* will be crowned. In line with the event's objectives will the winner, as a key prize, be given a full scholarship for a Master Degree programme in tourism, which will earn the winning lady not just a crown but knowledge for a future career in the tourism industry.

Tourism is one of Rwanda's key economic activities and has in recent years grown in leaps and bounds, regularly recording double digit growth figures and is expected to earn the country over 300 million US Dollars this year. A deliberate government policy of environmental protection, forest restoration and proactive marketing across the globe, alongside product diversification and innovations, has made Rwanda one of East Africa's most sought after destinations. MICE tourism is being promoted using existing facilities like the Kigali Serena Hotel and Conference Centre, the upcoming Kigali Marriott Hotel and Conference Centre and will receive a further boost when next year the country's new international convention centre will open. RwandAir, the national carrier, too is playing a critical role in promoting the country and has in recent years aggressively expanded both network and fleet, positioning itself as a key player in African aviation. Watch this space for more information on the event, close up and personal reports from the country's key attractions before covering the Grand Finale of *Miss Tourism Rwanda 2013*.

Visit www.misstourismrwanda.com for additional information or check out www.rwandatourism.com and www.rwandair.com.

KEY HIGHWAY FROM KIGALI TO MUSANZE / RUHENGERI BLOCKED BY LANDSLIDES



One of Rwanda's most important traffic arteries, the highway from Kigali to Musanze, and from there on to Gisenyi, was yesterday completely blocked when a land slide took out half of the road at Gashenyi / Gakenke District.

The road, hugely important for trade, i.e. to bring agricultural products to the markets in Kigali and in turn to supply the upcountry areas, besides being the main access route for tourists to reach the Volcanoes National Park where gorilla tracking is on offer, was closed for fear of more traffic collapsing the remaining road structure.

According to a tourism source in Kigali, a section of nearly 100 metres was washed away in a land slide, as heavy rains have been pounding not just Rwanda but much of Eastern Africa.

'This is a key road in Rwanda. There are few options but very wide detours which are not viable. Right now, vehicles are stuck on both sides of the collapse stretch. What we are trying to do is to have busses swap passengers, like the ones coming from Kigali will have passengers get out and carry their bags over that stretch where there is only half tarmac now. The passengers from busses coming from Musanze or Gisenyi will do the same and then board the respective other busses for their onward journey. The bus operators use mobile phones to communicate to colleagues on the other end to make arrangements so that local travelers and even tourists can at least reach Kigali if they have to fly home or reach the park for their gorilla experience. But trucks and their cargo are just stuck right now, there is nothing which can be done. Even when a detour has been opened, that will be a soil road and truck will be banned from it because they will get stuck and block it again. We just beg for understanding from our tourist visitors that they bear with us but this is really beyond anyone' said the source on the phone last evening.

Due to being a weekend no official statements could be obtained from RDB's Tourism and Conservation Department as to the logistics involved should tourists not be able to be at the Kinigi park headquarters for the mandatory briefing at 7 am on the day of their tracking, though it is understood that this emergency situation has triggered a reaction of flexibility for those coming late or else not arriving until very much later that day.

From another source it was mentioned that creating a bypass might take up to two weeks and that a full repair of the section might take several months due to the steep terrain and the caution which needs to be exercised to avoid further landslides.



The history of the Seychelles archipelago is well described elsewhere, with the islands changing hands between colonial occupiers ranging from the Portuguese way back in the 15th and 16th century over the French to the British, before becoming independent from Britain on the 29th of June 1976.

An important part of this history, of course well known on the islands but less well known further abroad, was the archipelago's transformation in the 1830's from a slave based agricultural economy, when Britain abolished slavery in 1833 and the administration in Mahe started to enforce these changes from 1835 onwards.

At the time, out of an overall population of more than 7.500 across the archipelago, records from the Seychelles National Archives show that 6.521 were slaves. Lacking the free labour the larger estates previously established on the main islands faced immediate problems of being competitive and subsequently the population started to decline alongside the economy. It was in that period of time, between the abolition of slavery in the mid 1830's and the arrival of a group of Anglican missionaries in 1861, that many changes in the socio economic structure of the islands took place. The Missionary Society, increasingly aware of the unmet needs for education among the children of the freed slaves, in 1875 began to establish a settlement in the mountains originally known as '**Venn's Town**' and opened a boarding school for these children the following year in 1876, a project which lasted, according to information sourced from archived records, until the 1890's before it was eventually abandoned.



The ruins, which became more widely accessible after the Sans Souci road was constructed in the 1970's, were at least in part excavated and restored by the Seychelles government in recent years, and a view point established offering one of Mahe's grandest vistas, in the run up to starting the process of UNESCO recognition of what is today called '**Mission Lodge**' as the archipelago's first cultural World Heritage Site. Located inside the Seychelles' largest terrestrial protected area, the '**Morne National Park**', Mission Lodge is awaiting consideration by UNESCO's World Heritage Site Committee later this year.

Currently, visitors can access the site free of cost and the tour companies are already including visits to Mission Lodge, where tourists can walk around some of the cleared ruins but at present mainly enjoy the magnificent views

down the mountain and across the ocean. Once the site has attained UNESCO WHS status, further plans are afoot to show visitors in greater detail the archeological finds, more of the partly restored ruins of buildings, the cemetery and artefacts unearthed when clearing the site.

The Ministry of Tourism and Culture has already announced plans to construct a visitor pavilion, which similar to the one on the island of Praslin at the entrance to the Vallee' de Mai, Seychelles most visited tourism attraction and of course also a UNESCO WHS, will serve as administrative offices as well as a museum. The facilities this new centre intends to provide, will undoubtedly draw more visitors into the mountains, where they can not only see part of the Seychellois history but also take guided walks and hikes into the Morne National Park, to explore the tropical rainforest and its rich flora and fauna.



(Pictures from Mission Lodge, Sans Souci, Mahe by W. Thome)

Tourism and Culture Minister Alain St. Ange, when introducing the concept of reconstruction of the site to key tourism industry stakeholders last year, which will allow to much better showcase the Mission Lodge, was at the time quoted of having said: ***‘The historical aspect of Mission Lodge is being forgotten and overshadowed by its breathtaking panoramic view. An important chapter in Seychelles history is engraved in Mission Lodge, and this aspect should constitute the central attraction of the site’.***

Seychelles has enlisted the support of the UN World Tourism Organization in its bid to have Mission Lodge recognized as the country’s first cultural World Heritage Site, to join the two ecological sites already in place, the Aldabra Atoll and the Vallee’ de Mai. Towards that end Minister St. Ange added: ***‘The world through UNESCO must walk with us in protecting these ruins. UNESCO must feel proud to be working with us to not only save this unique site, but to help protect it forever’.***

Find more details about the Seychelles via www.seychelles.travel which offers a wide range of facts about the destination but also provides an extensive guide on available accommodation, from very affordable Bed & Breakfast establishments to guest houses, holiday villas and some of the world’s most acclaimed luxury resorts. ***Seychelles, truly Another World.***

SEYCHELLES AND CHINA SIGN MUTUAL VISA WAIVER



Confirmation was received today by a regular source from Mahe, that the Seychelles – already the only country not to require a Visa from visitors no matter where they come from around the world – and China have signed a mutual Visa waiver agreement, now also allowing Seychellois to fly to Hong Kong on Air Seychelles, and beyond on to the Chinese mainland, without having to go through the process of first getting a Visa.

China has been one of Seychelles fastest growing tourism source markets, to a large part for the country’s policy to admit every visitor to the archipelago as long as they have a return ticket, a confirmed hotel booking and funds to sustain their stay, although the natural beauty of the islands has captured the minds of Chinese travelers coming for weddings on the beach, honeymoons in the hammock and to enjoy the pristine nature of the islands.

The Seychelles, according to the information at hand, is the first country from Africa to sign such a ground breaking agreement with China, considered an exceptional appreciation of the close ties which have developed over the past years between the two nations.

Tourism sources have welcomed the move, saying it will make promoting the Seychelles in China now even easier as the bureaucracy and red tape to acquire a Visa have now been removed, allowing staff of resorts, DMC's and tourism attractions to travel to China for trade fairs and sales calls at an instant's notice.

Said one source on condition of anonymity for not being the official spokesperson of the organization: *'Our open door policy is one of the main reasons for our success in attracting more tourist visitors. Our natural attractions, the best beaches and the best resorts, act like a magnet for many. Seychelles is a dream destination and we can make these dreams become reality. The start of flights by Air Seychelles to Hong Kong is a milestone in tapping the Chinese market. Other airlines like Emirates, Qatar Airways and Etihad, which between them fly more than two dozen times to Mahe every week, opened the market from the China mainland for us. But if Chinese would have to get Visa, we would not get as many visitors from there. The policy of our government to throw our doors wide open for everyone, apart from a few basic conditions like return ticket and hotel booking, is perhaps the single most important factor to facilitate tourists to come here. No Visa, no cost involved, no hassle, no waste of time. Just get on a plane, it is really as simple as that and through the tourism board website potential visitors can book so many resorts now on line and print their confirmation and that is all they need'.*

The Seychelles have since 2009 recorded sustained growth in visitor arrivals and for 2013 expect a rise in arrivals of approximately 4 percent, but are by the look of it already ahead of this target for the first quarter of the year. *Seychelles, truly Another World.*

AND as is usually the case, some interesting reading material taken from Gill Staden's *The Livingstone Weekly*

Robin Pope takes over Stanley Safari Lodge

Stanley Safari Lodge had been joined to Robin Pope Safaris. Robin Pope Safaris operates in Luangwa, Liuwa Plain and Malawi. Stanley Safari Lodge was opened in 2004 and is on the road to Mukuni Village.

Fuel Increase

From Zambia Weekly

Government has increased fuel prices by over 21% – with immediate effect. This is one of the highest increments ever seen in Zambia. The country now has the highest fuel prices in the region.

Mines, Energy and Water Development Minister Yamfwa Mukanga explained that prices had gone up because government has decided to stop subsidising fuel (the previous MMD government declared to have done the same in 2010 when prices were increased twice – which President Sata back then, as the leader of the opposition, called an “open scandal”).

Mukanga explained: “Current evidence suggests that the poor have benefited the least from this measure. Key consumers of fuel, who are the mining industries and urban dwellers that are able to own vehicles, have benefitted most from this measure. Given the current economic conditions, government was committed to improve the welfare of the Zambian worker, as well as the most vulnerable and poor in our society,” he said.

In 2012, government allegedly spent KR754 million on fuel subsidies, equivalent to 30% of its health sector budget. Mukanga told the Post that government expects to gain KR2.4 billion by scrapping the fuel subsidy.

Mukanga added that the increment could have been even higher: “In order to reduce the level of increase in fuel prices, government has decided to remove the 5% import duty chargeable on crude feedstock. Furthermore government has reduced the KR0.24 that was chargeable on petrol for the strategic reserves fund to KR0.15 on all products”.

Minibus drivers (and probably their – non-car-owning – passengers) protested, and consumer organisations pointed out that the increment would affect anything from transport fares to mealie meal prices. Industry organisations pointed out that it would increase the cost of production, thereby affecting anything from inflation to the trade balance.

Others wondered what happened to the PF government’s campaign promises. The last time fuel prices changed was right after the PF government assumed office, when prices were reduced by an average of KR0.45 per litre. Back then Sata appealed to millers, ZESCO, bus operators and transporters to “pass the benefits to the people”. He also dissolved the Energy Regulation Board on allegations of corruption, and appointed a commission of inquiry to probe public procurement of fuel – with the overall objective to “bring the cost of fuel in Zambia to the reigning levels in the southern African region,” stated Mukanga’s predecessor, Christopher Yaluma. Instead Zambia now has the highest fuel prices in the region – despite international fuel prices falling in the meantime, argued some commentators.

The commission of inquiry, led by PF Secretary General and Justice Minister Wynter Kabimba, concluded in 2012 that the MMD government had lost KR2 billion to “malpractices” in awarding petroleum supply contracts from 2007 and 2011, and promised to do better. The PF government then proceeded to award fuel contracts to Gunvor Company (spiked crude oil) and Trafigura Oil Company (diesel and unleaded petrol), despite the tender procedures being breached. Later, the Anti-Corruption Commission initiated investigations into allegations that Kabimba had received a kick-back from Trafigura, but eventually cleared him of all wrongdoings.

The main problem with Zambia’s fuel prices is the cost of production, with government insisting on maintaining (and upgrading) the Indeni Petroleum Refinery. Indeni is too small to be able to compete with direct imports of petroleum products. Hitherto it has therefore only survived through tariff protections. Import duty on finished petroleum products is 25%, but only 5% on Indeni crude – and the 5% has just been removed by government, thereby further increasing Indeni’s advantage.

Immigration at Vic Falls, Kazungula and Sesheke to be computerized.

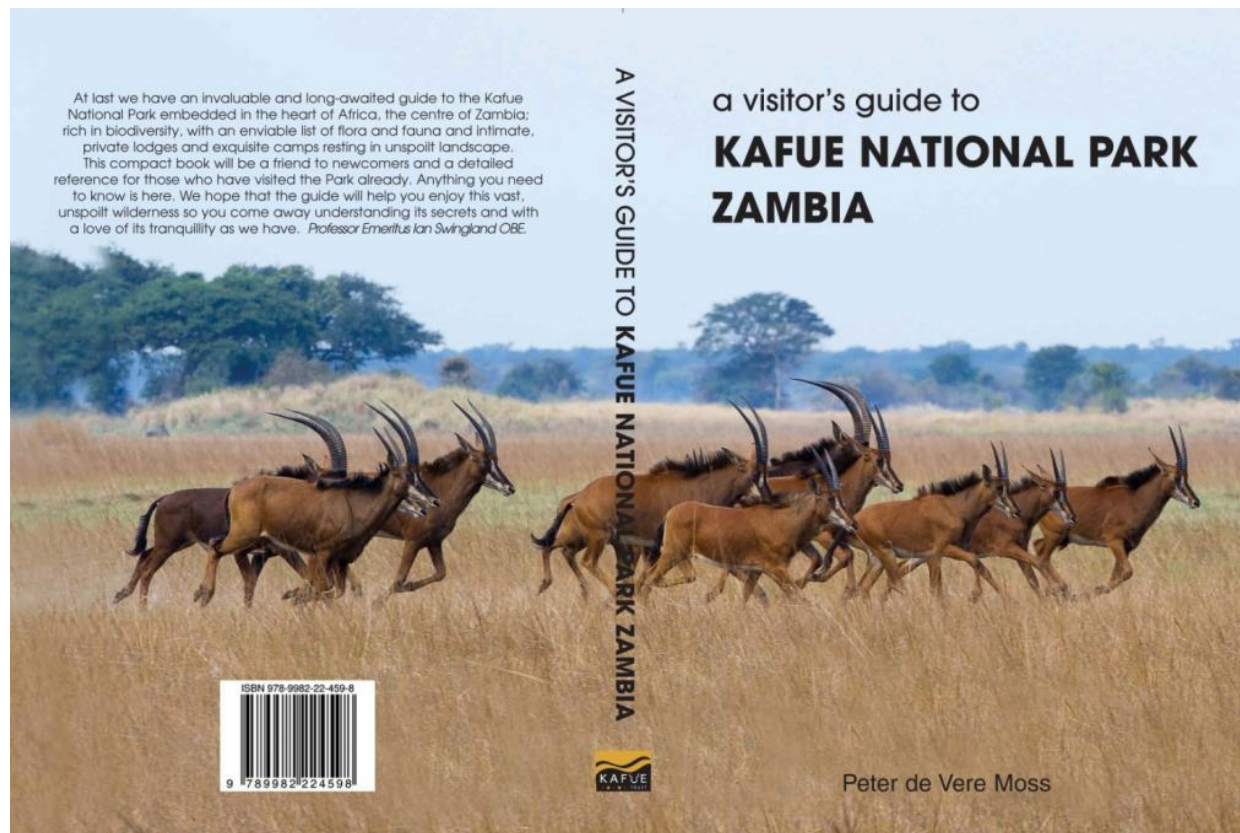
In a report this week, we are told that the three border posts near Livingstone are to be computerized. 20 computers, 15 webcams, 15 fingerprint scanners and 9 printers have been sourced. Zamtel is doing the connection work. The computers will link to Lusaka and it is expected that this will help speed up procedures at the border.

Kafue National Park

A new book for visitors to Kafue National Park is being printed. The book is written by Peter de Vere Moss and produced by the Kafue Trust. As I write this it is probably coming off the printing press ... Ready for Indaba ... It is a mine of information.

I love Kafue National Park and thought that I knew all about it, but this book has shown me that there is so much more to learn. Thoroughly researched, the book has all the information you need to know and is a 'must' for all tour operators in Zambia and prospective visitors to the park. It lists all the lodges, along with their GPS coordinates, giving details on how to get there and what to see on the way.

I think what I find most interesting is the list of antelopes (as well as other mammals, birds, fish, amphibians and reptiles) in Kafue. There are more species of antelope in Kafue than any other park in Africa. I always knew this, but to have them listed with a photo of each is incredible to see.



The book does, though, itemize the issues which face the park like fires and poaching. It is not one of those books which glamorises the park – it tells it as it is. To me, this makes the book more special.

The book is a collaboration of all the lodges in Kafue and, for that, it is detailed and accurate. The descriptions of the areas of Kafue – from Nanzhila and Busanga Plains, the Kafue River, the Itezhi-Tezhi Dam to the mopane woodland and the tsetse fly – show the passion behind the book.

I do not know the price yet, but if you would like a copy, let me know and I will order some. For those of you going to Indaba, look out for Steve Smith from Nanzhila Plains Safari Lodge because he will be clutching some.

Free Visas for Delegates

It was announced this week that delegates to the UNWTO would be given free visas to Zambia and Zimbabwe. The announcement was made in Addis Ababa at the African Union's head office.

According to a report, David Phiri, Deputy Minister of Tourism in Zambia, said that a regime had been worked out so that travellers could move easily and not be frustrated at the borders.
