

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



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East Africa News

REGIONAL COOPERATION SEEN AS KEY TO FUTURE SUCCESS



This week saw two important regional African meetings take place, focusing on the tourism industry and how to better use one of the world's foremost economic sectors to alleviate poverty through increased cooperation and the subsequent investments, job creation and foreign exchange earnings.

COMESA, The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, a 19 member trade block, held its first ever Tourism Forum in Kenya's capital Nairobi, where the Kenya Tourist Board, aka Magical Kenya hand in hand with the Ministry of Tourism and the Kenya Investment Authority acted as hosts.

Held at the Windsor Golf Hotel and Country Club, the forum participants worked the proverbial overtime during the meeting days, by agreement exceeding the allotted time by several hours every day, so as to allow each delegation and each delegate to make contributions and add their own observations and experience, so that others could benefit from it. Discussed were a range of topics, starting from sharing the respective member states' success stories, where notably East Africa's premier hospitality group Serena Hotels was showcased by their Director of Sales and Marketing Rosemary Mugambi, alongside the story of the Seychelles and last but not least Egypt, which under difficult circumstances over the past years kept focus on tourism nevertheless.

Other sessions dealt with the expansion of economic opportunities, best practices for sustainable tourism development, tourism policy and strategy issues and the need to prioritize the sector within the national frameworks of economic activity. Corporate and social responsibility did of course not miss, with some remarkable stories told during the forum before the meeting turned its attention to what was considered a key issue, the relaxation of Visa requirements, for travel of COMESA citizens as well as for foreign visitors, with the ultimate aim to establish a common single Visa in the medium term. Regional cooperation was discussed and encouraged, on a bilateral and multilateral basis in form of pilot projects but other global issues such as the conservation of biodiversity too featured high, as all delegates were aware that only an intact environment could sustainably support wildlife and nature based tourism. Industry standards and the harmonization of them across the COMESA member states too was a major agenda item as was the closely linked development of human resources. The last sessions then turned their attention to the urgent need for infrastructure development, the opportunities the new media offered through a deliberate use of information and communication technologies, air transport and, no surprise here, the role the media can play in promoting destinations and showcasing wide range of natural, historical and cultural attractions found

across the COMESA region. Here in fact a presentation was given by this correspondent on the eTurboNews Group and its focus on African destinations, besides giving and insight into the workings of the International Council of Tourism Partners, in short ICTP, which has green growth for tourism at its core, a perfect match to the COMESA theme of sustainable tourism developments 'Shaping the Future of Tourism in the Region'.

The closing session then featured questions on product development and marketing initiatives, before the COMESA Secretariat staff then presented a range of findings and recommendations.

It was agreed that alongside the next COMESA Summit, due in November in Uganda's capital of Kampala, progress will be monitored as to having passed key issues on to the member states and have the delegations incorporate tourism related topics on their respective agendas.

The COMESA Business Council will form a dedicated tourism working group, incorporating key individuals from across the region to drive the agenda forward and the venue for the second tourism forum will be announced in due course.

Meanwhile has the Vanilla Island Cooperation also met during the same week, incidentally having three COMESA member states amongst them, namely the Seychelles, Madagascar and the Comoros, a fact not lost on the delegates of the Nairobi meeting who were keen to incorporate the experience and progress of the Indian Ocean islands cooperation into their own future progress and rollout. In particular interest was expressed to learn from the creation of an annual calendar of events, where each member state could submit a key tourism festival to be listed and then supported by fellow members, to increase visibility and widen the marketing reach.

The Vanilla Island Cooperation of La Reunion, where the headquarters will be placed in the future as it was just learned, Mauritius, Madagascar, Mayotte, Comoros and Seychelles was in fact expanded when the islands of Rodrigues, Nose Bey, Praslin and La Digue were admitted into the cooperation in their own rights, adding the proverbial 'oomph' to the lineup. Also not lost on the COMESA forum was the fact that a generous support package from the European Union allowed the Vanilla Island cooperation to set up a head office, recruit a CEO and a Director of Tourism Marketing and allocate 300.000 Euros to marketing alone, a sum which will surely allow to make an impact through the new media and on the web as well through the more traditional methods of attending trade fairs, tourism shows and road shows. Is there another media juggernaut in the making, similar to what the Seychelles have accomplished over the past years, which is now literally everywhere in the world of tourism one looks? Well the right minds are present in the Vanilla Island cooperation to accomplish that and COMESA's Business Council has left no doubt that they will keep an eye on these developments and draw from the lessons learned there through member states input from the Comoros, Madagascar and of course the Seychelles.

A week of focus on tourism in the COMESA region and the Indian Ocean islands has come to an end but work now only starts in earnest, so watch this space for regular updates on progress made and decisions taken.

Uganda News

NEW FERRY, NEW PROBLEMS, ALREADY?

Rowdy scenes by travelers were reported in the local Ugandan media, surrounding the new MV Pearl ferry, officially launched only days earlier by the Minister for Works and Transport, when an apparent damage to an engine, caused by striking submerge rocks on attempting to land the ferry, required repairs to the new vessel. Operating the service between the main island of the Ssese Islands group in Lake Victoria, Buggala to the mainland at Bukakata near Masaka, the new ferry reportedly then failed to operate the last scheduled crossing due at the end of the day on Saturday, prompting waiting passengers to vehemently protest and, according to one report, waylay the ferry staff, when they tried to return to their base at dusk. Police had to be deployed to restore order but those attempting to return to the mainland found themselves stuck on the island, having to find accommodation for the night and spending extra unbudgeted funds.

The ferry then resumed services later on Sunday to allow a maintenance team to complete their task but observers have voiced concerns that the substantially larger ferry, compared to the previously used type, may have to use different operating methods when landing or leaving to avoid hitting submerged rocks, which were too deep for the old ferry but pose a threat to MV Pearl due to the substantially larger displacement.

A crossing previously took over an hour and is now reduced to theoretically 20 minutes, with perhaps some added time now set aside for a slower final approach to avoid rocks and the capacity has been lifted to 20 vehicles.

Tourism for the Ssese Islands and in particular Buggala is expected to get a significant boost from the larger capacity ferry, making it easier and faster to cross the waters, to then either stay on the main island or use smaller lake boats to reach other, smaller islands where the ferry cannot dock and to enjoy the hospitality of a number of small locally owned beach side resorts. Long off the beaten track, the Ssese Islands are thought to have a significant potential for the development of both domestic tourism from within Uganda but also for foreign visitors, who have started to visit in greater numbers to enjoy the removed locations, the good fishing and the local food and hospitality

in small, owner operated little resorts as notably not one major local hotel management company, leave alone the regional hospitality leaders, have yet set foot on any of the islands. But when they do, be sure to read about it right here, so watch this space.

ANNUAL ‘ROYAL ASCOT GOAT RACES’ CONFIRMED FOR SEPTEMBER 01

What started at the Kampala Rugby Club way back in 1993 as a small fundraising event, providing some family fun watching the goats to be egged on to race around a small circle, with onlookers nevertheless dressed as if indeed they had come to see Royal Ascot for real, the event is now one of Uganda’s biggest social weekends.

Long moved to the grounds of the sprawling lake side resort of Munyonyo, the annual goat races now attract huge numbers of visitors, from the region and beyond too, and corporate hospitality tents give those with the magic badge access to the open bars, finger food and at times full meals, while those without the badges can frequent the many stalls where meat is being roasted and drinks served to still hunger and thirst.

From an initial afternoon event the races have evolved into a full day programme, since 1999 held in Munyonyo, and attendance grew from an initial 400 odd Kampaleans to over 10.000 last we looked while charitable collections now stand in the double digit million Uganda Shillings range, benefitting a number of pre-selected organizations in need of financial support.

The Entebbe Sailing Club, the original hosts and owners of the brand, smartly formed a limited liability company in 2004 but upon realizing that unpaid volunteer work to make this huge event happen could no longer be sustained, sold the entire shares to new owners who now have staff from their other hospitality businesses prepare for and manage the event.



(The Super Chipmunk seen here at a ribbon cut trial at the Kajjansi airfield outside Kampala)

One of the main attractions this year is the expected appearance in the skies above Munyonyo of aerial dare-devil Capt. Howard Davenport, of the Kampala Aero Club, who will perform his acrobatics above the crowds, smoke trail included, before aiming the De Havilland Super Chipmunk he plans to use this year for another ribbon cut, expertly performed as often seen before. Sadly, this correspondent will be out of country while reporting from the CAF Assembly in the Seychelles, but that should not prevent anyone from not going there and for those who can only see the event via cyberspace, there will be ‘official’ and visitor generated YouTube uploads on the day and information available via www.thegoatrases.com. Enjoy #VisitUganda ...

BIG BIRDING DAY DATES ANNOUNCED



Those who love the birds of the feathered kind will be marking October 19 – October 20 in their calendar, when from midnight to midnight ornithologists and hobby birders will once again swarm Uganda’s best, and also the lesser known sites to collect sightings and audible identifications of as many of the 1.061 species confirmed to have been recorded in the *Pearl of Africa*.

The Uganda Wildlife Authority and the National Forest Authority are once again participating in the event and will be offering free entrance to participants to the parks, reserves and national forests, to broadly promote domestic tourism and in particular raise awareness for the rich variety of birds found across the country. Last year some 40 official teams covered 38 sites across Uganda and ‘brought home’ sightings of 622 species, something the organizers hope to better this year with more participants covering yet more of the country.

First launched in 2009 by Nature Uganda and conservation partners, the #BBD – this being the hash tag on Twitter for the event besides #VisitUganda – or Big Birding Day has since evolved into a major conservation and domestic tourism event, held annually and promoted by safari companies, safari lodges, the Uganda Tourism Board, the

Uganda Wildlife Authority and the National Forest Authority. Companies have last year sponsored teams, 'collecting' bird sightings and reporting them back via twitter to base for instant computation and updates and the social media will again be playing a major role in publicizing the event more broadly around the world, perhaps with enough hash tags even 'trending'.

The 'winners' of the event will be announced and celebrated on October 27th at a venue still to be announced, so watch this space for future updates. Meanwhile, visit www.natureuganda.org for more information or write to dianah.nalwanga@natureuganda.org with specific questions.

Kenya News

AIRPORT CONTROVERSY THREATENS TO SPIN OUT OF CONTROL



The latest twist in this murky saga is hitting the headlines now in Nairobi, with allegations of a million dollar bribe having been given to an unnamed official, who subsequently tried to turn all hell loose when 'his friends' did not get the contract to build JKIA's second runway and new 'super terminal'. This **Vision 2030** expansion of East Africa's primary aviation hub, which according to information gathered while in Nairobi during the week will be aimed to significantly cater for Kenya Airways' projected growth under their 10 year strategic '**Plan Mawingo**' and provide an integrated terminal for KQ and their Sky Team partners, has been under the media spotlight since embattled Transport Minister Amos Kimunya attempted to overturn the tender award made in December last year. The Kenyan public, armed with ever more details through the media, is presently rushing to conclusions as to his true motive, now that open allegation on a million dollar bribe have been made, though without naming names for legal reasons at this moment. Similar allegations were made years ago when Kimunya was knee deep in the fallout when the Grand Regency Hotel was sold to the then Gadaffi regime for a fraction of what was the true market value of the property. Analysts are already drawing parallels between the two cases and are attempting to put two and two together, once too often for those now baying for Kimunya's scalp.

As previously reported here did sections of the board of KAA, thought to be individuals in Kimunya's pocket, attempt to send the KAA CEO on compulsory leave but the latest information has it that Stephen Gichuki refused to take this laying down and in turn accused the board of acting illegally by failing to observe regulations to do with calling a valid board meeting. ***'From what I could establish, that meeting was not called by the Corporation Secretary which is a requirement, and it failed to involve the CEO in calling for the meeting, which is another requirement under the existing law. It would suggest that the chairman of the board committed a serious procedural error and it now calls his own position into question. Is he still tenable in this job or just did the bidding of his political master by trying to organize a clandestine meeting behind the back of the CEO? The biggest fallout of that, if it delays the project start, will be for Kenya Airways because their entire strategy is centered on the expansion of JKIA. They said it, the President said it and if there are now forces at play which put their bribes before the national interest, it is surely time Kibaki steps into the fray and directs where this is to go. Kimunya has been disrespectful to the President when he basically told him to get lost with his ambition to break ground for the project before his term ends, and ministers in the past were sacked for less reasons. Let us not lose sight that Kimunya very likely misled the parliament with his answers on the issue and is already being investigated for that action. And the board of KAA had sanctioned the contract in principle even though there is now a cost increase over the figure initially agreed upon. If sections of the board are dancing to Kimunya's tunes, let them be sacked too for trying to sabotage this project'*** wrote a regular aviation source from Nairobi overnight.

It has since become known that Kenya Airways' Chief Executive Dr. Titus Naikuni has spoken out too expressing his growing concern that any change in schedule would have a significant and financially very negative impact on national airline Kenya Airways. He had on previous occasions minced no words, not when in December last year the B787 Dreamliner was introduced in Nairobi nor at the launch of the airline's share right issue in April in the presence of President Kibaki, that the growth of infrastructure in Nairobi was quintessential for the growth and future success of the airline. With aircraft number 36, an Embraer 190, expected in September, and then more month by month lifting the fleet across the 40 threshold by early 2013, it is needless to say paramount that government delivers on the airport expansion, not just the current work scope but the crucially important second runway and major new terminal under '**Project Greenfield**', without which Kenya Airways' '**Project Mawingo**' could be

stopped dead in its tracks, a failure which competitors on the continent belonging to other airline alliances would gleefully watch happen as no such issues are known to surround the building for instance of the new airport in Addis Ababa, where Ethiopian Airlines belong to Sky Team's archrival Star Alliance.

'If JKIA does not soon start build the second runway and that new terminal and facilities expansion, the airport will choke on traffic and KQ's ambitions will be thwarted if not sabotaged. Therefore, I think it is important that the issue of economic sabotage is raised here and that those individuals trying to scuttle the timeframe need to be exposed for what they are, traitors to progress and development, scavengers only interested in filling their own stomach' added the Nairobi based source when discussing the latest developments this morning.

What is clear, is that the project is being increasingly submerged in murky waters, making it more and more difficult to see through personal and vested interests of individuals playing the fiddles and vying for the lead, and that investigations will find it difficult to separate myth and intentionally told fiction from the hard reality of signed documents, signed board minutes and in particular the various letters and green light nods from amongst others the Kenyan Attorney General and the country's procurement watch dog.

Dancing along the abyss and playing with the future of Kenya's main aviation hub and the well being of the entire aviation industry comes to mind ... Watch this space.

KAA DESCENDS INTO INFIGHTING AS CEO SUSPENDED BY BOARD



'When elephants fight it is the grass which suffers' goes the saying in Africa but here the grass is Kenya's crucially important aviation industry, as the country's airport authority, responsible for the main hub in Nairobi and other airports across the country, descends further into infighting and what appears to be systematic anarchy.

At the core of the relentless fights over contracts and tenders is the plan to build a major new extension to the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, often referred to as ***'Project Greenfield'***, which includes the construction of the long overdue second runway for the airport but also a range of new terminal facilities, able to cater for traffic increases deep into the century.

The Minister for Transport, embattled and hugely controversial Amos Kimunya, no stranger to being lambasted by parliamentary committees and already removed from cabinet before, had locked horns over the tender award for the project to a Chinese company, which he wanted cancelled. Utterances in the direction of his President, who is reportedly keen to lay the foundation stone for the project before he leaves office, to the effect that he, Kimunya, did not care or bother who breaks ground, raised the heat and his dismissive attitude towards a legal opinion by the Kenyan Attorney General over the dangers of cancelling the contract made further headlines in the local media, as well as waves in cabinet, which is now in its final countdown toward the March 2013 general election and appears ever more divided along party lines and in pushing for personal interests.

With Kimunya told to hold his horses until cabinet as a whole has reviewed the various positions submitted, he nevertheless went ahead and appointed a new committee comprising sections of the board of KAA thought loyal to him and in a surprise action did the KAA board then suspend the authority's CEO Stephen Gichuki, sending him on compulsory leave to facilitate yet more ***'investigations'***, aka doing their master's bidding.

Gichuki's tenure, as was his predecessor's, were marked by both achievements as well as intense controversy and squabbles with airlines, in particular over a major electricity outage at Mombasa's international airport, then followed by a series of similar failures in Nairobi which has a huge financial impact on the affected airlines. KAA is also under pressure to deliver on the completion of the ongoing expansion works for a new adjoining terminal building, linked to the present terminal, creating more aircraft parking spaces and generally uplifting standards and operational efficiency in running East Africa's premier aviation hub. Added mishaps, like a boiler explosion in Nairobi or a fire in the newly restored VIP lounge in Mombasa added further pressure on KAA before at least two known contempt of court charges were brought against Gichuki and the KAA over the willful destruction of an entire housing estate on disputed land adjoining the JKIA perimeter.

Said a regular and usually very outspoken aviation source from Nairobi overnight: ***'You are aware of my feelings about the professionalism of KAA. They should sack all those useless bureaucrats, the same with the KCAA by the way, and bring in a new breed of professionals unsullied by the dirty game of politics and corruption. What vested interests does that minister have and I hope parliament exposes those and gives him marching orders again. All we in the industry see is more delays while they fight over the spoils of multibillion Shilling contracts'***

and trying to make a quick buck on the back of those. Every day the second runway is delayed we are at risk to see JKIA close down when there is an incident on the runway. The cost of diverting planes and the subsequent delays in the schedules of all airlines, especially of Kenya Airways, is massive. Every day we suffer the congestion in the terminal, the apron or in car parks is a day lost because passengers are not happy with what they find when they arrive, depart or transit in Nairobi. It is time to acknowledge that the political games are putting the entire sector at risk and because we so depend on the airlines to export our produce, to bring tourists and visitors, can we afford to just stand by the sidelines and watch this?

Acting CEO is now the KAA Deputy CEA Matthew Wamalwa while Gichuki is pondering his fate and misfortunes for an indeterminate period of time, however long the ‘investigations’ may take. Watch this space.

1TIME SETTO PULL FLIGHTS FROM MOMBASA



A regular source from Kenya’s tourism fraternity has just confirmed that 1Time, a South African LCC flying for a while now between Johannesburg and Mombasa, appears set to halt their operation to Kenya’s Indian Ocean city. High regulatory and aviation services cost have been cited as the main reason, a fact affirmed only yesterday through a presentation by Kenya Airways’ Phyllis Wakiaga, Coordinator Government and Industry Affairs, who spoke at the COMESA Tourism Forum to the delegates. She answered a question from the floor over the relatively high fares across Eastern Africa and the COMESA region and was specific that high airport taxes, high charges for services at airports and by aviation authorities for a wide range of fees were ‘too high to lower the cost of air travel significantly’.

Should 1Time indeed withdraw their flights this would be seen as a major blow by coast stakeholders as the postponed start of flights by Qatar Airways, allegedly over a deep rift vis a vis traffic rights between the airline and Kenyan government authorities, has already cut deep into the projections of new additional arrivals.

Said a frequent contributor from the aviation scene in Nairobi: *‘If this is true, other airlines might follow if charges keep going up. Authorities at times in the past just raised fees with little notice and until fares are adjusted the carriers have to absorb that added cost. Proposals in the new VAT bill spell doom for aviation in Kenya, like moving from an exempt status to a double digit tax figure. Those who drafted the bill are either totally uninformed or else agents of doom for the airline industry in Kenya. We need to ascertain the reasons behind the delayed start by Qatar and the intended halt of flights by 1Time but government should take this very seriously. We do, and as elections come closer who knows who next will leave, after all, it is only weeks now till Virgin will pull out from Kenya. I think tourism needs to stand up in cabinet and lay out the start consequences of all this but with the ministers we have for transport for instance he will not cut it with his colleagues’.*

No comments could be obtained from ‘official’ sources in the Kenya tourism industry but others, preferring anonymity, blamed escalating costs of doing business in Kenya for at least some of the downturn in fortunes, since reaching record arrivals and revenues last year. Watch this space for future developments as and when information comes to light.

NOT A GOOD DAY FOR KENYA

The first bit of bad news reached in the morning, that Mrs. Gichuki, who only buried her husband some three months ago after the principal owner of the Windsor Golf Hotel and Country Club had passed away, also died in the early hours of the day. This robbed the Windsor of two of the owning principals within months, leaving staff and management dumbstruck of why fate had to be so cruel.

The next bit of bad news came at lunch time, that Mombasa Air Safaris lost a LET 410 in a crash in the Masai Mara, with 2 pilots and 2 passengers killed on impact after attempting to take off, leaving a further 3 passengers critically injured. That bit of news already went viral on the social networks after breaking the news a few hours ago.

Now did news come in via the BBC of a tribal clash in the Tana River area of Coast Province, which left at least 48 people dead in what appears to be a violent backlash over grazing rights on fertile pastures.

Amongst the 48 were a 31 women and 11 children who got reportedly burned in their huts after attackers from the rival tribe has set the homesteads alight, while the six men died fighting, being hacked to death by machetes. The two tribes, the Orma and Pokomo, have been attempting to get control over the pastures to ensure their herds are

well fed and watered and found no formula to share access to the land, landing them in a violent battle for supremacy.

Kenya's tourism sector is said to be stunned by the BBC report which just broke into the international domain but one source from the coast already expressed his regret over this latest piece of bad news saying ***'is it ever going to end. This series of bad news today affecting tourism is terrible and will give us bad publicity for a while to come. The crash was bad and it is deeply regretted that people died but the mention of Coast Province in regard of these killings is very misleading. The Tana area where this happened is a very long way off what people overseas understand as coast. There is no link to our resorts here and no threat to our visitors' safety. It should be pointed out that the incident, as bad as it sounds, is a long distance off and reflects age old customs and tribal rivalries which were allowed to spill over instead of having a peaceful resolution for their dispute'***

Mrs. Agatha Juma, CEO of the Kenya Tourism Federation, in response to a question asked by this correspondent about the incident said: ***'It is very scary that our government has not used their intelligence and information to prevent such incidents from happening, it is not good for our reputation as a destination'***.

Other coastal sources have agreed that this will increase their challenge to keep hotel occupancies up as the negative publicity races around the world, with figures already down by over 20 percent compared with a year ago for coastal resorts. Indeed, not a good day for Kenya, so watch this space to see good news return to the headlines.

MOMBASA AIR SAFARI CRASH KILLS TWO PILOTS



In a breaking news development in Kenya it was reported that Mombasa Air Safaris suffered a fatal crash in the Masai Mara at Ngerende airstrip near the Mara Safari Club, with both pilots of the aircraft killed as well as at least one passenger. The aircraft had arrived from Mombasa, via Amboseli and had disembarked 6 passengers according to details provided by the Kenya Tourism Federation. When taking off the plane inexplicable crashed, killing the two pilots and two passengers with 3 more sustaining serious injuries. The Kenyan Flying Doctors, aka AMREF, are on site treating the injured before airlifting the to Nairobi for hospital care.

The Czech built LET 410, a 19 seater twin engined turboprop aircraft proven to perform at both higher elevations and high temperatures, was reportedly completely destroyed in the crash. According to Wikipedia information on the airline, in 1998 a 19 seat LET 410 crashed immediately after takeoff from Ol Kiombo airstrip in the Masai Mara. No passengers were on board. Both pilots died. The accident report found no technical problem and cited possible pilot error with the flap settings.

Still more details about the current crash are being sought, and updates will be filed as soon as additional information has been received.

Watch this space closely. Meanwhile are condolences expressed to the families and friends of the two pilots and the two tourists, and the other three casualties this crash has caused.

WINDSOR GOLF HOTEL AND COUNTRY CLUB MOURNS DOUBLE BLOW



Only weeks after the untimely death of the principal owner of Kenya's premier golf resort, the late Hon. John Gichuki, Minister in President Kibaki's government, his wife has also passed away this morning at the Nairobi Hospital, throwing the entire staff and management of the golf resort on the outskirts of Nairobi into a state of visible shock.

This correspondent is presently staying at the Windsor for the COMESA Tourism Forum, which plenary session rose for a minute of silence, after only moments earlier observing a minute of silence in honour of the late Menes Zenawi, who passed away in a hospital in Brussels / Belgium yesterday morning. The Ethiopian delegation at the meeting expressed their thanks for the gesture, as did later on the staff of the hotel too.

The Windsor with its championship 18 hole course of 7,277 yards has been described as one of Africa's finest and the elevation of over 6,000 feet above sea level makes balls travel further, surprising many golfers with the extra flight due to the thinner air. 73 bunkers and some very deviously designed roughs pose major challenges as do the several water hazards, including the one surrounding the 18th hole.

Built over 25 years ago, General Manager Marc Van der Borghst has expressed his confidence to this correspondent that the loss of two key principles within the space of three months was unsettling but that the board of directors of the company would nevertheless continue to pursue the ideals and objectives of the late owners, which will include a major investment package to be unveiled, probably, in view of the current circumstances and the Kenyan elections drawing nearer, with some initial delay. Watch this space for updates from the COMESA Tourism Forum and a review of the Windsor on TripAdvisor, which should be available in a few days.

COAST RESORT OPERATORS BLAME GOVERNMENT FOR LACK OF VISITORS

'Let me be very specific here so that there is no mistake on what I say. It is the government which has denied KTB the funding needed to do the job, and although KTB should do more with the resources they have, there are limitations. Their budget in real terms buys perhaps 25 percent less compared to last year because of inflation. If we still had Balala as our minister, things could be different, but the one we now got is just a peacock really. [At this stage the source categorically insisted on not being named but allowed the quote to be cited here] He failed to fight for a better tourism budget and just enjoys his limo and office before he is gone again at the next elections. Tourism deserves better. Besides low tourist numbers we also have issues with the finance bill trying to make tourism a VAT item, which will increase the cost for visitors and yet not enough money is being given back by government to promote tourism. KTB last week confirmed that numbers in Mombasa are down a lot compared to last year, by over 20 percent, but our colleagues here talk of way more than that. Something has to change if we are not going to return to 2008 and because of elections and the Somali situation our circumstances are far from ideal as it is' said a regular source in a communication from the Kenyan coast, citing overwhelming disappointment by industry stakeholders associated at the Mombasa and Coast Tourist Association. He quoted that MCTA chairman Mohammed Hersi, gave the present performance a 6.5 out of a possible 10, a far cry from the 10 out of 10 when Kenya broke all records last year, before Islamist terrorists from the Al Shabab group in Somalia, attacked tourists and resorts at a distant stretch of beach near the Somali border.

Another stakeholder, requesting anonymity in spite of his top seniority in the industry, pointed out that now is the time to invest in product innovation, upgrades of hotels and resorts and a complete review of the way guests are entertained and looked after, to copy the methods of 5 star destinations like the Maldives or Seychelles. ***'When you***

write about the resorts in Seychelles for instance, that is the quality we need to restore in Kenya. We need to incorporate the lessons from others and need to learn what they do to bring their own numbers up when everyone else stares at losses this year. Mauritius is down, and they are wondering what went wrong there, Mombasa is down too and we know what is wrong. The product is tired, we need to move from the 70's and 80's into the next decade of the new millennium. That requires government support with investment incentives but with elections coming, I do not see that happen this year, so that is a year lost. Tourism has to lobby now already not just for adjustments in budgets for this year but for the next few years ahead'.

The upcoming COMESA Tourism Forum in Nairobi will undoubtedly be a suitable platform to discuss the various approaches and the future of tourism in the trade block and it remains to be seen what recommendations the COMESA Tourism Forum will make to the private and public sectors to move the industry ahead and anchor it firmly as one of the key engines of economic growth amongst member countries.

For now though, tourism stakeholders at the Kenya coast are disgruntled and are getting angrier by the day, demanding immediate counter action by KTB and the Ministry of Tourism. Watch this space.

DEFIANT KIMUNYA APPOINTS SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO OVERSEE AIRPORT EXPANSION

In what now clearly has become a game of 'who blinks first' has Kenya's embattled Transport Minister Kimunya, no stranger to controversy after stumbling from scandal to scandal and having been removed from cabinet before, appointed a special committee to oversee the ongoing implementation of plans to substantially expand JKIA. Jomo Kenyatta International Airport is Kenya's main aviation facility and has been suffering for years from capacity constraints, something the new project is supposed to address, adding a second runway and yet another major terminal to the existing facilities and those under construction already.

Meanwhile will the parliamentary committee appointed by the Speaker of Parliament start their work to investigate the circumstances under which Kimunya appears to have misled the house, when in a fumbling statement last week he failed to explain the circumstances under which he directed a contract between KAA and a Chinese construction firm to be cancelled less than a month after it had been signed.

'Kimunya is a liability now and from the way things are shaping up, including his latest gimmick to appoint a committee of cronies, the parliamentary investigation very likely will result in him being censured again and having to quit or else be sacked. He is one chap who attracts controversy like few others. He sings anti corruption hymns but reality suggests otherwise. His latest gimmick when he appointed without any visible need a special committee to oversee the airport expansion, seems just another avenue he has now resorted to for delays or to impose his own agenda on the project. We can see no benefit from that otherwise' a regular aviation source from Nairobi wrote in a message, when discussing the ongoing saga over airport expansion and the urgency to get a second runway built without any further delays.

It is understood that President Kibaki, whose two terms of office have been marked by his government's action on roads and infrastructure developments, including airports, may break ground as early as November this year to get the project off to a flying start, giving hope to airlines that the eternal congestion of JKIA will, give or take a few years, come to an end. Watch this space.

Tanzania News

TANZANIA TO HOST CONTINENTAL ENVIRONMENT MEETING

The 14th Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment will take place in Arusha between the 10th and 14th of September and will according to information at hand be officially opened by President Kikwete.

It is expected that a range of topics discussed at the Rio+20 Conference a few weeks ago will also feature on the agenda of the continent's environment ministers and their delegations, trying to form a common position on the way forward for the African continent.

Meanwhile it is also expected that environmental and conservation lobbyists will use the presence of the ministers to highlight the challenges they have in host country Tanzania, where according to regular sources the environment is under assault like never before. A series of white elephant and ill considered projects have left dark spots on Tanzania's previously immaculate image as a conservation nation but no more.

'Last week we heard about poaching reaching alarming proportions. The issue of the Serengeti highway is still unresolved. So is the routing for the proposed railway to Musoma. The Lake Natron soda ash plant continues to be mentioned by government officials and yet it would spoil the breeding ground of the flamingos. The Selous has two issues, the uranium mining for which the 200 square kilometres are being removed from the reserve but it will still impact the environment around and into the reserve. The power project at Stiegler's Gorge will completely alter the entire fabric of the core tourism are because of the extensive flooding. And then there is the Coelacanth marine national park near Tanga where they intend to build a deep sea port. There are lots of other

issues too we are concerned about but these are the most crucial ones right now, besides the illegal logging which decimates our forests. We shall try to alert the ministers and the delegations of our struggles and challenges here so that they not only hear from officials speeches that all is well in Tanzania. It is not, our environment is under big threat' contributed a regular source from Arusha when asked what to make out of Tanzania hosting the continental environment meeting. Watch this space for expected updates from regular sources intent to sit in the public sessions of this meeting and what resolutions and strategies the environment ministers and their delegations will come up with .

PRECISION AIR ADDS MORE DOMESTIC CAPACITY



The sudden departure of Air Tanzania from the skies recently, when an emerging dispute over the continued lease of a B737-500 from a UAE based company prompted the plane to be grounded, has not had any significant impact on options for travelers in Tanzania. In fact, Precision Air, which already resumed operations to the Arusha Municipal Aerodrome with ATR aircraft, has now announced the use of larger aircraft on certain routes and traffic days and the addition of more flights between Dar es Salaam and Arusha and Mwanza.

A fifth daily flight to Arusha has been launched and on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday will a B737-300 be operating to Mwanza, besides the regular flights on ATR 72 aircraft.

The airline has also announced that they will temporarily suspend flights to Johannesburg in September, to allow the aircraft to be re-deployed on domestic services, where a healthy growth in demand has been recorded in recent weeks. Passengers to Johannesburg can now use the double daily service of Kenya Airways out of Nairobi, to which both Precision and partner airline KQ connect several times a day from Dar and Kilimanjaro.

'I have to speculate here but if they are bringing back a 737 from international service for use on domestic routes, it shows that they are ready for growth, ready to serve and ready to face the competition, if those should ever sort out their perennial problems and take to the skies again' said a regular aviation source from Dar es Salaam when asked to comment on the developments before adding *'... our government should accept that Precision is a Tanzanian airline, majority owned by Tanzanians as it is required under our law and regulations to maintain traffic rights, and that they should fully support them instead of flogging a dead horse. Let them stop wasting money on ATCL and rather invest in Precision where they can get dividends, not pay for constant losses and misappropriated funds'*.

The airline recently launched services to Lusaka via Lubumbashi, initially made difficult as the Congolese authorities in a game of cat and mouse tried to withhold traffic rights before being forced to swiftly remedy their blackmail like attitude when a major diplomatic row threatened to cloud bilateral relations.

The flights to Lusaka via Lubumbashi are reportedly doing well, with importers and exporters using the connection to link their businesses to the Port of Dar es Salaam.

Meanwhile it was also learned that Precision has halted operations into Kigoma and Musoma while work is being carried out on these aerodromes, but will resume flights as soon as the construction has been completed. Watch this space.

SWISSPORT PROFITS UP INSPITE OF INCREASED COMPETITION



The loss of the Swissport monopoly for aircraft and cargo handling at Tanzania's main airports has apparently not dented the profitability of the company, with the latest figures available now showing an increase before taxes of 8 percent in a year by year comparison.

The company, traded at the Dar es Salaam stock exchange, has clearly defied the odds and additional aircraft movements, up by 8 percent compared with 2011, and of cargo handling operations, up by a remarkable 16 percent compared to the past year under review, have made an impact on the company's bottom line.

The company used the opportunity when making the announcement to also break the news of plans to build a new custom designed warehouse, due to cost an estimated 9.4 million US Dollars, though regulatory approvals are still to be obtained as due process has to be followed.

The good news had an immediate impact on the share value, which rose by nearly 12 percent in recent days, or over 63 percent in value over the past 12 months, giving the shareholders something to cheer about. Seems opening up to competition actually can work and that, when both quality and pricing of services is of importance, a company still can do better through focused management and strict cost controls. Watch this space.

TOURISTS ESCAPE DEATH AFTER DRAMATIC OCEAN RESCUE

The series of marine accidents in Tanzania just does not seem to end, as according to a regular source from the Tanzanian coast three ‘*wagenis*’ aka tourists from overseas had to be pulled from the sea, as their boat, sailing from Pangani to Zanzibar, sank after running into heavy weather. A total of 11 passengers, according to the source, were rescued from the ocean before dusk on Sunday though one of the passengers is presumed dead after failing to rescue him together with the others.

In recent years Tanzania has been struck by a series of ferry sinkings, on Lake Victoria and between Zanzibar and Pemba island, and only weeks ago another ferry went down, after it had previously been grounded over safety concerns but made her way back to the ocean nevertheless.

Local media reports went further about the latest incident, blaming the owner of the boat to have literally forced the captain to sail in spite of his objections, as the bad weather was already apparent, and soon after reaching the open ocean passengers reportedly started to make mobile phone calls urging immediate assistance, as the boat took on water and eventually capsized in the high waves. The owner is reportedly now being investigated over the incident, and if indeed a passenger has drowned may be charged with manslaughter and sent to jail. Watch this space for breaking news from Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands for everything worth and important to read.

TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS DEMAND GREATER VISIBILITY FOR 7 WONDERS VOTE



Sections of Tanzania’s tourism stakeholders have voiced their concern over the lack of visibility for the upcoming 2012 vote for the 7 natural wonders of the world, for which the country has reportedly entered three key attractions, Mt. Kilimanjaro, Ngorongoro Crater and the Serengeti with the annual migration of a million and a half wildebeest and zebras. *‘Other countries in Africa are making a lot of noise about their tourist attractions. The Egyptians about the pyramids and South Africa about the Table Mountain for instance, but here we see little, hear less and information how we can help promote this more and more important annual vote is sparse. The South Africans were the only ones since this thing started in 2009 to be voted into the top bracket [sic: Victoria Falls was once in the top 7] and it is time the world is told more about Africa. We have top class attractions but do too little to propagate them. We fail to use the new social media more effectively which cost a lot less than conventional marketing and we want to see a new vision from the tourist board and the ministry how they intend to capture this. And we are talking professionals here, not ministry bureaucrats who are responsible for the sham marketing they are doing. This can be a lot of free publicity if we do it right’* said a regular source overnight to this correspondent, exposing what he thought was a very good idea to put Tanzania on the global tourism map. *‘We have a lot of negative publicity about the Serengeti highway, the Lake Natron issues, the Selous issues and so forth and the report of 30 elephant poached a day two weeks ago in parliament exposed our weaknesses in conservation. Let us work hand in hand to make the 7 new natural wonders vote a success for Tanzania, use twitter hash tags and ask our friends, clients and colleagues to like FB pages tailored to promote our proposed sites, so that the world can find us with ease’*.

Tanzania though has made ripples by having three landmarks included while other African countries, including Kenya have entered only one proposal. Kenya is actively promoting Mt. Kenya around the world to capture votes in what can only be described as a concerted campaign of e-marketing.

In stark contrast there seems to be the usual silence from the Uganda Tourist Board and our own Ministry of Tourism about having nominated any of our parks or natural attractions for inclusion in the list of the 7 new natural wonders of the world, which if true, especially in our 50th Golden Jubilee Anniversary year, would be a crucial oversight and reveal the sad state of affairs about which Ugandan tourism stakeholders complain day in and day out. Good luck to the entries of Tanzania and Kenya, in the apparent absence of any nominations from Uganda and let’s hope one of our East African attractions will be voted into the top 7 this year. Watch this space.

Rwanda News

NYUNGWE BUFFER ZONES SET FOR COMMERCIAL TREE FARMING

The contracts signed last year, between the Rwandan government and the New Forest Company, to manage and sustainably utilize the Nyungwe Forest buffer zones, are now becoming fully operational, after NFT has entered into a tripartite partnership with the Rwanda Development Bank and the Rwanda Social Security Board.

The company can now finally commence the planned planting of millions of new trees to enhance the buffer zone while at the same time embark on harvesting in areas where softwood has reached maturity. The New Forest Company last year entered a 49 year initial lease agreement with Rwanda and is committed to turn timber production within the buffer zone into a sustainable long term business, creating business opportunities in the wake of their activities, such as creating timber plants for building materials like planks and poles but also furniture manufacturing and the processing of wood waste for energy production.

Nyungwe Forest National Park has in recent years increased its visibility on the global adventure tourism market manifold, more so since the nearby Congo Nile Trail was launched from where hikers can access the forest and its short, medium and long distance trails, and the canopy walk at the new park visitor centre has become a magnet for tourists who want to see what rich biodiversity exists in the canopy of the forests' giant trees.

Other parts of the buffer zone around the forest national park are dedicated to growing some of Rwanda's finest teas in extensive plantations, which are often visited by tourists when traversing the area, to better understand how tea is processed, from the plucked leaf to the final product – a freshly brewed, tasty cup of Rwandan highland tea.

Making sustainable use of all the available resources has become a hallmark of development in the land of a thousand hills and the partnership with the New Forest Company is bound to add yet another feather in the country's cap. Watch this space.

HOTELIERS SEEK DIALOGUE WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Rwanda's Hotel and Restaurant Association has expressed their readiness to involve local authorities in dialogue, aimed to mitigate if not prevent sudden 'swoops' and even closures on their members over alleged or real infringement of regulations. A major meeting with mayors and other leading administration officials will seek to cement closer ties between the business association, the membership at large and local public officials, to promote regular dialogue and exchange of views.

Mr. Dennis Karera, Chairman of RHRA, was quoted to have said: *'We want to forge this cooperation to mainly avoid abrupt closure of hotels, restaurants and bars without prior talks on the cause of closure. This does not mean that there will no longer be any more closure of restaurants or hotels, but it will actually bring about proper coordination to even take tougher measures against owners who persistently ignore to abide by the minimum standards'*.

The Mayor of the capital city of Kigali has also gone on record welcoming the initiative from the hotel and restaurant association, expressing his hope that the planned meetings, due to be held at least three times a year, can help to identify issues and problems and solve them in an amicable and regulated fashion instead of just locking up premises.

The initiative, it is understood from a regular source in Kigali, is mainly aimed to improve industry standards, on hygiene and related concerns, to uplift the standards on a broad basis to the level of the region's other countries, where institutional dialogue has long been in place.

Sudan News

UPDATE ON TALODI / SOUTH KORDOFAN ANTONOV CRASH



(Wikipedia file photo of the Antonov 24)

More information has now been received on the deadly crash yesterday in South Kordofan, where 31 passengers and crew died as the aircraft hit the side of a mountain near the main town of Talodi while attempting to land for a second time in bad visibility, caused by a dust storm which had reportedly reduced visibility of the airfield to near zero conditions.

Amongst the dead are Khartoum's Minister for Religious Affairs, the State Minister for Youth and Sports and notably also the **State Minister for Tourism** Eissa Daif-Allah, who perished alongside three top security officials of the rank of Major General and their aides, senior administration figures and a state media team.

The Antonov 24 was reportedly owned and operated by Alfa Aviation, a company with a woeful accident record, following the fiery crash of one of their Iljushin 76 on 30th June 2008 and another crash of one of their Antonov 24's on 11th November 2010. The Antonov 24 has been in service since 1957 as a passenger version while the Antonov 26 is a predominant cargo aircraft, at times also modified however to carry passengers too.

Sudan's air accident record, alongside that of Congo DR, is amongst the worst in the world and often attributed to weak oversight and enforcement of regulations by the country's civil aviation department. Lack of prescribed maintenance, lack of crew training and the often total absence of simulator training for pilots has in the past been regularly cited by international aviation observers as contributing, or even sole factors in past air accidents. Unlike many other countries in Africa, Sudan continues to register and permit the use of Soviet era ancient aircraft like Antonov's and Iljushin's, which are cheap to acquire after being dumped from around the globe into aviation jurisdictions still ignorant to the dangers associated with flying such aircraft, or otherwise easily bribed to turn a blind eye to such methods, making it only a matter of time before the next crash happens. It is understood from a Khartoum based source that a full investigation has been ordered into the crash, though from experience little if any sanctions are taken by the aviation authorities against those at fault, as the continued operation of Alfa in the Sudan, inspite of earlier crashes amply demonstrates.

Condolences are expressed to the families and friends of those who perished in the crash.



(Talodi location map courtesy of Google)

Ethiopia News

ZENAWI'S DEATH PLUNGES ETHIOPIA INTO UNCERTAINTY

The smoke screens on Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's health have finally been lifted, after many misleading statements, when the announcement just broke that he has died abroad while undergoing treatment for an unspecified illness.

Zenawi, long serving strongman of Ethiopia's post communist period since overthrowing Dictator Haile Mariam – now living in comfortable exile in Zimbabwe – has kept his country on a controlled development path and was a major regional player in the war against terror in Somalia.

According to information at hand Zenawi will be succeeded as Prime Minister by his erstwhile trusted deputy Hailemariam Desalegn, who reportedly has been sworn in already to ensure a swift succession without any major shifts in policy, internally and externally.

Ethiopia's allies in the region, Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi have all sent messages of condolence to the people and government of Ethiopia on this sad occasion.

On the opposite side of the spectrum there has been thinly concealed, yet totally displaced glee across the border in Eritrea, against which expansion drive, support for terrorist groups in particular Somalia's Al Shabab and the so called Oromo Liberation Front, Zenawi stood firm and uncompromising.

With flags already lowered to half mast, a week of national mourning in Ethiopia will be followed by a state funeral, which many heads of state and heads of government are expected to attend, using the opportunity to discuss the way forward with the new Prime Minister, who so suddenly had to take over the mantle of power. This correspondent, privileged to have met the late Menes Zenawi at summits held in Kampala, extends his own sympathy to his family, the people and the government of Ethiopia.

In a related development was it reported from a periodic source in Ethiopia that while security has been stepped up visibly and troops stationed at the borders have been put on high alert, there will be no closures of borders nor will air traffic via Addis Ababa's Bole International Airport be affected in any way. Said the source in a brief message:

'This is a very sad day for Ethiopia but the country remains open for visitors and for business. We host the

African Union head quarters, so there will be no reason to spread bad rumours that Ethiopia has been shut down. Please do tell the world and share our grief.
Duly delivered my friend. Watch this space.

Seychelles News

RAFFLES MAKES FORBES TOP TEN LIST



The '**Raffles Seychelles**' on the archipelago's second island of Praslin, has just been included in the **Forbes Travel Guide** top 10 beach resorts worldwide. Forbes, one of America's foremost business magazines, selected the resort for its exceptional location, beaches and outstanding service levels.

The General Manager of Raffles Praslin Seychelles, Simon Hirst, has according to information received expressed his delight for being recognised by this prestigious publication and was quoted in a media release availed by the Seychelles Tourist Board as having said: *'This is a wonderful achievement for the resort in its second year of operation. Our dedicated team is working to deliver the Raffles luxury standards, the personalised service and tailor-made experiences which with the warm, relaxed and welcoming Seychellois ambience, all come together to grow our worldwide reputation. Our aim is to ensure that our guests' needs are anticipated and we make a point of creating a wow effect each step of the way so that from arrival to departure, their whole stay is memorable for a lifetime. The resort's completely natural five hundred metre beachfront setting has stunning Indian Ocean scenery, with crystal clear waters, awe-inspiring granite back-drops and ancient over-hanging Takamaka trees. As a leading beach hotel and resort, we offer a wide range of activities for families and couples alike, which allow them to feel at one with the natural beauty of Praslin.'*

Alain St.Ange, the archipelago's Minister for Tourism and Culture on his part was quoted saying that the recognition of the Seychelles and of its products has never been so apparent. *'Today Seychelles is visible, but our visibility is also matched with excellent products on the ground as has now been recognised by Forbes Travel Guide. This award is merited recognition of what Seychelles Brand of tourism is achieving'*.

In a related development it was learned that a delegation led by Minister St. Ange is presently in Brazil to promote holidays to the Seychelles but also for discussions on a yet closer cooperation with various Brazilian carnival groups and organizations, expected to once again participate in the Carnival International de Victoria in February next year, when the third edition of this unique event in the Indian Ocean will be celebrated. Watch this space.

SEYCHELLES REMOVES DUTY ON ELECTRIC CARS TO PROMOTE A GREENER LA DIGUE



The island of La Digue, long known to have no cars on the island and instead using the traditional oxcart or bicycles, has in recent years nevertheless seen a steady increase in motorcars and pickup trucks, to cater for the growing number of visitors, and the need to get them swiftly and conveniently to their resorts, guest houses or holiday lets. Though a small and controlled number, the government has in recent months looked into dialing back some of these developments, and while not banning cars is rather promoting green technologies, such as battery powered vehicles, to ensure the continued status of La Digue as an unspoiled island, reducing pollution and offering visitors the age old experience of not hearing car engines or having to smell diesel fumes.

With more than 50 percent of the Seychelles now under formal protection as parks and reserves, the most recent island to be added to the list having been D'Arros Island, the move is bound to be widely applauded by conservation groups, which have in the past seen the introduction and wider use of cars on La Digue with some concern. President Michel has a few months ago named Prof. Rolph Payet as the island's Minister responsible for the Environment. The enthusiasm of the minister in his capacity as an environmentalist will help ensure that the Seychelles remains the jewel it is today. Prof. Payet is a recognized expert in climate change and the problems of small islands states and sea level rise. He is a frequent speaker at International Forums and was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for some of his works. His initiative vis a vis La Digue is seen as a groundbreaking approach and keeping the island 'green' without necessarily reversing the convenience of limited motorized transport, now that is a way forward to pursue for sure. *Seychelles*, truly *Another World*.



(Oxcart transport waits for visitors near La Digue's jetty)

AND in closing the weekly dose of news from Gill Staden's '*The Livingstone Weekly*' – enjoy!



Dear All

At this time of year the water over the Victoria Falls gets less and less until the Zambian side virtually dries up. It is good news that the government is saying that they are going to reduce the water take-off for the hydropower station to allow Zambia to have a bit of water from time to time.

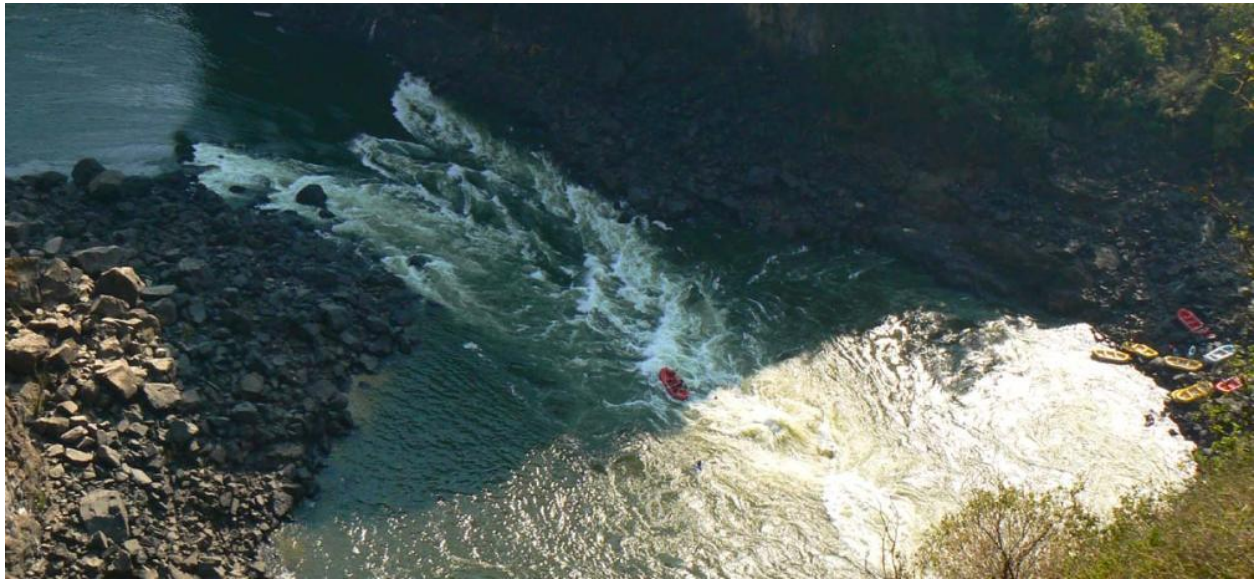
But just look at the rafts in the gorge. It is possible to take the rafts above Rapid 1 to see the falls from below. It must be magical. This, of course, can only be done when the water is low and is only available on the Zambian side because we have access to the gorge at the Boiling Pot via a footpath which winds down from the National Park.



Once the rafters have had their fill of the Falls they get to raft through Rapid 1. Looks like fun, but not for me ...



I was standing on the bridge overlooking the Boiling Pot below ... I am a good spectator ...



David Lemon

David has been staying in Livingstone during the past week or so. He needed to build up some reserves to continue his trek along the Zambezi. Karien and Peter Kermer from Wild Side Tours have looked after him and fed him up until he was strong enough to start off again.

I chatted with David for a while in Karien's office. He is so passionate about Africa. He has loved every minute of his journey even though there have been tough times. His journey is about travelling the length of the Zambezi River from the source to its emergence into the Indian Ocean at Chinde in Mozambique. He was denied entry into Angola to do that stretch because bureaucracy in Angola is totally out of control (how, one wonders, are they ever to promote tourism?). Sadly, jumping that section of the river, David was driven to Chavuma where the Zambezi River re-enters Zambia and continued his journey.

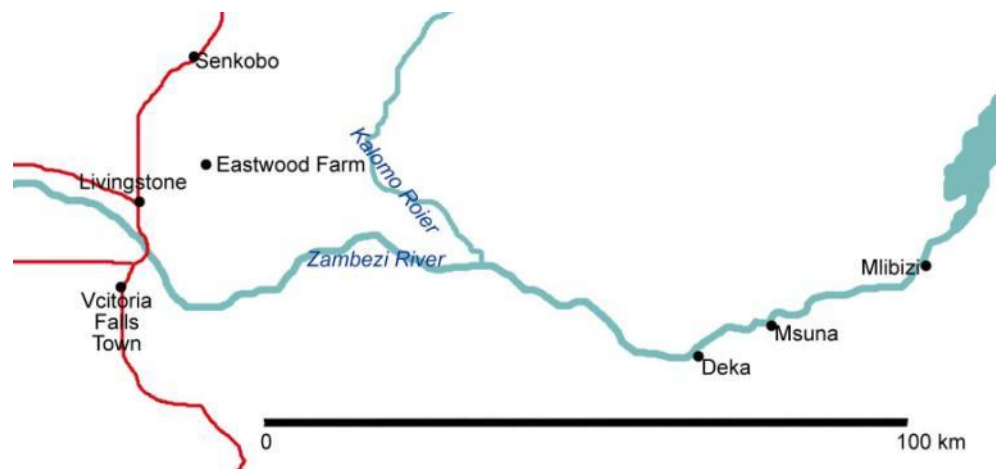
He says that the people have been absolutely amazing. He has needed to find footpaths to walk as close as he can to the river and has had to ask for help along the way. Often, he said, the villagers wanted to accompany him for a distance along his walk, sometimes for kilometres as they chatted along the way.

He has met chiefs along the route, talking to them about the environment and how people live and work along it. He has been fed by villagers who knew he needed some 'proper' Africa food. Surprisingly, or not, he found that people knew who he was as he arrived in remote villagers – was it jungle drums or the radio???

David walks for about 4-5 hours a day while it is cool and then relaxes in the shade while it is hot. And how does he fill those hours? He has a kindle ... hundreds of books on one small machine ...

Feeling fully fit again, David was taken to Eastwood Farm where he was given a guide who was to take him from there to the Kalomo River which they will follow back to the Zambezi River. The gorges are not a place for an easy trek and David decided that he would have to ignore that section. David Lemon's only concern is finding water along the route.

The photograph is David with another David. The other David knows the path to the Zambezi and will act as guide. It is a several days walk – looks to be about 50 km in a straight line, but there are lots of lumps and bumps to negotiate.



Next stop in civilization will be Kariba Bush Club, so I am hoping to catch up with David then – it will be an excuse for me to go and visit Muftau.

According to Kingsley Lilamono, Chairman of the Livingstone Tourism Association, the private sector in Livingstone is fully prepared for the UNWTO. They are, though, just waiting for government to do their 'thing'.

On Monday, Edwin Zumbunu, Southern Province Permanent Secretary, addressed government departments and private sector. From Edwin Zumbunu:

The committees at national level include ministerial committee, national steering committee, a secretariat and a national technical committee. At the local level in Livingstone, there will be a local organising committee which will be chaired by the provincial permanent secretary.

According to Edwin Zumbunu, there will also be various sub-committees to deal with other aspects such as accommodation, security, immigration, protocol, health, etc.

Why do we always have so many meetings? Yes, meetings are necessary, but we need some action, some decisions. We always overdo the meetings ... I sometimes wonder if our government staff define their jobs by the number of meetings they attend ... In the past I used to attend many meetings and the only positive thing to come out of them was the date of the next meeting ...

During the week, the Minister of Tourism, Sylvia Masebo, also visited. She is yoyo-ing to and from Lusaka and Livingstone these days. Sylvia Masebo seems to be concentrating her efforts into the cleanliness of Livingstone. With street vendors now 'legal' it is quite a task to see how we can change the face of Livingstone which has become a market all along our corridors.

Interestingly there is an association of street vendors. It is called the United Street Vendors Foundation. The Chairman is Patrick Mubanga. Patrick Mubanga says that the Foundation has set up several groups to clean the streets (I can't say that I have noticed) and also that some of them would be willing to move to designated sites if they could be identified. He also said he hoped that they could have a Saturday market near the museum so that they could showcase their products. However, the vendors who deal in cellphones and other electronic bits and bobs want their own street from which they can trade.

There is, of course, a huge dilemma in allowing street vendors their own patch along the pavement. Firstly, of course, the shop owners pay for the privilege of occupying their premises and trading from there. Street vendors pay nothing and intimidate would-be customers in the shops. I use the word 'intimidate' to show that many people now do not go to the town centre because they cannot stand the irritation of weaving their way through cellphones, underpants and bananas spread along the pavement.

So, what is the answer? I really don't know. But I do know that most of the traders are actually quite harmless; they are merely trying to make a living to feed themselves and their families. They also tend to be the younger generation who cannot find jobs. They cannot find jobs because there are few jobs to be had and they have no skills.

Why do they cling to the pavements and not go and find a spot out of town? Of course, they are in town because that is where the would-be buyers are. They also like the corridors (this is what we call the pavements under a roof) because they give shade. It seems to me that an area should be identified in the town where these traders can operate – they need good, clean, shady premises where they should pay a minimal rent and take responsibility for their surroundings. If government wants to allow these people to operate in some legal way they should be given their own area, built at government expense,

and they must be made to pay for the privilege. It is only through paying, even just a small amount, do people understand that life is not for free.

Kariba Dam

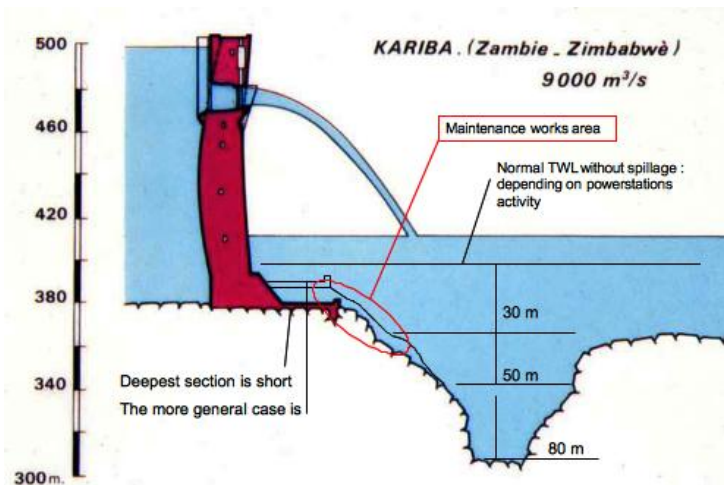
From <http://www.internationalrivers.org>

The Kariba Dam holds back Africa's biggest reservoir. Millions of people live downstream of it in the Zambezi River Basin. The safety of the 53-year-old dam has been called into question a few times, for various reasons.

Multi-beam bathymetric photo of the Kariba Dam plunge pool.

Source ZRA ppt, 2012

Most recently, at a meeting of dam operators in July 2012, engineers from the Zambezi River Authority (ZRA) revealed that the plunge pool below the Kariba Dam has deepened beyond expectation: it has now eroded to a depth of more than 90m into the rock substrate. The plunge pool is the area where the water is released after going through the dam's spillways. The main concern is not the depth of the plunge pool, but that it has been eroding towards the dam wall, with the likely possibility of undercutting the foundation of the 128-meter-high wall. This is of great concern, as an unstable foundation can lead to dam failure, a potentially catastrophic event for the hundreds of thousand people living downstream of the Kariba Dam.



Kariba holds back over 64,800 Mm³ of water – about a year's worth of the Zambezi's flow. The design has six spillway gates that release water at the rate of 9000m³/s when the reservoir levels go above the maximum flow stipulated by a "rule curve." At most times the spillway gates are opened in advance of predicted floods for dam safety reasons.

In the July presentation, ZRA noted that dam releases eroded approximately 150,000m³ of rock between 1962 and 1981, when the 19th dam-safety survey was done. Since 1981 there have been no significant changes due to limited spilling during this 30-year period. With the current situation, the stability of the plunge pool will be affected if the spillway is operated with more than three gates open at the same time. The need to open the gates may be necessitated by large floods resulting from heavy rainfall events in the Upper Zambezi catchment – a condition that is likely to increase with a changing climate.

ZRA has engaged consultants who have proposed a number of options to address the problem. The preferred option is one that will excavate and widen the hole in order to dissipate the energy from the spillways, thus removing 295,000m³ of rock. The bigger plunge pool will reduce the excessive turbulence that scours the hole. This work will involve building a cofferdam 18-20m downstream of the

plunge pool, dewatering and blasting the pool area in order to widen it. The work will cost millions of dollars and will take over a year to complete. ZRA said they prefer the work to be done during the nine-month dry period and that generation of electricity will continue during that time. A second opinion regarding methods and estimated design is being sought before the work can begin, possibly as early as next year.

Questions about the dam's safety in regards to the plunge pool issue include:

Will the vibrations resulting from plunge-pool blasting damage the dam wall or compromise its stability?

How effective will the new plunge pool be in limiting future damage to the 128-metre wall?

What do experts believe is the remaining life span of the dam?

And how will the current situation affect flood management?

Kariba Dam operators have been advised to open only three spillways in an event of a flood, to alternate the gates that they open, and not to open Gate 6 at all. The downstream Cahora Bassa Dam is far smaller and will not contain the flood from Kariba. How are they going to cope with huge floods in the face of climate change? How safe will the proposed Mphanda Nkuwa Dam in downstream Mozambique be? What kind of evacuation plan would be needed should the dam fail in some way, and is that plan in place?

We'll be monitoring this situation and reporting on any new developments.
