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Second edition August 2013

HONG KONG CUSTOMS SEIZE MORE IVORY, RHINO HORNS AND SKINS

(Posted 08th August 2013)



1.120 tusks, 13 rhino horns and several leopard skins were seized by vigilant members of Hong Kong customs, the second large find of blood ivory in less than a month.

While the container was reportedly shipped from Nigeria, the origin of the rhino horns and ivory will be subject to forensic testing to establish the country where the illicit cargo originally came from.

Officials in Hong Kong put a 41 million Hong Kong Dollar value to the find and are presently looking for parties named in the shipping documents to answer questions.

While Hong Kong fines those found guilty in trading in endangered species up to 5 million HKG D and dishes out up to two year prison terms, this has not stopped the constant, and going by some accounts growing flow of blood ivory via Hong Kong into the Chinese mainland, where the nouvelle riche find it chic to display intricate ivory carvings in their opulent residences, but also use ivory chop sticks, serviette holders and signatory stamps, clearly not caring that for each of those possessions an elephant was brutally slaughtered.

Cites has admitted that the illicit trade has more than doubled since 2007, when a new wave of poaching hit first in South Africa where since then nearly 2.000 rhinos were killed for their horns, before spreading north to neighbouring countries and then to Tanzania and Kenya, where it is mainly elephant which are being killed before their tusks are removed, often by chainsaws, leaving a gruesome sight for game rangers and anti poaching units confronted with the carcasses.

Activists in Kenya, foremost Dr. Paula Kahumbu, have managed to bring the spotlight back on the problem of ivory poaching and gained the patronage of Kenya's First Lady Margaret Kenyatta to support their 'Hands off our elephant' campaign which is now gathering momentum and spreading around the globe.

Hardest hit in Eastern Africa is Tanzania, which last year lost at least 10.000 elephant, mainly in the Selous Game Reserve and Ruaha National Park, though suggestions have been made that the real number could be substantially higher. Authorities in Tanzania and Kenya, but also in Uganda, which has become a transit country for blood ivory from Congo and South Sudan, have vowed to crack down on offenders and at least in Kenya the amended Wildlife Act is now in parliament. The updated law will hand down mandatory long sentences for poachers, smugglers and the hinter men of such illegal activities, plus slap those found guilty with heavy fines. Yet, for the conservation fraternity this is all too little and too late, considering the number of seizures in Mombasa and Dar es Salaam ports.

'If this trend is not halted we may lose our elephant in the next 20 or so years. That will make a big dent in our

tourism receipts because when there are no elephant, less game and fewer and fewer rhinos and predators, a safari will just not be the same again' said a regular conservation source from Nairobi.

While customs officials in Hong Kong need to be congratulated, the demand remains towards the Chinese government to do more in preventing the illicit trade and equally hand down stiffer sentences and heavier fines, besides making ivory possession, unless it underwent a strict verification process in regard of age and possession prior to the CITES convention, illegal. Watch this space.

TO CLARIFY NOT TO DEFEND ...

(Posted 08th August 2013)



First let me thank my readers for producing an amazing 8.230 new clicks yesterday for my various articles posted here, most of them of course reading the early morning breaking news about a fire at JKIA and then the regular updates throughout the day.

I got plenty of positive comments about keeping the public informed, details from the airlines which had to deal with the fallout of the airport closure and updates on when flights would be resumed.

That was before eTN dropped a bomb on me with a headline unfit to have my name associated with it, and rightly, people got upset, but wrongly they got upset with me.

Earlier in the morning I had posted this update on my blog, AND sent it to eTN, reading:

Update 2 at 06.34 hrs EAT

This correspondent also urges to refrain from any speculation over the cause of the fire, which will no doubt be fully investigated.

At present there is NO information about any injuries or loss of life.

Kenya Airport Authority Statement:

We confirm reports of a Fire at JKIA affecting part of International Arrivals building and Unit 1 departures. KAA Fire and Rescue Team is on ground being assisted by G4S and Nairobi Fire Brigade. Passengers have been evacuated to safety.

THAT was and remains my position, to refrain from speculation over the cause of the fire, and it was of course NOT lost on me that it happened on the 15th anniversary of the callous and cowardly attack on the American Embassy in Nairobi – and Dar es Salaam for that matter – though I deliberately refrained from mentioning this in any of my updates or posts of yesterday, even as I had already prepared a commemorative article which I then binned in view of the JKIA fire.

Still, I was taken aback if not shocked by the broadsides against me, some very personal, some outright racist, some clearly showing the sender did not think before mouthing off, but all of them failing to ask, apart from a handful of faithful friends whose tenor was '*Ahem, was that really you who wrote that sensationalist headline*'.

I think my track record speaks for itself when I report about what is going on in Kenya, amply demonstrated during the time of the 2008 post election violence and in many cases since, where my take on events looked at the positive side of things instead, as many other international media did, tear into Kenya and cause negative vibes about visiting

the country. That though seems to have been conveniently overlooked when offloading their verbal missives in my direction, and that I shall not forget, especially from self professed ‘friends’ who showed their true colours. Thank you for unveiling your true self.

When the eTN headline appeared through their twitter feed, I immediately responded to them and up to this moment, some 12 hours later, not had a response. Thanks here to Jackie Arkle who re-tweeted my tweet to eTN, showing a degree of loyalty I missed in many others. I also wrote to the Publisher of eTN and those mails too were not receiving the courtesy of a response, strange considering that I wrote for them in increasing volumes since 2001. Those mails are privy though and will not feature here but suffice to say they were sent and my degree of displeasure quite evident.

I guess you get the drift of this message now, that headline was not mine and I took immediate and grave exception to see my name under a headline with used the ‘T’ word, a word I painstakingly avoided and yet got ambushed by whoever manufactured that sensationalist heading. Only recently did eTN include Kenya in a list of countries where the risk of abductions by terrorists was high, causing already consternation at the time among Kenya’s leading tourism stakeholders but at least NOT bearing my name.

Finally, I have not ‘F***** O**’, have not suddenly turned into a ‘Bloody muzungu who at last dropped the pretence’ and have no intention to reciprocate the wishes to commit an unnatural act on myself to those who proposed such to me.

I will continue writing, in my usual style, and when I raise the temperature, stir emotions and cause reactions to my articles, then I stand by it because those were my words.

The words published yesterday in the headline were not, and hence I am not standing by them, of course not and I say it in public because it was in the public domain that my name got dragged into a controversy which is not mine. And now it is time to move one, because after all, you read my blog for the news and there are more to be told ...

WHAT MESSAGE DOES BRITAIN SEND TO THE WORLD BY DENYING YOUTH LEADERS ENTRY

(Posted 07th August 2013)



Britain’s image in Africa is getting increasingly negative, as the latest denial of entry for groups of youth leaders from Eastern Africa has once more stirred emotions against the former colonial power.

Ugandan, Rwandan and Kenyan participants, sponsored for that matter, who were to attend the Christian Global Youth Fellowship’s Boys Brigade meeting in Hempstead between August 11th and 14th next week, were according to reliable sources in Nairobi denied Visa, reportedly on well known template grounds of lacking funds and being suspect to jumping ‘ship’ while in the UK.

‘It is time we expose the Brits for what they are, anti black African. Such global meetings where our youth can participate and learn from their brothers and sisters abroad should no longer be awarded to countries which treat us like beggars when we apply for Visa and to add insult to injury, take very high fees for refusing us. It is unacceptable that conference organizers choose such destinations where they cannot guarantee participation from African delegates. There are too many cases where our people pay registration fees for conferences or conventions or trade shows and are then denied a Visa, losing both moneys in the end when they cannot travel and cannot get a registration fee refund because it is too late. Add to this the loss of global representation. In some cases our people are standing for office and election to executive positions but if they are not there, they cannot do so. It is almost like an evil coalition against us to keep us first out of the meetings and then also out of leadership positions. I personally attribute much of this situation to the phobia of Cameron’s government, which is anti African only to keep their voters from drifting to the radical parties. Some of those are openly racist and in cases like this one we pay the price. It is a crying shame our Christian youth leaders from Kenya have been banned simply for being black African youth leaders’.

The same source also confirmed that the British High Commission was unwilling to comment publicly on the insulting decision as was the UK Home Office, inspite of growing pressure by the conference organizers to go on record in these specific cases. Said a tourism source from Nairobi late in the evening in response to a question:

'They should learn a lesson from us in Kenya. We give the Brits Visa on arrival for a fee which is less than what Kenyans pay when applying for a UK Visa. You tell me when we have turned a Brit back at immigration, unless it is their radicals trying to infiltrate us as Shabaab sympathizers. Remember, there are many such cases now where UK passport holders were in fact trying to enter Kenya to join the fighting in Somalia. Those we have a good reason to keep out or lock them up but those 99.999 percent of Brits who just want to visit our parks and beaches, they are entering without any hassle. Yet, they do not treat us the same, but as we say in Kenya, Beggars cannot be choosers. Shameful'.

No official reaction could be obtained in view of the short time since the information broke from the Ugandan conference participants who were equally denied travel. Perhaps some official British source will formally state what their policy is vis a vis Africans wishing to enter the UK for such purposes, and no smoke screen please.

ROUTES ONLINE SEEKS TOP 100 AVIATION GEEK BLOGGERS

(Posted 07th August 2013)



Routes has commenced the search for the 100 most influential aviation geek bloggers on Twitter with a hashtag campaign marked as **#AvGeek100**

Nominations are invited by the aviation community to determine whom we should follow, who cuts through the industry spin and delivers real and usable information and who out there is providing maximum value for their 140 characters?

The Routes' site manager, Richard Maslen, who is based in Manchester, explains: *'The Aviation industry continues to be one of the most talked about sectors of global business and social media is playing a huge role in sharing insight, ideas, news and general information. To acknowledge this fact, we are launching the #AvGeek100 twitter campaign to find the most influential, whimsical, and useful tweeters on everything related to the industry - and we need your suggestions! Whether you are interested in seeing the latest photographs, in-flight innovations, network and fleet changes, industry analysis or business trends, we want you tell us who you take notice of on Twitter!'*

Paul McCann, Head of Digital Content for www.routesonline.com added: *'We've had an incredible response. After just one day of nominations we've reached over 340,000 twitter users in the aviation community. Everyone at Routesonline is delighted to be leading such a fantastic campaign and to be discovering the people who are leading the way in social media for our industry'.*

The #AvGeek100 will initially measure Twitter influence using a live PeerIndex table found on Routesonline (<http://goo.gl/8m3P8N>). An editorial panel will then vote for the essential 25 AvGeek tweeters that practitioners cannot afford NOT to follow.

Nominations can be submitted until Friday 23rd August, when voting will close, by using the tweet:

I nominate @twitterhandle for the #avgeek100 most influential #avgeek Twitter accounts <http://goo.gl/8m3P8N>

For more details on Routes' visit www.routesonline.com or follow them via Twitter on @routesonline

East Africa News

COST OF FIGHTING AL SHABAB RISES AS ETHIOPIAN CARGO PLANE CRASHES IN SOMALIA

(Posted 10th August 2013)



The ongoing clean up operations against Al Shabab remnants in Somalia have taken a further toll on the coalition forces when an Ethiopian Air Force cargo plane with 6 crew on board crashed yesterday on landing in Mogadishu. The crash reportedly happened just after day break. Only two survivors could be pulled from the wreckage while their other four compatriots perished in the crash. Flight operations in and out of the airport were suspended to put out the resulting fire and then collect evidence for the air accident investigation, before the runway will be cleared and flights can resume.

Mogadishu airport has since the fight to clear Al Shabab radicals and their pirate allies out of Somalia started a few years ago seen several such crash landings and it is remembered when a flight carrying Burundian and Ugandan personnel out of Entebbe also crashed into Lake Victoria a few years ago.

A senior Ugandan army officer, who served in the past in Somalia, on condition of anonymity said: ***‘We and Burundi were the first to go in. We lost good men in that fight but it was and is a just fight. Uganda played a part on behalf of Africa to restore a proper government and bring law and order. We all mourn the loss of our Ethiopian comrades in that crash. It is a reminder of the price we have to pay to keep Africa at peace and help Africa develop’***. Indeed, warm sentiments shared by this correspondent who also extends his condolences to the families and friends of the deceased as well as to the people and government of Ethiopia.

Air Uganda is now flying three times a week between Entebbe and Mogadishu, following in the footsteps of Ethiopian Airlines and among others, Turkish Airlines, which have for some time been offering scheduled flights to the Somali capital city.

FASTJET’S FUTURE WILL BE DECIDED IN THE AIR AND NOT THE BOARDROOM

(Posted 10th August 2013)



Reports are coming out of the UK that FastJet’s board had to deal with the unpleasant situation of their share value repeatedly falling below the actual nominal value in the recent past, a development causing the main investors serious headaches as it prevents them from raising more capital through the issue of new shares under UK company law. An audit report a few months ago already ruffled the feathers of senior management of the company, prompting CEO Ed Winter to launch a rare attack on their audit firm, seen then as now as a faux pas of the highest order and rather a shot in the own foot, as it caused the financial markets to pay more attention to the going on’s rather than less. It was learned then that the company had in its short life run up losses of over 56 million UK Dollars, attributed by Winter to ‘legacy debts’ incurred.

That is today largely blamed on former FastJet chairman Lenigas – reportedly forced to quit a few weeks ago as chairman when his position as a result became untenable – being responsible for a less than thorough due diligence of choice partner Fly 540, now standing accused of having sold his partners a mirage of bright sunshine which in reality turned into one of thunder and lightning.

The current situation has been described as so dire in fact that, according to the UK based source, Sir Stelios was left with little option but to take more shares a few weeks ago in lieu of his consultancy fees and other entitlements, as the company allegedly lacked the cash to pay up. While the directors of the company have now resorted to creative financial measures, like proposing a major share restructuring in coming weeks which will require the approval of a general meeting of the shareholders – an EGM has been called it is understood – the survival of FastJet will be primarily determined in the market, where they are now facing a make or break situation.

Successful on the domestic routes in Tanzania, where they fly from Dar es Salaam to Kilimanjaro and Mwanza with little opposition left, as Precision Air has withdrawn their B737-300 from the route and now operate ATR flights only on domestic routes. Air Tanzania, the moribund national airline of Tanzania, has reportedly also fallen to the wayside with Mwanza jet flights, leaving that market almost entirely to FastJet.

That alone however will not be enough to keep their fleet of Airbus A319's busy to fly the required number of hours every month to make money. Their initial target market Kenya is still, for all practical purposes, closed to them to start their own branded operation. All eyes will therefore be on the success of their announced first international route on September 03rd to Johannesburg, for which fares starting from 100 US Dollars, PLUS TAXES AND FEES – the airlines still does not openly advertise the final cost of a ticket a passenger has to ultimately pay – have been announced. There, like on domestic flights within Tanzania in the past, they have a chance to carve out substantial market share through their pricing, but face the same danger like on the domestic routes that unless their fare mix can achieve a significant portion of sales at higher fares, booked closer to departure, their planes might fly with a high load factor but yet struggle to make financial ends meet.

'Low Cost in East Africa is a myth of sorts' said a Nairobi based aviator closely involved in the setting up of a new low cost venture in Kenya, before continuing 'Unlike in Europe where a LCC can opt for much cheaper airports, some distance away from their target cities, in East Africa there are few such options. They have to use the same hub airports and the operators there cannot afford to give them lower fees. Existing airlines, if they would find out that a new entrant pays less than what they pay, what is published in the tariffs, would probably take them to court or resort to other action. Fuel is the same, cost of pilots is the same. Maintenance is the same. So they save a few bob by selling catering on board and try to make revenue by charging for baggage and such stuff but overall, they fly the same skies as we do. They can only survive with such fares if their load factors are persistently high, perhaps as much as in the low 90 percent range. And they need more routes to effectively fly say 150 or 180 hours a month with each aircraft, maybe even more. The market is now watching when FastJet launches Jo'burg and how South African will react with special offers. Combine these market challenges and their board room challenges, they have their work cut out for them'.

There has been no word as yet on the starting date of a South African domestic operation, which has been postponed twice in the past and the current financial situation may in fact push the company to move their strategic goal posts from a predominant FastJet ownership to a franchised operation, as Richard Bodin, COO of the company suggested a few weeks ago in Kampala at the Routes Africa meeting. The turbulences ahead, financially as well as the operational challenges and challenges to finally get into the Kenyan market, will no doubt keep the FastJet management busy and make for plenty of more stories to tell. Watch this space for regular and breaking news updates from Eastern Africa's vibrant aviation markets.

THE DOWNSIDE OF AIRTRAVEL WHEN YOU ARE AN ICC FUGITIVE

(Posted 05th August 2013)



Saudi Arabia blocked its airspace for Sudanese regime leader Hassan Al Bashir, when he tried to fly late last week to Tehran for the swearing in ceremony of their recently elected president. This is the second case in a month, after he literally had to flee Nigeria where he attended an African Union Summit in July, after civil rights organizations went to court to get an order compelling the Nigerian government to detain him and hand him over to the ICC in Holland to stand trial, that he found his freedom to travel severely compromised and curtailed. Saudi Arabia's action is seen as a tit for tat reaction to Bashir getting close to Iran, after he permitted several navy visits by Iranian war ships to Port Sudan and other ports along Sudan's Red Sea shoreline, and received added support from Iran. Saudi Arabia, Iran's main rival in the Middle East and Gulf region, has eyed these warming relations with suspicion, as the potential of the Iranians' getting bases in Sudan could be seen as yet another effort to encircle the Saudi Kingdom, considering the unpredictable policies of the Ayatollah regime in Tehran and constant allegations that they might seek to produce nuclear bombs.

Hunted now for several years now by the International Criminal Court, Bashir was the first ever sitting head of state to be indicted for Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes and Genocide, to stand trial in The Hague for his alleged involvement, complicity and masterminding ethnic cleansing campaign in Darfur as well as in the Southern states of Sudan. Campaigns of brutal repression, burnt earth policies, mass killings, rape and looting earned Bashir the by name of 'The Butcher of Khartoum', especially after he set loose the Janjaweed militias on the African population in Darfur.

The refusal to grant the presidential jet overflight permission was seen as both a huge embarrassment for Bashir as well as a warning not to pursue policies of alignment with Iran, or else.

The noose around Bashir's neck clearly seems to tighten, although the African Union has issued a directive for member states not to cooperate with the ICC in arresting Bashir, however a more and more untenable position as a number of countries have already stated that they would execute the arrest warrant given an opportunity.

Ongoing aggression in Abyei, where a long overdue referendum on the future of the territory has been sabotaged by Khartoum, as well as similar developments in Blue Nile and South Kordofan, extending in fact into South Sudan's territory with bombings, artillery attacks and the use of proxy militias, has strengthened the resolve of the ICC to bring Bashir to justice, even though there are no signs of an imminent arrest.

Faced with internal dissent since the loss of more than 75 percent of the oilfields to newly independent South Sudan, and the loss of crucial revenue from the oil pipeline after the South stopped exporting oil for an extended period, has brought opposition parties out on the streets of Khartoum and Omdurman and other cities demanding change.

Returning home with the head hanging after being refused a much publicized visit to Tehran, has not helped either and may be indicative that the circle may be closing for Bashir and restrict him to visits in Africa to accomplice states willing to still do business with him, though similar flight bans might yet happen in Africa too by countries opposed to his continued flight from justice.

Uganda News

MARASA AFRICA AT THE CENTRE OF ROTHSCHILD GIRAFFE RESEARCH

(Posted 09th August 2013)



A new research project is being launched in Uganda's Murchison Falls National Park to research, document and perform genetic analysis on the Rothschild's giraffe, the tallest creature on earth, dapper in white knee socks (no spotting on the lower leg), and notable for its grace, winsomeness and beautiful patterning. Of the nine recognized giraffe sub-species, the Rothschild's is one of the most imperiled, with fewer than 1100 individuals remaining in the wild. It has been declared an endangered species by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and as being of high conservation priority. Murchison Falls National Park is home to the last endemic population of this once abundant animal, all other surviving populations have been reintroduced, and often in areas where they never were originally.



The project is spearheaded by the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) and will be led by their conservation scientist Dr. Julian Fennessy, a Namibia-based Australian who is also Co-Chair of the IUCN SSC Giraffe and Okapi Specialist Group (GOSG), and fellow GCF trustees and researchers Andy Tutchings, a Germany-based British national and Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society, and Stephanie Fennessy, a Namibia-based German, both also

members of the GOSG. Working closely with the Ugandan Wildlife Authority, the team's local-based researcher will be Henry Opio from the Ugandan Wildlife Education Centre.

Despite low population figures and its endangered status, little is known about the Rothschild's giraffe in the wild, an issue that must be addressed to develop and implement effective conservation strategies. To this end, the Project seeks to provide the first scientific review of the Rothschild's ecology, behavior and habitat requirements in Uganda; essential information for the development and implementation of meaningful conservation initiatives. These include the provision of technical support and funding, data sharing and results for a comprehensive approach to giraffe conservation.

The group will be hosted by *Marasa Africa* at their *Paraa Safari Lodge* located near the Nile crossing inside the Murchison Falls National Park. Located high on the river bank the lodge overlooks one of nature's best kept secrets, the River Nile, on its journey from its source at Lake Victoria to join Lake Albert. It is inside the park where it is suddenly channelled into a gorge only six meters wide, and cascades down the rocks into a white water inferno 48 meters below. When standing on top of the falls the earth literally trembles as one is only a few feet away from one of the world's most powerful flows of a river..

For more information on the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF), go to: www.giraffeconservation.org. For information about [Marasa Africa](http://www.marasafrica.com) or reservations at Paraa Safari Lodge or Chobe Safari Lodge, contact www.premiersafaris.com

UWA OFFERS SPECIAL 'NOVEMBER ONLY' DEAL FOR GORILLA TRACKING

(Posted 07th August 2013)



Anyone wanting to track gorillas in Uganda's two national parks where they are found, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and Mgahinga, are in for a surprise, should they plan to visit *The Pearl of Africa* in November this year.

The Uganda Wildlife Authority has just announced a special deal for November tracking only, whereby the regular cost of 500 US Dollars per person per tracking will be reduced to only 350 US Dollars per person for foreign non resident tourists, while foreign residents in Uganda and East Africa will pay even less, namely 300 US Dollars per person, against acceptable ID presentation of residency.

As permits for the reduced tariffs are expected to sell like the proverbial hot cakes, anyone seeking to take advantage of this special offer should rush and contact www.ugandawildlife.org to express their interest.

A range of licensed tour and safari operators are able to put tours together, details of which can be found via the Uganda Tourism Board's website www.visituganda.com. Accommodation, ranging from budget to very upmarket is found in the vicinity of the Buhoma park entrance of Bwindi but also on the Nkuringo side of the forest, which is reached through the town of Kisoro, where a range of accommodation options also exists. It is from Kisoro in fact that Uganda's second gorilla national park, Mgahinga, is accessed.

While in country visits to the other 8 national parks can be organized, as well as a trip to East Africa's adventure capital Jinja, where white water rafting, boating, quad biking, bungee jumping, horse riding and cross country cycling, to name but a few of the activities on offer, can get the adrenalin flowing. Uganda was for last year the Lonely Planet's top global destination and National Geographic has included our country in their top ten travel destinations worldwide.

BRUSSELS AIRLINES STEPS UP TO SPONSOR THE UGANDA UK CONVENTION

(Posted 07th August 2013)



A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

The UK – Ugandan Trade and Investment Forum and the 03rd Uganda UK Convention, set for the 14th of September has received generous sponsorship from Brussels Airlines, it was announced yesterday.

The airline has made special fares available for attendees from Uganda wanting to travel to the UK, where this increasingly important Trade and Investment Expo is once more hoping to attract investments by UK businesses and from Ugandans living in the UK, improve trade volumes between the two countries and stimulate a greater flow of tourist visitors.

Dr. Frank Sebowa, CEO of the Uganda Investment Authority, has been confirmed as one of the key note speakers while the Buganda Land Board has registered too as an exhibitor, to showcase the opportunities for investments by using land made available by the kingdom's administration. For more details visit www.ugandanconventionuk.org

UGANDA'S 2012 TOURISM REVENUES PEGGED AT A BILLION US DOLLARS

(Posted 06th August 2013)



Figures just published put Uganda's tourism earnings to over 1 billion US Dollars, significantly up from 2011 when estimates put tourism income to over 800 million US Dollars.

The data are contained in a World Bank report which focused on a detailed analysis of Uganda's tourism sector, and put tourism to 38 percent of the country's exports (invisible) while contributing over 5.5 percent of the GDP.

A base survey undertaken last year also revealed that departing passengers, sampled at Entebbe International Airport, comprised about a third of all travellers coming to the *Pearl of Africa* for purposes of business, 20 percent falling into the category of VFR, aka Visiting Friends and Relatives – generally thought to explore with them the national parks and other attractions – 17 percent were described as leisure travellers, 5 percent came for religious purposes, for instance to attend the Martyrs' Day celebrations or visit the Bahai Temple, the only one in Africa while a mere 2 percent came to visit for unspecified cultural purposes.

The survey also revealed incumbent challenges with infrastructure and transport as well as the quality of services encountered.

The information came into the public domain at a time when the tourism private sector is openly accusing the government of doing little more than paying lip service to the tourism industry, talking about plans and intentions but year after year failing to facilitate the Uganda Tourism Board, and the Ministry of Tourism, with sufficient funds to actually carry out their mandate in promoting the country abroad. Taxation measures like the introduction with little notice of 18 percent VAT on resort and lodge accommodation as well as on tourism services was also condemned in strong terms as *'an irresponsible act aimed to punish tourism, driving companies to the brink of bankruptcy and complete failure by government to even begin to understand tourism and how tourism works'*. Some sources, on condition of anonymity, went as far as describing certain initiatives and appointments as *'complete and utter failures'* at the expense of strengthening the tourism board, while also letting fly vis a vis the bureaucrats in the ministry, in some cases described as *'deadwood'*.

Sentiments certainly were running high after the budget proposals were made, which left the Uganda Tourism Board with a proposed budget of only 250 million Shillings, which compares miserably with the rest of the region.

'Tourism could do much better. The World Bank study is specific how much the country could benefit if every tourist would spend just one more night, or if we could attract just 100,000 more tourist visitors. But with the finances not there, we have really no facilitation from government. Whatever initiatives they talk about are either not matched by budgets or one off scenarios which are not helping the sector medium and long term. Remember the wasted CNN campaign – no follow up, or the Gifted by Nature campaign – big failure for lack of follow up after some individuals ate big and the industry at large starved' ranted another source. Leading stakeholders have of late gone on public record over their frustrations with government not facilitating a sector which has the capacity to create much needed jobs, earns instant foreign exchange and can attract FDI and local investments alike.

Uganda was in 2012 named by Lonely Planet as their top ranked destination in the world and for 2013 has National Geographic put Uganda in their top ten destinations to visit, certainly a boost and helping to raise visibility and

recognition but too little to create a new Brand Uganda without major financial commitments from government, used for a change in accordance with private sector needs and wishes and not to serve the fancies of a few with no other interest but for their fees, per diems and allowances. *‘Imagine how much further Uganda could be by now if only we were given the budgets we needed. When an MP on the committee says tourism should plan better, she too has no clue. We plan, we apply for funds, we follow the budget process and still, besides words we get literally nothing. Uganda by now could be topping earnings and numbers like it did in the 60’s but our leaders simply do not seem to get our message. Yes, tourism has done well but against all the odds. Give us the money we ask for and you will see how tourism will rocket and propel the country forward’* quipped another regular source. Quo vadis Uganda Tourism ... such potential, so underexplored and so under exploited. Watch this space.

NGAMBA ISLAND EARNS TRIP ADVISOR RECOGNITION

(Posted 05th August 2013)



Uganda’s renowned chimpanzee sanctuary island, Ngamba, has narrowly missed getting a full 5 star rating by TripAdvisor, when they earned their Certificate of Excellence for 2013.

Home to over 40 chimps for the past 15 years, most rescued from illegal traders or found at the airport attempting to smuggle them out of the country, the island is near reaching its capacity and efforts are underway to secure a second island for the same purpose, to create another safe home and environment for the animals.

Visitors are able to see the chimps while being fed, as well as interacting in the forest or open glades, giving an insight into chimp life for those unable to track them at for instance Kyambura Gorge or Kibale Forest, among several other locations across Uganda where chimps can be found with relative ease.

Daily trips are available for visitors keen to see mankind’s closest relative in nature, leaving from the Entebbe pier and those interested to spend a night on the island, a tented safari camp is available for bookings. Congrats to Lilly Ajarova, Executive Director of Ngamba Island and her committed team of staff, researchers and handlers.

For more information write to info@ngambaisland.org or visit www.ngambaisland.org

Kenya News

AIRTEL KENYA PUTS HELP BEFORE PROFITS

(Posted 10th August 2013)



One of Africa’s leading telecommunication companies, Airtel, has stepped up following the fire at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport earlier in the week.

The company rushed to install temporary boosters and towers to replace those burned on top of the arrival building and then went a step further by offering free internet access and limited free phone calls for passengers stranded or struggling to get rebooked for their onward journeys.

‘This is one fine example of how the spirit of Harambee has come to life in this time of crisis. They could charge for the service and yet offer it to our tourist visitors for free, to help them communicate with home. The visitors had a bad experience and such generosity will go a long way to make them feel better, make them feel welcome to Kenya. They know this country cares for them and is not taking advantage of their misery by even making them pay for communications while still at JKIA. Airtel should be given recognition for helping out at what must cost them a lot of money’ said a regular tourism source from Nairobi, while passing on the details.

Meanwhile has President Uhuru Kenyatta also come out firmly in denouncing any suggestion that terrorism could have been involved in the fire, telling Kenya and the world that there was not a shred of evidence of a bomb or any other advice which could have triggered the blaze. This is a timely reminder in particular for media houses whose headlines went way ahead of the situation, in the process adding insult to injury by unsettling potential travellers and scaring those already in Kenya to bits.

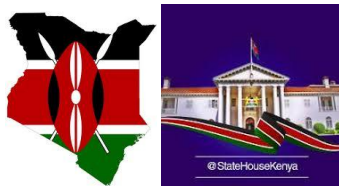
Investigators are now concentrating on searching for evidence if perhaps an electrical fault could have triggered the initial fire, or if other causes could be responsible for the incident.

Kenya Airport Authority has meanwhile erected tents, with heaters installed, to allow departing and arriving passengers to find some shelter before either boarding on their flights – all scheduled flights are now well near back to normal – or else clear immigration and customs at the domestic Unit 3, which has been turned into the main international arrival facility. Tourism stakeholders who have since then inspected the temporary measures are full of praise for the efforts undertaken by airlines and airport alike to facilitate the high season wave of arrivals and departures from East Africa’s main aviation hub.

Congratulations to Airtel, to national airline Kenya Airways and all the other carriers and to the staff at the airport of immigration, customs and airport authority for pulling off this miraculous recovery in the face of highest adversity.

PRESIDENTIAL VIP TERMINAL OPENED TO PROCESS PASSENGERS AT JKIA

(Posted 09th August 2013)



News just emerging from the Kenyan capital Nairobi speak of President Uhuru Kenyatta granting the Kenya Airport Authority the use of the presidential pavilion and VIP area to process passengers, after a devastating fire two days ago destroyed the entire arrival complex of East Africa’s most important airport.

This gesture will go a long way to make the processing of passengers easier, since domestic flight handling of arriving and departing passengers has been shifted to the cargo terminal for the time being while international arrivals now use the domestic Unit 3 to go through immigration and clear customs after receiving their baggage. Most airlines have now resumed international flights, and especially national airline Kenya Airways is enroute to restore a full flight programme by tomorrow, after succeeding to bring stranded passengers back to Nairobi and fly them to their final destinations. All of KQ’s domestic services have been restored however, with flights to and from Mombasa, Malindi, Eldoret and Kisumu back on schedule, while regional flights were yesterday resuming at a part schedule before going full schedule again today, 09th August.

Qatar Airways also confirmed via Twitter that their flight on 09th August will operate as scheduled and other airlines too have used social media communications to reassure their clients.

Meanwhile though are details emerging of alleged lapses in fire safety at JKIA with specific allegations being directed against the Kenya Airport Authority, that past fire drills identified shortcomings such as the lack of sprinklers and the lack of fire resistant materials for office partitions on the upper floors of the Arrival Terminal, where the fire two days ago spread rapidly. Whatever was listed as missing or outdated though in reviews of such drills, according to one single source at the airport, was at no time implemented and became a recurring observation kept on file for future action.

The airport was built in the 1970’s and opened in 1978 by then president Jomo Kenyatta, the late father of the current president, but has seen little in terms of major upgrades or refurbishments vis a vis latest technologies.

A brand new Terminal Four is under construction but delayed in its opening and a new mega terminal and second runway planned some distance away from the present complex, aimed to expand capacity at least threefold over present numbers. While the airport, which took over from the old Embakasi airport, was to cater for some 2.5 million passengers at most, today's throughput is in the 7 million + region and KAA clearly had found it difficult, or so it seems, to schedule major upgrades and refurbishments, especially by installing sprinkler systems in parts of the terminal. This however is apparently not for lack of money as every departing international passenger has to pay 40 US Dollars in departure taxes but attributed to other logistical and managerial issues within KAA's hierarchy. A full scale investigation is now underway by Kenya's police, several intelligence agencies and special investigators, some reportedly from abroad, to identify the location where the fire started and the cause of the rapid spread of the blaze which consumed the entire building in hours. Official sources in Nairobi have, as has this correspondent, urged to refrain from speculating what could have caused the blaze, but already quietly dismissed media suggestions of sabotage or, as seen elsewhere, terrorism as farfetched and lacking any foundation in facts so far at hand. Time will tell the what, where and perhaps the why of it all but until then, watch this space.

ECO TOURISM KENYA REVEALS NOMINEES FOR THE 2013 ECO WARRIOR AWARDS

(Posted 09th August 2013)



It was learned overnight through a media release from EcoTourism Kenya, that they have completed the nomination list for the 2013 Eco Warrior Awards. The winners will be announced during the EcoTourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference, which will take place at Nairobi's Safari Park Hotel between September 24th to 27th.

The Award Gala Night is due to be held as part of the conference's social event programme and will take place on the 24th of September. Some of Kenya's biggest names are on the list of nominees and I am particularly pleased to see several properties listed I have in the past visited and then rated 5 star on TripAdvisor, such as Hemingways' Ol Seki, the Ol Kinyei Conservancy of Porini / Gamewatchers, Ol Pejeta – a place I continue to describe as the arguably most complete safari experience in Kenya all in one place – the Porini camps in the Mara and Amboseli and Safarilink, THE safari airline operating out of Wilson airport and the first to be carbon neutral through their acclaimed tree planting campaign on Mt. Kenya.

To them, and all the others I periodically write about, like Cheli & Peacock, Sarova, Serena and many more, the best wishes for success in this year's award season.

2013 Eco-Warriors Awards Gala Dinner and Nominees Announcement

Ecotourism Kenya will hold its 7th Edition of the Eco-Warriors Award Ceremony Gala Night on 24th September 2013.

The Award ceremony is held annually to recognize exceptional achievers in ecotourism best practices in Kenya. Over 77 applications were received for this year's awards, the nominees are as follows:

1. Conservancy of the Year 2013 – Private
 - a) Ol Pejeta
 - b) Borana Conservancy
2. Conservancy of the Year 2013 – Community
 - a) Ol Kinyei Conservancy
 - b) Ilngwesi Conservancy
 - c) Naboisho Conservancy
 - d) Mara North Conservancy
3. Ecotourism Enterprise of the Year 2013 – Lodge
 - a) Severin Sea Lodge
 - b) Serena Mountain Lodge
 - c) Amboseli Serena Safari Lodge

- d) Sirikoi Lodge
- e) Tawi Lodge
- f) Keekorok Lodge
- g) Olarro Lodge
- h) Sarova Shaba Game Lodge

4. Ecotourism Enterprise of the Year 2013 – Tented Camp

- a) Ol Seki Hemingways Mara
- b) Lake Elementaita Serena Camp
- c) Porini Mara Camp
- d) Kilima Camp
- e) Basecamp Masai Mara
- f) Kiboko Luxury Camp
- g) Elephant Pepper Camp
- h) Sanctuary Olonana
- i) Sarova Mara
- j) Governors camp

5. Ecotourism Enterprise of the Year 2013 – Villas/ Holiday homes

- a) Forest Dream Resort
- b) Medina Palms

6. Ecotourism Enterprise of the Year 2013 – Community Based (Supported by Kenya Wildlife Trust)

- a) Porini Amboseli Camp
- b) Camp Kenya
- c) Kobo Safaris Ltd
- d) Statunga Ecotours

7. Ecotourism Enterprise of the Year 2013 – Tours and Travel

- a) Gamewatchers Safaris Ltd
- b) Kobo Safaris Ltd
- c) Exclusive Eco Travels Ltd
- d) Cheli & Peacock Safaris

8. Ecotourism Enterprise of the Year 2013 – Airline

- a) Air Kenya
- b) Safarilink

9. Eco-Rated Facility of the Year 2013

- a) Basecamp Masai Mara
- b) Ol Seki Hemingways Mara
- c) Sasaab Lodge
- d) Kicheche Valley Camp
- e) Amboseli Serena Safari Lodge
- f) Lake Elementaita Serena Camp
- g) Serena Mountain Lodge
- h) Serena Beach Hotel & Spa
- i) Porini Amboseli Camp
- j) Turtle Bay Beach Club
- k) Kichwa Tembo
- l) Joy's Camp
- m) Sanctuary Olonana
- n) Baobab Beach Resort
- o) Kicheche Camp Ltd

10. Ecotourism Partnership of the Year 2013

- a) Ol Seki Hemingways Mara
- b) Sasaab Samburu
- c) Porini Amboseli Camp
- d) Kobo Safaris Ltd
- e) Cheli & Peacock Community Trust
- f) Basecamp Maasai Brand

11. Ecotourism Guide of the Year 2013 (Supported by Kenya Wildlife Trust)

- a) Christopher Letur- Saruni Samburu
- b) Deric Nabaala- Basecamp EagleView
- c) Nelson Ole Reyia- Sanctuary Olonana
- d) Andrew Odhiambo- Kicheche camps
- e) Onesmus Irungu- Rekero Camp
- f) David Ng'ang'a- Mara Rianta

12. Ecotourism Journalist of the Year 2013

- a) Kimathi Mutegi- People Daily
- b) Aby Agina- Nation Media Group
- c) Rupi Mangat – Saturday Magazine
- d) Carol Gatura - CCTV

13. Ecotourism Student Innovation Award 2013

- a) Anthony Muinde
- b) Mwanja Stephen
- c) David Mwabili & Billy Oyaro
- d) Musau Makau

14. Ecotourism Training Program of the Year 2013

- a) Strathmore University
- b) Kenyatta University
- c) Amboseli Institute
- d) International Hospitality & Tourism Institute

15. Ecotourism Student Host Organization of the Year 2013

- a) Mlilo Community Tours & Safaris
- b) Statunga Ecotours

Eco-Warrior Awards recognize efforts, innovations and exceptional achievements for promoting responsible tourism and enhancing tourism sustainability which directly conserves the natural environment linked to local communities (either credible individuals or groups) through mutually beneficial and equitable partnerships. Therefore, the awards aim to celebrate ecotourism best practices in different tourism sectors and tourism set ups in Kenya. Eco-Warriors Awards truly recognize many otherwise unsung heroes and heroines for their effort to promote responsible and sustainable tourism in Kenya.

The unique characteristic of ecotourism is its cardinal principle of linking tourism to nature conservation and community development, especially for local people who have conserved the environment since time immemorial through their traditional customs and cultural practices. It was in Kenya that The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), the world's first organization to dedicate all of its resources to tourism as a sustainable development mechanism, was born. The International Ecotourism Society now has over 1,000 members from over 120 countries, who represent a strong voice for tourism as a positive force for change.

The 2013 Eco-Warriors Award ceremony will be held during the Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference (ESTC13) Kenya Night Event. This year's ESTC will bring together an estimated 500 professionals from around the world. For further details please visit <http://www.ecotourismconference.org>

KENYA AIRWAYS MASAI MARA MARATHON SCHEDULED FOR 05TH OCTOBER

(Posted 08th August 2013)



Registration is now open for participants wanting to run in the Kenya Airways Masai Mara 2013 Marathon, which is due to unfold on the 05th of October.

Participants have several options where to stay overnight, booked directly at some of Kenya's finest in the conservancies and the reserve but also using the organizer's camps set up for the purpose.

Self catering camping fees start at 3.000 Kenya Shillings a night, at a secured camp ground while those seeking a bit of more creature comfort can opt either for the KQ Chui Village, at a cost of 12.000 Kenya Shillings a night or for the fancy KQ Premier World Camp, which will set one back by 75.000 Kenya Shillings a night.

The first, inaugural Masai Mara Marathon was held in November 2009 with a total of 352 participants registering; 214 took part in the 5km race while 138 participated in the 21km.

Organized by the Masai Mara Marathon Ltd, the Rotary Club of Nairobi and Kenya Airways, the highlight of the marathon has been its ability to bring together legendary Kenyan Olympian runners through the National Association of Kenya Olympians (NAKO), prepared to mentor young upcoming athletes. This is a partnership project between the Kenya Olympians and the organizers aimed at benefiting the community.

The Masai Mara Marathon's setting will combine the allure of the Masai Mara and adjoining conservancies and the fame of Kenya's running tradition and spirit to attract local and international participants.

The annual marathon is a charity event aimed to raise funds for the Lemek Conservancy Community to address shortages in education facilities, access to medical services, improvement of sanitation utilities and provision of clean drinking water to its residents. All in all, an event well worth attending and by keeping fit benefitting others in much need.



Details on how to register are available on a dedicated website www.kenyaairwaysmarathon.com or by email to KQ-MasaiMaraMarathon@kenya-airways.com or by phone between 09.30 and 16.00 hrs on work days to this number: +254729244022

SRI LANKAN EYES NAIROBI FLIGHTS VIA MAHE

(Posted 08th August 2013)



Information was confirmed through a statement by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Transport in the Seychelles, that Sri Lankan is intent to commence flights between Colombo and Mahe in October this year. The Sri Lankan national airline will initially operate three return flights a week and, subject to regulatory approval by the Kenyan civil aviation authority and government plans to extend the service to Nairobi.

This would be the first ever direct flight link to Sri Lanka and offers travelers from other destinations of Sri Lanka on the Indian mainland and beyond the opportunity to reach Nairobi with a two stop flight.

Sri Lankan is partnering with Etihad, Abu Dhabi's national airline, as is incidentally Air Seychelles, where Etihad holds 40 percent shares. It is not known at this stage if Sri Lankan and Air Seychelles will codeshare the flights, and if flights to Nairobi would also be codeshared between the two.

Etihad is also now flying in partnership with Kenya Airways to Abu Dhabi on a fully code shared operation and this may be the door opener for Sri Lankan perhaps getting their fifth freedom traffic rights between Mahe and Nairobi, which are thought crucial for the commercial success of the operation. Air Seychelles does presently not fly to Kenya and Kenya Airways is – during the present high season – operating four flights a week from Nairobi to Mahe, again not in code share with Air Seychelles.

A regular aviation source from the Seychelles when asked to comment on the development wrote: *'Sri Lanka's president visited us a few weeks ago and one of the outcomes was an agreement to establish air services between our two islands. In part it is the cooperation with Etihad which is bringing their airline partners together to also cooperate. It is possible for Air Seychelles to negotiate with Sri Lankan to put a code share agreement in place for the entire route, Colombo to Mahe and on to Nairobi. Maybe Kenya Airways can come on board because they also have a Memorandum of Understanding with Etihad and code share from Nairobi to Abu Dhabi. It would for sure provide much needed extra flights from Nairobi to the Seychelles, and if such an agreement on code sharing can be reached, it will give travellers from Africa even more opportunities to visit our islands. Let's wait and see how the Kenyan authorities will respond to Sri Lanka's request for 5th freedom rights but from the Seychelles side there should be no problem at all'*.

Sri Lanka's market entry to Kenya would in particular open the South Indian market for Kenya which would allow for increased trade and in particular travel, undoubtedly a shot in the arm for Kenya's tourism industry and economy at large. Watch this space for breaking and regular news from the vibrant aviation scenes of Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands.

KENYA AIRWAYS FLIGHT UPDATE FLASH

(Posted 08th August 2013)



Nita Nagi, Kenya Airways' UK country manager based in London, has just via Facebook released this important information, which I hasten to share with my readers:

KQ 101 left on schedule and expected to arrive JKIA domestic terminal at 0645 LTC.

Thursday 08th August International departures confirmed as follows:

1. KQ 762 to JNB departs 0830 hrs LTC (pax disrupted on 7 August KQ 760 will be accommodated on this flight.)
2. KQ 112 to Paris departs NBO at 2245 hrs LTC
3. KQ 102 to London Departs NBO at 0045 hrs (after midnight therefore 09 Aug)

Hats off to the Operations Control Centre Team and Ground Services teams in Nairobi who are working tirelessly to ensure our guests travel as scheduled as far as possible

Again, well done to the Kenya Airways staff and management for their extraordinary efforts, in the face of sheer adversity, to keep up the spirit and work out alternatives. Truly *The Pride of Africa*.

KENYA AIRWAYS OPERATES B777 TO MOMBASA TO BRING PASSENGERS BACK TO NAIROBI

(Posted 08th August 2013)



Following the devastating fire yesterday, which brought flight operations at Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport to a halt, have domestic flights resumed yesterday evening. Several airlines issued statements on when their services, operating out of the unaffected Unit 3 – domestic terminal – would commence.

Kenya Airways carried the largest burden of passengers ending up at different airports and put together swift measures to fly their largest aircraft on the fleet, the B777-200, to Mombasa last evening to uplift passengers who had still remained in Kenya's coastal city, where the airline booked them into hotels.

While some 200 passengers had opted to accept an offer for road transport to Nairobi, many others were uplifted on the evening flights to Jomo Kenyatta International, from where they can now start their holidays, resume their business plans or else, when international flights commence again in the morning, fly to their onward destinations.

Chris Diaz, Director of Marketing of the airline, responded – like all other key staff during the cause of the day – in an exemplary fashion by Twitter:

777 200 leaves for msa tonite from nbi

[06:15 PM - 07 Aug 13](#)

International KQ flights land in nbi tomorrow morn

[06:15 PM - 07 Aug 13](#)

Certain flights we start to fly in steps

[06:15 PM - 07 Aug 13](#)

KQ team has worked with stakeholders to start flying tonite to msa

[06:17 PM - 07 Aug 13](#)

From a regular source at JKIA it was also learned that it was all hands on deck at Kenya Airways to plan for contingencies and ensure that passengers ending up in the wrong places in the morning of the 07th August would be rebooked on the earliest possible flights to their final destination, or as in this case, brought to Nairobi.

Meanwhile have sources from the Kenyan tourism industry and from across society, hailed the courage and bravery of the first responders in the early stages of the fire, and commended the staff of airlines who assisted passengers already in the arrival hall, or waiting to be processed at immigration at the time, to get away from the fire.

From information out of Nairobi it is clear that there were no casualties and while some cases of smoke inhalation had to be treated in hospital, no major injuries were reported either.

The fire investigation is now ongoing, to establish what could have led to the outbreak and subsequent rapid spread of the inferno across the upper floor of the arrival building, as airlines, shops, banks and other service providers with offices in the area outside customs and the floors above are counting and documenting their losses to file insurance claims. Watch this space later in the night when information is expected about the resumption of regional and international flights in and out of JKIA, where temporary processing facilities for travellers are being established to process them through immigration and customs.

BREAKING NEWS – MAJOR FIRE AT NAIROBI'S JOMO KENYATTA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

(Posted 07th August 2013 05.55 hrs)



Reports are coming in through the Kenya Red Cross, the country's foremost emergency response organization, that a major fire is raging at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. Courtesy of twitter picture via this tweet: 'FIRE reported at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport #Nairobi via #iVolunteer @decibyte ^PO' this is the first available image of the raging inferno, which seems to have fully engulfed one of the main buildings. Stand by for more reports and updates in due course.

PRESIDENT KENYATTA ASSURES TOURISM SECTOR OF 3 BILLION BUDGET

(Posted 06th August 2013)



President Kenyatta took time out to see the great migration over the weekend, when he visited the Masai Mara Game Reserve in the company of Phyllis Kandie, Cabinet Secretary for East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism, the ministry's PS Mohammed Ibrahim and the CEO of the Kenya Tourism Board Mr. Muriithi Ndegwa. President Kenyatta, while at the Mara Serena Lodge, reassured the tourism sector that his government had set aside some 3 billion Kenya Shillings to allow for vigorous marketing of the destination in existing, new and emerging destinations, aimed to bring in significantly higher numbers of tourist visitors to the Kenya coast and the safari parks. He was quoted to have said that over the coming 5 years visitor arrivals need to rise to 5 million per annum. This is seen as a direct response to the growing concern by private and public sector when parliamentarians tried to shift 2 billion of the budget estimates to other areas, which would have left KTB and the ministry cash strapped and almost unable to fulfill their mandate and roll out the planned recovery marketing campaign.

Latest arrival statistics show that the decline in visitor numbers has now bottomed out and for the second half of the year a rise in tourists coming to Kenya is expected.

The President also, during his visit to the Mara, addressed issues concerning poaching and how best to combat it, which includes the new Wildlife Bill set to introduce heavy fines and longer prison terms. Always worth to watch this space and catch the latest news from the tourism sectors across Eastern Africa.

JKIA HIT BY FUEL SHORTAGE AS PUMP SYSTEM FAILS

(Posted 06th August 2013)



Airlines flying into Jomo Kenyatta International Airport yesterday afternoon were faced with a '***Sorry, no fuel***' announcement, after a problem in the pipeline and hydrants of the airport prevented JetA1 fuel from being discharged.

Among the hundreds of affected passengers was the Kenya Athletics Team, headed for the World Championship in Moscow, left to rue why they did not leave earlier to allow for more time to acclimatize, only to be stuck in a hotel in Nairobi for the night as the crew, unable to refuel the aircraft for their flight, ran out of maximum duty hours. Blame was reportedly traded between the Kenya Pipeline Company and the Kenya Airports Authority, with the latter apparently refusing to issue public statements, unlike when they raided the duty free shops a few days ago, during which property worth tens of millions of Kenya Shillings was destroyed, when they were busy to trumpet their '***We followed the law, we are innocent, we evicted a tenant whose lease expired***' in spite of evidence to the contrary that they had been handed an injunction to prevent the raid.

Airline sources suggested it was the airport fuel installations and pumps which failed, nothing to do with the pipeline company which only delivers their products to the main storage tanks from where the daily fuel requirements are then met through the underfloor fuel distribution system to the parking positions.

'This is another failure we lay at the door step of KAA and their incompetent management. They are an embarrassment to the industry. That organization needs an overhaul at the top right to the middle ranks.'

Remember the exploding boiler, the fire at the newly renovated VIP lounge in Mombasa, the light failures in Mombasa and Nairobi. All KAA handiwork. JKIA is East Africa's most important airport and it needs professional management not the sort of output you get from political appointees.

A tourism stakeholder, not surprising also on condition of anonymity, commented angrily: 'We are trying to get Kenya's tourism industry back on track. Such mishaps sadly happen but it is the way they are handled. KAA is not good in thinking on their feet. Information came late for passengers who proceeded to the airport, checked in cleared immigration and then were told no flight because of a problem with fuel. That is upsetting. Such cases should be handled more sensitively. Airlines and their passengers should have received that information before leaving their homes or hotels. They will leave Kenya with the feeling they got messed up. By tomorrow it may be back to normal but the fallout will be felt by the airlines for days to come. KAA needs to shape up really, the delays in Terminal 4 and getting a second runway sooner is affecting tourism growth'.

From other information sourced from Nairobi and airports in neighbouring countries it appears that a number of incoming flights were diverted to pick fuel from Entebbe until the situation returned to normal many hours later in Nairobi. Watch this space to stay informed on events from Eastern Africa's aviation industry.

TRIBE HOTEL INTRODUCES NEW RANGE OF LUXURY VEHICLES FOR CLIENT TRANSPORT

(Posted 06th August 2013)



One of Nairobi's finest privately owned hotels, The Tribe, has just introduced a new fleet of upmarket vehicles, used to provide airport transfers for guests but also to give them chauffeur driven services in cars commensurate with their status as VIP's.



The picture above, sent by a regular source from Nairobi, show the latest Range Rover and Land Rover Discovery models, painted in the livery of the Tribe Hotel, available with immediate effect, undoubtedly adding to the appeal the Tribe already has among Nairobeans and regular guests.

Guests can hire the vehicles for trips into the city for meetings but also for excursions into Nairobi National Park, the National Museum, the Karen Blixen Museum, the Giraffe Manor and the Daphne Sheldrick Elephant Trust to name but a few of Nairobi's attractions worth seeing.

The state of the art 4x4 limousines, the hotel bought, come at a time when the Tribe was just elevated into the global top 100 city hotels by the Robb Report, in addition to positive mentions in the globally leading Conde Nast travel

magazine and other similar publications. Watch this space for regular updates from East Africa's vibrant and fast expanding hospitality sector.

KENYA LAUNCHES A NEW ELITE ANTI POACHING UNIT

(Posted 06th August 2013)



Sources from within Kenya's conservation fraternity have confirmed that a new elite anti poaching unit has been launched at a time when key amendments to the current Wildlife Act are discussed in the national assembly. KWS Executive Director Kiprono has in fact suggested that poaching of animals threatened with extinction, like rhinos, be punished with life imprisonment, but the argument rages on if fines now proposed are sufficient to deter poaching, the financing of it and the traders involved in the illicit smuggling of blood ivory.

'Fines between 10 and 15 million are not enough. Consider for how long this law will be in place and we end up like now when poachers or smugglers laugh about the small amount they pay to get off the hook. Let us be serious and start fines with 25 million. Then make provisions for cars and property used, bank accounts included, to be seized by the state once a conviction has been handed down by court. Prison terms should not be less than 10 years and be open ended' contributed the source when passing on the information.

The Cabinet Secretary responsible for wildlife, Prof. Judy Wakhungu, will launch the new force of initially 120 members, which will be a rapid deployment unit, on Thursday this week. The composition of the new team comprises KWS personnel and a number of other security organs thought of importance to add competence and capabilities to the new force.

While KWS had continued to fight poaching, responses have at times been agonizingly slow, too slow for those who reported incidents, leading to private sector efforts to complement government anti poaching efforts with their own initiatives. OI Pejeta has been leading the way by purchasing the country's first ever UAV, also known as a drone, which will shortly arrive in Kenya and be deployed over the sprawling wildlife sanctuary, where the highest number of rhinos are found in the entire country. The OI Pejeta team is also part of an airborne intervention force operating out of Nanyuki, supported by among others Tropic Air, a private airline which has offered the use of their helicopter for instant deployment of armed personnel into the field, while awaiting other KWS units to then mobilize and join. While Kenya, through added detection measures at airports and seaports and improved intelligence gathering, has recorded significant successes in confiscating blood ivory, finds in seaports in the Middle East and Far / South East however suggest that only a fraction of the illicit cargos are however caught before leaving Africa while the majority of such shipments reaches the ivory hungry consumer markets of Vietnam and China, among other countries in the wider Asian region.

The fight against poaching, spearheaded now by Kenya's First Lady Margaret Kenyatta, who was brought on board by among others Dr. Paula Kahumbu to join the ***'Hands off our Elephant'*** campaign, has gained new momentum and it is hoped that with such top level involvement the government will take a much tougher stand on poaching, trading and financing of such activities. Watch this space.

Tanzania News

ZANZIBAR TOURISM STAKEHOLDER CONDEMN ACID ATTACK ON BRITISH TOURISTS

(Posted 09th August 2013)



An acid attack on the eve of the Eid holiday, which marks the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan, against two young British tourists on the Zanzibari island of Unguja swiftly brought out condemnation from the Spice Island's tourism community as well as from official government sources, as a manhunt was launched to find the criminals who sped away on a motorbike.

The two 18 year old young women, working as volunteers in one of the island's schools, were flown to the Tanzanian capital Dar es Salaam to get better treatment as the acid splashed on their faces, arms and hands.

Radical Islamists have in recent years repeatedly tried to damage the generally good relationship between Christians and the majority Muslims on the island by storming, firebombing and destroying churches on the island before shooting a Catholic priest earlier this year. This situation, which then also spread to the mainland, was eventually brought under control by a determined security apparatus leaving nothing to chance when hunting down the inciters and perpetrators of such attacks.

Unfortunate statements by a small section of politicians that foreign tourists were subject to their religious law when eating or drinking during the fasting daylight hours of Ramadan, did also not go down well with the tourism fraternity, especially after some bars and restaurants were targeted last year and prior to that by radicals.

Tourism sources, on condition of anonymity, expressed their anger and frustration over this latest incident, saying in unison that such acts, this in fact being the first known direct attack on tourists, were extremely rare but yet impacted heavily on the island's tourism industry. *'Tourism is a big source of employment on Unguja. It is also the largest source of foreign exchange earnings. We hope the police can find the perpetrators and bring them to justice quickly. Such incidents give any destination a bad reputation and it is no different here in Zanzibar. The people here absolutely must be rated as a very friendly lot but a few rotten apples spoil the entire picture the world has of Zanzibar. It is time for community and religious leaders to come out in support of tourism after this incident and condemn such acts in no uncertain terms. These radicals may well remember that Islam is a religion of peace and not one which condones violence against the innocent'* wrote one source in an overnight mail.

Another source in Arusha also confirmed that following the incident making it into the global news channels, emails started coming in asking if it was safe for booked clients to go and visit Zanzibar after their safaris or if the arrangements needed cancelling in favour of Kenyan or other Indian Ocean islands beaches.

Best wishes for a speedy and full recovery to the two young ladies, whose selfless engagement to volunteer in a Zanzibari school was repaid with aggression and violence.

Seychelles News

SEYCHELLES HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM ASSOCIATION ELECTS NEW CHAIRMAN

(Posted 09th August 2013)



Following the departure of long serving chairman Louis D'Offay a few weeks ago, who desired since last year to step down from the helm of the archipelago's tourism private sector body, has – following an interim period presided over by Daniella Payet-Alis – a new permanent chairman been elected into office.

John Stravens, who works at the Sunset Group as Director of Finance, will be leading the private sector body together with other newly or re-elected board members.



Mr. John Stravens –elected as new Chairman of SHTA

An accountant by profession, Mr. Stravens has worked in the tourism industry for many years, both locally and internationally. He has been actively involved with the Association in various capacities in the past. Currently, he is the Projects and Finance Director for the Sunset Group.



Ms. Kate Carolus – elected as Board Secretary

Kate's previous responsibilities have included those of Director of Marketing and Director of International Relations at the Department of Tourism in the late eighties.

Following several years in key positions in the DMC business in Dubai and heading the marketing of Denis Island, she is now contributing towards the advancement of the Seychelles tourism industry as a marketing consultant.



Mr. Alfred Fourcroy – elected as ordinary member

Mr. Fourcroy is a prominent 51-year-old businessman now living in Seychelles. He heads several tourism & hotel related companies as CEO/ Partner - ISPC Seychelles, La Plage Restaurant, Refrigeration Systems Seychelles, ISPC Supermarket Fresh Beau Vallon & Baie Ste. Anne, Praslin).



Mr. Eddie d'Offay – elected as ordinary member

Holding the position of GM at Mason's Travel almost a decade, Eddie also has experience in the airline industry having held management positions at Air Seychelles.



Ms. Sherin Naiken – elected as Ex-Officio member

Ms. Naiken is the new CEO of STB having previously headed the SIB for four years whereby she has been instrumental in broadening the marketing arm of the board and raised the Seychelles' profile internationally as an investment destination. Sherin has also done a short stint as Principal Secretary of the Tourism & Culture ministry.

Existing members of the board of SHTA are:

Mrs. Daniella Payet-Alis - stays on as Vice-Chairperson

Mr. Jean-Paul Barallon - remains as Treasurer

Mr. Paul Hodoul – Ordinary member

Mr. Amit Wasserberg – Ordinary member

Mr. Alan Mason – Ordinary member

Mr. Freddy Karkaria – Ordinary member

Mr. Guy Savy – Ordinary member – absent at the meeting (overseas)

Mr. Achim Leiss – Ordinary member – absent at the meeting (overseas)

The newly elected chairman wasted no time to make his official inaugural visit to the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Mr. Alain St. Ange, to discuss a number of pressing issues and agree on future meeting dates and the agenda, the private sector intends to discuss with government. The two sides, in an exemplary partnership, have in the past met at least once a month in a formal setting and often in between, formally and informally, to tackle matters arising where either government was asked to intervene or the private sector was called upon to rally their membership in dealing with pending issues.

Said Minister St. Ange after the meeting in a media release sent to this correspondent: ***'The Ministry of Tourism and Culture values the support of the private sector and the Ministry remains conscious that its ongoing successes in the continued growth in visitor arrival numbers is the result of unity in the industry, and because of the spirit of togetherness in marketing approaches. Today it is the private sector who controls the Marketing Committee of the Tourism Board. This approach of involvement of the private sector at the level of decisions will be maintained because the Government believes in public / private sector initiatives. We want to assure you, Mr.***

Stravens and your Committee of our total cooperation as we work together for the benefit of the Seychelles Tourism Industry'.

In his response Mr. Stravens said: *'Today we have brought out a list of what we see as challenges as the industry. We are willing to continue to develop a strong working partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and with the Tourism Board and we shall also steer our industry to work even closer together and help Seychelles consolidate its tourism industry'.*

Congratulations to the new chairman John Stravens and his newly elected board members and once again a fond thank you and fare thee well to Louis D'Offay for his past support and assistance through SHTA in highlighting the archipelago's private sector position on all matters concerning tourism.

SRI LANKAN CONFIRMS FLIGHTS FROM COLOMBO TO MAHE

(Posted 08th August 2013)



The recent state visit by Sri Lanka's president to the Seychelles, and the signing of a new bilateral air services agreement at the time, appears to be bearing immediate fruits as an announcement was made yesterday by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Transport about the commencement of flights between Colombo and Mahe:

Start quote:

Ministry of Home Affairs and Transport

PRESS RELEASE

SRI LANKAN AIRLINES ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF FLIGHTS TO SEYCHELLES

The Government of Sri Lanka and representatives of the Sri Lankan Airlines has announced that the airline will introduce direct services to Seychelles in October 2013.

The airline will operate three return services per week from Colombo to Seychelles and subject to regulatory approvals, offer a through service to Nairobi.

The announcement was made in the offices of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Transport, at a meeting held between officials of the Government of Sri Lanka, the Government of Seychelles, and representatives from the air transport sectors of the two countries.

Seychelles have agreed to a wide-ranging commercial agreement that will give customers of Sri Lankan Airline convenient access to Air Seychelles' regional network in the Indian Ocean and South Africa, including additional services from Colombo to Seychelles via Abu Dhabi. Customers of Air Seychelles will in turn enjoy access to new points in Sri Lanka, China, Japan, and Southern India, as well as Nairobi.

Minister Joel Morgan said: *"I commend the spirit of collaboration that has developed between the parties here today and the commitment and drive to make the new flights a success. The new services will boost business and leisure traffic to our islands, extend the networks of both airlines in attractive ways and shall delight their customers. This is a great advance in the ties between Seychelles and Sri Lanka and I am confident it will facilitate further development of political and economic relations between the two countries"* continued Minister Morgan who reiterated the full support of Government to the venture by Sri Lankan Airlines.

End quote

In a related development was the Seychelles, under the Vanilla Island Cooperation, the driving force to include Sri Lanka as a member in the Indian Ocean island marketing cooperative and flights between the two island countries will greatly enhance the concept of inter island travel and multi island holidays.

AIR SEYCHELLES EXPANDS CODESHARE WITH AIR BERLIN

(Posted 05th August 2013)

Air Seychelles partnership with Etihad, Abu Dhabi's national airline, has been paying off in many ways, profitability included, and allowed the Seychelles' national airline to tap into markets and locations previously unimaginable for a small Indian Ocean airline.

The already existing codeshare arrangement with Air Berlin, allowing for both airlines to put their code on the respective routes from Germany, and beyond, to Mahe via Abu Dhabi, has now been strengthened further, as Air Berlin can now reach the archipelago's second largest island, Praslin, through Air Seychelles' domestic flight services. The aircraft used on the route, which has as many as 20 flights operated throughout the day, is a De Havilland Twin Otter of which the airline operates two for scheduled flights to Praslin and charters to other islands. In turn has Air Seychelles now been able to put their code on flights operated by Air Berlin to Stockholm and Copenhagen, widening the reach to Denmark and Sweden where the archipelago has found growing popularity among travellers.

Cramer Ball, Air Seychelles' CEO, was in a media release sent to this correspondent overnight quoted as having said on the occasion of signing the expanded codeshare agreement: ***'Our codeshare partnership with Air Berlin has been a commercial success, with a record surge in arrivals from Germany contributing to our bottom line. With the addition of Stockholm and Copenhagen, we will bolster our position in Scandinavia, one of the fastest growing source markets to Seychelles, and we are confident we will be able to leverage our presence to drive more high-income traffic to our archipelago'.***

Tourism sources on Mahe have warmly welcomed this latest advance in cooperation between Etihad's partner airlines, which has opened up access to markets with strong growth and yet greater potential. ***'The resorts in Praslin will be very pleased to see that Air Berlin can now ticket passengers from Scandinavia and Germany straight through to Praslin. Guests will clear their customs and immigration at the international airport and then check in at the domestic terminal a few steps away from the arrival hall for their final flight to Praslin. Even La Digue will benefit from that because tourists can now fly to Praslin and then take the short 20 minute ferry ride across to La Digue. These days Air Seychelles has more answers than questions being asked of them, unlike when Etihad first came on board. Back then some individuals reacted badly to questions, thinking it was hostility but in fact, the sentiments back then were justified and only needed engaging with key stakeholders. I think they have understood those early sentiments and with time found the right way to partner with the tourism sector. This new partnership is bearing fruits. Our national airline has survived those very difficult years and can start to look at new African mainland destination and strengthen flights to South Africa and Mauritius'*** commented a regular source from Mahe, when discussing these latest developments on email.

Flying the Creole Spirit into the wide world – Happy Landings for all flights bearing the HM code, wherever they land.

AND in closing, as most weeks, some interesting reads again from ***The Livingstone Weekly*** by Gill Staden:

Livingstone Airport

Our town is looking very smart. Work continues on the roads and other facilities. The airport is due to be completed by August 13th, according to George who showed me around the other day. However, according to a report in the press, the work was supposed to have been completed by 1 August.

Transport, Works, Supply and Communications Minister Yamfwa Mukanga, on a visit to the airport: ***I don't want to be coming here and waste my time just to see uncompleted structures. I am giving you 10***



days to complete the structure. You must finish the remaining works by August 10, 2013. I will come back to inspect on August 12 and 13 and I should find the entire structure completed.

It is a cavernous structure which is going to allow for a lot of growth. It is all smart and shiny, too.

The main concourse has wide staircase leading to a viewing area overlooking the runway. George told me that there will be a restaurant there too. Either side of the concourse there are shops waiting for their tenants.



New Tour Guides

Libes – The Livingstone Institute for Business and Engineering Studies – has recently graduated 99 tour guides after the 3-week course.

The interesting thing about tour guiding is that you never stop learning. So these new young graduates still have a long way to go, but if they are willing to keep learning, there are jobs waiting for them.

Mulobezi Railway Line

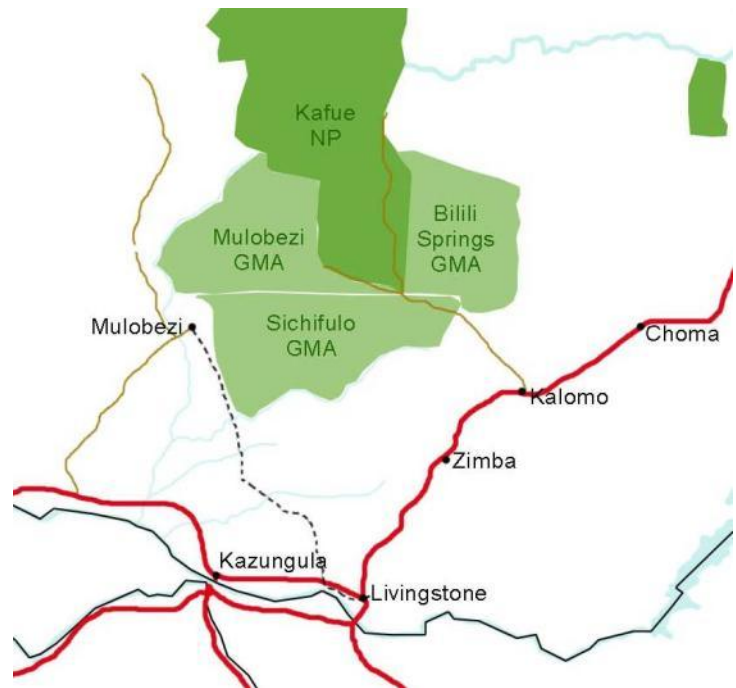
There are more discussions on the way forward for the Mulobezi Railway Line. This line was constructed in the early days to bring timber from Mulobezi to Livingstone. It was the longest private railway in the world at the time. At Independence the railway line was nationalized and it has had little TLC so is in a dreadful state. For a number of years the line has been under private management but still is in a bad way and the government is thinking that it should take back the line to bring it back to life.

The Zambian government is keen to rehabilitate its railway network in order to reduce road transport. The Executive Officer, Muyenga Atanga: *The key issue about Mulobezi is that everything available in terms of equipment, machinery and the train is provided for by Zambia Railways. The cardinal issue is the track that needs to be rehabilitated; it's in a bad state and takes time to reach Mulobezi*

Of course, I have a bit of a Gill Comment: The Mulobezi Line was put in place for business reasons. The timber from the forests had to be brought to Livingstone. Mulobezi used to be a thriving town; now it is not. The people there do not have work; they do not have money. And there are lots of them – it is a large community, a large poor community.

Any business, Zambia Railways being a business, has to look at its income and expenses. The cost of rehabilitating the Mulobezi Line and the cost of maintenance far outweigh the income from poor villagers in Mulobezi.

We have to look for a business to provide income for the people and the railway in Mulobezi. Can the forest and sawmill be revitalised? Is tourism a contributor to the income?



On the tourism side, the income will be small, but it can help. The railway runs through some beautiful countryside; it is a must-do for steam enthusiasts and Mulobezi is not far from Kafue National Park. Could we provide carriages to take vehicles so that cars could be taken by train to Mulobezi and then de-bus from there for a trip into the park? There are probably many opportunities, but surely we can look at those before we go to the expense of rehabilitating the line. Just because it is there now, does not mean that it is good for us now ...

Wilderness Safaris

Busanga Plains (northern Kafue National Park)

If there's a better way to start your morning, we'd love to hear about it!

Hot air ballooning at Shumba and Busanga Bush Camps is included on a complimentary basis from August through October, providing a very different perspective of Kafue.

The giant 8-person balloon floats for approximately an hour above this unique landscape with uninterrupted views of the floodplains and its game



Victoria Falls Town

I went over to Victoria Falls Town during the week and had a look around to see how things were going on in preparation for the UNWTO. The town was still rather tatty round the edges and it appeared that not much work had been going on to clean up the town. I did see some



street lights being fixed and the Conference Facility at Elephant Hills was just being started. This facility is to the right as you enter Ele Hills. I think it used to be tennis courts(?) I am sure it will be up in time as it is one of those 'flat pack' varieties of construction.

On the way to the airport I found the road was being worked on. It has been widened and resurfaced. That too will be finished. The airport itself was still boarded up so I didn't see much except that the lounge/concourse had been extended by covering part of the front.



I am sure that the town of Victoria Falls will be cleaned up. It is only a small town and was not in such a state as

Livingstone, so it shouldn't take time. Robert Mugabe is sure to

be at the UNWTO conference and he will make sure that he shows a side of Zimbabwe which is rarely seen in other towns of the country.
