

AVIATION TOURISM & CONSERVATION

NEWS EAST AFRICA

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



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Second edition January 2014

Africa News

ROUTES LOOKING FORWARD TO 2014 EVENTS AFTER RECORD BREAKING YEAR 2013

(Posted 11th January 2014)



Routes, the global network of conferences for the aviation industry, is looking back at an extraordinary year when at all their key events new attendance records were established.

Over 5,600 delegates attended the six forums that Routes organised around the globe in 2013, the premier global event of World Routes in Las Vegas, USA, the Routes Asia in Mumbai, India, the Routes Europe in Budapest, Hungary, the Routes Americas in Cartagena, Colombia, the Routes Africa in this correspondent's home city of

Kampala, Uganda and Routes CIS in Donetsk, Ukraine. These gatherings, which focused entirely on aviation route development, have become the must attend events of the year that shape the world's air services.

Katie Bland, the recently appointed Director of Routes, when reviewing the last year and looking ahead to 2014, was quoted to have said: *'Routes is where the aviation industry decides where people will fly in the future. With 16,000 face-to-face meetings at World Routes alone, our events play a crucial role in shaping the future of air services around the world. In 2013, around 100 CEOs and Tourism Ministers plus 300 senior executives of airlines, airports and tourism authorities attended our global event in Las Vegas. This is simply unrivalled in the aviation industry. The record attendance at our events highlights the growing importance of intelligent network planning – not just for airlines and airports, but also for tourism authorities, cities and regions. They increasingly throw their weight behind the development of new air services which are integral to their economic growth and development'*.

The following six events will take place in 2014, once again providing the platform for the aviation industry to come together and discuss cooperation and innovation for their region, and then, at the World Routes in September in Chicago, on a global basis again:

Routes Americas: 23-25 February, San Salvador, El Salvador

Routes Asia: 9-11 March, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia

Routes Europe: 6-8 April, Marseille, France

Routes Africa: 22-24 June, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

World Routes: 20-23 September, Chicago, Illinois, USA

Routes CIS: date and host to be announced very soon

In addition have future events already been announced for 2015, which includes bringing World Routes in Durban to Africa, Routes Europe in Aberdeen, Scotland and Routes Asia in Kunming, China as well as Routes Americas in Denver, Colorado, USA.

The African continent is looking forward to the Routes Africa meeting in Victoria Falls, where the organizers have the challenge to beat the previous attendance records established in 2012 in Victoria / Seychelles and 2013 in Kampala / Uganda.

For more information visit www.routesonline.com and follow their key Twitter handles for breaking and regular news updates: @Routesonline, @TheHUBRoutes, @VictoriaRoutes, @NLPROU, @airlineroute

WORLD TRAVEL MARKET AFRICA PREPARATION GATHERS MOMENTUM

(Posted 10th January 2014)



The first ever edition of the World Travel Market Africa has received phenomenal initial interest from the global travel industry's leading buyers with the introduction of Reed Travel Exhibitions' world-renowned Hosted Buyer programme.

Registration for WTM Africa's Hosted Buyer programme only opened last week and has already received over 200 applications from 35 different countries for its 300 places at the inaugural event, which takes place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre on May 2nd and 3rd as part of the newly-formed Thebe Reed Exhibitions' Africa Travel Week.

A targeted recruitment campaign to attract the 300 key international and pan-African hosted buyers was launched at the end of last year and is already well underway. With WTM Africa's dedicated Hosted Buyer Manager making use of Reed Travel Exhibitions' extensive buyer contacts and forging key partnerships from both established and emerging markets, the WTM Africa team is confident they can ensure they maintain Reed's excellent track record in attracting top-quality buyers. Through their extensive qualification process, WTM Africa is well on the way to delivering the most relevant buyers for the exhibiting companies.

The opening of registration for the Hosted Buyer programme has received positive feedback, with global buyers very excited at the prospect of a leading new and fresh B2B event for the African travel industry.

'For many years we have supported Reed Exhibitions and are disciples of the value-for-the-investment derived through the qualification process Reed Exhibitions puts into each event and the seller contingent drawn in. With

African and Indian Ocean destinations looming larger with our client base WTM Africa is the one event we will support delivering new customers and new business to those WTM exhibitors’ said buyer Allan Falck, Executive Director, Sundance Tours, Argentina.

Klas Wallin of Escape Safaris in Sweden added: ***‘WTM Africa is great for us as it gathers the whole African market under one umbrella. We are looking forward to meeting our existing suppliers for updates and investigating new opportunities’***.

WTM Africa Hosted Buyer Manager Paulina Lund recommends interested buyers to submit their applications. ***‘I am delighted with the interest from the world’s leading buyers to be part of WTM Africa’s Hosted Buyer programme. However, I would still urge those buyers who have not applied to do so, as only the most relevant buyers will be the ones that are ultimately chosen to take part in the programme’*** said Paulina in a communication sent to this correspondent while WTM Africa Event Manager Polly Magraw added: ***‘WTM Africa exhibitors will be impressed with the quality of buyers that have already applied for the programme’***.

If any of the readers is interested in being considered for the WTM Africa Hosted Buyer programme, please submit your application at www.wtmafrica.com/Hosted immediately as spaces are filling up fast.

Suppliers wishing to present their products and take part in the pre-arranged Hosted Buyer appointments should contact the WTM Africa team to secure their participation at www.wtmafrica.com/Exhibit

Africa Travel Week events are:

- ILTM Africa 28 – 30 April 2014
- IBTM Africa 28 – 30 April 2014
- WTM Africa: 02 – 03 May 2014

For further information about each of these Africa Travel Week events, please visit www.africatravelweek.com

East Africa News

SWITZERLAND BY A380 – NOW POSSIBLE WITH EMIRATES

(Posted 09th January 2014)



East Africans traveling to Switzerland now finally have the chance to fly one sector of that journey with the giant Airbus A380, as Emirates, Dubai’s award winning airline launched their latest destination to be served with the world’s largest passenger aircraft. This switch represents a capacity increase of over 20 percent compared to the aircraft type used on the route so far.

Available with immediate effect can those connecting out of Entebbe, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Addis Ababa connect in Dubai to flight number EK087 to Zurich and sample for a few hours the splendour of Emirates’ First Class Suites, a superbly appointed business class section with a variety of features and a generously spaced economy class with the latest entertainment at passengers’ finger tips.

The launch of Zurich by A380 is now Emirates’ 25th destination worldwide to be served by this aircraft type, of which the airline is already the largest operator and has dozens of more such planes in the delivery pipeline. Only very recently did Emirates firm up the orders for an additional 50 such aircraft, after initially announcing the deal at the Dubai Air Show in November last year at the new Dubai World International airport in Jebel Ali.

Information received from Emirates suggests that since the launch of the route in 1992 nearly 3.5 million passengers travelled with them between Zurich to Dubai and beyond. Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news from the Eastern Africa region.

Uganda News

BRUSSELS AIRLINES BRINGS ‘BIKE FOR AFRICA’ TO UGANDA

(Posted 10th January 2014)



Supported by the Brussels Airlines Foundation will a group of cyclists from Belgium come to Uganda between the 29th of January and the 05th of February to raise funds for children's projects in the country. They plan to cover a distance of about 450 kilometres from the Source of the Nile in Jinja to the Murchison's Falls National Park. Local and international sponsors have committed themselves through various measures to make this first visit of '*Bike for Africa*' to the *Pearl of Africa* a success. In Uganda notably are Marasa Africa, through their Chobe and Paraa lodges on board, as are Deloitte and Africa Cargo Services while back in Belgium Brussels Airport is one of the big names on the sponsors list. Be sure to watch this space for more updates over the next two and a half weeks and then from the event itself, as our cycling visitors arrive in the country and the show goes on the road, literally as well as proverbially. Meanwhile is more information available via www.bikeforafrica.be and readers can '*Like*' the event on Facebook by visiting their page <https://www.facebook.com/BikeForAfrica2014>

AIRWORTHINESS CERTIFICATION COURSE SET FOR ENTEBBE

(Posted 10th January 2014)



The AVIASSIST Foundation, in conjunction with CASSOA, the Civil Aviation Safety and Security Oversight Agency of the East African Community, will be holding a rare airworthiness certification course in Uganda between 10th and 12th of March this year.

The information availed shows that only 20 places will be available and early registration is therefore recommended. The course features all aspects of airworthiness from the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standards and leading regulators such as the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the US FAA. The rules are explained in general terms but the fundamental principles are also detailed which will allow greater benefit from the course. The course addresses the key aspects of design, construction, maintenance and operation of aircraft across a wide spectrum of technologies met in aerospace.

Subjects will include:

- Initial airworthiness certification
- Main regulatory regimes
- Verification and validation
- Supplemental Type Certificates (STCs)
- Organisational approvals
- Just culture
- Auditing techniques
- Auditing techniques role plays
- Occurrence reporting
- Human factors
- Continuous & continuing airworthiness

Staff working in aviation and interested to attend the workshop can [click here to download a registration form](#). The course is delivered over 3 days and is mostly in the form of lectures. Group work is also used a number of exercises. All delegates will receive a Certificate of Completion at the end of the course.

Those keen to attend should click [here for a full program](#)

In addition will additional modular components be available at the Entebbe workshop between 10th and 21st of March:

Safety campus with 4 other courses & 2 day conference

The AviAssist Foundation is bringing an unprecedented training program to the region with more valuable & very affordable courses. The courses include:

Flight Data Management course
Aviation English course
SMS introduction course
2Gether 4Safety seminar/conference/expo
IATA Dangerous Goods course

All these events take place from 10-21 March in Entebbe. Come and get your shot of safety updates at the AviAssist Pop-up safety campus 2014!

Click [here for registration and more information on these events](#) or contact us on events@aviassist.org

Tom Kok, the Director of AVIASSIST, ended his communication by appealing to: *'Help us promote this event and forward this to anyone you think should be attending the seminar. Only with good numbers of participants can we continue and expand our work. As an independent, non-profit organisation, we rely on support of aviation organisations and companies, even if only by attending our great value for money events'*.

The various workshops have been made possible through support and co-operation with among others:



UGANDAN TOUR OPERATORS GRUDGINLY ACCEPT ON LINE GORILLA PERMIT SALE

(Posted 09th January 2014)



In what was described as an internal debate of some vigour has the Association of Uganda Tour Operators apparently accepted that the Uganda Wildlife Authority's on line sale of the prized gorilla permits can go ahead after all. Sections of the local tour operating fraternity had vehemently opposed plans of UWA to go online with permit sales, as the organization wanted to widen their reach beyond Uganda in an attempt to push sales up. Local tour operators had enjoyed a monopoly in purchasing and processing gorilla tracking permits which provided them with a significant portion of their income and cash flow and were of course reluctant to share this resource with anyone else, especially not foreign tour companies for which the new system would at last provide the opportunity to get permits confirmed directly from UWA without having to go through local companies. This was aggravated by a second controversy brewing when UWA announced late last year that they would begin to offer tours into the parks, using new vehicles purchased under a bilateral aid agreement, which again prompted sections of the local tour operators to object vehemently, some going as far as accusing UWA as wanting to *'kill our business'*. While no details have been received as of now over the vehicle and in-house tour plans by UWA, it seems that the debate, for now, is over about the Uganda Wildlife Authority's plan to offer gorilla permits on line. According to a source close to UWA it appears that an agreement has been reached now with AUTO's leadership allowing the Uganda Wildlife Authority to formally launch their online platform. Uganda has seen visitor numbers to the national parks grow substantially in recent years, with gorilla tracking in Bwindi and Mgahinga leading with generated revenues, bringing the organization closer to financial self sustainability. However, compared to the closest 'rivals' in the region, Tanzania and Kenya, visitor numbers are still considerably lower and in terms of gorilla permit sales neighbouring Rwanda has for some years now outpaced Uganda, clearly prompting UWA to take a fresh look at available options to gain a greater market share within the East African Community. Uganda over the past two years had gained international recognition in being named the Lonely Planet's top destination for 2012 and was ranked in the top bracket of countries to visit by National Geographic in 2013 and is now globally recognized as one of Africa's leading adventure destinations. Said one source when contacted about the controversies between AUTO and UWA: *'Personally I think open controversy does not help. It does not help relations and it does not help*

anyone's reputation. We should take a leaf from Rwanda. You never read about open controversy between RDB and their tour and travel association. But I know they also have arguments, like when RDB wanted to raise the permit fee to 750 US Dollars per person. Even then there was no dissent in the media unlike here in Uganda where all the arguments are dragged into the public domain. We have a representative on the UWA board where clarification can be obtained. It is there where the lobbying needs to start plus direct engagement of our board representative, the AUTO leadership and UWA management. Maybe we need to look at our style of doing things and think of better ways in the future'.

However that pans out, Uganda remains the Pearl of Africa and has a wide range of wildlife and natural attractions to offer to visitors, details of which can be found via www.ugandawildlife.org and www.visituganda.com

Kenya News

KONGO MOSQUE REGATTA READY TO SAIL

(Posted 10th January 2014)



Tomorrow, Saturday 11th January is D-Day for the Kongo Mosque Regatta, which is held in conjunction with the South Coast Community Eco Tourism Association. The event promises a fun day out at the beach, or for sailors on the ocean, as the 'arrival' of the Kaskazi trade winds is celebrated, a long tradition which in ancient times, when much of the trade was done by dhows, marked the shift in winds and dictated the direction the trade was taking.



The Kongo mosque, in information availed overnight, is described as '***Borrowing a name from the surrounding forest, Kongo Mosque is an ancient structure rich in history now turned – tourist attraction. Previously known as Diani Persian Mosque, a name coined by the Arab Merchants who occupied the area then, Kongo Mosque is today more than a worship center***'.

Diani Life, a website dedicated to highlight the attractions of the Diani beach area along the south coast of Mombasa, adds:

Located in Diani Beach, South Coast, an area that is always bustling with tourists, the Mosque is a favourite destination for visitors. Although the architect of the mosque is not known, it is believed to have been constructed in the 14th Century. The Arabs who occupied the coast in the 14th Century put up the mosque as a place of worship being Muslims.



(Picture courtesy of www.dianilife.com)

The architecture has indeed stood the test of time and is still in use by locals to date. With minor tweaks, the local Muslim leaders have kept the Mosque in operation for prayer sessions and have even invited tourists to appreciate this great heritage. For that reason, Kongo Mosque is highly revered.

Characterized by giant baobab trees that overshadow the Mosque, the setting is quiet with a breeze constantly sweeping over the landscape. As a matter of fact, you can laze on the sun beds set along the Kongo River and enjoy the sight of the azure waters in the brilliant sunshine. The river empties into the Indian Ocean and besides the great shoreline you get the opportunity to view various bird species.

You can access the Kongo Mosque via the Indian Ocean Beach Club and savour the beauty of this ancient wonder. With such a great backdrop, breathtaking shots at dawn and dusk are memories worth taking back home.

In closing, this is as fine an example of local Muslim leadership embracing tourism for the benefit of their communities as it comes!

MOMBASA COUNTY TOURISM SECRETARY'S 'DEMOTION' RUFFLES FEATHERS

(Posted 08th January 2014)



Kenya coast tourism stakeholders were largely perplexed when news broke yesterday that the Mombasa county governor had sent his tourism secretary packing and move to the agriculture portfolio, generally seen as a demotion and swiftly bringing condemnation for the governor's action.

In the immediate aftermath of the reshuffle, which comes barely 8 months after the county administration was formed following the March 2013 General Election were speculation and rumours making the rounds, until Anthony Njaramba issued the following statement, clearly singing his own praise and certainly making the job of his successor harder, as he is trying to leave him a pair of oversized shoes to fill:

Start quote of the mail dated January 07th at 12.37 pm local time:

Greetings dear stakeholders,

Happy 2014 to you all. I trust you are all excited and looking forward to this new year, as we seek to better our tourism industry within the county.

I am obligated to inform you that pursuant to a county government reshuffle effected by His Excellency the Governor as of yesterday, I have been transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries. The immediate former Health Minister Hon. Joab Tumbo will be taking over the Tourism docket, with immediate effect.

Within the period we have been in service, I am grateful for the cordial working relationship my office has had with the stakeholders. Any minor challenges have been surmounted by our concerted dialogue and working together. We have thus been able to achieve several important milestones, which include:

Monthly clean-up exercises which have greatly contributed to the restoration of Mombasa's aesthetic beauty

Initiation of feasibility study for 15,000 seater Mombasa International Convention Center

Data collection of all hotels, restaurants and pubs that will lead to automated revenue collection

Drafting of Mombasa County Liquor Control Act, that will regulate liquor licensing within the county
Hosting of highly successful Miss Tourism Kenya 2013, both Mombasa chapter and the national finals
The first ever Mombasa International Cultural Festival, that will be an annual celebration of our rich cultural heritage.

Advocating for increased direct international chartered flights, such as the recent ones by Condor and Thompson Airlines.

Increment of chartered flights from an average of 10, to a current average of 24.

Continuous stakeholders' meetings and involvement even at short notice.

Stakeholders central role participation in the County affairs, e.g. setting of rates and levies under the County Finance Bill

I wish to express my sincere gratitude for the overwhelming support given to my team and I during my tenure in this docket. I pray that the same courtesy will be extending to the incoming Minister.

I look forward to our continued interaction in different fora, and wish you all success in your different endeavours.

We will arrange for a hand-over session with the incoming Minister as soon as possible, but you may contact him on the following email:

asembo2000@yahoo.com.

Kind regards,

Hon. Anthony Njaramba
County Executive Secretary
Tourism & Culture Development
Mombasa.

Email: tourism@mombasa.go.ke

f: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ministry-of-Tourism-Culture-Development-Mombasa-County/222313591271621#>

End quote

Several stakeholders took in fact issue with the statement, asking once again where the number of 24 charter flights was coming from, as such '**ghost figures**' as one regular Mombasa based source put it were '**not only not helpful but outright damaging because it gives the impression the coast resorts are doing ok**'.

Another source, from a mail received, termed this particular part of the statement '**What a joke ??**'.

Njaramba was also blamed for attempting to introduce a bed levy of 500 Kenya Shillings per bed per month and a levy on tourism vehicles registered in Mombasa county of Kenya Shillings 3.500 per month, which earned him barbs aplenty and set him on a collision course with the coast tourism fraternity. Be that as it may, his removal and shift to the agriculture ministry was receiving more condemnation than applause, giving the Mombasa Governor perhaps some fodder for thought. Watch this space for breaking and regular news from the tourism industry across Eastern Africa.

NOW JETAIR TOO ANNOUNCES THE END OF ANOTHER MOMBASA CHARTER

(Posted 07th January 2014)



Information was confirmed yesterday that Belgium's Jetair will halt their charter operation to Mombasa come April and will not resume operations later in the year. Passengers from Belgium will then have to travel to neighbouring Holland and use flights by TUI Holland – Jetair is part of the TUI Group – causing major inconvenience and very likely resulting in a drop of passengers from Belgium as a result.

A Mombasa based source added that special promotions are now underway to fill seats on the charter for arrivals in March but the withdrawal of the charter before the Easter holiday will be another blow to Destination Mombasa.

Coast tourism stakeholders have been consulting behind the scenes and it is understood that a presentation has been made at the end of last year to the government in Nairobi, outlining urgently needed countermeasures and candidly

describing the current circumstances and the potential fallout for primary and secondary jobs at the Kenya coast, should no action be taken to blitz existing, emerging and new markets with a recovery marketing campaign. Said a regular contributor when breaking the news to him: *'I am no longer sure I want to answer your calls or read your mails because increasingly you come up with bad news for coast tourism. We have some really great resorts, we have marine national parks, Shimba Hills and Tsavo East and West, the Taita Hills Sanctuary literally just hours away from the beach and we should focus on our competitive strengths compared with other destinations. All we hear is that Kenya is de-campaigned abroad and we should reverse the trend and showcase ourselves better. You said yourself in an article sometime late last year that Kenya still got what it takes, so why are we then losing so much traffic?'*



A fair question that is but until and unless the Kenyan government now acts on the submissions it was handed, and funds KTB to allow for such a major recovery marketing blitz focusing on the coast, it will get a lot worse before it is getting better again. Visit www.magicalkenya.com for more information on Destination Kenya and also look up www.mcta321.blogspot.com where a host of details can be found about tourism attractions and facilities along the Kenya coast.

LUFTHANSA'S SKY CHEFS ARE HEADING TO NAIROBI

(Posted 07th January 2014)



One of Kenya's last monopolies will finally be broken, when Lufthansa's catering subsidiary company LSG Sky Chefs will set up shop at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport after being given a concession as second caterer by the Kenya Airport Authority.



NAS has held the monopoly literally since Kenya's independence, first at the Embakasi Airport before the moving to the new JKIA in 1978 but also at the Port Reitz Airport before the new Moi International Airport was opened in Mombasa. NAS has in the recent past taken new partners on board, apparently in preparation of the competitive onslaught of a global aviation catering giant like Sky Chefs, which allowed NAS to begin bringing their operation in line with the latest standards in this line of business. Servair, a French based catering multinational, acquired a majority stake some time ago at a reported cost of over 25 million US Dollars while Centum, a financial investment company, now holds a 15 percent stake.

LSG Sky Chefs new Kenyan unit will make it a total of 5 on the continent, with their largest African operation in South Africa, where three airports are served by them. It is expected that when the new facility has been set up and is operational, likely to be in late 2014, a number of airlines, in particular those which have contracts with Sky Chefs elsewhere, many of them members of Star Alliance, will switch from NAS to the new outfit, as competition over both cost as well as quality will undoubtedly stir up this long stagnant market. Both KAA and LSG Sky Chefs have confirmed the development yesterday. Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news from Eastern Africa.

Tanzania News

ZANZIBAR COMMEMORATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REVOLUTION

(Posted 12th January 2014)



Zanzibar today, Sunday 12th January, celebrates the Golden Jubilee of the revolution which 50 years ago overthrew the Sultan's government, after Britain had finally agreed to independence a few weeks earlier on 10th December 1963.

The Omani Sultans had for over 150 years maintained their stronghold over Zanzibar, their key trading position off the African mainland and the Arab influence and domination, which goes back to 1698 when the Omani's established an armed stronghold and installed their loyalist administration, before eventually letting go of the island in 1858. Arab rule however continued when the Sultan of Zanzibar then stepped in to take over with his own government.

Britain entered the scene in 1890 when Zanzibar became a Protectorate, with their influence further strengthened after displacing the Germans, following the end of the First World War, as colonial power of mainland Tanganyika. The bloody uprising, some archive material suggests as many as 20,000, though other reports talk of between 2,000 to 4,000, died during and immediately after the violent takeover, brought to power the majority African population which stood at an estimated 230,000 at the time, with a further 50,000 people of Arabic descent, some 20,000 Asians and a few hundred Europeans, many of whom fled individually or were evacuated by British and American warships during and after the revolution. The Sultan, his family and closest advisors managed to flee on his yacht as soon as the outcome of the fighting had become obvious and police and troops loyal to him had been overrun. The new government, led by Abeid Amani Karume, turned Zanzibar into a short lived People's Republic of Zanzibar, was recognized almost immediately by countries of the Warsaw Pact with the West following suit some weeks later, before on 23rd of April, Karume led Zanzibar into the union with mainland Tanganyika to form the new United Republic of Tanzania with Julius Nyerere as Head of State. Until present day has Zanzibar however maintained a separate government, including a President and while by and large the union remained working and intact and mutually beneficial, there have of late been voices trying to split the union and turn Zanzibar into an independent state. Ahead of the upcoming 50th anniversary of the formation of the United Republic of Tanzania will a new constitution draft be discussed, which has over the past year been developed though no fundamental change in the relationship between mainland and Zanzibar is expected.

Meanwhile has Zanzibar, which in the more distant past depended almost entirely for its economy on trade, fishing and the well known spices, in particular cloves, developed a flourishing tourism sector which today brings in over 75 percent of the foreign exchange earned and is the key economic pillar of the two islands of Unguja and Pemba, which make up Zanzibar.

High end resorts, some run by international hospitality giants – though the majority operate under the direct management of both foreign and local investors – have sprung up along the beaches of Zanzibar, thought to be among the best in the world, and an award winning restoration of two Stone Town buildings – the Stone Town is a UNESCO World Heritage Cultural Site – allowed the establishment of the Zanzibar Serena Hotel right at the waterfront.

Direct and nonstop charter flights from key European destinations today connect Zanzibar with Europe and scheduled flights, from the mainland as well as the region and beyond, including from as far as Oman and South Africa, have opened the *Spice Island* to tourists from all over the world.

Congratulations to the People and Government of Zanzibar on this auspicious day, celebrating half a century of true independence.

FASTJET WIDENS REACH BY SIGNING ON TO NEW DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

(Posted 09th January 2014)



FastJet yesterday announced the signing of two additional distribution agreements that will allow travel agents worldwide to access and sell its flights.

The first agreement, signed recently with Skyscanner, the award-winning global travel search and comparison company, will enable consumers to compare fastjet's flight schedules and prices against those of other African carriers via www.skyscanner.net/. Visitors to the site will then be able to link directly to FastJet's website and book flights. Skyscanner currently has over 25 million unique visitors every month.

In addition has FastJet also signed an agreement with Hahn Air Systems, a sister company and client of Hahn Air. Through Hahn Air Systems' e-alliance[®] product, FastJet's flight information will be available within all of the main Global Distribution Systems (GDS), including Amadeus, Sabre and Travelport. This will give FastJet access to over 91,000 travel agencies worldwide and the link with Hahn Air Systems will provide unencumbered access to these systems. It is anticipated that FastJet's flights will feature on the GDS within the next month.

Commenting on the collaboration, Alexander Proschka, Managing Director of Hahn Air Systems, was quoted in a media release as saying: *'FastJet, as one of our first customers in Africa, extends our airline portfolio of e-alliance[®] with pan-African routes and competitive prices for global distribution. Hahn Air Systems is looking forward to fruitful cooperation with FastJet entailing joint sales and growth'*.

Ellis Cain-Jones, FastJet's Chief Commercial Officer, was quoted to have responded: *'Continuing our success in establishing FastJet as a true low cost airline, we now want to expand access to our affordable pan-African flights to travel agents worldwide. Our new partners will benefit from FastJet's drive for cost-efficient global distribution in both traditional and digital arenas'*.

The additional distribution channels will pave the way for FastJet's launch of new routes in 2014, with Lusaka already announced and more to follow. Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news from across Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands.

ANOTHER MARITIME DISASTER NARROWLY AVOIDED

(Posted 08th January 2014)



At least 5 passengers on the inter island ferry MV Kilimanjaro II died on Sunday after falling overboard with an unspecified number of people still reported missing. Information received from Unguja, Zanzibar's main island, to where the ferry was heading after leaving the sister island of Pemba in the early morning, suggests that the ship sailed into bad weather, with ocean swells causing the ferry boat to lean heavily. While barely staving off a rolling over, a number of passengers on deck however seem to have lost their footing when the ferry leaned heavily and hold and fell overboard, with little rescue action taken, according to the source's report. The captain of the ferry is now reportedly in police custody, *'helping with investigations'* as the phrase here in East Africa goes, after being blamed to have ignored heavy weather warnings and abandoned those who had fallen off his vessel. Official search and rescue has now been terminated though local fishing boats are still looking for bodies, as no survivors can now be expected to be found. The Kilimanjaro II is part of a fleet of more modern ferries of catamaran design, having maritime observers wonder what could have gone wrong during that voyage.

Tanzania has in recent years been struck by several major maritime disasters, notably ferries and boats sinking while plying the waters between the two islands, as well as a Lake Victoria tragedy in May 1996 with allegedly over 1.000 lives lost at the time when the overloaded MV Bukoba sank within 30 miles of Mwanza port.

Tanzanian authorities at the time of the last major accident vowed to strengthen regulations and oversight and withhold licenses of errant shipping companies not complying with the new set of rules, but this latest near tragedy suggests that this is still a long way off and that complacency, and perhaps even corruption – a major issue cited in the last accident investigation – has crept back into the system. Prosecutions of past accidents are ongoing and it is expected that this latest incident will also make it to criminal prosecution. Watch this space.

ZANZIBAR IS GETTING READY FOR SAUTI ZA BUSARA 2014

(Posted 08th January 2014)



What has arguably become Africa's best known music and performing arts festival, and is without doubt East Africa's leading event to showcase African music and films, *Sauti za Busara* is now just over a month away and the organizers are working flat out to be ready for the inflow of a record number of visitors for this year's event. The lineup of groups and musicians promises to bring yet more ear and eye candies to the spectators and after National Geographic (http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/best-trips-winter-2014/#/sauti-za-busara_74123_600x450.jpg) named the festival as one of their best winter trips from the United States, yet more priceless publicity is almost guaranteed, spreading the fame of the festival around the world.

Hoteliers expect to be fully booked between the 13th to 16th of February – the festival days – but experience shows that even the days prior and immediately after the festival remain in demand as visitors who come for the festival then take time to explore the *Spice Island* before returning home again.

Airlines have reported strong advance bookings for the festival period too and tickets to access the 17th century fort of the Omani Sultans are also selling at a fast pace. (<http://busaramusic.org/festivals/tickets/>)

Media accreditation runs until the 17th of January and details can be accessed through the Sauti Za Busara website by clicking on this link: http://busaramusic.org/press/press_accreditation/

Zanzibar has become the '*en vogue*' destination in East Africa with a number of top ranked resorts available for discerning travelers though accommodation facilities are available to suit all pockets. Flights from Dar es Salaam are operated by Precision Air, FastJet, Coastal Aviation and a number of other airlines and there are daily ferry connections between the mainland and the island of Unguja, Zanzibar's main island where the festival is staged. Make a date with Zanzibar and *Sauti za Busara 2014* and see the impressive lineup of performers, but in view of the advanced time, make that date as fast as you can.



(Impressions from the 2013 edition of Sauti za Busara)

OVER 80 TUSKS CONFISCATED AT DAR ES SALAAM PORT

(Posted 04th January 2014)



Information already referred to yesterday about a seizure of blood ivory at the port of Dar es Salaam was confirmed overnight. Sources in the Tanzanian port city gave the number of tusks confiscated as 81, indicative of the slaughter of at least another 41 elephant, perhaps even more. Questions are being asked and investigations have been launched already how the two suspects who were arrested with the loot, managed to get into the harbour and suspicions have been voiced already that they had accomplices in position of power giving them access without being subjected to gate controls. This latest find of blood ivory comes hot on the heels of President Kikwete announcing in his New Year's address to the nation that operation Tokomeza will resume soon again, but with different rules of engagement and a focus mainly on bringing the commercial style poaching gangs to justice while leaving pastoralists and herders largely alone.

In a related development it was also learned that the Tanzania Ports Authority will be introducing additional screening equipment during the course of 2014 to check the contents of containers before they are loaded on ships, though no one was able to confirm if TPA would in conjunction with TANAPA and other security organs deploy sniffer dogs – a measure which is hugely successful in Kenya where the dogs have found much concealed contraband, not just at the sea ports but also airports where transit baggage as well as checked in bags are now routinely checked out. For now, a good result of increased vigilance and intelligence gathering as reportedly a tip off led to the seizure and arrests. Watch this space.

Rwanda News

RWANDAIR NAMES FEBRUARY 24TH AS DELIVERY DATE FOR THEIR FIRST BOMBARDIER Q400

(Posted 07th January 2014)



RwandAir has yesterday announced that they expect their next brand new aircraft, a Bombardier Q400NextGen turboprop in a dual class configuration, on Monday, February 24th.

When put into commercial service the new state of the art bird will replace the Bombardier Dash 8, which has been leased from Nairobi based ASL and served such destinations as Kamembe – RwandAir's presently only domestic route after suspension of flights to Gisenyi – and some near regional routes like Bujumbura and Entebbe.

The new Bombardier Q 400NextGen will join two Bombardier jets of CRJ900NextGen make, which were also delivered brand new to the airline.

Also planned for the next few months are the launch of flights to Douala and later on to Abidjan, as RwandAir continues to expand its footprint into West Africa from where it offers convenient connections across Eastern Africa, to South Africa and to Dubai. Additional destinations in Southern Africa too are reportedly undergoing final evaluation, as are plans to turn options for more CRJ 900NextGen into firm orders.

According to a source close to the Rwanda Development Board's tourism and conservation department, echoed incidentally by several private sector stakeholders, is RwandAir a key pillar in the ongoing growth of the tourism industry, which in 2013 has once again seen more arrivals and greater revenues coming into the *Land of a Thousand Hills*, by providing affordable fares and easy connections from East Africa and across the continent for visitors. Check out the airline's new website via www.rwandair.com

885 GRADUATE FROM RWANDA'S UNIVERSITY TOURISM COLLEGE

(Posted 06th January 2014)



Last weekend saw nearly 900 students from the Rwanda Tourism University College graduate and receive their certificates, diplomas and degrees after successfully completing their respective courses last year.

This is generally seen as a shot in the arm of Rwanda's sustained efforts to professionalize the workforce in the tourism and hospitality industry across the country, aimed at uplifting the standards of service delivery.

The Rwandan government, through the Rwanda Development Board's Tourism and Conservation Department, has over the past years moved to promote vocational and tertiary training for the sector to improve performance levels, customer satisfaction and the quality of staff working in the sector. Rating and grading of hotels, resorts and lodges and the introduction of award schemes, annually selecting the best hotels and lodges, has subsequently shown upwards trends, providing the fundamentals for the continued growth in visitor arrivals in Rwanda.

The private sector in Rwanda has played a key role in this effort and a number of privately owned institutes and colleges have opened in Rwanda in recent years, offering basic and advanced courses for hands on training for the hospitality professions as well as for tourism management.

Leading companies like Serena Hotels, which operate the Kigali Serena and the Lake Kivu Serena hotels in Rwanda, but also Marriott International, which will be opening the first Marriott Hotel in East Africa in Kigali later this year, have provided staff with a range of in-house training opportunities. Marriott has, ahead of starting operations, taken a significant number of Rwandans to learn their trade in some of Marriott's Gulf based properties while Serena Hotels is using regular on the job training besides staff rotations to some of their 24 hotels, resorts and lodges across Eastern Africa to improve skills. For information about Rwanda's tourism attractions visit www.rwandatourism.com

Vanilla Islands

Reunion News

REUNION RECOVERING FROM MONSTER STORM BEJISA

(Posted 07th January 2014)



Cyclone Bejisa, which lashed the French Indian Ocean island of La Reunion first thing in the New Year, has left a trail of destruction and claimed at least one life while causing over a dozen people to be injured, some of them seriously.

The island is now recovering steadily from the aftermath of the storm, which while thankfully not hitting the island directly – the eye of the storm passed some 20 kilometres off Reunion – still brought gale force winds up to 150 kilometres per hour. It was those winds which made trees collapse, caused roofs to be torn off, prompt electricity and water supplies to go down, leaving over 170.000 households without electricity and about 200.000 households with periodic water shortages, according to details received from the island. Services have since January 03rd been progressively restored however.

Flights, which were suspended in the run up to the storm, have since of course resumed too with Air Austral flying a full schedule again. There are no reports from Reunion's tourism resorts of much damage other than torn off tree branches and flower beds in need of some tender loving care by the gardeners, allowing the resumption of unrestricted operations of tourism businesses across the country. Some yachts and boats used for diving, sailing, fishing and watching whales and dolphins were reportedly damaged in port as a result of high tides and strong waves though the source in St. Denis could not confirm if any total write offs were incurred.

Some of the low laying parts of the island suffered minor flooding damage while some roads along the coastline were also damaged, as were some in the interior where torrential rains caused rivers to break their banks before eventually returning to manageable levels. Damage to agricultural farms with sugar cane and vanilla suffered

damages too but cannot be quantified at present while a full survey of the storm impact on crops, through rain, flooding and wind damage, is still ongoing. The French central government has been asked to declare at least some parts of Reunion as a disaster area to allow for immediate financial help from Paris and compensation for the storm damage to those affected. Damage to infrastructure, agriculture and private property could run into tens of millions of Euros according to information received by yesterday end of business, all the more important that disaster funding is released rapidly to Reunion to start repairs and provide the funds to do so.

Cyclone Bejisa was described as one of the worst storms in the recent history of Reunion for at least the last two decades. Other Indian Ocean islands like Madagascar, Rodrigues and Mauritius and parts of the Seychelles outer islands were also affected by torrential rains and high wind speeds.

Seychelles News

CONSTANCE LEMURIA JOINS THE ELITE ‘CLUB’ OF THE WORLD’S LEADING HOTELS

(Posted 12th January 2014)



Praslin’s – arguably – best resort, the Constance Lemuria, has just passed the audit for admission to one of the world’s finest and most exclusive ‘clubs’, the *Leading Hotels of the World*.

After scoring over 88 percent affirmative ‘ticks’ in the audit, the hotel can now formally display the plaque at the entrance of the resort, which only confirms the impressions made on my during two past inspections, inspite of never having actually stayed overnight nor walked the 18 hold championship golfcourse, the only one of its kind in the entire Seychelles.

Being admitted to the *Leading Hotels of the World* only happens after a lengthy process of vetting, open and incognito audits and inspections and once accepted guests can be sure of the superior service such a hotel then offers to visitors, in this case adding to the reputation of Constance Hotels and Resorts, already recognized as a leading resort brand on top of their game in their properties in Mauritius, Madagascar, the Maldives and the Seychelles. The Lemuria in Praslin bagged repeatedly the accolades for the Seychelles best golf resort and the Seychelles leading Spa resort – a major success considering the number of top rated Spa’s in the various resorts across the archipelago – and with three beaches and three swimming pools, plus the golf course, the Lemuria offers a complete holiday package for even the most discerning clientele.



(An aerial view of the Lemuria’s 18 hole golf course and two of the three beaches the guests can enjoy)

Congrats to the resort’s General Manager Bruno Le Gac and his entire team for a job very well done.

DROPPING CRIME RATE GOOD NEWS FOR SEYCHELLES TOURISM

(Posted 10th January 2014)



Seychelles’ Minister for Home Affairs and Transport, Joel Morgan, earlier this week, on the occasion of honouring long serving police officers and recognizing their often challenging work, revealed a significant drop in crimes

recorded in 2013 when he reportedly said: ***‘By being pro-active, it has impacted positively on crime reduction in general in Seychelles, causing it to decline by a remarkable 29.27%. This result has not come haphazardly but rather it has happened as a result of assessments, planning, training and an overall methodical approach to deliver the day-to-day service of policing in a manner that was most likely to have a direct and positive impact in general’.***

A source from the Seychelles’ tourism fraternity applauded this trend, saying improved security and reduced crime by 30 percent would only add to the archipelago’s appeal to bring in tourists, though at the same time called for continued vigilance by security organs to make sure that petty thefts on beaches were kept in check.

The Seychelles’ government has over the past years increasingly targeted drug trafficking as well as drug use and what is called anti social behaviour in public places and while the local people are the main beneficiaries of reduced crime, so are tourists of course as general security across the islands has made it even safer for them to walk in villages and the capital Victoria, take strolls at the beach and enjoy a trouble free vacation.

Visitors coming to the islands by air in fact should be aware that on arrival sniffer dogs habitually check baggage of arriving passengers and that the import, even of small quantities of drugs, will result in prompt arrest, prosecution and depending on various factors, at times lengthy jail time. Said the source, perhaps tongue in cheek, when discussing the latter aspect: ***‘Anyone coming to our paradise islands needs no drugs to enjoy themselves. We offer paradise and paradise cannot be improved by anything and definitely not by drugs’.*** Wise words for sure from one of the islands’ tourism stakeholders who surely knows what he is talking about. ***Seychelles, Another World.***

SEYCHELLES OFFERS AFRICAN COUNTRIES A SHOWCASE PLATFORM IN INDONESIA

(Posted 09th January 2014)



Seychelles’ Pan African spirit once again showed when the Special Envoy of the Seychelles to ASEAN Mr. Nico Barito invited fellow African countries to use the Seychelles’ stand to display posters and brochures and provide information about trade and investment opportunities.

The International Investment and Trade Expo of Local Governments is hosted by APKASI ‘Association of Kabupaten of Indonesia’ a prominent local government organization of Indonesia with 416 members. The 1st Expo of Local Governments held at Jakarta International Expo was officially opened by Indonesian Coordinating Minister of Economy Hatta Rajasa on behalf of the President of Indonesia. The 3 days expo attracted over than 10,000 visitors both from local and international businesses.

Seychelles invited representatives from the African missions in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur to show case Africa during the business forum which was attended by the key regional economic figures. Mr. Barito of Seychelles who took lead in the session, explained about the potential of Seychelles and its tourism and how Seychelles’ strategic position can be a hub for ASEAN businesses to link with its African compatriots. During the session, Mr. Barito was accompanied by Ambassadors and representatives from Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya, Tunisia, Nigeria, Sudan, Burkina Faso and Guinea.

Other participants who took active part in promoting Seychelles were Mr. Dougie Douglas, the Country Manager of Etihad / Air Seychelles, Mr. Hermawan Kertajaya, Asian Marketing Guru & founder of Markplus and Mr. Pui Sudarto, founder of Pulau Intan an Indonesian main construction company and property and resort developer.

The Seychelles Minister for Tourism and Culture, Alain St. Ange, is currently one of Africa’s representatives on the UNWTO Executive Council, after he was elected at the UNWTO General Assembly last year in Zimbabwe. Notably does another Seychellois, former CEO of the Seychelles Tourism Board Elsia Grandcourt, now hold the position as Director for Africa at the UNWTO headoffice in Madrid, giving the Seychelles a unique position, and responsibility, to help promote the entire continent. ***Seychelles, truly Another World.***

RENAMING OF THE CREOLE INSTITUTE MARK – THE START OF THE CREOLE NATION?

(Posted 07th January 2014)



'You had a great idea my friend, yes it is time for us Creole people to come together as one nation. Even though we are spread across much of the world, we are unique in our culture, our music, our poetry, our language and even our food. I think when Seychelles holds the 30th edition of the Festival Kreol we should come together as one Creole nation, see ourselves as that and present ourselves as that' said an official from the Ministry of Tourism and Culture when discussing the question asked at the opening media briefing of 28th edition of the Festival Kreol *'Why is there no Creole Nation yet'*.

The question was asked at the opening media briefing at Eden Island, just outside Victoria by yours truly, and seemingly baffled a few in the audience and on the podium, but true to form did Seychelles' Minister for Tourism and Culture, Alain St. Ange, make an immediate recovery when he agreed that indeed, there was no Creole nation as yet but then, perhaps there could be one day.

A significant step was taken towards that end yesterday when it was announced that the Creole Institute in the Seychelles will be renamed this coming weekend as *'Lenstiti Kreol Enternasyonal'* – the International Creole Institute. The institution, long renowned and respected for promoting the use of the Kreol language in prosa and poetry, as well as daily life, will receive a new direction and focus, to serve not only the Seychellois Creole community, or those of neighbouring Indian Ocean islands and in particular the Ile de la Reunion, but extend as far as Haiti, Martinique, Grenada, Guadeloupe, the Dominican Republic, French Guiana, St. Lucia, St. Thomas, Trinidad and other Caribbean islands where Creole people live today and speak their own dialect of Creole. The geographical spread goes as far even as Louisiana which has an equally long tradition of being the home of Creole people.

Bringing them all together, with the understanding of being one Creole nation of many locations around the world, united by language, poetry, music, food and culture, will probably be the most significant achievement the Seychelles can trigger, as they move towards the 30th anniversary of their Festival Kreol in October 2015, when the world of the Creoles celebrates the International Creole Day on the 28th of October.



The commemorative plaque at the Institute shows that it was launched on 26th October 1989 and the transformation from a purely Seychellois organization to a global focal point for Creole people will no doubt go down in the history books as a watershed event.

A delegation from Reunion will join officials from the Ministry of Tourism and Culture this weekend to celebrate and launch the change of name and purpose, and the eyes of Creole people from around the world will no doubt all look to the Seychelles, where the first fledgling steps will be taken towards the Creole Nation.

The brief of the renamed institute will extend from cultural, linguistic, scientific, educational, and sporting to economic development and cooperation. *'The newly acquired status will position the International Creole Institute as an extended arm of the Seychelles Creole Institute with the purpose of furthering the international dimension of its general mission based on the principles of promoting and of developing the Creole, the Seychelles maternal language'* said a media release received from Victoria overnight, underscoring what has been said here earlier on.

The creation of "Lenstiti Kreol Enternasyonal" was one among several projects of cooperation proposed during a high level meeting in July 2013 between the Seychelles delegation which was on official mission in La Reunion and

headed by President James Michel and top officials from Reunion Island, represented by Didier Robert, President of Regional Council and Nassimah Dindar, President of General Council of the island.

On 28th October last year, with the Festival Kreol in full swing in Victoria, a Memorandum of Understanding stating the intention to launch the International Creole Institute on 10th January 2014 was signed between Seychelles and La Reunion to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Indian Ocean Commission.

The unveiling of the plaque this weekend will also set the ball rolling for the institute to embark on the launching of a regional literacy competition, the '**Prix Antoine Abel**'. The competition will be tabled to the Indian Ocean Commission and International Organisation of Francophonie (OIF) for their respective approvals and endorsements. The thought has occurred and was validated by a number of Creole friends made in the Seychelles and on Reunion, and from further abroad during the last edition of the Festival Kreol in October last year on the Seychelles' island of Mahe, that the Creoles might be the true cosmopolitans of this world, and only need a catalyst, a trigger event to being to understand themselves as a nation of people with similar cultural traits and many other commonalities.



(Scenes at the Clock Tower in the heart of Victoria last October as crowds joined the performing troupes in dancing, singing and celebrating being Creole)

It is hoped, and much expected, that the transformation of the Creole Institute on Mahe will be that trigger event, that catalyst, to set the march in motion towards Creole people from around the world starting to perceive themselves as THE CREOLE NATION.

NEXT UP IN THE SEYCHELLES - THE ECO FRIENDLY MARATHON

(Posted 06th January 2014)

The poster for the Seychelles Eco-friendly Marathon features a scenic view of a beach and a large rock formation. A colorful logo with the text "seychelles eco-friendly marathon" is positioned in the upper right. Below the image is a white box containing the following information:

GENERAL INFORMATION www.seychelles-marathon.com

DATE & TIME Sunday 23rd February 2014

VENUE Beau Vallon Beach, Mahé, Seychelles

ENTRIES Marathon / Half marathon / 10 km Fun Run / 5 km Fun Run / 10 km Walking / Marathon Relay

QUALIFICATIONS Marathon competitors should be 18 years old or older on the race day. For half marathon, runners must be at least 16 years old on the race day.

REGISTRATION Apply through Seychelles Eco-friendly Marathon official website at www.seychelles-marathon.com or download the application form and send via email to highviewports@seychelles.sc

DEADLINE to the Registration (by 31st January 2014)
(Seychelles National Sports Council +248 467 12 98)

Marathon – EUR 45 / Half marathon – EUR 30 / Fun Run (10 km) – EUR 20 / Fun Run (5 km) – EUR 10 / Fun Walking (10 km) – EUR 5

ENTREE FEE

WINNERS' PRIZE Air Seychelles Round-trip ticket, Accommodation in Seychelles, Winner's Trophy, Medal, Certificate, T-shirt, Cash prize (USD 500)

Visitors who want to combine a trip to the paradise archipelago of the Seychelles with some active sports event, mark the 23rd of February in your calendar as that is the day the annual Seychelles Marathon is being run on the main island of Mahe. More details can be sourced via www.seychelles-marathon.com/Introduction/Greetings.asp With very nominal entry fees for the various races, a full and a half marathon, a 10 and 5 kilometre 'fun run' and a 10 kilometre 'fun walk' this is the Seychelles' most widely known land based sporting event, alongside the Seychelles Regatta which sails across the azure waters of the archipelago.

A full calendar of major festivals and events, cultural, music, food, international friendship weeks and sports can be accessed through the tourism board's main website www.seychelles.travel which also offers an insight into the great variety of accommodation facilities available, information on terrestrial and marine national parks and reserves and a broad insight into life on the archipelago.

The Seychelles is connected to the wider world by Air Seychelles and their partners Etihad, via Abu Dhabi to Hong Kong and soon Paris again, and offer direct flights to Mauritius and Johannesburg. Emirates, with 12 flights a week, brings the world to Mahe with one stop in Dubai and Kenya Airways now flies 4 times a week to the Seychelles, connecting Africa to the archipelago. *Seychelles*, truly *Another World*.

SEYCHELLES RECORDS DOUBLY DIGIT TOURISM GROWTH IN 2013

(Posted 06th January 2013)



The Central Bank in Victoria, the Seychelles' capital, has today confirmed that the archipelago has in 2013 earned 343.6 million US Dollars from tourism revenues, up by 11 percent from the previous record breaking year of 2012. Tourism arrivals by midnight 31st December 2013 were quoted as an equally record breaking number, 230,272 or up by 10.7 percent on a year by year basis according to figures released at the same time by the Seychelles National Bureau of Statistics.

Speaking after the figures were released, Minister Alain St. Ange, the Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture said that he was extending his congratulations to the Seychelles Tourism Board for a job well done and then went on to say: *'The strategy in place for marketing Seychelles was working. The annual Marketing Meeting where the industry's Private sector and the Government sit together to plan the year ahead was bringing the results we all wanted and expected. The net has again been dragged to the beach at Beau Vallon and it was full of fish for those interested to come out and collect their share. As a country we are often confused with regards to the yield derived from tourism. Government does not set hotel rates, this is done by the respective establishments and they charge depending on what they feel they can charge when faced by competition, not here but in the region and in the world at large. We have to work to reinvest, to upgrade so as to get a better rate, yes, but at the same time we need to think outside the box and get more activities and facilities for our visitors to use and appreciate. We need to provide more for them to do so they are able to spend. The State will be proactive facilitators, but it is the private sector that now needs to grab opportunities that are up for grab and in so doing increase the country's yield from tourism'*.

When setting targets for 2013 a year ago, the archipelago's tourism gurus were cautious in their estimates, projecting a growth of about 4 percent over 2012, but as the year went on it became evident that these projections would be outpaced by strong demand for the Seychelles, boosted by an extraordinary campaign around the world where the islands are today known as one of the world's most desirable destinations, stimulating demand and adding over 22,000 visitors to the previous arrival record set in 2012.

Constant engagement with the global travel media, and regular high ranking sales and marketing missions to existing, emerging and new markets, supported by national airline Air Seychelles and their partner Etihad, and of course Emirates, which flies 12 times a week to Mahe, have made this possible.

Wrote another source only moments after the results were published and sent to this correspondent: *'I think Seychelles has done a remarkable job to set new revenue and arrival records at the end of last year. Expectations are high that this trend continues in 2014 and the following years. But as the minister said, this is not the time to sit back and rest on our laurels. This is the time to be more determined than ever before to do better. The reorganization of the tourism public sector, the establishment of a professional events agency, the merging under one roof of culture and tourism related departments and bodies, will allow STB to concentrate on their main*

function, marketing. All other functions will in one way or another support this. STB will this year go to all the key trade fairs but over and above do sales missions together with our national airline and other airlines to grow traffic. Our calendar of events now includes many different kinds of festivals and our membership in the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands organization will also help to promote our events but also the events of our partner islands. Our No Visa policy will continue, our doors are open for people from around the world but I specially mention our fellow Africans from the mainland, who do not need to go through a great deal of bureaucracy to visit Mahe, Praslin, La Digue and the other islands. We will have new sales collaterals, a new destination DVD is coming out and we will continue to work with airlines, tour operators, travel agents and of course the media to continue what you always call our juggernaut'.

Congratulations to the entire Seychelles tourism industry, public and private sector, for these astonishing results and to the Central Bank of Seychelles and the National Bureau of Statistics for excelling and producing these figures within days of ending 2013, something only a very few other countries are able to do. Watch this space for breaking and regular news from the tourism sectors of the Indian Ocean islands.