

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



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Second edition June 2013

East Africa News

EMIRATES LAUNCHES SUMMER FARES AND NAMES ZURICH AS NEXT A380 DESTINATION

(Posted 06th June 2013)



Emirates, Dubai's award winning airline, has just named Zurich as their next Airbus A380 destination, making the prospect of travelling to Switzerland's banking city even more attractive.

The service will start in January 2014, still a while away, even though Emirates will until then continue to serve one of the world's foremost banking hubs with double daily flights on B777-300ER aircraft.

Meanwhile has the airline also hit the East African market with fares as low as US Dollars 600 return, taxes included, to Dubai during the upcoming hot summer months, with equally hot deals on offer in the many malls across the metropolis – all fully airconditioned of course to make shopping a pleasure.

The offer dubbed '**Hello Dubai**' runs until August 4th, 2013 and covers a round trip economy fare from Nairobi to Dubai and three -night accommodation on bed and breakfast basis. Other East African destinations will have similar packages on sale with immediate effect.

'Dubai has been a favourite destination for Kenyan holiday-makers as well as business travellers over the years' said Emirates Vice President for East Africa Khalid Bel Jaflah before adding: *'The present offer is an opportunity for our valued Kenyan clients to experience Dubai at a very competitive rate whilst enjoying Emirates' award winning product and service. Our 'Hello Dubai' campaign has been designed to allow our customers to explore this multi-faceted tourist destination which has something to offer every type of traveller, without breaking their wallets'*.

With flights on Emirates, packages are tailored to include a full range of hotels in the city, in the desert or on the beach and also include other services such as meet-and-assist in Dubai, hotel airport transfers, buffet breakfast, taxes and service charges, amongst others. From iconic landmark hotels such the Burj Al Arab to a wide range of three star and four star hotel packages, visitors to Dubai can avail of a variety of attractive holiday offers.

Known as a city of contrasts, a city of superlatives and a city which truly never sleeps – from futuristic architecture to vibrant traditional culture and from world class tourism attractions like indoor skiing to outdoor waterparks to top rated restaurants, though traditional eating places and tasty take aways too are able to generate culinary sensations, Dubai is a place that caters to all types of travel. Offering everything a visitor could dream of - views from the

world's tallest tower, shopping at some of the largest malls in the region or dining options which will spoil anyone for choice – a trip to Dubai is a must for families, friends and individuals. Emirates flies double daily to Nairobi and to Dar es Salaam and daily to Entebbe. Time to travel, time to fly, time to go with Emirates and enjoy some extraordinary travel bargains this summer.

FASTJET TAKES AIM AT AUDITORS KPMG

(Posted 05th June 2013)



It took just a few hours until FastJet's mouth pieces took aim at their own auditors, global market giant KPMG, which in their report for the period of 18 months ending 31st December 2012 painted a bleak pictures about the financial status of the UK based company.

As published in the highly respected *Routes News* earlier today, a company spokesperson apparently told them that no matter what the auditors had put in their report, it failed to reflect the *true prospects* of the airline.

The full text of the *Routes News* text is published here:

Bleak conclusions from auditor KPMG are being contested by the aspiring pan-Africa low-cost carrier.

On Friday, auditor KPMG said there was "significant doubt" the company could continue to trade after the airline lost \$56m (£37m) over the 18 months to December 31, 2012.

But a spokesperson for the airline told Routes News that the results fail to reflect the carrier's true prospects.

In its most recent expansion, fastjet has opened an operation in South Africa, which is set to fly Johannesburg–Cape Town from early July.

This week, it was also reported that the carrier's subsidiary Fly540 Ghana has secured rights to fly to Nigeria.

In defence of the airline, the spokesperson told Routes News that fastjet had only started flying a month before the close of the audit period at year-end.

"Therefore the results are extremely historic and not relevant to the performance of fastjet," said the spokesperson.

"The losses are attributed to Fly540, where the fastjet board has had to make significant impairments to goodwill and assets acquired. The board is taking action to improve Fly540 performance whilst services continue under that brand."

Fastjet carried almost 800,000 passengers in the year to March 2012, a 50% rise on 2011, with 99.2% of flights on-time, said the spokesperson.

Fastjet has also secured £15.7m (\$24.1) to fund expansion and is now Africa's second most 'liked' airline on Facebook, the spokesperson added.

A Kampala based top manager with rival audit firm PriceWaterHouseCooper, when consulted on the style and format of the response above, had this to say on condition of anonymity: *'I have not seen that report, but one can assume that those accounts were qualified. There is a process to deal with qualified accounts and it is up to the Directors of the company, the true custodians of any limited liability company, to sit down and digest such findings. If I am to qualify accounts, my team and I have a meeting with the clients to discuss remedies but it is ultimately the directors who have to face the shareholders in an AGM and explain how the accounts failed to get a clean bill of health. To have a spokesperson of the company to make public statements of the sort you mailed to me is highly unusual and only muddies the waters even more. Such staff should be put on a tight leash because financiers and banks also read such statements and from what I read, this will not be helping the company to resolve the underlying issues'.*

There you are, this is what others say about FastJet. Watch this space for breaking and regular news from Eastern Africa's clearly exciting aviation sector.

FASTJET IN REPORTED 56 MILLION US DOLLAR LOSS

(Posted 05th June 2013)



Disquieting news are making the rounds in East Africa's aviation observer circles, that FastJet has reportedly suffered a massive 56 million US Dollar loss for their financial year, wiping out much of the share and venture capital sunk into the '*fly cheap dream turned nightmare*' for the shareholders.

While fat cat management continues to earn huge wages, they are thought to be largely responsible for some of the major loss making factors, such as a bungled due diligence with Fly 540 which ended the two companies in a costly court battle, costly in terms of not just legal fees but the various delays then suffered to get into the more lucrative Kenyan market. Mistakes were also made in Tanzania, the only country where the company is presently flying, when shortly after launching two additional routes the plug was pulled from flights between JRO and ZNZ and JRO and MWZ. While no imminent departures of senior personnel have been reported at this stage, it is entirely plausible that the board of the company will take action against those thought primarily responsible for the financial losses, which should they continue into another year, may well spell even deeper trouble for the investments made so far. The launch of flight operations in South Africa has also been pushed back to at least mid 2013, reportedly to allow the airline '*to get ready*' though the aviation grapevine from further down south equally, like in East Africa, suggests a range of other issues being responsible for the postponement of the startup. LCC's in South Africa like Kulula and Mango, among others, have meanwhile put up their own defenses against the upstart and are ready to counteract whatever FastJet may throw at the market.

Yet, if anything to go by, the losses reportedly incurred in year one of operations in Tanzania, do not seem to deter current management from continuing their strategy which a regular aviation observer from Dar es Salaam described as '*reckless in terms of pricing, reckless in terms of how they promote by not stating the full cost of the ticket and, if the news about the 50+ million US Dollar losses is anything to go by, reckless in financial terms too*'.

Ouch comes to mind as the bean counters at FastJet are now scratching their heads of how to best plug the holes these losses made in the balance sheets. Watch this space for more twists in the tail of this saga.

Uganda News

4G LTE ARRIVES IN UGANDA

(Posted 07th June 2013)



Smile Communications yesterday evening launched Uganda's fastest broadband network, offering a state of the art 4G LTE connection in and around Kampala. According to company sources, a rollout into key towns across the country is expected just as soon as a strong foothold has been established in the capital Kampala and the wider metropolitan area. Smile, according to the same source, has opted for the mast sharing approach, sparing themselves that major added investment and is literally renting mast space, where required, from other providers or dedicated mast owners like Eaton Towers, which recently purchased all masts from Orange Uganda and now subleases space for transmission gadgets to make better use of their assets.

Smile is using the latest technology commercially available on the market, which allows for the fastest speeds available today in Uganda. The nearest rivals are according to the Executive Director of the Uganda Communications Commission, who spoke at the launch, confined to half that speed at best while other internet providers are now left trailing in the wake of Smile with fractional speeds through USB modems or conventional

routers. This development puts Uganda, alongside other Smile operations in such countries like South Africa and Nigeria, into the global top league of internet speeds. Needless to mention has this correspondent, long suffering from the empty promises and regular network outages of literally all other ISP's in Uganda, tossed his USB modems into the bin and installed a Smile router, to improve productivity and response times and stay connected around the clock. **Powered by Smile – Now You Can**, a befitting slogan already tested for the past few days and found as true as corporate commitments come. Watch this space for regular and breaking news from Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands.

MABIRA CONTROVERSY OVERSHADOWS WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY IN UGANDA

(Posted 06th June 2013)



Uganda's Member of Parliament for the Environment, as he is often referred to, Hon. Ken Lukyamuzi, held a press briefing yesterday announcing that he will not attend the World Environment Day celebrations in Kampala to manifest his opposition against the ongoing uncertainty of the future of Mabira Forest.

While the Environment State Minister Hon. Flavia Munaaba launched a tree planting campaign in Mabira last week, with the NFA and Libya Oil Uganda Ltd. as key partners, she stated that government would want to partner with civil society organizations, the corporate sector and conservation groups to restore degraded and encroached sections of Mabira Forest, which has since 2007 been in the cross hairs of the conservation fraternity after plans became known that a quarter of this unique rainforest was to be converted into sugar plantations for the Mehta Group. The news at the time prompted public protests which ended in the death of people but forced government to back off, for a while at least. Last year the same minister attempted to show the media sections of the forest which were earmarked for the giveaway as a result of 'degradation' but the attempt failed miserably when no degraded areas could be found, nipping that attempt to justify a conversion into a sugar plantation firmly in the bud.

Lawyers for the '**Save Mabira**' movement point to government's legal inability to touch the forest, as it agreed with the World Bank to preserve Mabira for eternity in an offset deal, which saw the bank co-finance the Bujagali Hydro Electric Plant, which also included to leave Kalagala Falls further downstream alone and not build another power station there. One legal advisor to the '**Save Mabira**' campaign, on condition of anonymity, had this to say: ***'The Government of Uganda committed to retain Mabira Forest as a crucial water tower and Kalagala Falls as a site of exceptional natural beauty for tourism purposes. Mzee [reference to President Museveni] might have forgotten that when he promised to give Mehta that land. Meanwhile have many other options been floated how SCoul [Sugar Corporation of Uganda Limited] can lease land from the Buganda Kingdom or engage with outgrowers who are willing to grow sugar cane for them on their own land. None of these options have been seriously explored however. The sentiments were rekindled when Mzee at Kyankwanzi [during a ruling party retreat earlier this year] again made reference that he still wanted to give a quarter of the forest away. I do not know who advises him but the legal situation has not changed. Additionally has our Constitutional Court recently ruled in a similar case of Nyakana vs. NEMA, that the lease granted for land reserved for protection was null and void. This ruling was based on Article 237 of the Constitution of Uganda, which is the supreme law of the country. Any attempt to dissect Mabira will end in the same court and the precedent has now been set with this ruling which has not been appealed and therefore stands like a law itself. Perhaps it is time to once and for all close that chapter about giving part of Mabira away'***.

Uganda has been suffering from forest degradation, forest invasions – often encouraged by local politicians seeking to garner favours with voters – and illegal cutting down of mature hard wood tree for timber, a trend which has become increasingly unsustainable and which even government experts now say needs to be halted and reversed. However, unlike in neighbouring Rwanda, where re-forestation is high on the government agenda and enjoys the thumbs up from the highest office in that land, in Uganda no such measures have been taken as yet. In Rwanda, which as the time of the genocide saw forest cover reduced to around 18 percent, has as a result of sustained efforts to restore and protect forests, the country's forest cover returned to around 24 percent over the past years and is due to reach a target of 30 percent by 2020. President Paul Kagame, a few months ago, answered a specific question by this correspondent over his government's forestry policy and why Rwanda is not making a stronger point to tell fellow heads of state in the EAC to equally embrace the groundbreaking policies of environmental protection and re-

forestation introduced and implemented by Rwanda. While beaming over the recognition of his own country's exemplary efforts in this field, he nevertheless passed the buck on to his colleagues to do the right thing in their own backyard, though it has since become known that Rwanda's officials working on environmental issues on the EAC platform, are indeed strongly promoting the adoption of their own policies by other member states of the East African Community.

Meanwhile at home though have environmental groups and conservationists raised serious doubts on the State Minister's statements, doubting the sincerity of treeplanting efforts until the Mabira giveaway has not been firmly put to rest. *'Of course we participate in tree planting. This is what we believe in. Even if we have doubts about the sincerity of such activities when government is involved, we will participate. If only government could recognize that Mabira is part of the offset agreed with the World Bank and leave it finally alone. We appreciate how you draw parallels with Rwanda and highlight how Nyungwe Forest or Gishwati Forest are protected and turned into a sustainable tourism resource. We have a good example in Uganda. Kibaale Forest is now very popular with tourists visiting the chimpanzees or just hike across the forest. Mabira, which is so much closer to Kampala and has a first class lodge [Geolodges Africa's RainForest Lodge] can become a weekend retreat for Kampala residents. There are cycling routes, hiking routes and a great biodiversity of flora and fauna. I remember when you floated the idea 10 or more years ago to put up a canopy walk. I think it is still a viable idea and maybe National Forest Authority should either do it alone or together with a development partner and then concession it out or run it themselves. It would be a huge attraction for foreign tourists. They would appreciate our forests even more and those forests could earn a steady stream of income. We would reinforce our global standing as a green eco-friendly destination and draw even more tourists here. But first, let there be clarity on government's position about Mabira. They cannot always profess one thing and then do another when it comes to Mabira. No sugar plantations for Mabira and while I am at it, no golf courses in our national parks either'* contributed another regular source, who, what else, insisted on anonymity.

Meanwhile has Lukyamuzi and other like minded legislators claimed to be aware of ongoing encroachment and illegal logging, suggesting complicity in these activities and inferring ulterior motives, when justifying their proposed absence from the national celebrations of UNEP's World Environment Day.

Let there be action following the good words adds this correspondent, action of the right kind, action to preserve and protect our environment for future generation that they still have a Uganda to live in we can all be proud of.

Links to a few other articles about Mabira with more found through the search function on my blog

www.wolfganghthome.wordpress.com:

<http://wolfganghthome.wordpress.com/2012/06/12/mabira-the-endangered-forest-yet-full-of-promise-and-opportunities/> - <http://wolfganghthome.wordpress.com/2013/03/23/mabira-forest-the-silent-assault-continues/> - <http://wolfganghthome.wordpress.com/2013/01/15/mabira-must-not-die/>

ROUTES AFRICA REPORTS KEEN INTEREST AMONG TOP AIRLINES AND AVIATION ORGANS

(Posted 02nd June 2013)



Uganda's Minister for Tourism Maria Mutagamba will formally open the Routes Africa 2013 meeting, which will bring together leading airlines, airports, tourism authorities and related services in the lake side resort of Munyonyo between July 07 – 09.

Keynote speaker is Dr. Titus Naikuni, CEO and Group Managing Director of Kenya Airways, one of the top carriers from within Africa to attend the event. Others are Ethiopian Airlines, South African Airways, Egypt Air as well as fast growing RwandAir, among some 30 or so airlines confirmed to attend from across the continent.

From further abroad will Brussels Airlines and Etihad be in Uganda for the event, as will be United Airlines from the US, Vueling from Spain, Mango from South Africa and Nasair / Saudi Arabia.

More than 250 delegates are expected to meet for 2 days of intense discussions and networking in an event, which has gained greater prominence year after year, and which during last year's conference in the Seychelles truly gained global attention. Notably will the Seychelles' Minister for Tourism and Culture, Alain St. Ange, be one of the main speakers at the event, from where fresh ideas about improved air links within and to Africa will be discussed. Watch this space for live reports. Meanwhile, visit www.routesonline.com and follow @routesonline and @TheHUBRoutes on Twitter for regular updates.

MARTY'S DAY BRINGS THOUSANDS OF RELIGIOUS TOURISTS TO UGANDA

(Posted 02nd June 2013)



They came by air, they came by bus, they came by car and they came by foot, in their thousands, to attend the annual Martyr's Day celebrations at the Namugongo Shrine outside the Ugandan capital of Kampala.

As every year, Catholic faithful with a close affinity to the celebration of the Ugandan Martyr's, who were made Saints of the Church by Pope Paul VI during his visit to the country in October 1964, come from all over Africa and in fact around the world to Uganda to pray and pay tribute to their favourite saints. Hundreds of them in fact walk to the venue, from within Uganda and as far as Tanzania, the journey often taking weeks to complete.

Visitor numbers from abroad are swelling year after year as religious pilgrimages have been turned into religiously motivated travels by the marketers of the Uganda Tourism Board, and the private sector. Such tours are now a growing market segment which originally sprang from the Christian's pilgrimages to Rome, and to the Holy Land, the Hindu pilgrimages across India and the Islamic duty to attend Haj or perform Umrah visits to Mecca and Medina. In past days, few would know of the Ugandan martyrs who got burned alive on the 03rd of June 1886, but with the onset of the new media, the social media, the instant global news business and the need to diversify the tourism attractions beyond the gorillas, it was only a matter of time before this event had become a major attraction to showcase to visitors.

This Monday will be a public holiday in Uganda, celebrated ever since Pope Paul VI's proclamation of sainthood for the 22 Catholics among the victims of Kabaka Mwanga II. For those from abroad, it is a warm welcome from us all and enjoy your time in the *Pearl of Africa*.

RHINO NUMBER 13 'ARRIVES' AT ZIWA RHINO SANCTUARY

(Posted 01st June 2013)



Breaking news just in from the Rhino Fund Uganda confirms that another rhino baby was born on the Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary overnight. Nandi, donated some years ago by the Disney Animal Kingdom in Florida to the Rhino Fund Uganda, now had her third baby since she arrived at the sanctuary. The father is once again Taleo, clearly the dominant bull on the conservancy, who originally came from the Solio Rhino Sanctuary in Kenya with the first group of four, purchased by RFU when the sanctuary was officially opened. The pair first had Obama, named after the American president who also has a Kenyan father and an American mother, in June 2009 before Malaika arrived then in June 2011.

Considering a gestation period of about 16 months, the reproductive rate of rhinos at the Ziwa Sanctuary arguably has set new speed records, as the other two female rhinos too are in the family way again, with Kori expected to deliver in December this year and Bella in March next year. This goes to show that the concept of rhino reintroduction and the establishment of a breeding sanctuary, as conceived by Ray Victorine and put into action by Yvonne Verkaik, Uganda's erstwhile rhino lady, was spot on and the development partners and donors, who generously donated to the Fund in cash and kind, will be more than pleased to hear this latest success story from Ziwa. Of the other two adult females, Kori gave birth to Justice and Laloyo while Bella mothered Augustu and Donna. Apart from the confirmation of the birth, the 7th under the auspices of the Rhino Fund Uganda's dedicated team of wardens, rangers, carers and veterinarians, it is presently unknown what gender the newborn rhino baby is, until the mother will allow her regular ranger escorts to come nearer and ascertain if Ziwa, as it is hoped for, has

given birth to another rhino girl or another rhino boy. **(It was since then confirmed that the new born rhino is a 'girl')**

Naming the rhino will very likely go to the 'highest bidder', either an individual or a company with keen interest in conservation, who will be able to have clearly defined publicity rights, in order to raise much needed funds for the ever escalating cost of caring for the rhinos and in particular protecting them with high tech equipment for surveillance and monitoring.



(Sign and rhino sculptures, showing visitors the way at Nakitoma towards the Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary)

The sanctuary is now a 'must visit' location for expatriates and foreign tourists coming to Uganda, and is included on literally all safari itineraries going to or coming from Murchisons Falls National Park. Entrance into the sanctuary, from daybreak until 18.00 hrs, is free though access to the rhinos, normally undertaken on foot with a team of rangers in close attendance, requires prebooking and payment of a fee at the RFU offices on the sanctuary. Ziwa now has two accommodation units on the conservancy, the Ziwa Rhino Lodge next to the main sanctuary offices which offers a fully fledged restaurant, a camp ground, back packers accommodation and a guest house with three bedrooms and one shared bathroom, ideal for families, while the upmarket Amuka Safari Lodge, a little further away, offers guests more amenities such as a swimming pool, where they can relax after hiking across the sanctuary in search of the prized rhinos.

Ziwa is the ONLY place in Uganda where rhinos can be seen roaming the wild, although the Rhino Fund also brought in the two rhinos kept at the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre in Entebbe, which sadly though have failed to reproduce until now. Congratulations to Angie and her team at Ziwa on this magnificent achievement.

Kenya News

KENYA AIRWAYS MOVING TOWARDS NEXT NEW AIRCRAFT ORDER

(Posted 07th June 2013)



A usually well informed source close to Kenya Airways has given the clearest indication yet that **The Pride of Africa** is set to soon place an order for more B 737-700/800NG aircraft, as their older B737-300 models are progressively leaving the passenger fleet to undergo conversion into cargo aircraft.

While the Embraer E190 has by and large replaced the Boeings from the domestic and regional routes and even medium distance African routes, the B737-800NG is needed for routes with higher passenger numbers, where the E190 is too small to make a regular appearance.

While a current order of Embraer jets continues to be delivered, next in line will therefore be another order of what might be as many as 8 B737-700/800NG's to allow the projected growth in destinations and frequencies across Africa to be backed up by sufficient assets.

The airline's strategic **Plan Mawingo** foresees a doubling of the present fleet by 2016 and again nearly doubling the fleet size to about 120 aircraft, freighters included, by 2021/2 financial year.

Shown below is the projected fleet increase by Kenya Airways over the coming years to allow for a better understanding where KQ is heading:

Passenger Fleet Requirement

FY	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
777-300ER				1	2	2	3	4	4	4	4
777-200LR					1	2	2	3	4	4	4
777-200ER	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
787-9								3	4	5	6
787-8				2	7	12	16	16	18	23	26
767	6	6	6	6	4						
737-8	5	5	5	10	14	16	16	17	18	18	18
737-7	4	4	4	7	10	10	10	10	11	11	11
737-3	6	6	4	2							
E190	1	4	12	14	15	19	22	25	27	29	31
E170	5	5	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Pax Total	31	34	40	50	60	68	76	85	93	101	107
	5	3	6	10	10	8	8	9	8	8	6
Fleet Type	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Wide body	10	10	10	13	18	20	25	30	34	40	44
Narrow body	21	24	30	37	42	48	51	55	59	61	63
Total	31	34	40	50	60	68	76	85	93	101	107
%Share	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Wide body	32%	29%	25%	26%	30%	29%	33%	35%	37%	40%	41%
Narrow body	68%	71%	75%	74%	70%	71%	67%	65%	63%	60%	59%

7

MOMBASA AND COAST TOURIST ASSOCIATION RE-ELECTS MOHAMMED HERSI UNOPPOSED

(Posted 07th June 2013)



News just in from Mombasa confirm that Mohammed Hersi, Regional General Manager Coast for Sarova Hotels in charge of the Whitesands Resort and Spa and the Taita Hills and Salt Lick lodges, was last evening re-elected unopposed as Chairman of the Mombasa and Coast Tourist Association.

This all inclusive body for the tourism, hospitality, travel and aviation sector along the entire Kenyan coast, has in recent years come to the forefront of the tourism industry as an effective lobbying body, whose input and advice government now keenly seeks out.

Mohammed was first elected in 2011 after a spell as Vice Chairman and has since then proactively and very effectively represented the interests of his membership, vis a vis government but also in the private sector framework.

Present at the Annual General Meeting was the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism Ruth Solitei and the Mombasa County Government's tourism representative Antony Njaramba, underscoring the importance government officials now attach to MCTA events.

Mohammed gained nationwide exposure when leading a peaceful anti poaching demonstration in Mombasa, which eventually spread across the country and which galvanized public opinion against the menace.

Congratulations to Mohammed Hersi and all the best of success during the next two year term of office.

KTF'S AGATHA JUMA GETS ELECTED TO THE EAST AFRICAN BUSINESS COUNCIL BOARD

(Posted 04th June 2013)



The Chief Executive of the Kenya Tourism Federation, Mrs. Agatha Juma, was over the weekend elected to the Board of the East African Business Council in Arusha, the main private sector representative body at the level of the East African Community.

Her election signals the greater recognition of tourism as a key pillar of the East African economies, and a main contributor to FDI, job creation and foreign exchange earnings. From information at hand she is the only tourism representative on the board of the EABC from among the five member states of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. As a member of the Board of the East African Tourism Platform, East Africa's regional private sector umbrella organization for the national tourism associations and their membership at large, she is now uniquely positioned to help shape the EABC's way forward, vis a vis tourism, for the next one year, as all elected officials have a one year term of office. The chairmanship of the EABC is held for the next 12 months by Kenya's Vimal Shah, the CEO of regional oil and edible fats giant BIDCO who is also chairman of Kenya's Private Sector Alliance. The chair is a rotating position among member states to ensure equal opportunities for leadership for each country. Congratulations to Agatha Juma and all the best for the year ahead on the Board of the East African Business Council.

KENYA AIRPORT AUTHORITY BLAMED FOR MOMBASA FLIGHT CHAOS

(Posted 03rd June 2013)



The closure of the single runway at Mombasa's Moi International Airport for several hours yesterday morning, information received speaks of the time between 05.30 a.m. to at least 09.30 a.m., in other words for 4 hours, appears to have caught several airlines by surprise. Flights out of Mombasa were delayed and flights into Mombasa diverted, as aircraft approaching MBA were told that they could not land and had to seek alternative landing points while awaiting to complete their journeys later on. Flights from Nairobi to Mombasa in the early morning too were delayed, prompting passengers to complain about the affected airlines' alleged unreliability, only to later on learn that the fault lay with KAA.

The Moi International Airport manager, one Kangogo, was subject to ridicule when he, in a belated attempt to mitigate the damage done, tried to cite 'safety of passengers as their main concern.

No information could be received to confirm that a formal NOTAM, aka Notice to Airmen, a commonly used public information system informing airlines and cockpit crews of such closures, was in fact posted in advance as it should have been, though there are strong indications that if at all one was published it happened belatedly.

'Another shining example of KAA incompetence. How can flights enroute to Mombasa be told to divert? If that information had been published as it is required, well in advance, the airlines would have made other arrangements and informed passengers accordingly. Now we are being blamed for another mess created by KAA. I know of at least two flights which had to be diverted to Nairobi and Kilimanjaro. Now if they are from long

haul, that means the crews will run out of maximum permitted duty hours and might require a minimum rest time as dictated by their respective regulations. Such a thing means a long delay for passengers getting to their destination and those joining such flights in Mombasa would be delayed just as long. We have said it again and again, KAA needs to professionalize but you can see the result. They do not think with their brains and for sure do not respect airlines' ranted a regular aviation source from Nairobi when asked to comment on this latest mishap by KAA. Officials from affected airlines opted not to comment in time for this article being posted, their silence speaking volumes though as to what they think of their supposed partners KAA and their performance as custodians of Kenya's aviation infrastructure.

KAA has in recent times been under scrutiny over actions taken by their current and previous CEO's, namely the massive demolition of properties on allegedly disputed land, in the face of a court order preventing any such action, while also facing intense criticism over the ongoing delays in completion of Terminal 4 at JKIA in Nairobi, the rollout of the 650+ million US Dollars Project Greenfield, repeated past landing light failures in Nairobi and corruption allegations presently being investigated.

'Kenya's future as a tourist destination, Kenya's future as an exporting country for horticultural, flower, fish and meat exports depend almost entirely on functioning airports. Project Greenfield is due to expand our main airport in Nairobi with a second runway and literally doubling terminal capacity, even after T4 has been opened. This requires competent management of our aviation infrastructure but such events like yesterday continue to cast doubts over KAA's professionalism. From what I gather no one knew about the runway closure in Mombasa, for whatever reason that was done, maintenance or other, until it happened. This is a big failure in communications. Everyone has a mobile phone so calling this in to the airlines would have been a very simple thing but instead, they just close and let others face the music as they switch off their phones saying they have gone to church. Very bad behaviour!' said a tour operator from Mombasa who wrote in saying their company had to deal with upset passengers ready to leave from Kenya and only after check in being told that their inbound aircraft had been diverted due to these problems and in the cases of others, their flights could not take off until after 09.30 a.m. Watch this space for regular and breaking news from Eastern Africa's vibrant aviation scene.

KENYA'S PARLIAMENT PASSES EMERGENCY MEASURES AGAINST POACHING

(Posted 02nd June 2013)



Kenya's parliament, of late under intense scrutiny and attack by the electorate over their elaborate attempts to increase their salaries just weeks into their term of office, has for a change been receiving praise and kudos. Earlier in the week were emergency measures put into place, in line with President Uhuru Kenyatta's agenda to hunt down poachers and restore sanity in the wildlife sector, which saw significant deterrents being introduced.

Fines can now be dished out by magistrates and judges with poaching cases before them to the tune of 120,000 US Dollars, an rise by 2,500 percent compared to the laughable past regime, while jail terms are now reaching up to 15 years in prison, when found guilty.

In the past, smugglers caught at the country's airports, often got off with no jail time other than their pre-trial detention and paid a few hundred dollars in fines, something which will now change. *'A full review of the Wildlife Act is still ongoing but for now our magistrates have the tools they need to fine and jail poachers and smugglers. Up to now they have claimed the law does not allow them lengthy prison terms and heavy fines. That law has just changed. We now expect our judiciary to play their part in throwing the book at poachers, traders, financiers and smugglers and hand down stiff fines and long terms in prison. Any magistrate who will still let offenders found guilty off lightly, will be named and shamed and reported to the Judicial Review Commission for failing the country'* wrote a regular Nairobi based conservation source, when passing the information to this correspondent last night. Another source close to the Kenya Wildlife Service, which has just launched a nationwide crackdown on poachers and is in pursuit of some of the gangs, expressed hope that the new fines and prison terms will immediately act as a deterrent but added: *'when the first poachers go down with an 8 or 10 or even 15 year term, depending on the gravity of their offense and if they are repeat offenders, they will face the reality that their time is up. Once the first trader or financier has been slapped with a fine of 120,000 US Dollars, they will think twice to go back to*

that line of blood business. We will still expect however that when the main law is amended, it will provide for seizures and confiscation in addition to fines and jail terms. It is an economic crime these gangs commit and they need appropriate punishment when caught’.

Dr. Paula Kahumbu, the country director of Wildlife Direct, who just won a major victory in court against NEMA and KeNHA over the routing of the Southern Bypass together with her co-plaintiffs, was quoted as having said:

‘The passing of this bill is a huge victory, it is the strongest message from the Government of Kenya on the commitment to preserve our national heritage. MPs today voted for Kenya to restore her position as a global leader in wildlife conservation’.

For once full marks for Kenya’s MP’s for having reacted swiftly in passing emergency measures against poaching into law before a further escalation of the slaughter on wildlife could take even more elephant and rhino lives.

KENYA AIRWAYS EXPANDS CODESHARE WITH CHINA SOUTHERN

(Posted 02nd June 2013)



Sources close to Kenya Airways have confirmed that the airline has signed a revised and expanded codeshare agreement with fellow SkyTeam member China Southern.

The deal will become operational from 01st of August this year and will cover an expanded list of destinations for Kenya Airways passengers, who fly from or via Nairobi to Guangzhou. They can now seamlessly, with one ticket and baggage checked through – and miles earned too – continue to Australia’s key destinations like Perth, Sydney and Melbourne, but also the central Chinese city of Wuhan, which will be served on China Southern flights from Bangkok.

In turn will China Southern passengers be able to fly seamlessly via Nairobi to Lusaka, Lagos and Johannesburg, key destinations on the African continent.

The new codeshare agreement will give Kenya Airways leverage vis a vis other leading airlines on the continent, which at least in part operate to more destinations in the Far East compared to Kenya Airways present list of destinations, something now effectively addressed by the expanded agreement. *‘Others are launching to say Korea where we have been going in codeshare with Korean Air for a while now. True, we may not cover some destinations at this time with our own flights but that is what partner alliances are for. We supplement and complement each other to make sure that passenger loyalty is rewarded. If they choose to fly with KQ every SkyTeam member is ready to serve them too. Through fares will be as attractive as if we’d fly on our own and when we get more wide body aircraft from next year, more destinations can be opened especially in China and that region’* said the source in added information when passing the news. Kenya Airways’ CEO Dr. Titus Naikuni was additionally quoted to have said upon signing the new deal: *‘This will benefit our guests a great deal with the increase in flights, frequency and ease of connectivity to more destinations’*. Going places? Then go with *The Pride of Africa* to more and more places. Watch this space for regular and breaking news from Eastern Africa’s exciting and vibrant aviation sector.

Tanzania News

CHUMBE ISLAND CORAL PARK ONCE MORE GETS TRIPADVISOR’S TOP RATING

(Posted 05th June 2013)



Like in previous years has the Chumbe Island Coral Park once more been awarded by TripAdvisor with their coveted *‘Certificate of Excellence’* for consistently scoring the highest marks from visitors to this unique tourism attraction. For long ranked as undisputed number one attraction, out of 139 listed for Zanzibar – Chumbe Island is a

small coral island near Zanzibar's main island of Unguja – the owners and their team of dedicated staff have once more been rewarded with this global recognition, priceless really in terms of competitive advantages. Sibylle Riedmiller of Chumbe Island had this to say about their latest award: *'We are surprised ourselves that our quite strict ecological design and operations do have such a strong market, as the feedbacks show that our guests love the place for all the right reasons. Very encouraging for conservationists who see tourism mainly as a tool to finance conservation and sustainable development'*.

Chumbe Island Coral Park has for long been recognized globally as a unique, eco compliant and sustainable tourism development in harmony with the fragile marine and island environment, living proof that conservation and business can exist side by side and in fact complement each others' efforts. Founded in 1991, and ever since operated on the basis of sustainability and least impact of the lodge on the ecosystem of the otherwise uninhabited island, the owners have upgraded their operating systems to use latest knowledge and technology to reduce the lodge's carbon foot print and comply with best global practices.

The Rio Summit last year recognized Chumbe Island specifically and singled it out with a special recognition when Chumbe was highlighted in one of the key reports as follows: *'A noted example for PES (Payment for Ecosystem Services) within the context of coral reefs habitat is the private, non-profit Chumbe Island Coral Park Ltd (CHICOP) in Tanzania. The Government of Zanzibar established a protected area around the island and its fringing coral reef in 1994 and gave the management rights to CHICOP, which is responsible for implementing the CHICOP Management Plans 1995-2016'*. The respective mentions can be sources via the following web links:

http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res_pdfs/ga-66 and

http://www.unep.org/NairobiConvention/Information_Center

More information about Chumbe Island is available via www.chumbeisland.com

AIR TANZANIA ADDS TABORA TO NETWORK

(Posted 04th June 2013)



Last Saturday saw the return of Air Tanzania to Tabora, using the airline's Bombardier Q300 aircraft on the route. ATCL will serve the destination initially three times a week, twice nonstop from Dar es Salaam on Monday's and Saturdays' while the Thursday flight will route via Kigoma.

No other scheduled flights have been available between Dar, or any other airports in Tanzania for that matter, to Tabora, forcing wannabe air travelers to charter planes at substantially higher cost. Local aviation pundits have expressed their support for ATCL flying to such destinations on the domestic market, where no competition exists at present, as they can both fulfill their public mandate to offer air transport to the more remote parts of the country while charging fares which can make ends meet financially. *'Instead of just thinking jet aircraft and eyeing places like Nairobi or Entebbe, they should seriously consider getting more turboprop aircraft and serve our secondary airports which are too small to allow jets to land. Still, there will be traffic as business people like to get from A to B faster than by bus or car. On many such routes there will be perhaps only one competitor and if TCAA sets realistic fare levels, even if there are two airlines flying they will still make money'* said a regular aviation source from Dar es Salaam. Happy landings to crews and passengers of Air Tanzania as Tabora is once again 'connected' by scheduled air services to the rest of the country and the rest of the world.

Rwanda News

PROTEA SIGNS FIRST PROPERTY IN RWANDA

(Posted 06th June 2013)



PROTEA HOTELS

Protea Hotels have announced that they will later this year open a 25 bedroom hotel in a suburb of Kigali, their first ever in Rwanda, the *Land of a Thousand Hills*. Included in the rooms will be up to 8 two bedroom units with the rest being standard Protea rooms as found across their other hotels.

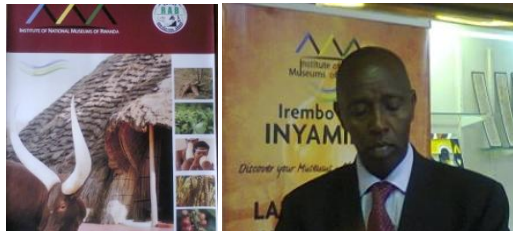
A restaurant, a gym but no fully fledged Spa and a swimmingpool will be on offer for clients, as will two small conference rooms.

Protea will, after regional giant Serena Hotels, and the upcoming Marriot only be the third international hotel group represented in Rwanda, though Dubaiworld's Istihmar and Kenya's Governors Camp both own properties on the safari circuit. Istihmar's Nyungwe Forest Lodge is part of the Shamwari Collection while the Sabinyo Gorilla Camp of Governors is self managed.

The arrival of Protea will add further '*oomph*' to Rwanda's marketing efforts as the South African hotel management company will undoubtedly have to hard sell their new property, complementing the efforts of RDB's generic marketing of the country. No rates are available as yet nor has a firm opening date so watch this space for future updates.

RWANDA'S MUSEUMS – INSIGHTS FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

(Posted 05th June 2013)



(Making a point with a passion – INMR Director General Alphonse B. Umuliisa)

'Discover your museums, Cherish your heritage' are the opening words on the INMR's website, written by the Director General of the Institute of the National Museums of Rwanda Alphonse Umuliisa. He goes on to state:

'Welcome to the National Institute of Rwanda Museums and heritage sites. I am delighted that you have chosen to visit our website and hope that you will find much to enjoy and reflect on whilst you browse through and have an opportunity of visiting our heritage sites as altogether we promote culture tourism.'

The subject of our institute is about the unique culture of the Rwandan people, the land of a thousand hills and a million smiles, and a country that touches everyone in one way or another, whether you live in Rwanda or are just visiting. There are many stories for Rwandans, but you may find yours too.

The landscape that the Institute of Museums and heritage sites as a whole inhabits is continuously changing. It has been over 24 years since the first museum (Ethnographic museum in Huye), was introduced and over the past couple of years has seen some exciting changes. The new millennium has seen various developmental changes within the institute. To date the portfolio now consists of 5 museums and over 80 heritage sites across the whole country. The Institute of Rwanda Museums and Heritage sites are a big attraction which serves as a learning process set in a lively atmosphere. For example, National Harvest Day has been reintroduced; it is a day that highlights and showcases the traditions and customs of Rwanda pre 1925, always in appreciation of the country's harvest'.

When meeting Alphonse during a recent repeat visit to Huye, formerly known as Butare, I had just come from the King's Palace Museum in Nyanza, which now forms an integral part of the string of museums and monuments under the care of INMR. He was clearly passionate as he discussed my experience there and then explained his plans and how '*visiting our museums must be fun, must be enjoyed*' while he highlighted upcoming special shows and commemorations.

Alphonse was in particular excited about the prospect of opening a new environmental museum in Karongi, previously known as Kibuye, where a building has already been constructed to become the sixth such facility under INMR, besides the existing main Ethnological Museum in Huye, the National Art Gallery, the King's Palace Museum, The Presidential Palace and the Natural History Museum, aka Kandt House in Kigali. A seventh museum is planned to be opened at Parliament, named ***The Campaign Against Genocide Museum***.

The history of Rwanda is amply recorded in the various museums and nearly 80 monuments and historical sites across the country, allowing visitors, local and international, to appreciate the rich cultural past of the kingdom, the troubled times of the first republic and the emergence like the Phoenix from the ashes of the New Rwanda of today. Together with Genocide Memorials, in Kigali and across the country, the museums of Rwanda play an important part of remembering, and where appropriate honouring the past, documenting the evils of past regimes and opening the window into the future of the country, in my humble opinion well manifested through contemporary art and culture exhibitions.

Towards that end has INMR launched outreach programmes to connect with secondary school children within Huye District, before rolling out a wider programme across the country. In the words of Alphonse it is aimed to bring Rwanda's past closer to the next generation, who need to remember the lessons of times long gone while appreciating the diverse culture and history the country has enjoyed in pre-colonial days, during colonization and after independence. Much to see, learn and understand for foreign tourists, who come to Rwanda to explore the national parks, forests, lakes and hills, and yet no visit is complete without engaging more closely with Rwanda's past and present. Here in particular are visits over the less trodden paths of interest, on offer through NDA Associates (www.newdawnassociates.com), which include day visits to the Millennium Village, the Nyamata Genocide Memorial, a reconciliation village where perpetrators, survivors and returnees live side by side in newfound peace.

The visit to the INMR in Huye was made possible through the efforts of the Ereka Group, in which NDA is partnering with Victoria International (www.victorial-international.com), Eagle Ride (www.eagle-ride.com), national airline RwandAir (www.rwandair.com), a number of hotels and other service providers to promote Rwanda to in particular the East African markets of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, but also, needless to say, to international markets overseas.

For more information about INMR visit www.museum.gov.rw or Rwanda's generic travel and tourism site www.rwandatourism.com

KWITA IZINA ANTE PORTAS

(Posted 04th June 2013)



(Most recent visit to the Sabinyo group of which Umutungo, whom I named last year, is a member)

All over Rwanda did the large posters go up last weekend, reminding the country that the annual Festival of the Gorillas, aka Kwita Izina, is now just weeks away. This year, in its 9th edition, the annual naming of new born gorilla babies will be held on 22nd June near the headquarters of the Volcanoes National Park at Kinigi, and a series of activities will kick off on the 14th of June already, to lead up to and commemorate the annual event.

The Rwanda Development Board's Tourism and Conservation Department, headed by Mrs. Rica Rwigamba, will be pulling out all stops again to make sure that the country efforts to protect the mountain gorillas, will be publicized all over the world, as the global conservation fraternity, friends of Rwanda and tourists from all over the world flock to Musanze and do animal pilgrimage of the gorilla kind.

Tracking mountain gorillas remains Rwanda's highest profile tourism activity, and is by any standards well organized and 'packaged', so that visitors, who after all pay US Dollars 750 per person per tracking, get full value for their money. Every day are 10 groups of gorillas available for visits by tourists, who assemble at the park headquarters at 7 a.m. It is there that they are allocated to which group they will track, where they meet their guides, get the opportunity to meet fellow group members and get their initial briefing. RDB serves complimentary coffee and tea to the visitors from near and far and a group of traditional Rwandan dancers perform some of their thrilling displays to set the mood for the day.

Come rain or shine, the 10 groups of maximum 8 tourists will be on the road by latest 8, driving to their 'jump off point' from where their hike up one of the five volcanoes commences. Some of the gorilla groups are known to have a shorter access route while others are more distant from the park headquarters, some require a short drive and a longer hike while others require a longer drive but a shorter walk, in the end however all offering visitors the experience of a life time. By my own count I have now been privileged to visit the gentle giants of the Virunga Mountains, and of Bwindi, 20 times and every time I see different scenarios, different behaviour, different patterns. The time frames differ widely, my longest hike taking nearly 12 hours in pouring rain, before gorilla tracking had become a regularized tourism attraction in Uganda in the early 90's, to just under 3 hours, to and from the Kinigi

park headquarters in Rwanda in glorious sunshine. Getting all sweaty, wet to the skin at times inspite of protective clothes, scratched by thorns and 'beaten' by snapping branches, stuck in bamboo or thickets, wading knee deep in open glades saturated with rain water or literally trotting along well beaten paths, it is all part of the experience, part of the excitement and makes part of the memories tourists take home with them, as ambassadors of conservation, friends of the gorillas and last but not least, friends of Rwanda.



This year a dozen young and new born gorillas will be named, manifesting the steady growth in gorilla numbers as a result of a concerted effort by the communities living around the park, separated from the forest by a chest high stone wall meandering and winding along the volcanoes for about 70 kilometres to the border with Uganda, by RDB and their team of dedicated wardens, rangers, trackers and guides and by international NGO's like the Diane Fossey Gorilla Fund International and many others contributing in cash and kind to gorilla conservation. However, crucial to the success of RDB's conservation efforts was to get the local communities on board, turning poachers into guardians of Rwanda's wildlife heritage and showing the communities that benefits come their way as a result of them endorsing conservation measures. 5 percent of the revenue from gorilla activities comes directly to the community beneficiaries, in form of constructing water tanks, laying water pipes to homesteads, improving health and education facilities and other infrastructure such as better roads. Every year, over the two days prior to the naming of the gorillas, are such projects either launched or handed over upon completion, a timely reminder of the cooperative spirit shown by the locals and their appreciation by the wildlife managers. Additionally of course, numerous jobs have been created through gorilla tourism, and tourism in general of course. Every group of tourists going up the mountain is able to engage the services of a porter, highly recommended for that matter, at a nominal cost of 20 US Dollars, who can carry the water, camera equipment and spare batteries and is ever ready to give a helping hand to climb up and down some of the steeper sections when ascending the mountain.

Farm supplies, like fruits and vegetables, are sourced from local farmers by hotels and lodges which have sprung up around Kinigi and of course in Musanze itself and staff are recruited from among local school leavers who are then trained to perform well on their jobs.

Tourism, which has in past years grown in leaps and bounds by double digit figures, vis a vis arrivals and in terms of revenues, has become a key cornerstone of Rwanda's economy and conservation is not just a hollow phrase or lip service, but a firm commitment from the highest office in the land to the local grassroot 'cells', the smallest administrative unit in the country. Kwita Izina is an annual highlight in the calendar of Rwanda's events, and though other festivals, like **FESPAD 2013** earlier this year, also grab headlines, it is the **Festival of the Gorillas** which year after year commands the highest attendances and attention, regionally and internationally.

Watch this space for live reporting from this year's **Kwita Izina**.

RWANDAIR LAUNCHES COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS TO ACCRA

(Posted 02nd June)



RwandAir yesterday launched their first commercial flight from Kigali to Accra. Extending their regular flight routing to Lagos, which is being served 5 times a week already, to the capital of Ghana, the new route will further strengthen the links Rwanda has been developing with West Africa over the years.

Much of the expected traffic is thought to come from transit passengers, routing via Kigali to the entire East Africa, where the airline covers Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Kilimanjaro and Entebbe, and from next month onwards also Juba. Records seen also show that the route to Dubai is much in demand from the West African destinations like

Brazzaville, Libreville and Lagos, offering passengers from Accra the same options to reach the world's biggest supermarket, the city of unlimited dreams and the city of the superlatives, Dubai.



(The RwandAir B737-800NG, second from left, moments before taxiing out for takeoff to Accra, via Lagos)

The flight left with little fanfare from Kigali, as witnessed by this correspondent, though no doubt passengers on board flying beyond Lagos to Accra, will have been treated to some special surprises. Representing RwandAir on the first service was Alice Katiti, General Manager Sales, who travelled to Accra to prepare for the formal inaugural flight, which will take place on 15th of June. Then a big party in Kigali will surely be followed by a bigger one in Accra when the airline's top management, a government delegation and invited guests are expected to travel to Accra for the celebrations.

In a related development it can also be confirmed that flights to Gisenyi remain suspended due to security concerns, until the situation across the border in Eastern Congo has sufficiently stabilized to resume safe and secure operations at Gisenyi airport.

Ethiopia News

ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES CLOSE TO SIGNING NEW DEAL WITH BOEING FOR MORE B787'S?

(Posted 03rd June 2013)



According to a regular source from Addis Ababa there is growing speculation that Ethiopian Airlines, Africa's leading airline, is pondering additional orders for Boeing's B787 Dreamliner, in spite of another battery incident reported in the media two days ago when a sensor in the modified battery installation failed midflight on a Japan Airlines B787 aircraft. Ethiopian was the first airline worldwide to resume flights with the B787 after the FAA had lifted the ban on the aircraft, following modifications carried out at the Ethiopian Airlines maintenance facility at Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa.

AT's CEO Tewolde Gebremariam reportedly told journalists on the sidelines of the just concluded IATA Summit in Cape Town / South Africa, that his board is considering up to additional 6 orders for the world's most modern aircraft to date, either through direct purchase or lease arrangements and due for delivery by the 2017/18 financial year at the latest.

Boeing is presently having a significant back log of undelivered, and in fact delayed and overdue orders pending and has been increasing working on increased production to deliver more aircraft to customers.

Nearest rival Kenya Airways will no doubt be equally considering additional orders for the B787, in spite of a challenging financial year 2012/13, as the battle for the African skies continues on all fronts. ***'The key for survival of African airlines is in cooperating, but just as much in phasing out old fuel guzzlers and keeping a firm handle on cost'*** said a regular aviation source from Nairobi before adding: ***'Africa has growth potential for the aviation industry. Last year and this year is full of challenges and the leading carriers will surely have sat down in Cape Town. I think they resumed talking about Dr. Naikuni's proposal at the AFRAA AGM to get closer together. Obstacles are many towards that. One is the two key blocks of airline alliances coming head to head here. Egypt Air, Ethiopian and South Africa are part of Star Alliance and Kenya Airways part of SkyTeam. But I am sure they will look beyond such memberships and recognize that their main threat comes from the Gulf giants and of late even from Turkish and to a lesser extent from African competitors.'***

You wrote an interesting piece last week about a possible change of trends, pace and direction from the Gulf carriers when you reported Qatar Airways is leaving Seychelles. Emirates for sure will continue on their growth

path but QR and maybe even Etihad may seek different strategies for destination growth. The other one, Turkish, continues to talk of a massive rollout into Africa this and next year and those combined factors will eat into the traffic share of African carriers. The main opposition offer more destinations from their respective hubs in Dubai, Doha, Abu Dhabi and Istanbul than all the African hubs combined. That is an important factor for passengers to decide which airline they use. They can use the big league carriers and do a one stopper to their final destination or use our own African airlines and perhaps need two or even three stops to get to their final destination. Fleet age and use of state of the art aircraft is become less of a problem with the leading African carriers as they have already or are in the process of phasing out old aircraft and now operate relatively new fleets. I am keen to hear what has happened at the IATA meeting in South Africa especially when it comes to our own airlines coming closer together'.

Fodder for thought no doubt as we wait for formal announcements by Boeing and Ethiopian Airlines that they have put pen to paper for more of the fancied B787 Dreamliner to carry Ethiopian's colours through the skies of Africa and around the world. Watch this space for regular and breaking news from Eastern Africa's aviation sector.

Seychelles News

SEYCHELLES TOURISM PRIVATE SECTOR GAINS ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE FINANCE

(Posted 07th June 2013)



Development loans for the Seychelles' hospitality and tourism sector will become substantially more affordable for stakeholders wishing to renovate, upgrade or expand their properties, after the government and the French Development Agency AFD, short for 'Agence Francaise de Developpment' has made a 10 million Euro soft loan available for such purposes. France and the Seychelles maintain cordial if not outright friendly relations and this form of support, benefitting private sector development through lower cost loans, is one area of cooperation the two governments have agreed on when the principal agreement was signed in late 2012.

A high ranking staff member of the AFD is expected to attend the upcoming Annual General Meeting of the Seychelles Hospitality and Tourism Association to present the membership with a range of options they can choose from, should they wish to access funding either outside or alongside their regular financing channels.

Both Tourism and Culture Minister Alain St. Ange and Louis D'Offay, the chairman of the SHTA were instrumental in arranging for the visit and opportunity, a fact not lost on the tourism stakeholders at large, who can now reap direct benefits from the hand in glove cooperation between public and private sector.

MORE CODESHARE DEALS BY AIR SEYCHELLES OPEN UP EASTERN EUROPE

(Posted 04th June 2013)



The announcement, only days after formally signing a deal with partner airline Etihad to open the Australian market through code shared flights to Melbourne and Sydney, that Air Seychelles has now inked a strategic partnership with Czech Airlines, allowing for initially three flights a week between Prague and Mahe, via Abu Dhabi, is seen as part of an aggressive repositioning of the airline, if not through direct flights but through codeshared operations, to reclaim market presence and market share in Europe.

The two airlines now offer market access to travelers not just from the Czech Republic but the wider Eastern European region, who want to explore the Seychelles and experience that holiday of a life time they always read about with a one stopover flight.

'The addition within the space of a few days of Melbourne, Sydney and now Prague is a major achievement for our national airline. It helps to fill our beds, something you highlighted just a few days ago, and the seats on our flights from Mahe to Abu Dhabi, and allows us to become present in market places the old Air Seychelles could in the past only dream of. Through code shared flights we now cover the UK and Ireland more effectively than

ever before, and the same is the case in France and Germany. Now the Czech Republic has joined as an HM destination. The plane to and from Prague will be a Czech Airline plane but our HM code will show on airport displays, in scheduling information and as a result on the booking screens of travel agents. Such agreements widen our reach, allow us control and at least from Abu Dhabi passengers can taste the essence of the Seychelles already inflight when they fly the Creole Spirit’ wrote a Mahe based source when passing the information earlier in the day.

Eastern Europe has become an important market segment, showing significant growth in past years, and the magic of the Seychelles has reached potential travelers by word of mouth and through the travel media, which are reporting regularly on such high profile events like the Carnaval de Carnivals, the Carnival International de Victoria.

Cramer Ball, CEO of Air Seychelles, added his voice to the excitement of the breaking news when he said: *‘The Seychelles has seen a surge in arrivals from Central and Eastern Europe in recent years and I’m delighted to forge a partnership with Czech Airlines, an important player in the region. With this new agreement, the Seychelles has access to the city of Prague and attractive destinations beyond in Central and Eastern Europe operated by Czech Airlines, such as Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Scandinavia. We are confident the schedule will appeal to travelers throughout Central and Eastern Europe, thereby providing a source of revenue that will contribute to the future of Air Seychelles, Seychelles tourism and our home economy. It is also thrilling to note that we have connected three UNESCO world heritage sites: the Seychelles, with its two natural wonders, Aldabra and the Vallée de Mai, and Prague, a cultural wonder, known for its beauty and historical significance’.*

His counterpart, Mr. Philippe Moreels, President of Czech Airlines, in turn was quoted as having said: *‘The partnership with Air Seychelles brings to Czech Airlines’ clients a new, smoother way to travel to the Seychelles, a destination with increasing demand in Central Europe. And vice versa, Prague becomes closer and more easily accessible from the Seychelles. Thanks to perfect connectivity in Abu Dhabi, the two companies are able to offer attractive regular service, with a plan to increase the frequency of flights in future. This goes hand in hand with our intention to further develop Czech Airlines’ route between Prague and Abu Dhabi’.*

Czech Airline is a member of the world’s second largest airline alliance, SkyTeam and has Korean Air as an equity partner since April this year, in a deal very similar to the Air Seychelles / Etihad partnership. While neither Air Seychelles nor equity partner Etihad are yet part of any global aviation alliance, Etihad has pursued its own strategy to cement alliances through strategic cooperation agreements, which includes close cooperation with SkyTeam leaders KLM/Air France and in some cases shareholding partnerships such as Air Berlin, Air Lingus, Jet Airways and Air Seychelles, among others.



(Seen here are Cramer Ball of Air Seychelles and Philippe Moreels of Czech Airlines following the signing of the codeshare deal)

Even erstwhile more critical tourism stakeholders now do admit, in a clear change of heart, that Air Seychelles’ new ownership and partnership with Etihad is not just by the look of it or by promises made but by action now putting the national airline of the Seychelles in a better position than it has ever been. The profits made last financial year of 1 million US Dollars are expected to increase further this year through such partnerships as the load factors on flights operated by Air Seychelles to Abu Dhabi are expected to rise further, prerequisite of making money while sharing the routes to Europe with partners who in turn needed the added passengers to boost their own loads.

Seychelles, truly Another World which can be reached by *Flying the Creole Spirit* to Mahe from more places than ever before. Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news from the Indian Ocean region.

SEYCHELLES BID FOR UNWTO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP GETS BOOST

(Posted 04th June 2013)



Seychelles' efforts to get elected to the United Nations World Tourism Organization's Executive Committee last weekend got another boost, when Madagascar threw their support behind the Seychelles bid to represent Africa. Madagascar's Minister responsible for Tourism, Mr. Jean-Max Rakotomamonjy publicly announced that Madagascar is supporting the Seychelles bid for a seat on the United Nations World Tourism Organization Executive Council. The election for this seat will be taking place at the body's General Assembly that will be held in August this year and co-hosted by both Zambia & Zimbabwe in the cities of Victoria Falls and Livingstone respectively.

Minister Rakotomamonjy pledged his support for the Seychelles bid during his opening address at the 2013 International Tourism Fair Madagascar in the presence of Mr. Didier Robert, President de la region La Reunion, members of the diplomatic corps, the regional and international media representatives, tour operators and tourism exhibitors.

He was quoted in a media release sent out as having said: *'Tonight I have the pleasure, on behalf of Madagascar, to publicly state that we are standing behind the Seychelles for their bid for a seat on the Executive Committee of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, the UNWTO. We believe that Minister Alain St. Ange, the Seychelles Minister for Tourism and Culture and President of the Vanilla Islands would be an asset for the region and for the UNWTO Organisation. His dynamism, his leadership and his professionalism in the field of tourism has today been recognized, not only in our region, but right across the world. We will give Seychelles our full support for a seat on the Executive Council of the UNWTO.'* Minister Alain St. Ange of the Seychelles told the press after the announcement was made that he valued the support echoed by the Madagascar Minister.

'We are an archipelago that depends on tourism, the pillar of our economy for our islands is tourism. For our industry to continue to grow and to be consolidated, we need our region, as we need Africa to be more seen and to be more recognized as the new destination offering unrivalled potential for the discerning travelers. This is why we have put our country's name forward and today we say thank you to Madagascar for confirming their support. It is important to also state that Zambia has also already confirmed their support during the last INDABA tourism trade fair in Durban South Africa'.

Reports of a rival bid, the rumours of which have been making the round for a while, even though the supposed other country has been trying to keep this very quiet and out of the headlines, are still waiting to be confirmed but the wider a support base the Seychelles can now build, the more certain it will be at the end of the day that the election will go their way, and very likely unopposed as other aspirants will have to wait for their turn to come in the future. All the best as the final weeks towards the UNWTO General Assembly now tick down.

AIR SEYCHELLES' PARTNERSHIP WITH ETIHAD OPENS AUSTRALIA ROUTES

(Posted 03rd June 2013)



Air Seychelles has confirmed that they have just signed a code share deal with partner airline Etihad, Abu Dhabi's national airline, to open up the Australian market for the archipelago.

The new arrangement offers seamless connections, through one of the daily joint flights between Mahe and Abu Dhabi, to continue to Melbourne and Sydney. Etihad presently flies 10 times a week to Sydney and daily to Melbourne, effectively opening up a new source market for tourist visitors.

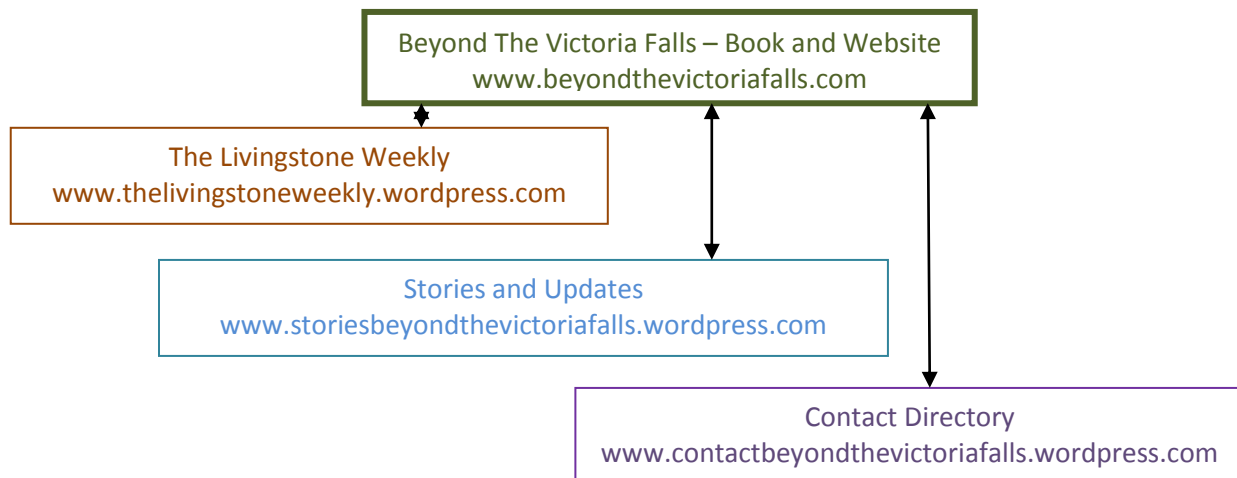
Cramer Ball, CEO of Air Seychelles, was reported to have said on the signing of the agreement: *'We are delighted to enhance our codeshare agreement with Etihad Airways, offering our guests seamless connectivity to and from Australia over Abu Dhabi. Not only does this offer more opportunity for Australian business and leisure travelers to come to Seychelles but it also introduces a simple and appealing travel option for Seychellois travelling to Sydney and Melbourne. Australia hosts the largest Seychellois Diaspora in the world and, as the national airline of Seychelles, we are proud to introduce a new airlink between the two countries'.*

The announcement came following the signing of a MoU in January between Australia and the Seychelles for the establishment of flights between the two countries. Tourism stakeholders have welcomed the new deal and expressed their hope that other parts of the world too can soon be accessed through an '**HM**' flight number, attached to Etihad's services from Abu Dhabi. At least 25 code share destinations have been put in place since the start of the partnership, most of them operated by Etihad, while Air Seychelles has in turn signed similar deals with Air Berlin, another Etihad partner airline as well as with KLM to and from Amsterdam. Flights directly operated by Air Seychelles, in which Etihad is code sharing, are the services from Mahe to Abu Dhabi and from Mahe, via Abu Dhabi to Hong Kong, the latter being taken up by growing numbers of passengers. Air Seychelles currently operates two Airbus A330-200 aircraft and besides Abu Dhabi and Hong Kong also flies to Mauritius and Johannesburg. Other destinations on the African mainland and overseas are reportedly under consideration though no details have been released as yet. Watch this space for regular and breaking news updates from the Indian Ocean's aviation sector.

AND in closing again some worthwhile reads from Gill Staden's *The Livingstone Weekly* ...

Beyond The Victoria Falls

For some reason the internet has been particularly bad this week. On and off and being very frustrating. So it gives me a chance to write a bit about Beyond The Victoria Falls, my book, website and blogs.



The Livingstone Weekly is a blog which you know very well.

Stories and Updates is a blog where I have put stories and photographs of my trips over the years.

Contact Directory is a listing of contact details of tourist companies in the region.

Advertising is available on the website. I am also putting ads on the Livingstone Weekly and the Contact Directory.

All the blogs are read regularly from people all over the world. One week when I checked I found someone access The Livingstone Weekly from Peru and another from Cambodia. Rather odd, I thought, but the internet is, of course, worldwide.

Most of my readers are within Southern Africa.

All advertising is very reasonably priced, so please ask me for details if you are interested.

For those of you who are just readers, the website makes a good first stop when you are travelling to our area. The stories blog has loads of photos I have taken on my trips and gives a good idea of things to see and do.

The contact directory was constructed looking at websites and finding information from lodges. I need companies to update information when it occurs. The information is free unless companies opt for a 'block' which links direct to their website.

Zambia's Outstanding Natural, Cultural & Historic Sites **By Nicholas Katanekwa**

I eventually found a copy of Nick's book in ZEPH on Kuta Way. The book has lots of interesting bits about cultural history. Although I had looked previously for stories about our traditional history there seems to be very little out there. Nick's book is filling in some of the gaps and just for that it is worth buying.

Apart from traditional history, the book details our parks, waterfalls and other heritage sites. It is an important book for any library.

