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**Third edition April 2013**

#### **Uganda News**

#### **UGANDA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY REJECTS WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM RANKINGS**



*'Uganda has improved in many spheres, that's why it has continued to receive global recognitions. Infrastructure and security have all improved so I don't know what they are talking about'* said Mr. Cuthbert Baguma, CEO of the Tourism Uganda, aka Uganda Tourism Board, when the results of the recently published survey by the World Economic Forum, in short WEF, were published, showing Uganda had slipped one place from 115 to 116 of 140 sampled countries.

*'There is a big flaw somewhere in their way of putting things together'* said a regular contributor on condition of anonymity before continuing *'Last year the Lonely Planet Guide declared Uganda as their top destination for 2012 and this year it is National Geographic which has named Uganda as among their top destinations. Visitor numbers are up. Revenues are up. Visitor satisfaction according to our own internal surveys is up. The country is peaceful contrary to what some international media peddle about us. Kidepo Valley National Park has been named as the most spectacular park. Uganda keeps hosting big events and conferences so how did they arrive at us losing a place. We should by our own estimates have gained entry into the top 100'*.

True enough, facilities and attractions all speak for Uganda but to realize the country's full potential, and rise in terms of global recognition, it takes sufficient funding for the activities of the tourism board and to facilitate a new marketing vision for new, emerging and existing market places way beyond what government presently injects into the sector. *'If only agreement could be reached to operationalize the tourism levy, that money could be a savior for the sector and fund a much bigger global market penetration. Kenya is planning big buck spending for their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence, Rwanda is spending again more on tourism marketing and Tanzania also is adding funding. Our government must finally stop talking and start doing the right things. Instead of concentrating on miniskirts they should find ways and means to add funding to the tourism sector for marketing'* added another source, referring to the present attempt by the country's minister for ethics to criminalize wearing of miniskirts in the context of a bill before parliament dealing with pornography and related issues. ***'We have 10***

*national parks. We have 2 gorilla national parks. From Jinja to Mbale to the Rwenzori Mountains we offer adventure and thrills to adrenalin junkies, rafting, quad biking, bungee jumping, paragliding, acrobatic flying, abseiling, mountain climbing. Those rankings are just plain wrong and I see some level of lack of attention to detail by those who compiled the charts. Uganda is a lot better than what those people are telling the world and those who visit us will be our witnesses and ambassadors'* were the closing remarks after discussing the issue yesterday evening.

Uganda, the Pearl of Africa, remains open for business and can be accessed with multiple daily flights by international airlines from Europe, the Gulf and the rest of Africa. Kenya Airways, Ethiopian Airlines, Egypt Air, South African Airways and RwandAir are joined by such big league names as Emirates and Qatar Airways from the Gulf and KLM, Brussels Airlines and British Airways from Europe. Visit [www.visituganda.com](http://www.visituganda.com) the official site of Tourism Uganda or the UWA website via [www.ugandawildlife.org](http://www.ugandawildlife.org) for more information on the country and its varied attractions.

## CONTROVERSIAL GOLF COURSE PROJECT BACK IN THE NEWS



When presiding over the passing out of over 400 new Uganda Wildlife Authority rangers last week, President Museveni again let fly over his disappointment, if not outright anger, for having been defied in the past by UWA, NEAM and the conservation fraternity at large, to give permission to a lodge operator in Murchisons Falls National Park for the establishment of an 18 hole golf course.

A similar attempt was thrown out many years earlier, when the same hotel group tried to have a similar project approved for the Mweya peninsula in Queen Elizabeth National Park, something equally defeated back then, when UWA's chairman and Senior Presidential Advisor for Media John Nagenda and this correspondent in his then capacity as President of the tourism apex body UTA vocally opposed the scheme and marshaled the conservation troops. Then like today, the alternative of establishing a golfcourse near the park at Katwe was turned down, as was in the case of Murchisons the proposal to modernize the golf course in nearby Pakwach.

The misguided view of wanting to establish a golf course inside protected areas, requiring the introduction of alien grass species and the need to constantly water and fertilize the greens and fairways, has been broadly rejected as the environmental impact by common consensus is too great to be mitigated. Around the world no new such projects are approved, though existing courses, namely in South Africa, continue to exist amid controversy over the use of sparse water.

Tourism Minister Maria Mutagamba was quoted in local media to have responded to President Museveni's demands by stating that an agreement was recently reached with the company to establish a golf course outside the park, where land will be availed to them, reportedly at the Karuma side of the wider area.

*'Why these people continue to demand for such lunatic projects defeats any normal thinking person. It is contrary to conservation and they know it. They got to the president but at least UWA and NEMA dug in their heels and made it clear it is not possible. Now why government should give them land to build a golf course nearby is another puzzle. Do they not have money to buy land? Was it not possible to agree with the Pakwach golf club to bring that one to modern standards? This sure alienates the people of that part of the country where further north they are also engaged in endless battles over land for a sugar cane farm. And can they even say how many of their guests at that lodge would play golf? How golfers from Kampala would go there during the week other than on a weekend maybe? I do not see that project happen because unless it is very near their lodge, so that they can reach it with their electric carts, it is not viable for them. At least it seems that the option of having a golf course inside the park is now off. Let no one try that again, conservation is not a toy for corporate giants in Uganda. We are watching them'* ranted a regular source with links to both conservation and safari operations, when discussing the matter yesterday.

The president has a checkered history over conservation issues, at times coming out strongly in favour and then, like in the case of the golf courses or even more notably the Mabira Forest, bewildering his supporters with his opinions and giving ammunition to his opponents, when insisting on solutions which could have an irreversible impact on the

very ingredients the tourism industry in Uganda is benefiting from, intact forests and parks. As the saying goes, watch this space to see what end, if any, this saga will have.

## **Kenya News**

### **TORRENTIAL RAINS LEAD TO RAIL SUSPENSION**



Kenya Railways has yesterday, for the time being at least, suspended train operations between Nairobi and Nakuru after extensive flooding was reported from the Naivasha area in the Rift Valley. Motorists too were warned to be extra careful after the river Malewa burst its banks, threatening to submerge sections of the main highway from Nairobi to Nakuru. A key bridge is now being monitored for any potential damage which could pose a major logistical nightmare for road transport of goods and people along this vital link, as all transit traffic to the hinterland countries of Uganda, South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi and Eastern Congo passes on this highway. Hundred of villagers had to leave their farms and homesteads as the water levels rose fast, destroying property, livestock and crops in season as heavy rains keep pounding parts of Kenya but also Tanzania and Uganda from where similar situations are reported.

Highway patrols are deployed to closely monitor the rising water levels and if necessary close the highway, which would then require lengthy detours by trucks, busses and passenger vehicles.

No accidents were reported by the time of filing this report though elsewhere in Kenya were several cars swept away in flash floods leading to at least 10 deaths as well as destruction of other property and displacement of people.

The announcement of the new cabinet is expected to be made in Nairobi on Monday and whoever will be put in charge of disaster relief and emergency operations will find his or her intray full as will whoever is put in charge of transport and works, having to deal with emergency bridge and road repairs from parts of the country where road transport has been disrupted. Rains, both a blessing and a curse.

### **SERENA CONTINUE TO INVEST INSPITE OF LOWERED PROFITS**



Serena Hotels, East Africa's predominant market leader in the hospitality industry, has once again bucked the trend, when continuing to invest significant funds in the upgrading of selected properties. Reports from Nairobi tell the story that the company's 2012 year on year profits have reduced by some 20 percent – it should be remembered that 2011 however was a record year for Kenya's tourism industry as well as in the wider East African region – a trend probably seen by most other hospitality businesses too when their figures are published. While the overseas markets during the period in question has seen a reduction in numbers, for known reasons, has Serena been able to strengthen the domestic and regional market segment as well as corporate business, a reminder that quality will always be in demand, especially when reliably and consistently delivered as is the case here.

Serena, in the face of this development has continued with their group wide refurbishment programmes which has seen two lodges in Kenya getting a face lift, namely the Mara Serena Lodge and the Sweetwaters Safari Camp on the Ol Pejeta Conservancy. The award winning Mombasa Serena is undergoing a bedroom workover while all the safari lodges in Tanzania too are seeing action to bring fresh colours and a new shine to Lake Manyara, Ngorongoro and Serengeti Serena.

The hotel group is also optimistic that the slow start of this year, largely caused by anti travel advisories and market concerns over the March 04<sup>th</sup> elections in Kenya, will turn into a rapid recovery from the international markets as the peaceful transition, combined with a fresh focus on tourism by the new government, is bound to return the country to sustained growth once more. Serena's properties in Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda have continued to enjoy good results, making positive contributions to the company's bottom line.

Watch this space for regular and breaking news updates from Eastern Africa's hospitality sector.

### **KENYA AIRWAYS INTRODUCES FIRST OWNED FREIGHTER TO THE PUBLIC**

Kenya Airways yesterday introduced the media, cargo partners and the general public to their first fully owned B737-300 freighter aircraft, which was converted over the past few months from a passenger version to a cargo plane, the first of four such planned conversions. Registered as 5Y-KQC the aircraft is capable of uplifting up to 20 tons of palletized cargo, allowing Kenya Airways to feed and de-feed such shipments into the wider region as well as across the continent of Africa, where wide body cargo planes could either not land or could not viably fly to.



(Picture courtesy of Kenya Airways, Corporate Communications)

Kenya Airways CEO Dr. Titus Naikuni was delighted to show invited guests around the cargo plane, which is now joining a leased B747-400F to form the foundation of the airline's cargo business, the dedicated fleet eventually expanding to 12 aircraft under **Plan Mawingo**, the strategic 10 year plan launched last year.

Dr. Naikuni, according to the media release received, said: ***'We are excited to take delivery of this newly converted freighter jet, which will be a perfect addition to our fleet. This aircraft will go a long way in enabling us to grow our cargo business segment across regional routes as well as increase revenue from cargo services which will be a significant contribution to our bottom-line'***.

At the same time did information come to light that Kenya Airways, aka **The Pride of Africa**, continues to be working on the launch of an own inhouse lower cost airline to be known as **Jambo Jet**, after finalizing all relevant documentation now before the board of directors for consideration. Should the board sanction the plans put together by management, **Jambo Jet** could be launched over the coming months. Meanwhile has the financial year of Kenya Airways also ended on 31<sup>st</sup> March and preliminary financial results are expected to be released in due course. Watch this space for breaking and regular news from Eastern Africa's vibrant aviation sector.

#### **KENYA TOURISM BOARD CONFIRMS HOSTING OF WTA AWARD CEREMONY**



No sooner had the former tourism minister Mwazo left Utalii House did the Kenya Tourism Board confirm that the country has been selected to host the World Tourism Award Ceremony for Africa this coming October, aka the ***Oscars of Tourism***. A gala of major proportions is being planned as this event will be part of the build up to celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Independence from Britain, which will be celebrated in December 2013. Already slated for last year, the tourism ministry at the very last moment embarrassed the nation when citing financial problems to meet their obligations, compelling the organizers to hastily move the award ceremony to within the framework of the World Travel Market in London, but as mentioned, no sooner had Mwazo left the building for the last time, the tourism board executives and the WTA organizers were back in business.



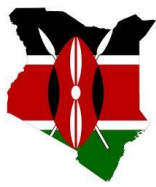
(Picture courtesy of the Kenya Tourism Board)

Notably was Kenya crowned '***Leading African Tourism Board***' during the London ceremony, something many stakeholders would have wanted to take place on their home turf, but chances are good that Kenya will repeat to claim top position once again, now that a new tourism friendly government has come into place.

KTB's CEO Muriithi Ndegwa was quoted in a media release just received as saying: '***World Travel Awards (WTA) is coming to Kenya at the right time after a successful and peaceful general election under a new constitution. This has further raised the country's profile as a safe destination***' while the WTA President and Founder Graham Cook added: '***The selection of our hosts is fundamental to the success of our awards programme, and Kenya as a nation has all the ingredients to rise to the challenge of hosting our Africa Ceremony – a warm, vibrant and progressive nation, brimming with enthusiasm and creativity. Tourism is vital to Kenya's economy, contributing 12 percent to its GDP and sustaining one in ten jobs. The future is bright for Kenya, given the nation's overwhelming natural resources, its unrivalled wildlife experiences and pristine beaches***'. Tourism stakeholders across Kenya have already been urged to participate widely in this year's nomination process and ensure that they will once again scoop major prizes and recognition for beach resorts, safari lodges and camps, city hotels and other service providers. Details are available via [www.worldtravelawards.com/nominate](http://www.worldtravelawards.com/nominate) where further details, including entry forms and closing deadlines for nominations can be accessed.

New government, new spirit, new hope and new horizons – well done indeed!

**KENYA NABBS MORE BLOOD IVORY SMUGGLERS AS 1.000 MORE RANGERS JOIN KWS**



A Vietnamese national was arrested earlier in the week at Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, when he was found with nearly 34 kilogrammes of carved and cut up ivory. Reports from Nairobi speak of almost 500 pieces of ivory, painted brown to look like soap stone, detected by security officials as the culprit tried to board a plane to fly to Bangkok and on to Vietnam.

While the latest CITES meeting has largely failed to devise measures to curb poaching for ivory and rhino horn on a global scale, Kenya's own efforts continue to be undermined by weak legislation which, as it presently stands, leaves magistrates with little choice but to hand down a small financial fine and at most a few weeks in prison. The new Kenyan government is expected to bring an amendment of the current wildlife bill before the new parliament, which is due to be opened officially by President Kenyatta on Tuesday next week, introducing wide ranging changes such as very heavy financial penalties, forfeiture of among other items vehicles used while poaching or transporting contraband and long prison terms, after the newly sworn in president has named poaching as one of the criminal menaces his government will target.

At the same time information became available that up to 1.000 new rangers will join the Kenya Wildlife Service, boosting monitoring, enforcement and anti poaching operations in the field.

It is expected that under the new government UAV's will be deployed to allow for 24 / 7 aerial monitoring of poaching hotspots, which would allow for swift and targeted deployment of ground forces.

Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Laikipia was the first to announce the purchase of such airborne monitoring systems, to stem the rising tide of rhino poaching which has in recent months hit them alongside other key conservancies like Solio and Lewa Downs.

The announcement of the new Cabinet Secretary (Designate) for Tourism and Wildlife – the nominee will have to undergo vetting by parliament before being confirmed in his or her position – is expected to take place later today and will give a clear indication how serious the new government is to turn words and campaign promises into concrete action. Watch this space for updates as and when available.

## **KENYA'S TOURISM AND CONSERVATION MENTIONED IN INAUGURAL SPEECHES**



History came home to roost yesterday when at 12.35 local time Uhuru Kenyatta, son of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's founding father, was sworn in as the country's fourth President. He has now returned to the place of his youth where he spent his early years as a young lad at State House in Nairobi, as he follows in the footsteps of his late father to lead Kenya into a hopefully bright and prosperous future.

More than 20 heads of state, heads of government and heads of delegations from across Africa were present to witness the colourful ceremony, testament of Kenya's peaceful transition of power and generational change.

The country's tourism industry took heart when the newly sworn in Deputy President William Ruto set out part of the new government's agenda, with the tourism industry clearly at the very heart of things to come. It was clear that the new leadership of Kenya knew very well what potential tourism had and how it could be developed yet further with the right supporting policies and measures, turning it into a true locomotive of growth. The new President Uhuru Kenyatta at one time served as chairman of the Kenya Tourism Board, giving the sector now an added advantage that the highest level of government has a close relationship and full understanding of the tourism industry.

The country had suffered significant setbacks as part of a negative campaign, in part at least fueled by Western governments and international media speculating openly over pre- and post-election violence, none of which in the end happened. Last minute anti travel advisories by Nairobi based High Commissions and Embassies also ruffled feathers with the new leadership, as it impacted heavily on Easter Holiday travel, again found baseless in the end and now subject to intense speculation over the hidden motives of such actions.

Conservation, a matter of grave concern to the tourism and conservation fraternity, was addressed too by President Uhuru Kenyatta in his inaugural address, as one of the crimes – alongside drug trafficking, cattle rustling and terrorism – to be tackled head on and the culprits to be hunted down and brought to book.

A new cabinet will see the position of Tourism and Wildlife joined together with Environment and there is intense speculation that former tourism supremo Najib Balala may return as Cabinet Secretary for this portfolio. Besides sorting out the mess made by the outgoing tourism minister one of the first key activities for the new holder of the portfolio will be to move an amendment to the wildlife act, introducing financially crippling fines and long prison sentences for anyone found connected with poaching. The other area will be to operationalize the new tourism agencies created under the tourism act passed by the last parliament and facilitate the Kenya Tourism Board with adequate funding to run a global marketing campaign to aid the recovery of the sector.

Best wishes to the new President and Deputy President who clearly hit the ground running, and running fast by the look of it, and as the saying goes, watch this space for the breaking news of who will be appointed as Cabinet Secretary for Tourism, as and when available.

## **TRAVELPORT SETS UP DIRECT OFFICES IN KENYA**



Travelport Africa has announced that they will commence direct operations in Kenya and have appointed Mr. Rajab Itambo as General Manager Kenya. He joins the company from Kenya Airways where he has been working on the Travelport assignment since 2008. The past partnership with Kenya Airways, which had represented Travelport's interests in the country until now, has reportedly been amicably terminated under a mutually signed agreement permitting Travelport to set up shop on their own.

The move is seen in part at least as a reaction to Galileo's main rival Amadeus making serious inroads in the Eastern African region via a vis market share and services offered to travel agents and corporate clients' in house travel offices, prompting Travelport – which owns the Galileo brand – to react and establish a direct presence in East Africa's most important airline and travel market.

Kenya's travel and aviation industry is set to be boosted by the peaceful transition after the country's general election in early March, permitting the economy take centre stage again. Recent discoveries of significant quantities of oil in the country and a range of major infrastructure projects are bound to revive interest in Kenya – and the wider region where in particular in Tanzania huge gas deposits have been found – and give travel activities the proverbial shot in the arm.

Welcome to Travelport and all the best to Mr. Itambo and his team.

## **Tanzania News**

### **BUKOKA AIRPORT MODERNIZATION ON COURSE FOR MAY OPENING**



A regular aviation source in Dar es Salaam has confirmed that the airport of Tanzania's Lake Victoria township of Bukoba, located on the western shores of the lake, and administrative capital of the Kagera region of the country, will see the new facilities officially launched by the end of May this year, but latest by June.

It is understood that under a programme launched some four years ago by the Tanzanian government, aimed to improve aviation infrastructure across the country's primary and secondary airports as well as a number of aerodromes and airfields, the runway of Bukoba Airport was expanded to 1.7 kilometres in length, all tarmac, finally able to accommodate larger twin engine turboprop aircraft like the commonly used ATR planes, flown by Precision Air but also small jet aircraft.

Bukoba, thought to now be home of well over 100,000 people, has been lacking regular scheduled flights and the newly expanded runway and a new, modern terminal building will facilitate more local airlines to think about launching scheduled air links.

The inauguration of the new runway at Bukoba will come only a few months after the Songwe Airport at Mbeya was officially relaunched and the recently introduced scheduled flights by Precision Air to Mbeya have vastly

improved connectivity to and from other parts of Tanzania. Good news for aviation this is so watch this space for the announcement when the tapes will be officially cut.

## **Rwanda News**

### **CHINESE COMPANY WINS TENDER FOR NEW BUGESERA AIRPORT IN RWANDA**



News broke a few days ago that Rwanda had finally awarded the contract for the new international airport at Bugesera to the winning bidder, the China State Construction Engineering Corporation. The move was overdue and anxiously awaited by Rwanda's aviation fraternity, in particular RwandAir, which expansion drive depends largely on the new airport coming on line in a few years time. The Rwandan national airline is expected to commence direct long haul flights after their two ordered B787 Dreamliners have been delivered, expected to be in the 2015/6 period, and then urgently requires state of the art facilities capable to cater for the traffic expected by then. With the fullest support of the Rwandan government RwandAir is turning Kigali into a major hub for transit passengers, who are using the airline to fly beyond Kigali to the growing number of West African, Southern African, Eastern African and Gulf destinations.

The cost of the new state of the art airport is expected to top 650 million US Dollars at current prices, a massive investment by Rwanda as part of creating infrastructure to position the country better as a leisure and MICE tourism destination as well as an ICT and mining / manufacturing hub in central Eastern Africa.

The present airport, while conveniently located near the city – Bugesera will be some 25 kilometres outside the city limits and requires to be linked by a dual carriage highway – is bursting at the seams as a result of RwandAir over the last two years literally doubling passenger numbers and expecting a further significant rise of point to point and transit passengers in 2013, while other international airlines like Brussels Airlines, KLM, Qatar Airways, Turkish Airlines, Kenya Airways, Ethiopian Airlines, South African Airways, Air Uganda and others have added flights, stretching handling capacity of Kanombe way beyond its intended limits. Work is currently going on at Kanombe to enlarge the passenger departure lounge and gates spaces to make the transition period until Bugesera comes on line in approximately 2016/7 easier to bear for airlines and passengers. Overall traffic at Kanombe grew last year by a staggering 30 percent, and further double digit increases are projected for the coming years, as RwandAir will add at least two more aircraft in 2014, bringing the fleet by then to 9.

President Paul Kagame confirmed his government's commitment to this correspondent at the end of February during his monthly meeting with invited media houses, that RwandAir and the new airport, besides the new national convention centre, will get the necessary funding, while keeping the avenue of a public private partnership through strategic investors open as a future option to recoup some of the investment advanced by government at a later stage. Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news from all over Eastern Africa.

### **RICA RWIGAMBA TAKES OVER CHAIR OF GVTC**



RDB's Head of Tourism and Conservation Rica Rwigamba has yesterday taken over as Chairperson of the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration, which brings together Rwanda, Uganda and the Congo DR for the purpose of conservation and management of the mountain gorilla populations and their habitat.

Rica is starting her two year term as Chairperson at the end of the regular meeting of the tripartite parties in Kampala / Uganda yesterday following the end of term of her colleague Dr. Wilungula of the Congolese Institute for



Conservation of Nature of ICCN in short, with the Uganda Wildlife Authority and Dr. Andrew Seguya hosting the meeting which rotates between the member countries.

Gorilla tracking is one of the most high profile tourism activities in Rwanda, Uganda and Eastern Congo, attracts thousands of visitors to the region and makes up the largest share of tourism related income for RDB – Tourism & Conservation, the Uganda Wildlife Authority and ICCN. Numbers in the three countries are estimated to stand at nearly 900 of the endangered animals, up significantly over the past decade as a result of cooperation between the wildlife management bodies, campaigns among area residents to promote conservation vis a vis benefit sharing and improved monitoring and security measures.

The cost of a gorilla tracking permit in Rwanda stands at US Dollars 750 per person while in Uganda the cost is ordinarily US Dollars 500, although a special low season promotion for the period up to 31<sup>st</sup> of May is presently ongoing with tracking permits going for US Dollars 350 per person.

Congratulations to Rica and all the best in dealing with the challenges ahead.

## South Sudan News

### NEW BAT SPECIES FOUND IN SOUTH SUDAN EXCITES CONSERVATION FRATERNITY



Information was received from a source in Juba, the capital of South Sudan that a new bat species was discovered recently in the country and was subsequently named '*Niumbaha Superba*'.

Similar to a bat discovered in 1939 in the then Belgian Congo, now the Congo DR, according to a report sent from Juba, the newly discovered species however varies enough to warrant a new categorization, different from the discovery in 39 which was named '*Glauconycteris Superba*'.

The small, black and white striped bat, was discovered in Western Equatoria State of South Sudan by a team from Bucknell University which led a scientific research expedition together with UK based Fauna & Flora International to the Bangangai Game Reserve which borders the Congo DR.

Conservation sources from within South Sudan used the opportunity to reiterate the rich biodiversity of the country and the magnificent national parks, which hold one of the world's greatest migrations moving between Boma National Park, the Sudd and Bandingilo National Park, where once a year, around July and August, up to 2 million white eared Kobs, the Tiang and Mongalla gazelles congregate before returning to the places they set out from. An animated map of this migration can be found via [www.bahr-el-jebel-safari.com](http://www.bahr-el-jebel-safari.com). The largely underexplored country has inspite of such massive attractions, found it difficult to attract growing numbers of adventure travelers and upmarket clientele, mainly for the negative publicity South Sudan has been getting as a result of North Sudan's constant aggression and fueling of conflict through proxies. Additionally however it is also for the lack of lodges and permanent safari camps, easy road access, scheduled light aircraft flights to the parks and bureaucratic obstacles like compelling visitors with cameras – who does NOT go on safari with camera and video recorder – to obtain photographic licenses, a costly and time consuming procedure singled out, besides other '*registration requirements*' as the most off putting aspects of visiting South Sudan.

Mexico based Bahr el Jebel Safaris is arguably the best bet to explore the South Sudan's 5 national parks and 10 game reserves, offering to facilitate such requirements, against a cost of course and organizing scheduled departures for their expeditions into the great wilderness areas, in the past described by this correspondent as '*Africa's last frontier for safaris*'.

### FLY DUBAI SET FOR APRIL 21<sup>ST</sup> INAUGURAL FLIGHT TO JUBA



As reported here in February in a breaking news article, Fly Dubai will commence flights to Juba from the 21<sup>st</sup> of April. Initially will the Dubai based LCC fly four times a week, using their workhorse B737-800 for the service, though it is expected that the flights will be progressively upped to eventually operate daily. The date of the inaugural flight has just been reconfirmed in Juba as the airline's sales team is rolling out a full scale publicity campaign to promote their upcoming connection.

The airline, in order to make it more attractive for passengers from South Sudan to the Gulf's arguably most attractive destination, is offering an on the spot Visa service from their offices in Juba, allowing for processing of the permit within the space of a few hours, a service which is bound to impress travelers from Juba who otherwise have to go through lengthy application processes, often via Nairobi, hampering their ability to travel on business and pleasure.

It was also learned that both countries are in the final stages to agree on the opening of embassies in their respective capitals, which will afford yet easier processing of Visa but also facilitate consular assistance at both ends for passengers to and from Dubai.

Fly Dubai is fully owned by the government of Dubai and currently operates a fleet of 28 B737-800NG, configured with 189 seats in an all economy cabin. The LCC was established in 2008 and commenced flight operations in June 2009. The airline connects a growing number of destinations in Eastern Europe, the Gulf and of late in Africa too, and further destinations are planned for Africa as another 22 B737-800NG await delivery in coming months and years. It is the UAE's second LCC after Air Arabia which is based in Sharjah. Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news from the wider Eastern African region.

## Ethiopia News

### ETHIOPIAN DELAYS SOUTH AMERICA FLIGHTS ONCE AGAIN



As with other delays in commencing flights has Ethiopian Airlines now conceded that their planned flights to Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo will be pushed back by at least another month.

This development is likely caused by the lack of available aircraft while the airline's prized B787 Dreamliners remain grounded as Boeing is awaiting clearance by the American FAA and the NTSB to attain airworthiness status and let the birds back into the air. This has prompted the airline to continue using B767 aircraft on routes where the B787 was due to fly, leaving in particular planned new destinations hanging in limbo.

The tentative routing of the service will be Addis Ababa – Lome – Rio de Janeiro – Sao Paulo – Lome – Addis Ababa, presently planned to launch on the 01<sup>st</sup> of July with B767-300ER aircraft. ET has reportedly secured traffic rights between all points except for the Rio de Janeiro – Sao Paulo sector.

For most travelers from Africa this will be the most direct route to South America, when finally launched and with Ethiopian Airline's extensive coverage of Eastern Africa the planned flights, though with multi stops enroute, will avoid to travel to the Gulf or Europe first before connecting to Rio or Sao Paulo. When final confirmation of the launch is received it will be published here. Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news from Eastern Africa.

## Seychelles News

### AIR SEYCHELLES ADDS DUBLIN TO CODE SHARE DESTINATIONS



Information just received from the Seychelles confirms the latest grapevine talk, that Air Seychelles has signed up to another codeshare agreement with Etihad, partner of the Seychellois national airline and a 40 percent shareholder in it, to offer seamless connections to the Irish capital city of Dublin.

In recent months has the partnership between Etihad and Air Seychelles borne fruits through a number of codeshare agreements, both ways incidentally, as for instance the latest Air Seychelles destination Hong Kong allows Etihad to 'backpack' on the HM services there, while of course the majority of codeshare destinations beyond Abu Dhabi are operated by Etihad with an HM flight number attached to it.

Cramer Ball, the CEO of Air Seychelles, in a media release just availed, commented on the signing of the codeshare agreement as follows: ***'We are delighted to expand our codeshare operations to include Ireland, a market that we are keen to explore further. Seychelles has a strong affinity and traditional links with the UK and Ireland and this expansion enhances our commitment to Seychelles' traditional tourist markets and provides an expanded choice of convenient, seamless travel options for visitors. The new codeshare to Ireland has been achieved***

*through the development of a successful partnership between the Seychelles Civil Aviation Authority and Government of Ireland. In addition to our organic growth, airline partnerships form a major pillar of Air Seychelles' expansion plans and we will continue to introduce new codeshare partnerships in the coming months'.*

Air Seychelles presently flies seven times a week to Abu Dhabi, which has become the airlines' second hub but the total number of flights HM offers together with Etihad are 10 return flights per week between the archipelago and the capital of the United Arab Emirates. The aligned schedules already offer Air Seychelles passengers extensive onward connectivity to destinations through Etihad services across the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Australia. In addition to the codeshare with Etihad Airways, Air Seychelles also has a codeshare agreement with AirBerlin to Berlin and Düsseldorf and has also signed a codeshare agreement with KLM to add Amsterdam to the growing number of destinations.

Said a regular, but unofficial source from Victoria: *'The management of Air Seychelles has in recent weeks intensely listened and interacted with the tourism sector on the islands. There have been misunderstandings in the past and dialogue was seen as the best way forward. The hoteliers and others were able to express their wishes and expectations, about domestic services between Mahe and Praslin but also overseas destinations. It is clear they would prefer nonstop flights to Paris for instance. The exchange of views allowed them to understand that for Air Seychelles to financially consolidate, certain aspects have to be put first, before the wishlist. Paris had very good loads but failed to turn in a yield which had generate profit. Now, the reach of Air Seychelles goes way beyond just Paris but covers, through the codeshare agreements, more destinations in France and the rest of Europe than we reached ever before with our own flights. For the foreseeable future our main operational stopover point is Abu Dhabi. That benefits our partners Etihad but more important, it benefits Air Seychelles. We could not have come from a loss to post a 10 million Dollar profit within a year were it not for such operational streamlining. Plans are to serve South Africa and Mauritius better which are two important regional markets for us and otherwise carry our long haul traffic to and from Abu Dhabi, where our partners will take over, except for Hong Kong which we will continue to serve and hope to grow from three to more flight a week as demand rises'.*

Other sources from the islands expressed their delight over the choice of Dublin, as the Seychelles Tourism Academy has a close partnership with the Shannon College where Seychellois students complete their Bachelor Degree Programme. One source let it be known when discussing the new aviation development that European arrival figures for the Seychelles for the first three months of 2013 were significantly up by over 14 percent while the UK and Ireland figures are up by over 22 percent, attributed mainly to improved air access via the codeshared Etihad flights from London and Manchester and now Dublin.

*'We had some reservations in the past and you helped us to highlight some key issues. The industry is happy to see how Air Seychelles has responded to such constructive critique. We are now meeting regularly, STB has signed an MoU with the airline which benefits the industry and I think we are now finally all on the same page. We need to be working hand in hand among all players, public and private, resorts, DMC's, the ferries and our national airline and the success in increasing traffic to our islands is a sign that the strategy works'* added a senior private sector stakeholder with the request to remain unnamed.

Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news from the key Indian Ocean island destinations.

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

## From Birdwatch Zambia

### Musuku Lodge

Bird Weekend 5th to 7th July 2013: This will be at Musuku Lodge in Choma. Booking is required. This is one of the best birding spots in Zambia where we will be able to see our Barbet as well as a good variety of waterbirds and woodland birds. Rory McDougall will lead. The lodge has given BirdWatch members a discounted price of K300,000 Full board per night. There are only 6 chalets and two have been taken so please email me if you would like to book a chalet to make sure you are on the list at [birdwatch.zambia@gmail.com](mailto:birdwatch.zambia@gmail.com) with Masuku Lodge in the Subject line.

## Bird of the Month – Secretary Bird – *Sagittarius serpentarius*

I have chosen this bird because Dr. Sally Hofmeyr from the Animal Demography Unit of University of Cape Town is researching on the status of these birds in southern Africa. They are classified as vulnerable.

Birders have been asked to send any information or sightings they have to her – see [zambiabirds@yahoogroups.com](mailto:zambiabirds@yahoogroups.com). In Zambia they are often seen on the Kafue Flats as well as the flood plains of the upper Zambezi River. Surprisingly they are not seen in the Bangweulu Swamps.

Secretary Birds are large raptors with a wingspan of over 2 metres. They are found on open plains and they stride around - often in pairs – looking for food. They have the longest legs of any raptor and have to bend their legs in a crouch to feed from the ground or drink. These legs are heavily scaled which may protect them while walking through the bush or when attacking their prey which is often snakes. Prey is often discovered by stamping on clumps of undergrowth, which then flushes prey for them to capture. They also wait near bush fires, along with many other species, eating anything they can that is trying to escape.



Secretary Birds have a wingspan of over 2 metres and they can fly but often choose to walk. However when courting they display by soaring high with undulating flight patterns and calling with a guttural croaking. Males and females can also perform a ground dance by chasing each other with their wings up and back. ...

## Swaka

One of our members and bird guides - Leslie Reynolds of Lapwing Safaris - is doing a guided trip to North Swaka in April. This is one of the IBAs that BirdWatch Zambia is working in and the area has some interesting birds and features. It is about 350 kms from Lusaka to the north of Mkushi and has some very good miombo woodland as well as large dambos and pretty waterfalls. The trip is scheduled from the 5th to the 8th of April. The birding will include Northern Miombo, Mushitu and dambo specials.

If you are interested in visiting this IBA then please contact Leslie directly for further information email [lapwing@zambiasafari.com](mailto:lapwing@zambiasafari.com)

Includes: Transport, meals, drinks, tents, professional and local guides

Bring own: hiking gear, snacks, bedding (lapwing can provide sleeping bags on request)

PRICE: Kr 3500





## BirdWatch Zambia Membership

If you want to become a member or renew your membership, I will collect subs and deposit it in their bank account. Put the money in an envelope with your name on it and leave it with Nick at Foleys. I will be paying mine, so I might as well do others at the same time. Gill

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## UNWTO

It would appear that Zimbabwe is running short of money for the hosting of the UNWTO in August this year. It estimates it needs US\$11.2million but does not have it. The government, though, has promised US\$6.5million, but this will only be available if diamonds are sold.

Walter Mzembi, Minister of Tourism wants to showcase Zimbabwe and its tourism revival, but Tendai Biti, the Minister of Finance thinks that the country has other problems which need the cash. In order to secure the necessary funds, other countries and private business are being requested to help out.

Zimbabwe companies, Mbada Diamonds, Econet and Telecel have come up with offers of financial help. A company, Conventions Africa, is being used for consultancy to raise more (On a Google Search is could not find 'Conventions Africa'). Susanna Makombe, the spokesman for Conventions Africa, said they were targeting Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.

On the plus side the road between the airport and town is being worked on. There is lots of action going on at the airport. The Chinese gave a loan of US\$150million to extend the runway to make it 4km long. The hospital too has seen some improvements and the town is definitely sprucing itself up.

Meanwhile in Livingstone the Zambia Government says that it has given a lot of money to Livingstone towards upgrading the town prior to the UNWTO. The roads are being repaired; the Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park is having a new fence and gates; the Victoria Falls World Heritage Site is having some new loos, as is the border post. Livingstone Airport is being enlarged, a new market is being constructed and a new bus terminus too. One can only doubt that all these things will be done as we only have 4 months to go ... it is a bit of a tall order.

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