

AVIATION TOURISM & CONSERVATION

NEWS EAST AFRICA

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



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Third edition December 2013

East Africa News

COALITION OF THE WILLING PUTS FINAL TOUCHES ON PASSPORT FREE TRAVEL

(Posted 12th December 2013)



Experts from Uganda and Kenya will meet in Kigali before the end of the week to put final touches to the commitment made by the three Heads of State that come January 01st next year, now only three weeks away,

citizens of the three countries will be able to travel across the region by using their national ID cards. This will be the case with Kenya and Rwanda, while Ugandans will be able to use their voters cards for the time being until the national ID project has been concluded.

As Kenya is celebrating her 50th anniversary of Independence from Britain are the citizens of the region, with Tanzania and Burundi sadly absent on their own volition, looking forward to easing travel to neighbouring countries without having to go through the process of acquiring a passport first, which for many is cumbersome and expensive.

It was also confirmed by a regular source in Kigali that the experts will be shown the newly printed common tourist Visa stickers which are now being distributed to the national immigration offices for use at the countries airports and land borders. Tourists wishing to visit all three countries, Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda, will be paying 100 US Dollars, a saving of 50 US Dollars compared to current practice where they must purchase individual Visa at a cost of 50 US Dollars each, and while the issuing country will 'earn' 40 US Dollars, which will include a handling fee of 10 US Dollars, the other two countries will get 30 US Dollars each.

The newfound partnership between Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya has so far produced some major commitments, among them to build a standard gauge railway, for which only recently ground was broken in Mombasa, but the passport free travel and the common tourist Visa will be the first tangible and real results for the people of the region, easing trade and travel for them.

There has however been no word on how from January onwards duly registered expatriates from among the three countries will be treated when they cross for instance from Uganda to Kenya, and if they will be spared from having to pay for Visa, an issue which in the past has regularly led to expat families rather travelling to South Africa or the UAE for holidays instead of going to the beaches of Kenya out of anger and frustration of having to pay for a family of 4 some 200 US Dollars. Repeated enquiries have been made towards that end but not one conclusive answer has been provided by any of the immigration departments so far, another damning indictment of how the mindset works vis a vis a hugely important segment of potential tourists, in particular for the Kenya coast which at present is suffering from a significant downturn in demand. Will they listen, CAN they listen and comprehend how the two issues connect? Time will tell come January 01st next year.

DO TANZANIAN OFFICIALS MAKE A MOCKERY OF THE EAC SPIRIT?

(Posted 11th December 2013)



'Tanzanian diplomats must be very accomplished in misleading their audience across the East African Community because every time they profess to the East African Community's unity and togetherness they smile but reality is 180 degrees the other way and they know it and are aware of their country's sectarian behaviour. It is almost as if they are implementing an apartheid like culture in segregating themselves from Kenya and Kenyans. What problem do they have with us I wonder, considering we as a country are the largest single investor country in Tanzania? And their largest trading partner? What do they hope to gain from constantly trying to run rings around all things Kenyan? Our aircraft entering their airspace are treated as foreign, our safari buses cannot go to their parks, they keep the Masai Mara – Serengeti border closed though if it were on the border with Mozambique for sure it would be open. Our nationals who still in this day and age need workpermits are treated the same way like foreigners from Europe or America. What problems do they have with us' asked a frequent contributor from Tanzania following enquiries made after the receipt of unsettling details on the latest cost rises in work permits for Kenyans and other East African wanting to work and reside in Tanzania.

Another source wrote: *'I only do my business here because I love the country and the people but, like so many freelance workers in Tanzania I can do just as well back home in Kenya which under these circumstances will leave Tanzania short of taxes and fees. Kenyans are generating massive income through sophisticated tourism as well as generating extensive job opportunities for Tanzanians, which the country can ill afford to lose. The newly hyped up residency/work permit fees that classes Kenyans alongside the Western World (whilst Tanzanians work freely in Kenya) goes directly against the new EAC foundation and only increases the deep crack ever present in the union that Tanzanian is causing.*

[I attach] *a copy confirming B permits have gone up from 650 US Dollars to 2050 US Dollars, i.e. more than threefold. This is across the board for all nationalities, surprisingly including Kenya, East African Community members. A Namanga immigration officer said [to me] [that] Kenyans will be treated and classified the same as British and American nationals. General consensus is the Tanzanian authorities are deliberately trying to cut back the number of Kenyans workings in Tanzania who are filling both professional positions as well as less qualified jobs within the hospitality trade. Speaking fluent English and providing a more productive and committed approach to work has long swayed investors within the tourism to opt for Kenyan or Ugandan staff. I don't know whether you even want to touch on this, but the continual and blatant disrespect of the EAC Union by its Tanzanian counterpart only increases the deep crack ever present in the union. Is it worth a story or not Wolfgang?'*

Deep rifts have of late emerged between the so called '*Coalition of the Willing*', i.e. Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda on one side and lead opponent Tanzania and a reluctantly coerced if not outright bullied Burundi on the other hand. A recent EAC Head of State Summit in Kampala sent mixed messages out to the people of the region. The final closing session was in fact delayed by several hours when the 5 heads of state remained locked into further talks and while the three intend to push ahead with infrastructure projects of a truly giant nature, linking the Indian Ocean deep sea port of Mombasa – and the new port of Lamu – with the interior by standard gauge rail, highways and pipelines, they reiterated their invitation to the other two EAC members Burundi and Tanzania to come on board, anytime.

A common tourist Visa will be formally launched on 01st January 2014, again for the three only at present, as Tanzania purportedly is not ready to follow suit, and work and residence permit fees among the three for their citizens wishing to work in any of the other two CoW members, have been waived.

Tanzania's President Kikwete will be under pressure to make conciliatory gestures when he attends Kenya's 50th anniversary celebrations of Independence from Britain tomorrow, that is IF he is attending, as there is speculation that he might use his trip to South Africa for the Mandela memorial service as an excuse to delegate his Vice President to attend the party in Nairobi.

Tanzania over the past months, often using the crudest of methods, called outright inhuman by sections of the media, have expelled thousands of Rwandans across the common border, including many who had fully acquired Tanzanian nationality or had lived there for decades, amid reports of looting of the property of those expelled by Tanzanian officials and their collaborators. They have also caused hundreds of Kenya teachers to leave Tanzania who taught in Tanzanian schools, reportedly causing a shortage of good teaching staff already, as the schools could not afford the sharply raised work permit fees.

'Lip service is no longer good enough now. Tanzania has time and again introduced unilateral non tariff barriers, like fees for trucks, fees for traders and so forth. They now have to either show that they can uphold the spirit of the EAC and once and for all do away with their discriminatory measures or else call a spade a spade and declare what they are truly up to. We are aware of their SADC talk and thinly veiled threats to leave the EAC for SADC. Let's end this charade. When or if Kikwete comes to Kasarani tomorrow, let him declare his intentions so that we know where we stand. Ugandans and Rwandans can now work in Kenya unrestricted though they have to register of course and we Kenyans can equally work there. This is good for professionalizing a lot of economic sectors where we can all benefit from. I have always said the EAC has to mean something to the people in the region, give them benefits, and this is a big benefit. And in my own opinion, Burundi is a very reluctant follower of the Tanzania position because they know if the other three would react like with like, they could be in serious economic trouble. I just wait until they find a face saving way to join the three and become a fast forward partner too. I am not saying Tanzania is a fast backward partner but for sure they are as slow as a snail in an age when speed is of essence' ranted another regular source from Nairobi, who is currently working as an expatriate in Kigali. Tanzania just celebrated 52 years of Tanganyika's independence from Britain and will soon celebrate 50 years of the union with Zanzibar, which together makes the United Republic of Tanzania, while Kenya celebrates their Golden Jubilee of Independence tomorrow on the 12th of December.

The first East African Community broke up in March of 1977 over sharp differences of the direction of the respective economies between Tanzania and Kenya and the hostile actions by Uganda's despot Idi Amin at the time, and it is now only just over 10 years that the '*new*' EAC was formed. Will the mindset of the 1970's once again destroy the community or will a new spirit prevail which wants to promote economic prosperity for the over 100 million citizens of the region, fast track infrastructure development and turn the region into one fully integrated domestic market without internal boundaries? Time will tell so watch this space.

IGAD LAUNCHES REGIONAL TOURISM MASTER PLAN

(Posted 10th December 2013)



After nearly three years of preparation, 2 regional workshops (Addis Ababa in June 2012 and Kampala in October 2012) and several national consultative workshops, private and public sector interaction on national and regional level and a peer review, was yesterday the IGAD – short for Intergovernmental Authority on Development – regional Sustainable Tourism Master Plan launched. The two day meeting, held at Nairobi’s Kenyatta International Convention Centre, was attended by tourism ministers and ministry representatives from across the IGAD member states, namely host country Kenya, Uganda, The Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea. Formally launched by President Uhuru Kenyatta will the document, which covers the period 2013 – 2023, provide a blue print for the IGAD region how to use tourism for economic development and how to make tourism sustainable, upholding green principles and having local communities participate and benefit as a tool of poverty reduction. Commissioned by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa / Eastern Africa Subregion The Executive Summary’s introduction outlines the broad objectives of the master plan and reads as follows:

‘The Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (STMP) is guided by the aim, objectives and principles of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The main aim of the IGAD is to expand the areas of regional co-operation, increase the members’ dependency on one another and promote policies of peace and stability in the region in order to attain food security, sustainable environment management and sustainable development. The Master plan is also further informed by the Africa Union (AU) Minimum Integration Programme (MIP), an instrument geared towards achieving the wider goal of the African Economic Community. In addition, the AU, through the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) 2004 Tourism Action Plan Africa recognises the important role that tourism can play in socio-economic development and poverty alleviation and that through trans-boundary activities it can be an effective vehicle for regional integration. Importantly, the STMP is as a result of strong recommendations of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Sub-Regional Office for East Africa’s (SRO-EA) 15th Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) meeting themed, Towards a Sustainable Tourism Industry in East Africa, on the need for a regional framework for tourism development in the region.

On the basis of the above backdrop, the main aim of the IGAD STMP is to provide member states with a regional framework for sustainable tourism development with a view to contribute to socio-economic development and poverty alleviation and to promote regional integration. More specifically the STMP seeks to: outline the importance of tourism development in the region; analyse in detail the prevailing scenario of tourism development; and to provide a detailed roadmap for the implementation of strategies and actions.

The STMP is further guided by the following underlying principles:

- *tourism development should be sustainable providing both inter- generational and intra-generational equity;*
- *the master plan should provide a vision for tourism development in the region; the master plan should enhance the competitiveness of the IGAD region as tourist destination;*
- *tourism development strategies should be in line with the wider national, regional, continental and international development initiatives and economic development plans; and*
- *tourism development should be guided by sound research.’*

The master plan touches on crucial issues such as the need to harmonize the policy and regulatory framework among the member countries, where tourism was acknowledged to be at vastly different development stages. Kenya and Uganda are clearly leading among the member states, others like Ethiopia have made some progress towards establishing a viable tourism industry while others have, inspite of a wide range of natural and cultural resources which could support a vibrant tourism sector, no tourism industry worth mentioning or one which is in the very infancy of development. Connectivity among member countries by air, Visa regulations, foreign exchange limitations and a range of national restrictions placed on travellers are seen as some of the main obstacles towards having tourism thrive, as are broad security issues vis a vis some of the IGAD member states.

Towards that end were a total of 9 action points and strategies were outlined in the document, aimed to gradually start a process of extending support from the region's tourism power houses Kenya and Uganda to those countries which lack sound tourism policies, regulatory and legal frameworks, tourism related infrastructure, human resource development levels in terms of training facilities and actual skills among the workforce and not the least the accounting mechanisms to capture tourism data and interpret them correctly as done under the Tourism Satellite Accounting system.

The proposed cost to accomplish all outlined tasks was according to the document given as nearly 40 million US Dollars, and considering how poorly national governments are facilitating tourism where the sector already makes significant contributions to the respective national economies, it is generally an open question just how much of those funds can be generated on national level and how much of it will have to come from development partners, on multi- or bilateral development support basis and if in fact other national priority sectors like health and education will be willing to share the limited national resource cake with a new comer sector, which while full of potential in several IGAD member countries has literally no track record.

Access to the full report by interested parties should in due course be possible via www.uneca.org or through the national tourism ministries across the 8 IGAD member states.

Uganda News

STOP THESE FRAUDSTERS AND THIEVES SAYS UTA'S IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

(Posted 13th December 2013)



Quote:

'Help help.....the government of Uganda is borrowing 25 million Dollars to support the growth of tourism and this money is going to be approved by parliament next Tuesday. 12 million is for developing Jinja tourism training school, 3 million is developing the ministry of tourism and 10 million dollars is meant for marketing Uganda's tourism. However, some guys have been planning to eat the 10 million dollars for marketing and I have evidence for this. James Tumusiime and I have been moving from office to office telling off these fellows...by the way, some ministers want the money to develop their personal hotels which is a very selfish way of doing things as usual....how can you help? Make sure to tell every MP you know that no one should touch money meant to marketing Uganda and my media friends we are planning a press conference tomorrow we need your support. 10 million dollars is small money for marketing but can make a very big difference if well utilized....you guys helped with the eclipse and great things happened....the battle is half won and we need to win the next half....

End Quote



(Thumbs down to those trying to grab that money and thumbs up to Amos Wekesa for exposing their schemes)

This hard hitting comment was received yesterday through Facebook contacts who copied it from Amos Wekesa's page, where he in unusually blunt language alerted his contacts, and the tourism industry in Uganda at large, to the scheme he describes above. Amos Wekesa is the immediate past president of the Uganda Tourism Association, the country's tourism sector associations apex body, and as such the main private sector platform in dealing with both government and tourism industry affairs at large. Several regular sources urged to have this information published here, as did Amos Wekesa himself ask for help to lobby members of parliament. The allegations made in the Facebook post are graphic and while this correspondent lacks the insight of Mr. Wekesa, as to who exactly is involved in the scam he refers to, the publicity is happily given and the hope expressed that these issues – presently of course mere allegations – are referred to the appropriate authorities within the Ugandan law enforcement

community. In addition should this issue be referred to the Inspector General of Government and the anti corruption bodies, public and from the NGO sector, to get to the bottom of this, prevent any loss or diversion of funds and ensure that finally some serious money comes to the Uganda Tourism Board and is used for the intended purpose, the promotion of *The Pearl of Africa* abroad, the generic marketing of the country and to undertake joint sales missions and trade fair attendances with the private sector.

As and when details of the planned press conference become available, be sure to read it right here how this new evolving saga will continue. Watch this space.

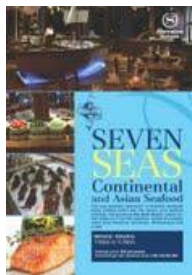
SHERATON KAMPALA OPENS NEW SEAFOOD RESTAURANT

(Posted 12th December 2013)



In time for the festive season has the Sheraton Kampala Hotel launched their latest restaurant venture, the *Seven Seas*, a dedicated sea food eatery offering the catches of crustaceans and ocean fish flown in daily from Mombasa and Dar es Salaam, from Mozambique and as far as Dubai, making certain of first class quality and a variety which gives diners a wide choice of dishes.

Open Monday to Saturday, for dinner only, from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. the new restaurant will sit up to 60 at a go in an atmosphere reminiscent of a yacht club – with only the sound of the waves missing to complete the image, though the sound of falling water from the fountain will give diners opting to sit outside perhaps the feeling they could be near a beach. The chef has in addition selected a range of wines to match the food experience, giving discerning locals and visitors from abroad the first real seafood restaurant experience in Kampala on a daily basis.



The hotel has also earlier in the week launched their programme for the festive season, which includes specials from the Sheraton's pastry shop as well as all the yummy details for Christmas and the New Year celebration, where the fireworks from the Sheraton's roof top have always been one of the night's highlights for patrons as well as for crowds of revelers who watch the spectacle from across the city.

Meanwhile, as no substantive new Director of Sales and Marketing has been appointed as yet since James Rattos' departure in November – James moved to Kenya after he was appointed General Manager of the Enashipai Resort & Spa in Naivasha – is Miss Joan Kasozi, the Sheraton Kampala Hotel's Sales Manager, holding fort and is available for enquiries about accommodation, conferencing and the hotel's social programmes.

EMIRATES APPOINTS NEW COUNTRY MANAGER FOR UGANDA

(Posted 10th December 2013)



Emirates, Dubai's award winning national airline, have announced the appointment of Mr. Thani Abdulla Al Ansari, as their new Country Manager for Uganda. Thani, according to the information received, joined Emirates in 2011 as a Commercial Trainee where he took on various roles as Commercial Manager in the UAE, Bombay and London. He holds bachelor degree in Business Administration from the American University in Texas, USA. Emirates presently flies daily nonstop between Dubai and Entebbe and has been a travelers' favourite, not just for flying shopping visits to Dubai but for those connecting to their final destination.



(Mr. Thani Abdulla Al Ansari)

At the same time has Emirates also appointed new country managers in Tanzania, where the airline flies double daily to Dar es Salaam, where Mr. Khalid Al Zarouni takes over as the new Country Manager for Tanzania. Mr. Zarouni started his career with Emirates in 2006 as part of the airline's UAE National Commercial Management Programme. He completed his outstation training in Singapore and was posted as Manager Cyprus in 2009 and Country Manager for Uganda in 2011. Before joining Emirates, Khalid worked in the banking sector for three years.

He will be succeeding Mr. Abdulaziz Al Hai, who proceeds to Khartoum as the new Country Manager for the Sudan. Abdulaziz Al Hai was appointed as Country Manager for Tanzania in 2011 and has seen traffic grow during the last two years from strength to strength.

When passing on the information did Mr. Hubert Frach, Emirates' Divisional Senior Vice President Commercial Operations West comment: *'These moves reinforce our commitment to the long term career development of our employees. Market dynamics vary in every one of our destinations creating a unique working environment and offering our Country Managers the opportunity to broaden their knowledge of the aviation industry. Africa is a market that is constantly evolving with over 150 flights operating across the continent each week. The region continues to grow exponentially each year and Emirates is well placed to capitalize on this growth with a 24 destinations across the continent'*.

Zambia and Algeria, according to the brief received, have also seen the appointment of new Country Managers. The newly appointed Country Managers for Tanzania, Zambia and Uganda will report directly to Orhan Abbas, Senior Vice President Commercial Operations for Latin America, Central and Southern Africa, whereas the Country Managers for Sudan and Algeria will be part of the commercial team that falls under Adil Al Ghaith, Vice President Commercial Operations for Northern and Western Africa. Visit www.emirates.com for more information on the airline's schedules, fares and bookings. Watch this space for regular and breaking news updates from Eastern Africa's aviation industry.

PROTEA SET TO ADD FOURTH PROPERTY IN UGANDA

(Posted 08th December 2013)



PROTEA HOTELS



Usually reliable sources in Kampala have confirmed late last week that Protea Hotels will manage a new hotel in the town of Hoima, which is also the seat of the Bunyoro Kingdom and located in a part of the country where much of the oil finds have been made so far. The proposed 80 room Protea Hotel Hoima is reportedly under construction already and should be opening in 2014.

Protea initially entered the Ugandan market in time for the Commonwealth Summit in 2007, before opening the Protea Hotel Entebbe in 2012 and then adding the Protea Hotel in Mbale, the main town in Eastern Uganda.

The same source also confirmed that the Entebbe property is due for expansion, doubling the number of rooms, which is reflecting sustained demand for the location. The Protea Entebbe is the nearest hotel to the international airport, and the only international brand and as such ideally placed for passengers arriving late at night and shying away from the 45 kilometre drive into the city.

In a recent article here it was mentioned that Marriott has made an offer to purchase Protea Hotels, which once completed next year will catapult Marriott to the top of the rankings in number of hotels in Africa as well as in number of keys. Watch this space for breaking and regular news from East Africa's hospitality industry.

GOVERNMENT TO INVEST IN AIR UGANDA – FINALLY

(Posted 07th December 2013)



President Yoweri Museveni and His Highness the Aga Khan have reportedly reached an agreement during a meeting in Paris on the sidelines of a security conference the president is attending, that the Government of Uganda will acquire a stake in Air Uganda, which would turn the quasi national airline into a regular national airline. The offer was made on start up when Air Uganda went operational 6 years ago but never taken up until now.

This will put an end too to ongoing rumours fueled by speculators and middlemen to revive Uganda Airlines, which was thought to be a massive scam, attempting to siphon millions of dollars out of government coffers, similar to the failed investment of 700 million Uganda Shillings in Victoria International Airlines, where vested interests by individuals caused a total write off after VIA halted operations within weeks of their maiden flight and not a single shilling returned to Uganda since.

Air Uganda in contrast has, since a rocky start caused by inept Italian management, stabilized and with recent CEO's like Hugh Fraser and now Cornwell Muleya is on a steady course towards further and sustained growth. U7 operates a fleet of 3 CRJ200 jets, after offloading the fuel guzzling MD87 aircraft, and presently flies from Entebbe to Nairobi and Mombasa in Kenya, Dar es Salaam and Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Kigali, Bujumbura, Juba and of late even Mogadishu, making it 9 regional destinations.

The buy-in by the Ugandan government, though still required to go through a due process, will set the stage in the medium term to eventually float an IPO and let the wider public in Uganda acquire shares through the Uganda Securities Exchange, then making it truly the national airline, key local staff of Air Uganda have always aspired for it to become.

A source from within the Ugandan government has yesterday evening already indicated that once the share acquisition has been concluded and government has appointed their directors to the board, they are likely to push for a widening of the destination network to include other key African destinations like Johannesburg, to look at the Gulf region and to evaluate a few added key destinations beyond Africa, with India, China and Europe being mentioned. Some of those destinations, when U7 has fully assumed the role of a national airline, can of course be accomplished through code shares with other airlines, and it is understood that negotiations are already underway with prospective partners towards that end. The recent AFRAA Annual General Assembly in Kenya in fact set the stage for Air Uganda's CEO to meet fellow airline chiefs and have a few chats to open the doors for more serious talks in the future. Watch this space for breaking and regular news from East Africa's exciting aviation scene.

UNWTO AND UNDP SUPPORT UGANDA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY THROUGH NEW PROJECT

(Posted 07th December 2013)



The United Nation World Tourism Organization, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme are engaged in a new one year programme benefitting the Uganda Tourism Board and the private sector alike. Emphasis is on the sustainability of tourism businesses and the value they create vis a vis helping to bring benefits to

those rural communities where many of the country's tourism attractions are located. Towards that end has the project now commenced a series of consultative workshops across the country to mobilize the private sector and throw their support behind the initiative. ***'The project aims to empower the poor to increase benefits from the tourism industry and improve their livelihoods through access to labour and markets, and increased opportunities for decent work and income'*** states on the of project pamphlets.

In Kampala did company representatives but also association executives, led by Herbert Byaruhanga, President of the Uganda Tourism Association, attend the most recent workshop this week where case studies from key tourism regions like the East, the West and the South West were presented and discussed of how they can be copied and adopted by other regions of Uganda.

The project is financed through respective grants and hopes to have by the end of 2014 accomplished the following three key targets, namely to establish and operationalize up to 30 new business linkages, to develop 6 innovative pro-poor business models and finally to build added capacity for 6 tourism associations/institutions and up to 100 SME's across the country. Watch this space.

INTEREST IN EAST AFRICA WANING CLAIMS VISA REPORT

(Posted 07th December 2013)



An extensive survey carried out by VISA, the results of which are now reaching the public domain, has little good prospects for 2014 for some of the East African countries, with the exception of Tanzania and Zanzibar which were ranked fourth and fifth as destinations of choice, with South Africa topping the rankings and the Seychelles coming in third. Tourism stakeholders were swift to question projections that Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda would see a decline in interest, though conceded that some of the issues raised in the VISA survey were valid points but that the wrong conclusions were drawn.

'I think there is no doubt in anyone's mind right now that Kenya has a challenging year ahead of them. 2013 was not a good year and it is obvious that perception about security, something the VISA report highlighted, is not very good right now. We in Uganda have also told our government to cool it and not make public spectacles over small political issues, when the international TV cameras are transmitting scenes of police officers going berserk and rough up opposition politicians and their supporters. We only give ourselves a bad name and whoever devised such tactics needs their head examined, I mean really! Instead of building on the 2012 accolade by Lonely Planet and this year's top ranking by National Geographic, we see bad pictures from Kampala on the global news instead of seeing our attractions highlighted' said one regular commentor from Uganda, before adding: ***'Unlike what VISA seems to conclude, we all think that we will have another arrival record in 2013 inspite of such issues and inspite of our government giving UTB peanuts to promote the country. I gather they are now advertising for top positions in UTB and perhaps a new team could change direction but it will all be in vain if they are not given the money they need. We are fed up with promises, we want to see cash on the table now for UTB to promote Uganda like Rwanda does or like other neighbours do. And I hope you print this like I say it because those responsible should know how bitter many of us are. We spend a lot of our own money to promote Uganda and government just bleeds us with taxes and puts nothing back. And write this also, because cattle keepers will understand, you cannot milk a cow without feeding it or it will stop giving milk and die!'***

From Rwanda too cautious optimism was voiced that 2013 would produce another record in terms of arrivals and revenues, denouncing the issue of security concerns by those polled in the VISA survey: ***'Our visitors know that Rwanda is a safe country, in fact probably the safest in Africa. Our visitors know that their safety and security is on top of our agenda here in Rwanda. Next year we will have Marriott open a new 5 star hotel in Kigali, we hope that our new national convention centre and the adjoining hotel will be completed and our national airline RwandAir continues to expand their wings across Africa. We have a good product and we keep adding new attractions as you well know, so Rwanda as a destination will continue to shine bright. Really I don't know where some of those surveys come from and how they get interpreted but as far as Rwanda is concerned, we are optimistic that our market will continue to grow'***.

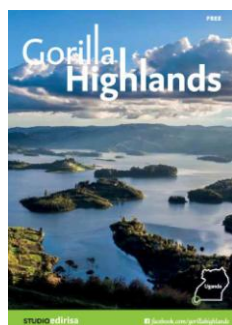
A leading Kenyan tourism stakeholder has meanwhile conceded that the last government under President Kibaki completely failed to appreciate the impact of the election scares which had been peddled in foreign media and the need to allocate more funding for KTB to stem the tide by creating visibility for Kenya during those months. ***‘Our present government has not delivered very much for us. They raised taxes in a business environment which demands tax cuts and incentives. I do not understand how you in Uganda could have the VAT reversed, considering how you constantly write your government does not understand tourism, and yet we in Kenya have failed to make our government understand what negative impact those VAT charges have. We have won awards this year but awards do not translate into occupancies and arrivals. What Kenya tourism needs is a supplementary budget to roll out a full recovery marketing campaign so that for 2014 we can reverse the trends of this year. And as you rightly point out, we need to market Mombasa better. Yes, many of the resorts have gone to sleep so to speak but I think they are all having a wakeup call now. We need to get the charter operators back to Mombasa and we need to get more scheduled airlines fly to Mombasa, not just Turkish and Ethiopian. What happened to Qatar Airways, to the plans of Brussels Airlines to fly to Mombasa. How can Zanzibar get two flights a week from Johannesburg and Mombasa has none? But I fear if this government continues the way they have started and they even want to submerge KTB now into a mix with investment promotion, then probably the scenario of the VISA survey might just happen’.***

Arrival data available from Kenya show a continued decline in numbers throughout 2013, a trend which according to senior stakeholders must be reversed, but such a reversal comes at a cost. For one there is consensus that KTB needs to remain a standalone marketing body in order to be an effective force to promote the country. There is also consensus that KTB requires more funding than has been allocated this year to work in particular high growth emerging markets in the Far East, India and Russia. National airline Kenya Airways has added capacity from both India and China and entered into codeshare arrangements with their SkyTeam partners from Vietnam and Korea, while Emirates and Qatar Airways offer double daily connections from their hubs in Dubai and Doha to Kenya’s capital Nairobi, offering easy connections from Asia, India and Russia. Etihad, now flying in codeshare with Kenya Airways, also connects those emerging and new markets via Abu Dhabi, offering yet more connections for potential travellers from those countries. ***‘There is a need to go into those markets and do sales missions, engage the travel trade, participate in their tourism trade fairs. For that to happen KTB needs that extra money. Tourism has the greatest capacity of all economic sectors to grow jobs, grow foreign exchange earnings and attract investment. Every dollar spent in promoting comes back to the country in great multiples. We want tourism to become Kenya’s number one export, Kenya’s top performing sector. We can make it happen but things must change’*** added another regular source from the coast, citing the successes of such competing beach destinations like Zanzibar or Seychelles, the Maldives and Sri Lanka.

Cause for concern, yes, but losing hope, that would be a big fat **NO**. East Africa has much to go for it as a region of choice and the common tourist Visa coming into effect in January between Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya will undoubtedly help to promote travel through the region and visiting more than one country. The region’s parks and forests, rivers and lakes, beaches and mountains offer a spectacular variety of options, where to go and what to do. Tourists can, as they choose, be either adventurous, active and intrepid or else laze in a sun chair on the shores of Lake Kivu, on Uganda’s Bulago Island in Lake Victoria, along the famous beaches of Diani or Watamu or on the Spice Island of Zanzibar. Opportunities and options galore and courtesy of Google, all those attractions are now at anyone’s fingertips via iPad or tablet. So go Google and then come visit as East Africa remains open for business and safe for visitors like few other destinations are.

GORILLA HIGHLANDS LAUNCHES POCKET GUIDE AND VIDEO MAP

(Posted 07th December 2013)

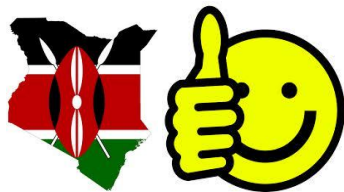


At a UNWTO / UNDP supported tourism workshop in Kampala this week, organized by the Uganda Tourism Board, did participants have the opportunity to see the latest two private sector initiatives to promote Uganda's South West, a new pocket guide by www.gorillahighlands.com and a brand new video map, which is still being developed further to include ultimately all points of interest covered by the pocket mini guide or the exhaustive and award winning e-book '*Gorilla Highlands*', available through Apple's iBookstore at a cost of 14.99 US Dollars. Workshop participants in fact let go of their long overdue coffee break to stay in their seats and leave their eyes glued on the screen to learn all there is to know about this part of Uganda, which is fast establishing itself as an equal to Jinja, the erstwhile '*Adventure Capital of East Africa*' with new adventure activities, hiking, biking, canoeing, with visitors having the unique opportunity to also get to know the cultural and historical side of the Bakiga, the Batwa and other tribal groups living the border triangle of Uganda, Congo DR and Rwanda. Workshop participants were united in their opinion that besides hearing much about the East of the country this presentation of the South West's attractions was one of the main highlights. Apple's iBookstore presently 'sells' the *Gorilla Highlands* e-book in 50 countries and plans to add more in the near future. More details are also found on Facebook via www.facebook.com/gorillahighlands

Kenya News

KENYA TO ADOPT RWANDAN MODEL GRANTING VISA TO AFRICANS ON ARRIVAL

(Posted 13th December 2013)



Like Rwanda did in January this year, will Kenya follow suit and begin to grant Visa on arrival to all citizens of the African Union memberstates, come January 2014.

President Uhuru Kenyatta, among many other announcements of significance, made the declaration yesterday as he addressed the nation from Kasarani Stadium, where the main celebrations of Kenya's 50th anniversary of Independence from Britain took place.

Unlike Rwanda though Kenya will demand reciprocity for her citizens when travelling to other African countries, i.e. to be equally granted Visa on arrival, by many seen as a thinly veiled reference to recent changes in the South African Visa processing system, which, while professing that Kenyans do get Visa for free now letting a handling agent rip Kenyans off to the tune of over 70 US Dollars for '*processing the application*'.

Issues of national security too could see the full implementation looked at afresh, should circumstances require that certain nationalities had to undergo stricter vetting. However, once granted a Visa on arrival, visitors can stay up to 6 months in country, a boost no doubt for the hospitality industry which of late has been enjoying less than favourable conditions.

Rwanda, after nearly a year of experience with their new system, has attributed their open door policy to significantly risen numbers of visitors, as well as being passengers on RwandAir, since the need for a transit Visa to be applied in advance is no longer now an issue.

Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda will also launch their common tourist Visa on January 01st, which will allow foreign visitors to pay for one Visa and then being able to visit up to three countries in the region without extra cost.

Sources from within Kenya's tourism industry have applauded the move but remain, in part at least, skeptical over the various '*riders*' mentioned, like reciprocity, with one saying that once the matter is referred to bilateral level it can take years before such reciprocity is agreed in a formal amendment of existing formats.

Tourism stakeholders have also expressed their disappointment that relatively high Visa fees have been maintained in the face of a downturn of tourism fortunes in particular at the Kenya coast, where lower cost of travel might induce more potential visitors to decide visiting Kenya after a string of bad publicity incidents, including one yesterday when a grenade was thrown at a car carrying British tourists.

Watch this space for regular and breaking news from across Eastern Africa.

TUSKER AIRSHOW POSTPONED DUE TO BAD WEATHER CONDITIONS

(Posted 13th December 2013)

LOCATION WILSON AIRPORT LANGATA RD NAIROBI

DAILY TICKET	KIDS DAILY TICKET	NITE AIR ENTRANCE
ENTRANCE & PARKING ONLY THROUGH UHURU GARDENS KES 1500	KES 500 (12 & UNDER)	KES 1000 AFTER 5PM (OVER 18 ONLY)

• PARKING WILL BE AVAILABLE AT UHURU GARDENS
• A BUS SHUTTLE SERVICE WILL ALSO BE ESTABLISHED FROM KICC

JOY RIDES KES 2,000

NITE AIR AFTER BURNER PARTIES 7PM SUN SUNDAY 15TH DEC

NITE AIR PARTY 7PM SAT 7:30PM SUN

*AIR SHOW ENTRANCE DOES NOT GIVE FREE ENTRY TO THE CONCERTS AND PEOPLE WILL NEED TO PAY THE ADDITIONAL 1,000/- CONCERT TICKET.

THE TUSKER AIR SHOW Festival

The organizers of the Tusker Airshow at Wilson Airport Nairobi have decided to postpone the event due to the prevailing poor weather conditions, to ensure the safety of both spectators and flyers. They issued the following release yesterday late afternoon and in view of the enthusiasm in the feedback received by readers I hasten to publish this, hopefully in good time to avoid too much of a disappointment. Best wishes for better weather next weekend.

The Tusker Air Show Festival has been postponed to the weekend of December 21st to 22nd due to poor weather. Aero Club Chairman Rob Linck said that safety for both participants and spectators was the primary concern after recent heavy rainfall caused several parts of Wilson Airport to be waterlogged. "After reviewing the situation this morning, we decided that it would be best to postpone the Tusker Air Show Festival to next weekend due to the bad weather. For an event of this scale, safety for everybody involved is paramount and we didn't want that to be compromised," said Mr. Linck.

The festival which was set to take place this weekend is also part of the Kenya @ 50 celebrations. Concerts featuring top local artists and cultural groups have also been lined up. "We were hoping that the weather would clear up as the event drew closer but unfortunately that hasn't happened. Hence we decided to play it safe and move it to next weekend," added Mr. Linck.

Kenya Breweries Limited Managing Director Joe Muganda echoed Mr. Linck's sentiments saying that safety is key. "We want the public to enjoy this spectacle in an environment that is secure. With this in mind, Tusker and our partners Aero Club decided it would be best to reschedule the festival," said Mr. Muganda.

Members of the public who wish to attend the festival can only purchase their tickets at the gate on both days of the event. There will be displays by the Kenya Army and Kenya Air Force, Kenya Skydivers and a fly past by national carrier Kenya Airways and a race between a rally car driven by Kenya National Rally Championship driver Quentin Mitchell and a helicopter flown by former rally ace Marco Brighetti.

PRACTICAL JOKE OR PLAIN MOCKERY?

(Posted 10th December 2013)



Kenya Airways has reportedly been taken to court by their former corporate communications manager over an alleged incident at the end of the Kenya Airways sponsored safari marathon a few weeks ago.

A source close to the airline has confirmed that Kepha Bosire had during the evening dinner celebration put on a T-shirt of a London based football club which was advertising a rival airline and apparently refused to accept a number of 'hints' by colleagues to take it off and wear the Kenya Airways' branded shirt which had been provided to officials participating in the event. The source suggested that Bosire was made aware of the likely affront his outfit could cause and that wearing the T-shirt would be seen as a mockery of his employer and put his loyalty (if not his sanity) as not just an ordinary employee but head of corporate communications, i.e. spokesperson, in question. Since regular sources were reluctant to get drawn further into the circumstances of the incident, it could not be established if perhaps alcohol was to blame for this seemingly mocking behaviour by Bosire, who within days of the incident

then tendered his resignation from Kenya Airways after his position as ‘*the voice of Kenya Airways*’ had clearly become untenable.

Bosire’s departure was at the time communicated to this correspondent not by himself as would ordinarily be expected but by other Kenya Airways’ staff, without at the time providing any further details. The only added comments were stating that a new head of corporate communications would be appointed in due course, which has since then of course taken place with Ms. Alice Odera now at the helm of Kenya Airways’ corporate communications.

Bosire, according to two Nairobi based sources, has now taken his former employers to court and made a range of added allegations which on first perusal read like a tale told at the end of a boys night out in town.

Time, as always, will tell if court will throw this out as a nuisance suit or entertain it, pun intended, with a full hearing, Watch this space.

KENYANS SUBJECTED TO VISA RIP OFF

(Posted 10th December 2013)



Kenyans started to react sharply to news that they now have to pay a private contractor a massive 5.850 Kenya Shillings for a Visa to South Africa, which purportedly is supposed to be free for tourist visitors staying up to 30 days. South Africa maintains that Kenyans remain exempted from Visa fees, but that they now have to pay an administrative fee to the contractor chosen by the South African foreign ministry to process Visa applications, a company by the name of VFS, come Monday 16th of December.

‘Forget about the Visa being free as they tell us when you have to cough up more than 70 US Dollars for processing the application. South Africa should extend the same courtesy to us like they give to our Tanzanian brothers and sisters who can get Visa for free on arrival. Why are African countries making it so difficult for other Africans to visit. It is bad enough how we are treated by the Brits, by Schengen [in reference to (part of) the EU’s common Schengen Visa] and the Americans who just chew our money even when they deny us Visa. But for South Africa to do this, it is like a punishment. They will see how it affects arrivals from Kenya because that is money no one has budgeted for. And that company, what is it they do which is worth that much money when our Visa is supposed to be free. Are they sending us a limo or serving champagne when we drop our applications? That is daylight robbery sanctioned by collaborators in the South African foreign ministry. I want to know what share they take from that money, because if they benefit financially from it they are in league with rogues to rob us’ wrote an enraged Kenyan when passing the information over the weekend after being notified by his travel agent that unless he got his Visa for the upcoming trip to Johannesburg processed immediately, he would have to pay that fee from mid December onwards.

There was no feedback available why the South African High Commission in Nairobi ‘*outsourced*’ the Visa application service for short term visitor Visa and yet has retained apparently all other Visa application processing in house. During a recent diplomatic reception attended in Kampala though one of that embassy’s staff said point blank when discussing the general issue of Visa processing for Ugandans, that ‘*those Visa applicants are often just a nuisance. There are a lot of fraudulent documents they bring and it causes extra work burden to sort those out. When you hand that process to a third party, they are responsible to submit complete documentation for an application with verified attachments, so the embassy can review it case by case and give or deny a Visa*’, shedding light on the mindset of embassies and High Commissions.

Once the news make the rounds and more potential travelers will be aware of the new added cost of getting their Visa for South Africa, not only is a chorus of protests expected but going by the feedback of one travel agent who responded overnight, this may well encourage travelers to opt for flying to Dubai or the UAE on Kenya Airways, Emirates, Etihad, Qatar Airways or even Ethiopian, or else use a low cost airline like Air Arabia, instead of traveling to South Africa and to do their shopping in Dubai instead of in Johannesburg. Time will tell no doubt who this will affect the number of visitors to South Africa from Kenya but for now, mega barbs for VFS for charging such exorbitant fees and for the South African foreign ministry for treating Kenyans like ATM’s. Shame on them both.

KENYA’S WOES – MADE BY POLITICIANS

(Posted 10th December 2013)



More and more tourism stakeholders from across Kenya are starting to voice their disquiet, worries and at times outright disillusionment with their country's politicians just days before the 50th Independence Golden Jubilee Celebrations with some now openly demanding that the '*head in the sand*' attitude has got to stop and government own up to reality. Some are on condition of anonymity seeking a platform here to express their concerns, and one of the '*old guard*' with decades of service under the belt wrote yesterday '*you have established yourself as a source of information and a place where we can read good news about Kenya, find critical views of things which ought to be improved together with constructive input and opinions our government should heed to get us out of this downward trend*'. While music to my ears it also is a damning indictment of some of Kenya's mainstream media which have yet to catch on to the reality on the ground, like singing from government issued hymn sheets instead of creating their own tunes.

A regular aviation source, close to the national airline, on Saturday added to a wave of emails on this topic, when saying '*... it is fair and good if you write Mombasa needs more flights. Kenya Airways has just added over 10 extra flights between Nairobi and Mombasa, but you also need to tell those who ask for more flights that airlines need the passengers to fill those flights. No one today can afford to fly planes with too many empty seats. On a scheduled flight you need to match the fleet average load factor or you lose money. Charters as we both know need guarantees from tour operators and those are slow in coming these days. If the demand for Mombasa is not there, if the forward bookings are not there, not one of them will give the required 70 + percent guarantees charter airlines demand. The result is that the airlines then cut back in flights. Flying just a few added frequencies over the peak period is also costly because normally you have one flight each on the series almost empty, the first return from Mombasa and the last flight into Mombasa. Those need to be factored into the cost of packages. Tour operators with empty seats who gave guarantees have stark choices. If seats remain empty a week prior to travel they can only try to sell them as last minute offers and then you get those ridiculously low prices of say 199 Pounds for a week in Mombasa for bed and breakfast which give us a cheap image and really only reduces the loss of an unsold seat, not make profit from it. Right now the airlines all say, find me the passengers and I will fly but this winter season Mombasa is not comparing favourably with other long haul destinations. Even the troubles in Thailand right now do not help Mombasa. The trend this winter from Europe is to other destinations, Zanzibar even, but not Mombasa. I have no hard facts but this winter there will be those repeat clients who always come to Mombasa through thick and thin but the percentage of new comers might be a lot less than normal*'. Another source close to the same airline spoke in a mail shared under confidential cover of '*never seen flights this empty*' after fares had to be raised in the face of slackening demand before concluding '*No one is prepared to listen*'.

Two other senior tourism stakeholders, while saying no one wants to spoil the party for the 50th Independence celebration, the time would be now to drop the pretence that all is well and sit down, analyze the international trends where those passengers who are not coming to Mombasa or to Kenya this year are going and formulate a response tailored to those markets to restore confidence in the destination.

'Egypt remains on the map but with deep discounts right now. They had a deep slump in arrivals during the height of the political unrest in Cairo and were forced to drop rates, even airfares to just stay in business. Egypt depends on tourism as much if not more than we do in Kenya. Maybe our government official should take a look of what amount of money Egypt's government poured into recovery marketing because that is a good comparison, African destination with African destination and beach destination in Sharm el Sheikh with Mombasa. They do their culture thing while we do the safaris but essentially, this is a very similar market. Key issues here in Kenya are still the VAT which made us a lot more expensive, lack of enough funds for KTB and I am afraid to say those county governments trying to milk a dying cow to death. The demands from Mombasa county for a bed tax and for a vehicle tax are outrageous and show that those officials have no clue at all what they are talking about' added another regular contributor from the coast whose own resort occupancies in 2013 will be '*significantly down*' compared to 2012.

There is consensus among those '*sampled*' that Kenya's failure to react with increased marketing activities in key market places in the face of pre-election market wobbles contributed considerably to the way how the rest of 2013 panned out and that the current government's failure to appreciate the woes of the industry after more recent incidents and clearly visible market trends away from Kenya are the main causes for the present situation. '*If we can*

invest in infrastructure the way we do now, new roads, airport extensions, railways and all, then this government should equally invest in tourism. Many of those projects are done by the Chinese and they bring their own labour so the benefits for Kenyans in terms of jobs are marginal. In contrast, when tourism revives the impact on the labour market is almost instant and the knock on effects are significant in terms of added supply chain benefits and their ability to recruit. But it seems that government invests in physical infrastructure only and does not invest in tourism marketing. This failure will come to haunt them in 2014 like the failures of the Kibaki government came to haunt us this year. If the Kibaki government had invested in tourism marketing at the time when the fall out of the Somalia invasion was cutting coast occupancy rates and when the extend of the pre-election fears in our key markets drove down demand, we would be better prepared, better off now. But that failure combined with the current lack of appreciating our sector's challenges, makes it a double whammy for our industry'.

The same sources also conceded that many of Kenya's coastal resorts have failed to upgrade, modernize and revamp their products and accepted that this too has made selling Kenya's beaches more difficult. It was accepted that competing destinations have not rested on their laurels and invested in new resorts, new attractions and refurbishment of existing beach resorts.

That said, there was also agreement that a number of resorts along the coast HAVE in fact have taken such steps and as a result recorded better occupancies than the rest. And there is equal agreement that Kenya's safari camps and lodges remain top of the pops, offering high standards and often exceptional quality and value for money, something the coast needs to copy to re-invent itself as a prime tourism destination.

The way forward obviously needs to be determined by Kenya's stakeholders, driven by the private sector while the public sector has to facilitate what has to be done in order to reverse the trend. And as one 'regular' put it correctly, there is no time like the present. ***'It is not us who failed Kenya, it is our politicians. They have to bear the blame, they are responsible. And let me rattle the hornets' nest, the devolved government has yet to prove its effectiveness because all I have seen so far is the cost of that extra layer of government coming down on us like a ton of bricks with no value addition at this point at all'.***

With but three days to go till Kenya's 50th birthday, time to celebrate but also time to reflect. Thanks to those who contributed and as you asked for, the ball is now firmly in the court of public opinion and in the court of government. Watch this space.

Tanzania News

AURIC AIR ANNOUNCES DODOMA FLIGHTS

(Posted 13th December 2013)



Tanzania's Auric Air (IATA H8 / ICAO AUK) has announced the launch of flights to Dodoma from January 2014 onwards, adding to the already impressive number of 19 destinations across East Africa's largest country. No other airline covers Tanzania, with scheduled flights and charters, as extensively as Auric Air does with their fleet of presently 8 Cessna 208B Caravans, all of which were acquired new between 2008 and last year.

Auric's main hub is at the airport of the lakeside city of Mwanza but the airline has additional operational bases in Dar es Salaam and Arusha.

OUR DESTINATIONS:

Mwanza	Sumbawanga
Bukoba	Serengeti
Mbeya	Iringa
Dar E Salaam	Lake Manyara
Songea	Rubondo Island
Zanzibar	Pemba
Tanga	Katavi
Ruaha	Mpanda
Niombe	Mafia

Meanwhile has Auric achieved the BARS Silver Registration from the Flight Safety Foundation after successfully completing the FSF Safety Audit, giving their passengers the assurance that all humanly possible is being done to provide flawless operations.



Visit www.auricair.com for more details about fares, to make bookings and to check out their impressive photo gallery.

MV LIEMBA TURNS 100 AS CENTENARY YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR APPROACHES

(Posted 12th December 2013)



(The former Graf von Goetzen, now known as MV Liemba, still going strong after 101 years)

The MV Liemba, a Swahili word for Lake Tanganyika, has a long history of dominating the waves of Lake Tanganyika, since she was lifted in 1924 and returned to service in 1927 by the British colonial administration. But first things first, going back in time one hundred years to tell the story right.

The vessel was put into service on Lake Tanganyika after being built in Germany in 1913 in Papenburg's Meyer Werft, and was initially known as Graf von Goetzen, named after the Governor for German East Africa Gustav Adolf von Goetzen. The Graf von Goetzen, and her two [two I know of] supply ships, were part of the German naval fleet, used to assert control of Lake Tanganyika during the Great War, as WW I is also known, and she was operating until the 26th July 1916, when her captain scuttled her to avoid capture and subsequent use by the British forces, which had earlier managed to first capture one of the German gunboats before sinking another supply vessel, leaving the Graf von Goetzen without support. The British came across the lake from what was then the Belgian Congo after making it up the Congo River from Point Noire and Kinshasa before reaching the shores of Lake Tanganyika where they regrouped, assembled their assault force and then hunted for the German ships. Later on part of this story was to become the inspiration for the famous Oscar winning film '*The African Queen*'.

However, before the Graf von Goetzen was scuttled, engineers on board the ship from the Meyer Werft in Papenburg were careful, according to available reports, to ensure the ship could be salvaged later on and carried out preservation work before the ship was submerged, by liberally greasing the engine and oiling all parts which could corrode before wrapping equipment and all in oil paper and greased sack cloth. It was this care and foresight which allowed the British in 1924 to raise her and after a 3 year restoration process put her back into service as MV Liemba.

Since then, apart for times the ship had to be overhauled, was the MV Liemba in uninterrupted service on Lake Tanganyika, plying the waters of Africa's deepest lake, carrying passengers and cargo along the lake ports of Tanzania, Burundi, Zambia and the Congo.

In 2012 an offer was made by the German government, undoubtedly already with August 2014 in mind, to have the MV Liemba completely overhauled, her navigation and other equipment brought to modern day standards and the ship be given a new lease on life, able to sail across Lake Tanganyika for decades still to come.

For a while there was even talk of turning the vessel into a floating museum but the acute shortage of safe lake transport, for passengers and for cargo, made it almost necessary to retain MV Liemba's services as an active ship instead of mothballing her in port.

Eastern Africa is thought to be featuring prominently with history and World War I buffs come August 1914, as Tanzania, back then known as Tanganyika while under German colonial rule and Kenya were on opposing sides when the war broke out. The war led to a series of naval battles in the Indian Ocean and naval engagements on Lake Tanganyika involving the Koenigsberg and the Graf von Goetzen and their respective supply ships. The land war, briefly described here in an article 'Battlefield East Africa'

(<http://wolfganghthome.wordpress.com/2012/06/24/battlefield-east-africa>) too will be remembered come the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War I, along the border in the Taita Taveta area but also as far as the Kenyan's Kisii region, where German forces fought skirmishes before being repelled. A number of fortifications and sites have been found and identified by James Willson Esq. and are well described in his book '*Guerillas of Tsavo*' which was published more recently and details of which can be found via these links

<http://www.guerrillasoftsavo.com> <https://www.facebook.com/GuerrillasOfTsavo>.

There is hopeful speculation within Tanzanian and Kenyan tourism circles that the German government may still avail some funding to have key sites in Kenya and across the border in Tanzania preserved and readied to become tourism sites, similar to the memorial sites now maintained in the greater Taita Taveta area by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

It is not known at this moment if and when MV Liemba will undergo refurbishment and modernization but come August 2014, when the centenary commemoration of the start of the First World War will go underway, there will no doubt be plenty of visitors who would want to not only see her in port but sail on her and transpond their thoughts back to a hundred years ago, when this ship was still the Graf von Goetzen, carried cannons and troops and flew the German Imperial flag.

Time to recall, as 2014 is knocking on the door, that there is a long history to be remembered, when Africa against her will was drawn into the European conflicts in both World Wars and then even in the Cold War, aggravating the injuries caused by the often senseless drawing of colonial borders in the Berlin Conference, during which Africa was divided among the European powers. Hence, when the commemorations go underway in August next year, it should well be remembered that tens of thousands of African porters and askaris died in battles, from exhaustion and from disease, and to date, apart from some monuments for the King's African Rifles and other units, there are still no War Cemeteries honouring the fallen Africans, unlike their comrades of European and Asian descent, who themselves however were buried in different locations. There are many lessons to be learned, about the battlefields in East Africa, along the Kenya Tanzania border, in Tanga and across Tanzania down to Mozambique and Zambia, about the insanity of that war, the immense losses to all the participating nations and most of all, about the racism which was and is still evident today, the segregation of European and Asian war graves and the total absence of African war graves. Fodder for thought as 2013 runs down the clock and 2014, the centenary memorial year, arrives. Watch this space.

Rwanda News

RWANDA'S KWITA IZINA IS AFRICA'S ONLY NOMINEE FOR UNWTO'S ULYSSES AWARDS

(Posted 12th December 2013)



Kwita Izina, Rwanda's annual festival of and for the gorillas, held every year in Kinigi, outside Musanze, at the entrance to the Volcanoes National Park, has emerged as Africa's only nominee for the coveted UNWTO Ulysses Awards in the category of **UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation in Public Policy and Governance**. Rwanda is competing with two other nominees, the *Interactive System of Tourist Information*, Office of the Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship (Poland) and the *Responsible Tourism Project at Kumarakom*, Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala (India).

The winners will be announced during the UNWTO Awards Ceremony to be held on 22nd of January 2014. The Award Ceremony, organized for the first time in collaboration with the International Tourism Trade Fair (FITUR) in

Madrid, Spain, is one of the several events organized by UNWTO within the framework of FITUR for next year's event.

The UNWTO Awards Ceremony will be followed by the UNWTO Knowledge Network Symposium on 23rd of January 2014. The Symposium will showcase the projects of the winners of the UNWTO Awards in the different categories. It will further include keynote speeches by the 2013 UNWTO Ulysses Prize and Lifetime Achievement laureates (awardees to be announced shortly) and a high level panel on knowledge management in tourism and on how to improve knowledge flows within the tourism community.



Congratulations to *The Land of a Thousand Hills* – the hopes and best wishes of Africa will be with you to bring back a global award to our continent. For more information on Rwanda visit www.rwandatourism.com or www.kwitizina.org and details of the UNWTO award scheme can be accessed via [UNWTO Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism](#)

RWANDAIR CONFIRMS DELIVERY DATE FOR NEW Q400NEXTGEN FOR END FEBRUARY 2014

(Posted 09th December 2014)



RwandAir, Rwanda's national airline, has just confirmed that the delivery of yet another brand new Bombardier aircraft, a Q400NextGen, is due by end February 2014.

The new next generation turboprop aeroplane will be offering passengers a two class option, with business class and economy class, extending a front cabin throughout the entire fleet. The new Q400 will replace the wet leased Bombardier Dash 8-100, which will be returned to ALS in Nairobi at the end of the lease period. With 67 seats and a speed not much lower than a jet aircraft, can the new bird be deployed across the entire region, besides of course serving RwandAir's only domestic destination outside Kigali, Cyangugu / Kamembe on the border with Congo's town of Bukavu.



(RwandAir's new Q400, seen in the picture on the right being assembled at the Bombardier plant in Canada)

RwandAir's CEO John Mirenge on the occasion of confirming the arrival date of RwandAir's latest acquisition, said: *'Beginning the year 2014 with the arrival of our Bombardier Q-400 NEXTGEN puts us in the position to surpass the impressive targets we set for ourselves with ease as the introduction of the increased number of seats as well as the business class option meets the demands of our domestic market. It also allows RwandAir to embrace its long term expansion goal while staying on target to grow our fleet to seventeen by the year 2020'*.

The airline also confirmed that Douala flights will be launched very likely in March 2014, adding the 16th destination to RwandAir's growing reach across the continent before adding Abidjan later next year. For more information on RwandAir, such as fares and schedules, visit www.rwandair.com

Watch this space for breaking and regular aviation news from across Eastern Africa.

Reunion

AS REUNION TOURISM GROWS DO NEW SERVICE PROVIDERS ENTER THE SCENE

(Posted 12th December 2013)



As Reunion Tourism has used the year 2013 to reinvent itself and rebrand, showcasing the magnificent attractions this French Indian Ocean island has to offer to visitors, has the island's tourism sector also started to benefit from the positive spotlight IRT has generated. Two new diving centres were launched recently, B'Leu Ocean in Saint-Leu and the Southern Diving School in Saint-Pierre, both offering a range of diving options, besides courses for beginners and advanced divers, ready to cash in on the expected tourism boom the island is hoping for in 2014 and beyond. Also new are the new Cascade Cottages, which offer hikers enroute to Piton de Neiges, incidentally with 3,070 metres the highest peak in the entire Indian Ocean region, accommodation and meals in typical Creole houses. The three cottages feature self contained double bedrooms as well as dormitory style accommodation for larger groups of hikers who pass through Bras Sec Cilaos.



While of course tourism to Reunion was always there, traffic flow was primarily dominated by the French domestic market and greater global exposure only started to come into play when Reunion joined hands with the globally better known Seychelles, which though smaller in terms of arrival numbers had managed to capture the attention of the global media. Reunion, co-host of the Carnival International de Victoria since the inaugural event in 2011, has seen their global reach grow in leaps and bounds and the UNWTO Conference on Sustainable Tourism for Small Island States brought key players of the world's leading tourism and travel publications to the island able to see for themselves the wide range of adventure, culture, history and beach attractions which make Reunion so unique. Reunion is a founder member of the Vanilla Island Organization which brings together key Indian Ocean islands off the coast of Africa such as the Seychelles, Comoros, Mayotte, Madagascar and Mauritius, and of late also the Maldives.

For more information visit www.reunion.fr which now offers multilingual versions in more than half a dozen languages.

Mauritius

NEW HOLIDAY INN OPENS NEAR SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON MAURITIUS

(Posted 13th December 2013)



The new Holiday Inn Mauritius Airport at Plaine Magnien is now open for business, offering a full range of services for travellers, those on business and those coming for leisure alike. Located less than a kilometre from the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport terminal, a few minutes from the nearest beach and just over 40 kilometres from the capital Port Louis, will the new 140 rooms and suites hotel offer the swiftest access yet to a major hotel brand for visitors to Mauritius.

Being close to the airport also reflects in the names of the hotel's bar and restaurant, the latter aptly named '1933' when the first international flight took off from Mauritius while the bar / lounge is called 'Piper Navajo', the aircraft type used for the first scheduled flights between Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Said Jean-Eric Sirop, the General Manager of the Holiday Inn Mauritius Airport on the occasion of the opening of the hotel: *'I'm delighted to announce the opening of Mauritius' first Holiday Inn. The combination of the*

building and ground's unique character, with its prime location close to both the airport and Mauritius' beautiful beaches, will make this a popular hotel for business and leisure guests. We are proud to be part of such a globally celebrated brand and have no doubt that guests from across the globe will enjoy the comfort and value that our hotel and team deliver'.

In turn did Mr. Pascal Gauvin, IHG's Chief Operating Officer, for India, Middle East and Africa, according to the media release received from IHG, say: ***'We've been looking forward to bringing Holiday Inn to Mauritius and today we welcome guests through the hotel's doors. As the island's popularity amongst holidaymakers and business travellers continues to increase, this Holiday Inn will provide an affordable, quality option on Mauritius' scenic south east coast'.***

Meanwhile will Emirates commence flights with the Airbus A380 from the 16th of December onwards between Dubai and Mauritius, substituting the B777 on one of their two daily frequencies to the tropical island, meeting a key demand by the private sector, in particular the hospitality industry, for more seats. The recent modernization of the airport includes facilities to handle the giant double-decker A380, making it at present the only Indian Ocean island destination to which this aircraft type is being deployed.

Watch this space for regular and breaking news from the hospitality and aviation sectors across the Indian Ocean islands.

Seychelles

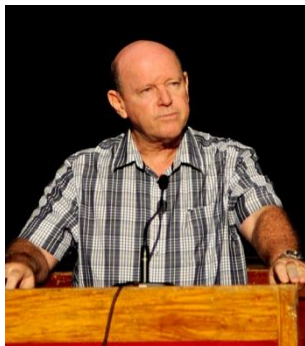
SEYCHELLES COUNCIL OF MINISTERS APPROVE CHANGES IN TOURISM INSTITUTIONS

(Posted 13th December 2013)



2014 will be a landmark year for Seychelles' tourism and culture public sector institutions, as major reforms, realignments and organizational changes are coming into effect, after the Council of Ministers approved the proposals made.

The Ministry of Tourism and Culture, led by Minister Alain St. Ange and two Principal Secretaries for Tourism and for Culture, will take the overall lead vis a vis policy, standards and regulations, among other functions and have existing and new departments subordinate to it to allow for the best possible coordination of all the various missions allocated to those statutory bodies.



(Minister St. Ange seen here addressing the meeting earlier this week in Victoria)

Minister St. Ange, when meeting all the concerned staff at the International Conference Centre in Victoria, explained the new structure and various changes as follows:

'The planning of this has been going for quite a while. Many a meeting has taken place and finally the proposed structure has been approved by the Council of Ministers, and it will come into place in the first two months of 2014. The aim has been to increase productivity, and to ensure high performance and the delivery of service within respective Departments, and also the delivery of service to our respective public or clients. It is very important that all staff are aware, that all their work and performance, will be under constant monitoring and

evaluation; which means that each individual will have to ensure, that he or she, is giving the highest level of service at all times, because this will have definitely have a significant impact on end of year appraisals’.

As of next year, according to information availed late yesterday, a new agency will be set up to run and manage major cultural events the government holds. As a result the events sections at the Seychelles Tourism Board, the National Arts Council (NAC) and the Seychelles Heritage Foundation, will merge to form the new **‘Creative Industries and National Events Agency (CINEA)’**. Continued the Minister in his explanation: **‘This has been necessary because the Government will be implementing the new Creative Industries Policy, as well as a new Strategy for Music Development, in accordance with UNESCO’**.

UNESCO experts who were in Seychelles in 2012 to help Seychelles draft its Music Policy and Music Strategy advised on the move that would be helping the Ministry of Tourism and Culture fulfil its commitment to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which Seychelles ratified in June 2005.

The new Creative Industries and National Events Agency (CINEA) will also be responsible for the promotion, development, and preservation of National Heritage Sites. The new agency will also house a division for events management, which includes all arts and cultural manifestation, festivals and carnivals, formerly organized separately and individually by the Department of Culture, the Tourism Board, the International Conference Centre or the National Arts Council.

Continued Minister St. Ange: **‘It is important for me to again re-state to avoid any misunderstanding or misrepresentation. No One, I repeat, No One will be losing their job, their employment through this coming change. A new body, a new administration, yes, but every staff member today working at the National Arts Council, the Heritage Foundation, the Events Department at the Seychelles Tourism Board and the International Conference Centre will be offered a new contract of employment simultaneously as the one body is phased out and the new one created. For all staff touched by this change think of the avenues ahead that create opportunities. Any moment can be seen as the darkest if you do not take time to talk, or the brightest if you get the right information from the right person.**

Also as of next year, the ministry will welcome the Kreol Institute – soon to be re-named the International Kreol Institute at the upcoming Indian Ocean Commission meeting in January 2014 to become part of the overall set up for culture and tourism in the country.

In regard of the future functions of the tourism board and the linkage with the Seychelles Tourism Academy the minister then added: **‘The Seychelles Tourism Board’s function will now focus only on marketing. The Ministry will assume the regulatory functions of products and standards as well as policy and international cooperation. The events management of the Seychelles Tourism Board will move into the new national body, the Creative Industries and National Events Agency, whereas the Seychelles Tourism Academy (STA) will become a more autonomous body and will now fall directly under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture. To recall, the Seychelles Tourism Academy, is currently being rebuilt and it is set to reopen next year.**

As he ended his address at the general staff meeting, Minister St. Ange also said that there would be further discussions with staff in specific sections such as the Film Classification Unit which will also experience some change next year.

The way things are now shaping up suggest that Seychelles Tourism, and Culture for that matter, will be operating in a leaner, more streamlined and more functional environment come next year, and the anticipated move of the Ministry into new premises, where at least the Seychelles Tourism Board if not other agencies too will find a new home, will serve notice to the Seychelles’ competitors for tourists, that it will not be *‘business as usual’*. A new spirit will propel the Seychelles forward and with a new organizational set up the tourism powers that be will no doubt redouble the archipelago’s efforts to not just continue their marketing juggernaut, but setting their combined eyes on new visitor records while showcasing tourism attractions, cultural attractions, music and history in a hitherto never seen display of unity, which will lend them strength and power to succeed. ***Seychelles, truly Another World.***



(Minister St. Ange, the two Principal Secretaries and all the staff present)

SCAA ANNOUNCES NEW DOMESTIC TERMINAL FOR MAHE'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

(Posted 11th December 2013)



The impressive performance by Air Seychelles' domestic services, which offers over 20 daily departures between the international airport on Mahe and the aerodrome of the second largest island of Praslin as well as charters to other islands across the entire archipelago, has now prompted the Seychelles Civil Aviation Authority to announce the construction of a new domestic terminal towards much improved check in, departure lounge and arrival lounge facilities. The present terminal will upon completion of the 24 month construction period serve purely for arrivals, while the check in and departure lounge will be located in a newly constructed adjoining building.

Seychelles' Minister for Home Affairs and Transport, Joel Morgan, earlier this week laid the foundation stone for the new terminal, which comes hot on the heels of inaugurating additional cargo processing sheds last week. Local aviation sources attribute these developments at the airport, including the launch in October of a new VIP Terminal by Air Seychelles, to the growing success of the national airline, which has embarked on a strong growth path after an initial period of consolidation since Etihad, Abu Dhabi's national airline, has come on board as an equity partner.

In October did Air Seychelles announce, as reported here from location, the purchase of three brand new Twin Otter DHC6-400 aircraft, with delivery due in 2015, which will coincide with the completion of the new domestic terminal. Two weeks ago then did Air Seychelles announce the acquisition of an Airbus A319 which will be delivered to the airline in Q4 of 2014, with expanded destinations, to be served by this aircraft, given as Antananarivo / Madagascar, St. Denis / Reunion and Mumbai / India.

Said a Victoria based source when passing the information on late yesterday: ***'SCAA has in the recent past engaged in a range of projects, which have modernized our international airport. New navigation equipment, embracing the new ICAO navigation standards, the new cargo facility and now the new domestic terminal. Air Seychelles has seen passenger numbers rise by double digit percentage since last year, not only to Praslin but also for the charters to other islands.'***

This speaks of the newfound success of Air Seychelles which makes further infrastructure development by SCAA a priority. Apart from cruise passengers all our visitors come by air, this year more than ever before, and it is important that their first and last impression of the Seychelles, at the airport, is favourable. Tourism is our most important business in the Seychelles and we are doing what it takes to make the stay of our visitors from the moment they land to the moment they board their return flight as pleasant and memorable as possible'.

The Seychelles Civil Aviation Authority in July celebrated 41 years of being the regulatory body for aviation in the Seychelles and is headed by Gilbert Faure as CEO and Capt. David Savy as Chairman of the Board.