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Third edition September 2013

JOHANNESBURG SHINES IN DARKNESS

(Posted 08th September 2013)



Joburg held to ransom screamed the headline when I arrived in South Africa’s industrial and commercial capital city of Johannesburg, which had the previous night been plunged into darkness and in many parts still was off power, as a result of alleged sabotage by staff. We in Uganda are of course used to power outages, and while suggestions of sabotage are thankfully on the rare side, there however are plenty of other suggestions on the Twitter and FB timelines as to the causes of such blackouts, which in some parts of the Kampala metropolitan area are as regular as day gives way to night. Some of the reasons floated are outright funny, some are outright acid, some truly hit home but all contain a grain or a sack of grains of truth.

In South Africa the reason was, or so the media suggested, that Johannesburg’s City Power was trying to eliminate overtime payments, which in some cases apparently tripled employees income, as the company struggled to stay financially afloat. Whatever the true reasons, it is now a police matter who are seeking to speak with dozens of City

Power staff who allegedly used their key cards to gain access to installations, switched off the power and then calmly walked away after plunging the city into darkness.

Tourists, as were the locals of course, were left bewildered as to the immediate causes of the city wide power cuts, and though hotels immediately switched to back up power generators, only those residences and businesses with such equipment on standby could 'light up' whereas the rest of the city had to do with candles or torches.

The city authorities vowed to bring the culprits to book, investigating the use of key cards and looking at CCTV footage but the harm which was done is hard to undo and a reputation once lost is well near impossible to restore. And what a change it was for me to fly away the next day again, out into the Indian Ocean, across Madagascar to Reunion, where in stark contrast the lights during an entire week did never flicker, or go out, unless oneself turned the switch to turn the light off when leaving the hotel room. Read all about the stories from Reunion right here, where else.

Uganda News

BRUSSELS AIRLINES CHANGES TRAFFIC DAYS FOR WINTER SCHEDULE

(Posted 13th September 2013)



Brussels Airlines announced changed traffic days to their flights from the European capital to Entebbe, via Kigali, for their winter schedule which will come into effect on the 29th October.

Currently SN operates on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, which will then switch to Monday, Wednesday and Saturday. The departure time from Brussels will for all flights be 10.25 hrs while out of Entebbe the flights will leave back for Brussels at 23.59 hrs on Saturday and 23.40 hrs on Monday and Wednesday.

Brussels Airlines uses an Airbus A330 on the route with their business class continuing to make waves a year after it was progressively introduced on all their long haul aircraft, featuring stand alone single seat 'suites' aptly named the 'King's or 'Queen's chair'. Visit www.brusselsairlines.com for more information on schedules, destinations in Europe, North America and across East and West Africa.

Kenya News

FLY 540 UPS FLIGHTS TO LODWAR

(Posted 14th September 2013)



Fly 540 has with immediate effect increased their flights from Nairobi to Lodwar, a town in Northern Kenya.

According to information received from the airline's PR agency there will now be an added departure on Tuesday leaving the capital at 6 a.m., up to now the only day without any flight. Monday, Wednesday and Friday will with immediate effect have a second daily departure, leaving Nairobi at 3 p.m. from the temporary domestic terminal at the Cargo section, which became necessary due to a major fire just over a month ago at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. Fly 540 is Kenya's only airline to offer scheduled flights to Lodwar. The airline's CEO Don Smith was quoted in the media release to have said: ***'We are pleased that we are able to offer our passengers greater availability and flexibility on this route. Our flights are low cost and offer passengers a more convenient form of transport than travelling by road. The new flights reflect the increasing demand for domestic air travel in Kenya, and Fly540's commitment to meet that demand'***.

At the same time has the airline's new website gone on line which offers passengers a more user-friendly experience as well as greater access to up to date information. In addition, the website now includes a '***Special Offers***' section and an option for passengers to sign-up to the Fly540 mailing list to receive promotions and updates about Fly540's routes.

Fly 540 also launched their Passenger Charter, which contains the following commitments to passengers and the general public:

Passenger Charter

Passenger promise – what you can expect from us

At Fly540 Kenya, we put the passenger at the heart of everything we do and make the following promises to ensure that you receive the best possible service:

Safety

- Underpinning everything we do is a fundamental commitment to passenger safety.

Reliability

- We promise to provide a reliable service that you can trust. This year, so far, we have a record 92% of flights arriving on time to their destination.

Simplicity

- We promise to make our service as easy to use as possible – saving you time and effort.

Customer service

- We promise to give you excellent customer service from the moment you book your flight, to arrival at your destination. All of our staff and cabin crew receive comprehensive customer service training.

Value

- We promise to provide a service of the highest quality possible, for affordable prices – giving you excellent value for money.

CSR

- We promise to support the communities and environment in which we operate.

Visit www.fly540.com for more information on destination, schedules and fares.

JAMBO JET IS TAKING SHAPE WITH KEY APPOINTMENTS

(Posted 13th September 2013)



Kenya Airways yesterday announced the appointment of Willem Alexander Hondius as the Chief Executive of Jambo Jet, the low cost addition to the Kenya Airways Group, which is thought to take off within months now to take over a number of domestic, and perhaps even regional routes from parent company Kenya Airways. At the same time did KQ confirm that Mr. Ayisi Makatiani will be chairing the board of directors of the subsidiary company.

Dr. Titus Naikuni, CEO and Group Managing Director of Kenya Airways, had this to say when making the announcement: ***‘I am pleased to announce the appointment of Willem Hondius as Chief Executive Officer of Jambo Jet Ltd, reporting into the Jambo Jet Board which is chaired by Mr. Ayisi Makatiani. Willem brings to the airline a wealth of experience in the aviation industry especially in the low-cost airline area and will be instrumental in steering the operations of the new carrier. There is still a lot of work to be done before operations start and this appointment is a major milestone in that process’.***

Before his appointment was William the General Manager of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines for Eastern Africa based in Nairobi since 2012 but also served as project manager for Jambo Jet Limited. Between 2005 and 2012, he was executive vice-president and chief commercial officer of Transavia Airlines a wholly-owned subsidiary of KLM. Welcome to William and best of success in handling the final run up to the long awaited launch of Jambo Jet.

EDELWEISS MAY DROP MOMBASA ROUTE FOR SUMMER 2014

(Posted 12th September 2013)



Information is emerging that Edelweiss, the Swiss charter airline, is considering halting their charter flights to Mombasa for the summer season 2014, after flying to the Kenya coast for a number of years regardless of season. Should this information be confirmed, and every effort is being made to obtain this confirmation, it would be a hammer blow for tourism to the Kenya coast, as Air Berlin too has already a while ago indicated they would halt flights at the end of the high season 2013/14.

With current occupancies still way below those of a year ago, the hospitality industry is getting increasingly concerned and restless, and many responses received here over the announcement by the Kenya's minister in charge of tourism, when she revealed the full year data for 2012/13, indicate that a barrage of questions are floating about over the budget government will allocate to KTB to roll out a global recovery marketing campaign with the private sector in tow, to fill those beds along the Kenya coast.

While it is clear that some resorts are doing way better than others, it is those others the industry is worried about, as one resort in Diani will reportedly close down soon while others are trying to stay open for the sake of their staff, yet drawing a red line in the sand when their financial circumstances will become so dire that they find it impossible to pay salaries and utilities from their cash flow.

Challenging times ahead for sure and all the more a reason to market Kenya's coastal resorts in the wider region and beyond on the African continent, since value for money has never been much of an issue at the coast with special offers waiting to be snapped up. Watch this space for future updates.

KENYA'S ANNUAL TOURISM REPORT RAISES MORE QUESTIONS

(Posted 12th September 2013)



When tourism cabinet secretary Phyllis Kandie announced the details of the 2012/13 annual tourism report, for the period of July 2012 to June 2013 (Kenya's financial year), the data gave cause for more questions than it provided answers for, as far as senior stakeholders in the tourism industry are concerned.

'It is very important to have the correct figures at hand, but they look discouraging. What we as a sector need to come up with is a strategy of marketing ourselves across the world. Existing markets need reassurance. New and emerging markets need special measures like marketing and sales missions, open days in key cities for the travel trade and generally a good will campaign. We need to sit down as stakeholders and map out the way forward. To do that we need to be certain of the budget the country has and will give to KTB. If KTB's resources are not boosted, much of what we could do or should do will remain in the talk sphere and not move to the action column. This is the time to join hands and everybody put their ideas and resources together like we did in 2008 with the Kenya Airways led Mega Fam Trip' contributed a regular source to the topic.

Kenya suffered a reduction in arrivals from 1.3 to 1.2 million, a decline of 9 percent, while revenues over the same period reduced from 104 billion Kenya Shillings to 96 billion Kenya Shillings, a decline of 7 percent.

The highest single reduction of arrivals by nations came from the UK with 18 percent over the previous year, attributed to the hostile anti travel advisories and negative publicity over hyped up fears for visitor safety. ***'Those allegations and insinuations did us a lot of damage but let us be clear, that apart from those two incidents perpetrated by Al Shabab, which resulted in Kenya taking military action alongside the UN mission in Somalia, no visitors have come to harm. Security for visitors remains high and strict and the suggestions by UK officials, here in Kenya from the High Commission and from London were patently unjustified'*** added another source when discussing the likely reasons over the steep decline.

In contrast have regional travelers taken to Kenya's beaches, with Uganda for instance up by 44 percent in the statistics, obviously aware that the true situation on the ground was far from the panic talk Western media peddled among their populations. Visitor numbers from India went up by 10 percent, aided no doubt by Kenya Airways' launch of flights to Dehli while visitor numbers from the UAE rose by a staggering 54 percent as a result of more flights, closer links with travel agents and tour whole sellers and the positive feedback given by the media vis a vis visits by journalists to Kenya. Mrs. Kandie though will have to do a bit better than just saying ***'We are deliberately***

investing more in emerging markets, the Middle East and domestic tourism’ by putting budget figures to such activities and finally coming clean over just how much money KTB will now get in the 2013/14 financial year. ‘The industry is ready to come on board for joint activities but we need to agree on the strategy, the places and the timing and most important, let us have the truth about how much KTB can spend this year so that the expense is shared accordingly. And by the way, no word on the impact of the new taxes which may yet show a very detrimental side effect and also impact on visitor numbers because of the tariff increases’ quipped another regular. True that is of course, so time to sit down and put the combined heads of private and public sector together to drive Kenya’s tourism industry forward. Watch this space.

NO BOARDS FOR KENYA TOURISM PARASTATALS AS LAW GOES FOR REVIEW

(Posted 11th September 2013)



Kenya’s Cabinet Secretary in charge of tourism, Mrs. Phyllis Kandie, yesterday responded to mounting pressure over lack of board appointments for the tourism parastatals bodies formed under the most recent version of the Tourism Act, when she stated that the law had to be taken back to the national assembly for amendments as some sections were making their implementation well near impossible.

‘We took the Act for review. It has been difficult to implement it as it is. It’s critical we get it right’ she was quoted as having said when asked the question following the launch of the final countdown for the International Eco- and Sustainable Tourism Conference later this month in Nairobi.

Tourism stakeholders are clearly divided over this issue, with some in their feedback demanding that boards are appointed and appointees subjected to the current requirement of getting approval from the national assembly, while others in fact asked for the entire law to be re-written.

‘This might give the chance to review the tourism law in its entirety. Not just about those difficult sections about board member approvals which in many other sectors is not required. I personally find the entire law bad because it has created a number of bodies all of which need offices, staff, boards and so on. Yet, in many other African countries such functions are bundled under one roof. Look at Rwanda. They got RDB and tourism promotion and wildlife conservation is handled by one major department of RDB. Zimbabwe is another case, they have a tourism authority. Tanzania is toying with forming exactly that, a tourism authority which then handles contentious issues inhouse and not need more costly meetings and retreats to find more costly compromises. We should use this chance to take a fresh look at things. Already the country is near breaking our back with taxes to pay for all those constitutional changes and new institutions when at the time not one side submitted a detailed cost for us all. Let us not have 6 or 7 or more tourism bodies but one active well facilitated authority with some semi autonomy where the private sector plays a key role and which then shapes our tourism future along our own agreed principles’ wrote a source over several emails last night, when exchanging views on this surely contentious issue. It is perhaps a time when KTF, KATO, KAHK, KATA, EcoTourism Kenya and other key stakeholders can and even should sit down, take stock, look at the cost involved and the effectiveness – and the downside of the potential squabbles and arguments over turf rights – of the current system and then decide to bring a united position to parliament. Watch this space.

KENYA AIRWAYS MOVES REGIONAL FLIGHT HANDLING TO UNIT 3

(Posted 09th September 2013)



Kenya Airways has over the weekend completed shifting their regional flight handling to Unit 3, the former domestic unit which was transformed into an international arrival unit following the fire a month ago which in part destroyed the international arrival hall and adjoining facilities.

Effective therefore immediately will ALL flights from Nairobi to Entebbe, Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar, Kilimanjaro, Mwanza, Kigali, Bujumbura, Addis Ababa and Juba leave from Unit 3 and passengers booked on any of these flights have to present themselves for check in there. This change applies to Precision Air flights too. All other international flights continue to be handled in Unit 2 while all domestic services will for the foreseeable future be processed at the Cargo Terminal. International arrivals for Kenya Airways and her partner airlines under the Sky Team alliance will remain in the tented temporary facilities for the time being, but as and when this changes be sure you watch this space to get timely updates.

KENYA WILDLIFE SERVICE MOVES RHINOS TO NEW SANCTUARY

(Posted 09th September 2013)



Last week did KWS complete the move of 21 eastern black rhinos to the newly established Borana Rhino Sanctuary in Laikipia. 10 of the prized animals were taken from the Nakuru National Park while a further 11 came from the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, both of which are thought to have come up to their carrying capacity for this species of rhinos. The move was financed by World Wide Fund for Nature, in short WWF, The US Fish and Wildlife Department and the Zurich Zoo.

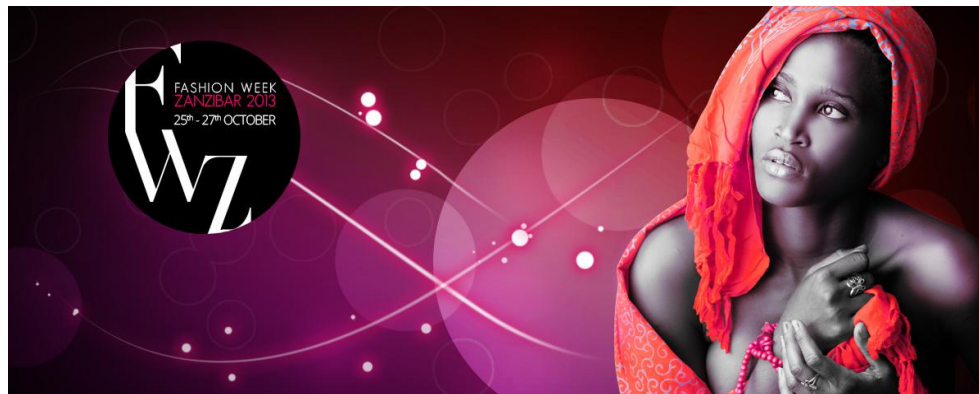
The new sanctuary hopes to establish a wider geographical spread of the eastern black rhinos, also allowing for 'surplus animals' to be moved there, now that the infrastructure exists, from other conservancies, sanctuaries and parks, where the numbers may have grown too large to sustain the populations. Kenya has since the 1980's relied on fenced sanctuaries for rhinos to ensure their protection and worked together with such privately owned conservancies like Ol Pejeta, Solio and Lewa Downs, and the establishment of new areas dedicated to conservation of crucially endangered wildlife like the Borana sanctuary is a pointer that the concept has worked well. The WWF in charge of the exercise Mr. Robert Ndeti confirmed WWF's participation and continued support for wildlife management organizations in the Eastern African region.

Only a week earlier was a senior staff of WWF also visiting Uganda's Rhino Sanctuary at Ziwa after having meetings with UWA and the Ugandan Ministry for Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities. Ziwa has over the years shown sustained success in their breeding programme with an almost unprecedented rate of reproduction by their adult females and has for some time now eyed the option of being considered for a regional relocation of the eastern black species to Ziwa where a carrying capacity of over 60 rhinos, both eastern black and southern white, has been established.

Tanzania News

FASHION WEEK ZANZIBAR SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 25 – 27

(Posted 10th September 2013)



Fashion events across Eastern Africa have gained greater prominence in recent years, and regional as well as local event have drawn the spotlight on the creativity which can be found among local fashion designers who proudly include and feature local fabrics, colours and emblems to thrill fashion aficionados. In fact, fashion shows and fashion week like the Swahili Fashion Week or the Nairobi Fashion Week are becoming tourism attractions in their own right as more and more visitors in country at the time take the opportunity to spend an evening attending these events, tipped off by their safari operators or the concierge at their hotel when asking 'what to do tonight'.

The Zanzibar Fashion Week, a brain child of Javed Jafferji, Farokh Abdalla and Adnan Abbas, is one such event which has taken root and which keeps gaining in popularity. Side events like a Dhow race, a film festival and fashion workshops are supplemented by added activities like model casting, merchandise presentations and the all important, some say most important fashion parties ahead and during the event.

For more information on the event programme, the locations, the designers, the models and so much more visit www.zanzibarfashionweek.com where one can also sign up for regular mailings of newsletters and breaking news.

MANGO READY TO LAUNCH SECOND FLIGHT TO ZANZIBAR

(Posted 10th September 2013)



Mango, one of South Africa's low cost carriers, will be adding a second weekly flight from Johannesburg to Zanzibar, it was just learned. Mango will in fact be moving from their present format of a charter operation to scheduled operations, effective 21st of September.

Announced here at the time that Mango was launching flights from South Africa to the *Spice Island* of Zanzibar, this latest development is good news for the Zanzibar tourism sector, which has of late been wrestling with some negative publicity and been working hard to promote holidays to the island, where a number of new resorts have been opened or are going to open soon, adding more beds to the market.

It is understood from a reliable source in Tanzania that the TCAA has in fact granted traffic rights to Mango for as many as three scheduled flights a week between South Africa and Tanzania, and plans are already afoot, subject to satisfactory loadfactors for the two flights, to add a third one over the upcoming end of year high season, for at least December and January.

The source also confirmed that Mango was granted additional traffic rights to commence at some point in the future flights to Kilimanjaro, though at this moment in time no concrete plans could be ascertained to begin operations any time soon. Watch this space for breaking as well as regular news from East Africa's vibrant aviation scene.

Rwanda News

KIGALI MEETING DRIVES SINGLE TOURIST VISA AGENDA FORWARD

(Posted 13th September 2013)



Experts from Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda met in Kigali yesterday to advance discussions on how to implement the directive of their heads of state to have a single tourist Visa available from 2014 onwards, to enhance the flow of tourist visitors across the three countries without any added fees. The same meeting also discussed the implementation of passport free travel for citizens of the three, simply using existing ID cards in the case of Kenya and Rwanda and of voters cards in the case of Uganda, as there the process to issue national ID cards has just gone underway.

The three countries have of late found themselves spearheading developments which under the auspices of the East African Community were long overdue but failed to take off over constant objections and querulations by one member country in particular. Uganda hosted a first summit of the '*Coalition of the Willing*' a few months ago in Entebbe, and inspired by the range of mutual agreements did Kenya host another summit just two weeks ago, during which yet more progress was made and key decisions taken on the issue of connecting the three by rail. Another summit will be held in two months time in Kigali to review what the panel of experts has agreed on before implementing Visa and ID travel arrangements.

The cost of 100 US Dollars for a Visa covering all three countries will be shared equitably with each country being allocated 30 US Dollars while the first entry point country will get a further 10 US Dollars for administration cost. Officials were hard pressed to alleviate suggestions that Tanzania and Burundi were left out of the exercise, but with the writing on the wall it was clear that the three would no longer be held back in implementing what is good for them while leaving the doors open for others to join, as and when, if ever, they were ready to do so.

The information was received with great anticipation by the tourism sectors of the three countries where hopes are high that the measures will increase visitor numbers and revenues. It was pointed out though that provisions must be made for duly registered expatriates resident in any of the three countries, holding a work permit or a residency permit, that they too can from January onwards travel freely across the borders without having to pay Visa fees, which currently acted as a major obstacle for expats to spend their local vacations in the region and instead often opted to visit such places like South Africa or the UAE where they are not subject to Visa fees. Watch this space as progress is made towards the common tourist Visa and for the announcement when it will go '*live*'.

RWANDA MOVES FAST TO PREPARE FOR MOMBASA – KAMPALA – KIGALI RAIL LINK

(Posted 10th September 2013)



Following the two tripartite summits between presidents Kagame, Kenyatta and Museveni, during which the East African countries agreed on a host of joint infrastructure and logistics projects to be implemented on the fast track, has Rwanda now announced that they will immediately embark on detailed studies about the proposed rail link which is to connect the Indian Ocean port of Mombasa with Uganda, Rwanda and other hinterland countries. A team has been put into place since the last summit in Mombasa to look at possible routes for the railway, while also studying the cost of the project, the cost involved in compulsory acquisition of land and the compensation of land owners towards that end. Infrastructure minister Prof. Silas Lwakabamba confirmed that since construction of the new rail link in Kenya was due to commence before the end of the year, Rwanda too had no time to waste but to progress with all due haste.

Notably though, and perhaps as a fallout of the recent expulsion of thousands of people of Rwandan origin from Tanzania, in the process of which much of their property was looted without any visible intervention by Tanzanian security organs, suggesting that the openly committed crimes were sanctioned at high levels of government, as well as the ill considered demand by Tanzania's president Kikwete that Rwanda ought to negotiate with the killer militias, has the rail project linking Kigali to the Tanzanian town of Isaka gone into silent mode. ***'You cannot expect this to be business as usual when our intelligence is insulted. We cannot and never will negotiate with these terrorists who are hiding in Congo under protection of the UN, the Kinshasa regime and now even Tanzanian troops. In my humble view and in the view of most Rwandans this was an insult of the highest order and showed us that Kikwete either has a hidden agenda or else is woefully misinformed and misguided as to the situation on the ground in Congo and the sentiments of the Rwandan people about the genocide 19 ½ years ago. People of Rwandan descent were driven like livestock from their homes and ran out of Tanzania, many of whom never knew another home. That is ethnic cleansing, that is a revenge act of a man who could not own up to his mistake and move on. It shows his true character. We know we can rely on our friends in Kenya and Uganda when it comes to the railway project, especially Uganda because they also face similar hostile groups who are equally protected in Congo. There are consequences for every action and what is happening now is a broad realignment of a coalition, as you put it, of the willing, ready to implement decisions they feel strongly about and were held back by the constant veto of one. It is like the UN Security Council which is also turned into a lame panel when***

there are constant threats to use a veto. Now, on a tripartite basis Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya are moving on key issues which have long been blocked. South Sudan is coming on board and Burundi too will follow because we can easily extend that rail line to Bujumbura. There is no point to split our limited resources to build two railway links, one to the Ugandan border and one to Isaka. We as a country have to consider where our long term interests are better taken care of and what happened over the past weeks simply cannot be in our best interest' contributed a regular source from Kigali in the course of several email exchanges since yesterday when Prof. Lwakabamba made his announcement.

The planned standard gauge railway, from Mombasa via Nairobi, the Ugandan border and Kampala to Kigali is estimated to cost about 5 billion Shillings and will largely be financed by China on condition that Chinese companies be given the contracts and key components of such contracts were already signed up when President Kenyatta recently visited China. Lesson drawn should be watch your mouth and engage brain before uttering nonsense but it is likely to be a lesson wasted on the one who most needs to learn it. Watch this space.

RWANDAIR FINALISES JUBA LAUNCH

(Posted 09th September 2013)



Come September 21st will RwandAir launch their nonstop flights to Juba, three times a week. Originally planned to route as an extension of the flights to Entebbe, the Rwandan national airline ran into objections over 5th freedom rights between Entebbe and Juba, which while giving passengers a third daily flight option were clearly not going down too well with and Ugandan Civil Aviation Authority and the airline already on the route.

RwandAir will use their new CRJ900NextGen jet for the flights providing both business and economy class options for passengers, and fares, according to the Senior Manager Sales Mrs. Alice Katiti, will start at US Dollar 350 return, all taxes and fees included.

The airline, ahead of the launch, expressed their confidence that the new route will be accepted by travellers from both cities, with in particular the Southern Sudanese now being able to connect from Juba, via Kigali, to the entire East Africa, to Johannesburg and Dubai but also to Brazzaville, Libreville, Lagos and Accra, with Douala and Abidjan coming on line soon too.

Watch this space for regular and breaking news from Eastern Africa's vibrant aviation scene.

South Sudan News

SOUTH SUPREME LAUNCHES JUBA – KHARTOUM FLIGHTS

(Posted 10th September 2013)



South Sudan's South Supreme Airlines on Sunday launched their first commercial flight between the South Sudan capital Juba and the Sudanese capital of Khartoum, reportedly using an Antonov A26 for the service.

The flights became possible following the establishment in end February of the South Sudan Civil Aviation Authority, which has since licensed SSA and granted them their air operator certificate before giving them designated carrier status for flights to Khartoum.

South Supreme, according to information received from Juba, seeks to lease B737-300 aircraft for the flights to Khartoum and other destinations in East Africa, probably cognizant of the fact that Antonov aircraft do not enjoy the best of reputation in the region.

Meanwhile hangs the fate of the proposed national airline for South Sudan in the balance as a key partners, Turkey's AtlasJet, apparently pulled out of the joint venture talks, leaving yet another airline project in South Sudan in limbo.

After a period of mutual isolation spurred by hostile acts from Khartoum which included threats to block the crucial oil pipeline for South Sudan's oil exports, have the two sides apparently eased their positions following a bilateral meeting last week between the two presidents. Happy Landings to crews and passengers.

Madagascar News

AIR MADAGASCAR FIRST TO SIGN ON TO VANILLA ISLAND CONCEPT

(Posted 11th September 2013)



Air Madagascar was the first airline from within the newly formed Vanilla Island Tourism Organization to sign a formal cooperation agreement with them. When learning of the announcement made in La Reunion on Tuesday, that VITO, now facilitated with a budget of Euros 650.000 for the rest of their financial year and already recognized by UNWTO, which Secretary General Dr. Taleb Rifai was present on the occasion, airline executives flew promptly into La Reunion that same evening, worked out the modalities for the MoU, crossed the t's and dotted the I's before signing the next morning and then returning back to Antananarivo.

During their brief stay in La Reunion they also took the opportunity to announce the planned launch of a flight from Antananarivo to Mahe / Seychelles, commencing early next, year, which will greatly improve the connectivity between the two islands.

It was then also learned yesterday that the Ministers responsible for tourism, transport and joined by the top management of the four main Vanilla Islands' airlines, Air Austral from La Reunion, Air Mauritius, Air Madagascar and Air Seychelles will meet in October on the Comoros, where they are expected to discuss and finalize a Memorandum of Understanding of increased cooperation.

Many questions by journalists present at the Reunion meetings, focused on present and future connectivity by air between the islands to facilitate easy and affordable access for tourists booked to visit one of them but wishing to also visit another. Ministers agreed that more needed to be done to enhance the present level of flights between the various islands and affirmed that the creation of a VITO airpass was put on the agenda, as was a modus operandum for the airlines vis a vis joint flights. Air Austral had already committed to relaunching flights between La Reunion and Mahe / Seychelles, though no details could be obtained if these flights would be an extension of the current flights to Mauritius and if so, with full 5th freedom traffic rights to uplift passengers between the waypoint and the final destination too.



(Smiles after the signing, from left to right Eric Koller (President of Madagascar Tourism Association), Hughes Ratsiferana (CEO, Air Madagascar), Minister St. Ange (President Iles Vanilles) & Pascal Viroleau (CEO, Iles Vanilles)

What is clear, and the swift reaction of Air Madagascar was evidence towards that end, is the new spirit of cooperation now that VITO is in place and an entity to reckon with. Close cooperation – 5th freedom rights included – will be limited to inter island cooperation and only benefit airlines from member countries and as such provide mutually beneficial arrangements for the individual airlines, which will remain separate companies but intensify marketing and logistical cooperation to create a wider network of destination and frequencies among the VITA island members. Watch this space of regular updates from the aviation scene of the Indian Ocean islands.

Mauritius News

CONCESSIONARY TICKETS TO REUNION OFFERED FOR LONG HAUL PASSENGERS ON AIR MAURITIUS

(Posted 11th September 2013)



Mauritius Tourism Minister Michael Sik Yuen yesterday, on the occasion of the launch of the Vanilla Island Tourism Organization (VITO), made a breaking news announcement when answering a question from a journalist about affordably connectivity between the islands. ***‘Air Mauritius will with immediate effect offer passengers who arrive on their long haul flights from Australia, China and Europe, a free fare onward ticket to La Reunion. All passengers have to pay are the applicable taxes on such a ticket, but the fare itself is free.’***

This development followed an earlier statement made by Seychelles’ Alain St. Ange, Minister of Tourism and Culture, who had confirmed that Air Austral would resume flights from Reunion to the Seychelles from early next year onwards. On the question of Visa for such visitors wanting at the spur of a moment in fact fly to Reunion to discover the often breathtaking vistas in the centre of the island, Mr. Didier Robert, President of the Regional Council of Reunion, then added that steps had already been taken to ease the issuing of Visa in the interest of boosting visitor numbers. It is understood that South African citizens can now enter Reunion already under a substantially relaxed Visa regime, while visitors from China would next enjoy similar privileges to be followed by a number of other nationalities.

Air Mauritius, which has undergone some significant restructuring and cost cutting measures, had pruned routes deemed unprofitable and then started to focus on opening up new services, like their flight to Beijing which the market has accepted well, offering the first direct route between China and Mauritius.

Mauritius is, after newly admitted Maldives, the island with the second most arrivals from among the Vanilla Island Tourism Organization’s members and has for long led the statistics of the Indian Ocean islands off the African coast. Watch this space for breaking and regular news from the Indian Ocean aviation scene.

Reunion News

VANILLA ISLAND MEETING ADMITS MALDIVES AS A FULL MEMBER

(Posted 10th September 2013)



In breaking news it was confirmed that the present members of the Indian Ocean Vanilla Island group have earlier today admitted the Maldives as its seventh member. The group now comprises La Reunion, Mauritius (including Rodrigues), Madagascar (including Nosy Bay), Mayotte, the Comoros, the Seychelles (including Praslin and La Digue) and as of today the Maldives. The group’s president, the Minister for Tourism and Culture in the Seychelles, also broke the news that they just received 650.000 Euro budget support from the European Union, allowing them to immediately start marketing the group with emphasis on web based activities.

The La Reunion Resolution covered a total of 9 key aspects of the ‘cooperative’, among them improvements to the entire hospitality sector, covering accommodation and the gastronomy, the immediate start to have their respective transport ministers work out an open sky agreement for the islands airlines. This includes Air Mauritius, Air Seychelles, Air Austral and Air Madagascar to start with.

The group is also finalizing their new logo and will present same at the upcoming Top Resa tourism show to create a new brand identity for the Indian Ocean Vanilla Island members. The group also pledged to engage immediately with the world’s major cruiselines in order to discuss the creation of itineraries for cruise ships to sail between the islands, or include them on round the world cruises with the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands group committed to come

on board for sales and marketing missions. A 3 year action plan will be drawn up by the secretariat, which will remain in La Reunion, headed by Pascal Viroleau, the CEO of Reunion Tourism and among the tasks this action plan will include is the future invitation to Zanzibar, Sri Lanka and the Mozambique Indian Ocean islands to join the group. The UNWTO Secretary General Dr. Taleb Rifai, who was present at the media briefing, confirmed that the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands group will be joining UNWTO as an affiliate member with immediate effect.



(Seen here making the various announcements is Alain St. Ange, Minister for Tourism and Culture, Seychelles, President of the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands group and Member of the Executive Committee of UNWTO with Dr. Taleb Rifai, Secretary General of UNWTO on his right).

It was also confirmed that the individual tourist boards will continue to market themselves at key tourism trade fairs as they did in the past, but that their stands will be visibly marked as members of the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands group and that those stands will be in close vicinity to each others. Congratulations to the Maldives on their admission to this circle of Indian Ocean islands committed to make an impact and make the proverbial waves to promote themselves as a newly emerged region on the world tourism map. Watch this space.

REUNION SIGNS MOU WITH UNWTO

(Posted 10th September 2013)



(Seen here at the press conference from right to left Mr. Didier Robert, President of the region of La Reunion, Dr. Taleb Rifai, Secretary General of UNWTO and Alain St. Ange, Minister for Tourism and Culture, Seychelles and current President of the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands)

Yesterday afternoon, at the Regional Council Building in Saint Denis, did the UNWTO Secretary General sign a comprehensive MoU with the President of the region of La Reunion Mr. Didier Robert, ahead of the organization's global conference on Sustainable Tourism Development in Small Islands. This conference brings together tourism ministers and stakeholders from as far as the Caribbean to the islands in the South Pacific, all united by the challenges plaguing their planners, politicians and people, namely rising sea levels due to climate change, the need for conservation of sparse island resources, increasing connectivity to and from often remote ocean locations to the rest of the world, the need to create value and jobs out of tourism for their growing populations and being able to put themselves on the global tourism map.

Bringing the UNWTO conference to La Reunion is by many seen as a result of the efforts by the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands president Alain St. Ange, who has for years been promoting the concept of cooperation, sharing of resources and building alliances by promoting each others' strengths and unique selling propositions. Alain St. Ange

was in August elected to the UNWTO Executive Council, the first time the Seychelles have been represented at this key organ of the UN's World Tourism Organization. Dr. Rifai in fact not only applauded the cooperation between the Vanilla Islands, and their adding, subject to the approval by the membership later today, inclusion of such more distant islands like the Maldives and Sri Lanka, but also pledged UNWTO's support for them to develop along the lines of the Caribbean Tourism Organization and ASEAN, which over the past decades have made enormous strides in marketing their regions and putting them, alongside individual islands, on the global tourism map.

The panel agreed to tackle the question of making the Vanilla Islands more accessible to visitors, in particular visitors from Africa and other new and emerging markets, acknowledging the challenges of Visa to those islands which are part of the European Union, like La Reunion and Mayotte. Other issues raised like connectivity between the islands by air, on a regular basis with direct flights instead of having to fly via waypoints on the African mainland too will be on the agenda in the upcoming and future meetings. In addition was confirmation received to questions raised by this correspondent to engage with the major global cruise lines to create, promote and then sell cruise itineraries across the entire range of Indian Ocean islands, which offer such varied attractions as the volcanoes of La Reunion, the national parks of Madagascar, the Creole culture and pristine waters of the Seychelles to the cultural monuments of the Sri Lankan highlands. Clearly there is a new dawn breaking for the Indian Ocean Vanilla Islands and a new spirit of hope is sweeping through the corridors of the members' tourism establishments in expectation of still better days to come. Watch this space.

UNWTO COMES TO REUNION TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABLE ISLAND TOURISM

(Posted 09th September 2013)



The French Indian Ocean island of La Reunion this week will play host to the tourism leaders of small island countries from around the world, who have come to Saint Denis to discuss a host of agenda items.

More will be said in coming days about those of course, but for now let me take a preliminary look at the island itself. Air Austral is Reunion's main link to neighbouring islands, to the African mainland and of course to several overseas destinations, led – needless to mention – by daily flights to Paris on a state of the art B777 aircraft.

I arrived from Johannesburg / South Africa yesterday evening in a modern B737-800 and the check in staff at the O. R. Tambo International Airport were spot on when they told me '***We could upgrade you but I can give you an entire row of seats to yourself so you can stretch out***' which ultimately proved entirely right. I shall still want my upgrade to the business class on the way back to compare catering with economy but that said, the tray of goodies which came for lunch was shaming the business class fare of several airlines I have travelled with over the past year.



(Goodies goodies for lunch on Air Austral flight UU 372 from Johannesburg to Saint Denis)

Considering the new aircraft and such superior catering, the positive mood of the crew and their ever cheerful posture in the face of yours truly pulling his usual tests on them to see how alert they were and how they responded to seemingly endless questions of another hapless tourist, they broke into fits of laughter when at the end of the flight I introduced myself and told them what I was up to. Full marks for the Air Austral crew and here is the evidence of the catering served, in ***Economy Class***.

Two types of cheese, two different rolls, the starter including a generous portion of smoked salmon, a steak as tender as to melt on my tongue and a meringue for desert along with coffee and tea. Drinks, including wines, beers, juices and soft drinks were proffered until well after lunch had ended and tea, my personal poison, was served steaming hot right up to the time the cockpit crew ordered the cabin to be cleared ready for landing.

What at that time came into view were the volcanic mountain peaks of La Reunion, an island some 2.500 km² large and of which some 40 percent have been turned into a UNESCO Word Heritage Site.



Landing was butter smooth on the single runway of the Roland Garros International Airport and ongoing expansion work was evidence that the infrastructure of the airport was being boosted ahead of growing visitor numbers.

Visitors from countries not exempted of Visa requirements need to have a Visa to France, or a Schengen Visa SHOWING '*and La Reunion*' an issue I surely will raise during the conference sessions and media briefings, as it makes visits by African mainland visitors most difficult of course, unlike fellow Vanilla Island Seychelles, which requires NO VISA at all. But, that said, La Reunion is not at liberty to offer a similar deal, being part of France and hence bound by Schengen regulations.

Unlike at my first visit many years ago, when it was a typical Indian Ocean island airport with lots of corrugated iron sheets, the new building is all glass and marble, which was later replicated as I was driven to my hotel across First World style highways, intersections and then roads, not one pothole in sight and traffic as disciplined as can be. Check in at the Mercure Creolia Hotel was smooth, all ready to sign as my particulars had been religiously transmitted to the reception's check in form, and in no time was I installed in my room.

The room, and a separate TripAdvisor review will of course as usual follow, contained all one needs for a few days stay on business and it worked out well to have brought adapters for the European type standard sockets which would otherwise have defeated our East African three pin.

As dusk settled over the city, the lights went on stretching to the horizon, where the dark suggested the Indian Ocean extended towards Africa.



(Night sky over Saint Denis / La Reunion)

The island with some very distinct and visible peaks, the highest, Piton des Neiges rising some 3.070 metres above sea level and several others, lower but just as wildly impressive, like Petit Matarum at 2.957, Grand Benare at 2.898, Piton des la Fournaise at 2.631 and Piton Maito at 2.205 offers almost untamed landscapes, canyons which seemingly have never seen the step of man on their bottom, steep escarpments not made for the faint of heart and

then suddenly alleys lined by trees as in rural France, turning a corner and opening into meandering vales full of sugar cane, moving in the wind not far from those magical white beaches.

There will be much to be discovered over the next week, much to be shared and of course much to be written about the UNWTO Conference on Sustainable Tourism in Small Islands and the Vanilla Island group meeting preceding the main event.

For now is it as usual *Watch This Space* because there will be many tales told, images shared and the desire in my readers awakened, wanting to come here too to experience this arguably wildest – in terms of landscapes at least – island of the Indian Ocean and yet in contrast it is also so organized, but not of the German or Swiss gender but in a way so very French, and I say this as a first compliment after only one day. Baguettes, coffee, croissants and all, but now off to see more, experience more and then, what else, write more.

Seychelles News

ISLE SOLEIL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BACK ON TRACK

(Posted 13th September 2013)



Following extensive examinations on the initial plans for the development of the Isle Soleil, with particular emphasis on tourism projects, was a new version launched a few days ago, which includes stakeholder input after taking advice and critique on board. Following the formal introduction of the project last year, which was reported here, a time out was agreed when a flood of comments and observations were made at stakeholder meetings and in public forum, compelling the promoters to go back to the drawing board with the aim to improve the various aspects of the development.

Barry Faure, who is also the Chairman of the Seychelles Tourism Board, announced the changes which include setting more land aside for tourism purposes, extending the lease period up to 99 years and introducing a new policy on the development of villas among other incentives the government put in place.

New tender documents are now available from the Seychelles Investment Board and the closing deadline for proposals has been set for the 02nd December. A major marketing campaign towards that date will be launched in early October to allow for enough time for potential investors to make their own studies before committing to the project in earnest. More details can be access via the following web link which outline the Seychelles' government plans to make more reclaimed land available to meet the development needs over the next two to three decades: http://www.virtalseychelles.sc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=141%3Anew-land-for-new-projects-&catid=55&Itemid=117

AND yes, Gill Staden is back from one of her outings into the parks and brought back quite a few stories to tell ...

As I write this I am overlooking the floodplain at Nanzhila Plains Safari Lodge. Josh and I have been on the road for 11 days and I was too tired to drive today! So we are enjoying Nanzhila and will be on our way tomorrow to Livingstone. Hopefully, then, this Weekly will hit the internet and reach your inboxes.

We have had an amazing trip:

Day 1: Nanzhila Plains Safari Lodge, Southern Kafue

Day 2: Musungwa Lodge, Itzhi-Tezhi

Day 3-4: Mukambi Safari Lodge, Mumbwa GMA

Events on the Way

13-15 September: Fishing Competition.

Eagles Rest, Siavonga

20-21 September: Golf Competition.

Victoria Falls Town

28 September: World Rhino Day

2-4 October: Fishing Competition.

Kariba Town

26 October: Zambezi Kayak Festival.

Livingstone

26-31 October: World Adventure

Travel Summit. Windhoek

Day 5-6: Leopard Lodge, Lunga Luswishi GMA

Day 7: Mukambi Safari Lodge

Day 8-9: Kaingu Safari Lodge, Namwala GMA

Day 10-11: Nanzhila Plains Safari Lodge

Day 12: Home? I jolly well hope so. We are travelled out and I have no clean clothes!

Overall impression of the trip is that Kafue National Park is an amazing park but that we have a lot of work to do in order to make it a first class destination.

Roads

We found that some of the roads are excellent but others are horrid. Notable in the horrid category is the Itezhi-Tezhi Road to the Lusaka-Mongu Road. The 110km took us 4½ hours. Because of this road, Itezhi-Tezhi is virtually cut off from the rest of Zambia. The other really nasty bit of Zambian ‘road-age’ was the Mumbwa-Kasempa Road. Another dirt road which had not been graded for years, it seems. We travelled along it for an hour, covering 20 km, and I turned back because I couldn’t take any more. Roads in the park were generally good with the odd bad stretches but, sometimes we don’t care too much about park roads because bad roads can be part of the enjoyment.

Bushfires

Most of the park was either burned or in the process of being burned. Personally, I don’t like any burning of the bush and neither do tortoises which get caught up in them ... and all the other small creatures which live in the soil. The trees are blackened the plants are dead.



I know that many people say that it is best to do an ‘early burn’ because, if the bush burns in October when it is really hot, much more damage is done to the environment. If only we could stop burning altogether we would have a much better environment – less erosion, more plant diversity, better wildlife ...

Wildlife

The wildlife was OK. We didn’t see an awful lot. The park is still recovering from the devastation of the 1990s when the wildlife was decimated. I had thought that the northern section of the park would be fine, but the wildlife there was also pretty thin on the ground. I am told, in the north, the wildlife often moves to Busanga Plains at this time of the year. That maybe so; it may also be that we were just unlucky.

However, we were told that poaching is still an issue. There are poachers who shoot for the pot but there are others who shoot for commercial gain. I was told that there was a growing market for bushmeat in Lusaka with the up-and-coming middle class who like to have it for dinner. I don’t know how true this is and, with the concern by Zambians about their natural environment you wouldn’t believe it. But, maybe ...

At this point I gave up because I had no internet. The rest of the Weekly is done in a bit of a rush, just to get something out. Mostly ‘copy and paste’, but it will mean that I can work nicely on the next Weekly without worrying about the weeks gone by ...

From the Zambia Weekly

Solwezi to become 5th international airport?

Solwezi Airport is ready to become an international airport following the extension of its runway from 1.3 kilometres to 2.8 kilometres. The runway has also been widened, allowing for large aircraft such as Boeing 737. The \$9 million project was funded by First Quantum Minerals, reported the Daily Mail. Zambia has four international airports in Lusaka, Ndola, Livingstone and Mfuwe.

UNWTO contract irregularities

Auditor General Anna Chifungula has handed over a report to the Anti-Corruption Commission on officials from the Ministry of Tourism believed to have perpetrated irregularities in awarding contracts for the UNWTO conference. The irregularities were picked up by Tourism Minister Sylvia Masebo, who suspended the officials, pending further investigations, reported the Post.

Fewer business licences

Government has eliminated 113 business licences out of the targeted 170 deemed to be unnecessary – as part of its private sector development reform programme. In 2008, an inventory recommended that out of Zambia's 517 business licences, 170 should be eliminated, 57 be reclassified and 99 be amalgamated into 21.

British Airways will suspend its 3-times-a-week

London-Lusaka route with effect from 27 October – due to low revenues – after more than 70 years in Zambia. Instead, the airline intends to increase the number of flights to Accra in Ghana and Entebbe in Uganda. The local tourism industry was quick to protest, as the UK is Zambia's main source of European visitors – tourists and businesspeople alike. Zambia Tourism Board said it would mobilise other stakeholders to try and persuade British Airways to stay. Earlier this year, British Airways stopped flying to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, and it is still to resume its route to Harare in Zimbabwe, which was cancelled in 2007. After pulling out of Zambia, British Airways will now be serving eight sub-Saharan African countries directly from London, including Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mauritius, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa (Johannesburg and Cape Town) and Uganda.

ZIMBABWE

Zim elephants a jumbo problem

SCHALK MOUTON, Times Live

The Zimbabwe National Parks and Wildlife Authority said in an article in the Zimbabwe Gazette last week that the country's elephant population was 100 000 strong and becoming too large to manage. Zimparks spokesman Caroline Washaya-Moyo said the elephant population - the third-biggest in the world - was putting a strain on the resources in the country's parks and the animals were becoming easy targets for poachers.

"Law enforcement requires operational equipment such as patrol kits, uniforms, radio communication kits, vehicles, boats, tracking equipment [eg GPS]," said Washaya-Moyo.

"Currently, most of the existing field equipment is old and obsolete. Poachers are getting sophisticated. In some situations poachers are using hi-tech gear including night-vision equipment, veterinary tranquillisers, silencers and helicopters."

Washaya-Moyo said that, unlike in other countries, Zimparks was not funded by the government. The parks authority currently owned a stockpile of 62 374.33 tons of ivory worth \$15.6-million (about R159.5-million), which it was not allowed to export as it is bound by regulations from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites).

"The authority is therefore saying elephant ivory in store represents animals that are already dead. Why should we not use the dead to look after living animals?" she asked.

Conservationists in Zimbabwe are, however, sceptical about the numbers of elephants quoted.

The last comprehensive elephant census in the country was done in 2001, when their largest population, in Hwange National Park, was counted. Elephant estimates from the International Union for Conservation of Nature's elephant database from last year indicates an estimated 76930 animals in the country with only 47366 being "definite".

"Any figure of elephant numbers is a spurious guess," said Sally Wynn, spokesman for the Zambezi Society.

Johnny Rodrigues, chairman of the Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force, said the parks authority was trying to spread "propaganda" to get Cites to allow an ivory sale.

"A couple of months back the numbers of elephant in the country were between 40000 and 45000 and that was sustainable. Now [the number of elephant] is 100 000. How do they come up with those figures?" he said.

Cites banned the commercial sale of ivory in 1989, but in 1997 allowed Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe to sell their existing stock of ivory to Japan in 1999 and allowed a second sale that included South Africa in 2008.

Daphne Sheldrick, a conservationist based in Nairobi, last week said about 36000 elephants were killed in Africa last year, and elephants could be extinct in 12 years.

Zimbabwe: Govt Urged to Enact Tougher Poaching Penalties After Mass Elephant Poisoning

By Alex Bell, SW Radio Africa

The deliberate poisoning of more than 40 elephants in the Hwange National Park has sparked outcry across the world, with a growing chorus of voices demanding that stricter poaching penalties be implemented.

The elephants died after members of a suspected poaching syndicate laced salt with the toxic chemical cyanide and distributed the salt in a drinking pool used by elephants in Hwange. The carcasses of the animals were discovered late last month after park rangers heard gunshots within the park.

Investigations by the police resulted in the grisly discovery of the elephants, with their tusks removed. Further investigations led the police to nearby Mafu homestead, where six suspected members of the poaching gang were arrested and 17 elephant tusks were recovered.

The story has made international news headlines and around the world people have been calling for tough measures to be taken to punish the poachers and prevent a further incident like this from happening.

Johnny Rodrigues, the Chairman of the Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force, said that current poaching penalties are "very lenient," and often "nothing more than a slap on the wrist." He told SW Radio Africa that while stricter anti-poaching laws are necessary, this was only part of a much bigger problem.

"The main problem we have is with high unemployment. There is a market for people to be paid by syndicates to kill the animals, in return for ready money," Rodrigues said.

He explained that it is desperation more than criminality that is fuelling the poaching crisis, with even National Parks staff (who have not been paid in many months) sometimes being implicated in providing poachers with information, in return for cash.

"There's a thriving market in Zimbabwe for poaching syndicates and it is disgusting. This (the incident in Hwange) will have a huge impact on other animals, especially your scavengers like vultures who eat the meat and then also die," Rodrigues said.

He added: "There is also a human side, because people, if they find it, will take the meat and eat it. So it's not just the animals at risk here."

Although it cannot be confirmed where this syndicate accessed the cyanide, observers who spoke to SW Radio Africa said it was no coincidence that many of the gold mining firms in Zimbabwe are Chinese run and cyanide has been used for years in Zimbabwe's gold mining industry. The highly toxic substance is used to separate the gold from the ore it is contained in.

And, as Rodrigues said: "There are so many Chinese in Zimbabwe with ready money who are interested in getting their hands on the ivory."

Hwange Appeal

HWANGE NATIONAL PARK is very dry this year and needs support.

The residents of Bulawayo are doing all they can through Wildlife Environment Zimbabwe (WEZ) but they can't do it alone. At the moment we have a drilling rig in the Park cleaning out a few critical boreholes but we need to do more and whilst the rig is there it would be great if we could find the money to do a few more to make the exercise worthwhile.

Friends of Hwange Trust is doing all it can keeping the pumps going. We held a fundraising dinner in May and although we raised a reasonable sum of money it is not enough to get the Park through the dry season and definitely not enough to spend on major rehabilitation like the work being done at the moment on the boreholes.

Please support this great National Park by generously donating as a matter of urgency.

Bank: NMB, Branch: Borrowdale

Branch Code: 11106

Acc No: 260093754

Acc Name: Friends of Hwange Trust

CROSSING INTO BOTSWANA

A very new regulation has been introduced by the Botswana immigration department. This has been in effect since July 2013.

When travelling with children under the age of 16 years the following documents are required:

- Original or Certified copy of their Birth Certificate (safer to take the Original along so that they can see it alongside the Certified Copy)
- An affidavit signed by a commissioner of oaths stating that either/or both parents are in fact the parents of that particular child.

If you do not comply with these regulations, they will turn the whole family away until the documents are to their satisfaction.
