

AFRICA



Travel Magazine

The Smiling Coast

Gambia hosts ATA

Profiles of other
African countries.

**Includes chapter
from new book
on Timbuktu**

Photo by Karen Hoffman



(1) Editor at James Island, near Banjul, a remnant of the West African slave trade. (2) New ATA President, Hon. Fatou Mass Jobe-Njie, The Gambia Minister of Tourism and Culture with Edward Bergman, ATA Executive Director.

ATA IN REVIEW

by **Jerry W. Bird**,
Editor and Publisher



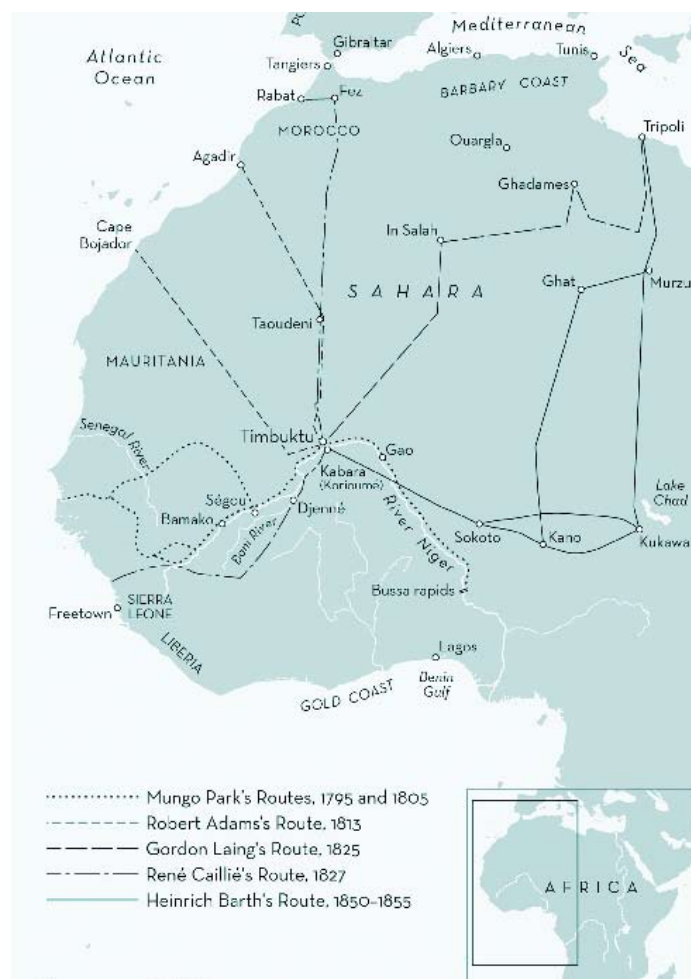
This Yearbook Edition starts in Banjul, The Gambia at the Africa Travel Association 35th Annual Congress, where a new ATA President, **Hon. Fatou Mass Jobe-Njie**, (above) takes office, and concludes with a chapter from “To Timbuktu for a Haircut” by **Rick Antonson**. As Rick relates his present day journey through West Africa, he recalls the trials and tribulations of five explorers who came here between 1795 and 1855. The map on the opposite page traces the routes taken by Mungo Park, Robert Adams, Gordon Laing, Rene Caillie and Heinrich Barth. Our flight from JFK International Airport in New York was a joy - thanks to Arik Airlines who treated our ATA media group with tender loving care. A special thanks to our host **Bob Brunner**, Arik’s North American manager. During an overnight stop in Lagos, Nigeria, we visited Arik headquarters and were treated to dinner and an overnight stay at the Protea Hotel Ikeja. Gambia proved to be a gracious host.

ATA delegates enjoyed relaxing cruises on the great river from which the country's name is derived. This brought to mind an initial goal of our two travel magazines - the combination of Air and Marine Tourism. Both topics were covered by speaker **Lelei LeLaulu**, who provided much food for thought. Speaking of food, West African cuisine was in the forefront, as exemplified by our two Culinary Superstars - Gambian **Ida Chiam**, the attractive lady on our magazine's cover, and Niche Market panelist **Pierre Thiam**, owner of Le Grand Dakar Restaurant and author of a cookbook *Yolele, Recipes from the Heart of Senegal*.

The first of my Tourism Minister Interviews is with **Hon. Baba Hamadou** of Cameroon, who positioned his country on the world stage in terms of travel and tourism. Cameroon has been a solid supporter of ATA during our 15 years as publishers. Another rock solid supporter is **Hon. Shamsa Mwanguna**, Tanzania's Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, who presided at the Board's 10th Annual Awards and gala evening.

Area Tours

We paid a brief visit to James Island and the



remains of Fort James slave post, then crossed the river to Juffureh, Alex Haley's ancestral home, now housing a small museum on the Slave Trade in the Senegambia region. Haley is author of 'Roots,' a best selling book and TV series featuring Kunta

Kinte. Delegate and media group and guest activities also included a trip to President Jammeh's home village, and Abuko Nature Park, with its museum and crocodile pool. Our last visit was to Makasutu Cultural Forest, site of a unique ecological resort, relatively new and becoming popular with visitors including honeymooners.

There's much more to talk about -- so why not turn the page and discover

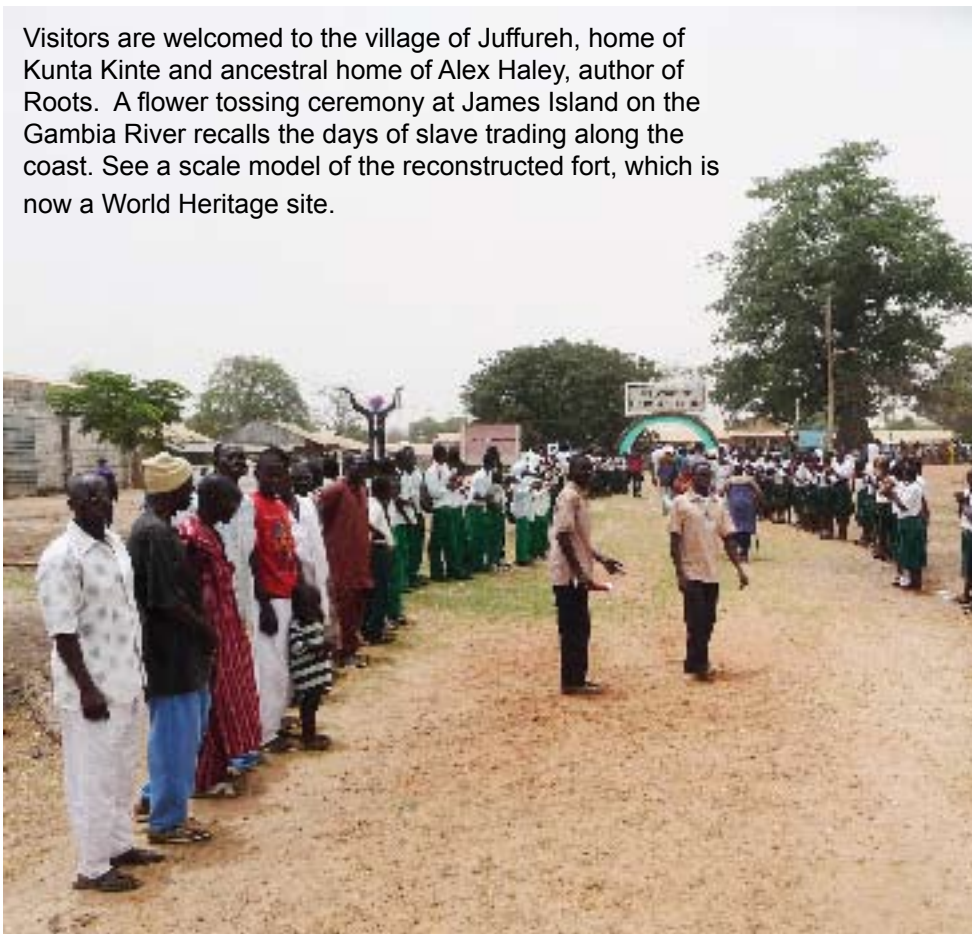
our impressions of The Gambia, ATA and the people we love to write about.

Photos: Edward Bergman, ATA Executive Director (left) and dignitaries from The Gambia and other Africa member countries

celebrate this successful event. For more information on Gambia Tourism and the Africa Travel Association, visit our websites - www.africa-ata.org and www.africa-travelassociation.org



Visitors are welcomed to the village of Juffureh, home of Kunta Kinte and ancestral home of Alex Haley, author of *Roots*. A flower tossing ceremony at James Island on the Gambia River recalls the days of slave trading along the coast. See a scale model of the reconstructed fort, which is now a World Heritage site.



GAMBIA SAYS MANY HAPPY RETURNS TO AFRICA'S SAFEST,

by Mugnette Goufrani

Most ATA 35th Congress delegates saw The Gambia for the first time. Before adding our personal comments, let's set the stage by having the host country speak for itself.

I am The Gambia ...

I am proud to be host country of the Africa Travel Association 35th Annual Congress. I occupy a narrow area on the Gambia River, surrounded by Senegal to the north, east and south. My western boundary along the Atlantic Coast offers visitors some of Africa's most beautiful beaches with warm coastal waters and a tropical climate that is warm and humid year round. A former British colony, I became independent in, 1965. As President, H.E. Yahya AJJ Jammeh, stated recently concerning my promising future,

"We want to transform The Gambia into a trading, export oriented agricultural and manufacturing nation, thriving on free market policies and a vibrant private sector, sustained by a well educated, trained, skilled healthy, self reliant and enterprising population and in so doing bring to fruition this fundamental aim and aspiration of Vision 2020."

My Ethnic Roots

Many Americans know about me thanks to Alex Haley's bestseller and epic television docudrama "Roots," which tells the story of Kunta Kinte and his ancestral homeland of Juffureh. My population of 1.5 million includes the Mande, rural Mandinka and Atlantic peoples - Wolof and Fulani. They live harmoniously in mixed communities, freely exercising their religious and cultural traditions. My people are also widely recognized for their genuine friendliness and hospitality. While English is the official language, Wolof and Fulani are spoken in towns and Mandinka in rural areas. About 85% of my population is Muslim, with a fairly large Christian minority. My capital, main port and commercial center along the River Gambia is Banjul (300,000 population).

My Economy

Tourism and Agriculture account for 23% of my gross domestic product and employ 75% of my workforce. In 2000, around 100,000 tourists visited me, providing an estimated 10,000 Gambians with stable employment. Fishing and manufacturing industries offer opportunities for expansion, with plastics and confectionaries as key products. I am

an important entry point for goods to be distributed to neighboring countries - the logical "gateway" into West Africa for the trans-shipment of imports and exports. .

My Rich Heritage

The World Heritage Committee Inscribes 24 New Sites on the World Heritage List, including the West African Republic of The Gambia. New natural sites include James Island and related locations, which present a testimony to the main periods and facets of the encounter between Africans and Europeans along the River Gambia, a continuum that stretched from pre-colonial and pre-slavery times to independence. The site is particularly significant for its relation to the beginning and abolition of the slave trade. It documents early access to the interior of Africa.

For more details online visit

www.visitthegambia or e-mail info@gta.gm

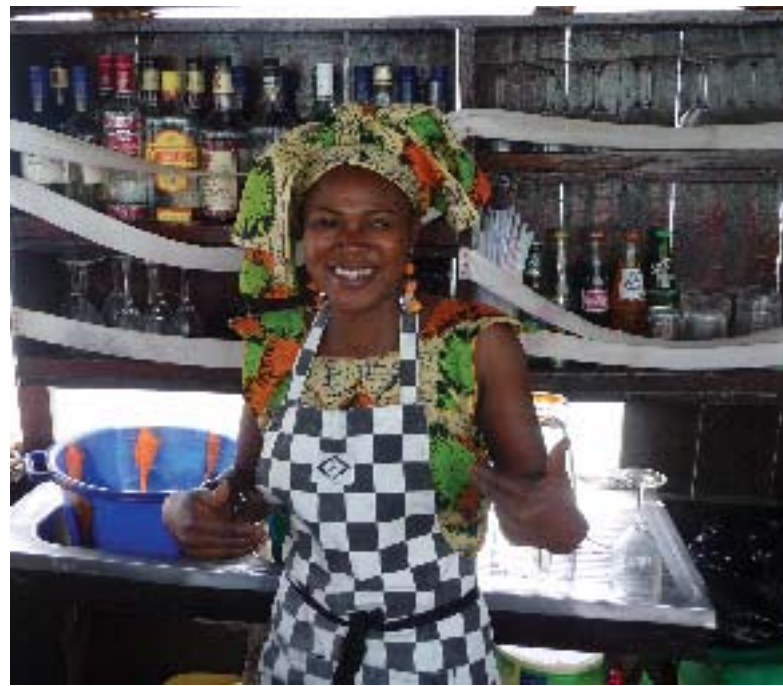
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MOST FRIENDLY, PEACEFUL AND LAID BACK COUNTRY





ATA ANNOUNCES TOURISM INDUSTRY MILESTONES

BANJUL: The Africa Travel Association's 35th Annual Congress ended with a commitment among Africa's tourism stakeholders to boost efforts to develop new public-private partnerships devoted to advocating for and developing the tourism industry in Africa. Honorable Fatou Mass Jobe-Njie, The Gambia Minister of Tourism and Culture and incoming ATA President, closed the event that was attended by more than 300 participants as well as

press from Africa, Europe and North America. In her closing remarks, the Minister highlighted the importance of tourism as an engine for economic growth and prosperity. She also said, "This may mark the end of a successful event, but it also marks the beginning of our

joint efforts to work in partnership with the public and private sector to promote the travel and tourism industry to and within Africa. The Gambia was a proud

host of this event and hopes that our infectious spirit will inspire other countries and tourism stakeholders to take action."

Record of achievements

At the meeting, ATA announced a number of milestones for making a strong case for increased investment in Africa's tourism industry. "ATA members and friends and supporters have shown that we are truly committed to promoting tourism to Africa as a means to promoting socio-economic development," said Edward Bergman, ATA Executive Director. "I know that when we return to our home countries, we will continue to work in partnership with tourism





REACHED AT ITS 35TH ANNUAL CONGRESS

stakeholders in the public and private sectors to promote the industry and inspire others to follow our example.”

Key milestones

Congress milestones include the following: The announcement of the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Africa Union and ATA. The MOU, which was signed by Honorable Shamsa Mwangunga, outgoing ATA President, Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism of the United Republic of Tanzania, and Dr. Elham M.A. Ibrahim, Africa Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, declares that the two organiza-

tions undertake a commitment to develop collaboration in the area of travel and tourism promotion. The launch of a joint effort by New York University's Africa House, the World Bank and ATA to make a case for developing Africa's tourism industry with the preparation of the joint publication *The State of Tourism in Africa*. Using facts, figures and stories, the report paints a picture of the current and potential impact of tourism on both a country's and a region's development strategy. The report also advocates for increased attention and resource allocation from national governments to the tourism industry.

Variety of workshops

During the industry workshops and networking events, ATA and UNWTO engaged in discussions on how the two global organizations would pursue collaboration and cooperation in the areas of travel and tourism development in Africa in the future.

The Gambia Organizing Committee announced its commitment to hosting the first “Carbon Off-Set Free” ATA congress. In addition to planting seedlings to grow an “ATA Forest” at the GIG Forest, the Committee limited the “carbon footprint” of the congress by ordering produce from the award-



GAMBIA HOSTS ATA DELEGATES AND WORLD JOURNALISTS

winning project Gambia is Good. GIG sources all its produce from local producers.

As a sign of his commitment to developing The Gambia's tourism industry, President of The Republic of the Gambia, Sheikh Professor Dr. Alhaji Yaya A. J. J. Jammeh, hosted the delegates at a number of special events, including a visit to his home village, Kanilai, and a gala dinner and evening of entertainment at the Sheraton Hotel Spa and Resort.

Gala evenings

In what has become an ATA congress tradition over the last few years, Shamsa Mwangunga (MP), ATA President and Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism of the United Republic of Tan-

zania hosted a special evening of dinner and dancing held at the five-star Ocean Bay Hotel.

On the first of two Host Country days, delegates visited James Island and Juffreh. James Island is a designated UNESCO World

Heritage Site, and was a base of transportation of slaves from The Gambia to other parts of the world.

At James Island, delegates participated in a special memorial, in which they floated flower wreathes down the River Gambia and stood in a moment of silence. Delegates were also asked to consider making a donation for the restoration of the jetty to James

Island. The project was organized in cooperation with U.S. Ambassador Barry Wells. Following the day-long visit to James Island and Juffreh, the delegates enjoyed a special cocktail reception at the luxury hotel, Coco Ocean Resort and Spa. The evening event was co-hosted by the US Ambassador to The Gambia, Honorable Barry Wells.

Under the banner "Discover Africa's Genuine Warmth," the ATA-Gambia event brought together tourism ministers and more than 300 travel industry professionals from across Africa, Europe and North America for four days to explore the latest issues facing the travel trade industry, learn about "Destination Gambia," and advocate for increased resources to the tourism industry.

Wide range of topics

During the congress, delegates explored: Sustainable Tour-





WITH AN EXCITING ARRAY OF EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

ism, Innovative and Interactive Marketing, Niche Markets and Emerging Trends, Standards in the Hotel Market, Connecting the Africa Diaspora to Destination Africa, and Hospitality and Tourism Education in Africa. Special sessions were held on tourism and development, advocating for tourism resources, and partnerships with airlines serving Africa www.africatravelassociation.org. <http://www.visitthegambia.gm/>. www.africatravelassociation.wordpress.com.





ATA DELEGATES COMBINE BUSINESS WITH PLEASURE

UNWTO and ATA Discuss Ways to Cooperate with Tourism Development

The United Nations Tourism Organization attended the Africa Travel Association's 35th Annual Congress at the Sheraton Hotel Spa and Resort in The Gambia from May 17-20, 2010. More than 300 participants from Africa, Europe and North America, as well as the press, also attended the travel trade conference.

During the industry plenaries and networking events, ATA and UNWTO engaged in discussions on how the two global organizations would pursue collaboration and cooperation in the areas of travel and tourism development in Africa in the future.

ATA Executive Director Edward Bergman said, "We are pleased that UNWTO participated in our Gambia congress and we look forward to continuing discussions with the UN agency on how to build a case for tourism in Africa."

Mr. Bergman went on to say "We are

especially pleased that this discussion takes place in parallel to our discussions with the Africa Union on how we can promote travel, tourism and hospitality to "Destination Africa."

Public & Private Cooperation

Mr. Helder Tomas from the UNWTO Regional Program for Africa participated in the event on behalf of UNWTO. He arrived in The Gambia immediately following the 50th UNWTO Commission for Africa Meeting in Algiers, Algeria from May 17-19, 2010.

Mr. Tomas stressed the importance of the cooperation between the public and the private sectors for the development of tourism in Africa and the need for the sector to start speaking with one voice for the benefit of the industry.

The ATA Congress was hosted by The Gambian Ministry of Tourism and Culture, the Gambian Hotel

Association, and other Gambian stakeholders, including private and public sector members of the ATA Chapter in The Gambia.

"As a member state of UNWTO and as member of ATA, The Gambia is putting forth a strong proposal for the development of joint collaboration between the two organizations," said Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Kaliba Senghore.

African Union New Tourism Direction (Issued May 25, 2010)

The African Union in recognition of the Continent's need for a more cohesive execution of its tourism policy has signed a MOU with the Africa Travel Association (ATA) during the 35th ATA World Congress held in Banjul, The Gambia. The MOU calls for African Union Commission (AUC) and ATA to work together to advance Africa's agenda within the NEPAD context of the AUC Tourism Action Plan addressing following areas:

- Creation of an enabling policy and





E IN ACHIEVING A RECORD OF SUCCESS IN TOURISM

regulatory environment;

- Institutional capacity building;
- Promotion of tourism marketing;
- Promotion of research and development;
- Promotion of investments in tourism infrastructure and products;
- Mobilization of financial resources;
- Establishment of code of conduct and ethics for tourism; and
- Strengthening of human resources and quality assurance.

The signatory for AUC was the Honorable Dr. Elham M.A. Ibrahim, Commissioner Infrastructure & Energy. On behalf of ATA, the MOU was signed by the ATA President, the Honorable Mrs. Shamsa S. Mwanguanga, Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Dedicated to Africa

ATA since its inception in 1975 has represented Africa's public and private tourism sectors, many of the AU States are members of ATA, together with their national tourism boards, as are all

the major airlines, hotel groups, tour operators and front-line travel agents serving or having operations in or with Africa worldwide.

In an additional development of establishing a cohesive Africa tourism direction and in an effort of establishing as many tourism economies within the 53 AU States, ATA welcomed the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) presence and deliberation contributions at the Congress.

Action Plan

These developments are designed to crystallize and mainstream tourism into the individual AU States' economies and encourage greater collaboration between government and industry on marketing, planning and execution of the AUC Tourism Action Plan.

To operationally respond to these new ATA responsibilities, the ATA International Board of Directors has been supplemented by several high-level international tourism and economic development experts, notably Lelei

LeLaulu, Founder and President, Sensible Development Corps; Chair of the Leadership Council of George Washington University's School of Business Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management; Alvin Rosenbaum, Senior Advisor for CDC Development Solutions, and R.S.Mracky of the Africa Consult Group.

ATA Executive Director, Edward Bergman in heralding the 35th ATA Congress and its accomplishments, made a strong case for increased investment in Africa's tourism industry, and for Africa tourism and travel stakeholders to join the ATA new efforts and responsibilities: "ATA members and friends and supporters have shown that we are truly committed to promoting tourism to Africa as a means to promoting socio-economic development, I know that when we return to our home countries, we will continue to work in partnership with tourism stakeholders in the public and private sectors to promote the industry and inspire others to follow our example."



TRANSPORTATION PLAYS A KEY ROLE ON THE ATA



Support African Airlines Urges Development Expert

Banjul: Africa's airline systems were branded "colonial and cold war remnants" stunting the continent's progress by a development specialist who called on African governments to urge international donors to actively support Africa's airline industry.

Speaking to the African Travel Association Congress, which drew ministers and some 300 delegates to the capital of The Gambia, Lelei LeLaulu, co-chairman of Innovation for Sustainable Development Centre, said the current airline route systems "were designed by former colonial powers to fly Africa's riches and ex-patriots to their colonial

capitals -- and were further exacerbated by the East-West divisions of the Cold War." "These route systems have rarely served Africa's real needs -- and as a result going from West to East on the continent often requires transiting through a European capital," he observed. "Africa will not develop its full potential until these remnants of colonialism and the Cold War are sorted out," added LeLaulu, who is also an advisor to CDC Development Solutions.

LeLaulu who was involved in setting up sustainable tourism projects in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, urged that "airline transport systems in Africa be recognized as integral parts of infrastructure -- just like terrestrial highways, causeways and bridges."

"Infrastructure is essentially a means of sharing the wealth - - and that is precisely why airlines should be treated as Aerial Highways sharing the burgeoning global tourism receipts with the continent," he asserted. Furthermore, cautioned LeLaulu, "without aerial highways

transporting Africa's goods and services to global markets, many of our economies will wallow in the backwaters of the world economy."

LeLaulu, also chairman of the Leadership Council of George Washington University's Tourism and Hospitality Management Department in the School of Business, urged African governments to proactively support airlines serving the continent with subsidies, "and by buying large blocks of airplane seats for government travelers, in advance."

"International donors like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and bi-lateral supporters understand, and respond to, infrastructural needs and there is none more in need than aerial highways," opined LeLaulu.

About African Travel Association (ATA)

The Africa Travel Association was established as an international travel industry trade association in 1975 to promote travel, tourism and transport to and



CONGRESS AGENDA

within Africa, and to strengthen intra-Africa partnerships. ATA provides services to a broad range of members including: tourism, diaspora, culture, and sports ministers, tourism boards, airlines, hoteliers, travel agents, tour operators, travel trade media, public relations firms, consulting companies, non-profit organizations, businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises, and other organizations engaged in tourism promotion.

About Innovation for Sustainable Development Centre (ISDC)

Innovation for Sustainable Development is a non-profit US company which is focused on sustainable businesses, communities and environment. Its objective is to be a catalyst facilitating sustainability and carbon neutrality through learning, dialog, innovation, research, investment and partnership amongst cross-sector tourism stakeholder players. The focus is to find common grounds that meet the stakeholders' interests and facilitate the implementation of their initiatives and investments that foster responsible tourism related job creation, trade, preservation of culture and environment, and enhancing the economy of disadvantaged communities. Tourism stakeholders from government, NGO, travel & tourism industries, financial sector, academia, commerce & trade, facilities & infrastructure development, IT & communications, and science & medicine have the opportunity to interact and learn through global online communities and forums, as well as in person events

For further information

Contact: Peter Simons, press@innovation4sustainabledevelopment.org

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WEST AFRICAN COOPERATION URGED ON MARINE

Introduction by Jerry W. Bird



As founders of the successful Air and Marine Tourism Conference, first held in Vancouver, BC, Canada in 1997, we are proud to present the following article by Lelei LeLaulu, a regular speaker at African Travel Association events. Africa Travel Magazine is a strong supporter of Marine Tourism and our Air Highways Magazine of Open Skies has been active since 1995. Our grand experience on Moevenpick's Royal Lily following the ATA 34th World Congress in Cairo featured in our Northern Africa Yearbook Edition.

Visit Africa's Exotic Ports

During her career as a Travel Agent in Tahiti, Muguette Goufrani, our Associate Editor, worked for Matson Lines. Later, visiting West Africa on a cruise from Europe along the Gold Coast and Ivory Coast, she ended up working there for several years. Ms. Goufrani's views on Cruising Africa will appear in this section and in print. She lives in Vancouver, BC, Canada, one of the world's finest ports and center of the famous Love Boat

Cruises to Alaska. In my late teens I, worked aboard the paddle wheeler SS Keno on the fabled Yukon River system. Together we can give you some sound advice based on experience.

If you have news of a cruise experience e-mail: airhwy@smartt.com. For information on our previous Air and Marine Conference visit www.airhighways.com/air&marine.htm

West Africa Comments by Leili LeLaulu



DAKAR: Senegal and The Gambia should invest more in developing marine tourism, together, before the big cruise lines increase

arrivals in West Africa, urged a development expert.

"Once the big cruise companies start sailing into West Africa - which they will because of rising fuel prices and the need for fresh destinations," predicted Lelei LeLaulu, co-chairman of Innovation for Sustainable Development Centre, "if there are no local arrangements for their passengers, they are likely to build their own on-shore facilities, thereby decreasing cruise revenues for the host countries."

"West Africa should learn

from the Caribbean experience where cruise lines have built their own destinations with beaches, shops and touristic activities where infrastructure was absent," stated LeLaulu, a director of the Caribbean Media Exchange for Sustainable Tourism (CMEx), who admitted marine and cruise tourism can be good for Africa if managed sustainability.

Speaking to reporters at Senegal's first "Salon TICCA," showcasing tourism, cultural industries and art from Africa, LeLaulu, an adviser to the Africa Travel Association, said the Gambian River "should be developed to enhance the tourism offerings of the West African region."

"For example, you should be able to fly from the heart of the ancient desert kingdom of Timbuktu, in Mali, onto a traditional, or modern fishing boat, and sail between Dakar and Banjul in a matter of hours," asserted LeLaulu, who also advises CDC Development Solutions, a Washington DC agency which links tourism to business development in several African countries.



TOURISM. A HUGE OPPORTUNITY AWAITS

The marine, river and coastal assets of West Africa offered “huge opportunities for multi-day cruises which both Senegal and The Gambia can jointly develop - there are well over 500 species of birds and an abundance of wildlife to draw visitors to the river and its many waterways,” he opined.

“Gambian and Senegalese companies have the means to really turn the Gambian River into an attractive destination - it has rich human assets with several culturally distinct peoples sharing the waterway, as well as the architectural heritage of the Portuguese, French and English colonial periods,” LeLaulu asserted.

“And for those yearning for the fruits of the deep, it has some of the best fishing on the continent, with record deep water catches recorded off the West African coast,” he reported, “while the Gambian river delta and waterways boast a cook’s

seafood delight.” LeLaulu also urged more marine transportation: “there are high-speed boats in Senegal and Gambia which can ferry passengers between the two West African capitals in two

hours for those wanting to avoid driving to and from airports for the short Dakar-Banjul flight.”

Photo (left): Tahitian Princess cruise ship, Banjul, The Gambia



'The Oscars of the Travel Industry'
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GAMBIA'S NATURE RESORTS ARE A PROUD





EXAMPLE OF ECOTOURISM IN ACTION



A WELCOME VISIT TO THE MAKASUTU CULTURAL FOREST NEAR BANJUL

Photos: 1. Gordon LaiHein, the name is a Mandinka word, which translates into English, as “Holy Forest”. There is a history to this dwelling. Legend has it that tribal wars took place in this forest centuries ago. A particular King was also killed here, and his head, crown and throne were all buried in the forest. 2. Cruise ship visits the port of Banjul, proof of the vast potential for sea cruises in this friendly, accommodating country. Our popular professional guide from the Gambia Welcoming Committee made our travels a pleasure during and following host country day.



PIERRE THIAM PRESENTS HIS AUTHENTIC WESTERN

Introduction by Jerry W. Bird.



Meeting Pierre Thiam (left) at the ATA 35th Annual Congress was a highlight of my Gambia visit and the start of a long term friendship.

What an inspiration

he is to those of us who want to see authentic African foods earn their proper place in the culinary world. The following is from his presentation on Niche Markets.

Above photos: 1. Caldou seafood 2. Blakeye Pea Salad 3. Chicken Yassa 4. Duck 5. Rice Pudding 6. Avocado Mango Salad. 7. ThiebouJenn

Thinking beyond the traditional markets.

Experiencing the food of the country, region or area is now

considered a vital component of the tourism experience. Dining out is common among tourists and food is believed to rank very high in importance to tourists.

Many countries have developed a niche based on their traditional cuisines.

France is the obvious example. Whenever the country's name is mentioned one cannot help but think about good food. It has set an example and others have successfully followed its steps. Italy tops the list, with different cuisines in each region and towns famed for their special ingredient or dish. Japanese, Chinese and Indians, to name a few have cuisines that are drawing very diverse crowds. In fact, it's hard to visit southern Europe, SE Asia, Japan or Mexico without stumbling onto a food festival or event. Visitors plan their vacations around the dates of these gustatory celebrations. The 2006

Taste of Chicago brought in a record 3.6 million people.

In brief the product is ripe, but in the case of Africa certain challenges need to be addressed.

Challenges

Our first challenge is the stigma that Africa carries, especially when it comes to food. Westerners are used to the *image of the starving African*. Once, during a radio interview, an NPR journalist told me of how shocked she was when she read my book and saw the images of delicious and abundant food because in her own words, when people think of Africa, they think of scarcity.

A recent NY Times article titled "in Epicurean NY the challenge of Africa" (7/09) quotes a respected food critic saying that 'Africans vastly prefer tough, tough meat' and they "eat tree snails that are so tough you would have difficulty distinguishing it from a rubber



AFRICA CULINARY DELIGHTS AT THE ATA CONGRESS

tire”... “for them, eating something for dinner is not an appreciation of tenderness. It is an appreciation of toughness, and they want to really chew on the meat and enjoy it because meat is so rare”.

This is another case of xenophobic comments that simply repeats old prejudices toward Africa.

Solutions

Culinary Tourism is the hippest travel trend

Tourism boards must seize the great opportunities that exist in this niche by investing in development and promotion of the local cuisine. A few necessary steps must be taken:

- * Introduce tourists to local restaurants offering unique and memorable experiences
- * Introduce the local or regional cuisine
- * Organize market trips
- * Introduce traditional artisan products
- * Organize Food Festivals

* Organize cooking classes: Chef Demonstrations or in-the-kitchen **chef training** are two exciting ways to create an unforgettable dining experience for guests. Enhance these approaches further by showcasing a chef. African chefs must research our traditional recipes and then deconstruct them in order to present it beautifully and appetizingly in plates and in cookbooks. We need to **reinvent our cuisine**, using techniques and lessons from other food cultures while still keeping our authentic flavors (for example Roy Yamaguchi is credited by some industry observers with reinventing and reinterpreting Hawaiian cuisine. Opening his first restaurant in Honolulu, he became renowned for using only the freshest locally grown, raised, or harvested ingredients, and combining them in a unique style that married the best techniques and flavors of European

and Asian cooking.)

• Another way to dramatize our regional cuisine is to publish a cookbook with favorite recipes from the area, as well as local specialties from restaurants. Tourism boards must **realize that cookbooks are cultural products, as well as objectifications of culinary culture**. Rather than simply be understood as reflections of contemporary consumer culture, **cookbooks should be understood as artifacts of cultural life in the making. Cookbooks contain not only recipes but inscribed cultural tales**. Yet the study of cookbooks as placed cultural artifacts is largely neglected by consumer researchers.

Food for Health

* The healthy aspect of our traditional cuisine must be reclaimed. Our ingredients are among the more nutritious in the world. Nutritionists agree that the traditional Sub-Saharan diet is the

best. It is well balanced with grains, beans, proteins, leaves, fruits and the occasional use of fermentation which facilitate digestion.

Fonio for example, is a grain that has been cultivated for over 5,000 years in the continent and even considered sacred in some parts of Africa (i.e. ancient Egypt, here in Gambia and Casamance and by the Dogon people in Mali who call it the seed of the universe). This grain is extremely rich in protein and minerals, it abounds in 2 of the rarest amino-acids (cystine and methionine) which are absent in all the other major grains (rice, barley, corn etc..) in addition fonio is gluten-free, it matures in 2 month and is now easily processed and packaged.

Another ingredient is the quintessential palm oil, which was for a very long time discredited. Falsely rumored to have cholesterol (which is impossible because it's from a vegetable and not an animal), palm oil is in reality rich in beta-

carotene (that's why it's orange in color), rich in vitamin A and D and is even now believed to have cancer fighting qualities (serious researches are being done on the topic). Today, palm oil is called nature's gift to the world and it is interesting to notice in shelves of NY health food stores' as well as organic supermarkets' like Whole Foods, where it is sold in small 8 ounces jars for \$15 to \$20. There are many more African ingredients that would make this list (millet, sorghum etc.). It is our role to educate the consumers.

Needless to say this fight can't be the chefs' alone. It will take the combined efforts of governments and entrepreneurs, as well as tour operators. It is a daunting effort but it is well worth it. Once they taste African food they will not only ask for second servings, they will keep this unique and memorable experience with them and help spread the word. *Photo: Le Grand Dakar Restaurant, Brooklyn, NY, USA..*

YOLELE! RECIPES FROM THE HEART OF SENEGAL BY PIERRE THIAM

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAM BARTOS

African cuisine is the hottest trend in the culinary world today and Pierre Thiam's YOLELE! Recipes From The Heart Of Senegal is the first cookbook devoted to Senegalese cuisine. YOLELE is one more reason why food critics and food lovers alike are taking notice of the new, exciting recipes, and bold flavors coming out of Africa. Now, thanks to the pioneering efforts of restaurateur and Senegalese native Pierre Thiam to bring this once little-known cuisine to a wider audience, we are able to explore a cuisine that is at once familiar and exotic, down-home and elegant. Once food lovers try these delectable dishes, they will understand why Pierre Thiam's Le Grand Dakar restaurant in Brooklyn has packed crowds night after night, feasting on such delicacies as Shrimp and Sweet Potato Fritters, Grilled Chicken with Lime- Onion

Sauce, Blue Fish with Red Rice and Vegetables (their signature dish), and Roasted Mango and Coconut Rice Pudding.

YOLELE introduces readers to new taste sensations, exotic spins on rice and other familiar ingredients, and foods indigenous to Senegal, such as fonio, an ancient, tiny-seeded whole grain that has been one of the mainstays of Senegalese cuisine. Bursting with delicious taste and extraordinarily healthy, fonio is likely become a major



player in home kitchens and top restaurants in the years ahead. Senegalese cuisine is a sonorous synthesis of native African, French, Portuguese, Creole, and Vietnamese cuisines. Among the many savory recipes to explore:

Tempra: A classic from the shores of Guinea Bissau to the Casamance River, tempra is reminiscent of Peruvian ceviche, the major difference—the shrimp or oysters are grilled before marinating in the lemon mixture.

Fonio & Smoked Tofu Stuffed Tomatoes:

The perfect light dinner dish. The smoked tofu and refreshing cucumber are topped with lime juice and oil, then stuffed into large, ripe tomatoes. This unique dish provides a special, irresistible balance of flavors.

“We would have to be grateful for almost any new contribution to the too-sparse literature of African food. But restaurateur Pierre Thiam’s book on the richly appealing food of his native Senegal is beyond the call. Fresh, lively, and intelligent, Thiam’s YOLELE documents, through good strong recipes, fine writing, and much marvelous photography, a fascinating food tradition and the culture in which it is embedded. Reflecting warmth and pride, this highly personal book connects us to those who know, make, and love this food. A most welcome addition to the kitchen shelf!” Nach Waxman, owner, Kitchen Arts & Letters

Yucassoise: Inspired by the classic recipe for vichyssoise, what’s most satisfying about this dish is how the flavor of yuca coaxes out the nuttiness of an ordinary potato. Garnishing this soup with leeks makes for a nice touch.

Vegetarian Spring Rolls: If the Senegalese were to choose only one of their many Vietnamese-inspired dishes, this would be the one. This vegetarian appetizer will be the highlight of any party or dinner.

Bakary Calamari Salad: Named in honor of Chef Bakary Diedhiou at the Casamance hotel, Au Bar de la Mer, this may be the most tender calamari salad to beguile even the most epicurean palate.

Fonio Taboule: This fresh salad is a healthier variation of Lebanese bulgur salad, thanks to the nutrient-rich fonio.

Bluefish with Red Rice and Vegetables: Also known as Thiebou Jen, this unique combination of fish stuffed with vegetables and cooked in a thick tomato sauce is a signature Senegalese dish.

Oyster Elin-kine: This simple recipe is similar to a classic mignonette, grilled or broiled, and served with a lime and raw onion dressing.

Five-Spice Duck: Vietnamese and Senegalese influences come together in the marinade for this roasted duck recipe, giving the duck a perfect blend of sweet and savory flavors. Pierre Thiam’s YOLELE, the first Senegalese

cookbook in English, will surely lead the way as African cuisine emerges and takes its rightful place among the world’s favorite culinary traditions.

About the Author

Pierre Thiam is the chef-owner of Le Grand Dakar restaurant in Brooklyn, New York. Previously, he was the owner of Yolele and Sage Catering. He has worked at top restaurants throughout New York City including Garvin’s, Jean Claude, Boom, and Two Rooms. His website is www.granddakar.com.

Cookbook: (Lake Isle Press. \$21.95 (hardcover))

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MAY 2010: TANZANIA TOURIST BOARD MARKS THE



Photo caption: *At the Tanzania Gala Awards Dinner, Hon. Shamsa Mwangunga, Tanzania's Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism and ATA outgoing president, presented the host of the ATA Congress Hon. Fatou Mass Jobe Njie, Minister of Tourism and Culture, the Gambia, with a Makonde carving. From Left: Hon Njie and Hon. Mwangunga. Opposite page: Gala dinner participants celebrate on dance floor.*

Banjul, The Gambia

Celebrating its 10th Anniversary, the 2010 Honorees of the prestigious Tanzania Tourist Board (TTB)'s Annual Awards were announced by the Hon. Shamsa S. Mwangunga, M.P., Tanzania's Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, and out-

going President of the Africa Travel Association (ATA). The announcement took place at the Gala Tanzania Tourism Dinner on May 17th at the Sheraton Gambia Hotel. The Tanzania Award dinner has become a celebrated tradition and one of the highlights of the annual ATA Congress. Notable among the honorees was MTV News and Docs, named winner of the Tanzania Tourism Media Broadcast Award, in recognition of its one-and-half hour documentary on the "Summit on the Summit" Kilimanjaro Celebrity Climb aired nationwide on March 14, 2010. Other honorees included: Dar Guide, Media Print Award; Zara Tours, Tour Operator Humanitarian Award; Africa Adventure Consultants, Tour Operator Southern/Western

Tourism Circuit; Immersion Journeys, Tour Operator New Product Development Award; and Asilia Africa's Sayari Camp, Sustainable Tourism /Camps Award.

This year, there were also three *Special Recognitions* for outstanding contribution to the development of **Tourism**: Jane Goodall, for her world renown research with Chimpanzees on Gombe Island National Park, and her worldwide efforts to educate children around the world about conservation; the late Drs Louis and Mary Leakey, archaeologists and anthropologists, working on bone and fossil analysis in Oldupai Gorge in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (now a UNESCO Heritage Site) fifty years ago, discovered a skull that would change all prior scientific hypothesis. Their exciting discovery was a humanoid skull with huge teeth that they named *Zinjanthropus* or "Zinj." The excellent condition of the skull allowed scientists to date the beginnings of mankind to about two million years ago, and to verify that human evolution began not in Asia, as previously thought, but in Africa. In keeping with the significance of this information, Oldupai Gorge is now known as "The Cradle of Mankind"; and Retired General Mirisho Sarakikya, who has climbed Kilimanjaro forty-six times, the most among Tanzanians, for his outstanding

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS AWARDS PROGRAM

contribution, passion and efforts he has shown in promoting and sensitizing various categories of climbers including diplomats, students and several dignitaries to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro.

Present at the Tanzania Dinner for the announcement of the 2010 Honorees and Special recognitions were the Hon. Fatou Mass Jobe Njie, Minister of Tourism and

Culture, the Gambia, Eddie Bergman, ATA Executive Director, and the Ministers of Tourism and heads of delegations from more than 10 African countries, the ATA International Board of Directors and ATA Chapter representatives as well as more than 300 ATA

delegates, including US-based travel professionals. In addition to the Hon. Mwangunga, the Tanzania delegation included, Dr. Aloyce Nzuki, newly appointed Managing Director of the Tanzania Tourist Board (TTB), representatives of the Tanzania Ministry for Natural Resources & Tourism, the Tanzania Tourist Board, Tanzania National Parks, Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority, Tanzania Wildlife Department, the National Museum of Tanzania and the

Department of Antiquities.

Tanzania and USA

The American market continues to grow, and for the third consecutive year remains the number one source of visitors to Tanzania worldwide,” said Hon. Shamsa S. Mwangunga, M.P. “We attribute this growth to the many aspects of our marketing plan, not least of

in the US. We are confident that Mr. Pitt, a photo journalist who is involved in many humanitarian projects in Tanzania, will generate much interest in Tanzania through his multiple business and social networks.” Dr Aloyce Nzuki, TTB Managing Director noted that “as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Tanzania Tourism Awards

program, we can be proud of that fact that we achieved two major objectives, increasing the number of tourists from the North American market, and increasing the number of tour operators who offer stand alone safari programs to the Southern



and Western circuits. These successes are due in large part to the strong private sector support from Tanzania itself as well as our partners globally. However, we want to emphasize, that as we work hard to continue to grow our tourism arrivals, TTB will remain vigilant about conservation, encouraging low impact/high quality tourism.” This year, Tanzania also took full advantage of the unique opportunity to use the World Cup in South Africa to reach

which is the strong support of our travel industry partners we are honoring here tonight. We are also seeing the great impact of a two year CNN-US TV Ad Campaign and “Ultimate Safari” Sweepstakes, as well as our Travel Agent University Tanzania Specialist Program with 1500 graduates. This coming year we hope to bolster the numbers even further with the appointment last month by H.E. President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of Doug Pitt as Tanzania’s Goodwill Ambassador



out to the thousands of football fans coming to Africa from around the globe. According to Amant Macha, TTB Marketing Director, “with a less than four hour flight from Johannesburg to Dar es Salaam on South African Airways, a Tanzanian safari is an ideal extension to a visit to South Africa. By hosting more than 25 South African-based tour operators, we were able to assist them in creating some excellent tour packages.”

TANZANIA TOURISM AWARDS 2010 HONOREES

Tanzania Tourism Board Tour Operator Humanitarian Award 2010:

ZARA TOURSTanzania-based Zara Tours, through Zara Charities, has created unique initiatives that benefit the local communities. Zara Tours itself donates \$15 to these charities

for every client booked on Zara Tours. In addition to the diverse range of local projects that have been funded by Zara Charities, it also created in 2004 and provides funds to the Mount Kilimanjaro Porters Society to ensure the health and safety of all the porters. Zara Tours also created a volun-tourism add-on to its safaris of two or three days to encourage its clients to work on local projects.

Tanzania Tourism Board Southern/western Circuit Awards 2010: Africa Adventure Consultants

Tanzania is the number-one best selling destination in Africa for Denver-based Africa Adventure Consultants with an expected 40% growth in 2010. Africa Adventure Consultants has promoted the growth of tourism to the Southern and Western safari circuits in Tanzania. They offer six stand alone itineraries to these areas, which enhances the depth of their overall Tanzanian portfolio: Chimp Trekking Adventure, Selous Walking Safari, Southern Tanzania Adventure, Southern Tanzania Safari, Tanzania Southern Gems Safari and the Wildest Tanzania Safari

Operator Award Product Development 2010: Immersion Journeys

Immersion Journeys has created a special niche by providing programs for universities, corporations and public sector institutions who want to have

an exchange with Tanzania and gain access to people, sites and industry sectors of their interest. This program also provides assistance with identifying investment opportunities in Tanzania. Complimenting this Academic/Corporate Track is Immersion Journeys’ African Chronicle Series where guests meet with cultural leaders, government officials and local residents. They are hosted for meals and are given a very local cultural experience, providing the visitors with an authentic and genuine opportunity to meet and interact with their hosts.

Sustainable Tourism Award / Camps 2010: Asilia Africa’s Sayari Camp

Sayari Camp in the Northern Serengeti is a model of sustainable tourism– in its environmental policies, “keeping it local” with 90% local employment, training staff from the local community to become managers and buying locally-grown produce. Their environmental policy highlights waste management, energy saving, pollution issues, staff welfare and reductions of carbon footprints.

Media Award: Broadcast 2010: MTV News and Docs

MTV produced and aired a one-and-a-half hour documentary on the “Summit on the Summit” Kilimanjaro Charity Climb led by award-winning rap star, Kenna, including actors Jessica Biel and



Emile Hirsh. Kenna initiated the climb to focus world attention on the need for clean water in developing countries. With 150 channels worldwide, MTV is a name that is recognized around globe. MTV is part of the Viacom network, which connects with audiences around the world in more than 562 million households in 161 countries.

Media Award Print 2010: Dar Guide

Launched in May of 1997, the monthly *Dar es Salaam Guide*, a full-color, glossy magazine written in English, has proven to be a valuable tool in promoting domestic tourism. The *Dar es Salaam Guide* features stories focusing on Tanzania's national parks, game reserves, historical sites, cultural tours and beach destinations, as well as guides to weekend getaways, local entertainment, restaurants, movies, arts and culture. 15,000 copies are distributed for free countrywide, with a concentrated

distribution in Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar, Arusha and Moshi.

About the Tanzania Tourism Awards

The Tanzania Tourist Board announced the establishment of the Tanzania Tourism Awards at the ATA Congress in May 2000 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the First Annual Tanzania Tourism Awards were presented at a Gala Dinner at the ATA Congress in Cape Town, South Africa, May 2001.

The Awards were created to support, and show appreciation to, the travel professionals and media who have worked hard promoting and selling Tanzania in the US market as well as to provide an incentive to increase the numbers even more in the coming years. The Awards have taken on more significance as the American market has become the number-one source of tourists for Tanzania worldwide for two consecutive years. One of TTB's specific objectives was to promote the Southern Circuit, which until recently was the travel connoisseur's "best kept secret" but

now the number of tour operators offering "stand alone" safaris to the South and West of Tanzania has been steadily growing.

TTB selected the Annual Africa Travel Association Congress as the venue for the Gala Awards Dinner to show support for ATA's ever expanding global reach in promoting tourism to the Continent of Africa. The prestigious Awards are presented each year by Tanzania's Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism. The 2010 Awards were presented by the Hon. Shamsa S. Mwangunga, M.P.

In 2004, TTB created the first ever Tour Operator Humanitarian Award. This was a direct result of the Second IIPT African Conference on Peace through Tourism (IIPT) hosted by Tanzania's Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, December 2003. TTB wanted to encourage more tour operators to make a direct contribution to the betterment of the local communities, thereby making them 'stakeholders' in the tourism industry.

In the same year, 2004, TTB also expanded its Awards Program to honor Tanzania's partners at home who have helped to improve the quality and infrastructure of its tourism product recognizing that tourism could not experience the fast-paced growth without this private sector investment and support.

For more information about Tanzania visit www.tanzaniatouristboard.com.

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CAMEROON'S FESTIVALS ,WILDLIFE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY



Cameroon is Africa in One Country

Photos. 1. Giraffes in Wasa National Park 2. Malimba race canoe"at Ngondo festival. 3. Fantasia in North Region. 4. Tea plantation. 5. Face painting. 6. Nguon festival near Sultan's Palace. 7. Trek to Mt. Cameroon. 8. Kapiski Region. 9. Lobe River Excursion. 10. Limbe Botanical Gardens. 11.-12. Ngondo Festival activities. 13. Lobe Waterfall. 14. ST-EP Ebogo Tourist Site.

Interview: H.E. Baba Hamadou, Minister of Tourism, Cameroon

Mister Minister, what are your immediate and long range goals for tourism in Cameroon?

In the area of tourism Cameroon is currently pursuing a double objective: seeing to it that this sector participates concretely and immediately in the implementation of the Head of State's policy programme for his current seven – year term of office, so as to meet the common goal of social well being. This is why my Ministry is working to increase significantly the number of international tourists visiting Cameroon. The figure is today estimated at about half a million.

The immediate objective which agrees with the medium- range target of endowing the sector with a sound tourism policy that will be made possible in the coming months through a Tourism Development Master Plan, will lead to a more rational and optimal development and exploitation of our potentials.

The upcoming creation of a National Tourism Board, the developments now taking place in some tourist sites, notably within the framework of the STEP (Sustainable Tourism for Eliminating Poverty) Programme, the imminent launching of major construction works for the investment of giant tourist complexes in Malimba-Yoyo in the Littoral Region and in Lobé near Kribi in the South Region are ample proof of a brighter future for Cameroon's tourism industry. As far as cooperation is concerned, we are going to continue with the signing of cooperation agreements in the area of tourism, notably with China.

What sets Cameroon apart from other destinations in Western and Central Africa? What is your competitive edge?

The main characteristic of Cameroon's tourist products is their diversity. In fact, thanks to its central position on the African continent, Cameroon's tourism is characterized by a large variety of products. Cameroon's tourism potential is endowed with a large range of resources stemming from its landscape, and climate which give rise to flora and fauna resources that feature among the richest in Africa. Moreover, this country harbours almost the totality of what nature has unevenly given to other African countries. Here live more than 250 ethnic groups with exceptionally rich and varied cultures and folklores.

It is worth noting here that in a region like ours which is plagued with all sorts of crises - social peace that reigns in our country

is very conducive for profitable tourist investments.

How highly do you rate your membership in the Africa Travel Association and its events in Africa and the USA?



There exist potential market segments in the USA for the development of our tourism. There are for example, lovers of nature, of less – disturbed environment, and of genuine cultures and traditions. But, the most visible segment is of human and historic interest. It is worth recalling that according to historians, about 30% of black slave population that was taken from the West Coast of Africa originated from the region that stretches from Cameroon to the Niger Delta. Probability is therefore high that an important part of African Americans hailed from Cameroonian families, as it is the case with Nate Parker, who, according to recent information, will visit Cameroon where his roots are said to be found in the Tikar region. This accounts for: Cameroon's adhesion to ATA in 1986; the organization of two annual congresses (1987 and 2004) and of one symposium on ecotourism in 2001 in Cameroon; the creation of an ATA Chapter; the creation of a National Scientific Committee on Cultural Tourism Project "The Slave Route" and more recently the representation of Cameroon Head of State H.E. Paul BIYA at the 4th Forum of African Heads of State on Tourism organized by ATA last September in New York alongside the General assembly meeting of the United Nations.

As far as ATA events in Africa and the USA are concerned, they have been witnessing for the past years both a quantitative and qualitative evolution. The project for the elaboration of a five-year plan of ATA's activities could be a good thing likely to help this organization be more at the service of its members and of the development of

tourism in Africa.

What are your priorities for the improvement to the tourism infrastructures?

To improve tourism infrastructures in Cameroon, a number of activities have been undertaken, notably:

1- On going leasing procedure of State-owned hotels.

To that effect, a public international call for the manifestation of interest was launched and the deadline for submission of tender files is 24 May 2010;

2- Many tourist sites have been studied and are soon going to be developed within the framework of ecotourism development in Cameroon. It is the case with the EBOGO tourist site in the Centre Region and Lake AWING in the North- West Region which are STEP projects (Sustainable Tourism for Eliminating Poverty)

3- Improving upon the quality of service in lodging establishments through the on going campaigns on classification and re-classification.

4- Training and sensitization campaigns geared towards private operators through the organization of seminars on quality.

What results do you expect from the Africa Tourism Commission meeting this May?

The UNWTO Africa Commission is holding its 50th meeting from 17 to 19 May 2010 in Algiers in Algeria. This meeting is coming after the 18th session of the General assembly meeting of the World Tourism Organization held last October in Astana in Kazakhstan and whose resolutions marked more than ever before, the determination and the capacity of its members to make tourism an essential tool for job creation and economic recovery. In my capacity as Chairman of the UNWTO Commission for Africa, and considering the positive results achieved by this region as far as international tourist arrivals since the beginning of the economic and financial crisis of 2008 are concerned, our wish is to see our countries implement the resolutions mentioned above, namely the ones relating to "the road map for recovery" and the Declaration of tourist movements". This will help to maximize the fallouts of tourist activities in our countries. The World Football Cup to be organized in South Africa and the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of most African countries will obviously contribute to it.

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TO TIMBUKTU FOR A HAIRCUT: A Journey through West Africa

by Rick Antonson

The Forbidden City

It surprised me how reachable Timbuktu was. I'd been willing to put up with sporadic travel and delays, to accept cramped and stuffy spaces, to be hot to the point of suffocation, to adjust to communication gaffes, to accept "price surprises," and even to eat sand. None of this was easy for anyone. Nevertheless, "the Forbidden City" was, after all, accessible."

I had taken a day — one day only — in the middle of my life and set it aside for Timbuktu. This was that day and its evening and the night.

The Bouctou Hotel, low and unassuming as a sand dune, seemed to attract litter into piles wherever people sat or squatted. An irascible Mohammed, determined to remain aloof from the scattered groups around him, leaned alone against a tree, where my Land Cruiser stopped just short of his scowl.

"Rick!" he shouted at my open window, commanding the scene and muting the hubbub of conversation. I shoved the vehicle's door open and swung my feet to the ground. I was a titch taller than him; his eyes were darker. He held the advantage. "The boat must leave today at three," he smiled.

"Nope." I said this quickly, and noticed that the bystanders gasped that someone would dare disagree with this forceful Arab. The air quickened. "It would be good," he continued with self-serving self-assurance. "You have lots of time in Timbuktu. Then the pinasse can leave."

In the ensuing silence, he knew that I knew that this change was necessary to make a related itinerery work for him. The River Niger could wait. I said nothing. People looked away. Zak scraped the sand with the heel of his sandal. Then, all eyes turned toward Mohammed. Finally. "Rick?" It was sharp, the way he flung it. "It's not going to happen, Mohammed." I breathed for the crowd.



"The boat leaves tomorrow."

Unesco World Heritage Site

Tagged with labels such as "The Town of 333 Saints," Timbuktu no longer receives accolades. Those who call it home do not share the foreigner's fascination. The city's mystique

is powerful only until you arrive. I'd like to pretend it's different, but it isn't.

Nothing prepares the naive visitor for the absence of intrigue quite like the question Malians consistently ask when they find out that one is travelling to Timbuktu: "Why?"

UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites grew in 1988 with the designation of Timbuktu and the specific inclusion of its three mosques, of which the Djinguereber Mosque, built in 1325, is the most prominent. Its reputation rests on its history and its current state of disrepair, as well as for its periodic acceptance of visitors. The Sankoré Mosque, part

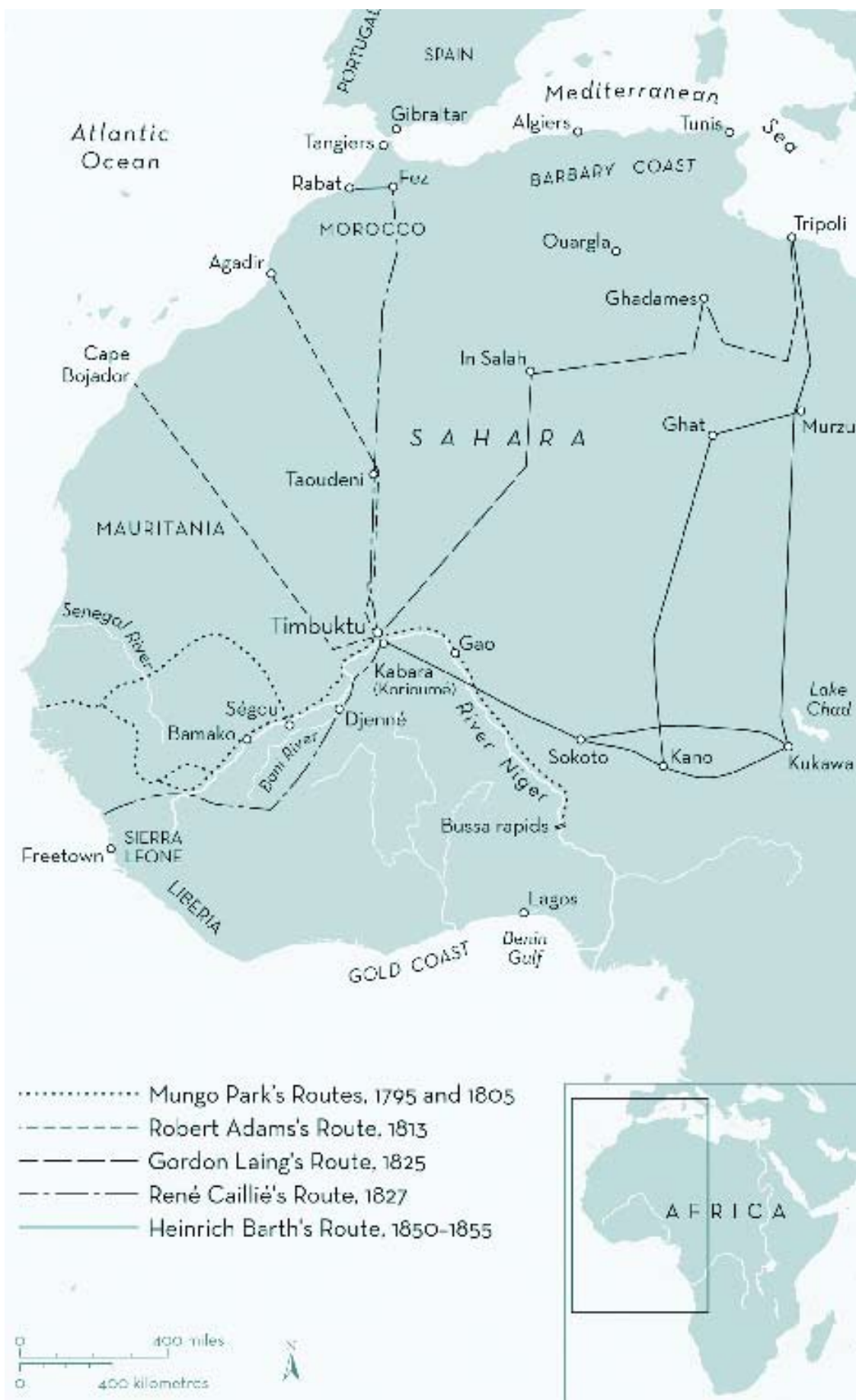
of a school, attended by 25,000 university students at its peak in the sixteenth century, is also notable. Its colonnades and courtyard were rebuilt in 1582, though it was first constructed a century earlier, and the mosque is cited as "unique earthen architecture." The Sidi Yahia Mosque,



which takes its name from one of Timbuktu's saints, is in the best condition of the three, but non-Muslims are denied entry. All three mosques, however, are crumbling away. In Timbuktu, the restoration of monuments is a continuous process, and the drift of earth among them relentless. Timbuktu, once the "Pearl of Africa," also has the dubious distinction of being on the United Nations' List of World Heritage Sites in Danger.

Surviving there to this day are homes of the three earliest European explorers to reach the fabled city and live among its inhabitants. Each feared for his personal safety and was eager to return to Europe and relate his achievements. In the nearly two hundred years since then, the mud houses of Laing, Caillié, and Barth have been, as they were before the arrival of their historic guests, shelter for residents of Timbuktu. And they remain intact, despite the desert's continued attempts to erode them.

Scuffed by history, Mali benignly accepts its diminished status. The Malian Empire is no more, and the country vies with Bangladesh as the world's poorest nation. Desertification is Timbuktu's greatest threat; Mali's nemesis, the Sahara — with 7 million square kilometres of sand — assaults every man-made structure. The Sahara



gave birth to Timbuktu. Now its sands are trying to bury it with a persistence more treacherous than the heat's.



Priceless Timbuktu Manuscripts

Endangered, too, are the rarest of writings — pieces of history-on-paper that form one of the world's great treasures — the Timbuktu manuscripts. Many crumble at the touch of a well-meaning hand; others

wither simply because of their exposure to air. Without them, we will know immeasurably less about a glorious time for Africa, some six hundred years ago. The manuscripts provide a portrait of life, of religion and science, of law and architecture, and of a society that thrived like none other at that time. Before leaving on my journey, while researching Timbuktu's fourteenth-century history and its extensive libraries, I was disheartened to read about thousands of ancient manuscript pages that today lay tattered and unattended in mud homes and deserted buildings. Images of ancient books and furled pages falling apart for lack of care provided a powerful incentive for visiting Timbuktu. My newly gained awareness of their existence, and their peril, infused my journey with a worthy purpose: to find the manuscripts and find a way to help with their preservation.

Old Timbuktu

Once known as “The Eyes of the Desert,” old Timbuktu was quite the sight. In 1933, William Seabrook wrote, “It is, I believe, the only city in the whole wide world which has none of the banal blessings, or curses, of what we choose to call ‘white civilization.’” Old Timbuktu, the inner part of the city, was innocuous and compact, its walkways the now-trampled swells of desert. Few markings or signs designated its streets or paths.

Travellers and travel books said it would be wise for a visitor to hire a local guide, if only to rid oneself of pestering youngsters. I asked Zak to come with me that morning. We walked away from the Bouctou Hotel's drabness to a wider dirt road and along its rim into the old city, a district neglected by charm.

Famous Landmarks



The Djinguereber Mosque was an exceptional find, though it does not loom physically as it does historically. To imagine that it had once been a centre of learning, filled with fervent adherents and peopled night and day with scholars as well as those in prayer, paints a picture of a vast house of worship. But we found it was not much over twice the height of the other buildings in the neighbourhood of the Place de l'Indépendance, off the Boulevard Askia Mohammed, and that it had a modest entrance. Centuries earlier, Leo Africanus wrote, “There is a most stately temple to be seen.” In those days it must have been more impactful on its surroundings. Caillié had noted another reality in his journal: “I visited the great mosque on the west side of town. The walls are in bad repair, their facing being damaged by rain. Several buttresses are raised against

the walls to support them. I ascended the tower, though its staircase is almost demolished.” Since 1325, when the poet and architect Es Saheli created this unique design, Timbuktu’s most important mosque has needed constant reworking and repair. Wooden support beams poke through its slanting walls, acting as stabilizers for the wall and for mudding crews. Though Mansa Musa directed its construction upon his return from Mecca, it was Saheli, brought from Egypt, who created the striking pyramid base that now defines Timbuktu, Djenné, and Mali generally in photographs. Musa also encouraged broader belief in the tenets of Islam, and building libraries and universities known as madrasas, most of them no longer in existence.

A Rare Opportunity

Non-Muslims are generally not invited into mosques, so when the opportunity arose to enter this one, we took it. The caretaker waited inside the house of prayer, his mood as solemn as the dusty light.

Quiet. The caretaker gestured to me to shed my leather thongs. Streams of sunlight were the only other intruders as he showed Zak and me along the passage where prayers were uttered. He indicated privacy hollows, fortified by wood and carved mud, where worshippers made penance.

We entered three inner courts. Rows of pillars, twenty-five in all, stood in an east-to-west alignment. Zak whispered the translation as we walked. “Islam too has pillars. Five. Primary belief, ‘Is no god but Allah,’ and Mohammed his prophet.”

“Second, Muslims face Mecca and pray. Must at daybreak, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset. Again nightfall.”

“And they give alms,” I added, happy to contribute.

Walking within the mosque, with no one else about, the austere expanse made it seem less a place of worship and more a magic hall where, when I stopped and let Zak drift on, I could imagine a throng of prayer-makers, hear the

shout of calm from the Imam and, in my own way, feel compelled to kneel and give thanks.

“Another, Ramadan,” Zak said, no longer repeating the caretaker’s words, and only then noticing me pondering prayer behind him. But I’d heard, and nodded, so he continued. “Commemorates first revelation to Mohammed. Muslims fast. One month. Dawn to dusk.”

“And Mecca,” I added, to complete the fifth pillar of their faith.

“Yes,” Zak said. “Every Muslim. Pilgrimage. If they afford. If healthy.”

Religion has long been a travel motivator: the seeing of sites, the paying of tributes, homage given to deities or a pilgrimage. Faith led to travel as surely as a current carries water. If you are fortunate, you travel with two religions: your own and that of your host, from whom you learn. Many people travel to learn the rituals of other religions rather than to comprehend the beliefs underlying these rituals.

“Zak,” I asked, “do you believe in God?”

“Yes,” he said. He did not elaborate.

The caretaker left us alone, and we ascended the mosque’s stairs to the roof. The architect Es Saheli had invented the mud brick, a revolutionary technique in a land where previously mud and weeds were slapped on wood frames. The stability of this brick, augmented by upgrades over the centuries, accounted for the sturdiness of the stairs. Caillié too had climbed those stairs, two centuries ago.

Life and Commerce in Old Timbuktu

Throughout old Timbuktu, narrow, shallow ditches



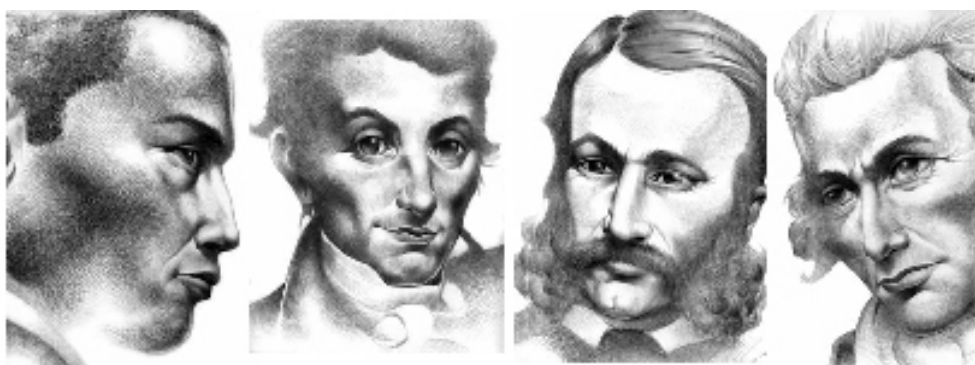
line the centre of every street. We strolled with one eye to the ground and noticed the locals stepping carefully to avoid dipping a foot into those sewers. It meant we were not able to fully appreciate the buildings that bordered the walkways.

Leo Africanus's memories of Timbuktu inspired centuries of envy. "Here are many shops of artificers and merchants, and especially of such as weave linen and cotton cloth." We did not find that splendour; rather, we witnessed the eking out of a life. I asked Zak, "What does everyone do here?"

"They sell." It was true. Everyone sold. I wanted the guy who sold haircuts.

But the shops were not defined. Nothing said, "Come in ...". Nothing on the streets recognized the visitor or the need for rest, or refreshment. Residents set a pot of still-cooking food on the bunting of their homes, or used a table to promote their wares: fried fish, individual cigarettes, old tools. Bread was stacked three loaves high and four deep on a rickety chair in front of the flat-sided mud house where it was baked. I bought one and handed half to Zak.

Children played tag, the world's most affordable game. Centuries have transformed the personality of Timbuktu and her people. Africanus noted, "The inhabitants are people of a gentle and cheerful disposition." He continued with something I'd not noticed, that they "spend a great part of the night in singing and dancing."



Quest for Timbuktu: Explorers featured in the book and route map: From left, Robert Adams, Rene-August Caillié, Heinrich Barth, Mungo Park

Those were the days, my friend ...

The sun dictated that we hide. Zak and I dawdled over fried chicken, smoked tomatoes, and what tasted like sawdust at the Poulet d'Or. Sheltered from the midday heat, we snoozed a little in our straight-back chairs. My thoughts drifted to the morning's conversation with Mohammed, in which I'd challenged him. He was unkind, arrogant. "Police, your embassy, these people can do nothing to me." I did not agree, but it was his country. I asked him, "What if a traveller wrote about you? It might not be favourable."

He was contemptuous. "People can write whatever they want. It is nothing. I have no care for it." He acknowledged that the hotels and transport He was contemptuous. "People can write whatever they want. It is nothing. I have no care for it." He acknowledged that the hotels and transport were not as he'd portrayed them and agreed to reimburse me: "I'll do that." I scribbled an address on a piece of paper and handed it to him. He said, "I will look at everything and wire money Western Union to Janice. You and me can then meet in Ségou on the

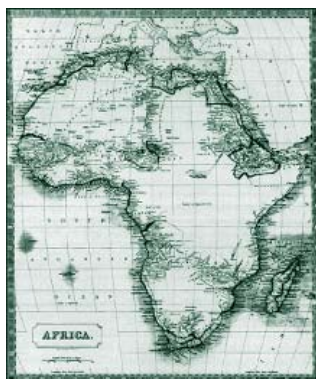
twenty-sixth."

Mohammed might still shirk his responsibilities, but I did not want that possibility to colour my mood, to spoil my lunchtime rest, or to detract from further adventures in Timbuktu.

I sensed that my greatest discoveries were ahead of us that hot afternoon. Hidden down old roads were the places that Laing, Caillié, and Barth had temporarily called home; I had to find them. More poignantly, there was my immediate need to find even a portion of the Timbuktu manuscripts. I knew that within this old city, centuries of neglect had allowed a wealth of literary and scientific writings to age, deteriorate, and disappear. Would this day provide a way for me to help reverse that trend, to be a part of recovering and saving these documents?

Lunch was over, and so was my reverie. "Zak," I said, "let's go find the manuscripts."

We headed out to search for the bibliothèque. For thirty minutes we stepped carefully around garbage, urine, and feces on the streets of Timbuktu. The scene did not reconcile with Caillié's description: "The streets are



clean, and sufficiently wide to permit three horsemen to pass abreast.” After we

had walked into the same empty square for the third time, I was becoming exasperated.

“Zak, do you know where the bibliothèque is?”

“Here,” he said with a guide’s overconfidence. He led us into yet another alley, and for ten minutes I followed. We circled nicely. Then the same deserted surroundings appeared.

“Zak, have you ever been to the bibliothèque?”

“No.” He sulked, unwilling to admit defeat.

“Do you know if there is one?” “No.”

Search for Historical Residences

I had thought that patience was my strong suit, but it was running low. Near us was a dilapidated warehouse. Its loading platform gave us some shade.

“Zak, sit down,” I said.

“Listen.”

He cast his eyes at the ground.

“There are a few things that are going to happen here,” I began. He listened as a child would under reprimand. “One, we’re going to find La-

ing’s house. Two, Caillié’s home. Three, Barth’s place. They say it’s a museum.” I trumped that many fingers in front of him. “Then we’re going to find the bibliothèque.” I flipped a fourth finger to catch up. “Zak, if we don’t, you get to tell Mohammed that I’m staying tomorrow in Timbuktu.”

He nodded, the fear of Mohammed evident on his face, and then he smiled, up for the alternative task of helping me find these places.

“And,” I added, my full hand flat, the count clear: “We’ll find the centre where I can get my passport stamped.”

“I don’t know where that is,” he confessed.

One of the demons of travel is hesitation. “Let’s ask,” I sug-

gested.

“No, we’ll find it.” (I read that there’s scientific proof that males of our species don’t ask for directions. This was proved by the fact it takes a thousand sperm to find and fertilize one egg.)

I spotted a boy watching us nearby, and asked him. He looked halfway down the street, at a bend, and there it was: Gordon Laing’s place. His guidance to Caillié’s home was clear, and his directions to Barth’s sounded unimpeachable. I should have hired a local guide.

Visiting Laing Residence

Laing’s house was before us.

A crooked Mission Culturelle plaque was stuck to the middle of a mud wall, and, to my delight, a carved Moorish door was lodged open.

In this alcove of time there was silence. This building had been Laing’s home for most of his stay in 1826. Now owned by a local, it did not seek passers-by. As I stood before it, there was no one in view to ask if I might enter, so I did under the pretense of obtaining that permission. The mud walls did not differentiate this building from other homes; neither did the height of its ceiling nor its crowded passageway set it apart. It did have a notable street presence accented from the second storey by two Moorish windows of carved wood.

“The Timbuctoo Mission,” as Laing’s expedition



was officially known, reflected its leader's ambition. It offered the journey he sought and the fame he craved.

Laing complained in his writings from the desert that he was continuously pressed for money by those he'd hired and already paid. He wrote that one intransigent chief "insisted I should go no further if I did not pay." Death was common in these parts, and robbery convenient. Threats, putrid food, hostilities, and ransom requests were impediments long registered by Africans, Arabs, and the few Europeans who'd ventured this far.

Laing arrived at Timbuktu in a terrible state, destitute after being attacked in the desert by Tuareg, shot in the side with a musket ball, slashed on his upper leg, crippled by a knife thrust that sliced his ear and cut his face. His companions fled, and the explorer was left for dead. The rest of the caravan's merchants were unharmed. They patched him up as well as they could, lashed him to his camel with rope, and let him trail the caravan. They believed he would soon die.

Laing survived the one-thousand-kilometre trek to Timbuktu. With what energy he could muster, and despite the squalid surroundings, he sent optimistic dispatches with native couriers accompanying the northbound caravans. Once he was settled in Timbuktu his wounds healed slowly, and meals of fish and bread helped his re-



covery.

Only one of Laing's letters from Timbuktu arrived in Tripoli at that time. He wrote of Timbuktu that the city had "completely met" his expectations.

I chose to believe that Laing had penned that line within the walls where I stood. Those words contrasted with his later accounts portraying "bitter disappointment" with Timbuktu. He was under constant pressure from the Fulan sultan to leave, though he had freedom of movement about the town. He sketched a city plan of Timbuktu and spent his time "searching the records in the town, which are abundant." This man, the first European to knowingly stay in Timbuktu, spent five weeks in the city before receiving permission to leave. A few days out of Timbuktu, heading for Europe, Laing was attacked by his African protectors. Using his own turban, they strangled the man who loved Africa and decapitated him. His remains were left uncovered in the desert. Birds, insects, and sand had their way with him. Laing's servant, who survived the attack, over the next two years made his way to Tripoli, where he reportedly delivered some of Laing's letters and told of his murder. The explorer's journals, which are thought to have been exceptional records of observation and history, were, however, missing. Often presumed to still exist, no trace of these artifacts

has yet been uncovered.

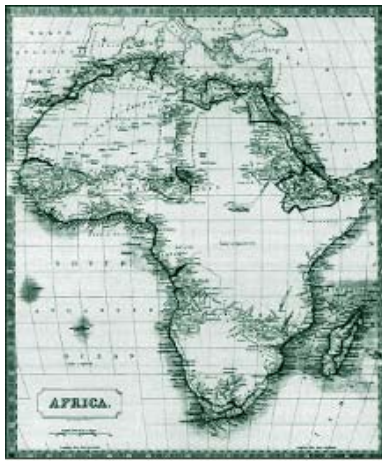
Laing's former home in Timbuktu was on a street corner and was two storeys high. The house appeared vacant on the lower level; not abandoned, just not in use. Finding no one to give me permission to enter, I walked up a narrow stairway to the second floor. A shaft of sun picked its way through an ornamental window frame and cast an eerie pall on the room's three-metre-by-four-metre space. There was a complete absence of furniture or any evidence of occupation. Out of all of the potential ghosts of Timbuktu's European explorers, Laing's was the most likely to stay in the vicinity. I imagined the two of us sharing a moment in that dank space, separated by 178 years, and I envisioned him writing his last journal notes in this room: "I fear I shall be involved in much trouble after leaving Timbuktu."

Finding René Caillié's house was exhilarating.

It stood (if this can be said of an often re-mudded structure, 174 years after his visit) to the west of the fifteenth-century Sidi Yahia Mosque. The building, still lived in, was not set for visitors. I was more in awe of the man than the structure, yet it was a Mecca-like destination for me.

Caillié has been called "one of the oddest figures in the history of travel." He departed for Timbuktu (calling it "the mysterious city which was the object of all my curiosity") full of ambition and a sense of adventure, and was unknown to the other prominent

competitors seeking the glory of first arriving in the fabled city. He travelled without official sanction, having been refused support for his “preposterous” plan. He studied the Koran, learned to speak Arabic, and presented himself, convincingly, as an Egyptian born of Arab parents. In that guise, he ventured through hostile land, attired as an Arab. No one responded to my asking, in French, “Is anyone home?” Zak, bemused, offered up Bambara’s version of the phrase. The door was ajar and I sensed it bid me enter. For the moments I spent in Caillié’s former home, I was a tourist in history, not a traveller in the present. With a deferential nod to the past, I walked into the open part of the house and replicated a two-century-old sliver of time, feeling like an imposter. While I travelled far beyond the bounds of my own skimpy knowledge, Caillié travelled with an understanding of places and lands far beyond that of his contemporaries, even beyond that of the local guides who passed him on to more local locals when he journeyed across their territory. He battled scurvy and deprivation. His urge to be self-sufficient was at the heart of his explorations. On camel, with the assumed name of Abdallahi, the twenty-seven-year-old son of a French baker approached Timbuktu from the port of Kabara,



now Korioumé, riding north under the watchful Tuareg. “My idea of the city’s grandeur and wealth did not correspond with the mass of mud houses, surrounded by arid plains of jaundiced white sands,” he

observed. “I looked around and found that the sight before me did not answer my expectations. I had formed a totally different idea of the grandeur and wealth of Timbuctoo.”

When he arrived in 1828, Caillié heard details of Laing’s desert misfortunes, his arrival in the city and his death, and he discovered that the explorer had lived in the house behind his only two years earlier. Caillié continued to avoid arousing suspicion of his Christianity. His host, Sheikh Al Bekây, provided sanctuary, freedom of movement, and food while Caillié rested in Timbuktu.

Caillié’s candour still resonates: “I cannot help contemplating with astonishment the extraordinary city before me, created solely by the wants of commerce, and destitute of every resource except what its accidental position as a place of

exchange affords.” He resolved to leave the city.

His desire to leave Timbuktu, however, exceeded the willingness of his hosts to let him go. It was Caillié’s goal to travel to Morocco to make the outside world aware of his amazing accomplishments. His efforts to persuade his hosts to allow his departure became increasingly assertive, and he was eventually given leave. Four days’ travel away from that Timbuktu house, en route to Tangiers, Caillié’s caravan stopped near the camp where Laing was killed. There, the Moors showed him confirmation of that terrible deed.

René Caillié was the first European to return safely home from Timbuktu. He received the Société de Géographie de France award of ten thousand francs, offered in 1826 to the first European to reach Timbuktu and return safely. It was an award he’d heard of in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and of which he’d said: “Dead



or alive, it shall be mine ...” In addition, France’s King Charles X made him Chevalier of the Legion of Honour. Caillié’s residence in La Mystérieuse had been short, his observations picaresque, and the eventual telling of his rediscovery reliant on jotted memories and scrupulously kept notations, secretly scribbled after excusing himself from the company of others, requesting time for quiet meditation. Although his writings covered his entire travels, they were not able to persuade a skeptical world that Timbuktu was without the charm and stature created by legend. Controversy would swirl around Caillié’s book, *Travels Through Central Africa to Timbuctoo*, which appeared in both France and England in 1830. But public acclaim continually fought with scholarly disdain. As Brian Gardner noted, “René Caillié’s book did little to stop the Timbuctoo Rush.”

Bouctou’s Well Still in Use

Circling the Sidi Yahia Mosque, I inadvertently found Bouctou’s well. My guess is that most visitors don’t find it, and don’t bother to believe that the propitious well is even marked. Yet that hole in the ground at my feet was the origin of the name Timbuktu. I politely shooed Zak away. I wished to be alone in my travel fantasy. The two keepers of the place, oblivious to my presence, talked in their sleep. The Eth-



nographic Museum encircled its namesake “Tin,” the Berber language’s grammatical kin to “well.” A recent construction, it showcased Tuareg and Songhai artifacts of music and costume. Standing over the well of the woman whose name became the byword for remote, I stared into the hole, its shallow depth blocked by mud. At the end of a rope swung a camel-skin bucket that dropped from a wooden winch, itself secured by tree branch props. I looked within the well and sensed Bouctou contemplating her distorted navel. Zak sloughed along a block away and waved to me. Bolstered by our logistical success in matching a street name with an explorer’s home, it made sense to Zak that we chance Barth’s Lane to find the house of the man who finally convinced skeptics that Timbuk-

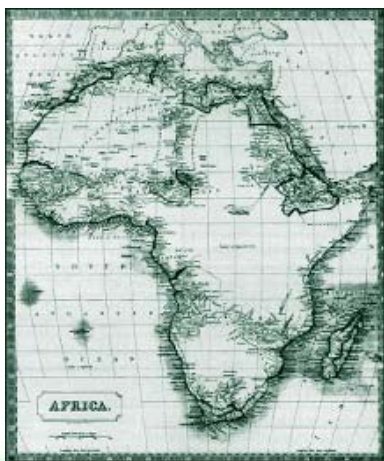
tu’s fame was founded on exaggerated claims.

Heinrich Barth in Timbuktu

Sweating and covered with a day’s dust, we stopped outside the home of Heinrich Barth, to the northeast east side of the Sidi Yahia Mosque. I breathed deeply. Barth’s stay in Timbuktu was the signature piece in his five-year crossing of the Sahara. If there was a hint that Timbuktu might have a tourism future, this house was it: we paid an entrance fee. Pictures on the walls had descriptions in English, French, and German.

Barth’s maps and sketches were displayed. Framing was elusive, but some of the documents were protected behind glass, where the heat had melded them to the surface. A pamphlet on Barth’s exploits was for sale. Was the furniture his? Did he slouch in that corner, surrounded by curious and untrusting observers looking on in silence? Did the tall German feel the urge to hunch over, given the lowness of the ceiling, as I did? Was the air as tight in his lungs as it felt in mine? Barth arrived in Timbuktu with a debilitating fever and recuperated as a guest in this house, close to Sheikh Al Bekây. He stayed here for the first month, during which the competing authority, the local chief, who challenged the sheikh for power over the Christian, made many attempts to expel

Barth. Among other reasons, it was suspected that he was Laing's son. The result of this competition between two conflicting and influential local rulers was that Barth was unable to move freely about the city. Sheikh Al Bekây eventually moved him to an encampment in the desert, from where Barth, on occasions, visited Timbuktu's mosques and spent hours among the townspeople and visiting the "lively markets." But political pressure mounted for this symbol of foreign intrusion, the infidel, to leave. It culminated in a late-night conference between the sheikh, the Tuareg, and the Fulani. The Fulani gained control over Barth and held him for two months in another camp while he tried to resolve the compromises that kept him from departing. He remained a total of six months, a stay that resulted in the most thorough European-recorded observations of Timbuktu, including notes on the city's commerce and customs. Barth undertook language and vocabulary documentation, and wrote of tribes, place names, and daily habits. His restricted movement meant that he had time for letter writing. Halfway through his visit he wrote, "You will have heard, I think, of my happy arrival in this ill-famed place." And, preda-



ing today's urban anti-smoking bylaws, he noted, "Amongst other things they have smoking a capital crime, so that even in Timbuctoo, except near the house of Al Bekây, a man smoking is in great danger

..."

His prolonged absence, and the African rumour trade, resulted in an erroneous report of Barth's death in Berlin. His obituary was published, and all hope of knowing his whereabouts disappeared. He was still 2,700 kilometres from safety. Sheikh Al Bekây, whose father had protected Laing in Timbuktu, travelled with Barth along the River Niger's north shore for weeks to ensure his safety. Finally, in September 1855, five years and five months after his journey began, Barth wrote from his north African camp: "I set out on my last march on the African soil in order to enter the town of Tripoli."

London and the world responded excitedly to Barth's triumph. Oxford bestowed an honorary degree on him, the Geographical Society of Paris awarded its Gold Medal, and Queen Victoria presented the Order of Bath. Heinrich Barth became president of the Berlin Geographical Society. But his five-volume work, *Travels in North and Central Africa*,

although popularly received, disappointed its readers. Barth's reputation as a scholar and scientist was strong enough that his portrayal of Timbuktu as a mundane and dilapidated backwater was believed. He validated Caillié's descriptions of Timbuktu's unimportance in modern African trade. Barth's great achievement was that the public and politicians finally accepted the truth about Timbuktu. The myths of the "City of Majesty" began to lose their duel with reality.

We dawdled in the dust, letting our accomplishments settle in with satisfaction. "Thanks," I said to Zak, who had recovered his confidence.

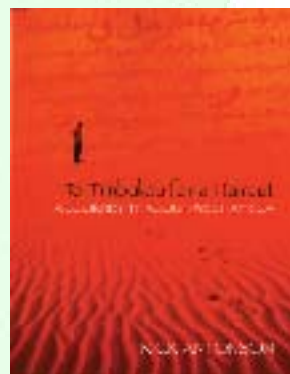
In a narrow street, above the doorway of a building, hung a faded sign, tinged with mud that had been whipped high in the rains and dried by the wind: Bibliothèque Manuscrits — Al-Wangari. Feeling euphoric, I pointed to it and smiled at Zak. Just then, a blue robe appeared on the path, seemingly brought by the

breeze. It came closer to reveal a tailored fit on the lanky frame of a scholar.

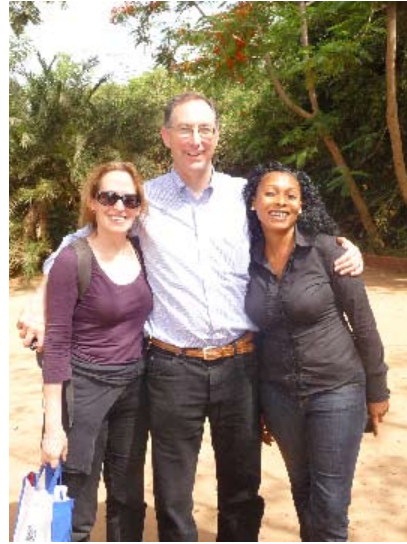
Excerpted from *To Timbuktu for a Haircut* by Rick Antonson.

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MORE ATA ACTIVITIES IN BANJUL AND AREA





Africa's Niche Markets - a Popular Panel Topic at the Africa Travel Association 35th Annual Congress, Banjul, Gambia

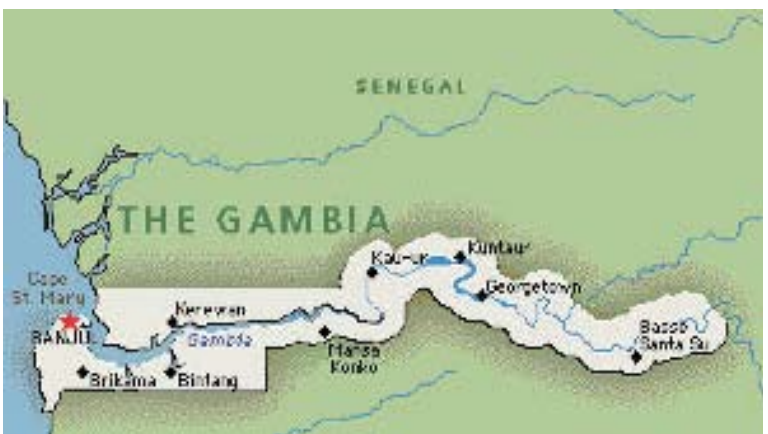
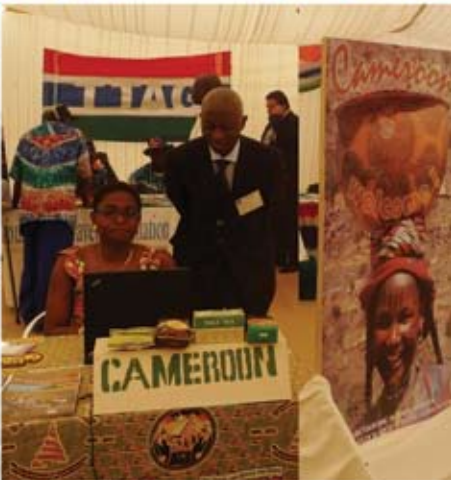
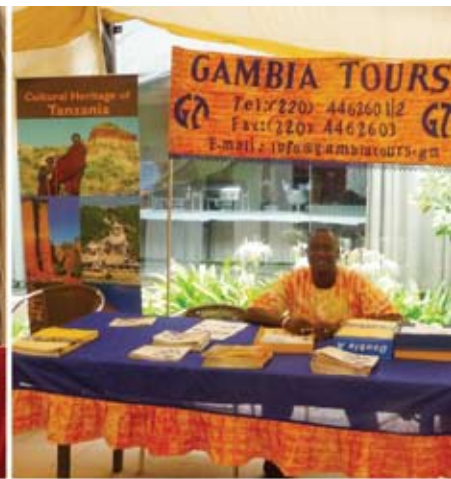
(1) Pierre Thiam, Founder and Chef, Grand Dakar; Author, Yolele! Recipes from the Heart of Senegal, Senegal and USA (Culinary Tourism) 2. Moderator: Karen Hoffman, Sr. VP, The Bradford Group and Tanzania Tourist Board Representative USA (3) Dr. Aloyce Nzuki, Managing Director, Tanzania Tourist Board (4) Michelle Pinedo, Controller, Museum of African Art, USA (Art & Sculpture) (5) Sindiswa Nhlumayo, Deputy Director General, South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, South Africa (Sports Tourism)



Shola Lewis (right) of Atlanta, GA, Broadcast member of ATA Congress Media Team. Shola interviewed each of his media colleagues during a visit to a radio station in Banjul.

Below: Exhibit at ATA Congress Trade Show.







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03 Salles de Conférence

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02 Piscines

02 Salles de Musique "Mocave" et "Calypso"

Une Plage Privée Un restaurant panoramique

ATA Media group dinner at the Protea Ikeja Hotel, Lagos, Nigeria enroute to The Gambia, courtesy of our sponsor Arik Airlines. Journalists from Nigeria, Jamaica, Senegal, USA and Gambia joined our group later.



THERE'S MUCH MORE TO COME IN THIS EDITION, INCLUDING PHOTOS, CAPTIONS, COMMENTARY AND INTERVIEWS

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World Travel Market,
ExCel Centre, London
8-11 November, 2010**

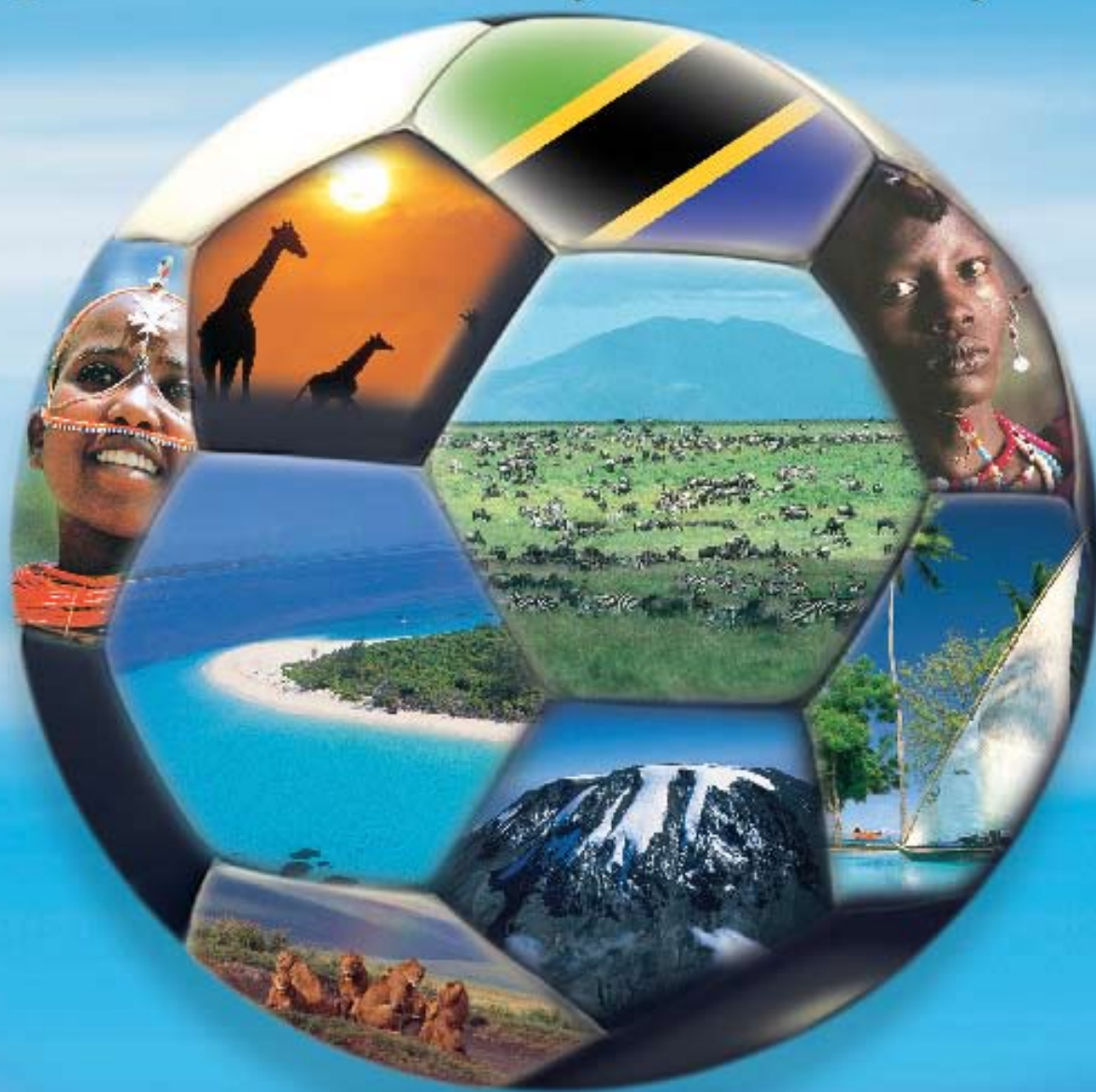




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