

AFRICA

Travel Magazine.



Best of Africa
World Edition
Electronic Preview

**East Africa
Travel, Tourism
and Flight News**

by Prof. Wolfgang H. Thome
Full reports twice monthly

IN MEMORIAM 'NETA PEAL'



No sooner had last week's edition gone to press did news reach me of the passing of an old friend from my Mombasa days, and someone I owed a great deal to – her work inspired me to take up writing myself. Neta Peal, a 'fixture' in Mombasa in post independence days and in fact until the time of her passing last week, was for decades the journalistic face of the coast's tourism sector. I

met her first when I came to Mombasa and besides her regular articles in national dailies, various coastal weeklies and later on in the 'Coast Week' she used to do successful PR work for hotel and safari companies, including the one I used to work for in those days. For ages she used to drive an old beaten up Fiat 127 and many a company and individuals periodically contributed to have the vehicle fixed up again, as her income never was enough to cover all those extra and unbudgeted expenses, leave alone to buy a new car – she simply loved that old thing as we all loved her for her bubbly spirit and her warm, friendly personality. At one time, while serving as a committee member for the Mombasa and Coast Tourism Association MCTA I learned that she was doing MCTA's PR work for free, a service she also extended to the Skal Club of Mombasa for a long time in her desire to make a difference. And what a difference she made over those years – if Neta had not been there one surely would have had to invent her.

Together with the then MCTA Chair, Lorna Hayes, she was never afraid to speak up on controversial issues, in particular matters impacting on the tourism industry, and many a politician harboured grudges against her and as far as I recall even threatened her when her articles did put a thorn into the sore side of misleading politicians and do nothing municipal council members. Yet, Neta always put her perspective and her own interpretation to things and her truthful articles all stood the test of time.

I recall one particular incident, when Neta had joined me and my wife Esther (who was expecting our first child at the time) on a charter flight from Kilimanjaro Buffalo Lodge just outside Amboseli after a Skal

Club of Mombasa social weekend, for which we had offered her a seat in the small Cessna 186. Just after becoming airborne the plane lost power – we later on learned it was too hot at the time – and the instructor pilot miraculously brought the plane down on the strip again from some 15 feet up, and then evaded the rocks at the end of the strip by diving into the 'bush' where we came to a full stop not a foot from a tree. As we got out of the plane to stagger back to the lodge, the late John Arkle came running along with some others, all glad to see us unhurt. Neta and I downed in quick succession some glasses of brandy at the bar while the pilot inspected the plane and brought it back to the parking area, not a scratch on it either. And then, undeterred, Neta declared that the drinks had steadied her enough to start getting back home and so we did, although we split ourselves and the bags into two planes, Esther and I in the Cessna and Neta and the bags in a Seneca, which was passing through to drop off a passenger. As the story is told, we all made it back to Mombasa safely of course and this was the beginning of a fast friendship which spanned decades. It is one of the unforgettable stories I remember her for, never one to give up in the face of adversity and ever ready to meet another challenge just as soon as she had dispatched of a previous one.

I use this way of my column to express my sincere condolences to the family and friends of the late Neta Peal, a good soul sorely missed and a reminder just how fast time has been running through our hands.

BAD NEWS FOR EAST AFRICAN B787 CUSTOMERS

Boeing at last owned up to their mounting problems by now shifting the dates for the first test flights of their new aircraft into the second quarter of 2009, which will undoubtedly delay deliveries yet further for Kenya Airways and Ethiopian Airlines. The first test flights are now probably commencing in late May 2009, although, going by Boeing's recent track record, this remains to be seen, until it actually happens. Both carriers have a substantial number of the 'Dreamliner' on order which were supposed to replace their ageing B767 fleets while offering greater capacities for passengers and cargo and better flight economics. It is understood from sources at both airlines that they are negotiating not only penalties for the late deliveries with Boeing but are also exploring the interim use of other aircraft to fill the inevitable gap which the late deliveries will leave in route and fleet expansion plans.

Meanwhile, launch customers ANA of Japan and Jetstar of Australia now reportedly expect their first

deliveries as late as 2011, which might be indicative when 'lesser' customers can receive their first 'Dreamliner turned nightmare'. General problems within the Boeing supply chain, more recent problems with 'fasteners' and a nearly two month long strike at Boeing added to the earlier woes for the aircraft made largely of composite materials to save weight and reduce fuel burn. Watch this space.

CHOBİ LODGE RECONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Information received from the Madhvani Group, owners of the country's most prestigious safari lodges Mweya (Queen Elizabeth National Park) and Paraa (Murchisons Falls National Park), indicates that construction of the Chobi Lodge in the upper part of Murchisons Falls National Park, above the Nile falls, is a little behind schedule due to adverse weather condition over the past few months, which impacted on construction work. Soft opening of the reconstructed fishing lodge on the river Nile may now take place some time in June or July 2009 (instead of April) after which the lodge is expected to become once again a magnet for fishing aficionados attending competitions or simply enjoying the river's first class sport fishing. Meanwhile, the group has also commissioned a 20 MW private power plant at their main Kakira Estate (between Jinja and the border with Kenya), fired by biomass left over when producing sugar. Uganda's leading sugar company is selling some 12 MW into the national grid and still covers all of their own electricity and power needs from this internal source. Notably it was President Museveni who commissioned the power plant and he is also anticipated to eventually open the new lodge when it is complete.

The Madhvanis' are one of Uganda's most prominent families of Asian origin and renowned for their generous scholarship schemes allowing Ugandan students to complete primary, secondary and university education free of cost, once selected for their talent and skills. Unlike the Mehta sugar barons, who have discredited themselves in recent years over a scheme to erase nearly 8.000 hectares of the Mabira tropical rainforest in favour of expanding their sugarcane fields, the Madhvani Group has engaged in better environmental practices and brought outgrowers on board to fuel their expansion, an option the Mehtas rejected over cost arguments.

OPPOSITION BLAMES GOVERNMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGES

In a hard hitting statement last week during an environmental forum at Hotel Equatoria in Kampala did the leader of the opposition in parliament blame the government for environmental damages and degradation. Other opposition MP's joined the chorus while the national association of professional

environmentalists cited statistics, showing the reduction of forest cover since independence from 44 percent or over 106.000 square kilometres to now only 18.4 percent or just over 43.000 square kilometres. The full article can be found on the website of Uganda's leading daily newspaper, The New Vision, via <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/663820>

PIPELINE RECONSTRUCTION TO EXTEND TO ELDORET

A month after commissioning the pipeline extension between Mombasa and Nairobi the tender for the second part of the expansion project was awarded to one of the bidding company. Main contractor is again the Chinese company 'China Petroleum Pipeline Bureau' and work will commence just as soon as all documents are signed and sealed. The expansion will eventually bring relief to Uganda and the African hinterland nations depending on fuel imports from Mombasa, as the construction of the Eldoret to Kampala pipeline will then be adding a 'new' supply route and substantially reducing the transportation cost of fuel in Uganda.

UGANDAN TOURISM INDUSTRY FEARS FOR MARKET SHARE

The tourism fraternity in Uganda seems at last to wake up to the stark reality of the global economic crisis, which this column predicted months ago already would affect the country's traditional exports like fish and flowers but also force market changes for tourism in view of the economic woes in the main 'producer markets' of North America and Europe. As the crisis also extends to the tiger states in the Far and South East including India and China, those emerging new markets too are now suffering from having to tighten their belts and holidays and travel will slip down the list of priorities of potential tourists.

The Uganda Tourist Board's marketing manager Edwin Muzahura urged the Government to support tourism and believes that the missing support would further dent chances of marketing Uganda. "The private sector has been trying their best but without government support, we are not going to move." Yet, government has a dismal record in financially supporting the Uganda Tourist Board and the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry has a lesser budget for the present financial year compared with the 2007/8 period. The potential financing mechanism for the tourist board through the tourism development fund levy is also hanging in the balance, as the provisions of the tourism law have not been made operational as yet, more than half a year since President Museveni assented to the law. The restructuring demanded by the same law for the tourist board has also hit snails pace, giving little hope to the sector that things will fundamentally

change in this time of need.

A Mr. Leopold King, reportedly the manager of the Gorilla Forest Camp inside Bwindi National Park at Buhoma, is reported in the New Vision to have said Uganda would be affected in a big way because the country is overly dependant on the US and European market, which were hardest hit by the credit crunch. "Tourism is a luxury. Already there are a lot of cancellations of bookings," he said. King said October is usually a good month for Uganda, but this year, the number was just slightly above half of the bookings and he expects the situation to worsen.

AIR UGANDA TO LET GO OF ZANZIBAR?

The latest aviation talk in town is that the only recently started route from Entebbe to Zanzibar might soon be a thing of the past, due to low passenger numbers. The airline's former Italian commercial director, since then of course relieved of his duties as reported in this column, apparently believed some of the travel agencies in town, that they 'would fill the plane' but none of them actually committed money for seats other than the few lonely passengers actually booked for a weekend on the island, who could be convinced by them not to fly with Kenya Airways via Nairobi or with Precision Air or Air Tanzania via Dar es Salaam. Sadly, should the development become reality it will reduce the choice of travellers from Entebbe once again. However, some culpability is attributed to the senseless Visa regime, which requires duly registered residents across Eastern Africa to obtain expensive Visas - at 50 US Dollars per person - when travelling to any of the other East African nations for a holiday, just the same as overseas visitors. This makes 'home made' holidays in Eastern Africa more expensive than they should be and this has in the past diverted traffic to the UAE or Southern Africa, where most of the expatriate community resident in East Africa do not require any Visa at all. It is high time that the endless talk about integrating East Africa further shows some tangible results for travellers from within the region like dropping Visa requirements for duly registered expatriates' resident within the East African Community.

COMPLAINTS MOUNT OVER FUEL PRICES

In spite of a reduction of petrol prices in Kenya by well over 350 US\$ equivalent, no such move was made by the fuel companies in Uganda. The oligopoly is sticking together, citing higher transport cost, reduced loads on fuel tankers and a weakened Uganda Shilling - yet the Kenya Shilling too has depreciated considerably and in comparable percentages in recent weeks. It was also revealed in public last week that too little fuel is being imported by rail, but change here requires a political decision involving both Kenyan and Ugandan

governments and the rail operator Rift Valley Railways. Meanwhile, the Ugandan public is angered and getting more and more enraged that they continue to pay near record prices for fuel, while on the global market crude oil now trades at less than a third of their peak.

Oil company executives also continue to peddle misleading information about their 'value chain', which sole purpose seems to be to enrich the companies and shamelessly exploit the general public. Unlike in Kenya, where legislation is going to kick in on this type of profiteering, the Ugandan government has done little to compel fuel companies to pass on the lower purchase prices to the public. It has also transpired that the government owned fuel reserves have run low and not been replenished for some time now, preventing a strategic intervention to bring prices down. Watch this space.

MINISTRY ADVERTISES FOR RAILWAY CONSULTANCY

The Ugandan Ministry of Works and Transport has now invited tender submissions for consultancy services, geared towards the rehabilitation and expansion of the Kampala - Kasese railway. Regional governments have of late paid more attention to rail transport in view of deteriorating roads and the high cost of transport of goods to and from the main East African ports of Mombasa and Dar es Salaam. Meanwhile, scaremonger reports were peddled to the local media and happily reproduced by some of them over the state of the main bridge across the Nile at the Jinja hydroelectric dam. The 'reports' were quoting unspecified sources of having stated that the bridge is 'unsafe and about to collapse'. Yet, under planned arrangements a team of consultants and engineers from Japan only arrived last month in the country to carry out a full assessment of the bridge's condition and what immediate measures would be needed to expand its lifespan, before - again with assistance from Japan - a new bridge is being constructed nearby. Government has also allocated several billion shillings in the current financial year to carry out repairs and strengthening at the bridge, belying the media fiction.

FRANCE TELECOM TO LAUNCH 'ORANGE' SOON IN UGANDA

The French national telecoms company, which bought into HITS Telecom a few months ago, has now given first indication that they are to launch soon in the new year. They are presently sourcing their advertising and marketing agency in Uganda, and going by the Kenyan experience, where they launched two months ago with big fanfare and low tariffs, the Ugandan telecoms market is due for a shake up once

again. In Kenya, post paid customers have been offered free internet access and if reports are true, Ugandan subscribers can expect free or subsidised handsets, the lowest tariffs in the market and a range of other goodies. Excellent news of course for visitors to Uganda who will soon have wider choices and arguably have to pay a lot less when roaming with their home networks.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF KENYA ON CELEBRATING THEIR INDEPENDENCE DAY ON 12th DECEMBER – IT HAS BEEN A LONG ROAD SINCE 1963

KENYA – US FLIGHTS SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS

The American ambassador to Kenya during the week addressed members of the American Chamber of Commerce in Nairobi. In his address he raised matters related to starting air traffic between the US and Kenya and called for a speedy implementation of inspections and improvements in aviation security. What however raised some concerns as flagged to this correspondent was the envoy's inclusion of other unrelated matters like Kenya having to drop their demand for the use of the International Standardisation Mark, which has nothing to do with questions on air transport. Said one attendee of the lunch in an email: 'let the Americans not raise the threshold again for starting air transport between the two countries. I appreciate there are technical issues to be resolved like the Category One rating by the American FAA, but there it has to stop. The ambassador should not try to mix all the other things America has been pushing us for and not link one with the other and for all purposes threaten that one thing will not happen if Kenya will not concede on other areas. Is he a diplomat or a dictator of terms?' Oooops.

KENYA AIRWAYS BLAMES AIRPORT FOR WOES

The Chief Executive of Kenya Airways delivered a fitting Christmas gift to the Kenya Airports Authority when he launched a blistering attack on them for their inefficiencies and congestion at Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. The blame game emerged at the launch of passenger busses, which the airline had to introduce themselves to carry passengers to aircraft parked on the apron, as the airport operator was obviously unable or unwilling to provide such services to their clients (the airlines), of course at a cost. The Kenya Airports Authority and KQ had run ins before, mostly over the state of aerodrome runways like in Kisumu, to which the airline had in the past suspended flights over safety concerns, and at the Lamu aerodrome. There were also complaints over

bodged procurement procedures when planning for the expansion at Nairobi's international airport but KAA has shown little concern over such complaints by their main users or the public at large.

KAA reacted by placing adverts for tenders to expand passenger facilities at the airport, including terminal space and additional parking areas, but this will take years to be accomplished, going by present experience with the modernisation and expansion of the airport.

Mr. Naikuni also confirmed that the airline would receive two new aircraft, one before the end of the year and the second before Easter 2009, but was cautious with his remarks over the delays for the Boeing 787 deliveries, other than confirming ongoing 'discussions'.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA ON THEIR 47th INDEPENDENCE DAY, WHICH WAS CELEBRATED EARLIER IN THE WEEK

SAUTI ZA BUSARA MUSIC FESTIVAL JUST TWO MONTHS AWAY

The sixth edition of the annual Sauti za Busara music festival in Zanzibar is now only a few weeks away, taking place between 12th to 17th February 2009 on the island of Zanzibar. The 'Sounds of Wisdom' festival will this year feature such eminent groups, performers and artists as [Samba Mapangala & Orchestre Virunga](#) (DRC / Kenya), [Natacha Atlas](#) (Egypt / UK), [Msondo Ngoma Band](#) (Tanzania), [Oudaden](#) (Morocco), [Nawal](#) (Comoros / France), [Culture Musical Club](#) (Zanzibar), [Khethi with Kibo Sounds](#) (South Africa / Tanzania), [The Moreira Project](#) (South Africa), [Comrade Fatso and Chabvondoka](#) (Zimbabwe), [Bi Kidude](#) (Zanzibar), [TY](#) (UK), [Carola Kinasha & Shada](#) (Tanzania), [Jagwa Music](#) (Tanzania), [Jang'ombe Nursery School](#) (Zanzibar), [Joh Makini](#) (Tanzania), [Elemotho](#) (Namibia), [Mamillion](#) (South Africa), [Segere Original](#) (Tanzania), [Katapila 'Sangula' Ngoma](#) (Tanzania), [Sansa Troupe](#) (Uganda), [Best of WaPi](#) (Pan Africa), [Mohamed Ilyas & Nyota Zameremeta](#) (Zanzibar), [Iddi Achien'g](#) (Kenya), [Rachel Magoola](#) (Uganda), [Wahapahapa Band](#) (Tanzania), [Omega Bugembe Okello](#) (Uganda / USA), [Mutinda](#) (Kenya), [Safar](#) (Zanzibar), [Kiumbizi](#) (Pemba), [Zinduka Ngoma](#) (Zanzibar), [Tarbia](#) (Zanzibar), [Zimamoto](#) (Zanzibar), [DJ Side](#) (Zanzibar), [DJ Yusuf](#) (UK / Zanzibar), and more to be announced closer to the event.

Entrance to the event is again free of charge from 4 p.m. until sunset, whereafter passes and tickets will be required by visitors. For more information write to

Busara@zanlink.com or visit their website for news updates at www.busaramusic.org

Visitors to the festival are advised to book their flights and hotels as soon as possible to avoid disappointment, as the festival normally attracts 'full house' signs all over Zanzibar.

RWANDAIR NEWS UPDATE

Earlier in the week Rwandair gave further indications of their future plans for route and fleet developments in coming months and years. Plans were revealed that the airline is looking at new destinations like Dar es Salaam and Mwanza in Tanzania, Lusaka / Zambia and Addis Ababa, besides considering Kinshasa in the DR Congo. The airline presently operates a leased B737-500, a CRJ 100ER and a 'Dash 8' turboprop but intends to acquire additional suitable aircraft to commence flights on their planned new routes. It was also announced that Rwandair has now passed the IATA operational safety audit and has been certified as an IOSA compliant carrier.

No news however could be received on the status of their discussions with a strategic investor, leaving this correspondent to conclude that they are either in their final stage or have gone nowhere. Watch this space as news emerge.

Meanwhile it was also learned that the Rwandan government has now signed a contract with a British consultancy firm to develop plans for the redesigning of the international airport, which is part of a masterplan development for major infrastructural projects. The final agreed designs should become available by early 2010.

PRIVATE SECTOR ALLIANCE TO TRAIN TOURISM ADMINISTRATORS

The Rwandan Private Sector Foundation, the Chamber of Commerce and the Office for Tourism and National Parks, ORTPN (which is now part of the Rwanda Development Board) have joined hands to commence a 'train the trainer' programme for tourism disciplines, aimed at strengthening the human resource component in the sector and making the destination more competitive through better trained personnel. Technical assistance is given by a German based consultancy firm associated with the Cologne Business School. Watch this space.

RWANDA IN NEW GORILLA ALLIANCE

This article was sent by a contact in Kigali / Rwanda and is reproduced with due author's and publisher's credit:

ETHIOPIA PERMITS TOURIST VISITORS TO SEE ELEPHANT HERDS

A newsflash from Addis Ababa confirmed that the country is now gradually allowing tourists to see their remaining elephant herds at the Babile Wildlife Reserve located nearly 600 KM east of the capital city. Elephant populations in the past suffered of poaching and declining ecosystems, where they could sufficiently feed and reproduce. Reportedly some 300 elephant are presently found in and near the reserve and the herds, plus other wildlife of course, can be visited under package tour arrangements made in Addis Ababa from licensed safari operators.

And as usual the weekly tourism news update from Livingstone / Zambia by Gill Staden, who has once again produced some great stuff. Visit the new tourism website www.victoriafallszambia.travel for regular news and updates on the destination, including a guide for hotels, lodges, inns and guest houses and of course information on where to go and what to do, not to be missed by any visitors to Zambia in general and Livingstone in particular:

A visit to Nyanga National Park, Zimbabwe

Because I was waiting for my car to be fixed we took a drive to Nyanga National Park. It is an area of hills on the border with Mozambique. It is park in which to enjoy the scenery. But the scenery didn't look that great while we were there because it decided to rain. All around us we could see sun, but that big black cloud followed us around and dropped water on us. Oh well, just our luck, I suppose.

Having said that, it was an enjoyable day. We tried valiantly to get around the park in a Toyota Corolla. Didn't happen, but we did get some distance and saw some sites. The park has not been maintained very well and the exotic trees – pine and wattle - are taking over the hills. It is not as it should be.

There was a fort-type place at the top of a hill. No-one seems really sure how it came to be there. But it is quite interesting to see. The walls are very thick and it must have been a mission to construct. Having done the archeological bit I had a look at the plants. There is a wonderful array of flowering herbs and heathers on the hills. All colours. And some of the areas looked as if a landscape gardener had spent ages arranging them – they looked so perfect. Nyanga is about 300 kms from Harare. Main road is good. And, of course, there is not a lot of traffic on the road. Fuel is still a bit difficult to get but some petrol stations are now selling in US dollars. Previously you had to find coupons. In fact, most of people's

lives now are run using the US dollar because Zim dollars are impossible to find in the large quantities that are needed. The rate the other day was US\$1 = Zim\$7million.

The people in the rural areas look very sorry for themselves. At one farm we visited, one of the 're-settlers' came to visit and said that they were all starving - could he get some food. But life is tough and no-one has anything to spare.

Zimbabwe is a very sad place. Don't know where it will all end. And ... when the end will come.

From Karien on the new Website

On the 24th of November a new e-booking site for Livingstone and Kafue was launched at Wasawange Lodge.

This e-marketing website is the end product of one of the SEED project's components to boost the Zambian Tourism Industry in cooperation with the Zambian Ministry of Tourism and Environment and Natural Resources, with the objective to assist the micro, small and medium tourist businesses to improve market access for Livingstone and Kafue National Park.

The project started of in June, when a team of consultants from World Hotel Link came to Livingstone and Kafue National Park to visit the accommodation providers for a Market Readiness Survey. This was followed a couple of months later with a Content Collection Exercise by a professional photographer. The beginning of November the market- and nearly-market ready Micro- Small to Medium Operators received a CD-ROM with individualized digital photo's and an example of an English language brochure, to be used for the production of marketing materials.

With assistance of the LTA and LILOGHA, a two day training seminar was held at The Zambezi Sun for the ready- and nearly market ready properties. A lot of accommodation managers and owners, mainly in the nearly market ready category attended the workshop and learned about, Market access - unique selling points - valuing and pricing the product - understanding commissions and managing bookings - e-marketing and web portals and the building of websites - travel and tourism market trends an the individual travel market.

The one day seminar for the not market ready properties was also very well attended and the main focus was more on - Targeting Investment. Minimum Standards of Tourism Products and financial

management.

The www.victoriafallszambia.travel website is the end of the project and the beginning of Wild Side Tours' marketing and selling.

Wild Side Tours was chosen to become the Market Place Operator for whl.travel. Whl.travel is a franchise company with approx 200 sites up throughout the world. All sites have the same set-up and apart from marketing the various destinations one of the main focuses is sustainability. Many of our Livingstone and Kafue operators do a lot for sustainability, be it environmentally, culturally, historically or socially, with the many village and community projects as well as sponsoring the various institutions or have volunteering projects in place. Others are very active on environmental issues or a mixture of all.

The new site allows us to market our many facilities in Livingstone and Kafue in a way that mainly the micro, small and medium accommodation providers would never be able to do individually. Through whl.travel we have access to a team of international experts who assist us in promoting our products as well as keeping our site high up on the search engines. We are very excited about having joined the network and growing Livingstone as an international travel destination. At the moment I have 43 accommodation providers up on the site and this is growing, there are also numerous activity providers represented. Some of the properties I have been working with over the past years are not up yet, because they have their marketing in place and it has just been too busy, though they will also be up by January. Before www.victoriafallszambia.travel site, there were no other international e-marketplaces which represent and book for so many accommodation providers. Nearly every provider is represented, from guesthouses - backpackers and mid range to top-end hotels. Although it will take some time to reach the top of the search engines, we are already receiving bookings on a daily basis through this new site.

I would also like to mention the 1 hour radio program every Thursday on the environment and keeping Livingstone clean.

Fred Mwendepole presents this radio program and invites every week somebody to talk about the environment and the importance of acting now for the future of Livingstone. The public can phone in and comment or ask questions.

Fred had on his weekly program Simon, the environmental man from Sun International, who talked about the importance of doing something now and the practices Sun has put in place, very interesting!!! Ali Shenton has also been on the program and was excellent. As everybody knows Ali is very active on

environmental issues. With this radio program a lot of discussion is taking place that makes people think and some are trying to find solutions to problems and have brilliant ideas. We have a long way to go and now through this program we are reaching the biggest part of our community

We would very much like to keep this program alive. Wild Side Tours has sponsored 4 weeks of one hour. If anyone else would like to sponsor one hour or more, please phone Fred Mwendepole on 0977 852308. Also if you would like to appear in the program and want to get discussions and arguments going please call Fred.

From Clover Elephants

Just thought you may want to know we had a sighting of the 3 wild dogs on our road this morning. 7:00 a.m. clients were coming down and saw 2 of the dogs standing by the side of the dirt road while the other was laying down. They apparently were not too disturbed by the vehicle.

From Ali

Two of the five wild dogs which swam across the Zambezi a couple of months ago in front of the River Club. These photos near Susi and Chuma were taken by Johan van der Merwe on the 25th November 2008. Perhaps any info on sightings should be sent to Claire Mateke at the museum email: vcmateke@zamnet.zm

Capitol Theatre

The Capitol Theatre is being brought back to life. This will hopefully in turn help to revive a bit of the social spirit in Livingstone. The aim of the restoration is to provide the following:

- A cinema
- A theatre
- A Jewish and cinematic museum (during the day).
- A conference centre for public meetings, addresses etc
- A bar and small eatery (for cinema and theatre goers/club members) run by Tara.
- A chocolate/pop corn/coke shop at the entrance

The intention is to theme each night so all sections of the community get to experience their particular type of film entertainment, EG: A Bollywood night, a classic black and white/cult movie night, an action night (Bond, Kung Fu etc) etc. Each Saturday morning and afternoon have children's matinees (cartoons in the mornings and Harry Potter and the like in the

afternoons for example). It is also intended to have it as a venue for amateur dramatics/choir practise etc.

Due to the economic down turn the finances have been curtailed somewhat but not to an extent where the project is in jeopardy. It will open but certain sections like the upstairs will do so at a later date.

I would like to ask the community firstly if they have any time to dig around in their spare rooms for any memorabilia that they might have when the theatre/cinema was open before. Any old programmes from shows that were performed there or movie posters. Perhaps any old information on the Jewish people in town as well.

I would also like to ask for willing volunteers to come and help sand and paint the walls and recover the seats if they have time. Any advice would also be very welcome.

I would also like to suggest a group is formed to start looking at how the theatre might be utilised by the school as part of their curriculum especially when it comes to the annual pantomime.

Does anyone have a list of the actors who have been to Livingstone? I would like to have their photos and a 'star' on the wall to record the fact that they have been here. EG: Arnold Schwarzeneger, Michael Douglas, Catherine Zita Jones,

I have a Canadian theatrical group arriving to perform on the stage for the months of February to April. They will be arriving at the end of January and will be looking for local talent to act in their shows.

DID YOU KNOW?

The theatre was built in 1931 by the Grill family. It has 254 seats downstairs, 140 in the circle and an extra 20 can be accommodated in the two boxes. There will be a slight reduction in the seating capacity due to alterations.

Alfred Hitchcock visited Livingstone in 1954 in preparation for the filming of Laurens van der Post's Film 'Flamingo Feather'. He was hosted by Harry Sossen, who owned to Capitol Theatre at time. Hitchcock had already chosen his leading lady for the film, Grace Kelly but unfortunately she married Prince Rainier of Monaco later that year and thus her acting career came to an end. Hitchcock lost interest in the film shortly after. I have a photo of Hitchcock with Harry Sossen at Livingstone airport. Harry was also a friend of Laurens van der Post and I have copies of

letters from Laurens to Harry to frame and put in the cinematic part of the museum display. I also have a picture of Danny Kae at Harry's house.

John Thaw, of Inspector Morse fame, made a film in Livingstone in 1971. It was called *The Grass is Singing*, a Doris Lessing novel, and Martyn Hitchens had a role in the film and Dalene Vincent's voice can be heard in the part of the telephonist at the North Western Hotel, which features during the movie.

Please come and help get this wonderful building open again for the benefit of everyone in town.

State effects annual fish ban

THE Government has effected the annual closure of the fishing season that begins today up to the end of February 2009. Agriculture and Cooperatives Minister in charge of Livestock and Fisheries Bradford Machila said in a statement in Lusaka yesterday that people should observe the annual fish ban to conserve the fish resources. "If we fail to conserve our own fish resources, then we will not be able to rehabilitate the degraded fisheries and lost diversity of fish species," he said. Mr Machila said the fish ban was not meant to deprive the community of their economic livelihood but was meant to promote the conservation of the fishery resource and strengthen the capacity in fishery resource management among the fishing community. He urged the fishing community to engage in other agricultural activities to boost production as they observe the closure of the fish season. The minister said during the ban, fishing and other related activities were prohibited in Kafue River and the flood plain fishery, Super Upper Kafue Fishery, Upper Zambezi, lower Zambezi from the dam wall to the Zambezi /Luangwa confluence. Other areas were Lukanga Swamps, Bangweulu fishery and the swamps, Mweru-wa-ntipa, Mweru-Luapula, Lusiwash and Chambeshi fishery. Lakes Tanganika and Kariba fisheries would remain open as the main fishery in the two lakes was Kapenta which is highly migratory and is shared among countries. "Those fishery areas that are normally open to fishing during the closed fishing period will ensure that certificates of origin or conveyance for the fish movements are available to traders, transporters and the other people carrying such a commodity. "Please ensure that you obtain these documents which should bear proper information before making any fish transfers or transportation," he said. The fisheries staff would be working together with the Zambia Police, the Zambia Wildlife Authority (Zawa) to monitor illegal fishing activities. He said that the closed fish season did not affect fish farmers whose activities would go uninterrupted with harvests and sales of their farmed fish. -ZANIS

News from 'Uganda

Gifted by Nature'

By Prof. Dr. Wolfgang H. Thome

First edition December 2008

Photo: Forest Whitaker (left) of Last King of Scotland Movie, with Prof. Thome

AIRLINES BAG TOP BUSINESS AWARDS

The annual PriceWaterHouseCoopers sponsored regional 'most respected company awards' yielded some interesting results this year, as both Kenya Airways and their Tanzanian partner airline Precision Air bagged top honours. Kenya Airways came second overall in Kenya, a remarkable comeback and vote of confidence by regional CEO's in spite of a hard year for the aviation sector, and Precision took the top honours in Tanzania as most respected company. The collective vote by CEO's sampled from across the region underscores just how highly rated the business model of Precision Air is in the region. Well done to the Pride of Africa and to Precision Air. Most respected Ugandan company was telecoms giant MTN while in Kenya it was telecoms industry leader Safaricom.

SKYNET KEY CAA CERTIFICATIONS

It was just learned that Skyjet's aircraft has been registered by the CAA in Entebbe, now carrying the registration 5X – SKA. A 'C of A' – or certificate of airworthiness – has been issued, clearing one of the last hurdles for the airline before going operational.

The now mandatory 'test flights', required by the CAA for new applicants to obtain an AOC – or air operator certificate – will be carried out within days now and should then be followed by the formal announcement of operations launch. Handling agents in Entebbe, Juba and Khartoum have already been selected and the airline's offices in Entebbe are receiving their final touches before opening the doors to the travelling public. Happy Landings.

ETHIOPIAN ANNOUNCES MORE CODE-SHARED FLIGHTS WITH LUFTHANSA

A contact at the airline's Kampala office has confirmed that Lufthansa has now signed an extended codeshare agreement with Ethiopian Airlines. Travellers from Frankfurt can now travel on Lufthansa tickets via Addis Ababa to Entebbe (daily flights), but also to Nairobi, Kigali, Kilimanjaro (Arusha), Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar. This will undoubtedly assist ticket sales in Germany to those destinations on scheduled flights and will in particular benefit Entebbe, which has not seen a Lufthansa flight number on the arrival and departure board for over three and a half decades – other than an occasional cargo flight.

In turn, Ethiopian can now sell additional Lufthansa destinations on their own tickets as code shared flights, like Stockholm, Geneva and Amsterdam within the European network and San Francisco and Los Angeles on their long haul network.

BWINDI CELEBRATES ANOTHER GORILLA TWIN BIRTH

Uganda Wildlife Authority has now released information about the birth of twin gorilla babies a few weeks ago at Bwindi Gorilla National Park. The newborns are part of the Nkuringo gorilla group, whose dominant male had passed away earlier in the year, before a new 'silverback' emerged as undisputed leader. The group is reportedly being monitored by veterinary staff of UWA to ensure the well being of the gorilla babies and to assist them as much as possible to see them through maturity in a few years time.

UWA EXTENDS BID DEADLINE

The Uganda Wildlife Authority has now extended the bid deadline for proposals by investors for recently advertised opportunities in national parks to 17th December 2008 at 11 a.m. and the formal opening of bids will then taken place half an hour later in the UWA board room. Contact uwa@uwa.or.ug for more information or visit www.uwa.or.ug

SIMBA TRAVELCARE ADVERTISE 'HONEST FARES'

In a remarkable departure from industry wide practise, Declan Peppard's Simba TravelCare has now offered all inclusive holiday season fares to Europe and North America. Airlines in the region are notorious for advertising misleading fares on top of which unsuspecting travellers then have to add a variety of airport taxes, fuel surcharges and other creative inventions, making the ultimate price for the tickets often substantially more expensive than initially 'advertised'. The EU has now banned such deplorable behaviour and it is hoped that across Eastern Africa too common sense prevails eventually before the matter ends up in consumer courts for misleading advertising.

Even with all the charges included in the fares, Simba TravelCare is offering excellent deals, valid for the period from the 13th December with the return journey at the latest by 31st March 2009.

Thank you for the honesty and hopefully the airlines and others will now stop misleading the general public when advertising fares.

EMIRATES STARTS A380 FLIGHTS TO LONDON

The airline's Kampala office has now confirmed that effective immediately they will be using one of their new A380 aircraft for flights to London Heathrow. The airline is flying several times a day from Dubai to the UK but travellers will be trying to get their booking on the new giant aircraft to sample the inflight service and comforts. Emirates connects Entebbe daily with Dubai, via Addis Ababa, offering one of the broadest ranges of connections available to Ugandans.

CAA INVITES TENDERS FOR AERODOMES WORK

The Civil Aviation Authority has now advertised regravelling work at Kidepo Valley National Park airfield, the Tororo airfield and the Jinja airfield, all of which are owned and operated by the CAA. The work, once completed, will be welcomed by the aviation fraternity, as it will improve operational safety for planes landing and taking off from those facilities. Tender awards are expected in early 2009, whereafter works should start by mid 2009.

THAI POLITICAL SITUATION AIDING EAST AFRICAN TOURISM RECOVERY

Conversations held with leading hotel operators in Mombasa would indicate a strong and growing demand for beach holidays in Kenya, probably accelerated by the political turmoil in Thailand, which saw up to 300.000 passengers stranded in and around Bangkok and elsewhere in the country. Understandably, major tour operators in Europe have stepped on the brakes before sending more tourists to the country torn up by strikes and protests, and the latest High Court decision dissolving the ruling party – by some accounts a politically inspired verdict – will not help restore confidence in the destination anytime soon. While thousands of protestors continue to block the two main airports in Bangkok, in contrast the airports in Nairobi and Mombasa are continuing to operate without interruption and the forthcoming Christmas season is therefore expected to be a sellout across the Indian Ocean beaches of Eastern Africa, i.e. Kenya, Tanzania and Zanzibar. As Thailand benefitted from the political troubles of Kenya earlier in the year, so it is now the turn of others to provide safe holidays for the sun seekers from Europe and elsewhere.

SHELL KENYA LOWERS FUEL PRICES

Following intense pressure from the Kenyan public and under threat by the Kenyan government to introduce legislation in January against profiteering and overcharging by fuel companies, Shell Kenya earlier in the week lowered their pump prices by 15 Kenya Shillings or equivalent to about 350 Uganda Shillings. However, in Uganda prices continue to remain as high as during the peak of crude prices, by public opinion a shameless exploitation of motorists in a near monopolistic market. Aviation fuel prices also remain high in both Entebbe and Kajjansi, a mindboggling situation considering the drop of crude oil prices to around 50 US Dollars a barrel, a mere third of its former peak earlier in the year.

NEW TERMINAL FOR SHARJAH

The home airport of Air Arabia has now announced plans to add another terminal building to the airport to cater for the sharp growth of passengers travelling to, from and via Sharjah. This will be good news for Air Arabia passengers from East Africa, where the airline presently flies several times a week to Nairobi. While construction may take a while still, the new facility is according to sources close to the Air Arabia

office in Nairobi likely to be open before Sharjah reaches its present capacity limits, expected to happen early in the next decade.

Air Arabia flights have taken the Kenyan market by storm in view of their value for money fares and traffic in both directions is reportedly ahead of budget on the route, no wonder with fares starting at 286 US Dollars return, plus of course the hidden charges which few airlines or travel agents dare to openly reveal.

TANZANIA'S MAFIA ISLAND AIRPORT COMPLETES UPGRADE

The year long rehabilitation of the island's main aerodrome has now been completed and the nearly 1.7 km long runway has been strengthened and resurfaced to cater for larger aircraft. Commonly used ATR turboprops but even small jets are now able to land and take off safely from Mafia, giving a boost to tourism and trade between the island and the mainland. Before the works Mafia's aerodrome was only able to operate safely during the dry season but faced operating restrictions during the long rains, but even during and after heavy downpours.

The works were part of Tanzania's ongoing effort to upgrade the country's aviation infrastructure to boost connections across the country and promote increased use of air transport. Tarmacking and lengthening of the field is foreseen in the next phase of works which would then allow the use of commercial jets.

EGYPTAIR PONDERES RETURN TO DAR

Several years after dropping their single weekly flight to Tanzania due to economic reasons at the time, Egypt Air is now said to plan their return to this Eastern African nation by middle of 2009. The airline is looking at 4 flights per week on brand new B737-800 equipment, while previously they only operated one flight per week, which made using the airline less attractive for travellers.

The 144 seater Boeing aircraft will offer 120 seats in economy class and 24 seats in business class and flight schedules will be timed to allow for prompt onward connections in Cairo in both directions.

RWANDA'S VENERABLE GORILLA 'KING' DIES

News emerged last weekend of the passing of the dominant 'silverback' male gorilla of the 'Shinda' group, reportedly aged over 30 years, due to ill health. Sources from ORTPN confirmed that there was no foul play suspected as the ageing gorilla chief has been suffering of ill health for a while before succumbing. The animal, owing to its strength and utter domination of his extensive family, was often dubbed 'king' amongst game rangers. It was also reported that a new dominant male has already emerged within the gorilla family structure.

TOURISM FUTURE BRIGHT FOR RWANDA

Projections now published in the Rwandan media paint a rosy

picture for the country's booming tourism sector. With new hotels and meeting facilities being built by such investors like Dubai World the promotion of such new assets will also be assured, hand in hand with a very proactive ORTPN, now under the auspices of the Rwanda Development Board. ORTPN expects earnings to top some 150 million US Dollars this year alone and the new focus on meetings, conventions and exhibitions could add a further 40 million US Dollars earnings by 2012. ORTPN will also spend further funds on creating MICE promotional tools in coming months, underscoring their commitment to promote tourism with determination.

REPORT FROM ZAMBIA

And finally some tourism tidbits taken from Gill Staden's newsletter in Livingstone / Zambia:

Exhibitions

"What we have been told about Independence"

The Livingstone Museum celebrated Zambia's independence this year by launching an exhibition entitled "What we have been told about independence".

Zambia got its Independence from British colonial rule on 24th October 1964. Every year this day is commemorated by different activities throughout the country. In 2007 the Museum decided to commemorate the day by partnering with school children in bringing out the experiences and stories of ordinary citizens who participated in the struggle for independence and/or witnessed the first independence celebrations in 1964. Children from various schools in Livingstone were asked to interview members of their families and/or communities on their personal experiences in the events leading up to and including Zambia's first Independence Day. From the interviews, the pupils wrote essays, some of which they presented at public talks in October 2007 to mark Independence Day. During these talks, local freedom fighters also gave accounts about their experiences to the children.

If you would like to get the Museum news sent to you, email museumnews@microlink.zm

Open Africa

There was a meeting on Monday with Cobus from Open Africa. There weren't a lot of us there but this is understandable, I think, because we just have far too many meetings in Livingstone. But it is OK. Those of us that were there learned a lot and can pass the information on. Although I didn't make any notes, this is what I can remember ...

Open Africa promotes tourist routes. Once they have identified a route they contact as many people on that route as possible for inclusion in their website. The routes, of course, are

primarily for self-drive tourists.

Livingstone used to be on a route between here and Sioma Falls. Unfortunately the route had not been well used and Open Africa has decided to change it. The problem is the road. Few people can stomach the road up to Sioma Falls from Sesheke. I've done it and I know. Not a good one ...

So Livingstone is going to become a 'route' on its own. It will have a webpage all to itself. This is absolutely brilliant. If you think about Livingstone and its environs we can easily be a 'route' – the Falls, the gorges, the Park, the river, the town. We are a route.

The best thing about Open Africa is that they have the most amazing website. It is stylish; it is updated regularly; it has class ... and it is free ... Check it out for yourself.

If you would like to be included in the Livingstone route, contact

Email: cobus@openafrica.org

Website: www.openafrica.org

AND HAPPY IDD AL ADHA TO ALL THE MUSLIM
FAITHFUL, MARKING THE END OF THE CURRENT
PILGRIMAGE / HAJ SEASON

