

AFRICA

Travel Magazine



**Cameroon: All Africa in one country
hosts ATA 38th World Congress
Profiles of other African Countries
Includes Gorongosa Mozambique
most treasured destination**



Cameroon says many happy



Africa Travel Magazine

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By Jerry Bird

Before adding our personal comments, let's set the stage by having the host country speak by itself.

I am Cameroon, a "Ecotourism Heaven" and "Land of Promise" that holds great hope in the many avenues of travel, tourism and hospitality. Proud host country of the Africa Travel Association 38th Annual Congress in Buea, I share my borders with a number of other countries: Nigeria to the Northwest, Chad to the Northeast, the Central African Republic to the East, and Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Congo to the South. My country is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the Southwest, and Lake Chad forms part of its Northernmost frontier. My Southern Cameroon is largely taken up by thick jungle, and there are few towns or other population centres here. Buea is the Capital of the Southwest region, and home to the breathtaking Mount Cameroon which provides an amazing hiking opportunity. The coastline here is by far Cameroon's best: Kribi for great scenery and a relaxed vibe and ecotourism in Campo-Ma'an National Park.

I am unique, my country when it comes to natural beauty has many national parks: The Waza National Park, The Bouba Ndida National Park, The Benoue National Park, The Faro National Park, The Kalamaloue National Park, The Mozoko Gokoro National Park, The Korup National Park, The Lobebe National Park, the Campo Ma'an National Park. The wildlife

add to the beauty of my country and it is a great place to have exciting safaris with many exotic species. My waterfalls and lakes are the perfect tourists destinations, the savannah in the North of Cameroon harbour is one of the most wild and varied animal populations in Africa. With its six national parks, the North is the ideal for discovering the African fauna. The highest point is Mount Cameroon in the Southwest. Undoubtedly Cameroon will amaze you with the diversity of its landscapes and wherever you go you will witness outstanding panoramas that only Africa can offer you.

A former French colony, I became independent in 1960. As tourism Minister, H.E. Bello Bouba Maigari, stated concerning my promising future, "Thanks to her natural resources, cultural diversity and the political stability she enjoys, Cameroon is a "Tourist Eldorado".

The Congress is holding at a time when tourism is ranked the biggest world industry noting that Cameroon has succeeded in securing a major position among tourist destination in Africa" and will become an emerging destination" It is a country with huge tourism potential which is still undiscovered.

MY ETHNIC ROOTS

Many Americans know about Cameroon, thanks to Dr. Peter Wuteh Vakunta and Grassfields Stories from Cameroon. My population of about 20,549,221 includes the Fulani, the Chow, Katokoa and Kirdi, the Bamoun and the Bamileke, the Bassa, Douala,





returns to the “Ecotourism Heaven”

Bakweri, Bantanga, Ewondo and Fang, Pygmies such as the Bakola and Bofi, who live harmoniously in mixed communities, freely exercising their religions and cultural traditions.

My people are widely recognized for their genuine friendliness and hospitality. While French is the official language, English, Fulfulde, Douala, Ewondo and Fang are spoken in town and rural areas. About 40 percent is at least nominally Christian, 20 percent is at least nominally Muslim, and 40 percent practice traditional indigenous religious beliefs. Cameroon is divided into 10 provinces and Yaounde is the political capital with a population of 1,299,369 located in the centre of the nation of about 750 metres above sea level.

MY ECONOMY

Oil, abundant natural resources, deep sea port of Kribi, natural gaz, several hydroelectric dams Agriculture is the main sector, employs 70% of the workforce and contributes 42% to the formation of gross domestic product and 30% of its export revenue.

MY INDUSTRIES

Petroleum production and refining, aluminum production, food processing, light consumer goods, textiles, lumber, ship repair, diamonds, aluminium, cobalt, nickel,

manganese, iron, tea plantations, banana, pineapple offer opportunities for expansion. However, many of rich forest, which are also home to indigenous peoples such as the Baka pygmies.

MY RICH HERITAGE

The world Heritage Committee inscribes 2 sites on the World Heritage list: Dja Faunal Reserve (1987) and Shangha Trinational

(2012). More proprieties are submitted on the list such Park Nation de Waza, La Chefferie de Bafut, les chutes de la Lobe, Park National de Korup, Parc national de Campo Ma’am, Site archeologique de Shum laka, Maglithiques de Saa et Complexe des parcs nationaux de Boumba Bek et de Nki.

For more information visit:
<http://cameroon-tourism.webs.com>



Hotel Hilton Yaounde, Cameroon



CAMEROON'S FESTIVALS ,WILDLIFE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY



Cameroon is Africa in One Country
Clockwise- from top left: Giraffes in Waza National Park, Ngondo Festival on Wouri River-Douala, Fantasia in Northern Cameroon, Tea Plantation, Face Painting, Bamenda Castle, Trekking- Mt, Cameroon, Kapsiki Region, Lobe River Excursion, Cameroon Chief in Costume, Limbe Botanical Garden, Western Region Dances, Giant Sea Turtles at Ebojie, Lobe Waterfall, Ngondo Festival. So much to see and do.



CAMEROON'S NATURE AND RESORTS ARE A PROUD EXAMPLE OF ECOTOURISM IN ACTION



1. Photos: Mount Cameroon 2. Tea Plantation 3. Gorilla 4. Cameroon Mountain. 5. Ekom Nkam Fall 6. Former PM Lodge in Buea. 7. Limbe Botanic Garden. 8. Le Meridien Douala Hotel.



By Sharon Roling

The Africa Travel Association, the leader in tourism promotion to Africa, held its 38th Congress in Buea, Cameroon from October 16-20, 2013. Under the banner of “Re-Discovering Cameroon,” nearly 200 international and local delegates, including tourism ministers from Cameroon, Uganda and Zimbabwe and representatives from the public and private sectors, gathered at the newly-opened Mountain Hotel to explore how tourism is one of the most promising industries across Africa and an evolving industry in Cameroon.

The Congress was hosted by the Cameroon Ministry of Tourism and Leisure under the auspices of Honorable Minister of state, Minister of Tourism and Leisure, Bella Bouba Maigari. In his opening remarks, the Minister said, “The 38th edition of ATA’s Congress in Buea is taking place at a time when tourism, a sector with a strong added value that cuts across sectors, is ranked as one of the biggest industries in the world. The important role it plays in Cameroon’s economy contributes significantly to improving the trade balance.”

Drawing on the theme of the event, the Minister said Cameroon will be “re-discovered” time and again, particularly when there is so much “to newly discover, given the country’s incredible tourist potential, natural resources, cultural diversity, peaceful cohabitation of religions and political stability, which makes our country a tourist El Dorado, known as “All Africa in one country”. Also building on the theme, Edward Bergman, ATA’s Executive Director challenged the delegates to take a new look at Cameroon and to share ideas and insights on how to grow the industry and refine products.” Please consider how we can diversify a country’s attractions by investing in new niche tourism products; please also consider how the

public and private sectors can partner together to support the packaging and growth of tourism in the region”

Reaching out to the U.S. Market

Throughout the deliberations the Cameroon delegates from both the government and private sector emphasized their desire to connect with the North American market. In his remarks, Minister Bella Bouba Maigari spoke about the importance of turning Cameroon’s diversity into innovative products that could be sold to the North American marketplace. He said, “The Government is determined to spare no effort in order to boost up the tourism industry,” announcing that Cameroon recently opened a new tourism information bureau office in Washington, D.C.

A number of U.S. - based speakers explored this topic in their presentations. John Riggan, President of Parmer Concepts, spoke about how to promote a successful African destination, product or service in the U.S. market. Blanca Menendez, Political/Economic Chief at the U.S. Embassy, spoke about the realities of doing business in Cameroon, and Mark Walton, Managing Director of Onyx Global Marketing, spoke about strategies and tactics for a country to adopt to improve its brand.

Engaging New Partners in Tourism Growth in Africa

For the first time representatives from the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) participated in an ATA Congress. Both in the Opening Ceremony and in a panel on public-private partnership, Estherine Lisinge Fotabong, Director-PICD at a NEPAD, spoke about NEPAD’S role in economic growth across the continent and the possible role travel and tourism, can play in increasing trade and investment. AfDB representative, Beejaye Kobil, Division Manager of the Economic & Social Statistics Division, provided an overview of what’s happening in business in Africa right now.

Africa Rising

The Congress captured the spirit of Africa’s economic growth in a number of sessions, beginning with the keynote by Valentine Ozigbo, Managing Director and CEO of Transnational Hotels & Tourism in Nigeria. Ozigbo spoke about the growth of hotels and lodging in Africa, its impact on the tourism industry, and how governments can support investment through public-private partnership.

Angelle Kwemo, founder of the Congressional African Staff Association, also articulated the message that Africa is on the rise in her presentation on global investment in tourism. “In the twenty-first

century economy, any company that needs to grow needs an Africa strategy and any African country that wants growth needs a global strategy,” she said.

The discussion on airline connectivity also captured the spirit of “Africa rising.” Presenters included Esayas WoldeMariam Hailu, Managing Director of Ethiopian International Services at Ethiopian Airlines, serving forty-six destinations in Africa; Bobby Bryan, Commercial Director of Delta Air Lines, serving four in Africa; and Djanbou Ali, Sales Executive at Brussels Airlines, serving twenty destinations in Africa.

Discovering Southwest Cameroon

The Ministry of Tourism and Leisure organized two separate afternoon excursions for delegates to learn more about the region’s attractions. The first included a tour of the Tole Tea plantation followed by a visit to the Limbe Wildlife Centre. A former zoo, the centre is a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation project that is home endangered wildlife including gorillas, chimpanzees, and several species of monkeys.

The delegates then headed to the neighbouring Botanical Gardens for cultural entertainment. The day wrapped up with a special dinner, a blend of French and African cuisine, at the Fini Hotel. The Fini boasts a view to Limbe’s beaches and is home to one of the region’s top night clubs.

The second Host Country day included ATA’s annual tree-planting ceremony at the entrance of Buea University’s Medical School. Then delegates visited Bimbia, the runs-Atlantic and trans-Saharan slave port, in the world of a delegate. “it was an incredibly memorable experience, unlike no other heritage site I’ve visited in Africa, including Ghana and Senegal, but it requires an all-terrain vehicle to ascend the Libe hills and sturdy and comfortable shoes to walk through the canopy of trees.”

The potential of Cameroon’s attractions was presented at a session with the country’s leading tourism specialists, who all made strong cases for more increased attention and investment not only from the U.S. market, but also the Chinese one. Moderated by Elimbi Ebenezer, former Director of Tourism Marketing at the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure and a consultant to the UNWTO, presenters included Adame Mahamat, a Cameroon tour operator based in China; Elangwe Peter, a tourist delegate in the Southwest; and Rodolphe Simo Kam, Managing Director of SOFITOUR, one of the country’s largest travel companies.

Congress Sponsors

Arik Air, served as the Official Congress Carrier and offered special discounts to delegates. The Nigeria-based airline also served as Official Media Carrier, ATA, in partnership with Arik Air and the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure, organized a media delegation to the Congress, which included journalists writing stories for Travel Weekly, Canadian World Traveler Magazine, the Atlantic, CNN, Black Enterprise.

For more information contact: sharon@africa-travelassociation.org.



Cameroon Congress Fashion Show



By Chief Margaret Bolanle Fabiyi

This year's congress included an exclusive fashion show, thanks to our delegate from Nigeria, Chief Margaret Bolanle Fabiyi, President, Webisco International Federation of Women Entrepreneurs & Tourism.

Chief Margaret staged the show, which showcased her own textiles and designs, as part of her presentation on "Art & Fashion," and how these niche tourism products contribute to the promotion of travel and tourism across the continent.



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Tanzania promotes Treasures of the North, Gems of the South and West



HON. LAZARO NYALANDU

Dear Travel Agents, In this special ATA Congress edition of Africa Travel Magazine, we want to take this opportunity to introduce you to a part of Tanzania few people know National Park, the Selous Game Reserve, Pangani, Tanga and Songea. Even if you have not yet been to Tanzania, most of you are familiar with some of our famous icons and World Heritage sites, Kilimanjaro, the tallest mountain in Africa, Serengeti National Park, famous for the great wildebeests migration, as well as the Ngorongoro Crater, which is often called the 8th Wonder of the World. But in the south, with fewer tourists, the experience is different, some say even more authentic. Ruaha National Park is now the largest park in East Africa and the second largest national park in all of Africa. The Selous Game Reserve is the largest in the world. Now, as the air connections between North and South expand with Coastal Aviation offering scheduled flights between the Serengeti and Ruaha National Parks starting June 2010, and as the choice of accommodation increase in the South, your clients can have a diversified safari experience not forget the opportunities for total relaxation on the miles of white sandy beaches along the Indian Ocean. Marine parks, water sports and world class diving sites are found off the shores of mainland Tanzania, its coastal islands like Mafia, as well as on the exotic spice islands of Zanzibar. The most frequently heard comment from first time visitors to home the memories of the warm hospitality Program, Visit the People, which currently comprises 26 villages in the North, offers visitors a rare opportunity to meet the local people and participate in a diverse range of daily activities such as cooking, fishing and making handicrafts We look forward to saying Karibuni Tanzania (welcome to Tanzania) to you and your clients.

TREASURES OF THE NORTH, GEMS OF THE SOUTH

Tanzania, the largest country in East Africa, is focused on wildlife conservation and sustainable tourism, with approximately 28 % of the land protected by the Government. It boasts 15 National Parks and 32 game reserves. It is the home of the tallest mountain in Africa, the legendary Mt. Kilimanjaro; The Serengeti, named in October, 2006, the New 7th Wonder of the World by USA Today and Good Morning America; the world acclaimed Ngorongoro Crater, often called the 8th Wonder of the World; Olduvai Gorge, the cradle of mankind: game reserve; Ruaha, now the second largest National Park in Africa; the spice islands of Zanzibar; and seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Most important for visitors, the Tanzanian people are warm and friendly, speak English, which together with Kiswahili, are the two official languages; and the country is an oasis of peace and stability with a democratically elected and stable government.

TREASURES OF THE NORTH

Tanzania is most famous for the icons of what is known as the Northern Circuit. Arusha, the Safari capital of Tanzania, is the jumping off point for the North. International flights to Arusha fly into Kilimanjaro Airport, most domestic and safari flights are from Arusha Airport.

Ngorongoro Crater

A visit to the world renowned Ngorongoro Crater is an integral part of any first time Safari to Tanzania. But too often it is just an overnight, where visitors only come to see the Ngorongoro Crater, which in fact is only one of eight craters, and miss the excitement and diversity of the entire Ngorongoro Conservation Area. There is so much to experience beyond the Ngorongoro Crater that we encourage visitors to incorporate at least two or three night stays in the NCA. It is one of the World's most unique ecosystems because it is the only conservation area where man and wildlife co-exist in harmony and one of the reasons that NCA was accorded the status of a World Heritage Sites and listed as one of the International Biosphere Reserve by the UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Reserve Program. Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa. The ultimate in adventure travel, scaling the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro is a heavy challenge, more from the rigors of altitude than the actual difficulty of the hike itself. The climb, which takes on average five days, takes hikers through thick forests and

alpine grasslands, desolate rockface and brilliant white glaciers.

Serengeti National Park

Serengeti National Park is easily Tanzania's largest and most famous park because of the annual animal migration of over one million and a half white bearded wildebeest and zebras; it has 5,700 square miles of protected area. Large prides of lions laze easily in the long grasses, plentiful families of elephants feed on acacia bark and trump to each other across the plains, and giraffes, gazelles, monkeys, eland, and the whole range of African wildlife is in awe-inspiring numbers. One of the highlights of the Serengeti National Park is the opportunity to take a hot-air balloon safari, organized by Serengeti Balloon Safaris. The journey takes off flying low over the plains as the sun comes up and turns the grasslands from blue to gold. After landing, guests have a champagne breakfast complete with crystal glasses and white linen tablecloths in the middle of the African bush, as zebra and antelope graze nearby.

GEMS OF THE SOUTH

Southern Circuit! The sheer vastness of southern Tanzania, still undiscovered by many, makes for some spectacular game viewing and opportunities off the beaten track. Dar es Salaam, the commercial capital of Tanzania, is the jumping off point for the South. Ruaha National Park Ruaha, which boasts 10,000 elephants, the largest population of any East African national park, protects a vast tract of the rugged semi-arid bush country that characterizes central Tanzania. Its lifeblood is the Great Ruaha River which courses along the Eastern boundary of the park. A fine network of game-viewing roads follows follows the Great Ruaha and its seasonal tributaries, where, during the dry season, impala, waterbuck and other antelopes risk their life for a sip of life sustaining water. The risk is considerable with prides of 20 plus lions lording over the savannah, the cheetahs that stalk the open grassland and the leopards that lurk in tangled riverside thickets. Ruaha is also home to over 450 bird species and now includes the Ihefu Wetland, the natural water reservoir for the Great Ruaha River.

The Selous Game Reserve

The Selous Game Reserve is Africa's largest game reserve and covers more than 5% of Tanzania's total area. Its rivers, hills, and plains are home to roaming elephant

populations, the area's famous wild dogs, and some of the last black rhino left in the region. Due to its natural diversity and untouched state, the Selous Game Reserve was proclaimed a World Heritage Site in 1988 and today continues to live up to its esteemed status. The Selous offer tourists the added attractions of boating safaris on the Rufiji River and walking safaris.

Katavi National Park

Isolated, untrammelled and seldom visited, Katavi is a true wilderness, providing the few intrepid souls who make it there with a thrilling taste of Africa as it must have been a century ago. Tanzania's third largest national park, it lies in the remote southwest of the country, within a truncated arm of the Rift Valley that terminates in the shallow, brooding expanse of Lake Rukwa.

Saadani National Park

Saadani is where the beach meets the bush. Located on the Indian Ocean beachfront, it is the only marine/bush national park in East Africa. The beach possesses all the attributes that make Tanzania's tropical coastline and islands so popular with sun-worshippers. Yet it is also the one place where those idle hours of sunbathing might be interrupted by an elephant strolling past, or a lion coming to drink at the nearby waterhole! About a three hour drive from Dar es Salaam, it is also a popular day trip from beach resorts scattered along Tanzania's northern coast.



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Mbeya Region

The city of Mbeya, near the Zambesi deep in the southern and border highlands, is the major agricultural capital in the country's south-west region. The Mbeya mountain range lies to the north, and the Poroto mountain range lies to the south-east. Lake Nyasa, that serves as a boundary for Tanzania and Malawi, is among the leading tourist attractions in the southern highlands. The 800-metre deep lake and shoreline offer pristine beaches for water sports and sun bathing. The lake is the third largest body of water bordering Tanzania, 500 kilometres long and 50 kilometres wide. From the Lake Nyasa Shores, are the Uporoto Ranges, Kipengere and Livingstone mountain ranges and the Rift Valley features; all of which the Tanzania Tourist Board (TTB) and the Tourism Division in the ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism have identified for development and marketing. At the Chimala and Matamba escarpments, a road with 52 hair-pin bends (sharp corners) has been constructed and a thrilling, panoramic and breathtaking drive as it snakes through nine kilometers of spectacular waterfalls.

Songea

Songea town in Ruvuma region has been declared a historical tourist site in southern highlands of Tanzania. Ruvuma region has been identified for its rich tourist attractions, mainly cultural heritage, historical sites and scenery. Among such attractions are the Matongo Forest Reserve, Luhira Game Reserve, the German Boma, originally built in Songea town in 1902 and the Maji Maji warriors hanging place. Since the end of infamous Maji Maji rebellion in 1906, a festival to commemorate the Maji Maji heroes hung in Songea takes place every February. The new Maji Maji Memorial Museum was inaugurated during the 2010 Songea Festival.

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By Agorom Dike

Nelson Mandela: An Icon of Reconciliation and Peace made South Africa a Welcoming Tourism Destination

Our world has lost one of our greatest leader whose life should become a pattern for other leaders.

Nelson Mandela's life reflects the full essence of human character, commitment and courage. This was remarkably demonstrated through real suffering, sacrifice, service, selflessness and solidarity for peace, freedom and equality in South Africa. His service, leadership and decades of imprisonment and struggle brought the greatest ray of hope to his nation on April 27, 1994. This day marked freedom from apartheid as a transcendent reality in the nation of South Africa. It symbolized hopeful anticipation, yet fear of what could have resulted in a bloody catastrophe. It was the apex of the black experience as they voted in a democratic election for the first time in their homeland. The dream of many spiritual and secular leaders of an eschatological liberation from apartheid and doom was now realized while Nelson Mandela the earthly anointed liberator was 76 years old. This change in the nation, is a legacy and story of freedom from adverse tragedy and devastation experienced by South Africans and their journey to hope, civility, justice and peace. Mandela's achievement is a testimony of faith and hope. His life heralds the message that

overcoming structural evil and administrative terrorism is a continuous reality that can be achieved in any nation. This story is an assurance that deliverance and reconciliation is a possibility. Integration and forgiveness are critical factors that I also found very impressive throughout Mandela's life and mission.

Without forgiveness, South Africa's future would be a dismal reality. For Mandela, revenge was not an option as such would handicap their hope and destroy the plight of the nation. The only means by which a sense of harmony, stability and freedom was achieved is through forgiveness. It is therefore our wish that leaders of all political parties, governments and institutions will learn from Mandela that only truth, reconciliation, solidarity, love and forgiveness can bring social equality and stability to a nation.

He opened up South Africa, and his name alone has attracted millions of tourists wanting to walk in his footsteps to his country every year. Robben Island, where Mandela was imprisoned for 27 years, is today a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the country's biggest tourist attractions. The Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, Freedom Park in Pretoria and the Hector Pieterse Museum, in Soweto also attract hundreds of thousands of visitors every year, while the street where Mandela lived was a catalyst for Soweto's thriving tourism industry. Vilaskazi Street in Soweto is the only street in the

world to have been home to two Nobel Peace Prize Winners: Mr. Mandela and Archbishop.

The passing of Madiba will continue to drive growth in tourist attractions in the future, with the introduction of new tour packages from tour operators expected to further raise awareness and generate more business opportunities within museums and historic buildings associated with Mandela.

Released at the end of November 2013, South African Tourism and South African Airways have helped with the promotion of the film "Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom" on social media as part of a larger effort to promote South Africa to the world. Just days before Mandela's death, South African Airways vacations, the tour operator of the national carrier, introduced a 10-day tour package called Mandela's Journey to Freedom, which includes cultural visits following in the footsteps of Mandela's life and a stay in deluxe accommodation at the Protea Hotel Victoria Junction in Cape Town and the Protea Hotel Fire & Ice in Johannesburg's Melrose Arch.

Madiba's leadership will be missed. He will always be remembered and honoured by all mankind for his vision and compassion. His legacy lives on!

Adieu Madiba





By Habeeb Salloum

LUXOR THE GREATEST OPEN-AIR MUSEUM IN THE WORLD

What impressed me most in Egypt were the pharaonic monuments. Today's Egyptians still live off the remains of their ancestors. This was the remark made by a Canadian friend when I asked her about the tour she had just made to that ancient land.

Now, after I had ended my exploration of Luxor's awe-inspiring conglomeration of monuments, I remembered her words. In this greatest open air museum on earth, one can truly appreciate the Ancient Egyptians' contribution to world civilization. There is no place else on earth where so many ruins are concentrated in this one spot - once named Weset, later changed to Thebes by the Ancient Egyptians.

Homer in his Iliad described Thebes, capital of the Egyptian Empire for a thousand years, as 'the hundred-gate city for which only the grains of sand surpassed the abundance of wealth contained therein'. When the Arabs came in the 7th century A.D., they saw Thebes' mass of huge structures and named it Al-Qusoor (the castles) from which we get Luxor - today a city of some 200,000.

As a testament to their desire for immortality, the Ancient Egyptians were the only people who wrote manuals for the other world. In Luxor and elsewhere, they built for eternity with sandstone and granite. In the spirit of the ever-lasting, their still-standing temples and tombs are a mecca for millions of tourists from the four corners of the globe.

The fear of terrorism, which had kept tourists away for a number of years, has faded as the Egyptian government has gradually taken control of the situation. When I asked Hashim, my driver, bringing me on a desert road from Hurghada, Egypt's top Red Sea resort, to Luxor, whether terrorism is still a problem, he replied: "al-hamdu-Allah (praise be to God), for a long time we have not had one incident against tourists. Al-hamdu-Allah, Egypt welcomes all visitors."

Amid the breathtaking splendour of Luxor's pharaonic monuments where imagination overtakes eyesight, thousands upon thousands of these visitors take a thrilling walk through history. Beneath pillars carved with lotus buds and the papyrus plant, past statues of gods and animals, and climbing down into fantastically decorated tombs, they are never far away from the early Egyptians and their remains.

Pharaonic Thebes, a city of a half million, was divided into two parts: on the East Bank of the Nile, the City of the Living; and on the West Bank, the City of the Dead. The Karnak and Luxor Temples where the gods lived - two of the 10 temples in the area - greet the sunrise on the East Bank; and the sunset on the West Bank throws shadows over the 400 tombs of Queens and Nobles, located in the Valleys of the Kings. The whole site was organized for those alive and for the ones who travelled to the other life.

Guides usually begin their tours on the East Bank at the Karnak Temple complex - to the ancient Egyptians, the most esteemed of places. Covering over 40.5 ha (100 acRes) and spanning thirteen centuries, the complex is a massive collection of ruins on which at one time 81,000

people toiled - the largest series of temples ever built in one place. Dedicated to the god Amon-Ra, king of the gods; his consort, Mut; and their son Khonsu, Karnak, is a holy city of colossal statues, hypostyles halls, obelisks, pylons and shrines.

Past the two gigantic statues of Ramses II, who sired 100 daughters and 65 sons and was the only pharaoh who declared himself a god while still living, one enters the pantheon between two huge pylons. Inside, a 300 ton statue of Ramses II, later usurped by King Pinedjem, stands guard at the entrance to the huge hypostyle passageway. The hall's colossal 134 columns, 23 m (75 ft) high, have capitals in the form of the lotus plant - atop of each can stand 50 people.

Beyond are many other halls and statues, a sacred lake and three grand obelisks, the ones remaining from the seven that once graced this house of the gods - the other four are in Istanbul, London, New York and Rome.

As we walked out of this awe-inspiring pantheon, the words of our guide, Muhiyadeen, had a ring of truth when he remarked, "In my opinion Karnak should have been the first among the 'Seven Wonders of the World'."

After a tour of this most massive of ruins on earth, for an unique experience, one should take in the 'Sound and Light' show held within the temple. As the visitor moves between the massive columns, voices seemingly from the world of the past relate the history of Thebes. Throughout the presentation, one feels the grandeur of a civilization which in the mist of time created such a structure.

The Luxor Temple, 3 km (2 mi) away from Karnak, was once joined to that pantheon by an avenue of ram-headed sphinxes - many of which still remain. However, only a modest section of this passageway has been excavated. The remainder remains under homes and mosques, waiting to be uncovered.

It took 200 years to build the Luxor Temple - a much smaller version of its older twin. In pharaonic times, every year in late August, the marriage of the gods Amon and Mut was celebrated for 15 days. The sacred boat of Amon-Ra, followed by those of Mut and Khonsu, were carried between the sphinxes with music and dancing from his home in Karnak to the Luxor Temple, then returned a few days later, amid much merrymaking.

Alexander the Great in the 4th century B.C. expanded the Luxor Temple and later the Christians turned it into a church. By the 12th century, it was a pile of ruins covered by sand. In 1130 A.D., the oldest mosque in Luxor, Abu al-Hajjaj, was built on land covering the top of its lotus capitals. After an adjoining portion of the temple was excavated, the mosque appears to be suspended high above the temple floor.

From the East Bank, we crossed the Nile to the City of the Dead where our guide had planned for us visits to a number of pharaonic tombs and temples. The most important site in this barren burial spot is the 'Valley of the Kings' - the necropolis of the great Egyptian sovereigns where some 64 of Egypt's pharaohs had their palatial resting places hewed into the sheer rock.

Here, the first vault we visited was that of Ramses IV, the largest in the entire Valley and once used as a Christian church. Among other magnificent decorations, the tomb features scenes from the 'Book of the Dead', 'Book of the Gates' and 'Book of Caves'.

A short distance away, we stopped at the famous Tomb of Tutankhamen - the only grave discovered with all its treasures. It was uncovered in November 1922 by the Englishmen Lord Carnarvan and Howard Carter. Today, his small tomb is empty except for the sarcophagus and the deteriorated mummy. Its 4,000 piece rich contents are exhibited in the Egyptian Museum of Antiquity in Cairo.

From the grave of this boy-king, we explored the Tomb of Ramses III, a warrior king who defeated a coalition

of 'sea nations' and Libyans. Noted for the frescos in its walls depicting life in ancient Egypt from the playing of music to the use of perfumes, it is a very impressive burial chamber.

After visiting the Tomb of Ramses I - the best preserved in the Valley of the Kings - we left for the Valley of the Queens. Here, we stopped at the Temple of Hatshepsut or Deir al-Bahari (Convent of the North) built by Queen Hatshepsut 1501 -1481 B.C.), the most renowned of all the Ancient Egyptian queens and the only woman to govern Egypt as a pharaoh. She ruled the country for 20 years and built the sanctuary in honour of her father, Thothmes, and herself. Consecrated to the goddess Hathor, she called it 'Splendour of Splendours'. Later, it was converted into a Christian convent and thanks to this, the Temple has been well-preserved.

Leaving this imposing shrine, carved into a stone mountain side, we drove to the Colossi of Memnon. These two huge statues, the only remains of the Temple of Amenophis III, became a legend in Greek mythology.

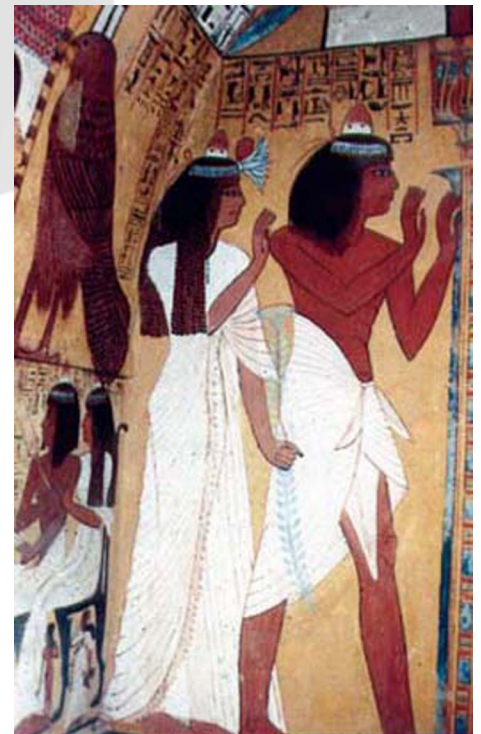
At these deteriorating statues where pharaonic and Greek gods became intermixed, we ended our tour of the City of the Dead - the most important necropolis in human history. It is a spot that has kept alive for thousands of years the history of the pharaohs and their amazing achievements - a place that should be a must on any visitor's itinerary.

The optimal time to travel to Pharaonic Thebes and its necropolis is in November. Annually, on the 21st of this month, for four days, a national celebration, featuring dancing, music and acrobatic feats, is held in honour of King Tutankhamen.

During this fun-filled period, a visitor can live for a time in the era of the fabulous pharaohs who created 'the mother of all civilizations'.

About the Author

Habeeb Salloum is a freelance writer, author and member of Travel Media Association of Canada (TMAC). He has travelled extensively to most parts of the world and has written comprehensively about topical items, tourism and the cuisines of the countries through which he has journeyed. (habeeb.salloum@sympatico.ca)





By Muguette Goufrani

GORONGOSA NATIONAL PARK THE "SERENGETI OF THE SOUTH"

Mozambique has regained its position at the forefront of the international tourism scene and is now, once again, one of the most attractive and intriguing tourist destination in Southern Africa.

We are hoping that the following outline of Gorongosa's attractions will put you in the mood to explore this hotspot of "biodiversity" a place that must be saved for future generations to enjoy. We thought how wonderful it would be to play a vital role in this amazing wildlife conservation effort. Eco-tourism is a powerful force that helps conservation if you do visit Gorongosa for a Mozambique Safari, you will help save it. So, whether you'd like an adventure holiday or just prefer to relax and get away from it all, it's all waiting here for you in Mozambique "the land of smiles", an undiscovered game of the Africa Safari.

Gorongosa National Park is a spectacular safari destination in the heart of Mozambique. Thanks to its varied terrain, the richness of its soil, and the blessings of plentiful rain, Gorongosa boasts a remarkable variety of different ecosystems, each with its own "cast of characters" Gorongosa boasts some of the most unique and diverse habitats in all of Africa. Tropical rainforest on Mount Gorongosa towers above the lush emerald floodplains, filled to the brim with thousands of game. You will find more water-buck on our plains than in any other park in Africa – that's why they call us the "Serengeti of the South". The grasslands of the valley support large grazing herbivores, (hippo, buffalo, wildebeest, waterbuck, sable, kudu, and a variety of smaller antelope) as week as the carnivores that prey on the, (lion and leopard). The highlands that surround the valley include beautiful sights such as limestone gorges and Mount Gorongosa with tropical rainforest and cascading waterfalls. The epicenter of Gorongosa National Park - Lake Urema - is home to pods of hippos and the largest crocodiles in Africa.

Tourists can choose from a variety of accommodations for their stay, including a luxury private camp, comfortable, modern cabanas, or camping for the budget traveler.

Jeff Trollip & Lise Wagenaa wrote about the "Serengeti of the South" and we are very pleased to publish their experience in guiding you in the beating heart of Gorongosa National Park with nine top reasons.

1. You can climb aboard a game viewer and start your adventure into Africa's unknown. An interpretive safari will take you into the beating heart of Gorongosa and expose you to the intricacies of humble termites, soaring falcons and thundering

beasts. Marvel at your first glimpse of the hoof-covered floodplain and remember to breathe when you gaze out over Lake Urema with a backdrop of Mount Gorongosa. Take in the moment when your guide announces fresh lion tracks, elephant activity or fresh buffalo droppings – you sense that life is all around you. Immerse yourself in the thrill of finding them as even though we see them often, seeing high profile game in Gorongosa means so much more than in other parks in Africa.

2. A walking safari in Gorongosa National Park will open up a world very few have seen. Gorongosa is a massive expanse and a large portion of the Park is not accessible to vehicles, which is perfect. Come explore areas where no one has set foot for the last 20 years. Become alive with the feeling of true participation in a living ecosystem as your senses reach their peak from the sights, sounds, smells, textures, and even tastes. The experience of tracking big game will bring all of those dormant senses hastily back to life. Find out what so many of us take for granted today like ancient medicinal uses of plants passed down through generations, and experience how the smallest thing often makes the largest impact. A walk in Gorongosa National Park is for those who want to know more and understand what so many have forgotten.

3. Towering 1863 meters above the floodplains lies Mount Gorongosa. This is truly Gorongosa's provider as it opens its granite arms to receive moisture-laden air that rushes above Mozambique's flat lands. The water is welcomed by Mount Gorongosa and gives rise to pristine rainforest that hugs the slopes of the behemoth. The remaining water flows down ravines carved into the slopes over centuries and creates powerful waterfalls and cascades before refueling the Park.

4. The Murombodzi waterfall drops over 100m into crystal clear pools. The ultimate experience is a hike to the waterfall, meandering through ferns and moss covered rock that make you feel as if every step is watched by a hobbit or fairy. Calls of the green-headed oriole and a cacophony of other birds reverberate through the forest. The canopy towers above letting striations of light strike the forest floor illuminating delicately rich colored flowers amid a dark green canvas. The beauty that surrounds you renders most to silence as the mind stills in its beauty of old.

5. Gorongosa will provide a kaleidoscope of color and variety with close to 400 species and some rare specials that are easy to find. Pel's fishing owl, black-and-white flycatcher, racquet-tailed roller, Cabanis's bunting, Livingstone's turaco, green-header oriole, chirinda apalis, mustached grass warbler, silvery-cheeked hornbill to name a few, are all seen on most birding trips

6. Rare and unique creatures lurk in Gorongosa. Lets start with a favorite among safari guides, the scaly anteater (or pangolin). In my 8 years of guiding around Africa I have seen a mere two Pangolins but Gorongosa has revealed ten sightings of this little understood and heavily persecuted animal. The African civet is another animal you might catch a glimpse of on your safaris through Africa, but in Gorongosa you are guaranteed a sighting of this strange striped cat-like creature of the night. Cane rats larger than Jack Russell terriers can be found scurrying across roads. A loud rustling through the bushes at night

conjures up thoughts of a huge beast, but turns out to be a friendly porcupine. The serval cat is a great and common sight in Gorongosa. Smaller rarities include bushy-tailed water mongoose and white-tailed mongoose. The strange drumming sound of four-toed elephant shrews can be faintly heard at dusk. There are 18 different kinds of antelope species in the Park including sable antelope, Lichtenstein's hartebeest, oribi, red duiker and suni antelope. A reptilian rarity is the Nile soft-shelled terrapin, which can have a shell of over a meter long.

7. Water gives life and vigor to everything in Gorongosa, and what better way to see this than by boat. This wet season we are mapping Gorongosa's waterways to provide an experience we feel lucky to take part in. Starting on the Pungue River that forms the border to the Park we meander down the wide, slow flowing river passing a wealth of birdlife. Cross over 4 meters long slumber into the murky depths before us. We watch a herd of elephants drinking and hippos grunting with disdain at our presence before submerging. Imagine setting up a camp on the banks of the river inaccessible by foot or vehicle and knowing that you are truly in the wild. The Pungue meets up with the Urema River, which is our best chance at seeing wildlife. And then our destination is none other than Lake Urema which covers a large portion of the Park but until recently has been unexplored other than from the air.

8. Gorongosa's local people are some of the strongest people I know and they are some of the most helpful and happy people I have ever had the privilege to meet. Gorongosa National Park is teaching and inspiring local Mozambicans through the Community Education, Center, local schools, clinics, job creation and so much more. This is a Mozambican national park – for the people, and supported by the people of Mozambique. Come share a laugh with the woman collecting water or listen to an account on Mozambican history from the village elder, come experience the difference just visiting Gorongosa would make.

9. The African bush comes alive at night. Big cats by day appear to have a life of leisure, but their work begins under the cover of night. Antelopes, baboons, and warthogs are on watch for the night predators. As the heat of the day dissipates, all kinds of small creatures join the night from chirping insects and singing frogs to eerily crying bushbabies. If you're the type of creature that comes alive at night too, join one of Gorongosa's night safaris to discover the secret world after dark. Take a moment to close your eyes and hear the baboons barking in the distance, the cacophony of small creatures, and the crackle of a twig that could be a silent predator.

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By Muguette Goufrani

“Life is but a journey - to travel is to live twice.”

During my career as a Travel Agent in Tahiti, I have worked for Matson Lines. Later, visiting West Africa on a cruise from Europe along the Gold Coast Ivory Coast, I ended up working there for several years. I live now in Vancouver, BC, Canada, one of the world's finest ports and Center of the famous Love Boat Cruises to Alaska. Our Publisher and editor Jerry Bird worked aboard the paddle wheeler SS Keno on the fabled Yukon River system. Together we can give you some sound advice based on experience.

Inspired to cruise on a floating resort? So why not have the adventure of a lifetime by day and return to the Africa Cruise by Night?

More and more travellers are looking for unique opportunities to embrace new cultures, take in breathtaking scenery, and create memories of a lifetime while traveling to places off the beaten path. With Top Cruises lines sailing all over the world, now is the perfect time to experience exotic destinations such as the Africa's Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean.

Like North American and Caribbean cruises, African cruises use luxurious ocean liners to provide tourists with an unforgettable vacation experience which will offer the convenience of a resort hotel at sea, while their days are spent canvassing this adventurous land with fun-filled activities.

Africa is the largest of the three great southward projections from the largest landmass of the Earth. The climate of Africa ranges from tropical to subarctic on its highest peaks.

Its northern half is primarily desert or arid, while its central and southern areas contain

both savanna plains and very dense jungle rainforest regions. Africa boasts perhaps the world's largest combination of density and ‘range of freedom’ of wild animal populations and diversity. Cruise holidays to South Africa attract the true adventurer. With its game-rich savannahs, fine vineyards, cosmopolitan cities like Johannesburg & Cape Town and architectural heritage of a great colonial past, the region begs to be explored. Travelling miles across its wilderness, dusty plains and rolling dunes appear on the horizon. For the lucky ones, the “big five” might be spotted grazing in the wild.

On the coast, Cape Town is dramatically framed by Table Mountain. Venture by cable car to the plateau where, on a clear day, there are spectacular views of the city and South African shoreline. Sample fine wine in the tranquil winelands, then explore the country towns, lagoons and forests along the pretty Garden Route. The Wild Coasts boasts isolated beaches, rocky coastline and traditional rural villages. As you cruise into this and every port in this rich land, a whole host of attractions will all vie for your attention. Africa is truly astounding and leaves an imprint on its visitors forever.

Indian Ocean Cruises

As a holiday destination the Indian Ocean is without doubt one of the few remaining areas in the world that is still relatively uncommercialized and largely unaffected by mass tourism.

The Indian Ocean cruises range in duration from 4 to 18 nights, with itineraries which not only include the breathtakingly beautiful coral reef encircled Seychelles islands, the fascinating Mascarene islands of Mauritius, with its ever-changing scenery, and the French influenced island of la Reunion, but also Madagascar, the perfumed islands of the Comoros and the bustling bazaars of Zanzibar. Each island has a distinct and unique character of its own.

Unique cruises in the Indian Ocean of varying durations which can be combined with a relaxing stay at an exotic Kenya beach hotel and optional safari adventures in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa. Ports of call are the Seychelles, Tanzania Islands, the Comoros, Madagascar, South Africa and Mozambique.

According to Anouk Zijlma, cruising to Africa is becoming an increasingly popular way to travel to Africa and enjoy the sights in comfort.

This article recommends the best cruise liners offering African itineraries; freighter-cruises offering African destinations and information about renting yachts as well as finding a job as crew.

Popular African cruise itineraries include the Mediterranean in North Africa, the East African coast with stop-offs in Mombasa and Zanzibar; Indian Ocean itineraries which sail to Madagascar and the Seychelles; and Southern Africa with stops in Namibia and South Africa.

Starlight Cruises is based in South Africa and offers cruise itineraries for the South African coast line and beyond. Crystal Cruises: Offer voyages to the African Mediterranean, South Africa and Kenya. Silversea Cruises: Offers cruise to Northern Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa.

Cruising in Africa can take the form of a month long public ferry down the Congo River or a luxury felucca up the Nile. Lovely old ferries still ply the Zambezi, Chobe and Senegal rivers, offering travellers a wonderful alternative to long days on dusty roads. Needless to say, cruising in Africa is adventurous and fun.

Recommended African Cruises

Senegal River Cruise

The Senegal River forms the border between Senegal and Mauritania and for half a century the “Bou El Mogdad” has steadily sailed these waters. The six day cruise takes you past old French forts, Tukolor, Wolof and Maure villages, and the amazing Parc d'oiseaux de Djoudj, filled with birdlife.

Floating Luxury Safari on the Zambezi Queen

Hop on board the ultra luxurious and modern Zambezi Queen and enjoy a lovely cruise on the Chobe River which marks the border between Namibia and Botswana.

Nile Cruise on the Royal Cleopatra

The Royal Cleopatra is an excellent bet if you have the budget. It's a traditional sailboat called a dahabeeya, commonly

used by Victorian travellers.

Dhow Safari in Mozambique's Quirimbas Archipelago

The Quirimbas Archipelago in northern Mozambique offers up some of most stunning islands in the Indian Ocean. A traditional dhow is your sailing vessel on this adventure and camps are set up every night on a different island. The trip starts at the Ibo Island Lodge.

Lake Malawi Cruise on the Ilala II

Lake Malawi is a beautiful fresh water lake. The Ilala is a large ferry that crosses the lake every week (about a 300 mile trip) You can get off at any point, or sail the whole route back to the starting point of Monkey Bay. It's a classic African adventure.

No matter how you choose to spend your Africa cruise adventure, you will be sure to head home with unforgettable memories and insight into this golden land of treasures!

For further information, contact Muguette Goufrani email: airhwy@smartt.com




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