

## Life in the Republic of Congo

I live off a long sandy track (it can hardly be called a street) shaded by mango and papaya trees in what is called Television District after the television station which is located there. Next door are multiple families of women and children. I rarely see their men. The women rise early to pound manioc in giant wooden mortars. It is the first sound I hear in the morning. They cook all day long outside over charcoal, which is hardly surprising for the number of children they look after. Their house is of concrete blocks, and unfinished. Their toilet is a hole surrounded by rusted pieces of tin roofing.

The little boys set up a soccer pitch in the lane. After dark, they play in front of our house, in the light thrown by our lights, for they have no electricity. These boys will flag my husband down as he comes down our lane, clamoring for a ride in his heavy, diesel-powered Toyota. He opens the door and lets them pile in. They roll down the windows so that the happy singing they impetuously break into carries down the lane ahead of them. The women look up from their cooking and laugh. I watch our car roll into our driveway with its load of excited passengers. It barely stops before the boys fly out like birds released from a cage.

Our house is the second to last one in a cul de sac. I must walk up the entire lane to the main road. A black and white mongrel guards where the lane meets the road. I've seen him warn other dogs which approach with stiffened head and legs. One of his ears is badly ulcerated from a fly bite. By the time I reach the end of the lane I have said "Bonjour" at least twenty times. I feel that my lane isn't a lane but a village. I call my village "Television".

I walk in the early morning, before the sun breaks out from behind leaden skies. A Tropical bulbul's crystal clear song from a tree beyond my garden wall serves as my alarm clock. From the bottom of my lane, it takes me another ten minutes to reach a stadium which is busy and noisy on weekends when football matches are played there. We can hear the uproar from fans from our house. The stadium is protected by a high metal fence with an entrance gate sometimes guarded by a soldier. My young woman friends complain that they are harassed by soldiers around Brazzaville. I tell them that the advantage to reaching 51 is that rarely do I have to worry about the unwanted attentions of men. Inside the stadium's gate is a track of broken concrete which encircles it. No cars are allowed inside although one morning huge lorries had made it past the guard. Barefoot men stripped to the waist washed the trucks down with dirty water from buckets made from sawed-off plastic containers. The vehicles' doors were open and their radios blaring Congolese pop. When I stuck my fingers in my ears as I passed, the men laughed and danced a little jig for me.

Bands of young men pass me at a run on the stadium's concrete track. I assume they are football players keeping in shape. Every patch of litter-ridden dust functions as a football pitch. The players are ordered by their coaches to weed the pitches first, but they never clear the playing fields of the empty plastic bags and flattened bottles which are strewn across Brazzaville. The young men exercising in the stadium have thin, sinewy legs. They wear an odd assortment of footwear—flip flops, sandals, runners with the toes cut out. Some have no shoes at all. They run barefoot.

I stepped outside my gate for my early morning walk and found a new born puppy at my feet. It mewed a little, but its tiny eyes were rolled up in its head and it was barely moving. It was a miniature version of the black and white mongrel at the top of the lane. I silently swore that it had found me. Women in the lane directed me to where the puppy had crawled from. A teenage boy dressed in shorts and tattered shirt acknowledged that the dog belonged to him. He was embarrassed to be addressed by this white woman with her rough French. The dog's mother was dead four days ago, he said. It is hungry I told him, without meaning to accuse him of not caring. There was an awkward silence. Then the boy shrugged, his hands splayed and uplifted as though to say "What can I do?" I looked beyond him to his concrete block hut. The front door was a dirty yellow curtain. The family which lived there could barely feed themselves. I left the pup there. I am leaving Brazzaville in a few weeks for a month. I am not around to take care of it.

Afterwards, I thought this teenager must be the one who I've seen sweeping the lane several doors down with a whisk broom held together at the apex of triangle by a flattened metal container. He handed my husband a note this week in English which mysteriously read, Monsieur, I was cleaning behind the wall of your garden and I killed a snake. I will return to finish the job. Behind the house is where the Tropical bulbul sits and sings in his tree. There are no houses there, just subsistence garden plots of manioc. I see the women working in the plots when I look out my study window. I think of snakes. We found cobras in our garden when we lived in Tanzania. My husband tells me that several black mambas were killed at his Brazzaville construction site.

On Saturdays after my walk I treat myself to small twisted donuts, freshly fried in a wok of hot oil. Soft and sweet, six of them cost me 50 cents. When I first arrived in Brazzaville, I was buying them every day. Now I resist and look forward to my Saturday splurge. The woman who makes the donuts sets up her shop of small table, stool and cooking pot early morning on an intersection with a side lane so that she attracts a good flow of customers. She usually sells out by noon. She wears her hair in braids which stick out all over her head. Her clothes are gaudy colored cotton prints. She smiles in pleasure when I tell her how good her donuts are. She is not the only business woman in the lane. Rickety stands outside private houses sell papayas and mangos, popcorn to be scooped from large containers, and small bags of charcoal. 🐾

In this issue:

**Life in the Republic of Congo**

**A Republic of Congo Gorilla Safari**

**My winter in the Southern Hemisphere**

**Southern Safari July 2007 Trip Report**

**Northern Safari July 2007 Trip Report**

**Honorary Maasai Program, Engaruka**

**Oreteti Discovery Cultural Tourism Program at Eluwai Village**

**Stand Out Adventures      Yoga**

**Light In Africa**

**Boundary Hill Lodge**

**If you have a few hours to spare...**

**Books, Recommended website and a Tidbit**

## A Republic of Congo Gorilla Safari

I visited the Brazzaville office of the Wildlife Conservation Society [www.wcs-congo.org](http://www.wcs-congo.org) which has worked for the past 15 years with the Republic of Congo's government in managing wildlife and its habitat in the country's national parks, among other places.

I plan to soon make an exploratory safari to ROC's northern Nouabale-Ndoki National Park. I then offer to accompany guests in 2008.

Nouabale-Ndoki was created in 1993 to protect 4000 sq km of virgin old growth forest which had been previously marked for commercial timber extraction. To quote the WCS, Nouabale-Ndoki is a **"rare example of an intact forest system in Central Africa, completely uninhabited by people, and with extremely low human population densities in the surrounding areas."** Contiguous with protected forests in neighboring Cameroon and the Central African Republic, Nouabale-Ndoki is home to forest elephants, western lowland gorillas, chimpanzees, De Brazza monkeys, situngu and bongo antelope, Yellow-backed duikers, and hundreds of bird species. During reconnaissance surveys in the 1990s, prior to the park's establishment, "naïve" chimpanzees were encountered which had never before seen humans. Nouabale-Ndoki contains 1000 plant species, including 100-year-old mahoganies, as well as the sources of three major river systems which drain the northern Congo.

Nouabale-Ndoki's ecotourism program was opened in 2000. It is one of the only places where western lowland gorillas can be observed in the wild. Mbeli Bai is a large forest clearing where gorillas come to feed on aquatic vegetation. Other mammal sightings at Mbeli are forest elephants, buffalo, situngu, and otters. Visitors observe from a raised platform constructed on the clearing's edge. Thirteen gorilla groups and nine solitary silverbacks are known to frequent Mbeli Bai. All are habituated to the presence of observers and to the researchers who accompany guests. Visitors are therefore able to learn about the wildlife from the researchers who study them.

A group of habituated gorillas inhabit an area around Mondika, another park destination for guests. Habituation efforts took a period of seven years for local Ba'Aka trackers, expatriate, Congolese and Central African researchers. These are the only western gorillas to be habituated thus far. Seeing them in the wild is a comparable experience to seeing East African mountain gorillas. Finally, there is the large mammal viewing from a platform at a clearing in the park called Wali Bai. Here there is a scenic lake visited by forest elephants, buffalo, and many species of birds.

This is not an easy safari. Getting to Nouabale-Ndoki NP first involves a flight from Brazzaville's chaotic airport to the northern air strip of Ouessou. From there it takes anywhere from two to five hours to travel up the Sangha River by motorized pirogue (a dugout canoe) to a pick-up point where a vehicle can transport the remaining distance to Bomassa, park headquarters, where guests overnight. It is another two and a half hours to Mbeli Camp from Bomassa, first by truck along a forestry road and then by pirogue into the national park and along the narrow Mbeli River to camp. Access to Mondika Camp involves a three-hour hike through the forest as well as a river crossing of thigh to waist high water. In addition, walking is required in the forest around Mondika in order to find the habituated gorillas. Tracking can mean wading through swamps. You must be in good physical condition.

You should allow a week for this safari. Accommodation is basic but comfortable. Mbeli offers raised timber bungalows with attached bathrooms and terraces which overlook the forest. Mondika Camp consists of tents under thatch. Groups of visitors must be small. Mbeli Camp sleeps eight. Mondika Camp, where habituated gorillas are observed, only allows four people at a time. For this reason, reservations for these camps must be made many months in advance. August through October is the best time to visit.

Air France has direct flights to Brazzaville from Paris three times a week. The average cost of a return ticket from eastern Canada or the US is \$2500.00 US. A ROC visa must be obtained in advance from the ROC embassy in Washington, DC. A confirmation of a tour booking can serve as your letter of introduction. Factor a per diem cost of \$350 – \$400 US a day for this safari.

The current limits of Nouabale-Ndoki were determined after a series of reconnaissance surveys and walks carried out by Wildlife Conservation Society researchers. One of these was Michael Fay, who you may be familiar with from a series of National Geographic articles since the 1990s. Mike Nichols was the NGS photographer who traveled with Fay. See Nichol's website at [www.michaelnicknichols.com](http://www.michaelnicknichols.com). Click on Ndoki: The Last Place on Earth and be instantly transported to deepest Africa.



This information about Nouabale-Ndoki, Republic of Congo is under Other Destinations on the website. Please contact me if you are interested in going August through October 2008. 🐾

## Congo Snapshots



Sax player at Brazzaville's Hotel Rochelle



Fish wrapped in Manioc leaves on the grill



Kids hitching a ride on the back of the Landcruiser



Overloaded Congolese taxi



## My winter in the Southern Hemisphere

I led a small group safari through Tanzania's southern circuit July 2nd through 15th. We were a mix of Canadians and Americans with homes in Vancouver, Los Angeles and Gulfport. "Miss Donna", the Gulfport guest, also called "Mama Kuni" or Mama Firewood because of her attention to the nightly campfire, took some teasing about her Mississippi accent. Along on the safari was Vancouver photographer and travel show presenter William Jans. Will has amazing energy for his craft and I learned a lot about how to improve my wildlife and people photography. "Miss Donna" intends coming to Vancouver next year to see Will's show on his Tanzanian travels. I hope many of you can make it too.



## Southern Safari July 2007 Trip Report

Our southern safari itinerary was as follows:

Three nights camping in the Selous Game Reserve; a day's drive through the Uluguru Mountains to Morogoro town; a night in Mikumi National Park; three nights camping in Ruaha National Park; a night in Mang'ula, gateway to Udzungwa National Park; and a three day and two night canoe safari on the Kilombero River. Other activities besides the canoe safari were a walking safari inside the Selous and a boat safari on the Rufiji River just outside of the Selous' borders. On previous visits to the Selous I have taken boat safaris inside the reserve itself where people aren't allowed. I believe that these boat safaris are superior to the one we took on this trip which had no choice but to take us along stretches of populated river. It stands to reason that wildlife sightings might improve away from people. Still, we had great sightings of birds, such as Pied, Giant and Malachite kingfishers, and primates such as Black and White colobus which swan-dived from one tree to the next on the river banks. We were able to get very close to hippos loafing on a sandbank and a big iguana at the water's edge. There occurred a funny moment on our early morning walking safari when our ranger and guide told us to back up quickly and quietly in order to avoid confrontation with a hippo and her young which were out of the water. "Don't run", we heard, but the knee jerk reaction was a stampepe.



Let me remind you about the Selous Game Reserve. When combined with the Niassa Game Reserve it becomes one of the largest and most important biological ecosystems in Africa. It includes the world's largest remaining miombo (deciduous) forest and two of the most significant intact elephant ranges in all of Africa. It shelters the largest populations of elephant, Cape buffalo, and Sable antelope in Africa. That's a lot of hype which results in raised expectations, but when you visit you must be prepared for wary wildlife. Animals are simply not as habituated to man as they are in Northern Tanzania. In the Selous' case, hunting is allowed and this impacts wildlife's skittishness as well. They know enough to keep their distance. You therefore have many opportunities for action photography using 1000th of a second shutter speed. I practiced on a graceful, airborne impala.



While reviewing all my photos, however, I realized just how much wildlife we nevertheless saw under these different circumstances—elephants, giraffe, baboon, hippos and crocodiles (more hippos and crocs imaginable), wildebeest, mongoose, hyena, and kudu.

A different set of rules applies to game driving in the south. Drivers/guides don't have radios with which to communicate with one other as they do in the north. Since they cannot rely on hearing about a sighting, they must be knowledgeable about wildlife. A place like the Selous, and Ruaha National Park too to a certain extent, like to uphold their reputation of isolated pristine bush. If, for example, a second vehicle approaches where you are observing, its driver typically waits until you are finished. Drivers jockeying for the best views for their clients, which is what happens at a leopard sighting in the Serengeti, is just not done in the south—at least it isn't happening yet. As the south develops more of this is certain to occur. The first signs of it will be vehicles equipped with radios.

Two wildlife sightings stand out during our Selous visit: While everyone rested before a late afternoon game drive, a large elephant fed on *Borassus* palms very close to one of our tents. The tent's occupants stayed quiet to watch it out their screened entrance flap while the rest of us observed from the safe distance of the mess tent. When the elephant finally smelled us, it panicked, turned tail, and ran back into the bush as quickly as we had sprinted from the hippo on the walking safari.

The second memorable sighting was a large collection of giraffes drinking at Lake Manze. I have a record giraffe sighting of 40 altogether in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. This placed a close second.



There are many new luxury tented camps in the Selous. I still prefer to private camp. My operator set his camp at a superb spot on Lake Mzizimia's shores. Our camp fire and chairs faced magnificent sunsets. We listened to bellowing hippos at night and at dawn, the throbbing hums of Southern ground hornbills. Selous' sunsets and sunrises some of the best anywhere in Tanzania.

When I lived in Dar es Salaam, the route from the Selous through the Uluguru Mountains to Morogoro was poor. It included an Mgeta River crossing that was best attempted only in the dry season. The route can still give you trouble, but at least the problem of the river has been solved with the opening of a bypass.

It is wonderful long day's drive to Morogoro through the Uluguru Mountains—made shorter if you stay closer to the reserve's other entrance at Matambwe—through scenic forests, and friendly colorful villages where you can stop and buy oranges, bananas, sugarcane to gnaw on in the car, or millet juice, a local specialty. It would be perfect to overnight along this route if there was a guesthouse with a good grassy garden to pitch tents. It is on my list of things to do to find such a stop next time I pass through Uluguru.

We hit some bad luck in Mikumi National Park. One day before we arrived, a controlled burning out of control swept over the park. You will always encounter controlled burning when you travel in the dry season, but usually only sections of parks are burned at a time. In this case, however, there wasn't much left in Mikumi, either of landscape or of wildlife, with the exception of a singularly beautiful family of elephants. Thankfully, our tented lodge where we were booked remained intact. We checked in early and nursed our disappointment with cold beer and a swim in the pool. "Dirty Harry", a lone bull elephant, grazed below the lodge early next morning.

I consider Ruaha National Park the safari's highlight. We camped there too, at a site known as Kilima Mitonge which overlooks a "sand river" for which the Selous Game Reserve and Ruaha National Park are known. Sand rivers are raging torrents during the rainy season and seemingly dry river bottoms during the dry season. Trapped beneath the sand however, by impermeable rock, is water for thirsty game to uncover when they need it the most. Apart from bees which temporarily swarmed in the tree where we hung the bladder shower, no wildlife was seen from camp. Game drive sightings easily compensated for that, especially on what came to be known as "Simba Day" due to the number of lion sightings we racked up. We first watched three to five lionesses at a water hole. Their kill of early morning was a few hundred meters away, left for the vultures by the time we arrived. As the females moved off three handsome young males showed up for a long drink. (They drank steadily for ten minutes!) Other female members of the pride were nearby. One was a mother of three cubs, thought to be barely three weeks old. They mewed, like domestic cat kittens. That same afternoon we saw a lioness hunting along the Ruaha River, the male which followed her detrimental to her two heroic efforts to bring down impala. As we headed back to camp, we came across a dead Cape buffalo guarded by three lion brothers. It didn't appear that the lions made this kill. The truth may be that the buffalo traveled into the park to die from wounds suffered by a poacher's bullet. (Buffaloes are tough animals.) We returned shortly after dawn to watch a lively drama played out for hours between the feeding lions and the hyenas, jackals and vultures intent on stealing the leftovers.



The Kilombero canoe safari was an exploratory one. I must thank all my tour members for being such good sports about it. From Ifakara village we drifted down the river in a local dug-out paddled by a Kilombero River fisherman. Passing little fishing villages, spotting birds of Tanzania's largest wetlands like fish eagles, egrets, pelicans, bee-eaters, kingfishers, cormorants, skimmers and plovers, we enjoyed sunset from the water. Arriving at dusk at the boundary of the Selous Game Reserve we found a camp waiting for us. Another dug-out had gone ahead with camping equipment. In the morning we tried our hand at fishing the traditional way, with line and baited hook, and we made a visit to a nearby fishing village. After lunch, we began our return to Ifakara. This was slower going because the canoe now fought the current. We made camp on a sandbank in the middle of the river. We made Ifakara by noon on the third day after a very early start. This safari would appeal to truly adventurous souls. Being impervious to the pain of sitting long hours in the bottom of a canoe under a very hot sun is also a requirement. Elephants are possible sightings at certain times of the year. We did see hippos and some of my guests said they heard lions at night from the campsite by the Selous. I think it has great potential with some adjustments. I hope to return next summer and improve it.



A final word about Mang'ula village at the entrance to Udzungwa National Park. Not only is it the base for forays into Udzungwa, one of Tanzania's newest protected areas of endemic forests, primates, birds, reptiles and amphibians, Mang'ula also makes an ideal base for a Kilombero canoe safari. Mang'ula came at the end of our southern safari. It was a perfect place to relax and experience the lively culture of a friendly Tanzanian town. The Udzungwa Mountain Guesthouse where we bunked is an extremely simple place but there is something about it which satisfied everyone. I would stay longer next time. Photographer Will didn't join the canoe safari. He climbed to the Sanje Waterfalls in Udzungwa National Park from where, if you camp overnight (another great idea for a southern safari), you overlook the Kilombero Valley far below. There are no roads in Udzungwa National Park, only hiking trails. You must be fit to undertake these. 🐾



## Northern Safari July 2007 Trip Report

One of my guests from the southern safari, Vancouverite Dale Connery, joined Will Jans and me on a northern Tanzanian safari July 18th through 29th. The focus of this safari was a hike beginning at Mount Makarot down an old rift escarpment to Lake Eyasi.

We began the safari with a game drive in the Ngorongoro Crater. We were lucky at the hippo pool. An old bull elephant with a most impressive set of tusks was in the pool along with the hippos, which appeared to be tolerating him. Since the vehicles stop on the pool's raised banks we had a super view of this old fellow. It was late afternoon and the sun was behind us. It doesn't get any better than that.



While Will climbed Mt Makarot (also known as Lemagarut), Dale and I took my driver and old friend King to survey a hike I want to undertake from Naibartat to Ndotu early next year. The drive took us through Laetoli where Mary Leakey made the biggest scientific discovery of her career in the 70s, fossilized footprints of three hominids which revealed that early man was upright and walking far earlier than was thought. These footprints are covered to protect them and not open to the public. It was the kind of day I love most: good company, beautiful bush and the time to explore. We re-grouped late afternoon at Il Misigiyo campsite. Will had some excitement on Makarot which he will tell you about in his show.

Our hike was accompanied by Maasai guides and wranglers for the donkeys which bore our camping equipment, as well as an armed Ngorongoro Conservation Area ranger. It took three days. I felt a great sense of achievement when we enjoyed sunset on Lake Eyasi's shores

and were able to look up at the escarpment and know that we came down it on foot. You cannot experience remote places like our camp sites on the rift with their spectacular views unless you make the kind of effort this hike required. There were times when we suffered, but it was worth it.

We spent three nights at Lake Eyasi. We visited the Datoga and Hadza peoples primarily, but also left time to soak up Mang'ola's vibes which included in its bar. (Eyasi's main settlement of Mang'ola is not to be confused with Mang'ula town in southern Tanzania.) It is only a two hour drive to Mang'ola from the main Ngorongoro Crater/Serengeti road (or a three day walk!), albeit on an extremely rough track, but once at the lake you realize you have entered a very different world. Our fellow campers included archeology students from the University of Dar es Salaam in the area to study the rock paintings the Hadza protect as their cultural heritage. Several of them saw their very first elephant on this trip, which had included a stop at the Ngorongoro Crater.



We dropped Will in Engaruka where he entered the "Honorary Maasai" program while Dale and I spent three days with Oreteti's Maasai cultural tourism program in Eluwai village. Dale and I also visited Tarangire National Park, using as our base Boundary Hill Lodge on the eastern fringes of the park overlooking the Maasai Steppe. Separate reports of Engaruka, Eluwai and Boundary Hill follow. 🐾

### Honorary Maasai Program, Engaruka

I first met Abby Matthew when he was seventeen. I turned up in Engaruka and camped at his father's campsite in the middle of town called the Engaruka Ruins. Abby offered to act as my guide. Abby is currently a student at MWEKA, Northern Tanzania's school of wildlife and conservation management.

Abby has put together some short cultural itineraries for me which we decided to call Honorary Maasai programs. They are for those hardy travelers who are truly interested in immersion in Maasai culture. They run from three days and two nights to five days and four nights and involve camping at the Engaruka Ruins campsite. There are no guesthouses in Engaruka. The itineraries are designed for easy inclusion with a longer wildlife safari since Engaruka is located half way to Lake Natron on a track which runs north from the town of Mtu wa Mbu at Lake Manyara National Park. Between December and March you will find zebra, ostrich and buffalo sharing new grasses with Maasai cattle in the Engaruka area. The rift valley scenery is superb. For more information see Cultural Safari under Tour Info. 🐾



## Oreteti Discovery Cultural Tourism Program at Eluwai Village

[www.oreteti.com](http://www.oreteti.com)

This is another opportunity to live with the Maasai. Oreteti founders Gemma and her Maasai husband Leskar Enolengila, invite guests to Eluwai village in Monduli district where Leskar was born. Eluwai has an unsurpassed location overlooking the rift valley. I made a mental note to return in the clearest months of the year beginning in October to enjoy the panorama again. Mounts Oldeani, Ngorongoro, Empakai, Kerimas, Gelai and Lengai are visible from Eluwai, as is Engaruka's seasonal lake on the rift valley floor. There is a higher view point to walk to from Eluwai which allows you the chance to see Mounts Kilimanjaro and Meru, even Mt Kenya, if you are very lucky.

The way to get the most out of an Eluwai visit is to include it on a longer safari. Because of its location in Monduli district, just outside of Arusha, this is easy to do. The road north from Eluwai has been much improved I hear since my last explorations of the area so it might be a great adventure to head north to Engaruka and Natron from Eluwai instead of driving to Mtu wa Mbu village first and taking the better known track north from there. *Adventurers out there, let me know if you are keen and I am only too happy to go with you.* We could time our trip to catch all the once weekly Maasai markets. Even if you make Eluwai your only stop, remember that Saturday is market day in Monduli Juu, the nearest town to Eluwai village. You will catch some opposition if you take photos, but the market is well worth visiting if you don't mind carrying its memory in your head instead of on a flash card. Purchase a cold soda from the bar and watch the pool games on the outdoor tables. This kind of market is a good place to buy the pastoralist sandals the Maasai wear made from motorcycle sandals.

Gemma has built a round guest hut, which sleeps four in a pinch. Two is a better fit. The cook who accompanies you prepares meals in the same hut. You get a lot of visitors here as well, such as Leskar's father (delightful, handsome Maasai mzee with a taste for popcorn) and the young warriors after they return with the herds at the end of the day. For that reason, until Gemma can provide more guest huts, which is her plan, I would suggest that you tent on the compound. It is cooler and you have more privacy. There is a basic drop toilet.

Eluwai activities include hikes to the higher view point of the rift valley and to several orpul, temporary camps where Maasai men, typically warriors, congregate for purifying and energy rebuilding ceremonies. I learned at Eluwai that Maasai women too have their own versions of orpul, after the birth of a child for instance. Leskar's father, a traditional healer, will accompany you on your hike and lecture on the plants and trees that the Maasai use medicinally. You can learn how to bead at a Maasai women's cooperative a few minutes walk down the hill from the village. When the animals return to the homestead at dusk you can help the Maasai women milk the cows and goats. (Use caution around ornery Maasai cows.) Then there is that view to enjoy. On your last night in Eluwai, the young warriors and girls dance, a very evocative performance by kerosene lantern. The young men so enjoy their competition of who can jump higher and impress all the women that I got the feeling that they could dance and sing all night. Leskar's brother was the undeniable jumping champion.

See more about Oreteti's programs under Cultural Safari under Tour Info. 🐾



### Stand Out Adventures

[www.standout-adventures.com](http://www.standout-adventures.com)

This is my promised follow-up on Mary Kariuki. If you recall, Mary is the owner of Standout Adventures which guides women (although not exclusively women) up Mts. Kenya and Kilimanjaro. I met Mary in Moshi, Northern Tanzania, where she had taken an all day bus ride from Nairobi to talk with me. During our day together, I learned some interesting facts. Mary is considered the first East African woman to summit both Mts. Kenya and Kilimanjaro. Growing up in a village in the shadow of Mt Kenya, and wishing to provide for her son from an early ill fated marriage, she worked as a porter on Mt Kenya which was not only backbreaking work but also highly unusual for a woman in traditional Africa. She then worked her way into guiding on the mountain. Mary and I have decided to collaborate on a Mt Kenya ascent followed by a wildlife safari which will include Kenya's Maasai Mara as well as Tanzania's Northern Serengeti. Since the best climbing months for Mt Kenya are August through October, the Maasai Mara (the same ecosystem as the Serengeti) and the Northern Serengeti are the destinations of choice for that time of year. Please Active Safari under Tour Info for Mary's Mt. Kenya climbing programs. 🐾

### Yoga Safari

This seems the ideal place to talk about another kind of active safari. At Arusha's Ngare Sero Mountain Lodge, guests can book private yoga classes with instructor and lodge manager Stacia Leach. She also offers classes if arranged in advance at Ngare Sero's eco-camp at Lake Natron. Another good idea that Stacia has for yoga practitioners is the combination of daily yoga practice and meditation with a wildlife safari. I love the idea because quiet thought is compatible with wildlife appreciation. See Yoga Safari under Tour Info's Active Safari on the website. 🐾

## Light in Africa

[www.lightinafrica.org](http://www.lightinafrica.org)

Here is my promised follow-up on Light in Africa. I met with Mama Lynn in Wereweru village, Northern Tanzania, where LIA is located. I had set aside a morning for my visit with her. I ended up staying for lunch and departing late afternoon. How to describe Mama Lynn? She is tough—in Tanzania she would be described as mkali or "fierce"—energetic, driven, outspoken, and with unshakeable faith in the power of good (which for her is the same as a nondenominational God) and in her calling to help the young, the old, the unwell, the handicapped and the abused of Africa. As my hours passed with her I came to see that without this intense belief in her destiny (she claims receiving a vision) she wouldn't have been capable of leaving behind her life in England, and building Light in Africa.org into what it is today—four children's homes for orphans; medical and social worker teams which hold outreach clinics in the bush; the program of choice for 200 volunteers a year, usually 2nd year medical students from British universities, among many other things. Because she is fearless, she strikes me as unstoppable. An indicator of her success must be that she has drawn the undesirable attention of those who resist change. By now she is a little famous, which she acknowledges sheepishly. She says she has to relate her "story" about six times a week.

Mama Lynn asks prospective volunteers to fundraise first. The sum of \$1000 US per volunteer group is a typical donation. Volunteers then have the choice where their money goes. For instance, the British medical students usually replenish medical supplies for the clinics. There might be furniture, a toilet or a new building that LIA needs. The organization can work with volunteers on ideas for their fundraising.

Please be advised that volunteers to Tanzania are required to pay for an additional work visa in addition to their tourist visa, which is obtained after their arrival. LIA helps volunteers with these applications. 🐾



## Boundary Hill Lodge

I spent two nights here late July. One of the owners and directors, Hartley King, came out one of those nights from Arusha to explain to me about the lodge, its history and its mission.

Boundary Hill is fifty percent owned by the Maasai of Lokisale village to the east of Tarangire National Park. It is located in its own 164 sq km Lokisale Conservation Area (LCA), set aside by its owners, the Lokisale Maasai. Tarangire Treetops (now owned by Sopa Lodges) is the other lodge within the LCA, but only Boundary Hill shares ownership with the Maasai.

The Lokisale Conservation Area is one of four which makes up the Tarangire Conservation Area (TCA), a total of 585 sq kms, the purpose of which is to provide opportunities for local communities to be involved with management of their own land so that peaceful co-existence with wildlife is maintained. Without the land which the TCA protects, the future of Tarangire National Park and its wildlife species is threatened.

Why is this? The Tarangire eco-system comprises some 20,500 sq kms and supports the national park; game controlled areas where hunting is allowed; and the village-owned land of the TCA. Tarangire National Park was formed in 1970 to safeguard its status as the dry

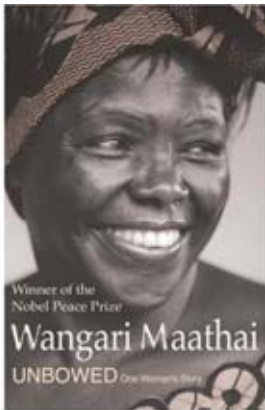
season sanctuary (July – October) for large herbivores such as elephant and zebra. When grazing resources become scarce at the end of the dry season, and the rains start (November – March), this wildlife migrates out of the park's confines of 2600 sq kms into the TCA. This migration allows Tarangire National Park to regenerate.

It is imperative to maintain wildlife's unrestricted and safe movement during this wet season migration, but this is difficult. In the past, elephants, zebra and wildebeest took many different routes out of Tarangire into its hinterlands. To the west of the park, a growing human population of cultivators, unfriendly to migrating wildlife, has all but eliminated the old migration routes. Only a few of those original migration pathways remains today, none more important than those east of the park which now comprise the TCA. It is possible that what happened to the west of the park will happen to the east as well. Human populations are ever increasing. The Maasai cannot subsist on their cattle alone and many of them must farm. Other damaging land uses impacting the migration are charcoal-making and small-scale mining.

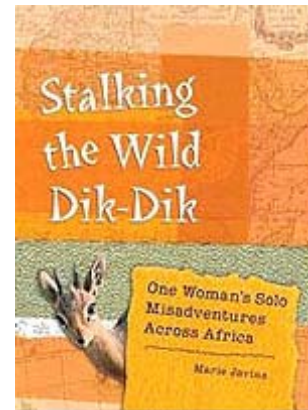
Boundary Hill Lodge is perched on Boundary Hill, a granite outcropping overlooking the vital wet season dispersal area of the TCA. I watched sunrise from my bed in room #3 while enjoying "bed coffee"

delivered to my door. Cape buffalo and elephants moved below in the direction of the park, a ten km distance from the lodge. (For a view from the toilet see the Gallery!) It is a relaxing place where time should be built into the schedule for simply enjoying its beautiful location. But if one cares to think about more sobering issues while on their safari, Boundary Hill is also the place to grasp the complex problems facing Tanzania's national parks as they become more and more surrounded by polluted lands and unfriendly human populations to wildlife. 🐾

[www.tarangireconservation.com](http://www.tarangireconservation.com)



## Book Reports



Wangari Maathai's *Unbowed: One Woman's Story*: Kenyan Wangari Maathai is the first woman in eastern and central Africa to earn a doctorate; the first female professor at the University of Nairobi, and the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace prize in 2004. When she heard of her win, she planted a tree to celebrate, which was appropriate for the founder of the "Green Belt" movement, a grassroots women's group which, beginning in the 1970s, has planted over 30 million trees in Kenya and beyond to halt deforestation in Africa. The Green Belt has also provided jobs and the means to lift 10,000 women out of poverty. *Unbowed* is Maathai's remarkable memoir which documents the many challenges she has faced head on in a traditional world which favors men, among them beating and imprisonment by Kenyan president Daniel Arap Moi's government for protesting the clearing of a forest for a Nairobi housing development. She signed her police report in her own blood from a head wound. After Moi lost the presidential elections of 2002, Maathai was elected to parliament. She is now Assistant minister of the environment.

Her detractors seriously underestimated this woman. This is a book to inspire about Africa instead of to disillusion.

A passage from her book: "Trees have been an essential part of my life and have provided me many lessons. Trees are living symbols of peace and hope. A tree has roots in the soil yet reaches to the sky. It tells us that in order to aspire we need to be grounded and that no matter how high we go it is from our roots that we draw sustenance."

For more information about the Green Belt movement see [www.greenbeltmovement.org](http://www.greenbeltmovement.org).

Marie Javins *Stalking the Wild Dik-Dik: One Woman's Solo Misadventures Across Africa*: In 2001, Javins came up with the idea to travel round the world within a calendar year without taking an airplane, for the benefit of fans of her blog at [www.MariesWorldTour.com](http://www.MariesWorldTour.com). (A similar premise of Jeff Greenwald's 1995 *The Size of the World*.) *Stalking the Wild Dik-Dik* isn't about the entire world tour, only the African portion of it. In the introduction Javins writes that her 2001 travels introduced her to an Africa that she didn't know existed—dignified, vibrant, with a sense of community and caring lacking in our own culture—and falling in love, she returned to live there for six months of 2005. I settled in to read about those epiphanies on African soil that had so changed her and which drew her back, but that book hasn't been written yet. Instead *Stalking the Wild Dik-Dik* read like a check list of African destinations and sights. Every so many chapters, Javins returned to her claim that Africa had transformed her; she asked the tough questions that travel in the developing world ultimately raises—do you give to someone who asks for help when you have just spent money on a balloon safari or at one of the best hotels on Zanzibar? Her answers were typically as abbreviated and superficial as her travels through the continent. There was a line in the introduction which warned me that I wasn't going to relate to this travel writer: "I sleepwalked through most of Asia, having been there just one year before." 🐾

## Recommended website

[www.safaritalk.net](http://www.safaritalk.net)

"Passionate about Africa": This is where you can find out about who is making a difference on the continent, especially in the field of wildlife conservation. Safaritalk is the creative efforts and hard work of the "Game Warden" who returned from his African travels determined to make the site his contribution to the cause of raising awareness of safari travel to something more than checking off sightings on the list of "big five". 🐾

## If you have a few hours to spare...

### in Dar es Salaam

And you seek books on Africa and African subjects go to the Novel Bookstore at the Slipway shopping complex in Mbasani. Novel has other outlets besides, one at the Sea Cliff Hotel shopping complex and another on Ohio Street in the city center next to Steers restaurant, but the original one at the Slipway has the best selection in my opinion.

### in Arusha

Try Miriam's massage. There are plenty of masseuses in Tanzania, but I have often found them lacking (I was spoiled for life by Russian masseuses when I lived in Central Asia), until now. Find Miriam in a little room above the Jambo Makuti restaurant in the center of town. It isn't the ideal place for her to work with the noise of the restaurant below, but you will soon forget about the surroundings under her magical touch.

Cost: \$20 US for one hour. 🐾

## MT Tidbit

"When one tugs at a single thing in nature, one finds it attached to the rest of the world."

John Muir

Mama Tembo Tours  
[www.mamatembotours.com](http://www.mamatembotours.com)  
email: [leslie@mamatembotours.com](mailto:leslie@mamatembotours.com)  
phone: 778-386-1026