THE adventures&leisure
adventuresandleisure.net
TANZANIA'S HOTEL AND TOURISM GUIDE
AUG - SEP 2017
ISSN NO. 2408 8080
Free Copy Issue No. 8



budget travel
CLIMBING KILIMANJARO THE FINANCIALLY SAVVY WAY

legendary
Serengeti wildebeests migration undergoing changes

wave of **rhino killings**

Roads inside **ngorongoro crater** to be redrawn

all wildebeests
hold Tanzanian 'Passports'

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Dear readers,
Welcome to another fascinating edition of the Adventures & Leisure Magazine. We bring you exciting news and articles concerning the Hospitality and Tourism industry in Tanzania. It is our desire to keep you well informed and up-to-date concerning the industry.

In this edition, we'll take a closer look at the great migration of Serengeti's wildebeest, and on how these peculiar ungulates have 'passports' issued in Dar-es-salaam, Tanzania. Funny, huh! Well, we will take you through the overall process of how they acquire these so-called 'passports' and you can read all about it in the MEET THE LEGEND section, where we have a one on one interview with Mr. Shelutete, the Principal PR officer for TANAPA.

We'll also take you into the Ngorongoro crater which is the leading tourist destination in Tanzania, attracting so many tourists, and lately, there has been a complaint about there being too 'many cars' in the caldera. And the NCAA is considering several ways of solving the problem without adversely affecting the number of visitors.

Moreover, we offer helpful hints on how booking a room at a hotel can be made easier and more convenient. Customers need to be made more aware of efficient methods of booking a room through online platforms, done simply through several clicks of a button or touch points. And what customers really want is to be provided with adequate and accurate information, relevant to their desired needs and preference.

In the 'Did you Know?' section, we'll give you tips on how you can climb Mount Kilimanjaro on a budget, and other helpful information on planning your trip. And in our 'Other parts of Africa' segment, we take you to South Africa, where we give you an overview of how rhino killings take place, poaching patterns and how the rhino horn trade is being coordinated and conducted.

The A&L team would like to thank our enthusiasts for their invaluable feedback. We are grateful to all our contributors and advertisers for their continued support. Thankful to all those who assist us in one way or another, through giving of their time and effort so as to ensure that we're providing our readers with significant insight concerning our industry. We appreciate you all.

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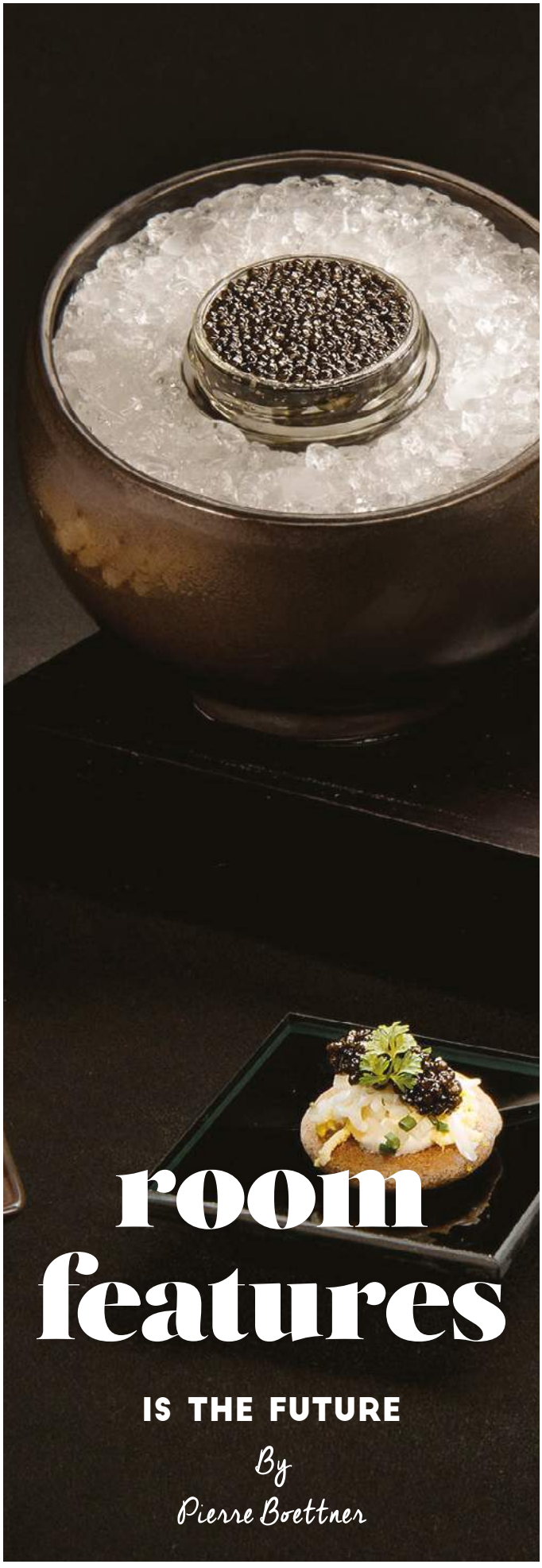
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Luxury Kilimanjaro operators lure you in with promises of extraordinary climb success rates, greater safety standards and extras, but will charge prices that are not justifiable.

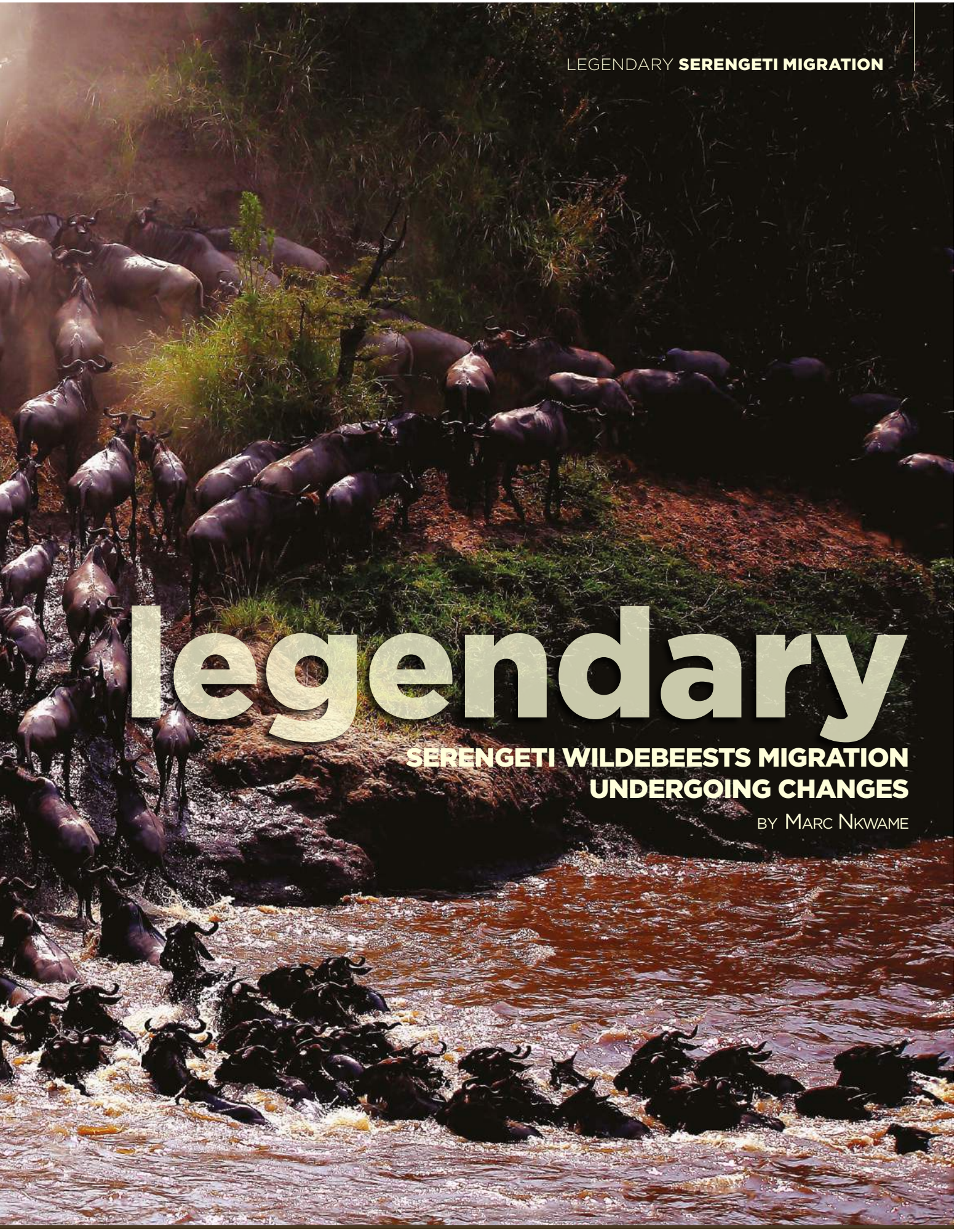


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IS THE FUTURE

By Pierre Boettner

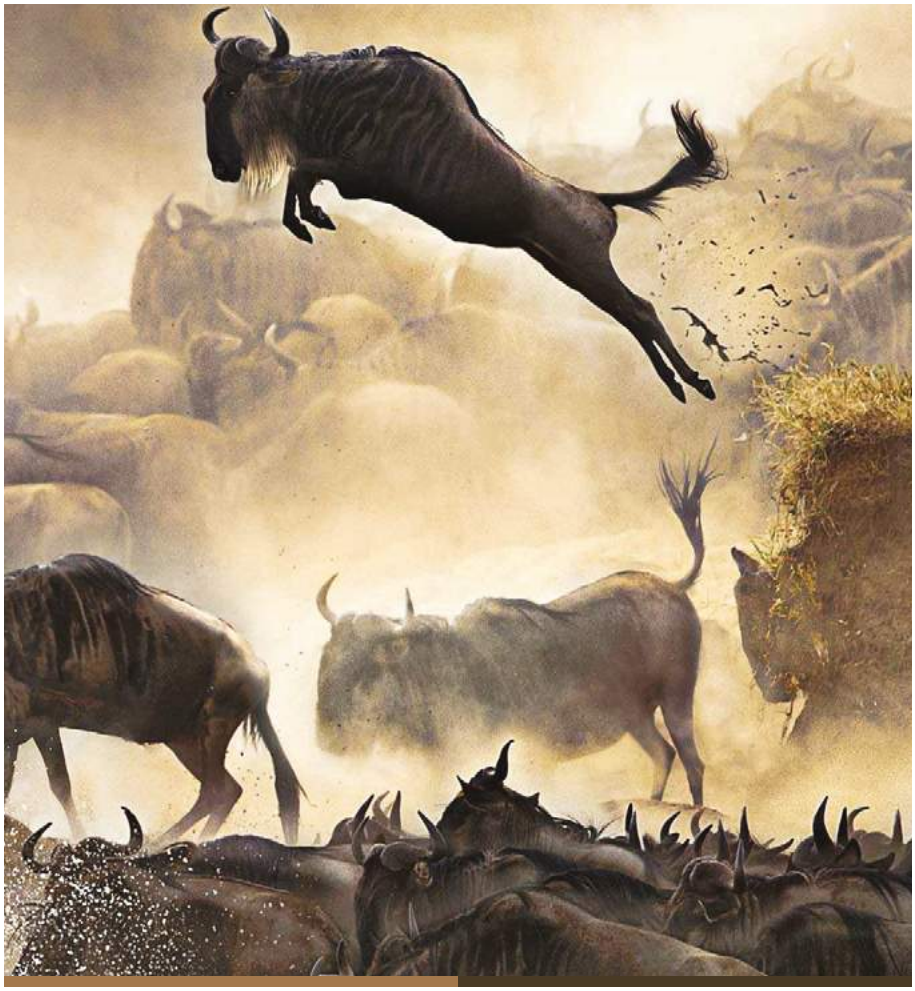




legendary

SERENGETI WILDEBEESTS MIGRATION UNDERGOING CHANGES

BY MARC NKWAME



The World's only remaining mass migration of large mammals and which takes place back-and-forth across the Serengeti National Park of Tanzania into Maasai Mara Game Reserve of Kenya has just undergone major changes yet to be noticed on large scale.

The migration features movements of 1.5 wildebeests and 250,000 Zebras trekking and running over a distance of nearly 3000 kilometres.

But the observation from the 2017 migration revealed drastic changes in both the movements of the ungulates as well as their annual calving season which caps the return of the wildebeests to the Southmost point of Serengeti and Northern section of Ngorongoro Conservation Area.

The more than 2 million ungulates, among them 250,000 zebras have only spent just two weeks in the Maasai Mara Game Reserve of Kenya instead of the usual three months.

Conservators fear that, if the trend persists the wildebeests may cease to cross into Kenya altogether; "It is possible that Kenyans have destroyed the natural environment at Maasai Mara where increased human activities are scaring the wildebeests from venturing there," stated Mr Susuma Kusekwa, the Senior Tourism Promotion Officer for the Tanzania National Parks, based at Serengeti.

Kusekwa explained that even the number of the mammals that crossed into Kenya this year, was small compared to previous years and in the same concern, even the annual calving session skipped the southern parts of Serengeti as the ungulates chose to breed in the central parts of the country's second largest National Park.

The 1.5 million Wildebeests that were supposed to give birth to 500,000 new calves this year, reportedly also delayed their 2017 reproduction exercise biologically, waiting for rains and when the precipitation took longer, they have now shifted their breeding location.

The animals delayed their calving season by holding onto pregnancy for three more weeks, waiting for the rains to fall so that new grass may sprout to provide the much-needed food for the massive herds of nomadic mammals.

As it happens, effects of climate change have driven Millions of ungulates that were supposed to give birth to nearly



"This is the first time this is happening and we fear that, increasing number of livestock, especially cattle, in Ngorongoro, has also scared the wildebeests from venturing further south, where livestock have eaten all grass,"

- Principal Public Relations Manager for Tanzania National Parks, Mr Paschal Shelutete.



500,000 new wildebeest calves in Serengeti National Park and parts of Ngorongoro Conservation Area, to relocate their breeding sites to central parts of the country's second largest game park at Seronera.

"Normally the wildebeests after crossing back to Tanzania from Maasai Mara game reserve, they heed to Ndutu area, South of the Serengeti Nationals park striding the Northern Section of Ngorongoro Conservation where they start their annual breeding process from January to February," explained Shelutete.

But this year, the ungulates did not venture beyond Naabi hills, but remained in the central parts of Serengeti, mostly Seronera where the calving, albeit a delayed one took place and this strange shift of behaviour seems to baffle conservationists.

The Chief Conservator for Serengeti National Park, Mr William Mwakilema said there are many factors that could have contributed to the wildebeests shifting their calving precinct from South to Central Serengeti, including delayed rains in the Northern Ngorongoro.

"Seronera and other sections of Central Serengeti received precipitation earlier than the Southern areas that suffered drought and for the wildebeests to give birth to calves they need tender grass sprouting from the early rains," explained Mr Mwakilema.

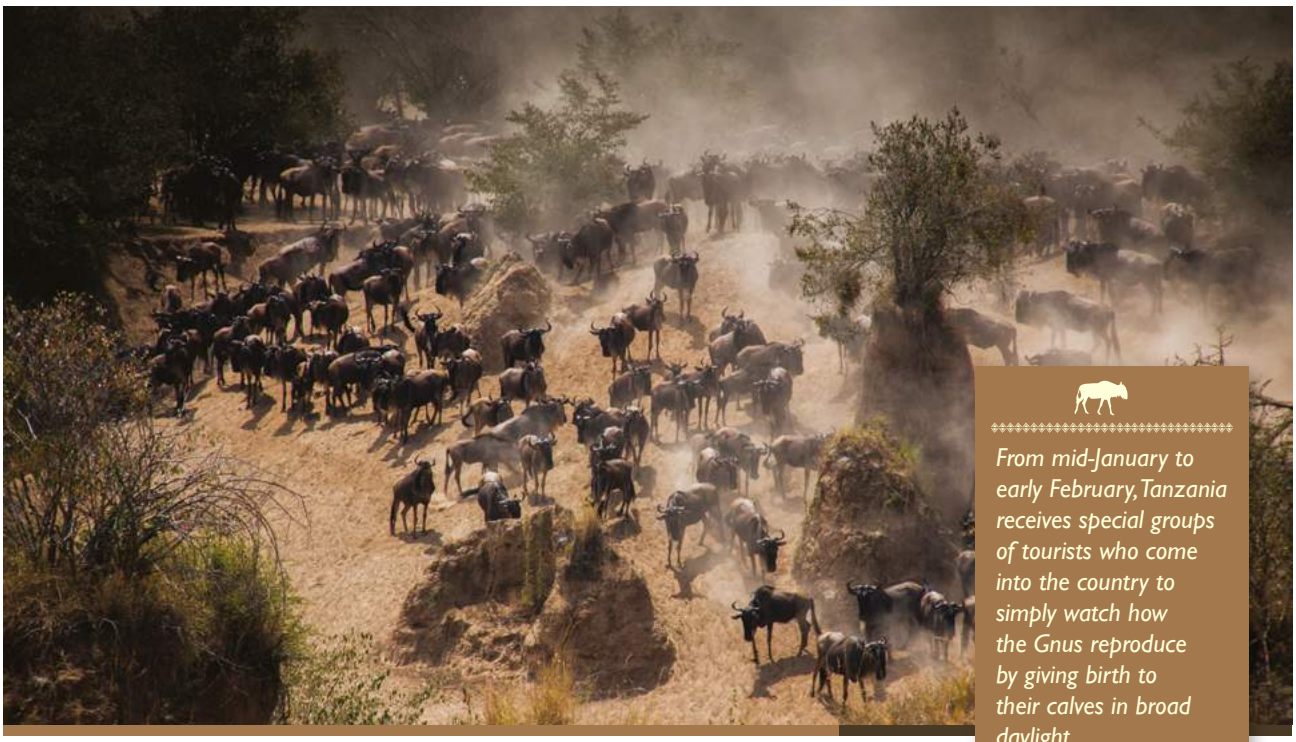
Serengeti is home to more than 2.5 million wildebeests, that reproduce annually to bring 500,000 new ungulate calves every January and February. The always mobile mammals form the world famous, legendary migration which remains among the global wonders in its own right. From mid-January to early February, Tanzania receives special groups of tourists who come into the country to simply watch how the Gnus reproduce by giving birth to their calves in broad daylight, as it happens just shortly after falling from the wombs, the young wildebeests start running away.

After crossing River Mara in their journey back to Serengeti from Maasai Mara in Kenya, the more than 2 million wildebeest herds are currently in Tanzania's Second Largest National Park, moving south from the north-east region and into the southern Serengeti, Ndutu area and Ngorongoro Conservation area.

Next February will see the herds sweep the good grazing fields of the Southern Serengeti, Ndutu and Ngorongoro Conservation areas and they will remain in this far south section for rather a while.

By March the huge herds will have chewed up much of the grass down South and though they will still be in the area it will only remain for the last calves to be born before the wildebeests gather themselves in preparation for the next leg of migration heading North again.

The journey going North officially starts in April and the wildebeests, as well as Zebras will be seen sweeping up in large numbers from Southern to Central Serengeti but the fast movers should by then be already trotting in the Western Parts of the National Park by then.



From mid-January to early February, Tanzania receives special groups of tourists who come into the country to simply watch how the Gnus reproduce by giving birth to their calves in broad daylight...

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(VRN) : 40-021568-N

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ROADS INSIDE NGORONGORO CRATER TO BE REDRAWN

BY MARC NKWAME



Tourists visiting the legendary wildlife filled crater in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area know exactly what they want; they want to see all the big five; the lion, elephant, buffalo, cheetah and Rhino but of late the visitors started complaining of high number of vehicles in the caldera.

Tourists who were prepared to gaze at undisturbed natural setting of the large crater were apparently not prepared to also meet as many cars as those cruising in the streets of New-York, Nairobi and Dar-es-salaam.

But; "We are yet to find alternative ways of getting people into the crater without using vehicles," said the Ngorongoro Conservator, Dr Fred Manongi, pointing out that even those complaining of 'many cars,' are also compelled to be riding in the same cars to get into the caldera.

The Ngorongoro Conservation Area is so far the leading tourist destination in Tanzania, attracting around 600,000 visitors per year; all of these tourists apparently need vehicles to get around in their game viewing experience, but it seems each visitor wants to be alone in the crater, the sight of others makes them queasy.

It is being estimated that at least 450,000 tourists visit the crater annually and it gets an average of 400 cars daily during peak season. The sight of these machines, all being large Four-Wheel-Drives, takes a toll on the otherwise beautiful natural setting in the caldera.



The Conservator at the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA) Dr Fred Manongi, seems to have taken note of the situation; "It is very funny that, while tourists want to go down the crater, they do not want others in there; still we have found a way of solving the problem without affecting the number of visitors here," he said.

According to Dr Manongi, the best way out so far is to redraw the driving tracks inside the crater to separate incoming and outgoing vehicles reducing the possibility of groups meeting each other while game viewing inside the vast caldera which has all types of wildlife, except giraffes but that can also be spotted on the rim of the crater.



Ngorongoro Crater which is one of the seven UNESCO's World Heritage Sites found in Tanzania, is the only place in the world where the rare and endangered Black Rhinos can be seen grazing freely in their natural environment and with the highest concentration of lions and hyenas.

There are also a number of marine species, especially large hippos found in the Engutoktok Lake at the base of the Crater.

Elsewhere, like in the 'Serengeti' and 'Mkomazi' National Parks, these animals are kept under special enclosure to protect them from horn-seeking poachers and other illegal hunters.

> *"WE ARE YET TO FIND ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF GETTING PEOPLE INTO THE CRATER WITHOUT USING VEHICLES*
>
> **– Ngorongoro Conservator, Dr Fred Manongi**



budget travel

climbing **Kilimanjaro** the financially savvy way

Climbing Kilimanjaro might be a dream of yours, but it's wise to make sure the costs don't turn into a nightmare. When you're new to Tanzania, as for any place, you won't necessarily know what's an overpriced rip-off and what's too cheap to be safe.

Written by Viva Africa Tours
Photography by Peter de Jong/PDJPhoto

So, we've put together an idea of what to think about when you're planning your trip. The cheapest deal might not be the best, but you don't need to go for the uber-expensive option either. There are over 200 licensed tour operators offering Kilimanjaro treks. If you walk through Moshi town, almost every second person will say that they can take you up the mountain. The truth is, the number of reliable operators is limited.

Don't choose your tour operator by price alone. What you should be looking for is quality service for a reasonable rate.

The costs: what a tour up Kilimanjaro normally includes

Every trip up Kilimanjaro will include the basic expenses of park fees, camping fees, rescue fees, staff wages, transportation and logistical costs and taxes. So what does this look like in real life? Let's take a look at a **Viva Africa Tours** tour – a six day climb via the Machame Route, which is a popular route.

The national park fee for Kilimanjaro is 670 USD per person for a 6 day/5 night climb. Depending on your group size, each climber will be accompanied by four porters, one chef and one guide. Local wages for these crew members are about 280 USD. Additionally, food costs for yourself and the crew add up to about 250 USD. Also there may be transport costs of around 100 USD. Along with these major expenses there are quite a few other factors like rescue fees, equipment maintenance and taxes.

Overpriced or luxury? How to decide

US$4000-5000– or even sometimes up to US$6000 for a standard itinerary- is just too much. Kilimanjaro is a tough climb and there's no huge extra level of comfort that can be built in – unless they're promising a piggyback up the mountain!

The extras might sound good, but they're not practical. You'll crave a hot shower after your trek but that doesn't mean that the portable shower at -20°C offered by your operator will be much fun; or having bottled Kilimanjaro water (the most common bottled water in Tanzania) on your entire trek instead drinking from the clean, purified mountain water from small streams.

Low cost or low standards? How to



decide

We're all looking for the best deal. We're all on a budget. So how cheap can your trek be without being a scam?

At this side of the price range, every dollar saved comes at a price. On Kilimanjaro, safety should be your priority. How much is the dollar saved worth, when you're on a high altitude trek and something goes wrong? Here are some issues worth thinking about:

GUIDES: There are countless guides who claim to be able to take you safely to the top of Kilimanjaro. The good mountain guides don't work for questionable companies. They don't wait for a call for a Kilimanjaro trek next month. They are on the mountain all year round and they climb with the company that is best for them and gives them most benefits. Top guides have experience on the mountain, speak good English and have first aid training.

ORGANISATIONAL EXPERIENCE: People who tell their story of climbing Kilimanjaro generally mention phrases like "greatest trek", "hardest thing I have ever done", "bucket list" , "once in a lifetime" in their storytelling. It's an intense experience. And because it's intense, you need to make sure that everything is organised properly. All it takes is an incomplete packing list, or incomplete gate registration or camp fee for your trip to be cancelled. So it makes sense to book a tour with a company that has experience and who knows what they're doing.

If you book through a tour operator outside Tanzania, the focus won't be on your Kilimanjaro climb. They'll offer it as part of an extensive list of tour offers, with three consequences:

•Kilimanjaro is not their core business and they have to rely on others to ensure your trip is safe.

•Your booking will be routed through many organisations before it reaches the guides at the base of Kilimanjaro. There is a lot of opportunity for things to go wrong.

•If something happens on your climb, your contact people are far away and might not won't even speak the language so might not be of much help on the ground.

EQUIPMENT: The saying goes, "There's no bad weather, just bad clothing". The wrong gear or broken gear can ruin your trip. However, the lower the budget, the higher the chance that the company can't afford to fix the holes in your tent. Also make sure that your company checks all your Kilimanjaro mountain gear and don't take chances with "normally, you don't need". There is no "normally" in an extreme situation!

KIATO registration: If a company is registered with the Kilimanjaro Association of Tour Operators, it's an important indication that the company looks after their guides and porters. KIATO ensures that all members pay fair wages and that all staff are properly clothed for the extreme temperatures. They'll provide transport, medical assistance, shelter and the park fees for them. Additionally a registered company provides meals for the entire crew and makes sure that porters aren't overloaded.

Kilimanjaro is an investment, however much you pay. But if you book with a trusted, reliable and KIATO-registered company that looks after their staff as well as they look after you, you're sure to have a memorable and safe adventure.



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ALL WILDEBEESTS HOLD TANZANIAN 'PASSPORTS'

BY MARC NKWAME

Paschal Shelutete is the Principal Public Relations Officer for the Tanzania National Parks. He is of view that, the annual wildebeests' migration may move back and forth between Serengeti National Park in Tanzania and Maasai Mara Game Reserve of Kenya, but in reality, the whole herd of ungulate have 'passports,' issued in Dar-es-salaam.

Q How can wild animals hold passports?
Well, the thing is the legendary migration takes place around the year, but the wildebeests spend only three months in Maasai Mara, but in the remaining nine months the ungulates are all in Tanzania, mostly within Serengeti.

Again, there is the issue of calving; the wildebeests give birth to their young ones in the Southern Parts of Serengeti National Park as well as some Northern Sections of Ngorongoro Conservation at Ndutu plains.

Now, since all wildebeests are born in Tanzania, then automatically they all become Tanzanians. We issue them with 'passports,' at birth.

Q How Many wildebeests could be there now?
The number is still in estimates, but the wildebeests that go on migration are around 1.5 million, mind you the annual ungulate migrations also comprises of 250,000 zebras.

Not all wildebeests go on migration, there are many others that remain in the Serengeti, there are some that accompany the rest in the massive movements but do not cross River Mara, they just turn back and we also have many resident wildebeests in Ngorongoro area, with many populating the crater.

Q How was the wildebeests' calving season for 2017?

It was slightly different compared to other years, because the rains took long in 2017 and the animals usually calve between January and February when rains irrigate the southern plains of Serengeti aiding the sprouting of fresh grass.

As it happens the rain patterns changed a bit, the precipitation fell in the central parts of Serengeti and as a result, tourists witnessed the calving around Seronera area. The animals did not venture south as expected.

Q How many calves are born each year?

Between 400,000 and half a million young wildebeests see the light of the day every year between January and February, at least half of this number survive so we anticipate around 250,000 new calves every year.

The rest of the new calves are either preyed on by carnivores, like hyenas, leopards or wild dogs and others drown in rivers while crossing during migration, or simply succumb to other forces of nature.

Q Will the migration survive in future?

The Wildebeests migrations are here to stay, at least as far as Serengeti and other conservation areas of Tanzania are concerned. We cannot speak for Maasai Mara in Kenya where reports have that, increasing human activities are said to be scaring the ungulates rigid from the Kenyan side .But we have nearly 15,000 square kilometres of land making up the Serengeti, which is as big if not bigger than many countries; we also have the Ngorongoro in the Southern parts as well as the Maswa and Grumeti game reserves, all well protected, maintained and mostly virgin land that can hold the migration for hundreds of years.

Besides as I said before, the wildebeests only spend short time in Kenya, it is like they cross there for just shopping and as time goes by, periods spent in Maasai Mara keep reducing, like in the course of this year, the ungulates stayed there for just two weeks instead of the usual three months.

*Between **400,000** and half a million young wildebeests see the light of the day every year between January and February*



ABOVE:
The Great Migration: the Bond Between Wildebeest and Zebra
Photograph by Manoj Shah/ Getty Images

selling room features is the future

By **Pierre Boettner** Founder & CEO, HospitalityPulse
Photography by **Cashman Photos / Roberto Lara / Laure Joliet**

It's hard to imagine a time before shopping carts, but it really wasn't that long ago. Sylvan Goldman, who owned a number of grocery stores in post-Depression America was the mastermind behind the shopping cart. His was a business problem to solve. The stores were suffering, and he needed shoppers to buy more groceries. In order to do this, however, they needed a tool that would be functional (to keep their arms from tiring) and, ideally, would encourage the purchase of a few more products without the carts becoming too big for the store space. As we all know, the shopping cart, which began rather small, has evolved over time to fit the way that consumers use the grocery store. Now, shoppers fill baskets—both at the grocery store and online—to the brim. Goldman would likely be shocked at how the cart has evolved, but the point is that he saw a problem and created a solution that would allow shoppers to get more of what they want, and, in turn, he increased his business.





When I think about how simple it is to fill up an Amazon cart with a million things, big and small, I am confounded at how we have limited ourselves to just a few options for booking a hotel room. You select a category, a pre-determined assembly of key room features, offered at a price. Distinct views, corner rooms, the high floor, and so many more features that have true value to many guests are relegated to either find their way into such a category – or they can only be given away for free. Adding extra services such as breakfast, or the occasional massage, some even try selling teddy bears, towels, and bathrobes; that is about as creative as we get when it comes to the use of shopping carts. Yet, we want to inspire them – get them excited and delighted. These are not inspiring choices. And, let's be honest. There are no guarantees their preferences will be delivered. All too frequently, ***travelers are disappointed when they arrive onsite to find out there are no more king-size beds available, or that their preference of being on a high floor could not be accommodated.***

This way of booking hotel rooms goes against everything that travelers want. They want control, and we are wrongly assuming that giving them the ability to do everything on a mobile device will fulfill that desire. It will help, no doubt. However, what will set one property apart from the next is the ability to drop features into a shopping cart; choosing a hotel room based on a whole different spectrum of options than they've ever been offered before.

Like Goldman, we can look at our

current situation and identify a problem. The market is competitive; supply continues to increase, and occupancy is beginning to shrink. How can we give travelers more of what they want in order to drive up occupancy and rates? Creating the desire to stay at your property is a starting point, and it begins with giving them something besides "double, non-smoking" as a choice when booking. Instead, we can directly offer them to book the room features they care about. Instead of having to choose among dozens of categories to find one that best fits their needs, and then hoping the 'Away from elevator' and King bed' requests will be honored, what if travelers are simply offered the choices that correspond to their desires? Guests could choose their view in as much or as little detail as you want. They could drop a balcony into their cart, if available. They could choose their floor: high, low, mid. The features functionality can go as far as you want. Add a bottle of wine or a choice of bathroom amenities to make it even more compelling. Each of these opportunities to make a personal selection also has the potential to move the guest to buying decisions, without ever having to leave the dream phase. Many of these features are also quantifiable, while in today's flows, they aren't capitalized on. Many guests gladly pay extra for the guaranteed bed type, floor, or view. And once committed to "the dream" of their stay, they are less likely to change their mind.

Intelligent technology allows hotels to offer these opportunities. It encourages guests to book with you, because you've given them more of what they want, and it increases loyalty when guests can select the exact amenities and conveniences they care about, and that are geared to the purpose of their stay. Making this experience, and consistently delivering on it – that is what creates loyalty. This last point can't be overstated. We are in an era of declining loyalty.





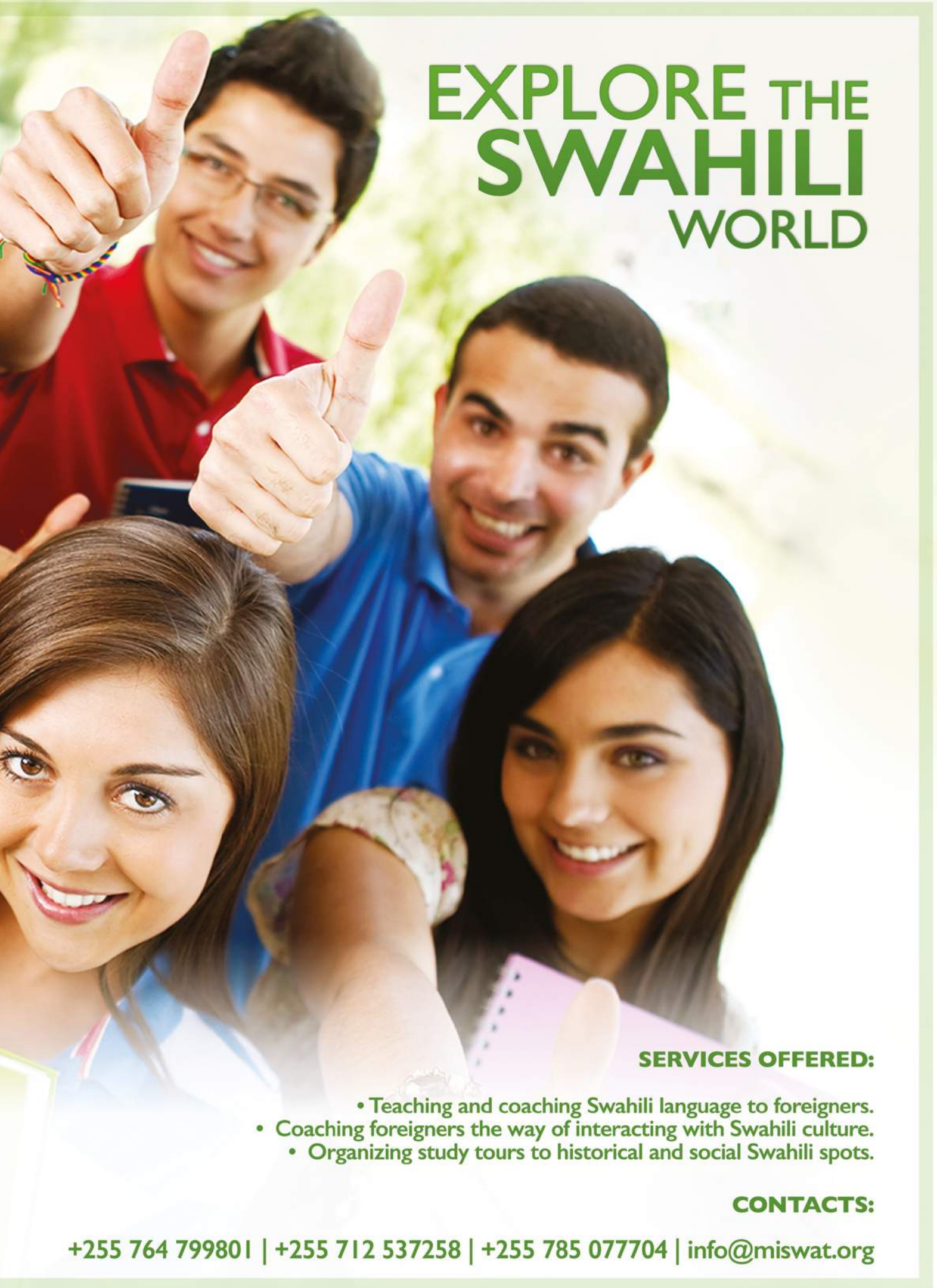
Being more competitive in selling hotel rooms is about more than distribution channels and Google rank. Guests know how to search for the kind of place they want, and most will go to great effort to find it.

According to Google, a typical traveler has over 700 digital touch points while planning a trip. This includes 52 Google searches, and eight different accommodation brands considered before booking (Think with Google). When it comes down to deciding between hotel A and hotel B, travelers care about a lot more than just price point. They care more about relevant choices and designing their own experience than they do about saving $20. The opportunity to capture travelers is right there in the empty shopping cart space that hotels have not begun to use. Yet.

Creating the desire to stay at your property is a starting point, and it begins with giving them something besides "double, non-smoking" as a choice when booking....



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WHAT A WAVE OF rhino KILLINGS TELLS US ABOUT **POACHING PATTERNS**

BY **KEITH SOMERVILLE**
VISITING PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF KENT

Poachers killed this black rhinocerous for its horn with high-caliber bullets at a water hole in South Africa's Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park. They entered the park illegally, likely from a nearby village, and are thought to have used a silenced hunting rifle. Black rhinos number only about 5,000 today.

*Photography by **Brent Stirton***
*Post-Processing by **Alan S.***



Rhino poaching in South Africa continues to be a problem. In recent months poaching incidents have spiked in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park in the northeastern province of KwaZulu-Natal. In one of the worst attacks nine rhinos were found dead, bringing to **23** the number killed so far in just one month.

Earlier this year South Africa's Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, announced triumphantly that in 2016 fewer rhinos had been poached than in 2015. Her statistics showed that nationally 121 fewer animals were poached in **2016 (1,054)** compared with **2015 (1,175).**



LEFT:
In an area of Kruger National Park known to be at high risk of poaching, staff capture a rhino, which they'll move to a safer area.
Photograph by Stefan Heunis, AFP/GETTY IMAGES

BOTTOM:
Image by The Wilderness Foundation

But my research into the evolution of poaching operations in South Africa – which I shared round about the same time – showed that while fewer had been killed, poaching efforts had simply shifted locations. In particular, illegal killings in areas outside South Africa's largest game reserve, the Kruger National Park, have been on the rise.

There are at most 5,458 black rhino, 21,085 white rhino, 3,500 Asian one-horned rhino, 100 Sumatran rhino and between 61 and 63 Javan rhino left in the wild. South Africa is home to 75% of Africa's rhino with between 19,000 and 20,000 white rhino and about 2,000 black rhino.

SUCCESSES IN KRUGER INCREASE JEOPARDY ELSEWHERE

Protection in the Kruger National Park has increased through the establishment of an "intensive protection zone" in the centre and south of the 19,485 km² park. This has reduced the number of killings.

But, to some extent, the poaching epidemic has simply changed focus and location. KwaZulu-Natal is home to smaller wildlife sanctuaries and reserves as well as private game reserves. All have substantial numbers of rhino which is why they have become the focus for poachers and criminal syndicates that run the illegal trade.

Zimbabwe and Namibia have been hit too. There are even fears that Botswana could be next on the hit list.

Rhinos under threat in South Africa have been relocated to the country's well-protected national parks and private reserves. Botswana lost most of its rhinos to poachers in the 1970s and 1980s. But the success of the wildlife department and the Botswana Defence Force in combating poaching meant that it became a safe haven. In December 2014, Botswana had 154 rhinos and 25 more were translocated in 2015 and 2016.

In March this year, another 12 were sent from South Africa to the Okavango Delta, with 88 more due to follow this year and possibly another 100 sometime in the future.

But now their security is threatened. Budget cuts have forced Botswana'sDepartment of Wildlife and National Parks to cut funding for rhino protection. This has affected the elite Rhino Squad, set up to protect the relocated rhinos. It has even run out of money to buy fuel for its vehicles.

Botswana's Environment Minister Tshekedi Khama II has bemoaned the lack of resources and the poor response from donors:

If you have given us money to establish the Rhino Squad, it will come with operational costs. We are always at war with poachers and we try to do as much as we can, with little.



The lack of funding could seriously imperil the relocation programme, which is reliant on security and well-resourced anti-poaching.

There has already been a surge in elephant poaching in northern Botswana. Elephant poachers would see rhino horn – worth over $60,000 per kg compared with $1,000-$1,200 for ivory – as even more lucrative contraband than tusks.

KWAZULU-NATAL BEARS THE BRUNT

If Botswana could be a target, Namibia and Zimbabwe have already felt the effects of the shifting poaching operations. The numbers killed in Namibia have risen in recent years, reaching 80 in 2015 having been down at 25 the year before. Zimbabwe lost 50 rhinos in 2015, double the previous year's level. Figures for 2016 have not been released.

But it is South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province that is now bearing the brunt of renewed rhino poaching. Ezemvelo's official 2017 statistics show that 89 rhino have been poached in KZN province so far this year, compared with 55 rhino this time last year. This is a rise of 48%, attributed to Mpumalanga poaching syndicates who were operating in the Kruger National Park targeting Zululand reserves because of increased security and anti-poaching in their own province.

My visit to Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Reserve in September last year confirmed that 95 rhinos had been poached in the first nine months of the year. The latest statistics for 2016 showed 140 killed across the province (133 in protected parks) between January and November 2016. But with 89 poached across KZN in the first four months and killings up by 48%, the province could be looking at well over 200 dead in 2017 if the trend continues.

Cedric Coetzee, head of rhino protection in the park, believes that while it might take poachers days to track a rhino in Kruger National Park, the high density of animals in the KwaZulu-Natal reserve meant they might only spend two to three hours there before killing a rhino and escaping with its horns.

LATEST STATISTICS FOR 2016 SHOWED 140 KILLED ACROSS THE PROVINCE (133 IN PROTECTED PARKS) BETWEEN JANUARY AND NOVEMBER 2016.



PHOTO CREDIT:
A black rhino photographed at night by remote camera in South Africa. Courtesy of Steve Winter/National Geographic.

One thing that remains to be seen and analysed in detail is the effect that the unbanning of domestic trade in rhino horn in South Africa will have. In April this year South Africa's Constitutional Court refused an attempt by the government to overturn an earlier court suspension of the government moratorium of the legal trade in horn imposed in 2009.

The Environment Minister has put out draft regulations for a legal trade. This would control domestic commerce and allow the export for personal use (not commercial exports which are banned by CITES) of a maximum of two horns. The draft is vague. But it was welcomed by the Private Rhino Owners Association in South Africa, who want a legal trade. Conservation organisations which oppose any trade in wildlife products were highly critical of the court decision and the South African government's draft legislation for a legal trade.

The outlook for southern Africa's rhinos remains threatening. The trade issue is confused and the South African government under President Jacob Zuma hardly has a reputation for administrative competence, integrity and far-sightedness.

The police and wildlife authorities struggle to deal with poaching and smuggling. The ability of criminal syndicates to evolve their operations to take account of improvements in security in some areas suggests a shifting and complex war between anti-poaching units and the poachers, weighted in favour of the killers and smugglers.

ELEPHANT POACHERS WOULD SEE RHINO HORN – WORTH OVER $60,000 PER KG COMPARED WITH $1,000-$1,200 FOR IVORY – AS EVEN MORE LUCRATIVE CONTRABAND THAN TUSKS.








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