

All About Ngoma

In March I undertook a three-week safari in Morocco, where spring days were clear and cold and a strong Sirocco wind blew. I loved Moroccan music, especially the blend of African and Islamic traditions that is known as *gnaoua* (*gnawa*). No matter where I stayed in Morocco, the tam-tam or drums made a regular appearance after dinner and the same men who prepared and served our meals or drinks would settle down for a long drumming session. They lost themselves in their playing, beating out repetitive rhythms with closed eyes, unaware when weary travelers headed off to bed leaving them alone to their music. One young man told me that he suffered from insomnia if he didn't play the drums before bed. On the night we undertook a camel safari into the Sahara Desert, a sandstorm obliterated the clear skies that my traveling companions and I hoped to sleep under. We had to take shelter for the duration of the night under a tent buffeted by strong gusts and swept by blowing sand. Our Berber hosts attempted to make the best of it for us by entertaining us with percussion instruments fashioned out of a couscous strainer and plastic water jug.

In Tanzania the word for drum—*ngoma*—and the act of drumming is shared. I have attended some exhilarating *ngoma* in Tanzania, when bonfires flared and dancers swayed in their light to the beats pounded out by drummers literally drenched in sweat from their exertions. *Ngoma* however is a threatened practice throughout Tanzania. My first awareness of this occurred on a safari I made to Lake Nyasa (also known as Lake Malawi) when I unwittingly incurred the wrath of the Lutheran manager of the guesthouse where I stayed. All day I had heard the distant beat of drums. Seeking out their source, I had persuaded the drummers to call an impromptu *ngoma* that evening, an event attended by nearly everyone it seemed who lived by the lakeshore. The following morning I faced the guesthouse manager's disapproval, learning that the stance he took against *ngoma* was unchanged from that taken by Africa's very first missionaries—that Africans are driven to self-destruction by the hedonistic beats of their drums.

The Makonde are a tribe from southern Tanzania and Mozambique and are among Dar es Salaam's oldest residents. They brought their love of *ngoma* and costumed dance to Dar. Twenty years ago, it is said that Makonde drums were a familiar sound in

Dar. An old Makonde woman who lived in my Dar neighborhood told me that a group of drummers continued to play at weddings, but it consisted of young men who played only for money. Nor did these young drummers make their own instruments as the elders used to do, many of whom had died.

When drumming was discouraged by Christian missionaries, the art of drum-making declined too, which explains why the most beautiful drums that I have seen in Tanzania weren't made by an African at all but by a Frenchman, Jeji Bruno, who I met at Dar's Alliance de Francaise where he exhibited them. A musician and cabinet-maker, Bruno wandered the African continent for years studying its music before finally settling in Tanzania. He devoted himself to drum-making because he couldn't find anyone who knew how to make the drums he wanted for his own compositions. He searched the forests south of Dar for wood left behind by wood-cutters, like *minga*—African teak—rosewood and ebony, and he learned to carve elaborately decorated drum bases as the Makonde once had. He fashioned his drums' tympanums from an assortment of natural materials, among them cobra, python, impala, bushbuck, cow and goat skins, and bound them to their bases with twine made from tree bark. Bruno's drums were magnificent, but none of the 70 in his collection was for sale. He intended to take them into the schools and instruct Tanzanian children in the ways of their own music.

Bruno remembers falling ill once. A witchdoctor was called, who told him that his illness resulted from making drums—tribal ritual objects—without undergoing the required purifying ceremonies first. The West African shaman Malidoma Patrice Some explains that indigenous people believe that drums and masks are inhabited by invisible spirits which, if not respected appropriately, can be powerful and dangerous energies to contend with. In the case of Bruno's illness, the *mganga* was so concerned about the enormity of Bruno's offence to the unseen world that he refused to treat him.

In *My Heart is Africa: A Flying Adventure*, author Scott Griffin writes that in Kenya there is an ancestral spirit among Bantu peoples called **Ngoma** who is called upon in times of illness and who greatly affects the success rate of recovery.

I may have more to write on the subject of *ngoma* when I spend time over the next year

In this issue:

All About Ngoma
Woman With Wings Travel Club
Light in Africa
Oreteti Cultural Tourism Discovery
Stand Out Adventures
Southern Tanzania Safari July 2007
Wild Dogs
Books
Music
Workshops
Tidbits

in Congo-Brazzaville. (I am very excited to have this opportunity!) Other than Bruno's drums, the next most inspiring drums I have encountered in Tanzania come from the Congo. I owned one myself, an old one purchased from a Congolese in Western Tanzania, but it never emerged from the container in which it was shipped home. In preparation for going to the Congo, I found through an out of print book seller, a copy of *Mboka, The Way of Life in a Congo Village*. Published in the early 1970s, it recounts Lona B. Kenney's adventures in Western Congo as an expat wife. Bored of tedious post life, she follows the beating of drums into the jungle to find their source, the *mboka*, which literally means "village". On this first visit to the village, she arrived shortly before nightfall and disturbed inebriated villagers at a funeral. "This was Isongo", Kenney wrote, "the dance of joy and mourning. Some of the women were practically naked, their bodies painted bright red. A few wore brass necklaces and bracelets on arms and ankles, and short raffia skirts at the hipline. None among them had on *pagnes*—the unmistakable badge of the inroads of civilization, let alone regular dresses, generally indicating the proximity of a mission".... "The whole crowd, with me in their midst, [slowly shifted] toward the center of the *mboka*. It was hard to tell how many people there were. We [moved] towards the big fire which threw up bright sparks above the thatch of the huts"... "As the men and women walked, they whirled to the explosive beats of the tom-toms." I wish I had attended an *ngoma* such as this! Lona made it home later that night with the help of a village elder. "Awakening the next morning," she wrote, (with a hangover from the local liquor), "I was not certain at first whether my adventure of the previous evening had been real or nothing but a dream."

* * *

Women with Wings Travel Club

www.womenwithwings.ca

The dates for the Women with Wings travel club's Northern Tanzanian safari have been decided—Feb 27th through March 11th, 2008. If you are interested in this very special safari please email me, leslie@mamatembotours.com, or Liz Irving of Travel Concepts, liz@trvlconcepts.com.

The itinerary:

Fourteen day Northern Tanzanian safari, a perfect balance of wildlife, culture and unique, less visited destinations.

Tues. Feb. 26th: *Karibuni Tanzania!* Welcome to Tanzania! You are met at Kilimanjaro International Airport near the northern Tanzanian city of Arusha, the country's thriving safari hub, and transferred to your accommodation Ngare Sero Mountain Lodge. The lodge, on the slopes of Mount Meru near Arusha National Park, is set in lush gardens amidst forest and near a crystal clear spring. Hundreds of bird species have been recorded around the lodge and troops of Sykes and Colobus monkeys inhabit the forests. The lodge was created from a farmhouse built turn of the century and has just ten rooms. Hosts Tim and Stacia Leach, in collaboration with nearby villages, are dedicated to the conservation of the forest around their lodge and the protection of the vital spring on which so many people depend.

Wed. Feb. 27th: *Safari Njema!* Have a good journey! Your safari begins after breakfast when your Land Cruisers and drivers for the next 14 days await at the entrance to the lodge for the six hour journey north to Lake Natron on the Great Rift Valley floor. The perfectly symmetrical cone of Mount Lengai, Tanzania's last active volcano, dominates Lake Natron's skyline. Along the way, enjoy a picnic lunch in a landscape which reflects the volcanic forces which created the rift valley. At this time of year, wildebeest and zebra are typically grazing alongside the

Maasai people's livestock. Your accommodation is Ngare Sero Natron Camp, which consists of only six uniquely designed tents which blend in harmoniously with the otherworldly environment. The camp provides a high level of comfort in this remote and rarely visited area.

Thurs. Feb 28th: After the long drive to Natron, you have the day to enjoy the Natron area, by vehicle and by foot. This is Maasai country and visits can be arranged to their homesteads. Or hike to the waterfalls which breach the rift valley walls. Lake Natron is one of the few spots where flamingoes regularly nest and raise their single chicks. Take a trip to the lake to see the birds and afterwards enjoy sunset and sundowners on a bluff overlooking the lake.

Fri. Feb 29th: This morning you ascend a track up the rift valley wall to cross Loliondo, a stunningly beautiful landscape of rolling hills and grassy plains used by migrating antelope. It's a five hour journey. Although Loliondo lies outside of Serengeti National Park and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, wildlife isn't concerned with borders and Loliondo provides good game viewing at this time of year. There have been frequent sightings of Wild dogs, among Africa's most endangered animals. Your accommodation is Suyan Camp, one of only a few luxury seasonal camps in Loliondo's Gol Mountains. Ten tents in all, each is spacious and elegantly furnished with ensuite. This is the way safaris used to be many years ago.

Sat. March 1st: You remain in Loliondo and spend another night enjoying Suyan Camp's intimate atmosphere. Because of the camp's location outside of official borders, walking safaris are allowed with a Maasai guide. Or you can go by vehicle to nearby OIKarien Gorge, where Ruppell's griffon and White-headed vultures nest every March and April.

Sun. March 2nd: Today you venture into the Serengeti National Park proper, crossing cheetah and lion country, your

entire day a game drive and your ultimate destination the central Serengeti. Your accommodation is the recently refurbished Sopa Lodge, good quality accommodation and service in a prime wildlife location.

Mon. March 3rd: You remain in the Serengeti for another day. The central Serengeti has resident game throughout the year and you are likely to see a lot on your game drives. Go on early morning and late afternoon game drives or take a picnic and stay out all day. The central Serengeti offers the best chances of sighting the elusive leopard. The Sopa Lodge is also well situated at this time of year for the migrating herds of wildebeest and zebra as they move up from the southern plains.

Tues. March 4th and Wed. March 5th: From the central Serengeti you head south to where the park borders on the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, a five hour journey depending upon wildlife sightings. Northern Tanzania's wildebeest and zebra migration was recently announced as the seventh on UNESCO's list of the world's new wonders. The park has been a UNESCO world heritage site since the 80s because of the migration. If the migration follows its usual pattern, you may find yourself in the middle of over a million wildebeest or very close to them. Late January through early March is also foaling season. Your accommodation for two nights is Ndutu Safari Lodge. Set under a canopy of acacias overlooking Lake Ndutu, the lodge offers comfortable accommodation and tasty home cooking.

Thurs. March 6th: Today, the Ngorongoro Crater awaits, after a brief stop at Olduvai Gorge to visit the small museum which documents Mary and Louis Leakey's many fossil discoveries. Ngorongoro Crater is one of the world's largest calderas with a floor 600 meters below its rim, and home to a long list of East African wildlife. Only giraffes are missing; they cannot negotiate such steep walls. The crater offers the best

chances of seeing endangered Black rhino. It will be a long and exhilarating day. Your accommodation for the night is one of the best lodges on the northern safari circuit. Small and tranquil, with lush gardens surrounded by coffee fields, Plantation Lodge is the perfect place to relax, offering individually decorated rooms, excellent food, massage, and a refreshing pool.

Fri. March 7th and Sat. March 8th: Today you descend an old rift escarpment on a bumpy track for several hours to Lake Eyasi, where you have the opportunity to meet the Hadzabe tribe. This is an extraordinary cultural experience: the Hadzabe, who speak a click language, attempt to live by the hunter and gatherer traditions of their ancestors. Your accommodation for two nights is Kisima Ndege Tented Lodge on the shores of Eyasi. There are just seven tents, each built of palm and other ecologically sound materials. There is a simple elegance about Kisima. The excellent service, meals which use home grown produce, and sunset over the lake, when the rift walls which rise on the opposite shore glow copper, make this camp a special experience.

Sat. March 9th: You depart Eyasi after an early breakfast for Mtu wa Mbu or Mosquito River village, gateway to Lake Manyara National Park, a three hour drive. You take a guided walk through Mtu which is an excellent introduction to village life. After the walk you enjoy a lunch prepared by local women. In the early afternoon you check into your accommodation early for a restful afternoon, because at nightfall, you return to Lake Manyara National Park for a bush dinner under the stars followed by a night safari. A night game drive is a rare treat: you might see hippos out of the water; bush babies; porcupines; night birds of prey; perhaps even a leopard if you are lucky. Your accommodation is Kirurumu Tented Lodge, a comfortable permanent camp set high on the edge of the rift valley and with an excellent view of Lake Manyara far below.

Sun. March 10th: It takes three hours to reach Tarangire National Park, a mix of grassland, acacia woodlands and rocky hills and one of the most scenic of the northern parks. Tarangire is known for its large resident population of elephants because of the year-round availability of water. You will most definitely see elephants. Tarangire is also a great park if you enjoy East Africa's superb birdlife. Your accommodation is Tarangire Safari Lodge, set on a bluff with an unsurpassed view of the Tarangire River where thirsty wildlife comes to drink. Wildlife often passes through camp.

Mon. March 11th: After one last early morning game drive, you depart Tarangire for the two hour drive back to Arusha. You have a few hours to explore Arusha where you can have lunch. You can also do some shopping. Any purchases you make, as well as lunch, will be at your own cost. In the afternoon you will be taken to Kia Lodge where you can relax by the pool or in your day room. On a clear day, enjoy views of Mount Kilimanjaro from Kia Lodge. After an early dinner, you will be transferred to Kilimanjaro Airport for the departure of your KLM flight home. It is possible for anyone traveling to Zanzibar to catch a midday flight from Arusha.

* * *

Light in Africa www.lightinfrica.org

Some Women with Wings tour participants intend to volunteer prior to their safari for Light in Africa. For the past few months I have been communicating with Mama Lynn of Light in Africa. This is how she describes volunteer work with LIA:

“One day you might comfort a young baby, the next day take a group of youth on a field trip, while the next day you may sit with HIV positive children during their monthly check-ups. You could build a home for a widow and her children, or bag bags

of rice and maize flour for families on outreach community programs. You could buy the supplies of fruits and vegetables from the local market for the children's home, or put flowers in the rooms of terminally ill patients or just sit and hold their hands in comfort. You could partake in an arts and crafts lesson or the reading tuition program; or facilitate a seminar on HIV/AIDS prevention or on the importance of healthy nutrition for the nomadic Maasai people. The list goes on and on...

Tailor made plans will be set in place for each volunteer on their arrival in Tanzania, whether they are on their own, are a couple or are in a group. You will only get out of your volunteer service what you put into it, so our advice is to live every day doing the most that you can do for everyone around you. Our aim is that you will leave Tanzania feeling a sense of self-worth and with the knowledge that you have made a difference in this small part of the world.”

I meet with Mama Lynn when I am in Tanzania in July. Please check the September newsletter for more on LIA.

* * *

Oreteti Cultural Tourism Discovery www.oreteti.com

Oreteti is a small, family-run business in Northern Tanzania with a mission to “preserve indigenous knowledge, promote respectful dialogue between visitors and local residents, and create a new model for responsible business in the 21st century.” Oreteti works towards these goals through cultural tourism programs; short or long term volunteer programs; short courses, such as drum making, beading, cooking, and Swahili and Maa languages; walking safaris in the beautiful Monduli district not far from Arusha and part of the Maasai people's homeland (spectacular views from the Monduli area); and International Summer School, a three-

week program held July/ August of every year in partnership with the NGO Ang Serian (www.angerian.org.uk) with a curriculum which combines travel to rural communities, music and language studies, lectures and practical workshops. Dates for summer school 2007 are 10-29 July.

One of Oreteti's founders, Gemma Enolengila, and I learned about each other from the internet, and now plan to meet in person in July when I partake in a "four-day Maasai village tourism program" in Eluwai village where Gemma and her Maasai family reside. (Gemma, British-born and Oreteti's principal lecturer, is an anthropologist/ethno botanist specializing in Maasai traditional health care and environmental issues. She is married to a senior Maasai warrior from Eluwai, a traditional healer and current director of Ang Serian.) During my stay at Eluwai I can expect to learn about, among many other things, Maasai women's beading (bead colors hold secret meanings); traditional systems of healthcare; and the history, proverbs and stories of the Maasai from their elders. I have spent a lot of time with the Maasai, but never in Monduli district so I am very excited about this time I will spend with Gemma. Please check my future newsletters for a trip report. It is my hope that I will interest my future guests in incorporating a cultural program such as Oreteti's with a wildlife safari. Oreteti's location makes them an ideal stopover—Monduli is on the way to the main attractions of the northern safari circuit.

* * *

Stand Out Adventures

www.standout-adventures.com

A guide for woman climbers of Mounts Kenya and Kilimanjaro: 36-year-old Mary Kariuki from central Kenya, graduate of the American Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), and owner/operator of Kenyan agency Stand out Adventures Tours and Travel. I'll let

Mary speak for herself in this excerpt from one of our e-mails:

"Being a female guide [in East Africa] isn't easy when you are gone for a week or more and you have a family waiting at home. That's why I am glad when I find a fellow woman who appreciates what I do. Tourism is an industry [in East Africa] that has been dominated by men, and it is my prayer that more women will join us in proving them wrong [in thinking that they alone can do it.] I am proud to be there with the men [on Kilimanjaro.] I remember in the year 2000 when I did my first Kili climb, no one could believe that a woman alone could lead a group of nine to the summit. It was history. Lately I have been able to train several ladies who are all doing fine as guides and also bringing up their families without any problems. As you know, women in Africa are meant for marriage and child rearing. There was a time when a woman who worked couldn't get a husband. I hope we shall meet one day and discuss these issues further."

Mary, we will meet one day.

*

Mary Kariuki provides an excellent segue for **Wandering Women**:

Recently I was contacted by Beth Whitman, author of *Wanderlust and Lipstick: The Essential Guide for Women Traveling Solo*, who launched her new web site, a travel site for wandering women by wandering women. Like me, Beth is a Pacific Northwest Coast resident, albeit on the US side; we also share a love of travel, writing and teaching. (Probably in that order.) It has occurred to me that we should collaborate on a Women Traveling Solo to Tanzania workshop. We have agreed to try and meet later this year, when I am back from Tanzania and she returns from a tour she leads to China. In the meantime, Beth asked permission to print some of my travel articles under

Wander Tales on her web site. I am proud to be included with the other talented contributors. Beth's travel blog is. Pass both web site and blog along to all the wandering women in your life.

www.WanderlustAndLipstick.com
www.blog.seattlepi.nwsource.com/travel

* * *

Southern Tanzania Safari July 2007

The sold out tour departs July 2nd for a 14 days in Southern Tanzania which includes three nights camping in both the Selous Game Reserve and Ruaha National Park and with shorter stops in Mikumi and Udzungwa National Parks. With the help of my Dar-based operator, I was able to add a two-day canoe safari on the Kilombero River which lies west of the Selous Game Reserve. The canoe trip involves paddling amongst hippos and crocs, fishing village visits, and fly camping on the river banks at night. I can't wait. I love Southern Tanzania's wilderness; you usually have it to yourself. Check my September newsletter for a full trip report with photos.

Vancouver-based photographer and travel show presenter William Jans is on board for this southern safari, after which he travels north with me to hike from Mount Makarot to Lake Eyasi and to spend time alone with the Maasai. His take—and it might be a whacky one—on his Tanzanian adventures will come to venues across Canada in 2008. William's web site is www.wrjphoto.com.

* * *

Wild Dogs

Another reason I am always thrilled to tour the southern circuit is the rare opportunity it provides for sighting Wild dogs, one of Africa's most endangered animals. However, a happy circumstance has emerged in the Gol Mountain area of Northern Tanzania's Ngorongoro Conservation Area where what seems to

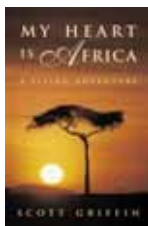
be a thriving pack of Wild dogs has taken up residence and become a regular sighting, at least during the time when migrating antelope are passing through. I take two tours through the Gols early 2008 and am really excited about the chances of seeing this pack. I thought I would pass on an operator called Kiliwarriors whose great video clip of the Gol Mountain dogs hunting earlier this year was posted on YouTube. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAA G5g_EaiU.

Here is another YouTube video posted this May that you MUST see. Lions, cape buffalo and crocodiles battle it out at Kruger National Park, South Africa. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LU8 DDYz68kM>

* * *

Books

Scott Griffin's *My Heart is Africa: A Flying Adventure*.



This is the travel memoir of a successful Canadian businessman and certified pilot who volunteers for the Kenyan Flying Doctors Service for several years beginning in 1996, not to serve as one of their dedicated pilots, who fly the ill and injured out of remote areas, but as a business consultant. In the 1990s, the service faced challenges to its growth into a stable self-sustaining organization. The book is more about, as its title reflects, a flying adventure and not about the Flying Doctors. We learn about the considerable problems facing the charity, but at the book's end we remain assured that the Flying Doctors service is a noble cause and that should any of us become ill or injured while in East Africa

(anyone on safari should purchase short term Flying Doctors memberships) then these are the men and women who we most want to come to our rescue. Instead, author Griffin relates his flying adventures around Africa during his two-year Kenyan tenure. I learned more about the risks of small planes than is good for me. What the title also acknowledges is that this is another love story about Africa and the lessons it holds. The most powerful chapter for me, the one which most illustrates the Africa I know, care about and respect, is Chapter Five, Angels of Mercy: nurse Rose, compassionate and uncomplaining, flies in bad weather with a daring young pilot on an ill-fated rescue mission of a fifteen-year-old tribal girl who hemorrhages after giving birth to a stillborn child, while her own young son lies desperately ill and in need of better health care in a Nairobi hospital.

* * *

Music

Upon my return to Morocco, I picked up this wonderful double CD set: *Desert Blue, Ambiance du Sahara*, a collection of ballads from Ethiopia, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia and Mali, by Network Music. Frankfurt, Germany.

While in Morocco, I was introduced to this singer from Mali, and couldn't wait to order her CD set called *Oumou*. I play it every day at the moment.



Another of my favorite CDs this month is Senegalese Ismael Lo's *Jammu Africa*. This is sure to appeal to Western tastes.

* * *

Tidbits

"The body may travel by train, but the soul travels by donkey." I haven't been able to trace this proverb's origin, but I came across it in Taras Grescoe's *The End of Elsewhere: Travels Among the Tourists*. (A great read by the way.)

* * *

Workshops

Here's the fall line-up for "Planning a Tanzanian Safari" Workshops:

Saturday October 27, 2007:

Lucas Center, North Vancouver

2132 Hamilton Ave

10 am to 4 pm with a one hour break for lunch.

Please register with North Vancouver's Continuing Education Dept. 604-903-3333.

Saturday November 3, 2007:

False Creek Community Centre,

Granville Island, Vancouver

9:30 am to 12:30 pm

Call 604 257 8195 to register.

Enrolment is free.

Wednesday November 14, 2007:

The Travel Bug book store

3065 West Broadway, Vancouver

7:30 pm

Please register by calling Sian or Dwight at 604-737-1122.

Saturday November 17, 2007:

First of a two-session workshop at

Kitsilano High School

2550 West 10th Ave., Vancouver

10 am to 12:30 pm

Saturday November 24, 2007:

Final day of the two-session workshop 10 am to 12:30 pm

Please register with Vancouver School Board's Continuing Education Dept at 604-713-4550.

* * * * *