



LOWER PRICING sees African demand soar

Australians continue to flock to Africa, with the strong exchange rate encouraging even more travellers to book. South Africa continues to be in high demand, with wholesalers reporting that Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana and Zimbabwe are also hot destinations.

Northern Seregeti (image courtesy of African Wildlife Safaris, ©Singita Game Reserves)

By Jenny Burns

THE popularity of Africa as a major holiday destination for Australians continues unabated. All major industry players are reporting strong demand for African destinations.

South Africa, for example is reporting increases of up to 31.7 per cent for the first couple of months of the year. According to South African Tourism Australasia marketing and communication manager, Tommy Lindblad, the outlook continues to be very positive.

"We are confident that the leisure travel market will continue to perform well this year with expected visitor numbers to remain steady at over the 100,000 mark," he said.

"With strong advertising, promotion and social media campaigns in Australia and New Zealand, we already have more than 14,000 fans of South Africa on Facebook and we will continue to focus on ways to interact and convert these fans to booking their next holiday in South Africa."

SAT's new 'Leave Ordinary Behind' campaign is also expected to play a major role in attracting Australians to visit South Africa.

The campaign highlights the diversity of experiences South Africa has on offer with the aim of driving

consumers to see South Africa as an enriching and memorable destination.

The campaign encompasses a number of traditional and social media, direct to trade, and business tourism activations to drive conversion and increase passenger numbers to South Africa.

Africa as a whole is performing phenomenally well for African Wildlife Safaris according to chief executive officer, Stephen Cameron.

"We are continuing to see major growth across our African portfolio, with Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana and Zimbabwe the strongest performers for the 2011 season," he said.

Cameron said Africa has never been more accessible.

"With the dollar so strong, prices are almost 55 per cent cheaper than two years ago (based on current exchange rates)," he said.

"The increase in regular flights to the destination from Australia's main centres has also made it easier to get to the continent."

Cameron said it is important agents book clients early.

"Camps that are positioned in the best locations for game viewing are smaller and often seasonal," he said.

"Booking early guarantees clients an unsurpassed wildlife experience with a smaller environmental impact on the surrounding wilderness. These camps offer a unique experience and

therefore are very popular.

"To secure one of these camps clients need to book at least eight to 12 months in advance during Africa's peak travel season of June to September."

The Africa Safari Co is also reporting good sales.

"Africa has shown growth over the 2010/11 financial year with Botswana, Kenya and Tanzania showing the way," said marketing manager Wayne Hamilton.

Africa continues to account for Abercrombie & Kent's highest sales in 2011 according to managing director Sujata Raman.

"Sales are up 130 per cent on the same time last year," she said.

"Southern Africa is booming with South Africa leading the pack. Private reserves in the Sabi Sands are popular while Cape Town is also hot. Botswana comes in a close second with the Okavango Delta and the luxury Sanctuary Retreats firm favourites."

A&K is seeing clients planning well in advance for Christmas holidays and beyond while private game reserves are also very popular. Perennial favourites are Rattray's on MalaMala in South Africa's Sabi Sands and Sanctuary Chief's Camp in the Okavango Delta.

Raman is predicting family safaris will continue to become more popular. "South Africa's malaria-free Madikwe

Reserve is great for families with young adventurers in tow," she said.

Thanks to heavy rains throughout Southern Africa, floodwaters were up in the Okavango Delta, Linyanti and Selinda Reserves and the Makgadikgadi Salt Pans and the deserts of Namibia are lush with green grass.

"This makes it a delightful and unique time to visit," Raman said.

"Interest in the Selinda Reserve has heightened also through recent documentaries on the area by Selinda's owners, acclaimed film makers Beverly and Dereck Joubert."

Creative Holidays is reporting a good response to its Africa program.

Creative re-launched its program this year with a range of African safari and lodge style options, across key regions including South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Tanzania.

"To date, our program has been well-received by agents and we expect to see a continuation of the current growth in particular in South Africa," said Creative Holidays managing director, Paul McGrath.

"With the Australian dollar performing well against the South African rand it makes it more enticing to travel to Africa and more affordable on arrival."

As a result of the destination's value, Creative is expecting travellers may upgrade their accommodation to more indulgent options.

AWS's 'off-the-beaten-track' experiences

AFRICA Wildlife Safaris (AWS) is reporting increased demand for off-the-beaten-track African experiences.

"While traditional vehicle-based safaris that showcase Africa's prolific wildlife are still our most popular sellers we have seen demand grow for tours that incorporate an element of adventure or including areas that are 'off the beaten track,'" said African Wildlife Safaris chief executive officer, Stephen Cameron.

"For me canoeing in the beautiful Mana Pools National Park in Zimbabwe is the ultimate wildlife experience. I have returned six times to canoe the river and challenge anyone to show me a safari that provides more up-close encounters with wildlife.

Canoeing is in comfortable, stable Canadian canoes, with nightly accommodation in comfortable tented camps."

AWS is selling four-day itineraries from \$1216 per person (twin share), departing from Mana Pools airstrip until October 31.

Cameron said AWS's most popular walking expedition was Kalumu Trails a four day program in Zambia's remote South Luangwa



Get up close and personal with wildlife in a canoe (image credit: AWS/NFS)

National Park. "Accompanied by an armed guard, guests walk through wilderness areas along the Luangwa River; staying each night in

comfortable tented camps," he said. Prices start from \$2043 per person (twin share), departing from Lusaka airstrip until October 31.

sellingAfrica

'Memorable' famil

A FAMILIARISATION tour to South Africa with South Africa Tourism provided Barbara Koryzna-Kijowski from Sydney-based All Tours and Travel with the perfect opportunity to see all the destination has to offer.

From a personal perspective it was also an unforgettable experience.

"My trip was exciting and memorable," Barbara explained. "It has given me a passion to promote this wonderful country.

"After seeing so many different places and experiencing a range of accommodation styles I am much more confident in recommending South African travel options to my clients, as I can now explain that travelling around South Africa is easy as well as amazing.

"The easygoing personality of the South Africans is similar to our own in Australia. We both drive on the same side of the road and the climate is similar."

Barbara was extremely impressed with South Africa's food and wine which she described as first class in quality but, at the same time, very affordable.

"As I discovered, a safari experience is also amazing and makes you feel like you are at one with nature. And as there are so many options – all budgets can be catered for."

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Free stopover package on offer from Air Mauritius

AIR Mauritius has launched a new free stopover package aimed at travellers flying to Mauritius and then to Africa where the flights do not provide immediate connections.

The airline will pay for a night's stopover in Mauritius for passengers if no same-day connection exists for either the inward or outward journey.

If no same-day connection exists both for the inward and outward journey then one night will be paid for by the airline both ways. If a connection in one direction is not on the same day but after two days then the airline will pay for a stopover package for two nights. In such cases the package will not be provided in the other direction.

The packages apply to all fare types.

Air Mauritius' African network includes flights to Durban, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Nairobi and Antananarivo. The airline also flies to Reunion and Rodrigues while in Australia it services Perth with an A330 aircraft and Sydney and Melbourne with an A340 with two configurations – business and economy class. Air Mauritius' Steven Palombo said the package, together with the airline's network into Africa provides a great product to sell.

New golf course adds to Beachcomber's appeal

LUXURY hotel group, Beachcomber Hotels, will open a new golf course in the north of Mauritius in 2013.

Beachcomber sales and marketing manager, Darren Partridge, said the new golf course is expected to prove very popular with Australian travellers.

"Mauritius continues to attract many Australians and this will further add to the destination's appeal," he said.

The new 18-hole 27 par golf course will be located at Le Goulet, on the north-west coast of Mauritius, renowned as the best climatic region on the island.

It will spread across 6200 metres and according to Partridge is inspired by the spectacular golf course at Paradis Hotel and Golf Club, considered one of the most spectacular and scenic courses in Mauritius.

"This fun and challenging course has been designed to appeal to players of all levels from beginners to seasoned professionals. It will feature large fairways of 35 to 60 metres and spectacular greens ranging from 450 to 650m²," Partridge said.

"Like the golf course at Paradis,



a strong emphasis will be given to aesthetics with spectacular views over the northern mountain range."

The course will also feature a club house, a driving range and golf academy equipped with modern facilities.

"It will be the only golf course in the north west of Mauritius and is strategically located only 15 minutes away from five other Beachcomber hotels – Royal Palm, Trou aux Biches Resort and Spa, Le Victoria,

Le Canonnier and Le Mauricia," Partridge said.

The course will be accessible to all guests residing at Beachcomber hotels in Mauritius. Until the course opens Beachcomber guests can enjoy a golf holiday at the five-star Paradis Hotel and Golf Club. A special golf package, which includes four days' unlimited golf, motorised cart, driving range balls, polo shirt, tees, three balls and a massage, costs from \$525 for single golfers and \$730 for couples.

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It's Possible

Family safaris, Tanzania camping prove popular for ATS



Image credit: Richard Ruskin

AFRICAN Travel Specialists (ATS) is reporting significant growth for some of its new products.

"Family safaris have grown in popularity and we have been combining these with village visits in Kenya," said managing director Richard Ruskin.

"We support these villages and many clients are involved in (activities such as) assisting with building schools (and) putting in bore holes.

"Private camping in Tanzania has

also been popular as this is a unique product that no one else can offer."

Prices start from \$470 per person per day based on four people sharing. Each safari has its own African Travel Specialists driver/guide and camp crew and chef.

Also popular is ATS' seven-day Kenya companion safari which sees the first person pay from \$5590 while their companion pays from \$2795 – a 50 per cent discount. The safari

includes five-star accommodation, all meals, local branded wines and spirits, game park fees and game drives and internal flights.

ATS is reporting massive growth in Zimbabwe business.

"I have just returned from guiding some clients in Zimbabwe for two weeks," Ruskin said. "The country offers exceptional value for money with exquisite luxury bush camps like Somalisa in Hwange and Kanga

in Mana Pools – truly outstanding. Victoria Falls is still one of the most visited places in Africa and it never disappoints."

Other areas to show good growth include South Tanzania, particularly Selous Game Reserve, Ruaha and chimp trekking in Gombe National Park (where Jane Goodall set up her research) and Mahale Mountains which Ruskin described as one of the most isolated and exciting places to see mountain chimps.

"This is the most untouched areas in East Africa and still one of the most exciting," he said. "Our eight-day safari including internal flights, accommodation in four and five-star lodges, game drives and walks, game park fees and chimp trekking fee and all meals start from \$8525."

Also new is a houseboat experience in the Okavango Delta, Botswana which Ruskin described as a very different experience in one of the most peaceful and beautiful areas of Botswana. A three-day package starts from \$710 per person including accommodation on the houseboat, most meals and water based activities.

Luxury Walking Safari Camp Opening special!

This is the first true luxury bush adventure on foot, where you experience the sights, sounds and smells of the bush while enjoying personalised service, fine dining and the most luxurious tented accommodation in Zambia's fabled South Luangwa.

This is a seasonal camp operating from June to October, each year. The camp has been designed to leave the lowest possible carbon footprint and will be packed up completely with no trace that it was ever there between seasons.

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Save \$460 with Bench's Vic Falls offer

BENCH International is offering savings of \$460 per couple on a three-night stay at the luxurious Victoria Falls Safari Lodge, located near the banks of Zimbabwe's Zambezi River.

The deal involves paying for two nights and getting the third night for \$1 for stays between November 1 and December 15.

The \$525 per person package includes three nights' accommodation with breakfast and dinner, a Zambezi River sunset cruise, a guided tour of the falls and airport transfers.

In other news, Bench is to introduce an arrival-night tented camp experience in Nairobi as an alternative to the traditional stay in a city hotel.

Product manager Fiona Orton said the luxurious Nairobi Tented Camp was situated deep in a forested area of Nairobi National Park (located minutes from the international airport) and offered all-inclusive rates which competed very favourably with Nairobi hotel

prices and other options.

"The camp gives visitors an instant introduction to East Africa's wildlife that Bench clients can expect throughout their visit," she said.

"The tariff is slightly higher than alternative options, but the rates include breakfast and dinner with soft drinks, beer and house wine, transfers to/from airport, Nairobi National Park entrance and camping fees, a game-viewing drive with the opportunity to view black and white rhino, lion, buffalo, giraffe and other wildlife, plus a game walk (if time permits)."

Orton said the camp had an agreement with the Kenya Wildlife Service that allowed the transfer of clients through the park 24 hours a day.

"Clients are collected at the airport in a comfortable safari vehicle and within 15 minutes they are in the National Park on a game drive," she said.

Southern Africa's 'intoxicating mix' proves a winner for New Horizon Holidays

NEW Horizons Holidays is reporting strong sales for its African product.

"With the strong growth in popularity of Southern Africa as a holiday destination we have witnessed excellent sales to the destination within the last year," said acting managing director Mark Langdon.

"We always believed the brochure would be successful as Southern Africa's intoxicating mix of beaches and battle sites, gardens and game, rock-art and reserves, deserts and deltas, award-winning vineyards and incredible vistas, coupled with its inimitable energy and fantastic value for money makes the region a perfect holiday destination for agents to suggest to their clients.

"The travel industry has welcomed our brochure, produced in conjunction with travel partners Thompsons Africa, which includes many holiday options including fully or partially escorted tours, fully escorted private touring, day tours and excursions, packaged getaways and self-drive options. Travellers have



Elephant Camp, Victoria Falls

the flexibility to choose one, or mix and match, creating their own African holiday."

Langdon said demand had been particularly strong for New Horizons Holidays' 15-day "South African Surprise" journey. This tour includes Johannesburg, Hazyview, Kruger National Park, Swaziland, St Lucia, Durban, Drakensburg, Port Elizabeth,

Knysna, Outsoar and Cape Town.

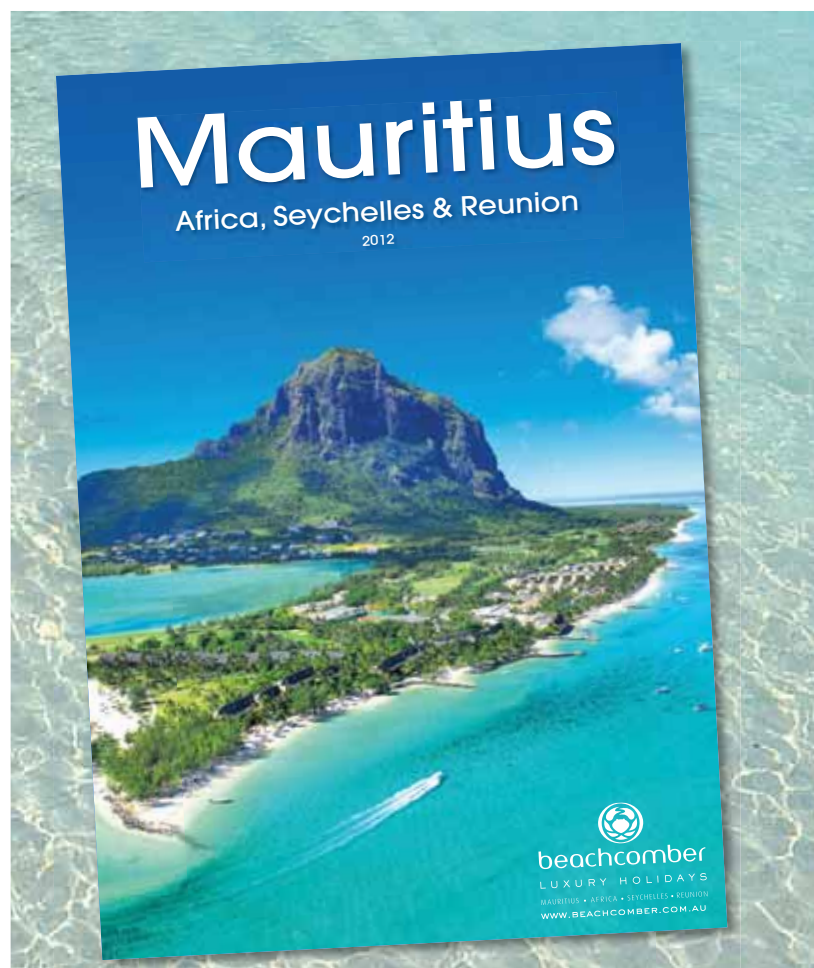
"Another hotspot is Kruger National Park and here we provide clients with a range of lodge-style accommodation, catering to all budgets with options from the budget rest camps in Kruger National Park right through to the luxurious five-star Lion Sands Private Game Reserve for those who want to indulge that bit extra," Langdon said.

Cox & Kings releases new 'taste of South Africa'

COX & Kings has introduced a new tour to South Africa - the eight day "A Taste of South Africa" escorted small groups journey.

The tour is part of a suite of new website-marketed tours and explores some of South Africa's most famous sites including Cape Town and the Cape of Good Hope. Also included is a stay in South Africa's gourmet capital Franschhoek, a full day tour of the Cape Winelands travelling through the vineyard-filled valleys of Stellenbosch and Paarl and a guided walk through Featherbed Private Nature Reserve in Knysna on the Garden Route.

The tour costs from \$2184 per person (twin share) ex Cape Town which includes seven nights' accommodation, transport, services of a tour escort/local guides and entrance fees for sites on the itinerary. The tour also operates on a fully private basis.



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Africa Safari Co expands adventure tourism offerings

THE Africa Safari Co is adding more African adventure tourism product to its portfolio.

According to marketing manager, Wayne Hamilton, this is in response to travellers looking for more grassroots experiences.

As a result, the company has added Sanctuary Zebra Plains luxury walking safari in Zambia to its offerings.

“This true luxury walking safari camp in Zambia’s fabled South Luangwa has just opened,” Hamilton explained

“It is the ultimate bush adventure by foot as you experience the sights, sounds and smells of the bush while enjoying personalised service, fine dining and the most luxurious tented accommodation. The camp has been designed to leave the lowest possible carbon footprint and will be packed up completely with no trace that it was ever there between seasons.”

The camp operates between June and October.

The Africa Safari Co is currently

offering a 50 per cent discount off the second person travelling on a three-night walking safari. The safari costs \$1750 for the first person and \$870 for the second person. In other news, the Africa Safari Co is donating a portion of all sales of Great Plains products to lion conservation in Botswana.

The company made the announcement at a meeting with Derek and Beverley Joubert from Great Plains, who own and manage properties in Botswana, Kenya and Tanzania.

“The Jouberts may be better known for their documentary work with National Geographic in Botswana,” Hamilton said.

“The couple have been filming in Botswana for many years and took some time out to share some of their stories with visitors to the show and also updating us on their products and services.”

Other new products include the three-night “Selinda Canoe Safari” in Botswana along the Selinda Spillway – the waterway linking Botswana’s



Sanctuary Zebra Plains, Zambia

Okavango Delta and Linyanti and Kwando water systems.

“This trip is the ideal setting for Botswana’s leading canoeing and

walking safari, hosting a mere eight guests on each departure. Trips such as this are giving the traveller far more choice than ever before.”



Humpback whale monitoring

Monitor the marine ‘Big Five’ with i-to-i in South Africa

VOLUNTEER travel specialist, i-to-i has announced a new project where volunteers help monitor the marine “Big Five” – whales, sharks, dolphins, seals and penguins – at the southern tip of Africa.

The primary focus of the project is monitoring the hundreds of whales that annually migrate north from Antarctica to breed and calve in the waters around the Western Cape of South Africa: it’s renowned as one of the best places on the planet to see southern right, humpback and Bryde’s whales.

Working with local ecotourism operators, the research is boat-based, with volunteers working from a whale watching tour boat to document whale identities and behaviour, but also to observe and record data on dolphins,

birds, seals and penguins.

There is also the opportunity to work with the organisers’ sister company, which operates shark cage diving, monitoring the great white sharks that frequent the area.


Education is a prominent part of the project, with lectures by marine biologists; training in data recording; photographing marine animals; animal rescue and seamanship.

Volunteers will also gain insights into the workings of ecotourism, as they will be assisting the ecotourism operators during their daily whale watching tours. The aim is for volunteers to gain a holistic understanding of the issues and challenges of ocean conservation.

The “Whale Monitoring in South Africa” project is based in Kleinbaai, a small harbour

town situated 180 kilometres south east of Cape Town, and part of Gansbaai in the Western Cape of South Africa. There is comfortable accommodation, with twin share rooms and a bathroom shared between two rooms. The project is located within walking distance from the accommodation.

Volunteers can stay for a minimum of two weeks, up to a maximum of four weeks. Two weeks costs \$2549 per person (twin share), and extra weeks cost \$800 per week. This includes all accommodation in a residential house on site; breakfast and some lunches; airport transfers to and from Cape Town airport; in-country orientation, pre-departure and in-country support team and 24-hour emergency support.



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SAA assigns A340-300 to Perth-Johannesburg route

SOUTH African Airways is reporting healthy growth on the Australia-South Africa route.

“We saw a 30 per cent rise in passenger numbers and as a result have now allocated our A340-300 permanently onto the Perth-Johannesburg route to meet increased passenger demand,” said SAA head of Australasia Thevan Krishna.

“While SAA saw an expected increase in tourism and business traffic during the World Cup last year, we have seen a heightened level of enquiry and uptake this year which is very pleasing.

“In addition, South Africa is also becoming a meetings, incentive, convention and exhibition destination as more enquiries mount following the exposure received during the World Cup.

“Because of the strong Australian dollar and increased marketing into Australia by South African Tourism and major private operators, Africa is very much on people’s mind when planning a holiday, whether that be a trip to Kruger Park to see the Big Five, surfing at Jeffrey’s Bay or sampling the



Above, Durban and right, leopard in Kruger National Park (credit: SAT)

culinary delights of Durban and Cape Town.

“As many of our major hotel and resorts quote rates in \$US, visiting South Africa has become a real value-for-money destination for Aussie tourists.”

Krishna said the airline was finding great interest in its routes to South America and was seeing a lot of

patronage from Australia.

“We have seen a big increase in Australians travelling to Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo via Johannesburg, particularly passengers from Perth and Adelaide,” he said. “We are also seeing interest from those wanting to fly to the UK, Europe and the US via South Africa as a completely different stopover option.”

Krishna said a primary focus for SAA in 2011 would be the expansion of its Africa network.

“We are already the largest carrier in Africa reaching 30 destinations on the continent from our hub in Johannesburg. We plan to increase our capacity and are investing in new aircraft (such as six new A330-200’s)



to meet increased demand on regional and international routes.”

“2011 is a challenging year for airlines around the world, but at SAA we are very excited by the strong tourism and business interest in Africa and welcoming more Aussies onboard.”



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