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## *AUTO NEWS* – 2nd Edition

(March 2009)

### Chairman's Column

My Fellow Colleagues,

Welcome to the second edition of Auto News. A lot has happened since the first edition and these, needless to say, are very trying times for the industry in general with specific regard to the economic recession we are experiencing currently.

In light of these circumstances, we are currently engaging all stakeholders to work out means and ways of getting the industry out of the jaws of this recession - We continue to discourse with UWA with a view to reducing tariffs and making the destination competitive price wise, and with government on increased marketing and mitigating on losses accruing from the economic downturn (safari cancellations). At an appropriate point in time we will circulate a detailed explanation to the membership.

There remain many challenges to face and overcome if our industry is to survive and prosper. However I feel more confident now than at any time since the inception of the new Executive that we are making good progress and I am optimistic about the future.

I would like to thank all my colleagues on the Executive for their support and for their 'free gratis' efforts given to the Association over the past year. I am confident that we have the management in place to drive the Association forward and meet our strategic objectives.

Equally, i would like to thank the membership for their positive response and support.

Henry Okecho  
Chairman - AUTO

### Executive Committee

**Chairman:** Henry Okecho [henry@explore-uganda.com](mailto:henry@explore-uganda.com)

**Vice chairman:** Cam Mcleay [cam@adrift.ug](mailto:cam@adrift.ug)

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**Secretary:** Babra Vanhelleputte [babra@asyanuttours-safaris.com](mailto:babra@asyanuttours-safaris.com)

#### Executive Committee members:

Mohit Advani [mohit@global-interlink.org](mailto:mohit@global-interlink.org)

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#### Co-opted Executive Committee Members

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#### Ex-officio UTA & UWA representatives:

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*AUTO Social at Metropole Hotel (Photo courtesy Amos Wekesa)*

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### AUTO Social

The Association of Uganda Tour Operators (AUTO) hosted a social get-together at the Metropole Hotel on 1st October 2008. The purpose of the evening was for AUTO members to interact in a casual environment, away from the workplace. The evening was well attended with approximately 80 persons present, representing over 30 companies.

Should you have any suggestions on venues, themes or activities for future social gatherings, please do not hesitate to contact any of the AUTO Executive Committee Members.

We will keep you posted on any future social get-togethers.

## Uganda - "The Pearl of Africa" shines at the World Travel Market



Article written by -  
Baluku Geoffrey

Uganda once again reaffirmed itself as East Africa's number one tourist destination at last year's World Travel Market (WTM) exhibition held at Excel London from 10 – 13<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

From a survey conducted from the thousands of guests who visited the Ugandan stand, it was noted that Uganda was once again the most sought after destination in East Africa albeit the continuous under funding to Tourism Uganda.

Uganda's success has come a long way. Efforts to make this years show a success started in Kampala where Uganda Tourist Board on realizing its constraints decided to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Association of Uganda Tour Operators (AUTO), Civil Aviation Authority and Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) to market Uganda.

This was followed by a pre WTM event cocktail at Metropole Hotel Kampala on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2008 where AUTO presented a cheque of US\$10,000 to the WTM 2008 organizing committee. Another cocktail meant for suppliers was held at Eclipse Restaurant in London. For the first time Uganda had a storeyed stand and all participants from Uganda showed unity in purpose.

The several wholesalers who visited the Ugandan stand noted that over the past few years Uganda had become a "stand alone" destination. In the past many international and regional tour operators offered Uganda as "an add on" extension to Kenya and Tanzania. However, now there is such a great demand by consumers to spend their entire time in Uganda as it is emerging as a long haul destination especially for specialty tours. As tourists at all price levels become more sophisticated in the global market, value in addition to price becomes a critical element in the decision to visit one destination rather than another.

Also to note is the fact that international tourism and its markets are facing unprecedented change as a result of rapidly evolving technologies, the credit crunch and exchange rates that are now leading holiday makers to shun expensive foreign

holidays.

Research from insurance specialist Tower Gate Bakers reveals, 65% of Britons will be switching to cheaper holidays over the next 12 months so as to beat the crunch. The credit crunch is an indicator that the development of Tourism will continue to be driven by the attitudes of consumers in the source markets.

With the economic situation worsening, 2009 actually represents a golden opportunity for Uganda to strengthen Uganda Tourist Board through implementation of the Tourism Act that was passed earlier this year.

Considering that Uganda is competing on the world market with the sole aim of penetrating it, it is necessary for emphasis to be put on quality products at competitive prices but most of all to offer the unique products with a Ugandan approach.

Government full support is also needed to further promote Uganda's unique features at the upcoming exhibitions in Germany, Spain, Russia, Japan, South Africa and also to explore the United States of America. This will enable Uganda to claim its rightful position as the most rewarding destination in East Africa.

When we challenge the impossible in life, we most often get the best possible. Companies known to share responsibility for this challenge of marketing Uganda are African Pearl Safaris, Abacus African Vacations, Acacia Safaris, Amazing Safaris, Asyanut Safaris, Atlas Tours, Bunyonyi Safaris, Brovad Tours, Crystal Tours, Jewel Safaris, Travelust, Lets Go Tours, Lake Kitandara Tours and Metropole Hotel. These companies deserve recognition for the service to promote Uganda.

The critical factor for Uganda's success at this years show is accountability as every thing else flows from that. Uganda Tourist Board (Tourism Uganda) is yet to call members for a post WTM meeting where a full report on accountability and future marketing plans will be unveiled.



Hon Serapio Rukundo -  
Minister of State for Tourism  
at the Cocktail Party

*With the economic situation worsening, 2009 actually represents a golden opportunity for Uganda to strengthen Uganda Tourist Board through implementation of the Tourism Act that was passed earlier this year.*



WTM 2008 -  
Uganda Stand



L-R Henry Oketcho Chairman AUTO handing a cheque  
to Edwin Muzahura - Marketing Manager UTB

## Property Profile - Kibale Forest Camp, Kibale Forest National Park

*“A classic under canvas experience at an incredible value for money ratio”*

Kibale Forest Camp is a property from the recently established hotel development and Management Company: Nature Lodges Ltd. The Company is managed and operated by Ruben Vandenhoeke, an energetic Belgian graduate with more than 10 years working experience in hotel management and sustainable tourism in East Africa and South America. Ruben aims for the operation of small and intimate quality tourism facilities in beautiful settings and at an exceptional value for money ratio. With their first property Kibale Forest Camp, Nature Lodges certainly succeeded offering a product along this vision.

Kibale Forest Camp is situated in a patch of indigenous forest, just outside Kibale Forest National Park. It borders Bigodi swamp and is located on a mere 4 km from the starting point for chimpanzee tracking. The camp is a renowned birding paradise, not only frequented by our human visitors, but also by different primates like

the black and white colobus, the red colobus, the red tailed monkey, the bleu monkey...

The camp consists of 7 African safari style tents, which are comfortably furnished with twin or double beds. Each tent has its own private en suite bathroom with an eco friendly toilet, a dressing room and a bush shower. The tents are placed in thick forest, are on raised wooden platforms and have their own verandah from where the forest and all its secrets can be observed.

Kibale forest Camp recently opened its new bar and restaurant. The complex is a beautiful wooden construction with a grass thatched roof which blends perfectly in the forest surroundings. From here excellent food is served which, together with the professional service makes your stay an even more memorable experience.

For more information contact [booking@naturelodges.biz](mailto:booking@naturelodges.biz) or visit [www.naturelodges.biz](http://www.naturelodges.biz)



Kibale Forest Camp, Kibale Forest National Park

## Skål News

Skål is a professional organisation of tourism industry leaders around the world, promoting global tourism, peace and friendship.

The Skål Club of Kampala hosted their annual Gala Dinner-Dance on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> November at the Kampala Serena Hotel. The theme for the evening was “Bollywood Blast”, with over 200 guests dressing up in Bollywood attire, a Bollywood show, a Bhangra show and a fine Indian menu. Sponsors ranged from hotels, lodges and restaurants, to airlines, adventure companies, and global distribution systems.

A donation of Shs. 2,000,000 was made to the Uganda Society of the Protection and Care of Animals (USPCA). As always, Gala Dinner proceeds from sale of raffle tickets will go towards the Skål International Kampala Chapter 611 Conservation Fund.

For information on monthly get-togethers, club activities, details on joining, or recommendations for Conservation Fund donations, contact Pearl Hoareau (Club Secretary) [pearlhoareau@utb.co.ug](mailto:pearlhoareau@utb.co.ug) or Marinka Sanc-George (Skål Club Programme Director) [marinka@letsqosafari-ug.com](mailto:marinka@letsqosafari-ug.com)



Skål Kampala Executive Committee



Handover of cheque to USPCA

## Airline Update

### British Airways launches mobile check in service

British Airways has launched a remote check in service, allowing travellers ‘on the go’ to check in for flights wherever they may be, via their mobile handsets. The service is quick, free and available in 11 languages- without any need to download accompanying software.

By logging on to [www.ba2go.com](http://www.ba2go.com) using any mobile device with wireless connectivity (such as Black-Berry's and mobile phones), customers can access the BA timetable in real time, as well as select seats and check in individuals, groups and families 24 hours before their flight departs.

The check in service offers full seat change and seat selection functions and the ability to enter passport information – everything that can be done on [ba.com](http://ba.com) apart from printing the boarding card. At the end of check in customers will be presented with the option to collect the boarding pass at the airport from a kiosk or desk, or email or fax the boarding pass.

For more information, visit [www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com)

AUTO News 2nd Edition compiled by Mohit Advani.

Thanks to Baluku Geoffrey (Uganda at WTM write-up).