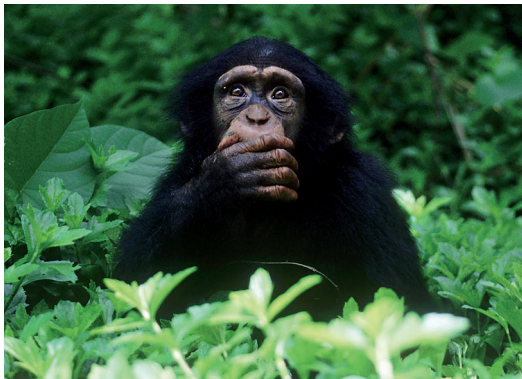


**THE
AFRICA
BOOK**

**A JOURNEY THROUGH
EVERY COUNTRY IN THE
CONTINENT**

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FOREWORD

AFRICA IS A DESTINATION FULL OF DREAMS FOR THE TRAVELLER: VAST AND DIVERSE LANDSCAPES, COLOURFUL AND MYSTERIOUS CULTURES, ICONIC WILDLIFE AND A CHARACTER DEFINED BY EXTREMES OF BEAUTY, CELEBRATION AND HARDSHIP.

Africa for me is still largely unexplored. So far the only country on the continent that I have visited is Egypt, an iconic place that houses one of the world's oldest civilisations, situated at the source of the great African Nile and nestling at the axis of Africa, Europe and the Middle East. Still, somehow this country doesn't represent the 'Africa' of the popular imagination. This quirk reminds us that Africa – a continent of 54 individual nations – is so much more than those eternal images of majestic wildlife on a vast savannah. It is a characteristic of the continent that it somehow exists in duality, divided between the 'imagined' – a series of images and impressions that we hold in our mind's eye – and the 'real' – diverse peoples and cultures that have extended their roots and influences the world over.

Many of us will admit to entertaining a host of dreams about Africa: an undulating canvas of stunning mountains, rainforests, canyons, deserts and deltas, lakes and waterfalls; a collection of diverse social groups each with their own languages and cultures; a place to experience and commune with the most iconic and rare creatures on the planet. And for the traveller, there's a unique opportunity to see and experience a mix of these things.

I've been dreaming of visiting Africa for many years, and am currently in the final stages of planning my 'big trip' this year. My dining room table is littered with travel brochures and this trip is my singular topic of conversation at the moment, unfortunately for my friends and family. My journey begins in Uganda, where I'll join a trek to meet the mountain gorillas in the wonderfully-named 'Impenetrable Forest' in Bwindi National Park. From there, I'll travel through Kenya, if I feel brave enough taking the so-called 'lunatic express' from Nairobi to Mombasa. I'll definitely check out the flamingos on Lake Nakaru, and visit the Masai Mara National Reserve, and then it's onto Tanzania where I'll go on an organised safari through the Serengeti and Norongoro Crater.

At the risk of sounding like one of those brochures I mentioned, the options for travel in Africa are limitless and planning a trip is both exciting and painful, because choosing one thing inevitably involves excluding another. I hope that this book will provide you with a great starting point for discovering Africa – in it we have brought together a selection of stunning images which bring each country to life and evocative text that explores the characteristics of each country, as well as contributions from our travellers who have sent us their stories and pictures of travel in Africa, sharing with us what their experiences have meant to them.

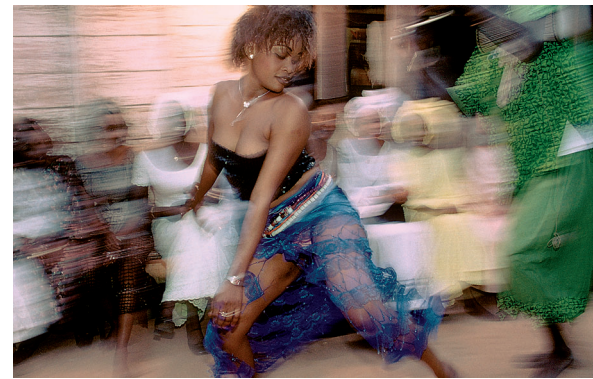
Keeping the traveller in mind, we've divided this book into five regions with the countries of each ordered by a logical travel route. For the traveller, the experience of each of these countries is unique, with its own sights, sounds, people, trademarks and surprises.

There are unifying themes to Africa, and we've explored some of these in the essays at the end of this book – you can join our authors on an in-depth tour of the culture and spiritual traditions of Africa, take a whirlwind ride through high-adrenaline adventures; reflect on the soul and significance of music in African cultures and, of course, marvel at the sheer diversity and majesty of wildlife on the continent.

In Swahili, the word for journey is *safari*. Many journeys have gone into the creation of this book, and we hope that it will inspire you to plan your own *safari* to this remarkable place where dreams and reality meet.

ROZ HOPKINS,
PUBLISHER, TRADE & REFERENCE,
LONELY PLANET PUBLICATIONS

INTRODUCING AFRICA



Africa was dubbed the 'Dark Continent' by Henry Stanley (of 'Dr Livingstone, I presume?' fame) in the late 19th century. Stanley chose this epithet not because Africa was perceived as malevolent, but rather because it was a place into which few outsiders had ever ventured – and a place nobody fully comprehended. Today, despite looming large in the global consciousness as its challenges are widely discussed in the world's media, Africa continues to be misunderstood.

AFRICA, THE IMAGE

To those with a penchant for adventure, romance or wildlife documentaries, Africa holds a lifetime's worth of dreams: tracking legendary animals across acacia-dotted plains, encountering remote cultures that time seems to have forgotten or exploring the monumental remains of past empires. To those who keep their heads out of the clouds and focussed on the apocalyptic hype created in the news, Africa is a place of incessant nightmare: famine, poverty, crime, corruption, disease and war. To *all* who visit – experienced Africa travellers included – each step into the 'Dark Continent' brings further enlightenment on the true nature of this fascinating place.

AFRICA, THE REALITY

Considering Africa's vast size (the Sahara alone could swallow most of the United States) and its diversity of wildlife, landscapes and cultures (how does 1800

spoken languages sound?), the only African reality is that there are countless realities. Cape Town's gleaming shopping arcades welcome the affluent while poverty and constant struggle continue unabated in suburbs nearby. Harvest cycles and family life in rural villages carry on at the same tempo as that of their ancestors. Remote tribes, like those on Lake Turkana's shores, exist in harsh environments yet exhibit pride and happiness that would make those in materially rich societies blush. Yes, poverty is widespread, but sadness and wanting are not.

The dire realities of famine and war still plague parts of Africa, but they are anything but commonplace. Cease-fires and peace deals in recent decades have brought peace to former trouble spots – Mozambique is a stellar example, with others such as Rwanda, Burundi and (more tentatively) Angola slowly following suit. Meanwhile, Africa's famines through the years have achieved such notoriety that many countries remain scarred by the images of starvation and drought long after famine has ended. The biggest victim of this phenomenon is Ethiopia. Despite being one of the most traditionally fertile and well-watered nations (it supplies over 80 per cent of the Nile's water), travellers, with images from Live Aid still on their mind, continue to phone the world-class Ethiopian Airlines to enquire whether there will be food available during their flight.

Africa's landscapes, such as the mind-numbing Namib dunes and the resplendent Rift Valley, are no less spellbinding than its cultures. The sublime stature and equatorial glaciers of Mt Kenya have even led the Kikuyu people to



deify the extinct volcano. Although a multitude of Africa's landscapes are artworks in their own right, many consider them simply backdrops to another of Africa's masterpieces: its fabled wildlife.

THE PAST

The history of Africa's people is a long and storied one. After all, Africa is considered to be the birthplace of humanity, where 'ape men' branched off – or rather let go of the branch – and walked on two legs down a separate evolutionary path. Since those very early beginnings, numerous empires and civilisations have risen and fallen across the continent. While the influence of the ancient Egyptians is widely known, the prowess of other civilisations – such as Ethiopia's Aksumite kingdom, which spread Christianity into Arabia and gained tremendous wealth by trading with Egypt, Syria and India – is little known. As well as shaping many of Africa's present-day cultures, the empires of old left behind many physical traces of their grandeur: the pyramids of Egypt, the stelae and rock-hewn churches of Ethiopia, and the ruins of Great Zimbabwe, to name only a few.

Africa's modern history has been more turbulent – the 16th to 19th centuries were not kind to the continent, with the slave trade and colonialism rearing their ugly heads. And while the 20th century brought independence to most African nations, the ensuing grim economic realities – often due to old colonial policies and foreign loans with strings attached – meant that many countries were more

financially shackled to the West than they were during colonial times. Worse, the power vacuum created by the end of colonialism led to numerous civil wars, some of which still continue today. But the greatest blight of the 20th and early 21st century is the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which affects Africa more than any other place on the planet: 5500 Africans die from the disease every 24 hours.

THE FUTURE

Although Africans could easily despair in the face of the HIV/AIDS catastrophe, many are looking to the future with optimism. The G8's debt relief to date is already showing dividends in many nations, including Tanzania, which has used its savings to fund education and eliminate school fees – three million children have returned to school. Now, if only the West would remove the trading shackles from Africa, Africans would have a truly fair chance to pull themselves out of their current morass. Some Africans cringe at the idea of economic growth, globalisation and the Westernisation of their traditional cultures, but others question why they should be held back from the same financial prosperity experienced by many Western nations. But in some areas, such as northern Kenya, pioneering remote communities are showing that it's possible to blend both worlds. They are thriving thanks to novel ecotourism projects designed to preserve both their vibrant culture and their surrounding wildlife, which would otherwise be under threat. So it just may be that sustainable ecotourism is the key to retaining the essence of local cultures in an Africa that is becoming more and more globally aware.

TIMELINE

14,000–9500 BC »

The Sahara region is covered with verdant vegetation and plays host to early agricultural societies.

2755–2255 BC »

The pharaohs of Egypt oversee the construction of the Pyramids of Giza; huge advances are made in navigation, astronomy and medicine.

2500 BC »

The rains decrease in North Africa and the Sahara starts to form.

1323 BC »

King Tutankhamun and his treasures are laid to rest in the Valley of the Kings.

1100–146 BC »

Phoenicians rise to create the capital of Carthage; they dominate the Mediterranean from the 6th century BC until conquered by the Romans in 146 BC.

AD 300–325 »

The Aksumite kingdom of Ethiopia accepts Christianity.

639 »

Islam starts its inexorable sweep across North Africa.

700–1000 »

The Ghana empire flourishes in West Africa.

1000–1200 »

The Shona dynasty rises in southern Africa and creates the trading city of Great Zimbabwe; when resources are exhausted in the 15th century the city is abandoned.

1250 »

The vast Mali empire rises to power and rules from present-day Senegal to Niger until its eventual collapse 300 years later.

1348–51 »

The Black Death kills 25 per cent of North Africa's population.

1490–1543 »

Ethiopia's Christian highland people endure and eventually defeat the Muslim raiders.

1510 »

Spain's King Ferdinand authorises the systematic transportation of African slaves to Spanish colonies in South America.

1593 »

The Portuguese build Fort Jesus in Mombasa (Kenya); the garrison is massacred in 1631.

1834 »

Slavery is abolished in the British Empire; the French do the same 13 years later.

1835–40 »

Afrikaners abandon their Cape colony and commence the Great Trek North.

1848 »

Johannes Rebmann becomes the first European to see Mt Kilimanjaro.

1867 »

The first diamonds are found in South Africa.

1869 »

The Suez Canal is completed.

1871 »

Henry Stanley meets David Livingstone in Tanzania (or Burundi) and utters the immortal line, 'Dr Livingstone, I presume'.

1884–85 »

Africa is divided up between European nations at the Berlin Conference.

1896 »

Gold discovered on the Witwatersrand, South Africa

1896 »

Ethiopia routs the Italian armies at Adwa and avoids being colonised.

1910 »

Union of South Africa created, with no voting rights for blacks.

1951–80 »

Fifty African nations are granted independence from European powers. Seventeen countries were granted independence in 1960 alone.

1990 »

Nelson Mandela is released after 27 years of imprisonment and apartheid effectively ends.

1994 »

The Rwandan genocide occurs while Western governments sit on their hands.

2003 »

Niger officially bans slavery.

2006 »

Andrew Hawkins, a descendant of England's first slave trader, kneels in chains before 25,000 Africans in The Gambia to apologise for the slave trade, and is officially forgiven.

2010 »

South Africa will become the first African nation to host the FIFA World Cup.

AFRICA AT A GLANCE



⌘ THE ZAMBIAN SIDE OF VICTORIA FALLS



⌘ IN AMONG IT ON A FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE SAFARI, SOUTH AFRICA



⌘ REAPING THE DEPTHS OF LAKE TANGANYIKA, TANZANIA

POPULATION 910.8 MILLION

With a population growing faster than anywhere else on earth, Africa's 910.8 million account for 14 per cent of the world's people.

AREA 30.1 MILLION SQ KM

Africa's beauty stretches over 30 million square kilometres, which is just over 20 per cent of the earth's land area.

COUNTRIES 54

LANGUAGES 27 OFFICIAL,
1800 SPOKEN

BEST NATURAL FEATURE

Dotted with volcanoes, lakes and exquisite escarpments and stretching across a total of 12 African nations, the Rift Valley is the world's most stunning scar.

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

The snow-capped stratovolcano Mt Kilimanjaro (5982 metres) rises magnificently from Tanzania's plains.

BEST WATERFALL

Victoria Falls – at almost two kilometres wide and 100 metres tall, this mind-blowing waterfall is justifiably ranked as one of the world's seven natural wonders.

BEST OUTDOOR ACTIVITY

A no-brainer – Africa is blessed with the most entertaining wildlife on the planet and spectacular backdrops, so you can't beat a safari.

LARGEST LAKE

At 68,000 square kilometres, Lake Victoria has the second-largest surface area of any lake in the world; three countries – Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda – meet at its sultry shores.

DEEPEST INLAND BODY OF WATER

Lake Tanganyika's 1470 metres, courtesy of Rift Valley tectonics, make it one of the planet's deepest lakes; it's also fringed with beaches, forests and wildlife.

MOST BEAUTIFUL TREK

The 41-kilometre five-day Otter Trail, along the sublime shores of Tsitsikamma Coastal National Park in South Africa, is pure bliss.

MOST EXTREME ENVIRONMENT

In the Danakil Depression, a primordial region of salt flats, volcanic vents and sulphur fields in Ethiopia, temperatures often soar past 50°C. It's the home of the world's only permanent lava lake.

OLDEST MAN-MADE FEATURE

Olduvai Gorge's stone circle easily beats the step pyramid of King Zoser in Egypt and all of Africa's ancient rock art for age – it's believed to be the base of a 1.8 million-year-old hut.

BEST OFF-THE-BEATEN-TRACK DESTINATION

Arquipélago dos Bijagós is a little-visited Unesco International Biosphere Reserve in Guinea-Bissau with unique wildlife.

MOST STUNNING CITY

Lapping at the base of Table Mountain's striking sheer bluffs is the sophisticated and cosmopolitan South African city of Cape Town and its bounty of beautiful beaches.

BEST CUP OF COFFEE

Ethiopia is the birthplace of the bean and coffee isn't just consumed there, it's celebrated – a coffee ceremony is a thing to enjoy.

STRANGEST ANIMAL

The aye-aye: with the face of a ferret, the teeth of a rodent, the ears of a bat, massive middle fingers and the hair of Albert Einstein, this lemur is an odd sight indeed.

BEST HANG-OUT

Zanzibar – dine on seafood at the seafront in historic Stone Town, laze on powdery white beaches and swim in crystal-clear waters.

BEST ADVENTURE ACTIVITY

Hands down, it has to be trekking – Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and South Africa are just a few of the prime locations.