

## NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the second edition of the Manda Wilderness newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading our little updates and anecdotes, and that we will see you again soon!



### WINNER!!

The Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards 2008 - Nkwichi Lodge declared "Best Small Hotel Worldwide".

What the judges said: "Nkwichi demonstrates what a small, privately-owned, luxury eco-tourist lodge can contribute through a \$5 bed night levy; and has been a driving force in the creation of the Umoji Association representing 20,000 local people through their chiefs and elected representatives. One of the first, large community associations in Mozambique, it has enabled six communities to secure land rights certificates from the government".

Read on to find out what we have been doing this year that has led us to winning this award.....



### New Honeymoon Suite - truly open

Nkwazi, one of Nkwichi's first chalets, got a revamp this year, and it's almost unrecognisable. Gone are the old-style low roof and small windows. In fact there are no windows at all.

Instead ingenious concertina doors and expanded roof space make this a truly open-air retreat. Of course, that's no hardship here in the land of sun and blue skies, looking out on to the crystal-clear water from the chalet's very own private, romantic, lakeshore dining area. Every part of this chalet is exceptional, complete with a luxurious bath for two (it is a honeymoon suite after all). The spacious patio area is perfectly suited for those decadent breakfasts. Tempted?

### Imaginative ways to arrive at Nkwichi

Nkwichi Lodge is remote, that's part of the attraction. Most guests arrive in one of our boats - some on the fast launch, others on the more traditional dhow. But recently we have had a spate of adventurous types making their own way to our little piece of paradise. One couple arrived at the hidden natural harbour in a folding canoe. A group of energetic Italians arrived on bicycles, and a lively bunch of Spaniards decided to hike along the lakeshore when they left.

But the prize may go to the South African guests who landed on the main beach in their helicopter and ended up staying 9 nights.



### Nkwichi turns the lights on

Using the sun's heat to make ice-cream? The Nkwichi team has installed the very latest solar system, so we now have sun-powered electricity to spare. So much so that we can run the new ice-cream machine plus solar freezers to keep the beers ice-cool.

Don't worry, this has not ruined the natural ambiance of our beach paradise. Only discreetly soft lighting around the lodge hints at the power available, and visitors still get to keep fit winding up their torches. But behind the scenes, the new power source brings improved communications and internet

access for guests and staff alike. You can now charge up your mobile phone - but you'll have to climb a hill or take out a canoe to get a signal.



## Catch of the Day

Here's a fishy tail (sorry). Nkwichi is always on the look-out for tasty local food to enrich its cuisine for guests. And none is more tasty than fresh fish from the lake - especially the sweet white flesh of the Chambo.



So when two fishermen came by, the head of the kitchen staff - Margaret Banda - was quick to snap them up (sorry again). She offered a top price for as many Chambo as they could find, as well as a good deal for the tasty variety of catfish caught in the lake.

No, said the fishermen, we can't accept a fixed price. We price each fish on how long it takes to catch it. How would we know the price was fair, reasoned Margaret. You'll have to trust us, they replied. And with that, the fishermen turned tail and left.

Several weeks later, the two men returned with several dozen fish. What's your price? Margaret asked, only to be told the exact price she'd quoted. The notion of what might be called Time-Based Pricing was forgotten.

But the deal was not quite struck. Margaret weighed the fish, explaining that because she'd taken the heavy bowl off the scales, she'd have to add two kilos to the registered weight.

The fishermen smelled a rat. First they cheat us with a fixed price, now they're messing about with the weight, even if it does appear to be in our favour. Eventually, they reached agreement. But where was the Chambo? None today, just catfish, they said - leaving at least one Nkwichi guest wishing their unorthodox system of pricing had been accepted...

PS The fish-loving guest suggested Time-Based Pricing to his local fishmonger in the UK - not allowed, said the stone-faced merchant, unamused.

## COMMUNITY PROJECTS

### Volunteer rallies support



The Manda-supported school at Mala just along the lakeshore from the lodge now has a brighter future - literally. Louise, a Scottish volunteer spending three weeks at Nkwichi

under a programme run by Leap, decided to walk to the village each day to paint the recently-plastered school. The grey walls soon shone with colour. Nkwichi staff were so impressed that several of them took the same trail after work each day to lend Louise a hand.

Proving that "many hands make light work", the school received two coats of paint in record time. Forty five staff assembled at the school, taking it in turns to paint due to a lack of brushes. "It was a good thing that Christopher the boatman arrived," Louise recalls. "He was the only person tall enough to reach the high bits."

Further north along the coast, the picture below shows the Nkwichi dhow arriving with cement donated by the Lodge's Manda Wilderness Trust for the Mataka School Project. The chief rolls up his trousers to unload 10 bags of cement destined to fix the walls to the support the new tin roof.



Mala and Mataka are among six schools in the area that have been built or improved through Nkwichi donations - many of them from guests themselves. We supply scarce items such as cement and nails. The villagers make the bricks, cut the wood, and build the walls. Government provides the roofing sheets. And hundreds of kids supply the enthusiasm and brainpower.

## New Clinic Opens in Cobué



The Manda Wilderness -backed Maternity Clinic in the district capital of Cobué along the lakeshore from the Lodge has been officially opened by the Governor of Niassa Province.

A much-needed medical resource, the gleaming new clinic, resplendent in cream and green paint, was built with bricks made by seven communities. Finance was raised by Manda Wilderness and generous guest donations, and local people provided the labour.

Labour of a different sort is now easier and healthier for mothers and their new-born from around the region, home to some 25,000 people. The clinic was opened just in time for little João, whose mother was the first to experience the new facility.

There is still work to be done. Our next priority is providing a regular water supply - thanks to generous donors including a past Nkwichi guest William Garnett, we are exploring drilling a well and installing a solar pump. The unusual speed of construction for the clinic points to the urgent need for better health services in the area. Now more women are expected to attend the Clinic (sometimes walking for many hours to get there), rather than take the risk of giving birth at home.

## Paddle Power

A one-off event has proved so popular that plans are being made to make it an annual affair.

The secret?

**Canoes.**



Villages from across the huge Manda Wilderness area were invited to take part in a race here at Nkwichi. By chance, the Director of Tourism was holidaying with us at the time and acted as one of the three judges. Competitors from eight villages arrived with their own canoes and the races began. Two men's heats were hard-fought and the final was won by the very strong team from Uchessi.

The ladies, who did not want to be left out, gave us the closest race of the day which was eventually won by a team from Utonga. The event was sponsored by long-time friend and some-time Nkwichi resident Gerard Van Dyke. The Government's chief officer in the district - the Chef de Poste, (also one of the judges), reminded the assembled crowd that events like these were not only lots of fun but also good for community relations.

PS Guests from Nkwichi did take part in the event, finishing dead last in every heat. Life is obviously too comfortable at Nkwichi.

## Background to the Manda Wilderness Project

The Manda Wilderness Project started in Northern Mozambique in 1999 with three aims:

- Establish a responsible tourism lodge of high quality, Nkwichi Lodge, on the white sandy beachfront of Lake Niassa (Lake Malawi)
- Set up a viable conservation area in the name of and for the benefit of the local communities
- Encourage the communities to work together on small development projects such as building schools, which they themselves select and in which they play the lead role

Nearly 10 years on great progress has been made. The lodge is well established, has won awards for responsible tourism and is listed in the Lonely Planet Guides and with well respected travel agencies

In 2005 Manda Wilderness secured funding from the Swedish Co-Operative Centre to establish the community-owned reserve, and to create a community association (called Umoji) to manage it. In 2007 further funding was gained from the US Ford Foundation to create the Management Plan for the conservation area covering 120,000 hectares, 15 villages and 20,000 people.

Meanwhile an extensive community development programme is in place, raising funds through a combination of applications to official donors and private donations to the UK-registered charity Manda Wilderness Community Trust (MWCT). All projects are managed as a partnership between the community committees and Manda Wilderness. Both sides contribute to the project: for example with schools, Manda Wilderness provides materials such as cement and communities make bricks and take responsibility for construction.

Intensive work has also been carried out with small-scale farmers to improve nutrition, horticulture and introduce new crops. An agricultural project started in 2001 set up a demonstration farm, where training is given on soil conservation methods, irrigation, organic compost, crop processing and marketing.

## The Big Picture - UMOJI

In front of Nkwichi - the sparkling fresh waters of Lake Niassa/Malawi. Behind Nkwichi - the vast unspoiled hinterland of hills, plains and valleys of the Manda Wilderness

Nkwichi Lodge and its Manda Wilderness Trust have from the outset made preservation of the local environment an absolute priority. Now we have powerful new partners to make sure it happens. At the centre is the UMOJI Association, a unique partnership of elected representatives from local villages and their traditional chiefs. UMOJI (its name means "As One") has become a driving force to develop the area's huge potential (especially for tourism) while retaining all the benefits of a tranquil lakeshore life.

UMOJI's first big achievement was to secure land titles for the 25,000 people who live in 15 villages spread across 120,000 hectares of land (the size of greater London). Backed by Nkwichi and its Manda Wilderness Trust (a UK-registered charity), UMOJI is now pressing a group of Mozambique experts to finalise their suggestions for an income-generating community conservation scheme. The area has already been



professionally mapped, and is gradually seeing a return to its former glory as a home for many of Africa's most endangered species, such as the wild dog.

UMOJI showed its metal when the government and an international charity set out plans for the other vital part of everyone's life - the lake and its diminishing stock of edible fish. "We were very tough with them," says one of the UMOJI chiefs, with a broad smile. He and his colleagues resisted efforts to have the lakeshore declared a "buffer zone", beyond their control. UMOJI negotiated, and it now looks

likely the buffer zone will be UMOJI-run. The scheme involves imaginative ways of protecting the existing fish stocks so they can grow unmolested by such threats as mosquito-net fishing.

With the lake project now back on course, UMOJI awaits the same success on the land side. Anyone seeing the brilliant white sands and dreamy hills in the distance, and contrasting it with the subsistence life of almost everyone, knows how important it is that they succeed.

## Farms new defence against monkeys

For several years now the staff at the Manda Wilderness Agricultural project have faced a continual battle to defend their crops against the monkeys and baboons. The animals delight visitors as they swing through the trees, but they have also developed a taste for carrots and tomatoes, (amongst many other of the farm's produce).



So in January this year the farm took on a new staff member, in the shape of 'Kaka' the dog. Kaka (which means brother in the local language

Chinyanja) has been working very hard this year and the farm is now virtually monkey-free. This in turn frees up the staff time to concentrate on perfecting arts and crafts with some great new designs for recycled cards and pottery, all available at the lodge kiosk.

Meanwhile, the succulent tomatoes produced on the farm (and in neighbouring villages, thanks to the farm's project work) are everywhere. Staff and visitors compete for new recipes involving tomatoes, with results including a delicious chutney and a powerful local version of a Bloody Mary. Rumours that the next chalet will be built entirely of tomatoes are unfounded (but doesn't that wall look suspiciously red?)



**GET INVOLVED:** The **Manda Wilderness Community Trust**, a registered charity based in the UK, is working hard to raise funds for our community projects. If you are interested to get involved then please do get in contact with them at [MWCT@mandawilderness.org](mailto:MWCT@mandawilderness.org). Small monthly donations by direct debit are one of the easiest and most effective ways to help, but we welcome all contributions - from one-off donations to fund-raising events. Please find on the back of this newsletter a donations form, which can be used to make contributions to the projects.

We would like to thank all our friends and donors for their continuing support and generosity. Special thanks are due to William Garnett and his family and friends who sponsored his Iron Man Challenge, Aspect Capital, Leaden Hall School, the Ridley Family, Sarah and Francis King and Mr and Mrs Meek. The work of the trust is solely reliant on guest contributions, and one-off donations of friends of Manda. Our next focus is raising money for school desks and chairs. Thanks to some recent generous donations (including Leaden Hall School which raised a very impressive \$2,000) we hope to get the first two schools fully furnished within the next year.



# MANDA WILDERNESS COMMUNITY TRUST

Reg Charity no (UK): 1110563

Email: [MWCT@mandawilderness.org](mailto:MWCT@mandawilderness.org)

Contact Address: Lucy Varcoe, Demelza, Easten, Hampshire, SO21 1EF

## BANKER'S ORDER

*(for UK residents only)*

To:- .....Bank Plc  
.....  
.....  
.....

(please insert the name and address of your Bank in the space above)

Please pay to Charity Aid Foundation Bank, Ac Name: Manda Wilderness Community Trust, Ac No. 00013425, Sort Code: 40-52-40

£.....on.....  
(please insert date above)

And thereafter every month / quarter / six months / year (delete as appropriate) until cancelled by me in person

Name of Account to be debited.....  
.....

Account Number.....

Sort Code.....

Signature.....

Date.....

### Please return the completed form to:-

Lucy Varcoe  
Chairperson  
Manda Wilderness Community Trust  
Demelza  
Easton  
Hampshire  
SO21 1EF

Please note donations can also be made by internet transfer (Bank details above)

## Friends of the MWCT Donation Form

PLEASE PRINT YOUR DETAILS IN CAPITALS

Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Other: .....

Forenames: .....

Surname.....

Address.....  
.....

Postcode.....

Telephone no.....

Email.....

I enclose a donation of:

OR: I have completed the Bankers Order Form.

UK taxpayers only, please sign below if applicable:

I am a UK taxpayer and want the Charity to treat this donation and all subsequent donations I make as Gift Aid Donations until I notify the Charity otherwise. I am aware:-

- 1) that I must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gain tax at least equal to the amount of Basic Rate tax that the Trust will reclaim on my donations; and
- 2) that if I pay tax at the Higher Rate I may claim further tax relief through my Self Assessment tax return; and
- 3) that I can cancel this declaration at any time by notifying the Hon. Chairman in writing.

Signature:

Date: