

Canoe Race hits the lake!

NKWICHI Lodge **MANDA** Wilderness

Runner-up in *The Good Safari Guide*
for 'Best Community Safari Property in Africa'



Nkwichi Chronicle

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Chicaia beach, on the remote Mozambican shores of Lake Malawi, was the setting for this year's Manda Wilderness Dug-out Canoe Race, held on 19th March. With its view of both of nearby Malawian island Likoma and distant rolling, Tanzanian mountains, Chicaia braced itself for the biggest spectacle of the year, watched eagerly by tourists, villagers and government officials alike.

In an ever-growing event which is proving so popular in the area that the local police were roped in to help with crowd control, this year all 10 lakeshore villages from Manda Wilderness fielded 2 men's teams, 1 women's team and 1 mixed team, in the biggest competition yet to hit the Lake.

A boys and girls swimming race, with participants from 4 local village schools, proved just the warm-up the crowds needed and a cacophony of cajoling soon filled the air. Jubilant head-teachers exalted as their pupils brought home winning donations for the school while class-mates chanted their names. Then, dug-out canoes poised on the sand, each seemingly pointed toward victory, the races began. In a flurry of brightly techno-coloured T-shirts the contestants burst towards their canoes, their paddles flashing in and out of the water, with a frenzied start which would have put Formula 1 drivers to shame. With the undulating ululations of over two thousand supporters stamping on the sand, nearby Chilola village brought home the Mixed Race trophy whilst Mataka's women showed why they're famed for the size of the fish they catch, easily beating their rivals to capture the Women's Race. In an aquatic duel, the likes of which have not been since seen since the 1907 Cambridge-Oxford Canoe race, and with scenes reminiscent of Jason and The Argonauts, the furiously competitive Men's final proved itself as the battle of the day.

Creating a ripple of excitement through the thousands of anxious supporters, Ngofi village powered home to victory, winning for the 2nd successive year. Gerard van Dijk, friend of Nkwichi Lodge and main sponsor of the event, beamed proudly as he handed over the trophy to a jubilant Ngofi chief, who danced for joy at the achievement. After the annual race, the dug-out canoes will revert back to their original use of small-scale subsistence fishing. This is one of the main generators of income in an area which has been much-forgotten over the years and remains extremely under-developed. The Manda Wilderness Community Trust, working out of Nkwichi Lodge, works with the villages of the area in development initiatives they themselves decide on and to date has helped with 15 schools, a maternity clinic, a demonstration farm and numerous vocational training schemes. Through organizing community events such as the Canoe Race, football tournaments and choir festivals, MWCT helps bring distant neighbours together and strengthen local Nyanjan culture and identity.

The Long Swim to Freedom...



The Mozambique Government finally approved the creation of **Mozambique's first fresh-water lake reserve** last week, after years of work by WWF and some of their partners, including The Manda Wilderness Project. Labelled by WWF as the **most important lake in the world in terms of bio-diversity**, the Lake Niassa/Malawi lake reserve will see the creation of no-fishing zones along the length of the Mozambican coast, similar to that across country around the Quirimbas Islands. Nkwichi Lodge is set to have its untouched coastline, with 8 different beaches, pronounced as a marine sanctuary. This will further strengthen Nkwichi's location as one of the best places on the lake to see the endemic and emblematic Cichlid fish that colourfully reflect the character of the local Nyanja people. Finding Nemo may prove to be a touch harder in the future...

Helping Hands

Delving behind the scenes at Nkwichi its possible to find a range of intrepid characters helping achieve its status as one of the world's most unique and exciting lodges.



First guests may meet our resident permaculture expert Tarirai Mpfu whose green fingers work wonders in the Manda Wilderness Agricultural Project, improving methods, developing new skills in the

surrounding communities, and making sure the salads at Nkwichi taste so fresh, they'll make you want to see for yourself our horticultural hero from Harare in action. Composting has never been so fun!

Bringing her bright smile and bounding enthusiasm, Bettina Hodup, trained FGASA guide and etymologist extraordinaire, is helping open up the secrets of the Niassa bush. Through her work with Nkwichi's inimitable Guest Management team, training them to achieve their own FGASA certificate specializing in the unique environment of the area, Bettina is ensuring guests have the opportunity to learn more about the treasures of Manda Wilderness.





Pumping up paper recycling and production, Kristina Low has been teaching new methods and designs to the MWAP staff. Showing the versatility of using natural materials such as sisal, banana leaves and vetiver grass in the paper-making process, Kristina's products have hit the shelves of the Nkwichi shop and have recently been presented at a recent WWF-sponsored exhibition in Malawi.

Patrick Ties the Knot!

One hundred guests from 21 different nationalities descended on a safari island last week for the wedding of Patrick Simkin, one of the founders of the Manda Wilderness Project. Luckily he found his Moroccan princess on the squeaky sands of Nkwichi. The moonlit beach was the perfect place for cupid to strike...



In brief:

Passion-filled Nkwichi! An explosion of citric satisfaction as passion fruit season enters full swing. From ice-cream to 'jus de Maracuja', such fresh local produce helps Nkwichi kitchen pamper the palette of each coming guest.



Wrangling with Pangolins! Nkwichi had an unmistakable visit last week from a curious pangolin. This scaly mammal gave a brief appearance and then disappeared in search of more termite treasure.

Coming Soon: With only 2 weeks left until the 2nd annual Manda Wilderness Choir Festival, Cobue village is steadying itself for the musical extravaganza of the year. Last year over 2,000 people crammed into the old, roofless church to hear 16 choirs from villages as far as 3 days walk competing for the honour of holding the title. This will be a celebration of note! Stay tuned! If you would like to donate please go to: <http://www.justgiving.com/mandawct>

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