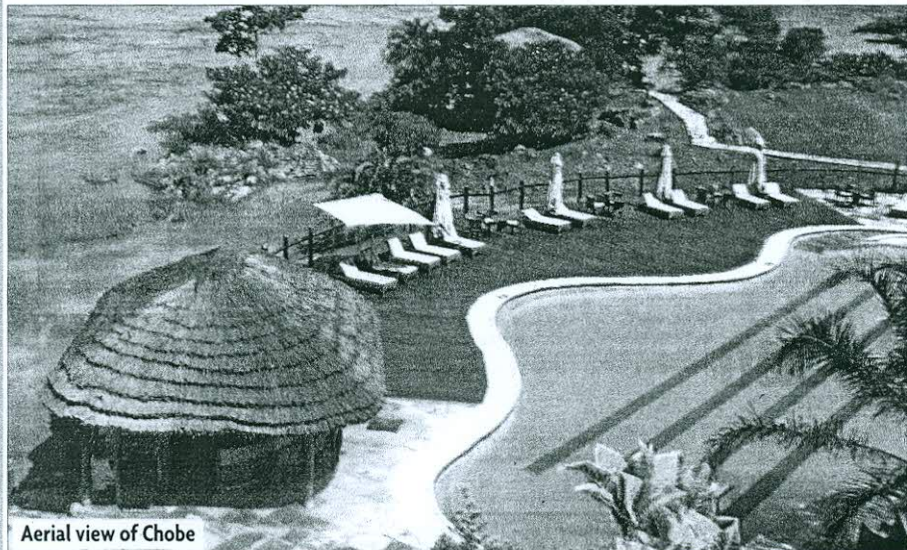


EXCEPTIONAL!

Visiting Murchison Falls Game Park, First Impressions



Aerial view of Chobe

BY MIKE SEGAWA

Sitting at the restaurant terrace of Chobe Safari lodge, facing River Nile as it flows through Murchison Falls National Game Park down to the Sudan and Egypt, it reminds me of the hard reality that life is the sum total of choices and experiences. When Uganda Tourism Board reached out to me to join a trip organized for senior media managers to familiarize themselves with the magnificent Murchison Falls National Park, I didn't have to think twice despite having two other events. For there are few experiences one can compare with interacting with the wild, or water resources such as the Nile river. The trip from Kampala to Chobe Safari Lodge in Nwoya District was in uneventful, until we made a stopover at Kabalega restaurant in Nakasongola district. For anyone making a leisure or business trip to northern Uganda, this is one spot that comes handy. Honestly they have delicious food but unfortunately, maybe because we were too many to handle our orders, the waiters somehow mixed up menus. But, Kabalega is a relaxing place where you can break from the long journey and eat or drink something without much worry. We drove comfortably to the upscale lodge in the middle of

the game park facing the river. Chobe is a gem in a forest. The environment surrounding the lodge is all natural – and the facility compliments nature. Located 13km off the main Gulu road, we arrived at Chobe around 7.30pm. Before we could check in, we had already seen wild animals having their final round of a meal on a Friday evening. Chobe is a product of Marasa Group, a company owned by Madhvani Group. We were told by the community liaison officer for Murchison Jose Muhangi, that the name chobe in Luo means a 'place without men'. The name was corrupted by the British, but in this area, women lost their husbands to either wars or wild animals so the many widows which gave the place its name. The world class facility was not short of guests for the two nights we were there as several tourists were trickling in private and tourist vehicles. The general manager of the facility James Rattos intimated to us that for the past one and half years, there are more Ugandans staying at Chobe than any nationality on the planet. This was a good sign that Ugandan middle class was starting to spend on Ugandan tourism. The reception and restaurant of Chobe are located at a premium part of the facility overlooking a steep valley, where at the bottom the Nile flows fast

towards Lake Albert. A few steps below the balcony are several swimming pools where residents are spoilt for choice if they want to swim. A fire place was set between the river and the bar at the swimming pool. Whether day or night, here, you hear hippos charging or playing in water. The sight of hippos is also a common place, but there is security to ensure no accidents take place. On our first night, the entire group comprising senior editors and producers sat around the fire to talk about Uganda's tourism. Listening to Stephen Asiimwe, the CEO of the Uganda Tourism Board talk he underscored the fact that tourism was everyone's business. He made a case for the media to support the tourism sector as tourism was a single sector that has potential to impact all sectors of the economy. Apparently, according to Asiimwe, tourism contributes about 10% to Uganda's gross domestic product and swears it could double or triple if all pieces of the puzzle were put in place. Talking over the fire place, we could not realize time was flying into the night. The laughter from conversation, questions and comments flowed. Wines and beers rained as the fire warmed up the pale tired faces. Time flew. No one was realizing until

Rattos reminded us it was dinner time but the discussion on the Uganda tourism sector was raging, from the concerns of the restaurants and curio shops charging in dollars to the yet to meet the standard service in our service sector. Dinner was served hot. And yes, at a balcony overlooking the river. For now, I am thinking this must be the best part of the lodge to enjoy a meal, while enjoying nature surrounding this gem inside the animal paradise. Did I say, by this time; we have seen not only hippos coming as close as 15 metres from us, but, along the road, we had also rubbed shoulders with giraffes, elephants, baboons, monkeys, and antelopes. And this was before we stepped out for the game drive. It is 12.25am and I just need a good sleep. The writer is director at Watchdog Uganda.

VAT On Agro Inputs Reduces Poultry Profits

The Value Added Tax (VAT) attached to agro inputs has been cited as a reason for the reduced profits and other agro products. Craig Neilson, the Chief Executive Officer for Biyinzika Farmers Biyinzika Biyinzika Poultry International Ltd explains that Uganda has a very big market for poultry products but because of the huge taxes on inputs, the business gets hardened. He cited a clear example on preparation of animal feeds; VAT is charged on maize grain, soya bean, cotton seed to mention and the entire finished product also charged VAT. This makes the entire activity very expensive for farmers hence failing the strategy of prosperity through Poultry farming. It is hoped that government will take this issue into consideration when reviewing their tax policy

later this year. "Uganda has a very big market for poultry produce, that is why our team is committed to providing free training and services to all our farmers through Uganda," said Craig. He adds that, "We have identified a very viable business and relationship with our farmers, the only task we have is to work as a team and improve Ugandans economically. That is why we have opted different free approaches in poultry farming to our farmers with an intention of maximizing poultry production economically." He show cased different farming manuals by BPIL for farmers in Layers and Broilers segments where an ordinary Ugandan can become a millionaire once their set guidelines in the manual are followed by its farmers. (By Moses Ssemakula)

Bell Injects Shs100m In Chameleone

The upcoming Chameleone concert seems to be causing a stir on the entertainment scene. At a joint press conference addressed by Chameleone and Bell Lager, the beer brand announced a sponsorship package to the tune of UGX100 million under the new Bell Jamz music platform. Addressing the press, Uganda Breweries Marketing and Innovations Director, Juliana Kagwa said, "Chameleone is one of Uganda's most acclaimed and celebrated artists. Through the years, he has demonstrated his musical mastery and skill, rising to the top of his game. As a brand that is all about pouring life into every moment, we are honored to be part of this event that

celebrates a great artist and his music." The show is being organized by renowned promoter Balaam Barugahare code named "Sabaavulu". Responding to media queries at Uganda Breweries offices in Luzira, Chameleone revealed that this show was not an album launch, but rather an all-encompassing performance that will present all his hit songs through the years, hence the name "Legend: Hit After Hit". The show is slated for Friday, June 30th at Lugogo Cricket Oval. Tickets are being sold for UGX20, 000 and VIP at UGX100, 000. In his address, Balaam revealed that they had hired sound engineers from China to ensure great sound and production.

ABS Tv Takes Uganda's Waves By Storm

Kasubi-Kawaala based ABS television has swept Ugandan waves by storm since its inception. The television has steadily out competed most of the traditional local television stations in Uganda. The TV has viewership of 60% regular and 40% cooperate people. It is also watched a lot by a big number of la-

dies in Uganda having a percentage of 60% and men taking 40%. Teenage viewership has risen to 55% while adults' has shoot to 45%. From the above statistics, ABS TV is viewed by all people around Uganda, accelerated by its nationwide coverage that even crosses up to Rwanda. The TV came with new and unique

programmes which have never been aired on all other televisions stations in Uganda. This has given it a lot of mileage and viewership and right now it is the second most viewed television in Uganda. ABS TV can be accessed on all decoders like Azam channel 149, Zuku tv, Star sat, Star times, Free to Air, and Go tv.