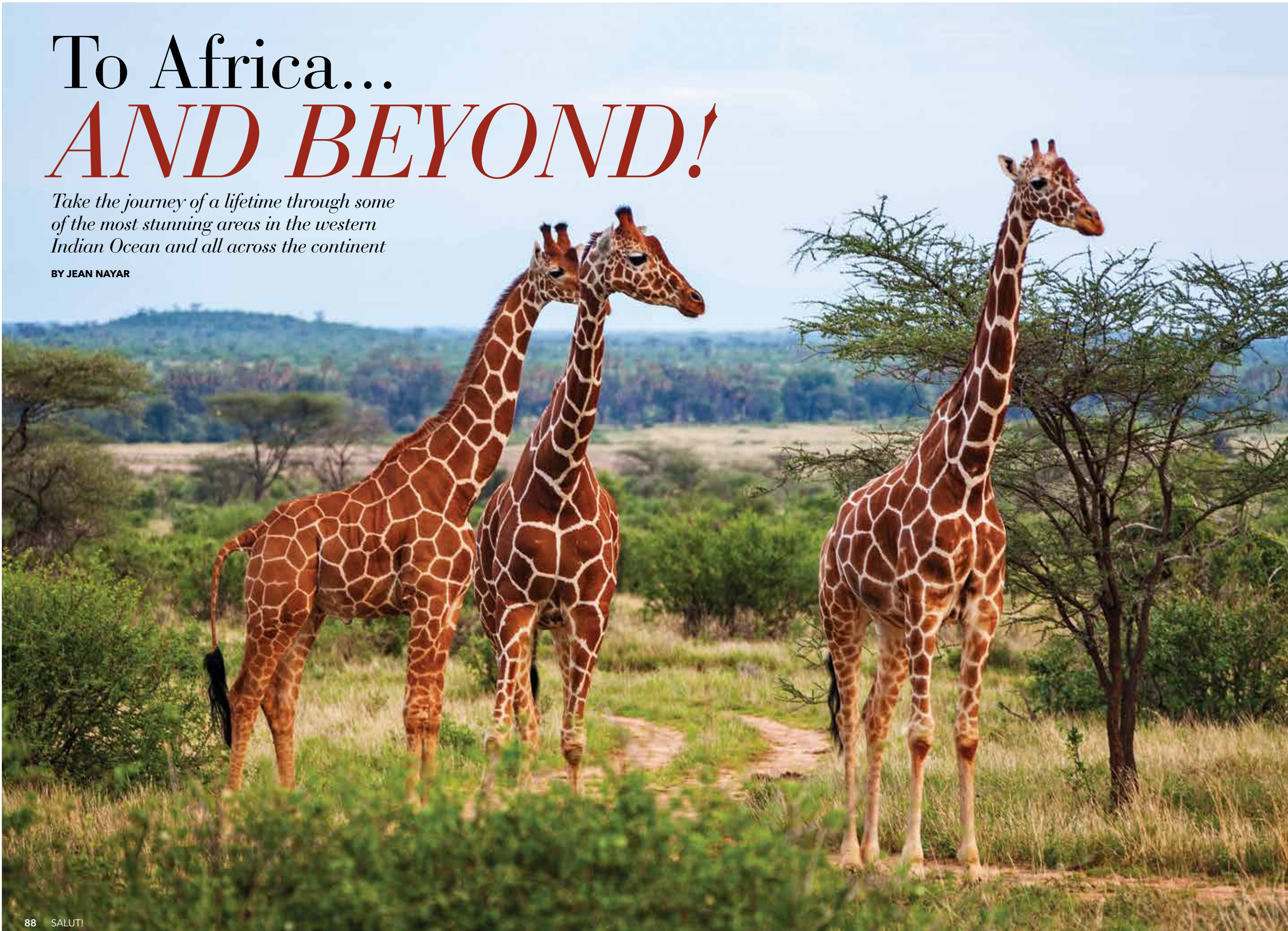


# To Africa... *AND BEYOND!*

*Take the journey of a lifetime through some of the most stunning areas in the western Indian Ocean and all across the continent*

BY JEAN NAYAR



*Left: Kenya's Giraffe Manor is a haven for the graceful creatures. Above: Crispy skin tilapia from Cafe Villa Rosa at Nairobi's Kempinski Hotel*

Imagine boarding a private jet for an extraordinary journey—from the glorious beaches of the Seychelles to the wild game reserves of Botswana and Tanzania to the bustling historic souks of Marrakech. That's exactly what was up for grabs as one of the experiential lots at the 2016 Naples Winter Wine Festival. The lucky winners of this amazing package? Naples Children & Education Foundation trustees Nancy and Joe Masterson. The seasoned travelers say they bid on the adventure both to support the NCEF and to experience a part of the world they had yet to discover. Anyone wishing to unlock the majesty and mysteries of this amazing part of the world would do well to follow their exciting itinerary, which was organized by Lakani World Tours.

The journey begins in Nairobi, Kenya, where an ideal place to spend the evening is the Villa Rosa Kempinski Hotel. The five-star retreat positioned between the city and the countryside offers a blend of European luxury and Kenyan hospitality. Guests don't even have to leave the hotel to experience some of the best local cuisine: The hotel's Cafe Villa Rosa is known for its signature dishes like crispy skin tilapia, with fresh fish from nearby Lake Victoria served on a bed of ugali mash (local corn grits), topped with grilled tiger prawn, and accompanied by fried matoke (plantain) and mango slices.

Not too far away is the must-see National Museum.





Clockwise from above left: Tamambo Restaurant on the former estate of author Karen Blixen in Kenya; interact with young elephants at the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust Conservation in Kenya; the Seychelles' beautiful Praslin Island

Take a guided tour through the newly renovated museum, where you can view Kenyan works of art, specimens from naturalists who founded the museum in 1910, and the serene botanical gardens. In Nairobi's western suburbs, at the foot of the Ngong Hills, visit the former estate lands of *Out of Africa* author Karen Blixen (also known as Isak Dinesen). When hunger calls, stop by Tamambo Restaurant, built within the former store rooms of the Blixen farm, for a delicious lunch on the veranda overlooking the beautiful landscape of 200 species of plant life including jacaranda trees, candelabra cactus, and bottlebrush.

A trip to Africa, of course, must have its fair share of wildlife appreciation. Meet a group of friendly, long-necked creatures at nearby Giraffe Manor, which operates a breeding program for endangered Rothschild giraffes and reintroduces them back into the wild. Then stop by the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust Conservation to get up close and personal with some of the resident rhinos and elephants. Visitors have an opportunity to interact with these young animals who were lost in the wild—such as Jotto, a baby elephant found by local herdsman in a well. You can even adopt one of the young calves to ensure its future safety and care in the world.



On to your next destination: Lakani will take you on a swift flight over the Indian Ocean to the idyllic islands of the Seychelles. On Praslin Island, a relaxing stay in a villa at the elegant Raffles Hotel awaits—dips in your own private pool, snorkeling in the Indian Ocean, and romantic dinners on the beach. Among the archipelago's 100-plus islands, one standout to visit is Valley de Mai—a UNESCO World Heritage Site with vast varieties of endemic palms, including the renowned Coco de Mer palm, and several species of birds. A quick day trip by boat will take you

to Curieuse Island, where you can visit the protected, centuries-old giant land tortoises and their precious, tiny offspring.

Heading south, the picturesque island of La Digue is ready to greet you with its pristine beaches. Worth a visit here is L'Union Estate, where you can get a glimpse of what life in the Seychelles was like 100 years ago. The former vanilla and coconut plantation is filled with traditional wonders—like the copra mill, whose wheel is still powered by bull oxen to heat and grind coconut husks into oil every day. Enjoy a



SELOUS SAFARI COMPANY

seaside lunch at the lovely local resort Le Domaine de L'Orangerie before continuing by private boat to Little Cousin Island to tour an extraordinary protected bird sanctuary.

Bid adieu to the Seychelles because it's time to head to Madagascar. Land at the tropical island of Nosy Be, then ride safari-style to the remote Anjajavy Hotel, a luxurious lodge on the white sandy beaches of the Strait of Mozambique. Right outside your private villa on a sheltered peninsula, you might spot one of the country's world-famous lemurs hanging

from the trees above the lodge's Eden-esque garden. Enjoy tea and cake below while you watch these creatures make staggering leaps from tree to tree, feeding on leaves and fruits.

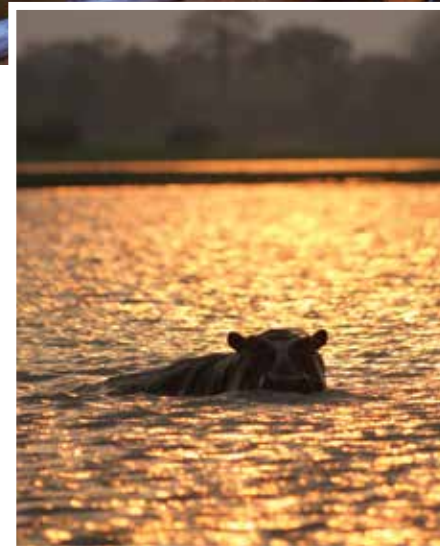
A day trip by boat to Malagasy Village offers a taste of local life. Here you can buy indigenous handicrafts and take a guided night walk to spy some of the island's nocturnal species of lemurs and birds.

Next stop: Tanzania. Back on Africa's mainland, set up camp at the exquisite Siwandu. Considered by many seasoned

travelers as the most beautiful camp on the continent, Siwandu sits on the shores of Lake Nzerakera in the Selous National Game Reserve, the largest wildlife protected area in Africa. Under shady acacia trees, the camp's spacious tents include plush furnishings and outside showers and offer 360-degree views into the palm groves. A butler will deliver your morning tea, coffee, or hot chocolate along with homemade ginger cookies, and delicious African fare for lunch and dinner. Don't sleep in because game drives start

Clockwise from top right: Le Com-bava restaurant at the Seychelles' Le Domaine de L'Orangerie resort; adorable lemurs frequent the trees at the Anjajavy Hotel in Mozambique; the luxurious Siwandu camp in Tanzania; Raffles Hotel in the Seychelles



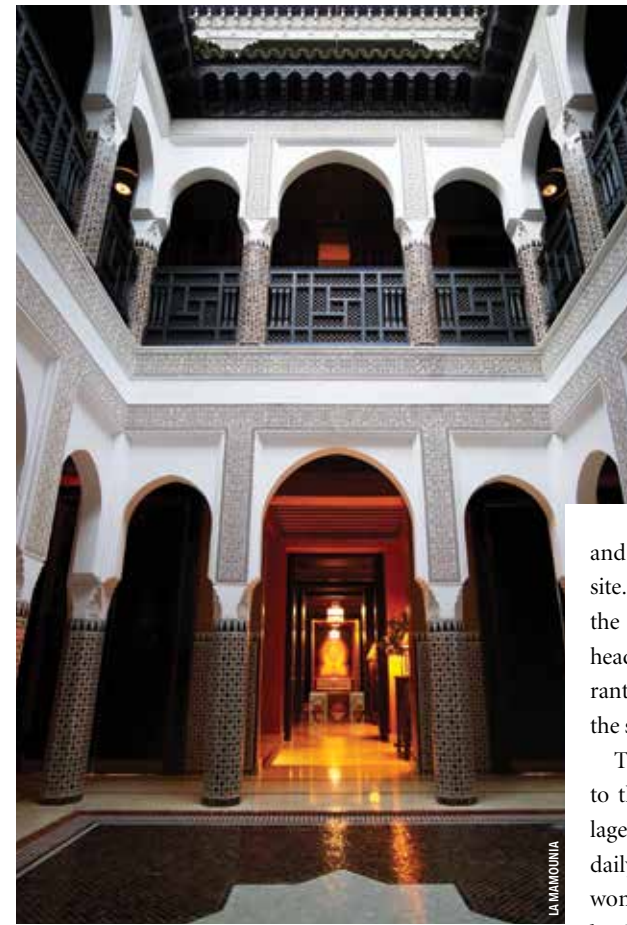


*Clockwise from top:* the guest lounge at Siwandu; encounter lions on a game drive; Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge in Botswana; hippos abound in Tanzania's Lake Nzerakera

early. Hop into a comfortable Land Cruiser with a safari guide who will point out everything from minuscule insects and tiny colorful birds to the massive elephants that roam the area. While at Siwandu, be sure to get out on the vast Lake Nzerakera (either by small boat or larger pontoon) to see the great Nile crocodiles often sunning themselves on sandbars and the many hippos that can be seen at night grazing on the shoreline's lush grasses under the moonlight.

If spotting the "big five" is on your bucket list, welcome to Botswana. In famed Chobe National Park, experience the wildlife and bush from the luxury of Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge's climate-controlled, tented villas, which are furnished with king-sized beds draped in mosquito netting. Dining here is also always a treat—particularly special dinners like South African-style braai (barbeque) under the stars accompanied by singing and dancing.

The safari guides here are truly the best in their business and will whisk you to areas frequented by herds of elephants and prides of lions. You might witness male lions competing for female attention with earth-shattering



*Clockwise from top left:* the palatial La Mamounia hotel in Marrakech; the suites at La Mamounia are fit for royalty; browse the goods at a traditional Moroccan souk; Sir Richard Branson's Kasbah Tamadot hotel in Morocco's Atlas Mountains offers dining with amazing views.

and market that's also a UNESCO World Heritage site. Finish the day by horse and carriage through the small alleys of the medina (old city) before heading to rooftop cocktails at the landmark restaurant Dar Yacout in Marrakech, where you can watch the sun set over the breathtaking city.

The following day, take a leisurely, scenic trip to the Atlas Mountains and its many unique villages. In Asni, a Berber community, experience the daily lives of Moroccan families: children at school, women engaging in traditional weaving and embroidery, boys producing crafts in a woodworking workshop... Continue up the steep valley to enjoy lunch at Sir Richard Branson's hillside hotel Kasbah Tamadot before returning through the villages of the countryside.

Cap the day back at La Mamounia with a delicious farewell meal accompanied by belly-dancing and local music—a lively note on which to end an extraordinary journey. +

*Lakani World Tours, lakani.com*

roars, or glimpse an endangered black rhino or an African buffalo, considered by many to be the most dangerous of the big five. You may also spy cheetahs, impalas, warthogs, giraffes, wildebeests, monkeys, ostriches... The variety of species is abundant. Come dusk, you may be rewarded with a sighting of the elusive leopard.

There's no better way to end your journey than with a stay in the storied city of Marrakech, at the foot of the Atlas Mountains. For the ultimate experience, check in to Morocco's iconic La Mamounia. The historic palatial hotel set amid magnificent flowering gardens and towering palm trees has played host to European royalty, American presidents, British prime ministers, and countless celebrities and jet-setters.

Take a tour of the historic Ochre City, which is surrounded by ancient ramparts and offers riotous displays of carpets, baskets, and exotic spices at the souks (marketplaces). Other must-sees on day one include: the old historic Bahia Palace, beautifully preserved and restored, as well as the brand-new five-star Selman Hotel, a family-owned retreat that celebrates the Arabian Thoroughbred (an integral part of the country's heritage) with an on-site horse farm. Also worth a look is Jemaa el-Fna, a large historical square

