



TRAVEL

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Safari shows animals unique gift to mankind

MANSOOR LADHA
Special to The News

Little did we know when my family left for our African safari to Tanzania that we would be encompassed by an international incident with a Minnesota connection. I received e-mail from my travel agent moments before we boarded our flight to Arusha.

There's a silver lining to the killing of Cecil, the lion, by U.S. dentist Walter Palmer in Zimbabwe. It's unfortunate the lion was killed but the killing has brought the issue of animal hunting and poaching in the forefront. There is worldwide awareness of animal hunting and sympathy for protection of animals and conservation.

Cecil's death has sparked an international outcry and even the White House is believed to be reviewing a petition signed by 140,000 people.

Palmer has been a trophy hunter for years, with an extensive collection of pictures in which he has posed with other big game he has slaughtered. How can anyone claim to get pleasure in killing an animal is beyond me. I simply cannot place myself as someone who pays thousands of dollars to go and kill beautiful animals so that they can boast and show off the trophies to their friends at home.

Wildlife is mankind's precious resource and every attempt should be made to preserve the dwindling population living in its natural habitat. Humans and animals should learn to live together if mankind wants to enjoy the inhabitant of the animal kingdom. Mozambican writer and environmentalist Mia Couto lamented the fact that Africa's "entire habitats and ecosystems are vanishing." He describes lions as "colonial icons of the 'real' Africa."

The world's poachers and trophy hunters should see Serengeti Shall Not Die, a documentary released in 1959, which won an Academic Award for best documentary. Written and directed by Bernhard Grzimax, the film portrayed herds of African game as a cultural heritage of all mankind.



SUBMITTED PHOTO MANSOOR LADHA

Serengeti offered some of the most spectacular game viewing, including herds of buffalo, groups of elephants and giraffes.

I had a chance this year to visit Tanzania's animal kingdoms at the world-famous Ngorongoro, Serengeti and Manyara national parks. It was an experience of a lifetime to observe animals wandering undisturbed around the park.

When we arrived at the Kilimanjaro International Airport in Arusha, named after the famous Mount Kilimanjaro, our guide, Edward, neatly dressed in a safari suit, greeted us.

"Jambo bwana, karibuni (hello sir, welcome) Arusha to begin your safari," he said welcoming our group of three and escorting us to a special safari vehicle. After a brief stop in Arusha, we headed for Lake Manyara National Park, 80 km west of Arusha. Part of the road has been newly surfaced but interior roads leading to the national park are gravel and unpaved, with deep pot-holes, so be prepared to rough it out. Lake Manyara National Park is the

best place to start a safari as Lake Manyara, being relatively the smallest national park sandwiched between the Rift Valley and the road to Serengeti and Ngorongoro, gives an excellent introduction to the area. From the entrance gate, the road winds through lush jungle with hundreds of baboons and blue monkeys along the roadside and between mahogany trees.

The famous and unusual tree-climbing lions are only sighted in Manyara. They have become a signature item for Manyara providing a spectacular setting where only one can find lions majestically resting on a tree to avoid the tropical heat.

We were fortunate in organizing an early morning breakfast overlooking Lake Manyara where our group was strategically placed to view the rising sun over the lake. The chef of Laka Manyara Serena Lodge personally supervised the freshly cooked breakfast, with tablecloth and complete with a bottle of champagne. We were greatly impressed with Manyara Serena Lodge where each of the 67 rooms has a private balcony providing a panoramic view of the Great Rift Valley and Lake Manyara — where pink flamingoes share habitat with white pelicans.

After a night stop at the Manyara Serena Lodge, our safari took us to Serengeti National Park, Tanzania's oldest and most popular national park. Declared a world heritage site and the seventh wonder of the world, Serengeti is famed for its annual migration of millions of hooves, 200,000 zebra and 300,000 Thomson's gazelle. Even in off-season, Serengeti offers the most spectacular game viewing in Africa, with herds of buffalo, groups of elephants and giraffe.

Our last safari destination was Ngorongoro Conservation Area where Ngorongoro Crater, the world's largest inactive volcano, is located. Two to three million years ago, the volcano exploded forming the 610 metres (2,000 feet) deep and its floor covers 260 square kilometres (100 square miles) crater. The Masai, the warrior tribe which inhabited the area, are permitted to graze their cattle within the crater, but they must enter and exit the crater, also abundant in hippos, elephants and lions, daily. Ngorongoro Crater is famous of all the national parks among tourists because of the variety of animals inhabiting the area.

See **Ngorongoro**, Page B2

Caesars Palace getting \$75M update despite bankruptcy

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS
Caesars Palace on the Las Vegas Strip is getting a \$75 million upgrade for its 50th birthday despite facing a complicated bankruptcy reorganization and millions of dollars in fines.

Parent company Caesars Entertainment Corp. announced Friday that it's overhauling the hotel's original Roman Tower of rooms, last redone in 2001. The iconic Roman-themed property is the only Strip casino owned and operated by a Caesars subsidiary that is trying to shed \$10 billion of its \$18.4 billion in debt by restructuring.

Caesars Palace was recently fined \$9.5 million by federal and state regulators for failing to take steps to prevent money laundering in the casino.

Chris Jones, a gambling industry analyst with Union Gaming, said it would be difficult for anyone involved in the bankruptcy case, including Caesars' creditors, to argue that a capital investment to improve the nearly 15-year-old rooms would be a bad call.

He said it doesn't help anyone if the tower, closed for construction since mid-September, isn't making money. The 567-room tower will get 20 additional rooms and a new name: the Julius Tower.

"It's a renovation that has to happen, considering how old the room product is," Jones said.

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