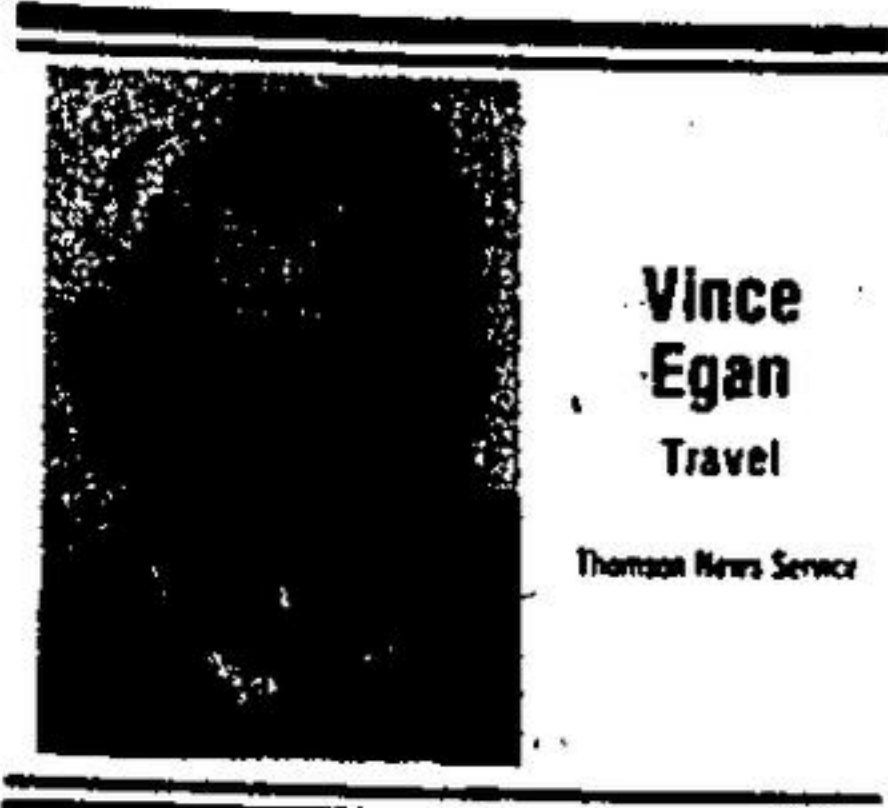


Protect yourself in the Dark Continent



Vince Egan
Travel

Thomson News Service

Few travel experiences could be as intensely interesting, even exciting, as participating in a wildlife-viewing safari in Africa.

But there's a certain element of risk in travel to remote, lightly populated areas anywhere in the world. Unfortunately, the danger factor seems to be the rise - more from man than from animals - in some parts of Africa that attract foreign visitors.

That doesn't mean that Canadians should avoid going to those African countries that have facilities for expeditions into the bush to view wild animals in their natural habitat.

But it does mean that some thought needs to be given to the particular destination, with personal safety in mind - and that the prudence that has always been needed is especially important now.

Just two months ago, a group of 19 U.S. tourists in Kenya, travelling in three vans between Amboseli and Tsavo national parks, was attacked by nine gunmen thought to be wildlife poachers.

Marie Esther Ferraro of New Haven, Conn., was shot dead. The bandits wounded Allen Sullivan, a retired high school teacher from Trumbull, Conn., in the chest and robbed the tourists of their cash and jewelry.

That same month, a French couple were gunned down on a seldom used track in the Meru park.

FIVE ATTACKS

It was the fifth attack on tourists in Kenyan game parks in 11 months. That figure does not include the much more frequent cases of purse-snatching and pocket-picking on the streets of Nairobi, Kenya's capital city, near the equator - nor the Aug. 20 slaying of the famous conservationist, George Adamson, 83.

Farther south on the Dark Continent, Zimbabwe has closed its Gonarezhou national park in the southeast of that country, near its border with Mozambique, because of incursions of gangs from the latter country.

The U.S. State Department has issued a travel advisory warning travellers to expect military and police roadblocks throughout Zimbabwe, and adding that some local authorities have waited a long time before notifying the U.S. embassy of detentions of U.S. visitors.

(A Canadian, Richard Leban, has been held for the past two years in a Zimbabwe prison, although courts there have more than once declared him innocent of any crime.)

However, Zimbabwe's main tourist areas from Inyanga to Vumba, and the popular Victoria Falls, are still considered safe - as

are, of course, Kruger national park and the other great wildlife sanctuaries in the neighboring Republic of South Africa.

MALARIA RISK

Although gun-toting bandits and poachers are a worry in some areas, a more prevalent attacker is the malaria-carrying anopheles mosquito.

The latest (May 15) World Malaria Risk Chart, published by the Guelph-based International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (IAMAT), lists both Kenya and Zimbabwe - as well as Kenya's neighbor Tanzania - as among those countries having a "malaria risk throughout the country, including urban areas."

Its notation for South Africa is "malaria absent in most of the country; risk exists only in specified areas."

The non-profit IAMAT (40 Royal Road, Guelph, Ont., N1K 1B5, telephone 519-838-0102) distributes its detailed publications, the World Malaria Risk Chart and How to Protect Yourself Against Malaria, free of charge. (Note, however, that IAMAT depends upon voluntary donations to finance its work, initiated by the late Dr. Vincenzo Marcolongo.)

The "how to" folder provides detailed information on the parasites that spread malaria and on the various medications to prevent or suppress the disease - the primary health problem affecting visitors to sub-Saharan Africa.

SLEEP NET

The most recent project of IAMAT has been to develop a low-cost, portable frame and net to pro-

tect beds in malarious areas. Called LaMosquette, it consists of a free-standing aluminum frame that, it is said, can be assembled in a few minutes, and a rectangular net that hangs from the frame and tucks under the mattress - plus a carrying pouch.

"Only a properly designed bed net, used in conjunction with a prescribed drug regimen and correctly applied insecticides and repellents, can offer full protection against malaria," says an IAMAT announcement.

The net is sold by IAMAT for \$90 plus \$9 postage within Canada. Weight is five pounds.

Doctors recommend that visitors to tropical regions where malaria exists should, at least after sunset, wear closed shoes, long-sleeved shirts and long trousers in light colors, and avoid the use of perfume or after-shave lotion.

ON GUARD

An insect repellent containing "deet" should be applied every two

hours, without waiting for the parasites to start biting. While most mosquitos are active at night, some species will bite during the day (for example, the carrier of dengue fever).

Don't wade or swim in fresh water unless you are certain it is safe - and the fact that local people may be in the water is no guarantee of that. Immediately wipe off any water that splashes on you from a suspect source.

On ocean beaches, exercise caution if no lifeguards are present. The seas around West Africa's Atlantic coast are notorious for treacherous surfs that have claimed the lives of a great number of foreign visitors.

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