

MESSAGE FROM CHRIS FOX, FOUNDER OF MWAGUSI CAMP, RUAHA, TANZANIA



In the years before Ruaha was unveiled to the discerning traveller as a richly diverse and unspoiled park, when the sounds of roaring lion and whooping hyena, over dinner, were interspersed with the sounds of automatic gunfire, and when elephants were still being slaughtered in great numbers, and when it was difficult to find a part of the park not spoiled by bushfires, I dreamed of building simple camp with a few loyal staff members and a cluster of only four tents, where our clients were welcomed and hosted as friends, with whom we shared adventures by foot or vehicle, which in those days of few roads was more off road than on.

Much has evolved both in Ruaha, and in my camp since that day. No longer do we have the mass slaughter and the vast destructive bushfires, there are more camps and people and rules, but the essence of unspoiled space and freedom still remains, which pulls visitors to return again and again.

Whilst we strive in many aspects of our camp to remain environmentally sensitive, we are particularly committed to empowering our local Tanzanians. In an environment where on average six people are directly dependent on a salary earner, and where aids is ravaging the employment sector, leaving behind grandmothers and children, everyone is multi trained in camp.

Our staff are trained in multiple life skills. For example a water carrier has evolved to be competent stone mason, waiter, barman, plumber, electrician, and guide. A thatcher has evolved into waiter and cook. A waiter progressed to barman and on to be driver, mechanic and guide. Should the tourist industry collapse they have many other skills to keep them employed.

We bring in twelve school leavers every year, to work board and lodging and to be trained seven hours a day in English language waiting and guiding under our guide instructor. Up to three will be guaranteed employment and continue for further training. It can take us eight years before a guide is fully mature enough to handle clients. This process enables us to hand pick the best, and many others find employment in other camps all over Tanzania.

We are all custodians of this wilderness, the wardens, the visitors, the operators, the agents and the journalists. It is within our collective grasp to influence the politicians and decision makers, to protect and preserve its integrity through responsible action, and by supporting those who act responsibly and by not supporting those who don't. It is simply up to us.

Chris Fox, May 2011

“Whisper its name very, very quietly and only to those you know and trust, it is wild unsophisticated, little visited and it is on no ones route to anywhere” (Lucia van der Post - Financial Times).

“There is a rawness here I have never seen before, its the real thing, the unexpurgated Africa of long ago, and I can't wait to explore it” (Brian Jackman - Daily Telegraph).

“The appeal of Mwagusi, we soon discovered, lay in its determination to provide an authentic wilderness experience, without compromising on comfort.” (Jeremy Lawrence - The Independent on Sunday).