



**KATE KOZIOL'S TRIP TO AFRICA  
FROM CHICAGO TO KENYA  
FROM KENYA TO MADAGASCAR  
FROM MADAGASCAR BACK HOME**

**BY**

**KATE KOZIOL**



**PART ONE: KENYA**



## Chicago to Amsterdam

I love travel  
The possibility of travel  
The puzzle  
The prep  
The plan  
The seeing  
The doing

The happenstance of who you meet. Like the nice Czech guy who put my suitcase into the overhead and told me I was dressed too nice (meaning I was a target) – that I looked American. And of his travels in Eastern Europe and the pretend police.

Before I traveled there was a line between me and the pictures of the faraway places that I saw in magazines. After my first great adventure when I saw the islands of the Great Barrier Reef sprout up from the ocean that something clicked for me. Since that day, the wall between what I saw in the picture and what I felt and experienced came down – almost as if I could step inside the image and imagine being there. The more I travel the more I get a 3D vision of the world.

I know that my life will never be the same. This trip will change me, help me see what is next. Just the paring down of my belongings to a 33lbs case is refreshing, challenging, fun. To think I've got all the right stuff and not even off my first flight and my Czech mate tells me I have to rough up my look. No laptop – just pens and paper. A different experience from my usual keyboard. Is there life outside of spellcheck? Unlike my edit, re-edit, building a well crafted line so unlike this untamed word river.

These reports will be a bit off from my usual business blog. But I think around the animals and observations there will be some things I have come to know – about business and the rest of my world.

Somehow we are flying north enough to enjoy a constant orange mustard ribbon on the horizon. The world's longest sunset.

Heading to Amsterdam to my Dutch roots. So I listen to KLMs Dutch music channel and tune into the Dutch language channel – can I be fluent in two hours??



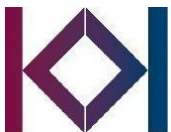
## **Amsterdam and Beyond**

Touchdown, take a good walk through the airport with Mandy – stop for syrup waffles – a round wafer soft cookie with a honey filling – a very good Dutch treat. Even better with the hot chocolate that we get at the gate.

Another round of security and no water allowed in the secure gate area. 747-300 is packed – 60 some rows and 9 across – very close.

Got some sleep on this flight. Mandy's friend Jan, who is a pilot for Martin Air, is in Nairobi. At 6ft tall and blond and blue, he's easy to pick out in the crowd. We grab our bags and walk into a sea of greeters and drivers with a zillion signs calling to us – I see a Kate poster – and connect with my driver – only to find out there is another driver for us and this "Kate" driver is for someone else. Our driver David takes us to his parent's guest house behind a security gate that the neighbors all pitch in to support. The security guard has a little fire by his lean-to and opens the spring-loaded gate to let us pass. We drive by the city's largest slums and the million dollar homes all within 10 minutes. After David's dad John gives us a tour and shows us to our rooms, we have a great meal and settle in.

At 12 midnight – after 20 hours of travel, I am trying to turn on my hot water – but that remains a mystery for the morning. I freshen up in cold water and retire. Can I turn off the light at the door and get into my mosquito net draped bed without calamity? Stay tuned.



# Waking Up in Africa

## **Sunday June 19**

It might be 608A or 708A as I am still a bit muddled on the time zone and the operation of this throwaway digital wrist watch, but the neighborhood rooster tells me to get up. I am normally a fussy sleeper, needing ambient light, temperature and sound to be perfect to drift off and then spend the night in one crazy dream after the other, tossing and turning, talking and shouting, and generally an unwelcome roommate.

Last night, under my mosquito net – which I managed to negotiate without harm to net or self in the absolute dark, I fall into a deep sleep and wake three hours later in the exact same spot. I was like the sleeping dead until the rooster crowed. Outside my window is a lovely walled patio and outside the other window is a walled garden: tropical, tidy and unassuming.

Our host John was wearing a long sleeve shirt, long pants and a ski sweater when he greeted us. He was concerned about how cold it was for us and found me some slippers to keep my feet warm – even though it was fine and no colder than a Spring day in Chicago.

Today we head off to Nyahururu where David tells us that some of the citizens may have never seen a Caucasian.

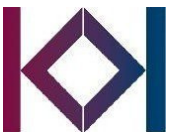
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Parquet floors  
Shoes at the door  
Kenyan dust is left outside  
Thick stone walls  
Cool to the touch  
But inside warmth.

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### **Theme lyric of the morning:**

“Here I go again on my own,  
goin’ down the only road I’ve ever known  
like a drifter I was born to walk alone.”



## The Road to Nyahururu

After a hearty breakfast of toast, fresh fruit and sausage, time to pack and head off on and telephone safari – much more scary than elephants on a Sunday morning. Tracking the illusive Safaricom phone. Sunday is definitely not a good time for phone shopping. At our third stop we tracked down phones at a huge store that sold ink cartridges, furniture, you name it.

Then across the open air mall to the butcher – who sells phone cards right next to a huge vat of tripe. The goat chops were on sale that day, but we just got the SIM cards. My basic Kenyan phone cost \$20 and 3 cents a minute to call the US – better than the \$4.60 that Verizon charges.

The road to Nyahururu is mostly well paved – and we traveled along the Rift Valley Escarpment – a lovely view – even with the fog we had that day. And further north we traveled along the mountainsides of Aberdeen National Park. This is a route that tourists do not take – so it was great to see everyday Kenya. Hundreds of people along the road walking to church, tending their flocks, selling their wares from market stands made of turf or wood or from a store front. Every size and shape of van take turns passing, all filled to various states of capacity, and motorcycles, bikes and pedestrians all on a barely two lane wide road.

And the best of all – we got a flat. So we had to stop and fix it and the local children came by to look at us – I guess we were the entertainment for the moment. I had bought toffee candy in town and was able to give five or six brave ones that dared to venture close to us a bit of candy. After our talented driver and guide fixed the flat using rocks and a jack – the spare was on and we were off. Rocks are a multiuse tool in Kenya – like a primitive Leatherman – it can help you jack up a car if you make a ramp of them, they were used to mark a section of road – maybe 300 yards of 3 rocks across to let you know that there was a drop and not to pull over there.

The only time I cringed a bit and tried to will my side of the car to squeeze in a bit was when I saw a large truck barreling toward us and the banner at the top of the truck said “Student Driver.” But no lives were lost.

I received a lovely compliment at breakfast, our host John started to talk to me in his native language – and then quickly apologized – I took no offence and told him that I would take it as a compliment that he would consider me one of his family.

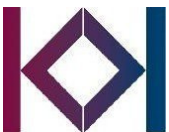
### **Thompson Falls Lodge and Hippos**

Gorgeous falls, great room with a balcony overlooking the garden. Lovely park like setting with many families enjoying the day. A cold Tuskers beer and late lunch – perfect!

Then....

A walk to the river to see the hippos – maybe 10 of them where we can see them. Sondra had met a guide who took us down the paved road to the dirt road, to the two ruts in the grass to the beaten path to the marsh by the river. Maybe it was a 15 minute walk. Lovely and so cool to see the hippos in the wild – I had never seen hippos in the wild before and even when agreeing to go on the hippo walk I had no idea if we were going to see hippos in a fenced area or what. I did not try to pet them because I hear they can be kind of crabby.

And, now, in my mosquito net draped queen size bed, with the fire blazing to heat the room for the night. Class kicks off for us at 9A in the morning.



## Night Music

Stayed warm last night and wake to fireplace embers still glowing. I slept in fits and starts and know I will adapt to the night music of dogs and birds and hippos. The hippos walk around at night and the pack of dogs up at the orphanage up the hill go crazy. Not just the annoying neighbor dog kind of bark, but a full baying of the hounds that rolls on in wave after wave and then dies down only to start up again.

I can hear the constant rush of the falls from my balcony but I can't see it for the tropical trees. Molly told me this place was remote, but I thought of remote with a Western mind – this is remote with a capital "R." I have been to remote places – but this is a far, far away place. Remote, yet scraping by, even thriving, in its own way.

Off to prep for my Day 1 class that starts in 1.5 hours.

Class Break – Midmorning

We are working in a barn, or perhaps a converted shed – stone walls, rustic vintage parquet floors – so it must have been a living space at some point. Our projection screen is a bedsheet nailed to the wall. It is all completely workable – just not the conference room you think of in the US.

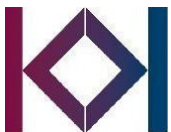
**Today's theme lyric:**

"Who cares about strangers and social injustice...."

Today we met 20 entrepreneurs who have already been in class for two weeks. These 20 were picked from the countless applicants that wanted to get in. We broke off into groups and I worked with Naomi, Charity and Kariuki to determine what challenges they had in their businesses and how we can address that.

Sondra, who is teaching today, assigns Kariuki as our group leader and I was the outside consultant – so I could help where needed, but not to be the superhero solver. Sondra made it clear that collectively the entrepreneurs can solve anything and should work together to resolve any issues they face.

The top issues for our group were collections, staffing and infrastructure like power outages and passable roads. Charity's internet cafe can be closed for days due to internet outages and there is no other internet service she can move to and none arriving for 6 months. Luckily she is the only internet provider for miles so she has no immediate competitors. What would you suggest she do to stop losing money on those days? Chime in with your votes. Tomorrow we visit the entrepreneurs at their businesses – should be another eye opener.



# Untaken Pictures

## **The Welcoming Committee and the Pink Lady**

Kenya's photo ops extend in every direction and well beyond the boundaries of the game reserves. But some photos I choose not to take out of respect.

I have the image in my head of the area just outside of baggage claim at the airport – where they had to be 70 people with 70 signs – the visual cacophony was a lot to take in on a body pushing 24 hours of travel. But to whip my camera out and start snapping was not a respectful way to enter Kenya. The people behind the signs were hard working, most likely underpaid and deserved to be greeted with a smile and not another gawking tourist.

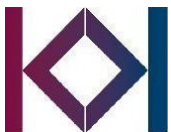
The pink lady was a woman, maybe 30 or 40, sitting on a dusty brown rock against a dirt and grass hillside in a flamingo pink suit waiting for the van or resting a bit from the long walk into town for church. Her crisp pink skirt and jacket, and perhaps her quietly capable countenance, stood out prominently against the well worn hillside.

Of the 145 images that I have snapped in the two plus days I have been here, I carry with me The Welcoming Committee and The Pink Lady – and those are mine alone. The power, the will, the elegant majesty carved amidst their hard fought lives.

So if you want to see these images, you will have to travel to Kenya and take it in first hand. No camera, no flash, just an open heart.

What might surprise you about our entrepreneurs and their world

- Most don't have cars.
- Most never went to college.
- Most did not have a burning passion to become an entrepreneur – they didn't have a job – so they made one.
- Price fixing is okay.
- Check bouncing is a criminal offense.
- Most run multiple businesses. An internet café that has a movie theater (think bedsheet and 40 plastic chairs. I mention this not to disparage the operation – as I quite admire the ingenuity – but to recalibrate what you think of when I say movie theater.)
- Not everyone has electricity so they can't be open at night.
- Many live at the work place in the back room.



## Here Come the Mzungu\*



Tomorrow we go on our first site visits – two teams will travel the region to see 6 businesses total, discuss how they are doing, what new tactics they are adopting because of the training, what questions they have and get a better understanding of their businesses.

Unfortunately my calendar transferred all my Chicago time slot reminders to my global phone and it woke me up at 230A. It is now 430 and I have spent the last two hours writing and talking to family back home where it was still evening. I think I'll head back to bed to catch a nap before my real alarm goes off at 7A.

*\*non derogatory term for white person.*

### **Theme lyric of the morning:**

“Last night, I couldn’t get to sleep, no I couldn’t get to sleep at all, no, no, no...”

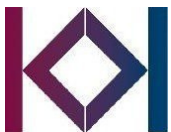


## **Okay, so what is with the sugar prices?**

In group discussions with Naomi, a shopkeeper, we talk about sugar prices and how when the wholesale price drops, she has to drop her prices. We talked about getting together with other shopkeepers to buy in bulk or when the price drops from the supplier, buying more so she can expand her profit margin, – but she said it couldn't be done. I asked why and tried to explain the “buy low, sell high” concept, but she began to look at me as if I was an idiot. So I backed off.

I asked one of the other trainers – ‘what’s with the sugar prices having to mirror the wholesale rate?’ and they commented that it is just a mindset that can be overcome. I really did think that I must be missing some key point because you should have seen the look on her face – like I had just said – for the second time – the stupidest thing she had ever heard.

I am not encouraging price gouging, but everyone deserves a little profit. If I have the opportunity to discuss sugar prices again with Naomi, I will re-present the bulk buying and the ‘buy low – sell high’ concepts – even at the risk of looking like an idiot.



## My Joanna



I have to give the entrepreneurial persistence award to Joanna.

Within the first hour of being at Thompson Falls, she approached me and asked if I wanted to see her shop up the hill. I told her I would come, but I was going to visit the falls with my friends. Upon walking back up to the main falls viewing area 15 minutes later, there was My Joanna, asking me if I wanted to see her shop now. Now mind you, there are

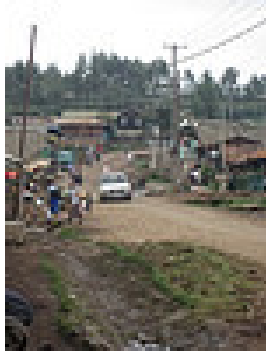
20 shop stands at the falls, but My Joanna was really working the crowd. I told her I need to go get some lunch, but that I would be back. A couple of hours later, upon returning from our hippo walk, a group of shop owners were resting by the road. I must have been 100 yards away – but Joanne gets up from her group, and walks into the center of the road and asks me again if I would like to see her shop – how could I say no?

Her shop is 30 feet away and has walls and a ceiling, but no electricity – so my friends and I shop by cell phone light. I buy a ceramic dish with a giraffe on it for my good friend and business mentor Joe cause he has given me two giraffes because he says giraffes are lucky and I believe him.

Joanna, or My Joanna, as I like to call her, is tenacious but pleasant, focused and setting a great example for her twin girls. So the first annual My Joanna award for best sales person goes to Joanne, the sharpest shopkeeper at Thompson Falls.



## Backstage Pass



It is a privilege to be here. If we can help one person be more successful – and success can be as little as making \$100 a month – then they can have an easier life and teach another 10 people – we can help change entire communities.

I hope the people in these villages, who may be seeing Mzungu (white people) for the first time, see us as friends and helpers.

I have never had so much fun working so hard. I get to see places that few outsiders get to see. And traveling with the locals – we are welcomed and don't mind the stares and timid handshakes of the little ones brave enough to come close. The entrepreneurs are hungry for improvement and I sometimes can't sleep because I am thinking of how to help make these businesses stronger.

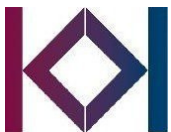


## What's In the Woodpile?

We have fireplaces in the rooms because there is no central heat and after the fireman comes – usually one of the marathon trainers that train around here because of the altitude – to light the fire, I go down to the wood pile underneath the stairs to get extra wood to keep the fire going through the night.

If it were not absolutely necessary to stoke the fire, I would not go to the woodpile because I know there are things – bugs, reptiles, creatures I have never seen – living in that woodpile. So I gingerly coax one of the sticks around the perimeter closer to the edge and then use that to call the next one out, until I have an armful I can manage up the flight of stairs.

I know if so much as a gecko surprises me when I am at the woodpile – my hair will stand on end, my eyes will bug out just like in the cartoons and I will skip any future woodpile runs.



## Wake Up Call



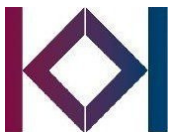
Three words about our site visits to the five student businesses over the last two days.

Wow.  
Wow.  
Wow.

We got to visit:

- James' bike rental and repair shop in Rhumuruti
- Joseph's micro lending business, three barber shops and public service theater youth group in Maina
- Diana's hair salon in Nyahururu Town
- Hilary and Susan's used clothing store in Jambica
- Laban's tool and die, cement pipe construction and rabbit farms on the outskirts of Nyahururu

Each business owner demonstrated passion for their work, a commitment to learn and a trust in our words. Such a great responsibility to provide good counsel and help them see the best path to take. They are each driven and with the new tools at hand they all have the potential to be highly successful. Getting a firsthand look at their businesses only increases the respect I have for them, the value I see that they bring to their communities and my commitment to help them succeed.



## Morning Routine



I have been on many business trips, but none like this.

It's chilly in the room when I wake up, but the heavy wool blanket and down duvet has kept we warm all night. It's not the chill that wakes me during the night, it's the dogs barking at the roaming hippos or its one of the three phones that I am traveling with sounding off to alert me to some recurring scheduled event in some far off place called North America – but I digress.

I untangle from the mosquito net that has kept me malaria free for another day and I pad across the honey brown wood floor to the fireplace, stoking the embers to see if it can be lit. This morning I use 10 pages of business articles that I travel within my "Stuff to Read" folder – and that is actually getting read on this trip. I don't know if reading the pages or burning them has been more beneficial. With the embers and half burnt logs provoked enough, but still not in flames, I was across the entry hall (unheated) to the bathroom (unheated and on an outside wall where there is a metal framed window that does not close all the way) to turn on the shower.

The shower – deluxe by local standards – so I am not complaining – just noting how different my hot house orchid life is so different from this wild flower existence – has the ability to kill. Kind of a tortuous way to start the day and not usually found in your average hotel.

The water supply is piped in though an in room water heater which is powered by a thickly wrapped wire that snakes out of a hole in the wall. My trusty Themex Pocket heater has two temperature settings – scalding and cold. I prefer scalding. I have the hot shower run to heat up my bathroom and head back to the bedroom to check on the fire and put my clothes on the fireside leopard print armchair. I brush my teeth with bottled water and head back to the bath.

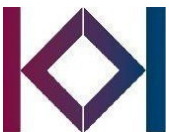
This morning my bathtub has a few dozen bugs, some flyers, some crawlers, nothing outside of what you might find at your summer cottage – on the floor of the tub. So I pick up the hand held shower head and begin to spray down the tub. With that both the lights on the water heater and the lights in the room flicker. So a put the shower head back on the holder and vow never to move it again.

Even in the best situations I like to keep water and electricity at a healthy distance. Since I am not ready to give up hot water, I will just be careful with this odd couple arrangement.

Back in Chicago I never think about the fact that the water we use daily has passed by fish and fauna, but I do find it amazing that just a few minutes ago any water here as most likely flowed by the hippos that are in the river nearby.

Slightly scalded, but not electrocuted, I return to my bedroom and dress by the fire that may or may not come to life – because fire, just like electricity has a bit of a mind of its own and performs on its time, not mine.

Fresh, dressed and ready for the day. Within the hour I will be with my students, some of which have ventured forth from their homes, many of which might not have running water, indoor plumbing or electricity to take a two hour Matatu (bus-taxi) ride to our classroom, so who am I to complain about a bug or a loose wire or water that is too hot?



# Are We Together? and What a Wonderful World!



Quote of the Morning:

“Are my employees just cows to be milked?” Lawrence Musili, General Manager of the Thomson Falls Lodge.

Lawrence spoke to our students today. He spoke of taking the harder but honest road. You see, Kenya administration is rather ‘Blagoarchy’ and tips are common – but not with Lawrence. As a successful Kenyan business man he was able to share with the students that there can be another way.

The cadence of his speech had an almost rhythmic pulse, pulling you forward with him; ending many statements with “Are we together?” and some of the students nod and murmur “yes.” It was on target and very inspiring, like the seed of this new way has been planted. Lawrence has agreed to be a mentor to our newly formed Young Kenyan Entrepreneurial Association so he can help it grow.

## **What a Wonderful World**

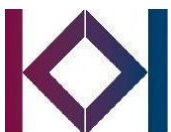
Theme lyric of the morning:

“I see leaves of green,  
Red roses too,  
I see them bloom  
For me and you  
And I think to myself  
What a wonderful world.”

Today up at 5, walking Thompson Falls at 615 – but being there along – even though it is within the protection of the Lodge – is most likely not smart, so I don’t venture too far. The morning schedule was not planned, yet perfectly timed, because when I went to the lobby a Masai Warrior followed me in – expanded earlobes – gauged to the size of silver dollars, worn open tire tread sandals, a beaded cuff around his left wrist and draped in plaid. In the photos of the Masai I never pictured plaid – but that is the pattern of their robes – very cool.

Friday afternoon update:

Drove to Masai Mara today – through mud and rocks and cliffs – made it in one piece. Saw zebra and wildebeest – could it be the start of the great migration? Also saw gazelle and one bunny – how does the poor thing cope? I was concerned for my safety and I am in a van.



## The Long and Winding Road



At the end of a long and dusty road is nirvana. We took a 7 hour ride from Nyharuru to the Masai Mara game reserve in southern Kenya – right on the border to Tanzania today. The first one hour was a bit rugged, the middle three hours were sweet, flat highway, the next one was rugged and the last two were a mud and bolder, axel breaking, cliff hanging, roller coaster thrill ride. As one of my fellow adventurers Todd put it, it was more like driving in a dried river bed.

As soon as we started in the river bed road we were slipping and sliding – no traction at all on our minivan safari bus. Maybe the worn tires didn't help much. We just got used to the slipping and sliding movement when we came across a wilderness traffic jam caused by the summer rain. Four vehicles were stuck in various mud pits. We stop and our marvelous driver Samwell pushes, with 8 or 10 others, the currently mired car over the ridge of turf and back onto what I will joking call solid ground.

The main road has gotten so bad that the smart vehicles have gone off road to travel on the grassy side of the road – but that requires getting over two mud pits and a one foot tall berm. Berm? (living a brave life outside spell check – one the great frontiers)

We (actually Samwell) help a few others and we ask them to stay until we clear the grass mud hurdle. So Samwell tells Al and Mandy and Todd and I to stand clear of the van and he backs up, guns it and our trusty van clears all three obstacles and we reimbark and head off. A few hours of bone jarring road and we reach Nirvana – and eden in the forest.

We descended into a wooded valley as a spotlight in the distance shows Samwell where to go because it gets darker and darker and harder and harder to know what is road and what is rubble. The guard at the stockade fence and Samwell talk to a moment and the longer they talk, the less likely it is that we will get in. But good luck prevails and the gate opens.

We enter the compound and are greeted with cool towels, fruit juice and cookies and a magnificent stone walkway leads to a stone foyer at Kichwa Tembo, a lush resort carved into a forest. That night I fall asleep to the rustle of leaves, the chorus of birds and the promise of big cats.



## The Day Heaven Met Earth

Simon, my first and most likely only tent butler, brings Mandy and I hot chocolate and cookies at our 7A wake up call. He recommends that we eat them inside because monkeys like cookies – smart monkeys. He also shows us how to tie up our tent zipper so we don't get monkey looters when we are away. After a quick shower and the excellent hot chocolate, I step outside to meet the loveable looters and chat with Simon. Just then a wild warthog strolls toward us from the brush beside the tent. I, brave soul that I am, leap behind Simon. We come to find out that there are warthogs all over the resort – but that they are still wild and we should not touch them.

Then off to the morning safari drive – I cannot express in words the scope of the landscape – the view is too vast to fit on a page. Samwell tells us that we will see 2 percent of the Masai Mara this weekend – and that 2% holds so much. Vast fields of Red Oat grass, the Mara River, the Acacia trees – so Dr. Seuss like in their shape, the backdrop of mountains. A heaven on earth that should not be missed.

In two drives today we see so much:

- A young giraffe startled by a noise runs Jerry Lewis-like in the other direction
- (even now, late at night as I write this – I think I can hear hippos bellowing in the night.)
- A muddy crocodile rests on the bank by some 15 hippos.
- Four curved bills or hornbills or something, walk the side of the road
- Lions, lazy in the morning sun, find a place to rest
- Many large groups of Thompson Gazelles, complete with racing stripe, keep watch so as not to be a lion's lunch
- Topi groups roam freely
- A herd of 20 elephants graze as they move and one mother lets us know not to get any closer to her calf
- And zebras and herons and water buffalo and the leopard that got away.

Like children with a new box of crayons, the colors and shapes and sizes that the Masai Mara offers, thrill us to no end. Even now, as I sit in my tent late at night writing, I hear howls and bellows that I don't recognize and they are not too far away.

We enjoy an excellent lunch overlooking the pool and savannah with zebra and giraffe today, extends into the distance. The warthogs venture close enough to slime Al's briefcase, but skitter away quickly, back to their postulate-like position, grazing from their bended knee.

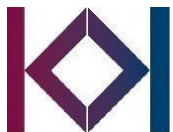
The only thing rivaling the view is the food – outstanding. An excellent lunch and then I have some time with Al's laptop so I sit in the lounge to work. The bartender closes up shop and tells me he'll send the security guard to check on me – and shortly a man in a green trench coat and tall rubber boots appears, carrying a rifle. He asks if I am ready to go to my tent – and I never disagree with anyone with a gun – so even though I have not uploaded a single photo, I say yes.

We pass his compatriot, who is brandishing a bow and arrow and they speak a moment in Swahili before we venture forth to my tent. A pleasant walk and no weapons fired. No even a single warthog or monkey to block our path.

And now it is 11:30 PM and I have 5 or 10 blog entries to type up. We have a 6 AM call where Simon will bring us coffee – which alone will be an adventure because I haven't had coffee in two or three



years. He'll also bring us yogurt and granola so we can be off on a 6:30 AM game drive. I may have to nap a bit during the drive as sleep is a treasured hobby of mine and this heaven on earth has me worn and amazed and I feel as if I have lived three lifetimes in this last week.



## Mile 11 – Is this the Wall?



Theme lyric of the morning:  
“Good Morning, good morning,  
How I hate to stay up late.  
Good Morning, good morning to you.”

Stayed up until 2A typing blog entries and up at 530A for a last game drive. Coffee was great, a needed boost to compensate for the lack of sleep.

Second week, Monday June 27, was a rough day. Nothing tragic, and nothing at all to complain about considering the obstacles the Kenyans face every day.

It started with a new driver scheduled to take us to visits this morning. The Kenyans have unique rules of the road and this person believed his half of the road was in the dead center, swerving radically to miss people and buses and donkey carts and taking the frequent speed bumps like a Dukes of Hazzard car chase. One particularly tough launch caused everyone in the back seat to smack their heads on the ceiling – no seat belts in this model. Luckily I am short and a slight pop on the head was not a problem, but my team mate Alex took a heavy hit and was dazed for quite a while.

It was great to see Paul’s farm, Alex’s cyber café and Carolyn’s copy and graphic design shop – but another long day of business diagnosis is very tiring and I collapse into bed at the end of the day. I did get a chance to get back to Alex’s cyber café and upload 25 photos – it only took 1.5 hours – which is better than the laptop modem I was using which was taking 15 minutes per photo. When we are in the countryside, I know I am an oddity – but sometimes when I am in the larger cities I feel uneasy on some streets. I get the vibe that some passersby think I reek of money – even when I am purposely casually dressed. It is not hate or harm that I feel – but it makes me cautious.

I also don’t have my bearings, so while sitting at the cyber café I got to thinking that I don’t know how to get home should my mates not get back from their shopping trip. I don’t know what direction to walk, I don’t know how to get a taxi – because they are not marked – or a borda- borda (motorcycle taxi) or if they speak English. Tomorrow we are walking into town and I will study the trail so I feel more in control.

Overall I feel well – none of the usual traveler maladies except for some hip pain flaring up from a long ago car accident. The roads here would wear on anyone. Imagine going over endless railroad crossings (but there aren’t any railroads here anymore) with that bone shaking, tire busting rat-a-tat-tat of a crossing. When it’s not rough road, they are washouts and pot holes as big as bathtubs. The roads here are so pitted that our drivers zigzag down the street oftentimes driving on the shoulder of the road to find a smoother path.

I collapse weary and worn into bed and hope to find a better day tomorrow.



## Study the Trail – HA!



Today our dear guide Florence – about 100 lbs of warmth and charm and smarts – picks us up at our Kenyan home – the Thompson Falls Lodge and we are going to walk into Nyahururu Town to visit Mina’s property management company, Patrick’s print shop, David’s cyber café and Elisha’s Milk Bar. Elisha also works in real estate, banking and one other field. This tendency toward multiple business lines is a frequently found Kenyan trait.

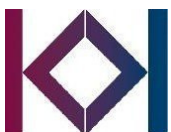
So I study the path we take so I am better suited to fend for myself. We start on a road, then to a path in a field to another road to a path that looks like every other path, to cross a field of cows and sheep and two friendly shepherds that greet us “Jambo” which is hello in Kikuyu and we chat a bit in English, to a deserted railroad track to an abandoned rail station to a parking lot and on into the edge of town.

The day is long but fruitful and I am happy to hear I am not the only trainer that collapses into bed each night – completely drained. I find it invigorating but exhausting to meet with two or three or four business owners in a day, learn more about their business, assess the issues and ops, probe to find more details, make recommendations and answer questions. Our Kenyan students have so much ability and ingenuity; we just have to help them clear some hurdles, analyze the best path and find a way to make it work.

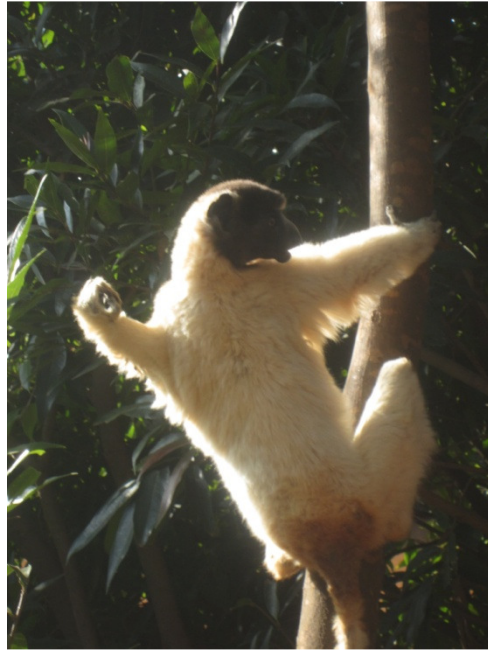
The way to work is complex and I test myself on the walk home – I master some of it – but far from the local experts. After a quick rest back at the hotel Molly, Alex, Todd, Mandy and I head to our student Peter’s home for dinner. What a treat. Peter’s parents are charming and warm and we tour the Catfish and Tilapia ponds, the beehives in the distance, the garden, Peter’s brick making business (which he runs in addition to his copy shop in town – remember that Kenyan multi-business trait?), the cows and geese in the barn – I think I caught it all. We meet the neighbors that helped make us a wonderful dinner and settle in for a delicious traditional meal of goat stew, chapatti (a pea and potato and beans mash) and several other dishes.

The meal is only surpassed by a vast and varied chat with Peter’s dad about politics, U.S. farm policies, family, life and work. We all laugh and learn and I may have to include this as one of the highlights of the trip. Over hot milk tea and honey, I see traces of my favorite life Sherpa in this man, so smart, so simple, such a joy to be around.

And now the Mile 11 wall is gone and it’s back to my love affair with Kenya. The hard work is a joy again and I realize I will be leaving in 3 days. The names that started just as ink on a page have now come to life. Each student’s story so rich and varied. Each one working diligently to be successful. I hope our work together brings another tread of peace and prosperity to the world.



## PART TWO: MADAGASCAR



## Message from Madagascar



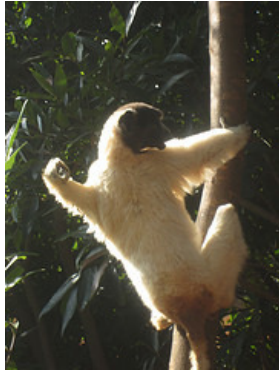
This could be the best Friday of my life – second only to my rehearsal dinner (catch that Dave?) Two weeks of working with entrepreneurs in Kenya, then 9 days in my dream land of Madagascar. The only trip I have sought and planned for for decades, saved for for two years and now I am here.

As a single traveler, I reluctantly booked a driver for the week but worried that it would be some “Driving Miss Daisy” tour, kind of staid and stodgy and all too contained. I am more of an independent traveler but did not think wandering about a country that has seen diminishing tourists due to past political unrest and my lack of fluent Malagasy or French, would be wise. So I connected with Thecla at Atlas Travel International – my fellow Lemur nut – and Cortez Travel and we outlined a great trip to see the highlights of Southern Madagascar.

Upon arriving in Tulear, I was greeted by my most excellent driver and guide Ramiandrisoa Parson. Far from a “Miss Daisy” tour – it was a personal introduction to the country that was beyond compare. Parson was my guide, my translator, my negotiator, my protective brother. He knew what oranges were in season and what to pass up. He seemed to know everyone on the island and we would stop at villages and markets and roadside stands. He had traveled with a real photographer in one 3 month tour in particular, and he pointed out the best vistas and spotted some great human interest shots. It is a beautiful country and the Malagasy are wonderful. I could not recommend the trip more and have come back reoriented, rejuvenated and thankful for many blessings I have in my life.



## MWW Seeking EUA (Married White Woman Seeking Evolutionary Unique Animals)



I can't believe I am on my long dreamed of trip to Madagascar, to see the lemurs, the Ringtail Lemur in particular. Ever since Sr. Kevin's 7th grade science class I have been intrigued by evolutionary oddities and been to the Galapagos to see the Blue Footed Boobies, Tasmania to see the Tasmanian Devil and to the south Coast of Australia to see the Fairy Penguins, for example. When some people flock to see the art or the food of a country, I go to see the animals. I enjoy the local art and sample most local foods – although brains and tripe and other squishy bits are not my favorite, but my real passion is to see endemic animals.

This past week was the most marvelous trip imaginable. A week in Madagascar and the potential to see wild lemurs. I've seen dozens and dozens, ringtails and sportives and red fronted brown and golden bamboo and lesser bamboo and mouse lemurs and talked to researchers about their work as it relates to lemurs and to the local people. Every day learning something, seeing something new. Each day was better than the last and I came to welcome whatever the day brought, even if I had thought it would take another path – I dedicated the week to seeing what would be presented to me instead of my oft-lived life of managing the minutes and the minutia.

To hope and dream of doing something, and getting the chance to do it – was marvelous. But the most surprising thing about going to Madagascar was meeting the people. I went to see the lemurs and the wonderful warmth and the needs of the people were what stood out the most. Many of the people, despite working very hard, live very meagerly. No electricity or running water and little access to prescription medicine.

I know one way to help them is to start by encouraging tourism to reinvigorate the economy there and I encourage you to go to Madagascar. I felt completely safe, and rich beyond compare. I think the guides thought I had lost my mind – but I doubled and tripled the recommended tips for good service, because I was paying for decades of experience and I wanted to share what I had with those that had need. I welcome you to join me in well compensating those that help you in travels so that they can also enjoy the fruit of their hard work.



## Thoughts on Take off



I live a perfect life. Not that I am perfect, far from it. Just ask family, friends or other ne'er-do-wells – and they will attest to that. But a perfect life – nonetheless – and not because of anything I have done.

I have clean water, electricity, access to medicine, housing, heat, sufficient food, a right to say my peace, respect, sufficient funds to afford these luxuries and the smarts to know that a newer car or a bigger ring won't make a difference – even in the short run.

We have choices, options; we have the time and luxury to complain. I am wondering how do we help those that live hand to mouth? More than that, I am wondering why does anyone have to live that way at all? Why in a land as rich as Madagascar are so many so poor? With sapphires, gold and biodiversity beyond compare – why do so few have a share of the riches? Why are children, dressed in the best their families can afford, sitting roadside pounding granite blocks into bricks, bricks into stones and stones into gravel? Why can't they have choices?

We sit in Barcaloungers with our Kenmore-freshened clothes wondering why they can't stop deforestation and understand the value of biodiversity? They are hungry and cold and as a very wise friend told me – the people did not choose deforestation – the government did. When the government does not care for the people, the people manage as best they can.

So fellow Barcalounging Kenmarians – what do we do next?

I went to Madagascar to find the lemurs and the people found me. In small googly-eyed stares from children surprised to see a “Yazo” in the village, to the desperate need of street beggars, to the highly capable and talented guides that led me through narrow canyon passages and from mountain top descents – all with care and knowledge of an Oxford scholar, but with none of the pretense. I met botanists, linguists, genealogists, counselors, artists, primatologists, ornithologists and none with the papers to prove it. But I would stake my claim with any of these self taught experts. If such raw talent exists, what would happen if they were warm at night or didn't feel ancient beyond their hard-fought years?

I don't know how to save Madagascar, or even my own neighborhood food pantry that runs dry from time to time. But I know what we are all better than this and that hunger and cold are to the detriment of us all.



## Toad Warrior



I can tell it's the end of a journey because on the three flights, some 30 hours of travel, I have not said "boo" to a single seat mate. I am bone dead tired. That kind of tired that radiates out from the top of your ears and your brow and hang like a spider web, invisible to others, yet forcefully strong.

I long to be home in order to be ignored by those that love me best. I long to slip back into the humdrum to be happy to hear English and know that others understand me too.

I love visiting the Zip Lock life, where my support systems are dutifully tucked into quart and gallon sized units of pharmacy, currency, food, in-flight...

And as itchy as I get to fly, to see, to do, this travel-weary warrior is happy to touch down once again. Home again, home again, jiggity jig.



*A special thanks to the folks at Heartland International for making the trip to Kenya possible.*

### **About the Author:**



Kate Koziol is the Founder and President of K Squared Communications, a public relations, marketing and social media consulting company located in Chicago. Kate Koziol brings 20 years of experience to her work with social networking, marketing and public relations clients. Named Women Business Owner Star by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council in recognition of entrepreneurial leadership and professional excellence, Kate brings her senior executive experience to a wide range of organizations, from entrepreneurial startups to Fortune 500 companies.

Kate developed an inside and in-depth understanding of business communications working for industry leaders such as United Airlines and Westvaco. Kate also worked for business-to-business e-marketing pioneers such as Apollo Travel Services and Galileo International. Kate has held a variety of management positions including market management, corporate communications, sales and training development.

Kate is a featured presenter at business conferences nationwide on a wide range of marketing, public relations and business communications topics such as: "The Latest in Social Networking for Business," "The Brand of You," "Using Public Relations to Build Your Profits," "Million Dollar Marketing Ideas That Won't Cost a Million," "Beyond Branding," "Super-sizing your Sales," "Facebook Your Way to More Sales," and "Maximizing Your Tradeshow Investment." She has conducted keynote presentations and workshops at conferences and educational institutions nationwide. Kate is a summa cum laude graduate of the CUNY Baccalaureate program with a B.S. in Acting and Directing.

