



SAFARITALK

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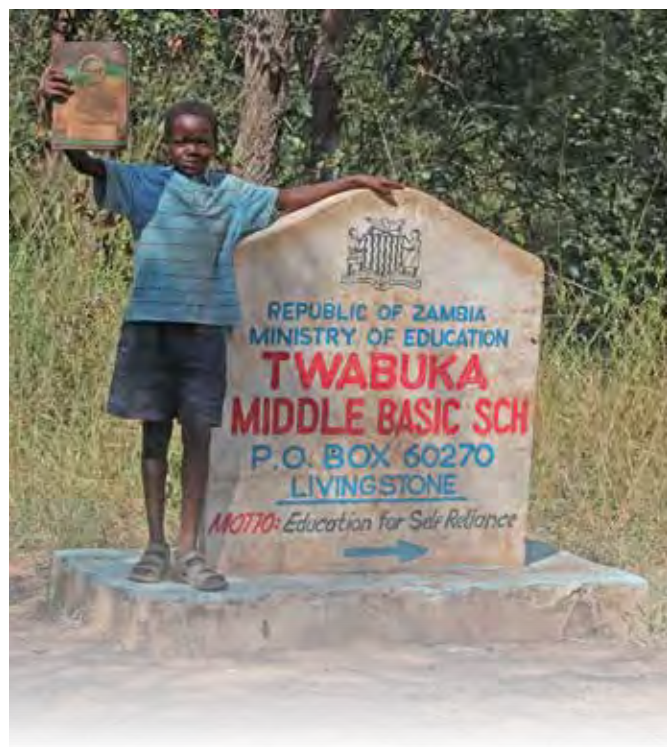
Pictures by the author

It is not all about the animals

During my most recent safari in Zambia I visited a village called Sinde, a half hour from the majestic Victoria Falls. There were the familiar smiling faces of rural folks in Africa who appreciate life despite its hardships. Sinde (population 1,055) consists of a hundred basic thatched-roof huts, a small farmer's market, a communal water pump and a school. On our way we encountered a young boy, school books under his arm, walking along the dusty road and gave him a ride. I asked him what he enjoyed most. He did not hesitate for one second. "School," he said. It was only fitting to take his picture next to the school signpost with its motto: *Education for Self-Reliance*.

This school was made possible in large part with the support of Wilderness Safaris that operates Toka Leya safari camp on the edge of the Zambezi River. Wilderness does not only put its own funds but contributions from guests to work in schools and other community-related projects across Southern Africa. All of its properties provide employment for the locals.

Wilderness is not alone in this effort. Other high-end safari operators such as Singita, AndBeyond, Lion Sands and Nomad Tanzania all have special projects to provide employment and bring education and extra revenues to neighboring



A Village called Sinde



villages. Several have set up non-profit organizations dedicated to the improvement and upliftment of these communities.

Wilderness Safaris' Children in the Wilderness (CITW) is dedicated to helping children whose lives have been disrupted by disease, poverty and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. With environmental education and therapeutic recreation it aims at increasing their self-esteem and building and strengthening their capacity to cope with life's challenges. For several weeks every year Wilderness Safaris closes off some of its luxury camps to guests to play host to these children.

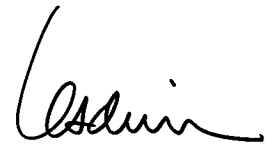
The Tanzania-based Singita Grumeti Reserves' Environmental Education Centre (EEC) was established to develop among the young people from local communities an awareness of the importance of preserving the bio-diversity of their communal lands and neighboring reserves. Singita Grumeti, situated in a concession in the Serengeti purchased by American billionaire Paul Tudor Jones, provides jobs for more than 800 people in the neighboring communities.

Lion Sands, with lodges in South Africa's Madikwe and Sabi Sand Game Reserves, has teamed up with several other interested parties in constructing clinics, schools and playgrounds in adjacent communities.

AndBeyond uses its Africa Foundation to manage projects across Southern and East Africa. In the past ten years it has raised millions for community development projects in five African countries, building classrooms, training teachers and pupils about the environment, constructing clinics, implementing water programs and creating small business opportunities.

None of these initiatives by socially responsible safari concession holders is a mega-project but collectively they are making a real difference by not only improving the quality of life in rural regions but ensuring that one of Africa's most important assets, its fauna and flora, is preserved for future generations.

As a safari consultant I like to work with these socially responsible safari operators, knowing that a substantial part of the fees paid by my clients not only benefit the animals of Africa but also its human population.



Les de Villiers

les@theultimatesafari.com

