

## Case study—Africa: an ecotourism adventure

Africa is a continent of natural beauty that has the extremes of wealth and poverty, the excitement of the game parks and rich biodiversity with many different habitats, ranging from grasslands, savannas, cool mountain forests to deserts. It has much to offer and many areas are yet to be explored by international tourists.

Ecotourism was once thought of as simply nature tourism and was a major selling point for many countries in eastern and southern Africa. Ecotourism became more of a marketing term in Africa than a reality until 2002, when sectors of the ecotourism industry got together to plan a future strategy for the region. The industry consulted with ministers and tribesmen and community members from villages where tourism was a growing concern. As a collective, these ministers, tribesmen and community members saw ecotourism as 'environment and community oriented'. The industry moved beyond environmental signage to actually involving the locals to ensure there was some protection of the culture of the community and the surrounding environment. Locals have been given a stake

in the ecotourism industry, which has led to greater success and sustainability. Trained local people acting as guides are the key to success.

In the 1980s, local people had lost land to national parks, there was conflict over land between people and wildlife, locals were no longer able to graze herds alongside wildlife and some people had turned increasingly to illegal poaching and hunting to survive, with the result that animal extinction became a real concern.

At the same time, tourism numbers continued to increase and sectors of the tourism industry began to realise that if local people were able to benefit from the industry then the issues of poverty could be overcome. The tourism industry began to work with local people, and brought them into the tourism industry with job and business opportunities. Local people were also educated about the need to protect animals and the fact that wildlife can have a higher value alive rather than dead. While small-scale ecotourism cannot eliminate poverty, it can improve the lives of many if the money goes to the right people. The tourist boom in Africa has led to many hotels and operators putting measures in place to benefit the local communities, such as supporting reforestation schemes, sourcing locally produced goods and employing villagers.

## Case study—Kenya: an ecotourist leader

Kenya is located in East Africa and is bordered by Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda and Sudan. It also shares a border with Lake Victoria and the Indian Ocean. It contains numerous wildlife reserves that are home to thousands of plant and animal species.

Kenya has had great success with ecotourism. Through the work of organisations such as the Ecotourism Society of Kenya (ESOK) it has continued to develop and become more sustainable. ESOK is involved in an eco-rating scheme of tours and accommodation and the development of a Safari Code. It also provides education and training in the community, plays an important role in information dissemination, has a resource centre and works through a community outreach program to combine ecotourism and mainstream tourism. ESOK was founded in 1996,

based on the key values of respect for the environment and respect for local people and their cultures, and with a focus on equitable sharing of the responsibilities and benefits of ecotourism. It now has 186 member groups that contribute to research and consultancy, a Standards and Best Practice program, and information sharing between ecotourist ventures in Kenya.

### Civics and citizenship

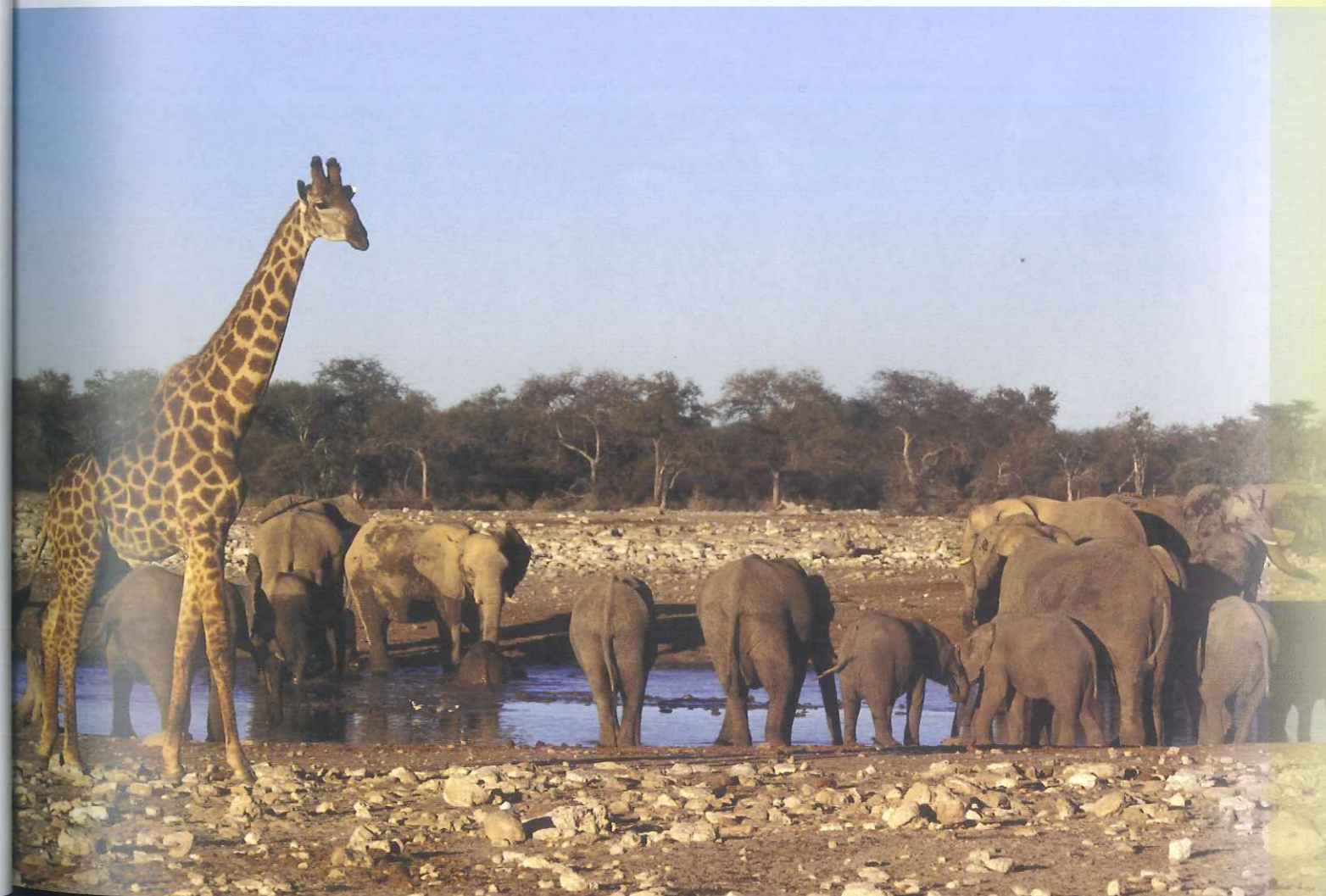
#### Reborn Women Group

The Reborn Women Group is located in Ndhiwa in Kenya and was established in 1999 to support, initiate and strengthen the income of its members, mainly women and orphans. They run eco-cottages and have embraced sustainable projects focused on their cultural backgrounds.

**2.3.5** The 'Big 5' are the animals that travellers come to see in Africa—African elephant, rhinoceros, leopard, lion and buffalo. Many are protected today as their numbers are in decline.



**2.3.4** The wildlife of Africa is a great drawcard for tourists. Safari tours offer exciting opportunities to observe animals in their natural habitat and surroundings, and to camp under the stars at night.



## Is this the real deal?

With so many operators offering ecotours it can be difficult to determine which are worthwhile. Below is an example of one of the many tours on offer in Africa. Campi ya Kanzi advertises that it is 'bringing you the real Africa'—but is it?

Campi ya Kanzi lies within Kuku Group Ranch in southern Kenya. The land is owned by Maasai herdsmen and is rich in biodiversity with many different habitat types on the 1036 square kilometres of African wilderness that it covers. Pools, springs, rivers and lakes attract large animals. The region is a natural corridor between Tsavo and Amboseli National Parks, which are protected areas.



**2.3.6** Maasai herdsmen are a semi-nomadic people who reside near many game parks in East Africa. They are among the most well-known groups due to their distinctive dress and customs. Their ability to farm in deserts and scrublands has been applauded by some but their killing of the lions to protect their herds has come under fire from other sectors.

The camp itself has been built with local materials and in an effort to be sustainable, electricity is solar-powered and water is heated through solar heaters. To cook meals, eco-friendly charcoal fires are used and food scraps are composted for the vegetable garden. There are greywater systems in gardens and ponds for further water conservation.

The camp employs game scouts to ensure there is no animal poaching. The guides set themselves up as living examples of the policies of the Kenya Wildlife Service. Workshops are held for local Maasai communities and are run by teachers and the elders of the tribes. They work together to ensure that a sustainable and eco-friendly experience can be had by all.

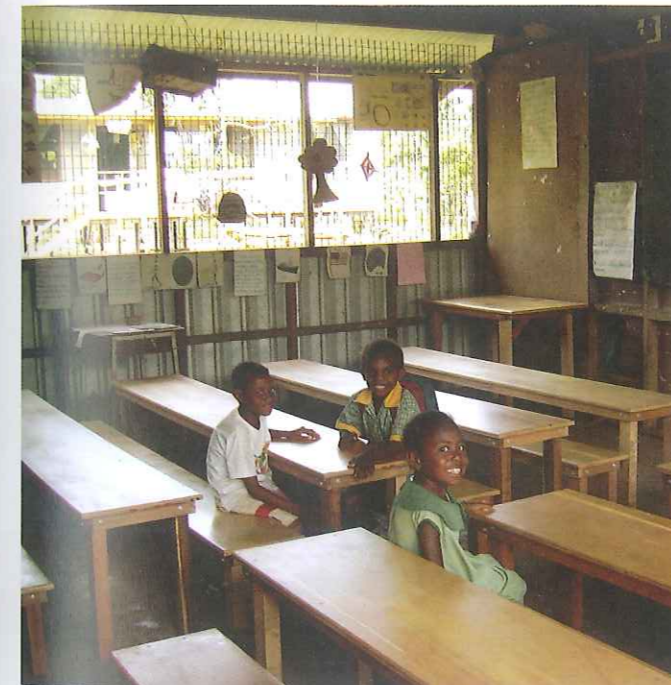
## Volunteer tourism

Volunteer tourism is travel in which the tourist is involved in conservation or social projects on a volunteer basis. These projects are usually for a short period of time compared with other volunteer programs. Projects can be for a few days, a week or a few weeks, and volunteers usually pay for the experience.

Conservation volunteers in Australia can find themselves collecting seeds, weeding, planting trees, counting whale numbers or monitoring sea turtles in Western Australia. After the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria in 2009 volunteer tourists helped to plant trees and rebuild fences.

Most of the volunteer social projects are located in the developing world. Volunteers in these countries can be involved in a wide variety of activities, such as working with children in orphanages or schools, digging latrines, painting or helping to build schools.

The volunteer tourist aims to actively contribute to the well-being of a local community. Volunteers come from all sorts of backgrounds, from students having a 'gap' year to skilled professionals such as doctors, nurses and builders.



**2.3.7** Building school desks in Sogeri, Papua New Guinea. PNG is one of the poorest countries in the Pacific region and has low levels of literacy and school attendance. Prior to the volunteer building project, students sat on the floor. The Australian volunteers were also able to supply the school with books, pens, writing paper and a globe of the world.

## Unit review

### Geographically remembering

- 1 Define the term 'ecotourism'.
- 2 Who are TIES and what is their link to ecotourism? Justify why this organisation is needed in the tourism industry.

### Geographically understanding

- 3 Refer to the ten energy-saving tips from TIES for ecotourism travellers. What do you think it means to fly wisely? Choose another two tips and explain how they reflect ecotourism.
- 4 Refer to the section 'Is this the real deal?' Make a list of the features of Campi ya Kanzi that demonstrate the features of ecotourism.
- 5 Explain why you think ecotourism has been so successful in Africa.
- 6 Are there any disadvantages of ecotourism? Justify your answer with examples.

### Geographically applying

- 7 Choose one of the ecotourist experiences listed on page 37. Research and prepare a one-page report on how the experience would be considered an ecotourism experience. Refer specifically to how the experience impacts on people and the environment.
- 8 Hold a class discussion on the following:  
*Ecotourism works only in developed countries.*
- 9 Research and prepare an electronic presentation on the different types of volunteer tourism that are available throughout the world. Choose one project and consider the following questions before presenting:
  - How long has the organisation been operating?
  - How do they measure results?
  - Do they understand the local language?
  - How is sustainability achieved?
  - How is the local community involved?