

EVOLUTION OF TOURIST REGIONS IN EAST AFRICA

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Attractions and Facilities

All the Governments in East Africa recognize practically the significance of tourism. And the industry will never return to the dark days of indifference when its activities were a part-time occupation, in which neither the colonial governments nor our people took a serious interest. But only rational developmental programme and activities will lead the travel trade on to a bright future. No wonder, therefore, that all the three Governments recognize the need to assess the potential of the tourist attractions, the degree and direction to which they have been developed, and the service and related facilities available to satisfy the visitors who come. And, certainly, those attractions must be conserved through planned development. Therefore, in the light of the bright prospects forecast in world tourism¹, a planned development which involves a concerted effort in all relevant fronts could uplift East African tourism to staggering heights by the end of the 1970s.

Numerous factors have contributed to the present status of East African tourism during the period 1938 – 1970² and several works exist to throw some light on the development of the industry to the present. ^{3, 4, 5, 6, 7.}

Innumerable attractions lure tourists into East Africa. Details of these have been discussed elsewhere⁸. They include wildlife, natural aviaries, sport fisheries, climate and resources for sports, antiquities and historical sites, cultural heritage and scenery, landscape and mountaineering.

The first map summarizes the distribution of some of the attractions, the tourist roads and some of the service facilities. Details of their development and adequacy can be sought elsewhere⁹. In 1968 Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania received respectively, about 328, 95 and 140 million shillings of foreign currency from tourism. This is a long way from 10 million shillings which East Africa received in 1948 and the consensus of opinion among students of East African tourism is that aggregate potential of East Africa's resources and attractions is enormous. Developments have so far only scratched the surface of natural and cultural resources which serve as tourist attractions to East Africa. For there are enough of these resources here to make the East African tourist region in two decades the most tourist-trodden playground south of the Mediterranean. Already East Africa's major antiquities are known, and her beauty spots are magic names in the travel world: Kilimanjaro, Serengeti, Ngorongoro, Mountains of the Moon, the Murchison Falls..., not to mention Ngulia, Malindi, Ngurdoto, Mweya or Treetops.

Evolution of the Tourist Regions

On the basis of the concentration, diversity and magnetism of potential tourist attractions, E. Africa can be divided into four major categories high-, moderate-, low- and negligible- potential regions. Those major nature conservancy areas, the scenic countryside, the coastal beaches, and areas of first-class antiquities, palaeontological remains and fishing possibilities are high-potential regions. At present the absence of all these attractions designates an area a negligible-potential region. The other two classes fall in between. The four categories are based upon potential, regardless of the existing degree of development. Some other factors are also taken into account in assigning classes to regions. For both domestic and foreign, tourism, the spatial location of a tourist attraction is important, in relation to the existing national centres of travel-conscious populations and in relation to entry points by foreign tourists. Thus, though wildlife and scenic attractions of the Kidepo Valley National Park (Fig. 1) are in many respects superior to those of the Murchison Falls National Park, both Uganda's centre of travel-conscious population and the main points of entry for foreign tourists are south of the Nile — Kyoga — Elgon tourist divide. Consequently, Murchison Park has a much higher potential as a money earner than has Kidepo. Thus, Murchison Park is designated high-potential while Kidepo is moderate-potential (Fig. 2). On the other hand, because Kigezi is so near the Queen Elizabeth National Park and other attractions which already receive thousands of tourists annually, and because of Kigezi's proximity to a major entry point of foreign tourists who head immediately for Uganda from a friendly neighbouring state, Kigezi has Class I potential. In contrast, Mbeya and the Rungwe region (Fig. 2) are so far from major tourist attractions, so far from the present major points of tourist entry into Tanzania, and so remote from financially capable and travel-conscious centres of Tanzanian population, that in the foreseeable future Rungwe remains a Class II potential attraction. Even with improved political and generating climate in Southern Africa, Rungwe on its own is hard to visualise as a first-class attraction.

Also an area is classified on the basis of available internal mobility (i.e., roads, railways or water transport, airfields...), proximity to major points of tourist entry or to domestic centres of travel-conscious populations, and on the basis of development and conservation programmes (completed and planned) and available hotel and lodge accommodation. The five developmental categories thus, adopted are: highly developed, well developed, moderately developed underdeveloped and undeveloped, respectively, designated *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*; and *e*. Fig. 2 depicts the distribution of attractions according to both the potential of development (I — IV) and the stages of development already achieved (*a* — *e*). Thus, whereas the Murchison and Kigezi, Serengeti-Ngorongoro and Usambara, Nairobi and Lamu are all regions of Class I, potential, present developments designate them variously into Classes Ib and Id (Fig. 2).

TOURISM MAPS OF EAST AFRICA

The potential attraction of a region will change very little in future, with respect to domestic tourism. New airport developments, regional developments in the membership of the East African Community... will, however, affect the *potential* classification slightly. But developments in mobility and provision of service facilities should progressively see most regions reclassified toward categories *b* and *a*.

It is, however, pertinent to realise, for example, that the categories *a*, *b*, *c*, *d* and *e* are relative to each other, and are time-dependent. Thus, whereas the Nairobi region is now in Class *Ib*, in relation to the cumulative stage of development which may be realised by 1980, the Nairobi region of to-day will be re-viewed, possibly as Class *Id*. Also by 1980 Lake Rukwa region (now Class *Ie*) may become a Class *Ib* region. That Class *Ib* will not necessarily be equivalent to the Class *Ib* of Mafia Island of to-day, or even better than the Class *Ic* of Serengeti-Ngorongoro of to-day. Thus, the classification herein adopted indicates relative potentials and existing developments as they are to-day. Fig. 2 will, therefore, require periodic revisions to keep it up to date. But at present Fig. 2 indicates a consistent classification throughout the whole of East Africa. It will be a welcome improvement for anyone to devise a classification that affords objective comparison between East Africa and neighbouring states; and which will facilitate objective internal comparisons of regional redistributions of categories from time to time.

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