

August 29, 1969 – African Tourist Year

From the official Ethiopian post office presentation folder:

5c – Hunting

Hunting animals and birds with a camera can be one of the most exciting and satisfying parts of a visit to Ethiopia. The Imperial Ethiopian Government is establishing national parks and reserves at Awash, the Simiens, Gambela, Omo, the Bale Mountains (proposed) and Danakil where life is protected. Here, the famous Walia Ibex found only in Ethiopia, and may be observed (with powerful binoculars), along with the greater and lesser kudu, varieties of gazelle, Grevy's zebra, wild asses, lions, leopards, the Colubus monkey, the Simien Fox, and unusually large array of birds and water fowl, and many others. The Rift Valley Lakes are especially good for birds and water fowl.

Outside of the preserves there are large controlled areas for those who prefer to hunt with a gun instead of a camera. Hunters should be sure to procure a license at the Wildlife Conservation Department before hunting, to learn which animals may or may not be killed. The professional hunters working in Ethiopia can give much information and can help in assuring the hunter that he is killing an old animal that can no longer reproduce so that Ethiopia's present good supply of game will not be unnecessarily diminished.

10c – Camping

Camping in Ethiopia is not a city of blue tents and a Coca Cola refreshment stand. Camping in here is setting up your private campsite on a ridge overlooking a deep and rich valley, and waiting for the soft strangeness of the African light to move gently through a spray of dusky colors before it drops abruptly behind the escarpment.

Camping in Ethiopia where active young Ethiopians are always available to offer assistance, is both delightful and inexpensive.

Ethiopia is an open land for camping. The visitor need only be sure he is not on private property, be careful of his fire and leave his campsite clean to enjoy the most intensely personal way of seeing this exciting land. This is the way to wander over tracks in lush Sidamo and Kaffa provinces, to travel through the landscape of southern Shoa with its handsome tukuls (round, thatched-roof homes) and its varied shades of green and yellow. Camp quietly along the shores of the great Rift Valley Lakes, and, when you are ready for civilization, visit a small hotel dining room not too far away and perhaps rent a boat. North to the Blue Nile Falls, Gondar and the Simien Mountains. Here, the scenery is fierce and proud, and the nights, purple at dusk, soon become cold. Further north, at the bottom of the 8000 feet escarpment, camp on the white sandy beaches of Massawa and the Dahlac Islands.

15c – Fishing

Massawa and the Dahlac Islands were once a secret known only to the connoisseurs of tropical pleasure gardens. But word is beginning to travel now about the 128 off-shore islands that bide some of the most beautiful marine life ever available to sport fishermen. Handling, trolling and the excitement of spear fishing will bring the sportsmen barracuda, tuna, little tunny, rock-cods, red snappers, blood snappers, spotted groupers, Sudanese groupers and many more, some found only in these waters.

Skilled Massawa fishermen are ready to rent their boats and equipment, and share their knowledge of the shoals and inlets most likely to net the kind of catch you are looking for. Available too is skin-diving equipment so that the adventurous can investigate for himself the rare beauty of the marine life below. Jacques Yves Cousteau, world-famous oceanographer, brought his cameras to Massawa and the Dahlac Islands for just this purpose last year.

Proper relaxation awaits the sportsmen at Massawa where hotels with fine continental cuisine are ready to serve him. Massawa and the islands offer swimming and water skiing as well as fishing and skin diving. Ancient archeological sites like Adulis are nearby to explore, and the crowded Arab-style market in the middle of Massawa Island and on Edaga Berai offer Ethiopian handicrafts and exquisite Red Sea shells for the fisherman's wife. Asmara and the highlands are just a 15-minute flight away, up 8000 breathless feet of the escarpment.

Tourists think of Ethiopia as a land of blue-purple rock and spectacular gorges, of unique art and mysterious history hinted at in the stelae of Axum and the churches of Lalibela. But Ethiopia's richness for tourist and vacationer goes beyond beauty and mystery to offer a range of all year sporting possibilities that is the envy of other countries. Where else could a man conquer 15,000 feet of jagged mountain and hunt big game, camp on rolling rich hills and water skiing tropical sea, fish in almost untouched deep sea fishing grounds and in secret inland waterways?

20c – Water Skiing

When Europe is at its greyest, that's the time the sky is brightest and the Red Sea waters near Massawa move most sweetly under water skis. Water skiing about and around the 128 Dahlac Islands off Massawa is a lovely way to spend a winter vacation. The sun is hot but not too hot. The water is a "limpid" as the advertisements say.

Massawa is the place where the traveler looking for exotic beauty still unspoiled can find those secluded white sand beaches that writers always talk about. Indigo and gold-orange fishes swim among the coral and mother-of-pearl. Some of the islands are covered with mangrove trees. Others are the rocky tips of a massive undersea mountain. They are all sizes, all shapes, many are not fully explored.

Water sporting, though it has its capital at Massawa, is not limited to the sea. In the highlands just south of Addis Ababa are the blue crater lakes of Bishoftu. Water skiing can be an uncommon joy here in the heart of ancient volcanos. Boating and water skiing on the Rift Valley Lakes offer yet another charm, for here are water birds of many species, colorful, curious and close enough to photograph well. Lake Abiata will look like pink fluff, hidden as it is under a burden of thousands of flamingoes.

25c – Mountain Climbing

Ethiopia's Simien Mountains are one of the few remaining frontiers for the mountain climber who wants to test his skill where no other has climbed before him. The Simiens offer a distinct challenge they are as high as the Alps, but, because they are near the equator, they have no covering of snow. What they present then to the climber is 12,000-15,000 feet of rock sheer cliffs that stretch hundreds of feet, deep gashes, precipitous angles and strange formations that seem to change shape with the angle of the sun. Here is a true test for the chisel and the rope, the legs the lungs and the heart.

In the Simiens, climbing is only part of the pleasure, for here the sportsman has the chance to see rare and beautiful animal and bird life. Most famous is the Walia Ibex, a graceful creature found only in Ethiopia and sadly on the verge of extinction. Those that are left inhabit craggy gorges in the Simien Reserve. The Simien Fox and the Colubus monkey, also found only in Ethiopia, are more easily seen.

Half of the adventure in climbing in the Simiens is getting to the base of the mountain. Although access roads are being panned, the only way to reach into the mountains at present is on the back of a horse or narrow mountain paths.

But one need not be a rope-and-chisel climber to enjoy the Simiens. Much can be seen and appreciated from mule-back and from walking (frequently upward). As with mountaineering anywhere in the world, do not proceed without an experienced guide who knows the region.

As a celebration of Ethiopia's sporting wonders, the Imperial Ethiopian Ministry of Posts, T. & T., Post Office Department, is issuing a series of stamps on Hunting, Camping, Fishing, Water Skiing and Mountain Climbing for "1969. International Year of African Tourism".