

Living a dream with a good viewpoint

By Herman Erdtsieck and Marion Neidt, social entrepreneurs and owners of MamboViewPoint in Mambo/Mtae/Lushoto – Usambara mountains – Tanzania - www.MamboViewPoint.org

We were getting older but still in the mood to do something. Also, if possible, we would like to leave the world a bit better than we found it. We travelled through many continents, worked with some development agencies and saw very many development projects. We were unhappy with all the money that went to expensive overhead and offices, 4x4 cars and often with very poor or even contra productive results.

What to do? You can resign and live an easy life in western luxury, but we are not people like that. Moreover we have no children and also not many valuable properties that, for many people seem to enrich their lives, but for us only felt as ties and blocking our freedom.

And thus it happened that we found ourselves on a fact finding mission through Kenya and Tanzania, looking for a nice place to build or to take over a lodge. This should become a stable and safe green base from where we could do projects in the area to improve people's quality of life or organise conferences for people and aid workers in the conflict areas around.



"How did you find this stunning place?" is the most asked question. No, in Tanzania you don't find many "for sale" signboards. But we were lucky. During our trip we asked around and it looked like you could "buy" any piece of land as long as you bring money, sometimes a lot, sometimes reasonable. In the end we had about seven options with the present one being far the best. In many tourist places like around Arusha, some development is already there or it got stuck due to facts like the madness of the mass tourism. Not so in the Usambara Mountains. With their wide vistas, cool climate, winding paths and picturesque villages, the Usambara's are a potential destination for sustainable tourism. People are friendly, peaceful, happy and hard working, but many live below the poverty line and for mass tourism it's too far out.



We found the place through Ndege (which means bird in Kiswahili), a manager of a luxury lodge in Lushoto who was originating from a settlement close to the village Mambo. He was also searching for a possibility to bring some development in his home-village. A perfect match, how lucky we were again! You can understand that he is our manager now. This is tremendously helpful since he knows the local people very well. He knows about their needs, and understands their hopes and wishes. Together with him we are able to solve the many problems that irrefutably go hand in hand with change.

Did you ever dream to buy a top of a mountain?
We didn't but found ourselves having done right that.

Our place is near the village Mambo. Mambo as a word has a very positive association in Kiswahili. (Mambo poa! means "very good!") Once upon a time a huge rock fell down from the mountain and people were astonished about this happening on this beautiful spot and since then, the village is called Mambo. So we called our lodge MamboViewPoint, Mambo for the village and something good and viewpoint because of the stunning view over the African plains and mountains, but also because of our vision regarding development.

What happened next is too much for this short story. After having every morning over 100 people waiting for a job we made a list with over 650 women and 250 men who helped us in shifts to build the lodge. Some had some skills, others not. But in the end many have new skills and some even a new profession. Everybody who wanted gained some income during building. The best effect however was that it became also a bit a project of the people from Mambo and around, they felt proud of being able to build something nice as our lodge and most sundays when family from Dar or Arusha is over they come to show their relatives what "they" have built.

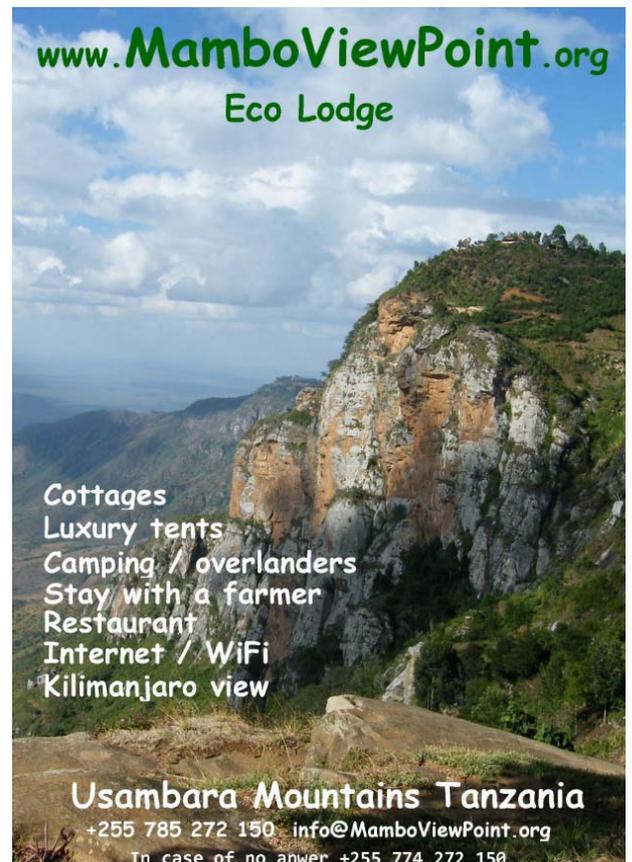
Since people worked very hard, we managed to receive the first guest already within a year. With

them also came some volunteers who taught at the school, gave computer courses for school teachers, instructed women how to make cheese and many other things. Since the area is very fertile and has many resources, we focus on projects that give an added value to the things produced already like making cheese from milk, biogas from cow dung, juices from all fruits around etc.

For sustainable development we think it is important not to give aid because it makes people dependent but to empower the people. If they manage to pull them selves out of poverty it is far better. To achieve that they only need a little push, some advice or some tools or a loan.

Since we are a kind of far out most tourists that are coming are not the ones who like the mass tourism but really are interested in the local culture. Before we started we did not realize that however we are remote we are not isolated; did we have to go to many places to visit people in the past, now many people, among which the famous and powerful, come to visit and share ideas with us. Also local people from the Tanzanian cities found our place to relax and also people from the Usambaras like to spend some time to drink a soda or to have a local meal. No reason anymore to leave our small paradise!

Of course we had also the necessary challenges like the low level of education from the local people and some distrust of the government. But those problems are to overcome and especially the villagers are eager to learn new skills and to change their lives.



www.MamboViewPoint.org
Eco Lodge

- Cottages
- Luxury tents
- Camping / overlanders
- Stay with a farmer
- Restaurant
- Internet / WiFi
- Kilimanjaro view

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We dreamed of having a green lodge in Africa and doing some development projects around. We got a top of a mountain with a stunning view and beautiful buildings and gardens. We became a meeting place for different cultures, among which many interesting and nice people from all over the world, were able to initiate a lot of projects and are planning even more which all together can create a substantial and sustainable regional development. Both, local people and our guests are enthusiastic and come up with many ideas and support to make the best out of it.



Sometimes dreams become even more than truth.

Karibu sana (most welcome) at MamboViewPoint to have your own sweet dreams which might come true like ours did! Or as one of our guest said: "Some may call this place "end of the world" but you made it in a new beginning for a lot of people!"

The review of two of our guests below gives possibly the best atmospheric description of what we achieved.

By good luck we were introduced to Marion & Herman's little heaven in Northern Tanzania and with our FairWater.org Foundation we started a co-operation to assist in their local WatSan (Water Sanitation) Projects. Last end of December we visited their Eco-Lodge project to set-up the WatSan projects, but little we knew about the amazing place itself.

Literally, an unforgettable breathtaking experience, one day, waking up at the very edge of an 1300m high cliff, overlooking a game park, with the mighty Kilimanjaro in the background, the next day, overlooking the early morning clouds as we were in heaven.

Even the nights on the cliff were amazing; as there was no other light around, and with an altitude of nearly 2.000m high, thousands of stars seem to be fingertip close and between these the Milky Way showed up with brilliance that I have never seen before. This is surely an unforgettable place, not to mention, last but not least, the warm, friendly welcome, the healthy food, and handmade, local yogurts and various types of cheese in the morning, creating a family ambience around Marion & Herman, who are latterly living their dream in making this incredible endeavor, happen as a natural miracle that seems to be originated in a natural way, as with no effort at all.

Do not tell this to anyone, I thought at first, let's not spoil this hidden place at the end of several hours of never ending winding dirt roads with potholes and sometimes scary corners when the roads makes a sharp turn with the mountain on one side and a deep, deep valley at the other side. You do need to have nerves and to trust your driving skills to enjoy the view while driving.

But OK, if you promise to keep this information just for yourself, or only reveal this to anyone that would understand the beauty of it and keep it a secret as well, you should go there yourself and find out all about it, and come back as reborn, with the Mambo View for ever on your mind.

Stay Well !!

FairWater.org
Sureyya Gok and Paul van Beers