

# ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Find out more about the DER Touristik Foundation  
and its global activities



**DER**  
Touristik  
Foundation



Side by side for increased future prospects in Tanzania: ECLAT project partner Toima Kiroya and Sören Hartmann, Chairman of the DER Touristik Foundation

## EDITORIAL

Since 2014, the DER Touristik Foundation has been working hard in less-developed tourist destinations to ensure that children in remote areas get the chance to attend school, young people are given the opportunity to take vocational training courses and animal welfare and nature conservation get the support they need, all while adopting a sustainable approach to its operations.

This brochure is designed to demonstrate what the non-profit organisation has managed to achieve in just a few years thanks to all those involved. It will not only provide you with an overview of our global funding projects but will also allow you to learn more about the people behind the projects.

We have achieved a lot, which is encouraging and is providing us with fresh momentum. This will enable us to help our project partners and support ongoing and upcoming aid projects. We're looking well into the future to ensure our planet provides us all with good quality of life.

Sören Hartmann  
Chairman of the Management Board of the DER Touristik Foundation



Shouldering the workload: not only young men but also young women are trained at the Vocational Training Centre in Tanzania.

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# FIGHTING POVERTY & CREATING NEW PROSPECTS.

The DER Touristik Foundation supports social and ecological projects in tourism regions. The work that the organisation does all over the world provides young people with future prospects, empowers women and makes a considerable contribution to improving nature conservation and animal welfare.

## Helping people to help themselves

The DER Touristik Foundation was set up as a non-profit organisation in 2014 by DER Touristik. The DER Touristik Foundation promotes social as well as ecological projects in tourism regions. It supports people on-site, opens up positive future perspectives to young people, strengthens the role of

women, champions animal welfare and contributes effectively towards nature conservation. Initially, it focused on school-building projects in Africa and Asia. Further down the line, it also added vocational training projects as well as nature and wildlife conservation initiatives. Everything it does is designed to help people help themselves. Donations are used

100% for the funding projects – every cent is used efficiently and for its intended purpose.

## Projects all over the world

Since it was founded, the DER Touristik Foundation has funded a total of 86 projects in 26 countries across 5 continents in cooperation with other non-profit associations, foundations and aid organisations. Numerous projects have now been successfully completed while others are still ongoing and new ones are being added. Even during the Corona pandemic, the DER Touristik Foundation fully supported its



project partners. Many aid projects struggled to survive, as donations largely disappeared and tourism, as an important source of income, came to an almost complete standstill. The DER Touristik Foundation's reliable support enables aid organisations to continue their important work.

## The future starts now

Since 2022, a focus has been on the internationalisation of the DER Touristik Foundation. In the meantime, the international DER Touristik subsidiaries in Switzerland, France, Eastern Europe, the UK and the Nordic countries have also joined the

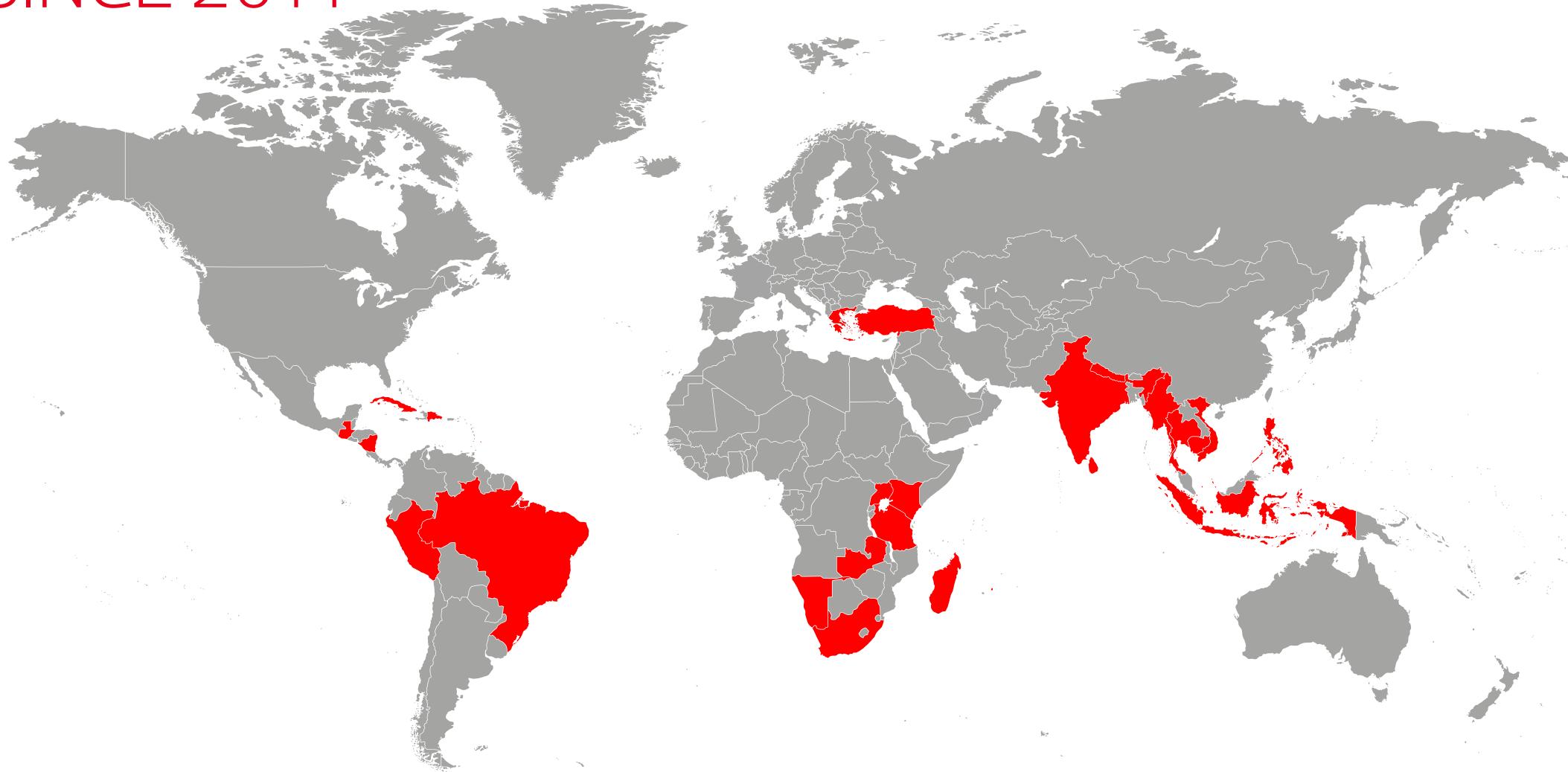
DER Touristik Foundation as full members and support the association. Bundling strengths of the entire DER Touristik Group for a common good cause is clear to see. In the

future, the work of the DER Touristik Foundation is expected to have an even greater impact. ■

## Sustainable tourism

Since 2020, clients of DER Touristik travel operators have been given the opportunity to learn more about selected projects, such as Smiling Gecko (p. 24) and Pimali (p. 28) on site for themselves and thus gain an authentic insight into the destination country. This ensures that travellers benefit from sustainable tourism and are made aware of pressing issues in the local areas surrounding their travel destinations.

# FUNDING PROJECTS SINCE 2014



## 26 COUNTRIES

- Barbados
- Brazil
- Cambodia
- Cuba
- Dominican Republic
- Greece
- Guatemala
- India
- Indonesia
- Kenya
- Madagascar
- Mauritius
- Myanmar
- Namibia
- Nepal
- Nicaragua
- Peru
- Philippines
- South Africa
- Sri Lanka
- Tanzania
- Thailand
- Türkiye
- Uganda
- Vietnam
- Zambia

## 86 PROJECTS

- School-building: 68 projects
- Training/education: 10 projects
- Animal welfare: 4 projects
- Nature conservation: 4 projects

# OUR MAIN ACTIVITIES

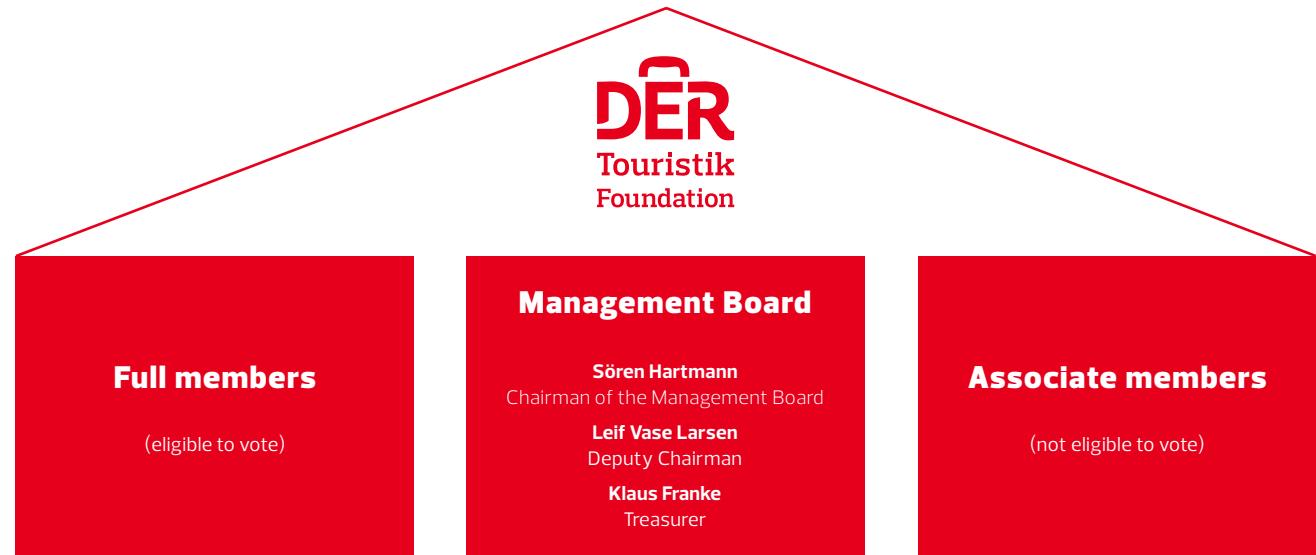
**1. Investing in people**

**2. Nature conservation**

**3. Animal protection**

**DER**  
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Foundation

# MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE



**Current full members**

- DER Touristik Deutschland GmbH
- DER Deutsches Reisebüro GmbH & Co. OHG
- DER Touristik Online GmbH
- DERPART Reisevertrieb GmbH
- DER Touristik Hotels & Resorts GmbH
- DER Touristik Partner-Service Verwaltungs GmbH
- DER Touristik DMC GmbH
- DER Touristik Nordic AB
- DER Touristik UK Limited
- DER Touristik Eastern Europe a.s.
- DER Touristik Suisse AG
- Travel Lab S.A.S.

**DER Touristik Foundation**

Do you have any questions about our projects?  
Then feel free to contact us. We look forward to hearing from you.

**You can contact us as follows:**

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Emil-von-Behring-Straße 6 · 60424 Frankfurt, Germany  
or directly via email: [cr@dertouristik.com](mailto:cr@dertouristik.com)



# INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Obtaining a school education is still a privilege in many countries. As such, every investment in education lays the foundations for the further development of any society. DER Touristik funds the construction of schools and the creation of education and training programmes in poorer countries and therefore provides disadvantaged children, young people and women with new future prospects.

School is fun when you learn with friends

Tanzania

# EMBOREET REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

**The big picture: educational support, environmental programmes and wildlife conservation.**

## **Maasai Women's Education Centre**

Maasai women traditionally have very few rights, are usually married off while still in their teens and must then look after themselves and their children – often alone as the men usually have several wives. Women are also socially isolated and even have little contact with each other. The women's groups address all of these points. Since the Women's Education Centre, which we fund, was opened in October 2017, Maasai women from the surrounding villages meet to discuss their experiences. A positive side effect is that the women see how important education is, recognise how valuable it also is for their children and send them to school. The majority of the women's groups has received financial aid in the form of microloans for them to use as startup capital.

## **Vocational Training Centre**

There are hardly any qualified professional bricklayers, carpenters or metalworkers in the Simanjiro District, which means that expensive tradespeople need to be brought in from the neighbouring region of Arusha for construction projects. At the same time, many school leavers in the region are unable to find work because they don't have

any professional vocational training. The Vocational Training Centre, which we fund, was opened in November 2021. It is designed for secondary school leavers and aims to provide 20 young people per year in each discipline with future prospects in the region. It involves a dual approach, whereby the training is put into practice on site as part of construction projects. ■





Philomena Kiroya, Sören Hartmann, Ulrike Braun, Kathrin Sommer and Toima Kiroya in front of the Women's Education Centre (L to R)

## IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

### Smart into the future:

#### How Tanzania's youth are becoming wildlife experts

Human-wildlife conflict is becoming an issue on account of the growing population in the region and in the areas bordering Ngorongoro and Tarangire National Parks. The Living in Harmony with Nature project is designed to educate secondary school pupils aged 14 to 20 in the Simanjiro District on the importance of a sensible and sustainable approach to animal welfare and wildlife conservation. Since 2017, more than 500 secondary school pupils have been educated annually at three schools using descriptive and illustrative reading material and environment days have also been organised in the neighbouring Tarangire National Park. The pupils transfer their knowledge to their parents and grandparents, who are often illiterate and thus difficult to reach via informational material.

## ELEPHANT CONSERVATION

### Hot peppers instead of shooting:

#### How to keep elephants at bay with chillies

The Ngorongoro Conservation Area in the north of Tanzania is home to the semi-nomadic Maasai pastoralists who practice agriculture and keep livestock. As the areas where the Maasai live overlap with the territories of wild animals, there are constant conflicts – which the DER Touristik Foundation helps to defuse through simple measures. A prime example is the use of fences coated in chilli paste for defining elephant corridors as these have been hugely successful. Impressively, the chilli fences keep the pachyderms at bay as their highly developed olfactory organ is extremely sensitive. The local population helps to build and maintain the chilli fences, accompanied by a comprehensive information and training campaign on elephant conservation.

## STRONGER TOGETHER: OUR COOPERATION PARTNERS IN TANZANIA

### PAMS Foundation

The PAMS Foundation, founded in 2006, consists of a team of 200 rangers who strive to protect wildlife in Tanzania. The foundation's aim is to protect wildlife and nature in a way that also ensures that the local population benefits.

### ECLAT Development Foundation

ECLAT is a non-profit NGO that was set up in 2008 in order to improve the lives of poor communities in Tanzania. Its work includes the economic empowerment of women, the construction of educational institutions and the supply of clean water.

### Upendo - registered charity for the support of development projects in Africa

Upendo promotes development cooperation at local community level in Africa, in particular in Tanzania. The project work is planned and carried out in close cooperation and consultation with the government which is ultimately responsible for the country and its people.



Tanzania

# AFRICA AMINI ALAMA

## On the right track: how children of Meru farmers and Maasai families in Tanzania gain new perspectives

In the North of Tanzania, near Arusha National Park, the non-profit organisation Africa Amini Alama has established a regional development project. Each year, over 1,000 children receive primary education in three English-speaking primary schools. In the infirmary, ill people in need of social care receive support and treatment. Trainees from poor families are afforded the opportunity to do vocational training as carpenters, bricklayers or mechanics. Girls and women can obtain a qualification in a tailoring workshop. The Original Maasai Lodge built and managed by Maasai is also part of the Africa-Amini-Alama project. Here, Maasai who received training at Africa Amini Alama, are employed as guides, chefs or service staff, for example.

### Practical training in tourism

The latest branch of what has now grown into a grand project, is the secondary school that opened in January 2022. Here, each year 40 pupils are given an opportunity for the first time to do a

secondary education diploma and a state-recognised vocational qualification in the hospitality industry as part of a four-year programme. In addition to agriculture, tourism significantly contributes towards the economic development of Tanzania and also harbours potential for growth. For that reason, the DER Touristik Foundation has been funding 15 secondary school pupils since 2022. After all, pupils are presented with many opportunities after leaving school: as qualified workers in the kitchen, service, bar, housekeeping and reservation divisions, they are in demand in the local tourism sector and can pursue adequate employment. From

the first year of training, internships at tourism companies and many practical hours in the curriculum ensure that pupils receive a hands-on education. Partner companies hold their own seminars and can thus become acquainted with potential employees already during the training phase. ■



### Our cooperation partner: Africa Amini Alama Deutschland e.V.

Founded in 2009, the association began with the construction of an infirmary for the local population. The association gradually extended its commitment from medical care to school, vocational training as well as social issues, and is financed by donations and sponsorships.



## South Africa

# LEARNERSHIP IN GENERAL TRAVEL

## Potential meets perspective: using education to combat poverty

Tourism represents an important industry for South Africa, yet there is a lack of qualified and experienced travel and tourism consultants. The one-year Learnership in General Travel was initiated by Tourvest Destination Management (TDM) in order to resolve this problem. TDM is one of the leading travel management groups in Southern Africa. With the help of the Learnership Programme, provided thanks to support from the educational foundation StudyTrust, TDM aims to reduce the high number of unemployed young people from poor backgrounds through qualifications and permanent employment. Trainees not only learn about theory, but also the practical application of knowledge in the workplace: how do I present myself in a professional environment? How do I behave towards people

from different ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds? How do I draw up a budget? Following completion of the course in general travel and tourism, participants receive a certificate as proof of their qualification. Since 2007, more than 130 trainees have already undertaken a Learnership at TMD, most of whom continue to be employed at TDM and are now an integral part of the company.

### Four winners

Since 2022 the DER Touristik Foundation has been funding four

trainees, who are mentored by employees of GoVacation Africa, the specialist for destination support and marketing under the TDM umbrella. They get to experience all departments and receive specialised training on products, processes and guest support guidelines. After completing their training, they have the opportunity to be taken on: a win-win situation both for the four trainees and the company, since they already possess the necessary skills to provide an outstanding service to customers cared for by GoVacation Africa. ■

### Our cooperation partner: StudyTrust

Established in 1974, the educational foundation and non-profit organisation affords educational opportunities and scholarships to young people regardless of their origin or skin colour.



Vietnam



# KOTO

## Tastes good to everyone: With KOTO to secure future prospects in Vietnam's catering and hotel industry

The KOTO educational facility supports young people aged between 16 and 22 from the surroundings of Hanoi. They come from difficult backgrounds and in some cases are victims of sexual abuse. By means of a two-year educational programme according to international standards, KOTO offers young people a professional future perspective, while also providing access to the job market within the hospitality and tourism industry. The name KOTO has a good reputation in Vietnam: many hotels not only prefer to employ young people from the KOTO project due to social commitment, but also, above all, because they are well trained and good team players. The young people have learnt that by helping each other, a whole life can be changed. After all, KOTO stands for Know One, Teach One and means everyone transfers

their knowledge to others. Ninety-three percent of pupils complete the training, 100 percent are offered and accept a job in the hotel or catering industry. Prior to the pandemic, the DER Touristik Foundation supported the renovation and expansion of the KOTO training restaurant in Hanoi, where trainees complete their practical training. Owing to the Corona crisis, all sales from the gastronomy industry, in



which the trainees are employed, collapsed. That's why, in 2020, the DER Touristik Foundation financed the accommodation, teaching and health care of some trainees over a period of 24 months, to prevent these young people from losing their training and future prospects. Several trainees are supported again in 2022 as well. ■

### Our cooperation partner: KOTO Foundation

The KOTO Foundation, whose sphere of influence extends from Australia to Vietnam, cares for disadvantaged young people in Vietnam. KOTO's philosophy is embodied in its name: KOTO stands for Know One, Teach One – knowledge should be passed on. It is there to be shared. This is the main idea of the Vietnam–Australian founder of KOTO, Jimmy Pham.



Cambodia



# SMILING GECKO

## Smiling Gecko helps socially disadvantaged Cambodians smile again

### The opportunity to earn a living

With the help of his aid organisation Smiling Gecko, Hannes Schmid, a former celebrity photographer, developed a plot of land spanning 140 hectares, 60 kilometres north-west of the capital Phnom Penh, where socially disadvantaged Cambodians can attend school and learn a trade. The really special thing about it all is the holistic approach. As such, all the elements of the development aid project are interconnected, mutually support each other and are underpinned by training and education. As a result, Smiling Gecko helps to improve the quality of life of the rural population and safeguard their livelihood and food security. The cluster project focuses

on agriculture and livestock farming, production and trade, hospitality and tourism as well as training and education.

### Independent lives

The DER Touristik Foundation has been supporting the Smiling Gecko Farmhouse Resort & Spa since 2019. The funding has so far enabled

10 individuals to be trained as professionals. Young locals from poor families are trained at the Farmhouse Resort & Spa in both the theoretical and practical sides of service, cooking, housekeeping and tourism. This is designed to enable them to earn a sustainable living for themselves and their families and lead independent lives. ▶

### Our cooperation partner: Smiling Gecko

In order to help destitute children and families in Cambodia, Smiling Gecko adopts a holistic approach which enables and encourages people in rural areas to lead independent lives.





Hannes Schmid, Founder of Smiling Gecko

## "I HAD TO DO SOMETHING!"

An interview with Hannes Schmid, Founder of Smiling Gecko

### Hannes, how did you first get involved?

The trigger for me was an upsetting encounter. I met a girl in Cambodia whose father had maimed her with a blowtorch. I mean, I had already seen a lot of misery, poverty, hunger and despair but that was really too much for me. I felt that I had to do something.

### You ended up establishing the Smiling Gecko project. How do you train people who have never been to school?

With a lot of patience and, most of all, respect. When our newcomers first arrive, they're like inquisitive children, even if they're over 30 years old. They're learning! Then they go through a phase where they have learned a few things already and they grow in self-confidence and develop a sense of pride. By the end, they're individuals, real characters who know what they want.

### Have you had any setbacks?

Oh, yes, lots! Pigs, chickens and fish have died, vegetables have failed to grow and people have failed to understand me and vice versa – of course, there were all sorts of setbacks.

### Money is always an issue, no?

Yes, especially in terms of the project's future. I'm replaceable but I need to find ways for Smiling Gecko to become independent in the future, starting with the funding side of things. It can only be independent if it is profitable. I would like to build a rice mill, for example, which farmers could take over as part of a cooperative. I would then be able to help thousands of people get out of poverty.

### How have Smiling Gecko and the Farmhouse fared during the pandemic?

The Farmhouse had to partially close in spring 2020 and 2021 due to the coronavirus. During the lockdown, the trainees kept their jobs and were even able to acquire and develop several new skills during this time. The Farmhouse is currently receiving plenty of bookings from Cambodian tourists and is being increasingly used to host conferences, which is partly making up for the lack of international guests. The Farmhouse also offers high-quality catering for events which is raising its profile and providing a new source of income. ■



A keen nose for flavour: Mariya Un Noun checking a Cambodian delicacy for seasoning.

## "COOKING IS MY LIFE"

From the slums to Michelin-starred kitchens: the incredible story of Mariya Un Noun

Mariya's life started off like that of many poor girls in Cambodia. When she turned 12 years old, her mother sold her as a maid to a rich family. Her mother needed the money and signed to say that Mariya wouldn't have any rights and would work for the family for her entire life. When the man of the house tried to rape her she narrowly escaped and fled. However, in order to be able to pay off her mother's debt, she worked hard at a clothing factory. She was then entered into

forced marriage. Luckily, Mariya and her two small children were picked up by Smiling Gecko where fortune finally smiled upon her – primarily when she discovered her passion for cooking and realised she was extremely talented at it. One day, the CEO of the hotel management school in Lucerne stopped by – and was blown away by Mariya's dishes. Without further ado, he took the young Cambodian to Switzerland with him so that she could study at the hotel management

school in Lucerne. What's more, Mariya also passed on her knowledge of little-known Khmer cuisine to renowned Michelin-starred chefs. Mariya Un Noun is now the head chef at the Smiling Gecko Farmhouse where guests can experience how she allows the local cuisine to shine in her own unique and creative way. Her signature dish is a mouth-watering example: fish amok with Cambodian Kampot pepper. ■

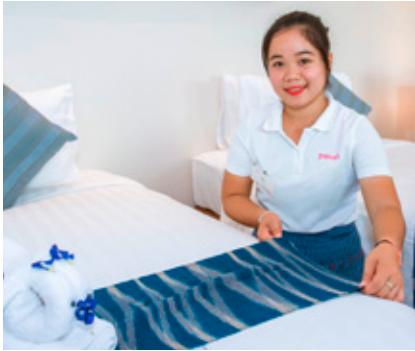
Thailand

# PIMALI

Pimali enables disadvantaged young people in Thailand to train to work in the hotel industry



Vacancies: guests receive a warm welcome and excellent hospitality at the Pimali Guest House.



**In pursuit of happiness**

The north-eastern Thai province of Nong Khai located on the border with Laos is one of the poorest areas in the country. There are very few vocational schools there, especially for girls. Poorly educated, disadvantaged young people and orphans leave this economically underdeveloped area once they have finished their compulsory school education and move to Bangkok or other tourist destinations. They go in search of happiness but can usually only keep their heads above water by resorting to illegal jobs or prostitution. It is not uncommon for them to become addicted to drugs.

**Professional training**

Stéphanie des Arts-Loup and Alexandre des Arts wanted to do something and founded the Pimali

Centre in 2013. It provides young Thai people from disadvantaged backgrounds and orphans from Nong Khai with a professional training programme. Designed as a practical hospitality training centre, every year Pimali accepts young people who are aged 15 and over and have completed their compulsory school education.

**The concept is taking off**

The training, which is based on the "Learning by Doing" approach, enables

trainees to acquire skills required in the hotel industry and put them into practice during a six-month internship. The DER Touristik foundation has been supporting 7 apprentices since 2021. And the concept is taking off: as tourism in Thailand is an ever-growing sector of the economy and trained professionals with English language Skills are in demand, 82% of trainees manage to get a job following their six-month internship.

**Our cooperation partner: Pimali Association**

Pimali strives to fight the exploitation of disadvantaged youths and reduce poverty in the north-east of Thailand. Pimali provides young people and orphans with practical training in hospitality. The aim is to provide them with future job prospects in the hospitality and tourism sectors.



Indonesia

# ENGAGE FLORES



## More sustainable travel: Bali's little neighbour wants to make it big with soft tourism

Bali promises exquisite beaches, richly decorated temples, deep green rice paddies and many more exotic travel experiences. Tourism is playing an increasingly important role as a vital industry and main source of income for those employed on the island. Yet this development has its drawbacks, too. In crowded destinations, overtourism is taking a heavy toll on the lives of the local population. In order to overcome this challenge, the Indonesian government has decided to strengthen the development of tourism in other parts of Indonesia.

### **The beautiful unknown: The island of Flores**

The island of Flores is where the ENGAGE Flores project was launched. The Trans-Flores-Route is particularly worthy of mention here, connecting the island from East to West, and in whose hinterland the authentic life of locals unfolds. To date, tourism has focused only on the West of Flores, from where travellers ferry to the offshore and popular Komodo Islands in the West. The inland areas are still not very well known as a travel region, however. This is where the ENGAGE Flores project

comes in by creating jobs and better living conditions for the local population in three villages Waelolos, Todo and Pemo along the Trans-Flores-Route.

### **Development of expertise in tourism**

As part of a tourism training programme, the three communities will acquire in-depth knowledge on the expansion and management of tourism products and services. This includes a joint understanding of more sustainable tourism as well as the associated hygiene, health or safety aspects. But also on the agenda are topics such as strengthening the organisation of tourism villages, local tour guides and development of culinary products, services or souvenirs in tourism villages. The DER Touristik Foundation

finances the training the three villages are scheduled to receive in 2022. In future, not only will the region benefit from expanding the Trans-Flores-Route, but also DER Touristik itself. After all, customers of DER Touristik will have the pleasure of experiencing authentic travel moments along the Trans-Flores-Route. ■



### **Our cooperation partner: DMO Flores**

The local non-profit organisation is focused on promoting the development and marketing of travel destinations. Since 2019, DMO Flores has led the Community Coaching on Sustainability programme, which aims to support local communities in Flores with developing more sustainable tourism in Indonesia.

# NATURE CONSERVATION

The overwhelming beauty of nature is often what attracts travellers to faraway lands: African savannahs, tropical rainforests, superb beaches, enchanting underwater worlds. All of these unique landscapes are home to people and animals as well as the countless plant species. Preserving these habitats is one of the missions that the DER Touristik Foundation has set for itself. Various projects aim to enable current and future generations to enjoy the beauty of nature and live in harmony with it.



Mauritius

# RESTORATION OF NATIVE HABITATS

## Rare tortoise in need: A human protective shell for the Aldabra tortoise

### Green Mauritius

Mauritius is a sparkling gem situated in the turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean. Sustainability is of paramount importance. As such, Mauritius is striving to achieve "Green Destination" status by 2030. The EU-funded "Sustainable Island Mauritius" (SIM) project, which aims to promote sustainable tourism in Mauritius, is playing a key role in that.

### Threat posed by oil fumes

Sustainable excursions offering unique experiences in Mauritius have been available since 2018 under the name "The Wise Dodo" as part of the SIM project. DER Touristik co-created the Dodo tours from the start, and as part of the "Natir" excursion holidaymakers can even visit a tortoise conservation project which has been supported by the DER Touristik Foundation on Ile

aux Aigrettes off the south-east coast of Mauritius since 2021. The Aldabra giant tortoises that live there became endangered following a maritime incident off the coast of the island in July 2020. An oil spill spanning approximately 30 km<sup>2</sup> seeped into the waters, and the fumes threatened the lives of the tortoises that live along the shoreline.

### Protected rearing

In order to safeguard the survival of the Aldabra giant tortoises in

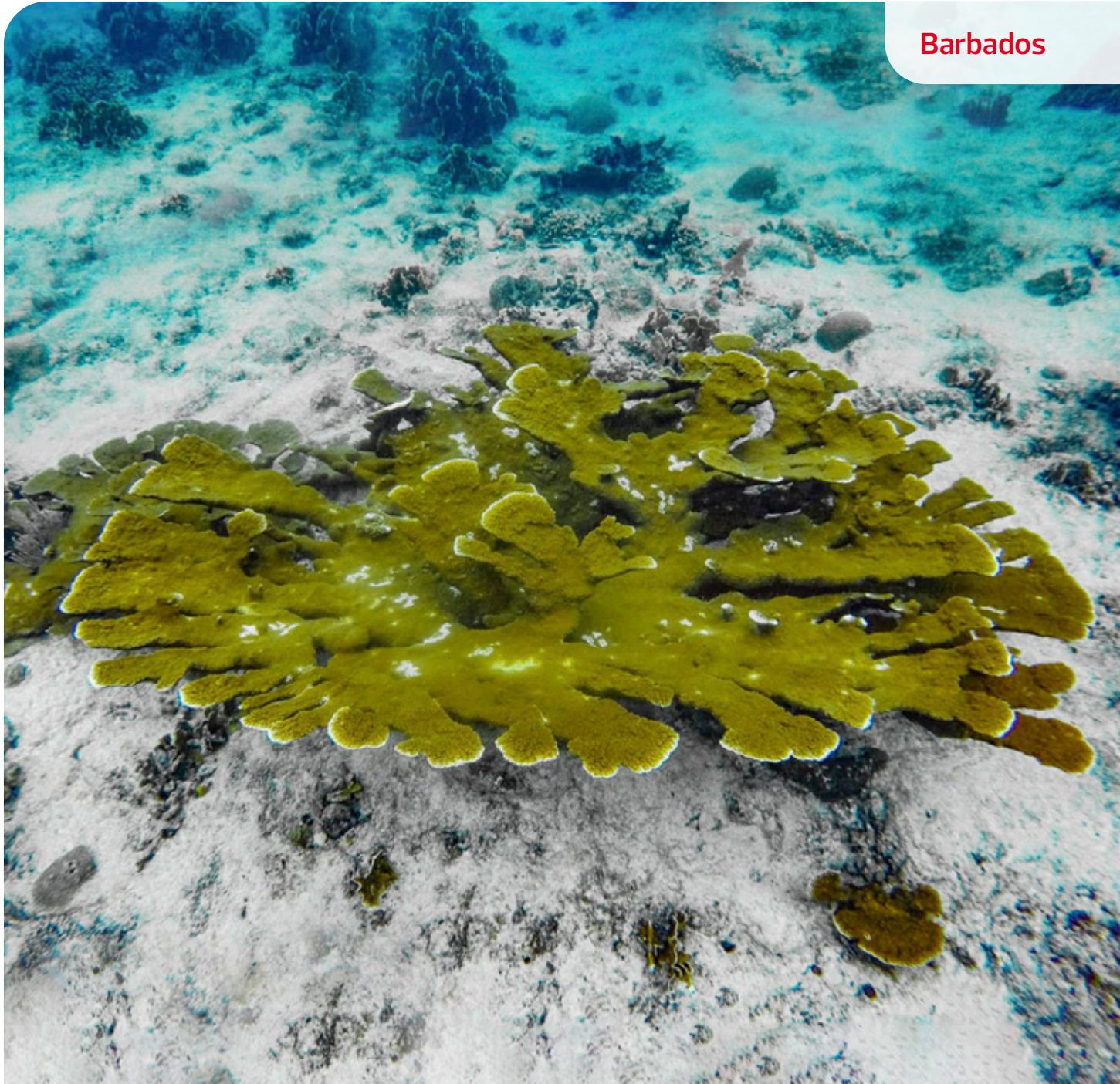
Mauritius, baby tortoises are taken from Ile aux Aigrettes to Round Island for two years where they are monitored and can grow in a protected environment. In addition to regular medical check-ups, they receive plenty of food and weigh-ins as part of the programme. After two years, the Aldabra giant tortoises are strong enough and are returned to Ile aux Aigrettes, where they play an important role in restoring the island's natural habitats. ■

### Our cooperation partner: Mauritian Wildlife Foundation

The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF) is the largest NGO in Mauritius to be exclusively concerned with the conservation and preservation of the nation's endangered plant and animal species. The hands-on conservation projects are carried out in Mauritius including the offshore islets and Rodrigues.



## Barbados



# CORAL REEF RESCUE

## Getting coral reefs to show their colours

### Cutting-edge technology

The Caribbean island country of Barbados is suffering a high coral reef mortality rate along its southern and western coasts. A promising countermeasure has now been put in place with the help of the Barbados Environmental Conservation Trust. It aims to accelerate coral reef growth and conserve marine biodiversity with the help of Biorock technology. Frames made from structural steel and metal mesh, through which low-voltage direct current flows, have been installed in the sea at Paynes Bay. Thanks to electrochemical processes, a hard crust gradually forms on them consisting of aragonite and brucite salts dissolved in the seawater. Every year, one to three centimetres of solid limestone grows on the surface of the artificial coral reefs. The steel frames serve as artificial coral reefs – a great help for coral, as they don't have to build their substrate themselves. Subsequently,

living coral fragments that have broken off naturally, are transplanted onto the constructions. In most cases, the corals quickly accept their new habitat and can immediately convert their energy into growth. Here, they increase in size much faster than in the natural reef, and reveal their wealth of colour again in no time. The German architect Wolf Hilbertz developed this process back in the 1970s.

### A watchful eye

The project, which has been supported by the DER Touristik Foundation since

2021, boasts real-time monitoring data systems that will collect water quality over the course of the five-year monitoring programme. The project is also being supported with comprehensive education programmes designed to raise awareness of the project amongst schoolchildren and young people. Everyone now hopes that the coral reefs along the western coast of Barbados will show their colours by December 2024 and hence provide new habitats for marine species. ■

### Our cooperation partner: Barbados Environmental Conservation Trust

The Barbados Environmental Conservation Trust is a registered charity established in 2019. Its vision is that through supporting local initiatives aimed at environmental sustainability, Barbados will attain its targets in national development.



# MANGROVE CONSERVATION

Sri Lanka

**No effort in vain!  
When bottomless  
barrels hold more  
than they let on**

Mangrove forests, which are as valuable as they are sensitive, are greatly endangered across the world – and Sri Lanka is no exception. In the Koggala lagoon lake lies the island of Thalathuduwa to the south of the country. In the lagoon – an enormous bird sanctuary – there were once 21 islands. Yet severe shoreline erosion has now reduced the number to nine. Fish stocks, too, have dramatically declined, which also hits the population hard. Since 2022, the DER Touristik Foundation has been supporting the project partner Wildlife and Ocean Resource Conservation (WORC) with protecting and preserving these valuable ecosystems – for both the inhabitants and travel guests – by restoring mangrove forests in the Koggala lagoon. 2017 began with the planting of mangrove trees in mud-filled bottomless barrels along the shoreline. After eight years, the barrel is removed and naturally decomposes – the



trees now grow freely. By planting mangroves, the project not only contributes to nature conservation, but also to the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions: the project will plant a total of 6,000 trees, which over time will offset 6,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. Pupils of five schools in the Koggala Lagoon and adult residents regularly visit the mangrove project, and are educated about the importance of mangroves for their habitat. More modern fishing nets are provided for fishing families. People around the lagoon predominantly earn their living

from fishing and tourism. By promoting eco-tourism through the WORC, new sources of income will be exploited for the region over the long term: the construction of an information centre and the establishment of a mangrove nursery brings visitors closer to the mangrove conservation project. Additional sources of income in tourism are created by means of training in the breeding of fish and ornamental flowers, the production of batik clothing as souvenirs as well as the promotion of the cinnamon industry on Ganduwa island. ■

**Our cooperation partner:  
Wildlife and Ocean Resource Conservation (WORC)**

The non-profit organisation has been focusing on the preservation and restoration of ecosystems in Sri Lanka since 2010. WORC also offers travel experiences in all these areas. All income from eco-tourism is used to finance ongoing protection and restoration work.

A photograph of a lion in a savanna landscape. The lion is in the foreground, looking to the left. In the background, another lion is visible, slightly out of focus. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The text is overlaid on a white, rounded rectangular box in the upper right corner.

# ANIMAL WELFARE

**E**xperiencing wild animals in their natural habitat is a unique opportunity for travellers. The DER Touristik Foundation has a responsibility to safeguard the welfare of animals around the globe, as well to protect animals against the potential repercussions of tourism and to promote positive impacts of tourism on wildlife – in nature reserves for instance. What's more, the local people also always benefit.

Greece

# MARINE MAMMALS CENTRE

Still far from being old iron: refuge for sprightly sea pensioners



Visitor Centre in Leipsoi



## New life after captivity

More than 3,000 marine mammals all around the world live in captivity. Marine biologists and environmentalists believe that the situation is critical. This is because most of the animals cannot be returned to the wild and there is a lack of organisations able to provide them with alternatives to captivity and give them the medical care that they need.

## Protected area along the coast

Things are about to change in Leipsoi at least though as dolphins, seals and turtles that have either been injured or were formerly kept in captivity will soon be able to spend their "retirement" in the natural surroundings of a defined protected area along the coast of this small Greek island in the northern part of the Dodecanese.

## Local awareness raising

The aim of the project, which has been funded by the DER Touristik Foundation since 2019, is not only to protect and preserve marine mammals but also to raise awareness of the importance of animal welfare amongst the local population. The project also involves establishing a first aid network on the surrounding islands and setting up an education programme for locals and

tourists. Due to Corona-related delays, the completion of the sanctuary (for 7 seals, 30 turtles and up to 10 dolphins), the opening of the visitor centre and the commissioning of the animal clinic, are scheduled for 2022. ■

## Our cooperation partner: Archipelagos Institute of Marine Conservation

Archipelagos is a Greek non-profit NGO which, since its creation in 1998, has been focusing on the combination of multidisciplinary scientific research and efficient conservation work in which local communities play an active part. The aim is to preserve the biodiversity of the northeastern Mediterranean, focusing specifically on Greek waters and islands.



South Africa



The Black Mambas dressed in camouflage gear shed light on the dark world of poaching.

# BLACK MAMBAS

## Girl power against poaching in Kruger National Park

### Strong troops and successful operations

36 young women from local tribal communities make up the remarkable task forces of the Black Mambas. The aim of the unit, set up in 2013 by the environmental organisation Transfrontier Africa, is to uncover illegal camps, holes in fences, traps and fire pits created by poachers. Since 2014, these women have managed to destroy over 1,000 traps and dismantle 29 poacher camps. Poaching by setting of traps had reduced by 89% and the illegal rhino trade had fallen by 67%. However, these days the estimated 13,000 rhinos in Kruger National Park need the protection of the antipoaching unit more than ever as, due to the coronavirus, tourists have stayed away and therefore the related income has disappeared. Poaching is on

the rise again and the existing rhinos are once again endangered.

### New threats due to coronavirus

The pandemic has hit the tourism industry hard and even the people and nature in the destination countries are suffering a lot on account of the difficult circumstances and the related restrictions. Since 2020, the DER Touristik Foundation has been supporting a refresher course lasting several weeks for the Black Mambas. This training course is essential for the women as they need to successfully complete it in order to retain their status as wildlife experts. In 2021, the project was also chosen as one of the funding projects to receive ongoing support in the form of 'payroll giving' from employees of the REWE Group, whose travel division is DER Touristik.

### The Bush Babies programme

The DER Touristik Foundation also provides funding for the Bush Babies programme through which around 870 children and young people aged between 12 and 17 from 10 schools around Kruger National Park are taught about the environment and animal welfare. Wildlife crime has even been committed by their families as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The project is designed to show the youngsters how they can lead sustainable lives and provide for themselves and their families in the long term. As such, once a week, the children learn sustainable cultivation techniques and are taught about food security by tending to a vegetable garden themselves. ▶

# "OUR WEAPON IS SIMPLY OUR PRESENCE"

An interview with Felicia Mogakane who, since 2013, has been working as a Black Mamba in Olifants West Nature Reserve in Kruger National Park and is now a Sergeant and the Media Liaison Officer.



Felicia Mogakane

**Felicia, as a Black Mamba you control fences, track down traps and are also the spokesperson.**

**How did that all come about?**

The Eco Club organised by the Timbavati Foundation was very active in schools and was also at mine, educating the pupils and teaching us everything about the need to conserve nature and wildlife. When I finished school and my parents had no money for me to go to university, I heard that the organisation was looking for rangers. I applied and got the job.

**What exactly did you have to do?**

It began with very extensive specialist anti-poaching training with the Protrack Academy. As junior rangers, we also received additional field training. During the training, we learned everything we needed to know about

the wilderness and how to respect and protect nature and animals.

**Why are the Black Mambas women?**

Women manage the household, they know the wilderness, are tough and are used to physical work. They are responsible and effective. Men are often more interested in the externals, the cool Jeeps, the weapons and all that kind of stuff. Young women in Africa have a lot of influence on the family and child development. The children of us rangers grow up with mothers who do something important and meaningful, who are independent, and they learn from us.

**You don't use any weapons – how effective is that?**

Using firearms often tends to make the problem worse. Our method is



Theory and practice: bush walks and classes are part of the training.



to observe closely and document. We patrol constantly, we see everything and we analyse our observations. Who goes where when and comes back from where? Who drives which car? And then we see who's acting suspiciously. We're always on the go. It's like the bobbies in England who don't carry any guns either: our weapon is simply our presence. That's how we become part of people's collective memory. Every poacher should know: the bush is a very uninviting place for you.

**And what have you been able to achieve so far?**

Oh, we've tracked down lots of poachers. They were so sure of themselves, as if no-one could touch them. They camped in the bush, dried their meat and prepared their

prey to sell it. But in a few months we had driven away more than 90% of them, without any gunfights or the like, since the families of these men would have ended up in even more serious difficulties.

**Top tip**

The Pondoro Game Lodge is tucked away in the private Balule Nature

Reserve which is part of Kruger National Park.

Guests can go on an exciting excursion there with the Black Mambas. ■

**Our cooperation partner: Transfrontier Africa NPC**

Transfrontier Africa conducts nature conservation research, carries out anti-poaching activities and provides environmental education and community support in the Kruger area. The organisation has signed a contract with Balule Nature Reserve in order to provide ecological input and strategic ecological management for the entire reserve.





Hospitality is extremely important to the Maasai. Welcoming visitors involves draping them in typical Maasai cloths and adorning them with home-made necklaces. The pieces of jewellery are also an important source of income for the women's groups.

## SUPPORT US

The DER Touristik Foundation supports dozens of funding projects every year. You can support us by providing a donation. Even small contributions can make a big difference.

# YOU CAN HELP TOO

Everything that has been achieved so far was possible thanks to the generous commitment of customers and employees of DER Touristik, as well as hotels, travel agencies, service providers and customers of the sales organisations DER Reisebüro, DERPART, DER Touristik Partner-Service and DER Business Travel. We want to continue our commitment in the long term and thank you for your donation. All donations are channelled to the projects in full.

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