

**Kansas event to honor black Civil War soldiers**

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — A group that publicizes Kansas history is planning a three-day celebration in Topeka next month to mark the 150th anniversary of the formation of the first unit of black soldiers to go into battle during the Civil War.

The Kansas Fever Committee plans to have events starting Aug. 3. The site will be Cushmanberry Park, near the national historic site dedicated to the U.S. Supreme Court's historic *Brown v. Board* decision in 1954 declaring segregated schools unconstitutional.

The celebration will honor the 1st Kansas Colored Volunteers, which formed in 1862 and went into its first battle in Missouri in October 1862.

That was nine months before the first battle in South Carolina for the better-known 54th Massachusetts, subject of the 1989 film "Glory."

**'Billy the Kid' tombstone repaired**

FORT SUMNER, N.M. (AP) — The tombstone of Billy the Kid has been repaired.

Officials at the old Fort Sumner Museum say the famous outlaw's 2,000-pound tombstone was restored after vandals tipped it over and damaged it last month.

De Baca County authorities say other graves in the cemetery were also vandalized and thieves broke into the old Fort Sumner Museum. Three antique rifles and a shotgun were stolen.

Museum officials say an air conditioning unit has been fixed and the exhibits are open to the public. No arrests have been made.

**Susquehanna River is part of historic water trail**

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — The Susquehanna River is one of four water trails designated as new components of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

State Environmental Commissioner Joe Martens says the designation enables the National Park Service to provide financial and technical assistance to state and local agencies for interpretive markers, public facilities and promotion of tourism.

The trail allows visitors to relive Smith's exploration of the Chesapeake Bay from 1607 to 1609. Four rivers in five states were included in the trail because of their significance to 17th-century American Indian culture and trade routes.

The other rivers are the Chester, Upper Nanticoke and Upper James.

**Many boosting vacation spending**

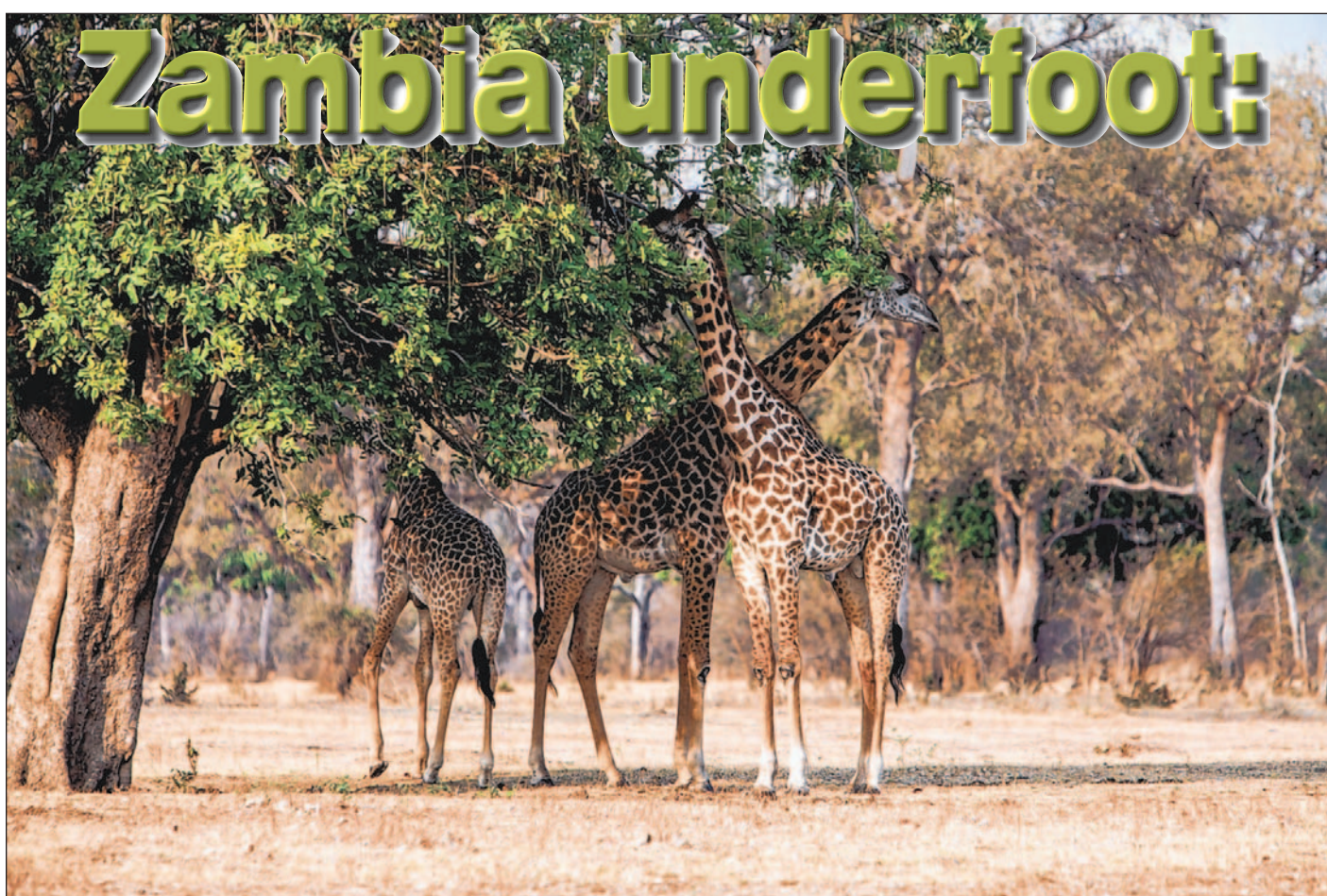
LOS ANGELES TIMES (MCT)

Despite a still uncertain economy in the U.S. and abroad, many travelers worldwide are planning to spend more on their vacations this year than last year, with Chinese vacationers expected to be the biggest spenders of all.

Of the 5,000 travelers surveyed around the world, 70 percent said they plan to spend the same or more on vacation travel in 2012 than last year, according to a report commissioned by Wyndham Hotel Group, the world's largest hotel company.

The survey found that U.S. and Chinese travelers plan to use the extra money they spend this year to take longer vacations. Travelers from Britain said dining was a top priority for their vacation, while Brazilian vacationers put shopping at the top of their lists.

Forty-three percent of all travelers said the vacation they aspire to take includes a visit to a theme park.



Steve Haggerty/MCT

Thornicroft giraffes have adapted to reach the leaves in the treetops.

# On the ground at Zebra Plains

By ANNE Z. COOKE

McClatchy-Tribune News Service (MCT)

MFUWE, Zambia — We're nodding off in our tent, pitched under a tree, when the crunching and gnashing begin.

It's the hippos again, a half-dozen massive beasts climbing up from the Luangwa River for their nightly feed. During September, a hot, dry month here at Zebra Plains Camp, in northeast Zambia, the tree's foot-long fruit hang low, an irresistible meal for diners with gaping jaws and fist-size grinders.

Silence falls as the hippos lumber away. For a moment we doze. Then the bushes rustle and the elephants arrive, treading gently to avoid our plastic ground cloth and canvas patio chairs.

I fall asleep wondering who decided to pitch the tent under a sausage tree. Intentional, perhaps, or a prank, to give the dudes a thrill? But Garth Hovell, manager at Zebra Plains, a walking safari camp in the most remote sector of the South Luangwa National Park, shakes his head. "No way," he says. With 20 years of bush experience, Hovell, head naturalist for Sanctuary Retreats' five Zambian lodges, says that here in the bush, where we're the intruders, safety is Rule One.

The Luangwa River, pristine and undammed, is the reason we — and the wildlife — are here at Zebra Plains, near the national park's northern border. Flowing in wide, curving loops over fertile plains and through wild miombo woodland, the Luangwa supports an immense diversity of species, a veritable Zambian ark.

From elephants to antelope, lions to leopards and crocodiles to hippos, all flourish within this vast wildlife refuge.

Walking-only safari camps, like Zebra Plains, are probably this decade's biggest news in African safaris — and ironically, the oldest. The first Europeans to venture deep into the Dark Continent — glory-seeking adventurers, greedy miners and relentless missionaries — expected to walk. Even after trucks and jeeps arrived, hunters and photographers bunked in tents, stalked their quarry on foot and thrilled to the charge of angry lions.

Most safari lodges are commercial enterprises, of course, relying on a half-dozen off-road vehicles and guides who radio big animal sightings from guide to guide. Guests get what they've paid for: guaranteed close-ups of lions yawning and trumpeting elephants. Luxury is the norm as is a large staff, including a chef, dish washers, maids, laundresses and the fix-it crew.

"That's not Zebra Plains," Hovell said. "We're designed for people who've been on safari before but are tired of sitting in a vehicle. Curious people who ... want to hear dry grass crackle underfoot and smell the earth," he said.

Our days began at 6 a.m. while the air was cool and the animals were active. On day one we headed for a distant loop of the Chibembe River, led by Mathews, the camp's armed guard, rifle loaded and at the ready. Hovell followed toting binoculars and a day pack with a first-aid kit, loaner hats, survival gear, extra water and sun lotion.

We six, dressed in khakis (tan makes the best camouflage), fell in behind. Guide Rabson Banda walking shotgun, kept us bunched up tight. Predators like to pick on stragglers, he told us with a grin. Banda's backpack



Steve Haggerty/MCT

A zoom lens catches these elephants unawares.

**IF YOU GO**

■ **ZEBRA PLAINS** is open from June through October only; for details, visit [sanctuaryretreats.com](http://sanctuaryretreats.com). The all-inclusive rate per person per night, sharing a tent, is \$585. Sanctuary's other Zambian lodges include Chichele Presidential Lodge and Puku Ridge, near Mfuwe; Sussi & Chuma in Livingstone; and Zambezi Kalefu Camp, near Lusaka.

overflowed with the tea things: a portable gas stove, pot, cups, tea bags, cookies, brownies and water.

Here and there groups of tiny puku grazed calmly, lifting their heads to watch us pass. Three giraffe and sable antelope were more wary, moving into a grove of mopane trees. After an hour walking, stopping to identify plants and telltale spoor, Mathews and Hovell pulled up short and bent over to inspect a lion track. With a zing of fear, we stood still and peered left and right until Hovell spied two lionesses at 50 yards, half hidden in deep grass. For a long minute they stared at us, unmoving, and then they were gone, fleeing the other way.

Each day followed a similar pattern. Morning game drives lasted from 6 to 11 a.m. followed by lunch and downtime for a shower, journal notations or photo downloads. From 4 to 6 p.m., we set out again, now searching for the elephant family approaching the river, or to watch the hippos grunt and growl, jockeying for position.

At twilight we gathered around the campfire for a glass of wine, some surprisingly appealing dishes and an evening of stories and stars. Escorted back to our tent by a game-wise guide with a flashlight (sometimes Isaac our porter and guard, and sometimes Milemia or Rabson) — we took a warm shower, crawled under the mosquito netting onto a first-class mattress and fell asleep to the hippo chorus.

Because walking safaris are specialized, choosing an itinerary that includes stays at other lodges is a good way to broaden your



Steve Haggerty/MCT

**Garth Hovell, Zebra Plains' camp manager and Sanctuary Retreat's lead naturalist.**

experience. Sanctuary Retreats has five Zambian lodges, each different from the others. Driving safaris are most popular, but several lodges lead guided walks as well. Having done both, I confess that I like the convenience, comfort and range that a vehicle provides. But if you're like me, you won't say you've really seen Zambia until you've walked the walk.