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INTRODUCING

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GAME ON FOR ECOLOGICAL RESORT

Four Seasons' first Sub-Saharan hotel has followed up on its 2012 arrival in Tanzania with the opening of an advanced Discovery Centre, allowing guests to understand the ecology of the Serengeti and showcase many of the initiatives the resort is involved in, writes April Hutchinson.

Part museum, part lecture theatre, the new centre at Four Seasons Safari Lodge is the first lodge-based conservation research and education platform in the Serengeti. The centre also includes a 3D map that depicts the Great Migration across the enormous Serengeti-Mara area.

Guests are able to contribute to research through the Cheetah Watch Campaign and to take part in the Serengeti Lion Project, which is a camera trapping project using hi-tech photography to track and identify animals.

Discovery Centre manager Oli Dreike said: "We aim to deliver an educational experience that continues beyond the game drive."

"Understanding why and where these millions of animals are moving can be challenging, but this makes it easier to grasp and gives a platform for our guides to explain what guests are actually a part of here," Dreike said.

The centre will also act as a base for many of the area's conservation researchers, while staff will encourage guests to share their own images and sightings to help build a picture of what is in the area.

Birding walks, wildlife documentary screenings, Maasai for a Morning sessions and science safaris are some of the options Dreike and his team of five can also help to organise.

The 77-room Four Seasons Safari Lodge opened in December 2012 and has a spa with six treatment pavilions, three restaurants, a Kijana Klub for kids and teens, and small conference facilities.

"It's big," said Dreike. "But it doesn't pretend to be a camp. It's a large luxury hotel with TVs and Wi-Fi."

The Lodge is the first of three Four Seasons projects to open in Tanzania, with a tented safari camp in the Ngorongoro conservation area and a beach resort on the island of Zanzibar to follow.

voice of reason

Svein Wilhelmsen

Founder, Basecamp Explorer

Now in Norway, Kenya, France and India, my concept for Basecamp Explorer has evolved over many years. I hitchhiked around the world for three years in the 1970s and my interest in wildlife and ecosystems really grew from there.

Ecosystems are naturally entwined with traditional local cultures, and the opportunity to create Basecamp Explorer came about after a plea from a Maasai chief, Oel Taek, to help develop a model that would benefit both the people of the Maasai and sustainable environmental tourism in Kenya. To date, our greatest achievement has been the creation of the Naboisho Conservancy in Kenya: a pristine 123,553-acre wildlife area.

We feel we can transform lives through tourism and adopt a three-fold approach of showcasing responsible tourism practices, developing sustainability, and engaging local, national and international supporters. Naboisho, for example, has enabled more than 500 Maasai families to become landowners, providing them all with a monthly income.

When at Basecamp Explorer camps, our guests seek authenticity and informal luxury; they want to relax in the company of equally passionate people. In return, we like to enrich their journey and create moments of honest, uninhibited interaction. Guests leave our camps as conservationists and philanthropists.

We have now committed to expansion in the Arctic archipelago of Spitsbergen, with five lodges and us owning and managing 95% of all guestrooms outside Longyearbyen village.

In the Maasai Mara, we now have 70 beds in three camps, our newest being the award-winning Eagle View, which has been recognised as one of the 25 best eco-lodges in the world.

Our camp in the French Pyrenees, a medieval Catalan farmhouse, has also had considerable investment.

We are proud to have camps in some of the planet's most spectacular wildlife spots and, through investment in responsible tourism, we hope to safeguard the future of the environment and local communities.

"We feel we can transform lives through tourism"



ECO TIPS BEYOND THE NORM & Beyond's new kid programme WildChild (pictured) across southern and east African properties has conservation at its heart, with age-appropriate activities including tracking and fishing (andBeyond.com). **GREEN VENTURE** Barbados's room Colony Club reopens next month with new eco-features including an organic garden serving produce for the hotel's menu. Educational talks, beach clean-ups and a hatchling release programme in support of the Barbados Sea Turtle Project are also under way (colonyclubhotel.com). **MARINE MISSION** Song Saa Private Island has launched a foundation to protect the reefs, mangroves and sea-grasses of southern Cambodia's Koh Rong archipelago.

Projects include development of a boat-based education and sustainability learning centre (songsaafoundation.org).

SILVER LINING Less than a year since opening, Dusit Thani Maldives has been awarded EarthCheck's silver certification by environmental auditor EarthCheck, which has commended its sustainable energy solutions (dusit.com). **ECO-PARTNERING** Considerate Hoteliers has recruited Raffles Hotels & Resorts as its

