

Discover the Hidden Gem of Africa

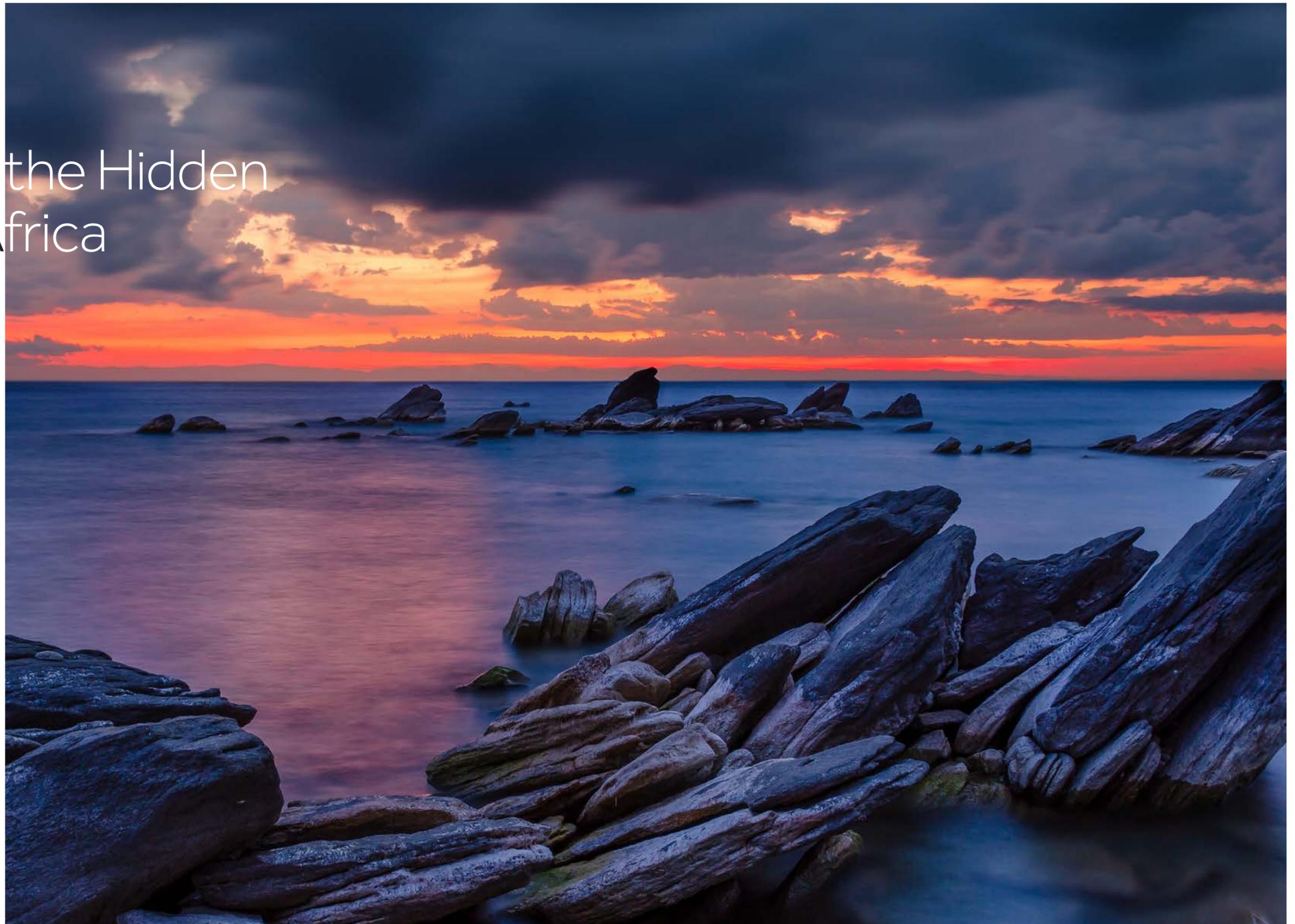
If you think about Malawi, what picture comes to mind? Well, the first thoughts for most people might not necessarily be something synonymous with a luxurious Southern African, paradise-like holiday destination including crystal-clear waters, sandy beaches, extraordinary views, lush green flora, and wild animal safaris. Mauritius and Mozambique (and of course South Africa) generally take the spotlight here, but for now we can put those aside, as the tiny country that is Malawi might just be your next bucket list destination.

This landlocked country in the Southeast part of Africa may be defined by its topography of highlands split by the Great Rift Valley and enormous Lake Malawi—one of the most popular tourist destinations sporting clear waters and sensational views.

Similar to the size of Cuba, Malawi is one of the smallest countries in Southern Africa, with its neighbour, Zambia, occupying over six times the area. At approximately 900 kilometres long and varying widths never more than one third of its length, the country is clearly elongated north-south along the line of the Rift Valley in which Lake Malawi sits.

This shape lends itself to a three-way regional division: North, Central, and South. The diversity for which Malawi is famed is reflected both between these regions and within each one: elements of landscape, wildlife, and culture can be undertaken in each of the regions; yet such a combination will give a different experience in each district.

And even though the country is relatively small, it offers a myriad of popular, beautiful and awe-inspiring places for travellers to explore, such as Lilongwe, the capital city, Lake Malawi, Liwonde National Park, the extraordinary Cape Maclear, and Likoma Island.



Two of the top lodges in Malawi, Tongole and Kaya Mawa, led the way at the recent Safari Awards for 2018, claiming wins in no less than five of the 16 categories, judged across the whole of Africa. With Nkwichi Lodge (strictly in Mozambique but on the shores of Lake Malawi and very much part of the tourism circuit of Malawi) weighing in with wins on a global scale, taking home two categories at the World Travel Awards, the lodges of Malawi have taken Africa by storm this year.

Perhaps even more exciting, in a country where development has been slow and steady for many years, is that there are now new lodges opening up. Kachenga Bush Camp is a sister property to Tongole, has just opened in the fast emerging Nkhotakota Wilderness Reserve. In Liwonde National Park, word is that a number of cheetah and lions will be coming in at some point in 2018. Kuthengo Camp will soon be opened by renowned safari company Robin Pope Safaris.

As Malawi goes through the most exciting period of tourism development in its history, its visitors can sleep easy knowing that they will have amazing adventures and can stay at an array of affluent lodges around the unspoilt, natural beauty of the country.

Tongole Wilderness Lodge

Described as "Malawi's last true wilderness in the heart of Africa", Tongole Wilderness Lodge received *Best in Africa* awards in three categories: Best Community Focused Safari property in Africa, Best Ecologically Responsible Safari property in Africa, as well as Best Value Safari property in Africa, at the 2018 Safari Awards, held at the World Travel Market. The three wins and a couple more third places, made them the most successful individual lodge at the ceremony.

Tongole Wilderness Lodge was started with two main ideas in mind: firstly, to establish an eco-friendly business that would create employment opportunities and long-term benefits for people. Secondly, to provide a sustainable link between tourism, conservation, and communities around the reserve.

Tongole has proved itself to be an ethical and responsible safari destination, whilst offering the highest standards in all aspects

of guest experience. The lodge is perfectly situated, overlooking the Bua River in the heart of the Malawian Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve (NWR).

This lodge is the only high-end lodge in the reserve offering awe inspiring views over the beautiful Bua River, providing a truly exceptional experience of this pristine region. The luxurious, open-plan suites offer the perfect retreat in which to relax after an exciting day of exploration. The dining experience is often rated as one of the best in the country.

Kaya Mawa

Voted in the top ten *Most Romantic Places in the World* by Condé Nast, Kaya Mawa is a uniquely stunning lodge with a feeling of contemporary rustic charm whilst maintaining a chic feel.

Kaya Mawa is everything an African paradise is thought to be: soaring baobab trees, mango groves, untouched coves and beaches, dirt roads leading to cassava fields, and small fishing settlements. Visitors are drawn to swimming and snorkelling in Lake Malawi, with the greatest diversity of fish anywhere on the planet.

Likoma Island, surrounded by the pristine waters of the great lake, is widely regarded as being the best diving spot, both in terms of the diversity of fish species and their sheer abundance.

The destination is partnered with Likoma Island Divers and is a recognised PADI Resort, with two in-house dive instructors. So whatever skills you may or may not have, they can get you exploring the amazing underwater scenery in no time.

Nkwichi

Nkwichi, a paradise hidden on the Mozambican shores of Lake Malawi, is entwined in the fabric of local life by the lake. It ensures guests a five-star experience and leaves the indelible imprint of an authentic Africa on their hearts.

More than a lodge, Nkwichi is a complete experience, offering a unique taste of the continent with exquisite lakeside scenery and unparalleled tranquillity. With eight secluded beaches set on a four kilometre Rift Valley coastline, Nkwichi is the perfect

setting to discover a lost world; a fresh-water oasis and an untouched Africa.

With its all-embracing approach to tourism over the last 15 years, this destination is intrinsically linked to the surrounding communities and their natural environment. Dedicated to conserving the pristine lakeshore and virgin wilderness in which it operates, Nkwichi engages with the local Nyanja people in their development and helps preserve and enhance their colourful culture.

The crystal-clear freshwater of the most bio-diverse lake in Africa awaits any guest here to explore secluded bays, untouched beaches, towering monoliths, and an underwater world of wonder.

For more information on visiting Malawi and the lodges, please visit www.malawitourism.com.

Text: Monique Vanderlinden
Images © iStockphoto.com

BRITISH AIRWAYS ROUTE INFO

British Airways (operated by Comair) services the following local and regional destinations: Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Windhoek, Livingstone, Victoria Falls, Harare and Mauritius. Globally, British Airways flies to almost 1,000 destinations in 150 countries with its partner airlines. To book your flight, please call +27 11 921 0222.

