

# What About Ebola?

“**W**hat about Ebola?”

Nowadays this question seems to pop up every time prospective new clients come to me to explore the possibility of going on their first African safari. (Repeat safarists do not ask because they know the chance of getting Ebola on safari is about as slim as being struck by lightning).

I might tell the worried newbies that in the past two months I have been visiting with the Gelada baboons in Ethiopia’s Simien Mountains, gorilla-trekking in Rwanda and Uganda and staying in several safari lodges in South Africa, without any concern or fear.

Or, I might show them a map of Africa to indicate just how far Africa’s safari countries are from the three affected West African nations—Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

I might also tell them that I found a higher level of alertness at African ports of entry than at European and American airports.

Take for instance Kigali in Rwanda where I not only had to provide my flight detail but my seat number as well while my passport was fine-combed for any

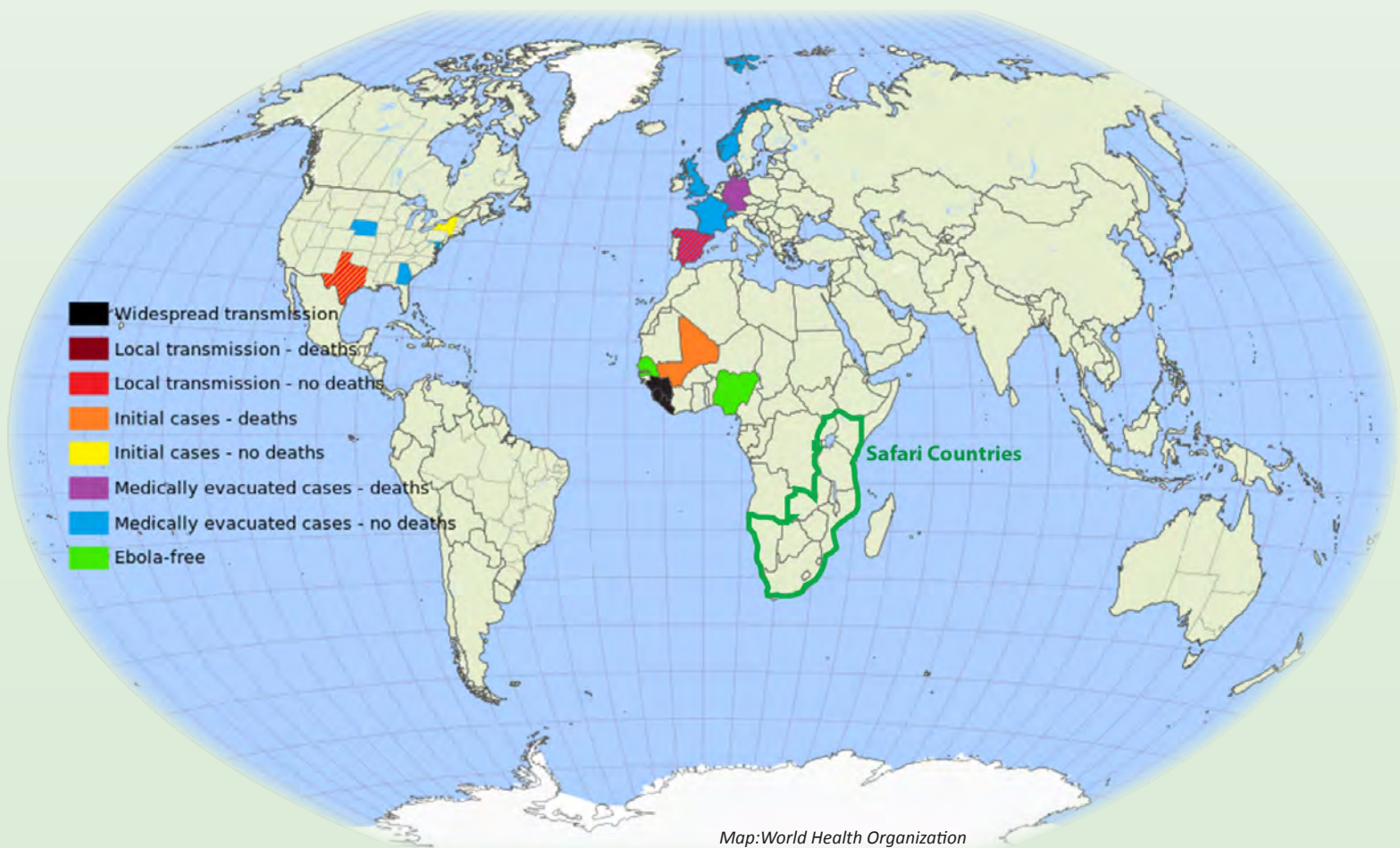
indication that I have been to any of the affected West African countries recently.

A young American who came to Kigali from Liberia via Europe was isolated in a local hospital until blood tests proved negative.

**B**ut all of this is lost in the frantic debate surrounding cable news coverage of a few isolated cases in the United States and Europe. (Never has so much been said so often about so few).

While my wife and I were on safari in South Africa’s Sabi Game Reserve the topic of Ebola never came up. It was only when we moved into a hotel in the Cape winelands and switched on the TV that we were once again exposed to a non-stop Ebola barrage, courtesy of cable networks. Needless to say, I switched out and concentrated on wine tasting instead.

**R**ecently the well-known conservationist and wildlife filmmaker Dereck Joubert addressed the Ebola issue in a guest editorial in the *Huffington Post*.



“Africa is a continent, not a country, and it is big! “ Joubert points out. “I cannot tell you how often I meet someone and tell them I am from Botswana, and they ask if I know so and so, *I think he lives in Uganda.*”

“Africa is a huge continent that stretches wider than the USA, (4,350 miles versus the 3,400 miles of the USA) and twice as deep, from north to south, as the USA (4,500 miles versus the 2,600 miles of the USA). In fact North America, China and Europe can all fit inside Africa’s landmass.”

“To travel between countries in Africa you require a passport, unlike the European Union, or states in the USA or even countries in North America,” Joubert writes. “In the 36-year history of Ebola there has not been a single case in Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Namibia, Angola, and in fact most (African) countries, while there have been cases in the USA and Europe (Spain).”

“When in March 2014 Ebola raised its head again, countries like Botswana, Kenya and Tanzania put in place strict screening processes for all arrivals and in Botswana, it stopped ALL travel from West Africa to ensure that it stayed Ebola free. This move was made six months before similar conditions were initiated in the USA.”

“There are, as a result, more cases in the USA and Europe than in East Africa, (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania) or Southern Africa, (Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland) as there has NOT been a single case in these regions.”

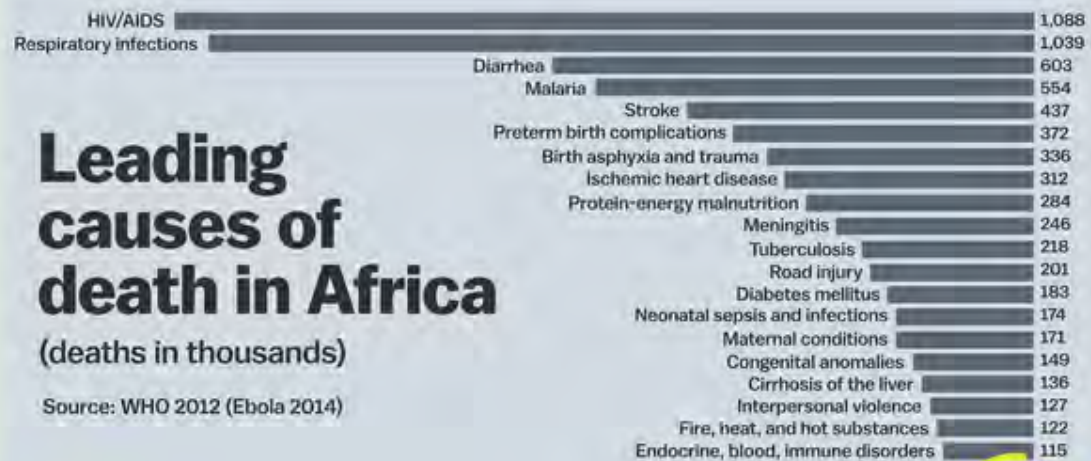
“There is US\$200 billion-a-year tourism flowing through Africa, money that supports economies and communities which is often the only thing that keeps people above the breadline. If you ask anyone in Africa what is important to them it will be jobs, and the future of their children. Ignorance about Ebola can lead to an epidemic of poaching just to survive.”

Owners of several leading safari lodges and camps in Africa undertook to refund clients in full if any booking should be cancelled as a result of an Ebola outbreak in the safari destination country—confirmed by the World Health organization (WHO). Apart from giving clients the comfort of knowing



that they are not putting themselves or their pockets at risk, it also attests to confidence on the part of the safari providers that there is hardly any likelihood of them having to take the hit.

The chart below puts Ebola in perspective as compared with other major killer diseases and dangers on the continent of Africa. By the way, even though malaria is a major issue in Africa tourists hardly, if ever, succumb to this mosquito-borne disease.



Source: WHO 2012 (Ebola 2014)





### *Safari chic*

Keep in mind that when you are going on safari you are not following in the footsteps of Livingstone and Stanley. Even if you opt for the Hemingway experience in movable tents instead of the more permanent structures you are pampered and protected in luxury style. We believe that to view the animals you don't have to live like them.

Comfort and safety are foremost wherever you chose to go: Witnessing the Great Migration on the Serengeti Plains; tracking the Big Five in South Africa; following elephants and lions in Namibia's desert; gliding along the canals past abundant animal and birdlife in the Okavango Delta; ballooning over Zambia's Busanga Plains; communing with thousands of elephants in

Zimbabwe's Hwange; trekking with gorillas in Rwanda or Uganda; or following chimpanzees along Lake Tanganyika...

We are ready to provide you with that very special experience of a lifetime. But be cautioned: The worst bug that will bite you is the safari bug. You will never recover. You might become a safari addict like me.

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