



BOOKED FOR TRAVEL

The New Continent—2. Up a Tree

ODD AS it may appear, the enormous publicity that has attended the political emergence of Africa has caused a nagging, almost irrepressible curiosity among the adventuresome travelers of Europe and the Americas. While Germans, who come on packaged tours in their own chartered aircraft, are now the most numerous tourists in East Africa, the game preserves are teeming, besides gazelles, with Italians, English, French from Madagascar and metropolitan France, Mexicans in numbers that seem out of proportion to their population, and Americans. The number of U.S. visitors in East Africa this year is already up 56 per cent.

To this avant-garde who had long ago discovered the Greek Islands, invaded Moscow, buzzed Hong Kong on their way around the world, and even skipped off on the nonstop flight from Los Angeles to Tahiti, Africa is a new continent. The new tourists come neither with high-powered rifle nor built-in Ruarkian swagger. Like tourists everywhere, they have come to see—in this case to see game and to see lands and

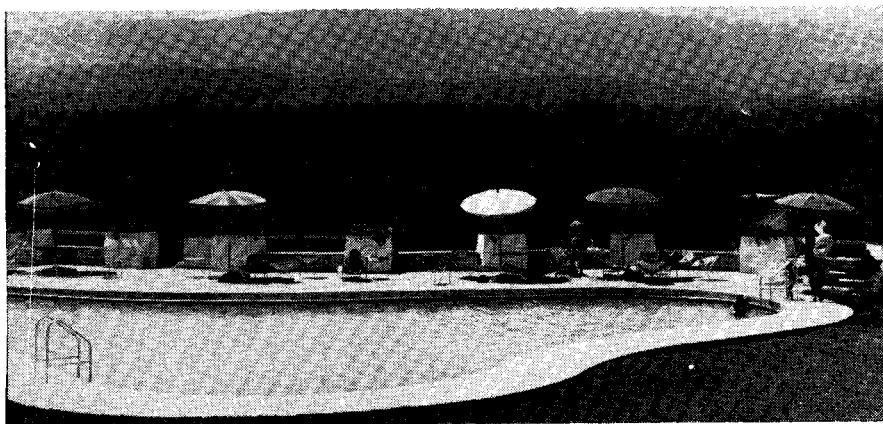
to see people. Of all the new continent's many corners, East Africa, after seventy years of British rule, and long experience meeting the exacting demands of big game hunters, seems best able to receive them.

Most celebrated, perhaps, of all of Africa's attractions is Treetops Hotel, an inn built in the trees over a water hole in the Aberdare Mountains north of Nairobi. I drove up there one Sunday recently, rolling along a splendid tarmac highway that took us into the Kenya highlands where European settlers have created large coffee and tea plantations. It was in the Aberdares that the Mau-Mau terrorists, who were extremists of the Kikuyu tribe, had their redoubt. Kikuyu huts, once scattered over the pleasant highland hills and dales, were now gathered in orderly rows where police could maintain a visual control over them.

Safaris into Treetops are staged at the Outspan Hotel, an inn of unusual charm near the town of Nyeri, ninety-four miles from Nairobi and a few miles south of the equator. Outspan is a retreat in its own right, with an outdoor



Treetops Hotel, above; Mount Kenya Safari Club, below.



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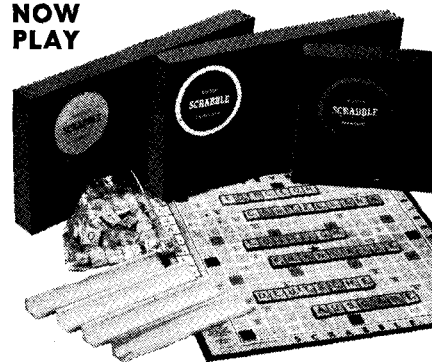
pool, a squash court, a tennis court, a billiards room, and a pet zebra that has been trained to take children on gambols over the grounds. All of its fifty-six rooms have private baths and the best of them cost \$8.50 a day with meals included. Sitting in an easy chair one can gaze over the clipped lawns draped with towering blue gums to the mass of Mount Kenya fifty miles away.

After lunch at Outspan the daily party bound for Treetops is loaded in small buses and driven ten miles through the green highlands where the roads are marked with signs that say "Elephant and Rhino in These Woods—Please Drive Carefully." Some 230 acres have been set aside as the Aberdare Royal National Park, and vehicles are stopped at the entrance by an African ranger in a natty uniform who must telephone to an advance point inside the park before vehicles may proceed. The phone rings, permission is granted, the ranger erupts with an extravagant salute. The bus rolls on to a clearing where bearers in green uniforms and green fezzes and a white hunter carrying a high-powered rifle wait to convoy the party to the hotel in the tree. The hunter calls for quiet, and, gun cradled in his arms, leads the group on the hundred-yard walk through the forest. Should dangerous game appear, there are escape ladders built into trees along the way, and there is, of course, the hunter's gun.

We walked the path in silence to the strange structure built on stilts and climbed the stairs. "Do Not Descend Without Hunter," a sign cautioned. This strange hotel has a bar and a lounge, a dining room, a kitchen, a hostess, phone service to anywhere in the world, flush toilets, and room for twenty-two guests. I went down to stow my bag in my room, a narrow cubicle with reed walls and five branches growing through it. There was a drape for a door. Guests were already on the terraces outside, lounging in the deep airplane seats and gazing off on the salt pan and the water hole. A family of wart hogs was enjoying a Sunday afternoon mud bath, and when they left, a fat waterbuck came to drink, then a posse of baboons. A white heron stalked about the fringes of the pond among the lilies and the reeds. All afternoon they came, the bushbuck, the waterbuck, the baboons, some carrying their young on their backs.

At four-thirty the fez-topped bearers appeared on the rooftop terrace with tea and scones, and some of the baboons, quite used to the ritual, climbed up the trees and waited for a handout. From the roof the glowering clouds hung over the Aberdare forest where the animals waited in the

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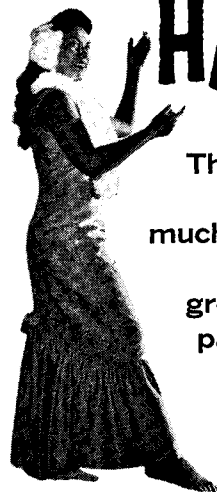
wings to come on stage at the water hole. When the sun went down Treetops turned on its artificial moon, an arc lamp hidden high in the eaves, shining down on the salt pan. Just before dinner the first performer appeared, a huge bull buffalo that weighed about a ton. He licked at the crisscrossed salt lines that had been spread that morning, then he had a drink, wallowed luxuriously in the mud for a while, and with the noise of great slopping and sucking he climbed out of the ooze for another lick at the salt. Only when he was quite through with his toilette did the rest of the herd appear, calves and cows and other bulls, about twenty in all. Then they left, all except one straggling young bull. From the wings came the first rhino, a giant, moving the buffalo off the salt. And in the middle of the minor drama came the comedian, a tiny hare skittering across the stage in a walk-on part. The interlude was short before a family of giant forest hogs appeared, ugly and hairy with large warty growth under their eyes and upper and lower tusks.

We left the darkened terrace with reluctance and went in for dinner. It was served at two long tables by the bearers, who sent the steaming platters down a little center track that had been built with wheels appropriated from electric trains. It was brought to a startling climax when the lights went out and the bearers appeared carrying flickering bowls of flaming peaches. The guests applauded and the hostess beamed. No one had ever assembled a more cosmopolitan group, for the night I was there the party included visitors from Capetown, South Africa; Mombasa; Salisbury, Rhodesia; Milan, Italy; Argyll, Scotland; Somerset, England; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Merrick, Long Island; Tanganyika; Isfahan, Iran; Hong Kong; and Denmark.

I stayed on the terrace long after the hunter and the hostess had fixed a tray of Ovaltine to soothe the nerves of the guests in the tree, and with a few other diehards I wrapped myself in a blanket against the chill night air that was settling through the Aberdares and floating up to our cozy terrace. Finally the hunter went to sleep and the night watchman came on, a giant African in a green fez, white sneakers, an old army greatcoat, and a rifle slung over his shoulder. On his breast glistened his name plate, etched with one name, Julius. Among his instructions Julius was to wake everyone in case of the appearance of big game—elephants, perhaps, whose appearances were highly uncertain. I climbed over the branches and settled into my small bunk and was, lightly anyway, asleep. Suddenly there came a great roar. It seemed almost

(Continued on page 76)

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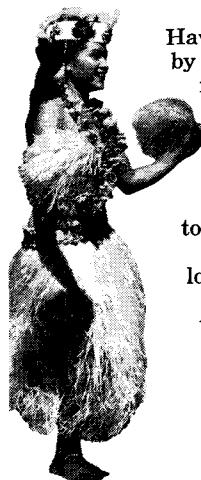
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Gimcracks and Finimbrums

By ALICE DALGLIESH

THERE were, so we are told, more than 2,000 books for children published this year. Looking over some of these, I am reminded of an anecdote told by Izaak Walton: "Diogenes walked on a day with his friend, to see a country fair; where he saw ribbons and looking-glasses and nutcrackers and fiddles and hobby-horses and many other gimcracks; and, having observed them, and all the finimbrums that make a country fair, he said to his friend, 'Lord, how many things are there in this world of which Diogenes hath no need!'"

There was a time when I thought that some "finimbrums" might be tolerated and brushed aside, for the good books stood out easily each year and made their way to children. I do not think so now, for the gimcracks are out of all proportion to good books. Also, the repetition of subject matter is out of proportion to the whole output and the number of series to that of individual books.

And yet it is remarkable how, from the myriad of books, one that has originality, beauty, good writing will rise to the top. Among the season's picture books no one could miss Maurice Sen-

dak's delightful little "Nutshell Library," with its four small books in a slipcase (see page 34). No one familiar with this field could help seeing that in a picture book—Evan G. Valens, Jr.'s "Wingfin and Topple" (see page 36)—Clement Hurd has used a technique entirely new in his illustrations. When an artist changes his style after a number of years, it is worth noting. It is also worth noting when a story flows as easily and has as well-sustained a plot as "The Meanest Squirrel I Ever Met," by Gene Zion (see page 36). Lavinia Faxon's and Alan Price's "A Young Explorer's Guide to New York" (New York Graphic Society, \$3.95) is probably the most practical and original approach to the city that we have had—both for New York children and visitors. They will like poring over the picture maps and "walking" up and down the streets.

Beni Montresor's "House of Flowers, House of Stars" (see page 36) has a charming title, and is a spectacular book, but it is uneven and the text does not live up to expectations. In the long run, a picture book is only as good as its text. What children say is, "Read me a story!"—not, "Read me a picture book."

And have many artists forgotten that

For picture credits see page 42

