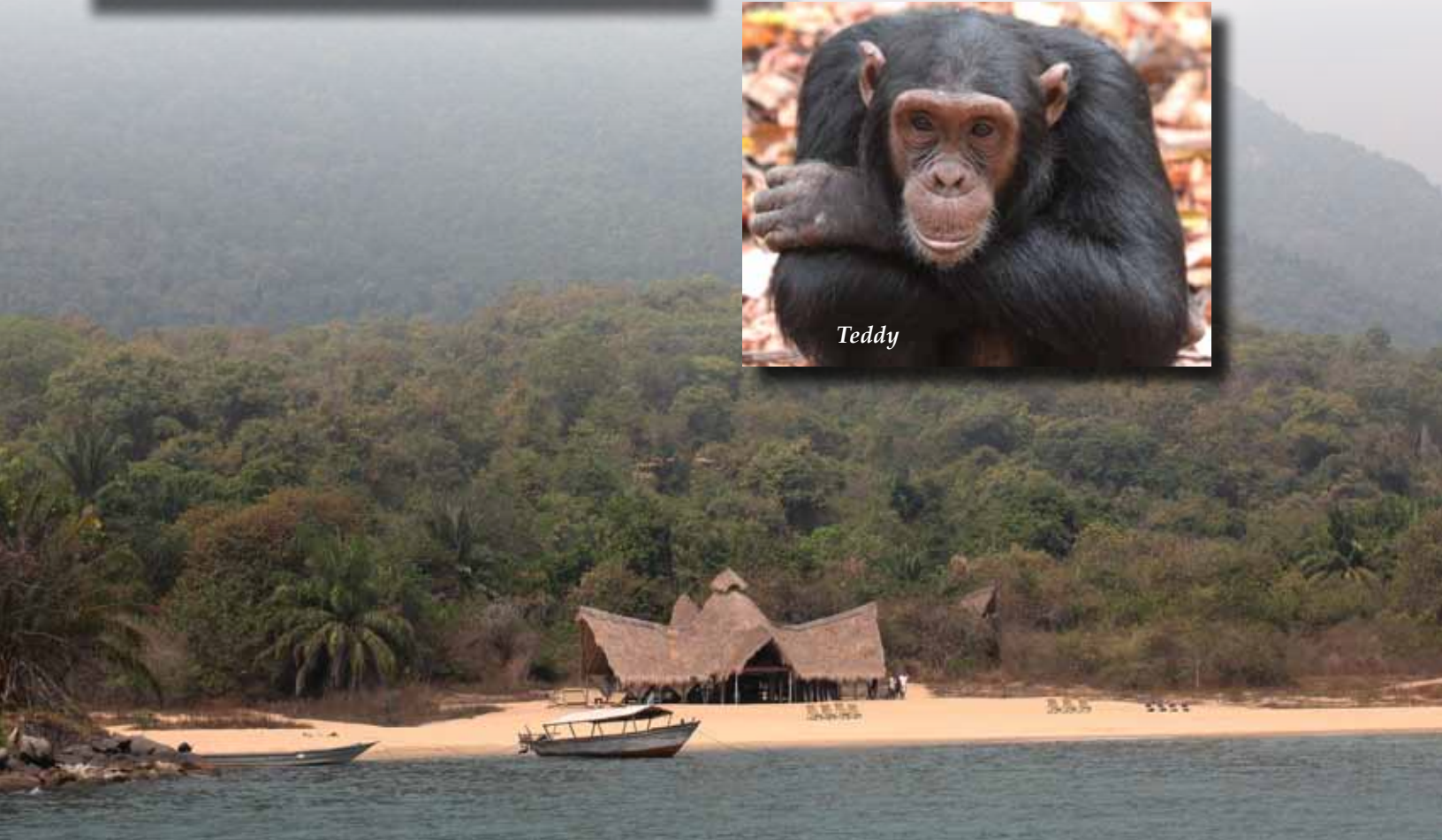
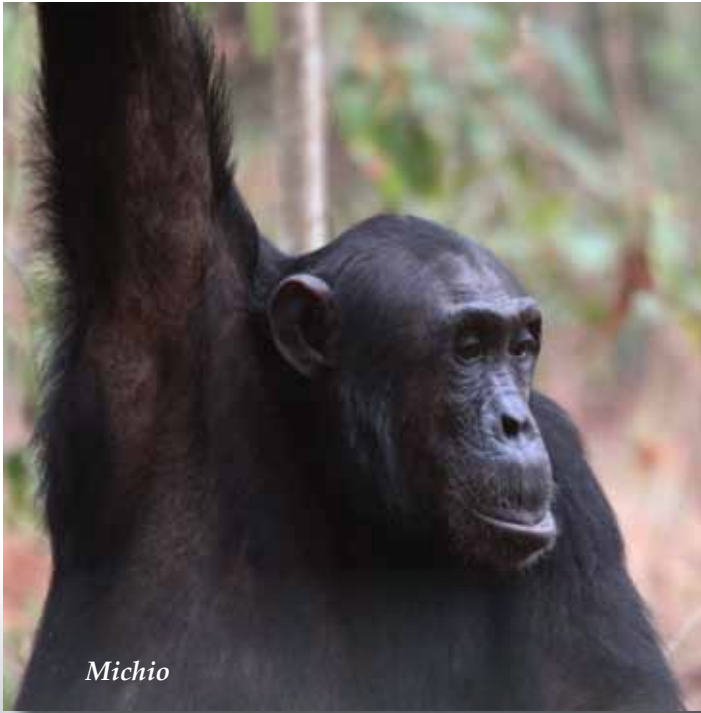


expert trackers try to stay close to the community and remain in constant radio contact with the camp. During the rainy season the chimpanzees find enough food high up the mountain slopes, making it very difficult to reach them.

August is a dry month when they are bound to come closer to the camp as the food supplies diminish at higher altitudes. Still, during our first attempt both

of our parties had to hike up the slopes for about three hours before they encountered the chimpanzees. (A maximum of six guests are allowed per party together with a guide and a park ranger). However, on the second day we encountered the chimps hardly two minutes from the shore.

The rules of engagement are clearly spelled out beforehand. Wear surgical masks to avoid transmitting diseases to the chimpanzees and vice versa. Do not go closer than ten meters. If the chimpanzees should wish to make contact that is their prerogative. No flash photography. No rapid movement and finger pointing. One hour per encounter. No more.



Everyone soon realized why Pimu (Pim for short) is the alpha male. His display of dominance as he noisily rushed up and down breaking branches while straining his vocal cords and our ears to the utmost, not only had his followers cower respectfully but impressed us as well. Still, I came away thinking of Michio as the Macho Man. He just looked the part. And who will forget little Teddy who decided to squat close by and stare us down.

Chimpanzees in the wild just happen to remind us why they should be given protected space in their own world instead of becoming captives in our society. They can do what comes naturally and even if they sometimes act like humans, they are not—despite the fact that they share more than 98 percent of the human DNA.

Is the Hemingway experience for everyone?

It all depends on personal preferences. If you insist on all the creature comforts that you enjoy at home plus five star luxury I would suggest other destinations and venues. There are plenty of safari lodges on my list of approved destinations that offer the kind of luxury that rakes in *Condé Nast* and *Travel and Leisure* awards for best small hotels in the world.

If, on the other hand, you wish to experience wildlife up close in a comfortable tent with a soft bed and hot-water bucket showers and semi-flush toilets Hemingway is the way. One of my female guests

Lunch on the Serengeti plains

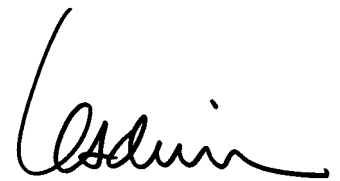
rather jokingly listed unzipping the partition between her bedroom and bathroom every time she needed to go there as the biggest negative. I could not resist to remind her that this is what men have to do most of their life.

I happened to have been privileged to lead a great group of compatible friends on this trip. Having twelve to fill out every camp and every plane ride certainly added to the unique experience. But it is not vital to go in groups. Anyone who feels like breaking away from the hustle and bustle of our electronic gadget-laden society and get closer to nature, should try this.

In his foreword to *African Game Trails*, written in 1910 after a safari in East Africa, former US President Teddy Roosevelt declared:

“There are no words that can tell the hidden spirit of the wilderness, that can reveal its mystery, its melancholy, and its charm.”

Truly spoken, as I once again discovered when I tried to do justice to this recent safari experience in a written report.



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