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FINDING YOUR AFRICA



Malawi

Lake Malawi
Liwonde National Park
Nyika Plateau
Majete Wildlife Reserve



INTRODUCTION

Snorkelling is not an activity one would usually associate with a landlocked country but in Lake Malawi it is richly rewarded as more species of fish occur here than in any other lake in the world. Coupled with excellent birdlife and a concentration of large game in the south, the lake forms the focal point of the country's tourism industry.

For two thirds of its length Malawi hugs the shores of the lake, one of the deepest lakes in the world. Most of Malawi lies within the Great Rift Valley and nearly 20% of the country's total area is covered by the lake.

The lake, the third largest in Africa, plunges to a depth of 696 metres (2,300 feet,) and has an exceptionally varied fish population. Between 500-1,000 species of fish are found in the lake. Of the roughly 350 species of cichlid fish found in the lake more than 95% are endemic - they occur nowhere else on earth. The cichlid family, small colourful

fish, are kept by aquarium hobbyists all over the world. One of the more unusual activities to explore is to go snorkelling at Cape Maclear, which is part of a World Heritage site, and at a number of other places to view the fish.

Malawi's best large-game area is found at the southern tip of the lake where the Shire River begins its journey to the Zambezi River further south. In the north the Nyika Plateau rises to over 2,000 meters (6,600 feet) and dominates the area west of the lake.



Malawi's main attractions include the wonderful lakeshore, friendly people, excellent birdlife and decent game lodges. Malawi is a wonderful destination for second or third time visitors to Africa looking for an authentic African holiday.



HISTORY

Like many African countries, hunter gatherers moved through the region thousands of years ago. In the late 15th century some of the tribes of the region united and formed the Maravi Confederacy which included all of what is today Malawi and parts of present day Zambia and Mozambique.

During the late 18th and first half of the 19th century the region was regularly raided by slave traders from the Africa East Coast. Later a number of European explorers and missionaries, including David Livingstone visited the region. Intent on expanding its influence in Africa, Britain established the Nyasaland and District protectorate in 1891 but changed the name to the British Central African Protectorate in 1893 and again to Nyasaland in 1907. Although opposed by local leaders Britain went ahead in 1953 and combined Nyasaland with the Federation of Northern and Southern Rhodesia (now Zambia and Zimbabwe).

In the late 1950s a campaign for independence gathered momentum and after a series of protests the leaders of the Nyasaland National Congress were imprisoned and a state of emergency was declared. Later after the leaders of the protest were released, talks were held in Britain and Nyasaland was granted independence and became known as Malawi on 6 July 1964.

PEOPLE, CULTURE AND ECONOMY

The majority of Malawians are from the Chewa (32%) Lomwe (18%) and Yao (14%) groups but there are a number of smaller tribal groupings.

Malawi has few exports and most people are dependent on subsistence agriculture and fishing for their livelihoods. Fish are the most important source of protein for most people. It is often eaten with nsima, (pronounced in-see-ma) which is ground maize made into a form of stiff porridge, and relish based on tomatoes and onions and sometime spiced with chillies.

MALAWI IN BRIEF

- Capital City: Lilongwe
- Area: 118,484 km² (45,756 mi²)
- Population: 2.09 million
- Time zone: GMT +2
- Currency: Kwacha (MWK)
- Electricity: 220V
- Geography: Primarily within the Great Rift Valley along the shores of Lake Malawi and bordered by high plateaus. Its neighbours are Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique.
- Language: English and Chichewa



WHEN TO GO

The lakeshore areas have a warm relaxing climate. The highland areas have greater temperature changes and nights can be cold.

April to October: dry winter months, clear skies and warm days, bush becomes thinner and drier, good game viewing, some intermittent rain storms in April.

November to March: summer months, higher levels of rainfall and humidity, many roads become impassable, best bird watching, intermittent rain storms at any time.

CLIMATE

Lilongwe	Temp °C		Rainfall
	Min	Max	mm
Jan	17	26	200
Feb	17	26	210
Mar	16	26	130
Apr	13	26	30
May	10	25	0
Jun	7	23	0
Jul	6	23	0
Aug	7	25	0
Sep	11	27	0
Oct	14	30	0
Nov	16	30	70
Dec	17	27	170





HIGHLIGHTS

LAKE MALAWI

Lake Malawi occupies about twenty percent of the Malawi's total area and is the third largest lake in Africa. It is approximately 587 km (365 miles) from north to south and 83 km (52 miles) wide. The lake was formed during the natural faulting of the Great Rift Valley. The surface of the lake lies some 470 metres (1,550 feet) above sea level yet is 696 metres (2,300 feet) deep, the bottom of the lake thus being well below sea level.

The Lake Malawi National Park protects both the shoreline and water-life around Cape Maclear and the area has also been declared a World Heritage Site because of the vast number of fish, the diverse vegetation on the shore and sheer depth of the lake. The Park also includes 12 islands. For much of the year the lake is placid, but when strong winds blow the water can become very rough with large waves forming.

The lake plays an important part in the country's economy and fish is the most important source of protein for many Malawians. Fishing villages are scattered along the length of the lakeshore and this traditional industry gives visitors an insight into the lives of ordinary Malawians. There are well managed canoeing and boating trips on the lake and comfortable "beach" lodges. Some houseboats are also based on the lake.



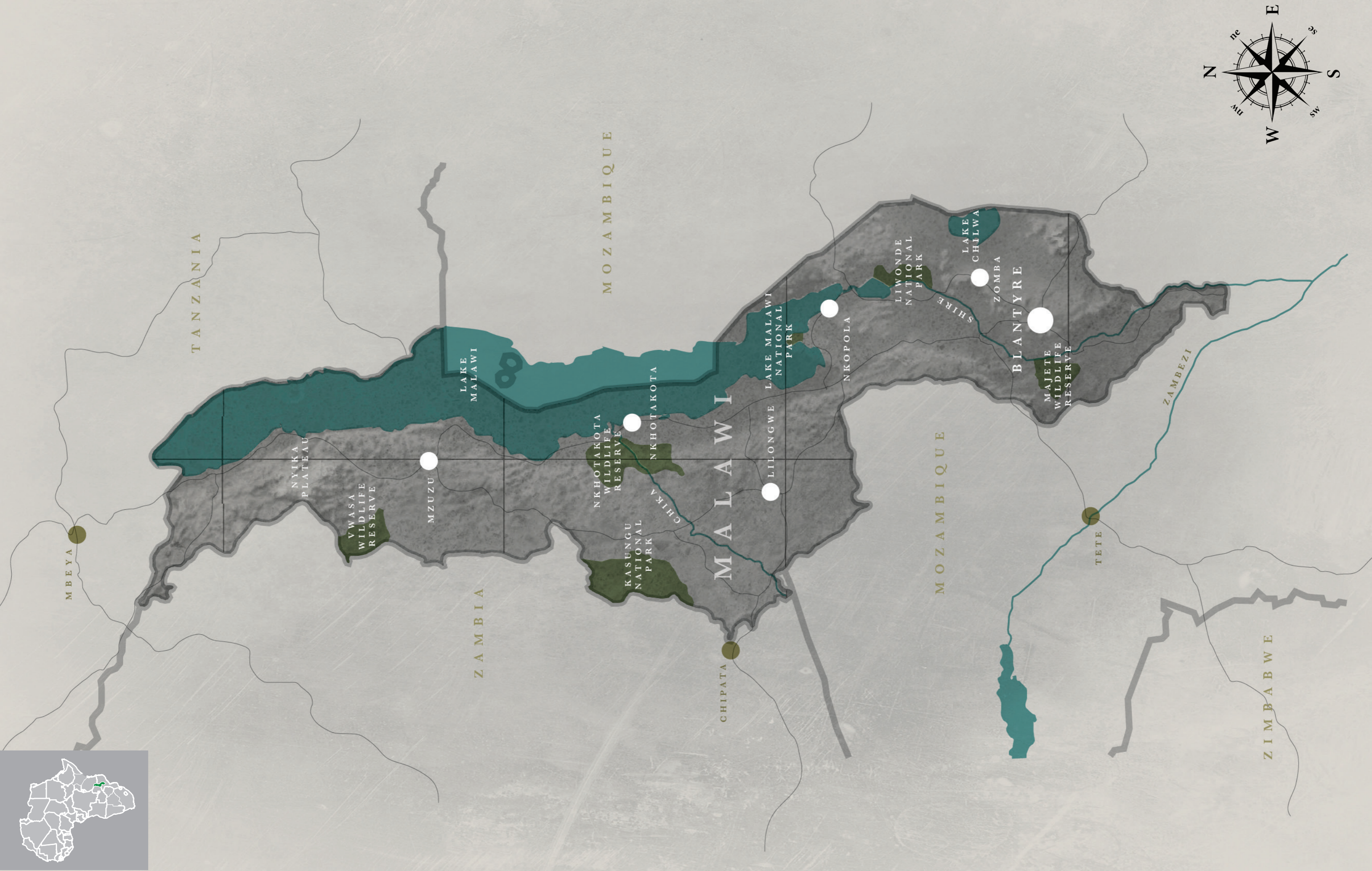
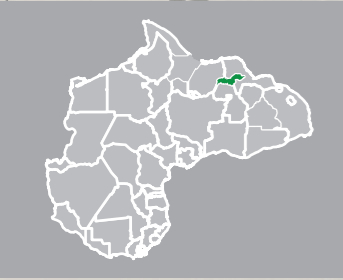
LIWONDE NATIONAL PARK

Liwonde lies at the southern end of Lake Malawi along the Upper Shire River (pronounced Shirree), and also borders Lake Malombe. Liwonde encompasses riverine swamps, deciduous woodland, open grassland and mopane woodland on the higher stretches. Such diversity means that Liwonde offers some of the best bird watching opportunities in Malawi. Game is abundant with a healthy population of elephant, hippo and crocodiles. Game viewing is often undertaken from boats on the Shire River.

Waterbuck, sable antelope, impala and bushbuck also occur in the park. Predators include lion, leopard, serval and jackal. More than 300 species of birds have been recorded in the area.



Lake Malawi is 360 miles long and 52 miles wide, (hence sometimes known as the "calendar lake"). It is lined with excellent beaches and is one of the cheapest places to learn to dive. There are more species of cichlids here than anywhere else on earth.



NYIKA PLATEAU

Most of the plateau lies between 2,000 and 2,200 metres (6,600 to 7,200 feet) although the Nganda Peak rises to some 2,605 meters (8,596 feet). The area is cool and offers good hiking and horse-riding. Birds and butterflies that have adapted to the high altitude habitats are a particular attraction.



MAJETE WILDLIFE RESERVE

Although relatively remote Majete is being restocked with wildlife including elephant, rhino, buffalo, sable antelope and other species. In decades gone by poachers took a heavy toll on the wildlife but the area is now being slowly restored.

The more adventurous can arrange to go elephant tracking on foot. Local communities are closely involved with the park, running some campsites, and benefit through job creation. Majete is near Blantyre in the south of the country.



OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

For a unique holiday experience, there are few better ways to discover the real heart and soul of a country than to travel away from the traditional tourist destinations and go 'off the beaten track'. With the wealth of experience we have gained through our many years creating luxury safari holidays to Africa, Hartley's Safaris offer an extensive portfolio of experiences that allow you to embrace the true spirit and adventure of this magnificent country in a safe and secure manner.





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