



AFRICAN elders

Age commands respect in Africa, and the Governors' Safari Camps in the Masai Mara are amongst the longest-established in East Africa. Best-known in the UK as home to the BBC's 'Big Cat Diaries', their relationship with the local community goes back generations. Silver Level Safari Guide Leonard Sadera talks to Sarah Read, Audley's East Africa Regional Manager, about how Governors' has helped his family.

Where were you born and brought up?

I was born in 1978 in a manyatta (circular encampment) near the village of Aitong, on the outskirts of the Masai Mara.

What is your current job?

I am currently a Silver Level Safari Guide for Little Governors' Camp.

How did you get involved with Governors'?

Governors' has been operating for many years, even before I was born. My father worked for Governors' Camp as a gardener in the 1980s and always recommended it as a close partner to our community. Governors' has also supported many community projects in my home area such as building class rooms, providing reading material, construction of a biogas plant in our Mara Rianda village, a free eye clinic and many others.

How long have you worked at Governors'?

About three years: in this time I have guided many Audley clients through the Mara.

What positions have you had during your time with Governors'?

I have always worked as a safari guide. At Governors' you are encouraged to continuously update your wildlife knowledge. All Governors' guides have to take the national guiding exams which begin with the bronze level. These are quite difficult: as a Masai living in the Mara I find the marine section especially hard! After I got my bronze I began studying for my silver. There are not many silver level safari guides in Kenya and it is a very prestigious badge to have.

Why should people visit Kenya this year?

Kenya is now back to peace after the violence that erupted after last December's general election. Visitors can now safely come and enjoy our annual migration. The wildlife in the Mara has always been good but right now it is especially wonderful.

What job would you be doing if you weren't working at Governors'?

If I was not working as a safari guide I would be working for our community as a ranger and looking after my cattle.



Governors' Bush Camp, Masai Mara



Leonard Sadera



Zebra approaching a river crossing in the Mara

What do you enjoy doing when you are not at work?

Herding cattle and reading. I enjoy reading wildlife magazines and other informative books that will enhance my guiding skills.

How has Governors' helped you?

My family has benefited from the various projects that Governors' have introduced into our community. My children are at the Mara Rianda School which has received a lot of direct assistance from Governors' Camp and my manyatta has had two biogas plants provided: this means that all 40 of our houses have free gas to cook on. The women no longer have to risk their lives to cut down wood for cooking and the trees are preserved. There's another advantage too: with less cow dung lying around the manyatta most of the flies are gone.

What is the most exciting game viewing experience you have had?

I have seen so much. It would have to be between some of the river crossings where many thousands of wildebeest and zebras cross the Mara River trying to avoid the crocodiles, but I have also been lucky enough to witness numerous amazing hunts by the large cats.

What do you hope to do in the future?

In the future I hope to further my studies in wildlife management and administration.

Little Governors' Camp was named as "Kenya's Leading Safari Lodge" at the World Travel Awards 2008 in Durban. This is the second year running that they have received this award.



Village water supply resulting from Governors' efforts

Get Involved

Guests are very welcome to visit Governors' projects, including the Mara Eye Clinic, Mara Rianda School and the Mara Biogas Project, Governors' Tree Planting Project, Loldia Primary School, Mfangano School Project, Responsible Tourism Rwanda, Governors' Recycling Project and the Karen Street Children's Trust in Nairobi. Guests are encouraged to contribute to the projects in any way, either by giving money directly or by bringing out relevant text books or pencils for the schools. Our specialists can provide further details of how you can contribute.

Audley sponsors pilot biogas project in Kenya

Audley have donated £8,000 towards a biogas project in Kenya's north eastern Masai Mara. Work will start in the next few months building the demonstration unit, which will hopefully prompt the widespread adoption of this cheap and very environmentally friendly form of energy production in this part of the park. The project is being run by Friends of Conservation (FOC). For further details please visit www.audleytravel.com/rt

FACT FILE

A two week trip to Kenya incorporating a stay at one of Governors' camps and some time relaxing at the coast would start from £3,200 per person including return flights. Please contact Russell, Melissa, Bronwen or Alex on 01993 838 510.

