



TRAVEL FEATURE



SUN, SEA AND SURF APLENTY...

DAN BEVAN WRITES ABOUT AN ADVENTURER AND HIS WIFE WHO PROVIDE HOLIDAYS ON A LUXURY CATAMARAN IN TANZANIA.

THE LAUNCHING of the 18-metre *Amarula* as a luxurious live-aboard catamaran in the Indian Ocean is the result of a unique twisting and turning journey, in more ways than one.

Eric Toyer, an Australian, and his English wife Lynne Sands, have established their business in Tanzania after an extensive odyssey, which covered several countries and dices with death on more than one occasion.

Eric gained his early experience on an old prawn trawler, *Topaz*, off the coast of New South Wales, Australia, he then worked in the Saudi Arabian Gulf and Zanzibar, Tanzania. He returned to Australia in 1998 with the dream of building a craft to take advantage of the excellent diving and water sport facilities which abound in Tanzania. Now that dream is a reality.

Amarula is a special vessel. It is borne of collusion between the third and fourth generation of the Toyer boat-building dynasty, Eric and his son Daniel. It is an 18.4-metre luxury catamaran, which Eric not only built and operates but also designed.

Amarula is based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania - within easy reach of the exotic spice islands of Zanzibar and the world-renowned dive sites of Pemba Island. Other Indian Ocean destinations including Madagascar, the Seychelles, Comoros, Kenya, Mozambique and Mauritius can be visited.

Eric is an experienced and extremely able seaman. Prior to his charter business he operated his prawn trawler *Topaz* in Australia, the Middle East, and Tanzania. It was in the latter in 1993 that he met Lynne, his future wife. Eric says she was an important catalyst in the conception of *Amarula* after he started running into many difficulties with the trawler business.

"Lynne had come to Dar es Salaam to teach at the International School of Tanganyika. We first met playing rugby; we were on opposing sides. Lynne became an inspiration after having experienced difficult times," he said.

"My ambition had always been to build a yacht and sail the world, Lynne offered to be my crew and soul-mate. We had been looking for a name for our

vessel and had been through many possibilities. One evening we were sitting at home looking through sailing magazines enjoying a glass of 'Amarula' with crushed ice; we looked at each other and simultaneously agreed that would be the name."

The catamaran offers luxurious accommodation and facilities for its passengers - 30-day passengers or 12 overnight.

Amarula has been designed specifically for blue water cruising and has all the comforts of home. She is fully self-contained with a large fuel capacity, generous battery supply, solar power, air conditioning, water maker, dive compressor and large sail wardrobe.

There is also no question over its sea capability. After the Toyers put their final touches to *Amarula* in Yamba Marina, Australia it was time to sail her on toward Tanzania.

Eric said: "We sailed up toward the Gold Coast, then onto Tin Can Bay and Fraser Island. From there we went to the southern end of the Great Barrier Reef, Lady Musgrave Island, Percy Islands, Pearl Bay, onto the Whitsunday group and Townsville. From Townsville we went on to Hope Island and then to Cooktown for a few days. Then it was further up through the Reef to Albany Passage and Cape York and across the Gulf of Carpentaria, through the 'Hole in the Wall' and onto Darwin.

"We cleared out of Darwin on the 2,000-mile leg to Cocos Island, stopping briefly at Scott Reef on the way. It was then the 1,500-mile leg to the Chagos Archipelago. Chagos is only accessible by boat and is a pristine place. From here we set off on the 1,000-mile passage to the Seychelles, a pleasant interlude before setting off on our final leg of 1,000 miles to Dar es Salaam. This final leg was good sailing. We finally had the wind that had eluded us for most of the passage and we averaged 200 miles per day arriving in Dar es Salaam some three months and 8,000 miles after departing our home port of Yamba."

Eric and Lynne hold the credentials needed for top enjoyment on a chartered yacht. Lynne is a super cook. For a typical lunch a buffet of

Left: *Amarula* poised for another voyage of discovery.



barbecued fish and steak, fried squid, marinated prawns and chicken with various salads and fruit are on offer. This is all washed down with a selection of wines, beers, sodas and fruit juices.

Eric's knowledge of the area *Amanla* operates in is extensive: "There is the opportunity to explore the coast and the many historic ruins, there are some in Kilwa dating back as far as the 900s.

"Zanzibar was the centre of the East African slave trade, where over 50,000 slaves were sold in the slave market at the time the Sultan of Oman ruled his domain from here. It is the coast of Sinbad the Sailor, Livingston and Stanley, Burton and Speke."

He added: "The largest river delta system in East Africa discharges into the Rufiji Delta. It was in this river system that the German raider *Konigsburg* entered and hid from the British Navy for over a year in 1915 after she had sunk HMS *Pegasus* in Zanzibar, the first naval engagement of World War One.

"Some of the best diving in the world is in the islands of Mafia and Pemba. Other sites of similar quality are being identified along the less known southern coast by Kilwa and Mtwara. Possibly the best attribute to the Tanzanian coast is the weather. With the exception of the rainy season from March to May when winds are low and fickle, there are always good sailing breezes."

Amanla is as perfect for corporate hospitality as it is for holidaymakers and marine nature enthusiasts. Recently the catamaran has played host to groups of marine research biologists. Important research work for a pilot study on the humpback whales that inhabit



the waters around Zanzibar and Pemba during calving season took place aboard Eric and Lynne's vessel.

The sights and experiences of marine life during these trips capture the imagination

Eric said: "We motored up the beautiful West Coast of Zanzibar to Ras Nungwi where we spotted our first pod of 50 bottlenose dolphins. We

Top: Lynne and Geoffrey with 'Biscuit', the welcoming tortoise at the Aldabra research station.

Above: Masked boobies – part of a study at Cosmoledo.

then encountered another pod of more active spinner dolphins that numbered 100.

"We continued around to Mnemba Island where we spotted two humpback whales.

It was during this first interaction at 15 metres away we learned that each whale has different patterns on its flukes. This means that photographs of their dorsal and tail fins will fingerprint each individual humpback whale."

After a beautiful day sighting nature, Eric and Lynne know how to unwind with their guests from

the exhilaration and excitement of discovery.

Eric said: "We had dinner with our party that evening at one of the many fine restaurants in Stonetown before having a leisurely sail back to Dar es Salaam the next day. We stopped off at Pungume Island for a snorkel in the mesmerising coral garden before anchoring at the Dar es Salaam yacht club in the evening for some friendly drinks at the bar."

Amarula provides the opportunity to travel to exciting places that relatively few people have the opportunity to visit. Her major draw-card is that she offers guests the luxury of sharing experiences with only a small group of like-minded people. Eric and Lynne's preferred overnight group size is up to six guests, however groups of up to ten can be accommodated comfortably.

The trips are customised entirely to the guest's requirements. Sailing, snorkelling, scuba diving, fishing, kayaking or simply, pure unadulterated relaxation are many of the treats on offer.

From Eric's attitude it is obvious that *Amarula* is far more than just a commercial venture. He sums it up: "If Lynne and I can share our experiences with others and they gain an enjoyable and memorable experience when with us, then we will have done what we set out to do."

* For more information, try www.amarulasail.com

Below: The beautifully appointed galley and saloon.

Bottom: Mark (an Aussie friend based in Botswana), Lynne and Eric enjoy a seafood platter with 'The House of Wonders', Stone Town, in the background.



