

TANZANIA

COASTAL AVIATION

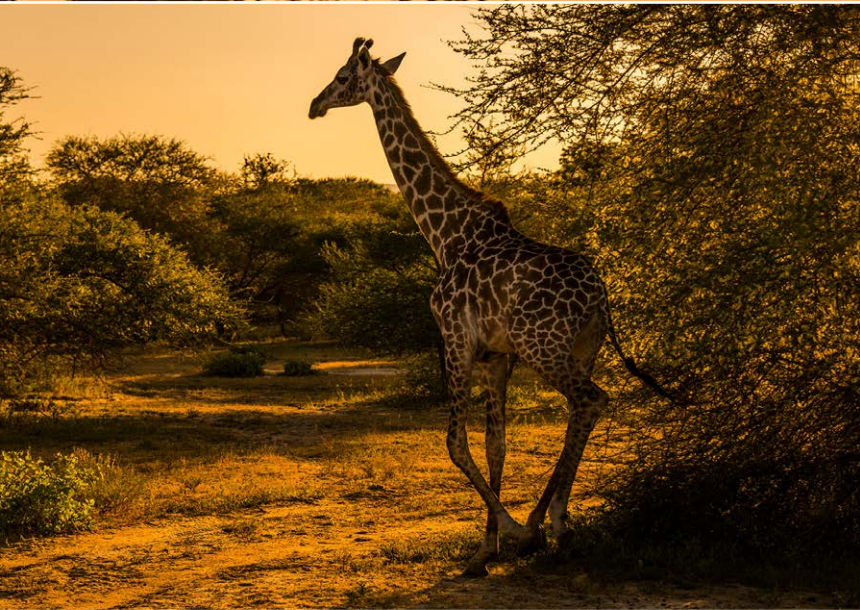
This was not strictly an air-to-air session, but it includes aircraft and ground imagery, so it does show another side of aviation photography. Here Jude and I were on assignment in Tanzania for a local aviation charter company Coastal Aviation. They needed to upgrade their visual pr for web and print delivery. Coastal pioneered the aerial safari concept, so the imagery had to address all the aspects of their operations, such as the aircraft, the method and style of personal interaction with the clients, the sights, the landscapes etc. So it was a full-on weeks work that entailed travelling to the Serengeti, Selous, Dar es Saalam, Zanzibar, the volcanoes and the lakes.

French pilots from Coastal, Gilles Laugier and Jean Baptise Debroise gave us the full tour, and it was our job to cover all the various aspects of the tours. With the help of a local model agency in Dar, we had two great models on hand, Miss Tanzania (Jihan Dimachk) and her male counterpart Jonas. So together with a make up artist and stylist, plus Serena from the marketing agency and a videographer Michael Mwambo, we all set off in a PC12 on the adventure of a lifetime.

First shoot was to show the PC12 and the FBO (Fixed Base of Operations) at Kilimanjaro Airport, to help reinforce the idea that the clients will be met personally as they get off the airliner and be taken to the FBO, where all official legalities will be handled, and not at the main terminal with its huge queues. At the FBO they can freshen up and then board their personal PC12 that they will have for the week, or however long their tour is. This aircraft will fly direct to the bush camps such as Ubuntu or Lake Manze in Selous, then whisked off in a waiting tropicalised Land Rover for their personal interactions with the African landscapes and its animals. The shoot covered sunset through to dusk, which of course is my preferred shooting time.







LAKE MANZIE, SELOUS NATIONAL PARK

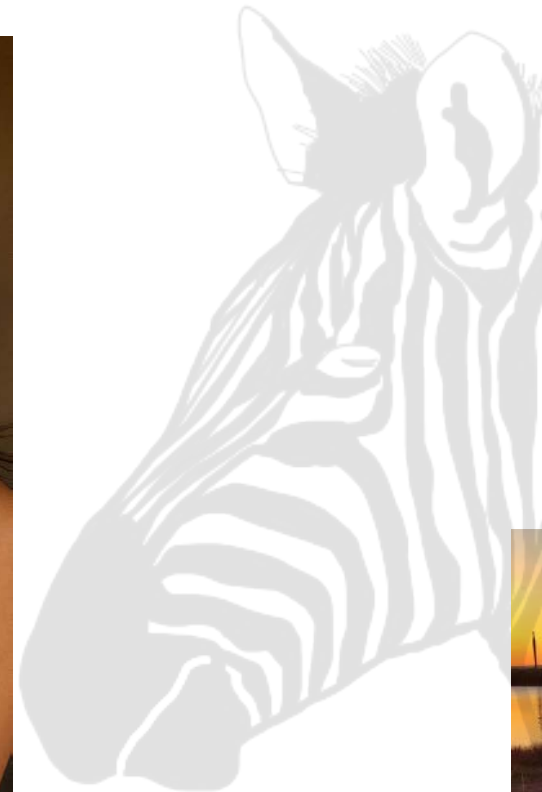




So the images almost had to portray a timeline of their journey. Arrival, the FBO, in the aircraft, relaxing, entering the Land Rover, seeing the animals, the camps, the ambience etc, then back to Kili.

My concern with models always, especially if you don't know them, is can they act? I have found that some models come loaded with the assumption that all they need to do is pose, which is fine on a fashion shoot where they are selling the clothes. But in a shoot like this for a travel company, the subjects have to try and sell the experience. They need to look like they belong there. Be it on the phone, or chatting, the viewer has to believe that these people are really doing these things.

But it is a hard thing to do especially if they have never had experience. It often takes a half day for new models who don't know each other to make a connection with each other. So I usually just sit and watch this taking place as you can't force it. A little prompting though can help. Then when they do act, it is great to see. This was the case with this shoot, by the end we were getting some really natural scenarios happening and they were almost oblivious to the camera, which is just perfect.







Once in a while situations test you. During the volcano shoot we found that mine and the pilots views of the subject were not the same. I showed them the storyboards of the view I wanted, which showed the entire volcano, so I could use different lenses to bring it closer or push it away. But although the pilot was good at formation work he had never needed to think about his aircraft being a camera, which for this sort of work is paramount. So as the cone of Mt Ol'doinyo Lengai slid by beneath me.....

'Were too close, we need to be a lot further out'

'But I can see the volcano Jon, its below us'.

'That's the problem, I can't see it with my camera, it's too close. We need to be heading east but at least three clicks further away.

'I don't understand Jon.....'

The light was awesome and I was pissed off that we were not in place. So I cancelled the sortie. Back on the ground I showed them what I meant and explained the effect of parallax. So we went up again, and got about three kilometres away. The light was still good and this time we and we nailed it.





The idea behind the Coastal philosophy is that the PC12 lands on a dirt airstrip at the camp. So the guests arrive right into the heart of the national park game reserves. Lake Manzie was no exception, once on the strip, the waiting Land Rovers took them to their tents by the lake. It was very hot, with temps around 33c, and the humidity around 85%. Animals were everywhere.

At night, with the tent right by the lake edge, the sounds were staggering, bellows, roars, grunts, cackles, just voicing their normal nightly activities. So this concept puts the client right in the thick of it within an hour of landing at Kilimanjaro, no hassle, no interruptions, no stress. The PC12 is theirs for the week. They can choose the area they want to see, from Ngorongoro or Manyara, to the Serengeti and Lake Natron or Mt Ol'doinyo Lengai and Mt Meru, as well as Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar. So it is a very comprehensive itinerary. I felt very privileged to see just small part of what Coastal offer in this spectacular part of the world.

Grateful thanks to all at Coastal Aviation; Gilles Laugier and Jean Baptise Debroise, Miss Tanzania (Jihan Dimachk), Jonas Njau, Michael Mbwambo McShady and Serena Mora.

