

LACK OF SAFARI TOURISM IN AFRICA IS DANGEROUS FOR ANIMALS



Elephants, rhinoceroses, giraffes: to see wildlife on safari, huge numbers of tourists travel to Africa every year. But now the coronavirus pandemic threatens the safari tourism sector and the lives of wild animals.

While summer holidays in Europe are becoming possible again despite the corona crisis, most tourists will probably have to wait a little longer for the next long-distance trip. This also hits popular safari destinations hard: Usually, tourists come in droves to Namibia, Kenya, Botswana and South Africa to watch the Big Five. **But since March the safari tourism in the African countries has completely collapsed, the safari camps lie abandoned.**

The consequence: in South Africa alone, up to 600,000 jobs are acutely endangered, warned the country's tourism minister, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, with a closure of the borders only until September.

The South African government paints an even darker picture. They assume that the country will not reopen for international visitors until February 2021. This would mean the end of a complete peak season, many lodges, hotels and safari operators would not be able to keep up. An entire industry is on the brink of collapse.

According to an estimate by "Safari Bookings", the safari tourism generates around 12.4 billion dollars per year in South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia - Africa's most popular wildlife destinations.

The news agency "Reuters" quotes a survey of more than 300 tour operators conducted by the online safari travel platform this month. The survey showed that almost 93 % of bookings had fallen by at least 75 % during the Corona pandemic, and cancellation figures had also risen.

The Corona pandemic is not only threatening the existence of people in Africa. While in Europe, during lockdown periods, images of dolphins in the port of Barcelona, deer in the center of Paris and goats in Wales went through the media, safari destinations have the exact opposite problem: the coronavirus pandemic threatens the lives of wild animals through an increase in poaching in Africa.

The lost tourism income has already brought hundreds of families to a point where they no longer know how to feed themselves and their children. This desperation can force people to hunt wild animals for meat and money.

Already in some places an increase in so-called bushmeat poaching, the poaching of antelopes and other game on whose meat people can feed, can be observed. This is because game-drives to remote regions are currently being cancelled, **which means that the risk of poachers being discovered is lower.**

And if the borders are reopened, this will not solve all the problems. On the contrary: the economic situation of the people will become increasingly worse. Experts fear that poaching in Africa will then even increase because of ivory, rhino horns or bones. Their export is currently difficult - that will

change when the borders are open again.

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