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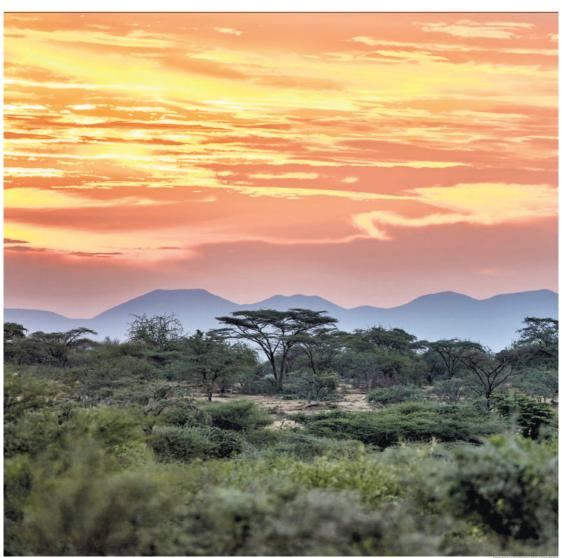
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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2017

Travel The New York Times



Of Rivers and Rituals

Touring Ethiopia's Omo Valley, with a sustainable travel outfitter.

By ANDREW McCARTHY

By ANDREW McCARTHY
"Your George W. Bush came here two years
ago and not a person recognized him."
"No one?"
"No one knew who he was."
"Would they have known Nelson Mandela?"

dela?"
"No. No one here would have seen TV. No one here thinks beyond Omo."
I was speaking with Lale Biwa, a member of the Karo people, in Ethiopia's Omo Valley. We were surrounded by low, circular huts made from sticks, with pitched grass roofs, in his home village of Dus, on the banks of

the Omo River. A woman, heavily adorned in beads and bracelets, ground sorghum on a large stone in the nearby shade. Men, some carrying AK-47s, sat in clusters. Small naked children scampered past. Goats and cattle roamed freely on the dusty flood plain. There was no electricity, no running water, no cars. Mr Biwam, who guesses his age to be "about 40", tooked around. "It is a "land come to the Omo Valley with the innovative tourism entrepreneur Will Jones toget a view into the lives of some of Africa's most traditional tribes." I'm particularly in most traditional tribes. "I'm particularly in most traditional tribes."

"It's an at-risk ecosystem, with at-risk communities. But it is still a very wild place." Mr. Jones was born in Nigeria of English parents, raised in East Africa and educated in England. "When it came time to put on a suit and go into town," he said, "I came back to Africa." Mr. Jones, 45, has been creating customized tours to the continent for more than 20 years. Wild Philanthropy is his latest ventrainable tourism with a mutually beneficial exchange between visitors and the people and land they visit. Mr. Jones also operates CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



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Of Rivers and Rituals in the Omo Valley

CONTINUED FROM PAGE!

The only permanent tented camp in the Omo
Valley, not far from Mr. Biwa's village.
This southwestern corner of Ethiopia is
home to seven primary tribes who coexist
with varying degrees of peace. The land is
largedy ofly savanna, with the Omo River
to Lake Thrians on the Kerpy border. The
discovery of human remains dating back
nearly 2.5 million years prompted Unesco
to dub the Lower Valley a World Heritage
site in 1880.

nearly 2.5 million years prompted Unesco use in 1880.

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But today the Omo is a region on the creaming the open of the company of the proposed dama sprive. The dama threaten to the creaming the company of the company of the proposed dama sprive. The dama threaten to the company of the company of the company of the proposed of the company of the company of the is the only time anyone can remember that The area has also fallen victim to hit-and-run tourism— people driving down from the company of the company of the transport of the company of t

ized boat — carrying supplies for an NGO downtriver.

so as on guide, we benedict with the supplies of the NGO downtriver.

Will be the supplies of the suppli

gathered during the war in neighboring Sula-Both they are not cheaps. Mr. Birsw Said.—"How much do they cost?" I asked.
"How much do they cost?" I asked.
"Five cows;" he said.
Beside firearms, I witnessed few other accommodations to the contemporary the grid, news traveled fast throughout the grid and the grid fast of the grid fas

nities. We headed east.
AT THE END of a long, deeply rutted road we came upon a dusty willage in the midst of a celebration. Old men and women gathered in the shade. Young men painted their faces red and white. Young women were draped in skirts and wore large bells wrapped around their calles. Their hair was ornately much gather than the state of the sta

done in rings culed with ochre-colored must Each carried a small horn and blew it manual Each carried a small horn and blew it may be a small form and blew it may be a small horn and and ranked it over his head. The woman believe her horn men insistently, then sud and ranked it over his head. The woman helps horn and the small helps her horn horn small horn and horn

ANDREW McCARTHY is the author of the young adult novel "Just Fly Away" and the travel memoir "The Longest Way Home."











tied our engine through the brown water.

"The Nymagatem are livere (githers, They are so water week. Not just with their water. The state of the source of



cuts, causing the skin to well in intricate patterns. They made this two mile walk to experience. The made this two mile walk to carrying water is women's work.

At the outsiders of the village, a half document of the state of



moul semon elser. I was offered a spot in the liking.

A ball was being reasted over an open free with machine lands, the likeling of the with machine lands of the area of the animal I couldn't identify was dropped leaves before the assembled. A part of the animal I couldn't identify was dropped leaves before the assembled to part of heavily pierced ears and a pointed stilled heavily pierced ears and a pointed stilled heavily pierced ears and a pointed still part in mouth. Just beyond the circle a dozen booded vulnares gathered.



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FROM FISHERMEN AT Turkana we learned that not far upstream, numerous Daassnach communities had begun to gather for a Dimi ceremony. They had come from miles away for an event that happens only every few years and lasts several weeks — culminating in the act of female circumcision.

'It's an at-risk

We left the boat and were immediately confronted by two dozent resuage boys, each of the confronted by two dozent resuage boys, each off, they happly aboved as the sharp tips of their wespens. We carried on across land for the confronted by the carried to the carried by the c







Daasanach woman and a Kara tribeswoman work the fields near

