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FOUNDER'S NOTE

LET THERE BE LIGHT

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN CAUTIOUS about bringing gifts with me when I travel. I remember the discomfort I felt when I went to East Africa in 1995 and saw other travelers tossing candy to local children. The tourists felt they were doing something good, without thinking about the impact. Instead of trying to engage with the kids in a genuine way, the visitors were encouraging them to covet or even beg for these meaningless and unhealthy "gifts."

I recently returned to East Africa and had a much better gift-giving experience.

Before my trip, Mark Lakin, the cofounder of Epic Road, a New York-based travel company that specializes in Africa, introduced me to a unique program he is establishing. He encourages his travelers to distribute solar-powered lanterns. Ambient light charges the lanterns during the day, then at night, the lanterns provide up

to four hours of light for homes, most of which do not have electricity, so people can read, sew, or cook. The lanterns are inflatable, so they pack easily, and as I found out, explaining how to inflate them is a great way to spark up a conversation with locals.

In Tanzania, I stayed at Singita's sublime Sabora Tented Camp in the Grumeti Reserve, which borders Serengeti National Park. Grumeti's community manager, Richard Ndaskoi, arranged for me

to visit the public school in Nagusi, a nearby village. I spent a couple of hours with the students and teachers, talking with them about their classes, how they could use the lanterns, and all sorts of other things, even the controversial topic of poaching. To me, someone who traveled across the world in part to see the incredible animals, poaching is inconceivable. And although I still think it's wrong, talking with students whose families see poaching as

a way to survive gave me a new perspective.

I can only hope that the lanterns are going to make a positive impact on the lives of the people of Nagusi. I know that this experience had a positive impact on mine. Taking the time to meet people and learn about their lives enriches my travels so much.

Mark is working on ideas to enable more travelers to give away lanterns in a way that is respectful of the recipients and their communities. If you are interested in helping, let me know.

GOOD TRAVELS,



Greg Sullivan
Cofounder & CEO

 Do you have thoughts about giving gifts while traveling? Email me at greg@afar.com.



A BRIGHT IDEA
The Mpowerd company introduced the Luci lantern in 2012.

A HEALTHY GLOW
The lantern's 10 light-emitting diodes can illuminate a small room.