

In Comfort and the Long Way Round

By Ken Wilkinson



In September 1956, following military service, I experienced the discomfort of spending four weeks on the lowest deck of a troopship, travelling from Mombasa to Liverpool via Cape Town because the Suez operation was imminent. To compensate for that unpleasant experience I decided to travel First Class when returning from UK leave in August 1962 via the Suez canal.

So, in August 1962, I embarked on the SS Uganda at the Albert Dock, London, for the twenty eight days voyage to Beira, Mozambique. Travelling first class to begin what was probably the most enjoyable travel experience of my life. The Uganda carried 300 passengers, with equal numbers in first and tourist class. Our itinerary was Naples, Aden, Port Said, Mombasa, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanga and Beira and I also took a separate trip to the island of Zanzibar. It was really great to be able to visit all of these places as an interested visitor and to take advantage of the leave travel arrangements then available.



I also counted myself very fortunate to have been allocated a dining place at the table of the Ship's Doctor which was not large but included the very attractive Ship's nursing sister. The Doctor was a jovial GP, on a single trip, and he allowed the surgery to be used for quite regular and very sociable gatherings of those from his table and when the non-medicinal alcohol flowed!

During the trip, I also had the pleasure of meeting up with Paddy Adair again and we were able to enjoy our Nyasa chat. Food and service throughout the ship was of a very good standard and fellow passengers invariably very friendly. After four fantastic weeks of enjoying plenty of sunshine, excellent food, drink and company, and too much inactivity, I finally disembarked at Beira weighing a great deal more than when I left London. *(I also missed that lovely Ship's nurse quite a lot!)*

Ken Wilkinson

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PS: Uganda went on later to become an educational cruise ship and then became a hospital ship in the Falklands War.

