

# Python

**The Python Hunter** Twenty years ago a hunter came into my one room hut and unrolled a seven meter python skin across my hard packed floor. "How did you kill it?" I asked, unable to mask my astonishment. He gave me the same answer that I'll give you right now: "Wait and I will tell you, but first you have to hear me out." I remembered this moment the other day as I stared at the huge green coils of the largest python ever seen in Tanzania, which I'd managed to stumble across just outside of town. I was in Mbezi Beach, at the northern tip of White Sands, and the Python that I'd stumbled across is actually an 80 meter pipe that swallows anyone brave (or foolish) enough to climb into it. Then it spits you out — as if you were shot from a canon - half way across a sparkling pool forty feet below. This particular python, as you've no doubt figured out, is one of Water World's six enormous slides and for Tshs 3,500 (2,500 for children) the slides provide a very slippery day of fun. In addition to the adult slides there is an identical set, but on a toddler's scale, set aside for kids. The whole park is connected by a patchwork of waterways and landscaped paths leading to the snack bar and covered seating area, all ideal for watching the antics in the pool. But the real highlight is the setting: a palm studded sandy beach set off against the sparkling Indian Ocean (White Sands also offers a snorkeling trip out to Mbudya island, a few minutes away by boat). But to get back to my python hunter, whom I mentioned in the first line: he explained to me that he'd killed the huge python by stripping naked and tying a long-bladed knife tightly to his thigh. "Then I put my foot into the python's hole and waited," he said. "It took a long time for it to swallow up to my thigh but when it finally got there I knew I had it trapped. Then I slid my knife down the length of its body...it takes a long incision to kill a snake as big as that. I couldn't believe how good it felt when my foot was finally out." Initially, I thought I recalled his words so vividly because of a shared sense of relief - having just been spat from the mouth of Water World's enormous Python I now knew exactly how good it felt to finally get out. But then I looked down and noticed that in the process of being freed I had also been partially defrocked. My reason for relating this little misadventure is to share the lesson learned therein. To borrow a phrase I heard the other day, "Take my advise...I'm not using it": The best way to enjoy Water World is to bring along a belt!