

## CLIENT TRIP REPORTS - SOUTHERN AFRICA

JULY 2008 – SEPTEMBER 2008

### SAFARI TO BOTSWANA AND ZAMBIA

**Flying safari in Botswana to the Okavango Delta and Chobe National Park**

**Flying safari to the Lower Zambezi National Park**

**Visit to Livingstone - Zambia**

Thanks for an absolutely fabulous trip. Everything went off without a hitch and everyone had a wonderful time. As first time visitors to Africa, we were in awe every day with spectacular sunrises and sunsets, the diversity of animals and birds, wonderful camps and outstanding staffs. We were fortunate to see four cheetah's, leopards both day and night, sable antelope, lions, beautiful birds and some of the more elusive smaller animals like a wild cat, genets, mongoose and a python. Our two excursions to local villages were also insightful, especially to a guides home village near Kasaka River lodge, Zambia. Victoria Falls was also a scenic highlight.

In summary:

Transportation: All internal Africa flights and transfers went off without a hitch. It was comforting to find that someone was always at our destination to meet us and ensure we proceeded smoothly ...especially at a chaotic place like the Botswana to Zambia border river crossing.

Accommodations: Your choice of camps was ideal. Although similar in hospitality, each had it's own character. We also enjoyed seeing the diversity of terrain from camp to camp.

Chitabe...overall our favorite camp (the fact that the main lounge/bar bldg burned down May 1st did not distract at all ....it's almost rebuilt). We felt the camp had a " Warm, friendly, intimate atmosphere". Kenny and Josephine were great hosts and Andrea, "Andy", was our favorite guide overall.

Little Vumbura....spectacular setting in the Delta with a "Joyful staff who genuinely enjoyed singing and entertaining". One of two camps with the "best food".

Muchenje Safari Lodge ....another great setting overlooking the Chobe River floodplain. The camp felt "Comfortable and friendly, but more formal than other camps"...perhaps because it had the largest number of other guests. Chobe was a very busy Park with numerous other safari vehicles, but also the largest quantities of big animals.

Toka Leya ....about three months old. Our most luxurious camp ...."Safari Luxury in a beautiful riverside setting with numerous optional activities" (we took the sunset cruise). We never expected a heated and air conditioned tent. Despite being new, the staff was very friendly and well organized. Excellent meals. Even has a Spa ....my wife got a massage. I would definitely recommend this camp over a big hotel for a visit to Victoria Falls.

Kasaka River Lodge ....great setting on hilly side of the Zambezi river. I assume this is a "classic" permanent tented camp....I'd describe it as a "Rustic, family with kids, oriented camp". It was our only tent with a "zipper door" to the tent and outdoor bathroom....less convenient than a door, especially in the middle of the night. Food was just ok. We enjoyed a mix of land and river safari's, canoeing, fishing and our trip to the local village. The best place to see Hippo's out of the water.

Victoria Falls. The visit to the falls exceeded my expectations. It's a spectacular place! It was a great break from early morning safaris. The granddaughters will also long remember the "friendly-aggressive" vendors of local crafts.

Summary: Some people have commented that the trip was "expensive" compared to big tour operators. When I reflect on our approx 20 land/river safaris with our own vehicle and guide, at five diverse camps, visits to Victoria Falls and two local villages, and local air transport .....I think we got an outstanding value and I would heartily recommend the Africa Adventure Co to anyone wanting to go to Africa.

*Al and Glenda Halliden, July 2008*

## **SAFARI TO TANZANIA, ZAMBIA AND SOUTH AFRICA**

**Private safari in Tanzania to Tarangire/Lake Eyasi/Ngorongoro/Serengeti**

**Island getaway to Zanzibar**

**Visit to Victoria Falls, Livingstone and Cape Town, South Africa**

Thank you for your hard work in making our African safari truly a dream vacation. We are now back home for one week and are talking with various family and friends about the trip. If we didn't experience it ourselves, we would hardly believe our stories of all the great things we saw and did. Your expertise and guidance helped us get the most out of the adventure. The itinerary was very diversified and provided a rich experience, and lived up to our highest expectations.

Omari was an unbelievably friendly, knowledgeable, and talented guide in Tanzania. Thank you for choosing him for us. Tarangire Treetops was a great way to start out with luxury in the bush. The ability to do a walking safari and night safari at Treetops enhanced the total experience. The time with the Hadzabe people near Lake Eyasi was one of the big of the many highlights on the trip. Thank you Alison and Mark for letting us know about their experience and how their kids enjoyed it. Kisima Ngeda Camp was very nice and we liked talking with one of the owners, Nani, about her interesting life. The three days in the mobile camps gave us the ability to be even more in touch with nature during our stay in the Serengeti. The staff at camp couldn't have been more accommodating. We're going to miss the lions' roaring nearby and elephants' visiting and trumpeting us to sleep. Flying out of the Serengeti was a great way to maximize our time on Safari.

Zanzibar was nice. The Serena Hotel was great. We especially liked the Safari Blue sailboat ride and the chance to scuba dive in the protected marine park. The dive people had modern equipment and were cautious and well-trained.

Cape Town and the surrounding areas were a great way to get westernized again before our long trip back to the States. The Welgelegen Guest House was like a home away from home. Fresh fruit, cookies, and wine were available all day. The location, as the name states, was well situated. We could easily walk to dinner. They also let us keep our bags in the room until 8:00 p.m. before our late flight home - giving us an extra day to explore Cape Town and the wine country. I especially enjoyed the chance to do great white shark cage diving in Gansbaai on an especially calm weather day. We really lucked out with our weather in Cape Town. Table Top Mountain was visible the entire time.

Sounds like there is nothing else for us to do in Africa. Wrong! We need to book with you guys to do gorilla trekking in Rwanda, chimpanzees in western Tanzania, and the various parks in Kenya, Botswana, Malawi, etc... We would definitely like to get back to Africa in a few years and will definitely give you a call to assist us in planning the next trip.

*Joseph Lucas and Mary Lee Fugina, June/July 2008*

## **PRIVATE LUXURY SAFARI TO BOTSWANA AND ZIMBABWE**

### **Mobile Tented Safari to Moremi and the Okavango Delta**

### **Safari in to Linyanti Reserve**

### **Visit to Victoria Falls**

I am writing in response to your invitation for feedback about the Botswana and Zambia trip. I think all of us had a wonderful time and appreciate all the arrangements made by African Adventures! We were treated great at all locations, and everyone we came in contact with was on time, professional, to polite and helped us! Adrian Dandridge was a great guide and I would recommend him to anyone. He has a very interesting background and perspective, having grown up in Botswana and hunting with his Dad and he knew so much about the bush and about life in Botswana! He went above and beyond the call of duty to help us. The open 4x4 vehicles were ideal for seeing everything around. We all agreed that it was a trip of a lifetime and it made me even more insistent on conservation. (We learned that wild dogs and cheetahs are rapidly dwindling in number and we did not see them, though we saw so many other animals.) I loved the mobile tent camping and the thrill of hearing lions, hyenas, hippos and elephants at night and being so close to wildlife. The permanent camps (Gunn and Linyanti) also were very natural and good! The food was good everywhere and I felt quite pampered. Thanks to you and the staff for all of your help!

*Stanley Chapman, June/July 2008*

## **PRIVATE LUXURY SAFARI TO BOTSWANA AND ZIMBABWE**

### **Mobile Tented Safari to Moremi and the Okavango Delta**

### **Safari in to Linyanti Reserve**

### **Visit to Victoria Falls**

To say that our trip to Africa was the trip of a lifetime cannot capture the uniqueness and adventure we experienced. We owe the majority of our enthusiasm to our guide Adrian Dandridge, a true native of the Bush, whose love of the land, its animals and its people was evident as he shared his expertise and stories about his country. We witnessed lions right after a kill, fighting over the killed baby Cape buffalo, a leopard in a tree, ready to pounce on approaching impala, an elephant charging (we were kept quite safe) and many other unique scenes of the wild African bush. A few of our party are birders and Adrian helped us identify well over a hundred native African birds, as we "tick, ticked" them off the list of sightings. We learned how to make a snare, beginning with a palm leaf, from which rope is made; and how to identify animals by their footprints and scat. We gathered by an open fire every morning and every evening for laughter and camaraderie. After dinner each night, we stared in wonder at the Southern Cross and other brilliant stars of the Southern Hemisphere.

Our favorite part of the trip was the mobile tenting. It is noteworthy that this preference comes to you not only from the men in our party; but also from the women, who might have preferred luxury over "roughing it" under any other circumstances. Our staff at the tent camp provided wonderful service, including delicious food (with recipes shared!), a native singing performance and impeccable care. No 5-star hotel could compete with our tents and staff!!!

On our last evening in Africa, our group was contemplating where we could go next that could "top" this trip...and then there was silence...and then laughter...because we realized there is nowhere in the world that could come close to our time in Africa.

I would also like to add that I appreciated SO MUCH the arrangements made by the Africa Adventure Company to have us met and "handed off" from one representative to another. I was grateful for the guidance of your representatives, guiding us through customs as we crossed borders and providing safety, especially in light of the fact that we had to carry a good bit of cash with us on our journey. Africa Adventure Company is recommended highly to everyone we know! Once again THANK YOU!

*Shelley Hutchinson, June/July 2008*

## **VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA AND SAFARI TO ZAMBIA**

### **Visit to Cape Town and Hermanus**

### **Visit to Victoria Falls – Livingstone, Zambia**

### **Safari in Zambia to South Luangwa and Lower Zambezi National Parks**

We had a wonderful trip to Africa! We wanted to thank you and the rest of your colleagues for arranging such great vacation. We wanted to specifically praise several of the lodges and activities you set up for us. The Cape Cadogan was excellent. Both the service and the facilities were top notch. Our only disappointment was that with so much to do in the city itself, we didn't have more time to spend at the Owner's Villa (which was huge).

The Whale Song in DeKelders had the most picturesque views among our accommodations, and we were able to spend 2 afternoons watching whales from our room and the cliffs out front. Shark diving Marine Dynamics was great. We had great luck, seeing 9 white sharks. The boat was not full and we spent about 45 total minutes in the cage. We enjoyed Tongabezi as well. Rafting was fun, and the big downside that we had read so much about--the hike out of the gorge--is no longer an issue as a cable lift has been built at Rapid 25. The lunar rainbow was amazing.

We really enjoyed the staff at Chiawa; we thought they went out of their way to accommodate the wishes of all their guests (who had quite divergent ideas about what they wanted to do on safari). We highly recommend canoeing. There were no safety issues, and the guides seemed plenty conscientious about avoiding trouble spots. Being on the canoe allows you to get closer to the wildlife without engine noise putting animals on alert. Hippos were ubiquitous in camp, with one grazing at the foot of our stairs one evening, which was a tremendous plus for us. We had our best luck with lions here, as we were able to find and photograph a pride of fifteen at close range every day we were in camp.

Our favorite camp was Mwamba--it was where we felt most fully immersed in the wilderness. With only six people in camp, you get a real sense of personal attention. We also received the best guiding here, where special mention should be made of Patrick, who remarkably balanced guiding and hosting during our stay. There was a nice mix of walks and drives, and the wildlife viewing was superb.

We were able to spot 7 leopards during our visit, and encountered a group of wild dogs. It was a thrill when the research team arrived the next day at camp to go over our photos and identify which dogs we had seen. We spent a good deal of time at the Hippo Hide, where there were never less than 100 hippos in view.

We had an excellent experience with Pro-flight. It was also notable that every single flight while in Africa was on time, a remarkable achievement and one of which we Americans can be envious. The baggage storage service in J-burg was professional and extremely responsive --we would recommend them highly. All in all it was a great trip and we were sorry when it was over. There's so much else to do that we almost have to go back, so you can expect to be hearing from us again in the future!

*Rahn Huffstutler and Whitney Hopper, July 2008*

## **WILDLIFE SAFARI TO SOUTH AFRICA AND SOUTH BOTSWANA**

**Safari to Phinda Resource Reserve**

**Safari to Limpopo – Mashatu Private Game Reserve**

**Visit to Coach House-Tzaneen**

**Safari to Djuma Private Game Reserve**

Africa is so much more than we anticipated. The Southern African 's where gracious and fun loving hosts. I haven't laughed so much in a long time. I also haven't eaten as much either. The Phinda Camp helped to celebrate our 39th anniversary trip by setting up a surprise champagne toast with appetizers served in the bush and lit with lanterns and candles--caught us totally by surprise. The sky was lit with the Milky Way - -which I haven't seen in 30 years--and the southern heavens with the Southern Cross and Scorpio.

Our second safari at Mashatu was wonderful. It was great fun standing under the shower head attached to the tree while the monkeys watched ready to steal anything --they did get a friend's hair brush!

Our last stop at Djuma gave us all of the big five, in addition to a hundred bird species I'd never seen before and just about every mammal in Southern Africa . The best adventure for me was the last night of our trip and the next morning. We bushwhacked across country hot on the backs of two stalking male lions. Then it got pitch black as night descended. We sat silent in the open land cruisers, completely surrounded by three hundred Cape Buffalo and followed the hunt with our ears --heard a mother defend her calf, heard the bellows of the male buffalo and the soft stalking sounds of the lions who were within a few feet of us. The stars were brilliant overhead, the noises so primitive it made my heart flutter. The next morning found the mist had rolled in that night. Our guides took the gun and tracked the pride of lions through the brush where at times the mist just seemed to swallow everything. I couldn't believe those trackers. The land cruiser just rode over bushes and small trees and down deep gullies and up perpendicular hills. All the time we hung on for dear life.

The best part of the trip was the people we met. We spent many hours talking with couples from 10 different countries as diverse as Australia and India . We didn't meet a person we didn't like. Our rangers waited on us hand and foot, the chef's made incredible meals, the housemaids left flowers and candy for us every night. It was amazing.

We can't wait to go again. Every single person at the three safari camps was so nice to us, the game viewing astonishing, and the weather perfect.

*Barbara and Peter Lyndrup, July 2008*

## **BEST OF BOTSWANA FLYING SAFARI**

### **Visit to Victoria Falls - Zimbabwe**

### **Flying safari in Botswana to the Kalahari Desert/Linyanti/Okavango Delta/Moremi**

Africa was amazing and wonderful from our first stop at Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe to our last morning safari ride in Botswana before driving to the airport for our flights home. The first week I kept saying *IF* I come back...by week two both Andy and I were saying *WHEN* we come back again!

Victoria Falls is as awesome as the photos I've seen. Our first evening we cruised the wide Zambezi River upstream from the falls where I saw my first elephant and hippo in the wild. And saw the first of many African sunsets – called sundowners, complete with drinks and snacks. The helicopter ride the next morning gave us a wonderful view of the falls which cascade into a narrow canyon and flow on into the Indian Ocean.

Our first of four safari camps was at Jack's Camp, a 1940's safari style camp in the Makgadikigadi Pans in the Kalahari Desert – that is to say in the middle of nowhere the size of Switzerland. I loved the open spaces, the candlelight formal dinner under the stars on the pan, and the opportunity to sit with the meerkats as they came out of their dens to spend 30 minutes warming up in the sun before beginning their day of foraging. Andy liked the quad bike ride on the pans.

Camp number two, Duma Tau, was in Linyanti area north of the Okavango Delta (the world's largest delta) where I started seeing the African animals I have dreamed about for so long. And the accommodations were unbelievable. They may call them tents but the only resemblance to tents are their canvas walls and ceilings! The camp staff was very welcoming and the other guests were a delight. The first morning I saw a pride of 9 lions eating their kill of the night, a zebra. I was amazed at how close we came to these wild animals in the open 4 x 4 land rovers – we couldn't have been more than 30 – 40 feet away from these magnificent lions who completely ignored us, however we would probably have been breakfast if we stood up in the vehicle! During our morning and late afternoon drives I saw elephants, giraffes, cape buffalo, baboons, hippos, impalas (the goats of Africa – they are everywhere in large numbers), warthogs, zebras (donkeys in pajamas), various antelopes.

Camp number three, Tubu Tree, was in the Okavango Delta where we were greeted by many elephants crossing the water in front of the camp. There are no fences – the animals and people live together. On the safari drives I continued to see the African animals, even gradually learned to identify the various antelopes: duiker, impala, kudu (which I thought was the most handsome), hartebeest, lechwe, springbok, steenbok, tsessebe. Met more people at camp where the conversation was always which camps have you been to and which camps are you going to. I learned about so many interesting African countries that could be explored on my next visit!

Our last camp, Mombo, was on an island in the delta and its animal life was simply amazing as were the accommodations. We saw most of the animals that we had seen before but in greater numbers. I passed fields where there were hundreds of animals (the lion's grocery store) grazing and keeping alert to predators. Late the first afternoon we watched two lionesses nursing their young, one had three 12 day old cubs, the other two four month old cubs. The older cubs finished dinner, then played in the field before us – just like the calendar pictures! The elephants were fascinating and the giraffes so graceful as they walked before us. On our last day which was my birthday we saw our first male lion, then a wild cat, then a cheetah eating his kill of a lechwe (cheetahs are seen only about once a month) and ended the day by the sighting of a leopard and her cub. We watched the leopard "hanging" in a tree, then get up and stretch, and come down the tree to "pose" for photos before our vehicle.

Now that was some birthday gift!! But the birthday surprises continued – came back to our “tent” to find that in honor of my birthday I was invited to a candlelight dinner for two (decided I had better ask Andy) beside the pool. What better way to spend my last night in Africa!

I could go on and on and on about my trip – the whole progression of camps, animals, camp staff, guests (never more than a dozen) was beyond my dreams. My next call is to my travel advisor who set this whole trip up to complement him – so many people commented that I had a terrific itinerary.

*Irene and Andrew Bailey, Aug 2008*

## **SAFARI TO SOUTH AFRICA, ZIMBABWE AND ISLAND GETAWAY TO MOZAMBIQUE**

### **Visit to Cape Town**

### **Flying Safari in Zimbabwe to Hwange/Mana Pools/Victoria Falls**

### **Island getaway to Benguerra Island, Mozambique**

Lindsey and I have safely returned to Boston after our incredible honeymoon in Africa. The highlight of the trip was most definitely our canoeing adventure with Nick and Rick. I am still trying to wrap my mind around what an incredible experience it was. We have done a lot in our short lives including canoeing from Maine to Canada, hiking all over Australia and New Zealand, and climbing through glaciers, but nothing compared to Mana. It was the best trip I have ever been on and sad to say, it could be the best trip I could ever imagine going on for the rest of my years. On the plus side, I guess this means that once we have enough money saved we will be back to do it again. Best of luck and thank you for everything.

*Michael and Lindsey Moyes, Aug 2008*

## **FLYING SAFARI TO ZAMBIA**

### **Safari to Kafue National Park/Lower Zambezi National Park/South Luangwa Valley**

I just wanted to take a moment to thank your crew for their work on our Zambia trip: just as in 2006, all arrangements went off without a hitch. Once again, we felt the parks and camps reflected your (and our) concern for varied experiences, quality guides, and responsible tourism. We very much enjoyed the time we spent with Phil, Sarah, and the Busanga staff--in contrast to S.A. and Botswana, we got a good sense of what a newer, more remote park is like. Chiawa, Old Mondoro, and Tafika certainly lived up to their reputations in terms of both hospitality and guiding...we especially appreciated our river activities on the Zambezi--in particular, the canoe trip to Old Mondoro via the Discovery channel. (It confirmed that the two of us would have loved the Zimbabwe canoe trip that Allison urged! The guides at Chiawa told us they feel that the wildlife experience in Zimbabwe is still superior to any other.) Bonnie and I also walked at Chiawa and Old Mondoro, which gave us an entirely different perspective on the landscape and wildlife that we very much appreciated.

We also loved our stay at Tafika and got a real appreciation for what John and Carol Coppinger have contributed to those who live in the area. The guides were great, as was the general hospitality. Four of us took ultra light flights, which was a real treat, and we visited Mkasanga village and school. We also appreciated the care displayed by the management!

Thanks again--we would not hesitate to recommend African Adventure!

*Pam Liebing and Bonnie Beach, Aug 2008*

## **SAFARI TO BOTSWANA, VISIT TO VICTORIA FALLS & CAPE TOWN**

### **Visit to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe**

### **Flying safari to Selinda/Okavango Delta - Moremi**

### **Visit to Cape Town and Garden Route, South Africa**

Our flying safari/tour to Zimbabwe, Botswana, and South Africa was frankly amazing. From the game viewing in the Okavango to the car hire in Cape Town, all happened exactly according to plan. You get 'off the chart' super-high marks for making it happen for us. We can't tell you how much we appreciate all of your hard work to make this an absolutely perfect vacation. You definitely steered us in all of the right directions and we'll certainly follow your roadmap again very, very soon.

Below hits a few specifics about each place we visited.

#### **Victoria Falls**

The people we encountered in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe were very warm and welcoming. We felt that they were truly glad to have us in their country and everyone went out of their way to make us comfortable. Esther taught us how to bungee jump without leaving the bridge (I think she does a lot of things her own way). The Victoria Falls Safari Lodge was fantastic! Vervet monkeys jumped all around our windows trying to find a way in, and elephants visited the water hole right outside our room. The Boma's spread was just that ... A SPREAD! They have ostrich, warthog, crocodile, bream, cape buffalo, and of course ...the Mopane Worm (all of which I enjoyed).

#### **Selinda Reserve**

What an incredible way to start off the safari experience. The room was beautiful and it looked out over a floodplain marsh full of water-fowl and HIPPOS (they're hilarious to listen to at night – we couldn't stop laughing at them). Fifteen minutes into our first game drive, we saw two cheetah brothers resting under a tree. During our sundowners that same evening, we watched a pride of lions stalk a herd of cape buffalo from about 30 yards (now that's safari!). Even though the game viewing was special, the staff was even more special. We were very fortunate to spend time with Ella (Elmari Cuyler). She proved to be an extremely lovely hostess and lady, and she made sure no minor detail was left out. Obie, our guide, and I hit it off immediately. Kristi and I both learned so much from him during our game drives. There was no question about wildlife, birds, or geography that he couldn't answer. Obie provided a knowledge base that made the rest of our trip all the better.

Coollest animal sighting – The Pangolin!

(Selinda was a very special place and a personal experience that I'll never forget).

#### **Vumbura Plains**

At Vumbura the game got kicked up a notch. We saw a lot of the same species but more of them. Our animal encounters were more frequent and more abundant. The food was good but the staff was fantastic! Janice is a total NUT and Tanya, Frank, Percy, etc. took great care of us. Our guides, Lettie and Ace, were an awesome team. They gave us valuable information about the wildlife we witnessed with just the right amount of humor to give it an edge.

#### **Mombo Camp**

Mombo is definitely top of the range. I needn't say more ... but I will. Mombo has the personality and character of Selinda coupled with the wildlife of Vumbura, but cranked up a bout 100 fold. The room was beautiful and enormous (I got lost a couple of times on my way to the outside shower) and the wildlife was insane! Our first night we had a pride of lions kill an impala right in front of the camp giftshop. Another morning I showered with baboons barking above my head and a cape buffalo snoring just below me (probably getting wet from the over-spray).

The people were also unforgettable. I cannot say enough about Simon, Tapps, Lebo, Nicole, Lizzy, and Kirsten. For all of these reasons and more, we plan to return to Mombo very, very soon. By the way, the food at all the camps was unreal.

### **Cape Town**

The Welgelegen Guest House was fantastic. Annie and Martan took very good care of us and of course the breakfast was great. We arrived after dark so we had no idea what surrounded us. Imagine our surprise the next morning as we awoke to see Table Mountain right outside our window. Clive gave a great tour of The Cape and we enjoyed his company very much.

### **Hermanus**

We were blown away by the mountainous and rocky terrain of the coast. We never imagined it would be so striking and dramatic. It has such a powerful beauty. The Schulphoek Guest House is top shelf with an outstanding view of the ocean and whales (and oh yeah ... the food was absolutely fantastic). In all, I guess we could say it was the trip of a lifetime but it wasn't really. I say that only because we hope to return many times to the spirituality and beauty that is AFRICA! Again, you and everyone at AAC did an outstanding job of ensuring we had the most incredible vacation. Thanks so much and we'll be in touch.

*Oren and Kristi Reedy, Aug – Sept 2008*

## **SAFARI TO ZIMBABWE AND BOTSWANA**

### **Safari in Mana Pools and visit to Victoria Falls - Zimbabwe Flying safari in Botswana to Moremi and Okavango Delta**

Thank you for the follow-up letter asking us about our trip. We landed yesterday after what Matt and I both considered one incredible adventure!!!

Overall, it was a truly awe-inspiring experience, with our time in Mana Pools and the unforgettable Nick being one of the many outstanding highlights. What a great guy and what an amazing place!! We are so very happy that we decided to go to Zimbabwe!

The trip started in Victoria Falls/Zimbabwe, where the falls themselves were equally as stunning as the Class 5 white water rafting adventure on the Zambezi on day 2. I have never screamed so hard and swallowed so much water.... Matt added a zip line adventure across the 300 foot high gorge, which I just couldn't stomach. But I took photos of his brave feat. The elephant back ride on a semi-wild but willing elephant bull seemed tame in comparison but was a pretty unique experience in itself.

We then went on to Mana Pools in Zimbabwe, a most gorgeous area framed by the tall mountains of the Rift Valley, where we paddled in our canoes 48 miles in 3-1/2 days along the shores of the Zambezi. We encountered innumerable herds of cranky hippos, some of which had us paddling as fast as we could while a couple required us to get out of our canoes and wade through knee-high mud as we faced the giant and tooth-studded jaws of territorial males. It was an adrenaline rush. So were the quiet approaches in our canoes toward grazing old elephant bulls that let us come as close as 5 feet from them. One footstep or a flick of their long trunks, and we would have been in a bit of trouble.

The animals seemed to tolerate these close encounters since we were on different footing and seemingly posed no threat this way.

Our hours in the canoe were interspersed with morning hikes through the brush to sit nearby bathing elephants or track a pride of lions (ON FOOT...) One morning we even spent two hours running after a pride of wild dogs on the prowl. It was a sweaty and exhausting affair but also an incredible adrenaline rush!

We camped each night in a different location by the river, in basic small tents with bucket showers and holes in the ground for toilets. It was a true adventure.

After four nights in the Zimbabwean bush, we went on to Botswana. The camps here were more cushy but the experiences during the safaris just as real and raw. We got to witness from 10 feet away how a young male lion single handedly killed a female buffalo. It took her a good 30 minutes to die while the lion was trying to strangle and tackle her and eventually started to eat her while she was still trying to fight him off. It was one of the most real, difficult and awe-inspiring experiences. Nature pure!

We got to see lions fight over prey. We watched hyenas crunch through the skull and bones of an impala, eating the whole animal within 5-10 minutes, bones, eyes, nose and all. Incredible.

More peaceful encounters included two giraffe bulls gracefully fighting with each other over females or tracking down a leopardess and her cub, who eventually trusted us enough to come out of their hiding and sun themselves in front of our vehicle for a good hour. We also got to observe numerous lion cubs in their interaction with the adults. Too cute.

The stories are innumerable and we will hopefully be able to tell you more in person. We will also be better able to share photos and eventually a film once I looked through the many hundreds of photos, and Matt worked his way through the 10 hours plus of footage.

*Nadja and Matt Brandt, Sept 2008*

## **SAFARI TO BOTSWANA, SOUTH AFRICA AND ZIMBABWE**

### **Safari to the Okavango Delta and Selinda Reserve**

#### **Visit to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe**

We recently returned from a trip to 3 camps in Botswana and the Ilala lodge at Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. I believe I am only confirming what others have already said. As a whole the trip from California to Southern Africa and back was a wonderful, safe, enlightening, memorable adventure. I can't call it a vacation when each morning starts at 5:30 AM, but it will be a lifelong treasured experience!

The camps, Tubu Tree, Chitabe and Selinda are accurately advertised and a pleasure to stay at. After a day of game drives the accommodations were simply comforting. We enjoyed the cultural entrees at meal times and the conversations with everyone. Botswana is so natural that driving and flying felt like we were in another world. That so few people are allowed on the concessions makes it a unique and personal experience. I wondered what might have been if I had had the opportunity to visit in my youth.

The staff, guides and managers are exceptional. They not only complement the surroundings but are entertaining, informative and sincerely friendly. I now see why on the internet there are so many personal compliments about individual people involved with safaris.

I am also impressed that the opportunity for so many Africans to grow is provided and we cherished the personal conversations shared with many of them.

We had many memorable experiences. Following wild dogs on a cross country hunt at sunset was one. Another was when we drove around a large bush and startled a young elephant. He bellowed loudly when he felt trapped and we were then confronted by two large females that were aggressively being protective. Our guide, Peter from Chi tabe, stopped the vehicle and waited while the ellies showed us who's boss. When they had made their point, they went on their way and we did too. I was able to take a short video but ready to dive under the seat if they had continued their advance toward us. My wife was able to breathe again. Sharing this short video with friends usually brings gasps.

We also came across a leopard feasting on an impala on a thick branch high in a tree. Her brother was lying below waiting his turn. When she left, he climbed up the tree and very warily worked on the kill. He frequently stopped to look for his sister as he was pulling fur and skin off and getting his fill. She never did come back but rather drank in the stream and then laid down in the shade.

We saw so much wildlife that we began stopping for considerable periods of time to observe the baboons, giraffe, buffalo, lions and wild dogs be themselves. We learned so much about the wildlife and ecosystem from the guides. We didn't know it could be so educational, and we now can understand why birders become birders.

It was very sad to leave. Someday we shall go back.

*Frank and Judy Gesicki, Sept 2008*