



CLIENT TRIP REPORTS

EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (JAN – APR 2009)

SOUTHERN AFRICA

South Africa – Cape Town, Winelands and Shamwari

I just wanted to write and tell you how much we all enjoyed our adventure you arranged for us. It was absolutely amazing!

We arrived in Cape Town and were greeted by our driver who took us to the Bay Hotel. The hotel was extremely nice and all of our suites looked out at the ocean. The food was excellent and the staff was all very accommodating. As you know we stayed the first 2 nights at the Bay and then moved to Ezard House, which is a one of a kind experience. Our stay there could not have been better. The staff, chef and owner, Don Ezard were fantastic. The accommodations are amazing. They had a driver for us who took us to Cape Hope, shopping at V & A and on a Township Tour.

We also took a side trip to Gansbaai for shark cage diving. Even though it was the off season for seeing the sharks we lucked out and got face to face with 7 different sharks. It was continual excitement. I highly recommend the company Shark Cage Diving. They have the best boat, equipment and captain. An unforgettable adventure!...Lunch at The Showroom was also a wonderful experience. The food and staff were five-star. Thank you for that treat! I am glad we were able to split our stay in Cape Town between the Bay Hotel on the beach and Ezard House on the mountainside. You get two totally different experiences.

After our 3 nights at Ezard House the driver picked us up took us to Franschhoek. What a wonderful place! It reminds me of both Tuscany and Napa rolled into one place. The executive chef at Ezard House, Brent, had spent a lot of time in Franschhoek and recommended two “must go” places. Dinner at the Dieu Donne Winery and wine and cheese tasting at Fairview Winery. He was right on! Le Quartier Francais is a fantastic hotel. Everything was perfect. We were unable to get reservations in their restaurant but dined at Dieu Donne instead, which I am glad we did. It has more character with amazing food and views. Our next driver, Michelle picked us up and drove us to Tsala House. Another wonderful experience. Their food and service was also five-star. Michele picked us up the next morning to take us to Shamwari. We told her we would like to stop at Bloukrans Bridge and do the highest bungee jump in the world. She was very accommodating but thought we were nuts. Three of us took the jump. What a rush!

Lobengula Lodge in Shamwari is another amazing place. It could not have been better. Our ranger, Ben, is absolutely the best guide in the Reserve.

We not only got to see all of the Big Five but witnessed a pride of lions kill a wart hog next to a large herd of elephants. One of the elephants had just given birth and the entire herd surrounded the baby to protect it from the lions. Ben took us out twice a day on game drives – 5 AM and 3:30 PM. The experience was like nothing any of us could have imagined! Our 3 days in Shamwari will be etched in our minds forever.

We all felt we experienced the perfect trip. Thank you so much for arranging memories that will last a lifetime. I will highly recommend you and your company and encourage everyone to visit South Africa.
Marty Plunkett, Feb 2009

Livingstone-Victoria Falls/Chobe/Linyanti/Okavango Delta

Hi Kyle - Sorry to be so delinquent in telling you how much we enjoyed our entire safari with AAC.

Actually I was waiting to see if I could come up with some new superlatives to use in my e-mail to describe our wonderful trip. Without a doubt, we will NEVER EVER EVER be able to top this trip.

Our guide, Andy Anderson, was the greatest guide we could ever have hoped for. If I ever am asked about going on safari in southern Africa, I'd say to select your safari based on having Andy as a guide!

I have to say that one of the absolute highlights of our trip was being upgraded from mobile tent camping to classic and premier Wilderness lodges the entire trip due to last season's flooding. Toka Leya was our first lodge - not even a year old - magnificently situated on the banks of the Zambezi river which was flowing so fast it sounded like waterfalls. After this breathtaking Lodge we were concerned we were spoiled at the very beginning of our trip and wondered if we would be disappointed with the rest of our lodges. Not the case at all! EVERY single lodge was wonderful and unique in its own way. Of course Vumbura Plains Lodge was so outrageously spectacular that there are no words to describe it.

One of the real highlights of our safari was the wonderful, kind, genuine men and women who catered to our every need (and some needs we didn't even know we had!). The people of southern Africa are by far the nicest I've ever met. As we left each lodge we were saddened by the fact that we had to leave our new-found friends.

I could go on and on, but probably should get back to work. Rest assured that I will sing AAC praises every chance I get. Yours is the ONE AND ONLY company I will ever recommend to my friends. And, of course, should I ever have the chance to get back to Africa, AAC will be my booking company.

Kyle, thanks again for all you did to ensure we had such a great trip. Gail and I roughly estimated how much we would have spent had we initially booked a premier lodging safari and figure we probably would have paid three times as much as we spent on our (initial) mobile tent camping safari. Of course, we now are truly very spoiled African Queens!

Thanks again, Susan McNulty, Apr 2009

Safari in the Okavango Delta and Linyanti areas of Botswana

Safari to a Private Game Reserve near Kruger

Visit to Victoria Falls and Cape Town

Hi Lynne,

We returned yesterday from our trip and I wanted to get back to you re feedback (while I still remember everything).

The trip was fabulous! Your company did a wonderful job regarding logistics of getting us here, there and yonder! All of your ground operators were on time, professional and informative during our drives!

...The Wilderness Safaris camps that we stayed in exceeded our expectations (and I even had them take me to one premiere wilderness camp, Jao, so I could compare and make sure I wasn't missing something). We were all very, very happy with your camp recommendations.

I loved Wilderness Safari's commitment to the local community! Even though that was one of the reasons I had selected that organization before I even contacted you, Lynn, the information in each of bush camp rooms provided a wealth of information regarding their local presence. It made us all feel that our presence in enjoying this expensive vacation was also having a very positive impact on the local villages. Everything was so clean and their commitment to the environment could be seen and felt as well as read about. They walk the talk! It felt kind of foolish though, carting and giving crayons, pencils, and water colors when, during the orientation, they told us about the 100 new computers Wilderness purchased for the local schools!

I was very happy that we selected four different camps to visit because due to the highest flooding in 50 years animals were scarce at both Kwetsani and Selinda. Had we only gone to those two camps, it would have been extremely disappointing!...

...My three favorite memories were: 1. Our day in Kyamandi, the township in Stellenbosch 2. Cultural exchange with other camp guests regarding wedding ceremonies (and learning how important it is to have 8 virgin cows to marry in Botswana)! 3. Exchange with one of our guides who shuddered at the thought of eating seafood, but gave us his favorite recipes for preparing pan - fried termites for snacking!

All in all, my 1.5+ years of planning this vacation and driving you crazy with questions was all worth it! We really had a fabulous time! And thank you Lynn for all of your efforts to make this a memorable vacation!

Regards,
Gail Koff, April 2009

EAST AFRICA

Kenya – Campi ya Kanzi and Mara Explorer

Milissa and Irene,

We have returned from our trip and we had a GREAT time, both the cruise and the safari. (02/01/2009 to 02/07/2009)

We loved the opportunity to take our safari with Masai guides, it made all the difference in the experience. We missed meeting the owners of Camp Ya Kanzi because they were in Italy having a baby! Our host, Stefano was wonderful however. We only had one other couple in camp at Camp Ya Kanzi. They were from Italy and were staying for a week. Otherwise the camp was lacking guests.

Origins, the local agent, Mr. Okemo, contacting us on January 31st as promised and let us know the time he would be there to pick us up the next day. He was prompt to arrive at our ship and was ready for us at 5:45 a.m. He was most helpful and we enjoyed our conversation while we waited for the airplane to arrive. Please thank him again!

Our flights as always were an adventure. We get a thrill out of flying in small planes; its €™s the closest we get to a balloon ride without being in a balloon! We had 16 seat and 4 seat planes.

We were happy to see another female pilot, this time Kathy flew us from Masai Mara to Camp Ya Kanzi and from Camp Ya Kanzi to Nairobi.

Our accommodation are just what we like, nicely appointed tents with ample space overlooking the river (Talak River in Masai Mara) or watering hole (Chyulu Hills). We were impressed by having a bidet in our bath at Camp Ya Kanzi that was a first!

As always we like the food and each camp had a different style of service. We enjoyed the variety of having an option to have a "bush breakfast" out on the savannah (Masai Mara) and sundowners on top of a mountain (Chyulu Hills) looking at Mount Kilimanjaro. Both camps offered a variety of options and both were eager to make our safari experience memorable.

We were very impressed with Camp Ya Kanzi's conservation efforts and contributions to the Masai community. We visited the schools they help to support and heard about the Trust they have established to support the Simba Project and the Masai community in the form of education, conservation and health.

As always, we maintain an attitude that we will see whatever animals present themselves to us. So we always see every type of animal the area has to offer. We saw lions, leopards, cheetahs, giraffe, hartebeest, wildebeest, warthogs, hyenas, elephants, to name a few and we saw many beautiful birds.

Our only disappointment was the trip to the Masai village on Masa i Mara. The Masai in this area have learn to business of taking advantage of the tourist trade by charging you \$20 per person to see the village, the women dancing and the young men dancing. We might not have mind the money if we knew in advance. Our guide didn't tell us but I think he knows that any charge is up to the village leader. Afterward we were given the opportunity to purchase Masai jewelry but a higher prices than I had seen. For example, I purchased three necklaces from our camp Masai guide for \$41 dollars. The next day when we visited the Masai village, they wanted \$390 for five necklace and 4 bracelets! Given the number of tourist they are exposed to and the great financial need of the Masai, I'm not totally surprised. Others tourist we not happen either. A Camp Ya Kanzi, the Masai attitude was not driven by the tourism and they seem more surprised by our visit; especially the little children. Even the animals were not so use to people and therefore it was harder to get a photograph at close range in Chyulu Hills.

You can tell that the economy has affected travel and safari business. Kent and I were the only guests at Mara Explorer and they didn't expect new guests until February 14th! We had them arrange for us to have dinner at Mara Intrepid on night just to have company. We even took the opportunity to request the camp manager, Mariana to join us for lunch one day and dinner at Intrepid the next night. Mara Intrepid only had 24 guests for a camp that can host 60 guests.

All our safari trips have been affected by bad events in the world. When we went on safari for 22 days in 2001 it was in October right after the event of 9/11 attack. That affected travel by British and Americans and we were the only guests in two of the four c amps we visited. Now the economy has tanked and British and Americans are not traveling again. Let's hope the economy changes and the future brightens.

Overall, our trip was as wonderful and the first safari we took in 2001. We like that each camp, the environment, topography, weather and guides have all be different. We like new experiences and different things; this trip provided it all. We want to see about getting a group of family and friends to go back to Masai Mara for the migration and to Ngo rongoro Crater.

We made a great choice to bring our video camera and got great scenes to show. However, I made a mistake in the selection of film (400) that made all our pictures too bright.

I don't like any of the pictures we took with our Canon SLR camera. Our digital camera took some good close-ups and we put them on a slide show presentation. We will send some pictures in the mail.

Thanks again for your patience with the planning of our trip and for the excellent choices. Thanks too for handling all our flight arrangements.

We are eager to consider New Zealand and Australia on a land adventure. Please send details, information or contacts.

Kent and Mary Gardner, Feb 2009

Safari to Arusha/Tarangire/Lake Manyara/Gibbs Farm/Ngorongoro/Serengeti Travel on the Luxury Blue Train

Visit Cape Town

We have just returned from Africa, and so many thoughts are swirling in my head I can hardly sleep. It was truly a wonderful trip, all I had hoped for and much more. Of course you go to Africa to see the wild animals, and we did, and it was fascinating to see so much wildlife. However, I think that was almost an extra, because it was the other things that impressed me more. The third day, I just looked at John and said, "Africa is just OVERWHELMING!"

We were in the middle of a Coffee plantation, at the Arusha Coffee Lodge. Open air lobby and bar, restaurant, beautiful old trees, and you sit at beautiful teak tables under market umbrellas and order lunch. Watching the Vervet monkeys play on the roof-like squirrels, running and rolling and chasing. The people in Tanzania are very kind, gentle people. All Tanzanians speak Swahili and English-taught from nursery school on. Although they have many different tribes, they consider themselves all "Brothers and Sisters", whether Christian, Muslim, etc.

Then the geography, I don't know what I expected, but it is incredibly diverse. You can go from forests with monkeys and baboons to savannah with grass and dotted with acacia trees, to huge rocky "kopjes" within a few miles. There are 140 kinds of acacia trees, including one that bloomed with peach blossoms and smelled heavenly. Yes, there is acacia honey! Imagine huge areas, blue sky as far as you can see, and no telephone wires or anything to disturb the eye.

As you are driving along, it is just so cool, you suddenly see a giraffe by the road... you realize that there are five more, no six, seven as you look, and they slowly amble with their rocking gait, inspecting you as they decide to cross the road in front of you, watching carefully, shepherding the babies across. The next thing may be elephants, and again, one, or twenty! One reason this is a good time to go to East Africa is because this is the Migration. Wildebeest (Gnu's in S. Africa) and Zebra hang out together, and they are moving across Africa in search of better grazing as the weather changes. We were there at exactly the right time, and we saw thousands (millions?) of them, all with new calves/foals, moving, slowly by. The next day, they were gone.

They have 400+ birds, and I swear we spotted half. Huge exotic secretary birds, storks, parrots, lime green bee catchers, thousands of flamingos, both pink and white. And Cats, everyone's favorites! Cheetah is my favorite, so absolutely beautiful. Their coats are just marvelous and PERFECT -not a scar, sore or fly bite. And orange eyes, like owls. The leopards are really gorgeous too, but there is something about the Cheetah. The lions are so oblivious to the vehicles, we were on top of one who was napping on a rock, legs up in the air like a dog. We were like two feet from him and he did not even open his eyes - full and sleepy. Saw lots of cubs, and just one male lion with a ruff, although we saw a lot of younger males.

One day I was in the swimming pool when I heard crashing. Seconds later, a huge elephant was standing in the entrance to the pool. I stayed very quiet, and he slowly ambled over to me. We watched each other, and he began to drink from the pool. I figured I was safe there, as they can't charge you while you are in a pool (at least I hoped so!!) and he drank, blowing some water out his trunk, but not at me, thankfully!

The accommodations were fabulous-think resort! The tent may have canvas walls, but it is over a wood or tile floor, with a fabulous shower, maybe inside and outside, with private terrace or veranda that no one can see. Perhaps a soaking tub, a sitting area, a king sized bed with mosquito netting at night, vessel sinks, etc. Maybe it is built into a Baobab tree or a fig tree. Always you are greeted with hot or ice cold wash cloths that have been soaked in lemon or Eucalyptus oil, to refresh yourself. Then you are offered a fresh squeezed juice, or an iced coffee, depending on where you are... Everyone escorts you to your tent. At night you are escorted by a Maasai (with spear!) to your tent. (Once they asked us to wait as the elephant had just been between Cottage #1 and #2!)

At any rate, we had almost two full weeks of safari, which was wonderful. We felt like we had seen and learned so much. I encourage everyone to go to Tanzania -it was just a fabulous trip! Even those who are put off by some of the things we saw elsewhere would love the country, people and animals. I felt more stimulated by this trip than by anything I have done for a long, long time.

We took the Blue Train to Cape Town, and it was lovely, old fashioned luxury. The train itself is deep blue, and the inside is all veneered wood with inlay, brass framed windows, and beautifully fitted compartments. Our bathroom was marble and had a soaking tub! Everything is cleverly fit to maximize space. At night the loveseat folds away to become a bed. Meals and the bar and club car were fun and interesting and the wine and champagne flowed. Could not manage to eat the desserts at tea but they looked good. It all came out of the one kitchen car -amazing!

Cape Town is bustling, the economy is better and everyone is excited to be hosting the World Cup in 2010. All sorts of hotels, roads, and housing projects are planned. The coastline is stunning, with huge limestone cliffs meeting the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and turquoise blue water foaming up in huge waves. Surfers, penguin colonies, very beautiful drives to see the Cape. Table Mountain and the cable car are wonderful and we had awesome views. The city streets are crammed with restaurants and outdoor cafes. Great seafood! Everyone is extremely polite and appreciative of tourists. The harbor was fun to sit and watch the seals swim, boats coming and going.

We went to the winelands and it was wonderful, nicer than Napa I thought. Two very interesting towns (Franschhoek and Stellenbosch) I thought, where I would have liked to get out and shop!! Beautiful countryside, charming people, it reminded me of France. The harvest was going on, so it was fun to see the grapes hanging on the vines. Wines were great and cheap. The region is filled with charming inns and bed and breakfasts, and we had lunch at a Relais and Chateaux property called La Quartier Francais, that could have been in Provence. Did I mention the fruit in Africa? OMG! I had not had pineapple like that since I was in Kauai. And mangos, and tiny bananas, etc., etc.

We will try to figure out how to get the pictures off tomorrow, but everyone has been calling and emailing so I wanted to let you all know something about the trip! I encourage everyone to go to Tanzania -it was just a fabulous trip! Even those who are put off by some of the things we saw elsewhere would love the country, people and animals. But I felt more stimulated by this trip than by anything I have done for a long, long time.

At any rate, it was truly a fabulous trip, and both John and I thought it was just about perfectly planned. Thank you for all your efforts, and kudos for selecting Rassul, our guide, for us!

Sally McDonald, Feb 2009

**Private Safari in Tanzania to Serengeti/Ngorongoro/Lake Manyara/Tarangire
Safari in Kenya to Amboseli/Masai Mara**

Hey you guys! JAMBO!!! Well, Jim and I have been back from our safari for a few weeks now, but it is taking longer than I expected to change gears in my head from safari to real life.

Anyway, just wanted to let you know that we could not have had a better time! And things went amazingly smoothly! No glitches, no bumps in the road. Our journey was AMAZING!!! There was always someone to greet us wherever we went; we always had a ride to wherever we were headed; our accommodations were first rate! In fact, at one of our camps, an Abercrombie and Kent vehicle pulled up and those travelers (who I know paid twice as much as we did) were so happy to be staying at such a great camp -- the same camp as us!

Anyway, it was truly a life-changing experience and we know we want to return again in the future.

Our Tanzania guide, Selemani, made sure we saw all the big five and then some. He, along with our Kenya camp guides, was all so accommodating. And so knowledgeable!

In the Masai Mara we saw 4 lionesses take down a zebra and then watched the pride eat their meal -- Very cool! We saw a mom and baby rhino in the crater. We had a bush breakfast with crocodiles and another couple that we became friends with.

We watched wildebeest moms giving birth in the crater. We saw a leopard devour its kill up in a tree. Then we saw leopards so close to our vehicle that we could have touched them! And cheetah!

Anyway, we are sorting through our thousands of photos and video that we took. We have shared our experiences with everyone who asks (which is pretty much everyone!) The Masai are beautiful, warm people and we have video and photos of us dancing with them and hugging them.

Well, you probably hear this all the time, but I did want to share a little with you. We cannot thank you enough for putting together such a life-altering and FLAWLESS journey for us!!! Tafidhali!!!

Kwaheri!

Jody Feldman and Jim Pratt, Feb 2009

**Safari to Serengeti/Ngorongoro
Visit to Cape Town**

Hi Guys!

We just returned from another fabulous safari in Tanzania and South Africa. First off thank you so much for all your hard work. Everything went off without a hitch and our traveling companions, first time Africa goers were duly impressed. We were met and escorted at every stop and all the ground staff could n't have been nicer and perfectly prompt. Ranger Safaris in Tanzania were great, from the airport transit, to my Arusha National Park mini-safari to our guide for the week. Speaking of which, Ephata was as good a guide as I have had in all my safari travels.

He was personable, professional, knowledgeable, had a sense of humor and extremely flexible to all schedules. I would heartedly recommend him to your future clients and would definitely request him specifically in the future. Apparently his uncle got him into the business years ago as he was Director of Wildlife (or some such title) at the time. It is obvious that he understood how to follow the animals without putting undue stress on them. This made the experience much more enjoyable for me and there was not one instance of "get us closer" for a better photo if this would compromise the sighting. His English was excellent even though accented but this never presented a problem.

I had some trepidation before going to Tanzania. My biggest concerns were the volume of safari vehicles around sightings and the lack of ability to off-road in several of the places. For photographers this can be a nightmare. As far as the numbers of vehicles, it was far, far less than I expected. While some of this may have been due to the economy and the crazy weather that prevented the migration from being where we were I often found us alone or with 1 or 2 other vehicles at most at sightings of cats. The exception was Ngorongoro where any lions elicited the full attention of everyone. The non off-roading does sometimes present a photographic problem. Even with a 400mm lens, 1.4 teleconverter on a 1.5 crop body I was wishing for more lens. But, but, but....the advantages clearly outweigh the disadvantages. Because of the rules the animals are given a wide berth and ultimately that is to their benefit. It prevents the behavior I have seen elsewhere where some poor cat is surrounded by 10 or more vehicles. So, would I have liked to get closer to the lion lounging in the tree, the leopard who somehow caught a vulture and stashed it in the highest branches or get nose to horn with the 5 (count 'em) black rhinos we were fortunate to at Ngorongoro Crater and one in the Serengeti, sure but then habitat destruction from the vast fleet of safari vehicles would destroy this Eden in no time.

Sustainable eco-tourism appears to be alive and well at least in the places we visited. I think the economy is having a very unintended effect of really reducing the stress on the animals but it had obviously affected the general tourism industry and I feel very sorry for those Africans who have nowhere to turn when the guests simply do not turn up. I do believe that Tanzania has gotten it right with respect to wildlife and I think combining a Tanzanian safari with a Botswana or S. Africa trip would be perfect as the terrains and the intimacy are so different. Both tented camps were very well run but with totally different vibes ...

Ngorongoro Crater Lodge was amazing. Forget the dollars and cents, it is a life experience. Our friends didn't want to leave the lodge and were so impressed by all the little touches which I suggest you keep secret from future guests so they can experience them without knowing in advance. I intentionally told my wife I was not going to tell her anything so as not to spoil the surprises. It is the perfect romantic hideaway coupled with the awe inspiring Ngorongoro Crater. After the Serengeti, it can actually feel a bit Disneylandish as one feels the animals are "trapped" in the crater and seem to live harmoniously. Lions lounging, hyenas skulking amongst the zebras and wildebeest, tens if not hundreds of the most gorgeous crowned cranes and the silhouette of a black rhino as it comes ever closer makes one feel you are in a very controlled environment. However, over the hours we spent there (first in at 6:20, almost last out at 4:15pm) the place literally grew on us. It felt bigger the longer I stayed. The rim of the caldera actually seemed to get further away and as the elephants faded into the distance I realized it wasn't so small after all. We even saw our 16th and last cheetah walking in the distance. It was really at that point that the advantages of keeping to the roads hit home. I am sure there would have been 20 vehicles surrounding the cat if we had all been allowed to chase after it. As it was we were the only ones to actually see her.

Speaking of cats, I generally find my safaris can be lumped into lion, leopard or cheetah focused adventures. While we saw at least 30 lions and some a little too close for comfort for Karen (like the male lion who was just about to say hello to her one late afternoon), and 5 leopard sightings (2 of which we were the sole vehicle in attendance), it was the cheetahs that took center stage. We saw 16 cheetahs (13 unique ones as a 3 brother coalition was seen on 2 different days). I suspect our cheetah luck had something to do with the migration not being in full force because of the inconsistent rains.

There was more dispersal of the wildebeests and zebras as rain was a bit here and there. It did look however, that within a week of our departure that the massing of the herds would start to happen. We could just begin to see some lines form and the short rains were falling more consistently around the southern Serengeti. But, because the larger cats were also more scattered it gave the cheetahs a lot more room to roam without the constant threat of lions. We saw a few solitary cheetahs, a coalition of 2 and 3 brothers, a very shy mating pair (missed the end game) and a couple of mothers with 8-9 month old cubs.

We also saw and followed a serval late one afternoon as it was just about to start its nighttime hunt and missed a caracal by a few seconds. I caught the movement out of the corner of my eye as the guide yelled "CARACAL". It was still afternoon and it quickly descended into a hole leaving the half eaten hare at the entrance. (In my best Maxwell Smart impersonation... "Missed it by THAT much".) The bizarre thing was Ephata and I talked about seeing a serval and caracal the morning prior to seeing them.

Other highlights before our Nat. Geo. moments. We were at the tourist center in the Serengeti for a break and George and I decided just to sit and rest a bit when Karen came back from exploring the exhibit and said "Well, you missed it." She and she had seen a snake and I would be jealous. Of course I was but Le-ellen said not to worry it was just a little green garter snake. I said show me where and we walked back with Ephata. We both smiled at the same time as the little green garter snake was in reality a Boomslang! ...

Apart from the animals, the most incredible experience was watching the Obama inauguration with the staff at Mbuzi. There was such palpable emotion in the staff tent where they set up a TV. I can honestly say that I felt totally different as an American in Africa on this trip then in almost any other, certainly in the last 5 years. The staff at the lodges, people in the streets...they would just look at us and say "Obama" and smile. It is truly a memory that will be forever etched into my brain.

Now, for my Wildlife Moment of the Year. Karen and I wore George and Le-Ellen out with long game drives including bush breakfasts and lunches and so on our last drive at Kusini after long morning of following a mother cheetah and cub search for a meal unsuccessfully, it was only the two of us going out for the afternoon drive. The weather was ominous with storm clouds brewing and we really didn't know if we would get caught in a downpour as that had been the late afternoon schedule the past few days. In fact one evening we were treated to one of nature's great displays of power. For over two straight hours we had cloud to cloud and cloud to ground lightning in the distance that was continual. There was never more than a few seconds between the sky just exploding with light. It was truly amazing.

Anyway, we started off and quickly saw the most beautiful yellow and black chameleon in the road. Being the brave soul I am I got out of the vehicle to photograph it....a four inch insectivore would have been no match for my 10 pounds of photogear! We then saw a magnificent long crested eagle in a neighboring tree and as the sky had incredible patches of blue, grey and black with great shadows cast we also took some scenery shots. We then watched as two lines of wildebeests in a V formation headed towards us. This was the more typical migration view that I suspect was short in coming. Ephata then said he thought he saw something in the distance...and when I say distance I mean at least a kilometer. It was really eerie as he was almost always right. He would tell us what he saw and then find it. Well, he thought it was a cheetah and so we headed towards the area. It was in a wide open plain with relatively high grasses surrounding it. We only saw a lone wildebeest and I could see his disappointment. But no, he then said "LION", and in fact there was a large male lion hiding in the grass. He said, I knew I saw something but I thought I could see spots". Well we stayed with the male lion for a while and then saw the female way across the plain also in tall grass. The distance to the wildebeest was much to large for either lions to cross in the open so we left them and headed back toward where we had come.

Ephata then said "Cheetah". I said, "ok let me find it this time before we go towards it" This one was pretty easy as it was in the open in a classic cheetah pose on its haunches.

We made our way over to it and before getting there we saw 2 dead Tommie fawns with one partially eaten. Ephata was a bit deflated as he felt we missed the kill by only a few minutes. So we headed over to the cheetah and realized it was not one but two. The second was an 8-9 month old cub and they were just sitting on the ground at least 50 yards from their kills. I then saw that they had a third Tommie with them...so a third kill....well not really....this one was ALIVE! For the next hour and a half we witnessed what was both fascinating and heart wrenching as the mother cheetah allowed her cub to hone his chasing, tripping and killing skill with the gazelle. What was so bizarre was that the Tommie being so young had obviously not imprinted on its own mother and on occasion even looked like it wanted to suckle from the mother cheetah...how bizarre. The mother cheetah then went and fed off of one of the kills while the cub chased and "played" with the gazelle. It was only after 90 minutes that the cub "got it right" and figured out the correct choke hold and finished the job. She even managed to open up the rear and feed on her kill.

Well, to say we were mesmerized would be an understatement. I had seen snippets of this kind of thing on TV but to view it in person was thrilling. There are so many mixed emotions that one goes through watching a kill, hearing the Tommies' bleating and finally watch as it is eaten but I wouldn't have traded that 90 minutes for anything. Fortunately, we have the whole thing on high def video as well as my almost 1000 frames.

We then set off for Cape Town and had a marvelous week there. I think I need to dry out a bit after a trip to Stellenbosch and Franschhoek. Lots of great, inexpensive wines and a fabulous lunch at Le Petite Ferme...with views to die for. We had some great meals in Cape Town as well and loved the Cape Grace. As you know they redid the decor and I am not sure I love it but the people are what make the hotel. Everyone is so gracious and friendly.

I can't believe after over a year in planning and 3 weeks away this adventure is over.

Thank you all so much for all your help in planning, coordinating and dealing with my endless questions and needs.

I can't wait to go back! Can anyone say "gorillas"!

Regards,

Eric Gurwin, January 2009

**Kibale Forest/Queen Elizabeth Park/Bwindi Impenetrable Forest in Uganda
Volcano National Park in Rwanda**

Hello Louise:

We went to Uganda and Rwanda to see the mountain gorillas in March, but just now getting around to letting you know what a wonderful time we had. Everything was perfect (except a couple of things which I will mention later) and beautiful. Many times we were the only people around as it was considered the rainy season. We had sunny days all five times we trekked to see the gorillas, and those times were absolutely amazing! We were so glad we trekked five times as each trek was different. I have written an article for our local paper about the trip which will be published in June. I would recommend anyone to your company.

Thank you,

Valorie Wilson and Roger Owens, March 2009