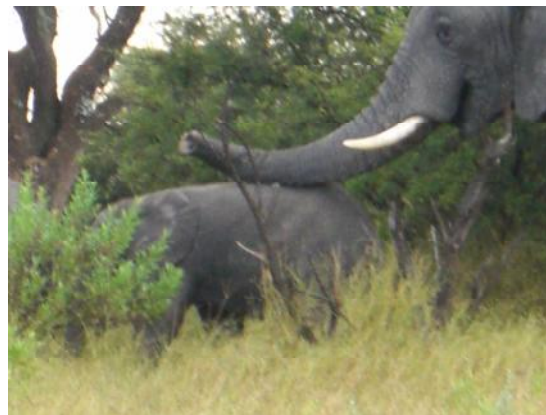


Safari with friends by Elena Theodosiou

A special safari this one – I had the pleasure of traveling with 3 Africa ‘virgins’ – my partner Sonia and our dearest friends Barbara and Steve. For those of us who have had the good fortune to have been on safari already taking first timers is incredibly exciting - we know what is coming and how fantastic the whole experience is



After a few days with my family in Johannesburg we left for Maun and were met by our bush pilot and our first flight over the delta. Chitabe was our first stop and our first game drive we found a juvenile leopard that had eaten too much impala and lay full and sleepy in the shade a few feet from the vehicle - needless to say my safariers were blown away. The sense of triumph and I told you so...was overpowering. After a second game filled day at Chitabe we continued to Vumbura Plains - the game viewing continued, our first night drive at Vumbura a pride of lions roaring so close to the vehicle you could feel the vibrations in your chest! What can I say we saw it all and more - with the most memorable ‘encounter’ being that night when we all went to bed and the hippos came to crop the grass under the tent and kept Steve awake the whole night wondering what was going on outside - needless to say the three girls slept through it all and he has yet to live it down!





Next Victoria Falls where the water was so high you could see the mist from everywhere - it was truly the smoke that thunders! We stayed at the grand Victoria Falls Hotel which is so beautiful and where sitting on the outside patio gives you a sweeping expanse of lawn, the bridge and the mist from the falls as your view - breathtaking. We enjoyed the Jungle Junction for dinner, the next day an elephant back safari and a sunset cruise on the Zambezi. A grand time was had by all...



Cape Town was good to us and the weather was absolutely beautiful! We stayed at the Cape Grace with a beautiful view of the Marina. One of my favorite things is to reserve 'a go as you please' and I had arranged two days for us. The first day we did the peninsula with the drive on the coast, Cape Point, and visited the penguins and the seals - our afternoon ended with Table Mountain - crystal clear air views of the whole city, the new stadium and a glass of wine. The next day we drove to the wine lands - some of the most awe

inspiring countryside, surrounded by mountains, vine yards on the slopes and the little historic towns of Franschhoek and Stellenbosch. We had lunch at the Goatshed at Fairview – where you can enjoy some of the excellent wines they produce along with excellent goats cheese a fantastic combination for a lazy afternoon. The next morning we spent some time at Greenmarket square looking (and buying) some of the fantastic curios and African art, a visit to the V&A for an excellent lunch at Balthazar – and a stroll enjoying our last sights and sounds of Cape Town.



Our last stop was Phinda in northern KwaZulu-Natal. We spent time at Mountain and Forest Lodge and enjoyed both very much. Forest Lodge is in a very special sand forest area and has a very special feel about it - definitely a favorite. Here we had our first rhino sightings which were up close and personal and reminded me how huge these animals are – for my newbie's they were impressed and a little shaken at how close this encounter truly was. The game viewing was great and in-between game drives I got the opportunity to have a look at all the Phinda properties. Our last night on safari we had a boma dinner under the African stars with the special smells and sounds surrounding us.

