



15-DAY ZIMBABWE - “EYES ON ELEPHANT”

Exclusive Group Safari to Zimbabwe - Hwange, Mana Pools and Victoria Falls

FEATURES OF YOUR SAFARI

Program highlights:

- ❑ This is a new safari highlighting the extraordinary guides in Zimbabwe who will lead you on this signature 25 year anniversary safari.
- ❑ Experience the ultimate walking safaris in northern and southeastern Hwange with Dave Carson and Nic Polenakis and in Mana Pools Nick Murray will take you walking and canoeing. Game drives in open vehicles are also offered.
- ❑ This safari operates as an exclusive group with up to 6 persons per departure.
- ❑ Accommodations are a combination of first class, private mobile tents and permanent tented camps in the parks.

September 2012

I had the pleasure of traveling with three clients on our 15 Days Eyes on Elephant safari to Zimbabwe. We spoke on the phone for months, so it was nice to finally meet everyone face to face at the Airport Sun Intercontinental. We relaxed over an excellent meal, retired to our rooms and tried to sleep – never a success for me coming off the international flight.



The next morning we got together and made our way to Terminal A – no wait a minute Terminal B (check your e-ticket receipt and itinerary!) for the flight to Victoria Falls. After clearing customs Sofret, met us and cheerfully transferred us to an unmarked road near Hwange Town, where we were met by private Guide Dave Carson. We changed vehicles and were off, driving to Sinametela. The landscape in the region is marked by large granite outcroppings, mopane forest and open plains. We stopped for our first walking safari en route. Dave spotted something interesting from high on the escarpment, an impala lying on the ground. We drove down and did our first walk of the safari. We discovered that the impala must have passed due to natural causes, as no lion or scavengers were in the area.



We continued driving through the park and reached our camp by night fall – delayed by a tire puncture that was solved by a can of fix-a-flat because none of the 32 tire irons (spanners) that materialized from good samaritans were the right size. Dave met his high school buddies who he had not seen in years, who happened to be at the stop, carrying an air compressor that you can hook up to a car battery. Can of Fix-a-flat, a little air and were on your way to camp. Dave does not know the meaning of a schedule, so be prepared for long but rewarding days. We witnessed a new born elephant just minutes old, welcomed into the herd by the female elephants and their young, and later the final days of a old bull, struggling with each step to make it to water, his tusks and head so heavy he could no longer hold them up.



Life begins

Oh my shattered nerves it was the Three Mohicans – Daniel, Day and Lewis. Lewis was shy and rarely showed himself but Daniel and Day gave us some excellent shots in the morning and evening sun. We also tracked lion on foot with our incredible tracker Felix.

There is good work being done by research teams in Hwange and the lion numbers have increased since my visit 5 years ago, during which I did not see one, but this trip we saw lion every single day.



We bid farewell to Kazuma Trails and headed off to Davison's at Hwange National Park – game viewing along the way. We stopped for snacks and drinks at Ngweshla Pan and the amount of game coming to drink was astounding. There were giraffe, warthog, roan and birds all in one shot. We enjoyed a few snacks and then headed on to camp.



Davison's is a permanent tented camp in a private concession in Hwange National Park. We witnessed a pride of lions setting up for a buffalo kill just as the sun was setting. You could just make out the silhouette of 16 lions in military formation, waiting for the right moment to launch the assault. We could only hear the stampede of hooves in the twilight. It was too dark for photos so we soaked in the sounds and enjoyed the experience.

Dave Carson will do anything for you on safari. He insisted we drive ahead of a herd of Sable and wait under a tree to see if they crossed in front of us, making their way to the watering hole. It was a hot day and I mentioned if Dave insisted on keeping us out under this tree, then we would need refreshments – and Dave delivered them on a silver tray. You can just make out Davison's in the background of the photos. Dave ran to the camp, I was using his binoculars to watch making sure he put enough ice in the G&T.



Hwange is all about elephants in September and we had a spectacular show at Makalolo Pan; Moms, sisters and babies were all enjoying the evening sun and fresh drink of water.



We departed by charter flight to Mana Pools, one of my all time favorite national parks. We were met at the airstrip by Nick Murray – the Indiana Jones of Mana Pools. We were transferred to camp and enjoyed a delicious lunch. Desire Murray designs the menus and the food was amazing. My favorite salad was the blue cheese and biltong dressing – yum.

We walked to lion on our first game drive, and discovered a buffalo kill they had not finished eating. We stayed near by to see them return to the kill. This was our first, but not last exercise in bum crawling to get close to wildlife.



We had three extraordinary experiences with elephants. We met Handstand one of the only elephants that can stand his back legs to reach the acacia branches. We also had a very close encounter with Spirit who insisted that we were hiding more pods somewhere in our bag. The final experience was with a bull on the banks of the Lower Zambezi, during our full day of canoeing. Nick Murray has a way with these bulls and can deliver magical moments. I was overcome with the awe and emotion of having a bull elephant just 3 feet from me eating acacia branches. This is the magic of Mana Pools.





We spent two days on the river with a combination of walks and fishing. Who knew I was a fisherman supplying breem (tilapia) for the appetizer at dinner one evening. We stopped to swim in the river, play tennis ball with an ore enjoying the cold water on a hot hot day. Brunch was served on day one, a full English breakfast cooked over a camp fire by learner guides Tan and Dani, along with fresh salads and breads. Day two was salads and pizza.



Swimming in Lower Zambezi



Fresh Bream



Dani – Cracking eggs for breakfast

The **Bushlife Conservancy** is directly funded by your contribution when staying at Vundu Tented Camp. This donation goes toward the animals and National Parks employees for the betterment of the park. Several recent examples include transporting a NP member’s sick child to the nearest hospital (several hundreds of miles away); the NP anti-poaching team received new tents and backpacks; and improving the NP self-catering lodges. Vundu also serves as the “head quarters” for wild dog research. The packs are growing large and we spotted some from our canoes and went for a walk go get a better look.

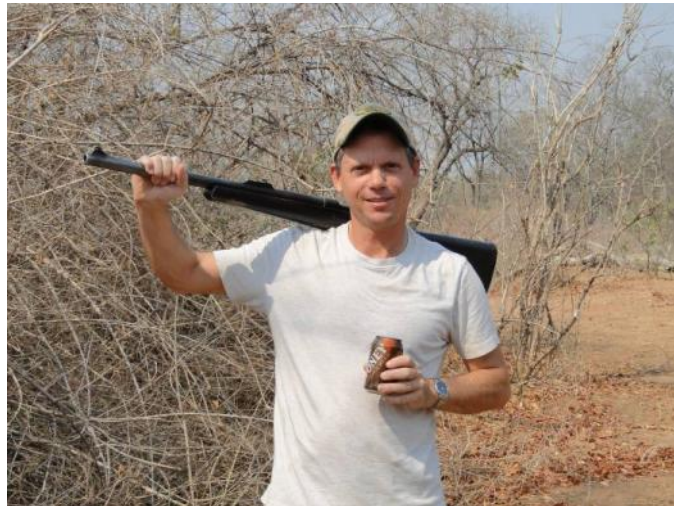


Our last morning was a walk to an ancient baobab tree that is Zimbabwe National Historical site, having served as the burial chamber for a village chief. The inside of the trees are hollow and the body was placed inside and the hole was sealed with stone and mud, the tree would eventually grow over the whole, leaving a scar.

We had a blast with our guides Dave Carson and Nick Murray – two of the best in Africa. I am trying to convince Nick to become the spokesperson for Stoney Ginger Beer, what do you think?



Nick Murray



Kyle Witten

We finished our adventure in Victoria Falls meeting our special guide Esther for a tour of the falls. Below is picture of our group with Esther. I am taking the picture because I would step one foot closer to Danger Point.



The Eyes on Elephant safari to Zimbabwe gave me experiences I have never had. This could have only happened with our private guides Nick Murray and Dave Carson. This safari is a real adventure with up close and personal game viewing experiences with days as adventure filled as you want.