

What a wonderful adventure we had in South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Eight of us traveled together for two weeks. The trip to get from Houston to Cape Town, SA was never ending, but it was well worth it in the end. If a trip such as this has ever crossed your mind, I suggest that you do it. A once in a lifetime adventure. Cape Town is a beautiful, cosmopolitan city nestled between the bay and the mountains. It is reminiscent of San Francisco. Our weather was perfect there – in the low 60's day and in the high 40's night. The sun was bright, and only one afternoon did we get blustery winds and cloud cover which made one want to get indoors. We visited Table Mountain – a wonderful vista of the surrounds; Robben Island, Nelson Mandela's prison for 16 years, the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Point, Klein Constantia Winery, the botanical gardens and a township. Some of the family went cage diving with the great white sharks. Our meals were wonderful, our days were full, and our accommodations were great. We saw ostrich, baboons, penguins, and seals. We had wonderful guides and a terrific fun time.



After four nights in Cape Town we flew to Kruger/Mpumalanga airport on the edge of the Kruger park. We then went by charter flight to an airstrip near King's Camp. We spent three nights at Kings Camp in the Timbavati region going morning and evening on drives in range rovers looking for game. It was wonderful. Our guide was very knowledgeable and told us,



not only of the fauna, but also of the flora and land formations in the region. Our tracker had "hawk eyes" and could spot game that was impossible for us to see until it was pointed out to us. It was the dry season, so again, we had fantastic weather, chilly morning and night, but very pleasant in the day. Since our wake up calls came at 5:30a.m., the evenings were a wonderful meal and an early bed time. We saw so much that even though I tried to keep a diary, I missed listing things we saw. Since these are game reserves, many of the animals are accustomed to the sound of the trucks, so as long as one is still and quiet, you can get quite close to some of the animals. At King's Camp, we had our own house with four bed rooms for the eight of us. We had our own cook, butler, guide and tracker. They were all great folks, and we were truly sorry to leave their company. All of our meals were "al fresco"

either on the patio overlooking the dry river bed, on the patio or in the boma. We shared a great deal of laughter and camaraderie and were sad to leave our new friends!

After three days at King's Camp we traveled by van to Leopard Hills Camp in the Sabie Sands region. Here we each had our own little house. The accommodations were lovely. Each house/room had a double shower and an outdoor shower, patio, small pool and living area. It was positively decadent. We had our guide and tracker morning and evening again.

Raymond, our guide was dubbed the "animal whisper," because I would say I wanted to see elephants, and within 15 minutes we would be in the midst of a herd of 20 elephants! It was great! Every morning and evening our table for eight was set either on the patio, in the dining room or in the boma – an outdoor dining facility with fencing on the surround and a roaring fire in the center. We saw everything one would expect and more – rhino, elephant, cape buffalo, lions, leopards, giraffe, zebra, impala, water buck, bush buck, steen buck, kudu, hippos, crocodiles, wildebeest, only one snake, a puff adder, and it was dead, thankfully! We saw beautiful birds, huge termite mounds, mongoose, monkeys, baboons. We saw leopard cubs playing attack on each other. We saw a pride of lions try to take down a cape buffalo. We saw two male lions attack a lioness from another pride. We saw the remains of a cape buffalo and a



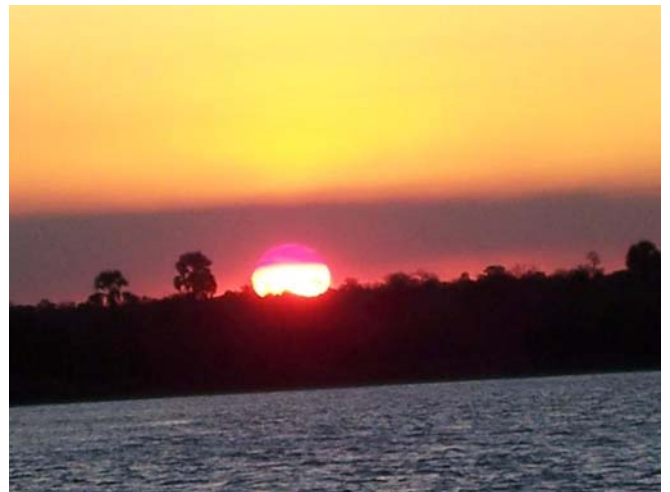
giraffe that had been meals for the big cats. We saw caracal cats which are hardly ever seen as they are very shy and skittish. We saw a huge male leopard lounging and a female leopard stalking a herd of impala. We never saw a kill, and for that I am grateful. It was an adrenalin rush to see the stalking, but I would have hated to hear the animals scream. Every night at Leopard Hills the lions roared all through the night. The pride there had 5 males, and they were a noisy bunch!



After three days we returned to the Mpumalanga airport and flew to Livingstone, Zambia. We stayed at a beautiful Victorian hotel on the bank of the Zambezi River only ½ mile from Victoria Falls. This is such a huge cataract that you can see the spray from 50 miles away by air. Our accommodations once again were elegant. On our first day we did the Zambia side of Victoria Falls then hiked across the bridge to Zimbabwe and saw the falls from the opposite side. All in all we were completely soaked twice and dry before we returned to our hotel. Our hike had lasted about 6 ½ hours and once again it was supper then bedtime! The rainbows caused by the spray were wonderful, and on the trails on the Zimbabwe side, we walked right by wart hogs and waterbuck fawns. We also stepped across a snake, but it was very little, so I didn't completely freak out. The monkeys and baboons were everywhere and I was fascinated! On our

second day a monkey got into a room and stole a biscuit jar. After the monkey finished the cookies, we were able to shoo him away, climb out on the roof and retrieve the biscuit jar! We went by boat for breakfast to Livingstone Island which was situated at the edge of the falls in the middle of the river. With help from the guides we held hands, forming a chain and walked out to rocks on the edge of the falls. It was frightening and thrilling. We then went the opposite direction and the guides took the brave hearts into the river. In the afternoon we went on a sun set cruise on the "African Queen" and had a great time. Every night from every location, the sunsets were magnificent. At Kings Camp we had a full moon, so the sunset on one side and the moon rise on the other was splendid!

All things must end and on our last day it was time to pack and prepare ourselves mentally for the 30 + hour trip home. Two of the group did a 6:45a.m. ultra light flight over the Falls, trying to cram in everything possible right up until the last minute! We were packed and waiting for our van to collect us. There was a great deal of hubbub at the hotel, including armed military. When I asked the reason, I learned that the president of Zambia was arriving that morning. Had we stayed longer, we would have been neighbors as his rooms were in a building next to our building! We asked if we could photograph him, then we asked if we could stand in the receiving line!!! Permission was granted! We got to meet and shake hands with the president of Zambia. He was very gracious to everyone. When he got to me he asked where we were from, and upon learning we were from Texas, he asked us to return and bring him some oil! He told us about his visits to the USA and told us that his eldest son was born here. All in all, a very exciting way to end the trip. As we drove away from the Royal Livingstone, we passed the herd of giraffe and were then treated to an informative trip by our driver telling us about protocols for the tribal chiefs. Apparently, we would never have been allowed to meet or greet a chief, but what we were permitted to do was memorable.



From Zambia we flew back to Johannesburg then to Atlanta then to Houston. We have recovered from jet lag and are sadly almost back into the real world. If I had the time and the means, I would return next week. These words have not adequately described all the fun and excitement we shared, but enough is enough. I hope that everyone is well and that your summers are passing well. There is no point in asking about the temperatures, because we all know that it is HOT!

Warm regards,
Marita and Angelo