

## South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Zimbabwe with a day in Botswana!



*The Great Migration, some of the 1.5 million Wildebeest crossing the Mara River*

On this Girls Own Adventure we visited so many wonderful places it is hard to do it justice in so few words, from beautiful Cape Town to Nairobi, then Lake Nakuru home to the world's largest flamingo population and hundreds of Great White pelicans. This park delivered all bar the elephant with leopard, lion, dozens of white rhino and the endangered black rhino, we even saw a tree-climbing lion! We were then transported across bone shattering roads to the breath-taking Masai Mara, west through the vast Serengeti to the Ngorongoro Crater on route we stopped to watch lion hunting, in fact we counted seventeen a huge pride, herds of zebra, elephant and giraffe grazing alongside. Late afternoon, our first glimpse

of Ngorongoro Crater was a dry soda lake with a bluish purple backdrop, the crater has the densest population of lion and spotted hyena, Bateleur and Crowned eagles soar above and Kori Bustards stroll through the grass. The crater is 304sq miles and 610 meters deep most of the 25,000 animals never leave. Ngorongoro Conservation Area is also home to Olduvai Gorge, where the Leakeys discovered the hominoid remains of a 1.8 million year old skeleton Australopithecus boisei, one of the distinct links of the human evolutionary chain.

Driving through coffee plantations and farming land to Mt Kilimanjaro for our flight to exotic spice island of Zanzibar, here we enjoyed the beautiful white beach, tepid Indian

Ocean and all inclusive meals and drinks at our beachfront hotel. Refreshed we made our way via Dar es Salaam to majestic Victoria Falls where we walked with lions, rode elephants and saw the Falls from the viewpoint of angels.

**But on this safari our main aim was to see the Great Migration and getting ourselves in the right place at the right time was our goal and we had 12 women counting on us to do it!**

In the Masai Mara's gentle rolling grass land, specked with flat topped Acacia trees, is where we saw the huge herds of 200,000 migrating zebra, 500,000 Thomson's gazelle

along with one and a half million wildebeest marching shadows across the landscape. Nothing prepares you for the sounds of rows upon rows of chewing, grunting, moaning and panicking wildebeest. You don't just hear the noise you feel it, resonating around you, as they make their annual journey followed by all the African predators, lions, leopard, cheetahs, hyenas, jackals and smaller animals such as bat eared foxes, erupting from dens in search of insects.

Our guide gets a call on the radio and we speed to the Mara River, here nervous energy meets survival instinct as the Russian roulette of river crossings is played out and we witness crocodilian action

and nature at its most raw. We sat quietly some shedding tears as we willed a trampled zebra to get out of the mud and swim to safety, this time he was lucky, or was it the concentrated energy of 14 women sitting in a couple of jeeps meters away making it happen?

While Africa is no longer the untamed wild of our grandmothers time, and our tents had bathrooms and Edwardian writing desks our experience was full of the richness and romance that makes Africa, Africa. And this is just a small part of the whole story.



Game viewing from the safety of our 4x4 vehicle



"Our Zebra" who made it back!

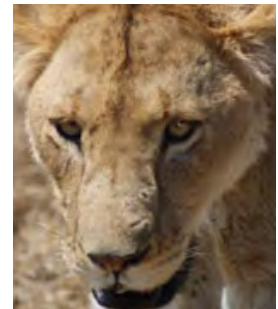
by Veronica Newman & Suzie Wright, Girls Own Adventures

## SAFARI HIGHLIGHTS

- Seeing Cape Town, a beautiful ocean-side city on the west coast of South Africa
- Visiting LDK school/orphanage and meeting the children in Nakuru, Kenya
- Being humbled by the wildebeest migration in Masai Mara, Kenya
- Spotting a huge pride of lions in tall grass in the Serengeti, Tanzania
- Ngorongoro Crater the largest unbroken caldera in the world and a microcosm of Tanzania's safari scenery, and Ngorongoro Conservation Area a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Chilling out on pristine beaches of Zanzibar, Tanzania, East Africa's exotic spice island
- Navigating the winding, narrow alleys of Stone Town, Zanzibar, which is also a UNESCO's World Heritage Site
- Standing in awe before Victoria Falls, Zambia and Zimbabwe, one of the natural wonders of the world
- Walking with lions and riding elephants at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe
- Cruising on the Chobe River, Botswana



Riding orphaned Elephants Vic Falls



Hippos in Chobe River, Botswana



Walking with Lions Vic Falls

# Africa a Dream Come True

**I always wanted to go on Safari in Africa, this had been a dream of mine for many years. Rarely do these dream holidays live up to reality. However, I can honestly say this one did!**

We visited 6 countries in 3 weeks starting with South Africa, where we stayed in a fabulous hotel, the Ambassador, perched high on cliffs overlooking the sea, we had an excellent meal on our first night, seated at our own long table. We visited Robben Island where Mandela was imprisoned with a delightful and amusing guide. I did a wine tour to Stellenbosch, the only other person on the tour was a Muslim woman who didn't drink! However we had an interesting day visiting 3 wineries.

We then flew to Nairobi, going first to Lake Nakuru seeing the famous pink flamingos and many more animals including the white rhino and cape buffalo.

It was near here that we went to a school/orphanage and spent a wonderful morning with the children, listening to them sing and then dancing with them and touring their school. We are very happy that we managed to raise enough money between us for repairs to the showers and on our return Suzie and Veronica have raised even more to pay for the electricity to be reconnected and for some other important building improvements.

From here we went to the Masai Mara and saw the great Migration which was without a doubt the most extraordinary sight I have ever seen. With the stupid wildebeest getting eaten by the crocs as they crossed the river or falling over each other and break-

ing legs as they tried to clamber up the bank. Not so the smart zebras, they chose another place to cross and didn't clamber over each other to reach the other side, or run back once they had made it. The fact that they are related to the horse may have something to do with this higher level of intelligence?

We then drove to the Serengeti in Tanzania, stayed at the Kirawirra Safari Lodge, which was just amazing, it even had an Edwardian writing desk in the bedrooms.

The food was excellent and the service outstanding, being one of the top 100 small luxury hotels of the world obviously helped. We even needed a guard to take us back to our tented room as the wild animals came right up to our balconies. Here we did twice daily safaris seeing the big 5 and much more. I have even been converted into a "tweeter" with all the fantastic bird life we saw.

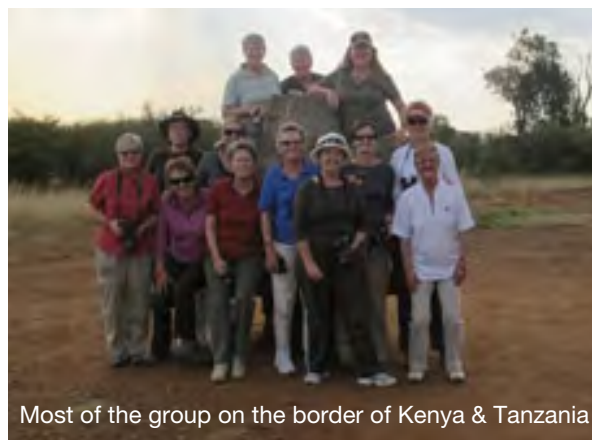
We then drove into the Ngorongoro Crater, where the animal life was abundant, although they did not look as healthy as in other areas, interestingly the animals in the crater do not migrate.

Next we flew into Zanzibar an Island off the east coast of Tanzania. It was as I imagined full of interesting buildings, laneways, doors and spices. We stayed at a wonderful beach resort and had a day to lie on the beach or by the pool. Visited Stonetown, which was of great interest, apart from the markets which were very smelly, we learnt about the slave trade and saw the appalling conditions they had been kept in.

Enjoyed a wonderful lunch at the

Africa Hotel over looking the beautiful blue Indian Ocean.

Ending our trip at Victoria Falls, where we stayed in the famous Victoria Falls Hotel. In one day I rode an elephant and patted lions in the wild in the morning, walked alongside Victoria Falls, one of the Wonders of the World, finishing the day with a horse ride through the bush with Veronica where we were chased by a elephant! The only fright we had on the whole trip was when the guide snapped off a branch from a tree



Most of the group on the border of Kenya & Tanzania

and all the horses went sideways including our other guide's horse which went down and he came off, no damage thankfully. We finished our stay with a glorious dinner in the Livingstone Room at the gracious old hotel, served by our waitress Precious.

Our last day was spent crossing the border into Botswana and a boat trip down the Chobe River where we saw an abundance of wild life, animals and birds.

The company on the trip was great and we had lots of good laughs, particularly over the "tweeting" and sightings of the Lilac Breasted roller (LBR), Masai jumping and dancing.

Thank you so much Veronica and Suzie for making my dream holiday come true. Yes, it is one place I would love to go back to in the future.

by Rosemary Scott

# A Journey Through Two Worlds

It might be very touristy but I love those red open top double decker Hop On-Hop Off sight-seeing buses. Climb upstairs, stick in the red ear-pieces, choose your favourite of the 16 languages on board and away you go. You can get a really good overview of a city and its sights and all whilst sitting down which is a bonus if you're jet-lagged.

On our free day in Cape Town a few of us hopped on the local version and set off for our journey through two worlds. The first thing we noticed were the ugly spikes running along the top of the high walls surrounding many homes. Other properties were also protected by electrified fences, barbed wire and signs saying 'Armed Response'.

I had visited Cape Town 40 years previously and had always wanted to see Table Mountain again as it was a vivid memory for me. It didn't disappoint and its stunning presence was a photographer's dream. You would swear it was made of granite but it's actually sandstone.

En route to the CBD we passed the very dramatic Cape Town Stadium built for the soccer world cup and which is, according to many locals, a multi-billion rand white elephant. The tour gave us a good taste of the downtown area but what makes it all particularly special is Table Mountain looming overhead. The passing parade was diverse and included uniformed school children and women in hijabs.

Leaving the CBD we drove through District Six. These green but barren slopes were razed of houses after the infamous forced removal of over 60,000 inhabitants, because of the colour of their skin, during the 1970's by the apartheid regime.

With a certain amount of neck-swivelling we could spot the Rhodes Memorial, the University of Cape Town and Newlands Stadium. This led us into an area of rather magnificent homes where beautiful gardens, huge fences and long driveways were features. Kirstenbosch Gardens were next and with such wonderful weather it was a shame we didn't have time to spend there. They are in a spectacular setting on the eastern slopes of Table Mountain and are readily acknowledged as one of the great botanical gardens of the world.



Twelve Apostles Clifton area



Shop in the township

Our third world experience began when we hopped off the bus and went on a walking tour of Imizamo Yethu Township in the Hout Bay area.

**We were shocked to see the standard of living that more than 33,000 people have to endure.**

Having said that, our guide and his friends, all residents of the Township, were very happy to show us around and discuss the ongoing improvements.

The government has built more than 2 million houses in South Africa since 1994 but many more

are needed. An Irish millionaire had given more than 10 million Rand to build small permanent houses for many of the residents here. (We hope having built up such good karma he survived the GFC.) Certain criteria have to be met by families to be eligible for these new houses.

We also visited a church and its offices constructed from shipping containers. The church was very active in supporting and feeding the local people. It struck us that the residents felt that they had some control over their lives. A sign in a house used as a Township museum read 'Unifying our diverse community to build our future together'.

One of the industries in the Township is called 'Original T-Bag Design'. It's hard to describe but the women create stunning products such as notebooks, coasters & bookmarks with patterns drawn on recycled teabags. Overall, we had the feeling that there were a number of small entrepreneurs who were trying a variety of methods to earn a living.

The coastal views through Camps Bay and Clifton were a bit gorgeous with the Twelve Apostles rising sharply from the sea. Beautiful beaches abound but the water is so frigid most of the year it seemed parks, cafes and restaurants were the venues of choice. The up-market beachside houses are tightly packed together and land values are high. In fact a car park for a house or apartment might cost up to AUD75,000.

Cape Town is truly one of the world's most beautiful and interesting cities with its vast array of experiences and that's without even mentioning the nearby world class vineyards.

by Margaret Smith

# Another Unforgettable Girls Own Adventure

“Few destinations are as challenging and rewarding as Africa but it is also a place that changes you and stays with you long after you leave. We had some hard journeys on rough roads, we saw a few very ugly and frantic cities, some of which are home to the poorest on Earth. But in saying that there is not one minute of the whole experience I would alter, the wildlife and scenery was extraordinary, at times I felt that I was in the middle of a National Geographic documentary not knowing where to point the camera. The people were warm and friendly. Heart strings were pulled and emotions had to be kept in check on our visit to LDK School in Nakuru where we meet staff and children of the school with underprivileged students and Aids orphans. While we were in Africa the days seemed to stretch into about a week each, it was unbelievable how much ground we could cover, what we managed to do, see and experience in just a day and I already want to return.”

by Suzie Wright



Walking with Lions Victoria Falls

**“Thanks Africa for the trip of a lifetime!”**



Some of the children at LDK School in Nakuru



Elephants Masai Mara

“Most people dream of a journey through the plains of Africa; being up close to experience the elegant beauty of a ferocious lion, or the aged creases that mark the skin of an elephant, or even to hear the thundering sounds of a buffalo or wildebeest stampede. For most, this is a fantasy, but for me this has become a wonderful reality.

I have been fortunate enough to visit the African continent on 5 previous occasions, this my first visit to East Africa. A place as diverse geographically as it is culturally. It exceeded my expectations, with the amount of game the constant changing of scenery and the beautiful African sunsets.

Africa gets under your skin, the images stay with you for years, the elephant’s intelligent eye’s, the lions antics, so mindful of a domestic cat, zebra barking warning to others, giraffe popping their heads over a tree staring at you whilst slowly chewing leaves. The hyena’s call at night, grunting of hippo at sundown, as they come out of the water to graze. The pink haze of the flamingos on Lake Nakuru, the brilliant colour of the birdlife, the sheer majesty of a Fish eagle in flight. All of this will stay with me always. I will return.”

by Veronica Newman



Rhino with suckling baby Lake Nakuru



The famous 'Lilac Breasted Roller'



**THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO CAME FOR MAKING THIS THE BEST TRIP EVER!**

Girls Own Adventures is a division of Albury Kent Travel

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