

2007 NAMIBIA AND VICTORIA FALLS

Thursday and Friday, October 11 and 12. The flight to Dakar was eight hours of non-eventfulness. I slept most of the way. My seatmate was a lady from Hendersonville, NC retired from the CDC. She is off on a South Africa and Botswana trip organized by Wilderness Safaris¹, the same outfitter that organized our Natural Habitat Adventure². Wilderness Safaris operates numerous small camps throughout the south of Africa.

Dakar is only halfway to Johannesburg. During the hour layover they came aboard and serviced the plane. We had to identify our cabin baggage and then were asked to stand up while they searched the seat for some sort of contraband. Nothing was found. What they didn't do was ask for our boarding passes. Since my original pass only read Atlanta to Dakar I hope I get credit for the sky miles for the second leg.³

Breakfast was served out of Dakar. It is about 1 am in Atlanta. I slept most of the way to Johannesburg

A nice wheelchair pusher named Philemon got me through immigration and retrieved my bag. Then he was going to wheel me to the Sun International Hotel. I checked my itinerary and saw it was the Southern Sun Hotel⁴ but it was only a few steps beyond to the jitney bus. A jitney bus was just pulling in when Scotti and Mac⁵ appeared, having come from Cape Town.

There was a problem at the hotel since they wanted a voucher. Shades of the Belize trip⁶ where we had no vouchers.

Then we called South African Airways to reconfirm our flight to Windhoek. They told us Scotti and Mac's reservation had been cancelled! After much arguing we finally were able to book Scotti on the last seat on the 1:00 pm flight but not Mac. They will have to go standby on my earlier flight. I don't understand why Susan cancelled their reservation. Scotti said they had practically no contact with Susan and did not know they were supposed to book the flights themselves. It is a most inauspicious beginning for our trip.

We went down for dinner and the concierge had an envelope with our vouchers but she can't do anything about the air. The dining room was set up for a buffet but I ordered a chicken salad off the menu. I am not very hungry. Then I went to bed and slept all night. Hopefully that puts me on African time⁷.

We had early breakfasts and went to the airport almost three hours early to see about the McCarthy reservations. There were enormous crowds. I quickly grabbed a wheelchair. The system at the Johannesburg airport is three-fold. First you queue up to weigh your bags. Then you queue to buy your ticket and in a third line you get to check your luggage. Elsie, who pushed the chair, was very helpful, but it was Scotti who found my paper ticket, hidden in my bag. I had to go through emigration by myself, as the McCarthys had to stand by for the 10:55 flight. I was taken to a special bus to get to the plane and then hoisted up to the galley door. I was just getting settled when they started boarding the other passengers. I was so happy when Mac and Scotti appeared. I hope that's the end of things going wrong! It has been very stressful.

My seat was 15C, right in front of the exit row, and the plane was fully booked so I was stuck with a non-reclining seat! South African Airline served a lunch on the hour and a half flight. My seat mates were a Danish woman and her son who were coming here to hunt. I have never understood killing for sport so I had little to say to them.

We cleared immigration and stepped out into a ninety degree heated desert. I could feel the moisture being sucked right out of me. It is about a half hour drive into Windhoek⁸ the capital of Namibia. The flat desert changed to rolling hills and the sparse vegetation turned to scrub bushes and then small trees. At last we reached the town. It stands almost a mile above sea. About 300,000 people live here, almost a fifth of the entire population of Namibia. The jacaranda

¹ www.wildernesssafaris.com

² <http://www.nathab.com/>

³ I did

⁴ <http://www.southernsun.com/>

⁵ My daughter Scotti and her husband Denis McCarthy

⁶ See 2004 Belize and Tikal

⁷ We are seven hours ahead of Atlanta

⁸ <http://www.windhoekcc.org.na/>

trees⁹ are blooming with spectacular lavender flowers and there is bougainvillea¹⁰ as well as desert plants like palms and cactus.

Our hotel, the Hilltop House¹¹, lies as you can imagine is on a hill overlooking the city. It is a lovely oasis with a tropical garden surrounding a small swimming pool. Our rooms are small but have every amenity.

I first became interested in the San people¹² and Namibia, when I read the National Geographic. Then I read Wilbur Smith's book 'The Burning Shore'. His descriptions of the sand dunes and the San people made me wish to see them in person. Last year I made the trip to the Cook Islands with Spencer Wells¹³. A geneticist, Spencer has traced the DNA of many remote people and found that everyone on earth descend from a pre history Eve 300,000 years ago. She was a member of the San tribe. These indigenous people speak with a clicking sound and are sometimes called the Bushmen. However they consider Bushman is a derogatory term. They have adapted so they can live in the Namibian Desert. 2300 years ago the Bantu¹⁴ people moved into Namibia and either enslaved the indigenous people or forced them into the hostile desert.

The early European settlers largely ignored Namibia because its coastline was so inhospitable. However in the late nineteenth century the Germans annexed and colonized the area and it became known as German South-West Africa. German rule came to an end after World War 1 and South Africa was given a mandate to rule the area. The Namibian people under apartheid were impoverished as forced laborers and there were demonstrations and a rising feeling of Nationalism. Many migrated to Botswana and Zambia. The fight for independence continued until in 1989 UN monitored elections were held. The following year Namibia was awarded independence under President Sam Nujoma. Many of the emigrants came back but there was a civil war and much instability along Namibia's northern border with Angola. The democratic election of Hifikepunye Pohamba as President in 2004 finally brought peace to the country.

Half of the population of Namibia depends on subsistence agriculture for its livelihood. However the country does not raise enough food to support itself so much has to be imported. The economy is heavily dependent on the extraction and exportation of minerals. Namibia is the world's fifth largest producer of Uranium. They also produce diamonds, lead, zinc, tin silver and tungsten. Even so Namibia is a very poor country and the people live in poverty with high unemployment. The mineral wealth is in the hands of only a few.

We took a taxi to Joe's Beerhouse¹⁵ for dinner. It was very touristy, long on atmosphere a bit short of comfort. Long tables were flanked with benches with no backs. There was a lot of game on the menu. I ordered a game stroganoff, Scotti had zebra and Mac had spare ribs. We ordered pinotage¹⁶ to go with it. There was an enticing gift shop but I did not find anything I wanted to buy.

Sunday, October 14. We had been told that the earliest we could order breakfast was 7:20 for our 7:45 departure. At 7:00 I received a call that breakfast was ready! I threw myself together and went out for an English breakfast under the jacaranda tree. Our host had implied we would be picked up earlier than scheduled but it was still 7:45 before we left for the airport, not the International airport but one for small planes right in the city. Our route took us through the downtown part of Windhoek so we had a glimpse of some of the buildings the German's built which look very European.

At the airport we cooled our heels for almost an hour before our young pilots; Phillip Malan and Giovanni Schlotz arrived. They fly for Sefofane¹⁷, the charter airline that will chauffeur us around

⁹ <http://images.google.com/images?q=jacaranda&hl=en&client=safari&rls=en-us&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&oi=images&ct=title>

¹⁰ <http://plantanswers.tamu.edu/publications/bougainvillea.html>

¹¹ <http://www.namibweb.com/hilltop.htm>

¹² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bushmen>

¹³ See 2006 Cook Islands

¹⁴ <http://www.capetown.at/heritage/peoples/bantu.htm>

¹⁵ <http://www.az.com.na/tourismus/windhoek-fuehrer/a-taste-of-windhoek.20133.php>

¹⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinotage>

¹⁷ <http://www.sefofane.com/>

Namibia. Phillip, our pilot is 21 and has been flying for three years. He has ambitions to work for a large airline. We boarded our Cessna 210s¹⁸. In the other plane the fifth person must sit on the jump seat. Our first stop will be Sossusvlei Wilderness Camp¹⁹. The rest of our group is Roy and Maureen Jobson and James and Allison French. The Jobsons live in Edinburgh where he is in charge of the schools and other public services. The Frenches live in Devon, England where he is a pilot for a regional airline²⁰. Roy was born in England and lives in Scotland. James was born in Scotland and lives in England

The flight took about an hour. For a long time I looked down on scattered homesteads and small villages connected by winding two track roads. Dry watercourses also crossed the area. I wonder how people live in these places. Some of scenery looked like our western deserts with saw tooth ridges and sparse vegetation. We passed a "table mountain" like the one in Cape Town. It is called Tsaris Mountain that means wily wind or dust devil.²¹ It is part of the ridge, which separates the Kalahari Desert²² from the Namib Desert²³. Then we flew down through even more desolate territory and landed on a gravel runway in the middle of nowhere!

We were met by more of the staff and loaded into a safari vehicle with open air "stadium seating". We drove to the camp and our guide stopped several times to point out interesting things.

There was a Quiver tree,²⁴ which the San people used to make their quivers. There were also some springbok²⁵ with their distinctive black racing stripe and white belly. He pointed out a huge weaver bird nest. In Namibia the sociable weaver birds²⁶ use the same nest over a period of many years and it can grow so large it sometimes breaks the branch it hangs from.

We are greeted with apple juice at our delightful lodge on top of a small hill. In the distance we can see the red sand dunes we have come so far to see. Below the lodge is a small water hole that they keep supplied with water so it attracts the springbok. We are briefed on our activities and then are taken to our cabins. There are nine thatch roof buildings: mine is so wonderful it will be hard to tear myself away. A chaise in front of the large windows lets me enjoy the view of barren hills and the dunes beyond. I have every amenity. There is even a "splash" pool where I can enjoy the stars this evening,

Garson, the cook, prepared a delicious lunch of a chicken pot pie and various side dishes, far more than I needed to eat. Then we were given a three hour siesta. I actually slept for an hour or so but when I woke decided to go back to the lodge rather than risk sleeping too much. Some new people have joined us. There is a French family, a Canadian couple and another couple from the UK. We were served high tea with meat pies and cake and then boarded the safari wagon for the game drive.

We seven were in the open wagon, the rest followed in a closed van behind. I imagine we saw more than the closed van. Franco was our driver guide. He stopped often to point out the flora and fauna.

A remarkable lot lives in this very arid desert. The moringo tree²⁷ resembles the baobab²⁸. It is also called the upside down tree or the devil tree. The Melaleuca or paper bark tree²⁹ sheds its bark, which has the consistency of paper and a fragrant smell. We saw numerous Ruppels Korhaan birds, which seem to be related to ostrich although they are smaller. There were small herds of springbok, always with a dominant male. Sometimes lesser bachelor springbok lurked

¹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cessna_210

¹⁹ http://www.wilderness-safaris.com/camps/camps.jsp?map_id=2554

²⁰ <http://www.flybe.com/>

²¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dust_devil

²² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalahari_Desert

²³ <http://images.google.com/images?q=namib+desert&hl=en&client=safari&rls=en-us&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&oi=images&ct=title>

²⁴ http://www.livingdesert.org/plants/quiver_tree.asp

²⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Springbok_Antelope

²⁶ http://www.sandiegozoo.org/animalbytes/t-sociable_weavers.html

²⁷ <http://www.warrenphotographic.co.uk/mdh/06974.htm>

²⁸ <http://images.google.com/images?q=baobab&hl=en&client=safari&rls=en-us&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&oi=images&ct=title>

nearby hoping for a chance to mate with one of the does. We saw weaverbird nests and Franco told us how the cobra gets in the nest to eat the young. We even saw a mongoose.³⁰

The Namib star bush was in bloom with its white flowers. The antelopes won't come near it while it is in flower although they eat it at other times. We saw sand grouse³¹, which resemble our quail. There were ground squirrel burrows similar to prairie dog colonies.

I found the "fairy circles"³² interesting. These are perhaps 15 feet in diameter and nothing grows in them because there is very little topsoil. No one is sure what causes them. One thought is that termites have an underground nest. Another theory is that a poison plant lived here and killed the soil. The poison plant can be deadly to humans. Some campers died when they breathed the smoke from their campfire made of poison wood. The springbok and oryx³³ don't eat the grass on the edge of the circle.

We saw a red necked breeding pair of falcons near the end of the drive.

It is amazing to me that there is so much biodiversity in this arid part of the world. We learned that there is a large aquifer of water under the surface, which the animals can seek out.

Dinner was at eight. Before we were served Stanley recited the menu in Nama/Damara. I had heard of the click languages but never heard it spoken. When the Bible was translated into click language some way had to be devised to express the clicks. Four different clicks are used as modifiers for words. They are expressed in writing by a !, #, I and II. The menu was pork roast or stew, served with, among other things, marrow. I don't remember having this before. It is in the squash family and resembles okra in appearance.

I sat next to Philippe who is an older man, much traveled. He told me how his bag had been robbed in Johannesburg when he checked it through to Windhoek. He lost his camera and razor among other things.

After dinner it was early to bed to try and rest for the 5:00 am wake-up call in the morning.

Monday, October 15. I heard the knock on my door and got up and dressed. When I got to the lodge no one was there! After about a half hour the rest arrived talking about how the knock had come at four-forty. I hadn't looked at my clock or I would have been more leisurely. We left immediately after the five thirty breakfast.

Today our safari wagons were enclosed but much easier to get into. I was able to move to the back to give others a chance at the middle seats. Mac sits in the front for he needs more room for his bad knee.

It is 20 kilometers to Sesriem, the entrance to the Sossusvlei Dunes Park. As the sun comes up we spot the small steenbok³⁴. He is the second smallest of the antelope. Only the dik-dik³⁵ is smaller. We also sighted an African wild cat³⁶ crossing the road. There were also ostriches.

The Sossusvlei Dunes³⁷ are the most famous sight in Namibia. They are one of the great natural wonders on our earth. The most spectacular part is along the dry course of the Tsauchab River. The sand dunes were caused by the wind and over the centuries have been compacted so they are stable. The highest is 1000 feet high. They come in many different shapes and in the early morning the shadows are very beautiful. The windward side is flat as though sandpapered. On the leeward side some vegetation may grow. The red color comes from the iron oxide. In February the rains come and for a short time the river turns to swamp land where many birds come. At this time of the years the river is dry and we drove on the hard compacted river bottom through scattered acacia trees.

Mother came here on a Travcoa³⁸ tour in 1969 coming by bus from Windhoek across the desert. I'm glad we could fly in and then use our safari wagons on a relatively short trip to view the

³⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mongoose>

³¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandgrouse>

³² [.margheritacampaniolo.it/crop%202004/Fairy_circles_of_Nabimia.htm](http://www.margheritacampaniolo.it/crop%202004/Fairy_circles_of_Nabimia.htm)

³³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oryx>

³⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steenbok>

³⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dik-dik>

³⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Wildcat

³⁷ <http://wikitravel.org/en/Sossusvlei>

³⁸ <http://www.travcoa.com/>

dunes. African roads are bumpy and dusty.

We saw many tourists making pilgrimages to the dunes. They climb the dunes and look like tiny insects on the top.

Franco finally reaches the soft sand and turned on the four-wheel drive. We skated and skidded for it was like driving in snow. We saw one car mired in. We finally reached the point where Franco said we could hike in close to a dune and climb it. I got about 50 feet and decided not to go on. It is hard enough to walk on the sand and hardpan surface³⁹. Worse than that, as far as I could see there was no shade and it was getting hot. I rested under a handy acacia tree⁴⁰ until the group returned. They reported my decision was probably right for it was very hot and the climb very difficult.

We then had an elegant picnic on folding chairs around a table clothed picnic table under an acacia. Franco produced cold meatballs and cold fried chicken, hardboiled eggs, a pasta salad and a carrot dish. It was all delicious. He even cut open a plastic water bottle so he could make a watering hole for the bees and birds.

And then it was time to drive home. It took a little longer than the hour suggested because we came across a large herd of oryx and spent some time photographing them from all angles. Sometimes the oryx loses one of his two-foot long horns and one of these ancient antelopes may have given rise to the unicorn legend. We also saw many springbok.

I was very hot and tired when I got back to my room. I thought to take a plunge bath but the water was so icy I only got wet to the knees. Then I took a cold shower and lay down on the cool tiled floor in an effort to cool off. Eventually I felt better but my ankles are swollen to twice their normal size. I had to forego the evening drive to Sesriem Canyon⁴¹. Another three or four hours in the car would have killed me!

I napped and read for the afternoon. We had gin and tonics on the porch before dinner. Tonic⁴² used to be the precaution for malaria. I don't much care for tonic water but the gin and tonic was a very cooling drink.

After dinner Franco took us up to a platform in front of the lodge and pointed out the constellations. You could clearly see some of Jupiter's moons⁴³. He also identified Antares⁴⁴ as the heart of Scorpio and with a pointer light made me see the scorpion with his long curved tail. I am very impressed with Franco's knowledge and hope he realizes his goal of being a guide for the whole country.

Tuesday, October 16. We got to the airstrip and then waited for ten minutes or so while the pilots prepared the Cessna 210s. First they took the covers off every orifice and inspected them to be sure no bugs and birds had gone in. Then they oiled and inspected the plane from stem to stern. A pilot in this part of the world must be a jack-of-all-trades.

We took off for Swakopmund about nine. We were so lucky with the weather. First we flew over the wonderful red sand dunes, which stretch 400 kilometers to the sea.

When we reached the coast fog was rolling in but Philip managed to keep below it or around it. We saw the remains of the shipwrecked Edward Bolen, which happened over a hundred years ago. She was full of whiskey when she came ashore. The other century-old wreck was almost covered by sand.

As we headed north the dunes lost their red color but one thing is certain, if Namibia could develop a market for sand she would be wealthy indeed. While the eastern beaches of Africa are losing sand, Namibia's are actually gaining. Heavy breakers and surf bring more sand from the sea.

Philip pointed out the oyster breeding beds. In one place a man built a platform and attracts birds. The guano⁴⁵ has made him a rich man. I thought guano was used for fertilizer but this

³⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hardpan>

⁴⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acacia>

⁴¹ <http://www.go2africa.com/namibia/namib-desert/sesriem-canyon/>

⁴² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tonic_water

⁴³ <http://solarsystem.nasa.gov/planets/profile.cfm?Object=Jupiter&Display=Moons>

⁴⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antares>

⁴⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guano>

goes into cosmetics! Remind me to check the ingredients of my cosmetics!

We checked out Walvis Bay⁴⁶ with the long fishhook neck of land that encloses a huge harbor. This is a major port, not only for Namibia but also for Botswana and beyond. Many people have built homes and there are resorts along the sandy shore. At last we came to Swakopmund⁴⁷ and found two safari wagons waiting. They took us straight down the beach road back to Walvis Bay.

We come to the dock and they brought the Tersio alongside, a small runabout. The current was running and the boat was pitching. The Brits were dubious if they wanted to go. Dauntless Scotti and I clambered aboard. No sooner had we arrived than with a big splash a huge eared seal⁴⁸ named Robby climbed on the swim platform and came flopping into the cockpit. He made it clear he was ready for the treat the captain had brought aboard. The Brits changed their minds right away and joined us on board where we all patted Robby. He was completely dry under his thick outer fur. I even fed him a fish. A smaller female seal named Audie also tried to come on board but Robby scared her off. Finally the captain threw one last fish into the water as a decoy and as Robby jumped in he gunned the boat and we took off. Not too far away the boat was stopped again and Audie was given her chance. She was sweet but as soon as Robby reappeared she was scared to death and fell to the floor next to Maureen, then flopped across the boat and disembarked over the outboard! Maureen was really startled. Then Robby came aboard again but we ran out of fish and he was coaxed overboard.

Our tour of the harbor was interesting. We passed an old freighter, which had been abandoned. Cormorants⁴⁹ had taken over and every inch of the old derelict was covered with birds. I don't know what they will do in a year or so because there are plans to scrap the ship.

The bay was full of seals and as we neared the tip of the peninsula that shelters the bay we found ourselves looking at an enormous eared seal colony. There were perhaps 30,000 animals, packed closely together. We saw the male seals confronting each other. We saw young seals cavorting in the water. It was wonderful. Our skipper promised us an even larger seal when we returned to the dock but Casanova must have occupied elsewhere.

Then we had an elegant picnic in a tent on the beach. I got to try the delicious oysters from the breeding beds we have seen⁵⁰. They are large and juicy and have a wonderful taste. When the world becomes aware of them I am sure they will be in great demand.

We then split up. Some went to ride dune buggies⁵¹. Scotti said the pilots were hot-dogging their buggies while she and Alison rode less high-powered vehicles. The Robsons and I were taken back to Swakopmund. They needed to book some further arrangements, I was anxious to go to an Internet café. It was good to catch up on things although I also got the sad news that my dear friend Lou Smith was in her final coma.

Then I had time to window shop the tourist shops. It's always a good idea to look things over before I make a selection and I have several ideas of what would be fun to buy.

Back in the plane we headed up the Skeleton Coast⁵², but the fog gods decided to put an end to our fun and closed everything down. Phillip headed inland and we noted an immediate change in scenery below. Craggy mountains appeared that looked like those in our west although they are much older. There has been little erosion in the desert climate. The huge Brandenburg volcano crater soars to 8,550 feet and is the highest point in Namibia. At last we came to the dry Huab River where the desert elephants are in residence. Philip came in low and we had a good if brief view of some of them. And at last we came to our landing strip.

The Damaraland Wilderness Lodge⁵³ is one of the older camps established by Wilderness Safaris but it has every amenity. This time we are housed in tents with en-suite bathroom facilities⁵⁴. Each tent has its own generator so we have electricity and hot water. I immediately introduced

⁴⁶ <http://www.walvisbay.com.na/>

⁴⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swakopmund>

⁴⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otariidae>

⁴⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cormorant>

⁵⁰ <http://www.economist.com.na/content/view/1141/33/>

⁵¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dune_buggy

⁵² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skeleton_Coast

⁵³ http://www.wilderness-safaris.com/camps/camps.jsp?map_id=2537

⁵⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bathroom>

myself to Thelma one of the resident cats. She purred in response. Louise is not as friendly. We had a special dinner that night. We went to a traditional boma. A boma is an enclosure built to keep the animals out. We walked down a path to the boma where the dinner had been set up in a tent. Some of the staff came out and welcomed us, first in their language and then in English. At last the menu was read also first in English and then in click language. We are told that almost all the staff is from Damaraland.

Later I read that the Torra Conservancy⁵⁵ was set up with the idea of educating the locals that ecotourism was more profitable than poaching. They also have a promotion program so the locals can be found at many of the camps throughout Namibia. The best part is that each year part of the profit has been handed back to the local government. In a few years' time, the natives will own the camp outright. This has made a huge difference in the area. The herds have grown in size and people are even moving back into the area now that there is employment available. The program has won prizes.

It was a long climb back up to bed but a very enjoyable evening.

Wednesday, October 17. Afar an 8:00 am breakfast we climbed into our safari wagon and started out to find the desert elephants. Everest, our guide, pointed out the poisonous euphoria bush. The San people use its milk to poison their arrows. Only two animals can eat this plant the kudu⁵⁶ and black rhino. Others are poisoned. Elephants rub against it to get the milk on their skin. This is an effective insect repellent. Only baboons and rhinos can eat another kind of Euphoria.

The shepherd tree is interesting. The Damara people strip the bark and make a coffee like beverage from it. Ground up it makes a beverage that help women with menstrual cramps and others with stomach aches. It is called the shepherd tree⁵⁷ for it is big enough for the shepherd to take shelter of the hot days. The ringwood tree is also called the toothbrush tree since the natives use twigs to clean their teeth.

We saw herds of springbok, much larger than the ones at the last camp. There were oryx, the national animal. There were also ostrich. The ostrich breed once a year. The female sits on the eggs at night while the male exposes his black feathers to the heat so he can store up heat to keep the eggs warm at night. They can run 60 miles per hour.

We spotted a long-billed lark⁵⁸ and paused to listen to his whistling song. We spotted a black-backed jackal⁵⁹ but he was too far away to get a good look.

The land was strewn with rocks of lava, probably from the nearby Brandenburg Crater. We spotted two African hawk eagles⁶⁰ on a rocky escarpment.

We passed a deserted looking house and two gravestones. When we asked who was buried there, Everest made a joke that they were tourists who had not kept their hands inside the lorry!

Finally we got to the river and soon found two desert male elephants munching away on the vegetation. Desert elephants⁶¹ have adapted to the dry climate and can go three or four days without water. The older one was about 35 and he was teaching the younger one. Periodically he would shake the mopane tree⁶² with his body to make the seed pods fall. Sometimes he would reach high in the tree for a morsel to put in his cavernous mouth. It is an incredible sight from 25 feet away. In the winter the desert elephants move to the mountains and are harder to find.

We watched for some time and then were off to find the rest of the herd. Passing a small village where Everest lived as a child we were offered a pit stop and the girls went one way, the men the other. Everest pointed out the water reservoir for the village which the larger elephants can also drink from. He also showed us the windmill that the elephants had destroyed to make a water source for their young whose trunks were too short to reach into the tank. Before the Conservancy this would not have been tolerated but now the natives share their water for they

⁵⁵ http://pubs.wri.org/pubs_content_text.cfm?ContentID=3846

⁵⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kudu>

⁵⁷ <http://www.bushveld.co.za/pictures-shepherd-tree.htm>

⁵⁸ <http://www.birdsinsa.com/birds/certhilaudabenguelensis.htm>

⁵⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black-backed_Jackal

⁶⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Hawk_Eagle

⁶¹ <http://www.namibweb.com/elephant.htm>

⁶² http://www.african-hunter.com/mopane_tree.htm

know the elephants are important to keep the tourists and the money coming in.

The village had some older looking huts but new houses were being built with small porches and windows. During apartheid many South Africans came to Namibia and settled here but after apartheid they returned to the cities. Now they have started coming back having found that city life was not for them. These new houses are being built for these newcomers.

Then we found more elephants. Everest is very good at getting close without disturbing them and we watched some females with their young feeding and dusting themselves. André, the baby elephant was only 4-months old and he was investigating the branches as a baby discovers his world.

The Everest stopped for tea in the middle of the elephants. It was served on a tablecloth with cookies. What fun to have tea with the elephants!

We went on and found some mother elephants keeping watch while their babies rested in the shade. It had started to get hot. Two adorable babies were curled up on the ground looking for all the world like human babies with their limbs akimbo. The sentinel stood nearby and fed or dusted herself to get rid of the bugs. Once the smallest elephant came to long enough to dust himself, but he went back to sleep. Other elephants were also nearby. Scotti got some unbelievable pictures of this.⁶³

At the very end, one large elephant snuck up on us from behind and passed within a foot of the wagon. We were all quite startled to be sure and had a good laugh.

Then Everest found another small herd of elephant and we watched until it was time to head back to the lodge for lunch. I loved every moment but I am going to forego the afternoon trip to Twyfelfontein⁶⁴ to see the rock carvings and etchings made by the San people. It would have been a highlight but the cost to me of going out in the heat and then hiking for more than a half hour to see them is beyond my ability. Mac is also going to sit it out. This gives me a chance to catch up with my journal.

We had another large lunch and I enjoyed watching the birds swoop into the lodge and try to steal tidbits off the buffet. One tried a slice of fish but it was too big and he had to drop it.

The afternoon was very hot. I hope it cools off like it did last night when we had to don our sweaters and windbreakers.

Thursday, October 18. We left the camp about 9:00 am and went to the nearby village of Fontaine. There are five houses but about 60 people call it home. The children are off to boarding school and some work in camps in other parts of the country. James showed us around. The Damaraland laundry is all done by hand here. However, two weeks ago electricity reached the village and they may get some labor saving machines. We walked down past a large pool to the garden where there was a fruit garden. Dates, and oranges are fenced in with the hope the elephants won't get to them. However this is not entirely successful for one section of fence had been knocked down and some trees killed. I was sorry we could not go in one of the concrete block houses. The one door that was open revealed a bed and pots and pans hanging on the wall. There were lots of dogs in the village. They are there to protect the large herd of goats from predators. The village also has chickens so they are completely self-sufficient.

We got to the airport and watched Phillip and Giuliani prepare the planes. They were on their best behavior because their boss had flown in to deliver some people and was going on to Ongava⁶⁵.

Looking at the ground we saw the scenery start to change. Following the Huab River, we quickly left the mountains behind. Below us there was more and more vegetation. At one point we spied a date orchard. Off in the distance we saw a dust devil like a tornado of dust but it vanished almost immediately.

Ongava means rhinoceros and this large privately held preserve is home to both the black and white rhino⁶⁶. As soon as we got in the wagon we started to see game. Lots of it. We saw kudu

⁶³ My picture page is at www.meges.smugmug.com

⁶⁴ <http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/twyfelfontein/>

⁶⁵ <http://www.ongava.com/>

⁶⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhinoceros>

with their big ears and the red hartebeest⁶⁷ that runs the fastest of all the antelope. There were oryx and springbok.

We passed the Ongava Lodge and noted the tour bus parked in its yard. We love our small intimate lodges and feel sorry for the tour groups who can't possibly see as much as we do.

We came upon a dazzle of zebra⁶⁸. I didn't know that their back is so weak a lion can jump on it and easily kill him. No wonder no one has been able to ride one.

Forty-five minutes from the airport we got to the Ongava Tented camp⁶⁹. There are nine tents. Cameron Woolson, who with his wife Wendy, is the genial proprietor of our camp, was there to meet us with welcoming cool wet towels. He was a fisherman until a couple of years ago but found he could not run his fishing business because of bribes and the required native partners who did not want to work. He came to Ongava two years ago and loves it.

The lodge was wonderful. Seventy-five feet beyond the low fence that borders the lodge is a waterhole. I could sit there all day watching. There were many animals enjoying the oasis. A baboon⁷⁰ appeared and scared them off temporarily but as soon as he was gone they returned. Cam tells us the baboon came unexpectedly two months ago and the other animals haven't figured him out as yet.

We had lunch and met Nadja and Lillian, two Swiss. Nadja is the tour leader of the bus group at the Lodge and is here whether by design or because the lodge is overbooked. They seem quite pleasant. Then we had an hour or so of siesta. I slept. At 3:30 we went back to the lodge for tea and our drive.

We hadn't gone far before we spotted our first southern giraffe.⁷¹ Binius, our guide, points out that this one is male. The female are lighter in color and their horns are more pointed. The giraffes have a smelly oil on their which tends to repel the lions. The giraffe does not make a sound.

We spotted the black-faced Impala⁷² that is only found in Namibia. There was a flock of guinea hen⁷³. We caught a glimpse of our first wart hogs.⁷⁴

The waterbuck⁷⁵ was reintroduced 12 years ago. Someone remarked that his white-circled rump looks as if he had sat on a fresh painted toilet seat!

We saw a few wildebeest⁷⁶, also known as gnus. They are one of the lion's favorite meals.

We stopped to see a pretty Manteros hornbill, only found in Namibia. We also saw a few termite mounds.⁷⁷ Active termite mounds are pointed, while in dead ones the top has been eroded.

The red-crested korhaan is smaller than the Ruppels korhaan. We saw the anti-poaching patrol that makes sure the wildlife in the preserve is protected.

Then we came to the highlight of the day. Two young white rhinoceros were resting close to the road. Their names are Rene and Jeffrey, named for two of the park's board members. Rhinos were introduced to the park 16 years ago and there are now about 25 white rhino and 20 black rhino. We learn that white rhino are more docile than the black, and also more commonly seen. The term 'white' may refer to the "wide" mouth for both black and white rhinos are gray in color. This pair will mate for life. Black rhino are more aggressive and can run 50 km per hour. We watched for a long time and eventually they got up. They are huge lumbering tanks of animals with their armored skin. They also look somewhat prehistoric. They were so close to our vehicle that we could hear them chew on the grass they were grazing! Later we saw two more rhino.

⁶⁷ http://www.photos-voyages.com/namibia_botswana/wildlife/red-hartebeest.html

⁶⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zebra>

⁶⁹ <http://www.namibian.org/travel/lodging/private/ongavatended.htm>

⁷⁰ <http://images.google.com/images?q=baboon&hl=en&client=safari&rls=en-us&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&oi=images&ct=title>

⁷¹ <http://www.onime.com/Africa/herbivores/giraffe/giraffes.html>

⁷² http://www.bluewaterbiggame.com/game/african_black-faced_impala.cfm

⁷³ <http://images.google.com/images?q=guinea+hen&hl=en&client=safari&rls=en-us&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&oi=images&ct=title>

⁷⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warthog>

⁷⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waterbuck>

⁷⁶ <http://images.google.com/images?q=wildebeest&hl=en&client=safari&rls=en-us&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&oi=images&ct=title>

⁷⁷ <http://www.junglephotos.com/africa/afanimals/insects/antnest.shtml>

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This time it was a mother and her calf. The mother is quite old. They walked across the road in front of the van. We saw springbok and zebra. Some of the springbok went off pronking, their characteristic leap.

We saw a kori bustard⁷⁸. This is the largest bird that can fly. They can also run at 19 km per hour. We found an African hoopoe⁷⁹ that feeds on insects on the ground.

Binius is very good at spotting and found a mother and baby giraffe. She was one of the first ones introduced in the preserve and has had about 5 children. We also saw a steenbok, 2nd smallest of the antelopes. He covers his spoor like a cat.

We had sundown in an open area where we could see zebra and giraffe.

Charlie the porcupine⁸⁰ came during dinner and Cam gave him a snack of apple and lettuce. Cam found him almost dead two months ago, having been torn up by a lion. Now he looks back in good health and ruffled his menacing quills for us. Later he came up on our deck to drink from the pool. No one is sure if he is male or female for no one dares go near him.

In the evening the animals stay away from the water hole for this is when the lions come. Sure enough two came during desert and we abandoned the table to watch them drink

Friday, October 19. During the night we heard growls and roars outside the tent. In the morning we found some lions had killed a kudu within eyesight of the camp. They were still working on it. Cam tells us there have only been eight kills at the camp since he came here. It was fascinating to watch but we had to go off for our drive.

Cam investigated later and told us it was four lions and three cubs. Also a leopard had come to the water hole. We could almost not bother going on a drive at all; it is so much fun here. Cam reported that once another kill was very close to the terrace and the lions growled all night. One South African tourist was so frightened they packed up and left the next morning! I am taking Cam's word for it that we are safe at night as long as we stay in our tents!

The goal of our drive was Etosha National Park,⁸¹ which borders our preserve. Etosha means great white space. The vast Etosha pan covers about 4731 square kames. It is approximately 110 km by 60 km. Inside the gate we soon came to a waterhole. A lonely giraffe towered over the springbok and zebra that were drinking there. A lone wildebeest came to join them and later an oryx. It is delightful to watch the animals coexisting so peacefully. The giraffe finally bent down to drink. He is a relative of the camel and can't keep his head down too long or he gets dizzy.

We spotted a pair tawny eagles⁸² in a tree. They are scavengers but occasionally kill for themselves. Then we paused for a large journey of giraffes and saw elephants in the distance.

The savannah elephant is different from the desert elephant. He looks bigger but that may be the setting in which we see him. There are no tall trees in Etosha so the elephants tower above the vegetation. They took some to Damara but could not make them breed with the desert elephants who are a different species.

The weaverbirds in Etosha build the small nests I expected but there are a few of the sociable birds that build the huge nests we saw before.

There was a waterhole at which we did not stop but there were animals coming from all directions as if going to a revival meeting.

Then we came to the Okaukeujo Rest stop and somewhat of a culture shock. It was civilization. Here there were not only toilets but also a couple of small shops, a café and even a post office. This also meant there were also lots of cars and tour buses. We saw one of the tour buses later at a water hole. The tourists were all crowded on one side trying to see out. Hurrah for our stadium-seating open-air safari wagons.

Roy treated me to a coke and Scotti found us unimaginably wonderful ice cream!

We then continued into the park seeing many springbok huddling under the short scrub trees to get out of the sun.

⁷⁸ <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/Birds/Facts/FactSheets/fact-koribustard.cfm>

⁷⁹ <http://www.kenyabirds.org.uk/hoopoe-a.htm>

⁸⁰ <http://www.luddist.com/porc.htm>

⁸¹ <http://www.namibian.org/travel/namibia/etosha.htm>

⁸² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tawny_Eagle

At our next waterhole a lone male elephant stood sentinel over the herds of antelope and zebra. In the distance we could see a second huge male pachyderm coming. It seemed to take a long time for him to get to the hole and we wondered what the first one would do. The newcomer took a drink and passed on to the mud hole where he could give himself a dust bath. The first elephant, not to be outdone, came to the hole and put all four feet in. The antelopes scattered while he obviously relished the soothing coolness on his feet.

Some of the male oryx were sparring with their long horns. It made me think of a fencing match. Not to be outdone, some of the zebra started carrying on and kicking one another. Zebra use a sort of bray to communicate. Three ostrich and a kori bustard came to enjoy the party. Some of the antelope would leave and go toward the road but none wanted to get close to the culverts under it. Binius speculated that a lion might be lurking there.

We saw dust devils frequently on the drive.

We came to another hole where zebra, kudu and impala were refreshing themselves. Then we noticed all the animals were on one side of the pool. In the distance we saw why. There were two lions lurking under a tree. We watched for a time but they made no move to come closer.

Our last water hole boasted three elephant. One gave himself a good dust bath.

We were becoming very tired and finally Binius headed for the camp. It was 1:30 when we got there. We had been on the road for seven hours!

I spent the afternoon catching up on this journal. Some went swimming. Six new people came in.

I went to the lodge for dinner and found two spectacular lionesses at the water hole. Scotti reported that they had gone on a walk to see the kill and that little remained but the stomach bare rib cage and horns. The lions leave the stomach for the jackals and hyenas for they do not eat grass.

At dinner, Cam gave a lovely speech welcoming and introducing the newcomers and bidding farewell to us. Emanuel and Alice, the French honeymooners had a romantic table set for two on the terrace. We joked that they were our first line of attack in case the lions decided to invade!

Saturday, October 20. We said goodbye to our British friends who are going on to Cape Town. They have been delightful travel companions.

Then we had our last flight with Phillip. He has used up his hours and will have a couple of days off. He plans to watch the World Rugby Cup⁸³ match this evening. It is between South Africa and England and has been much discussed on the trip⁸⁴.

He flew us to Okonjima⁸⁵, where Albert met us and took us to the lodge. We had expected a farmhouse but found a luxurious lodge decorated with all sorts of African memorabilia from large wooden hippopotamuses to masks. We were shown to our chalets that are large circular thatched buildings containing a bedroom and sitting area. Behind an opening in the canvas wall is a small water hole. Birdseed is provided so we can feed the many small finches and yellow weaver birds that live in the camp.

The project is run by the AfriCat Foundation⁸⁶ and is dedicated to educating the nearby farmers and schoolchildren to the importance of the wildlife. They also are involved with the rescue and rehabilitation of the big cats, primarily the leopard and cheetah. Some of the animals come here wounded and some come orphaned or have other problems. More than 500 animals have been repatriated into the wild. A British corporation called the Tusk Trust⁸⁷ provides some of the funding.

We were offered lunch and then I found a Bushwoman statuette in the shop and could not resist buying her although I have no idea where I will find room for her when I get home.

After a short nap I awoke to thunder. A large black cloud has settled over the camp. We went out on our drive to find the leopard. There are four leopards being rehabilitated at the 5000 acre preserve and they wear radio collars so they can be watched and tracked. Albert used a radio

⁸³ <http://www.rugbyworldcup.com/>

⁸⁴ South Africa won.

⁸⁵ <http://www.okonjima.com/>

⁸⁶ <http://www.africat.org/>

⁸⁷ <http://www.tusk.org/index.asp>

and antenna to locate them.

No sooner had we gone through the gate in our open wagon when it rained on our parade. We huddled under the waterproof blankets for about 15 minutes while I wondered if I was having fun. Sharing our stormy ride was a British couple who have been here eleven different times and their daughter and son-in-law. She wants her ashes strewn here when she dies!

At last the rain lifted enough for us to continue. At last we were rewarded with a full rainbow and the rain almost went away.

There are grazing animals in the preserve, serving as food for the predators. Small steenbok bounded off as we approached and we saw oryx and waterbuck. However our goal was to find a leopard. We drove round and round over the red sand roads until at last the radio found a magnificent male leopard named TJ lying along the side of the road. We stopped and watched him for some time. His coat looked like velvet. The other leopards I have seen in the wild were always on the move and so it was delightful to have this close look. Then we picked up the sound of another leopard. We finally found Mafana near a long dead kudu but he is very shy and did not stick around very long. We were glad to get away from the aroma.

We saw a brilliant red sundown on a small rise. I went off to relieve myself and fell into a nettle bush. Scotti had to come and pull me back on my feet. I am getting so clumsy.

We ate dinner with an English couple, Maureen and David Taft, who are on their fifth visit to Okonjima. He is a cartographer and has had an interesting career mapping first the British Empire and then some of the unmapped African countries. She is a photographer and carries an amazing camera.

After an 8 o'clock dinner we again got into the truck and went to a blind. We had brought leftovers, which the men strewed on the ground. Very soon two badgers⁸⁸ appeared for the feast. I don't think I have ever seen them before. Then some porcupines came. However, it was thundering ominously and we cut our visit short to get back to the camp before the heavens opened. We almost made it!

Sunday, October 21. I was up before the 6:00 am wakeup call. After a light breakfast we were off to search for the cheetahs.

Four cheetah cub orphans were brought to the preserve. They were fed on bottles until they were old enough to be turned loose. For a time food was brought to them every three days, but then the time was lengthened until they were forced to learn to hunt. The two males hunted together and the two females hunted together. However, the leopards killed two of them and the surviving male and the one female paired up and now hunt together. This is very unusual among cheetahs. She is given birth control medicine but eventually it is hoped they will both be released in the wild and then she will be able to reproduce.

Driving into the preserve we found a journey of giraffe and paused to watch them. They can kick sideways if they are attacked. The female giraffes have a tuft of hair on their horns while the male horn is hairless on top. They have seven bones in their neck just like humans but of course theirs are much bigger.

We saw several scrub hare who raced ahead of us. This species does not live in a burrow like our rabbits.

Again it rained but not as long as yesterday. Why couldn't we have had some of this cooling rain when we were in the desert?

After many tries, Albert finally picks up the radio signal. We stop and get off the truck to trek through the brush in search of the cheetah. It was somewhat hard going and unsuccessful for the signal got fainter and Alfred told us he was walking away.

We drove on and then picked up the signal again. Albert and the tracker left us on the wagon while they checked it out. Soon they returned to report the pair was resting near the perimeter fence. We trekked in and there were Apollo and Artemis resting by the road. Artemis⁸⁹ in particular was feeling kittenish and rolled on her back. They cleaned themselves like proper cats should do. Then they went back into the brush to continue their hunt.

⁸⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Badger>

⁸⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artemis>

We paused to watch a 10-inch long millipede⁹⁰ on the road. If you touch one, they expel a liquid. Their defense is to roll up into a ball and play dead.

It does not seem so authentic to track the cats with radios but it does give the tourist wonderful opportunities for photos.

After brunch we had five hours off! I went back to my chalet and fed my birds and slept.

After tea we went on another drive. Sharing our safari coach were two men whose names I do not recall and Tricia and John Creedon. They are all from England. It is interesting that we have met no Americans at all on this tour.

First we went to see the African wild dogs⁹¹. A five-puppy litter had been orphaned and was being raised until they could be repatriated. They were so young their eyes weren't even open. They had to mix chicken with the milk before the pups would take a bottle. These are colorful dogs: no two in the same pattern. There are probably less than 3000 living in the wild today.

In another nearby cage were two orphaned wart hogs. AfriCat will feed and raise them until they are ready to go into the larger preserve to learn to live in the wild.

We then went to an area they call the camp. Here we found the cheetahs that cannot be rehabilitated. Some have been badly injured. One poor thing had lost some of her toes in a trap. Others had been domesticated as pets and lost their instincts so they cannot ever go back to the wild. They will spend the rest of their lives in this retreat. I found it interesting that they are fed lams⁹² dry Cat food, which has been moistened every morning. In the evening they are given meat.

The five were decoratively draped on a small knoll and we studied them for about 15 minutes. Their faces are all quite distinctive. They would clean themselves or roll on their back just like domestic cats.

At last Alfred lifted up the bucket of scraps that he had brought. They sprang to attention and came down from their hill to surround the truck. Alfred threw each of them a snack and they would catch it in their mouth. One grabbed someone else's snack. One yowled just like my cats do asking for more. It was just lovely.

We had sundown at a place Albert called his office. A square of green grass enclosed in stones. One lone twisted Shepherd's tree grew there. The view was over the scrub plain to the horizon far away. We spotted a lone baboon on the road below. I enjoyed a cider drink.

Monday, October 22. Scotti and I got up bright and early for the Bushman walk. Mac decided to take the morning off.

Albert left today for his two week leave. He was to have a 10-hour bus ride back to Zimbabwe where his wife and children live. He worries that Zimbabwe is on the verge of war.

So Paul conducted the walk. It was about a mile walk with frequent stops so that we could have aspects of the Bushman's life demonstrated.

He explained how the Bushmen used to be all across Africa, but the Bantu tribe in the north pushed south forcing this ancient tribe into the Kalahari Desert. European development from the south has compressed the remaining ones into a relatively small area in northern Namibia and western Botswana. The Europeans considered the Bushmen curiosities and even took one woman named Saartje Baartman⁹³ to England to exhibit as a sideshow attraction.

The Bushmen are small people and they have a light colored skin. They respect the environment around them and much as our Indians did, make sure something is left for posterity. For example, if they find an ostrich nest they only take some of the eggs.

The ostrich eggs were important for they would use the shells for canteens. Water would stay fresh for up to 6 months, enabling them to have water from one rainy season to another. The women of the tribe would take the shell fragments and make beads to fashion their jewelry or decorate their clothing. They used animal sinew to string the beads.

⁹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millipede>

⁹¹ <http://images.google.com/images?q=african+wild+dogs&hl=en&client=safari&rls=en&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&oi=images&ct=title>

⁹² http://us.iams.com/iams/en_US/jsp/IAMS_Page.jsp?pageID=GSP

⁹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saartje_Baartman

There is a fruit called a monkey orange⁹⁴. The Bushmen would clean out the inside and fill the cavity with ostrich shell to make a rattle for use as a musical instrument. They also used iron and a block of wood to form a six or seven note sort of piano.

The Bushmen learned from the Bantu how to make a crude iron by putting the stone ore in a termite mound and burning it. Thus they had the material for their sharp arrowheads.

The Bantu had cattle and the Bushmen would catch them. They learned to process the hides. First they would bury the pelt in the sand until the hair rotted off. Then they scraped the hide until it became a sort of chamois leather.

The Bushmen built huts to keep their belongings in, but they slept in the open around the fire unless it was raining.

The praying mantis cocoon was also important to them and Paul showed us a belt made of these cocoons.

At one stop he showed us the hunting kit each carried⁹⁵. It had not only bow and arrows, but poison in a small container for the tips of the arrows. A hunter carried a digging stick and a finishing stick (like a spear) for finally ending the animal's life. They used a number of poisons. Snake venom was one of them. They would cut out the part, which the arrow had entered, and then cook the meat thoroughly so that no poison remained.

After the dying animal was shot he might live for several days and the Bushmen patiently tracked him until they could finish him off with their finishing sticks. If it was a big animal like a giraffe, the whole village came to celebrate while skinning the animal and collecting the sinew.

We were shown a simple yet effective trap to catch a porcupine to be used as a lure for the animals. Much like a lobster trap, he could enter but his quills kept him from being able to back out. If the porcupine did not attract other game the Bushman would apologize to the animal before killing him for he needed food. Another trap was demonstrated to catch a bird's leg. Their traps did not kill.

At one stop Paul's helper, Nicklai gave a demonstration of how they make rope from a fibrous plant. Scraping it against his leg the liquid was drawn from the fiber until finally it had the consistency of hair. This could then be woven together to fashion a strong cord of any length.

One courtship rite was amusing. If a man spied a woman he would like to marry he would shoot a small dart into her hip. If she weren't interested she would throw it away, but if she was interested she kept it. Then the arrow and bow were taken to the girl's father and if he approved of the workmanship permission was given for them to marry. Perhaps this is how the legend of Cupid began!

Nicklai demonstrated making a fire. He had a piece of wood with some cavities in it. He would put a bird nest near the hole. Using another stick, he deftly spun the stick in his hands until a puff of smoke appeared. It would ignite the piece of nest and then he could add more twigs and so forth to start his fire. The nest was saved for future fires. It is interesting how quick the process was. He made the fire in about the same length of time it has taken me to write this.

Back at the lodge we had to sit around for two hours until our plane came to take us back to Windhoek. Checking out I found Mac had surprised me by paying for my Bushwoman statuette. What a lovely surprise!

This time the plane was a Cessna Grand Caravan 208B⁹⁶. As Cass the pilot told us it was business class. A twelve-passenger plane with a proper set of boarding steps and lots of legroom!

In Windhoek we caught the plane back to Johannesburg. Again I was in 15 C, which does not recline. We had requested a wheelchair in Windhoek and I repeated the request to the steward who brought the drinks. When we got to Johannesburg there was no chair and the stewardess told me I should have requested it from her. Johannesburg is a huge airport. I climbed on the jitney bus and walked some distance to immigration where thankfully there was not much line. In baggage claim Scotti plunked me on a seat and went in search of a chair. Eventually two men appeared. One had a chair for me and the other pushed a trolley of luggage.

It was a long way still to the Southern Sun jitney. I was too tired to do anything but crash in my

⁹⁴ <http://www.bushveld.co.za/monkey-orange-tree.htm>

⁹⁵ <http://www.africanarcher.com/survivor/boesmans.html>

⁹⁶ <http://grandcaravan.cessna.com/>

room. I had Internet access but it crashed in the middle of one message I was trying to send. I finally gave up and about 8:30 pm was in bed.

Tuesday October 23. I was not surprised to be fully awake at 6:00. Washed my hair and luxuriated in the bathtub. I have never learned to like showers. I had finished my breakfast and checked out the shops before Scotti and Mac appeared.

I still had some time on my Internet voucher and the lady in the business center had told me it could be used there. I logged on with some difficulty and was able to send a couple of emails and then I was told they would not honor my voucher! When we presented it at checkout, they told me again it could not be used for the business center! So I felt rather ripped off even though Internet Access is fairly cheap.

I had a chance to buy some reading material in the airport and then we went to the gate. The wheelchair bus never came. Finally we climbed on the regular bus and had a tour of the airport to reach our plane. It was a commuter jet. We sat for a time and then they announced it would be 20 minutes more. I had a seat and Scotti had my cane stool⁹⁷. Poor Mac had to stand. We could see them working on one of the engines. I thought I heard an announcement that they were replacing brake linings.

Finally we were off for the hour and a half flight to Livingstone, Zambia⁹⁸. When we arrived it had been 24 hours since we left Okonjima, which is two hours away by plane! The first thing I noticed was that Zambia is much warmer than Namibia with an almost oppressive humidity.

After I got home I had an email from Wendy with Natural Habitat. She explained that the schedule was really the only one possible. Having the charter take us to Livingstone would have cost over four thousand dollars. Also the Namibian flight takes you to the Zimbabwe side of the river and it is cumbersome to get to the border and it is not safe. I wish I had been given the option of having the charter. Going by South African Air through Johannesburg cost over about \$1800 for the three of us and when you add the cost of the hotel it would only have cost only about \$2000 to have the charter.

The first European to come to this area was the missionary and explorer Dr. David Livingstone⁹⁹. He came in 1855 and discovered the falls.

In 1890, Cecil Rhodes¹⁰⁰ came to Livingstone with the British South African Company. He was a colonizer and wished to develop the country for its natural resources.

Livingstone, the city, was important enough that in 1907 it was the capitol of the country. In 1935 the capitol was moved to Lusaka. Zambia became independent of British rule in 1980.

We were taken through the downtown and then went another half hour to the Zambezi River¹⁰¹. We are far upstream of the falls. Eugene, the general manager of the River Club¹⁰², was waiting for us and we went down river to the Club pausing to view see hippos on the way. It was a long climb up from water to the bluff where the club sits.

The lodge has a veranda, dining room, living room and library. There is a nearby croquet court. The atmosphere makes it feel like it is a hundred years old although the present lodge was built in 1997. Vintage photographs adorn the walls and there are games scattered about.

We are greeted by Erin who briefs us on what is available to do. I focused on the word massage! We have also signed up for a helicopter ride over the falls. We are shown our chalets. Mine is Edward, named for the Duke of Windsor. Scotti and Mac are next door in Rhodes, which is the honeymoon suite. Edward is like a screened tree house extending over the cliff. It is two levels with the main room having twin beds draped with a mosquito net, a desk and two somewhat uncomfortable wicker chairs. On the floor below is a delightful bathtub up on legs with a view of the river. My chalet is screened thank goodness for bugs are very evident. They haven't got around to screening the honeymoon suite so the McCarthy's have bugs with their romantic atmosphere.

⁹⁷ <http://www.activeforever.com/p-163-carex-folding-seat-cane.aspx>

⁹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Livingstone,_Zambia

⁹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Livingstone

¹⁰⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil_Rhodes

¹⁰¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zambezi>

¹⁰² <http://www.eyesonafrica.net/african-safari-zambia/river-club.htm>

In 1948, Austen Joseph Giblin bought "Farm 1519" from the crown and started the development of the River Club. He planted the garden with bougainvillea and jacaranda and built the first three chalets: Edward, Rhodes and Livingstone.

William Arthur Clarence Stewart leased the farm and incidentally murdered his wife in the dining room for he suspected she was having an affair with the Roman Catholic Priest in town. After the trial, in which Stewart was found guilty, the farm was sold to James Simpson who shortly thereafter sold it to Diane Marie Marcus Stellade Nekludoff, a Belgian teacher, who planned to build a tourist resort called Quiet Waters.

In 1994 Peter Jones and his family bought part of the farm. The present lodge was built in 1997. Jones planned to open a lodge of quality. He wanted it saturated in the history of the area. Now Wilderness Safaris owns a share of it.

We are offered lunch and I ordered a peach sundae which was deliciously cool to eat. I will have to really diet to get the extra pounds off when I get home

We had a short rest and then went out with Mark for a sundown cruise. Near the hippo colony a small crocodile wads sunning on a rock. We went up river along the Zimbabwe side of the river and Mark identified the many birds. We were hoping to see the elephants come down to drink but were disappointed. However, we did see baboons and vervet monkeys. One of the birds was a hammerkop¹⁰³ and I was reminded of seeing this bird in Senegal last winter.

There was a fishing boat and they proudly showed off their large catfish they had caught. There's an island in the river that belongs to Zimbabwe so at one point that country surrounded us. However the river is considered neutral territory.

We spied a bigger croc on the island. Then we cut the power and Mark produced our drinks and hors d'oeuvres, which were salmon and crackers as well as a dip.

I noted how fast we were slipping back downstream. Even though we are 20 km above the falls the mighty Zambezi current is strong.

Mark took me to shore on the Zambia side where Eugene was waiting so I did not have to climb the cliff again!

Erin hosted an elegant four-course dinner on the open terrace under the stars, with all the wines and cordials and we got to meet the four other guests. There was an English couple, Bonnie and Dick and an American couple, Cathy and Allen. The conversation was interesting as we had present a lawyer, a neuropsychologist¹⁰⁴, a psychiatric nurse and a tennis pro. Unfortunately the American couple who are from Gainesville, FL tended to dominate the conversation. Cathy is a real motor mouth so we were happy we only have these two days to endure them. They are the only other Americans we have seen on the trip.

Wednesday, October 24. We journeyed to the famous Queen Victoria Falls¹⁰⁵, first seen by explorer David Livingstone¹⁰⁶ the first European to see the magnificent waterfalls on the Zambezi River in 1855. He named them Victoria Falls after Queen Victoria. The falls are known in Zambia as Mosi-Oa-Tunya "the smoke that thunders." The Zambian town, Livingstone, near the falls is named after him. Livingstone was so highly thought of in the area and Livingstone is the only town in Zambia that retains its pre-independence name. The Zambezi River¹⁰⁷ is the fourth longest river in Africa only surpassed by the Nile, Niger and Congo. The falls are the most extensive in the world, even more extensive than Iguazu Falls¹⁰⁸ in South America and dwarfing Niagara! A curtain of water 1708 meters wide cascades through the slate into Batoka Gorge¹⁰⁹ 103 meters deep at its highest point. When it is in flood, during the rainy season, 500 liters of water per minute fall. The thunder of the water can be heard several miles away.

We had to leave Zambia and enter Zimbabwe¹¹⁰. The one-day visa cost \$30, probably going to

¹⁰³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hammerkop>

¹⁰⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neuropsychology>

¹⁰⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_Falls

¹⁰⁶ "Dr. Livingstone I presume."

¹⁰⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zambezi>

¹⁰⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iguazu_Falls

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.trekearth.com/gallery/Africa/Zambia/photo117106.htm>

¹¹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zimbabwe>

line Robert Mugabe's¹¹¹ pockets. The poor people of Zimbabwe are starving under his corruptive and repressive reign. Vincent could not escort us into Zimbabwe so he briefed us and we went alone.

It cost \$20 to enter Victoria Falls National Park. A paved path runs along the bank with numerous outlooks each affording a view more beautiful than the one before. I sat and contemplated the enormous power of these cataracts. Each cascade was a major waterfall in its own right. What must Livingstone have thought when he discovered the "The smoke that thunders"?

We walked almost to the end in a cool rain forest, spotting vervet monkeys¹¹² in the trees. I took the path back to the Interpretive Center but found it very sunny and hot. I wish I had backtracked. However, I did see a bongo¹¹³ on the way. I was tired and thirsty by the time I got back to the entrance. We walked back to the border and left Zimbabwe. Then we had to reenter Zambia but this was not a problem.

Vincent took us to a bazaar on the way back to the Club. I succumbed to a small malachite box. Lunch was out on the lawn.

And then I had a wonderful massage in a white tent open to the river. Namakau was very good. She used a lot of pressure and really worked on my legs and feet. I felt 100 % better. I returned to Edward and had a cooling shower and washed my hair. Then I had time to rest and work on this journal.

Scotti and Mac had a tour of the nearby village, which the River Club sponsors and reported it was very interesting. I am happy to see our tour contributing to the native's quality of life.

While waiting for dinner we had a rain shower. It was the first they had had in months and signaled the beginning of the rainy season. The men hastily moved the dinner table back on the covered veranda. Margaret and Harold a newlywed couple from Norway have joined us. He is involved in mergers and acquisitions. She is a clinical psychologist. They were in Mozambique before coming here.

Thursday, October 25. Our last day. We checked out of the River Club and were driven to Batoka heliport. Batoka was the name of the indigenous tribe in the region. The outfit also has ultra lites,¹¹⁴ which look like small motorized motorcycles with wings.

We were so lucky for our flight. Two of the reservations didn't show so we each had a window in the six passenger aircraft. The ride over the Falls was amazing. You get to see down into the deep ravine, which the water has carved over the millennium. A lovely rainbow was created in the mist. After we circled the falls the pilot dove down into the twisting Batoka Ravine and I felt like I was in an IMAX.¹¹⁵ What a sensation to hurtle through with the walls of the ravine close on either side! The ravine zigs and zags forming the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe. He then flew over the park and we could see animals on the ground. It was well worth the \$190 cost.

Then we were taken to the airport. We are three hours early so it was a long sit on not very comfortable seats. I checked out the three shops twice but it was still a boring time. People kept coming and coming until the room was so full some had to stand. Three flights were leaving at the same time, which seems like poor planning for such a small airport.

I said goodbye to the McCarthys in Johannesburg and the wheelchair bus took me to the terminal. The woman in the bus hit me up for a tip and I gave her a couple of dollars. Then I was wheeled to a place where I could get my boarding pass. That woman also hit me up before she passed me to yet another person. This time a man who worked for Delta. He worked the hardest of all three and refused the tip. I had two hours in the lounge before the same nice young man came and took me to the flight.

My first seatmate was a pilot. I learned that Delta has 100 female pilots among the 7000 they employ. She has been flying for 28 years. The stewardesses all knew her and made quite a fuss over her. She has been to Africa with her two twin sons and a nephew. Unfortunately at Dakar she got bumped to a less desirable seat.

¹¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Mugabe

¹¹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vervet_Monkey

¹¹³ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bongo_\(antelope\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bongo_(antelope))

¹¹⁴ http://www.masportaviator.com/fh_ultralights.asp

¹¹⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IMAX>

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During the layover in Dakar, the plane was again searched. My pilot friend had told me this was because of security to be sure a deplaning passenger had not concealed something dangerous on the plane.

My next seatmate was somewhat uncommunicative. Her husband is studying at the University of Dakar, but she made it very clear that she lives in California and had only come to visit him for two weeks.

The flight was very long and sometime after dinner I started sneezing and by Atlanta I was fighting a full blown cold. Others on the plane were also sneezing. Either I brought home a nasty souvenir from Africa or there was some bug living in the air of the plane.

Apart from the South African Air portions, this has been one of the best trips I have ever taken. Flying between the camps is so much quicker and easier than driving the dusty roads of Africa. The intimacy of the small camps also allowed close encounters with the wildlife, which enhanced the trip. Africa is a strenuous destination and the air and small camps made it as easy as possible.