

COWABUNGA FLY-CAMP
(Correspondence for Brian only)

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Safaris since 1974.

COWABUNGA MAIN CAM
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Attention!

The following itinerary is meant to help your safari planning. Since 1974, we at Cowabunga Safaris have done many, many kinds and variations of safaris to Kenya and South Africa.

This is only one kind of safari. Do you want something more upscale? Do you want something more rustic and participatory? If you have a different safari in mind, wish to stay longer, or want to travel to other parts of the continent, tell us. We can make it happen.

KENYA & SOUTH AFRICA:

“Across the Equator, along the Great Rift, and to the Cape Safari”

Length: 16 days from the USA; 13 days in Africa

Accommodations: 4 nights in upscale lodges; 4 nights in first-class hotels; 5 nights in a luxury permanent tented camps. All accommodations have private, hot-water showers and flush toilets. All but one of the places (Mountain Lodge) has a filtered swimming pools (yes, out in the middle of Africa). Most important, all the places Cowabunga stays at are in breathtaking surroundings in or near world-renowned wildlife areas. Pictures of accommodations are available on request.

Luxury Tented Camps: An additional explanation... Our luxury permanent tented camps are not the same as the camps you might find on a weekend camping trip in the USA. The tents are large - they are big enough to walk into and stand in -- with comfortable twin beds complete with linen and duvets. All tents are bug-proof with mesh

windows, have nightstands next to the beds, and, as has been mentioned, possess en suite bathroom facilities.

Fitness Level: Although there will be opportunities for optional walks, this safari is primarily a vehicle-based safari (albeit if one opts not to take the cable car to the top of Table Mountain, trekking to the top of mountain can be a challenge for even the most fit!). Only a minimal level of fitness is required.

Group size: Cowabunga believes in keeping groups small, to better share Africa. Unless otherwise stated, this type of safari will have no more than 10 Safarists. A custom-designed itinerary might have fewer still.

Food: You should NOT go on this type of safari to lose weight! All meals cater to western preferences, are first-class, and excellently prepared. Chefs make exquisite cuisine using a wide array of meats, pastas, and fresh vegetables and fruits grown in the area. Desserts are delectable and overwhelming - so much so, we encourage all Safarists to practice the Cowabunga mantra: to "Eat dessert first, because life is so uncertain."

Water: Treated drinking water is provided in some of the places we stay. Everywhere bottled water is available for purchase. All water in South Africa is safe to drink straight from the tap.

Stay Longer: Experiencing all Africa has to offer is a once-in-a-lifetime privilege for most. Accordingly, some Safarists like to stay longer. We at Cowabunga Safaris understand! If, after this safari, you wish to go diving in Mozambique, climbing dunes in Namibia, or to continue on to other parts of the continent, we can help. In fact, given our love of the continent, you can bet we'll beg to join you!

Detailed Briefings: Cowabunga provides in-depth written briefings for all Safarists after they sign-on for any safari. Furthermore, when possible, Cowabunga conducts face-to-face briefings approximately three months before departure. For those who can't make the face-to-face briefings, a detailed transcript of questions and answers is sent to them. Gary, Brian and Nancy always stand ready to brief Safarists at a moment's notice via fax, phone, e-mail, or in-person.

-- A NOTE FROM YOUR SAFARI LEADER --

On the first part of this safari, while we are directly on or near the equator, at times we are in the shadow of the permanently snow- and glacier-capped peaks of Mt. Kenya, the

second-highest mountain in Africa. In the near-desert environment of the Northern Frontier District "above" the equator, we see endemic species like Beisa oryx, Somali ostrich, and gerenuk; here runs the life-giving Uaso Nyiro River, its banks lined with palm trees and crocodile. "Below" the equator we explore Lake Nakuru National Park, where both black and white rhino and the Rothschild's giraffe -- all endangered species -- can be found. Finally, we spend full days in the world-famous life-filled Maasai Mara, the northern extension of the Serengeti ecosystem. Throughout we encounter big game and associated predators...

After traversing the Great Rift Valley in Kenya, the 6,000-mile gouge down the eastern side of the African continent, we travel most of its length en route to South Africa. In South Africa, we end up at the southwestern-most tip of the continent: The Cape of Good. Historic Cape Town is arguably the most beautiful city in the world, one where a person can find penguins, fur seals and wildebeest all within kilometers of each other! The Cape provides a marked contrast from Kenya, highlighting the diversity of the African continent. Cowabunga Safari Leader Brian Hesse finds South Africa so fascinating, he choose to spend months on end there under the guise of researching and writing his book, *The United States, South Africa and Africa!* Brian continues to return to South Africa whenever possible using any excuse he can.

-- THE ADVENTURE --

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In the Dark About Africa

by Brian Hesse

Nearly a century ago, in *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad took readers on a literary voyage up the Congo River. What he described was an African continent of disease, disaster, and decline. In the middle of the 1990s, Robert Kaplan produced a book entitled *The Coming Anarchy*, and similarly, portrayed Africa as a continent of overpopulated cities and countries, and conflicts and tragedies.

To be sure, Africa does have many, many problems. Yet it is wrong to paint the entire immense -- IMMENSE -- continent as one monochromatic chaotic scene. Africa is a vibrant tapestry of 800 million people in 50+ nations, living and working in bustling urban centers with skyscrapers and traditional villages with dusty soccer pitches. It is a place of snow-covered mountains, deep forest, and open savannah, a place where penguins and wildebeast can be found within a few kilometers of each other. It is so many different things and so much to so many. To me, it is a continent that challenges my physical abilities and intellect, soothes my spirit, and inspires faith and wonder. Far from being an alienating place, it is a magnet on my soul.

Nevertheless, Africa does not shed its stereotypes easily. One of the most difficult tasks in either considering to go to Africa or, having made the decision, preparing to do so, is not the logistics of getting there. Rather, it is not giving in to imposed generalizations. If I had a dime for every person who has ever told me what bad things *could* happen to me in Africa, I would be a

wealthy man. However, it is often the most skeptical individuals who, having heard the stories, seen the pictures, sensed the positive impact Africa has had on me, it is often they who make the comment, "I didn't realize..."

Ultimately, a person's decision and desire to experience a part of Africa has to come from the very place from which African solutions are being, and will be, found: from within. But for those of us who have been blessed to share in what is "right" and "good" about Africa's many offerings, far from being a "dark continent," it is a continent about which far too many are in the dark.

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Day 1 EN ROUTE

Our Safari begins! We depart New York on our South African Airlines trans-Atlantic flight to Johannesburg. (D)

Day 2 JOHANNESBURG

We have an afternoon arrival in Johannesburg where we are met and transferred to our hotel. Depending on the time of our arrival, Brian can arrange a tour of Soweto, the famous township from where anti-apartheid activists like Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu carried out their struggle. Dinner tonight, our first night in Africa, is on our own, but Brian can take us to any number of nearby restaurants. (B)

Day 3 NAIROBI

This morning we return to the airport for our flight to Kenya. After clearing customs and immigration we are transferred to the historic New Stanley Hotel. B/(L)/D

Day 4 SWEETWATERS TENTED CAMP

After breakfast we travel north past the coffee and pineapple farms of the Kenyan Highlands and arrive at Sweetwaters Tented Camp in time for lunch. Sweetwaters lies in the heart of a privately owned 22,000-acre Wildlife Reserve. All tents face the waterhole and salt lick, as well as snow-capped Mt. Kenya, and all have electricity with en suite bathroom facilities. The main bar and restaurant are in what was once the homestead farmhouse, and there is a gift shop and swimming pool, plus an outdoor thatched bar overlooking the waterhole (lighted at night). Even though we are smack dab on the equator, we sleep under blankets and it is frequently cool enough at night for the staff to provide hot water bottles in our beds. B/L/D

Day 5 SWEETWATERS TENTED CAMP

A full day of game drives which may include a visit to a chimpanzee rehabilitation center. Animals often seen are impala, waterbuck, giraffe, zebra, warthog, baboon, eland, jackal, hartebeest and elephant. The birdlife here is prolific. B/L/D

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The Night of the Giraffe Ballet

by Gary K. Clarke

Sweetwaters, in my opinion, is a gentle introduction to the African bush and its wildlife, and a great way to start a Safari. On our first day we had driven from Nairobi in the morning, arriving at camp in time for lunch. Most of the group were "first timers", and thrilled to actually be in Africa. Our sightings had been primarily limited to zebra, impala, and warthog. Still, the group was enthusiastic and excited, and so was I.

On our return to camp from our afternoon game drive, the group drifted back to their tents for a shower, then later moseyed down for sundowners and dinner after dark. By dusk most had assembled in the Waterhole Bar, an open elevated thatched roof enclosure with a direct view of the waterhole. Low level floodlights illuminated the waterhole forming a giant soft-edged circle. A brilliant orange moon rose over the far horizon, hanging suspended like a stage decoration. The entire scene appeared unreal, similar to a fabricated special effect.

Then, unexpectedly, it happened.

First, from the darkness of the surrounding bush emerged four Defassa waterbuck. Robust thickset antelope, they are characterized by a shaggy brown or rufous coat. Males have heavily ringed horns that curve backwards, outwards and upwards. White markings on chin and muzzle, inside the ears, and around the eyes were quite distinctive in the floodlight.

Next -- the most unbelievable sight!

One by one, a string of reticulated giraffe came out of the night in single file, as if in a parade. When giraffes walk, front and back legs on the same side of the body move at the same time, resulting in a gentle swaying motion. Eventually there were twelve giraffe at the waterhole, appearing as though spotlighted on a darkened theatre stage.

Now, the dance began. Some giraffe awkwardly straddled their front legs, gracefully bending their long necks forward until their lips touched the ground. After a taste of salt, they bolted into the air, kicking and jumping in a most un-giraffe-like manner. Others arched their long necks backward and danced on their long legs. I'd never seen such unusual behavior.

The artistic movements of the giraffe were emphasized by the light against the darkness. There was such precision, movements were elaborate and formal, having a slow-motion-like quality. The atmosphere was charged with silence and the giraffe made no sound. It was an impromptu giraffe ballet produced on nature's stage. My group was transfixed!

The supporting cast arrived unannounced: eight zebra with their contrasting black and white stripes; thirteen eland, the largest of all antelope, with thick spiraled horns and tufted dewlaps hanging below their necks.

What a fantastic show of nature -- a momentary glimpse into the secret lives of these magnificent wild creatures! It was enough to send a shiver of joy down my spine. I only wish *all* Cowabunga groups could have seen the giraffe ballet.

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Days 6-7 SAMBURU

We continue north this morning across the Equator to the semi-arid region of the Northern Frontier District to an area known as Samburu. Along the way we may see Samburu, Turkana and Somali ethnic groups in their traditional dress.

The Samburu National Game Reserve is dominated by the Uaso Nyiro River. This river is unique because its waters never reach the sea, but dissolve in the Lorian Swamp to the

east. Since we are north of the equator this is our opportunity to see species of animals not found in others parts of Kenya, including Grevy's zebra, reticulated giraffe, Beisa oryx, Somali ostrich and gerenuk. Although often just called Samburu, the entire area includes three different National Reserves, including Buffalo Springs, Shaba and Samburu. The dominant tribe in the area is the Samburu, closely related to the Maasai. On occasion we see northern desert tribes, sometimes herding their camels. Our accommodations are at Samburu Serena, a luxury lodge on the banks of the Uaso Nyiro River. Each bandana has a ceiling fan, front porch and en suite facilities. The lodge has a swimming pool and the famous Crocodile Bar. Game drives each morning and return to the lodge for meals and overnights for these two days. B/L/D

Day 8 MOUNTAIN LODGE

This morning we drive south across the Equator back into the southern hemisphere in time for lunch. We then proceed through the montane rainforest of the Aberdare Mountains to Mountain Lodge, perched at an elevation of 7,500 feet above sea level on the slopes of Mt. Kenya, the second-highest mountain in Africa. From the Lodge -- in fact, from our rooms, because all rooms face the lighted waterhole and salt lick -- we will be kept busy watching all kinds of activity. Animals come and go all night and this may be a night with little sleep! Cape buffalo, elephant, mongoose, warthog, bushbuck and if we're lucky, rhino, often appear. B/L/D

Day 9 LAKE NAKURU

This morning our scenic drive takes us down the escarpment of the Great Rift Valley. The Valley is 6,000 miles long and stretches from the Red Sea to the mouth of the Zambezi River at the Indian Ocean. It is such a prominent natural feature that the astronauts could see it from the moon with the naked eye. Our destination is in the heart of the Great Rift, at Nakuru, which is the name of a town, a National Park, and a lake.

Lake Nakuru itself is one in a chain of Great Rift Valley lakes, some of which are fresh water while others are alkaline. Known for its flamingoes, sometimes thousands are seen near the shores of the lake. Lake Nakuru National Park is known for its leopard and the endangered Rothchild's giraffe. It has been declared a rhino sanctuary and both black and white rhinos are found here. There are several distinctive habitats, including yellow-barked acacia forests and massive concentrations of candelabra trees. Our accommodations at *Lion Hill Lodge* are in cottages with en suite facilities. There is a swimming pool. B/L/D

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Return to Kenya

by Nancy Cherry

No matter how many other varied and exciting Safari destinations we offer, we always return to Kenya at least twice a year. What is it about Kenya that keeps calling us back? Two things come to mind straight off: the landscape and the animals.

To start with the latter, it's hard to beat the variety of animals one sees on a Kenya Safari. But more than the number of species is the opportunity to get really close to them. Travelers have been going to Kenya for so many years that the animals are accustomed to the vehicles and accept their close proximity. Photographers are in heaven and those without a camera benefit, too. In fact, those who aren't fiddling around with telephoto lenses and light settings probably see more. Without the distraction of camera gear it's possible to study an animal's behavior (But this doesn't mean I plan to leave my camera at home!).

For sheer beauty and variety of habitat Kenya is outstanding. On our Safaris to Kenya we travel from the forested moorlands of the Aberdares Mountains to the semi-arid desert country of Samburu Game Reserve. Even though we cross the equator more than once, it is a far cry from the hot, steamy jungles of the Tarzan movies. For one thing the altitude is high (Nairobi is about the same altitude as Denver) and the humidity is low. Rain is virtually unheard of during the months we travel in Kenya and the climate is ideal with warm, sunny days and cool evenings. It's not like Kansas in the summer when it still may be 80 degrees at ten o'clock at night. The minutes the sun goes down in Kenya (about 6:30 pm) the temperature begins to drop. It's a very invigorating climate.

Kenya is often called the most "westernized" of the Safari countries. Certainly the accommodations are plush and the food is excellent. All the lodges, and even the permanent tented camps, have filtered swimming pools and electricity. One can't really go on Safari in Kenya and say they have "roughed" it. I think one of the most enjoyable aspects of a Kenya Safari is spending almost all of one's waking hours outdoors -- with no insects and a perfect climate. We all vow to spend more time outside when we return home, but it never works. It's either too hot, or the mosquitoes are biting, or a storm is brewing... That's extremely rare on Safari.

We at Cowabunga often recommend Kenya as a destination for first timers on Safari. It's a wonderful introduction to the Safari experience. But there something about Kenya that calls us back even when we've had a fantastic adventure in Zimbabwe or Zambia. We find many people who return to Kenya over and over. It's just that kind of place of which you can never get enough.

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Day 10 MARA SAROVA TENTED CAMP

Today traverse the floor of the Great Rift Valley and have the opportunity to see life in rural Kenya. We pass through towns, villages, and small *shambas* (farms). It's an interesting drive, though be prepared for poor roads. Our destination today is Mara Sarova Camp, situated inside the wildlife-filled Maasai Mara. Tents in the camp are scattered over a sizable area with many winding paths. Incredible views of the Mara's magical vistas abound. An optional activity while in the Mara might be a hot air balloon flight. B/L/D

"BALLOONING OVER AFRICA"

The Maasai Mara is one of the few areas of Africa that offers the opportunity for a hot air balloon flight. The flight is steady and smooth and so unlike an airplane. Once aloft you see no power lines,

transmitting towers, parking lots, or roofs of buildings - just pure Africa. Upon landing a gourmet champagne breakfast with omelets cooked-to-order is served on the open savannah.

Days 11-12 THE MAASAI MARA

The Maasai Mara is the northern extension of the Serengeti ecosystem with open plains, acacia woodlands and riverine forest. The park and preserve are intersected by the Talek and Mara Rivers, which are home to many hippos, crocodiles and waterfowl. A multitude of savannah animals can be found on the open grasslands. All the animals that have come to epitomize the African bush are here, often in numbers that can defy description: wildebeest, zebra, gazelles, elephant, waterbuck, lion, buffalo, and a few rhino. And whenever you see large herds of antelope you can count on predators. If there has been a kill, we're apt to see hyenas and scavengers such as jackals and vultures nearby. Here, too, are the topi antelope, the only place in Kenya where they are common. B/L/D

Day 13 NAIROBI/CAPE TOWN

After breakfast we drive across the floor of the Great Rift Valley back to Nairobi. We arrive in Nairobi in time for our flight to South Africa. Tonight we find ourselves on the southwestern-most tip of the African continent, the Cape of Good Hope, in what has to be the most beautiful city in the world: Cape Town. B/(L)

Day 14 CAPE TOWN/CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

The scenic views around Cape Town are spectacular: Table Mountain towers over the city, foam-filled waves crash against rocky shorelines, beaches lie hidden in quiet coves... Today you might opt to take a guided tour along the Cape peninsula to Cape Point, where the Indian and Atlantic Oceans meet (keep your eyes peeled for the rare African penguin and Atlantic fur seals). Alternatively, or even additionally, you might choose to ride the cable car up Table Mountain and to hike down, enjoying unmatched views of the city and Robben Island. You might stroll through Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden or Cape Town's many shops, tour the city's old fort and parliament, or even sit beside the harbor and watch the activity of ships from distant ports. Your options in Cape Town are as endless as the area's beauty. B

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A Day Out on the Captivating Cape

by Nancy Cherry

Cape Town has been described as one of the three most beautiful waterfront cities in the world. With Table Mountain and Lion Head Mountain as landmarks, the scenic views in and around Cape Town are spectacular.

Cowabunga Safarists always enjoy the drive down the peninsula to Cape Point. Our route follows the Atlantic Coast with tremendous waves crashing against the rocks. At Cape Point, a tram can be taken up to a viewing station for a great Kodak moment. The more fit and adventuresome of the group always enjoy climbing to Cape Point to photograph the place where the Indian and Atlantic Oceans meet. Our drive back to Cape Town on the Indian Ocean side of the Peninsula takes us along

False Bay where we can stop to view penguins.

Eventually we pass through the suburbs of Cape Town with homes perched on hillsides for the stupendous views. A stop at Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden is a must: three themed gardens are the Fynbos Walk, Fragrance and Medicinal gardens, and the Water-wise demonstration garden. With over 4500 plant species in cultivation, Kirstenbosch has a lot to offer.

Back in Cape town, a trip up Table Mountain on the revolving gondola is not to be missed. The view is absolutely spectacular with Robben Island visible on the ocean side and the city of Cape Town on the other side. Take plenty of film! Even the indigenous hyrax are worth a shot or two.

Back at Victoria and Alfred Waterfront, with its working harbour, it is easy to get lost in the many shops, restaurants and the Two Oceans Aquarium with its impressive exhibits. It is safe to walk around the Waterfront, and we recommend speaking to our hotel's concierge about places to visit. Near the aquarium is a large market with souvenirs of all types for sale.

A visit to the Cape is a captivating experience. What a way to end a safari!

Day 15 **CAPE TOWN**

Cape Town's crisp, ocean air is invigorating - thankfully, given that we have another half-day here to undertake more local adventures. Late in the afternoon we proceed to the airport for our flight out of Africa. B/(D)

Day 16 **HOME**

This morning we arrive back in the USA. Though our Safari through across the equator, along the Great Rift Valley and to the Cape is over, our memories of Africa's endless diversity and infinite beauty will endure. (B)

