

#### 4/7/13 -Day 91-Naledi BushCamp Safari, Morning Game Drive–Trip to Cape Town:

Our last day at the Naledi BushCamp started at 5am with Kjell's now familiar tap on the door and announcement of the 5:30 morning game drive. We met our safari team at the Toyota LandCruiser and climbed aboard. We were then off with Opa shining his spotlight into the bush as Kjell drove along the trails. We were now able to recognize some landmarks from the drives of the last two days.

This morning there were no significant sightings for the first couple hours. Then we met up with a guide and guest on a game drive from the Leopard's View game lodge, as shown on the right. In a brief chat it was revealed that a rhinoceros had been sighted at some distance from where we were. Kjell immediately headed off in the direction of the reported rhino sighting.



We were bouncing along on our way for 10 or 15 minutes when two rhinoceros were sighted off to the left of our vehicle. These were not the rhinos we had set out to see but they would do quite nicely. We quickly snapped the first of many pictures of the pair who were contentedly munching on the brush around them, as shown on the left. Kjell said these were black rhinoceros

that have a pointed hook like snout. They are adapted for eating woody branches and leaves of the brush. There is another rhinoceros type called a white rhinoceros that has a wide flat snout that is adapted to foraging for grass.

The following are some of the photos we took of our rhinos over a period of about 30 minutes that we stayed in that location.



As soon as we had sighted the rhinoceros Kjell had radioed other safari guides and told them of the find. Within 15 or 20 minutes a couple other safari vehicles arrived in the vicinity and maneuvered to provide their guests a good view of the rhinoceros. They did not get in our way thanks to a gentleman's protocol among guides providing rules for this kind of situation that maximizes enjoyment of the safari for everyone.



After about an hour at the rhinoceros sighting we got word of a herd of elephants at another location. We were satisfied with our rhinoceros exposure and headed off to see the elephants. We had not proceeded very far when we came across a group of warthogs rooting around in an open area as shown on the right. We got better photos of the little critters than we got yesterday so we were happy about that.



However, our main goal was to see some



elephants so after a short stop we were off again along the bumpy trails. If a person suffered from back problems, the jostling and rough ride on the bush trails would probably cause some pain. After driving a few miles we came upon the herd of approximately 30 elephants. Three of the large animals are shown on the left. Kjell said they had gathered around a hole that had been dug in the

ground by the adult elephants to collect water. They were now in the process of sucking the water out of the hole and drinking it.

Another elephant was in a creekbed and was looking at us over the bank of the creek, as shown on the right. Check out the huge ears of the African elephant. They are so much larger than those of the Asian elephant.

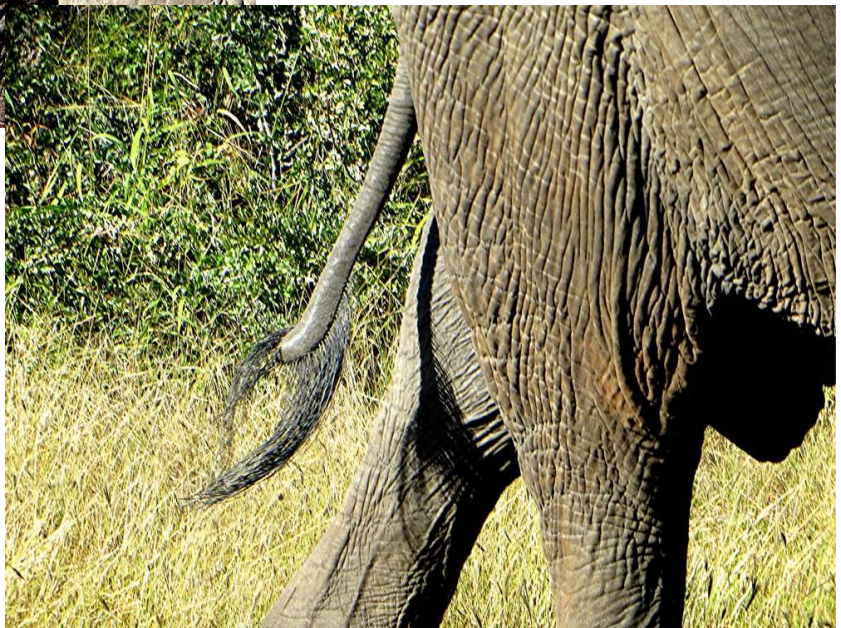








We made a brief photographic study of elephant eye lashes and tail fronds. The eyelashes are super long and stiff to protect the elephant while crashing through the brush. The tail appears to be well on its way to being a great fly swatter.



We watched the elephants for about 30 minutes as they ate brush and drinking water. Then Kjell got a radio message that a leopard had been sighted. Since the leopard is one of the big five game animals we were suddenly off and running to the new site.



We arrived after about a 15 minute ride and found that the leopard was not running around where we could see him easily. He was hunkered down in a bush which was far from an ideal pose for photography. We waited and Kjell

maneuvered around a bit with the vehicle but it appeared that we were just not going to get a clear photograph of the leopard today. We had to be satisfied with the photo on the right showing the cat lying on his left side with right shoulder, chest and front legs showing. His head is hidden by the brush.



At least we got a good view of the beautiful spotted fur with the pattern that has become so popular in women's clothing.

We gave up on the leopard and headed back to the Naledi compound. Along the way we passed by a section of the high fence that marks the border of the Nature Reserve, as shown on the right. The fence had narrow spacing between wires and looked super strong and high. It had to be strong to hold rhinos and elephants within the Reserve boundaries. While this fence was high and strong the fence around the Naledi Game Lodge



compound was very not obtrusive and was about the same height as the low growing natural bushes around the place. What it lacked in height it made up in high voltage electricity that would turn away any animal with a painful but harmless jolt. While we



didn't have to fear big animals invading our Naledi space, Phindile had warned us when we arrived that monkeys can get over the fence and we should keep our doors closed to avoid an uninvited monkey visitor. However, we didn't see any monkeys while we were at Naledi. Perhaps they come at other times of the year.

Back at the Naledi compound we had breakfast and then prepared to leave on a shuttle bus that Kjell had arranged to take us to the Hoedspruit airport. We spent some time getting last minute pictures. Here on the right is the picture we got of Kjell, TK and Opa standing beside the Naledi lion logo. It turns out that Naledi means "star" in the local native language. However, we thought the lion logo was terrific and very appropriate for the Naledi experience.



Then we got Kjell to pose with us.

Last but not least was the library card. We got documentation for the visit of Barbara's little yellow library card to the Naledi Game Lodge, as shown on the left.



We settled up our account at the front desk with a credit card. The whole safari at Naledi was very economical as these kind of adventures go. The basic accommodations at Naledi including all meals and game drives were \$1400 USD total for 2 people.

The South African Airline tickets from Durban to Johannesburg and then Hoedspruit to Cape Town cost the equivalent of \$725 USD. The shuttle transport from Johannesburg to Naledi and then from Naledi to the airport at Hoedspruit cost \$260 USD. The total cost of the 3 day safari was about \$2400 USD. We were more than satisfied by the accommodations and personal attention we got from Kjell and his staff at Naledi. It surpassed our expectations with regard to the passion shown by Kjell for assuring each guest got the full safari experience in this big game country. We would recommend Naledi Game Lodge to anyone interested in a safari. For info: [www.naledibushcamp.com](http://www.naledibushcamp.com) ; Kjell Bismeyer, Owner/Manager; email [kjell@naledi.biz](mailto:kjell@naledi.biz) .

Our shuttle van arrived about 10:30 and it was driven by Dobby, the same man who had picked us up in Johannesburg and delivered us to Naledi last Thursday. We loaded our stuff into the van and with Tom and Jean we headed out to the Hoedspruit airport. We drove over dirt roads for about 5 miles to the Game Reserve Security Gate then we took a modern highway the 15 miles in to Hoedspruit. The highway took us along the border fence for the Game Reserve. The fence is electrified in order to assure that the big animals don't venture on to the highway. We were moving along nicely when Barbara shouted out --- **"THERE'S A GIRAFFE !"**. We asked Dobby to stop the van so we could take one last picture of these magnificent animals, as shown on the right. We thought our giraffe friend was asking why we were leaving so soon.







After about a 20 minute ride we arrived at the Hoedspruit airport, as shown on the left. Hoedspruit is a small town and this airport had all the charm

you would expect in a small hometown establishment.

There was a single ticket counter where they efficiently gave us a boarding pass and took the bag we were checking in for transport to Cape Town. Then we walked in through the outdoor gift shop shown on the right.



Here in this well decorated room, shown on the left, we spent some time waiting for our flight on South African Airways to be called.







Finally it was time to go. We went through the security check and then walked out onto the flight ramp. We had a little hike to our plane as can be seen in this photo on the left. The flight to Cape Town, South Africa couldn't have been smoother and

we even got a meal on the way.

As we climbed out of Hoedspruit we got a picture of the imposing Drakensberg Mountains through the plane window, as shown on the right.

After a 2.5 hour flight from Hoedspruit we landed at the Cape Town International Airport. We walked from the plane into the airport terminal. On the way we noticed the



control tower for the airport was adorned with what appeared to be a giant soccer ball, as shown on the left. The people of South Africa really love soccer (which they call football) so this bit of architectural whimsy seemed appropriate.



We collected our checked bag at the baggage carousel. Then with Tom and Jean we caught a taxi that took us to the Amsterdam located at Berth E near the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront.



The taxi ride took about 20 minutes and along the way we got our first view of Table Mountain which is an icon of Cape Town. Our view of Table Mountain through the taxi cab window is shown on the left. We could see that the famous "table cloth" of clouds was laid on the table. There is a cable car that takes tourists to the top of Table Mountain to see the view. However, it doesn't run when the mountain is covered in clouds so we were concerned that we wouldn't be able to check out the view from Table Mountain tomorrow on

our planned tour of Cape Town.

Our taxi dropped us off at the Amsterdam and we happily walked on board. It was good to be back on board the Amsterdam and we found our good ole' stateroom to be as comfy as ever. We didn't have any sight seeing planned for the rest of the day but the next day we had planned to catch a HOHO bus and see the city. Part of that plan was to take the cable car up to the top of Table Mountain but we will have to see if the cloud "table cloth" is going to allow that.