

South Africa and Madagascar Trip October 21 - November 8, 2016

Friday, October 21:

Finish packing in the morning and catch the van at the Marriot. Lunch at Chick-Fil-A at the airport. Flight to Atlanta slightly delayed but everything goes fine. Get to the Johannesburg flight without a problem. Jan has a real temper tantrum when she finds out that she is in a middle seat. After that, things settle down for the 15 hour flight. Hit some real turbulence in the middle of the Atlantic.

Saturday, October 22:

Get into Johannesburg at about 5:30 pm. Get through customs at about 6:30. Change money and catch bus to hotel. Have some wine and go to bed.

Sunday, October 23:

Have breakfast in the hotel and meet "Hoppy," our guide, at 8:00 am. Drive to the Blyde River Canyon overlook. On the way stop at a rest stop by a wildlife farm. The farm had elands, cape buffalos, white rhinos (with their horns cut off), blesbok, ostriches, and emus (non-African). Along the way we also saw baboons. The canyon was steep and deep, but not as green as I expected. We had lunch at a pancake (crepe) house. Back to the uplands for a view over the plains to the east and to Lisbon Falls.

Checked into the Sable River Bush Lodge (a very nice resort just outside Kruger National Park). We got our own little hut and a deck that overlooked the Sable River. Go to the deck and have a glass of wine. While on the deck we were entertained by a bushbuck grazing on the other side of the river, and Egyptian geese, blacksmith plovers, pied kingfishers and other birds at the water's edge. A crocodile lazily swam against the current in the middle of the river. While we were drinking our wine, a hippo came up and grazed in front of us, then went away and came back for an encore.

Dinner was at the hotel and then to bed.

Animal list:

- Baboons
- Long crested eagle
- Scared ibis
- Lesser Flamingo
- Steppe buzzard
- Bushbuck
- Egyptian geese
- Blacksmith plover
- Pied kingfisher

- Nile crocodile
- Hippopotamus

Monday, October 24 - First day in Kruger:

Down to breakfast at 6:45. Good breakfast. Served eggs, cereal, fruit, and juice. Only Egyptian geese and crocodile on the river. Day starts out overcast in the morning but clears up later. Drive to and through Kruger national Park. Land has a lot of scrub trees and not much grass. Hoppy says that the drought last year has taken its toll and that the spring rains haven't come yet. A lot of elephant damage to the trees and a lot of elephant dung everywhere. I was surprised by the thickness of the scrub. You can't see very deeply into it at all. See many impalas and, after turning off the main road, lots of elephants. (Hoppy estimated that we saw 150 throughout the day - that may have been low.) Also see kudu and giraffes. Full list of animals that we identified below (most identifications were made by Hoppy).

Had lunch in the park at an outdoor hut. Hear from another guide that there was a leopard in a tree up the road. Went north to see it. It was posing for everyone. Many, many cars. There was a water hole on the other side of the road where we saw cape buffalo in the mud, elephants splashing in the mud and a lot of birds including a pair of African spoonbills. Drive to hotel seeing lion and lionesses and ???? along the way. Hotel is on the Sable River (again). Jan takes a nap and Randy first explores and then takes a nap. It is 40° C (104° F) outside. Dinner and wine at the restaurant. Shop at the gift shop getting an outlet adapter before going back to the yert and to bed. Do you know that South Africa is the only country that uses this type of old English plug.

Ground animal list:

- Cape Buffalo
- African Elephant
- Giraffe
- Hippopotamus
- Impala
- Kudu
- Leopard
- Lion
- Vervet Monkey
- Nyalala (male)
- Warthog
- Waterbuck
- Wildebeest
- Burchell's Zebra

Bird list

- Water dikkop (water thick-knee)
- Green spotted dove
- Fork tailed drongo
- Bateleur Eagle
- Fish eagle
- Tawney eagle
- Crested francolin
- Grey heron
- Greybilled Hornbill & Redbilled Hornbill
- Hadedah ibis
- Grey lourie
- Redbilled oxpecker
- Blacksmith Plover
- Lilac breasted Roller
- Long tailed shrike
- Burchell's starling
- Marabou stork
- Saddle billed stork
- Wooly necked stork
- Lappet faced vulture
- White backed vulture

Tuesday, October 25:

Go south in Kruger today. Hoppy says that this is a better direction for rhinos. Up at 5:00 for a 6:00 departure. Early morning ride. Do find a lion and lioness and cub. Finally do find two rhinos. Get back to room about 12:30. Hit the gift shop and get an ice cream.

Leave for sunset ride about 4:15. Ride is kind of a disappointment. See kudu and a lion asleep under a tree before dark. The lion turns onto its back oblivious to us - kind of funny. See no night animals though the man with the light thought he saw a grey mongoose and a bush baby. Just before returning to camp we find a hyena walking down the road.

Dinner is at the lodge again. Have a good Stellenbosch Sauvignon Blanc and ribs for dinner.

Land animal list:

- Chacma Baboon
- Cape buffalo
- Nile crocodile
- African elephant
- Giraffe

- Hippopotamus
- Spotted hyena (+ night drive)
- Impala (+ night drive)
- Kudu (+night drive)
- Lion (night drive)
- Vervet monkey
- Nayada (female)
- Reedbuck
- White Rhinoceros
- Steenbok
- Leopard tortoise
- Warthog
- Waterbuck
- Wildebeest
- Burchell's Zebra
- Damara Dik-Dik (night drive)

Bird list

- Water Dikkop
- Fish eagle
- Tawney eagle
- Cattle egret
- Great white egret
- Natal francolin
- Hammerkop
- African jacana
- Yellowbilled Kite
- Pied kingfisher
- Grey lourie
- Lilac breasted roller
- African spoonbill
- Black-winged stilt
- Black/white stork
- Marabou stork
- Open-billed stork
- Wooly necked stork
- Yellow billed stork
- Helmeted strike

Wednesday, October 26 - Last day in Kruger:

Get up at 5:00 again. Shower and pack. Hopsy arrives at 6:00 with biscuits and coffee. Head for the south entrance of the park. Starts out a little sparse on wildlife, but, as it gets lighter, it gets better. Impalas, giraffes, and elephants were out. Then came the rhinos. First a group of two juveniles along the side of the road, then a group of three across a field (two adults and a baby), and then a mother and a young one walked down a path. Finally as we were watching two warthogs, a rhino past behind the car. I cannot rib Poppy any more about not finding rhinos. I switched to duikers. However, close to the exit, a grey duiker passed in front of the car. Also see another hyena under a tree.

At the exit to Kruger, there was a wonderful bridge where we can see hippos and crocs. Many, many bird types also including grey heron, saddle cranes, and African darters among others. Eat lunch at Muggs and Bean again and drive to the rest stop with the wildlife farm. The rhinos are at the trough now. This has really been the day of the rhinos!

Get back to the hotel about 3:00 and say good bye to Hopsy. Get laundry organized and out. Jan naps and Randy journals.

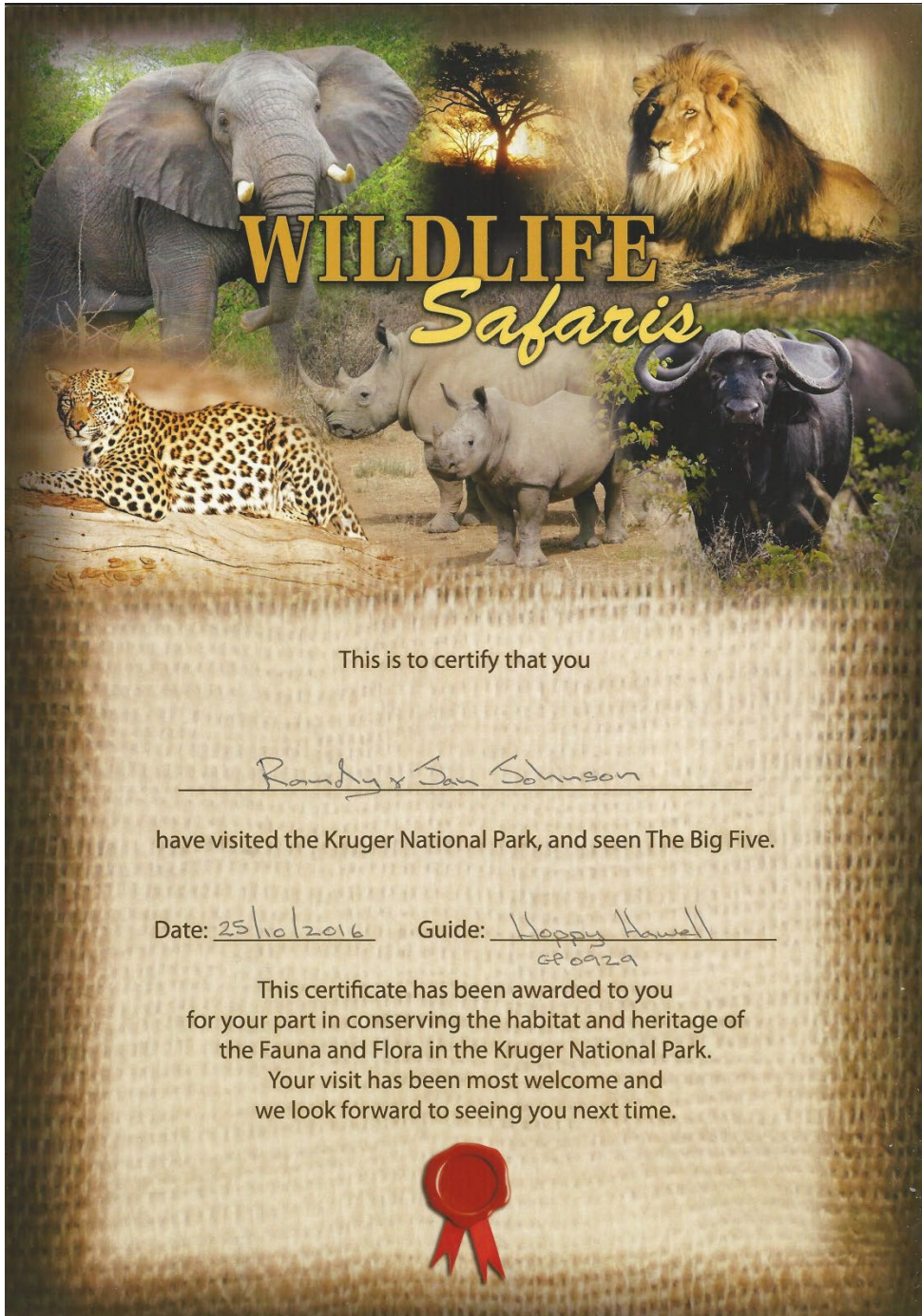
Land animal list:

- Cape Buffalo
- Nile Crocodile
- Grey (Common) Duiker
- African elephant
- Giraffe
- Hippopotamus
- Spotted hyena
- Impala
- Kudu
- White Rhinoceros
- Warthog
- Wildebeest

Bird list

- African darter
- Brown snake eagle
- Great white egret
- Green backed heron
- Grey heron
- Wood African hoopoe
- Red/greybilled Hornbill
- Yellowbilled hornbill
- African jacana

- Malachite kingfisher
- Pied kingfisher
- Blacksmith Plover
- Lilac breasted roller
- Yellow billed stork
- White rumped swift
- Lesser masked weaver



WILDLIFE *Safaris*

This is to certify that you

Randy & San Johnson

have visited the Kruger National Park, and seen The Big Five.

Date: 25/10/2016 Guide: Heppy Howell
CP0929

This certificate has been awarded to you
for your part in conserving the habitat and heritage of
the Fauna and Flora in the Kruger National Park.

Your visit has been most welcome and
we look forward to seeing you next time.



Thursday, October 27 - Leave South Africa and arrive in Madagascar:

Randy is anxious all morning about getting to the airport on time, but everything goes according to plan: finish packing, breakfast, get medicine, checkout. Porter has trouble finding the medicine in freezer, but finally does. Use most of South African Rand to pay bill. Tip van driver and bell hop \$3 each using up our Rand. Get through security and passport control just fine. Long walk to gate. Flight is not on board and no one from group is there. More worries. Eventually people come and they announce our flight. Once on the plane, the pilot discovers a gas leak. Disembark, wait an hour, and get on another plane. Amazingly, one is available! Pleasant flight.

Arrive, pay \$60 for visa, get luggage, find currency exchange and get money. What a wad for \$300. (all in 10,000 (~\$3.) and 5,000 (~\$1.50) Airy notes). Follow tour guide to bus and drive to hotel past rice fields through rush hour. Nice hotel (Hotel Colbert - later find out that it was "the hotel" of Antananarivo in the past). Have dinner and a bottle of wine (Chile - Chardonnay - very good). Go to room. No real television. Go to bed.

First impression of Antananarivo: dirty, congested, lots of people walking past shanty type shops.

Friday, October 28 - Antananarivo:

Antananarivo is not a very pretty city. Lots of smog and traffic jams. People walking in huge numbers everywhere. Shanty store fronts line the streets.

Go to zoo in the morning. Claims also to be a botanical garden. Not very much of the latter. They house the royal collection (animals given to the country by foreign governments) and a lot of lemurs. Cages are small and old fashion. See a fossa and many lemurs. (Nocturnal house was closed.) Also go to the zoo's museum with stuffed birds and fossils of dinosaurs. Hippos, and elephant birds which were all found at one time in Madagascar. The zoo had a central pond with many herons and egrets. The handlers allowed us into the backs of the lemur pens and, for a tip, allowed us to hand feed the lemurs.

Bus to a local restaurant for lunch and then back to the hotel. At 4:00, bus to the Queen's Palace area and go into a small museum at the Prime Minister's Palace (not too interesting for a national museum). Then go to two overlooks for views of the city.

Go to the university for a lecture by Steven Goodman who was one of the co-authors of *Madagascar Extinct*. It seems that the extinctions were mainly caused by climate change as the winds changed from westerly to easterly as India collided with the Asian plate. Interesting.

Go to local restaurant for fish soup, fish and vegetables. Then back to the hotel for bed.

Birds at zoo pond:

- Immature black crown night heron

- Black heron
- Cattle egret
- Great white egret
- Squacco heron
- Striated heron
- Plus Madagascar crocodile

Saturday, October 29 - Leave Antananarivo:

Up at 6:00, dress, pack, and breakfast. Delayed because Berkeley tour is pinning our bus. Finally back out, load up and head out of town. See six different types of geckos, a tree boa, two frogs, and several chameleons. Facilities are shanty-ish but adequate for the farm. They had the animals out in open pens and we could walk around among them and get close to them. The handlers hung the tree boa around various people's neck.

Drive Vakona and have lunch. Get room assignments. During rest period, we do some laundry and go out for a hike. Find orchids at the hotel entrance. Guide shows us a fly-catcher on a nest and we find a micro orchid up the hill.

At 5:30, go out for our night hike. Find three nocturnal Lemurs listed below plus a frog (Jan found another), two chameleons, and a number of insects including a walking stick.

Back to the hotel for more laundry and bed.

At Peyrieras Reptile Reserve:

Chameleons:

- Parson's chameleon
-

Geckos:

Frogs:

- Madagascar tomato frog
- Madagascar poison frog

Other:

- Tree boa
- Fruit bat
- Common tenrec

At Vakona

Lemurs:

- Cross-legged dwarf lemur
- Goodman's mouse lemur
- Eastern wooly lemur

Birds:

- Madagascar paradise fly-catcher on nest
- Malagasy kingfisher

Sunday, October 30 - Vakona Forest Lodge:

Up and head for Andasibe National Park. See some chameleons and geckos at the entrance. See perched scoop owl. Then go deep into the bush to see Indri lemurs. See troop of three. All guides converge onto this area. Big congestion. Follow them for about an hour. They move by jumping from tree to tree. Quite long leaps actually.

Walk out to find nightjar. It's hot and there are no more lemurs. Back to lodge and rest. Out to lodge's nature park. Another "zoo" with crocodiles, fossa, white faced ducks and helmeted guinea hens. Back to lodge for night hike and dinner. Do laundry and go to bed.

Lemurs:

- Indri (largest lemur; does not have a tail)

Other animals:

- Green gecko (chameleon?)

Birds:

- Madagascar scoop owl
- Collared nightjar
- ? cuckoo
- Partridge relative
- Madagascar buzzard (looks like a hawk)
- Madagascar crested drongo

Monday, October 31 - Happy Halloween:

Up at breakfast and load into bus. Off to Lemur Island. See four types of lemurs: red fronted brown, bamboo, black and white ruffed and diademed sifaka. Handlers gave us bits of banana and allowed the black and white ruffed and the brown lemurs to climb on us to get it. It was great fun.

Back on the bus for ride back to 'Tana' making photo stops along the way. Get into Tana and stop at a market for half an hour (or more). After marketing, we are back in the

bus for a two hour drive across Tana to get to the hotel by the airport. Boy, do I dislike Tana.

Very nice room except air conditioning and television do not work. Dinner at hotel and then pack with the restriction of only one 5 kg carry-on each.

Once we get to the room it poured!

Tuesday, November 1 - Fort Dauphin (Tôlanaro):

Get up early again for 7:00 bags out. Internet is reasonable here and we enjoy seeing the facebook pictures of the kids. Get bags out, eat breakfast, and take off for the airport. Get checked in and on plane. Didn't need to worry about the 5 kg carry-on limit. They didn't check. Take off on time.

Get to Ft. Dauphin, load luggage in truck and bus to hotel. Nice room. Have lunch in restaurant next door. Climb into three SUVs (all old) and go over a very bumpy road to the Reserve du Nahampoana, an old French estate, and walk through. See dancing (Verreaux Sifaka), collared brown, bamboo and (at the very end) ringtailed lemurs. Back over the bumpy road to the hotel. Randy's cold gets the better of him and he goes to bed as Jan sups, washes clothes, and listens to the news.

Wednesday, November 2 - Berenty Reserve.

Up for continental breakfast (they run out of eggs). Four hour drive through the rain forest (not much of a forest), the transitional zone in the mountains and the spiny forest. Road was built in 1957 and not repaired since. It was awful - four hours for 90 km. Final portion of road is through a sisal plantation, acres upon acres of sisal!

Get to lodge for lunch. Ringtails observe every move. Get nice room and Randy journals while Jan explores. In afternoon, get out to enjoy the dancing of the white sifikas across the road. Take night (even though we did not bring our headlamps, we survive). Saw a small mouse lemur which we didn't get a picture of (well, one very blurry picture which we discarded) and a chameleon which we did.

Thursday, November 3:

Early morning walk through spiny forest section of preserve. See small white footed sportive lemur plus a scorpion, a hissing cockroach, a radiated tortoise, and a Madagascar nightjar.

At 11:00 we took a walk along the river to the place where the villagers water their zebu. See a number of owls along walk. The kids at the clearing want to have their pictures taken. See the flying foxes (bats) on the way back to the camp. Go through the little museum before lunch.

The plane to Antananarivo will be in the morning tomorrow. Manny decides to drive back to Ft. Dauphin this afternoon rather than in the very early morning. Another four hours along the awful road. Oh well, it had to come sometime.

Friday, November 4:

Early morning flight back to Tana. Check in and eat lunch at hotel by airport. We find out that the flight Sunday will be at 6:00 pm rather than 6:00 am making the trip to the coast impossible. Manny decides to have group stay in Tana instead. The connections on Monday were very tight anyway with no room for error or delay. Jan and I were considering staying in Tana anyway, and, while disappointed that one of the three legs of the trip would be missed, it was probably for the best given the total lack of reliability of Air Madagascar.

Fred, Susan and Randy go to Croc Farm. Lots of crocs and chameleons. A few frogs and snakes. Very much like a zoo with sections for various animals. Many herons and egrets around big center pool.

On way back, stop at the vanilla store and buy some vanilla pods and ground vanilla for \$15 each for 25 gms,

Meet everyone else for dinner at hotel.

Saturday, November 5:

Leave for Lemur Park at 8:30 expecting to get there about 9:30. Traffic is horrid again and we actually get there about 10:30. Very nice park layout built on the side of a hill next to a river. See common brown, ringtail, bamboo, black and white collared and two types of sifika lemurs (Coquerrel's and Crowned sifika).

Leave about 12:30. Still heavy traffic and it takes us an hour to get to the school. Have lunch and tour the school. Very enjoyable. Wonderful vegetable garden. Kids enjoy posing for camera.

Back to room for rest and repacking luggage. Then dinner.

Sunday November 6 - Extra day in Tana:

After breakfast, go to craft market. Then a stop at the vanilla shop again and lunch. We had to change hotels (to one downtown - further from the airport) because the other hotel was filled for the extra day. The day ended with a final banquet of Malagasy food at the Vanilla Villa. There was musical entertainment including Manny singing for us. Then off to the zoo to see the Aye Aye (nocturnal lemurs).

Monday, November 7:

Leisurely pack up for the return trip to the US. Visit a tee shirt shop and have pizza on the way to the airport. (The pizza probably made Randy very sick!) Was able to check luggage all the way through to Cincinnati making the transfer in Johannesburg a lot easier. Arrive in Johannesburg and change planes without a problem. Had changed seats so that Jan had an aisle and there was no repeat of the tantrum.

Tuesday, November 8:

Arrive in Atlanta and go through passport control without a problem. Declare our vanilla and have to tell the customs inspector what it is. Recheck luggage and get on plane heading for Cincinnati. Take Executive Limo to Marriot and car home.

Some final thoughts of Madagascar:

Madagascar is a very poor country with a few wealthy people. Those who have the wealth and power seem only to be interested in increasing both. Foreign companies can come in and exploit the natural resources without giving anything back except a couple of well-placed bribes. So much has to change to improve things that it seems impossible. While the wildlife on the preserves was very exciting, the only forested places left were the reserves. The general condition of the country was very depressing.