

AFRICAN SAFARI –MAY/JUNE 2018

At the end of May, a group of 15 (mostly 41 Club members, but with a few non-members included) flew out of Auckland on their way to Johannesburg, South Africa to undertake a safari through the Kruger Park, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

Our first highlight was when, on the flight from Sydney to Jo'burg, we flew far enough South to be over the Antarctic ice shelf – quite a sight from 35,000 feet up.



Because we had a spare day on arrival, we arranged for a half day trip through Soweto – a city of some 4 million (!!!) people on the outskirts of Johannesburg. We all came away from that day deep in our own thoughts.



Time to get into our own game viewing bus, and away to the Kruger Park for 2 nights, and the first of our game viewing days.

To be shown these magnificent animals in their natural environment, by two wonderful Zimbabwean guides like Shadreck and Deon, is a sight to behold.

Then it was our first border crossing - into Zimbabwe, and a look at what has been done to that country's infrastructure. Words cannot describe what we found – roads barely usable, towns like Bulawayo (the 2nd city of Zimbabwe) looking like something from the wild west – ask any of the group what they saw and they will tell you.



Staying at lodges and camps, we were able to see the animals close up – on one occasion we saw in excess of 100 elephants (including some babies)



wander up to a water hole barely 150 meters away and spend an hour or so drinking and playing in the water. Girafes have always been my favourite animal, but to see them standing in the bush, eating the tops of trees, and looking at you with those real long eyelashes so prominent, takes your breath away.

There are about 35 white rhino left alive in this part of Africa, and on a morning game walk we were able to get within about 20 meters of 4 of them – 3 adults and a calf - such magnificent animals they are.



After three days spent at Victoria Falls, and a helicopter flight over the Falls, we headed for the border again – this time into Botswana.

More game parks and early morning game viewing rides on the back of Toyota Land Cruisers showed us so many animals.

We were lucky (and told so by many) to have seen so many different animals – lion, leopard (3 times), elephant, kudu, wild dog, giraffe, impala, crocodile, rhino, hippo (with a 2 day old calf), bush buck, and a large number the of birds peculiar to that part of the world.



One day we found 3 lionesses with 5 cubs just lying in the sun – they weren't in the least worried about our being there – just 5 metres away – in fact one of the lionesses rolled on to her back and sunned her belly!!.

The Okavango Delta awaited us – and the annual rainfall which would fill it up. They told us the water was about 15 days away – it comes down from Angola. We spent a morning in mokoros – used to be made out of hollowed out logs, but are now made of fibreglass – being poled along by local villagers, through the grasses etc and on to lunch in the middle of nowhere.



Another flight (this time in a fixed wing aircraft – guess who had few minutes at the controls??) over the Delta, enabled us to see the size of the place, and also allowed us to see some of the animals who call it home.

Our final 2 nights were spent in a permanently tented camp, where we were told that the animals were likely to roam through at night. Sure enough, on the last night, an elephant chose to visit, rubbing himself (maybe herself??) on one the tents and then moving close to another tent, decided it was time to feed. This involves breaking off branches and munching them. All of this took



place at about 11.00pm when we were all trying to get some sleep before an early morning start the next day. Life in Africa can be exciting!!!.

However, like everything, our trip had too come to an end. On Friday, June 15th, we left Maun in Botswana – 7 of the group headed south for a few days in Capetown, and the remaining 8 flew to Johannesburg. Of this



group, 6 flew straight back to New Zealand, meaning a very long “day” for them, while Margaret and I stayed for 2 days in Johannesburg with Brenda and Ross McSweeney. I first met Ross on a visit to South Africa in 1986, they visited here and attended our A.G.M. held in Blenheim in 2000.

We also caught up with Sue Stroud, widow of Eric Stroud who presented our National President’s jewel to our Association in 1976.

When a group of Kiwi 41 Club members visited South Africa in 1992, and attended their A.G.M. a Patu was presented to South Africa. I was told that this Patu is still in use as a trophy and is presented at each year’s A.G.M.

Full details of this are to be found on the “History” page of our website – have a look at www.41club.org.nz

Have a look at the attached photos – they will give you an idea of what we saw and did.

I would like to thank 41 Club for the opportunity to lead this tour, and I know that we all found it a really great experience.

Peter Butchart – July 2018