

On Safari
ON SAFARI

Also by David Anderson

ON SAFARI CD-ROM

Also by David Anderson & David Bridge

FOCUS ON AFRICA

Wildlife, Conservation, and Man

On Safari

ON SAFARI

THE SOURCE FOR SAFARIS IN EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA



DAVID ANDERSON • CARRIE HAMPTON

Focus on Africa Publications

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Publisher: Focus on Africa Publications, 30 W. Mission – Suite 7,
Santa Barbara, CA 93101 USA. Telephone: (800) 733-6732.

Distributed in Africa by Russel Friedman Books CC, PO Box 73,
Halfway House 1685, South Africa.

Visual Concept/Project Designer/Content Editor: Alyson LeBlanc,
LeBlanc Studios, Santa Barbara, CA 93101 USA

Printer: Wilson Printing, 5777 Hollister Avenue, Goleta, CA 93117 USA

ISBN: 0-620-29695-X

Printed in United States of America



IN MEMORY

BETTY LAVELLE
1927 - 2001

“This is Betty LaVelle from Bishop calling.” Those were the first words I heard from a person who would become my friend, traveling buddy, and “mama.” The year was 1986 and she was calling to see if there was space on a safari for serious photographers being sponsored by Brooks Institute of Photography. Over the years, Betty joined me on twelve safaris in East and Southern Africa, in India to see the tigers, and to trek in the Himalayas of Nepal. Just before her passing, she said that the last fourteen years of her life had been the most rewarding and that her safaris in Africa had provided the best and most lasting memories.

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ECOTOURISM AND CONSERVATION PHOTOGRAPHY

FOREWORD BY CRISTINA GOETTSCHE MITTERMEIER
Biodiversity Consultant

CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

“In teaching us a new visual code, photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe. They are a grammar and, even more importantly, an ethics of seeing. Finally, the most grandiose result of the photographic enterprise is to give us the sense that we can hold the whole world in our heads - as an anthology of images.” Susan Sontag

Beyond the task of documenting, demonstrating, comparing or inspiring, images are indispensable elements of the conservation toolbox. With the exception of the most technically written, peer-reviewed scientific journals, the inclusion of photographs is a necessary and constant element of conservation communications. And, in the case of ecotourism, a valuable marketing tool and part of the very attraction itself. Indeed, the role of photography to motivate people to discover remote regions is quite significant.

Be it the snapshots of thousands of enthusiastic amateurs traveling to remote places today or the well-crafted images made by gifted professionals, photography inspires us and enriches our soul. For the majority of people on this planet, who will never be able to reach such places, it is the next best thing to being there.

The unique experience of visiting a remote, pristine location and the inextricable relationship such an experience has with nature photography is worthy of attention, mostly because it tells a story that should matter to anyone who cares about wild areas. The link that exists between the economic benefits of ecotourism and

the protection of biodiversity can be boiled down to the people who depend directly on these resources. It is the people living in those areas who are the most important partners in our global efforts to conserve wild places, because it is their immediate livelihood that hinges on the success of activities like ecotourism. When photographs printed in magazines or books make the journey back to the areas where they were made, these images become an immense source of pride for local communities who are able to see their own natural and cultural heritage so beautifully presented to the entire world.

There is no question about it - carefully planned and implemented tourism development can play an important role in conservation; but it is critical to ensure that local people benefit from tourism and that communities receive training and support to establish and manage their own ecotourism businesses. Beyond the beautiful landscapes and animals, this is the story that needs to be told through pictures.

My early thoughts on the subject of ecotourism date back to the 1980s. Then, like many others, my attention was centered on the development of ideas to provide alternative sources of income for communities so that they would not be forced to exploit precious and irreplaceable natural resources, either for personal subsistence or for commercial purposes. Ecotourism quickly emerged as one of the most suitable activities to achieve this objective. Today, any serious conservation organization focuses part of its strategy on the possibilities of ecotourism.



Unto the seventh generation: it is their future, as well as our own, that conservation and ecotourism seek to preserve. Documenting our threatened world brings global awareness to these efforts.

So - what is the role of photography in the effort to further ecotourism projects? To some, a photograph is a way to appropriate the thing photographed and, in a way, the act of photographing creates a lasting bond with nature. Although the ties between nature photography and conservation seem self-evident, the truth is that photography has much more potential than has yet been realized. When considered outside of a purposeful role, nature photography can be a frivolous activity. However, when photographic skills, creative talent and scientific understanding converge on a subject, the outcome can be really powerful. Most professional nature photography does serve a commercial purpose, earning the photographer a living - but in the case of ecotourism, the lens can be pointed in two completely opposite, yet complementary directions.

On the one hand, ecotourism enterprises make wonderful use of beautiful images to attract tourists. They rely on the kinds of images that illustrate some of the most remote and untouched portions of our planet in a romanticized and attractive way. Open a travel book or a brochure and the carefully crafted images will beckon you to visit. Scenes of peaceful beaches dotted with lazy palm trees; colorful villages filled with smiling children and endless expanses of savanna, rainforest, or ocean glistening under the sun attract hundreds of tourists who yearn to get closer to nature. Making these types of images may seem simple, but it is far from a casual endeavor.

Creating a successful image, one that can capture the imagination of a political leader, as well as that of the general public, requires training and experience and, although to some the ability to make a good photograph comes naturally, for most it takes years of work, training, frustration and failure in order to become a professional photographer. These “architects of images” are masters at selecting the most delectable pieces of the landscape and embellishing their frames with exquisite light and composition.

The other side of the equation is the fast-growing interest in photography as a hobby. The recent advent of ever-more-affordable, user-friendly digital equipment allows everyday people to aspire to emulate the perfect images found in glossy magazines. Today’s ecotourists can be found anywhere from the Brazilian rainforest

to the African savannah, many packing all the latest photographic equipment. They set out to capture a digital masterpiece that resembles the beautiful brochures that served as their travel inspiration in the first place. Whereas not so long ago the opportunity to photograph lions, zebras and giraffes in their natural habitat was pretty much the privilege of the very rich traveler or of the very talented on-assignment photographer, today many within the ever-expanding global middle class can aspire to visit these previously remote and exclusive locations. It doesn’t matter that the end product is less than perfect; to the serious amateur photographer, wildlife photography allows one to become the fabled African hunter of days gone by. The trophy will be just as cherished, except for the happy fact that no creature will have to die to obtain it.

The images brought home are so much more than evidence of our travels - they are more like physical pieces of the experience itself, snippets of reality available for anyone to take away with them and do no harm. It is the task of professional photographers to continue to inspire such amateurs to travel to wild places, because when done right, a portion of every dollar spent on tourism goes to benefit the local wildlife and the local people.

That said, there are those among professional photographers who worry about the effect of this overabundance of images on the global mass-consciousness. Images are like evidence. When we’re shown a photograph, something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven. How can there really be a shortage of elephants or cheetahs when you can see thousands of images of them in magazines and books? If truth be told, we have seen ten times more images of endangered wildlife than are actually left in the wild. The real challenge within wildlife photography is not that there are too many images, but that many of those images fail to reflect the true diversity of the natural world. The goal then should not be to produce more or fewer images, but to make images that tell stories about the wilderness drama, the human spirit and our struggle to connect to the natural world on an ever-more urban and technological planet.

More and more, professional photographers - especially those concerned about conservation - find themselves challenged to reveal the extraordinary that hides

amongst more familiar landscapes. We think we have seen it all; but when it comes to photography, we are just getting started. Just as ecotourism should never aim to 'tame' the wilderness experience to suit the urban tastes of the paying customer, photographers should strive to preserve the wild forms and places in every image, instead of making the world appear domesticated and approachable. What the experience of ecotourism demands is the underlying vitality of wild nature, i.e. wildness, rather than a cultivated landscape. So, the question really is: do we need more pictures of elephants and cheetah? The answer, according to conservation photographer Niall Benvie, is yes, as long as we can find a way out of the maze of sameness that infects so much contemporary nature photography today.

This determination lies at the heart of the concept of conservation photography: it is an idea that has been proposed out of the need to make a distinction between the creation of images for the sake of photography, and the creation of images to serve the purpose of conserving nature. In the case of ecotourism, the connections are very clear.

This fresh approach to photography - conservation photography - showcases both the beauty of our planet and its vanishing spirit; and it represents the "pictorial voice" used by many conservation organizations to further their messages. Although traditional nature photography is often adequate to the task, the creation of images that inspire and move people to change behaviors and take action requires an understanding of the issues necessary to tell the story; this is the job of a conservation photographer. As eloquently stated by Frans Lanting, anyone can purchase the equipment, travel to interesting regions and learn the secrets of wildlife behavior; what cannot be purchased is the empathy and sense of urgency necessary to create awe-inspiring images that move people to take the necessary actions that ensure that the wild world persists.

So, although the similarities between traditional nature photography and conservation photography are many, the most outstanding difference lies in the fact that the latter is born out of a global - and pressing - purpose. From the early achievements of Ansel Adams in capturing the imagination of the American public with his well-crafted images of wild America, to the brilliantly executed images

made by National Geographic's "Nick" Nichols during the epic trek made by Dr. Michael Fay across the Congo (which recently led to the creation of an entirely new, protected area system in Gabon), conservation photography has a well-established yet seldom-recognized record. Interestingly, there is potential for a whole new ecotourism venue to be born of the Mega-Transect. Today, as more and more people are hoping to retrace at least a small portion of this already-legendary trek, both the conservation community and independent ecotourism operators are now working to take advantage of the momentum created by the publication of Nichol's powerful images to build a sound eco-tourism operation in Gabon.

In traditional nature photography the subject is defined by aesthetics. By necessity, in conservation photography the subject must also be defined by conservation priorities. Beyond documenting nature, conservation photography answers to the mission of protecting nature. This is a discipline limited by specific places and issues and its purpose is to elicit concerns and emotions that affect human behavior. We must advocate the revelation of the entire scene - not just the select pieces that we, the architects of the image, choose to show the public. Photography is the preferred way to document biodiversity and the changes that happen in any given landscape. It serves as both a reference and a silent witness to describe more efficiently than words ever could, the changes happening to our planet.

As conservation challenges continue to grow around us, the need for the kinds of images that touch people's hearts and change people's minds is also growing. Photographers of great conviction have already traced the path for us. It is our job to show the way to the legions of new photographers who are not yet a part of the conservation movement.

Cristina Mittermeier

FURTHER READING

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niall@niallbenvie.com

Lanting, Frans. 2000. Jungles. Taschen Publishers, Köln, London & Madrid
Sontag, Susan. 2000. On Photography. Picador Books, 1st Picador Edition (August 25, 2001)
<http://www.susansontag.com/onphotographyexcrpt.html>



A Zulu warrior chief shares stories of the bush with On Safari author David Anderson.

INTRODUCTION

“There is something about safari life that makes you forget all your sorrows and feel as if you had drunk half a bottle of champagne - bubbling over with heartfelt gratitude for being alive.”

Karen Blixen, *Out of Africa*

Karen Blixen knew what it was like to feel really free; to go in any direction over the plains and camp by the river at sundown, knowing that the next day and the next night would bring a whole new range of experiences.

This incredible freedom can still be found in Africa . . . you just have to know where to look. *On Safari* takes you to those special places and will awaken your desire to taste some of that African freedom for yourself. This magical continent is waiting for you.

Most of the images in *On Safari* were captured during the Focus on Africa Project of 2004. One hundred forty-two conservation-minded, serious amateur photographers traveled

to ten countries on 26 safaris. Their purpose: to reveal as much of the true spirit of a genuine African safari as possible.

‘*On Safari*’ should delight and inform you, but I don’t encourage you to attempt Africa on a ‘do-it-yourself’ safari. It is vital to consult with a professional when planning such an important trip.

I have experienced 79 safaris over the years and have visited almost all of the wildlife reserves within these pages and inspected most camps and lodges described. You might say that I am addicted to being on safari and exploring the natural world. This is my passion, so allow me to lead you into my Africa - the Africa you have dreamed of . . .

On Safari
D A V I D A N D E R S O N



ON SAFARI - YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Safari is a Swahili word meaning journey. During most of the twentieth century, the word was synonymous with hunting expeditions in East Africa. Today, when someone says they are going on a safari, it usually means they are going on a journey into the African bush (wildlife reserves of East or Southern Africa) armed with a camera, not an elephant gun. However, hunting safaris are still popular.

Since the early 1600's, Cape Town was the gateway to southern Africa and the starting point of many great African pioneers, explorers, or treasure hunters with a thirst for adventure. Most of these journeys were to establish contact with the natives and to set up trade. On August 25, 1685, one of the biggest ever safari expeditions was mounted in search of trade, copper, livestock and the natural history of Africa. With the strength of 57 men, the safari that set off could be regarded as the very first *grande* safari of southern Africa.

To help with this work was an apothecary and qualified naturalist. He was appointed "to paint animals and plants to perfection". Heading out in a horse drawn carriage, with eight pack donkeys, fourteen riding horses, eight carts, two field guns, seven wagons bearing provisions, camping equipment, tools, utensils, barter goods, a boat followed by 300 oxen, a body of armed infantrymen, and six mounted hunter/frontiersmen, this safari set off to change history forever.

However, it was David Livingstone who ventured forth in 1849 on what was to become the most extensive safari into unknown regions ever conducted by anyone up until that time. Never before had a safari in southern Africa been recorded with such outstanding precision. In May 1856, Livingstone's travels had come to an end and, with that, an influx of settlers, government officials, mounted commandos, and the inevitable colonisation of southern Africa began.

Big game hunting safaris began in east Africa in the late 1800's when the first colonialists arrived. To give you an idea of how fast a culture can be impacted by intruders, in the first six months of 1888, 37,000 firearms and 1 million rounds of ammunition were imported through Zanzibar! In those days, the purpose of a safari was not just to bag 'big game', but to clear the land of wildlife so it could be put to "better use". Of what use was wildlife? Agriculture ruled. The wave of white settlers began the slaughter of wildlife much the same as Americans did in the mid-1800's in the American west.

The gradual awareness that there would be no wildlife left if the slaughter were to continue, led to the establishment of the first game reserve in east Africa in 1899. A game ranger was appointed two years later and the protection of the flora and fauna of east Africa began.



The completion of the railroad linking Mombasa to Uganda allowed the first tourists “easy” access to the wildlife areas and a tourism industry began in the early 20th century. The writings of adventure seekers like Frederick Selous got the attention of European aristocrats, and East Africa became *the* place to go for adventure and play. Killing of wildlife was considered sport and the man who could bag the biggest received accolades. The East African Professional Hunters Association was formed in 1934, an association which American author Robert Ruark described as, “. . . the most exclusive club in the world.”

Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt introduced America to safaris when he embarked on the largest safari in history in 1909. His expedition left Nairobi’s Norfolk Hotel with taxidermists, a team of professional hunters and five hundred porters carrying close to a year’s worth of supplies for the expedition. Many of his trophies are still on display at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C.

Years later, Ernest Hemingway journeyed to Kenya. His writings and the movie “Snows of Kilimanjaro”, released in 1952, introduced more Americans to the romance and adventure of an African safari. Soon the Boeing 707 would allow more than just the wealthy to experience a holiday in Africa, and the popularity of photographic safaris began.

Several movies, mostly fictional, have given us a glimpse of the grandeur and beauty of East Africa and its magnificent wildlife, but no movie has had more impact than “Out of Africa.” Millions watched as Karen Blixen told the story of her days in Kenya, and tourism took off like a hungry cheetah after a gazelle.

While the safari experience has greatly changed over the past four hundred years, there still is no better feeling than to be immersed in the natural world that only east and southern Africa can provide. A safari is not only a journey into Africa; it is a journey into your soul. I think Karen Blixen summed up safari life well when she wrote,

“One only feels really free when one can go in whatever direction one pleases over the plains, to get to the river at sundown and pitch one’s camp with the knowledge that one can fall asleep beneath other trees, with another view appearing before one the next night.”

FOOTNOTE: Information for this chapter came from “50 Years of Challenge and Achievement: Parks beyond Parks” a publication by Kenya Wildlife Service, and also from Peter Hayward, whose South African safari company was established in 1902 by his great grandfather.



PLANNING AN AFRICAN SAFARI

Unlike travel to many other destinations, Africa requires input from an experienced safari specialist. I strongly advise against creating an itinerary yourself through internet research. An African safari is one of the most expensive and complex holidays you will take, so it pays to seek the expertise of a seasoned professional whose knowledge of travel planning, as well as the best fares and rates, is indispensable.

Over the past twenty-seven years I've traveled to Africa on 79 safaris and have visited every major game park and private reserve in east and southern Africa. I've also visited most of the 162 camps and lodges featured in *On Safari* and inspected close to 100 others. I would like to share some of my thoughts on planning the ultimate adventure travel experience - The African Safari. But, before we start planning, let me address the major concerns for Americans who are considering taking a safari.

SAFETY

"Is it safe?" In my opinion the safest place to be is on safari in wildlife sanctuaries, far away from mankind. I believe those of you who have been to Africa on a pre-planned safari organized by a specialist company will agree with me. Whether you are in Serengeti National Park - where human population numbers in

the hundreds and non-human population in the millions - or in a private concession in the Okavango Delta, you are far away from the troubles of the modern world. The only people you will encounter on safari are other travelers, lodge staff and rangers. In east Africa, you will also meet colorful tribal peoples like the Maasai and Samburu, who still maintain their traditional life styles.

RISK-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

While in college, I was taught the importance of recognizing opportunities and accurately predicting the costs associated with exploiting these opportunities. The dangers awaiting the first adventure travelers to Africa were certainly greater than those we face today. However, it still comes down to accurately assessing the risks against the gains. What are the benefits of going beyond our boundaries in a quest for knowledge and adventure?

Louise - a lady in her 50's - joined me on the first safari that I escorted in 1980. She grew up in Bangor, Maine and her travels had consisted of going to Boston once. Now she was about to go to Kenya via Rome, with a stopover in Egypt on the return to see the pyramids. Do you think that trip gave her a new perspective of the world? To answer that question from the perspective of those who have traveled to Africa, here are a few of their comments:

"The word safari does not mean simply to make a journey, but rather to experience the things you have never experienced before. I can't think of a better place than Africa to do that." Daphne Polson

"In business I concentrate on the monetary. . .after visiting Kenya, I have a new perspective on how valuable and irreplaceable wildlife, cultures, and land are . . . If you only do one unforgettable trip in your lifetime, it must be Africa." Christa Taylor

"Africa touches me to the core of my being . . . The glory of Europe is its History, but the glory of Africa is its LIFE!" Sharon Taylor

"My life is changed and mostly all I think about is Africa." Lori Ann Denitz

“My Tanzania adventure was everything I hoped and dreamed of . . . I felt fresh, rejuvenated, and re-awakened to the joys and beauty of the earth and all aspects of life while on safari.” Nancy J. Behrend

“Journeying to the ‘cradle of mankind’ has changed my perspective of life forever. The beauty and wildness of Africa is stunning. The animals are our true teachers. The people are of such inner beauty and peace it warms the heart. Africa is now in my blood and I will be returning again and again to visit Ma Africa.” Elle McDonald

“Africa’s greatest treasure is its vast diversity. From its tallest peaks, down its cascading rivers, its sweeping deserts, its indigenous people and all the wildlife, one journey is never enough. That’s why I keep returning.” Chuck Graham

Even today, few Americans have experienced the world outside of the USA, and I find that troubling. As for Africa, it *is* called the ‘dark continent’ - but probably due to simple ignorance or misinformation about our planet’s second largest land mass. Africa is, in fact, the continent of our origination as human beings and packs a visceral punch when one sets foot on African soil.

It is clear that Africa touches people like no other destination.

POLITICS AS USUAL

For some reason Americans see Africa as a country, not a continent of 52 nations. In fact, the nations of Africa make up one-third of the membership of the United Nations. It’s a continent 3.5 times the size of the United States, with a land mass second only to Asia. Yet when trouble breaks out on the continent, Americans tend to avoid all 52 countries. I have never felt unsafe in Africa and all of the people who I have assisted in traveling there have told me the same.

BUGS OF ALL SIZES

Africa has its fair share of diseases with AIDS being in the forefront of the news these days; AIDS prevention in Africa is exactly the same as in the USA.

The main precaution you need to take out of the ordinary is against malaria.

Malaria is contracted from the bite of the Anopheles mosquito that feeds between sundown and sunup. High-risk times are during the rainy season when mosquito larvae breed in stagnant pools. During the dry seasons few mosquitoes are to be found.

WILD THINGS

Remember Tarzan? Did you know that the creator of Tarzan never visited Africa and most of the episodes were shot in southern California? It seemed that some wild animal was always attacking Tarzan, but in reality most animals avoid humans and only attack if provoked or protecting young. You do need to exercise caution in camps without fences, but there is always a guard or ranger at hand for advice or as an escort.

Now that I’ve put the safety issue in perspective, and you’ve decided that you would like to experience a safari, let me address the various considerations.

CHOOSING YOUR DESTINATION

As with all travel experiences, the first step is to decide on your destination. Unless you have a month to travel, I do not recommend combining East Africa with Southern Africa as the distances are just too far. There are three main safari regions. These are:

1. East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda
2. Southern Africa: Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Malawi and Namibia
3. South Africa: (I put the country of South Africa in a separate region because it is very different from the other countries in southern Africa.)

HOW MANY DAYS WILL A SAFARI REQUIRE?

While the average safari is 16 days, safaris can be from as few as 7 days to as long as many weeks. Remember, the journey to and from Africa and the United States will take at least 3 days of travel and the airfare will be the same if you go for two weeks or four weeks.

COMFORT LEVELS

We define the level of comfort that our age, background, desire, attitude, and income level have conditioned us to accept. While it's easier to accept a higher level of comfort than our expectations, it's also possible to feel uncomfortable in a 5-star hotel if you prefer a 3-star or a 2-star hotel. If you are used to the finest restaurants, eating a \$1.79 fast-food hamburger may not be acceptable under any conditions. I often hear people say that they don't need luxury camps but they do want the best game viewing experience. As a rule, you won't find budget accommodation in the best game viewing areas.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

This is perhaps the most important question. An African safari can cost as little as \$100 per day to well over \$500 a day. Some companies specialize in budget safaris for the young "back-packer" wanting to "rough it" on an overland safari, while others cater to the more affluent seasoned traveler who wants to experience Africa in style and comfort. Here are some things to consider when thinking about choosing a safari that matches your budget and desired comfort level.

ACCOMMODATION

- Overland safaris, where you pitch your own tent and participate in camp chores, are the least expensive of all safaris.
- Large lodges are less expensive than small tented camps and lodges.
- Luxury mobile-tented safaris are normally the most expensive but exclusive permanent tented camps can be a similar price.

TRANSPORTATION

- Overland safaris use big trucks with a low level of comfort.
- Comfortable minivans are used on some safaris in East Africa.
- Land Rovers and Land Cruisers are more expensive than minivans.
- Fly-in or 'winged' safaris are more expensive than using vehicles.

OTHER ISSUES AFFECTING YOUR DECISION

- Often, more expensive safaris have more experienced guides.
- Always check what is included in the safari price.

- Private game reserves are more expensive than government managed parks and reserves.
- As a general rule, the more expensive the lodge or camp, the better the food.
- Up-market camps and lodges usually include wine with dinner and sometimes have an open bar policy.

LAND COSTS IN SUMMARY

- Cheap – Under \$100 per day – Overland safaris and participative camping
- Budget – \$100 - \$200 per day – Cross-country and driving safaris where you stay in large lodges
- Moderate - \$200 - \$275 per day – Full service camping, the larger lodges, and safaris that have some flights
- Deluxe - \$275 - \$350 per day – Smaller lodges and camps and flights between the game parks and reserves
- Luxury - \$350 - \$500 per day – Luxury mobile tented camping, Exclusive lodges and tented camps. Private reserves. Charter aircraft
- The Best - \$500 + per day – Over the top but worth it if you can afford it

WHAT ARE YOUR INTERESTS?

Do you have special interests in, for example, birding, culture, and wildlife? If wildlife photography is your passion, you will want to go on a safari whose guide understands the needs of the photographer. If you choose to join one of the Focus on Africa safaris, (www.focusonafrika.com), you may even see your pictures in the next edition of this book.

Are there any special activities you would like to incorporate into your safari? Do you have your heart set on climbing to the 'Rooftop of Africa' - Mt. Kilimanjaro, or standing on the edge of Victoria Falls? Do you want to see animals from a hot air balloon? Fish for giant Nile perch? Would you like to explore the bush on a walking safari or canoe on the Zambezi River?

Do you want to travel with a group of like-minded travelers or do you prefer independent travel? The popularity of group travel has decreased dramatically over the past ten years. The safari industry has adapted to this trend by offering

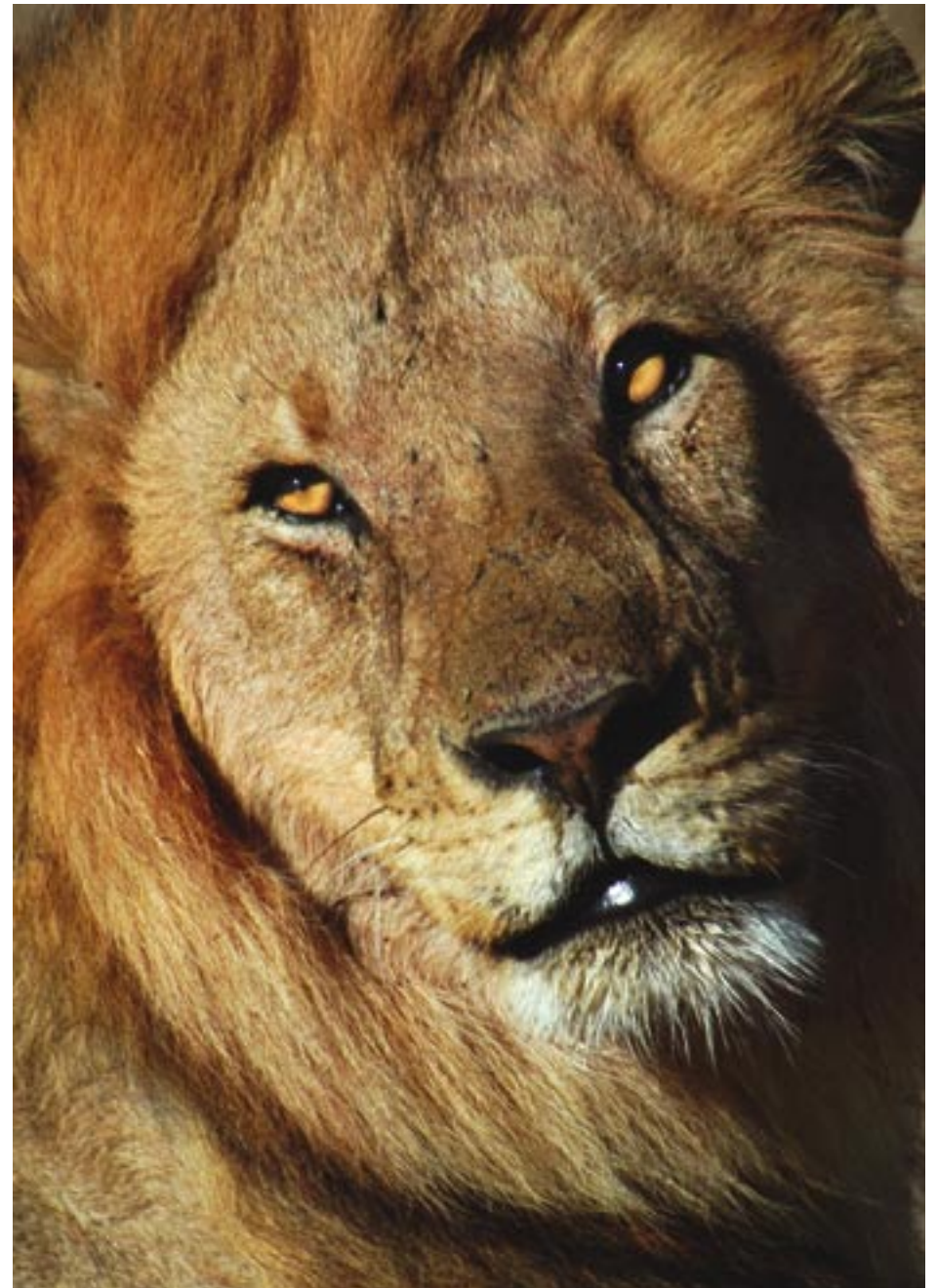
a number of fly-in safaris where your guide stays at the camp and does not travel with the group. There is very little difference in the cost for a private safari now over a group scheduled departure.

THE SEVEN COMPONENTS TO A SUCCESSFUL SAFARI

Once you have considered all of these factors, it will be time to pick up the telephone and call a safari specialist to help you find a safari that matches your interest and budget. Over the years, I have concluded that there are seven factors that influence how successful a safari will be. These are the most vital aspects to settle with your safari consultant:

1. **Good Wildlife Viewing** – Since most Americans travel to Africa to see the wildlife, seeing many different animals in quantity is important.
2. **Proper Preparation** – An African safari is like no other travel experience. It is essential that you receive accurate information to prepare you for your safari.
3. **Comfortable Accommodation** – The accommodations should meet the standards that you expect.
4. **Good Food** – You can expect the food on all of the safaris featured in On Safari to range from good to gourmet.
5. **Excellent Safari Guides** – The knowledge, training, and personality of the guide or guides that you have during your safari is probably the biggest factor to a successful safari.
6. **Carefully Designed Itinerary** – A safari should be designed to go at the right pace. This might include using chartered aircraft between the camps to cut down on driving time.
7. **Support Services** – Does the safari company have backup services in the unlikely event that something went wrong?

Years ago, I took Chuck Henry, host of Eye on LA, the longest running travel show in the history of television, to east Africa. Standing on the escarpment overlooking the Masai Mara in Kenya, where the final scenes of Out of Africa were filmed, Chuck turned to the camera and said “If you have just one place to visit in this lifetime, this is it.” From a man who has traveled to every world destination you can imagine, that’s quite an endorsement.



Experiencing a lion in the wild is a world away from viewing him at a local zoo or game park.

“The darkest thing about ‘the dark continent’ is people’s ignorance of it.”

An Unknown American Journalist

