



# Shutterspeedtravel

WILDLIFE • PHOTOGRAPHY • EXPEDITIONS



## Trip Report 'Exciting South Africa' August 2010

Shutterspeedtravel has focussed on African wildlife in East Africa, Central Africa and Botswana. Many of our friends and contacts have spoken about the quality of safaris in South Africa but our reluctance has always been based on concerns about too much effort on rose petals in bathtubs and not enough on the wildlife – we know visibility can be tricky in SA's bush where there aren't the wide open grasslands of the Mara for instance.

After some hesitation we booked a recce expedition to see whether South Africa worked for what we know our clients and we like; time spent watching and photographing outstanding wildlife behaviour.

We travelled to two camps; the first near Kruger and the

second in the famed Sabi Sands region.

In short we had an amazing time. Wildlife highlights included eight Leopards in eight days. Stacks and stacks of time with Elephants. New Antelopes we hadn't seen before. Lion and Cheetah (although not as numerous as some of our trips to Botswana and East Africa). Wonderful birds. In short this trip exceeded our expectations and for anyone interested in Leopard, well this is as good as it gets.

The guiding, food and accommodation were outstanding.

So, we have answered our question. South Africa can be absolutely amazing if you go to the right places at the right time of year.

*Julie and Adam*

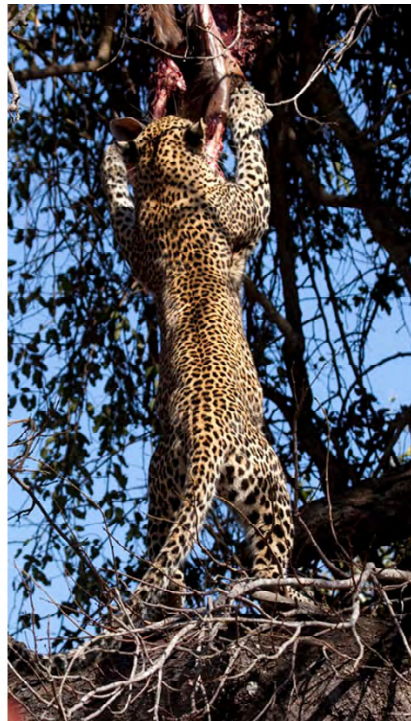
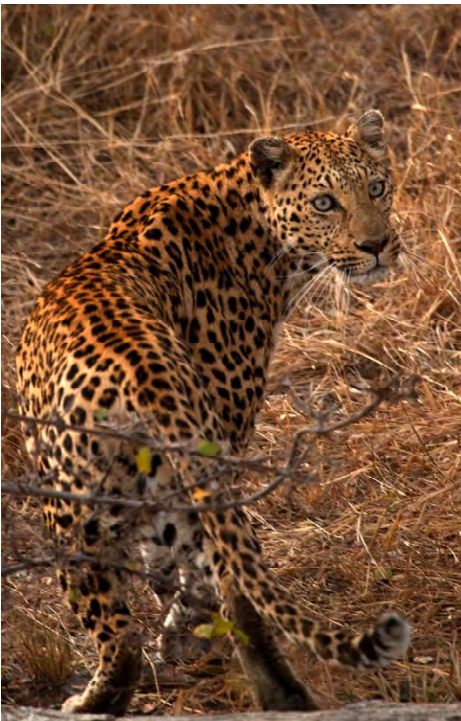


## Leopards

The bush in this part of South Africa is denser than that say in the Masai Mara in Kenya. This means that the smaller Antelopes do better (Impalas) and you do not tend to get the very large herds of Wildebeest. This suits predators such as Leopards more than Lions or Cheetah. So this is the place to go if you really want to see Leopards. In all of our Safari experience of the past 25 years we have NEVER spent so much time with these wonderful creatures.

There is no substitute for patience and luck. We were out for perhaps 10 hours each day, sometimes in the heat of mid-day. Always tracking and guessing where the Leopards were moving or laying up. When we found one, it was really amazing and well worth the perseverance. Unlike in the Mara, often we would be the only vehicle with the Leopard and we would stay until he or she moved. We had more luck with the lady Leopards. These appeared small when walking past the vehicles, but when running up a tree with a dead Impala in her jaws, her sheer power was very evident.

One highlight was the privilege of seeing a five week old Leopard cub. Cute was an understatement as the cub clambered over the very patient mother. We managed to see the cub two times and in both we were overcome with the experience. Amazing, incredible and it goes to show you can get what you wish for!





## Antelopes

South Africa's wildlife is as varied as you would expect. The Klipspringer ("rock jumper" in Dutch) did what it said on the can. We only saw it on rocks and as you can see from the photo below, we saw it jumping.

What surprised us was the number of very healthy Greater Kudus. Lots and lots of really handsome males. Lots of very skittish family groups – we have never seen such large groups before. Great ears!

Impala all over the place. They're a bit like a VW golf. You see lots of them around but until you look closely

you do not always appreciate how good they are.

Then there were the really small ones. Steinbok and Duikers. Very twitchy and nervous. We managed to get a few great shots of these, but unlike the Leopards they did not hang around!

Nyala were a new species for us. Down by the water. Shaggy coats, like the Bush bucks or those Afghan coats Julie wore in the 1980s.

Really amazing, can it get any better?



*"A Klipspringer jumping from rock to rock in the early morning light. These twitchy creatures are really cute and have a very effective camouflage."*





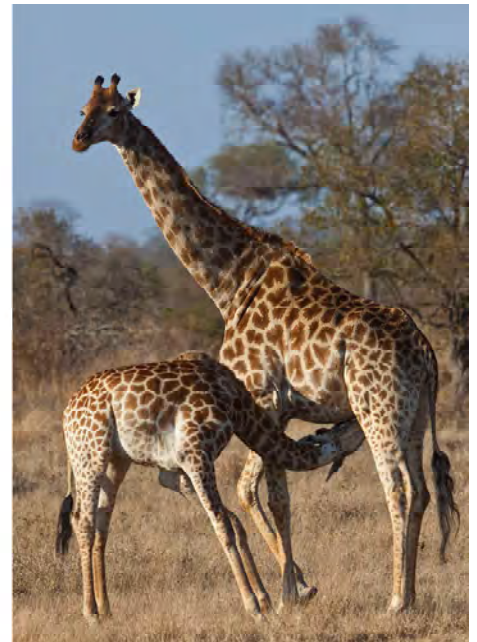
### Other interesting sightings

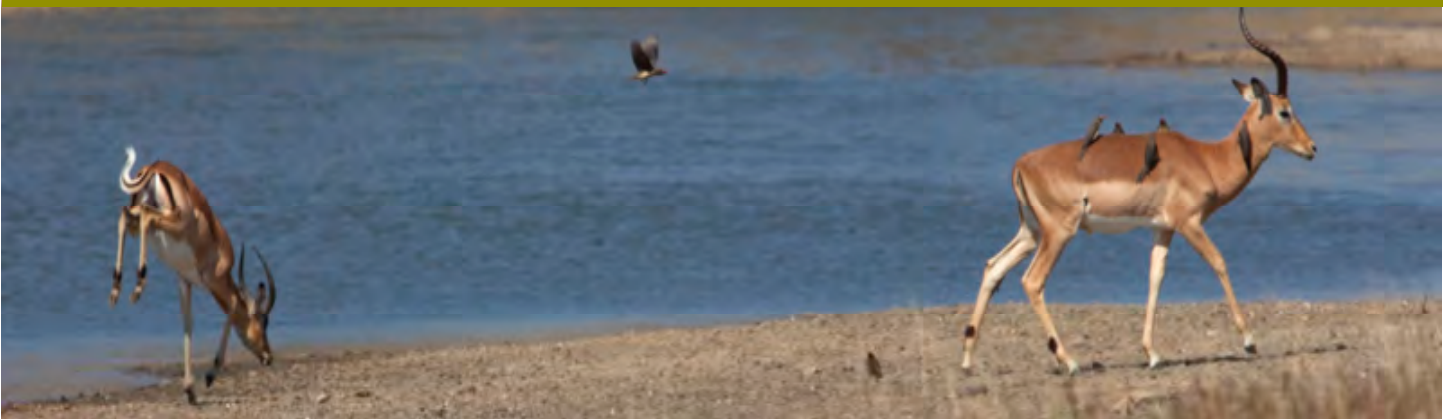
Did you know that many reptiles have a split tongue? This is principally to give them a sense for where smells are coming from. This can be seen in this shot of a monitor lizard. We took about 100 shots of which three had the tongue out and we got bit of a surprise when we took a closer look! Just goes to show, at times taking lots of shots does pay off.

Although we were in SA in the dry season, the Sands River was flowing well. On a couple of occasions we saw a variety of Elephants, Buffalo, Hippos in and out of the river enjoying the very clean water, as clear as gin according to Adam. There were also a number of pools around the camps in which we were delighted to see Elephants enjoying mud baths!

One morning we came across a herd of Giraffe. We spent a very relaxing hour watching them gently moving across the bush landscape, grazing on the greenery high up in the trees. There were four young not quite knowing what to do. One was suckling which requires quite a bit of neck dexterity!

As mentioned in our introduction, Lions did not feature on our spotting list every day. We saw a couple of prides late in the evening. This is the best time to see Lions and as they move through the dusk, it is very clear that they are not cuddly kittens, but ruthless killers who need victims to survive. Eerie to catch the vacant but focused stare of a Lion with intent at this time of day but it gives you an appreciation of the power of these cats especially in a well coordinated pride.





## Wildlife Photography Expeditions

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### Non-wildlife stuff!

We booked private vehicles in both camps. Up at about 6am and for the first time we can remember, hot water bottles and blankets in the vehicles for the chilly mornings. By 11am it had warmed up for us to be down to shortsleeves, sunscreen-check, hat – check, shades - check. To make the most of the day we usually took out packed lunches and breakfasts. Weather is dry at this time of year so pretty perfect for shooting and not too much dust.

The hospitality was top class. Our guiding and trackers were excellent. Life at camp very good. Food really excellent, wine really, really excellent (SA Shirazs). Practical things like laundry were very efficient.

Getting to the camps to and from Joburg really easy. Efficient internal flights made everything very smooth. SA hospitality guaranteed!



*"Finding Leopards is down to a bit of luck but also skillful tracking. Finding early morning tracks was a pretty good sign for what we would see that day."*



For more frequent updates on our trips and what we are up to, check out our Blog at:  
[www.shutterspeedtravel.com](http://www.shutterspeedtravel.com)