

NJ Wight Wild!

South Africa 2016

Tentative Dates: May 22-June 1

I am currently working through the last pieces of the itinerary for a fabulous adventure to South Africa. This is a preliminary look at what I am planning for 2016. A finalized itinerary and booking requirements/dates will be forthcoming, but for now, this should help you make the decision that it is time to start planning this trip of a lifetime!

A few things to keep in mind as you read on and think things through; this is a wildlife-centered trip and you will be spending your time in the wilderness, albeit in very capable hands and very comfortable accommodations. However, the properties are not fenced and you will truly feel the magic of the African bush! Animals routinely walk through camp—while you are fast asleep or enjoying a morning coffee. It is not unusual to walk out of your room in the afternoon to find an antelope leisurely grazing close by. Anything can happen—but rest assured, you will always be safe.



A young male elephant appeared at the widow of my tent while I was getting dressed one morning. He may have got a glimpse of my backside...but was a gentleman and looked away.

There are different price points for African safaris and the trip we will be taking would be considered in the mid to upper range. I wanted to take a moment to explain why this is my choice and what you are paying for.

1. This is a fly-in safari as opposed to strictly overland. By this I mean that we will *not* be spending long periods of time in trucks driving across the country. We will be flying in

light aircrafts, combined with shorter 2-3 hour transfers by vehicle. It is always fun to spend some time on the roads in Africa, but you do not want to be spending long days traveling between camps.

2. We will be staying at award winning properties—especially in terms of location, comfort, service and conservation mandates. More about this later.
3. The number of people in vehicles will be a maximum of 6, not 9, as is the case with some camps. This means no "middle" seats for anyone.
4. We will be spending our time with highly trained guides and trackers from one of the best guiding schools in Southern Africa.
5. Small group size: minimum 8, maximum 10.
6. From the moment you land in Johannesburg until you return for your flights home, you will have on-the-ground contacts making sure everything runs smoothly.
7. On-site photography tips and pre-trip camera equipment guidance.
8. Pre-trip preparation, including what to pack and how to prepare for your adventure. Resources for those who want to learn as much as they can before traveling. Expert coaching on what everyone needs to know in case you have to go to the bathroom while on safari!
9. The experience of traveling with a knowledgeable and enthusiastic photographer who will happily answer your questions and guide you in the proper cocktail choices for Happy Hour in the bush.

So, on with the trip...

We will be travelling with the upscale conservation travel, **& Beyond**. I have stayed at 19 of their properties across 6 countries and assure you we will be in EXCELLENT hands. *& Beyond* has won several prestigious conservation awards for their incredible lodges and community-based management. Take a look here: <http://www.andbeyond.com/awards.htm>

The tentative dates are currently **May 22** arrival in Johannesburg and **June 1** departure from Johannesburg. May-June is a great time to travel to SA to safari as it is approaching winter and the dry season, with skies generally clear and sunny. Temperatures at this time can be cool and range from overnight lows of 8C to highs of 25C. You can see the weather history here: <https://www.safaribookings.com/south-africa/climate-dryseason>

Although it can be a little cool in the early winter months, the wildlife viewing is very good and it is much easier to locate the animals as the bush is thinning out. (The summer brings more rain, resulting in lush, green foliage that becomes quite dense, making it a little more difficult to find what you are looking for.) In the drier months the animals will begin to spend more time closer to water sources. We will also be traveling outside the season of high temperatures and humidity.

Riding in open trucks in the early morning and late afternoon requires some thoughtful layering however. I am never without a hat or ear band, scarf and very warm socks! On any given morning I may leave camp in a t-shirt with long sleeve shirt over, fleece and lined wind jacket. I might arrive back at camp in just my t-shirt or my tee with open long sleeve shirt rolled up. At night, I might leave in shirt sleeves, but arrive back after dark with ears covered, scarf, fleece and lined jacket-heading straight inside for a glass of red wine! For photographers, a pair of fingerless gloves can be quite handy! We will be driving in an open vehicle so it is always colder than when you are off the truck standing around with a gin and tonic in your hand.



South Africa with & Beyond in 2013.

We will explore three distinct regions and spend our time on private reserves. One of the benefits of being on private concessions is the ability to drive “off-road” if your ranger spots something exciting. (You cannot drive off-road in National Parks like Kruger) We can also be out in the reserves after the sun goes down. Accommodations will be varied—some are cottages, some tented and some, well, they are just very unique! Top-notch rangers and trackers will be in charge of your game drives and you will be in reliable and comfortable Land Rovers. Amazing meals will be prepared for you and “sundowners” will become part of your take away vocabulary.

Your days will usually begin with a “civilized” wake-up call around 5:30 am when hot beverages and rusks (South African cookies) will be brought to your room. Brush your teeth (not much more preening required!) and grab your camera and climb onto the trucks around 6 AM for your morning game drive. We return to camp around 9:30 for a late breakfast and you have the day at your leisure to swap stories with other guests, nap, read, look at your photos, take a swim (some lodges have a small pool) and eat some more! Around 3:30 we will meet for teatime (it is all very civilized, isn’t it?) and head out again, returning to camp just after nightfall in time for a cocktail before dinner.

Then, it is off to bed to rest up for the next day. Safaris are not physically active trips due to the location of the camps in the wilderness so keep in mind, you won't be able to go for a run or walk about. And there won't be a boutique in sight!

From Johannesburg we will take a short flight to the Timbavati Nature Reserve, which is one of the Mpumalanga Lowveld game reserves west of the Kruger National Park. Timbavati is part of the Kruger ecosystem where animals roam between unfenced parks. We will spend 3 nights at the secluded *Ngala Tented Camp*. All of the big 5 are present in this reserve.



Your "luxury" tent at Ngala...although I do not know who is sitting in your chair... on your deck...?



Your “luxury” tent at Ngala...no camp cots or rolled beds for us!

From here we will travel overland to the Sabi Sands Reserve, considered to be one of the very best game viewing regions in South Africa. This is *the* place to go if you want to see leopards, one of the most elusive animals in Africa. Kirkman’s shares a south-western, open border with the famous Kruger National Park. Kirkman’s Kamp was one of the first hunting lodges in the Sabi, and while hunting is long, long gone, it has retained its authentic colonial feel. All of the Big 5 are present in the Sabi Sands...but we will especially be hoping for the elusive leopard!



Dining outside at Kirkmans!



This fig tree at Kirkmans, where we will undoubtedly stop for a cocktail of coffee, is over 600 years old.

From Sabi Sands we will travel to the Kwazuzlu Natal province for 4 nights in the Phinda Reserve.



Phinda is a 60,000-acre paradise nestled between the Lembobo Mountains and the Indian Ocean. Phinda is a stunning park and a conservation masterpiece. It offers our best chance of seeing cheetah and the very endangered black rhino. The reserve is probably the most ecologically diverse region in South Africa, and for this reason, we will likely split our time between two lodges; Vlei and Rock lodge. In addition to our daily game drives, Phinda will afford us the possibility of night drives, a very intense and magical experience in the bush!



Your room with a view at Rock Lodge.

From Phinda you will be flown back to Johannesburg on the afternoon of June 2 in order to catch your evening international flights or to set off on any extended visits to another area of South Africa.

Things are changing all the time in the "safari circuit" which could affect this itinerary. But, even with changes, this likely still represents what our trip will look like in terms of number of days, locations and types of accommodations. I will make the itinerary available as soon it is finalized.

If you are trying to imagine what all this will look like and feel like, well, take a look at this short video I put together from snippets of my 2013 trip to SA. All of the footage, with the exception of the Samburu singing at the end, are from the same camps we will be visiting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90fD-gW6rBU>
(The Samburu were singing me Happy Birthday in Kenya in 2010.)

For those of you wanting to extend your trip, the Greater St Lucia Wetlands are just a quick hop from Phinda and you could spend a few days relaxing on the Indian ocean where the white sandy beaches are truly like no where else you have seen! Or, recover from your bush adventure drinking pinotage in Stellenbosch or Franschhoek, the extraordinary wine regions outside Cape Town, one of the most beautiful cities in the world. For those of you wanting to add a little extra time, I will be happy to help you sort through the possibilities and introduce you to someone who can finalize your plans. I have travelled to the wetlands and have spent time in Cape Town, the wine regions and along the whale coast, so I would be happy to answer questions and share resources.

In the coming days, I will be providing a quote on a per person/double occupancy basis. Single accommodation is possible, but the supplements in Africa for this are quite high. This is largely because the properties we will be staying at are very small. (Let me know as soon as possible if you will be travelling alone and willing to share accommodations.) At this stage I would *estimate* the cost of the trip (excluding international flights) at just under \$10,000 **CDN**. This price includes *almost everything*—in country flights and transfers, all accommodations, laundry, all meals, drinks, wine, activities, park fees etc. (Insurance, gratuities and cellar wines are pretty much all that is excluded.) So you won't need much in your pocket once you are there. Because we have no control over world currency and exchange rates, I will be providing the quote in South African Rand. At the time of deposit and payment due, we will use our travel partners publicized rate of exchange to determine payment.

I hope to have a firm price quoted by the end of next week, but for now, hopefully this will give you what you need to start planning! It would be a great help to know if you are still interested and if you would like me to keep your name on this mailing list.

Looking forward to hearing from you and please feel free to contact me at:
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Cheers,
Nancie