

Safari Time



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Simba



There is something special about seeing a lion in the wild even if all they do is lay around and sleep all day. They sprawl out on the grass all cute and cuddly but then you realize that they would tear you apart and feast on your kidneys if you got out of the vehicle. In fact when you are standing in the car with the top popped up and a lion walks by you think of how easy it would be for them just to jump inside.

There are not a lot of cats compared to the other animals such as antelopes or zebras so to find a lion in the parks all you have to do is look for a bunch of safari cars all parks together and usually there will be a lion or some

other large cat there. The only time we got to see a cat alone is when we were lucky enough to spot a lioness sleeping in a tree.

Because they usually hunt at night you will find them just lounging around all day most of the time finding a nice piece of shade to nap in. They only hunt about every 3 or 4 days and our guide Abel could tell how long by looking at the size of their bellies. The lioness usually will hunt together and the male just waits around and then when they catch something he gets to eat first. Not a bad life being a king.

We were lucky enough to come across a female lying down hiding behind a

bush and we could see a column of zebras walking towards her. We pulled the car around in a manner to herd the zebras in her direction obviously we were rooting for the lion and not the zebras. Abel said by looking at her belly that she was hungry and there were two tasty baby zebras in the back of the column so we were ready for action. It was just getting dark and the zebras walked by her within 30 feet without a clue of her presence. But with cameras rolling nothing happened and everyone lived to see another day. I hate to say it but all of us including Maddie wanted to see the lioness go in for the kill on one of the cute little zebras.



Twigas



Little giraffe running in the water.

The Twigas which is Swahili for giraffe are a seriously strange animal standing tall. They move as awkwardly but yet graceful at the same time as they move from tree to tree looking for tasty sprouts and buds. You can spot them from miles and miles away and will usually find anywhere from 6 to 12 of them together. The giraffe feeds almost all the time and will only sleep for 2 hours a day.

When you see giraffes you will find all kinds of other animals hanging around using their incredible view to spot danger. The Pumba or warthogs having the worst eyesight are always found not too far from a herd of Twigas. The giraffes along with a couple other animals in the Serengeti

do not migrate with the large herds of Zebras and Wildebeests so you will find them all over the parks. They were one of the only animals we saw in all 5 parks that we visited and also one of the only animals we saw outside of the parks.

As seen in the photo we came across two young males dueling it out probably over a girl. The

tactic seemed to be to swing your head around to try and poke your horns into your pal's neck. The one problem is that the horns have soft fur on them and the other is your neck is 10 feet long so you look like a highly dysfunctional plastic man. And after watch them punish each other for 20 minutes we finally left the show – I get the feeling it always ends in a draw.



Genet Cats

While we were staying at the Ndutu Safari lodge



we were lucky enough to meet a colony of wild Genet cats living up in the rafters that have slowly became tame as they twist and turn around the ceiling every night in search of treats – and the fact that they feed them cat food. Maddie was able to make friends with the little one but you still never know when the wild little

cat-weasels might bite.

They are about twice the size of a normal house cat but slightly longer and sleeker like a weasel or ferret. They use their long tails to help balance them as they jump around like gymnast. Some people have made them into pets but I would not want one of these roaming around my house at night.

Living in Sewage



You are traveling across a beautiful green prairie and come to a deep blue river flowing so you decided to walk downstream when you come to the hippo pool.

The hippos like to turn up the water as they play and fight in the dark brown liquid. If you watch long enough you will see the small flap of a tail that they have turning like a propeller as they go potty mixing it into the water like a chocolate cake batter. We visited 3 different hippo pools on our journey through the parks and the largest pool Retima has over 60 of the fat smelly creatures dwelling in it.

During the day when it is hot and sunny they like to just lay in the water most of the time submerged

only coming up for air and a peek every 3 or 4 minutes. Their heads have been engineered so they can just stick the nose and eyes out of the water and nothing else and it is like a whale blowing when the big males come up for air.

Like any other large group of animals there is an order and a boss and in this case it is the big male



with the 2 foot long tusks that is the king. You can see this when you watch them move around and everyone stays out of his way. For us the most fun is to watch the little hippos as they stretch their giant jaws and play fight with other hippos.

They say that the hippos are the most dangerous animals in Africa and kill more people than all other animals combined. It is not that they are going out stalking humans but instead they panic as they return from grazing in the grass and trample people.

While we were watching a big female was coming back to the pool from behind us and the guides started scrambling to make sure no tourist got flattened by her. It definitely would not be the most desired way to go when your obituary would read "trampled by hippo".



"Lisa standing in front of the Retima hippo pool in the Serengeti."

Elephants



"A colony of elephants roaming for food."

They move slowly and you can spot them from a great distance but once you are next to them there is something special about these creatures. When you get close enough to look into their eyes you can see that they are thinking and reasoning much like us.

Most of the day they spend eating and socializing with the colony staying very close together. The adults are not in any real danger but the babies can fall victim to a pack of hyenas or a pride of lions so they are usually always in the center of the herd.

The elephant family is very much like a human family and each one has

their own personality. They are very protective of the young ones and will go out of their way to let you know that. They are pregnant for almost 2 years before having a 250 pound baby that will live for over 50 years.

Our favorite moment with the elephants was when they crossed the road and two large females came out first and faced each direction to block traffic while a newly born baby probably only two months old walk through.



African Paparazzi

In Africa around the camps and the parks you have a mass migration of rich folk with their ultra big lensed cameras on safari to capture the perfect

shot. It is not uncommon to even see a person with 2 or 3 cameras linked together by remote trigger so they can capture different angles at the

same time.

For the animals who are just going about their daily routine it must be very confusing to have 8 safari vehicles circling around you with large glass lens eyes staring and clicking away. The only way most of the big cats can even hunt at all is because you are only allowed in the parks during daylight hours.



"Chicken and rice please."

