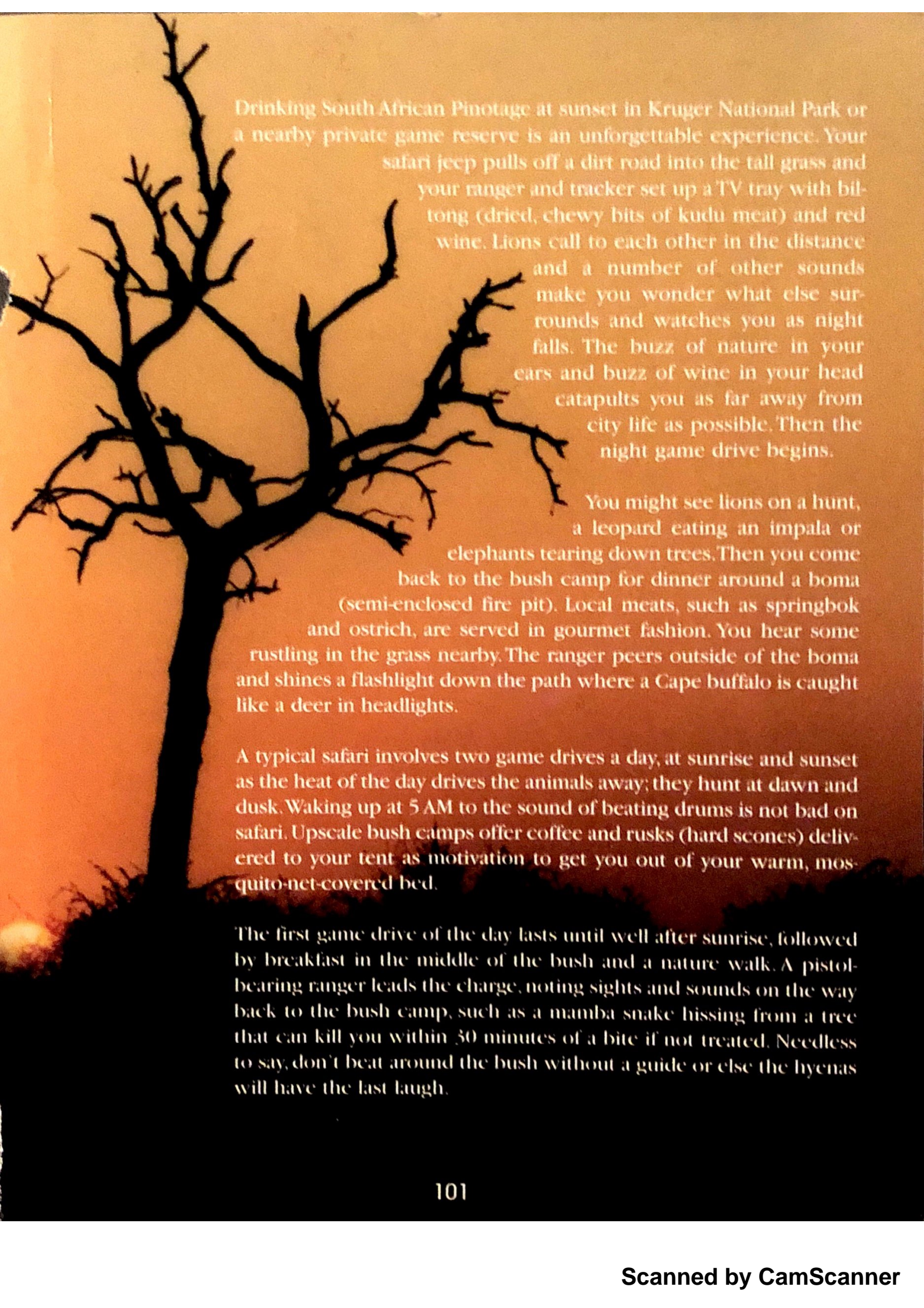


SOUTH AFRICA

GLOBALSCENE
ANGELA DANSEY

For an unusual outdoor adventure, South Africa is the place to go if you don't mind traveling halfway across the world and have at least 10 days to travel. The wildlife is amazingly up close and personal, the culture is an interesting Anglo-Dutch-African-Indian mix and the wine country is spectacular with sprawling estates and grape vines set against a mountainous backdrop. While nature is the country's calling, there is no shortage of great restaurants, bars, and nightlife in major cities. But don't go to South Africa for its club scene. Here, scenery is the scene.



Drinking South African Pinotage at sunset in Kruger National Park or a nearby private game reserve is an unforgettable experience. Your safari jeep pulls off a dirt road into the tall grass and your ranger and tracker set up a TV tray with biltong (dried, chewy bits of kudu meat) and red wine. Lions call to each other in the distance and a number of other sounds make you wonder what else surrounds and watches you as night falls. The buzz of nature in your ears and buzz of wine in your head catapults you as far away from city life as possible. Then the night game drive begins.

You might see lions on a hunt, a leopard eating an impala or elephants tearing down trees. Then you come back to the bush camp for dinner around a boma (semi-enclosed fire pit). Local meats, such as springbok and ostrich, are served in gourmet fashion. You hear some rustling in the grass nearby. The ranger peers outside of the boma and shines a flashlight down the path where a Cape buffalo is caught like a deer in headlights.

A typical safari involves two game drives a day, at sunrise and sunset as the heat of the day drives the animals away; they hunt at dawn and dusk. Waking up at 5 AM to the sound of beating drums is not bad on safari. Upscale bush camps offer coffee and rusks (hard scones) delivered to your tent as motivation to get you out of your warm, mosquito-net-covered bed.

The first game drive of the day lasts until well after sunrise, followed by breakfast in the middle of the bush and a nature walk. A pistol-bearing ranger leads the charge, noting sights and sounds on the way back to the bush camp, such as a mamba snake hissing from a tree that can kill you within 30 minutes of a bite if not treated. Needless to say, don't beat around the bush without a guide or else the hyenas will have the last laugh.

A few days in the surrounding wine country at Stellenbosch are also a must, especially if you're a wine lover or collector. The price is right for shipping home wines unavailable in the United States. Pinotage, a varietal unique to South Africa, has made a name for the country's wine industry, along with lots of other good reds and whites.

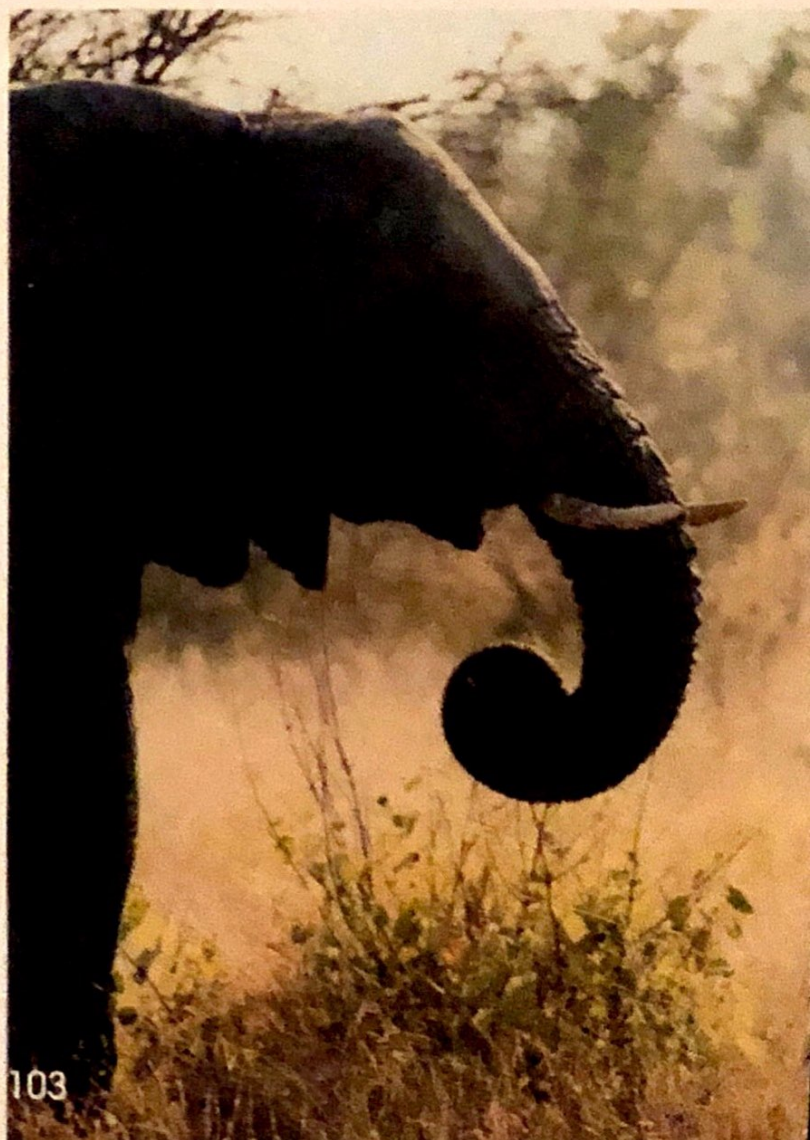
South of Cape Town, the Cape of Good Hope is also worth a visit to see the Atlantic and Indian Oceans collide. Rumor has it the rough waters in this area have caused more shipwrecks than anywhere else in the world.

Off the coast of Cape Town is Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was once exiled. Today it is a memorial to the human suffering caused by the Apartheid government. While these days of oppression are gone, remnants of South Africa's civil strife exist in museums, memorials and subtly in daily life. But South Africans get along quite well now in spite of history.

TIPS

British Airways, Delta, KLM, South African Airways and Virgin Atlantic fly from the United States to South Africa. If you only have 10 days, divide your time between Kruger National Park and the Cape Town area. Head straight to Kruger from Johannesburg, which has the closest international airport to safari land. Domestic flights via South African Airways to the cities of Phalaborwa and Hoedspruit northeast of Jo-berg get you within driving distance of the game reserves.

Winter in South Africa (June-August) is a great time to go on safari as the days are hot and dry, the grass low and watering holes sparse, which allows for better viewing of the animals. Just be prepared for temperature extremes (30°-90° F) as it gets cold when the sun goes down. Cape Town temperatures are mild all year round (50°s-70°s), but the best time to go is from February to April, which is late summer/early fall in the Southern Hemisphere. If you take malaria pills, opt for the newer anti-malarial medication, Malarone, rather than Lariam (mefloquine), which causes a higher percentage of undesirable side effects.





ACCOMMODATIONS

Kruger National Park

You can find indoor accommodations in the bush, but if you're in nature's paradise, why not get as close to it as possible? A compromise is staying in a luxury tent, which has a real bed and toilet with plumbing, but canvas walls so you can fall asleep to the sounds of baboons mating and wake up to an elephant spraying water 20 yards away.

WINE COUNTRY

For a complete listing of vineyards and wine tastings, go to the Stellenbosch Wine Routes web site at <http://routes.wine.co.za/stellenbosch>.

NIGHTCLUBS

No surprise, there are no nightclubs in the bush, just nightlife by way of animals hunting and mating. However, there's a human watering hole (bar) and interesting people in every bush camp.

CAPE TOWN

As the second largest city in South Africa, Cape Town has a number of clubs and lounges with great music and funky crowds.