

TRAVEL: Africa continued...

Our stay at Tshukudu was different and quite enjoyable. We did our game drives in traditional game drive vehicles, but with using the lift on Alfie's truck the transfers were level and with some assistance went smoothly. He even had seat belts to insure the safety of wheelers. The way they have the roads (I use the term loosely) set up we were able to view animals up close and personal. This was an experience that I won't soon forget. We saw a couple of giraffes that we were close enough to count their spots and we were within a few yards of two rhinos.

The first evening there we had a treat, wildebeest for dinner. It was a lot like prime rib and it was really good. We ate in the camps' covered dining room but we could also have had our meal under the stars in a traditional South African "Boma". In the morning we didn't go on a game drive, we all piled into the truck and went up into an area inside the preserve to drop off everyone except those of us in chairs for a stroll with the animals. It was decided that it was best that we not join them because among them was an adolescent lion that would bite at the tires of our chairs. We went to the owner's house to spend the extra time with the two orphan cubs that they were raising. They were both two months old, one was a lion cub and the other was a serval and boy were they cute. We each had a chance to hold them and we watched them play. It was quite an experience!

We had breakfast and then it was time to view the sights of the area. One thing that surprised me was that Africa actually has mountains and that is where we went. Our first stop was an overlook of Brythe River Canyon. We also picnicked in the park near the three Roundavels and we finished out the day's sightseeing at Gods window, a beautiful mountain top overlook that is often above the clouds. At each stop locals were set up selling traditional handicrafts. After a full day of sightseeing we went to the Nyani Tribal Village, which is of the Shangaan cultural heritage. We learned a little about their history and were served their traditional food for dinner and were treated to some of their thrilling traditional dancing -complete with dress!

On our last day we stayed near the Bush Camp at the game lodge. In the morning we got word that Samantha had come to where we could interact with her. Samantha is a full-grown cheetah that roams free in the game park. She was raised by the owner when she was orphaned as a cub. Therefore she is not afraid of people so she will lie down so you can stroke her back. That evening we went on a game drive and also went through the enclosures of their lion-breeding project. I was a bit concerned when Ian strapped on his side arm, but there was no need to be concerned. However, these were wild lions that we were going to be among and caution was in order. Each enclosure is at least an acre in size and houses a male and a couple of females where they let nature take its course. The safari had come to a close and it was time to head back to Johannesburg and that long flight home. I can't say I was looking forward to it, but I found the best way to deal with it was not let myself think about until that day and for the experience of a lifetime it was worth it.

I am convinced more than ever that you can go anywhere you would like, so don't make having a disability the excuse for not going.