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## Maloney's Adventure to South Africa

In May 2007, Brian and I enjoyed our first trip to South Africa. Fabulous, just fabulous! Brian went to hunt and I went to tag along on a few hunts as well as to enjoy the game preserves, sites and shopping of the Eastern Cape. All memorable.

If you have ever wondered if you can travel to South Africa, we can honestly say: if you can travel to Europe or Mexico, you can easily travel to the Port Elizabeth area of the Eastern Cape and neighboring Cape Town in the Western Cape. Almost everyone speaks English and all the signs are in English. Navigating the airports and communities is a synch. Other than they drive on the "wrong" side of the road! If you have never experienced it, it is like an amusement park ride - especially turning corners!

South Africa is an industrialized country, so other than no WalMart on every other corner, you feel like you are somewhere in the US. For the most part, in the towns water is safe to drink. You do you have to be careful about street vendors and out in the countryside. Bottled water is everywhere. The soda is formulated a bit differently (like the Diet Coke and pretty much all "diet" beverages are sweetened with sodium cyclamate besides NutriSweet, it's okay in a pinch), but the coffee and beer taste the same. They have toast, cereal and eggs for breakfast, sandwiches for lunch and steaks and fish for dinner, you know, the usual stuff. Fresh fruit and vegetables are abundant. *BEING* in South Africa is no problem.

There is no getting around the fact the flights over (15 hrs) and back (18 hrs) are long. You just have to prepare yourself and wait it out. We flew on an Airbus with 2 seats on each side and a bank of seats in the middle. I would recommend aisle seats in the middle section, they are a smidge wider and on a full plane you somehow don't feel as cramped in. People do move around during the flight, so it isn't a big deal to sit one in front of the other. For most people, not sitting at the window also isn't a big deal, since 90% of the flight is over water and 70% is "nighttime" on the plane (i.e. lights out and shades down.) We flew South African Air (SAA), maybe it is different with other airlines. Definitely bring along one of those travel pillows - they work great. One guy in our party had one of those triangular blow-up pillows that you put on your tray table and lean forward on; looked a little silly but he said it actually worked pretty good - and on a long flight, that is what matters.

To help pass the time, there were on-demand current movies (not even on cable/satellite yet) that played on personal screens on the seatback right in front of you, with good quality personal headphones. There were also many music channels as well as games and TV shows, with a typical TV remote. Plus they feed you multiple times during the flight, with beverages available all the time. And I have to admit, as far as airline food goes SAA ranks pretty darn close to the top in terms of quality, quantity and variety. I had packed all kinds of snacks and we really didn't munch on them.

When I travel, I have found it helps to get on your destination's time ASAP. Worked pretty good for us going to South Africa. Coming home, I ignored my own advice and it took me 5 days to get back to normal bedtime and rising. Ah, but it was worth it.

Hunting in South Africa is a bit different than hunting in the States. For the most part, South African hunts are high fence, where many species of plains animals are brought in to live wild on the same piece of land. The properties, from 5,000 to 150,000 acres have water holes and natural food sources. Depending upon the species and quality of animal you are looking to harvest, your outfitter chooses from the different land owners he has permission to hunt on.

South African Veld



Brian, can you see the kudu??  
What? Where? Where?



Plettenberg Bay

Blue wildebeest at sunset



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Most hunts are one guide to one hunter, although one guide to two hunter hunts are available. Your guide in Africa is referred to as a PH, a Professional Hunter, an actual certification. Typically, the PH is accompanied by a tracker, usually a local who knows the land and animals. The tracker works with the PH in locating and judging quality animals, and sometimes works to drive the animal into position. The PH shows you where the animal is (MUCH harder than it sounds!), gets you to the animal and into position to take your shot. They also share advice regarding the animal, the terrain, the distance and the shot, and get just as excited as you do when it comes time to set up and take the shot. Typically the tracker is the one mainly responsible for the taking care of the downed animal.

The PHs with our outfitter were amazing. Four hunters were in camp, with 4 PHs who each listened to the needs and desires of his own hunter - and there was quite a variety in our group. Brian is in great physical condition and managed to leave his PH a bit winded a time or two. Another gentleman had some health concerns he needed to keep an eye on. His PH watched over him while also guiding him to great hunting opportunities. Then back to the lodge for lunch and a rest, before heading out for an afternoon hunt. Customized for every hunter. Terrain varied from flat open almost desert land to thick scrub trees to steep shale and rock covered hills/mountains.

Because there are so many game animals on any given piece of property you never know what is around the next corner. Therefore you have to be prepared. What do I mean? Although you may be out for a nice springbok, a huge kudu may step into your line of fire. Such opportunities present themselves quickly and unexpectedly - you have to be ready - ready to make the decision, to shoot or not, and you have to be able to pay the trophy fee, in cash before you leave the country. Don't worry, there are plenty of ATM machines around; if you let your bank know before you head to Africa, it is just a matter of making the withdrawal. Traveler's Checks work well too. Brian started with 5 animals on his list, took 3 more and let a huge 54" kudu walk, much to the sputtering dismay of his PH. He had his one nice kudu and didn't want the expense of another (not just the trophy fee but the taxidermy!) The outfitter and PHs are still shaking their heads! But the kudu is waiting for you!

Trophy fees are set mainly by the land owner; typically, the land owner gets 75% of the trophy fee and the outfitter gets 25%. It is up to the land owner, whether he wants to keep the meat or not. The skull, horns and cape are the hunter's. You can have the taxidermy work done in South Africa and the mount shipped home, or you can have the skull, horns and cape shipped home and have the taxidermy done in the States. There are fees associated with doing the taxidermy stateside: dip-n-pack of the trophies, forwarder fee to monitor the entire packing and shipping, actual shipping fees, dock fees at US port-of-entry, broker fee to monitor clearing of customs, USF&W and USDA inspections, shipping fees to get the trophies from the port-of-entry to your taxidermist, and then the fee from your taxidermist to disinfect and destroy all the crating. Oh, and of course the taxidermy fees. And as you might have gathered by now, it takes time. Best guess suggests, mount on the wall in your living room in about 18 months after the hunt. If you have the taxidermy done in Africa, might be home within 6 months. But for various reasons most folks choose to have the taxidermy done by in the States.

Our experiences just left us wanting more. Hopefully one of these days we will be able to return to explore the rest of the Cape and South Africa. After that, the rest of Africa awaits!

If you'd like more information about planning your adventure to South Africa, get in touch with us. We have many stories to tell and lots more pictures to share!

*Doris and Brian*



Hunters and their trackers

### Day 1: Sighting in the gun



Up close and very personal!

### The Trophies



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