

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

An EXCERPT from DAVID'S DIARY

by David Skillan

For much of my life I've been extremely active, bounding up and down airplane steps and ship gangplanks, travelling the world in a constant quest for adventure. It's been both my job and a way to satisfy my curious nature.

I've hiked in South Africa, New Zealand, the Swiss Alps, the Himalayas, the Black Forest, the Canadian Rockies, and Ireland's Mountains of Mourne.

I've sailed up and down countless waterways and rivers, including Holland's canals, the Thames, the Danube, the Volga, the Rhine, the Zambezi, the Amazon, and the Nile.

I've steamed across the Baltic, Arabian, Tasman, and South China Seas, the Bay of Bengal, the Sea of Japan, the Gulf of Siam, and the Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans.

I've swum in many of the world's lakes.

I've clambered in and out of all manner of boats, jeeps, trucks, buses, planes, helicopters, balloons, pedicabs, rickshaws, yachts, trams, trains, and trolleys. I've ridden Japan's bullet train, camels, donkeys, mules, horses, bicycles, motorbikes, scooters, sleighs, ostriches, and elephants.

I've visited many of the world's most famous places, some many times—the glaciers and volcanoes of Iceland, the Pyramids of Egypt, Australia's Great Barrier Reef, Bolivia's Lake Titicaca, America's Grand Canyon, Jordan's Petra, Italy's Colosseum, Germany's Kurfürstendamm, France's Palace of Versailles, the Great Wall of China, Kenya's Maasai Mara, Turkey's Ephesus, Russia's Red Square, Botswana's Okavango Delta, Costa Rica's rainforest, Uganda's game reserves, Scotland's Edinburgh Castle, Japan's Ginza, Argentina's Iguazu Falls, Morocco's Marrakesh, Iran's Persepolis, Afghanistan's Bamiyan, Tanzania's Serengeti, Chile's Patagonia, Ecuador's Galapagos Islands, Peru's Machu Picchu, Ethiopia's Highlands, Cambodia's Angkor Wat, and India's Taj Mahal.

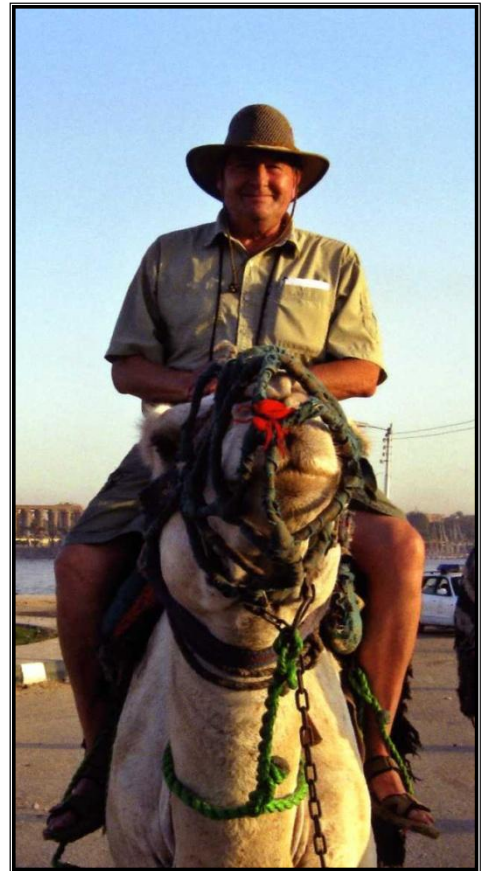
*All that dashing about caught up with me.
My right hip was hurting, and had to be fixed.*

I've stood in line, sometimes for hours on end, to visit the most interesting museums, galleries, churches, temples, mosques, and cathedrals. Much of the time I've had a heavy camera bag over my right shoulder.

And I don't regret a minute of it!

A few years ago, though, all that dashing about caught up with me. Arthritis was bothering me. My right hip was hurting, and had to be fixed. Not for nothing is arthritis known as the wear-and-tear disease! I needed surgery, and the sooner, the better.

I was very philosophical about it. I knew that sooner or later everyone has some kind of health problem. And I



wasn't worried about the operation, as hip and knee surgery is very common these days, and the success rates high. If life were perfect, we wouldn't enjoy or appreciate anything! But I was getting fed up with hobbling around with a limp and a cane. It would be a relief to walk normally again.

In March of 2007, I underwent hip surgery at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver. The doctors replaced my hip with a new one made of titanium. I was up on crutches within 48 hours of surgery, and sent home 24 hours after that.

I had to lie low for a couple of weeks, taking it easy around the house, but I had minimal pain. And the constant ache that had been getting me down before the surgery was completely gone.

By the third week I was able to hobble to and from the HandyDART on my crutches, en route to physiotherapy classes. With other men and women who'd had the same operation, I slowly graduated from basic exercises to more strenuous ones, done waist-deep in the pool, to strengthen my leg and hip muscles. As I recuperated, I looked forward to travelling again, as well as hiking, dancing, and riding my bike.

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After about a month, I threw away my cane. The limp I'd had before and after surgery gradually lessened as I walked more and more. Now it's completely gone.

Since my surgery I've led numerous tours to different parts of the world. Perhaps the most difficult was last year, when I participated in a three-hour hike over densely forested, steep, slippery, up-and-down terrain, in search of Uganda's mountain gorillas. It left me knackered, but I wouldn't have missed it for the world! It was gratifying to find that my new hip stood up to all that arduous effort.

And over the next few months I'll be re-exploring Peru's ancient Machu Picchu ruins and Jordan's famous stone city of Petra, among other places, clambering up and down steps like all the other tourists.

I'd recommend hip-replacement surgery to anyone who's considering it. I can't say enough good things about it. It's wonderful to be fully mobile again, and keeping up my personal appearances all over the globe! →



*David Skillan leads tours to exotic locales several times each year.
For information, please visit www.skillansafaris.com/david-skillan-tours.html.*