

DAVID SKILLAN'S WORLD OF TRAVEL . . .

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2008/2009

Travelling the World Since 1951 → Leading Tours Since 1970

Dear Fellow Traveller:

Compliments of the season! It was my intention to have this newsletter out some time ago, but there were so many interruptions over the Christmas and end-of-year festivities, including record snowfalls, that it didn't happen.

I am recently home from two wonderful back-to-back tours. In October I travelled to **Kenya and Tanzania**, and in November I toured **Egypt and Jordan**. In both destinations we had nearly perfect weather—hot, sunny days and beautiful, balmy evenings. As usual on my annual **East African safari**, we saw just about everything, such as 34 lion that included four magnificent mating couples. You name it, we saw it. As well as plenty of the Big Five and countless giraffe, impala, topi, hyena, and hippo, we spotted a caracal (a lynx-like cat) hiding in some bushes and a serval cat darting through the grass. One is lucky to see either a caracal or a serval in ten tours, let alone both in one trip! We also saw many baby animals, including adorable lion and cheetah cubs. We watched with bated breath as a group of zebra and wildebeest rushed headlong across the Mara River, observed by hungry crocodiles. Luckily, they all made it safely across. Just one of the many awe-inspiring sights we enjoyed.

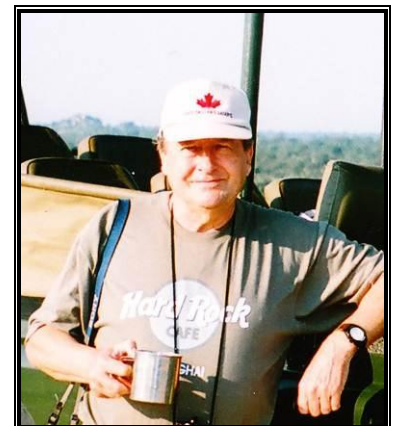
My latest tour of **Egypt and Jordan** was also very rewarding. As usual, my great friend and right hand Fouad Salah stole the show in Egypt, providing us with an extraordinary tour of his exotic land and proudly explaining the finer points of the temples of Abu Simbel, Philae, Kom Ombo, and Karnak. Also as usual, all the ladies fell for him. Like all charming men, he has a way about him that women can't seem to resist. As for Jordan's Pink City of Petra, it has to be seen in person to be really appreciated. In my opinion, it ranks right up there with Peru's Lost City of the Incas, Machu Picchu.

You may recall reading in my autumn newsletter that last summer I visited the Maritimes with a friend. This year, as well as the tours listed in my newsletter and on my website—**South Africa, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania**, and **Egypt and Jordan**—I intend to visit more places that are closer to home. In May I am going to spend two weeks exploring the Canyons of America with friends, then in August I hope to spend another two weeks in the Yukon, also with friends. It will be my first time to the far North, and I am greatly looking forward to it.

By the time you read this, I shall be on safari in **Botswana**, enjoying the peace of the African bush while watching herds of zebra and blue wildebeest quietly graze. In the African bush, such calm is frequently punctuated by adrenalin rushes as exciting events suddenly unfold. You'll find an article about the drama of a Botswana wildlife safari on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter. (It's also on my website; see "Botswana—The 'In' Place for Safaris" under the heading "Articles" at <http://www.skillansafaris.com/david-skillan-newsletter.html>.)

A few years ago, while on safari in his beautiful country, I met Ian Khama, then vice-president and now president of Botswana. Ian's mother, Ruth Williams, was a friend of my mother's who on several occasions babysat me when I was a toddler in England. This was some years before she met and married Seretse Khama, Ian's father, a union that made world news at the time. Like Barack Obama, but considerably less famous, Ian Khama is the son of a black father and white mother. It will be interesting to see how well Khama and Obama cope in managing the affairs of their respective countries (not to mention much of the world, in Obama's case). While I wish Obama all the luck he's going to need, I do not envy him the formidable challenges he faces, including the totally impossible one of trying to please everybody!

In February I depart on my annual tour of **South Africa and Zambia**. A few places are still left, so please let Wild Africa Safaris know if you or someone you know may be interested in joining us. As I have often said, it is my favourite tour (but not to be confused with my favourite country, New Zealand).



With love . . .

Regardless of the negative stuff one reads in the newspapers, South Africa is the most wondrous of African countries, with absolutely everything, from an extremely pleasant climate most of the year to magnificent scenery, splendid game reserves, and very high standards of food, service, and accommodation. To read the details of this spectacular tour, please browse the overview on page 6 and the article about Cape Town on page 9 of this newsletter, or check my website at <http://www.skillansafaris.com/david-skillan-tours.html>.

I had to cancel my April tour of **Australia and New Zealand**, and for good reason: it seems that most of my regular clients have been there. Not too surprising—they know a good thing when they see it! As I am anxious to go back in the near future, I may go on my own, unless somebody wants to join me. If so, by all means call me at 604-261-4656 or e-mail davidskillan@skillansafaris.com, and we'll work something out.

You'll notice that some of my 2009 tours do not yet have prices. (The list of tours is on pages 6 to 8 of this newsletter and at <http://www.skillansafaris.com/david-skillan-tours.html>). That's because of how the Canadian dollar is fluctuating against the US dollar, and of course all the uncertainty in the news. The price for the tour of South Africa and Zambia is still valid, because it is pegged to the South African rand. I will post full details for all my tours, including prices, as soon as I know them, so please check my website or call **Wild Africa Safaris** at 604-519-1610 or 800-991-6111 for updates.

I must admit that it almost seems inappropriate to be promoting travelling right now. But hey, you know what? No matter how extreme the circumstances, life goes on. Indeed, while my heart aches for those who lose their jobs, many people are unaffected by the global financial crisis, and in recent weeks I have had a number of inquiries about my 2009 tours. There is no point in sitting at home, cringing in fear or wringing our hands in despair. That doesn't get anybody anywhere! As I pointed out in a previous newsletter, people will always travel, but in the future they will be more selective and discerning than before. A good thing!

If you have not seen my website recently, I invite you to take a look when you have the opportunity. I have added quite a few pictures to my slide show (<http://www.skillansafaris.com/david-skillan-slide-show.html>), as well as some revised and updated articles (<http://www.skillansafaris.com/david-skillan-newsletter.html>). I will add more in due course. I have not yet even touched my vast collection of colour slides, which includes many unusual shots, so stay tuned to my website for many more over the coming months.

What a tumultuous year 2008 has been! No doubt about it, the world is in a sorry state, thanks to man's folly—greed and stupidity. It is truly pathetic. When, oh when will people realize that happiness and contentment do not lie in material wealth or in fighting one another? The less said about our leading politicians, the better. I have never seen such a childish public display among grown men jockeying for power. When I was younger, I always wondered why older people were so cynical about politicians. Now I know.

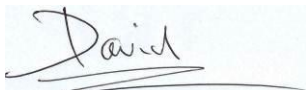
I had fully intended to add my view of all that has been happening around the world, but decided there is enough bad news without my going on and on about it. The media are doing a good job of that. When I predicted, in my summer newsletter, that big changes would occur in the airline and travel industries over the next few years, I didn't know exactly what was in store! I will say, however, that I was not too surprised to learn about the global financial crisis. The party had to end sometime—we cannot go on raping the world and spending money we don't have. My great concern is that the SOBs—damned crooks and swindlers—who got the world into this mess will be left loose to do it again. We must not let them get away with it.

As an eternal optimist, and one who has had his fair share of hardship and very tough times (including my first ten years in Canada), I have learned through experience that every cloud has a silver lining, even though it may not be obvious right away. I believe some good will come out of all this bad news. Hopefully, it will make people more considerate of one another, as trying times often do.

You may notice that I have added “conservationist” after my name at the bottom of this newsletter. I have been a conservationist for most of my adult life, but never advertised the fact before. Now I will, as I hope—and expect—to do more about it than I have in the past.

Wishing you and all your loved ones good health, and much happiness and prosperity—no matter the dire predictions—for 2009. *Safari njema* (travel safely), wherever you may go. And please be so kind as to tell your friends and relatives about my thrilling safaris and tours.

Yours in everlasting travel,



David (Around the World in Eighty Months) Skillan

Incurable romantic, free spirit, conservationist, and your man in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere . . . ➔



Excerpts from Recent E-Mails, Cards, and Letters

“How does one say thank you for the trip of a lifetime? You showed us a part of the world that has given us a very different view of our world. It was a life-altering experience! Thank you for your expert guidance and for making the tour a superior experience. We will happily recommend your tours and you as tour leader, even though you tell untruths—going swimming in your loincloth! Looking forward to getting your video, which will greatly enhance ours!”
~Larry and Anita F. (Langley, BC)

“Pleased to get your newsletter, as usual, with info on your tours past, upcoming, and planned. Doreen and I are definitely interested in your tour to Japan, and April/May 2010 sounds good. Please add us to your list, as we are excited about going there with you and your wife, Yuriko.”
~ Jack S. (Calgary, AB)

“Can’t wait for more photos to be added to your slide show. You seem to be at home and comfortable in every place you visit. You look so relaxed. I envy you this wonderful lifestyle. Doing what you love is the best profession!”
~Gisele R. (Nanose Bay, BC)

“Great new website! Botswana was truly one of the very best trips I have taken. Now contemplating Uganda next September. Will think long and hard about it.”
~Marlene W. (Osoyoos, BC)

(Together with her late husband Murray, Marlene took five tours with me—to Kenya, Cuba, the Orient, Ecuador, and Egypt. She and her daughter Vicki of Prince George also went to Botswana with me last January. ~DS)

“What a fun, memorable trip—laughs and memories for years to come. I can hardly believe I was really in East Africa and am already back! The experience impacted my life more than I imagined. Looking forward to the DVD.”
~Gerry S. (Richmond, BC)

*“Your newsletters have often inspired me . . . to go travelling
. . . and to write my own memoirs for family and posterity!”*

“A great trip to East Africa. You have not seen the last of me!”
~Lis D. (Whitehorse, YT)

“Your newsletters have often inspired me, not only to go travelling, but also in others ways, including to write my own memoirs for family and posterity!”
~John M. (Victoria, BC)

“We’ve met some great people, visited sights we’ve only read about, and now have some wonderful memories for the rest of our lives.”
~Maureen and Les O. (Ottawa, ON)

“So glad I decided to join your tour. I’m still reeling from the entire amazing Egypt and Jordan experience; it was just incredible. Thanks to you and your expertise! Gratefully . . .”
~Lynn D. (Vancouver, BC)

“My mother enjoys travelling with you, and I like working with you!”
~Anne B. (Richmond, BC)

(Anne is my much-needed and long-overdue computer instructor. ~DS)

“Thanks so much for all your sincere efforts to give us the very best time on our tour of Kenya and Tanzania.”
~Carole O. (Richmond, BC)

“I would like to tell you again: you have made most of my travel dreams come true, and I am forever grateful. Sadly, I have bad knees and cannot travel long distances anymore, but my thoughts and best wishes are with you.”
~Rita A. (Saltspring Island, BC)

Your pleasure is my pleasure! Always so nice to hear from satisfied clients!
~DS →

Botswana

The "In" Place for Safaris

Bob Hope and Bing Crosby fished there. Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton got married there the second time. Where? In Maun, once an obscure, isolated town on the banks of the Okavango River in Botswana, southern Africa.

I first went to Botswana in 1965, after spending fourteen months in the Republic of South Africa while working my way around the world. Ten years later, I wrote about Botswana in *The Toronto Star* and other newspapers. I have been back several times in the last few years, leading photo safaris.

In recent years, Botswana has become a favourite safari destination for those in the know, thanks to its sustainable tourism, luxurious tented camps, and daily game drives in open safari vehicles piloted by highly qualified local guides. The authorities wisely acknowledge that they want high-end tourists, rather than budget travellers. Botswana has also become better known through a series of widely read mystery novels by Alexander McCall Smith, the most popular being *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*. Yet, despite the influx of visitors from around the world, most of the country remains unspoiled.



Formerly the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland, Botswana used to be a relatively poor country, known mainly for its cattle industry and its famous Kalahari Desert. Today it is best known for its diamond, tourism, and manufacturing industries, as well as for its peace and tranquility. Thanks to these favourable factors and stable government, Botswana is one of Africa's great success stories.

Entirely landlocked, Botswana is bordered in the south and east by the Republic of South Africa, in the northeast by Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia), and in the north and west by Namibia. It covers 220,000 square miles, which is comparable to the island of Madagascar. Its climate is subtropical. The capital city, Gaborone, which was literally hacked out of the bush in the early 1960s, is the largest town, followed closely by Francistown.

Several native tribes make up the country's population of nearly two million, including the few-and-far-between Bushmen who inhabit the Kalahari (now called the San people and, sadly, a dying breed) and several thousand caucasians, mostly from South Africa. After independence from the British in 1966, the first prime minister and subsequent president of the Republic of Botswana was Sir Seretse Khama, a former paramount chief and leader in the independence movement who went to Oxford to study law and made headlines in 1948 when he married Ruth Williams, an English woman. Both are now deceased. Today, their eldest son, Ian Khama, former vice-president and Botswana Defence Force head, as well as a dedicated conservationist, is the president of Botswana, having taken over the role from the internationally respected Festus Mogae.

The country is dominated by the vast Kalahari Desert in the southwest, the Okavango Delta in the northwest, and the Makgadikgadi, a massive salt pan, in the north. Also in the north is the 4,250-square-mile Chobe National Park. Named after the Chobe River, one of the main tributaries of the Zambezi, the park boasts some of the richest wildlife in the country and is a 90-minute drive from the world-famous Victoria Falls.

In the extreme northeast lies the area known as Ngamiland, the main feature of which is the Okavango River. Rising in Angola, this considerable river dissipates most of its flow into 6,500 square miles of the desert to form the Okavango Delta, or Okavango Swamp. This inland delta is home to hippo, crocodile, the Big Five, many species of antelope (including sable, kudu, waterbuck, impala, eland, tsessebe, lechwe, and sitatunga), and no fewer than 350 species of birds (including the relatively rare Pel's fishing owl). Marshy and covered in ten-foot-high papyrus reeds, and surrounded by woodland and savannah, much of the swamp remains virtually unexplored.

Maun, an insignificant, sleepy little town consisting of just a few wood and metal buildings when I first went there, is a stone's throw from the edge of the swamp. Today it is large and busy, the centre of Botswana's safari and tourism industry.

Big-game hunting, now long restricted, used to be one of the country's most valuable resources. Between the mid-1960s (after Kenya and Tanzania got independence) and the mid-1970s, several well-known East Africans—including Harry Selby, Kenya's most famous white hunter—expanded into the region to establish their own hunting camps. They have since been replaced by photo-safari companies and exclusive tented camps with romantic-sounding names like Duma Tau, Savuti, Jao, Xigera, Little Mombo, and Kings Pool.

The camps have to be seen to be believed. Staffed by cheerful local people who happily prepare gourmet meals, pour sundowners, and attend to a hundred and one other duties, these artfully constructed camps offer every amenity under the sun while blending into their natural surroundings. The bedrooms and bathrooms are comfortable and luxurious, with private plunge pools and balconies or verandahs overlooking waterholes or plains and never-ending parades of wildlife. Nighttime campfires invite everyone to relax with a gin and tonic or whiskey sour, swapping stories about the day's events.

*The camps have to be seen to be believed.
They are artfully constructed to blend into their natural surroundings
while offering every amenity under the sun.*

There are two ways of getting to Maun—by air and by road. A number of African airlines fly into Francistown and Gaborone. Regular daily service operates to both cities, where you can transfer to a light aircraft such as a Cessna 206 to complete your trip. The main roads today are all tarred, but there are few of them, and a journey by automobile is invariably long and tiring. You have to stop frequently to give way to impala, giraffe, zebra, and huge elephant herds. It's much quicker and more convenient to go by air.

Once at Maun, you can hire an African guide with a dugout canoe called a *morokoro* and explore the swamp. Your guide will be armed with a razor-sharp machete, to cut a channel through the dense reeds. As you penetrate deeper into the swamp, you'll encounter some of Africa's loveliest, wildest scenery.

Come dusk, you'll haul the dugout onto the nearest patch of firm, dry land and make camp. By day, except for occasional birdsong, it's uncannily silent in the swamp, but at night the bush comes alive with the croaking of frogs, the occasional yelping of hyena, and the growling of a nearby male lion. At first light you may spot a pack of wild dog splashing through the water in pursuit of a leaping impala, a lone elephant taking a drink, or three or four giraffe staring over the papyrus reeds.

How much game you see in the swamp depends on chance, but at the very least, you'll have the satisfaction of blazing your own trail in a remote, peaceful area that is still unspoiled, unpolluted, and untamed.



For information about David Skillan's annual safari to Botswana and Zambia, please turn to page 7 of this newsletter or visit www.skillansafaris.com/david-skillan-tours.html. ➔

WILD AFRICA SAFARIS
Proudly Presents
DAVID SKILLAN'S AFRICA
An Overview of Upcoming African Tours and Safaris

"I speak of Africa and golden joys"

~William Shakespeare, *Henry IV*, Act 5, Scene 3

"Africa grabs a piece of your heart and never quite lets go"

~Robert Ruark, author of *Uhuru*, *The Honey Badger*, and *Poor No More*

"On safari . . . each breath you draw gives pleasure. You wake each day with a new sense of wonder"

~Elspeth Huxley, author of *The Mottled Lizard* and *The Flame Trees of Thika*

"My beloved Africa"

~DS

SOUTH AFRICA & ZAMBIA TOUR

Departs February 18, 2009 → 18 wonderful days → \$7,995 per person (sharing)

Described as "a world in one country," the breathtakingly beautiful South Africa is one of the most diverse countries on earth. Our incomparable tour, which includes both city and safari, goes to Capetown (one of the world's loveliest cities), Durban, and Pretoria, as well as the world-renowned wineries, Cape of Good Hope, Blyde River Canyon, Zululand, Swaziland, sensational Sun City, Mpumalanga, Kruger National Park, Hluehluwe Game Reserve, and day and night game drives in open safari vehicles. Take in the scenic Panorama route, and visit a penguin colony and rhino sanctuary, as well as the magnificent Drakensburg Mountains. In Zambia, we visit Livingstone, the adventure capital, during a two-day excursion to the awe-inspiring Victoria Falls, a sunset cruise on the mighty Zambezi River, and a thrilling optional helicopter, ultralight, or elephant-back ride. We'll sip fine wines, enjoy gourmet meals, and experience close encounters with extraordinary bird and other wildlife. You can extend the tour with an extra three days at an exotic beach resort in Mozambique's famed Bazaruto Archipelago. **Seize the moment—book now!**

UGANDA WILDLIFE SAFARI

Departs September 6, 2009 → 17 memorable days → Price TBA

Often referred to as "the Pearl of Africa," Uganda is a lush, green, tropical land with some of Africa's friendliest people and a safari circuit that encompasses breathtaking landscapes. You'll see Africa's Big Five (lion, leopard, elephant, rhino, and buffalo) and hundreds of other animals, including four different species of jackal, pygmy antelope, Nile crocodile, bush pig, giant forest hog, and the Uganda cob, Uganda's national antelope. Uganda is a birdwatchers' paradise, boasting the largest concentration of birds in all of Africa—more than 1,000 species. Our tour includes Lake Victoria (the largest lake in Africa), the Ruwenzoris (the Mountains of the Moon) and the acclaimed national parks of Murchison Falls, Queen Elizabeth, Kibale and Bwindi (the rainforests that are home to the mountain gorillas), and Ngamba Island (a sanctuary for chimpanzees). All this and much more, including the finest accommodations. **September is one of the loveliest times to visit Uganda, so please get your name on the list soon.**



KENYA & TANZANIA SAFARI

Departs October 3, 2009 → 18 thrilling days → Price TBA

The ultimate adventure . . . the two most famous safari destinations in Africa . . . a romantic journey that many dream about, but few experience. This thrilling tour of East Africa includes the finest game lodges and tented camps, splendid game-rich wilderness, and the magical Serengeti Plains, Ngorongoro Crater, Mounts Kenya and Kilimanjaro, Masai Mara, Aberdares, Samburu, Lakes Nakuru, Naivasha, and Manyara, and the Olduvai Gorge (the Cradle of Mankind). Take a balloon ride over the East African plains and visit a Masai village, the Karen Blixen Museum, and more. The perfect tour for those who have long yearned to see a wildlife spectacle unrivalled anywhere in the world. October coincides with the great migration of wildebeest and zebra—often called the greatest show on earth. Imagine warm, sunny days, spectacular scenery, and amazing experiences: they're all yours on this incomparable trip! This tour can be extended to conclude with the island of Zanzibar or Kenya's Coral Coast. ***Don't miss out on this, our most popular tour!***

EGYPT & JORDAN TOUR

Departs November 4, 2009 → 16 unforgettable days → Price TBA

Join us in the land of pharaohs, mystery, and enchantment! This exciting tour includes Cairo, Memphis, Aswan, Luxor, the Pyramids of Giza, the Valley of the Kings, a four-night Nile cruise, and the famous temples of Abu Simbel, Philae, Edfu, Kom-Ombo, and Karnak. Visit the renowned Egyptian Museum, ride a camel, watch a belly-dance display, haggle for souvenirs, take a horse and buggy ride, sail in a felucca, and peer into King Tut's Tomb. You'll also be transfixed by the wildly beautiful country of Jordan, as we follow in the footsteps of Lawrence of Arabia, explore the World Heritage Site of Wadi Rum, and visit the extraordinary forgotten Rose City of Petra, one of the newly named Seven Wonders of the World. ***If you've always wanted to see one of the world's greatest ancient civilizations, this is the trip for you!***

BOTSWANA & ZAMBIA SAFARI

Departs in January, 2010 → Duration TBA → Price TBA

This exclusive connoisseur's tour features luxurious tented camps, masses of wildlife, and visits to Moremi Game Reserve, Vumbura Plains, Linyanti, Okavanga Delta, and Victoria Falls. You can read about Botswana on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter. ***Then watch our website and upcoming newsletters for details about this first-class adventure!***

***. . . And Collette Vacations Proudly Presents
DAVID SKILLAN'S JAPAN***

JAPANESE CHERRY BLOSSOM TOUR

Departs in April, 2010 → Duration TBA → Price TBA

Visit the fascinating cities of Tokyo, Hakone, Kyoto, Nagano, Takayama, Kanazawa, Otsu, and Hiroshima. ***Watch our website and future newsletters for details about this thrilling trip!***

Writer, photographer, and adventurer David Skillan has travelled, lived, and worked all over the world, including Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa. He's had a love affair with Africa since 1962, when he first set foot there.

Since 1970, David has hosted more than 200 foreign tours, including more than 100 to Africa—Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Zaire, Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. He spends four to five months of each year travelling the world, mostly to African destinations.

He has been publishing newsletters about his life, travels, and tours since 1978. →

EXCLUSIVE

The David Skillan Travel Collection

A Special Series of the Finest Personally Escorted Tours and Safaris

| 2009 | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------------------|
| February 18 | SOUTH AFRICA & ZAMBIA TOUR | 18 days | \$7,995 | Wild Africa Safaris |
| September 6 | UGANDA WILDLIFE SAFARI | 17 days | Price TBA | Wild Africa Safaris |
| October 3 | KENYA & TANZANI SAFARI | 18 days | Price TBA | Wild Africa Safaris |
| November 4 | EGYPT & JORDAN TOUR | 16 days | Price TBA | Wild Africa Safaris |
| 2010 | | | | |
| January | BOTSWANA & ZAMBIA SAFARI | TBA | Price TBA | Wild Africa Safaris |
| April | JAPANESE CHERRY BLOSSOM TOUR | TBA | Price TBA | Collette Vacations |
| <p><i>Tour prices are per person, in Canadian dollars. Prices include all international and domestic flights (round-trip from Vancouver, Canada, though you can make your own flight arrangements and meet your tour), fine accommodations, most meals, and all sightseeing, as outlined in the respective itineraries. Taxes are extra. All dates, itineraries, and prices are subject to change. Most tours can be extended at the ends.</i></p> | | | | |

David Skillan's tours are promoted and marketed exclusively by Wild Africa Safaris of New Westminster, BC, and Collette Vacations of Mississauga, ON. For full details about a tour or safari, including the itinerary and booking information, please contact the tour operator indicated in the schedule above.

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| <p>Wild Africa Safaris</p> <p>Suite 104 713 Columbia Street New Westminster, BC V3M 1B2 Canada</p> <p>800-991-6111 or 604-519-1610</p> <p>africa@wildafricasafari.com www.wildafricasafari.com</p> | <p>Collette Vacations</p> <p>Suite 6A 5761 Glover Road Langley, BC V3A 8M8 Canada</p> <p>800-468-5955 Extension 4098</p> <p>elliott@collettevacations.ca www.collettevacations.ca</p> |
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Call now for colour brochures and detailed itineraries! →

A Visit to Cape Town

. . . One of My Favourite Cities

Reprinted by popular request, this article covers the full day of leisure we spend in this lovely city during our popular annual spring tour of South Africa. We usually spend the other couple of days in the region sightseeing at the Cape of Good Hope and visiting some of South Africa's famous wineries, before heading north to Durban, Pretoria, Kruger National Park, and Victoria Falls, with plenty of interesting stops in between. For details, please turn to page 6 of this newsletter or visit <http://www.skillsafaris.com/david-skillan-tours.html>.

It's a long way to Cape Town, where I once lived for a little over a year, but the journey is well worth it. Every year I go back to this exceptionally beautiful place, usually in February or March, when it is sunny and hot—unlike July and August, when it is winter in the Southern Hemisphere and can be very wet and cold as the famous southeasters blow.

After a typically sumptuous South African breakfast at the hotel (I can't get enough of the tropical fruits—fresh mango, watermelon, and pineapple), I either walk or take a shuttle or local bus, depending on where we are staying, to the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront. There I gaze at the always-bustling harbour and Table Mountain (if it's not covered in cloud), and watch the Cape Coloured musicians performing their lively tunes and antics. Then I hop onto a red double-decker bus for a tour of the city and the most popular beaches before it gets too hot. One can get on and off the bus at such interesting stops as the National Museum, the Planetarium, the Castle, Table Mountain Cableway, and St. George's Cathedral, where Archbishop Desmond Tutu still conducts the occasional sermon.

Back at the waterfront, I buy a ticket into the renowned Two Oceans Aquarium, to observe sharks, penguins, stingrays, and the amazing variety of other weird and wonderful marine life found in the southern waters of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. Then it's a stroll through the nearby Red Shed, to admire the original merchandise and artwork that is produced in South Africa.

When it's time for lunch, I go next door to the Cape Town Fish Market, which offers a choice of fresh seafood, sushi, or fish and chips—I usually order the catch of the day—together with an ice-cold Lion or Castle lager. Or I may choose to sit outside at one of the many harbour-facing restaurants and share my meal with squawking seagulls.



Next stop is Marcel's, for a strawberry-, banana-, or toffee-flavored treat—the most delicious frozen yogurt you will find anywhere. It's then time to purchase a ticket for a launch tour of the harbour, a rewarding way to take in the endlessly fascinating parade of fishing boats, ferries, and yachts, with plenty of up-close-and-personal sightings of Cape fur seals and dolphins. Once I even got to go on board a South African navy submarine. Other interesting excursions worth considering include Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden and a trip by catamaran to Robben Island, site of the prison where Nelson Mandela spent many years.

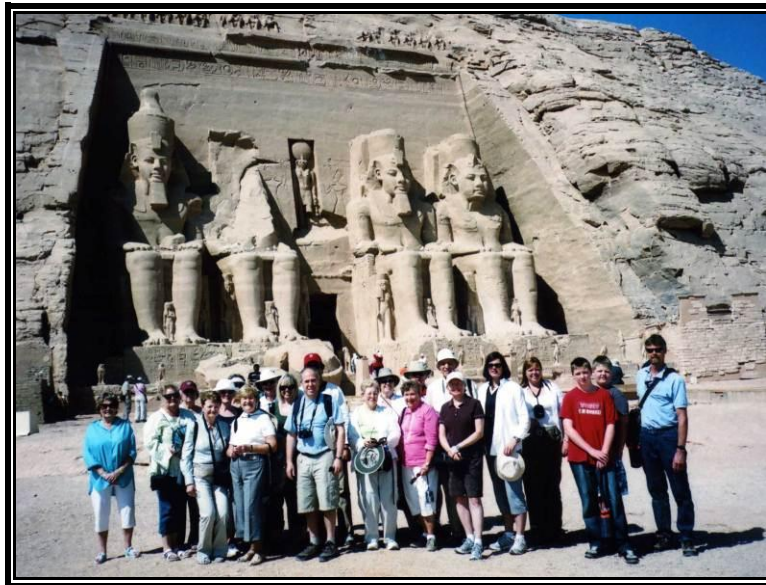
Back on shore, I usually mooch around the stylish and trendy shops, boutiques, and stores, to see what's new, before returning to the hotel. There I shower and change before heading out again to a nearby restaurant for dinner. As Cape Town is very cosmopolitan, there is a huge selection of good, reasonably-priced local, international, and ethnic restaurants. Or I may decide to stay in and relax at the hotel with a glass or two of fine South African wine and a plate of cheese and crackers.

Then it's early to bed, to be ready for another full and exciting day . . . ➔

This newsletter comes to you with our compliments.

It is intended to create a greater awareness of the world we live in, to promote worldwide travel and tourism, and to motivate you to get up and go.

The time to go is now! →



David Skillan's tour members at Abu Simbel Temple, Egypt, in November, 2008.

***Relive your exciting journey
with our exclusive, customized souvenir video!***

A 90- to 120-minute DVD or videotape of your tour includes the sights you've seen, the places you've visited, and the major highlights and adventures you've enjoyed.

Featuring you and your fellow tour members in exotic locales, the video or DVD is available at the end of your trip for a nominal sum. It provides a comprehensive record of your trip and makes a cherished family memento.

"Had some of our fellow tour members over for dinner and to watch the DVD, and just loved it," a tour member from Tsawwassen e-mailed us. "We laughed and laughed at the fun we'd had. It was just like being back there!" →

Words of Wisdom . . .

"To have what you want, you have to do what it takes."

~Dr. Phil

"Always laugh when you can. It is good medicine."

~Lord Byron

"There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

~William Shakespeare

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"Adventure is the champagne of life!"

~G. K. Chesterton