



The Compact Traveller

THE WILD ISSUE



TREVOR NELSON

CAN A CITY BOY HACK IT IN THE BUSH? THE CELEBRATED DJ TAKES UP THE CHALLENGE IN AFRICA

24 HOURS

>4>5
VANCOUVER,
GATEWAY TO THE
GREAT OUTDOORS

THE FAMILY

>9
OFF-PISTE WITH
THE CHILDREN
IN Gstaad

INSIDE TRACK

>10>11
THE BEST NEW
HOLIDAYS IN
THE WILDERNESS



Savour in moderation. drinkaware.co.uk

Salopettes

or *Sarong?*



Let the conversation flow

Smooth, rich Martell cognac. Serve with good friends to bring warmth, delight and inspiration to any evening.



How to survive in the bush: AN URBANE GUIDE

Beware of creepy-crawlies

One evening it was our turn to do the washing-up. I was outside the kitchen when I heard a scream from Dillon, our director. I investigated and saw the largest spider in Namibia. Even the spider-lovers were put off by its fangs. Far worse than a cheetah, this was the real Africa.



It's good to (really) talk

It might sound ridiculous but try to rediscover the art of real conversation. It's something we have forgotten in the UK with our mobile phones glued to our ears all the time. One of the highlights of my trip was chatting round the open fire each night, putting the world to rights.



Raise a glass ... often

Drink a lot of water. Force yourself if need be, particularly when doing any physical activity. It sounds obvious, but we are just not used to this kind of heat. It's easy to underestimate the effects of dehydration on your body. If you don't drink you'll die. Simple!



"Buff up" for the bush

Get fit. If you want to do anything more active than lie on a sun-lounger and reach for a cocktail, then you should think about toning up at the gym. The last thing you need in the bush is to be excessively overweight. This kind of heat will expose any lack of stamina.



Buckle up, knuckle down

Learn how to drive off-road. You might think a serious 4x4 vehicle can get you out of anything but there are techniques that you'll need which run counter to normal driving instincts (see the "challenge" box). Never go out alone – getting stranded in the bush is bad enough even with company...



Keep in touch ...

Just in case you do get stranded take a satellite phone, so that someone can rescue you. It's much easier than trying to learn how to use a compass and a winch. Oh yes, and bring a good book. Without TV, PlayStation or your iPod, it's the next best form of entertainment.



Step in the right direction

Wear robust trainers or lightweight, hiking boots. If you were to get a thorn through your foot – as one of our crew members did – or catch a glimpse of one of those giant creepy-crawlies clambering over your toes, well, it's enough to put you off flip-flops for the rest of your life.



Top DJ **Trevor Nelson** turned down the music to spend a week in the company of cheetahs and leopards in Namibia. The conservation work he did was recorded for 'The Lick', which will be broadcast on MTV tonight. Scary? You bet. And that was just driving the Land Rover...

CITY BOY ANIMAL INSTINCTS

When I was offered the opportunity to track cheetahs, leopards and hyenas in Namibia on the west coast of Africa, the crew of *The Lick* – the show I present on MTV – and I knew that it was a once-in-a-lifetime journey that just had to be documented on camera. So the boys and I snapped up the invitation from Land Rover to hook up with one of their global conservation partners, Biosphere Expeditions. We jumped on a plane to the motherland that is Africa to take a look at Namibia's fascinating landscape, wildlife and people for a special programme.

Normally, I can't live without my Sky+, internet access, mobile phone and PlayStation portable. So roughing it in the African savannah while throwing my efforts into conservation work monitoring the Namibian cheetah, leopard and brown hyena appeared to be the ultimate challenge.

Namibia gained its independence from South Africa just 15 years ago and is one of the world's youngest nations. It's three times the size of Britain, but has a population of just under two million. And it has distinct wet and dry seasons. At the time of our trip the daytime temperatures consistently hit a stifling 40C.

DAY ONE

The action started as soon as we landed when Rob Timke, our South African Land Rover instructor, put me through some



intense off-road driving tuition. Apart from the main Tarmac roads, it's all sand and rocky tracks so we were quickly taught how to put the vehicles through their paces. The mountains were teeming with wildlife, and after stopping at the lake to see the formidable crocodiles hungrily eyeing us up, we stumbled across kudus, springbok, baboons and herds of giraffe.

By the end of the day we had climbed 2,000 metres through rugged terrain, avoiding the lethal thorns that could have ripped through the tyres and forced us to change them on the mountain edge while frying in the heat. Reaching the summit was an awesome experience. We surveyed the landscape below, pumped with adrenaline after the drive up. By the time we hit the downward trail I had been driving for seven hours, and exhaustion was seeping through me.

That night we dined at the

lodge where I (slightly guiltily) tucked into the GamePan. It was a delicious meat feast of the kudu, springbok and antelope that I had seen hours earlier. I crawled into bed. If I had had my TV with me I would have watched it for hours. But the only entertainment was being terrorised by the sound of hooves at the door. A giraffe was outside. It wasn't your regular middle-of-the-night occurrence, but definitely more interesting than reruns of *I'm a Celebrity...*

DAY TWO

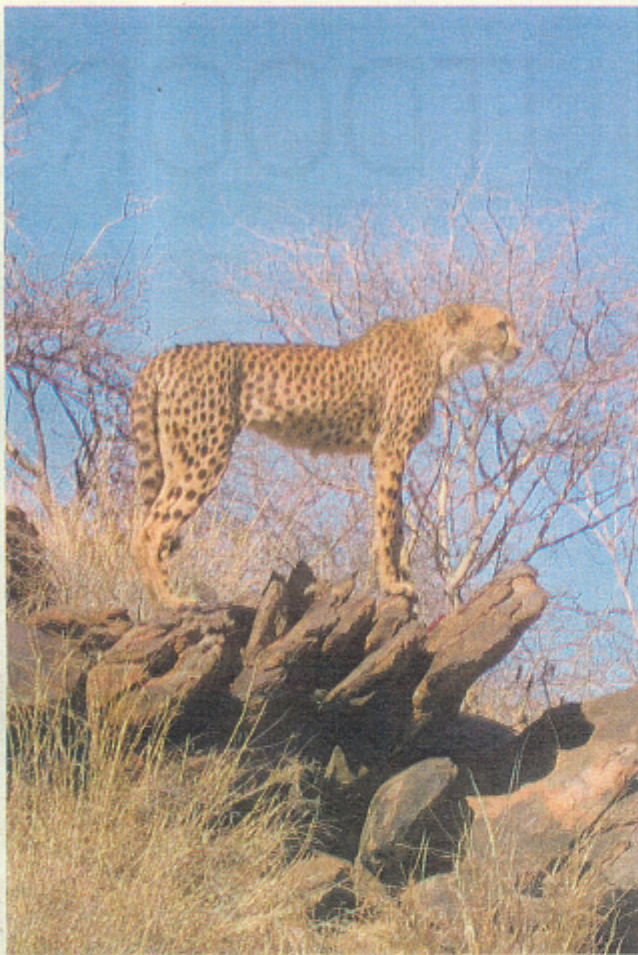
An early start as we head for a cheetah sanctuary. I had the chance to feed animals that had been rescued from a farm and reared in the wild. Moving towards them with big hunks of bloody, raw meat was nerve-racking. I was about to feed wild cheetahs, with no barrier between me and one of the world's greatest and fastest predators. Then one of them let

out a growl, just as I was edging closer, reminding me that they were not tame domestic cats but beasts that could tear me to shreds in minutes. I was told to stay still. This was no easy feat, especially as I noticed that the crew were 20ft behind me (normally I can't get out of my hair) making full use of the ultra-zoom and not daring to venture any closer. Later, I reflected that this was one of the high points of the trip and definitely one of the most incredible things I have ever done.

We then met our expedition leader and qualified scientist, Harald, and headed out to the Biosphere Expedition's base camp. Harald set up home in Namibia 12 years ago with his wife Brigit to pursue their joint passion for protecting wildlife. According to Harald, Namibia harbours the world's largest cheetah populations and is one of a few African countries that supports six species of large carnivores. It is estimated that the habitat for 90 per cent of Namibian cheetahs is on this farmland, but conflict with humans has resulted in large numbers of predators being captured or shot.

So Biosphere was asked to monitor the cheetah population and devise a conservation strategy. The expedition's emphasis is on capture activities (using box traps), radio-tracking and counting track frequencies. If a cheetah, leopard or brown hyena is captured it will be immobilised, sampled, radio-collared and released.

One of our first tasks was to



check the box traps. We felt a mixture of excitement and anticipation, wondering if we might have caught a cheetah. Rather than a cheetah, we found a young baboon messing about inside, which we had to release. I had to jump on the trap and lift up the door to let it out. If this had been the first day I would have been pretty freaked at being out in the open with nothing between me and the baboon, but after the cheetah-feeding my confidence had grown.

On the return to base camp, Harald explained to us about cheetah and leopard conservation, and why the project was set up. There is a misconception that farmers kill off the cheetahs. Instead, lions and hyenas are the cheetah's biggest threat.

DAY THREE

We looked for animal tracks (spoor) to collect data on the various species. We searched for prints in the sand and stumbled across some brown hyena, leopard and baboon tracks, along with some trails from giant centipedes. Now, spotting spoor is not easy – apart from the hyena, the only tracks I could recognise were Nike, Puma and adidas ones – but fortunately we had the experts to help us.

The previous team had spotted a leopard and we wanted him to come back so that we could track him further. So we put a bloodied fresh carcass in two spots near to the original sighting to entice him back. The following few days revealed no new spoor but the next team will

My biggest challenge



The Land Rover driving course started on flat sandy terrain, but we were soon heading up to the mountains where I negotiated my first steep incline. It was daunting, hitting the accelerator at the bottom of this 45-degree slope – OK, maybe it was 40 degrees, but no less – covered in rocks and slippery stones. You have to have faith in the vehicle. When I stalled half way up because I hadn't given it enough gas, Rob shouted at me not to hit the clutch, which goes against your instincts. But the Defenders are incredibly adaptable and we finally made it to the top.

continue to monitor the site to see if he should turn up.

Our week in Namibia was a busy one for baboons inside the traps. It appeared to be the vogue for them to dive back inside the trap and up the tree upon release. We also had an

HEAT AND DUST: Trevor Nelson's team helped to monitor the local wildlife in Namibia as part of a long-running conservation project, left and above
DILLON KHAN

From
£49
single

Make Tracks

Head straight for the slopes this winter with Eurotunnel. Drive off the motorway, onto the train and 35 minutes later – voilà you're in France.

Book your entire holiday from accommodation and insurance to lift passes and ski hire via eurotunnel.com. It's a breeze. And there's no need to worry about airport transfers, foreign car hire, baggage allowances or bad weather. No wonder we're the motorists' number one choice.

To get our best prices book early, and choose the quieter times to travel. Remember, we don't charge per person, we charge per car. So everyone travels for just one low price.



Call now on 0870 011 3673 or
book on-line at...

eurotunnel.com
relax... we'll drive

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

unbelievable honey badger capture, in which the crazed beast squeezed itself through the bars of the cage and made off while one of the crew was on top of the trap and about to open the door!

DAY FOUR

I realised you have to be quite fit to do this work, because we had to climb our first mountain in order to pick up transmission signals from collared cheetahs and leopards (otherwise known as telemetry).

To miss the heat of the sun we had to start early – 7am early – about the time when I am usually crawling into bed. The mountain was a bit of an effort. It was very sandy and gravelly in places. This is when you need decent walking boots to stop you from slipping back down – like the crew and I nearly did. If I'm honest, climbing a mountain is not something I would usually think to do – but it is amazing what you do when you are part of a group and don't want to let the side down. I was put to shame when two of our group, who were nearing pensionable age, were more than keeping up. I like to think that it was during this experience that we truly bonded.

It was worth it when we hit the top and surveyed the amazing views of the savannah, while breathing in the fabulous fresh air – quite a change from London. It was at this point that my crew – unable to wait till they hit civilisation – got a bit excited that there might be the chance of a phone signal. But after hearing the familiar beeps of their text messages flooding in, with new pressures and deadlines, I decided to resist the temptation and keep my phone switched firmly off. I wanted to embrace the African experience. It was the first time in 15 years I hadn't had mobile access.

At the very highest point we practised the telemetry. But I just picked up interference; it was my first piece of bad luck on the trip. We tried again later that day from the roof of the Land Rover but luck was still not on my side.

DAY FIVE

We had lots of action, with highs and lows and mixed emotions. Exciting news came in from the morning team who reported a leopard capture in the eastern river bed box trap using the wildebeest bait. But the euphoria turned to disappointment when we discovered that the leopard captured was old and in a bad condition, thin and with many injuries from fighting other leopards. He was too frail for a radio

My favourite relaxation



At the end of our trip we decided that after spending a week devoted to conservation, living with the bare essentials and arid, dry heat, we needed some home comforts. So we started our 400km trip to the coastal town of Swakopmund. Beautiful and bizarre, it is a pristine German-style town, which looks like it has been dropped into Africa. It was great to re-acclimatise with food from a good restaurant, air-con, mobile phone, and Sky TV. I watched the sport channels and heard that Roy Keane had left Man United – much to my amusement. A great way to end the trip!

collar and unlikely to survive the trauma of any darting or tranquillising. The team decided to follow the advice of vets and release him. Sickly animals often make an unexpected recovery – nature would take its course.

DAY SIX

The process of releasing a leopard sounds easy, but I was told that it cannot simply be released like any other animal, as the risk of it turning and attacking is too great. So we used a kind of pulley system by which the door of the cage was slowly raised by the force of a Land Rover driving away from behind the trap. This gave the leopard, who was reluctant to leave the trap, a chance to run free. Not to mention us. Trevor Nelson was invited to Namibia by Land Rover (landroverexperience.com) to take part in a Biosphere (0870-446 0801; biosphere-expeditions.org) cheetah conservation expedition. It offers a range of such trips worldwide; the next departure to Namibia is in autumn 2006, from £1,250 excluding flights. Land Rover and Biosphere have been global conservation partners since 2002 and work together to help to preserve and protect wildlife across the globe. He flew to Windhoek on Air Namibia (020-7960 6016; airnamibia.com), which flies direct from Gatwick three times a week. You can see 'The Lick' Namibia special tonight at 8pm on MTV Base or visit mtvbase.co.uk/thelick to go behind the scenes