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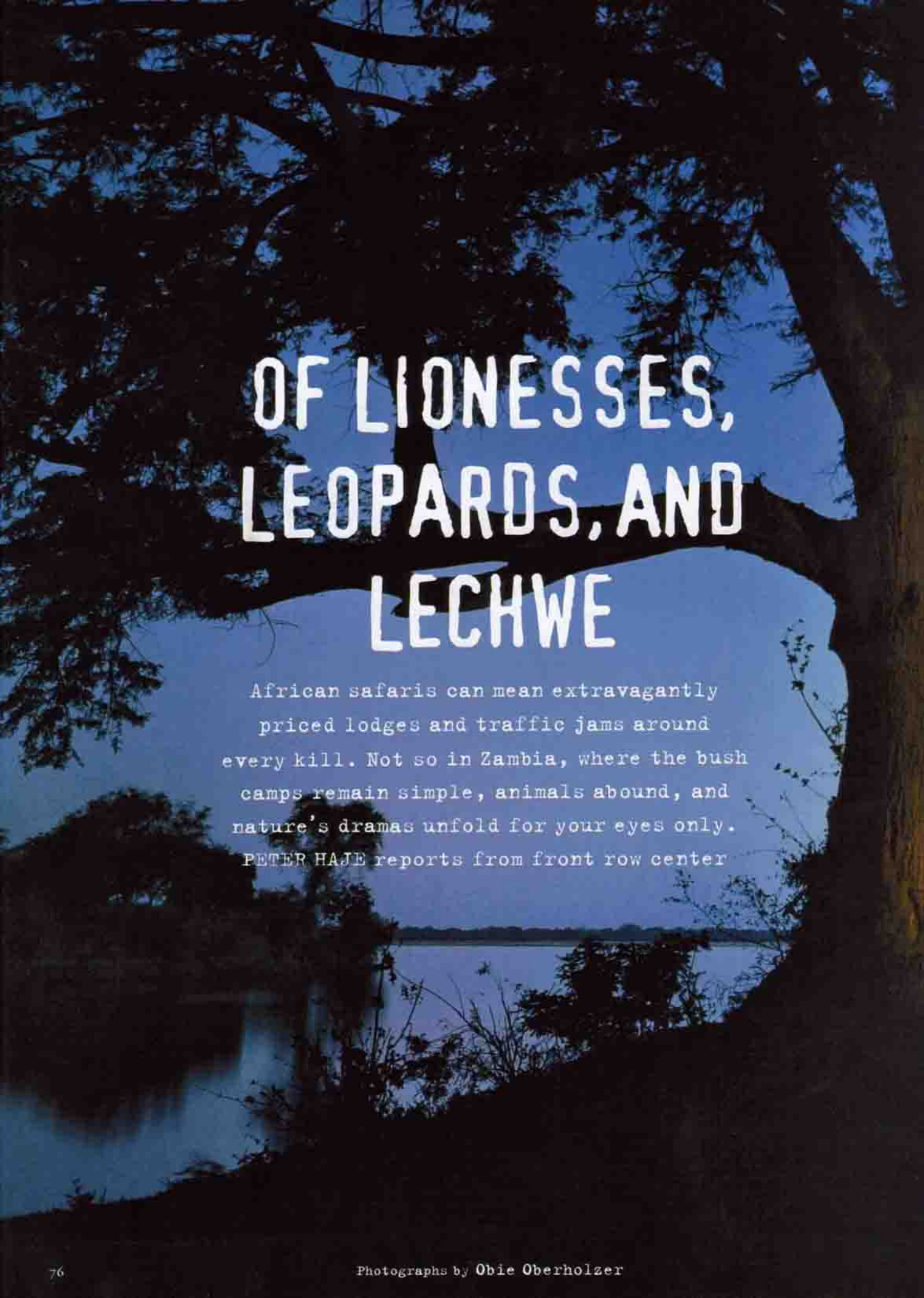
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A large, dark silhouette of a tree with thick branches frames the central text and image. The background is a soft, blue-tinted landscape featuring a wide river or lake in the foreground, a waterfall on the left side, and a distant shoreline with trees under a clear sky.

OF LIONESSES, LEOPARDS, AND LECHWE

African safaris can mean extravagantly priced lodges and traffic jams around every kill. Not so in Zambia, where the bush camps remain simple, animals abound, and nature's dramas unfold for your eyes only. PETER HAJE reports from front row center



Little house in Africa: A guest tent at the Chongwe River Camp, in Zambia's Lower Zambezi National Park. The river here teems with hippos. (Tip No. 1: Never get between a hippo and deep water.)

O

UR FIRST LOOK AT ZAMBIA'S VAST, REMOTE Busanga Plains comes when we stop for lunch at the edge of the miombo forest. For two hours, our two Land Rovers have been racing north on a smooth dirt track through thick, dry woods unbroken but for a few savannas. The only humans we have seen since leaving the airstrip on the Lunga River, a major tributary of the Zambezi, are a few women and children in two clusters of primitive rondavels—housing for game warden families. Now, with the engines cut and the guides and spotters setting up camp tables and chairs, we stare out at a flat, serene, seemingly endless landscape punctuated by small oases that have grown up around old termite mounds. In the wet season, when the Busanga Plains, fed by the Lufupa River system, floods and becomes an enormous shallow lake, these hillocks, some of which are dominated by single trees of remarkable girth and spread, become a place of refuge for many animals, especially the big cats—lions, leopards, and cheetahs. But for the wind, the silence is absolute.

After a picnic of pastas and salads, our last hour's ride across the plains goes much more slowly, for the track turns crude and rugged and we must ease across minor streams on flimsy log bridges. At first we are accompanied only by birds and butterflies, but soon we see large herds of red lechwe, with graceful, backward-curving, lyre-shaped horns on the males, and smaller, stockier pukus, as well as groupings of large mask-faced roan antelope, bushbuck, zebras, and wildebeests. Incongruously, miles from nowhere, a lone man on a bicycle waves and smiles as he pedals past. We cannot fathom where he may be bound.

We realize that we have found what we came for. The Busanga Plains, for all its space, constitutes less than four percent of Zambia's Kafue National Park. At 8,600 square miles (about the size of Wales), Kafue is the second-largest game preserve in Africa, after Tanzania's Selous. Slightly larger than South Africa's famed Kruger

River run: Paddle a canoe a few hundred yards to the right of this tent on the Chongwe River and you'll be on the Zambezi. (Tip No. 2: Beware of crocodiles.)





Just kidding:
The flapping ears
of this angry
elephant in
Kafue National
Park signify
that the charge
is a mock one.
(Tip No. 3: When
the ears are
plastered back
and the trunk is
rolled up tight,
he's deadly se-
rious—and you're
in big trouble.)

WE SWUNG AROUND AND ALMOST RAN INTO A MASSIVE BULL ELEPHANT.
"ANIMALS HAVE THE RIGHT OF WAY," OUR GUIDE SAID. NO ARGUMENT



New day dawning: Morning at Chongwe River Camp. Zambian tourism has benefited from neighboring Zimbabwe's downturn—many Zimbabwean wildlife guides now work here. (Tip No. 4: Know your Mugabe facts.)

Park, it has few tourists and, on the Busanga Plains, no permanently established lodges or asphalt roads.

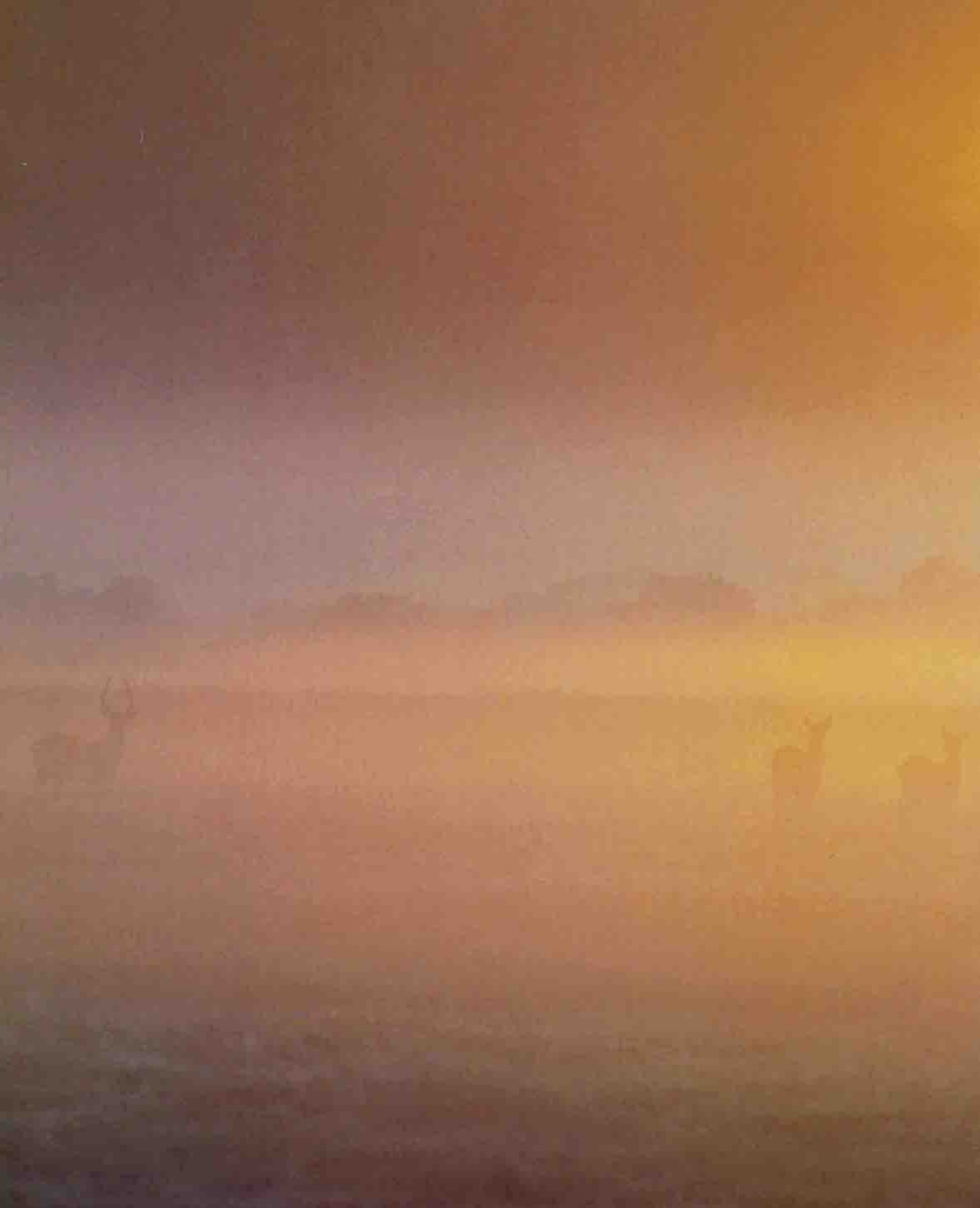
Our party, two couples and three children (classmates Lily, fourteen, and Sofia, thirteen, as well as Alex, eleven), wants something a lot closer to the “old Africa” safari experience—simpler, more remote, with fewer visitors than is the norm in the “hot” game parks in South Africa, Botswana, and Kenya. That’s why we have come to Zambia, where southern Africa slides up into central Africa—an impoverished landlocked country a bit larger than Texas that shares borders with eight neighbors. On a map, it looks something like an old telephone handset, with Kafue in the middle of the mouthpiece. Our other two Zambian destinations are South Luangwa and Lower Zambezi national parks. The former, in the earpiece portion of the Zambian telephone, is forty percent the size of Kafue and is one of the world’s richest wildlife sanctuaries—where the walking safari originated. Lower Zambezi, located on Zambia’s borders with Mozambique and Zimbabwe (in the middle of the handset) and the newest of its parks, is less than half South Luangwa’s size but is an absolute wilderness, the human population having moved away generations ago because of the then prevalence of sleeping sickness. This is a world of bush planes barely large enough to hold our party and landing strips where you wait for the kudu to get off the runway.

OUR LAND ROVERS ROUND A STAND OF ENORMOUS stately trees, and suddenly we are in Busanga Bush Camp, utterly charming in its functional simplicity. We are the only guests, filling three of the four small guest cabins, which consist of three reed walls (one with a reed door and a simple wooden latch), one canvas wall, and a canvas top. The tents have dried-mud floors that are sunbaked as hard as concrete, painted, and cool. There is (moderately) hot water, a flush toilet, and a shower but no electricity beyond one dim solar-powered lamp. Enclosing ourselves in mosquito nets at night, we read by strapping on the camper’s equivalent of a miner’s lamp. Meals, cooked over open fires and eaten in the dining tent or alfresco, are plain and delicious. Because some of us are nervous about canoeing among hippos,



"HERE WE HAVE THE WHOLE PLACE TO OURSELVES. YOU WON'T SEE ANYONE ELSE. AND WE DO NOT DISTURB THE ANIMALS. WE'RE PART OF THE UNTAMED WILDERNESS"

Small is beautiful: At the four-cabin Chindeni Camp, in South Luangwa National Park, Zambia's best bush camps sit lightly on the land and can have bare-bones infrastructure. (Tip No. 5: Pack a headlamp for nighttime reading.)



THE FLAP OF OUR TENT IS UNZIPPED AND WE LOOK OUT AT A PINK
AND PALE BLUE SKY, AT HERDS OF GRAZING LECHWE AND PUKUS
STRETCHING INTO THE DISTANCE. LIFE BARELY TOUCHED BY MAN



Solar power: Sunrises and sunsets are Zambia's showstoppers. Here, the curtain rises on the Busanga Plains, in Kafue National Park. The animals are lechwe. (Tip No. 6: You're most likely to see predators on the prowl at dawn and dusk.)

scheduled for later in the trip, we use these times to discuss the potential dangers with the guides and Molly, a young American woman who works as a sort of social director/facilitator at Busanga. The only non-Zambian and the only woman working at the camp, she gently reassures us. “We’ve heard of incidents with hippos in Botswana,” Molly says, “but that’s because the guides get too close to the animals and disturb them. And that’s because there are so many visitors, and they all want instant gratification. Here we have the whole place to ourselves. You won’t see anyone else. And we do not disturb the animals. We’re part of the untamed wilderness.”

Fragile is one word for Busanga Camp. Judging by appearances, a strong wind could blow it away. Warned—as we will be at each camp we visit—never to walk from our tents after dark unaccompanied by a

and pale blue sky, at herds of peacefully grazing lechwe and pukus that stretch farther and farther into the distance as the mist burns off. Again there is no sound but the wind. We are seeing life barely touched by man, a thought underscored by the lions heard roaring near camp in the night.

Although each camp we visit will bring something new, the general shape of our days here will be repeated throughout our journey. We are up at dawn for a quick breakfast and then, bundled in blankets, climb into the Land Rovers for a far-ranging morning of animal viewing, traversing an almost featureless, trackless landscape. Although we can see for miles on the Busanga Plains, we sight only two other camps at a distance, both unoccupied, and encounter no other people. We truly have Africa to ourselves. We are back in camp in time for lunch, followed by a siesta and,

A FRANTIC BARKING BEGINS, EERIE IN THE MOONLESS NIGHT. BABOONS IN TREES, WARNING THE TROOP. SUDDENLY THERE ARE LEOPARDS, THE GANGSTERS OF THE JUNGLE, POWERFUL AND SLINKY, DANGEROUS

guide, since lions sometimes wander through, we ask, “What keeps them from coming into the tents?” At first the answer seems odd. “Lions don’t have hands.” Then we get it: Lions can’t open latches and, unlike humans, won’t smash their way in. Lesson one in lion behavior. *Portable* is another word for the camp. It will be disassembled and trucked out before the rains begin in November and flooding follows, a big reason the Busanga Plains will remain undeveloped.

Nights at this altitude—we’re on a plateau 4,600 feet above sea level—are cold in early August, southern Africa’s winter, but we sleep cozily under down comforters, and just as dawn begins, the flap of our tent is unzipped and we look out a “picture window” at a pink

in the late afternoon, another tour in the Land Rovers, which invariably ends with sundowners in a picturesque spot, watching the great red ball of the sun fill the western sky. We return to camp in a darkness lit solely by moon, stars, and the lights of our vehicles.

BY OUR SECOND DAY AT BUSANGA, IDOS and Luckson, our expert native Zambian guides, are unhappy not to have shown us any of the lions, leopards, or cheetahs for which the Busanga Plains is noted. During the post-lunch siesta, Molly hurries to our tent and whispers, “Luckson has spotted a lion. Do you want to come have a look?” Predators are usually lying low at this time of day. Moments later, we are in the two Land Rovers. A short distance from camp, we catch up to a mature, sleek lioness. Luckson, who knows the local lions almost like family, explains: She is the recent mother of a pair of cubs; that’s why she is out in daylight, hunting alone. We ride alongside, matching her pace, thirty yards away—regally ignored. The lioness freezes, sinks into a crouch, and moves on more slowly, low to the ground, detouring into such clumps of high grass as she can find. Luckson points to a small rise, several hundred yards ahead. A lone male lechwe grazes away from his herd.

With motors off, we watch silently through binoculars. The lioness closes half the distance to the lechwe, creeping ever lower, ever more slowly, finally sinking to the ground and disappearing in a small patch of grass. Closer and closer the unwary lechwe grazes until, from our perspective, it’s almost on top of the lioness. At last, she springs, from perhaps twenty yards. The lechwe leaps away in panic and maintains its footing through the lioness’s first swipe. A few more bounds and the chase ends. Down go lioness and lechwe.

The Rovers now race to within thirty yards of the

PLACES & PRICES

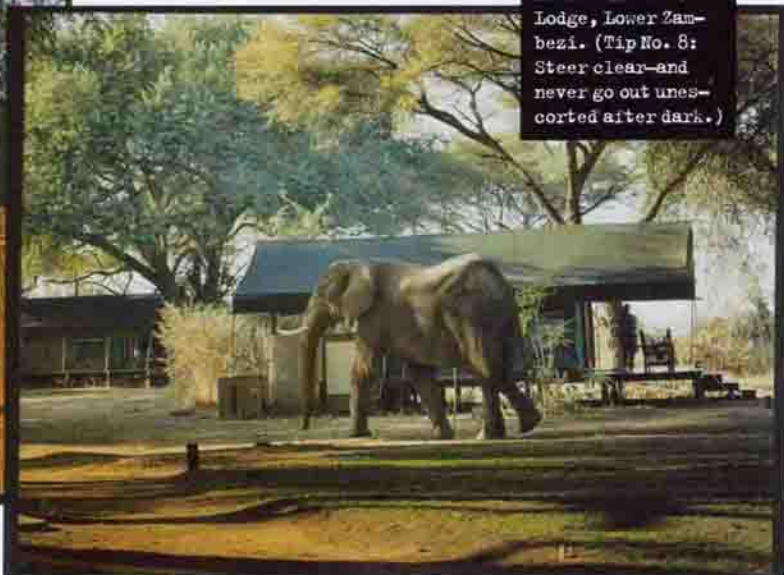
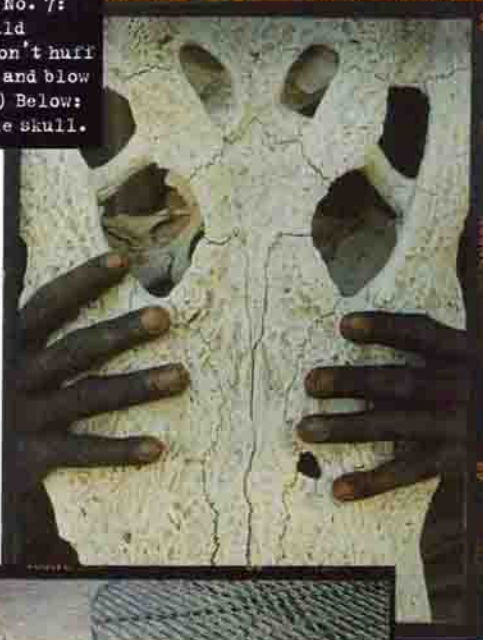
AFRICA À LA CARTE

Because of Zambia’s several parks and scattered bush camps, a trip here involves prop planes and dirt runways—and, if you’re game, a canoe trip on the hippo-filled Zambezi. For how to book (do it now for next summer), see page 134.





House of straw: Shower at Chongwe. (Tip No. 7: Relax—wild beasts won't huff and puff and blow it down.) Below: Crocodile skull.



Elephant walk: Typical visitor at Mwambashi River Lodge, Lower Zambezi. (Tip No. 8: Steer clear—and never go out unescorted after dark.)

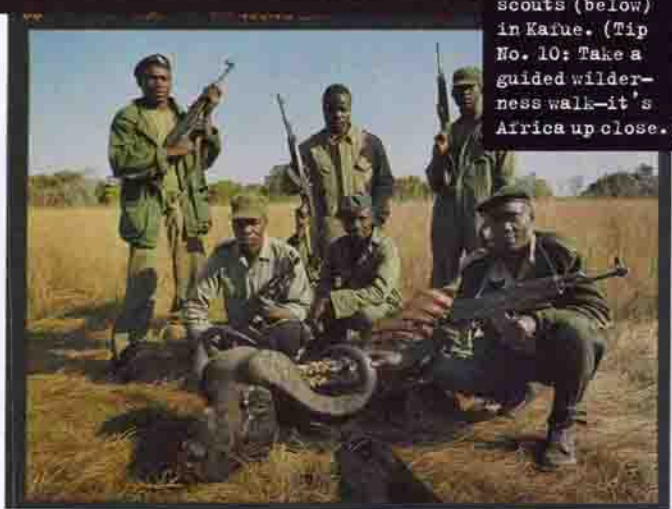
ZAMBIA REMAINS ONE OF THE WORLD'S POOREST COUNTRIES, BUT INCREASED TOURISM HELPS



On guard: Lunga River guide; anti-poaching scouts (below) in Kafue. (Tip No. 10: Take a guided wilderness walk—it's Africa up close.)



Creature comforts: Mwambashi dining area; morning toast (above) at Chongwe. (Tip No. 9: Zambian camps serve four meals daily—diet later.)



RHINOS ARE BEING REINTRODUCED IN A REMOTE AREA PROTECTED BY PARK RANGERS



The art of the sundowner: This setup in South Luangwa's Kapamba River beats any watering hole you'll ever walk into. (Tip No. 11: Indulge if you're so disposed. Designated drivers will take you back to Chindeni Camp—and dinner.)

animals. In a swampy area with no cover, the lechwe lies on its side, kicking feebly, eyes wide. The lioness lies wrapped around it in an embrace, her lungs heaving from her exertions, her jaws clamped on the lechwe's throat. The kicking weakens, stops. The lioness's yellow eyes, the color of her pelt, blink closed. Exhausted, she rests for a few minutes, seeming almost to fall asleep, then rouses herself and begins to feed. We are so close, so alone, and the silence of the plain is so complete that we can hear the hide being torn from the flesh, the crunching of the bones. Being in a tiny, isolated camp has great advantages.

Luckson says that this is only the third time in ten years of tracking that he has seen a lion make a mid-day kill. As the lioness feeds, her muzzle turns red with blood. The kids are fascinated, not repulsed. As Sofia says, "A lion's got to do what a lion's got to do." We leave the lioness ringed by an audience of several dozen vultures, settled at a respectful distance. The hour and a half that have passed since Molly's alert seem compressed into a few minutes. The force of nature's cruel rules and of happenstance weigh on us. The lechwe broke the rules: It wandered too far from the protection of the herd, it was careless and inattentive, and it paid with its life. And yet . . . lions are usually inactive between 8 A.M. and 6 P.M.; the plain is so flat and bare that the lioness had almost no cover; had the lechwe changed its path even a little, kept away from the one clump in which the lioness could hide, it would have lived—a lion's attack range is short.

After two days in the Busanga Plains, we drive back to the Lunga River. We pass herds of the now familiar lechwe, pukus, zebras, wildebeests, roan antelope, impalas with their goalpost horns, and the slim, graceful, and agile oribi, the Audrey Hepburn of antelope. We see flocks of wattled and crowned cranes, saddleback cranes, fierce-looking secretary birds, fish eagles, and cattle egrets. Zambia is an ornithologist's heaven, with 750 species identified so far.

TO REACH OUR NEXT DESTINATION, SOUTH Luangwa's Chindeni Camp, we take off from the Lunga airstrip in a twelve-seater, landing two and a half hours later at the grandly named Mfuwe International Airport. International, this modest two-gate facility? Well, yes. The runway is paved, and according to the arrival/departure board, there are a few scheduled flights to nearby countries. It is also hot—tropical compared with Busanga. The road to the park takes us through the town of Mfuwe and past the first Zambians and Zambian homes we've seen in any numbers since our first stop in the country, the bustling town of Livingstone, by Victoria Falls. Mfuwe, gateway town to South Luangwa National

Park, thrives on the jobs tourism creates. The reed walls and thatched roofs of traditional rondavels are being replaced by cinder blocks and tin. We pass a number of schools and (Continued on page 152)

which is being converted into an office and retail center. The architect's nature-inspired cast-iron ornament wraps its show windows like an Old Master painting.

While such famous works of architecture do make jaws drop, it's been equally satisfying to watch, from my critic's perch, the care that Chicago has lavished on public spaces in recent years. Not only are they remarkably clean, they've also been attractively gussied up by Mayor Richard M. Daley, a mostly benevolent dictator who wants to transform Chicago into "the greenest city in America." (A recent *Chicago Tribune* story cast that goal in doubt, disclosing that greenhouse-gas emissions have risen even though Daley vowed to reduce them six years ago.)

The mayor, who was born on Arbor Day, has presided over the planting of between 400,000 and 500,000 trees, and the construction of seventy-five miles of median planters and dozens of green roofs—those icing-on-the-cake layers of shrubs, vines, flowers, and grasses that fight the "urban heat island effect" with cooling greenery. Since 2000, when Daley had one installed atop City Hall, Chicago has been a national leader in green roofs. And the biggest green roof of all is Millennium Park, which is "constructed

ground" built over railroad tracks and a new underground parking garage. The roof's greenery makes it look natural, but it's a grand illusion. Unless I stop and listen for the trains through the ventilation grates, I can completely forget that thousands of commuters are passing beneath me.

The park's two major works of art—the Crown Fountain, by Spanish artist Jaume Plensa, and *Cloud Gate* (pictured on page 92)—are highly interactive, making viewers full-fledged participants in the fun. At *Cloud Gate*, which has been dubbed The Bean, pedestrians ogle reflections of themselves and the skyline before wandering beneath the sculpture and gazing up at its spectacular domed underside. The monumental piece, Anish Kapoor's first major outdoor work in the United States, became an instant icon with a broader lesson about the changing nature of public spaces. As the architectural historian Sally A. Kitt Chappell writes in *Chicago's Urban Nature*, "Parks and other open spaces are no longer an adjunct to city life, passive areas of retreat; rather, they are dynamic, culture-creating forces."

Millennium Park has surprised even its creators by becoming the cultural town square of an often-fractured polyglot me-

tropolis. I've seen (and heard) that cultural convergence firsthand at the Pritzker Pavilion, where Frank Gehry's signature swoops of stainless steel top the band shell and an enormous steel-framed trellis spreads out above a vast lawn. The space is acoustically superb and surprisingly intimate. Its multi-ethnic stew of performances—on a given night, you might hear (for free) Afro-Cuban jazz, gospel, European folkloric melodies, or classical music—ensures that Millennium Park is more than aesthetically dazzling. It's a vibrant urban place that brings the world to Chicago and Chicago to the world.

Stand in the middle of Millennium Park and you realize that, more than 120 years after inventing the skyscraper, the city is again on a roll. Swinging construction cranes are building Renzo Piano's Modern Wing at the Art Institute—a temple of steel, glass, and limestone scheduled to open in 2009, the centennial of Burnham's *Plan of Chicago*. In every direction except the lake, cranes are erecting more skyscrapers—some destined to be eyesores, but all of them conveying an impression of urban vitality.

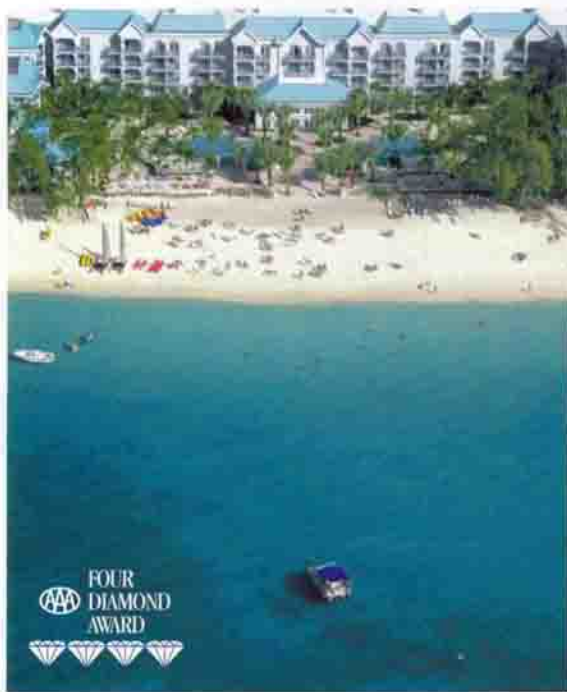
Gazing at all this construction, you could easily jump to the conclusion that the city's leaders fully expect to host the 2016 Summer Games and are simply getting ready for the party. Not so. This boom started before the Olympics bid, and it marks a new chapter in the history of the skyscraper, which is increasingly a place to live rather than a place to work. And it marks, as well, a new chapter in the history of the American city. Now, as it has done with such mastery for so many decades, Chicago has revitalized its role as an urban laboratory, where architects experiment with—and, at their best, perfect—the world of tomorrow. □

Zambia

(Continued from page 87)

many stores, a lot of them new. Storefront signs often proclaim INVESTMENT, including GOD KNOWS INVESTMENT. One of us mutters about how it seems too early for financial planners. It is. "Those are clothing stores," says our new guide, Manda, a tall, husky Zambian whose modesty at first masks his learning. The women dress in colorful ankle-length skirts and short-sleeve tops. Children wave to us. Manda goes on: "You can see all this activity. ... Tourism has helped so much. Zambia is on the move."

Zambia remains one of the world's poorest countries, close to the bottom for life expectancy (thirty-three years, according to some sources) and plagued by three scourges (malaria, tuberculosis, and AIDS), but increased tourism helps provide a real



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ZAMBIA

economic boost and is a tribute to conservation efforts over the past two decades. Poaching from the late seventies to the mid-eighties severely reduced the elephant, lion, hippo, giraffe, and other populations and eliminated the rhinos—which are being reintroduced in a remote area of North Luangwa protected by park rangers. That's the reason, we are told, that there are few truly large specimens—full maturity takes years. Conservation efforts are strongly supported by international funding (and oversight to assure the money is correctly spent), especially from Norway. A meaningful share of tourism dollars is returned to communities near the parks, a vital incentive to reduce poaching—and doubly appropriate since in many places local people were uprooted, essentially evicted from the parklands when they were formed.

It's not just tourism fueling the economy. Manda tells us that in recent years, 450 farmers have moved over from Zimbabwe, pushed out by the brutal, expropriating Mugabe regime and drawn by Zambia's ample freshwater and good land. Long the poor relation to Zimbabwe, Zambia is now benefiting from the influx of talented black and white Zimbabweans and from the encouragement of free enterprise by the anti-corruption national government. The camps we visit, for example, are all on public lands but are leased and operated by private companies. Zambia understands that it needs to reduce its dependence on notoriously volatile copper mining—traditionally the source of most of its desperately needed foreign exchange and now heavily, somewhat worryingly, influenced by China.

OUR ARRIVAL AT CHINDENI Camp, some thirty-five miles into the heart of South Luangwa, comes hours after dark, long after we are expected. The trip there turned into one of our most memorable night drives—and that's the reason for our lateness. Animals were everywhere before dusk: hippos, elephants, zebras, puku, impalas, waterbuck, elephant shrews, scrub hares, trees full of marabou storks, cranes, a kite, a ground hornbill, a giant pelican, plover—more birds than we can identify or recollect. After nightfall, the show grew more exotic: baby elephants, hippos grazing out of water, a lost bushbuck fawn, a young hyena that lay flat in the road and watched us for minutes before rising slowly and disappearing into the bush. Our first giraffe appeared and then another, and then a gang of three.

We crossed one dry riverbed after another—a dozen or more—bouncing down one side and up the other in the swirling dust and

dark. We swung around a corner and almost ran into a massive bull elephant standing in the road. "Animals have the right of way," Manda said. No argument when it comes to an elephant, but we did grow impatient when forced to crawl for half a mile until a panicky guinea hen finally figured out that it could avoid us by leaving the road ("Africa's stupidest bird," Manda commented).

Arising late the next morning at Chindeni Camp and stepping onto the slatted wooden decks outside our tents, we discover that they are set some twenty feet above a long lagoon off the Luangwa River. Looking far up, down, and across the lagoon, we see the hippos that we heard rumbling and chuffing through the night, puku, Cape buffalo, a baboon, many monkeys, and lots of birds—cranes, egrets, and jacanas (called the "Jesus bird" locally for its seeming ability to walk on water) among the most noticeable. Directly across the lagoon, a great dark waterbuck with beautifully curved horns drinks, and nearby an elephant strolls out of the forest and stares suspiciously. Another elephant emerges; two more, and then another two; yet two more farther away. Some sort of face-off occurs between two males, until one retreats into the forest. The rest come to the water, drink, and slowly depart, watched at a distance by a puku family—male, female, and fawn. And we're barely out of bed.

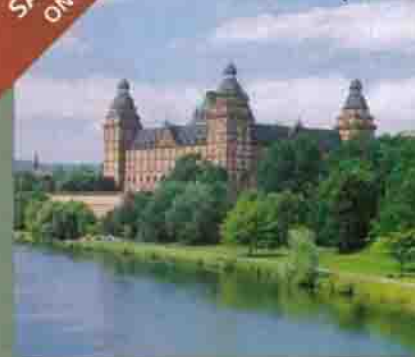
The scene is entirely natural and entirely ours. Chindeni Camp has only four guest tents, a thatched-roof bar and dining area, and staff tents. More than eight beds, one camp operator tells us, "and you might as well be operating a sausage factory."

The plentitude of game in the Luangwa Valley, a small split on the western side of the Great Rift Valley, comes from the nutritious grasses and shrubbery produced by the rich soil and from the many permanent lagoons, like the one we are camped above. These shrink a bit each day after the rains end but nevertheless provide water throughout the dry season.

The success of Zambia's conservation efforts can bring problems. While watching a pod of more than a hundred hippos chill out in the Luangwa, we learn that they are overcrowding—six hundred pairs in this stretch of river. There is talk of culling, which Manda opposes, convinced that natural forces, if allowed to operate, will restore balance. He says that hippos have as beneficial an effect on the South Luangwa landscape as the termite mounds on the Busanga Plains. "The hippos always walk along the same paths, so they create channels for water to run down toward the lagoons. This makes the lagoons deeper, and there is water in them longer into

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the dry season." One day we stop for sun-downers at the edge of the lagoon across from our camp. Manda cautions us to avoid the water's edge. Crocodiles live within, he warns, "and they are very dangerous."

Here and there on our drives we encounter locally made tsetse flytraps. Although Manda proudly explains how they work, he is quick to defend the tsetse. "It's Africa's greatest conservationist. Efforts to stamp it out are a mistake. Cows can't coexist with the tsetse. Stamp out the fly and farmers will move in with their cows and destroy the wildlife."

AZAMBIAN SPECIALTY is the walking safari, pioneered by the legendary Norman Carr, the father of Zambian conservation. He opened the first wildlife tourism camp in South Luangwa back in the colonial era, when Zambia was called Northern Rhodesia, by making a revenue-sharing arrangement with the senior local chief, Nsefu. One afternoon we decide to try it. It's good to be on the ground, moving under our own power, but we are a little nervous. The guides on the Busanga Plains taught us never to stand up in the Land Rover: "Never let the lion see you as a separate being. Always appear to be part of the vehicle." Another rule: Never, ever leave the vehicle until the guides have checked the area, circled every bush. But now, no protective vehicle—just a group of vulnerable humans on the trail. So there are new safety rules. Walks are normally only for those twelve or older, but the guides have discretion, so spry, athletic eleven-year-old Alex can go. Stay in single file: The guide must be able to see everyone at all times. In an emergency, never run: Stand still and await instruction. Trees and termite mounds are important: Hide behind them, get out of the animal's sight. Predators are normally inactive until dusk, so a midafternoon walk reduces our risk—but who can forget the lioness and the lechwe?

Joffre, a short, muscular, reserved man dressed in neat fatigues and high, polished boots, will take the lead, a bolt-action rifle over his shoulder. Manda will go next, then our band, and last a young man, carrying water and learning the ropes. We learn that Joffre has never had to shoot an animal to protect a tourist. On rare occasions he has fired into the air to discourage an aggressive beast, but that's all.

Off we go. This is Africa up close. So close that this could fairly be called Dung Walk.

Manda identifies, in short order, impala, kudu, hippo, elephant, baboon, and lion dung, the last embedded with a bit of impala hoof and a host of porcupine quills, which lions use to clean their digestive tracts. Hyena dung is white because of all the calcium (bones) they eat, Manda says, and he goes on to praise the much-maligned hyena as his favorite animal—"the environmental police officer"—for all the messes it cleans up and for its good family habits. Without hesitation, he picks up and breaks apart dung samples, demonstrating their different characteristics. The children's expressions are hilarious. But why are we shown no puku poo?

Early in the walk, a hippo blocks our way.

Manda and Joffre clap loudly. After a baleful look, it lumbers off. We are incredulous—why did they draw its attention to us? Manda explains, "Hippos are by nature timid and spook easily. You don't want to surprise them by your presence. And you never want to get between a hippo and water"—that's where they run for safety, often in panic. We'll hear—and observe—that rule many times before our safari is over.

But now, at ground level, we're learning about how the huge ears of an elephant will have up to 450 liters of blood, and all of it passes through its ears every 20 minutes); about the therapeutic effects of different fruits, leaves, and barks; and about how the "non-competitive feeding" system works for herbivores: Giraffes and elephants eat at the highest levels of trees and bushes, larger antelope at midlevel, smaller antelope at the lowest. A herd of elephants we come upon disperses quickly upon seeing us, hurrying off into the bush. "Not used to humans here," Manda explains. We fall into a discussion of animal group names—pride of lions, pod of hippos, journey of giraffes, pack of hyenas, troop of baboons. Manda instructs us that a group of warthogs is called a "sunder." A pair run by. "A small sound," I say. Lily corrects me, "A whisper of warthogs."

SOUTH LUANGWA'S WILDLIFE richness and the absence of any other humans inevitably make us feel that we are witnessing tableaux comparable to those seen by the earliest travelers and settlers, before familiarity with people affected animal behavior. Late in the afternoon, in the clearing by the Chindeni lagoon, more than a hundred Cape buffalo emerge from the forest, stage left. Simultaneously, a band

of a dozen elephants enter from stage right. Backlit by the golden sky of that hour, they cautiously edge toward one another. Center stage, in the rear, clusters of zebras and impala stand watching. Slowly, the distance between the buffalo and the elephants narrows, keeps narrowing, until the herds are only yards apart. The elephants are much larger, but the buffalo outnumber them ten to one and are notoriously mean-tempered. (In the words of author Robert Ruark, "They look at you as if you owe them money.") Suddenly, the buffalo break it off and race away in a giant cloud of dust, not frantically but in a determined, heavy, lumbering run, as if they have suddenly remembered that they are late for important business elsewhere. The elephants watch them go, then slowly turn and majestically depart the other way. Only the zebras and impalas remain. Curtain.

On our last night drive at Chindeni, we see many animals but nothing new except the almost mythically feared honey badger, to all appearances a skunk badly in need of a haircut. Manda, however, is disappointed and keeps us out very late, hoping to show us leopards. Finally he gives up, and we start back. Less than a mile from camp, in the pitch dark, dust swirling all around the Rover, the searchlight catches a pair of eyes probably five hundred yards away. "A mature leopard," says Manda. Oh sure, I think. Something to make us feel good. We jolt down the dry riverbed in that direction. "Yes, two of them," Manda says. We see nothing. A wild, frantic barking begins, eerie in the moonless night. Baboons in trees, warning the rest of the troop. Suddenly there are leopards—a mating pair on the hunt. We buck down the riverbed, reverse course to climb the track uphill, reverse again back down the riverbed—again and again, making V's, with the tree grove inside the angle. We pick up the leopards a number of times in the headlights or the searchlights, get several good, close views as they prowl up and down the hillside, the gangsters of the jungle, powerful and slinky, sinuous and threatening, deeply dangerous, sliding in and around the great trees to which the baboons have fled.

Our next stop is Chongwe River Camp, in a game management area (GMA) bordering Lower Zambezi National Park. Unlike in the parks, hunting is allowed in the GMAs (although not in Chongwe), and money from the hefty license fees goes to the Zambia Wildlife Authority.

More travelers find their way to the Zambezi, and while the particular camps we visit here are only a bit larger than the earlier ones, we see a few small river craft and on the Zambian side some vehicular traffic. The other bank, Zimbabwe, remains virtu-

"The tsetse is Africa's greatest conservationist. Efforts to stamp it out are a mistake"

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ally devoid of any sign of human life. Chongwe River Camp, a dozen guest tents (all full) sheltered under a canopy of giant winterthorn acacias, is more like a lodge than a camp—more permanent, more luxurious. Its tents are spacious and wood-decked, with an open-air bathroom at the rear and privacy provided by reed and stone walls. There are thick towels, and we can even recharge our camera batteries here. And the camp is enlarging: Half a mile up the Chongwe, a two-story building nears completion, a construction unlike anything we've seen in the bush: solid walls from local woods, a thick thatched roof, four large bedrooms. It will have its own chef and house manager as well as a swimming pool—one of Africa's first rental villas within a national park. The attraction to groups and families looking for a more luxurious experience is obvious. Nevertheless, dining at Chongwe is alfresco, an elephant patrols the grounds, the camp keeps a pet impala (rescued as a fawn after its mother's death), hippos wander through at night, and we must be escorted to and from our tents after dark.

By far the smallest of the three national parks we visit, Lower Zambezi, situated at the southern end of the Great Rift Valley, is still larger than the famous Masai Mara National Park in Kenya, and it's chock-full of game, both along the river and in the forest beyond. The Zambezi is wide here, looking as broad as the Hudson, though much shallower and faster flowing; when we're on it, we gain expansive views of the Zambezi escarpment and marvel at the sight of a large male elephant with a mud-encrusted back (for tick and flea protection as well as insulation) fording the river, commuting to Zimbabwe. Apart from the seasonal camps, there is no human habitation on either side. That's the big reason, we are repeatedly told, that you can drink straight from the river—no human, industrial, or agricultural waste.

Our main activity here is a two-day paddle from camp to camp on the Zambezi, east toward the Mozambique border, with Roddy Smith in charge. Weathered, compact, sinewy, born in South Africa, in Rhodesian Special Forces during the war of independence, Roddy is a man of great learning, competence, wry humor, and modesty. He spends the rainy season (when all the Zambian camps close) providing security for trucking convoys in Iraq. ("Good for the retirement fund," he says.) With Roddy, and his talent for demystifying danger, we know that we are in expert hands, dissipating earlier anxieties about whether to expose the children to the risk of going by canoe—i.e., hippos.

Roddy reaffirms Manda's advice: Hippos

are timid, herbivorous creatures. They regard water as their refuge—just deep enough to cover them will do—so if you don't get between them and deep water, and don't get directly over them, you should be fine. As we pile into four canoes, preparing to shove off, he adds, "Hippos get a bum rap. They're not inherently aggressive animals. Our attitude communicates itself to the animals. We need to be respectful. We never drift, so hippos always hear our paddles and know we're coming. And we always stay in single file, so the animal doesn't feel trapped between two boats. If we treat them right, they're very cool." All well and good, but we also know that hippos are big and fast (especially in the water), and unlike their flabby cartoon images, they bulge with muscle and are known for causing more human deaths than any other African animal (excluding, of course, humans).

Roddy leads us on frequent detours off the main river, into long channels where the current runs slower and the animals and birds are closer. At one narrow spot, several groups of nearby hippos simultaneously panic, crashing into the water to our left and right, ahead of and behind us. What a racket they make: thundering

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hooves; rasping, complaining calls; water splashing like a great waterfall or glaciers calving. Gee, guys, relax—it's only us. Despite our vulnerability in the canoes, we keep our aplomb and even when a large bull elephant in a herd with young becomes annoyed as we paddle past their watering site. Although we've learned from Manda to recognize flapping ears as a mock charge, we prudently make an orderly withdrawal.

The only sound besides the thwack and swish of our paddles and the (very) occasional motor of a fishing or tour boat out in the main channel are the cries of birds—there are more than 250 species here in Lower Zambezi—and the amusing music of hippo talk, once they are safely in the water and staring at us with only ears, eyes, noses, and mouths (and such big mouths) visible. Their chatter is always loudest after we have paddled past a large pod. Probably males bragging that they have bravely chased us away.

After a night at the Mwambashi River Lodge—smaller, simpler, more intimate than Chongwe yet still entirely comfortable—we paddle for another half day in what Roddy labels the Discovery Channel: much narrower than the previous day's channels and filled with turns and obstacles, an exciting journey although sometimes beyond our paddling skills. At one point, water hyacinth completely block the way. Roddy and his crew get out of their canoes and, standing hip deep in the stream, cut a hundred-foot path through the dense bed, a scene reminiscent of *The African Queen*. Humphrey Bogart hacking his way to exhaustion in a sea of reeds just short of Lake Tanganyika. But unlike Humphrey, we can see exactly how far we have to go. For all the hippos, elephants, Cape buffalo, and the occasional antelope we view in the Discovery Channel, its main attractions are the close-up views of the exotic birdlife—many sacred ibis, saddlebill storks of great beauty, lilac-breasted rollers, kingfishers, several species of eagles, louries, geese, white-fronted bee-eaters, jacanas—and the silence. The loudest sounds by far are the occasional clunk of a paddle on a canoe thwart, then the bird calls, then the swish of paddles through the water. Nothing else. Magical. For hours.

OUR LAST STOP IS KULEFU Camp, which we've reached in our canoes. It's small, sandy, picturesquely located on the river, with a reed island just offshore, the wide river beyond that, and farther still the distant trees on the Zimbabwean shore. We are on a game drive with our latest Zambian guide, Lexon, at the wheel. He spots lion tracks in the sandy trail, but

he's puzzled. Something isn't right. He falls silent, staring from the tracks to the tall grass ahead, cautions us all to sit down and be quiet, then bucks straight ahead into the tall grass. Violating his own rule, he stands up in the vehicle and takes a long look around, frowning. His tension communicates itself to us. Farther into the tall grass he drives, stops again, points to the ground and says, "Predator remains." Then we see it—part of a lion's skull, still red with bits of clinging muscle and blood, a paw and foreleg, virtually intact, and the tail. Nothing else. Lexon is troubled. The only lions in the vicinity are two lionesses and four cubs. A few days ago, all were alive and well, but a story has been circulating among the guides that one of the lionesses has been killed, a rare event, though no one seemed sure—until now. Lexon wonders how it occurred. "Lions aren't cannibals," he says, "but nature does not always follow a set pattern. Weird things happen." He worries for the survival of the four cubs. Will the remaining lioness be able to care for them all? Will she even try?

He doubles back and forth, trying to unravel the mystery, skeptical of the lion-cannibalism scenario. A guide from another camp pulls up, and together they continue the search—two detectives on a murder case. They spot crocodile tracks—claw marks and dragging tail—which lead from a small stream a distance away to the spot where the lioness's remains lie. Another set of tracks lead back to the stream. How odd for a crocodile to travel so far from water. They develop a "most likely" script: The lioness went to the stream to drink, was badly wounded by the crocodile (probably grabbed by the head), escaped and made it to the tall grass, either on her own or dragged by the other lioness. But the croc followed, killed and devoured the lioness, and then returned to the stream. It's all very odd. Usually those species avoid each other.

In the Busanga Plains, we saw a lioness win, for herself and her cubs, the struggle for survival. Now we learn that even the supposed kings and queens of the bush must take care, and we recall Manda's warning us about crocodiles when we came too close to the water's edge of the seemingly benign Chindeni lagoon. We have by now seen a host of strange, wonderful, and occasionally sobering scenes, had a string of memorable experiences, and done it in settings about as close to primal as you can find today. Thrilled by our safari, we carry away a vivid sense of the tension between the need to know and observe the survival rules and the recognition that coincidence, happenstance—perhaps fate—can override those rules in an instant. □

FOR THIS MONTH'S CONTEST, SEE PAGE 133.

MAY 2007 PUZZLE

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

The answer, running from the southeast corner to the northwest corner, is EUPHRATES.

S	E	S	K	U	L	K
N	E	X	T	I	O	L
A	T	S	T	O	O	L
F	L	O	A	T	S	P
U	L	U	R	C	H	P
B	R	E	H	A	S	H
E	L	B	O	W	P	A
A	R	O	P	U	S	
W	H	E	A	T	Y	E

WHERE ARE YOU?

COMPETITION RULES (SEE PAGE 96)

NO PURCHASE OR PAYMENT OF ANY KIND IS NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN THIS SWEEPSTAKES. A PURCHASE WILL NOT IMPROVE CHANCES OF WINNING.

1. Enter *Condé Nast Traveler's* "Where Are You?" contest by sending a 3½-by-5-inch to 4½-by-5-inch postcard with your name, address, and telephone number and correctly identifying the place shown in this month's installment of the "Where Are You?" contest to:

Condé Nast Traveler's "Where Are You?" Contest
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Enter online by filling out the online entry form at enrtraveler.com and correctly identifying the place shown in this month's "Where Are You?" contest, according to the instructions given on the contest page. By providing your e-mail address, you grant Sponsor the right to send you commercial messages and share your address with others, unless specified otherwise as indicated on the entry form.

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3. Only one correct answer will be registered per entrant per month for the Monthly drawings. For the Grand Prize drawing, contestants who have one registered correct answer at the end of the contest period (on or before January 10, 2008) will have one entry in the Grand Prize drawing; contestants with a total of two registered correct answers will have two, and so on. *Condé Nast Traveler* reserves the right to disqualify any contestant at any time, in which event prizes will be awarded based on entries received to date.

4. For each issue, one potential Monthly winner of the contest will be chosen, on or after the eleventh day of the following month, in a random drawing of qualified entries that have correctly identified the location in that issue's "Where Are You?" contest. The potential winner will be notified by phone or mail. If the potential winner cannot be contacted within 14 days of attempted notification, an alternate winner may be chosen. All decisions by the judges are final.

5. Each Monthly winner will receive an award of \$1,000. There is no limit to the number of times a contestant may win the Monthly prize during the contest period. The Monthly winner's registered correct entry will be entered in the Grand Prize drawing.

6. One potential Grand Prize winner will be chosen, on or before February 25, 2008, in a random drawing of qualified entries that have correctly identified locations in the "Where Are You?" contests published in 2007. The potential winner will be notified by phone or mail. If the potential winner cannot be contacted within 14 days of attempted notification, an alternate winner may be chosen. All decisions by the judges are final.

7. The Grand Prize winner will receive a trip for two to one of the destinations featured in the 2007 "Where Are You?" contest. The choice of the destination is subject to approval by *Condé Nast Traveler*. Disapproval may be based on potential danger, inordinate expense, or other factors. The Grand Prize will include accommodations for the winner and his/her guest for seven days and six nights, air transportation (coach) from the major commercial airport nearest the winner's home in the U.S. or Canada, and hotel transfers. Winner and travel companion must be available to travel on the same itinerary, as selected by Sponsor. Additional transportation, meals, in-room charges (e.g., minibar, movies), telephone calls, gratuities, incidentals, and all other expenses are not included. Prize elements subject to availability, certain restrictions, and blackout dates. Scheduling is subject to availability and blackout dates, and accommodations are on a double-occupancy basis. Travel must be completed within 10 months of notification of the winner. No substitutions for the Grand Prize will be allowed except by the winner. *Condé Nast Traveler*, in which case a prize of equal or greater value will be awarded. The retail value of the Grand Prize is approximately \$10,000, depending on exact itinerary.

8. Income and other taxes, if any, are the sole responsibility of the winners. Prizes are non-transferable.

9. The contest is open to legal residents of the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, or Canada (except Quebec) who are 18 years of age or older as of the date of entry, except for employees of *The Condé Nast Publications*, participating promotional agencies, contributors to *Condé Nast Traveler*, and the families of any of the above.

10. The contest is subject to all federal, state, local, and provincial laws and regulations. Void outside the 50 United States and the District of Columbia and Canada, in the Canadian province of Quebec, and where prohibited. In the event the winner is a resident of Canada, the winner may be required to correctly answer a time-limited arithmetic skill-testing question.

11. Odds of winning depend on the number of correct entries received.

12. All entries become the sole property of *Condé Nast Traveler* and will not be acknowledged or returned.

13. Acceptance of a prize constitutes consent to use the winners' (and the Grand Prize traveling companion's) names and likenesses for editorial, advertising, and publicity purposes without further compensation (except where prohibited). The winners may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility, and the winners and the travel companion may be required to sign a liability and publicity release, which must be returned within 14 days of the attempted notification or an alternate winner may be chosen.

14. Contestants, by entering the "Where Are You?" contest, agree to be bound by the above rules and regulations. Sponsor is not responsible for errors in the administration or fulfillment of this sweepstakes, including without limitation mechanical, human, printing, distribution, or production errors, and may modify or cancel this promotion based upon such error at its sole discretion without liability.

15. For the names of the winners, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope, after the eleventh of each month but before August 25, 2008, to *Condé Nast Traveler* 2007 "Where Are You?" Contest Winners, 4 Times Square, New York, New York 10036. Sponsor: *The Condé Nast Publications*, 4 Times Square, New York, New York 10036.