

SHEN YUN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
2019 CONCERT TOUR

Music 5,000 Years in the Making

Roy Thomson Hall
Sunday, Oct. 6, 2PM
1-855-416-1800
ShenYunSymphony.org

SATURDAY STAR

WEATHER HIGH 21 C | SUNNY, BREEZY | MAP 58

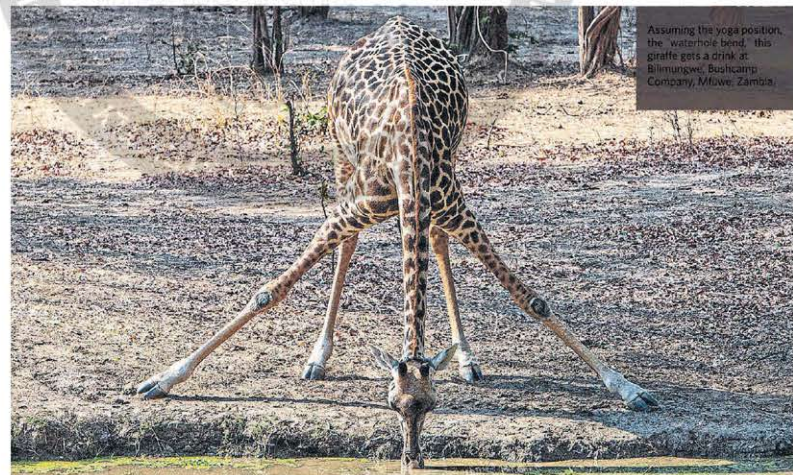
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2019

TORONTO STAR SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2019 SECTION T



FLYING SOLO
Being the only parent on a trip can be a fun, fulfilling adventure. **T8**

TRAVEL



Assuming the yoga position, the water-hose brand, this giraffe gets a drink at Billmunge, Bushcamp Company, Mfuwe, Zambia.

WIDE-EYED IN ZAMBIA

STEVE HAGGERTY PHOTOS TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

A safari lodge is a thousand times better than any zoo. You — not the animals — are the ones in the cage

ANNE Z. COOKE
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE
MFUWE, ZAMBIA—Alex Stewart, writing on the steps of Billmunge Lodge, deep in the Zambian bush, likes nothing better than surprising first-time visitors to this wilderness outpost with an introduction to the next-door neighbours. "Come in, come in, you're just in time," she urges, a twinkle in her eye, leading me to the rear deck of the lodge, one of six Bushcamp Company lodges in the South Luangwa National Park. When she points to the backyard water hole, I get it. There they are, two female elephants and a baby, splashing each other, cooling off on this hot October day. "Junior is a year old now," says Stewart, beaming as the little guy rolls over and over in a bathtub-shaped hole, smacking the water with his trunk and feet, the very image of a four-year-old let loose in a wading pool. "And that's Harry," adds

Stewart, as a hefty hippopotamus rises up in the water, blinks at the commotion and sinks back down. "He walks over from the Luangwa River to get away from the other males," she says, tossing back her hair, a thick white mane. "He likes it here, where he's top dog." After 26 hours and three flights from California to Zambia, in southern Africa, with a three-hour drive from Bushcamp's Mfuwe Lodge to Billmunge, I was dragging. But not for long. I'd forgotten how it feels on your first day in the bush. Exhilarated and wide-eyed, under the moon. And then, sobering up, eager but cautious. A safari lodge is a thousand times better than any zoo, but you — not the animals — are the ones in the cage. "You need to be aware, to look around you, and especially, never go out at night without an escort," says Bushcamp manager Amy Alderman. The safe way to watch lions is from an



Flapping ears tells us to back off and give this guy space at the South Luangwa National Park.

off-road vehicle, which the big cats ignore. When your tracker climbs up on the fender and your guide shifts gears, the adventure begins, a search for the legendary "Big Five" (lions, leopards, elephants, hippos and buffalo) and the "Lesser Eleven": hyenas, zebras, impalas, bushbacks, giraffe, wildebeest, rhinos, wild dogs, crocodiles, civets and genets. Why this trip, our fourth to the region? Steve, my husband, showed me a South African Airways ticket sale online, and I said it was too good to pass up. And we had a plan. Fly from Washington, D.C. to Johannesburg, then north to Lusaka and Mfuwe, transfer to Mfuwe Lodge, then to Billmunge and later to Chamilandu. Next, fly south to Livingston for a couple of days at the islands of Siakaba, the riverside resort in the Zambezi River. Finally, a flight to Skukuza, in South Africa, for a visit to Earth Lodge and Bush Lodge, in the 100,000-acre Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve, on the border of Kruger National Park.

ZAMBIA continued on T10

T10 | TORONTO STAR SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2019

TRAVEL

Tent camping in Zambia can be cheap and fun

ZAMBIA from T1

Sixteen days, five game-lodge destinations, and none of them alike. I picked Billmunge and Chamilandu for the location, in the wilderness and off the grid. With rustic cabins, six to eight guests, a friendly staff, first-class guides and a dedication to wildlife preservation, they sounded perfect. Built of logs, planks, reeds and thatch, the cabins were a work of art. And with striped pillows, African colours, flush-toilet, running water, screens and a single solar-powered night light, I felt right at home. But the lodges weren't identical. Billmunge looked over a water hole, Chamilandu had a river view and a "hide" above an elephant path. Chamilandu's dinners were served by the river, at Billmunge we ate on the deck by candlelight, sharing wine and laughing over the day's surprises.

The lions that killed and the buffalo, the bush babies in the Mahogany tree and the discovery — to our mutual astonishment — that our fellow guests, a couple from England, live next door to my English cousins. Manda Chisanga, our guide, the award-winning naturalist and a keen-eyed tracker, was both tireless and professional. "Did you hear that?" he asked. "It's an Eagle Owl. He's on that tree branch, there, no, to the left. And over there, the grass is moving but there's no wind tonight. Do you see the leopard?"

We bonded when I told him I drive a 48-year-old car with a dented fender, and disbelieving, he cracked a smile, then broke down laughing. "No, you don't really do you? That's too funny," he said, shaking his head, chuckling just as we spotted a pair of hyenas.

Steve picked the next destination, the Islands of Siakaba, on an island in the mighty Zambezi, where the river is wide and shallow. Spectacular views from the lodge take it all in, from the trees in the foreground to Zimbabwe, on the river's far side.

The paths, with tables, flower beds and a fountain, was the gathering place. Our bedroom, one of seven tented cabins connected by swinging bridges, hung to

> IF YOU GO

Making plans
There are no African safaris that you can't afford. Tent camping and 35-year-olds, favoured by students and young couples, are cheap and fun. High-priced lodges cost more because they offer more, from personal airport transfers to private cabins, comfortable beds, meals, beverages, game drives, off-site tours and even laundry service.

How to get there
For South African Airways' routes, flight times and special offers see www.flysaa.com. Visas to enter Zambia are sold at the Lusaka Airport; the \$65 visa is slightly more expensive but provides multiple entries.

Where to stay
See the Bushcamp Company at www.bushcampcompany.com; the Sabi Sabi Bush Lodge at www.sabi-sabi.com; and the Islands of Siakaba at www.siakaba.net. These and similar safari lodge websites provide photos, maps and descriptions of lodging, meals, wildlife, game drives and climate. All-inclusive safari lodge rates per person, per night, range from \$750 to \$1,300 or more.

the bank above the high water mark. Sleeping late we relaxed, swam in the pool, took a sunset cruise, joined an off-island picnic and got into a molero (cano) for a guided ride, launched from the dock. Dinner times were especially busy. The restaurant has a local following.

With Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park next door, game drives were available. But we pressed them up to spend a day with a young college-educated Zambian couple.

Comparing cultures, we played "straight man-funny man," trading jests about housing prices, the cost of gas, favourite vegetables, names for babies, strange wedding ceremonies and the number of cows it takes to buy a bride.

ZAMBIA continued on T11



Expert trackers Lazarus and Louis find gold: a pride of lions sleeping off dinner near Earth Camp Lodge, Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve, South Africa.

The Liberation of Holland
75th Anniversary Tours / Spring 2020

Join us for the 75th Anniversary, as we give our thanks and remembrance to the Canadian veterans who liberated Lusland from the Second World War.

Highlights include:

- May 3rd: A day at Keukenhof Gardens
- May 4th: Canadian Military Cemetery in Holten
- May 5th: Liberation Parade in Wageningen
- May 8th: Victory in Europe Day (VE Day)
- May 9th: Apeldoorn "Thank You Canada"

Full tour also includes: Juno Beach, Viny Ridge, The Last Post Ceremony, Dipsie and Somme battlefields.

Full Tour: Normandy to Holland \$5,950 p.p./twin
14 nights, April 26th to May 10th, 2020
Core Tour: Holland only \$3,830 p.p./twin
8 nights, May 2nd to 10th, 2020
Optional Extension: The Road to Berlin \$2,990 p.p./twin
6 nights, May 10th to 15th, 2020

Includes: 3-4 star hotels, daily breakfast, most dinners, all admissions and experienced guide.

Visit our website or request brochure.
www.dhgtour.com 1-888-597-3519
905-639-9954
dhtour@dhgtour.ca
609-2319 Fairview St, Burlington, ON L7R 2E3
MCO # 88012768

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2019 TORONTO STAR | T11

TRAVEL



Billmunge manager Alex Stewart has a surprise for her guests: the evening sounder in the Luangwa River, barefoot, with the Chinden Hills behind.

An island in the mighty Zambezi

ZAMBIA from T10

Trevor Noah, the comedian, and a South African native, would have fit right in. We spent our last week in South Africa at two very different safari lodges, the star's minimalist Earth Lodge and its partner, Bush Camp, a family-friendly resort, both in the Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve.

Despite a day lost to rain, we didn't miss a drive, bouncing over the hills in comfortable vehicles, with rain gear on board and miles of new territory to explore. When our guide and tracker, Lazarus Mahore and Louis Mlamisi, spotted paw prints in the dirt, they drove over every bush until they found the spots, asleep in the grass.

But the lodges themselves couldn't have been more different. Channelling the Neanderthals, Earth Lodge's 13 luxury suites were caves, richly decorated dugouts in the side of a hill, invisible from the top or sides. We sat in our plunge pool outside the front windows and watched the impala graze in complete privacy.

The lounges, tidy rock gardens, weathered tree trunks, bar, wine cellar and dining room echoed the motif, fresh and inviting but spartan. Even the dinner guests fit the mould, eating at the next table, alone and in silence.

In contrast, Bush Camp, with 25 luxury suites, popped with energy. Game drives mattered, but as part of the larger experience. The high school kids in shorts, shorts, celebrating a birthday, said it best. "First person to see a rhino gets the prize."

The food, served buffet style on a half-dozen tables heaped high, ran from meats, fish and pasta to salads, fruit, vegetables, breads and cookies, while the guests, sitting wherever there was space, mingled and exchanged names. You could hear your kids in the Children's Center, four Huntington Village or visit two nearby schools, both supported by the game lodges. Or you could meet village elder Nosiya Sabya, a Shanga shaman. Invited into her rondavel, I sat down, crossed my legs, she rolled the knucklebones and then she spoke, the words I'd hoped to hear: "We will meet again some time."

We China Vacation

\$1399 From 13 Days Ancient China Capital with Terracotta Warrior
Departs: Oct/2019 - May/2020

\$1699 From 15 Days Dream of China with Yangtze River Cruise
Departs: Oct/2019 - May/2020

Luxury 10 seats per departure date
AIRFARE, BULLET TRAIN TICKET, YANGTZE RIVER* LUXURY CRUISE & TAXES ALL INCLUDED
*If applicable

www.wechinavacation.com
TOLL FREE: 1-844-678-9266 | 905-604-7551

3621 HWY 7 East, Suite 502, Markham, ON L3R 0G6
Hours: Monday-Friday 10:00-18:30 & Saturday 11:00-16:30
Tel: 905-604-7551
MCO # 88012768