

TRIP REPORT – SMITH FAMILY TO JAYDEE CAMP – 19 to 22 NOVEMBER 2012

I had spent a few days guiding three members of the family a couple of years ago and after a great few days in the bush, they had decided that they wanted to bring a few more family members along for the next trip. With this in mind I sought out a suitable location and after weighing up all the options, I decided on Jaydee Camp, a private self-catered camp located in the heart of the Timbavati Private Nature Reserve. Our group booked the entire camp for 3 nights with me as guide and Lucas as tracker and chief navigator.

Although the camp is self-catered we decided to opt for a slightly less strenuous option and had our food bought for us and prepared by the live-in chef, Schoeman. After sampling Schoeman's first dinner of beef fillet, we soon realised that we had in fact made the right decision. Not only was his food excellent, but doing it this way meant that we could relax on a game drive and not worry about returning to camp and having to prepare a meal.

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The majority of the group arrived late in the afternoon on 19 November. We decided to head out for a short game drive just to explore the area. I am certainly not one for missing a game drive and shortly after leaving the camp, we came across the fascinating sight of a Spider-hunting Wasp dragging a Baboon Spider along a road. These wasps sting a spider and in so doing paralyse it. They then lay an egg on it, bury the spider and when the egg hatches, its first meal is the spider. I have seen Spider-hunting Wasps with spiders on many occasions, but never with one as large as this baboon spider. After studying this amazing sight for a while, we continued on our way.



Not long thereafter, another vehicle which was in close proximity to us spotted a young male leopard. We headed across to the sighting and ended up being the last vehicle with the leopard which allowed us at least

45-minutes with him. He provided us with some fantastic views as he rose from his resting place and headed off into the African night. We returned to the camp to enjoy the fillet that Schoeman had prepared for us.

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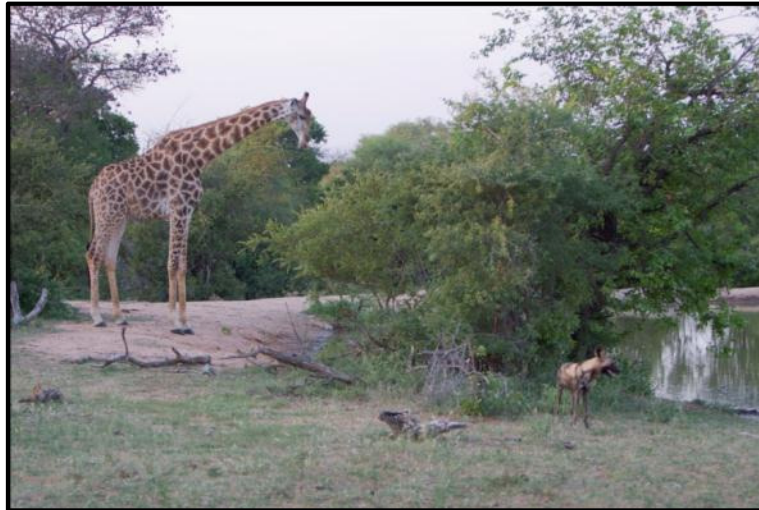
After a great first day, everyone was eagerly anticipating what lay in store for us on day 2. Coffee was enjoyed in the main area of the camp after which we departed on our morning game drive. Some of the morning highlights included seeing 2 adult and 2 young Spotted Hyenas as well as a white rhino cow and calf. We also had great views of giraffe during the morning. The highlight of the morning was seeing 2 male lions in prime condition, resting up in the Nhlalalumi river bed. These lions both had huge bellies and had probably feasted on something during the night. After viewing the lions, we headed back to Jaydee Camp.



After a hearty brunch, the group relaxed in camp with the majority of the group spending time in the refreshing waters of the Jaydee Camp pool. Schoeman had whipped up a tasty chocolate cake during the day which we enjoyed at tea time. We had thoroughly enjoyed our previous two drives and as we left on our afternoon drive, we wondered how we could top them.

We had good sightings of general game such as kudu, giraffe and impala including some new born lambs. Fairly late in the day, we decided to visit a waterhole to see if anything had come down to drink as it was a really hot

day. We were in luck. As we arrived, we saw a giraffe making his way to the water's edge. It is fascinating to watch them as they nervously approach the water. We parked a distance from the water so as not to disturb the giraffe. After a while, the giraffe slowly lowered his head and started to drink. It was about this time that Doug said that he had seen a wild dog. Knowing that 2 packs had been frequenting the area, it was something we had been speaking about and hoping to see. As per usual, I thought Doug was joking and when I looked up, I was amazed to see a wild dog standing near the vehicle. As we scanned the area, we saw more dogs heading towards the water. We watched as the dogs drank from the waterhole and settled around the edge of the water.



After a short while some of the dogs started running off and we decided to follow them as they often hunt at this time of day. In less than a minute, we saw that some of the dogs were now at full sprint indicating that one of the pack had made a kill. We came through a small drainage line and found a few dogs squabbling over the remains of an impala lamb. It was amazing to see how quickly they finished the kill. The dogs then turned around and headed back to the water and we followed suit. When we arrived at the waterhole, we were greeted by the sight of 15 pups. The pack now totalled 29 dogs.

We watched the interactions between the dogs as they milled around the edge of the waterhole. Again, the pack got up and headed off in another direction. Not wanting to miss any of the action, we followed them. After trotting along for a few minutes the pack sprinted off. We followed them and found them with 2 impala – this time they had killed an adult and a new born. We had spent about 45 minutes with the pack and in that time we had seen them with 3 separate impala kills. It is amazing to witness what efficient hunters they are.



For the second day running, we had missed our sundowner stop, but no one was complaining. We returned to camp and shared our stories around the fireplace and enjoyed a tasty lamb potjie that Schoeman had prepared for us.

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It was always going to be difficult topping the drive of the previous evening, but every game drive is different and there is always something interesting to see. The highlight of the morning was seeing the same 2 male lions we had seen the previous day. They had only moved a few hundred metres along the riverbed in the space of 24 hours. We also had a view of a hippo in one of the remaining pools in the Nhlalalumi River as well as a fantastic sighting of a nyala, our first for the trip.

We returned to camp for a rest during the heat of the day and again, the swimming pool was a popular place. During this time, Simon put his tracking skills to work and was most disappointed to discover an empty packet of Tim Tam cookies. Fortunately this was just a prank and Simon's disappointment soon turned to delight as Yvonne produced the much-talked-about cookies. Thanks to Ern and Yvonne for bring them all the way from Australia.

On our afternoon drive, we were treated to the sight of a female leopard lying sprawled across a branch of a Weeping Boer-Bean tree completely unperturbed by our presence. We managed to stop for sundowners and at last gin and tonics were enjoyed in the African bush.

Throughout the afternoon drive, we had watched as storm clouds rolled in from the south-west. Shortly before dark, we started to see some lightning on the western horizon. On our return to camp we switched off the vehicle and watched in awe as the lightning danced across the sky. We were fortunate not to get wet on drive yet still enjoy the spectacle of the approaching storm. It was great just to sit and enjoy the beauty of nature – the dark clouds rolling in from the west, the flashes of lightning and the smell the approaching African storm.

When we returned to camp, Schoeman had anticipated the change in weather and had set up a table for us in the main area of the camp and it was here that we enjoyed our last dinner together.



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A fair amount of rain had fallen during the night and as we left on morning drive, only the freshest tracks could be seen on the roads. Again we saw good general game on the morning drive, but the highlights were watching a pair of jackals in an open area and also seeing a territorial white rhino bull resting up.

After a great morning drive, we returned to the camp for brunch before packing our cars and heading off.

Jaydee Camps is a superb camp. The staff based there – Lucas, the tracker together with Schoeman, the chef and Seliwe and Klara who assist with the housekeeping – were outstanding throughout our stay. Not only is Jaydee in a fantastic game-viewing area, but the beauty about staying at a 'self-catering' camp like Jaydee is that you have plenty of flexibility. The camp accommodates 10 people and is ideal for families.

For more information on Jaydee Camp, please contact Simon Stobbs at simon@diverseafrica.co.za