

A South African Holiday to remember. By Janet Gilbert and Jack Cooke, Barnside, Walkden, Manchester, United Kingdom.

We arrived at Paul & Jill's B&B (Tandala Lodge) on a Saturday in early May 2012 and stayed for 18 days all of which were full of interest.

The house and rooms were clean and tastefully decorated and the beds and mattresses were brand new and very comfortable. We experienced many different things and visited many local places many of which we would not have known about if it wasn't for Paul & Jill.

We visited the world famous Hans Merensky golf course where you can play golf in the wild and all manner of animals can be expected on the course. We also visited the Phalaborwa mine look out station to get a view of one of the biggest open cast copper mines in the world. We also chilled out and dined at the "Amarula Lapa" home of the famous Amarula cocktail drink.

We drove from Phalaborwa to Tshukudu game reserve in Hoedspruit where we had the once in a life time thrill of walking in the bush with a semi-tame female Cheetah called Ntombie followed by a lovely breakfast on the veranda of the game reserve where Ntombie even joined us for breakfast! We then drove on to the tourist area of Hoedspruit where we experienced the art galleries, antique and crafts shops which we found full of interest.

After lunch we then drove down to Kamai reptile park and learned about snakes and reptiles from the dedicated guides -two young South African gentlemen who were full of enthusiasm for their collection of snakes and reptiles. We even got to handle a few of the less deadly ones!

We also visited the famous Moholohollo animal rehabilitation centre in the foot of the Drakensburg mountain range where amongst many other things we got to meet a baby White Rhino and were serenaded by two Lions calling to each other, the sound of which almost shook our bodies!

After a couple of lazy days around the pool we were then off again on a 3 night two days off road driving and camping expedition into the wild South Africa bush. We camped in dry riverbeds along the edge of the magnificent Kruger National Park! Jack had camped before but it was my first time and this in the wilds of Africa! -every star was visible in the night sky and after a huge camp fire feast we fell asleep listening to the calls of the animals in the Kruger park!

The driving was both challenging and exhilarating and despite being covered in dust at the end of each day we thoroughly enjoyed it. It was nice to relax in the pool when we got back to Paul & Jill's.

We also enjoyed two days and one night in the Kruger National Park and visited two of the many rest camps there. We stopped at Letaba on the way down and also visited the Elephant museum there, which was full of interest and is well worth a visit. We stayed overnight in thatched Rondavels in Olifants rest camp and then drove back to Phalaborwa the following day filming and photographing all manner of wild animals and birds and even being charged by a huge female Elephant which was so exciting and a memory we will never forget!

Our last trip out was a morning river safari and breakfast aboard a boat on the Olifants River and we spotted lots of crocodiles, hippos, birds and antelope during the cruise -a lovely end to a wonderful holiday.

The drive back to Johannesburg took us through the magnificent Blyde River Canyon a stunning spectacle and ever changing landscapes full of interest. We then stopped off at Dullstroom for lunch and enjoyed the many shops and galleries etc of this old Transvaal town.

During our stay at Tandala lodge Jill catered for us brilliantly and Paul organised all our activities and visits perfectly.

Overall we had a really enjoyable stay in Tandala Lodge and a wonderful safari style holiday in South Africa, many thanks to Jill and Paul. A great first visit to South Africa well recommended!

Janet Gilbert. May 2012