

A Quick guide to help you prepare for your first African Safari
&
A little bit of info on what to expect

Note: Most of the information given here was provided by Terry Blauwkamp, a veteran of 18 African Safaris. This is a guide only, and not set in gold. It is however, some of the best advice I have seen for hunters visiting Africa.

1. **Preparing for the journey:**

Here are a few tips clients learned the hard way. Where to start? For the sake of simplicity, let's ASSUME that you already have a hunt booked. Getting hunts booked is another complete project, and the easy part of it all. Most of the information given; is relevant to a 7-14 day Plains Game hunt in South-Africa.

There are other tips and info for other African countries and you will be forwarded what is relevant to your holiday.

Money:

U.S. Dollars are always welcome in Africa. Your outfitter can be trusted to keep your cash out of harms way in a safe, as all hunting camps in S.A. are nowadays forced by law to have a safe in camp for rifles. The currency in South Africa is the Rand (ZAR). Count the money together, and let the person entrusted with it sign for it.

On your way to the departure area, you will see a Currency Exchange window. If you have not gotten some South African Rands before you left home, stop here and exchange some US Dollars for SA Rand. Take about \$100 to \$500 and buy some Rands.

Ask for small bills, as you will use these for tips and misc. things when you get to South Africa. If all they have is big bills, try to exchange them with the flight attendants on your SAA flight. They carry Rands from home and will usually help you.

Traveler's cheques are a safer bet, but your PH/Outfitter might frown upon this, as the banks in South Africa, charge extraordinary fees to bank traveler's cheques.

Call your credit card company and tell them you are going to be in Africa. That way when they get any transactions from there, they will not deny them. This could save you a lot of trouble trying to pay for a meal or Hotel somewhere in Tim-Buc-Too.

Another new problem clients have run into is this. What is your credit limit? Get as large a Credit Card limit as you can. It seems that when you purchase something in local currency, like South African Rands, @ 6 or 8 to 1, they run the sale thru in Rands. So 10,000 Rands is really a \$600 dollar purchase, but is charged against your available credit line.

If you have 10,000-dollar credit limit, and you try and run another sale thru that day of 500 Rand, the sale will deny because you have exceeded your limit. Now the next day it will workout, as they convert all sales each night, and adjust your account, but on the day it can cause a red face or two.....

Do not bother to change any Rand back to dollars at the airport, rather use it to tip the people that looked after you so well.

2. Your pre-Safari planning:

Check with your local health dept to see what shots might be needed. There are now a couple of "lifetime" Polio and Hepatitis shots that should be gotten. Be certain your Tetanus is up to date for sure. Ask the outfitter if you are visiting a malaria or bilharzia area or not.

Speaking of Health Problems, look up www.MedJetAssistance.com

Clothing:

An old saying comes into mind when packing... "Bring half as many clothes as you think you will use, and bring twice as much money".

DARK colored clothes are the key. Old Boy Scout uniforms are great. Dark green. Real Tree or Tree Bark seems to be OK, but not light colored khaki shorts or shirts. Also no WHITE baseball caps.

The game will spot your legs or head moving first in the bush, and dark ones are harder to see. There may be a lot of game in Africa, but it still is hunting. You must see them first or they are gone just like a White-tailed Deer.

Remember, most all hunting outfits in Africa do your laundry everyday, so it is not important to bring a lot of clothes. So bring one or two sets to travel in and two for hunting. Always pack one comfortable "track suit", "sweater", top and trousers, The Southern parts of South Africa can get very cold during July and August, and even snow in higher elevations.

Shoes are very important, WELL broken in walking shoes, and a lightweight DARK colored hat or baseball cap. If hunting in rocky terrain, make sure you have boots with good ankle support, but that are flexible and comfortable to hike with.

Local Customs Office- form 4457:

Before going to the Airport to leave, take a trip down to the local Customs Office, and get a form 4457... This is a CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION OF PERSONAL EFFECTS TAKEN ABROAD, as they are called.

Take all your guns, cameras, binoculars, and anything with a serial number on it with you to the Customs office.

They are usually open normal 9 to 5 hours. Monday - Friday. Be careful of Gov't holidays, as they might be closed. It is a no hassle deal; they do it all the time.

Do not try and do this the same day as you are leaving on your trip. All you need is for the Customs office to be closed for some dumb reason (like Presidents Day) or any other Gov't Holiday excuse for a day off, and then you are screwed.

The reason you get this form, is to show the US Customs people when you come back into the USA.

They want to be sure that you are bringing back the guns, cameras, etc, that you took out. If you have something not on that list, they then might charge you DUTY because they can say that you bought it abroad and now must pay Duty.

Plus the Customs folks in South Africa NOW REQUIRE YOU TO HAVE THAT FORM UPON ARRIVAL TOO, plus you will need it to get your gun permits.

Another new thing..... It seems that the Federal Gov't is now spot checking departing passengers to see if they have more than \$10,000 in Travelers checks or cash on them. If you have \$10,000 or more, you are "required" to file a FinCen Form 105 with US Customs at your departing airport. It is no big deal, and it is trouble free just like the 4457.

Look up www.fincen.gov/reg_bsaforms.html#105 to download the form. Do it or don't do it, but remember, I told you about it.

As you can see by now, this is no short quick reading material to absorb before going.

Passport:

Did you bring our PASSPORT up to date before we try to leave?

YOU MUST have at least 11 months left on your Passport after your scheduled return date. Why, we do not know, just a Gov't thing. In case you get delayed, then your passport does not expire. SO BE SURE and check the expiration date.

South Africa requires 2 blank pages in your passport when you arrive. We assume that you have a passport already, or have just gotten a new one.

Insurance

What about INSURANCE? Look up www.siai.net you might want to buy their coverage on your guns and equipment. Great low cost, no-deductible coverage.

3. Booking your flight and traveling-practical tips

Booking the flight

- Airline tickets are a big part of the trip. DO NOT CALL THE AIRLINES DIRECT, they have no deals. Ask several travel agents for QUOTES, you will be amazed how different the same flights can be in price.
- Call Elaine at African Odyssey Travel toll free at 1-866-486-9351 or e-mail at aodyssey@gate.net She specialize in hunters traveling to Africa.

Other countries (connecting flights)

- Make every effort to be sure that you are NOT going through London. London is very anti-gun and anti-hunter, so most of the gun problems occur there.
- Seldom can you not get where you want to go by going through Amsterdam Holland, Frankfurt Germany or Johannesburg SA.
- Speaking of Amsterdam, one must now have a TRANSIT OF NETHERLANDS CONSENT FROM in order to take your guns thru there. Fax your request to 011-31-50-523-2183 they will usually get it back to you in a few days.
- If going thru Frankfurt, as long as your arriving airline has a baggage agreement with the connecting airline, then it is not a problem.

Miscellaneous.

- But, if for any reason you need to take possession of your guns, even just to take them to another airline, you need a Transit permit there too. So check with your airlines and booking agents on this subject.
- If you absolutely "MUST" go thru London, DO NOT attempt to change airports between Heathrow & Gatwick. London has some very strict and nasty gun laws, and transporting guns between airports is big time trouble unless you hire a courier to do it for you at \$500 or more.)
- IF YOU MUST GO THROUGH THERE, TRY TO GO IN AND OUT OF GATWICK AND AVOID HEATHROW IF AT ALL POSSIBLE. It now seems that Paris is not much better, so stay out of there too.

In Jo-burg, you can change planes and connect to any of the southern parts of SA to hunt like Port Elizabeth, Durban, etc. Also you can change to flights to Namibia, Botswana or Zimbabwe too.

SAA also still fly's out of New York's JFK Airport, one-stop to Jo Berg leaving at 5:55 PM. arriving at 5:50 PM the next day.

A word on name tags on luggage put on TWO just in case a conveyor or cart rips one off.

- Checking in and out

Arrive at the airport 2 hours before departure time here, and 3 hours before any international flight.

Remember, only TWO checked pieces of luggage per person, and don't let exceed 50 lb in weight per bag. That's right 50... not 70 like it used to be for international flights. If you are alone, (and that is no fun) that means one gun case and one bag.

A good piece if kit can be found by going to the local "Army Surplus" store and look for an Air Force flight bag, a big Green nylon rip stop flight bag. It weighs next to nothing and is very tough, but does not lock very well, even with a pad lock.

But why worry, if someone wants in the bag, they either pick the lock or cut a hole in it anyway. All locking does is keep it from coming open by itself in transit.

Include in your packing a laundry bag. Also write down what you turn in to be cleaned each day to be sure it all comes back.

A word on name tags on luggage put on TWO just in case a conveyor or cart rips one off.

Luggage weight is a problem, which is why the light bag is important. A 20 lb suitcase is already 20 lbs, and on international flights, they are not bashful at charging you for over-weight bags.

Let us assume again that you are going with your wife/partner/girlfriend. It matters not if she hunts, but it is a bonus just having her along, because it gives you more bags ;)

Rifles and ammo

You still will take only one gun case with two, NOT THREE OR FOUR guns in it. Seems that since 9/11, those big "trunks with 3 or 4 guns are not being allowed anymore but two does not seem to be a problem with any airline.

An Important NOTE: South Africa will not give you a permit for 2 guns of the same caliber, nor can you bring in semi or fully automatic rifles, and NO handguns, unless it is a revolver for hunting. Also don't attempt to bring in (traffic) ammo for your PH for a caliber that you don't have with you.

So now we have one gun case and THREE bags we can take along. This is wonderful because that gives your wife two and a half complete bags for her and one half of one bag for you, but that is OK, because you are going to want to put some ammo IN EACH of those three bags.

Let's assume again, that you are taking only two rifles. A Buffalo rifle, (if hunting Buffalo), and a plains game rifle.

Maybe a 416 or 375, and 300 Mag, 7mm Mag, or 30-06.

PUT a box of ammo of EACH Cal in EACH bag. That way if you loose any one bag, you still have ammo.

Even if you go with a partner and not with your wife, put some ammo in each other's bag, so that if you lose yours, you still have ammo in your partner's bag.

REMEMBER, Airline Regulations allow only 5 Kg's or 11 lbs. of ammo per passenger. So you claim 5 kg for your wife and 5 kg for yourself.

If they ask how much you have, tell them 5 Kg's, don't say any more than that, and only answer their questions.

South African Air (SAA) will usually ask you to sign a paper stating that you have only 5 kg's. No problem, just sign it and say no more about it.

Also, do not take the bolt out of your rifle, and try and carry it on the plane in your carry on. When x-rayed, it looks like a pistol, and guess what that will get you at an Airport?

It seems that you will be asked when checking in, "Is your ammo in the ORIGINAL factory container"? Also, they might ask, "Is it in a locked metal box"?

Put your ammo in an original factory container, OF THE CORRECT CALIBER for the ammo, and put your ammo in a metal "cash box" that you can buy from Wal-Mart for \$8.97 compared to Office Max at \$29.99 ea. So buy 2 metal boxes, and you can put ammo in each piece of luggage.

Never mind that you will have too much ammo if all the bags get there, that ammo is priceless to your Professional Hunter (PH). Leave it, and the metal box, with him when you go home.

Do not attempt to leave a gun in Africa under any circumstances. It is illegal and the US Fed's frown on that big time.

If you are taking a laser range finder, be sure it is in your checked luggage, as airline folks are inclined to think you are a terrorist if you have a laser object.

If you get an anti-hunting agent, ask to speak with the supervisor right away. Don't make a big show of it, but you don't have to take any guff either.

Do just what they say, and get away from that counter before something else comes up. **DOUBLE CHECK YOUR CLAIM CHECKS, AND BE SURE THAT YOU HAVE AS MANY AS YOU SHOULD HAVE**, also be sure that they are **YOURS** and be sure that your tags get on your bags at the counter.

It always takes longer to check in when you have guns. They will ask if they are unloaded and may ask you to fill out a form and sign it. They may also ask about ammo, and tell them it is **SEPARATE** and in the other luggage.

While we are speaking of "firearms", here is the latest twist. More and more PH's are having their clients use or rent their rifles. This eliminates the gun permits fiasco. It really works well, if you are going to take a photo tour in conjunction with your hunt, as some National Parks frown on you taking your guns in to park.

4. Arrival

Upon arrival, (In Joberg) you will come down the steps to Immigration.

Now go through Immigration, again only answer the questions, and don't make small talk. But don't look like you are in a hurry either.

Once through Immigration, you will see the luggage area and lots of people. First of all, find yourself a cart for your bags. Proceed through the customs area into the arrival lounge where a Infinito Safari member of staff will meet and greet you.

Your GUNS will USUALLY NOT come out on the normal luggage carousel, but are unloaded and taken to the S.A.P.S. office by a security guards company. 4457 you got from US Customs, and fill in their forms with Serial numbers etc.

- Clearing your rifles at customs

We will now escort you to the Police office where we will clear and collect your firearms. In order to bring you rifles into South Africa, you would need a temporary import permit issued by the South African police service.

Although a bit of a hassle because of all the paperwork, it is easy and quick to clear your firearms. It is very important that all the paperwork as set out below is in order. Get out that Form

There are two ways of obtaining this permit:

- 1.) Arrangement of your temporary import permit prior to your
- 2.) Getting you temporary import permit at the airport in South Africa

The first option is one we recommend for people booking a hunt well in advance, and the second is option for people booking with 60 or less days notice. We will forward the relevant information to you as a separate document.

Please find herewith a separate document with all the requirements and step by step guide of what you need to do to get everything in order.

5. The drive to the hunting area.

South Africa has got the widest variety of hunt able game in Africa. These animals all roam different habitats. Infinito Safaris hunt 3 main regions. They are:

- Bushveldt- Tree forests and savannah. Game like Eland, Kudu, Nyala, and Dangerous six.
- High veldt – Open “steppe” like grasslands. Bird shooting and High veldt plains game like Grey Rhebuck, Black Wildebeest, Blesbok, Springbok, and many more.
- Karoo- Semi dessert- vermin-springbok, and various other plains game.

Most of the species on our price list, can be hunted in one and or all of the above areas, but there are some that occur exclusively in one area.

These areas are hundreds of miles apart, and depending on where you will hunt, the drive from the airport might be 2 or 10 hours. It is possible to get connecting flights to closer airports.

All transport is comfortable and have air-conditioning. The option is also there to refresh at our B&B in Pretoria (35 min. from airport) before an onward journey of 8/10 hours are taken.

6. Arrival and lodging in hunting area.

You will be taken to your room, and given about 30 min. to settle in a bit. We will then proceed and introduce you to the camp staff and show you around your new environment.

If the light permits, we will check the rifle zero.

After the welcome ceremony on the first night, we will have an information session on what is going to happen in the next week, and also put your mind to rest on small detail like first aid procedures, and answer any questions you might have.

You will be treated to a high standard on food, drink and service throughout your stay.

7. Hunting

For the purpose of this information piece, we will only touch on Plains Game. If a dangerous game Safari is planned, then you are more than welcome to ask for any advice in particular.

Remember, what is said below is general advice, please bring the rifle YOU shoot best, as bullet PLACEMENT is what counts the most to us.

- Calibre

What rifle? Well, what do you want to hunt? If you do not have any specific idea, or are interested in a general plains game bag, and Kudu and Eland are on the menu, nothing smaller than a 30-06. A personal favorite is the .375 H&H.

The ideal weapon for this type of hunt is the various 300's and .338 calibers. It also depends on where you will be hunting. In the thick bush veldt, shots are seldom taken longer than 200 yards, where this is the average distance in the Karoo or High veldt areas.

For smaller Plains Game like Blesbuck, Springbok and Impala, anything .234 and bigger will do the job. Then again, the .338 will do the job just fine.

To give you an idea of what to bring, look at the rifles we "rent" to clients.

- .375H&H

- .300 Win Mag
- .30-06 Spring.
- .308 Win
- .22 Hornet (vermin and geese)
- Shotgun (Birds and Bushpig)

- Bullets

Use good bullets like:

Swift A-Frames, Barnes TSX, Trophy Bonded Bear Claws, and Nosler AccuBonds or Partitions.

- Optics
Good quality optics is very important, but you do not need an expensive telescope. Leupold and Burris are fine. Bring something close to a 3-9x40.
- Practice
Practice from 25-250 yards, so that you know where the rifle shoots at these distances. Also practice shooting from sticks, as a dead rest.
For bush veldt hunting, I would like you to have a zero at 100 yards, and for High Veldt and Karoo zero at 200 yards (or 2" high at 100yards).

8. Going home like it or not

On the final day, all outstanding monies are paid, and we get you to the airport at least three hours before your flight departs.

Now it is a sad time of having to say goodbye to your PH, kiss his wife and kids, of course by now you have promised the world to him, given him the scope off your rifle, and any extra left over ammo, and even left deposit money to come back again next year.

You are on a high, and the euphoria is making your head spin. Remember that the going home bit is just as, if not more so, important than the going. This can easily make a dream holiday a nightmare one.

- Taxidermy

Here is a subject sure to send terror through many people.

Although this is an arrangement between you and the actual artist that does the work, we will assist you in getting this done. We do the field preparation of your trophies, and deliver them to the taxidermist in South Africa.

You may certainly want to consider having your heads mounted in Africa. It saves dipping & packing charges, the price per head is cheaper than in the USA and the Quality of work is very good.

Before you leave on your trip, contact Carol Rutkowski in Dallas at Copper Smith Importers at 1-888-827-4388 or e-mail to carolr_dfw@coppersmith.com She is very good about helping get your stuff home.

Now you must have even more patience, as this takes a long time to get them out of an African Country and finally get to the USA.

Back to going home

Now that we are finally on the way home, the next thing is getting through Oliver Tambo again. Upon landing, (assuming you had to fly back in) you will again go down the steps down to immigration, just like when you arrived the first time. Only now, you do not have to go through the passport stamping line

OR

Come into the INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURE area, and a Porter will want to help you. That is OK as he knows how to get through the lines. Only use the "approved" porters with their orange work suits.

Remember that bank of Airline counters you saw when you arrived in Jo Berg? Go right to Airline you are using, SAA, KLM etc, and get your boarding pass.

After that, just to the left of the Airline counters, is a metal detector. Go there because that bypasses the lines, and takes you directly to the departure lounge upstairs.

Here you wait for your plane to depart for home. Plus lots of shops for last minute shopping, But remember, you buy it you carry it.

Now pay attention for a minute, IF you purchased anything in SA, you paid a VAT tax on it. This tax is refundable to you when you leave, but you must apply for it.

Just inside the door when you come into the terminal is a VAT tax office. There you must check in they may want to SEE the goods you are taking out of the Country.

So do not bury them in your luggage. They will give you some paperwork to take to the REFUND office inside the departure lounge way on the far end.

Here you will get a check for the VAT tax refund and you can go to a Bank there in the lounge to cash it in.

VAT tax refund is usually not worth the trouble. "They" disallowed most of our receipts for one reason or another. Sort of like the U.S. IRS, no compromise.

OK, back to departing. Now go over to your check in counter for boarding passes and luggage tags.

Then you must take your gun case to the special desk to check that in. Your porter will know where to go. Make sure your paper work is correct, be polite, and say thanks. Be sure that your luggage tags get on YOUR gun cases. Then you go through passport control and into the departure waiting area.

Now is when you go to collect the VAT tax spoken about earlier. (If you have enough to make it worthwhile).

Jo Berg is an unbelievable airport in efficiency. How they ever get so many people boarded "on time" is an incredible feat. It is about an 8 -9 hour flight during the night and then at about 3 AM the next morning all the flights will land to refuel.

Usually you can't get off the plane while they refuel. It is then about another 8 or 9 hour flight to the US, and after about 6 hours, they will put the lights on and start to serve some breakfast, show you a newsreel and such, and some information upon entering the USA.

Again, keep your passport handy, as you will wear it out. They will give you a form to fill out about where you were and what did you do and what did you BUY. Get all the receipts from purchases ready to show Customs if they ask.

The Immigration people now want to see all boots from returning hunters, so that they can dip and spray them with a disinfectant to prevent hoof and mouth disease from entering the USA.

Upon landing you will have a long walk to immigration to have your passport stamped but they have lots of lines, and do very well. Then down the steps to baggage claim.

Luggage will come out as normal, (get a cart) but your gun case will come out on a side door.

Then over to Customs to see if they want to see or open anything up. He or (she) is bound to ask for that Form 4457 PERSONAL EFFECTS that you got in Customs before leaving. Have it out and ready. At this point it is a 50-50 chance if they will want to check the gun numbers or your purchases. Just be patient and polite.

DO NOT ATTEMPT TO BRING ANY FOOD OR ANIMAL PARTS INTO THE COUNTRY. THIS INCLUDES BILTONG, Warhog tusks, or Porcupine needles.

Don't act nervous or in a hurry. After clearing Customs, there is a check in counter for ALL airlines leaving to your departing airline. Check in your luggage and guns here and they will put them on the right plane.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, we have done the best we can to help the first timer have a successful trip with a minimum of hassles. Thanks again to Terry Blauwkamp for all the useful info that he provided free of charge.

Remember, anticipation is half the fun.

See you in soon in Africa