

# The Living Waters of the Zambezi

## Laura and Sandy tour Zimbabwe and Zambia in June 2001

Also on the tour, Jill Henderson, Steve Stolper, and our guide, Jon Imhoof

### Tuesday, June 19

I arrived in the Johannesburg Airport after a 15 hour and 25 minute flight on South African Air. Our flight was the longest scheduled commercial flight on the books. The plane weighed 800,000 pounds at take off, and 200,000 of that was fuel. There were about 100 high school kids on the flight, headed to Africa for a mission trip. They were nice, and actually, quite well behaved. The flight wasn't nearly as bad as I had anticipated, I slept some, and watched a few movies.

I met Laura in the Jo-berg airport, and we lounged in the business class lounge (thanks Laura!). We boarded the plane for Victoria Falls and they sprayed bug spray on the plane...apparently that's the law when you fly into or out of Zimbabwe. Nothing like starting a trip in an enclosed tube with bug spray in the air. Jon and Steve met us in the Vic Falls airport and we headed to the lodge. The lodge was quite nice...definitely shades of things to come. It was a cabin with two rooms (nicely equipped with mosquito nets) and a loft. It had a great view, and was quite comfortable.



After depositing our belongings, we were off to Victoria Falls. It was breathtaking! The mist from the falls created rainbow opportunities everywhere you looked. We had the opportunity for several short hikes, and wore our rain coats to protect us from all the spray from the falls.

After our "shower" (from the falls) we had drinks and watched the sunset from the lodge balcony. We looked for wildlife at the watering hole. Dinner was at this place called the Boma. It was a bit touristy, but as the trip progressed, we had a hard time even finding post cards, so touristy on our first night was just fine. We sampled local game; ostrich, warthog (quite yummy), Afrikans sausage, and impala. A group of guys sang a cappella at our table. Jon had heard them before, and requested they come sing. They were great, and we all ended up buying their CD. The CDs were just duplicates, so we speculated that we just payed for blank CDs. I was glad when I got home and popped it in the CD

player and heard "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" just like it said on the label. At the Boma, we also sampled the traditional African alcoholic beverage. It was AWFUL!!! We were glad to have the option of South African wine instead.

All tuckered out, we retired for a good night's sleep. The flight over, seeing Vic Falls, and dinner wore every one out, and we were grateful for such nice accommodations.

### Wednesday, June 20

#### *Quote for the Day*

*"In Zimbabwe, we don't believe in capital punishment" Later when asked what they do when they find game poachers, he replied "well, if they are armed, we shoot them on sight."*

*-- our driver from the lodge*

We woke up and had little time to eat and meet our hired car. Toast seemed to be quite a challenge for the lodge staff, they were used to folks ordering the full buffet. Toast and coffee was just the ticket for us, although perhaps in retrospect, we would have saved time not explaining that this was plenty for us.

The driver was better than prompt, and we loaded the van and headed for the Botswana border. My passport is much more interesting after all the border crossings and countries visited on this trip. At the border, our driver dropped us off, and a driver from the Chobe Safari Lodge picked us up.



Once settled at Chobe, we hopped in the Toyota Pick-up, modified with risered seats in the bed of the truck, and were off to the Chobe National Park. At Chobe, we saw many hippos sunning themselves. Our guide said this was a pretty big deal, as most of the time they are submerged in the water. Hippos are susceptible to skin cancer, so

sunning is bad for them. (we didn't see any hippos applying sunscreen, so no protection there). We also saw crocodiles, impala, and...oh so cool...a pride of lions. They were so beautiful. They came from behind a tree, crossed the dirt road right in front of our truck, and drank from the Chobe River. Wow!



We came back for lunch and found our rooms had wasps in them. Jon said he would talk to the lodge folks about taking care of the wasps, and also setting up mosquito nets for Laura and I. Jon and Steve ordered dessert at lunch..."eggclairs"...that's what the waitstaff called them anyway. They were day old (at least) eclairs. We decided dessert was not the forte of the Chobe Safari Lodge.

That evening, we went on a cruise on the Chobe River. Elephants (one in particular taking a bath) hippos, a HUGE croc, buffalo, and many birds dotted the shoreline. The sunset was particularly beautiful over the water.

After the boat cruise, it was dinner time. Jon had bought wines in Jo-berg, a great addition to the hearty dinner we enjoyed. Dessert was definitely not in the cards...same quality as lunch. The lodge staff distributed iron pots of hot coals to keep warm over dinner. In African tradition, they set the pot right between Jon and Steve. Men are definitely the pampered gender in Africa.



When we got back to the room, they had indeed sprayed for wasps...there were hundreds of them dead on the walkway in front of our door. They also only put up one net over the bed. Laura had brought a portable net, so Jon and Laura rigged hers up over her bed. In all honesty, I really liked the netting at night. While we saw more lions on this trip than mosquitos, the nets were great at keeping out other flying insects...not to mention anything else that might slip into our tents or huts at night.

Other musings from this day, we discovered that hotels in Africa supply complimentary soap, shampoo, and *insect repellent*.

Incidentally, Jon informed the hotel staff about the dead wasps and they “took care” of the problem by sweeping the right off the balcony on to the sidewalk below...just outside Jon and Steve’s room.

### Thursday, June 21 – Eclipse Day

Breakfast this morning was on the veranda overlooking the Chobe River. Not just toast this morning - we all went for the full buffet, including the vervent monkey accompanying us on the veranda! (Vervent Monkeys are also known as blue monkeys because of the color of the the males'...um...well...um...not so private parts...they look like blue Easter eggs) Anyways, our extroverted and hungry friend was not afraid to come right up to our table and take our food. The fresh french bread I was bragging about to the group was a hit with the monkey; as soon as I got up to refill my coffee cup, he scampered right up to the table and grabbed the bread! Sneaky little thief. Later we saw the same little guy go over to a table and stick his face in someone’s coffee cup. He had quite a rude awakening, as it was filled with hot coffee (no McDonald’s disclaimers on that cup). When we got back to our room after breakfast, we were sad to see the monkeys popping those poisoned wasps in their mouth like candy. We hoped it would not hurt the monkeys.



Songwe Point Village, in Zambia was our next destination. We ferried across the Zambezi River on a rickety ferry that local trucks may wait hours to board. Our group walked on the ferry, and met Ferdinand on the other side of the river. Ferdinand was the driver for Songwe Point Village, and over the next couple of days, he began to feel like a close friend to our group. Daily he navigated the dirt roads of Zambia between all the local villages. He was kind and patient, and always helped make our drives pleasant.

Ferdinand took us on the bumpy roads through Livingstone and through Songwe Village, and on to Songwe Point Village. Songwe Village is an actual village, and Songwe Point Village is a



tourist village, with “westernized” open air huts and bath huts. The Village is elegant in its simplicity. It’s on a point overlooking the Zambezi River Gorge. Views are stunning! The bath huts overlook the gorge on both sides of the village, one for the sunrise and one for the sunset. Bath time will never be so good again! Unbelievable Views!

Our hosts are wonderful. When we arrived, they showed us how villagers thrash corn into meal and watch as they peel nuts for the natural oils to use in cooking and as a moisturizer. Wow, it’s so easy to take for granted how convenient these things are at home.

Songwe Point is a purpose-built village, offering visitors the unique opportunity to experience African life and culture. Situated in Zambia just five kilometres downstream from the Victoria Falls, the area archaeologically abounds in material from over 700,000 years ago. Accommodation is of traditional African design, being thatched huts, all containing mosquito nets, citronella candles and paraffin lamps. A comprehensive museum is near the village. Proceeds from this project benefit the local school, community health and infrastructural developments.

Today is the day of the eclipse. We took the afternoon to observe the eclipse and enjoy the village. Steve brought several sheets we could view the eclipse through safely (from the eclipse in Mexico several years ago). He also had a lens on his camera we could view it through. It reached 92 percent coverage. It began to get darker and cooler, and the roosters crowed. Animals were visibly confused. The eclipse was all the rage there, and Zambia even called for a national holiday. It was quite memorable.



As part of our visit to Songwe Point Village, the group toured the nearby Mukini Village. Again, the huts are simple and beautiful. Albina was our tour guide in the Village. She walked us through the village and we saw boys playing with a homemade fooseball game. It had ways to keep score and everything. Who needs TV and Nintendo???

More photos of the Village...While at the village, I sketched for Sandesigns [www.sandesignscards.com](http://www.sandesignscards.com). I was surrounded by villagers who were enjoying the variation in their day. There were ten or more surrounding me before all was said and done.



Our hosts at Songwe Point Village are Juliet and Gabriel. Ferdinand (our driver), Lawrence (our chef), Muriam, Melba, Isabel, Peggo, and Angela also make the place tick. They were all so kind and really made our stay quite luxurious!

That evening, we were dressed in traditional Zambian ceremonial dress for dinner. The Chitangae is colorful material and is wrapped over the shoulder kind of like a toga. Women have it tied over the right shoulder, men the left. When approaching the village chief, villagers can skip the traditional kneeling and hand clapping when wearing the chitangae, as wearing it is considered respect enough. Steve's material was a lovely shade of blue and had women's high heel shoes depicted on it. It was quite amusing.



Our appetizer included Mopani worms. Since I was not a contestant on Survivor, I did not feel compelled to try the worms. In all honesty, I was ready to pop one, then I shined my head lamp into the bowl, and the black fuzzy bodies with shiny little heads just weren't going to cut it for food. So much for my sense of adventure.

As we wait for dinner, we are surrounding the campfire and viewing the southern hemisphere stars. It's a great time to view the Southern Cross and Scorpio. Jon taught us how to figure out which direction South is using the Southern Cross and the two indicator stars. It was very interesting and a fact I used on many evenings throughout the trip.

Dinner was wonderful! The women ate on the floor and the men at a small table with stools. This was village custom. Traditional fare included chicken, ox tail, potatoes, grits like corn meal, rice, and garlic spinach. I asked Juliet if they had "westernized" the meal and she said it was pretty true to the real thing.

Juliet shared with us many village customs and stories. She talked about how it only takes \$20 a year to educate a child in the village. Customs also dictate that a girl must go through a period of isolation that is two to three months. During this time, she learns about "being a woman" and other things that she will need to know when she marries.

Juliet also told us about the Mukuni chief that was buried alive. Tradition says that if a chief falls out of favor with the village, he must die in order to be replaced. This particular chief had followed protocol, and taken the poison he was supposed to take in order to die and be replaced. Apparently nothing could kill him. The villagers finally, in a fit of desperation, dug a hole and lured the chief to it. He was pushed in and buried alive. Afterwards, the villagers were consumed by guilt and devised a way to avoid this problem in the future. The next chief swallowed a "magic stone" and it stayed in his stomach until he is ready to forfeit his title (and die). He then coughs up the stone and passes it to the next designated chief. This has been tradition for 17 chiefs.

## Friday, June 22

### *Quote of the day*

*When discussing the different positions people assume while doing extreme gorge activities like bungy jumping and the gorge swing... "then there's the superperson... I try to be P.C. for the bitches, you know"*

*--Afrikans guy who runs the extreme activities*



The day started great...I recall Ferdinand driving us along the dirt roads, the sheer isolation and beauty of the area really sinking in for me. We went to the Zambia side of Vic Falls that morning. Jon led us on a hike down to the Boiling Pot, a put-in point for rafters during low water, just below the falls. It was an intense hike/rock-scramble down with a great view of the bridge that crosses the gorge. Somehow (long sad story) I lost my camera at the base of the hike. Jon went back as soon as I discovered the loss, and everyone made a search of my backpack. Laura, Jill, Steve and I completed the loop hike around the point by the falls while Jon went on the camera search. The hike was interesting, great views, and areas where the mist was like walking in a torrential rainstorm.

I was doing okay with the camera loss (upset, but feeling more stupid than anything) when I discovered I made the hike with my pack partially open. I thought my malaria meds had fallen out, and just lost it on the spot! I calmed down when I discovered they were just buried in one of the pockets. Phew! I hate breakdowns. I have to



laugh, I had my old Ricoh camera for 16 years, the new one lasted me about 16 days.

We had lunch at a place in town, Pilgrims. It was pretty icky. Jill and I ordered the vegetable bowl, and it was mostly cabbage. Not too good on an already queasy tummy. Afterwards, we went to town and I bought some pants (an easy task) and a new camera (a cumbersome process involving changing money and managers signatures...good thing we're not trying to return something).

In the evening, we went on a river cruise. This one was particularly amusing, as there were a bunch of folks from Poland on the boat and they got totally drunk. They proceeded to do the conga line dance all over the boat, periodically asking Jill, Laura, or myself to join in. They danced for what seemed like hours to the SAME AFRICAN SONG...over and over and would never end. On a positive note, we thought it was a good thing we had to choose between Village and a game drive. We had hoped to see more giraffes, but had to vote for the Village. Thankfully, we did get this glimpse of the giraffes that evening.



They proceeded to do the conga line dance all over the boat, periodically or myself to join in. They seemed like hours to the SONG...over and over and would never end. On a positive note, we thought it was a good thing we had to choose between Village and a game drive. We had hoped to see more giraffes, but had to vote for the Village. Thankfully, we did get this glimpse of the giraffes that evening.

### **Saturday, June 23**

*Quote of the day*

*Rrr rrr rrruhgh*

*-Songwe Point Village Rooster who sounded like he had dead batteries*

Woke still feeling queasy, but I think it was nerves. Jon told us the night before about a long hike down into the gorge to get to the raft sites. I am not good at downhill, so I was pretty unnerved. We got to the rafting meeting point, and met our guides. I'm sure they were amused, as Jill showed up with her hand wrapped (recent surgery), Laura showed up with her knee brace (recent surgery), and I showed up and announced I was scared to death! We looked down into the gorge, where we were about to hike. There were make-shift ladders crafted from tree branches about the size of a skinny person's arm. Nothing too substantial. In some places the terrain was very steep. Our guide, Potato, (named because he was caught engaging in extracurricular activity (ehem, well this it edited) in the potato field, or so he said) helped me down the ladders. At one place, he pointed out a particularly steep place and said a guy fell off there a while back. Aaack!

The river was GREAT! I chose to hold on instead of paddling...mainly because of my mom's unfortunate incident rafting in Costa Rica. I really didn't want a broken arm in Zambia. I relaxed as the day proceeded, becoming more and more comfortable with the rapids. There was one point where we had to hike/scramble instead of rafting. The rapids were too dangerous. The hike was quite challenging, and we occasionally had to use some basic rock climbing skills.

Back in the raft, we did 15 rapids ranging from easy 2s to some pretty challenging 4s. When the water is lower, the Zambezi is one of the most challenging rivers in the world. We had a ton of fun. Our boat was the only one of our group that didn't flip or lose a passenger. We were all grateful.



The hike out was much easier than the one down. The path was nice, and basically stair-stepped all the way out. Lunch was served at the top, and we had a very bumpy ride back to the meeting tree where Ferdinand was waiting for us.

Back at Songwe, I sketched and we all relaxed. I had the most phenomenal shower on the sunset side of the camp. WOW, the gorge is so beautiful and the hot water felt so good. As usual, Lawrence provided a wonderful meal, and we sat around with Gabriel, Juliet, Ferdinand, Christov (random guy from Germany staying at Songwe), and Murial telling stories, jokes, and playing games...Steve's fork trick was a real hit! We all slept well that night.

### **Sunday, June 24**

Woke and had another great bath. My little bathroom at home will never quite be enough anymore. We breakfasted by the fire, and got ready to depart. The group said our farewells to the Songwe folks, they were so wonderful.

Ferdinand drove us to the "airport" and we met our pilot who would be flying us to Kariba. The plane was a six seater twin engine. Our pilot flew us over Victoria Falls several times. In Kariba we *finally* found post cards. They have been extremely hard to come by, definitely the sign of a great vacation if you ask me.



In Kariba, Jon, Steve and Jill shop for our groceries for the stay on the houseboat. At the harbor, we met our boat crew, John the captian, Lovemore the first mate, and Paterson the chef. They were kind and helpful. It was nice to relax on the upper deck with a book and some post cards to write. The evening consisted of a few minor battles with insects, a warm breeze, and come card games on the upper deck.

### **Monday, June 25**

Quotes of the day

*"We must be careful and quiet, the animals can smell humans for quite some distance"*

*-Ally, our game guide as he lit a cigarette*

*"Animals are sensitive to the smell of humans, not cigarette smoke"*

*-Ally in response to our questions*

Got up at 5:30 am and ate as we cruised to M... Game Park. Our guide Ally carried a rifle and we prepared for a full morning of game walk. I was still a little sore from the decent into the gorge for the rafting trip, but figured a good hike would work it out.



We began at the black rhino pens. The park has a program to help protect the endangered rhino, and they keep the babies in pens at night, and "bottle" feed them (giant baby bottles the size of antifreeze

bottles). They are released during the day, and gradually introduced full time into the wild. The group was allowed to touch the rhino, it was very rough.

After the rhinos, we began our game walk. That's when Ally provided us with our quote of the day. We were all amused, and not all that surprised when we didn't see too many animals. We ran across an elephant bathing in a swampy area. We saw leaping impala, horny water buck (trying unsuccessfully to mount the female - she kept rejecting him), wart hog, and a big croc in the distance. At one point Ally stuck his finger in elephant dung to see if it was fresh...like the fact it was steaming and glistening wasn't a good enough indicator. Eeew!!! He also picked up a lot of other animal droppings, giving us helpful tips along the way about each. Ally pointed out lion and leopard prints as well.

After five hours of walking, we were beat! Laura's brace was rubbing, and my legs were wobbly. Jon asked Ally if we were close to the office, and he said we were about four kilometers away still. Ally radioed camp and asked for them to tell the boat to come pick us up. The hike turned towards the water and we waited there, hopeful that the message got transferred. Soon we saw the two little boats that had been attached to the back of the houseboat zipping around the corner and heading toward our tired crowd. John and Lovemore had come to rescue us! They were a welcome sight.



That evening, we rode around in the little boats and saw many birds, hippos, and a totally amazing



sunset! Paterson made a great dinner and we rested, read, and played cards again. It was great to relax after the six to eight mile walk that morning.

## Tuesday, June 26

Today's pretty much a travel day that started with a three hour boat ride to the Kariba Harbor, followed by geese and a cat entertaining us during our wait

for our next ride. A long van ride was followed by a short boat ride to our camp. We crossed the Kariba Dam along the way, built in the 1950's, at the time of construction, it was the largest dam in existence.

Exhausted by travel, we relaxed on the boat ride until arriving at camp. During the ride, we saw elephants and hippos. Kiambi Safari Lodge is very nice. It is set at the confluence of the Zambezi and



the Kafue



Rivers. The safari tents are large and comfortable. There's a full bathroom with each tent, including the solar heated shower. On arrival, I sketched the baobab tree at the entrance of the camp. At night, we can hear the sounds of the wild, like they are in our tent. The hippo's call sounds close, though it may be a mile away.

### Wednesday, June 27

Lackson, our boat driver and legendary terrorist of hippos along the Zambezi (at least among the hippos) brought us down the river to the next camp, the Kiubu River Lodge. The three lodges we visited on the lower Zambezi were all run by the same folks. The areas get wilder and more remote as you go further down the river.



Upon arrival, we relaxed and I sketched and read. We have definitely eaten well on this trip, and these camps are no exception...three squares and tea every day. Steve asked if we could go for a walk, and they told him that he could not go beyond the camp boundaries without an armed scout. Well, it doesn't take much to scare me, I don't relish the thought of being stampeded by some scared hungry hippos.

We did a sundowner cruise and saw plenty of hippos and some major crocs! The boat stalled in the middle of the croc infested waters near sunset. I could just see us floating there for hours, hoping wayward hippos didn't come along and tip us over only to be eaten by the first hungry croc to come our way. Luckily, Lackson has been navigating the Zambezi for fifteen years and this was just a day in the life for him.



### Thursday, June 28

Quote for the day

*I'll ride with the guide, unless one of the girls needs a strong man in their boat.*

-Steve



Dawn breaks with the drum call to wake us at the lodge. The day started early for us with a light breakfast and a boat ride up the river, three canoes in tow. The canoes came loose as the knots failed, and I wondered, hmmm, are these the same knot tiers who put up the hammock I was relaxing in on the steep embankment just yesterday? Oh well, we motored for a very long time, and finally stopped on an island and were instructed to get out of the boat. We gingerly stepped on the island, hoping there were no hungry crocs lurking in the nearby foliage. Unfortunately, the morning coffee had caught up with us, and we needed facilities...Laura, Jill, and I

ever so carefully tip-toed to the other side of some bushes, trying to decide if we would rather have the locals or Tristan our guide and the guys view the three full moons. We opted to maximize our privacy by walking a bit further. It's all part of the adventure!

Canoeing started out very fun, but the wind picked up about half way through the morning, making the way quite difficult. We actually covered nine miles that morning, but with the wind, it felt more like twelve or fifteen. We stopped for a snack, and as we got started again, I thwapped myself in the face with my paddle. I worried all the way back that I would return to Austin looking like the elephant woman. It was an exhausting morning, but honestly, the exercise was great, and it was a very cool way to see the river.



That afternoon, we relaxed, and in the evening went on another sundowner cruise...this one full of surprises! While we had the usual entertainment of diving hippos and sly crocs slipping into the water, we also saw a water monitor, a yellow crocodile, and (ooh, aah) a python! How cool is that? We also saw a hippo on shore, usually when they hear noise, they immediately dive under water. This guy heard us, and started running along the shore before submerging itself. He ran for quite some distance at an alarming speed. I'd heard those guys are

fast...phew, this one really *moved!*

### Friday, June 29

#### *Quote of the day*

*I've been drinking Zambian coffee from my local grocery store for four months. I get to Zambia and drink Nescafe.*

-Sandy



What a great day! We began with an early start by canoeing about twelve miles. The weather was perfect and the wind was calm. Laura and Steve teamed up, and I went with Tristan. We canoed up into the National Park, and had a lovely picnic lunch. Here we had a great

opportunity to see hippo tracks, and gain a little perspective with them. We had to stop here and



ride in the boat, since the hippo population increases exponentially at the part of the river. It's just not safe to navigate in a canoe. Our next destination is the Kolefu Game Lodge.

A quick turnaround at the lodge and we're back in the boat headed to the safari vehicles (the river was pretty high so the lodge was temporarily cut off from the land). Marati and Martin were our scouts and they were set up for a night drive, so we started prior to sunset, and carried on well after dark. In the dark, they shine a strong spotlight and try to catch the eyes of animals. The first thing we saw was a big group of impala, and they stood like the proverbial deer in headlights. It was an amazing sight to see all their eyes in the dark...like New York City at night. In addition, we saw a Jennet, an African ... cat, and many more impala. We saw three zebra. They were in a clearing. I've never seen a zebra outside the zoo and they were most impressive.

Ahead in the distance we saw what we thought was another "impala city"...as we neared, we realized we were right on a herd of cape buffalo. The herd was huge! They stampeded in front of us, we thought it would never end. Morati joked that there were 518 of them. We saw a second herd minutes later.

As we met up with the other safari vehicle (we had parted ways early in the drive) they were spotlighting a large tree. The closer we got, was peaked. They were in the tree. It was an amazing site. He was pretending to sleep, slightly every once in a while, and opening his eyes periodically. WOW!! The experience was enhanced when, after the night drive had come to an end, Lackson went back to the camp down river at break neck speed...in the dark! Quite an adrenaline rush!



other safari vehicle (we in the drive) they were in the tree. The closer we got, was peaked. They were in the tree. It was an amazing site. He was pretending to sleep, slightly every once in a while, and opening his eyes periodically. WOW!! The experience was enhanced when, after the night drive had come to an end, Lackson went back to the camp down river at break neck speed...in the dark! Quite an adrenaline rush!

Laura and I discovered that we had a frog visitor on our toilet when we returned to the lodge. We laughed that we had been on game walks, game drives, boat cruises, and now had the opportunity to have a game pee.



Our little friend caused a bit of grief later in the trip. He was permanently camped on the back of the toilet, which was not really an issue for us, until he decided to move his residence to the bowl. After much cajoling, he disappeared, and we were forced to...um...use the facilities as they were intended, frog or no frog. I walked in a little later and there he was on the seat! Again, he was stubborn and would not move. Eventually he was relocated to the wild outside our tent.

As we turned out the lights that evening, we heard the resident hippo grazing right outside our windows. We're definitely not in Texas anymore.

**Saturday, June 30**

*Quote for the day*

*We want to see lions, not mosquito repellent!*

*-Jon on a game drive*

We were up with the sun for a game walk. Geoffery



was our scout, his rifle has all but duct taped together. He said he had never fired it. We didn't feel very protected after that. There wasn't much game to view this morning but we had a very pleasant walk. After lunch, I sketched a bit. One of the proprietors had expressed interest in my sketches as post cards for the lodges. I would like to have a client in Africa!

The afternoon is spent on a game drive with Morati. The group put in "requests" for the drive (in jest really, you get to see what you run across). Jon wanted to see a male lion, mane and all. As we drove by a plant used by the locals as a mosquito repellent, Morati stopped to tell us about the plant. Jon said "we want to see lions, not mosquito repellent!"

Dinner was good. Steve shared a great story about his worst date. We were all in stitches. It was a nice end to our days in the lower Zambezi.

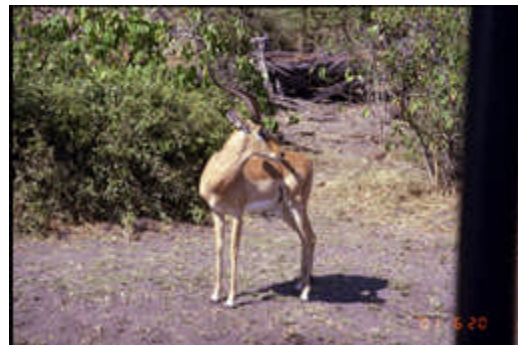
## Sunday, June 31

*Quote of the day*

*Impala!!*

*-everyone*

Aack! Up before the sun this morning, the day will be jam packed with travel! We had our final boat trip with Lackson at the helm, terrorizing hippos and the people in the boat alike. He would fly at the unsuspecting animals and they would plunge under water with the agility of a dancer. We would pray they stayed under water and not decide to resurface under our boat.



We arrived at the safari vehicle and Morati drove us on our final game drive...this time to the very remote Jeki Airstrip (15'38"S 29'36"E). After about an hour, we arrive at the air strip with about a minute to spare before we see our small plane landing. Our pilot Gillian craftily loaded all our luggage into the tiny plane and off we flew to Lusaka, the capital of Zambia.

In Zambia, we switched to a "much bigger plane" which seated 17 passengers. We had a very rough flight, Laura concentrated on not getting sick, and the man next to Jill didn't concentrate hard enough. Poor Jill was stuck next to an airsick stranger. We were all shaken, not stirred after that trip. Definitely glad to have our feet on solid ground in Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe.

Once in Harare, the group headed straight for the Chapunga Sculpture Garden. The sculptures ranged in size and price. Most pieces were about the size of a chair, some were large enough to not fit through a door. Prices for the larger pieces were in the thousands. We all found nice smaller pieces we were fond of. As we walked through the apprentice area afterwards, we were impressed with



the works there as well. We met a sculptor named Friday and several of us bought from him as well.

The Bed and Breakfast in Harare was very nice. After check in, we went to the market and bargained for gifts for friends and co-workers. The stone carvings made great gifts. For dinner,



we sought recommendations from the B&B proprietor, and embarked on the journey through the city. After many wrong turns, we found the steak place and had a wonderful dinner. The return trip was as eventful as the journey there, as we again lost our way, and even though we were on the right track because things were looking familiar...only we were going in circles. We passed one church where Steve said he had seen people going in with bathrobes on. We then referred to the church as the Church of the Holy Bathrobes every time we passed it from that point on. Always an adventure to be had.

Time to pack, we depart tomorrow for the states.

### **Monday, July 1**

I woke to hear Laura screaming in the bathroom. After two weeks in the wild, we arrived in the city unscathed, only to have her discover the biggest spider you have ever seen in the shower. After several methods of pest control, we were able to extract our "friend" from the shower.

We spent the morning shopping for gifts. When I went to exchange money to buy gifts, the guy gave me all sorts of grief. He refused to give me the same exchange rate he gave everyone else in the group. I was so tired of arguing, I gave up and conceded to his rate, then started crying (cry baby). He asked what was wrong and I said I was tired and didn't understand why he wouldn't give me the rate. He said he would change the rate and off I went, happy I got the rate everyone else got. How silly that he was so unwilling to negotiate.

We made a mad dash to the airport and Jill and I caught our plane to Jo-berg. Laura and Jon caught up with us there and we played cards and chatted one last time. Jill and I were on the same the flight to Atlanta and enjoyed ample leg room in our exit row seats. We were also treated to some air rage from a guy who required the assistance of four flight attendants to return to his seat. Always an adventure

### **The weeks following the trip**

As I battled jet lag, bought my first home, and moved in the two weeks following my trip to Africa, I also spent time trying to process and reconcile things I had seen there. First, it was a phenomenal vacation packed with adventure, fun, great people, new cultures, and sites and sounds that were constantly changing. The people we met there were wonderful, kind and welcoming. From the river gorge in Zambia, Victoria Falls, Chobe National Park, Lake Kariba, and the Lower Zambezi River, the river came to life for me. We saw cities, rapids, waterfalls, lakes and large rivers. We saw the way people lived in the cities, in the villages, and along the water. We saw the ecosystems change, the animals that thrive on the water, and the water itself change as we progressed.

I saw what it really means to subsistence live. I saw happy people living in mud huts. I saw people who didn't need a new car, the next fashion, or even more food on their plates and a hefty dessert. I learned about needs and wants in a way I had not learned before. I learned about

disparity of wealth between the US and other countries. I come away from this trip changed.  
What a grand and wonderful adventure.