

→ Visiting Sand Rivers, Tanzania

Having planned to travel to Africa, we decided to bid for the holiday auctioned at David Wynne's "A Celebration on Life" exhibition last February. A couple of glasses of Champagne later, we came away with the trip of a lifetime to Zanzibar and the exclusive Sand Rivers Lodge in Selous.

Some months later, we learnt of the death of Lizzy Theobald, director of Sand Rivers Selous Game Lodge and founder of the Sand Rivers Rhino Project, on 27th August 1997, at the tragically young age of 34.

Naturally this gave the trip a poignant twinge of sadness and through conversations with other visitors at the lodge, we learnt that this feeling was experienced by others, thus demonstrating Lizzy's strength of character and spirit.

However, we were determined to enjoy ourselves and the highlight was the 2 days spent with the rangers at the Rhino Project. These rhinos are notoriously elusive, being such a small number within a huge area, so we didn't hold out much hope of a sighting. However, the experience of tracking rhino and seeing first hand how the rangers worked, was inspirational. As expected we didn't see the rhinos, but we discovered an area where they had been feeding only days before and found fresh rhino spoor. (and I never thought that I would live to see the day that I publicly announced how excited I was about seeing what is effectively manure!)



Motorola radios in use at Mkomazi

More than 6 rhinos have been sighted, along with newborns over the past 6 months. Infra-red cameras monitor their movements and with funding from the British High Commission, SRI helped Sand Rivers obtain night vision equipment from Moonlight Products, to assist this monitoring programme. In addition, the money raised from our trip will fund a census to determine the number of rhinos in the area.

Sleeping in a mosquito net under the stars, listening to lions who sounded rather too close for comfort is both mind-blowing and humbling, as I really began to appreciate that we are pretty insignificant cogs in a huge wheel. It is also tremendously

gratifying to know that the money used to buy this holiday will actually help the rhinos, rather than profit a tour operator.

Lizzy's death will be great loss to conservation in Selous and our deepest sympathy goes out to her husband, Bimb and their two children, George and Toby. However, the ray of light from Lizzy's death is that Bimb has taken up the cause and is determined to further the efforts of the Rhino Project in Lizzy's memory. As part of this, SRI will administer all Sand Rivers Rhino Project funding in the UK, so anyone who wants to help can contact SRI directly.

Julie Roach

→ Rhinos At The BBC Good Food Show

The rhinos appeared at the BBC Good Food Show in April, with newly appointed corporate sponsor, Clipper Teas. This ethical tea company has included SRI branding on two of its newly launched Organics Tea Range (the Assam and Blend products).

As well as this sponsorship, Clipper buys its tea from an estate in Assam which works with The Rhino Foundation locally. Co-incidentally, this is the same Foundation that SRI supports to help the rhinos in the Kaziranga National Park.

You can get hold of Clipper Organic Teas

in Waitrose, Somerfield, CWS, EH Booths & Co and all good health food stores - buy it to help the rhinos! More information about this in the Autumn newsletter.

→ Don't Miss...

...the opportunity to take part in a Wilderness Leadership Schools Trail. This is a unique chance to walk in pristine wilderness areas, with black and white rhino, buffalo, lion, leopard and many other species of animals and birds. You will lie at night under the stars and keep guard beside an open campfire. Somewhere out there in the bush you will find yourself and begin to understand Africa. This is the ultimate wilderness experience.

A selection of dates are available for the Umfolozi and St Lucia Greater Wetland Trails. 7 days (6 nights) cost £655 plus air travel.

Or a double whammy of a wilderness journey! Combine the Umfolozi with the St Lucia Greater Wetland Trail. 11 days (10 nights) cost £1,168 plus air travel. Dates on application.

The maximum number is eight per trail - so book now! For more details and other trail information, contact Norma or Susi at ECCO Tours directly at 4 Macclesfield Street, London, W1V 7LB, tel: 0171 494 1300, fax: 0171 494 1369.



On trail in Umfolozi