

Freeman Safaris

"Yesterdays Safaris Today"

Testimonials

My aim is to provide my clients with the real safari experience, spending time within the Kenyan culture, observing and photographing the game, living in the bush, and being part of the wild from dawn until dusk.

A safari is not like visiting a town or museum, it is a living experience, which is forever changing, and I can guarantee no two safaris are the same. It is for this reason that the majority of my clients come back again and again, in some cases every few years. As each safari is unique and different, personal enjoyment increases with understanding and experience.

But don't just take my word for it, take a moment to read some of the comments and diary entries (and look at their photographs) of my previous clients who have volunteered to discuss their safari with you should you need further information.

Guest's Comments

"We haven't been back to Africa since [we went with you] as we knew there was no way of emulating the safari you arranged for us... Many is the time I dream of sitting beside the camp fire enjoying a cold Tusker beer after a dusty day wildlife watching with the stars above seemingly so close that you could reach out and touch them. There is nothing to match the sights, sounds and smells of the African bush."

Jill, August 2002

"I know elephants are my favourite, but how did you organise the elephant show every lunch?"

David, February 2001

"Having been to Kenya a few times previously on tourist safaris which were enjoyable, we wanted our last safari, in 1997, to be something different. We saw an advertisement for Brian's company which appeared to fulfill our needs. It was going to be our last trip to Kenya, so we wanted it to be completely different - and different it was! It wasn't like going away with a tour company, it was as if we'd known Brian for years and like being with friends. The experience of staying in the bush was incomparable, no racing back for 9 o'clock breakfast (like you would if you were staying in a lodge), and the whole safari was built around little stories, not just listing animals and moving on, but following things through to the end, For example watching a leopard doing very little for two hours but then following her, seeing her hunt and feed her cub. All the camp sites were immaculate and the food was superb. Needless to say, it did not turn out to be our last safari and in 2001 we returned [to Kenya] with Brian. We challenged him to show us something different and this challenge was met and the safari exceeded all our expectations! We look forward to our next *last* safari!"

Tony and Cathy, November 2002

"I am scared of bees, wasps, and any flying insect to the extent that I am forever ducking and diving in an English garden, so I never thought I would be able to go to Kenya. However, I took the plunge and went on a safari with Brian and I had the time of my life! Once I was there my fears did not cross my mind and I enjoyed every single minute. I was not bitten once and the tents were completely dudu [Swahili for insects/mosquitoes] proof. I can't wait to go back and I would thoroughly recommend it to anyone."

Caroline, July 2002

"For a truly memorable and lifetime Kenyan safari experience, we whole heartedly recommend Brian Freeman and his team without any reservation whatsoever. Personal care afforded was absolute and, photographically, we were presented with unimaginable close-up views of wildlife and village life that will stay with us forever. The holiday exceeded all our expectations, a holiday we will repeat."

Derek and Mary Chatburn, September 2001

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Diary Entries

A morning by the Ewaso Nyiro river

by Anne Freeman

Like Brian I just love going to Samburu and particularly enjoy our mornings parked up in the shade by the river in one of the glades. We usually go to the river on the 3rd or 4th day and as a change to the normal routine we get up about 0630 with the sun and after a leisurely full breakfast leave camp about 0800 working our way up what I call the hidden valley calling into the springs on the way, I remember on my last safari we came across a young lioness with her first set of cubs playing by the waters edge, mum so proud and the cubs so playful we could not drag ourselves away. Not to day although we saw a really lovely pair of white throated beaters who posed on a branch in the early morning sun within full frame view.

This is the usual routine and as Brian says we have no time table what we see and the time it takes is the schedule, it is so important opportunities are taken as they occur as nature has a habit of following one with another, I am so please we stayed to film the vultures as we saw the leopard emerging from the bush I remember Eric saying on my last safari.

Anyway back to day we crossed the stream by my bridge and followed the watercourse down to the river where they meet under Marie's Dom Palms. On the way we stopped to look at a little bittern and a grey heron. Marie's spot is one of the nicest places as the stream is always flowing; Ewaso Nyiro River is wide with good sandbanks in the middle with a good patch of grass and lots of light. Ok let me see on arrival just across the stream was a grey head kingfisher perched on a branch eating a small grass hopper, further off to the right about 30 yards in a huge river acacia tree was a hamerkop nest occupied by a pair of verreaux's eagle-owls, unusual as they are normally in denser trees, maybe just warming up. On the sandbank was a tawny eagle with its feet in the water and above us in the dom palms a pair of noisy african orange-bellied parrots feeding a chick. Flying in and around us are a few superb starlings who walk up to the side of Bluebell to eat cake crumbs, they are so beautiful in the mornings light, common but still one of my favourite.

I join Brian on the roof scanning the riverbanks; I notice a huge croc just down below us where the two waters meet as it comes out to sun himself on the sandbank. I shouldn't imagine he moves far from this spot as animals are for every coming down to drink. Brian warns me to remain very still as right behind us one of the big Samburu elephant bulls emerges from the thickets using the road flapping his head from side to side, smells moves right pass us down the bank into the river to drink and wee at the same time. After a while he continues across the river, water only up to his angles stopping for another drink before climbing out the other side, an elephant on a mission, must be able to smell a female giving all the right signals.

I watch a male waterbuck eating grass in the middle of the sandbank as further down a herd of Impala come down to drink, very timid. Not far in front of them is a baby croc green in the light and I am sure wishing he could take them on. As the river bends a way about 300 yards away I see another big bull elephant striding down the hill towards the water, he takes his time to drink and splash himself in a muddy patch.

Across the other side of the river more and more elephants arrive in the trees stopping to eat on the move no real rush for the water, at first I thought there was about 50 but as we watch more and even more appear, they move into the water in waves until I have counted over 200 and lost count. You could see the herd consists of many small groups all out on a social gathering some were crossing, some drinking, some playing, others splashing. The babies and they were of all ages where playing falling in and under the water with their trunks just poking out of the water running and trumpeting.

The river was awash with elephants with some coming right up to Bluebell eating the dom nuts from the floor, it was just an amazing sight and difficult keeping up with the activity, Brian and I were picking out different elephants some of them well known to him. The bulls where passing amounts the ladies testing the water but it appears that they were out of luck today.

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We were really enjoying the scene when suddenly the large croc to our immediate front reared up with a huge splash freighting a baby elephant, who took off in the opposite direction making a hell of a racket, not sure who was more scared the elephant or the croc! The rest of the elephants in the immediate area trumpeted and dashed forward forcing the croc to move off up the stream out of the way. What an exciting 20 minutes a lovely finale as we then decided after 3 hours it was time to move on as Brian wanted to check out a new route as we slowly returned to camp.

I just love my mornings by the river and I must say so do all our clients, I have never been disappointed some thing always happens, a story unfolds involving large or small, birds or animals, a real treat. Just as it does in camp as I don't always go out every morning, the river is the life line.

A day in the Mara

Mick's diary - 20 Sep 1999

Our usual early start and breakfast although there is the normal full breakfast we prefer fruit and cereal with tea, Brian's on his 4th cup of tea by the time we arrive in the mess tent. As we eat Barisa drives Bluebell over all nice and clean ready for another hard days drive. The cool box and tea is loaded up, today Barisa will be coming in the 2nd Landrover to help spot for that elusive black rhino so will be carrying the picnic lunch.

We are off to the park with Brian saying look out for the lions as they were very close during breakfast, we were woken by their roars not that far away from the tents, an extremely impressive sound, both exhilarating and scary at the same time. No sooner had he said it we come upon them making there way up the track to the hills for the day, 3 females and 4 cubs, Brian estimates about 9 months old. Like all cats they prefer to walk on tracks keeping out of the morning dew, too early to photo so we watch until they move out of sight and press on to the park. The impalas instinctively new the lions were full, watch with interest without moving away.

Once in the park off come the hatches and off we go to search Rhino ridge with Barisa working the other side of the water course passing a bush buck and a herd of elephant again with lots of youngsters wallowing in the mud, a day for young animals we see a baby zebra as well.

On the top branches of an old tree are quite a few vultures preening and warming up in the early morning sun, whilst the boys were shooting Cathy and Brian were swallow spotting as well as scanning the horizons. Saw a hammerkop pick up some nesting material and fly off just as quickly, a really interesting bird that looks as if it belonged to yesterday and builds a huge nest which Brian says is not always accepted by the female.

Brian drives over a rocky outcrop; we actually need a toilet stop so we circle a big bush to make sure it is safe for Cathy. Once we are all comfortable Brian mentioned the fact that he'd seen lion in the area, the lioness sitting on a rock 800 meters away!! So we go and look at her she seems to be panting heavily, not sure if see had been active or unwell although she looks healthy enough. Whilst we are watching Brian scans and spots vultures not that far so off we go to investigate. When we get to the vultures they are watching 3 lions around a kill, a wildebeest, like the vultures we sit and watch. Barisa is still in contact working the gully and tree lines looking for the rhino. There are other lions in the vicinity, Brian reckons there must be another kill in nearby, the lions don't seem to be concerned of our presence, took some really good action shots one or two rather colourful. The lions join up and slowly wonder off except one who seems intent to case the vultures whenever one lands to close and does in the end drag the carcass away. We decide to stay and watch have a cup of tea and sandwiches, a couple of hours have passed and time to move on.

Barisa is still working away, we see 3 ground hornbills in a tree, they are nervous and fly off, and Cathy spots a little bee-eater. There are thousands of wildebeest, we are lucky as they are still migrating. Before getting too close another pit stop, it is so strange sharing a toilet with thousands of wildebeest and zebra, never got to see them crossing a river as suddenly Barisa comes over our radio with 'Faro Faro' Brian instinctively turns changes course increases speed knows exactly where Barisa is yet we looking out of the hatches could not see him for love or money. Brian shouts hold on we may not have much time as Barisa explains he is moving fast and seems bad tempered, which

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female up set him. Brian changes course again to intercept the rhino saying you wont have much time get ready and make the most of a fleeting target. As we come around a line of bushes he comes into view, what a size, just out of this world, fantastic, tail up and trotting, Brian anticipates his course and without upsetting the rhino positions the Landrover so that we got shots of him coming towards us passing to our front and luckily turning just to our front to give side on shots, he stops looks at us, Brian whispers keep on filming. My hand is shaking by now just hope the shutter speed is fast enough as I am aiming and shooting. The rhino scents the bush walks towards us and then just as I was about to ask Brian should we move he turned and went off in the shrub leaving us all in an excited state, time for another cup of tea Brian says knowing we were all fit for nothing, all trying to speak at once. If we saw nothing further in the Mara in the next 3 days I would leave happy, a action packed 20 minutes and all to ourselves.

Brian answered our many questions by saying put it down to many years in the bush and experience emphasising that the animal must always be our first and main concern it was very important that we were not the cause of the rhinos frustration and under no circumstances where we to antagonise him or any animal for that matter large or small.

We move on back to the wildebeest down to a tree line stream and gully, manoeuvring Bluebell in the long grass to catch the mini migration crossing, splashing through the water, we get a great view on a mini scale. Whilst watching the wildebeests climb up the bank a woodland kingfisher lands on a branch close by.

What a fantastic view, so quiet we decide its time to have lunch and no better place than the present, lunch is a full salad and beef, rolls fruit and tea, time to clean and check our cameras as Brian and Barisa chin wag in Swahili, I am sure commenting on the mornings work as they seemed to enjoyed equally as much.

We move to photograph the moving wildebeest but eventually, the time just flies by and it is time to head on back, first we have to get across the stream, Brian checks the depth of water and decides to go for it- we rally across and up a steep bank. The Landrover and Brian's driving make it look so easy. As the evening sets in we move close to a lilac breasted roller on a branch of an old tree, its colour is fantastic. A living watercolour. Within minutes on another branch of a different tree we see Hoopoe just as impressive.

Whist driving back to camp in the fading light we see a jackal as well as all the plain game always stacks near the camp as well as a number of nightjars in the track.

Once again its time for that lovely shower, campfire drinks and bites... and more food, I don't know how Patrick does it but so far I've had the best vegetarian meals ever and that includes English restaurants! We notice this evening John who does an excellent job as our waiter also does some pretty nifty serviette folding; it seems different for every meal.

A day in Nakuru Park

Marc's diary - 02 Feb 1999

It was lovely walking out of the tent this morning dark no sun but still light enough to see the silver on the lake and the flamingos which appear to be up our end of the lake. I lay in bed last night listening to flights of flamingos flying over clattering and in formation. After dinner last night we were able to watch the arrowhead formations fly overhead we think to the top end of the Lake.

Out straight after breakfast around the lake up the other end, Brian uses a different and shorter route since my last visit, on the road to Nakuru, what a state it is large pot holes in the tarmac. Down through Nakuru town as we have to go through the main gate, the only gate you can pay at as they use swipe cards. It takes a little time to complete, hatches off and in we go and it is only 0715.

The acacia trees are really dense Brian says the park has the best examples of acacia forests in Kenya as the baboon is there only real natural enemy and they spend more time scrounging! With the

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early sun the trees and colour is so lovely. We spot a crested eagle and shortly we a lioness, which quickly disappears into the bush.

As we come to edge of the trees we see a small herd of male impala some with large horns and as Brian says they are the leopards best meal the horns help to wedge the carcass in the trees, still they are too calm for any cat close by. Under other trees are common waterbuck as well as a few tummies grazing in the clearings; we scan the large open areas for Rhino large grey shapes.

Driving on with the lake to our right we stop for a couple of bee eaters and a lilac breasted roller and there in a small clearing still well away from our track Sylvia spots our first 3 white rhinos, mum toto and dad, grazing slowly moving in our direction. It is decided to move on as it takes them some time to get closer if they do at all and if need be we can always return, Brian is confident we will see more.

There are 4 old buffalo bulls all very well caked with grey mud, they and the yellow ox peckers make good pictures with the low sun on them, so difficult filming black faces, I think I have managed to get the classic, grass in the mouth. Moving on we photo a lovely impala and waterbuck male nice and close, the light is so good. Off we go as a male rhino is close to the track further on, once again the sun is on our side and we get some really good shots with the rhino passing close by, we are joined by some noisy Japanese and I can see Brian getting cross luckily we had finished videoing.

Up we go to baboon lookout for tea and sandwiches the time is 1000 and once again we are all hungry and need creaming as it is getting hot, the ladies want a loo stop. What a great view of the park and lake Brian points out the various landmarks and his intended route for the day but as we all know that can change. Once sorted off we go down to the lake right up to the waters edge where we get out and take loads of pictures of the pink flamingo carpet the birds all feeding on the blue algae. A couple of sticks fly by but too quick hope to get those tomorrow at camp.

Once again we are back in the trees searching for colobus monkey or leopard which could be on the ground, Brian is driving very slowly, after a long sweep we come on to a large glade stop and scan, yes a male rhino, we move forward and get some good action shots, scenting and walking beside us. The rhino moves into the tree line out of site we move spotting determined to find our first leopard. Brian does not give up as we sweep through again as well as taking a different route and after an hour we change tactics going out into the open and once again finding a family of 3 rhino. Brian takes off they are just so close although the grass is in the way for feeding shot, patience pays off as we get really great shots and just watch and enjoy them, god are we so lucky to be here.

We move on continuing round the lake and yes we spot another group this time 5 white rhino with a very small toto, Brian reckons no more than a month old although we wait they have no intention of coming toward us, we have to be content with a couple of long shots but seeing is just the tops. As we move on Brian shows us a number of trees he has seen leopard in and although we are all looking hard and after a number of false alarms we spot nothing except a really lovely reed buck, even the reticulated giraffe appear to be on holiday still we have time.

Time for lunch and to get out of Bluebell we go into the lodge Brian takes us to the best spot overlooking the park where he only allows toasted sandwiches and chips as he only wants to be here for 30 minutes. A lovely stop, not where I would like to stay as it is too divorced from nature.

Out we go passing the baboons that have mastered getting past the electric fence down to a little water hole by the lake and yes there where 2 rhinos enjoying a lie in the mud not of us want to leave as we have them to ourselves. We move on spending the last hour looking for leopard as Brian points out previous sightings, which unfortunately don't help us despite looking even harder as Brian says there is always the next day.

We leave the park via the lion gate and head back to camp arriving just after last light a welcome site the fire and lamps outside each tent, tea and then off to the shower and sort out. Another superb dinner this time tilapia fish cooked in a Amani special sauce as usual had to have seconds followed by bread and butter pudding. He always amazes me just how he can cook such meals in the bush nothing is ever from a packet and despite the timing always perfect.

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Time to put the light out as it is 2230, mind you the flamingos are chattering .

A day in Samburu Park

Tony's diary - 25 Sep 2001

Up nice an early after a really nice sleep, these late nights and early mornings are blending the days so well we cant remember what days are what! As we have seen our leopard we are searching for eland today, on leaving the camp we see a dark catlike animal race down the track, Brian thought it look like a civet as it disappeared.

Once again we witnessed another fantastic sunrise. A small herd of buffalo look unconcerned as we drive by and on crossing a stream over Anne's ford we see a heron fishing for his breakfast. One of the very few streams that runs all year as it starts further up from an underground spring, an extremely interesting water course visited by many different birds as well as home to hippos and crocodiles, a watering hole when the main river dries up. As we wanted pictures of Bluebell under an impressive acacia tree and in the morning glow we took our pictures before coming upon on a reticulated giraffe followed by a tawny eagle on top of a tree.

We drive passed the tree we saw our leopard in yesterday, she's not there but the mongooses are at home in the old anthill. I noticed a young crested eagle in a tree which flew by giving us a superb flying display disturbing a black bellied bustard and a family of dwarf mongoose who where also being watched closely by a squirrel.

Brian is slowly driving down to the river when he stops out come his binos, scans and after a while says leopard driving off to catch it up. I pick up the tell tail sign the leopards tail moving between the gorse bushes before moving into a tree. We take more pictures as a tourist mini bus arrives who then calls in the rest over the radio. Brian moves away and we wait, the mini buses move away and once again we have the leopard to ourselves, it ignores us walking right pass the Landrover, it looks up and suddenly runs off at great speed, we witness our first ever leopard kill.... A ground squirrel.

As the leopard moves off with the squirrel Brian's says what ever happens don't loose site of her as you are in for a real treat, with us in pursuit from a distance we lose in the bush but see her almost immediately. Brian crosses a sandy river up the bank and we have an excellent view of her and she appears to be calling walking through a small gap in the bush she lays down with the squirrel to one side. She calls again and to our surprise suddenly a small leopard cub appears runs over to mum and suckles, the mother licks and cleans her, greetings and nourishment over the little cub pounces on the squirrel, and goes through the motions of the kill, then drags it's victim off into the bush, the female moves away as well. We too move away so as not to attract too much attention as mother and cub need time together and if the message had got out to the mini buses they would have been back. It never ceases to amaze us how they charge from one animal to another, a short look and move on with no real regard to positioning for a picture. As Brian says they have 2 hours at the most at each end of the day and are governed by meal timings in the lodges, it is very much a matter of seen it tick it off.

Once again our excitement is too much and we move off to the river where Brian parks up in his favourite glade under a tree to watch the comings and goings, time for tea and sandwiches as we discussed what I could only describe as a once in a life time show, what a morning!

We watch elephants coming down to drink swaying passed bluebell with a swagger that matches their determination to reach the water, other elephants are crossing, it is so good to see so many young, we notice a female has a bad gash in her trunk which Brian says will heal quite quickly. A large crocodile slips silently into the water drifting down to where a herd of impala are nervously drinking, always skittish and far prefer to drink from pools rather than the brown river. Luckily the commo of a tawny eagle catching a bird in flight startled the impala that rush up the bank out of danger from the croc. All the while we are watching the activity we were being watched by a group of vervet monkeys. Another female impala reaches the river for a drink as the croc drifts in for the kill, she suddenly see it and runs off disturbing a young elephant close by who trumpets loudly making me jump out of my skin much to Brian's amusement.

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Eventually the croc drifts into the shade and we after nearly 2 hours move on seeing an even bigger croc coming out on to a sand bank, it is busy on the way back for brunch, we see a saddle bill stork, a pale chanting gosh hawk a little further on and as we cross Anne's ford Brian tells us to be quiet as there in the trees is a huge eland the animal we set out to photo some 7 hours earlier. As we approach camp the big bull elephants are across the river, we wait for them to cross they are coming to visit and pass just behind the tents, the closest being only 20yards from my tent and remain in view whilst we each our brunch. Barisa informs Brian that he had seen a lioness with small cubs not far from the camp and it seem s a good idea to try and find them on the evening drive. It is so hot we all sit in the shade after another fantastic brunch watching the river, the Egyptian geese plus a grey-headed heron as well as the big bull elephant.

The Landrover is cleaned and ready for action as Brian rounds us up and off we go, the aim is to work the swamp and spring area in the hope we will see the lioness and cubs as well as hippo grazing. Just out side the camp is a lovely old wart hog if you can call them lovely, we try to photograph him thank good for my 300mm lens as he always just manages to run away at the last minute.

Well we search for the lioness for over an hour looking and listening she must have moved on is in right in the thickets and not making a sound Brian says watch out for the twitching tail and the pant if not once a 1000 times! No luck so we move up to the plains seeing a number of grant gazelle as well as a nice herd of oryx who although weary let us get close. Near the spring we watch a heard with a very small baby still covered in hair slowly potter away from the river in the hills for the night stopping to eat and allow the baby to rest, I never tire of these lovely animals.

A leisurely drive back into camp tonight all of us up spotting or if the truth been known just up and enjoying the cool breeze talking and recapping on another supper day, all a bit dusty looking forward to that shower and drinks around the fire. As we arrive in camp Barisa meets as usual to hear our stories as Benson our tent man tells us the showers are ready. Quick cup of tea and away to the tents to sort out our kit as well as ourselves.