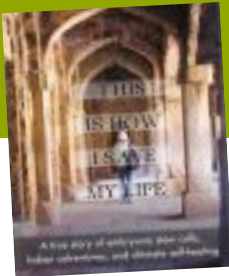


LIFE



SAYING 'I DO' AT DENNY'S
Couple first to marry at new Vegas venue.

ADVICE FOR GOING ABROAD
Medical traveler shares her practical insights.

INDIA'S REPUTATION TARNISHED
Attacks on women threaten flow of visitors.

GARDEN IS AWASH IN BLOOMS
Ginter Garden hosting its spring celebration.

CELEBRATIONS >> G2

ADVENTURE >> G2

TOURISM >> G3

DESTINATIONS >> G3

Nat Geo expands viewers' horizons

IT'S hard to know what you'll find on ever-expanding cable channels. National Geographic Channel is a good example this month, with specials that run the gamut from a documentary on receding glaciers to an emotional retelling of a famous Vietnam POW story.



TV COLUMN >>

ROB HEZELT

BACK TO 'THE '80s'

A look back at the '80s is thrown in for good measure. That kicks off tonight with "The '80s: The Decade That Made Us," a six-part series narrated by Rob Lowe.

It's more a People magazine approach to history than a serious attempt to understand forces at work in that transitional time. The rise of Apple computers bumps up against Jane Fonda and the workout craze. Donna Karan

and Calvin Klein get time, along with the shooting and resurgence of Ronald Reagan.

'VIETNAM POWS'

It's impossible to watch the new episode of "Locked Up Abroad" without being moved by its emotion and raw power. The April 19 debut of the series is titled "Vietnam POWs: McCain and Brace." It focuses on the extraordinary connection

SEE HEZELT, BACK PAGE



Photographer James Balog shares the process of documenting melting glaciers in "Chasing Ice."

JAMES BALOG / EXTREME ICE SURVEY

GET THIS

film

REDBOX TOP 10

Top rentals at kiosks, April 1-7:

1. "Red Dawn," Fox
2. "Zero Dark Thirty," Sony
3. "Killing Them Softly," Weinstein
4. "Argo," Warner
5. "Lincoln," BVHE
6. "Rise of the Guardians," DreamWorks
7. "Wreck-It Ralph," BHVE
8. "Skyfall," Fox
9. "The Collection," Lionsgate
10. "Chasing Mavericks," Fox

geography

IT'S QUIZ TIME

GEOQUIZ. What is the smallest country on the African mainland by land area?

(Answer: The Gambia, at about 4,361 square miles, is slightly smaller than Connecticut. The Seychelles, an archipelago, is Africa's smallest country overall.)

ADVENTURE >> BE IN THE KNOW BEFORE YOU GO



PHOTOS BY STEVE HAGGERTY/COLORWORLD

Seize relaxation when you can on safari. Try a mokoro ride through the Okavango Delta in northern Botswana.

Safaris aren't for shrinking violets

BY ANNE Z. COOKE AND STEVE HAGGERTY
MCLATCHY-TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

MAUN, Botswana—If you've paid for an African safari but you're still not clear about the details, bad on you.

Making the same mistake, I didn't dig into the heart of the adventure before I headed to Southern Africa for my first wildlife safari, because I was always too busy. Bad on me!

By the time we reached the Okavango Delta, in northern Botswana, we'd been on the go for 24 hours, rocketing through nine time zones, three airplanes and four airports. Jet lagged and yawning, I ached for a hot shower and good bed. But when Botswana's big animals call, every moment counts. I'd barely unzipped my bag when they announced the afternoon game drive, starting at 4:30 p.m. No problem, I thought. I'll sleep late tomorrow. Until they explained the next morning's game drive would start—as usual—at 6 a.m. sharp.

Why was I clueless? Like most travelers who dream of Africa, we'd seen wildlife documentaries and yearned to experience those distant sights and sounds in person. Beyond that we didn't know what to expect.

What's the Okavango Delta? The Okavango River, flowing southeast into northern Botswana from Angola and Namibia, has no outlet, to other rivers or to the ocean. When annual spring floods reach the

NEXT >> Ex-Free Lance-Star staffer shares her safari story.

Delta, they slow down and spread out, refilling lagoons and marshes and turning woodland mounds into islets and this water paradise into a self-contained sanctuary.

To protect this remarkable natural area, the Botswana government limits tourism by awarding guest concessions to qualified tour outfitters.

Each company leases a specific numbered area and builds (or takes over existing structures) one or more lodges and guest tents. There are a few permanent lodges, built back in the day. But newer lodges and guest tents are required to be semi-permanent structures bolted onto raised (and sometimes terraced) wood decks that can be moved every few years.

A TYPICAL DAY

Your wake-up call arrives at 5:45 a.m. when a staffer knocks on your door, bearing a tray with tea or coffee and toast. Bolting it down, you hurry to the



On safari drives, elephants always have right-of-way.



Elevated tent cabins are typical accommodations.

main lodge, grabbing fruit or a sweet roll to go.

By 6 a.m., you, your guide and four to six other visitors are sitting in an open-topped off-road vehicle, heading away from camp in search of elephants, giraffes, antelopes, rhinos, hippos, big cats, African buffaloes, snakes and warthogs.

Why so early? Simple. This is when animals are awake and active.

At 9 a.m., or so, you'll stop for a trailside breakfast. By 10 or 11 a.m., as the day heats up and the animals head to the shade to sleep, vehicles return to the lodge for lunch. Afterward, until 4:30 p.m., when

SEE SAFARI, BACK PAGE



ARMCHAIR ADVENTURES >>

PAUL SULLIVAN

Pilot charts a new course when weather gets in his way

BILL HARRELSON'S to-do list was overflowing as he angled the sleek white Lancair IV to touch down at Punta Arenas, Chile—often used for launching expeditions to Antarctica.

He had been in the air more than 19 hours since the specially built craft lifted off from Recife, a coastal city in Brazil. The long flight was only the second leg of a circum-polar attempt for small piston-engined planes.

Ahead lay the Antarctic leg of his flight, more than 6,000 miles from this airport in Chile to Christchurch, New Zealand—over the South Pole.

Ahead, too, lay more than a week of weather-watching,

SEE SULLIVAN, PAGE G3

SAFARI: Prepare to be on the go, morning and night, watching animals on safari

FROM PAGE G1

the day begins to cool and second game drives leave, you have time to meet fellow guests, take a guided walk, read, browse the gift shop, send Internet messages, swim in the pool or nap.

By 4:30 p.m., you've donned a lightweight shell, sprayed on mosquito goo and are on the prowl again. As the sun drops in the west, male lions wake, lionesses hunt, leopards steal through underbrush and hyenas make rounds to recent kills, hoping for leftovers. Antelopes and zebras, waterbuck and bushbuck, kudus and impalas step out of the shade to graze.

As the sun sets, you stop on the trail for a sundowner—wine, spirits, beer, cheese and conversation.

As dusk falls, lucky visitors will hear male lions roar and hyenas cackle, raucous choruses of yips, howls and barks.

By 8 p.m.—or later, if you've watched a leopard drag an impala up into a tree—you'll be dragging back into camp, tired but happy and ready for dinner.

These leisurely and often lavish four-to-five course meals, served with wine, are a chance to compare wildlife sightings, share personal histories and exchange emails. As the evening wears on, the elephants grow larger.

After digesting the lodge manager's command that you are never to walk alone at night, from your tent or to the lodge, a camp guide walks you to your bed, leaving you with strict instructions to stay inside until morning.

As the night turns dark and you fall asleep, you may hear huffing or rustling as animals prowl among the cabins. As there are no fences, they are free to check the swimming pool, rub up against the trees and walk past your tent. Soon you realize that they've turned the tables and you're the one in the zoo.

On the day you move to the

next lodge on your itinerary, you'll join the morning game drive as usual then head for the grassy airstrip nearby. The plane, a high-wing eight-seater, lands just before lunch, drops off new guests and picks you up. In 30 minutes or less you're at your next lodge in time for lunch.

ZOO ETIQUETTE

Talk softly, sit still and don't stand while you're on a game drive, especially when lions and elephants are close. Swap seats with your drive mates or lean out of the way to let them take photos.

Surprisingly, animals pay little attention to tents or vehicles and don't seem to realize that the contents—you and yours—are edible.

Never leave the camp area on your own to walk along a river or pond; Nile crocodiles, Africa's deadliest killers, lie in wait there for prey. Never walk alone after dark.

TRIP TIPS

You can plan and book your own trip sight unseen, relying on Internet sources. But most North Americans choose to book a trip to Botswana—or to any destination in Africa—with a tour operator, somebody with representatives in the U.S., and employees at the destination.

A typical Botswana itinerary includes several different lodges and flights between, plus the round-trip flight from Johannesburg, in South Africa. Once you're there, nearly everything is included, from game drives and guided walks to lodgings, meals, beverages and laundry service.

Most tour companies prefer to book guests into their own lodges. But they can book you into any lodge you might request; it is, in fact, a common practice. If you are interested in staying at a specific lodge, insist that it be included in your itinerary.

AS THE NIGHT TURNS DARK AND YOU FALL ASLEEP, YOU MAY HEAR HUFFING OR RUSTLING AS ANIMALS PROWL AMONG THE CABINS. AS THERE ARE NO FENCES, THEY ARE FREE TO CHECK THE SWIMMING POOL, RUB UP AGAINST THE TREES AND WALK PAST YOUR TENT.

PACKING LIGHT

Since small planes enforce space and weight restrictions, bring no more than you can fit into a medium-size duffel (approximately 36-by-18 inches), plus a small carry-on for your camera, money, passport and toiletries.

Safari lodges provide frequent laundry service so two changes of clothes is enough. Basics include two pairs of long pants, two pairs of shorts, short and long-sleeve shirts, underwear, light jacket, tennis shoes, a bathing suit, big-brimmed foldable hat and binoculars. Safari guides swear that beige clothing (not white) makes you least visible to wildlife and helps to repel mosquitoes.

The best tour companies—Cox & Kings, Ker & Downey, & Beyond (formerly CCAfrica), Sanctuary, Abercrombie & Kent and Wilderness Travel, for example—employ reservationists who are familiar with the lodges. Ask these questions: Will the company's local representatives meet you at the airport? Do they provide a hotel and transportation, if any? Do they book your connecting flight to Botswana? Are your lodge stays confirmed? If your plane is delayed, who's the contact person?



STEVE HAGGERTY/COLORWORLD

Small islands dot the Okavango Delta in northern Botswana. Animals are active there.

WANT TO GO?

BEST DATES: June through October are dry months, with less foliage for the animals to hide in. June through August are cool to cold with mild, sunny days; September and October are warmer and dry. Jan. and Feb. are considered low season. March, April, May, October and November are mid-season. Some lodges close for a month in December, for maintenance.

MALARIA: Mosquitoes that carry this sometimes fatal disease are rarely a threat during dry months, from June to mid-October. Local residents protect themselves at twilight with light-colored long-sleeve shirts,

long pants and lots of insect repellent. Before you start a course of prophylactic drugs with potentially serious side effects, investigate alternative options. Consult your physician or a travel medicine clinic before leaving home.

ESSENTIAL READING:

■ "The Bradt Guide To Botswana" (Globe Pequot Press) by Chris McIntyre, a long-time Africa traveler, is thoughtful, readable and detailed, the very best source available. Buy it before you go and read it while you're there.

■ "The Shell Tourist Guide (and map) to Botswana" by

Veronica Roodt, is sold in South Africa, at the Johannesburg Airport and at some safari lodges. We found it an exceptional reference. Don't pass it up.

GETTING THERE: South African Airways flies nonstop from selected U.S. cities (including New York and Washington) to Johannesburg, South Africa. The return flight, against headwinds and thus two hours longer, refuels in Dakar, Senegal. Flight times and dates can change; see FLY-SAA.com for current information. 800/722-9675. Your tour outfitter will reserve the flight on to Botswana.

Pay for your trip before leaving home, in U.S. dollars. Book your own flight—or use

miles—from the U.S. to Johannesburg, South Africa. And buy trip insurance, in-

cluding emergency evacuation from Botswana to a hospital in South Africa.

HEDELT: Nat Geo Channel features POWs, glaciers, '80s

FROM PAGE G1

tion between the American prisoners.

John McCain was a young naval commander whose plane was shot down over Hanoi. Ernie Brace was a civilian pilot who flew supply and support missions for the CIA, and was captured upon landing in Laos.

The tale is told through interviews with them and recreations of their experiences in prisons. McCain had minimal medical treatment and solitary confinement. Brace had a cruel stay in an outdoor bamboo cage that robbed him, for a time, of the ability to walk.

They both ended up in the Hanoi Hilton, where Americans were interred and tortured. They communicated through tapping and eventually whispering through the wall between their cells. Brace notes it was his first communication with another American in more than three years.

The prohibited connection helped to sustain them, even after they were separated.

The powerful ending comes after they ended up at the same White House dinner—and saw each other for the first time. Dry eyes will be hard to find.

GLACIERS RECEDING

Never has the power of images been quite as strong as in "Chasing Ice," the story of one man's quest to document how fast climate change is melting glaciers.

In this award-winning documentary, we meet acclaimed photographer James Balog. He was inspired to document the melting with mounted stationary cameras in some of the world's most unforgiving climates.

He dispatched installers and dozens of cameras—with unique power supplies, mounts and designs meant to cope with harsh elements—to spots where glaciers were known to



FILE/ASSOCIATED PRESS

A boy places a lei on freed POW Ernest Brace in Tokyo on his return home. See Brace's story on 'Locked Up Abroad.'



FILE/ASSOCIATED PRESS

John McCain, a POW for five-plus years, waves to well-wishers in Florida in 1973.

be melting rapidly. Balog's passion and the physical toll his profession has taken on his body personalize the story. By film's end, knee injuries keep him from going himself to install cameras in the more difficult spots.

The film's beauty comes in the huge, beautiful images he captures where glaciers meet water, air and sky. But its power is revealed at the film's end when, in time-lapse images, the viewer sees glaciers the size of cities melting more in a year or two than they have in the previous dozens.

It's hard to watch the images and not feel there's change going on that deserves more serious consideration than it's gotten.

Rob Hedelt: 540/374-5415
rhedelt@freelancestar.com

WANT TO WATCH?

WHAT: "The '80s: The Decade That Made Us"
WHEN: Tonight, Monday and Tuesday evenings, at 8 and 9

WHERE: National Geographic Channel

WHAT: The episode "Vietnam POWs: McCain and Brace" on the series "Locked Up Abroad"

WHEN: Wednesday, April 17, at 9 p.m.

WHERE: National Geographic Channel

WHAT: "Chasing Ice"

WHEN: Friday, April 19, at 8 p.m.

WHERE: National Geographic Channel

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