



Shamwari Hunting Safaris – Zambia

The REAL Africa



In the client’s own words, testimonial from the latest hunt at Rufunsa – Zambia.

‘My week in the Zambezi Valley was over way too fast. Even if there were times when time stood still, the time passed too fast. This was my second buffalo hunt, however my first hunt in Dande in Zimbabwe unfortunately ended with me not taking a buffalo, even though the experience was amazing.



I arrived at Shamwari Safaris’ Rufunsa camp on the lower Zambezi mid-morning on the Saturday, after an excited drive from Lusaka. Being able to travel and hunt is one of the joys of living in Zambia during this Pandemic. Turning into the Luangwa Valley at the Luangwa Bridge, I got the first taste of what lay ahead. Beautiful river views, baobabs and Ilala palms; truly Africa at its best. The last section of the road into camp, going to the village of Kavalamanga, was rough and a bit slower, but I made sure to soak up the bush and I was already seeing plenty game tracks. To say I was happy and excited doesn’t really tell the tale.

The camp is brand new and very well positioned on the Zambezi river bank under a thick riverine canopy of shade; with a fire pit, that we spent many hours at, right on the bank with incredible views. The rooms are spacious and comfortable with great showers, which is always a win after a tough day in the bush.



After getting settled and meeting everyone, we headed out for an afternoon drive to check waterholes in the concession. My PH for the hunt and owner of Shamwari Safari’s, Steve Rufus, along with his apprentice PH, Peter Goneos, had already been scouting for suitable tracks the day before and through Saturday morning, so we had an idea of where to go and check. The afternoon was a great intro to the area that concluded with a short walk on some tracks, but no eyes on buff.

The Sunday was to be the start of a long week of 4am wake ups and long days in the bush. We were very spoilt being there over a spectacular full moon, which made the early morning coffee at the fire unforgettable. The silver Zambezi and airbrushed clouds made for an amazing view while enjoying good coffee next to a mopani fire.



The days followed the program of leaving camp by 5am, checking for tracks in the various areas we had

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identified as being buffalo locations. On Sunday we were almost immediately onto fresh tracks and spent most of the day tracking and stalking a small herd. Unfortunately, the wind wasn't being kind and closing sufficiently to get eyes on the whole herd proved very tricky. We were sure there were some good bulls in the herd, based on the size of some of the tracks, but we just didn't get a good look at them all. That's buffalo hunting!

This routine continued with us stalking many dagga boy groups and herds throughout the week. Some of the trail cams we put up caught some great bulls on camera, but their patterns were erratic making them tough to locate. We subsequently found, through both photos on the cameras and "spoor" that this probably had something to do with some lion operating in the area. We caught these lion on various trail cams during the week, including stealing a leopard bait from high up a tree! Always great to hunt in wild areas where you have these experiences.

As an aside, but that must be mentioned, we saw plenty of good leopard on the various cameras all over the GMA throughout the week. This will certainly be a leopard hunter's paradise.

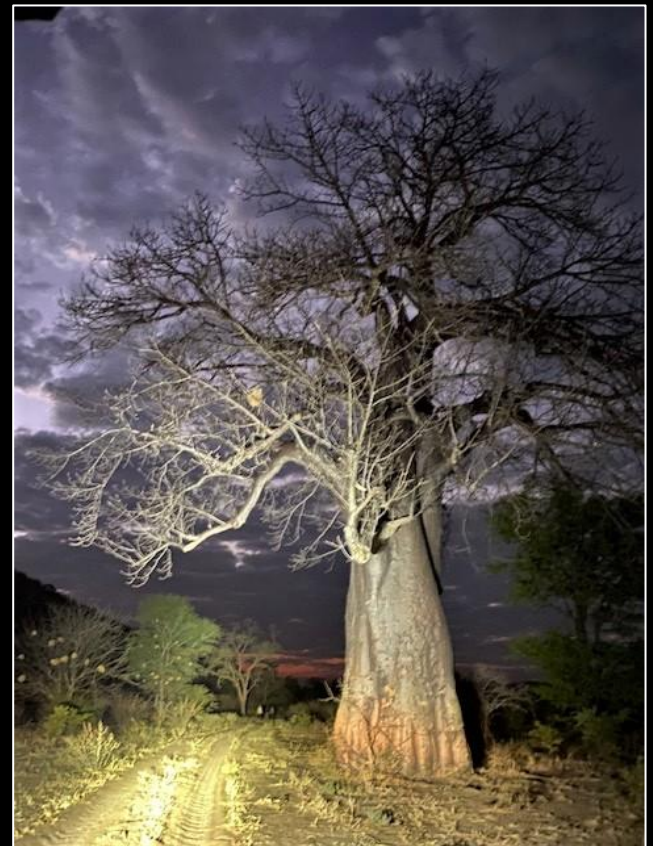


As the week progressed, we continued to track buffalo every day, including a day of 6km's worth of climbing a mountain behind a group of buff that eventually gave us the slip. I can confirm that Rufunsa is not for the unfit or faint of heart, this is real African hunting at its best. Hard and long tracking and stalks, through tough terrain where everything has thorns or bites. Steven does however have a team of incredible trackers, supported by a great community scout, who tracked buffalo for more than 65km's over the week. More

than once we doubted that they had been able to follow the specific bull we were after until they proved us wrong. These guys could track a cat through my lounge; truly amazing skills.

Coming to the last day of the 7 day hunt, I was feeling that the hunting gods had decided it was not to be. Even though we had seen plenty buffalo throughout the week, I had only had one brief "opportunity" to be on the sticks until the last day. This was largely because of swirling and inconsistent wind and definitely not because of a lack of good buffalo.

We cut tracks early on Friday morning in the Zambezi valley, our last day, and managed to get the wind on our side. We ambushed the buffalo and I was on the sticks! The excitement was palpable, with the herd crossing an opening about 45m in front of us, completely unaware we were there. Scanning the whole herd, we couldn't see the bulls we thought were in there, based on the tracks we had seen. So we looped around and tried again, only to find that the



group must have split up and the bulls were gone. This was now going down to the wire.



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Nothing for it, but to load up and head down to the Luangwa side of the GMA and look for tracks; as we suspected after not finding tracks the day before, that the group down there would have had to drink on Thursday night. They had! Fresh tracks and a clear direction to their exit from the waterhole. The game was on.



We checked the roads in that direction to see if they had crossed. First road, crossed, we headed immediately to check the next road along and after careful inspection, nothing! Bingo! They were still in that section of thicket and the day was warming up, so they would be looking to bed down for a few hours. The wind was however not playing ball. Nothing for it, but for us to settle down under a tree and have lunch and wait a while. We had lunch under the shade of a big Mopani tree and tried to sleep for a while, but the damn Mopani Flies drove me nuts. Eventually the excitement and flies had me and Peter hassling Steve to get up and going.

The wind had settled a bit and was more importantly consistent. So we took to the “spoor”. Being more than deliberate and as quiet as we could be, we slowly inched along the “spoor” almost immediately coming upon fairly fresh, a couple of hours old, dung. This continued, until we twice got to places where you could smell buffalo. The excitement and adrenalin were building.

About a kilometre and half into the stalk, the trackers, Jim and Lazareth, hit the ground, pointing. We had just

found the group. But almost immediately we heard the familiar crashing of bush and heavy hooves on the dry ground. But this time the hunting gods were on our side, like the wind. Since they hadn’t scented us, they stopped almost immediately to look back.

Lazareth got Steve and myself into position quickly and I immediately had eyes on the group, but most importantly the old broken horn bull leading this group. They were standing in the shade of a small Mopani clump. Unfortunately, when I put down my binoculars, all I could see at the 70m distance was a black mass in the shade. Again, raising my binoculars, I could see the old warrior with the broken horn staring at us, nose held up. Still unable to take the shot, because without a scope on my Krieghoff 470NE I could still only see a black mass. His dominance got the better of him and he took two big steps forward towards us; this put his chest in the sun.

All of a sudden, I could differentiate him from the rest and had a shot. Settling the dot of my Trijicon RMR on the center of his chest I was about to squeeze the trigger when the PH, Steve, said to wait, as we both noticed him stepping forward again! Another two steps forward, he was very keen to show us who was boss. As he stopped, I was waiting and let the 470NE talk. The shot hit him just to the right on the front of his neck entering the chest cavity and hunching him up good and proper. As he came down, I settled the RMR dot back on him for the second barrel, but with his head dropping and him turning, my second shot was into the boss and along the outside of his skin on his back. The damage had been done already though and he turned 180 degrees and went down, bleeding heavily from the nose. We moved forward and I put an insurance shot into his chest, after which we got the eagerly anticipated “death bellow”.





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We had to wait a few minutes for him to completely stop moving before we carefully approached and checked the eye. I had taken my first buffalo!

The sensations and emotions are very hard to describe, but the satisfaction of succeeding after a long and challenging week of hard hunting made this all the more rewarding. It also made me even more appreciative that I have been able to fulfil this “bucket list” item. I have a massive affinity and passion for Zambia and the Zambezi River in particular, so to be able to hunt my first buffalo in this area made it exceptionally special.

My bull was everything I could have wished for. He was estimated at about 10 years old, with a broken horn and surprise-surprise, one testicle. His unbroken horn demonstrated a beautiful drop and curl, which would have put him most likely over the 40/41 inch mark had both his horns been complete. The broken horn has a big knob growth on the end, making him a truly unique

old buffalo trophy. No true hunter could wish for a better trophy.

Shamwari Safari’s have taken on a most beautiful part of the Zambezi and Luangwa Valleys offering some of the most authentic fair chase hunting you could wish for. Wild and tough Africa at its best. Come prepared and you will have the hunt of a lifetime!

Thanks again to Steve and the Shamwari team as well as [@PeteG](#) the appy, for a really memorable hunt and experience I will remember forever.’

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It was an amazing safari, such fun to be in the bush with a dedicated client and great game. This really is a remarkable area, not for the faint hearted but truly rewarding for authentic hunters.

Just as a reminder, if it needs to be said

WE ARE OPEN FOR BUSINESS!

Please contact us if you want to take advantage of the special offers we have for the rest of the season.

Look forward to seeing you all soon

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