



CATH ADVENTURE

WOMEN-ONLY

Several companies offer women-only adventures, where you can join a group of like-minded travellers. Cath Adventure organises female-only adventures, from canoeing across the Rift Valley lakes to intrepid overland trips. And for a deeper experience, Orbis Expeditions in Malawi runs a Women's Partnership Challenge designed to empower and inspire both you and the local people you meet. Highlights include business sharing workshops with local female entrepreneurs and student mentoring, as well as hiking, game viewing and much more.



ANITA TRUSHEIM/CATH ADVENTURE



Connections Cath Adventure offers women-only tours to Namibia (top and middle); Orbis Expeditions' Women's Partnership Challenges include a 10-day trip to Malawi (bottom), where you meet female entrepreneurs and mentor students



SUSAN WOOD

GO BACK TO BASICS

I have been fortunate to stay at many of the new, luxury camps and lodges throughout East Africa, but rustic camping has always held a special place in my heart. Some of my most memorable safaris were travelling with a guide, a cook (who doubles as an 'attendant') and a minimal camp, erected in designated national parks' sites: a 'pitch your own' tent, a sleeping bag atop a roll mat, a bucket-style shower tent with water heated over an open fire and a privacy tent (portable loo) discreetly set up nearby. On these trips we had amazing animal encounters, including being woken by the ground shaking as thousands of wildebeest ran past our Ndutu campsite. Or the time a lone bull elephant stuck around our Tarangire camp for several days, happily munching on the trees which provided shade for our tents. And in central Serengeti, our campfire dinner was interrupted by two male lions who sauntered into camp and proceeded to make their presence known for nearly two hours. Yeah, it's definitely time to get the sleeping bags out of storage.

SUSAN WOOD A-WAY-TO AFRICA SAFARIS



NATURAL SELECTION

Get hands-on

Choose a safari with a purpose and contribute meaningfully to the survival of a species. Many places offer volunteering conservation experiences (no specific skills required), where you can get hands-on for a few hours, or longer if you wish. On Natural Selection's Dawn Ranger Patrol, for example, you can spend a morning tracking predators in the Khwai Private Reserve in the Okavango Delta, helping rangers to identify individual predators and log sightings (pictured). In South Africa, Ranger Buck Safaris hosts rhino and lion conservation experiences, where you assist with the tracking, darting, dehorning or collaring of animals. If leopards and cheetahs are more your thing, join in with research projects at Namibia's Okonjima and the Cheetah Conservation Fund, respectively.

TAKE A ROAD TRIP

Self-driving allows you to explore places under your own steam, when each turn could lead to a new adventure. But why restrict yourself to a two-week car hire? Consider taking a sabbatical and spend two-three months on the open road. For the really adventurous, Africa Rally holds an annual 4500km charity road trip between South Africa and Kenya, where competitors 'race' in a variety of old and ridiculous vehicles (this year it was won by two gents in a 1971 VW Kombi Ice Cream van).



WILLIAM GRAY



AFRICA RALLY



SUE WATT

Pack a parent or two

Shortly after my father died, I took my 75-year-old mother Jean to Zambia's South Luangwa National Park: I returned with some of my fondest memories in twenty years of African safaris. Not only did the wildlife put on a spectacular show, but our time together gave us a special bond that still stands today, 12 years on. Mum proved you're never too old to enjoy a safari and that planning for your parent is no different from any other trip: the same factors such as destination, budget, interests, camp amenities and activities apply. You might consider requesting a room closer to the main camp, a private vehicle for flexibility and staying longer in one place to make the trip less tiring. Practicalities aside, it's your shared experience that makes your safari so memorable. This was Mum's first time in the bush and her childlike sense of wonder at everything she saw inspired me to see through fresh eyes. Yes, there was some inevitable role reversal, but I learnt not to cosset or underestimate her: in this wild new world, she never failed to surprise me. She walked along elephant-rutted paths to stalk a leopard, flew in a microlight above the Luangwa River, loved our sundowner G&Ts, and relished meeting new people, from children in the villages to guides and fellow guests. My only regret is that I hadn't brought her on safari before, when my father could have joined us too.

BY **SUE WATT**

GET AWAY FROM IT ALL. NO, REALLY.

As I get older, my resolution each year is to keep moving outside of my comfort zone, to step out of the safe and familiar routines, to keep expanding my awareness of the world around me and building confidence to keep trying new things.

We travel to Africa every year, spending seven weeks camping with our very old HJ 60 Landcruiser. It gives us the opportunity to press the pause button on everyday life, time to reflect and explore this extraordinary landscape, both around and within us.

On our recent trip we stayed on a site in the middle of the Erongo mountains in Namibia, 35km from the main road. We were totally on our own and lying in our tent in the silence of the night my fears took over... I thought of all the 'what ifs', the dangers both real and imaginary, and planned to head back to civilisation the next morning.

Yet over the next few days, immersed in the solitude and beauty of this place, I felt truly alive, with a new sense of freedom and a letting go. I left with a greater awareness, a resolution to say yes to more things, to find more moments of stillness... and to start planning our next off-the-beaten-track camping trip!

BY **LINDA CAMERON**, SUBSCRIBER