

TIGERS & LEOPARDS

A SQUIVER PHOTO TOUR



Squiver

In a poll conducted by Animal Planet, the tiger was voted the world's favourite animal, narrowly beating the dog.



HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

11 days of safari, of which:

-5 days tigers

-5 days leopards

-all accommodation

-all meals

-all drinks

-all park fees

-all local transport

-specialized safari vehicles

-experienced guides & trackers

-one row of seats per guest

-small group size, max 6 guests

-daily image reviews

-in the field tips & tricks

-lots of fun!

TIGERS AND LEOPARDS

Dates: 15 May - 25 May 2016 (11 days)
19 June - 29 June 2016 (11 days)
3 July - 13 July 2016 (11 days)

Tour leaders: Marsel van Oosten and Daniëlla Sibbing

Fee: 6950 EUR per person

Group size: min. 4, max. 6 participants

Level: all experience levels

We offer you the ultimate big cat safari: photographing tigers and leopards, in South Africa. Allow us to explain.

Tigers are indigenous to Asia and there are many companies that offer photo tours to India, where they visit parks like Bandhavgarh and Ranthambore. But chances of you actually seeing a tiger are low, and seeing one in good photography conditions are even lower. Unfortunately, chances of seeing a tiger in the wild are diminishing even further every year, as tiger conservation on the Asian continent does not seem to be very successful. Numbers are decreasing rapidly and necessary measures, like fencing the national parks, are not taken.

Marsel can tell from his own experience how difficult it is to photograph tigers in India. Early 2012 he was on assignment for National Geographic Traveler in Bandhavgarh and Ranthambore. He was there for a week to shoot for an article on tiger safaris, and only on his very last game drive did he see a tiger. One tiger. After sunset. On the road. Hardly the ideal conditions for a good shot. And the fact that he saw just one that whole week does make one wonder how many tigers are actually still left in the national parks. Once the tiger is lost to the parks, so is the tourist potential and so too is the vital income needed to save the tiger. It's a downward spiral.

In 2011 we met John Varty, known as JV. A man who has been wild about big cats most of his life. He came up with a highly controversial plan to do something about tiger conservation. His idea was to create a free-ranging, self-sustaining tiger population outside Asia. In South Africa, to be precise. His life story starts in Sabi Sand.

EVERYTHING IN AFRICA BITES, BUT THE SAFARI BUG IS WORST OF ALL

//BRIAN JACKMAN



At one year of age, leopard young can probably fend for themselves, but remain with the mother for 18–24 months.

The Sabi Sand Game Reserve is a collection of private game reserves that share unfenced borders with each other and Kruger NP. This allows the free movement of wildlife over more than 2 million hectares of pristine bush.

Each lodge in Sabi Sand is privately owned and managed, and the typical safari experience here combines the comfort and luxury of 4-star and 5-star lodges with the thrill of open vehicle game drives, bush walks and Big Five sightings. The Big Five are known to be the most dangerous animals to hunt, i.e. lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo and rhino. Of course, no hunting is permitted in Sabi Sand. The reserve is dedicated to the conservation of Africa's wildlife and biodiversity, supported by ecotourism.

It was 80 years ago that the great grandfather of JV lay the foundation of one of the most established lodges in Sabi Sand: Londolozi. Two friends, the great grandfathers of the Varty and Taylor clans, stood before the mighty Sand River for the first time. Camp was set up on the banks of the river, the first campfire was built amidst the roar of lions, and it was from here that the property evolved into one of the most sought after ecotourism destinations in the world.

In the beginning, the property was a hunting concession. For two generations the property hosted presidents and princes, and sacrificed its wild beasts at the mercy of the hunter's gun. But in the 1970's the farm underwent a fundamental shift in consciousness. In 1973, along with his brother Dave, John Varty (JV) renamed his grandfather's hunting camp Londolozi, the zulu word for 'to protect'. The new name symbolized the family's aim to provide a sanctuary for all living things.

Described as an elusive and solitary predator, it was a rarity to see leopards in the very early

days of safari at Londolozi. Yet in 1979 that was all to change when JV developed a relationship with a female leopard and started habituating her. She became tolerant of his presence and allowed him into her secret world. He followed her everywhere she went, and when she had cubs, they learned from their mother that safari vehicles were nothing to be afraid of. It was a relationship that endured for 12 long years during which time a dynasty of Londolozi leopards was born. This dynasty has been chronicled over the past 31 years by the many guides and trackers, past and present, who have worked at Londolozi.

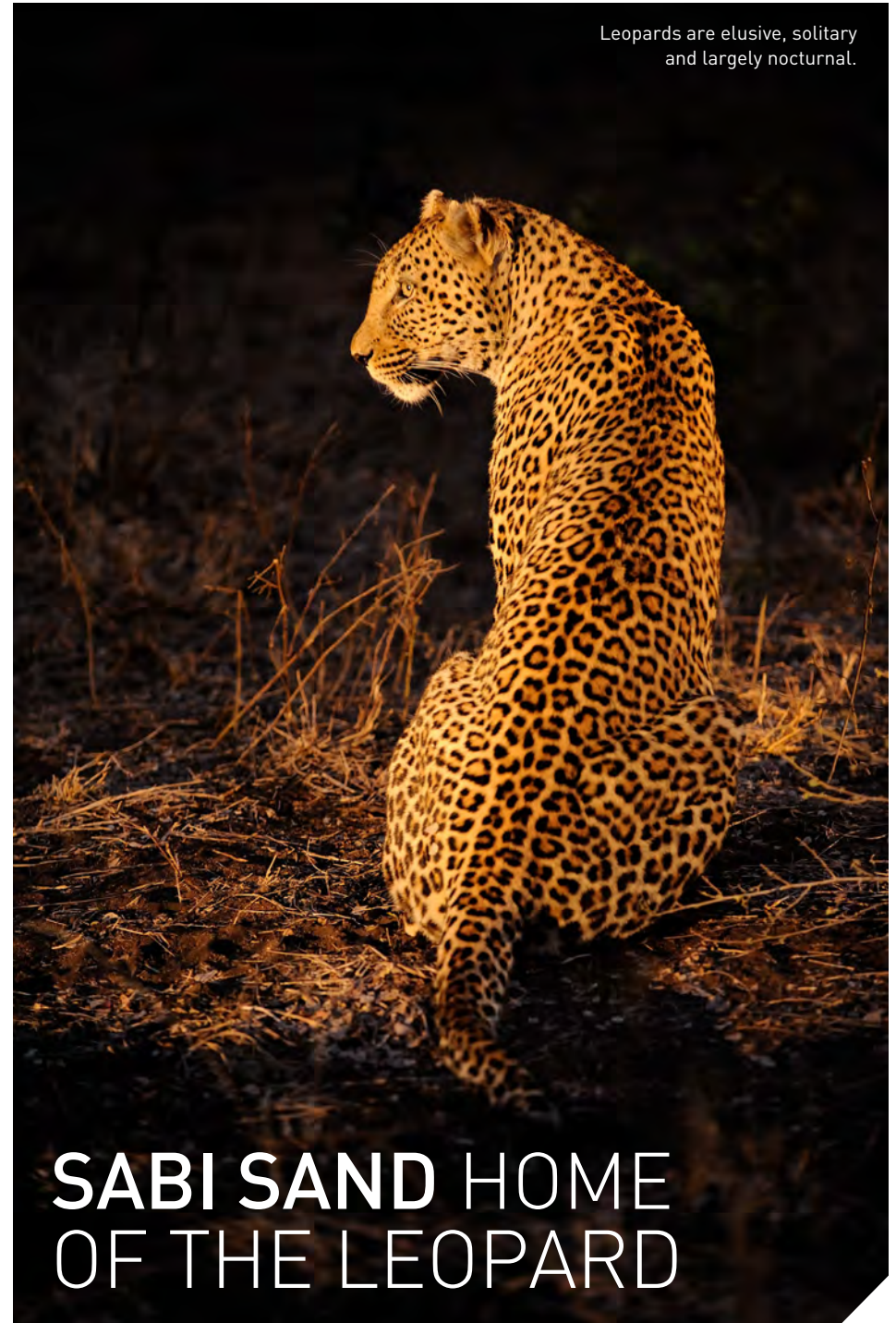
With over 16000 hectares of traversing wilderness, no two game drives are ever the same. Trackers sit up at the front of the Land Rover looking for fresh animal tracks, while rangers drive with great skill through ravines and thickets in pursuit of elusive animals.

Many of the rangers and trackers at Londolozi grew up living off the land and therefore have an incredible knowledge of the area and deep cultural connections to the fauna and flora. In addition, Londolozi's rangers specialize in photographic safaris and will always try to position the vehicle at the best angle.

Breeding herds of elephant and buffalo roam throughout the Londolozi area, while white rhino and lion concentrations are amongst the highest recorded on the African continent. However, it is the truly remarkable relationship which has developed over three decades between wild free ranging leopards and ranger & trackers that has made Londolozi world famous.

There is no disputing that viewing the leopards of Londolozi is one of life's truly treasured experiences. And it is exactly the reason that we chose this amazing camp to photograph leopards. It is simply the best.

Leopards are elusive, solitary and largely nocturnal.



SABI SAND HOME OF THE LEOPARD

LEOPARD FACTS

→ The leopard (*Panthera pardus*), is a member of the Felidae family and the smallest of the four Big Cats in the genus *Panthera*. The other three are the tiger, lion, and jaguar.

→ The leopard was once distributed across eastern and southern Asia and Africa, from Siberia to South Africa, but its range of distribution has decreased radically because of hunting and loss of habitat.

→ Because of its declining range and population, it is listed as a "Near Threatened" species on the IUCN Red List.

→ The leopard has relatively short legs and a long body with a large skull. It is similar in appearance to the jaguar, but it is smaller and more slightly built. Its fur is marked with rosettes similar to those of the jaguar, but the leopard's rosettes are smaller and more densely packed, and they do not usually have central spots as the jaguars do. Both leopards and jaguars that are melanistic are known as black panthers.

→ They are powerful swimmers, although not as disposed to swimming as some other big cats, such as the tiger.

→ The species' success in the wild is in part due to its opportunistic hunting behavior, its adaptability to habitats, its ability to run at speeds approaching 58km per hour (36mph), its unequalled ability to climb trees even when carrying a heavy carcass, and its notorious ability for stealth.

Cubs are born with closed eyes, which open four to nine days after birth. Around three months of age, the young begin to follow the mother on hunts.



BETTER TO LIVE ONE YEAR AS A TIGER,
THAN A HUNDRED AS A SHEEP
//MADONNA





The small, rounded ears have black markings on the back, surrounding a white spot. These spots, called ocelli, play an important role in tiger

A TIGER SANCTUARY IN SOUTH AFRICA

For many years JV was practically nocturnal. He followed leopards, night after night, to understand their behavior and to establish a bond with them. His knowledge and fearlessness enabled him to get amazing footage of these highly elusive cats, and this also helped to establish the reputation and fortune of Londolozi.

JV has made over 30 films for Discovery Channel, National Geographic, and the BBC amongst others. He has made documentaries that were widely distributed, like **Shingalana** and **Jamu, the Orphaned Leopard**. **Swift And Silent** won an American Cable TV award, and **The Silent Hunter** won The New York Gold Award. In 2011, John Varty starred in **Leopard Queen**, a documentary about a leopard he has filmed for 17 years. He also wrote, produced and starred in **Running Wild**, a feature film starring Brooke Shields.

In the 1990s JV became involved in saving the tiger. In spite of conservation efforts, tiger populations are steadily declining, and the future existence of tigers in the wild is far from assured. Ironically, what is now Bandhavgarh National Park was once the private hunting grounds for the maharajas of Rewa, where hundreds of tigers were killed.

By official count, there are only about 1400 tigers remaining in India, and last year 60 deaths were reported. Thirteen tigers were killed by poachers in just the first three months of 2010 in Bandhavgarh. Pressure on the tigers is coming from many directions: mining and construction interests, conflicts with villagers, and poachers who sell the skins

and other body parts for use in traditional Chinese medicine. In Asia a tiger is worth much more dead than alive, and that makes the need to conserve this beautiful cat even more urgent.

Because of his vast knowledge of wildlife conservation and his success with leopards, JV was invited to visit India and he offered his advise on how to improve the living conditions of the tiger. When it became clear to JV that nothing was going to change in the way tiger conservation was handled in India, he decided to take matters into his own hand.

In 2000 JV came up with the idea to buy huge stretches of farmland in South Africa and start a new game reserve - one where tigers could roam in the wild, hunting on their own, living free while protected by a huge fence. He has sunk practically everything he has into the tiger project, which to some people is a scientifically invalid, wild goose chase. So far it has cost him dearly, in far more than just financial ways.

He was criticised by conservationists, who questioned the value of what he was doing, and the project bogged down in a protracted and crippling legal battle with a crooked business partner. But he hung on and continued to work with his two original tigers that came from a zoo in the USA. Two additional captive bred tigers were added to the mix and were rehabilitated to the wild, and soon the first litters were born.

In January 2014 there were 21 tigers in the sanctuary, and it is currently the most

A white tiger should not be confused with an albino tiger. It has simply inherited two white genes from its parents. All the tigers at the tiger sanctuary are white gene carriers.

AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO DEAL WITH
PREDATORS IS TO TASTE TERRIBLE
//ANONYMOUS

successful tiger conservation project in the world when it comes to rapidly increasing numbers of tigers. Saving the tiger took over JV's life, turning him from globetrotting filmmaker, khaki-clad playboy, and one of Africa's most glamorous "wild men", to an impoverished conservationist on a desperate personal mission.

JV is hell bent on demonstrating a way to keep tigers from going extinct in the wild, even if he has to give the shirt off his back to do it. And when you meet him, it looks as though he might already have given up his shirt for the cause. His appearance is more like that of a down-on-his-luck war

veteran, than the co-owner of one of the most famous high-end game lodges in the world. He is a real character, with an enormous passion and drive. Meanwhile, things are changing and the world has caught up a bit with JV's wild thinking and his "Just do it" approach. Recent news that all the tigers have disappeared from Panna, one of India's leading reserves, when just 2 years ago there was still a healthy population of 24, has somewhat vindicated Varty's big idea. Maybe he was not so crazy after all.

JV's tiger sanctuary is the culmination of a lifelong obsession: big cats. It's an amazing opportunity to join what promises to

be the dramatic physical and emotional journey, of a man possessed, a man making a huge gamble to help save a species, and the stakes are his own life.

The sanctuary offers us a unique view into the life of the tiger. As the tigers are used to vehicles, we will be able to see them up close in the African landscape, allowing us to make stunning pictures of these beautiful big cats.

In JV's visions it is possible that one day you may see the tiger, the lion, the leopard, and the cheetah interacting at the tiger sanctuary like they once did on the Asian continent.

Cats will be cats. Enjoying the last sunlight on a winter afternoon.





Tiger habitats will usually include sufficient cover, proximity to water, and an abundance of prey.

TIGER FACTS

→ The tiger (*Panthera tigris*) is the largest cat species, reaching a total body length of up to 3.3 metres (11 ft) and weighing up to 306 kg (670 lb).

→ Their canines are the longest among living felids with a crown height of as much as 90 mm (3.5 in).

→ Tigers are good jumpers, better than lions, so the fence surrounding the sanctuary is 3.6 meters high.


→ Over the past 100 years, they have lost 93% of their historic range.

→ Temperatures can go from below 0°C in the winter up to 40°C in summer. To combat the heat and the cold, tigers have a summer and winter coat. In winter it's thick and shaggy, and in summer it slims down to a fine coat rather like a lion.

→ Contrary to most cats, tigers love water. And they go swimming even in wintertime. They simply break the ice with their paws and take a dip in a pool.

→ Many people in China have a belief that various tiger parts have medicinal properties, including as pain killers and aphrodisiacs. There is no scientific evidence to support these beliefs.

→ The stripe pattern is also found on the skin of the tiger. If a tiger were to be shaved, its distinctive camouflage pattern would be preserved.

A tiger is walking through tall, golden grass at sunset. The scene is bathed in a warm, golden light, creating a soft, hazy atmosphere. The tiger's stripes are clearly visible against its lighter fur. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

DON'T
BLAME GOD
FOR HAVING
CREATED
THE TIGER,
BUT THANK
HIM FOR
NOT HAVING
GIVEN IT
WINGS
//INDIAN PROVERB

The pattern of stripes is unique to each animal, much like human fingerprints. It seems likely that the function of stripes is camouflage, serving to help tigers conceal themselves amongst the dappled shadows and long

Stalking a small herd of blesbuck.



TOUR DESCRIPTION

START OF THE TOUR: 27 MAY 2015 or 28 June 2015

Today everyone flies in for their African adventure. We stay at a hotel on the airport, where everyone should arrive before 5PM, so we can have dinner together and give a briefing. We will all try to have a good night sleep before the big adventure starts!

PHOTOGRAPHING TIGERS (4 NIGHTS/5DAYS)

We start the day early for the long drive to the tiger sanctuary. As the tourist aspect of the tiger project is still in development, there is no accommodation in the sanctuary itself. We stay in the nearest town and drive to the sanctuary for the daily game drives. We stay in self-catering units in restored historical buildings; quite simple but comfortable. After check-in, we grab our cameras and are on our way for our first encounters with the most impressive of the big cats!

We do our game drives in modified safari vehicles. While the tigers roam free in the reserve, we are caged in for our own safety. We have three specialized vehicles for our group, with

only 2 guests per car. You will shoot either from the back seat through the open windows, or from the caged area at the back of the vehicle. You are virtually guaranteed to see tigers on every drive. There are lots of open areas and we are allowed to drive off-road (landscape permitting) to follow a tiger when we find one. Just like the leopards in Londolozi, they are not afraid of our vehicles. Some of them even jump on the safari vehicles, which is another reason why we need to be locked in...

The landscape is beautiful and very diverse. There are open plains, hills, rocks, reeds, small streams and ponds. This offers us the opportunity to photograph tigers in all kinds of surroundings and situations: walking, hunting, playing, relaxing, sun bathing, jumping and swimming. Winters tends to be very cold, so we can expect anything from frost, clouds, sunshine, and the occasional winter showers - a nice mix of conditions for photography.

We will have all our meals at the tiger sanctuary. Homestyle cooking makes the meals very enjoyable. A typical day starts with driving to the sanctuary, where we are welcomed with tea,

coffee and rusk to get us started. We hop into our vehicles and will be starting our search for tigers at sunrise (which will be around 7 o'clock). We come back for a brunch around 10.30. After that we have time to upload and back-up our shots, and select images for image reviews with the group. It is both fun and inspiring to see each other's shots, and Marsel will give tips on how to improve your images.

Around 3 PM we have a savory snack or a cup of soup and head out again for another game drive until sunset (around 5.30). Upon return we have a drink and an early dinner. After dinner we drive back to our cottages for some highly needed rest after an exciting day.

JOHANNESBURG (1 NIGHT)

After our last morning drive at the tiger sanctuary we say our goodbyes to the wonderful crew at the tiger sanctuary and head back towards Johannesburg. We have lunch on the way and arrive in time for dinner at our guesthouse, just outside of Johannesburg.



In search of safety, leopards often stash their young or recent kills high up in a tree, which can be a great feat of strength considering that they may be carrying prey heavier than themselves in their mouth while they climb

PHOTOGRAPHING LEOPARDS (4 NIGHTS/5 DAYS)

Today we drive to our next location: the famous Sabi Sand Game Reserve, for some thrilling encounters with yet another beautiful big cat: the leopard. The photography will be just as thrilling, but the safari experience is quite different here, as we are surrounded by luxury.

We stay at one of the most exclusive lodges in the park. You will experience exceptional cuisine and the very best game viewing with some of Africa's finest rangers and trackers. But the main reason for choosing Londolozi for our leopard tour is because of the photographic opportunities it has to offer: if you want to get good images of leopards, it just does not get any better than this! We have 2 private vehicles for our group, where you will each have your own row of seats. This allows you to move freely from side to side in the car, with ample room for your gear, and without being bothered by someone sitting next to you, blocking your view.

Each morning, we start with a morning game drive. After our morning drive we come back for an extensive brunch. In the afternoon we have high tea, followed by another game drive and we return when the light is gone. During the day or in the evening, there will be image reviews followed by a delicious dinner.

During the game drives we will focus on photographing leopards. Not only are they the most beautiful of the African big cats, they are also extremely elusive and notoriously difficult to photograph. But in Sabi Sand it's a different story. The leopards have become so accustomed to the safari vehicles that they do not take much notice of them. Even when hunting, a leopard in Sabi Sand will not mind a

vehicle following it, even if this means following it off-road through the bush. A mind-blowing experience!

But Sabi has a lot more to offer. Lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo and rhinoceros - the most sought after and dangerous of the the Big Five. You will always remember the thrill and exhilaration of encountering these animals in an open Land Rover and seeing them through your camera lens! And chances are excellent of seeing the Big Five on this tour.

The reserve is internationally recognised for its far-sighted and progressive management of land and wildlife rehabilitation, as well as productive community involvement. World renowned as one of Africa's finest game lodges, Londolozi was the first game reserve in the world to be accorded Relais & Chateaux status, reinforcing its commitment to luxurious accommodation, fine cuisine and exceptional service.

'During my long walk to freedom, I had the rare privilege to visit Londolozi. There I saw people of all races living in harmony amidst the beauty that Mother Nature offers. Londolozi represents a model of the dream I cherish for the future of nature preservation in our country.' -Nelson Mandela

END OF THE TOUR: 6 JUNE or 8 JULY 2015

After a last game drive in the morning, we travel back to Johannesburg where most of us will catch an international flight in the evening, arriving back home the next day. With wonderful memories of an amazing adventure and spectacular images of the African wildlife, amongst which the most endangered big cat, the tiger, and the most elusive, the leopard.

REMINDS ME OF MY
SAFARI IN AFRICA.
SOMEONE FORGOT THE
CORKSCREW AND FOR
SEVERAL DAYS WE HAD
TO LIVE ON NOTHING BUT
FOOD AND WATER
//W.C. FIELDS



In antiquity, a leopard was believed to be a hybrid of a lion and a panther, as is reflected in its name, which is a Greek compound of λέων leōn (lion) and πάρδος pardos (male panther).



ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

During the first part of the tour we stay in comfortable hotels and cottages. The second part of the tour we stay in a 5-star luxury lodge.

It is possible to get a single room for a single supplement of 350 EURO (everywhere, EXCLUDING Londolozi), or 1800 EURO (everywhere). Single rooms are subject to availability and need to be confirmed. For 2015 we were able to negotiate a special deal, where the first 2 single rooms are available for 550 EURO only (for the whole tour), and single rooms after that are 1800 EURO. We are awaiting confirmation of this same deal for 2016, but the official rates are not yet out.

All meals are included on the tour, as well as drinks (soft drinks, beer and house wine). At the tiger sanctuary it is homestyle cooking; at the 5-star lodge you can expect exquisite meals. When we are traveling, we will have lunch on the way.

PARTICIPATION FEE & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This trip offers you the best photographic opportunities in the world to photograph tigers and leopards. It is unique and exclusive in every way, also when it comes to accommodation or the group size, as we take only 6 guests with us.

PARTICIPATION FEE INCLUDES:

- all accommodation
- all meals
- all drinks (excluding premium brands)
- all entrance fees and park fees
- all local transportation
- all game drives in specialized safari vehicles
- small group guaranteed (max. 6 guests)
- your own row of seats during game drives
- image reviews
- in the field tips & tricks
- lots of fun!

BOOK NOW

Not included in the tour is transportation to South Africa, insurance, tips & gratuities. Depending on your time of arrival, an additional night in Johannesburg at the beginning or the end of the tour may be necessary.

We can help you with finding tickets or booking an extra room for you in a hotel in Johannesburg if you like.

Don't forget to watch the videoclip below!



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