

# WILD EXPLORER

## BUFFALO HUNT IN CAPRIVI



Photo: Ronald Nel

Ronald Nel, Namibia

As I sat down in the FNB SLOW Lounge at OR Tambo's International Departures, excitement permeated the room. Being able to travel again feels unreal! The first lockdown had occurred nearly two years ago, and while there were periods when one might travel, it was simply too unpredictable to prepare. I questioned whether I would ever be able to travel again... One of my closest pals and a frequent hunting buddy is Stefan Fouché. Stefan and I took the same aircraft into a hot, humid Kasane in the month of March.

After passing through customs, Rovista, the dependable driver for Ndumo Safaris and a familiar face by this point, was waiting for us with a welcoming smile.

It's not every day that one has the thrill, excitement, and utter privilege of hunting in wilderness locations like the Bwabwata National Park. My inner being must undoubtedly be moved by the utter vastness of this wilderness, the majestic ambiance,

and the genuine spirit of freedom that is produced while traveling through it. I immediately accepted this invitation and only asked for my wife's permission later.

A suitable, adequate, and reliable hunting rifle is surely the most important article on a hunting "checklist" – more so when the targeted quarry holds a nasty reputation. Luckily, Karl Stumpf, owner of Ndumo Safaris, is also one of the biggest "gun nuts" and owns quite an impressive collection of rifles, especially those developed and chambered for dangerous-game hunting. So, when Karl offered to lend me his Verney-Carron double rifle, chambered in .500 Nitro Express, I gratefully accepted. I was familiar with this rifle as it is identical to my own, and I, therefore, didn't hesitate for a moment. The mistake of not being familiar with your gun has cost several hunters in the past.

Due to the mentioned time constraints, Karl and his team met us at the border of the concession, and we immediately headed off to the hunting area.

The animals typically targeted are old bulls past

their breeding prime who don't carry horns big enough to qualify as trophies and are mostly isolated from the herds.

Driving through the concession, it was clear that: 1) the region had a phenomenal rainy season, 2) water and sun make grass grow, and 3) it would be an interesting hunt with close-quarter encounters. We were both excited to be here!

The bush was green and dense, while the grass stood shoulder high. Not ideal for following dangerous critters, but certainly a scene set for excitement.

Within an hour of driving round, we bumped into a lone bull. He jumped up from where he was wallowing in a puddle of water, hidden in the tall grass. He was as surprised as we were, rushed past the front of our Cruiser, and stopped about 15 meters away, turning fearlessly toward us with the familiar stare so well described by Robert Ruark, "as if you owe him money". He was coming close to being in the prime of his life, probably about 6-7 years old, and in absolute top condition.

(continued on pg. 2)

## Hochsitz

Marco van Niekerk

CEO: Outdoor Investment Holdings

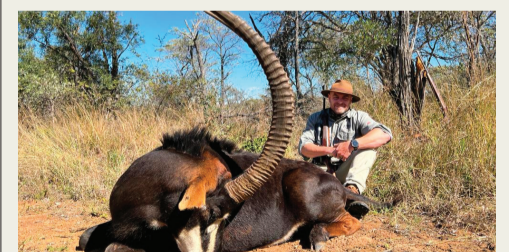
The start of hunting season in South Africa is always exciting. I can remember my dad taking the firearms out of the safe towards the end of April every year. My brother and I would lovingly slave over them until the smell of Ballistol infused into our hands permanently. We would sharpen knives and tell stories of the previous year's excursions. We would dig up old issues of the Magnum and read parts of it for the hundredth time...all while dreaming of what was hopefully waiting for us.

The promises of the African bush, the camaraderie around the fire with good friends and then the early cold mornings are all part of what we came to love. As young men we certainly had some very hard hunts with some pretty late evenings and stiff drinks. I have to admit there were quite a few mornings where I struggled to make it to the first coffee, but as we matured we became more focused (albeit ever so slightly). These days it is a rare occasion for everyone not to be bright eyed and bushy tailed by the time the bakkies start.

But let's not forget about the food - oh, the food! Hunting camps are these days renowned for their delectable fare. Everyone gets a meal and let's be honest everyone tries to outdo each other. It is one excellent meal after another to the point that the food alone is worth the trip.

Ek het self minder tyd deesdae en met kinders wat groter word moet ek slim kies wanneer ek kan en nie kan weggli nie. So het ek dan ook besluit om hierdie jaar die sneller te trek op 'n jag waaroor ek al jare droom in Zambië. Twee van die groot vyf, seekoei, krokodil en sitatunga is op my dans kaart en ek kan nie wag nie! Ek moes natuurlik my begroting mooi doen vir die jag, maar terwyl ek jonk en gesond genoeg is het ek gevoel dit is die jaar waar ek die droom moet waar maak. Die punt is egter nie hoe groot jou jag lys is nie want goeie herinneringe word baie min keer deur 'n begroting gedryf. Die punt is 'n mens moet nooit ophou droom en beplan nie.

So my wens vir jou jag seisoen, mag jy elke oggend in die veld opstaan met die wete dat dit 'n seëning is. Mag jy die tyd met goeie vriende en familie uitkoop en geniet. Mag jy nie 'n enkele mis of kwes skoot hê nie. Mag jy nie een keer jou geweer of ammunisie vergeet nie. Mag jy doodmoeg by die huis instrompel aan die einde met die grootste glimlag, 'n vol hart en ten minste tien nuwe stories vir jou oudag. ☺



Rigby 416 Double Square Bridge  
now in stock at SAFARI OUTDOOR

Think Big Game.  
Think Rigby.

Est. 1775  
RIGBY