

AFRO-DYSIAC: A JOURNEY THROUGH SENSUAL SOUTH AFRICA

Photos by: Neil Friedberg ©Copyright 2007 Friedberg/Nash



South Africa is for lovers. And I don't just mean the two-legged kind. Everywhere we went it was though there was this aphrodisiac-like mist in the air. Beginning with the Marula Tree, whose legend has it that its fruit bears magical powers to heal matters of the heart. South Africans sometimes refer to it as "The Marriage Tree." Thousands of elephant can't seem to live without it, quite often knocking down barbed-wire, electric fences just to get to it, that's how powerful the juices of this libido-enhancing fruit seem to be.

So why not bottle it? Of course! Yes, there's even a liquor promoting its legend, Amarula, a product that reminded us of Baileys but with the warm edge of a spirit. Brown-Forman brought us down to experience it first-hand. Amarula is the second-best-selling cream liqueur in the world and available in 150 countries. But, as the Marula tree only grows in subequatorial Africa, it is a noteworthy find. At first, we paid no attention to its lore. But as each day progressed, one incident after another made us believers. But never in a million years did we expect to see such a strong sensual side to a country all on one 10-day trip. But we did.

Sensual Safaris and More...

Everything in South Africa spells sensual; from a glass of red wine to the Marula fruit to Amarula on-the-rocks to Capetown's Amalfi-like coast to sexual safaris where the animals were fornicating quicker than you could put a quarter into a slot to watch a porn video at your local Downtown strip joint.

We started our sensual journey at the Melrose Arch Hotel in Johannesburg to regain our travelling legs, so-to-speak. A modern hotel with a hip fashion sense, it was the perfect place to recharge our batteries in preparation of our safari adventure. Below we found a myriad of restaurants where we delighted ourselves in a few glasses of red Cabernet

Sauvignon South African wine from Durbonville Hills, and partook in eating the Biltong dried meat delicacy. An aphrodisia buzz set in, a combination of jetlag and the potent fruit of the vine -- but we resisted in favor of a good night's sleep, turning in at an early hour. But it didn't come easy.

Upon returning to our rooms, we quickly discovered that even the hotel was affected by the hint of aphrodisia in the air. Looking to watch a movie to help us sleep, we soon discovered each room had a DVD collection that included free porn! Okay, the writing was on the wall. South Africa is hot. Red hot. But we were ready for it!

Sensational Sightings at Kirkman's Camp and the Ngala Game Reserve!

Most of us have a conception of what a safari game drive might be like. Years of watching National Geographic specials and numerous TV shows, like "Safari!," have put this glamorous image of adventure and danger into our consciences. But even our safari Ranger, Murray Tindall, who was our guide at our first safari camp, Kirkman's, would express his astonishment at the sightings we were about to see over the first 48 hours.

Afro-dysia continued to sustain its effect even in the bush. It seemed like mating season in the 50 km area of the Sabi Sans Game Reserve, where Kirkman's Camp resides. Astoundingly, in our first three game drives, we were surrounded by the Big Five -- rhinos, elephant, cape buffalos, leopard and lions -- all which we saw fornicating at one point or another.

One of the rarest animals to spot on any game drive are leopards. To see more than one at a time is considered an event in the bush. But to see a male and a female having sex, to capture it on film and then to watch them walk just a 100 yards away to munch on a freshly killed

impala hanging from a Marula tree, well, to those who know, it's practically a miracle sighting. Forget that even our Ranger, Murray, had never seen something like this. National Geographic spent three years tracking a male and female leopard to capture them mating on film. We wake up at the crack of dawn, have a coffee, take a casual ride in our Range Rover and catch this rarity by happenstance.

Oh yeah, and did I mention minutes after this sighting we came across another female leopard with her two baby cubs? Incredible.

Soonafter, we would soon see the startling sight of cape buffalo mating on a nearby riverbank, two of the largest animals we'd ever seen "doing it."

There would be elephants in "must," a term used to describe the males when they go into heat, who, we were told, can be quite dangerous during this period as they can become extremely aggressive without warning.

Female and male baboons doing the mating dance, screaming at one another, the females butt swollen red, which indicates they, too, are ready to mate. All the commotion they would make would not soon be forgotten.

Rhinos, who when they mate march in a circle to mark their "spot," so-to-speak, would also be on the prowl. Like dinosaurs from a bygone era, it was almost surreal to see these animals behaving amorously.

"For the record, animal-tracking is unpredictable," Ranger Murray explained to us. "They move around a lot. This is NOT a zoo. So to see all these animals AND to see the kind of sightings we saw, is truly remarkable. Even I've never seen leopards mating. And I've been doing this for many years."