

Travel

Edited by Jane Memmler



TRANQUIL OASIS: The Okonjima bush camp and, below, zebra at a watering hole

It's all fun and game in wilds of Namibia

Author, conservationist and father of London's Mayor **STANLEY JOHNSON** goes in search of some big cats

WE HEARD the lion roaring soon after dawn. From the balcony of our chalet, we scanned the waterhole on the plains below. Where was he (or she) we wondered? As we watched, it roared again, not once but a dozen times. "The lion's obviously had its breakfast," I said to my wife Jenny. "Let's go and get ours."

Dolomite Camp, where my wife and I were staying, is the latest addition to the previously restricted western section of Namibia's Etosha National Park.

It boasts some of the highest numbers of wildlife in the region and Dolomite is ideally situated to make the most of its treasures. It has been built in and around the dolomite outcrops of a vast kopje (a rocky hill).

The spacious reception, lounge, bar, pool and restaurant area offers crimeon sunrise and sunset views over the surrounding



Picture: KATHRYN HAYLETT

VANTAGE POINT: Stanley sees the sights from the Toyota's viewing roof

savannah. A walkway leads to thatched, en-suite chalets with their own plunge pools. Great efforts have been made to blend in the camp with its surroundings; until we got close, we scarcely realised it was there.

Despite the temptations of the breakfast bar ("Full English" is an understatement) we didn't linger as we couldn't

wait to get out into the bush. There are 114 mammal, 340 bird and 110 reptile species in Etosha and we were keen to see as many as possible. The biggest trophy? A sighting of the lion whose roar had greeted the rising sun.

Our guide that day, and indeed for the whole trip, was an ebullient Englishwoman called Kathryn Haylett. Years ago, she had fallen so in love

with Namibia that she had bought a Land Cruiser and fitted it out as an expedition vehicle with a special "viewing roof" suitable for photographic safaris. "Just stand on the seat," she told us, "and poke your heads out."

My wife and I were Kathryn's only clients that week. While she drove, we stood in the back scanning the bush. An hour later we struck gold.

Unlike some national parks and game reserves, visitors to Etosha must stick to the gravel or dirt roads which, on the whole, run east to west.

Unless a kill is made close to the road, you won't necessarily be able to view a lion at close range as it feasts on the carcass of a zebra, gemsbok, impala or springbok. This may be a disappointment to some, but this less-intrusive approach

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