

Day 12 - Wednesday 30th July

An enthusiastic wake-up call from Richy meant that we were seated for our first meal of the day well before the restaurant expected! After a hearty hot breakfast, and verses of 'Happy Eid' sung to Yasar, we were well fuelled for another highly competitive game of limb ball before our shiny new buses arrived for the next section of our adventure!

Our journey to Khama Rhino Sanctuary was broken by a tasty lunch at the side of the road and many trips the bush toilets! Jamie E explored many of the treetops along the way, displaying impressive climbing skills...



On arrival, we were greeted by our new guides and had a little time to settle into our rooms before heading up to the restaurant for delicious local chicken curry. A stunning starlit sky overhead, we travelled back to our rooms for a welcome rest.

Day 13- Thursday 31st July

After a hot breakfast up at the restaurant, we met the educational lead for the rhino sanctuary, who spoke to us about their work and projects. We then went on a nature walk, learning some interesting facts about the rhinos and their habitat, before heading out in safari trucks to see if we could see them in the flesh!

After not seeing any rhinos in the first part of the drive, we suddenly spotted one walking over to a watering hole we had stopped at. We were very excited to see gentle-giant 'Peter' join the vultures and warthogs for a drink. Soon we were overwhelmed with sightings - one sleeping in the distance, another group coming over to the watering hole, some even crossing the road right in front of us!

All the rhinos we had seen in the park had been white rhinos, the rare black rhinos being much more elusive. We were interested to learn that the colours describing the



animals are not related to the colour of their hide - 'white' rhinos actually picking up their name as a miss-hearing of 'wide' in Afrikaans, as they are the larger of the two varieties; 'black' being then chosen simply as the opposite of the adopted word. Khama sanctuary is currently in the process of increasing their black rhino population from 5 to 9, importing the new four from South Africa. We were lucky enough to see one of these new arrivals close up in its 'holding pen', and incredibly many of our group were even able to touch the animal's skin as it walked past the fence!



A remarkably successful mission to find Jamie E's wallet, which could have been dropped almost anywhere in the reserve, set us up for a slightly delayed lunch. Re-energised, we set to work helping with maintenance around the sanctuary. Our jobs were cutting back vegetation and felling trees, and work was undertaken enthusiastically by the whole group.

We were rewarded for our exertion with a delicious beef stew for dinner, improved further by a kind couple in the restaurant who not only didn't mind us taking over their romantic meal, but very generously bought a round of drinks for the whole group!

Star of the day was awarded to Sarah for her impressive efforts with the physical work in the afternoon's projects.



Day 14 - Friday 1st August

After an impressively organised morning, we were packed up, breakfasted and ready to go in record time. Ahead of us loomed one of the longest journeys in our trip, 610km travelling over the border and into South Africa - we were keen to hit the road!

Unfortunately one of our trailers had other ideas and an hour or so into the journey we were suddenly alerted by a very loud metallic noise behind the vehicle that one of the bolts had worn through, leaving the trailer dragging along the road behind us! A number of the male JOLters were able to prove their skills as budding mechanics working out a solution. With good displays of teamwork all round, we were able to get back to our travels and get a few further miles under our belts before lunch.

The morning delay meant that we still had plenty of travel time ahead of us for the afternoon. The group were in remarkably good spirits throughout our long journey - jollied along by 'pub' quizzes, sing-alongs and card games.

With a few delays along the way, we had survived our 13hr epic journey and were grateful for the very smart restaurant which greeted us at Blyde River Canyon Resort with a lovely dinner. The 32-bed dorm that we all camped down in was great fun - although, tired from a long day, we were soon off to sleep.

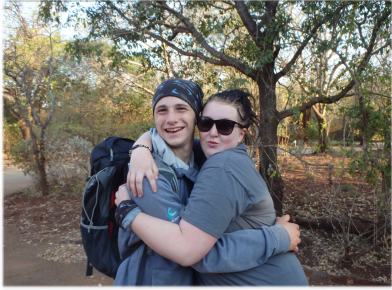
Day 15 - Saturday 2nd August

Feeling much brighter for a good night's rest, we loaded our vehicles to head to the restaurant, only to find one of them with a flat tyre! Fortunately we were able to walk there (or in Andy and Beth's case, free-wheel down the hill...) in time for the warming breakfast which awaited us.

We were soon off to the heart of the Blyde River Canyon, and to the viewing points over the Three Rondavels. After taking some time to consider the stunning vistas, we then had



opportunity to shop at the nearby craft market and pick up a few souvenirs; Katie is trying her hardest to prop up the South African craft market single-handedly!



Back on the buses, we were off to Kruger National Park, one of the largest in the world - the same area as Swaziland! Within 100m of entering the park, we had already seen buffalos and zebra! This seemed to bode well... We stopped inside the boundaries for impressive packed lunches from the Blyde River Resort, Shaun doing impressive work to ensure that no leftover food was wasted!

We soon arrived at our camp and were shown to our charming 2-bedded circular thatched huts. A trip to the pool provided us again with freezing water and a good opportunity to cool off.

Shelby showed incredible resilience to the cold waters, managing to stay in the whole time! Jack and Joe provided entertainment with Joe leaping over Jack's head, kicking a ball from his outstretched arm and then landing safely in the waters the other side of him.

Before dinner, we had time for 'one-to-one's'. At the prep weekend, we had all set goals of what we hoped to achieve by the midpoint of the trip, by the end, and for the future. This was time to sit with one of the leaders, and review these goals and how we could best ensure that we worked towards them over the second half of the trip.

In the evening, we were treated to a 'Wimpy' meal on camp, which was very well received! Jack suggested that the Star award tonight ought to be offered to our guides Bob and Mpo, for their impressive effort with the long drive yesterday. We headed back to our huts ready for an early start tomorrow.

Day 16 - Sunday 3rd August



A 4am wake up was a shock to the system as our earliest start so far. Huddled together in the cold of the morning for hot drinks and biscuits, we packed our bags into the trailers and set off for our 5am sunrise safari. Using the spotlights on the side of the vehicles, we illuminated the park, looking out intently for the tell-tale green or red lights as the torch reflected on the animal's eyes. A number of sightings including groups of giraffes and elephants with their young kept us occupied whilst we viewed a stunning sunrise. Glad for the warmth of the sun, we continued our safari to Skukuza where a wonderful hot brunch awaited us. After some time to peruse the shops, we jumped back in our vehicles for a short journey to our next lodgings.

On arrival at Lower Sabie Camp, we ate our lunch in a picnic area before heading down to the pool. We challenged ourselves to see how many touches of the volleyball we could make without dropping it... the game quickly deteriorated into a hotly contested waterfight!

At 1630, we were off on another game drive to catch the animals as they became more active again as the temperature cooled and the sun set. A massive array of wildlife were out for viewing, including our first sighting of a male adult lion, which was sat waiting for us at the side of the road, and seemed unbothered by our presence! Many of the group agreed with Xavier, who said it was the most exciting



thing he had seen so far.

Macaroni and cheese welcomed us back at the lodge, followed by pieces of cake as big as your head for desert! We carried ourselves back to our lodges and turned in for our last night in South Africa.