

## Twelve Things to Take on a Safari to South Africa

Going to a new place with different weather, terrain, and all-around conditions can be a stressful situation when it comes to packing. While everyone is different, here are a few general ideas and suggestions for what to take on your South African trip.

**1. Lightweight down jacket or fleece sweater with stuff sack** While many safari destinations in Africa can be plenty toasty during the day, nights are often cool, and if a front comes it may get really cold. If your hunt is scheduled for the South African fall- April to May you'll need a light weight jacket. I like the Filson safari jacket- but there are several to choose from. A light weight down jacket is nice for the colder months- June to Sept- but I like the ease of fleece. A fleece vest and jacket fare well for most weather and preferably in neutral colors, khaki, or camo.



*Me and Eric after an afternoon of upland game. I'm wearing my cotton hat made by Tilly. Eric has a billed cap which Legelela gives to everyone who comes on safari. Both of us have on safari type lightweight jackets.*

**2. Crushable safari hat with cord** A good safari hat is high on any packing list. I like the Tilly hats and you can't go wrong with the lifetime guarantee. Columbia makes some good ones as well, so does Cabelas and REI. Straw hats work fine but are difficult to pack and keep from crushing. Baseball type billed caps are common but don't cover the ears and neck. If your hat isn't crushable, you risk ruining it- but Hemingway never wore a crushable hat and he looked dapper in photos.

**3. Clothes made for comfort** Normal cotton or synthetic blend fabrics for shirts are fine but don't wick away sweat as well as some other fabrics. I like shirts with pockets, but you can take whatever you like. Long sleeved shirts work well as the sleeves can be down when it is cool in the morning and evenings and you can roll them up when it is warm. For an average week or longer, you'll need three shirts, two pair of trousers, and a pair of shorts if you like. The key is layering your clothing so you can shed or add a layer for weather changes. A good belt is important to attach your cartridge case to if you are shooting, and a knife with a good case. Most places have laundry service so there is no need to take lots and lots of clothes. Take enough underwear for at least six days though just in case. Don't skimp on stockings- buy good ones and make sure they are the same type or easily identifiable. Your laundry is normally done together with the others in your group. And lastly take a comfy pair of moccasins or slippers for lounging.



*An example of good layering and crushable safari hat.*

**4. Spare pair of sunglasses** Sun glasses can take a beating on safari. The Africa sun is bright and beautiful and you need your peepers to be protected. It's easy to lose, drop, sit on or scratch a pair of shades. Do yourself a favor and bring an extra pair and bring both pair in a hard case. I always do and I've used my spare pair more than once or loaned them to others. You'll always break them far from town so keep the extra in your day pack.

### **5. Day pack or small duffel for your “possibles” gear.**

Most days the hunting starts early. Keep your essentials handy and in one place. Your day pack should contain extra ammo, range finder, binos, sun screen, medicines – always nice to have some aspirin or the like handy, small first aid kit, folding knife, hand cream or lotion, antibacterial gel in a small container, and your water bottle. Don't forget a small flashlight or two, a hand held as well as one for your head. You will use them more than you think. Again- don't skimp and get the cheapest flashlight you can find. Bring good quality gear- but don't worry about price, there are plenty of good ones these days that are not expensive.



*An example of a good-sized daypack.*

**6. Wet Wipes** Take plenty. You can find them in the stores there, but you might not have access to a store straight away so bring some in your carry-on luggage and your checked baggage. You'll use them often for quick clean up or dirty hands from handling grubby equipment. You'll love them when nature calls and you are in the sticks. Take four or five packets of the travel size packs, or make your own zip-lock packet. But take plenty. You'll use them and share them with others. Same goes for tissues. The travel size packs are perfect. Take four or five packs in case you get the sniffles or sneezes. Take more tissues if you have room. They are light and nonperishable. You'll be glad you did.

### **7. Your mobile phone and camera, and plastic Zip-Lock bags to put them in.**

You can buy the deluxe cases for your phones and camera- and they are terrific- but if you don't have time or the inclination, a zip-lock bag works well. Make sure you get the heavy duty zip-lock to keep out moisture and dust. South Africa has good phone service, though

you'll get nailed for roaming service if you are not careful. Make sure you check with your mobile provider and disable your internet function. Your emails can wait until you have access to wi-fi which is available in quite a few places, however not as readily as in North America. They have it at the airport, of course, and some other places in towns- but not always at the lodges.

**8. Extra batteries and memory cards.** Take spare batteries for your camera or flashlight and more memory capacity than you think you will possibly need. Maybe your camera has rechargeable batteries. If that's the case you'll need a transformer/adaptor. South Africa uses 220 volt. You will need your own adaptor and a multi-plug to go in that so that you can charge several things at one time if you wish. Put it all in one place in a small bag or zip-lock and keep it handy.



*A common adapter.*

### **9. Warm clothes to sleep in.**

It might sound silly but the nights during the Africa winters can be cold enough to make it uncomfortable at night. Most places have electric blankets, but just in case, bring a warm pull over shirt- long sleeve and either sweat pants or something warm for the bottoms. I like sweat pants because they are great to lounge in.

### **10. Good binoculars**

Can't say enough about this. Buy, borrow and whatever you need to do, but come with a good pair of binos. You'll use them all day every day, whether it's looking at animals, birds, or the many other interesting things to see. You can get really good binos in a lot of sporting goods stores or on line. Check around to get a good pair at a fair price.



*Sweater layer, billed cap, lightweight pants that cinch at the bottom, and his binoculars strapped to his chest. Ready for action.*

### **11. Copies of your passport and credit cards.**

Hopefully it will never be an issue- but just in case. Take photo copies and scan them so you have electronic copies. Don't bring the photo copied pages unless you don't have access to a scanner- but almost everyone does. You can scan photos at copy stores and then save them to a thumb drive. If you have a smart phone, an ipad or the like you can email them to yourself if you can open them on the device. For extra precaution, you can save your files on two different thumb drives and put them in separate places in your bags. Keep your electronic files separate from your actual documents. You will need a current passport of course- the original. Make sure you give yourself time to renew if you need to.

### **12. Good broken in comfy boots.**

The ankle height is fine though I prefer a taller boot. Get the ones you like but go with comfort. Don't even think about bringing a brand spanking new pair of boots that are not broken in and end up with blisters and the like. It's fun to walk around in Africa and you'll be happy you picked some proper boots. A pair of sneakers or shoes work well when you aren't out and about in the field and they should be comfortable as well. Sometimes the folks at the airport make you disinfect your boots when you come back to the States so pack them so that they are easy to retrieve in your packed luggage. If you are there in the rainy season make sure to take two pair of boots. Again, ankle height, light weight are fine most of the time. But don't forget the moccasins or comfy slippers. You will use them more than you think because going barefoot can be risky.



*Well-outfitted group having a good time shooting birds.*

Having the right gear makes a big difference in your trip. Being prepared means the difference between a miserable experience and fantastic one. Get things together early so you're not rushed the night before you leave. It does you no good to have plenty of underwear if you forget your boots.