

AFRICAN STORYBOOK

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“As a newly-established independent working in the media environment, servicing the tourism, conservation and sporting worlds, (we) wouldn't want to be anywhere else...”

An Exciting Time To Be In Africa

It was mid-afternoon on a summer's day in Tsavo East National Park, Kenya, deathly quiet and rather hot. Owned and designed by Italians, Galdessa Tented Camp is typically stylish. On the Indian ocean-bound Galana River, the camp is characterized by white linen touches amongst slate and thatch, and a row of wind-tickled, majestic doum palms.

It was while photographing a 360 degree image of the setting - at the edge of what would be called the lounge or meeting area - that I met an elephant. Named Tusker (rather obviously, since he had lost one of his tusks) the new managers at the time warned me to look out for the young bull, as he regarded the camp as his own. So when I saw him at the lounge, seemingly trying to lift the thatch roof with his head, it made for a compelling image.

With an extremely wide camera lens, by the time I'd shot frame six of the 12-shot exposure I thought Tusker was still a fair distance away. When I looked up my life really did flash before my eyes. Tusker was lumbering forward, trunk swinging from side to side, almost - quite literally - on top of me.



Tusker makes an entry - Galdessa Tented Camp.



Maasai askari - Lodge security Kenyan style.



“...we will share with you our belief in The Story, a custom that just happens to be as old as the history of the world.”



Doum Palms at Galdessa.

“We are always seeking out a good story, and to do it justice by getting the telling right.”

Holding an opposite tripod leg, ever so firmly and gently I too tugged, while taking a long stride in the opposite direction. I can only think that Tusker was feeling very relaxed, because he let go, and with my second stride I melted into the nearest tree...

That's pretty much the story behind the picture of Tusker above. Until Alison and I at African Storybook looked at it metaphorically. Sometimes we don't know how big our challenges are until they're right before us. Take a look at the world economic recession.

For many it was just a word, something that 'happened' in the USA and Britain - until their own family members lost jobs out here in Africa. 180 000 in the first three months of the year in South Africa alone - a country with unemployment figures of over 40% as it is. So yes, the elephant is truly in the room, and many are hurting.

But there is good news. Just like I escaped with the tripod and camera, so too can we make our way out of this latest challenge (however bold and unorthodox our approach), especially here in South Africa. As a newly-established independent working in the media environment, servicing the tourism, conservation, development and sporting worlds, Alison and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

Just this year South Africa has already had three major sporting events, rugby's British & Irish Lions are still out here and soccer's Confederations Cup - the curtain-raiser to next year's 2010 soccer World Cup - has been well-attended and well-run. It's not just an indication that things can only get better.

This is the first of our monthly newsletters, in which we will share with you our belief in The Story, a custom that is as old as the history of the world. We will review lodges, talk travel and

conservation events, and share our enthusiasm in approaching projects from a really fresh perspective.

It could be producing a Storybook newsletter or tourism brochure with the editorial quality to match the good looks of the destination - as we did for the Ghana Tourist Board - my Carte Blanche (TV) piece on the resurrection of a Mozambican game reserve, or Alison presenting a new TV series on inspiring, unheard of school upliftment projects in Cape Town. We hunt good stories, and to do them justice by getting the telling right.

As for Tusker...the forgiving old fellow ambled off, leaving me with a story, a pounding heart and a fond memory. But above all, a story.

Angus Begg

