

*On safari Mashatu Game Reserve*



# Hunting & shooting

A photography safari allows shutterbugs hours of uninterrupted pleasure and plenty of picture opportunities, as Lisa Johnston discovered.

I joined a hunting party recently. We went out to shoot lion, impala, squirrel – anything we could get in our sights. I got an elephant and her calf while they were drinking from a stream and a lioness crouching in the long grass. In my proudest moment, I got a white-fronted bee-eater – first shot, crisp and clear, with a twinkle in its small, black eye.

Best of all, not a drop of blood was shed. The hunting was with our eyes and shooting with our cameras.

Our guide was Shem Compion, professional wildlife photographer and co-owner of C4 Images and Safaris. His company runs photographic workshops in Southern and East Africa, as well as its islands, and bases its schedules on seasonal migrations and localised activities of specific animals.

I joined Shem on a safari in Mashatu Game Reserve in Botswana, at the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe Rivers. The 33 000 hectares is home to large herds of elephant, giraffe, lion, eland, wild dog and black-backed jackal, among many others, and is a paradise for picture seekers.

Each morning, we dragged our groggy selves from bed before dawn, clambered into a game-viewing vehicle and raced to get into position for a dramatic sunrise photo. Unlike a typical game drive, everything on these safaris is geared towards photography and helping you 'get the shot'. The rangers wait in location for as long as there is something to photograph, or something worth waiting for (and everyone on the safari is in agreement). One morning,



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our drive took seven hours, with a large portion of time spent repositioning the vehicle to get a shot of a pair of European rollers, who were playing see-saw between branches.

Understanding animal behaviour is key to successful wildlife photography, Shem believes, so he prepares participants in advance for a potentially dramatic shot. What I discovered is that spending hours behind the lens makes you zone in on details and really see an animal. You begin to notice its individual markings and quirks, the way it walks or holds its head.

After the morning game drive, we were rewarded with an enormous cooked breakfast, before taking a couple of hours to download photographs and rest. In the early afternoon, we reviewed a small selection of our work and were given informal lectures, tailored to the needs and in-

terests of individuals in the group. The lectures touched on the basics – such as light, composition and recognising visual design – and moved on to more advanced techniques of wildlife photography and post-production. Then it was time for an evening drive and sundowners.

The main advantage of this kind of workshop is that the expert is always on hand to offer advice, according to your level of expertise or the limitations of your equipment. Groups are kept small and much of the conversation is around a particular scenario, with participants swapping experiences and helping each other with technique.

It might sound tedious for non-photographers, but for shutterbugs it's a little bit of heaven – an unfettered environment in which to set your obsession free. ■

## footnotes



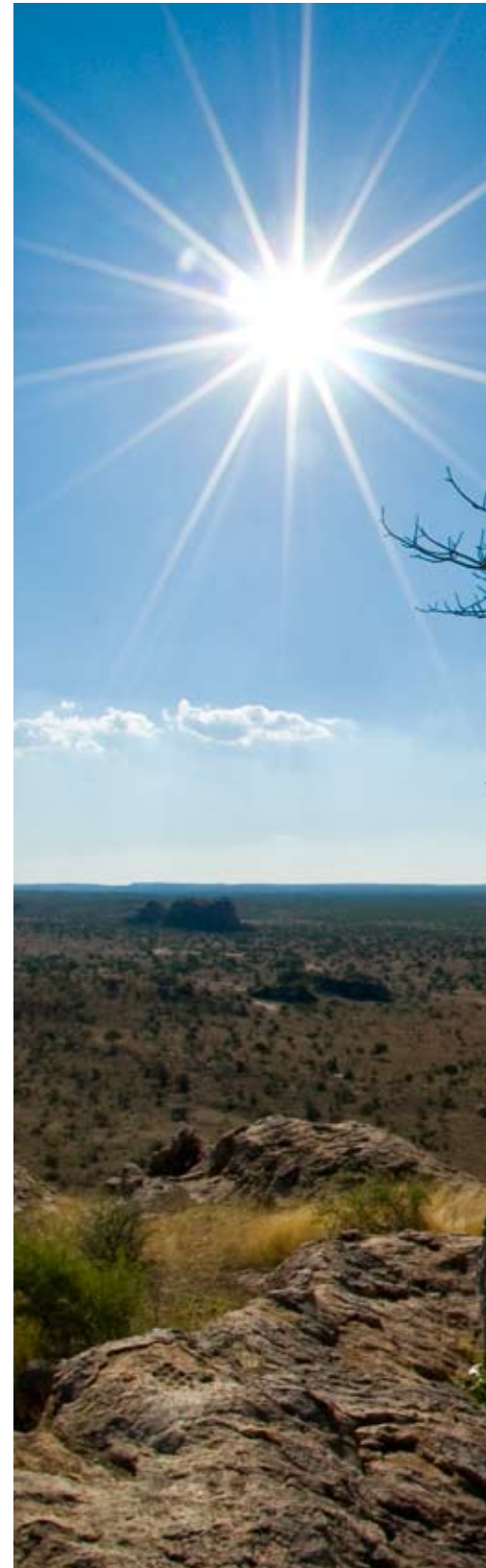
### Who to contact

C4 Images and Safaris offers workshops in South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Madagascar.

Prices vary according to destination, but start from about R8 070 a person sharing for a four-night, five-day Mashatu Safari, which includes accommodation in a luxury tented camp, meals, cold drinks and refreshments, game drives, a professional guide and photographer.

C4 also offers courses and tailored safaris and courses. Tel 012-993-0335, cell 087-805-7641, e-mail [shem@c4images-safaris.co.za](mailto:shem@c4images-safaris.co.za), web [www.c4images-safaris.co.za](http://www.c4images-safaris.co.za). ■

Shem's next photography workshop for Getaway readers is on xx xxxxx 2010. To book, contact Tracy-Lee Behr on tel 021-530-3379, e-mail [tracy-lee@ramsaymedia.co.za](mailto:tracy-lee@ramsaymedia.co.za), web [getwww.awayevents.co.za](http://getwww.awayevents.co.za).





### **Shem's big five tips**

1. Know your subject. Study behavior and learn to anticipate an animal or bird's actions. This will help you 'get the shot'.
2. Buy the best lens you can. Camera bodies come and go, good glass lasts forever.
3. Outgrow your equipment. Work with what you have to get good and different images. This will push your creativity and challenge your thinking.
4. Study light and composition and put them into practice in your photography. You can learn a lot from looking at the work of top wildlife photographers.
5. Patience, perseverance and persistence all reap rewards beyond the normal images.