

Safaris and treks: Experiences in travel photography

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Safaris and treks: Experiences in travel photography

- General topic for tonight = travel photography
- But does this come in just one flavor?
- The types of travel photography I do and know best are:
 - Treks, reflecting my interest in sometimes remote landscapes, and,
 - Safaris, reflecting my interest in wildlife
 - Both obviously reflect my interest in travel, often to somewhat exotic parts of the world

Within-category variations

- Though I've obviously narrowed the field of travel photography, treks vary from each other as do safaris
- Among the dimensions of variation are:
 - Level of activity, or amount of ground covered
 - Level of independence from travel professionals
 - In planning
 - In execution

Variations in activity level

- Across treks:
 - Are your x days of trekking spent traveling between points x days apart or taking x day hikes from a single base camp?
- Across safaris:
 - Is yours a “grand tour” encompassing many parks, possibly even many countries?
 - Or is it more concentrated, perhaps to a single park?
 - When you find something interesting, how long do you stay with it?

Variations in levels of independence

- Did you select your trek or safari from among the multitude of trips prepackaged by companies such as REI, Mountain Travel Sobek and Wilderness Travel (the ones I've used)?
- Or is it something that you planned and executed completely on your own?
- Or is it a hybrid?
 - In most likely form, you planned the trip but relied on professionals for its support and execution

Variations in levels of independence

- These choices make it sound as though you can avoid trip planning. But to do so strikes me as a huge mistake:
 - Planning obviously is essential for independent or hybrid (as I've defined them) trips
 - But how can you even distinguish good from bad prepackaged trips without some image of an ideal trip to this destination?
 - And how can you visualize the ideal trip without essentially planning your own?

Variations in levels of independence

- For instance, the quality of a trip to Botswana might be increased by knowledge of the major ecological zones in this country



Variations in levels of independence

- Similarly, any attempt to view the “great migration” in Serengeti NP would depend very much on knowledge of where the wildebeest are, and what they’re doing, at different times of the year



Trip planning

- If planning is desirable, how do you do the necessary research?
 - With joy in your heart! After all, why wouldn't you want to exercise some control over the agenda?
 - Using “all of the usual suspects” in terms of sources, e.g., travel guides
 - But don't neglect local or visiting experts!
 - An academic environment attracts experts on nearly everything
 - Travelers love to tell you about their travels and to advise you on yours

Making use of your ideal plan

- Pretty clear how you would use a plan to run your own trip or identify the best prepackaged one
- But how might a plan help develop a hybrid trip?
 - A detailed plan amounts to an itinerary
 - This can be presented to friends and possible US or foreign tour operators, looking for...
 - Companions, if desired
 - Refinements in the plan
 - Someone to execute it

Making use of your ideal plan

- Of these uses, the most complex probably is the assessment of possible tour operators, perhaps especially if foreign (in or near destination)
- A possibly instructive example = process that led me to Warrior Trails for the execution of a trip to Tanzania
 - Some selection mechanisms that didn't work
 - Some that did:
 - Quality of initial (and subsequent) responses
 - Flexibility
 - Price
 - Reviews, if available

Making use of your ideal plan

- Developing and circulating an itinerary should increase the chances of success
- Nevertheless, bear in mind that **NOTHING IS GUARANTEED**
 - Your best friends at the start of the trip may not be so by its end
 - Most carefully-selected tour operator may turn out to be a dud
 - But probably even more unpredictable are factors such as...

Sources of unpredictability

- The weather, perhaps especially on treks
 - Obviously, good weather is the ideal, e.g.,



Sources of unpredictability

- To some extent, can prepare for bad weather, e.g.,



Sources of unpredictability

- To some extent, can prepare for bad weather, e.g.,



Sources of unpredictability

- But only to some extent, e.g.,



Other sources of unpredictability

- The animals, on safaris
 - Again, can prepare, but still may need to be lucky, e.g.,



Other sources of unpredictability

- And other great sightings may be purely products of luck, e.g.,



Trip gear

- As you would expect, differs greatly across types of trips
- Trekking gear
 - Body = Sony a7r II (full-frame, IS, 42.4MP)
 - lens = Zeiss FE 35mm f2.8
 - Accessories = spare batteries & memory, harness, battery charger (?), travel tripod (?), hard drive (?)
 - Advantages = size & weight
 - Disadvantages = fixed focal length, battery life

Trip gear

- Safari gear, all Canon
 - Body1 = 5D III (full-frame, 22.3MP)
 - lenses = EF 70-200mm f4 L IS or EF 17-40mm f4 L
 - Body2 = 7D (APS-C, so 1.6x crop factor, 18.0MP)
 - lens = EF 400mm f4 DO IS II, sometimes with 1.4x extender, EF II ($400 \times 1.6 = 640$; $640 \times 1.4 = 896$)
 - Accessories = batteries, charger, memory, backpack
 - Advantages = coverage, can minimize lens changes, redundancy
 - Disadvantages = weight, need for space

Finally, selective types of prepackaged trips

- Phototours, e.g., to Iceland



Selective types of prepackaged trips

- Phototours, e.g., to Yellowstone NP



Selective types of prepackaged trips

- Cruises, e.g., in New Zealand



Selective types of prepackaged trips

- Cruises, e.g., to Antarctica

