



1946-2006 • 60th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

2006 marks a milestone in the history of African Safaris, as my company Ker & Downey celebrates 60 years of operation. Some fantastic trips over the past few months have shown that safaris to the East African bush are as enjoyable as ever.

60 Years of Classic Safaris

As Kenya comes to the end of the short dry season, I would like to share some of the inspiration that has placed Ker & Downey as East Africa's oldest and most experienced luxury safari operator.

When Donald Ker and Syd Downey pioneered the concept of "*Classic Mobile Tented Safaris*", they initiated what was to become one of the earliest forms of modern African conservation. By utilising the remote wilderness of Kenya, these visionaries gave assurance to the newly created Kenya National Parks and Reserves that there was indeed international demand to visit these incredibly diverse wildlife destinations. This enabled the protected areas to flourish, becoming the world famous safari destinations they are today.



**Prince Charles on Safari
with Syd Downey in 1971**



Cheetah boys in the Masai Mara

Just as importantly, from the very beginning, the guides of Ker & Downey also operated safaris in areas outside of the parks and reserves, establishing what would be decades-long relationships with communities such as the Masai and Samburu. Such interactions meant that not only were our guests able to experience the rich diversity in both the culture and wildlife of East Africa, but that these communities also benefited from safari tourism. This continues to this day, and those of you who know my trusty spotter Solomon ole Lenkaja can appreciate the wealth of benefits that accrue to both our visitors and the tribes-people who have lived on this land for generations.

Continuing and Enhancing the Tradition

We at Ker & Downey are indeed proud to share with our guests the legacy that exists as a result of the far-sighted and inclusive approach of Ker & Downey's founders by continuing in their footsteps and ensuring that our guests receive a comprehensive and

very personal safari experience. To further commemorate 60 years in the Classic Safari business Ker & Downey is currently producing a wonderful coffee table book, beautifully illustrated and outlining the story of the company from its inception in 1946 to the present day.

My safaris over the next couple of years will be of particular significance as they will incorporate aspects of our 60th Anniversary celebration. I'm adding points of interest to all my trips such as opportunities to meet with wildlife conservationists and researchers - sure to include Steph's continuing work with large carnivores in the Masai Mara. *2006 is looking very busy, though a postponement has left me with an opening for June/early July. This place will fill fast, so please let me know if you are interested.*

Kenya is currently in the grip of a severe drought, and this has had much international exposure. Many organisations have been supplying food aid to some of the more affected areas, and we have sent several full safari truck loads to the Masai community around Amboseli. My recent guests have all seen first hand just how important the earnings from tourism are for the local communities, as it brings in needy revenue with which they can buy food for themselves and their livestock; illustrating to us and them how tourism revenue can alleviate their situation.



Black rhino sharing a waterhole with baboons in front of camp

Interestingly, dry weather makes for incredible wildlife viewing, as animals concentrate around the ever decreasing water supplies in huge numbers. On safari in Tarangire National Park in Tanzania last December, we saw an amazing amount and diversity of wildlife during a walk along the main river. Elephants competed with buffalos, hippos, zebras and lions for space at the drinking spots. The picture above is from my safari just in February, showing baboons and rhinos taking turns to quench their thirst at the waterhole in front of camp in Kenya's Lake Nakuru National Park. Over the course of the day, everything from giraffe to impala and even a hot looking hippo came by to drink, though no one was prepared to take on the rhino for pole position at the trough! To complete the day, a female leopard wandered casually past the dining tent while we were finishing dinner which was a real treat.

Safari to the Russian Far East

Stephanie and I spent two weeks in January on a visit to the Far East of Russia where the last remaining 450 Amur (Siberian) Tigers live. We were hosted for part of the time by the scientists working on the Russian-American Tiger Project which is affiliated with Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). The work is of profound importance given the small numbers of these magnificent animals remaining. We could empathise with many of their conservation concerns, and Steph was especially interested to discuss many of the challenges in researching and conserving large carnivores.

We were lucky enough to participate in the capture of a female tiger which had been preying on dogs near a small village. In the middle of the night, with the mercury dropping to nearly -30 degrees Celsius, she was radio-collared and will now be tracked in efforts to prevent more conflict with local farmers' interests. We were also able to meet a young cub called *Almaz* who was raised in captivity. Playing with this young and beautiful beast, I was impressed with what was already a great strength that in the wild allows adult tigers to take prey as large as elk, and even bear!



Almaz, the five month old tiger cub



The tigress after being tranquilised

With so much to organise for the coming season, I'll be spending much of the rainy months of April/May preparing my camp and vehicles for the many exciting adventures ahead. I've also begun arrangements for some of the special Ker & Downey Anniversary events which will take place during my next visit to the States in November.

Despite some of its political intrigues and harsh climatic problems, Kenya remains a wonderful and safe destination and a must for anyone interested in wildlife.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best wishes,
Howard

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