

TRAVEL DIARIES

Discover travel and honeymoon tips from one recently married couple.



Following their destination wedding in Playa del Carmen, Mexico, Whitney (née Leipzig) and Ross Spielfogel set off on a 21-day African adventure, visiting the coastal city of Cape Town, embarking on safaris in Kruger National Park, relaxing in Zanzibar, Tanzania, and exploring Johannesburg before returning home to New York. With such a wide range of locales, the newlyweds succeeded in planning a honeymoon that was adventurous, cultural, and romantic.



Photo: Adene Photography

The first stop on Whitney and Ross' African adventure was Cape Town, one of South Africa's capital cities. The couple spent four nights at the One&Only Cape Town, a luxurious, centrally located property in the heart of the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront – "which is a great jumping-off point for the many sites to see in the area," shares Whitney. Their first day included a tour, where they saw thousands of penguins on Boulders Beach and visited Cape Point, the most southwesterly tip of Africa. They also enjoyed a privately guided sunrise hike to the top of Table Mountain. "[We're] not avid hikers coming from New York City, but we very much enjoyed the hike itself, a panoramic view of the city, and our time talking to the local guide," says Whitney.

Venturing away from the heart of the city, the newlyweds were thrilled to explore the wine regions

of Stellenbosch and Franschhoek. "We might consider going back to this area and spending a few nights there next time," adds Whitney. Another one of the couple's favorite experiences was a dinner at La Columbe, a fine-dining establishment at the Constantia Uitsig winery (now located at the Silvermist organic wine estate). They dined at a private table in the vineyard where they enjoyed springbok meat (similar to venison) among other local specialties and fine wine. "The food was superb, the ambience was amazing, and it was the perfect setting for a splurge of a meal that we'll never forget," says Whitney. Relishing their time exploring the outer towns, the honeymooners suggest to other travelers: "Get out of the city center and visit the Cape's awesome wine region, go shark diving in Hermanus, and revel in the beauty of the beaches."

HIGHLIGHTS CAPE TOWN

Visiting a cheetah conservatory. "We got to pet and play with Joseph the cheetah, which was a blast!"

Drinking wine. "We enjoyed a private wine-region tour of Stellenbosch and Franschhoek. We had a lovely time in these little towns and beautiful vineyards!"

Cage diving with Great White sharks. "This is a MUST do and a total thrill! We had such a blast seeing these amazing creatures up close."



Photo: Singita



Photo: www.londoloji.com

HIGHLIGHTS KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

Seeing the "Big Five." "We saw lions, elephants, buffalo, rhinoceros, and leopards. They were so close that you could touch them – a lion grazed Ross' leg while in the Jeep!"

Indulging in a private picnic. "As a honeymoon surprise, a private treetop picnic lunch was arranged. It was romantic and secluded... no one but us – and a radio in case we were in danger."

Flying a plane. "When we went from the first safari to the second via small plane, Ross asked the pilot if he could sit in the cockpit. Not only did he sit up front, the pilot let him fly the plane!"



For their first safari, Whitney and Ross spent four nights at the five-star, all-inclusive Singita Lebombo Lodge. "It was the most remarkable hotel that we've ever stayed in and absolutely worth the splurge!" they admit. Each day, the newlyweds participated in two game drives where they saw male lions on a hunt and female lions playing with cubs, as well as other encounters with "Big Five" animals. "On safari, go on every game drive," urges Whitney. "While the 5AM wake-ups aren't the most natural, you won't want to miss a thing! No two drives were alike, and all of them were filled with the most amazing animals and unique experiences." Between excursions, the couple indulged in incredible fare ("The hotel will literally make you anything you want," shares Ross) and impeccable wines, enjoyed bike riding in the bush with a guide, and spent time relaxing poolside.

Following their first safari, the honeymooners visited another part of Kruger National Park to stay for three nights at the Londolozi Game Reserve. "At this property, we had more intimate encounters and time spent with animals," reveals Whitney, which allowed the couple to have "two very different, but unbelievable, experiences" at each lodge. Outside of morning and evening game drives, Whitney and Ross also had fun learning to shoot a rifle, as well as a delightful tour of the employees' village. When choosing where to stay, the newlyweds suggest other couples take the region and time of year into account: "Animals are easier to spot in the winter when the bush is bare, but migrations take place in the summer when there's warmer weather. You can't go wrong either way," explains Ross. They both agree that the safaris were extraordinary: "We felt worlds away from New York City, and we long to go back for another experience!"

“We felt worlds away from New York City, and we long to go back for another [safari] experience!”

TRAVEL TIPS FROM WHITNEY & ROSS

- “Purchase an awesome camera with a super zoom and a great lens. You’ll want to remember the images from the safari – and your honeymoon – for a lifetime!”
- “Splurge on spa treatments! Honeymoons are a once-in-a-lifetime experience and you want to fully relax, be pampered, and enjoy these romantic moments.”
- “Make sure every hotel knows you’re on your honeymoon. They’ll often give you the room with the best view, make sure complimentary bottles are included, and they’ll go out of their way to light candles, draw baths, leave rose petals, and more.”
- “Initially the cost of the safaris gave us sticker shock, but once we were there, we knew exactly what we had paid for. If there’s one time to splurge, it’s on your honeymoon.”

Following a week on safari in the bush, Whitney and Ross were thrilled to end their trip at an island destination and decided upon a remote, off-the-grid location in Zanzibar. Spending “a week in paradise” at the Baraza Resort and Spa – a gorgeous property off the beaten path – was “pure zen,” the newlyweds describe. “The resort is situated on the award-winning Bwejuu beach on the southeast coast of Zanzibar,” shares the bride. “The design and grounds are very relaxing; it’s beautifully maintained and features a continuous stretch of palm trees and soft, white sand. We were completely tranquil all throughout our stay.”

The couple stayed in a luxurious oceanfront villa complete with



Photo: Baraza Resort and Spa - part of The Zanzibar Collection



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HIGHLIGHTS ZANZIBAR, TANZANIA

Splurging on spa treatments. “We enjoyed a treatment every single day during our weeklong stay.”

Relaxing by the pool. “The employees waited on us hand and foot – helping us to rotate our choices when the sun moved, bringing us drinks, and making sure we never went hungry.”

Eating lobster on the beach. “The staff arranged a Champagne lunch on the beach with freshly caught lobster and the catch of the day.”

a private plunge pool and appointed beach area, as well as a butler. “The staff went to every extreme to ensure that every need and want was met at all hours,” recalls Whitney. “We had daily end-of-day massages, but that was the extent of our movement. This part of the trip was pure rest and relaxation for us.” All in all, Whitney and Ross were pleased with their trip itinerary. Adventurous activities in Cape Town, two iconic safaris in Kruger National Park, a romantic stay in Zanzibar, and spending two culture-filled days in Johannesburg before returning stateside allowed them to experience as much as they could. “All of the excursions, little details, and surprises along the way made it a trip to remember,” they affirm.