

Issue 3 | 2020

# NZiRA

Travel Zimbabwe

This issue  
will take  
you to:



## IN THIS ISSUE

1

[A Story of Hope](#)

2

[Positive Action in the Rainforest](#)

3

[Slow Cooked Lamb Shoulder](#)

4

[Trading a House for a Tent](#)

5

[Traveller's Directory](#)

# NZiRA

Travel Zimbabwe

Make  
*memories*  
— Now —

We entered the 'roaring twenties' with a big bang, full of hopes to catch flights that would take us to destinations across the globe, this was the year to make headway on our bucket lists. Then in the blink of an eye, the pandemic happened and overnight countries shut down their borders. In place, are some of the strictest restrictions we have ever witnessed and the freedom to travel, at a whim, has also been taken away. So where does that leave us?

It has certainly left us with fond memories of all the trips we used to take and regrets over the ones we turned down. There are many things we fail to realize the value of until they are missing from our lives. Our hope is for you to treasure every memory you now make, from having a meal with loved ones to documenting the next trip you'll take even if it's to your local art gallery because someday these little things will become the big things and you will be so grateful you never took them for granted.

We will travel, but it will not be the same and what that will look like we do not fully know yet. We hope that it's with a newfound appreciation of all that is travel - the good, the bad and everything in between.

Juliet

## Status



Restaurants



Domestic  
travel



Domestic  
Flights



International  
Travel

"ZTA would like to stress the need for all players in the tourism industry to strictly observe and adhere to the set COVID-19 guidelines and protocols."

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Nzira Cover Photo

**Matetsi Victoria Falls**



Image: Rudo Nhamoinesu

### Current Discussion Topic:

In light of the recent regulation update, are you confident in the reopening of the tourism industry?

Send your views and comments to [travel@bindu.co.zw](mailto:travel@bindu.co.zw)






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# A Story of Hope

Article **Sara Gardiner**

Images **Matetsi Victoria Falls**

"How they survived for so long without a mom, exposed to all the leopard and hyena lurking around. They are going to be a tough pair."



**B**orn into a dusty barren world, where the colour green did not exist. Their mother was part of a large pride of lions (about 10 or so). In those first months, she kept them safe, within a forested area on a steep hill, while the rest of the pride roamed to hunt. With just two of them, she was not willing to risk anything.

In those first weeks, we caught glimpses of this lioness with her two young lion cubs on Matetsi Private Game Reserve and kept a respectful distance. When they were a little older, she brought them down to December Pan to drink and roam across the dried-out earth. Occasionally, the pride would connect with them and their father seemed quite proud of his two little ones.

We continued to see this pride, often with the cubs and their mother from September through to November/December. When the first rains set in and the vegetation started to thicken, it seems the pride split off to different areas, most likely intending to give them all a better chance of survival. The mother and her cubs remained relatively close to camp and were even seen on one occasion in mid-January hunting baboons near the lodge area.

Over the first few months of this year, the lioness and her cubs were sighted only very rarely with the pride, and it seems they were left completely. The condition of the cubs started to deteriorate, and it was clear that the mother was struggling to hunt by herself to feed her young ones.

March was awful, we stopped seeing the mother, her cubs became skeletal and they were always seen by themselves. Something must have happened to the mother, though we have never been able to confirm what it might have been. We speculated that maybe she died from a snare, crocodile attack, or buffalo defense because she would not have left them.

We kept seeing the two lion cubs around Namakana and Kudu Alley areas, their condition was not good, and it was clear that they were not getting food. Although this was heartbreaking, Matetsi Private Game Reserve is a true wilderness area, and we do not interfere with nature, and so we do not feed animals in the wilderness under any circumstances, even such dire ones as these.

In early April there was a sign of hope, a male lion (with a distinctive dark mane) on a buffalo kill was joined by the two emaciated lion cubs. The large male showed obvious strong paternal instincts toward the little ones. Under the guard of their father, who kept them safe from hyenas, the cubs remained on the kill for three days, feeding up and enjoying their fill.

However, the cubs were alone again. Ophious our senior guide recounts, "We saw them trying to ambush some impalas in an open space but not knowing where and when to start, unfortunately, the hunting technique is not known at all, as they were out of cover completely, still too young to know the meaning of cover." Their condition started to worsen again, and they looked so frail.

In mid-April we all breathed a sigh of relief, the dark maned lion and his whole pride reunited with the cubs and the cubs were seen feeding on a baboon carcass.

Over the next few days, from a very respectful distance, we observed that the pride accepted the cubs and bonded with them. The lionesses were seen demonstrating their protective instinct over the youngsters and they appeared to be in good hands with their new family.

Now, with a good source of food, these cubs can grow into a strong pair of fighters. Even after a couple of days with the pride, they looked much healthier than when they were spotted on the buffalo kill.

"How they survived for so long without a mom, exposed to all the leopard and hyena lurking around. They are going to be a tough pair."

*Thank you to the Matetsi Victoria Falls guiding and conservation teams, as well as our guests, for their insights and photos with which we have been able to tell the story.*





# Greenline Africa:

## Positive Action in the Victoria Falls Rainforest

Article **Veronica Chapman**  
Images **Greenline Africa**

Greenline Africa has mapped areas within Victoria Falls where this invasive species is still present and has coordinated an annual community volunteer Lantana Camara eradication programme for the last couple of years.

Tourism stakeholders in Victoria Falls recently joined hands with Zimbabwe National Parks and Greenline Africa to remove invasive Lantana Camara in the Victoria Falls

Rainforest, which is part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Victoria Falls community always rise to a call to action, 160 people both corporates and individuals volunteered their time to remove

It essentially suffocates and if not controlled and eradicated, displacing naturally occurring species, thus causing major imbalances in the ecosystem and a reduction in biodiversity. Lantana Camara also contributes significantly to the reduction in the potential agricultural output in Africa, causing a loss in millions of dollars.

A general clean-up of the Rainforest area was also undertaken and the hard work put in by all was rewarded with the opportunity to view the magnificent Victoria Falls thundering over the Gorges. For some of the local resident volunteers, this was the first time they had the opportunity to see the Victoria Falls.

Greenline Africa has mapped areas within Victoria Falls where this invasive species is still present and has coordinated an annual community volunteer Lantana Camara eradication programme for the last couple of years.



the Lantana Camara using the cut rootstock method. This is done by cutting the main rootstock of the lantana 3cm below the soil surface and turning the bush upside down. These are left to dry for three months and the dried bushes are pulled together in an open area and burnt to avoid spreading of the seed and roots. This mechanical method is labor-intensive but effective and is the method currently being advocated in Zimbabwe. On the first clear-up day nearly 60% of the Lantana Camara was removed and on the second day another 30% leaving an approximate 10% still to be removed. This will be carried out in the next two weeks.

Lantana Camara is a species of flowering plant within the Verbenaceae family and was first discovered in South America and is grown primarily as an ornamental plant. This alien plant has invaded many native species in countries around the world including Zimbabwe, forming highly extensive, dense and impenetrable thickets in forests plantations, orchards, farm land, wasteland and natural areas such as the Victoria Falls Rainforest.





# SLOW COOKED LAMB SHOULDER

\*WITH VEGETABLES\*

Recipe **Shane Ellis**  
Images **Matetsi Victoria Falls**



- Boned shoulder of lamb, rolled and tied
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 6 sprigs of rosemary
- 6 sprigs of thyme
- 4 cloves of garlic, crushed and chopped
- 2 red onions, quartered
- 3 carrots, turned
- 2 sticks of celery batons
- 1 leek, shredded
- 6 tomatoes, halved
- 2 bay leaves, chopped
- 375g canned plum tomatoes, chopped
- ½ bottle red wine or dry cider
- Other suggested sides: redcurrant jelly and couscous

1. Rub the lamb with oil, and season with salt and pepper. Place in a suitable roasting tray and cook in an oven at 200°C for 15 minutes
2. Remove from the oven and reduce the temperature to 140°C
3. Add the remaining ingredients to the roasting tin
4. Cover with a lid or aluminum foil and cook for 2 ½ - 3 hours (removing the foil 40 mins before the end) until the lamb is tender and sticky
5. Remove the herbs, then remove the lamb and place to rest
6. Carve the lamb and serve on top of the vegetables
7. To make the sauce, once the vegetables are removed, reduce the cooking liquor to the required consistency



## SHANE ELLIS

Born and raised in Zimbabwe, Chef Shane Ellis is passionate about the local produce and local raw talent from his beautiful home country. As Executive Chef at Matetsi Victoria Falls, Chef Ellis is creating exceptional menus for their guests, and using his own professional experience to develop a team of talented chefs. Over the last two years, Chef Ellis, with the support of his wife Sara, has up-skilled his hot-kitchen team, trained keen individuals from scratch, and nurtured some of the best pastry chefs in the region. Previous to Matetsi Victoria Falls, Chef Shane had a broad range of experience from classical training at Meikles Hotel through to working "in the bush" with Singita, embracing challenges along the way. Whether there be a lack of readily available ingredients through to working with teams with a low skill base, Chef Ellis says "there is always a plan to be made". Next time you have the pleasure of sitting around a fire pit with Shane (as he's known to guests), after one of his renowned à la carte bush dinners under a star-filled African sky, ask him about his from-scratch sourdough bread (made with fermented-pear yeast!) Chef Ellis has chosen to base himself "in the bush", and he'll be the first to tell you "I don't have any fancy accolades, to call my own, just a decade and a half of working in my country despite its challenges, and trying to do the best I can to keep up, with what we have." Outside of work Chef Ellis is a fun-loving family man, who loves nothing more than to jump in his jeep with his family and go out into the bush - enjoying the stunning landscapes and rich wildlife, and occasionally doing some foraging along the way.

## Working together to stay safe and fight against COVID-19



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# Trading a House for a Tent

## Discovering Home

Article and Images **Cindy Tyrell**

This trip was definitely a stimulus, albeit a somewhat sobering one, which unlocked a long forgotten self and I celebrated the delightful sense of an emerging re-discovery of a me that had become lost in the freneticism of city life, where we all can unconsciously surrender our true identities without realising it.



My first confrontation with how easily one can mess up in the bush – if one does not consider the possible mistakes they can make, happened when I drove off in the cool, early morning light to deliver a thank you present to the hostess working at Vundu camp, a short drive west from our camp.

Elated by the delight of driving out alone, on a glorious morning, all senses being assailed; the sounds of early morning bird song, the smell of the dry dust, the sights of the majestic Leadwood and monolithic stumps of pachyderm-ravaged Mopane trees, I smiled at the sheer delight being alone as I took this all in, augmented by driving 'The Beast', which is what our ancient land rover was named. This reminded me of the extraordinary times past I had experienced, driving a similarly ancient landy, when I volunteered at a mission hospital in rural KwaZulu-Natal, at the age of 17, having come out from England, ready and willing to do whatever job was needed. One of my myriad roles there, was that of an auxiliary ambulance driver, the aforesaid vehicle was a 1960 Land rover, so 'The Beast' felt like a recognised friend. After a brief visit to Vundu, I returned, heading eastward back to camp.

My eyes scanning right and left as I slowly drove home, taking in the amazing essence of my surroundings.

All of a sudden, I caught a glimpse of something moving a hundred metres or so away to my right, it was a lioness slowly walking through the mopane stumps, in the direction I was driving.

What a privilege to watch this beautiful creature in the glorious, early morning light, as she slowly padded on seemingly unaware of me. I thus slowed down and admittedly kept my eyes more on her than the road – (first mistake!) After a few minutes, she slunk off into the thicker vegetation and I carried on my way, back to camp, (or so I thought), ecstatic to have had a few minutes watching this magnificent cat.

However, soon after losing sight of her, I began to notice the vegetation was becoming much thicker on either side of the road – something that I realised was quite different to what I had seen whilst driving to Vundu. I obviously was now on the wrong road! and by the time I realised this error, it was impossible to turn around as the trees were right up against either side of the very narrow road, leaving no room to turn.

No worries I thought, I will drive on a bit until I can find a place to turnaround and then get back onto the correct road. However, after a kilometre or so, having still not found a place where I could easily do this, there in front of me loomed a fairly significant, deep and very uneven sided donga!

I would be lying if I said this did not fill me with more than a slight anticipation and dread, as I was very aware that I could seriously damage the sump of the landy if I did not negotiate this massive chasm very carefully to get me to the other side and hopefully to a spot where I could turn around and head back to camp.

Gingerly negotiating this significant hole in the track, I eased my way out of it only to find that the road was still tightly lined with trees to the right and left.

Time to stop and take a breath, on doing so, I happened to glance at the fuel gauge and it was on empty! (Second mistake – always check on the fuel gauge before venturing out anywhere, especially in the bush!)

I also realised that I had foolishly driven out with no water, thinking I would be back at camp very soon, third mistake – do NOT EVER drive anywhere in the bush without water, however short the anticipated journey might be!



Taking stock of the situation, about to run out of fuel and having no water, I considered my options in attempting to get back to camp and decided I would have to try and get as far as I could in getting back to the correct road but still acknowledging that I would have to walk the rest of the way if I did run out of fuel.



The myriad butterflies, so varied and beautifully patterned, sadly flitted off at any attempt in me trying to get closer to identify them. At first I was frustrated, then realised the true beauty was in just seeing them, knowing their name did not really matter.

I stepped down onto the rutted track and sat for a while, taking in the contrasting emotions I was feeling: the elation of being on my own in this remarkable place, feeling the dust on my face and clothes, smelling

the gentle morning air, seeing the stunning mopane woods on either side with their glorious coloured leaves, hearing the first early morning flock of Lillian's Love Birds fly past and realising I had made one too many errors of judgement, which could be serious.

After trying a nine point turn to head back from whence I had come from, I had to renegotiate the massive donga, which now seemed to be the least of my problems.

Heading back, with both eyes now wide open, I finally found the previously missed fork in the road and managed to return to camp, with the landy fuel gauge on empty.

On arrival, I asked Leon, the wonderful caretaker and fixer of all things: vehicles, tents, water supplies etc, why he had not put fuel in the landy tank, knowing I was going to drive to Vundu, although I of course should have checked this myself.

I was then laughingly informed that he had indeed done so, but the fuel gauge had not worked for years! Needless to say, MANY sobering lessons were learned on this trip of initiation.

Somehow, when we find ourselves in a potentially challenging situation, one gains access to the elements of self which have long remained dormant. This trip was definitely a stimulus, albeit a somewhat sobering one, which unlocked a long forgotten self and I celebrated the delightful sense of an emerging re-discovery of a me that had become lost in the freneticism of city life, where we all can unconsciously surrender our true identities without realising it.

Having a couple of weeks at camp, where we had no guests, we all busied ourselves with preparing the tents and the kitchen caravan, which was a beyond challenge.

This kitchen caravan was a misnomer of note! The oven had no thermostat, every single knob for the gas plates had broken off, forcing one to use a pair of pliers to turn them off and on, so as not to burn one's fingers when adjusting the intensity of flame. The kitchen had one shelf, so cooking meals for up to up to 18+ people or keeping food warm for guests returning late from game drives was often a hysterical balancing act, with one dish on top of another and having to turn the oven gas on and off in an attempt to keep the food hot, yet not burn it!

The dire lack of most modern day culinary gadgets in this 'kitchen', provided us with a significant challenge to be inventive when creating meals and made me realise that one can actually easily do without many of the items that clutter our kitchen cupboards at home.

Whilst looking back on this rudimentary kitchen which we did improve over the months, it amazes me that our cooks managed to put out such an array of wonderful meals that our guests raved about.

These early weeks without guests also allowed me to have some time to walk away from the camp to explore and take in the true magnificence of my new home.

Looking back at these early times, I well recall thinking that as much as it is exciting to see the larger species of game, with elephants regularly meandering through the camp on their way down to the Zambezi, our resident lions often skulking past the gazebo in the early morning light, the plethora of hippos that wallowed and grunted throughout the day and chomped away at the grass outside my tent at night, it was the minutiae that I found most fascinating and entrancing.

Each morning, on my way to the camp fire, for that essential first cup of coffee, I was enthralled to see the delicate filigree architecture of mud cases that had been made by tiny, nocturnal termites whilst I slept. Every morning produced a wonderful array of new and varied shapes.

I loved watching the many multi-coloured lizards as they scurried up the bark of the age worn mopane trees.

A shower in my tiny canvas outside shower tent was always made more enjoyable when it was shared by a frog or two, which it often was, unperturbed by me interrupting their hunt for supper.





The myriad butterflies, so varied and beautifully patterned, sadly flitted off at any attempt in me trying to get closer to identify them. At first I was frustrated, then realised the true beauty was in just seeing them, knowing their name did not really matter.

The morning 'oomph oomph' of ground hornbills waddling past my tent down to the river's edge at dawn, inevitably made me smile - a great way to start any day.

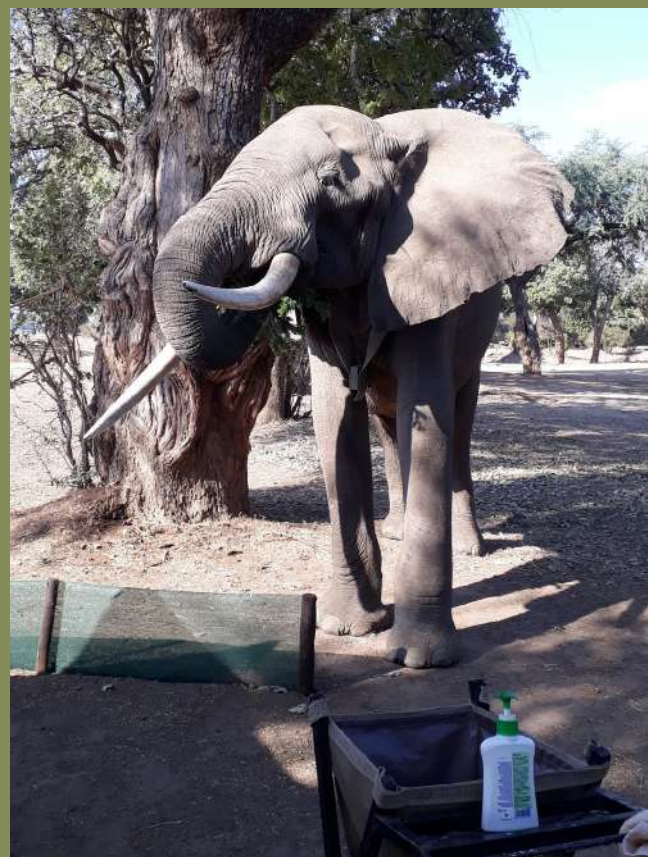
Then came the frustration of trying to locate and identify the multitude of birds, whose calls began in earnest, once the golden, orange sun had risen, its gentle warmth infusing the dusty morning air. The various woodpeckers challenged me to correctly identify them on a daily basis initially, but I did get better at this!

The most meaningful and privileged time I had during my entire 8 months unfolded. The camp manager left to guide elsewhere and 4 of the 5 staff members were given leave due to the camp having no guests. Thus I remained in camp with Leon, the wise and knowledgeable senior staff member and John Zinvashe, our beyond experienced and learned guide, with a sense of humour second to none.

I will always look back remembering the time spent with these two remarkable men listening to them both recalling their childhood memories, of learning from their elders and much more. As we sat huddled around the comforting, warm glowing embers of our evening fire, these two gentlemen spoke of what they had learnt about; the plants to use for various ailments, the special recipes their grandmothers had made for them and much more.

In our huddled space of special connection one night, we heard the roaring of lions - that were close by. So I was escorted back to my tent by John, who gave me a radio, telling me to contact him or Leon if I was worried.

As I snuggled into my camp bed, I smiled thinking of the special evening of wisdom I had been privileged to be a part of. I began to drift off to sleep but then heard the roars of the lions that we had seen earlier in the camp becoming louder and closer. I sat up hearing this spine tingling sound and heard footsteps coming towards my tent.



A magnificent lioness padded right across the plastic 'patio' of my tent. I perhaps foolishly shone my torch to see more clearly, the torch beam caught her eyes as she turned to look my way. We stared at each other, I well recall that I held my breath for quite some time, knowing there was only a thin mosquito net 'door' between us both.

The lioness slowly ambled past and settled down on a termite mound slightly to the east of my tent, where I could still see her clearly, but the roaring continued to the west, where two other lions were, right in the middle of our camp. I settled back down in my camp bed, knowing sleep would not come for a long while.

I then heard what sounded like human footsteps, crunching through the dry leaves, coming towards me.

I was aghast, thinking it was either Leon or John coming to see if I was okay, I realised I had not switched on my radio so they could check on me. I was now very concerned that whichever one of them coming to see if I was alright, was about to come face to face with an unexpected feline confrontation.

I could clearly see out of the western 'window' of my tent that the 2 other lions were slowly padding towards where the lioness had settled down. So I shouted out "watch out guys, the lions are right here". I hastily switched on my radio to tell them that they should urgently retreat.

Hearing no response, I then realised that in all likelihood, both John and Leon were probably fast asleep - which indeed they were!

I then discovered, what I thought were footsteps of a rescuing human, were in fact those of one of the lions, walking to join the lioness on her termite mound.

So much for the brave and protective males whom had assured me they would be there for me!



# Directory

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