



Multigenerational Once-in-a-Lifetime Trip to Africa

When a group of 17 individuals with ages ranging from 9 to 71 approaches you for a “once-in-a-lifetime” vacation to Africa, and you own a travel agency, you are excited.

When you are part of that group—a group that includes your children, bonus children, nieces, nephews, mother-in-law, mother-in-law’s friend and her family, and friends—the stakes get just a bit higher.

Although the company my wife and I helm had planned a myriad of multigenerational trips before this one and, in fact, had recently launched a subsidiary to specifically cater to luxury, multigenerational travelers, the team at Luxe Travel Consultants still had their work cut out for them.

The Situation: With safaris, elephant riding, exploring Cape Town, Victoria Falls, and making the most out of every minute on the “wants” list, the planning began. Botswana, Zambia, and the Republic of South Africa were identified as top destinations, dates were chosen, and everyone’s interests and abilities were assessed.

The Challenges and Solutions:

Choosing between two well-respected tour companies presented the first major challenge. Eventually, though, we chose Tauck for their customization abilities.

Luxe Travel Consultants began the month-long process of working with this incredible company to ensure this trip would be one no one would forget.

“Everything was precisely planned, from the minute we woke up to the minute we went to bed,” said Tanya French, the mother of the youngest travelers, ages 9, 11, and 13. *“The organization and orchestration was unbelievable.”*

Travel to Africa also posed a challenge. For those at both ends of the age spectrum, the long duration of sitting during flight was a concern. To address this, everyone picked their own air travel arrangements. Some chose to fly to New York and then go to Africa. Others chose to fly to Amsterdam and then to Africa, and others chose travel arrangements that broke up the trip even more.

“When everyone arrived, we got into a boat that took us to the most amazing hotel by Victoria Falls,” said Ann French, a well-traveled 71-year old who went on the trip with her son, his wife, and their three children. *“Everything was planned to perfection—and there were added surprises every day. For example, one day, we knew we were going to move campsites, but we didn’t know we were going to do this via a gorgeous river cruise.”*

Finally, the varying capabilities of all the travelers presented potential obstacles. Luxe Travel Consultants worked with Tauck to ensure that for every activity that may not be suitable for everyone there was an alternate activity planned.

“On the night safari, for example, Rodney and I decided to stay back and enjoy a glass of wine by the campfire,” said Lisa George, co-owner of Luxe Travel Consultants. *“Another day, several members opted out of a boating excursion in favor of enjoying a coffee in a local café. No one had to plan anything, but everyone had the opportunity to do exactly what they wanted to do—and felt comfortable doing.”*

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Ann opted out of the ATV rides the first go-around. *"I was concerned about my knee that had been giving me problems, she said. "But when I saw how much fun everyone had doing it, I decided to do it the next time we had the opportunity and had a grand time!"*

With activities that included day safaris, night safaris, happy hour in the African bush, camping out on the salt flats in tents with wooden floors and running water, playing with meerkats and baby lion cubs, witnessing the majesty of Victoria Falls, exploring the beauty and bustle of Cape Town, watching a leopard stalk his prey by moonlight, riding through the desert in ATVs, and star gazing 100 miles from civilization on the clearest possible nights, this trip was truly unforgettable.

"I woke up every day thinking 'today can't possibly be as cool as yesterday,' but it was, unbelievably it was," said Heather Wood, the mother of two teenagers who accompanied her on the trip.

Tanya echoed that sentiment.

"My children are still talking about it," said Tanya. *"It is amazing what happens when you get a multigenerational group together like this... relationships changed, and were formed and strengthened between the older and younger generations. When you are all sharing this incredible experience, you interact with each other on a different level. I overheard my children talking to members of the group about everything from gratefulness to politics. It was a transformative experience."*

Heather agrees.

"We are a pretty tight-knit family, but there is a special kind of bond that happens when you are sharing an extended experience like this," she said. *"It is much different than the interaction that happens during the course of a 3-hour holiday dinner."*

From broadening worldviews to strengthening and deepening family relationships, everyone on the trip had a wonderful time and noted that they would do it again in a heartbeat.

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