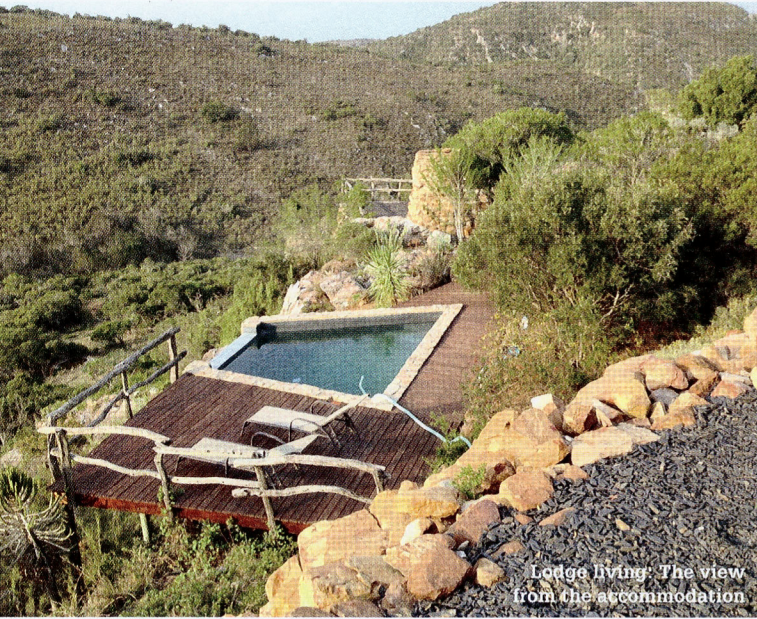


## Africa: Safari winner



Lodge living: The view from the accommodation

South African Airways flight to Port Elizabeth. The next challenge is making sure that the time between connecting flights is sufficient to recover the firearm and ammunition, completing the process of importing them into South Africa and being issued with a temporary South African firearms permit. My recommendation here is to allow at least three hours between flights as once these processes are completed you will have to check in your rifle and ammo again for the connecting flight, all of which takes time. I was fortunate to engage a knowledgeable porter to assist in the process. If all this is likely to raise your blood pressure to unacceptable levels you can appoint a commercial firearms handling service to do this for you before you leave the UK.

One thing arose that briefly worried me when I submitted the partially completed eight-page South African Police Service SAPS 520 form, which I had downloaded and pre-populated in the UK. The officer asked for the UK-issued letter of permission to import my firearm into South Africa. Saying to him that it was not necessary, he began to dig his heels in and retrieved a well-worn piece of paper pinned to the board behind him, bearing the heading of 'UK Border Control', and said that I could not bring in a firearm without the equivalent. The paper appeared to have been issued by UK Border Control to grant a specified UK citizen express permission to export and re-import a specified AYA shotgun. Fortunately I had previously been in touch with my very efficient Surrey Police Firearms Licensing department, who had swiftly responded to my email enquiry confirming that the issue of a UK FAC was in itself permission to export and re-import to and from the UK. On production of this, the officer relented and I heaved a sigh of relief and my gun and ammo were released to me.

However, all this had taken time and I now needed to take my rifle and ammunition, each in their approved and locked flight cases (if using combination locks allow time to unlock, lock and unlock repeatedly!) for checking in for the next leg of the journey and this had to be done through referral from the check in desk to the airport's firearms handling department. It was only through the very helpful young porter called Nkosi that catching my next flight was made

I collapsed into bed at 9.30pm. Even though the time difference to the UK was just one hour, the 18-hour journey had left me exhausted

possible – that and a little 'largesse' to the jolly lady behind the counter of the handling facility who implied that it could be difficult to get the cases on board in time...

Then, having successfully caught my flight and landed in Port Elizabeth, the whole baggage claiming process went as smoothly as one could have hoped for. I was met by Craig Done, my PH (professional hunter) for the week, and we departed the airport in his Hilux pickup – more of which later. The journey went quickly, as it always seems to do when first visiting a new country, and we arrived two hours later at the Bushmans Gorge estate, north-east of Grahamstown where, after a cool lager, I unpacked and admired the ruggedness of the deeply convoluted landscape. Then after a quick tour of the estate, checking the zero on my rifle, a .308 Win Sako 85 topped with a Swarovski Z6i, followed by dinner and a promise to start at 8am the next morning, I collapsed into bed at 9.30pm. Even though the time difference to the UK was just one hour, the 18-hour journey had left me exhausted.



Blesbok bonus: A short walk and a long but efficient shot saw James account for a blesbok buck