



## Africa: Safari winner



**Third time lucky: The third warthog was spied along a fence line and taken at 77 yards**

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there was a danger of a shoot-through harming other members of the herd. Later that day though, on a boundary fence between two parts of the same estate, we saw a group of warthogs with one fine beast in particular which I lined up on at around 50 yards, and with a rock steady rest I took the shot – and completely missed! I couldn't understand it until Craig ruefully pointed out the broken strand of barbed wire that my .308 round had neatly severed, thus preserving the warthog so it could continue making holes in the farmer's fencing. Lunch was deferred due to the interminable attempts to get a safe shot at a blesbok, but eventually we retired to Normandale Lodge, to belatedly eat our lunch and observe the secretary birds seeking snakes to eat.

Day four saw us back at Normandale Lodge estate again after the elusive blesbok, where, after just one hour on site and a relatively short walk, I took a long but perfectly efficient shot at 188 yards, and downed the right ram without endangering any of the others.

We returned to Bushmans Gorge for lunch, and decided to take some time off before trying for another warthog later at Coombs Fountain. However, late that afternoon, when warthogs begin to be more active, we were driving along the main road and I spotted a lone 'hog grazing on the far side of a fence on one of the many estates over which Settlers

Safaris have permission, and we stopped and stalked it, resulting in my third warthog, at 77 yards.

Later at Coombs Fountain we had an amazing experience, one of the best of the trip. Walking down a track with the sun behind us and the strong wind in our faces, we softly walked to within 15 feet of two foraging young warthogs before they bolted. Soon after, on the same track, we came across a very mature male bushbuck of serious trophy quality and Craig and I approached to within 20 yards. We then retreated before it even knew we were there. Craig was frustrated that such a magnificent trophy beast presented itself to no avail, but as I was there for the hunt, rather than trophy collecting, we contented ourselves just to see such a wonderful creature so closely.

On day five, after much discussion we decided to see whether we could find a kudu cow to cull, which was a rare privilege as the 'Grey Ghost' of Africa is one of the most revered of all the plains game species. Within 45 minutes of arriving at the estate we saw a group of four standing immobile, and as expected, despite being nearly a kilometre away, they were looking intently in our direction with their large radar-like ears trained on us. The intervening scrub and thorn bushes made it highly unlikely that we would get close enough for a good shot, and so it proved after a long and challenging stalk. During the remainder of the eight-hour day we saw them repeatedly but no further action was taken. We made our way back to the lodge, happy but weary.

Day six saw Craig returning me to Port Elizabeth airport. Beforehand he kindly showed me around the city – known as 'The Friendly City', and the choice of restaurants, shops and many attractive buildings of the colonial era certainly looked appealing, and these together with long white sandy beaches and a busy port found me starting to plan a return, next time perhaps with my wife and maybe, just maybe, with my own rifle again.

Now, of the huge range of animals on this incredible continent, and with a .375 Flanged Magnum double rifle on order, what would I like to hunt next? ■

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**Impala upgrade: A change of plan sees James secure a trophy impala he will have shoulder-mounted as a memento of the African experience**