

BOOK REVIEW FOR FINE MUSIC RADIO BOOK CHOICE

Hlengiwe Magagula & Denis Costello (2021). *Walking Safaris of South Africa. Guided walks and trails in national parks and game reserves.*
Struik Travel & Heritage, Cape Town. R270.00

What a pleasure to review one of the best presented travel guides I have come across in a very long time. I am referring to Hlengiwe Magagula & Denis Costello's *Walking Safaris of South Africa*. I am enthusiastic about this book because I am a great believer that spending time walking in the bush opens up a whole new world that is almost impossible from a vehicle. On foot you can access places you cannot get to from a vehicle, hear bird calls and insects which are so often missed when driving, appreciate an astonishing array of scents hardly ever noticeable from a vehicle, and even more importantly have the opportunity to see at close quarters many of the smaller species which can be all too easily overlooked.

If anyone still needs convincing to undertake a walking safari, do no more than look at the excellent photographs in the book and marvel at the options available in South Africa alone. Let me stress that you do not have to be super-fit to go exploring on foot. Although all the walks described are led by professional guides, there are three distinct categories of walks, from the gentle and relatively easy day walks from camps and reserve gates, to multi-day wilderness trails, and the ultimate backpacking trails where participants have to carry everything they need.

I can understand apprehension about setting out on foot in a protected area where you are likely to come upon dangerous animals quite regularly, but you can rest assured that the guides leading your group have the best possible qualifications from the Field Guides Association of South Africa (FGASA), a most demanding certification that requires a minimum of 600 hours in the field and at least 300 logged dangerous game encounters.

The two authors are obviously very experienced hikers, resulting in a book packed with quality valuable information to help you to decide when and where to walk in the 59 options described in South Africa, (with an additional two in eSwatini and one in Botswana). What is particularly useful are the concise summaries of the type of experience available at each location, the physical demands of each option, when to go, how to make a booking, the cost, what to wear and what to carry.

An added bonus is a delightful and entertaining selection of anecdotes of first-hand experiences on some of the walks, adding an authenticity to the text which is so often missing in travel guides.

Describing one of her walks in the Kruger National Park, Hlengiwe writes: “By the last day, I’d stopped worrying about seeing lions. I was just happy to know they were out there, like the civet and the porcupine, living their lives unbothered, less interested in us than we were in them. In a few days, our footprints would blur under hoof and paw, like all of those who had walked here before. Me, I’d happily reverse time and do it all again.”

There is really no substitute for enthusiastic and passionate writing, and I must congratulate the authors and publisher for a production which I am sure will stimulate those who have not spent any time walking in protected area to give it a try, and for those who already experienced the advantages, to make reservations for one or more of the 62 options described.

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