

5th of July 2014

This is the third day of my holidays in Namibia. Me, my family and our friends came yesterday to the Okaukuejo camp in the Etosha National Park. We arrived in the evening.

Etosha is a Namibian treasure. It is as big as the whole Netherlands and is one of the best places in Africa to observe the animals. Here you can find so called "Big Four" which means that there are elephants, lions, rhinos and leopards. Big Five of Africa are the animals considered by hunters in the past as the most dangerous and difficult to hunt. The only one missing is buffalo. But among others we can see giraffes, hippos, antelopes, hyenas, cheetahs...

I was very excited. I have been waiting for this visit for a long time. When I read books about Africa as a child I always wanted to come here. And now my dream came true....

In Namibia in the summer it is warm at day but really cold at night. It also gets dark at around 6 o'clock pm. We knew that there was not much time to spread the tent and cook some ready made soup before it got completely dark. We didn't have a chance to look around.

We went to sleep in our tent placed on the roof of our jeep. We were so tired that I have fallen asleep really easily.

The most interesting places in Etosha park are illuminated at night, because the animals come to watering places. Sometimes black rhinos come to visit them. I have heard some noises at night, some strange voices of the animals which were "telling" some news to each other. I didn't know what kind of animals it was, as I don't recognize the voices. I was too tired though to get up and observe the animals. I hoped to see some of them next day, during the safari tour.

6th

Today I woke up early in the morning but the sun was already high in the sky. It was really nice and warm and it was a nice contrast to the cold night. The temperature at night was about 0 Celsius degrees, so I was really happy to feel the strength of the sun. I looked around to see the landscape. It was a typical savanna with only a few trees in the horizon. The surrounding was peaceful, calm and nothing happened.

I was really disappointed. I was sure there will be herds of elephants and lions, cheetahs and giraffes. Unfortunately, there was not even a monkey. The savanna seemed to be completely empty.

Today it was my turn to prepare the breakfast for my whole family. I had to get up and make some scrambled eggs. My parents were already drinking coffee, my brother and sister also decided to get up. Everybody was hungry so we have eaten breakfast quickly and were ready for the new adventures.

Today it was the safari day! We were so excited and we couldn't wait for it. We ate breakfast quickly. We haven't even taken care about washing the dishes. We left them near the tent with the rests of bread and eggs.

With our guides and binoculars we left for safari. The landscape was so beautiful with open spaces. The guide says that Etosha park is home to over 140 species of mammals, 340 species of birds, 110 species of reptiles, 16 amphibians and one species of fish. This is an excellent place for observing and photographing wildlife at any time of the year. The heart of the park is the Etosha Pan ("the place where the water is dry"), a vast salt

lake, which covers a huge area. In the rainy season the lake is supplied with water by seasonal rivers. Then you can see thousands of flamingos. Very often wild animals visit the lake searching for water and food.

We were driving in our jeep with all the windows open and were looking out for the animals. The local guide was with us. I waited for the animals, in my imagination I have seen thousands of elephants, lions, antelopes coming to our car and me stroking their heads. Especially I was waiting to see the lions. I really love cats and lions and always dreamt about having a one. We were driving and driving looking for any movement in savanna. We had a lunch in an absolutely amazing place. Our guide gave us boxes with lunch and some drinks and we ate it on a big meadow with a great view over savanna. We were driving for more than 6 hours, we have made a tour around the Etosha Pan. Unfortunately this time the pan was dry, there was no water and it was very, very hot. So no animal has appeared.... During the whole tour and all we saw were five giraffes and a herd of elephants. Probably far in the bushes we saw a back of a rhino, but I am really not sure... The giraffes were so cute! I loved them! Also a little elephant passing the road with his mum was so beautiful, but I must admit that I was so disappointed again! I haven't seen any lions. We have traveled half of the world, then driven almost one day and met only a few animals, almost like in the zoo...

But what could we do? We were tired and unhappy, so we decided to go back to the camp. I hoped that maybe next day we will be more lucky to meet wild lions and cheetahs.

We approached to the camp. When we were still far away from our tent we could hear some huddle. We drove closer to our tent and saw the towels and laundry, which we left before in front of the tent, strewn on the ground. We were surprised and felt threatened. We did not know whether to leave the car. Slowly we drove a little bit closer and then my sister called: there is a family of lions in our tent! I did not believe it, I thought she was lying.

I approached the tent. The big lion mum was staying near the entrance and sniffing the dishes which we left after our breakfast. Three little sweet cubs were eating the rests of our breakfast. The situation was unbelievable! I didn't know what to do – should I run away or stay and watch those animals which I loved the most in the world. We decided to back off and say somebody from camp workers that we have lion in our tent. We met one man and he called vets. They came with special guns that make animals fall asleep. They slowly came to our tent and shoot the lions. After few minutes lions were sleeping and vet allowed me to touch the beast. I was so amazed and scared. It's fur was so soft and nice. Unfortunately after all we had to clean up our tent, there was such a big mess... Anyway, although I had plenty of work to do, it was amazing because I have finally seen a family of lions that we couldn't find during our safari tour! I felt great and happy. We kissed each other with my sister and brother. They were really scared, just like I was, but just as happy as me. My parents also said they were so afraid... But our adventure has finished well and now I have such an interesting story to tell to my friends at school. I guess nobody had such visitors at home like we had today.

The vets and camp workers told us that it was really stupid to leave the food on the camp's ground. We had to agree. Now we are wiser and next time we won't make such a mistake. I asked the people what will happen to the lions when they wake up. They told

me that they will take the lions back to savanna where they will be safe.
The rest of the day we spent on organizing the supper and discussing the lions' habits.
My mum couldn't believe that nothing happened. My father has said that when we come back home we will take a little kitty! I think I will call it a "Cub".
This day was amazing. Now I am sitting near the tent, it is already dark. It is my brother's turn to prepare a supper, so I am a little bit afraid if it will be ok. But nothing and nobody can make me feel bad tonight. I even had a chance to take a photo of the lions sleeping in front of the tent.
Africa is great!

Witold Holeksa