



C3 BUSH AND SAVANNA - SAFETY RULES

Peter Drake, 2002 - Revised 2007

In Africa the term "Bush" can mean anything from rolling open grasslands with few trees (Savanna) to very thick thorn tree and scrub growth that may make travel very difficult. On maps it can be described as open, medium or thick bush.

Like all wild country, being in the bush can be very exciting but safety must be always to the front of one's mind. The bush may seem empty but it is home to both people and animals, which spend all their lives there. The bush is a fascinating and complex environment that supports a wide variety of plants and animals. For those who take the trouble to learn, it can provide food, fuel, medicine and shelter but for the foolhardy it can be dangerous. It is very easy to get lost or become disorientated, and, just as in mountainous areas or on open water, the unaware or the foolhardy adventurer can quickly come to grief. If you are not in the hands of competent and experienced guides it is important to use map and compass and all other natural navigation aids.

When walking through the bush it is a good idea to keep a good lookout to spy out the lie of the land. It is particularly important to keep looking behind you so you will see what the route looks like if you have to retrace your steps. Look for landmarks like rock outcrops, strangely shaped trees, watercourses, and the like.

These are some other simple rules to bear in mind when working in the bush:

VEHICLES

Never get out of a vehicle, stand up in an open vehicle or open the roof of a vehicle unless you have been given specific permission to do so. Wild animals may seem very docile when you are in a vehicle but they will take an entirely different attitude to humans when you are on foot and out of it.

WALKING

If you are walking in the bush, never go off alone particularly in a dangerous game area. Always carry a whistle, compass, matches and water. In dangerous game areas an armed qualified game guard/trail officer must always accompany you.

You will generally walk in single file with an appointed member at the front and back. Everyone in the trail will be expected to maintain a keen lookout. If you are in long grass and have pack animals with you let them go first and follow in their tracks, as any snakes that may be in your path will get out of the way before you come along.

Do not seek shelter or camp under large tall trees especially during electric storms.



ANIMALS

When accompanied by a guide, always obey their instructions to the letter. If you are on your own and unexpectedly encounter dangerous animals stay still, remain calm and never run away. This is especially important if you come across any of the big cats. Larger animals such as rhinos and elephants have very poor eyesight and rely on an acute sense of smell and hearing. Stay upwind whenever possible) and keep quiet. If you must move, move slowly. Keep it in view if possible and retrace your steps carefully until you reach a place of safety or are sufficiently far away. If you can, climb a tree but remember that all the big cats can climb trees well!

All animals have a comfort zone, understand and recognise these zones. Do not put pressure on the animal. When approaching animals or waterholes be aware of the wind direction, never approach upwind.

In thick woodland and forest make sure you make some noise as this will alert animals and allow them to move out of your way. You would be surprised how well an elephant or buffalo can conceal itself and move silently through the forest if it wishes to.

SEE ALSO THE APPENDIX TO THIS PAPER

CLOTHING ETC.

When in the bush you will find there are many plants that have thorns on them; also ticks and other insects abound in the long grass. Wear footwear that provides good ankle support and has hard sufficiently hard rubber soles to prevent being pierced by sharp thorns. Another consideration is that 70% of snakebites happen on the lower leg. If you are wearing boots and long trousers they may offer some protection. You will also find it useful to have a cotton shirt with long sleeves that can be rolled down to protect your arms from the sun, insects or thorn bushes. Wear a hat with a brim to protect your head during the hottest hours of the day. A cotton neck scarf is also useful to protect the exposed neck areas.

Try not to wear bright colours in the bush if you want to see game. Solid black and white are not recommended as they provide hard and conspicuous silhouettes. Green, brown, khaki or similar muted colours which merge into the surroundings are best. Do NOT wear camouflage clothing. You might be mistaken for a para-military or a poacher. In many parts of Africa it is illegal for anybody to wear this kind of clothing unless they are part of the armed services or the uniformed Game Parks services.

At dusk and dawn mosquitoes and other biting insects are at their most active. Make sure you cover yourselves up. Many people put long trousers on but forget to protect their ankles, arms and wrists. (N.B. If you are operating in Malaria areas, make sure you take your malaria tablets regularly before, during, **and after** your expedition).

If you wear contact lens take your glasses with you as well, for many people find the bush is too dusty to wear contact lens.

All the articles which form the Webguide are all written by able and experienced leaders of youth expeditions, but represent their own personal views and not necessarily those of the Council of The Young Explorers' Trust. The points made represent suggestions for consideration rather than direct advice, and the responsibility for how these suggestions are used rests entirely with the users. No liability is accepted by the authors or by the Young Explorers' Trust for any loss or damage arising from the contents of these papers



PHOTOGRAPHY

When you meet local people, do not take photos until you have their permission to do so. If you don't gain this and still try to take photographs, they may take offence and become aggressive. Do not take pictures of game rangers, police officers, customs officials, or army personnel; you could get arrested and lose your film.

Do not take photographs of sensitive buildings such as airports or bridges or military or police posts.

AT NIGHT

You must never ever walk around in the bush at night unless you are escorted properly. At night you must not leave the immediate lit areas of a campsite for any reason whatsoever. Most dangerous animals hunt actively at night. Make sure that your toilet routines are completed well before last light. If you have to go to the toilet and are unable to wait you must inform the leader and follow instructions.

CAMPING

Before making a camp clear all the area of scrub, dead wood and the leaf litter as this will make sure you are not sharing something else's home! Also check to see there are not ants in the area (especially under your tent). Do not camp on ground covered with animal droppings as there is a risk of diseases.

Never site an overnight camp in a dried up watercourse. It can rain many miles away and a flash flood could hit your camp in the night. Unfortunate people have been drowned in this way.

Do not camp or seek shelter under large tall trees especially during electric storm and never camp next to a termite mound.

If you use a water hole try to take your water away from where animals have been drinking. Always treat water found this way as very polluted and boil and purify it before you drink or cook with it.

Do not make camp too near a water source or on obvious animal tracks. Water will act as a focus for all the animals in the area and animals use the same tracks regularly. You will also find that mosquitoes, flies and other flying insects will be more of a pest near water. Never go continuously to the same point of a river to collect water, for crocodiles could well be lying in wait.

Separate sleeping areas from areas for food storage, preparation and consumption (see *appendix*).



Make sure you burn and bury all your rubbish; otherwise you will attract animals and flies to your camp. When you leave the site replace the leaf litter and leave the camp just as you found it.

Always take someone with you if you are leaving the main party to go to the toilet etc., and make sure the leader in charge knows you are leaving and where you are going. When going to the toilet check the area first then dig a hole sufficiently large for the purpose. Do the business and clean yourself with soft leaves or grasses. If you have to use paper or tissues take the material back to the camp and burn it completely. This applies also to sanitary towels, tampons etc. Do not leave them in the bush. When selecting a site, make sure that it is at least 50 meters away from any water source, water hole or river. If you get lost, stay where you are, and sit and wait for someone to come looking for you. Blow your whistle every 15 minutes. If possible site yourself in an open area under a tree where you can be seen, but stay in the shade. Make sure you have plenty of firewood to hand and if you can, sit on something off the ground as it can be 20 degrees cooler 18" or so above ground level.

And remember to shake out shoes or boots every morning !

Use your common sense to enjoy this fascinating environment, but remember that as in all environments it is easy to get into trouble if you do not follow the rules.

APPENDIX: SOME RULES FOR DEALING WITH ANIMALS IN THE WILD

RULE
Do not touch, get too close to, pressure or feed animals. This is for the safety of the animal as well as you. If you treat them with respect and do not make them feel threatened they will not usually present a threat to individual safety.
Do not touch dead animals. Touching dead animals serves no purpose and exposes you to diseases. If large predators are near they may view you as a competitor for their food supply.
Separate sleeping areas from areas for food storage, preparation and consumption. Store food and items containing food smells safely, choosing a place away from the sleeping area. Use an animal-proof container sufficient to the threat, or suspend your food container high above the ground by tying a rope

All the articles which form the Webguide are all written by able and experienced leaders of youth expeditions, but represent their own personal views and not necessarily those of the Council of The Young Explorers' Trust. The points made represent suggestions for consideration rather than direct advice, and the responsibility for how these suggestions are used rests entirely with the users. No liability is accepted by the authors or by the Young Explorers' Trust for any loss or damage arising from the contents of these papers



<p>horizontally between two objects and attaching the container to a rope tied to the horizontal rope.</p>	
<p>Most animals want nothing to do with people. Let them know of your presence and they will usually go elsewhere. Do not surprise large animals, especially mothers with young.</p>	EXPLANATION
<p>Know the symptoms of an animal with rabies. These include the following:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active in the daytime when the animal should be nocturnal• Salivation• Partial paralysis• Irritability and aggressiveness• Strangely quiet. <p><i>If bitten by an animal suspected of rabies, seek medical attention immediately.</i></p>
<p>Do not feed any wild animals Regardless of how appealing, follow this rule. To feed them will make them a nuisance to everyone, may endanger your life, and will diminish the quality of the animals' lives in many ways.</p>	