



# Adventures of a lifetime.... Vacations with a purpose

Paul Ivaska, 2607 N. Waterman Ave, Arlington Heights, IL, (847) 650-4562  
paul@ubuntuadventures.com www.ubuntuadventures.com

## **Basic things to consider concerning the hunting of leopards**

By Andre Wiess and Paul Ivaska

It is our intention in this article to help in the understanding concerning the hunting of leopard. Leopard is One of the Big Five and deserves all the respect of an ethical hunter. Obviously we do not expect to cover all aspects of leopard hunting but offer you enough information to start your research.

As in any research the best questions to ask are who, what, where, when, how and why. You will find our responses below.

### **WHO:**

Anyone can pull the trigger on a trophy but getting to that point and afterwards is what makes a Leopard Hunter.

More than anything else experience primary on any leopard hunt. You can not expect to be able to hunt leopard without having first hunted in the African bush and that for many times. Neither can you expect to hunt leopard if all you have done is sat in a deer stand hunting Whitetail or spot and stalk elk. It would be best if you have been to Africa on several different safaris and taken most if not all of the Plains Game. However this still could and would not prepare you for your first leopard hunt. The bush is home to the leopard and you are his uninvited guest. Having experience with everything from the sun in the sky to the dirt below your feet is a must. Your experience comes from your accomplishments and your mistakes. Making a mistake with a leopard is not an option. Experience also comes from knowledge and understanding. So not only do you need to have been "in the bush" but you need to educate yourself about the leopard and his environment by reading and studying. Even after all this each encounter with a leopard will be new.

Next you must have confidence first in yourself then your rifle and then your PH... in that order. Without confidence in yourself it doesn't matter what kind of rifle you have or even if you have the best PH in Africa. You are the one to make the shot. Again this confidence can come only from experience. To have confidence in yourself you must be able to stand the charge of a wounded animal. However in the case of a wounded leopard you probably won't even hear the rustle of the grass as he swiftly and deftly makes his attack. The adage of "don't panic, shoot straight and live" has to be tried and true before coming to grips with this One of the Big Five.

Confidence in your rifle is next. You have to know exactly what it will do under any circumstance. You try and true your rifle as you do yourself. You must put it to the test so that when the shot comes it will be as automatic as breathing. This is achieved only by practice. "You can only perform in public to that extent of which you practice in private." Ammo is cheap. Your safari and your life aren't.

You must have established a confidence in your PH because he must be everything you're not. Educating yourself about a leopard hunt includes knowing your safari company and its PH. You can usually tell one by the other. If this is your first or even subsequent leopard hunt then by the time both of you first meet you should have no problem putting your life in his hands. If not then either you or he is not prepared. The actual shot takes less than a second. All that happens before hand is preparation, preparation on your part and on his part. If one of you fails to prepare properly then the hunt will most likely be a failure.

It is the job of your PH to do the scouting, baiting, hide construction, etc. It is your job to find out how well versed he is in doing these things as well as making sure that they are done well before you arrive. Of course it might be necessary to move bait and hide but by then you should know if your PH is doing his job.

### **WHAT:**

This you might think is obvious but you might be surprised by the actuals. The SCI minimum is 14 while the SCI record is 19 2/16. The Rolland Ward

minimum is 15 3/8 while the Rolland Ward Record is 19. Males weigh up to 90kg and the females up to 60kg. They can live up towards 20 years. Obviously everyone is hoping for another record book trophy but know what your accepted trophy limit will be. Make sure that you listen to your PH while you are setting up on a possible location. You can judge the leopard by the paw prints and you should be able to at least understand how to size a leopard in this manner by the end of your hunt.

### WHEN:

Just like any other hunt leopards are not predictable and there is no guarantee that you will even get to see one. However if your PH has done his job he will have done the scouting and then picked up on the first track and from there to hide and to bait.

If you find that you had a "hit" on your bait one day they will probably come in the next normally around sunset but it could be as late as or later than 2100hr. Neither are they regulated by the phases of the moon but you would want to bait 5 to 6 days before a full moon so as to take full advantage of the moonlight in the low light conditions. It is best then to study when the moon phases will be and especially the times as well because there could be a period of time perhaps 60 to 70 minutes when there will be neither sun nor moon. If the leopard comes to bait in that time frame then you would possibly need to use lights. And then again they sometimes surprise you and come to the bait during the day time hours.

### WHERE:

Leopard can be found in regions of South Africa as well as Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and further north and pretty much where ever they want to be.

### HOW:

Of course in no reasonable manner could anyone put to paper exactly how to hunt leopard for each leopard is unique to itself and requires different tactics and skills. However there are a few basics that are important to understand.

If a leopard is not first sighted or has not become a problem in the area then it is scouted. The PH and his staff go and look for "first track." It is then determined how long ago this track might have been made and if it is then seen again in subsequent days or the track is fresh then bait is set out immediately. But most likely the leopard will know that you are there before you know it's there.

If the bait is "hit" the next preparation is the deciding the best place and angle to position a hide. That being done the hide is constructed in such a way as to give the hunter the best advantage of a kill shot. The bait is continued to be hung.

Once the hunter arrives then logistics are discussed and plan of action is laid out. The PH preps the hunter in any peculiarities of the animal and the wait begins. Your PH should be with you for the entire time and when the leopard is spotted on bait it will be up to you to place the bullet on the mark.

### WHY:

"Why" has probably been decided well before you have started to read this article. It could be that you have taken all of the trophies that you desired or it could be the time has presented itself and you feel that you are ready to take a trophy leopard.

The taking of a leopard is not a small matter and much thought should be given to the whole idea. As stated in the first section you must have the experience and having the experience you should be as well mentally prepared. Even just One of the Big Five is something of a life quest. You might not even have the opportunity to actually take a leopard on your first or second safari. Or you could pass on one that is not quite what you are looking for. You must not underestimate your reasons for hunting leopard. Be truthful with yourself and it will add to one of the most exciting hunts of your life.

If you decide to pursue a leopard hunt please contact us and I know that we can offer you a hunt that others can only imagine.