

COMMON GROUND

Behind each epic African challenge that Chris Cecil-Wright embarks on – such as motorcycling from Mount Kilimanjaro to Cape Town or running and cycling across the Namibian desert – there is one man who tailors the trips and pulls the strings. Gregg Hughes, co-founder of Safari Footprints, knows Africa like nobody's business.

The African landscape is a vast and varied natural world that requires expert guiding and interpretation. 'With Gregg you get completely engrossed in Africa,' says Chris, 'I go once a year with a group of friends and each time Gregg lays on something incredible. He guides with enthusiasm, entertaining banter and an encyclopedic knowledge of animals - he can even call birds in using his voice.'

Whether it's a scenic safari from an aircraft, mountain or motorbiking across African terrain or canoeing a river, Gregg Hughes will deliver on his clients' dreams of Africa from a thrilling perspective. 'We mould our 'projects', as I like to call them, around what our clients want to achieve here,' explains Gregg. 'All our safaris are with repeat clients. We initiate ideas and tailor-make their African adventure. I get to know them, and they come back for other things to do - there are so many experiences here.'

WALKING ON THE WILD SIDE

A South African native, Gregg worked at prestigious game reserves and at a large safari operator before starting his own guiding organization in 2008. Safari Footprints now arranges bespoke adventures to the main attractions across several countries on the continent: Victoria Falls, the Zambezi River, the Okavanga Delta and witnessing the wildebeest migration. 'But that's just scratching the surface,' Gregg continues, 'You can experience real wilderness that's without equal on the planet. We have megafauna – such as elephants, lions and hippos – as well as unique tribes and ethnic groups. These are the things that draw people back.' And Safari Footprints has a holistic approach to preserving those elements, making donations to wildlife conservation initiatives for every safari booked.

THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

Standard safaris last two to three weeks and the accommodation ranges from remote tented camps to the finest luxury lodges. Chris's most recent expedition with Gregg entailed running and cycling 600km across the Namibian desert with tented camps being erected ahead of the party of 20 guests. 'It's a test of endurance as well as the elements,' says Gregg, 'It's one of the harshest deserts in the world.' Gregg is with his clients every metre of the way, and his expertise in biology, nutrition, animal behaviour, plants, insects and birds means that they are always in good hands.

'You have to watch the traffic,' explains Gregg, 'You're in the food chain here. I've been charged by all the big animals and stalked by crocodile. That's just life in the bush. It's an incredible thrill, but you have to make the right call at the right time.' Asked to name an occasion when he's seen something sublimely beautiful in Africa, Gregg answers simply: 'That happens every day. Because of all the diversity, I'm always seeing something new.'

