

Giraffes and wart hogs draw African vacationer

By MARGARET MILLER

"Giraffes are so curious, they come in quite close. When they bat those eyelashes, you just want to pet them. And the wart hogs are so ugly—a mother and a brood of homely duplicates really cracked me up. Then there was a bull impala with his harem. He was going bananas trying to protect all his cows. Absolutely gorgeous."

THE TRAVEL REPORT comes from Fran Austin, who has found her perfect vacation in the safari of East Africa.

Ms. Austin, who works as secretary to the owner of Centaur Farm Stables, West Bloomfield, has made the trip twice, the second time this spring.

"I just had to get back to my lions

and my elephants and my cheetahs and giraffes and all of them," she said.

"The wonderful animals, and the interesting people from all over the world, makes it a vacation without any equal."

FRAN AUSTIN discovered Africa through a friend, ever more smitten by the country than she is—the friend went there to stay.

"We used to vacation together in Hawaii," Ms. Austin said, "and then she and her husband started off on a world tour. I told her when she found the perfect place to let me know."

A wire "This is it" came from East Africa a few months later, and Ms. Austin arranged to join her friend on safari.

By the time they had completed their first tour of the luxurious lodges that house safari parties, her friend had decided to stay, and she's now headmistress of a school for the retarded and arranges tours on the side. Ms. Austin visited her on the second visit, which helped some with the expenses of a quite-costly trip. Air fare, she said, was \$1,051 this spring, up over \$200 from two years ago. But the all-inclusive cost of seven days in the safari lodges is \$200, comparable to similar accommodations here.

THE EXPENSE was well worth it to revisit the animals, Ms. Austin vows, and adds:

"I want to go again just as soon as I can afford it."

When you safari in Africa, she said, you stay in several lodges and usually there are a couple of tent camps on the jungle tour.

"The lodges are really beautiful and the meals are mammoth and excellent," she reported.

"They call you in the morning at 6 a.m. and tea is ready then. You want to get out by about 7:15 for the early animal runs."

Travel, is by Volkswagen bus, which easily holds seven people and

FRAN AUSTIN with some of the books and pictures she brought home from African safaris. (Photographed by Bob Woodring)

their luggage. Usually the party goes on to the next lodge or camp in the late afternoon.

"And you're usually ready for bed by 9," Ms. Austin said. "You're exhausted."

Extreme safety precautions are taken by those leading the safaris, she added.

"No one goes anywhere on foot," she said, "and even at the lodges you have a guard with you if you have to step outside the enclosures."

ANIMALS SHE HAS SIGHTED include hippopotamuses, baboons, hyenas, and wild hunting dogs as well as lions, elephants, giraffes and wart hogs.

"And ostriches are all over the place and there are dozens of beautiful birds," Ms. Austin said. "They are so brightly colored, I kept wanting to

take them home with me and show the brown sparrows here and ask why they don't look like that."

Beautiful flowers also bloomed in the area, she said, "but no one could tell what they were."

MS. AUSTIN'S main souvenirs of the African trips are books, photographs and her own snapshots of her beloved animals.

"I feel I learned a great deal of ecology that began with the safaris and has continued with reading," she said.

"For example, in the area I visited all the animals eat at a different level, from the wart hogs burrowing in the mud to the giraffes nibbling the tree tops."

"And the predator animals kill the sick and the weak individuals of the animals that are their prey, so that improves the rest of the herd."



IT BOTHERS Ms. Austin that more people in this country aren't more interested in the animal kingdom.

"There is so much to learn from the animals and about their preservation," she said.

She also found it exciting to talk to other visitors in the area—a wide cross-section of Africans, Asians, Europeans and British with not a great many other Americans.

"They all seemed so well-read," she said, "and everyone I met was interested in learning more about Amer-

ica. They have some misconceptions about our country."

FRAN AUSTIN would love to be able to spend three months of so in East Africa, but has reservations about making a move there as her friend did.

"I have to admit I don't think I could adjust to the inconveniences for very long," she said. "I wouldn't want to be far from a hairdresser, for instance."

But though she wouldn't want to live there, she's sure she'll be back for another visit.

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