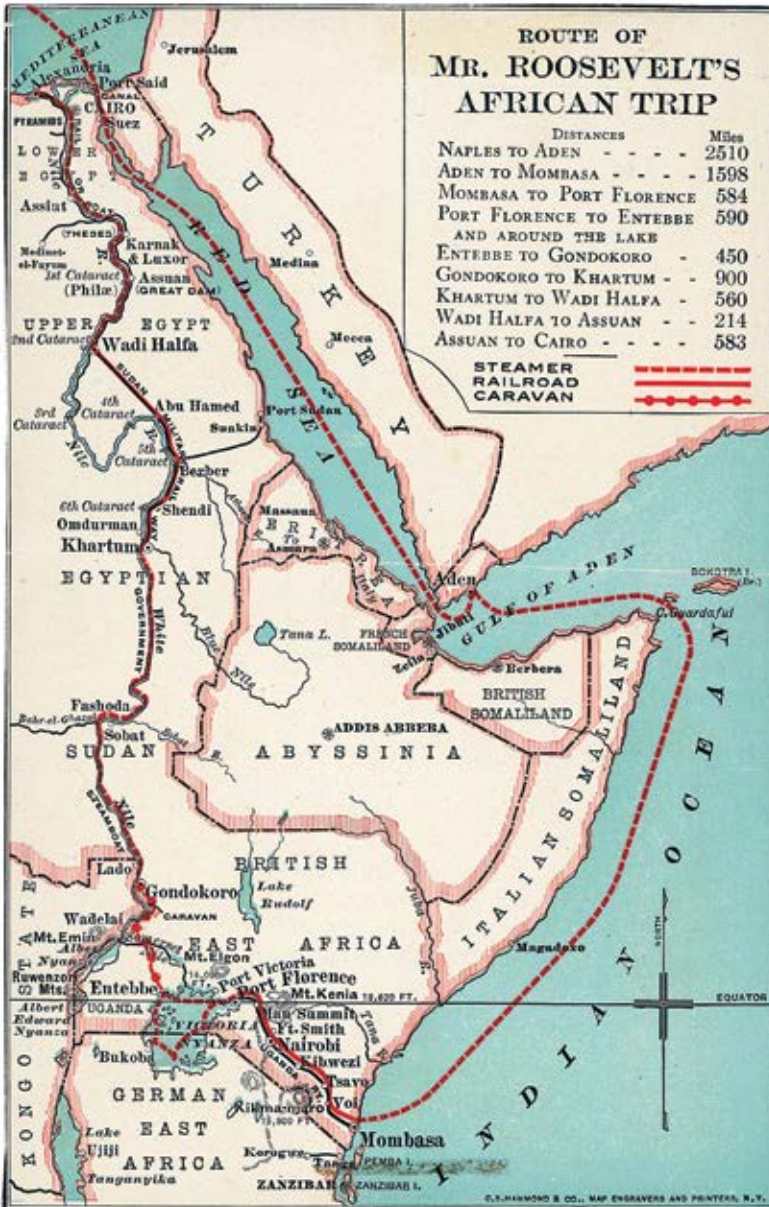




SPACE AND TIME

In early 1909, Club founder Theodore Roosevelt journeyed by steamship to England, down the Atlantic, through the Suez, and then down the Indian Ocean to Mombasa. He traveled by train to Nairobi, then commenced perhaps the most epic safari ever. It was a nine-month odyssey that took the former president and young son Kermit overland through Kenya, into then-Belgian Congo (now Uganda), then north through Sudan to Khartoum. They ventured up the Nile, then back to Europe by steamer, finally returning to the United States in June 1910.



B&C founder Theodore Roosevelt's 1909-1910 African expedition was an odyssey lasting nine months, essentially opening Africa to safari hunting.

A LOOK BACK IN TIME AT HOW MONTHS-LONG HUNTS HAVE TURNED INTO ACTION-PACKED, WEEK-LONG ADVENTURES. AND FRANKLY, WE'VE GOT IT (TOO) EASY TODAY!

Although the 30-day packstring hunt is almost a thing of the past, there are still numerous horse outfitters in the western US and Canada.

Before WWII, early hunters to Alaska would travel by ship from Seattle up through the Inland Passage, then to Anchorage, and then out into the blue. Things were simpler in western Canada. Railroads carried hunters north to jumping-off points, then into game country by pack train. A month's hunt was minimal, six weeks more likely.

Time was measured differently back then. Or, more accurately, distant adventures were the exclusive province of hunters who had unlimited time. The Roosevelt Expedition could be described as excessive, but before WWII, an African safari of just 30 days was considered minimal; two and three-month safaris were common.

In the postwar era, reliable air transportation whisked hunters to almost any destination. Propellor aircraft soon gave way to faster jetliners. Worldwide, hunts got shorter. Robert Ruark's *Horn of the Hunter* is probably the best-written and most widely-read account of a postwar safari conducted in Tanganyika in 1952 when I was

born. We writers often take liberties with timelines (trust me, I know). Read the book, and the impression is Ruark's first safari was lengthy. Perhaps, but his professional hunter, Harry Selby, recalled it as a normal three-week safari.

For at least the next quarter century, including my early safaris, 21 days remained the standard period for an African hunt. Internal and ground transportation improved worldwide. Better roads and light aircraft shortened timelines, especially in North America. The 30-day packstring hunt vanished before my time, replaced by hunts of ten days or two weeks, depending on location and species.

Travel time isn't just a matter of getting from point A to point B; one still must get from point B to a hunting area. For instance, I just returned from a brown bear hunt on the Alaska Peninsula. Jet travel from home to Anchorage was just a few hours. It took another day to get down the peninsula to base camp. Tack on another day to get to spike camp by



PHs and six hunters with the results from a seven-days safari in South Africa's Eastern Cape. The "plains game" safari didn't exist when Boddington started hunting Africa. Today, shorter hunts are most common, productive, and the best bargain in the hunting world.

SuperCub. That's three travel days to get afield. In countries like Namibia and South Africa—with good road networks—I can be hunting 36 hours from home, despite the long trans-oceanic flight. Shortly, I'll be headed to Mozambique. That requires an overnight in Johannesburg and a connecting flight, but I'll be checking zero in camp 48 hours from departure.

The worldwide shortening of hunts isn't just a

matter of reduced travel time, which hasn't changed much in the last half-century. Other factors are at play. Part of it isn't just that we are busier. Rather, hunting in distant locations is no longer restricted to people with unlimited time. Instead, most modern traveling sportsmen and women work hard to earn the privilege and need to cram the adventure into a nice, neat package within a two-week vacation.

Other elements influence shorter hunts, but not all are positive. In the Africa of my youth, a three-week safari included an opportunity at multiple members of the “big five.” The wonderfully productive and inexpensive shorter plains game safari almost didn’t exist. Restrictions, closures, and quotas for key species changed this. Cape buffalo, by far the most numerous of Africa’s dangerous game, can still be hunted on a seven or ten-day hunt. Safaris for the cats and elephants are necessarily longer and more specialized. Today, across Africa’s 20-some hunting countries, there are about 20,000 annual hunting safaris. Some three-quarters of these are shorter plains game safaris, resulting in a

half-dozen to a dozen antelopes, wild swine, and zebras for about the cost of a mid-range guided elk hunt in the Rockies. As Peter Capstick wrote, it’s still “the last great adventure on Earth” and worldwide hunting’s greatest bargain.

Elsewhere in the world, with different models of wildlife management, shorter seasons are generally not a factor. However, for almost any species, certain periods are better than others. Greater kudu rut in June, red stags in early fall—September in the northern hemisphere, April in the southern hemisphere. In Africa, rainy seasons are usually avoided, but international outfitters have the luxury of several favorable months to plan their schedules.

In North America, outfitters must work (and make their businesses profitable) within set, often short, seasons. On our side of the pond, this is a major factor in the shortening of hunts. It’s attractive for today’s busy hunters but not always great for an ideal or successful experience. On the Alaska brown bear hunt I just returned from, the spring peninsula brown bear season was mysteriously cut to just 16 days. Some hunters opt for the full period, but that’s too long for many. So, of necessity, outfitters are obligated to split the season in two, offering two eight-day hunts to make the season work. It sounds like enough if everything comes together. However, many camps are reached only by light aircraft, and the peninsula is famous for its fickle weather.

In 2023, I stayed in spike camp throughout the peninsula’s fall bear season, mostly watching horizontal rain. I made multiple stalks on a big bear and didn’t get a shot. In the 2024 spring season, I was fortunate. I

got in during a break in the weather and got a nice bear on my fourth hunting day. As a bonus, I got out of camp during another break in the weather and got home. Most hunters who booked the full season were likewise successful. My heart hurt for other hunters as I watched them run out of time or season. Some waited a solid two days after the season closed to fly out of spike camp because of the weather.

Light aircraft with balloon tires, floats, or skis in Alaska and Canada enable remote access hunting. Elsewhere (occasionally in North America), helicopters enable some access, less commonly because of cost. When I hunted in Nepal, we needed to reach the last village as a jumping-off point for the Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve. We had two choices: a ten-day trek (each way) or a helicopter. The trek sounded awesome, but I’m not one of those guys with much spare time. I took the helicopter.

It is best to allow as much time as possible with difficult species. This is



LEFT: Alaskan outfitter Dave Leonard, secures a caribou rack to the struts of his SuperCub. This versatile little airplane essentially enables hunting in much of Alaska and western Canada.
BELOW: In Nepal, Boddington had a choice between a ten-day hike each way or a two-hour helicopter ride to the jumping-off point. The helicopter was more expensive, but few hunters today have 20 days to spare.



especially true in mountains and northern regions, where weather is constantly a limiting factor. The reality is that not all hunts will be successful, but the shorter the hunt, the higher the failure rate.

COMMUNICATION

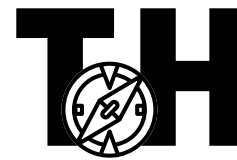
While hunts have gotten shorter and travel has gradually improved, the biggest difference today is improved communications—and that's all to the good. When I arrived in Kenya in 1977, my outfitter messed up my arrival time. I was young and scared, trying to figure out a foreign telephone system, when Willem van Dyk arrived, much to my relief. Before cell and sat phones, we were in a trick when flights were delayed. Today, cell phones can be used in almost any airport or city in the world. Make sure you have international coverage and all the phone numbers (and country codes). The free and handy WhatsApp smartphone app allows voice and text; most guides and outfitters use it. Don't expect cellular coverage in any remote

hunting camp anywhere in the world. Then again, base camps are likely to have some Wi-Fi connectivity. In the last couple of years, conversion to the Starlink system has been almost worldwide in the outfitting community.

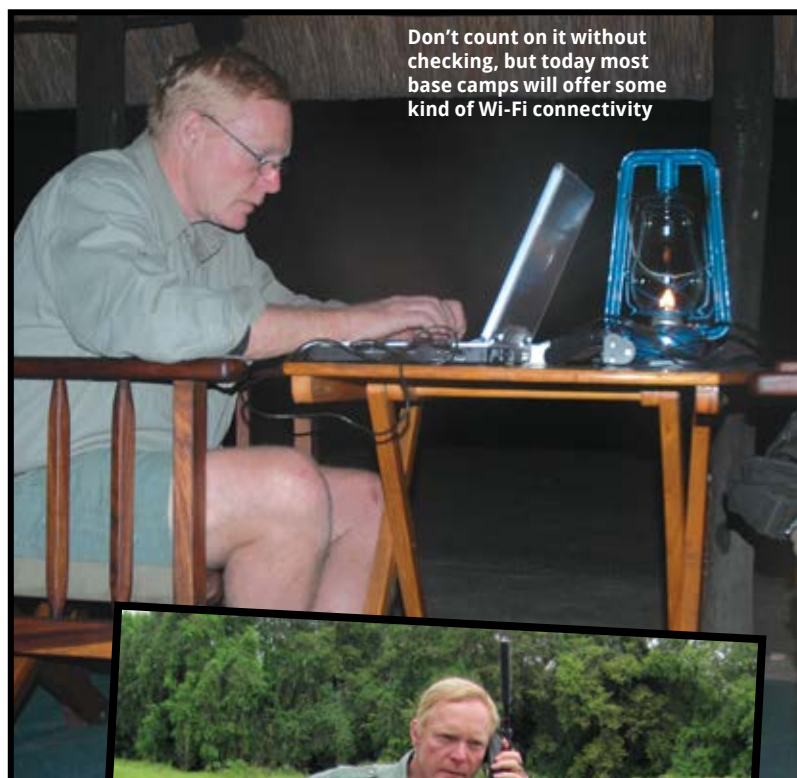
Satellite communications and GPS have improved dramatically, both coming out of the first Gulf War. In 1997, Joe Bishop and I were in camp in southwest Central African Republic (CAR), and Joe had one of the first civilian sat phones. It was the size of a briefcase with fold-out aerials that had to be oriented. In one of CAR's numerous insurrections, mortar shells were falling on the runway in Bangui, and we needed to find a way out. That darned contraption worked. We got a charter plane and exited west through Gabon.

As they got smaller, I carried sat phones for years. Today, Garmin's compact inReach system provides GPS data and text messaging slaved to a smartphone. Sat phones are still indispensable for voice communications, but since 2019, inReach

has provided all the communications needed on several northern hunts. Do-it-yourself hunters need more information, but it can all be right there in your hand. The onX Hunt app is the premier smartphone navigation app for backwoods hunters, offering satellite 3D and topographic maps, private/public land boundaries, and much more. Today, there's no excuse for not having communication when needed or being uncertain where you are. ■



The reality is that not all hunts will be successful, but the shorter the hunt, the higher the failure rate.



RIGHT: Both cellular and satellite communications have improved dramatically. In remote areas, the satellite phone remains a primary tool for emergency communications...or just checking in. **BELOW:** All hunts depend on time and weather, but especially for difficult animals in northern climes. In fall '23 Boddington spent two weeks in this spike camp on the Alaska Peninsula, mostly weathered in, didn't get a bear. He went back in spring '24, took a nice bear in six days.

