

PICTURE PERFECT

The ultimate outdoor/adventure photography guide

Anton Pretorius

Just like Land Rover owners, photographers use their cameras as a tool of exploration – their passport to inner sanctums. For Land Rover owners, a camera comes in handy when your vehicle takes you to those hard-to-reach-yet-very-rewarding locations. Whether you're a hardcore photographer or just a keen shutterbug, *Land Rover AFRICA Magazine* helps you develop your skills as an outdoor or adventure photographer with our big photographic issue.



©GdT King of the plains.



Greg du Toit shooting meerkats.

FROM THE BEST IN THE BUSINESS

PHOTOGRAPHER Greg du Toit

ACCOLADES 2013 International Wildlife Photographer of the Year

The 2013 International Wildlife Photographer of the Year, Greg du Toit, talks to us about all things photography. Not many South Africans have received this coveted award, and Greg's work has brought him international acclaim from several major television networks like National Geographic and BBC Wildlife. You'll even find his work displayed in both the London and Sydney natural history museums, and his 'Authentic Africa' collections have been exhibited across the globe, from New York to Singapore.

The first few years of Greg's career were spent in Timbavati Game Reserve near the Kruger National Park, where he served an apprenticeship as a game ranger. His days were spent stalking Africa's big game on foot, and these skills later proved invaluable as he focused his attention on wildlife photography.

Greg's journey started in 1996 when he was living in the bush full-time. "For the first time in my life, I had a desire to share all these wonderful wildlife sightings with friends and family," he said. He bought a second-hand Pentax camera and Sigma lens kit and just started shooting. "I had zero knowledge of photography. But when I picked up a camera for the first time, I knew this is what I wanted to do with my life." >



I wanted to capture the mood and mystery of the African elephants in a ghostly, eerie way



©GdT Essence of elephants blue.



©GdT Gazing up.

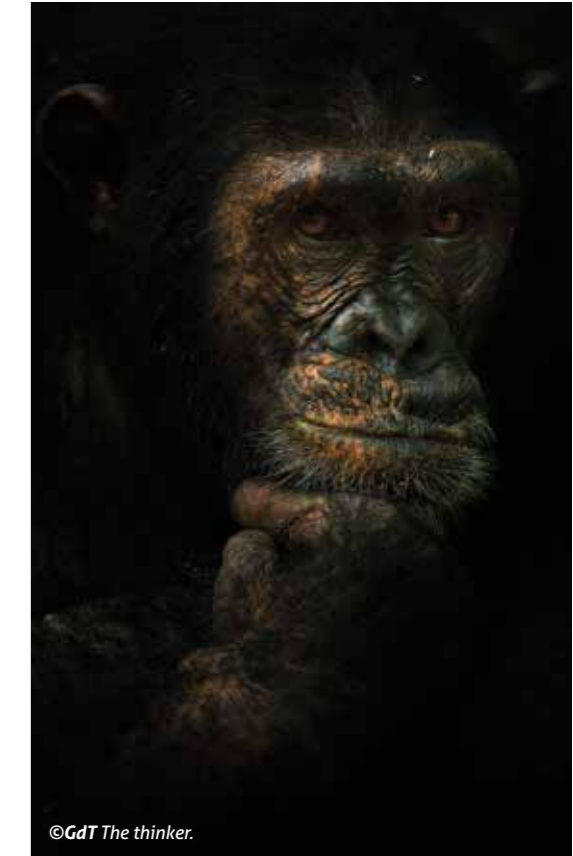


©GdT Night of the pelican.

GREG'S TECH TIP: MOTION BLUR

Want to shoot like a pro? Greg offers up a great tip when photographing wildlife.

"I love shooting with slow shutter speeds. Normally, you'd want to match your shutter speed to the focal length of your lens. With a 300mm lens, you'd want to shoot with a shutter speed of 1/300 or faster. But sometimes, I like to shoot with a slower shutter speed, so that there's some blur in your photograph. Traditionally, a still photograph doesn't convey the movement or energy of the subject. Just a slight delay can actually capture the movement. Sometimes, I'd shoot 1/60 of a second as opposed to 1/300 of a second." To view some of Greg's award-winning images, visit his website www.gregdutoit.com.



©GdT The thinker.

About that winning photo

"In Greg's photograph, which won him the esteemed 2013 'Wildlife Photographer of the Year' award, he got up close and personal with African elephants and captured the moment they congregated around a still body of water that caught their reflections, while one of the baby mammals ran past. Greg beat almost 43 000 entries from 96 countries to be crowned the winner. The image was taken from a hide at ground-level. "I intentionally shot with the blue colouring and slow shutter speed. I wanted to capture the mood and mystery of the African elephants in a ghostly, eerie way," said Greg.

Are you self-taught?

I studied nature conservation, but from a photographic point of view, I'm totally self-taught. My learning curve was steep. I started out on film and got everything wrong. It ended up costing me a lot of money. But in the long run, it did me more good than harm. It has allowed me to develop my own style and quirks. I'm a bit unconventional. But that's what helps my photographs stand out from the rest.

What's your favourite subject to shoot?

I'd say lions. Some consider that unusual. Most photographers feel that lions are boring, because they sleep a lot. But for me, they are raw and wild, and they typify Africa. There's nothing quite like sitting around a campfire

and hearing a lion's roar in the distance. They have beautiful eyes – great for photography. The males are such powerful, dominant beasts, but they can also be incredibly stupid, goofy and lazy. I quite like that combination of power and goofiness. I've spent lots of time with lions in various parts of Africa and even got to know certain individuals.

Any close shaves?

During my 16-month project in Kenya, two lionesses came for a drink at the watering hole, and they didn't notice me at first. But when I tilted my camera to take a vertical shot, my elbow came out the water and they spotted me. They never left the watering hole. It started getting dark, and I was trapped in the water all alone, with no vehicle or rifle. I then had to make a discreet exit, which was pretty tense. It was definitely my closest shave I've had with lions.

What other dangers do you often encounter in the bush?

The water turned out to be more dangerous than I anticipated. I staked out the watering hole for years prior, so I knew there weren't any crocodiles. But from a parasitical side, it was dangerous. I got malaria twice and contracted other tropical diseases. The worst is malaria. I've had it six times already. You become lackadaisical about it. Now, I travel with a self-medicating and malaria test kit. One of the other things you've got to look out

for when you're running around in the bush is buffalo, especially the old bulls. They're not with the herd and tend to be more aggressive. A mother elephant with a calf is probably the most dangerous. Snakes are also a serious threat in the bush. I recently came across a black spitting cobra. That was scary.

You recently returned from an excursion in Namibia. What did you do there?

We were on assignment in Damaraland in the north of Namibia. Damaraland is a very sparse, remote and beautiful place. We photographed black rhino, elephant and lion – all of them are desert-adapted. The trip was a huge success. We found about five of these desert-adapted lions. Interesting stuff!

What's attractive about Africa?

When Africa's in your blood, it never goes away. Perhaps it's that primitive energy. It has a lot to do with our unique wildlife, but also, the people. African people are very genuine, sincere and warm. It's an intoxicating mix. I think sound plays a big role too. There are so many sounds in Africa compared to the rest of the world. I recently did a photographic excursion on the northern border of Russia. I got to photograph wolves and bears there. Something that struck me was the silence, which of course, is beautiful on its own. But Africa is never silent. There's always the sound of a bird, cricket or animal. I think the smell is vital too. We get addicted to

smells. I love the smell of fresh antelope or elephant dung. Not many people know this, but leopard urine smells exactly like buttered popcorn. You get hooked on smells.

Is it difficult to capture these senses on camera?

Well, that's my ultimate goal, to try to do the continent justice through my lens. Look, photography is purely visual, and a photograph is a flat piece of paper. My job as a photographer is very difficult: to try and tell a story through one moment. But the bizarre thing is, it is possible. That one moment can trigger many senses in a person's imagination. With my photos, I try to give viewers a glimpse of that moment and let that spark one's imagination. Photography is a powerful language. Visuals have been around long before the written word.

What tips can you offer up to aspiring wildlife photographers?

I get contacted a lot by aspiring photographers asking what they should study or what direction they should take. My advice to them is to go on a journey of self-discovery. Find out what you treasure most in life. What are your passions? And photograph that. That's how it worked for me. I'm passionate about the African bush. I have a spiritual and emotional connection to it. It all starts with you, and what you're passionate about. ▶

©GdT Swimming with elephants.



©GdT Gelada baboon.



To watch Greg du Toit on how he won the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Award with that winning photo, scan this QR code with your smartphone



©GdT Drakensberg chat.

“
When off-roading in the bush, the Land Rover allows me to get on location and keep up with animals.
 ”



©GdT A brush with death.



©GdT A roller's catch.



©GdT Dawn king.

Do vehicles play a big part in your work as photographer?

Yes, vehicles play a big part. My preferred vehicle of choice is undoubtedly, a Land Rover. For photography, I find that a Land Rover's suspension is really soft. When off-roading in the bush, Land Rovers allow me to get on location and keep up with animals. It goes comfortably through dips and it's good through sand and mud. I'm a huge fan and very bleak that Defenders are being discontinued – such a classic vehicle!

Your favourite location to shoot?

I'd have to say the Maasai Mara. To get great shots here is like taking candy from a kid. You

don't have any problems with finding animals or backgrounds. There's just a plethora of wildlife. The hardest place I've photographed is the tropical rainforests in the Congo, photographing gorillas and forest elephants and buffalo. It's very dark, and you shoot in very low light conditions. But it's so vast and wild. There's no roads, and you have to travel on foot. It's hot and humid with loads of biting insects. But it's very rewarding. It was great to see so much wildlife in the Congo.

Where to next?

Next trip is to the Kalahari to photograph pangolin and armadillo. After that, I head to Hwange and Mana Pools in Zimbabwe. Exciting trips ahead.

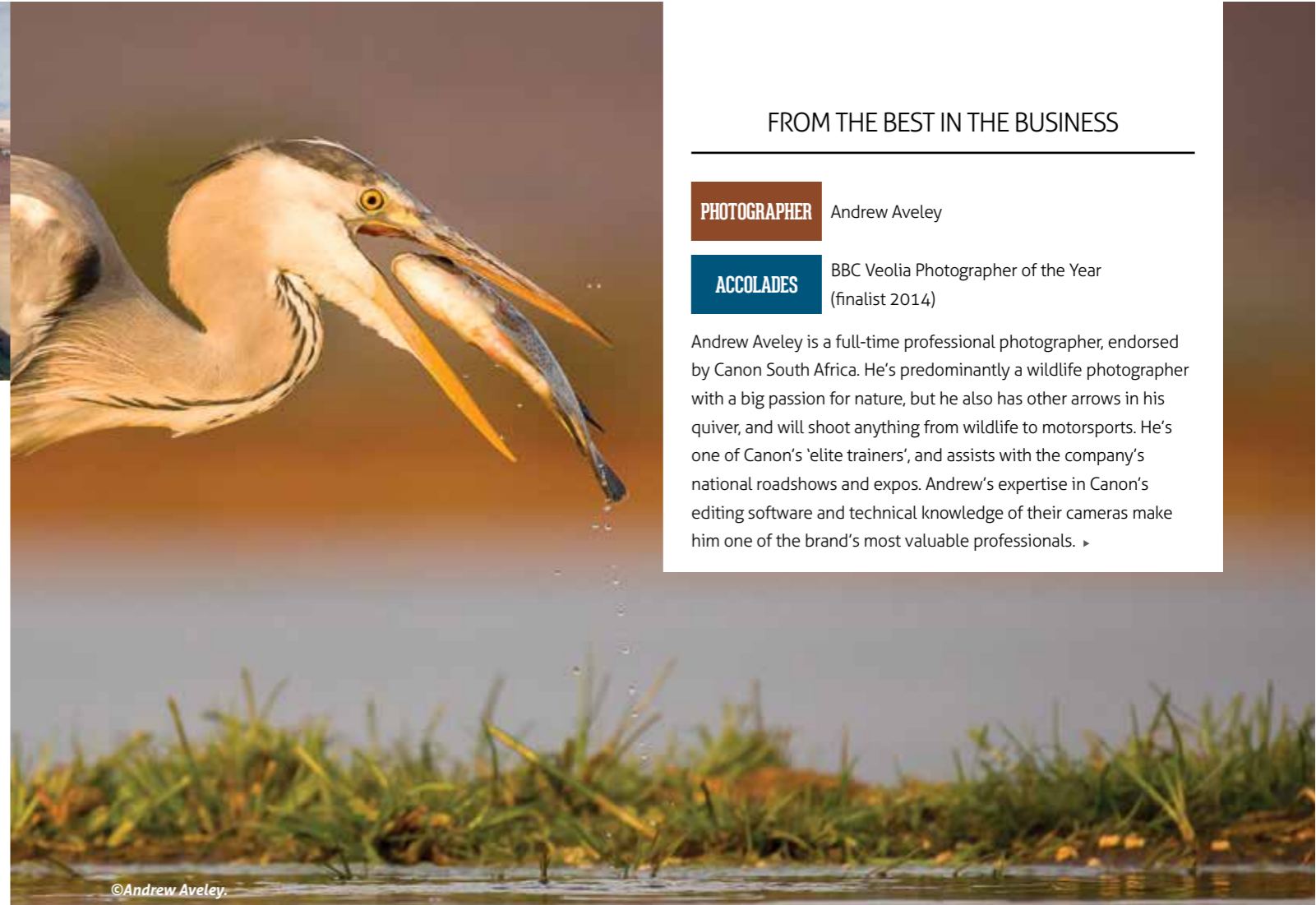


GREG'S GEARBAG

Greg does a lot of travelling in light aircraft and tries to keep a balance between having the right gear and travelling light.

"With this setup, I can shoot pretty much anything, from a bird to an elephant," Greg says. In his kit, you'll find the following:

- Nikon D4S camera body: "I like to shoot with one body only, which is quite unusual for professional photographers."
- Nikon D750: "I use this camera purely as backup. I don't actually take it out into the field unless I really have to."
- Nikon 600mm lens: "It's a big lens. It weighs around 5kg. Nikon announced a lighter version of the lens. I'm chuffed about that."
- Nikon 80 – 400mm lens: "This lens is great for capturing the animal in its environment".
- Nikon 16 – 35mm F4 or Nikon 24 – 70mm F2.8 wide angle lens
- Laptop
- Backup hard drive
- Card reader
- Little bean bag
- Flash
- Flash bracket with cord
- Small tripod



©Andrew Aveley.

FROM THE BEST IN THE BUSINESS

PHOTOGRAPHER Andrew Aveley

ACCOLADES BBC Veolia Photographer of the Year (finalist 2014)

Andrew Aveley is a full-time professional photographer, endorsed by Canon South Africa. He's predominantly a wildlife photographer with a big passion for nature, but he also has other arrows in his quiver, and will shoot anything from wildlife to motorsports. He's one of Canon's 'elite trainers', and assists with the company's national roadshows and expos. Andrew's expertise in Canon's editing software and technical knowledge of their cameras make him one of the brand's most valuable professionals. ▶



©Andrew Aveley.



©Andrew Aveley.



“
**Everyone has their own view.
 I don't believe there is a
 wrong or right way, and the
 only person that should be
 happy with the image is the
 photographer himself.**
 ”

©Andrew Aveley.



©Andrew Aveley.

What camera would you recommend for intermediate photographers?

If you're looking to take photography seriously, the Canon 7D Mark II, paired with the 100 – 400mm Mark II lens is a 'prosumer' product. It offers the best value for money in terms of investment for photographers. It's got great tech specifications; it performs brilliantly in very low light conditions, and the lens is an optical masterpiece. It's the most mid-range camera you can get from Canon and use effectively. For under R50k, there's no competitor in the market that can match the Canon 7D Mark II for combination pro lens and really high-quality body.

Do you consider Canon as a user-friendly camera?

Each system is different, but Canons are very user-friendly. It just makes sense. It follows decent structures and with a little training (scrounging the Internet), you'll get a great understanding of the camera. Just by reading the basics of the manual, you can come to terms with it pretty easily. On the 7D Mark II, there's a unique and

specific focus system, which takes some getting used to. But using the focus system on the EV preset, you'll do very well before customising it for your own needs.

How significant is Canon's software?

Canon's software that comes with the camera is very underrated. Using it in the field, there are different ways of managing your images like a strong picture file setting. When you're experimenting with your camera and using your focus, you can set things like saturation and sharpness. When you're in the field, you can get a good idea of your exposure on the quality LCD screen.

Favourite subject to shoot?

Wildlife is my passion. I lead photographic safaris and help people create photos (#creatingphotography). Everyone has their own view. I don't believe there is a wrong or right way, and the only person that should be happy with the image is the photographer himself. I teach people to shoot for themselves and create their own art, and not for Facebook, photographic forums, or other people's approval.

ANDREW'S TAKE ON THE CANON 1D-X

"The Canon 1D-X tops every other camera in the range. The body shoots twice as many frames per second. Bird photographers would love it as the high-frame rate catches very fast-moving scenes, good for landscapes. It's rugged and can handle quite a punch. Designed to be an all-weather camera versus the others. While some are weather-sealed, it's not to the extent of the 1D-X. With a high-standard built quality, this camera is great for Land Rover enthusiasts who want to bounce it around the car – it's built to last. I think for anyone who wants to take photography seriously, it's a great starting point."

Visit www.andrewaveley.co.za for more information or like his page on Facebook for updates and images.



©Andrew Aveley.



Watch this great independent review on Canon's 1D-X masterpiece, scan this QR code with your smartphone

EQUIP YOURSELF

If you're serious about photography, you'll find some interesting equipment on the market that could help you improve your skills and take that winning shot.

THE GIMPRO DOOR MOUNT

The GimPro swivel head clamp-on door bracket gives you freedom and versatility to photograph animals in their natural environment. Owner and avid wildlife photographer Ralph Pollack started the GimPro business out of frustration for the lack of equipment available on the market, and the GimPro was born on his own Defender. "What's great about the GimPro is that it's a universal fit, and mounts on the outside of any vehicle's door, and doesn't impede on the window. It fits and removes within minutes," he said. "It's stable and secure and gives you a lot of manoeuvrability. With a standard set up like a bean bag, your field of view is around 50

degrees, left to right panning. But with the GimPro, that changes to about 120 - 130 degrees," Ralph adds. It's rated to carry up to 800mm lenses. Constructed from aluminium and stainless steel, it's largely maintenance free. Another great aspect of the GimPro door mount is the sealed ball bearings, which puts it in a league of its own. "Most mounts use plastic bushes, and panning and titling is not as smooth as on the GimPro. It's geared towards the professional, more serious amateur photographer as your 15kg camera rig is completely weightless on the GimPro." "This is a product that'll definitely improve your photography," Ralph says.

For more information on other GimPro products, visit www.gimpro.co.za, phone Ralph on (+27) 82 778 8075 or e-mail ralph@gimprogear.com. For regular updates, like their Facebook page: www.facebook.com/gimpro

**WIN
 A GIMPRO
 DOOR MOUNT**



LIKE WHAT YOU SEE?

Land Rover AFRICA Magazine, in partnership with GimPro, is giving away a GimPro swivel head clamp-on door bracket with Pano Head worth R12 000. **To win, LIKE GimPro and Land Rover AFRICA Magazine on Facebook, post your best wildlife photograph and tell us the story behind the image.** Entries close 15 October 2015. T&C apply. Visit www.landymag.com for more information.



To see the GIMPRO in action, scan this QR code with your smartphone



ARMASIGHT AVENGER 3X GENERATION

Featured in issue 14, the high-performance Armasight Avenger 3x Generation 2 night vision monocular amplifies the ambient light 10 000 times, allowing you to view animals and game at night in their natural environment without disturbing them. No additional light source needed, only the moon and stars required! With superior low-light performance,

you can now spot and snap animals up to 300m away. It mounts onto DSLR cameras, compact cameras and camcorders for night photography. It can also be used as a night vision rifle scope when mounted to the Armasight AIM Pro-L mount.

Price: R18 999

Buy this product online. Visit www.futurama.co.za or contact (+27) 21 851 3284.



Whether you've invested in an entry-level DSLR or went all out for the big boy, it's imperative that you maintain your camera to ensure its longevity. Here are some handy maintenance tips:

ONE ENEMY #1 – HUMIDITY

Humidity is your camera's nemesis, and harmful to your imaging sensors. Keep your camera dry and away from extreme weather conditions. Avoid bringing your camera in from the cold to a warm room. Use protective, padded bags or cases.

THREE CAPS AND HOODS

Lens caps and lens filters protect your lenses against scratches and damages. Although lens hoods are meant to block the sun's glare, they're great for protecting your lens's edge.

FOUR SPOTS ON YOUR SHOT

If you notice any dark, dirty spots or splotches on your images, it's a sign that your camera needs a clean. Using a sensor loupe will help identify the spotty areas and an airbrush will blow and wipe dust away.

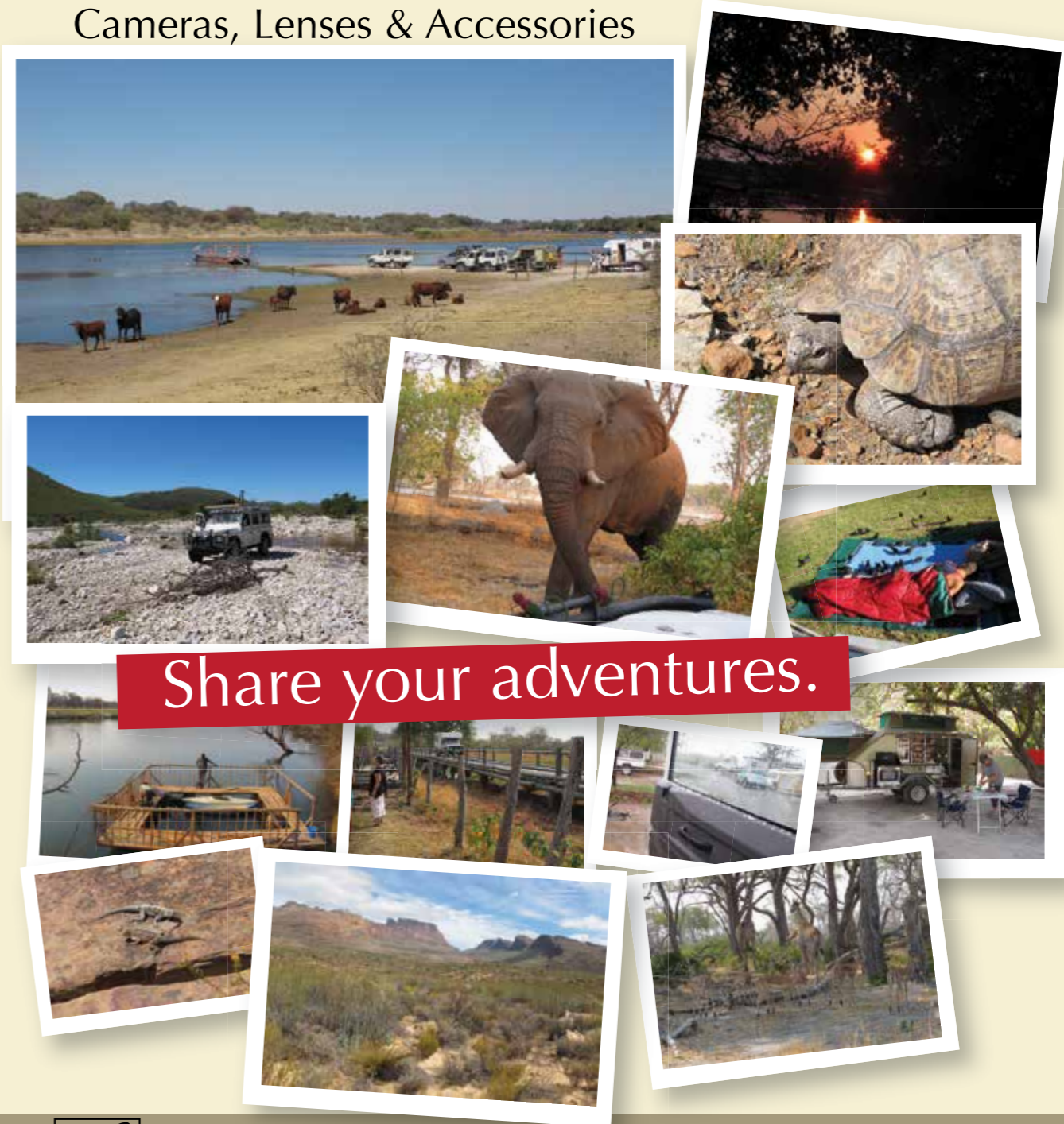
TWO KEEP IT SPICK 'N SPAN

Use a soft, microfibre cloth to effectively clean your lenses and camera. Also, remember to wipe down the exterior for dust that could creep inside the body.

FIVE STORING YOUR CAMERA

Avoid leaving your camera (even if it's in your bag) in the boot of your car in the heat or leaving it in below freezing temperature. These extreme temperatures are not your camera's friend. ☒

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