

BE IN SHAPE

TIPS ON CONDITIONING FOR AN AFRICAN SAFARI

By Tim Danklef

You have booked your safari, now the fun begins. Are you in the proper physical condition for the trip? If you are like most of us, the answer is probably "no." This should not be of concern to the average client as most hunters who enjoy the outdoors maintain a reasonable level of conditioning throughout the year. The bottom line is that you do not have to be able to run a marathon to enjoy your safari. In fact, a typical safari does not require the same level of conditioning as an elk hunt in the Rockies.

Your African safari will require you to be able to walk sometimes 5-6 hours, perhaps 8 to 10 miles if hunting Cape buffalo and they are motivated. Temperatures will be in the mid 70s to mid 80s. The terrain varies from flat ground to rolling hills with an occasional mountain to climb. The typical day can be quite long, as you leave camp before the sun is up and return after dark. Most safaris are from 10-21 days in length, which is generally longer than the average hunt in North America. This said, a safari will require some conditioning prior to your departure.

The main exercise that should be focused on is walking. Start by buying a good quality pair of hunting/walking shoes, the ones you plan on wearing during the safari. Do not wait until the week before your departure to purchase your shoes. Buy them now. These shoes should be lightweight with soft rubber soles. Any of the hiking type, over the ankle style, will work. In fact, many professional hunters actually wear tennis shoes to hunt. The important thing is to buy a pair that is lightweight, quiet, and comfortable.

Next, set aside a schedule that allows you to walk for at least an hour each day, a minimum of 5 days per week. Walk at a comfortable pace, yet as rapidly as you are able. By the time you leave for your safari, you need to be able to walk a minimum of 5 miles. At the end of your walk, you should be able to be in good enough condition to make a shot, if required. If you are able, mix in some slow jogging with your walk. Now you are starting to simulate the safari game!

A safari is a wonderful experience that will be greatly enhanced if you are in reasonably good physical condition. In addition, your chances are much greater of collecting top quality trophies if you are in good physical shape. Time is on your side—take the time now to be in the best physical condition for your safari.