

Into Africa, 2022

Chapter 1 - Getting There

My third trip to South Africa's East Cape was booked back in April. At that time the objective was Barbary sheep and red lechwe, two rather expensive trophies. My PH wanted me to consider adding other species to the list but I remained



evasive: "Time permitting maybe I'll think about shooting something else if it gets in the way." But having guided me to fine kudu bulls on each of my previous safaris, Glen knew my fondness for hunting them. "I'm sure we can find you a fifty incher this time." That bait *almost* got me to commit.



By early summer I had finished sprucing up my old 30-06 Springfield rifle (reblued and added optional iron sights with Warne QD rings) and worked up a slightly sub MOA load with 165



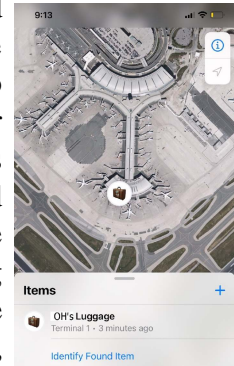
gr Hornady Interlok bullets powered by 55.5 grains of A4035. Fortunately, I had also booked my flight early. Relaxed COVID restrictions led to a stampede of summer vacationers and jammed airports. Spiralling fuel costs and increased demand caused a spike in ticket prices. Since I had already twice jumped through the hoops required to take guns to Africa, all the necessary paperwork to get the Springfield overseas was in hand well before the trip. But by then the news was reporting mountains of misplaced baggage piled up in the major airports. I planned on travelling in hunting clothes with an extra set in my carry-on so I wasn't terribly concerned about my checked baggage except, of course, the rifle. Losing track of a gun in a foreign country is not a good thing! Thanks to a tip from the HuntTalk forum I learned about Apple's AirTag for tracking luggage. But there was a problem: my phone is Android and the AirTag only works with iPhones. My daughter came up with a solution: she could track my AirTag with her iPhone and text its location to me as needed. That should work ... if I could ever find an AirTag. The 2022 vacationer crush and COVID



computer chip shortage made them scarce. Luckily, two days before I expected to leave for Africa I was walking by a small tech store in our local mall and thought I'd check if they had any AirTags. "We just got two in this morning." I could have bought them both but figured I should leave the only one remaining in town for someone else. Sure enough, as I was paying for mine a local nurse walked in and asked the clerk for a luggage tracker. That night my daughter mated the AirTag to her phone and we tested it inside my new Pelican Vault gun case. It seemed to work.

I went home and finished packing. For a change I was ahead of schedule ... or so I thought. Last of my preparations was printing up all the documents including flight itineraries (which had been changed several times by the airlines). Glancing at the Air Canada e-ticket I was shocked to see my departure was scheduled for the next morning instead of two days away! I very nearly missed my flight out which likely would have ended the safari before it was started. The rifle checked in without incident two hours before the scheduled flight departure. Only problem was the gun handling fee. Even the ticket agent couldn't believe what was on his screen: \$225.00! I paid it and he advised me to verify the fee with head office when I returned to see if there was a mistake. My flight out was delayed two hours waiting for the plane to arrive from Toronto's swamped Pearson

Airport. Then our flight on it back to Toronto was delayed four more hours due to local thunderstorms. Foreseeing potential problems with overloaded airports, I had rescheduled long layovers so my luggage, particularly my rifle, would always have plenty of time to get loaded on connecting flights. The flight from Toronto to Frankfurt was also delayed two hours (a short delay for Pearson). My daughter tracked the rifle to the gate and presumably it was loaded on my plane. AirTags utilize nearby iPhones to triangulate location but once the luggage is airborne and everyone on board's phone is switched to airplane mode, tracking ceases. She texted me a screen shot satellite image of the gate with a baggage icon indicating the rifle case's location. It appeared to be loaded on my plane. Whew! Because Air Canada and Lufthansa, my connecting airline from Frankfurt to South Africa, are partnered under the Star Alliance, the rifle only had to be checked in once at my home airport. I didn't see it again until transferring to a local commuter airline in Johannesburg. The flight across the Atlantic was eight hours and the layover in Frankfurt was eleven hours. From Frankfurt to Johannesburg was about ten hours. After a four hour layover in "Joberg," I boarded a packed Safair Airlines Boeing 737 to Port Elizabeth where an hour and a half later a PH (professional hunter) picked me up for the hour's drive to the lodge. My daughter tracked the rifle case all the way.



We arrived at the lodge in time to check my rifle at the range. Turns out I had to scrap all thirty rounds I'd loaded for the safari. The brass was worn out. A very stupid mistake! The lodge let me have some fresh 30-06 ammo loaded with 168 grain Barnes TTSX bullets. They didn't group great (likely due to wrong jump to lands) but would be more reliable than what I had. Glen, my PH from previous trips, had recently taken a lodge manager position at another outfit so I would be guided by the other two staff PHs. Stefan was originally scheduled to handle my safari but a family emergency led to the other PH stepping in after the first day. Unknown to me, the lodge owner had worked out a very good deal on a black wildebeest hunt to replace the bull from my previous trip that the South African taxidermist had ruined. It was an offer I couldn't turn down. The wildebeest property had other animals I could also consider taking if the opportunity arose. At last I was ready to start hunting. We would leave before sunup.

