

# Night a lion came calling!

Checking in...  
**Simon Reeve**  
Television presenter



Picture: BBC THE GARDEN/JONATHAN YOUNG

A lifetime of adventures: Simon in the Congo rainforest while filming his new TV series

**How did you prepare for your new Wilderness TV series?**

I WAS jabbed like a pin cushion — everything from typhoid to tuberculosis — and got into shape by running around Devon wearing a 15kg vest.

**What did you pack before venturing into the Congo jungles?**

A LIGHTWEIGHT tent and a pair of jungle boots with perforated soles to let out water — because I had to wade through streams. I also made sure I had anti-malarials as well as a mosquito net and insect repellent. Last but not least, I took teabags and a 'bidet bottle' — a squeeze bottle you can use instead of loo paper.

**What were the highlights of the series?**

ONE was working with the legendary sand trackers in the Kalahari as they hunted for food to feed their families. Another was climbing up to the South Patagonia ice field, high in the Andes.

**See any wildlife there?**

YES, I got to swim with whale sharks the size of a single-decker

bus off New Guinea and get up close to our closest relatives in the animal world, the bonobo [pygmy chimpanzee] in the Congo.

**Any scary moments on your adventures?**

I WAS asleep in my tent in the Kalahari when a lion began sniffing outside, smelling a juicy snack. One of my guides shooed it away.

**Most challenging day?**

DURING the sea crossing over the Coral Triangle in Indonesia, Eric, our director, went down with a fever. It ended up OK, but we were a very long way from a

hospital. It had been jolly adventures up to then.

**The most relaxing place you visited?**

BOBBING around on the sea in the Coral Triangle on a slow boat. Lying on a hammock I had time to practise some really cheesy Indonesian pop tunes on a gitar-ukulele — a cross between a guitar and a ukulele.

**Pick up any local lingo?**

I'VE been wary of attempting the local lingo since nearly sparking a riot in a former Soviet republic when I tried to ask for fruit in a

market, but mistakenly asked a lady for something indecent.

**Had many run-ins with the authorities?**

THE only intimidating moment was when rangers wielding assault rifles got on my boat in the Coral Triangle.

**Any tips for dealing with police and customs?**

BE RESPECTFUL. Don't say: 'I'm a Brit — get me out of here!'

**Best food you tried?**

A FISH curry with the Bajau Laut

people in the Coral Triangle. It had chunky fish and a delicate flavour. A welcome relief after our freeze-dried expedition food.

**Anything that didn't go down so well?**

STAYING with the gaucho cowboys in Patagonia we were served testicles for breakfast, lunch and dinner. I don't object to eating testicles in that scenario, but it got a bit much.

**Where would you like to visit that's new to you?**

I'D LOVE to explore more of our own spectacular islands with my 12-year-old lad Jake.

**What have you learnt from wild places?**

THAT while we have done so much to damage our planet, there is still great beauty out there. I felt reassured that these places still exist and I feel passionately that we should protect them.

**Did you miss the UK while in the jungle?**

FAMILY, friends and Guinness, in that order — probably.

**Where next for you outside of Britain?**

I'D love to travel more in Brazil, Indonesia and the Philippines.

■ **WILDERNESS with Simon Reeve is on Sundays at 9pm on BBC2 and on BBC iPlayer**

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