

African PH Spotlight

PETER DAFNER

German-born Peter Dafner operates in Tanzania as PD Safaris. He is a member of the International Professional Hunters Association and is a life member of the Tanzania PH Association.



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What do you wish a first-time DG client knew before arriving?

The good old saying—the more practice you have the luckier you get—is still very valid! An African safari for dangerous big game is far from home, very expensive, always involves an element of danger. Don't be scared, but always have and show respect for the animals. Get familiar with your big bore rifle at 50 to 80 yards shooting from sticks as well as off hand, and you will get an adventure of a lifetime.

How often do things go about as planned?

It has been at least somewhere between 90-95 percent as planned. The few times that things did not work out too well were because the plan was usually sloppy.

Who and how many people make up your best DG hunting team?

Rama has been my driver, mechanic and emergency backup tracker for many years; No. 1 tracker Juma is fearless and I am convinced that he can feel what the animals are going to do next. In his younger days he acted like a clown and entertainer as well. Both are close friends now.

What makes a good client into a great client?

Communication and early acceptance to work as a team. Ideally, meeting up before the hunt, asking as many questions as possible and getting a feeling of comfort with your outfitter and PH.

I would add this question: What makes a good PH into a great PH?

My answer is that a great PH should be able to read his clients' abilities very early on how he can walk, shoot, stalk, etc. and according to these abilities guide his client as calmly as needed to get the best possible opportunity to get his adventure (trophy animal). A great PH will explain to his clients what is happening, what he is thinking, what the next moves will be, so the client can be part of the overall experience.

Should clients do a “starter” safari on plains game, but then “graduate” for a second trip? Or do you have clients who want to DO IT ALL?

Both: most people give it a try first in Namibia and/or South Africa and later get addicted to remote places, and the adrenaline rush when following dangerous big game in remote areas. However, I also had several clients that came on their first hunt for full bag 21 days or even longer.

What was the best thing about your first dangerous game hunt, either as a pro or on your own?

My first self-guided hunt in Rwanda in 1990 left me with so many positive impressions of the continent, the people with their traditions and mentality, the animals—all these details combined brought me back to the continent two years later and I started my career as professional hunter—never to look back again to my former “civilized life.”

Besides not finding an appropriate and legal animal, are there any reasons you would back away from a hunt, or a shot?

The older I get, the more I have hunted, the more I am looking for the overall experience for the clients and if several standards and overall feelings are not met, then I recommend to walk away from it. Ortega y Gasset, a Spanish philosopher once said: “One does not hunt in order to kill; on the contrary, one kills in order to have hunted.” If anyone in the hunting party does not feel comfortable with dangerous game around, then rather pull back. Better be safe than sorry.



No. 1 Tracker Juma

What is your favorite dangerous game species and why?

Elephant. Doing it the right way (in my opinion, this includes not provoking charges). Following big old bulls for miles and miles, days and days, getting up close and personal with an animal that is my age or even older. This is always the highest level and a mixture of adrenaline with mixed emotions.

What's the best advice you received as you were growing up and doing PH apprenticeship? Who are your mentors and heroes?

Geoff Wainwright was a great mentor, the funniest PH to ever sit with around a camp fire. He said, “Pace yourself and give each client 100 percent of your attention, experience and knowledge.” Robin Hurt is a gentleman, and the most professional and interesting personality in all aspects I have ever seen.



Do you have favorite DG guns, optics and gear?

- Heym .500 NE has never failed to stop dangerous big game, and I feel a lot more comfortable walking into a thicket with this much shorter and well balanced gun, knowing I have that second barrel, when I really need it the most.
- .416 bolt action with a scope, when penetration counts
- O/U shotgun to follow up on wounded leopard
- As a good friend of mine said: always buy the best quality equipment you can afford!

What are your experiences with poaching, anti-poaching and anti-hunting efforts?

It seems that, in the last 25 years, we get waves of poaching coming and going.

Unfortunately, I had one of my trackers killed by poachers. He died in my arms and ... I still fight for the future of dangerous big game in remote areas and always will.

Favorite celebratory food and drink after a successful hunt?

Single malt whiskey with one ice cube and roasted peanuts around a campfire.

What do you do on holiday?

Hunt, fish, competition shooting, outdoor photography, travel with my fiancée ... not in this sequence necessarily.

If she was willing, would you take your mother on a dangerous game hunt, and would you be her PH?

Unfortunately, she died many years ago. However, if she was still around, absolutely yes, but it would be difficult to keep up with her. 🐘