ESCAPE in STYLE
Sunset shades, dream dresses & swimwear to love

How to make that summer body last all year

Wild at Heart

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How to make that summer body last all year
The elephant is nature’s great masterpiece but its very survival is under threat. In a 53-page special, PORTER visits northern Kenya to report on the crisis facing these majestic creatures, who without our protection could disappear in a single generation. We travel with Save the Elephants ambassador Doutzen Kroes and fellow Dutch model Imaan Hammam to the breathtaking Samburu National Reserve to meet the family who have made the elephants’ survival their life’s work.
Fragile World

When Dutch supermodel Doutzen Kroes heard about the crisis facing elephants and the effect their loss would have on our planet, she was compelled to get involved. Here, she travels with Lucy Yeomans to the nerve center of the Save the Elephants operation in Kenya to meet conservationist Saba Douglas-Hamilton who, with her family and the local Samburu people, is fighting tirelessly to keep the species alive.

Photography by Vincent van de Wijngaard
Fashion editor: Julia von Buehvar
I couldn’t walk on concrete every day. I couldn’t live in a city. It would choke me,” says Saba Douglas-Hamilton as we stand watching the sunrise in the Samburu National Reserve in northern Kenya, the silhouette of the nearby mountains just visible in the early morning light. “This,” she says, surveying the unending landscape, “feeds my soul.”

The conservationist, wildlife filmmaker and Sano the Elephants campaigner and I are watching Dutch supermodels Doutzen Kroes and Inma Hammam pose for the PORTER shoot. Against the vast, sun-drenched wilderness, with a herd of elephants just coming into view, the two models resemble exquisite birds of paradise, the vivid colors of their dresses searing through the dawn mist.

Despite having only arrived yesterday (along with Doutzen, the PORTER crew and my four-year-old daughter Redi), and the mammoth task in front of us, Africa is already working its magic and I feel a rare sense of peace. Saba tells me how much she loves watching the effect Africa has on people. “The city skin begins to slough off... suddenly there’s a connection again with the wild world, something many people have lost.”

It has been nearly 20 years since Saba and I first met at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. I will never forget our first encounter. It was at a first-term ball and all of us girls were dressed up in 1900s taffeta creations. Then in walked this mesmerizing young woman in a simple seagreen, figure-skimming cotton shantung, feathers casually pinned in her hair. We were transfixed. I got to know the Kenyan-born beauty better the following year when we were cast as witches in Macbeth. Saba worked with the director on a hypnotic tribal dance: lit by torchlight, on the ruins of St Andrews’ castle. During rehearsals, I learned about Saba’s childhood in Africa, and the work her father, Sir Ian Douglas-Hamilton, an...
acclaimed zoologist and conservationist, was doing with Save the Elephants, the NGO he had set up to secure a future for the elephants. In the coming year I would watch Saba present wildlife programs; and I heard from mutual friends how she'd married handsome British conservationist and author Frank Pope, and that they had settled in Kenya over 10 years ago. They joined their parents to work with SNT, which set up the Elephant Crisis Fund in 2013 with the Wildlife Conservation Network in response to the escalating threat from poaching and trading in ivory. I never imagined, however, that our paths would one day cross again quite like this.

It was a chance visit to Elephant Watch Camp (the eco-lodge set up by Jane’s wife Chris, by David Bannister, founder of DNA Model Management in New York, and his American partner and former model Trish Goff, that set the PORTER collaboration in motion. David and Trish, inspired by Saba the Elephants’ work, returned to New York determined to get the fashion world behind the cause. Doutzen Kroes, the Victoria’s Secret star, had been following his Instagram posts and wanted to know more. “David told me to go to Africa and meet the Douglas-Hamiltons,” says Doutzen. “I think even he was surprised how quickly I organised that first trip.” After a week at Elephant Watch Camp, Doutzen returned similarly inspired, and she, David and Trish devised a campaign, #KissMyElephants, which they launched with Tiffany & Co. in New York last September, and which has already helped to raise close to $2m for the Elephant Crisis Fund. It was at that launch, attended by fashion’s great and good, as well as Leonardo DiCaprio who has since donated film to the cause, that Trish, David, Doutzen and I first met to discuss our plan and how best we could shine a light on the plight of the elephants and the work of the Douglas-Hamiltons.

"David told me to go to Africa... I think even he was surprised how quickly I organized that first trip"  
Doutzen Kroes
Saba Douglas-Hamilton grew up with elephants—and is passionate that future generations should do so too. Here, she explains the threats these awe-inspiring mammals face and what we can do to save them...

Sitting under the stars, apart from the others in a dry shrubland, had been blissfully, alone. Then she suddenly heard a low, dark rumbling. It was so close that it blocked out half the night sky. There was nowhere to run to the nearest sandy soft sand. All around was play-steady and at his steady, a dangerous human. Entirely at his mercy and helpless on the ground in front of him, I was astonished when the giant bull elephant decided to spare my life. And rather than crush me with his knees or skitter me through with a task, after a long and heart-stopping moment of utter stillness, standing directly above me, he reached out his trunk and instead flapped me from head to toe in his breath before setting silently away in the moonlight.

I grew up with elephants as part of my extended family, as my father Dr Ian Douglas-Hamilton was among the first wave of conservationists dispatched to study the behavior of animals in the wild in the mid-1960s. June Goodall got chimpanzees. George Schaller got lions, David Livingstone gorillas and my father got elephants, but that moment with the bull elephant in the riverbed was definitely when I felt most powerfully the particular mix of awesome strength, complex intelligence and compassionate gentleness that is the elephant.

Elephants are some of the most socially interesting and clever creatures on this planet. There is a mind that experiences the world in a very different way from ours, but many parallels exist. The chimpanzees is closest to us, the dolphins perhaps next, and the human further still. But throughout human history, there has been something special about the intelligence of elephants that fascinates me. I see this time, and again in northern Kenya when I introduced people to elephants in the wild for the first time and witness their power to transform human hearts and souls. Thank you to those people who can truly explain why.

But unlike my experience in the riverbed, it is elephants that need the mercy of humanity not the other way around. They are fast disappearing beneath the storm of human needs and desires, and without urgent help could disappear from the wild...
in our lifetime. Once they’re gone, that’s it. And if we allow elephants, the largest, most charismatic land mammal on our planet, to be wiped out, then what hope for the myriad smaller species that make our world the site of a complex web of life we know it is?

Desire for white gold, or ivory, is sometimes cited, or in the current crisis for elephants. It’s nothing new. Africa’s elephants north of the Sahara disappeared 2,000 years ago thanks to the appetite for ivory in human times. In the colonial era, because of elephants for their tusks became industrial killed. By the 1970s and 1980s, America, Europe, Japan and were the main markets.

I long among elephants in Tanzania my father suspected that the killing was unsustainable, while the ivory’s disbelief. In the behavioral studies to measure such was going on. As he believed him at first, but when he published the data from his par. African elephant oceans, it was a question of. Eventually, in 1990, a worldwide ban on international trade in ivory was put into place.

That should have been the end to elephant ivory problems, and it was an apparent. But a misguided desire to kill as some force of habit in 2008, 2009, despite huge demand from China. In 2020

over 30,000 elephants a year were being killed, their rays removed from the elephants and processed through smuggling networks to feed an insatiable market. By 208,000 price of ivory had reached a new record of over $10,000/kg, up 320,000.

The problem was, Vietnam has been evolving. The continent’s second largest elephant population, the Seseus in Tanzania, was reduced by 60 percent just in the last five years. The rainforests of the Democratic Republic of Congo have largely been emptied of elephants, with only five to ten thousand thought to remain. These쪽, which are the only species that depend on some of the longer trees, without them the structure of the forest itself is changing. Forests that have been unsustainably removed from an entire ecosystem and its functions.

My father established the Elephant 900 to continue the mission to understand and protect elephants with the power of science. Following elephants using radio tracking collars, a particular specialty that he pioneered, is just an example of how we conceive of them. Initially, the elephants would take the grand scale of elephantic forests. Now they allow researchers to follow them in real time and defend them in the high-risk areas such as a elephant would live his life. This technology has now been built upon a system that’s being deployed in national parks across Africa to be felled, but not just elephants but all wildlife.

But there’s one thing that will help remove elephants more than any other, collaboration. Thanks to its global nature and the centralized strategies of odd-inclusive ivory trafficking for any organization or entity to tackle on its own. But together we can achieve. In 2011, with our friends at the Wildlife Conservation Network, we set up the Elephant Crisis Fund. The idea was to feed the desire for ivory, it is killed by the Frontline in Africa, and the building movement that does it with new power to create change. One hundred percent of all donations go directly to the field. Free from the constraints of a single organization, the fund has grown fast to become a powerful force for elephants.

More than 45 different organizations have been supported in their work to stop the killing of elephants, stop the trafficking of ivory and stop the illegal trade in wildlife across some 25 countries around the world.

This coalition for elephants has had some great successes from the grassroots level to the highest levels. One small group has managed to convince Congo’s first national park in 60 years, and has seen elephants returning across areas they’d not been seen for the last 60 years. This year saw the members of one of East Africa’s largest groups the Maasai implicated in large-scale ivory smuggling, as well as the drug trade and international drug trafficking that profits the US, but the law enforcement of it by 2017 China has agreed to cut down all of its ivory retail shops and end domestic trade.

There’s still a long way to go, but the coalition is growing. Last year the fashion industry joined the ranks. Dolce & Gabbana came to meet the elephants at our research site in Soncino National Reserve and immediately understood what was at stake. She became the first company to pull a movement across the industry that started behind the scenes and then made its move. Now she has returned with a 2017 magazine to shoot this issue and raise awareness.

Elephants are engaged in the future they’re going to need the whole world on their side. Just as that magnificent bull in a month’s ago shone on his neck. I believe that by joining hands and taking steps together, we can save the elephants and give them the fabric of life on which we all depend.

Bernard Leeslin, semi-aide and semi-aide to the director of the Elephant Watch Camp

It was our school friend, the man who inspired me to learn the Chinese English and the culture. Bernard Leeslin, pictured right with Safari Solutions. Bernard Leeslin first learned about the work of the foundation.

When we moved to Africa in the early 1980s, we began working on the project’s mission to protect and conserve elephants.

Leeslin(1983) was the fourth member of our team. We met him in Beijing, and he joined us on our first expedition to China. Our mission was to raise awareness about the importance of protecting Africa’s wildlife and to promote the cultivation of African wildlife. Understanding the role of elephants in the ecosystem is crucial to the survival of all wildlife.

The Leeslin family has been involved in the protection of African wildlife since the early 1980s. They have worked tirelessly to protect and conserve African wildlife, and their dedication has been instrumental in the success of our project.

Leeslin was a leading wildlife conservationist and played a pivotal role in the project. He was instrumental in raising awareness about the importance of protecting African wildlife and promoting the cultivation of African wildlife. Under his leadership, the project was able to achieve significant milestones.

Leeslin was a visionary leader who understood the importance of conservation and the role that elephants play in the ecosystem. He was passionate about protecting African wildlife and promoting the cultivation of African wildlife. Under his leadership, the project was able to achieve significant milestones.

Leeslin passed away in 2017, leaving a legacy of dedication and commitment to the protection of African wildlife. His contributions to wildlife conservation will be remembered for generations to come.
Day 1

The moment our twin-keg plane touched down in Samburu, we were thrust into an intoxicating new world. Samburu warriors greeted us on the dusty airstrip, their brightly colored kilimaks and layers of beads gleaming in the blazing sun. My daughter jumps excitedly into the arms of a warrior — and for the next few days extracting her to sigh is impossible. On the 50-minute drive to Elephant Watch Camp, we pass giraffe, dik-diks and blue-gallon birds, and up elephant in the distance.

The welcome at the camp is just as warm. Conceived and designed by Ortis in 2001 as a place to host donors and visitors interested in the work of Save the Elephants, Elephant Watch Camp is a luxurious, eco-friendly retreat where guests can learn about elephants and get close to them. “It’s not for tourists,” Saba tells me. “The point is to bring people here and introduce them to elephants in a safe but intimate way. I’m like a conservation recruitment agent,” she laughs. “People often want to help, but they feel impotent. We unlock the door, show how to take the first steps and fire up the heart.”

One look at model Imama Hazimah, who arrived a couple of days before us at her agent David’s suggestion and is already sporting one of the camps’ elephant-print kimonos, and it is clear that this first-time visitor to Kenya has been well and truly hooked. “Look,” beams one of fashion’s most exciting new faces, waving her iPhone. “Last night I saw elephants, it was just magical.”

For me, it’s a treat after all these years to catch up with Saba, who runs the camp with her husband Paul, new CEO of STE, and to meet their three children, Selkie, seven, and twins Mayan and Luna, five. “Let’s take Rod to visit the safari school,” she grins, as she leads me down tree-lined paths to...
a small hut, covered with banners bearing heraldic shields, times table charts and children’s paintings. Inside, sitting with their mother, are her children. They stop for break time - Selkie is taught how to throw a knife by a warrior and the twins climb the trees swaying up acacia trees.

Saba and Frank’s lifestyle is a simple one. Compared to the guests’ exquisitely decorated tented cottages, the family’s quarters are far more basic: netted tents, rush matting and camp beds for the three girls. Books aside, it’s a pared-down, possession-free zone.

Later that evening over supper on the banks of the Eleaas Ng’iro river, which has completely dried up thanks to a severe drought, Saba explains the family’s participation in Save the Elephants. “My sister Dush is the spoke coordinating the Elephant Crisis Fund’s work on anti-trafficking. I specialize in telling the story and linking it to the bigger picture, my father is the scientist and big-strategist thinker, Frank is CEO and Oria is, well, the mighty matriarch.” The other crucial element, she stresses, is the 40-strong team around the world, including front-line scientist Chris Thonless, who is also director of the ICP, and spends his time penetrating some of the remotest and most troubled regions of Africa to find the right people to help. Back home the family’s principal partners are the Samburu people. Indeed, it is this very involvement, the deep friendships and respectful collaborations that exist between the Douglas-Hamiltons and the Samburu that strikes me most in the days that follow.

Day 2

We wake at 4.30am and creep out of the tents in the pitch-black, recalling Saba’s words to always check surrounding...

FOUNDRY OF SAV E THE ELEPHANTS
Acclaimed conservationists Saba and Frank Douglas-Hamilton, inspiring the work they have done in Kenya and Tanzania here with their three grandchildren, Selkie, seven, and twin Mayan and Max, five.
trees just in case there is an elephant or another creature grazing or sleeping among them. We are still hoping to shoot Doutzen’s solo cover with an elephant in the frame, and there has been much discussion since we arrived as to how this will happen—unlike those who feature in countless photographic and film shoots, these are wild African elephants. “The best person to make it happen is Saha,” Bernard Lescot, the Samhuru warden who is driving our jeep today, confirms. “Some elephants are aggressive, some are shy; Saha knows which is which.” An experienced guide, Bernard is one of two Samhuru accompanying us on today’s mission. Saha drives the last jeep, with Doutzen, Inoua and renowned Dutch photographer Vincent van der Wijngaard.

We eat a breakfast of boiled eggs, banana bread and fruit while we wait for the sun to come up (the models are crew wrapped in Douglas Hamilton turban blankets). Bernard explains how STE has named each of the 1,000 or so elephants and their families that use the reserve, “We know the Swahili ladies, the Spice Girls, the Hard Woods, the Artists, the Whillas... and,” he pauses, “I always love seeing the Royals—with Anzestanin and Cheopatra—who are, quite unusually for elephants, joint matriarchs of the herd.” Saha chimes in, “We could use names to ID them, but names help you to connect with them as characters, to see them as individuals.”

With shots of the two models together completed, we try to locate a suitable elephant family for the solo cover and on create listen to snatches of radio conversation in a mixture of English, Samhuru and Swahili. Elephants successfully located, Saha directs the jeeps into position like a grand master plotting their next chess move. She tells Doutzen to get out of the car and stand silently next to the open door so the photographer can get a shot as the elephants walk behind.>
Getting so close to these majestic animals is a rare treat and the atmosphere is one of excitement and awe. All is going to plan until a lone bull elephant, hidden in the dense trees behind us, looms suddenly across our vehicles and trumpets the alarm. The mother elephant, who had been wandering peacefully behind Doutzen, begins to menace the car and Saba signals her to run. It’s an undramatic-filled moment. “I have never seen anyone move so fast in my life,” Bernard jokes, afterwards to Doutzen, who, in a fraction of a second, somehow managed to vault back into the car, even in her field full-length dress. “I was the only one who couldn’t see what was going on with the elephants,” Doutzen tells me later. “I had to trust Saba 100 percent and just keep looking into her eyes.”

Doutzen’s unfailable response is remarkable and we continue to witness her game spirit throughout the day.

In one shot, she climbs a tree with Saba, both pretending to be baboons (which helps calm the elephants), lying low on the branch so the elephants below can’t make out their human.

Noteworthy: Leliofo, senior guide and assistant operations manager at Elephant Watch Camp.

“I went to one of the schools that Save the Elephants supports,” Leliofo chuckles. “As we were off on a game drive, “This is my area, and I have always admired the work of Save the Elephants, and wanted to work for them.” He was a meeting with him, who called him the next day to offer him an internship. He’s been part of the team at Elephant Watch Camp for 13 years now. Since no one across the world has a dossier of these, Leliofo believes there are far more elephants and their cubs, sleeping in the indigenous, remote areas. “There is a lot of work that needs to be done,” he says. “I’d love to take this on, and start studying the relationships between these elephants.”

So while he’s been here, he’s been able to do just that. He started his work, and since then, he’s been able to study the more than 200 elephants in the area.

“Being employed at Elephant Watch Camp, I feel very proud of it, you know,” he says, as we drive back to the camp. “I’ve been here for 13 years now.”

“I am very proud of it, you know,” he says, as we drive back to the camp. “I’ve been here for 13 years now.”
silhouettes. It is gripping to watch the elephants pass so close to them. On the drive back to the camp, there is a mood of excitement. The most challenging shots are in the bag.

In the evening we are joined by Frank, who has flown in from investigating an elephant death, and Iain and Ori in from their home in Nairobi. The little ones are thrilled to see their father and grandparents and the whole family disappears for a stroll up the dry riverbed, before joining us for a lively dinner, where Iain and Ori are bombarded with questions about their life and work. They are impressive, charming and impressively energetic (it's hard to believe they are both in their mid-seventies), and we all listen, entranced by Ori's tales of adventures and Iain's prognosis on the elephant crisis.

A sobering moment comes after dinner: an elephant poaching incident has been discovered further north and David Dibbent, Iain and Frank's right-hand man and head of field operations who had gone to investigate, has not been in touch for 24 hours. "It's volatile out there," explains Iain. "And these killings are for ivory. The situation has been a bit better here in Kenya recently, but this shows you can never be complacent." The story of what happened will unfold over the course of our trip.

**Day 3**

I have gleaned up lots of interesting facts about the work of Save the Elephants – and the crisis facing the animals – but it is a privilege to finally get the complete picture from Iain, the godfather of elephant research and conservation, who I talk to after breakfast. As always, he is clutching his iPhone and, like Iain a few days earlier, he is keen to show me something on it. "As you can see technology plays a great part in our lives," he says showing me images of elephant skulls and detailed maps of Samburu (Save the Elephants works closely with Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen's company Vulcan, a key supporter and co-founder of the Save the Elephants Tracking App). "I see, for example, where this young bull was a few hours ago."

Iain, who admits he got into elephants by accident ("I went to Africa in the 1980s to study lions but was told George Schaller already had them and was asked if I would like elephants instead"), was the first to track them using radio-collars, which now provide a near-instantaneous GPS location. He can also tell if an elephant has been immobile for an unnaturally long period, a warning that it might be in trouble. Longer term, the data helps to build a better knowledge of elephant behavior.

"There are two very powerful reasons for tracking them," says Iain. "One is to protect them from poachers – if the anti-poaching people have an idea of where the elephants are moving they can organize patrols preemptively. The second is to help prevent crop raiding, the other main reason why elephants are killed illegally. Iain shows me some charts on his laptop monitoring the movements of Tim, a big tusker from a region where there is a huge crop-raiding problem. "The Kenya Wildlife Service and some other NGOs asked us if we could help by tracking him. So we collared him and set up a whole load of buffer zones when one is crossed a signal is sent to the rangers. This one's called the OB line – the Obsidian line," he laughs, "which means he's now in the crops and we need to be headed off by the anti-crop-raiding patrol."

Iain is a gifted raconteur who manages to weave science, statistics and anecdotes into an easily comprehensible and palatable stream. It serves him well, as an important part of his life is an element that is critical to the success of Save the Elephants is lobbying governments, securing funding, encouraging collaboration and generally building momentum. He describes the many hoops that he and others jumped through in order to explain the impact of the ivory trade to the Chinese government and persuade them to ban it – the massive slaughter of elephants since 2008 was largely driven by the increasing demand for ivory in China. Iain shows me two anti-poaching videos created with Chinese basketball star Yao Ming and actress Li Bingbing, both influential public figures who have visited Save the Elephants in Samburu. They are powerful and very moving and Iain believes they along with high level lobbying, had an important effect. After many years of sharing the stories and the data, last year the Chinese ban on ivory was finally announced. "We can't say it was easy and fast, but we can say that we made the effort and the law changed," Iain concludes. "We should show them to your team," he adds with a wink, "to motivate them a bit."

The crew watch the films before lunch. We've barely sat down to eat when Frank suggests a change of plans for the afternoon's schedule – to visit the carcass of an elephant found 50km away. Vincent and I are both overjoyed think it's important that we go. I'm concerned about publishing this image, but in my heart I know this is a story that has to be told, either in pictures or words, so I join the trip. The necessary vehicles...
including the Save the Elephants four-seater bushplane, are quickly mobilized. The timings, Souza explains, are tight because we need to land back in Samburu before sunset.

"It was really nervous," Doutzen tells me later. "But I knew it was important that I saw this to make sense of everything we are doing." The atmosphere aboard the plane, with its red tail and pearly elephant logo, is subdued. Doutzen and I are worried we will say "Don't worry" reassures Frank from the cockpit before we take off. "You're not alone. I am crying at the drop of a hat!"

Frank touches the plane down on the dusty Shaba airstrip where we meet a jeep driven by a young Jeremie. He's met Frank about his father-in-law, "His guiding star in life," he begins. "Data is what drives every decision we make. Back in the day people used to say we were crying wolf about the crisis facing the elephants. No one believed him. Now they do."

Three years ago, China was in complete denial, but thanks to the data, they eventually understood that this was real. All the stakeholding factors and stories we are now hearing are genuine.

Some 45 minutes later, we arrive at a stream surrounded by acacia trees. It's one of the most verdant, eddy-free landscapes we have yet seen in the area. The only sign that something is amiss are the valvatures sitting strangely in the trees ahead. We walk in silence up a slight hill and suddenly the body of the elephant comes into view. From one side, it looks as if it's just sleeping by a tree, but from the other, we can see the bloodied leg where it was shot and the remnants of a trunk, clearly eaten away by animals. "Hyenas probably," Jeremie tells me later. Insects swarm over the open wound and the stench is repellent. There are no words to describe the immediate feeling. Each one of us is silent, lost in thought. Doutzen tells me later it was the saddest day of her life. "Seeing something so beautiful, something that has taken so long to create, just lying dead there... it felt completely unnecessary." The reasons behind the killing are as yet unmore: Frank and Jeremie do not think it is a poaching death because the tusks were left intact. "It could have been a herdsman who just stumbled across an elephant and fired off his AK-47 to scare it away," says Frank. "Or it could have got caught in the crossfire of a tribal altercation."

Doutzen goes with Jeremie and Frank to see the elephant up close. She then plays a sprite of green twigs on what is left of its forehead and stands together in silence. Afterwards, Jeremie tells me about the ritual. "The Samburus have an elephant clan," he explains, "so we give respect when we see a carcass. We find some green twigs, place it on their head and say 'Sleep well our comrade.' That's also what elephants do when they find a dead person, they find a twig or a branch and place it on the body. My own tears, which I have managed to keep in check until this moment, suddenly begin to stream. Doutzen, who has also been crying, walks over to me and hugs each other for a few moments, both rendered completely speechless by what we have seen.

We are all silent on the plane ride home, processing what we have just seen. It is only when the plane circles Elephant Watch Camp and we catch sight of the children playing on the dry riverbed, wading up to us as if financially with boating gigs, that the somber mood lifts. >

David Babbelin, head of field operations, Samburu Camp

"We've been a hard week," says David Babbelin, "an attempt to summon a smile as he pulls up chair opposite me outside the Samburu Elephant Camp research center in Samburu. The elephant skull out in the fields behind him, a reminder of the very real danger he has faced. Head of field operations and a member of the Save the Elephants care for nearly. Babbelin has just returned from the northeast, where he was investigating what turned on the large-scale elephant poaching incident, the blush of which has not been weakened in this area for some time.

Six days earlier, Babbelin had told us the Northern Highlands that some of the community rangers had heard reports of dead elephants found at homes. Our mission was to actually see where he had heard that they died. The poachers had discouraged them high in the hills, in those invisible for female, 25-year-old radical and young kid from the same group. They explained how the had collected the skull from a field. "The poachers are very experienced, they get closer to the elephants who are probably all just standing in the shade and just went there, here, straight at their heads," Babbelin the next day was rougher and more pronounced."

"It's a 24km trek through the 60-degree heat, and while the Save the Elephants workers were hot and sweating the dragnet, the kids said, "We, the elephants passed through life, and now we have this crisis."

On the day the skull was found, the animal was only 10 days old, Babbelin said. "We have never discovered. It, but there were more, definitely more."

After leaving school the first day he wanted to become a game warden, the key element in the poaching front. The man had chased after the Save the Elephants, "If you've ever done it, you know it's hard."

"We have to get to know individual, and I told them, 'You can't be afraid.'" After two months, he added, "We don't second-guess our first instincts, but today, we have never discovered. It, but there were more, definitely more.""
That night Oria and Saba have planned a special surprise. We climb a nearby hilltop to join a group of about 40 Samburu warriors and women in a special ceremony in which a goat is sacrificed. Back at the camp a huge table has been laid out by the riverbed and a bonfire lit. Imam and Doctzen are the first to be pulled by the warriors when the dancing begins and soon we all find ourselves joining in the hypnotic chant. Seeing my daughter who has definitely slapped off her city skin, wearing only cut-off denim shorts, her body and legs smeared with mud, swaying and jumping in the firefight between two outrageously dressed warriors, totally lost in and bewitched by this extraordinary new world, is a moment I will never forget. It has been a day of highs and lows for us all.

Day 4

It is our last morning and before we fly back to Nairobi, the team are capturing a few final shots of the special Tiffany & Co. elephant charms that will be sold globally from June to raise money for the fund. I still haven’t visited the research center or talked with David Simioben, who thankfully had returned safely to Samuru in the night. So I jump in a jeep with Ian to get an update on the killings in the north.

We pull up to the research center: a cluster of huts and one partly-open-sided building; the visitors’ center, which Ian tells me was opened by Chelsea Clinton ten years ago. The walls are covered with boards outlining some of the projects the Save the Elephants is working on, including those the Elephant Crisis Fund has financed. But it is the seriously cramped remains of a jeep that captures my attention. “Yes, that’s what an elephant can do if he’s really angry,” Ian grins. “The two researchers in the rear were [CONTINUED ON PAGE 160]
Elephant Watch Camp

When the jeep pulls up at Elephant Watch Camp, a secret clearing of four tents, count our elation for the brief journey to the lush banks of the Hoanib Valley you’ve arrived somewhere special. Few finds have yet to encounter a herd of elephants or some similarly grand sight on the short drive from the airstrip; there is every chance you will witness the grandeur of the camp itself. And the sight of the Sandmuus lush surroundings, draped in vivid pink, red and blue-shades, arms and necks decorated with bracelets and necklaces, is a visual and emotional treat. The magic of the sanctuary is now heightened by the warm and inviting welcome. Any children in the party are quickly wooed up by the warriors; those so friendly and gentle as they are sturdy and proud. And soon monkey spotting near the reached or cushioned trees, while you indulge with a refreshing drink and take in our beautiful new surroundings. The lush, adorned ceilings, adorned with pink and red mother-of-pearl fabrics, the soft sofas and arm chairs, all surrounded by elephant decorations and cushions, the coffee tables bring in this book the rainbow-colored crystal chandeliers above the honey hue and, of course, the view. I wanted to create something different, a place where our guests could come and join us in our life and learn more about elephants and conservation, explains Toni Douglas Hamilton, our conservator, designer and author. First set up the camp in 2018 to give back for her and her husband, Jan, and visions to see following the opening of the Save the Elephants research center. "I wanted something that was intimate and real and that allowed guests on an elephant," she says. "I used all the trees that had fallen or been pushed over by the elephants in the natural landscape. We kept it as natural as possible. Like those beds, she points to a strip of a chair, "it’s completely made from the trees" the bed, laying on top of the trees. Everything has been locally sourced or recycled. That was our vision."

Today, Elephant Watch Camp, which is now owned by Toni’s daughter Sallie (who is also a special projects director at Save the Elephants) boasts six luxurious tented bedrooms, each decorated in a similarly vibrant color to the main drawing room. Guests can enjoy hot showers in the house, open air shower rooms that are perched on animal stilts decorated, upside-down, weathering any style contempo with as much of the best cooking I’ve ever tasted. It’s another unique fusion of Italian and African food, much of which is freshly picked from Toni’s organic vegetable garden. In the evenings, lanterns lead guests to a dining table by the river bed and starry sky, where one can listen from the Sandmuus and a member of the Douglas Hamilton family about the elephant community.

Getting people to love these majestic creatures is, after all, the real purpose of Elephant Watch Camp, as Sallie, the most well-known and beloved of all the people in the world as the sun rises on a gentle drive the next morning. "Tell it to our honey tour. We want to bring the people, feed them well and ensure they have a great and conservation tour," says Sallie.