

# History of Safari West



## **The original vision of Safari West is Peter Lang's.**

While growing up, Peter was surrounded by exotic wildlife. His father was film and television director, Otto Lang, who exposed Peter to these magnificent animals while working on projects such as "Daktari," "Flipper," and "Sea Hunt." In 1978, Peter discovered his passion for African hoofstock with the purchase of three Eland — these large antelope proved to be experts in pruning the bushes on his former L.A. area ranch!

Over the next decade, Peter continued to grow his collection with the addition of various species. In 1989, he purchased the splendid 400-acre property in Santa Rosa as a private ranch for breeding and species propagation. The collection also received certification in the prestigious *Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)*, one of only a handful of private facilities to earn such an honor.

While Peter brings an entrepreneurial sense of adventure and creation to Safari West, it is Nancy Lang who is responsible for spearheading the preserve's dedication to education and conservation. Previously, General Curator of the San Francisco Zoo, she holds a Ph.D. in Biology and teaches zoological biology at Santa Rosa Junior College. Nancy was instrumental in assembling Safari West's international bird collection, as well as directing our breeding initiatives for several endangered bird species.

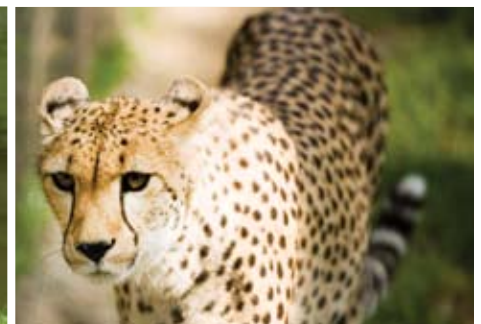
## **In 1989, two local teachers established our debut tour program.**

Our Safari West Wildlife Foundation (SWWF) President, John Menth, and his brother Peter, designed our first tours to bring school children from kindergarten through high school to Safari West for a wildly engaging learning experience with the animals and surrounding environment. Our school tour program

has developed tremendously over the years and now includes *Discover Africa*. This engaging educational program provides a unique opportunity for underserved youth in the Greater Bay Area to benefit from fully-sponsored field-trips provided by our non-profit, SWWF.

In 1993, Nancy developed programs for college students. Working directly with our veterinarian, animal management, and keeper staff, students learn about animal husbandry, conduct behavioral observations, assist in literature searches, and receive college credit for their work. Many of those students have been employed at Safari West during the summer as naturalists, and we have since begun unique internship programs for veterinary students and biologists across North America.

Catalyzed by the success of the educational programs, the Langs decided to open the tours to adults and families in the local area. Nancy always jokes



**Safari West** *the spirit of Africa in the heart of Wine Country*

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about the first day of being open to the public, July 4, 1993: "We were so excited to start these tours. We waited for visitors all day — and no one came!" While it did take some time to get the word out, the safari adventures quietly became a "must-do" for residents of and visitors to Sonoma, Napa, and the Bay Area. This slow, organic beginning reflects our organization's dedication to creating meaningful experiences for our glorious animals and their human counterparts.

*In 1999, in an effort to give visitors a deeper connection to the environment and truly embody the spirit of Africa, we began constructing authentic canvas safari tents which came directly from Ladysmith, South Africa. Complete with a cozy king or double beds, en-suite bathrooms, and private porches, their construction on our hillside and around Catfish Lake have helped position Safari West as a premiere African style getaway — without a passport! In 2000, we opened the Savannah Café, serving breakfast to overnight guests with lunch and dinner by reservation only.*

These expanded offerings have continued Peter's vision to provide visitors with full-immersion into African adventure. As a licensed general and engineering contractor, he has been responsible for the layout of the property and the design and construction of all facilities — for both the animals and the guests! The tents even feature wood furniture and vanities hand-crafted by Peter, with the attention to detail and exquisite finishing expected of a true artist. He also used locally salvaged wood and an on-site wood mill to create our restaurant's gorgeous, single plank family-style dining tables out of cedar, redwood, and bay laurel. Peter's passion for exotic animals is reflected in his striking work as an accomplished wood sculptor, crafting realistic replicas of skulls and horn structures of many of the African animal species found at Safari West. When visiting us, you can see one of Peter's ethereal Kudu skull sculptures on display in our Elephant Room.

The personal, intimate experience of Safari West is a point of great pride for the Langs, who still reside on property and are very much involved in the day-to-day work of the preserve.

While Peter continues to develop the experience as an African escape for adventure-lovers, Nancy remains the consummate mentor for the young biologists, animal keepers, interns, and volunteers.

When the Langs chose the Santa Rosa property to create this private sanctuary, they knew that their ever-growing animal collection would thrive in this environment, with ideal weather and a combination of grassland and forest quite similar to that of Africa. What they did not know of at the time was the tremendous potential a preserve of this type could have on others. Safari West works to inspire children to appreciate nature and its miraculous inhabitants, as well as to provide a pristine escape for adults seeking both serenity and adventure.

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Welcome to Northern California's  
best kept secret:

***An African Adventure in the  
Heart of Wine Country***

*Advanced reservations are essential for a visit to Safari West. Please call us at **(707) 579-2551** or **(800) 616-2695**. Prices may be subject to change without notice. No pets are allowed. For more information, take a trek to our website: [www.safariwest.com](http://www.safariwest.com).*



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