



## Travels with Gannon and Wyatt: Botswana

*Patti Wheeler, Keith Hemstreet*

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## Travels with Gannon and Wyatt: Botswana Patti Wheeler , Keith Hemstreet National Outdoor Book Award Winner

When Gannon and Wyatt arrive in Botswana for an African safari, they find themselves tangled up in much more than a family vacation. After receiving word that a poacher has shot and wounded a lioness, they set off into the wild in the hopes of saving the mother and her cubs before the poacher finishes the job. While on this amazing journey, they encounter Africa's Big Five — elephants, rhinos, cape buffalos, leopards, and lions — only to discover that the most dangerous predator in the African bush is not the king of beasts, but man himself.

In the tradition of the historic journals kept by explorers such as Lewis and Clark, Dr. David Livingstone, and Captain James Cook comes the adventure series Travels with Gannon and Wyatt. From Africa to the South Pacific, these twin brothers have traveled the world. You never know what they will encounter as they venture into the wild, but one thing is certain — wherever Gannon and Wyatt go, adventure is their constant companion.

You can find Gannon and Wyatt's blog, photographs, and video footage from their real-life expeditions at [travelswithgannonandwyatt.com](http://travelswithgannonandwyatt.com).

## Travels with Gannon and Wyatt: Botswana Details

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Author : Patti Wheeler , Keith Hemstreet

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Genre : Adventure, Childrens, Travel, Middle Grade, Southern Africa, Botswana

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## From Reader Review *Travels with Gannon and Wyatt: Botswana* for online ebook

### Tracy Poff says

Gannon and Wyatt are twin brothers with a passion for exploration. Wyatt loves to learn about science and the natural world, while Gannon prefers to meet new people and learn about how they live. Their newest adventure has plenty to offer both of them, because they're going to the Okavango Delta in Botswana, home of the Bushmen as well as many different wild animals. When they arrive, though, they learn that a poacher has wounded a lion. Worse still, the lion is a mother, and her cubs won't survive without her. Gannon and Wyatt aren't just going to stand by when the lion needs their help, so they set off tracking her, hoping to rescue her from the poacher.

*Travels with Gannon and Wyatt: Botswana* by Patti Wheeler and Keith Hemstreet is a middle-grade adventure story featuring the eponymous twins, very loosely based on a trip taken by real-life teens Gannon and Wyatt Wheeler. An epistolary novel, the book is written as a series of entries in the boys' field notes, usually alternating between the two of them so we get pieces of the story told from each of their perspectives. Wyatt's entries often focus on the animals and environment, while Gannon is more interested in the people they meet and travel with. The entries are typically very short, so there's plenty of variety in the course of a few pages. There's a necessary lack of detail associated with journal entries, which keeps the book moving along pretty quickly; there's no time to get bored.

Though it is partly a strength of the novel, the epistolary format is also a weakness. The lack of detail may be unsatisfying for older readers, and the descriptions tend to put the action at some distance from the reader. Also, since Gannon and Wyatt are interested in recording events, we rarely get to see them interacting with one another. It often feels like the story is about their traveling companions, with Gannon and Wyatt standing in the background, taking turns documenting the journey.

For the adult reader, the book's didactic tone may be somewhat off-putting. For example:

"Some experts estimate there to be fewer than 40,000 lions left in the wild today," Chocs told us. "Their numbers have decreased significantly since the early 1990s, when it was believed the lion population was over 100,000."

In my experience, though, kids tend to enjoy reeling off factoids of that nature, and there are no shortage of them.

The book doesn't stand alone. On the series' official web page, you can find photos from Botswana, as well as a short video documentary about the real Gannon and Wyatt's trip. The documentary is well worth seeing, and anyone who enjoyed the book should also enjoy seeing the people and animals mentioned in the book on film.

For kids who enjoy wildlife or travel, *Travels with Gannon and Wyatt: Botswana* is an easy, fun read.

*Travels with Gannon and Wyatt: Botswana* was first published in 2010, with a second edition to be published by Greenleaf Book Group Press on May 28, 2013. It will be available in hardcover for \$12.95. An edition of the book including the documentary on DVD is currently available from the series' official web page for

\$16.95.

*Disclosure: this review is based on an advance copy received free for review.*

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### **Tibby (she/her) says**

I picked this one up because our principal scheduled one of the authors to come visit our fourth and fifth grade. I figured I should read at least the first book in the series just to see what they were all about. The book was at best problematic. No joke, the first section of the book is called “The Dark Continent”. I know they’re trying to give the impression of the “great” explorers of the African continent, but this is 2016. We should not be calling it that. The name implies that the countries there are backward and ignorant, which is not true and I don’t think we should be encouraging kids to think they are. The narrators, Gannon and Wyatt, two white American twins, also repeatedly refer to Botswana as Africa. Africa is not a country, let’s get away from that idea. And those “great” explorers were symbols of some pretty serious oppression and exploitation and weren’t really discovering anything new to boot.

The book also buys into the white savior narrative and the narrative that paints Africans as poor but happy. They aren’t great narratives to say the least. Again I think it paints countries in Africa as backward and ignorant. The purpose of the books is said to help educate kids about other places, but this is not what I would want my daughter learning about Africa (or Botswana).

What really got me, though was when the family went to visit the Bushmen (is this really the term they prefer??) they talk about how their land is being taken away and their lifestyle has had to change as a result. But the boys are more concerned about an injured lioness. I get that wildlife is important, but placing more value on African wildlife than on the people is a huge issue. (Please see this article or think back to the whole hullabaloo over the lion killed by the dentist.) True, Gannon and Wyatt’s mother decides to help the tribe build its school for a week, but that’s just an teeny tiny footnote in the whole story as is the plight of these people and is again part of the larger white savior narrative.

Still, I enjoyed the story. It was exciting and suspenseful. The other librarian and my principal were hoping the series would hook our reluctant readers, but it won’t. The book is way too hard for struggling fourth and fifth graders. Even ours who read well above grade level. I think it would work for struggling seventh and eighth graders, but not lower school

This book is part of a larger series and they go other places that may be handled better. More specifically the ones set in Western countries. I don’t want to say I don’t recommend the book, but reading back in my review it sounds like I don’t. So there you have it. I may read the Ireland title, but I can tell you our library does not need more books about white kids in white countries. We need really, truly diverse books. Books that show Africa as a vibrant continent with lots of countries and cities and people who are rich and poor and not in need of saving from us, but needing structures taken down that oppress them. Books that have diversity as a matter of course, not as part of some narrative.

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### **Nick Turner says**

Gannon and Wyatt are fifteen-year-old twin brothers. They have a strong spirit of adventure - they like

nothing better than to exploring new places. In this story, the boys get to visit Africa for the first time, travelling to Okavanga Delta in Botswana for a week-long safari adventure. The story (the first *Travels with Gannon and Wyatt* story) consists of first person journal entries alternating between Gannon's journal and Wyatt's journal.

A list of English-to-Setswana translations of common phrases (you don't need to learn them - phrases in Setswana don't appear again in the text) emphasises that Botswana is a different country unlike the United States.

In Botswana they meet Chocs, a Botswanan guide, and his daughter, JubJub. Because Chocs' work takes him around Botswana, JubJub is home schooled like the boys. On safari Gannon and Wyatt see wild animals and dance at a Bushmen village. When they hear that a poacher is hunting a wounded lioness, they determine to save the lioness before the poacher catches her.

There are small black-and-white holiday snaps of vehicles, wild animals and Bushmen village scenes. There are few images of people but there is a photo of the boys at the back.

Fauna is announced "We even saw a kudu" but not described - what's a 'kudu', dude? As foreign tourists, Gannon and Wyatt tell this and that but sometimes don't show us in descriptive words. But you can view photos and video on their web site.

The writing is serviceable, sometimes switching tenses between reports of past events versus now. More punctuation (commas and semicolons) would make it easier to comprehend long sentences.

There are lined pages at the end where you can write your own journal notes.

There is a smell of "an eye for an eye" when the fate of the poacher echoes what he did to the lioness. One person's poetic justice is another's cruel vengeance.

There is a live web link for Gannon and Wyatt's web site in the e-book review copy I got from the publisher.

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### **Julie Maloney says**

As a mother of a child with dyslexia I find it very difficult to get my son interested in reading. I've spoken with his resource teacher and classroom teacher about finding ways to engage him and I was given a list of books to try out. We've been having some success, as I have Jacob read the books aloud to me and I'll assist him with a word when he points to it. When I saw I had the opportunity to involve Jake in a book series I had to take the chance. I asked him before I got the series, as I didn't want to have to force him into yet another book and we looked at the series website so we could get a feel for what we would be diving into. When Jake saw that it was a book about adventure and travel he showed genuine excitement and it was with pleasure that I invited this series into my home.

What Jake immediately took to was the fact that their mother worked for an airline. I myself spent eight years as a gate agent for a major airline and with the flight benefits saw most of the world just as Gannon and Wyatt have, only with slightly less adventure. I'm now a stay at home mother but we try to travel with our boys when we can and want them to experience what this world has to offer. Jacob always says he wants to follow my lead and work for an airline because he desires to travel the world himself, especially after diving into this series.

Just seeing my child with a book warms my heart, the reader in me wants so badly for my son to share my passion for books. When we first started the series, *Travels With Gannon and Wyatt Botswana* I myself was

hooked.

I have to admit, I bookmarked where Jake and I left off the first day after we started reading and I went to bed with the book to read it myself. I wanted to read the book in one sitting because Africa is one of the few places I really want to visit and also I wanted to know the book better so that Jake and I could pause between chapters to talk about what we read. Each day after school Jake would read a few chapters to his little brother, pausing to show his enthusiasm for parts of their adventure, reaffirming that this is what he wants to do with his life, travel. I sent Jake into school with the book once we finished it to give to his teacher with a note letting her know it would be a great addition to her class studies.

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### **Julie says**

An exciting adventure. You feel like you're really in Africa.

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### **Bluerose's Heart says**

\*\*I read the first 2 books before writing any of my thoughts down, so I decided to just do a combination post for both of them. My thoughts were pretty similar for both books.

I can't imagine a young person out there, especially young men, that wouldn't love this series of books! \*I\* already wish that the next book was out, so I could read it, too. These books provided me with such a wonderful learning experience. I learned about new places and even cultures of those lands. They are packed full of adventure and wildlife. I learned about some of the dangers that threaten those parts of the world.

The most amazing part of these books is the fact that Gannon and Wyatt are two real young men that have traveled to these places. The adventures are \*loosely\* based on their experiences. I don't imagine they'd be traveling quite as much if they were held at gunpoint and came so close to death everywhere they went. If you'd like to read more about Gannon and Wyatt, you can check out their website, Travels With Gannon and Wyatt. I found it pretty fun to peek around over there after reading both of the books. I felt like I was putting more of a face with the stories.

There's journaling pages at the end of the book, so your child can record their own adventures and notes. There's even maps at the end, too. I'm a huge sucker for book maps! I imagine these books would give young people a hunger for adventure and travel. It never hurts for education to be wrapped in a fun package, and that's exactly what this series gives.

As much as I enjoyed this series, it's obvious that it's written for young people. If you're an adult that simply reads middle grade for the fun of it, you might find parts of it corny. I won't lie! I did at times. I was easily able to look past it to see what a wonderful gift this series will be for my boys in a few years, though.

Lord willing, you better believe I'll be adding these books to our shelves for my boys to read! They are great, clean, adventurous fun and I enjoyed reading them!

\*\*I was provided an e-ARC of both books in exchange for my honest opinion.

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### **Caleb says**

On a trip to Botswana, brothers Gannon and Wyatt have an intense journey as they travel. As they explore, they meet people and learn about a group of poachers who are breaking the law. The two brothers vow to do what they can to put a stop to them and bring the poachers to justice! This was a very interesting read. I enjoyed it a lot.

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### **Igrowastreesgrow says**

I really wonderful book for adults and children. A great adventure story from start to finish. One of the better paced books I have ever read. The only complaint that I have, that doesn't involve point reduction in my eyes, is that it may be a little too grown up for kids 9 and 10 but I've always thought that all people, no matter their age or anything else about them, deserve to know how the world is and this may be a good way to expose them to it if they haven't experienced it. Anyways, I really enjoyed this book for myself and I hope to read more in the series soon.

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### **Heidi says**

Based on the real life adventures of Gannon and Wyatt, this book takes the reader deep into the heart of the African bush. While there the boys see incredible scenery, experience the thrill and excitement of being near lions, rhinos, water buffalo and other wildlife, and run into a poacher. It is very easy for this type of book to come off as just another exaggerated safari adventure story. But it doesn't feel that way at all. In fact, I loved the factual information that the authors integrated so beautifully into the story. It was also very clear that a lot of effort had gone into making the details of life in the Kalahari Desert and Okavango Delta accurate. For me, as a student of geography, there is nothing more irritating than inaccurate information in a book like this. But everything I read here matches with everything else I've read and seen about the area.

After visiting the website, it's very clear (and the author note in the book confirms it) that the content in the book is based on actual visits and experiences in the region. While the events depicted in the book did not happen *per se* (it is a novel after all), they are very much possibilities in that part of the world.

I enjoyed reading from both boys points of view. Each brother has their own interests and way of seeing things and they are quite different. Gannon is a very outgoing, personable boy who enjoys interacting with other people and learning about other cultures. Wyatt is the science buff who is very exacting in what he records and focuses more on the environment and wildlife. They make a great combination when it comes to telling the story.

Plot wise, the story moves along at a nice clip and the main theme (poaching) was introduced smoothly and appropriately. Encounters with animals, mechanical problems, and disease all create additional problems for the boys and their guides. Luckily for them they have an experienced guide and native tracker/hunter to assist them.

For those who enjoy reading about nature and a fun adventure/survival story, I can enthusiastically

recommend this one.

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## Reader says

Patti Wheeler's passion for traveling the globe is ingrained into her children's DNA, and Keith Hemstreet's award-winning writing skills have also rubbed off on these articulate boys. Wheeler's twin sons, Gannon and Wyatt, have been traveling to all corners of the world since they were in car seats. Now charming and charismatic 15 year-olds, world explorers Gannon and Wyatt have documented some amazing expeditions that combine stories filled with fun-loving adventures, educational descriptions of exotic animals and fascinating nature, and plenty of doses of suspense-inducing peril!

When I was younger I watched Dave Matthews play a small show long before his band became famous. I remember telling my friends, "Have you listened to Dave Matthews? His music is amazing! He's going to be famous someday!" As I turned the pages of "Travels with Gannon and Wyatt: Botswana," I felt a similar enthusiasm. This book is the first in what will surely become a wildly popular series that will first fulfill and then exceed Wheeler's goal of instilling a spirit of exploration in young people. These books will also serve to educate children about wildlife conservation and help them gain a deeper appreciation for nature and animals. Equally important, you can bet that teachers and parents, alike, will love having kids reading these books because they will help spark a love of reading in children as Gannon's and Wyatt's venturesome accounts will keep readers on the edge of their seats!

Patti Wheeler will tell you that "the world is your classroom." And her twin teenage boys may very well wind up being your teacher! Explore the world. Learn about wildlife. Laugh one minute and hold your breath the next. This family is tapping into unchartered territory and this series is the real deal! I will not be the least bit surprised when I turn on Discovery Channel one day soon and see that this exciting book series has become a hit TV show. In fact, if I was a TV producer, I would move quickly to sign a deal with this family of fearless, funny and groundbreaking travelers!

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## Kailey (BooksforMKs) says

I thoroughly enjoyed this story told through the travel journals of twin brothers, Gannon and Wyatt, as they explore the Kalahari Desert and the Okavango Delta in Botswana. When the brothers hear about a lioness with cubs who has been wounded by a poacher, they trek into the wilderness with a native guide to find the lioness and give her some medical attention before the poacher tracks her down to finish her off! Searching for the lioness, they encounter a plethora of wild animals, and learn how to survive in the wild.

I really liked that Gannon and Wyatt are both very different people. Wyatt is more scientifically-minded with an attention to detail, and Gannon is more socially adept with an ability to make friends with all kinds of people. Together they make a wonderful team, and I love to see how they support one another, and tease and annoy each other in true brotherly fashion.

I'm not usually a fan of the journal-style writing, but it works very well for this series. And I'm not usually a fan of changing POVs, but the twins different perspectives bounce off each other and keep the story moving along, so it works pretty well.

There is comedy, adventure, and suspense mixed in with interesting information about the country, the people, the food, the culture, until you almost feel that you have traveled to a new land along with the characters! I love learning about new places around the world, especially since the information is really true!

I recommend these books for readers aged 8-15, and for anyone who enjoys learning more about the world!

Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from the author in exchange for a free and honest review. All the opinions stated here are my own true thoughts and are not influenced by anyone.

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### **Kathy Davie says**

A story in the Travels with Gannon and Wyatt children's educational/adventure series. This particular adventure takes place in Botswana in Africa.

This is an ARC provided by the publisher.

#### **My Take**

This is clever and great fun. It's a blend of true story and fiction as the authors make use of Gannon and Wyatt's videos, blog, and photographs to tell a boy's life tale. The brothers "also founded the Youth Exploration Society (Y.E.S.), an organization of young people ... passionate about making the world a better place". There's a useful section of translated phrases in English/Setswana included in the front of the book.

The boys' mother works for an airline which means free travel anywhere while the boys' father is an artist; together they encourage their homeschooled boys to explore life.

"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness." – Mark Twain

The POV switches back and forth between the boys, and it reflects their personalities. Wyatt will get excited about how much grass an elephant can eat while Gannon wants to experience people. Wyatt provides the geography while Gannon "thinks friendliness can be understood anywhere, by anyone", "stopping to talk to random people", and exposing the reader to the different cultures the boys encounter. It makes for a balanced view on their adventures---as well as creating a more interesting story that's easier to write.

It's a lovely way to get the kids to read facts while providing adventure in story form---the poacher encounter has a feel of Nancy Drew to it. I can just see Nancy doing the clever bit with the radio! There's no end of excitement when their parents give the boys permission to go along on a hunt to rescue a wounded lioness and her cubs. The animals who prowl the camp at night, the lack of AAA for roadside assistance (!), and experiencing the need for quick thinking!!

The boys are definitely brothers, the way they snap and snarl, but they're there for each other when it counts.

#### **The Story**

It's been awhile since the family's last adventure and talk at the supper table eventually settles on Botswana. A useful trip as their father has a commission to create an animal sculpture for an art collector.

A childhood friend of their mother's is married to a man who runs a safari camp and that's where the family heads. It'll be a fabulous opportunity to interact with the people who live there, to experience their daily life: the happinesses and the travails, the fun and the terror.

Part of the terror is poaching, and when Tcori warns Chocs that a poacher has wounded a lioness with four cubs, the boys beg permission to help. And more exciting, terrifying adventure!

### **The Characters**

Fifteen-year-old twins, **Wyatt** is the brother who's more scientifically inclined, more pedantic while **Gannon** is more of a seat-of-the-pants type, who loves to meet people and film life, planning to be a filmmaker when he grows up.

**Edo's Camp** is a safari business run by **Chocs**, who will be the family's guide (he has a degree in environmental science and zoology), and his daughter, **Jubjub**, who is also homeschooled.

**Tcori**, one of the last remaining hunters in his Bushmen tribe, has just returned from an expedition in the Okavango Delta. **General Mozello** is part of a search party and anti-poacher unit.

### **The Cover**

The cover finds the boys front and center in safari hats and shirts with an array of African animals gathered below them.

The title is to the point, for it is Botswana to which the family has traveled.

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### **Randee Baty says**

I spent 16 years as a homeschool mom and I wish this book had been available when my children were still in school! I would have used it to introduce many topics and areas of study. It would make learning geography, science and history fun!

Twin brothers, having a mom who works for an airline and a father who is an international artist, have a lot of opportunity to travel the world. This adventure takes them to Botswana and into the battle to protect wildlife from poachers. It's written in a first person style by the two brothers as they keep their diaries of the trip. This technique would be handy as a homeschooler for encouraging reluctant writers to journal their own adventures. The book is filled with jumping off points for further studies and research.

There is an accompanying website with lots of extras to enhance the experience of the book. It is definitely for the 9-12 year old group and would seem simplistic to kids older than that but for its intended age group, I think it would cause a life-long interest in the beauties and problems of Africa. I'll be keeping this one for my granddaughters to read in a few years.

This was provided through Goodreads Giveaways and I appreciate the authors and publisher giving me the opportunity to read and review it.

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## **Dianne says**

Based on the real life adventures of two brothers, Gannon and Wyatt, whose parents have had the ability and foresight to share the world with their sons, **Travels with Gannon and Wyatt: Botswana** will take its reader into the heart of the African bush in all of its mystery, danger and glory. Imagine having been near wild animals in their natural habitat, then to experience the ugliness of what poachers are doing to these great beasts. Filled with facts, as well as fancy, the details are fascinating and encourages awareness of the world around us, while giving younger readers a brief trip into the world of books! Win! Win!

Written from the points of view of each boy, with their unique way of looking at things, the feel for the area, for their experiences makes this book come alive. (I've traveled to Africa, and can say, I re-experienced what I saw.)

I highly recommend this entire series for younger readers, who will walk alongside these boys as they learn of the wonders and dangers of Botswana and the world, as well as our impact on it. I received a review copy from the publisher in exchange for my honest review.

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Series: Travels with Gannon and Wyatt

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## **Rhonda says**

### **4 STARS**

This is my second book I have read in the Travels with Gannon and Wyatt. I enjoyed both of them. Gannon and Wyatt are homeschooled.

They get to travel a lot and explore places that I can only dream about. They are real twins who have traveled to the places but their adventures are made up along the way. They tale about real settings, and animals and real problems they have surviving in the wild.

Their family decide to fly to Botswana to go on a African Safari. They can fly for free because their mom works for a airline.

While they are in Botswana they learn that poachers have shot a lioness and she is wounded with four lion cubs. If she does not get medical attention all of them will not survive.

Gannon and Wyatt ask to go along with the bushman guide to track her and give her a chance to survive. It should not be too dangerous if they follow their guide's rules. Of course things go wrong and keep going

from bad to worse a long the way.

African safari is a dangerous place with lots of things that can go wrong. The worst predator is man.

They cross a river in their jeep and it gets stuck in the middle of the river with a large crocodile on the banks sleeping. They have to get out and swim to shore and be quite so they don't wake him up.

From that point on their is plenty of adventure, action, wild animals up close really up close. heroes and bad guy as they continue to try and find the wounded lioness on foot. I like Gannon and Wyatt but I would not let my children do the things they get into. I hope they have more stories to tell in the future.

I was given this ebook to read and asked to give honest review of it by Netgalley.

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Description below taken off of Netgalley

When Gannon and Wyatt arrive in Botswana for an African safari, they find themselves tangled up in much more than a family vacation. After receiving word that a poacher has shot and wounded a lioness, they set off into the wild in the hopes of saving the mother and her cubs before the poacher finishes the job. While on this amazing journey, they encounter Africa's Big Five? elephants, rhinos, cape buffalos, leopards, and lions? only to discover that the most dangerous predator in the African bush is not the king of beasts, but man himself.

In the tradition of the historic journals kept by explorers such as Lewis and Clark, Dr. David Livingstone, and Captain James Cook comes the adventure series Travels with Gannon and Wyatt. From Africa to the South Pacific, these twin brothers have traveled the world. You never know what they will encounter as they venture into the wild, but one thing is certain ? wherever Gannon and Wyatt go, adventure is their constant companion.

You can find Gannon and Wyatt's blog, photographs, and video footage from their real-life expeditions at [travelswithgannonandwyatt.com](http://travelswithgannonandwyatt.com).

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