

TRACKING WITH THE SAN

ROXANNE REID enriches her

perception of the Kalahari by focusing on the small things, the secrets in the sand

Andrew Kruiper is a tracker supreme; nothing escapes his keen eye. He learned from his late cousin Vet Piet, legendary San master tracker. Now this son of a San mother and Ovambo father is the Hercule Poirot of the desert, searching for signs of scorpions or snakes, reading the winds and clouds and looking for other clues to what's been going on around him minutes or even days before.

We first met him in 2003 on a walk into the dunes of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. He's become our friend and now we're spending four days with him – a sort of Kalahari masterclass.

He explains the difference between the tracks of a cobra and a puff adder, a leopard and a cheetah. He shows us how ground agamas latch on to anything with their teeth – hanging them on his ears like earrings, attached by their mouths, tails dangling free. He tickles the top of a buck-spool spider's nest in the sand, tricking it into believing a tasty morsel is walking over the delicate structure. He lightly flicks a large black beetle with fearsome pincers. 'Make this one cross and he really stinks,' he demonstrates.

He's a wealth of knowledge regarding San culture. 'We dry out a porcupine's