

# Safari Sneakers

by Neil Hair

- ▶ Well made and silent and stable to walk in;
- ▶ Fleece doesn't hold moisture and dries quickly;
- ▶ Keeps your feet warm when sitting and waiting;
- ▶ Quick and easy to put on;
- ▶ Light and compact;
- ▶ Easily carried in your daypack or pocket.



**E**xperience has taught me that close to zero impact is essential when hunting sambar. If your targeted animal is oblivious to your presence, or unsure of what you are, you stand a much better chance of harvesting it cleanly with one shot.

The hearing of sambar is legendary and coupled with the terrain they call home, it can be very challenging for hunters.

The sambar's habitat is covered with fallen branches, dry twigs, bark and brittle leaves which make quiet stalking virtually impossible. Throw in gravelly ridges, steep faces strewn with shale, dry stony river flats and thick gully heads. To reduce our noise when sneaking in many of us have spent countless hours hunting in socks, but in my case wearing socks has damaged my feet. After three days hunting in the Grampians where I spent too much time in socks I arrived home with very sore feet.



To cut a long story short, I had torn the Plantar Fascia in both feet which required surgery. All my toes were cut, shortened and pinned putting me out of action for way too long.

As a result I needed an alternative to socks so I tried gluing sheep skin onto my old boots. This didn't work as they were too high and unstable when walking long distances in steep terrain so I carried them in my day pack and wore normal boots until the quiet ones were needed. However they were not light and took up lots of room in my day pack. In the end I realised that it simply wasn't practical to carry a spare pair of boots.

Enter Errol with whom I had discussed the problems I was having with my feet. He asked me to field test the Safari Sneakers to see if they were a solution. They sounded promising and always on the lookout for new tricks I eagerly awaited delivery of the Safari Sneakers.

I was not disappointed. They are well made and quick and simple to slip on over my hunting boots. The sole is very soft and thick, far more so than the thickest socks. Plus the soles are wider than my boots which should make them quieter due to my weight being distributed over a larger area. And they were quiet, especially on stony and leaf covered ground.

One big advantage of Safari Sneakers is that when rolled up they are small, compact and light, so take up very little room in your day pack or jacket pocket. After rolling them up and placing a rubber band around them, I found that carrying them in my jacket pocket was best as they were easy to get at.

Once the marks you are following become super-hot, or you are closing in the last 200m on your sit and wait spot, this is when the sneakers come out for the final stalk. They slip over your hunting boots with ease - even in the dark of predawn - giving you the ankle support and waterproofing of your favoured boots but with quiet footsteps.



#### THE SAFARI SNEAKERS ARE QUICK AND EASY TO PUT ON.

*They enabled me to stalk in almost complete silence and after covering 150m, I found the target animal walking around totally unaware of our presence. A high shoulder blade spine shot and the freezer is now full.*



I had a few tests at home and worked out that it was best to fold them so the Velcro cannot become attached whilst stored in your pack or pocket. Velcro is very noisy when unfastened so care needs to be taken as sound travels surprisingly long distances in the predawn silence and is easily picked up by the super sensitive ears of any sambar in the area.

If a mature sambar hears anything abnormal they will slowly retreat into thick cover. Sound and scent are the two main defences sambar use when out feeding and although scent can be mitigated by hunting up-wind, the sound of your footfall is not so easy to eliminate. This is where I was hoping the Safari sneakers would give me a real advantage.

Into the bush I went with Jess, my GSP to see how they worked in the real world. Up at 3am, coffee, toast then hit the road. Walking down a bush track at 4.30 it was very dark and still on a warm windless morning. The track we were walking down was stony and at times quite steep. I had my red lens head light on the end of a stick to keep the light low to the ground to avoid detection by any deer out in the open.

About 300m from the farm edge I stopped and slipped the sneakers out of my jacket pocket. They were very easy and quiet to put on as I had practised doing this at home so it proved to be a simple task.

After closing the last 250m quietly, I then lay down to wait for first light as there was no moonlight to enable me to see any deer that may have been out in the open feeding. Jess sat on top of me and kept a constant look out.

At first light there were three mature hinds feeding 80m from us. As the farmer had reported seeing a good stag in the area we let them be and slowly snuck out the way we came in. Then I removed the sneakers, folded them up and placed them back in my jacket pocket.

We continued around the boundary to where we located a young animal that looked too tender to pass up. We walked around to where it had entered the bush then slipped on the Safari Sneakers. Then we stalked in on a forest floor covered in small branches, twigs, bark and leaves which normally is impossible to walk quietly on.

The Safari Sneakers enabled me to stalk in almost complete silence and after covering 150m, I found the target animal walking around totally unaware of our presence. A high shoulder blade spine shot and the freezer is now full. The stalk was quiet and my feet were not throbbing or damaged. After four hunts I washed the Safari Sneakers under the tap and hung them on the line ready for next time.



*I removed the sneakers, folded them up and placed them back in my jacket pocket.*



**TO PURCHASE  
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**What I liked:**

- ▶ Well made and silent and stable to walk in;
  - ▶ Fleece doesn't hold moisture and dries quickly;
  - ▶ Keeps your feet warm when sitting and waiting;
  - ▶ Quick and easy to put on;
  - ▶ Light and compact;
  - ▶ Easily carried in your daypack or pocket;
  - ▶ Available in sizes to fit your boot size;
- Sizes: M (8-9), L (10-11), XL (12-13)**

**What I didn't like:**

- ▶ Velcro noise but can be avoided by packing with Velcro disconnected;
- ▶ Sole picks up stuff but they are easy to clean.

**CONCLUSION**

*I am very happy with my Safari Sneakers and they are now an essential piece of my hunting kit. If like me you make every effort to hunt quietly and strive for clean shots on unalarmed deer, the Safari Sneakers are certain to become an indispensable part of your kit.*

