

News
World News

Safari guide on horrifying moment he was 'ripped apart' by 'berserk' hippo

Paul Temp

16:38, 19 OCT 2019
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(Image: Facebook)

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An adult hippo can grow up to 15ft in length, weighing around 4 tons. Standing up to 6 feet high at the shoulder, their fearsome bulk makes them a formidable foe for other wildlife.

While they're vegetarians and rarely attack humans, if they do it's almost always fatal.

So when experienced safari guide Paul Templer found himself clamped in the jaws of an angry male hippo in the Zambezi River in Zimbabwe, he feared the worst.

The horrific incident occurred in 1996. Paul, then 27, stepped in to lead a group taking 6 tourists on a canoe trip near Victoria Falls after the original guide had fallen ill with malaria.



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Paul's horrific injuries haven't stopped him kayaking (Image: X00330)

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The group took a careful detour around a group of hippos, one of which had shown itself to be unusually aggressive in the past.

Despite their precautions, disaster struck.

Paul told **Mirror Online**: "There was this loud thud behind me and I knew that thud. It was the sound of a hippo hitting a canoe.



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"I turned to see the back of the canoe maybe three feet out of the water atop a hippo and the apprentice guide flying out of it."



Paul faced a lengthy physical recovery in the months and years following the incident (Image: Facebook)

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Paul immediately began paddling towards the stricken canoe where the apprentice guide, Evans Namasango, had been thrown into the water.

He added: "Evans is bobbing along in the water and then I see this big wave, kind of like a torpedo coming towards a ship, at quite a pace.

"I pull up alongside him, lean over to grab him and it's almost a little too made-for-Hollywood moment with our fingers almost touching.

"Suddenly everything just went dark and quiet."

Paul realised that he was inside the hippo's mouth.

He said: "My first response was just complete relief because I feared I was inside a croc, and in a weird way there's some solace being in a hippo.

"That lasted an odd second and then I thought 'I've got to get out of here', but I couldn't do anything because I'm tightly wedged in his mouth.

"The hippo half spat, half choked me out and I burst to the surface, grab a lung full of fresh air and I'm face to face with Evans."



Paul says: "In the wild, we're the visitors, we're the intruders. The hippo attacked because I was invading its territory." (Image: Facebook)

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"I started swimming away but Evans was struggling to stay afloat. When I looked at him I could see he was absolutely terrified and in the grips of panic.

"I swam back to him, then suddenly, wham, I was in the hippo's throat again, but this time my legs were down his throat and he started thrashing me around again."

Paul tried to reach for his revolver, but the huge river beast was thrashing him around so much that he

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Paul tried to reach for his revolver, but the huge river beast was thrashing him around so much that he couldn't get a grip on it.

The hippo spat Paul out a second time. He tried to swim away, but was then attacked again.



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Paul thought he was going to die, telling his companions: "Please tell my family I am sorry and I love them." (Image: Facebook)

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He said: "I was looking under my arm and I saw [the] hippo with its mouth wide open.

"His tusks tore into my torso and now my legs are hanging out of one side of his mouth and my arms and my head and my shoulder are outside the other.

"This time he truly went berserk.

"He threw me up in the air and I did a half twist before I fell back into his mouth and he bit down so hard I thought he was going to bite me in half."



Hippos can weigh about 8,000lbs and grow larger than a Range Rover (Image: Getty Images)

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The hippo dived up to perhaps eight feet with Mr Templar trapped in its jaws as he bled .

He said: "I was relatively calm and I remember wondering who could hold their breath the longest.

"I was watching my blood coming out and I was wondering if I was going to bleed to death or if I would drown."



Paul is now now a management consultant and public speaker living in Chicago (Image: Facebook)

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Paul suffered almost 40 severe bite wounds, saying: "I was a mess. My one arm from the elbow up had been crushed to a pulp and from the elbow down most of the skin had been pulled off it.

"My other arm was kind of hanging on. My foot looked like someone had to beat a hole through it with a hammer.

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"Blood started bubbling out of my mouth because I had internal injuries.

"You could see part of a lung through a hole in my back. I had a bite in the back of my head.

"One of the bites had severed an artery but the hippo bit it at the right angle that he tore it but it sealed itself.

"By the time I got rescued I lost so much blood that my status was inconsistent with life. I shouldn't have been alive."



Two years after the attack, Paul paddled the 1,600-mile length of the Zambezi with one arm (Image: Facebook)

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The apprentice guide, Evans Namasango, drowned as a result of the horrific incident.

Paul faced a long journey through the jungle, with no painkillers available.

He was saved by sheer luck – the group encountered a rescue team which happened to be practising nearby.

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It took eight hours for him to get to a hospital for the first of multiple surgeries to keep him alive.

His left arm had to be amputated but surgeons managed to save his other arm and his badly-injured leg.

He says: "We all have s**ty days and I have learned that stuff is going to happen but we get to choose what's going to happen next."

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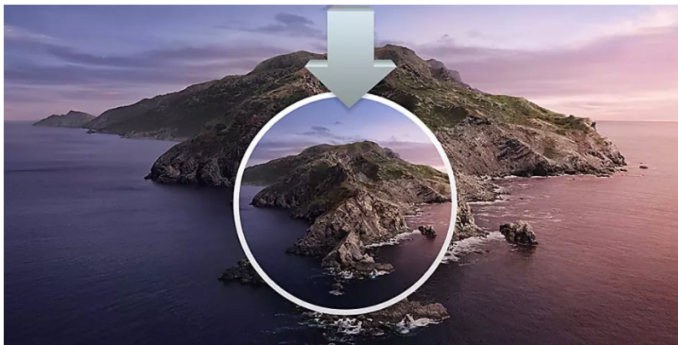
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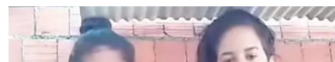
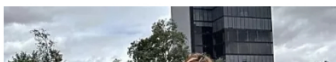
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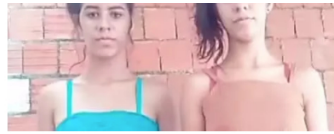
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