



ROMAN BALÁZ

MOMENTS OF MEANING

Photographer Roman 'Papa Chui' Baláz reflects on his longstanding affair with Africa

One beautiful, chilly morning in the Maasai Mara, as the first rays of sunlight broke through the soft mist and dew covered the golden blades of grass, the leopardess Luluka emerged, her coat glowing in the soft light.

She felt it was time to move her cub to a safer place. With her young one held gently in her jaws, she moved with an elegant grace and unwavering purpose, each motion driven by a powerful maternal instinct, every stride thoughtfully measured so as not to disturb the serenity of a land just beginning to wake.

Step by step, she led her cub through the thick brush toward a hidden spot where it would be safe from the eyes of other predators, away from the dangers that lurked all around.

The quiet was broken only by the occasional rustling of the wind or the song

of dawn's first birds. In this special moment at sunrise, Luluka embodied the strength and tenderness of a mother determined to protect her young. It was a scene of both beauty and fragility, capturing the resilience of life in the wild — where each day brings a fresh battle for survival — but also the unbreakable bond between a mother and her offspring.

For twenty years, my annual journeys to Africa have allowed me to capture its wild beauty, yet none of my photos would be the same without my friend Antony by my side. He has been my guide, my teacher, and a vital part of my experience here. Every frame, every moment of connection with the land and its people, is in some way thanks to him.



It all began when I was a young photographer, drawn to Africa by its untamed landscapes and timeless allure. Antony showed me places I might have never found, taught me to see beyond the lens, to feel the pulse of life in the Maasai Mara. From secretive leopards like Luluka, to hidden corners of the savanna where light dances just right at dawn, Antony knew how to reveal Africa's wonders in ways that brought my photography to life.

Ten years ago, with his encouragement, I founded a wildlife conservation and education foundation for the Maasai community. Initially, we simply funded conservation projects, but over time our mission grew to support the Maasai people, their culture, and their children's access to education.

And so, every return to the Mara is a reminder of what truly matters. Each photo, each encounter, each dawn shared with Antony is a testament to our journey together and the profound bond between a photographer, a friend, and the land that inspires us.

ROMAN BALÁZ OWNS THE PRAGUE-BASED TOUR OPERATOR PRIVATE SAFARI TRAVEL AND FOUNDED ROMANWILDLIFEFOUNDATION.COM