

Day 1 Kasane to Savuti River. Travel Day 170km (5 hours)

We will fly from Johannesburg to Kasane and transfer to Chobe Safari Lodge. For those guests transferring from Livingstone, transfers should arrive at Chobe Safari at 09h00 in time for a morning boat cruise. You will then be met by your guide for the drive along the Chobe River to Savuti.

Habitat: The habitat on today's drive takes us from the Chobe River through the wonderful Zambezi teak woodlands of the Chobe Forest Reserve, across the sand-ridge and into the stunted mopane scrub of the Goha clay basin.

Wildlife: While there are community areas we pass through that are settled by local tribes, the vast majority of the day's drive is through wild country where wildlife moves un-inhibited by fences or man. Roan and sable antelope thrive in the teak woodlands where the low density of predators and lack of competition for food by other ungulates makes this prime habitat. Leopard occurs in these woodlands in low numbers but they are highly secretive and seldom seen. The Goha region has natural waterholes that hold water well into the dry season and herds of buffalo, Burchell's zebra, greater kudu and elephant come down to drink.

Birding: The most unusual species are to be found in the teak (*Baikia plurijuga*) woodlands. This broad-leafed woodland, or miombo as it is locally known, provides good pickings for insectivorous birds that favor canopy habitat. Grey Tit-Flycatcher, Ashy Flycatcher, Paradise Flycatcher, Pallid Flycatcher, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Amethyst Sunbird, Yellow-throated Petronia, Red-headed Weaver and Violet-backed Starling are only some of the species that move around in the "bird parties" in the canopy. Dickenson's Kestrel, Red-necked Falcon, Peregrine Falcon* and Lizard Buzzard are some of the raptors to keep an eye out for, while the diminutive White-faced Owl can often be seen roosting in the road-side vegetation. Flappet Lark, Fawn-colored Lark, Dusky Lark*, Olive-Tree Warbler* and Neddicky are species most likely to be enjoyed by the birding enthusiast.

Accommodation: Mobile Tented Camp

Activities: Game Drive

Day: 2&3 Savuti (Chobe National Park) Exploration Days.

Habitat: Unlike the vast majority of the country, Savuti is not flat landscape. Large outcrops of volcanic rock reach up out of the Kalahari sands, towering over the endless savannah. These hills provide habitat for a completely different array of small wildlife, birds, and plants. The Savuti Marsh has been the stage for many of the most dramatic wildlife documentaries in Africa. The wide-open country, good ungulate populations, and particularly strong prides of lion and hyena clans make for dramatic wildlife interaction and excellent viewing opportunities. The now dry Savuti Channel runs through this landscape linking the drysand-veld, the waterholes, the hills and the grassland that was the Savuti Marsh.

Wildlife: Undoubtedly, it is the interaction between lion and elephant that is the most interesting aspect of Savuti. The area is inhabited by a huge pride of lions with numbers fluctuating from 20-30 members. These remarkable lion have learned over the years how to hunt these massive pachyderms that are supposedly above predation. Launching their attack under darkness and using their numbers, they manage to kill adolescent and even young adult elephant. The marsh is prime cheetah country and in the wet season it is common to have the wild dog hunting in Savuti.

Birding: The surface water that is pumped by the Government provides a major attraction for birdlife. In the dry season thousands of dove and sandgrouse come down to drink in the mornings and are under constant surveillance by Yellowbilled Kite*, Tawny Eagle and African Hawk-Eagle. Red-crested Korhaan are common in the Kalahari Apple-leaf (*Lonchocarpus nelsii*) veld. The marsh is the summer home for good numbers of Caspian Plover* and Montague's Harrier* as well as Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark, Grey-backed Sparrowlark, Northern Black Korhaan, Rufous-naped Lark, African Pipit and Desert Cisticola. Dickenson's Kestrel, Amur Falcon* and Red-necked Falcon are found along the perimeter of the marsh.

Accommodation: Mobile Tented Camp

Activities: Game Drive and Bushman Painting Walks

* Denotes migratory species

BOTSWANA 2010 with Tom Isgar of Wild Images Photography

Day 4 Savuti to Khwai. Travel Day. 100km. 4-5 hours

Leaving the parched landscape, we continue our journey south to the Khwai Community Area.

Habitat: A fascinating days drive looking at some of the evidence of the Paleo-Lake Makgadikgadi that dried up some ten thousand years ago. The most challenging part of the trip is crossing the Magwikwe Sand-ridge that formed the shoreline for this massive inland sea. The winding track through this deep sand makes for interesting travel in the early summer! The old lakebed is now the Mababe Depression. The dense clay floor of the depression result in high protein feed for wildlife and the area teems with game after the rains. During the rainy season, the depression is impassable due to the "cotton soil" and alternative routes must be used.

Wildlife: A day when anything could happen. The range of habitat that is covered encompasses most of the habitat types of northern Botswana. We pass through excellent lion country and some of the best cheetah country that our safari will cover. Elephant occur throughout the drive but are more common at the start and end of the drive where permanent surface water can be found.

Birding: The Mababe Depression is a birder's paradise. The nutritious grasses that grow on the rich soils provide excellent seed for an impressive array of estrillids and viduids. Among these are the magnificently colored Violet-eared Waxbill, Black-cheeked Waxbill, Village Indigobird, Shaft-tailed Whydah and Paradise Whydah. These in turn provide a good food source for small raptors such as the Little Sparrowhawk, Shikra, Gabar Goshawk, Red-necked Falcon and Lanner Falcon. Rodents as well as small birds feed on the grass seeds. There are annual outbreaks of huge numbers of rats and mice. As a result huge numbers of Secretary Bird, Tawny Eagle, Black-shouldered Kite, Steppe Eagle*, Lesserspotted Eagle*, Wahlberg's Eagle* and Steppe Buzzard* can be found.

Accommodation: Mobile Tented Camp

Activities: Game Drive

Day 5&6 Khwai Exploration Day.

Habitat: We spend our time between the dry-land habitats of the lead-wood and camel-thorn woodlands and savannahs and the riverside and marshy backwaters of the Khwai. Time permitting we may visit the lagoons and waterways of Xakanaxa where the largest heronry in southern Africa exists.

Wildlife: The Khwai region boasts excellent populations of both bull elephant as well as breeding herds. Lion, leopard, serval, and African wildcat are common predators of the region with wild dog and cheetah being less common. Buffalo use this area seasonally with large herds moving in during the summer rains. The swampy areas in the west are home to red lechwe. Other ungulates include tsesebe, blue wildebeest, giraffe, kudu, sable antelope, roan antelope and impala.

Birding: Truly a Botswana birding Mecca. The western reaches are prime habitat for the uncommon Rosy-throated Longclaw. The entire length of the river is hunting domain for the Bat-Hawk. Other interesting raptors here are Cuckoo Hawk (rare), Long-crested Eagle and Black Sparrowhawk. More common are the Tawny Eagle, Steppe Eagle*, Lesser-spotted Eagle*, Martial Eagle, Bateleur and African Hawk-Eagle. The waterways host Africa Rail, African Crake*, Greater Painted Snipe, Allen's Gallinule*, Lesser Jacana and Lesser Moorhen*.

Accommodation: Mobile Tented Camp

Activities: Game Drive, Walking Safaris and Night Drive

* Denotes migratory species

BOTSWANA 2010 with Tom Isgar of Wild Images Photography

Day 7 Khwai to Xakanaxa. Travel Day. 60km. 3-4 hours

Habitat: The Manuchira Channel is known as the Khwai River at its eastern most extremity. The day's journey follows this watercourse, with the track weaving from the riverside and floodplains into the mopane veld and the woodlands that make Khwai one of the most scenic areas of the Okavango. We pass the magnificent Dombo Hippo Pools in the morning stopping to enjoy the scenery and the antics of the resident hippo.

Wildlife: The western mopane veld is home to mostly breeding herds of elephant whilst the eastern reaches of Khwai are home to some impressive old bulls. The mature bulls revel in the cool waters of the Khwai and are far more approachable while drinking and bathing than the breeding herds. The river has an unusually high density of hippo as well as some huge crocodile. Leopard, cheetah, serval and lion are common predators along this route and both Xakanaxa as well as Khwai are included in the home ranges of 2 different packs of wild dog. General game includes southern giraffe, Burchell's zebra, tsessebe and red lechwe with roan and sable antelope being less common residents.

Birding: In the mopane woodlands African Hawk-Eagle, Tawny Eagle, Gabar Goshawk, Little Sparrowhawk, African Harrier Hawk and Shikra are common raptors. Mixed bird parties move through the canopy and include Red-headed Weaver, Stierling's Wren-Warbler, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Neddicky, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Chin-spot Batis, Diederik Cuckoo* to name but a few. The verges of the swamp form breeding grounds for the Rosy-Longclaw, Black Coucal*, Long-legged Bustard and the African Crane*

Accommodation: Mobile Tented Camp

Activities: Game Drive

Days 8&9 Xakanaxa Exploration Days Moremi Game Reserve

Habitat: Moremi lies on the eastern extremity of the Okavango Delta. Habitats here range from wide-open floodplains, marshes, lagoons, papyrus fringed channels, vast reed-beds of Miscanthus and Phragmites, woodland and savannah. Because of the extremely variable habitat the diversity of both wildlife and birdlife is excellent.

Wildlife: Every type of mopane habitat is well represented in this drive from the towering cathedral woodlands Xakanaxa to the classic climax mopane woodland and in the drier and harsher habitats, extensive stretches of scrub mopane. The Santa-Wani region has scattered ephemeral water pans with large floodplains and camel-thorn woodlands. 40 km of the drive is in Moremi Game Reserve with a further 40 km in areas designated for wildlife management where animals roam freely to and from the Game Reserve.

Birding: A good day for raptors with African Hawk-Eagle, Gabar Goshawk, Shikra, Little Sparrowhawk, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Tawny Eagle, Lesser Spotted Eagle* and Steppe Eagle* all inhabiting the mopane and adjacent woodlands. Other birds common along this route includes most of Botswana's hornbills including Red-billed, Southern Yellow-billed, African Grey, Bradfield's and the Southern Ground Hornbills. A large number of brood-parasites may also be seen. Diederick Cuckoo*, Levillant's Cuckoo*, Jacobin Cuckoo*, Great-spotted Cuckoo*, African Cuckoo*, Common Cuckoo*, Shaft-tailed Whydah, Pin-tailed Whydah, Eastern Paradise Whydah, Greater Honeyguide, and Lesser Honeyguide.

Accommodation: Mobile Tented Camp

Activities: Game Drive

* Denotes migratory species

Day 10 Xakanaxa to Nxai Pan. Travel Day. (320km – 8 ½ hr drive)

Following breakfast we will depart Moremi in order to get through to Nxai Pan, this drive will take us back through to Maun where shortly afterwards we will stop for lunch before continuing on the Nxai Pan.

Habitat: Our journey takes us through Kalahari veld that is uniform scrub Acacia with some dense stands of lala palms Hyphane. A short detour takes us to the erratic Chanouga Lagoons. This extension of the Okavango forms a large lagoon that, when full, supports a fantastic diversity of birdlife.

Wildlife: Nxai Pan lies on an ecotone between the savannah and Kalahari and as such has many of the species not often found in the Kalahari such as Cape buffalo, African wild dog, African elephant, impala and Burchell's zebra. Typical Kalahari game here includes oryx (gemsbok), springbok, ostrich, steenbok and red hartebeest. This is also one of the most reliable places in Botswana to see cheetah. Other predators include lion, leopard, caracal and African wildcat.

Birding: A trip to Chanouga Lagoon will often produce Pink-backed Pelican, Osprey, Greater Flamingo, African Snipe and African Fish Eagle as well as an array of resident and migrant waders; the grasslands abound with Double-banded Courser, Crowned Lapwing, Kitlitz's Plover, Northern Black Korhaan and Red-capped Lark. The thornveld on the perimeter of the pan offers Ashy Tit, Chestnut-vented Titbabbler, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Icterine Warbler*, Olive Tree Warbler* and Long-billed Crombec. Pale-chanting Goshawk and Greater Kestrel are by far the most common raptors. Gabar Goshawk, Little Sparrowhawk, Lanner Falcon, Tawny Eagle, Steppe Eagle*, Montague's Harrier* and Pallid Harrier* are also seen here.

Day 11 Nxai Pan Exploration Day

Habitat: Nxai Pan in a vegetated pan in contrast to the near-by Makgadikgadi Salt Pan. The pan floor has high clay content and the short sweet grasses support an abundance of grazers and browsers. The umbrella thorn trees dominate the pan area and provide shade for the pan's fauna during the mid-day heat

Wildlife: By far the most abundant animals here are springbuck, which number in the thousands. Other Kalahari antelope include Oryx and occasionally Red Hartebeest. Because this is a transitional area between the Kalahari and the semi-arid savannah there is an overlap here of Impala, Buffalo (summer only), Elephant, Burchell's Zebra and a host of other large mammals only associated with wetter areas. The lion of Nxai Pan are renowned for their blatant siege of the only watering point, leaving gaps for thirsty animals to come through and drink, and then storming in and often in the most amazing acrobatic fashion they pluck a leaping springbok out of mid-air. The flat vast landscape is also ideal for cheetah as well as caracal. Leopard does occur but they seldom venture onto the open pan-floor since they prefer to hunt in the surrounding thickets and on the vegetated dunes.

Birding: Northern Black Korhaan are prolific here and for much of the year the noisy displays of the males can be seen and heard for kilometres. Double-banded Courser and Temminck's Courser are also commonly found in the open areas and occasionally Bronze-winged Courser can be found in the mopane scrub areas. Sandgrouse flock to the waterhole around mid-morning and this is one of the few areas in Botswana where you have a realistic chance of seeing all four of the southern African sandgrouse species in the same area. Namaqua and yellow-throated sandgrouse are less common however and require a bit of luck. Secretary birds and Kori Bustard are both common birds here and their large size makes them visible over huge distances. Pale-chanting Goshawk and Tawny Eagle are the most common raptors.

* Denotes migratory species

Day 12 Nxai Pan to Maun. Travel Day (280km – 4 hr drive)

After an early breakfast, we will depart Nxai Pan for the drive back to Maun in time for your flight back to Johannesburg.

Travel Days

On our travel days we have an early start, pack our bags and leave camp to have breakfast somewhere scenic. Following breakfast we game-drive towards our next camp stopping for tea/coffee and cookies and later for a relaxing lunch under a shady grove of trees. Invariably lunch finds us within a short distance of our camp and we arrive in camp to find our crew has once again erected the camp at our new destination. There is time for a shower before afternoon tea and then it is time to begin our exploration of the area.

Please note that this is a rough outline of a travel day and events change from safari to safari depending on the distribution of game, distance between camps, conditions of the roads and the decision of your guide etc. Travel times are a rough indication of the driving time from one camp to another and do not include time taken for breaks and wildlife viewing.

Exploration Days

The best game viewing is the early morning and so each day begins at the first hint of dawn with a coffee and light breakfast around the fire. From here we go straight into game-drive, walking safari or boat trip. After several hours of wildlife viewing we stop for a comfort break and have tea, coffee and cookies. Between 10 and 11 am we return to camp where there is time to freshen up with warm water in your standing basins before enjoying a sumptuous brunch consisting of fresh-baked camp bread, baked dishes and cold salads. After brunch there is time to relax, siesta, read a book, shower etc. before heading out in the late afternoon for our game-drive or boat trip. In areas outside of the National Parks we may also return to camp after dark with the use of a spotlight to look for nocturnal game. This is a guideline as to what happens on most exploration days. The course of each day's events will be determined by local conditions, distribution of birds and mammals, safety and the decision of your guide.

Questions?

Your questions are welcome.

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