

**For most people a highlight of their travels in Africa is a wildlife safari. Whether this is the first time you are planning a safari or whether the safari “passion bug” has bitten you, this safari primer answers many questions we are asked on a daily basis and will assist you in deciding what type of safari is for you.**

### **Which country should I choose to go on safari?**

Each southern African destination has its own range of charms, scenery and wildlife attractions. It's almost impossible to recommend one over the other. South Africa probably offers the widest range of safari experiences from a self drive safari staying in a national park to simple intimate bushcamps and some of the world's finest luxury private lodges. Namibia's Etosha and Caprivi wildlife regions can be easily combined with its other natural attractions or with a safari in Botswana and Zimbabwe. Botswana and Zambia are prime safari destinations, with large tracts of wilderness areas literally teeming with wildlife and birds. Both offer an excellent safari experience with a choice of reserves, habitats and private safari lodges. Of course these only represent our Southern African Safari options, further North moving through Zambia, Tanzania and Kenya we offer unrivalled comfort in Lodges scattered around the wilds. These Lodge safaris are Fly – In packages only and promise to offer an unforgettable experience.

### **What type of safaris can I choose from?**

There are a number of safari types to choose from. Firstly, you need to consider if you would like a “traditional” safari with your 2 game drives per day in a 4x4 open vehicle with guide or if you would prefer something more adventurous such as an elephant back safari, a horseback safari, a walking trail safari or a mekoro ( traditional dug out canoe) or boating safari. Walking safaris are a speciality of Zambia and Zimbabwe. Wonderful horse riding safaris are on offer in South Africa and Botswana whilst Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana are known for their game viewing by canoe and boat along the banks of the mighty Zambezi and Chobe Rivers. Another exciting element which can be combined with your traditional safari is participation in a game capture or research program. ( These programs in conjunction with our Socially Active Tours form the backbone of our new Volountour Initiative.

Secondly, you need to look at the mode of travel on your safari. Most people enjoy a fly-in and transfer safari whereby you fly to the nearest local airport or lodge airstrip and are transferred by road to the safari lodge of your choice, thereafter flying by small charter plane from one lodge to the next.

A large majority of our clients also enjoy a private tailor-made safari accompanied throughout by one of our own expert guides. This applies especially to the Kalahari which we are passionate about and transport is in a suitably elevated vehicle with all comforts on board. Of course we can also design a self drive safari for you ( applicable for South Africa and Namibia ), where you can drive yourselves from one safari lodge to the next or, for the more budget conscious traveler, overnight in the national parks, which offer a large selection of self catering accommodation.

If you are looking for a more traditional style safari, then perhaps a mobile camping safari may suit you. These range from full participation, where you would assist with all camp chores such as putting up your tent and preparing food, to semi participation and then full luxury, in Ernest Hemingway style ! You may choose from a scheduled departure or book a private safari, ideally suited to a small group of family or friends.

### **What is the best time of year to go on a safari?**

We are often asked this question. The answer really depends on what you wish to experience. Each month is different and special in its own way. Generally speaking, Namibia's prime safari viewing time is during its winter months, from May-October when the daytime temperatures are not as searing as during the summer months. Botswana's dry season is also favored by travelers as a preferable time to visit, from April-October. This is due to the lack of water and lush vegetation, which draws the animals to the waterholes and allows for easier spotting. However wildlife viewing is always supreme in Botswana and apart from spectacular contrasting scenery and the lambing of many of the antelope species, excellent prices may be obtained during the so-called rainy season from November-March. South Africa's wildlife viewing is excellent year round with only the Eastern Cape experiencing rainy spells during May-September. The debate on when to go will always be a personal one; however we guarantee you no matter what time of year you choose every day on safari will bring you different wildlife surprise viewings together with the luck and skill of your guide

### **What level of comfort can I expect on my safari?**

The level of comfort will vary depending on the type of safari you choose. All our lodges and safari camps are chosen by us for their character, location and excellent guiding and tend to be intimate and fairly small in size. South Africa and Botswana have some of the finest game lodges in the world, complete with luxurious furnishings, excellent cuisine, top class wine cellars and private plunge pools, (though in Botswana many still remain traditional tented camps).

### **How long should my safari be?**

For many, seeing wildlife in its natural habitat is the focus of their African holiday. For others, a safari is only one of the anticipated highlights. The essence of a safari is that you are on the move, staying a few nights in different regions so that you experience a variety of habitats and a diversity of wildlife. The overall length of your safari depends on your interests... and on your budget! Our emphasis is on designing an individual safari after careful discussion with you - what do you want to see, which animals really fascinate you, how close do you want to get, do you want a luxurious experience or rustic charm? What's perfect for one person won't be right for another.

### **What is the advantage of having a private/specialist guide ?**

The success of your safari experience will largely depend on the skill and expertise of your guide. All private safari lodges have their own compliment of qualified field guides and trackers, who will accompany you for the duration of your stay. The advantage of having your own private guide with you on safari is the continuity of having someone accompany you from beginning to end of your complete safari itinerary, flying with you from lodge to lodge and ensuring everything runs according to plan. Also, if you speak a foreign language, a safari guide communicating in the language of your choice is a benefit. In our eyes, the best advantage to having your own private safari guide with you, is having an expert chosen by us from our profile of guides to suit your own particular needs or interests. However; keep in mind that this will be an additional cost as you are paying for your guide's accommodation and flights.

### **What kind of weather can I expect on safari?**

We suggest you have a look under each specific country for more precise details on monthly weather conditions and rainfall. Generally speaking the climate in southern Africa is really perfect for game viewing with dry season temperatures similar to those of the Mediterranean, but without the humidity. Daytime temperatures during April-October average 28-35 degrees celsius but can get much hotter, especially in the months of October and November, just before the rains arrive. During the winter period from June- August nighttime temperatures in some areas can drop to freezing or below. Early morning game drives can start out very chilly and you will need to dress in layers as by mid morning the days heat up dramatically. The rains occur each year during the period November through March usually starting towards the end of November and peaking December-February. They are however short lived and sporadic with blue skies appearing again shortly after.

### **How much will my safari cost me?**

Our website will give you an indication of various safari types and costs. South Africa and Namibia offer safari experiences for both the luxurious premium priced group and more moderately priced markets, with the local currencies offering good value for money. Botswana and Zambia/Zimbabwe's safari prices are in US dollars and are more expensive. However keep in mind that your safari experience will be away from the mass tourism crowds as all these lodges own private concessions of vast tracts of wilderness and have a bed capacity of on average 8-16 people only ! They also offer an all inclusive experience with everything you can think of included except for your personal purchases. We are experienced in planning safaris to suit all budgets and can offer you a full range of options from a self drive safari in South Africa's National Parks to a mobile camping safari in Botswana or a luxurious fly-in safari into some of southern Africa's wildest and most pristine wildlife regions.

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### **Can I go alone on my African safari ?**

There are many types of safaris you may choose from as a single traveler. You may wish to join a small group safari with scheduled departure dates. This type of safari is generally a mobile camping safari whereby you travel with a qualified guide in wildlife areas, setting up camp in different game reserves or national parks each night. A fly-in and transfer safari to the safari lodges(s) of your choice can offer you more flexibility and cater for any specific special safari interests you may have.

### **Is travel to southern Africa safe?**

As in any other major city in the world, simple security precautions are advised when sightseeing around southern Africa's cities such as not carrying valuables in obvious sight, not walking around alone in an area you do not know after dark, keeping your rented vehicle locked etc. We know our selected properties very well and will recommend only the best and safest for you in any cities you would like to visit. Safari lodges and tented camps are very safe and are far removed from any human settlements. We have never in all our years of travel heard of any security incidents. However; again we would advise you to lock away or leave any valuables with your lodge manager or guide if you are at all concerned.

### **What can I expect on a typical day on my safari?**

A variety of game viewing activities are offered at different safari lodges from canoeing, motor boating, walking, elephant back or horse riding. The most common way of game viewing is in a 4x4 open vehicle with your personal guide and tracker. The same general daily schedule is followed. You will start the day with a wake up call just before sunrise for a light snack and tea/coffee and then head out into the reserve for your first game drive. The morning game drive is usually the most rewarding ( so not to be missed ), as the animals are generally fresh and some of the nocturnal predators still about. There is usually a stop during the drive with another snack. By late morning you are back in camp in time for brunch and then it is time to relax during the heat of the day ( the animals generally also take a siesta under the shade of trees ) until high tea. For those who wish another game

activity such as a bush walk is usually offered either late morning or early afternoon. The afternoon game drive leaves at approximately 4pm and continues until after dark for you to discover some of the nocturnal wildlife. Return to camp, freshen up and then enjoy drinks around the outdoor campfire and dinner.

### **Can I travel with my children on safari?**

There are quite a number of safari lodges in southern Africa that have an age restriction of 8 years for children. If you have young children as we do, we would advise you to either plan a self drive or guided private safari with us which will allow you much more flexibility with your time and schedule ( very young children often cannot cope with a 3-4 hour game drive as offered by most safari lodges ) OR contact us for our suggestions on safari lodges that cater for children and even have special children's game drives and activities on offer. Generally speaking malarial areas are not recommended for very young children, so many of our recommended safari lodges are located in the Eastern Cape or Northern province of South Africa. Another option if you are a large family or small group of 8-10 people, is to book the entire safari lodge for yourselves and then children of all ages are welcome.

### **What animals can I expect to see on my safari?**

Africa's "Big Five", the lion, leopard, rhinoceros, buffalo and elephant are usually high up on everyone's list of animals they would like to see whilst on safari in southern Africa. However; keep in mind that there are a wealth of other animals, reptiles and birds to discover whilst in the bush, most with their own fascinating behaviour patterns and characteristics, which your guide will share with you. There are currently 370 different species of mammals and a mind boggling +900 bird species for you to discover whilst on your safari! If you are interested in a specific animal/bird species or would like to participate in a game capture activity, please let us know as we can arrange a safari with some of the world's top experts and researchers.

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### **Are any wild animals dangerous?**

One of the most thrilling and fulfilling experiences you may have on your safari is coming in close contact with wild animals whether it is on foot, by boat or in an open 4x4 vehicle. All wild animals are potentially dangerous; however under the safe guidance of your personal ranger and tracker who are experienced in reading the ways of the wild, you have nothing to fear. Most safari lodges in southern Africa, with the exception of South Africa, are unfenced, allowing wild game to roam at freedom in and around your camp. Again your ranger will advise you on certain precautions to take such as always keeping your tent closed at night and waiting for your accompanied guide to walk to and from your tent/accommodation after dark. We can assure you that being surrounded by nature and its wildlife is all part of your safari and you will treasure the experience as much as we do.

### **What about any health precautions and malaria ?**

Malaria is not a serious problem if you are sensible and take basic precautions. Malaria within South Africa's borders is only prevalent in a few areas. It is encountered mainly in northern and eastern Mpumalanga ( Kruger Park ), northern Kwa-Zulu Natal, and the border areas of the Northern and North West Provinces. It can also be found throughout Mozambique and Zimbabwe, and much of Botswana. Northern Namibia is also a malaria area. Should you be visiting these areas malaria precautions are advised. Malaria transmission is at its highest during the warmer and wetter months of November through to April. From May through to October the risks of acquiring malaria are reduced.

There are quite a few safari lodges and safaris we can recommend to you which are in malaria free areas, mainly in South Africa and Namibia. If you are traveling into a malaria risk zone then remember the most important and most effective way of preventing malaria is firstly to prevent mosquito bites

Cover your arms and legs towards evenings with light colored clothing to cover exposed skin areas and especially the ankles. Wear long sleeved shirts, long trousers, socks and closed shoes.

Apply insect repellents to exposed skin areas every 4-6 hours.

Burn insecticide oils or electrically heated insecticide tablets in the bedroom at night.

Screened mosquito proof windows and doors and mosquito nets are standard practice at most safari lodges

Take malaria prophylactics when visiting an endemic area, especially in the warm and rainy months from October to May.

Remember to complete your prophylactic course - even after leaving a malaria area.

If on your return or during the remainder of your trip, you experience any flu like symptoms, you should have a malaria test.

Malaria responds well to early treatment.

### **Can I have my laundry done on safari ?**

Most southern African safari lodges include laundry services in their rate. This is important to know as your luggage limit is usually restricted to 12kg on inter-camp air charters.

### **How safe is the water for drinking on safari?**

Although the water in most of the regions of southern Africa is safe to drink, you may prefer the bottled water provided at all

safari lodges for your convenience. It is very important that you drink plenty of water on safari especially during the warmer months. We recommend that guests drink at least 2 to 3 litres (4 to 6 pints) of water per day to limit the effects of dehydration.

### **Is there electricity in the safari camps?**

This depends on where you are traveling to. Generally speaking, most South African and Namibian safari lodges have electricity with a few intimate bush camps opting for the romance of oil lamps. The Botswana safari lodges mostly operate with a generator system and the camps do not have mains electricity. General lighting is therefore from paraffin oil lamps. However each tent is provided with a battery powered reading lamp in the evenings with a flashlight.

### **Can I use my cellular phone on safari?**

Telecommunications in the urban areas are easily accessible but please note that the safari lodges and camps you may be visiting could be located in very remote parts of Southern Africa and often do not have telephones. Guests who travel with satellite phones are required to respect the other guests in camp. Satellite phones are only to be used to retrieve messages and to make calls from your personal tent. They are not allowed on game drives. Wherever you travel on your safari you will be able to communicate with the outside world if needed, either by telephone ( South Africa/Namibia) or by passing on messages via radio systems for emergencies ( Botswana/Zambia). All Botswana camps are linked with VHF radio with a backup HF radio system. There are staff assigned to monitor after hours communications in the event of emergencies.

### **What happens if I have a medical emergency whilst on safari?**

It is standard practice that most safari lodges cover guests automatically with a medical rescue policy that includes evacuation to the nearest appropriate medical facility . The policy covers evacuation, admittance and initial treatment and is recoverable against your own medical cover, which is compulsory and your responsibility before undertaking your safari.

### **How much should I tip my guide?**

Gratuities should only be given if you are well satisfied with the service and experience that you have received. Do not feel compelled to tip. Any currency is acceptable but please note that local banks do not change foreign coins. Most safari lodges accept Master and Visa credit cards for gratuities. Generally the guides and trackers are tipped separately and the rest of the staff participate in a pool. The camp manager will accept the tips on behalf of the staff and will distribute the tips among the staff if required. If you feel a particular staff member was particularly deserving then feel free to give specific instructions. The following suggested amounts are to be used as a guideline only. Feel free to use your own discretion.

**Safari lodge guides:** Approximately US\$5 per guest per day for travel to Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe and further North and R50 per guest per day for visitors to Namibia and South Africa.

**The General Safari Camp / Lodge Staff :**Aprox.US\$3 per guest per day for safari camps in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe and R30 per guest per day for safari camps in Namibia and South Africa. This should be placed in the communal tipping box to be distributed equally amongst all the staff at a later stage

**Hotel Staff:** US\$1 per guest per day for hotel staff /housekeeping

**Porterage:**US\$1 per person per movement.

**Transfer and Touring Driver/guides:** Transfer US\$2 per person/ Half day tour US\$4 per person/ Full day tour US\$10 per person

**Restaurants / Hotels:**10% of total bill is customary on meal accounts in South Africa, but only if you are satisfied with the service.

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### **Can my specific dietary needs be catered for on safari?**

Yes, please let us know any specific dietary needs you may have at the time of your reservation. The food on your safari is generally of a very high standard and depending on the standard of safari lodge booked can rival some of the world's top class restaurants and hotels. The best part of eating on safari is the location which may vary from dining under the stars in a traditional African Boma to a surprise breakfast in the bush. Attention to details and luxury are never spared.

### **Can I use my credit card in the safari lodges?**

Most safari lodges in southern Africa accept credit cards, the most common being Visa and Mastercard.

### **What if I forget an essential personal item behind?**

If you have left behind or run out of an essential item, please ask your safari lodge manager who will have a supply of most essential items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, shaving kit, deodorant and the like. If you require non prescription medicine just ask and depending on transport they should be able to get it to you.

### **What photographic equipment can you recommend?**

The choice of the correct camera equipment and film will determine the quality of your photographs on the trip. For good photography of birds and animals, a good SLR camera and telephoto lens is necessary. A zoom lens can be extremely useful on safari and the minimum recommended size is 200mm. Consideration should be given before traveling with any lens bigger than 400 mm as most interesting shots are taken using hand held equipment. The new high-resolution digital cameras are outstanding and give great quality images, especially if you are using a digital camera body which takes normal camera lenses. Camera bodies like the Canon D60 and 1D are superb. The advantage of digital photography is that one can get instant feedback and adjustments can be made in the field to your techniques to ensure that your photographs are the quality that you would like. Colour reversal film (slides) will give far better quality than prints.

Our safari guides have found that they are getting the best results using Fuji film. Fuji has brought out a good high-speed film that gives good color with very little grain (less so than any of their competitors). This is especially useful when using a big lens in low light situations. The guides' personal preference is the slower film (either 50 or 100 ASA) as this gives almost perfect quality for normal light. However, you may consider going to 200 ASA for a larger lens in low lighting conditions. The new Fuji 400, we believe is giving great results too. The only disadvantage with the low ASA film is that you need a tripod for the early morning and evening shots

### **Do safari lodges stock photographic supplies?**

The safari lodges do not generally stock much film. What they do have is generally of standard speed and size. The heat precludes the film from lasting too long. Please make sure that you stock up well in advance of your safari with plenty spare film and batteries. A handy place to store your spare and used film is in a small airtight cooler bag, to prevent it overheating.

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### **What about charging my video recorder batteries?**

Please ask the camp manager to arrange for charging of batteries for video cameras as this can be done. It is advisable to have a battery charged while out on drive, so try to keep a full battery on hand and one on charge to ensure continuity.

### **What should I pack with on safari?**

A detailed packing checklist will be sent to you prior to your safari; however here are a few essential items to remember to pack with:

- Camera and video camera (remember spare batteries for both)
- Film for cameras
- Binoculars
- Sunhat
- Sun screen
- Neutral colored long pants (especially winter)
- Neutral colored short pants (all year round)
- Neutral colored long sleeved shirts (all year round - mosquitoes and cold)
- Comfortable flat shoes or running shoes
- Swimming costume
- Reference books

Style is "bush casual" you will not need to dress up for meals. A complimentary laundry service is provided in most safari camps - no expensive and delicate fabrics please.

### **How much luggage am I allowed to bring with me?**

Remember if your itinerary includes a light aircraft transfer there will be a weight restriction for your baggage. Most light aircraft charters restrict you to 12 - 20 kg (26 lbs.) of baggage - in a soft bag please (maximum dimensions- 35 cm wide X 20 cm high X 80cm long (14" wide x 11" high x 32 " long) as the pilot may have to push the bags to get them into the pod. Please note that the cargo pods on the normal light aircraft cannot handle suitcases and hard bags. If you have opted for a private charter then these restrictions will not apply. There is also a maximum guest weight restriction of 90kg (200lbs). If your personal weight or baggage will exceed the limits you are required to let us know in advance so that an additional seat can be booked for you at an additional charge.

### **Can you recommend a reading list for me prior to my safari?**

Over the years, we have compiled a substantial list of books on all aspects of Africa and we read everything new that becomes available. We recommend that our guests, especially first-timers, do some advanced reading as it certainly will enhance the experience once you are there. Depending upon which region(s) you will be visiting, we can recommend any number of our favorites to give you some up front knowledge of its animals, flora, cultures and history. Please see our recommended reading list under our Books to engage the mind.