

NORTHERN BOTSWANA SAFARI



Highlights of this comfortable camping safari to Botswana are numerous and varied. They include the wildlife-rich Xakanaxa area of the Moremi Game Reserve where the environs range from riverine forests and lily-filled lagoons to open savannah; the crystal clear channels and papyrus reed beds of the Okavango Delta; the fascinating and ever-changing Savuti Marsh in Chobe National Park; cruising along the Chobe River whilst watching elephants drink; and the sight of the majestic Victoria Falls as the grand finale. Travelling throughout Botswana's renowned wildlife reserves with an expert guide, you'll stay in mobile camps set on private sites just for your group, and sleep in comfortable en-suite tents.

Day 1 – Maun

On arrival you are met and driven to a comfortable guesthouse to relax after your long flight. This is likely to be Thamalakane River Lodge which is situated about 15 minutes drive from Maun Airport and in a tranquil setting overlooking the Thamalakane River. You'll overnight in stone-and-thatch cottages and have the option to swim in the pool before dining in their open-sided restaurant and bar area.

Dinner is included.



Day 2 – Moremi Game Reserve

After a leisurely breakfast and a relaxing morning you return to Maun Airport around midday to meet the rest of the Northern Botswana Safari group. A 30-minute light aircraft flight takes you over the Okavango Delta to the Moremi Game Reserve, where you will meet your safari guide.

On arrival at the mobile camp you are shown to your tents and introduced to comfortable camping Botswana style, before heading out on a short afternoon drive. Your day ends with a three-course dinner back at camp.

The Okavango Delta is formed by the Okavango River running into the middle of the Kalahari basin – the largest stretch of continuous sand in the world. A third of this unique ecosystem was set aside by the local BaTswana people in 1962 who named it the Moremi Game Reserve. Moremi now encompasses a significant portion of the Okavango Delta's eastern wetlands. In the reserve there is a large peninsula that juts into the wetlands; this is known as the Mopane Tongue. Xakanaxa Lagoon lies at the end of this peninsula and it is here, where land and delta meet and wildlife flourishes, that you explore in your 4WD safari vehicle with your guide.

Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Days 3 & 4 – Moremi Game Reserve

Each morning, after an early coffee and a light breakfast, you continue your exploration of this game-rich location on a safari drive. The Xakanaxa area of Moremi is home to a resident herd of several hundred buffalo which ranges through the territories of at least four lion prides. Breeding herds of elephant move between the fresh waters of the Okavango Delta to their browsing areas in the mopane forests. Antelope species are numerous, from the dainty yet common impala to the more unusual red lechwe. Following a usually productive morning, you return to camp for a sumptuous brunch and the relaxation of an afternoon siesta. Tea is then served just before the afternoon safari drive, after which you return to camp for dinner.

Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.



Day 5 – Khwai Community Area

The support team breaks down your Moremi camp while a game drive takes you to your next location in the Khwai region, just north of the Moremi Game Reserve. Today's transfer/game drive through Moremi is a relatively long one; you'll head out early to catch any morning wildlife activity in the Xakanaxa area before setting off towards Khwai. Taking your time so as not to miss anything of particular interest along the way, you'll first stop for a morning tea and cookie break, followed by a picnic lunch

under a shady grove of trees a little later on. Depending on what route you travel, and what you see on the way, you'll expect to arrive at your new camp around mid-afternoon.

The Khwai area is somewhat drier than the Xakanaxa area of Moremi as it is east of the Okavango Delta. The change in habitat heralds a change in the dominant wildlife species and you have the opportunity to explore all of this before arriving at your new comfortable mobile safari camp. If your campsite is situated in or near the Khwai community area, and animal movements permit, you have the chance to take an afternoon bush walk with your guide. A spot-lit night drive to see the area's nocturnal wildlife might then follow dinner. Guided safari walks and night drives are not allowed within Botswana's national parks so being outside Moremi's borders is a bonus. The boundaries are unfenced so the wildlife roams free between the two areas.

Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Days 6 & 7 – Khwai Community Area

Over the next two days, you'll explore the vast floodplains, riverine woodland and mopane veld bordering the Khwai River – the eastern most extremity of the Delta's Manuchira Channel. The region supports a great variety of animals and birds from elephant to mongoose, lion to wildcat and bee-eater to goliath heron. You are also likely to have the opportunity for a mokoro (traditional dug-out canoe) excursion through lily-filled waterways. This tranquil mode of travel is the perfect opportunity to view Botswana's colourful water birds and spot smaller creatures such as the fascinating painted reed frogs. After each day's tasty lunch and relaxing siesta, a late-afternoon game drive gives you a final chance to search out big game before nightfall, including a break to watch the sunset and take in the sounds of the African bush. Finally, each day ends with dinner at your comfortable mobile safari camp, and the background chorus of owls which is characteristic of this area at night.

Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.



Day 8 – Savuti

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before you depart for Savuti in the Chobe National Park. After your initial early morning game drive to see what's out and about whilst it's still cool, the day's transfer drive is a long but interesting one and takes about five hours. You'll pass through the ever-changing scenery of the famous Mababe Depression to arrive at your new camp. Mababe is the old bed of the Paleo-Lake Makgadikgadi that dried up some ten thousand years ago. The dense clay floor of the depression creates high protein feed for animals, especially after the rains. Unfortunately, this 'cotton soil' also makes it impassable when wet, and during this time other routes may be used.

Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Days 9 & 10 – Savuti

Central to this productive wildlife area is the unpredictable Savuti Channel which flows from the Linyanti's waterways into the heart of Chobe, resulting in the Savuti Marsh. Records show that when David Livingstone first visited Savuti in the early 1850's the channel was flowing. By 1879 the channel had stopped and the Marsh began to dry out. The river began again in the late 1950's, drying up once more around 1980. No one's quite sure whether rain fall or tectonic plate movements cause these changes but in 2008 the channel became a waterway once more, creating a habitat for hippo and attracting a myriad of aquatic birds. Sadly 2014/15 were drier years and the channel has dried up again.

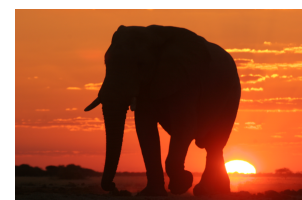
Savuti has always been famous for its wildlife – especially for its large population of bull elephant and large lion prides. In addition to a wide variety of herbivores, predators are numerous here: lion are often sighted and cheetah and wild dog range through the open plains. Unlike the vast majority of Botswana, Savuti is not a totally flat landscape. Large outcrops of volcanic rock reach up out of the Kalahari sands, towering over the endless savannah. These hills provide the perfect habitat for leopard and, unusually for the country, even the diminutive klipspringer antelope can be seen amongst the boulders from time to time.

Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.



Day 11 – Chobe River & Livingstone

Leaving Savuti early, you cross the Goha sand ridge on a long drive lasting about five hours en route to the northern region of Chobe National Park and its natural border - the Chobe River.



What time you arrive will depend upon the wildlife sightings you enjoy along the way. If there's time you'll stop for a picnic lunch along the river's banks, if not you'll drive straight on to the town of Kasane where you'll board a shaded boat and enjoy your lunch during the afternoon's leisurely safari cruise on the Chobe River.

This river supports a large number of wildlife species but is particularly renowned for its herds of elephants and buffalo which sometimes gather along the river in their hundreds to drink during the heat of the day. A boat trip will give you a hippo's eye view of the surrounding countryside and provide good opportunities to see all manner of wildlife drinking from the river. Birdlife abounds here, and depending on the time of year there are numerous rarities awaiting discovery.

In the late afternoon you bid farewell to your guide before a transfer from Kasane to the Kazangula border post where you connect with your road transfer to Livingstone (Zambia), arriving in the late evening. Here, you'll spend two nights at the Avani Victoria Falls Resort, beside the mighty Victoria Falls, as an independent traveller (without the group).

Includes breakfast and lunch.



Day 12 – Livingstone, Zambia

Livingstone itself is not a wildlife destination, but rather the current epicentre of adrenalin activities in Africa. There are a multitude of options to cater for all preferences (all payable locally and taken at your own risk), from bungee-jumping, jet-boating and white-water rafting to boat cruises, tracking rhino and helicopter flights over the Falls. Lunch and dinner for these two nights are at your own expense so that you're free to spend your days out and about enjoying the Victoria Falls area, or more quietly by the pool at the hotel.

Includes breakfast.

Day 13 – Flight home

You will be met at the Avani Victoria Falls Resort for your transfer to Livingstone Airport to connect with your scheduled flight home.

Includes breakfast.

SAFARI INFORMATION

In contrast to the ever changing faces of the people you meet on a fly-in safari visiting the permanent tented camps in Botswana, a comfortable mobile camping safari offers you a welcome sense of continuity, and the opportunity to get to know your guide and fellow travelling companions.

Guides

Each comfortable camping safari is led by a knowledgeable and personable guide who is passionate about the bush and its wildlife. Not only will they have extensive knowledge of Botswana's flora and fauna, but they are also fully trained in the complexities of a walking safari; so the opportunity to take guided walks with them can be one of the highlights of your trip.

Camp team

On days spent moving from one location to the next, the safari camp team will pack down the camp, travel ahead in the supply vehicle and prepare the next camp ready for your arrival. This team is typically made up of a safari chef and camp assistants who are there to carry out all the daily camp chores, helping to make your safari as comfortable and enjoyable as possible.

Mobile camp sites

Botswana is especially fortunate in that the *Hospitality and Tourism Association (HATAB)*, in conjunction with the *Department of Wildlife and National Parks*, has set aside private wilderness sites for the exclusive use of the country's licensed mobile operators. These private wilderness camping sites are used wherever possible on the Northern Botswana Safari, ensuring that you have a truly exclusive bush experience.

Tents

Accommodation whilst on safari through Botswana will be in spacious walk-in tents, each with an en-suite 'bush' bathroom. The tents are 3x4 metres with a high ceiling and a covered veranda area. Provided in each are two single camp beds, set with mattresses, sheets, duvets and pillows; a bedside table and an LED rechargeable lantern.

The 2x3 metre private en-suite, open-air bathroom is reached through a door at the rear of the tent. Here you'd find a short-drop with a 'proper' toilet seat cover and a bucket shower – water will be heated for you on request. Towels are also provided. Note that on days when the camp is being moved from one location to the next you may only arrive in the late afternoon and so showers won't be possible until then.

Each tent will have an oil or paraffin lantern set out on the veranda and in the bathroom after night falls. In front of the tent is a wash-basin with a small mirror. The basin is filled with fresh warm water first thing in the morning and again whenever you return to camp after a safari activity.

Costs

This comfortable camping safari to northern Botswana includes, transport in a custom-built, open-sided safari vehicle, transfers by road and light aircraft, accommodation, camping equipment, private campsite fees, park entrance fees, the services of a knowledgeable guide and usually three meals a day.

Dining

There is a dining tent where meals are served, but, because of the generally excellent weather and wonderful skies, dinner is served in the open beneath the stars whenever possible. The safari chef prepares all meals using fresh ingredients and cooks over an open fire. Sumptuous three-course bush dinners, guaranteed to satisfy any appetite, are served in style at a beautifully laid table and accompanied by freshly baked bread.

Whilst in Maun and Livingstone most lunches and dinners are for your own account and the bill is to be settled directly with the lodge or hotel before you depart.

Drinks

During your safari, drinks such as mineral water, soft drinks, beer, wine and the ingredients for a G&T are included. If you prefer whiskey, vodka or brandy, local brands of these can be included provided they are requested in advance of travel. Drinks whilst in Maun and Livingstone are for your own account and the bill is to be settled directly with the lodge or hotel before you depart.

Vehicles

The vehicles used on these safaris are custom-made open 4WD Landcruiser's designed for optimal game viewing. Each is spacious and comfortable with three rows of three individual bucket seats, seating a maximum of 7 passengers.

Each vehicle is fitted with seatbelts. A canvas canopy offers shade from the sun's glare and the windscreen folds down for uninterrupted game views. The vehicles are equipped with a 40 litre fridge to keep drinks refreshingly cool throughout the day, and HF radios allow for 24-hour communication with the Maun base.

Each vehicle is fitted with an inverter and a strip of plugs allowing travellers the opportunity to charge batteries whilst on safari using the standard two-pin charger that is usually supplied when you buy electrical equipment. If you do not have a two-pin charger, we recommend you purchase an adaptor. Botswana uses plugs with 3 large round pins – the same plug that is used in South Africa. It is relatively easy to find an adaptor for use in South Africa which would also work in Botswana.

The plugs on the vehicles are only to be used to recharge necessary items such as camera batteries; they are not to be used for charging electric toothbrushes or mobile phones.

Activities and driving

On a comfortable mobile camping safari, long driving distances between camps are typical and vary between two and five hours. However, like on this Northern Botswana Safari, these journeys are commonly within the national parks and reserves, and are incorporated into daily game drives with a picnic lunch en route, so the time is not wasted – you will still be viewing wildlife with knowledgeable guides, and enjoying a variety of surroundings.

This type of overland travel enables you to appreciate the subtle changes in the environment as you move from one area to the next, and to learn about the forces that caused these changes and shaped the contrasting landscapes around you. In other words the journey itself can be just as much a thrill as the destination.

High water levels caused by heavier than usual rains in the Angolan Highlands, which feeds the Okavango Delta, and more localized rains in Botswana can make some roads impassable. This may mean that when transferring from one campsite and wildlife area to another your guide may have to detour, taking a longer than usual route to your destination. Consequently driving times on these days can differ to those advised in the safari itinerary.

Game drives are the primary activity on this safari but a mokoro (dug-out canoe) excursion is also included during your time in the Khwai Reserve. Wherever possible a private camp site is booked within the Khwai community reserve (Days 5-7). Walking safaris and night drives are not allowed in Botswana's national parks, including Moremi. However, if you are camping in, or near

the Khwai community reserve, these activities may also be possible depending on wildlife movements and local conditions – they are often an added bonus to your safari experience.

A typical day on safari

You'll be woken up a little before dawn (sometime between 5 and 6am depending on the time of year) by one of the camp team calling a gentle koko near the entrance of your tent – knock knock in Setswana. The canvas basin outside your tent will have been filled with warm water for your morning wash and, after freshening up, you'll join the rest of the group around the campfire for tea or coffee and a light breakfast. The best times of the day to enjoy wildlife activities are the early morning and the late afternoon when the temperatures are cooler and the animals are at their most active. As the sun rises you'll head out on your first game drive, hoping to catch sight of predators who are usually most active in the very early morning.

Morning game drives typically last four to five hours depending on what you see. Returning to camp you'll be served a well deserved lunch in a shady spot before whiling away a couple of hours napping, chatting, reading or doing some gentle bird watching. Later in the afternoon the group will head out once more in search of animals as they start to stir, perhaps gathering at a waterhole to quench their thirst.

Returning to the camp just after sun set, you'll usually meet around the campfire for a pre-dinner drink and a chance to re-live the day's memorable sightings. A three-course dinner is normally served under the stars before a night-cap back round the fire and a good night's sleep.

On days spent moving from one location to another, the safari team will break camp just after the group sets off on the early morning game drive. They'll then travel ahead of you to set up at the next site in preparation for your arrival. You and your guide will drive at a more leisurely pace, enjoying the wildlife sightings and changing landscapes en-route. There's often a stop mid-morning for tea or coffee and biscuits, and a relaxing picnic lunch is provided under a shady grove of trees later in the day.

Luggage

The Northern Botswana Safari includes a light aircraft transfer. The maximum luggage limit on these flights, and therefore the safari, is 20kg (44lbs) per person including reasonable camera equipment. Your luggage must be packed in small squashable bags. This is seldom a problem as light, casual clothing is all that is needed except in the winter months (June to August) when we recommend you pack at least one warm jacket and a thick jumper or fleece along with woollen gloves and a hat.

Torches

The mobile camps on the Northern Botswana Safari will be lit by paraffin or oil lamps each evening. An LED rechargeable lantern will be supplied in each tent. Even so, we strongly recommend that you also take with you a good head torch which will let you read a book or catch up with your safari journal at night. We suggest you spend a little money on this essential safari item to avoid a lot of potential frustration in the bush.

Laundry

A limited laundry service is offered during full days in your mobile safari camp, not on a moving day. Clothes will be hand washed only and the service will depend on the availability of water and on the weather. If you would like items laundered please mention this to your guide or one of the camp team. For cultural reasons we ask you not to include smalls in your laundry. Water and washing powder can be made available to you should you wish to wash these yourself.

Language

The Northern Botswana Safari is usually conducted in English.

Single travellers

The single supplement charged covers a single room for your accommodation in Maun and Livingstone, and for the surcharge set for the transfers in these areas. A single tent can be guaranteed for the first two solo travellers to book on the Northern Botswana Safari. Due to limited storage space for camping equipment and tents, any further solo travellers may be asked to share a tent with a fellow traveller of the same gender. If you are a solo traveller and would prefer your own single tent, but you were not one of the first two solo travellers to book on the safari, you will be charged a higher single supplement. Speak to us at *Wild about Africa* for more details.

Age of travellers

The camp sites used on these safaris are in high density wildlife areas and are unfenced so for safety reasons there is a minimum age restriction of 12 years. Only children over this age can join this scheduled group safari. A private tailor-made safari can be arranged on request to accommodate families travelling with younger children.

Special requests

If you have any dietary requirements, special requests and/or medical conditions that you would like us to be aware of we ask that you tell us well in advance. Whilst we cannot always guarantee a special request, the safari operators and lodges will always try hard to help.

Passports / visas

It's important that you take responsibility for checking that you satisfy any visa and immigration requirements for the countries to which you travel on this trip. Only you know your own circumstances, and visa regulations do change periodically, often without any warning or announcement.

Having said that, even though it remains your responsibility, we'll always do best to advise and help where we can. Firstly, we recommend most strongly that you check that your passport will have at least six months left to run when you travel - we recommend a validity of nine months to prevent any problems. Secondly, that you will have at least 3 clean pages for each time that you pass through customs (these must be visa pages, not pages for amendments and endorsements which are found at the back of some passports). Most countries require this, and we have had recent reports of Namibia, South Africa & Kenya actively enforcing this restriction and refusing entry to those who don't comply. (If you will be passing through customs in more than one country, you need to make sure that you have sufficient blank pages for entry and exit stamps at each destination.)

Please check with the relevant embassy or high commission directly rather than rely on our comments below, but to help you do this here are some notes relevant to your trip. If you are at all unsure of which countries you are visiting or passing through, or have any queries at all, please contact us immediately. We would be happy to guide you where we can.

Botswana and South Africa: It has long been the case that most nationalities do not need a visa for holidays in Botswana or South Africa.

Zambia: Most nationalities do require a visa for Zambia, although these can easily be bought on arrival in US dollars cash. For most nationalities, the cost of a single entry visa is currently US\$50 and the cost of a double entry visa is US\$80.