

Ultimate Namibia-Botswana Combo

Birds, Wildlife & Landscapes with Naturalist Journeys

July 23 – August 15, 2022

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We are excited this year to offer a shorter version of our Ultimate Botswana tour in a two-country Namibia-Botswana Combo. We have wanted to do this for some time, as these two adjacent countries vary in scenery and wildlife, making them an ideal combination for seeing a variety of Africa's landscapes, birds, and iconic large mammals.

Namibia hosts superlative scenery, a dramatic arid landscape of great beauty. Along our route we witness massive red dunes, fanciful granite outcrops, isolated, iconic inselbergs, colonial Swakopmund on the scenic coast, and world-renowned Etosha National Park. We also find a wonderful array of arid-land birds, many not found in other parts of Africa.

The Namib is the oldest desert in the world, with oases for a rich and sometimes odd array of mammal, plant, and birdlife. Elephant, Oryx, Kudu, Hornbills, Rockrunner, Herero Chat, Dune Lark, numerous birds of prey, and more await! Highlights also include time at the vivid red dunes of Sossusvlei, which contrast coastal Walvis Bay and the rugged Erongo Mountains.

For many a highlight of the Namibia portion of the tour is time at the stunning and wildlife-rich Etosha National Park, where Elephant, Zebra, and other species congregate at scenic waterholes and birds abound.

Tour Summary

23-Night / 24-Day Namibia-Botswana Nature Tour
with Greg Smith

\$14,700 from Windhoek, departing Maun

Arrival airport is Hosea Kutako International (WDH),
departure airport is Aéroport de Maun (MUB)

Namibia Highlights

- Experience the Namib, the world's oldest desert, famous for massive red dunes at Sossusvlei
- Look for signature bird species such as Rockrunner, Herero Chat, Hartlaub's Spurfowl, and Dune Lark
- Walk amidst the fanciful granite outcrops of the Erongo Mountains, known for impressive wildlife, rock art, and over 200 species of birds
- See one of the most bizarre plants on the planet, the Welwitschia
- Watch exciting raptors such as African Black (Verreaux's), Martial, and Booted Eagles, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Lanner and Peregrine Falcons, Rock Kestrel, and more
- Find arid-land specialty birds including chats, coursers, sandgrouse, numerous larks, bustards, and korhaans
- Enjoy the colonial seaside town of Swakopmund
- Visit Etosha National Park—wildlife splendor!

Part 1: Namibia

Sat., July 23 Arrivals in Windhoek

Welcome to Namibia! Please plan to arrive at Hosea Kutako International Airport in Windhoek at your convenience today. You are met at the airport for the transfer to our hotel. We stay the first night in



Windhoek and offer some birding this afternoon for those arriving in time—if you can stay awake to shift to this time zone, birding awaits! Rocky slopes should yield Short-toed Thrush, White-tailed Shrike, Barred Warbler, and with luck, a favorite trip bird for some, the Rockrunner.

Close to Windhoek is Avis Dam, a great area to bird with easy walking. Over the water we should find aerial-feeding Bradfield's and Palm Swifts, Rock Martin, and both Greater striped and Pearl-breasted Swallows. Wetland birds occur and South African Shelduck, Cape Shoveler and Red-billed Teal are usually present. In the shrub-lands surrounding the dam, Desert Cisticola, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Black-chested Prinia, and a variety of seedeaters are easily seen. We keep dinner simple tonight as many feel a bit jet lagged. If you wish to arrive a day early to rest up from travel, we can help you make those plans.

Accommodations at River Crossing Lodge, Windhoek (D)

Sun., July 24 Windhoek | Sossusvlei

After birding an area of dry thorn savanna habitat of the highlands near Windhoek, we proceed towards the South, birding along the scenic route we take. On such drives we share knowledge of Namibian geography, history, and culture as we go. A good portion of today's drive is on gravel roads that wind through changing elevations.

Species we can expect to encounter on various stops today and in the next few days include the near-endemic Rosy-faced Lovebird, White-tailed Shrike, Buffy Pipit, and a number of Southern African regional endemics such as Ashy Tit, Southern Pied Babbler, Short-toed Rock Thrush, Mountain Wheatear, Southern Ant-eating Chat, Kalahari and Karoo Scrub-Robins, Black-chested Prinia, Marico and Chat Flycatchers, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Cape Glossy and Pale-winged Starling, Dusky and Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Great Sparrow, Sociable Weaver, Scaly-feathered Finch, Lark-like Bunting, and the handsome Groundscraper Thrush.

We also have a good possibility of seeing large and impressive raptors on this route, such as Martial, Booted, Tawny, and African Hawk-Eagle. Pale-chanting Goshawk and Rock Kestrel can be abundant over the Spreetshoogte pass, a spectacular pass overlooking the vast Namib Desert plains and inselbergs. This is also a good place to scan for Mountain (Hartmann's) Zebra, Greater Kudu, and Klipspringer.

One of the impressive sights to behold is the massive nest of Sociable Weaver that often houses a pair of Pygmy Falcon. We stop regularly along the way to look for Rufous-eared Warbler, White-throated Canary,



Chestnut-vented and Layard's Tit-Babbler and a number of lark species. We pass several extensive local farms on which we could see arid-land adapted mammals grazing, such as Oryx and Springbok.

Descending the Spreetshoogte Pass we enter the oldest desert in the world, the Namib. We look for Herero Chat, Karoo Chat, Rüppell's Korhaan, Ludwig's Bustard, Burchell's Courser and other arid adapted species such as Yellow Canary, Cardinal Woodpecker, Pririt Batis, and with luck Karoo Long-billed Lark.

Our accommodations are very close to the entrance gate of Namib Naukluft National Park. Individual cabins blend in with the stark environment and keep a light footprint on the landscape with their simple design. We are immersed in the Namib here within granite outcrops and expansive desert views. Our spacious, air-conditioned rooms all have private baths and patios. Enjoy a drink from the bar or a dip in the pool enjoying a panoramic view of the Namib Desert with towering red sand dunes and rugged mountain ranges, or simply take in the immense sense of peace and quiet that this vast desert brings.

Accommodations at Dead Valley Lodge (B,L,D)

Mon., July 25 Namib-Naukluft National Park Sossusvlei & Deadvlei

We get up by starlight to be at the park gate for first entry and sunrise at Sossusvlei. Marvel at some of the largest sand dunes in the world, all a deep orange-red color that glows with first light. We spend the day exploring this magnificent landscape with its unique natural history. A special effort is made to locate the Dune Lark, Namibia's only true endemic. Learn about desert plant adaptations, look for lizards, and study animal tracks left in the sand.

You also have the opportunity to walk into the world-renowned area called Deadvlei where you have the opportunity to photograph this magnificent landscape. Artistic skeletons of tree trunks rise from a white clay pan with massive red dunes behind—just striking! Both areas are within the larger Namib-Naukluft National Park.

Returning to camp, relax at the pool or sort through those first photographs—now your own!

Accommodations at Dead Valley Lodge (B,L,D)

Tues., July 26 Sossusvlei | Swakopmund

Today we head towards the coast, stopping regularly to look for arid zone specialists such as Ludwig's Bustard, Sociable Weaver, Pygmy Falcon, Lappet-faced Vulture, and Burchell's Courser. The dry river courses and drainage lines are relatively well wooded and we should see species such as Dusky Sunbird, Rosy-faced Lovebird, and Scaly-feathered Finch along the way.



After a lunch break in the desert we close in on the coast where the cold Benguela current from the Atlantic Ocean brings in dense coastal fogs.

Swakopmund is a popular seaside resort because of its old-world charm and relaxed atmosphere. Swakopmund exudes romance and history, which makes it a rich cultural melting pot of old and new. The town is an eclectic mixture of bohemian and Bavaria which make it home to artists, hippies, strait-laced descendants of German settlers, stately Herero women in Victorian dresses, and hardworking miners, game rangers, safari operators, and fishermen.

Accommodations at Pension Rapmund, Swakopmund (B,L,D)

Wed., July 27 Swakopmund & Walvis Bay

We spend most of the morning birding around the Walvis Bay Lagoon and if needed, we have a second chance here to find Dune Lark, Namibia's endemic beauty. We do not visit at the ideal time to bird Walvis Bay (October to April) when the migrant birds have moved in from the northern hemisphere by the thousands. But there are still plenty of species to see, and the sheer numbers of the birds around the lagoon are impressive. This area has the highest density of Chestnut-banded Plover, a near-threatened species, in the world. The Walvis Bay Lagoon happens to be one of Africa's most important shorebird stopovers (it is a RAMSAR site), where we see incredible numbers of Greater and Lesser Flamingos and some extremely localized species, such as the diminutive Damara Tern.

Resident birds of the lagoon include Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, White-fronted Plover, Three-banded Plover, as well as the sought-after Chestnut-banded Plover. July sightings at the Walvis Bay Waterfront include some of the migratory species like Common Greenshank, Red Knot, Ruddy Turnstone, Curlew Sandpiper, Whimbrel, and Bar-tailed Godwit.

We stop in at the Swakopmund salt works to look for Gray's Lark. This pale-colored desert lark can be difficult to locate as it blends in perfectly to the expansive gravel plains that it frequents in the true Namib Desert. Another good find would be the pale form of Tractrac Chat, as well as Familiar Chat, Red-capped Lark, and with luck, Rufous-eared Warbler and Karoo Eremomela. Some of the water birds encountered can be White-breasted, Bank, Cape, and Crowned Cormorants, Hottentot and Cape Teal, Red-billed and Maccoa Ducks, Cape Shoveler, Grey-headed Gull, and Little Grebe.



Return to enjoy the seaside town of Swakopmund, known for its wide-open avenues, colonial architecture, and its surrounding otherworldly desert terrain. Founded in 1892 as the main harbor for German South West Africa, Swakopmund is often described as being more German than Germany. While touristy, we have fun here and are assured of some great dining this evening.

Accommodations at Pension Rapmund, Swakopmund (B,L,D)

Thurs., July 28 Swakopmund | Erongo Mountains

After breakfast we depart for the Erongo Mountains via the Spitzkoppe. The Spitzkoppe is one of a series of impressive granite inselbergs that rise steeply out of the desert plains. It is at this imposing Batholith where we have our best chance of finding Herero Chat, should we have missed out on this species at the Spreetshoogte. On the way we may also encounter the rare and declining Burchell's Courser and many other sandy desert species like Stark's Lark and other strategic species like Karoo Long-billed Lark.

On the plains surrounding these hills we should see Rüppell's Korhaan, Namaqua Sandgrouse, Chat Flycatcher, and Karoo Chat, Verreaux's and Booted Eagles, Augur Buzzard, African Hawk-Eagle, and Lanner Falcon also occur in the hills, as do Rosy-faced Lovebird, Carp's and Ashy Tit, White-throated Canary, Layard's Tit-Babbler, White-tailed Shrike, Double-banded Courser, Starks, Sabota, Red-capped, Spike-heeled, Fawn-coloured, and Rufous-naped Larks, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, Mountain Wheatear, Pale-winged Starling, Bradfield's Swift, Rockrunner, and Monteiro's and Damara Red-billed Hornbill.

The Erongo Mountain Range, an expanse of rugged and picturesque wilderness with fanciful geologic features, is one of Namibia's most iconic places to visit, and in addition to excellent birding we find magnificent caves and rock painting sites, and an impressive array of wildlife species. The hoofed mammals include Wildebeest, Impala, Blesbok, Waterbuck, Kudu, Mountain Zebra, Oryx, Eland, Springbok, and this lovely range is home to over 200 species of birds. There are also Rhino, Elephant, Warthog, and Giraffe, and with luck we even have a chance at finding predators, including Leopard and Cheetah.

We stay at The Erongo Wild lodge, located in the spectacular Erongo Mountain hills. Birding in this area is very rewarding and supports many of the Namibian near-endemics such as Violet Wood-Hoopoe, Damara



Red-billed Hornbill, Rüppell's Parrot, White-tailed Shrike, Carp's Tit, Rockrunner, Hartlaub's Spurfowl, and other specials like Freckled Nightjar and Rosy-faced Lovebird. The whole environment is photogenic and magical.

Accommodations at The Erongo Wild, Erongo Mountains (B,L,D)

Fri., July 29 Erongo Mountains | Etosha National Park

Starting early in the magic of morning light with high bird activity we hope to find Hartlaub's Spurfowl and other elusive species. Today we make our way to Etosha National Park, but find many interesting species along the way.

There is a rich diversity of reptiles, scorpions, and plant life including Welwitschia plant, the only member in the family *Welwitschiaceae* and is one of the more bizarre plants on the planet, on the western foot of the mountain. This plant is distantly related to the conifers of Europe; some of these plants are estimated to be 300 – 550 years old, the oldest determined age was 920 years.

This is a good day to watch for raptors such as the African Black (Verreaux's) Eagle, Martial Eagle, Booted Eagle, and Black-chested Snake Eagle, and Lanner Falcon, Peregrine Falcon, and Rock Kestrel are all fairly common.

The near endemic Herero Chat, Benguela Long-billed Lark and Rüppell's Korhaan can also be encountered here, and other species such as Mountain Wheatear, Familiar and Karoo Chats, Pale-winged Starling, Red-faced and White-backed Mousebirds, Bokmakierie, Grey-backed Cisticola, Black-chested Prinia, and Sabota Lark are common and after good rainfall, thousands of Namaqua Sandgrouse can be found.

By day's end we reach incredible Etosha National Park where we have a prime location to watch wildlife come in to a waterhole at sunset.

Accommodations at Okaukuejo Camp, Etosha National Park (B,L,D)

Sat., July 30 & Sun., July 31 Etosha National Park

Over the next two days we explore one of the most magnificent game parks in Africa, which teems with large game and boasts about 380 species of birds. We are based in the park at two different camps for three nights in total and spend time visiting a range of habitats. We move to a second camp to keep driving time down, not retracing our steps. Our camps provide wonderful game viewing at night as well as providing opportunities to see nightjars and owls.



Etosha is famous for its large game populations and during our stay here we should see Lion, Elephant, Burchell's Zebra, Red Hartebeest, Blue Wildebeest, Springbok, Oryx, Giraffes, Greater Kudu, and several smaller antelope. Among the rarer species regularly seen are Black Rhino (especially at waterholes at night), Cheetah and Black-faced Impala, a subspecies only found in Namibia. We take time to see the various species well and there are excellent photographic opportunities.

The grassy plains north of Okaukuejo Camp are the best areas in the park to see Pink-billed Lark, Double-banded Courser, Northern Black (White-quilled) Korhaan, and Spike-heeled Lark. Raptors are abundant and we should see Martial Eagle, Secretary Bird, Bateleur, Ovambo Sparrowhawk, Tawny Eagle, and Greater Kestrel. Migrant raptors such as Western Red-footed Kestrel, Lesser Spotted Eagle, and Yellow-billed Kite can be seen in large numbers during the wet season. This is an excellent area for mammals and we keep a good eye out on the waterholes.

Near the center of the park, the Halali is wooded, a great stop for us as it's the best site to see Violet Woodhoopoe, Bare-cheeked Babbler, and Carp's Tit. Birding is great right from our lodgings, perfect for early morning birding options.

By the Von Lindequist Gate to the east we find the open grasslands are home to Namibia's isolated population of Blue Crane, Temminck's Courser, Grey-backed and Chestnut-backed Sparrowlarks, and Eastern Clapper Lark. The elusive Black-faced Babbler occurs in dense Terminalia woodlands in this area.

Accommodations at Okaukuejo Camp and Mokuti Lodge, respectively (B,L,D)

Mon., Aug. 1 Etosha National Park | Rundu Area (Kavango Region) | Hakusembe River Lodge

We head to Rundu today, about a 4.5 to 5-hour drive but an excellent chance to see new habitats in Namibia. Along the way the dry Mopane gradually gives way to tropical palm savannah and finally a climax teak forest which closely resembles the Miombo woodlands further north in Africa and indeed harbors a rather similar avifauna.

South of Rundu we enter a different biome with broad-leafed woodland and it is here that the real birding begins in the ideal habitat for Rufous-bellied Tit, Tinkling Cisticola, Kurrichane Buttonquail, African Golden Oriole, African Yellow White-eye, and Southern Black Tit and your first chance at Dark Chanting Goshawk.

Late afternoon we reach the Kavango Region and our fabulous lodging perched over the water where birds abound. The calls of Coppery-tailed and Senegal Coucals can be heard as well as many other species such as Hartlaub's and Arrow-marked Babbler, White-browed (Heuglin's) Robin Chat, and White-Browed Scrub Robin. Along the river you should find Pied, Giant, and Malachite Kingfishers as well as Little and Southern Carmine Bee-eaters.

Accommodations at Hakusembe River Lodge (B,L,D)



Tues., Aug. 2 Rundu | Mahangu Game Park

After an early breakfast we do some birding at the Rundu Sewerage Works, always an oasis for birds and their admirers! Back to the wilds we continue to the Mahangu Game Park where we not only see new birds, but also several new game species. We stop en-route and try our luck with finding the Souzas Shrike.

The park is home to a range of habitats, from open water, floodplains, and swamps to dry, dense, and broad-leaved woodland. This mixture of habitats means that the park attracts over 410 different species of birds in an area less than 25,000 hectares. The woodland area is home to Swainson's and Red-billed Spurfowls and Meve's Starling. Along the floodplains we hope to encounter the endangered Wattled Crane and Slaty Egret. Bee-eaters including Carmine, Blue-cheeked, Swallow-tailed and Little are a photographer's dream.

Accommodations at Mahangu Safari Lodge (B,L,D)

Aug. 3 Mahangu Safari Lodge | On to Botswana!

Enjoy the morning with birding around the lodge. Today we end our time in the Caprivi Strip section of Namibia that lies adjacent to Botswana. We have a border crossing to pass into Botswana where we continue to Shakawe and then to Xaro Lodge in time for a late lunch and some relaxation before others of the group arrive on a flight from Maun. The lodge is perched on an island in the Okavango River—an ideal spot for birding. Watch for Goliath Heron and as night falls, listen for the elusive Pel's Fishing Owl!





Part 2: Botswana

Embark on a true African safari to Botswana, where the wildlife is pristine and our days are timed with the rhythm of nature. Botswana is visually exciting—each of its unique habitats have distinct features, most famous of which is the Okavango Delta.

We find exciting birds and mammals in this lush realm of rivers, papyrus, and reeds. From here we can also see world-famous ancient rock art at the nearby Tsodilo Hills with a local guide. After three nights at Xaro we fly to the fascinating and vast Kalahari Desert where our lodgings are right on an active waterhole. Here we see unique birds and mammals of the arid lands and have our best chance to see Bat-eared Fox. From Nxai



Then we then fly to Moremi Game Reserve where we meet our good friends Ewan and Sallie Masson of Masson Safaris to spend six incredible nights in the world-renowned Moremi Game Reserve, a critical stronghold for several endangered species. We spend our Moremi days on the move, at two varied locations, kept comfortable by the support crew of a mobile-tented camp, complete with a mobile (RV toilet) private bathroom, bucket showers, a camp chef, and a wildlife and birding guide with an unparalleled 25+ years of experience. This mobile camp is designed to get us as close to the wildlife as safety allows. Imagine the richness of those wild nighttime sounds!

If big game, southern constellations, a rainbow of colorful African birds and the enchanting sounds of wild Africa beckon, this journey across two counties of Southern Africa is sure to entice.

Wed., Aug. 3

Arrivals in Botswana

Welcome to Botswana! Whether you start this amazing Botswana adventure as part of our combo trip, or arrive today to the modern airstrip at Shakawe, it's a short drive from there to the river dock of Xaro Lodge from which we venture to the lodge by boat. The river greeting committee consists of kingfishers, bee-eaters, Goliath Heron, and more! It's a short way upriver to Xaro Lodge, a stunning location with tall trees arching over the river. This is a wonderful start to the Botswana portion of our journey, exploring a permanent water camp on the Okavango River.

Settle into your relaxing accommodations, and then gather for cocktails by the fire, watching sunset over palms and papyrus. Dinner is graciously served outside with soft lighting and night sounds as the background music. With luck we may hear calls of Pel's Fishing Owl, which we should later find on day roosts with some searching.

Botswana Highlights

- ✓ Explore the Okavango Delta's papyrus-lined channels and lagoons and legendary wetlands and Mopane forests of Moremi Game Reserve
- ✓ Stay 3 nights at Xaro Lodge on permanent water of the Okavango River; look for Pel's Fishing Owl, White-backed Night-Heron, colorful nesting bee-eaters, and Sitatunga
- ✓ Experience the fabulous Kalahari Desert with prime lodging at Nxai Pan, where wildlife and birds congregate at our elegant tented camp's waterhole
- ✓ Follow wildlife and elegant, colorful birds with expert guides on a six-night mobile camp in the heart of the renowned Moremi Game Reserve
- ✓ Live "National Geographic moments" in real time on each morning and afternoon game drive
- ✓ Find signature birds like Slaty Egret, Black Heron, African Openbill Stork, Hamerkop, African Fish Eagle, Southern Ground Hornbill, bustards, hoopoes, and of course, the stunning Lilac-breasted Roller
- ✓ Capture that ultimate African sunset—acacia tree, Giraffes, Leopard, and more
- ✓ Return to Maun, home of the Okavango Brewery and primo birding along the Thamalakane River that flows through town



Enjoy a welcome dinner and chance to get to know your guide and travel companions.

Accommodations at Xaro Lodge (D)

Thurs., Aug. 4 Okavango River | Xaro Lodge

Wake up to the myriad sounds of birds in the garden area. Walk to the riverbank to scan for species in the reeds and on the sandbar across from the lodge. Goliath Heron are often on patrol outside the lodge and here we may find White-backed Night-Heron. It's nice to be able to walk around the grounds and gardens before breakfast. After breakfast we walk the island with a local expert naturalist, looking for birds and learning about the ecology of the region.

This afternoon we enjoy a boat ride that takes us up to a quiet lily-lagoon where African Swampheh and African Pygmy Geese can be found. Malachite Kingfisher often perch in close view, their jewel tones just captivating. The Okavango is not unlike our Everglades, a slow moving, major river system that allows water to fan out across the Kalahari Desert, transforming it into a paradise for wildlife. It is the largest Ramsar designated site in the world, set up to protect globally important wetlands.

As sunset lingers it's back to the lodge to freshen up and join a lovely gathering for tea or cocktails and dinner by candlelight near the river.

Accommodations at Xaro Lodge (B,L,D)

Fri., Aug. 5 Tsodilo Hills World Heritage Site | Xaro Lodge

After an early breakfast, we boat down the river and then drive over to a fascinating World Heritage Site, Botswana's archeological gem: the Tsodilo Hills. Here 3000-year old rock paintings adorn colorful rock walls and you also find Botswana's highest peak, all in a tiny inselberg mountain range visible for miles around. The birding is also good here, with possible sightings of both Barred and Pearl-spotted Owlets, close views of Meyer's Parrot, and a chance to pick up Melodious Lark or other arid-land specialty birds.

We take a picnic lunch and then return to the lodge to relax for the rest of the afternoon. If there is interest we may take a shorter sunset boat trip to search for a few more species or some special photo ops.

Dinner is at the lodge; be sure to take a look at the stars—this is a superb place to watch the brilliant night sky.

Accommodations at Xaro Lodge (B,L,D)

Sat., Aug. 6 Flight to Nxai Pan National Park | Explore the Kalahari

Botswana is very well organized for getting around by air; we book you from one lodge to the next, a wonderful way to make the most of our field time. After a morning outing today we head to the airstrip, then greet the wonderful guides from our next lodge as we head to lunch there. Your first experience of the Kalahari and its vastness is from the air.



Experience the arid Kalahari Desert from the comforts of one of our favorite lodges. This camp features nine beautifully crafted casitas on the edge of a large salt pan, replete with birds and wildlife. The camp is 100% solar powered, with a spacious and impressive central area dining and bar. Rooms face the permanent waterhole, which draws in numerous mammals and birds.

Nxai Pan is part of the greater Makgadikgadi/Nxai Pan National Park. From our comfortable base, enjoy birding and wildlife drives with lodge naturalists. Little has changed here since 1862, when the British adventurer and artist, Thomas Baines, explored the area and made famous its enormous Baobab trees. Watch for breeding larks that are active at this time, including Sabota, Rufous-naped, Red-capped, and Fawn-colored among the more common.

We take an afternoon game drive watching the sky for raptors such as Pale Chanting Goshawk, Martial Eagle, or Lanner Falcon. Capped Wheatear, White-quilled Bustard (Black Korhan), and Kori Bustard can be found in open country; watch for barbets and hornbills and possible Bat-eared Fox starting to consider their den sites.

Gather around the campfire for tea or a cocktail (drinks are included) and then enjoy dinner at this lovely lodge, with a view of the night sky and the camaraderie of your travel companions.

Accommodations at Nxai Pan Lodge (B,L,D)

Sun., Aug. 7 Nxai Pan National Park

We have the full day to explore this arid-land national park and we take both a morning and afternoon game drive. Star attractions here are two waterholes, one by the lodge and the other along our drive.

Elephant frequent the waterhole; their presence against the immense silence of this remote location is memorable. We should see family groups and also huge bachelor males. We may also see Gemsbok and certainly many Springbok, desert adapted animals that are rare and typically not seen in Moremi. Lion, Giraffe, Impala, and Wildebeest are here too, as are some of the more elusive species: Bat-eared Fox, Honey Badger, or (rare) Cheetah. Photographically, the edge of the waterhole provides unending beauty as species line up to drink—getting a shot with multiple species is a prized image!

A coffee/tea break is enjoyed at the south campground, which has restroom facilities and large trees that can make it a very active place for seeing songbirds. Kalahari Scrub Robin may venture out of a brush pile with its cocky tail alert, Cape Crombec are vocal and alert us to a mixed flock that may have Common Scimitarbill, Green-winged Pytilla (a beauty!), Southern Cordonblue, and Golden-breasted Bunting.

For those that wish, the lodge provides a unique experience. Many of their staff members are people of the Kalahari, the San or Bushman. You can walk with one of the San trackers to enjoy an informative walk that takes place within the camp's footprint. Learn about how the San lived nomadically, how they hunted and



gathered food, their water sources, and which plants were used for medicinal purposes. Their wealth of true bush knowledge is unparalleled, and one of our guests' favorite experiences at our desert camps.

Coffee around the campfire starts your day and social time around it, under the beautiful African night sky ends it. You are on safari!

Accommodations at Nxai Pan Lodge (B,L,D)

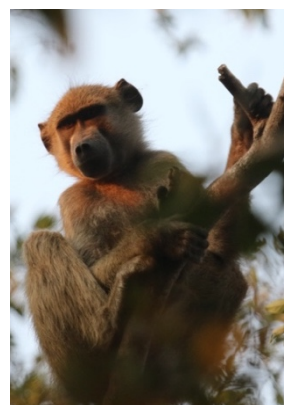
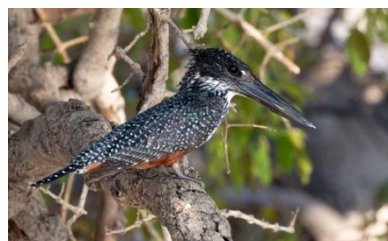
Mon., Aug. 8 – Wed., Aug. 10 First Mobile Camp | Moremi Game Reserve

This morning we enjoy a last game drive to the waterhole in Nxai Pan, have brunch, then mid-day head to the airstrip for our small plane flight into Moremi Game Reserve. Here we meet Ewan Masson for our amazing six-night mobile safari.

Mobile Safari: An Overview

We dive right into our mobile safari adventure! For six nights at two camps, we go mobile. There is NO better way to get close to prime wildlife areas. Being this close to wildlife is almost impossible anymore in many of the big game areas. It's truly an incredible experience to hear the night sounds, sit around a campfire, and to be able to jump in the vehicles at dawn and see predator and prey in their realm.

Our hosts and guides are from Masson Safaris, an ecologically friendly, small family-run safari company. We have been with them many years now and consider them good friends. They provide safaris aimed at wildlife viewing, bird watching, and spending quality time in nature. They have 25+ years experience, a marvelous camp staff, and chef. They operate with a fully-mobile set-up so we are comfortable, and with unparalleled access to wildlife. Our camps are private and set up in remote areas. Tents are large enough that you can stand, with a private bathroom equipped with bush (chemical) toilets. Hot water is brought to you each morning to freshen up, and hot water for showers is set up as needed (most often mid-day since mornings are quite chilly). This is as authentic as it gets—with a strong focus on seeing birds and wildlife. We are out early and back after watching sunset with the game.



Our safari vehicles are open, extended Land Rovers that offer the very best photo opportunities and are great for binoculars and scopes. They have a fridge in which we stock a good variety of fruit juices, bottled waters, and for evening sundowners, mixers, beer, and wine. And be assured of a good system for charging your camera and other batteries.

Learn the rhythm of safari; an early morning game drive, followed by a hearty brunch, and then time for a

siesta, in-camp viewing, and photography or relaxing. Then, it's an afternoon game drive lasting until sunset. Dinner is after dark, under an airy tent with candlelight and stars. It is served with fresh-baked breads and wine, as desired.

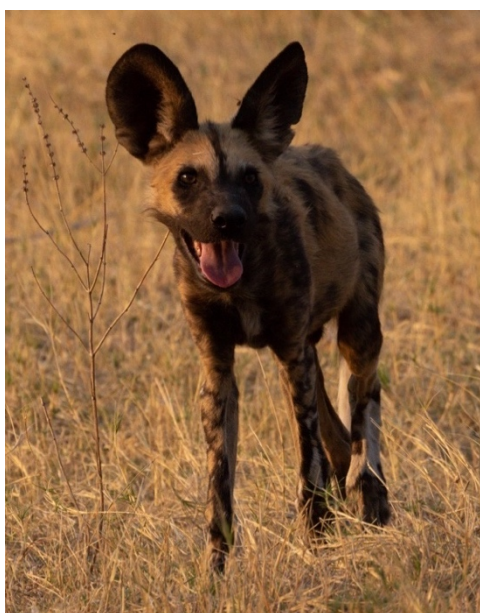
Moremi Game Reserve borders Chobe National Park. Within its boundaries lies about a third of the land area that makes up the Okavango Delta. It is a spectacular place where desert meets water. Landscapes of Moremi reveal upland tracts of Mopane forest, open savanna and papyrus-lined water channels, lagoons, and mature riverine forests. Aquatic animals and water birds abound, along with herds of plains game and predators. It has an amazing combination of vegetation types, animal species, and bird life. One of the treats is seeing Yellow-billed and Red-billed Hornbills calling from the crowns of trees. Birdlife abounds and there are babblers, shrikes, coucals, rollers, barbets, and the gaudy and comical African Hoopoe. Black-backed Jackal, Warthog, Kudu, Impala, and Red Lechwe are often observed here.

Our days start with the call, "Morning, morning, time to get up," as our lead guide gets us ready for an early start. A quick field breakfast with coffee and tea gets us ready to go out searching for wildlife at first light. Our group is usually the first one out and that always pays dividends. Nocturnal hunters like Lion and Hyena are finishing their hunts, while browsers and grazers (Waterbuck and Kudu) are breathing a sigh of relief as daylight offers them better visibility. It is also the time when the diurnal predators such as African Wild Dog and Cheetah start their hunting forays.

After our mid-day siesta, we head out again, this time looking for those same animals finishing their hunts while the nocturnal predators are starting theirs. Elephant and Giraffe appear out of nowhere, and it is not uncommon to have Lion and other wildlife laying in the shade of a Mopane tree along the road. We are the eyes and ears for our drivers as they take us deeper into the heart of this game preserve. It takes a bit of getting used to, but after a while you are picking out Zebra in the dappled shade that makes them seemingly disappear. We arrive at our private mobile camp with time to unpack and get settled before an afternoon game drive.

Each evening we gather around the fire for drinks and light appetizers before dinner (and after dinner around the campfire) where we discuss our day's sightings, photographs, and experiences. Then the kitchen staff arrives carrying serving dishes filled with different foods that just taste so good after our drives.
Accommodations in a Mobile Tent Camp (B,L,D)

Thurs. Aug. 11 Moving Day | Second Mobile Safari Camp at Khwai River, Moremi Game Reserve





As we move to our second camp, there are several routes we can take to traverse the park. Depending on what we have already seen, we may enjoy a morning boat trip from Xakanaxa. Tall papyrus and reeds line the channel and we often have Elephant feeding on the river margin. We watch for a deep-water tolerant antelope, the Sitatunga. And we listen for Chirping Cisticola and on an island lunch stop, have a chance at seeing the rare Pel's Fishing Owl.

Returning to our vehicles, we head on to our second camp. It is a full and rewarding day, often we see over 100 bird species between the driving route and boat tour. Our tents await and we are now well-trained on the routine. On to drinks, dinner, night-sky viewing, and sleep!

Accommodations in a Mobile Tent Camp (B,L,D)

Fri., Aug. 12 & Sat., Aug. 13 Khwai River, Moremi Game Reserve

"Morning, morning." We are up at dawn as adventure calls. Riverine forests line the Khwai River channel and



in this mosaic of habitats we look for Leopard, Red Lechwe, Kudu, and Giraffe. Lion of the Okavango have taken freely to hunting in the water—a behavior rarely seen in other areas. Wild dogs also find a stronghold here and with luck (and persistence) we may find them! Leopard enjoy resting in massive, often flowering Sausage Trees.

This is our guide's favorite part of the park as game animals and their predators abound. We should find ample numbers of Blue Wildebeest, various antelope species, Common (Burchell's) Zebra, Warthog, Lion, and Elephant. We make every effort to see as many mammals as possible. Birds are also plentiful (often up to 250 species) and some are huge, such as Ostrich, Kori Bustard, and Southern Ground Hornbill. Some of the birds bear spectacular colors—Carmine and Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters and possible Narina Trogon to name just a few. And each bend of the river is good shorebird and wading bird habitat, with many to inspect at close range!

Khwai has had active Wild Dog packs on both sides of the river in recent years, and at least one of our groups has spotted two species of otter! It's a scenic area and memorable. Time goes quickly here.

Accommodations in a Mobile Tent Camp (B,L,D)

Sun., Aug. 14 Return to Maun

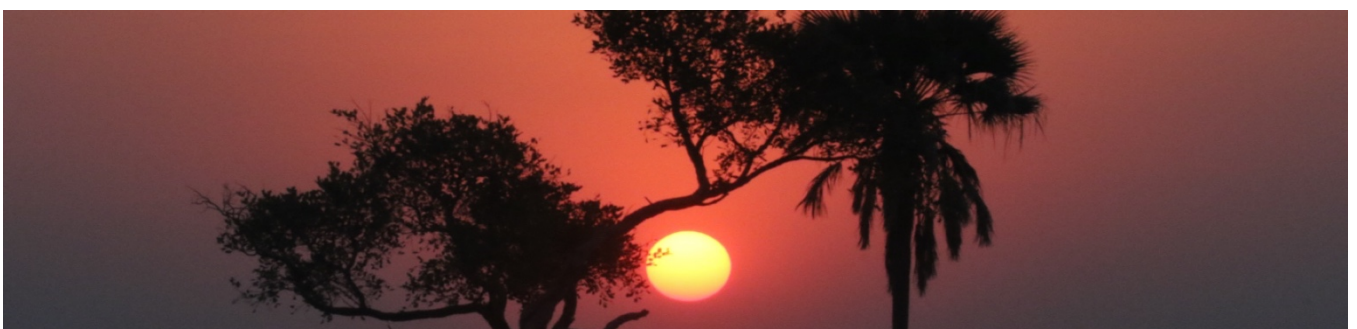
We are sad to leave camp this morning but thankfully a good part of our drive today is back through Moremi Game Reserve. We make the most of it, viewing wildlife for much of the morning.

After six nights in the bush, we enjoy the amenities of Cresta Riley Lodge in Maun, with time to pack, refresh, and then enjoy a gracious final dinner. As time allows, we may visit the local basket cooperative today, or tomorrow ahead of flights for those with an interest in handicrafts.

Accommodations at Cresta Riley hotel or equivalent (B,L,D)

Mon., Aug. 15 Departures

You may depart today at leisure. (B)



Cost of the Journey

Plan Ahead!

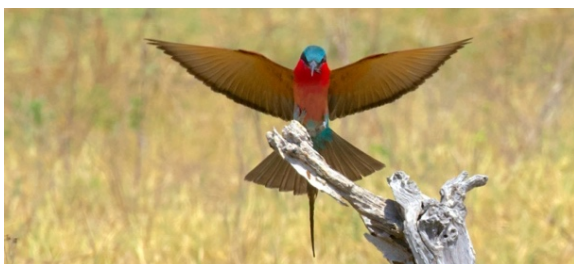
Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance.

Cost of the Journey

Cost of the Ultimate Namibia/ Botswana Combo journey is \$14,700* DBL. Singles are extremely limited; please ask directly for costing. This cost includes accommodations for 23 nights, all meals as specified in the itinerary, professional guide services, other park and program entrance fees and miscellaneous program expenses. For the Botswana portion of your trip, lodges are all-inclusive so alcohol and bar drinks are included.

Tour cost does not include transportation from your home city to Windhoek, departing Maun, optional activities such as fishing, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone charges, gratuities for guides, lodges and drivers, or at some locations, beverages from the bar.

**Subject to final cost of internal flights too early to quote.*



Travel Information

Please plan to arrive at your convenience in Windhoek at Huseo Kutako International (WDH) on July 23. Please plan your departure flight out of Maun's Aéroport de Maun (MUB) at your convenience on August 15. We can connect you with our travel agent who can help you make your flights; please ask.

Photo Credits

Heavy Sky by Johnny Chen on Unsplash; Springbok by Arne Smith on Unsplash; Desert Quiver Camp, courtesy of desertquivercamp.com; Martial Eagle, by Batis Birding Safaris (BBS); Lodge room, courtesy of desertquivercamp.com; Violet-eared Waxbill, by BBS; Quiver camp at night, courtesy of desertquivercamp.com; Red-billed Hornbill, by BBS; Chestnut-banded Plover, Bob Rodrigues (BR); Chestnut-vented Warbler, BR; Pink-backed Pelican, BR; Greater Flamingo, BR; Hohenstein Lodge x2, courtesy of ondili.com; Rosy-faced Lovebird, BR; White-faced Owl, by BBS; Dune Lark, by BBS; Brandberg White Lady Lodge, courtesy of brandbergwllodge.com; Etosha Water Hole, courtesy UnSplash; Southern Carmine Bee-eater, Greg Smith; Red-headed Finch, by BBS; Montiero's Hornbill, BR; Giant Kingfisher, PA; Mahuangu Safari Lodge, courtesy the lodge; Male Lion, Greg Smith (GS); Wild Dog, Peg Abbott (PA); Vervet Monkey, PA; White Rhinoceros, GS; Carmine Bee-eater, GS; Marsh Owl, GS; Yellow-billed Hornbill, PA; Saddle-billed Stork, PA; Yellow-billed Stork, GS; Lilac-breasted Roller, PA; African Gray Hornbill, PA; Malachite Kingfisher, PA; Leopard, PA; African Swamphen, PA; African Openbill, PA; Zebra at Nxai Pan Waterhole, PA; Elephants, PA; African Hoopoe, PA; Hippo gape, PA; African Fish Eagle, PA; White-backed Night Heron, Colin White; Masson Safari, PA; Zaro Lodge, PA; Ewan & Sally Masson, PA; Masson Safaris, PA; Gray Go-away-bird, PA; African Spoonbills, PA; Giant Kingfisher, PA; Baboon, PA; Wild Dog, PA; Wattled Crane, PA; Male Lion, PA; Giraffe & Oxecker, GS; Ostrich, PA; White Rhino, PA; Kori Bustard, PA; Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, PA; Greater Flamingo, GS; Hippo, PA; Double-collared Sunbird, GS; African Lion, GS; Nile Crocodile, PA; Southern Ground Hornbill, PA; Leopard in tree, PA; Sunset, PA; Bat-eared Fox, PA; Carmine Bee-eater, GS.

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