

THE EXPLORER SOCIETY PRESENTS

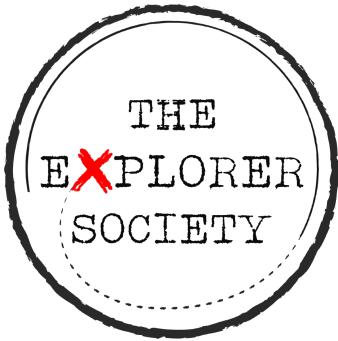
**THE ULTIMATE
GUIDE TO A
SAFARI IN
AFRICA**

HOW TO GO

WHERE TO GO

HOW TO GET THE BEST TRIP FOR YOU

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CONTENTS

About the Authors	4
Prologue	5
The Elephant in the Room	6
“Will I die if I visit Africa?”	6
“It’s such a big and complicated trip”	8
“Do I need to do a tour?”	8
“Isn’t Africa expensive?”	9
Here’s the Hard Truth	10
Some Additional Details	10
The African regions	11
The weather and seasonality	13
East Africa	14
Southern Africa	14
Life on Safari: East vs South	16
East Africa	16
Southern Africa	17
Where can I find the tiger?	20
Some sample itineraries	21
East Africa	21
Southern Africa	23
Kenya	26
Tanzania	28
Uganda	30
Rwanda	32
South Africa	34
Namibia	36
Botswana	38
Zambia	40
Zimbabwe	42
Final Word	44
About the Authors	45

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MARTIN EDWARDS – CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXPLORATION OFFICER



Originating from the UK, Martin's first real exploration was in his early twenties when he backpacked for 12 months around the world. During this time he, as a challenge, travelled over 7,000 km by public transport between Nairobi and Cape Town. Since then, he has also climbed Kilimanjaro twice, rafted the mighty rapids of the Zambezi, journeyed through the Middle East countless times and explored the wonders of South America. Always with a thirst for adventure and exploration, he has also run multiple ultramarathons when not exploring new regions of the world or

enjoying the great outdoors with his young family in Sydney.

CAMERON NEILL – CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXPLORER



Cameron began his travel lifestyle in earnest shortly after his 21st birthday. Living out of a backpack for over six years he lived, worked and travelled through countries all over the world. Along the way he masqueraded as an English teacher, a white-water rafting guide, an alpine ski worker, a cruise ship entertainer and a scuba divemaster. He also enjoys filmmaking, photography and writing, with his work published in a variety of publications. Now mostly based in Australia, he spends much of each year exploring new areas of the world with his family.

**LIKE TO START PLANNING YOUR OWN ADVENTURE TO AFRICA?
GET IN TOUCH WITH US. WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN.**

PROLOGUE

Welcome, and thanks for reading.

First things first. If you are considering a trip to Africa and wondering whether or not you should go, the answer is a resounding yes.

Absolutely.

A trip to Africa, whether on safari or otherwise, is one of travel's greatest experiences. So, if you are thinking about going, you absolutely should go as soon as you can.

Glad we got that out of the way early.

A trip to Africa in reality is quite a simple proposition, made complex by a myriad of options and the fog of mystery. Unlike planning a trip to the well-known (and well-travelled) areas of Italy, planning a trip to Africa can sometimes feel like heading into the unknown. Where is that place, what is the best place for this thing I want and will I be able to do it safely? Add into that the amount of well-intentioned advice from people who have only visited one area recommending that one area or regional tourism bodies each claiming that they have the best lions, safari guides or scenery. The end result is indigestion from a murky soup of conflicting advice and recommendations that helps no-one decide what to do or what suits them best. As a result, some postpone that dream trip as it all seems too hard or too complex. Instead of travelling to a dream destination it instead becomes "Let's instead go back to Italy and spend money on an overpriced coffee in Venice".

It doesn't have to be hard. All you need is a grounding in African safaris, a spark of inspiration and an idea of what may potentially suit you best. Then, get in contact with the frequent Africa travellers at The Explorer Society and we can guide you through to the trip of your dreams, without the headache. We've all been where you are right now, before our very first trip. It's worth the effort.

We hope you enjoy this book and get something out of it. More importantly, we hope this book gets you to Africa.

Martin Edwards & Cameron Neill
Co-Founders: The Explorer Society

1.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Let's get the negative stuff out the way first. We know it probably seems strange to start the book listing all the common issues people have with travelling to Africa. And, if they were true, it would be. The problem is that most of the problems aren't problems at all and the real problem is the non-problems that people think are problems!

So, let's go through common questions, or hesitations, asked to us at various speaking events, expos and talks over the years, usually in a low whispered tone.

"WILL I DIE IF I VISIT AFRICA?"

Although it may seem stupid to see it in writing, at the heart of this is quite a common hesitation. People are generally afraid of travelling to Africa for two main reasons: **the animals** or **the people**.

Beginning with **the animals**, there is a misconception that all African animals feature tourists as part of their regular diet. It's as though lions must be waiting around the baggage claim at the airport and ready to pounce the minute someone sets foot on the continent. There are dangerous animals in Africa. There are also dangerous animals in Canada, Thailand, Germany, in most countries in the world. The only issue is that we have the idea, thanks to decades of popular culture, that the African animals are out to eat you at the first opportunity. In reality, the opposite is true. Almost all African animals are afraid of humans, and those that aren't afraid are at the very least cautious. Humans are easily the most dangerous animal on Planet Earth and decades of less than positive interaction with us has made almost all species keen to avoid us. And, if they don't know us, they will still avoid us the same way you would be wary of the unknown animal nearby.

It's the very reason walking safaris are a thing in Africa. Do you really think that your 70 year old neighbour would be voluntarily heading into certain death by going on a walking safari, purely to get their daily steps up? The challenge of a safari in Africa is to spot the animals, and this comes from their tendency to try and avoid us at all costs. Only a respectful distance and repeated positive acclimatisation to the game vehicles (if using one) enables us to have the amazing encounters we do.

Interestingly, even people in Australia think African animals are dangerous. This is a country that takes patriotic pride in its assortment of dangerous animals and rugged reputation and yet

most citizens actually live in the suburbs in air-conditioned comfort. Despite their own animals not posing a great risk to their survival, they still fail to see the irony in their own views on Africa. This is because they largely watch the same TV shows and movies as the rest of the world and form the same opinions.

The second reason people think they will die is because of **the people of Africa**, which when you see it in writing is a silly thing to see. This is because of a limited awareness of the African continent amongst the general public and, once again, historical bad representation in popular culture. Let us give you an example: Can you think of a film you've seen that has a black African hero that portrays Africa in a positive light? Even the positive ones, for example, the story of Nelson Mandela, starts by portraying the cruelty of the apartheid regime. The only really positive story is that of Black Panther, which of course is entirely made up and only very recent. Films about Africa tend to focus on negative aspects like the Rwandan massacre or the illegal blood diamond trade. And, historically the only films we saw, portrayed African people as either that of the 'untamed native' or the 'noble savage', similar to the portrayal of Native Americans.

In reality, Africa is a continent consisting of 54 different countries. The second largest continent on Earth, its regions vary dramatically from each other, as do their customs, language, history, economies, security, weather and more. You can't dismiss 'Africa' as dangerous without knowing the specific part of Africa you are referring to. It's much like saying "Asia is dangerous" and leaving it there. I'm sure the people of Japan, Pakistan, Singapore and Nepal would argue their individuality and have differences of opinion as to their own crime rate. So, to say that African people are dangerous is at best lacking context and at worst, bigoted.

That's not to say all of Africa is a utopia. Indeed, there are parts of the continent that present a real danger to tourists. But, not only is there little to attract tourism in their areas, it is also highly unlikely you'll find your way there in the first place as the infrastructure required for any tourism usually doesn't exist. And whilst areas of Africa are below the poverty line, don't confuse poor for undignified or criminal. They live lives like ours, with family and work and dreams and community. The only thing missing compared to us is money.

A final point is to consider the activities you'll find yourself enjoying in Africa and the inherent safety of them compared to Europe. A standard trip to Europe will usually involve visiting the famous sights, landmarks and locations alongside thousands of other travellers. After all, a traveller to Rome doesn't tend to avoid the Coliseum, the Pantheon and the Vatican. The issue is that other tourists don't tend to avoid them either. The major dangers to tourists around the world are usually things like terrorism, pickpocketing, general crime and scams, all of which require access to people to be effective and so generally occur around busy areas.

Compare this to the isolation of a lodge whilst on safari, where the crowds consist of wildebeest or elephant, and you can see how those threats diminish. Any big city in the world has dangers but on a typical trip to Africa, you usually spend limited time in them. This means the overall safety is much higher in Africa than on a typical trip to Europe.

"IT'S SUCH A BIG AND COMPLICATED TRIP"

If you are attempting to see everything on the continent in a few weeks, then yes. If you are planning to visit a part of it and experience an amazing safari experience, then no. The real issue is often that without much knowledge of the regions of Africa or its huge size most people attempt to try and Frankenstein a trip out of separate experiences. Rather than one cohesive itinerary you are instead left bouncing from country to country trying to tick the boxes and 'do it all'. From that frame of reference, Africa is big and complicated (and very expensive to boot). It would be like trying to include Greenland and Greece in the one trip, by way of all the countries of Western Europe.

In reality, a trip to Africa can be remarkably simple and relaxing to take. But first, you have to accept that you won't be able to see it all.

I know, it sucks.

There is so much to see. You won't see it all on this trip. If you try, you'll end up missing other things you should see. Accept the fact that without deep pockets and considerable time you will have to prioritise your interests and instead save something for your next trip. I know most people travelling to Africa view it as a 'one time thing' and feel the need to do it all, but **it won't be** and **you can't**. Come to terms with it and plan a proper first trip.

Secondly, a trip to Africa is very doable. You don't have to sail across the ocean on a ship, arrive on foreign shores then spend three weeks transferring via foot and convoy to reach your lodge. This isn't the 1800's. You simply go to the airport like you would any other trip, board a plane and arrive in Africa. If you live in the northern hemisphere and have only done short trips then it will be a longer flight than you are used to. If you are from Australia, New Zealand or the South Pacific, it's a shorter flight than you are used to. Either way, it's a simple, safe and easy process.

"DO I NEED TO DO A TOUR?"

No.

We should expand this somewhat. You can do a tour if you want and indeed there are plenty of reasons you might choose to do one. You might have a restrictive budget and find that a tour could enable you to see more. This is especially true for overland camping safaris, the classic 'truck tour' that backpackers have historically taken. You may be a solo traveller and wish to spend your whole trip with a new group of potential friends. Or you may find a trip that is almost tailor-made for you, with all of your requirements and wishes taken into account.

In those cases, great! We have tours that we use at The Explorer Society because they have proved very popular over the years. That being said, you don't **need** to do a tour. Most tours are great for top level views of destinations. They are an approximation of the interests of the average traveller and therefore try to cater to that type of person. We often see people trying to

edit their wishes to fit into a trip, or a few trips, rather than thinking the reverse. Don't adjust the dream you have for your African safari by picking the closest option from a selection of tours. Instead, if this is you, **create the itinerary that fulfils those dreams.**

We know what you are thinking.

"Isn't creating my own itinerary more expensive?"

Sometimes yes, but not necessarily. It can actually be cheaper. Not being restricted to the tour means you can mix and match the accommodation level to suit you, perhaps staying in more budget accommodation than the tour offers. You could also choose to spend your money differently, perhaps some luxury for special areas and more affordable accommodation for the rest. You might also find that parts of the tour don't really interest you or suit you. If it is custom created then you can ignore those parts, perhaps choosing to instead travel cheaply to the next area and saving yourself the accommodation and activity costs of the entire section.

It is also worth noting to be mindful of companies that *only* offer tours in Africa and don't offer a custom option for anyone except groups. Whilst many are good, some will design the tour to suit their own bottom line or marketing pitch rather than your best itinerary. They will insist you have to do a tour, and preferably theirs, for vague safety reasons and because it offers 'all the highlights'. This is why you may see companies have itineraries that bounce all over Africa with minimal days spent in each location. They are focused on the business, their tour schedules, combinations of tours and fulfilling their contracted allocations. The priority is often not your experience.

If you have spoken to an expert and found a perfect tour, then by all means take that tour. As we said, there are many out there and we'd be happy to recommend a few. But, consider a custom itinerary for your trip before you make that decision. After all, it is **your_trip**.

"ISN'T AFRICA EXPENSIVE?"

You can buy a hamburger to eat for a couple of dollars. You can also buy one to eat for almost \$6,000 US Dollars, complete with a gilded bun. From diner burgers to chain burgers, from dining burgers to premium burgers to burgers as a luxury statement piece, there is no shortage of options. The same goes for Africa. There are options ranging from the super affordable to the ultra-premium, from the camping trip to the private plane. Some options cost more than others, some lower-end options come with caveats or conditions. There is even a seasonality to the pricing. As a general destination however, Africa is no more expensive (and can often be cheaper) for comparable quality elsewhere.

What needs to be stated is that as a destination, Africa often offers better value than other destinations. As a general rule, most people aren't as concerned about the price of an item as they are about the perceived value of an item. It's the reason why when shopping for a TV most people simply don't buy the cheapest TV in the store. They instead find the one with the features they want at the most competitive price. An African safari offers a life-changing

moment for those who undertake one, a travel experience unlike any other. You can spend endless hours comparing the fine print of three hotels to save a few dollars or instead focus on which one will enable me to enjoy the experience more. Whilst you can choose a lodge by the luxury credentials or the price alone, it's best to choose one that suits your budget. In Africa, where safari lodges include most meals and activities, you'll find that budget to be far more inclusive than other destinations.

HERE'S THE HARD TRUTH

Despite these misgivings, there is another reason that people don't end up following their dreams and going to Africa. It's, far and away, the most common reason.

The reason? It all seems **too hard**.

As mentioned earlier, with clear and relevant information it can seem like an overwhelming prospect. Because of this, people postpone their Africa plans to some undefined future trip, choosing to take some other seemingly 'easier' trip now. Don't do this. Don't postpone the trip you actually want to do. The other place you go to will be good, but it won't be *Africa*.

Planning a trip on safari in Africa is much like a trip anywhere else. It is invaluable to get some expert advice (Ahem, hello...) before you go to prevent wasting any money, avoid common errors and plan out the best trip **for you**. This should be done before too much planning takes place to prevent unnecessary stress. Or worse, postponing the trip because it's all too hard to figure out.

SOME ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Before we break down each region into more detail, there are some additional points we think you need to know.

Safari

This word is a Swahili term meaning 'journey'. Although it can refer to your entire trip, it usually is used in reference to the animal spotting segments only.

Sundowners

An African tradition, it is pausing at sunset to enjoy the natural show and reflect on the day, complete with drink and snacks.

Game drives/Game walks/Game

When we use the term '**game**' we are referring to the animals you'll see on safari. This comes from the historical hunting term but is largely no longer used in that context. A **game drive** is a drive you'll undertake to spot animals, different from a drive between regions or to/from a lodge.

The Big Five

The most famous grouping of animals and what most tourists aim to see. Historically grouped as 'the most dangerous animals to hunt on foot', The Big Five are the rhinoceros, the lion, the leopard, the elephant and the buffalo. In reality, these animals aren't any more special than the others and it doesn't really matter whether you see these particular animals or not over others. However, this hasn't stopped an industry from springing up countless tours and souvenirs around the theme.

National Parks

National Parks are areas set aside by various governments for wildlife conservation. There are very strict rules about what can go on inside the parks and when. Related to tourism, this is normally in regards to whether vehicles can leave the road and the hours that visitors are allowed to drive or be inside the park. It might be worth noting also that these park fees all add to the cost of the itinerary. In the case of extremely popular parks, this can be quite a large amount.

National Reserves

These are areas set aside by governments for wildlife conservation but also have mixed purposes and differing restrictions, often to allow domestic grazing and living in the area by traditional tribal groups.

Game Reserves/Concessions

These areas are usually privately held areas of land used for the private purposes. Whilst in some rare cases this may be for hunting, usually they are for general photographic safaris and make up a large part of the safari experience in Africa. They also often border national parks and allow a greater portion of the land to be 'saved' for the wildlife to live. Being private land however they can limit the number of visitors. They also can set their own rules for its protection and can therefore offer activities like night driving.

THE AFRICAN REGIONS

Africa is generally lumped into five major regions: North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa.

North Africa sits on the top of the continent and is typically linked with the Middle East or a desert landscape. This includes countries like Morocco, Libya, Tunisia and Egypt. This isn't what we group as 'safari Africa' and is usually visited for its culture and history.

West Africa is beside the Atlantic Ocean on the western side of the continent (on the large curve) from as high as Senegal to as low as Gabon. This region is in its infancy for tourism and doesn't offer the safari that most African travellers seek, with most visitors involved in either business or travelling for the culture.

Central Africa is the massive forested region in the centre, or heart, of the continent. Whilst there is some tourism here it is few and far between and only for extremely intrepid explorers with the means, and patience, to seek out remote experiences. The situation here is ever-changing and can create some security concerns.

That leaves the two areas known for safaris: **East Africa** and **Southern Africa**.

A safari in East Africa is usually in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and/or Rwanda.

A safari in Southern Africa is usually in South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and/or Zambia.

Don't confuse Southern Africa and South Africa. One is the region; one is a country in that region.

You'll hear more about these areas later on.

2.

THE WEATHER & SEASONALITY



Low season in South Africa.

Despite the link between the two, when we talk about the weather and the seasonality in Africa, we are talking about two separate things. The **weather** in Africa (technically the climate, but we digress) refers to the daily temperature, the amount of rainfall and the conditions you'll encounter meteorologically on your trip. **Seasonality** refers to the amount of tourism that occurs at any given time of the year.

Often, they are linked. But it should be noted that the seasonality doesn't indicate the *best* and *worst* time to go, just the *busiest* and the *quietest*.

THE SEASONS

We should begin by saying that for most trips to Africa, any time of the year will be suitable. If you have special requirements, for example the blooming of flowers or the flooding of salt pans, then you may have limited times to see these. But, for most travellers, all seasons will be suitable and offer amazing experiences.

Across Africa, generally the busiest season is between July and September. This is linked with the extended summer holidays in the northern hemisphere and sees an increase in tourism, largely from North America and Europe. There are also a couple of additional contributing factors, such as the wildebeest migration in East Africa and the short Zambian season, but this peak largely is driven by demand and not the conditions on the ground. There is also an increase in tourism from mid-December to mid-January as the same travellers look to escape the winter. The quietest seasons across Africa occur just before these peak periods in both March/April and November. The other months are referred to as the shoulder seasons.

In a never-ending cycle, the busy period often becomes the time that people choose to go as they theorise that it must be busy for a reason. Likewise, they avoid the low season as it clearly must be quiet so it can't be as good. **This isn't true.**

African animals don't have an employment contract and therefore never take holidays. They continue with their lives every day of the year, irrespective of whether people are there to view them. Their lives run their own cycles, from breeding and pregnancy to birthing and raising. Often annually (except for the larger animals and predators), each step of their cycle offers a different viewing experience for the safari goer. There isn't one part of it that is better than the other, just different perspectives on the same animal.

THE WEATHER

East Africa sits around the equator meaning that it has a wet/dry weather pattern. This means it alternates between dry seasons and wet seasons, rather than four distinct seasons. The first wet season is in April/May and is known as the 'long rains'. During this time, you will usually encounter tropical rainfall at least once a day and often overnight. This enables the landscape to begin to regrow and the grasslands to flourish. The second wet season is in November and is known as the 'short rains'. This season, as the name suggests, is shorter but similar. Outside of these two seasons the weather is milder, with occasional rain but mostly dry and sunny days. It should be noted that the wet season here doesn't mean it rains all day, but rather briefly (and heavily) each day. You can usually see it coming and retreat to enjoy the show.

Southern Africa is a little more varied, depending on the region. Far south in South Africa there are four distinct seasons. An obvious (but important note) is that with Southern Africa being located in the southern hemisphere, you'll find the opposite seasons to the northern hemisphere. As you head to the north of Southern Africa the distinct seasons will soften, turn

more tropical and merge together more until eventually they become East Africa's wet/dry pattern. You can see this pattern around northern Zambia. As a loose guideline, the wet season across Southern Africa is tropical and will be around the New Year, from about November to February. The exception to this is the southern half of South Africa (for example Cape Town) which with its distinct seasons sees the most rain in its winter around July.

For readers in the northern hemisphere, it may be all new to you. For readers in the Southern Hemisphere (and particularly Australians), it is helpful for weather comparisons to think of Cape Town as Melbourne/Auckland, Victoria Falls as Darwin and East Africa seasons as Singapore.

"SO...AH...WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO GO ON SAFARI?"

There isn't one.

I know that may be annoying for those of you who want a firm answer. It all, however, depends on the person and their budget, their free time, their preferences and their desires. Each time of the year will have an advantage and a disadvantage. It's the balance of this that will help you choose the right time for you. Don't feel pressured into going when it doesn't suit you.

The wet season in East Africa will see more rain than the dry season. This also can mean, depending on which part of that season you go, that the grass might be taller and it can take longer between sightings. All that rain however brings an explosion of growth and colour and also the birth of many animals to take advantage of that growth. The increase in rain also means a decrease in tourists, so you won't have to contend with many people at animal sightings or lodges. This also generally lowers prices. The dry season meanwhile brings less rain and often shorter grass but you do have to contend with high prices and more people.

In Southern Africa, it depends on what you want to visit. If you plan on visiting multiple areas, they often have conflicting seasons. Victoria Falls, towards the north, is at its largest not long after the rainy season here. This means towards February/March it is big and will generally slowly decrease in size over the year. But it is hot and warm during this period and you can encounter rain. Inversely, Cape Town is cold during the winter months (July) but it is drier at other safari locations in the country with thinner bush cover. The water level in the Okavango Delta is at its largest during the middle of the year but far more expensive than other seasons when it isn't as flooded. Namibia is drier towards the end of the year, meaning the waterholes are busier with animals, but it can be very warm here during this time and more expensive.

And so it goes on. If it sounds confusing, it is only because you are looking for a definitive time to travel and when it comes to Africa, there **isn't one**. There isn't the **best time**, but rather the **best time for you**. This comes down to you and your requirements from your trip. If it has specialist elements (whale watching, wildflower blooms etc), then there might be special times. It may just be the only time you can take leave from work or school holidays or work around other events. Most importantly, start at the beginning with the major elements (like the locations) before you get lost in the details. Otherwise, it would be like painting an elephant by starting on the toenails.

3.

LIFE ON SAFARI: EAST VS SOUTH

You'll typically find yourself travelling differently when you are in East Africa compared to when you are in Southern Africa. This is due to the distances involved, the infrastructure available and the attractions of each region. Knowing these differences may assist you in deciding which area you'd prefer to visit.

EAST AFRICA

East Africa has an iconic landscape, one of open flat grasslands and savannah seen in films like The Lion King or Out of Africa. These national parks, national reserves and private concessions are dotted across both Kenya and Tanzania and form a large interconnecting web of migratory routes and home territories for the animals. The itineraries you undertake are often dictated by the distances and roads involved between locations. Going on a safari is the major focus of this region and you'll spend your days either out on game drives or spending time making your way from region to region to view differing landscapes and animals. A safari through East Africa is a true exploration of that word's meaning.



Flat landscapes in Ngorongoro Crater, Tanzania

A typical safari day in East Africa would begin with an early start and a breakfast in the lodge. Given that most safaris here occur in national parks and reserves like the Serengeti or Masai Mara, you are not permitted to be driving around outside of daylight hours. That restricts your safaris to the daytime and so mornings and evenings are instead a more relaxed affair back at your accommodation. Once that breakfast has been eaten there are two common itineraries. One option is to head out for the entire day, popular in places like the Serengeti where distances are vast and people are often hoping to cram in as much animal spotting as possible. So, you are given a packed lunch and you spend the whole day out in the park. If you are based in the area for a few days you might instead only head out until lunchtime, returning to your accommodation for a few hours rest before taking a smaller afternoon drive until sunset.

As mentioned, when you aren't on a safari day you are on a transfer day to another safari destination. This might be via a small plane but commonly it's in a safari vehicle. Road conditions in East Africa are also pretty infamous with rough roads often part of the adventure. In this region, if you want wild animals you'd better be prepared for wild roads to get there. Expect journey times to be long with 100km/60 miles sometimes taking a few bumpy hours.

Whilst Uganda and Rwanda do offer safari opportunities (Uganda more so) the major attraction of these countries has to be the opportunity to trek with the endangered mountain gorillas. The journey here is shorter and focused, often only a few days in length, with the classic savannah safari portion of most travellers usually taking place in nearby Kenya or Tanzania. It's worth noting that with a limited number of permits offered for the gorillas early booking here is essential.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

By contrast, with more countries and a more diverse landscape, Southern Africa is often a far more piecemeal affair than East Africa. Itineraries down in the southern part of Africa tend to be highly customised and segmented, each part of the trip its own little exploration of an area. Between these segments, each often taking place in different countries, are a series of short flights or land connections. Rather than a long continuous exploration of one or two countries (like in East Africa), you tend to find itineraries in the south a series of local explorations connecting to form a larger itinerary.

Down here in this area a common itinerary might be a few days spent in Cape Town and the Cape area, a few days on safari around the greater Kruger region and then some time spent at Victoria Falls. You might choose to add on some time in Botswana, skip the Kruger region, and replace it with time a journey along the Garden Route. You might start in Cape Town, spend time in the deserts of Namibia before ending up at Victoria Falls. Rather than a purely safari/wildlife-based itinerary it can include a wide variety of experiences, from winelands to whale watching. And, not only is it highly customisable in terms of destination but it is also highly customisable in terms of accommodation style, budget, or length. In addition, with travellers more spread out, in private reserves or in less commonly visited countries like Zambia,

overcrowding and the dreaded 'Jeep Jam' are less common if you choose wisely. These private reserves also mean you don't have the same restrictions on the hours you can go out looking searching for animals.



Denser bush but closer encounters, like here in the Kruger reserves

As a result, a typical day on safari here tends to start earlier, heading out around sunrise with just a light snack and some coffee in your belly. You may have breakfast, coffee or another snack as you go but you tend to return to the lodge around 9:30/10am for a substantial breakfast and a day of relaxation. Your next drive isn't usually until mid-afternoon and, after some sundowners, you drive for a while into the evening in hope of seeing some of the nocturnal wildlife. It's only after that is done that you return for dinner at the lodge. This means you typically end up travelling between regions in the middle of the day, often by scheduled flight, leaving enough time for a game drive that morning and another that night. Or, even a city adventure in the morning and a safari sleepout the same night.

As a general rule, safaris in East Africa tend to be part of a larger safari journey, where long days are spent out on safari and the lodge is instead more a base to work from. Southern Africa tends to offer a more relaxing trip around many different regions, where the lodge/camp is a larger focus and where more time is spent relaxing in nature.

This will affect things like vehicles as well. East African safari vehicles tend to be enclosed with fitted 'pop tops', enabling a 360-degree view of the landscape. They are enclosed as they legally need to be able to drive from location to location on the highways without exposing the theexplorersociety.com

guests to what would be horrific sun and wind burn (as well as the obvious issue of vehicular safety). Safaris in Southern Africa are often conducted in open-top vehicles (although you can also see this on location in lodges in East Africa where guests have flown in on an air safari). This is because these vehicles don't leave the reserve with the transfers often instead by luxury sedan or van.

Of course, this is all subjective and there are exceptions, depending on the location and lodge. That's why we said 'typically' at the beginning. Indeed, a private air journey in East Africa may have more in common with most Southern African itineraries and a southern overland journey more in common with East Africa. However, the main aim is to get you to Africa and live out a dream, so this is just to give you some context to start from.

4

WHERE CAN I FIND THE TIGER?

This is a common area of inquisition. People often ask us where a specific animal can be found, with the next question often where another specific animal can then be found.

Before we get into the finer details, we first need to remind you of what the African animals eat. The answer of course is, the environment and then each other! That means that they all generally co-exist in similar landscapes and areas. There is an idea that one area has all the lions, another has all the elephants and another the giraffe. This isn't the case. Most of the time you'll have all of them mixing in together, all living in the same eco-system. Sometimes there is a common-sense element to this. Cheetah are fast animals but need space to run. Therefore, you won't find them in areas of forest or rocky ground. Hippos need water to live in therefore you won't find them in the middle of the desert. Like we said, common sense.

With population size often limited by resources available, it does mean that the larger the ecosystem then the larger the number of animals it can sustain. The Serengeti and Kruger are both large national parks and their animal populations are quite large. This means your chances of seeing a lion are pretty good. Smaller parks mean you may be searching for a lion amongst a lower total population (but then again you also have less ground to cover). There are always places that are known for certain animals but this doesn't mean that other areas lack them. The open large areas of Amboseli in Kenya are known for their large elephant populations, as is the Chobe National Park in Botswana. You can see an elephant in many other places, but these areas are known for them as a primary attraction with both able to sustain herds of this size.

So, for the general safari animal wish list, there are many options to go in order to see them all. It's only when things become specialised that the destination becomes specialised. If you want gorillas, you need to head to Rwanda and Uganda. If you want chimpanzees, these countries (as well as Tanzania) are your choice. If you want penguins, you'll need South Africa. If you want meerkats, you'll need the deserts of Namibia, Botswana or northern South Africa. And if you want tigers, you'll need to go to another continent and visit India.

Believe it or not, that last one is a common question.

5.

SOME SAMPLE ITINERARIES

Here are some suggestions for trips of all budgets that cover a wide range of destinations. You don't have to do these, but they can help to give you a starting point of what is popular and why.

EAST AFRICA

COMMON ITINERARIES

Destination: Kenya

Duration: 7-9 days, beginning in Nairobi

Classification: Usually found in 3-5 star options

Highlights: Masai Mara, Lake Nakuru plus Amboseli or Ol Pejeta Conservancy.

This itinerary focuses on the southern half of Kenya, particularly the animal dense (and world famous) Masai Mara. Lake Nakuru is often a great spot for animals like rhinoceros and a good park in its own right but is largely there to break up the long drive between the Mara and the next destination. Amboseli is known for its elephants and its Kilimanjaro views. The 5-star variant of this may see guests flying in small planes between locations to save time and avoid the long, rough drives.

Destination: Tanzania

Duration: 7-9 days, beginning in Arusha

Classification: Usually found in 3-5 star options

Highlights: Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater and either Tarangire or Lake Manyara

This itinerary focuses on the famous twins, the Serengeti and Ngorongoro Crater. Differing landscapes side by side (about a four hour drive), travellers usually visit both. One of the most famous parks in Africa, the Serengeti is easily the main attraction here. Lake Manyara or Tarangire are there to break up the long drive between Arusha and the Serengeti. The 5-star variant of this may see guests flying in small planes between locations to save time and avoid the long, rough drives.

Destination: East Africa

Duration: 12-14 days, either starting in Nairobi or Arusha

Classification: Usually found in overland and 3-5 star options

Highlights: Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, Masai Mara, Lake Nakuru and one or two others

A classic 'all in one' itinerary, this one crosses off most of the most famous parks in East Africa. The 1-star variant will usually be travelling the quickest route and sometimes missing a park or two to save money. The 5-star variant will be flying between locations to save time and avoid long drives.

COMMON ADD ON SEGMENTS

Destination: Rwanda

Duration: 3 days

Classification: Usually in 3-5 star options

Highlights: Gorillas

It's pretty simple. Arrive in Rwanda and transfer to gorillas, do gorillas, go back to the capital, go to your next place. It's popular as it is incredibly easy to add on to any East African trip. Rwanda is beginning to target the high-end market which may see the options skew more 5 star in the future.

Destination: Uganda

Duration: 4 days

Classification: Usually in 3-5 star options

Highlights: Gorillas

It's also pretty simple. Arrive in the country and transfer to gorillas, do gorillas, go back to the main airport, go to your next place. To avoid a long drive, you might fly to the gorillas from the airport. The gorilla permits are cheaper here however.

Destination: Zanzibar

Duration: 7 days

Classification: Usually in 1 and 3-5 star options

Highlights: The week in Zanzibar

After your safari you'd simply board a flight from your airport (Arusha or Nairobi typically) and fly to Zanzibar for a beach break. Often this is broken up with 1 or 2 nights in the capital Stone Town and 4 nights on the beach.

ALTERNATE OPTIONS

Destination: Northern Kenya

Duration: 6 days

Classification: Usually found in 3-5 star options

Highlights: The quieter side of Kenya

Head north for either an entire safari or as an extension post the Masai Mara safari. Up in the north the landscape is a little drier and a little quieter, with gems like the Samburu and Laikipia region a hidden pocket of the country.

Destination: Southern Tanzania

Duration: 7 days

Classification: Usually found in 4-5 star options

Highlights: Perfect for the explorer

A region for the intrepid explorer looking to get away from the crowded northern circuit. Southern Tanzania has the largest game areas in Africa with the Ruaha, Nyerere and Selous regions offering wild and remote safaris. In these areas you will be more likely to see rare animals than any other tourists.

Destination: Western Tanzania

Duration: 7 days

Classification: Usually found in 4-5 star options

Highlights: Perfect for the explorer

Similar to the south, the west of Tanzania offers experiences like chimp tracking in the Mahale, relaxing on the beaches of Lake Tanganyika and many other unique options, far from the crowds.

Destination: Uganda by Rwanda

Duration: 7 days

Classification: Usually found in 3-5 star options

Highlights: Multiple gorilla tracking opportunities

For those who can't decide between gorilla trekking in Rwanda or Uganda, or perhaps would like to see both whilst getting the best value for money, this itinerary is for you. Take advantage of the ease of the Rwandan logistics whilst also the much cheaper gorilla permit cost in Uganda by landing in Rwanda, transiting to Uganda for trekking and then returning to Rwanda. That way you get a bit of both countries in the one itinerary.

Destination: Mt Kilimanjaro, Mt Kenya or Rwenzori

Duration: 7 -12 days

Classification: 1-2 star options

Highlights: For the active

For those who want a challenge, Africa has plenty of impressive and challenging mountain climbs. The most famous by far is Africa's tallest mountain, Mt. Kilimanjaro, with multiple routes on offer. Far more technical and requiring special training Mt Kenya also offers a unique challenge for the adventurous. Rwenzori, or the 'Mountain of the Moon', is a hidden gem for those looking for experiences off the beaten track.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

COMMON ITINERARIES

Destination: South Africa

Duration: 10 days

Classification: Usually found in 2-5 star options

Highlights: Cape Town, Cape Winelands and Kruger region

This trip sees you visiting a lot of the South African highlights. From the cosmopolitan city of Cape Town for 4 nights to time in the nearby winelands and then onto your safari near Kruger, it's a great mix of options. You'd be flying between Cape Town and Kruger.

Destination: South Africa

Duration: 14 days

Classification: Usually found in 2-5 star options

Highlights: Cape Town, Cape Winelands, The Garden Route and the greater Kruger region
As above, but with the addition of the Garden Route for a self-drive or guided tour to explore the coastal regions. You'd then fly between Port Elizabeth and Kruger.

Note: There is often a longer version of this seen in many tours (around 21 days) but the extra length is usually taken up with driving to the Kruger region via KwaZulu-Natal and can sometimes result in less time on safari.

Destination: Botswana

Duration: 6-9 days

Classification: Usually found in 3-5 star options

Highlights: Chobe, Okavango Delta

This itinerary is a simple two/three stop trip through Botswana's two biggest attractions. A 2-night stay in Chobe allows time to see the park and 4 nights in the Delta allows for an extended stay or a combination of camps. You could also throw in a stay in the Moremi/Savuti areas or even down south into the Kalahari.

Destination: South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe

Duration: 17-21 days

Classification: Usually found in 3-5 star options

Highlights: A journey from the Cape to the Delta

A combination of the 10 day South Africa with 3 days in Victoria Falls and some time in Botswana, usually split between Chobe National Park and the Delta. Flights would be used in between segments, except for Victoria Falls to Chobe. The extended version would feature the Garden Route.

Destination: Cape Town, Namibia, Botswana and Victoria Falls

Duration: 21-23 days

Classification: Usually found in 1-3 star options

Highlights: A journey from the Cape to the Falls

This is an overlanding staple. Whilst usually either the beginning or end of a trans-Africa trip this segment is the most popular itinerary of them all. It takes into account a diverse range of experiences and regions and camping conditions along the route are generally better than in East Africa, making it more tolerable to the average traveller.

COMMON ADD ON SEGMENTS

Destination: Zimbabwe and/or Zambia

Duration: 3 days

Classification: Usually found in 1-5 star options

Highlights: Victoria Falls

This same option is available on both the Zambian and Zimbabwean sides. The 3 days take into account a midday arrival and departure and two nights in the area. This would mean enough time to see the falls and enjoy some of the other activities in the area.

ALTERNATE OPTIONS

Destination: Namibia

Duration: 10-12 days

Classification: Usually found in 1-5 star options

Highlights: Sossusvlei, Etosha, Swakopmund and Damaraland

Namibia is a bit of an outlier in Southern Africa. Much like Ethiopia in East Africa, it doesn't quite fit into the cohesive offering the rest of the region offers. Rather than lush bush, cosmopolitan cities or cool waters, Namibia instead offers a desert experience filled with soaring dunes, animal filled salt pans and quirky isolated towns. It's a destination sought out for its uniqueness.

Destination: Zimbabwe

Duration: 7-9 days

Classification: Usually found in 3-5 star options

Highlights: Victoria Falls, Hwange and Mana Pools

Zimbabwe was formerly the crown in Southern Africa safaris but years of unstable government has seen it lose its shine. That aside, it retains all the elements that made it such a name in the earlier years and new investment helps it to offer an amazing experience. Victoria Falls is an obvious draw but Hwange, just a few hours south, has some incredible safari experiences on offer. Combined with the quiet and reliable Mana Pools and you can see the attraction Zimbabwe had for generations (and will again).

Destination: Zambia

Duration: 7-9 days

Classification: Usually found in 4-5 star options

Highlights: Victoria Falls, Lower Zambezi, Kafue National Park and South Luangwa

Zambia is the overlooked gem of Africa. Sandwiched between East and Southern Africa, Zambia shares similarities with both and allows for some amazing, and quiet, safari experiences. This is a destination for experienced Africa travellers looking to get away from crowds and take part in something truly unique. The Lower Zambezi allows a combination of water activities and game drives and South Luangwa is almost spoken about in hushed tones by African experts. Kafue is underdeveloped and still retains its wildness. Due to the weather Zambia is quite seasonal, which means despite its quality it has a limited window to visit and a price to match that ensures that it will never hit the popularity of other destinations.

KENYA

BEST FOR: THOSE SEEKING A CLASSIC SAVANNAH FOCUSED SAFARI, WHERE THE JOURNEY IS PART OF THE SAFARI EXPERIENCE.



Kenya is known as one the classic safari destinations and has long lived in people's imaginations as their idea of Africa. From "Out of Africa" to the Man Eaters of Tsavo, Kenya has almost become synonymous with the thought of an African safari. There are large grasslands, combine with arid bushland and mysterious mountains to be explored and of course, wild animals to see in all parts of the country. Adding to the diversity there is also a large tropical coastline to relax on along post safari, from around the Mombasa area to further north.

Kenya is often combined with Tanzania as part of a larger itinerary that explores the major attractions of East Africa.

POPULAR HIGHLIGHTS

Masai Mara National Reserve

Easily the most famous national reserve in Kenya and one of the most famous in Africa, the Masai Mara National Reserve sits on the southern border of Kenya and directly above the Serengeti in Tanzania. This central placement between the Serengeti and the northern populations of African animals means a large and healthy population of famed iconic African animals like lion. It is most famous as the home site of the river crossings of the Great Wildebeest migration.

Lake Nakuru National Park

Although no longer home to the large flocks of flamingos that originally brought fame to the park, Lake Nakuru is still a common stop on most itineraries in Kenya. The park offers great good safari viewing but the biggest attraction would be the healthy population of both black and white rhinoceros. There is also a huge variety of bird life on offer to be viewed in all seasons. This all combined with the close proximity to the capital of Nairobi means it is often a popular stop, either on its own or traversing between two other national parks.

Amboseli National Park

Sitting roughly between the Masai Mara and the Kenyan coastline, Amboseli is famous for both incredible views of Mt Kilimanjaro and the large herds of elephant that make this area home. Although big cat sightings are slightly less common than in the heart of the Mara it provides is home to bigger herds of larger herbivores like buffalo and elephant, both inside and outside the park boundaries.

TANZANIA

BEST FOR: THOSE LOOKING FOR ICONIC LANDSCAPES AND WELL-KNOWN SAFARI LOCATIONS WHERE THE SEARCH IS PART OF THE EXPERIENCE.



For most travellers Tanzania conjures up one of a few classic African images. It might be the endless open savannahs of the Serengeti grasslands. Perhaps it is the towering icon of Mt Kilimanjaro peeking through the clouds. It also might be the seaside bliss that is the historical island of Zanzibar, where the ancient world meets the ocean. Whichever of these you may think of, Tanzania has a well-earned place in history as an iconic African safari destination.

Whilst the majority of travellers only journey through the northern parts of the country, there is more on offer than most realise. The western borders near Lake Tanganyika offer unique and remote adventures for those willing. The southern combination of the Ruaha and the Nyerere (Selous) regions provides a rare opportunity to step back in time for an old-fashioned safari.

POPULAR HIGHLIGHTS

Serengeti National Park

One of the most famous national parks in Africa, and arguably the world, the Serengeti is a top destination for many travellers to East Africa. Whilst sharing migration patterns with the Masai Mara in Kenya the size of the national park allows for huge numbers of both predators and prey to live within and around its borders. You could spend weeks exploring the Serengeti and not see all it has to offer.

Ngorongoro Crater Conservation Area

Sitting adjacent to the Serengeti, the Ngorongoro Crater offers a complementary but contrasting safari experience. Although very large, the naturally formed caldera forms a natural boundary that keeps most animals comfortably living within its boundaries and enables a reliable and amazing safari experience. Whilst you won't see the same sized herds as you would in the Serengeti, you also won't have to do as much driving to see the different species.

Zanzibar

An island known around the world, Zanzibar is a melting pot of cultural influences and African experiences. From its rich Islamic and Arabian culture to the touches of British, Swahili and Portuguese that weave through its history, Zanzibar offers a unique experience to contrast with the mainland of Africa. From the winding back alleys and markets of the capital Stone Town to the remote beaches around the island, there is something for everyone to enjoy.

UGANDA

BEST FOR: THOSE LOOKING FOR QUIETER AREAS IN EAST AFRICA, GORILLA TREKKING OR FOR PREVIOUS TRAVELLERS LOOKING FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT.



Also known as 'The Pearl of Africa', Uganda sits between savannah Africa and forest Africa. As such, it offers a great combination of both safari experiences. Most famous for the mountain gorillas that live in two of its national parks, there is also a range of activities available for every style of traveller, from the adrenaline seeking and remote hikers to nature lovers and safari aficionados. Uganda is often combined with Kenya or Tanzania as part of a larger itinerary that explores the major attractions of East Africa and often with Rwanda as part of the gorilla experience.

POPULAR HIGHLIGHTS

Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park

Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park makes up a large part of the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and is an incredibly diverse national park, home to many species of mammals, chameleons, birds, plant life and more. Most famously it is home to Uganda's largest population of mountain gorillas that can be visited on a gorilla trek.

Queen Elizabeth National Park

Queen Elizabeth National Park is one of the most famous parks in Uganda, home to healthy populations of the major African animal attractions such as lions, leopard and elephants. With a large and varied terrain, the park offers a great place to view many different animal species in the one area.

Kibale National Park

Linked to Queen Elizabeth National Park by a wildlife corridor, Kibale National Park does offer sightings of elephant, leopard and more, however the biggest drawcard is the large variety of primates in this area, in particular the chimpanzees that call this park home.

Murchison Falls National Park

Home to the incredible Murchison Falls, this national park is Uganda's largest and is home to four of the 'Big Five' as well as many other animal attractions. The biggest drawcard are the Falls themselves, where the Nile River rapidly condenses and with incredible force pushes through a chasm almost horizontally.

RWANDA

BEST FOR: THOSE LOOKING FOR AMAZING SCENERY, GORILLA EXPERIENCES AND EASY TRAVEL.



Rwanda is also sometimes known as the 'Land of a thousand hills' or the 'Switzerland of Africa', largely because of the lush green landscape and the endless peaks that spread across this small country. Breathtakingly beautiful to view, a drive across Rwanda takes in verdant valleys, rich forest and everything from volcanic peaks to inland beaches. It also helps that Rwanda is arguably one of the cleanest countries in Africa (if not the world). The population, the memory of a past genocide burned into their subconscious, focused on making their home a great place to live and thrive. There are plenty of other activities on offer for those willing to search them out.

Rwanda is often combined with Kenya or Tanzania as part of a larger East Africa itinerary. It is also and often combined with Uganda for the gorilla experience. This is usually either to double up the trekking or to take advantage of Rwanda's great air connections.

POPULAR HIGHLIGHTS

Volcanoes National Park

The main attraction for tourism in Rwanda, Volcanoes National Park is home to the country's population of mountain gorillas. Forming part of the larger Virunga Massif that spans three countries (Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and enables greater gorilla numbers, this park sees visitors hiking into the forest to spend an hour with the gorillas in an amazing experience unlike any other.

Nyungwe National Park

An old and primeval rainforest, Nyungwe is home to many primate species including the chimpanzee and the L'Hoest's monkey. It is the primate tracking that is the major attraction here but hikers and birders also enjoy spending time in the atmospheric landscape, an attraction in its own right.

Kigali

A safe and clean cosmopolitan capital with great nightlife and food scene, Kigali is also home to the Kigali Genocide Museum, a must see for any visitor to Rwanda. It will take visitors through the events that led up to the 1994 Genocide and the road towards healing that has seen the country move forward towards a new future.

SOUTH AFRICA

BEST FOR: THOSE SEEKING AN EASY, AFFORDABLE AND RELIABLE SAFARI AS PART OF A LARGER, VARIED TRAVEL EXPERIENCE.



South Africa is one of the most popular destinations for all travellers to Africa, and for good reason. The number of diverse experiences on offer is immense and the landscape variation allows for incredible safari opportunities of all shape and size, budget and style. The cities are cosmopolitan and rich in culture to immerse yourself in and the multi-layered history allows for a step back in time to visit locations famed around the world, from battlefields to the ending of apartheid. If active holidays are more your thing, the hiking and trekking in South Africa is rich with opportunity. If it is not, the coastline offers numerous opportunities to sight the 'Marine Five' or simply relax on the sand.

POPULAR HIGHLIGHTS

Cape Town

Winning multiple awards as the 'World's Most Beautiful City' this coastal metropolis has a perfect combination of natural beauty, historical influences and cultural discoveries. From the stunning mountain top plateau of Table Mountain, the seaside living of Camps Bay to the offshore island prison of Robben Island (and its most famous inmate, Nelson Mandela), the city is not short in the beauty department. The vibrant city provides a hub for dining and shopping, perfectly sandwiched between the colourful Bo Kaap and the peaceful Company Gardens and if more is needed, a short trip to the V&A Waterfront is in order.

The Kruger region

One of the most famous national parks in Africa and matched in fame only by the Serengeti in Tanzania, Kruger National Park and its surrounds are a can't miss item on the wish list of many travellers. This enormous park is known for both the depth and diversity of its wildlife and the consistent wildlife sightings. The surrounding Kruger reserves, a series of private reserves that protect thousands of additional square kilometres for wildlife conservation, are also known for their amazing wildlife sightings. Without the crowds of the nearby national park this enables night time drives to see more elusive animals.

The Garden Route

The Garden Route, a coastal drive heading east from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth, is a blank canvas to be filled with activities that cater to each visitor. From the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Agulhas, the most southerly point of the African continent, travellers can also visit items as diverse as African penguins at Boulders Beach, great white sharks at Gansbaai, the epic whale migration at Hermanus, the dolphins at Plettenberg Bay and more. The Garden Route also includes cute coastal towns like Knysna to stop at and enjoy gourmet offerings. There is really something for everyone along the way.

NAMIBIA

BEST FOR: THOSE SEEKING ISOLATION AMONGST THE STUNNING DESERT LANDSCAPES, WHERE A SAFARI IS ONLY PART OF THE EXPERIENCE.



A unique departure from the typical African safari holiday, Namibia is one of the most beautiful countries on the continent. Vast sandy deserts meet large salt pans and stormy coastal beachfronts, intermixed with great animal sightings and unique cultural experiences. From the soaring sand dunes of Sossusvlei to the unforgiving Skeleton Coast, Namibia is a place that captures the power of nature. In the north, wonderful game spotting at Etosha National Park and Damaraland live alongside ancient rock art and prehistoric forests. In the south you'll find dramatic landscapes such as Fish River Canyon and Sossusvlei. Across the country, hidden surprises abound around every turn.

A well-connected road network means that Namibia is an easy place for independent travellers looking for a self-drive holiday. It also has tours and itineraries for all budgets.

POPULAR HIGHLIGHTS

Sossusvlei

A landscape unlike any other, Sossusvlei is the name of a particular region of the Namib-Naukluft National Park and the general name used to refer to all of it by travellers. One of the world's oldest landscapes, this area is a visual feast. From the tallest sand dunes in the world to the incredible vivid colours of the desert, this is an area not to be missed.

Etosha National Park

An enormous national park dominated by the Etosha salt pan. Etosha National Park provides tremendous landscape diversity within its boundaries which means great safaris with large animal populations. Despite the seemingly harsh conditions, you'll be amazed at the wildlife that call this place home, often as you relax and view them from a comfortable chair near a waterhole.

Fish River Canyon

The second largest canyon in the world, Fish River Canyon dominates the southern landscape and is a major attraction for hikers and trail runners alike. The natural colours of the rock combine with the desert sun for some truly wonderful sights for people of all activity levels.

BOTSWANA

BEST FOR: THOSE SEEKING LIMITED CROWDS AND SOME OF THE BEST HIGH-END SAFARI EXPERIENCES IN AFRICA.



Botswana is one of Africa's premier safari destinations, and it's easy to see why. With huge amounts of land dedicated to natural habitat and a history of strict commitment to the environment, Botswana has huge concentrations of wildlife spread out across numerous different eco-systems and landscapes. Visitors to Botswana can get away from the crowds and explore wild Africa. High standards of facilities on offer make the experience easy and comfortable.

Road conditions are very good in Botswana. This aside, a network of small aircraft will be the likely method of transportation for most of the trip. This is due to the waterways that crisscross the major tourist destinations and isolation of these attractions.

POPULAR HIGHLIGHTS

Okavango Delta

The world's largest inland delta, and a mostly untouched wilderness, this part of Africa is famed for its wildlife and the isolated and authentic experiences on offer in its many private concessions. Large herds of predators, migratory elephants and rich diversity of bird life make a safari in the Delta something to remember. There's a reason the Delta is commonly listed as one of the best safari experiences in Africa.

Chobe National Park

Located near the borders of Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, Chobe is easy to access making it a great add-on for trips to Victoria Falls and more commonly, a sought-after destination in its own right. A huge national park running alongside the Chobe River, Chobe National Park provides large herds of elephant and many other animal species able to be viewed from land or from the river by boat. You can even stay overnight on the houseboats that call this region home and fall asleep to the honking of the hippos.

Moremi Game Reserve

Often confused with the Okavango Delta itself, Moremi Game Reserve is a large area of land adjacent to the Delta and rich with wildlife. Including large islands like Chief's Island, the incredible wildlife encounters here often are credited to the Delta, especially because the quality and accessibility are similar.

ZAMBIA

BEST FOR: THOSE TRAVELLERS LOOKING FOR AN ISOLATED AND WORLD-CLASS SAFARI EXPERIENCE, USUALLY THOSE EXPERIENCED IN AFRICA.



One of Africa's best kept secrets, Zambia is often overlooked as nothing more than an alternate viewpoint of Victoria Falls. In reality, in addition to Victoria Falls, Zambia possesses some of the finest safari experiences in all of Africa. This almost secret destination means that Zambia is usually largely crowd free and still has national parks and areas for wildlife viewing almost as wild as hundreds of years ago.

Zambia has a good road network, but most commonly travellers will utilise the air network to visit multiple areas as part of the one itinerary, cutting down on long drive times between destinations. Zambia is often a singular destination but extensions into Malawi for a 'beach' break post safari are becoming increasingly popular.

POPULAR HIGHLIGHTS

Victoria Falls

Known locally as 'Mosi-oa-Tunya', or 'The Smoke that Thunders', Victoria Falls is considered the world's largest waterfall. Almost twice the height of Niagara Falls and the largest falling curtain of water in the world, Victoria Falls must be seen to be believed. The Zambian side of the falls is best during the first six months of the year when water levels are high and before the falls recede to the Zimbabwean side.

Lower Zambezi National Park

The Lower Zambezi National Park (and surrounding concessions) are an escape from the modern world, with large amounts of wildlife drawn to the abundant water supply and natural resources, courtesy of the Zambezi River weaving along the eastern edge. In addition to standard safaris there are also great opportunities for river activities, including dining on a sand bank in the river and fishing for the famed tiger fish.

South Luangwa National Park

Situated in northern Zambia, the South Luangwa National Park is considered one of the greatest wildlife sanctuaries in Africa and is the home of the classic African walking safari. A varying landscape and ever-changing ecosystem, it provides a home to large quantities of wildlife and birdlife without the crowds seen at other national parks.

ZIMBABWE

BEST FOR: THOSE SEEKING A MIXTURE OF EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA STYLE SAFARIS IN QUIET, UNDER-APPRECIATED AREAS OFFERING GREAT EXPERIENCES.



It's very easy for visitors to see why Zimbabwe was known around the world as a place of amazing wildlife encounters and natural wonders. Nowadays, despite the well documented turmoil of the past years, a safari in Zimbabwe retains the wonder of years gone by and still delivers an incredible experience for travellers. Boasting numerous world heritage sites and great concentrations of wildlife, a trip to Zimbabwe will amaze any explorer.

Zimbabwe has a good road network between major locations and good air connections, so most itineraries will utilise a combination of both to make the trip as easy as possible to maximise time on location. You can combine Zimbabwe with Botswana or South Africa for a longer safari journey. However, if you are only planning on visiting Victoria Falls then you can add it to almost any itinerary, subject to flight length.

POPULAR HIGHLIGHTS

Victoria Falls

Considered the world's largest waterfall, Victoria Falls is known locally as 'Mosi-oa-Tunya', or 'The Smoke that Thunders'. Almost twice the height of Niagara Falls and the largest falling curtain of water in the world, you have to see Victoria Falls to believe it. The Zimbabwean side has continuous waterflow, even in dry season, and you can visit all year around.

Hwange National Park

Hwange is home to large herds of elephant that make the area their home, alongside famed Zimbabwe lions, clans of hyena, cheetah and a growing population of wild dog. The diverse landscape changes from grasslands to desert sand to rocky outcrop and provides a home for some amazing adventures.

Mana Pools National Park

Named after the four large pools that hold water all year round, this national park is a UNESCO World Heritage site, providing amazing natural beauty and incredible wildlife opportunities for the intrepid traveller. Situated on the banks of the Zambezi River in the Lower Zambezi region, the park is known for the rich concentrations of wildlife that call this region home.

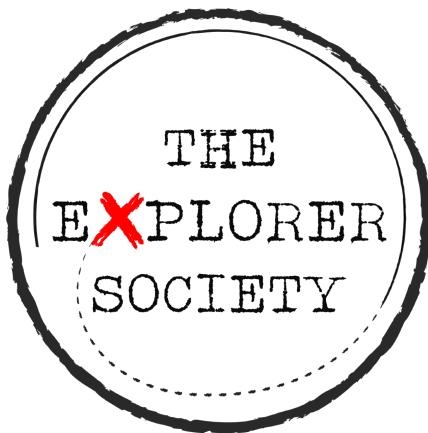
FINAL WORD

Thanks for reading this book and we hope it has informed you, entertained you and inspired you to visit this amazing continent. When you do decide to look into taking a trip, we hope you remember the experts at The Explorer Society and get in contact to start planning out the trip that best suits you.

If you aren't at that stage yet but enjoyed this book, you can sign up to join the Society (for free) as an honorary guest and hear all the latest from Africa, South America, Antarctica and more. This includes modern developments, new travel styles, historical accounts and entertaining tales with loose handles on reality.

Thanks for reading and we'll see you for a sundowner.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MARTIN EDWARDS – CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXPLORATION OFFICER



Originating from the UK, Martin's first real exploration was in his early twenties when he backpacked for 12 months around the world. During this time he, as a challenge, travelled over 7,000 km by public transport between Nairobi and Cape Town. He has also climbed Kilimanjaro twice, rafted the mighty rapids of the Zambezi and kayaked with whales in the Cape. Always with a thirst for adventure and exploration, he is a successful two time ultramarathon runner, in one case covering over 100km of mountainous terrain. When not exploring new regions of the world, he is

happy to enjoy the great outdoors with his young family in Sydney.

CAMERON NEILL – CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXPLORER



Apart from two small stints as an exchange student in Japan in his teens, Cameron began his travel lifestyle in earnest shortly after his 21st birthday. Living out of a backpack for over 7 years he lived and travelled through countries all over the world. Along the way he also worked as an English teacher, a white-water rafting guide, an alpine ski worker, a cruise ship entertainer and a scuba divemaster. He also enjoys filmmaking, photography and writing, with his work published in a variety of publications. Now mostly based in Australia, he spends much of each year

exploring new areas of the world with his wife and young son.

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