




AFRICAN SAFARI

AN ELEPHANT EXPERIENCE

Prepared by Jarvis • February 2026

 **Goal:** An African safari where you can spend meaningful, up-close time with elephants — walking with them, learning about them, and supporting their conservation. Here are the top 3 options, from ultra-luxury to mid-range.

Top Pick: Jabulani Safari — South Africa

Jabulani Safari Lodge

 Greater Kruger, Hoedspruit, South Africa

~\$1,350–\$1,550 USD / person / night (all-inclusive)

Why this one: This is THE elephant safari in Africa. The lodge was literally built around a rescued elephant herd. You don't just "see" elephants — you walk alongside them in the bush, learn their individual stories, and watch them interact with their caretakers. The HERD (Hoedspruit Elephant Rehabilitation and Development) orphanage is on-site.

What's included: Luxury suite with plunge pool, all meals & premium drinks, daily elephant experiences, game drives (Big 5 area), guided bush walks, airport transfers, laundry, Wi-Fi.

Elephant experiences:

- Walking with the Jabulani elephant herd in the bush
- Visiting the HERD orphanage — meet baby elephants being rehabilitated
- Elephant dung research walks (sounds weird, actually cool)
- Learning individual elephant stories — many are rescues from Zimbabwe

Best time: March–May or October–November (shoulder season, lower rates, great weather)

Getting there: Fly Vancouver → Johannesburg (16-18h), then 1h flight to Hoedspruit Eastgate Airport. Lodge handles transfers.

Premium Pick: Abu Camp — Botswana

Abu Camp, Okavango Delta

 Okavango Delta, Botswana (500,000-acre private concession)

~\$2,500–\$3,500 USD / person / night (ultra-luxury)

Why this one: The original elephant-interaction safari camp. Named after an elephant who starred in a Clint Eastwood film. The resident herd includes Naledi, whose rescue was featured on Netflix. You walk with elephants through the Okavango Delta and sleep on a star bed above their boma — falling asleep to elephant rumblings below.

What's included: All meals, premium drinks, twice-daily safari activities, walking with elephants, mokoro (canoe) excursions, night game drives, scenic helicopter flights (some packages).

Elephant experiences:

- Walking alongside the Abu elephant herd through the Delta
- Star Bed experience — sleep above the elephant boma
- Observing natural herd behavior in a private concession
- Supporting Wilderness Safaris' elephant conservation program

Best time: June–October (dry season, peak wildlife viewing)

Getting there: Vancouver → Johannesburg → Maun (Botswana), then charter flight to Abu airstrip.



Value Pick: Reteti Elephant Sanctuary + Safari — Kenya

Reteti Elephant Sanctuary + Sarara Camp

 Matthews Range, Northern Kenya

~\$600–\$900 USD / person / night (mid-luxury)

Why this one: Africa's first community-owned elephant orphanage. You'll see baby elephants being bottle-fed and rehabilitated for release back into the wild. Combine with Sarara Camp for a full safari experience. This is the most conservation-focused option — your money directly supports the local Samburu community and anti-poaching patrols.

What's included: Accommodation, meals, game drives, guided walks, cultural visits to Samburu communities, orphanage visits.

Elephant experiences:

- Visit Reteti orphanage — bottle-feed baby elephants
- Watch elephant rehabilitation and release programs
- Game drives with wild elephant herds in the Matthews Range
- Cultural exchange with Samburu elephant keepers

Best time: January–March or June–October

Getting there: Vancouver → Nairobi (Kenya), then charter flight to Sarara airstrip.

\$ Cost Comparison

Option	Per Night (USD)	5-Night Trip Est.	Flights (approx)	Total Est.
 Jabulani (South Africa)	\$1,350–\$1,550	\$6,750–\$7,750	\$1,200–\$1,800	\$8,000–\$9,500
 Abu Camp (Botswana)	\$2,500–\$3,500	\$12,500–\$17,500	\$1,500–\$2,200	\$14,000–\$20,000
 Reteti + Sarara (Kenya)	\$600–\$900	\$3,000–\$4,500	\$1,000–\$1,600	\$4,000–\$6,100

*Prices are per person. Flights estimated from Vancouver. Shoulder season rates shown where possible.

Suggested Itinerary: Jabulani (5 Nights)

Day 1

Arrive in Johannesburg

Overnight at OR Tambo airport hotel. Rest and adjust to the timezone (UTC+2, 10 hours ahead of PST).

Day 2

Transfer to Jabulani

Morning flight to Hoedspruit (1h). Lodge transfer. Afternoon game drive — first chance to spot the Big 5. Welcome dinner under the stars.

Day 3

Elephant Day

Morning walk with the Jabulani elephant herd through the bush. Afternoon visit to the HERD orphanage — meet the baby elephants. Evening sundowner game drive.

Day 4

Full Safari Day

Dawn game drive (best time for predators). Midday spa or pool. Afternoon guided bush walk focused on tracking. Night game drive for nocturnal species.

Day 5

Conservation & Farewell

Morning elephant dung research walk (seriously cool — helps track herd health). Final game drive. Farewell dinner.

Day 6

Departure

Transfer to Hoedspruit. Flight to Johannesburg. Connect home to Vancouver.



Quick Tips



Visa: Canadian passport holders get visa-free entry to South Africa (90 days), Kenya (eTA required), and Botswana (90 days).



Vaccines: Yellow fever certificate may be required. Malaria prophylaxis recommended for all three destinations.



Packing: Neutral colors (khaki, olive, brown), layers for morning cold/afternoon heat, good binoculars, camera with zoom lens.



Tipping: Budget ~\$20-30/day for guides, \$10-15/day for camp staff.



Ethics: All three options are ethical — no riding, no chains, no forced interactions. These are rescue/conservation programs where elephants choose to engage.

