

Prescott, AZ
January 15, 2013

African Safari Planning – Safaris101

Africa is often referred to as “The Dark Continent”. The media is largely to be blamed for many negative perceptions about Africa – it is so often depicted as a continent ravaged by wars, crime, poverty and drought...

Let me shed some light on this mysterious land. After 30 years in the safari industry, it is still part of my daily task to educate people about the “real” Africa – a land of many cultures, where more than 2000 languages are spoken, the sheer size of it, the stunning beauty and ever changing landscapes, and perhaps the most outstanding feature – The Wildlife!

Having lived in Africa for more than 45 years, I enjoyed exciting adventures, exotic sights and wondrous journeys, which took me the length and breadth of Africa, my mysterious continent... What I so long ago could not have envisioned was that many other adventurers from all over the globe would also undertake many of my own journeys!

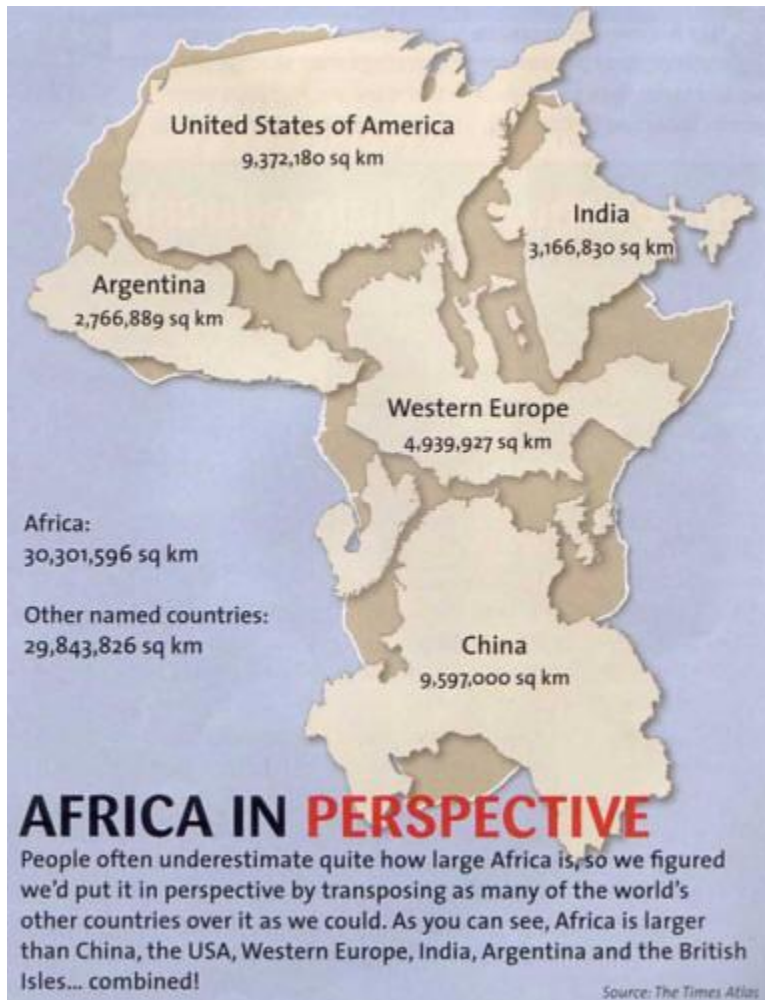
[African Safaris and Travel](#) has been actively involved in the safari industry since the late seventies. Today the thrill of sharing my beloved Africa is still as fresh and exciting as it was back then. I brought the safari businesses over to the U.S. in 1994 to share my dreams and adventures with travelers here and elsewhere abroad.

[African Safaris and Travel](#) actively supports the principle of development of Africa's natural resources sustainably through low-density, high quality tourism. "Environmentally Intelligent" tourism is such an important issue in Africa. All safaris and safari programs I recommend have been developed in conjunction only with safari outfitters who are dedicated to conserving Africa's precious and unique resources. All the lodges and camps featured in our programs have been built with absolute minimal impact on the local fauna and flora, and all camps operate under the dictates of approved wildlife management.

Naturally, many clients planning a safari to Africa have not visited the continent before and have numerous questions and concerns they would like to have addressed. What follows are the ones most often asked.

Is it Safe to Travel to Africa?

Africa's biggest enemy is the international media who represent all 46 African countries as a single country and not as unique and individual countries with their own characteristics. Africa is actually a huge CONTINENT, nearly 5 times larger than the United States of America.



(Source: The Times Atlas)

It would come as a surprise to many people to find out that there are in fact areas that are worse off in more developed countries than in the "dangerous" African countries. No country can claim to be 100% safe, and so as with travel to any new or unknown destination, it is advisable to take certain standard security precautions. Visitors should take the same precautions as they would normally take in any other travel destination worldwide. Keep an eye on your valuables when walking in a crowd. Avoid walking in the cities at night and place valuables in your hotel safe. Choosing a knowledgeable operator such as [African Safaris and Travel](#) as your specialist Safari tour operator is the best move you could make.

While staying at African safari lodges and tented camps you are typically far removed from human settlement, and crime in the camps is virtually non-existent. Nonetheless, it is advised that valuables be locked away or kept under the supervision of the camp or lodge manager.

Most of your travel time on safari in Africa is likely to be spent away from the large cities where crime is most prevalent. You will be visiting areas and regions that are remote and where crime is almost non-existent. When your African safari involves spending some time in the cities, you will find the cities and locations I recommend to be just as safe as you would expect.

Finally, I [never recommend](#) visiting destinations or locations that I am not comfortable with. I have lived in Africa, know its cultures, and know where it is safe and where it is not. This is why only the finest African safari camps are recommended, and only certain cities while away from "the bush".

How Much Does it Cost to go on an African Safari?

Most African safaris and vacations are customized to individual interests, time frame and budgets. Rates for destinations cover a wide range and typically vary significantly from the "high season" to the "low season" – which in itself can be somewhat confusing, as low and high seasons indeed vary between some safari countries!

The cost of individual camps and lodges and safaris are indicated on our [website](#) at the bottom of every camp or safari description - where available. For any not listed, please [contact us](#) so a current quote can be requested.

You are encouraged to contact us directly for a quote based on your requirements; we are here to assist you in planning your dream safari.

We really are passionate about what we do and we welcome all enquires.

Southern Africa vs. East Africa - Which Safari Region is Better?

In terms of wildlife safaris, Southern Africa includes the countries of South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia, while East Africa is essentially Kenya and Tanzania. Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and The Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), are all destinations popular for Gorilla tracking safaris, and are generally considered Central Africa. Malawi and Zambia are also sometimes classified as Central Africa.

Historically and up until the 1980's, East Africa was the preferred destination for safari-goers and wildlife enthusiasts. Kenya and Tanzania offered superb wildlife viewing with a well-developed safari infrastructure of operators with both permanent camps and mobile safari circuits. In contrast, the countries in Southern Africa, while full of wildlife and beautiful wilderness areas, were either politically unstable or mostly undeveloped for safari tourism.

During the 1990's things began to shift. South Africa's apartheid came to an end and its monetary unit, the Rand, historically very strong, began to depreciate, making South Africa a very attractive travel destination. Entrepreneurs in South Africa took advantage of the increase in tourism to open up Botswana and Zimbabwe to hunters and photographers. With the increase in tourist capital, the safari industry in Southern Africa grew and permanent camps and mobile safaris opened in its pristine wildlife areas.

In terms of landscapes and attractions, the regions are quite different. East Africa boasts Mount Kilimanjaro, the Serengeti Plains / Maasai Mara ecosystem and the Ngorongoro Crater.

Southern Africa includes Botswana's Okavango Delta wetland, the semi-arid Kalahari Desert, the Skeleton Coast, the Namib Desert of Namibia, the Skeleton Coast, Kruger National Park of South Africa, and the lower Zambezi River basin including Victoria Falls along the borders of Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The wildlife species found in the two areas are essentially the same. Most of the predators and plains game can be seen in both regions and only some birds and a few mammals and reptiles are endemic to certain regions. The major difference is in the numbers of certain species and the general experience a visitor will have when viewing them.

East Africa offers herds of zebras and wildebeests in the hundreds of thousands. The annual migration between the Maasai Mara in the north and Tanzania's Serengeti in the south is a spectacle unequaled anywhere on earth today. However, Botswana and Zimbabwe are home to 80% of Southern Africa's 300,000 elephants and huge herds are a common sight along their northern borders.

The weather also varies between the regions. In East Africa, October marks the beginning of the "short rains" while April brings "long rains." Many of the safari camps close during the long rains due to difficult driving conditions. In Southern Africa, while each country varies, the rains generally fall between November and March with the rest of the year being mostly rain-free. A plethora of websites refer to the period between December - March in Southern Africa as the "Rainy Season" - technically correct, however we need to place this into very clear perspective. The rainfall in Southern Africa is minimal when compared to most places - it is a semi-arid region. The rain that Southern Africa gets is usually in the form of quick thunderstorms which disappear almost as quickly as they came, usually in the late afternoon.

Most of the camps in this area stay open year-round. The rainy or "green" safari season in Southern Africa offers benefits such as herbivores having their babies, lush green landscapes and dramatic skies, all of which combine to create superb photographic opportunities. Temperatures are similar between the regions with May through August being the cooler months.

The major differences between East Africa and Southern Africa for safaris are the density of tourists, the safari accommodations and the safari vehicles. East Africa, in general, has earned a reputation for a high density of tourists staying in hotel-styled lodges. The most common safari vehicle in East Africa is the mini-van with its pop-up roof, whereby passengers stand up to take pictures while peering out of the roof or sit in the enclosed vans. Conversely, Southern Africa is known for its luxury tented safari camps and huge concession areas with very low tourist densities, making for a private safari experience. The safari vehicles used here are modified open-air Land Rovers or Land Cruisers, which also add to the intimacy of the experience.

That said, there are a growing number of luxury safari camps popping up in East Africa, particularly in Tanzania, and these lodges offer a far more exclusive experience than the large safari lodges, which may have typified Kenya and Tanzania in the past.

For the most part, game areas in Southern Africa, also known as wildlife concession areas are owned or leased by luxury safari camp operators, and these concessions are for the sole use of the individual camp and its guests. With an average camp size of only 10-16 guests and only one or two vehicles for the entire concession, one can drive all day and not encounter anything but wilderness and wildlife.

What About Zimbabwe?

Over the last couple of years Zimbabwe has received a large amount of negative press surrounding President Mugabe's decision to permit "re-distribution" of privately owned farms to the "war veterans".

This process has been accomplished with its share of crime and violence, especially by those who were removed from their life-long farms. However, this violence has largely been limited to in and around the cities and farming areas, and then mostly in the central and southern portions of Zimbabwe.

Fortunately, the northern National Parks and reserves in Zimbabwe have not been affected and these amazing wildlife areas offer some of the best safari bargains in all of Africa. Game viewing is outstanding and on a par even with Botswana. These areas are located far away from the heavily populated cities and surrounds where the crime is centered.

These northern parks - Mana Pools, Matusadona, and Hwange offer great camps, superb guides, and amazing game viewing all at bargain prices. There is a travel advisory from the US State department and agree that this warning is possibly accurate for the farming areas and the cities. The northern parks however, are still havens of peace and tranquility, offering a superb Zimbabwe safari experience. Encouraging travel to Zimbabwe will help to keep the conservation efforts in this country going and keep the poachers out. The bottom line is, Zimbabwe's northern parks and reserves are completely safe and offer fantastic African safari deals.

Guests first fly into Victoria Falls from Johannesburg. After enjoying all the varied and superb experiences Victoria Falls has to offer – our guests then fly from camp to camp, all of which are within totally safe National Park areas far removed from any urban hotspots.

What Are the Medical Health Precautions and Issues?

As vaccination requirements change from time to time, check with your local doctor or health department for the latest health precautions. The most important health consideration in Southern Africa is Malaria and it is strongly recommended that prophylactics (i.e., oral tablets) be taken as a preventative precaution.

It is reassuring to point out that the safari camps in Southern Africa are not located in densely populated areas and this greatly reduces the risk of being infected by malaria. Anopheles mosquitoes start biting by late evening and the peak of biting activity is at midnight and early hours of morning.

Protect yourself against the bites in the evenings and early mornings by applying mosquito repellent, wearing garments that cover the body as much as possible, and at bedtime, by using mosquito nets without fail. All of the camps provide mosquito repellent in the tents and in the lounges and on game drives. Most also provide mosquito "coils", an incense-like slow-burning substance that produces a smoky repellent that can be lit inside the tent before heading for dinner so that the tent is cleared by bed time.

Finally, the majority of the camps also provide a mosquito netting over the beds to keep the "muzzies" out while you sleep. Wearing lightweight long pants instead of shorts and covering the ankles especially is also very helpful during dinner and in the evening hours. Use the bug spray after sundown on game drives as well.

The next best precaution is to begin and complete a full regimen of anti-malarial medication for your African safari. The medication usually begins before you leave and is completed after returning home. Check on the internet or with your physician for further information.

For more information, please also visit the following links:

CDC Information on Prescription Drugs for Malaria:
<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentMalariaDrugsPublic.aspx>.

CDC Health Information for Visitors to Southern Africa:
<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/regionSouthernAfrica.aspx>.

Tanzania and Zambia require tourists to provide proof of Yellow Fever inoculations. Please check with us or the respective Zambia and Tanzania Embassies for the latest up to date requirements.

The food and water in Southern Africa is much safer than the rest of Africa, especially in the African safari camps and hotels you will be traveling to. We have never experienced any problems with the food or water in any of the camps or hotels we have traveled to over the years.

What are the Entry Requirements?

All people traveling to Africa require a valid passport that is valid for a minimum of 6 months beyond the intended length of stay.

At present, holders of American passports are not required to obtain visas for South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. Holders of American passports however do need to obtain visas for Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Visas can be obtained at the point of entry for a nominal fee. It is advisable to check with the consulate of the country that you intend to visit as requirements can change without notice.

South Africa... IMPORTANT:

Southern Africa passport control has become very strict with regards to passport control requirements. There have been instances of visitors being deported due to non-compliance. **Passports MUST be valid for at least six months after your return home date.** We recommend a validity of nine months to prevent any problems in this regard. **The passport entry requirement for any travelers entering South Africa is a minimum of two blank pages in their passport (in addition to the two endorsement pages in US passports).** If however a guest should be traveling to more than one African country via South Africa, then the traveler must ensure they allow for sufficient pages for each country visited and also have the minimum of two blank visa pages for each re-entry into South Africa.

How Much Cash Should I Take With Me?

Most of the African safari camps we represent accept Master Card and Visa credit cards for purchases of curios and even accept them for guests to pay gratuities to the camp staff and guides. A note on gratuities at the African safari camps: Gratuities are not expected, but a reasonable tip would be US \$10 per guest, per day for your driver/guide and perhaps \$5 per day for the overall camp staff. Believe me, this amount will seem like nothing after you experience the fine service in the camps we offer. These can be paid by credit card so cash is unnecessary.

If you are visiting Cape Town, Johannesburg, Nairobi, Lusaka, etc., a highlight is visiting one of the flea markets that offer beautiful African woodcarvings, batiks and other VERY inexpensive but nice arts and craft items. For purchases made in the flea markets, you will typically want some cash. The artisan's artworks are typically of nice quality and make excellent mementoes of your trip or gifts for your friends and family. The shops and restaurants in cities as well as the hotels in generally all accept credit cards.

When we travel for say three weeks to Africa and include two weeks on safari, we typically take around \$300 / \$400 in cash. This however is only a guideline. Traveling with more cash than this is unnecessary.

What is a "Typical" Day on an African Safari?

Typically, a safari day includes two major activities - one that begins early in the morning and the second, which occurs in the mid to late afternoon and continues until dark or sometimes up until 2 hours after sunset.

A safari activity may include game drives (viewing) in Land Rovers (or other safari vehicle), water activities like canoeing, mekoroing or motor boating, or game walks. Most safaris are predominantly game drives as this is usually the best way to see wildlife, unless your safari is on a river or in a permanent water area.

Morning activities begin with tea or coffee and a light morning snack before sunrise with the drive or activity beginning at or just after sunrise. The mornings are really the best opportunities to see good wildlife and interactions as it is still cool and the nocturnal animals are still quite active. There is usually a break to get out and stretch and have another coffee and snack.

Morning activities are usually over by late morning and guests return to camp for a full breakfast / brunch.

The middle of the day is on your own. Because southern Africa's climate is warm, midday's are typically very warm to hot and the animals are therefore quite inactive for the most part and seek shelter in the shade to wait out the heat. Guests may relax at the camp swimming pool or take a siesta, read, etc. Most camps will allow a short midday activity like a game walk or a visit to a hide.

After the siesta, guests return to the main area for tea (drinks, snacks, etc) before heading out on the afternoon safari activity. This activity typically starts at 3:30 or 4:00pm and the weather at this time is usually quite warm. The activity will carry on until just before sunset, when the guide will stop at a safe and picturesque spot, for guests to enjoy "sundowners"- some drinks and snacks – followed by the drive back to camp which turns into, or is known as a night game drive. On arrival back at the camp, there is ample time to freshen up, come down for drinks at the bar, followed by dinner. After-Drinks around the camp fire are always offered, but most folks find that they are tired from all the fresh air and are in bed by 10pm!

The next day begins again before sunrise and you're out in the bush exploring again. It's addicting!

Are the Animals Dangerous?

Most of the regions visited in Southern Africa are in areas where you are within the natural habitat of the wildlife and so there are no fences surrounding the camps.

The best advice to be given here is to listen to your guide's instruction while in camp, ensure that your accommodations are not left open, doors are closed etc. At almost all the camps the guides walk you to and from your tents or chalet and they are trained to handle any situation, should it arise. Keep in mind that animals do wander through the camps during the day and at night, so at all times just be aware of your surroundings and you will be fine. Having wild animals in such close proximity is one of the main reasons people visit the area – enjoying them in their natural habitat is what makes the experience all the more special.

Game drives are conducted in open-air vehicles, which really allows you to get up close and see the animals from an unimpaired viewpoint. Many people argue that animals only see the vehicle as it would a tree (albeit, a tree that moves") and not the people in it. This point is debatable but, personally, with hundreds upon hundreds of hours spent on game drives; we feel that most of the animals, and most likely the larger cats like lions, are keenly aware of human presence. They do not view a Land Rover with people in it as a threat. The animals actually become accustomed to the vehicles and eventually ignore them for the most part. This allows guests to view animals exhibiting their natural behavior. It is truly a pleasure, I can assure you.

Occasionally an elephant, especially the females in the breeding herds, become annoyed and their protective motherly instincts take hold and they chase a vehicle off, but this is rare. Also, the guides at the camps are very good with reading an elephants moods and will avoid situations which could be potentially dangerous. Generally speaking, you are in no danger whatsoever if you listen to the guides and keep aware of your surroundings – and always bear in mind that you are not dealing with domesticated animals.

What Kind of Food Can We Expect on Safari?

Most foreign visitors are very impressed with the quality and quantity of food provided while on an African safari. Some of the more up-scale camps provide food, presentation and service, which rival that of a 5 star hotel in any top city. The tables are elegantly set under the stars, under thatch or even in a boma - and you will never go hungry.

Meals are geared around the game viewing times and activities. Typically one starts off with a light continental breakfast upon waking before heading out on the early morning activity. Guests usually return at about 10/11 am for a large brunch, which incorporates meals from both the breakfast and lunch menus. A light tea and snack is offered before the afternoon activity and upon returning to camp in the early evening, a hearty three-course dinner is enjoyed followed by after dinner drinks around the campfire.

The camps are able to cater to all food requirements as long as they are made aware at the time of booking so as to ensure sufficient time to fly in the necessary supplies.

What About Communication with the Family Back Home?

For the most part, communication by phone, fax, etc. is out of the question given the remote locations of the camps. In areas where cell phone reception is available, guests are requested to turn off their cell phones in the public areas and on game drives, and to make calls only from the privacy of their rooms.

All camps do however have radio communications with their town/city offices in case of any emergencies. Most lodges in South Africa offer full telephone and internet services for those who do not wish to detach from the world completely.

What Laundry Facilities are Available on African Safari?

Most safari camps in Southern Africa offer a laundry facility, but there are a few where water restrictions may apply and because of camp location, this service may not be available. Please check with us to make sure.

Laundry service is included in the accommodation cost for most African safari camps. Hotels in the cities as well as some lodges charge a nominal fee for it. Most safari camps and lodges also provide washing powder in the rooms/tents in order to hand wash underwear and delicates.

How Do We Get From Camp to Camp on an African Safari?

On tailor-made fly-in African safaris, inter-camp transfers are done by light aircraft, also affectionately known as "bush taxis". They do a circular route, picking up and dropping off clients at their next safari camp. If you prefer to book a plane for your party's exclusive use (to ensure that you are flown directly to the next camp and possibly to allow you an increased baggage allowance), we will gladly arrange that for you, at an additional charge.

Inter-camp transfers are done in Cessna 210s, Cessna 206s, Cessna Caravans and Islanders. Charters in larger and faster planes are possible from Johannesburg to Maun and Victoria Falls as well as on some of the other longer routes. Most guests however traveling from Johannesburg or Cape Town to Maun, Victoria Falls or Windhoek use scheduled flights on SAA, BA/Comair, Air Botswana or other reliable carriers.

For the inter-camp air transfers, space and safety concerns don't allow for lots of baggage - so there is a strict 20kg (44 lbs) per person baggage limit on all flights (unless you have booked a private flight). All bags must be soft to allow us to squeeze your bags into tight corners. 20kg doesn't sound like much, but as the dress code in the camps is casual and as most camps and safaris offer a laundry service (and most often this is a free service), the 20kg allowance is ample. If you require more baggage, then we can often sell you an extra seat on each flight, which will allow you and your party up to an extra 70kgs (also in soft bags). If you have lots of luggage but don't need the extra bags in the camps, we can often send your bags ahead to your next city as unaccompanied baggage. There is of course an additional charge for this service.

Pilots will not compromise on safety. If you come with more than your 20kgs baggage allowance and you have not made arrangements for your excess luggage, you will be forced to leave some of your baggage behind and arrange a private charter at considerable extra cost and inconvenience to yourself.

Are Children Welcome on a Safari?

Most safari camps welcome children over the age of eight. There are few exceptions, so please check with us when making an enquiry. These rules can be waived by booking out smaller camps for exclusive use by parties with young children. Families with children between the ages of 8 and 12 will have to book private activities so as not to disturb other guests. Depending on the size of the family, this may necessitate additional costs at certain camps or at certain times of the year.

Some camps have family tents where families are able to have their children in the adjoining tent (sometimes sharing the same bathroom). Children staying in the family tents get a discount for this type of accommodation.

To elaborate further on age issues, there are no upper age limits at most safari camps. On some cross country and camping safaris, suppliers set an upper age limit due to the active nature of some of the safaris. Please advise ages of passengers if you are in doubt and check with us for any possible restrictions.

What About Traveling Single?

Sure! A safari is the ideal trip for the independent traveler. Go to new places - meet new people! Just be aware that many of the lodges and camps charge a single supplement.

If you prefer to travel with a group, please review some of the safaris tours we offer which have set departure dates. If you are unsure about this, feel free to contact us and we will gladly assist with the information you require.

Are There Facilities to Recharge Batteries for Cameras?

Camps and safaris in the remote wildlife regions of Southern Africa have no access to electrical power due to the remote nature of their locations. Most camps have generators on site with 220v electricity or they make use of solar panels. The generators are not normally heard by guests as they are run for a couple of hours at a time in the morning and afternoon while guests are enjoying their activities.

The electricity is used to power ice machines, fridges and freezers that keep the food and drinks cool and fresh. The generator charges batteries that provide the power for the bedroom lights and overhead fans in the rooms. Out in the bush and on safari there is plenty of power available to charge batteries for cameras and video cameras, but not for hairdryers and the likes.

For most mobile tented camps there is no electricity; lighting is by kerosene lamp and campfires in the true traditional style of Africa. Electrical power is not a problem at larger safari lodges.

If you bring a video camera, electric iron, razor or hair dryer, make sure they are adaptable to 220v AC and 50 cycle current and that you have adapter plugs for English outlets. Game lodges use generators which shut down at bedtime.

Most camps only run generators for a few hours per day, however this usually is enough to recharge video batteries. On mobile camping safaris one can re-charge camera batteries from the cigarette lighter plug in the vehicles.

What Animals Will We See on a Safari?

The variety of animals found in the Southern African Sub region is incredible. Of course, most visitors want to see "The Big Five". The big five is a term originally used by the "Great White Hunters" in Africa to refer to the five most dangerous prey animals to hunt: Lion, Leopard, Elephant, Buffalo, and Rhinoceros. Today, these animals are thankfully more often hunted by those with a camera than by those with a rifle (although legal and illegal hunting is still possible for all of these animals). It is possible to see all five of the Big Five in certain areas in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana still today. If this is your goal, we can direct you to camps where it will be possible, and in some cases, even probable that you will see all five.

For us, African safaris are about more than checking off the "Big Five". It is a magical experience with nature and with wildlife that is virtually impossible almost anywhere else on earth. Yes, we go to look for the big cats, lion, leopard, cheetah and we love seeing the rare and endangered wild dog (or Africa painted dog), but there are so many other incredible animals in Africa, each with interesting behaviors of their own. Still, if you are interested in specific animals, like birding or predators or rhinos, let us know and we can arrange an African safari with this as the goal.

When is the Wildebeest Migration?

Every year the wildebeest migrate from the Serengeti National Park into the Masai Mara National Park in Kenya. From the vast Serengeti plains to the champagne colored hills of Kenya's Masai Mara over 1.4 million wildebeest and 200,000 zebra and gazelle, relentlessly tracked by Africa's great predators, migrate in a clockwise fashion over 1,800 miles each year in search of rain ripened grass.

There is no real beginning or end to a wildebeest's journey. Its life is an endless pilgrimage, a constant search for food and water. The only beginning is at the moment of birth. An estimated 400,000 wildebeest calves are born during a six week period early each year - usually between late January and mid-March.

DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH

The Serengeti National Park / Ngorongoro Conservation Area is arguably the most impressive wildlife sanctuary in the world. During the months December through March the seemingly unending plains of the southern Serengeti and the Conservation Area are inhabited by enormous herds of wildebeest and zebra. The great herds graze on rain ripened grass.

In the calving season (late January through mid March) the herds concentrate at the Ndotu and Salei plains (Southern Serengeti / Ngorongoro Conservation Area) attracting the attention of predators like lion, cheetah and hyena.

During this period the migration is best observed from Ndotu Safari Lodge, Kusini Camp or any of several private tented camps used by mobile safaris such as our "Wildlife Adventure by 4x4 Safari". These include campsites in the Ndotu / Naabi area.

APRIL, MAY

During April and May the depleted plains are unable to sustain the endless herds. The migration, sweeping west and north, moves from the short grass plains of the southern Serengeti / Ngorongoro Conservation Area to the long grass plains and woodland of the Serengeti's western Corridor, almost to Lake Victoria.

This period is during the long rains and is considered off season for wildlife viewing in East Africa as roads are often impassable. Ndutu Safari Lodge, Kusini Camp and the Serengeti Serena Lodge are fine for wildlife viewing during this time. So are campsites in the Ndutu / Naabi area.

JUNE

By the end of May the wildebeest have exhausted the Western Corridor's best pastures and the herds must move further north. Entering the Lamai Wedge and the Mara Triangle, breeding occurs May through June.

This is the transitional period between the rains and the dry season. The Serengeti Serena is a central, easily accessible lodge for viewing the migration at this time. Grumeti River Camp, Migration Camp and Kirawira Camp are also options. Seronera and Moru area campsites are best.

JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER

By July the countless herds have amassed along the swollen Mara River - a final barrier from the short sweet grasses of the Masai Mara. Sometimes the crossing place they have chosen is shallow allowing the majority of animals to pass safely. In other areas the waters boil with drowning wildebeest and slashing crocodiles.

Between July and October the Wildebeest Reside in the Mara.

We recommend Governor's Il Moran Tented Camp as the leading safari camp in the Masai Mara. Other tented camps include Governor's Main Camp, Little Governor's Camp and Bateleur Camp. Tanzanian lodges recommended during this time include Kirawira Tented, Migration Camp, and Grumeti River Camp. Kirawira and Moru area campsites are best.

NOVEMBER

The arrivals of the short rains call the migration southward. During the short rains of November the wildebeest migration is best viewed from either Lobo Wildlife Lodge or Klein's Camp. Campsites in the Lobo area are best.

As November ends the migration is making its way back to the southern Serengeti and early in the year they once again give birth. The circle of life is complete.

* Note - the migration is a natural event and the timing varies month by month; year by year, further determined by rainfall patterns.... All this will contribute to probably the most enjoyable vacation you will ever have.

What About Snakes and Bugs?

This aspect is very exaggerated. You will rarely see a snake, but if you do, it will most likely be from the safety of your safari vehicle. Tents and lodges all have bug screens fitted to windows.

In most areas where bugs or mosquitoes are prevalent, rooms and tents are also equipped with mosquito nets, adding to the romantic ambience... Bear in mind that malaria is a threat in most wildlife areas, and it is essential to consult your physician for advice before embarking on your safari.

What is the Weather Like?

In general the climate in Southern Africa is as near perfect as you can get with dry season temperatures similar to those of the Mediterranean, but without the humidity. Daytime temperatures average 70 - 80 degrees Fahrenheit but can get much hotter, especially in the months of October and November, just before the rains arrive.

During the winter period (June through August) nighttime temperatures in some areas can drop to freezing or below. Early morning game drives during these winter months can start out very chilly and you should bring a warm sweater, gloves and even a hat to cover your ears. However, by mid morning (9 am or so) the layers will start coming off as the days will heat up dramatically. The rains occur each year during the period November through March with the dry season stretching from April through October.

In East Africa, October marks the beginning of the “short rains” while April brings “long rains.” Many of the safari camps close during the long rains due to difficult driving conditions.

In Southern Africa, while each country varies, the rains generally fall between November and March with the rest of the year being mostly rain-free. A plethora of websites refer to the period between December - March in Southern Africa as the “Rainy Season” - technically correct, however we need to place this into very clear perspective. The rainfall in Southern Africa is minimal when compared to most places – it is a semi-arid region. The rain that Southern Africa gets is usually in the form of quick thunderstorms which disappear almost as quickly as they came, usually in the late afternoon.

Most of the camps stay open year-round. The rainy or “green” safari season in Southern Africa offers benefits such as herbivores having their babies, lush green landscapes and dramatic skies, all of which combine to create superb photographic opportunities. Temperatures are similar between the regions with May through August being the cooler months.

When is the Best Time to go on Safari?

For most visitors, an African safari is a once in a lifetime experience and they want to optimize their safari experience in the time they have available to do their safari. Again, different countries have different “optimal” times, and quite a number of different factors come into play when considering exactly when to go on safari. Generally speaking, we will not give any person a “sales pitch” as to which particular season he should be doing his safari – instead we will discuss the pros and cons of different seasons in the different countries.

Generally speaking, the Southern Africa game viewing safari areas (Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa) have a rainy season (which falls during the southern hemisphere's summer months of November - March) and a dry season (during the winter months of May-September).

Most visitors who research this aspect of African safari travel by reading up in books or website's are steered to the dry, winter months for the best game viewing. The reason for this is that the water holes are smaller, fewer and farther between and the little remaining green vegetation is widely spread out. The result is that all animals have to come to these watering holes to drink daily and so the wildlife is generally easier to find. On the other hand, the landscape during this dry season is less colorful and there is a great deal more dust. Photographically, the greens of the summer months are mostly absent and your photos will bear a more brownish color. Still, with less vegetation and cover for the animals, it is generally easier to spot them. You could drive past a thick, heavily vegetated area in the rainy season and drive right past a sleeping pride of Lions and not see them; however, driving the same route in the dry months, without the thick green cover, practically everyone on the vehicle would likely spot the big cats.

Some repeat visitors to Africa have found that they prefer the greener, summer months for several reasons. As mentioned, the green colors make the scenery breathtaking. Additionally, as the summer is also the rainy season, one finds dramatically beautiful skies to compliment the lush greens of the landscapes. However, there is always a small risk of a missed or shortened game drive here or there because of a late afternoon thundershower. Typically, rain in the form of a thundershower may last for 45 minutes or so, and blow over just as quickly as it built up, leaving the air fresh and clean, and dust all clear and gone!

Another aspect of the summer months is that many of the antelope species like impala, tsessebe and wildebeest start dropping their young during this time to take advantage of the lush vegetation. With baby animals everywhere, a safari takes on a totally different dimension!

Cruel or sad as it may sound, most predators also focus on hunting the young animals, making hunting easier for them. While this sounds unfortunate for the youngsters, it is part of nature's way and many more survive than are taken. For those who want to possibly see the predator-prey interactions, the summer months will tend to provide better opportunities to see hunting behavior and predator interactions.

Many visitors tend to focus on the dry months for their African safari, hence the winter in Africa being considered the "high season" and the operator rates reflect this higher demand with higher prices. Occupancies are higher, safaris must be booked a bit further in advance and your costs are greater. Still, many visitors swear by the winter months as THE time to go – as far as I am concerned it is a matter of six in one hand, half a dozen in the other ...

Can we guarantee lions every day...? NO. Can we guarantee wild dogs if you stay for 2 weeks...? NO. Can we guarantee you will see a kill...? Nope. Can we guarantee animals...? YES. Predators? Almost certainly. Lions...? Most likely. The point I am trying to make is that the word "guarantee" does not exist in the safari world!

The one "negative" I can point out about an African Safari... is it is addictive. Simply put, you will want to return – again and again.

What Kind of Accommodation Can I Expect?

In the major cities of the African safari destinations, you will stay at Hotels or Country Lodges as you would anywhere else in the world. In the wilderness areas or National Parks, you will stay at Safari Lodges and Camps.

[African Safaris and Travel](#) actively supports the principle of developing of Africa's natural resources sustainably through low-density, high quality Tourism. "Environmentally intelligent" Tourism is nowhere as an important issue as in Africa. All safaris and safari programs have been developed in conjunction with safari outfitters who are dedicated to conserving Africa's precious and unique resources. Lodges and camps featured in our programs have been built with absolute minimal impact on the local fauna and flora, and all camps operate under the dictates of approved wildlife management.

One of the very first things one will notice when browsing [our website](#), is the fact that we have NOT included a comprehensive list of all the safari camps to be found in the respective African safari destinations... with very good reason...

We recommend only safari camps and lodges that (to our knowledge) contribute directly to uplifting the community and which apply good principles of sustainable eco-tourism.

When rural populations, across socio economic lines benefit, both financially and otherwise, from the tourism and wildlife industry, tourism becomes an asset. When something is an asset, then it is worthwhile to protect and conserve its survival. The challenge then is to create a model whereby the communities that border National Parks, Game Reserves and Conservancies see wildlife and tourism as assets. That is the only way the future of Africa's wildlife is ensured.

Universally accepted hotel and lodge ratings are not applied to the different types of accommodation, but they generally fall within first-class to luxury range.

Lodges are permanent structures (mostly under thatch) which have been aesthetically designed to blend into the landscape and retain a rustic ambiance, providing luxurious and modern facilities. Most lodges also have swimming pools.

Camps are relatively small and may be permanent, semi-permanent or mobile camps. Whatever the nature and structure, the camps are fully catered (you do not have to participate in any chores) and generally apply a staff ratio of 3 to 1. Camps are either thatched chalets or permanent and luxuriously furnished walk-in tents.

Tented Camps are luxurious; most have en-suite bathrooms, beds with fine innerspring mattresses and conform to all the modern conveniences, which will ensure that your stay will be very comfortable and enjoyable. As each property is indeed quite unique, we invite you browse our "Camps and Lodges" pages, and discover their individual features and find the ones that best suit your needs.

What are the Differences Between a Mobile and a Permanent Tented Camp?

Around the turn of the century (until the 30's and 40's), mobile tenting was the only option, and "camp as you go" was the standard practice. Over the years luxury connected with the traditional mobile tenting safari has increased. By the same token, one can understand that the cost to have a "luxury

hotel" following one around in Africa is expensive. Most people settle for tented camps, which are permanent. Because they are "permanent" they can be equipped with flush toilets and traditional bathroom fixtures and conveniences. A permanent tented camp offers the comfort of a 5-star hotel but with the romance and adventure of being surrounded by the sights and sounds of Africa.

A **"Mobile Camping Safari"** offers a taste of Africa in the old tradition. You will travel off the beaten path away from the mainstream tourist flow, enjoying more privacy and the thrill of open-air life in the African bush. Some would say that this is the only way to see the African Savannah!

Traditional East Africa style tents are used, giving you plenty of space. Each tent has its own shower and with hot water. Toilets are portable Elsan chemical type and they do flush! By the way, you will not sleep on the floor - proper camp beds are made up with mattress - sheets - blankets and pillows! Authentic canvas chairs, washbasin and towels are also provided.

Mobile tented safaris are, generally speaking, more expensive than the equivalent itineraries staying in lodges. It is however, really a special experience, and many would consider it the only authentic way to safari and well worth the extra cost.

A full crew will accompany your expedition to take care of all the work and details involved in setting up and moving the mobile camps. They will also provide the transport for game drives during the days and catering at nights where appropriate. Each camp has its own dining tent and a bar is set up every evening for sundowners, and laundry is done on a daily basis. When moving the camp from one location to another, lodge accommodation may be used to give your crew a chance to be ready for you at the new site. You will travel in specially adapted 4x4 vehicles with maximum comfort and roof hatches for excellent game viewing, - with a maximum number of 5-7 passengers per vehicle. Some clients on mobile-tented safaris wish to have their own private vehicle and can then decide exactly on their own itinerary, subject to logistical considerations.

What Clothing Should I Pack and How Much Luggage Can I Bring?

One of the most common questions we receive from our clients is what size and type of luggage is best for an African Safari.

The best choice for luggage on a safari to Africa is the SOFT DUFFEL BAG.



(Photo Credit:- Wilderness Safaris)

While weight limits and size restrictions vary for airlines and charter flights between safari camps, the following generally apply to air transfers in safari areas:

1. Only soft bags will be accepted - no hard suitcases or bags with wheels can be transported, as they physically cannot fit into the aircraft.
2. Maximum dimensions are generally 30 inches maximum in length.
3. Weight is almost always 20kg (44 pounds) at most, sometimes only 12kg or 15kg.

There are Strict Weight Restrictions in Place on any Itinerary Including Light Aircraft Transfers for the Following Reasons:

- The aircraft are designed with a maximum bodyweight and luggage weight allowance.
- Most of our airfields are over 3000 feet above sea level and are located in the tropics, and therefore the permissible aircraft carrying capacity is reduced.
- The aircraft have physical space restrictions.

1) Luggage, including camera equipment and hand luggage, is restricted per person traveling on seat rates, as follows:

- 12kg in Zimbabwe
- 15kg in Malawi
- 20kg in Botswana, Namibia (including the Skeleton Coast safari but excluding the Best of Namibia Wing Safaris and Namibia Explorations) and Zambia
- 12kg for Best of Namibia Wing Safaris and Namibia Explorations
- 20kg in South Africa.

2) Only soft bags will be accepted - no hard suitcases or bags with wheels can be transported as they physically cannot fit into the aircraft.

3) The maximum dimensions of the soft bags which can be accommodated are as follows: 25cm wide x 30cm high and 62cm long.

Please keep in mind that the baggage compartments on the light aircraft are only 25cm high, so the pilots must have the ability to manipulate the bag into the compartment.

- Passengers weighing more than 100kg (220 lbs) must advise us in advance as an extra seat may have to be quoted into the package for safety purposes.
- For those who absolutely must bring more than the maximum allowance of luggage, an extra seat may be purchased in advance but the bags must still be soft bags only. Be sure to pre-arrange any extra seats with us at the time of booking.

These Luggage Restrictions Sound Very Restricting But Keep in Mind the Following:

- Most African safari camps / lodges and hotels provide basic toilet amenities.
- Laundry can be done on a daily basis (and many camps provide this service free of charge but hotels do charge a nominal fee).
- Mainly casual clothing is required.

As no formal clothes are needed throughout most of southern Africa, we recommend that you limit your luggage to the basics. More formal attire is usually required only when staying in the more prestigious city hotel establishments or on any of the luxury trains. On an African safari, casual clothing is the order of the day.

Suggested Packing List

Remember the weight restrictions covered above!

1. Good quality sunglasses - preferably polarized. Tinted fashion glasses are not good in strong light.
2. Sun hat
3. Golf-shirts, T-shirts and long-sleeved cotton shirts
4. Shorts/skirts
5. Long trousers / slacks
6. Sweat pants / sweat shirt
7. More formal attire for your stay at prestigious city hotels or on one of the luxury trains
8. Underwear and socks
9. Good walking shoes (running/tennis shoes are fine)
10. Sandals
11. Swimsuit
12. Warm winter sweater
13. Warm Anorak or Parka and scarf / gloves for the cold winter months (May to September)
14. Light rain gear for summer months (late November to April)
15. Camera equipment and plenty of film (or digital storage)
16. If you wear contact lenses, we recommend that you bring along a pair of glasses in case you get

irritation from the dust or pollen

17. BINOCULARS - ESSENTIAL (and Newman's bird book if you are keen)
18. Personal toiletries (basic amenities supplied by most establishments)
19. Malaria tablets
20. Moisturizing cream & suntan lotion
21. Insect repellent e.g. DEET, etc.
22. Basic medical kit (aspirins, band aids, Imodium, antiseptic cream and Anti-histamine cream etc)
23. Tissues / "Wet Ones"
24. Visas, tickets, passports, money, etc.
25. Waterproof / dust-proof Ziploc bags / cover for your cameras

What About Travel Insurance?

Most safari operators require that clients take out travel insurance. The sole responsibility lies with the guests to ensure that they carry the correct comprehensive travel and medical insurance to cover themselves, as well as any dependants or traveling companions for the duration of their trip to Southern Africa.

This insurance should include coverage including, but not limited to, the following eventualities: cancellation or curtailment of the trip to Africa, emergency evacuation expenses, medical expenses, repatriation expenses, and damage/theft/loss of personal baggage, money and goods.

How Early Should I Start Planning and Book My Safari?

We encourage you to plan your African safari as far in advance as possible; 12 to 18 months at a minimum, to ensure a better selection of camp availability.

This is especially important if you are planning to travel during the Southern Africa safari "high season" months of July through October, as is the case when wanting to witness the Wildebeest and Zebra migration in either Kenya or Tanzania.

The preparation and anticipation of the actual trip can be almost as exciting as the safari itself! It is quite unlike the planning of any other travel.

Take it step by step. [Consult](#) with one of our safari specialists at [African Safaris and Travel](#), to plan your own, personalized "dream trip to Africa". Once you have a clear idea of the kind of safari or tour you would like to take, we will put it together and book it for you – Your dream safari to Africa!

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