

25 Day South West Safari

Tour overview

View the great elephant heads of the Chobe River, the worlds oldest desert, the Namib-Naukluft, the diverse Okavango delta and have cultural exchanges with Kalahari Bushmen in this superb introduction to Southern Africa.

Highlights

Kruger National Park, South Africa

Victoria Falls

Chobe National Park, Botswana

Okavango Delta, Botswana

Fish River Canyon, Namibia

Swakopmund, Namibia

Namib Naukluft Park, Namibia

Windhoek, Namibia

Etosha National Park, Namibia

Meals

24 Breakfasts, 19 Lunches, 19 Dinners

Accommodation

Camping in 2-person dome tents

Day 1 – 2

Greater Kruger, Kruger National Park

From Johannesburg - South Africa's commercial capital - we travel through scenic Mpumalanga to South Africa's most famed national park – the Kruger. The fences between the park's borders and private game reserves on the fringes of Kruger have been recently taken down to form Greater Kruger and the park's wildlife is free to roam the whole area. Kruger and Greater Kruger cover over 24,000 sq km are home to an incredible wealth of African animals from the miniscule dwarf mongoose to all of Africa's famed Big 5 mammals. There is also an incredible diversity of birdlife and flora to be discovered. We spend two nights within the Kruger area and take game drives across the savannah to glimpse some of the wildlife that inhabits the park.

Day 3 – 5

Polokwane, Nata, Kasane, Chobe National Park

Leaving Kruger and travelling north we spend a couple of days crossing from South Africa into the vast grasslands of Botswana, via Francistown, Nata and the edge of the Makgadikgadi salt pans to Kasane and the Chobe National Park. Chobe is a vast reserve of some 11,000 sq km with river plains and forests which support a variety of wildlife. It is perhaps most known for its elephant populations and it is thought that some 40,000 elephants inhabit this area. Whilst in the park we take an afternoon river cruise, time to relax and watch for wildlife coming to the river to bath and drink in the lowering light.



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Day 6 Livingstone – Victoria Falls (Zambian side)

From Kasane it is a short drive to Livingstone and Victoria Falls (Zambia side) where our tour ends. There are numerous activities and excursions to choose from around Victoria Falls which will amply fill your time here on the tour and any extra time you wish to spend in Livingstone before your onward travel. Feed your hunger for adrenaline with white water rafting, bungee jumping, abseiling, gorge swinging and amazing scenic flights (microlight, helicopter or small plane) or enjoy the surroundings on canoeing safaris, elephant back safaris and horse riding treks. However, don't leave without seeing the thundering Victoria Falls themselves. At over a mile wide and over 100 metres deep, the Falls produce the world's largest curtain of falling water in the world. Up close they are formidable and at times of high water, the spray can be seen from 20 kilometres away, hence their local name Mosi au Tunya – the 'smoke that thunders'.

Day 7 Livingstone / Waterfront

We have the day at leisure in Livingstone. There is time to do some more adventure activities, or if you've had your fill of 'adrenaline running' then take a time out and relax. Sit with a coffee or a coke and stare out over the Zambezi River for an hour or two, try to spot hippo or croc in the deep grey waters of this massive river. Or go into Livingstone – a small town but worth a wander up and down the street. If you are feeling more adventurous you could organise a day trip across the border into Zimbabwe (but check the visa situation before you go – both Zimbabwe and Zambia require visas and if you only have a single entry visa for Zambia you may have to buy a second visa when you come back from Zimbabwe at the end of the day! If you are interested in this idea, be sure to speak to your tour guide for practical advice). Overnight at camp in Livingstone.

NB For the sake of practicality, meals in the Livingstone/Victoria Falls area are restricted to breakfasts. This allows you to take on half day or full day activities (some of which include lunch) without having to be back with the group at mealtimes. The Waterfront camp restaurant overlooks the Zambezi River and offers a good selection of reasonably priced meals and snacks throughout the day (we suggest you allow US\$25-\$35/ day).

Day 8-9 Chobe National Park, Kasane

After breakfast we leave Livingstone and travel to Botswana and the Chobe National Park. Situated in the extreme northern part of Botswana, Chobe is home to large populations of elephant as well as lion and abundant birdlife, including the African fish-eagle. In the late afternoon we take a cruise on the Chobe River - a delightful way to see hippo or elephant, sometimes buffalo, come to the river for bath and drink. Earlier in the day we take an early morning game drive into the park itself for a glimpse of Botswana's premier game reserve.

Day 10-12 Maun, Okavango Delta

Further south, we cross the fringes of the Kalahari Desert and make our way to Maun and the Okavango Delta. A natural wetland system spreading over some 1.6m hectares of northern Botswana, the results from rivers that rise in Angola and flow south then divide repeatedly to form an intricate floodplain of channels and islands which spreads out into a broad flat inland delta – the only one of its kind in the world. Our overnight excursion gives us the opportunity to explore some of the area on foot and by dugout canoe (makoro). This is a very unspoilt wildlife area. We search amongst the giant lily pads, tall grasses and narrow channels for hippo, crocodile and a variety of birds. We camp for a night in the Delta itself on one of the river islands - an unforgettable wilderness experience!



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Day 13-14

Ghanzi - Windhoek

Leaving the Okavango we travel south-west skirting the Kalahari. We stop at Ghanzi and take a guided Bushman Walk to discover some of the secrets of this immense terrain and gain a glimpse of how the indigenous people live in this area. The following day we continue west into Namibia and stop a night in the capital Windhoek, a city steeped in German atmosphere and architecture. Enjoy the contrast from the previous few nights, perhaps with a flagon of ale at one of the local taverns.

Day 15-19

Etosha National Park – Cape Cross Seal Colony - Swakopmund

We make our way north to Etosha National Park, a vast reserve of over 20,000 square kilometres surrounding a central salt depression or 'pan.' The pan is seasonally filled with water but managed year-round waterholes sustain some 114 mammal and 340 bird species. We spend two nights in Etosha, camping near a floodlit waterhole which offers exciting night viewing for those who wish to stay up late.

We arrive at the colonial town of Swakopmund, Namibia's main seaside resort. Sandwiched neatly between the desert and the ocean, this delightful coastal oasis has developed into something of an adventure centre. Try 'quad biking, sand boarding, or skydiving (weather permitting) or for those preferring a slower pace, take a coastal walk or indulge in Swakopmund's café culture at your own leisure.

Day 20-22

Namib Naukluft Park – Fish River Canyon

Continuing south through the barren desert we reach the Namib Naukluft Park. The world's oldest desert and containing some of the highest sand dunes in the world – some of Sesriem and Sossusvlei's dunes are over 300m high – this is an ideal spot to clamber to the top of one and see the sun rise over the empty desert. We continue deeper into the park for a nature walk across the salt pans and flat valley floors. Don't forget your camera - the changing colours of the sand as the sun rises and sets throughout the day offer brilliant photographic opportunities.

Continuing to the very south of Namibia we admire the awesome beauty of the Fish River Canyon. One of the natural wonders of Africa, some 500m deep and over 160km long, this is the second largest canyon in the world after America's Grand Canyon. Again, there are plenty of opportunities for keen photographers as we spend time around this area and visit the canyon's infamous sharp river bend known as 'Hell's Corner.'

Day 23-25

Gariep River – Cape Town

On our final leg of the journey we leave Namibia and enter South Africa stopping en route for a night next to the desolate but striking Gariep (Orange) River.

We continue south and notice the desert slowly give way to the increasingly fertile Cape Province. On the edge of Cape Town itself lie the Cape Flats, home to Cape Town's townships. We visit some of the local people and community projects in the area. The townships illustrate both South Africa's tumultuous history and its hope for the future. Finally we continue to cosmopolitan Cape Town, without doubt one of the world's most beautiful cities. If time allows we recommend you spend a few days exploring the city and surrounds. Take advantage of the variety of activities normally available here – from abseiling Table Mountain and shopping at the V&A Waterfront, to wine tasting in the nearby winelands of Paarl and Stellenbosch.



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Includes

- * Fully equipped safari vehicle
- * Camping and cooking equipment
- * All road tolls and vehicle taxes
- * All ground transportation
- * Services of two crew
- * Sleeping mattress
- * Meals as indicated
- * Bushmen paintings visit.

Excludes

- * Local Payment excursions
- * Visas
- * Travel insurance
- * Flights
- * Departure taxes
- * Airport transfers
- * Sleeping bag
- * Optional activities
- * Tips, drinks and items of a personal nature.

