

Botswana's Desert & Delta

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Mammal Tour

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London.
Day 2/4	Khwai Concession.
Day 5/8	Xakanaxa. Moremi Game Reserve.
Day 9	Depart Maun.
Day 10	Arrive London.

Departs

April, May, September, October & November.

Dates and prices

Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code BWA04) or see the current Naturetrek brochure.

Focus

Mammals and other wildlife.

Grading

A traditional African safari – Grade A.

Highlights

- Explore the Okavango Delta, one of the world's greatest natural wonders!
- AM and PM game drives within the Khwai Concession & the Moremi Game Reserve
- Seven nights fully serviced camping in small exclusive camp sites
- Night drives within the Khwai Community Area
- Abundant mammals including Lion, Cheetah, Elephant, Southern Giraffe and Burchell's Zebra
- Wild Dog possible!
- Colourful and abundant birdlife
- Expertly guided by local naturalist guides



Images from the top: Lions (J Prince), Elephant (V Steyn), Wild Dog (Shutterstock Images)



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Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Depart London

We depart London's Heathrow airport on a British Airways or South African Airways scheduled evening service to Johannesburg.

Days 2 - 4

Khwai Concession

We will arrive in Johannesburg around 0700 hours and transfer late morning to an Air Botswana flight to Maun, the gateway to the Okavango Delta. On arrival we will be met by our local guide and driven north to the Khwai



Leopard

Concession, a huge expanse of protected wetlands, leadwood forests and open plains lying adjacent to - but just outside - the western limits of the Moremi Game Reserve. The journey to Khwai will take in the region of 4 hours, much of which will double up as our first game drive with lots of mammals and birds to be seen enroute. Our wilderness camp is situated not far from the banks of the Khwai River in an excellent area for game and other wildlife. We will be based at Khwai for 3 nights and explore the area on a series of game drives.

The woodlands, marshes and plains of the Khwai Concession are open to Moremi Game Reserve and the animals wander freely between the two. The reserve is managed by the local Khwai people and is an excellent example of a local community helping to protect, conserve - and benefit from - their wildlife. This has been a great success, for the Khwai region boasts some of the best game viewing in the Okavango region, including huge bull Elephants as well as breeding herds. Lion, Leopard, Serval and African Wildcat are common predators with Wild Dog and Cheetah also possible, but less common. The swampy areas are used by African Buffalo and Red Lechwe, whilst other mammals to look for during our time here include Tsessebe, Blue Wildebeest, Burchell's Zebra, Waterbuck, Southern Giraffe, Greater Kudu, Impala and perhaps even Roan or Sable Antelopes. The Khwai River also holds an unusually high density of Hippos as well as many huge crocodiles.

Khwai is an excellent area for the Okavango's abundant birdlife including Slaty Egret, a Botswanan near-endemic that only occurs in the Delta and neighboring Caprivi Strip in Namibia, plus the rare Wattled Crane. The liquid song of the colourful Heuglin's Robin dominates the morning's birdsong whilst the Mopane and Leadwood woodlands are home to Southern Black Tit, Bennett's Woodpecker and the mighty Giant Eagle Owl. In the forest near the camp we often encounter Black-collared and Crested Barbets, whilst overhead an abundance of birds of prey can be seen including Bateleur, Martial Eagle, African Hawk-Eagle and Black Sparrowhawk. The nearby Khwai River is home to a



Southern Giraffe



Giant Eagle Owl

wealth of waterbirds including Purple Gallinule, African Spoonbill, Giant Kingfisher, African Jacana and many many more.

Since the cool early morning hours offer the best game viewing, our days will start at the first hint of dawn with coffee and a light breakfast. From here we head straight out into the field on a game drive returning to camp once again around 10am - 11am for a delicious brunch. As the heat of the day kicks in you are free to relax, read a book or wildlife watch from camp, before typically heading out once more in the late afternoon for another game drive.

One of the great advantages of staying outside the Moremi Game Reserve for a few nights is that we can enjoy night drives which are forbidden in Botswana's game reserves and national parks. These open up a whole new world of wildlife-watching opportunities, for a good proportion of Botswana's mammals are only active after dark. Honey Badger, Crested Porcupine, Common Genet, Black-backed Jackal, White-tailed Mongoose, Scrub Hare and Spring Hare are all possible on our spotlighting drives, with perhaps even an unusual sighting such as Aardvark for the fortunate few. The night drives also give us our best chance of seeing Leopard which are at their most active after the sun has set. A variety of interesting birds can also be looked for after dark including the spectacular Pennant-winged Nightjar and Giant Eagle Owl with its bright pink eyelids.

Days 5 - 8

Xakanaxa, Moremi Game Reserve



Lion

Leaving Khwai we move into the heart of the Moremi Game Reserve to an area known as Xakanaxa. Our camp team will dismantle our mobile safari camp for us and meet us 60 kilometres to the west. This transfer, however, will double up as an extended game drive and we are sure to see a wealth of animal and birdlife en-route. As we journey along the Khwai and Manuchira Rivers, and through vast Mopane and Leadwood forests, we will be looking out for a wide variety of African game mammals and other wildlife. Elephants are common, along with Impala, Southern Giraffe, Burchell's Zebra, Tsessebe, Steenbok and Red Lechwe. These are preyed upon by Leopard, Lion and Cheetah and both Khwai and Xakanaxa are included within the home ranges of two different packs of Wild Dogs. The Moremi Game Reserve - and Okavango Delta as a whole - is home to one of Africa's

highest densities of Wild Dogs. It will take a degree of good fortune to find one of these elusive and highly mobile packs, but if fortune does smile upon us it will be an undoubted highlight of our safari!

Birdlife is equally diverse and we will be on the lookout for a wide variety of species including African Hawk-Eagle, Little Sparrowhawk, African Harrier Hawk, Shikra, Red-headed Weaver, Stierling's Wren-Warbler, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Rosy Longclaw, and Chin-spot Batis to name but a few.



The Xakanaxa area of Moremi will be our base for the next 4-nights of the safari. Our camp staff would have arrived several hours before us and will have our wilderness home fully erected by the time we arrive and a refreshing cup of tea ready to drink. We now have the afternoon of Day 5 and the following three full days to fully explore the varied habitats of Moremi Game Reserve on a series of early morning and late afternoon game drives (NB: As mentioned earlier, night drives are not permitted within the game park boundaries). Once again you will be awoken each morning

by the camp staff with warm water in your basin for a wash and coffee and tea in the nearby dining tent. Then as the sun starts to creep above the horizon, and to the rhythmic background cooing of a myriad Cape Turtle Doves, we will head out once more on a game drive to explore the Xakanaxa region and Paradise Pools.

Set aside as a reserve by the baTswana tribe in 1963, the Moremi Game Reserve is now considered to be one of Africa's finest wildlife sanctuaries. Covering nearly 5,000 square kilometres of the north-eastern portion of the Okavango Delta, its wide-ranging habitats include dry savannah woodland, Mopane forest, riparian woodland, floodplain, reedbeds and permanently flooded delta. The Xakanaxa region lies on the northern edge of the Moremi Game Reserve and gives easy access to a wide variety of different habitats and a wealth of game and other wildlife. The area is home to a resident herd of several hundred Cape Buffalo whose range covers the territories of at least 4 prides of Lion which are often seen flanking the ever moving herd. Breeding herds of Elephants move between their browsing areas in the Mopane woodland and the fresh water of the Okavango. Wild Dog are again a possibility, along with Leopard, Serval and African Wild Cat. Red Lechwe are common whilst the rare and shy Sitatunga skulks in the dense papyrus swamps. Although rare, the Pel's Fishing Owl can occasionally be found roosting in the giant Jackal Berry trees that overhang the water and your guides will try their best to track down this much-sought after, but elusive, species.



Day 9

In flight

This morning we must say a sad farewell to our camp staff and depart Xakanaxa after breakfast to begin our drive back to Maun. En-route we will pass through a wide variety of mammal habitat and so may well pick up a few last minute species we may have missed the previous days. In the early afternoon we will arrive back at Maun's small international airport to await the departure of our mid-afternoon Air Botswana flight to Johannesburg from where we connect with our mid-evening British Airways/South African Airways flight home.

Day 10

London

We will arrive back at London Heathrow around 0600 hours this morning.

Tour grading

A traditional African safari, travelling by vehicle with the occasional gentle walk. Grade A.

Weather

October and November marks the end of the dry season and very start of the rains (although the exact start of the showers varies from year to year and adds an attractive green wash to some of the drier regions we will be visiting). We can expect midday temperatures to be well over 30°C, but much cooler in the early morning and late afternoon when we will be enjoying most of our game viewing activities. You can expect mostly clear and dry weather, with the occasional short sharp shower. The nights and early mornings are also generally warm, but can be cool on occasion, however, so a fleece or light sweater would be useful. The weather in September is generally dry and sunny, with little chance of rain. We can expect midday temperatures to be in the low 30s degrees Centigrade (sometimes higher), but cooler in the early morning and late afternoon. Nights can also be cool on occasion.

December traditionally sits within Botswana's rainy or 'green' season, although the start and end of the rains is less predictable these days. Even though the heaviest rains tend to fall from January to March, you should expect some rain in December which is likely to come in the form of short, sharp afternoon showers, with warm sunshine in between. The tents used on this trip are fully waterproof, however, and any rain that does fall is unlikely to disrupt the itinerary or cause a problem to British clients used to British weather! The 'Green Season' is a lovely time to visit southern Africa. At a time the landscape is lush and green, the animals are well fed and having their young and the birding is at its best!

The rains have usually finished by April and the temperature is somewhat cooler than later in the year. You can expect dry and sunny weather at this season, although the occasional rain shower or thunderstorm is likely and should be packed for. Daytime temperatures will be in the 20s°C, reaching 30°C on occasion. The nights and early mornings can be cool, however, so a fleece or warm sweater is essential. The vegetation is lush and green in April and May and many of the game animals have small young. Please note that the thicker vegetation can make some of the more elusive animals a little trickier to see in this season.

Food & accommodation included in the price

All food and accommodation is included in the cost of the holiday. For this holiday we will be camping in a mobile wilderness safari camp. We use small camp sites for the camping element of the tour, normally set under the shade of trees and our group have exclusive use of each site. They are positioned well away from the tourist lodges allowing us the unique experience of camping in the true wild heart of the Africa with only the sounds of the African night to lull you to sleep!

The 'Meru' style tents measure approximately 3 metres by 4 metres with a high roof. They come equipped with camp beds, bedding, pillows and an en-suite 'bathroom' accessed through a zip door at the rear of the tent (with bucket shower and long-drop bush toilet). Showers can be ordered as hot, cold or warm and the water is heated in a bucket on the fire. Showers may be taken at any time but the guide holds the right to limit water use if necessary. The camping is 'fully-serviced' and you will not be expected to help with camp chores such as setting up tents, cooking and washing-up.



Your transport

We use open-sided 4-wheel drive safari vehicles for this holiday. They have a canopy to shade from the sun and are excellent for photography. Whilst there may be three people per row on occasion, the group will be rotated frequently and the open nature of the vehicles means everyone will have excellent visibility. In order to be fair to all participants, we regret that we are unable to guarantee a permanent front seat to those who might suffer from motion sickness or other concerns.



Extra expenses

Please note that we do not include the following in the cost of your holiday; any optional boat/Mokoro excursions, drinks, tips to local guides, locally payable airport taxes, lunches on Day 2 and Day 9 and all items of a personal nature such as souvenirs, telephone calls etc. UK citizens do not currently require a Visa to enter Botswana; other nationalities should check requirements with their local Botswana Embassy.

NB - The Botswana Park authorities are planning on increasing park fees in the near future but have not as yet announced by how much. Prices may therefore need to be tweaked slightly depending on what the final increase turns out to be.

Entry requirements

No vaccinations are mandatory, but several are strongly recommended and we suggest you visit your GP to discuss your travel plans as far in advance of the tour as possible to discuss this and malaria prophylactics which must be taken. There is no visa fee for UK citizens wishing to enter Botswana. Your passport must have at least six months validity left after the return travel date and at least 2 blank pages.

Tour itinerary

Whilst the majority of our 'Botswana's Desert and Delta' safaris operate with 3 nights in the Khwai Concession and 4 nights in the Moremi Game Reserve, from time to time - due to the availability of campsites - we run these tours with 4 nights in Khwai and 3 nights in Moremi. Even though this tweaking of the itinerary will in no way affect the wildlife content of the holiday, should you have any questions on this, or any other aspect of the holiday, please give the Naturetrek office a call on 01962 733051 or email us at info@naturetrek.co.uk

Your safety & security

Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/botswana or telephone 0870 6060290 prior to travel.

How to book your place

In order to book a place on this holiday, you will need to read the Naturetrek terms and conditions in the back of our brochure or on our website, and then book either online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, by calling us on 01962 733051, or by completing and returning the booking form in the brochure together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you do not have a copy of this brochure, please call us on 01962 733051.

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