Botswana's Highlights

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London
Day 2/3	Livingstone and Victoria Falls
Day 4/6	Savuti, Chobe National Park
Day 7/9	Mababe Concession
Day 10/12	Xakanaxa. Moremi Game Reserve
Day 13	Depart Maun
Day 14	Arrive London



Departs
September & October

Dates and prices
Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code BWA05) or see the Naturetrek brochure.



Focus
Mammals, birds and other wildlife.

Grading
Grade A - mostly vehicle-based safaris with some gentle walks in the Mababe Concession.

Highlights

- Visit the Victoria Falls, one of the 'Seven Natural Wonders of the World'
- AM and PM game drives within Chobe National Park, Mababe Concession & Moremi Game Reserve
- Explore the Okavango Delta
- Enjoy a boat cruise on the Chobe River
- Nine nights fully serviced mobile camping in small exclusive camp sites
- Abundant mammals including Lion, Cheetah, Elephant, Southern Giraffe and Burchell's Zebra
- Sightings of Wild Dog likely!
- Colourful and abundant birdlife
- Expertly guided by local naturalist guides



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Introduction

A land-locked country straddling the Tropic of Capricorn, Botswana offers one of the last unspoilt wildernesses left in Africa. Within its huge game reserves and national parks, the largest herds in southern Africa roam free and wild, together with some of the continent's most spectacular and varied birdlife. Remarkably for an African country, Botswana has a tiny population: just over two million inhabitants occupy this nation that is the size of France and Germany combined! It is a dry land, the majority of the country comprising the waterless Kalahari, yet the world's largest inland delta – the Okavango – transforms 15,000 square kilometres of this desert into a paradise of palms, papyrus and crystal clear waterways. The water that feeds the Delta is Botswana's lifeblood. Falling as rain on the Angolan highlands a thousand kilometres away, it takes up to six months to reach the Delta; a pulse of flood water that brings life-generating moisture during Botswana's long, dry winter season.

This tour starts amidst the wonderful scenery of Zambia's Victoria Falls, then continues with a 9-night mobile camping safari through Chobe National Park, Mababe Concession and Moremi Game Reserve, three of Northern Botswana's foremost wildlife reserves.

Itinerary

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 Heathrow this evening onboard a scheduled British Airways flight to Livingstone (via Johannesburg).

Day 2 – 3 Livingstone & Victoria Falls, Zambia

Following a change of aircraft in Johannesburg we will complete our journey to Livingstone, Zambia's gateway to the Victoria Falls, arriving early in the afternoon. Here we will be met and transferred to Waterberry Lodge, a small exclusive lodge set in the heart of the bush on the banks of the Zambezi River, approximately 30 minutes upstream from Livingstone.

Our time here will give us the opportunity to relax after the long flight and enjoy one of the world's great natural wonders, the Victoria Falls. In September and October the falls are not in flood, but there is still plenty of water thundering into the spectacular deep canyon that snakes its way downriver. Indeed, many people feel this is one of the better times to visit the Victoria Falls as, during the flood, the canyon and surroundings are so full of spray that the Falls themselves can be difficult to observe!

The small Victoria Falls National Park and the riverine forest that lines the Zambezi is also a great area for wildlife. Birds of the area include Rock Pratincole, African Finfoot, Tropical Boubou, Collared Palm Thrush, Brown Firefinch, Tawny Eagle, Mottled Spinetail, Trumpeter Hornbill and the beautiful Schalow's Lourie. A wide variety of mammals are also commonly spotted along the Zambezi including Elephants, Buffalo, Greater

Kudu, Warthog and many Hippos and Nile Crocodiles. Livingstone is also home to the small Mosi-o-tunya National Park, home to Zambia's only White Rhinos. Your time in Livingstone will include a trip to the Victoria Falls and a sunset cruise on the Zambezi, but you may also like to take advantage of the many optional excursions available such as flights over the Falls, white-water rafting on the Zambezi or a game drive into the aforementioned Mosi-o-tunya National Park. If you are interested in any of these trips (which are not included in the price of your tour) please contact us as soon as possible as it helps if we book them in advance of your holiday.

Day 4 Camping, Savuti, Chobe National Park

This morning our African adventure really begins! Following an early breakfast we will leave Livingstone around 0700 hours and drive a scenic rural road to the small border crossing of Kazungula, where we will cross the Zambezi River, enter Botswana and continue onto Kasane on the northern edge of the Chobe National Park. Before heading deep into the park to our campsite along the Savuti Channel, we will take the opportunity for a morning cruise along the Chobe River. Since the river is the only permanent water source in northern Chobe its banks are a magnet for the local wildlife during the dry season. Chobe is best known for its huge herds of Elephant numbering several hundred animals, and its Buffalo, which sometimes congregate in herds of a thousand or more in the height of the dry season. Other mammals to be found in the park include Botswana's only population of Puku, plus Lion, Cheetah, Leopard, Hippo, Southern Giraffe, Bushbuck, Blue Wildebeest, Impala, Spotted Hyenas, Roan and Sable Antelopes, Greater Kudu, Warthog, Chacma Baboons and many, many others!

Amongst a fabulous collection of birdlife we hope to see Long-toed and African Wattled Plovers, White-faced Whistling Ducks, African Fish Eagle, Pink-throated Longclaw, numerous species of heron and waterbirds, and perhaps Banded Snake-Eagle. Brilliantly plumaged Southern Carmine Bee-eaters seem to circle endlessly overhead, whilst Lilac-breasted Rollers adorn every lookout.

After lunch we will head through Chobe National Park to our first campsite along the dry Savuti Channel, a journey of around four to five hours. Much of the drive will be through wildlife rich Miombo and teak woodlands, dotted with open plains and dry river channels. Roan and Sable Antelopes favour these more wooded areas of the park as do Bushbuck and Southern Giraffe. Birds to look out for include African Paradise Flycatcher, Amethyst Sunbird, Violet-backed Starling, Red-necked Falcon and Lizard Buzzard.

Day 5 – 6 Camping, Savuti, Chobe National Park

We now have two full days to enjoy the mammals, birds and other wildlife of Chobe National Park. The Savuti is an impermanent waterway which holds water only every decade or so. Currently it is dry, but the game viewing here is still amongst the best in Botswana, many of animals drawn in by the nearby permanent waterholes which are kept topped up by the park authorities. Impala, Burchell's Zebra, Common Waterbuck, Greater Kudu, Buffalo and other mammals dot the open savannah, falling prey on a daily basis to prides of Lions, clans of Spotted Hyena and speedy Cheetah. A little more searching may reveal a pair of diminutive Steinbuck or perhaps a Bat-eared Fox whilst, for the very fortunate, there's always a chance of something much rarer such as Caracal or Serval. The water holes at Savuti were once the stage for one of the most epic battles on the African

continent; for it was here that – under the cover of darkness – Lions learnt to hunt, and bring down, Elephants (although, that particular pride now favour easier prey!).

Birds we are likely to see include Saddle-billed Stork, Dickinson's Kestrel, African Hawk-Eagle, Tawny Eagle, Kori Bustard, Red-crested Korhaan and Yellow-billed Hornbill to mention but a few. The feeling of being truly out in the wilds is enhanced once darkness falls and the roars of Lions, the yelps of African Wild Cats and the cries of owls reverberate around the camp. The Ratel or Honey Badger may also pay us a nocturnal visit in its search for food. During the daylight hours we will explore the stunning open savannah landscape with its attractive kopjes and stands of Miombo woodland, in search of the ceaseless bird and mammal activity along the Channel, in the Mababe Depression, and at the famous Savuti Marsh (dry at this time of year). Our four-wheel drive vehicles will follow trails winding between resplendent acacia trees and across dried up channels, discovering excitement at each and every turn!

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 1000 hours to 1100 hours for a delicious brunch. As the heat of the day kicks in you are free to relax, read a book or bird/mammal watch from camp, before typically heading out once more in the late afternoon for another game drive.

Day 7 – 9 Camping, Mababe Concession

Today we leave Chobe and enter the fringes of the great Okavango Delta. Our scenic journey of around three to five hours will take us across the Mababe Depression and then over the Magwikhwe Sandridge into the Mababe Concession, a huge expanse of protected wetlands, leadwood forests and open plains adjacent to – but just outside – the Moremi Game Reserve. On route, we will stop off for lunch and a siesta. Our wilderness camp for the next three nights is situated not far from the banks of the Khwai River in an excellent area for game and other wildlife. 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 will also explore the area on a series of game drives and (depending on the vegetation and advice of our guide) perhaps a couple of short walks. We will also, however, take a mokoro excursion, which offers the opportunity to explore the tranquil waterways of the Khwai River in a traditional canoe. The 'Ngashi' (long pole) is quiet through the water, allowing wildlife not to be frightened off.

The woodlands, marshes and plains of the Mababe Concession are open to Moremi Game Reserve and the animals wander freely between the two. The region boasts some of the best game viewing in the Okavango region, including huge bull Elephants as well as breeding herds. Lion, Leopard and African Wild Cat 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 Tsesebe, Blue Wildebeest, Burchell's Zebra, Common 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 Nile Crocodiles.

Mababe is an excellent area for the Okavango's abundant birdlife including Slaty Egret, Botswana's only endemic species, plus the rare Wattled Crane. The liquid song of the colourful White-browed Robin-chat dominates the

morning's birdsong, whilst the Mopane and Leadwood woodlands are home to Southern Black Tit, Bennett's Woodpecker and the occasional roosting African Scops 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, Bat-Hawk and Black Sparrowhawk. The nearby Khwai River is home to a wealth of waterbirds including Purple Gallinule, Lesser Jacana, African Spoonbill, Black Heron, Greater Painted Snipe and many many more.

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 not allowed in Botswana's game reserves and national parks. These open 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.

Day 10 – 12 Camping, Xakanaxa, Moremi Game Reserve

Leaving the Mababe Concession we move into the heart of the Moremi Game Reserve to an area known as Xakanaxa, a journey of around three to four hours with a lunch and siesta stop. Our camp team will dismantle our mobile safari camp for us and meet us 60 kilometres to the west. This transfer – as with all our camp to camp moves – 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, Tessebe, Reedbuck 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 African 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 Saddle-billed Stork, Slaty Egret, African Hawk-Eagle, Little Sparrowhawk, African Harrier Hawk, Shikra, Red-headed Weaver, Stierling's Wren-Warbler, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Luapula Cisticola and Coppery-tailed Coucal.

The Xakanaxa area of Moremi will be our base for our final three nights of the safari. We now have the afternoon of Day 10 and the following two full days to fully explore the varied habitats of Moremi Game Reserve on a series of early morning and late afternoon game drives (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 Ring-necked 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 baTwana 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 fringes 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 Buffalo whose range covers the territories of at least four 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. African Wild Dog are again a possibility, along with Leopard, Serval and African Wild Cat. Red Lechwe are common whilst shy Sitatunga skulk 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 very elusive, species.

Day 13 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 wildlife habitat and so frequent stops are likely to pick up a few last minute species we may have missed the previous days. Around midday we will arrive back at Maun's small international airport to await the departure of our mid-afternoon South African Airlink or Air Botswana flight to Johannesburg from where we connect with our mid-evening British Airways flight home.

Day 14 London

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

Tour grading

Grade A - Vehicle-based wildlife safaris with some gentle walking in the Mababe Concession (vegetation permitting). This is an easy holiday and therefore suitable for anyone with average level of fitness.

Extensions

Since this tour ends in Maun, the 'Gateway to the Okavango' we would recommend extending your holiday with a few nights in the heart of the Delta. A wide variety of small exclusive lodges are dotted around this natural wonder, all a 20 to 30 minute light aircraft flight away (Maximum luggage limit of 20kg, including hand luggage). Here you can explore the permanent waters of the Okavango and search for the animals and birds that favour these wetter areas such as Sitatunga and Pel's Fishing Owl. Extensions to other areas of Botswana can also be arranged on request. Please call the Naturetrek office on 01962 733051 for additional information and prices.

Weather

September and October lie in Botswana’s dry season, although the first showers of the rains typically starting later in October. We can expect midday temperatures to be into the high 30ºCs, but it will be 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.

Group size & transport



We will take a maximum of seven people on this tour. We use 4-wheel drive open-sided landcruisers for this holiday driven by your local naturalist guide.

The vehicles have a canopy to shade from the sun and are excellent for photography.

Food & accommodation included in the price

All food and accommodation is included in the cost of the holiday, except for lunches on Day 2 and Day 13. In Livingstone we use a comfortable small lodge on the banks of the Zambezi River, all rooms having ensuite facilities.

Following our first two nights in Livingstone we will then be camping for nine nights in small exclusive camp sites set under the shade of trees. They are positioned well away from the tourist lodges allowing us the unique experience of camping in the true wild heart of the African bush with only the sounds of the African night to lull you to sleep! The "Sahara" style tents are approximately three metres by four metres with a high roof, and will be equipped with camp beds, bedding, pillows and a small en-suite 'bathroom' accessed through a zip door at the rear of the tent (with bucket shower and long-drop bush toilet). The camping is 'fully-serviced' and you will not be expected to help with camp chores such as setting up and taking down tents, cooking and washing-up. All drinks (mineral water, soft drinks, beer and wine) are included during the 9-night camping safari.





NB - Single rooms for the 9-night mobile camping safari are available at the supplement price outlined on the Naturetrek website. Only two single rooms are usually available at Waterberry Lodge at the start of the tour. For further information please call 01962 733051.

Extra expenses

Please note that we do not include the following in the cost of your holiday;

- Additional activities whilst at Livingstone not included in the tour cost such as game drives in Mosi-o-tunya National Park or flights over the Falls.
- Tips for local guides (allow around £150).
- Drinks during your time in Livingstone (drinks are included during the 9-night camping safari).
- Locally payable airport taxes (not currently applicable but subject to change without notice)
- Lunches on Day 2 and Day 13.
- Entrance to the Victoria Falls National Park (currently US$30)
- All items of a personal nature such as souvenirs, telephone calls etc.

Guiding

The Naturetrek group will be met on arrival at Livingstone Airport and transferred to Waterberry Lodge for two nights. We will then be looked after by a local guide from the lodge who will escort us to the Victoria Falls and join us on the Zambezi sunset cruise. The naturalist safari guide for the 9-night mobile camping safari will meet us in Kasane and then stay with us until the holiday ends in Maun. This tour is not accompanied by a Naturetrek guide from the UK.

Entry requirements

No vaccinations are mandatory for entry into Zambia and Botswana, 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. UK citizens to do not currently require a Visa to enter Botswana and can obtain a free Visa to enter Zambia on arrival; other nationalities should check requirements with their local Botswana and Zambia Embassies. Your passport must have at least six months validity left after the return travel date and at least two blank pages for entry and exit stamps.

Your safety & security

You have chosen to travel to Zambia and Botswana. 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, Commonwealth and Development 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 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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