

Botswana's Wild Dogs

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	<u>Depart London.</u>
Day 2	<u>Maun.</u>
Day 3/5	<u>Mababe Concession.</u>
Day 6/8	<u>Moremi Game Reserve.</u>
Day 9	<u>Maun.</u>
Day 10	<u>Depart Maun.</u>
Day 11	<u>Arrive London.</u>



Departs

September.

Dates and prices

Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code BWA07).

Focus

African Wild Dogs, plus other mammals, birds & wildlife.

Grading

A traditional African safari – Grade A.



Highlights

- Explore the Okavango Delta, one of the world's greatest natural wonders!
- Search for Wild Dogs & other mammals within the Mababe Concession & Moremi Game Reserve
- Six nights fully serviced camping
- Night drives within the Mababe Concession
- Abundant mammals including Lion, Cheetah, Elephant, Southern Giraffe & Burchell's Zebra
- Colourful & abundant birdlife
- Led by Wild Dog researcher Ben Chapple & a local safari guide



From the top: African Wild Dogs, African Elephant & Lions



Naturetrek Mingledown Barn Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

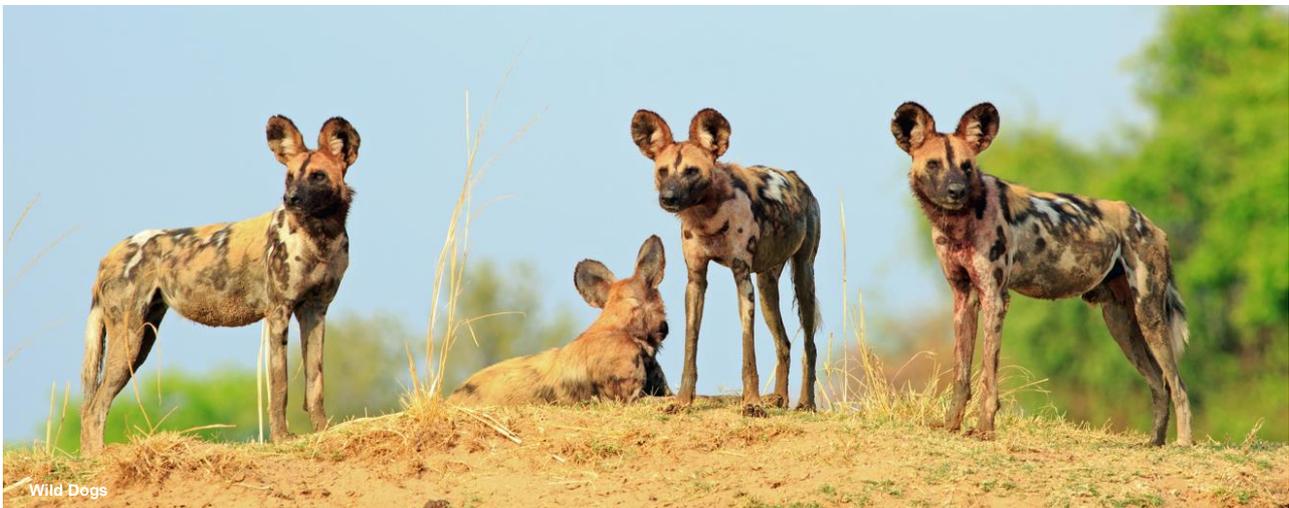
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Introduction

The African Wild Dog, or Painted Dog as it is also known, used to roam much of Sub-Saharan Africa from Egypt to South Africa's Cape. Today they are classified as 'Endangered' by the IUCN and their range has been reduced to a few scattered populations in the last remaining wild corners of the continent. There are thought to be less than 6,000 individuals left in the wild, making Wild Dogs the second most threatened large carnivore in Africa after the Ethiopian Wolf! Fortunately, however, Botswana still retains a healthy and stable population and on this new safari we will explore the fringes of the wonderful Okavango Delta in search of this iconic canid in the company of a Wild Dog researcher and conservationist

Following a night in Maun, the 'Gateway to the Okavango Delta' our time in the wilds of Botswana will be split between three nights under canvas in a comfortable, but simple, mobile tented camp in the Mababe Concession and the following three nights camping in the Moremi Game Reserve. Camping is a wonderful way to explore the bush, well away from all the tourist lodges, with only the sounds of the African night to lull you to sleep! The region we will be exploring is currently home to packs four packs of African Wild Dogs, and over the course of the week we will go in search of – and learn about – these iconic African hunters.

Mababe and Moremi are also home to an exciting supporting cast too and on our morning and afternoon safaris we will be looking for large herds of Buffalo (a favourite of the local Lions!), Elephants, Southern Giraffe, Burchell's Zebra, Hippo, Cheetah and much more. The birdlife is equally enthralling and includes Long-crested Eagle, Wattled Crane and Southern Carmine Bee-eater.



N.B. 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 direct British Airways scheduled evening service to Johannesburg.

Day 2

Maun

We will arrive in Johannesburg around 0700 hours and transfer late morning to a South African Airlink or Air Botswana flight to Maun, the gateway to the Okavango Delta. On arrival we will transfer the short distance to the Sedia Hotel for a 1-night stay.

After freshening up after the long journey, those who wish can join the Naturetrek tour leader on a birdwatching walk along through the gardens of the hotel and along the dry riverbed at the rear. Here we can enjoy our first Botswanan birds including Red-billed and Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills, Tawny Eagle, Yellow-billed Kite, Lilac-breasted Roller, Little Bee-eater, Arrow-marked Babbler, Fork-tailed Drongo, African Pied Wagtail, Burchell's Starling, Blue Waxbill and others.

Days 3 – 5

Mababe Concession

This morning we will drive north into the Mababe Concession, a huge expanse of protected wetlands, cathedral mopane woodlands, Kalahari scrub and grassland which lies between Chobe National Park and the western limits of the Moremi Game Reserve. Mababe is a private – unfenced – reserve, with less visitors than neighbouring areas. Indeed, no more than 20 vehicles at a time are allowed within the whole concession! The journey from Maun to Mababe will take around five hours,



much of which will double up as our first game drive with lots of mammals and birds to be seen enroute. Our private wilderness camp is situated not far from the banks of the Manuchira Channel (also known as the Khwai River) in an excellent area for game and other wildlife. We will be based here for three nights and explore the area on a series of morning and afternoon game drives returning to camp for lunch and an afternoon 'siesta'.

The Mababe Concession boasts some of the best game viewing in the Okavango region, including huge bull Elephants as well as breeding herds. Lion, Leopard and African Wildcat are common predators with Cheetah a possibility too. A pack of Wild Dogs roam the reserve and we will be making a special effort to track them down during our time here. 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, 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, 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 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 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. River edges and open water are home to a 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 10.30am – 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.

We may also have the opportunity to explore the surrounding wilderness on foot to enjoy an up close and personal encounter with Botswana's flora and fauna. Please note, however, that this activity is subject to the height of the vegetation and your guide will determine the safety of walking during your stay.



Giant Eagle Owl

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 6 – 8

Moremi Game Reserve

Leaving Mababe we move south-west 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 later in the day at our second private camp site. 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 Manuchira River, 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 we will be travelling through the home ranges of another 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 and once again we will be keeping our eyes and ears open (and fingers crossed) for an encounter.

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-breasted Longclaw and Chin-spot Batis to name but a few.

The Moremi Game Reserve will be our base for the next three nights of our safari. Our camp staff would have arrived several hours before us and will have our wilderness home fully erected by the time we drive in and a refreshing cup of tea or coffee ready to drink. Once again, we will 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 and walks 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 palm-dotted bush.



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. Our camp offers easy access to a wide variety of different habitats and a wealth of game and other wildlife. Northern Moremi is home to a resident herd of several hundred

Cape 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. Wild Dog are, of course, high on our wish list, but Moremi is also home to a variety of other predators including Cheetah, Leopard, Serval and African Wild Cat. Red Lechwe are common in the wetter areas, whilst the rare and shy Sitatunga skulks in the dense papyrus swamps.

Although rare and tricky to find, the Pel's Fishing Owl can occasionally be found roosting in the giant Jackalberry trees that overhang the water and your guides will try their best to track down this much-sought after, but elusive, species.

We will also take to the water one morning in a traditional mokoro (local dugout canoes) for a two hour peaceful journey along the waterways of the Khwai River.



N.B. At some point during our tour we will be joined by a Wild Dog Researcher from Wild Entrust Africa who will give the group a talk on his/her work and on the conservation of this rare canid in Botswana. Naturetrek will be donating £125 per booking to Wild Entrust Africa to support their conservation work (see www.wildentrust.org).

Day 9

Maun

After a final game drive this morning, we must say a sad farewell to our camp staff and depart the Moremi Game Reserve for our drive back to Maun (a journey of around six hours). En-route we will pass through a wide variety of different wildlife habitats and so may well pick up a few last-minute species we may have missed the previous days. On arrival back into Maun we will overnight at the comfortable Sedia Hotel.

Day 10

Depart Maun

Around midday we will transfer back to 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 11

London

We are due to arrive back into London's Heathrow Airport around 0600 hours this morning.



Tour grading

Grade A - Easy. This is a traditional African safari where most wildlife viewing will be undertaken from the vehicle, although a 'walking safari' will be offered if conditions allow. Participants, however, still need to be of an average level of fitness to get the most out of this holiday and comfortable in the hot climate, able to climb in and out of the safari vehicle and happy to walk on sandy soils.

Guiding

Our 2026 and 2027 departures will be led from the UK by Naturetrek tour leader, and Wild Dog researcher, Ben Chapple, along with a local safari guide who will meet the group in Maun. For more information on Naturetrek tour leaders assigned to future tours please refer to our website (www.naturetrek.co.uk).

Weather

September and October sit within Botswana's dry season and so dry and sunny weather is expected with fair weather cloud bubbling up during the afternoon. Whilst we do not expect any rain, Southern Africa's climate is less predictable than it used to be and so a shower or two is not out of the question. We can expect midday temperatures to climb into the mid-30s°C (occasionally higher), but it will be cooler in the early morning and late afternoon when we will be enjoying most of our game viewing activities. The nights and early mornings can be cool on occasion, however, so a fleece or light sweater would be useful for early morning game drives. The temperature gets progressively hotter through September and October leading up to the rains in November.

Food & accommodation included in the price

All food and accommodation are included in the cost of the holiday, except for lunches and evening meals in Maun. For our nights in Maun we use a comfortable tourist hotel, each room having private facilities. For six nights of 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 'Sahara' style tents measure approximately four metres by three metres with a high roof. They come equipped with camp beds, bedding, pillows and an en-suite, two metres by three metres, 'bush bathroom' accessed through a zip door at the rear of the tent, with bucket shower and long-drop bush toilet (see photo above). 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.

Each tent also has an oil/paraffin lamp on the veranda and in the bathroom and within the tent itself, a LED rechargeable camp light is supplied along with a side table in the sleeping area and in the bathroom.

Your transport

We use open-sided 4-wheel drive safari vehicles for this holiday. They carry 7 passengers, have a canopy to shade from the sun and are excellent for photography. There will be no more than two people per row of seats. Although, the group will be rotated frequently, 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: drinks, tips, locally payable airport taxes, lunches and dinners on Day 2, Day 9 and Day 10 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.

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, Commonwealth & 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/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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