

Zambia, Botswana & Namibia – Victoria Falls to Etosha!

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London.
Day 2/3	Livingstone, Zambia
Day 4/5	Chobe National Park, Botswana.
Day 6	Katima Mulilo, Namibia.
Day 7	Okavango Panhandle.
Day 8/9	Mahango Game Park, Namibia.
Day 10	Kavangoland, Namibia.
Day 11/14	Etosha National Park, Namibia
Day 15	Waterberg Plateau, Namibia
Day 16	Depart Windhoek.
Day 17	Arrive London.

Departs

March.

Focus

Birds, plus mammals and other wildlife.

Grading

Grade A - This is a traditional safari-style holiday with wildlife viewing by vehicle, boat and on foot

Dates and Prices

Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code NAM01) or see the current Naturetrek brochure



From top: Crimson-breasted Shrike, African Elephant & Rufous-eared Warbler.



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NB. 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.

Introduction

Southern Africa is blessed with some of the continent's very finest national parks and landscapes. From the harsh Namib Desert to the lush green wetlands of Okavango Delta and the natural wonder of the Victoria Falls, this spectacular region is home to a diversity of wildlife to rival none, and some of the most breathtaking scenery in the world. By combining Zambia, Botswana and Namibia in this exciting holiday we can offer, not only the opportunity to visit three countries in one hit, but the chance to enjoy a range of birds, and other wildlife, that spans over 1,000 kilometres and which is as varied as the Schalow's Lourie of Zambia, the Pel's Fishing Owl of Botswana and the beautiful Blue Crane of Namibia. Likewise, by timing the holiday to run at the end of the green season, we will benefit from the influx of wintering birds that move south for the southern African summer and enjoy many of the nesting species resplendent in their breeding dress.

NB – This additional departure for 2019 (with a reversed itinerary) has been launched due to the popularity of this safari and the early filling of our original brochured tour. For additional information please call 01962 733051.

Day 1

In Flight

We depart London Heathrow this evening on a scheduled British Airways or South African Airways flight to Livingstone (via Johannesburg).

Days 2 & 3

Livingstone, Zambia

On arrival into Livingstone, the gateway to the Victoria Falls, we will transfer to a comfortable lodge on the banks of the Zambezi River for a 2-night stay. 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.

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, Peregrine, 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, Warthogs and many Hippos and Crocodiles. Livingstone is home to the small Mosi-o-tunya National Park, home to Zambia's only White Rhinos. Whilst Mosi-o-Tunya has a far less of a wild feel about it than Chobe or Etosha (each Rhino has its own armed guard and the park is fenced in), it is nevertheless another fabulous area for birds.

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 and white

water rafting on the Zambezi. 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 well in advance of your holiday.

Days 4 & 5

Chobe National Park, Botswana

This morning we will leave Zambia and enter Botswana at the Kazungula border crossing. From here we continue to Kasane, the gateway to Chobe National Park, for a 2-night stay at Chobe Safari Lodge.

Chobe is one of Africa's very finest wildlife reserves covering over 11,700 square kilometres of African bush with the Chobe River forming its northern boundary. It was declared a national park in 1968 and today is probably best known for the huge herds of Elephant and Buffalo which often congregate along the Chobe River in the dry season. In March these large congregations have broken up, but we are still sure to enjoy large numbers of mammals along the river, a focus for wildlife throughout the year. This includes Botswana's only population of Puku, plus Lion, Hippo, Impala, Southern Giraffe, Bushbuck, Common Waterbuck, Spotted Hyenas, Roan and Sable Antelopes, Greater Kudu, Warthog, Baboons and many, many others! We are also sure to benefit from the lack of other tourists, for whilst Chobe is a popular destination in the latter months of the year, especially considering its proximity to the Victoria Falls, in the 'green season' it is often pleasantly quiet.

Yet again birdlife in March is at its very best and amongst a fabulous collection of species to be found here we will search for Long-toed and Wattled Plovers, Three-banded Courser, White-faced Duck, Verreaux's Eagle Owl, flocks of vultures, including the menacing Lappet-faced Vulture, African Fish Eagle, Lizard Buzzard, White-fronted Bee-eater, Southern Ground Hornbill, Greater Honeyguide, Grey-headed Bushshrike, Rosy-throated Longclaw and chattering parties of Helmeted Guineafowl and Red-billed Francolin. Eagles such as Lesser Spotted, Tawny and Steppe seem to circle endlessly overhead whilst various bee-eaters, shrikes and rollers adorn every lookout. We will explore Chobe National Park by vehicle in the morning and then take to the water in the evening for a sunset boat cruise on the Chobe River (extra game drives are also available, but at an extra cost payable locally).

Day 6

Katima Mullilo, Namibia

This morning we travel to Namibia and enter the area known as the Caprivi Strip. Our accommodation tonight will be at Zambezi River Lodge, situated at the town of Katima Mullilo on the banks of the great Zambezi River. Set in natural surroundings on the banks of the Zambezi, the lodge features 42 comfortable ensuite rooms overlooking the Zambezi River or garden and pool area, with restaurant and bar facilities nearby.

Birds to look out for around Zambezi River Lodge include Dickinson's Kestrel, Western-banded Snake Eagle, African Cuckoo-hawk and Racket-tailed Roller, African Skimmer, Rock Pratincole, African Finfoot, Schalow's Turaco and Grey Go-Away Bird to name but a few.

Day 7

Okavango Panhandle

After breakfast we depart on our drive to along Namibia's Caprivi Strip to the narrow neck of the huge Okavango Delta. Here the meandering Okavango River is channelled along a narrow 15 kilometre geological fault, only once it leaves this confinement do the crystalline waters fan out to create Africa's finest inland delta.

Our long journey will take us through the Caprivi Game Park, a thin strip of wetlands, teak and copalwood woodlands and dunes (covering 5,715 square kilometres) sandwiched between Angola and Botswana. Whilst the Caprivi is home to 35 species of large mammal and numerous smaller mammals and birds, access is difficult, the roads are very bad and there are currently no lodges within the park boundaries. We are most likely, therefore, to be confined to wildlife viewing along the main sealed road (the 'Golden Highway') that bisects the park, but will make plenty of stops enroute.

Birds to look out for during our time in the Panhandle include Martial Eagle, Brown Snake Eagle, Wahlberg's Eagle, Bataleur and Tawny Eagle, Shikra, African Golden Oriole, Southern Carmine, Little and Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, African Pygmy Goose, Red Bishop, Golden Weaver, Rufous-crowned and Lilac-breasted Rollers, Red-billed, Yellow-billed and Bradfield's Hornbills, Magpie, Lesser Grey and Red-backed Shrikes, Red-crested Bustard, Yellow-billed Kite, Grey go-away Bird, Lesser-striped and Grey-rumped Swallows and the elusive Pel's Fishing Owl.

For the next three nights we will be based at Mahangu Safri Lodge

Days 8 & 9

Mahango Game Park, Namibia

In this area we have reached the KAZA region (Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area), the second largest nature conservation project in the world, encompassing five countries (Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Angola). The region aims to maintain natural wildlife corridors and is one of the most extensive and ambitious wildlife projects in the world. Sandwiched between the Botswana border and the Kavango River, the Mahango Game Park is a fascinating world of papyrus-lined channels, vast floodplains, dense riverine forests and tall teak woodlands. Covering over 244 square kilometres, the park is home to an incredibly diverse range of wildlife. Mammals are common and include Hippo, Elephant, Buffalo, Roan, Sable, Red Lechwe, Reedbuck, Bushbuck, Tsessebe, Blue Wildebeest, Impala and Gemsbok, although in common with Chobe some of these can be a little trickier to see during and just after the rains.

Birdlife is once again superb, however, with over 430 species recorded. During our time here we will be on the look out for Bradfield's Hornbill, Broad-billed Roller, Arrow-marked Babbler, Long-toed Plover, African Pygmy Goose, Grey-rumped Swallow, Brown Firefinch, Southern Carmine Bee-eater and perhaps even the localised Greater Swamp Warbler. Mahango also marks the western-most limit of several Okavango specialities including Wattled Crane, Lesser Jacana, Coppery-tailed Coucal and Black Coucal. We will also visit the nearby Popa Falls (more of a series of rapids than a waterfall) to look for Rock Pratincole, Yellow-breasted Apalis and Blue-grey Flycatcher.

On the last day at Mahangu they go into Shakawe for the boat excursion.

Day 10

Kavangoland, Namibia

This morning we must leave the Mahangu Game Park and head further west to the Namibian region of Kavangoland and the riverine wetlands and forests along the Okavango River. Here we will be based for one night at Kaisosi River Lodge, a small lodge located on the banks of the River.

Around Kaisosi River Lodge we will be on the lookout for birds such as Kurrichane Thrush, Senegal Coucal, White-browed Coucal, African Wood Owl, Marsh Owl, African Barred Owlet, African Rail, African Jacana, Black Crake, Greater Painted Snipe and African Snipe.

Days 11 – 14

Etosha National Park, Namibia

Next we move south out of the lush wetlands of the Caprivi and into the bush-covered flatlands of Etosha National Park. Etosha covers an area of 22,000 square kilometres and is undoubtedly one of the finest national parks in all of Africa. We will spend four nights in Etosha, split between two nights at a lodge located just outside the park's eastern boundary and two nights at either Halali or Okaukuejo Rest Camp situated within the park itself. The word 'Etosha' means "big white place", which refers to the great Etosha Pan which dominates the centre of the park. The pan is simply the floor of a large, shallow inland lake, one hundred kilometres long by eighty kilometres wide, which long ago dried up. From September to November large concentrations of game animals crowd the freshwater waterholes that dot the southern edge of the pan. This is a dry and hot time of year, however, when the park is at its busiest and most of the wintering birds have yet to arrive. During the January to March rains, the park is transformed into a lush green mix of bushland and open plains dotted with ponds and marshes. With a plentiful supply of fresh water most of the large concentrations of game have dispersed, but the birdlife is supplemented by thousands of birds moving in from further north and resident species moulting into their breeding dress. The wildlife of Etosha National Park is superb at any time of the year, and whilst some people favour the dry season, others choose to visit during or after the rains, the lush green landscape, greater diversity of birdlife and lack of other tourists more than compensating for the slight reduction in game-animal numbers.

Our days in the park will start as the sun just appears over the horizon and the gates of the lodge are pulled opened. We will then head out to explore the open pans, marshy ponds, grasslands and acacia covered plains in search of a wide variety of birds, mammals and other wildlife. Common sights include herds of Elephant, Southern Giraffe, Greater Kudu, Red Hartebeest, Blue Wildebeest, Gemsbok, Springbok, Black-faced Impala and Plains (Burchell's) Zebra. Smaller antelopes such as the Steenbok and Damaraland Dik-dik can be a little trickier to track down, and with a little luck we should find one or two of the park's Black Rhino and hopefully a pride of Lions, or an early morning encounter with a Spotted Hyena or Leopard. The first few hours of daylight are excellent for finding some of the more nocturnal mammals and we will be on the lookout for the appealing Bat-eared Fox and its slightly larger cousin the Cape Fox.

Birdlife during and after the rains is prolific with over 300 species recorded from the park. Cuckoos such as Black, Jacobin, Striped, Diderick, Klass's and African Grey arrive shortly after the first green shoots start to appear and many of the weavers and whydahs will be resplendent in their spectacular breeding plumage. Birds of prey are particularly numerous, and include Red-necked, Lanner and Pygmy Falcons, Gabar Goshawks, and a wide variety of eagles and vultures. Other birds of note include Double-banded Courser, Kori Bustard, the beautiful Blue Crane, White-faced Scops Owl, Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Black-faced, Bare-cheeked and Southern Pied Babblers, Violet Wood-hoopoe, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Chat Flycatcher, Pirit Batis, Black-cheeked and Violet-eared Waxbills, Rufous-eared Warbler, Barred Wren-warbler, Pink-billed Lark and Cape Penduline Tit to name but a few.

Late in the morning we will return back to the lodge for lunch and an afternoon 'siesta' before re-entering the park mid-afternoon for another game and birdwatching drive. In addition to the animals mentioned above we hope to see Black-backed Jackal, Yellow and Slender Mongoose, Warthog, Ground Squirrel and perhaps even a Cheetah stalking a Zebra through the grass. Additional birds may include Purple Roller, Acacia Pied Barbet, Cardinal Woodpecker, Groundscraper Thrush, Short-toed Rockthrush, Kalahari Scrub-robin, Burnt-necked Eremomela, White-crested Helmet Shrike and Great Sparrow.

All vehicles have to be back at the lodge by the time the sun has disappeared below the horizon, but with floodlit waterholes to hand there is no need to stop the wildlife viewing. The waterholes are at their busiest as at the end of the dry season with an almost continual procession of animals venturing down to drink. Even after the rains, however, a little patience is bound to pay off perhaps with a few Elephants or a pride of lions coming down to drink. Other nocturnal drinkers of Etosha can include Black Rhinoceros, Honey Badger and African Wildcat plus Rufous-cheeked and Fiery-necked Nightjars which fly in to hawk for insects around the floodlights.

Day 15

Waterberg Plateau, Namibia

We will break our journey to Windhoek, the capital of Namibia, with a night at the Waterberg Plateau Park. Rising almost 200 metres above the surrounding African bush, the Waterberg Plateau, with its dramatic brick-red sandstone formations and thick green vegetation forms an island of colour above the flat acacia covered plains. The park covers 405 square kilometres and was originally created in 1972 as a haven for rare and endangered species of the Caprivi region of Namibia such as Cape Buffalo, Sable and Roan Antelopes and Tsessebe.

These animals live on the very top of the plateau (and are near impossible to find in the thick vegetation) so we will concentrate our efforts on the bird and animal life inhabiting its forest covered slopes. En route to the park we should see Impala and maybe one or two Red Hartebeest or Greater Kudu. At the park itself baboons are a common sight as they wander around the lodge grounds or sit in the tree tops feeding on fruit. Birdlife is abundant and with over 200 species recorded in the park. These include Verreaux's Eagle, Cape Vulture, African Scops Owl, the endemic Hartlaub's Francolin, Bradfield's and Monteiro's Hornbill, Jacobin Cuckoo, White-tailed Shrike, Ruppell's Parrot, Rosy-faced Lovebird, Marico and White-bellied Sunbirds, Rockrunner, Black Eagle, Pied and Bare-cheeked Babblers, Plum-coloured Starling and Violet Woodhoopoe. We will spend our final night in Namibia in chalet accommodation.

Day 16

In Flight

We should have a couple of hours this morning to further explore the slopes of the Waterberg Plateau, before we begin the 4-hour drive back to Windhoek to connect with our South African Airways flight to Johannesburg to connect with our British Airways or South African Airways evening flight home.

Day 17

London

We are due to arrive back into London's Heathrow Airport early in the morning.

Grading

This wildlife tour does not involve any overnight trekking, but we will include walks where ever possible when not within national park boundaries. No great level of fitness is required.

Weather

We will be travelling at the end of the 'Green Season'. This does not mean, however, that you should expect a lot of rain, merely that there will be some rain from time to time, usually in the form of short, sharp, afternoon showers. This gives the land a less parched appearance, and the arrival of rain ensures a more attractive landing spot for the many birds that are drawn here from the north. You can still expect plenty of sunshine, however, with daytime temperatures in excess of 30°C.

Food & accommodation included in the price

All meals and accommodation in Namibia and Botswana are included in the price. Lunches and dinners whilst in Livingstone are excluded. The lodges and hotels we use on this tour are comfortable (not luxurious) and located in excellent locations for birds and other wildlife. All rooms have private facilities and single accommodation is available at the supplement cost outlined at the start of this itinerary. Many also have swimming pools and air-conditioning.

Please also note that the accommodation outlined above may, very occasionally, need to be amended. Replacement lodges and hotels will always be of the same standard as the ones outlined in the itinerary and will in no way affect your holiday. Should we have to implement any changes to the above we will notify you as soon as possible.

Extra expenses

The following items are not included in the cost of the holiday and must be paid by you locally: lunches and dinners in Livingstone, entrance fee into the Victoria Falls (approx. US\$20 per person) airport taxes (currently US\$25.00 from Livingstone; but subject to change), tips and all other expenses of an entirely personal nature, such as drinks, souvenirs etc. All locally paid expenses are subject to change without notice.

Entry requirements

We suggest you visit your GP to discuss your travel plans as far in advance of the tour as possible to discuss necessary vaccinations and malaria prophylactics which must be taken. Visas are not required for entry into either Namibia or Botswana, but a visa is required by UK passport holders wishing to enter Zambia. Your passport must have at least six months validity left after the return travel date.

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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