

Zambia – A Wildlife Photography Tour

Naturetrek Wildlife Photography Tour

Outline itinerary

Day 1 Depart London

Day 2 Arrive Lusaka, fly Mfuwe. Transfer Chikunto Safari Lodge

Day 3/8 Chikunto Safari Lodge

Day 9 Fly Lusaka

Day 10 Arrive London



Departs

June – November

Focus

Wildlife photography, primarily mammals but also birds and other natural history



Grading

Grade A/B – This is a traditional safari with a mix of vehicle game drives & optional walking safaris.

Dates and Prices

See www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code ZMB08)



Highlights:

- Abundant mammals including Leopard, Lion, Elephant, Thornicroft's Giraffe and Greater Kudu
- Private, fully open vehicles with plenty of space to work
- Fantastic birdlife
- Led by expert wildlife photographer

Images from top: Leopard, White-fronted Bee-eater, Chikunto Safari Lodge (courtesy of Shutterstock & Chikunto)



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Introduction

Zambia's South Luangwa National Park is the country's foremost wildlife reserve. We begin with a flights to Mfuwe, where we will enjoy our first safari drive on the transfer to our camp in the South Luangwa National Park for a 7-night stay at Chikunto Safari Lodge, which offers some outstanding game-viewing. The lodge is located an hour from the park's main gate and sits on the banks of the magnificent Luangwa River, surrounded by pristine mopane woodland, grassy plains and seasonal waterholes, and is far from the game drive routes that most other visitors use. The wildlife



African Lion

is right on your doorstep, and indeed often wanders through the camp itself! Pods of lazy Hippo wallow in the river, and South Luangwa is one the best places in Africa to see Leopards.

With our own private vehicle and a maximum group size of just 6 participants plus our expert photographer-leader, everyone is assured of plenty of room in which to work, and, just as importantly, plenty of time to benefit from the advice of our leader. Vehicles are fully open safari trucks with three tiered rows of seats, meaning everyone is assured of a "window" seat (though there isn't, of course, any glass!).

Photographer Leader

Our leader for this tour will be one of the professional wildlife photographers that we work with. Each has plenty of experience in both capturing stunning images as well as coaching others in how to get the best from their cameras and how to use post processing techniques. Once the leader is confirmed for a departure, you can find out who they are in the information below the tour departure date on our website and more about them on our website at <https://www.naturetrek.co.uk/about-us/tourleaders>

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

In Flight

We depart London Heathrow (or regional airport) on a mid-evening Emirates flight to Lusaka, changing in Dubai.

Day 2

Arrive Chikunto

We are due to arrive into Lusaka in the early afternoon, where we will connect to an onward Proflight flight to Mfuwe and the South Luangwa National Park. Our local guide from Chikunto Safari Lodge

will meet us on arrival, and take us on a game drive back to the lodge, which is set inside the heart of the National Park, on the banks of the Luangwa River.



if we are unable to connect to an onward flight the same afternoon we will instead overnight at a comfortable lodge on the outskirts of Lusaka, before returning to the airport and flying to Mfuwe the following morning.

South Luangwa National Park is 9,050 square miles of unspoilt wilderness that makes up one of Africa's finest national parks. Here, herds of Elephant, Plains (Crawshay's) Zebra, Thornicroft's Giraffe, Puku and Impala dot the open savannahs whilst Bushbuck, Grey Duiker, Vervet Monkeys and troops of Yellow Baboon may be found within the acacia scrub, or amongst the woodlands of Strangler Figs, Sausage Trees and Combretums. Hippos laze in the Luangwa River alongside huge Nile Crocodiles, whilst careful searching on the river banks may yield a family party of Greater Kudu, Common Waterbuck or perhaps a herd of African Buffalo. With such a large population of game, it is not surprising that the South Luangwa holds good numbers of predators such as Lion, Spotted Hyena, one of the world's highest densities of Leopard and several packs of rare Wild Dogs.

Birdlife is equally prolific here, and whilst our primary focus will be photographing the iconic mammal species, there will certainly be time to enjoy and photograph the likes of Saddlebill and Openbill Storks, Woodland Kingfisher, White-fronted Bee-eater, Paradise Whydahs and the Carmine Bee-eaters which arrive in great numbers to breed during the autumn months, starting from late August.



Days 3 - 7

Chikunto Safari Lodge

This morning we will enjoy our first full safari drive before returning to our lodge for brunch. We will have time to review this morning's images and perhaps spend a little time photographing on foot around the lodge grounds or using the hide by the waterhole.



Elephants crossing the river

Patience and timing are the key to successful wildlife photography, coupled with the ability to react when the moment arrives! We plan to spend less time traversing large distances and more time observing, gaining quality time with a range of subjects in differing lighting and scenic settings. Each day begins with an early wake-up call, before we head out to spend the entire morning in the field, maximising photographic opportunities as they present themselves. Once the heat of the day starts to kick in we will return to the lodge for brunch, after which you are free to relax, or enjoy some birdwatching or game-viewing from the camp which is set near the banks of the Luangwa River.



Pel's Fishing Owl

Your safari guides will then offer an afternoon game drive or walk, the former of which can be extended with a night safari (sunset is shortly after 1800 hours) which provides a great opportunity to see such nocturnal mammals as African Civet, Large-spotted Genet, South African Crested Porcupine, Southern Scrub Hare, White-tailed, Bushy-tailed and Slender Mongooses and Honey Badger.

Above all, such drives offer the best chance of seeing the elusive Leopard and perhaps a pride of hunting Lions or a clan of scavenging Spotted Hyena. Nocturnal birds include Mozambique and Pennant-winged Nightjars, Spotted and Giant Eagle Owls and, occasionally, the rare Pel's Fishing Owl.

We may also indulge in some astro-photography as the lack of light pollution will allow us a spectacular view of the night sky.

During our stay we will be presented with a wide range of conditions in which to shoot, and we will take our time each day. Our photographer-leader will be on hand to coach and advise as much as needed, whilst at the same time putting photographers into situations where they can challenge themselves and be encouraged to “see” a different image to the standard one. We will work on making decisions in-viewfinder, at speed and without spending too much time looking at the back of the camera. Whilst we can’t promise what we will find and what it will be doing, we will certainly make the most of any situation that presents itself! From context-shots, to intimate portraits to motion-blur and freezing action, we’ll be looking to test our full repertoire over the course of the trip. We will also find time to review the images taken each evening for those that wish to do so.



Day 8

Fly Lusaka

This morning, we will make our way back to Mfuwe. Depending on the timing of our flight, there may be time to make this a leisurely game drive with opportunities to stop along the way. On arrival in Mfuwe we connect to our onward Emirates flight, bound for Dubai.

Day 9

Arrive London

Following a change of aircraft in Dubai, we are due to arrive into London (or regional airport) early this afternoon.

Images courtesy of Shutterstock & Chikunto Safari Lodge

Tour grading

Grade A/B. This is a traditional safari-style holiday with a photography focus, that includes wildlife viewing by vehicle or on foot on regular morning and afternoon safaris. Game walks usually last two to three hours and cover several kilometres. Although the terrain is mostly flat, it is often sandy underfoot and by mid-morning it will get hot. Walks are optional and please note that all walking safaris are dependent on the height of the vegetation.

Focus

This is a specialist wildlife photography holiday, aimed at amateur photographers of all abilities. Whilst we will primarily focus on photography the iconic mammals of the South Luangwa, we will also spend time observing and photographing birds, other natural history and scenery too.

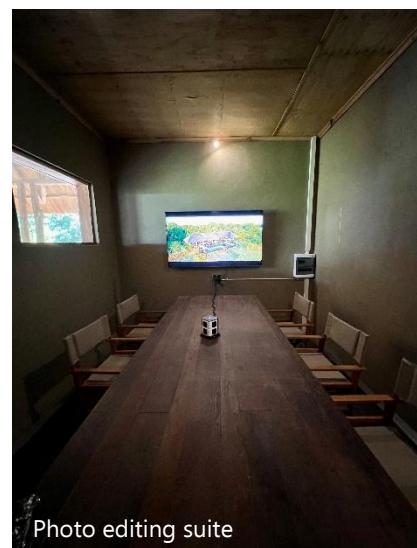
Food & accommodation included in the price

This safari includes all meals and accommodation, with the exception of any meals necessary in Lusaka. We will be based at Chikunto Safari Lodge, a stylish hybrid lodge/bush-camp that holds a maximum of 12 guests in five very comfortable and spacious tents situated on raised wooden platforms (see <https://www.chikunto.com/>). Each tent has an ensuite bathroom, wardrobe and both an indoor and outdoor seating area. One of the tents is connected by a wooden boardwalk to a raised stargazing platform out on which guests can sleep for the night under the stars (subject to availability and may incur a supplementary cost).



Delicious meals are served in the main communal area of the lodge and your stay includes breakfast, lunch, afternoon cake and a three-course dinner, as well as a selection of soft and alcoholic drinks (excluding premium brands). All game drives and walking safaris are also included.

Chikunto Safari Lodge is located within the South Luangwa National Park, around one hour from the main gate and sits upon the banks of the wide Luangwa River. Surrounded by pristine mopane woodland, grassy plains and seasonal waterholes, well away from the game drive routes that most other visitors use, this lodge offers a unique, luxurious and secluded safari experience. An air of relaxation and comfort can be found throughout, yet the feeling of being in the heart of the Zambian wilderness is not lost, with Elephants, giraffe and other animals regularly wandering past – or pausing to drink from the waterhole out front – and only the sounds of the African bush to lull you to sleep.



It also has a dedicated photo editing suite – ideal for checking images that have been taken during your stay, and a small hide by the water hole.

There are a maximum of 2 single occupancy rooms available for this tour. These will likely be in the family tent, which has two separate bedrooms, but a shared bathroom; there would be no additional supplement for these rooms. Single occupancy of a standard tent does carry a single room supplement.

Transport

Chikunto's own open-top four-wheel drive game viewing vehicles will be used for the safaris within the park (designed with stepped rows of seats – completely open and great for photography!). Please assist our tour leaders in ensuring that there is a rotation of seats around the tour vehicle(s) to allow each tour member to enjoy approximately equal time in the front. In order to be fair to all participants, we regret that we are unable to guarantee a perpetual front seat to those who might suffer from motion sickness or other concerns.

Weather

Zambia has a pleasant climate and three main seasons. Summer between September to April (temperature range from 26°C to 38°C); a dry winter from May to August (temperatures range from 15°C to 27°C but fall much lower in the early morning and evening); and a rainy season between mid-November and early-April, although showers are possible from October onwards.

In June to September we expect the weather to be dry and hot (on average between 26°C to 38°C, but even up to 40°C). The advantage of this heat is the higher concentration of game and more action!

Entry requirements for Zambia

British nationals visiting Zambia for less than 90 days do not need to purchase a visa in advance and can now obtain a free one on arrival into Lusaka.

Flights

The main group flights as far as Lusaka will most likely be with Emirates from Heathrow via Dubai. Please ask the Naturetrek office if you would like us to look into regional departure options.

Luggage restrictions

Please note that the internal Proflight Zambia flights between Lusaka and Mfuwe have a strict weight limit of 23kg of luggage per person plus 5kg hand baggage (we will send additional pre-departure information on how to cope with such a tight limit for all your camera equipment!). Extra hold luggage weight can be purchased: please refer to Proflight Zambia's website at www.proflight-zambia.com for additional information on baggage restrictions and the cost of purchasing any additional weight.

Extensions

There are no set extensions for this tour, however there are plenty of lodges around if you would like to spend longer in Zambia, or perhaps visit the Victoria Falls. There is also the option of visiting a neighbouring country, such as Malawi. Please contact the Naturetrek office if you would like to discuss possible options.

Your safety & security

You have chosen to travel to Zambia. 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/zambia prior to travel.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website.

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