



Wildlife and Water Northern Circuit

The Okavango River ends in a vast inland delta – a paradise of lush, seasonally flooded grasslands; tranquil lagoons, and palm studded islands. This is one of the richest and most diverse ecosystems in Africa, largely undisturbed by man, and the wildlife is simply outstanding. There is no better way to see the animals than to set up camp amongst them. And with a 4x4 vehicle and a rooftop tent you can.

This circuit will take you to four of the best wildlife sites in Botswana: The Moremi Game Reserve; the Makgadikgadi Pans; the Chobe National Park and the northern Okavango Delta. For 6 of the nights you will be in unfenced campsites where the wildlife can wander freely amongst the campers. The vehicle will be fully equipped for camping and some nights you will have to cook your own dinner over a fire. The roads inside the parks are generally 4x4 tracks, but your Toyota Hilux GD6 should handle these with ease. The circuit as described begins and ends at Maun. It would be equally easy to begin and end in either Kasane or Livingstone with only a minor adjustment to the price.





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Day 1: Maun

Time to collect your car from the airport. Maun is a tourist town, and an easy place to stock up for the journey ahead. There are supermarkets, ATMs, banks, bureau de change and cellphone shops. You will be travelling to places where buying even a box of matches will be difficult. So put some thought into the shopping list. Your campsite for tonight is only a few km from the international airport, and set in riverine forest with a view out over the Thamalakane River. If you think of anything more you need there will be a chance to get it in the morning.

Day 2-4: The Moremi Game Reserve 78 miles, 3 hours

You'll spend the next three days exploring the Moremi Game Reserve and the surrounding tribal concessions. The reserve isn't fenced and the animals recognize no boundaries, so the tribal concessions enjoy one important advantage. The National Park rules don't apply. You can get out of your car anywhere to take photos; and you don't have to be back in camp before sundown. In the photo below the reserve boundary is the middle of the river. On this side of the river you can get out of your car, set up a camera and tripod, and wait for the perfect photo opportunity. On the far side of the river you can do this only at designated 'stretch points'. So you need to experience both.

You have a 4x4 so you can do your own game drives. If you would prefer to spend time gliding silently along the narrow channels of the river system in a dugout canoe there will be opportunities to do this from one of the many boat stations in and around the reserve itself. The local BaYei tribesmen live by fishing, and grow up using these canoes (mokoro) as their main form of transport. Many are also part time tourist guides.

Day 5 Moremi – Gweta 202 miles, 5 hrs

Today you drive back to Maun and south east to Gweta. You will pass through Nxai Pan National Park. The elephants here have learned to open the valves on the water pipeline and create their own waterholes. Expect to see a variety of wildlife right alongside the A3 highway. The big attraction in Gweta is the opportunity to visit a troop of fully habituated and very lovable meerkats out on the edge of the giant Ntwetwe Pan, and this requires an early start in the morning

Day 6 Gweta – Elephant Sands 116 miles, 3 hrs

Early this morning you will be off to seek out the meerkats. Your guide will be in contact with a tracker who follows the meerkat troop every day. They are constantly on the move so difficult to find otherwise. If you sit quietly the meerkats will come right up to you.

From US\$ 4475 for a couple

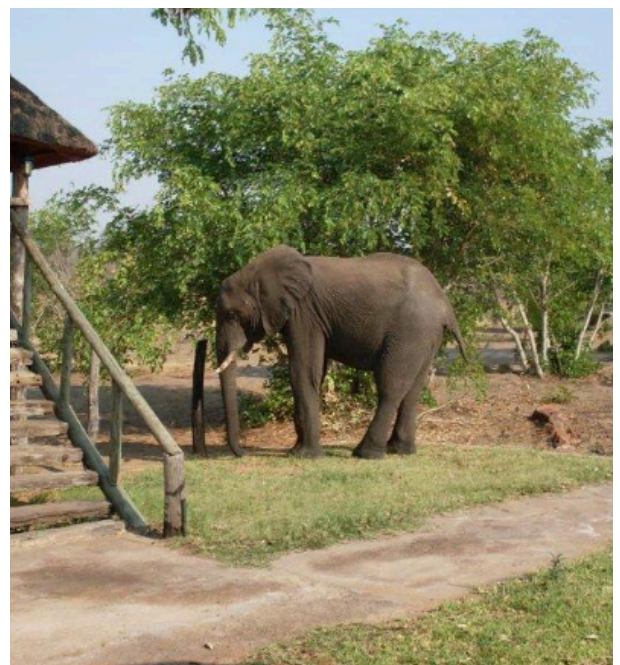
15 DAYS / 14 NIGHTS
4x4
CAMPING

WHATS INCLUDED

- A personal meet and greet service on arrival at Maun International Airport .
- Hire of a Toyota Hilux 4x4 or similar, fully equipped for camping for period of stay.
- 14 nights accommodation for two persons staying at designated campsites
- 'meet the meerkats' tour at Gweta
- A sunset river cruise on the Chobe River in a private boat
- Day trip to the Victoria Falls
- Day trip boating in the Okavango Delta
- Road maps of Botswana and Moremi Game Reserve
- A bespoke Self Drive Tours Botswana guidebook tailored to your route and interests

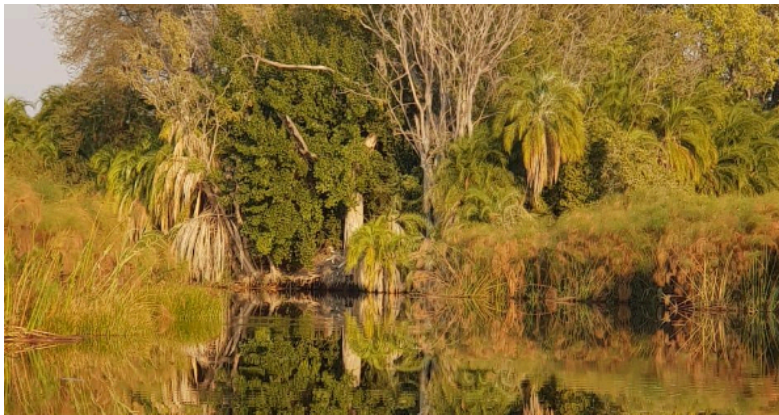
WHATS EXCLUDED

- National Park and reserve fees – you pay these at the gate as you enter. The cost depends on nationality.
- Scenic flight over the delta
- Mokoro ride
- Cross border fees and visas, which depend on nationality
- Side visit to Tsodilo Hills
- Personal vacation insurance. This is essential and cover should be in place from when you book your vacation
- Surcharges for pickup or return of the rental vehicle on a public holiday or a weekend
- Tips, gratuities and items of a personal nature
- Flights to and from Maun





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You will be back in Gweta late morning, giving time to make a visit to the Nata Bird Sanctuary. Depending on the time of year and water levels in the giant Sua Pan, the sanctuary is home to 70,000 flamingos. Wildlife such as springbok, zebra, wildebeest, and jackal will be here too. Accommodation tonight is at Elephant Sands, where you will be sharing the campsite with elephants. Dining at the restaurant here will give a riverside seat over the waterhole.

Day 7: Elephant Sands– Lesoma 145 miles, 3 hrs

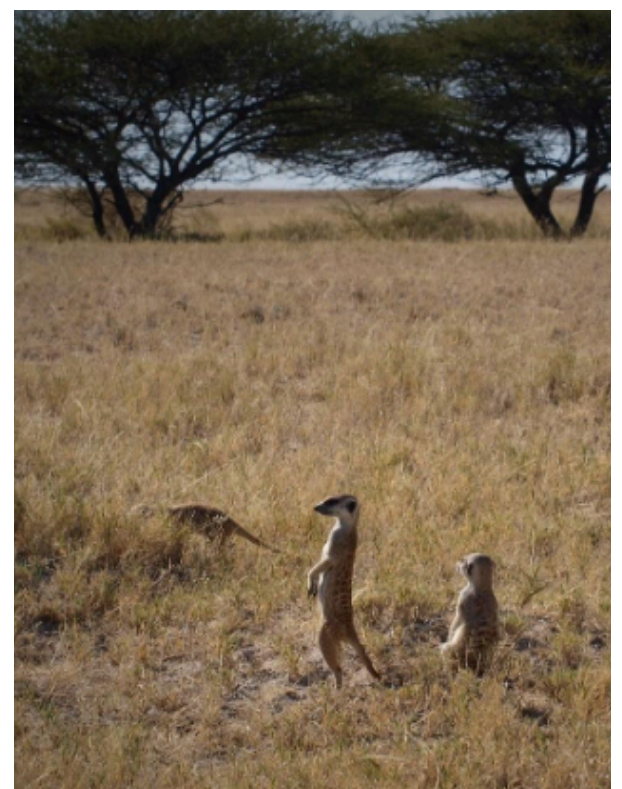
The journey north today passes through the broadacre agricultural fields of Pandamatenga with rich black cotton soils and elephant proof fencing. Before reaching Kasane you turn off to Lesoma, a small village on the Botswana border. There is a camp here where the restaurant and bar look directly out to Hwange National Park of Zimbabwe. The wildlife don't respect international borders and come and go as they please.

The waterhole in front of the bar is floodlit, and it is tempting to stay up late to see what comes along. Different species have their own preferred times to make an appearance. An underground hide will get you very close to all the animal action.

Days 8 & 9: Kasane 15 miles, ½ hr

The next two nights are based in Kasane where you will take a sunset cruise on the Chobe River, and a day trip to the Victoria Falls, in Zambia. The cruise is on a private boat, and the boat and guide are included in the price. Having just you and the guide aboard means you can linger as long as you like to get the photo you want without inconveniencing other passengers.

The Victoria Falls are only 55 miles from Kasane, and although you could drive yourself taking a vehicle through the Zambian border takes several hours. It's much easier to use one of the cross border shuttle services.





The shuttle will collect you from your accommodation in Kasane and deliver you to the gate of Zambia's Mosi-a-Tunya National Park; and pick you up again at the end of the day. You can explore the walking tracks of the park and see the falls from all angles. A shuttle is included in the price of this tour.

Park entrance fees for Chobe and Mosi-a-Tunya National Parks are additional.

Day 10: Kasane – Muchenje 50 miles, 1 ¼ hrs

Kasane is another tourist town and there is a lot on offer here.

Tours of a high tech aquaculture farm raising *Oreochromis andersonii*

- A wildlife rehabilitation centre where you can get up close to animals like African civet
- Fishing with a guide in the Chobe River
- Street markets selling the wares of four countries
- A boat trip to the point where the four countries meet
- A hot spring where elephants come to dig in the mineral enriched earth

So there are two options for the day. Explore some of what Kasane has to offer, and take the tarred road to Muchenje at the end of the day. Or take a drive on the wild side. You can drive the 4x4 tracks to Muchenje through the riverfront section of the Chobe National Park, and make a day of the journey. If you've not already seen lions and leopards in your travels this is a promising place to find them, and you may be able to spot the rare puku antelope. There is a nice picnic spot on a high terrace above the Chobe River at Serondela, so take the makings for lunch.

Day 11: Muchenje – Shakawe 264 miles, 6 hrs

An early start today will give you plenty of time to pass through the Caprivi Strip in Namibia, a narrow piece of land that borders Zambia, Angola and Botswana. Most of the journey is through Namibia's Babwata National Park, and the speed limit is 80 km/hr to protect the wildlife.

The Okavango Panhandle and the northern end of the Okavango Delta awaits you.

Day 12: Shakawe – Guma Lagoon 62 miles, 2 hrs

It's a short drive from Shakawe to Etsha 13 and out to Guma Lagoon. The stretch from Etsha 13 to Guma Lagoon is a sandy track, but the rest is on tarred road.

Along the way we suggest you take the long detour to Tsodilo Hills, a UNESCO World Heritage site preserving ancient San rock art. The National Museum provides guides to take you around some of the paintings, and you can climb the hills themselves for a panoramic view over the northern Kalahari Desert. Human occupation of these hills stretches back to the early stone age, and there is a small but fascinating museum here explaining the prehistory of the area.

Day 13: Guma Lagoon

There is a boat and guide waiting for you today, and they are included in the price. You just have to pay for the fuel used at the end of the day.

Spend the day exploring the Okavango waterways, swamps and lagoons. There will be swamp specialists here like water mongoose, otters, and sitatunga antelope that you probably won't see elsewhere in your journey. This is also one of the best spots in Botswana for both fishing and bird watching. Somewhere you could easily come for a week and just relax beside the tranquil waters, watching the hippos.

Day 14: Guma Lagoon – Maun 174 miles, 3.5 hrs

You will head back to Etsha 13 and travel back to Maun.

The numbered Etsha villages are home to the Hambukshu people who arrived in Botswana as refugees from Angola in the 1970's. Bringing nothing but their skills they have a unique style of basketry. Their baskets are real works of art, and there is a story behind each one of the intricate patterns. You can see more of the finished products at their shop in Gumare, and see how they are made by the Hambukshu ladies.

There may also be an opportunity to visit the famous Lake Ngami along the way: an amazing birdlife spectacle when it has water.

Day 15: Fly out

The Okavango Delta is flat, so a scenic flight is really the only way to appreciate the geography and the vast scale of the area. Flights are typically 45 minutes in length. Photographers can take a helicopter with the doors off to get some superb shots. Fixed wing planes cover more distance in the time available.

Most international flights leave Maun after lunch, leaving plenty of time for an early morning scenic flight over the Okavango Delta before you depart. This is not included in the price but can be added as an optional extra; or you can organise it for yourself, booking ahead when you reach Shakawe.

