

# Wildlife Photography in Botswana



With Thom Hogan and Tony Medici

Three options:

- April 7 to April 19, 2020 — Okavango Delta
- April 20 to April 29, 2020 — Kalahari Desert
- April 20 to May 4, 2020 — Kalahari Desert + Okavango extension

Or you could combine the first two trips:

- April 7 to April 29, 2020 — Okavango Delta plus Kalahari Desert

**Wilderness Travel • 1102 Ninth Street • Berkeley, CA 94710 • 800-368-2794**

### ***Photography in Botswana***

Our destination on these primarily tent-based, photo-safari workshops is wildlife-related, with a hint of scenic. We're here to learn about and photograph African animals and birds in two classic, and very different, southern Africa environs: the Okavango Delta and the Kalahari Desert.

We've designed these trips for those who want to photograph in one or both of these phenomenal areas. The 2020 tour schedule has been put together so there are logical 13-day Okavango, 9-day Kalahari, and either 15-day or 22-day combination choices. This is the first time we've offered so much option and variety in Botswana.

These trips are designed, guided, and taught by photographer Thom Hogan, along with his teaching partner Anthony Medici. Our local guides and camp staff are ones Thom has worked with for 25 years and who know how to make your African photographic experience as good as it can be.

Each trip starts at a small lodge just outside Maun where we'll have presentations and some short one-on-one time with everyone making sure that they are handling their cameras and focus techniques correctly.

We hit the ground running. You'll literally be taking photos of animals within hours of getting off the plane. During our first "day" in Botswana (late afternoon, after dinner, next morning) our goal is to get you ready for all the challenges that come up in wildlife photography. We'll help you understand how to keep a stable platform in the vehicle as we drive around the lodge's fenced game farm facility, when and when not to use converters, how to select focus (and optimize it), how to best expose whether the animals are light or dark colored, and much more. We'll also get you thinking about how to capture the African environment in your photos; after all, if all you want is a close up photo of an exotic animal, you could just go to your local zoo.



There are no prerequisites for these trips, though we think that they will be of most interest to photographers who are already comfortable with their basic equipment and wish to get specialized education and experience in wildlife photography. That said, we welcome students at all skill levels on either trip, and with a low 6:1 maximum student to teacher ratio, everyone should get plenty of personal time with the instructors. We also have a very low 3:1 student to local guide ratio, meaning that you'll have plenty of help finding and identifying animals and their behaviors.

After completing our brief orientation and getting individual feedback on our techniques, we'll head immediately into either the Okavango Delta or Kalahari Desert regions and begin our primary pursuit: multiple daily wildlife safari sessions in differing terrains while seeking the widest possible variety of animals and birds. Most of our trip features accommodations in a very comfortable tent camp that we move with us as we sample the Botswana parks.



Because Botswana is so flat, so large, and for much of the year so hot, the river flowing into it never makes it to the sea. Instead, it pans out into a wet delta (Okavango) that eventually peters out into a dry desert (Kalahari). This unique environment is even more exciting because the delta's "floods" are seasonal, so the land itself is changing constantly.

Those constant changes in where water is available forces the animals to move as the water accessibility changes. Botswana protected much of the land we'll be traveling through with National Parks, so we'll be entering an ecosystem that is healthy, and, while not the site of the spectacular masses of animals you sometimes see in the Masai Mara or Serengeti during migration, it is still home to very large groups of the African mammals you came to see and photograph, including Africa's largest population of elephants.

If you haven't looked at Frans Lantings' book, *Okavango*, it's worthwhile to take a peek at it to get an idea for what to expect for that area. Frans captured the uniqueness of Botswana in a way that few have managed since, while traveling to many of the same places we will. Botswana may be one of the most scenic "flat" countries in the world, plus the animal population is healthy, easily found, and very diverse.

You can also look at the blogs from some of my previous workshops in Botswana to get an idea of what to expect. You'll find those blogs on these Web pages:

- [2010 Botswana Blog \(bythom.com/photographic-travel/africa/2010-botswana-photo-worksho/\)](http://bythom.com/photographic-travel/africa/2010-botswana-photo-worksho/)
- [2013 Botswana Blog \(bythom.com/photographic-travel/africa/2013-botswana-photo-worksho/\)](http://bythom.com/photographic-travel/africa/2013-botswana-photo-worksho/)
- [2016 Botswana Blog \(bythom.com/photographic-travel/africa/2016-botswana-blog-2/\)](http://bythom.com/photographic-travel/africa/2016-botswana-blog-2/)

(As you might note from the dates on those blogs, Thom tends to revisit an area with a workshop only once every two to four years. So if you're interested in coming to Botswana with Thom, don't delay on reserving your spot for these trips.)

Your primary goal on whichever option of the tour you sign up for should be to experience a truly wild and remote place, and to photograph wild animals and birds of all kinds on an intensely personal level. A key secondary goal that we begin emphasizing starting with the short workshop portion that begins the trip is to improve your photographic ability when faced with challenging scenery and elusive animals. You'll certainly come back from these trips with shots of exotic places and wild animals that you'll want to show off to your friends and colleagues.

In our last few trips we've been counting bird species. It's pretty typical that we see well over 150 different bird species in the areas we'll be visiting. So besides all the big and small mammals you're probably expecting to photograph, we'll bet that you take as many bird photos. Reptiles abound in Botswana, as well, and we'll try to photograph as many of those as we can, too. And then there are animals you might not expect to shoot, such as the honey badger.



Spouses are more than welcome on these trips. However it should be noted that this won't be a casual, relaxing vacation at a five-star resort with pool and room service (though we do have a couple days on each trip where that might seem the case). Spouses should expect to participate in multiple daily game drives that are focused on finding, observing, and photographing animals in their natural settings.

A photography group like ours can and will detour from time to time, spending long periods of time at one location when conditions are right. The vehicles we use on safari can and do get quite wet or dusty at times, and there will be days when the only way to get the accumulated dust and sand off is with a quick trip to the shower in your tent (yes, your tent has a bucket-based shower that is filled with hot water on demand). Still, the sensory rewards are high, and we try to make the living arrangements as comfortable and friendly as you'll ever find in such a remote place.

In both the delta and the desert we do stay at a high-end lodge for at least two nights in the middle of the trips, which you'll find to be a refreshing break from camp life.

The part of Botswana we travel covers a large physical area and access is mostly via poorly maintained, unpaved roads. Actually, some of the roads seem like nothing other than long mounds of sand placed between ubiquitous bushes. You need to be capable of handling as much as six hours a day of travel on winding, bumpy, dusty roads. Fortunately, there's usually something just outside the window that will divert your attention. Plus we stop a lot.

We typically place a maximum of four people per vehicle on these trips (and often only three), so everyone should have plenty of space for their equipment and the ability to shoot in any direction when necessary. (Thom or Tony usually sit in the front seat when they're in your vehicle, then we put one customer in the middle two seats, and two in the larger back area that has three seats. As you should guess from that statement, you'll have one of the instructors in your vehicle about half the time; at all times you'll have a local driver/guide in your vehicle.)

One final note: if you've been on a previous byThom tour in Botswana, you were almost certainly there in what is Botswana's winter (and dry) season.

This time around, we're targeting the time just after the wet season ends, which is sort of fall in Botswana. There's more visible vegetation during this period, and a lot of rainwater on the ground in temporary ponds and pans. The skies should be clear and blue (not hazy with blowing sand as they are later in the year). It's amazing how just a shift of a few months can make everything seem completely different in Botswana. It's a country that absolutely has "seasons" and cycles, and I encourage everyone to come back at different times because of that.

**Wilderness Travel** of Berkeley, CA has worked closely with Thom on more than a dozen highly successful international photographic workshops. They will once again coordinate all of the necessary local logistics for this Safari including, but not limited to, provision of vehicles, mobile camps, meal service, vetting guides and crews, as well as help each passenger with their pre-trip questions, reservations and payments. The limited spots on this workshop are not initially made available to Wilderness Travel's own general interest clientele, by the way, but are reserved for photographers from Thom Hogan's mailing list and Web site first. Be that as it may, these tours tend to fill up fast once posted on Thom's Web site.

## ***Detailed Itinerary***

No matter which option you pick, your trip will start and end in Maun, Botswana. Maun is served by two primary airlines, and only from Johannesburg: Air Botswana and South African Airways (aka South African Airlink). Almost certainly you'll fly from the US or your country of origin to Johannesburg, then catch a late morning flight to Maun.

We ***strongly*** encourage you to arrive a day or two early in Africa to rest up from the long flight from your point of origin and to enjoy at least one relaxing afternoon and evening in Johannesburg, South Africa, or perhaps Maun, Botswana. This not only allows you to start the workshop and tour rested, but also gives you a buffer in case you have flight delays.

Optional additional tours of other nearby exotic African destinations can be arranged by Wilderness Travel for the period prior to or after the trip, as well. One typical extension some add is to go to Victoria Falls, since it is close. But the options are quite diverse, and Wilderness Travel can help you make sense of them and even book many of them for you.

If you're coming into Africa from the US or Europe Thom suggests you overnight in Johannesburg. The reason for this is that when airline schedules get delayed—and that happens with some regularity when you head long distances to South Africa—it's impossible to make a later connection to Maun the same day. The only Johannesburg to Maun flights both leave late morning and arrive early afternoon. So if your flight from Europe was scheduled to arrive in Johannesburg at 7am but gets delayed, there's a chance you'll miss a same day flight to Maun.

Again, there are four options to the Botswana schedule that Thom is running in 2020 that you can sign up for. These four options share two basic start dates (April 7 and April 20).

So:

- If your trip starts on April 7<sup>th</sup>, we suggest you arrive in Johannesburg on April 6<sup>th</sup>, and fly to Maun on the 7<sup>th</sup>.
- If your trip starts on April 20<sup>th</sup>, we suggest you arrive in Johannesburg on April 19<sup>th</sup>, and fly to Maun on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

In both cases, if you'd like to arrive a bit earlier in Maun, we can arrange accommodations in Maun for you (and suggest that you use Wilderness Travel to do that, as they have constant communication with our Maun-based guiding company and facilities and can make sure you're in the right place at the right time).

The three basic trip options you can sign up for are:

- **(A)** April 7 to April 19, 2020 — Okavango Delta only
- **(B)** April 20 to April 29, 2020 — Kalahari Desert only
- **(C)** April 20 to May 4, 2020 — Kalahari Desert + Okavango extension

You could also sign up for A+B or even A+C if you wished to spend maximum time in Botswana.

So that you can see how they dovetail, I'm going to use "Start Option A", "End Option B" type of headers on the days where appropriate so you can see how the flow goes as we work through the daily itineraries.

---

## START OPTION A

---

### **Day 1 (April 7th) At Tree Lodge, Maun**

Upon arrival in Maun just after lunch, we are met by one of our local guides and transferred to Royal Tree Lodge, where our trip leaders will meet you. Royal Tree Lodge is a game farm and lodge where we'll hold a very short and intense skills workshop. We have our orientation and first skill meeting in the mid afternoon followed by a welcome dinner the first evening. After dinner there will also be short lectures by our Photographic Leader, Thom Hogan, and his teaching partner, Anthony Medici. This continues early the next morning. Overnight at Royal Tree Lodge...**D**

*Royal Tree Lodge is a permanent tented camp on the bank of the Thamalakane River. Each guest tent includes a full bath, and an outdoor shower area. Located just outside of Maun, the facility is in a large fenced area containing giraffe, zebra, springbok, ostrich, eland, gemsbok, and kudu. Walking trails take you through the game area. Royal Tree Lodge features a large central dining and deck area with bar and lounge, and has a pool should you feel the need to get wet. Wi-Fi is available in the main lodge area. If you come early, you might want to take an optional horseback safari. Portions of The Amazing Race and Taylor Swift music videos have been filmed at Royal Tree Lodge, by the way.*

### **Day 2 (April 8) Drive to Moremi Camp**

By mid-morning we'll have loaded up the vehicles and head off to the wilds, with our first destination a private camp deep in the Moremi reserve. Moremi is an excellent bird-photography and wild-animal area, as there are abundant, permanent water pools in this area, all of which have good vehicle access. No promises, but in past trips we've seen all the big cats (lion, leopard, cheetah) in Moremi, as well as incredible abundance of other animals. And as noted, birds aplenty.



We'll have a picnic lunch as we enter the park, then immediately get into "safari mode" for the rest of the afternoon. By the time we reach our camp around sunset, you'll have enjoyed plenty of animal encounters and arrive to your tent, which is already set up with an inviting warm shower ready for you. Overnight in our comfortable mobile tent camp...**BLD**

*Our Mobile Tent Camp* offers relaxing solitude and an authentic bush atmosphere that no safari lodge or permanent tented camp can offer. The camp crew, complete with our excellent chef, goes ahead in

a very large 4x4 supply truck and sets up the camp at each new site before our arrival, then takes camp down after we leave, always working towards minimal impact on the environment. We sleep in high-roofed canvas tents (two to a tent unless you've opted for one of the few single options), approximately 10 by 14 feet, furnished with beds, bedding, duvets, pillows, and a small bedside table. At each tent's rear door are separate warm-water shower and toilet areas, while at the front is a small covered veranda with two wooden chairs, a small table, and a washbasin. Solar-charged, battery-powered lights provide illumination inside at night. The entire tent is covered by an extended rainfly to provide protection from sun and rain. Each tent has a dedicated tent steward who can help you with anything you might need. Laundry service is available at most camp locations (except for women's undergarments, due to cultural reasons). Our camp also has a full outdoor kitchen and on-site chef, who'll create freshly prepared three-course meals for us. Wine, beer, and soft drinks are provided with meals. We have plenty of AC power available to us in camp, as each vehicle is supported with heavy duty batteries, multiple inverters, and a power strip.



*We really do camp under the stars.*

### **Day 3 and 4 (April 9th and 10th) Moremi Camp**

We spend two more full days exploring the Moremi and Xakanaxa area. With multiple vehicles, we tend to spread out at the beginning of each drive, maximizing our chances of finding where the most interesting animal activity in the area is. Each vehicle has radio contact with one another, so when we have an exceptional find, we often regroup there. We leave camp each morning around 6am and sunrise after a light breakfast, and then spend most of the morning on a safari drive, typically with a mid-morning "tea break." We arrive back at camp for lunch, and then have an hour or two around camp before we head back out after our afternoon tea break at 3pm. We then stay out until the park closes (7pm at this time of year). By the time we get back to camp it is usually dark. Overnight in our comfortable mobile tent camp...**BLD**



### **Day 5 (April 11) Boat Trip to Camp Okavango**

After a short final morning game drive in Moremi, we'll load onto two flat-bottomed boats for a trip into and up the Okavango Delta itself. Our destination is an area around Nxaragha Island, in particular a permanent tent camp with a recently remodeled main lodge and cabins: Camp Okavango. Instead of using Land Cruisers to explore, today we start using our boats and shore walks to find some of the more unique species of the area. You never quite know what you'll find in the weaving river channels, but crocodiles, monitor lizards, and lots of bird species are a given. Sometimes we find elephants and hippos in the channel, and it's quite possible you might see something more exotic than that. Along the way, we'll often stop at a heron rookery or perhaps a sunning crocodile.



As you might be able to tell from the photo, we'll stop and have a picnic lunch in or near the water somewhere as we work our way deeper into the Okavango.



After we get to Camp O (as the locals call it) we will likely get into makorros (canoe) and take a quiet ride through the reeds, which gives you yet another view of the delta. If we don't do the canoe ride when we arrive—depending upon what we find in the river channel itself, sometimes we arrive late—we'll arrange to do the next day. Overnight at Camp Okavango, a permanent luxury tent camp with a main lodge...**BLD**

*Camp Okavango is a luxury safari camp with twelve raised suite-style buildings for guest accommodations. There's a double shower and open-air viewing deck at each hut, and the huts are connected to the main lodge and lounge areas by raised walkways. There's a separate library, bar, and curio shop, as well as a swimming pool. The entire camp is powered by solar panels and batteries. Camp O is a bird-watching paradise, and one of the places we sometimes see the rare sitatunga, one of the rarest of antelopes in Botswana. Camp O has a computer connected to the Internet that you can use free of charge, but no Wi-Fi. If you're going to check email, make sure that you have browser-based access to it.*

### **Day 6 (April 12) Camp Okavango**

Once at Camp O, we're in the middle of the many channels and lagoons that comprise the actual delta area. This provides us a chance to see a different mix of animals and a very unique African environment. We'll have another full day of exploration by boat and foot in and around the area. Yes, on foot. We'll take the group to one of the nearby islands and take a walk to explore the area from the ground. Overnight at Camp Okavango...**BLD**



### **Day 7 (April 13) Fly to Savuti**

After breakfast we'll hop on private charter planes and fly directly from Camp O's airstrip over the delta to Savuti, part of the Chobe National park. While the flight is not long (less than an hour), we'll be relatively low to the ground while we're still over the delta area, enough so that we sometimes see and photograph lines of elephants or other herds in the waterways below us that we photograph. The flight will also give you more perspective on just how flat Botswana is, as well as how the water just meanders through that environment. You'll also get to see the change from the wetter portion of the delta to a much drier, more Serengeti-type open portion that comprises Savuti.



We'll be met at the air strip by our Land Cruisers and drivers and immediately embark on a short safari drive as we work our way to our camp. We'll lunch at our mobile tent camp, which will have magically reappeared in Savuti, and then resume our usual camp schedule (e.g. afternoon safari drive after tea at 3pm). Overnight in our comfortable mobile tent camp...**BLD**



**Days 8-9 (April 14th and 15th) Savuti** We continue our exploration of this part of the Delta with multiple daily excursions in our Land Cruisers. A few years ago, after decades of drought, the Savuti channel once again filled with water, which forced the animals to adapt to a new environment for the first time in years. But in 2015 the channel dried out again towards the end of winter. By 2017 the channel was dry again. This changing water situation has made the area a prime target for great wildlife shooting, as territories are constantly being carved out and fought over as the terrain and water access changes.

Located to the eastern side of the Delta, the Savuti is a completely different terrain than we've explored up to this point, with fewer trees and bushes and some of Botswana's few rocks (as well as Bushman paintings, which we'll also visit). Savuti has a wide variety of birds and game, which we explore by off-road vehicles with our usual twice-a-day safari drive schedule. But our real hope is to see the lions stalking the cape buffalo out in the open savannah.

Overnights in our mobile tent camp...**BLD each day**



### **Day 10 (April 16) Drive to Khwai River Camp**

This is a long, interesting, and challenging day. We'll break camp early and be on one long drive virtually the entire day, stopping for a picnic lunch probably about the time we transition between the two areas. In the morning we'll be doing our final game drive in Savuti, while in the mid-day we'll be driving down probably down the Mababe Depression back towards Moremi. This area is less visited than the Sand Ridge side, and often provides us with some animals sightings that are unique and have unique backgrounds.

Once we've made it to the Khwai area we'll be continue our safari drive, this time in another unique area where a constant river runs through the terrain. Where Moremi was at the edge of the Delta and has many wet areas, and while Savuti was at the edge of the desert and forest and mostly dry, Khwai is somewhat in between, as it straddles the Khwai River in a forested area at the edge of Moremi. Overnight in our comfortable moving tent camp, which will somehow have miraculously made the move faster than we did...**BLD**



### **Day 11 and 12 (April 17th and 18th) Khwai River Camp**

We continue with our exploration of the area with multiple daily safari rides. Our expert local guides will again help us find the right animals and help position us for the best shots. One unique aspect to Khwai is that we do some of our driving *after* sunset to see what the animals do at night. While challenging photographically, every now and again we encounter some unique species that most people never see. Overnight in our comfortable moving tent camp ...**BLD**



### **Day 13 (April 19th) Drive to Maun**

We drive back to Maun in the morning. Those of you completing your Option A trip will arrive at the airport in time for your early afternoon flight home, while any of you who elected to combine both the A and B options will be taken back to Royal Tree Lodge and have the afternoon (and next morning) to yourselves. The Lodge has walking trails, a small pool, and Wi-Fi access. **B (Option A)**  
**BLD (Option A+B)**

*Note:* if you take an early afternoon flight from Maun to Johannesburg on the 19th, that typically links up extremely well with the early evening flights from Johannesburg back home, also on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

---

*END OPTION A,  
START OPTION B and C.*

---



#### **Day 14 (April 20) Arrive Maun**

Those of you who opted for doing both the A and B trips are already in Maun and can partake of the many options at the lodge during the day, including the walking trails through the game farm—don't worry, there's no predators inside the fencing—and even (optional cost) horseback riding if you'd like.

Those of you just starting Option B or C will be met at the airport in the early afternoon and you'll be brought to the Royal Tree Lodge where we'll hold a very short and intense skills workshop for our newcomers. We have our orientation and first skill meeting in the mid-afternoon for this new group followed by a welcome dinner. After dinner there will also be short lectures by our Photographic Leader, Thom Hogan, and his teaching partner, Anthony Medici, and perhaps the continuing students will show what they've been up to so far. The workshop portion continues early the next morning....

**LD (option B), BLD (option A+B)**

#### **Day 15 (April 21) Drive to Nxai Pan**

After breakfast we'll head east to Nxai Pan National Park. The pan is at the edge of the Kalahari desert, and you might be surprised to discover that, yes, lions live in this environment, too. Your primary initial destination, though, will be a famous set of baobab trees adjacent to one of the larger open pans in the park. You'll be exploring this area much of the day, and those continuing on from the first option can expect to find some new animals you haven't seen before, including the onyx.

Toward the end of the day we'll probably visit a watering hole in the area at sunset, then proceed to, yes, you guessed it, our mobile tent camp. Overnight in your mobile tent camp ...**BLD**

### **Day 16 and 17 (April 22 and 23) Nxai Pan**

We start our usual two-a-day safari drive schedule, only this time it will be in and around this large and interesting pan area, with an emphasis on being at the few water holes at the right times, as animals all have to make their way there at one point or another during the day. We'll be on the lookout for the Kalahari lion, plus some new birds, and watch the interesting dance that goes on at water holes as predators and prey come to visit, sometimes together. Overnights in your mobile tent camp ...**BLD**



*During one of the dark nights in the pan, we intend to try to take pictures of baobabs with the Milky Way over them.*

### **Day 18 (April 24) Drive to Makgadikgadi Pans Game Reserve**

After breakfast we'll head off to the Makgadikgadi Pans Game Reserve and a permanent lodge at Leroo La Tau. This lodge is technically on the Boteti River, but the Boteti River is seasonal, or sometimes not at all. That's because it's the primary overflow from the Okavango Delta. In really wet years, the water pushes down the Boteti channel—much like we described earlier for the Savuti channel—and provides abundant water. From 1988 to 2009 the river never flowed, though. Then it did again after an exceptionally wet season. It's been seasonal ever since. Remember, we're in scrubland that transitions to desert here. What we'll find on arrival will always be a surprise because of the ever changing water situation.

However, Lerro La Tau translates to paw of the lion (tau is lion in Setswana, the local language). So yes, we'll continue looking for those beasts and their prey on our visit within the Makgadikgadi. Overnight at Lerro La Tau.

*Lerro La Tau consists of a dozen raised thatched chalets with bathrooms, plus a main lodge and dining area. All overlook the Boteti River if it is flowing. There's a swimming pool, plus a camp hide at the water, a fully stocked bar, and electricity is provided from a generator during the day. Lerro La Tau has a computer connected to the Internet that you can use free of charge, but no Wi-Fi...BLD*

### **Day 19 (Aug 25) Makgadikgadi Pans**

We return to our two-a-day safari drive schedule, only this time it will be in and around the Makgadikgadi Pans, with an emphasis again on being at water holes at the right times, as animals all have to make their way there at one point or another during the day. We'll again be on the lookout for the Kalahari lion, some new birds, and watch the interesting dance that goes on at the water holes as predators and prey come visit, sometimes together. Overnight in Lerro La Tau ...**BLD**

### **Day 20 (April 26) Drive to Deception Valley**

After breakfast we're back on the road, this time to the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, and in particular, a unique area called Deception Valley. The rainy season will have just ended, and the abundant grass and bush between wooded dunes should be alive with predators and prey, such as springbok and gemsbok. The area gets its name from the fact that its blueish clay can make the pan look as if it is a lake of water, even when it is bone dry. Still, as far into the dry region as we've come, expect to see plenty of wildlife. This will be our third pan area in the Kalahari region, and you'll find that they each have their own unique flavor. Toward the end of the day we'll proceed to, yes, you guessed it, our mobile tent camp, which will have been set up in our new location. Overnight in your mobile tent camp ...**BLD**

### **Day 21 and 22 (April 27 and 28) Deception Valley**

We return to the two-a-day safari drive schedule, only this time it will be in and around the Deception Valley Pan and the Letiahau River areas, with an emphasis on being around water at the right times, as animals all have to make their way there at one point or another during the day. It's possible our excursions will take us all the way into the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. Overnights in your mobile tent camp ...**BLD**

### **Day 23 (April 29) Maun or Camp Okavango**

For those finishing up Option B, they will catch a late morning flight back to Maun. Those of you completing your Option B trip will arrive at the airport in time for your early afternoon flight home. If you take an early afternoon flight from Maun to Johannesburg on the 29th, that typically links up extremely well with the early evening flights from Johannesburg back home, also on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

---

*END of OPTION B,  
continues for OPTION C.*

---

Those of you who elected Option C will also get on a private charter plane to fly all the way from the Kalahari into the middle of the Okavango Delta. Overnight at Camp Okavango.

After we get to Camp O (as the locals call it) we will likely get into mokoros (canoe) and take a quiet ride through the reeds, which gives you yet another view of the delta. If we don't do the canoe ride when we arrive, we'll arrange to do the next day. Overnight at Camp Okavango, a permanent luxury tent camp with a main lodge...**BLD**

#### **Day 24 (April 30) Camp Okavango**

Once at Camp O, we're in the middle of the many channels and lagoons that comprise the actual delta area, which provide us a chance to see a different mix of animals and a very unique African environment. We'll have another full day of exploration by boat and foot in and around the area. Yes, on foot. We'll take the group to one of the nearby islands and take a walk to explore the area from the ground. Overnight at Camp Okavango...**BLD**



#### **Day 25 (May 1) Boat to Moremi**

After breakfast we'll hop on a boat and explore and drift with the river channels back towards Moremi. You never quite know what you'll find in the weaving river channels, but crocodiles, monitor lizards, and lots of bird species are a given. Sometimes we find elephants and hippos in the channel, and it's quite possible you might see something more exotic than that. Along the way, we'll often stop at a heron rookery or perhaps a sunning crocodile. We'll have lunch in the river channel itself. Eventually, we'll reach Xaxanaka, where we'll be met by our Land Cruisers and drivers and immediately embark on a short safari drive as we work our way back to a new camp in Moremi. Overnight in our comfortable mobile tent camp...**BLD**



### **Day 26 and 27 (May 2nd and 3rd) Moremi Camp**

We spend two more full days exploring the Moremi and Xakanaxa area. We leave camp each morning just before sunrise and after a light breakfast, and then spend most of the morning on a safari drive, typically with a mid-morning “tea break.” We arrive back at camp for lunch, and then have an hour or two around camp before we head back out after an afternoon tea break at 3pm. We then stay out until the park closes (6:30pm). By the time we get back to camp it is usually getting dark. Overnight in our comfortable mobile tent camp...**BLD**

### **Day 28 (May 4th) Driven to Maun**

For those finishing up Option C, you will be driven to Maun in the morning in time to fly out on the early afternoon flights to Johannesburg. If you then take an early afternoon flight from Maun to Johannesburg on the 28th, that typically links up extremely well with the early evening flights from Johannesburg back home, also on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

---

*END of OPTION C*

---

### *The Option Pricing:*

- **Option A (Okavango only, April 7-19): US\$11,995 (minimum 9, maximum 12 students)** includes all lodging, food, and transportation as described above for an Okavango-centric tour of Moremi, Camp Okavango, Savuti, and Khwai. Additional costs: Park Entrance fees US\$190, Internal Flight fees US\$799. Starts at Maun April 7<sup>th</sup> and ends in Maun April 19<sup>th</sup>.
- **Option B (Kalahari only, April 20-29): US\$9,795 (minimum 9, maximum 12 students)** includes all lodging, food, and transportation as described above for a Kalahari-centric tour of Nxai Pan, Makgadikgadi Pan, and Deception Valley. Additional costs: Park Entrance fees US\$125, Internal Flight fees US\$799. Starts at Maun on April 20<sup>th</sup> and ends in Maun on April 29<sup>th</sup>.
- **Option C (Kalahari + Short Okavango April 20-May 4): US\$14,695 (minimum 9, maximum 12 students)** includes all lodging, food, and transportation as described above for a Kalahari-centric tour of Nxai Pan, Makgadikgadi Pan, and Deception Valley, that is followed by a short tour of Okavango that encompasses Camp Okavango and Moremi. Additional costs: Park Entrance fees US\$190, Internal Flight fees US\$1480. Starts at Maun on April 20<sup>th</sup> and ends in Maun on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

The bold-faced prices above include all instructor and guiding fees, plus all indicated food, lodging, and transportation during the tour (described in detail, above). We separate out the park entrance and internal flight costs as additional charges because unfortunately they are subject to change outside our control.

**To sign up for any option, contact Lisa Laferte at Wilderness Travel (800-368-2794, or 510-558-2488)**

Two additional costs you need to consider:

- *Single supplement.* If you wish to have single lodging instead of pairing up, the extra cost for that will be between US\$799 and US\$1590 depending upon the trip. We are extremely limited in our ability to offer single supplements (maximum two), so please inquire with Wilderness Travel as to availability and final price.
- *Tips.* The local trip leader and our Land Cruiser drivers and guides work hard to make your trip enjoyable and safe. Due to the nature of their work, they also only work portions of the year, and do so for long hours and doing difficult and multiple jobs. It is customary, but entirely at your option, to tip the driver/guides (US\$80 X 4), plus the camp crew (\$130 for entire crew). The photography instructor has asked that no tips be given to him—if you wish to express your pleasure with his efforts during the trip, he's asked that you make a small donation to a non-profit organization that benefits Africa and its residents.

#### *Payment Schedule*

\$600 at time of reservation

50% trip cost payment 150 days prior to departure

Balance of payment 75 days prior to departure

Cancellation schedule:

Up to 150 days prior to departure \$300

91- 149 days prior to departure 25% of trip cost  
61-90 days prior to departure 50% of trip cost  
60 days or less 100% of land cost

Rates are based on full group participation and no partial refunds will be given for unused trip arrangements for any reason whatsoever. We highly recommend that all clients purchase trip cancellation insurance (Wilderness Travel can provide suggestions).

What isn't included in the above is:

- Airfare to the starting and ending point (Maun, Botswana) from your home, and any airport taxes that might be associated with that
- Personal expenses (liquor or sodas, souvenirs, and laundry at Camp Okavango and Leroo La Tau)
- Trip insurance (highly recommended)

**There's a limit of twelve total customers on any leg of these trips. We're making things more flexible for students in offering options this time, but if we have people sign up for Options C, that means that there will be fewer openings available for Option B, and vice versa. So please don't hesitate to contact Wilderness Travel and sign up if you're interested in any of these options. If you delay, your preferred option may no longer be available.**

## Important Notes:

*Lodging.* Other than our tent camps, this is subject to change depending on availability; equal or better lodging may be substituted as needed.

*Meals.* We've indicated which meals are provided each day with a **B**, **L**, and **D** (Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner, respectively) at the end of each day's description. Some lunches will be sack or mobile lunches so that we can stay moving during the day. Breakfasts generally have both hot and cold options and are European style. Our in-camp lunches and dinners are full sit-downs that often turn out to be mini-gourmet opportunities (yes, our mobile camp chef is that good). Expect lots of meat and cheese, as that's the primary cuisine of the area, but **vegetarians and other food restrictions can be accommodated if we are made aware of them in advance**. Wines, beer, drinks, and sodas other than water, coffee, and tea, are available, though sometimes at your own expense at the lodges we use.

*Laundry Service.* Due to our constant travel and remote locations, formal laundry service isn't available all the time; be sure to bring clothing that can be washed in camp. We'll have at least one laundry day at each tented camp location at no charge, and usually two. Your tent steward will pick it up in the morning and it will be back in your tent by the time we return from our afternoon game drive. Note that for cultural reasons, the staff will not wash women's underwear. A suggested packing list is in the Departure Notes you'll receive after reserving your spot on the trip.

*Electricity.* In these parts of Botswana, we'll normally **not** have full time availability of electricity while in our safari tent camps or the lodges. In camp, the normal method of dealing with this is twofold: (1) bring a roll-up solar panel you leave in camp during the day charging your spare batteries, or (2) run your chargers or supplemental battery off the vehicle's electrical system (this can be done while traveling or while the vehicles are parked in camp; we'll supply notes about this in our pre-trip emails). Our photo leader recommends the Brunton 14 solar panel and the appropriate accessories (the output connector of the Brunton is the same as the DC outlet in vehicles).

All the Land Cruisers we use have a 12V to 110V inverter and a power strip with US-style plugs. Most of this part of Africa uses European style or South African style electrical connections, so you'll also want to bring the appropriate adapters for those times when you do have access to AC at the lodges we use on the trip. The lodges we use often turn their generators off during sleeping hours, so don't leave things plugged in for charging overnight.

Overall, since we made the modifications to the Land Cruisers many years ago, we've not had any trouble keeping everyone's cameras and computers charged during our trips. But you will have to pay a little attention to *when* you're doing your charging. Overall, you should probably bring more (and fully charged) batteries than usual, just in case you can't immediately recharge at some point along the route.

*Cell and Internet Service:* Once we leave Maun, the outside world will fade away, which is a good thing, as we want you to concentrate on capturing superb animal images. The lodges we use all have at least one central computer connected to the Internet you can use when we're there, but service in the middle of nowhere is done via satellite, and it's slow. There is no Wi-Fi connection, you have to use their (Windows-based) computer and Web browser to connect, so plan accordingly.

We sometimes do get cell service when we're near a village, but you can't rely upon having anything near a constant connection.

We do, however, have ways to connect via radio to the phone system in Botswana in emergencies. If someone absolutely needs to get a message to you (or you to them), it will be done through our local vendor's offices in Maun via a radio relay.

We encourage you, however, to let this trip be a disconnection from the hectic phone/Internet world. Thom had a world famous concert pianist on one of his previous trips who marveled at how life was just so fresh and different and interesting without hearing music or having people constantly pinging you with messages.

*Weight.* Flights in some portions of or to Africa sometimes have very severe weight limits in place for checked baggage. Please make sure that you're within those weight limits or be prepared to pay a weight penalty on each flight. Unlike in the US, check-in agents tend to weigh all bags on flights to and from Africa. Also: paying for extra weight tends to take a great deal of time, so it can make you miss connections if you're not careful.

As long as your *carry-on* backpack fits in the overhead of an MD-80 or 737, you can usually load up the heavy photographic items in that on the flight to Maun from Johannesburg. Both Air Botswana and South African Airways tend to be reasonably accommodating of heavy backpacks on the Johannesburg-to-Maun flight *as long as the pack fits in the overhead*. However, really large and heavy photo backpacks (e.g. LowePro Photo Trekker or some of the ThinkTank roller bags) may have to be gate-checked by the airline. Make sure you have a lock for your photo backpack, just in case.

Thom tends to fly Air Botswana for one reason: if for some reason they really want to gate-check your backpack, the turbo prop plane Air Botswana uses actually has a cargo area just in front of the passenger area, and you can generally get them to not load your pack until last and to treat it gently. Tripods of the size we would be using can't be hand-carried onto planes in Africa. Note that weight limits won't be a problem for our internal private flights, as we've chartered the aircraft we use.

*Flights.* We start and end in Maun, The most logical place to fly from the United States (and most other countries) is to Johannesburg, South Africa. That means you'll need a short round trip from Johannesburg to Maun, which can be done on South African Airways or Air Botswana. Those flights land at mid-day in Maun, and leave in early afternoon. There are *no* other options to get to Maun conveniently, which is why Thom recommends that you overnight in Johannesburg the day before your Maun flight. At the end of the workshop, the Maun flights match up well against all European and US-based flights out of Johannesburg; you typically don't need an extra night at the end of the trip.

You'll be faced with a lot of choices of how to get to and from the workshop. You can fly to Europe and then down to Africa, for instance. Or you can use one of the two carriers that fly directly to Johannesburg, South Africa, from the US (Delta, plus United via a code-share with South African Airways). Delta flies from Atlanta to Johannesburg. United/SAA flies from either JFK or Washington Dulles to Johannesburg. Both flights tend to have a fuel stop in West Africa due to the length. If you need help figuring out how to get to Africa, ask Wilderness Travel. They are happy to discuss the possible options, though they no longer book airfares.

Make sure to send Wilderness Travel a copy of your flight itinerary so that they can both double check that the connections work and schedule the needed airport to hotel transfers you'll want.

## Photography Equipment

This trip provides us just about every photographic opportunity you'd ever encounter in the area. Wildlife, however, is our focus. Almost every other type of photography you can think of is also there to take if you look hard enough. Thus, you need to be prepared for almost anything. At a minimum you should consider bringing the following (all focal lengths are for full frame):

- \* *Wide-angle lens for any scenic work; often a compact or mirrorless camera is sufficient*
- \* *Mid-range zoom or compact camera for grab photography*
- \* *Telephoto that reaches to at least 400mm, preferably with VR/IS for wildlife*
- \* *Back-up body with 70-200mm on it*
- \* *Macro capability for small flowers and detail around camp*
- \* *Monopod, beanbags, or windowpods for the vehicle, perhaps a tripod for night work*
- \* *Filters: possibly a polarizer and ND for water work if you opt for an extension at Victoria Falls*
- \* *All-weather carrying system for your photo equipment*
- \* *Protective layers from dust (Thom sometimes travels between locations with my camera bag wrapped in a plastic garbage bag)*

The photo instructors will send a much more detailed discussion of an appropriate equipment list and carrying suggestions to each workshop participant prior to departure, but here's a quick summary of the camera/lenses Thom would typically bring:

- Two D850 bodies or two Z7 bodies
- 70-200mm f/2.8 and 400mm f/2.8 primary lenses, or possibly 300mm f/4 and 500mm f/5.6E PF with a short telephoto zoom of some sort
- A 19mm PC-E plus a fast wide angle lens for night shots
- An RX100 Mark VI for casual grab photography, or similar

Tony shoots more birds than Thom, so elects for a slightly different set:

- Two D850 bodies and a D5
- 200mm f/2 and 500mm f/5.6 primary lenses
- TC-14EIII
- Zeiss 18mm f/3.5, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8E, Nikon 70-300mm AF-P, Sigma 135mm f/1.8 and Nikon 300mm f/4E PF

Obviously, there are plenty of other choices, and Thom and Tony will send a series of emails to registered students prior to the trip to discuss these options. Indeed, new cameras and lenses that appear before the workshop may very well change Thom's choices, as he has to review those lenses in actual conditions, not just on test charts. Note that Thom got by with just a D7200 and an 80-400mm on one of his recent Africa trips (article at <http://www.dsrlrbodies.com/newsviews/shooting-with-just-a-d7200.html>), so don't feel like you have to spring for the biggest, fastest, heaviest lens you can find.

About photography from a vehicle: we use traditional Land Cruisers whose tops are open. We put a maximum of four photographers to a vehicle, including the instructors. Because we carry a lot of gear and extra stuff with us (every vehicle also has a refrigerator stocked with cold drinks), it isn't super spacious inside, but there's plenty enough room for everyone to spread out a bit and shoot, plus plenty of room for gear as long as you're not someone who wants to spread *everything* out (not recommended in the dirty/dusty African conditions anyway). Some tours put six or seven people in these vehicles. We restrict it to 4.

Oftentimes the best place to be is just sitting up top (obviously not while we're driving, but when we're stopped and shooting the animals). Beanbags work quite well on the edge of the roof, but probably the best shooting is done by standing on the seat or sitting on the roof and perhaps using a monopod. We've got windows you can shoot through that open if you want to get lower, but it's difficult for more than two people to shoot through the windows at a time in the back of the vehicle. If you're interested in what the vehicle looks like and what it looks like to shoot from it, you can see photos on the blog Thom did from one of his earlier trips.

### **Local Trip Leader**

Shane Hedges has been running mobile tented tours through Botswana for Wilderness Travel for quite some time now and is as knowledgeable as anyone you'll find in Africa about photographic opportunities. Shane sometimes does some shooting himself on these trips (he's a Nikon shooter like Thom and Tony), but his main goal is to make sure you have the best safari experience possible. Shane's dad Adam started the business decades ago, and Adam's dad had one of the earliest safari companies in Kenya. You're in good hands with this tour; decades of experience underlie the logistics we use. Shane is joined by three other great driver/guides with decades of safari experience and knowledge between them.

### **Photography Instructors**

Thom Hogan has been teaching photography since leaving *Backpacker* magazine in 2000, where he was the editor. Formally trained as a filmmaker, Thom taught film and television courses at Indiana University, and has developed coursework in many of the visual arts. While primarily known as a writer and instructor, Thom's imagery has appeared in a number of magazines, including *Backpacker*, *Outdoor Photography*, *Digital Foto*, and *Photographer's i*. "Botswana is in some ways better than the more traditional African safari locations in Kenya and Tanzania. You're less likely to find other vehicles in your framing, and the elephants are more easily approached." This will be Thom's ninth trip to Botswana, thirteenth to Africa. Thom's teaching partner, Anthony Medici, is a highly experienced wildlife shooter who specializes in birds. This will be Tony's eighth trip to the area.

### ***Wilderness Travel***

Wilderness Travel is one of the world's leading adventure travel companies, and is proud to have an exceptionally high rate of repeat travelers. They would be happy to put you directly in touch with a past client that has traveled with them to Botswana. The photo instructor is also proud of the quality of his workshops and instruction, and can put you in touch with someone that has taken previous workshops from him.

Once you have signed up on the trip, Wilderness Travel will send you Departure Notes that include a complete packing list, relevant medical information, required travel documents, and a reading list.

### **Health**

Full details are included in the Departure Notes. But malaria and several other medications are recommended by the CDC. We're traveling at a time of year when bugs and mosquitoes may be present. While we strongly encourage you to bring prophylactic malaria protection, you may find it is not needed when you're there. Follow all instructions from your doctor and ask our tour leader upon arrival in Botswana for advice on whether to continue taking your medication. Malaria is something that requires critical mass (in the host, in the carrier, and in the human population). Generally, the population density is so low in the areas we're visiting that it's unusual to see malaria there. But it is possible, so prepared is better than unprepared.

## **Climate and Weather**

The rainy season in Botswana is generally considered from December to March. By April the rainfall has tapered dramatically. In Maun, for example the average April monthly rainfall is about 22mm, which is less than an inch. The skies are generally clear and blue because the sands are still wet and the winds aren't blowing it around as they do in the winter months that come later.

Temperatures are likely going to range from 60°F to 90°F during the period of these trips. This is not as hot as it gets in Botswana, but it also means that nights don't get to freezing as they often do in July and August.

## **Top Reasons to Enroll in this Photo Workshop and Tour**

8. *We respect the environment when we travel.* As much as is possible, we try to reduce our impact on the places we visit. We practice Leave No Trace. We'll be eco-savvy on our hikes and explorations. We act in ways to make sure that the next photographer or adventurer to visit the area has the same opportunity you'll have.
7. *Great food, comfortable lodging.* You shouldn't have to worry about eating and sleeping (other than trying not to get too much of either!). And you won't. We've picked places that are among the finest you'll find in the region, and our tented camp is very comfortable. In other words, the accommodations live up to the scenery.
6. *Relaxed and informal.* No need to get dressed up or put on airs. Our tour is designed to be informal, relaxed, and as worry free as we can make it. We'll take the time to stop and smell—well, okay, shoot—the flowers.
5. *Logistically easy.* Seeing as many places in Botswana as we'll visit is logistically complex, but from the time you reach Maun to the end of your tour, you'll find that we've dealt with the complexities and made it easy for you to take in such a variety of experiences as these trips provide. Even our short plane trips are photographic opportunities.
4. *The staff is top-notch.* From start to finish, you'll be stewarded by the best leaders in the business, and by local staff that is knowledgeable, engaging, and interested in seeing that your trip is as good as it can be.
3. *Small group.* While 9 to 12 people doesn't at first sound like a small group, you'll feel like it is by the end of this trip, especially since most of the time we'll be in our tent camps to ourselves. You'll meet new people and make new friends.
2. *Serious photographic instruction.* Our photo instructor is well known for teaching throughout the trip. Both he and his assistant instructor are prepared to teach you how to approach and shoot the wildlife to produce photos your friends will long admire. They also spend time demonstrating Lightroom and Photoshop techniques along the way. And yes, we carry a projector with us and use it in the wilderness!
1. *Botswana is one of the most target-rich environments in the world for wildlife photographers.* Botswana has long had a record of conserving and protecting their wildlife, and it shows.

## **How Do You Enroll?**

Reserving your spot on this trip is simple: call Lisa Laferte at Wilderness Travel (800-368-2794 in the US, 510-558-2488 for International callers). She'll help you reserve your spot by putting the US\$600 reservation deposit on your credit card and sending you a trip application form to fill out and return.

This is a first-come, first-served operation. We expect these trips to completely fill up, so we urge you to not delay in reserving your spot.

Lisa can answer all your Africa and logistical questions, and help you with itinerary extensions if you're interested. Lisa manages the African trips for Wilderness Travel and has visited most of the places listed on the itinerary, thus she can speak to specific needs or requests, or just give you a better idea of the facilities, staff, and activities at any of the places we'll visit. If you have photographic concerns or questions, you can email them to the Photo Instructor at [thom\\_hogan@msn.com](mailto:thom_hogan@msn.com).

In addition to coordinating the services for this trip, Wilderness Travel of Berkeley, CA, will also handle the reservations for each of the students signing up for these workshops. You will be asked to fill out the standard Wilderness Travel trip application as well as sign a Release of Liability and Assumption of All Risks agreement. Please note that the payment and cancellation schedules for this trip differ slightly from Terms and Conditions listed in the Wilderness Travel annual catalog and Web site.

*Please be advised that California has established a Travel Consumer Restitution Fund under the California Seller of Travel Law, which took effect January 1, 1996. This fund is designed to protect consumers from unscrupulous practices by discount airfare ticket sellers or air charter operators. Unfortunately, this law does not cover non-California residents and, even in the case of California residents, it does not cover any foreign travel where the foreign "providers of transportation or travel services" are not in compliance with the Sellers of Travel Law (compliance being defined as registered as a Seller of Travel in California and a participant in the Travel Consumer Restitution Fund). Thus none of Wilderness Travel's tours qualify and we are required by law to advise each client that they are not covered by the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires sellers of travel to maintain a trust account or bond. This business has a trust account. California Seller of Travel #1007696-40.*

*While as accurate as possible at the time of printing, this itinerary should be considered an approximate indication of the schedule and scope of activities and trip routing, rather than an inflexible schedule of events; it is subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control. This trip is subject to the Limitation of Liability and all the terms and conditions as detailed in the General Information section of the Wilderness Travel catalog.*

*Revised: 1/30/2019 th*

*All images in this brochure were taken by trip instructor Tony Medici on similar trips.*