



Wilderness Travel

# Botswana Okavango Photo Workshop

July 1 to 13, 2025

With Thom Hogan, [bythom.com](http://bythom.com)



# Okavango Workshop

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The quintessential Botswana Wildlife Photography

Because Botswana is so flat, so large, and for much of the year so hot, the river flowing into the country never makes it to the sea. Instead, it fans out into a wet delta (the Okavango), which eventually peters out into a flat area via a marsh (Savuti), eventually ending with an occasional trickle into the Kalahari desert.

Your destination on this primarily tent-based photography safari workshop is completely wildlife-related, starting from your very first moments in Botswana.

You're here to learn about and photograph African animals and birds in the world-renowned Okavango Delta, a UNESCO World Heritage site. We'll explore the edges of the delta, as well as boat right into its heart.

We've designed this trip for anyone who wants to see and photograph lion, leopard, cheetah, wild dog, buffalo, elephant, giraffe, baboon, monkey,



warthog, wildebeest, zebra, any of almost two dozen antelope species, hippopotamus, crocodile, monitor lizards, and more. On our last running of this workshop, we also photographed an incredible 161 bird species in our two weeks.

This workshop is designed, guided, and taught by photographer Thom Hogan ([bythom.com](http://bythom.com)), along with his teaching assistant Tony Medici. Our local guides and camp staff are ones Thom has worked with for almost 25 years and who know how to make your African photographic experience exciting and exceptional.



Your trip starts at a small lodge just outside Maun where the instructors will have presentations and some short one-on-one time with everyone to make that they are handling their cameras and focus techniques correctly.

We've scheduled this trip for a special time of year: just as the wet season ends, and well before the primary tourist season begins. That means more green in the landscape (top), more blue in the sky (bottom), and at times it will feel like we're the only humans around.

From your arrival in Maun you'll hit the ground running. You'll be taking photos of animals within hours of getting off the plane. During your first "day" in Botswana—late afternoon, after dinner, next morning—the instructors' goal is to get you ready for all the challenges that come up in

wildlife photography, and to do this we stay at a private game farm stocked with animals.

The instructors will help you understand how to keep a stable platform in the vehicle as your driven around our lodge's fenced 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.

Thom and Tony will also get you thinking about how to capture this exotic African environment and experience in your photos; after all, if all you want is a close up photo of an animal, you could just go to your local zoo.

There are no photographic capability prerequisites for this trip, though we believe that it 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. Thom and Tony have decades of experience giving each workshop student exactly the level of help they require, from beginner to expert.



We welcome students at all skill levels on this trip, and with a low 4.5:1 maximum student to teacher ratio, everyone should get plenty of personal time with the instructors. We also maintain a 3:1 student to local driver/guide ratio, too, meaning that you'll have plenty of help finding and identifying animals and their behaviors.

All photos in this brochure were taken on earlier trips using this same itinerary.

## Day 1 (July 1) at Thamo Telele

Upon arrival in Maun in early afternoon, you'll be met by one of our local guides and transferred to Thamo Telele, where our trip leader and instructors will meet you. Thamo Telele is a game farm and lodge where we'll hold a very short and intense skills class. That evening you'll experience an African-style welcome dinner, followed by presentations on what to expect and how to be ready for that. **Overnight at Thamo Telele (L, D)**

*Thamo Telele is a permanent tented camp on the bank of the Thamalakane River. Each guest tent includes a full bath, outdoor shower, and electrical outlets. Wi-Fi is available in the main lodge area. Located just outside 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. The lodge features a large central dining and deck area, along with bar and lounge, and a pool is available should you feel the need to get wet. Portions of the Amazing Race and Taylor Swift music videos have been filmed at Thamo Telele.*

*Tip: If you arrive a day early at the lodge you can take an optional horseback safari, as well as try to find the animals yourself via the self-guided trail system.*

## Day 2 (July 2) Fly to Savuti

After an early breakfast you'll hop onto one of two small, private charter aircraft we use and fly from Maun to Savuti, part of the Chobe National park. The flight is about an hour, and we're generally low enough so that you can sometimes see and photograph elephants or other herds moving in the landscape.

You'll be met at the Savuti air strip by our Land Cruisers and driver/guides, and immediately embark on a short safari drive as we work our way to lunch at our mobile camp. After you have a chance to unpack and get organized, we'll have afternoon tea and then head out for the late afternoon safari. **Overnight in your comfortable mobile tent camp (B, L, D)**

*Your mobile tented camp offers relaxing solitude and an authentic bush atmosphere that no lodge or permanent camp can offer. Your camp crew and chef set up the camp the day before you arrive. You'll sleep in high-roofed tents with separate beds for two (can be combined into one), and an*



*attached, external bathroom with toilet and shower.*

*Solar-charged lighting is in the tent and provides illumination at night. Each tent has a dedicated tent steward who can help you with anything you might need, including providing laundry service (except for women's undergarments, due to cultural reasons). You'll be astounded at just how safe, quiet, and comfortable these tents are.*

*Your camp also has a full time kitchen and on-site chef, who'll create an amazing variety of freshly prepared three course meals for you, as well as bread, muffins, and deserts freshly baked in camp! Wine, beer, and soft drinks are provided free during the safari.*

*You'll have plenty of AC power available to charge your gear, as we've added heavy duty batteries, multiple inverters, and power strips to our vehicles. We can charge laptops, tablets, phones, cameras, you name it in camp, and we can even charge batteries for cameras in the vehicle while you're on safari. The camp itself is mostly run from solar panels that charge batteries for use when the sun goes down. We do not use gas generators, and we recycle all waste on this trip. Heck, we even use recyclable filler for your bean bags.*



## Day 3-4 (July 3-4) Savuti

We continue our exploration of this part of the Delta with multiple daily excursions in our Land Cruisers. This time of year, the grass in the savannah has been munched on, making it easy to see the animals in the marsh area. During this colder time of year there will be an abundance of prey feeding on the remaining vegetation, attracting plenty of active predators. In Savuti, we often see all three of the major cats because of this. **Overnight in your comfortable mobile tent camp (B, L, D)**

## Day 5 (July 5) Drive to Khwai

This is a long, interesting, and challenging day. You'll break camp early and be on one long safari drive the entire day, stopping for a picnic lunch about the time we transition between Savuti and Khwai. In the morning you'll be driving down the Mababe Depression on the backside of Savuti, which often has large giraffe

and elephant herds present. This area is traveled less than the Sand Ridge route on the other side, so often provides us with animal sightings and backgrounds that are unique.

Once in the Khwai Reserve, you'll continue your safari drive, but now in yet another unique environment of the Okavango Delta. Chances are you'll lose track of how many bird species you see on this very first day in Khwai. Here, the constant flow of the Khwai River wanders through the terrain, providing essential water to animals and birds that is more constant. Thus, this area is

always a hotbed of animal activity. **Overnight in your comfortable mobile tent camp**, which miraculously made the move faster than you did. **(B, L, D)**



The goal of this trip is to come back home with plenty of high quality images to show your friends, neighbors, and others. Along the way, to see nature in a unique

## Day 6-7 (July 6-7) Khwai

You're out early and will stay out late as you continue your exploration of the Khwai River area with multiple daily safaris. Your expert local driver/guides again help you find the right animals and position you for the best possible photos. One unique aspect to Khwai is that it has permanent water, and thus attracts pretty much all the animals and birds of the Okavango. While it can be challenging photographically due to the abundant water and grass, we often encounter something unique that you wouldn't otherwise capture in a

Moremi-only adventure. **Overnight in your comfortable mobile tent camp (B, L, D)**



## Day 8 (July 8) Moremi

Once again we'll load up the vehicles after breakfast and head off now deeper into the Okavango, with your destination our tent camp reset deep in the Moremi reserve. Moremi is a huge area, and another excellent bird-photography and wild-animal habitat. All along the edges of Moremi there are abundant water pools, all of which have good vehicle access.

Somewhere along the way to camp you'll once again stop for a picnic lunch, probably just as you enter the formal park boundaries. Last trip, our lunch was accompanied by elephants bathing and fighting in the small pond we stopped at. **Overnight in your comfortable mobile tented camp (B, L, D)**

## Day 9-10 (July 9-10) Moremi

You'll spend two more full days exploring the Moremi and Xakanaxa area. With three vehicles, we continue to spread out at the beginning of each safari 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.



In case it hasn't been clear yet: you leave our tented camps before sunrise each morning at 6am, and after a continental breakfast. You then spend most of the morning on a safari drive, typically with a mid-morning "tea break." You'll arrive back at camp for lunch, after which you have an hour or two before

you have an afternoon tea break and head back out for your late day safari. You'll stay out until the park closes (typically 6:30pm, just after sunset). **Overnight in your comfortable mobile tented camp (B, L, D)**

## Day 11 (July 11) Boat to Camp O

After a final morning game drive within the Moremi park, you'll board flat-bottomed boats for a trip deep into the Okavango Delta itself. Your destination is Camp Okavango





It isn't about the equipment you bring. It's about being in the right place, at the right time, with the right guides and instructors. Which is our goal in putting together and executing this trip for you.

--Thom Hogan, by Thom



northwest of Moremi. The boat trip to camp is through a series of weaving river channels, where you never quite know what you'll find. But crocodiles, hippos, monitor lizards, and lots of bird species are usually a given. Sometimes you'll find elephants in the channel, and it's quite possible you may see something more exciting than that, such as the rarely seen sitatunga. Along the way, you'll stop for a picnic lunch our camp chef packed for us.

### **Overnight in Camp Okavango (B, L, D)**

*Camp Okavango is a modern permanent camp, where each cabin has a flush toilet, double sinks, and the biggest (dual) indoor shower you've ever seen. Every cabin has a private veranda with lounge chairs and Wi-fi access to the Internet. The main area has a pool, bar, fire pit, and lounge.*

## Day 12 (July 12) Camp Okavango

You have a wide variety of activities to explore at Camp Okavango, including travel by both mokoro and flat-bottom boat, as well as a walking safari on one of the nearby

islands. You're in one of Botswana's most plentiful wildlife areas, so anything is possible. We'll take advantage of the knowledge of the local camp guides to maximize your time in the area. **Overnight in Camp Okavango (B, L, D)**



## Day 13 (July 13) Fly to Maun

It'll seem like you've been on safari forever, but you won't want it to end. We'll pack our bags and fly from Camp Okavango straight back to Maun airport, where those of you not enrolled in any trip extension will arrive at the Maun airport in time for your early afternoon flights home via Johannesburg. **(B)**

## Pricing

**US\$17,395** includes all lodging, food, and transportation as described above, as well as workshop fees for both photography instructors.

*Additional costs: Park Entrance fees US\$595*

*Internal Flight fees US\$850*

*Single Supplement (1 available): US\$3000*

We separate out the park entrance and internal flight costs as additional charges because unfortunately they are subject to change outside our control.

*Trip starts at Maun on July 1st and ends in Maun on July 13th.*

### Tipping

It is customary, but entirely at your discretion, to tip driver/guides as well as camp crew and chef. Clients regularly ask us to provide tipping guidelines that would suitably award the guides and camp staff for particularly outstanding service. Our suggested range of reference would be:

- \* For each driver/guide — US\$100-125
- \* For the entire camp crew and chef — US\$130-150
- \* Photo instructors ask that any tip for them be made instead to African charities

Total suggested tip range would thus be US\$430-525.

## Payment Schedule

US\$600 non-refundable deposit due at time of reservation.  
The balance is due 90 days prior to departure

### Cancellation Fee Schedule

- \* Up to 91 days prior to departure: first deposit, as above
- \* 90 days or less: 100% of land cost

Rates are based on 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. You can take advantage of a comprehensive plan designed for Wilderness Travel by Travelex, or purchase other insurance on your own. See: [www.wildernesstravel.com/insurance](http://www.wildernesstravel.com/insurance).

## Not Included

What isn't included in the above is: (1) Airfare to the starting and ending point (Maun, Botswana) from your home, and any airport taxes that might be associated with that. (2) Personal expenses (e.g. passports, visas, souvenirs at Camp Okavango). (3) Any required COVID or medical testing that Botswana might require (currently none). (4) Trip insurance (which we highly recommend). (5) Gratuities.

## Getting To and From the Workshop

We start and end in Maun, Botswana. You need to arrive at the Maun airport no later than 2pm on July 1st. At the end of the workshop we'll drop you off at the Maun airport in time for outgoing flights on July 13th.

The most logical way to get to Maun from the United States (and most other countries) is to fly first to Johannesburg, South Africa. That means you'll also need a round trip reservation from Johannesburg to Maun.

From the US, two carriers now fly directly to Africa and are preferred: United Airlines flies directly from Newark to Johannesburg, and from Washington DC to Capetown. Delta Airlines flies from Atlanta to both Johannesburg and Capetown. South African Airways should have resumed its flights from Washington DC and JFK, as well.

Flights from both Johannesburg or Capetown to Maun can be booked on Airlink (a United codeshare partner), and from Johannesburg to Maun on Air Botswana. At present, Airlink is using a larger Embraer 170 jet with bigger overhead bins, so this is the preferred choice for photographers. Given Airlink's codeshare partnership, it is possible to book the entire US/Maun roundtrip on United's site, though the [united.com](http://united.com) Web site is a bit inconsistent about providing this.

Our instructors generally recommend that you arrive a day earlier than the workshop in Maun (e.g. June 30th) and stay an extra night at Thamo Telele or another local lodge in Maun, which Wilderness Travel can arrange for you. This is because the long cross-Atlantic flights can get delayed or cancelled, particularly if you're having to connect with them from elsewhere in the US.

A typical, "safe" flight itinerary would be:

- \* Leave US on June 28th for overnight flight to Africa
- \* Arrive and Overnight in Johannesburg on June 29th
- \* Fly Johannesburg to Maun June 30th, overnight in Maun
- \* Meet at Thamo Telele on July 1st

Going home is easier: all the outbound Maun to Johannesburg flight options link up to the Johannesburg to US flights with just a modest layover in Johannesburg. We'll drop you off at the Maun airport on July 13th. Please book a flight leaving after 12pm (noon). Note that you'll arrive home on July 14th, as the homeward from Johannesburg flights are overnight flights.

Wilderness Travel can also provide some logical, guided extensions to this workshop if you want to maximize your time in Africa. These all link up with our return to Maun.

## Important Notes

**Lodging.** Other than our mobile 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-down meals 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, sodas, water, coffee, and tea are available and free in the tented camp, though some alcohol is charged for at Camp Okavango.

**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 underwear. A suggested packing list will be emailed to you about six months prior to 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.

All the Land Cruisers we use have a 12V to 220V 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 power off during sleeping hours, so don't leave things plugged in for charging overnight.

Overall, 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 seeing the sites and capturing superb animal images. The only Wi-Fi connection after you leave Maun will be in Camp Okavango, and cell service will be rare. We sometimes do get cell service when we're near a village, but you can't rely upon having anything near a constant connection, or that the village carrier supports roaming.

We do, however, have ways to connect via radio to the phone system in Botswana for 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 ping you with messages.

**Weight.** Flights in some portions of Africa often have severe weight limits in place for checked baggage. Please make sure that you're within the limits, or be prepared to pay a weight penalty on each such flight. Unlike in the US, check-in agents on scheduled airlines tend to carefully weigh all bags on flights within, and 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 a 737-sized aircraft, you can usually load it up with the heavy photographic items for your flight to Maun from Johannesburg. Both Air Botswana and Airlink tend to be accommodating of heavy backpacks on their Johannesburg-to-Maun flights *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 larger 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.

For our internal flights from Maun to Savuti and Camp Okavango to Maun we are chartering two aircraft and have no weight limits. However, we generally bring only one soft-sided duffel as our checked bag, so as to accommodate the tight cargo compartment in these planes. Your instructors will give you further information about this in emails prior to the trip.

## Trip Leaders

Our primary driver/guide is Shane Hedges. Shane has been running mobile tented tours through Botswana for Wilderness Travel for almost a decade, and is as knowledgeable as anyone you'll find in Africa about photographic opportunities.

Shane sometimes takes photos himself during this trip, but his main goal is to make sure you have the best safari experience possible.

Shane's father Adam started the business in the 1980's, and Adam's father was one of the original tented camp safari operators in Kenya. So we're now on a third generation using some of the top guides and camp providers in Africa.

Two other experienced local driver/guides with decades of safari experience will be joining Shane, and you'll find that each driver/guide has unique knowledge of the area and animals, and unique experiences to relate.

Thom Hogan has been teaching photograph workshops regularly 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 International magazines over the years. This will be Thom's 11th trip to Botswana and 15th to Africa.

Joining Thom on this trip will be Tony Medici, Thom's long-time teaching partner.

All three of our Land Cruisers will have an experienced driver/guide at the helm, and two of them will have either Thom or Tony in the other front seat. We'll rotate you so that you get equal experience with all the driver/guides and instructors.

While the back of these Land Cruisers are designed for five occupants, we put only three students in them so as to facilitate photography. You'll have plenty of room for both you and your equipment.

## Wilderness Travel

Wilderness Travel is one of the world's leading adventure travel companies, winner of many travel awards, and is renown for its exceptionally high rate of repeat travelers.

Wilderness Travel will be happy to put you directly in touch with a past client that has traveled with them to Botswana. The photo instructors are also proud of the quality of their workshops and can put you in touch with someone that was on a previous Botswana workshop.

Once you have signed up for the trip (see next page on how to do that), Wilderness Travel will send you Departure Notes that include a complete packing list, relevant medical information, required travel documents, and a reading list.

Our trip leaders will also send out emails 120 days and again at 30 days before the trip with lots of additional useful information.

*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: 12/17/23 (th)*

## How Do You Enroll?

Reserving your spot on this trip is simple: **call Lisa Laferte at Wilderness Travel (800-368-2794 in the US, or 510-558-2488 for International callers)**. She'll help you reserve your spot by putting the reservation deposit on your credit card. Lisa will also send you a trip application and a Release of Liability form, both of which must be filled out and returned to Wilderness Travel for you to participate in this safari.

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

Lisa can answer all your Africa and logistical questions, and help you with itinerary extensions throughout Africa if you're interested. Lisa manages African trips for Wilderness Travel and has visited the continent multiple times, 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. Lisa can also advise you and book you on optional extensions to Victoria Falls or other nearby southern Africa locations.

If you have photographic concerns or questions, you can email them to the photo workshop leader at [thom\\_hogan@msn.com](mailto:thom_hogan@msn.com).

Wilderness Travel will be both handling the reservations and coordinating the services for this workshop and safari. 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.