



Wilderness Travel  
by Thom  
Creative Photo Academy

**Okavango Photo Workshop**  
**May 3-15, 2026**





# Okavango Workshop

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The quintessential introduction to Botswana Wildlife Photography

*Instructors:* Thom Hogan and Mark Comon

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.

In this workshop, we'll traverse that flow in reverse, starting in the marsh and working our way back into the source.

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'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. In previous workshops in this area, we've seen as many as 161 bird species in our short visit.

This workshop is designed, guided, and taught by photographer Thom Hogan ([bythom.com](http://bythom.com)), along with Mark Comon (Creative Photo Academy). 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 as good as it gets.

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.

From the beginning, 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.

Your instructors will help you understand how to keep a stable platform in the vehicle as your driven around our initial 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.

Thom and Mark will also get you thinking about how to capture this exotic African environment and experience in your photos; after all, if all you



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 and more blue in the sky. At times it will feel like we're the only humans around.



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 Mark have decades of experience giving each workshop student exactly the level of help they require, from beginner to expert.



Thus 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.

## Day 1 (May 3) 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 workshop. 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, kudu., and more. 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 (May 4) Fly to Savuti

After 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 less than an hour.

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 you work our way to camp. You'll lunch at your mobile tented camp, where we'll start our daily safari schedule (e.g. afternoon tea at 3:30, safari by 4pm). **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), a small dresser/closet, and an enclosed bathroom with sink, 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 undergarments, due to cultural reasons). You'll be astounded at just how well equipped, 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 cooked in camp! Wine, beer, and soft drinks are provided free.*

*You'll have plenty of AC power available to charge your gear, as we've added extra heavy*





*duty batteries, multiple inverters, and a power strips to our vehicles. We can charge laptops, tablets, phones, cameras, and other devices 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 (May 5-6) Savuti

You continue our exploration of this part of the Delta with multiple daily excursions in our Land Cruisers. With three

vehicles, we 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.



You leave camp before sunrise each morning at 6am after a light breakfast. You then spend the morning on a safari drive (with a mid-morning "tea break" in the bush). You'll arrive back at camp for lunch and have an hour or two before the afternoon tea break after which you head

back out for your late day safari. You'll stay out until the park closes (typically 6:30pm, just after sunset). During those mid-day breaks, both Thom and Mark meet individually with two students each going over images and processing; we rotate the students that are worked with each day.

This time of year, the grass in the savannah can be high, which is both a good and bad thing for safari. Bad in the sense it makes sightings tougher to initially spot, but good because there will be an abundance of prey feeding on the plants, which in turn attracts the 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 (May 7) 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 you've made it into the Khwai Reserve, you'll continue your safari drive, but now in yet another unique environment of the Okavango Delta. 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. In our 2024 trip we even had an African wild cat visit our camp. **Overnight in your comfortable mobile tent camp**, which miraculously made the move faster than you did **(B, L, D)**

## Day 6-7 (May 8-9) Khwai

Our daily schedule picks up just as with Savuti: 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. While challenging photographically, every now and again we encounter something unique that you wouldn't otherwise capture while within the park boundaries. Mark and Thom continue working with individual students over the mid-day breaks. **Overnight in your comfortable mobile tent camp (B, L, D)**





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

## Day 8 (May 10) Drive to Moremi

Again we'll break camp early and be on safari all day as we make the drive crossing from the Khwai portion of the park to Moremi proper.



Moremi is another excellent bird-photography and wild-animal area, as there are abundant water pools here, 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 an incredible abundance of other animals. We'll have a picnic lunch midday, but be on safari the whole day. And once again our camp and your luggage will have miraculously appeared in a new location before we manage to arrive in the early evening. **Overnight in your comfortable mobile tented camp (B, L, D)**

## Day 9-10 (May 11-12) Moremi

You'll spend two more full days exploring the Moremi and Xakanaxa area using the same daily schedule as we did in Khwai and Savuti. **Overnight in your comfortable mobile tented camp (B, L, D)**

## Day 11 (May 13) Boat to Shinde

After a final morning game drive in Moremi, you'll board flat-bottomed boats for a trip into and up the Okavango Delta itself. Your destination is a lodge named Shinde north of Maun, well up the labyrinthian channels of the delta. We're now deep into the



wettest portion of the Okavango Delta. The lodge was rebuilt in 2020 and in a unique treehouse style. While your cabins will keep you well protected from the animals and insects, you'll experience a very close connection to the place. Your 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, especially this time of year, 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 another picnic lunch our camp chef packed for us. **Overnight in Shinde (B, L, D)**

*Shinde is a modern permanent camp, where each permanent tent has a flush toilet, double sinks, and both indoor and outdoor showers. Every cabin has a private veranda with lounge chairs and Wi-fi. The main area has a pool, bar, fire pit, and lounge.*



## Day 12 (May 14) Shinde

You have a wide variety of activities to explore at Shinde, including travel by both mokoro and flat-bottom boat, as well as a walking safari on one of the nearby islands. We even may explore a night drive while here. You're in one of Botswana's most plentiful wildlife areas, and anything is possible. We'll take advantage of the knowledge of the local camp guides to maximize your time in the area. **Overnight in Shinde (B, L, D)**

## Day 13 (May 15) Fly to Maun

This morning we'll have our last breakfast and activity together before loading into our Cessna Caravans for a return flight to Maun that arrives in time for flights home via Johannesburg **(B)**

Note that we've scheduled this trip so that it connects to our second workshop in Tuli Block, or with any number of Wilderness Travel extensions (e.g. Victoria Falls).

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 part of the world, up close and personal.

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, byThom

--Mark Comon, Creative Photo Academy



## Pricing

**US\$18,525** includes all lodging, food, and transportation as described above, as well as workshop fees for both photography instructors.

*Additional costs: Park Entrance fees US\$575  
Internal Flight fees US\$975  
Single Supplement (1 available): US\$2500*

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

*This trip starts at Maun on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and ends in Maun on May 15<sup>th</sup>.*

### 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\$1800 non-refundable deposit due at time of reservation.  
The balance is due 120 days prior to departure

### Cancellation Fee Schedule

- \* Up to 120 days prior to departure: first deposit, as above
- \* 120 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). (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 May 3<sup>rd</sup> where you'll be met. At the end of the workshop we'll drop you off at the Maun airport in time for outgoing flights on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

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 for short Johannesburg to Maun flight.

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 may 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. May 2<sup>nd</sup>) 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 April 30<sup>th</sup> for overnight flight to Africa
- \* Arrive and Overnight in Johannesburg on May 1<sup>st</sup>
- \* Fly Johannesburg to Maun May 2<sup>nd</sup>, overnight in Maun
- \* Meet at Thamo Telele on May 3<sup>rd</sup>

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 May 15<sup>th</sup>. Please book a flight leaving after 12pm (noon). Note that you'll arrive home on May 16<sup>th</sup>, as 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 sometimes 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 Shinde, and cell service while we're on safari will be rare. We sometimes do get cell service when we're near Khwai village, but you can't rely upon having anything near a constant connection, or that the village carrier supports roaming with your provider.

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 once 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 Shinde to Maun, we are chartering two aircraft and have no weight limits. 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 was born in Botswana and has been running mobile tented tours through Botswana for Wilderness Travel for over a decade. Shane is as knowledgeable as anyone you'll find in Africa about photographic opportunities and will regale you with plenty of Setswana stories.

Shane often 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. Thom is working on his third dozen worth of trips to Africa at this point.

Joining Thom on this trip will be Mark Comon, owner of Paul's Photo camera shop in the Los Angeles area, as well as the founder and leader at Creative Photo Academy. Mark is another highly experienced wildlife photographer with extensive Africa workshop experience. This will be Mark's third workshop in Botswana teaching with Thom.

All three of our Land Cruisers will have an experienced driver/guide at the helm, and two of them will have either Thom or Mark in the opposite 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 renowned 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: 7/7/24 (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.