



Okavango Workshop

August 31 to September 9, 2024

A short introduction to Botswana Wildlife Photography
with instructor Tony Medici

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). We'll be exploring the best portions of the delta on this introductory trip to the area.

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 lizard, and more. On our last running of a similar workshop, we photographed an incredible 161 bird species in just two weeks.

This workshop was designed by photographer Thom Hogan (bythom.com), and is taught by Tony Medici, Thom's long-time teaching assistant. The local guides and camp staff are ones we've worked with for almost 25 years and who know how to make your African photographic experience as good as it gets.

The trip begins at a small lodge just outside Maun where you'll get presentations and some short one-on-one time to make sure that you're handling your cameras and focus techniques correctly.

From the beginning, we 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—Tony's goal is to get you ready for all the challenges that come up in wildlife photography.

Tony will help you understand how to keep a stable platform in the vehicle as we drive around our lodge's fenced game farm facility; when and when not to use converters; how to select, control, and optimize focus; how to best expose whether the animals are light or dark colored; and much more.

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



This trip is scheduled at the end of the regular Botswana tourist season, but after the primary vacation time of the Europeans and Southern Africans. The timing is deep into Botswana "fall", and the dry conditions start making prey and predators more active as they seek water.

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 comfortable with their basic equipment and wish to get specialized education and experience in wildlife photography. Tony has over a decade experience giving every bythom workshop student exactly the level of help they require, from beginner to expert.



Thus students at all skill levels are welcome on this trip, and with a low 6:1 student to teacher ratio (and a 3:1 guide/ratio), everyone should get plenty of personal time with knowledgeable experts who can help them get great images of the Botswana wildlife.

Day 1 (August 31) at Thamo Telele

Upon arrival in Maun in the early afternoon, you'll be met by one of our local guides and transferred to Thamo Telele, where Tony will meet you. Thamo Telele is a game farm and lodge where Tony will hold a very short and intense skills workshop. That evening you'll join a 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 Telelee.

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 (September 1) Drive to Khwai

This is a long, interesting, and our most challenging day. We start early in the morning in Maun and will be on one long safari drive the entire day, stopping for a picnic lunch about the time we transition into Khwai. First, though, we have to leave the tarmac outside of Maun and travel through a couple of local villages.

Once we've made it into the Khwai Reserve, you'll be on a safari drive in one of the unique environments of the Okavango Delta. Here, the constant flow of the Khwai River wanders through a mixed terrain, providing essential water to animals and birds that is constant. Thus, this area is always a hotbed of animal activity.

Overnight in your comfortable mobile tent camp, which miraculously was set up while you were on safari drive. **(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 we arrived. You 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.

The tented 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 cooked fresh in our camp! Wine, beer, and soft drinks are provided free.

We have plenty of AC power available to charge our 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 we'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 (Sept 2-3) Khwai

You're out early and stay out late as you continue your exploration of the Khwai River area with multiple daily safaris. Our 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 is not bound by the National Park hours, so we'll take advantage of that to get out before sunrise and stay out after sunset.

While challenging photographically, every now and again we encounter something unique that you wouldn't otherwise capture while within the park boundaries. **Overnight in your comfortable mobile tent camp (B, L, D)**

Day 5 (Sept 4) drive to Moremi

When you leave camp in the morning, you'll be on a safari through Khwai into the adjacent Moremi Reserve, part of the Botswana National Park System. 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.

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

Chances are you'll lose track of how many bird species you see on very quickly on this safari.

Along the way to camp and just before you get to Moremi proper, you'll stop for a picnic lunch prepared by our camp chef. **Overnight in your comfortable mobile tented camp (B, L, D)**

Day 6 & 7 (Sept 5-6) Moremi



You'll spend two more full days exploring the Moremi and Xakanaxa area. With two vehicles, we spread out at the beginning of each drive, maximizing your chances of finding where the most interesting animal activity in the area is. Both vehicles have 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, and after a light 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. We stay out until the park closes (typically 6:30pm, just after sunset). **Overnight in your comfortable mobile tented camp (B, L, D)**

Day 8 (Sept 7) Boat to Camp O



After a final morning game drive in Moremi, you'll load onto a flat-bottomed boat for a trip into and up the Okavango Delta itself. Your destination is Camp Okavango, northwest of Moremi. The boat trip to camp is a water safari 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 the

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, AC power, and Wi-fi. The main area has a pool, bar, fire pit, and lounge.



Day 9 (Sept 8) Camp Okavango

You'll explore a wide variety of activities 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 our time in the area. **Overnight in Camp Okavango (B, L, D)**

Day 10 (Sept 9) Fly to Maun

After breakfast you'll hop onto a small, private charter plane and fly from Camp Okavango to back to Maun.

It'll seem like you've been on safari forever, but you won't want it to end. 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)**



The goal of this trip is to introduce you to Botswana's best-known feature, the Okavango, and to come back home with plenty of high quality images to impress your friends, neighbors, and others when you get home. Along the way, you'll see nature in a unique part of the world, up close and personal.

This particular trip is designed to be more intimate (fewer other passengers), and to provide the best possible introduction to Botswana wildlife photography without requiring a three-week vacation window. We also finish at a high-end permanent camp, which allows you to shower and pack for your return trip home a little more comfortably than in our longer trips. This trip is perfect for first-time Africa visitors, and can be easily combined with an extension to Victoria Falls, if you desire.

Pricing

US\$13,295 includes all lodging, food, and transportation as described above, as well as workshop fees for the photography instructor.

Additional costs: Park Entrance fees US\$350

Internal Flight fees US\$390

Single Supplement (2 available): US\$1995

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

The trip starts at Maun on August 31st and ends in Maun on September 9th.

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

* The photo instructor asks that any tip for them be made instead to African charities

Total suggested tip range would thus be US\$330-400.

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.

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, and souvenirs at Camp Okavango). (3) Any required COVID or medical testing that any Botswana might require (currently none). (4) Trip insurance (which we highly recommend). (5) Gratuities.

Getting To and From the Workshop

The workshop starts and ends in Maun, Botswana. You need to arrive at the Maun airport no later than 2pm on August 31st. At the end of the workshop we'll drop you off at the Maun airport in time for outgoing flights on September 9th.

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 the short flight between Johannesburg and 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 is also planning to add direct to Johannesburg flights from Washington DC and JFK.

Flights from both Johannesburg or Capetown to Maun can be booked on Airlink (a codeshare partner), and from Johannesburg to Maun on Air Botswana. At present, Airlink is using a larger jet (Embraer 170) 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 Web site is a bit inconsistent about providing this.

Our instructor generally recommends that you arrive a day earlier than the workshop in Maun (e.g. August 31st) and stay an extra night at Thamo Telele or another local lodge in Maun. 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 August 28th for overnight flight to Africa
- * Arrive and Overnight in Johannesburg on August 29th
- * Fly to Maun August 30th, overnight in Maun
- * Meet at Thamo Telele on August 31st

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 September 9th. Please book a flight leaving after 12pm (noon). Note that you'll arrive home on September 10th, 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 at your own expense 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 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.

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 Camp Okavango. The lodge we use sometimes turns 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, and your cell service might not support roaming on the village carriers.

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. We once had a world famous concert pianist on a previous trip 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 Africa often have very 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 flight from Camp Okavango to Maun, we are chartering the aircraft and have no fixed weight limits. However, we ask that you use a single soft duffel of no more than 42 pounds for your checked luggage, as this is more easily accommodated on the small plane (your photo gear/backpack has no specific limit).

Trip Leaders

You will have two experienced, local driver/guides with decades of safari experience on this trip. You'll find that each driver/guide has unique knowledge of the area and animals, and unique experiences to relate.

Tony Medici will be the photographic instructor on this trip. He's been teaching with Thom Hogan on bythom.com workshops for over a decade, and is an experienced wildlife and bird photographer.

Both of our Land Cruisers will have an experienced driver/guide at the helm, and one of them will have Tony in the opposite front seat. We'll rotate you so that you get equal experience with both driver/guides and the instructor.

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.

Thom Hogan hopes to join up with the group for at least one day at some point on this trip. However, due to the uncertain nature of his schedule and the logistical hurdles of moving about in Botswana, we cannot promise him showing up to provide additional instruction.

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 instructor is proud of the quality of his teaching and can put you in touch with someone that was on a previous Botswana workshop with him.

Once you have signed up for the trip (see next page for 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 photo instructor 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: 3/14/23 (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 tony.medici@icloud.com.

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