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17 JANUARY 2020

## NEWSFLASH

### King's Pool Reduction in Inventory

At the end of 2019, we unfortunately had a fire at King's Pool, where room # 8 was struck by lightning during a fierce thunderstorm. Sadly the room was completely burnt to the ground. Thankfully there were no guests in the room and no one was injured while fighting the fire.

However, this does mean that we have lost two guest beds so we have closed 1 twin in inventory between now and 31 July 2020. King's Pool therefore has 7 twins and the suite (with 4 beds) plus a pilot/guide room. Note that from 1 August 2020, we had already reduced inventory to 8 rooms to allow for the additional beds at Little DumaTau.

### Exciting Elephant News from Abu

Abu is pleased to announce the birth of Warona's new male calf, born on Saturday the 4<sup>th</sup> of January at 23h00. As Sirheni is also pregnant, due to give birth in February 2020, the elephant experience will be strictly controlled for the next few months to avoid any danger of stress to the calves or to the other herd members. This will entail no walking near the elephants over this period. However, Abu Camp guests will still have the unique opportunity to meet the herd, with our Elephant Manager welcoming guests and introducing the herd, sharing a bit of history of each elephant along with a photo session. They can have tea time snacks and drinks in nature with the herd, watching them in their natural environment either eating, drinking, mud wallowing, playing together, etc. Guests may also spend additional time with the elephants throughout their stay, especially when they return to the boma at night out of their own free will.

This is further testament to the important elephant conservation and research work being done at Abu. Although it is early days yet, we hope that our new calves will ultimately be introduced into the wild, along with the other herd members that have chosen to return there of their own accord; this forms an integral part of our conservation programme at the camp. As part of this reintroduction process to the wild, our Abu herd do mate and conceive, and we believe this is to their benefit both socially and biologically.

By introducing elephants from the Abu herd into the wild in Botswana's remote Okavango Delta, Abu is making a direct contribution to the future of Africa's elephants. Each introduction also represents a rich learning opportunity, as local researchers can then track the now-completely wild elephants and learn more about their movements, interactions, and where they choose to spend their time.

## CAMPS & ACTIVITIES

### Botswana Water Level & Activity Update

The good news is that there has been some rain over the past couple of months and the summer season transformation is happening, turning the bush green and providing some relief for wildlife – who have been through a tough season. Now we wait in anticipation for the annual inundation to arrive! There are reports that Angola has received some good rains so hopefully some of that will end up in the Okavango and Linyanti river systems.

- Abu: There are still no water activities on the Abu concession. We have had a few showers, some heavy some not; about 75 mm so far this season. Marabou lagoon and Dead Log Pan currently have water. The lagoon in front of Abu camp has a little water and is attracting plains animals: zebra, wildebeest, buffalo and tsessebe. The plain surrounding the lagoon now has lush grass and there are of baby impala aplenty.
- Qorokwe: We have had some rain in this area so the channels are half full and it is green all over. Mokoro excursions are still on offer.
- Savuti: Although we did receive some decent rain in November, the channel in front of camp is dry. The vegetation is greener and looking good. Due to the natural movement of wildlife thanks to new food and water sources, game drives may cover greater distances. There have been some good lion sightings in the area.
- King's Pool: We've had a nice bit of rain lately, so the bush is thick and beautifully green. Not enough to operate the barge as yet – we hope to start in excursions in a few months' time. For now the focus is on game drives, night drives and walks.
- Vumbura: We are still doing both mokoro excursions and boat rides from all three Vumbura camps. There is lots of greenery after recent rain. Previously dry pans now have water, and the game is coming back to take advantage of this.
- Chitabe: They are still having great sightings - lions, cheetahs, wild dogs, elephants and hyenas at the den. Rainfall was received in the recent weeks, and a few water holes have filled up.
- Jao Reserve: There have been some good rains and the lagoons are starting to fill up. Channels are still low but the bush is recovering nicely. Activities remain the same as per the last few months - only Pelo is still offering limited mokoro excursions while the focus at the other camps is on game drives and walks.

### Upcoming Closures at Vumbura Plains

Between 14 January and mid- March 2020, there are various closures in place at both Vumbura North and South – either full camp or individual rooms. Over this period, we will be building a new kitchen at Vumbura South, and doing maintenance in all the rooms at Vumbura North, plus adding another guest bathroom and treating the main area floors at North camp.

### Additional Camp Closures for Maintenance

- Jao – full camp 2 to 13 February 2020, 1 villa 14 to 28 February 2020
- Linyanti Tented West – full camp 1 to 31 March 2020
- Bisate – full lodge 23 March to 7 April 2020

### Emergency In-Camp Communication at Mombo & Little Mombo

Desktop telephones, for emergencies only, have replaced radios in the rooms. The number to dial is 911 and this will go straight to the duty manager. We will roll this out to our other premier camps in Botswana in due course.

## WILDERNESS AIR

### Update on Revised Excess Luggage

Thank you for your patience. We hope to go live with this on 1 February 2020. Our apologies for the delay - as soon as the necessary is in place, we will advise. In the interim, , the status quo remains whereby you need to book an extra seat on inventory and charge normal seat rates per sector, which allows for 75 kg of additional weight – while still confirming to our baggage dimensions.

## TOURING & TRANSFERS

### Water Levels at Victoria Falls

Water levels of the Zambezi River are rising steadily and the following seasonal product changes should be noted:

- High Water Rafting Season started on 10 January 2020.
- Livingstone Island - Devil's Pool will be closing shortly due to the rising water levels above the Victoria Falls. However, Livingstone Island tours will remain open until the end of April/May when the Angel's Pool will close at a similar time to the Island.

## REMINDERS & REGULATIONS

### Vat in Zimbabwe

Effective 1 January 2020, the VAT rate in Zimbabwe changed from 15% to 14.5%.

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