



WILDERNESS PRODUCT

# News and Updates

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## GENERAL UPDATES

**Botswana Weather**

During the cold fronts that came through recently, we had guests who were seemingly unaware of the potential severity of how cold it can get on safari – and not just in Botswana\*. Some guests arrived with very light jackets and no alternative attire, meaning they had to purchase items from the curio shops in camp. This can sometimes prove difficult when it comes to availability and sizes.

- We recommended that guests pack allowing for layers for all activities. In winter a warm layer is essential for the early mornings and evenings. Long-sleeved shirts with roll-up tabs, and zip-off trousers allow one to adapt to local weather conditions as temperatures rise (breathable items are recommended as these can adapt to changing temperatures throughout the day/night). Dressing for ease and comfort is key. Please refer to our suggested packing list to ensure guests carry appropriate clothing.

\* In Central and East Africa, the temperature variation is generally less marked in the summer months when it can be quite hot and/or humid; the winters usually do not become as cold. Requirements for a visit to Rwanda are very specific so please contact your Travel Designer for further details.

**Mokete Direct Helicopter Transfers**

As of 11 June 2024, in order to provide a more seamless experience for our guests, please note the change in operational logistics: all Wilderness Mokete arrivals and departures are flown directly by helicopter transfer with Helicopter Horizons.

- Applicable routes include from Maun International Airport as well as certain Wilderness and third-party camps within the Delta and Linyanti.
- All above transfers are direct with no stops en route.
- The estimated flight duration is 40 minutes from Maun International Airport to Mokete, and provides an exceptional aerial safari, adding a unique touch to the overall Wilderness Mokete experience.
- The no-stops exception is to/from Kasane Airport, from where there will be a number of stops en-route with Wilderness Air Botswana per fixed wing to Santawani Airstrip. From Santawani Airstrip, the onward helicopter transfer to Wilderness Mokete is direct with no stops along the way.
- The vehicle transfer from Mokete Helicopter pad to camp is approximately four minutes.

**Water Level — Update**

Based on the information provided by Botswana Operations on 18 July, here is a summary of the water activities available:

- Qorokwe — Mekoro activities on offer
- Vumbura and Little Vumbura — Boating and mekoro activities
- DumaTau and Little DumaTau — Boating and barge activities
- King's Pool — Barge activity is currently **not** operational



## AIRLINES

**Ethiopian Airlines** commenced services to Maun, its second destination in Botswana after Gaborone, on 10 June 2024 with its return flight from Maun to Addis Ababa that includes a stopover in Ndola, Zambia.

The new route operates on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays as below:

- Flight ET833 departs Addis Ababa at 08h30 and arrives in Maun at 12h40
- Flight ET833 departs Maun at 13h30 and arrives in Ndola at 15h30
- Flight ET833 departs Ndola at 16h20 and arrives in Addis Ababa at 21h25

### **Airlink – Windhoek-Maun with FlyNamibia Update Routing**

As of 03 July 2024, Airlink's franchise partner, FlyNamibia, will launch direct seasonal flights between Windhoek's Hosea Kutako International Airport and Maun, Botswana until the end of October 2024, and again from June to October 2025. The updated flight routing has been designed to enhance connectivity between the two countries and facilitate improved access to key destinations.

The updated flight schedule is as follows:

Wednesday, Friday and Sunday

- Depart Windhoek at 10h15
- Arrive Maun at 11h15

Wednesday, Friday and Sunday

- Depart Maun at 11h55
- Arrive Katima Mulilo at 12h25

Wednesday, Friday and Sunday

- Depart Katima Mulilo at 12h55
- Arrive Windhoek at 14h15

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## SPECIALS

A reminder that our Wilderness Exclusive Safari Offers have been extended to 2025. Download our PDF with all the offers [here](#).

For clarity on Governors' and Wayo Africa packages, FAQ's have been addressed in the sections below.

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## CAMP REVIEWS

### **During May, Aurelie Dubreuil visited Botswana and this is what she had to say about Wilderness DumaTau.**

I recently had the pleasure of staying at DumaTau in the Linyanti Wildlife Reserve, and it was an unforgettable experience. From the moment we arrived, the staff made us feel like family, providing exceptional service and hospitality. We stayed in the family room, which was luxurious and well-appointed, with all the bells and whistles. The private plunge pool and spacious bath added to the sense of indulgence, making it a perfect retreat after a day of adventure.

The highlight of our stay was the fishing excursion on the barge. Although we didn't catch any fish ourselves, our guide did, making the trip exciting and memorable. The camp also offers various game viewing opportunities, although our time was limited due to our educational trip and camp inspections at Savuti and King's Pool. The food at DumaTau was exceptional, with a well-thought-out vegetarian option that catered to all tastes. Each meal was a culinary delight, prepared with care and creativity.

The staff at DumaTau truly stand out. Their warmth and attentiveness made our stay special. Our guide BK was knowledgeable and ensured our comfort during game drives, providing ponchos and hot water bottles to keep us warm during the cooler mornings.

Despite not having much time for game viewing, our experience at DumaTau was one of my favourites. The combination of excellent service, luxurious accommodation, and unique activities made it a standout destination. I highly recommend DumaTau to anyone looking for an extraordinary safari experience in Botswana.




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**Mosiuwa Mofokeng, Kabelo Mothibeli, Siphokazi Kalo and Alex Rautenbach recently went on a Botswana educational trip and shared some feedback on their stays at Chitabe, Jao, King's Pool and Vumbura Plains.**

Alex flew in directly to Maun from Cape Town to meet her Johannesburg colleagues. The 2h40 min direct flight on Airlink is a convenient way to link the two tourist destinations. Cape Town International Airport's Departures is a small and stress-free environment, allowing for an enjoyable start to your travels. On arrival at Maun, we had a swift connection to Wilderness Air and flew in a Cessna 208 Grand Caravan to the Chitabe Concession.

**Wilderness Chitabe**

Our guide Phinley is the oldest guide at Chitabe and a treasure trove of information. On arrival we were warmly greeted with songs by the staff, and managers Mass and Gloria – so friendly and accommodating, with a good sense of humour. Chitabe is a charming camp, but what really stands out in this area are the amazing game sightings. We saw the cutest hyena cubs playing just outside their den; very curious creatures that came up to the vehicle and started chewing on the tyres! Furthermore, we had a great cheetah sighting with two cubs, saw a leopard resting in the shade of a tree, guarding its prey above, and beautiful blonde lions. The back-of-house visit was very informative; and it was good to see **Wilderness Chitabe Lediba** – a smaller camp with a wonderful private and personalised offering. Besides the game, we can also highly recommend the fig cake which was served during one of the afternoon teas.



### Wilderness Jao

Our next destination was Wilderness Jao. The flight from Chitabe to Jao is breath-taking... as you fly over the floodplains you can spot red lechwe crossing the channels, elephants gracefully meandering along, and hippo heads dotted in the lagoons. The accommodation at Jao is next-level luxury, a modern and ultra-chic take on a bush offering. The afternoon boat safari produced great sightings of jacanas, fish eagles, storks, herons, etc., and naturally, hippos. Our guide Gift added a great touch of sophistication to the guiding style, and the staff at the lodge are highly trained, especially the waiters. The afternoon mokoro ride was a wonderfully relaxing experience, which culminated in a surprise bar set-up where we met up with other guests, and the sundowners turned into a festive party with the beautiful African sun setting in the horizon. So special! The vegetarian options at all the Wilderness camps we stayed at were delicious, and varied, with the Jao option being especially delish (a vegetable curry). Gift also took us to visit **Wilderness Jacana**, which is a charming and intimate camp, wild and authentic.





### Wilderness King's Pool

From Jao we continued on to Wilderness King's Pool in the Linyanti (approx 40min flight). We were warmly greeted by Martin, the GM, and Kayla, the Service Standards Manager for Wilderness, who was staying at King's Pool for a few days. King's Pool just seems to have the perfect balance of olde worlde charm, authenticity and modern comfort, and has a magical location overlooking an oxbow lake that has water throughout the year. The elevated rooms offer the best vantage point, especially from the outside sala, from where we saw elephants and even a giraffe crossing the river, crocodiles basking on the banks of the river, and hippos dominating the waters. You can have a full safari experience without having to leave your room. This is the definitely the place for elephant lovers, as you get to see loads of them. The breakfast wraps can



be highly recommended, and they had the best fluffy muffins.

We undertook a day of site inspections of **Wilderness Savuti** and **Wilderness DumaTau** with game drives in between. At Savuti we met the very competent GM Sasha, who took us to the camp's log hide – from which we had the closest and most thrilling ellie viewing by the waterhole. There is something about being on foot, and so close which amps up the wild experience. We continued the drive to DumaTau, which has an enviable location on the water. Slick and chic, the Osprey Retreat features a wellness centre, gym and lap pool. DumaTau has very interesting dishes on the lunch menu, local dishes with a modern twist. The Matabele Bowl is a crowd pleaser.



### Wilderness Vumbura Plains

At Vumbura's airstrip, we were met by Ona, who whisked us off to a surprise welcome tea/coffee station in the bush. Thereafter we continued on a game drive following leopard tracks, and eventually found a big male lounging in a tree. Safely at Wilderness Vumbura Plains we were delighted by a boma evening with a lovely choir, drumming and dance show. We stayed in one of the family tents at Vumbura Plains North. The rooms are exquisitely decorated reflecting the nature and waterlilies, with beautifully curated furniture and accessories. One thing to bear in mind is that the rooms are very open plan apropos the bathroom, so great for couples, but they don't offer much privacy. Vumbura Plains South is basically an extension, and mirrors

Vumbura North. We also got to visit **Wilderness Little Vumbura** which you can only access by boat. It is a cosy and intimate camp, with an authentic bush feel. On our game drive we saw lions (including a sad injured one) and had an ellie that joined our bush lunch (very exciting!).

After another surprise set up – this time a barbeque lunch in the bush, we were treated to yet again another surprise: a helicopter scenic flight with Helicopter Horizons over the Delta. Breath-taking and highly recommended.

Ona, our guide, joined us for dinner and entertained us with some funny “believe it or not” stories about Mandalay Kay (a key legend from that area).

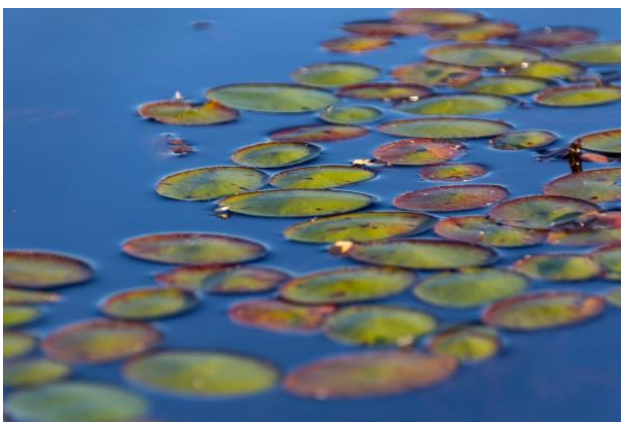
A truly inspiring and enriching educational!



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### **During April, Carel Loubser visited Wilderness Vumbura Plains South and Wilderness Mombo.**

We left South Africa hoping for two things: my wife wanted to experience her first mokoro ride, and we both hoped to have a memorable leopard sighting. To increase our probability, we booked Vumbura Plains and Mombo. With the Okavango Delta flood starting to come in about a month ago, it was with relief that we saw more and more water as we approached the airstrip at Vumbura Plains. At least we were able to tick off one wish.



Our last morning drive at Vumbura Plains started slowly. It was great not to rush, and to take in the sounds and smells and keep an eye on the animal tracks at a slow pace.



A couple of hours into our drive, an update came across the radio that the pride of six lions we had seen lazing around a few days before had been spotted, and were on the move. With a couple of hours left before our charter flight to Mombo, we slowly made our way to the area of the sighting.

As we arrived, the two lionesses and their four sub-adults were relaxing, and lazing around again. This time, at least, they were in an area underneath a big tree, using the termite mound as their surveyor's point. We managed to get some beautiful photo opportunities of the three young lions on the termite mound. It was not long before a lioness spotted a herd of blue wildebeest grazing a couple of hundred meters away and decided to approach them slowly with the sun perfectly behind her. The script started playing out as many before, with the wildebeest becoming aware of the stalking lioness and scattering off in different directions. And... an unsuccessful hunt.



Only this time, the lioness did not give up and kept approaching, crouching further. We were in pursuit with the cameras, ready to capture a very unlikely lion kill. The next moment, she sprang into action like Usain Bolt out of the starting blocks, rushing towards the wildebeest. Our slow stalk turned into a rush to get past a large bush blocking our view. As we drove around the bush, we expected a disappointed lioness to turn back to the pride, but instead, there was a cloud of dust as the vehicle came to a stop, and the cameras began shuttering away.



The wildebeest did scatter, but one unlucky one was resting behind the bush. With probably 100 different safari experiences behind me, I finally managed to experience a successful hunt.





Off to **Wilderness Mombo!** Our first afternoon drive was slow, but there were plenty of giraffe, wildebeest, impala, baboons, and zebra. As expected, many hyenas scavenged the area for something to eat. A leopard sighting would be great, but as the sun started to set, we lost light, making photography much more difficult.

The guides tend to plan the next day together with guests the night before, and our plan was to look for the wild dogs seen late on the drive the night before. Luckily, a call came through early, and we slowly approached a female leopard walking through the woodlands.



We hoped she might jump up as she approached several big fallen leadwood and jackalberry trees. Not only did she pass them all, but all trees worth climbing. After about 30 minutes, she finally entertained us by climbing a massive termite mound. As an excellent professional photographer friend later said, a leopard on a termite mound is probably more memorable than one in a big tree. He should know, considering he is permanently on safari and has photographed it all...

