

WILDERNESS PRODUCT

CAMP REVIEWS

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June 2024

BOTSWANA

Our Travel Designers, Gordon Bauerlie-Sims, Suraj Jivan, Anna Tinkler and Leigh-Anne Williams visited our camps in Botswana and this is what they had to say.

Wilderness Savuti

We fell in love with Savuti instantly. The décor and architecture is charming, tasteful and evokes the classic safari experience. It's unpretentious and in tune with Wilderness' purpose. The camp seamlessly meshes with its riverine surroundings, bringing in elements from the channel and surrounding bush, and the effect is lovely.

The communal spaces in camp were warm and inviting, and the staff here were particularly attentive. The tents themselves sit on platforms overlooking the channel and were comfortable. The decks were perfect for just sitting and watching the African jacanas move around on the water.

Wilderness Qorokwe was a lovely surprise. On our way from the airstrip, we were treated to a drinks stop, while watching a herd of elephants.

The lodge is a contemporary design, on raised decks and walkways. The rooms are spacious and well appointed, looking out over the plains in front of camp, which, when the annual waters come in, fill up.

The main area is nice and large, with intimate seating areas scattered around. The boma is quite open, which is actually very nice and is situated in the front of the camp. Close to the bar area are two large floating, swing couches overlooking a water feature with lilies. They are lovely to laze around on when you have some down time. The water feature gives the whole area a very relaxed and laid-back feel. On one side of the main area is a large swimming pool and is great to be in while overlooking the plains in front of camp.

Being in the Gomoti area, it also offers really good game viewing, and one of our first sightings was of wild dogs.

Wilderness Vumbura Plains

The four elements of a safari came together nicely at this camp:

People, Camp, Guide and Safari Experience.

Suraj grew up in the North-West Province of South Africa, and the local language is Setswana, which is also the official language of Botswana! To give some geographical context, North-West Province borders southern Botswana – about 3-4 hours' drive from Mafikeng to Gaborone. Having spent the majority of his life here, he picked up a little Setswana and was really excited to understand what the staff in camp were chatting about.

The main area has a premium feel with artful and contemporary décor. To complement this it overlooks a permanent water channel, which is home to hippos. The camp itself is quite widespread, with the common area at the centre and guest tented suites located to the left and right. The suites are large, each having its own private deck with lounge and plunge pool over the looking the permanent water.

The food was amazing and very well presented. We had a bush boma dinner on one of the nights – be sure to try the Pap & Gravy! We were also entertained with singing and dancing by the staff members, and had the opportunity to participate – a really eventful night!

Our guide, Bame, was undoubtedly one of our best-ever experiences with a guide on all safaris we have ever been on! He is young, energetic, entertaining, attentive and very knowledgeable. He challenged our knowledge

and learnings as we went along – everything from the grasses and plants, to birds and guessing animal tracks – we had some great laughs indeed. He fed off our energy and in turn we fed off his energy.



The mokoro excursion is one of the highlights of staying at a camp which offers both land and water activities. Afternoon came and we departed on the game vehicle, heading towards the location of the mokoros. En route, we spotted a pack of nine wild dogs along a water channel. Wild dogs are nomadic and ever on the move, therefore always making them a thrilling sighting. As we made our way closer to them, we noticed the leader was golden in colour, from head to toe, which is rather unusual – an albino wild dog! We were all really amazed and fascinated to experience this rare encounter of the Vumbura Concession's famous Golden Pack, which is known to the guides in this corner of the Okavango Delta for the dogs' distinctive gold patterning.



ZIMBABWE

Karabo Mathe, Nthabiseng Mosia, Sibongiseni Shongwe and Dewald Snyders had the opportunity to visit our camps in the Zambezi region...

Our first stop on this educational safari was at **Wilderness Toka Leya**, situated just a few kilometres from the Victoria Falls on the Zambian side. It's a beautiful camp situated right on the Zambezi River, and our first activity was a sundowner cruise. Although we missed the sunset, the cruise itself was amazing. The weather in Livingstone is nice and warm during April and May. We didn't do any game drives at Toka Leya; however, we did the Tour of the Falls the next day, which was the greatest highlight of our two night-stay.

On the third day we flew to **Wilderness Linkwasha**, where the welcome was amazing. We were met by all the managers and staff in camp. The food offering was tasty and we enjoyed the buffet setup on the deck. The guest

tents were very spacious and comfortable. The weather was chilly in Hwange in the mornings, but nice and warm during the day. We saw mostly general game, and a lot of lions on our drives.

Our top favourite in Hwange was **Wilderness Little Makalolo**, which we found very warm and welcoming. It has a great location where the main area overlooks a floodplain, which is great for view the wildlife while having a meal. The ellies come in numbers to the plunge pool for fresh water, so we had literally armchair game viewing!

Our trip ended off with two nights at **Wilderness Ruckomechi**, where we were nicely welcomed by staff singing and dancing as we approached the camp. We also had the opportunity to do a site inspection of the refurbished **Wilderness Little Ruckomechi**, which was lucky as the camp was opening the following day. The camp is intimate, looks fresh and is ready to welcome guests.

From Ruckomechi, we did morning and evening game drives, and on the second day we had the best sundowner – a full fire setup on the Zambezi River. We sipped on G&Ts, watching the sun set over the river full of hippos. A signature way to an amazing safari!

