

## WILDERNESS BOTSWANA GUIDE

### SEGOPOTSO OJA



Segopotso's inspirational Wilderness journey began at the age of 10 when he was given the chance to attend a Children in the Wilderness Eco-Camp. This greatly encouraged his passion for the wild and a career in guiding. He embraced all his opportunities along the way, eager to learn and progress. A true Wilderness ambassador, he is currently working at Wilderness DumaTau, sharing our iconic wildlife with his guests.

Segopotso Oja, known to everyone as See, was born and raised in a small village called Eretsha, located in the eastern Okavango Panhandle – referred to by locals as “overseas”. He grew up in a large family surrounded by 29 siblings. His friends like to tease him that his family forms half of the village's population.

Eretsha offered limited facilities, so the people who lived there had to depend on the neighbouring village Beetsha for food, medicine, schools and other supplies. The long 17 km daily walk between the two villages meant that people often came into contact with wildlife along the way. As a result See learnt from a very young age all about these wild animals, their tracks and behaviour.

When See was 10 years old, he was given the opportunity to join a Children in the Wilderness Eco-Camp. Here he grew to learn about and love the wild, and recognise the importance of protecting our wilderness. He felt very fortunate to attend the camp, which inspired him to pursue a career as a guide.

The second stepping stone on his Wilderness journey came about in 2013, when he was offered a position as an escort guide by the Okavango Community Trust in partnership with Wilderness. He spent his days shadowing professional guides on game activities with their guests. He embraced the opportunity to learn and hone his own guiding skills.

In 2017, See officially joined the Wilderness family as a relief WOW Co-ordinator for Wilderness Mombo and Wilderness Vumbura, giving him the chance to further his learnings and passion for the wild. See progressed to Trainee Guide in 2021 and has since proudly qualified as a Professional Guide.

Currently based at Wilderness DumaTau, See is an inspiration to many and he is humbly grateful for the opportunities Wilderness has afforded him. “Indeed, my journey with Wilderness has changed my life, and now I am in a position to give back by sharing and introducing some of Earth's ultimate, untamed places to my guests”, he says.



## WILDERNESS BOTSWANA GUIDE TAPOLOGO GAOTHOBOGWE

Inspired by nature from a young age, Tapologo always knew he wanted to work in tourism and make a real difference. Joining Wilderness in 2015, he has embraced every opportunity along his journey and loves nothing more than sharing our iconic wildlife with guests.

Tapologo, known to his colleagues and friends as Taps, grew up in Mahalapye, a town in the Central District of Botswana. His love for animals and the wild began early on when he spent his childhood days looking after the family's livestock in between attending school.

In 2014, after completing senior secondary school and determined to follow a career in tourism, Taps enrolled with the Botswana Wildlife Training Institute based in Maun. After graduating, his Wilderness journey began in 2015 as a trainee guide. As an introduction to the business, he spent time gaining experience at several camps, including Wilderness Linyanti Tented Camp, Wilderness Vumbura Plains and Wilderness King's Pool, among a number of others no longer in the collection.

Taps went on to spend four incredible years guiding at Wilderness Abu. One of his most memorable moments was the opportunity to interact with elephants. He learnt a lot about elephant behaviour during these up-close and personal encounters in the western Delta. Taps was proud to be included in the team that reintroduced and released the Abu Herd into their natural habitat. "The process really warmed my heart as I am a true believer in free movement of every animal and letting nature take its course", he says about the experience.

Grateful for the opportunities he has received at Wilderness, Taps believes the company has nurtured and grown his passion for conservation, as well as helped him create opportunities for everyone to experience our iconic wilderness.

He never misses a chance to get involved in the annual Children in the Wilderness camps, where he educates young children on his role as a guide, and the positive impact guides have on the wildlife areas where they operate. He loves seeing the enthusiasm on the children's faces, which remind him of a childhood moment listening to officers from Botswana's Department of Wildlife & National Parks sharing their inspiring stories during a career day at school.

Taps joined Wilderness DumaTau as a guide in 2022. He reflects on his career with Wilderness so far: "I believe every day is a learning opportunity in the wild, and nothing gives me greater joy than to discover nature with my guests".

### **About Wilderness:**

Wilderness is a world-leading conservation and hospitality company, offering unforgettable and exclusive adventures that positively impact conservation and communities. Operating in eight countries, with more than 60 exceptional camps and lodges, Wilderness helps protect some 2.3 million hectares (6 million acres) of exclusive wilderness. Its goal – to double that by 2030. Wilderness has been creating impactful journeys for four decades, with its beginnings in Botswana in 1983. Wilderness' purpose today is stronger than ever: To increase the world's wilderness, together.

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