

April 2014

It is hard to believe that it is already autumn here in South Africa, and Indaba is only two weeks away! There is quite a lot to share with you this month – including camp upgrades, a number of activity updates, public holidays and some money matters.

## **NEWSFLASH**

### **Upgrades planned for Kings Pool Camp**

Over the next two to three months, the following is planned for Kings Pool:

- Re-varnishing of walkways (completed) and pool decks
- In the main area and rooms - new chairs, cushions, curtains, loungers, lamps and décor

### **North Island Upgrade**

Scheduled for completion around mid-June, North Island is currently undergoing an upgrade and softs refurbishment:

- In the rooms – adding brighter colours, new light fittings/furniture/curtains/carpets and new cushions for the salas
- In the main area – new lighting, furniture and decorative elements plus upgrading the wine cellar
- At West Beach – adding colour and new furniture plus décor accents

### **Introducing our New Bag**

Wilderness Safaris and Wilderness Air have designed the perfect safari travel bag to suit both our guests' needs and meet the aircraft weight restrictions of Wilderness Air. Key features of these bags are:

- There are no hard sides, ridges or handles
- It folds up to fit into a smaller handy storage bag
- It has wheels on one end for easy manoeuvrability

We hope to have a few samples with us in Durban, to show those of you attending Indaba. Alternatively, please contact your Journey Specialist or Sales Manager for further information.

## **IMPORTANT**

### **Forthcoming Public Holidays in South Africa**

Limited services will be available in Johannesburg and Cape Town on the following dates:

- Monday 28 April – Freedom Day, which is on Sunday 27 April and carries over to Monday
- Thursday 1 May – Workers Day
- Wednesday 7 May – National Voting Day
- Monday 16 June – Youth Day

In the event of an emergency, please contact our After Hours Service.

Mobile/cell: +27 82 576 9173

Email: [WSAfterHours@wilderness.co.za](mailto:WSAfterHours@wilderness.co.za)

## **GENERAL**

### **Credit Card & Transaction Fees**

Most banks and credit card companies will charge for transactions – whether paying by credit card or drawing cash from ATMs. To avoid inconvenience and possible fraud, we do recommend that all guests advise their credit card company and/or bank that they will be travelling to a foreign country and will be using their card or accessing cash accordingly.

### **VAT in Zimbabwe**

There has been talk of Zimbabwe introducing a VAT charge on tourism services, similar to Zambia. As a final decision has not been reached, the status quo remains and there is no change to our rates in Zimbabwe.

### Zambian Currency

We are aware of a recent communique advising that foreign currency is now accepted in Zambia. This may be a short-term reprieve, so our stance remains cautious where Kwacha is still the local currency used for transactions and foreign currency may be accepted as an exception.

### Travelling on a Self-drive Basis

When travelling to our camps on a self-drive basis, all parking at specific points will be at the guests' own risk.

### Revamped Victoria Falls Airport to Open in 2015

The Victoria Falls International Airport expansion project, which includes the construction of an additional terminal and runway, is currently on schedule for completion by April 2015. The new runway will cater for wide-body aircraft, and the new International Terminal will be able to handle 1.2 million passengers per annum. The project will see the existing terminal building upgraded and changed to a domestic terminal, while the existing runway is to be strengthened and used as a full-length taxiway.

## WILDERNESS AIR

### Zimbabwe Flying Update

In Kariba, the only airstrip that we service on the schedule is Fothergill for Changa Camp. As the airstrip is in the process of being upgraded, we are currently not flying into Fothergill. All Changa guests flying with Wilderness Air Zimbabwe will be flown into Kariba Airport, whereupon arrangements will be made to pick-up and drop-off our guests at Kariba at no extra cost to the guest. Please ensure guests are aware that they will not be flying directly to Changa and that there will be a transfer by boat and road from Kariba Airport to the lodge. Once operations have resumed, we will advise.

With immediate effect, access to Bumi Hills Lodge and Musango with Wilderness Air Zimbabwe is via Kariba Airport only. Additional road and boat transfers will need to be booked and charged for to move guests between Kariba and Bumi or Musango.

Important to note is that when flying out of Kariba Airport guests will need to pay the US\$ 15.00 per person domestic departure tax directly at the airport.

### Update on 50% Discounted Flying in Zimbabwe

Subject to the same rules as Little Makalolo, Davison's and Ruckomechi, we have extended the 50% discount on Wilderness Air flying to bookings staying at Changa for 3 nights or more as part of a Wilderness itinerary. This is with immediate effect for new bookings and quotes only - existing quotes and bookings remain as is. Note that this does not apply to Changa bookings if no other Wilderness property is included in the itinerary i.e. if you fly VFA - Changa - VFA or between other non-Wilderness properties and Changa.

### Weight Restrictions in Botswana for Wilderness Air & Mack Air

The Civil Aviation Authority in Botswana has very strict regulations when it comes to weight and balance on all aircraft. We no longer charge for passengers weighing more than 100 kg (220 lb) as long as we have all guest weights prior to travel. That said maximum weight restrictions on all aircraft still apply and Wilderness Air must adhere to the guidelines laid down by the CAAB. If actual weights are not received in advance and additional aircraft are required to allow for excess weight, passengers will be charged directly for private charters.

Note that the above is specific to Wilderness Air - other charter operations in Botswana may have their own regulations, and in particular, Mack Air. If we book on Mack Air, then their principles, policies and procedures apply. In the case of a passenger weighing more than 120 kg (264 lb), an additional seat on the aircraft must be purchased on all Mack Air routes.

## BOTSWANA PRODUCT UPDATE

### Water Activities in the Linyanti

Canoeing is no longer on offer as a standard activity at Savuti. Conditions in the area have made it unsafe, and while the canoes are still at camp, the experience is limited and they are used for short trips in front of camp or in the backwaters for sundowners only. Boating along the waterways on a season basis is still on offer from Savuti. The barge activity is possible year round at both DumaTau and Kings Pool, while boating from DumaTau is also seasonal.

### Seasonal Water levels

The annual floodwaters have arrived in the Jao concession, affecting access for some of the camps. Jao, Tubu Tree and Little Tubu are still accessible by vehicle from their respective airstrips. For the other camps, approximate times are as follows:

- Kwetsani - transfer between airstrip and camp by boat (45 minutes)
- Jacana - transfer by boat to a point (45 minutes) followed by a short drive by vehicle (15 minutes)
- Pelo - transfer 1 hour by boat and 15 minutes by vehicle.

The floodwaters have not yet arrived at Vumbura, however, when they do there will be a longer transfer time to avoid the flooded airstrip road. Xigera water levels have risen well, so the camp is able to reach the Xigera Lagoon now. Seba and Abu are now able to offer boating and mekoro excursions due to the higher water levels.

### **New Platforms for Savuti Camp Sleep-outs**

We now have two separate platforms for sleep-outs, approximately 10-15 minutes from camp by boat, or 5 minutes drive. They are located a short distance apart, so we can offer sleep-outs to different sets of guests or one bigger group. The maximum number per sleep-out is 8 guests - 4 per platform – and mosquito nets plus bedrolls with linen are provided. The guide sleeps in a dome tent near the platform and as always, sleep-outs are weather dependent. Wash-basins can be set up for guests to freshen up before going on activity, should they not return to camp first thing. While private vehicles do not need to be booked for the experience, guests must be aware that without their own vehicle, they have to fit in with other guest/camp movements. You need to book rooms in camp as normal, with a request for a sleep-out in the sector notes.

## **CONGO PRODUCT UPDATE**

### **Minimum Number on Odzala Departures**

Departures are guaranteed with a minimum of 2 confirmed guests and operate with a maximum of 12 guests per departure (including any specialist guides or tour leaders).

## **NAMIBIA PRODUCT UPDATE**

### **Hot Air Ballooning from the Kulala Lodges**

The rates for hot air ballooning with Namib Sky will increase on 1 August 2014. This is with immediate effect – all existing confirmed bookings will be honoured, while all quotes/provisional bookings will need to be re-costed.

## **SOUTH AFRICA PRODUCT UPDATE**

### **Firearms in the Kruger National Park**

Unless special permission is obtained from the highest levels, NO firearms are permitted in the Kruger National Park. In addition, there is no firearm safe available to guests in our Pafuri operation.

### **Age Limit on Pafuri Walking Trail**

All activities centre on walking when participating in the Pafuri Walking Trail. For operational safety reasons, there is a strict age limit of between 16 and 65 years and guests over 65 years must provide a certificate of fitness from their medical practitioner.

### **Access to Rocktail Beach Camp**

Self-drive guests with their own 4x4 vehicles may drive directly into Rocktail Beach Camp. Guests travelling in 2 x 4 vehicles, whether their own or with a transfer company vehicle, must make use of our scheduled transfers to/from camp, utilising Coastal Cashews as the pick-up and drop-off point. There is no extra charge if scheduled transfers are booked in advance, however, if these transfers are outside of scheduled pick-up times, a charge does apply which can either be arranged in advance or settled directly in camp.

### **Turtle Drives & Young Children**

While we do not have an age limit for the turtle drives from Rocktail Beach Camp, these research drives only take place at night, during low tide. The duration of the drive is entirely dependent on what turtles may be seen and it is therefore not recommended for very young children. Childcare/babysitting facilities are available and can be arranged in camp at an additional cost.

### **Scuba Diving At Rocktail Beach Camp**

- Is subject to tide times & dependent on the weather
- Is not available on 01 January
- Scuba divers must bring dive cards and/or log books. **NO CARD – NO DIVE.**
- To avoid Decompression Sickness (DCS), we generally advise guests to wait 24 hours after a dive before flying.

### **Further Activities at Rocktail Beach Camp**

At additional cost and booked/paid for in camp, the following activities are possible at Rocktail:

- A game drive and brunch at Tembe Elephant Park.
- Excursion to Black Rock - approximately 1 hour 30 minutes drive each way from the camp. Note that the Black Rock excursion is on offer for FIT's only, subject to availability - **groups are on request only.**
- Gugulesizwe is a joint venture between Wilderness and the community. Transfers to Gugulesizwe are included on the FB4 rate, while extra activities once there include a **sangoma visit/cultural village experience (on request)**, Zulu dancing and/or quad biking (quad biking is not available on 01 January).

### Restaurant Update in Cape Town

The following restaurants in Kalk Bay are closed for renovations from 1 to 31 July 2014: Harbour House, Polana, Lucky Fish and Live Bait.

Moyo restaurant at Spier Wine Estate has closed its doors with immediate effect. Spier will accommodate guests with bookings at either Eight or the Spier Hotel restaurant where possible. In addition, those who have made group and corporate bookings may make use of Spier's extensive conferencing facilities if available. Spier will be restoring the Werf (the historical farm yard area in which Moyo was located) and is in the process of developing an exciting new offering in this location. Please ensure agents or clients with specific requests are informed.

### ZAMBIA PRODUCT UPDATE

#### Park Fees for Fishing, Rhino Tracking & Guided Walks at Toka Leya Camp

From 1 March 2014 and per instruction from ZAWA – the Zambian parks authority - guests staying at Toka Leya and wishing to fish will be required to pay US\$ 5.00 per person per excursion, and US\$ 10.00 per person per excursion for guided walks and/or rhino tracking. All park fees are settled direct in camp.

#### Reminder - Rhino Tracking at Toka Leya Camp

It is possible to go rhino tracking while staying at Toka Leya. ZAWA scouts monitor the rhinos 24/7 and track them each morning. Guests travel to the area by vehicle and then track the rhino on foot, accompanied by the ZAWA scout - our guides may not carry weapons. The total duration of the rhino tracking is approximately 2 hours (combination of drive & walk).

Guided nature walks and rhino tracking are included in our FI basis, however, the park fee is a separate amount that must be settled direct. Note that all walks are subject to the availability of a ZAWA scout and therefore cannot be confirmed or guaranteed in advance. Note that the minimum age for walking is 13.

#### Livingstone Island Excursion Closed

Due to the increasing water levels on the Zambezi River, management closed operations of the Livingstone Island excursion from 5 April 2014 until further notice.

### RATES UPDATE

#### Namibia

2014.14	The Hot Air Ballooning rates with Namib Sky Adventures are increasing from 01 August 2014.	17/04/14	Page 4
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#### South Africa

2014.03	The transfer times between Rocktail Beach Camp & Richards Bay have been changed. Please refer to page 3 of the manual for the new times.	02/04/14	Page 3
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#### Zimbabwe

2014.08	The Zimbabwe Highlights package rates have reduced due to an adjustment in the flying costs.	02/04/2014	Page 4
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Warm regards,  
Tina

### Wilderness Product Services Manager

For further information on Wilderness product or rates, please refer to our Agent Portal or contact either myself [tinak@wilderness.co.za](mailto:tinak@wilderness.co.za) or your reservations cluster/Journey Specialist directly.

[www.wilderness-safaris.com](http://www.wilderness-safaris.com)

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