



25 May 2016

WOW | Explorations & Mombo Feedback

I returned last week from a fantastic educational with Wilderness – a combination of our Great Wilderness Journey (an Explorations trip) and Little Mombo! What an amazing experience and one I cannot recommend highly enough.

I now understand and fully appreciate the value add of a private guide! We learnt so much about the country, the wildlife, tracking skills, photography, etc. from Ollie Porote. He facilitated all aspects of the trip (just be here or there at this or that time) and organised great activities including walking, fishing, swimming in the Delta. He pre-empted your needs...your decaf coffee or glass of Merlot appears before you even ask for it! We had sole use of most camps and flights plus activities for our group only – there is great flexibility and really at the end of the day, you are on a private safari which makes one feel very special. Fellow travellers bonded as we had ten nights to get to know each other, discussing other travel experiences and developing new shared memories – and there were many!

We also have incredible people in all our camps, passionate about what they do and a very organised air operation...getting our guests from point A to point B – even if hyenas have chewed the aircraft tyres and caused a delay! I thought I would share some of my highlights with you – including a few pictures selected from the many 100s I took! One cannot help yourself when faced with the wonders of the wilderness...

- We got comprehensively soaked at the spectacular Victoria Falls – who says there is no water? It was pumping on both the Zimbabwe and Zambian sides – and cruising the Chobe River plus flying over the Chobe flood plains reaffirmed this.



- I loved exploring the riverine forests, floodplains and mopane forests of the Linyanti with sightings of brown hyena, elephants en-masse, lazy leopards, plentiful owls, kudus chewing bone for calcium, hippos joining us for sundowners and a beautiful little camp called Linyanti Tented!



- I revelled in the acacia savannah around Gomoti – a stunning rustic yet very comfortable camp that makes you feel truly at one with nature...especially when two male lions walked between room 3 and the main area to the waterhole in front of camp (no walkways here!). There was an abundance of game feeding on the sweet grasses – zebra, impala, giraffe, wildebeest, tsessebe – and we worked hard to find the fast-moving (and therefore elusive) wild dog ☺. We also had a very helpful ostrich family...clearing the airstrip of small stones!



- There is little to beat a true Delta experience at Jacana with tranquil mokoro excursions, seeing hippo and elephants crossing the waterways from a boat, notching up the ticks with an abundance of birds, and of course enjoying the beautiful water lilies and brown ivory palms – synonymous with a Delta experience and those ubiquitous sunset shots.



- “The Place of Plenty”! I stayed at Little Mombo...the camp and accommodation are super, the staff amazing and attentive, the food to die for! I experienced the thrill of the floodwaters coming in and a sense of happiness was almost tangible as one witnessed elephants, buffalo, lechwe, impala, giraffe and birds of all shapes & sizes taking advantage of the water and the insects it flushed out. Wonderful interactions included seven lion cubs playing on an anthill, a cheetah and francolin coming face to face (hard to tell who got the bigger fright!), a matriarch hyena teaching the cubs to scent mark and Pula (daughter of Legadima – Eye of the Leopard fame) playing with her own daughter, pouncing each other as our cats at home do!



NEWSFLASH

NEW | The Ultimate Getaway

This great programme features a combination of safari, rest and relaxation - 2 nights at Toka Leya on the Zambezi, the splendor of Hwange at Linkwasha in the summer for 3 nights and the remoteness of luxurious Singita Pamushana in the south-east of Zimbabwe for 4 nights! Available from end October to end December 2016, this nine night itinerary utilises the new air connection between Victoria Falls and Pamushana in Zimbabwe and is the ideal way to wind down at the end of the year, escape from colder climes or celebrate the holidays! Please contact your Journey Specialist or refer to the Info Centre on the Wilderness Window for more information.

UPDATE | Re-introduction of the KAZA Visa

Although the necessary visa stickers have finally arrived in both Zambia and Zimbabwe, we are still waiting for an official announcement as to when they are going to start issuing the KAZA visa again at ports of entry. We will keep you updated, however in the interim, standard visa applications and costs will apply as relevant for visitors to Zambia and Zimbabwe.

IMPORTANT

Yellow Fever and Botswana

There is an outbreak of yellow fever in Angola, which has put yellow fever back on the radar for a number of countries. Conflicting information may have been sent out, however, we have been advised that while Botswana still requires travellers from listed countries such as the DRC, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Sudan (including transit passengers) to have been vaccinated against yellow fever before entering Botswana, this is not the case for Zambia. Clarification was sought from the District Health Management Team Head in Botswana, and he confirmed that travellers from Zambia will NOT be required to produce Yellow Fever Certificates to Botswana Border Authorities.

CLARIFICATION | Yellow Fever Requirements for Kenya

My apologies for any confusion in my previous update, however, yellow fever vaccinations are a requirement for visiting Kenya. The government of Kenya requires proof of yellow fever vaccination if you are traveling from a country with risk of yellow fever PLUS yellow fever is a risk in certain parts of Kenya, so other countries will require proof of vaccination i.e. if travelling from Kenya to South Africa.

Maintenance at Little Kulala

In the April update I advised that an extensive maintenance project was underway at Little Kulala, scheduled for completion at the end of April. This is not a refurbishment or rebuild, however, it is giving the camp quite a facelift. Due to high occupancies and working around guests in camp, it has however taken longer than anticipated. Despite our best intentions, the work is not yet complete although we are hopeful it will not take much longer. In the interim, every effort will be made by the team on the ground to minimise the impact on the experience for our guests.

RATES UPDATES

Demand Based Pricing plus Future Rates

Per recent communication, we have revised a number of our rates for the remainder of the 2016 season, and published rates valid from 11 January 2017 up to 31 May 2018. We hope that the immediate rate reductions for 2016 at some camps, in low and shoulder season especially, and the long-term visibility for the years ahead, will assist you to secure bookings. There are also a few key items to point out in this regard:

- As we have repriced our low season – there will be no more Six Countries. However, the second phase of our new price strategy is to introduce long-lead discounting (or early-bird specials) and details on this will follow in the next couple of weeks.
- The revised (including reductions in several instances) rates apply to new bookings only.
- Our rate seasons have changed and are now standardised across all countries, taking into account the exception of camps that operate according to specific seasons such as Ruckomechi and the Kafue camps: 11 Jan to 31 Mar; 1 Apr to 31 May; 1 Jun to 31 Oct; 1 Nov to 19 Dec; 20 Dec to 10 Jan.
- The updated 2016 and new 2017/2018 rates sheets are available on the Info Centre.
- Note that Rocktail, Abu, Seba and some touring/transfer rates are still missing. We will add these as soon as we can.

PACKAGES & SPECIALS

UPDATE | Our Namibian Packaged Safaris

The good news is that despite the recent rate review, there is no change to the published rates for our Wings over Namibia and Spirit of Namibia programmes and these are still on offer for the rest of this year – great value for money and an easy way to promote the highlights of Namibia as a destination. Do note however, that these packages will be discontinued in 2017.

REMINDERS

Bush Buddy Packs

Children aged 6 and 16 travelling to our camps receive a Bush Buddy Pack at the first camp on the itinerary. The first image shows the bag and content for youngsters between the ages of 6 and 12, while the second image is the pack that has been tailored for teenagers between the ages of 13 and 16.



WILDERNESS TOURING

ZAMBEZI FEATURED EXCURSION | River Safaris

Available for breakfast, lunch or at sunset, this is an ideal way to experience the "mighty Zambezi" - especially with the water levels nice and high again. Cruise to amazing parts of the Zambezi that have previously been out of reach and enjoy the thrill of speeding over rapids before slowing down for a leisurely game viewing trip around the islands. An experienced skipper will conduct your safari, and explain the river, the wildlife, the people and the history of the area.

CAPE FEATURED EXCURSION | Private Full Day Hermanus Tour

Leaving the city, we head towards the seaside towns of Strand and Gordon's Bay, and continue along the spectacular rocky coastline of Marine Drive. Passing the white beaches of Koeël Bay and the villages of Rooiels, Pringle Bay and Betty's Bay, we stop at the Harold Porter Botanical Gardens, for a mountain walk to the waterfall at Disa Kloof. We then make our way to the Bot River, pausing in the picturesque Hemel-en-Arde valley whose cool, maritime climate favors the growing of Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay grapes, found at acclaimed wine estates like Bouchard Finlayson, Hamilton Russell and Creation. On reaching the charming village of Hermanus, we have the opportunity to spot Southern right whales that come in very close to shore to mate and calve (from June to November), amble along the iconic cliff paths, browse the local craft markets and enjoy lunch. We then head back to Cape Town via the verdant apple-growing regions of Grabouw and Elgin, stopping on the spectacular Sir Lowry's Mountain Pass for a panoramic view of the Cape Peninsula.

BOTSWANA

Revamped Main Pool & Deck at Abu Camp

The new main deck now allows for both pool loungers and dining tables to enjoy a relaxing lunch at the poolside!

Xigera Configuration

Reminder - we have revised the room configuration at Xigera to 9 rooms - 8 twins and 1 family. For 2016, we will honour those bookings where all 10 rooms were booked, however, for 2017, the maximum number of rooms will be 9.

Water Activity Update

- **Jao Concession:** All channels and activities are in operation, at all of the camps, including Tubu Tree and Little Tubu. There is no driving to Hunda from Jao or Kwetsani anymore - only boating and then getting into the game drive vehicles at Hunda. Pelo, Jacana and Kwetsani have to drop-off and pick-up via boat for airstrip transfers.
- **Vumbura Plains & Little Vumbura:** Full offering of water based activities as per normal.
- **Xigera Camp:** Full offering of water based activities as per normal.
- **Linyanti Concession:** Boating and barge excursion as per normal at DumaTau. NO water activities for either Savuti Camp or Kings Pool. Water levels are still too low for the Queen Sylvia.
- **Abu Camp & Seba Camp:** Only mokoro activities for now. No boating as yet, however, we hope to be able to offer it in the next month or so as the water levels are slowly rising.

Kazungula Bridge between Zambia & Botswana

Access between Zambia and Botswana at Kazungula is currently by means of a ferry. However, a bridge is being built

by the Botswana and Zambian governments to facilitate trade and tourism development in the Zambezi and SADC area which will hopefully be operational in 2018.

NAMIBIA

Access to the Dunes at Sossusvlei

In accordance with strict park rules, no Wilderness Safaris vehicle is allowed to enter through the Kulala designated gate before sunrise (specific times change depending on season). Although guests will be able to avoid the crowds by getting to the dunes earlier thanks to this access, and will still have great views/lighting, they will not be on the sand dunes at sunrise. Based on proximity to the gate, vehicles are scheduled to leave Kulala Desert Lodge 10 minutes prior to sunrise and Little Kulala 30 minutes prior to sunrise. Any earlier than this would result in guests having to park outside the gate until the designated time they may enter.

In addition, it is important to note that only Wilderness Safaris vehicles may use this gate to enter the park. Guests not booked on an FI basis, such as self-drives or any rental vehicle, or who have not booked this activity with camp directly, need to drive to the main Sossusvlei gate to access the Namib Naukluft Park and the dunes. They will be denied access at the Wilderness gate and will be rerouted by park officials to the general access point.

AIRLINES

Another option for the Cape Town-Livingstone Link

Kenya Airways has introduced a six-hour flight between Cape Town and Nairobi, travelling via Livingstone.

The Kenyan national carrier will route through Livingstone with flights on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. They will land in Livingstone from Nairobi at 09:30, departing at 10:20 to Cape Town and then on the return leg they will arrive in Livingstone at 17:10 from Cape Town departing at 18:00 on the way back to Nairobi.

Iberia Reinstates Flights to South Africa

Iberia has set 2 August 2016 as its launch date for three flights a week between Madrid and South Africa. Flight IB 6051 will depart Madrid at 23:45 on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays to arrive in Johannesburg at 09:05 the next day. Return flight IB 6050 will depart Johannesburg at 20:15 on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays to arrive in Madrid at 06:35 the next day.

Warm regards,
Tina

Wilderness Product Manager

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