



November 2016

Greetings from Africa!

In keeping with the many reasons to book a Wilderness Safaris Private guide for your guests, herewith feedback from guests that were guided by one of our incredible guides, [Onalethata Basimane](#):

"A trip of a lifetime that exceeded our hopes for unique wildlife experiences! Ona's knowledge of each species was exceptional. It was amazing to watch him in action as he studied the tracks, listened to the sounds around him, used his keen eyesight to spot wildlife none of us could initially see, kept up a running commentary on what was happening, predicted what a particular animal was going to do next (he never missed), mimicked animal sounds that they would respond to...all while driving us to where the action was! We can't thank Ona enough for his expertise, humor and professionalism and for making our Africa dream come true in the most magical way." R.B

"Not many expedition leaders can answer to 7 veterinarians in the car as Ona could and DID! We threw so many questions at him re: wildlife habitat, biology, behaviour, etc and he provided not only answers but insight and enthusiasm. Ona was FUN and informative and he was a big part of the success of our trip" P.P.S



Here is what Ona had to say about guiding these group of friends:

*"This was yet another highly successful private safari. The dry season is at its peak throughout southern Africa as we are heading towards the rainy season. These dry conditions made for intense game viewing as animals are always drawn to the available permanent water sources at this time of the year. I was guiding a group of friends who had known each other for over 35 years and all except one were veterinarians. We started our time at **River Club** with an evening boat cruise along the Zambezi River. Besides some great water birds and crocodiles on the riverbanks, we had a great sunset to photograph. The following morning, we went on a village tour of Simonga to meet the local people and learn about the culture. We then proceeded to Victoria Falls thereafter. We were back in camp for lunch and a little break before proceeding to do the rhino tracking activity. The guests thoroughly enjoyed the walk to see the rhinos. We found three under a shade and then followed them to the waterhole where they wallowing in the mud. This capped a great stay here.*

*On the last morning, we left for the Chobe boat cruise in Botswana by road. Large herds of buffalo and elephant congregated around the Sedudu Island as we cruised along. We also saw various water birds as well as hippo and crocodile out of the water. After lunch on the boat, we wrapped up our cruise and headed for the Kasane International Airport and proceeded to **Linyanti Tented Camp**. Linyanti is at its driest at the moment and most of the deciduous trees are without any leaves. Due to this, the game viewing in the Linyanti region is simply mind blowing. We decided to start the game drive from the airstrip and headed down to the Linyanti River. We found a pride of eight lionesses and cubs after picking up their trail. They were all lying down under the bushes, digesting a buffalo kill. This was a perfect start to our time here. The following morning was perhaps even better. We came across two full-bellied hyaena along the river. As we drove closer, we heard impala alarm calling. We quickly made our way there to investigate and found a male leopard on the run. It was difficult to ascertain whether he was running away from us or from the approaching hyaena. Half an hour later when we found a leopard mother and cub resting up a tree. The cub was in great view and provided some great photography. We were to pick up another leopard the following afternoon to take our tally to four leopards in two days. We also had our first pack of wild dogs that morning. The next morning we tracked down a pair of lion to the east of camp after hearing their roars through the night. We found them mating along the river and spent some time with them. Shortly before this we picked up three sitatunga along the marsh, as we were tracking the lions. This of course is the holy grail of southern Africa's aquatic antelopes and we were all jubilant to see not one, but three on the same spot. Another amazing thing here is the population of elephant we also encountered. Due to the dry conditions, large herds congregated along the water all day long and we were treated to some great elephant experiences throughout our stay. In addition to those rarities, we had several sightings of both the roan and the sable antelope.*

The following morning before we headed for the airstrip, we decided to “swing” to the east of camp and see if we could find the mating pair of lion. However we were treated to a different lion experience as we stumbled onto two young lion that had just brought down a big buffalo bull. We watched them as they recovered from what must have been an intense fight with the buffalo. They then proceeded to start opening the carcass up and feed. On our way to the airstrip, we picked up a pack of fourteen wild dogs lying along the river. We also stumbled across a honey badger carrying a leopard tortoise. Unfortunately he was a shy individual and promptly dropped the heavy load and ran away, perhaps much to the relief of the tortoise who was facing certain death.

After a 35 minutes flight, we were at **Gomoti Tented Camp** and ready for our next adventure. The temperatures at Gomoti were slightly higher than in Linyanti however this was countered by the great wildlife experiences we had over our three nights here. Besides the two different leopards we saw here, we also had numerous lion encounters. Perhaps the most memorable one was when a lion roar at close range interrupted our sundowner drinks. We had to quickly pack up everything and track down the lion and found him shortly afterwards. He continued to roar, which the guests thoroughly enjoyed. We followed him until he and another male converged on a female that was calling from another direction. We were to see these two males the following morning competing for a fresh impala carcass. A pack of wild dogs started our next morning when they came down to drink at the camp’s waterhole. We followed them as they started hunting and it was not long before we picked up that death bellow from an impala. We dashed to the spot to find an impala labouring through its last breaths under the clutches of the pack. This would be the last sighting of this pack but we continued to see more lion during our stay here. Since the Gomoti is much drier, it also provided opportunities for dry habitat species such as honey badgers, Yellow mongoose, dwarf mongoose, black-backed jackal, kori bustard, red-crested korhaan and a few others. Our last sundowner was also not without adventure as we were parked close to a waterhole and watched a few animals coming down to drink and interact. Next thing I spotted a brown head poking out of the grass about 100 meters away. As we watched her with our binoculars, she stood up and proceeded towards us. Then a young male also emerged from the grasses and followed. Then a big male emerged from the bushes elsewhere and they all walked past us towards the waterhole. Throw in an unsuspecting honey badger coming from a drink and walking towards the lions and you have a sighting that could potentially explode. However the lions ignored the badger and proceeded to the waterhole.



Tracking and following signs and leads to find a cat can often be exhilarating experience for guests on safari. The last morning provided two opportunities to execute a near perfect tracking experience. We picked up some leopard tracks not far from the camp and we followed up as they looked fresh. Ten minutes later, we went off road to investigate some squirrel distress calls and duly picked up the leopard. While he was shy and did not give us opportunity to photograph him, we all enjoyed the tracking experience. Another opportunity came later that day as we were making our way back to camp and were running slightly late. As we approached the spot where we had left a big male lion earlier, we picked up some alarm calls from a vervet monkey up a tree. Initially I assumed it was because he was watching the lion but a gut urge got us swinging into the bushes to investigate. In no time, we bagged our second leopard of the morning, and our sixth of the trip. He was hiding up a tree with thick foliage around him with only the tail showing.

After spending six days on the vehicle and chasing big game, **Pelo Camp** was a welcome change of scenery as we could now focus on water activities. Guests thoroughly enjoyed our two nights here as we did several mokoro and boat activities. The aquatic creatures and general scenery of the Okavango Delta was a great treat for us. After this, we were ready to get back into game drives at Tubu Tree Camp to finish off our trip. The seasonal flood plains around Hunda Island are dry at the moment, leaving large tracts of land for grazers such as buffalo, zebra and wildebeest. We had numerous herds of these ungulates during our time. From this trip, **Tubu Tree** will perhaps be most remembered as the camp that provided the most impressive leopard experience for us. On the first afternoon, we picked up a young leopard cub lying in some tall grass. She was very relaxed and allowed us to approach at close quarters. After sometime, she moved off and we followed her. Shortly she was reunited with her mother who had been hiding in some tall grasses about a hundred yards away. We watched as they played and bonded for about an hour. We also got to see another male on our full day here.

After our short drive on the last morning, we returned to camp to pack and be ready to depart. Our mid morning flight took us across a long stretch of the central part of the Okavango Delta and over the Chief’s Island. This provided ideal opportunity to enjoy the aerial view of this iconic landmark once more as we wrapped and incredible twelve days of safari. Our arrival in Maun was not without a little delight as we landed just a few minutes ahead of the Botswana presidential jet. It was delightful for the guests to see the president of the country they had grown to love over our twelve days of safari here”.

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Until next time
The Wilderness Explorations Team

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