

BUSANGA PLAINS:

AFRICA'S MOST EXCLUSIVE HOT-AIR BALLOON GAME VIEWING

Zambia – “the real Africa” – is one of Africa’s hidden gems. It is a vast country, with a low population and expansive wild areas hosting a huge diversity of wildlife. Kafue National Park and the spectacularly unique Busanga Plains are even less well known and the pristine nature of the latter makes it perfect for Wilderness Safaris and guests at our two charming camps here.



NEW IN 2013:

- **50% discount** on flying to and from Kafue for stays of 3 nights or more (from Livingstone or Lusaka)
- **Free hot-air ballooning** during August, September and October for all guests staying 3 nights or more.
- Complimentary copies of **Swamp Lions**, the compelling documentary on the Busanga Pride, for all our guests.


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BUSANGA game viewing

From the first time you see the **Busanga Plains** you are struck by the immense space and remoteness. Flying in from either Livingstone or Lusaka one sees mostly unbroken woodland for kilometres at a time; occasionally meandering bright blue rivers break the monotony. Then, even before you leave the woodland completely, a vast plain appears on the horizon. It is ringed by dense miombo woodland, but as you fly above you immediately notice that the plain is not uniform. Rather it is a mosaic of grassland, sluggish channels and hippo pools, palm islands and fragmented papyrus swamp. It is this range of habitats that results in a diversity of game viewing.

Shumba Camp and **Busanga Bush Camp** are perfectly located in order to access all of these habitat types and ensure that our guests see as wide a range of wildlife as possible.

The carnivores

Lions are the dominant carnivore and the prime attraction for many on these plains. The territory of the Busanga Pride centres on both Busanga Bush Camp and Shumba, while the Papyrus Pride occurs to the north, and the Treeline Pride to the south. The two very large Busanga Boys – the dominant male coalition – move across the entire area. Aside from their impressively stocky physiques these lions are celebrated for their climbing of stately fig trees (to catch the cooling breeze and achieve a vantage point) as well as for their ability to survive the inundated summer months on this floodplain. While the lions are resident, **cheetah** and **wild dog** are more nomadic over much larger home ranges and are seen less often. **Spotted hyaena** occur at low density, while **leopard** are more at home in the surrounding woodland than on the plains themselves. **Side-striped jackal** and **serval** are exciting smaller carnivores that are relatively common.

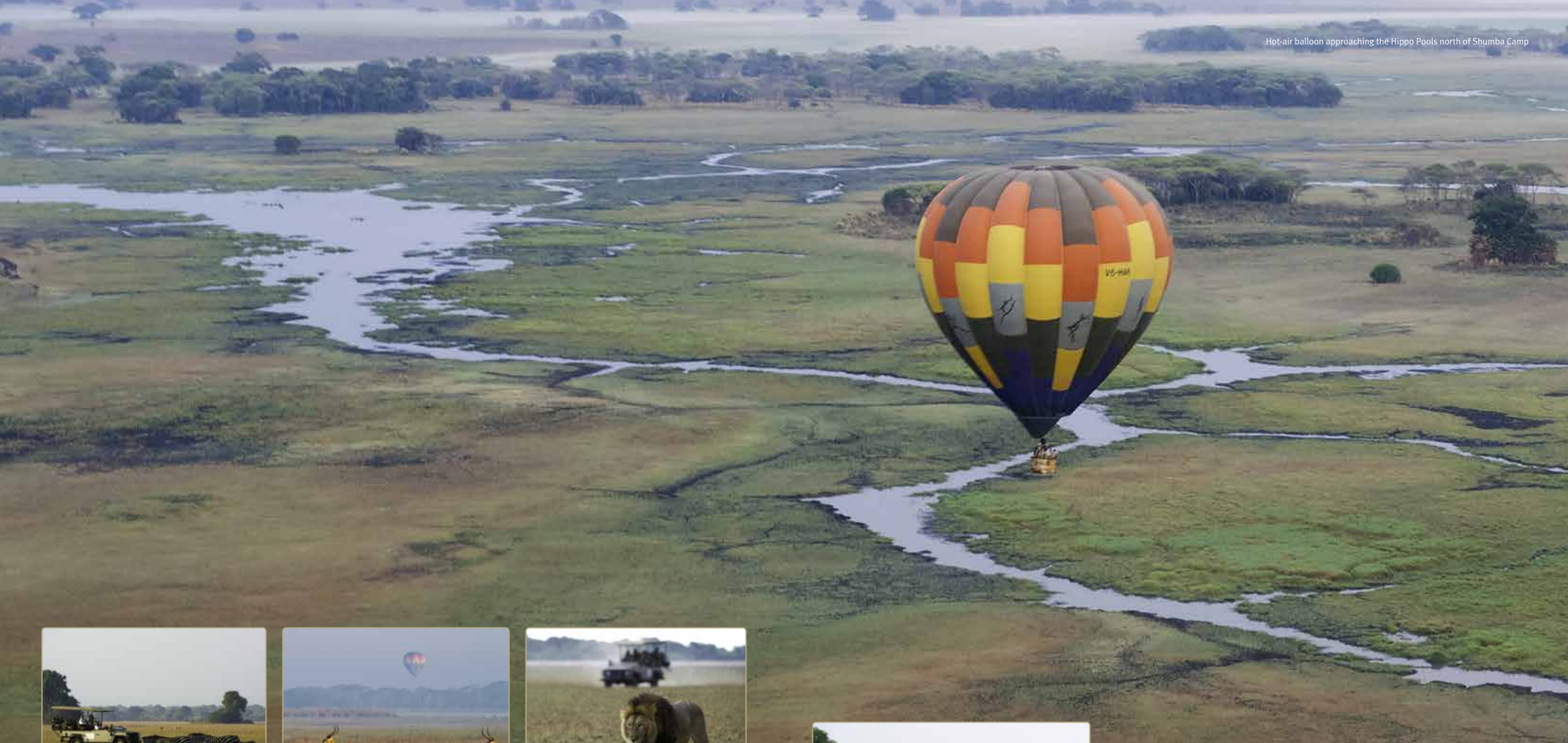
The plains game

Red lechwe and **puku** are the most common antelope on the plains and occur in their thousands. While the puku favour the dry ground adjacent to the wetter areas, the lechwe thrive in the shallows of the floodplain. **Common reedbuck** occur across both habitats while the small areas of pure papyrus swamp are the haunt of elusive **sitatunga**. Away from the watery areas **roan antelope**, **oribi**, **warthog** and **blue wildebeest** are the most abundant herbivores, while along the treeline **Lichtenstein's hartebeest** are most common. As the floodplains dry out through the winter months, more and more game is attracted from the surrounding woodlands. It is then that **zebra** numbers increase, and that antelope such as **sable** venture onto the plains for water.

Large mega-herbivores

Large herds of **buffalo** and isolated smaller groups of bulls revel in the grassy and water rich environment of the Busanga Plains. A herd of 300+ uses the area around our two camps. **Hippo** also are abundant and haunt the smaller channels as well as the deeper pools where they form large pods. **Elephants** are seen less often, preferring instead the richer feeding grounds of the woodlands. When they are seen on the plains though, their bulk and size is dwarfed by the extent of the grasslands making for striking sightings.





BUSANGA activities



Game Drives

The mainstay of our game-viewing activities, game drives take place throughout the season and enable us to cover large areas of the plains and the tree-line edge in search of wildlife.

The vast open landscape allows for excellent visibility and game viewing, whether of large predators like lion, or the herds of plains game that occupy specific niches in the environment. It is this openness that makes night drives here exciting, with a chance of rare species such as aardvark, serval and large grey mongoose.



Hot-air Ballooning

During the second half of each season – August, September and October – we operate hot-air balloon safaris on the Busanga Plains. Drifting silently aloft over the expansive plains as the sun rises is a spectacular experience. Wildlife commonly seen from above includes lechwe and puku, as well as roan, wildebeest, buffalo, oribi and zebra. It is not uncommon to see lion from the air as well.

Boating

At the beginning of the season – from May through to June, and even into July, should summer rains have been heavy enough – it is possible to traverse parts of the Busanga Plains by boat. Specially adapted motor boats allow us to operate in very low water levels allowing excellent birding opportunities, as well as viewing of hippo, lechwe and puku.



BUSANGA camps

Shumba Camp

Shumba Camp has six luxurious safari tents on raised platforms under a shady tree canopy, overlooking spectacular surrounding plains. The large en-suite rooms are served by a central dining and lounge area, which is also raised to maximise the view.

Sunrise breakfasts are served here as the ethereal mists rise off the plains in winter. Evening meals are often cooked over an open fire in front of guests, and served either in the elegant dining area or in the cosy confines of the traditional *boma*, where elements of local Zambian culture come to the fore.

Shumba Camp at a Glance

Category: Premier

6 tents (including 1 Family Tent): raised on wooden decks and connected by walkways; en-suite bathrooms; outdoor shower; private front deck.

Experiences: Day and night game drives • Boating (seasonal) • Hot-air ballooning (seasonal)



Busanga Bush Camp

Busanga Bush Camp provides the most authentic and intimate safari experience in Kafue without compromising on comfort. Consisting of only four well-appointed tents, the camp is nestled in a grove of sycamore fig trees overlooking a plain teeming with game – the ideal staging post from which to absorb the special diversity and richness of the area.

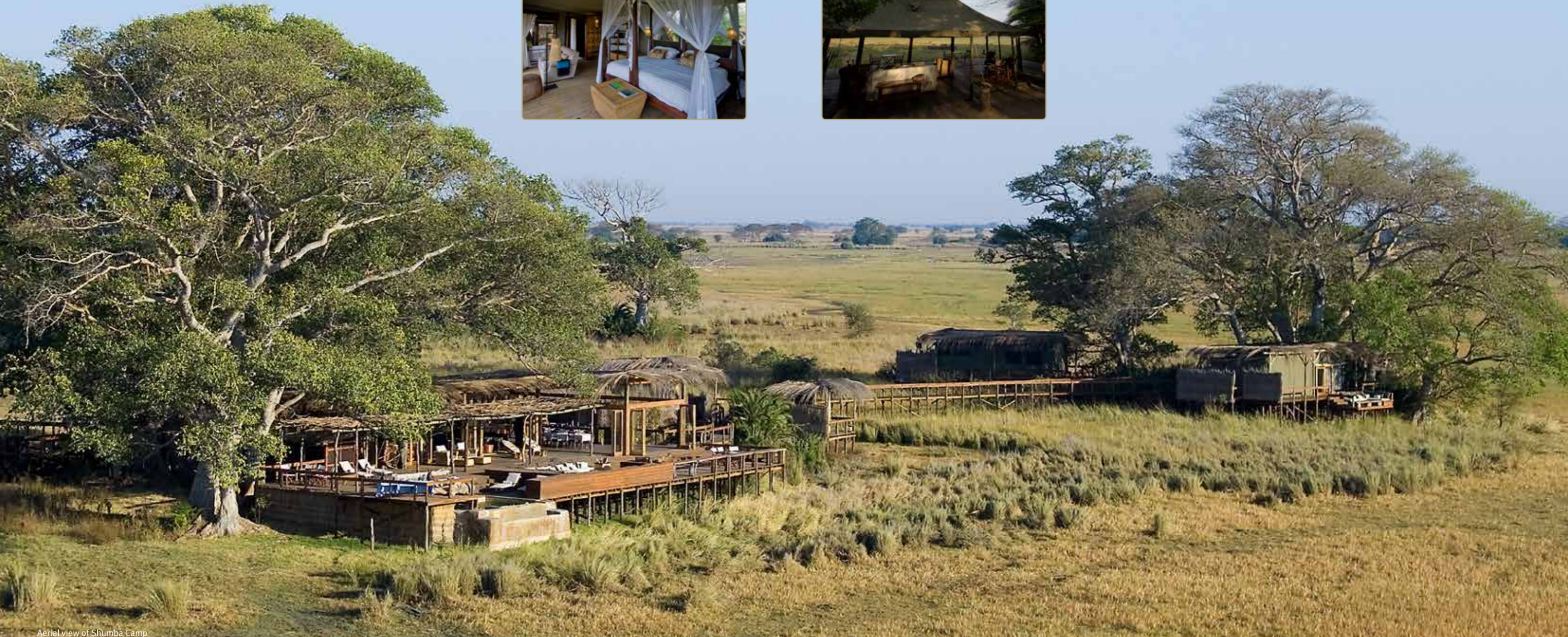
The lounge looks out over the plains – breakfast is often served here to take in the mist-shrouded view of herds of lechwe and puku – while the focal point of the dining area is an unusual lantern chandelier hung from the shady canopy of a majestic tree above.

Busanga Bush Camp at a Glance

Category: Classic

4 tents: Traditional Meru tents set on the ground and shaded by giant figs; en-suite bath; private front deck.

Experiences: Day and night game drives • Boating (seasonal) • Hot-air ballooning (seasonal)



Aerial view of Shumba Camp

Kafue National Park and the Busanga Plains

Conveniently located in the western half of Zambia, almost equidistant from Lusaka as well as the Victoria Falls at Livingstone, Kafue is the largest and oldest national park in the country. At 22 400 square kilometres (8 648 square miles) it is also one of the largest parks in Africa and as a result hosts a huge range of diversity, often being lauded as having the most varied antelope viewing on the continent. Also as a result of its size it is home to one of Africa's most important populations of lion and wild dog, and Zambia's most important cheetah population.

The Busanga Plains, the undoubted gem of the Kafue, is located in the remote and pristine north west of the park.

Here a vast mosaic of expansive grassy seasonal floodplains and palm islands extends to the horizon, providing fantastic concentrations of common species such as puku, lechwe, buffalo and wildebeest, but also comparative rarities not easily viewed in most other places in Africa; the stately roan, nimble oribi, secretive sitatunga and unusual Lichtenstein's hartebeest. Lions dominate the carnivores with three prides resident across our core area. These 'swamp lions' are impressive, heavily built animals and are best known for their seasonal tree-climbing antics and aquatic hunting tactics. Cheetah and wild dog are seen sporadically, with leopard and spotted hyaena present.

The Busanga Plains also have a diverse array of birds, with almost 500 species recorded; the plains provide a stronghold for the rare wattled crane, and support the endemic Zambian (Chaplin's) barbet.



Getting there...

