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APRIL 2019

NEWSFLASH

Ballooning Excursion from the Vumbura Camps

Operational between April and September (ex Vumbura Plains and Little Vumbura only), the new balloon season is now underway. A key change is that we will no longer be offering road transfer options, only helicopter. We have done so to make it a much more pleasant experience for our guests:

- Guests do not have to get up as early. One has to be at the balloon site just before sunrise which may mean a 04:00 wake-up call - departing at 04:30 with up to an hour's road transfer in the dark (remember this is during some of the chilly winter months).
- More flexibility in the balloon launch sites.
- Guests will not have a two or three hour road transfer back to camp after the balloon flight.

From the helicopter transfer perspective, there will be three options available:

- Standard return air transfer
- Return air transfer including a 15 minute scenic flight
- Return air transfer including a 30 minute scenic flight

In addition, should the balloon excursion be cancelled due to poor weather conditions, Helicopter Horizons have offered a 1 hour 15 minute scenic flight (doors off) with "Champagne Island Stop" as an alternative. The cost matches the cost of standard return transfers plus balloon.

Botswana Water Activity Update

Low rainfall plus what looks like a less than average inundation, has resulted in a significant drop in water levels, particularly down the western side of the Okavango Delta. Please ensure your clients are aware of the below to ensure expectations are met:

- There are currently no water activities on both the Abu and Jao concessions. The focus here is on game drives (which have been good) and walks where applicable. All transfers in and out of camps on the Jao concession are by road.
- Boating is still on offer from the camps in the Vumbura concession and DumaTau in the Linyanti.
- Mokoro excursions are still possible from Qorokwe.

Roll-out of Wi-Fi in Wilderness Camps

While we have always encouraged our guests to “disconnect to reconnect”, we understand that in the modern world, there is an expectation of Wi-Fi being offered everywhere. We are therefore placing the choice to disconnect – and connect – in the hands of our guests, and are making Wi-Fi available in all the areas in which we operate. This is taking place in a phased approach, through all regions. Please note that Wi-Fi will only be available in guest rooms or tents and, due to the remoteness of our areas, signal may be intermittent.

CAMPS & ACTIVITIES

Jao and King’s Pool

The rebuilds are proceeding well at both camps...watch this space for more updates in the coming weeks as we approach “the grand openings”!

Jacana Rebuild

Having opened at the beginning of April after an extensive rebuild of both rooms and main area, changes include:

- 5 x Twin Tents (10 beds) only, and no family accommodation
- Each room has an outside bath
- The camp is now 100% solar
- There is no longer a private vehicle

Olympus Binoculars in Camp

With the exception of Abu, the Chitabe camps, the Jao Camps, Qorokwe and our Zambian camps - all other camps in Botswana, Namibia, Rwanda and Zimbabwe now have:

- A pair of Olympus binoculars in the main area of the camp for all guests to use
- A pair of Olympus binoculars on every vehicle with the guide that all guests may share

Scenic flights, Tsodilo Hills & Helicopter Transfers

Add a WOW factor to your Botswana itineraries with either a scenic helicopter flight from our Delta camps or an inter-camp transfer (with an optional champagne stop) by helicopter. Ranging in duration between 30, 45 or 60 minutes, the scenic flights (minimum 2) are conducted any time of day. Doors can be removed for great photo and video opportunities. To learn more about Botswana and the history of the San Bushmen, the half day Tsodilo Hills excursion is also possible from all our Delta camps. Contact your Journey Specialist for more information.

The Abu Elephant Experience

- On arrival, guests have a meet and greet session with the elephant herd where the Elephant Manager will introduce them, sharing a bit of history of each elephant.
- Walking - guests (maximum 6) walk with the herd in their natural environment, and the handlers share their knowledge on elephant behaviour and conservation. Approximately 1.5 hours in duration, mornings and afternoons, this is subject to change depending on herd dynamics and weather conditions - with an option at the end of the walk to feed the elephants and have a close up photo opportunity.
- High Tea – enjoyed with the herd, guests watch what comes naturally to elephants such as eating, drinking, playing together or mud wallowing. Wallowing is seasonal and may occur three times a day in the hotter months, whilst during winter months the elephants seldom mud bath. No maximum guest numbers.
- Sundowners - at the Elephant Boma in the evening with the herd. No maximum guest numbers.
- Note that the herd roam freely during the day and are only placed in the Elephant Boma enclosure for their own safety in the evenings.

Recent “Facelifts” on the Abu Concession

At Seba:

- New lowered bar area (adding a lot of space) and addition of a pergola at the pool area
- Sanding and varnishing in main area and rooms
- New duckboards for the showers and new canvas panels around the window areas so that they close properly

At Abu:

- New pools are being installed.
- General maintenance carried out including waxing of floors, privacy screening and replacing balustrades.

Promote Low Season Travel to Rwanda Due to Discount on Gorilla Permits

If a minimum two night stay at either Akagera or Nyungwe National Parks is added on to a visit to Volcanoes National Park between November and May, then a 30% discount is offered on one gorilla permit per person. This is a great way to add value to an itinerary that includes a combination of Bisate and Magashi, opening on 1 May 2019. An ideal Rwandan itinerary would include 3 nights at Magashi for an exclusive/wild safari experience, an overnight in Kigali to discover the history and culture of this remarkable country, and 3 nights at the iconic Bisate, trekking for gorillas and golden monkeys.

Lower Transfer Rate to/from Bisate

Good news... we have reduced the Private Guide & Vehicle rate for transfers to and from Bisate. These costs also include the following:

- Emergency Evacuation – to Nairobi in Kenya if necessary
- Porter fee for the gorilla trekking – contribution to a good cause and takes the hassle away from the guest
- Meet and assist at Kigali Airport – on both arrival AND departure

TOURING & TRANSFERS

NEW | Historic Tram & Bridge Tour

This lunchtime tram journey travels from Victoria Falls Train Station to the iconic Victoria Falls Bridge. On arrival at the station, enjoy a selection of sandwiches and snacks with a refreshing Pimm's cocktail or glass of champagne. After a brief introduction, the vintage styled tram slowly meanders through the National Park with frequent sightings of wildlife towards the Victoria Falls Bridge. Stops on the bridge take in the beauty and magnitude of the Victoria Falls, followed by carefully selected craft gins and snacks at the viewpoint, before returning to the station. Departing at 11:45 and returning at 14:00 daily, the excursion will operate with a minimum 4 and maximum 24.

WILDERNESS AIR

Wilderness Air Zimbabwe

Effective mid-March, we moved to AREA FLYING in Zimbabwe for all travel from 1 April 2019 to a) simplify the booking process and b) provide additional access via Wilderness Air to selected third party airstrips. An updated flyer is available on the Info Centre, and the Zimbabwe Rates Sheets have been amended accordingly.

- Although there are set departure times from certain areas, flights will be booked camp to camp (as we do for Botswana), instead of seats on the schedule.
- Confirmed/provisional bookings travelling between 14 March and 31 May 2019, remain as is on the previous circuit. Note that for these bookings, especially those already finalised with documents issued, times stipulated in the voucher or itinerary may not be adhered to i.e. not match the reality on the ground. Wilderness Air Zimbabwe will endeavour to match them where possible, however, there may be occasions where guests will be flown according to the new simplified circuit in order to maximise efficiencies and reduce our carbon footprint.
- All existing confirmed and provisional bookings travelling from 1 June 2019, will be re-booked by your Journey Specialist as AREA flying, and all new bookings will be placed accordingly.
- To utilise our Wilderness Air seat rates, there must be at least one Wilderness Safaris Zimbabwe camp (no minimum night stay) in the itinerary, while third party arrangements in the same itinerary may be booked through Wilderness Safaris or direct with the supplier.

Wilderness Air Zambia

Effective 1 June 2019, we have made some changes to our flying in Zambia (operated by Staravia) to allow for additional access to selected third party airstrips and provide additional seats to/from Livingstone. Accordingly, we have revised the concept to reflect Area flying, matching how the rates are set up i.e. Area 1, Area 2 and Area 3. Important to note however, is that unlike Botswana and Zimbabwe where you now book a charter camp to camp, in Zambia we will still have a specific number seats set up in inventory. The reason for this is due to a) load factors and b) outsourcing our flying to Staravia. An updated flyer is available on the Info Centre, and the Zambia Rates Sheets have been amended accordingly. Note that the current circuit will fall away.

- **IMPORTANT:** there will no longer be a Saturday flight between Kafue & Lusaka, but we have ADDED a Saturday flight to the Kafue & Livingstone leg. All existing bookings (as of early April) on the Kafue/Lusaka/Kafue legs on Saturdays, will be honoured.
- Selected third party camps in the Kafue area have been added which will be accessed via Area 2/Area 2 flights. These lodge hops (10 to 15 minutes long) do not have set flight times so guests will be advised in camp the night prior.
- There are set departure times from Livingstone, Lusaka and the Kafue (which is based on our Plains camps of Shumba and Busanga). If guests are going to or departing from a third party in the Kafue, be aware that times will be adjusted accordingly on the day.
- All confirmed and provisional bookings travelling from 1 June 2019 on the previous circuit, will be re-booked per the new circuit (exception being existing bookings on the Kafue/Lusaka and vice versa Saturday flights).
- All new bookings travelling from 1 June 2019, will be booked per these new routes and times.
- All sectors will have 8 seats allocated to them on the days as specified. Additional seats may be possible – on a request basis only, subject to availability.
- The Lufupa and Chunga stops for third party camps, are only possible when your itinerary includes either Shumba or Busanga Bush Camp. An Area 2/Area2 rate has been loaded to cover the cost of this leg.
- To utilise our Wilderness Air seat rates, there must be at least one Wilderness Safaris Kafue camp (no minimum night stay) in the itinerary, while third party arrangements in the same itinerary may be booked through Wilderness Safaris or direct with the supplier.

Minimum Two when Flying in Zimbabwe & Zambia

Due to passenger numbers (i.e. less volume and frequency than Botswana and Namibia) in Zimbabwe and Zambia, you may NOT waive the single flying surcharge for a single traveller and must charge accordingly.

Zambezi Triangle Flying

Seat rates on the Zambezi Triangle flights (BBK/VFA/LVI) only apply when these are booked in conjunction with Wilderness Air Botswana flights. Should flying be booked with another supplier and connections between Kasane and Livingstone/Victoria Falls are required, this must be booked as a sole use charter or a road transfer.

Mana Pools Hop

Rate-wise, Mana Pools is treated as one destination – the same rate applies whether flying into Mana West airstrip (for Ruckomechi/Little Ruckomechi) or Chikwenya airstrip (for Chikwenya). The additional cost for the air hop (road transfers are not possible) between Mana West and Chikwenya is only applicable when guests combine Ruckomechi and Chikwenya.

Important for all Wilderness Air Flights

If we have not received passenger names as per passport two weeks prior to travel, bookings on seat rates will be released and sole use charters will need to be booked and paid for by the agent or guest.

The 20kgs baggage allowance stipulated in our terms & conditions for Wilderness Air INCLUDES carry-on luggage – back-packs, camera equipment, sleep apnoea machines, etc.

RATES

Enhanced Guide Offering

The private guide rates for 2019 have been extended into 2020 – so no increase. Great value add for an itinerary...

Utilising Wilderness Air Seat Rates

With immediate effect, and applicable to new bookings only, the following changes have been made to our previous policy:

- For Botswana and Namibia: Seat rates on our Wilderness Air flying circuits may now be utilised on a standalone basis - they no longer have to be booked in conjunction with accommodation or other services through Wilderness Safaris.

- For Botswana specifically: Should you book Wilderness Safaris camps but your own flying, charging RSP rates less 15% no longer applies in Botswana. In this scenario, standard accommodation rates are applicable. The exception is Mombo and Little Mombo – they still have to be booked in combination with another Wilderness Safaris camp (in any country) for standard rates to apply. If Mombo or Little Mombo are the only Wilderness Safaris camps booked, then RSP rates less 10% still applies.

Pelo Rate Increase for Peak Season 2020

The RSP of Pelo has increased to US\$ 900.00 per person, per night for peak season 2020. Systems and Rates Sheets have been adjusted accordingly. All existing bookings quoted/confirmed at the previous rate will be honoured.

REMINDERS & REGULATIONS

New Luggage Regulations at OR Tambo

We have received further information from the Airports Company South Africa (ACSA) in this regard.

- The new baggage rule has been implemented at O.R. Tambo International Airport as a soft launch to create greater awareness.
- The soft launch rule is only applicable to departing bags from check-in.
- It is not applicable to bags that are through checked (transit) to its final destination.
- This rule will not see any passenger turned away at check-in.
- Soft sided bags that have one flat surface are not deemed to be irregular which therefore means that majority of safari bags are not considered to be irregular.
- Passengers will be requested to secure or remove long straps and insert them inside their bags prior to check-in.
- Irregular bags can be wrapped with a flat surface at the standard wrapping cost (ZAR 90 per bag). They do not have any card facilities, and accept CASH ONLY in ZAR, USD, Euro or Pounds. If you pay in a foreign currency, they determine the rate of exchange on the day.

Birth Certificate Requirements

At this time, further clarification on the final ruling is still pending. A birth certificate is required to travel to South Africa, although apparently a copy may be accepted as opposed to the original. Directives to airline check-in staff and immigration appear to be unclear however, so until there is absolute clarity, our recommendation is that guests should travel with an original birth certificate where possible (plus other relevant documentation according to circumstance) to avoid being turned away – either by the airline on departure or on arrival here. This is simply to err on the side of caution - the onus is on the guest if they choose not to do so.

KAZA Visa Applicable to Botswana

Botswana has committed to join the Kavango-Zambezi (Kaza) uni-visa system, to expedite the movement of tourists between the country and other Kaza members, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Nothing is finalised as yet – we will advise when it goes live.

Scheduled Commercial Air & Ticketing

- Passport copies/correct names are vital for making bookings – to secure fares and issue tickets. Changes will incur costs.
 - All fares are subject to change until tickets have been issued. Available seat categories and rates of exchange play a big role in this.
 - An After Hours assistance fee applies.
 - When connecting between flights in South Africa, passengers currently have to collect luggage first i.e. cannot check it straight through. Apparently this is going to change – we will update all as soon as details are available.
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