

Pursuing Predators in the Okavango Delta

Available December 1st through March 31, 2011



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Introduction

Safaris in Botswana can provide an unbeatable exclusivity by exploring private concessions, here just one to two camps will have unlimited access throughout areas of huge acreage. Because of this extremely low tourism density it is possible to drive off-road allowing for active tracking of predators. While many guides will watch for tracks and pay some attention to them on the road there are very few camps where the dedicated effort to apply the ancient art of tracking occurs. On this itinerary I have selected three camps renowned for the presence of predators and the active tracking of predators. At each of these camps your game drives have a guide/tracker team and it is common for both the guide and the tracker to actively get out of the vehicle and follow the trail of predators greatly increasing your chances to find them.



The camps on this itinerary are located in very different habitat areas so complement each other very well and combine for opportunities to see a diverse array of animals but the one thing they have in common is a tendency to deliver high quality predator sightings, often due to dedicated tracking. The game viewing is strong in these areas for general wildlife and I have found each area to be very high quality during the green season. Typically this itinerary will produce sightings of more than 30 different mammal species as well as a great diversity of birds. The itinerary also includes great swathes of Okavango Delta wilderness allowing for full exploration by vehicle, bush plane, power boat, mokoro, and on foot.

Safari Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive in Maun, Botswana and then fly by bush plane to Santawani Lodge.
Day 2 Santawani Lodge
Day 3 Santawani Lodge
Day 4 After morning activity fly by bush plane to Mapula Lodge
Day 5 Mapula Lodge
Day 6 Mapula Lodge
Day 7 After morning game drive fly to Kwara Camp
Day 8 Kwara Camp
Day 9 Kwara Camp
Day 10 After morning activity fly to Maun.

Cost: \$3,650 per person sharing
\$ 325 Single Supplement – there is no supplement on accommodation but the additional cost is for the bush flights.

*This itinerary is priced from Maun to Maun and includes all internal flights between camps, accommodation, meals, drinks (except at Santawani), laundry, and activities.

**Price is valid December 1, 2010 through March 31, 2011 except for holiday period of December 20 through January 04 when a supplement may be charged.

***As the camps are small and intimate this itinerary is always subject to availability. As it is a custom departure this safari can be modified according to client desires by lengthening, shortening, substituting a camp, etc. with corresponding re-pricing.

Not Included Out of Pocket Costs to Consider

International Air to and from Maun, Botswana.

Drinks at Santawani Lodge

Tips – Recommend \$20 per person per day -- \$10 to your guide, \$5 to the tracker, and \$5 to the staff.

Travel Insurance – The camps require that you have comprehensive travel insurance with medical coverage. I sell Travel Guard and can assist with a policy or you are welcome to secure your own.

Health Precautions – I recommend a visit to a travel clinic. You will need anti-malarial medications and possibly some shots depending on your medical history.

Into the Botswana Wild



Fly between camps by bush plane.

Once you arrive in Maun a representative of Delta Air will be waiting to greet you and help you transfer to your bush plane for a flight to Santawani Lodge. When your bush plane lands your safari guide from the camp will be waiting to pick you up. Each camp is small and intimate with the surrounding bush. The typical day involves an early wake up (around 5:30 am), meet at the lounge around 6 am for coffee, juice, fruit, cereal, etc. Then about 6:30 it is off on an activity, mostly game drives but you will have opportunities for a walk and to explore the Okavango waters by mokoro (traditional dug out canoe) and powerboat. In the midst of your activity you will stop for tea (or coke, etc.) and a small snack. Typically you will return to camp around 10:30 for a big brunch, followed by a few hours of relax time while during the heat of the days most of the animals are doing the same. Wildlife might come and go at anytime and the sounds of hippos will be an excitable reminder that you are deep in the Botswana wilderness. Tea time is around 3:30 p.m. and there will be a hearty snack in preparation for your next activity. By 4:00 you will be out in the bush again enjoying the wildlife. Near the end of daylight you will stop in a beautiful location for one of the most magnificent traditions on earth – The Sundowner. Enjoy your favorite drink to a glorious sunset. Now the game drive turns to a night drive and the spotlight is turned on as the drive back to camp will be in the dark and with luck you will find some of the secretive nocturnal creatures. Dining is usually a communal event and the guides and camp managers sit in to ensure lively conversation with old African hands. Following a leisurely meal you might enjoy a night cap or simply retire to your tent before another early morning. Whenever it is dark your guide will escort you to and from your tent, fortunately these camps are not fenced and it is common for elephants, hippos, sometimes even lions to wander through, if you are lucky you will hear some of them from the safety of your tent. Keep in mind this was all the typical schedule but nature is unpredictable and I love all of these camps because they have a dedication to wildlife viewing as the focus, thus if you are in the midst of a thrilling sighting you will not be called in for meal time as happens at some other camps – here the wild rhythm sets the schedule.

Santawani Lodge – 3 Nights



This lodge is a first model of its kind in Botswana, as the local community receives 50% of the daily profits instead of a simple lease fee for their land while someone else owns the camp. Santawani Lodge is a simple brick bungalow style lodge that is in an exceptional wildlife area. Santawani is located in a prime area for predator viewing, in fact this private concession has long served as the home base for much of Botswana's predator research, including Dr. Tico McNutt's African wild dog research. Dr. McNutt's efforts have now been expanded to become the Botswana Predator Conservation Program, including studies on lions (3 prides in the area), spotted hyena, leopard, and cheetah. The book [*The Lion Children*](#) is based on lion research conducted in this concession as well. It should be noted that being the geographic center for Botswana's major predator studies means there are a number of animals that are fitted with GPS collars, an issue for photography but it is still just a small portion of the predators that are collared so it is a minor consideration. The concession lies on the southern border of the wildlife rich Moremi Game Reserve, widely considered to be amongst the richest wildlife areas in all Africa and this may prove to be the best private concession for diverse predator viewing.



Typically in Botswana local people own concession rights and they earn an income by leasing their concession to a safari operator who builds and operates a safari camp. In this case, the Sankuyo Tshwaragano Management Trust has instead entered a partnership with Lodges of Botswana to develop and manage this area as a 50/50 venture with the community earning 50% of the actual operating profits. The Sankuyo Tshwaragano Management Trust had a competitive proposal process before selecting this model that is believed to be more beneficial for the community than the traditional leasing set up. A guiding principle for The Wild Source is to support community based projects and I am ecstatic to see the development of this new model and hope that as additional concession leases come up for renewal that other local people will be able to increase their economic benefits.

Activities at Santawani Lodge focus on game drives and night drives in open vehicles with a guide and tracker to pursue sightings of the many predators as well as a full diversity of other species such as elephants, giraffe, zebra, kudu, etc., this is a very rich wildlife area. It is also possible to arrange a visit to a local village so learn about the community who owns this lodge.

The lodge consists of just six chalets with en-suite bathroom. They were recently renovated with new décor, linen and public areas. The strength here is the community, and the friendly cultural feel gives this lodge a different atmosphere.





You will be hosted by one of Botswana's most skilled guides, Doctor, formerly of Kwando Kwara and Mapula Lodge fame. Doctor has an exceptional reputation for finding the difficult to locate species and for his gregarious personality with an infectious enthusiasm that has earned him many followers. Doctor is joined in management by his wife, Tsogang, who was formerly a manager and cook at Mapula Lodge. In a small and intimate camp great management is essential and I can't imagine more enjoyable hosts than Doctor and Tsogang.

Mapula Lodge, Okavango Delta – 3 Nights



Mapula Lodge is set in a magical location in the far north of the Okavango Delta making Mapula one of the most remote camps in Botswana. This happens to be my personal favorite place because of the tremendous community staffing the Mapula Lodge and the welcoming atmosphere they provide, the scenic location of the camp, the outstanding accommodation that is very comfortable but not over the top, and most of all the focus on finding wildlife. The Mapula Lodge guides are outstanding and work with trackers to actively pursue predators. The area is vast and diverse as is the wildlife. With a high season cost that is far below other top camps I believe Mapula Lodge is the best value luxury camp in Botswana.



Mapula is best known for its African wild dog pack that can provide some exciting sightings but they can disappear for a long period of time so are now hit or miss. Lions are commonly seen with a coalition of three spectacular males the highlight, while hippos and elephants frequent the lagoon in front of camp. As of late leopard sightings have become outstanding. Smaller cats, serval and caracal are much rarer sightings but seem to be spotted with a fair frequency at Mapula. The area is well known for the elegant sable antelope that is rarely seen in other areas and as the area contains the only permanent water for many kilometers drawing elephants and buffalo into the area. Birdlife at Mapula is tremendous with great diversity.



You can do a variety of activities at Mapula including game drives, night drives, walks, and explore the Delta in the traditional mode of transportation – the mokoro, a dugout canoe that is poled along by a local guide. You can also explore the wider channels of the Delta by powerboat making Mapula a location for a complete Okavango experience.

Putting your feet on the ground on a walking safari at Mapula Lodge delivers a new unfiltered experience connecting you to the African past deeply buried within each of us, a connection to your ancient homeland where the human species originated.



The chalets at Mapula Lodge are unique - combining the feel of a chalet structure with a tent as the entire back of the chalet is screened mesh letting in the wild sounds and allowing private views out to the lagoon at Mapula and the hippos, elephants, fish eagles and multitude of other species that are commonly seen.



The camp at Mapula Lodge has a magical setting on the edge of a magnificent lagoon. The common area is large and comfortable and includes a bar with a location that can't be beat.



While the wildlife is exceptional at Mapula, the wonderful people will leave a lasting impression as well! Mapula Lodge staff is like a village and they welcome you with caring and kindness. Virtually the entire Mapula Lodge staff consists of couples, which is very rare in safari camps and it makes a noticeable difference and feels as if you are visiting their home as opposed to place of employment.

Mapula Lodge's guiding staff of Dicks, Matt and Josiah with Simon, Mike and John tracking is outstanding, both in skill but just as importantly in the enthusiasm they bring to seeking out wildlife. They enjoy game drives and want to go early, stay out late, track, and do whatever it takes to bring their clients the best experience. The people in this area are river bushmen, closely related to the San bushmen of the Kalahari and they have maintained their incredible tracking skills as well as taught them to the other local people the Bayei. Many excellent guides and trackers at other camps, such as some at the renowned Kwando, hail from the region surrounding Mapula Lodge.

Kwara Camp -- 3 Nights



Kwara Camp is located within one of the largest (almost half a million acres) private concession areas in all of Botswana, and it is also one of the richest for wildlife. The area is very diverse including permanent waters of the Okavango Delta, wide open plains, mopane woodlands, and palm islands. Kwara is part of the legendary Kwando Camps, known for their hard core dedication for game viewing. Kwara concession is rich in predators and this area has been one of the most productive for cheetah, leopard, and lion sightings. For a couple years now a coalition of three cheetah brothers have been frequently sighted, and there is an amazing coalition of seven male lions associated with the seven sisters pride.





Kwara Camp is able to offer a great diversity of activities including power boating, mokoro (dug out canoe) trips, walks and game drives. Kwara camp comprises just 8 twin-bedded rustic safari style tents accommodating a maximum of 16 guests. The tents are built on raised teak decks each with en-suite facilities. The intimate dining and lounge area is under thatch, built around a large shade tree overlooking the lagoon. Kwara has a small gift shop, lounge, dining room and small plunge pool. The camp is simple but comfortable and the setting is spectacular with wonderful sounds from hippos and birds.

