

# **CHEEPERS!** **AFRICA**

## **Botswana - Okavango Delta Birding and Wildlife Tour GUIDED FLY-IN SAFARI**

8 nights / 9 days  
February 5 – 13, 2020

**\$8800**

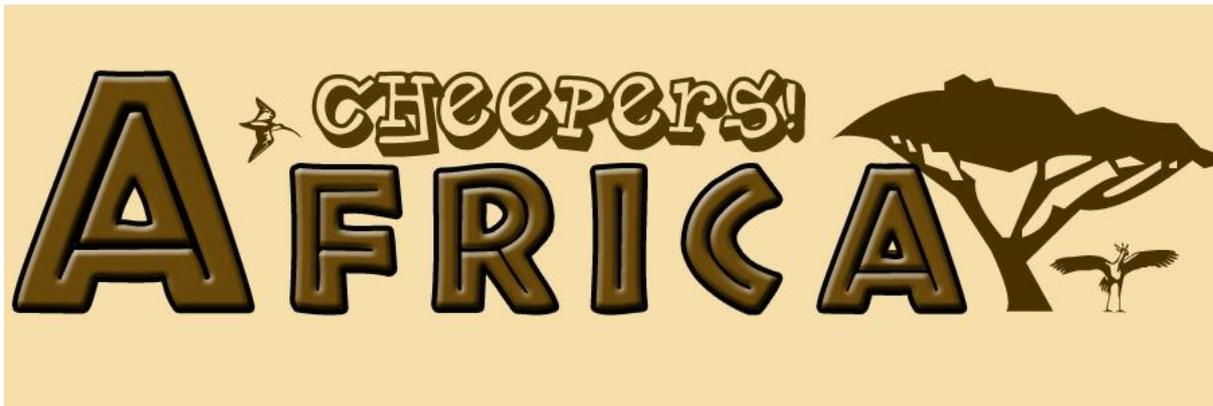
Single supplement \$220

8 nights / 9 days  
February 5 – 13, 2021

**\$8995**

Single supplement \$300

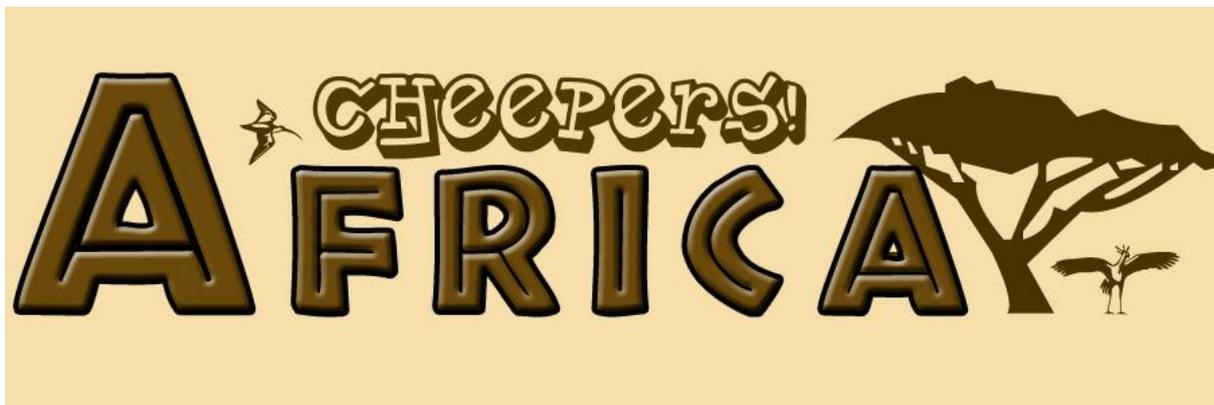




### Overview

This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to enjoy one of the most spectacular wildlife havens in the world is presenting itself as we managed to secure a special deal at some of the top lodges in Botswana. This is truly a Safari in style with no tedious drives between lodges as we transfer by charter plane throughout the trip. Enjoy spectacular game drives, boat trips and even Mokoro (dug-out canoe) excursions in search of big game and a plethora of birds. This trip starts in the heart of the Okavango Delta, then to the edge of the Delta from where we proceed to the famous Savuti area and then to the game rich Chobe National Park. The dates are preliminary dates and can be adjusted to anywhere within the months of May and June. This trip can be combined with our Zambia trip, which comes highly recommended.

- **The Okavango Delta** - one of the most incredible wilderness sanctuaries in Africa, is 15 000 square kilometres of water channels, lagoons and islands. Each year, floodwaters flow from the central African highlands over 1 000 km away into the Delta to create this wondrous wetland within a desert. It is home to large numbers of wildlife from common mammals and birdlife to those that are not often seen elsewhere, such as sitatunga, wild dog, and wattled crane. Read more at <http://www.botswanaturism.co.bw/destination/okavango-delta>
- **The Savute** - Stretching from the Linyanti River all the way to Savute Marsh, the winding waterways of the Savute Channel have pumped life into the western section of Chobe National Park for many thousands of generations. However, this fickle and unpredictable channel, which has a fascinating history of flooding and drying up, independently of good rainy seasons and flood levels elsewhere, has mystified local inhabitants, geologists and others for many years. In 2009, after another extended hiatus, the channel began flowing again and by January 2010 had spilled into the Savute Marsh for the first time in three decades, but for how long - no one knows ...
- **Chobe National Park** - Massive elephant populations, riverboat safaris, sunset cruises, riverfront safari lodges and top quality game drives have firmly positioned the Chobe National Park as a "must visit" destination for any enquiring safari enthusiast. Chobe National Park is famous for its elephants. The latest enquiry into the elephant population estimates it to be 120,000 - the highest elephant concentration in Africa and the largest continuous surviving elephant population on Earth. Read more at <http://www.botswanaturism.co.bw/destination/chobe-national-park>



## Detailed Itinerary

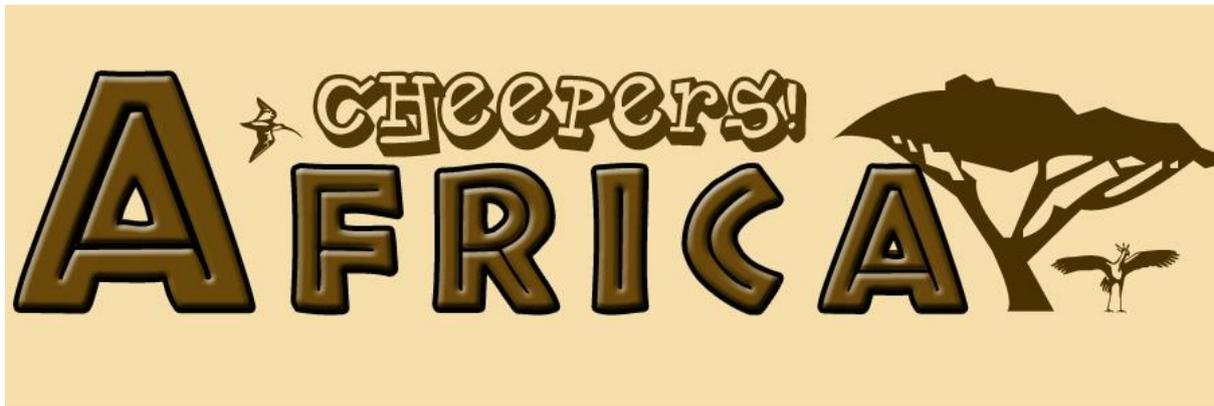
**Days 1 - 4: Johannesburg to Maun, Botswana and onwards to Moremi:** We take a morning flight from Johannesburg to Maun in Botswana. The ground agents can book this flight for all of us and add it to the overall tour cost. On arrival in Maun, we will transfer to a smaller plane for our short flight to our lodge in Moremi National Park.

Our time in Moremi will be spent at two brilliant but very different lodges with our time divided between game drives and birding by boat over the next couple of days. We have several full days in this very rich area of Moremi National Park to explore far and wide for birds and mammals - especially African Wild dog. We will probably take a boat ride into the Okavango for birding, which is particularly good in this area. Moremi lies on the eastern extremity of the Okavango Delta. Habitats here range from wide-open floodplains, marshes, lagoons, papyrus fringed channels, vast stands of Miscanthus and Phragmites, woodland and savannah. As a result of the extremely variable habitat the diversity of both wildlife and birdlife is excellent. Moremi is amongst the best game reserves in Africa for viewing the endangered African Wild Dog.

The area is very good for raptors with African Hawk-Eagle, Gabar Goshawk, Shikra, Little Sparrowhawk, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Tawny Eagle, Lesser Spotted Eagle and Steppe Eagle all inhabiting the mopane and adjacent woodlands. Other birds common along this route include most of Botswana's hornbills including Red-billed, Southern Yellow-billed, African Grey, Bradfield's and Southern Ground Hornbills.

The mopane veld is home to mostly breeding herds of Elephant whilst the eastern reaches of Moremi are home to some impressive old bulls. The mature bulls revel in the cool waters and are far more approachable while drinking and bathing than the breeding herds. The area has an unusually high density of Hippo as well as some huge Nile Crocodile. Leopard, Cheetah, Serval and Lion are common predators along this route. General game includes the southern race of Giraffe, Burchell's Zebra, Tsessebe and Red Lechwe with Roan and Sable Antelope being less common residents.

Mixed bird parties move through and include Red-headed Weaver, Stierling's Wren-Warbler, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Neddicky, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Chin-spot Batis



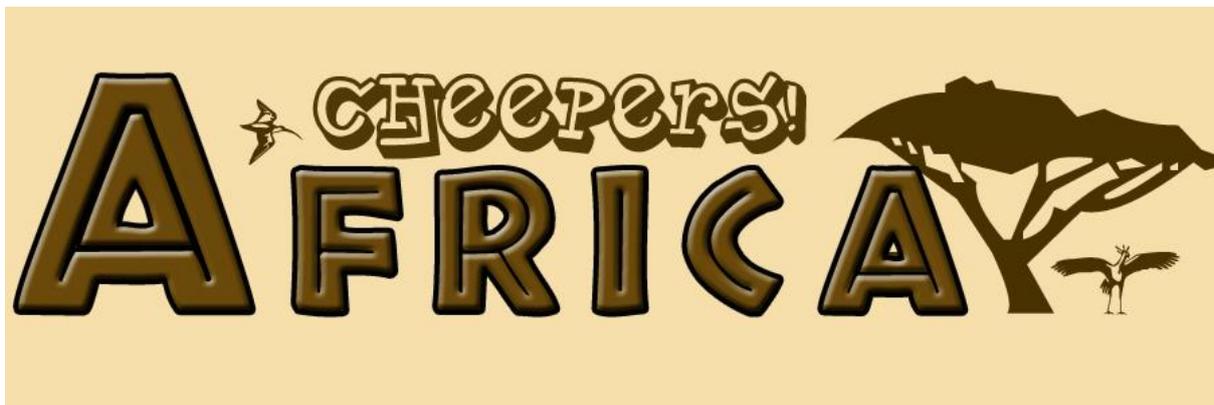
and Diederik Cuckoo to name but a few. The verges of the swamp form breeding grounds for the Rosy-throated Longclaw, Black Coucal, Black-bellied Bustard and African Crane.

O/N Accommodation – We will stay 2 nights each at 2 of the following lodges, depending on availability at time of booking.

- Camp Moremi
- Camp Xakanaxa
- Camp Okavango
- Xugana Island Lodge

**Day 5 & 6 - To Savuti:** Our transfer this morning will take us to the Savuti area in time for an afternoon game drive. Here we spend the following two nights in an exquisite wilderness lodge on the banks of the Savuti Channel in the Savuti region, exploring the more desert-like landscape. Game drives in the area should be fascinating as we'll be looking at some of the evidence of the Paleo-Lake Makgadikgadi that dried up some ten thousand years ago and crossing the Magwikwe Sand-ridge that formed the shoreline for this massive inland sea. The old lake bed is now the Mababe Depression with a dense clay floor producing high protein feed for wildlife and the area teems with game after the rains.

The range of habitat that is covered encompasses most of the habitat types of northern Botswana. We pass through excellent Lion habitat and some of the best Cheetah country that our safari will cover. Elephant occur throughout but are more common where permanent surface water can be found. The Mababe Depression is a birder's paradise. The nutritious grasses that grow on the rich soils provide excellent seed for an impressive array of estrildids and viduids. Among these are the magnificently coloured Violet-eared and Black-cheeked Waxbills, Village Indigobird, Shaft-tailed and Paradise Whydahs. These in turn provide a good food source for small raptors such as the Little Sparrowhawk, Shikra, Gabar Goshawk, Red-necked Falcon and Lanner Falcon. It is not only the small birds that feed on the grass seeds, but rodents too. There are annual outbreaks of huge numbers of rats and mice. As a result huge



numbers of Secretary Bird, Black-shouldered Kite, Tawny, Steppe, Lesser-spotted and Wahlberg's Eagle and Steppe Buzzard can be found.

Unlike the vast majority of the country, Savuti is not a totally flat landscape. Large outcrops of volcanic rock reach up out of the Kalahari sands, towering over the endless savannah. These hills provide habitat for a completely different array of small wildlife, birds and plants. The Savuti Marsh has been the stage for many of the most dramatic wildlife documentaries in Africa. The wide open country, good ungulate populations and particularly strong prides of Lion and Spotted Hyaena clans make for dramatic wildlife interaction and excellent viewing opportunities. The Savuti Channel runs through this landscape linking the dry sand-veld, the waterholes, the hills and the Savuti Marsh.

Undoubtedly it is the interaction between Lion and Elephant that is the most interesting aspect of Savuti. The area is inhabited by a huge pride of Lions with numbers fluctuating from 20-30 members. These remarkable Lions have learned over the years how to hunt these massive pachyderms that are supposedly above predation. Launching their attack under darkness and using their numbers, they manage to kill adolescent and even young adult Elephant. The marsh is prime Cheetah country and in the wet season it is not unusual to see African Wild Dog hunting here in Savuti.

### [O/N Accommodation - 2 Nights at Savute Safari Lodge](#)

**Day 7 & 8 -To Chobe National Park:** We start early with a final game drive and birding in the Savuti area before we board our plane for our transfer to Chobe National Park where we will be spending our final two nights of the trip.

The Chobe floodplain is tens of kilometers wide and in years of exceptional rains the water stretches as far as the eye can see. Teak Woodland dominate large parts of the park and Roan and Sable Antelope thrive in these woodlands where the low density of predators and lack of competition for food makes this prime habitat for these large ungulates. Leopard occurs in these woodlands in low numbers but they are highly secretive and seldom seen.

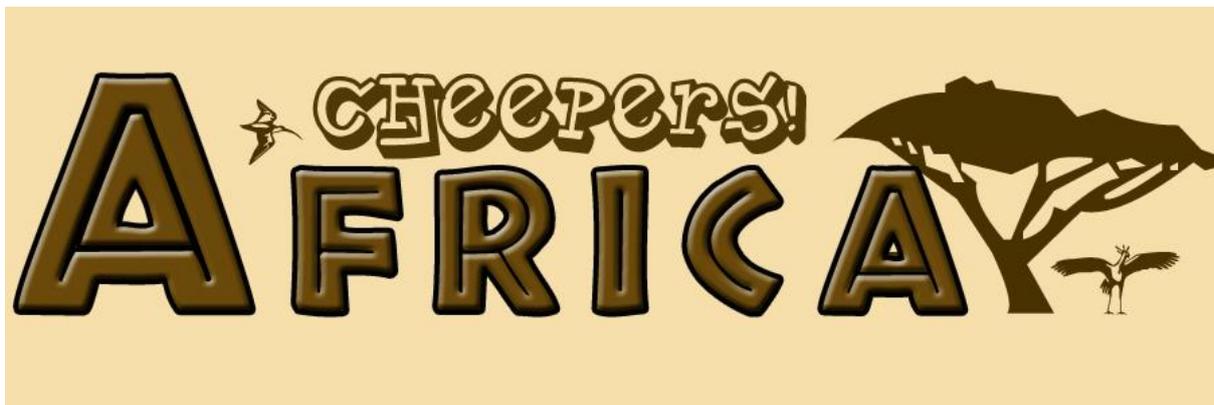
The most unusual bird species are to be found in the teak (*Baikia plurijuga*) woodlands. This broad-leaved woodland provides good pickings for insectivorous birds that



favour canopy habitat. Grey Tit-Flycatcher, Ashy, African Paradise and Pallid Flycatchers, Scarlet-chested and Amethyst Sunbirds, Yellow-throated Petronia, Red-headed Weaver and Violet-backed Starling are only some of the species that move around in the “bird parties” in the canopy. Dickinson’s Kestrel, Red-necked Falcon, Peregrine and Lizard Buzzard are some of the raptors to keep an eye out for, while the diminutive White-faced Owl can often be seen roosting in the road-side vegetation. Flappet, Fawn-coloured and Dusky Larks, Olive-Tree Warbler and Neddicky are other special species here.

We plan to do a morning boat ride on the Chobe River, this is often one of the highlights of our Botswana trips. The Chobe River is presided over by an impressive sand-ridge, where broad-leafed woodland is the dominant vegetation. As you move into the valley the impact of the high Elephant population is felt with the paucity of large trees that typically line the rivers of sub-tropical Africa and the dense tangled masses of knobbly Combretum (*Combretum mosambicense*) and woolly Caper Bush (*Capparis tomentosa*) that appear impervious to the constant onslaught of browsers. The river itself is broad and meandering and in the flood season it is an impressive sight. To the east, outside of the park lie the riparian forests that are home to so many of the more tropical species whose ranges end abruptly in north-eastern Botswana. Much of the Chobe’s wildlife come to drink in the latter half of the morning and early afternoon when the heat excites their thirst. This is one of the best places to see Roan and Sable Antelope. Breeding herds of Elephant seem to be around every corner here in the dry season and the massive herds of Cape Buffalo are constantly flanked by the ever-hungry Lions of the Chobe. This is one of the highest Lion densities of any National Park or Game Reserve in southern Africa. Puku antelope occur nowhere else in southern Africa except here on the Chobe floodplains. With the diminishing woodlands and thickets the magnificent Bushbuck is becoming ever-more scarce. The western Chobe supports strong herds of Burchell’s Zebra.

Bat-Hawk, Cuckoo Hawk, Eurasian Hobby and Ovambo Sparrowhawk are some of the more interesting raptors. Corncrake, African Crake, African Rail, Luapula Cisticola, Malachite Kingfisher, Quail Finch and Rosy-throated Longclaw are found on the edges of the floodplain. Large flocks of Great White Pelican investigate the drying pools as the floodwaters recede. Much larger flocks of the nomadic Red-winged and also some Black-winged Pratincole, numbering in their thousands, can be found on the drying floodplains. The woodlands support Racket-tailed Roller and Stierlings Wren-Warbler.



O/N Accommodation - 2 Nights at Chobe Game Lodge

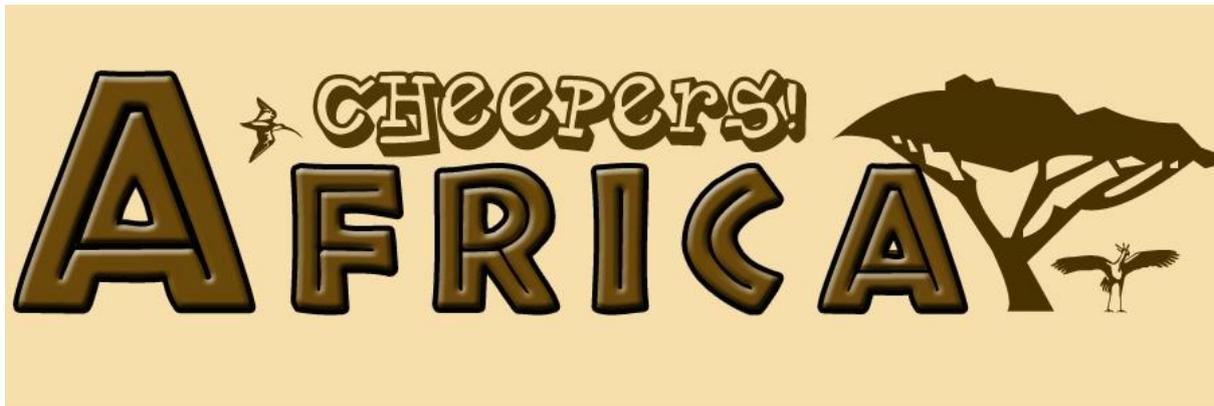
**Day 9 - Transfer to Kasane for flight to Johannesburg and onwards to various International destinations:** We transfer to Kasane International Airport this morning for your onward flights homeward. Again our ground agent can help with the booking of this flight that is not included in the tour price.

**INCLUDED:** All accommodation as outlined in the itinerary, all in country transport in Botswana (this includes all transfers by air between lodges), all activities, game drives and boat trips, bottled and/or filtered water, all meals, tea and coffee, local spirits and wines at the lodges, full time tour leader/specialist bird and wildlife guide, laundry service, all entry and park fees.

**EXCLUDED:** All international flights, including the connecting flights from Johannesburg to Botswana return, all items of a personal nature, tips and gratuities, drinks not mentioned above, travel insurance and medical cover.

**CLIMATE:** We should not encounter any rain during this trip; it is typically dry and dusty at this time of year with pleasant day time temperatures, usually between 22-28 Celsius. Night-time temperatures can be cool and chilly with temperatures ranging from about 2-8 Celsius.

**CLOTHING:** Depending on weather, heat, and your susceptibility to the sun, you could bring a mix of T-shirts and long-sleeved and lightweight blouses or shirts. Similarly, it is OK to wear shorts in most situations, but lightweight, washable pants (especially those that convert into shorts by unzipping legs) are also recommended. A sweater/sweatshirt for cooler evenings and gloves/beanies for early mornings on the open game drive vehicles. Neutral colors (grays, tans, and khakis) are most appropriate. Easily washable, quick-drying clothes are useful. Another way to lighten your load is to bring some clothes you have planned to discard. These can be worn on tour and left behind - very well received by local lodge and national park staff we meet on tour. There are few opportunities for any serious hiking, so lighter walking



shoes should be adequate. A sunhat and sunglasses are advised. Casual clothes are adequate throughout: leave fancy jewelry at home!

**CURRENCY:** Currency is the Botswana Pula, currently about BWP 10.20 to 1 US\$. There are opportunities to exchange small amounts of currency (US\$, UK£ or €) at lodges, and you will not need large amounts. Many places (including souvenir and gift shops) will accept US dollars (less likely to accept UK£) and major credit cards. There are ATM machines in Maun and Kasane bring your PIN number!

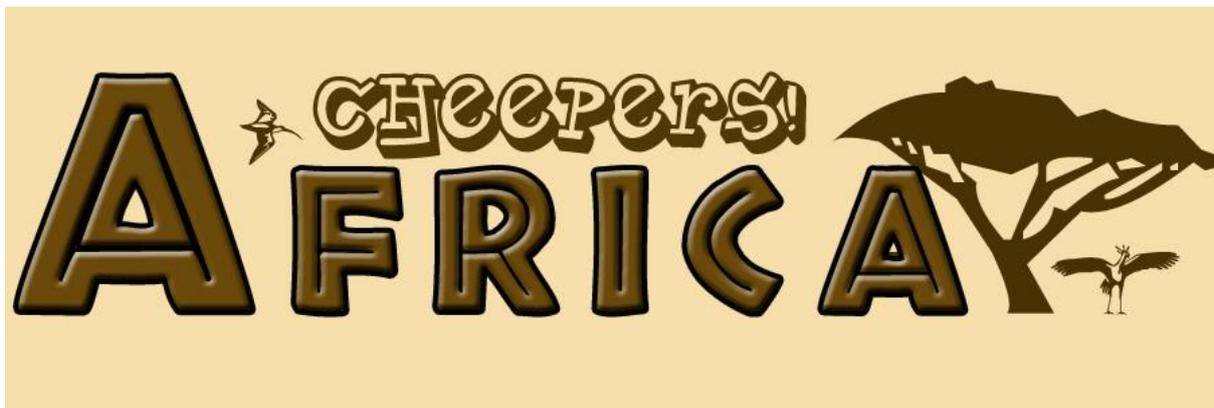
**DOCUMENTS:** A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Botswana and with at least two blank pages. No visa requirements for entry by citizens from United States, United Kingdom and Canada into Botswana.

**EQUIPMENT:** Your tour leader will carry a spotting scope for all to use. Since much watching will be done from vehicles, there is limited use for such scopes. There will be a few times when we'll be out of the vehicles and on foot, but unless you are really keen and used to using one in a confined space you may prefer not to carry one. A small daypack for carrying your essentials in the vehicles on game drives is useful. You should bring all the camera equipment and any special batteries you need, as these can at times be difficult and costly to purchase. Botswana offers *many* excellent photographic opportunities, so be sure to bring plenty of memory on your digital camera.

**RECHARGING:** Most lodges will have facilities for recharging camera/laptop batteries. Bring a small torch/flashlight as electricity supply can be unpredictable.

**HEALTH:** If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your doctor as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

Bottled and purified water is supplied during the game drives, so you shouldn't need a canteen or purification tablets. You will need sunscreen and a small amount of insect repellent (though mosquitoes are scarce and not usually a problem). Though food



hygiene and quality is generally good and we rarely experience any serious stomach problems, you may want to bring whatever remedy you prefer or are prescribed for upset stomach. Moist towelettes can be a pleasant way of keeping refreshed and clean en route. Lodges do have emergency medical kits and some lodge shops stock basic, well-known drugstore remedies for headaches, painkillers etc. However, participants should bring their own supply of any medical/pharmaceutical items they need or have prescribed, as these may not be available.

Although mosquitoes are scarce, there is a general recommendation to take malaria prophylaxis. Check with your doctor as to current recommendations for this and other standard travel precautions and inoculations.

**MISC:** Departure Tax - None

Electricity - 220V throughout, plugs are of the British Standard, rectangular pin but since many lodge were built by South Africans you may find lodges with the South African style plugs which is the old British standard 3 pin round.



Language - English is well understood and spoken throughout

#### **SUGGESTED READING:**

##### **Birds**

- Sasol (Princeton) Birds of Southern Africa, 4th edition - Sinclair, Hockey, Tarboton and Ryan



- Birds of Africa south of the Sahara, 2nd edition - Sinclair and Ryan
- Robert's VII Multimedia on Android or Iphone

### Mammals

- Field guide to the Larger Mammals of Africa - Chris and Tilde Stuart
- Field guide to the Mammals of Southern Africa - Chris and Tilde Stuart
- The Kingdon pocket guide to African Mammals - Jonathan Kingdon
- Smither's Mammals of Southern Africa - Field guide, edited by Peter Apps

### Reptiles

- A Guide to the Reptiles of Southern Africa - Graham Alexander and Johan Marais