

BUDGET BOTSWANA

Makgadikgadi Pan, The Okavango Delta, & Chobe National Park

February 4 – 14, 2022



11 Days / 10 Nights

\$3850*

Single supplement \$380

Our Budget Botswana trip offers our clients the opportunity to experience the best of what Botswana has to offer at an affordable price by making use of more basic but still great value for money accommodation options and driving rather than flying between lodges. Participants can expect to see birds and mammals very similar to what we see on our fly-in safari and get to experience the magic of the Okavango Delta first-hand. We combine some of the best game viewing and bird watching spots in Botswana to offer you a Safari that you will never forget. We recommend reading through our fly-in safari itinerary and following some of the links provided to get a deeper insight into what this magical tour has to offer.

Day 00 – 0, Feb. 2 or 3 - Depart the US

You will need to leave the US a day or two early to arrive in Johannesburg by February 4. If you opt to arrive earlier than Feb. 4, *Cheepers! AFRICA* will assist in arranging accommodation for your extra night(s) and include the cost on your final invoice.

Day 1, Feb. 4 - Arrive in Johannesburg, South Africa:

You will arrive in Johannesburg today, where you will be met by a driver or guide and transported to your hotel. Depending on arrival times, the group will enjoy a welcome dinner this evening.

O/N TBA (D)

Day 2, Feb. 5 - Johannesburg to Francistown, Botswana and on to Elephant Sands:

We will take a morning flight from Johannesburg to Francistown in Botswana. On arrival in Francistown, we will transfer to our vehicles, which we will use for the rest of the Botswana trip, and drive approximately 3 hours our lodge near Nata.

O/N Elephant Sands Lodge (BLD)

Day 3, Feb. 6 - Elephant Sands:

This lodge is more off the beaten track than many others, being east of Maun and slightly off the usual circuit. It has been included partly because it has a great reputation for sightings of African Wild Dogs (a pack came through the lodge's open-air restaurant recently in pursuit of a Kudu!), but also because it gives the opportunity to experience a very different set of dry, desert-like habitats of the Makgadigadi Pans and the Kalahari. We will have the whole day birding and game viewing at Elephant Sands. The camp overlooks a stunning waterhole with a continual stream of Elephants, Greater Kudu and other wildlife coming to drink. We also have a very good chance of spotting Wild Dog here, which will be one of the main focuses of our effort. Burchell's Sandgrouse drinks here every morning, as well as many other dry country species.

O/N Elephant Sands Lodge (BLD)

Day 4, Feb. 7 - To Maun:

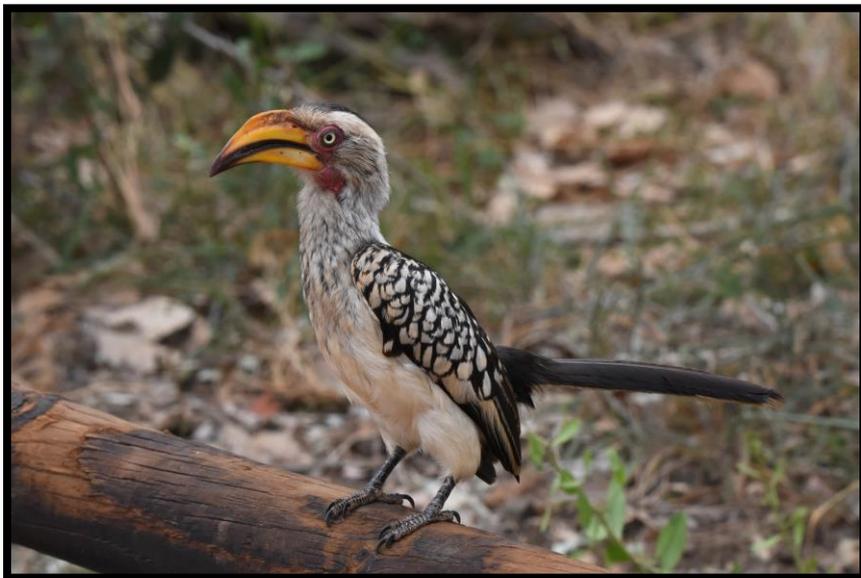
Morning at Elephant Sands, after which we will depart for Maun, with a possible stop at the Nata Bird Sanctuary. Maun is about a 3-hour transfer through interesting and quite wild country of various very extensive "pans" or salt flats formed by temporary lakes in the wet season. We arrive in Maun in the late afternoon.

O/N Island Safari Lodge (BLD)

Day 5, Feb. 8 - To Moremi National Park:

We set off this morning to Moremi National Park for a full day of birding and game viewing. 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. A large number of brood-parasites may also be seen: Diederic, Levaillant's, Jacobin, Great-spotted, African and Common Cuckoos, Shaft-tailed, Pin-tailed and Eastern Paradise Whydahs, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides. Moremi is among the best game reserves in Africa for viewing the endangered African Wild Dog.

O/N Island Safari Lodge (BLD)



Southern Yellow Hornbill

Days 6, Feb. 9 - Okavango Delta:

We will take a boat ride into the Okavango for birding, which is particularly good in this area. 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. We should have a good chance to see the likes of Slaty Egret, Pel's Fishing Owl and White-backed Night Heron. Some local birding in the Maun area in the afternoon should yield good results.

O/N Island Safari Lodge (BLD)

Day 7, Feb. 10 - To Khwai:

We will continue our journey through excellent game country wilderness to another famed area for wildlife at the Khwai Game Concession. We should arrive in time for initial exploration of this exciting area. The journey may follow water courses with the track weaving from the riverside and floodplains into the mopane veld and the woodlands that make Khwai one of the most scenic areas of the Okavango. We may pass the magnificent Dombo Hippo Pools in the morning, stopping to enjoy the scenery and the antics of the resident Hippo. The western mopane veld is home to mostly breeding herds of Elephant while the eastern reaches of Khwai are home to some impressive old bulls. The mature bulls revel in the cool waters of the Khwai and are far more approachable while drinking and bathing than the breeding herds. The river 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. Khwai is included in the home ranges of 2 different packs of African Wild Dog. General game includes southern race of Giraffe, Burchell's Zebra, Tsessebe and Red Lechwe with Roan and Sable Antelope being less-common residents.



African Harrier-Hawk (Gymnogene)

In the mopane woodlands African Hawk-Eagle, Tawny Eagle, Gabar Goshawk, Little Sparrowhawk, African Harrier Hawk and Shikra are common raptors. Mixed bird parties move through the canopy 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 Crake.
O/N Khwai Guest House or similar (BLD)

Day 8, Feb. 11 - Exploring the Khwai Game Concession area:

Morning and afternoon game drives in Khwai will give us further good chances to find African Wild Dogs. The area is well-known for them and they are apparently increasing here and should be less nomadic at this time of year as they are denning with pups. There will, of course, be many more birds to find and other game on the daytime drives and optional night drives for more difficult nocturnal birds and mammals.



Bateleur

The Khwai River forms a boundary between the reserve and the community area. We can explore the Khwai floodplains on game drives both during the day and at night. Exploring after dark with spotlights offers an opportunity to experience some of the nocturnal animals that are rarely encountered during the day. We will also have the opportunity to explore the surrounding wilderness on foot and enjoy an up close and personal encounter with Botswana's flora and fauna. It is important to note that night drives and guided walks are not permitted within the national parks and reserves. These activities are conducted outside the boundaries of the Moremi Game Reserve in the Khwai community area. We spend our time between the dry-land habitats of the lead-wood and camel-thorn woodlands and savannahs and the riverside and marshy

backwaters of the Khwai. The Khwai region boasts excellent populations of Elephants as well as Lion, Leopard, Serval and African Wildcat being quite common predators with African Wild Dog and Cheetah being less common. Buffalo use this area seasonally with large herds moving in during the summer rains. The swampy areas in the west are home to Red Lechwe. Other ungulates include Tsesebe, Blue Wildebeest, Giraffe, Kudu, Sable and Roan Antelopes and Impala.

Truly one of Botswana birding Meccas, the western reaches are prime habitat for the uncommon Rosy-throated Longclaw. The entire length of the river is hunting domain for the Bat Hawk. Other interesting raptors here are Cuckoo Hawk (rare), Long-crested Eagle and Black Sparrowhawk. More common raptors include Tawny Eagle, Steppe Eagle, Lesser-spotted Eagle, Martial Eagle, Bateleur and African Hawk-Eagle. The waterways host Africa Rail, African Crake, Greater Painted Snipe, Allen's Gallinule, Lesser Jacana and Lesser Moorhen.

O/N Khwai Guest House or similar (BLD)

Days 9 & 10, Feb. 12 & 13 – To Kasane and Chobe National Park:

We have a long drive from Maun to Kasane in Botswana for a 2-night stay at Chobe Safari Lodge.

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.

Some of the most unusual bird species are to be found in the teak (*Baikia plurijuga*) woodlands. This broad-leafed woodland provides good pickings for insectivorous birds that favor 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 full day of Safari activities in the park, which will include a morning and afternoon game drive, with some time spent closely following the Chobe River. The 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 Chobe Safari Lodge (BLD)

Day 11, Feb. 14- Departure: After some birding in the lodge grounds and a hearty breakfast we'll head to the airport for our flights back to Johannesburg to connect with your International flights out.

PRICE INCLUDES:

- ~ All accommodation
- ~ All meals as indicated on itinerary
- ~ Full-time services of an expert local guide and driver
- ~ Ground transportation
- ~ Bottled water
- ~ All tolls and entry fees
- ~ All indicated activities

PRICE EXCLUDES:

- ~ All flights
- ~ Items of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, snacks, souvenirs, etc.
- ~ All drinks other than bottled water
- ~ Gratuities

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

Deposit of \$400 with registration. Balance is due 4 months prior to start date of the tour.

CANCELLATION POLICY:

Cancellation should be made in writing (email or snail mail)
More than 6 months prior to departure – full refund of deposit
Between 4 and 6 months prior to departure – 50% refund of deposit
Less than 4 months prior to departure – No refund of deposit

Trip insurance is recommended.

You can compare prices offered by various trip insurance companies at these websites:

<http://www.insuremytrip.com>

http://www.quotewright.com/?sub_id=6056

Cheepers! Birding on a Budget LLC reserves the right to make changes in the itinerary if the need should arise due to unforeseeable circumstances such as weather, landslides, and other natural phenomena, as well as suggestions by local guides in order to take advantage of an unusual birding opportunity. Lodging is subject to change based on availability.

QUESTIONS? CONTACT US!

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 jamesdbeckman@sbcglobal.net

Contact us by phone: 011 27 76 634-7370 (Errol in South Africa)
 937-862-4505 (Beckmans' land line)
 937-974-0802 (Jim's cell)
 937-974-0803 (Cindy's cell)

Contact us by mail: Cheepers! Birding on a Budget
 PO Box 385
 Spring Valley, OH 45370

BOTSWANA TRAVEL INFORMATION

LANGUAGE: English is well understood and spoken throughout

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 11 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.



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