

## Botswana & South Africa

### ELEPHANT & BIG CAT SAFARI

- Go 'backstage' on elephant, leopard, cheetah, lion research projects
- Highly personal, small group safari hosted by wildlife experts
- Comfortable accommodation without continuous journeys
- Helps fund research projects visited
- Excellent wildlife viewing in spectacular, little visited regions of both Botswana & South Africa



## Summary

Botswana is famous for having some of the largest herds of elephant left in Africa and the huge, never-ending, sparsely populated landscapes of the Tuli Block in the far east of the country make it an ideal habitat for studying these intelligent creatures. It is also here, near the mighty Limpopo River and its tributaries, that leopard, cheetah, lion and wild dog specialists are undertaking vital research on these elusive predators.

# Overview

---



Steppes Discovery is proud to be working in collaboration with these exciting research projects, set up to create a scientifically sound, long-term ecological monitoring programme in the area. As a result we can now offer you an unique opportunity to go 'backstage' on wildlife research, gain insight into study techniques, track elephant, leopard, lion, cheetah and wild dog and gain an understanding of their remarkable behavioural patterns during this 9-day wilderness safari. The emphasis of this journey is on offering a relaxed and enjoyable safari with the added benefit of providing you with privileged insight into the research projects visited.

This small group safari is conducted in small teams of between 4 and 7 people and is based at two comfortable lodges, one in South Africa and one in Botswana. Furthermore, it aims to help fund the ongoing study of the Central Limpopo River Valley Elephant Research, Northern Tuli Predator Project and the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Carnivore Conservation Group (cheetah and lion research conducted on Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve).

## Your experts

---

### **Jeanetta Selier – *Central Limpopo River Valley Elephant Research***

One of the questions I am often asked: "Why elephants?" My reply is always the same: "Because they are so funny, not intentionally funny, but they do such entertaining things that make you laugh! You can watch them for hours without getting bored, and most of all, continuously learn something from them." Having started her pioneering research in 1999, when little was known about the Tuli Block elephants, Jeanetta's study plays a significant role in trans-frontier conservation. Her passion and dedication is infectious and her vital research is crucial to successful elephant management.

*- A field assistant from Jeanetta's team will host you during your time at Mashatu.*

### **Mark Hardon – *Central Limpopo River Valley Elephant Research***

Mark joined the Central Limpopo River Valley Elephant Research project as a field assistant. He is responsible for collecting field data on the project and focuses on identifying the various herds within the reserve, tracking their movements and observing their feeding habits. Mark has experience in both managing captive wild animals as well as wildlife management and is passionate about sharing his knowledge of the Tuli elephants.

### **Andrei Snyman – *Northern Tuli Predator Project***

As well as running the Northern Tuli Predator Project which studies the population dynamics, movements and home range sizes of the Northern Tuli leopard population, Andrei is also looking into the dynamics of the Tuli lion population. With an absolute passion for wildlife, Andrei has been studying lion population dynamics in the Kruger National Park for the past few years and is currently working on his Masters Degree, specializing in lions and leopards.

### **Craig Jackson – *Northern Tuli Wild Dog Project***

After the relocation of 18 wild dogs to the Mashatu Reserve, the start of 2008 saw the planning of the Northern Tuli Game Reserve wild dog project. Craig is the principal researcher for the Northern Tuli Wild Dog Project, responsible for monitoring the dogs progress and movements as part of a larger research project.

### **Rox Brummer and Wendy Collinson – *Project Field Researchers, Carnivore Census Project in the Limpopo Valley***

Rox Brummer studied Ecology and Zoology at Durham University in the UK, before working at Makulu Makete Wildlife Reserve in Limpopo Province. Here she was responsible for managing the introduction of Cheetahs caught elsewhere in South Africa, and initiated a research project into the ecology of Cheetahs and Brown Hyenas on small fenced reserves. As well as the carnivore work, Rox managed a habitat rehabilitation project, working to restore land that had been degraded by decades of overgrazing. Rox joined EWT in July 2007 to co-ordinate the Carnivore Census Project in the Limpopo Valley.

---

# Itinerary

---



## Day 1

Following your early morning arrival in Johannesburg and after clearing visa formalities, you will be met & welcomed by your driver. There will be an opportunity to freshen up at the airport before departing for Little Muck Lodge.

After a 5 hour-drive north east, towards the border with Botswana and Zimbabwe, you will arrive at Little Muck Lodge, your base for the following three nights. Situated within the Mapungubwe National Park, Little Muck lodge lies at the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe rivers.

This scenically beautiful region has a rich and important cultural heritage, related to the Great Zimbabwe stone ruins of the first millennium. There is also a flourishing diversity of wildlife here, including a carnivore consensus research project which is located in the nearby Venetia-Limpopo Nature Reserve, where you will be able to spend time tracking and learning about cheetah and lion.



Relax at the comfortable Little Muck lodge with its breathtaking views over the Limpopo floodplain, before an afternoon walk to see some bushman paintings or a game drive. This evening you will meet the carnivore census research team, who will brief you on the project.

## Days 2 - 3

You are usually up before sunrise to make your way to the nearby Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve (a drive of approximately 40 minutes) to search for the big cats, using telemetry equipment. Once you have picked up their trail, you can expect a bumpy ride over rough terrain and if you are lucky enough to come across them, you will observe their fascinating behaviour.



Rox and members of her team will be on hand to answer any questions you may have and give you fascinating insight into their behaviour. You will then return to camp mid-morning (depending on sightings) for brunch with some leisure time until late afternoon when you head out again to enjoy another thrilling encounter with the big cats of the Venetia Reserve.

## Day 4

This morning, after a hearty breakfast, you will depart for the Botswana border, a journey of around one hour. On your arrival at the Pont Drift border post you will be met by a Mashatu guide who will assist you with the border formalities and transfer you to Mashatu Tented Camp.



Following your arrival at camp, you will be welcomed by the Management team and have time to settle in and unpack before heading out on a game drive with your guide. Mashatu is one of the largest private game reserves in southern Africa, home to some of the biggest herds of elephant, as well as a fantastic variety of other wildlife, including some unusual species such as the aardwolf, bat-eared fox, African wild cat, honey badger and black-backed jackal. Return to camp after dark for a delicious dinner which will be served either in the open-air thatched gazebo or in the boma, overlooking a floodlit waterhole.

## Day 5

Today you will meet Mark Hardon, part of the Central Limpopo River Valley Elephant Research Project team, who will accompany you on an early morning game drive, in search of the magnificent elephants found at Mashatu. The whole group will fit onto one vehicle, ensuring that everyone will have the benefit of Mark's knowledge and expertise.

---



Following afternoon tea, you will meet Andrei Snyman, who heads up the Northern Tuli Predator Project and join him on a fascinating predator drive with the emphasis on all the predators found in the area. During the drive you will have the opportunity to learn more about the project which focuses mainly on the study of lions and leopards as well as other large carnivores such as spotted and brown hyena.

### Day 6

Early wake up before setting off on a further predator drive during which Andrei will share the extraordinary life of the Mashatu leopards and lions with you from a researcher's perspective, as you search for these charismatic large predators.

This afternoon you will set out on a wonderful bush walk with Darren, where you will be able to learn about the smaller creatures found at Mashatu and track various animals. Walking in the African bushveld is truly fascinating, allowing you to experience the wonders of nature. Alternatively, participate in one of the adventure activities (mountain biking and horse riding) on offer at Mashatu this afternoon (an additional cost, with pre-booking essential).



### Day 7

This morning the group will set out again with Mark, on a further elephant-focussed game drive. In light of the proposed Trans Frontier Conservation Area, the Mashatu elephant population forms part of a significant cross border population and the research being conducted, together with the monitoring of their movements, supply vital information to help formulate a management plan in the formation of the proposed conservation area.



Depending on animal sightings, head back to camp for brunch and a well-deserved siesta or spend some time in the camp's hide. This afternoon, join your guide on a game drive to see a variety of other wildlife found here. Beside elephant, lion, cheetah, leopard and hyena, general game such as giraffe, zebra, wildebeest, eland, a variety of antelope and nocturnal species like springhares, bat eared fox, civet cat, genet cat, honey badger and mongoose are prevalent throughout the reserve. The bird life is also prolific here, with over 366 different species being recorded.

### Day 8

A further morning with the elephants of Mashatu, where you will spend time tracking and observing these elephants in their beautiful, natural habitat.



Later this afternoon, join Andrei for the final game drive of the trip, using the telemetry equipment to try and locate one of the collared leopards. At sunset, stop off for the traditional sundowner drink and absorb the atmosphere of the bush as the sun sinks into the dusty horizon.

### Day 9

This morning, after an early morning breakfast, you will bid farewell to the Mashatu team as you are transferred back to Johannesburg, stopping en-route for lunch (not included).

**Optional pre- or post-group trip extensions available.**

***Please note the itinerary is flexible and is to be used as a guide only as the itinerary will remain dependent on the movements of the animals and weather conditions. It is important to bear this in mind as the itinerary can and will change at short notice. You will be doing a combination of the activities mentioned, but the order in which they take place can and will change on a daily basis!***

---

### ITINERARY NOTE:

The properties visited are specifically chosen to provide the best opportunities of seeing and gaining insight into the research animals (African Wild Dog, Elephant, Cheetah, Lion and Leopard). Little Muck Lodge (located within the Mapungubwe National Park), is conveniently located close to the Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve (about a 40 minute drive), where the Carnivore Consensus Project is based. Furthermore, it is *possible* that the recently released African Wild Dogs on the Mashatu Reserve may be seen from Little Muck Lodge, further enhancing your chances of seeing these magnificent animals. Our small group trip offers exclusive use of Little Muck Lodge during this trip.

Mashatu Game Reserve consists of 30,000 hectares of pristine wilderness and during your stay here, you will be accommodated with other Mashatu Tented Camp visitors (although they will not accompany you on the group trip excursions) and the only other visitors you will come across during your stay here, are those from Mashatu Main Camp. Wild Dog research drives will *only* be incorporated during your time at Mashatu as and when possible (this is not guaranteed).

### Game Reserves:

#### **Mashatu and Venetia-Limpopo**

In the remote eastern corner of Botswana, at the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe rivers, bordering South Africa and Zimbabwe, lies a diverse wilderness of savannah, riverine forests, marshland, open plains and sandstone outcrops. It is here that the Mashatu and Venetia-Limpopo Game Reserves lie. The area offers some of the most exciting game viewing in Africa in a landscape unchanged since the days of early explorers such as Kipling, Selous and Rhodes, as well as the remains of some of the oldest African civilisations known to man in the nearby Mapungubwe National Park. A scenically beautiful and little-visited area of Africa that offers the chance to study game in some of the regions last true wilderness.



### Accommodation:

#### **Mashatu Tent Camp**

Mashatu Tent Camp comprises of 8 comfortable twin tents, all with private outdoor en-suite facilities. Meals are served either in the open-sided thatch gazebo or the traditional boma, overlooking a floodlit waterhole. The camp has a plunge pool for cooling off in the heat of the day as well as a hide which also overlooks the waterhole. Food is excellent and dietary requirements can easily be catered for.



#### **Little Muck Lodge**

Set attractively on a sandstone ridge, the lodge offers breathtaking panoramic views of the Limpopo River floodplain. Purchased by De Beers in 2000, the lodge is one of several developments in a conservation project of huge regional significance. De Beers, in collaboration with SANParks and the Peace Parks Foundation, is playing a role in developing the new Mapungubwe National Park and extending this into neighbouring Botswana / Zimbabwe to form the Limpopo-Shashe Trans-frontier Conservation Area. Accommodation is offered in luxury air-conditioned chalets, all with en-suite facilities, with the main area comprising of a cosy bar / dining area and plunge pool under a thatched cover. *Please note that there will only be a very limited bar provided at Little Muck Lodge and that it is not possible to purchase drinks at the lodge.*



# Dates

---

## **DATES 2010 (Johannesburg / Johannesburg)**

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> July to Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> July  
Friday 13<sup>th</sup> August to Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> August - **FULL**  
Friday 10<sup>th</sup> September to Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> September – **2 PLACES LEFT**

## **DATES 2011 (Johannesburg / Johannesburg)**

### ***To be confirmed***

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> July to Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July  
Friday 12<sup>th</sup> August to Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August  
Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September to Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September  
Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October to Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October

# Main tour cost

---

**2010 – From £2'295 per person in twin share room throughout *excluding all international flights***

Based on a minimum group size of 4 and maximum of 7.

### **Single supplements**

We do not charge single supplements, unless you want a guaranteed single room, *subject to rooming availability*. The cost of a single supplement is £769 per person.

### **Includes**

All accommodation, all meals throughout (except for lunch on Days 1 and 9), all road transfers, all vehicles and expertise throughout, conservation and park fees. *A limited bar at Little Muck Lodge.*

### **Excludes**

All flights, travel insurance, all drinks, laundry, gratuities, items of a personal nature and any extra curricular activities at Mashatu (mountain biking and horse riding). Cable car crossing if Limpopo River is flowing (BWP35 per person per crossing).

### **Flights**

We are happy to book the international flights for you, but should you choose to book these direct, please note the group flight schedule which you would need to base your flights on:

Arriving Johannesburg at 06.55 on Day 1 (subject to flight schedule changes)

Departing Johannesburg at 20.15 on Day 9 (subject to flight schedule changes)

Due to the transfers to and from Johannesburg, it is imperative that your arrival and departure co-incides with these timings.

### **Extras**

Here are some suggestions of ways to enhance your trip even before you arrive; upgrade your flight from economy to premium economy or business class, upgrade your hotel room, pre-book valet or airport parking, airport hotels and airport lounges. If you wish to take advantage of the reduced tour operator rates we are able to offer, please don't hesitate to contact us for further information.

---

# Important information

---

## **Travelling from outside the UK**

We are happy to quote you either in US Dollars or Euros or for the tour including return flights to Johannesburg. However, owing to currency fluctuations, we will quote you at the time of your enquiry using the current exchange rate and base this on current flight availability. Please do contact us for a costing.

## **Vaccinations and Visas**

All visitors must be in possession of a valid passport with at least six months left before expiry. Visas are currently not required for entry into South Africa and Botswana for all UK, Commonwealth and US citizens. We recommend inoculations for: Typhoid, Tetanus and Hepatitis A. If you are a regular traveller abroad we would recommend that you are up to date on all childhood inoculations and vaccinations including polio. Malaria is endemic in Botswana and expert advice is therefore essential. Please consult a medical practitioner or call MASTA on 09068 224100 (premium rate call) at least one month before you travel.

**Please note that everyone arriving in South Africa must have TWO blank pages side by side for their South African visa – this policy is strictly enforced.**

## **Health and Fitness**

A reasonable level of fitness will allow you to fully appreciate this safari and the small amount of walking involved. We also suggest taking a small personal medical kit.

## **Essential items that you will need**

You should take sun block, strong sunglasses, and a wide brimmed hat. When walking wear colours that blend with the scenery. Long trousers or combat trousers (not jeans) give protection against thorns and do not leave you cold when wet. Good footwear is essential as is a lightweight waterproof jacket in neutral colours. A light jacket or sweatshirt for the cold mornings is required in winter, as it does get very cold, as well as a good pair of binoculars per person, a camera with lenses and plenty of film (charging batteries is no problem for digital cameras and videos.) On receipt of a booking form and deposit we do send out a very detailed trip dossier including a suggested kit and equipment list.

## **Weather**

This programme is set during the dry autumn / winter period. In May the transition from summer to winter is notable and the early mornings and evenings are cold, with clear, comfortable days. Leopards become less elusive as the vegetation cover thins and the game begins to congregate near water. June and July is mid winter, with crisp days and VERY cold mornings and evening, but the game viewing is very good as the waterholes continue to dry up, concentrating the animals around the water sources. African Wild Dogs tend to den in / around the month of June, providing a possibility of seeing wild dog pups in July / August (provided they have denned in an accessible site!). August and September is very dry and dusty but the days are warm and predators have a field day as water is scarce. Elephants spend hours wallowing and drinking and trying to find shade. By October temperatures begin to increase steadily, bringing with it the occasional tropical thunderstorm. Predators make full use of this time as the wildlife tend to congregate close to the waterholes and the lack of vegetation makes tracking much easier. Elephant wait out this dry season and move from waterhole to waterhole, where they wallow and drink for hours.

---

## Our commitment

---



In 2007 we celebrated 10 years of spectacular achievement as pioneers in the field of nature travel.

We have raised significant funds in support of the world's leading wildlife and conservation agencies, researchers and experts, and increased awareness of travel and conservation through newsletters, lectures and consistent media coverage. Furthermore we have voluntarily spearheaded collective action campaigns such as Travel Operators for Tigers in South Asia.



To mitigate the carbon dioxide released into the high atmosphere through your air travel we are giving £10 per client to Rainforest Concern. Rainforests have a central role to play in the slowing of climate change and yet we are removing forests from the planet at a faster rate than they can grow back. It is thus axiomatic to try and preserve the forests that we have rather than replanting.

Rainforest Concern was established in 1993 to protect threatened natural habitats, the biodiversity they contain and the indigenous people who still depend on them for their survival.



The Endangered Wildlife Trust's Carnivore Consensus Project aims to deliver an assessment of the status of all large carnivore species in the region, and will enable the identification of problem areas and vulnerability of particular species. This trip includes a contribution to the Carnivore Conservation Group.

Mashatu Game Reserve initiated a research programme which incorporates scientists into the operation to study aspects important to the protection and conservation of the area. The research programme is ongoing and currently consists of the Central Limpopo River Valley Elephant Research, Northern Tuli Predator Project and the Northern Tuli Wild Dog Project.

Our travel partners, accommodation, service providers and ground agents are all carefully chosen to ensure their commitment to the environment, most being quality, family owned businesses – reflecting the unique character of the places, the abiding hospitality of its people and the remarkable spirit of its wilderness.

**Now come along and see for yourself. With us it won't cost the earth!**

## Want to discuss this trip?

---

Please call **Mandy** on **01285 643333** for more details or to make a booking



Born and raised in South Africa, Mandy's passion for the African bush and its people began at a private game reserve adjacent to the Kruger National Park. This led to far dustier and wilder experiences further afield in Botswana, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia. Considering herself privileged to have witnessed raw Africa at its finest – from nesting leatherback turtles and endangered mountain gorillas to the simple beauty of everyday life in the bush – Mandy is passionate about the conservation of Africa and its wildlife.

---