

South Africa

GAME RANGER BUSH SKILLS SAFARI

- Led by qualified wildlife expert Les Brett, professional safari guide with over 35 years ranger experience
- Offers a unique insight into wildlife, including bush skills, animal tracking and identification and musketry
- Stay in authentic wildlife lodges, close to the game and enjoy a night camping under the stars
- This trip includes a donation in support of the Endangered Wildlife Trust's anti-poaching unit



Summary

This adventurous, hands-on wildlife safari within the wilds of South Africa is designed to get you out of the vehicle and on foot, to enjoy firsthand the glorious beauty of the African wilderness. Under the guidance of professional ranger Les Brett, you will gain an insight into the wondrous laws of nature and the complex relationship between the animals and their environment. This inspirational safari will cover everything from wildlife ecology, animal behaviour and tracking to bird identification, bush survival, rifle practice (although this is NOT a hunting safari!) and conservation issues.

You will also have the chance to enjoy some fascinating game walks in areas known to attract the Big 5, as well as the chance to camp under the stars. Following in the footsteps of a professional ranger and learning the skills required to appreciate the unique flora and fauna in the region makes this more than just a safari, but a unique wilderness experience!

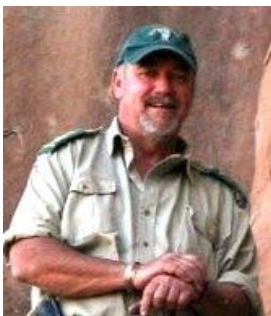
Overview

The Game Ranger Safari is aimed at anyone who has an interest in wildlife and wilderness and who wants to experience a safari that offers more than just watching from the back of a 4x4. Designed to get you out into the bush, this trip covers all aspects of wildlife and ecology. From walking in Big 5 areas, following animal tracks, interactive bush walks, learning to identify various flora and fauna, snake-handling, musketry, a night or two sleeping wild under the star, astronomy and basic bush skills, this trip offers you the chance to stimulate a passion for nature that few wildlife experiences can match.

The accommodation on the trip range from well appointed game lodges to tented camps and sleeping under the stars, all offering good levels of comfort, delicious food and the chance to explore some of Africa's finest wilderness areas.

Absolutely no experience is necessary. Just an interest in wildlife and a love of the wild!

Your experts



Les Brett has been leading Game Ranger Safaris for the past 15 years, with more than 35 years experience in the African Bush. Les is a qualified guide and registered specialist in Dangerous Game Guiding.

As such, his abiding passion, humour and insight into the wildlife and wilderness of his home country is infectious and always inspires those lucky enough to spend time with him in the bush.

Itinerary



Day 1

On arrival at Johannesburg International Airport, you will be met by Les and his team and transferred to your lodge, a journey of around 2 hours with the afternoon free to relax and explore your surroundings or maybe a spot of birdwatching. In the evening you can enjoy a traditional South African welcome Brai (BBQ), where you will get to know the rest of your group and Les will discuss the exciting safari that lies ahead.

Day 2

This morning, you will leave the lodge after breakfast and drive to the Limpopo Province, a journey of about 3 hours, arriving in time for lunch. In the afternoon, the adventure begins, as you head out into the bush for your first walk, with lots of hands-on examples as Les points out the huge variety of fascinating flora and fauna found in the area. From the large mammals through to the tiniest plant, you will soon learn to appreciate that everything in the bush has a role to play and relies on a complex series of relationships to ensure the healthy ecology of the wild as a whole and the creatures who live here. You will then return to the lodge for dinner in the evening.



Day 3

After an early breakfast, you will collect your essentials for your first proper bush walk (water bottle, field guides, notebook, pens, sunscreen, binoculars and sun hat) and, for the next few hours, take your first lessons in game ranging. This will include spoor (track) identification, tracking and animal habitat. Understanding the environment and seeing the bush through a ranger's eyes, learning to read the signs all around you is what this trip is all about. After returning to the lodge for lunch, you will then head out again into the bush for bird identification and bird call recognition, looking out for the striking Bataleur Eagle or the colourful rollers, before returning to the camp for the evening.

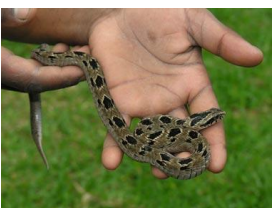


Day 4

Today you will begin your second bush walk, allowing you to study the ecology of the area, the huge variety of wildlife and the complex relationship between plants and their environment. En route, you will be shown individual tree and plant specimens and learn how and which animals utilize the fruit, leaves or bark from the plant. You will also discover how certain plants are intertwined with Zulu folklore and tradition and how they can be used for treating insect bites or even cleaning teeth.

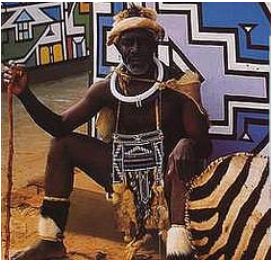


After lunch, you will be able to learn about animal physiology, anatomy and animal diseases, before an afternoon of musketry. This involves practical demonstrations on the correct handling and safe use of firearms, with the chance to enjoy some target practice at the nearby shooting range, using a number of different rifles. Competition is fierce! You will then return to the lodge for dinner.



Day 5

After breakfast, you will drive to the nearby Reptile Centre, where you will spend the morning learning about these fascinating and vital species, including snake identification, snake bite treatment, reptile anatomy and reptile conservation. There will also be practical demonstrations on how to handle some of the country's most dangerous snakes, under the guidance of experts.



After lunch in a nearby restaurant, you will spend the afternoon learning about the rehabilitation of injured or captured wildlife at the Moholoholo Animal Rehabilitation Centre. You will look at issues surrounding animal diseases, the handling of sick and injured animals and birds and the impact that man has on nature. You will also learn about the workings of the centre itself, which include a number of successful breeding programmes.

Day 6

Depending on events of the day, today may bring a rare opportunity to take part in an endangered species programme or game capture (if appropriate). These are both very hands-on experiences, involving taking blood samples, measuring horns, ear tagging, parasite counting, anti-poaching, animal capture and relocation (often with the use of a helicopter). There will also be a lecture on the various drugs and equipment used. Should a game capture not be possible, there will be a chance to spend time at a local Shangaan village, learning about the Shangaan culture, with traditional food, stories and dancing.



Then, late afternoon, armed with your bush knowledge and a small overnight bag, you head out for an evening away from the main lodge to set up a small 'fly camp' under the guidance of Les and his tracker. This evening, your senses will come alive to the evening sounds of the bush, as you sit around the fire listening to (and hopefully identifying) the calls of nocturnal animals, before an introduction to astronomy and some star gazing of your own. Watch out for shooting stars! You will also be expected to take turns in standing watch over the camp for some night game viewing (in pairs!).



Day 7

In the morning it is always fun to check for prints, to see which animals have walked through the camp during the night and after an early bush breakfast, you will pack up, and collected before being driven to the Greater Kruger area, arriving around mid morning. After a light lunch, there will be a short lecture on dangerous game, animal aggression behaviour and recognition. In the late afternoon you will head out on a game drive, continuing as the sun sets, to keep an eye out for shy nocturnal animals. You will then return to your lodge for the night.



Day 8

After breakfast, you can enjoy a walk in 'Big 5' territory and following a quick coffee, you will start putting your bush skills to the test to track down some of the 'Big 5' themselves. You will already be looking at the bush in a new light, as your eyes and ears will be attuned for signs that wildlife might be close at hand. Animal tracks and plants may begin to seem familiar and you will begin to feel confident in exploring the wild on foot. After lunch, you begin another afternoon walk, with the chance to spend another night sleeping out under the stars.



Day 9

After your final bush breakfast, you will return to your lodge to freshen up. The rest of the morning will be free to relax and after lunch, there is a practical bush walk to see how much you have learned over the last few days and you will then return to the lodge to enjoy a farewell Braai and a few drinks before your final safari tomorrow morning.

Day 10

This morning you can enjoy a final game drive and the chance for some last minute photo opportunities, before returning to camp for a late breakfast. You then drive back to Johannesburg via Mpumalanga and Blyde River Canyon, a dramatic contrast to the relative flat spaces of the bushveld.



Although driving within the canyon itself is not permitted, the views from the road that hugs the canyon walls are stunning. The region contains the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve and is known as The Escarpment, a dramatic geographic feature where the land drops away from the high canyon wall to the lowveld, towering over the huge expanse of bush below.

Say a fond farewell to Les and his team and then return to Johannesburg International Airport in time for your flight back to UK.

Dates

2011

9 - 18 May 2011
13 - 22 June 2011

Main tour cost

IMPORTANT NOTE

Please bear in mind that the details shown above are only a guideline and given the adventurous nature of the tour and the area in which the tour takes place, the itinerary can and will change at short notice. Whilst you will cover all the activities shown above, the order in which they take place may vary, depending on a number of factors on the day. We do ask that you approach the trip with this in mind and that you travel with a flexible attitude and sense of humour! We must also stress that, whilst you have a very good chance of seeing a wide range of wildlife, sightings can never be guaranteed as the animals are wild and an encounter with any animal in its natural habitat is a privilege and not a right. Spotting them takes patience, skill and a lot of luck!

From £1,795.00 per person in twin room, *excluding all international flights*

Based on a minimum group size of 4 and a maximum group size of 10

Single supplements

Should you wish to have your own room, there is a supplement payable of £395.

Includes

Expertise of Les Brett, all transfers in South Africa, all accommodation on a full board basis unless otherwise shown, two private safari vehicles, services of English-speaking qualified South African wildlife guides, other expertise on the venture, park fees, flying doctor cover and donation to Endangered Wildlife Trust

Excludes

International economy return flights from London to Johannesburg, (which we are happy to quote for) travel insurance (mandatory), visas, vaccinations, items of a personal nature, gratuities, alcohol and meals other than those shown, soft drinks, extra meals, departure tax and laundry.

Travelling from outside the UK

We are happy to quote you either in US dollars or Euros, without flights to South Africa. Recent currency fluctuations dictate that we will quote you at the time of your enquiry, using the current exchange rate, which is subject to change.

Important information

Notes on Wildlife Viewing

Whilst the aim of the trip is to see as much of South Africa's spectacular wildlife as possible, please bear in mind that seeing any game in the wild is a privilege and not a right. Finding any animal requires patience, skill and a little luck, which is why we use the most experienced South African guides who work alongside Les to give you the best opportunity to see as much of the region's flora and fauna as possible. For many, it is the thrill of being on safari and the opportunities this presents that makes this tour so appealing. However, please bear in mind these are wild animals and sightings can never be guaranteed, although the quality of the guides on this trip offer the best chance of seeing fantastic game.

Vaccinations And Visas

All visitors must be in possession of a valid passport with at least six months left before expiry. Visas are not required for entry into South Africa for all UK, Commonwealth and US citizens, but the visa and passport requirements remain the responsibility of the participant. If you are a regular traveller abroad we would recommend that you are up to date on all childhood inoculations and vaccinations including polio. Please consult a medical practitioner to discuss your own personal requirements 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 and if there is insufficient space in the passport, entry will be denied.

Health And Fitness

A good level of fitness will allow you to fully appreciate this trip and the walking involved.

Accommodation And Food

We use a wide range of accommodation on this trip, all of which is chosen to offer the best wildlife experience possible. The accommodation ranges from well appointed wilderness lodges, with private en-suite bathrooms to wild camping under the stars (sleeping bags and other equipment are provided). Food is wholesome and plentiful throughout and most dietary requirements are easily catered for, if given prior notice.

Essential items that you will need

Once the booking is confirmed, we will send through a very detailed kit and clothing list, but no specialist equipment is required for this trip and all bedding and camping equipment is provided.

Safety

The safety of our clients is of paramount importance on all of our tours and this is no exception. You will be spending time in wilderness areas, home to dangerous animals and the camps are NOT fenced. Les is a qualified ranger and registered specialist in dangerous game guiding and you should adhere to his rules and follow his instructions at all times.

Our commitment



Your journey includes a contribution towards the Endangered Wildlife Trust which is dedicated to conserving threatened species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people. For further information on this organisation, please visit the website at: www.ewt.org.za

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 **Chris** on **++ 44 (0) 1285 880 936** for more details or drop him an email (chris@steppesdiscovery.co.uk) to make a booking.

Having travelled extensively in East and Southern Africa, Chris has developed a passion and understanding for this wild and captivating continent. He has also survived the game ranger safari himself and will be happy to talk you through his own experience in the area.