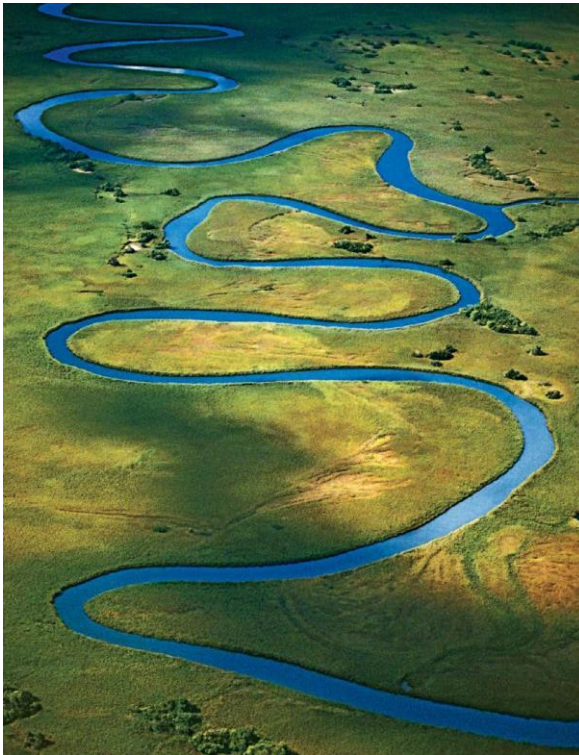


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12 Day Africa – Botswana’s Timeless Wilderness



CELEBRITY HOSTED – YOUR FLEXIBLE INCLUSIONS DATES — 12 DAY ITINERARY

If we had to pick the most miraculous African place of all, it might well be the Okavango Delta, where the 1,000-milelong Okavango River gives up on its search for an outlet to the sea and seeps life into the sands of one of the world’s most uncompromising deserts, creating a vast and mesmerizing oasis. As Frans Lanting wrote in his elegiac book *Okavango: Africa’s Last Eden*, “The [Delta’s] very existence in the middle of the Kalahari Desert is nothing short of miraculous . . . like a dream.”

Botswana’s wilderness is expansive and—to our scurrying senses—timeless and the Okavango isn’t its only dreamy place. Our under-two-week safari takes us to three others, right up near the top of African marvels: Chobe National Park and, up near the

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Zambian border, the exemplary Moremi Wildlife Reserve, quite close to another phenomenon of miraculous rarity; Victoria Falls.

12 Day Africa Itinerary: Botswana's Timeless Wilderness

Day 1 En-Route: US – Johannesburg

Day 2 Africa: Johannesburg

After arriving at O. R. Tambo International, we'll be escorted to the Saxon Boutique Hotel and Spa in Johannesburg's tree-lined suburb of Sandhurst. This luxury hotel has much to be proud of but says, touchingly, that its greatest "boast" is that the late Nelson Mandela chose the Saxon as his sanctuary at which to complete his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*.

Tonight, we'll also enjoy dinner at the home of Micato family friends.

3-4 Africa: Johannesburg - The Okavango Delta



accompanied by well-versed guides.

Our base in the Delta is Xugana Island Camp, exactly the camp of an Okavango dream: brainily constructed, logically luxurious, set on a lush, wild ebony tree-shaded island overlooking a lagoon much frequented by animals and birds, permeated by peace and quiet, a lagoon considered by many the lagoon of all Okavango lagoons. We'll explore the Delta's complex waterways by *mekoro*, or canoe, and on foot,

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At some point we may experience “one of the Okavango’s delights,” as Lanting wrote, “the sheer surprise of seeing an elephant emerge from underwater”; we’ll certainly see many elephants, lots of bobbing hippos, sun-bathing crocodiles, lounging (and hard at work) lions, and scores more creatures large and small.



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Xugana Island Lodge

okavango delta, botswana

Marvelously emplaced in the heart of the Okavango Delta, Xugana Island Lodge is an eight-room luxury lodge nestled under a canopy of wild ebony and garcina trees facing the calm blue waters of Xugana Lagoon, a paragon of the Delta's allure. Xugana's secluded location in a private concession gives us a chance to explore via guided canoe excursions and walking safaris; birding here is spectacular and the fishing sublime.

Day 5-6 Africa: The Okavango Delta- Chobe National Park



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A quick flight takes us to Chobe's semi-arid Savute region, famous for its aforementioned exceptionally large and numerous elephants, for its lofty baobabs, and for its Kalahari mystique (operative day and night; Laurens van der Post wrote in *The Lost World of the Kalahari* about the "night silence in Africa [that] always holds the far sea-sound of urgent stars").

Savute Safari Lodge, set beside the once-dry, now wonderfully watery Stolen River—frequented by thirsty beasts of all varieties, chummily visible from our verandas—is a fine base for exploring Chobe, for immersing ourselves in a still fiercely wild—but not in the least bit unfriendly—place, one of the great earthly deserts, unique, abiding.



Savute Safari Lodge

Chobe national park, botswana

Situated on the banks of Botswana's fabled Stolen River, Savute Safari Lodge is a traditional thatched safari lodge in a setting of singular beauty. (The Stolen has been stolen and given back by the vagaries of the Savute Channel; it now flows merrily only a few hundred feet from the lodge. This is a centuries-long geo-story, but the upshot is a landscape of rich marshes and teeming wildlife, all visible from Savute Safari Lodge's signature glass doors and viewing decks.)

Day 7-8 Africa: Chobe National Park - Moremi Wildlife Reserve



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Another short flight takes us north to the Khwai River and Machaba Camp, designed in classic 1950s safari style, so well suited to its surroundings that animals wander down to the river insouciantly, delighting us as we watch, sundowner in hand, from our tents. And, not to be outdone by Chobe, Moremi gives us the chance to see the huge African night sky that ever captivated Elspeth Huxley, a sky “bristling with innumerable stars, as close-packed as the quills on a porcupine.”*

* People ask us about books. Africa has a great and deep literature, but if you read Isak Dinesen’s *Out of Africa*; Elspeth Huxley’s *The Flame Trees of Thika* and her sometimes overlooked *The Mottled Lizard*; Ng̃ug̃ i wa Thiong’o’s bracing *A Grain of Wheat*; and Beryl Markham’s *West with the Night*, you will be extremely enchanted and informed. (Of course, our pre-departure materials include a well-scouted reading list.)



Machaba Camp

moremi reserve, botswana

Visitors to Machaba Camp are charmed by its extraordinarily airy and fresh tents, by its eventful and rewarding game drives in the Moremi Reserve, by the reserve’s profound quietude and riverine beauty, but they invariably praise the blissful, only-in-Africa experience of sitting at ease on the veranda of their tent, watching elephants, hippos, lions, giraffes, and a host of less-celebrated

but equally fascinating animals as they pay a visit to the Khwai River in the warm evening.

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Day 9-10 Africa: [Moremi Wildlife Reserve – Victoria Falls](#)

We don't like to repeat ourselves—to gild any lilies, perhaps especially an *Agapanthus africanus*, treasure of our home continent—so we hope you won't mind if we direct you to a torrent of praise for Victoria Falls and the Royal Livingstone Hotel over on page 134. Here we'll repeat something a good friend of ours once said: "Victoria Falls is billed as one of the world's greatest waterfalls, but, as a matter of fact, it's one of the world's greatest *anythings*."

Poor Niagara," Eleanor Roosevelt supposedly said upon viewing Brazil and Argentina's Iguazu Falls. Had she gazed on Victoria Falls—the greatest curtain of water on earth, 60 tumultuous feet higher than its South American rival—the famously articulate First Lady might have been struck speechless.

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Victoria Falls is a waterfall like no other, and during our stay at the legendary Royal Livingstone Hotel (another perennial *T+L* best) we'll get to know the Falls, from early-morning, coffee-sipping views from our room's veranda of the almost 1,000 feet of mist that rise from the watery cauldron to lazy afternoon sundowners near its dramatic precipice, contemplating what the greatest travel writer of all time, Richard Halliburton, called "a hurricane of bursting water . . . that seems to fall *up*, not down."

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Royal Livingstone Hotel

victoria falls, zambia

An old-fashioned, colonial-style redoubt, fully up-to-the-second, one of *T+L*'s Best Hotels in the World, the Royal Livingstone would be a sought-after destination even if it weren't within strolling distance of ceaselessly stunning Victoria Falls.

An African icon, the Royal Livingstone underwent a many-

million-dollar upgrade recently, and its charms have been burnished to a shine for another few decades to come.



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Day 11-12 Africa: Victoria Falls – Johannesburg & Onward



We fly from the Falls to Johannesburg and connect with our international flight home, arriving on Day 12.

