

GILTEDGE

SAFARI 101 WHAT TO EXPECT ON SAFARI

*Take a look at the resource hub**

IS IT SAFE GOING ON SAFARI? WILDLIFE ETIQUETTE

It always feels a bit daunting experiencing something new, especially when you don't know what to expect! Upon arrival, your guides will take you through a safety briefing to ensure you understand the implications of being in the wild. On your game drives, the vehicle is seen as one unit to animals, and the rule of thumb is to never "break the form". Some general rules on a vehicle advise to keep volume at a minimum, remain seated and within the vehicle. Avoid making sudden movements, touching the animals and or calling them.

Guided walks are done with qualified guides that have an additional firearm license and are trained to be in the wild on foot. Provided you follow instructions, walks are very safe and guides will never intentionally put you in harm's way. Enjoy each unfolding moment while on safari!



WHAT CAN I EXPECT ON A TYPICAL DAY ON SAFARI?

Expect to get up before dawn, with two daily game drives or game activities, each lasting approximately three hours. The first one starts at the break of dawn and another in the late afternoon going into the early evening. These are generally considered the best times for optimal game viewing. Some lodges in private concessions offer night drives, where your guide will have a spotlight to help find nocturnal animals.

Prior to your first game drive, lodges will either offer you a snack and coffee, or a full breakfast. Once you arrive back at the lodge, you will have lunch and enjoy the afternoon at leisure before heading on your evening activity. Each game drive will usually have a little break to stretch your legs, use a bathroom "bush break", have a morning coffee with snacks, or an afternoon sundowner and snacks.

*Take a look at a typical day on safari**

WHAT ABOUT A BATHROOM WHEN YOU'RE OUT IN THE BUSH?

Should you need the toilet, your guide will stop at a safe place that they have checked. There are no flushing toilets and fixed bathrooms in the bush, but the guides carry toilet paper, wet wipes, sanitiser and throwaway bag for a bathroom break. Certain lodges have a more formal rest stop, which might have a bathroom. However, this is a rarity! We recommend going to bathroom before or after your drive if you are uncomfortable using a "bush bathroom".

HOW CLOSE DO YOU GET TO ANIMALS?

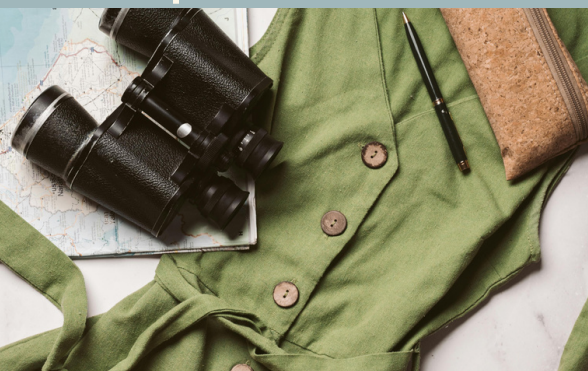
It is always important to maintain a safe and respectful distance to animals out in the bush. Closeness of viewings depend on park regulations, animal behaviours, and situation you're in – sometimes you can get within a few meters. Most lodges have a maximum number of 2 vehicles per sighting, to give you ample viewing time and the guides enough flexibility to move the vehicle in better proximity for photography.



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WHAT TO PACK & WEAR

Now that your mind is at ease, let the excitement (and packing) begin! Here is an infographic of valuable things to pack for your safari. Weather in Africa is often unpredictable, and layers of clothing are ideal with lightweight materials. Neutral, natural colors such as khaki, greens and brown are best to blend in with the wildlife. Camouflage clothing is not permitted in some countries.

Closed-toe shoes are recommended to walk around at the camp in case of insects and creatures.

If you're planning to do a bush walk, bring a good pair of walking boots, wear long socks to avoid getting scratched, and ideally tighter pants to minimise brush and sound.



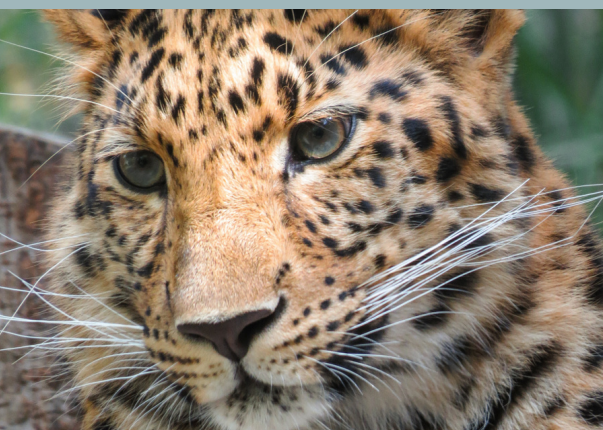
Take a look at what to pack ✨

WHAT DOES A GAME VEHICLE LOOK LIKE?

There are a variety of different game or safari vehicle styles, depending on where you are visiting. Traditionally, a game vehicle is a large 4x4 vehicle that has been modified for safety and great viewing abilities. Some vehicles have photography equipment, USB charging ports, and a seat for the "tracker" in front. East Africa tends to have enclosed vehicles with large windows for longer travel distances.

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE ON A GAME VEHICLE?

Most lodges have a maximum of 6 people per game vehicle so that each person gets a seat by the "window" and doesn't have to have a middle seat. Some exclusive lodges have a maximum of 4 people per vehicle, and some lodges offer private vehicles at an additional charge if you'd like additional privacy.



WHAT ANIMALS CAN I EXPECT TO SEE?

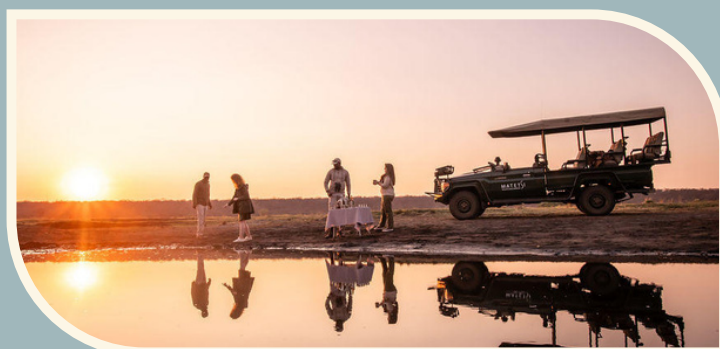
No one can guarantee any sightings on safari, and every natural sighting – big or small, plant or animal is incredible to witness. Always remember that you are not visiting a zoo and the animals roam freely. You are welcome to share your safari "wish list" with your guide, but it's recommended to come with an open mind and not have too many expectations of what you will see. Your guide is a wealth of knowledge and will share much more than just about animals!

WHAT OTHER ACTIVITIES CAN I DO BESIDES A GAME DRIVE?

Many lodges have a range of additional activities you can do to enhance your experience. These can include guided bush walks, horse-riding, mokoro / canoeing, sleep outs, bush breakfasts and dinners, hot air ballooning, photographic safaris, hides, to name a few!

WHAT MAKES BEING IN THE BUSH SO SPECIAL?

Lots of people tend to feel the tranquility, calm and magic being on safari. Contrastingly, the bush is also a place of surprises and wild action. Being disconnected to your daily life can bring about many emotions as you plug into the sensations, noises, and surrounds of the bush. We encourage you to come with an open mind and attitude when embarking on a safari, and reflect on your experiences during your travels to make the most of it.



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HOW MUCH MEDICATION DO I NEED TO BRING ALONG?



WHAT IS THE VALUE OF STAYING AT MORE THAN ONE LODGE DURING YOUR TRIP, AND HOW DO YOU GET FROM ONE LODGE TO ANOTHER?



CAN YOU WALK AROUND THE CAMPS AT NIGHT?



FROM WHAT AGE WOULD YOU RECOMMEND A SAFARI FOR CHILDREN?



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WHY ARE GRATUITIES AND TIPPING NOT INCLUDED, AND SO EXPENSIVE?

Tipping on safari is customary but discretionary, and therefore not included in the nightly rate.

Safari lodges operate in remote areas and employ highly skilled teams - including guides, trackers, chefs, housekeepers, and camp staff - who rely on gratuities as a meaningful part of their income. Tipping is generally higher at lodges than hotels for a few reasons:

- Safaris are intimate, highly personalized experiences
- Guests spend significant time with guides (often 6–8 hours daily)
- Staff-to-guest ratios are very high
- Camps are located in remote wilderness areas with logistical challenges

ARE ALL LODGES TENTED, OR WHAT OTHER LODGING OPTIONS AND STYLES OF CAMPS ARE THERE?

Not all safari camps are tented — and “tented” can be very luxurious.

Accommodation styles range widely, including:

Luxury Tented Camps

- Canvas walls with solid floors and en-suite bathrooms
- Often feature soaking tubs, plunge pools, air conditioning
- Designed for immersion in nature with full comfort

Permanent Safari Lodges

- Solid brick, stone, or wood structures
- More traditional hotel-style construction
- Often larger in size

Boutique Camps

- Small (4–8 rooms), intimate, design-forward
- Often owner-run with strong personality

Private Villas / Exclusive-Use Camps

- Ideal for families or groups
- Dedicated staff, private vehicle, flexible schedule
- Ultra-Luxury Properties
- High-end finishes, spa facilities, wine cellars, gourmet dining

The key distinction isn't tented vs. not tented — it's the level of luxury, privacy, and exclusivity.



WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A GUIDE VERSUS A TRACKER?

On many Southern African safaris (especially in South Africa, Botswana, and Zimbabwe), you'll encounter both a guide and a tracker working as a team.

Guide

- Leads the safari experience
- Drives the vehicle
- Interprets wildlife behavior
- Provides ecological, cultural, and conservation insights
- Ensures guest safety

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Tracker

- Sits on a specialized seat at the front of the vehicle
- Expert in identifying animal tracks and subtle signs
- Locates wildlife using spoor, sound, and movement
- Often responsible for finding elusive species like leopard

In East Africa, it is more common to have only a guide (who performs both roles). Together, the guide and tracker significantly enhance wildlife sightings and the educational depth of the experience.

DO THE LODGES HAVE POOLS?

Most mid-range to luxury safari lodges do have swimming pools, but not all — and the style varies by property and location.

Main Lodge Pool Many camps feature a central pool area overlooking a waterhole, river, or open plains. These are ideal for relaxing during the midday break between game drives.

Private Plunge Pools Higher-end suites and villas often include private plunge pools on the deck. These are especially common in Southern Africa (South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe).

No Pool (By Design) Some intimate or eco-focused camps intentionally do not have pools to:

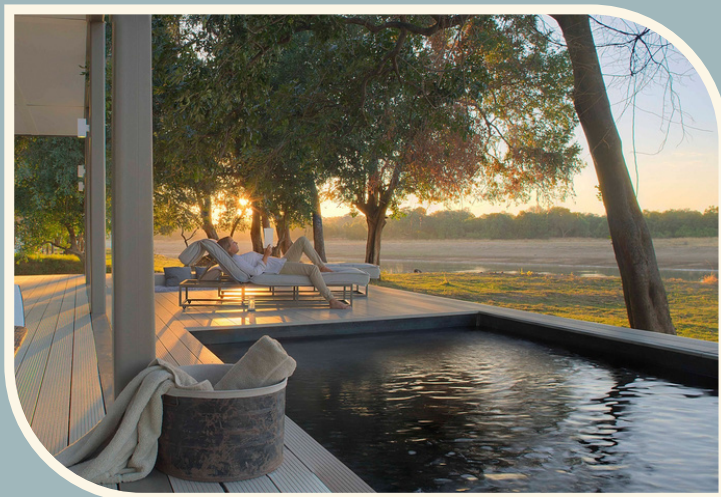
- Maintain a smaller environmental footprint
- Preserve a more authentic wilderness feel
- Reflect cooler climates where pools are less necessary

Climate matters:

- In hotter destinations (Botswana, Zambia's Lower Zambezi, South Africa's Kruger region), pools are very common.
- In cooler regions or high-altitude areas (parts of Kenya, Tanzania, Namibia), pools may be less common or less used.

Tip:

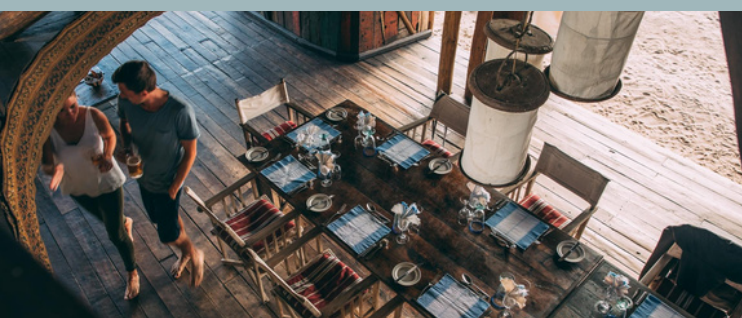
If having a pool is important to you/your client (families especially), always confirm at time of booking — and clarify whether it's a main pool or a private plunge pool.



WHAT DOES A "LIGHT AIRCRAFT FLIGHT" ENTAIL?

Light aircrafts or "charter flights" are smaller aeroplanes that commonly fly into more remote areas of game reserves in Africa. The number of passengers can vary between 2-14 people with a pilot and co-pilot, and are usually operated as a shuttle flight. This means that flight departures are scheduled, shared with other passengers and booked in economy class. There might also be more than one stop en route to your final destination. Private charters can often be booked with greater flexibility at an additional cost.

Light aircraft flights are generally operated outside of game drive times (unless otherwise specified), and in the case of bad weather where flights are halted, road transfers can usually be organised. Light aircraft flights can experience turbulence, especially in the afternoons. If you struggle with motion sickness, please take a tablet prior to your flight.



THE LODGE HAS "COMMUNAL DINING" – WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Some lodges have communal-style dining, where you will sit with other guests at the lodge or that are on your game vehicle during your stay. You are welcome to request private dining if you don't want to speak to anyone else during your downtime. However, you will find yourself connecting deeply with other guests due to your shared experience in the bush and it is really wonderful to have the opportunity to learn from each other.

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MY ITINERARY HAS FLIGHT DEPARTURE TIMES WRITTEN AS "TO BE ADVISED LOCALLY" - WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Your lodge manager will advise on your specific time of departure the day prior to your flights what time to be ready the next morning for your departure. This is organized on the ground while you are there, and could change.

15KG (33 LBS) / 20KG (44 LBS) SEEMS LITTLE TO PACK, HOW DO I MANAGE THIS?

Laundry is mostly included or available at the lodges, and therefore you can wash clothing while you are there. We recommend wearing layers of clothing and taking a maximum of 3 sets of clothing to wash during your stay to re-wear.

Where laundry is available, this might be limited, and we suggest you hand in your laundry as early on arrival to ensure the lodge is able to dry and clean it on time. Being off the grid, many lodges do not have driers and most air-dry items. This is to avoid the inconvenience of travelling with damp clothes, and the lodges will guide you upon arrival.

Remember you usually don't need to change after the afternoon game drive, dinner is casual and you can easily remain in your same clothes from safari drive into dinner. If you prefer to freshen up/change in-between of course that is up to you.



ARE THERE BUGS ON SAFARI?

Yes, insects are part of the natural bush environment, though most are harmless. Take necessary precautions when it comes to mosquitoes and insects that could bother you. Use insect repellent on exposed skin, wear long sleeves and pants during dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active, and sleep under mosquito nets in your lodge. Lodges are well-equipped to handle any concerns, have medical assistance if need be, and are experienced in helping guests manage comfort levels.

WHEN SHOULD I BOOK ANY ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES?

If you are very keen to do a specific activity that is not included in your lodge rates, we recommend you book this as soon as possible to ensure availability. Many lodges offer additional activities, such as helicopter flights or spa treatments, which you can also book closer to travel or on site should you decide last minute to experience these. If you are set on experiencing a specific activity or spa treatment, booking in advance is recommended.

As all your meals are included in your stay, it is not necessary to pre-book these unless you have specific dietary requirements that lodges need to be aware of in preparation.



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I'M A FUSSY EATER. WILL THEY BE ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE MY DIETARIES?

You will never be short of food on safari! Lodges cater for 3 meals a day, oftentimes a 3-course meal at that, and usually with snacks and drinks in between.

Dietary requirements are catered for, please confirm with your Africa Travel Expert.

DO LODGES CATER FOR KOSHER OR HALAL REQUESTS?

Yes, many lodges can assist with Kosher and Halal requests depending on the level of strictness and with prior notice. Some lodges have dedicated and accredited Kosher kitchens, source ingredients from Beth-Din-approved suppliers and can arrange for a Mashgiach to be present. Many lodges have Halal-friendly kitchens and can source halal ingredients.

I'M A KEEN PHOTOGRAPHER, ARE LODGES GEARED TOWARDS PHOTOGRAPHY?

Certainly! Most lodges guarantee that each guest gets a "window seat" on the game vehicle, which gives you greater visibility of animal sightings. You can also book a private vehicle to spend more time at your discretion at different sightings, arrange for a specialist guide to accompany you during your stay, and some lodges offer photographic studios where the studio team will assist you with post-processing techniques of your work.

Most game vehicles will have at least pair of binoculars, if not one for each guest, and many vehicles are fitted with modifications such as arm rests, or photography clips and bean bag rests for your cameras. You can also rent photographic equipment should you need lenses, accessories, kits and supports.



GLOSSARY

- **SAFARI:** is the Swahili word for "journey", adapted from the Arabic word safar, meaning "a journey". This was adopted to describe long overland expeditions in Africa, often for big-game hunting.
- **THE BIG 5:** animals include lion, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant, and Cape buffalo. They are traditionally the five most dangerous animals to hunt on foot.
- **THE SMALL OR "LITTLE" 5:** animals include Antlion, Rhinoceros Beetle, Elephant Shrew, Leopard Tortoise, and Buffalo Weaver. They are smaller creatures named for sharing parts of the famous "Big Five" animals.
- **BOMA:** open air dining with a fire.
- **CHARTER FLIGHT LIGHT AIRCRAFT:** size varies from 6-12 seater (or larger).
- **NATIONAL PARK VS GAME RESERVE VS PRIVATE CONCESSION:** exclusive area privately owned where different regulations apply eg, night drives and off-roading is possible.
- **GUIDE OR TRACKER:** your safari ranger + some lodges have a tracker too.
- **NIGHT GAME DRIVE:** drive after sunset, in the dark to view nocturnal animals.
- **NATURE WALK:** walk with a guide/ranger in the bush to view animals on foot.
- **MOKORO:** A traditional dug-out canoe most commonly used in Botswana's Okavango Delta and Chobe. Mokoro and motorboating excursions are seasonal, and do not operate when the water levels are too low, unless they are in an area with permanent water.
- **STAR BED:** outdoor sleeping.
- **HIDE:** to view animals without them seeing you – often underground with a lookout.



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