



Top Safari Destinations in Africa

Excerpted from an article by Jim Calio

Going on safari in Africa can be a life-changing experience, so figuring out what works for clients, particularly those on their first safari, is not a quick process.

Chobe National Park, Botswana

This park is best known for the incredible number of elephant within its 4,500 square miles. By some estimates they number up to 120,000. Individual elephant herds are mind-boggling in size, sometimes in the thousands.

The park is also prime viewing territory for the Big Five. In addition, you can see hippo, crocodile, wild dog, kudu, antelope and, again, huge numbers of birds of all species. A good safari guide will be able to identify birds and any animal, for that matter, day or night, and tell you the history of that species and its place in the ecosystem. If the guide is good, the trip is good.

There are a number of ecosystems in Chobe that range from the dry plains to fertile grasslands, thick forests and water-logged swamps. Many of Chobe's lodges are located along the Chobe River, which makes for some spectacular sunset cruises (and "sundowners," or happy hours) to see the wildlife getting in that last feeding before dark.

Its close proximity to Victoria Falls means that Chobe is a popular destination for short safaris and African honeymoons. Some local tour operators offer one-day mini-safaris that include a morning boat cruise, lunch and then a quick view of the game from a 4x4 vehicle.

Winter, which spans from April to October, is the best time to see wildlife in the park. Chobe is accessible by car, but there are other ways to see the game, including from the air.

"It's a unique experience to try game viewing by helicopter," said Dennis Pinto, managing director of Micato Safaris. "Hovering above a crystal-clear channel gives guests an unprecedented opportunity to watch a hippo playing at the bottom of a deepwater pool."

Accommodations in Chobe range from luxurious to rudimentary. Permanent tented camps offer all the amenities of a luxury lodge, including air conditioning and en-suite bathrooms with toilets and showers. Clients can even rent a houseboat.