



CHEETAH, SELINDA RESERVE, BOTSWANA

On Safari

Heather Tyrrell, one of Audley's Africa Programme Managers, gives advice on choosing an African Safari.

I first visited Africa twelve years ago on an expedition to Botswana. I canoed across emerald floodplains in the Okavango Delta, quietly tracked elephant in Chobe and camped out under a velvet sky in the Kalahari Desert. I was hooked, and since then I have visited virtually every national park and reserve in Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Tanzania.

Many people ask me if I get bored, returning to Africa three or four times a year. 'Once you've been on safari, isn't it all the same?' The answer is no. All the countries offer unique experiences and no park or reserve is like any other. I love Tanzania's Selous for its glassy lakes with perfect rings of crocodile, Zambia's Luangwa Valley for the leopard that appear out of the black night and Namibia for its ochre dunes, dramatic deserts and sheer expanses of space.

As all the countries are so contrasting it's important to choose the right place for your safari. I've outlined each country's highlights as well as my particular favourites below.

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Namibia is the place to go for dramatic photography. Desert elephant trudge across stark desert scenery, rhino roam gravel plains. In the south you can sit on the edge of the world's second largest canyon – The Fish River Canyon – and not see another soul. However, the greatest draw for me is

the dunes. Rising well before the sun, drive into Sossusvlei, climb a dune and sit on top and watch the sun come up and set them alight, changing them from pale pink to burning orange. Your photography cannot fail to be spectacular.

I always think that Botswana offers the ultimate safari experience. Huge tracts of wilderness have only a few tiny but exclusive lodges. The Okavango Delta with its expanse of glittering water is a natural wonder of the world. Gliding in a mokoro through channels alive with iridescent birds, terrapins and carpets of water lilies has to be the most relaxing experience I know. There is a magical area known as the Duba Plains, where buffalo herds 3,000 strong crackle across the plains and you can watch lion stalk them every single day. There's a camp, Kwetsani,



WOLWEDANS DUNE LODGE, NAMIBRAND, NAMIBIA

built in the treetops, a reserve where you can observe wild dog den and, my personal favourite, the 'log pile' hide at Savuti where you can watch elephant from heart-stopping proximity.

Zambia isn't a country for the faint hearted. It's wild and untamed with vegetation that runs riot, birds of every colour of the rainbow and wild animals all over the place. The camps are very small and rustic and surrounded by animals. Hippo graze around the tents at night and more often than not you'll find a friendly tree frog in your shower. It's the best place to go for walking safaris and has some of Africa's finest guides. Watching a female leopard greet her month-old cub at the dead of night is not something you ever forget.

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Tanzania is the country of wildlife documentaries. It offers some of Africa's most unique and specialist game viewing experiences. In the north, you must time your safari to coincide with the migration of the

wildebeest across the Serengeti. One of my favourite lodges to stay in is Ndutu, which is the favoured place for the wildebeest calving that takes place under a full moon in December. In the far west of Tanzania the Mahale Mountains are the best place in Africa to track chimpanzees. Hearing your first screech of a chimpanzee chills you to the bone. The southern parks of



HEATHER AT THE LOG PILE HIDE, SAVUTI, BOTSWANA

Selous and Ruaha offer big herds and fabulous birding and Katavi has a hippo pool with over six hundred hippo – possibly my favourite place in Africa to enjoy a sundowner.

Tanzania has the added bonus of idyllic beaches, turquoise seas and the exotic islands of the Zanzibar archipelago. You can explore Zanzibar's spice markets, stay in converted Arabic palaces and dive in the deep Pemba channel. Perhaps my favourite place of

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all though, is the little known Mafia Archipelago. A short flight from Dar es Salaam they are always the place I head for. Here, you'll find idyllic tropical islands, fringed by white sand with off-shore necklaces of coral reefs. The beaches are visited only by nesting turtles, the only sound that of the wind in the palm trees and the only thing to do is relax, escape and explore.

Travel File

Audley's new Africa & the Indian Ocean brochure is now out featuring all the countries mentioned in Heather's article plus tempting Indian Ocean islands to relax on post-safari. The brochure also features South Africa, which has a number of safari options which can be combined with other aspects of the 'Rainbow Nation', as well as Egypt and Morocco. For further details please call our Africa specialists on 01869 276 250.