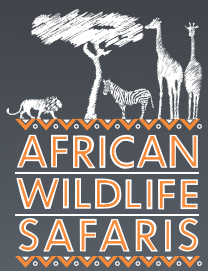


NATURAL FOCUS



THE TALKING DRUM

2024 E-Newsletter Volume 1



CELEBRATING
39 years
OF INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEYS



Welcome to Vol. 1 of the Talking Drum for 2024, with news, stories and features on some of our fabulous travel destinations. Amazingly, this is our 39th year since founding African Wildlife Safaris back in 1985, and we are happy to say that our ethos has remained the same – offering clients our knowledge, professional service and well-researched and well-constructed itineraries. Whether it's Africa or our other worldwide destinations under our Natural Focus banner, we seek to create wonderful and authentic travel experiences.

We also offer a few escorted small group tours every year. These are out-of-the-ordinary journeys, with specially curated itineraries - which

is why we lead them ourselves! They're not just a tour to a wonderful destination, but a unique experience.

In June/July this year James Cameron is escorting a mobile camping safari to Botswana, while in August/September Steve is taking a small group (for the third time) to Zambia's Luangwa Valley and the Lower Zambezi National Park. Anne-Marie Zambelli, our India guru, escorts a small group to India every February to see the historic sites and search for tigers; and this will be departing from Delhi on Friday 14 Feb 2025. These tours soon fill up, with just a couple of places left in 2024. See pages 6-11 for more information on these life-changing journeys. Looking further ahead, we have a host of existing and NEW small group tours in the works for 2025 as well – so watch this space for more details.

We are glad to report that Africa is once again one of the hot destinations for 2024/25 and we urge any of our clients keen to embark on a safari of a lifetime to book early. To secure the safari camps and lodges in the best areas you need to book at least 9 months and preferably a year in advance.

On page 5 you will find an update on the Victoria Falls Anti-Poaching Unit (VFAPU), and what they are doing to preserve and protect the precious wilderness area around the falls. Over-tourism is becoming a problem in many parts of the world, and ensuring a low-impact and authentic travel experience is increasingly important. In Africa there is no doubt that eco-tourism has many benefits; providing money for wildlife conservation and supporting the local economy - thus ensuring that wilderness areas and the animals that live there have a value and are preserved. At the same time visitors learn about the people, wildlife and fragile eco-systems of the places they visit and come home keen to protect them.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Talking Drum and we look forward to assisting you with your holiday plans soon.

Steve Cameron *Sara Cameron*

Steve and Sara Cameron - Founders

Internal photographs courtesy of: Aditya Singh, Ally Ross, Aurora, Bushcamp Company, Charles Brightman, Churchill Wild, David Merron, European Waterways, James Cameron, Letaka, Michael Poliza, Natasha Redondo, Natural Selection, Quark, Rovos Rail, Sabi Sabi, Sara Cameron, Southern Ocean Lodge, Steve Cameron, Takims, Un Cruise

FEATURES

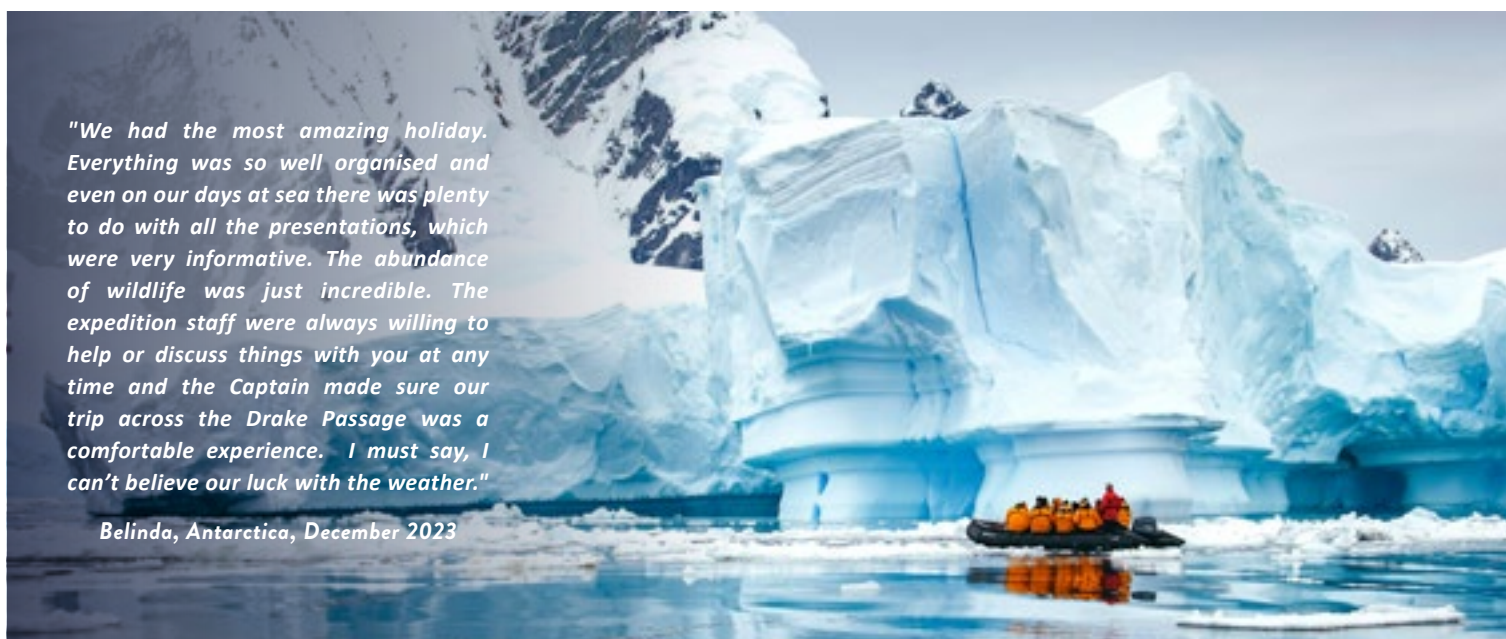
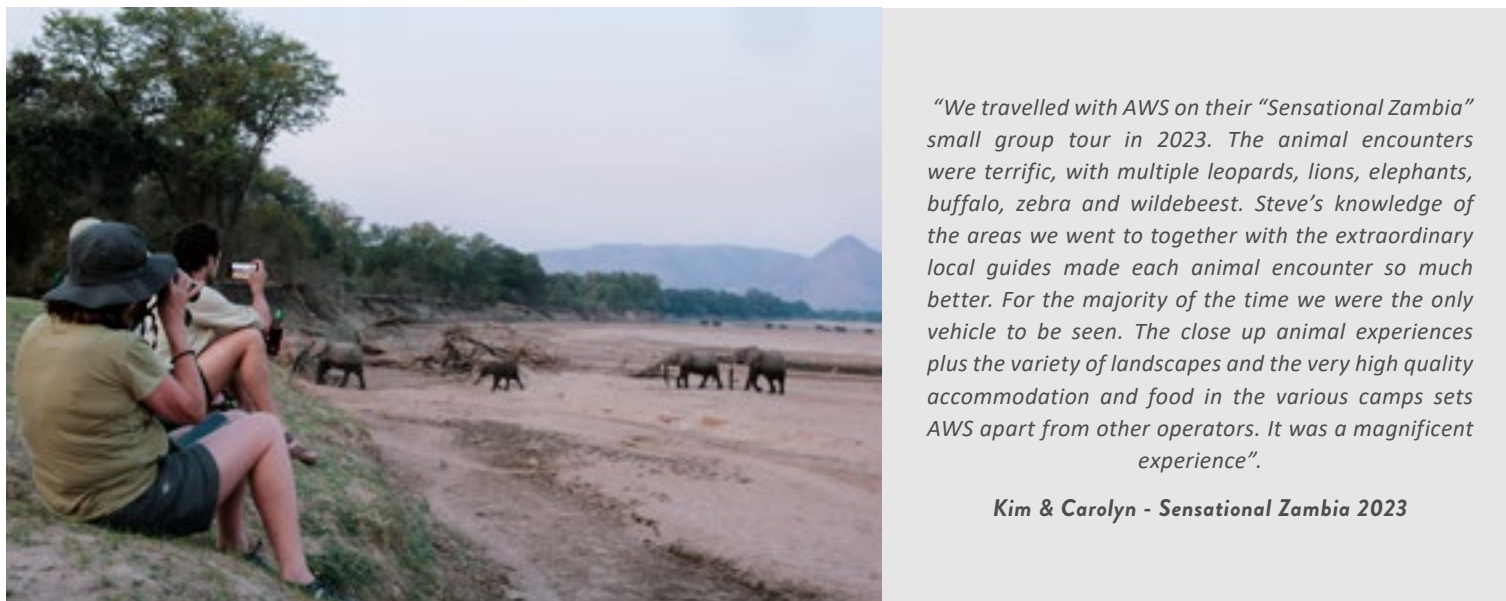
- 5 CONSERVATION UPDATE
Supported Projects 2023
- 6 ESCORTED SMALL GROUP JOURNEYS
Classic Botswana & Zimbabwe 2024
- 8 ESCORTED SMALL GROUP JOURNEYS
Zambia - The Wild Zambezi 2024
- 10 ESCORTED SMALL GROUP JOURNEYS
India - Taj, Temples & Tigers 2025
- 12 TANTALISING TANZANIA
The Spirit of Lemala
- 14 AFRICA'S LUXURY TRAIN
Rovos Rail
- 16 SABI SABI SOUTH AFRICA
Heart of the Bush
- 18 NATURAL SELECTION BOTSWANA
A true bush experience
- 20 ALASKA'S ALEUTIAN ISLANDS
UnCruise Adventures
- 22 CANADA'S POLAR BEARS
Arctic Discovery
- 24 BRAZIL'S PANTANAL
Jaguars, Jaguars, Jaguars
- 26 TRACKING PATAGONIA'S PUMAS
Chile's Torres Del Paine
- 28 ANTARCTIC PENINSULA JOURNEY
Aurora Expeditions
- 30 THE 7TH CONTINENT
A Penguin Safari
- 31 KANGAROO ISLAND
Southern Ocean Lodge
- 34 A TASTE OF SOUTH AFRICA
Recipes for the Soul

On the cover
AFRICAN ELEPHANT

© Steve Cameron



2023 CLIENT TESTIMONIALS



CONSERVATION UPDATE

VICTORIA FALLS ANTI-POACHING UNIT (VFAPU)

As many of our clients would know, African Wildlife Safaris have been supporting the Victoria Falls Anti-Poaching Unit (VFAPU) in Zimbabwe since its inception in 1999. In 2023 we were able to donate, together with our clients, USD \$3,962.62 to help them continue their conservation fight.

These rangers put their lives on the line to protect precious wildlife and fragile ecosystems. Their continual efforts have been even more imperative during the last few years, and with more and more travellers returning to Africa, this provides vital support to the VFAPU and other organisations across the continent.

Below is the customary yearly graphic that highlights the fantastic achievements of the VFAPU over the course of 2023. For more information or if you would like to donate, please visit their facebook page [here](#).



"Our experience with the Vic Falls Anti-Poaching Unit was amazing. We were picked up by Charles (the founder of VFAPU) early in the morning. Charles was a great guide and his knowledge was immense and he freely shared it with us. We stopped on a number of occasions to get a better look at wildlife or the scenery and Charles provided us with information about the history of the unit and the challenges they face continuing into the future. We went for a short walk over easy terrain identifying many features used to track animals and to look for animals on the ground. The trip lasted about 4 hours. This tour was the best part of our time in Victoria Falls."

Di & Steve, September 2023

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION EXPERIENCE ZIMBABWE

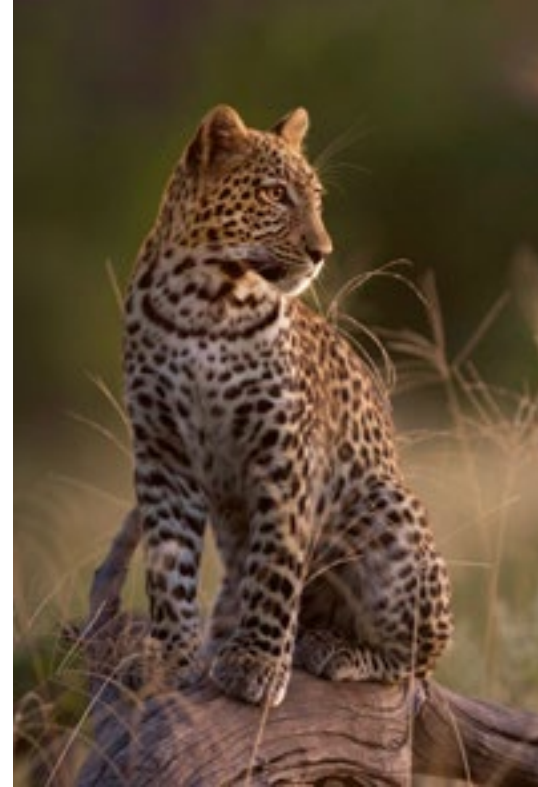
Throughout 2023, many of our clients included a morning experience in their itineraries with the VFAPU when visiting Victoria Falls. This activity includes a presentation on the history of the unit and the challenges they face, before heading out into the park to help rangers record game sightings, identify spoor, sweep for wire snares and visit areas to investigate for any signs of poaching. The experience helps to provide more eyes on the ground to deter various forms of poaching, whilst guests get to play an important role in conservation.

For more information on this activity, contact our Africa Specialists on 1300 363 302.



CLASSIC BOTSWANA

DEPARTS EX VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE
SATURDAY 06 JULY 2024
13 DAYS/12 NIGHTS



Growing up with tour operators as parents, James spent many family holidays visiting unique destinations worldwide, which instilled in him a passion for travel, culture and wildlife. His first safari was in 2002 to Kenya and Tanzania, and a long-lasting highlight of that trip was camping in the endless plains of the Serengeti. Since then he has returned many times to the continent, and this will be James' 3rd time on our Classic Botswana safari.



Don't miss out on our SECOND group departure in 2024 exploring Victoria Falls and Botswana's iconic Okavango Delta.

Escorted by James Cameron, this all-inclusive 13-day tour provides guests with a classic safari experience during prime gameviewing season, mobile camping in one of the world's most remarkable and pristine areas – the Okavango Delta. The maze of lagoons and islands sustains a huge variety of flora and fauna, including iconic African animals such as lion, elephant, leopard and hippo.

In keeping with our company philosophy, this is an African safari of old, visiting breath-taking wildlife areas whilst staying in a comfortable mobile camp. Travelling by 4WD vehicle and accompanied by a knowledgeable guide, we explore three contrasting landscapes, spending a number of days in each. The camps are set up in advance by a superb team of camp staff who cater to our every need. The

tents are spacious with ensuite bush showers and toilet. This safari also offers the chance to paddle by mokoro (dugout canoe) through the delta's pristine waterways.

The first 3 nights are spent in Zimbabwe, staying at beautiful Ilala Lodge, just 10 minutes' walk from the falls themselves. Here we will enjoy a tour of the falls, a sunset cruise along the Zambezi River and a fun-filled elephant interaction experience.

Highlights

- 3 different regions of Botswana – Moremi, Mababe & Chobe
- Mokoro excursion through the waterways
- Elephant interaction experience
- Tour the incredible Victoria Falls (Mosi-oa-Tunya)
- Take a sunset cruise along the Zambezi River

DEPARTS SATURDAY
06 JULY 2024
ex Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

4-5 clients

AUD \$14,225 /pp twin share*

6+ clients

AUD \$12,758 /pp twin share*

*Conditions apply. Single travellers on request.

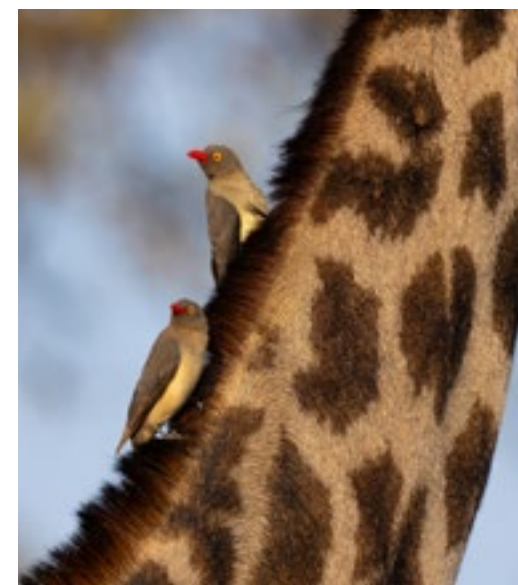
ENQUIRE NOW

Don't miss out! For further
information and to reserve your place,
please call us on 1300 363 302.



ZAMBIA AND THE WILD ZAMBEZI

JOIN OUR ESCORTED
SAFARI ON 21 AUGUST 2024! **PLACES LIMITED**



SENSATIONAL ZAMBIA

17 days/16 nights - ex Lusaka
From AUD **\$33,900** per person twin share
Departs: 21 Aug 2024 | 2025 TBC

Escorted by African Wildlife Safaris CEO Steve Cameron this 17-day safari visits some of Zambia's most prestigious wildlife areas staying at remote and exclusive camps. Expect expert guides, game drives and exciting walking and canoeing safaris away from busy tourist areas guaranteeing an unrivalled safari experience.

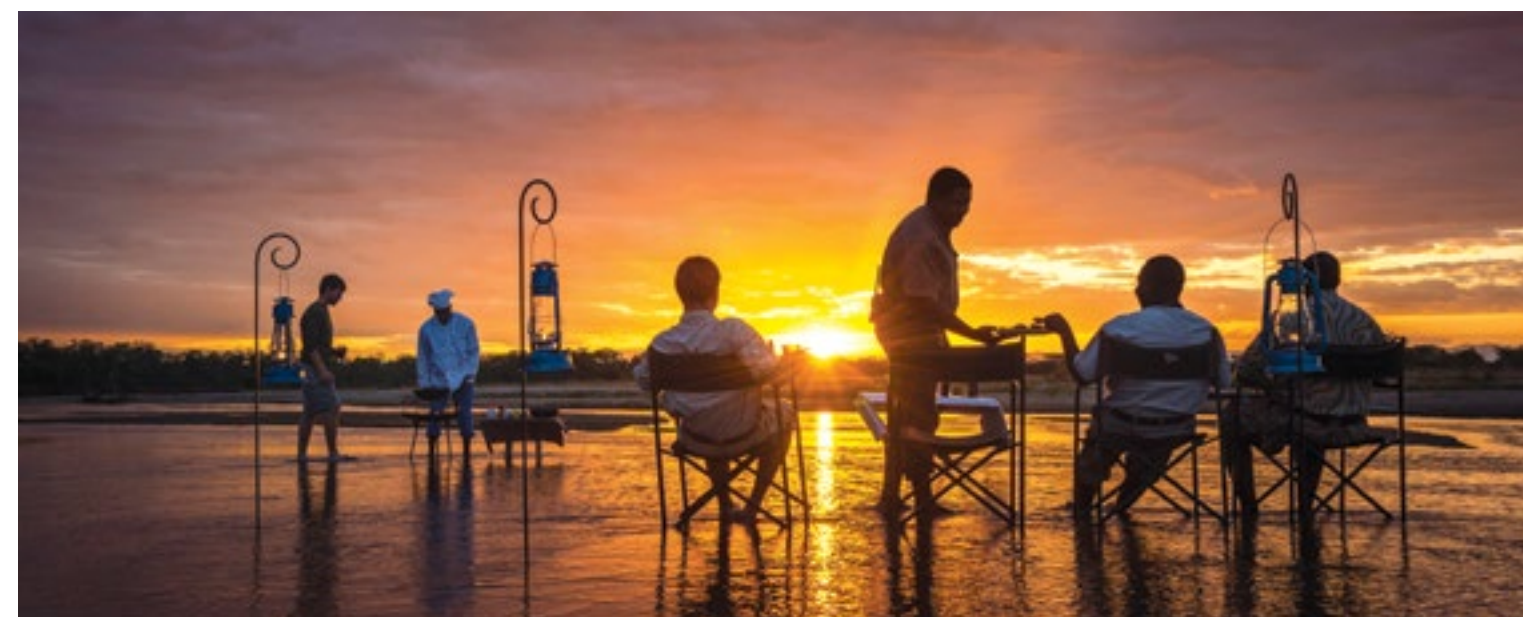
Departing from the Zambian city of Lusaka, this special departure unveils the wonders of Zambia during the peak wildlife viewing season.

Designed on an all-inclusive basis (except in Lusaka) relax, enjoy and make the most of this unique and off-the-beaten-track safari of a lifetime.

Please note: Maximum group size is 8. We can assist with your airfares and book your flights in your preferred class of travel.

For further information please call our Destination Specialists on 1300 363 302 or

ENQUIRE NOW



August and September in Zambia is prime game-viewing season, promising outstanding wildlife encounters. Animals congregate around seasonal rivers and shrinking lagoons as the bush dries out after months of no rain. It's a time of crisp mornings and warm days, clear skies and spectacular sunsets. So it's no wonder that our 17 Day Sensational Zambia safari, escorted by CEO Steve Cameron, has become one of our most popular small group tours.

With a maximum of just 8 guests, this exclusive safari will take you into the more remote parts of the South Luangwa National Park, where noisy pods of hippos wallow in the remaining pools and lagoons, and crocodiles sun themselves on the sandbanks. There are plenty of lion prides in the area, and leopards can be seen sleeping in tree branches or prowling the bush at night.

A short flight by charter aircraft then takes us to the next stage of our adventure on the banks of the Zambezi River. This area is rich in game, with many elephants, buffalo, lions and antelope in the riverine woodlands, and the chance to see endangered African wild dog. With our guides we explore the river by boat and canoe, looking out for hippo, crocodiles and birds like kingfishers, herons, storks and darters.

This is a very special safari designed by Steve Cameron himself with carefully chosen small camps away from busy tourist areas, excellent local guides and plenty of time spent game viewing rather than travelling. The tour ends with 3 nights at the spectacular Victoria Falls.

For more details on our 2024 departure please see the adjacent page.

TAJ, TEMPLES & TIGERS

Did you miss out on joining us in 2024?

JOIN OUR TAJ, TEMPLES & TIGERS
GROUP TOUR IN FEBRUARY 2025.

NOW is the time to book and secure your spot on our next Taj, Temples and Tigers tour, departing on 14 February 2025 – our most successful and popular escorted small group tour.

If you love wildlife, history and culture this is perfect for you, with unprecedented opportunities to get up-close to the majestic Bengal Tiger. Nothing can quite prepare you for seeing this magnificent creature in its natural habitat, as it wanders through the jungle, a privilege that few people will ever experience. Throughout this 18-day trip you will be escorted by our General Manager Anne-Marie Zambelli, whose knowledge and zest for India (and travel in general) knows no bounds, as well as naturalist Tirath Singh who has accompanied many of our previous tours. Whilst this tour visits four of India's national parks there is also plenty of time for cultural experiences and historical sites.

DEPARTS EX DELHI

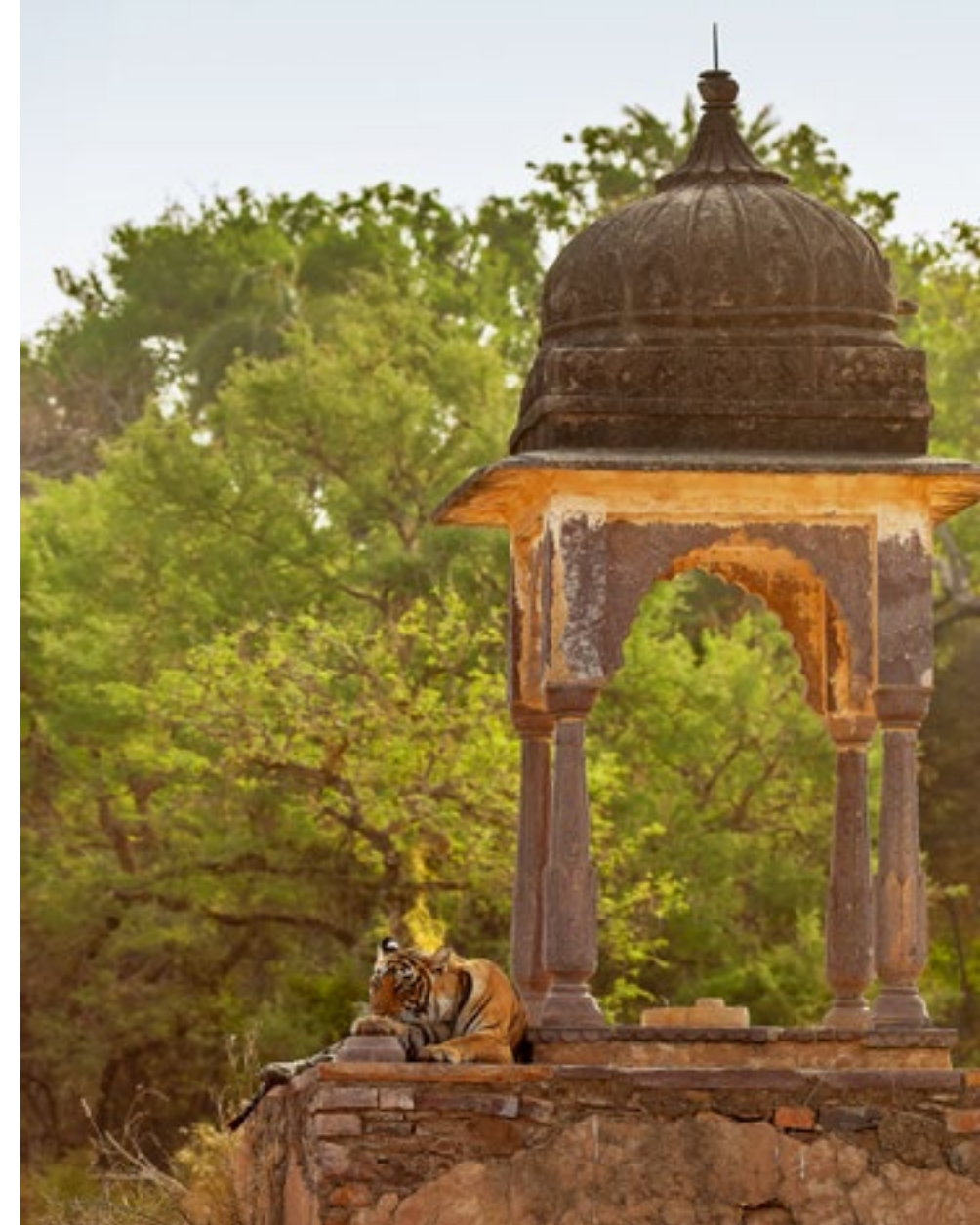
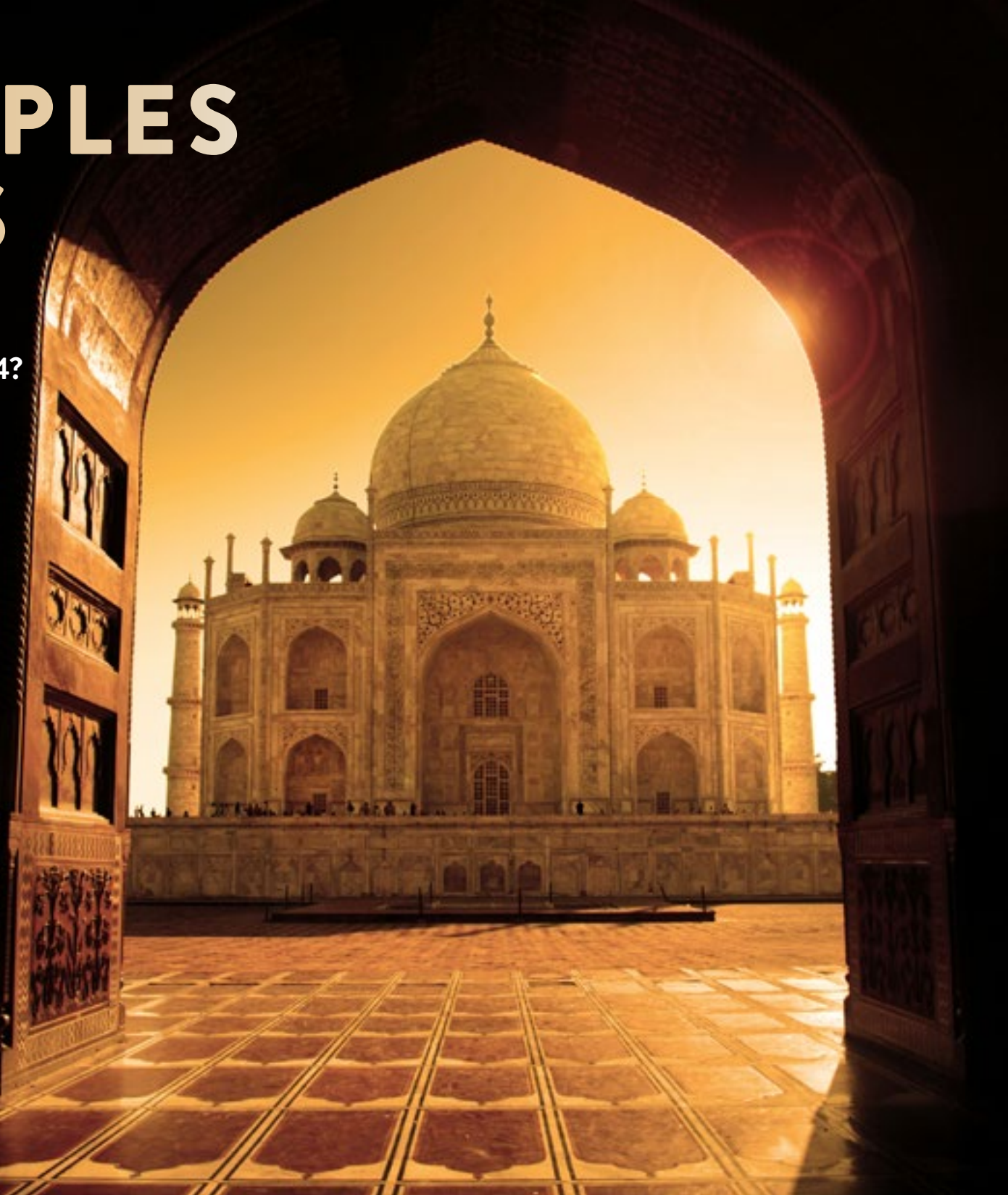
14 Feb 2025

18 days/17 nights

TOUR COST EX DELHI

AUD \$14,895 per person twin share
Single Supplement AUD \$3,193

ENQUIRE NOW



HIGHLIGHTS

- Total of 11 guided tiger safaris in Bandhavgarh, Ranthambore and Kanha
- The avian paradise of Keoladeo National Park
- The historic treasures of Delhi, Jaipur & the beautiful Taj Mahal
- Accompanying naturalist and Australian escort
- See the magnificent One-horned Indian Rhinoceros in Kaziranga NP (extension only)

TOUR ESCORT

A passionate traveller with over 35 years' experience in the travel industry, Anne-Marie (Annie) Zambelli's knowledge is unrivalled. As our General Manager she is an expert on all our destinations. As a tour leader she is a knowledgeable, enthusiastic and entertaining travelling companion. Captivated by India on her first trip in 2002, Annie has returned many times, and this will be her 14th Taj Temples & Tigers Tour.



KAZIRANGA 4 NIGHT EXTENSION

There is also an option to extend your time in India and add a 5 day/4 night stay exploring Kaziranga National Park. Located in the north east of the country in the state of Assam, Kaziranga is home to the endangered one-horned Indian Rhinoceros.

Don't miss out!

For further information and to reserve your place, please call us on **1300 363 302**.



TANTALISING TANZANIA

THE SPIRIT OF LEMALA



“What made the camps so special was the staff – from the managers to waiters, chefs, housekeepers, gardeners, askaris (night watchmen) and guides we met along the way. All performed their roles with enthusiasm and always with a smile. That is the spirit of Lemala and I cannot wait to return in 2025. Why not join me on a small group safari? Stay tuned”

Anne-Marie (Annie) Zambelli AWS General Manager

One of the important elements of any safari is where you stay and the Lemala collection is a great choice. With properties in Arusha, Tarangire, Ngorongoro and the Serengeti, Lemala has the northern safari circuit covered. Their camps are small and intimate and offer superior and stylish accommodation in some of the best locations.

Mpingo Ridge in Tarangire sits on the top of an escarpment and has undoubtedly some of the best views in Africa, while in the central Serengeti, contemporary Nanyukie Lodge sits on a grassy savanna dotted with rocky kopjes and offers 15 superb suites each with their own private plunge pool.

For those who wish to follow the wildebeest and zebra migration, Lemala Ndutu & Mara Tented Camps are seasonal, mobile camps, and occupy two prime game viewing areas when the migration passes through. They don’t lack for comfort, with a comfortable, communal lounge and dining area, ensuite bathrooms with flush toilet and bush shower, and even Wi-Fi availability!



Lemala Osonjoi Lodge

Opening in March 2025, we are excited about this brand new lodge that will sit nestled on the edge of the world-renowned Ngorongoro Crater. The main area will boast impressive views of the crater floor below, whilst importantly, the lodge is situated close to the less-used Lemala access road, meaning guests will be amongst the first into the UNESCO World Heritage site each morning.

For more information please call our Destination Specialists on **1300 363 302**.



EXPLORE AFRICA BY LUXURY TRAIN



Widely regarded as the most luxurious train in the world, Rovos Rail offers an inspiring fusion of opulence and adventure. Called the "Pride of Africa" this historic train transcends the ordinary, promising a unique travel experience reminiscent of a bygone era. Journeying to some of the continent's greatest destinations, with itineraries from 3 to 15 nights, there are also opportunities for off-train excursions to game parks and historic sites.

The meticulously restored carriages boast exquisite wood panelling, plush furnishings, and polished brass, creating an ambiance of timeless elegance. The level of service rivals that of the world's most exclusive establishments, and sumptuous meals, paired with fine wines, are served in the ornate dining cars. The observation car, with its open-air balcony, allows views of the ever-changing panoramas and the chance to savour the thrill of the journey.

Beyond the sheer luxury, Rovos Rail embodies a commitment to sustainability, incorporating eco-friendly practices into its operations. The train not only offers a glimpse into the golden age of travel but also serves as a testament to the enduring allure of railways in the modern era.



Rovos Rail is based in Pretoria, South Africa. They operate their luxury rail journeys throughout Africa, travelling to amazing destinations and offering unique and unforgettable experiences. You can choose from a range of itineraries depending on your style, length of time available and budget:

Shorter trips (3 or 4 nights): Journey from Pretoria to either Cape Town, Victoria Falls, or Durban. Highlights include the scenic beauty of the Western Cape, the awe-inspiring Victoria Falls, or the vibrant coastal city of Durban.

Combo journeys (6 to 8 nights): These journeys combine multiple shorter trips and themes, allowing passengers to immerse themselves in a variety of experiences. From the Southern Cross journey, which covers South Africa, Swaziland, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, to the African Trilogy journey, which includes Victoria Falls, Kruger National Park, and the Drakensberg Mountains, these combo journeys offer a true exploration of Africa's diverse landscapes and cultures.

Longer expeditions (11 to 15 nights): These journeys cross multiple countries and regions, showcasing the stunning diversity of the African continent. From Cape Town to Dar es Salaam, from Dar es Salaam to Lobito, from Victoria Falls to Lobito, or from Pretoria to Namibia, these expeditions offer passengers the opportunity to explore the vast and varied landscapes of Africa, from the savannah to the mountains, from the desert to the rainforest, from the vineyards to the waterfalls.

Themed journeys (various durations): These journeys cater to the specific interests of the passengers, such as golfing, photography or wildlife. These specialised trips combine the thrill of train travel with tailored experiences, ensuring that every traveller's desires are met.

Rovos Rail promises its passengers a luxurious and exceptional experience of Africa, with spacious and elegant accommodations, impeccable and attentive service, and breathtaking and panoramic views of the African continent.

For more information on these Rovos Rail journeys, contact our Africa Specialists on 1300 363 302.





IN THE HEART OF THE AFRICAN BUSHVELD



By Sara Cameron, Co-Founder

Leaps of leopards and dazzles of zebra were everywhere on our last visit to Sabi Sabi Game Reserve, deep in the heart of South Africa's bushveld. This recognised hotspot of biodiversity was established back in 1979 and has always been a leader in ecotourism, dedicated to sustainability, conservation and community. Adjacent to the Kruger National Park the game viewing here is legendary, particularly for big cats,

and on our last visit we had some amazing wildlife encounters.

With Lawrence our guide and Sidney our tracker we found lions lazing under trees and stalking prey. We watched graceful giraffe feeding on sausage trees and saw a pair of cheetahs who had just had their kill stolen by hyenas. One day we came across a pair of mating leopards who were not at all shy and were conducting their love affair in broad daylight right in front of our vehicle. She would start flirting and waving her tail at him and he would follow. Then after a quick pairing she would snarl at him and swipe at him with her paw, and they would collapse in the grass and rest. About 20 minutes later they would start all over again.

This was definitely a 'David Attenborough wildlife moment', and one which a decade or more ago would have been unheard of. These days however leopards are fairly

habituated to vehicles and often seen in broad daylight in well-established areas like Sabi Sabi.

On this occasion we stayed at Selati Camp, one of Sabi Sabi's four superb properties. Overlooking the Msuthlu River where herds of elephants, impala and other game come to drink throughout the day, this secluded camp has just 7 thatched guest suites surrounded by gardens.

To read more of Sara's blog [click here](#).

**For more information contact our
Africa Specialists on 1300 363 302**



"At Sabi Sabi the room was stunning, the staff were friendly and respectful, guides and spotters exceptional, and seeing the wildlife was extraordinary - we would go back again and will do more safaris in the future"

Karen & Stuart, October 2023



SPECIAL OFFER

STAY 4 NIGHTS / PAY 3

**Book any Sabi Sabi lodge for 4 nights and
get 1 free.**

ENQUIRE NOW

Offer valid 01 February 2024 to 28 February 2025.
Conditions Apply

"I visited Sabi Sabi with my Dad and stayed at the exquisite Earth Lodge. We had the most incredible holiday and were lucky enough to see all the animals while staying in the most luxurious accommodation. The food and service was 5 star, the staff incredibly friendly and helpful. It was without doubt a trip of a lifetime!"

Theda, August 2023



NATURAL SELECTION BOTSWANA

A TRUE BUSH EXPERIENCE



Anne-Marie (Annie) Zambelli
General Manager

With superb safari camps and lodges located in some of the best wildlife and wilderness areas, Natural Selection has southern Africa covered. Their portfolio of lodges and camps can be found in Botswana's Okavango Delta and Kalahari Desert, in Namibia's stark wilderness and along the southwest cape of South Africa. Our General Manager, Anne-Marie (Annie) Zambelli returned to her old stomping ground (Botswana's Okavango Delta) last year and relished the opportunity to visit some of their properties.

"I really enjoyed the fact that all the camps were different – not just location but the style of accommodation – and each offered a true bush experience. I heard lions calling during the night in San Camp, at Tuludi, Skybeds and Dukes! This certainly made my heart sing and was a goosebump reminder of where I was. There are fewer and fewer camps these days where you can hear the sounds of Africa from your tent, which is so very special. As always the wildlife was a highlight for me, with each game drive more exciting than the last. From flocks of flamingos and nocturnal residents such as aardvark and brown hyena that brought the Salt Pans to life, to the big cats of the Okavango Delta and the Khwai Private Reserve, I was treated to it all.

If you have ever longed to see Africa's wildlife in their natural habitat I highly recommend that you add Botswana to your list – you will not be disappointed".

For more information on a Botswana safari speak to one of our African specialists on 1300 363 302

EXTRACTS FROM ANNIE'S BUSH JOURNAL

- 1 **Meno A Kwena Tented Camp – Boteti River**
Meno is a gem of a camp, and a great spot to rest after a long flight. Accommodation is true bush – comfortable and rustic. From my view over the river, I saw a playful breeding herd of elephant. Magic!
- 2-4 **San Camp Makgadikgadi Pans**
My favourite camp in the Kalahari – to my mind it epitomises an authentic safari experience in the desert – perfectly positioned on the edge of the expansive salt pans. The tents are very spacious, light and delightfully furnished. Rati, Phidley and the whole camp team certainly made for a memorable stay. Wildlife viewing was off the charts, and I saw lion, wildebeest, springbok, zebra and greater kudu. Night drives were incredible, and we were rewarded with sightings of aardvark, African pole cat and brown hyena. Other highlights included the meerkats, walking with the bushman and drives along the salt pans.
- 5/6 **Tuludi – Khwai Private Reserve**
This camp is beautiful, and I enjoyed everything about it, the lowlight was having to leave! The area is a haven for big cats – leopards and lions galore. I enjoyed the topography of this area and can imagine when the annual flood arrives how lovely it would be exploring the area by boat or mokoro (local canoe). My guide was one of the best I have worked with in my years in Africa.
- 7 **Skybeds Khwai Private Reserve**
I headed to 'Skybeds' for sundowner drinks and a night under the stars. The three towers have amazing views over a productive waterhole frequented by elephants and other wildlife. The sleeping deck is very snug and toasty with a mosquito net draped over the bed which was open to the sky. I eventually fell asleep to the sound of lions calling. Amazing.
- 8/9 **Dukes Camp Okavango Delta**
This area must be one of the best in the Okavango! Wild and beautiful with varied landscapes. I saw fabulous wildlife from huge male lions to tiny leopard cubs, a majestic male sable antelope, elephants and giraffes everywhere and hippos in front of camp. The Jackalberry Trees made for the perfect shade canopy for outdoor dining.
- 10 **Thamo Telele On Thamalakane River, Maun**
A perfect place to relax at the beginning or end of a safari for a night. The highlight here is the giraffe activity where you will meet these elegant icons of Africa and learn about The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF).

LEARN MORE



DISCOVER ALASKA'S ALEUTIAN ISLANDS



In 2025, join UnCruise Adventures as they embark on a new journey to one of the world's most pristine and awe-inspiring wildernesses for the first time - The Aleutian Islands.

A remote archipelago stretching over 1,200 miles across the North Pacific Ocean, the Aleutian Islands stand as a testament to the raw and untamed beauty of Alaska. This remarkable chain of volcanic islands connects the Alaska Peninsula to the Russian Far East, forming a bridge between two continents. Comprising 14 large islands and around 55 smaller ones, the Aleutians are a captivating blend of rugged landscapes, unique wildlife, and a rich cultural history.

One of the defining features of the Aleutian Islands is their volcanic origin. The archipelago is part of the Pacific Ring of Fire and was formed by the subduction of the Pacific Plate beneath the North American Plate, resulting in a dynamic and geologically diverse landscape. Volcanic peaks, some still active, pierce the sky, creating a dramatic backdrop against the vastness of the surrounding ocean.

The nutrient-rich waters surrounding the islands support a thriving marine life, making the region a haven for seabirds, marine mammals, and fish. Steller sea lions, sea otters, and several species of whales, including orcas and humpbacks, can be spotted in these waters. Birdwatchers are treated to the sight of countless seabirds, including puffins, cormorants, and eagles, nesting on the cliffs and rocky outcrops.

The islands are also home to a rich cultural heritage. The indigenous people of the region, known as the Aleuts, have a history that spans thousands of years. Before the arrival of Russian explorers in the 18th century, the Aleuts led a subsistence lifestyle, relying on fishing, hunting marine mammals and gathering plants for survival. The Russian influence, marked by the establishment of fur trading posts, introduced new elements to the Aleut way of life. Today, the Aleutian Islands are a testament to the resilience and adaptability of the Aleut people, who maintain their cultural traditions and connection to the land.

This journey also visits Kodiak Island and renowned Katmai National Park, famous for its brown (or grizzly) bears. Originally created in 1918 to preserve the famed Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes, it was later designated a national park in 1980. There is over 9,000 years of human history here, while it is one of the most important habitats for salmon and supports over 2,000 brown bears.

For those seeking adventure, this 11-day small-ship expedition offers a unique and unparalleled experience. The vast, untouched landscapes provide a backdrop for outdoor enthusiasts, with opportunities for hiking, kayaking, and wildlife observation. This captivating and awe-inspiring destination is unmatched, from its volcanic landscapes, diverse wildlife and rich cultural history, the Aleutians offer an unforgettable experience for those willing to venture off the beaten path.



Aleutian Island Adventure

11 days/10 nights

Prices start from **\$16,038** /pp twin share*

Save **\$800** /pp

DEPARTS:

Fridays ex Whittier

Tuesdays ex Dutch Harbor

2025 DATES:

30 May

10 & 27 June

08 & 25 July

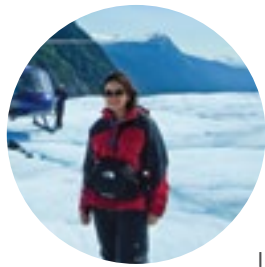
05 August

*Conditions apply. Price inclusive of saving. Single travellers on request.
Contact us for further details.

ENQUIRE NOW



ARCTIC



By Natasha Redondo, Destination Specialist

Imagine a tour where it is possible not just to see polar bears but also black bears, wolves and the incredibly curious beluga whale. Arctic Discovery with Churchill Wild delivers all of this and more. From kayaking with belugas to walking with polar bears this is true bucket list material.

I was lucky enough to experience one of these trips myself in 2023. My adventure began in Winnipeg, Canada where I met our group for the next 8 days. After a private tour of the Manitoba Museum there was a group dinner and a briefing on what the next few days had in store.

Early next morning we flew to Churchill and set out on a tour of this unusual frontier town, where you can sometimes hear the inmates at the Polar Bear Jail! There are opportunities for zodiac excursions, beluga encounters, and a boat trip to the Prince of Wales Fort for a bit of history.

The highlight for me was kayaking with belugas. They were inquisitive and playful, jostling our kayaks and seeming to take delight in showering us with water – getting even more playful when we squealed with laughter.

Then it was time for a light aircraft flight with our experienced pilot, spotting polar bears, moose and other animals on our way to Nanuk Lodge in the heart of polar bear territory. We must have seen 50 to 60 bears from the air.

On touch down right outside the lodge we were greeted by the local wolf pack - what an entrance! Then we were off on our first polar bear safari in the ‘Rhino’ - a specially built all-terrain vehicle designed to ford rivers and handle the tundra. I spotted the first bear through binoculars, and the excitement was palpable as we set off on foot in single file to approach this awesome creature. We got as close as 80 metres before we had to back away. Another incredible polar bear experience was on our full day tour when we saw a mother with her cubs.

Meal times at the lodge were a chance to gather and discuss our amazing experiences. While enjoying the delicious home style meals we were sometimes interrupted by the inquisitive mother black bear and her cub that kept creeping up to the lodge. Sadly all good things must come to an end and it was time to fly back to Churchill and then to Winnipeg. This was definitely one of my most incredible travel experiences ever.



Watch the video ▶

DISCOVERY





The Pantanal Wetland in Brazil's western centre is one of the very best places to see Jaguars in the world. Below is what one of our clients has to say on his recent experience there:

"During October I spent a magical 20 days in the Northern Pantanal in Brazil photographing the Jaguar, Caiman, Capybara and wonderful bird life. One of the highlights of this trip was capturing a Jaguar leaping directly towards us from the bank in search of a Caiman, whilst another was seeing the elusive and rarely seen Neotropical Otter catching fish"

"Each morning we were on the boats by 5:30am in search of these majestic cats. This area of the Pantanal is well-known worldwide for its jaguar sightings. It was typical to come across 2-4 different individuals each day. This was one of my best safaris I have done in nearly 20 years of travelling with Natural Focus & African Wildlife Safaris"

Gary, October 2023

BRAZIL'S PANTANAL

© Gary Hamdorf



© Gary Hamdorf



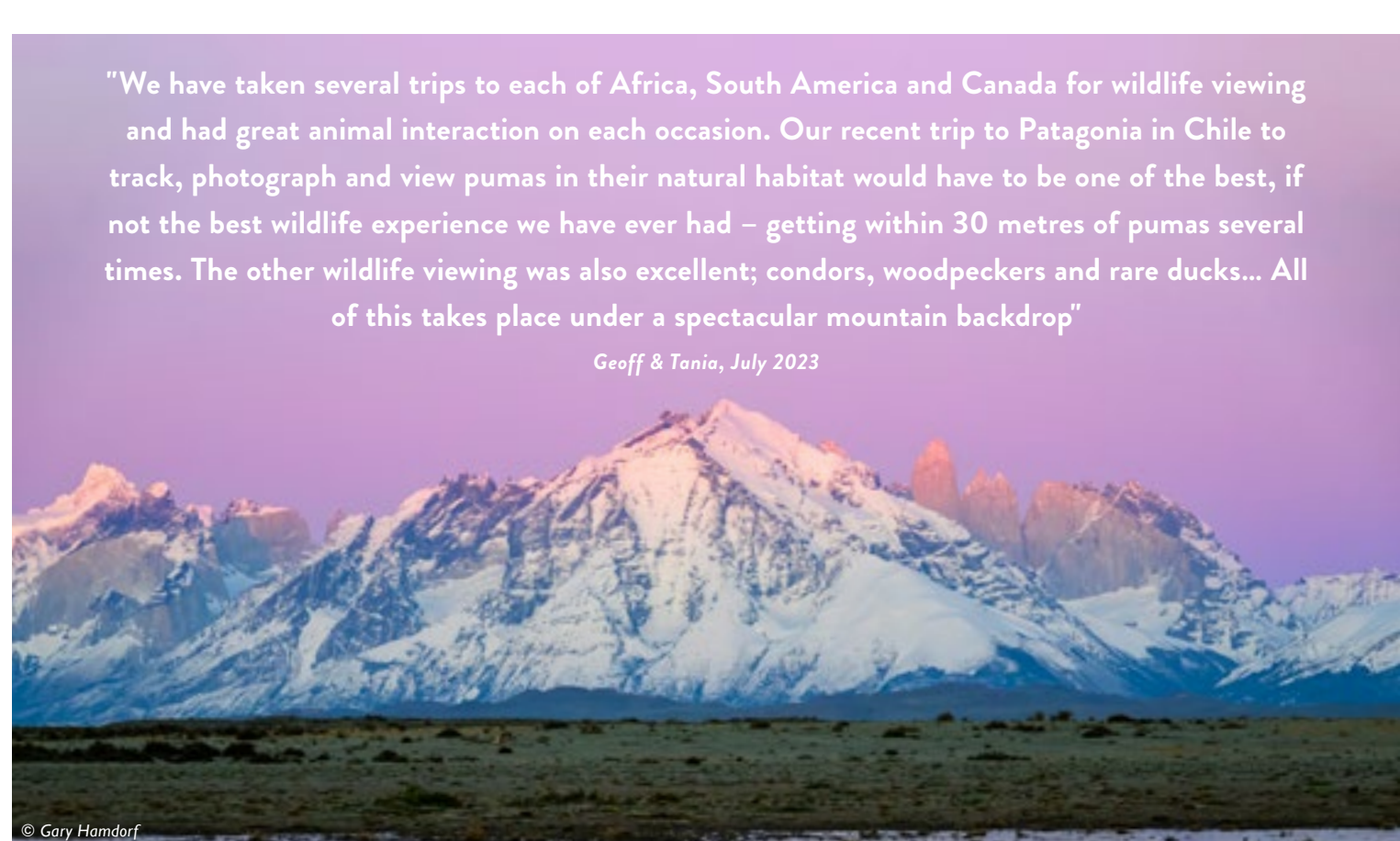
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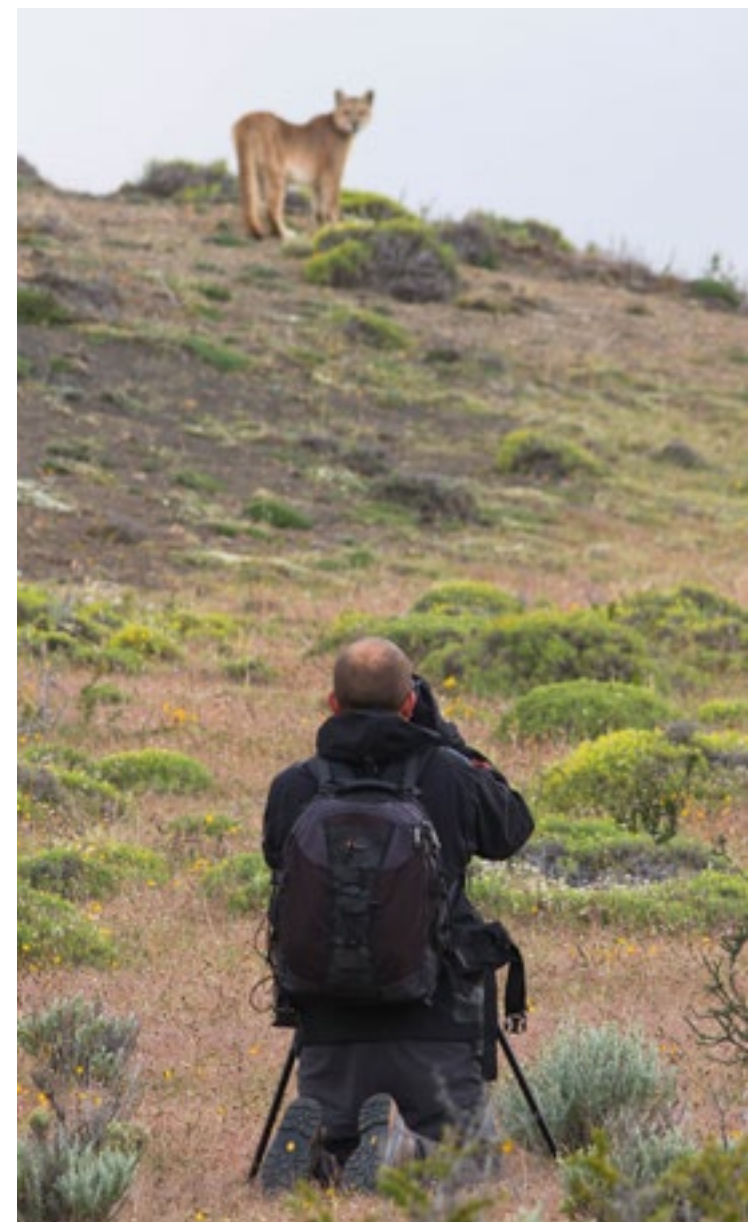
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"We have taken several trips to each of Africa, South America and Canada for wildlife viewing and had great animal interaction on each occasion. Our recent trip to Patagonia in Chile to track, photograph and view pumas in their natural habitat would have to be one of the best, if not the best wildlife experience we have ever had – getting within 30 metres of pumas several times. The other wildlife viewing was also excellent; condors, woodpeckers and rare ducks... All of this takes place under a spectacular mountain backdrop"

Geoff & Tania, July 2023



© Tania Neill



© Tania Neill



© Gary Hamdorf

TRACKING PATAGONIA'S PUMAS

At the very bottom of South America is the incredibly beautiful Torres del Paine National Park, one of Chile's most iconic adventure hotspots. The park is renowned for its rugged rock pinnacles, calving glaciers and alpine forests, but within this picturesque setting roams the world's largest mountain lion – the puma.

The Torres del Paine is thought to be home to the highest concentration of the species than anywhere else on the planet. Like their African relatives, the best time to see these cats, nicknamed "The Ghosts of the Andes" is when they are most active during early mornings and late afternoons. Daily puma tracking excursions follow this schedule, in the wilderness everything runs on nature's clock. Traverse this breathtaking landscape either by 4WD or on foot with a professional tracking team in search of this impressive, yet elusive cat – an experience that will rival any Big-Cat Safari around the world.

Tracking requires patience, dedication and silence to hear or see signs of pumas. But it is often the guanaco, a relative of the Andean llama that alerts trackers to a puma sighting with their alarm call. The park is home to a myriad of other animal species, including owls, eagles and black swans. Puma trekking, hiking, kayaking and fly fishing are just a handful of the options available in this magnificent part of the world.

RETURNING TO THE ANTARCTIC PENINSULA



By James Cameron, Marketing Coordinator

In February 2023, James journeyed to Chile before making his way down to Antarctica with a friend, travelling aboard Aurora Expeditions' superb expedition vessel the Greg Mortimer.

"If someone had asked me in January 2022 if I would be standing on the Antarctic continent in 2023 I would've said you're dreaming. Fast forward 12 months and there I was, stepping off our zodiac onto the shore to a cacophony of noise from the resident Gentoo Penguin colony at Yankee Harbour in the South Shetland Islands. I stood there for a little while thinking to myself; "Wow!" "This is what travel is all about - and what we've missed the last few years".

My journey started in Punta Arenas, the starting point for many "Fly the Drake"

Antarctic expeditions. I must say, having experienced a 2-day long Drake Passage crossing when I was 15 years old, crossing in 2 hours aboard a four-engine BAe 146-200 aircraft was a far better way to reach the 7th continent (this is not meant to deter anyone from the traditional crossing however, which is an experience in itself, and one I would never take back).

From my first view, I could see that the Greg Mortimer was a seriously impressive ship, equipped with an array of state-of-the-art technology that makes it a leader in polar expedition travel. Taking a maximum of just 140 passengers, and with over 100 staff, it's safe to say the level of service I experienced over the course of the journey was outstanding, from the expert Expedition Team to the catering and cleaning staff.

What was even more amazing was Antarctica itself. There is nowhere else like it. And to me, it is possibly the closest you can get to feeling as if you are on another planet. Everywhere you look the scenery offers something else; towering mountains straight out of the water, cracking glaciers, ethereal ice bergs, picturesque islands, or sheer cliff faces. I was lucky with both the weather and the unforgettable encounters we enjoyed,

whether it was on land, in a kayak or, even from the balcony of our stateroom!

Though everyone associates penguins as the highlight of an Antarctic expedition (and rightly so), for me on this occasion it was the whale viewing I enjoyed most. Jumping into our kayak, my friend and I shared many close encounters with humpback whales in particular. As little as 5 minutes into our first kayak of the trip and we'd come within 5 metres of a humpback whale coming up for air!

There was one particular afternoon I'll remember forever. Again, it started out in our kayak, and again, we were coming within a few metres of humpback whales. But this time, they were everywhere! They were feeding in pods of 5 or 6 individuals all around us. We spent close to 90 minutes paddling silently amongst these huge krill feeders, minding our own business as they minded theirs.

These are the moments we remember as travellers - and why we decide to travel to the farthest reaches of the world in search of these life-changing experiences.

You can read a full account of James' 2023 Antarctic experience on [our blog](#).



Antarctic Explorer

13 days/12 nights

2025 Departures Ex Punta Arenas

- 19 & 26 January
- 12 February

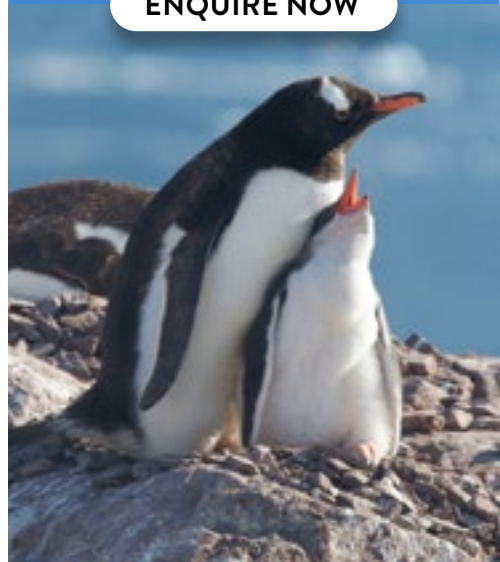
Prices start from **\$26,840** /pp twin share*

Please note: These departures fly from Punta Arenas (Chile), but return by sea crossing the Drake Passage to Ushuaia (Argentina).

*Conditions apply. Single travellers on request.

For more details or to talk to James, contact us on 1300 363 302.

ENQUIRE NOW



EXPLORING THE 7TH CONTINENT: A PENGUIN SAFARI



A Journey to South Georgia & the Antarctic Peninsula

By Rolf Huber, Marketing Manager

Stepping aboard the M/V Ultramarine in March last year, I was filled with anticipation for the adventure ahead. This magnificent vessel would be my gateway to the wonders of South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula.

With its sleek design and modern amenities, the Ultramarine is a sophisticated expedition ship. It combines comfort with a stunning

range of adventure activities, from kayaking to helicopter excursions, and the almost 200 guests are ably looked after by 140 expert crew.

As we set sail from Ushuaia, the southernmost tip of Argentina, I felt that the voyage was not just a physical one, but a spiritual journey into the untouched realms of nature.

The days unfolded with the perfect blend of exploration and relaxation. Expertly curated presentations by the expedition team deepened our understanding of the polar wilderness. Zodiac cruises became the highlight of our days as we ventured into pristine bays and glided past towering ice cliffs. The sheer magnitude of the icebergs left everyone in awe - their intricate formations resembling works of art carved by nature itself.

There were numerous encounters with wildlife. Curious seals and playful penguins

greeted us with their endearing antics, and on one unforgettable occasion we encountered a leopard seal. This immense creature emerged from the water right next to our sea kayak, its reptilian-like head poking out, before gliding beneath us and disappearing. And then there were the whales; watching humpback whales gracefully emerge from the depths, their massive bodies breaching the surface, left me in awe.

But it was the grandeur of Antarctica itself with its vast expanses of pristine ice that affected me most deeply. Helicopter flights gave a unique perspective - revealing a breathtaking panorama that words could never fully capture.

As the journey drew to a close, I reflected on the profound impact this experience had had on me. It had awakened a deep appreciation for the raw beauty of our planet and a renewed commitment to preserving it for future generations.



KANGAROO ISLAND'S COASTAL BEAUTY SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE

The award-winning Southern Ocean Lodge on South Australia's renowned Kangaroo Island re-opened to instant global acclaim following its recent rebuild on the island's wildly beautiful clifftops.

The new look luxury lodge holds almost the same footprint as the original property which was famously razed in the summer bushfires of 2020. Almost four years in the planning, design and construction, the new Southern Ocean Lodge opened its grand rust-red doors to the first returning guests in December last year.

From the moment guests walk into "The Great Room" – which offers breathtaking views to the cobalt-blue Southern Ocean – they will feel at home. The restaurant and lounges have also been recreated to replicate the original lodge, that were so loved by guests.

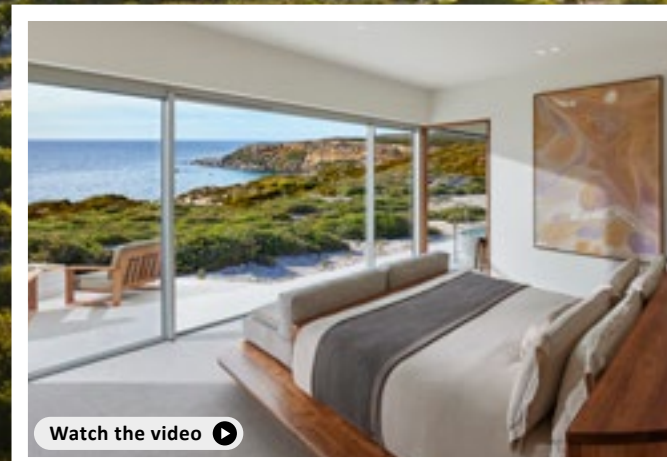
Twenty-three luxury suites are set along the coastline, with private verandas framing jaw-dropping, ever-changing views of the lodge's namesake Southern Ocean and the native coastal heath that rolls along the limestone cliffs into the distance. Each suite features floor-to-ceiling windows, a king-size bed dressed in fine linens and

Bemboka throws, and an ensuite bathroom with a rain-shower and sink-in bathtub. A separate, sunken sitting area invites lounging by the limestone-clad fireplace. The standalone Ocean Pavilion, which can be configured as a single residence with accommodation for up to eight people is the ideal option for multigenerational families, or friends travelling together.

Guided adventures are what set this luxury lodge apart from others, as the lodge's own experienced team lead small group expeditions to discover the incredible landscape that has been dubbed Australia's Galapagos. Kangaroo Island is renowned as a micro-version of Australia, with most of the mainland's native species thriving in this 'zoo without fences', making for an up close and personal encounter. Visitors can learn about the natural heritage of the island's flora and fauna as they search for kangaroos, koalas, wallabies, echidnas, monitor lizards and birds of prey. Excursions to Seal Bay offer a glimpse into the lives of the endangered sea lion, while Admirals Arch in Flinders Chase National Park is home to a colony of long-nosed fur seals.

"Southern Ocean Lodge is a remarkable place to visit and the location is stunning. We experienced wild weather and storms, which actually added to the experience in a way. Staff were exceptional and management most accommodating. Overall, we really enjoyed our time on K.I."

Morgan, December 2023



Watch the video ▶



A TASTE OF SOUTH AFRICA

All across Africa there are countless unique and tasty recipes that delight the senses. While staying in some of our fabulous lodges and camps, many of our clients and staff have been treated to renowned, cultural fare. Below are just some recipes we wanted to share with you.



MALVA PUDDING

SERVES: 6 PREP: 10 MIN COOK: 40 MIN

This dessert says “South African” like no other and is comfort food at its very best. Every South African cook has a variation of this pudding in at least one of their cookbooks. Overflowing with sweetness, this apricot flavoured spongy cake-like dessert is worth every single calorie. African Wildlife Safaris Graphic Designer, Jeremy Cameron, stayed at South Africa’s Sabi Sabi Earth Lodge and loved it (enjoying double serves most nights). He asked for the recipe whilst he was there and has since made the dessert on countless occasions.

The origin of the dessert is a little unknown. It is thought to be of Cape Dutch origin, while others believe that it comes from the fact that Malva pudding was served in the Cape with a dessert wine called Malvacea, from the tiny island of Madeira in the North Atlantic Ocean. Alternatively, it may have received its name from its spongy, marshmallow-like texture and was introduced in The Complete African Cookbook as “marshmallow pudding” (Malvapoeding) in Afrikaans.



DOWNLOAD RECIPES



BOBOTIE

SERVES: 4 PREP: 15 MIN COOK: 65 MIN

Bobotie is a recipe that was imported to South Africa from Indonesia in the 17th century and was adapted by the Cape Malay community. Bobotie comes from the Indonesian word botok. The dish is curried mince (either beef or lamb) and covered with a mixture of milk and egg that forms a custard crust.

Ginger, lemon, dried apricots, sultanas and almonds are all ingredients that make this dish unique. It is traditionally served with basmati rice, chutney or sambal, the Indonesian condiment made of chili peppers.

CURRIED CORN BUNNY CHOW

SERVES: 2 PREP: 10 MIN COOK: 35 MIN

Bunny Chow is usually made with curried meat, but this version is a vegetarian mix, placed within a hollowed-out loaf of white bread. This Indian-inspired dish originated in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal on the country’s east coast.

Once the curry mix is placed in the loaf, it is then covered with the hollowed-out inner bread, using this as a sponge to soak up the curry. A favourite for many, it’s an incredibly flavoursome and tasty dish.



AMARULA CARROT CAKE

SERVES: 6 PREP: 15 MIN COOK: 70 MIN

A cream liqueur from South Africa, Amarula is made from the fruit of the African Marula tree, also locally known as the Elephant Tree or the Marriage Tree. The fresh Marula pulp is sweetened and fermented, distilled and then matured in oak casks for around 3 years. The spirit is then blended with fresh cream to create the unique, smooth liquor.

The liqueur is widely used in cocktails, but also in desserts. Substituting the liqueur into a carrot cake recipe creates a mouth-wateringly moist and utterly delicious dessert.





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