

## *Adventure in Okavango Delta*

*Here coexists river and desert.*

*To live or to die, the slaughter game carries on day by day.*

*Do not pity for missing the Big Five, Botswana's animals give you big surprise!*

### **Baboon invasion**

Just coming back from outside the staff told Greg and me a troop of baboons just trespassed on our No.1 tent. We checked the reorganized clothes and baggage and found an ice bucket with a bottle of sparkling wine in. There was also a note left:

*Hi gentlemen! Sorry for messing things up. Please accept the wine as our apology.*

*---Baboons*

The six days in Botswana had made us accustomed to live with wild animals and fortunately they just stole a bag of candy, some pills and drunk up the mosquito repel (did they regard it as famous wine). Animals and people lived together harmoniously here. Stay in the camp named Vumbura Plains people can see every morning the ospreys dive from the sky at high speed to catch fishes. The day before the invasion, Greg was even cornered in an outdoor toilet by an eating elephant. It leisurely chewed the leaves beside the plank which was the only way to outside. The design of the toilet aimed to provide convenience for tourists to view sceneries however the unexpected guest not only stood on the only way but also lasted its dinner for about 10 minutes.

Living in the tent, one was surrounded by sense of danger. Luckily it was just sense not real danger. Obviously it did not need the staff to warn, we all knew that the most common wild animal in Okavango could kill a person easily. If you woke up early in the morning hearing noise outside the window, it must be the stout elephant leisurely passing by the pool; you could see through the telescope on the terrace the crocodile basking in the sun lazily; the low howling and sharp screaming outside the tent in the depth of night told you a real slaughter is going on. This was the real Africa in the real nature.

We were told not to go outside alone at night. The staff would accompany us back the tent with a torch. Rooms were all equipped with alarms in case of emergency. We went safari two times a day, one in the morning, the other is afternoon. There was no blocking on the convertible so it's ordinary to contact with these animals face to face. And for them the fast and non-harmful "monster" was just a common sight. Perhaps only as smart as baboons could the animal attack when people were out.

### **Sailing on "Mokoro"**

Here lies a piece of fantastic land. Before coming to Botswana, I went to other deltas too, like Pearl River Delta and Mississippi Delta. They are, as defined, areas of low, flat lands shaped like triangles, where a river splits and spreads out into several branches before entering the sea. But Okavango Delta is different. The Okavango River flows along Angola and Namibia to Botswana and seems not finding an estuary. It rushes into Kalahari Desert accidentally and is swallowed by the boundless area of sand and at last turns out to be the largest inland delta in the world.

The Okavango River on the map is just like a low hand stretching to Botswana from the northwest and the wrist part is called as “panhandle” in geography. We would stay here for 7 days and 6 nights and live in the Wilderness Safaris subordinate tents. The theme was to watch animals—on the ground, in the air and on the water.

If we say the Vumbura Plains locates between the thumb and forefinger, the Xigera Camp is exactly right in the center of the whole palm.

Xigera is built on an island so after the Range Rover Sport we took a motor ship. The local staffs welcomed us warmly with African song and dance and cool wet towel.

We got up early with the first light to go safari on a local canoe called “Mokoro”. Standing in the stern, the boatman took up the pole and shoved the boat off. Not after long we entered into a magical world consists of reed, lotus and waterfowl. This was my fourth time in Africa and I had experienced jungle safari before. The sailing safari on Mokoro really fulfilled all my expectations.

I felt lucky to escape from the blue, nervous and boring Beijing. The remote and unfamiliar corner in the southern Africa gave me a chance to be such close to nature. The isolated solitude was just what I was seeking. All of this was definitely worth of taking a 30-hour flight.

The sun was hanging in the heaven. All I could hear was buzzing insects, singing birds and sound of water. Closing the eyes I suppose I could also hear the subtle lotus petals opening sound.

### **Jungle Law**

On the third day we moved from Xigera to Chitabe or to say from palm center to fingertip. When the 12 light aircrafts landed on the ground we saw the waiting guide Anthony and his Range Rover. And on the short distance road from the parking apron to the camp we luckily came across a leopard.

Just like finding his prey, Anthony followed the leopard closely. The male leopard walked at slow pace with a chunk of meat in his mouth. And anyone could judge from his swollen belly that he just enjoyed a gourmet meal. Not far from him (in Africa, when guides talk about animals they specify the sexuality and even give them names like the tiger Richard Parker in *the Life of Pie* ) followed a baby leopard. Anthony explained that he was the male leopard’s son and just after his birth. And as he was not capable of hunting yet he can just follow his father to expect some food. Actually the antelope in his father’s mouth was hunted by his mother while the greedy father obviously did not satisfy for just being full but kept the rest as his own too. The female leopard had no choice but to leave. Only the baby still held the hope that his father would return the taken food. Undoubtedly this was a vivid lesson of jungle law for the baby leopard which was taught just by his own father.

We were told that there would be more chances to see large animals in Chitabe. Lions, leopards, wild dogs were all regular callers here. And if lucky we could see the sprint complain—cheetah.

As expected, the next morning, we really saw a lion pride. The seven lions were baking in the sun lazily. Anthony told us that, shortly after, the two young male ones would be kicked out the pride to live by their own. They would hunt alone and handle with the living issues all by their own. They would learn to fight with other lions, to occupy their domain, grab their mates, kill their babies and get the mating rights to perpetuate own gene. This was another example of the jungle law. The warm images of being affectionate with each other were just short sense. Live or die, in cruel nature, even the king of all animals had no choice but to fight.

### **Meet with local people**

On flight to next camp Vumbura Plains I saw elephants, hippos and giraffes. They totally enjoyed

living on this natural and peaceful land.

Upon arriving, the first scene came into my eyes was twenty to thirty black kids. After 5 days animal safari I really expected to meet with local people.

Though there was no water and electricity, no signs of extreme poverty were showed as well. And the school, the strongest building here, convinced me of the sentence “Botswana is a successful story in Africa”. Indeed the small southern Africa country was never really colonized. It used to a British protectorate while the traditional tribal culture still dominated during that period. And benefit from its political system, for half century, no war or serious social unrest had occurred in Botswana like other African countries. Besides, not long after its independence, the second largest diamond mine was found in this country which was very large wealth came unexpectedly.

As far as I experienced those days I took Botswana as top tourism destinations in the world both in cultural environment and service quality. It’s commonly believed that there is unique and pure environment while what people do not know is the holistic service. I experienced unforgettable safari, lived in luxury 5-star camps, ate gourmet meals. Sometimes I even felt spoilt by the staff. It seemed nothing was unreachable for them.

Wherever we went the kids would follow us with caution, curiosity and politeness. They would grow up and take responsibility to build up the beautiful country.

### **Sunset in Africa**

People and animals coexist in a comic environment, which was the deepest impression Botswana gave me. The last night in Okavango we had a bonfire party. Having dinner in open field with shining stars in the sky was really a big treat.

In Botswana I got a deeper understanding of the sentence “Nature always ensures individuals perish to pass down population gene”. The guide said winter was mating season in Okavango Delta. We saw female pregnant antelopes eating grass as usual. When rainy season comes next year there would be full of lives again.

## **Safari guide**

### ➤ **Itinerary Plan**

Wilderness Safaris ([wilderness safaris.com](http://wildernesssafaris.com)) have 14 camp resorts in 7 private natural reserves. Both Adventures stressing on outdoor explorations and Premier providing high-end service are available. As they differ in comfort level, animal series and safaris on ground or water you can totally select and combine your itinerary and inquire for rates all by yourself (rates inclusive of accommodation, meals, transport, safari and tour guide). 2-3 camps are recommended and at least 2 nights in each one. The transportation between two camps is light aircraft.

We recommend you customize your Botswana itinerary through Wilderness Safaris’ only partner in China—QuAfrica (Tel: 400-001-2725; [quafrica.com](http://quafrica.com)). You will get detailed guide and help in flight booking, camp selecting and Chinese guide. It is noted that all their profits are re-invested into the organization Clear Water Initiative to help African people solve drinking water health problems.

### ➤ **Cost**

3 camps (one is high-end) for 7 days 6 nights in peak season (June-August) is \$66,000 per person (inclusive of 4 light aircraft flights but exclusive of international air ticket); for off season it is \$45,000



per person.

2 camps for 5 days and 4 nights the price in off season will drop to \$26,000 per person.

Local village tour in helicopter will be charged additionally for \$2,660 per person (3 hours).

➤ **Visa**

It will cost one month to apply for Botswana visa. And transit visa will also be need for transfer in Johannesburg. You can get assistance if you customize service in QuAfrica which is rather convenient.

➤ **Forward**

Starting from China the most convenient air line is flight from Beijing or Hong Kong to Johannesburg in South Africa Airways then transfer flight to the traffic hub Maun in Airlink Airways.

➤ **Season**

During dry seasons (winter) between June and September the grass and trees are withered and the water level is rather high so it is suitable for water safari on Mokoro to watch wild animals.

It begins to get warm in October to November and in mid-November the rainy season will begin then the air humidity would be perfect for photographing.

You can see animals giving birth and feeding babies during summer between January and February.