“I never knew of a morning in Africa when I woke up that I was not happy.”

- Ernest Hemingway

Pricing, Dates & Booking

For current pricing, trip dates & online reservations please see our website.

Trip Packets

Our PDF Trip Packets are being updated all the time. Ensure you have the most recent version by clicking here.

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Trip Overview

Botswana remains one of the greatest countries on the continent of Africa for wildlife photography. Its remote, seemingly limitless wilderness is vast and untrammeled by the hand of man. Lions, leopards, cheetah, zebra, giraffe, and herds of African elephants roam the expansive plains of this land-locked country situated between South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. Explore the wilds of an Africa that remains in a time gone by.

Our ‘Botswana: Land of Giants’ tour will take us to Mashatu, a picturesque and privately owned 72,000-acre game reserve, where we’ll spend six days photographing a wide-array of wildlife found inside the preserved wilderness. Mashatu means "land of the giants," which is a reference to the huge trees that dominate the landscape.

Mashatu will provide Backcountry Journeys photographers a more serene and exclusive experience as we enjoy its sanctuary to the largest
herds of elephant on the continent. Picture yourself, and your camera, so close to those elephants that you feel as if they might be breathing down your neck.

While on our game drives we’ll have the opportunity to photograph the world’s tallest mammal, the giraffe; the world’s largest antelope, the eland; the world’s largest bird, the ostrich. The biodiversity of wildlife here is incredible. Three members of the ‘Big Five,’ namely the leopard, the lion, and the elephant are found here, and are complemented by some lesser well-known, but interesting, species, including the aardwolf (or “earth wolf”), the bat-eared fox, the African wildcat, the honey badger, the spotted hyena, and the black-backed jackal. Cheetah’s roam far and wide on the landscape of Mashatu and this is likely the best safari on the planet for big cat photography.

Birders will delight as Mashatu is home to more than 350 bird species including the enchanting lilac-breasted roller, and the Kori Bustard, which is not only the largest flying bird native to Africa, it is also the national bird of Botswana.

Return each night to your choice of either a luxurious safari-style “camp,” where you’ll find comradery with your fellow photographers under the starry African skies, or, to your lodge room designed for absolute privacy. Either choice will offer luxurious amenities and incredible accommodations. If your idea of becoming “one with nature” is an outdoor shower under the stars, the Tent Camp is for you. If the luxury of air conditioning is something you can’t live without, choose dates with lodge availability.

If wildlife photography is your passion, then a trip to ‘The Land of Giants’ with Backcountry Journeys needs to be on your list. Our meticulous scouting, camp selection, and world-class logistics leave no stone unturned in creating the most memorable travel experience to the continent of Africa.

*Please note: This is a “standard” tour so there is little to no hiking on this trip. Most of the excursion is by 4×4 safari vehicle.*
Highlights

- Some of the Best Big Cat Photography in Africa
- Huge herds of African Elephants
- Photographic safari via custom 4x4 vehicles
- Massive variety of African Wildlife
- Southern Africa's largest private game reserve
- Small Groups
- Top-notch meals, luxurious safari "camps"
- Learn from & shoot alongside a seasoned pro
Noteworthy Travel Logistics

- This trip begins & ends in Johannesburg, South Africa
- The airport to fly in/out is O.R. Tambo International Airport (JNB)

Transportation On-Tour

- We will provide transportation throughout the trip from Johannesburg, South Africa and back.
- After clearing customs, our tour representative will pick you up from the airport to bring you to our first hotel
Itinerary

Please note: This is a “standard” tour so there is little to no hiking on this trip

Most meals included – (B,L,D) denotes Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day One (Travel Day) (D)

Arrive in Johannesburg in the evening. After clearing customs, you will be met by our tour representative and transferred to your hotel. Meet and greet dinner along with orientation this evening.

Day Two (B,L,D)

Today we will transfer to Mashatu, a privately-owned preserve that will be our home for this trip! Mashatu is a true hidden gem, a throwback to Africa of yesteryear yet combined with luxury. The diverse landscape of the preserve includes wide open plains, grassland, riverine forests, rocky hills, marshland, and majestic sandstone ridges. Perfect for safari! This afternoon we will have our first game-drive in Mashatu.

Days Three through Six (B,L,D)

The next four full-days will be dedicated to game drives in Mashatu – which features some of the best big cat photography in Africa as well as massive elephant herds & unique photographic blinds. Aside from game drives we will have access to world-class wildlife “hides” which allow for incredible up-close photography of most of the species found in the region.

Afternoons and evenings in-between drives will be spent at our stunning safari camp or luxurious lodge.
Day Seven (B,L,D)

We’ll awake early on our final morning at Mashatu and take advantage of the soft light of morning to make some final images on one final game drive. Following our game drive, we’ll pack up and depart for our hotel in Johannesburg.

We’ll have a farewell dinner in Johannesburg, South Africa before departing either late this evening or the next morning. Flights can be booked anytime after 6pm tonight although we will have “day rooms” as many flights don’t leave until later in the evening.

Day Eight

International flights home.

Please Note: Please note that the exact sequence of the itineraries on all photography trips will be based on weather and lighting conditions. The goal on these trips is to make sure we are at the right place at the right time for the perfect light on our subjects. Also, itineraries can change for a variety of other circumstances including floods, forest fires, national park closures, road closures and more. Due to the nature of wildlife and nature photography we do not guarantee any specific sightings or specific compositions regarding wildlife or natural phenomena.
Trip Details

Physical Requirements
All participants must be in good physical condition and have the ability to walk with camera gear and ride in sometimes bumpy 4x4 vehicles.

Group Size
We keep groups small to maximize your one on one time with the guide/instructor.

Trip Length
8 days

Meeting Time and Place
Day Two in Johannesburg, South Africa

Trip Conclusion
Johannesburg, South Africa on Day Eight. We can drop you off right at the airport!
Price/Start Dates:
Please see our website for current Botswana: Land of Giants Pricing and Dates

Accommodation
7 nights lodging included.

Meals
Most meals are included during the trip dates. We often eat snacks and prepare lunch on the trail. We typically return for a late breakfast or eat breakfast on the road during photography trips as we are often out early to capture the morning light.

Weather
Expect warm weather during the day with temperate nights. Green season brings intermittent rain – but remember some of the best photographs are made before, during and immediately after a storm cycle. There is no such thing as bad weather just poor layering and gear choices – please plan accordingly! For more info on what to bring please email or call us. Make sure you are prepared for rain!

We recommend checking the weather prior to your trip departure to plan your gear and clothing packing accordingly.

Price Includes
Most meals, ground transportation, accommodation during the trip dates from the evening of Day One through the evening of Day Seven, professional photography instruction, park entrance fees, medically certified wilderness guide, & gratuities for service personnel such as drivers, pilots, captains as well as hotel & restaurant staff.

Price Does Not Include
Airfare, alcoholic beverages, accommodations before or after the trip dates, Souvenirs, one meal on your own & trip leader gratuities (industry standard is typically 10%–20% of the trip cost based on your experience.)
Gear List

This gear list should answer a lot of your gear questions so please read through this carefully. If you still have questions, please give me a call.

A good pair of good synthetic “Smartwool” type socks under sturdy boots works well. Clothing should be light-weight nylon pants (maybe base-layers), a polypro shirt and either a sunhat or warm hat depending on the weather. As weather conditions change add insulating and waterproof layers to your base setup. Don’t bring any cotton clothing. Cotton is not a good insulator and once it gets wet it takes forever to dry. Absolutely no jeans!
Photo & Field Gear

Recommended Camera Gear:

- DSLR or Mirrorless Camera. *(Nikon, Canon, Sony, Panasonic etc.)*
- Telephoto Lenses (1-2 lenses that range from 70-600mm)
- Wide-angle Lens *(10-20mm, 16-35mm or equivalent zoom)*
- Normal Lenses (ranging from approximately 35mm to 100mm)
- Memory Cards
- Batteries & Chargers
- Lens cleaning pen & cloth
- Camera Day Pack (this should appropriately carry all your camera & hiking gear and have a rain cover)
- Camera Rain Sleeve

Optional (but still recommended) Camera Gear:

- Back-Up Camera Body
- Sturdy but lightweight Tripod
- Filters such as a circular polarizer
- 1.4x tele converter
- Laptop Computer with Lightroom / Photoshop Pre-Installed(for personal use in hotels for downloading images while on tour)
- External Hard Drives
- Remote Shutter Trigger
- Camera’s Instruction Manual

Suggested Field Gear & Clothing:

- Field Clothing (safari casual in neutral colors i.e. tan, grey, green)
- Warm top, such as a long-sleeved sweater or fleece jacket
- “Softshell” Jacket lightly insulated windproof/breathable jacket for layering and protection from wind
- Warm hat and gloves (optional)
- Rain jacket
- Light neck gaiter or bandana (for dust protection)
• Sun hat
• Sunglasses
• Casual wear
• Binoculars *(optional)*
• Swimsuit (lodges have swimming pools)
• Sunscreen
• Converter plugs
• Headlamp with spare batteries
• Personal toiletries & prescription medication
• Passport
• Money, for tipping your guide *(industry standard is generally 10%-20% of the trip cost based on your experience)*, and for any personal expenses not included in the tour package such as alcoholic beverages, a few of the meals, souvenirs, etc.

**Note on Packing for the tour:**

*Please pack your extra clothing, toiletries, extra camera gear, and other travel items into a suitcase, duffel or travel bag. You will not bring all your camera gear on every hike or outing. Each evening you will be briefed on which lenses, filters, etc. you will need to carry the following day on the scheduled tour or hike.*