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2012

STRATEGIES

TRAVEL SMARTER

EXCLUSIVE SAFARIS

Some of our favorite operators have put together signature trips for T+L readers (prices reflect per person rates). Use the code **TLExclusive** to book any trip on this page.

Safaris Made Easy

Whether you're a first-time visitor to Africa or an old safari hand, T+L helps you locate the trip—and value—that's right for you. Here's your handbook to the wild.

BY DOUGLAS ROGERS
WITH REPORTING BY NIKKI GOLDSTEIN

Illustrated by Kyungduk Kim

UGANDA

A primate-centric adventure—including comeos by tree-climbing lemurs—with a stay at Bwindi Lodge in the Virunga Mountains.

Volcanoes Safaris
volcanoesafaris.com
7 nights from \$3,820

KENYA

A Samburu cultural experience and camping with wild cameos booked days spent game-spotting in Laikipia and the Northern Frontier District.

Journeys by Design
journeysbydesign.com
6 nights from \$6,295

ZAMBIA

A camp-to-camp river voyage through Lower Zambezi National Park by canoe (for up-close encounters with hippos, buffalo, and elephants) culminating at Victoria Falls.

Explore Inc.
exploreinc.com
7 nights from \$3,075

TANZANIA

A walking safari in the Selous Game Reserve, with views of the wildebeest migration and a night spent camping (and stargazing) in riverside tents.

Nomad Tanzania
nomad-tanzania.com
7 nights from \$5,950

NAMIBIA

Travel by land and air, ballooning over the Sossusvlei dunes and spotting black rhinos, desert elephants, and cheetahs in Damaraland and Etosha National Park.

Geographic Expeditions
geox.com
10 nights from \$3,145

BOTSWANA

Kids can spot meerkats, befriend Bushmen, and search for fossils at family-friendly Camp Kalahari.

Uncharted Africa Safari Co.
uncharted-africa.com
4 nights from \$816 for children, \$1,632 for adults

SOUTH AFRICA

Take a vineyard and art tour of the Winelands, explore the Cradle of Humankind fossils, and end with a safari through Sabi Sand Private Game Reserve.

Cape Insights
capeinsights.com
9 nights from \$5,295

ATLANTIC OCEAN

Republic of the Congo

Rwanda

Kenya

INDIAN OCEAN

Tanzania

Zambia

Malawi

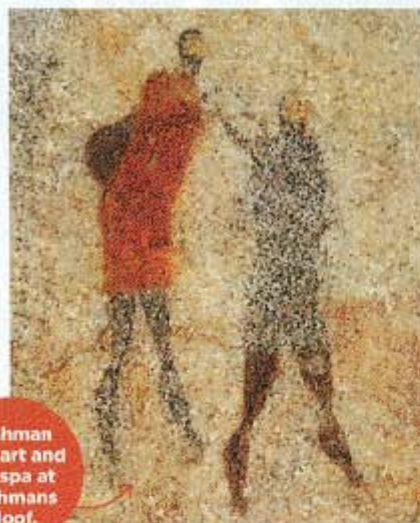
Mozambique

Namibia

Zimbabwe

Botswana

South Africa



Bushman rock art and the spa at Bushmans Kloof.

CULTURE & WILDLIFE

South Africa

HIGHLIGHTS **Kruger National Park** in the northeast, flanked by the private lodges and conservancies of the **Sabi Sand Private Game Reserve**; the vineyards and restaurants of the **Cape Winelands** region; **Cape Town** and **Johannesburg**, historical and cultural centers.

Post-apartheid, South Africa established itself as the continent's blue-chip destination. Safari lodges and companies, such as **Singita Private Game Reserves** (singita.com), **Londolozi** (londolozi.com), and **&Beyond**, brought luxury to the major game regions, while Cape Town and the surrounding winelands became a jet-set playground. But intimate retreats are now enticing travelers to make cultural side trips to lesser-known areas of the country. **Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve & Wellness Retreat** (bushmanskloof.co.za), a 16-room lodge a three-hour drive north of Cape Town, is in a wildflower-filled setting where Bushman rock art sites date back 10,000 years. Two hours south of Cape Town, the 27-room **Grootbos Private Nature Reserve** (grootbos.com) arranges trips to see the Marine Big Five: whales, dolphins, sharks, seals, and penguins. Just northwest of Johannesburg are the caves of the **Cradle of Humankind** (maropeng.co.za), a paleontology UNESCO World Heritage site. Adventurers can also head to Zululand, where **Fugitives' Drift Lodge** (fugitives-drift-lodge.com), the house of late historian David Rattray, offers tours of 1879 Anglo-Zulu War battlefields.

WHEN TO GO

Jan	Feb	Mar
Apr	May	Jun
Jul	Aug	Sep
Oct	Nov	Dec

TOP OPERATORS

- ▶ **African Travel** africantravelinc.com; 8 days from \$3,195.
- ▶ **&Beyond** andbeyond.com; 8 days from \$4,135.
- ▶ **Cape Insights** capeinsights.com; 7 days from \$5,062.
- ▶ **Passage to Africa** passagetoafrica.com; 7 days from \$3,000.

SAFETY NOTE

Travelers should be cautious in Johannesburg, especially around the city center. Your hotel can advise you on the best way to get around.

NEW ADVENTURE

Botswana

HIGHLIGHTS The wildlife of the **Okavango Delta**; the sprawling, semi-arid **Kalahari Desert**; the northeast's **Chobe National Park**, known for its massive elephant herds.

Botswana now rivals South Africa as the continent's most high-end safari destination, defined by the Okavango Delta's standard-setting camps such as **Mombo Camp** (mombo.co.uk) and Wilderness Safaris' refurbished **Abu Camp**, famous for its elephant-back tours. The country, however, is shifting away from ultra-luxe lodges and back toward active itineraries and comfortably rustic properties. On the Kalahari Desert's Makgadikgadi Pans, the 10-tent **Camp Kalahari** from Uncharted Africa is the affordable sister to the classic Jack's Camp, also on the pans. Alternatively, **Ride Botswana with David Foot Safaris** now operates a horseback safari across the pans. Even more adventurous is the Selinda Canoe Trail operated by **Great Plains Conservation**, a four-day, 30-mile trip along the ancient Selinda Spillway.

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TOP OPERATORS

- ▶ **Great Plains Conservation** greatplainsconservation.com; 7 days from \$3,846.
- ▶ **Ride Botswana with David Foot Safaris** ridebotswana.com; 7 days from \$3,860.
- ▶ **Uncharted Africa Safari Co.** unchartedafrica.com; 7 days from \$2,448.
- ▶ **Wilderness Safaris** wilderness-safaris.com; 7 days from \$5,400.

SAFARI EXPERT



Ralph Bousfield

From Botswana

Company

Uncharted Africa Safari Co. (unchartedafrica.com)

Safari Veterans

"For the experienced traveler to Africa, a trip to the Western Kalahari with the Bushmen is an amazing opportunity to see where we all come from. It's incredible to think that 10,000 years ago we were all hunter-gatherers."



African elephants in Botswana.

Rates are per person, based on double occupancy.



A Namibian steenbok, or small antelope.

DESERT DIVERSITY Namibia

HIGHLIGHTS **Namib-Naukluft National Park**, Africa's largest reserve; **Etosha National Park**, renowned for plains game; the northwest's **Damaraland** for fossilized trees and desert elephants; haunting **Skeleton Coast National Park**.

Namibia's otherworldly desert landscapes and dramatic coastal plains hit the traveler's radar in the mid 2000's and have since grown in popularity. The challenge has always been how to navigate the great distances between attractions and camps. Lately more travelers are opting for high-end, privately guided safaris—involving helicopters and light planes—to visit the most far-flung corners, such as Wilderness Safaris' eight-villa **Serra Cafema** camp near the Angola border. At the same time, operators are now offering more affordable group tours. Geographic Expeditions has eight-person safaris that travel from Windhoek to Damaraland for just over \$3,000 a person. Wild About Africa also features a nine-day group itinerary, with a tour of the Fish River Canyon, for only \$1,179 per person.

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TOP OPERATORS

- ▶ **Cox & Kings** coxandkingsusa.com; 7 days from \$5,435.
- ▶ **Expert Africa** expertafrica.com; 7 days from \$2,811.
- ▶ **Geographic Expeditions** geoex.com; 7 days from \$7,700.
- ▶ **Skeleton Coast Safaris** skeletoncoastsafaris.com; 6 days from \$8,885.
- ▶ **Wild About Africa** wildaboutafrica.com; 8 days from \$1,053.

Rates are per person, based on double occupancy.

SAFARI EXPERT



Garth Hovell

From Zimbabwe
Company **Abercrombie & Kent** (abercrombieandkent.com)
Traveling on Foot "Imagine standing in South Luangwa in the giant footsteps of an elephant or touching the bark of a tree where only minutes earlier a leopard had scratched it. Or spotting the tracks of a lion in the sand as it stalks its prey. On a walking safari, your senses are heightened by all that surrounds you."

AFFORDABLE ADVENTURE

Zambia

HIGHLIGHTS The river-crossed **South Luangwa National Park**; game-rich **Lower Zambezi National Park** on the north bank of the **Zambezi River**; majestic **Victoria Falls**, bordering Zimbabwe.

Long in the shadow of neighboring Zimbabwe, Zambia has now established itself as the ultimate adventure destination, famous for its walking safaris and canoe trips—and complemented by a slate of stylish (yet affordable) bush lodges and river camps. South Luangwa, where outfitters Norman Carr and Robin Pope pioneered walking safaris, is the jewel of the country's parks system and offers increasingly upscale accommodations to go with its unrivaled wildlife. The seven refurbished camps of the **Bushcamp Company** (bushcampcompany.com), in the south of the park, are chic and intimate, and can be visited on an exclusive camp-to-camp walk. In the Lower Zambezi Valley, the eight colonial-style suites of **Baines' River Camp** (bainesrivercamp.com) bring a new level of luxury to Zambia. More in keeping with the country's old-school authenticity are the river-view tents of the family-owned **Chiawa Camp** (chiawa.com) and its rustic sister property downriver, **Old Mondoro** (oldmondoro.com), accessed by boat. Activities include game drives, river safaris, and fishing excursions.

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TOP OPERATORS

- ▶ **Abercrombie & Kent** abercrombiekent.com; 7 days from \$5,040.
- ▶ **Explore Inc.** exploreafrica.net; 8 days from \$2,850.
- ▶ **Norman Carr Safaris** normancarrsafaris.com; 7 days from \$2,100.
- ▶ **Robin Pope** robinpopesafaris.net; 8 days from \$2,631.
- ▶ **Wild Planet Adventures** wildplanetadventures.com; 7 days from \$3,998.



Canoeing through Zambia's Lower Zambezi National Park.

FROM TOP: CHRISTIAN MEINRICH/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF ABERCROMBIE & KENT

Masai warriors at the Masai Mara National Reserve.

A CLASSIC, WITH A TWIST

Tanzania

HIGHLIGHTS The **Serengeti**, site of the Great Migration; **Mount Kilimanjaro**, Africa's highest peak; the volcanic, game-rich **Ngorongoro Crater** basin; the UNESCO-listed Stone Town on **Zanzibar** island.

As with the Mara in Kenya, the Serengeti has been plagued with mass tourism and overcrowding. But innovative operators are taking travelers to the country's less visited corners. Last June luxe lodging company **Singita Grumeti Reserves** (singita.com) unveiled its first mobile safaris in its 340,000-acre concession near the Serengeti. Eco-camping outfitter Wayo Africa visits remote **Lake Eyasi**, a salt lake south of the park. In the undeveloped north, the government has chosen a few companies to build small lodges, including Nomad Tanzania's **Lamal Serengeti**, whose 12 rooms blend into rocky hills. Even farther-flung regions are coming to the fore: In the jungle-covered Mahale chimp habitat, Nomad's **Greystoke Mahale** has six thatched-roof huts on Lake Tanganyika. In 2010, **Amara Selous** (amara-tanzania.com) opened with 12 suites (all with private plunge pools) in southern Tanzania's untamed Selous Game Reserve.

WHEN TO GO

Jan Feb Mar Apr May **Jun**
Jul Aug Sep **Oct** Nov Dec

TOP OPERATORS

- ▶ **Aardvark Safaris** aardvarksafaris.com; 7 days from \$5,500.
- ▶ **George Mavroudis Safaris** gmsafaris.com; 11 days from \$11,000.
- ▶ **Nomad Tanzania** nomad-tanzania.com; 7 days from \$5,400.
- ▶ **Rothschild Safaris** rothschildsafaris.com; 7 days from \$2,380.
- ▶ **Wayo Africa** wayoafrika.com; 7 days from \$2,400.



SAFARI EXPERT



Douglas Nagi

From Kenya

Company
 Cottars Safari Service
 (cottars.com)

First-Time Safari

"The Mara is as close to Out of Africa as you can get, and perfect for novice safari-goers. Nowhere else can you see all of the Big Five in a matter of hours and watch the annual migration of more than a million wildebeests."

COMMUNITY & CONSERVATION

Kenya

HIGHLIGHTS The **Masai Mara National Reserve**, home to the Great Migration; the private game reserves of the **Laikipia** region; the vibrant capital, **Nairobi**.

Traditionally the most romantic of safari destinations, Kenya lost much of its luster over the past three decades because of congestion in its parks and rampant political corruption. But there's a fresh energy in the countryside, evident in a new breed of lodges—and lodge owners—that emphasize community and preservation. Proceeds from the eight-cottage **Olarro** (olarrokenya.com), on the Mara's eastern perimeter, go to build local schools, clinics, and wells. The seven-tent **Mara Plains Camp** (greatplainsconservation.com) operates game-viewing trips in a conservancy run in partnership with the Masai. **Segera Retreat** (wilderness-safaris.com), meanwhile, is set to open eight solar-powered villas on a reclaimed Laikipia cattle ranch in July. Family-owned properties are also playing up the personalities of their owners. In Laikipia, **Lemarti's Camp** (lemartiscamp.com) is owned by Nairobi fashion designer Anna Trzebinski and her Samburu husband. Near Amboseli National Park, **Oi Donyo Lodge** (greatplainsconservation.com) is the revamped lodge of legendary conservationist Richard Bonham.

WHEN TO GO

Jan Feb Mar
 Apr May Jun
Jul Aug Sep
Oct Nov Dec

TOP OPERATORS

- ▶ **Big Five Tours & Expeditions** bigfive.com; 7 days from \$6,000.
- ▶ **Cottars Safari Service** cottars.com; 7 days from \$5,950.
- ▶ **Extraordinary Journeys** ajafrika.com; 7 days from \$3,500.
- ▶ **Journeys by Design** journeysbydesign.com; 8 days from \$7,395.
- ▶ **Micato Safaris** micato.com; 7 days from \$11,200.
- ▶ **Safari & Conservation Company** thesafariandconservationcompany.com; 9 days from \$4,997.

SAFETY NOTE

The U.S. State Department currently has a travel warning issued for Kenya. Check with your tour operator and hotels on what security precautions they take.

Blue Wildebeest in Kenya's Amboseli National Park.





SAFARI EXPERT



Brad Horn

From
Australia, but lived in Botswana for many years

Company
Epic Private Journeys (epicprivatejourneys.com)

Adrenaline Rush
"The biggest of the silverback gorillas in Rwanda's Virunga Mountains was yards away when he unexpectedly rose on two legs and ran past us beating his chest, meting out his punishment on a devious son. Incredible."

Mountain gorillas in Virunga National Park.

PRIMATES & THE BIG FIVE

Rwanda & Uganda

HIGHLIGHTS The mountain-gorilla-filled **Virunga Mountains**, encompassing **Parc des Volcans**, in Rwanda, and Uganda's **Bwindi Impenetrable Forest**; the adjacent **Queen Elizabeth National Park** and **Kibale National Park**, both in Uganda, famous for chimps and a dozen other primates.

Since 2000, Africa's central highlands have seen a dramatic rise in gorilla tourism, most of it from the United States. Rwanda is easier on trekkers, with its gently graded walks into the mountains, while Uganda's dense jungle, which holds a larger gorilla population, requires better fitness. But a safari to the region no longer need focus solely on gorillas. Thanks to sounder conservation policies, Uganda is seeing a resurgence in plains game at its parks. Volcanoes Safaris recently opened the **Kyambura Gorge Lodge** on a former coffee estate on the edge of Queen Elizabeth National Park—perfectly sited for lion, elephant, and chimp tracking. The operator can round out a trip with stays at its **Bwindi Safari Lodge** or across the border at Rwanda's **Virunga Lodge**. For a traditional safari experience, consider the recently rebuilt 36-room, 21-tent **Chobe Safari Lodge** (chobelodgeuganda.com), in Uganda's Murchison Falls National Park. Since the establishment of the Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary, it's now possible to see the Big Five in the country again.

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TOP OPERATORS

- ▶ **African Portfolio** onsafari.com; 7 days from \$4,595.
- ▶ **Epic Private Journeys** epicprivatejourneys.com; 7 days from \$8,000.
- ▶ **Ker & Downey** kerdowney.com; 10 days from \$6,445.
- ▶ **Volcanoes Safaris** volcanoessafaris.com; 7 days from \$4,782.

Rates are per person, based on double occupancy.

UP-AND-COMING DESTINATIONS



MALAWI

The gin-clear waters of Lake Malawi have attracted operators such as Wilderness Safaris, while the African Parks Network is reintroducing elephants and black rhinos into the Majete Wildlife Reserve in the country's south.



MOZAMBIQUE

Gone are decades of poaching; the big story is Gorongosa National Park, where conservationist Greg Carr's namesake foundation has spent millions to reintroduce elephants and opened a tented camp.



REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Not to be confused with the war-torn Democratic Republic, Congo is establishing eco-camps in Odzala-Kokoua National Park, home to rare forest elephants and the highest density of Africa's western lowland gorillas.



ZIMBABWE

After years of political turmoil, Zimbabwe is starting to regain its footing. Investors are renovating properties at Victoria Falls and Lake Kariba, while independent operators now offer cross-border trips to Zambia.

