

TOWN & COUNTRY TRAVEL

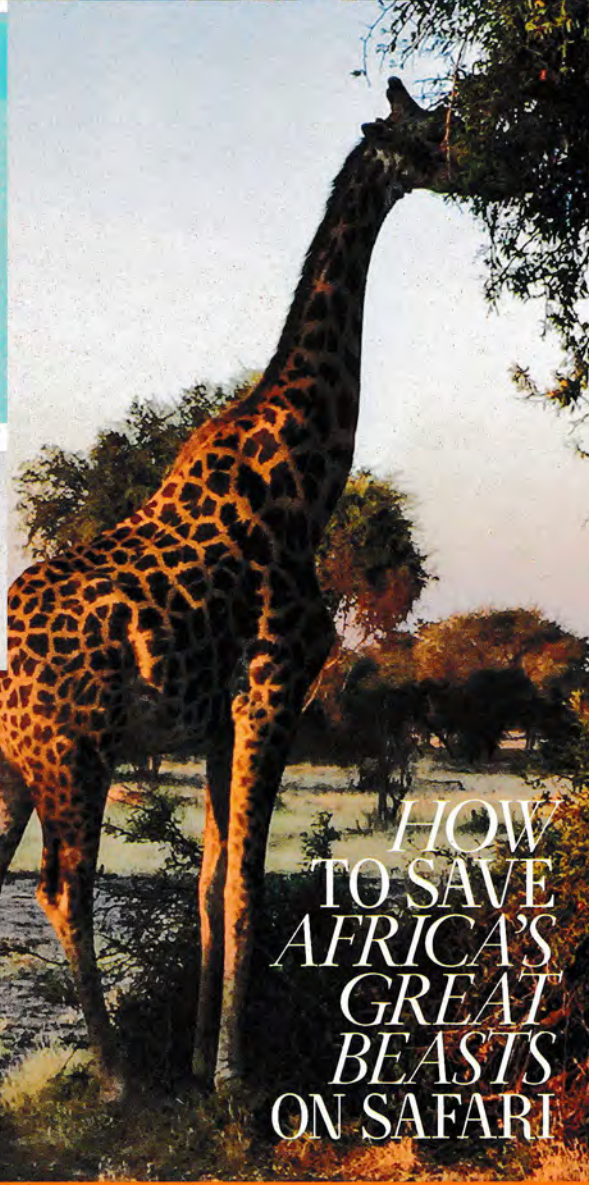
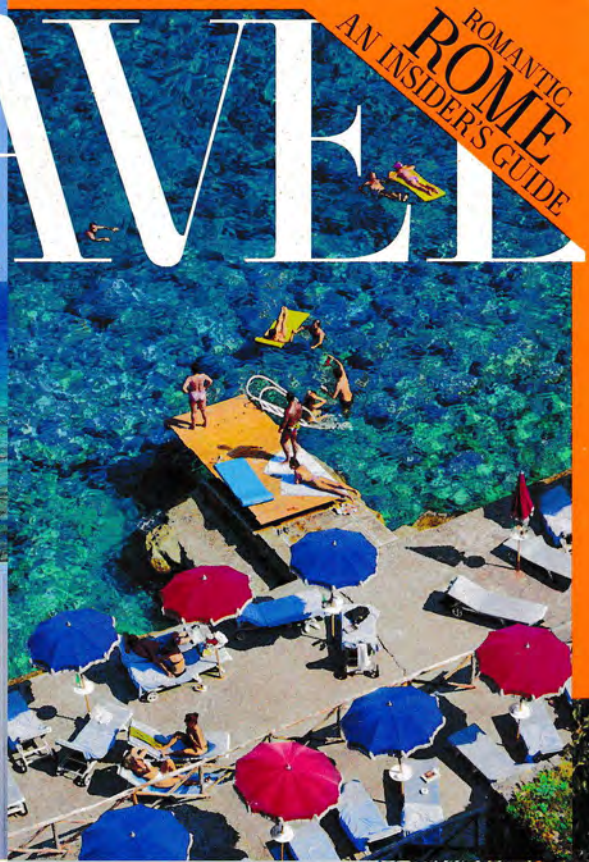
TOWN & COUNTRY

ROMANTIC ROME
AN INSIDER'S GUIDE

WINTER 2015

100 HOTELS
THAT WILL
CHANGE
YOUR LIFE

THE ULTIMATE
CHECK-IN
CHECKLIST



HOW
TO SAVE
AFRICA'S
GREAT
BEASTS
ON SAFARI



WINTER 2015 \$5.99

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THE T&C TRIP

PLANNED OUT AND READY TO BOOK



companies and neighboring countries to bring as many rhinos as possible to a safe haven in its less accessible, more easily defended areas. It is also providing military transport planes and Botswana Defense Force (BDF) soldiers to help resettle and protect the animals. One of its private sector partners, **Wilderness Safaris**, has been at the forefront of the funding and staffing for this latter-day Noah's Ark project for 16 years.

You'll begin your trip at Royal Malewane safari lodge, near South Africa's Kruger National Park, for an introduction to conservation issues; then it's on to Wilderness's **Mombo** camp in Botswana, where your experiences might range from a rhino capture to fitting the animals with tracking devices and monitoring their whereabouts and health. A moving and out-of-the-box adventure.

LIFE SUPPORT
There are only 4,500 black rhinos left in Africa. By taking this (expensive) trip, you will be aiding their survival.



RECOMMENDED FOR: Wildlife and Africa enthusiasts with a genuine interest in conservation and the fate of the world's most critically endangered mega-mammals—as well as in the efforts to save them. (For more, see the October *T&C* cover story.)

The cost—details are in “How to Book It”—includes a tax-deductible donation to the rescue effort.

WHY: In the past decade demand for rhino horn in China and Vietnam has made it the world's most valuable natural commodity, worth more per kilogram than diamonds or gold. Following the money, international criminal cartels have dug their talons deep into Africa, equipping gangs of poachers to infiltrate protected areas and slaughter rhinos—by some estimates more than four a day. South Africa, which has more than 88 percent of the surviving rhinos (both white and black), is a particular target. If the killing continues, they will face extinction by 2024. The **Botswana** government is working with private

DAY 1

After landing in Johannesburg, you'll board a charter flight (1) to **Royal Malewane**, in Thornybush Game Reserve (2), a private conservancy adjacent to Kruger National Park. It's about as opulent as safari lodges get. Beat your jetlag with a massage or a swim at the spa, followed by an introductory game drive with superstar guides (Juan Pinto or Ryan Jack and their trackers, pending availability).

DAY 2

After an early continental breakfast, you will be off with your guides by 6:30 for a sunrise game drive (3); animals are most active and hence visible after dawn and at day's end. Expect to see rhinos, but also ➡➡



Eight action-packed days with the RHINO RESCUE PROJECT

IN SOUTH AFRICA & BOTSWANA

AN UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MOST DRAMATIC CONSERVATION STORY OF THE 21ST CENTURY. AND A SAFARI LIKE NO OTHER.

By Klara Glowczewska

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ALEXEI HAY; DAVID NOTON PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY; ANN AND STEVE TOON/GETTY IMAGES; KLARA GLOWCZEWSKA; THE ROYAL PORTFOLIO. MAP: HANSAH HUSSEIN

THE T&C TRIP

SAFARI



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elephants, leopards, lions, hyenas, buffalo, and more, as you learn about their habitat and habits (4).

After lunch and an afternoon at leisure, it's time for another game drive and—one of the great pleasures of the bush—sundowners set up at the back of the Land Rover. Sip your scotch and soda (5) as darkness descends and Juan or Ryan points out the constellations in the Southern Hemisphere sky with the aid of his laser light. Seeing the Southern Cross is all the more dramatic knowing that here on earth the animals are out and about all around you, doing their wild things.

DAY 3

You've been accumulating facts about rhinos and other wildlife since your arrival.

Today you can experience the wilderness in the most intimate way possible: by walking through it. You'll be led by highly skilled trackers—and accompanied by an armed backup in case of emergency (6). Chances are very good you'll find rhino tracks (7) and follow them, hearing along the way about how this extraordinary animal eats, mates, socializes, and fights. You'll discover, too, the complex art and science of reading the bush (which, alas, the poachers have mastered as well). Your eyes will learn to see anew and your mind to interpret, and you will be walking in the steps of our ancestors. The day will be structured for as much walking time as you like (a game drive is always an option if you prefer) and punctuated by a bush breakfast and lunch.

DAY 4

The most economical way to get to Mombo, close to the Botswana town of Maun, is via a commercial flight from Johannesburg, to which you'll fly this morning and spend the night at the Fairlawns Hotel. Relax in the afternoon and evening, or consider any number of activities in and around Johannesburg—including a visit to Soweto and the Apartheid Museum, gallery tours, and shopping (8). Your flight to Maun departs early the next morning. Note: A private charter from Royale Malewane straight to Mombo (with a customs stop in Maun) would

eliminate the need to fly to Johannesburg and is available at additional cost.

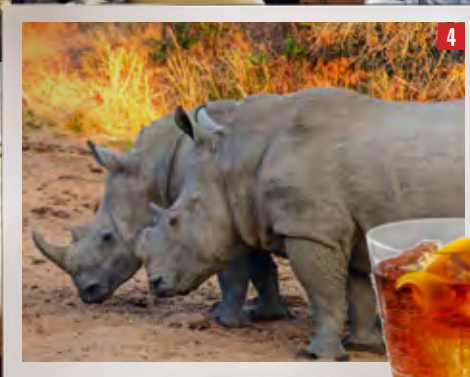
DAY 5

A bush plane will take you from Maun airport to Mombo camp, on Chief's Island at the edge of the Okavango Delta, a natural wonder designated in 2014 as the 1,000th World Heritage Site. Check out the beginnings of the delta's waters from the plane windows during the 20-minute flight, as well as the immense and clearly visible Orapa diamond mine, run by DeBeers, the world's second-largest mine by value and volume. (It is largely Botswana's diamond wealth that enables its exemplary conservation stance.)

Part of the great pleasure of staying in Mombo (9, 10)—aside from its spectacular location—is its distinctly African, authentic bush camp aesthetic, luxurious yet environmentally harmonious (and 100 percent solar powered). You will check into your tented suite (with both indoor and outdoor showers...heaven!) by the early afternoon and at high tea receive a detailed briefing on the history and challenges of the rhino rescue efforts (as well as the plan for the next few days) from a member of Wilderness Safari's senior rhino management team: Keith Vincent, Map Ives, or Kai Collins.

The afternoon's game drive will end with your first visit to the bomas, corral-like enclosures where rescued rhinos that have arrived by BDF plane from South Africa (and sometimes elsewhere) get acclimated to their new surroundings before being released into the wild. You can climb up onto the high boma walls and observe up close the great gray refugees, which often include a cow and her calf. Black rhinos might let you stroke their surprisingly delicate pointed muzzles (11).

It's all an intimate and moving experience: You are in a small, semisecret site in the midst of spectacular African wilderness, talking to wildlife experts (12) passionate about their work and mission, listening to the rumblings of rhinos communicating among themselves in ways we still do not understand. A sundowner table will be set up for you near the bomas under the watchful eye of the BDF soldiers usually milling about here—a comforting feeling, given the extraordinary dollar value of the rhino horn inside the bomas, and in itself a remarkable fact. No other ➡



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COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: ANDREW SCHOEMAN/GETTY IMAGES; THE ROYAL PORTFOLIO; EXPLORE; TIM HAWLEY/GETTY IMAGES; RICHARD BRADLEY/ALAMY; KLARA GLOWCZENSKA; FRIEDRICH STARK/ALAMY; GREG BALFOUR EVANS/ALAMY (2); MARK LEVY/ALAMY

THE T&C TRIP

SAFARI



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African government has made its military's first priority the safeguarding of its wildlife. It's a stark reminder that what's being waged here is nothing less than a war for the future of Africa's wilderness.

DAY 6

With several months' prior planning, project donors will be starting this day off with a bang: an adrenaline-charged rhino capture from a light helicopter accompanied by chase vehicles. This will involve immobilizing the rhinos, taking essential data measurements, and fitting the animals with electronic tracking devices.

After lunch, back at Mombo, a leisurely game drive to meet more of the local residents; Chief's Island abounds in lions, leopards, elephants, giraffes, zebras, buffalo, and innumerable other species. Relax into it. You will see, under the expert guidance

of your tracker, little dramas unfolding all around you, the endless dance of mating and breeding, prey and predator, life and death.

If at all possible, you'll be able to witness near dusk the release of rhinos back into the wild, which can be determined only shortly before it happens (13).

These events take careful planning and are never made public for reasons of security. Wilderness Safaris and Explore (see "How to Book It," below) will do

their best to organize and time your trip in such a way that you can participate in a release, but they cannot guarantee it.

DAY 7

You'll be back at the bomas early in the morning and set out with the security team and rhino monitors to track previously released rhinos, which can travel a dozen miles a day. This has all the drama of a hunt, but with a beneficent goal: to

get sightings of the liberated animals and ascertain their health, social relationships, and territorial range. Their whereabouts will be determined through the tracking devices (14), and then the chase will be on to get a "visual." Because it's purposeful, it will probably be the most exciting game drive you'll ever go on. Lunch is in the bush, and the timing of the return to camp is determined by the research goals of team rhino.

In the evening, another treat: a boma dinner at Mombo, preceded by tribal dancing performed by the staff around a fire. This is no listless tourist fare: Mombo employees determine the program, speak to guests about their customs, and enthusiastically share their Tswana and Bayei tribal culture and traditions.

DAY 8

A fluid last day. You might want a final visit to the rhino boma and/or an early morning game drive. You will have learned much during the week, and you will be seeing everything with new depth and perspective. This is a time for any final questions, or for simply letting the sights and sounds of this near-pristine wilderness wash over you.

Optional: Cap off your trip at 4 p.m. with a one-hour helicopter flight (15) over the Okavango Delta with Helicopter Horizons. It offers a breathtaking bird's-eye view of one of the richest and most unusual ecosystems on earth, and one that's now slowly but surely being repopulated with rhinos. You'll land at the Mombo airstrip—a great finale—just as the sun sets.

And that last sundowner back at the lodge, the final after-dinner conversation around the fire—a lovely African camp ritual—will be bittersweet for sure. You'll already be scheming about how to get back here, to these animals and to the men and women who care for them, and for Africa's future, so passionately. «

HOW TO BOOK IT

Exclusively through **Explore**, whose owner, travel specialist **Cherri Briggs**, has been working in African conservation for 20 years (CHERRI@EXPLOREAFRICA.NET).

Because of the logistical complexity of rhino transfer and care, this trip has limited

availability. Donor departures will take place from July 15 to October 1, 2016, with exact dates to be determined a few months in advance, pending rhino translocation dates. You will need a measure of flexibility.

The cost is \$18,655 per person,

based on double occupancy (flights not included), and there is a tax-deductible donation requirement for participants of \$50,000 per couple (\$25,000 per person), which goes, via Wilderness Wildlife Trust, to Rhino Conservation Botswana. *K.G.*



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COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: DANA ALLEN; KLARA GLOWCZEWSKA; EXPLORE (2); SIRKO HARTMANN/GETTY IMAGES; KLARA GLOWCZEWSKA (3)