

BOTSWANA - TULI SAFARI - TULI CYCLING SAFARI

ITINERARY

Day 1

The meeting point for the Tuli Safari is at the information desk in the international arrivals hall of Johannesburg OR Tambo airport at 11:00; the transfer vehicle will depart at 11:30.

Your flight should be scheduled to arrive into Johannesburg O R Tambo no later than 09:30 (and an earlier arrival time will be much safer).

To minimise the risk of flight delays spoiling your holiday you may wish to consider arriving into Johannesburg the day before the safari is due to start.

From Johannesburg OR Tambo airport you first have a road transfer to Lanseria Airport (c.45minutes) and then travel by light aircraft (1.5 hours flight) from Lanseria Airport to Limpopo Airfield.

The return flight from Limpopo Airfield will arrive back at Lanseria airport by 16:00. You then have a road transfer to Johannesburg OR Tambo Airport arriving around 17:00. Onward flights should depart Johannesburg OR Tambo airport after 20:00.

NB: It is possible in exceptional circumstances that the light aircraft transfer is replaced by a road transfer. A minimum of 4 pax is also needed to confirm the air transfers.

You first arrive at the Horizon Horseback Mashatu reception where you have lunch on the banks of the Limpopo River and receive a safety briefing, bike fitting and a chance to meet the guides.

The following is the likely itinerary for the safari. Please note that the itinerary of each safari may vary due to local conditions, but always with your best interests in mind. The order of the camps may vary.

The route this afternoon is from the reception to Two Mashatus, a ride of about 2 hours. It follows the Limpopo River floodplains, with good opportunities for those first exciting encounters with elephant, giraffe, zebra, ostrich and

wilderbeest. The route crosses close to a large wetland area which acts as a magnet for game and there is even a chance to come across bat eared fox, black backed jackal and spotted hyena. It then crosses the Majali River close to its confluence with the Limpopo.



Overnight Two Mashatus Camp. Two Mashatus is a semi-permanent tented camp. There are five comfortable and roomy tents, each on its own raised teak platform, with en-suite bathroom.



Interior of twin tent at Two Mashatus Camp

The century old Mashatu tree provides shade and there is a central dining area built in the traditional Botswana style with lala palm thatch. The lounge area has comfortable sofas and hammocks for relaxing between activities.

There is a plunge pool to relax after a long day in the saddle.

The camp is not enclosed and so you might encounter game in and around camp.



Tent at Two Mashatus Camp

Day 2

After breakfast at dawn you set off for a full morning of cycling across the game rich area of the central reserve. You first head along the Majali and then the Mataboli rivers in a north western arc towards Treehouse Camp. You might see elephant, waterbuck, giraffe, impala, wildebeest and zebra.

You arrive at Treehouse Camp in time for a refreshing shower and lunch. Later rest and enjoy a siesta in the comfort of camp in the shade of the Mashatu Tree.

After tea you might go on a guided bush walk up the Majali River in search of crocodile and other game. Kudu, warthog, klipspringer and eland are all present in the area around the camp, as are elephant, lion and hyena. Waterfowl fly low past the camp and many other birds can be heard.

Dinner is prepared over an open fire and your day draws to a close with the sounds of the bush all around.



Overnight Treehouse Camp. Wrapped around the trunks of a giant mashatu and two ancient leadwood trees, Treehouse Camp perches several metres up, out of "trunks reach".

The camp overlooks the banks of the Majale River and offers spectacular panoramic views of the adjacent cliffs and floodplains where Mashatu's legendary herds roam.

Sleeping quarters are five beautiful and spacious canvas roofed areas with four-poster beds, each facing into the spacious dining and resting area. There are shared showers and loos. The elevated platform offers a unique camp.



Treehouse Camp

Day 3

You waken in Treehouse Camp to the sound of birdsong as the early morning light filters through the leaves.

After a quick breakfast you set off on the one of the safari's longest routes - up onto the edge of a mini escarpment and then down through the Valley of the

Elephants and on towards the distant sandstone citadels guarding the Limpopo and Motloutse Rivers.

The first part of the journey winds along well worn elephant paths, past giant baobabs and the occasional shallow watering pan. This is prime elephant country and the guides are always on the lookout, using all their sharpened senses. Once the path leaves the river, the terrain is once again more open. A second river is then joined, which leads directly down to the veterinary control gate on the main road through Mashatu Game Reserve.

The route then allows for a sprint along the dirt road for a short while before heading across sand country towards the intriguing Sacred Rock massif. Here the mopane vegetation is short and it is safe to ride quite fast across the plain. Large herds of zebra, wildebeest and impala habit this area. The guides plot their route using individual mashatu, leadwood and apple-leaf trees as their markers.

Soon you reach the old leadwood enclosure (used in the past as a traditional law court of a Botswana village) known as 'The Kgotla'. This open-air enclosure forms camp for the night. The camp is not far from the banks of the Motloutse River and, with high concentrations of game living along the river's floodplain, the area is home to large prides of lion and clans of hyena. The sounds of these predators at night provide enduring memories!

In the afternoon, we search for the area's resident lion on a game drive and draw the day's adventures to a close with sundowners at the ancient "Amphitheatre" rocks. Whilst big cat sightings from the bikes are avoided (our guides are in radio contact with the Mashatu guides and we have a ride away policy). The opportunities to approach lion, cheetah, leopard and spotted hyena occur whilst on game drives are excellent, here the vehicle acts as a natural hide and is largely ignored by the predators.

Back at the Kgotla, dinner is enjoyed around a large log fire. The night is spent with a ceiling of stars and Africa's night-time melody to sing you to sleep; a veraciously rare experience which is just about as far away from city life and the modern world as anyone can imagine.



Overnight The Kgotla. The Kgotla is made from an abandoned old tribal court from a nearby community, which was relocated to the banks of the Motloutse River on the western periphery of Mashatu. The boma is an open-air traditional African enclosure made up of leadwood logs.

There is hot running water, open-air showers and flush toilets; the perfect combination of necessary comforts and an authentic bush experience. Guests sleep on beds around a large log fire which sits on a hearth in the centre of the boma.

This open-air enclosure forms the perfect, secure camp for the night. The camp is not far from the banks of the Motloutse River and, with high concentrations of game living along the river's fertile floodplain, the area is home to large prides of lion and clans of hyena. The sounds of these predators at night provide enduring memories!

Meals are around a large log fire. The night is spent with a ceiling of stars and Africa's night-time melody to sing you to sleep.



The Kgotla Camp

Day 4

The pace today is more relaxed and tailored to the group since you are staying here a second night.

A particularly interesting route to follow is first along the Motloutse River, stopping at well known elephant drinking holes to watch the herds come and go before winding down towards the impressive Solomon's Wall, a tall dolomite dyke which was breached by the river in ancient times. This is the favourite haunt of troops of baboon, which are always fascinating to watch. The trail then follows the banks of the river, flanked by giant mashatu and leadwood trees, towards the mighty Limpopo. This area is renowned for its dramatic sandstone rock formations, steeped in colour and home to eland, klipspringer and kudu.

Some of the oldest civilizations in southern Africa settled in this valley. Archaeological evidence in the area includes middle and late stone age tools, rock art and the legendary Mapungubwe Dynasty. Mapungubwe means "Place of the Jackal" in the Venda language and this dynasty existed around 1220 AD. The Mapungubwe topography itself is ancient and timeless and, combined with the wildlife sightings, makes for an incredible cycling experience.

The game drive in the afternoon takes you to the foot of the impressive Mamagwa massif, a free standing formation which was used by British troops as a defensive position against incursions from the Transvaal Boers at the end

of the 19th century. Sundowners are typically taken at the far western edge of the massif, with endless views over the wilderness landscape whilst you watch the sun slowly slip over the horizon.

The drive back to the Kgotla in the dark provides you with more opportunities to spot lion, leopard and hyena.



Overnight The Kgotla.

Day 5

Today you journey northeast and follow a series of river trails on the way back to the centre of the reserve. Life in this arid environment is always concentrated near water and the ride will likely have sightings of elephant, zebra, giraffe and wildebeest. The route crosses the watershed and then winds along ancient paths adjacent to a stream flowing north towards the Majali River.

At these elevated heights, the sweeping views to the north reveal the true wilderness character of Mashatu Game Reserve. Baobab trees scatter the landscape as they have for centuries and remarkably two of these giants are

found growing directly in the stream itself. This provides an excellent spot to stop for a rest and a drink.

The remainder of the route is a mixture of elephant trail trekking and a faster pace across relatively open mopane veld. The final stretch is along the Majali River itself, past rocky pools, cliff faces and ribbons of green grass. You might see baboon, kudu, klipspringers or even crocodile.

This afternoon you will go either on a guided bush walk or, subject to availability, a game drive with Mashatu Main Camp guides.

The game drive (although at an extra cost) is highly recommended as sightings of lion, leopard and sometimes of cheetah are very likely. This is because the guides are very knowledgeable about the structure and whereabouts of the various prides.



Overnight Treehouse Camp.

Day 6

With an early departure from Treehouse Camp today's route offers sweeping views to the east and south as you traverse along the edge of a ridge near the centre of the reserve.

The path then descends to a game rich area along the Majali River. The deep river pools are the favourite haunt of baboon and impala. Sooner or later the great herds of elephant come past for their daily drink, to play in the water and enjoy a dust bath.

The final part of the ride is across open plains and then through cool riverine vegetation along the approaches to Two Mashatus Camp.

Arrive at Two Mashatus Camp in time for lunch and the opportunity to relax by the pool.



Overnight Two Mashatus Camp.

Day 7

On your last full day on Mashatu Game Reserve the route explores the game rich area along the Majali and Pitsani Rivers.

Overall the pace is relaxed, with the guides responding to game movements.

In the afternoon there is the option of a bush walk or a short cycle, maybe to the banks of the Limpopo River where elephants are often seen crossing.

Your final dinner is in the lala palm rondavel at Two Mashatus. Experience your last evening in the bush, relaxing around the fire pit with the unforgettable sounds of Africa echoing around you.



Overnight Two Mashatus Camp.

Day 8

The final ride of the Tuli Safari is back to reception, following the Limpopo River upstream.

The route passes game rich habitat, including a hyena den and a large wetland which can be home to large flocks of waterfowl. Other notable possible sightings include Kori Bustard, the largest flying bird in Africa, bat eared foxes and ostrich.

Once at reception there is time for a shower and lunch before you start your journey home.

