

The Wilderness Safaris Green Season

November – April: Seasons of Life

The Green Season - the summer period that covers the months November to April – has long been considered low season by the travel trade. Because rain has fallen game has dispersed, vegetation is thicker, and humidity is higher. As a result many would rather send their clients elsewhere. To do so is to miss out on an explosion of life and colour and some exceptional game and bird viewing in spectacular scenery. Of course some areas do become less productive, but the trick is picking an itinerary that takes in those areas that produce year round high quality game viewing, as well as those areas that come into their own in summer.

Some of the Wilderness Safaris camps are at their peak during the summer months when they enjoy a high season in terms of productivity and experience that cannot be had during the drier months of the year. Throughout the camps this is the season of plains game births, vocal migratory birds in breeding plumage, floral displays, fruiting and fertility. In short, to not experience the summer highlights is to experience a poorer version of Africa.



Botswana

Central Kalahari (Green Desert Exploration)

- A harsh and low density game area during the winter dry season.
- Following rains and the response of the grass in the fossil river valleys and broad, vast pans, concentrations of hundreds of springbok and oryx form in the Deception and Passage Valleys and Tau and Letiahau Pans where they give birth to predator-vulnerable offspring.
- Game concentrations and wide open vistas make for some of the best cheetah viewing in southern Africa with large black-maned Kalahari lions and their prides also utilising the same areas.

Makgadikgadi (Green Desert Exploration)

- A harsh and sparsely populated terrain during the winter dry season (albeit offering desert specials like meerkat and others).
- Following rains and the response of the grass, concentrations of thousands of zebra (as well as springbok, oryx and hartebeest) form in the eastern parts of the national park creating one of the last great seasonal mammal concentrations in southern Africa.
- The rainfall transforms the salt pans overnight and tens of thousands of flamingos (and other wading birds) gather to breed in magnificent pink profusion.



Botswana

Okavango (land camps - Mombo, Little Mombo, Vumbura Plains, Duba Plains, Kwetsani, Jao, Tubu Tree, Chitabe, Chitabe Trails)

- Floodplains exposed by the receding winter flood are transformed by the rains into a tapestry of green. This couch grass luxuriance draws grazers from the woodland of the higher lying larger islands onto the plains to give birth.
- The retreat of the flood means that during the summer months more varied habitats are accessible with grass response in the woodlands supporting its own suite of grazers.
- The birthing of multiple antelope species makes for interesting predator-prey interactions and the myriad migratory bird species and green luxuriance make for spectacular photographic backdrops and specific opportunities.

Linyanti / Selinda (DumaTau, Savuti, Selinda, Zibalianja, Kings Pool)

- The extremely high concentrations of elephants during the dry season is what this area is so well known for. Following the rains, elephant and zebra do disperse out of the area, yet so much else stays and is viewed through the green season – lion, leopard, cheetah and wild dog are all resident for example, as are their prey species.
- The floodplains surrounding Zibadianja Lagoon and the upper reaches of the Savute Channel produce the best game viewing over the summer months with access to open grasslands allowing easier locating of animals.



Botswana

Okavango (water camps – Xigera, Little Vumbura, Vumbura Plains, Jacana)

- Those camps with access to permanent swamp and channels continue to offer the classic Okavango experience in terms of activities as well as unique species of birds and mammals.
- For birders this is the best time of year to be in the wetter parts of the Delta when heronries and other nesting colonies are active and at their most impressive in terms of bird numbers. The specials like lesser jacana, pygmy goose, coppery-tailed coucal, Pel's fishing owl and others continue to be seen.
- Specialised mammal species like sitatunga and red lechwe thrive during this time of the year and can be seen on the fringe as well as within these water wonderlands.



Namibia

The Namib Desert (Serra Cafema, Skeleton Coast, Palmwag Rhino Camp, Damaraland Camp, Doro Nawas, the Kulala camps, Sossusvlei Wilderness Camp)

- Broadly defined here to include the slightly higher rainfall desert fringe and the Skeleton coast itself, the Namib Desert is at its absolute best in terms of productivity, scenery and climate during the summer months of November to April and this is the best time to visit.
- While this time of the year might easily be expected to be sweltering hot, it is actually the time of year when the desert enters a period of calm, comfortable days, pleasant evenings and long episodes of wind calm.
- Protein rich seasonal grasses transform the vistas and attract concentrations of desert-adapted herbivores like oryx, springbok and the endemic Hartmann's mountain zebra. The scattered nature of rainfall means these green transformations are localised and as a result the area's game is forced to concentrate on small patches making for interesting viewing.
- Predators follow the concentrations and lion and cheetah can sometimes be seen on the plains in some areas, although equally thrilling in this specialised ecosystem are the frantically active birds, rodents and invertebrates and their avian, mammalian and reptile predators.



Namibia

Etosha National Park (Little Ongava, Ongava Lodge, Ongava Tented Camp)

- Best known for and associated with the dry and dusty images of the dry season when large concentrations of game are magnetised by the waterholes scattered around the fringe of the pan itself. As the dry season approaches its zenith however the tension of expectation in the air is palpable. Everything waits for the arrival of the spectacular summer thunderstorms for which Etosha is equally famous.
- For the photographer this is a special time: breath taking horizons, dramatic light and lightning, fresh clean air, and visibly more energetic game.
- Following the arrival of the rains a glut of springbok lambs arrive and the herds leave their waterhole fixation and concentrate on the vast short grass plains. Every predator – from lion to jackal to python to eagle – follows and takes advantage of the new food supply on offer.
- The open nature of the plains allows the observation of many unfolding dramas, from the predator-prey interactions mentioned above to the territorial disputes of baritone bullfrogs that take place in roadside puddles.



Zimbabwe

Hwange National Park (Makalolo Plains & Little Makalolo)

- Like much of northern Botswana, the Hwange area is hugely productive during the dry winter months when game concentrations are forced to water points. Also like northern Botswana it is for elephant and buffalo concentrations during this season that the area is best known.
- During summer the plains in south eastern Hwange really come into their own however. Here in areas like the Ngamo Plains the short, nutritious grasses ensure large concentrations of wildebeest, zebra and eland.
- The predators are inevitable followers of the game concentrations and with so many young antelope around interaction is spectacular as are photographic opportunities.
- Breeding crowned crane, visiting wattled crane and a host of migrant birds add colour, vocalisation and activity to the woodlands and the plains.



South Africa

Rocktail Bay

- This remote beach in Maputaland comes into its own during the summer months when the official turtle season runs from mid-October to mid-March.
- Enormous leatherback and loggerhead turtles make their way under the cover of darkness onto the beaches of their birth to lay their own eggs and can be closely observed by guests of the camp.
- The dune forest and coastal grasslands and pans are alive with birds unique to this part of Africa with green malkoha, Woodward's batis and rosy-throated longclaw thrilling the birders.
- This is the perfect end to an itinerary that may have taken in either the Cape, or a safari in Botswana, Namibia or Zimbabwe, with a multitude of activities along 40km of pristine beach. Gorgeous sunny days and balmy nights provide a subtropical contrast to a northern hemisphere winter.

