

Botswana Safari calendar for Linyanti and the Delta

This safari calendar is designed to illustrate the highlights associated with each month of the year. We are often asked 'what is the best time of the year to come to Botswana?'. There is no simple answer, as this ultimately depends upon your individual interests and likes or dislikes! The calendar will provide you with a better understanding of the events and climate throughout the year, and hopefully allow you to best decide on your perfect safari date!

January

Peak breeding time for many of the colourful migrant bird species. Excellent wild flowers, brilliant green foliage, constant sounds day and night, from insects and birds. The bush is alive. January is in the middle of the rainy season with spectacular afternoon thunder storms and warm days (average 30°C plus) and nights (20°C plus). Game viewing is average with active predators still chasing the fast developing young of their prey species. An ideal photography month for all the colours and dramatic skies. The contrasts of the predators' natural winter camouflage, with the summer colours, makes for dramatic photos. More easily spotted by their prey species, the predators have to work hard while the prey experience a time of plenty.



February

Ripe figs are eaten by many species including the fruit bats, who make interesting night sounds while feeding. Water lilies flowering peak - colourful and noisy reed frogs - the Okavango Delta is brilliant, noisy and alive. With the rainy season all plants are growing actively, butterflies, birds, frogs and all the small creatures are at their most active and at their best. The rains continue in afternoon thunder storms with dramatic skies and sounds. Temperatures range up to 40°C but average above 30°C with warm nights (20°C plus). Can have both wet and very dry spells within the month. The giant bullfrog emerges from months and sometimes years of hibernation to indulge in nocturnal feeding frenzies. The resident game species do not have far to go for water and the young are almost as tall as the adults.



March

The mighty Zambezi is in full spate and river rafting is often closed now. The Victoria Falls are as powerful as they can be and very dramatic, truly one of the seven natural wonders of the world. In Botswana, the Marula trees fruit attract their attendant bull elephants, who wander from tree to tree in search of their favourite meals. This brings them right into Lagoon and Kwara camps on a daily basis. The start of the rutting season leads to the sleek and fat impala males snorting and cavorting to attract females. Temperatures are still warm both day and night but the air is drier and the rains less frequent.



April

The first signs that the times are changing. Night time temperatures drop to below 20°C on average but day temperatures continue to rise up to 40°C on some days. The cooler mornings, with high relative humidity, lead to wonderful early morning mists over the waters. The impala rut is in full swing and the challenges continue right through the night with dramatic clashes between rival males. The trees have completed flowering and fruit is ripening - most notably the massive 'sausages' hanging from the Sausage trees. Reptiles are actively breeding and feeding in anticipation of the pending winter dry season.



May

Flood waters from Angola start to reach the top of the Okavango Delta and begin their slow and deliberate progress through this vast wetlands system. With rains past and atmosphere much drier, the nights are cooler with temperatures averaging 15°C, while day temperatures - though still warm - have lost their edge and maximum temperatures seldom exceed 35°C. Jackets are sensible for night drives. The buffalo begin to group into large herds and visit the permanent water sources more often as the seasonal pans begin to dry. Breeding herds of elephant increase in density as they also begin to visit the permanent waters. The greens have begun to fade to the duller dry season colours and the predators' natural camouflage once again blends perfectly into the surrounding bush. The migratory birds begin their flights to winter feeding and breeding grounds in far away places.



June

June is a time of excitement! The wild dogs begin to search for their annual den and our guides spend time seeking out their sites. Once they have denned, these rare animals will be easy to find for 3-4 months as they hunt from their den. The resident dog packs den in both the Kwando and Kwara concessions and the Kwando is known to offer some of the best dog viewing in Africa. Temperatures have dropped to their coldest by the end of June, with night temperatures reaching as low as 5°C (very cold on night drives due to wind chill). Day temperatures rise up to a very comfortable 25°C and dusty dry conditions begin to persist. Some green bushes and trees have scattered their leaves but many are almost bare. Seasonal waterholes are beginning to dry up. Animals increasingly concentrate at the permanent water, as do the waiting predators.



July

The floods arrive, both in the northern Okavango Delta and the Kwando areas, after a slow journey from the Angolan highlands 1000's km away. The paradox is obvious: the flood arrives when dust and dryness pervade and the rains have long gone. The leaves continue to fall from the trees and the grasses are getting drier and shorter every day. This means that visibility for game viewing is excellent. The nights are still cold but the days are warm and pleasant. This is the typical Botswana weather, sunny and clear. More and more animals congregate near the water and flood plains for grazing. This a special time of the year as water spreads into areas where there was none the day before and the makoro and boat trips become more exciting as new areas can now be explored. Soft early morning and evening light, combined with dust, produces many stunning photo opportunities.



August

The herds are getting larger and limited access to the water leads to tension between the breeding herds of elephant and the nights are filled with elephant sounds. The bush is bare and the dust pervades but there is abundant action and amazing sightings. The floods have passed through the Delta and now reach Maun, leading to excitement for the locals and water-related speculation is at a peak. How high will it reach? When will it stop? The weather remains pleasant during the day and cool at night. Thousands of herons, storks and other breeding birds start to congregate at the Gadikwe heronry, near Kwara, to begin nest building. This is the typical peak season for the safari industry.



September

The climate has changed and winter is all but gone. Night temperatures rise rapidly during this month to an average of 15°C plus at night and day time temperatures soar well in the 30's°C. The sun shines, the skies are clear and it is really dry and hot. Unbelievably, the elephants concentrate in still greater numbers as do the buffalo herds keeping the predators well fed as the season takes its toll on the prey species. This is a time of plenty for the lions. The skies are alive with colour as 1000's of carmine bee-eaters return from their winter feeding grounds and many other migrant bird species begin to arrive. The water levels have slowly started to drop as the waters from Angola have completed their trek. The predatory tiger fish becomes active with rising temperatures and some trees and grasses begin to show signs of new growth. Many species will flower and bear seed in the next six weeks, greatly increasing the chances of their survival as they will fall with the impending rains.



October

It is hot, really hot! But never will you experience game viewing like this. It is well worth the sweat. Day temperatures rise regularly above 40°C and nights are warm with averages in the low 20's°C. 'Start early and leave late' is the answer. This aversion to the midday heat is common to both people and animals alike. Animals are only active at first light and late in the day. Many species even begin to feed at night! There is no place to hide as everything is bare and the grasses are eaten or trampled. Night drives are at their best and the pervading dust makes all scenes dramatic. The Gadikwe heronry near Kwara is now full of literally thousands of birds, breeding, nesting and feeding. This is truly an awe inspiring sight.



November

The expectation (or rather the desperation) for rain dominates all discussions. People and animals all await an end to the dryness, dust and oppressive heat. Temperatures remain high both day & night and the game viewing continues to improve and will do so until the day of the first rains, normally around mid to late November. With the arrival of the rains comes an almost tangible relief. The herds begin to disperse to seek new grazing and will now begin to drink from the seasonal pans. The birthing season begins with the tsessebe, followed by the impala and red lechwe. The predators, such as wild dog and cheetah, seek out these vulnerable young and kill many times a day to sate their hunger. There is plenty of predator/prey interaction and great visibility as the vegetation is still growing. The green grass shoots, reminiscent of a mown lawn, and the trees bursting into life makes this a wonderful time for the photographers with action, colour and great visibility.



December

The abundant protein rich grass feeds the mothers of the young antelope, while the lambs and calves grow at an astounding rate. The impala complete their lambing as the wildebeest begin and the rains become more regular with thunder storms every few days. The pans remain full and the bush colours are radiant in brilliant greens. The grasses begin to grow high and while the grazers enjoy the green tender mouthfuls, the stalking predators are becoming increasingly visible in their lighter winter camouflage. This ensures that the predators devote much of their time to hunting the numerous species which produces plenty of predator/prey activity. All the migrant birds have arrived and it is a prime time for birders to visit. Temperatures have cooled slightly with the arriving rains, but hot days still occur and nights are still warm & humid. For photographers, dramatic skies and lightning at night all add to the magic.

