Tour Highlights and Activities
In terms of the incredible diversity of wildlife and uniquely contrasting landscapes, this is one of my favourite trips and includes four of the most precious natural jewels in all of Africa, the Kalahari Desert, the Okavango Delta, Chobe National Park and the mighty Victoria Falls. It is difficult to imagine that the arid, pristine wilderness of the Kalahari and the fertile waterways of the Okavango Delta can exist within less than 100km of each other, but we will experience both extremes during this trip, as well as huge concentrations of wildlife at Chobe National Park, one of the largest protected areas on the continent. The magical Cessna flight over the Okavango and the thrilling open microlight flight above Victoria Falls, are two of the more spectacular highlights of this unforgettable journey, but our adventure will produce a host of memories as we savour peaceful Makoro safaris through the myriad channels of the Okavango and a sunset cruise on the remarkably beautiful Zambezi. Other enthralling activities will include canoe trips among hippos and crocodiles, rewarding horseback safaris and the opportunity to swim just a few metres from the very edge of the immensely powerful 108m cascade of Victoria Falls. However, for all of these exceptional experiences, the magnificent animals remain the principal attraction of this spellbinding tour and one of the most enduring moments will be our boat trip on the Chobe River and the privilege of watching large herds of elephants frolicking in the depths, as the dying sun gently slips away across the shimmering water and the calls of the fish eagles mark the end of another timeless day in Africa. There are few better ways to enjoy wildlife and there are few better places in the world to do so.

Day 1 - Gaborone to Khama Rhino Sanctuary
Meet our guide at the airport in Gaborone and transfer north in our open-sided safari vehicle to the Khama Rhino Sanctuary, an initiative conceived and managed by the local community. Our interlude in the Okavango Delta aside, when he will enjoy a well deserved break, we will have the same knowledgeable and friendly guide with us for the duration of the trip, as well as the same vehicle. A leisurely drive from Gaborone on an easy road, the Khama sanctuary is a perfect introduction to Botswana, as it supports a large number of relatively easy to see animals and is more or less the only destination in the country where you are guaranteed to encounter rhinos. Although they have also been reintroduced to Chief’s Island in the Okavango, and are happily breeding successfully there, like so many of the neighbouring countries in southern Africa, the rhino population in Botswana has suffered devastating poaching over the years, to the point where the black rhino was declared locally extinct in the early 1990s and just a handful of white rhinos remained. Our two-night visit will therefore support the essential conservation work being undertaken here and will help to highlight the critical plight of two of the continent’s most majestic creatures.

Day 2 - Khama Rhino Sanctuary
After a refreshing first night’s sleep in our comfortable chalets, we will spend a full day in this attractive and surprisingly diverse reserve and can certainly expect to see and get fairly close to several white rhinos, a number of which usually have young calves. Although there are far less, two black rhinos have also been born at Khama within the last three years and while we look for these we
are likely to enjoy excellent views of a nice variety of antelope, including the red hartebeest subspecies, eland, greater kudu, oryx, blue or common wildebeest, springbok, impala and steenbok. As a result of the constant protection they receive, all of the animals here are very relaxed and giraffe, plains zebra, warthog, black-backed jackal, scrub hare and ostrich complete the picture in terms of the wildlife routinely observed and photographed.

Day 3 - Khama Rhino Sanctuary to Khutse Game Reserve
Depart Khama after breakfast and drive south west to Khutse Game Reserve, a comparatively small park within the Kalahari Desert and gateway to the adjacent and much larger Central Kalahari Game Reserve. Although the majority sits within Botswana, the Kalahari, including the surrounding Kalahari Basin, is a vast semi-arid region which also covers much of Namibia and South Africa, as well as less extensive sections of Zambia, Zimbabwe and Angola. Excluding the basin, which incidentally includes both the Okavango Delta and Chobe National Park, the Central Kalahari Reserve is one of the best places to explore this immense desert environment and Khutse is an ideal and fairly gentle introduction to that reserve. Our next three nights will be spent at a beautiful desert retreat, with magnificent panoramic views over the African bush and a glorious swimming pool that we will avail ourselves of during the scorching afternoon heat.

Days 4 to 5 - Khutse Game Reserve
Meaning ‘place where you can kneel down to drink’, it is now difficult to conceive that at one time Khutse was part of an ancient river system that flowed in a north-easterly direction to fill the huge but now equally parched, Lake Makgadikgadi. Only the pans now remain and, depending to some extent on when we visit, our wildlife viewing over the next two days will centre around those still containing water after the summer rains and the artificial waterholes in the area, including the one at our lodge. In addition to a large number of antelope, we have an excellent chance of seeing our first lions at Khutse, as well as cheetah, brown hyena, bat-eared fox, black-backed jackal, cape porcupine, meerkat, springhare, honey badger and South African ground squirrel. Leopard and hunting dog also occur in the area and caracal, cape fox, aardwolf, aardvark, African wild cat, spotted hyena and ground pangolin are all realistic possibilities. Given that Khutse and the Central Kalahari are really part of the same desert, separated on maps and in books but not in reality, we can reasonably expect to encounter, or at least to search for, most of the same species in both reserves. On one of our two mornings we will take breakfast in the bush, savouring the combination of a beautiful African sunrise, a freshly prepared meal and the commanding view over one of the most picturesque waterholes. We also have the option of spending some time with the local San or Bushmen, the indigenous people of Southern Africa who have survived in this inhospitable region of the Kalahari for thousands of years.
Days 6 to 14 - Central Kalahari Game Reserve

This morning we will meet our cook and camp helper and begin the first leg of our traditional mobile camping safari within the bordering Central Kalahari Reserve. A true taste of a bygone era, mobile safaris are the old-style way of discovering Africa and will enable us to experience the ‘dark continent’ as the European explorers did in the mid 19th century. Although one of the premier wildlife areas in the country, the Central Kalahari does not receive many visitors and with so few lodges, most people approach from the north and do not make it any further south than the various salt pans and artificial waterholes around Deception Valley. However, it is possible to traverse the entire park and for those that make the effort to explore further, the rewards are rich indeed, not only in terms of the wildlife and the exquisite wilderness, but also in terms of the absolute and almost incomparable solitude that can be experienced here. There really are very few places on earth like the Kalahari and the animals that we will see in this distinctive ecosystem are different in behaviour and in some cases appearance to those encountered in other parts of Africa. The lions are much larger than their East African cousins, with big black ‘desert’ manes and a total disregard for mankind and more or less anything else. It is not unusual to hear an entire pride walking through your tented camp at night and some of the bigger males still attempt to burst the tyres of moving game vehicles. In addition to an abundance of plains animals, including oryx, eland, wildebeest, greater kudu, red hartebeest and springbok, this is probably the best reserve in southern Africa to see cheetah in a totally natural environment and is also a good spot for the solitary and elusive brown hyena and the notoriously rare black-footed cat, the only endemic wild cat in the region and the smallest in Africa. Meerkats are more regularly seen, as are honey badgers, which are generally difficult to observe during the day elsewhere. On my last trip I saw fourteen in full daylight, as well as a mating pair of aardwolves and a cheetah teaching her cub to hunt with the assistance of a springbok that she had just killed. A couple of designated stops to refuel aside, we will be entirely self-sufficient during our nine-day expedition and will have the total freedom to slowly explore from south to north, concentrating our game viewing efforts around the major pans and waterholes and spending as much time as we choose at each. Relaxing evenings will be spent recounting the day’s events and enjoying wonderful bush meals by our hypnotic campfire, before we fall asleep to the evocative sounds of the African savannah and the scurrying of animals looking for scraps as the last embers of our fire slowly disappear. We will camp at four or five different locations during our stay and our helpful guides will pitch our tents whilst we are game driving, as well as the all important bush shower, which basically consists of a rope, a bucket and a tap, but is actually very effective and wonderfully refreshing in the heat of the Kalahari.
Day 15 - Central Kalahari Game Reserve to Makgadikgadi Pans National Park
We head to a real shower this morning, as our voyage through the Central Kalahari Reserve comes to an end and we make the easy transfer to our splendid lodge at Makgadikgadi Pans National Park, another of Botswana’s unique and less well trodden wilderness areas and still within the sprawling confines of the Kalahari Desert. Only about 20% of the national park encompasses the main Makgadikgadi Pans area, one of the largest salt flats in the world and the remnants of an enormous lake, larger than Lake Victoria, which dried around two thousand years ago to form a vast, seemingly desolate expanse of stunning pans and imposing horizons. The two main pan complexes are Ntwetwe and Sowa, but as the national park incorporates only part of Ntwetwe, and does not reach Sowa at all, it is far more hospitable than much of the surrounding region and attracts a wide variety of wildlife, particularly during the seasonal rains when sizable populations of migratory wildebeest, zebra and springbok converge on the fresh grasslands, followed inevitably, by a host of predators. Having taken the opportunity to freshen up somewhat after our desert exploits, we have the option this afternoon of either game driving in the national park or allowing the wildlife to come to us, as we observe unobtrusively from either the perfectly situated terrace or from a discreet viewing hide overlooking the Boteti River. The Boteti is the main overspill of the Okavango Delta and in 2009 it flowed past Maun and as far east as Makgadikgadi Pans for the first time in two decades, following record flood levels in the Okavango. Whichever option is preferred, we will this evening enjoy a delightful dinner in the traditional ‘boma’ or dining area of our lodge, before we depart for our first night game drive in Botswana and the chance to look for some of the nocturnal animals very rarely encountered during the day. African civet, southern lesser galago or bushbaby, aardwolf, aardvark, springhare, honey badger, zorilla or striped polecat, ground pangolin, cape porcupine, common genet, caracal and brown hyena are just a few of the species that we could be fortunate enough to encounter.

Days 16 to 17 - Makgadikgadi Pans National Park
Excluding the spotlighting, which we can participate in on each of our three nights here, we will split our two days between the excellent viewing platforms and facilities of our lodge, principally the rather tempting pool, and game driving in the national park. In terms of predators, Makgadikgadi is particularly renowned for lion, leopard and spotted hyena and is also home to two of the white rhinos reintroduced to Chief’s Island in the Okavango Delta, a mother and female calf who were obviously not greatly impressed with their new home and decided to trek 250km south in search of a habitat more to their liking. In acknowledgement perhaps of their supreme effort, and in an attempt to get them to breed, a male was introduced to the park in 2008 and, as they are closely monitored, we have a fair chance of finding all three. We will look in any case and in doing so are likely to find common duiker, bushbuck and hippo for the first time. Conspicuous by their rather large absence, and depending to some extent on the season in which we visit, we may also see our first elephants of the trip. If not, we have another opportunity at neighbouring Nxai Pan National Park and are guaranteed to see these gentle giants in both the Okavango and at Chobe.

Day 18 - Makgadikgadi Pans National Park to Ntwetwe Safari Camp
Our transfer this morning is also a leisurely game drive, as we slowly traverse the entire breadth of the Makgadikgadi National Park to arrive at our safari camp just beyond the eastern border of the park and still within the Kalahari Desert. We should arrive around...
lunchtime and will use this charming, traditionally styled camp as the base from which we will now explore the extraordinary landscapes of the Ntwetwe and Sowa saltlans to the south. Very few tourists on the main ‘Central Kalahari, Okavango, Chobe’ circuit ever reach here and are missing one of the most remarkable spectacles in Africa, as well as a truly authentic Kalahari experience that will live long in the memory. In a region famous for its imposing and ancient baobab trees, the extraordinary ‘lunar’ landscapes of what was once an immense lake dominate the horizon and it is impossible to really understand this epic land until you have gazed upon these haunting and almost surreal plains. We will drive through the harsh, scorched earth of Ntwetwe, the larger of the two main pans, until we reach Kubu Island, a granite outcrop adorned with towering baobabs, rising 20m above a sea of white and so breathtakingly beautiful that you will not believe it could exist until you see it for yourself. In keeping with the spirit of our surroundings, our time here will be flexible, as we will slowly descend into the pace and rhythm of this eternal desert. This afternoon we will probably unwind with a special group of meerkats, the entertaining stars of a long-term habituation and study programme, which are just as likely to use your head as a lookout post, than a more customary termite mound. After a captivating interlude with these intelligent and highly social creatures we can visit Chapman’s Baobab, which is apparently the third largest tree in Africa and is certainly one of the most attractive regardless of any official ranking. Often used as easily identifiable camping and meeting points by European pioneers, Green’s Baobab is another of the many baobabs in the area and still bears the inscription ‘Green’s Expedition 1858-1859’.

Days 19 to 21 - Ntwetwe Safari Camp and Sowa Saltpan
Over the next three days we have the rare chance to experience rural life in and around the desert, as we visit a local community and go on absorbing morning walks with the indigenous bushmen, who will teach us how to track and how to interpret this hostile environment. The village that we will visit is not a tourist attraction, it is a real thriving community and our guides will show us the trees under which they were taught in the classes of the local primary school, as we watch the next generation engrossed in their lessons. With the expert assistance of some of the most skilled guides in the country we will search for the species perfectly adapted to the harsh desert conditions, including oryx, springbok, aardwolf, honey badger and meerkat. Elephant, lion and cheetah also occur here and we will take time to visit a brown hyena research programme, to learn more about these resilient and misunderstood animals and to watch them interact around their den. We will take a quad bike tour across the desolate expanse of the spectacular Ntwetwe Pan, as we marvel at the sheer emptiness of this pristine landscape and learn more about the geology and archaeology of the area. We also have the option of another even more adventurous quad bike trip and if these bikes do not appear to be the most harmonious way of viewing a tranquil wilderness, they have been specifically chosen as a safe and low impact method of covering difficult terrain and do far less damage to the environment than a massive 4x4. Our second quad biking option is a spellbinding overnight trip to Kubu Island, which involves more or less a full-day drive through the Ntwetwe Pan and a night at a bush camp that will be erected purely for our use, complete with a bush shower after a hot and dusty day. Given the sheer beauty of Kubu, this is sure to be one of the special moments of the trip, particularly when we finally go to sleep, as tents are not required here and we will simply drift away in our comfortable bedrolls, as the fire crackles and a billion stars illuminate the heavens. In the morning our amazing chef will have prepared a delightful breakfast, including freshly cooked bread, and we will begin to explore Kubu, as well as the nearby ruins, which have been linked to the Great Zimbabwe civilisation of the 11th century.
Day 22 - Ntwetwe Safari Camp to Nxai Pan National Park
Today is flexible in the sense that our journey is not a long one and we may decide to tarry a while at our desert camp before transferring to Nxai Pan National Park, which borders Makgadikgadi Pans National Park to the north and is only separated from it by the Maun-Nata Highway. If we leave Ntwetwe reasonably early then we will be able to game drive in the national park this afternoon, which features the large saltpan after which Nxai is named and extensive grass plains, which support a healthy cheetah population.

Days 23 to 24 - Nxai Pan National Park
We have two full days to explore a park which annually plays host to the second largest zebra migration in Africa, after the famous Serengeti to Maasai Mara migration in Tanzania and Kenya. Up to 30,000 zebra, and a host of trailing predators, leave the Okavango at the start of the early summer rains and trek almost 300km to the fresh grass of the Makgadikgadi and Nxai savannahs until the pans start drying again and they begin the long march back by way of the Boteti River. Whether we see this event at Nxai will depend on when we travel, but we have a good chance of observing it in some form, as we will be visiting most of the migration route during the course of our marathon journey. Regardless of the migration, the game viewing within certain areas of the park is good and Nxai supports a large concentration of springbok and other antelope. Lion, spotted hyena and leopard are all regularly seen, as are elephants and occasionally packs of hunting dog. On one of our drives we will visit Baines’ Baobabs, a group of seven trees immortalised in a painting by the artist and explorer Thomas Baines in 1862.

Day 25 - Nxai Pan National Park to Moremi Game Reserve (Chief’s Island)
Will leave Nxai early this morning and drive west to Maun for one of the most exciting days of our trip and two very special events, our first glimpse of the Okavango Delta and an unforgettable Cessna flight over it to our lodge on Chief’s Island. The real beauty of this trip is that whilst the dry winter season is certainly the best time of year for viewing wildlife in Botswana, during the same dry period the life-giving rainfall from Angola’s western highlands is slowly permeating its way into the many channels and lagoons of the Okavango Delta, the largest inland delta in the world and one of nature’s indisputable masterpieces. As the crystal clear waters return and the meandering channels fill, so the dry desert basin of the Kalahari is transformed into a lush oasis and animals from all over the region, including herds of elephants from the arid deserts of Namibia, converge to create one of Africa’s greatest wildlife spectacles. The abundance of all forms of life at this time of year is simply breathtaking. In addition to thousands of deliciously happy elephants and buffalo, herds of gorgeous red lechwe and other antelope adorn the myriad of green islands and the secretive sitatunga delicately wade through paths that hippos have helpfully created among the thick papyrus and reeds. Stunning water lilies decorate the crocodile pools and hunting dogs are just one of the many predators that can be seen on the larger sections of dry land. While around a third of the Delta retains permanent water, and some areas therefore provide excellent game viewing regardless of the time of year, it is at full flood that the Okavango truly reveals its splendour, as a great number of the quarter of a million large animals that inhabit the area at this time are seasonal migrants that depart for better grazing when the water levels begin to recede. The Moremi Game Reserve, which accounts for around 20% of the entire Okavango Delta, is one of the best areas for wildlife viewing and is home to the first of our three destinations here, Chief’s Island, the largest section of dry land within the delta and haven to a massive concentration and variety of animals when the seasonal floods are at their peak. After a warm welcome from the friendly camp staff and a chance to familiarise ourselves with the wonderful facilities and beautiful décor of our lodge, we will head straight out to begin our discovery of this ecological paradise.

Days 26 to 27 - Moremi Game Reserve (Chief’s Island)
To give us the best possible flavour of this sprawling ecosystem, and to enable us to participate in the various activities available at different camps, we will visit three locations within the Okavango, the first of which has an excellent and well founded reputation for predator sightings. Leopard encounters are common, and although cheetah and hunting dog can be elusive, this is mainly due to
territorial pressure from sizeable lion prides and the equally robust spotted hyena population, both of which can be observed more or less at will. Despite the high density of competing predators, hunting dog are seen here and on my previous trip I was fortunate enough to witness an unusual lone female that is fast becoming famous not only for her supreme solitary hunting skills, but because she has taken to keeping company with a pair of black-backed jackals. Smaller carnivores are also very much in evidence, including serval, African civet, aardwolf, Central African large-spotted genet, common genet and the banded, slender and dwarf mongoose species. Elephant, African buffalo, chacma baboon and vervet monkey are all regularly photographed around our lodge and we may even be lucky enough to chance upon one of the reintroduced black and white rhinos, which are happily breeding successfully here to produce the first generation of wild rhinos in Botswana for two decades. Given the strict regulations regarding safari walks and night game drives, the wildlife viewing in this area is primarily conducted in open safari vehicles during the day, although there is also the option of a scenic helicopter flight, for further panoramic views of the delta.

Day 28 - Moremi Game Reserve to Private Concession Area
After a final morning game drive on Chief’s Island, we change camps this morning and take another memorable flight to a private concession area beyond the borders of the Moremi reserve, which will allow us to begin spotlighting at night and to drive off road when an animal has been spotted and our guide believes that it is appropriate to do so. Our activities will also change to some degree, as our new lodge is situated by one of the major waterways and we will now be able to observe the countless crocodiles and hippos by motorboat and Makoro, a type of canoe traditionally fashioned from a large scooped-out tree trunk, although the majority are fortunately now fibre glass imitations. As well as being the only way to get around easily in some areas, Makoro trips are a highlight of any visit to the delta and will provide us with a completely different perspective of the flooded plains, as skilled local ‘Polers’ steer us, apparently effortlessly, along a labyrinth of mesmerising waterways and channels. As we have been on dry land for so long, we will take a first opportunity to get out onto the water this afternoon before returning to the elegant ambiance of our lodge and a first night game drive after dinner in the delightful treetop dining room.

Days 29 to 31 - Private Concession Area
Given the number of activities available and the freedom in terms of when and where we can drive, we have longer at this lodge and will divide our time between day and night game drives, river safaris, Makoro trips and game walks. Regardless of whether we encounter lions or not, and we often do, walking safaris are an immensely rewarding way of exploring the African bush and there is something very special about observing a herd of elephants on foot, away from the constraints of our vehicle. There will also be plenty of opportunity to learn a little more about the flora and fauna of the area, as our enthusiastic guides point out a variety of plants and insects and explain how each are traditionally used by the indigenous people. Of the animals that we may not have seen previously, this is a particularly good habitat for side-striped jackal and the four antelope species roan, sable, waterbuck and reedbuck, while other familiar residents include lion, spotted hyena, elephant, red lechwe, giraffe, plains zebra, red hartebeest, greater kudu, blue wildebeest and hippo.

Day 32 - Private Concession Area to Moremi Game Reserve
After another early morning walk or drive, we transfer by speedboat back into the Moremi Game Reserve and one of the best
destinations to see hunting dog and leopard in all of Botswana. Cheetah also occur, as well as the ubiquitous lions, and whether our stay here is successful or not has only a little to do with good fortune and is far more dependent on when we visit, as during the right season you can expect to see every major predator within about three days, but at the wrong time you may not see any of them...and I have experienced both extremes. After lunch in the beautiful thatched boma of our woodland lodge, and a first visit to the elevated viewing platform overlooking a picturesque lagoon, we will take a motorboat cruise to watch the many animals drinking along the riverbank.

Days 33 to 34 - Moremi Game Reserve
In addition to searching for the prevalent apex predators, the forests and waterways around our lodge are an ideal setting for a prolific array of splendidly contrasting birds, including saddle-billed, marabou and yellow-billed storks, grey-crowned and wattled cranes, goliath and grey herons, lilac-breasted roller, southern ground hornbill, kori bustard, secretary bird and a variety of bee-eaters, kingfishers, weavers and smaller hornbills. Almost 600 bird species have been recorded in Botswana and most of these can be found in the Okavango Delta and further north in Chobe National Park. Given the perfect habitat and an abundance of food, raptors are also well represented and we have a rare chance to spot the secretive pel’s fishing owl, as well as bateleur, martial and tawny eagles and a host of other birds of prey. During our river cruises we may catch a glimpse of either the African clawless otter or the spotted-necked otter and possibly the semi-aquatic and infrequently observed sitatunga antelope.

Day 35 - Moremi Game Reserve to Savute
We have a short speedboat transfer this morning to meet up with our guide again and then a fairly long drive north to Savute, an area within Chobe National park, made famous by the massive pride of lions that became adept at taking down weary and isolated elephants at certain waterholes. We do have the option of flying to Savute if preferred, but the drive north via the Manabe entrance gate is a good way to perceive the different habitats that we will travel through and there will be plenty of stops for wildlife on the way. Until late 2008 when the Savute Channel flowed again for the first time in 30 years, Savute was always regarded as an arid, hostile area, where sightings of most of the dominant carnivores could be almost guaranteed during the dry season when the plains animals were forced to concentrate around the few permanent water sources. Although the dynamic has changed slightly with the return of the fresh, clear water, it has done nothing to tame this raw wilderness and Savute remains one of the best destinations to see lion, leopard, cheetah, hunting dog and hyena activity, as well as large numbers of the animals they prey upon. No one knows how long the water will remain, as the channel has flowed intermittently over the years and it took fifteen months for the floods to painstakingly wander the 100km or so from the Linyanti River all the way to the Savute marshes. However, there is currently no sign of the water abating and we will hopefully be able to witness this incredibly rare natural phenomenon as we drive north towards our lodge.

Days 36 to 37 - Savute
Wildlife viewing at Savute will be in our safari vehicle, but the shaded decks of our lodge also afford imperious views of the revitalised channel and the many animals drawn across the searing plains to satiate their thirst at the water’s edge. Elephants are regular visitors and as they cool down in the midday heat, we can do the same in the alluring swimming pool overlooking the river. Lions dominate the territory and are often seen in large numbers, whether hunting or attempting to get comfortable as they sprawl together under the meagre shade of a camelthorn tree, and solitary leopards and packs of hunting dog are also commonly visible. Massive hyena clans have been recorded overwhelming baby elephants in the middle of the day and their encounters with lions are
frequent given the exceptionally high concentrations of both species in the area. In addition to our game drives, we can visit the ancient volcanic hills of Gubatsa, which now rise loftily above the plains, but were once tiny islands jutting out of the huge lake that submerged these arid lands many millions of years before. Now the Gubatsa Hills are mainly visited for their fine examples of San rock painting and are also one of the best places in Botswana to see the klipspringer antelope.

Day 38 - Savute to Linyanti
We will leave Savute after breakfast this morning, as our route north west is a prime wildlife corridor and we can game drive slowly on the way to one of the best kept secrets in Botswana, the seasonal floodplains and lagoons of the Linyanti Reserve. Rising in Angola as the Kwando River and cutting through Namibia’s Caprivi Strip before it eventually forms the Chobe River to the east, the Linyanti River and marshes are another gem in this sparkling land of natural treasures. Bordered by Chobe National Park and the equally bountiful private reserves of Kwando and Selinda, all of which are unfenced to allow animals to roam freely, Linyanti remains totally unspoiled and is barely visited, unless you include the thousands of elephants that make this fertile area their home during the dry season. We will certainly encounter some of these on our first game drive this afternoon, as well as herds of up to 500 buffalo and possibly the hunting dogs that are known to den within the vicinity of our idyllic tented camp.

Days 39 to 41 - Linyanti
As Linyanti is another concession area, we again have the option of night game drives and the freedom to leave the road if we are unlikely to disturb the animals in question or disrupt their natural behaviour. Walking safaris are also permitted, as well as boat trips if the water levels are high enough, and we can spend time at a number of excellent and productive viewing hides in the area. In a region renowned for its high concentration of predators, we will take the opportunity to drive with the guides at our camp, as dedicated trackers are provided with every vehicle and they devote themselves to the task of finding specific animals with a wealth of local knowledge and even more enthusiasm. Their skills are particularly apparent during the night spotlighting and this is one of the
best areas to observe a variety of nocturnal creatures, including African wild cat, serval, caracal, honey badger, side-striped jackal, Central African large-spotted genet, African civet, cape porcupine and ground pangolin.

Day 42 - Linyanti to Chobe National Park
Although we will have been in or around the national park for the previous few days, this morning we transfer to the area of Chobe that most people are familiar with, the Chobe riverfront. Stretching from almost the border of Moremi Game Reserve in the Okavango Delta, through four distinct regions and ecosystems, Chobe is famous for the huge herds of migratory elephants that are drawn in their thousands to the northern boundary of the park, the Chobe River. It is on the Chobe that you can enjoy some of the most memorable river cruises in Africa, particularly during hot afternoons when elephants come down from the nearby hills to drink and bathe in the territorial waters between Botswana and Namibia. In the dry season it is common to see herds of several hundred and just as common to witness groups crossing the river in single file, the younger, smaller ones, with their trunks raised above the water in comical fashion. Buffalos can also be seen in large numbers, often taking shade against the fierce mid-afternoon sun, and groups of hippos are encountered basking on the riverbank in such numbers, that, from a distance, it is easy to at first mistake them for buffalo. Crocodiles and monitor lizards abound, the bird-life is staggering with 450 species at certain times including fish eagles on almost every other tree and flocks of dazzling bee-eaters nesting on the sandy riverbanks. The sunsets over the Caprivi Strip in neighbouring Namibia are as glorious as you will witness anywhere in the world and herds of puku antelope can be seen at the water’s edge in what is the most southerly extreme of their range. Further inland other rare antelopes thrive, including sable, roan, eland, oribi and sitatunga in encouraging numbers and a very strong population of greater kudu. Although cheetahs are not found at the waterfront, all of the other major predators can be observed here, including lion, leopard, spotted hyena and hunting dog. Like so many large wildlife habitats, Chobe, and all its converging environments, is one of those exceptional destinations that needs to be explored and experienced at leisure. Although a brief visit to the waterfront area and a sunset river cruise will provide many vivid and unforgettable memories, they are considerably less than half the picture as far as this extraordinary sanctuary is concerned and our journey north from the Okavango through Savute and Linyanti will enable us to experience the true scale and diversity of this outstanding reserve.

Days 43 to 46 - Chobe National Park
We have four days at the final major wildlife destination of our tour and will spend much of our time exploring the extensive and productive network of roads along the riverfront and further south to the Mopane woodlands and scattered pans of the Nogatsaa region, another distinct habitat within this diverse park, which features several prominent viewing hides and is particularly dynamic during the dry spring months. Roan antelope are commonly encountered here and while these shy animals are rarely seen in large groups, it is not unusual to observe herds of up to 50 sable antelope within the area between Nogatsaa and the Chobe River. Our superb lodge is ideally situated with glorious views of the river and there will be several opportunities to savour the intoxicating safari cruises for which the reserve is justly famed. Although we can experience both morning and afternoon cruises, the later trips, culminating in glorious sunsets, are generally the most memorable, as large herds of elephants emerge from the heat of the surrounding hills, cautiously led at first by the protective matriarch, until the lure of the cool water becomes too much and they gather pace and begin charging joyfully to the enticing river. Elephants adore water and it is the ultimate privilege to watch these amazing animals submerging themselves within a few metres of our boat before gathering on the sandy riverbank to enjoy a dust bath as the sun sets on our wonderful wildlife odyssey across this incredible country.
Day 47 - Chobe National Park to Victoria Falls
We bid a sad farewell to both Botswana and our much trusted guide today, as we take a final morning drive through Chobe to Kasane and the nearby Kazangulu ferry, our crossing point into Zambia and the only spot on the continent where four countries converge...Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. We will be met from the ferry and transferred a short distance by road to Livingstone, the adventure capital of Africa and gateway to the majestic Victoria Falls. Aptly named Mosi-ua-Tunya in the local language, or the Smoke that Thunders, Victoria Falls are the largest in the world in terms of the sheer width and height of the cascade and were ‘discovered’ by the Scottish missionary and explorer David Livingstone in 1855. As Livingstone was to later write “Scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight” and it is very difficult to greatly improve on that description or on the pure magnificence of the final destination of our epic adventure. After settling into our lodge, on the banks of the Zambezi and within touching distance of the spray generated by the falls, weather permitting, we will this afternoon experience one of nature’s wonders in all its glory, as we take an exhilarating microlight flight over Victoria Falls and along the Zambezi. With only a seat and a few strips of frame between us and the cascading torrents, this will be one of the great moments of this or any other trip and is easily the best way to appreciate the almost unparalleled grandeur of one of Africa’s iconic landmarks. Given the almost limitless choice of activities available on both sides of the border, we will split our remaining five nights between our riverside lodge in Zambia and a stylish colonial hotel situated within the Victoria Falls National Park in Zimbabwe.

Days 48 to 51 - Victoria Falls
Our four days at Victoria Falls can be as relaxing or as hectic as you choose, as there are any number of high adrenaline activities on offer in an area renowned for its world class white water rafting and terrifying 128m bungee jump from the steel bridge conceived by Cecil Rhodes to connect Zambia and Zimbabwe. Livingstone’s famous quote has been adapted to produce the ‘Flight of Angels’, an exciting helicopter flip over Victoria Falls and the Zambezi National Park, and almost as stirring as the microlight flight but without
the open elements and the ability to gaze down as the Zambezi passes beneath your feet. Powerful jet boats tear through the gorge beneath the falls, soaking and thrilling passengers in equal measure, and abseiling, gorge swings and cable slides are all designed to test the limits of even the most fearless traveller. If this type of activity is proving a little too much after our time in the bush, or is simply not your way of having fun, guided or unguided walks in Zimbabwe offer the best terrestrial views of the falls and picnics are another option on Livingstone Island, which sits within the heart of the Zambezi and was the spot from which Livingstone first viewed what is now considered to be one of the seven natural wonders of the world. From here during certain times of the year it is possible to swim across the top of the falls to Devil’s Pool, a small rock enclosed pool which looks as if it will sweep you to certain death as soon as you jump in, but from where you can actually swim to the very brink of the 100m plus plunge and peer over the edge. Game drives can also be arranged in both the Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park in Zambia, the highlight of which is the walk with one of the few populations of reintroduced rhinos in the country, and at the Zambezi National Park in Zimbabwe, where elephant, buffalo and lion can all be encountered, as well as packs of hunting dog, which range as far south as Hwange National Park, but den within the park each year. Private reserves offer spotlighting for a variety of animals including most of the cats and the infrequently observed bushpig, the nocturnal equivalent of the warthog. Regardless of what we see, our evening concludes with a starlit bush dinner and a chance to unwind in a wonderful setting around a roaring campfire. Horseback safaris for all abilities are available in Zimbabwe and whether you choose a two-hour hack or the full-day option, it is always a great thrill to ride within a few metres of a wild giraffe, buffalo or even an elephant, all of which take very little notice of us whilst on the back of another animal. Elephant rides are also a big attraction in both countries, although my personal favourite is on the Zimbabwe side, where it is possible to interact with a number of rescued orphan elephants and to share an enchanting couple of hours as they gently trample across the savannah and pretty streams of their expansive home. Of the many other possibilities for our stay here, the two most easily recommended are the full-day canoe safari
on the Zambezi and the sunset cruise on the same celebrated river. Whilst the canoeing will enable us to glide silently past pods of hippos, huge crocodiles sunning themselves on the riverbank and elephants wading by the shore, the cruise is an even more serene affair and the dazzling rays of the sun setting over the glistening Zambezi will be yet another abiding memory of this astonishing continent and our remarkable journey across just a tiny part of it.

**Day 52 - Victoria Falls**

Whether we participate in one last activity or just enjoy a lazy morning and the superb facilities of our hotel, today is the last day of our fabulous trip and transfers will be arranged to the nearby Victoria Falls airport in good time for final farewells and the flight home.

**Additional Options**

As with the vast majority of my itineraries, this one has been produced purely as a guide to some of what is available in Botswana and around Victoria Falls and it is possible to take a far shorter version of basically the same tour, by just spending less time at each
destination. Individual elements can always be added or replaced according to your requirements and I have actually touched upon only a few of highlights of this special country. The people are warm, welcoming and are proud to show you all that their country has to offer, not only in terms of the wildlife and natural wonders, but also in terms of their local culture and history. The San or Bushmen have been living in the Kalahari regions of Botswana, South Africa and Namibia for at least 30,000 years. They are not actually one indigenous people, but are disparate groups of nomadic hunters and gatherers, who share a lifestyle at one with the environment in which they live. It is possible to spend time with some of the remaining societies and tribes and to learn a little about their traditions and way of life, including how they have adapted to life today in a much changed world. Itineraries can also include a visit to the Tsodilo Hills, in the north eastern region, where more than 4,500 San rock paintings decorate the stone faces of the four largest hills and much of the neighbouring area. Some of the paintings have been dated as being 24,000-years old and there is another Stone Age rock painting site at Manyana, near the capital Gaborone. To the far south east and the borders of Zimbabwe and South Africa, the Tuli Block region surrounding the Limpopo is another bountiful wildlife haven that more people are now discovering and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park provides an alternative and totally wild Kalahari Desert experience which I have detailed in other guides. Extended horseback safaris are a magical way to explore both the Okavango Delta and the Tuli Block and seasonal canoe trails afford a rare opportunity to discover the abundant life of the Selinda Spillway linking the Okavango and Linyanti waterways. Given its proximity to Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa, Botswana is also ideally situated in terms of combining other legendary reserves in southern Africa, including Etosha in Namibia and Hwange in Zimbabwe.