

A NEW SERIES OF EXPERT GUIDES TO TRAVEL IN 2018

No.7
TELEGRAPH
TRAVEL
INSPIRES

50 AMAZING WILDLIFE ADVENTURES

*From Africa to the Arctic, Patagonia to the Pantanal,
we reveal the world's best animal encounters*

FRANS LANTING/FLPA

50 AMAZING WILDLIFE ADVENTURES

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27 OKAVANGO BOATING SAFARI, BOTSWANA

Many Botswana fans will have experienced a magical ride in a *mokoro* canoe when the Okavango Delta is in flood (May-October) but this adventure takes the experience to a new level. New for 2018, the four-day trip explores the delta from top to bottom while taking day trips from an uninhabited island. You'll watch elephants and hippos swim across the river in front of you and may get a sighting of one of Africa's rarest antelopes, the sitatunga.

- Four days from £1,395 (minimum four people) reducing to £1,080 (minimum six) excluding flights. Botswana Specialists (01473 599083; botswanaspecialists.co.uk).

28 DIVING WITH WHALE SHARKS, ST HELENA

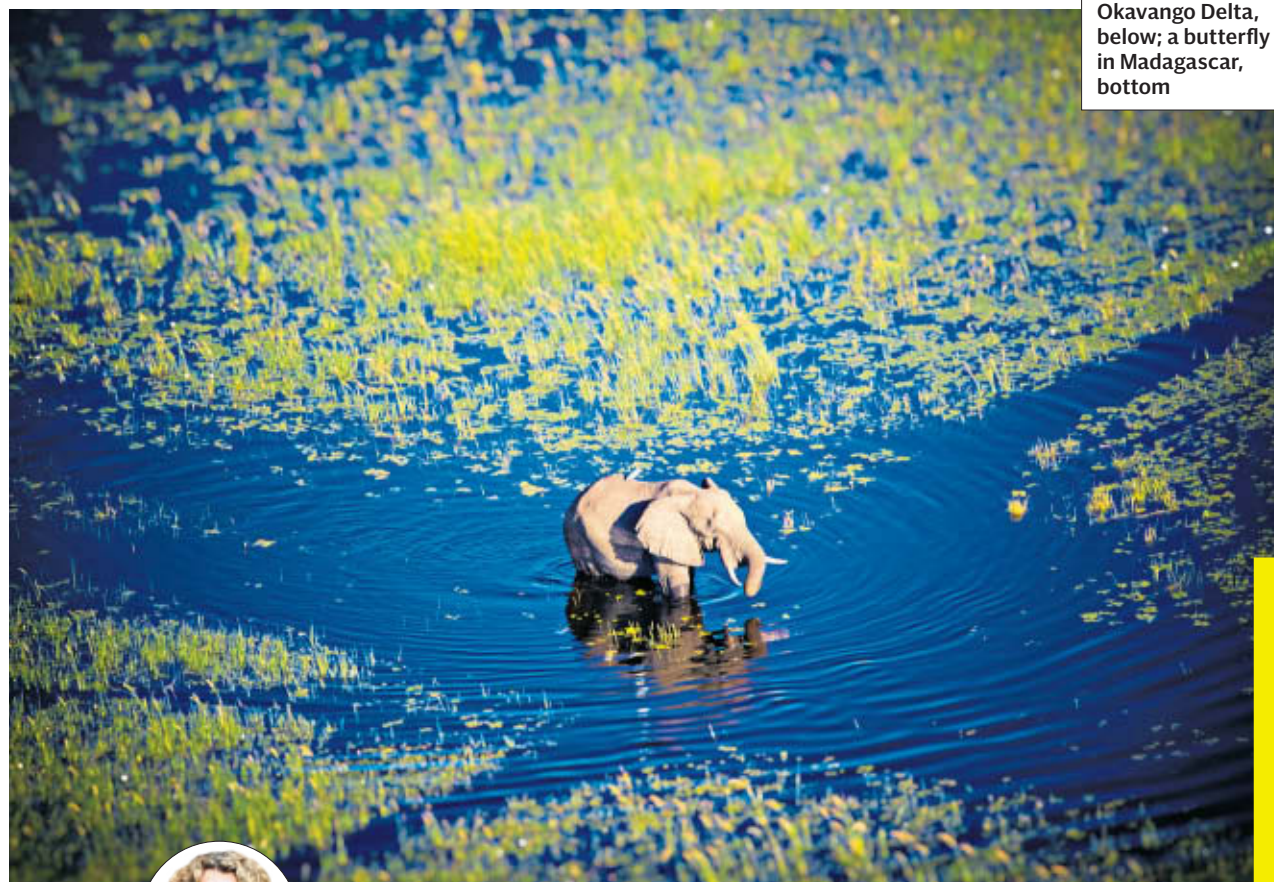
New flights from Johannesburg have opened up St Helena to adventurous divers. Until recently, the island could only be reached by ship, making it expensive and inaccessible. Known as the "Galapagos of the Atlantic", the island offers pristine dive sites teeming with life – including large numbers of whale sharks from December to March – a recent phenomenon that has attracted the attention of scientists worldwide.

- Eight nights including 10 dives costs from £2,795 sharing with Dive Worldwide (01962 302087; diveworldwide.com).

29 GAME-VIEWING, TANZANIA

Selous and Ruaha are Tanzania's two largest game reserves. Located in the south, they are both very remote. While the concentrations of wildlife are not as great as in the Serengeti to the north, the number of species is far greater. The best wildlife viewing, the most dramatic landscapes and the best lodges are concentrated in relatively small areas, especially in the Selous around the Rufiji river. Opened in 2017, Asilia's luxury Jabali Ridge lodge in Ruaha is located on a rocky outcrop surrounded by giant baobabs and with excellent big cat viewing.

- Eight nights split between Jabali Ridge Lodge and Roho ya Selous costs from £5,500 excluding flights (£600). The Luxury Safari Company (01666 880111; luxurysafaricompany.com).



WHY I LOVE AFRICAN WILD DOGS

Kate Humble, TV presenter

The first dogs trotted up to the dam, yards from where we sat. They drank, they frolicked in the water, play-fighting and scrapping almost within touching distance. I realised that photographer Paul [Joynson-Hicks] and I had stopped taking photos and were just sitting, dumbstruck, eyes shining, grins plastered across our faces.

30 FLYING SAFARI, KENYA

This unique air safari to study the plight of Kenya's endangered wildlife will transport guests to the most remote and inaccessible parts of the country (Maasai Mara, Laikipia, Samburu, Lewa) while meeting world experts including Saba Douglas-Hamilton and the cheetah

expert, Dr Elena Chelysheva. Species studied will include lion, cheetah, black rhino, elephants, wild dog, Grevy's zebra and reticulated giraffe. Guests learn in depth (and in luxury) about each species and the threats facing them.

- Nine days from £8,380 based on a group of 10 travelling together including international flights. The Explorations Company (01367 850566; explorationscompany.com).

31 WILDLIFE DISCOVERY TOUR, MADAGASCAR

This small group tour led by highly experienced guides explores some of Madagascar's protected areas in a diverse range of habitats. You will see many species of lemurs, endemic birds, chameleons and giant butterflies as well as trees and plants from baobabs to orchids. The tour can be adapted to different levels of fitness along forest trails of varying grading. The itinerary includes Andasibe-Mantadia National Park, Madagascar's top protected rainforest site, the unique spiny bush near Ifaty on the coast, and both Isalo and Ranomafana National Parks.

- Sixteen days costs from £4,450 including flights. Rainbow Tours (020 3553 0093; rainbowtours.co.uk).

PACK YOUR TRUNKS

An elephant in the Okavango Delta, below; a butterfly in Madagascar, bottom

33 WILD DOGS AND ELEPHANTS, ZIMBABWE

In 2018, the BBC will be screening a documentary on the highly endangered wild dog, sometimes called the painted dog, which was filmed over the course of two years at Vundu Lodge at the Unesco World Heritage site of Mana Pools, Zimbabwe. This photographic safari will be guided by award-winning wildlife photographer Bret Charman, and Nick Murray, founder of Vundu Camp and guide for the BBC film crew on their 300-day shoot

- Eleven days costs from £7,945 including domestic flights but exclusive of international flights. Departing Nov 1 2018. Wildlife Worldwide (01962 302086).

34 CORAL REEF PROJECT, OMAN

Here's an opportunity to join a pioneering long-term study mapping and monitoring the exceptionally diverse coral reefs of the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman's mountainous Musandam peninsula. In the wake of heightened awareness of the plight of the world's coral reefs, the research data is a crucial tool in preserving these reefs against development plans. The expedition will follow the protocols of an internationally recognised coral reef monitoring programme – and the price includes training as a Reef Check EcoDiver.

- Seven days' expedition contribution: £1,732 excluding flights to Dubai. Departures: Nov 25 and Dec 2 2018. Biosphere Expeditions (0870 4460801; biosphere-expeditions.org).

35 HWANGE BUSH CAMP, ZIMBABWE

Opened in 2017, this is one of the best examples of a "back-to-basics" camp that is nevertheless serviced by top guides. While the tents are very comfortable, luxury is not the top priority. Located in a remote part of Hwange National Park, it is owned by top guide Dave Carson and currently much of the guiding is done by the acclaimed Spike Williamson. Both are professional guide course examiners. It's also one of the best camps in Africa from which to track large wildlife on foot, with a reliable chance of being able to approach species such as lions and elephants.

- An eight-night safari combining two camps costs from £4,126 including international flights. Expert Africa (020 3405 6666; expertafrica.com).

32 GORILLA TREKKING, CONGO

While many are aware of the gorilla trekking options in Uganda and Rwanda, few have experienced the remote rainforest in the Republic of the Congo (not to be confused with its troubled neighbour, Democratic Republic of the Congo). Many consider Odzala-Kokoua National Park to be the best place in Africa for gorilla sighting (though they tend to spend more time in trees than their counterparts further east). Stay at Ngaga, Mboko and Lango camps, which are all dedicated to gorilla trekking.

- Eleven days from £7,611 including all flights. The Ultimate Travel Company (020 3553 2204; ultimatetravelcompany.co.uk).



50 AMAZING WILDLIFE ADVENTURES



THE GREAT OUTDOORS
Family breakfast at Chyulu Hills, Kenya, above; hot-air balloons over the Maasai Mara, right

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36 BALLOON SAFARI, ZAMBIA

Busanga Plains has some of the best lion viewing in Africa – and some of the best hot-air ballooning, with herds of elephant, zebra and lechwe spread across the plains below. A trip to Busanga Bush Camp, in Kafue National Park, is combined with crocs, hippos and bird life on the Lower Zambezi and a visit to Livingstone Island above Victoria Falls, staying at Toka Leya camp.

- A five-night safari costs from £4,762 including all flights. Africa Odyssey (020 8704 1216; africaodyssey.com)

37 BUSH GUIDE TRAINING, AFRICA

Based in South Africa, but with camps in Botswana, South Africa, Kenya and Zimbabwe, EcoTraining offers short courses as a more immersive alternative to a traditional safari – at a fraction of the cost. You will learn everything from tracking skills and animal behaviour to conservation with twice-daily bush walks or drives. Camps offer simple tented accommodation and excellent food.

- A seven or 14-day EcoTracker course costs from £935/£1,655 and a seven-day Birding in the Bush course from £805 excluding flights. EcoTraining (0027 13 752 2532; ecotraining.co.za).

38 HORSE RIDING, BOTSWANA

Launched last year, this is a unique way to immerse yourself in the Okavango wildlife, accompanied by local backup staff. You may find yourself cantering alongside herds of giraffe or surrounded by elephant, buffalo, wildebeest, lion and leopard. Luggage is transported by *mokoro* with meals cooked over campfires.

- A seven-night mobile safari costs from £2,535, excluding flights, for experienced riders only. Ride Worldwide (01837 82544; rideworldwide.com).

39 FLY AND SELF-DRIVE, NAMIBIA

The haunt of desert-adapted lions, elephants, rhinos and magical oryx in a surreal landscape of giant dunes, Namibia is one of the best self-drive destinations on earth, with little traffic and superb roads. The flexibility of combining



WHY I LOVE CHEETAHS

Princess Michael of Kent, author of *A Cheetah's Tale*

As he ran, his action was indescribably elegant, almost floating above the ground, whirling and twisting as he shadowed the antelope, his long, white-tipped tail swinging to balance him as he made sharp turns. I saw for the first time a cheetah at full speed hunting, and the thrill of it engulfed me.

self-drive and small planes to visit the country's most stylish safari camps in some of the best wildlife locations (Sossusvlei, Skeleton Coast, Damaraland, Etosha) is hard to beat.

- Fourteen nights from £10,050 including car hire, domestic and international flights. The Luxury Safari Company (01666 880111; theluxurysafaricompany.com).

40 WALKING SAFARI, MALAWI

Opening in April 2018, Kuthengo is a small Robin Pope Safaris bush camp in southern Malawi's lush and virtually untouched Livonde National Park. It promises walking safaris and much more in the grand tradition of this legendary safari guide. The park's elephants were a source population

for one of the largest pachyderm translocations in history (to Nkhotakota National Park) and cheetahs have now been reintroduced, with the first cub born in October 2017.

- Five nights from £3,040 incl flights. Expert Africa (020 3405 6666; expertafrica.com).

41 FAMILY SAFARI, SOUTH AFRICA

This trip combines a break in Cape Town with a safari in Madikwe Game Reserve, in the far north, with excellent game viewing in one of the country's best malaria-free reserves. In Cape Town you'll check out the two famous ocean aquariums, while the lodge at Madikwe has two family suites, babysitting, and activities for the youngsters. It's good value, too.

- Eight nights from £8,144 for a family of four in low season (April–November). Game viewing year-round. Yellow Zebra Safaris (020 3199 7776; yellowzebrasafaris.com).

42 ELEPHANT AID, SOUTH AFRICA

Guests can participate in &Beyond's elephant conservation project at Phinda Lodge, witnessing an elephant capture and helping to change a radio collar. Seven elephant herds on the reserve have been collared to assist with managing the population and protecting it from poachers. Combine this with visits to rural communities and conservation projects.

- Five nights from £6,395 including domestic and international flights from Wexas (020 7590 0610; wexas.com).

AUSTRALASIA

43 HUMPBACK WHALES, TONGA

Snorkel alongside humpbacks in the company of Doug Allan (Sir David Attenborough's legendary cameraman) on a South Pacific cruise. Allan has filmed for *The Blue Planet*, *Planet Earth*, *Life*, *Human Planet* and *Froze Planet*, and has twice won the Wildlife Photographer of the Year's underwater category. The boat is skippered by Lolesio Lui, the only operator Doug will work with, due to his in-depth knowledge of whales.

- Twelve days from £5,395 departing Sep 15 2018. Steppes Travel (01285 601050; steppestravel.com).

44 MARINE LIFE, SOUTH PACIFIC

In the wake of *Blue Planet II*, observing the creatures of the deep in their natural habitat is high on the wish lists of many wildlife enthusiasts. This pioneering new cruise around the Solomon Islands, a centre of global marine biodiversity, anchoring most nights in sheltered bays and lagoons, will include snorkelling on some of the world's most pristine coral reefs and diving with Fraser's dolphins, whales and huge manta rays. The islands are also home to bird species including sea eagles, cockatoos, and coucals.

- A 15-day cruise costs from £7,295 excluding flights. Naturetrek (01962 7330 naturetrek.co.uk).

VOLUNTOURISM – IS IT ETHICAL?

Voluntourism" has attracted some bad press in recent years. Most examples relate to humanitarian projects where volunteers help to construct buildings or provide amenities for local communities. All too often, these projects lack tangible benefits and long-term viability, denying local people jobs and opening them up to exploitation. One recent case involved orphanages in Cambodia. The number of volunteers from abroad led to orphanages becoming big business. As a result, corrupt managers began to separate children from living parents, then keep them in appalling conditions. The more malnourished the children looked, the more money was donated by gullible foreigners. However, it is important not to be put off. "Volunteering is still worth doing, but it's essential to do your research," says Dr Matthias Hammer, director of Biosphere Expeditions, a not-for-profit "citizen science" organisation that offers wildlife conservation trips. Often, there is no alternative to "foot soldiers" from abroad who can be trained quickly to collect data, often in remote areas – so you are very much needed.



Dr Hammer of Biosphere Expeditions

VOLUNTEERING CHECKLIST

The following is an edited version of tips compiled by Biosphere Expeditions and its partners.

REPUTATION

- Has your chosen project organiser won awards?
- What is its conservation ethos?
- Does it publish results?
- Does it have a good safety record?

PEOPLE

- Is the project led by qualified experts?
- Do you know the profile of other volunteers on the programme?

YOUR INPUT

- Is it clear how your money will be spent?
- Will you be kept informed about the project after you come home?

PURPOSE

- Is it clear what you will get out of the experience. Is it:
 - Training?
 - Self-development?
 - Adventure?

COMMUNITY

- Is there clear involvement and "buy-in" from local people?

FIELD WORK

- Do you know exactly what you'll be doing day-to-day?
- Do you know who will be supervising?

CAPTIVE ANIMALS

- If captive animals are involved, what is the purpose of the captive facility?
- How much attention is paid to the welfare of the animals?

HANDLING ANIMALS

- Does this ever happen? (Captive wild animals should not be handled for anything other than essential veterinary care.)

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Biosphere Expeditions (0870 446 0801; biosphere-expeditions.org)
- Earthwatch (01865 318838; eu.earthwatch.co.uk)

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GIANTS IN FOCUS
Snorkel alongside humpback whales on a Tonga cruise with cameraman Doug Allan