



Southern Africa Pre-Safari Information

PASSPORT

Your passport needs to be valid for at least six months after the end of your safari with us, and it's a good idea to bring a few photocopies in case you lose the original. We also recommend that your passport has at least two blank pages for each country we are visiting.

VISAS, IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS

Travellers of most western nationalities, including those from Australia, Britain and New Zealand don't require a pre-arranged visa for entry into Namibia and Botswana. Upon arriving at each of these countries' borders, visitors are granted a free 90-day Tourist Visa. For entry into both Zimbabwe and Zambia, travellers on most passports are required to pay for their Tourist Visa. This Tourist Visa can be organised and pre-paid via each countries' embassy in your home country, or can be purchased upon arrival at each border. This latter option is usually the most convenient and will be ably organised by your local guide, Darren. Travelling on our Southern Africa Safari, we enter Zimbabwe twice - firstly from Botswana after our time at Kasane and Chobe National Park, and then again from Zambia after our morning game walk and exploration of Livingstone town. Therefore a "Double Entry" tourist visa is required for Zimbabwe. A "Tourist Day Visa" is required for entry into Zambia, which enables visitors like us to visit Livingstone for the day. Should you prefer Darren to organise these visas for you on-safari, the current at-border costs are US\$55 (Zimbabwe, Double Entry Visa) and US\$20 (Zambia, Tourist Day Visa). They are payable only in U.S. dollars cash with notes that are dated post-2006, so please be sure to have this money available for Darren.

An immigration arrival form is required to be completed when entering and departing each country, and we will assist you with these forms whilst on-safari. As each immigration form usually asks for the address of your first night's accommodation, be sure to have your abridged itinerary handy when you first arrive in Namibia at Windhoek's Hosea Kutako International Airport. This abridged itinerary will have the address and contact details of each accommodation we frequent, and will be sent to you prior to your departure. There are usually no customs declarations required when entering and departing each country, and checks by customs officers are usually brief, if at all.

VACCINATIONS

A number of tropical diseases are present in southern Africa but provided you have had the recommended immunisations before you travel, the biggest health risk you will face on our safari is usually an upset tummy or a cold. We recommend that you are up-to-date on your immunisation status for tetanus, polio, diphtheria, typhoid, rabies and hepatitis A. Yellow Fever is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes, and approximately 200,000 cases occur each year with the majority of these occurring mainly in the western part of sub-Saharan Africa, such as Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Mali etc. In 2003 the World Health Organisation removed Zambia from its list of endemic countries for Yellow Fever. This placed Zambia in a similar situation to Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, Malawi, Botswana and South Africa, in that travellers moving between these countries do not require to have proof of Yellow Fever vaccine cover. However, unfortunately not all customs and immigration officials seem to be aware of this change, and travellers who have visited Zambia are reporting problems when entering another non-endemic country in southern Africa, particularly South Africa. This can also be the case when travellers arrive back in their home country. Under these circumstances, travel clinics (and ourselves) are still recommending the Yellow Fever vaccine, only due to the possible procedural and immigration problems.

Malaria is prevalent in parts of Namibia and Botswana, and much of Zimbabwe and Zambia. During the mild, dry months (June to October) the risk is minimal and can be further reduced by the usual precautions of using insect repellent and covering up from dusk to dawn. Should you wish to take a course of anti-malarial drugs, ensure you start the course before arriving in Namibia so that you can make sure there are no side-effects. See the website www.malaria.org for more information.

HEALTH

We recommend that you bring along a small personal medical kit containing elastoplasts or Band-aids, antiseptic cream, anti-histamine cream or tablets, soluble aspirin or Paracetamol, rehydration salts (e.g. Gastrolyte), anti-diarrhoea remedy, and insect repellent. Please advise us at the beginning of our safari of any personal health-related matters that we should be aware of.

The likelihood of drinking contaminated water is highly unlikely as most, if not all, tap water in southern Africa is drinkable. Bottled water is also widely available. Keeping up a healthy daily intake of water is imperative whilst on tour. Even on cool days, some people become dehydrated and end up with diarrhoea. Don't worry about drinking too much water as we have plenty of toilet stops on our driving days. Our Overland Safari Vehicle carries a supply of water, but this is solely for the use of cooking.

INSURANCE

Compass Odyssey possesses adequate operator insurance to industry standards including public liability insurance and passenger liability insurance. It is a condition of our insurance policy that all passengers possess personal travel insurance. Your travel insurance must cover accidents, medical expenses including any related pre-existing medical conditions, emergency repatriation including helicopter rescue and air ambulance, and personal liability. We also recommend that you include cover for loss of luggage and personal effects as well as cancellation and curtailment.

SAFETY

The governments of southern Africa are continuously striving to meet their citizens' increasingly vocal expectations for adequate housing, health and employment. Poverty is still the daily reality for the majority of southern Africans - indeed, Africans - and is an underlying influence in all the negative aspects of society, such as crime and the HIV/Aids pandemic. Basic personal safety precautions apply in southern Africa as they would anywhere in the world, but you should be particularly conscious of petty theft. Leave as much jewellery and valuables - especially those most sentimental - at home as you can, and while on safari with us make sure to use any safes provided by our accommodations, or alternatively lock valuables in your luggage when you are out for the day. We also recommend that you bring along photocopies of your important documents (passport, air tickets, insurance) and keep them separate from the originals. Your personal safety, and that of your travelling companions, comes down to common sense and staying aware of your surroundings and your possessions. Most crime is petty and opportunistic and whilst you are with us this will be countered by travelling in a secure safari vehicle with an experienced guide.

The majority of people in southern Africa are immensely strong in character and though they may wish for a better lot in life, they go about their daily grind in an inspiring manner and with dignity and purpose. On occasion throughout our safari however, you may be confronted by locals (including street children) begging for "small change". Through our experience from travelling around Africa for the past 13 years, we believe that giving money to beggars only exasperates the problem. We do understand that not giving money may mean this person is denied his/her only source of income, but we often see this income used to purchase alcohol, glue, thinners, drugs or on something comparatively frivolous, such as a video game. We've also seen fights break out when beggars squabble over the money, food, sweets, or gifts that have been offered by well-meaning travellers. We suggest a third option: treat him/her as an equal and as a fellow human being to afford them at least a hint of personal dignity, and rather support and encourage initiative and effort - many people on the streets make a living by selling things, often made from recycled goods. Should you wish to involve yourself further with the plight of southern Africa's underprivileged - you may be planning to bring along some small gifts, or pens and pencils for example, or you might want to donate to a worthy cause once you are on safari with us - then we will be very happy to advise you, and recommend particular projects and organisations.

TIPPING/GRATUITIES

Wages in the services industry are generally very low throughout southern Africa, and many workers - waitstaff, domestics, cleaners - appreciate a small gratuity for the services they have provided. Already budgeted into the cost of your safari are tips and gratuities for the staff at the various accommodations and restaurants that we frequent as a group. This allows us to ensure that our offering is distributed fairly and openly, and creates a positive relationship between Compass Odyssey and our chosen service providers, manifesting itself into friendly and efficient service offered to each of our travellers.

MONEY

The unit of currency in Namibia is the Namibian dollar, in Botswana it is called the "Pula", Zimbabwe the "Dollar", and in Zambia the "Kwacha". One Namibian dollar is equal to one South African Rand and both currencies are accepted in Namibia. Thanks to her reserves of diamonds, Botswana's Pula is one of Africa's strongest currencies, whilst the Zambian Kwacha has strengthened in recent years but is still valued in the 1000's against the world's major currencies. Namibian dollars are only accepted within Namibia and Zambian Kwacha is only accepted in Zambia, and cannot be exchanged for currency in other countries. Due to its relatively strong value, the Pula can often be exchanged in neighbouring countries. Major currencies such as US Dollars, Euros and British Pounds can be exchanged for local currency at banks and foreign exchange bureaux throughout southern Africa. Australian Dollars and New Zealand Dollars are only sparingly accepted for exchange in all southern African countries bar South Africa. Zimbabwe's financial and political crisis has been well documented, however the economic situation has taken a turn for the better since 2008 when government passed legislation allowing businesses to accept payment in foreign currency. Specifically in the Zimbabwean tourist hub of Victoria Falls, the foreign currencies most accepted for everyday payment are U.S. Dollars, South African Rand and Botswana Pula.

Bank, foreign exchange and ATM access is varied whilst we are on safari and we will inform you as to when and where you can access or exchange your money. Except in Victoria Falls, most shops and businesses will accept credit cards, like Visa and MasterCard, but not debit or EFTPOS cards so we will advise you as to how much local currency to have in your possession at any given time. As we enter and leave each country, Darren will help you to work out each currency. Should you have any great amount of leftover local currency, we will try to "make a plan", as we say here in southern Africa.

There are foreign exchange bureaux and ATM's located at Windhoek airport, and we will be there to assist you with exchanging your money upon arrival. It's best not to rely totally on ATM and credit card access by bringing at least a third of your spending money in either cash or traveller's cheques in one of the major currencies mentioned above. Traveller's cheques are often difficult to exchange and consequently are often given a lesser exchange rate when compared to cash.

How much spending money to bring? Our spending habits all vary i.e. whether you smoke or drink, what souvenirs you wish to buy, or any extra activities you may want to do. Most of your daily meals are included whilst you are on safari with us, and many of our past clients have commented on the amount of spending money that they have leftover. Keeping this in mind, we would recommend that you allow, in addition to any planned optional activities, a figure of around US\$20 (AU\$25) per day.

LOCAL COSTS

Local costs will vary greatly during our safari, as costs in Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia are generally considered "good value" for foreign visitors, whereas Botswana would be classed as expensive.

Here are some generalised costs to give you an idea:

375ml bottle of beer:	US\$2 (AU\$3)
750ml bottle of wine:	US\$6-20(AU\$8-25)
Snacks (crisps, nuts, chocolates):	US\$2 (AU\$3)
Evening restaurant meal with drinks:	US\$20+ (AU\$25+)
Souvenirs:	US\$5-10 (AU\$6-13) for small curio/carving. US\$10-20(AU\$13-25) for medium curio/carving. US\$20-30+ (AU\$25-50+) for a coffee table-style book.

CLIMATE

Although Africa's weather patterns are becoming increasingly unpredictable, we can still be generally sure of the climate we will experience while on this safari.

Partially covered by the Namib Desert (one of the world's driest deserts), Namibia only receives a fraction of the rain experienced by countries further east, and the climate is generally very dry and pleasant all year round. Namibia receives most of its rain in the hot, humid summer months between December and March. From June to August the country cools down and dries out more, and nights can become cold, dropping below freezing in some desert areas. As the landscape dries, the wildlife in the north of the country gravitates more to waterholes, and is more easily seen by visitors. By September and October it warms up again, and wildlife viewing in most areas is at its best, although there can often be a lot of dust around and the vegetation has lost its vibrancy.

Land-locked Botswana is far from the coast, receives a lot of strong sunlight, and most of the country is classed as either semi-arid or arid. In many respects, most of central and northern Botswana has a 'sub-tropical desert' climate, characterised by a wide range in temperature (from day to night and from summer to winter), and by low rainfall and humidity. Situated squarely in the tropics, Zimbabwe and Zambia also receive a lot of strong sunlight, though the intense heat normally associated with the tropics is moderated in most places by each country's altitude and its rainfall. The climate of Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia follows a similar pattern to that found in most of southern Africa, with summer rainfall in the hot and humid months from late-November to April. The heart of the dry season is generally from August to late-October/early-November, and the daytime heat gradually builds as these months wear on. Typical early afternoon temperatures are in the low 30's°C, and nights will seldom fall below 10°C - most will be nearer to 20°C. The humidity is typically a very pleasant 20-40%.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Naturally, there are many opportunities for still and video photography on our tour. Print film is available everywhere but the quality, speed and cost can vary. Memory cards and video tapes are becoming more available but you would be best served to bring all of your digital and video supplies with you. Batteries can be recharged each night but remember to bring along an international adaptor plus a spare camera battery for those times you can't get to a power point. It is also a good idea to bring a re-sealable plastic bag to keep dust from infiltrating your equipment and to store any film or tapes. Wherever we travel in southern Africa, it is NOT a good idea to photograph police, military personnel or any government official unless they have made it obvious that they are ok with it. This applies especially at borders. If in doubt, ask.

MOBILE PHONE

Called "cell phone" in southern Africa, mobile phone coverage is almost everywhere during our safari. It is one area of technology that definitely hasn't bypassed Africa. Organise international roaming with your local network and most days you shouldn't have any problems keeping in touch with home, assuming your network provider has an agreement with a provider in each of the countries we visit. Be especially vigilant with your phone as cell phone theft is quite common. This is due to the majority of users being on 'pay-as-you-go' and therefore not having the luxury of a free upgrade to a new phone every year or so.

LUGGAGE AND WHAT TO BRING

As a guide we recommend you keep to your airline's luggage restriction of 20 kilograms or less, in a **medium-sized, preferably soft-sided** suitcase. Ourselves and our crew will be more than happy to assist with the loading and unloading of your luggage from our safari vehicle, however for your own comfort we strongly suggest your luggage is as light as possible. There may be instances where the distance between the safari vehicle and our accommodation necessitates a short walk (up to 100m) that can also be on hilly or uneven ground.

On our travel days it can often be inconvenient to access your main bag during the day, so we suggest you bring a day bag/backpack, which can be kept with you. Most people make the mistake of bringing too much clothing. Your clothes should be easy to wash, dry and pack, as well as being warm and comfortable. All of our accommodations provide your bedding and a bath towel.

Our suggested list of clothing and accessories is:

2 long sleeved shirts/blouses	Personal medical kit
3-4 short sleeved shirts or t-shirts	Vaccination certificates (plus photocopy)
2 pairs of trousers or 1 pair and 1 skirt	Passport (plus photocopy)
1-2 pairs shorts	Camera, including digital needs
Tracksuit pants	Binoculars
Light sweater/jumper	Water bottle
Water/windproof jacket	Watch or alarm clock
Hat, beanie and warm gloves	Sunscreen and lip balm
Swimsuit	Torch (a head-torch is especially recommended)
Boots or trainers	Washing soap or powder
Sandals or thongs/flip-flops	Peg-less clothes line
International power plug adaptor (see: www.travel-images.com/electric-plugs.html)	

If you wear glasses or contact lens, it is advisable to bring a spare pair. Contact lens solution is available but only in the cities and major towns.

Most supermarket items that you can buy at home are available throughout southern Africa. Therefore you don't have to stock up prior to your departure on items like regular batteries, clothes washing powder and personal toiletries unless you so desire. Ask us at any time for advice on when and what to purchase along the way.



More Information and Reading

LANGUAGES

No matter what their native tongue, generally everyone in southern Africa will revert immediately to English when conversing with you.

Namibia's official language is English, although Afrikaans is also widely spoken, especially in the southern half of the country. About one-third of Namibia's people are Ovambo, with other major populations of Nama, Kavango, and Herero. The country also has a notable population of San (formerly known as Bushmen).

Setswana is the national language of Botswana, however English is the official business language and is widely spoken throughout the country. The Tswana people make up the majority of Botswana's population.

The official language in both Zimbabwe and Zambia is English, reflecting the region's colonial-era Rhodesian past. Shona and Ndebele are the two main cultural groups in Zimbabwe, whilst in Zambia are Barotse, Makishi, Ila, Lozi, Bemba, Nyanja, and Tonga cultures, with the latter three also the country's other major languages.

WEBSITES

Namibia:	www.namibiatourism.com.na www.namibian.com.na (Current news & events) www.nwr.com.na/index.html (National Parks)
Botswana:	www.botswanaturism.co.bw www.gazettebw.com (Current news & events)
Zambia:	www.zambiatourism.com www.zambia.co.zm (Current news & events)
Zimbabwe:	www.zimbabwesituation.com (Current news & events)

BOOKS

The Lost World of the Kalahari by Laurens van der Post

Besides authoring over 30 books, Laurens van der Post (1906 – 1996) was a farmer, self-proclaimed war hero, political adviser to British heads of government, close friend of Prince Charles and godfather to Prince William, an educator, journalist, humanitarian, philosopher, explorer, and conservationist. In this book, van der Post describes the “rediscovery” of the southern African Bushmen (now termed the San people). Ostracised throughout the 20th century by both white and black man, they retreated (or were generally forced) deep into the Kalahari desert. Van der Post’s fascinating attempt to capture their way of life and the secrets of their ancient heritage provide captivating reading and a unique insight into a forgotten way of life. Some of his other books dealing with similar issues include *The Heart of the Hunter*, and *A Story Like the Wind*.

Okavango: Sea of Land, Land of Water by Peter Johnson, Anthony Bannister, and Creina Bond

A tribute to the Okavango Delta, Creina Bond’s text includes a history of exploration (Dr. David Livingstone was among the first), a description of the Delta’s topography, and portraits of the local people. British photographers Johnson and Bannister have captured in 200 colour photos a fabulous and timeless world, one of Earth’s last great wildernesses.

Whatever You Do, Don’t Run: True Tales of a Botswana Safari Guide by Peter Allison

At age 19, Australian-born Allison headed to Africa for challenge and adventure, planning to stay no more than a year; having found work as a safari guide, he’s still here some 13 years later. In this fun, fearless memoir, Allison shares his experiences from taking clients through the African wilderness.

My Traitor’s Heart by Rian Malan

An autobiography from an outcast descendant of DF Malan, the architect of apartheid. The author fled South Africa after coming face to face with the atrocities of the undeclared civil war between the races, and this book is a profound account of his return after eight years of restless exile, affording the reader a profound insight into the psyches of both black and white South Africans. Namibia (known then as South West Africa) was virtually a northern province of the South African apartheid regime from the early 1960s through to Namibian independence in 1990.

The Sheltering Desert by Henno Martin

Threatened with Internment for the duration of World War II, two young German geologists, Henno Martin and Hermann Korn, along with their dog Otto, sought refuge in the Namib Desert for two and a half years. A journey of two pacifists trying to escape an ugly war that had reached the outer fringes of the German and British colonial empires, *The Sheltering Desert* reveals how they mastered their situation, what they did, thought and observed. There are scenes that are so small - they watch an ant colony one day - that come to life from Martin’s narrative, as does the vastness and clear skies of the Namib’s landscape, along with nature’s silence in the joy or suffering of her creatures. Martin’s writing style is unbiased and very much “as it was”. If you are unable to locate this book locally, it is easily found in South Africa and Namibia.

The Shackled Continent by Robert Guest

A personal study of both the reasons and the solutions to some of the problems facing the African continent today by one of *The Economist* magazine’s leading African correspondents. This book is considered an easy read and recommended if you enjoy travel writing, global issues or African issues.

David Livingstone, The Truth Behind The Legend by Rob Mackenzie, and
Into Africa by Martin Dugard

Many books have been written about the great Scottish missionary and explorer, Dr. David Livingstone. Rob Mackenzie's offering delves into Livingstone's life-long vision to set souls free from physical and spiritual slavery, and to open up Africa to Christianity and lawful commerce. Martin Dugard on the other hand, weaves a gripping, adventurous narrative centred around Henry Morton Stanley's 1871 mission to rescue the good doctor, presumed lost in "deepest, darkest Africa". Intensively researched, fresh and vivid, *Into Africa* retells this great story very effectively and with more than just a touch of drama and suspense.

Colour Bar by Susan Williams

Delving into newly released records, the author tells the true story of Sir Seretse Khama, the first President of Botswana and his wife, Englishwoman Ruth Williams. A shocking account of how the British Government conspired with apartheid South Africa and Southern Rhodesia to prevent the mixed-race couple from returning home after enforced exile in England. Yet it is also an inspiring, triumphant tale of hope, courage and true love in the face of prejudice and injustice.

GUIDE BOOKS

Note: We will have a small but informative selection of field guides and wildlife-based magazines on-board our safari vehicle for your use during our safari.

Bradt Travel Guide Namibia

Bradt Travel Guide Botswana: Okavango Delta, Chobe, Northern Kalahari

Bradt Travel Guide Zambia

Bradt guides are expertly written and longer on detail than any other guidebooks, and these three – all written by Chris McIntyre – are no exception.

Newman's Birds of Southern Africa by Kenneth Newman

Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa by Gordon Lindsay Maclean.

If you're an avid birder, one of these books is for you (or both if you're really keen).

Southern Africa's Mammals, A Field Guide by Robin Frandsen

This is the best general guide book on southern Africa's mammals that we've seen. It has just the right mix of pictures and maps with easy to read text and identification information. If you can't find it in your local bookshop, Chris and Tilde Stuart's *Field Guide to the Mammals of Southern Africa* is also recommended.

The Safari Companion: Guide to Watching African Mammals by Richard D Estes

More than a simple identification guide, this book dedicates itself to educating the wildlife viewer in the characteristics of each of Africa's mammals, with detailed writings on behaviour, aggression, offspring, mating, feeding, distribution and detailed identification. What this book lacks in glossy colour pictures, it more than makes up with an easy-to-read and in-depth analysis of each mammal.

Field Guide To Trees Of Southern Africa by Braam van Wyk and Piet van Wyk

Written and designed with the non-specialist in mind, over 1,000 species are logically arranged in 43 groups based on easy-to-observe leaf and stem characters. Each species account is illustrated by at least one full-colour photograph of the plant's most readily identifiable part or parts. The text also touches on the practical uses of plants.