

# AFRICAN WILDLIFE SAFARIS

## TRIP NOTES

### EcoQuest

14 Day nature training course



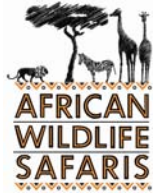
This 14 Day EcoQuest course is designed to provide a learning experience and incorporates certain aspects of the 28 day Field Guide course. It is primarily aimed at those who are looking for a more in-depth bush experience, without necessarily wanting formal qualifications. Attend EcoQuest if you are a student testing the waters for a career in this field or if you are an adventurous spirit wanting to gain a greater understanding of nature and the environment whilst experiencing the excitement of the bush.

*This course consists of two components:*

- Learning about the fascinating large and small elements of nature, about the amazing variety of living organisms that exist in nature around us.
- Experiencing some of the activities and daily experiences of a Safari Guide.

You will learn about the behaviour and identification of many of the insects, spiders, scorpions, other small creatures and birds in our ecosystems. Then you learn about the underlying elements that support this amazing variety of life such as the geology, soils, plants and climate. While you study how the smaller organisms interact with one another and their environment, we have the opportunity to show you identification and behaviour of the larger wild animals that roam our wilderness areas.

Depending on which camp the course is held at, all the big predators ranging from lion, leopard, and cheetah to spotted hyena may be seen and they prey on the variety of plains game species such as kudu, impala, duiker, nyala, wildebeest, giraffe, zebra and warthog. Spending eight hours out in the bushveld every day provides countless opportunities to study the various animal tracks so that we can track and find the game on foot or by vehicle!



# AFRICAN WILDLIFE SAFARIS

## TRIP NOTES

We show you how to drive a 4x4 vehicle, to identify birds, plants, trees, tracks and how to track animals. We teach you basic bush survival skills and how to navigate and orientate yourself in the bush. We show you what it is like to approach dangerous game on foot and how you should handle these situations. We teach you how to use binoculars properly and how to position a vehicle for photography.

Many previous participants on this course have loved it so much that they have gone on to do our professional Field Guide qualification.

### General subjects:

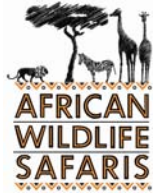
- Ecology
- Geology and soils
- Common trees and shrubs
- Animal tracks and tracking
- Bird identification and behaviour
- Animal behaviour
- Astronomy
- Amphibians and reptiles
- Orientation and navigation
- Bush skills
- Using binoculars correctly and positioning for photography

### TYPICAL DAILY ITINERARY

A typical daily program at the camp follows a routine of rising early, usually before sunrise, enjoying hot coffee while you listen to the bush waking up and then leaving the camp for an outing into the wilderness.

The outings are extremely flexible and determined by the unpredictability of what is found during the outing in combination with the subjects that have to be covered. The outing could be a game drive following up on the roar of a lion heard during the night or a walk learning about the plant species occurring in the area. It could be a walk following fresh elephant tracks, learning how to track the animal and finding it or it could be a game drive to a waterhole where animals come to drink.

Students return to camp in the late morning for a hearty brunch which is followed by a lecture on the subject of the day. Study and rest time is then followed by afternoon tea



# AFRICAN WILDLIFE SAFARIS

## TRIP NOTES

and another outing into the wilderness until sunset, if walking, or until well after dark if doing a game drive.

Afternoon outings could include night drives looking for nocturnal animals such as owls, bush babies and leopards or it could be a walk looking for and learning how to identify interesting birds. It could be time spent studying the night skies or it could be a time for learners to test their 4x4 driving skills.

It is then back to the camp for dinner, stories around the campfire, discussing the day's experiences and wondering about tomorrow's adventures.

The emphasis is on practical day-to-day experiences in the bush. The daily outings are flexible and may focus on specific subjects such as animal tracks and tracking, birds, plant identification or animal behaviour, or may involve game viewing and learning about the ecosystem in general.

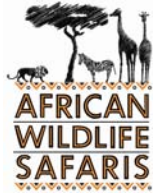
### LOCATIONS

#### **Makuleke Concession in Kruger Park**

EcoTraining's Kruger National Park Camp is situated in the Makuleke concession. The camp is situated between the Limpopo and Luvuvhu Rivers, in the northern sector of Kruger National Park in the Pafuri region, an area spanning 24,000 hectares (59305 acres). Within the Pafuri area is the Makuleke Concession, the ancestral home of the Makuleke people and the most diverse and scenically attractive area in all of Kruger National Park.

This is a true wilderness area, steeped in history and situated in the remotest part of Kruger in one of the most biologically diverse areas. Scenery ranges from the beautiful, quietly-flowing Luvuvhu River shaded by Nyala trees and fever tree forests and teeming with hippos and crocodiles; to the awesome Lanner Gorge, palm-fringed wetlands and rocky outcrops with thousand-year-old baobab trees. We employ members of the Makuleke community at our camp and there is a lot of history in the area that is exciting to learn about.

The Makuleke concession is not accessible to the ordinary tourist visiting the park. This area belongs to the Makuleke community. This is quite a historical event for South Africa as the Makuleke people were removed from this area in 1968 and after a lengthy process it was finally re-instated to the community in 1998 after a very long struggle. This area is certainly the wildest and most remote part of the Kruger National Park and offers



# AFRICAN WILDLIFE SAFARIS

## TRIP NOTES

varied vegetation, great wildlife viewing, the best birding in all of the Kruger National Park and is filled with folklore of the early explorers and ancient civilizations.

### **Makuleke Camp**

#### Accommodation

20 Students are accommodated in 10 comfortable thatched, tented rooms placed on wooden decks in the shade of large nyala trees. Each room has an en-suite bathroom consisting of a shower and washbasin with hot running water and a flush toilet and also has a verandah overlooking the surrounding bush. The camp itself is not fenced which means that animals do move through the camp from time to time.

The central communal area consists of a thatch-roofed open sided deck where all meals, lectures and studying takes place. A clearing for evening camp fires creates an idyllic setting for social and leisure time.

There is no electricity at the camp - paraffin lanterns as well as battery operated energy saving lights are used for lighting and a generator is used to charge camera batteries and cell phones. It is essential that learners bring torches; preferably headlamps and a standing torch for extra lighting in the tent is recommended.

Soft drinks and alcoholic beverages (beers, ciders, soft drinks) are sold from the camp and can only be paid for with cash. Should you drink wine, please advise the reservations office of your preference for red or white wine when you book and we will stock the camp accordingly. There are no credit card/debit card/cheque facilities. There is fresh drinkable water from the taps and cordial fruit juices, tea and coffee is provided.

A laundry service is provided by the camp cleaning person

The open game viewing vehicles are Landrover TDI's.

EcoTraining staff in camp for the duration of your stay there will usually be a head instructor; assistant instructor, a cook and a cleaning lady.

#### Temperatures at the camp

In the Kruger National Park you'll find a subtropical climate, with hot summers (average 40 C / 104 F) and warm, dry winters (average minimum 9.3°C and average maximum 26.3°C). However, be sure not to be caught out by the intermittent summer rains which fall between October and March. Early mornings and late afternoon/evenings during the winter do get very cold, so be sure to bring sufficient warm clothing.





# AFRICAN WILDLIFE SAFARIS

## TRIP NOTES

### Animals found in the Makuleke Concession (Kruger Park)

All the wildlife that one would expect to see in a great national park such as Kruger can potentially be encountered on the concession: plains game such as zebra, kudu and impala, lions and leopards are a special sighting, herds of elephant, a few rhinoceros, African buffalo, nyala antelope in abundance and also seldom-seen animals such as eland and bushpig. There is abundant birdlife. This part of Kruger is known to be one of the best birding areas in the park and is home to rarely-seen species such as Pel's Fishing-Owl, Blackthroated Wattle-eye and Grey-headed Parrot.

### **Karongwe Game Reserve**

Karongwe Camp is on the banks of the Karongwe River (mostly a dry river bed) in the 9000 hectare (22239 acre) Karongwe Game Reserve, which is to the south-west of the Kruger National Park. Through Karongwe Game Reserve flow three rivers which are tributaries of the Olifants River, carving their way through the bedrock and dividing the reserve. The vegetation of the reserve falls within the Savanna Biome of southern Africa with distinct vegetation zones being represented - mixed Lowveld and Mopane bushveld along with grass savanna, riverine vegetation and rocky outcrops.

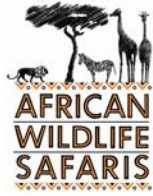
Karongwe has the following habitats: Undulating hills and valleys and broad-leafed woodland. We are allowed traversing over most of the reserve, except for one small section in the northern part of the reserve. This is not a restriction at all as it's quite a small section of the reserve.

### **Karongwe Camp**

#### Accommodation

The camp consists of 10 walk-in style meru tents, with twin beds (students share tents), shared ablution facilities and a central communal area. There are viewing decks in the central area of the camp, and many students choose to make the viewing decks their "bedroom" for part of or for the full duration of the course. The camp itself is unfenced. We supply linen for the tents and can accommodate a maximum of 20 students.

The central communal area is made up of 4 tall thatch-roofed open-sided decks which form four sides of a square that encloses an open campfire area. One of the deck structures serves as the open air dining area, lecture room and study area. Two decks remain open to welcome the adventurous who want to spend their nights as close to nature as possible, while the last deck is home to Rob, your head instructor.



# AFRICAN WILDLIFE SAFARIS

## TRIP NOTES

There is no electricity at the camp - paraffin lamps are used for all lighting and a generator is used to charge camera batteries and cell phones for emergency use. Studying at night with paraffin lanterns can at times be challenging so a headlamp for this purpose is recommended as well as an extra battery operated lamp if you wish to study in your tent at night.

Soft drinks and alcoholic beverages (beers, ciders, soft drinks) are sold from the camp and can only be paid for with cash. There are no credit/debit card/cheque facilities. Should you drink wine, please advise the reservations office of your preference for red or white wine when you book.

There is fresh drinkable water from the taps and cordial fruit juices, tea and coffee is provided.

A laundry service is provided by the camp cleaning person

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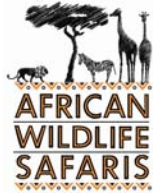
EcoTraining staff in camp for the duration of your stay will be: a Head Instructor; 1 other instructor, a cook and a cleaning lady.

### Temperatures at the camp

Our summers are warm to hot, with temperatures ranging from mid 20 degrees Celsius on the cooler cloud-covered rainy days, to the high thirties on average days. Occasional hot day's temperatures exceed 40 °C. Winters are usually dry, with the average morning temperature of 6 °C, with occasional cooler morning temperatures, and warmer mornings when there is cloud cover. Afternoon temperatures average in the mid 20s, with ranges of 18 to 32 expected. Occasional winter showers prevail, but are unusual. Rain in the summer takes the form of heavy thunder-showers, or frontal rainfall over a longer period of time.

### Animals found in the Karongwe Game Reserve

Karongwe is a good place for viewing leopard, lion and cheetah as well as elephant and white rhino. As the camp itself is unfenced, we often have four-legged guests in the camp. Hyena make nightly patrols of the camp and elephant, cheetah and lion have also made appearances in camp on occasion. There is abundant wildlife with over 60 different mammal species including lion, leopard, elephant, white rhino and cheetah.



# AFRICAN WILDLIFE SAFARIS

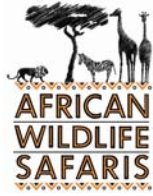
## TRIP NOTES

### WHAT TO BRING

This list of what to bring will vary slightly depending on which course you attend, however for most of the courses, you would need to bring the following.

- Appropriate walking shoes (hiking boots). Thorns go straight through takkies or sport shoes!
- Sandals for around the camp
- Khaki (or neutral coloured) clothing for the bush
- Warm Jacket and jersey (gloves and scarf as it can get very chilly in the mornings and evenings in winter)
- Hat for protecting both the head and neck
- Sunscreen
- Bath soap and towel
- Torch – very important (a headlamp is very handy as well as a standing lamp for in the tent)
- Extra batteries
- Pen / pencil and small notebooks
- A4 Notebooks / Notepads
- Small field note books
- Bedding is only supplied at Makuleke and Karongwe Camps, at Selati camp you need to bring!
- Please bring sleeping bag and small pillow for sleep outs.
- Raincoat / Poncho
- Insect / tic repellent
- Water bottles, at least 2 litres. We recommend a camelback, MTB or walking water pouch.
- Any small snacks / cigarettes etc you would like as there are no shops in the area!
- Any reference / field guide books you may have
- Binoculars and camera are essential
- Rucksack / daypack
- Any personal medication
- CASH (in ZAR Rands only) - sufficient cash for 4 weeks if you intend to purchase from the camp shop. **NOTE: THERE ARE NO CREDIT CARD OR ATM FACILITIES ON THE RESERVES OR IN CLOSE PROXIMITY!!**

Please note that there is little or no cell phone reception in the camps.



# AFRICAN WILDLIFE SAFARIS

## TRIP NOTES

If you have a musical instrument that you would like to bring along, you're most welcome.

Please note: radios and C.D. players are NOT allowed. Personal mp3s and Ipods with earphones can be used, although they are to be used in your tent only and with sensitivity to fellow course participants and the environment. If you bring an Ipod, please bring your own charging equipment for it, that is, a laptop.

We highly recommend that you bring additional power sources for your laptop, such as an extra charged battery or a car charger. A protective surge charger is a MUST!

EcoTraining takes no responsibility for damaged equipment. There is limited power use through a generator for 3 hours a day and needs to run the camp and student requests and current fluctuates. The Instructor has full authority on power supply.

For international students, please bring adaptors to suit your own plugs and South African plugs

### **Additional expenses**

While on an EcoTraining course one should expect to pay cash for the following additional expenses:

- Bar & Beverages (Excluding cordials; tea/coffee/hot chocolate)
- FGASA books
- EcoTraining T-Shirts or Peak caps
- Extra stationary such as note books or pens (limited stock, ensure you bring sufficient)
- External day trips on days off