

ANGOLA • BOTSWANA • NAMIBIA • ZAMBIA • ZIMBABWE

A JOURNEY THROUGH **KAZA**

Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area



KAZA in focus

*Experience wildlife, safari
adventure, community and
culture in the heart of Africa*

The Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA) is the world's largest transfrontier land-based conservation area.

Spanning the borders of five southern African countries – Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe – covering an area of over 519 000 sq km (200 387 sq miles) and boasting three UNESCO World Heritage Sites, it's a treasure trove of natural and cultural wonders.

The KAZA Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) initiative is led by the governments of the five partner countries. Its mission is: "To sustainably manage the Kavango Zambezi ecosystem, its heritage and cultural resources based on best conservation and tourism models for the socio-economic well-being of the communities and other stakeholders in and around the eco-region through harmonisation of policies, strategies and practices."

A trip across the numerous borders within the KAZA area has any bucket list overflowing with possibilities: iconic wilderness settings that are home to the greatest density and variety of African animals, the opportunity to meet locals in rewarding cultural



Image: Dietmar Denger

KAZA'S UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES



Image: Jacques Marais

MOSI-OA-TUNYA/ VICTORIA FALLS

The Zambezi River is 1.7km (1 mile) wide when it plunges noisily into the gorges that make up the Victoria Falls. The spray's iridescent mist, creating pockets of rainforest, can be seen 20km (12 miles) away.



Image: James Kydd

OKAVANGO DELTA

Annual floodwaters fill this unique inland delta, saturating its sand basin to create a pristine wetland that's considered a site of Outstanding Universal Value. The Delta satisfies every safari desire to see diverse species and endangered animals.



Image: Björn Lauen

TSODILO HILLS

This quartzite rock outcrop in the flat Kalahari Desert contains over 4 500 sacred and symbolic rock art paintings in their original state, recording human activity for more than 100 000 years.

interactions, experiencing real eco-tourism and conservation in action, and visiting three UNESCO World Heritage Sites – Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls, the Okavango Delta and the Bushmen paintings of Tsodilo Hills.

KAZA comprises a mosaic of land uses, with 36 formally proclaimed national parks and numerous other protected areas and communal lands. The amount of flora and fauna is outstanding, home to nearly 75% of southern Africa's elephants, 24% of the world's remaining endangered wild dog and around 600 bird species.

But there is more to experiencing KAZA than conventional safari activities and wildlife encounters on game drives, bush walks and boat excursions. This brochure shows

how to transform a trip into a more rewarding experience through engaging with the community, culture and conservation of KAZA. This creates a holistic and fulfilling travel itinerary that addresses the sensitivities and aspirations of today's travellers.

The following information puts KAZA in focus and offers a selection of activities to get the most out of a trip to the area. This includes suggestions on how to interact meaningfully with communities and their rich cultural heritage, support local enterprises, engage with conservation projects, experience wildlife, from safari drives to fishing and birding, and visit unmissable World Heritage Sites. Welcome to KAZA...

Visiting KAZA

Understanding the landscape of this five-country conservation and development initiative makes travel easy.

Most travellers are used to a landscape that remains fairly constant, with perhaps a mountain or lake creating a detour from the most direct route. In KAZA, nothing is constant. The conditions are forever changing when rivers like

the Okavango, Zambezi, Chobe and Kafue swell and spread across vast floodplains, wetlands and swamps.

Local rainfall from November to March is not what saturates the Okavango Delta, inundates the Chobe and Zambezi River floodplains or makes the Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls gush with fury. These spectacles are caused by the arrival of floodwaters from the Angolan and Zambian highlands, which have travelled south for about four months to reach the KAZA region, before spreading out across the Kalahari sand basin. This enormous volume of water, filling rivers and submerging



KAZA UNIVISA

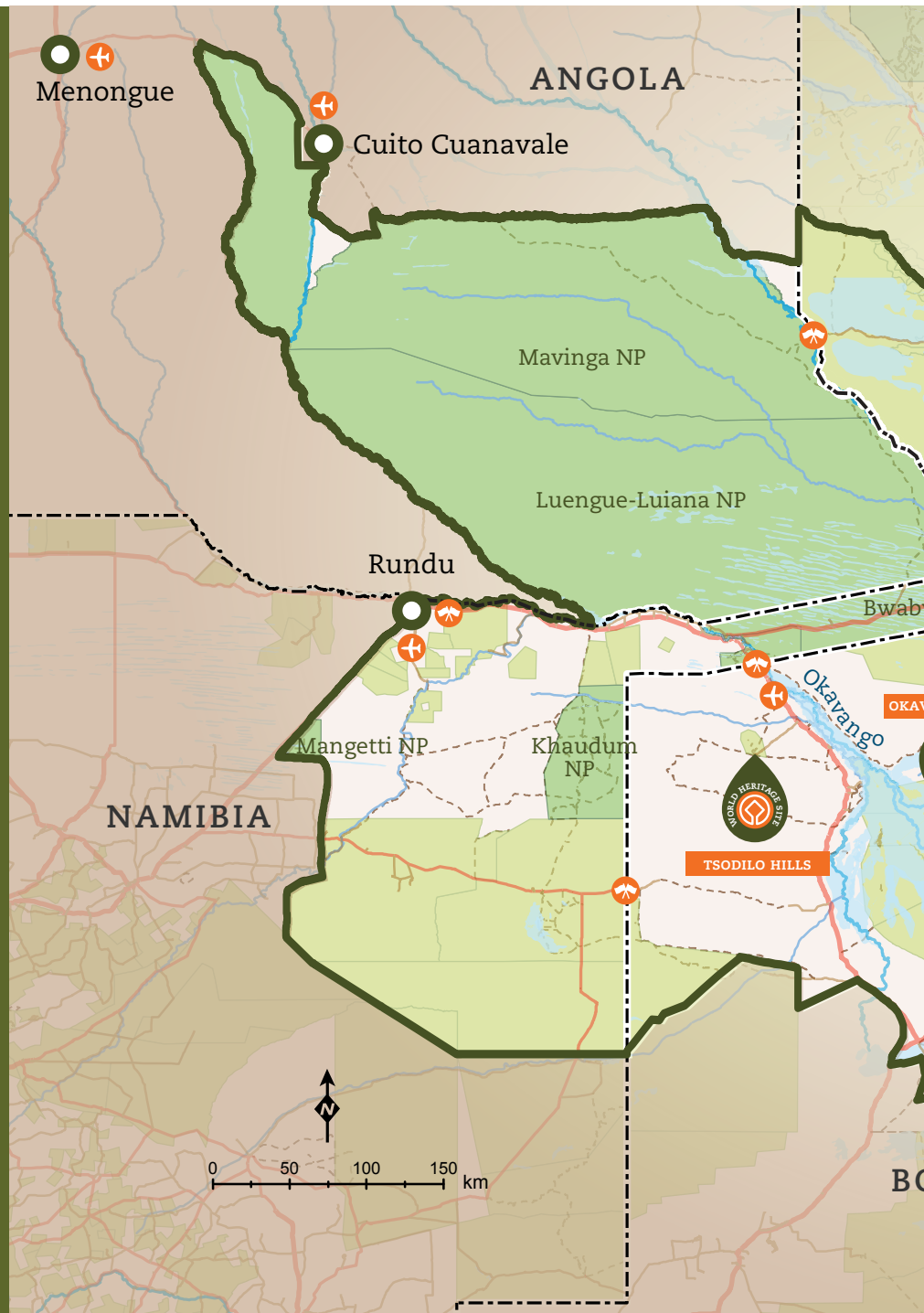
While wildlife can migrate through corridors uninterrupted, humans still have to stamp in and out of KAZA's five countries. Aimed at growing tourism in the region, the KAZA UNIVISA was first rolled out in 2016 as a 30-day visa for unlimited travel between Zambia and Zimbabwe, and with a limited 24-hour trip into Botswana. There have since been consultations aimed at implementing the UNIVISA across Angola and Namibia – and even beyond. On arrival at any international entry point within KAZA, enquire whether that country is offering the KAZA UNIVISA. kavangozambezi.org



Image: Craig Pusey Photography

DRIVING TIPS

Driving in KAZA is made easy by downloadable GPS maps and self-drive guidebooks. Information on border requirements, camping and attractions can also be found online. Don't forget to drive on the left.



vast grasslands, means that the landscape in wet season is completely different to that in dry season. Getting around, avoiding impassable roads, crossing rivers and often country-hopping requires the expert advice of ground handlers and tour operators.

This overview, presented in chapters showing cross-border possibilities and highlighting the freedom of travelling in KAZA, has specific examples of new and unique ways to enhance human connections and intensify experiential travel. Follow these suggestions to include more variety

in a KAZA itinerary and enjoy the opportunities that this area has to offer.

The brochure also identifies KAZA's objectives to manage the Kavango-Zambezi ecosystem by putting into practice sustainable tourism and conservation models, while at the same time providing economic opportunities and

upliftment to local communities. This often involves mitigation of human-wildlife conflict, especially in Wildlife Dispersal Areas (WDAs). There are numerous innovative examples in the following pages of how this is being done, such as building lion-proof cattle kraals and enlisting local communities to be wildlife guardians in return for financial benefits. Such projects are intrinsically linked to KAZA's efforts to facilitate free movement of animals along six identified WDA corridors, allowing wildlife to follow their instinct to migrate across great distances, irrespective of country borders.



KAZA is a colourful celebration of cultures, languages and traditions. There's no one description that can define the tremendous diversity of this transfrontier area, inhabited by people who identify not just with five different countries, but with a multitude of tribes.

People of KAZA



Image: Carrie Hampton

FOR THE LOVE OF LANGUAGE

The many and diverse cultures of KAZA live side by side, each speaking their own language but also those of their near neighbours, and usually a couple of dialects, too. Gilbert Kaimfa from Livingstone is a Tonga who also speaks Toka-Leya, Lozi and four other African dialects, as well as English. With more than 70 different tribes and many more vernaculars across Zambia alone, his eight languages will only get him understood within a radius of a few hundred kilometres from his home. One thing shared by most cultural groups of KAZA is the staple carbohydrate dish of maize-meal porridge. For Gilbert, it's called *nshima*, but across the Victoria Falls Bridge in Zimbabwe, and in much of Botswana, it's known as *sadza*, while Namibians refer to it as *pap* or *inkoko*.

Another example of language complexity is how the Chitonga language of the Tonga people

spoken in parts of the Zambezi River Valley is different to that spoken on the plateau, and is almost unintelligible to the Tonga of Malawi or the Tsonga (Tonga) of Mozambique.

Bantu languages often use prefixes to indicate a category for a noun, for example, *ba-* or *mo-* can distinguish people (Batonga), and *chi-* or *si-* can signify the language, as in Chitonga. In Botswana, all citizens are referred to as Batswana, one person is a Motswana and the national language is Setswana. However, the country boasts a variety of other local languages.

Common to all language groups is protocol and courtesy, and all conversations start with the polite enquiry, 'Good morning/good afternoon, how are you?' Master this greeting in the local language with the help of a guide, and the people of KAZA will open their hearts to you.

TRIBAL HIERARCHY

A knowledge of tribal hierarchy will foster a greater understanding of cultural protocols when meeting the people of KAZA. This example of traditional tribal structure from Namibia's Zambezi Region is common to many tribes. Each village has a headman – or more frequently these days a headwoman – who consults with a senior headman/headwoman (*induna*)

who represents a number of villages on the tribal council (*khuta*), which is the highest legislative, administrative and judicial body in the tribal area. This is presided over by the chief councillor (*ngambela*) and, ultimately, by the chief of that traditional authority. The *ngambela* communicates the chief's wishes to the community through the *induna* and vice versa.



Image: Björn Lauen



Image: Carrie Hampton



CONNECTING THE DOTS – WILDLIFE MIGRATION CORRIDORS

Six Wildlife Dispersal Areas have been identified in KAZA, offering critical linkages for animals to migrate between countries through protected areas. Creating a sustainable wildlife economy that benefits people living in these areas and encourages them to conserve wildlife is a priority.

- Zambezi-Chobe-Floodplain
- Hwange-Kuzuma-Chobe
- Kwando River
- Zambezi-Mosi-oa-Tunya
- Hwange-Makgadikgadi-Nxai
- Khaudum-Ngamiland

SYMBOLS OF KINSHIP

Totems serve as emblems to denote kinship or a mystical relationship with an animal or plant. Those who share the same totem are considered as relatives, even if not by blood. Totems also distinguish clans from each other. For example, the different clans of the Shona people of Zimbabwe are identified by at least 25 different totems, including the *Ngwena* (crocodile), *Shumba* (lion), *Nzou* (elephant) and *Dziva* (hippo). Senior Chief Inyambo Yeta of Zambia's Shesheke chiefdom has decorated his Mwandi palace gates with a buffalo totem, symbolising the fierce defence skills used to repel invasion of the territory.

A ROYAL OCCASION

Barotse culture permeates the Zambian quarter of KAZA. In March or April, when the floodwaters have risen, the Kuomboka ceremony marks the occasion when the *litunga* (king) is paddled by over 100 warriors in the royal barge down the Zambezi River to his winter palace on higher land. This spectacle is steeped in ritual, characterising the unity of the Lozi people and their links with the landscape.



Image: Sarah Kerr



Almost every safari in KAZA includes a visit to Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls, either on the Zambian side or on the Zimbabwean side. The falls are a sight to behold but there is a world of other possibilities to experience life in Livingstone and Victoria Falls from new angles.

Land of adventures: Livingstone and Victoria Falls



Image: Jacques Marais

CUSTODIANS OF KAZA'S WILDLIFE

Without the committed protection of Africa's wildlife by anti-poaching units, made up of men and women, there would be no safari tourism, and the natural ecology and local economy would collapse. Respective wildlife agencies are responsible for anti-poaching operations, and these units are found throughout KAZA. Transboundary law enforcement operations are being undertaken and are set to increase as part of KAZA's ongoing efforts to harmonise and strengthen collaboration. State-supported anti-poaching efforts often collaborate with non-profit organisations, where dedicated men and women go on patrols with national park units, sometimes accompanied by the local police force or army. Together, they prove an effective deterrent. For example, in the Victoria Falls area, more than 850 poachers have been arrested and over 22 000 snares have been removed. In the Sebungwe region of Lake Kariba, ivory poaching has all but ceased due to concerted anti-poaching efforts, after the loss of 11 000 elephants (75% of the local population) since 2006. Tourism is essential to the wildlife economy in KAZA and directly contributes to these praiseworthy custodians of Africa's wildlife.

Following the trajectory of the Zambezi River, the earth suddenly fractures in a geological fault 1.7km (1 mile) wide, and over it tumbles one of the greatest volumes of falling water in the world. The spray billows up to the sky, while rainbows touch pockets of indigenous rainforest, giving rise to the Lozi name Mosi-oa-Tunya, or 'Smoke that Thunders'. This is

the Victoria Falls, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World. A bridge, built in 1905 across the Victoria Falls' second gorge, links Zambia and Zimbabwe. This road, rail and foot bridge along with the international airports of both Livingstone and Victoria Falls provide excellent access to all the attractions and adventures in the area.



Image: Jacques Marais

LOOKING FOR AN ADVENTURE

The Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls have long attracted travellers seeking an adrenaline rush, perhaps the most daring being the 111-metre bungee jump off Victoria Falls Bridge. Other vertiginous thrills include the

gorge swing, zip line, helicopter flip and microlight flight. Get wet and wild with a swim in Devil's Pool on the very edge of the falls, or white-water rafting, which will almost certainly deposit you into the frothing Zambezi River.



Image: Dietmar Denger

VULTURE CULTURE

Vultures are the cleaners of the bush, eating 70% of leftover carrion, ensuring there's no rotting meat for diseases to spread. But this has also been their downfall. Their numbers are dwindling due to loss of food supply, scavenging on carcasses poisoned by ivory poachers, electrocution on power lines, and their body parts being used in traditional medicines. There's a lot stacked against



Image: Jacques Marais

them, but at 1 pm every day near a waterhole in Zambezi National Park, the trees are packed with white-headed, hooded, lappet-faced and white-backed vultures, as well as renowned rubbish dump scroungers – marabou storks. It's feeding time, when the birds swoop to the ground to devour the scraps of leftover meat from restaurants. In a programme of education and conservation, this Vulture Culture feast helps to protect these birds that are so essential to a healthy ecology.



Image: Africa Albida Tourism

FEAST OF FUN

Feasting on barbecued food under the stars with dancing, singing and drumming is a uniquely African activity that most visitors will encounter at one safari lodge or another. There are also renowned boma banquets in Livingstone and Victoria Falls, with face-painting, interactive drumming circles, and colourful dances representing many of the cultures of KAZA.



Image: Carrie Hampton

CHITENGE FRIDAYS

On Fridays in Livingstone, everyone sports bright chitenge, in celebration of this colourful traditional fabric. Printed in batik-style in vivid hues, it's worn as sarongs and head scarves or is made into other items of clothing. Visit a street market, side-street fabric shop, or curio stall to buy some chitenge to wear on Friday, wherever you are.

Something for the soul

For travellers wanting some personal growth while still enjoying the thrills of Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls, the region offers immersive experiences to help uplift the local communities and contribute to protecting wildlife. Some of these activities include:

Programmes for volunteers are action-oriented to help make a difference to communities and conservation in and around Victoria Falls. Tasks involve recycling, rural farming, education and community development, at projects such as a local sewing group or a clinic. Activities are in partnership with traditional leaders, schools and appropriate authorities. Families with children find this kind of voluntourism especially rewarding.

Travelling with a purpose is made

possible with tailor-made interactive conservation itineraries. Tour operators can include meeting lion, wild dog or elephant researchers, seeing how lion-proof cattle bomas help to mitigate the human-wildlife conflict in rural villages, and an introduction to tribal leaders and anti-poaching patrol units. Plus, there's some private guiding by experts in various fields.

For insights into the science behind wildlife rescue, rehabilitation, research and community outreach, a visit to the only wildlife forensics lab in KAZA is fascinating. They use scientific and veterinary techniques to tackle wildlife management problems, such as taking DNA samples from poached ivory to determine its regional origin.



Image: Carrie Hampton

PAINT A MASTERPIECE

Ignite your inner artist by painting elephants onto canvas at an art workshop beside the Zambezi River in both Livingstone and Victoria Falls. This has replaced elephant-back riding as the most fun you can have with orphan elephant herds that are habituated to people, without compromising the animals' dignity.

After a personal introduction to the elephants and a chat about elephant conservation, it's time to sit behind your easel and unleash your creative genius. Don't worry if you haven't picked up a paintbrush since school and are terrified of looking like a fool – a local artist patiently guides you towards creating a masterpiece.



Image: Art of Africa

TASTES OF AFRICA

In a region where many varied adventures are possible, take the challenge of trying some new and unusual flavours of Africa. Mopane worms – dried caterpillars of the emperor moth – are a high-protein, seasonal delicacy that are not to everyone's taste. But there are other culinary experiences to delight the most discerning palate.

One food journey is found along a dusty road in Chinotimba – a community near Victoria Falls – where women have been upskilled in every element of providing an authentic restaurant meal. That means cooking, waitressing, bar duties, greeting guests, answering the phone and even accounting.

Much of the local produce has medicinal properties used widely for self-medication, like the leaves from the

moringa 'miracle' tree, whose superfood qualities boost 'tired blood', and tea from the resurrection bush, which has anti-aging benefits. Baobab powder gives a citrusy tang to smoothies and desserts, and is packed with antioxidants and a healthy dose of vitamins and minerals.

When faced with a menu offering *indumba* hummus, *mongongo* nut balls, and *mnyi* berry juice, throw caution to the wind and give the tastes of Africa a try.



Image: Jessie Sargeant - Our Life Adrift Photo & Video



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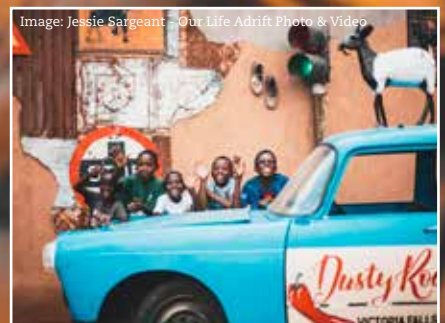


Image: Jessie Sargeant - Our Life Adrift Photo & Video



In this area of KAZA, life revolves around the Chobe River. Tourism is as concentrated here as the wildlife, which often comes close to human habitation. Chat with locals to find out what it's like to live in proximity to large and often dangerous wild animals.



Image: Carrie Hampton

KASANE

Kasane in Botswana is one of the busiest townships in this region, providing a variety of restaurants, accommodation and services to the tourism industry, particularly with transport and logistics for cross-border road transfers to Victoria Falls and Livingstone, and air travel internationally and locally. With a main route from Kasane through Chobe National Park, it's not uncommon to encounter large animals crossing the road, even in the centre of town.

Exploring Chobe: Kasane, Chobe National Park, Chobe River & Impalila Island

The Chobe River is the life-giving force of this region and provides a border between Botswana on the southern banks and Namibia on the northern. The river has extensive grassy floodplains on either side, which disappear under the annual floodwaters, making watercraft the best way of getting around for visitors, locals and even hospitality staff.

There are boats galore on the Chobe, taking travellers on game-spotting and birding tours, day trips,

sundowner cruises, and fishing and photography expeditions.

Taking to the water is the most convenient way to hop between the two countries and participate in all the activities on offer. This does mean stamping your passport in and out of Namibia at the Kasika or Impalila Island immigration posts, and at Kasane for Botswana, sometimes more than once a day. All are located on the banks of the Chobe River.



Image: Simone Micheletti/Serondela Lodge

CHOBE NATIONAL PARK

Chobe National Park is home to the largest population of African elephant in the world, estimated at over 70 000. The park is divided into four tourism nodes: the Chobe riverfront with its floodplain and teak forest; Savuti Marsh in the west, whose once dry channel is now flowing regardless of drought or rainfall; the Linyanti Swamp in the northwest; and the hot, dry hinterland

in between these areas. The park offers some of the finest game viewing in Africa, with enormous herds of elephant and buffalo, large prides of lion, and puku antelope, not seen elsewhere in Botswana. To facilitate free movement of

animals, Wildlife Dispersal Areas have been identified as a priority in KAZA's Integrated Management Plan, and elephant are known to migrate between Chobe National Park and neighbouring countries.



Image: John Fourie



Image: Craig Pusey Photography



Image: Simone Micheletti

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Effective sustainable tourism achieves a balance between respecting local societies and cultures, economic development through viable enterprises that benefit local communities, and using resources with minimal negative impact on the environment.

This is epitomised throughout KAZA, and Botswana's KAZA

component already boasts 63 eco-certified accommodation facilities.

Lodges committed to cultural and environmental guardianship are more likely to enter into joint ventures for the benefit of the historical custodians of these lands. Ngoma Safari Lodge, in a community concession adjacent to Botswana's Chobe Forest Reserve, is privately run in partnership with five Sibiya settlements.

Eco-friendly Serondela Lodge, on the Namibian banks of the Chobe River, was built as a collaborative venture with the Masubia tribe in the Kabulabula Conservancy.

With many sustainable choices available, it is hoped that visitors will gain a greater understanding of the social, economic and environmental impact of their accommodation and activities.



Image: Serondela Lodge

MAN VS THE LION KING

If a lion can hear and smell their prey but can't see them, they don't hunt them. With this understanding comes a simple solution to the human-lion conflict in the Chobe area – thick, opaque canvas is strung on posts around cattle kraals, inside which the animals remain safe at night. Park rangers, safari guides and tourists have been enlisted to report lion sightings via WhatsApp to the Chobe

Lion Group, a coalition of parties involved in wildlife conflict mitigation. This helps build a lion database and notifies communities if lions are moving towards known conflict areas.

Lions are threatened with extinction, and there are only an estimated 20 000 living in the wild. Several organisations are actively working with communities and governments to ensure that these apex land predators remain a common sight for tourists on safari in KAZA.



Image: Björn Lauen



Image: Sarah Kerr

IMPALILA ISLAND: A COMMUNAL CONSERVANCY

About 12km (7 miles) long and 4km (2 miles) wide, Impalila Island in Namibia is surrounded by the Chobe and Zambezi Rivers, which are connected by the Kasai Channel. Impalila Island is one of three communal conservancies in this area (the others being Kabulubula and Kasika) and where in the waters off its eastern tip four countries meet – Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The island is accessible only by boat, unless

one is staying at either of its two safari lodges. Excursions to Impalila can be booked through hotels and lodges.

Take a boat to Impalila Island, then walk to a Subiya village for a cultural exchange. Learn about the tribe's traditional song and dance, which have great meaning and significance for villagers. Don't just sit and watch the performers, though – the dancers love it when tourists join in.



Image: Carrie Hampton

Two oxen pull a clapped-out body of a car complete with front and back seats, for a ride around Impalila Island with guide Charles Matengu. Listen to his hair-raising stories of being a SWAPO militiaman during the border wars for Namibia's independence in the 1960s.

When you reach the giant baobab, with a girth of 48m, the adventurous can climb its metal rungs to survey the point where Botswana, Namibia,

Zambia and Zimbabwe meet. Or explore the island on an electric bike and engage with villagers. Gain insight into life between two rivers, where collecting river water comes with its own challenges – crocodiles and hippos!

The tour is unstructured to enjoy authentic, spontaneous experiences, like tasting the local brew, dancing to a makeshift beatbox or playing soccer with children.



Image: Carrie Hampton

PICTURE PERFECT

Photography and birding are two of the world's most popular hobbies, and on the Chobe River, both pastimes can be well satisfied in spectacular surroundings. To help achieve noteworthy photographs, specialist photographic boats are equipped with revolving chairs, tripod mountings and rentable DSLR cameras with zoom lenses. Guests receive a flash drive and expert tuition including tips like: focus on the animals' eyes, try and keep the background simple, and don't just concentrate on zooming in, try some wide-angle shots, too.



DOES THE RIVER ALWAYS FLOW THAT WAY?

The above would usually be considered a stupid question, but not around here. The Chobe River flows east, meeting the Zambezi at the confluence of four countries at Kazungula. But when the Zambezi floodwaters arrive from late February to May, the sheer volume of water backs up for a considerable distance, creating the impression of a change in direction.

And did you know that the Chobe River changes its name five times? It's the Cuando in Angola, the Kwando when it reaches Namibia, the Linyanti when it enters Botswana and does a triangular detour along a fault line, the Itenge for about 70km (43 miles), and then becomes known the Chobe as it runs alongside Chobe National Park, before converging with the Zambezi River.



Image: Jacques Marais



Image: Björn Lauen



Image: Björn Lauen

MAUN

Maun lies on the southern fringes of the Okavango Delta and, despite recent modernisations, carries the feeling of a dusty frontier town, where safari-style khaki clothing is the norm. For many tourists, Maun is the point of entry into the Delta, and often into Botswana. Small Cessna aircraft buzz in and out of the busy airport, flying guests and supplies to the Okavango Delta's luxury safari lodges, many of which are inaccessible by any other means.

MOREMI GAME RESERVE

Declared a game reserve by the BaTswana people in 1963 and named in honour of their chief, Moremi covers about 35% of the Okavango Delta's alluvial fan. Its iconic locations like Chief's Island, the Khwai River floodplain, Xini Lagoon and Xakanaxa Lagoon provide a year-round lush habitat for the abundant wildlife.

MAKGADIKGADI & NXAI PANS

The name 'Makgadikgadi' implies a 'thirsty land' of extreme dryness. But, while it may appear barren, an excursion with Bushmen, a walk with habituated meerkats, or a game drive encountering local specialities like black-maned lion, brown hyena and armadillo, will reveal an abundance of life.

The landscape transforms during the November rains, sporting emerald-green grasslands and large, shallow lakes visited by a flamboyance of flamingos and other water birds. The rain also triggers a dramatic movement of wildebeest and zebra on one of the longest animal migrations in Africa. Activated by a conserved memory of ancient routes and a genetic predisposition to migrate, they travel some 250 km (155 miles) from Chobe to the Nxai Pans, then back again about ten weeks later.

Heart of Botswana

Okavango Delta, Maun, Moremi & Makgadikgadi-Nxai Pans

The Okavango Delta is the largest inland delta on Earth, one of the Seven Natural Wonders of Africa and the 1000th UNESCO World Heritage Site. One of the most exquisitely scenic and prolific game-viewing and birding experiences in the world, it is also home to ethnic groups who

are deeply in tune with the natural world surrounding them.

The delta is habitat to more than 400 species of birds, nearly 200 species of mammals and over 150 species of reptiles. One way to get an idea of just how rich and diverse this ecosystem is by taking



Image: Arno Pouwels



Image: Carrie Hampton



Image: Björn Lauen



Image: Natural Selection

The great, pristine wildernesses of the Okavango Delta and Makgadikgadi and Nxai Pans offer the exclusivity of meeting few other visitors. The focus is on wildlife and culture, with no better way to learn both bush lore and folklore than from local guides.

a flight above its sparkling waters. Another opportunity to observe the unique wildlife, such as the elusive aquatic sitatunga antelope, is from a traditional dugout canoe (*mokoro*), poled by an experienced guide. To really connect with nature and be humbled by this haven, a guided

walk offers the chance to track, find and witness the Big Five in their natural habitat. Other activities include game drives, horseback safaris, boating, fishing, village visits and scenic helicopter flights.



Image: Arno Pouwels

THE ART OF POLING A MOKORO

For boys growing up in Okavango villages like Jao, Sepupa and Xaxaba, learning how to pole a *mokoro* is a key life skill. The traditional *mokoro* is a dugout canoe that provides the only dependable transport through the delta's waterways. It's

made by scooping out the trunk of a long, straight tree such as an ebony, jackalberry or sausage tree, although nowadays some are made out of fibreglass, negating the need to chop down old trees. The art of handling a *mokoro* starts with a good, sturdy pole, cut to the right height, strength and swing style of the poler. The pole serves as the

accelerator, steering, brakes and handiest weapon in times of danger, which more often than not comes in the form of hippos. Accomplished polers are in demand for their ability to anticipate hippos and steer out of danger. The best have an innate ability to know where they are going in a watery landscape that's constantly changing.

WEAVE YOURSELF A BOTSWANA BASKET

A visit to the Okavango Delta or Maun is incomplete without visiting a basket-weaving venue. Women converge daily to weave palm fronds into beautiful baskets, a skill often taught to them from a very young age by their mothers.

Basket weaving is a means of livelihood for these women, supporting them and their families.

Visitors have the option to engage and learn the art of traditional basket weaving and buy one of the finished products perfected by an expert.



Image: Carrie Hampton

CELEBRATING CULTURE

In Botswana, there are numerous festivals celebrating the country's different cultures and ethnic groups. The Maun International Arts Festival showcases local and international talent in literature, poetry, theatre and music.

The cultural festivals of the Wayeyi in Gumare, the annual Tjingirini Festival at Toromoja village in the greater Makgadikgadi area, and the Cisiyankulu Cultural Festival (Basubiya) in Kavimba, all celebrate the historical cultural practices of their communities in song, dance, storytelling and food.

Image: Arno Pouwels



Image: Natural Selection

RIDING IN BIG GAME COUNTRY

Previous horse-riding experience is a prerequisite for galloping through the Okavango on horses fit enough to keep pace with zebra or wildebeest, always alert to the possibility of meeting lion or

elephant. Both the horse and rider's senses are heightened to the sounds, smells and sights of the bush on exciting guided multi-day rides run by several operators. granite rocks rising unexpectedly



Image: Natural Selection

FEED THE SOUL AT KUBU ISLAND

Kubu Island, located in the middle of the Makgadikgadi Pans and known locally as Lekhubu, 'the rock outcrop', is a collection of granite rocks rising unexpectedly out of a landscape of dusty, flat salt pans. It's a place of primeval natural beauty, where at night the sky is so abundant with stars that they touch the earth's horizon. An indigenous sacred site and national monument, it

is overseen by the Gaing O Community Trust, who manage it and derive income from designated camping sites set far apart among the magnificent baobabs. Long-drop toilets are the only facility, and overland travellers need to be completely self-sufficient in food, water and fuel. Guided walks are offered, giving insight into prehistoric habitation, the unique rock formations and local flora and fauna.



Image: Björn Lauen

HIGH JINKS WITH ZU/'HOANSI BUSHMEN

For insight into survival in this unforgiving scrubland, the Zu/'Hoansi Bushmen in the Makgadikgadi area share their wisdom and ancient traditions with tourists in an enriching, interactive experience. Learn how to set a bird

trap, unearth and kiss a scorpion, make fire and brew tea from seed pods, and cure most ills with indigenous plants. High jinks involve catching and throwing 'lightning' to each other, and a daring game to the rhythm of clapping and singing,

where a player bashes a large stone onto wood and a second player has to slip their hand quickly under the stone and out again. Humour and community spirit are evident, a juxtaposition to the complexities of today's modern lifestyles. Most lodges in the Makgadikgadi area offer this experience to guests.



Image: Björn Lauen



Image: Björn Lauen



Image: Natural Selection



KAZA's wild west



Image: Namibia Wildlife Resorts

The Okavango River feeds Popa Falls, before flowing into the Okavango Panhandle. Away from the fertile riverbanks in less-watered lands is the remote wilderness of Khaudum National Park in Namibia, and Botswana's Tsodilo Hills, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, famous for its Bushmen paintings.

At the western edge of the Zambezi Region, the Okavango River separates Namibia and Angola, before flowing into what's known as the Okavango Panhandle in Botswana. As relaxed as the river is in the panhandle, so is the accommodation, with options for independent travellers, fishermen and birders, in mainly owner-run lodges, campsites, houseboats and riverside resorts.

The Popa Falls is a series of bubbling cascades rather than

a waterfall, with papyrus-lined channels perfect for sunset cruises. Drinks and snacks are often set up on islands, from where it's possible to rock-hop between the rivulets.

Birding is excellent in this region, and it's possible to tick off 30–40 different birds in one morning. Don't venture too close to the water's edge – not even for a Narina trogon – as there are crocs and hippos lurking. Boating is the most relaxing way to birdwatch; simply let some of the 450 bird species found here fly by.

TSODILO HILLS

This iconic landmark was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2001 due to its unique religious and spiritual significance to the local community. Tsodilo Hills is made up of three rocks (dubbed 'father, mother and child'), whose sedimentary sandstone holds archaeological records of human activity and environmental change over the past 100,000 years. Despite the dry, hostile environment far from any ocean, some of the 4,500 rock paintings depict penguins and whales. This has been attributed to the vast areas traversed by the inhabitants of this region. Chief Xontae explains that the local communities respect Tsodilo as the home of their ancestral spirits and a place of worship. A guided tour describes the art and its meaning, but to imbibe the site's spirituality, take a solitary meander along the marked trails. If staying at the public campsite nearby, visitors can pre-book a magical night of song and dance performed by the local tribes.



Image: Lisa Blanken



Image: Björn Lauen



Image: Carrie Hampton

Popa Falls, Okavango Panhandle, Tsodilo Hills & Khaudum National Park



LIVING WITH ELEPHANTS

In the eastern Okavango Panhandle, about 18 000 elephants compete with around 16 000 people for food, water and land. There are 13 demarcated elephant corridors close to human habitation within this section of the Kwando River Wildlife Dispersal Area, where living with elephants is part of life.

A holistic approach is used to help communities move from human-

elephant conflict to coexistence. Farmers are encouraged to practise 'elephant aware' farming inside fenced cluster fields, and to apply sustainable agriculture methods to increase food security.

Villagers also benefit from the 'elephant economy', with income-generating initiatives such as elephant-branded community-based tourism, handicrafts and food products like chilli sauces (in reference to the chilli-infused

dung deterrent that's set alight to create an acrid smoke that crop-raiding elephants hate).

In an effort to help support local elephant tourism, a viewing platform is being built on one of the main elephant migration pathways. Guests will be able to spend a night on a comfortable bed high above the elephants, where they can watch and listen to the herds as they move below.

Image: Björn Lauen



Image: Arno Pouwels

KHAUDUM NATIONAL PARK

With the Bushmen paintings of Tsodilo Hills east of Khaudum, it's not surprising that this far western part of Namibia was the domain of hunter-gatherers, whose communities now blend ancient and modern lifestyles in conservancies and villages around the park. Khaudum is an untamed, forested wilderness, with large herds of elephant and buffalo traversing an unfenced border between Namibia and Botswana.

All routes to Khaudum's two rudimentary campsites are challenging, with off-roading in deep sand and a minimum convoy of two vehicles. The rewards are 320 bird species and big game, as well as predators like African wild dog, lion, leopard and spotted hyena. Khaudum has few visitors – just how intrepid 4x4 enthusiasts like it. If exiting to the south via Tsumkwe, stop at the Dorsland Grootboom, an ancient baobab, and the Living Museum of the Ju/'Hoansi-San.



Corridor of connections

ANGOLA'S UNTAPPED WILDERNESS

Angola's KAZA component is surrounded by the Cubango, Cuito and Cuando Rivers, which not only beautify the region, but ensure the survival of its wildlife, making nature tourism the anchor activity. Large populations of elephant, buffalo, antelope and a number of different predators are found in the 45 000 sq km (27 960 miles) of Luengue-Luiana National Park – one of Africa's last uncharted frontiers.

Adventurous 4x4 convoys brave bumpy sand tracks to visit this unexplored wilderness, but high-end tour operators fly guests in to fully catered camps in remote locations.

Tourism and conservation go hand in hand, and KAZA has allocated funds for wildlife protection and reducing human-wildlife conflict. Success stories include the training of field rangers by Peace Parks Foundation in the use of CyberTrackers to collect data during anti-poaching patrols.

This region was the scene of Angola's civil war, and memorials and military battlefields can be visited on guided tours.

Tourism is in its infancy here, and official border posts for entry from other parts of KAZA are under construction. Visa documentation and vehicle entry paperwork are best advised by experienced operators.

Offering affordable tourism, Namibia's Zambezi Region plays a pivotal role in the unfenced Kwando River Wildlife Dispersal Area between Angola, Botswana, Namibia and Zambia. Angola's Luengue-Luiana National Park runs along the region's northern border and is a vast wilderness with untapped tourism potential.

The Zambezi Region in the heart of KAZA is a long strip of land with multiple land uses, containing the national parks of Bwabwata, Nkasa Rupara and Mudumu. It's watered by the Kavango River in the west and the Zambezi in the east, with the Kwando-Linyanti-Chobe (all one river, its name depending on location) forming the southern demarcation. It has 450 animal species in 16 conservancies, is home to nine different tribes, is traversed by migrating animals and is bisected by 200km (125 miles) of busy tar road. Transboundary

management strategies help to make sense of these complexities, ensuring that poaching, illegal logging and human-wildlife conflict are kept to a minimum, and that all communities benefit from income-producing activities, including tourism and hunting.

Enjoy riverside campsites and lodges, fantastic birding (almost 70% of Namibia's bird species are found here), fishing, sunset boat trips and game drives. Katima Mulilo is the largest town in the region, acting as a gateway for travel to all KAZA partner countries.



Image: Simone Micheletti/Nkasa Lupala Lodge



Image: African Bush Camps

BWABWATA NATIONAL PARK

Namibia's Bwabwata National Park, including the Mahango Core Area, is 190km (118 miles) of protected land, with large populations of elephant, buffalo, roan and sable antelope, red lechwe and predators such as wild dog, lion, leopard, hyena and cheetah. The KAZA Carnivore Conservation Coalition



Image: Jess Isden WildCRU

has strategies for carnivore protection, and a collared predator signifies that the animal is part of a programme monitoring its movement between Angola, Botswana, Namibia and Zambia.

This provides useful data and pinpoints human-wildlife conflict hotspots, where avoidance tactics can be used. It's not just predators that pose problems – elephants raid crops and threaten the lives of villagers when they move through on migration routes.

Bwabwata, Mudumu, Nkasa Rupara, Mahango & Luengue-Luiana Parks



Image: Chantelle Melzer/Nkasa Lupala Lodge



Image: Björn Lauen



Image: Lisa Blanken

MUDUMU & NKASA RUPARA NATIONAL PARKS

A Rift Valley fault line causes the Kwando-Linyanti River to change course at a sharp angle, almost doubling back on itself. On this piece of land, cradled by the V-shape of the river, are the Wuparo Conservancy and two Namibian national parks: Mudumu and Nkasa Rupara, containing wetlands reminiscent of the Okavango Delta. These are some of the least visited of KAZA's parks, just how eco-

travellers like it, with the option of staying at campsites and lodges like Jackalberry Camp and Nkasa Lupala, which operate in a joint-venture programme with the local Wuparo community. Such commitment to sustainable tourism has resulted in increased local employment, decreased poaching, and recovery of the depleted lion population after 120 lion-proof kraals were built.



Image: Jacques Marais

GO GREEN

Travellers are more aware than ever about choosing environmentally friendly places to stay, especially in natural settings. Namibia's Eco Awards identify establishments that make the effort to use resources carefully, include sustainable practices and implement social responsibility and environmental care. Look for the desert flower insignia denoting participation.

Image: Björn Lauen



TURNING TRASH INTO TREASURE

Turning waste into beautiful art is not new, but is only one aspect of a project in the Mayuni Conservancy. Chief Mayuni is right behind this initiative, having noticed that plastic was growing like flowers along the roadsides, and released Mafwe tribal land for the Sijwa Project. It includes a permaculture vegetable garden, with soil enriched by food waste and super-strength worm juice, boosted by elephant dung and kept free of bugs by free-range chickens. There's an indigenous nursery for visitors to buy and plant trees to offset their carbon footprint, with a local 'tree guardian' to secure the trees' survival against nibbling goats. To stop elephants from raiding the gardens, beehives are strung around the farm on a perimeter wire – a bee up the trunk is anathema to an elephant, so they soon buzz off! There is also a cultural village and a junior ranger training venue for jobs in tourism.

THE UPSIDE-DOWN TREE

Baobabs proliferate in the Zambezi Region, and these upside-down trees – which look as if their roots are in the air – are often thought to contain spirits. Old age for a baobab is 800 years, with one in Namibia dated to over a thousand years old. They only start fruiting at 200 years old, and

the citrusy powder covering the seeds is considered a superfood. Katima Mulilo has one of the most photographed baobab trees in KAZA, where a door has been fitted into its enormous hollowed-out trunk, behind which there is a public flushing toilet!

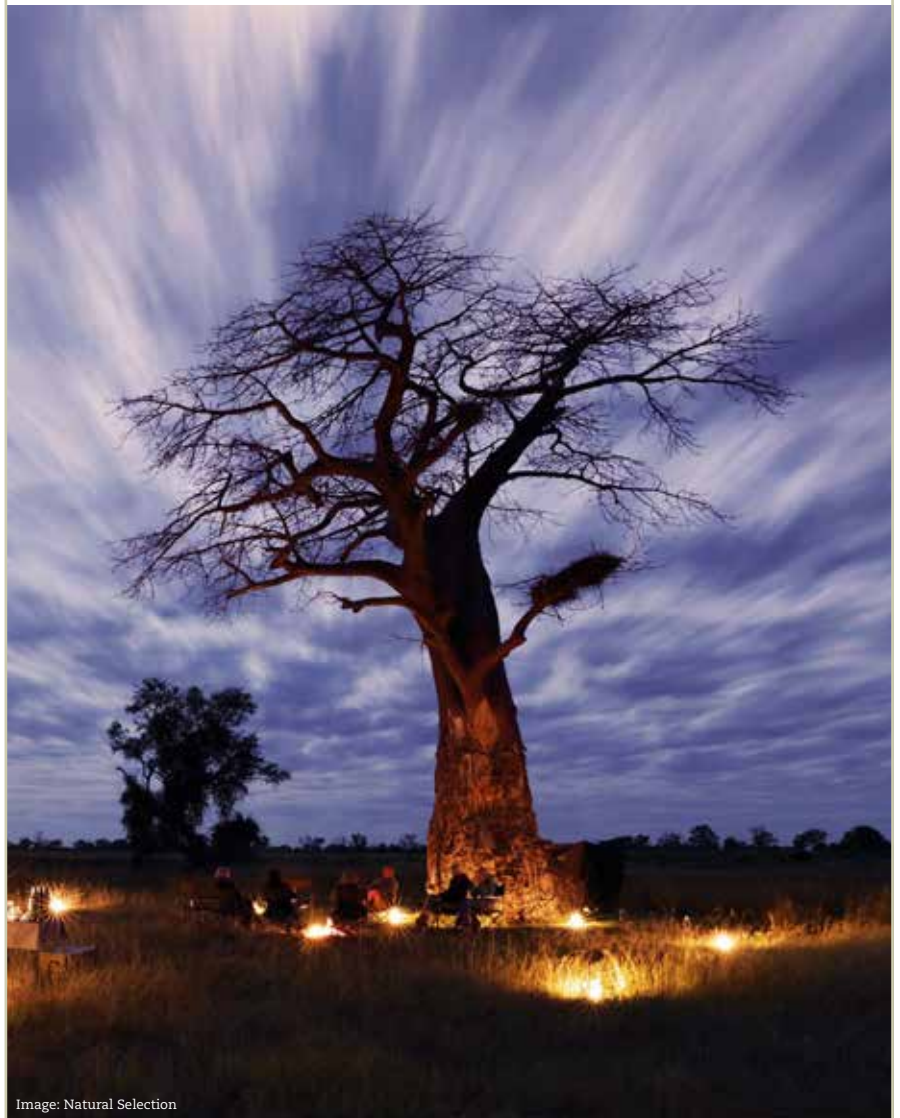


Image: Natural Selection



Image: Xaro Lodge



Image: A. Froneman www.wildlifephotography.co.za

THE VALUE OF WILDLIFE UNLOCKED

In addition to joint-venture tourism programmes with the local communities, the Zambezi Region has seen the first implementation of an innovative conservation performance concept using wildlife credits, incentivising the community to protect wild animals. The initial phase involves the Wuparo and Sobbe Conservancies, where donor money is contributed to local communities for actively setting aside wildlife corridors. This is proven through satellite imagery and camera traps. For protecting and conserving the wildlife, participating lodges pay a fixed amount for each sighting of iconic species during game drives in these areas. The programme leverages a secured, contractual payment at a national level in Namibia to match each sighting. As the number of verified sightings increase, so do payments to the communities, which can be used to protect crops and livestock from wildlife predation and as compensation for losses.



Image: Chantelle Melzer/Nkasa Lupala Lodge



Image: Chantelle Melzer/Nkasa Lupala Lodge



Image: Jacques Marais

TWITCHERS' TICK LIST

This region has some of the best birding in KAZA. Here's a list of top 10 specials to spot:

- Pel's fishing owl
- African skimmer
- Carmine bee-eater
- European bee-eater
- Slaty egret
- Woodland kingfisher
- Giant kingfisher
- Narina trogon
- African wood owl
- White-backed night heron



Image: A. Froneman www.wildlifephotography.co.za



Image: Chantelle Melzer/Serondela Lodge

Katima Mulilo is not so much a destination as a town for onward travel into Namibia's Zambezi Region, or across the Wenela-Sesheke border bridge over the Zambezi River into Zambia. Some 100km (62 miles) downriver from Sesheke lies Simalaha Community Conservancy, an unheralded Zambian wildlife sanctuary and success story in the making.

New pastures Katima Mulilo & Simalaha

Image: Simalaha Horse Safaris

RIDE INTO THE WILDERNESS

The first activity to be offered in Simalaha is horse-riding. Experience the freedom of galloping among wild animals through an untamed wilderness of woodlands and golden savanna. A tented camp set in a pristine location acts as a comfortable base after hours in the saddle over four or five days. Adding to the sense of exploration, a pop-up fly camp is set up for a night in the bush. Guests are introduced to the rich Lozi culture of this area, with personal introductions to a local induna (headman), who might arrange a traditional dance or a tour of a village. The group returns to a lodge near Livingstone for some post-ride pampering and a visit to the Victoria Falls.



Image: Simalaha Horse Safaris

A mayhem of heavily laden trucks from Zambia's copper belt queue at the border bridge from Sesheke in Zambia to Katima Mulilo in Namibia. Cars skip to the front of the queue and are processed quickly through passport control into Katima town, to stock up on groceries and pay a visit to the craft centre to browse the vast array of handcrafted baskets.

To the east of Sesheke, hidden away on the Zambezi floodplain, lies Zambia's least-explored reserve, the Simalaha Community Conservancy. One of its first visitors said, "Simalaha has the most extraordinary silence, different to other areas – no words can explain it."

Its location is a critical link in an ancient animal migration route from Kafue National Park in the north, through Zambia and Namibia, to Chobe National Park in Botswana – this is one of KAZA's six key Wildlife Dispersal Areas.

Two chiefdoms share this land; both have enthusiastically invested in the Simalaha Conservancy, and are working with Peace Parks Foundation to restore the ecosystem through conservation, protection and rewilding – reviving animal populations and severely depleted fish stocks. The sanctuary now boasts more than 3000 animals, with a vision of reaching its carrying capacity of 17000 head of game.

Nature-based economies like tourism are key to improving the circumstances of more than 14000 people living in and around the conservancy. A few lucky tourists will soon be able to immerse themselves in this breathtaking wilderness, with horse-riding safaris and an off-the-grid safari lodge being planned. Visitors can also look forward to houseboats and tiger fishing on the Zambezi River, stopping at Simalaha to engage in cultural participation, game drives and exceptional birding.



Image: Gordon Homer



Image: Gordon Homer



Image: Gordon Homer

COME DANCING

Each African culture in KAZA has its own particular traditions in song, dance and dress, and the Lozi of southern Barotseland sport red, black and white garments at their ceremonial gatherings. Both men and women swish flowing skirts while clapping and stamping out the rhythm of the music. Enjoy these vibrant performances while an interpreter explains the words, which could be an impromptu praise song in your honour. Tourists can join in the dancing, to the amusement of performers.



FLOAT ON A HOUSEBOAT

Staying on a houseboat brings you closer to nature on the rivers and lakes of Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Camper-boats are available, with a rooftop tent rather like a 4x4, for laid-back, multi-day

cruising along the Zambezi, pulling up to a sandbank each night, all the way from Katima Mulilo to Kasane. Lake Kariba is renowned for charter houseboats of every size and level of grandeur, equipped with crews

who will take keen fishermen to the best spots to catch a tiger. Super-stylish houseboats are found on Lake Kariba and the Chobe River, offering a luxurious, all-inclusive experience, including multiple activities.

Image: Francois Synders



Image: Carrie Hampton



This exciting region has two wildlife corridors, masses of elephants, packs of roaming wild dog and a lake the size of a small country. Just as memorable as the natural and wildlife attractions are the local people and their welcoming hospitality.

Big smiles and elephants

Hwange, Kuzuma, Lake Kariba & Chizarira

LAKE KARIBA

KAZA encompasses the entire Zimbabwean half of Lake Kariba – some 220km (137 miles) long – with drowned hardwood forests standing sentinel 60 years after the Zambezi River was dammed. This inland sea has become an enticing destination for houseboat charters and avid fishermen hoping to catch a tiger. The lakeshore at Binga offers temptations similar to a seaside beach, but crocodiles and hippos are a bathing hazard. It also has a Batonga cultural museum and a co-operative basket, beadwork and carved wood handicraft industry.

On the southern shores of Lake Kariba is beautiful Matusadona National Park, whose landscape was denuded of big game by poaching and is now in a public-private partnership for conservation management. There's high hope that Matusadona could once again become Zimbabwe's premier elephant and black rhino sanctuary, mirroring the successes of neighbouring anti-poaching units. There are numerous initiatives in this area to support local schools, clinics, small enterprises and human-wildlife conflict resolution, including erecting lion-proof kraals and recruiting 'lion guardians' from the community to monitor predators' movements and warn herders of their proximity.

Hwange National Park and adjacent private concessions give refuge to the second largest population of African elephant in KAZA. With the arrival of thirsty elephants from Botswana, coming to drink at the solar-powered waterholes during the dry season, the park's elephant numbers swell to far greater than the usual 20 000–25 000. Breeding herds in their hundreds and big lonesome bulls with magnificent tusks, along with all manner of antelope and birds, congregating at watering holes is a sight to behold. Hwange is also renowned for lion, leopard, cheetah and a better-than-average chance of spotting African wild dog.

Hwange is so huge – roughly 14 650 sq km (5 656 sq miles) – that in the wet season the animals just seem

to disappear into the grasslands and woodlands. It's then that the birdlife comes into its own, with 432 species and some migrants in breeding plumage. Some of Africa's largest flying birds, like kori bustards, ground hornbills and secretarybirds, seem to gather conveniently for great photo opportunities.

COUNTING GAME

Around 300 volunteers gather in Hwange National Park on the full moon at the end of September or beginning of October for a 24-hour annual game census. Teams of about four are each allocated a pan or waterhole to record any wildlife visitors. Anyone can apply, but a knowledge of animals and birds is a prerequisite.

WILDLIFE ON THE MOVE

Two of KAZA's six identified Wildlife Dispersal Areas originate in Hwange National Park: Hwange-Kuzuma-Chobe and Hwange-Makgadikgadi-Nxai Pan. Funds from KAZA have been allocated to enable animal movement and mitigate human-wildlife conflict on these migratory pathways. But, as these can include border fences, major roads, adjacent agricultural areas and hunting

concessions, the task is complex. Despite the adversities, thousands of animals, including elephant, buffalo, zebra, wildebeest, wild dog and lion, continue to follow their natural instincts to migrate to rich grasslands during the wet season and to water sources during the dry season.

Zimbabwe's Kuzuma Pan National Park and Botswana's Kuzuma Forest Reserve are contiguous landscapes of woodlands and grass plains, with an unfenced but patrolled border between



Image: Camp Kazuma

CONSERVING AFRICA'S PAINTED DOGS

African wild dogs, often called 'painted dogs' for their beautiful marked coats, are the most threatened carnivore in sub-Saharan Africa. KAZA's wild dog conservation strategy and action plan is critical to the protection of the transboundary populations, who roam great distances. There are about 7 000 wild dogs left in the wild, with roughly 10% of them living in and around Hwange National Park.

There's a conservation visitor centre just outside Hwange National Park where rescued wild dogs are rehabilitated and released into the

wild wherever possible. Guides lead visitors to the holding pens while offering information about the animals' social patterns and behaviour. For example, the minimum number for a viable hunting and breeding pack is about six, with an alpha breeding pair producing all the pups and the female acting as head dog. Storybook panels in the display room tell true accounts of some of Hwange's wild dogs and their biggest threats to survival – habitat loss, snares, diseases, such as rabies, and being killed on the roads or by farmers.



Image: Craig Pusey Photography

CHIZARIRA

On a high plateau about 90km (56 miles) east of Binga lies the incredibly scenic Chizarira National Park. Almost forsaken by man and beast due to rampant poaching, it's being rehabilitated with the help of conservation organisations, which are restoring infrastructure and working with the community to find ways for this park to benefit them. Self-drive tourism will pave the way for safari companies to set up operations, but for now visitor facilities are undeveloped.

them. As elephants move through during the dry season on ancient migratory routes, they gather in great numbers at waterholes. Watch live animal activity at a waterhole in the Kuzuma Forest Reserve on EarthCam. Attracting more than a hundred elephants at a time, the waterhole has to be replenished with 35 000 litres of drinking water per day from a borehole.



Image: capucinephoto



Image: Carrie Hampton



Image: Carrie Hampton

DISCOVER A CREATIVE COMMUNITY: DETE

The well-kept village of Dete, just outside Hwange National Park, has 4 300 residents, but only about 120 have employment. In the spirit of community upliftment, many safari companies operating in the Hwange area support small local enterprises that guests can visit as part of their travel experience.

A collection of women in this village have called their sewing group Thandanani, which means 'love each other', and use their sewing skills to make school uniforms and attractive items for sale in safari lodge shops. As part of a social initiative, they also sew washable, reusable sanitary pads, without which many girls miss a week of school every month.

Nearby is another community upliftment project under the name

Vukani, 'to rise up'. Here, elderly and disabled women and men create beautiful beaded jewellery out of donated waste paper and glossy magazines, which visitors can buy as gifts or souvenirs.

Visiting a Zimbabwean village school that has to contend with having no current textbooks, no water for several kilometres, and depleting food rations, is a humbling experience. Several schools near Hwange welcome visitors, and as one meets the teachers and children it becomes clear that they weather challenges with great dignity and a ready smile. There are a number of schemes that facilitate donations to schools, with a year's education for one child costing a sponsorship of as little as US\$30.



Image: Flame of Africa



Image: Jacques Marais



Image: John Fourie



Image: Jacques Marais

CYCLING FOR A CAUSE

One of KAZA's lesser-known annual events is Pumping Legs for Water. This two-day charity mountain bike ride takes place inside Hwange National Park to raise money to maintain the park's waterhole pumps. Meeting big game along the 110km (68-mile) route is a possibility, so participants ride as a group.

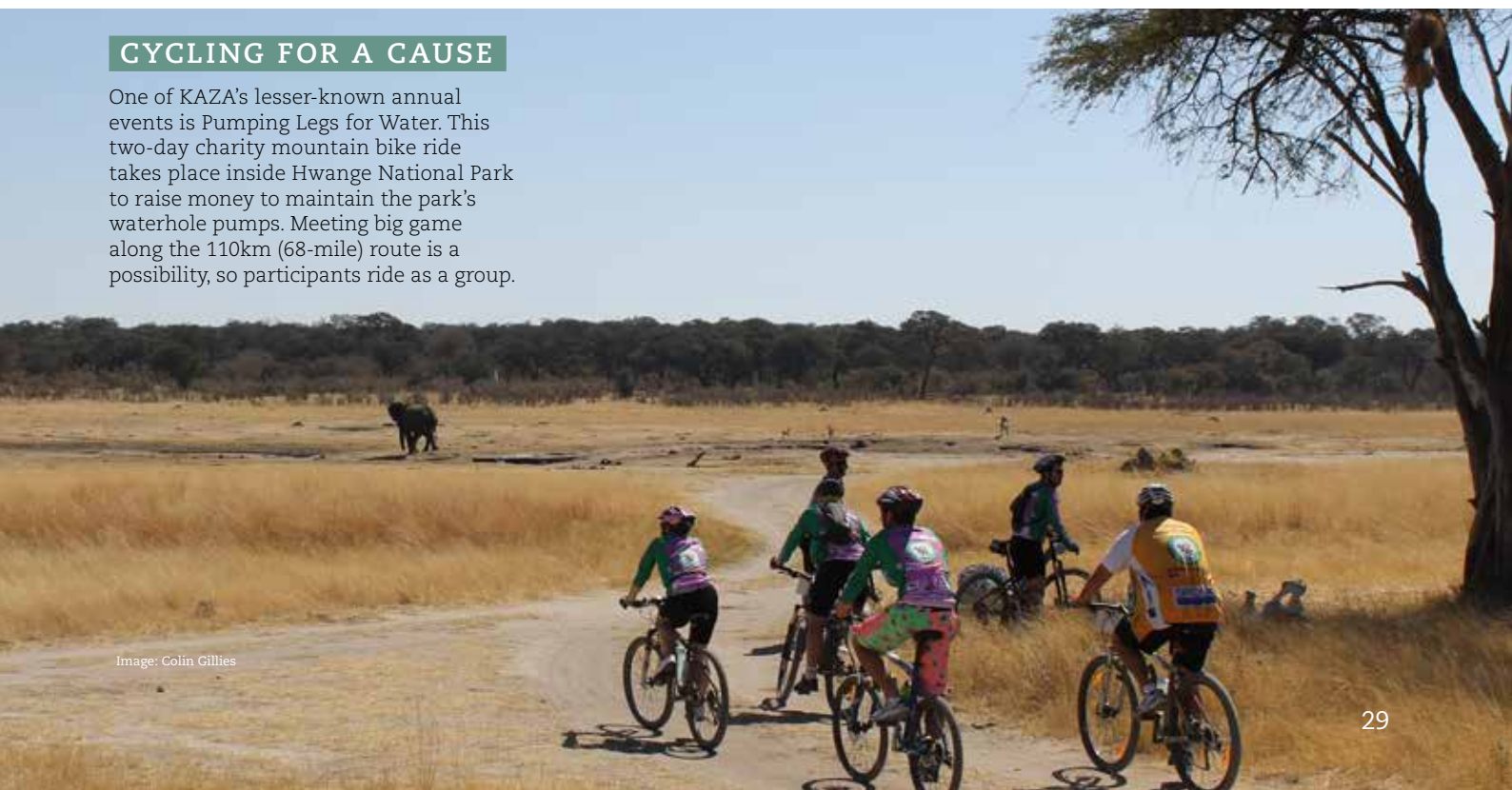


Image: Colin Gillies

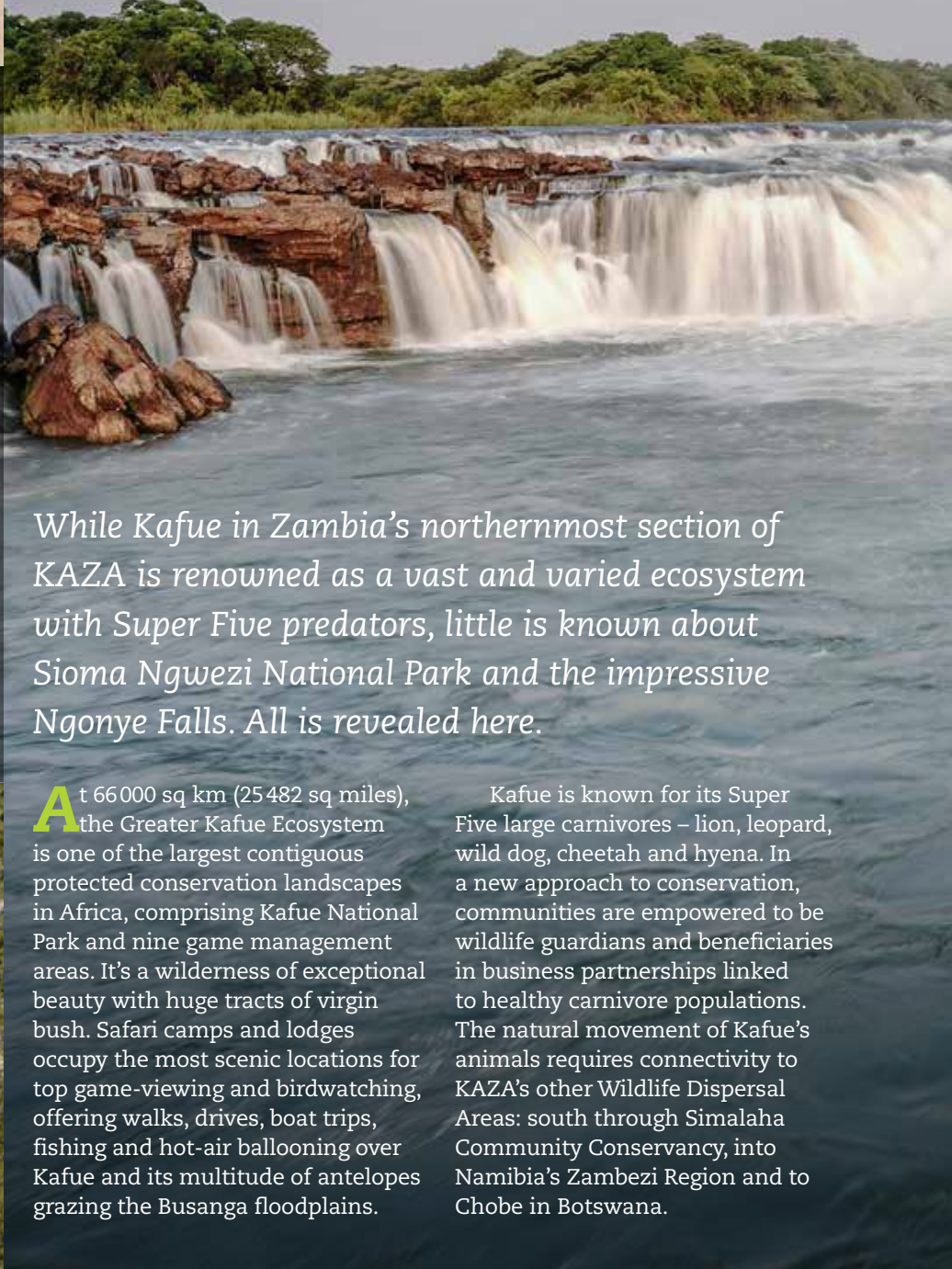


Zambia revealed:

WHERE VAST HERDS OF WILDEBEEST ROAM

Without any fanfare, Liuwa Plain National Park hosts the second largest wildebeest migration on the continent, between Zambia and Angola, with about 40 000 wildebeest shadowed by an increasing predator population. At the same time as the wildebeest arrive in mid-November, the pans fill up with water, attracting thousands of water birds – a birder’s paradise.

Liuwa Plain National Park lies just outside the invisible KAZA boundaries, but its success under a conservation management partnership since 2003 has turned it into a prime example of how more than 12500 people can live inside a park and co-exist with wildlife.



While Kafue in Zambia’s northernmost section of KAZA is renowned as a vast and varied ecosystem with Super Five predators, little is known about Sioma Ngwezi National Park and the impressive Ngonye Falls. All is revealed here.

At 66000 sq km (25482 sq miles), the Greater Kafue Ecosystem is one of the largest contiguous protected conservation landscapes in Africa, comprising Kafue National Park and nine game management areas. It’s a wilderness of exceptional beauty with huge tracts of virgin bush. Safari camps and lodges occupy the most scenic locations for top game-viewing and birdwatching, offering walks, drives, boat trips, fishing and hot-air ballooning over Kafue and its multitude of antelopes grazing the Busanga floodplains.

Kafue is known for its Super Five large carnivores – lion, leopard, wild dog, cheetah and hyena. In a new approach to conservation, communities are empowered to be wildlife guardians and beneficiaries in business partnerships linked to healthy carnivore populations. The natural movement of Kafue’s animals requires connectivity to KAZA’s other Wildlife Dispersal Areas: south through Simalaha Community Conservancy, into Namibia’s Zambezi Region and to Chobe in Botswana.



Image: Natural Selection

SIOMA NGWEZI

Sioma Ngwezi National Park and the Zambezi West Game Management Area is a vast ecosystem of approximately 11 500 sq km (4 440 sq miles), rubbing shoulders in the west with Angola’s Luengue-Luiana National Park. Since it is off the tourism industry’s radar as there is no visitor infrastructure, only hardened 4x4 self-drivers brave the 22 km

(13,6 miles) of roller-coaster sand track into the park, reaping rewards of silence and solitude. As accessibility improves and game numbers increase, thanks to rewilding and anti-poaching initiatives, so does Sioma Ngwezi’s tourism potential. To smooth the way, there’s 130 km (81 miles) of tarred road between Sesheke – the border town into Namibia – and Sioma.



Image: Simon Mayes

Kafue, Sioma Ngwezi & Ngonye Falls

MAKING A BIG SPLASH

Tackle 30km (18.6 miles) of rough, sandy road north of Sioma Ngwezi National Park to Ngonye Falls Community Partnership Park Visitor Centre, where a guide leads the way to viewpoints on foot. Only 12m (39 feet) high, the volume of water from the Zambezi River pounding over its crescent of rocks is second only to that of the Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls. It's mostly visited by independent travellers driving to or from Kafue and Liuwa Plain

National Parks. During April and May, the falls are at full force and have to be viewed from a distance, but at low water, from June to December, people rock-hop to sit under the gentle cascades.

The Ngonye Falls' cultural and aesthetic value has the power to boost ecotourism to the benefit of local communities. Facilities include a community-run campsite and a riverside beach campsite, where guests arrive by boat on fishing expeditions from a local lodge.

Image: Jacques Marais



Image: Shutterstock/cloete55

Annual events

Visit www.kavangozambezi.org/en/ for more information.

APRIL

Mascom Derby, Maun, Botswana

More than 70 thoroughbreds and local Tswana breed horses compete over Easter at the Shashe Race Track.

www.facebook.com/events/489129145329768

Livingstone International Cultural Arts Festival, Livingstone, Zambia

Livingstone gets lively with street carnivals and performances by cultural groups.

www.livingstoneculturalfestival.com

MAY

Livingstone MTB Epic, Livingstone, Zambia

This family-oriented mountain bike race showcases Livingstone's scenery.

lsf.co.zm/mtb-epic

JUNE

Livingstone Football Knockout, Livingstone, Zambia

Teams compete for the trophy in a short-match round robin, and there's a knockout competition for old-timers.

lsf.co.zm/football

JULY

KAZA Golf Classic, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe

Competitors play rounds of golf in several KAZA TFCA partner countries. www.kavangozambezi.org/en/events-public

Makgadikgadi Epic Skydiving, Makgadikgadi Salt Pans, Botswana

Skydivers take to the skies over Makgadikgadi's salt pans.

makgadikgadiepic.com or www.skydivebotswana.com

Pumping Legs for Water, Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe

This two-day charity mountain bike ride in Hwange NP raises money to keep Hwange's waterholes pumping.

wezmat.org/pumping-legs-for-water

Bwinkuhane Bwetu – Masubia Cultural Festival, Bukalo, Namibia

Thousands gather at the Masubia chief's traditional seat to celebrate traditional cuisine, music and ancestral dance.

Victoria Falls Marathon, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

Run over the Victoria Falls Bridge and through Zambezi National Park on this scenic marathon.

www.vicfallsmarathon.com

Okavango Bream Classic, Okavango Delta, Botswana

The team's five heaviest bream win in this Okavango Panhandle fishing competition.

www.facebook.com/OkavangoBreamClassic

AUGUST

The Okavango Delta Music Festival, Okavango Delta, Botswana

This three-day music festival in the Okavango Delta helps the Tsutsubega rural community.

www.okmusicfestival.com

The Nkashi Classic, Maun, Botswana

This is a celebration of Botswana's culture, with *mokoro* races to crown the Delta's fastest poler.

nkashi.co.bw

Tsodilo Hills Heritage Challenge, Tsodilo Hills, Botswana

This desert walk raises funds for cultural development and tourism at Tsodilo Hills World Heritage Site.

www.facebook.com/Tsodilo-Hills-Heritage-Challenge-235486037087154

Zambezi Classic, Katima Mulilo, Namibia

Hosted by the Nwanyi Angling Club on the Zambezi, anglers compete for the longest and heaviest fish of a given species.

www.facebook.com/nwanyianglingclub

SEPTEMBER

Zambezi International Regatta, Livingstone, Zambia

This is a regatta of rowboats, rafts and dugout canoes upstream of the Victoria Falls.

lsf.co.zm/zambezi-international-regatta

Hwange Game Census, Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe

On the last full moon in September or October, volunteers participate in a 24-hour game count throughout Hwange National Park.

pbirch@yoafrica.com

Lusata Cultural Festival, Chinchimane, Namibia

This cultural festival celebrates traditional values of the Mafwe people in the chief's tribal village of Chinchimane.

Cisiyankulu Cultural Festival (Basubiya), Kavimba, Botswana

This cultural event commemorates the history of the Bekuhane/Basubiya people in song, dance and storytelling.

www.botswanatourism.co.bw

OCTOBER

Kariba Invitation Tiger Fish Tournament, Lake Kariba, Zimbabwe

Teams compete on Lake Kariba to see who can catch the heaviest haul of tiger fish.

kitft.co.zw

NOVEMBER

Maun International Arts Festival, Maun, Botswana

This event nurtures local and international artists in theatre, dance, music, poetry, literature and visual arts.

www.poetavango.org.bw

DECEMBER

Victoria Falls Carnival, Zimbabwe

The culmination of this three-day music festival is a lively New Year's Eve party.

www.vicfallscarnival.com/



Image: Björn Lauen

AFRICA'S BIGGEST NEW CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY

The Lisima Watershed Partnership is a 'conservation consortium' of non-government organisations brought together by the *National Geographic* Okavango Wilderness Project. Their main objective is to conserve the primary water sources of KAZA. This involves the

protection of entire river basins in the central Angolan highlands, known as the Okavango-Zambezi Water Tower, to preserve their current near-pristine state.

There's a grand vision for a wildlife corridor 1500km (932 miles) long, connecting Angola's source lakes and the upper reaches of the Kwando, Okavango and Zambezi Rivers, through Namibia and into Botswana. To realise this, a network of new ecosystems in partnership with the Angolan government is required.

KAZA seasons

WET SEASON

(GREEN SEASON)

Rains are foretold by baobab trees sprouting leaves three to four weeks before rainfall, and by huge storm clouds gathering in late October, which can be so oppressively hot that it has the nickname 'Suicide Month'. Rains are expected in November, most commonly as afternoon downpours, peaking in January and February and ending around March. These are the warm summer months, with temperatures and humidity high and mosquitoes prevalent. Green Season tourism offers lower prices and rewards such as newborn antelopes and the arrival of migrant birds to swell the species list; however, the bush is thick so it can be difficult to spot animals.

DRY SEASON

The dry season extends from May to October, and as inland water sources dry up, animals congregate in huge numbers along rivers and at borehole-pumped waterholes. The bush is sparse and the game is easy to see, so safaris are rewarded with excellent sightings. This is the best time for walking safaris and

game drives, fishing competitions, sports events and cultural festivals. There is no rainfall during these winter months, and days are sunny and warm, but nights are cold and can get below freezing on higher ground in parks like Hwange and Kafue. It's common to find a hot-water bottle in your bed or a steaming bubble bath ready for you after an evening game drive. Daytime temperatures increase towards the end of the dry season, when come October, the heat soars above 40°C and the expectation of rain is high.

FLOOD SEASON

You may expect the flood season to coincide with the wet season in KAZA, but that's not the case. After the heavy rains in Angola's elevated forested river catchment areas, enormous volumes of water are released into the river systems downstream. The rivers gather momentum and flow steadily southwards, with the floodwaters arriving in the KAZA region several months after the initial rainfall, saturating the floodplains and the Okavango Delta from about April or May until August or September. Water-based activities available at this time include mokoro safaris and boat trips.

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Image: Björn Lauen

These would comprise national parks and communally owned and privately owned areas, with sustainable community-based conservation efforts a priority. At 150000 sq km (57915 sq miles) – an area larger than England – this is the biggest conservation opportunity in Africa.

As part of the Okavango Wilderness Project, there have been five research expeditions along the full lengths of all the main Water Tower rivers from their sources in Angola, and five large-scale land-

based expeditions. Angola has amazed scientists, who have made discoveries of undocumented lakes, waterfalls, vast peatlands and what is now recognised as Africa's largest remaining intact miombo woodland. They've documented more than 70 species of flora and fauna new to science, and 100 species not previously known to occur in Angola. The Water Tower project may be the last chance in the 21st century to implement holistic ecosystem conservation on this scale in Africa.



KAVANGO ZAMBEZI
TRANSFRONTIER
CONSERVATION AREA

KAZA

This colourful exposition of KAZA, just touches on some of the fulfilling adventures to be found in the five countries that make up this world's largest transfrontier conservation area. Collaboration between Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe have resulted in ground-breaking achievements, enabling easy cross-border travel, enriched by greater interactions with communities, cultures and conservation. A visit to KAZA takes African travel to new heights.



Implemented by: **giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

