

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR YOUR AFRICA PHOTO SAFARI

Thank you for choosing *Iconic Images International* for your photographic safari. I hope you enjoy yourself as we travel together and discover this magnificent region of Africa and you advance your photographic knowledge and skills.

This short document provides useful information on:

1. How to look after your camera equipment on an African photo safari.
2. Backing up your images each day.
3. Vehicle etiquette.
4. Keeping healthy while on safari.
5. Travel and camera equipment checklist.
6. Summary itinerary for the Okavango Delta photo safari.
7. Specific Information about Packing Personal Effects and Camera Gear for this Photo Safari

Using the information and adhering to the guidelines below will enrich your safari experience and ensure you will return home with some iconic images and wonderful memories.

1. Travelling with and looking after photographic equipment in Africa

Pack the minimum amount of equipment necessary to photograph the subjects which interest you, as you will frequently shuttle gear in and out of vehicles and in some cases planes. Pack to avoid placing delicate camera equipment in you airline check-in luggage.

The easiest and safest way to transport your camera equipment is in soft-sided, well padded, dedicated camera bags whether they are backpack or roll-on types. These come in many shapes and sizes, but only purchase and bring bags sizes that will fit into the overhead lockers in aircraft. This increases your chances greatly of carrying all of your essential camera gear on-board so that you are ready to shoot on arrival, even if the bags you put in the aircraft hold are for some reason, delayed or lost. You can always acquire some temporary clothes if the latter happens. Trying to replace expensive camera gear, at short notice, in a strange place (especially in Africa), is a nightmare and is guaranteed to spoil the start your photo safari. See my article "*Flying & Travelling with Camera Gear*" which draws together all of my own experience gained over many years of travel within Australia and internationally. You can download a PDF of this article from <http://denisglennon.com/files/Flying-Traveling-with-Camera-Gear.pdf>

When on safari, a large size plastic bag or bin liner helps to keep the omnipresent dust, grit and rain drops off the camera gear. All the lodges we use will have bin liners at hand to help protect your cameras/lenses in case of rain. I always ensure I pack a few very light weight poncho style rain covers.

When driving around ensure you keep your cameras and lenses on a nearby soft seat or in a light-weight backpack (possibly hanging over the back of the seat in front of you) and **not on the hard floor**. Some of the roads in the parks and reserves can be bumpy, pot-holed or corrugated. Do not use your laptops whilst travelling in vehicles.

At the end of each day it is essential to clean your camera gear. I use a soft bristle artist's brush and dry soft cloth to remove the inevitable dust that will find its way on to the areas around controls buttons, viewfinder, LCD screen and on carrying straps. Do not clean with a damp cloth. When travelling in the vehicles keep the windows closed to prevent dust blowing all over everybody's equipment.

Having clean gear available each morning means you can start shooting as soon as the first light arrives. You will generally be departing the lodges/camps for the early morning shoots, whilst it is *still dark*. This is not the best time to think about cleaning lenses or cameras!

2. Keeping up with downloading and backing up images at the end of each day's shooting is a **MUST**.

One thing is certain whilst away from your home base; laptop hard drives do and will fail. Murphy's Axe appears to always strike when the hard drive is just about full of your best images and you have no back-up copies!

To avoid the disappointment of losing even one image whilst you are on an Iconic Images photo safari, I recommend this simple, efficient and fool-proof (if followed) backup strategy.

- a. Download your images to a notebook/laptop or portable hard drive at the end of **every** day.
- b. Delete all of the 'out-of-focus' and 'less worthy' images; be reasonably ruthless with this first cull; also see e) below.
- c. Back up your retained images to **two** separate external hard drives on the same evening.

- d. Don't move or delete any of the retained images from your laptop unless it becomes absolutely necessary. External hard drives are compact to pack, come in sizes up to 1TB and are quite inexpensive to purchase. This will give you three copies of each image, one of which will remain on your laptop.
- e. A time however is likely to come, usually towards the end of a very fruitful safari, when the number of images on your laptop may affect its operating speed and you will have to move or delete some of them. An easy way to help avoid getting to this stage is to be ruthless in your first cull.
- f. Some photographers choose to store one of the external hard drives with someone else on the photo safari/- your spouse/roommate/fellow traveller. I personally do not do this, but it is an additional safeguard.

Using this fast and easy method, you will be guaranteed of not losing any of your images. Some people use extra memory cards as a form of back up along with two types of other storage. As long as you don't mix up the cards and do not try to reuse the ones holding images, this method is also reasonably full proof. However, in the middle of some exciting photography and your in-camera card shows full, it is so easy to mistakenly format a card on which you have stored images. It is extremely difficult to recover images from a formatted card!

Please note the steps recommended in Steps a, b, c, d, e is the way I do things and only my suggestion. You are free to use your own method if you believe it equally fool proof.

3. Vehicle etiquette and consideration for fellow passengers and photographers.

Participants may be require to rotate seats in the vehicles, (unless we have been informed otherwise) to ensure no one is perceived to have any advantage whilst photographing. I regret that anyone failing to advise us, before the tour, of any limitations to rotation of seats, will be expected to participate in the rotation.

A respectful adherence to the few additional requirements outlined below, will ensure you and your companions in the vehicle will enjoy a positive experience when on safari.

- Please keep noise levels low at animal sightings. This allows people to enjoy some wonderful scenes of 'nature at play' and listen to sounds that the animals may be making. Often these sounds will alert you to some behaviour and allows you to anticipate any action that may occur.
- If you are seated in the front of the vehicle, please have consideration for the people behind you. A pre-arranged chat at the start of each photo safari is an excellent way to work out how you will be photographing and working around

- each other. It provides a positive working environment and allows everyone to photograph happily in the vehicle. We will speak further about this when we meet at the commencement of the photo safari.
- When photographing, keep movement to a minimum. If you are going to shift places, then alert others in the vehicle of your intention and do so as swiftly, smoothly and directly as possible.
- Please do not do anything to effect the behaviour of the animals.
- Your driver/guide has to adhere to certain park/reserve requirements and etiquette at sightings that you may not be fully aware of. The driver/guide's behaviour is frequently monitored by park rangers and a breach of protocol (forced by a tour participant) may result in the loss of the driver/guide's licence and livelihood. This may mean, on the odd occasion, you cannot stop exactly where you would like. Please bear this in mind at sightings, especially when there are vehicles from other camps around. We have some of the best driver/guides who have worked with and understand the specific needs of photographers. They play a very significant part in getting you to the best locations and their ability to find and anticipate animal behaviour will amaze you. Please treat them as friends and with respect. You will be rewarded many times over.

4. Staying Healthy in Africa

The condition that affects most people visiting Africa is 'Traveller's Diarrhea' and is usually caused by bacteria or parasites entering the body when contaminated food or water is taken. In the vast majority of cases the diarrhea will disappear within a week or so, but if you get it, it is guaranteed to totally spoil your photo safari. There are no 'public toilets' on our photo safaris!

Should the dreaded diarrhea visit you, the following steps may help:

- *Drink plenty of fluids* - diarrhea often carries a risk of dehydration, especially if it includes vomiting. It is important to prevent hydration so make sure you are getting plenty of fluids, especially those containing electrolytes such as fruit juices and sports drinks. Avoid alcohol until you are feeling better.
- *Eat as soon as you feel up to it* - doctors used to tell people not to eat until the symptoms went away. They now recommend patients start with foods such as pasta, bread, rice or potatoes - foods high in carbohydrates, as soon as possible. Add a bit of salt to the food to replace salt loss. Avoid foods that are high in fat.
- *Medications* – 'over-the-counter' medicines such as Loperamide, Imodium, Buscopan, Lomotil or Valoid may slow down bowel movements and may also

increase the gut's water absorption. Please check with your doctor before you leave for Africa. Do not take anti-diarrhea medications if there is blood in the stools or if you have a fever.

It is very important to remain hydrated at all times when on safari. Drink only bottled water in Africa. Use bottled water to brush your teeth. Avoid salads where you think the ingredients may have been washed with local untreated water.

Malaria exists in certain areas in Africa. There are many types of anti-malaria medicines available and I recommend you consult your doctor, or health clinic specialising in travel medicine, such as *Travel Clinics Australia* as to which brand you should take if you do decide to.

If you are on specific medication ensure you *carry it in your hand luggage*. Certain drugs/prescriptions are unlikely to be available in the remote areas we will be visiting.

5. Travel and Camera Equipment Checklist

There are many comprehensive check lists available for international travellers. I have compiled the check list below. It helps me prepare for just about any photographic trip.

The section on photographic gear is a recommendation of the gear that I take. You are not required bring all of this gear with you. If you have it, bring it, but do not go out and buy special gear for this photo safari.

Travel Documents

- Passport – make a copies of the ID pages and carry in place separate to passport
- Visa – if needed
- ID Documents – driver's licence
- Flight ticket/s
- Itinerary – leave a copy with friend
- Travel Insurance – especially emergency contact numbers, email and physical addresses
- Vaccination Certificates – if needed

Personal Items and Clothing

- Hat – wide brimmed
- Sunscreen, lip balm, moisturizer, sun block
- Sunglasses – plus spare pair

- Reading glasses – plus one spare pair
- Cotton shirts, long sleeved – laundry facilities generally available and inexpensive
- Cotton shirts, short sleeved
- Cotton long pants
- Cotton shorts
- Warm top/s
- Wind breaker/rain jacket
- A light poncho-style plastic rain cover/coat
- “Inners” thin light gloves - to wear on early morning shoots
- Walking or hiking shoes
- A ‘Beanie’ – can be very cold on early morning shoots
- Toiletries
- Small alarm clock - if your mobile does not have an alarm
- Journal & pens (or iPad)
- Mobile phone – coverage is excellent throughout most of Africa but roaming charges are expensive. Consider purchasing a local SIM card on arrival

Camera Equipment

- Camera bodies – I always take two
- Camera manuals – also place electronic copies on your laptop
- Spare batteries for cameras
- Battery charger(s) and power leads for same
- Power adaptors – check type as electrical sockets vary across Africa
- Australian power board with at least 4 outlets; power is 240 volts/50Hz
- Memory cards – I use at 8Gb size or larger and carry at least 8 cards
- Wallet for holding memory cards
- Lens cleaning cloth/s
- Lenses – wide angle and telephoto; see note in Sec. 8 below re possible choice of lenses for wildlife photography
- Wimberley head – for very large telephoto lenses; beanbag will be main support
- Filters - UV, polariser and graduated neutral density
- Tele-converters
- Body and lens caps – to replace those lost on safari
- Flash – if you generally use it
- Cable or electronic remote shutter release
- Batteries for flash
- Large blower brush – the extent of the dust will surprise you
- Sensor cleaning set & fluid – you will get dust on the sensor!
- Laptop & power cables – lightest laptop possible
- Rechargeable batteries and charger – if you normally use these

- External hard drives – I travel with four, the smallest of which is 500 Gb.
- Power cables for external hard drives
- Monopod – can be useful in vehicles and easy to pack with clothes
- Tripod – if you are keen on landscapes
- Tripod head and quick release plate
- Beanbag – we will supply some, but I always travel with my own
- Camera vest – with greatest number of large pockets
- Non-oversized duffle bag with wheels – for all the non-camera stuff that goes in the aircraft hold
- Camera bag(s) – a light backpack is good for using in vehicles
- Plastic zip lock bags
- Cable ties – useful for locking backpacks that you might wish to leave alone
- Binoculars
- Jeweller's screwdrivers – *always packed in check-in luggage*
- Swiss army knife – *always packed in check-in luggage*
- Leatherman multitool with pliers – *always packed in check-in luggage*

Personal Medical Items

- Copy of any medical prescriptions
- Copy of prescription glasses
- Note of any allergies to any medication
- Mosquito repellent
- Diarrhea tablets
- Aspirin/Paracetamol
- Antihistamine – for bites
- Multipurpose antiseptic
- Painkillers
- Insect repellent – preferably not containing DEET (damage to camera bodies)
- Malaria prophylactics - if you are travelling in a malaria area.

Money and Travel

- Foreign exchange – US dollars *dated after 2000* are accepted in Africa
- A small amount of local currency
- Credit cards – stored on person and *do not let them out of your sight* in Africa
- Advise your bank of countries you will be visiting; cancelled cards are a nuisance

Tips and gratuities

- Tips are not compulsory as an amount has been included in your photo safari cost. We always pay gratuities to the drivers/guides. If you believe you have received extra levels of service from lodge/camp staff you are free to tip them.

6. Itinerary for Okavango Delta Photo Safari – Nov/Dec 2011

The table provides a summary of the daily itinerary for your photo safari.

Date	Transfer	Accommodation
27 Nov	Arrive South Africa – vehicle transfer to Guesthouse	Waterkloop Guesthouse, Pretoria
28 Nov	Flights J'burg/Maun/Savuti Lodge	Savuti Lodge – 3 nights
1 Dec	Flight transfer to Kwara Camp	Kwara Camp – 4 nights
5 Dec	Flight transfer to Lebala Camp	Lebala Camp – 5 nights
10 Dec	Vehicle transfer to Lagoon Camp	Lagoon Camp – 4 nights
14 Dec	Flight transfer to J'burg for connection to Australia	N/A
15 Dec	Arrive Australia	N/A

Those who have also selected the optional extension to Victoria Falls will fly from Botswana to Zambia on 14th Dec and stay at the Sussi & Chuma Lodge for two nights before returning to Johannesburg to connect with their international flights to Australia or elsewhere.

Highlights of the Okavango Delta Photo Safari

- Photograph the best and most stunning wildlife the Okavango Delta has to offer under the guidance of three competent wildlife photographers
- Capture the big predator cats in several locations
- Stay in exclusive lodges/camps; we have booked each Okavango Delta camp exclusively for our group
- Photograph Africa's wild dogs, (now an endangered species) in the best places
- This is not a rushed 'game-viewing' tour as it lasts 20 days, from 26 Nov to 15 Dec 2011
- Our drivers/guides have been selected because they have experience in working with photographers; they are accustomed to waiting, in order to capture that 'decisive moment'
- There will be a maximum of four photographers/persons per vehicle
- There is an additional post safari option to photograph the majestic Victoria Falls, and enjoy a memorable cruise on the Zambezi River

7. Specific Information about Packing Personal Effects and Camera Gear for the Okavango Delta Photo Safari

As we will be flying between camps/lodges please read the following information carefully.

We have chartered a "Cessna Caravan" plane solely for our group; hence we confine the number of participants in the photo safari to a maximum of twelve. This plane can take extra luggage as it has additional cargo space in the hold as well as in a space behind the passenger seats. This is in contrast to the much smaller "Cessna 206" planes that are normally used in the Delta.

We will not be confined to the usual low weight of 15 kgs per person, *inclusive of camera gear* as your hand luggage (i.e. your cameras, lenses, etc.) can be carried with you onto the plane and are not part of the usual weight consideration/restrictions. To assist in this regard we **require** that you:

- Keep your personal effects (in-hold) luggage as close to 15kg per person as possible.
- **Do not** travel with **HARD** suitcases, only hold-all/duffle bag for your in-hold personal gear.
- Pack you camera gear in bags such as those manufactured by Lowepro, Think Tank etc.
- Ensure you have your long lenses (>300mm) well packed in the protective packs designed for such lenses as they may have to go under the seat in front of you.

Note: We need to do our bit to keep the pilots in the Okavango Delta happy and in-hold luggage, especially hard suitcases weighing 20kgs or so tend to upset some of them more than a little. We do not wish to experience any luggage left behind on the air strip!!

8. Possible Choice of Lenses for Okavango Delta Photography

On this photo safari wildlife photography is the prime objective but do not discount the natural beauty of the delta particularly at the time of the first rains.

I suggest a telephoto lens in the range of 300mm to 500mm, plus a 1.4 x converter for 35mm cameras. If you are serious about shooting wildlife you will likely be looking at taking along a 600mm or an 800mm lens. For hand-held photography, e.g. birds in flight, you might consider a 100-400mm or equivalent lens.

A typical camera bag on an Iconic Images photo safari might contain a 16-35mm, 24-70mm, 70-200mm, 100-400mm or a straight 400mm, whilst the more serious shooters will also have a >500mm lens. For fun shots we are seeing more and more fish-eye lenses. Photographers who carry camera bags like this 'run the gauntlet' at airport check-in but most have worked out ingenious ways to arrive on board with all of their

precious camera gear, not caring a hoot about unimportant gear like clothes that end up in the aircraft hold!

Can you capture the magic of Africa with less than the above? Absolutely!
We look forward to showing you how.

One Final Note

As you go out into nature to photograph its incredible beauty, it is helpful if you have done a little homework in advance so that you have a cursory working knowledge of the environment you are about to immerse yourself into. Most areas on the planet are now covered by a wealth of field guides, natural history books and first class videos, all available on the internet. There are new publications appearing every few days.

Your advance preparation will greatly enhance your enjoyment of the area and your advance knowledge of the behaviours of the animals and birds you may encounter will actually improve your photography as well.

Thank you again for selecting *Iconic Images International*.