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TRAVEL

Stylish Safaris

by Teresa Rodriguez

The only things that most jetsetters want dry is champagne and martinis. But you can add African safaris to that list, as well. In arid months like June, there's not much grass for those beautiful creatures to hide in, and the drinking areas are limited, forcing herds and birds to gather in the same places, making them easier to find. It's like gala season on the savanna—a time for all the beautiful creatures to come out and show off their splendor.

EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

While Nob Hill has the Big Four, Kwandwe Private Game Reserve has the big five: lions, elephants, leopards, buffalo and rhinos. With 54,000 acres of private African wilderness, this game reserve is South Africa's largest big five private game viewing area. Its 22 incredibly opulent rooms are divided between two small, luxuriously appointed lodges and two exclusive safari villas. Highlights of your stay will include sunset dinners held in a stone-walled enclave lit by blazing lanterns, a roaring pit fire and dazzling South African stars. Breathe in the enormous landscapes, huge vistas and incredible scenery—just make sure you don't get lost. You don't know what may be hiding in the bushes.

If you go: Fly to Port Elizabeth via Johannesburg. Ground travel to the reserve is 2½ hours with driver or one hour via private aircraft. Prices start at \$500 per person per night, all-inclusive; visit [kwandwe.com](#).

KWAZULU NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

If you ever dreamed of Zululand, here's your chance to experience it—in pure, unadulterated luxury. A member of Leading Hotels of the World, Thanda Private Game Reserve is on 35,000 acres of spectacular wilderness with excellent game-viewing sites. You'll spend your days on big five game drives, specialized bush walks, Zulu cultural tours into the rural community, and guided photographic safaris. Thanda's expert trackers and guides provide in-depth knowledge of the land and the bush. Three magnificent accommodation options are available: Thanda Safari Lodge, abundant in size and as colorful as its people; Villa iZulu ("heaven"), a majestic five-suite villa; and Thanda Tented Camp, which offers glampers a relaxed, nonelectrified safari experience.

If you go: Fly to Johannesburg, then fly to Phinda airstrip for the 20-minute drive to the lodges. Accommodations start at \$520 per person per night, all-inclusive; visit [thanda.com](#).

RWANDA AND UGANDA

This unforgettable safari takes you deep into the jungles to track gorillas, and high up in the sky to take in the vastness that is Parc National des Volcans in Rwanda, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park in Uganda. Recommended for those who spend more time working out than eating out, this safari offers hikes through the misty forests of Africa with outstanding guides who share privileged insights into the fascinating world of the great apes. Highlights include gorilla tracking, golden monkey tracking, volcano hikes and a Batwa heritage experience at the Mount Gahinga Lodge.

If you go: Fly into Rwanda's capital city, Kigali. You will be staying at Virunga Lodge, which is about 20 minutes by helicopter. Prices start at \$6,478 per person for an eight-day safari; visit [volcanoessafaris.com](#).

ZAMBIA

We've all harbored that Out of Africa fantasy: sitting on a veranda overlooking the vast African wilderness with every creature comfort beautifully designed and at our beck and call. Chinzombo, a safari lodge in Zambia, can give you all of that (minus Robert Redford). It's a "tented camp" designed by Rech + Carstens, the team behind North Island in the Seychelles. The eight-night Luangwa Luxury Safari includes four nights at Chinzombo and four nights at Mchenja Camp. This is definitely the safari for those who prefer their gin and tonics in the bush or on a deck while watching wildlife pass by. Of course, you can go and explore during the day. But just in case you want to relax, why not enjoy a signature spa treatment or request snacks by the riverside?

If you go: Fly from Johannesburg to Lusaka, then fly on to Mfuwe, for a one-hour drive to Chinzombo. All-inclusive rates from Mfuwe start at \$13,840 for two people for eight nights; visit [normancarrsafaris.com](#).

TANZANIA

The Serengeti National Park is considered by many to be the quintessential African game-viewing experience. There you get to witness the wildebeest migration, where almost two million animals move across the plains and woodlands. Your first stop is the luxurious Klein's Camp, which affords fantastic views of the iconic valley. Fine linen, silver and china sparkle in the candlelight of the open dining areas, while mouth-watering aromas drift in from the kitchen. Fresh roses adorn bathrooms outfitted with huge showers and chandelier-lit bathtubs, while floor-to-ceiling windows ensure breathtaking views. Finally, spend a few nights in a luxury tree house lodge at Lake Manyara, where spacious bedrooms float in a sea of vegetation, and you can hear elephants roaming the forest floor below. If you want, top off your safari with a stay at Mnemba Island Lodge in Zanzibar, a barefoot luxury paradise in the Indian Ocean.

If you go: Fly into Kilimanjaro Airport and the staff will take care of everything else. Trips are eight days/seven nights, with optional three-night Zanzibar extensions starting at \$10,500 per person; visit [elevatedestinations.com](#).

BOTSWANA

Audley Travel's 10-day "Very Best of Botswana" safari includes everything: opulent accommodations, drinks, meals, internal flights, activities, game-viewing and even taxes. You will get to explore three different parts of the famed Okavango Delta in some of the most luxurious lodges Africa has to offer. You can view game from the air, in a safari vehicle, on foot, or by mokoro (dugout canoe). Your first stop is Vumbura Plains, considered one of the most opulent camps in Botswana. Then it's off to Chief's Island in the Moremi Game Reserve and a stay at Mombo Camp, which is one of Botswana's most famous and luxurious camps. Another fabulous location you'll visit is King's Pool Camp, which has nine luxury suites overlooking the King's Pool Lagoon.

If you go: Fly into Maun, Botswana, where a light aircraft will fly you across the delta to the private Vumbura Concession. Prices start at \$19,110 per person for the 10-day trip; visit [audleytravel.com/us](#).

Teresa Rodriguez is a travel expert and the founder of [tangodiva.com](#). She is also the author of several books, including *Fly Solo: The 50 Best Places on Earth for a Girl to Travel Alone*; *Solo: 7 Keys to Conquering the World Alone*; and *Body, Mind*.