

The Most Luxurious Train in the World



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ITINERARY + JOURNEY**

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THE AIR SAFARI ITINERARY

DAY 1	
12h00	<p>Arrive at Rovos Rail Capital Park Station. A light lunch is served on the balcony of the station building.</p> <p>Board the vehicles for the short trip to Wonderboom Airport.</p> <p>Board your private aircraft for a flight to the Phinda airfield.</p> <p>Board the vehicles and transfer to Phinda Mountain Lodge.</p> <p>Depart on an afternoon game drive.</p> <p>Comfortable clothes and shoes for hot days and cool evenings are essential. Sun tan lotion and hats are strongly recommended. As the sun drops during the drive it can get very chilly so please take along warm clothing.</p> <p>Dinner is served between 19h30 and 20h00.</p> <p>Overnight at the lodge.</p>
13h00	
13h50	
15h30	
16h00	
DAY 2	
05h45	<p>Accompanied by skilled game rangers, guests set out on an early morning game drive. After returning to the lodge for breakfast the rest of the morning is at leisure or you may enquire from your ranger as to the various extra activities on offer.</p> <p>A nature walk is available for approximately 1 hour.</p> <p>Join your fellow travellers for lunch.</p> <p>Meet for the afternoon game drive.</p> <p>Dinner is served between 19h30 and 20h00.</p> <p>Overnight at the lodge.</p>
11h00	
13h00	
15h30	
DAY 3	
08h45	<p>After breakfast transfer to the airfield.</p> <p>Depart the Phinda airfield for Plettenberg Bay on the Garden Route in the southern Cape.</p> <p>Arrive at the Plettenberg Bay airport and transfer to Hunter’s Country House where lunch will be served and the afternoon is spent at leisure.</p> <p>Enjoy dinner at Hunter’s Country House.</p>
19h30	
12h00	
19h30	

**Excursions may be changed according to schedule achieved
Times are approximate and cannot be guaranteed**

THE AIR SAFARI ITINERARY

DAY 4	
09h00 16h30 17h15	After breakfast, depart from the hotel for a tour to the Tsitsikamma National Park & Storms River. Lunch will be enjoyed en route. Transfer Back to Hunter's Country House to freshen up. Depart the hotel for an excursion to Knysna. Dinner will be served whilst enjoying a lagoon cruise. Return to the hotel for overnight.
DAY 5	
08h45 09h30 11h00 14h30 20h00	After breakfast, transfer to Plettenberg Bay airport. Depart Plettenberg Bay for Cape Town. Arrive in Cape Town and transfer to the Cape Grace Hotel where a light lunch will be served in the Bascule Bar whilst your rooms are being prepared for check-in. Afternoon orientation tour of Cape Town city which includes a cable car ride up Table Mountain - weather permitting. From the top of Table Mountain one can enjoy spectacular views of the city and coastline. Dinner will be enjoyed at Baia Seafood Restaurant. Baia is situated at the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront so you may enjoy a leisurely stroll from the hotel. Your Pilot will escort you to the restaurant.
DAY 6	
09h00 20h00	Breakfast followed by departure on optional tours. Dinner at the Cape Grace Hotel at the Signal Restaurant. Optional Tours: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Full Day Winelands Tour •Full Day Cape Point & Cape Of Good Hope Tour. •Half Day Tour of Robben Island – space and weather permitting. •Lunch is included in both the full day tours.
DAY 7	
07h00 08h00 11h00 15h00 16h30 20h00	Transfer to Cape Town International Airport after an early breakfast. After immigration formalities depart from Cape Town. Arrive in Lüderitz. Clear Namibian customs and immigration. Board the vehicles for a 20-minute drive to the mining ghost town of Kolmanskop followed by lunch. Return to Lüderitz airport for the flight to Wolwedans. Arrive at the Wolwedans airfield and transfer to the Wolwedans Dunes Lodge with a sundowner stop en route. Dinner at the lodge.

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DAY 8	
08h00 20h00	<p>08h00 Breakfast followed by departure on optional tours. Dinner at the lodge.</p> <p>Optional Tours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Morning and afternoon nature drives in the NamibRand Nature Reserve. •A full day safari with picnic lunch en-route at one of the famous picnic sites, the 'HardRock Café. •There is also the option to go ballooning over the desert. (Additional N\$3 050 per person sharing - approximate). <p>Please note: The following day's itinerary includes a light aircraft transfer to Khwai River Lodge. Please note that only 'soft bags' are allowed and we kindly request you to make use of the Rovos Rail tog-bags provided. Your remaining luggage will be kept safe on the aircraft in Maun.</p>
DAY 9	
06h00 08h00 09h00 11h40 13h30 15h30	<p>Enjoy an early morning breakfast before the 07h15 departure for the Wolwedans arfield.</p> <p>Take off for the flight to Windhoek.</p> <p>Arrive at Windhoek Airport where border formalities will take place before continuing onto Maun in Botswana.</p> <p>Arrive in Maun where we clear customs and immigration. Board a light aircraft for your flight over the Okavango Delta to Khwai River Lodge. Only your overnight tog-bag will be allowed on the light aircraft with the balance of your luggage remaining locked up in the aircraft at Maun airport.</p> <p>Transfer to the camp for lunch.</p> <p>Enjoy a late afternoon game experience before dinner and overnight at the camp.</p>
DAY 10	
06h30 11h00 15h30	<p>Enjoy breakfast at the lodge before departing a morning game experience.</p> <p>Brunch is served.</p> <p>Enjoy a late afternoon game experience before dinner and overnight at the camp.</p> <p>There is also a chance to do a 45 minute helicopter ride (included).</p>
DAY 11	
10h00 11h15 12h05 13h00 19h00	<p>After guest activities and breakfast, board the light aircraft and return to Maun airport where you will be re-united with the rest of your luggage. After immigration formalities depart for Livingstone in Zambia.</p> <p>Arrive at Livingstone airport and transfer to the Royal Livingstone Hotel. Enjoy lunch at the Royal Livingstone Hotel (food account to be placed on the Rovos Rail master account).</p> <p>Dinner at your own leisure at the Royal Livingstone Hotel (food account to be placed on the Rovos Rail master account).</p>

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DAY 12	
13h00 15h30 20h00	<p>Day at leisure. An activities desk is provided in the foyer of the hotel. To avoid disappointment clients are urged to visit the Falls Entertainment and Activity Centre and appropriate tour operator desks as soon as possible after arrival to secure a booking for the various activities on offer.</p> <p>Enjoy lunch at the Royal Livingstone Hotel (food account to be placed on the Rovos Rail master account).</p> <p>Meet promptly in reception for a Sundowner cruise on the Zambezi River. Your farewell dinner to be served at the Royal Livingstone Hotel where your pilot will join you.</p> <p>Activities: Kindly note that the following activities are optional and will be for guests' own account.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Air Adventures - which include helicopter, micro lighting or fixed wing. ● River Excursions - Canoe Safari Experience ● Action Water Adventures - white water rafting or tandem kayaking. ● Personalised Tours - a tour of the Victoria Falls, Chief Mukuni's Village, Livingstone Museum, Rhino Safari, Chobe Day (Botswana), Railway Museum, Maramba Market, Historic Tour of Livingstone or The Livingstone Island Luncheon. ● Safaris and Specialised Activities - horse trail safari, elephant back safari, bungee jumping
DAY 13	
08h30 09h45 12h00	<p>After breakfast transfer to Livingstone Airport.</p> <p>After immigration formalities depart for Johannesburg, South Africa.</p> <p>Arrive at Lanseria Airport near Johannesburg where your journey ends.</p>

Thank you for joining us on this unique Air Safari. We hope you will us again in the not too distant future.

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THE AIR SAFARI JOURNEY

Early signs of man's first settlement along the banks of the Apies River, in whose two broad and well-sheltered valleys Pretoria is situated, go back at least 350 years. Both Sotho and Ndebele people have dwelt here and in 1825, Mzilikazi the renegade Zulu chief who deserted Shaka with a number of followers established a stronghold on the banks of the Apies. The first European traders and the missionary Robert Moffat visited him there. Other Zulus also came to call and stories of his newfound prosperity soon spread. Shaka learnt of Mzilikazi's whereabouts and sent his armies to obtain retribution for his desertion. Mzilikazi warded off the attack but was forced to flee to the Marico district in the Western Transvaal.

In 1837 the Voortrekkers discovered the fertile valleys of the Apies River and set up a number of farms in the area. One of these early settlers was Andries Pretorius, a hero of the battle of Blood River, who established a farm in the valley at the confluence of the Apies and Crocodile rivers. Shortly after his death the Apies valley was chosen as the site for the capital of the newly created Boer republic, the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR). Marthinus Pretorius, son of Andries, selected a site on the farm Elandspoor and on 16 November 1855 the new town was named Pretoria in honour of his father.

Pretoria grew up around Church Square, originally the market place and focal point of the Boer community. Several impressive buildings were built around the square such as the Palace of Justice and the old Raadsaal (parliament) of the ZAR. Today Pretoria is the administrative and diplomatic capital of South Africa. The most notable of the cities edifices is the Union Buildings; designed by Sir Herbert Baker and built on Meintjieskop, the hill that dominates the centre of Pretoria. Built on a low hill outside the city is the monolithic Voortrekker Monument. Completed in 1949 to commemorate the Voortrekker's pioneering spirit, it is seen by some as an important memorial to Afrikanerdom and by others as a reminder of apartheid. Its interior frieze is said to be the second longest in the world.

During October and November Pretoria seems to shimmer with a mauve haze of blossoming jacarandas. In 1888 a citizen of Pretoria, J. A. Celliers imported two Jacaranda Mimosifolia trees from Rio de Janeiro. He planted them in the garden of Myrtle Lodge, his home in the suburb of Sunnyside. They still stand in the garden of what is now Sunnyside School.

In 1898 James Clarke obtained a contract to grow trees from the government. He ordered seed from Australia and included in the selection was a packet of seeds of the same species Celliers had imported. Clarke planted the seeds in the State nurseries at Groenkloof where they flourished. Today about 70 000 of these beautiful trees line the streets of the city.

Rovos Rail has its private station situated in Capital Park in Pretoria. This was once the bustling hub of steam locomotion in the old Transvaal. Officially opened in 1943, Capital Park, with its locomotive sheds and marshalling yard played a vital roll in the rail network around Pretoria before falling into disuse. Now the home of Rovos Rail, it boasts a small railway museum in addition to its other comprehensive facilities and will, with the addition of semaphore signals and a footbridge, recreate the atmosphere of a fully-fledged railway system. The gracious colonial style railway station serves as the new departure or arrival point for all train journeys except the Garden Route.

The aircraft will now take us into the Maputaland area of northern Kwa-Zulu Natal where we will find Phinda Private Game Reserve cradled within the arms of the Ubombo Mountains to the west and the azure sweep of the Indian Ocean to the east. Bordering the iSimangaliso/Greater St Lucia Wetland Park – a World Heritage Site – Phinda comprises 23 000 hectares of prime conservation land. The wild and diverse prime conservation land has seven distinct habitats ranging from palm savannah and montane bushveld, to rare sand forest and dense thornveld.

From its awakening as a vision born of far-sighted conservationists, Phinda has earned worldwide repute for its diversity and scenic wonder. And today, as the nucleus linking nearby conservation areas in the creation of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, Phinda has ensured the bio-diversity of this remarkable region. Phinda is bordered by Swaziland and Zululand to the west and Mozambique to the north. It falls into KwaZulu-Natal's northern-most region – Maputaland - which is a mostly flat area of game parks, wetlands and marine reserves. It is sparsely populated and one of the most unspoilt areas of the province.

Maputaland's name comes from the Maputo River. Once under water, Maputaland has risen slightly above sea level, so rivers meander their way to the sea, leaving a large number of freshwater and brackish lakes and pans. The small lakes are home to endless species of fish, water birds, crocodiles and hippos. Locals have developed ingenious traps across the lake to capture fish.

Phinda is partly made up of reclaimed cattle farms and needed to be restocked with the big game species whose habitat was destroyed by a century of agricultural activities. The varying eco systems provide shelter for an abundance of wildlife, including the big five: lion, leopard, elephant, black and white rhino and buffalo. The cheetah population has more than doubled since being reintroduced and has proved a huge success story. There are more than 380 bird species, and its marine diversity off the coast of Sodwana is said to rival Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

The Africa Foundation, part of the Phinda ethos, was founded in 1992 to facilitate a commitment to empowering communities through conservation. As an independently registered, not-for-profit organisation, Africa Foundation's primary focus is on education, health care and income generation development in the adjacent communities. A very special element is a visit to a Zulu community with an African Foundation representative. You will visit a school, see community projects and be introduced to song and dance, traditions and a strong sense of ubuntu (humanness). Visitors invariably feel a sense of privilege from the experience, and Phinda is proud of its contribution.

Our journey now takes us to the magnificent southern coast of South Africa and to Plettenberg Bay, a tranquil and charming jewel of the Garden Route with miles of sweeping, unspoiled golden beaches framed by the dramatic Robberg peninsula eight kilometers to the south of the village.

For two nights Hunters Country House hosts our stay in this beautiful part of the world. Craig and Jill Hunter bought the small farm (originally called Pear Tree Farm) in 1980, adding two cottages to accommodate their family of five children. After the children flew the nest they were persuaded to use the cottages as part of a Farm Bed & Breakfast Association. This formed the nucleus of what was to become an internationally acclaimed twenty-one suite hotel renowned for its service excellence, superb cuisine and beautiful gardens.

Long before Van Riebeeck landed at the Cape, Portuguese explorers like Bartholomew Dias in 1487 charted the bay in 1487. He was followed ninety years later by Manuel da Perestrello, who aptly called it Bahia Formosa or the Bay Beautiful.

Plettenberg Bay was named after Governor Joachim von Plettenberg, who incorporated the bay under the administrative sovereignty of the Dutch-East India Trading Company in 1778. The Company used the place primarily as a shipping port for the hardwood timber that grew everywhere. Later on a whaling station was built here, which was active until 1920.

A day will be spent exploring the Tsitsikamma National Park, a reserve well known for its indigenous forests and dramatic coastline. Tsitsikamma is a khoi word meaning 'place of abundant or sparkling water' and describes the 80km long stretch of coastline which stretches from the Bloukrans River in the west to Eerste Rivier in the east, is bordered on the north by the imposing Tsitsikamma mountains and in the south by the Indian Ocean.

The internationally recognised Outeniqua-Tsitsikamma indigenous forests are a unique mixture of Cape *fynbos* which harbour and conserve the giant Outeniqua yellowwood – one of the few true monarchs of the world's forests. This enormous tree is one of the most successful species in existence, having survived unchanged for millions of years. The Park is also Africa's oldest and largest marine reserve, playing a vital role in the preservation and conservation of marine fauna and flora.

The temperate forest and mild all year round climate offer the nature lover world-renowned hiking trails and an exciting opportunity to see the last remaining forest elephants in South Africa. The area teems with bird life, with nearly 300 species to be found in the great variety of habitats ranging from *fynbos* to forest to wetlands. No less than ten important nature reserves embrace the varied ecosystems as well as unique marine reserves, home to soft coral reefs, dolphins, seals and a host of other marine life. The bay

itself is a nursery to the endangered Southern Right whale which comes here to calf in the winter and spring.

Knysna, where we will spend an evening, has a lot to offer, historically and recreationally and has a delightful setting. It was founded by one of the most intriguing characters ever to set foot in South Africa. George Rex arrived from England at the turn of the 19th century and in 1817 was the first man to sail a ship safely into the lagoon so establishing a timber port. Why the Cape Governor treated him as a VIP was never recorded, but the belief held, subsequently proved completely false, that he was the illegitimate son of George III and a London Quakeress called Hannah Lightfoot. The town's Millwood Museum has a collection of his belongings. He certainly chose an attractive spot to settle.

The lagoon, now protected as the Knysna National Lake Area, runs out to sea between the two sheer red sandstone cliffs called the Heads, whose perils Rex defeated. The eastern of the two is easily accessible by land and gives splendid views and good rock fishing.

Pleasure boats do trips up the lagoon and to the Featherbed Nature Reserve on the Western Head, so called because the anchorage offshore is so calm. On the way out is Leisure Island, facing Knysna across the Lagoon. An oyster hatchery makes oysters a local speciality in season. Sadly the new N2 road is routed along the lagoon.

The town is proud of its semi-French atmosphere with pavement cafes, markets and sophisticated shops. Being among thousands of acres of hardwood forests, Knysna's craftsmen have become expert at making South Africa's highly prized traditional stinkwood furniture. The wood's hard, fine grain gives it a satiny finish usually oiled rather than polished. Yellowwood furniture is also attractive, similar to pine and light yet strong.

A short flight will take us to the Western Cape and our destination, Cape Town. Also called the 'Mother City' Cape Town was the site of the first European landings and settlement in Southern Africa after 1652. The subtle interplay of sea and mountain which characterises the Cape of Good Hope moved intrepid explorer Sir Francis Drake in 1580 to call it "the fairest Cape in all the circumferences of the globe." A description with which most visitors agree.

It is here, beneath the 1 000 metre high sandstone face of Table Mountain, that Jan van Riebeeck dropped anchor on 6 April 1652. He established a refreshment station for the Dutch East India Company to replenish the ships en-route to and from the spice islands of the East Indies (Indonesia and Malaya). Before Van Riebeeck landed others had long lived in the blue shadow of the mountain. They were the Khoikoi pastoralists with flocks of fat-tailed sheep and the San Hunters who lived off game animals. These ancient remains of Mankind's Stone Age childhood were innocent onlookers who by 1713 had been all but decimated by the Great Smallpox Epidemic. After 1702 black tribes were encountered for the first time about 700kms east of Cape Town around the Great Fish River, by eastward migrating white farmers - a meeting of two divergent cultures the consequences of which are still unfolding today.

There is an opportunity to visit one of three historically important areas in the Cape during our short sojourn here.

A journey through the lush Cape Winelands will soon reveal why South Africa has gained an international reputation for the production of award-winning wines. Surrounded by majestic mountains and stretching from the coast to the Klein Karoo, the Cape Winelands enjoys the perfect climate and growing conditions to support its many wineries. At the centre of the wine producing industry is the charming town of Stellenbosch with its oak-lined avenues and white-washed Cape Dutch buildings, while the picturesque town of Ceres is the hub of the area's thriving fruit farming industry. Other towns close to the city include Franschhoek, Paarl and Wellington - each with its own unique character and well worth visiting.

During the early days, Robben Island, which is 500 ha in size and is 12 kilometres off the coast, was used as prison colony and in 1961, South Africa's most notorious prison was established on Robben Island. Political prisoners of the anti-apartheid movement were kept here together with hardened criminals. The most prominent inmate was Nelson Mandela, who later became the first President of the new democratic South Africa. Here Mandela spent 27 years of his life in a tiny cell of 5 square metres. Nowadays Robben Island is a national memorial and a museum.

Situated at the junction of two of earth's most contrasting water masses - the cold Benguela current on the West Coast and the warm Agulhas current on the East Coast, the Cape of Good Hope is popularly perceived as the meeting point of the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans. Geographically, however, the Indian Ocean joins the Atlantic Ocean at Cape Agulhas.

The area was proclaimed a nature reserve in 1938 and it was incorporated into the Table Mountain National Park in 1998. It encompasses 7 750 hectares of rich and varied flora and fauna and its 40 kilometre coastline stretches from Schuster's Bay in the west to Smitswinkel Bay in the east. The cliffs at

the southern point, towering more than 200 metres above the sea, consists of three clearly defined promontories - Cape of Good Hope, Cape Maclear and Cape Point.

Leaving behind the fairest Cape in all the world, our private aircraft takes us on to Lüderitz, the largest town on Namibia's southern coast. Declared a municipality in 1909 its history goes back to long before diamonds were discovered - to the days of Bartholomew Diaz who first moored there in 1488. He was taking refuge from the Atlantic swell - and the barren emptiness of the Namib, which he called Sands of Hell. Diaz, the first European known to have ventured so far along the southwest coast of Africa, planted a stone cross on a rocky promontory looking out across the seascape. But, despondent at the idea that the barren shore would never end, he abandoned his search for a new route to India and returned to Portugal.

Then, as now, the sheltered harbour was a welcome and congenial contrast to the pounding surf of the Namibian coast. But, although a safe haven from the Atlantic's stormy seas, Lüderitz was as devoid of drinking water as the rest of the Namib. Nonetheless, whaling vessels, and those mining the nitrogen-rich guano deposits, continued to use its natural harbour.

It was in 1883 that Heinrich Vogelsang, an agent of the Bremen trader and tobacco dealer, Adolf Lüderitz, bought the bay from Joseph Fredericks, chief of the Bethanie Khoikhoi people. Soon after, Lüderitz made another audacious investment, staggering in its presumption, when he snapped up the entire coastline between Angra Pequena and the Orange River from Fredericks, who claimed he owned the land. Lüderitz, who arrived to inspect his investment in October of the same year, hoped the desert concealed mineral treasures that would make him rich. But he never found out, for soon afterwards he disappeared mysteriously while sailing from the Orange River to Lüderitz Bay in a small boat.

Lüderitz remained modest in size until the diamond boom shaped it into a charming and magnificent town, its distinctive architecture giving it the ambience of a little Germany, a Teutonic outpost far from its European homeland. Although it no longer enjoys the hustle and bustle of the glorious days of old, this fishing town of 5 000 people does have a stately enchantment, its mellow buildings slumbering in a mantle of antiquity. Characterised by clear blue skies with occasional gales, mist and rain Lüderitz rejoices in long periods of sunny days.

Two architects, brothers Heinrich and Albert Bause, contributed much to the grandeur of Lüderitz. Among the buildings they designed is the Deutsche Africa-Bank, completed in 1907, with a Renaissance style bell tower and gable. One of their most exceptional achievements is the Evangelical Lutheran 'Church of the Rocks' - Felsenkirche - at the southern end of the town. Albert Bause designed the church, which was completed in 1912, while his brother was responsible for the parsonage. It was paid for by public subscriptions from Germany and Kaiser Wilhelm II donated the altar window and the spectacular stained-glass windows, bearing his name and the imperial eagle of Germany, while his wife presented the altar bible. On its crude stone base, and with its stone tower, the church looks as if it has been hewn from the surrounding rock. The most spectacular of all Lüderitz's buildings is Goerke House on Diamond Hill. Seen from the streets of the town below, the house with its snaking stairway looks more like a fortress than the home. There a businessman, Hans Goerke, lived in the lap of colonial luxury for three years between 1909 and 1912.

With its tangled lanes and jumbled red and white rooftops, Lüderitz is deceptively beguiling for both traveller and resident. After enjoying lunch in this fairy-tale town, our guests will enjoy a short drive to the deserted ghost town of Kolmanskop. The diamond fever that swept southern Namibia early last century began at a place in the Namib called Kolmanskop which took its name from one of the first visitors to the desolate region, Jani Kolman, who had to be rescued when a voortrek of ox-wagons he was leading from Lüderitz to Keetmanshoop was overwhelmed by a sandstorm. Much later Kolmanskop became a boomtown - mushrooming from a single shack to a bustling community in months - after Zacharias Lewala's diamond discovery in April 1908.

Lewala gave the stone to August Stauch and, within days, he and other prospectors had pegged claims covering almost the whole coast from Conception Bay in the north to Marmora in the south. The diamond was no freak find but proof of the immense riches that this seemingly barren land had to offer. In fact, the southern Namib was one vast diamond field - a fact spectacularly confirmed one night when Stauch and Professor R. Scheibe, a geologist, visited Edatal, one of the valleys in the dunes. The desert winds had laid bare gravels so rich in diamonds that workmen dropped their loads and scooped them up by their hands. Soon there were so many that the men, not knowing where to put them, began stuffing them into their mouths. One observer recalled that the diamonds lay glistening on the desert floor by the light of a full moon ' like plums under a plum tree '.

Before a year had passed, prospectors were clawing away the desert sands at such remote places as Kolmanskop, Stauchslager, Charlottental and Bogenfels. And a year later Elisabethbucht had joined the

diamond rush, followed in 1912 by Pomona. Settlements spread across the desert and thousands flocked in to search for riches. Stauch became a millionaire playing a major role in developing South West Africa's livestock industry but when he died in near penury in Germany on 6 May 1947 he left behind him in Africa a fortune close to a million pounds.

At the time, however, the De Beers diamond conglomerate predicted that the Kolmanskop pipe would never be worth more than a million and a half carats. In fact, the sands of Kolmanskop produced enormous wealth. Shops and houses rose up overnight along with other enterprises designed to cash in on the riches being dug out of the ground. In its heyday, Kolmanskop was said to be more European than Europe. With their newfound wealth the inhabitants were able to afford all the luxuries and sophistication of a great city.

There was a soft drink bottling plant, swimming pool, and skittle alley - even a theatre with orchestra. The mine manager and engineers lived in elegant houses with fine, arched windows, balconies and verandas, overlooking the vastness of the desert. Soon, roads and pipelines linked Kolmanskop to Lüderitz and other parts of German South West Africa. One major problem was establishing sufficient supplies of fresh water. A borehole in the desert, 100 kilometres away at Garub, brought some relief. But most water was shipped in by sea from Cape Town to Lüderitz and hauled to Kolmanskop by mule. It was too costly to use in the diamond mine, however, so seawater was pumped thirty-five kilometres from Elizabeth Bay on the coast to the processing plant. Some was also turned into drinking water by a primitive prototype distillation plant, forerunner of today's desalination systems.

Kolmanskop's star began to wane in the years after the Great War with the worldwide slump in diamond sales. It was also hard hit by the discovery of the staggeringly rich diamond fields at Oranjemund. These reasons, coupled to the fact that the diamond seams were running dry, meant that Kolmanskop slowly died. By 1956 just one resident remained, and the desert had stolen back what hordes of rapacious prospectors had come to plunder. Other similar diamond ghost towns in the desert are Pomona, Bogenfels, Elisabethbucht and Charlottental. There, among the sands, stand macabre relics of immense riches - broken wheelbarrows and desolate graveyards where the wind and sand have rubbed away the names of the dead, and where, in the shimmering whiteness of a salt pan, shrubs struggle for existence.

Our next two days are spent at Wolwedans Dune Lodge, nestled into the dunes and set against a backdrop of extraordinary natural beauty. The lodge is located in the heart of NamibRand Nature Reserve from which there is an opportunity to explore vast stretches of awe-inspiring and undisturbed nature. NamibRand, one of Southern Africa's largest private nature reserves, originated as a dream of extending the desert frontiers through the integration of a large number of former sheep farms. The aim was to develop a sanctuary free of fences and create a 180 000 ha conservation area rich in flora and fauna.

Our next stop is the Okavango Delta, the world's largest inland delta. Described as "the jewel" of the Kalahari, the Okavango Delta is a tranquil and isolated oasis set in Botswana's harsh and arid desert - widely considered as being one of Africa's best safari destinations with its special diversity of fauna and flora. The delta environment has large numbers of animal populations that are otherwise rare, such as crocodile, red lechwe, sitatunga and wattled crane as well as the other more common mammals and bird life.

Nestled on the edge of a leadwood and fig tree forest, overlooking the vast Khwai River floodplains and beyond into the Moremi Wildlife Reserve, sits the luxurious Khwai River Lodge. Khwai is renowned for its large concentrations of mammals and it is not unusual to see many different types of wildlife from the comfort of your own private deck. As a year round destination for wildlife, predators can regularly be seen in the area, rated as one of the most prolific in Botswana for viewing wildlife. The exceptional location of Khwai makes it a regular host to elephant, buffalo, lion, leopard, cheetah and wild dogs. Birdlife can also be viewed in abundance with exceptional sightings of wildfowl and raptors near the lodge.

David Livingstone, the missionary doctor, was among the first of the early explorers to reach this lost world. Tantalised by African stories of an inland lake far across the desert, he set off with some friends in 1849 to pull their wagons across the unknown Kalahari and discovered not only Ngami, but also the outskirts of the Okavango. 'We came to a large stream,' he wrote. 'I enquired whence it came. ' Oh, from a country full of rivers, so many that no one can tell their numbers - and full of trees . . . We found the water to be so clear, cold and soft the higher we ascended that the idea of melting snow was suggested to our minds.'

The Okavango is born, not as snow, but as trickles of summer rain in the mountains of Angola. Just 300 kilometres from Africa's Atlantic coastline the highland streams gather together and strike vainly across the vast face of the subcontinent in search of another sea, the Indian Ocean some 3 000 kilometres to the east. When it reaches the plain it is a swift deep river which flows 1 000 kilometres before its torrent

falters, a hesitant invader of the Kalahari Desert. Then, sagging on sands 300 metres deep, disturbed and disordered by jolts in the earth's crust, the river spills into the braided channels, the swamps and lakes and lagoons of a 15 000 square kilometre wilderness. Where other rivers seek the ocean shores, the Okavango forms its delta on a sea of fitful sand. The Okavango is ever changing with channels of the river flowing one way this year, another way the next. Seemingly perverse, the floods pour down in the dry season when no rain falls. They get narrower, not wider as they run their course. A few steadily climb up above the countryside as if to defy the laws of water flow.

Yet these are the streams that feed the long, waving beds of papyrus, the hippo grass and water lilies that tangle the edges of the waterways. They feed the crocodile and hippo, the buffalo and elephant, the secretive aquatic antelope cowering in the wet greenery, the noisy babbler in the reeds, and the fish eagle watching from the sky. This is Botswana's sea of land, land of water.

Man has probably lived on the edge of the Okavango for at least 100 000 years. But the Okavango's modern history belongs to the newcomers, recent arrivals of less than 200 years ago. Until that time there were only a few scattered band of baNoka, or River Bushmen, who roamed where they could along the Okavango's winding waterfront. Then at different times, from different directions, came the baYei, the haMbukushu, the baTawana, baiZalahari, and the ovaHerero - many tribes sharing a diversity of skills to adapt to the rhythms of their unique environment.

Livingstone's brief journey to the Okavango country was to bring great changes to its peoples. For him the unknown was incentive enough, but his companions were after other rewards. They had heard 'flaming accounts of the quantities of ivory to be found there cattle pens made of elephant tusks of enormous size.'

Livingstone wrote of a trader in his party who 'was purchasing ivory at the rate of ten good large tusks for a musket worth thirteen shillings. The tusks were called bones and I myself saw eight instances in which the tusks had been left to rot with the other bones when the elephant fell. In less than two years after our discovery not a man of the baTawana could be found who was not keenly alive to the value of the article.'

In a single year, 1867, it was estimated that the tusks of 12 000 elephant passed through the hands of the traders at Shoshong on the edge of the desert. A new interior had been opened. With the ivory trade, Africans obtained muskets and went after big game. Soon rhino had been exterminated, buffalo driven north and elephant so depleted that only 2 000 remain in the Okavango Delta today.

Today there are more than 40 000 people living in and around the Delta and 70% of them earn no salary or own any cattle, but live off the land as they have always done. At the waterside women gather perfume from dried grass stems, or pluck water lily bulbs for the evening stew. Then it seems that time will never catch up on this corner of Africa after all.

Twice the size of Arizona, Botswana is in south-central Africa, bounded by Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The terrain is mostly an arid plateau (910 m high) with hills to the east and the Kalahari Desert in the south and west. In the northwest the Okavango (Cubango) River drains into the vast region of the Okavango Delta and Lake Ngami, thus forming a huge marshland. Rainfall varies from less than 23cm per year in the southwest to about 64 cm in the north. The climate is subtropical, but droughts are common.

The country's population is mainly Tswana, who speak a Bantu language and are divided into eight major groups. There are also small minorities of Kalanga, Basarwa, Kgalagadi, and other peoples. English is the official language, but Tswana is also widely spoken. About half the population is Christian and half adheres to traditional practices.

Cattle farming and the export of beef and other cattle products and subsistence farming are the chief agricultural activities. The country's water shortage and consequent lack of sufficient irrigation facilities have hampered agriculture, and only a small percentage of the land is under cultivation. Corn, sorghum, millet, and beans are the principal subsistence crops, and cotton, peanuts, and sunflowers are the main cash crops.

Mining has become the country's economic mainstay since independence. The only known minerals in the country at the time of independence were manganese and some gold and asbestos, but significant diamond, coal, nickel, and copper deposits have since been found, as well as salt and soda ash. Botswana's diamond mines collectively make up one of the largest diamond reserves in the world, with stones mined by the government and a South African mining concern. The revenue earned from diamonds has underwritten national health-care and educational programs, and now drives Botswana's economy. The vast coal deposits are also being worked. Deposits of antimony, sulphur, plutonium, and platinum have also been found.

Although Botswana's mineral wealth has made it one of the wealthiest nations of Southern Africa, high unemployment remains a problem. Development of the tourist industry has been based partly on the attraction of the country's game reserves, and financial services are an increasingly important sector of the economy. Botswana, because of its landlocked position, remains heavily dependent on South Africa, which provides port facilities. Many Botswana's people work in the South Africa's mines, although their numbers have diminished. There are rail and road links with South Africa and Zimbabwe, its chief trade partners. Botswana is a member of the Southern African Development Community.

The San people (Bushmen) were the aboriginal inhabitants of what is now Botswana, but they constitute only a small portion of the population today. The Tswana supplanted the San, who remained as subjects. Beginning in the 1820s, the region was disrupted by the expansion of the Zulu and their offshoot, the Ndebele. However, Khama II, chief of the Ngwato (the largest Tswana nation), curbed the depredations of the Ndebele and established a fairly unified state.

A new threat arose in the late 19th century with the incursion of Boers (Afrikaners) from neighbouring Transvaal. After gold was discovered in the region in 1867, the Transvaal government sought to annex parts of Botswana. Although the British forbade annexation, the Boers continued to encroach on native lands during the 1870s and 80s. German colonial expansion in Namibia (formerly South West Africa) caused the British to re-examine their policies, and, urged on by Khama III they established a protectorate called Bechuanaland in 1884-85. The southern part of the area was incorporated into Cape Colony in 1895. Until 1961, Bechuanaland was administered by a resident commissioner at Mafikeng, in South Africa, who was responsible to the British high commissioner for South Africa.

Britain provided for the eventual transfer of Bechuanaland to the Union of South Africa; in succeeding years, however, South Africa's attempts at annexation were countered by British insistence that Bechuanaland's inhabitants first be consulted. The rise of the National party in South Africa in 1948 and its pursuit of apartheid turned British opinion against the incorporation of Bechuanaland into South Africa. Although Bechuanaland spawned no nationalist movement, Britain granted it internal self-government in 1965 and full independence as Botswana on September 30, 1966. Shortly after, Botswana became a member of the United Nations. Seretse Khama, grandson of Khama III, was elected the first president, and served until his death in 1980, when he was succeeded by Dr. Quett Ketumile Joni Masire.

In the period after independence, the country generally maintained close ties with its white-ruled neighbours and refused to let its territory harbour guerrilla operations against them. Prior to Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, however, Botswana became a refuge for guerrillas. In the years before a multiracial government was established in South Africa, Botswana was the target of South African reprisals.

Although Botswana is rich in diamonds, it has high unemployment and stratified socio-economic classes. In 1999 it suffered its first budget deficit in 16 years because of a slump in the international diamond market. Yet it remains one of the wealthiest as well as most stable countries on the continent.

After 17 years in power, President Ketumile Masire retired in 1997, and Festus Mogae, an Oxford-educated economist, became the new president. Mogae has won high marks from the international financial community for continuing to privatize Botswana's mining and industrial operations.

Although Botswana's economic outlook remains strong, the devastation that AIDS has caused threatens to destroy the country's future. In 2001, Botswana had the highest rate of HIV infection in the world (350 000 of its 1.6 million people). With the help of international donors, however, it launched an ambitious national campaign that provided free antiviral drugs to anyone who needed them, and by March 2004, Botswana's infection rate had dropped significantly. But with 37.5% of the population infected, the country remains on the brink of catastrophe. President Mogae won a second and final four-year term in October 2004.

After serving 10 years as deputy president, Ian Khama, the son of Botswana's first president, Seretse Khama, was inaugurated as president in April 2008. Festus Mogae stepped aside after 10 years in office.

The Victoria Falls is one of Nature's great revelations on a par with the Grand Canyon, Mount Everest and an erupting volcano. It is believed that there have existed no less than seven different 'Victoria Falls' over the past two million years. These cascades correspond to the lower gorges of the Zambezi. The present falls is wearing from Devil's Cataract northwards, eroding the softer material behind the present basalt base of the falls. When eventually all the soft matter has been removed, the Victoria Falls will move back, a fresh gorge will yawn and where the falls are now will become a new site for tourists.

Although just over a mile long (1.7km) the falls are broken up by various small islands, including Livingstone's. At their deepest, the falls are 108m deep at Rainbow Falls. Although the usual tour of the Victoria Falls National Park is recommended from the south or Zimbabwe-side of the falls, the finest view along the gorge is to be had from the north side or Zambian-side.

David Livingstone is generally considered to be the first European to have seen the falls in 1855 during his first expedition from the Cape to Luanda (Angola), then back again via the Falls; along the Zambezi to Quelimane in Mozambique. A truly heroic journey! The greatness of Livingstone lies in his painstaking research and accurate observations. His book, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* including a sketch of *Sixteen Years Residence in the Interior of Africa* was published in 1857 and sold 70,000 copies. It probably did more to influence Western attitudes towards Africa than any book written before or since. Livingstone first approached the falls from upstream and landed on what is today called Livingstone Island. Let him tell the story:

When about half a mile from the falls, I left the canoe by which we had come down thus far, and embarked in a lighter one, with men well acquainted with the rapids, who, by passing down the centre of the stream in the eddies and still places caused by many jutting rocks, brought me to an island situated in the middle of the river, and on the edge of the lip over which the water rolls. In coming hither, there was danger of being swept down by the streams which rushed along on each side of the island; but the river was now low, and we sailed where it is totally impossible to go when the water is high. But though we had reached the island, and were within a few yards of the spot, a view from which would solve the whole problem, I believe that no one could perceive where the vast body of water went; it seemed to lose itself in the earth, the opposite lip of the fissure into which it disappeared, being only 80 feet distant. At least I did not comprehend it until, creeping with awe to the verge, I peered down into a large rent which had been made from bank to bank of the broad Zambezi, and saw that a stream of a thousand yards broad, leaped down a hundred feet, and then became suddenly compressed into a space of fifteen or twenty yards. The entire falls are simply a crack made in a hard basaltic rock . . . In looking down into the fissure on the right of the island, one sees nothing but a dense white cloud, which, at the time we visited the spot, had two bright rainbows on it . . . From this cloud rushed up a great jet of vapour exactly like steam, and it mounted 200 or 300 feet high; there condensing, it changed its hue to that of dark smoke, and came back in a constant shower, which soon wetted us to the skin. This shower falls chiefly on the opposite side of the fissure, and a few yards back from the lip, there stands a straight hedge of evergreen trees, whose leaves are always wet. From their roots a number of little rills run back into the gulf; but as they flow down the steep wall there, the column of vapour, in its ascent, licks them up clean off the rock, and away they mount again. They are constantly running down, but never reach the bottom.'

Thank you for joining us on this unique Air Safari. We hope you join us again in the not too distant future.

THE MAP



DISTANCE CHART

Total Distances Travelled	Kilometres	Total Kilometres
Pretoria – Phinda	485	485
Phinda – Plettenberg Bay	1092	1577
Plettenberg Bay – Cape Town	456	2033
Cape Town - Luderitz	866	2899
Luderitz - Wolwedans	400	3299
Wolwedans - Windhoek	400	3699
Windhoek - Maun	716	4415
Maun – Okavango Delta	250	4665
Okavango Delta - Maun	250	4915
Maun - Livingstone	350	5265
Livingstone – Lanseria Airport Johannesburg	955	6220

Updated 14 May 2010 – please check with Querida Venter for updates/itinerary changes
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