



## PLANNING YOUR SAFARI

### TOP 10 FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Our guests travel to Africa with high expectations and our goal is always to exceed those expectations. We invite you to evaluate the safaris we offer against this set of criteria that will differentiate the mundane from the most memorable and exciting lifetime experience. The order of importance is subjective – but this is our ranking (with 10 being the most important).

1. Ambiance
2. Diversity
3. Night Safaris
4. Wildlife Encounters
5. Fatigue
6. Local Hosting – Local Expertise
7. Off Road Tracking
8. Time of Day
9. Time of Year
10. Risk and Reliability

1. *Ambiance*

We believe that people visit Africa to experience the wildlife, adventure and atmosphere of this wonderful continent. Why then stay in a large and crowded hotel-style lodge that does nothing to add to the safari experience? Small private lodges and camps, designed to have minimal impact on the environment, provide unique charm, personalized service and exciting safari activities away from the crowded routes frequented by bus tours and minibus safaris.

2. *Diversity*

Africa is characterized by diversity and extremes. A great tour provides access to a range of experiences and to diverse wildlife ecosystems, so that each segment of the tour brings new discoveries. However, a good balance is important, since dashing across the wilderness from place to place will achieve little. The best wildlife sightings require time and patience. In our experience, a minimum stay of 2-3 nights at each lodge/camp is ideal.

3. *Night Safaris*

Many wild animals are nocturnal or become particularly active in the evening hours. Look out for lodges and camps that offer day *and* night drives. The low-end safari tours often have to leave the roads of the public game reserves by sunset and have no access to private concessions, missing out on this exciting extra dimension to the safari experience.

4. *Wildlife Encounters*

A great safari allows opportunities for guests to immerse themselves into the wildlife habitat, eliminating barriers that numb the experience. Imagine the difference in watching a herd of elephants through a tour bus window from a distance, or sitting in your open 4x4 safari vehicle surrounded on all sides by the herd, hearing trunks tearing bark from trees and the deep rumble of their conversation. Some lodges and camps offer guided bush walks, open vehicle game drives and other exciting opportunities to enjoy a full safari experience.

5. *Fatigue*

In East Africa, many safari operators offer guided circuit tours by minivan through the game reserves. At least half the tour is spent in getting from point A to point B and back across very dusty, very potholed roads, with long stretches of monotonous and uncomfortable travel. This unfortunately soon leads to the onset of fatigue and disinterest by the passengers. Safaris that offer fly-drive combinations around the safari circuit are more expensive but add value exponentially to the safari experience.

6. *Local Hosting – Local Expertise*

The camps and lodges that offer safari drives, guided walks and other activities (“*locally hosted*”) have an intimate knowledge and expertise of their local environment. They will know the location of a hyena den with new-born pups, or where a pride of lions was last seen feeding. *Abacus African Safaris* offers camps and lodges that provide locally hosted safari activities.

7. *Off Road Tracking*

Safari camps and lodges in private wildlife concessions and private game reserves are permitted to track wildlife off-road, allowing up-close and personal access to wildlife and photo opportunities. A cheetah teaching her cubs to hunt, or a leopard hauling an antelope carcass up into a tree, are not scenarios typically played out at the road side. Off road tracking is not permitted in public parks and reserves where bus tour groups and minibus safaris, with many miles to cover before sunset, crowd the roads. Look out for safari camps and lodges that offer off-road tracking of wildlife.

8. *Time of day*

Wildlife is most active in the early hours of the day and in the hours around sunset. In the heat of the day, lions and other animals may often be hard to spot, as they rest up in long grass and shade. Camps and lodges located in the heart of a safari region offer the best opportunity to view wildlife at these best times of the day. A location next to a waterhole or river is a bonus during the dry season.

9. *Time of year*

This is one of the most important considerations when planning a safari. For example, the short-grass plains of the south-eastern Serengeti typically provide a wonderful location in February, when the vast herds of wildebeest gather and drop their foals. Some other safari regions on the other hand, offer a poor safari experience at this time of year. In July, exactly the opposite would apply. Ensure that your safari takes into account the good or best time of year for the safari regions included in your trip. Take care when offered “value season” pricing to ensure that the tour will still meet your expectations. Never assume that a scheduled or offered tour has taken this into consideration!

10. *Risk and Reliability*

This is our most important consideration. No experience, no matter how exciting, is worth loss of life or serious injury as a result of reckless action or inexperience of the operator. We work directly with only the most reputable and experienced safari outfitters and suppliers.

*Our range of exciting itineraries visit select locations in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Tanzania, Zanzibar and Kenya, and parts of Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Uganda and the other Spice Islands of East Africa.*