Q&A GUIDE

Ask Mr. Africa

Essential planning information for unforgettable Southern & East African safaris

***** BY APPOINTMENT ONLY *****

PLANNING YOUR SOUTHERN AFRICAN ODYSSEY

Visas, Entry & Airport Security

NEW FROM 1 JULY 2026 — SOUTH AFRICA
All travellers entering or departing South Africa must complete an **Electronic Traveller Declaration** via the South African Traveller Management System (SATMS) at least 48 hours before arrival:
https://www.sars.gov.za/travellerdeclaration/

The Visa Landscape (Australian Passport Holders)

Always verify the latest requirements directly with official government portals before travel, as rules can change.

- **South Africa** — Free 90-day tourist entry stamp on arrival.
- **Botswana** — Visa-free for up to 90 days.
- **Zimbabwe** — Visa required. 30-day single-entry visa on arrival (USD 30), double-entry (USD 45), or the KAZA Univisa (USD 50) for multiple entries between Zimbabwe and Zambia (plus day trips into Botswana). Online pre-approval recommended at evisa.gov.zw — apply at least 30 days in advance.
- **Zambia** — Visa-free for short tourist stays (typically 30–90 days depending on entry point). The KAZA Univisa is also available.
- **Namibia** — Visa required. Visa on arrival or eVisa in advance (valid up to 90 days). Fees apply.
- **Malawi** — eVisa required/strongly recommended (or visa on arrival for eligible categories). Standard tourist stays usually 30 days. Apply via evisa.gov.mw.

5 Security Tips for a Seamless Airport Experience

Travel smart and stress-free through O.R. Tambo Johannesburg International Airport:

1. **Remove items** – Be prepared to remove electronics, belts and other items as directed by security.
2. **Easy-to-remove shoes** – Wear shoes that are simple to take off if required.
3. **Prohibited items** – Double-check hand luggage for any restricted items.
4. **Liquids, aerosols and gels (LAGs)** – Containers must be 100 ml or less and packed in a transparent, resealable bag.
5. **Cooperation** – Always follow instructions from security officers to maintain safety and efficiency.

Planning & Logistics for Southern Africa

When is the best time to go on a safari in Southern Africa?

The **dry season (May–October)** is widely regarded as the prime period for game viewing. Vegetation is thinner, and animals concentrate around water sources, making sightings more reliable.

The **green season (November–April)** delivers lush landscapes, excellent birdwatching, and dramatically lower lodge rates (often up to 40% cheaper). Rainfall usually arrives in short, dramatic afternoon bursts, leaving mornings clear for game drives.

Key advantages of the green season include: calving season (especially impala in the Kruger/Sabi Sands region in November, and wildebeest in other areas); fewer vehicles and greater privacy; and more accessible rates at premium camps. Regions such as the Okavango Delta and Moremi (Botswana) and South Luangwa (Zambia) are particularly rewarding during this period for clients who value space and birdlife.

Do I need a visa and vaccinations?

Visa requirements for Australian passport holders are summarised above. Health: Some areas (particularly northern Kruger) carry a malaria risk — prophylaxis is advised. Consult a travel health professional well in advance. Commonly recommended for most safari destinations: Hepatitis A and B, Typhoid, and malaria prophylaxis.

Is it safe to travel to Southern Africa for a safari?

Safaris with reputable operators are generally very safe when guests follow guide instructions. In urban areas, standard travel precautions apply. Comprehensive travel insurance is essential for all African destinations.

How much does a safari cost?

Costs vary widely according to luxury level, duration, and location (public national park vs private reserve or concession). All-inclusive packages typically cover accommodation, meals, and game drives; premium drinks and optional activities are often extra.

Expect from approximately **USD 1,000+ per person per night** at higher-end properties. South African reserves (e.g. Amakhala or properties near Kruger) can be more affordable as they avoid pure USD pricing. Light-aircraft transfers and long road transfers add significant cost. For peak season (July–August), book 12–18 months ahead to secure preferred lodges.

Are mobile safaris better than lodges?

Mobile (camping) safaris offer a more adventurous and often more affordable experience. Permanent lodges provide luxury amenities such as pools, Wi-Fi, and flushing toilets.

Can I bring children?

Many lodges enforce minimum ages (commonly 6 or 12 years). Family-friendly properties with Young Explorer programmes exist. Some camps require families to book a private vehicle (additional cost) so as not to disturb other guests.

How long should my safari be?

A first-time safari of 4–7 days works well. Plan at least three nights at each camp before moving on. Combining a safari with Cape Town or the Garden Route creates a more rounded itinerary.

What is the best routing for a Southern African safari?

A strong classic route is: South Africa first (Big Five game viewing + Cape Town) → fly Airlink to Victoria Falls → road transfer into Botswana (Chobe/Kasane) → Okavango Delta → depart from Maun back to Johannesburg. Leave the most exclusive experiences for last.

National Parks, Private Reserves and Concessions

The main differences lie in exclusivity, flexibility of activities and cost.

Aspect	National Parks	Private Reserves	Private Concessions
Management	Government	Private	Community / private
Crowds	High	Low	Low
Off-roading	Prohibited	Often permitted	Often permitted
Night drives	Not allowed	Standard	Standard
Self-drive	Yes (many parks)	No (guided only)	No (guided only)
Cost	Budget to mid-range	Luxury / high-end	Luxury / high-end
Key features	Open to public; daily entry fee; strict gate times; can be crowded at major sightings	Exclusive to lodge guests; vehicle limits at sightings (2–3 vehicles); quieter experience	Unfenced borders with park; free wildlife movement; community benefits from fees

O.R. Tambo International Airport Logistics

01 — Timing: How early should I arrive?

Allow 2 hours for domestic and 3 hours for international flights, plus an extra hour for queues. International check-in is on Level 2; customs and immigration on Level 1.

02 — Duty-Free: Is it good value?

Yes. Alcohol is generally cheaper than in Australia; liquids over 100 ml are collected at the gate. Big 5 Duty-Free is ideal for souvenirs and spending leftover currency.

03 — Lounges: Where to wait on long transits?

For transits of 4+ hours, the Bidvest Lounge (upstairs after immigration) costs about USD 50 and includes buffet, drinks, Wi-Fi and showers, with access capped at 4 hours.

04 — Hotels: What is the best transit hotel?

Protea Hotels sits inside the international terminal for transits under 16 hours. Outside, we recommend the Emperors Palace complex, reached by free shuttle every 30 minutes.

05 — Safety: Is self-driving from the airport safe?

Exercise caution: if you feel followed, drive to a police station or busy area. Ignore anyone posing as “Tourist Police” and only deal with uniformed ACSA staff or airport police.

YOUR SAFARI, PERFECTED

Speak with a specialist to weave these logistics into an unforgettable journey.

PLANNING YOUR EASTERN AFRICA SAFARI EXPERIENCE

Visas & Entry Requirements for Australians

Always verify the latest requirements directly with official government portals before travel, as rules can change.

- **Kenya** — Electronic Travel Authorisation (eTA) required before travel via etakenya.go.ke. Fee approximately USD 32–35. Processing can take up to 3 business days; apply 7–14 days ahead. Validity: single entry, up to 90 days. Mandatory travel health insurance from October 2026: approximately USD 44 plus fees (total approximately USD 52), purchasable during the eTA process.
- **Tanzania** — eVisa strongly recommended via visa.immigration.go.tz. Ordinary single-entry tourist visa: USD 50, up to 90 days. Processing typically takes 4–10 working days; apply 2–4 weeks ahead. Visa on arrival is possible at major airports but is not advised due to queues. Mandatory inbound travel insurance from 1 October 2026: adults USD 44, children aged 3–17 USD 22, infants free. Portal: inbound.nicinsurance.co.tz. This does not replace comprehensive private travel insurance.
- **Uganda** — eVisa required before travel via the official immigration portal. Single-entry tourist visa approximately USD 50, valid for up to 90 days. Processing usually takes a few business days. An East Africa Tourist Visa covering Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda is also available and can be good value for multi-country itineraries. Yellow fever vaccination is no longer required for entry as of late 2026, though some airlines may still request it.

Q&A Guide: Preparing for an East African Wildlife Tour or Safari

Below are answers to the most frequently asked questions when planning a wildlife tour or safari in East Africa.

What transportation is used on safari?

• Road transfers between parks and for pick-ups are typically carried out in 4x4 vehicles such as Land Cruisers or Nissan Patrols.
• Where destinations are far apart, domestic flights can be arranged in consultation with your local operator. Flight costs are usually included in the total trip price; if not, you will be advised in advance.
• Boats are used where needed to reach islands or cross rivers.

What accommodation options are available?

Accommodation generally falls into three categories:
• **Budget** – Guesthouses and simpler lodges (some may have shared bathroom facilities)
• **Mid-range / Deluxe** – Comfortable safari lodges and tented camps with self-contained rooms or cottages
• **Luxury** – High-end lodges, tented camps and hotels offering elevated service and facilities

Most hotels provide self-contained rooms, lodges offer private cottages, and safari tented camps feature self-contained luxury tents. When booking, clearly state your preferred category, as this significantly affects the overall cost. All properties serve both local and international cuisine. Please advise any dietary requirements or allergies in advance so the kitchen can prepare accordingly.

What safari activities are available?

Activities vary by destination and the time available:
• **Mountain gorilla tracking** (Uganda and Rwanda) – the primary activity in gorilla parks. Treks start early in the morning and typically last 2–6 hours.
• **Golden monkey tracking** – available in Volcanoes National Park (Rwanda) and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (Uganda).
• **Chimpanzee tracking** – notably in Kibale Forest National Park, Uganda.
• **Savanna parks** – game drives, nature walks and birdwatching.
• **Parks with lakes or rivers** – boat cruises and sport fishing.

Most activities begin in the morning but can be scheduled flexibly depending on your itinerary.

Are there age restrictions?

• **Mountain gorilla and chimpanzee tracking:** Minimum age is 15 years in both Uganda and Rwanda.
• **Golden monkey tracking:** Minimum age is 12 years.
• **Savanna game drives and most other activities:** No formal age limit.
• **Mountain hiking:** No strict age limit, though the activity is physically demanding and better suited to reasonably fit adults.

For accommodation, children aged 12 and over are usually charged at adult rates at many lodges. Inform the operator in advance so that appropriate room arrangements (extra beds, family rooms or suites) can be made.

What medical precautions should I take?

• Vaccination requirements change periodically, so check current advice before travel.
• Yellow fever vaccination has traditionally been required, and proof may still be requested at some airports. Rwanda has relaxed this requirement for travellers arriving from non-endemic countries (including most of Europe and North America).
• Malaria remains a risk throughout the region, so appropriate prophylaxis is strongly recommended.
• Comprehensive travel and medical insurance is essential. Consider adding emergency medical evacuation cover. Safari vehicles are insured under local policies.

What should I pack?

Essential items include: Passport and any required visas; credit cards and a modest amount of cash; comfortable clothing and sturdy footwear; body lotion / moisturiser; camera, spare batteries and chargers; prescription medications; sunglasses and swimwear.

Pack light. Soft duffel bags or backpacks are preferred. Domestic flights usually impose strict baggage limits, so bring only essentials.

What should I wear?

East Africa's climate varies by altitude and location. Forested and mountainous areas can be cool in the mornings and evenings, while open savanna is generally warm. Recommended clothing:
• Neutral, muted colours (avoid bright colours, which can disturb wildlife)
• Lightweight T-shirts and trousers for warmer areas
• Long trousers, waterproof pants and a light rain jacket or poncho for primate tracking and mountain hikes
• A warm sweater or jacket for cooler evenings and higher altitudes
• Sturdy, comfortable walking or hiking shoes

What is the tipping policy?

Tipping is appreciated but not compulsory and depends on the quality of service received.
• **Lodge and hotel staff:** Tips can be left in the communal tip box or given individually for exceptional service.
• **Park rangers and porters:** Direct tipping is appropriate.
• **Driver-guides:** A tip at the end of the safari is customary if you are satisfied with their service.

Are credit cards widely accepted?

Credit cards are generally accepted in capital cities and larger hotels. In rural areas and smaller establishments, cash is often preferred. Major safari costs are usually settled in advance, so you need not carry large amounts of cash. Foreign exchange bureaux are available at airports and in major cities.

What are the visa requirements?

Visa rules differ by nationality and destination. Some countries offer visas on arrival, others require online applications (eVisas), and a few still require embassy visas.
Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda participate in the East African Tourist Visa — a multiple-entry visa valid for 90 days that allows travel between the three countries. It must be applied for through the first country of entry.
Your passport must be valid for at least six months from the date of entry.

What safety precautions should I take?

East Africa is generally a safe destination for organised tours. Keep passports, electronics and other valuables secure at all times. Do not leave bags unattended. Most hotels and lodges provide safe-deposit boxes for important items.

Can I shop for souvenirs?

Yes. There are craft markets and souvenir shops in cities as well as near many national parks. Handcrafted local items are widely available, sometimes en route between destinations. Advise your driver-guide of any shopping interests — they can recommend reputable stops. Cash is usually required, as most craft vendors do not accept cards.

Disclaimer

The information on this page has been verified at the time of publication. Visa requirements, entry rules, health regulations and other travel conditions can change without notice. We strongly recommend that you confirm all details with the relevant government authorities, embassies or official websites before travelling.

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