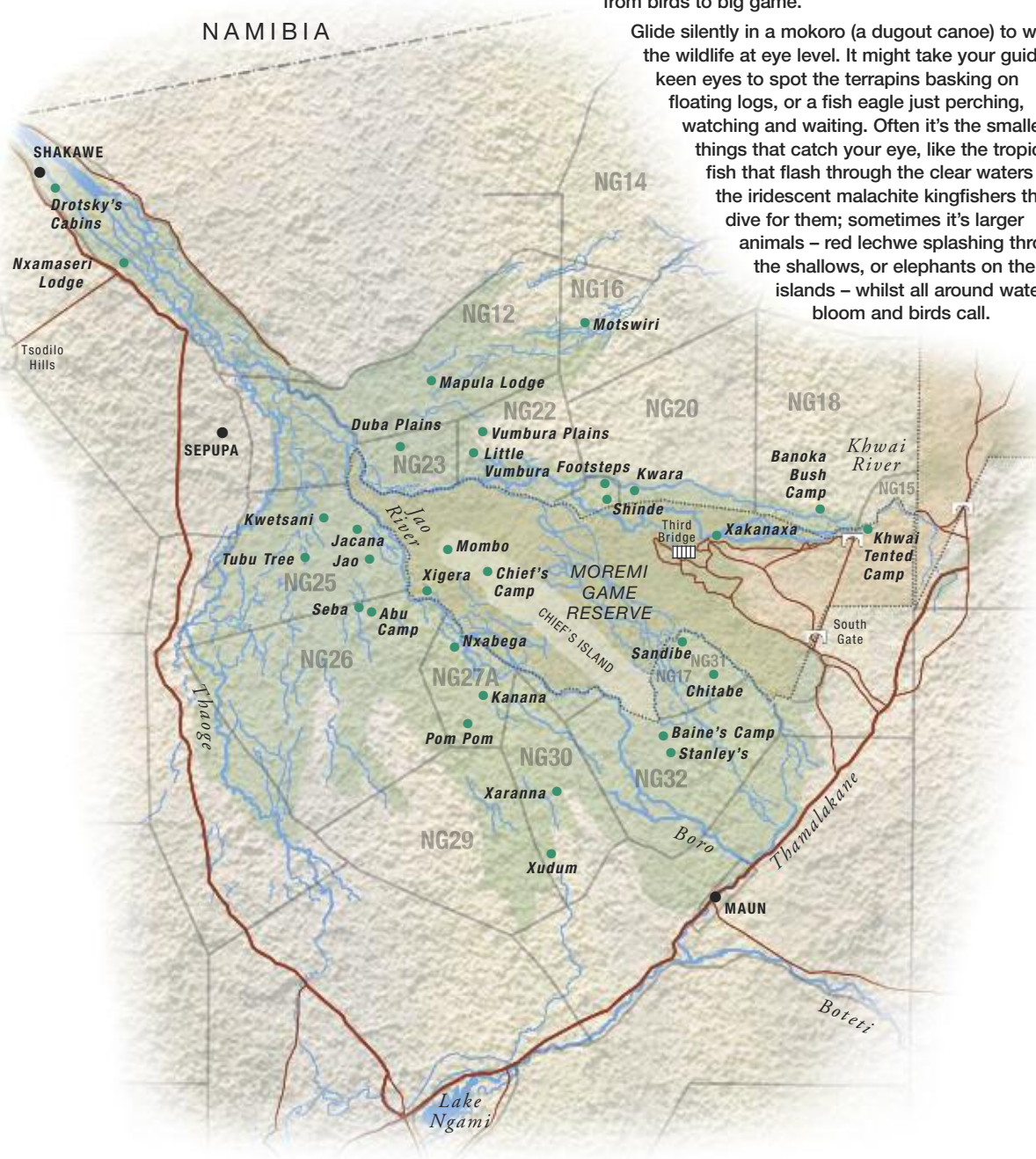


THE OKAVANGO DELTA

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The Okavango River rises in the highlands of Angola and flows southeast into the Kalahari. Here it spreads out into an inland delta covering over 15,000km² with a water-wilderness of papyrus swamps, shallow reed-beds and floodplains dotted with islands and laced with a network of channels. This is a unique environment. It's an amazing, world-class destination for wildlife, from birds to big game.

Glide silently in a mokoro (a dugout canoe) to watch the wildlife at eye level. It might take your guide's keen eyes to spot the terrapins basking on floating logs, or a fish eagle just perching, watching and waiting. Often it's the smaller things that catch your eye, like the tropical fish that flash through the clear waters or the iridescent malachite kingfishers that dive for them; sometimes it's larger animals – red lechwe splashing through the shallows, or elephants on the islands – whilst all around waterlilies bloom and birds call.



Putting your feet up in the Delta

MOREMI GAME RESERVE

In 1962 the local BaTswana people set aside a third of the Okavango Delta to protect it for the future. They called this the Moremi Game Reserve, and it now forms the core of the region's reserves, encompassing expansive wetlands and a large dry peninsula that juts into the Delta, the Mopane Tongue.

Moremi is lush and varied – a patchwork of lagoons, shallow flooded pans, plains and forests. It is one of Africa's finest wildlife areas, with high game densities and animals which are relaxed enough to allow vehicles to approach closely.

Most of Moremi is accessible only from the fly-in camps on its fringes. However, there are several prime areas – including the Khwai River, Xakanaxa Lagoon and Third Bridge – on the edge of the Mopane Tongue, where the land meets the Okavango's permanent waters. These can also be visited on a mobile safari.

KHWAI RIVER

On the northeast tip of Moremi, tall evergreen trees line a wide floodplain of the lovely Khwai River. Here you'll find an excellent density and diversity of predator and prey species: a large pride of lion has hunted buffalo and elephant here in recent years and leopard sightings are consistently good. Saddle-billed storks, wattled cranes and many species of kingfisher and bee-eater are common. You can stay here on a mobile safari, or at the rather grand **Khwai River Lodge**, sister camp of Savute Elephant Camp (page 101).

Alternatively the smaller **Khwai Tented Camp** has always been a firm favourite. A sibling of Linyanti Bush Camp and Saile Tented Camp (see page 104), it is a simple but comfortable camp which focuses on high-quality game activities: walking safaris and 4WD game drives (day and night). This very private camp has four smart, en-suite tents, each with a bucket shower and flush toilet. Although a rather complex lease issue has recently resulted in its closure, we hope that this will shortly be resolved and we'll see KTC return to Khwai in the near future. Call us for the latest developments.

Another simple tented camp in the area, now just a couple of years old, is **Banoka Bush Camp**. Larger than Khwai Tented Camp, Banoka has eight sizeable walk-in



Travelling between camps by light aircraft offers superb views of the Delta

tents and two family units, each with en-suite bathrooms. Activities from this comfortable camp include 4WD game drives, mokoro (dug-out canoe) excursions and seasonal boating.

XAKANAXA LAGOON

At the tip of the Mopane Tongue, mopane forests meet a patchwork of deep waterways, shallow flooded areas, and the Xakanaxa Lagoon. This area is unforgettably beautiful and packed with game: leopard and cheetah are relatively common, the density of antelope is amazing, and the birdlife is exceptionally varied, from innumerable herons, egrets, storks and other waders to many species of harrier, buzzard and kite.

Xakanaxa is a compelling area to visit on a mobile safari and there are also three adjacent lodges here which all overlook the Xakanaxa Lagoon. **Camp Moremi** has 11 comfortable, Meru-style tents, each with twin beds, solid furniture and an en-suite bathroom. **Xakanaxa Camp** is an old favourite; it has 12 twin-bedded tents of a fairly classic design which are stylishly furnished. Each has a partially open en-suite bathroom. Next in line, **Okuti** has seven units, including two family rooms, all making the most of its limited space, with an innovative tunnel-like design and a modern interior. All these camps offer 4WD

game drives and boat trips; Xakanaxa Camp also offers short mokoro excursions.

THIRD BRIDGE

A short drive from Xakanaxa, Third Bridge stands on an island of thickets just east of Mboma Island. The routes around this long (10km) island pass through some diverse and beautiful environments and extend further into the watery environments of the Delta than any other part of Moremi. Mobile safaris often camp here and the sites are famed for close encounters of the furry kind!

Moremi under Canvas is one such mobile – offering 4WD excursions during the day, and luxurious camping at night. This is open from early-September to end-December. During the rest of the year it becomes Savuti under Canvas (page 101).

As Third Bridge lies on the edge of Moremi's wetlands, mobile safaris often include boat trips that start from here.

SOUTH GATE

Around Moremi's South Gate is a thickly forested section of the reserve, often visited by mobile safaris. Further south, outside Moremi, the lovely stands of acacia and open landscapes are noted for their herds of giraffe.



Safari Guide to Botswana

Expert Africa's MD, Chris McIntyre, was co-author of the very first English guidebook to Namibia and Botswana, published over 20 years ago. Chris has since then written extensively on Botswana – including his comprehensive guide to northern Botswana, **Botswana: The Bradt Safari Guide**.

Researching these guidebooks has helped Chris and the *Expert Africa* team to understand the various reserves and camps, so ask for their advice when you're planning your trip.

The third edition was published in January 2010; if you'd like a copy then send us a cheque for £14, payable to *Expert Africa*, with your address, and we'll post one to you. (Sadly we can't take credit card payments for books.)