

## KWANDO RIVER & LINYANTI MARSHES

Beside the Kwando-Linyanti river system, large reserves protect high concentrations of wildlife. Like the Okavango's private reserves, these offer a more exclusive experience than the national parks – and both walking and night drives are allowed.

There are no fences here so the animals move freely; during the dry season, high concentrations of elephant and buffalo are drawn to these permanent rivers. Red lechwe, impala, wildebeest, kudu, zebra, baboon, warthog, giraffe and tsessebe are all common, attracting numerous predators. Lion are everywhere, leopard occur mostly in the wooded areas, and cheetah frequent the open plains. Wild dogs range throughout and in the last few years several packs have denned here.

### SELINDA RESERVE

The extensive Selinda Reserve protects 1,350km<sup>2</sup> around the Selinda Spillway: an ancient watercourse linking the Okavango with the Linyanti that filled with water in 2009 for the first time in decades. Around this shallow river, wide dry grasslands dotted with small 'islands' of palm forest make a picturesque, open and largely dry environment. Often you can spot game a long way off; it's perfect for following predators on hunting sorties.

At the eastern end of this reserve lie Selinda and Zarafa camps; both organise their own 4WD safaris (day and night) and occasional short guided walks. With the arrival of the water in the Spillway, they now also offer canoeing, boating and fishing. The teams are largely experienced Botswana hands with informative, enthusiastic and dedicated guides.

On the banks of the Spillway, overlooking floodplains, **Selinda Camp** takes 18 guests in nine high-quality, tented rooms – including a two-bedroomed family room. Each is built on a wooden deck under a thatched canopy, with an en-suite shower and a stone, free-standing bath. The lounge/dining area is a tall, thatched structure, with extensive views. Selinda's rates are comparable to many camps in northern Botswana, but its standards of hospitality and guiding are higher than most.

Nearby **Zarafa Camp** hosts just eight guests, and is one of Botswana's top camps: its huge private suites each have plunge pools and superb views over the Zibadianja Lagoon. Despite the luxury, the owners try hard to minimise its environmental footprint. Zarafa commands a supplement over most of Botswana's other camps – typically around £270-406 extra per person sharing per night,

depending on the season.

At the western end of the reserve, near the Okavango Delta, the small, independent **Motswiri Camp** stands beside the banks of the Selinda Spillway. It has five large tents on raised decking, all with en-suite bathrooms; one of which is designed for a family with two separate tents and interconnecting doors. There's a tented 'mess' area, and a plunge pool behind that. Historically the game here hasn't been as prolific as that found further east, but it does include sable and roan antelope.

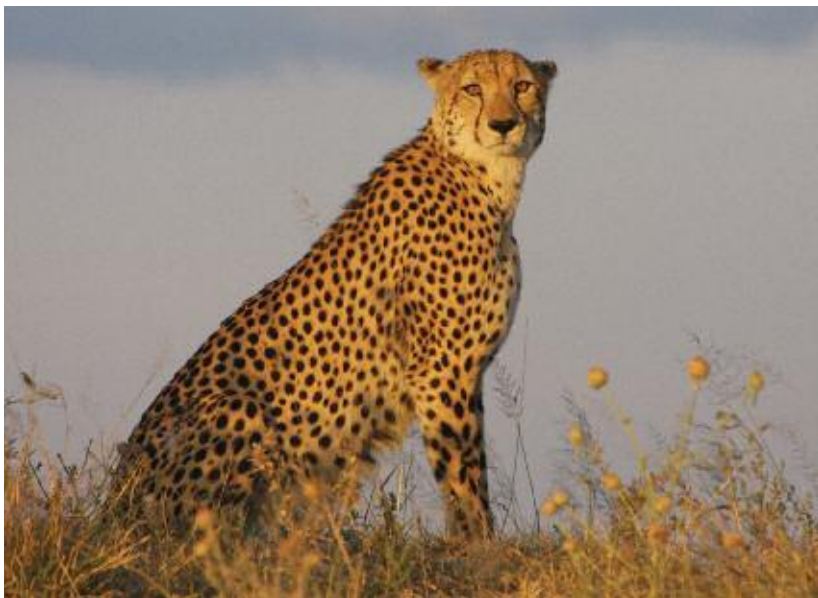
Motswiri focuses on activities that don't use engines: walking, riding, boating, fishing, mokoro trips and canoeing. There is a full stable of horses, but for safety reasons in this big-game area, riding is an option only for skilled and experienced riders. Nearby



*The new spacious rooms at Lebala Camp*

the small, satellite **Motswiri fly-camp** can cater for up to six guests, and is often included as part of a longer walking or riding safari.

For a more serious canoe trip, consider the **Selinda Canoe Trail**, which crosses this reserve along the Spillway from west to east. Paddling yourself along, under the guidance of a trail leader, you'll spend your days in large two-person Canadian canoes. Along the way you'll often stop to watch wildlife and enjoy walking safaris, and you'll spend each of the trail's three nights in a simple fly-camp. The trail runs on fixed weekly departures between May and October, when water levels are highest, and most of the equipment is carried by staff in their own canoes; ask us for more details of these adventurous trips.



*Cheetah enjoy the open plains of the Selinda Reserve*

## KWANDO RESERVE

North of Selinda, Kwando is another huge private reserve which covers 2,300km<sup>2</sup>. Most of its western side is dense mopane forest, but along the Kwando River a band of lush riverine forest is interspersed with open plains. Kwando attracts lots of big game, especially during the dry season when elephants seem to be everywhere; it is also notable for its cheetah and wild dogs. Wild dogs regularly den close to Lagoon Camp and offer some excellent viewing opportunities.

**Lagoon Camp** stands beside the river, to the north of the reserve, in thick riverine forest. Rebuilt in early 2011, it's an excellent small camp with nine comfortable new tents nestling under the riparian forest on the riverbank – and a tangible feel of adventure. Overlooking the Kwando River, the tents are large, bright and airy, each with an en-suite bathroom featuring a stand-alone bath, twin washbasins, indoor and outdoor showers and a separate toilet.

In a more open environment, further south, **Lebala Camp** is a super camp amongst open grasslands and palm islands beside the Linyanti Marshes. Lebala's nine spacious tented rooms have contemporary bathrooms, each featuring a stand-alone bath, twin washbasins and twin open-air showers. Inside, the rooms are decorated in safari tones and have smart wooden furniture, open sides of insect proof mesh, and sliding doors which open onto large verandas.

Both camps have plunge pools and offer game activities including 4WD safaris (day and night) and sometimes short walks. The drives all have a tracker as well as a driver/guide – a big bonus when following game. Lagoon also has a double-decker boat for fishing and birdwatching cruises. Lagoon and Lebala combine well with trips to their sister camps, Kwara and Little Kwara (see page 93).



A male kudu can weigh around 250kg



## LINYANTI RESERVE

The Linyanti Reserve covers 1,250km<sup>2</sup>, within which three permanent camps operate. In the north, beside the Linyanti River, the environment is very like the Chobe Riverfront: open floodplains beside the water, an adjacent band of riverine forest, and then dense (mostly mopane) forests stretching away south. Two camps – King's Pool and DumaTau – stand beside the river here, while to the south, Savuti Camp is quite different, overlooking a remote stretch of the Savuti Channel.

**King's Pool** is one of Botswana's premier camps, with nine lavish thatched suites standing on their own raised wooden decks. Each has a large designer bathroom, an outdoor 'sala' (day bed) and its own deck with an individual plunge pool. All overlook a hippo-filled, oxbow lagoon. King's Pool usually commands a supplement of around £270-406 per person per night over its sister camps in Botswana.

West of King's Pool, **DumaTau** stands near Zibadianja Lagoon, the source of the Savuti Channel. DumaTau's ten large, walk-in tents stand on wooden decks, each with a

thatched roof, en-suite facilities and a separate outdoor shower. One tent is designed especially for a family; another for honeymooners.

At both camps the game viewing from your room can be impressive, though naturally both offer 4WD safaris (day and night), short walks and boat trips when the river is high enough. There are several hides nearby – including one underground to give a crocodile's eye view of a waterhole, and where adventurous guests can pre-arrange to sleep out (if they spend three nights or more in the reserve).

**Savuti Camp** lies about 30km west of Savuti Marsh (see page 101) overlooking the Savuti Channel. It's a smart camp with seven large tents, including a family room. Each tent has a private veranda and an en-suite bathroom, a few of which are open-sided. Activities focus on 4WD safaris, day and night, along the Savuti Channel. In 2008 the channel started to flow again, creating a new linear water source during the dry season; previously there were only a few waterholes. This should attract more game into the area, making 2012 another promising year here.

*A hippo can stay underwater for up to six minutes*



Walking safaris are led by experienced guides in Linyanti

## CHOBE ENCLAVE

For some years, the Linyanti Swamps and Lake Liambezi have been misnomers, as both have been largely dry. However, they did fill with water late in 2009 and have remained wet since – proving a major attraction for waterfowl. The Linyanti has also been flowing consistently, making a perfect watering stop for elephant and buffalo during the dry season (June–October).

The 'Chobe Enclave' is sandwiched between these sources of water and the interior of Chobe National Park. It's a varied area with shady riverine forests where raptors and owls roost, extensive mopane woodlands and open glades. On the

northwest side of this, on the edge of the floodplains, are three sister camps – run by an operation with its roots in Zimbabwe and noted for high guiding standards. Activities from all three camps include 4WD game drives (day and night) and walking safaris conducted by high-quality, armed professional guides.

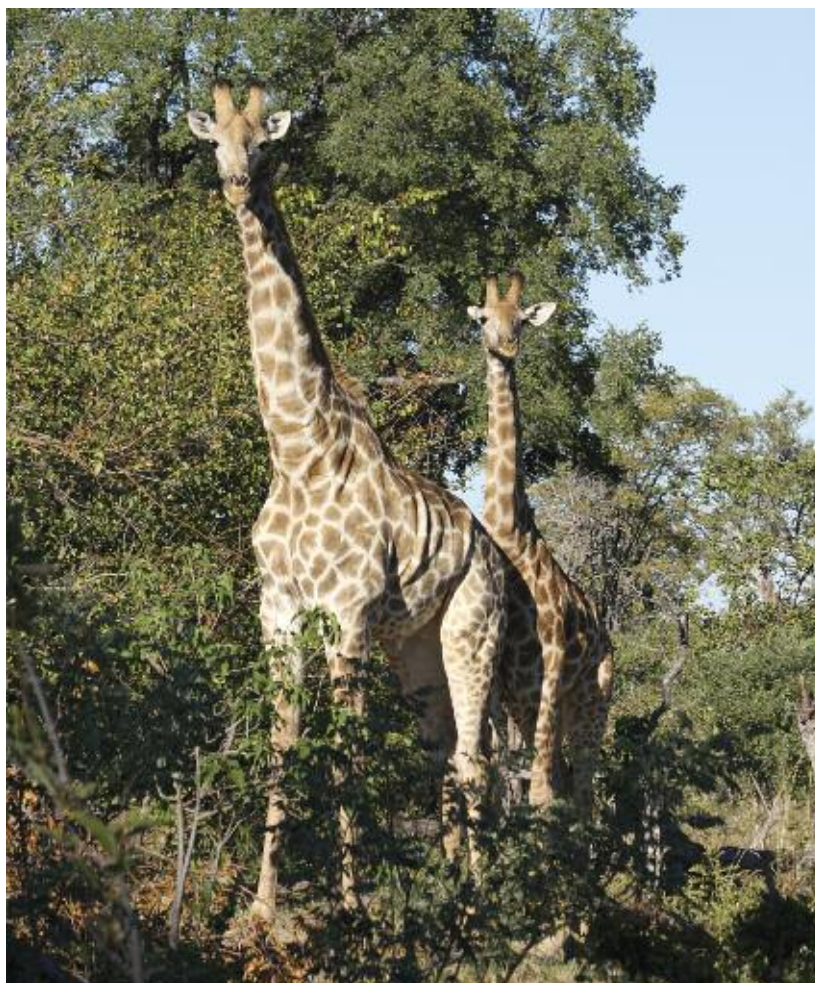
Overlooking the Linyanti Marshes, the small **Linyanti Bush Camp** has six spacious, en-suite tents, which are simple and low-key on the outside, but subtly luxurious inside. Sandy paths link the tents to a small plunge pool and the main lounge area, where you'll find assorted comfortable chairs, a small bar, a library and a collection of interesting antiques. In early 2011 this was augmented by the adjacent **Linyanti Ebony** which was

built with families and smaller groups in mind, incorporating a family unit and three en-suite tents.

To the reserve's west, **Saile Tented Camp** has just four en-suite tents. It has civilised touches like flushing toilets and hot bucket showers, but retains a simplicity that befits a camp with no electricity.

Bush enthusiasts should consider **Footsteps Across the Linyanti**. This small mobile camp with spacious en-suite tents focuses on walking safaris led by top guides. There are no fixed departures but walking is seasonal (May–October), and trips are guaranteed with a minimum of four travellers for three nights. Each caters for a maximum of six guests. (See our *Footsteps Across the Linyanti Add-on*, page 112).

As with *Footsteps Across the Delta* (see page 94), small groups can hire the Linyanti camp exclusively (see page 20), and families can enjoy activities tailored for children as young as seven on the 'Young Explorers' programme!



A giraffe's running stride can be up to 15 feet

### Botswana: the facts

Speak to our expert team for further details, or read the latest edition of Chris's guidebook, **Botswana: The Bradt Safari Guide** (see page 89 for details), but in brief:

- Currency:** The pula is Botswana's currency, and at the time of writing £1 = P12. Travellers' cheques and foreign currency can be exchanged at banks, although most camps will take credit cards. At most camps/lodges, there are no extras to pay.
- Visas:** Currently many travellers (including UK & US passport-holders) do not need a visa.
- Health:** Botswana is a healthy country to visit. Several vaccines are sensible (typhoid, polio and tetanus), though none are required. Anti-malarial tablets are usually recommended; check the latest recommendations with your doctor.
- Language:** English is the official language of Botswana and is widely spoken, though Setswana is spoken by almost everybody.
- Food:** Safari camps provide very high-quality food and drink.
- Climate:** For details of Botswana's climate, and the best times to visit, see the section on 'When to go' on pages 23–25.
- Driving:** Botswana's few tarred roads are generally excellent; away from these, roads are merely unmarked tracks in the sand.
- Wild animals:** Botswana's camps are unfenced; you must take care to stay away from wild animals, which can all be dangerous.

