

KAFUE NATIONAL PARK

About the same size as Wales, Kafue is Zambia's largest national park and protects a wide variety of different environments. On an undulating plateau, it's a mosaic of miombo and riverine woodlands dotted with occasional grassy pans (small depressions holding water, also known as 'dambos'). Veined by numerous rivers, it's perfect for a varied safari.

At the heart of the park, the main Kafue River is wide, deep and slow, to the obvious pleasure of large numbers of hippo and crocodile. Tall, shady hardwood trees overhang its banks, whilst islands are favourite places for elephant and buffalo. Aside from the common species of impala, puku, zebra, blue wildebeest, red lechwe and kudu, Kafue's wildlife attractions include rarer antelope like roan, sable, eland and oribi. Lion and leopard thrive, as do growing numbers of Africa's rarest large predators – wild dogs.

In the far north of Kafue, one area is beautiful and strikingly different: the Busanga Plains. These floodplains are dry for six months of the year – and then the game found here can be memorable.

NORTHERN KAFUE

With few visitors and often spectacular game, northern Kafue has long been one of our favourite safari areas. When we first visited it ourselves, in 1995, few Zambian safari aficionados had ever seen it. This is no longer the case; it's now firmly on the map, and the game-viewing experience improves year on year.

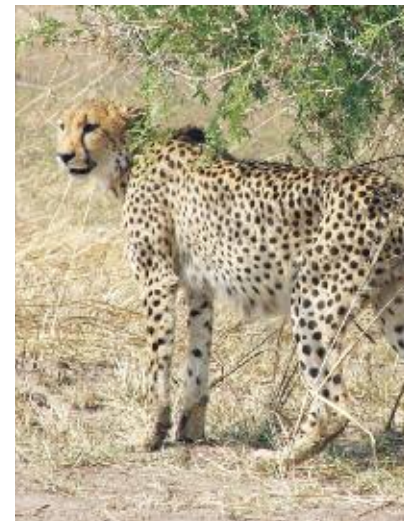
Originally known as Kafwala Rapids Camp, named after the section of rapids it overlooks, the refurbished **Lufupa Bushcamp** opened in May 2011. Each of the four thatched en-suite chalets overlooks a stretch of the Kafue River known for its white water and birdlife. Game in the area includes uncommon antelope like

Lichtenstein's hartebeest and the beautiful sable antelope. Activities from the camp include day and night 4WD safaris, walking safaris, boat trips and fishing.

A 90-minute drive south of the Busanga Plains mentioned to the right, **Musanza Bushcamp** is a simple camp; its six khaki, walk-in, zip-up tents are shaded by tall trees growing on the banks of the Lufupa. Each has comfortable twin beds, cotton duvets, a hanging wardrobe and a luggage rack – plus a flush toilet and a bucket shower (water is heated on request). Musanza has all the essential camp comforts, whilst keeping a sense of adventure in the wilderness – meals are often taken outside under the stars.



The lounge at Shumba Camp looks out across the Busanga Plains



Cheetah are occasionally seen in Kafue

BUSANGA PLAINS

One of the Kafue's main tributaries, the Lufupa, enters the north of the park via the Busanga Swamps. During the rains, it floods out over the adjacent Busanga Plains. When the waters recede, they leave behind lush vegetation. This is a magnificent wilderness: flat grasslands dotted with photogenic 'islands' of wild date palms, sausage trees and fig trees. It attracts huge herds of red lechwe and puku, as well as buffalo, zebra and wildebeest, followed by lion (known here for their tree-climbing antics), and the occasional cheetah.

Set on an island of enormous fig trees in the heart of the Busanga Plains, **Shumba Camp** has been built with style. Six large, luxurious tented rooms are raised up on wooden decks, overlooking the plains – each with twin or double beds, an electric overhead fan and an en-suite bathroom with indoor and outdoor showers.

Shumba is linear in layout; its open-plan bar, dining and lounge area is fronted with extensive glass doors overlooking a large wooden deck, a sunken lounge, a plunge pool and the plains beyond. It's dotted with African artefacts, and cool aqua- and sand-coloured sofas make it a welcoming place to soak up the view with a gin and tonic.

The camp at **Kapinga** used to be a luxury camp located in the far northwest of Busanga Plains. However it will be closed



A hot air balloon ride is a great way to see the Busanga Plains

for the whole of 2012 whilst it undergoes a radical transformation. We expect it to re-open in 2013 as a very different style of property – with platforms raised high off the ground and just the stars forming your roof. It should be very much like its sister property in South Luangwa, Kalamu Starbed Camp (page 128). Ask us for the latest details.

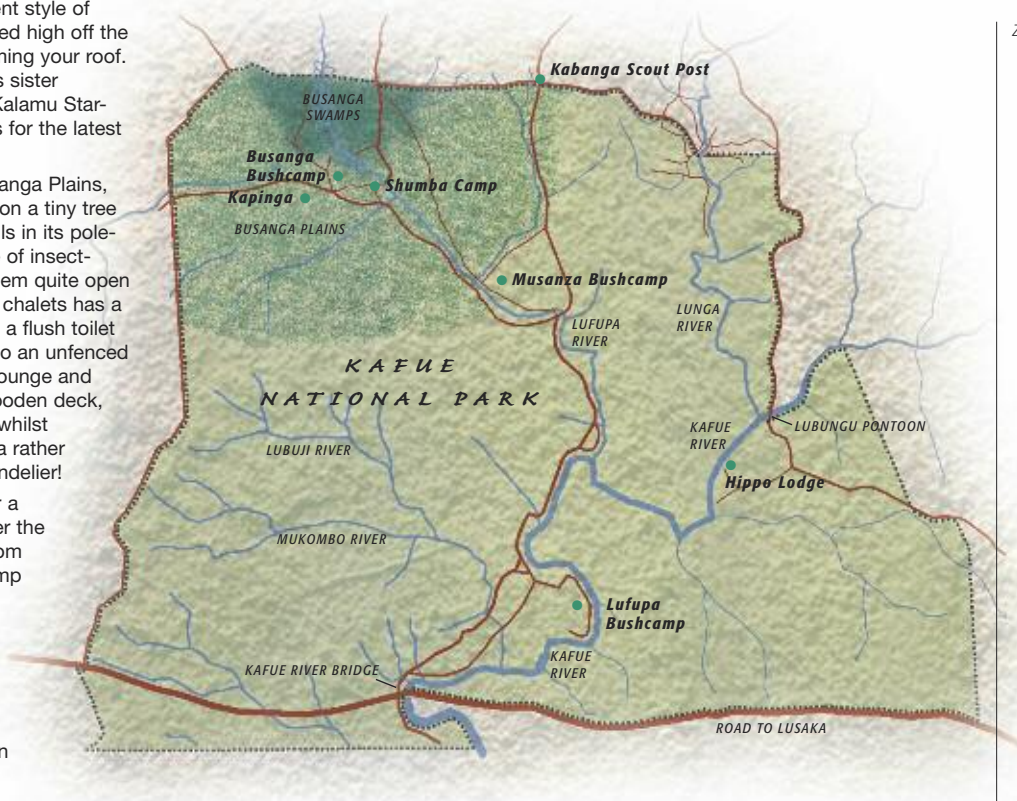
On the northwest side of Busanga Plains, **Busanga Bushcamp** stands on a tiny tree island. The top half of the walls in its pole-and-canvas chalets are made of insect-proof mesh – which makes them quite open and very airy. Each of its four chalets has a solar-heated en-suite shower, a flush toilet and stable doors opening onto an unfenced private veranda. The central lounge and dining area is canvas on a wooden deck, and has comfortable sofas – whilst fireside dining is often under a rather marvellous storm-lantern chandelier!

Between August and October a spectacular balloon safari over the Busanga Plains is possible from Shumba or Busanga Bushcamp at an additional US\$400 per person.

Suggested trips to the Kafue include the great value *Zambia Wildlife Safari*, which has a set itinerary and the *Boehm's Zebra Safari* (both on page 138).



Zebra in evening light





SOUTHERN KAFUE

Southern Kafue feels very separate from the north of the park, and doesn't have the same density of big game. However, camps here have been slowly establishing themselves, so if you want to visit an offbeat area before anyone else, then this is a good place to come.

The lovely **Kaingu Lodge** has a traditional design which has been executed with tremendous attention to detail. Its four large bedrooms are in spacious tents, raised on wooden decks. All have en-suite bathrooms with indoor and outdoor showers in stylish stone, while their front verandas overlook the Kafue from thick riverside vegetation. A family house, **Finfoot Cottage**, is available for families with children. The house has two en-suite bedrooms, an outside shower and a deck over the river.

Tom and Viviane Heinecken built this lodge with great care and run it with passion.

There is game here: antelope, lion and elephant can be seen on day and night drives, and leopards pass through camp regularly. However, that's not why we love the place. The primary attraction is the river, as here the Kafue splits into shallows that flow around a myriad of small islands – each a jumble of sand, soil and huge, rounded granite boulders. Boat trips and walks explore these, with options for excellent fishing and birdwatching; it's really very beautiful.

Further south, **Nanzhila Plains Safari Camp** overlooks the grass-fringed Nangandwe Pool, which attracts herds of game such as roan and sable antelope, Defassa waterbuck and eland, and attendant predators, including wild dog and cheetah. It accommodates 12 guests in three solidly built thatched cottages and three simpler safari tents, each of which



Kaingu offer boat safaris as well as drives

has an en-suite with hot shower and toilet. The open-sided thatched dining area, bar and lounge stands on a platform under a huge ebony tree.

Activities include day and night game drives in open 4WD vehicles, guided walks, excursions to Lake Itzhi-Tezhi, and visits to the nearby Shezongo cultural village.



An elephant crossing the Kafue River

More information online

Our website incorporates thousands of unedited reviews written by our recent travellers; extensive satellite maps of Zambia, including the Lower Zambezi's camps; and thousands of photos. Just browse to www.expertafrika.com as you research your trip – for much more than we can ever fit into this brochure.