

# Preparing For Your Trip

The following guide is compiled from our years of traveling in Africa, with input from our friends and clients. These notes should help simplify your packing, and give you information, which I hope will make your trip even more pleasurable.

*Please note: This info pertains specifically to an African safari. Please ask us for info pertaining to safaris to South American countries, India, Antarctica and Australia or New Zealand.*

## Luggage



These photos of the storage hold should speak for itself! Most importantly— please travel as light as possible, as you will be able to do laundry at most camps.

### **Size**

Use **soft, medium** duffel bags since the planes are small, and suitcases do not fit easily. A good rule of thumb is a bag should be no larger than **11”H x 23”W x 11”D**. You won’t need wheels, as there are people to carry your stuff everywhere, but should you want them, it is mostly OK except for Botswana internal flights.

Have a look at a typical bag that will fit— [Rolling Adventure Duffle](#)

### **Weight**

The weight limit for the small charter flights is **15kg / 33lbs max per person**, carry-on included (unless otherwise stated). Please note: You *may* have to pay for a larger plane if your bags don’t fit. In some cases, where severe weight limits exist; we can arrange storage for items not needed on certain legs of your trip. However, please remember that often the logistics of your safari do not make that easy, and you may have to pay to have it catch up with you.

## **Day Bags**

We suggest a day-pack / backpack for camera, binoculars and water. Choose one that carries EVERYTHING you need in the Land Rover for your day activities.

Please be aware that most of Africa has recently passed a ban on plastic bags. If you plan to go shopping or buy souvenirs while on safari, please bring your own re-usable bag with you. Similarly, we also encourage our guests to bring their own reusable water bottles. If you forget, almost every camp gives one to each client nowadays.



## Packing

### East Africa

East Africa is on the equator, and thus has no seasons. The driest and warmest period in the continent is from December through March, and the rainy seasons are in April, May and November. You will be mainly at high altitude (Nairobi is 5,500 feet above sea level, as is the Serengeti and Masai Mara), enjoying dry heat up to 85°F during the days and crisp cool nights.

### South Africa

As you go further south in Africa, you do encounter seasons – in the reverse of the Northern hemisphere. Southern Africa in the winter can be cold in the mornings and evenings – as low as the mid-30's, then warming up nicely as the day goes on!

### All Regions

The best method of dress is layering. Early mornings will be chilly and a lightweight primaloft down jacket is a great way to keep warm, we also suggest a beanie to keep your ears warm if you feel the cold . Hats are a must for the sun, particularly at the equator. Cotton trousers or shorts, sneakers or comfortable hiking shoes are recommended. You will do quite a lot of walking, so lightweight hiking boots/ comfortable sneakers are advisable. Evenings are cool around the campfire, and casual, as is all bush dress. A fleece with a lightweight wool turtleneck and long khakis are perfect for the coolest of evenings.

For evenings in the major cities, unless you plan a formal evening out, casual is the name of the game. For the girls, a travel dress and a wrap/pashmina.

### Sample Clothing List

- 2 pairs of khaki shorts
- 2 pairs of khaki pants – convertibles work well
- 1 bathing suit
- 1 warm sweater or sweatshirt
- 1 lightweight primaloft down jacker or long-sleeved fleece or waterproof windbreaker
- 3 long-sleeved shirts
- 3 short-sleeved shirts
- 3 sets of underwear
- 3 pairs of socks
- 1 pair of sneakers or running/hiking shoes
- 1 pair of Tevas / Chacos or sandals
- 2 cotton caps / hats or visors
- 1 beanie and lightweight gloves for cold mornings and evenings
- 2 kikois or kangas – can be bought locally
- A water-bottle belt / waist fanny pack is a good idea, especially if you plan to walk a lot
- a toilet kit with moisturizer – biodegradable shampoos, conditioners, and soap are provided by all camps

### Laundry

You will *not* need large quantities of clothes, as there is daily laundry service everywhere you have time. Be sure all clothing you take is washable, but beware – it may be hand-washed, beaten on a rock, scrubbed and sun dried! Most camps know how to iron the modern nylon fabrics, but do check with your hosts on how they may be ironed, as some types don't take kindly to charcoal irons. One laundry tip: ladies must do their own underwear because generally men do the laundry; and washing ladies underwear jeopardizes their dignity. All camps provide washing powder for this.



## Accessories

### Toiletries

Sunscreen (min 20 SPF) and moisturizer are a must in the African sunshine. Watch the face, neck, arms and the backs of your legs when in shorts!

Other small items to consider: Moisturizer, small packets of Kleenex and Wet Ones, lip balm, insect repellent, face soap, shaving stuff, large zip lock plastic bags to keep cameras dust free on the game runs, hard candy for “dry mouth” syndrome, plus a dust mask for those with allergies or the unwanted head cold. **Leave your jewelry at home.** A plastic watch is all you really need!

### Binoculars & Items For Camp

Every person *should* have their own binoculars. You will not want to pass them back and forth when the action starts, or a special bird is sighted. Binoculars do not have to be expensive, but you will get more enjoyment from a better pair. Get a “light gathering” and a “wide field” type. I recommend something close to 10 x 30. Technology, size and weight is improving all the time, as prices come down. I use Steiner 12 x 30. If you want to rent a good pair of Swarovski's, for a very reasonable price, call us for details.

A flashlight or headlamp is good to have for locating anything on your night table if you are in a tent. There is at least solar power in all camps these days, and they will have the capacity to charge equipment. At some lodges, power is supplied by a generator, which is switched off at around 11 pm – or whenever the party finishes!

### Electronics

Almost all portable electric appliances are now dual voltage (110/240 v) and can be used in African hotels, lodges and private homes, with a plug adapter. These travel adapters can be easily found at most airports or travel stores or amazon.

### Plug Types

Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia all use the British standard.

Botswana uses a mix of the British-type plug (Type G – 3 rectangular pins) and the South African plug (Type M – three big round pins).

Hair dryers – Most camps where they can be used have them to borrow, and always ask before using your own. Some generators cannot bear the load. There are even battery operated hair dryers available, but most people opt to use “sun power”!

## Cameras

You should have at least a 300-millimeter lens with a lens shade for animal shots. An 80 – 300 mm zoom is widely available and recommended, as is a 35 – 90 mm zoom for people and camp shots. Your totally automatic “point and push” cameras are super for the camp / lodge action, but you may be disappointed with their game photos. Camera buffs will enjoy a motor drive for fast animal action, and a 400mm lens for birds etc. Don't forget spare camera batteries, storage memory cards – some of them use special ones, lens cleaners, and possibly a monopod.

The majority of cameras these days are digital. If you are buying a new camera especially for the trip, don't forget to have several practice sessions with it so that you are ready when the game action starts!

Be careful not to fall into the trap of seeing your whole trip through a camera lens – step back occasionally and soak up the vastness and majesty of Africa!



## Drones

Drones are illegal in most of the game countries in Africa, and some people have had theirs confiscated upon arrival. Exceptions sometimes can be made by applying to the authorities in some countries, but this will take ages, and unlikely to be approved.

## Immunizations & Medicals Kits

We cannot advise you on this – please consult your own health practitioner. The very latest current information on immunization and malaria prevention is available straight from the [CDC in Atlanta](#); Another excellent website to look up overseas health matters is <http://www.masta.org/> but please refer all your concerns to your adviser.

**However, these are some of the things you are likely to hear from a health care provider:**

1. Cholera is unnecessary, as the vaccine is ineffective.
2. Yellow fever is required in a few countries. One shot at least ten days before you go. Valid for 10 years, though previous shots have recently been extended to life time validity.
3. Immune globulin is a good idea, but not required, against hepatitis. Haverix – long-term protection – is readily available.
4. A Tetanus and diphtheria booster is a good idea, if you have not had one in ten years.
5. One shot of Menomune for meningitis is a good idea, but not required.
6. Malaria – **Malarone**, is a non-toxic drug, though rather expensive, only needs to be taken for the duration of the trip – If you take this please ensure you drink plenty of water as it can dehydrate you and make you feel ill.
7. Some doctors are *still* recommending **Lariam** – 250 Mg (Mefloquin) – once a week for the two weeks before you go, and for 4 weeks after return. Many people have experienced various, generally harmless, side effects to this drug, so I strongly recommend you challenge them about this. In the U.S.A. you need a prescription for these drugs.
8. Evidence exists to suggest that it is NOT a good idea to have all your shots at once. Again, consult your doctor.

Regular travelers keep their Smallpox, Tetanus, Typhoid and Yellow Fever vaccinations up to date as a wise precaution, and a guarantee of “no hassle” entry to any third world country.

## **Insect Repellent**

Malaria exists throughout Africa, although inland you will probably see very few mosquitoes, perfume attracts them after dark. Probably the best method of protection is to cover up well after dark and use a repellent. It is a serious disease, so if you do get what seems to be flu, even up to three months after your return, you must tell your doctor that you have been in a malarial area.

Contrary to ones preconceptions, you will actually experience very few bugs in Africa. Much has been written on **Deet** (diethylemetalolumaide). The general feeling among outdoor enthusiasts is that the best shield remains an application of a Deet- based repellent on the skin. For broader protection, a secondary step can be treatment of clothing with a permethrin-based spray. Deet presents some possible, albeit very low, health risk in itself, but it remains the most effective repellent chemical since it was developed a half century ago. Public health authorities recommend repellents with no more than a 30% concentration of Deet for adults.



The American Academy of Pediatrics recently has changed its recommendations to support the use of 30% Deet products on children older than two months. Younger infants should not be treated with any Deet repellents. Deet in heavier concentrations doesn't repel bugs better, but rather does it longer. Recent tests – by the New England Journal of Medicine – found that a repellent with 23.8 % Deet held off mosquitoes for more than five hours, while a 20 % Deet blend was good for a little less than four hours. By contrast, a 6.65 % Deet mix repelled for less than two hours, and a 4.75 % concentration worked only a little less than an hour and a half. Non-Deet repellents generally fell short of these.

Permethrin compounds, sold as tick repellents, effectively kill ticks and bugs on contact where they have been used to treat clothing. The sprays aren't for use on skin, but rather they should be sprayed on clothing and allowed to dry. The resulting protection bonded to the clothing fibers is good for up to three weeks, even lasting through a couple of launderings. A one-two punch of Deet on exposed skin and permethrin on clothing is the outdoors enthusiast's best bet to knock out the annoyance and risk of blood-feeding pestilence – of which you are not likely to come across many anyway.

## Other Items

A tube of steroid cream for those allergic to insect bites, an antihistamine, Lomotil, Tetracycline, and an antibiotic such as Bactrim or Septra. Do not worry about medical emergencies, since you are never out of reach of the Flying Doctors of East Africa, or similar in Southern Africa. South Africa, as many of you may know, hosts some of the best medical facilities in the world. Blood is very well screened in Africa.

## Time & Communicating

### Time

East African local time is G.M.T + 3, Southern Africa GMT + 2; that means 8 / 7 hours ahead of Eastern Time. If you only have a short total time away from home, I recommend maximizing your time in Africa. However, with a total of up to 16 hours of flying to get there, some people opt to take a couple of day's stopover in Europe to catch up on the jet-lag before starting out on their safari. Some airfares will allow this at no extra cost.

The wildlife is at its most active in the early morning and evening, so expect some early starts! Much of the game rests during the heat of the day, so you can do also! Midday reading in the quiet of your world with only the sounds of the African bush around you is bliss.

### Communicating

About three weeks before you leave, we will send you a "departure letter" containing all your contact points, and how family, friends, and if necessary, secretaries can reach you!

We highly recommend downloading the app [WhatsApp](#) onto your phone before departing for your trip. You and anyone else with the app on their phone can send texts within the app from anywhere there is wifi— which is most of the camps.

Many camps (but not all) have WI-Fi, though most run very slow. This will work well enough for short emails, but not for very large files or uploading photos to the Cloud. Please don't let this frustrate you! Cell phone coverage continues to increase everywhere in Africa, but not always in the camp you are in. Be sure to check with your local provider about the roaming charges *before you leave* to ensure you are not met with a huge bill upon your return. Some people rent satellite phones but remember – you are taking a holiday!! Once outside the cities, landline telephones are now virtually non-existent, but everywhere you stay has their own communications so urgent messages can reach you, and vice versa.



## Currency, Shopping, & Dining

### **Currency**

The cities have plenty to buy, and your Visa and MasterCard, but not Amex, are readily accepted in all the better shops and restaurants. Also many of the remote lodges and homes have their own small shops.

Bring a couple of hundred dollars to change into the local currency, for small items and tips. Dollars are accepted in most places these days, so bring smaller denominations, though in remote Southern Ethiopia for example, they see it as monopoly money! Exchange rates vary, as in all third world countries! Please don't barter for jeans, tee shirts etc. – the people need the money. Your guides and drivers will all speak English, and the local dialects.

### **Shopping**

In Kenya, all animal skin or bone articles are forbidden unless proven to be antique. Elsewhere you can obtain these things, but it is illegal to bring these back into the USA. Beware of plastic ivory and elephant hair bracelets sold by street vendors. Many good African artifacts are available and modern “cottage” industry basketry, soapstone and jewelry are not only interesting, but are also very good quality and value. There are several excellent artists and sculptors that we can introduce you to.

Your hosts and guides all will have ideas for shopping should you wish, and have time before your departure from the cities. For those with little time scheduled in the cities, artifacts can be bought at very reasonable prices at small towns and villages, and most camps have a small shop.

### **Dining**

The food is excellent everywhere, and almost too much of it, it is hard to watch your weight! On safari you will enjoy largely European cuisine but do ask for a local meal if you would like to try the food. The water is safe to drink in most places, as it is double boiled and filtered, but many people prefer to drink bottled water, which is readily available.

There are many excellent restaurants in all the major cities:

In **Nairobi**: The Carnivore is a great favorite with visitors. Others are Tamarind – seafood, Misono – Japanese, Haandi – Indian, Salumaria – Italian and in Karen the Talisman – various.

In the **Cape Town** area we recommend Test Kitchen, The Stack, Roundhouse, on the V&A Waterfront, Docks, One Waterfront in the Cape Grace Hotel, Bihia and Green Dolphin, which features jazz with dinner. In Camp Bay, Blues and Villamoura. Cape Colony in the Mount Nelson Hotel, and Blue Danube on Old Table Mountain Road. Many of these need reservation months in advance!

In **Johannesburg**: Moyo's (African) in Melrose arch, Villamora – Sandton Sun, Montego Bay, Butcher Shop and Grille in Sandton Square (now called Mandela Square) and Blues Room for Jazz with dinner.



## Visas

You will, of course, need a current passport, but it is also essential that you have at least one empty page per country you are visiting on your trip and a validity of at least 6 months after the date of travel. Please plan this well in advance, as the passport offices can be slow to process renewals, especially in the summer!

U.S. passport holders require visas for many countries in Africa – currently Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Seychelles, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Zambia, but not Botswana or South Africa.

For Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda, you will need to obtain your visa online in advance. We will send you instructions on how to apply for online visas closer to your departure date as the visas are normally only valid for 90 days from issue.

It is possible to get most other **African countries** visas upon arrival at their *major* airports, and in all cases now the online system seems to be working well. Please advise us if you plan still to get a visa on arrival, as this sometimes causes a delay, and we will advise the driver who is meeting you.

## Insurance

It is a Safari Experts company policy to insist that clients take out a basic Evacuation Insurance. This in itself is very inexpensive, and very good to have.

This basic coverage takes care of emergency evacuation and many eventualities i.e. if a flight is late or delayed due to African variance – it may cost a bit to catch up! You may wish to supplement the coverage they offer with *trip cancellation cover* as well, which, though expensive, can be very valuable if, at the last minute, you or a relative gets sick, and you cannot travel.

Here are two companies we have great experience with. Please call them direct to discuss options for your travel insurance needs.

*Travel Guard Insurance* – Please call the Safari Experts dedicated phone line 888-678-7846.

*Travelex Insurance* – Please call the Safari Experts dedicated phone line 866-314-9483.

