

## **General Information**

### **What to Expect at the Safari Lodges**

All the lodges we'll be staying at are similar in format – a main building where there's a bar, a dining room, a gift shop, and comfortable places to hang out during “down time”. The sleeping rooms are a short walk from the main building. The rooms aren't heated in all the camps, but you won't get cold - they have electric blankets, and the beds are very cozy. We'll be staying at some of the best camps in this part of the world. They are beautiful, elegant, and very comfortable; the food and service are outstanding.

### **Food**

Everybody asks me “What's the food like in Africa?” Keep in mind we're not staying in remote villages; we're staying at upscale safari lodges, who cater to the fussiest American (and other) tourists. That means we won't see much local food. There is usually one night where local food is available for tasting, but it's always optional. Most often we'll be ordering from a menu or choosing from a buffet or barbecue, where the choices will include chicken, beef, fish, and vegetarian entrees that will remind you of something you might order at a fine dining restaurant in the U.S. There will also be appetizers and dessert choices. I promise you won't go hungry. By the way, they aim to please...if there is any beverage (alcoholic or otherwise) that you really like, please let us know; they will be happy to try to make sure each lodge has plenty of it in stock when we arrive. Yes, Jack, there will be Fanta and hot chocolate for you, and Mary Kay, we know you like Diet Pepsi.

### **Laundry**

All the camps do laundry free of charge (even your delicates), and they do a wonderful job. You put your stuff in the laundry basket in your room and it comes back the same afternoon, cleaned and pressed and wrapped in tissue paper, with a little raffia bow on it. You can even bring dirty clothes from the lodge you just came from and give it to them on the day you arrive. The good news about that is that you don't need more than 3 changes of clothes, which is so important. See “What to Pack” below.

### **A Typical Day**

A typical day starts with an early wakeup call (or knock on your door). Think 5:30 – 6:30 a.m., depending on the camp. You'll have 30 minutes to get dressed, brush your teeth, and meet in the main building for a quick bite and a cup of coffee. 30 minutes after that, you'll meet out in front for your morning game

drive. The jeeps will be ready and waiting – packed with hot water bottles and blankets to keep you warm until the temperatures start rising.

Morning game drives usually last about 4 hours; could be longer if there's something going on out there that's worth staying out for, or if you end up a longer distance away from the lodge because you were tracking a pride of lions or something. Halfway through the game drive, your guide will stop in a safe clearing, and you'll be able to get out, stretch your legs, use the "bush toilet" if you need to, and have some coffee and something small (and yummy) to eat. (NOTE: Most jeeps provide toilet paper, but you might want to have a travel size roll with you, just in case).

After the game drive, you'll return to the lodge to freshen up, eat a meal (brunch or lunch), take a shower, take a nap, or sit on the deck with a drink and/or a cigar to watch whatever's out there. Some of the lodges have a watering hole, lake, or river that's visible from the main lodge where you can watch the animals gather for drink.

At 3:00 or 3:30, you're back at the main building for tea or coffee and a small snack, before getting back into the jeep. The best part of the afternoon game drive (besides the game viewing, of course), is something called "sundowners", a break where you stop, get out of the jeep, have a cocktail, and watch the sunset. You haven't seen a sunset until you've seen one in Africa; there is something about the light and the sky that is just spectacular.

After the sun sets, you're back in the jeep, either headed back to the lodge, or taking a night game drive (depends on the lodge – some are in national parks where you're required to leave by a certain time; others are on private game reserves, where you can stay out after dark).

### **Things to bring with you on the game drives**

A small backpack or day-bag to carry:

Hand sanitizer or wet wipes	Water
Binoculars	Sunscreen
Camera and/or phone	Lip Balm
Portable charger	Sunglasses
Kleenex	Extra layer(s)
Travel sized roll of toilet paper	Gloves or mittens

### **Weather**

It will be their winter when we're there. That means we can expect very little rain, with cold temperatures at night and warm sunshine during the day. (During

all our other safaris this same time of year, it only rained once, very lightly, for about 2 minutes; that was in 2005). Temperatures every day will be coldest during morning game drives (in the 40's, which feels colder when you're in an open jeep), pleasantly warm during the middle part of the day (70's to 80's), and cool again when the sun sets toward the end of the afternoon game drives. Dinners are usually outside in an open air dining room; it'll be cool, but not too cold; you'll be wearing a fleece or a light jacket. The sleeping rooms at all the camps have heat and/or electric blankets, so even if it gets down into the 40's, you'll be cozy while you're sleeping.

### **Electricity & Technology**

Most of the camps have universal electrical outlets, but you might want to bring at least one Euro and UK adapter, just in case. Also, bring a small power strip if you have lots of things to charge. There are no TV's in the camps. They have what they call "bush TV", which is a fire around a big firepit every night after dinner, with cocktails and snacks (and cigars). All the camps have "Wi-Fi"; when it works it's OK for checking email, but too slow to post a lot of photos and/or videos. Do not count on cell phone service, especially in the Delta.

### **What to Pack**

Think solid, neutral colors (the ones found in nature), at least for the game drives. Khaki, green, brown, tan, grey; a little bit of black is OK too. Avoid bright colors, pure white, blue, and stripes or other patterns. Here's why that's important – the animals look at the jeep and its passengers as a complete unit; a big hunk of metal that's not alarming to them, doesn't look like food, isn't a threat, and that they are so used to seeing, they just ignore it. You don't want to stand out by wearing bright colors or unusual patterns.

Don't wear denim or anything that's all cotton – it doesn't dry quickly. Think quick-dry fabrics. Athleta, REI, and Eddie Bauer (where everything always seems to be 40% off), are good places to look.

Don't wear blue – it attracts tsetse and horse flies. They are attracted to blue and they bite.

Don't wear white – not only is it too bright (see above), but also because there is an extraordinary amount of dust that gets kicked up on the trails, and it gets dirty very fast.

Think in layers – short sleeve or sleeveless tops with something long sleeved to wear over it (shirts with sleeves that you can roll up and/or that have tabs are perfect); with a lightweight fleece to wear over that; topped with a cool looking

safari jacket. If you don't have a cool safari jacket like Roy's (which few people have), bring a medium-weight insulated jacket (not a big fluffy ski jacket). Something like the Patagonia jackets that fold up into a little ball and weigh nothing is perfect. (Again, its preferable that the jacket not be brightly colored or white). You'll be glad to have all those layers in the early mornings, and you'll be thankful to be able to peel them off throughout the day as the temperatures rise.

Hats – The best hat I ever bought for a trip to Africa was a Tilley Airflow (you can buy one at REI or on the Tilley website); it's got a wide enough brim to block the hot sun, but not so wide that it blocks the views, it's vented at the top, so it doesn't get too warm, it's got a chin strap (which keeps it on your head when it gets windy or when the jeep is speeding to get to a sighting), and it's Africa stylin'. It's expensive (\$85-\$90), but it's crushable, machine washable, and guaranteed against damage or loss for life (if you lose it, they will replace it). I bought mine for our first trip in 2005, I still have it, it still looks like new, and I've worn it all over the world. You could also buy a cute hat the airport in Johannesburg, or at any of the safari lodges. And if you're a die-hard fan, you could get away with a neutral colored baseball cap.

I also suggest bringing a knit hat for the coldest part of the day (the morning game drives), and gloves – the ones without fingers are great, so you can free up your hands to take pictures. If you're really sensitive to the cold, an insulated base layer (silk or level-1) as well as a scarf to wrap your face will help.

Shoes - While Ashley & Deb will probably bring more, one pair of sturdy, closed-toe low heeled walking shoes, low boots, or neutral colored sneakers is all you really need, plus flip flops or water shoes (Deb wore Keen "water proof" sandals for the falls and were great around the lodge between game drives). No fashion sandals or espadrilles, nothing suede (it collects dust and brush), nothing with high heels or platform soles. When we visit the falls, you *will* get soaked (think Iguazu x 2). Rain ponchos are provided, and they'll keep you reasonably dry, but you don't want to be in wet shoes all day, so plan to wear your water shoes at the falls and have dry shoes to change into in the car afterwards.

You might want to bring a pair or two of shorts or a little skirt to wear during the warmest part of the day, when you're hanging at the lodge between game drives. There is typically an hour or two of "down time" after lunch. Ashley brought a casual sun dress, shorts, and a couple of a tank tops for that time of day. While the water is too cold to swim in, all the lodges do have pools, so think about bringing a swimsuit for sunning at the pool in the afternoons.

You won't need evening wear or nice things to wear to dinner. We're not staying at any fancy hotels in the city; where we'll be, everyone will be wearing safari gear, even at dinner. On the 2018 trip, I never took the nicer stuff out of the duffel; when got back from the afternoon game drives, there wasn't enough time to go back to the room to take a shower and change clothes; all our meals were outside, and everything was all casual all day. Makes it so much easier to figure out what to pack, and it leaves you with a little bit of extra room in your luggage for anything you might buy there to take home.

## **Packing List**

Safari Hat	3 pairs of hiking socks
Knit Hat	3 pairs of socks for sneakers
Gloves	Underwear
Water Shoes or flip flops	Swimsuit
"Sturdy" walking/hiking Shoes	1 pair of pj's
Sneakers or other Flat Shoes (optional)	Shampoo (if you're fussy)*
3 pairs of pants	Conditioner (if you're fussy)*
1-2 pairs of shorts, a skirt or 1 of each	Moisturizer (if you're fussy)*
3-4 long sleeved button-down shirts	Electrical Adapter
1-2 short sleeved tee shirts or tanks	Phone Charger(s)
1-2 long or ¾ sleeve length tee shirts	Portable Charger
Fleece	Scarf to wrap around your neck
Lightweight warmer jacket**	Contact Lens Stuff
Sunglasses	

\*Shampoo, conditioner, body lotion and shower gel is provided at each camp. The lodges use the brand Africology (you can buy it anywhere) but for some reason the shampoo is rough on Ashley and Deb's hair, so they bring their own tiny travel sized bottles.

\*\*Don't bring a big puffy down coat; just something to wear over your fleece.

## **Other Things to Know**

### **Meds**

Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/> and/or talk to your doctor about required vaccinations. Don't wait too long as some of the vaccinations are given over a 6-month period.

You should have malaria prophylaxis meds. We will be in a malaria endemic region when we are in Zambia & Botswana (31-May through 9-June). The camp in South Africa is malaria-free.

You do not need a Yellow Fever vaccination. However, if you have been vaccinated, bring your Yellow card.

While I have never needed to use any of this, I always bring a Z-Pack (Azithromycin), Ciprofloxacin, Imodium and, if you are susceptible to motion sickness on the small planes, Dramamine.

### **Odds 'n Ends**

Don't bring any fragrances. They attract bugs and bees.

Do bring sunscreen. The afternoon sun is very strong.

Don't bring insect repellent. It's provided by the camps.

Binoculars are not mandatory but sharing tends to be problematic... especially if you're watching something unbelievable happening.

Absolutely bring sunglasses – a must. Some camp's vehicles will have an awning over the top to block SOME of the sun, but Chief's Camp has 100% open air vehicles with no awning, and you'll be in direct sunlight for several hours every day, and the sun gets very hot out in African bush.

If you plan to use your phone to take pictures, it is smart to bring a portable phone charger. You'll be in the vehicles for about 4 hours in the morning, and another 4 in the afternoon, and won't be able to charge your phones in the vehicles.

Bring something to protect your camera/phone at the falls. A zip-lock bag will work.

If you regularly wear contacts, you may want to plan to wear your glasses the day we visit the falls. Ashley wears contacts and had major issues with getting lots of water in her eyes.

### **Luggage**

Luggage **must** be soft-sided duffel bag(s). You can also bring a personal bag. I suggest a smallish backpack, which you can use on the game drives. Total weight limit per passenger is 33 lbs. for **both** checked and carry-on bags. The reason it's important to use only duffel bags or cloth backpacks and the reason for the weight limit is that between camps we'll be traveling in very small private planes, and they need to be able to shove things wherever they will fit; soft-sided bags are more "shovable".

It's not as hard as you might think to keep to the weight limits. I (Roy) packed way more than I needed and was still under 25 pounds. I (Deb) could have used another 10 to bring everything I wanted to bring). It's important to get it right, though, because it enables you to avoid checking bags for the long-haul flights, eliminating the risk that your luggage will get lost. If it gets lost on your way over, you probably won't see it again until you get home, and there is no place except the gift shops at the lodges to shop for clothes and toiletries; they won't have everything you need, and the selection is very limited.

### **Shopping for Gifts**

Far and away the best shopping for gifts or souvenirs to bring back is at the airport in Johannesburg. It's the best airport for shopping I've ever been to. There are several very nice, HUGE stores with great selections of all kinds of African stuff. So don't despair if you don't see things at the gift shops or markets; you will definitely find something at the airport.

### **For the Girls:**

Here's what Ashley bought for the last trip:

Safari Jacket – tons of anorak type jackets like this all over amazon. I bought this one in size S

[https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01G4IP06A/ref=oh\\_aui\\_detailpage\\_o04\\_s02?ie=UTF8&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01G4IP06A/ref=oh_aui_detailpage_o04_s02?ie=UTF8&psc=1)

Linen "safari shirts" – I actually LOVE these and will wear them more than just on safari. I bought XS, my mom bought S

[https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01ANOOOHM/ref=oh\\_aui\\_detailpage\\_o09\\_s05?ie=UTF8&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01ANOOOHM/ref=oh_aui_detailpage_o09_s05?ie=UTF8&psc=1)

Safari "pants" – they are super stretchy and fit like leggings. I bought size S.

[https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01NH0FS6B/ref=oh\\_aui\\_detailpage\\_o09\\_s03?ie=UTF8&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01NH0FS6B/ref=oh_aui_detailpage_o09_s03?ie=UTF8&psc=1)

Super cozy fleece lined mittens

[https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0771VQN27/ref=oh\\_aui\\_search\\_detailpage?ie=UTF8&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0771VQN27/ref=oh_aui_search_detailpage?ie=UTF8&psc=1)