

The Magic of Mana

Trip dates: 2-10 October 2020

Location: Mana Pools, Zimbabwe

Group size: 4; Cost GBP 6,795 per person

ANDY SKILLEN
PHOTOGRAPHY



AN 8 NIGHT, 9 DAY PHOTOGRAPHIC AND WILDLIFE VIEWING ADVENTURE TO ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING WILDLIFE AREAS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA. THIS TRIP IS **ESCORTED THROUGHOUT** BY ANDY SKILLEN, AND IS GEARED TO GIVE YOU A **SUPERIOR PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPERIENCE IN UNCROWDED SHOOTING CONDITIONS.**

WITH A **GROUP SIZE OF JUST 4**, YOU ARE **GUARANTEED PLENTY OF TUITION TIME, AND ALSO PLENTY OF ROOM IN WHICH TO WORK.** THIS TRIP IS TIMED TO MAXIMISE YOUR POSSIBILITIES OF VIEWING AFRICA'S MOST ELUSIVE PREDATORS – **WILD DOGS** – AS THEY TRANSITION FROM THE DENNING PHASE TO HUNTING ON THE FLOODPLAIN. BY WORKING WITH THE **RESEARCH TEAMS IN THE REGION**, WE INCREASE OUR CHANCES OF SPECTACULAR ENCOUNTERS. WE WILL ALSO SEEK OUT THE PARK'S OTHER **ICONIC WILDLIFE**, INCLUDING – BUT NOT JUST! - ITS PROLIFIC LION POPULATION AND **“STANDING” ELEPHANTS**, AS WELL AS AN ENDLESS LIST OF OTHER POSSIBILITIES TO EXPAND THAT PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTFOLIO.

THE MAGIC OF MANA IS A PHOTOGRAPHIC SPELL THAT ONCE CAST, IS NEVER FORGOTTEN!

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- **EXCLUSIVE GROUP SIZE OF JUST 4 GUESTS**
- **3 NIGHTS IN A REMOTE TENTED CAMP DEEP IN THE HEART OF THE NATIONAL PARK**
- **5 NIGHTS IN OUR EXCLUSIVE TENTED CAMP ON THE BANKS OF THE ZAMBEZI RIVER; NO OTHER GUESTS!**
- **OPTIONS FOR AN AFTERNOON CANOE TRIP FOR WATER-LEVEL SHOTS OF HIPPOS, ELEPHANTS, CROCODILES AND OTHER WILDLIFE**
- **ON-FOOT PHOTOGRAPHY OPPORTUNITIES OF ELEPHANTS, WILD DOGS, LIONS AND MORE AS WELL AS FROM OUR PRIVATE-USE VEHICLE**
- **WORKING WITH THE TEAM THAT TRACKS AND CATALOGUES WILD DOG MOVEMENT IN THE VALLEY**
- **ESCORTED THROUGHOUT BY ANDY SKILLEN**
- **AS MUCH, OR AS LITTLE, PHOTOGRAPHIC TUITION AS NEEDED!**

COSTS AND LOGISTICS

- **Group size:** 4 guests only
- **GBP 6,795** per person, based on twin-share accommodation
- **Start point:** Harare International or Victoria Falls International airport
- **End point:** Harare International or Victoria Falls International airport

Note: The price quoted includes a return bush-flight from Harare International, directly into Mana Pools (and of course, back again at the end of the trip!). If you wish to travel via Victoria Falls, then this is also possible to arrange, but the bush flight is slightly more expensive. Let us know if you'd prefer that route, and we'll advise of the additional charge. To access either Victoria Falls or Harare, the most common route is via Johannesburg, from where there are a couple of flights each day to either location.

WHAT'S INCLUDED...

- 3 nights accommodation at Chitake Springs bush camp
- 5 nights accommodation and exclusive use of Little Vundu tented camp
- All meals and drinks throughout the “Magic of Mana” itinerary
- Private vehicle throughout the trip
- All guiding fees, both for vehicle viewing and tracking on foot
- Meet & Greet at either Harare International Airport or Victoria Falls
- Bush flight transfers to/from Harare or Victoria Falls (depending on pre- or post trip extensions). Note that the bush flights to/from Victoria Falls are marginally more expensive.



WHAT'S NOT...

- International and/or any domestic flight to/from the itinerary start/end points
- Items of a personal nature
- Visa fees as appropriate (if required, you pay these in cash on arrival at immigration)
- Departure tax for bush flights from either Harare or Vic Falls (US\$15, payable in cash)
- Gratuities

YOUR ITINERARY....

Days 1-3: Arrive in Mana Pools, transfer to Chitake Springs camp (3 nights)

You will be met from your inbound flight (unless you have arranged a pre-trip extension of course, in which case we will ensure you are “delivered” to the right terminal!) to either Harare or Vic Falls, and transferred to the domestic “bush flight” base at either airport. Here your pilot will escort you to the aircraft, load up and fly you the 70-90 minutes to Mana Pools. This is a spectacular start – flying over the Kariba Dam and down the Zambezi valley on the way, with Zambia on one side, and Zimbabwe on the other. On arrival, Andy will meet you at the airstrip along with your guide, and we will transfer to our temporary, private tented camp at Chitake Springs for our first overnight stay. The journey will provide our first photo opportunities of course as we head inland towards the camp, and what is a very remote part of this special National Park. On arrival, we will settle in, head for a short walk to the nearby Springs, and start exercising those shutter fingers!

The next two full days will be spent in the Chitake Springs area, and we will do game drives and walks around the hills and floodplains that ultimately lead to the river, around our camp. This will be your first chance to get practicing with “on foot” photography in the park, and experimenting with angles and composition. The afternoons will be spent concentrating on the Springs themselves, which as the only source of perpetual water in the area at this time of year, prove a major draw for all the wildlife, both carnivore and herbivore. This is a fantastic, hidden part of Africa. With just FOUR people in the group, you will be assured of plenty of tuition time, and masses of space in which to work.

Days 4-8: Transfer to our tented camp by the Zambezi (5 nights)

Waking early to catch any local activity before heading off, today we will load up and wend our way towards the mighty Zambezi river, and our exclusive use tented camp right on the banks of the river...with no other guests. From this very special, unfenced base – through which it is not unusual to share with elephants during the day – we will explore the woodlands, floodplains, pools and drainages which make up the mosaic of Mana. It is in this period that we will be focusing even more on predators, particularly African wild dog and lion, as well as some of the most iconic bull elephants in southern Africa. In fact, sometimes we might get so close to the subjects...on foot...that we would almost be able to touch them. Under the guidance of our personal, armed guide – and I work with some of the best in the entire country – we may be able to have some truly adrenaline-pumping experiences, pushing your photography to an entirely new level.

We will also provide the opportunity for a canoe trip one afternoon (wind permitting!), giving you the chance to be up close and personal to elephants, hippos and crocodiles and give you the chance for some great wide angle shooting from an entirely different perspective. Nights will bring us clear skies – most of the time! – and depending on moon phase, we will grab the chance for some incredible astro-photography also....there’s nothing like an African sky in the dry season!

Day 9: One last safari...and onward!

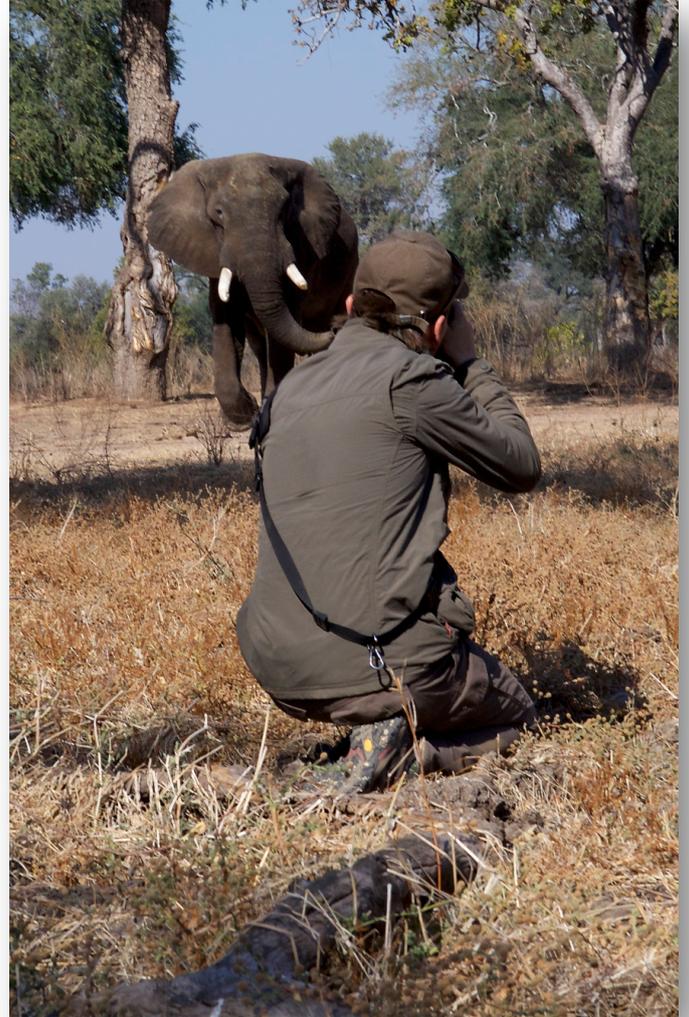
Sadly, all good things must come to an end ☹ However, although this is our last day, we will do our best to find some opportunities to fill a few more cards before we make our way to the airstrip and your flight out.

EXTENSIONS...BEFORE AND AFTER...

There are a number of options for those visiting the region at this time of year, and we will be pleased to arrange some suggestions for you. Victoria Falls is an obvious choice if you have never been (or, actually, if you have and want to experience the mighty Mosi Ai Tunya again!), and is just a 90 minute bush flight away. We can arrange a special rate at the iconic Victoria Falls hotel before or after your Mana Pools experience, if you wish – our suggestion would be a two night stay. Vic Falls is of course an easy flight to Johannesburg.

Our other suggestion would be to visit Hwange National Park – and we can arrange a direct flight from Mana Pools to the heart of this vast Zimbabwean wilderness for you, as well as a stay at our preferred camp in a remote, hugely unvisited part of the park where we have access to a 10,000 hectare private concession (so no issues with offroading), and which offers a great photographic experience in a variety of environments. Again, let us know if this interests you at the time of reservation.

For information only, Andy does not accompany either of these extensions...although, we often joke, you'll probably be quite glad of that by then...having had photographic bootcamp for the previous 8 nights!

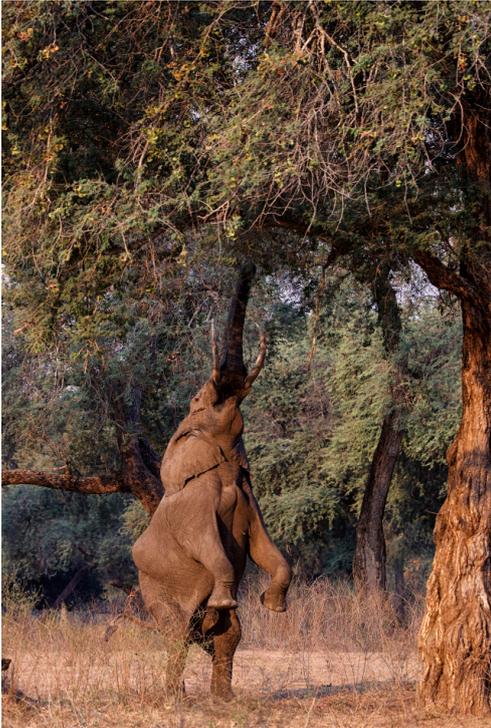


WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

To reserve your space on this very special adventure, either:

- a. send an email to Andy@faunavista.com or Carrie@faunavista.com to register your interest and receive a booking form
- b. download the generic booking form using the link on the page from where you obtained your itinerary, fill it out, and send it to either email address as above.

Photography in Mana Pools



This national park is one of the wildest and remote in Zimbabwe. Situated along the southern side of the mighty Zambezi river, it plays hosts to large prides of lion, some of the most enigmatic and magnificent elephants in the whole of Southern Africa (including those that stand on their hind legs to feed), large numbers of crocodiles, hippos and other game, prolific bird-life and, perhaps most importantly, considerable numbers of African Wild Dog...with a number of packs situated throughout the park area.

For me, the park, (along with Hwange), are THE most effective in which to photograph, and I have spent many weeks tracking and capturing its highlights.

This trip is designed, therefore, to emulate as far as is practicably possible, the way I would work if I was working on commission in the park. The trip is timed around some of the best weeks to photograph the dogs, as they transition during this period from the denning phase to hunting on the floodplain, giving us the best chance to track them in action, as well as getting on foot and recording some of the incredible interaction that a pack brings. At this time also, lions are incredibly active and the omnipresent elephant bulls are having to reach higher into trees for food, increasing our chances of seeing some stand on their hind legs to do so. "Fishing parties" of storks, herons and pelicans are also prevalent at this time, depending on how the rains have been, and it is not uncommon for us to locate a site where several hundred birds will be picking their way through a rapidly drying waterhole and scooping as many fish as possible. Nothing is ever guaranteed of course, but this is when I go to shoot....and how I do it.

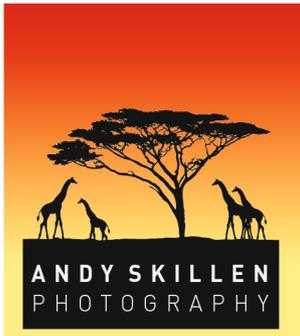
Photographically I will be getting us to spend as much time off the vehicle as possible. With our armed guide, we will be able to get into some truly spectacular positions for taking photographs – the type you see in coffee table books, and not those shot by a thousand people through the window of a vehicle! Laying on the ground, a few metres from a wild dogs is pretty exclusive experience....and we'll do our best to get you in that position. Of course, we will also shoot from our open vehicle if the situation is better to do that, but the beauty of Mana Pools is that roads are relatively limited, and therefore getting off to explore on foot and get in position are really the best way to go. It can give a truly incredible wildlife photography experience.

As I am the UK ambassador for the US-based Bushlife Foundation – which runs the anti-poaching across Mana Pools as well as being the centre of knowledge for wild dog research in the park and host to the Painted Dog Conservation Trust when in town – with one of the side-benefits that I can work with some of the best guides in the Zambezi valley. Each day we will work together to get us into the best possible positions for shooting, and by limited the group size to just four people, I can ensure that I can devote as much – or as little! – time to guiding you in getting that "winning" image as is possible. Our small group is of course also a massive bonus in tighter situations, and means everyone gets the chance to get a memorable experience.

Mana Pools truly is a magical place... join me in 2020 and see for yourself!

Charity...a permanent winner

Andy's photography is all about giving something back; back to a world that has given him such a wealth of memorable experiences and opportunities. As a result, a proportion of all the profits we make from every perspective of Andy's work is donated to some of the world's leading wildlife charities. These include the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF), Animals Asia and the Bushlife Foundation – for which Andy and Carrie are the UK ambassadors. Your holiday is not just therefore an adventure for yourself, your friends and your family, but a true contributor to the frontline of wildlife conservation.



CHANGING THE IMAGE OF WILDLIFE TRAVEL...

