



PICTURE PERFECT

TIPS FOR YOUR AFRICAN
PHOTOGRAPHIC SAFARI



Welcome

For many photographers – myself included – Africa is the ultimate destination. Nowhere else on Earth offers such dramatic landscapes, striking colours, vibrant cultures and awe-inspiring wildlife.

That's why photo safaris in Africa are so legendary.

They offer the chance to hone your craft while shooting (with cameras!) extraordinary wildlife in breathtaking locations. Every frame is an epic reminder of an unforgettable adventure.

I've spent countless hours chasing that elusive "perfect" shot – only to realise that the experience itself is what's truly perfect. At Encompass Africa, we can help you experience that same sense of perfection. We curate journeys that are rich in wildlife encounters, and designed to offer the best possible conditions for photography. If you dream of capturing the magic of Africa through your lens, we'd love to design a photographic safari tailored just for you.

In the meantime, please enjoy this eBook, where you'll find expert advice and inspiration to help you prepare, shoot, and savour every moment of your photographic journey, whether you're a budding photographer or a seasoned pro.

Jono Wilson

Co-founder Encompass Africa / enthusiastic amateur photographer



Photo: Jono in Botswana



Why Africa is a photographer's dream

Africa delivers everything a photographer could want: golden light, iconic wildlife, vast landscapes, and striking cultural moments. From a lioness at dawn to a leopard draped across a fever tree or a Maasai warrior silhouetted at sunset, Africa offers unforgettable subjects at every turn.

Here's what to expect on a photo safari with Encompass Africa:

- Unmatched access to wildlife and landscapes
- Fast-paced, unpredictable conditions to sharpen your skills
- Time with guides who understand light, behaviour, and composition
 - A community of like-minded travellers
- Extended time at sightings so you never miss the shot



Photo: Kicheche Photographic vehicle



Types of photographic safaris

Unlike standard safaris, photographic safaris are all about the shot. You'll be travelling with others who share your passion, and every element is tailored for photographers. The following options are designed to give you the best possible chance of capturing the shots you dream of, in Africa's most photogenic locations:

Guided photographic safari tour from our collection

Travel in a small group led by a professional wildlife photographer we've hand selected from Africa. Enjoy top shooting spots, insider guidance, exclusive locations and guaranteed prime shooting positions not to mention new skills and different perspectives taught with passion.

Tailor-made photographic safari

Prefer to travel solo or with your partner? We'll design a seamless, safari holiday that takes you to incredible camps within destinations that are best positioned and suited to your photography goals.

Private photographic safari with an expert guide

This is the ultimate in personalised photographic travel. Travel with very your own dedicated wildlife photographer for expert personal tuition, total flexibility, and unmatched access to prime locations.





What to expect

Group size

We keep groups small (usually 4 - 6) for flexibility, relaxed pacing, and clear views for every guest. On a private tailor-made camps focusing on photographic safaris usually allocate every guest a window seat so 4 - 6 per vehicle max,

Vehicle design & seating

Every guest gets a window seat in specially adapted vehicles with space for gear and freedom of movement. With only two people per row, plus camera mounts and gear space, you're free to focus on your photography.

Time at sightings

There's no rush. Our photo safaris build in time to watch, wait, and return to a sighting – so you get the image you came for.

Equipment support

We choose camps with photography-friendly amenities like bean bags, stabilisers, charging stations even editing tents and suites!

Great guides

Lastly, but most importantly, you'll travel with professional photographers or highly skilled safari guides who understand light, positioning and animal behaviour – and the joy of getting the shot.



Photo: Andre, one of our Photographic Safari Guides, Tanzania



Where and when to go

Every country in Africa offers something truly inspirational to photograph, whether it's wilderness, wildlife and the local people.

Here's some of our favs:

Botswana – especially the Okavango Delta

Kenya and Tanzania – big cats, Maasai culture and the Great Migration

South Africa – Big five

Namibia – stark deserts, dramatic dunes, and iconic dead trees

Zimbabwe – for its camps with amazing photographic hides

Timing is everything

The dry season (June to October) offers clear skies, golden light, and concentrated wildlife, while the green season (November to April) transforms landscapes with vibrant foliage, baby animals, and moody skies perfect for drama-filled images.





Hides: The photographer's secret weapon

One of the best ways to capture wildlife is from a photographic hide. Also known as blinds, these structures are designed to conceal photographers from wildlife, enabling close-up shots, unique angles and exceptional photographic opportunities without disturbing the animals.

Hides come in various forms, from simple camouflaged tents, treetop perches overlooking the savannah, or log piles near waterholes, all blending seamlessly into the environment. There are also sophisticated permanent installations equipped with amenities like air conditioning and sleeping quarters, allowing for overnight stays and night-time photography sessions.

At Encompass Africa, we recognise the immense value that photography hides add to the safari experience. That's why we prioritise incorporating accommodations with access to well-designed hides into your itinerary, so you have the opportunity to capture extraordinary wildlife moments in comfort and seclusion.





Favourite wildlife to photograph

The Big Five

Lion, leopard, elephant, rhino and buffalo – the legendary icons of African safaris.

Dramatic encounters

Cheetahs sprinting, lions roaring, hippos clashing, wild dog hunting, elephants bathing – moments full of power, motion and drama.

Birdlife in full colour

Vibrant species like lilac-breasted rollers, fish eagles and bee-eaters provide bursts of colour and endless opportunities for striking compositions.

Expressive primates

Gorillas, chimpanzees and baboons offer rich emotion, complex gestures and human-like interactions that translate into deeply compelling images.

Rare and remarkable

Pangolins, armadillos, servals and African wild dogs – elusive, extraordinary creatures that make for once-in-a-lifetime shots and top every wildlife photographer's wish list.



Photo: Leopard of Sabi, Danica Wilson



“I was never a photographer before,
but on safari I found myself enchanted
by everything: the light, the animals,
the quiet moments.

Now I look back at my photos
and feel like I’m there again.”

– Jess, Encompass Africa guest



Photo: Beauty and the beast, Danica Wilson



Cameras & lenses

The gear you bring will obviously depend on your style, how much you're prepared to carry, and any luggage restrictions, but here are some of our top tips:

Cameras

- Opt for a DSLR or mirrorless camera with fast autofocus, excellent low-light performance, and high frames per second (FPS) capabilities.
- Models with Animal Eye Detection, such as the Canon EOS R5, Nikon Z9, or Sony Alpha A9 II, are ideal.
- Bringing two camera bodies is advisable to avoid lens changes in dusty environments and to have a backup.

Lenses

- A versatile zoom lens covering 100–400mm is essential for wildlife photography.
 - Wide-angle lenses (24–70mm) are great for landscapes and lodge scenes.
- A fast prime lens (e.g., 50mm f/1.8) can be useful for low-light situations and portraits.



Essential accessories

Stabilising gear

- Bean bags are highly effective for stabilising your camera on vehicle window sills or roof rails.
- Monopods can be beneficial for heavier lenses, reducing arm fatigue.

Storage & backups

- Carry extra batteries and memory cards to avoid missing shots.
- A laptop and two portable hard drives are recommended for daily backups.
- Avoid erasing SD cards until you've safely backed up your images at home.

Cleaning & maintenance

- Dust is prevalent on safari; bring a rocket blower, microfibre towels, and lens wipes.
- A sensor cleaning kit can be useful if you're confident using it – it's a delicate job, and best left to experienced hands when you're out in the bush.

Other accessories

- A headlamp with a red light is essential for astrophotography and navigating camps at night.
- A multi-tool and small screwdriver can help tighten equipment loosened by vehicle vibrations.



Pro packing tips

Pack smart

- Keep your camera gear in your carry-on bag. Don't risk it in checked luggage.
- Dust is ever-present on safari, so use padded, dustproof camera bags or inserts.
 - Bring a lightweight day bag or sling for game drives.
 - A lens cloth is your best friend; bring multiples.

Power & charging

- Power is precious in the bush. Bring a power bank, universal adapters, and possibly a solar charger to keep your devices running.

Miscellaneous

- Spare ziplock bags are handy for organising and protecting gear.
- Be aware that drones are not permitted in most national parks and reserves, so always check regulations before bringing one.



Photo: Jono photographing lioness going to her cubs, Botswana



Photography tips from the field

Light is everything

Make the most of the soft, flattering, golden light in early mornings and late afternoons.

Know your camera

Master your settings so you can react fast when the action starts. Wildlife won't wait!

Think about composition

Use techniques like the rule of thirds, leading lines, and natural frames to elevate your shots.

Be patient

Wait for the perfect moment: the yawn, the eye contact, the dust cloud, the chase.

Respect wildlife

Always follow your guide's lead, and never pressure animals for the sake of a shot.

Be present

Trust your guide – they'll put you in the right place at the right time. Don't feel the need to shoot every second. Pause, take it in, and enjoy the magic of the moment.



Photo: Guide in Namibia chasing the light, by Danica Wilson



“Our guide understood photographers.
He’d position the vehicle perfectly
and wait patiently. I captured my dream image
of a leopard at sunset thanks to him.”

– James, Guest and Photographer



Photo: Samburu man, by Jono Wilson



Beyond wildlife: people and places

Some of your most powerful images may come from unexpected moments with people. A smile, a gesture, a glance – these small interactions can lead to portraits that feel deeply authentic.

Seek out stories in everyday life: market stalls bursting with colour, artisans at work, children playing, a pot bubbling on an open fire. Architecture, landscapes, and cultural rituals all add richness to your visual safari, helping you capture not just what a place looks like, but how it feels.

Remember to always ask permission when photographing locals. Respect and connection not only matter – they shine through in the final frame.





Editing & backup tips

Even the best photos can benefit from thoughtful editing. Programs like Lightroom and Capture One let you fine-tune exposure, contrast, colour balance, and sharpness – all while preserving the natural feel of your subject. Keep your edits subtle. The goal is to enhance, not overpower, and to let Africa's beauty speak for itself.

Back up your images daily using portable hard drives, dual memory cards, or cloud storage (where internet access allows). Pro tip: rotate memory cards and store them separately for added peace of mind.

Some safari camps offer digital lounges, editing suites or backup facilities – ask your guide or camp manager what's available, especially if you're travelling without a laptop.

Ready for a photographic safari?

Check out our Photographic Safaris Collection, or call us to create an itinerary that's picture perfect.

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