



TRUNK SHOW

BY JAMES STURZ

By July, up to 4 trillion gallons of water cover the Okavango Delta in northern Botswana, and the 200-foot-tall sand dunes of the Kalahari Desert become palm- and papyrus-fringed islands. Go now to explore lush lagoons where elephants wade before the waters recede in the fall.



“THE SANDIBE OKAVANGO SAFARI LODGE EXUDES PURE AFRICAN LUXURY, AND THE WILDLIFE DIDN'T DISAPPOINT. A SAVVY TRACKER LED OUR GROUP TO A RARE LEOPARD SIGHTING.”

 Marcy Mendelson, AFAR.com

SOUVENIR

Botswana's most famous crafts are baskets woven from fan palm fibers. They are dyed with natural pigments: blue from fever-berry leaves, dark brown from magic guarri shrubs, and yellow from the roots of red star apple trees. Some baskets take a month to make. *Nearly all lodges sell baskets, but you can also purchase them online at www.botswanacraft.bw.*

OUTDOORS

Tour Okavango on a *mokoro*, the dugout canoes of the Bayei people, traditionally carved from jackalberry and sausage trees but now often made from fiberglass. Lodge guides paddle the boats (or pole them like Venetian gondoliers) past lechwe antelope, painted reed frogs, and flocks of purple herons. *Most lodges offer mokoro trips between June and October.*

SAFARI LODGES

The ecotourism company Wilderness Safaris has been operating mobile camps in Botswana for 30 years. Today it runs 16 lodges in the Okavango Delta. Here are two of the best for wildlife viewing.

1. Three private, parquet-floored tents at **Little Mombo Camp** feature outdoor showers and private decks that overlook the floodplains of the vast Moremi Game Reserve. You'll see elephants—Botswana has more than any other country—as well as lions, leopards, and hyenas.

2. Located on the delta's 700-square-mile Abu Concession, **Abu Camp** (above) offers an unusual safari experience: to walk among a herd of rescued elephants, or even ride a mother or calf, as you observe the region's game. Reserve the open-air “star bed” on an elevated platform next to the elephant enclosure.

Accommodations at both camps must be booked through a tour outfitter such as [Travel Beyond](http://TravelBeyond.com). From \$2,431. (800) 876-3131, travelbeyond.com



TALK

In Setswana, the principal language of Botswana, *pula* means “rain.” In a country that's 84 percent desert, locals cry “Pula! Pula! Pula!” to invoke or celebrate good luck. Not coincidentally, the word is also the name of the national currency; one pula equals about 12 cents.