

Typical Day on Safari

To talk about a typical day on safari is tantamount to talking about a typical person with typical behavior. In the final count it is all about the animals that roam freely in the untamed African terrain that surrounds the lodges and camps. No one can predict what animals you will encounter and what they might be doing. Every day brings its own surprises. There is, however, a common schedule determined by the animals who rise early and have siesta from noon until mid-afternoon.

At most lodges and camps the daily program is set accordingly. While there might be some difference in the type of vehicle and the standard of the facilities provided back at the lodge depending on what you are willing to pay, the safari experience remains basically the same. It should be noted that in some, but not all, national parks off-road driving is not allowed regardless of whether you use the services of a ranger or self-drive.

Private lodge

Expect a knock on your door at anywhere between 5.30 or 6.30 in the morning. The wake-up call comes with coffee or tea and *beskuit* or rusks. An half hour later you find yourself in a comfortable open four-wheel-drive vehicle. Regardless of the season you will start off with an extra layer of clothes as early mornings and evenings can be quite brisk on the African plains and in the bushveld.



Refreshment break



*Lion sighting at Duba Plains, Botswana
Picture: Les de Villiers*

Plenty of blankets are provided for those who need extra protection. Sometimes hot water bottles are placed between the blankets by ever thoughtful hosts. For those who go to the exotic islands on the Zambezi, Kariba, Kwano and other water destinations where viewing is done from open boats the same extra layers are needed in the early morning and evening.

Viewing mode

The ranger in the driver seat of the open vehicle is normally accompanied by a tracker who sits on a high seat in front of the hood. He will

move back when there are lions, leopards or other predators close by or when the vehicle encounters needle-sharp thorn bushes in the search for animals. Rangers stay in radio communication with their colleagues to share information about important and interesting sightings. The rule at private game reserves is not to have more than two vehicles at a sighting at any given time. In some areas animal viewing could be from waterways in small boats or makoros. Camps may also offer their clients walking



Flatboat viewing, Okavango Delta



Makoros on the water canals



Canoeing at Mana Pools, Zimbabwe

Picture: Mike Myers

The Ultimate Safari Guide

safaris as an option. Gorilla viewing in Rwanda and Uganda and chimpanzee visit in Tanzania obviously requires walking as their constant movement in rain forest areas along the mountain slopes hardly allows for transportation.

Coffee break

At about 9 in the morning there is a coffee break. Passengers will only be allowed to disembark after the ranger and his tracker have thoroughly scouted the surrounding area. Guests have the opportunity to stretch their legs or answer the call of nature—within earshot, but hopefully out of sight,—and indulge in refreshments that include coffee, tea and fruit juices together with an array of snacks, *beskuit* and *biltong* or African jerky.



Bush breakfast, Singita, South Africa

Breakfast

At 11 in the morning the journey ends back at the lodge where a hearty breakfast awaits. Barely two hours later an a la carte lunch is in the offing. Some lodges have fitness rooms and provide massages for those who wish to stay in shape. Most have swimming pools and some have added private plunge pools to their array of luxuries in the bush. Nature walks under the watchful eye of a ranger are offered. Those who opt to stay out of the searing midday sun have ample reading material and soft beds begging if they need to make up for the early morning rise.

Afternoon drive

Late afternoon the game drive resumes. The animals have had their siesta and are now active again. The air has turned cooler and the extra layers of clothing that were taken off are needed and in some cases the ponchos and blankets provided by the every thoughtful guides.



Relaxing in a plunge pool at Lion Sands, South Africa



Midday walk at Elephant Plains, South Africa



Sundowner

This time the game drive leads to a sundowner open with dressed-up makeshift tables and fine crystal, wine and delectable snacks. It is time to discuss all the unusual sightings of the day. On a clear day the African sun slowly descends like a fiery ball. Some ascribe it to the dust in the air, others simply take it for granted as African magic, but no one will ever forget the experience. On the way back to the camp the tracker shines his spotlight in the trees and on the ground in search of nocturnal creatures. It is a furtive sweep as great care is taken not to temporarily blind some animals and make them more vulnerable and defenseless against lurking predators.

Dinner time

Back at the lodge there is time to freshen up before going to dinner, either indoors or in the boma—an open air space where tables are arranged around a campfire. Local tribal folk may visit to give a performance and there is the opportunity to exchange stories and compare notes with the other guests. Turning in at night is an eerie experience for those who thought that the sound of crickets is having communion with nature. The laughing of hyenas, the hoarse barking of baboons, the grunting of hippos and ultimately, the roar of a lion, are sounds that will remain with you for as long as you live and make you come back to Africa for more.

