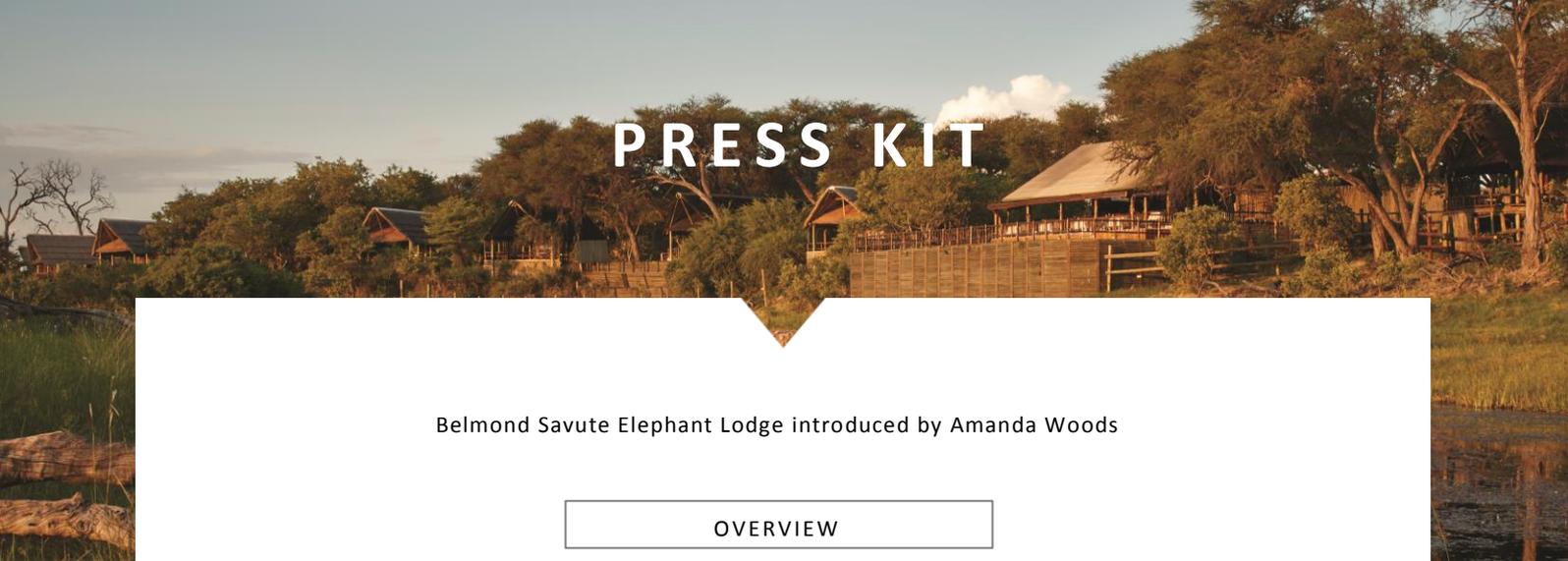




BELMOND
SAVUTE ELEPHANT LODGE
CHOBE RESERVE



PRESS KIT

Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge introduced by Amanda Woods

OVERVIEW

Through Botswana's Chobe National Park flows a mysterious channel—a ghost river that appears intermittently, regardless of rainfall, and whose water can change direction. On its banks, here in the elephant capital of the world, lies Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge.

The heart of the most biologically diverse game reserve in Botswana, the Savute is where the BBC and National Geographic have captured some of their best wildlife documentary footage and where guests can watch the live wildlife show every day and night.

Whereas some African nations are seeing elephant populations decline, in Botswana their numbers are on the rise and it is now believed around 200,000 elephants can be found in the country.

At Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge guests can go out on safari every morning and afternoon, but one of the most memorable experiences comes from simply sitting on the private deck of their tented room as a parade of elephants walks by, mere metres away.

Along with the peaceful pachyderms guests can experience encounters with leopards, lions, cheetahs, zebra, giraffes, wild dogs, hyenas and more, and can watch as a dust storm on the horizon reveals itself to be a herd of buffalo.

There is only one way to travel to Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge and that is on a light plane from Maun or Kasane, a 45-minute flight offering spectacular views of the landscape and animals below. After buzzing the landing strip twice to ensure no wildlife is in harm's way guests are transferred to 4x4s for the 20-minute drive to their luxury accommodation.

The 12 tented rooms are shaded by traditional thatched roofs and built on raised wooden platforms for better viewing over the Savute. Each one has a large private deck with day beds along with a table and chairs where private dinners can be served.

The interiors include polished wooden floorboards, a four poster bed with mosquito netting, comfortable chairs and a writing desk, a bathroom with both indoor and outdoor showers, and a dressing room with robes and slippers.

To cool down guests can either opt for the large ceiling fan or air conditioning, and there is also a radiator for those nights when temperatures drop below freezing.

The fully stocked mini bar is complimentary, and stays are all-inclusive, covering all meals and drinks including alcohol, (apart from certain premium brands and imported champagnes). As

it's a good idea to pack light when going on safari guests are also offered same day complimentary laundry service.

At the heart of the lodge is a dining area, bar and lounge under a large canvas roof with open sides for waterhole viewing. A shop supports local artisans by selling mostly locally made gifts and souvenirs, and a small reference library offers books and videos.

The 20-metre pool is a popular place to relax and the traditional Boma meeting space provides an atmospheric setting for a barbecue dinner and music performance by local teenagers.

But it is the lodge's position in the reserve that makes it so extraordinary. Animals roam freely apart from the discreet fencing to discourage elephants from joining guests in the lodge pool.

This is where wildlife is seen in its pristine habitat, where there is no human interference in animals' lives. When an elephant dies park rangers remove its tusks to discourage poachers, but leave the rest for hyenas, vultures and lions to feed on. Years later skulls can still be seen at the spot where the elephant fell. Nature is left to run its course, while humans merely watch.

For the full Botswana safari experience Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge can be combined with stays at Belmond's other luxury Botswana lodges: Belmond Eagle Island Lodge on a private island in the Okavango Delta and Belmond Khwai River Lodge in the Moremi Wildlife Reserve.

HISTORY & BACKGROUND

Savute means unpredictable, something that cannot be explained. And despite theories about the shifting of tectonic plates affecting the presence of water, no one knows when the Savute Channel will be an abundant source of water or when it will go dry. When David Livingstone explored the area in 1851 he described it as a marsh: since then the Channel has alternated between flowing strongly and then drying up.

The original inhabitants of the area were San Bushmen, nomadic hunter-gatherers who created San rock paintings in the Gubatsa hills.

The Chobe Game Reserve was officially created in 1960 and became a national park in 1967. In 1975 it was decided to limit human access to the reserve, apart from the area around Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge.

Two adjacent camps operated at Savute, one run by the legendary hunter Harry Selby, who was immortalised in the Robert Ruark book Horn of the Hunter. Selby eventually moved on and the twin camps were taken over and merged by Gametrackers. In 1993 Belmond (previously Orient-Express Hotels) acquired Gametrackers and in 2014 the camp was renamed Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge.

The Savute Channel continues to come and go, but with a water hole directly in front of Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge animal lovers are able to see wildlife big and small at all times.

PEOPLE

Christelle Horne, General Manager

Christelle Horne became General Manager of Belmond Safaris, including Belmond Eagle Island Lodge, Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge and Belmond Khwai River Lodge, in November 2015.

Christelle's new role followed four years as Belmond's Regional Human Resources Manager for Africa, which enabled her to gain an intimate knowledge of the lodges, the people who work there and the visitors who travel across the world in search of a unique luxury safari experience.

After starting her working life as a teacher, Christelle moved into Human Resources and accumulated more than 25 years of management experience, including roles in the fire

security and diamond mining industries, before moving into hospitality in 2003. Her passion for people and supporting their development has seen her introduce internal coaching and mentoring for managers and staff, and establish projects to raise awareness about social issues including HIV/AIDS.

After growing up in South Africa and visiting Botswana regularly, Christelle says that moving to Botswana has changed her life, beyond offering her the chance to do a job she's passionate about. "Botswana's lifestyle makes you realise that keeping up with the Joneses has no future and adds no value to the planet or to your life. Now I have extra hours in my day that used to be spent sitting in traffic. When you have a busy life those are magic hours that I can now spend relaxing and out in nature with the animals."

Matanta Thajane, Head Chef

Head Chef Matanta Thajane has worked for Belmond Safaris for 24 years. He joined Belmond Khwai River Lodge as a chef in 1992 and worked his way up to head chef through their in house training programme.

Ten years ago Matanta transferred to Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge, where he creates dishes that both fuel bodies for safaris and keep the taste buds entertained.

Menus change seasonally and Matanta offers a mix of light and healthy options. Local flavours and ingredients such as beef seswaa, sampas (dried corn), and papa (maize meal porridge) can be enjoyed alongside more familiar dishes

Matanta grew up in Maun, Botswana's fifth largest town. "The lodge is a completely different environment from what I was used too, and it was an exciting challenge to learn to work with international visitors from all walks of life," he says.

Since Matanta joined Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge he has seen it change from relatively simple tents to luxury air-conditioned ones with sliding glass doors, en-suite facilities and internet. As to the kitchen, he notes: "Guests today expect more quality ingredients and variety. Over the years we've learned how to deal with special dietary requirements and can be prepared for anything if we are pre-warned. We offer a vegetarian dish with every meal and create special dishes on request."

He's also happy to share his own recipes and even offers cooking classes for guests who wish to recreate some of the tastes of Botswana when they return home. In addition to cooking for the dining area, Matanta creates private dining experiences for guests to enjoy on the decks of their tented rooms and prepares a barbecue in the traditional Boma (using gas, due to National Park rules).

Although Matanta would relish the chance to barbecue on an open wood fire, it's a small price to pay for working in this part of the world. As he says: "It's such a quiet place, where I can enjoy the melody of nature and watch animals coming to drink at the watering hole in front of the lodge."

EXPERIENCES

With its unique position in the middle of Chobe National Park, Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge abides by park rules designed to minimise human impact on wild animals. While this means safaris may not go off road or operate at night, guests are still able to experience special activities, including;

Sundowners Under an Ancient Boabab Tree

Boabab trees are one of the longest living and some would say strangest looking plants on the planet. These huge, dramatic, gnarled trees have been compared to upside down oak trees and can have trunks 30 feet in diameter. They are believed to be among the world's oldest living organisms, with some reported to be more than 6,000 years old.

Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge guests can not only see these strange prehistoric looking trees, but can also enjoy sundowner drinks under them after a safari.

While gin and tonics, wine and beers are popular choices, corks are popped on bottles of bubbles for special occasions. Snacks including biltong, the dried cured meat that originated in South Africa, are set out on the picnic table to nibble on before returning to the lodge for a full dinner.

4x4 Safaris

With one of the largest concentrations of animals in Africa, Chobe National Park is more than just the elephant capital of the world. It is a place where wildlife lovers can see lions, leopards, cheetahs, zebra, puku, kudu, roan and sable, giraffes, wild dogs, hyenas, jackals, warthogs, monkeys, baboons and many more.

The park is also home to more than 250 bird species including fish eagles, secretary birds, kori bustards and flocks of red billed queleas which create fascinating patterns as they wheel in the sky.

Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge takes guests on morning and afternoon safaris when they are driven through the park in special 4x4s by expert guides.

Private Dinners Watching the Animals

At Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge guests don't need to go looking for nature. Nature comes to them.

Leopards, lions and other creatures have been found within the lodge, and when evening falls guests must always be accompanied by a guide when moving from their tented room to the public areas to make sure they remain calm and follow safety procedures if they encounter a big cat.

While guests can easily move around the camp at night with a guide, there are advantages to staying in one's tented room. Romantic dinners can be prepared and served on guests' private decks, where they can feel totally alone with nature. Here they can watch a parade of elephants walk by, see lion cubs playing and watch a host of other animals living out their lives during a dinner experience like no other.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY & ENVIRONMENT

Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge supports two charities in Maun, from where guests fly in and out of the lodge.

The Bana Ba Letsatsi centre helps orphans and vulnerable children of all ages. Its counsellors hold individual and group sessions, carry out regular home visits, and help children through art and drama therapy. Belmond Safaris' registered company nurse is also a mentor at the centre.

The second charity, Motse Wa Tsholofelo Orphan and Vulnerable Children Day Care, looks after 52 HIV-affected children aged two to six years old and their caregivers.

These malnourished and often forgotten children are fed and given a safe and friendly environment where they can gain a basic education and learn to interact with others.

Meanwhile at the lodge itself, recycling is encouraged amongst guests and glass, plastic and paper are sent to Maun for processing.