

AFRICAN TRAVEL TIPS

BOTSWANA

Techniques and General Advice

African travel for the first time hunter or seasoned traveler can be a somewhat daunting prospect. Since 9-11, things have certainly changed, but the key to hassle free travel is being informed and prepared. We feel that by following these guidelines and suggestions, you will breeze through travel formalities with a feeling of confidence instead of concern.

Having traveled to Africa numerous times, the following guidelines and suggestions are our way of 'walking you through' your safari experience so that you will know better what to expect and prepare for. A prepared client is a confident traveler! Read through the following information carefully, we suggest you even include it in your carry on luggage as you may wish to reference it as your trip progresses.

Safari is the grandest experience left on this earth. No doubt about it, 'getting there' is the worst part of the safari experience, but believe us, it is more than worth the effort. Rare indeed is the hunter who travels but once to Africa!

If you are hunting Elephant in Botswana with us and have not seen "*Boddington on Elephant*", we would highly recommend you take a look at this feature film. All were filmed in our safari areas and are filled with information and instruction that a visiting client will find of interest.

Another suggestion we feel is a MUST SEE for the hunter going on safari especially first-timers or hunters traveling to an unfamiliar safari destination is DVD '*Craig Boddington's African Experience*'. His DVD is the most comprehensive study on the modern day safari ever attempted. It covers today's safari scene from A to Z. Learn about countries, animals, guns, gear, travel tips, safari etiquette, tipping - - everything! Craig shares his three decades of African hunting (now nearing 60 separate safaris) in a straightforward, easy to understand, and exciting format that you will enjoy for every minute of it's three hour run time. All DVD's can be purchased on-line at www.craigboddington.com, or by calling us at 214-360-9599

AIRLINE TRAVEL

Airline tickets are probably the most important part of your planning. When they go wrong, or cost too much, there goes the fun. Never call an airline for a quote. They have no deals for you. We use travel agents and consolidators who are familiar with African travel, and who buy tickets in bulk from the airlines, thus enabling them to realize significant savings.

Whether you are traveling to Zimbabwe, South Africa or Botswana as your final destination, we **STRONGLY** recommend a direct flight from the U.S. to Johannesburg, South Africa. The more stops in route to Africa, the greater the risk of delays and/or lost baggage. This is especially true when traveling through an increasingly anti-hunting Europe. Visit with us on travel before you book your tickets.

Don't depend solely upon the luggage tags that go on the handle of your case. Attach another tag to the bag, a label stuck on the luggage, or even use a permanent marker and write the information on both sides of the case and on one edge. A lost bag is bad, but a lost bag with no identification is never going to catch up with you in time for your hunt!

Most airport personnel are professional and have no problems with hunters carrying guns. However, some do have an anti-hunting bias. If you are hassled, remain calm and do not lose your temper. Immediately ask for a supervisor, which will usually get things moving along very quickly. You must declare your firearms and fill out a firearm luggage tag that must be put inside the case, so keep your key handy. They'll probably ask you how much ammunition you have – your reply should be 11 lbs – no more, no less. They know this is the amount allowed so just claim that amount. If asked if your ammo is in the original factory containers? Yes, is the correct answer. Cartridges should be kept in the original factory boxes or clear containers with separate compartments for each bullet. Loose ammo touching other rounds is a problem, and will cause instant delays. If you use snap caps, leave them at home. You will also need your passport, so keep that on hand even for the domestic segment of your flight if it is connecting with an international flight. When your tickets are given back to you, make certain that you have all the tickets for your return flight in the envelope, and your passport. Discovering a missing ticket when you are trying to depart from Africa is too late. Double check everything and trust nobody.

Waiting at the gate for your departure, remember to anticipate the rows being called. Try to board quickly so that you can get your carry-on in an overhead bin above your seat. That legroom might not seem important now, but wait until you're on a 15 hour flight.

VISAS

You will not need to acquire a VISA in advance of your safari to Botswana. No visas are required for US visitors who are staying for less than 90 days. To enter the country you will need to ensure that your passport has at least 6 months validity and you must have your documents for return or onward travel in hand.

FIREARMS

Customs Form # 4457 – Prior to your trip, you will need to visit your local US Customs Office and declare your firearms with serial numbers, model numbers, calibers, etc. Form #4457 proves that you left the United States with the same firearms you return to the United States with. Without this form, you may be required to pay tax on these items as if they were purchased abroad. Customs Form #4457 will solve these problems when returning to the U.S. Although not necessary, it is a good idea to take expensive items like cameras, video equipment and binoculars, anything with a serial number, to customs as well. You **MUST** bring the items to the customs office with you. Go inside, tell an officer you will be bringing a sporting firearm and other items in for declaration purposes, and they will be happy to assist you.

We suggest a durable, hard-shell double gun case. The case must have a key lock or combination lock. We prefer key locks, and this is very important. **ALWAYS** carry **TWO** keys with you in case one is lost. We carry one in our pocket, and one in our money belt with airline tickets and passport. **DO NOT** pack ammunition in your gun case – it must go in your checked baggage. Double-check that your gun is unloaded. If you choose to remove your bolt from your rifle, lay it loose in the case, but keep them together. If you are bringing two rifles, and they are both made by the same manufacturer, make sure the bolts don't get confused between the two rifles. Mark or tag them in some way.

In order to enter Botswana with your firearm (maximum three allowed per person) you will need a firearms import permit that we will acquire for you based on the information you supply us (serial number , make and caliber).

CASH

You will need to carry US cash for various reasons such as tipping, food during travel, VISA's, etc. Botswana, as most international countries, has become wary of foreign currency due to counterfeiting. For this reason, it is important to carry only **newly issued** bills which can be obtained at any US bank. Also, it is important to take a variety of small bills as change will not be possible in most locations. You will not need to exchange currency for any reason on your safari. Credit cards are readily accepted at the Joburg airport in all the shops and restaurants.

PASSPORTS

You must have a passport to travel to Africa. Before you do anything else, get this process started. Every community has a public office that can help you arrange this with the application and photo. If you already have a passport, check the expiration date. **Your passport must be good for at least 6 months after your return date. Be advised that African authorities can fine you Ten Thousand American dollars and refuse to allow you to enter the country if you try to travel with less than 6 months remaining on your passport. **IMPERATIVE** you must have at least 2 blank pages in your passport, OR YOU WILL BE DENIED ENTRY INTO AFRICA. This is a new stipulation. If you need passport updates, this must be done immediately as the process can take up to 6 months.**

CHECK-IN BAGS AND CARRY-ON BAGS

Check with your travel agent for weight limits and restrictions on dimensions, which are strictly enforced. It is worth packing a personal kit along with a change of clothes in your carry-on luggage, just in case your checked bags gets lost, or you need to freshen up before your arrival. Be sure your personal kit does not have sharp metal objects like scissors and nail files among it. These will cause delays by security checks, and will likely be confiscated too. You are allowed only one carry-on that must fit under the seat, or in the overhead compartment, as well as one personal item – such as a briefcase or purse.

A noteworthy consideration: this is a very long flight. Many people do not sleep well on airplanes, especially in the cramped coach seating. The key to avoiding jetlag is catching some solid sleep on the plane. Two items will greatly add to your comfort: 1) bring some of the small foam earplugs that you can buy in any shooting supply or supermarket. These will drown out engine noise, as well as the background chatter of other passengers. 2) See your doctor and have him prescribe a sleeping aid. Maybe 20% of our first time clients take this advice. One hundred percent of our repeat clients adopt this strategy, and enjoy a good night's rest.

Do not pack a knife or any ammunition in your carry on luggage. This will cause big delays for you and may cause you to miss the flight as well. Those items are allowed in your checked baggage only. **YOU ARE ALLOWED TWO CHECKED BAGS. YOUR GUNCASE WILL COUNT AS ONE OF THOSE.** Remember, your checked bags have a weight limit of 50 lbs. each. If you exceed that, you will be charged a significant amount. Specific rules vary – check with your airline for specific weight limitations.

You can and should pack light as laundry is done daily in camp. In addition, if your hunt requires a charter flight, you will be restricted to one 50 lb. bag and one rifle case per passenger in addition to your carry on bag.

CITES PERMITS

Certain animals (such as leopard) require a CITES permit to export and import your trophy. If your hunt includes one of these species, we will provide you with the application to acquire this permit. Keep in mind that this permit is only valid for one year. Consider this in your determination of the appropriate time to apply. It can take up to 4 months to receive your permit.

ARRIVAL IN BOTSWANA

For many travelers, this can be the most intimidating part of the entire safari. Don't let it be. Just follow these simple guidelines and you'll be fine. Also, it is good to know that a significant number of the people on your airplane will be going to Africa to hunt. You'll recognize them by their clothing, their reading material, overheard conversations, and the like. Upon arrival in Jo'Berg, you will proceed to the transit area to obtain your onward boarding pass to Botswana . Have your passport handy when you go through the transit desk. Once you obtain your boarding pass, you will proceed to the International terminal for your onward connection to Botswana.

On the flight to Maun, you will be given an arrival form to fill out, citing your nationality and reasons for traveling to Botswana (hunting), the duration of your trip, etc. Upon arrival in Maun, hand this form to the Customs Officer along with your passport. He may ask you what your home town is, your

birthday, and the like. Answer his questions politely, but do not engage in small talk and do not look like you are in a hurry. Once through immigration, you will proceed to the luggage area. At this stage, you may be met by a representative of Johan Calitz safaris who will assist you with your luggage pick up, rifle permits, etc. If for some reason a representative does not meet you, do not panic. Simply collect your luggage, and proceed to the customs area. Be prepared to present the temporary import permit for your firearm(s). Once you have your luggage and rifles, proceed to the customs area for final clearance. You will be told to keep your import permit and a stamp will be placed in your passport with the serial numbers of your firearms on that. Place this in a safe place (inside your rifle case), as you will need this for your departure from Botswana to clear your rifles out of the Country. At this stage, you will be met by your PH and transferred to the hunting area by vehicle.

RIFLES AND AMMUNITION

Finally we get down to OUR favorite part of the trip. Chances are by the time you are reading this; we have already discussed firearm selections, calibers and bullets in depth. But here is a quick overview on OUR thoughts concerning guns and shooting.

Caliber selection will, of course, be determined by the type game you will be hunting. For plains game, most of our clients bring their favorite deer rifle. We would say that a .270 would be the minimum caliber for most plains game, with the 7mm mag, 30-06 or .300WIN all better choices. Most importantly, bring a gun you are familiar with and feel comfortable shooting. So many times your hunt will come down to a quick shot that will determine whether you bring home the desired trophy or go back to camp empty-handed. We have written an article on practical shooting tips that provide our thoughts on the subject (see attached). When an animal is spotted that maybe a potential trophy, let the P.H. do the binocular work, while you get ready with the rifle. This sounds simple in theory, but experience has made us stress this to our hunters over the years.

DANGEROUS GAME CALIBERS

In Botswana, for animals such as Cape buffalo, elephant, etc. the .375 caliber is the legal minimum. Many clients, especially first time hunters, do not own a caliber of this size. Many clients will, after booking a dangerous game hunt, wish to purchase their own big bore rifle. There are some marvelous and proven calibers available on the market. We are always happy to talk guns and gear prior to your purchase, but we do have a valuable bit of advice on big-caliber selection. By definition, the big calibers pack more recoil (on both ends) than the average deer rifle our clients are more used to. We would much rather have a client show up with a .375 H&H that he can shoot accurately, than with a .460 Weatherby that he is afraid of. If you can shoot the bigger calibers accurately, wonderful! But bullet placement is the key to successful hunting. Practicing with the big bores is more expensive and punishing, but just as important as it is on plains game hunts. A growing number of clients today choose a double rifle, which are a joy to own and shoot, but not necessarily the perfect choice for all hunting situations. A bolt action with a low-power scope is a better all-around choice for most hunting situations should you be considering a new gun purchase. We are both double rifle owners and shooters, but realize the limitations of the open sighted double. They are fun to own and rewarding to hunt with, but they do have limitations.

A great tool to help you decide on a safari rifle is Craig Boddington's new book 'Safari Rifles 2' and is available from **www.craigboddington.com**.

BULLET SELECTION

A well-constructed bullet is a necessity on African game. There are some excellent choices in most of the popular calibers. We strongly suggest premium bullets that will hold together upon impact to reach the vitals from various angles. We have a chance to examine a lot of bullets and their performance on game, and have found some we like, and some we dislike. Our favorite soft point bullets are the Hornady Interbond, Swift A-frame, but others such as the Barnes X, Winchester Failsafe or Woodleigh will work. There are a number of really good solids including Hornady, Barnes and Woodleigh. If buffalo or hippo is on your bag, bring a combination of softs and solids. If you are hunting elephant, solids are the only bullets required. Plains game, crocodiles or leopard will be hunted with soft points. Be sure to practice with the same bullet you will be bringing on safari, and find a load that your gun shoots well at various distances.

CLOTHING

We have included on a separate page on packing recommendations for your safari. Please refer to the number of garments you should bring, etc. Darker colors work best, especially dark green or brown. AVOID anything bright or light-colored. Do not wear any garment that makes noise when moving through the bush, such as nylon or plastic. Camo patterns are legal in South Africa but should be avoided in Zimbabwe and Botswana, however camo is of no real benefit in Africa.

FOOTWEAR

This is also covered elsewhere, but warrants some repeating here. It is beat to death in print, but so often ignored, the importance of bringing footwear that has been already broken in prior to your safari. On many hunts, especially buffalo, you are going to walk long and far. A pair of boots rubbing blisters on your feet will not only cripple you, but may ruin your chance for a successful hunt. One pair of light-weight hunting shoes with soft, quiet soles are perfect for long walks and sneaking in close to game. If you are after croc and hippo, throw in a comfortable pair of tennis shoes that you don't mind getting wet, because you WILL get them wet.