

COWABUNGA FLY-CAMP
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COWABUNGA MAIN CAM
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Attention!

The following itinerary is meant to help your safari planning. Since 1974, we at Cowabunga Safaris have done many, many kinds and variations of safaris to Zimbabwe.

This is only one kind of safari. Do you want something more upscale? Do you want something more rustic and participatory? If you have a different safari in mind, wish to stay longer, or want to travel to other parts of the continent, tell us. We can make it happen.

ZIMBABWE: "Mavuradonha Mountains, Mana Pools & Victoria Falls" Horseback and Canoeing Safari

-- SAFARI OVERVIEW --

Length: 14 days from the USA; 11 days in Africa

"The Mavs": In contrast to Mana Pools (a World Heritage Site), and Victoria Falls (one of the Seven Wonders of the World), the Mavuradonha Mountains, or "The Mavs," are one of Zimbabwe's hidden treasures, even to locals. You will be hard pressed to find them on any map. The region is one of pristine, unpopulated bush situated some 112 miles due north of Harare. Due to its ruggedness and remoteness, there is only one road into the wilderness, terminating at Kopje Tops Camp (see "Accommodations" below). There is no electricity, and the only way to get around is on horse or on foot. The Mavuradonha Mountains are such a beautiful place, of all the places Brian could have proposed to his wife on the African continent, this is where he chose to pop

the question. (FYI: Karen said yes - but what choice did she have, really, after he got her into the backcountry of such a remote area?)

Accommodations: 9 nights in the bush; 1 night in a hotel in Atlanta; 1 night in a lodge in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

In the Mavuradonha Mountains we stay at two camps: Kopje Tops Camp and Bat Caves Camp. **Kopje Tops Camp** consists of a mere six chalets, well spaced around the massive rock from which the camp gets its name. Each chalet has a permanent queen-sized bed or twin beds, an en suite bathroom with flush toilet, and a hot-water shower (heated by an ingenious wood-fed boiler, the wood being sustainably collected from already dead and fallen trees). **Bat Caves Camp** is more rustic than Kopje Tops, and is comprised of four secluded chalets, each opening to a private view of the surrounding bush. The camp is in the shadow of the massive "Bat Caves Dome" (it looks like Half Dome in Yosemite National Park, USA) and takes its name from nearby caves which are home to the largest known colony of Egyptian Fruit Bats south of the equator. Each chalet has its own long-drop loo and bucket-and-pulley hot-water shower out back.

In Mana Pools, "Cowabunga Camps" are **mobile tented camps** (see side picture). The tents are large - they are big enough to walk into and stand in -- with comfortable twin beds complete with linen and duvets. All tents are bug-proof with mesh windows and mesh skylights, have nightstands next to the beds, and en suite toilet facilities. The camps are designed to be erected and dismantled in hours, leaving no trace of their existence on the environment.

With the exception of the one night we spend in a hotel in Atlanta, and the one night we spend in a lodge at Victoria Falls, on this safari we are truly in the bush. At night, lighting is provided by hurricane lamps and candles, moon- or starlight, or by the torches ("flashlights" in American English) you have brought with you. Because animals are used to the presence of our camps and do not see us as a threat, it is not uncommon for them to pass through our camps.

Pictures of all accommodations are available on request.

Gear: Nearly everything is provided on this safari. Safarists, therefore, should bring only the bare essentials: binoculars, camera, three or four changes of clothes in "bush colors" (i.e., khaki, browns and greens - but no camouflage!), a wide-brimmed hat, sunblock, swimsuit, a broken-in pair of comfortable walking shoes, and a pair of flip-

flops/water sandals. A warm jacket is a must, especially in the Mavuradonha Mountains, and a stocking hat and gloves is recommended. Cowabunga's "Safari Briefing," provided under separate cover, covers all gear in detail.

Fitness Level,

Horses & Canoes:

While a reasonable level of fitness does help, you do not have to be in marathon condition. For example, in July 2002, Brian had a woman in her sixties who readily joked that she was anything but a picture of perfect health, yet she successfully completed (and thoroughly enjoyed!) this safari. Horses, some of the most gentle and intelligent to be found anywhere, are matched to individual abilities; Brian has had first-time riders do well (although some riding experience is preferred). Canoeing is with the Zambezi current, not against it, does not involve white water, and requires paddling which is non-technical. Walking in the Mavuradonha and Mana is as difficult or as easy as you want it to be; the distances and pace depend entirely on what you decide, your natural interests, and what encounters we have along the way.

Group size:

This safari will have as few as five Safarists, and no more than ten.

Food, Drinks,

Water & Laundry:

If you are going on safari to lose weight, this one is not for you! For all meals noted in this itinerary, a chef produces freshly-cooked, exquisite meals. Other than the two nights we are at Atlanta and Vic Falls, all drinks -- from cold sodas, to cold beer, to wine and spirits (one must try a Zimbabwean "spook n' diesel") -- are complimentary. Fresh filtered water -- as much as you want to consume -- is likewise provided. In the Mavuradonha and Mana, chalets and tents are serviced, beds are made, and laundry is done at no extra charge while you are out exploring. In sum, dedicated long-time friends of Cowabunga (some of whom have known us for nearly all of the three decades we've been conducting safaris) look after us royally. All you have to do is enjoy the natural African surroundings and abundant wildlife!

Stay Longer:

Experiencing all Africa has to offer is a once-in-a-lifetime privilege for most. Accordingly, some Safarists like to stay longer. We at Cowabunga Safaris understand! If, after this safari, you wish to travel to Botswana, Zambia, Namibia, South Africa, or even to other parts of the continent as far away as Kenya, we can help. In fact, given our love of the continent, you can bet we'll beg to join you!

Detailed Briefings: Cowabunga provides in-depth written briefings for all Safarists after they sign-on for any safari. Furthermore, when possible, Cowabunga conducts face-to-face briefings approximately three months before departure. For those who can't make the face-to-face briefings, a detailed transcript of questions and answers is sent to them. Gary, Brian and Nancy always stand ready to brief Safarists at a moment's notice via fax, phone, e-mail or in-person.

-- A NOTE FROM YOUR SAFARI LEADER --

People frequently ask me if I could go on only one more Safari, which would I choose? This "Mavuradonha Mountains, Mana Pools & Vic Falls" Safari would be near the top. (Come on, do you really expect me to limit myself to just one more safari? Not if I can help it!) Indeed, so special is this safari that, because the places we go to are so beautiful, so remote, so wild, and so unspoilt by the hands of humankind one can, for example, drink straight from the streams and rivers. (Perish all those thoughts you might have about the water in Africa.)

This safari starts in "The Mavs" of northern Zimbabwe. The remote Mavuradonha Mountains are such a well-kept secret that if you were to ask any number of Zimbabweans about it, most would think you were mispronouncing "Matusadonna," the well-known hills south of Lake Kariba. However, if you were to persist and to convince them that you were, indeed, pronouncing the name correctly, I am confident many (if not most) would say they had never even heard of the area, much less been to it. This is a shame. In June, the southern hemisphere's autumn, the Mavuradonha is typically a riot of colors. But the beauty of the area extends beyond scenery. In this mountainous wilderness one can find elephant, sable, zebra, duiker, klipspringer, grysbok, warthog, baboon, kudu, eland, and many other mammal species, including lion and leopard.

The latter half of this safari takes us to what is perhaps the greatest wildlife river in Africa, if not the world: the fabled Zambezi. We are on or beside this river in Mana Pools National Park, a World Heritage site. Every day we move downstream to stay at a new, specially-chosen Cowabunga campsite on the water's edge. We have the option of experiencing this wilderness in canoes, on foot, in vehicles, or through a mixture of all three. Because we are privileged guests in their home, animals like elephant frequently pass through our camps.

Our safari ultimately ends up at Victoria Falls, or *Mosi-au-tunya* in the local language: "The Smoke that Thunders" — a reference to the mist the largest curtain of water in the world produces, visible at times up to seven miles away!

Again, if I could go on only one more safari, this "Mavuradonha Mountains, Mana Pools & Vic

Falls" Safari would make the shortest of lists. I have never felt more insignificant, and therefore more humble, than when standing in the wonderfully, wondrously wild expanses of the Mavuradonha Mountains and Mana Pools, or beside spectacular Victoria Falls. On this safari I have felt — with every faculty, to my very core — the timeless cycles of nature.

-- THE ADVENTURE --

Day 1 EN ROUTE

Our safari begins! We depart Kansas City for Atlanta. Tonight we have a safari briefing at the Courtyard Hotel in Atlanta, followed by a good night's rest (assuming the anticipation doesn't keep us awake).

Day 2 EN ROUTE

We have a mid-morning South African Airways departure for Johannesburg, South Africa. (B/L/D)

Day 3 MAVURADONHA MOUNTAINS

After an early morning arrival in Johannesburg, South Africa, we connect onward, on to our short flight to Harare, Zimbabwe. From Harare, we travel overland to the wilderness of the Mavuradonha Mountains, riven with deep valleys and laced by perpetual running water. Our introduction to this magnificent area is **Kopje Tops Camp**.

Kopje Tops is situated in a breathtaking setting with Zimbabwe's towering Great Dyke range on one side, the Mavuradonha Mountains on two other sides, and the Tingwa Valley stretching away to the far horizon on the fourth. Though there is no electricity (because we are so remote, and the sounds of the bush are preferred to the sounds of pounding generators), the camp is extremely comfortable. At the ingeniously designed center structure — multitiered like a wedding cake — one can lounge in a sofa in front of the fireplace before dinner, sip an ice cold drink, peruse the library, or have a 360-degree view of the Mavuradonha and sky on the open roof. Multicourse meals are served replete with white tablecloth and, in the evenings, candelabra.

Our accommodations at Kopje Tops are in six chalets, well-spaced around the massive rock from which the camp gets its name and hidden amongst a grove of msasa trees. Inside the chalets the walls are plastered, and polished floors gleam with rich earthy red tiles. Each chalet has an en suite bathroom with a flush toilet and hot-water shower. All of the structures use surrounding mountain rock for the walls, and native grasses for the thatch roofs. B/L/D

Day 4 MAVURADONHA MOUNTAINS

The Mavuradonha Mountains teem with life: elephant, sable, zebra, duiker, klipspringer, grysbok, warthog, baboon, kudu, eland, buffalo, waterbuck, reedbuck, bushbuck, impala, bushpig, and many other mammals live here, including lion and leopard. Birdlife is prolific,

with 260 recorded species. Our activities cater to individual interests, abilities, and comfort levels: we might set off on foot or horseback, climb a mountain, or swim in any number of scenic streams (there is no bilharzia, and we're too high for crocodile), all the while looking for wildlife. Part of the reason why wildlife abounds in the Mavs is because the Mavuradonha wilderness is part of Zimbabwe's renowned CAMPFIRE project. Under this project, part payment from our safari goes directly to African communities in the region. CAMPFIRE funds help meet immediate needs while promoting conservation because communities which derive a direct benefit from wildlife are inclined to protect it.

Day 5 MAVURADONHA MOUNTAINS

Today we set off on horseback for **Bat Caves Camp**. The camp is deep in the Mavuradonha, over 30 kilometers from the one wilderness road that terminates at Kopje Tops; all provisions and bags must be carried in by pack-horse. Bat Caves is more rustic than Kopje Tops and is comprised of four secluded chalets, each opening to a private view of the surrounding bush. Each chalet has its own long-drop loo and bucket-and-pulley hot-water shower out back. The camp is in the shadow of the massive "Bat Caves Dome" and takes its name from nearby caves which are home to the largest known colony of Egyptian Fruit Bats south of the equator. It is a spectacle of nature to watch these bats emerge in the thousands from the caves right at sunset! B/L/D

Day 6 MAVURADONHA MOUNTAINS

From Bat Caves Camp, we might climb Bat Caves Dome (see side picture), explore the bat caves themselves, set off to find ancient bushmen paintings (there are many in the region, most estimated to be hundreds of years old), or track and view sable (The Mavs are one of few places left on the continent where herds with mature males with full swept back horns can still be found). Today one truly begins to get a sense of what it must have been like for the early explorers as we revel in the Mavuradonha's beauty and bounty. B/L/D

Day 7 MAVURADONHA MOUNTAINS

Today we spend the better part of a the day returning on horseback to Kopje Tops. Keep your eyes open: you never know when, where, or what kind of "unexpected eventualities" might occur! B/L/D

Day 8 MANA POOLS NATIONAL PARK

This morning we say farewell to the Mavuradonha and hello to what is perhaps the greatest wildlife river in Africa, if not the world: the fabled Zambezi. During our time on or beside this legendary river we are in Mana Pools National Park, the only park in Zimbabwe to be granted World Heritage status. For three nights we stay in "Cowabunga Camps": mobile tented camps which are erected, dismantled, then erected once again at specially-chosen sites as we canoe down the river (no small feat considering the tents are large walk-in safari tents with proper twin beds, nightstands and en suite loos in each). Our hot-water showers are temporary canvas enclosures with no roof, similarly dismantled, moved and erected each day; after a well-earned day, there's nothing like a hot shower under a star-filled sky!

What makes Mana Pools so magical is that though we have the option of moving from camp to camp in canoes, on foot, in vehicles, or through a mixture of all three, we do not always have to actively search out wildlife and adventure. Most of our Cowabunga Camps are set up on long-established elephant trails. As a result, it is not unusual to have gentlemen bulls wander between our tents as we're eating lunch, taking a shower, or bedding down for the evening! Because these elephants have never had a negative encounter with humans, they give us the privilege of being guests in their territory, quietly accepting our presence.

B/L/D

Day 9 MANA POOLS NATIONAL PARK

Animals are everywhere in Mana Pools, and we should watch for lion, impala, waterbuck, bushbuck, eland, jackal, hyena, and elephant, among other mammals. We should keep a particular eye out for the highly endangered wild dog, especially when on game-drives or walks. This abundance of wildlife and life provides a unique feeling. Cowabunga's own self-declared President-for-Life, Gary K. Clarke, conveys this when he writes: "In a canoe on the Zambezi one feels a communion with the spirit of nature. On the north, the blue mountains of Zambia ascend to the heavens. On the south, the river terraces of Mana Pools National Park create a mosaic of habitats, with stately acacia trees, beautiful mopanes, and thick-trunked baobabs. Hippos in large pods watch curiously as we float by. Crocodiles bask in the sun, ignoring us. A female kudu stands alert on a high bank, the sun forming a bronze cast on her body. Hundreds of brilliantly colored carmine bee-eaters flitter in and out of their hole nests on a vertical mud bank above us. And around the bend, a herd of elephants is bathing in the river and throwing mud over their bodies with their trunks..." B/L/D

Day 10 MANA POOLS NATIONAL PARK

By our third day in Mana, most of us have settled into a comfortable routine: gathering around the campfire in the red dawn while warming our hands and insides with cups of hot tea or coffee; eating a hearty breakfast of eggs made-to-order, fresh fruit, and toast (toasted over an open fire); setting off by canoe, vehicle, or on foot, fully aware that the day will become pleasantly warm — a marked contrast to the cold nights and cool early mornings; watching a multitude of animals, often at extremely close quarters; enjoying a well-earned hot shower in fading light; laughing over sundowners around a crackling fire; sharing camaraderie and friendship with fellow Safarists at a candlelit dinner under an open, star-filled sky; being lulled into fitful, dreamless sleep by the snorts of hippos in the river... This is how one was meant to live. B/L/D

Day 11 MANA POOLS NATIONAL PARK

As has been the Cowabunga tradition for the past twenty years, at some point while in Mana all will be invited to participate in a group mudwallow along the Zambezi River. Today might be the day! Because of how young one feels while wallowing, the importance of this act cannot be understated. It serves as a tangible reminder that God does not deduct days spent on safari from one's allotted time on earth! (Please note that the Cowabunga

mudwallow may be preempted by unexpected eventualities like wild dogs in camp, or an elephant occupying the wallow.) B/L/D

Day 12 **VICTORIA FALLS**

Today we get to see firsthand the many faces of the Zambezi as we fly upstream on a charter plane from Mana Pools to Victoria Falls. Over Mana, considered the "lower Zambezi," the river is over a mile wide in places, dotted with islands, and spills out of its main channels into multiple smaller ones. Over the "middle Zambezi" we find Lake Kariba, which at one time was the largest man-made lake in the world. Finally, on the "upper Zambezi" we come to Victoria Falls, the largest curtain of water in the world. At the height of the rainy season 140 million gallons of water pour over the falls every minute! The Zambezi is violent here. It plunges over Victoria Falls' mile-long lip, which is over twice as high as Niagara Falls, only to have to squeeze through sheer-sided gorges a couple hundred feet wide in places. From our lodge, the Falls themselves are a mere 15 minutes away. Because Vic Falls town is in a national park, there are still opportunities for wildlife encounters. B/L/D

Day 13 **VICTORIA FALLS/JOHANNESBURG**

Today we transition back to our modern existences. We catch an early afternoon flight out of Vic Falls to Johannesburg, where we connect on to our South African Airways trans-Atlantic flight to the USA. B/(L/D)

Day 14 **HOME**

This morning we arrive early in Atlanta where we connect on to our flights home. While Africa is now half a world away, the spirit of our "Mavuradonha Mountains, Mana Pools & Vic Falls" Zimbabwe Horseback & Canoeing Safari most assuredly endures. Cowabunga! (B)



Safaris since 1974.