

## ***The Mabitsi Trail – 14 Day Journey***

***“When elephants rub themselves against a trunk of a baobab they must surely feel a sense of companionship with the tree – like mine your skin is wrinkled by the sun.”***  
*(H. Blight)*

**Come on an African journey in which Elephants,  
Baobabs and the Bushman will relate stories of plains teeming with wildlife;  
Ancestral tales of myths and legend and civilizations lost and now revisited.  
We will guide you to great landscapes, extraordinary wilderness sanctuaries  
and African mythology, tracking the narrative and following the words of  
An Elephant Bloodline.**

### **Day 1: Our Journey Begins**

You will arrive at Oliver Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg and catch a connecting flight to Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport in Nelspruit with your guide.

You will then be road transferred to your accommodation, Hippo Hollow Country Estate, in Hazyview in Mpumalanga, situated on the Sabie River and famous for its hippo sightings.

Here you can relax and then be introduced to the EFAF (Elephants For Africa Forever) elephants that are cull survivors and the characters of the book An Elephant Bloodline.

Tembo, Mabitsi and 3 other elephants will take you on a wonderful sundown ride through the forest, where you will enjoy picnic sundowners while the elephants browse, leaving you with a sense of remarkable tranquillity.

### **Day 2: Sunrise Elephant Walk, Waterfalls & Scenic Splendour**

In the early morning, you will join the elephants again and take a gentle walk with them through the forest and down to the river for a champagne breakfast.

We will then depart on our journey traversing the beautiful and scenic Panorama Route visiting many of our beautiful waterfalls, curio shopping in the quaint town of Graskop and viewing the majestic Gods Window, Bourke’s Luck Potholes, The Three Rondavels and Blyde River Canyon.

Our day will end at Tshukudu Game Lodge near Hoedspruit, just outside the Kruger National Park, where we will spend two glorious evenings. This game reserve breeds lions and rescue other orphaned wildlife until they are ready to be released into the wild again.

This was also the home of Tembo, the elephant, who managed to escape when his family was being culled. He found himself on the Sussen Game Farm and they looked after him for many years. Tembo escaped from the farm because he was being dominated by wild bull elephants. He was saved and adopted by the EFAF organisation...we will hear his brave story of survival.

### **Day 3: Getting To One with Nature while at Tshukudu**

In the early morning, we will have the unique experience of walking with all the magnificent wildlife on the Sussen game farm, from small creatures to lions and rhino.

The rest of the day can be spent at leisure and then we will enjoy an afternoon game experience.

### **Day 4: Game viewing in the Kruger National Park**

After a leisurely breakfast we will depart for the Kruger National Park entering at Phalaborwa gate. The town of Phalaborwa has the largest opencast copper mine in the world.

Once through the gate, we will spot wildlife along the way to Olifants Camp, situated on a prominent 100 metre ridge overlooking the Olifants River. This spectacular river has its mouth at the Xai Xai in Mozambique and flows into the mighty Limpopo.

Here we can relax and later enjoy sundowners while watching the wildlife come to the water for their afternoon drink under the watchful eye of the African Nile Crocodiles.

We can then enjoy dinner in the restaurant and get a good nights sleep for an early start.

### **Day 5: A Day of Exploration and Wildlife Adventure**

Watch the earth greet the sun with our day's adventure at 05h00. We will make the most of the cool morning with a 3hr wildlife tracking walk through the park with a trained guide.

After a leisurely breakfast, we will then depart for our short journey to Letaba Camp to visit the Elephant Museum, which displays The Magnificent Seven Tuskers who used to roam the park.

One of the most famous being Mafunyane, Tembo & Mabitsi's Grandfather (as described in An Elephant Bloodline).

There are many emerging big tuskers in the Park at the moment and it is fun to try and spot them and compare their size and tusks with these great specimens. To qualify as a big tusker each tusk must weigh more than 100lbs or 45kg.

We will then travel north through the park, exploring and spotting wildlife, birds and trees, have a picnic on the way and arrive at Mopani Bush Lodge which is situated on the Pioneer Dam, great for wildlife spotting while enjoying sundowners.

### **Day 6: Elephant Country**

We will rise early with a traditional 'rusk/biscuit and coffee' before setting off on the next stretch of our journey north. This is elephant country and we have a leisurely day ahead, looking for elephants, finding dams rich with bird life and spotting other animals.

We will have brunch on the way to our next camp Shingwedzi.

Here we will relax and then later in the day enjoy a mystical night drive, along the way, breaking for a barbeque/braai in the bush, letting the whoop of the Hyena and the diesel-engine-like call of the Mozambique nightjar enchant you.

We will visit the Kanniedood Dam, a perfect place to be on the lookout for Crocodile, Hippopotamus, Elephant, Bushbuck and even Leopard and return to the camp for a well deserved good nights sleep!

### **Day 7: Baobab Stories & Crooks Corner – “The Haven of Scoundrels”**

There will be an early morning start again with a ‘rusk/biscuit and coffee’ before taking off on our journey to the furthest northern part of the Kruger Park. The terrain in the far north is quite different and therefore we will see a change in the wildlife and birds. On the way we will also view many of the magnificent baobab trees, icons of the bushveld with many stories to tell.

This is the area that set the scene for the famous book *The Ivory Trail* by T.V. Bulpin.

We will arrive at our accommodation, Wilderness Safaris, Pafuri Camp, which is a luxurious 4-Star, tented camp overlooking the Levuvhu River. Here we can relax, have lunch and enjoy a cooling swim.

In the later afternoon we will go on a game drive along the Levuvhu River and visit Crooks Corner, “The Haven of Scoundrels”. In the early 1900’s, ivory smugglers, poachers, bandits and hunters used to hop over the border depending on which police were looking for them. As you stand at the point, you are on the borders of Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa; it is rich with colourful

### **Day 8: Thulamela – The Lost Kingdom**

This will be a cultural day and a guided visit to the restored archaeological site and ancient ruins of Thulamela, an Iron Age Kingdom between 1200AD and 1640AD. (This will link to Mapungubwe and Dzata ruins that will be visited later in the tour). These sites prove people under powerful leaders ruled, farmed and traded in these areas more than 450 years ago.

It was only discovered in 1983 by accident. The afternoon can be spent at leisure or a game drive/walk and then we will spend another glorious night in luxury at Pafuri Camp.

### **Day 9: Baobab Forests & Lost Cities of Gold**

In the morning we will leave the Kruger Park and drive into the beautiful mountains of the Soutpansberg with endless indigenous bush, huge baobab trees and rich birdlife.

We will experience the rich Venda culture and visit South Africa’s lost city of gold, Mapungubwe. This is the largest of the Iron Age African Kingdom’s and dates back more than a thousand years. To the indigenous people it is shrouded in mystery and buried treasure.

In 1932, artefacts such as the golden rhino, ceramics and glass beads were discovered here, new evidence of sophisticated trade with China, India and Egypt.

The Mapungubwe Nature Reserve hosts the sacred Mapungubwe plateau and we can see the twelve baobabs growing on the ridge near the Limpopo River where the Shashi joins it. The Squirrel hunter, a character in *An Elephant Bloodline* planted all those seeds years ago.

Our accommodation will be just outside the Mapungubwe Nature Reserve in a tranquil and luxurious bush retreat called Mopane Bush Lodge.

### **Day 10: A Day of Myths & Legends**

In the morning we will visit the Venda near the town of Thohoyandou meaning Head of the Elephant. We will visit the mystical Lake Fundudzi, rich with Venda myth and legend as well as the Dzata Ruins, which hosts the spirit of the drum and is linked to Thulamela and Mapungubwe.

We will then drive back into the heart of the Soutpansberg Mountains to Lesheba Wilderness, a luxury Venda cultural village set in the mountains.

### **Day 11: Rejuvenating Your Soul & Senses**

We will enjoy a day of leisure at Lesheba and explore this magnificent wilderness area high above the Lowveld.

You can go on bush walks, view san rock art, visit the cultural centre or just relax at the pool.

### **Day 12: The Elephant Whisperer**

In the morning we will tour the area of Louis Trichardt/Makhado and then head for an area called Mooketsi, the home of the EFAF Elephant Training Facility. Here you will meet the elephant whisperer Rory Hensman and interact with the elephants that are in training at present and experience how incredibly intelligent they are. Open discussions can be held with Rory, he's one of a kind found anywhere in the world!

We will then travel to Tzaneen and stay the night at the charming and elegant 5 Star Coach House Country Hotel, with its rich history and magnificent views. The hotel has a fully functional health spa where you can enjoy some pampering if you so wish.

Any nougat lovers can visit the macadamia nut nougat factory close by!

### **Day 13: Modjadji – The Rain Queen & Duck Haven**

We will rise in the morning and head off to explore Tzaneen and the Modjadji Cycad Reserve with the biggest cycads in the world, which grow in profusion under an unbelievable mist and rain belt. This is the home to Modjadji the Rain Queen of the Bolobedu people (the legendary Queen of Sheba) and we will hear of miraculous rainmaking powers. We will also visit the Woodbush, one of the largest indigenous high canopy rain forests in the world.

Our day will end with sundowners at a private duck farm. There are 38 species of ducks as well as wild ducks just visiting. Having sundowners while watching them swimming and waddling around is so peaceful; a wonderful way to contemplate and wind down our tour.

We will return to The Coach House for another glorious night.

### **Day 14: The Valley of the Olifants & Homeward Bound**

After breakfast we will leave for our journey home which will take us up the beautiful Valley of the Olifants with sweeping exotic forests of yellowwood trees and down the mountain passes of Magoebaskloof, also known as the Land of Silver Mist. This is where the Pedi Chief Makgoba bravely resisted taxation by the Transvaal government and fled into the forest. He was eventually caught and beheaded. A bronze cast head was put here to commemorate the battle. We will tea to honour him at the Magoebaskloof Hotel.

We will then drive past Zion City and on our way to Oliver Tambo International Airport to connect with your journey home...or onto Capetown.

**This tour is conducted for a minimum of 6 people and accommodation can be changed according to your needs.**

**Depending on the availability of accommodation at the time of booking, some of the lodges mentioned may have to be changed, however, the same standard will always be selected and similar activities will be offered.**

**Please email for a quote.**