

ROTHSCHILD

• S A F A R I S •

AFRICA | ASIA | SOUTH AMERICA | PACIFIC



PHOTOGRAPHY
TIPS



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SAFARIS

CAPTURE THE — MOMENT —

SAFARI PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography has come a long way in the last couple of decades.

Gone are the days of having to carry dozens of film rolls, wind frames on, reload and then pay for print after print only to find that many are out of focus or simply terrible!

The digital age has revolutionised how we capture moments, and modern cameras allow us to shoot hundreds of frames at print resolution and share them around the world.

Not only that, with the right equipment we can preselect numerous options such as the subject matter, the white balance or even applying filters and effects.

The downside of all this technology is that we have become complacent. Most of us will carry a phone in our pockets, purses or backpacks almost every day of our lives, and this has led us to assume that a good photograph is only an iPhone away.

However, on safari conditions are significantly more challenging, and our trusty phones are no match for a speeding cheetah, a distant rhino or 10,000 wildebeest at sunset.

QUICK TIPS:

- Phone cameras are great for capturing short videos & personal moments, but poor substitutes for a proper digital camera (DSLR) on a game drive.
- Compact cameras, such as the Canon Supershot, are good, especially for children, but again are no match for a DSLR if you are wanting to take high-quality images.
- Visit your local camera store & discuss your needs, explaining where you are going, your budget & what you are wanting to achieve.
- Cameras have myriad settings & features. If you are purchasing a new camera, do so well in advance, read the manual & practice.
- Don't be afraid! Most cameras will have a fully automatic setting, so you don't need to be an expert.

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SELECTING YOUR EQUIPMENT

PHONE CAMERAS

Phones can be invaluable when on safari. You can capture a moment, edit on the go and share instantly with no need to download images to a computer or fiddle with focus. Phones are excellent for the more personal moments on safari; the family portraits, time in camp and so on, and are preferable to a bulky camera for this purpose. However, even the latest models quickly disappoint when trying to capture action on the plains or animals even 10 metres away.

COMPACT CAMERAS

Compacts are a wonderful way to introduce youngsters to photography. Better quality than a phone, they allow for a higher standard of image and greater zoom capacity while still being easy to use. Though many have an array of settings, familiarise yourself with the 'landscape', 'portrait' and 'action/sports' options. Select a camera with a good range of optical zoom. Most will have a combination of optical and digital, but digital zoom reduces the image quality.

DIGITAL SINGLE LENS REFLEX CAMERAS (DSLRs)

To capture the very best of your safari, invest in a DSLR. Though more expensive than other options, the results are exponentially better. However, you don't need to buy the best camera to still capture superb images. Better is to opt for a cheaper camera body and invest the money in a longer zoom lens instead. Select at least a 200mm lens or more if within your budget. Finally, take the time to learn and explore your camera at least one month prior to your trip.

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EQUIPMENT TIPS:

- Only zoom in a little. The more you zoom, the worse the quality, so zoom a little, then crop afterwards
- Check your phone's settings & opt for the highest quality options
- Back up your photos to the cloud
- Choose a compact with more optical zoom length over digital zoom
- If possible, buy an additional battery pack, or always carry spares
- Opt for a cheaper camera body & spend more on the lens
- For larger lenses, consider investing in a monopod



— CAMERA — OPTIONS

PHONES

If possible, take this opportunity to upgrade to the latest model. Even so, don't rely on your phone camera to capture the action of a game drive.

Some add-on lenses are available for phones, and these can be a cost-effective way to boost your phone's usefulness on safari, but none will match the quality you can achieve with a dedicated camera, whether compact or DSLR.

COMPACT CAMERAS

A wide range of compact cameras is available. Though they don't match up to a DSLR, they can provide good results and are highly convenient.

Fujifilm's X-T30 is a superb choice with interchangeable lenses, offering extra versatility.

The Lumix LX 100 II is an affordable all-in-one option with powerful built-in zoom - an excellent choice for amateurs or younger photographers, and one of the most compact yet effective solutions.

DSLR CAMERAS

The temptation with DSLRs is to believe that the more you spend, the better the images will be. Though true to some extent, unless you're a professional photographer you won't notice the difference, and many cheaper options still offer high-quality results.

Canon's EOS 6D Mark II or the Nikon D750 are comparative options that are competitively priced, leaving you more budget to invest upon a suitable lens, monopod and other equipment.





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CAMERA ACCESSORIES

LENSES

A powerful zoom lens is vital for good safari images and the minimum recommended is 70-200 mm, although longer is always better.

Popular choices include: Canon 100-400 ISO 4.5 - 5.6 lens, Nikon 80-400 VR f4.5 - 5.6 lens or the new Canon 70-300mm f/4 - 5.6L ISO USM lens.

Ask your camera supplier about teleconverters as this could be a cost-effective way of improving your zoom without investing in a bigger lens.



MONOPODS

Tripods can be heavy, bulky and cumbersome. Added to this, when on a game drive there simply isn't space to erect a tripod. You can also waste valuable seconds and even disturb wildlife when putting it up.

On the back of a safari vehicle a monopod is a far better solution. Compact and lightweight, they are quick to use and offer additional stability for larger lenses.



BATTERIES & MEMORY CARDS

Spare batteries and memory cards are essential, and an external hard drive will free up space and keep your photos safe. Make sure you have enough card storage as you never know when you'll be able to download your images. Buying quality memory cards is highly advisable as they are more reliable and process faster when taking multiple images

Camps have facilities for recharging batteries, but make sure you have the correct adaptors, cables and card readers.



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CAMERA — ACCESSORIES —

BINOCULARS

A good pair of binoculars will certainly enhance your overall safari experience – particularly with regards to smaller mammals and birds.

Everyone should bring their own pair of binoculars in order to get the most out of the safari – roof prism 10x42 / 8x42 is the recommended general purpose binocular specification for both birding and mammal viewing.



HEADLAMPS

A Petzl headlamp packed in your camera bag is a good hands-free idea for changing settings after dark and packing up your gear after night drives.

They can also be incredibly useful when walking around camp after dark and we recommend them to all clients.



DUST BLOWER

A dust blower is excellent to remove unwanted debris from a camera sensor and lens and for cleaning your equipment whilst in the field.

RAINPROOF PACK

A small waterproof pack can save your equipment from damage in impromptu rain showers. You can easily find cheap waterproof marine packs online that are both affective and highly durable. Even a garbage bag can be an incredibly compact, invaluable addition to your gear.





GENERAL TIPS

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LENSES: For the safety and protection of animals, you may well be some distance from your subject. Therefore, you will want a lens that bridges the gap wherever necessary. For a diverse itinerary in Southern Africa, where more off-roading is allowed, an 18-200mm lens is a good starting point and what we'd recommend as bare minimum. For East Africa, where regulations tend to be a bit stricter you probably want to increase that to 80-400mm.

LANDSCAPES & PORTRAITS: Landscapes can often be equally as dramatic and worthy of capturing as the wildlife. Likewise, images of family and friends will immortalise your journey and shared experiences. For these, you'll need a wide-medium lens, around 24-105mm.

CAMERA SETTINGS: For amateurs, select your camera's default automatic settings. For those more experienced photographers we recommend using "aperture mode" to best capture Africa's ever-changing light. Additionally, a shorter depth of field provides satisfying results when trying to blur out the grasses or leaves that may surround an animal, allowing you concentrate on the main subject.

GO FOR THE EYES: Always focus on the animals' eyes. You may need to take the time to focus and refocus the lens depending how much they're moving but the result will always be worth it. Just like humans, animal eyes tell a thousand stories.

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CHARGING BATTERIES: most countries in Africa have 220v so you will need to bring an adaptor with a built-in convertor. Many lodges now have the appropriate facilities so you may not need to bring an adaptor, depending on your specific battery charger. We recommend bringing at least two batteries for your trip.

TAKE NOTES: With thousands of photos taken every day, it can be overwhelming to remember what type of animal, bird or landscape your photo is of. Take time at the end of your day to sit with your guide and flick through your photos asking them to identify those you are unsure of, taking notes of all details for future reference.

RULE OF THIRDS: Don't always centre the animal or subject. Instead, look at how you can place the animal off to one side allowing you to capture the movement of that moment. If a lion is walking towards the left, place the lion on right of your screen allowing for 2/3 of empty space on the left. It will provide you with much more satisfying photos and a deeper context, artistically speaking.

BEANBAG: For larger lenses, when not using a monopod a beanbag can provide valuable, stable support. Bring an empty beanbag on the plane and ask us to preorder a bag of rice or beans at your first destination. The alternative is a travel pillow made of memory foam.