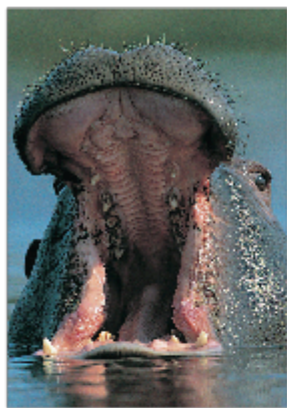


Chobe



LARGE: Hippos are some of the giants you can see at Chobe River

THE CHOBE River area is famed for its elephants. There are over 120 000 of these great animals that lumber down from Teak Forests where they browse, to drink water from this perennial river.

Some herds cross the Chobe to the flood plains to feast on the sweet grasses, while others head back for the leafy, rich forests.

What better place to watch their behaviour, up close and at ease, than from the comfort of a deluxe river safari?

The Chobe National Park area is scorched by the sun and dries up after the rainy season, leaving a denuded area with little food and no water pools. At this time it is not just the elephants that rush to the Chobe's edge.

Hundreds of buffalo crowd down to the water, jostling for space and to enter the water to slake their thirst.

From your cabin, in the flat-bottomed Zambezi Queen, you can lie on your bed and watch this panorama unfold – game and birds, drawn by the life-giving waters of the Chobe River.

The cabins are surprisingly spacious and airy, while the master suites in the front have a balcony in the front and on the side, with doors that open up completely, presenting a spectacular view of the river.

It's tranquil and pleasant as the Zambezi Queen cruises. A gentle breeze brushes your face as you gaze on the flood plain, filled with scores of buffalo and elephants, as you pass by.

On the Sunset Cruise into the Chobe National Park you could see some of the rare Sable and Roan antelope, giraffe or baboons while sipping a gin and tonic. Against a melted vermillion sky, you can try your hand at some iconic sunset shots with a Fish Eagle or skeins of African Spoon-bill. African Skimmers fly low along the water's surface, to catch insects or small fish in their specially adapted beaks. Many species abound including a variety of kingfisher, heron and egret. Fish Eagles dive into the water to catch Bream or Barbel.

Each morning and evening, unless you want to laze in your cabin or on deck, you can hop on to a small boat and explore the waterways. These cruises in the small boats enable you get so close to crocodiles that you can look into their beady eyes or study the skin colours that differ between individuals. You can observe the ominously large canines of hippo as they display their teeth to ward off other males. The joy of being a



LAP OF LUXURY: You can lie on your bed in your cabin and watch the panorama unfold

RIVER SAFARI

The Chobe River area is rich with game and birdlife, and seeing this is made easy from the luxurious Zambezi Queen, says **GILLIAN MCLAREN**

Zambezi Queen passenger is that you cruise back to her, climb aboard and continue the game and bird viewing from the deck, while other tourists have to scuttle out of the park waters and back to their lodges.

A strong sense of camaraderie develops on the vessel as everyone shares the sightings of the day and shows photographs taken. Friendships are forged.

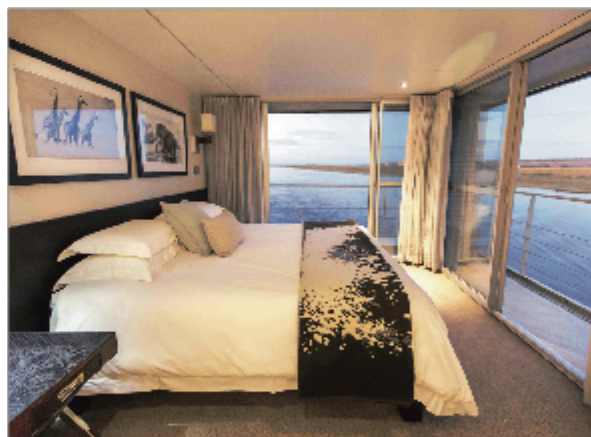
The Chobe River is where you want to try and hook a Tiger fish. This desirable catch is found in abundance here and puts up a good fight. Fishing tackle is provided and motorised boats take you to spots where you may test your casting skills.

It is possible to do a land safari into Chobe National Park, which

is a fascinating experience. Next to the river is a strip of greenery with trees and some grass, but behind that it is an arid wasteland, with stripped and dead trees and hardly any ground cover.

The dusty, dry area has a stark beauty of its own and is well worth seeing. Breeding herds of elephants frequent the area and somehow seeing tiny babies, that do not know what to do with their trunks, is deeply endearing. You see large aggregations of giraffe, huge herds of impala and near to the water, the endemic Puku.

One of the highlights of a holiday on the Zambezi Queen is the food. Not just hearty fare, it is a blend of African and international cuisine, which is creatively presented.



SPECTACULAR: A bedroom on the Zambezi Queen

Breakfast is offered as a buffet, including oats cooked in cream, with an array of seeds, nuts and dried fruit to sprinkle on top. A range of cheese and meat is displayed, as well as baked pastries and breads. Full English breakfast items are cooked at your request.

Meals are all a leisurely affair, which are occasionally interrupted when someone spots interesting game or there is an beautiful expanse of clouds.

I was pleased I had chosen a three-day trip, as it is immensely relaxing and fun.

Two days would have been too short to enjoy the many activities available. You are unlikely to forget the contemporary elegance of the Zambezi Queen and the unrivalled views she permits of the Chobe River, especially of the legendary herds of elephants that arrive to drink each day.

Contact details

Zambezi Queen
www.zambeziqueen.com
info@zambeziqueen.com

Airlink

A comfortable flight from Joburg will have you at Kasane International Airport in time to have lunch on the Zambezi Queen.
www.flyairlink.com

Flame of Africa

To visit several lodges in the Chobe area, you may have to cross borders between Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, which all meet here.
www.flameofafrica.com