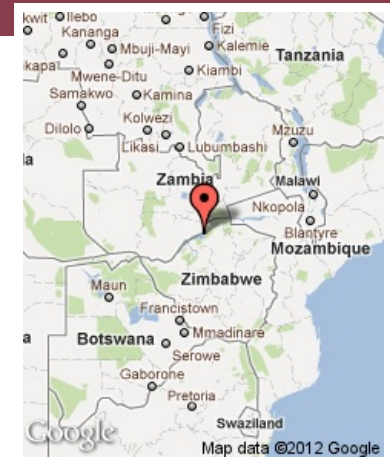


Adventurous Canoe Safari: Kariba to Mana Pools



Highlights

Mana Pools is a wildlife reserve in Zimbabwe, and quite possibly the least developed national park in Africa. Enjoy a wild six-day canoe safari paddling from Kariba to Mana Pools, helping to set up your own camp along the way.

Situated in the Lower Zambezi Valley, Mana Pools is named after the four gigantic lakes encompassed within its 2,000 km confines and is completely unspoilt by human hands. The land here is about as untamed as it was when modern man first appeared on the scene, and travelling through the rugged wilderness by canoe is an excellent way to see the stunning array of wildlife on offer, including elephants, buffalo, lions, cheetahs, hippos and rhinos (all at a safe distance from the river, of course!) In fact, thanks to the hydro-electric planning which occurred in the region in the 80s (subsequently saving the park from irreversible flooding) the park is one of the best game reserves in Africa as animals travel from far and wide to take advantage of its lake water.

On this canoe safari, you will spend six days paddling from Kariba to Mana Pools. Over the course of your six days, you will explore the area by canoe, covering a distance of between 18km – 27km each day. You will generally paddle for a couple of hours at a time; first thing in the morning before breakfast, then a late morning paddle followed by lunch and then a late afternoon trip. The pace will be leisurely, to ensure you have the chance to take in the wildlife and the beautiful scenery. This is a semi participatory safari, which means that each evening, when you come to shore, you will all help to set up camp. It's not all work, though, there is plenty of time to enjoy a sundowner and to enjoy wildlife spotting on dry land as well.

Is it for me?

If you haven't figured it out yet, be under no illusions – this is a hardcore adventure tour for serious outdoors and wildlife enthusiasts. You'll be roughing it in some of the wildest landscapes in Africa, which is of course the whole point of the tour!

The minimum age is 15 (there is no maximum age limit, just use common sense) and no previous canoe experience is required since there is plenty of training and the tour is fully guided, but be prepared to spend a lot of time under a hot African sun. A small degree of fitness and health is required, as for all adventure tours.

It's advised to take check out visa restrictions before travelling – at the time of writing a compulsory 30-day visa is required at a small fee (£20.) Currently no injections are required before entering the country, but it is necessary to undertake a course of anti malaria tablets before, during and after your tour.

Accommodation

Setting out in Canadian-style high quality canoes, you'll end each day of the itinerary setting up camp with the group. All equipment is provided, including two-man dome tents, mattresses, fly sheets and mosquito nets. The tent roofs are also gauze, so on a clear night you can stare up at the African night's sky.

This is not a 'luxury' trip insofar that there is no plumbing or electricity during the tour and toilet facilities are... well, basic is an understatement (it's a deep hole-in-the-ground) and shower facilities consist of a hot bucket of water.

Prices from

442 GBP (6 days) per person

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The food facilities are good though, and each camp has separate cooking and dining areas. The majority of the meats will be precooked and frozen for the trip, and you'll be up early each day to be served with coffee and biscuits to give you a kick start before canoeing for a couple of hours. Around 9 am you'll pause to eat a breakfast, usually variations on cooked full English. A picnic lunch and a siesta to take a break from the hot sun follows around noon.

Dinner is also included in the price, served after camp set-up at the end of each day and comprising of a variety of filling meat and vegetable dishes. Special dietary requirements can be catered for, but you'll need to book at least four weeks in advance to ensure these can be met. Also, the drinks served on the tour are cordial soft drinks, tea and coffee – if you want any spirits, beer or mineral water you'll have to purchase these at the start of the tour (which you'll get the chance to do.) All drinks will be kept chilled in cooler boxes.

Itinerary

The schedule below is a very loose guide, with times and even days varying on occasion due to weather or other uncontrollable factors. During the tour you'll be exploring the lower Zambezi river on a guided tour up to Mana Falls proper, covering approximately 22km per day.

Day one – Your safari will depart at 08:30 am following pickup from your location in Kariba to the operator's office. You will get time to do some shopping and purchase any extra drinks for your trip before setting off for the river and the start of the canoe safari.

After arriving at the start point, luggage will be transferred into the Gorge and your group will take a steep 1.5 km descent to the river. Here you will meet all the canoes and camping equipment which has been carried into the Gorge already.

Following a safety talk and instruction on how to paddle your canoe, you'll set out around 11am and paddle down the river until lunch at around 1pm. Lunch is served picnic-style with time for a siesta afterwards to pass the heat of the day until around mid-afternoon, at which time paddling recommences.

At around 5pm you will set up camp on an island in the middle of the River named Crocodile Rocks. There is time to have a bucket bath, relax and have dinner after a brief safety talk on camping.

Days Two to Five - Your group will be woken at sunrise for tea, coffee and biscuits before you start canoeing for a couple of hours, stopping for a leisurely breakfast around 9am. You'll continue for a few hours to midday, with the guide pointing out all the best sights on the river and features many African wildlife watching opportunities. A lunch stop will be made at the first suitable spot, with time for a siesta.

In the afternoon you'll set off down the river once again, stopping around 5pm to set up camp at one of the designated spots (Kokomarara, Lone Acacia, Twin Logs and Trichelia Islands.) You will be able to eat dinner, shower and explore the area at your leisure while being mindful of the safety guidelines.

Day Six – Following breakfast at 8am you will take the final two hour paddle onto Mana Pools for a connecting tour of the park or return back to Kariba.

Details

Getting there

The canoe safari departs from Kariba (Zimbabwe, just over the border from Zambia). There are no international flights into Kariba so you will need to get international flights to either Harare (Zimbabwe) or Lusaka (Zambia). A new service is operating from Harare to Kariba on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays, costing 800R (approx £75) per person each way operated by **Federal Air**. Alternatively you can take a 3 hour (300km) ground transfer from Lusaka Airport (serviced by BA) to Kariba costing \$110 per person each way. Whichever option you choose, you will need to plan to be in Kariba the day before your safari and stay on the day afterwards (for an early start and late return). We can arrange a stay in Kariba or alternatively there are a few game lodges in the area if you want to extend the trip.

Price includes

Price is per person fully inclusive of Zimbabwean tourism levy, fully qualified guides, transfers to and from Kariba, accommodation in camp and meals for the duration of the tour, all activities and equipment. Price does not include alcoholic drinks, government sales and value added taxes where applicable and national parks and river usage fees which must be paid directly to national parks along the way.

When is best

This trip departs on Tuesdays, Saturdays & Sundays all year round, November to June is the peak season.

Comfort level

Down to earth (hostels, camping, huts)

Experience required

Not relevant