



GUIDELINES TO MAKING SURE YOUR GAME DRIVE IS A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE

Going on a game drive is an exhilarating feeling. You're sitting quietly in a game vehicle watching a pride of lions preparing to hunt. The lead female is staking out a young buffalo while her sisters circle round in readiness to spring the trap. The tension is palpable and then... the calm of the bush is broken by the sounds of a cell phone belting out! The moment is gone! Spoiled.

To avoid these types of incidents on a game drive, and to make sure that you stay safe and do not endanger anyone or the wildlife, there are basic rules to follow to make sure your game drive is a memorable experience for everyone.

1. Rules of the Reserve: Each and every reserve you visit throughout Southern and East Africa, whether public or private reserves, has a set of rules that need to be adhered to when visiting these areas. The rules are there to protect both the wildlife, the environment and the visitors, and your professional guide upholds these rules.

2. Listen to your Guide: His/her instructions and safety advice is not negotiable. Every situation will be assessed and your guide will act and advise accordingly. Your guide/ranger is experienced and a very knowledgeable source of information. They are not only there to point out the wildlife, but have a vast amount of knowledge to share with you - so ask questions. Don't ask your guide to chase after any wildlife, or to get closer than he/she already is, or to drive in a direction not permissible in terms of reserve rules. Your guide is there for you throughout your time with them, to make sure you stay safe on your game drive, and to make sure you make the most out of your safari!

3. Game viewing vehicles: Most safari vehicles are four-wheel-drive, customized to maximize your game-viewing experience. The exact design of the vehicle will differ from reserve to reserve and from destination to destination. Those in Southern Africa are traditionally 4 x 4 completely open-sided with a canvas canopy roof and with tiered seats rising up behind the driver to ensure every traveler has a clear view. Some also have a small tracker's seat that folds out on the hood at the front of the vehicle, allowing a specialist guide to track spoor through the bush and help find a route across broken ground.

In East Africa, closed vehicles are still a popular way of experiencing an African safari. These vehicles also allow for longer distance road travel (not permitted by open sided canvas top vehicles). These vehicles tend to be four-wheel-drive with flip-top or elevated roofs so guests can stand up to get the best vantage point. The roof is also a good support platform for your cameras.

4. Useful things to take on a game drive:

- **Layers of clothing:** *Whether you're on an early morning drive in the middle of summer or a late afternoon drive in the depths of winter one thing is for sure, you will get both cold and hot. So dress in layers (not bright colours) that can be taken off or put back on. If you're on safari in winter or at elevation you may also want to consider a scarf and gloves for morning game drives.*
- **Hat:** *A wide-brimmed hat with a chin strap (so it doesn't fly off) will give you maximum sun protection, and in the winter a warm hat/beanie is a must. Don't forget to apply sunblock before you head out on your game drive and take some with you to reapply as needed.*
- **Camera:** *Whatever level of photographer you are, the general rule is to pack light so you can be nimble enough to catch shots quickly. Extra batteries and memory cards are useful, as is some sort of waterproof and dustproof bag to keep all your photography and electronic equipment in.*
- **Binoculars:** *Even though you will get up close to many animals on a game drive, it's likely you'll also have sightings of wildlife in the distance... which is where having your own binoculars comes in handy.*
- **Animal guide book:** *Your guide may well have a reference book or two, but nothing beats having your own animal / bird guide book*

5. Do's and Don'ts on a Game Drive: Your guide has the responsibility to make sure that guests adhere with all the do's and don'ts when it comes to game viewing and the safety of the visitor. **Listen to your guide at all times.**

- **Getting out of the vehicle:** *Only leave the game vehicle when you're given permission by your guide/ranger. If you get the opportunity to do a game walk with your guide, he or she will tell you when it is safe to get out of the vehicle. So NO getting out of the vehicle to take a photograph or other reason without the permission of your guide.*
- **Keep quiet:** *Don't be noisy on the vehicle as you're likely to see nothing. Clapping your hands, singing, calling the animals or even talking loudly will drive animals away long before you even get the chance to spot them. But do bring sightings to the attention of your guide/ ranger for others to enjoy.*
- **Movement in the vehicle:** *Wildlife is familiar with the shape and sound of the game vehicles and do not see them as a threat. So please don't make sudden movements such as standing up, as you break the profile of the vehicle. Predators like lions are attracted by sudden movements so you hopping up and down will draw unnecessary and unwelcome attention from a big toothy lion that could see you as a snack. You'll be endangering the lives of those on the game drive and put your guide/ ranger in a difficult situation.*
- **Keep it on the inside:** *Always keep your arms and legs inside the game vehicle. The trails and tracks are likely to be surrounded by thorny bush and if you dangle your arms outside you are going to need medical attention for the scratches, scrapes and thorns imbedded in your flesh. Dangling arms also present a tasty treat to predators.*
- **Don't litter:** *Never ever throw litter off the vehicle on your drive. Keep it with you to get rid of when you're back in camp. The pips from your peaches, the empty juice or wine bottles and the wrapper used to keep your sandwich fresh have no place in nature. Glass bottles are a fire hazard in a region where temperatures can soar to over 40°C in summer.*

- **Leave the technology at home:** Unless you're using your cell phone or tablet to take pictures of your experience rather leave these behind when on a game drive. Don't answer phone calls, read emails or tweet on a game drive. This is an insult to your guide/ranger who would like to share their love for the bush with you.
- **Ask questions:** Do you know the difference between a white rhino and a black rhino? Would you be able to tell a kudu from a wildebeest? Your guide/ ranger is an experienced and very knowledgeable source of information. They're not only there to point out the animals. They have a vast amount of knowledge to share with you so ask questions. You will be pleasantly surprised by what you learn and your guide will enthusiastically share his or her learnings with you.
- **Don't light up:** Smoking on a game drive is a huge no no. By lighting a cigarette, you are impinging on the other guests' enjoyment and you could be responsible for a bush fire. The coal from a cigarette is the spark that will ignite dry bushveld – with devastating effects.

ENJOY YOUR GAME DRIVE.