

PHOTOGRAPHIC TIPS

Capturing those unforgettable moments while on your African safari will often hinge on the correct choice of camera equipment; the selection of camera equipment determining the end result of your photographs taken on the trip. African conditions are certainly unique and these guidelines aim to make your equipment choice a little easier.

As the digital age has basically revolutionised the photography realm we focus our suggestions solely on that media.



Cameras – Compact

Super-zoom bridge cameras have improved greatly in recent years like the Nikon P100 and the Canon Powershot SX50 HS. They offer an incredible focal range – from capturing that close-up of an elephant's eye to Namibia's dune landscape – while being far more affordable and portable than a SLR camera body and range of lenses.

For satisfying photography of birds and animals, a good SLR camera and telephoto lens is preferable:

Cameras – SLR

The new high-resolution digital cameras are outstanding and give superb quality images,

especially if you are using a digital SLR camera body, with interchangeable lenses.

The leaders are Nikon and Canon and one cannot go wrong with either. Semi-professional camera bodies like the Nikon D300s, D7100 or the Canon 70D or 7D are very good choices. They are fairly light, easy to hold and all produce excellent results. Top of the range include the Nikon D4s or the Canon 1DX – the ultimate in durability, high frames per second (ideal for capturing action scenes) and weather sealing, however, these are expensive and heavy to carry around.

A second camera is a worthwhile consideration, as digital cameras do occasionally fail. Apart from providing backup it is also ideal to put a wide-angle lens on one and a telephoto on the other.

The advantage of digital photography is that one can get instant feedback on images and

adjustments can be made in the field to ensure that one's photographs are correctly exposed.

Lenses – Interchangeable

A zoom lens can be extremely useful on safari and the minimum recommended size is 70 mm -

200 mm, although a 100 mm – 400 mm or 70 mm – 300 mm is ideal. Modern image-stabilised lenses are best as they allow photographers to handhold their cameras at slower shutter speeds with sharper results. Popular lens choices include: Canon 100 - 400 IS 4.5 - 5.6 lens, Nikon 80 – 400 VR f4.5 - 5.6 AF-S VR lens or the Canon 70 – 300 f/4 - 5.6L IS USM lens. Fast fixed prime lenses have an edge when it comes to sharpness and low-light performance, however, one loses some versatility being confined to a fixed focal range. Choices here include the Canon or Nikon 300 f2.8 or f4 fixed lenses. A more cost-effective way to obtain further reach (without the bulk of a fixed 500 or 600) out of your camera is to use a teleconverter, particularly on f2.8 lenses – the 1.4X being ideal.

The Nikon 200 - 400 f4 VR II or the Canon 200 - 400 f4 IS (with built-in 1.4X teleconverter) are the ultimate wildlife lenses in terms of versatility, however, do come with a hefty price tag.





Spare Batteries, Recharging Facilities and Additional Storage

Spare batteries are essential and a storage device of some sort is recommended, such as a portable external hard drive. Make certain you have enough card storage – most people take more photographs than they expect to. Compact flash cards are continually dropping in price – 32 GB and 16 GB cards are the norm these days. Also try investing in the newer generation UDMA cards as they write data much faster so you can catch that split-second lion kill! Camps have facilities for recharging batteries. Strips for charging more than one device are suggested for more serious photographers. &OE Page 2 of 2 20 May 2014

OTHER GEAR

Supports

On the back of a safari vehicle a monopod can be a compact, light-weight solution for providing additional stability for larger lenses.

Protection from the elements

Camera bags like the Lowepro, Gura Gear or Tamrac range are ideal to transport all your camera gear. Out on game drives remember to pack something to cover your camera gear and minimise dust – an inexpensive pillow case or kikoy often does the trick perfectly.

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 10x32 / 8x32 is the recommended general purpose binocular specification for both birding and mammal viewing.

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.

A Giotto Rocket Blower is excellent to remove unwanted dust from a camera sensor and

for general cleaning before doing any lens changes in the field.

A rain-proof cover for your camera bag is a wise investment particularly for African safaris in the rainy season, when afternoon thunderstorms are frequent.