



African Safari Luggage Guidelines: A Country-by-Country Guide (within Africa)

Picture this: You're preparing for the adventure of a lifetime – an African safari – and suddenly you're staring at your empty suitcase with what can only be described as packing paralysis. Should you bring those extra shoes? What about that backup camera lens? And why oh why do these bush planes care so much about luggage weight anyway?

Take a deep breath. You're about to enter the wonderfully unpredictable world of African safari travel, where the only consistent rule seems to be that there are no consistent rules. Let us explain...

Here's the great luggage conundrum: For every client who returns telling us "Nobody even glanced at my bag's weight!" there's another who says, "They weighed everything – including my camera!" And they might have been on the same route, just different days. Welcome to the beautiful chaos of bush aviation, where your experience can vary wildly depending on who's in the pilot's seat, how many passengers are sharing your flight, and sometimes even the direction of the wind (we're only half-joking).

Why such variability? It all comes down to physics and those charming little bush planes. These aircraft are essentially flying puzzles where pilots must balance passenger weights, fuel needs, and luggage load. And yes, they do ask for passenger weights – not to be nosy, but because they're calculating exactly how much extra weight they can safely carry. A half-empty flight might mean no one bats an eye at your slightly overweight bag, while a full plane requires strict adherence to limits.

The good news? Most safari lodges and camps offer excellent same-day laundry service, usually included in your stay or available for a small fee. This is a game-changer that means you can pack far less than you might think. In fact, we've lost

count of how many clients have told us, "I could have managed with half of what I brought!"

But here's where it gets interesting: Post-safari, our travelers typically fall into three camps:

- The "I worried too much" group who could have squeezed in those extra comfort items
- The "I packed too much" crowd who barely touched half their clothes
- And our personal favorites: The "nobody weighed my bags!" adventurers who spent weeks agonizing over every ounce

Our advice? Plan for the strictest scenario while knowing that enforcement can be wonderfully inconsistent. Think of luggage restrictions like African weather – it's best to be prepared, but don't be surprised if what you actually experience is entirely different from what you expected.

Remember: Those small bush planes have weight limits for good reasons. Their compact size is what allows them to land on dirt airstrips and get you to those incredible remote locations where the real magic happens. Sure, the baggage hold might be roughly the size of a mini-fridge, but trust us – the spectacular views of elephants strolling beneath your wing make it all worthwhile.

One important note: When you're traveling between major cities or countries (think Johannesburg to Cape Town, or Nairobi to Dar es Salaam), you'll be on commercial aircraft with standard airline regulations – a completely different ballgame from the bush plane guidelines we're discussing here. These larger planes follow regular commercial airline rules for baggage, which are typically more generous and consistent in their enforcement. It's only when you head off into the bush that these special safari packing considerations come into play.

Tips for Travelers

1. Always pack soft-sided bags, when possible, (duffel-style and backpacks). Rolling duffels with no rigid frames are accepted. Some bush flights allow larger than this, but you will be safe if you have this size bag: 70 cm x 60 cm x 35 cm (L x W x D) 27" x 24" x 14"
2. Maximum weight allowances are inclusive of carry-on, checked baggage and camera equipment.
3. Check specific requirements for each leg of your journey
4. Be prepared to provide passenger weights for small aircraft
5. In some cases, you may purchase an extra seat or a special class of service to account for excess baggage weight in advance. Ask us for details!

6. Pack essential items in carry-on bag within weight limits
7. Remember that enforcement can vary significantly
8. Wear your heavy clothing or shoes if you are worried about weight
9. Remember that they do laundry at safari lodges, and it is often included in your cost, or just a nominal fee

SOUTHERN AFRICA

South Africa

- * Standard weight limit: 44 lbs (20 kg)
- * Soft bags strongly recommended, especially for charter flights where specific bag size restrictions apply
- * Enforcement varies significantly:
 - * Major terminals have strict weighing procedures
 - * Smaller outposts may be more flexible
- * Extra baggage options available for additional fee (subject to aircraft capacity)

Botswana

- * Weight limit: 44 lbs (20 kg)
- * Specific bag size restrictions apply
- * Soft bags mandatory for most safari operations
- * Bush flights often require passenger weights to be provided

Zimbabwe & Namibia

- * Variable weight limits: 33-44 lbs (15-20 kg)
- * Specific bag size restrictions apply
- * Enforcement levels vary by:
 - * Airport size
 - * Type of aircraft
 - * Current passenger load
- * Charter operations may have different requirements

Zambia

- * Predominant weight limit on bush plane: 33 lbs (15 kg)
- * Specific bag size restrictions apply
- * Bush flights require advance passenger weight information

EAST AFRICA

Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda & Uganda

- * Standard weight limit: 33 lbs (15 kg)
- * Specific bag size restrictions apply

- * Exception: Auric Air allows 44 lbs (20 kg) on shared charters
- * Strict enforcement common at major airports
- * Remote airstrips may have more flexible policies

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Private Charters

Weight allowances vary based on:

- * Aircraft type and capacity:
 - * Grand Caravan: Up to 12 passengers
 - * Smaller aircraft: 2-5 passengers
- * Number of passengers sharing the aircraft
- * Total distance being flown
- * Weather conditions

Helicopter Transfers

- * Strict weight limitations apply
- * Alternative arrangements often available:
 - * Split luggage transfers
 - * Vehicle support for excess baggage
 - * Ground transfers for heavy items

Important Notes

- * Weight restrictions are primarily safety-based
- * Flexibility depends on multiple factors:
 - * Total passenger load
 - * Weather conditions
 - * Pilot discretion
 - * Airport facilities
- * Additional fees for excess baggage may be available but aren't guaranteed
- * Some locations offer luggage storage for items not needed on safari if you will be backtracking through the same area

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Suggested Baggage Types

Examples: Eagle Creek Cargo-Hauler-Wheeled-Duffel-110L or similar, plus a strong, weather resistant backpack:



See the Packing List in the “Preparing for Your Journey” document you received when you booked your trip with us for more ideas.