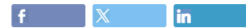


Mana Pools National Park: one of the most remote places in Africa

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Román Hervier | Sunday, August 31, 2025, 4:13 PM



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Mana Pools National Park, together with the Sapi and Chewore safari areas, have been a World Heritage Site since 1984. Located in Zimbabwe's Zambezi River Valley, they are known for their rich wildlife and unique landscapes, recognised by UNESCO for their natural beauty, as floodplains that flood and then dry up create temporary lakes that attract a large number of animals.



Sunset on the Zambezi River

It is a 219,600-hectare wildlife conservation area and national park in northern Zimbabwe. This is a region of the lower Zambezi where the floodplain transforms into a vast expanse of lakes after each rainy season. As the lakes gradually dry up and shrink, the region attracts numerous large animals in search of water, making it one of Africa's most popular game viewing areas.



Lioness yawning

It is home to a wide range of mammals, more than 350 species of birds, and aquatic fauna, and is one of the world's wildest and best-preserved natural ecological areas. Mana means "four," referring to the four large permanent "pools" formed by the meanders of the Middle Zambezi.

It has the largest concentration of hippopotamuses and crocodiles in the country, as well as significant populations of mammals during the dry season: zebras, elephants, and African buffalo.



Buffalo next to a wetland

The area also contains other threatened species, such as lions, cheetahs, Cape wild dogs, and leopards and brown hyenas.

• **Mana River Camp**

Choosing a campsite is always important. There are both lodges and tented camps, i.e., hotels more or less integrated into nature, and tents, sometimes more luxurious and allowing you more direct contact with nature, especially when you hear the sounds of the night...

In this case, I chose to spend the first three nights at Mana River Camp, a Machaba Safari's camp



Link to website

on the banks of the Zambezi River. The camp is set up and dismantled each year, from May to October, before the rainy season begins.



Two hippos fighting in one of the 4 temporary lakes

The choice couldn't have been better, as after a three-hour journey downriver and seeing a large number of hippos and elephants, you arrive at this camp that gives you a true African experience.



A tent at the Mana River Camp temporary camp

Surrounded by vegetation that attracts a large number of elephants that raise their troops to reach the greenest, tastiest, and most nutritious leaves of the trees, Mana River Camp makes you feel like a lucky one in the midst of wild nature, sleeping with modern comforts and enjoying exceptional cuisine, always well-washed with South African wines.



Good South African wines

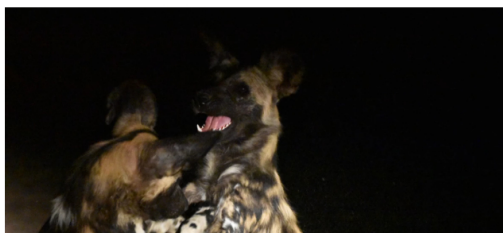
I'll always remember the elephants with their trunks raised to reach the best fruits and the approach to a group of three lionesses... on a walking safari.

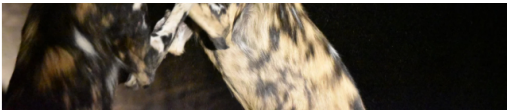


Elephant looking for the best fruits to eat

• "The Big Four"

The park is home to the Big Four (lion, elephant, buffalo and leopard), wild dogs, as well as various antelopes.





Two wild dogs fight during a night safari

It is much less accessible than other parks in Zimbabwe, as a 4x4 vehicle is essential, and is usually reached by small plane or by sailing down the Zambezi River from Chirundu, a transfer that takes just over two and a half hours.

Large herds of buffalo and elephants roam the river, teeming with crocodiles and hippos. The weather at Mana Pools is most pleasant during the early months of the dry season, from April to October—the best time for wildlife viewing, when the skies are clear and the animals gather in the Zambezi to stay hydrated, reaching their peak from June onwards.

- Ingwe Pan

I spent the next three nights at another Machaba Safaris camp: Ingwe Pan. This camp is permanent and extends in front of a large lagoon surrounded by vegetation. There, on a night safari, I saw a large pack of wild dogs, tracked a hyena on foot the next day, and returned to the river several times to once again observe the accumulation of wildlife.



Shop in Ingwe Pan

And if I chose to take a two-and-a-half-hour boat ride along the Zambezi River to get there, I used a small plane to get to Victoria Falls.



Leaving the park by plane



Román Hereter, text and photos

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