



ON AN ELEPHANT PATH WITH ALAN At Umlani Bushcamp TIMBAVATI / SOUTH AFRICA

3 Nights / 4 Days
Personally guided by Alan McSmith

Join Alan on an explorative specialist elephant safari at Umlani, Timbavati Game Reserve.

This safari is a unique special interest encounter focussing primarily on elephant behaviour and ecology and is kind of a culmination of Alan's time in the Timbavati spanning some 30 years. All activities, on foot or by vehicle are conducted on an exclusive and private basis, and we are based at one of our all-time favourite camps, Umlani Bushcamp.



WHAT TO EXPECT:

- Spend 4 nights exploring the big 5 private concession
- Spend a night in the Umlani tree-house overlooking a waterhole
- Exclusive use of an open game viewer
- Tracking & walking, a must!
- Small groups (max 8)
- Discover fascinating elephant behaviour
- Discover how these remarkable animals are the principal ecologists of the bush
- Endless conservation discussions
- Included in the safari tariff is a minimum donation to the reputable elephant conservation org, ELEPHANTS ALIVE. We have an option to have a day of elephant monitoring with them, tuning into research projects by tracking GPS collared bulls with telemetry. Discover all about the importance of monitoring behaviour and how human/elephant conflict could be mitigated. A small additional donation required to secure their time.

The safari is guided and hosted by top safari guide Alan McSmith who has been leading wildlife adventures here for over 30 years. A highly personalised, exciting and enlightening wildlife experience is guaranteed, ensuring a collage of encounters along the way.

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAY 1: Arrive at Umlani, check-in, lunch, afternoon game drive, dinner and overnight.

DAYS 2 & 3: Game drives and walks from our Umlani base with meals either packed or back at camp.

DAY 4: Morning in the wilderness followed by breakfast and departure.

TIMBAVATI



The Timbavati Game Reserve is a collection of privately owned properties, and covers over 50 000 hectares of wild bushveld. The reserve is unfenced and open to the Kruger National Park, ensuring free ranging big game. The Umlani concession is located deep within the reserve, and ensures very productive game viewing. Alan first worked in the Timbavati in 1988 and knows the region like the back of his hand.

ALAN McSMITH, PRIVATE GUIDE



For over 30 years Alan has lived as a wilderness guide and conservationist. His natural habitat is remote African wilderness, camping on a river and preferably close to elephant herds. His work acclaims the significance of nature in our lives, and the urgency of conserving and regenerating our natural heritage. He facilitates meaningful wilderness experiences and transformational leadership encounters, and is also an accomplished motivational speaker.

Day 1: Arrive at Umlani Bushcamp TIMBAVATI GAME RESERVE

Alan will meet you at Umlani Bushcamp in time for an alfresco lunch and check-in. After a camp orientation and lunch, its time to find your bush feet or boots as we like to say. We depart on an introductory game drive. We are private and flexible and stop often to chat, to listen and just to be. WE also stop for a welcome iced beverage as we salute the setting of the sun over this magnificent backdrop. Return to camp for dinner and valuable time spent staring at the fire

Dinner and overnight at Umlani

Umlani Bushcamp

PLACE OF REST



Umlani is, what we refer to as a “real African bush camp”, the family have stuck to the core of the Umlani message and that is to be a part of the bush. This makes it an ideal base to explore the intense big game encounters of the Timbavati. Hand built using indigenous materials and with a limited occupancy of only 16 beds. The camp is a perfect platform for our private safari. A thatched central lounge and bar with game viewing deck is the focal point, and there is often game drinking at the camp waterhole below. The charming huts offer classic safari hospitality, each crafted into the bush with an en-suite but open-to-the-stars shower. Umlani is completely off the grid and lighting is supplied by paraffin lanterns; a wonderful throwback to safaris of yesteryear. There is however wifi at the central lounge as well as a charging point for appliances



The wildlands of the world famous Timbavati set the scene; game viewing is excellent. Game drives (day and night) and walking trails are freely available, and our private safari of discovery ensures exclusive encounters with maximum flexibility.

We have been running private and exclusive safaris here for over 20 years with the kind support of the Schiess family. This is industry gold dust! We have exclusive use of an open 4x4 landrover, game viewing will largely be opportunistic and stopping the game viewer to follow up fresh tracks on foot, or heading out late at night to find lion is part of the philosophy. Unhurried discussions on special topics are all part of the fare.



Dinner is in the "boma," an open air circular "dining room" with a fire in the centre. This is a traditional meeting and eating venue, and the warm campfire perfectly holds the enjoyment of a hearty meal and the enthusiasm of conversation. The African way!

Then of course, there are the elephants! The Timbavati is home to high number of free ranging herds that are frequently sighted on our concession. The reserve is open to the Kruger National Park and is a vast vibrant wild ecosystem. This history of the reserve, as well as the development of elephant conservation in the region is open for discussion along the way

Elephants Alive (.org) OUR ASSOCIATION



This safari is based at a place and an area that is close to our hearts, and here Alan feels deeply connected. It is in the Timbavati, albeit a few decades back, that Alan started an elephant identification project that went on to become the humble beginning of a much bigger project that is today, NPO Elephants Alive. A donation for each safari is made to their project fund, so you will be actively supporting this reputable organisation.

Elephants; ecological keystones

LANDSCAPERS & CHANGE-AGENTS

Elephant conservation is one of Africa's most controversial narratives. And elephant, due to the demand of ivory as a precious commodity, have often been at the sharp edge of it. Their sentience and complexity are often overlooked, as is their ecological keystone impact as habitat landscapers. The complete story of elephant is seldom completely told. Poaching and habitat loss indicate that within the last century we have lost a staggering 90% of our elephants.

It's not only the future of elephant that is at risk, but also this precious gateway toward a deeper awareness of the wonders of our natural world and inter-connectedness.



Elephants are the true ecologists of the bush. These great grey landscapes create opportunity and habitat for a host of other organisms through their activities. The pruning of branches promotes regrowth, they open up pathways and access to waterholes and wallows, they deposit vast amounts of droppings, a rich and nutritious source of moisture and sustenance to insects, birds and mammals alike. As the only animal capable of digging wells and springs in riverbeds, they bring water to the surface in times of droughts. The list is endless!

Because of this, in ecological terms, elephants are known as keystone animals. A species that positively influences the well-being of others, and creates ecosystem diversity. For us however, just as they are keystone to an ecological circuit, they are keystone to a greater awareness. An awareness of the threat to all wildlife. They are ambassadors in a sense. Ambassadors of an ecological process and also of an ancient order of empathy, both of which are fundamentally connected to our well-being.

At a glance the impact of the elephant appears destructive. Wasteful perhaps. Harsh on the eye. For the sake of some roots, the marula tree will die and will soon be reduced to a pile of decaying branches. An iconic fruit-bearing shade-giving landmark has been lost. It must be damage and de-

struction right? We may interpret the dead tree in terms of deficit, scarcity or perhaps loss of opportunity. A door closing. The elephant, therefore, becomes the antagonist, the threat and the problem, something that needs to be 'fixed.' Metaphorically of course, the tree represents a resource that we consume for our benefit; fruit and nutrients in terms of finance, shade in terms of comfort, and its presence on the landscape in terms of familiarity. These are the tangible benefits of the tree.

But what if the process of an elephant killing the tree is entirely normal and ecologically intelligent? The largest walking animal on the planet encourage us to look at nature and ecology differently. To reset our presumptions of how nature operates and diversity flourishes.



This is what our elephant awareness safari is about: To showcase and view elephant through a transformational lens, a lens absolutely essential to understand their complexity, ecological value and special intelligence. To challenge contemporary beliefs systems that they have to 'pay their way' to remain part of landscapes. To be a voice for the silenced.

Because of this, it was inevitable that Alan would dedicate his life and work to this narrative. To share the story, from their side. As if in partnership with the elephants themselves and as a voice for their silence. "I've often wondered what an elephant would say to me if it could speak, and perhaps this would be it: "tell them who we really are," Alan adds.

Days 2 & 3: Private unlimited game viewing activities

BY VEHICLE OR ON FOOT

Full days spent in search of elephants and other game by vehicle, on foot or a combination of both. Early starts are a must and sometimes we do this in the dark as we may set out on foot with the sunrise. Waterholes in the dry season are often elephant magnets so we will spend time anticipating movements and find the right positions for meaningful encounters and photographs.

More often than not, the slow pace and attention to detail provides us with clues about the whereabouts of other game. An alarm call, birdsong, or a sudden quiet in the air may bto alert us to leopard or lion, or even rhino. We believe by paying attention to these signs, a lot of information can be absorbed ... the safari may focus on elephant, but its invariably about the sum of the parts.

Due to our exclusive activities, we have great flexibility to determine our routines, returning to camp for meals and down-time.



Although we are based at Umlani (and for the safari as a whole) for meals and overnights, we enjoy complete flexibility to stay out as long as we like, leave as early as convenient, or as long as required. Exclusive activities ensure that our group's special interests are tailored.

We have exclusive use of an open 4x4 landrover, game viewing will largely be opportunistic and stopping the game viewer to follow up fresh tracks on foot, or heading out late at night to find lion is part of the philosophy. Unhurried discussions on special topics are all part of the fare.

Experience at first hand the art of survival in both prey and predator ... discover more about the secret lives of nocturnal animals ... learn more about the precise art of tracking big game on foot ... spend time amongst elephant herds absorbing their mysterious qualities ... analyse the delicate balance of wildlife conservation in Africa.



Early starts with coffee and rusks (local biscuits) and heading out with the sunrise is strongly recommended. Walking is highly recommended (adults only and we could arrange kiddies activities of course).

Out on foot the pulse of Africa beats wildest, and tracking & stalking big game is a magnificent alternative to exploring the landscape. A fresh footprint in the dust, the faint sound of a breaking branch, wet mud rubbed on a tree, the presence of birds or a sudden quiet in the air. The seminal



tracking experience. Your senses are heightened searching for clues, sounds or smells to indicate an animal is near by.

The bush never sleeps and night drives searching for nocturnal animals with spotlights are both rewarding and exciting. Lesser seen species such as porcupine, genet or white-tailed mongoose may be encountered. The night is however about predator activity, which in these parts is dominated by lion, leopard and spotted hyena. Never a dull moment!

Optional activities may include an exciting night spent in the tree-house, which can only accommodate 4 clients. It is located overlooking a waterhole which is very active for game viewing during the middle of the year dry season. The tree-house is set high off the ground and offers a safe vantage point to watch predators, elephant and buffalo may come down to drink, often at very close range. Highly recommended by the way!!



And of course, there is the welcoming campfire on return at the end of the day. There is a certain magic that settles over the camp when the paraffin lanterns are alight and the fire has begun its energetic dance. Your preference may be a gin & tonic, or a bottle of South African wine and for a while, time stands still and all is good.



Day 4: Departure

TO CONNECT WITH ONWARD TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Another sunrise is gratefully embraced, and a morning game drive/walk is available followed by a leisurely breakfast on return to camp. Time for a final coffee on the deck and departure

FAMBA GAHLE !
(Bon Voyage)

Hope to see you on this path
and THANK YOU for joining this great, grey
and very wrinkled partnership of awareness!

