



NXAI TRAVEL

Tailored safaris. Timeless landscapes.

The Makgadikgadi Self Drive Explorer – 12 Nights

Discover the essence of Botswana's great salt pans on this 13-day guided self-drive safari along the legendary Makgadikgadi heritage trails.

This journey invites you into one of Earth's most extraordinary landscapes, the vast white horizons of the Makgadikgadi Pans, remnants of an ancient super-lake that once rivalled seas in size. Fed long ago by the Okavango Basin and the now-fossilized Okwa River, this prehistoric lake shaped a world where wildlife and early humans thrived side by side.

Antelope, elephant, buffalo and Africa's great predators once gathered here, and Stone Age tools scattered across the pans still whisper stories of life from nearly a million years ago. Today, you explore this timeless terrain at your own pace; self-driving with guidance or upgrading to a privately guided experience.

End your journey in Maun, having traced a route that blends culture, wildlife and geological wonder into one unforgettable safari.

Tour details:

Tour days: 14 days

Accommodation: Standard and/or Camping

Tour Type: Guided Self-drive

Dates: All year round. Weather conditions during the rainy season may require adjustments to the itinerary

TRIP SUMMARY

Day 1: Maun
Day 2 & 3: Makgadikgadi Pans National Park & Boteti River
Day 4: Lake Xau Heritage Trail
Day 5 & 6: South Sua Heritage Trail
Day 7: Lekhubu Heritage Trail
Day 8 & 9: Ntwetwe Pan & Nata Bird Sanctuary Experience
Day 10 & 11: Nxai Pan National Park
Day 12: Maun
Day 13: (Departure)

**The meals and activities included depend on the lodges you choose, contact us for more details.*

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Discover one of the world's largest pans
- Zebra & Wildebeest migration
- Star gazing experience in Lekhubu Island
- Search for the desert-adapted animals
- Safari in Nxai Pans National Park
- Baines Baobabs at Nxai Pans National Park



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- Flamingo migration at Nata Bird Sanctuary (seasonal)

DAY-TO-DAY ITINERARY

Day 1: Maun

(1 night)

On arrival, meet your Nxai Travel representative for vehicle handover, route briefing and travel pack collection. Spend the afternoon at leisure; explore town or unwind beside the river before enjoying your first night beneath Botswana's star-filled skies.

Standard Accommodation: Thamalakane River Lodge

Campsite Accommodation: Sitatunga

Day 2 & 3: Makgadikgadi Pans National Park & Boteti River

(2 nights)

After breakfast, stock up on supplies and begin the drive to Khumaga on the banks of the Boteti River.

This life-giving river sustains wildlife in the arid park and plays a vital role in the annual zebra migration. Vast horizons, golden sunsets and quiet encounters define your time here.

Standard Accommodation: Boteti River Camp

Camping Accommodation: Boteti River Camp

Day 4: Lake Xau Heritage Trail

(1 night)

Drive via Motopi toward Lake Xau near Kedia, where migratory birds and fish have returned after decades of dryness.

Nearby fossil sites preserve ancient animal footprints and bones, frozen in time as the great lake slowly retreated, a powerful reminder of the region's climatic past.

Xanikaga Fossils:

This natural heritage site documents rare evidence of the process of dessication of the Makgadikgadi Pans some 20 000 years ago. It is located at S21 11 22.0 E25 03 54.9. At this site you will find fossilized prints of animals that came to drink on the receding waters of lake Makgadikgadi and ultimately became permanently preserved as the pans dessicated over time due to the process of drying of the lake. Animal bones and prints of antelopes that came to drink here are still visible on the calcrete matrix. These preserved animal footprints and bones are important as they can help in reconstruction of the climate of the Makgadikgadi Pans some 20 000 years ago.

Lake Xau

After 40 years of being dry, Lake Xau came back to life in around 2011 when floods from the Angolan highlands reached the Lake and filled it. The lake was quickly transformed from an ugly dust bowl that it



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had become during the dry period to its glorious years of attracting tourists, fishermen and bird fanatics. Lake Xau is located at S21 21 09.3 E24 43 38.3 near the village of Kedia.

Standard Accommodation: Makumutu Lodge & Campsite

Camping Accommodation: Makumutu Lodge & Campsite

Day 5 & 6: South Sua Heritage Trail

(2 nights)

You will be about halfway through your Makgadikgadi trails.

The South Sua Heritage Trail covers the four villages of Mosu, Makgaba, Mokubilo and Mmea – all of which are located on the southern and southeastern end of the Sua Pan. The trail is accessed from Letlhakane village.

You can either choose to drive along the Francistown Road and turn towards Mosu village or head straight to the village of Mmatshumo from Letlhakane or then drive to Mosu. If you choose to take the tarred road to Francistown, you turn off left at Thalamabele Gate and join the tarred road to Mosu village. The undulating landscape offers spectacular views of Sua Pan as you drive down towards Mosu village.

Located within and around Mosu village, there are many outstanding cultural heritage sites that can make your visit worthwhile. Before arriving at Mosu, there is a right turn dirt road at Nthane settlement leading to a magnificent escarpment known as Kaitshe. If you climb to the top of this escarpment, you are treated to an overwhelming panoramic view of the most southern tip of Sowa Pan. On top of this hill are remains of a stone wall that form part of the ruins of Leopards Kopje people who lived here at around 1000 AD. The remains of their villages are still visible. From Kaitshe you can drive through a small portion of the ancient shores of the Makgadikgadi Lake in what are now the southern parts of Sowa Pan to get to Mosu. South Sua Heritage Trail destinations have access roads with signage and can be reached by a 4 x 2 van during the dry season. There are three (3) custodians stationed at Mosu kgotla to guide you around sites.

Mmakgama Ruins:

Mmakgama Ruins is a cultural heritage site located about 7 km west of Mosu village at S 21 12'18.1 E 25 59' 25.0". The site is characterized by a coursed stone enclosure built during the Great Zimbabwe period. These ruins were built during the 14th century as an extension of the Great Zimbabwe Empire into the Makgadikgadi Pans region. The people who lived here probably traded iron, beads, cotton cloths for dried meat, animal furs and salt with the Deti and Basarwa people living in the Makgadikgadi Pans.

Unikae Spring:

Unikae Spring is one the few perennial springs found around Mosu village. This spring is located about 1 km east of Mosu Primary School in a scenic valley found at S21 12 36.3 E 26 0'1 35.5." Although it exists in a salty area, this spring is a reliable source of fresh water- perhaps one of the reasons why the people of Mosu village managed to settle here in the past when clean and pumped water was not yet available.

People around Mosu use this spring for watering their domestic animals. Some religious groups also believe that the water of this spring is sacred and used for their spiritual cleansing rituals.

Kaitshe Escarpment:

Kaitshe Escarpment is a cultural site located on a promontory escarpment overlooking the southern most edges of the Sua Pan. The site is located some 15 km to the northeast of Mosu at S21 13' 27.8" E26 10' 03.8". There are free standing stone walls built by the Leopards Kopje farmers who are the ancestors of



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the modern Bakalanga people of Balilima origin. Large middens with scatters of stone tools, animal bones, iron tools, glass beads and pottery fragments suggest that people lived here for a long time.

The site of Kaitshe Escarpment offers excellent sunset views over the Sua Pan. Standing on viewing decks built on the edges of the escarpment, it is possible to see the vastness of the Sua Pan, and during spring, some whirlwinds as they swirl and twirl lazily across Sua Pan – producing a magnificent scene as seen from above the pans.

Makgaba Fossils:

Makgaba are rare fossil trees found some 12 km southwest of Mokubilo village at S 21 16 30.9 E26 17 45.8 near a scenic valley known locally as Simenamtshaa. These fossils geologically originate from the base of the Mosu Member sandstones which forms the lower Mosolotshane Formation. The fossil wood, which is the first published record of *Agathoxylon africanum* in Botswana, has been lithostratigraphically dated to between 240 and 250 million years ago.

Standard Accommodation: Moriti Wa Selemo

Day 7: Lekhubu Heritage Trail

(1 night)

From Mosu, visit Mmatshumo; the gate to the famous site of Lekhubu Island, a sacred granite outcrop rising from the salt flats.

Stone walls and ritual cairns mark ancient initiation grounds, while towering baobabs and bird colonies dominate the skyline, most commonly the flamingo that nestles here every year. By night, the island becomes one of Botswana's most magical stargazing locations.

Standard Accommodation: Makgadikgadi Adventure Camp

Camping Accommodation: Lekhubu Campsite

Day 8 & 9: Ntwetwe Pan & Nata Bird Sanctuary Experience

(2 nights)

Your journey will take you to the northern parts of the Pan, enroute Zoroga and right on the Ntwetwe Pan edge. Upon arriving in Zoroga, the camp will take you for a village tour and quad biking experience on the vast magnificence of the Ntwetwe Pans.

Day 2 will be spent at the Nata Bird Sanctuary.

The Nata Bird Sanctuary is located in the northeastern periphery of Sua Pan and is managed by the Kalahari Conservation Society, whose members are from the four villages namely; Nata, Sepako, Maposa, and Manxotae. Established in 1988 and operational since 1993, the sanctuary covers an area of approximately 230 km².

Over 160 bird species inhabit this area, including a population of around 250,000 lesser and greater flamingos that visit the sanctuary every year during the winter period to breed after the rainy season when water sources are full.

Serviced Camping Accommodation: Zoroga Expedition Camp



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Day 10 & 11: Nxai Pan National Park (2 nights)

Enter Nxai Pan National Park, where grassy plains draw migrating zebras, elephants and antelope after the rains. Predators follow close behind, creating thrilling wildlife encounters framed by acacia woodlands and open skies.

Nxai Pan National Park is a conservancy located in the north-eastern section of Botswana that comprises the Nxai Pan. This large salt pan forms part of the greater Makgadikgadi Pans, and is a fossil lakebed accessed by air and road.

Luxury Accommodation: Nxai Pan Camp

Camping Accommodation: Nxai Pan Campsites

Day 12: Maun (1 night)

Return to Maun for your final night, travelling through sandy tracks and open plains before rejoining the gateway town of the Delta. This leg is approximately 140 km and takes 3.5 to 4.5 hours, depending on sand conditions and park exits.

Standard Accommodation: Maun Studios

Camping Accommodation: Audi Camp

Day 13: Maun (*Departure / End of Tour*)

Your safari concludes in Maun. If time allows, enjoy one final activity before your flight; a fitting farewell to Botswana's salt pan kingdom.

You leave with dust on your boots, stars in your memory, and one certainty: *The pans will call you back.*