

BEYOND AFRICA

Safari Report 2026

Data, trends and the state of safari travel — built from real booking data across 14 African countries.

OUR FIRST ANNUAL SAFARI INDUSTRY DATA REPORT

2,847 bookings · 1,200 client surveys · 63 lodge partners · since 2004

Executive summary

The safari industry in 2026 is working through three defining shifts.

- Travellers are staying longer — the average safari is now 8.2 nights (up from 6.1 in 2023), as travellers choose depth over a tick-list.
- Green season is winning — 38% of travellers now book the green (wet) season deliberately, drawn by 30% cost savings, newborn wildlife and fewer crowds.
- Multi-country itineraries are the new standard — 64% of bookings combine two or more countries (Kenya + Tanzania, Botswana + Zimbabwe, safari + Zanzibar beach).

This report covers the top 10 destinations by bookings, average costs across 10 countries, season booking splits, the solo-travel surge, lodge preferences and the safari-plus-beach boom.



1. Top 10 destinations by bookings

Our booking data across 2,847 safaris in 2025–2026 shows the most popular destinations.

- South Africa (Kruger & Sabi Sand) — 32% — Best value, malaria-low options, Cape Town combination. ~$4,200 pp / 7 nights. Best May–September.
- Kenya (Masai Mara & Conservancies) — 19% — Great Migration, big-cat density, Samburu. ~$6,100 pp / 7 nights. Best July–October and Jan–Feb.
- Tanzania (Serengeti & Ngorongoro) — 17% — Migration, Ngorongoro Crater, Zanzibar add-on. ~$7,400 pp / 8 nights. Best Jun–Oct, Feb.
- Botswana (Okavango Delta & Chobe) — 12% — Exclusive camps, water-based safaris, elephant herds. ~$9,800 pp / 6 nights. Best May–October.
- Namibia (Sossusvlei & Etosha) — 6% — Desert landscapes, self-drive options, stargazing. ~$4,900 pp / 8 nights. Best May–October.
- Zambia (South Luangwa & Lower Zambezi) — 5% — Walking safaris, wild feeling, fewer tourists. ~$6,700 pp / 7 nights. Best June–October.
- Zimbabwe (Mana Pools & Hwange) — 4% — Victoria Falls combination, wild camps, walking safaris. ~$6,300 pp / 7 nights. Best May–October.
- Rwanda (Volcanoes National Park) — 3% — Mountain gorilla trekking (up from #12 in 2023). ~$8,900 pp / 4 nights, permits $1,500. Best Jun–Sep, Dec–Feb.
- Uganda (Bwindi & Queen Elizabeth) — 1.5% — Gorilla trekking with cheaper permits, chimp tracking. ~$7,200 pp / 5 nights. Best Jun–Aug, Dec–Feb.
- Mozambique (Bazaruto & Quirimbas) — 0.5% — Beach finale, diving, remote island camps. ~$5,400 pp / 6 nights. Best April–November.

> **KEY INSIGHT**
> South Africa remains the gateway (32% of bookings start there), but Kenya and Tanzania together account for 36%. East Africa is taking market share on the strength of the Migration and Zanzibar beach combinations.

2. Average safari costs by country

Per person, 7 nights, high-end lodges. Includes accommodation, meals, drinks, game activities, park fees and internal transfers. International flights, visas and gratuities excluded.

Country	Cost (7 nights)	Per night
South Africa — best value	$4,200	$600
Namibia — great value	$4,900	$700
Mozambique — good value (beach)	$5,400	$770
Kenya — good value	$6,100	$870
Zimbabwe — good value	$6,300	$900
Zambia — fair	$6,700	$960
Uganda — fair	$7,200	$1,030
Tanzania — fair	$7,400	$1,060
Rwanda — premium	$8,900	$1,270
Botswana — ultra-luxury	$9,800	$1,400

KEY INSIGHT

Botswana's low-impact, high-value model makes it the priciest per night, but travellers accept the premium for exclusivity and water-based safaris. South Africa offers top-tier Big Five experiences at roughly half the cost — hence its market dominance.

3. Peak vs shoulder vs green season

- Peak (July–October): 48% of bookings (down from 62% in 2022). Best weather, dry season, highest prices, busiest lodges.
- Shoulder (April–June, November–December): 38% of bookings (up from 29%). About 15% cheaper than peak, good weather, fewer crowds.
- Green (January–March): 14% of bookings (up from 9%). About 30% cheaper, newborn animals, migratory birds, green landscapes, short afternoon showers.

> **KEY INSIGHT**
> The green-season stigma is fading. Lower season means lower prices and fewer vehicles, not poor wildlife. Operators report green-season satisfaction of 4.8/5, close to peak season at 4.9/5.

4. Solo travel & group trends

- Solo travel has risen to 22% of bookings, up from 9% in 2022.
- Guaranteed-departure small-group tours are the main entry point for solo travellers who want company and a fixed price.

5. Lodge preferences: tented vs permanent

Tented camps now win 58% of bookings, overtaking permanent lodges at 42%.

- Why tented wins: closer to the bush, lighter footprint, often more luxurious interiors (plunge pools, outdoor showers), premium positioning.
- Where permanent lodges still lead: families with young children, extreme-weather months, larger pools, spas and public spaces.

> **KEY INSIGHT**
> The canvas tent is now the aspirational safari accommodation. Glamping has fully entered the luxury safari vocabulary.



6. The safari + beach combination boom

41% of safari bookings now end with a beach destination — typically 3–5 nights.

- Zanzibar (Tanzania) 52% of beach add-ons · Mozambique 18% · Seychelles 12% · Mauritius 10% · Cape Town & Garden Route 8%.
- Why it works: physical recovery after early game drives, bush-to-ocean balance, one long-haul flight for two experiences. 89% of honeymoon safaris include beach.

> **KEY INSIGHT**
> The typical combined trip is 8 nights safari plus 4 nights beach. Operators without beach combinations are losing bookings.

7. Multi-country itineraries are the standard

64% of bookings combine two or more countries. Most popular combinations:

- Kenya + Tanzania (Mara to Serengeti to Ngorongoro to Zanzibar) — 28%.
- Botswana + Zimbabwe (Okavango to Chobe to Victoria Falls) — 19%.
- South Africa + Mozambique (Kruger/Sabi Sand to Bazaruto) — 14%.
- Rwanda + Uganda (Volcanoes to Bwindi to Queen Elizabeth) — 11%.
- Zambia + Botswana (South Luangwa to Lower Zambezi to Chobe) — 9%.

8. What matters most to travellers

From 1,200 past clients, ranked as extremely important:

- Wildlife sighting quality 94% · knowledgeable guides 91% · accommodation 87% · food 79% · privacy/exclusivity 71%.
- Photography 68% · unique activities 61% · sustainability 58% · cultural experiences 43% · Wi-Fi only 12% (many actively want to disconnect).

> **KEY INSIGHT**
> Wildlife and guides are non-negotiable; everything else is a multiplier. Luxury lodges with weak guides draw poor reviews; mid-range camps with excellent guides earn 5 stars.

9. Booking windows & lead times

- Peak season: 9–14 months ahead (avg 11.2).
- Shoulder season: 6–9 months ahead (avg 7.4).
- Green season: 3–6 months ahead (avg 4.1). Last-minute is only 8% of bookings.

> **KEY INSIGHT**
> Top lodges in the Masai Mara, Sabi Sand and Serengeti sell out 12+ months ahead for peak Migration dates. Booking early is real advice, not a sales line.



10. Predictions for 2027

- Madagascar breaks into the top 10 — lemur tourism plus beach combinations.
- Green season reaches 20% of bookings as travellers accept that wet means green, not ruined.
- Private mobile camping rises — a private chef, guide and camp that moves with you.
- Conservation storytelling becomes a booking driver, not just a luxury add-on.
- Shorter flights, longer stays — one 14-night trip instead of two 7-night trips.

Methodology

- 2,847 safari bookings managed between January 2025 and June 2026.
- 1,200 post-safari client surveys (47% response rate).
- Field intelligence from 63 lodge partners across 14 African countries.
- Public booking-trend data from industry associations, cross-referenced.
- Two decades of safari design across South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Uganda, Mozambique, Malawi, Madagascar and Seychelles.

We share this data openly to raise standards across the safari industry. Use it to plan better trips and choose the right safari for your dates.

About Beyond Africa Safaris

Beyond Africa Safaris has designed tailor-made African safaris since 2004, starting from Cape Town and now working across 14 countries, on honest pricing and field-tested itineraries.

Questions about the data, or ready to plan your 2026 or 2027 safari? Call or WhatsApp Remondy on +27 78 471 4852, or email res@privatetourscapetown.com.