

Green Season versus Dry Season in Botswana.

The question of whether to go to Botswana in the green or dry season is one that we get asked a lot. Often people assume that the dry season will be better because they don't like the idea of being rained on safari, but it's not always quite as easy an answer as that. The 'best' season to go depends mostly on your interests in terms of flora, fauna and landscape, and also whether you can cope with extreme heat (October in particular can be staggeringly hot).

Green Season (November – March)

The green or rainy season in Botswana begins in roughly mid-late November and lasts more or less until the end of March. Of course the rains are fickle so this really is a moveable feast, but on the whole this is when the bulk of the rain falls, with February usually seeing the most rain. This is a generally dry country so we're not talking about vast quantities of rainfall (although a big thunderstorm can feel like it) and certainly the north east gets more than the south. The dramatic skies bring thunderstorms and heavy rain, but it's usually over for the day in one big downpour mostly in the afternoon. The rest of the day is dry, hot and humid. It's rare to get more than two consecutive days of rain.



Migrations

The Makgadikgadi salt pans turn into wetlands attracting tens of thousands of animals, thousands of zebras and plains game head for Savuti, and the Kalahari explodes with a big population of wildlife coming to eat the new grasses on the pans. These migrations of wildlife from more permanent water sources to floodplains & pans with the fresh new vegetation are a real draw for this time of year. It's hard to gauge exactly when this will happen, but if you happen to hit the point when the huge herds are on the move it's particularly spectacular.



Lush landscapes

Within a few short days and weeks, parched dry landscapes transform themselves with a clothing of fresh green grasses, and flowers start to bloom. This is summer, it's hot, humid and abundance is everywhere. It's a beautiful time to visit.

The desert

The green season is the very best time to come to the Kalahari, and arguably the Pans too, if general wildlife is your focus.

Newborns

It seems as if the antelope wait until the very moment the rains begin to give birth. In fact in a way they do, as they can delay giving birth for a time if the rains are late. Then they all give birth at one, and sadly this means a big feast for predators.



Birding

Whilst Botswana is actually very good for birds all year, certainly the very best time is the green season. At this time migrants return from all over the world so you get strong populations of flamingos, wattled cranes, kingfishers, kites, bee-eaters, swallows and more. It is really a birding paradise at this time of year.



Bogged down

One downside of the green season is that travel logistics can be tricky as roads

can become mud baths, or even rivers! This means that if you travel in this season you need to travel with a flexible attitude and accept that not all plans might work like clockwork.



Photography

With the beautiful colours, wonderful clear atmosphere & dramatic skies, as well

as the extra sparkle from the rains, this is a phenomenal time to come if you're a keen photographer. And of course you have some of the great wildlife spectacles too – zebra migrations, antelopes giving birth, and predators enjoying the bounty of the season.

Prices

Many travellers are not prepared to travel on safari in the green season. Their view is that game viewing is generally much better in the dry season when grasses are shorter so it's easier to find the wildlife, and the wildlife has to congregate near permanent water sources so again this makes them easier to find. Whilst this is not wrong, there are other reasons to travel outside of this season, and price is one of them. In the green season, lodges try to encourage more visitors by dropping their prices, and frequently dropping single supplements totally. You can therefore get some great deals in the green season.

Fewer visitors

Since fewer visitors are aware of the joys of the green season, you get a lot more privacy on your safari at this time. In the dry season, Chobe is the busiest spot, particularly in the east.

Dry Season (April – October)

The dry season in Botswana tends to kick in around the end of March/ start of April. The rains fizzle out and everything on the land begins to dry up from that point until they come again in about late November. Early in the season the air is still quite fresh and clear but it doesn't take long before the wetlands become parched and the dust starts flying. And then there are the fires which sometimes catch the drying grasses which have grown long during the green season. The heat slowly increases until it hits its peak in October, the hottest month in Botswana. So if it's such a dry and dusty time to come here, why is the dry season such a popular time to visit? Well, there are good reasons ...



The Delta floodwaters

Perhaps unexpectedly the time of high water in the Okavango Delta does not coincide with the green season. It's very much in the dry season.

Why?

Because the floods come all the way from Angola and it takes a few months for them to reach Botswana.

They usually start arriving in about May and they noticeably begin drying up by about October. So May to October is the peak season in terms of the Okavango Delta waters.



Wildlife and water

It's all about water in Botswana. In the green season there is water all over the land. In the dry season this gets limited more and more to only permanent water sources such as rivers and lagoons and very large waterholes. Of course the animals need water to survive, so they are forced to congregate closer to these guaranteed water sources as the dry season continues. This goes especially for the larger mammals. The effect of this is that thousands of elephants and buffalos are seen in the Chobe and Linyanti river regions in the north. It's quite a spectacle. It also means that in Savuti, the remaining waterholes are the focus for some dramatic wildlife encounters as thirsty

game come to drink at waterholes even when predators are obviously in sight.



Shade and cover

As the dry season moves on the grasses die down and some trees lose their leaves.

This means there is less shade for the animals and also less cover for them to hide in. This makes it easier for us to see the wildlife and can also make it easier for predators to see their prey.



Walking safaris

It's not really safe to walk in the wild when long grasses could hide predators. So the dry

season is the time to enjoy this excellent safari activity on the whole.



Mokoro trips

There are some camps in the Delta which can offer mokoro trips all year round, but some can only offer this activity when the floodwaters are at their height, in other words from about May to October.

Bugs

It is a small point, but if you're a mosquito magnet, you'll find the dry season less of a problem than the green season.