

Chobe: Nature in the raw

ボツワナ・チョベ国立公園 動物たちの楽園

Story and photos by Stephen Cunliffe



乾季には水を求めて多くの動物がチョベ川に集まる



チョベ国立公園はゾウの生息密度がアフリカで最も高い



筆者の方を見つめる雌ライオン



ヒヒの親子



木の上で休息するヒョウ



ボツワナの国鳥ライラックニシブポウソウ チョベ川を行くクルーズ船。船内からも動物たちの様子を観察できる



■ 水辺に集まるさまざまな草食動物

Similar in size to France, but with a population of only 2 million, Botswana is home to raw wilderness and prolific animal life. It is one of Africa's finest wildlife destinations, with the continent's largest populations of big herbivores like elephants and buffalo. With 84 percent of the country covered by the enormous Kalahari Desert, the life-giving waters of the Chobe River, which flows along the country's northern border, cut across an otherwise extremely dry landscape. Here, thirsty animals trek in endlessly from the dusty hinterland to satisfy their thirst. My wife and I also recently visited Chobe, where we found an African Eden that more than lived up to its description.

Chobe National Park enjoys one of the highest wildlife densities in all of Africa. This is especially evident during the long dry season, when herbivores arrive from far and wide to engulf the wide, grassy floodplains along the perennial Chobe River, resulting in an amazing wildlife spectacle. Watching countless elephant families drink and bathe in the river is unforgettable, but when numerous buffalo, sunbathing hippos and gigantic crocodiles join in, it's clear that this is one of Africa's greatest game parks.

Chobe is a mecca for elephant lovers from around the globe, and its ever-increasing popularity — along with the fact that no permanent lodges are allowed within the national park — have led most safari companies to operate around the gateway town of Kasane on the eastern edge of the reserve. Thankfully, however, the arrival of luxury mobile safaris inside the national park has finally provided a welcome alternative to overnighing in the lodges of overcrowded Kasane.

■ テントに泊まって観察旅行

Upon arrival at the exclusive Chobe Under Canvas camp, all 10 staff members — along with a curious male baboon — were assembled outside to greet us. Camp Manager Robson Chongwe then led us to our spacious safari tent, which came complete with a hot-water shower and flushing toilet.

The opulent tented camps here allowed us the opportunity to enjoy the solitude of a wilderness campsite deep inside a wildlife-rich national park amid fully serviced elegant simplicity, a friendly atmosphere, ultra-comfortable accommodations, and delicious cuisine.

After a tasty lunch and a short nap, we grabbed our cameras and binoculars before climbing aboard an open-top truck for

our first Chobe wildlife tour. Over the next five days, in the company of expert nature guide Stanza Molaodi, we were treated to a wildlife extravaganza that included tours and boat cruises along the Chobe River. The rains were late, which ensured a daily procession of elephants, buffalo, giraffes, zebras and the like trekking to and from the life-sustaining river. Meanwhile, lions relaxing in the shade eyed the passing antelope until the sinking sun finally saw them go into action.

■ 恵みの雨降り出し新たな命が誕生

When the dust settled after a successful hunt, we sat in awe, watching the lions fight, growl and hungrily eat a sable antelope. Another unforgettable sighting included spending time with a leopard snoozing in the fork of a shady tree. It wasn't all about the predators, however. Numerous babies were born to coincide with the arrival of the first rains, with warthog piglets and impala lambs being the most ubiquitous of the newcomers.

A superb Chobe safari of spectacular wildlife-viewing eventually finished with a highly successful adventure of tracking a regal lioness and her cubs. Stanza patiently took time to share his in-depth wildlife knowledge with us, and his final comments summed up how everyone felt on the eve of our departure: "Nature, she

is very beautiful and totally fascinating and you never know what could be coming next ... But this is Chobe; thank you very much!" Clearly, we had just enjoyed an impressive wildlife experience in the company of one of Botswana's best guides.

Sleeping under linens and listening to the roars of distant lions through the canvas walls of our "Chobe Palace" on the final night, my wife and I agreed that for wildlife connoisseurs wanting to explore one of Africa's top game parks without the safari hordes, Chobe Under Canvas offers an intimate and extremely rewarding luxury mobile safari excursion. It truly is the best way to get up close and personal with Botswana's wildlife in one of Africa's most iconic game reserves.

KEYWORDS

in the raw ありのままの、生の
prolific 豊かな
herbivore 草食動物
cut across ~を横切る
hinterland (ここでは)水辺から離れた土地

Eden 楽園
more than live up to (ここでは)は以上である
engulf ~ (ここでは)~に群がる
floodplain 氾濫原(洪水時に冠水する平野部のこと)
perennial (流れが)年中絶えな

spectacle 光景(後出 spectacular は壮観の)
hippo (=hippopotamus) カバ
gigantic 巨大な
game park 動物保護区域(後出 (game) reserve も同意)
safari (ここでは)動物観察旅行(後 出 mobile safari (excursion) は仮設キャンプでの動物観察旅行、safari horde は大勢の動物観察旅行者)
gateway 玄関口
welcome うれしい
overnight (ここでは)宿泊する
exclusive 高級な(後出 opulent は豪華な)

baboon ヒヒ
spacious 広々とした
solitude 隔絶
accommodations 宿泊設備
grab 手に取る
binoculars 双眼鏡
in the company of ~ ~に同行して

extravaganza (ここでは)お祭り状態
growl うなる
leopard ヒョウ
snooze 居眠りをする
fork (木・枝の)また
predator 捕食者
coincide with ~ ~と時を同じくする

in awe 畏敬の念を抱いて
warthog piglet イボイノシシの子
impala lamb インバラの子
ubiquitous いたる所で見られる
superb とびきり上等の
regal 堂々とした
lioness 雌ライオン
cub 幼獣

she 自然(nature)の代名詞
roar ぼえ声
~ **connoisseur** ~に通じた人
intimate 居心地の良い
rewarding 価値のある
up close and personal with ~ ~に非常に近い
[本文・703 words]

Chobe National Park, Botswana

1967年にボツワナ初の国立公園に指定された。面積は約1万1000平方キロ(秋田県と同じくらい)。アフリカでも特に多くの動物が生息する地域として知られる。訪れるなら乾季の6~10月がおすす。国立公園東部の玄関口であるカサネと、南アフリカ・ヨハネスブルクの間で複数の航空会社が就航している。日本国籍者は90日以内の観光ならビザ不要。サファリツアーで着る衣類はベージュなど地味な色が望ましい。



Photojournalist Stephen Cunliffe's love of adventure and wildlife has taken him to over 75 countries around the world, and his stories have been widely published. He lives with his wife and two sons in Cape Town, South Africa, where the wilds of Africa are a stone's throw from his doorstep. Website: www.stevecunliffe.com



6月27日
MWO8
初版
06月26日10時51分30秒
C版M版Y版親版