

Relax & UNWIND

Kick back in the lap of luxury, surrounded by Namibia's unspoilt beauty on the banks of the Chobe River, says Savanna Douglas

Standing barefoot on a wooden deck, the silence broken only by the sound of lapping water and the fish eagle's cry, you'll feel as though you're in the heart of untamed Africa, reconnecting with nature, away from the hive of big-city life. The Kasika Conservancy, an untouched floodplain between the Chobe and Zambezi Rivers that's teeming with wildlife, offers you a chance to do just that. Within this scenic conservancy, you'll find serenity staying at Chobe Water Villas. Only accessible by boat, this luxe, secluded Namibian boutique lodge, a stone's throw from the Botswanan border, is the ideal spot for nature lovers seeking a romantic break, or a relaxed trip with friends.

Paradise awaits...

Getting to the gem that is Chobe Water Villas takes a little logistical planning, but you can relax knowing Chobe Water Villas' staff arrange all the transfers. You'll fly in to Botswana's Kasane Airport, and, after a five-minute transfer by car, check in at the Kasane Immigration Point. Next

Relish the glory of nature, by land or water

All bookings at Chobe Water Villas include two daily activities of your choice. What's on offer? There's a morning game drive of four to five hours through Chobe National Park, home to over 160 000 elephants and more than 160 other species of mammal. Catching sight of any of these majestic creatures – from leopards relaxing in the trees to lions lazing in the sun – adds to the feeling you truly are in the heart of Africa's wilderness.

There are also morning or afternoon Chobe River safari cruises of three to four hours each, taking you along the banks of the Chobe National Park, where you'll likely spot

hordes of crocs and hippos. Lastly, enjoy a three-hour cruise along the Chobe and Zambezi Rivers, which I thoroughly enjoyed – with our G & Ts in hand, we sailed across the Chobe to the point where three nations – Namibia, Botswana and Zambia – meet, stopping to take in the sunset.

Of course, there are other activities to choose from, starting from R550pp, which aren't included in the rates.

These include cultural tours of local

villages by boat, a day trip to Victoria Falls, fishing charters, and more. Ask the reception staff to book these for you.





up is a 15-minute boat transfer across the Chobe River's calm waters to the Kasika Immigration Point in Namibia, before arriving at the villas, your home away from home. Here, you're warmly received by the staff with song and dance, the bubbly flowing as you take in the wondrous setting from the hotel's main deck. Your heart will swell as you clap eyes on the inviting infinity pool and the seating around the outdoor firepits – picture sitting around the glow of the flames looking out over the great Chobe River at Botswana's Sedudu Island, with Chobe National Park on the opposite riverbank.

The lodge's flowing spaces were created with natural materials to reflect the beauty of the area. Elements like the swallow's nest, a decorative piece of lighting that hangs above the main bar; and the 'spiral of life' pillar in reception tell a story that reaches far back to the very beginning of life in Africa. With its subtle browns and ochres, and warm lighting, the lodge exudes a cosy yet

contemporary bush-chic feel. Being in such an untamed environment doesn't mean forgoing creature comforts – Chobe Water Villas is as posh as it gets.

Stepping into one of the 16 private bungalows paints this picture clearly. Suspended above the water's edge on stilts, your chalet offers the best views from your private deck, complete with loungers that overlook the shimmering river and wild island. Slip on the linen robe you'll find there, and flop onto your king-sized bed, enveloped in a draped net to set a romantic tone (not to mention keep any mozzies at bay). Your air-conditioned villa is calming with its neutral decor in natural tones of whites, greys and taupes, and one of its highlights is a fab en-suite bathroom.

Live the good life

When you're not on a boat safari, food and relaxation at the lodge are top of mind. Breakfast brings hot and cold buffet-style options, while lunch allows you to sample light fusions of African

and Mediterranean dishes. The star of the show is the five-course dinner by candlelight. Whatever you choose to feast on – oysters in white-wine sauce; tasty pan-fried tiger fish; or butterfish carpaccio with red radish, deep-fried capers, pickled ginger and butter lettuce – it's all mouth-watering!

And what exactly does a day of tranquillity at Chobe Water Villas look like? Sitting by the pool on a sunlounger, a tempting cocktail in hand, with the soothing soundtrack of the river and the kingfisher's call easing you into laid-back bush life as you look for wildlife in the distance... far removed from all cares back home, I could get used to this!

Savanna's trip was organised by O&L Leisure. See ol-leisure.com for info.

Book your break

At Chobe Water Villas, you'll pay from R4 500pn for a double Luxury Water Villa, including all road and boat transfers, all meals, selected drinks, two daily activities, and Wi-Fi. Excludes flights and extra activities. See chobewatervillas.com for more info or to book your trip. **w&h**

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