

Africa Update



CAMP CHILL OUT

Botswana's renovated Duba Plains Camp has evolved into more than just a place for game drives.

SAFARI CAMPS are not exactly set up for old-fashioned relaxation. Consider the typical daily itinerary: 5:30 A.M. wake up; 6 A.M. game drive; 9:30 A.M. bush breakfast; 1 P.M. lunch; 4 P.M. tea; 4:30 P.M. game drive; 6:30 P.M.

sundowner; 8 P.M. dinner. Then repeat that day after day, often at multiple lodges. When is there time to simply lie on your tent's outdoor daybed?

Great Plains Conservation's **Duba Plains Camp** (tents from \$1,410; greatplainsconservation.com), above, which reopened in March in Botswana's Okavango Delta after a complete overhaul, offers plenty of

game viewing. But like its sister property, **Zarafa Camp** (tents from \$1,410; greatplainsconservation.com), it's turned the safari experience into more of a... vacation.

Duba stands apart from other African camps for several reasons. First, the five tents, outfitted in 1920s style, are quite big, at 1,290 square feet (more than twice the room size at Ian Schrager's new Public Hotel in

Manhattan). Each has an outdoor deck with a large plunge pool and—an African tent rarity—a Spinning bike. Yoga mats and weights in each tent are a plus. More standard are the in-tent massages. In the communal mess tent there are a wine cellar, a library, a media room, and a fire pit.

Then there are the activities. Guests can borrow professional Canon photo equipment

to enhance their wildlife drives; at camp, there's an iMac with picture-editing software. A kitchen offers cooking lessons.

Is calling Duba Plains a bush resort a stretch? Maybe. But a case can be made for tacking on an extra day or two or even three at Duba to give yourself time to use those alfresco showers, brass bathtubs, and, of course, the outdoor daybed.

—J.F.

Adrenaline on Safari

GAME DRIVES: Been there, done that? Try a safari by boat, foot, and air instead. Also in Botswana's Okavango Delta, on Great Plains Conservation's Selinda Reserve, is the **Selinda Adventure Trail**.

For four days, a guide leads travelers in 18-foot canoes through the Selinda Spillway water channels, stopping to see animal activity (elephants, buffalo, African wild dogs) along the banks, followed by treks inland. "The trail has a unique combination of canoeing, walking, time with native Bugakwe guides, and easy helicopter access," says Will Jones, founder of U.K.-based tour operator Journeys by Design. *From \$750/night; journeysbydesign.com.*



Better Gorilla Trekking

VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK, in Rwanda's Virunga Mountains, is probably the best place in Africa to track mountain gorillas—480 of them live here (around half the world's population). And now there's a luxury camp for travelers. **Bisate Lodge**, which opened in June from Wilderness Safaris, has six thatched villas and a strong sustainability focus: The company is reforesting its land to enhance the great ape's habitat. So far it has planted over 15,000 trees, which also provide shelter for birds and monkeys. *Rooms from \$1,100; wilderness-safaris.com.*