

Big Game Hunting in the Zambezi Valley

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The Zambezi Valley is home to some of the very best big game hunting to be found anywhere in Africa. The very name conjures up images of adventure. The lower Zambezi Valley is old Africa, where lion, elephant, buffalo and leopard still roam her remote wilderness. This is her allure; this is why you hunt there.

But your hunt in the Zambezi Valley may differ from your earlier hunts in other parts of Africa, or perhaps your mental image of what awaits you on a safari here.

Many clients start their safari career in South Africa or Namibia, which is a great way to get started in the safari game. Primarily plains game destinations, these two countries feature high densities of well-managed game where the more terrain allows for easier game viewing and, in general, easier hunting.

Many, and in some cases most of the game will be spotted from the vehicle and a short stalk will be made in hopes of a shot. Some outfitters even promote actually shooting from a specially designed hunting vehicle. Every hunter must decide for themselves what they are comfortable with, but a growing number of clients come to the Zambezi Valley thinking this is the 'norm' when hunting in Africa. Fortunately this is 'not' the case on your safari in the Zambezi Valley.

The valley has one of the highest concentrations of predators in all of Africa. Lion, leopard, hyena and wild dog are all found in numbers here, and from the day they are born, plains game as well as buffalo and young elephant are subjected to the game of life and death that is played out between predator and prey.

That assures that all species that live long enough to reach maturity and attain trophy potential are masters at escape, avoid, and survival. They also understand hunting pressure.

The dense jesse bush and thick riverine cover is their home and they know how to survive in it. Combine this factor with the free roaming ability of the game in the valley, unhindered by fencing, and you have the very definition of 'fair chase hunting'.

Tracking is the accepted way of hunting here. It is also one of the most enjoyable parts of the safari. Watching a veteran tracker team unravel a track is pure magic in most clients eyes and a highlight of their safari.

But tracking has it's realities that must be considered and accepted if you plan to succeed here. Relatively little game, especially dangerous game, will be spotted from the vehicle and certainly none will be shot from it, as it is unlawful to do so in Zimbabwe.

Once fresh spoor is found, you will follow it wherever it leads until you contact the game, spook the game, possibly lose the track, or run out of daylight. All are typical endings at one point or another on a typical safari here.

And they all are what you should mentally and physically prepare for. You do not need to be in marathon shape to play this game, but a sound fitness routine leading up to your safari can sure pay off on a long track, as each mile after the game means another mile back to the hunting vehicle. The tsetse flies will be happy to share the adventure, the sun will be your companion all day, and dust, fickle winds, and the occasional blister may be a nuisance from time to time. Prepare mentally for them and accept them as all part of the big game.

When you finally come up to your big buffalo, elephant, kudu etc... all else will be forgotten and you will be proud that you practiced and played the game the way it should be played.