



Guiding & WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

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PART 2



What to expect from a photographic guide

There is no such thing as the perfect setting; it all depends on the photographer, the camera, and the subject. There are some tricks and tips to have you best prepared for any eventuality. Adjust settings before you get anywhere near the animals; they won't wait around while you find the best exposure settings and shutter speed settings.

The photographic guide will point out things along the way during the safari, so you can experiment with your camera and go home with better pictures... isn't that what we all want?

The Guide is there to...

- remind you of preferred settings (and how to do this if you do not know) in a specific scenario. For example: for birds in flight against the bright blue sky, I would advise setting the shutter speed, likely at 1/1600 to 1/2000 provided the light conditions are good and overexpose with 2/3 of a stop.

- trigger your photographic, creative eye. I would point out things in nature which a regular guide would not necessarily consider interesting enough. Like capturing catchlight in the eye of an animal or rim/translucent light in furry or feathery animals with the sun or light behind your subject.



- try something new with the same subject, experimenting a bit. Ask yourself, why you would always take photographs of running wild dogs or zebra with a high shutter speed, if you already have 200 good crispy sharp pictures of that subject? It makes for interesting results to deliberately lower the shutter speed to, let's say, 1/25 and take pictures of the same running animal. This is called panning and it can result in very interesting dynamic effects.



• look for reflections. This offers good opportunities to add symmetry to your photographs, and the extra element that makes the pictures great, once framed in the right way.

- suggest when and why to use exposure compensation. Exposure compensation basically helps you override the automatic exposure adjustments your camera makes in situations with uneven light distribution. On most cameras, the default mode is evaluative metering, as it carries out metering across the entire image. In other words, your camera is evaluating the light, and takes an average of what is 'sees'. For example, at night we use a spotlight on our subjects, meaning that the subject will be exposed but the surroundings will be relatively dark. If you let your camera do the 'thinking' your subject will turn out overexposed or bleached. You can either use spot-metering or under expose your subject with some stops depending on the light intensity and focal length of your lens. When you have a very light background and when the subject is small and dark, you do the opposite. You need to overexpose your subject with a number of stops otherwise your subject will be too under exposed. Some correction can be done afterwards in Lightroom or other post editing software but it's better to get it right from the moment you take the picture.

- suggest the correct composition. The where, when and why to position the animal in the frame, for example whether to place the subject in the left or right section of the frame. If you expect the bird to fly to the left, you have to position in the right corner, to give it more capture space in its flight direction.

- suggest when to switch from still photography to video. It's a fact that there are scenarios when you see action happening in front of you that will be difficult to capture with still photography. For example, the

shaping of a flock of birds being chased by a raptor in the sky. Yes, you can capture a still of the flock of birds in the sky but it's much nicer to see the actual raptor diving into the flock and getting a variety of different shaped flocks. It's just great that cameras nowadays can make that happen and with one simple push of a button, go from still photography to video.

- prioritize subjects during the safari. All subjects are potentially great. Birds, reptiles, mammals, you name it. But to give you an example, the oxpecker will still be sitting on the zebra's back at 09:00 am while the leopard or lion has already found its sleeping spot under a shady bush and will not move until dusk.
- advise on the exposure triangle and what to prioritize. For example, I will advise you to always reduce your ISO number (noise) as much as possible but not at the expense of

compromising your shutter speed. Below is a picture taken during the evening safari with the only light source being a spotlight. This interaction of a male lion and crocodile over a carcass was taken with 20.000 ISO @ 1/1250sec. The 'noise' is clearly visible but to ensure it remains sharp during the action, there is little choice when the aperture is completely open (lowest number) and no additional light is available.

So, whatever type of safari you choose, have fun, and enjoy the sights, sounds and hospitality of the very special valley of South Luangwa. You don't need to avoid the dust, just make sure you don't need to change your lens!

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