

Treasures of the Desert and Delta



Kalahari Tracking with the Ju/'hoansi San & Wildlife Watching in the Okavango Delta

***Supporting indigenous trackers, local people, and community
owned businesses***

***with Senior tracker guides
Lee Gutteridge and Kersey Lawrence***

**Botswana, Southern Africa, 2-12 March 2020
\$7980 per person, sharing, 12 participants max**

Program Description

This program, over a period of ten nights and eleven days, is a once-in-a-lifetime, life-changing experience. You will travel with Senior tracker guides Lee Gutteridge and Kersey Lawrence on this specially designed adventure for trackers, wildlife watchers, and cultural enthusiasts from across the world. We will live in amazing style in our own mobile camp, traveling across the desert in comfort in order to spend time in the field with expert trackers and foragers from one of the most ancient cultures on earth, the Ju/'hoansi Bushmen of the western Kalahari. Also known as the !Kung of the San Culture of people, these denizens of this harsh environment will teach us about their traditional ways, foraging and tracking, and help us to understand their disappearing way of life. At night, we will sit together around the campfire and, if we are lucky, perhaps the Ju/'hoansi will share the ancient stories, music, and dance of their people with us.

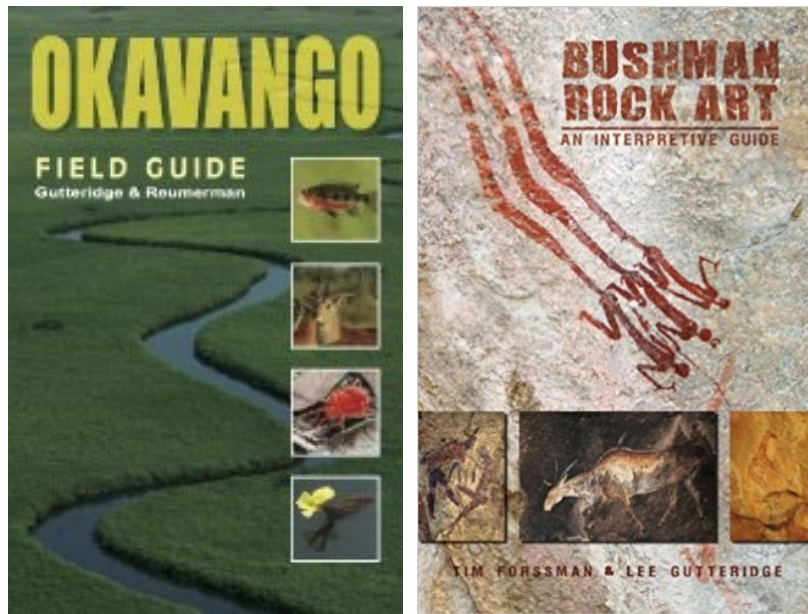
You will walk in the ancient footprints of our ancestors, in the probable birthplace of tracking. **Two expert trackers will guide you and protect you, as you explore the dry African Kalahari Desert. Lee and Kersey are both Senior Trackers and Evaluators on the internationally renowned CyberTracker system of evaluating trackers. What this means is that they have earned Specialist level qualifications, the highest level that can be earned, in BOTH Track and Sign and Trailing.** We will completely immerse ourselves in the track and sign identification and interpretation aspect of tracking, stopping to question everything we see, hear, smell, sense... from the micro to the mega. We will also practice following the trails of our African mega-fauna - learning about their behaviours and about how to follow a trail with every step.

In the heart of the permanently wet areas of the panhandle of the Okavango Delta, we will travel by boat and mekoro (traditional dugout canoe) and explore the enduring islands of the delta on foot. Tracking, as always, plays an important role in helping us to locate animals, to keep us safe, and to interpret the interconnecting stories in the rich web-of-life around us. We will continually endeavour to immerse ourselves in incredible daytime wildlife viewing, both from vehicles and on foot, and in night safaris, with expertly interpreted animal behaviours and astronomical descriptions, and in spectacular African sunrises and sunsets.

At Tsodilo, Lee will help us to interpret some of the panels in the most densely illustrated rock art site in Southern Africa. Lee, literally "wrote the book on it" and his Okavango Field Guide* is widely used in eco-tourism and guide training in the Delta, and his Bushman Rock Art* book is a user-friendly guide to interpreting these panels of historical information, as best we can.

Throughout, we will practice tuning our senses in to the ancient interpretation of animal communication – an old skill that began for us when the first peoples learned to pay attention to and interpret the vigilant body posture of antelope watching lions, oxpeckers calling and flying up from sleeping buffalo, or vervet monkeys creating different alarm calls to alert each other about specific aerial or land based predators. Just like you, animals know what's living and moving in their homes, and they communicate this to one another visually and audibly. We will practice observing and interpreting what's living and moving on the landscape through the body language and sounds of the animals all around us who are continually participating in this ancient song and dance.

All accommodation, food, drink, and transportation are included from the start to the end of the outlined program, beginning when we gather as a group in Maun on day one and ending upon our return to Maun on day eleven. Gratuities are not included.



**Lee Gutteridge has co-authored both a book on Bushman Rock Art, and a book on the tracking and ecology of the Okavango Delta. These books, covers as shown above, are available in print and Kindle format on Amazon.com.*

What is Tracking and why it is important

Tracking is the combined skills of Track and Sign identification and interpretation and Trailing (following a fresh trail and finding an animal).

Track and Sign identification and interpretation is the study of actual tracks, their shape and form, their subsequent identification to species level and the deeper understanding of associated behaviours from the signs seen on the ground. It is also the interpretation of sign of types other than footprints, such as scat, digging signs, feeding signs, tooth marks, claw scrapes and much, much more. Track and sign also includes aspects left behind by bird life, such as in the case of discarded feather identification, nest structures, skulls, or even egg shell pieces found on the forest floor. Invertebrates are also included here. Nests, egg cases, webs, cocoons, and earthen structures can all be found within this group of creature's signs. However, typically one would not trail a bird or insect (although occasionally we do). Reptiles and amphibians also leave interesting sign behind in nature, and must also be included. Even certain climatic conditions will leave signs, such as the circular patterns of a dust devil (whirl-wind) on desert sand. Humans also leave sign to be interpreted by a tracker.

Trailing, by comparison, is most typically associated with large mammals, especially here in Africa where ecotourism safaris to view and photograph the "Big 5" (African lion, Cape buffalo, African leopard, African elephant, and black or white rhinoceros) comprise so much of the economy. Trailing includes the ability to find a fresh trail (a line of footprints), identify the animal according to species, group number, sex, and sometimes to the individual animal, and follow the trail through differing difficulties of substrates, interpreting pertinent behaviours along the trail, using all our senses to remain safe and undetected. The ultimate goal of trailing is to find the animal and observe the creature in question. Ideally, we do this without alerting the creature to our presence.

Track and Sign identification and interpretation has been likened to the A,B,C's of tracking; it's the foundation of learning the component parts of an ecosystem and animal identity and behaviour. We couldn't learn to read without first learning the A,B,C's! Trailing is where we put it all together into sentences and paragraphs that tell a story; the story of the animal that we are following. Who is it? Where is it going? Where has it been? What is it doing? Why? Who and what else is it interacting with on the landscape, and how is the landscape causing the animal to move?

Tracking allows us to know more about what lives and moves around us, helps us find new and interesting animals, and keeps us safe.



An ootheca (egg case) of a Holocoryphella mantid, trackers on the trail of a pride of lions, and a red-billed oxpecker sitting on a rhino (one-of our early warning systems in the bush)



A tracker looks for a fresh trail from the 'tracker seat' while on safari, & the track of a big male lion dried in the mud

Program Itinerary

Days 1 to 4 (2nd – 5th March 2020)

After meeting in Maun, we will travel together to Habu, a community owned concession on the western edge of the world-renowned Okavango Delta. We have specifically chosen this fledgling tourism region because it is in the hands of its traditional owners, and they benefit directly from all of our interactions here. This area is not wet and swampy as you would imagine the Delta to be. It is dry Kalahari Desert, and the ancestral home of the San people we will meet and interact with over the coming days. We will stay in our very own luxury-tented camp, specially erected for us in this pristine wilderness. In stark dichotomy, professional bush-chefs will attend to our culinary needs, while we spend our days exploring the wonders of an ancient way of living with some of the world's original peoples.



A San hunter in the setting sun, and a must see for any tracker, the spoor of an aardvark

We will spend our days here with a select group of Ju/'hoansi San hunters and gatherers, who will travel from their private homes in Xai Xai, in the deep, almost impenetrable desert to meet us. They will arrive with an interpreter, Kavaa Keherara, a man from the local Tswana community who grew up in Xai Xai with the Ju/'hoansi people. Kavaa will help us to understand their language, and share with them our questions and our enjoyment at their stories and lessons. We will wander with them in their traditional homeland, learning about tracking and food gathering, seeing and tasting the food plants with them, following the trails of ancient food animals, and soaking in the culture of these people whose forebears wrote the prehistory of Africa onto the rocks of the region.



Gathering animal and plant foods has been (and still is) part of San Culture since time immemorial, a spectacular palm sunset in northern Botswana, and a Bushman hunter starting a fire with a hand-drill stick

This type of experience is a wonderful way for these people to share their culture with interested participants. Through responsible eco-tourism dollars, the San will earn money for demonstrating and teaching us their unique traditional ways, which also encourages them, and us, to continue to value these vanishing skills. Monetary incentives build a desire to preserve their incredible traditional ecological knowledge, a part of the "original wisdom" of Africa. It is important to note that the people we will meet actually live their lives in this way, and we are merely opening a window into their secret world for you to experience it.

Day 4 to 7 (5th – 8th March 2020)

We will travel by vehicle to Xaro Lodge on the Panhandle of the Okavango, where the Cuito and Cubango Rivers are joined together and channelled by parallel geological faults into the Okavango Delta. This river is a source of life for millions of animals and birds, and we will explore its waterways, travelling south into the Okavango Delta itself by boat to search for animals such as the elusive sitatunga antelope, cape clawless otters, hippopotamus, Nile crocodiles, Nile monitors and other aquatic residents of what is aptly known as the permanent swamp. Tracking and wildlife-watching opportunities abound on the permanent islands, on which we will disembark and explore. The bird life is also incredible, with many colourful and unique species flying above, perching in the trees, or skipping on the ground around us.



A permanent swamp papyrus bed and a palm island in the Delta

We will also spend a full day at Tsodilo Hills, one of the most significant rock art sites known. This ancient repository of the skills, ethnography and, dare-we-say, religious culture of the forebears of the modern San people we have just met is a not-to-be-missed experience for anyone interested in the ancient culture of this rapidly modernising race of people.

Day 7 to 11 (8th to 12th March 2020)

From Xaro we shall fly to Khwai, shortening a couple of days of land travel by flying directly over the swamp below us, heading to one of the true game viewing jewels of the region. Khwai, once again fully community owned, is a wonderful area for seeing Africa's big predators such as lion, spotted hyena, leopard and wild dog. Incredible densities of elephant, buffalo and impala, along with other herbivores will ensure a constant flow of interactions between wildlife and man, making the game viewing here absolutely world class.



A beautiful male leopard in the grasslands of the Delta

Here we will be able to walk, and also track and trail to our hearts content, always considering our own safety, and the safety of the animals in this predator rich environment as our priorities. This will be the portion of our trip where we will 'round up' sightings of the iconic African game species, including the opportunity to conduct some night time safaris! From here, after several remarkable days at Khwai, we will fly out to Maun, where we will sadly say goodbye, until we meet again, and end our program in time for our individual departures to regions less wild.

More images of what we can expect to experience on our trip



Incredible opportunities to see and photograph tracks with expert trackers and guides



Beautiful tented accommodation and amazing cultural interactions



Excursions in the bush both on foot and by mekoro



Excellent food and professional friendly service



Amazing vehicle based game viewing opportunities



Well-appointed lodge accommodation and amazing rock art



Incredibly diverse scenery and sundown drinks with a difference

For more information about this tour contact Lee and Kersey on lee@natureguidetraining.com or kersey@originalwisdom.com



About Your Senior Tracker Guides



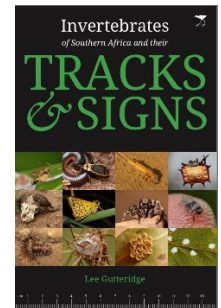
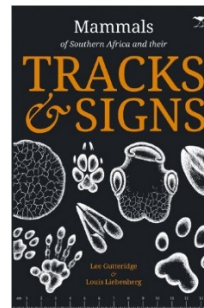
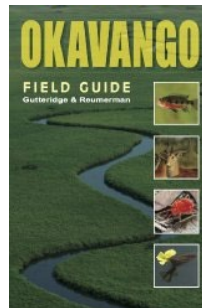
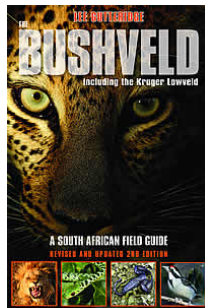
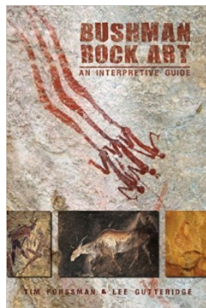
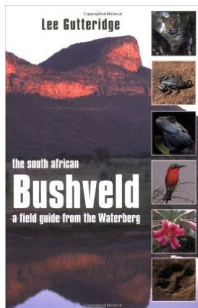
Kersey Lawrence is the first woman in the world to earn the rank of Senior Tracker in the internationally renowned CyberTracker system, and as such she stands as the sole female amongst the few dozen men who have also earned this rigorous qualification. In addition to her decade of guiding experience, Kersey also has several degrees in science and education, and is currently completing her Ph.D. through the University of Connecticut, where she also received an award for excellence in teaching. Kersey owns **Original Wisdom**, an education company offering both local programs in the USA and study abroad programs in Southern Africa in ecology, culture and tracking. Courses are custom designed according to the academic requirements and adventurous desires of the visiting faculty, professor, or group leader. Kersey's passionate approach to interpreting tracks and signs in nature and following trails will amaze and inspire you, as you spend time with her in the Africa she now calls home.



Lee Gutteridge has spent all of his adult life in the African bush, with more than 25 years of dirt-time. Lee is currently the highest qualified field guide in Southern Africa (a Scout guide on the FGASA system, with many additional specializations) and the author of six published natural history books, to date. Lee's company, **Nature Guide Training** began over fifteen years ago as a training school for field guides in the safari industry in Southern Africa and has a well-earned reputation as an industry leader whose graduates are employed by some of the finest lodges across Africa. As a respected guide and trainer of guides, a Senior Tracker and a wildlife author, Lee will educate and inspire you with passionate tales of African animals, wildlife trails and close escapes.

Lee and Kersey have been working together in Africa since 2008, designing and implementing these types of study abroad, ecotourism, and tracking intensive programs. Original Wisdom and Nature Guide Training work closely together to provide you with a truly exceptional, professionally guided, life-changing educational experience in the African bush. Thousands of participants have passed through these schools, and experienced Africa like never before.

Books by Lee Gutteridge:



More information about Kersey Lawrence and Lee Gutteridge can be found at

OriginalWisdom.com & NatureGuideTraining.com.

On our websites, you can also find information regarding our history, philosophy, venues, and programs.