

LIVING > TRAVEL

Inside the Romantic Safari Camp Where Prince Harry Took Meghan Markle



FEBRUARY 19, 2018 3:08 PM
by TODD PLUMMER



Photo: Courtesy of Meno A Kwena / Natural Selections



Maun, Botswana is a tiny outpost of a town halfway between the lush Okavango Delta and the bone-dry Makgadikgadi Salt Pans, and arriving there is like stepping back in time. Most Air Botswana planes still have old school propellers. As soon as you drive out of town and across the dusty roads of Botswana, you are transported to a quieter Africa of days past. You won't see many tour buses or backpackers here. Instead, you'll just see bush as far as the eye can see.

It's an epic setting, and one that played a small yet pivotal part in the world's most talked-about love story of the moment: HRH Prince Harry brought Meghan Markle here for her birthday last August, just weeks after they went on a blind date. Markle had never been on safari, and rumor has it that Harry planned the trip as a surprise. Are you swooning yet?



Sunset over the salt pans

Photo: Courtesy of Meno A Kwena / [Natural Selections](#)



Prince Harry is no stranger to Botswana, having traveled there numerous times over the last 20 years. And in addition to being a patron of [Rhino Conservation Botswana](#), he was recently appointed President of [African Parks](#), which supports national parks suffering from mismanagement and lack of funding. So when it came time to woo Meghan Markle, the Prince knew precisely how to put together a romantic itinerary.

He chose to bring Markle to [Meno A Kwena](#), part of the [Natural Selections](#) group and a place he's visited regularly for over a decade. It's a tented camp on the edge of the Makgadikgadi Pans, located a two hour drive east of Maun and, frankly, not the most obvious choice for a Prince. [Meno A Kwena](#) is far from the most luxurious camp in Botswana, but what it lacks in star ratings, it makes up for in spirit and authenticity.



Salt Pans

Photo: Courtesy of Meno A Kwena / [Natural Selections](#)



The camp is filled with curios from the golden age of exploration. Pinned insect samples, antique maps, rickety globes, teak furniture, and burnished leather chairs accent the tents. A ceiling over the main dining table is made from little more than draped parachute silk. There's an outdoor kitchen where yeasty bread is freshly-baked all day long. Daybeds, oriental rugs, and chintz pillows lend themselves to long and lazy naps. Not that you'll want to spend all day napping—the wildlife viewing in this part of Botswana is among the best in Africa. Come at the right time of year and you'll easily see more big game than you can count. Botswana's annual zebra and wildebeest migration, for instance, is among the largest in Africa, second only to the Serengeti's Great Migration (and you'll encounter far fewer travelers in Botswana as opposed to the more-tourist-filled parts of Kenya and Tanzania). [Meno A Kwena](#) offers full-day game drive excursions, including a picnic lunch in the bush overlooking an elephant watering hole. By the time you get back to camp, you'll be more than ready for a sundowner gin and tonic.



Zebras and elephants on a safari excursion

Photo: Courtesy of [Meno A Kwena](#) / [Natural Selections](#)



But the brilliant thing about [Meno A Kwena](#)—something of which HRH is clearly aware—is that you don't even need to leave camp to have an excellent safari experience. One of the property's greatest assets is its location on a large, private cliff overlooking a bend in the Boteti River (cliffs are unusual in this part of Botswana, which is otherwise a very flat, expansive country). This rare piece of real estate provides for exceptional experiences: watching sunsets and sunrises reflecting off the river, falling asleep to the burps and splashes of hippo, and waking up to families of zebra and elephants playing in the water. In front of each guest tent is a small private sitting area equipped with two camp chairs side-by-side, where guests can unapologetically sit all day, taking in the scenery.



A tent veranda at Meno A Kwena

Photo: Courtesy of Meno A Kwena / [Natural Selections](#)



While it's easy to fantasize about Harry and Meghan sitting in those chairs, (getting to know each other, falling in love...) to focus only on Meno A Kwena's star attraction is to miss the point. The real joy is watching the wilds of Botswana unfold at your feet.