



Courtesy Natural Selection

Skybeds Let You Sleep Under the Stars on an African Safari

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The best way to see the African bush is to sleep in it, sans windows, walls, or doors.

My first overnighter in the middle of the African bush was in 2000, on a school trip to the Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park in South Africa's Kwazulu Natal. It started out much like a walking safari—we crossed the park on foot during the day, and slept under the stars in sleeping bags. When we were allowed to sleep. During the night we'd pair up, armed with just a flashlight and our eardrums, to do a rotating watch. I remember sitting back-to-back with my partner, staring into the blackness, listening for distressing sounds that might prompt us to wake the guide (who had a gun). We didn't want to rouse him unnecessarily, so we tried very hard to distinguish 'alarming noises' from sounds with no significance. But at 3 a.m. in the bush, absolutely anything audible is paralyzing. A beetle shuffling over a leaf? A lion! Someone rolling in their sleeping bag? A rumbling elephant!

Fifteen years later, I found myself curled up under the stars again, listening for a hint of an elephant rumbling or hippo grunting. The experience wasn't nearly as primal or scary as my first: I wasn't responsible for the lives of my classmates this time, and I wasn't sleeping in a bag on the ground. I was in a **Skybed** in Botswana's Okavango Delta, a snazzy double bed—sheets and all—atop a wooden structure that looked more like an observation deck than a bedroom. It had no roof, no windows, and the four 'walls' were waist high, but it had a bathroom and a gate that required human hands to open. The room couldn't be described as luxurious, but it was a vast upgrade from my previous sleeping situation—as authentic a wild bush experience as I could hope for.