



# David Rogers Photography Expeditions

... leading small groups of photographers  
into Africa's wildest places

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Tell me about a typical workshop day?

It usually begins early – about an hour before sunset – with a light tap on your door. Then everyone meets for coffee and a light breakfast at the campfire before heading out to find something interesting before the sun is up. Everyone in the vehicle is there to take great photographs so we are very clear about early starts. “You can have a holiday when you get home” we sometimes joke.

We usually rotate positions on the game drive vehicle so everyone has a place in the front to get the low angles. There are never more than two people to a seat -- and some-

times only one -- so there is plenty of room for gear and even setting up a tripod if you so wish.

When we return to camp in the late morning, everyone is encouraged to process their images promptly and then present at least 10 images for viewing and assessment. These daily evaluation sessions are conducted before and after brunch and they are invaluable as they give insights to different ways of seeing, workflow skills, images processing techniques, and also fuel critical analysis. Everyone in the group shows pictures and criticism is in a constructive and nurturing environment. I do realize that it is sometimes not possible to process all your images but we do like to see work in progress.

Everyone is encouraged to have a short siesta before afternoon tea and heading out for the shorter evening game drive. Usually

we try to end off in a good spot for sunset landscape photography and for a well-mixed G&T. We return to camp with the spotlight and hoping to photograph some nocturnal cats, owls or nightjars. Back at the camp, we shower, have dinner and sometimes show more photographs. Then we head for bed promptly mindful of the fact that we will be waking up early again the next day.

### Who should attend a workshop?

We have had scientists, journalists, academics, doctors, surgeons, computer analysts, bankers,

dentists and housewives on the trips all with varying degrees of photographic experience. Some of the photographers are so skilled they could seriously consider giving up their day jobs! Less experienced people have told me that they were a bit intimidated by coming on a workshop because everyone else would be very skilled and have fancy equipment. My experience has shown that more experienced photographers are very patient and no one should ever have reason to feel intimidated. Also, the less that you know the more that you are likely



gain. Its wonderful for everyone in the group to watch new photographers grasp skills.

You are very welcome to bring a partner or friend even if they are not photographers, but we have negotiated very low single supplement rates, or none at all, knowing that many of our clients are single travelers who enjoy the company of like-minded photographers.

Mostly the trip is about having fun in a great place and we all have lots of laughs especially at sundowners when the beers and G&Ts come out. The trip is focused very much on visual elements so it's not ideal for anyone with tick lists. It is highly recommended that photographers do have SLR cameras with at least 300mm lenses.



## Why travel with David Rogers?

Most of my clients come back for me which means that I must be doing something right. I have been photographing wild places in Africa for more than 20 years originally as a journalist for Getaway magazine and then for a host of

other publications including Geo, Sunday Telegraph (UK), Africa Geographic, Travel Africa and many others. I have written and photographed many books and most recently Living Landscapes of Southern Africa, Classic Safari Camps of Africa and seven titles in the Africa Geographic Safari in Style series. Through these projects I have developed a deep understanding of the African landscape, the prime photographic spots, the best guides and also the most welcoming and the most classic lodges. I love teaching and have been running photographic workshops for more than six years.

I have a select group of destinations and lodges that I work with and aim to really work on my knowledge of these places and my relationship with the owners and guides in the camps so that I can give you a really fantastic experience.

The bush is the classroom and it's up to everyone to learn to look beyond the obvious and create interesting images. I sometimes give ideas for images but I also work as a facilitator helping people to develop their own style and also confidence. These trips are about you and your images. I know the lay of the land very well and can plan activities and areas to visit according to his knowledge of animal movements but I am also very open to ideas and suggestions that will suit the group.

David will be talking through the day a lot about design, selection and composition techniques as well as fundamental "rules" out there and they can greatly improve your photography. I will also provide you with a detailed document that you can take home.

The groups are almost always less than six photographers and I have learned that this is the prime number to be able to give plenty of time to each person and to ensure that the trip is a safari and not a lecture. It also means that we can all travel together in one vehicle and not split up the group. While I will make the most of opportunities and demonstrate techniques,



my primary objective is your photography and making sure that you learn a great deal and get everything that you want from the trip.

## When? Where?

Many of David Rogers Photography Expeditions are planned for the summer months (December to March). The parks are generally much less crowded and it is when the animals are at their healthiest and most active. It is also the season for rutting, mating and carving. Flowers, insects and migrant birds are abundant making for plenty of colourful subjects. Animals tend to disperse somewhat at this time but they also tend to be much more relaxed.

Rainfall is usually limited to an hour or two in the afternoons and game drives are rarely affected. The clouds, which act like a natural diffuser mean that you can often stay out all day and keep on shooting in quite even light. The landscapes and sunsets are also outstanding.

June to October is peak season for travelers because it is the easiest time to see game. During winter there is no rain so the bush is much thinner, animals are also forced to con-

verge on water holes and rivers and predator action is common. Often big herds of elephants and buffalo come together at this time of year making for great viewing. The horizon in many parts of Africa becomes quite choked with dust creating great atmosphere and stunning sunsets where the sun appears as a golden ball. It becomes increasingly hot towards October so animals and people look forward to when the rain falls again in November.

## Can I do the same trip on other dates and for less money?

The answer to both these questions is yes. David Rogers guided trips do cost a little extra because I need to travel from Cape Town and also pay my own guide fees as well as accommodation and other expenses. David Rogers "Unguided" trips use photographic guides who are based in the various lodges and who I have worked with me previously and can offer you an excellent experience. In fact, I have a mentoring program in my

selected lodges for particular guides and they are really expert. So, if you would like me to arrange a trip into any of the iconic destinations in Africa let me know your specific requirements and I will put something together for you using my experience of the land and its lodges..

## What can I expect to take away from the trip?

I have so often stood on hills enjoying sun-downers and heard people say that Africa and in the bush is where they truly belong. In addition to this great sense of healing which Africa provides, you can be sure of leaving the trip with a whole



bunch of memories, new photographic friends, and fantastic images.

We really do work hard on photography on these trips and your efforts will show. . And after the trip you can take your skills anywhere.

By the end of the trip everyone should have also mastered.

Usage of your camera

Landscape, wildlife, bird and macro techniques

Lighting techniques

Low light shooting

Shooting with flash

Workflow

Image processing and selection.

Book making skills.

## Can you give me 10 silver bullets for photography?

1. The 1/3 rule Use one-third sky or one-third foreground but not half of each. Similarly try not to position your subject in the centre of the frame. Think of your viewfinder as having three equal squares and then position your subjects off centre.
2. Less is more Someone said that true genius is about simplicity and I think that it applies to every genre including writing, music, science, or photography. Is there a disturbing element, which can be cropped? Go in closer, if necessary to remove it. Less is almost always more. Framing is a critical part of the choices that you make.
3. Leading lines Look for natural lines that can take your eye into a picture. Roads, landscapes, rocks, rivers, branches, clouds, horizons, petals,



animal tails, shadows, reflections, or any other form can also be devised to make images more harmonious. They can frame, attract, distract and often are used as leading lines to draw your reader towards, or away, from the focal point of your image.

4. Patterns The human brain likes to connect things like dot to dot. A single spot like the sun will attract attention, two spots will cause confusion because the brain goes back and forth. Three spots and more will start to create patterns. Also look for mirroring effects of colour, clouds and landscapes, for reflections, contrast between light and dark. Our brain likes them. Use them...

5. Develop an original style Whether it's a close-up, a landscape or a portrait, we all have an idea of what makes up a harmonious image and the trick to creating them regularly is to develop the artistic and technical skills to get it recorded in the way that you expect. Photographers need to develop a sense of their own style. It takes some time, and may change, but seek to be original.

6. Be patient People that become frustrated after spending 10 minutes at a scene and want to move on because they have seen and photographed the sighting will not make significant

progress with photography. Just because you have taken a picture of a leopard lying in a tree or a lion in the long grass does not mean that you have got the shot. A photographer will spend a whole day with a subject if necessary. You just have to be patient.

7. Three dimensions No picture has one dimension. Think about the foreground, the background and the middle ground. How much of the background do we want to include. Does it have any disturbing element? A busy background can distract – blur it out if necessary. Also bear in mind that shooting portrait can often create a stronger picture, while a landscape image is often more peaceful and harmonious.

8. Make your luck When the game viewing is not great, focus on flowers. When the sun is not quite right, wait. If it is raining then photograph the raindrops. Photography is an active process and you often need to really take control to get the pictures that you want. Keep your camera ready at all times and make hay while the sun shines. I have learnt that you should take a picture when you see it and not procrastinate. Even with static subjects like lodges, all too often the image that you see is not going to be repeated



9. Be selective We are only as good as the pictures that we show other people. So don't show the bad ones, or ones that are less than perfect. Don't dilute the gems. Look for impact, originality and technical quality.

10. Invest in the best equipment you can afford There is no substitute for a great lens and also a fine camera that can record images in low light.

## What are the most common mistakes?

1. Not working on the subject. It's all very well seeing a leopard or a great landscape but you have to work on the image and take your time. A key factor is to learn how to look beyond the obvious and create interesting images. Be ready

to wait for the right light, catch the animal doing interesting things and exhibiting behaviour. Don't be afraid to spend an hour photographing a troupe of baboon and waiting for those special moments. Also be prepared to move your own position too. Just about every creature looks more impressive from eye-level or lower. This means that you should lie on the ground at appropriate times or get as low as possible in the game drive vehicle.

2. Not knowing your camera. Understand your camera and most importantly how to use aperture, shutter speed, change ISO, focus and compensation settings. Also know how to use your flash. Some photographers practice their skills at changing settings in a black bag.

3. Blurred images. The number one challenge with wildlife photography is to keep your images sharp. So don't be afraid to turn up the ISO and shoot at high shutter speeds even up to 1/3000

of a second for flying birds. Also, where possible, use a camera or beanbag to keep steady. Many photographers also use predictive and other automatic focusing methods at the wrong time and thereby lose their ability to control the point of focus.

4. Not being selective. When shooting wildlife don't be afraid to fill cards but then be prepared to select ruthlessly so that you only show the gems. You would not show different drafts of a letter so at the end of your selection process make sure that you don't dilute great images with others you are not really truly proud of.

5. Expecting pro results with amateur equipment. Get the best equipment that you can afford. Even if you do not own a fast wildlife lens (f2.8 or f4) throughout the range then consider hiring or buying one. Not only will it get you closer to the action but the colour, clarity and sharpness of your images will be so much better.

6. You would not put a piece of fillet in a microwave, so don't shoot jpeg. Not only will you get a much better result if you shoot RAW and then slow-cook your images in a program like Adobe. When shooting in jpeg your camera automatically discards useful information that may be needed later.

7. Keep thinking about not only the subject but also the design of your shot. Remember the 1/3 rule, leading lines, foreground, background and middle ground, complementary colours, depth of field and also the different effects of your lenses. Also remember to shoot in portrait and landscape mode.

8. Don't get bogged down with equipment and technical stuff. Feature creep in cameras makes them much more complicated than they ought to be so don't feel that you need to use all the features in your camera. Also make sure that you have a fast computer, lots of disk space for images, and also a program like Lightroom that can make your processing much quicker.

## Making books

My background is making books and I love sharing my knowledge about shooting for print. There are excellent software packages available that can help you to print a book that will serve as a wonderful memory of your trip and also give your shooting a real sense of purpose. Taking photographs with an end in mind is a great exercise in creative thinking and planning. You will need a good variety of images including shots of birds, animals, people, landscapes, details, lodges, even food and we can work on all of these to show off the full experience of your journey. Useful book producing software can be downloaded from [www.blurb.com](http://www.blurb.com) and also [www.myphotobooks.co.za](http://www.myphotobooks.co.za)

## The right stuff

Take a look at my list of recommended gear for the trip on my website. You should ideally have a laptop loaded with Adobe Lightroom, two camera bodies, a selection of lenses, a beanbag and loads of storage on an external hard drive device. We visit some of the premier wildlife destinations in the world and you don't want to run out of storage and I would suggest at least 50 Gig for a seven-day trip. Also think carefully about buying, or hiring, a fast wildlife lens. This should have a maximum focal length of 300 mm and should ideally have a maximum f-stop of f2.8 or f4 through its range. Also make sure that you don't leave behind any important cables. Chat to me if you need more specific advice.