

# LEROO LA TAU PANS SLEEP-OUT WHAT TO KNOW

A sleep-out under the stars on the Makgadikgadi Salt Pans is one of the most life enriching experiences. Bringing you closer to all your senses and away from every bit of civilization. We believe the most incredible experiences in life happen when you are removed from your comfort zone and brought closer to nature. However, it is important to be prepared and to understand the nature of the journey and the environment to ensure the trip is for you.

This document will help you prepare and understand what is involved in a Pans Sleep-Out.

Conditions can get extremely hot, the journey can be rough and challenging and the nights cold and remember it is just you and a warm bed and the salt pans with some basic amenities. There is no tent or hot and cold running water.

Guests staying 3-nights or more at Leroo La Tau can choose between a day-trip to Nxai Pans or a Sleep-Out on the Makgadikgadi Salt Pans. The Sleep-Out experience is only valid for a maximum of 6-people and must be pre-booked before arrival.

Please note that the Sleep-Out is not guaranteed. Weather conditions such as strong winds, seasonal rain or cold-fronts may affect the experience and result in cancellations. Guests will be offered a day trip to the Nxai Pans if the Sleep-Out is not possible.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS?

### **WHAT ABOUT ANIMALS AND CREATURES? ISN'T IT DANGEROUS SLEEPING ON THE GROUND IN AFRICA?**

The number one question! Don't worry there are no wild animals that can cross your path when you are sleeping at night. The pans are covered in a crusty salt layer. There is no water, plants and therefore no incentive for the wildlife to come out there. No snakes or scorpions or big-cats. Mosquitos are unlikely to be encountered. So not only is this one of the best places to sleep under the stars due to the lack of noise and light pollution, but it is one of the few places in Africa where it is completely safe to do so.

### **WHAT HAPPENS TO MY ROOM AT THE LODGE WHEN I GO FOR THE SLEEP-OUT?**

Your room will be kept for you. You may leave your valuables in the safe or with the management and simply pack a light bag with your overnight things.

### **CAN I DECIDE WHICH DAY I GO FOR THE SLEEP-OUT?**

While the camp will do their utmost to accommodate guest request and preferences, unless a private activity surcharge is booked for the duration of the trip, the camp management will allocate which day the Sleep-Out will take place.

### **WHEN CAN I BOOK THE SLEEP-OUT?**

We start the Sleep-Out bookings in July most seasons and end in October when the rains start. Guests may request Sleep-Outs in the months of June & November but should be aware there is a high chance of cancellation due to inaccessibility and seasonal rainstorms. We only do the pans Sleep-Out in the dry season. As the inundation of rainwater from the summer season dries up, the crusty surface still retains a lot of moisture, rendering the Sleep-Out areas inaccessible. This means the earliest time to venture out to the pans is in June. When exactly we are able to get out to the pans depends entirely upon the amount of rain (and if the rain fell late in the season) during summer.

### **WHAT IS THE WEATHER LIKE? IS IT HOT AND DOES IT GET COLD?**

Like all deserts, the Makgadikgadi Pans are no exception in seeing massive variances in temperatures every day.

## **June – August**

You can expect the days to be warm to hot but manageable. 25 to 35 degrees during the day and in the evening the temperatures drop significantly. Occasionally close to freezing and with the easterly winds you can expect it to feel colder than freezing at night. Early mornings will be very cold and sleeping out in the elements and driving back on the open vehicle with the wind-chill will feel very cold. No matter how seasoned you are to cold weather, make sure you bring a wooly hat to sleep in and warm fleece in case of a cold night wind.

## **September – November**

Days will begin to reach extremely high temperatures. The afternoon journey to get to the pans will be extremely hot. 35 to 40+ degrees can be expected daily. The wind can feel like a hot oven. The temperature drops quickly at sunset and the evenings are pleasant to cool. Despite the extreme warm temperatures of the day, the evenings can still be chilly.

## **WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO COME?**

As we only operate the pans trips in the dry-season, other than the temperature variances listed above, the general Sleep-Out experience is the same month to month.

However, every week of every month offers something slightly unique. For example, full moons present some of the most epic moonrises and moonsets you will ever see (ask your guide for a wakeup call to catch the moonsets if its very early). However, the newer the moon the less reflection from the pans and the greater the stargazing. The stars are so bright there that they alone light up the pans. Most guests will find the stars to be bursting out regardless of what the moon is doing but if you're a keen photographer interested in capturing star-scapes or time lapses then we suggest picking the newer moon periods.

The earlier in the season the cooler it gets so those who like to avoid the cold should aim for the latter part of August and into September-October. The majority of the cold nights and early morning will be spent wrapped up in your cozy bedroll. Most will find the cold air exhilarating and of course there is nothing more rewarding than that feeling of the African sun warming your body at sunrise. The months of August – October can get very hot on the afternoon journey to the pans but become more than bearable once late afternoon/evening sets in at the Sleep-Out spot.

How do I experience the pans in the summer when the water and flamingos are there?

Leroo La Tau now offers year-round helicopter scenic flights. March – May (depending on the amount of rain) is an incredible time of year to do a 60-minute scenic flight where you will have the opportunity to witness this spectacle from the air. Endless pans of water, flocks of birds in their tens of thousands and a land rich in colours, shapes and patters like something from another planet.

## **WHAT SHOULD I PACK?**

As space in the expedition vehicle is limited you need to pack light. You cannot bring your entire holiday suitcase with you. We suggest bringing a light foldable duffle bag or daypack in your main bag which can be used to carry your toiletries and overnight things.

- Most importantly! Pack your medication.
- Usual safari gear (camera, binoculars etc.)
- Warm wooly hat
- Warm jacket/fleece
- Sarong (great for the hot drive and keeping you cool as well as keeping the dust out)

## **ARE THERE TOILETS AND CAN I SHOWER?**

The team will prepare a basic portable 'bush toilet'. There is no water for flushing but a natural system has been devised. There is no shower but the camp will prepare a small canvas 'bush-basin' with water to freshen up in the morning and evening.

## **WHAT ARE THE MEALS LIKE?**

We have prepared a delicious bush menu which is prepared and cooked on an open fire under the stars. Breakfast is a basic continental style.

## **WHAT KIND OF BED IS IT AND WHAT ARE THE SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS LIKE?**

The team will prepare what we refer to as a 'bedroll' which consists of a mattress with a duvet, pillow and extra blankets for warmth. The bedroll is covered in a thick durable canvas and guests sleep directly on the ground under the stars. There is no tent or covering or mosquito net. Guests may choose a spot for themselves by moving their bedroll accordingly but shouldn't venture too far away.

### **CAN I REQUEST A DOUBLE BED?**

All bedrolls are three-quarter size and can fit a couple close together. Clients may request their preference on the day.

### **HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GET THERE?**

The journey depends entirely on conditions of the year and the flow of the Boteti River which needs to be crossed to get to the pans. Expect a long trip starting with a tar road heading south (approximately 1-hour) and then a bumpy road until reaching the pans. Totally journey time of around 5-6 hours. It is a fascinating journey watching the landscape transform from bushveld to grasslands and eventually salt pans.

### **IS IT WORTH UPGRADING TO A HELICOPTER TRANSFER?**

Yes, for sure! Not only will you avoid a long hot drive but witnessing the salt pans on the return journey is a spectacle in itself. If you want the ultimate private remote Sleep-Out experience book out the Sleep-Out privately and request a helicopter there and back. The back-up team will set up camp and the helicopter will overnight with you (surcharges apply).

### **WHAT IF I WANT TO EXPERIENCE THE SALT PANS BUT DON'T WANT TO SLEEP-OUT?**

If you stay for 3-nights at Leroo La Tau you are welcome to request a day-trip to Nxai Pans which will allow you to see and experience the pans and enjoy the unique ecosystem of the desert wildlife. There is no extra-charge for this day trip.

Those who would like to get the full pans experience but don't want to Sleep-Out can book a 60-minute helicopter scenic flight where guests will land on the vast salt pans (seasonality dependent) to get the moonscape scene. It is so flat you can even see the curvature of the earth.

### **WHAT WILDLIFE WILL I SEE?**

The pans Sleep-Out is not about the wildlife or typical safari. Many Sleep-Out trips will yield very little wildlife. It is about the landscape, stargazing and sensory experience. However, there are chances to see zebra herds as well as desert dwelling animals such as springbok, gemsbok (oryx) and steenbok.

### **WILL I SEE MEERKATS?**

There are meerkat colonies on the way which might be seen however it is not guaranteed and our Sleep-Out does not offer a meerkat interaction.

### **IS THERE WI-FI?**

There is no Wi-Fi and no cell phone reception. Time to disconnect and become one with nature.

### **WHAT IF THERE IS AN EMERGENCY?**

In case of emergency we have a satellite phone and can contact camp and/or emergency support.

### **I USE A C-PAP MACHINE, CAN I STILL JOIN THE TRIP?**

There is no electricity or back-up power. Guest with quiet lithium battery powered c-pap machines may be able to join the Sleep-Out but anybody with pre-existing medical conditions should seek medical advice.

### **WHAT HAPPENS IF THE SLEEP-OUT IS CANCELLED, WILL I GET A REFUND?**

Unfortunately not as the Sleep-Out is a complimentary add-on. All cancellations will be for safety reasons and to avoid discomfort and issues on the trip.