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The Lower Zambezi River National Park and Game Preserve in Zambia is renowned as the spot in Africa with the best fly fishing for tigerfish (toothy critter at right) combined with an outstanding safari experience – all in one location. My wife, Marte, and I visited the Lower Zambezi in 2008 to verify this personally and additionally, we’ve had several clients experience the same results.



The Lower Zambezi National Park is a 4,000 square kilometer preserve and nothing dies by human hand within the park, including the tigerfish. Unlike so many other waters in Africa, no native netting is allowed and this is the key to preserving the fishery. There are six camps within the park; of those six, two have a focus on fly fishing for

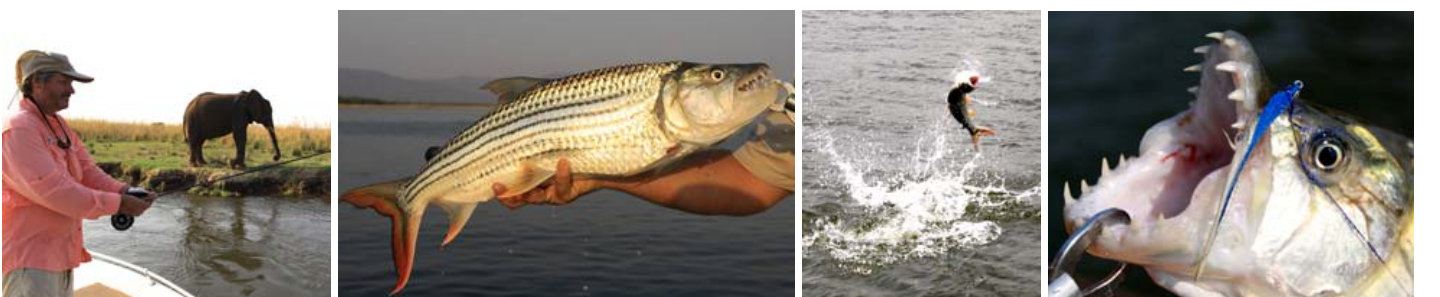
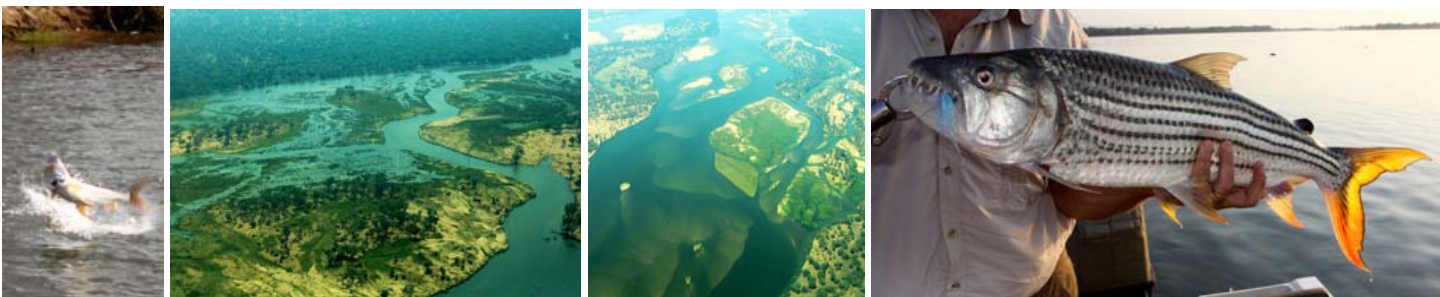


tigerfish and those same two are also among Africa’s top safari camps. Of those two, one has the best tigerfish fly fishing guide in the park, maybe in all of Africa.

John Landis (at left) took his fly rods and cameras on a visit to the Lower Zambezi in October. Overall, his following comment sums up the way we also felt about our experience, “The Africa safari and fly fishing trip was the best wilderness experience that I have ever had.”

John’s photography efforts produced an outstanding collection of photos which made this photo essay very difficult to assemble – what was difficult was trying to decide which photos to leave out! Part of his collection included an amazing array of big cat (lion and leopard) photos. Many of those are displayed below.

The river is a large body of water with many braids, sandbars, and channels as shown in the photos below.



The tigerfish, with its spectacular leaps and bony mouth, resembles in some ways a baby tarpon. September and October are the best months for tigerfishing. At that time, the river is as low and clear as it gets. This is the dry season and all the waterholes are dried up, congregating the animals close to the river. This timing provides the best of both options – throwing flies for tigerfish and game viewing. What an exciting combination it is! If there is a downside to this time of year, it may be considered the heat – it gets hot midday.



John: “In addition to fishing, I enjoy nature photography. Until now, the bar was set by my fishing experience in Alaska where I fished with the Grizzly Bears. Fishing in this environment was special and raised the bar. It was like fishing in a zoo with no bars. At all times, whether fishing from the boat or the bank, I saw large numbers and variety of animals. I will add Africa, with and without fishing, to my travel calendar every year.”

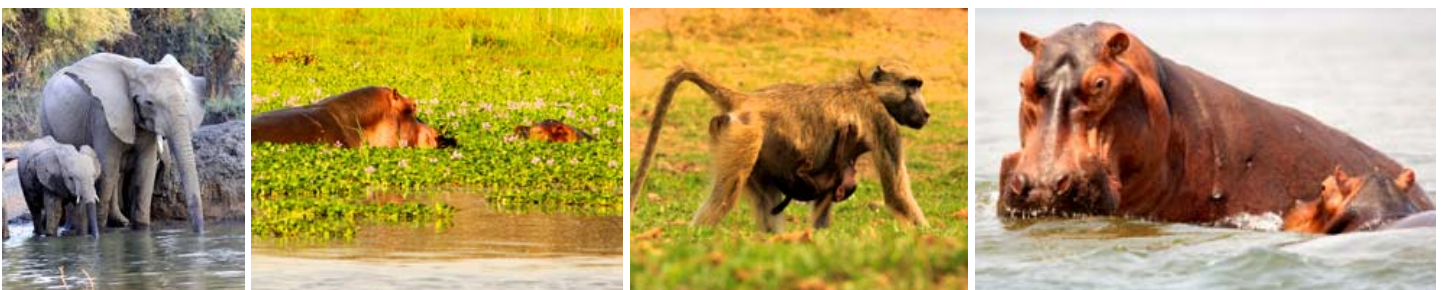
“While fishing, we encountered a group of about 50 crocodiles in the Zambezi feeding on something underwater. They would dive and come to the surface to swallow.”



Sometimes you can forget that the animals are not tame – they are in fact wild creatures. Occasionally, you get a subtle body language warning that it would be best if you didn't get any closer (below).



With toothy predators seemingly everywhere, the young grow up under mother's watchful eye. Mom and baby hippo playing in the water hyacinth (below, second from left). Mother baboon carries her child close to her heart (right, center) and Mama Hippo (at right) seems to be saying, “your boat is getting too close.”



“I used a monopod with a Sigma 150x500mm telephoto lens and it was used for most photos except the landscapes. Other lens I carried were Canon 70x300 and 16x35. Cameras were a Canon 60D and 50D.”



John captured a terrific array of big cat photos (lions and leopards below). Above are portraits of lion cubs and below are some mothers.



John: “The game viewing was beyond my expectations. Because it was the dry season, all of the animals were concentrated within 1 mile of the Zambezi River. I experienced 5 Leopard sightings; one during the day where we followed the Leopard for 30 minutes.”



Snorkeling elephants (left below) – one way to cross the deeper stretches of river.



Serious horns are part of the Africa scene. Below, l to r, Impala, Cape Buffalo, Kudu, and Waterbuck.



“The lodges were top shelf in quality of the accommodations and service. The staff was friendly and enthusiastic. The safari staff were very knowledgeable and worked hard to locate animals and help me get the best angles for photographs.”

L to r: A permanent safari style “tent” at left; main lodge area; riverside deck and dining area; inside a “tent”.



L to r: uninvited lunch guest; traditional Lower Zambezi “in the river lunch”; John with his mono pod ready to shoot in an open game viewing truck (at right)



After visiting the Lower Zambezi National Park, John made a stop in Livingstone and Victoria Falls. While there, he visited a game park and was able to get up close and personal with Cheetahs (l) and Lions (r).



PHOTO CREDITS: All from the cameras of John Landis.

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