



Nature's Light
Photography Tours and Workshops

Photographing Giants - Kubu Island Photography Workshop

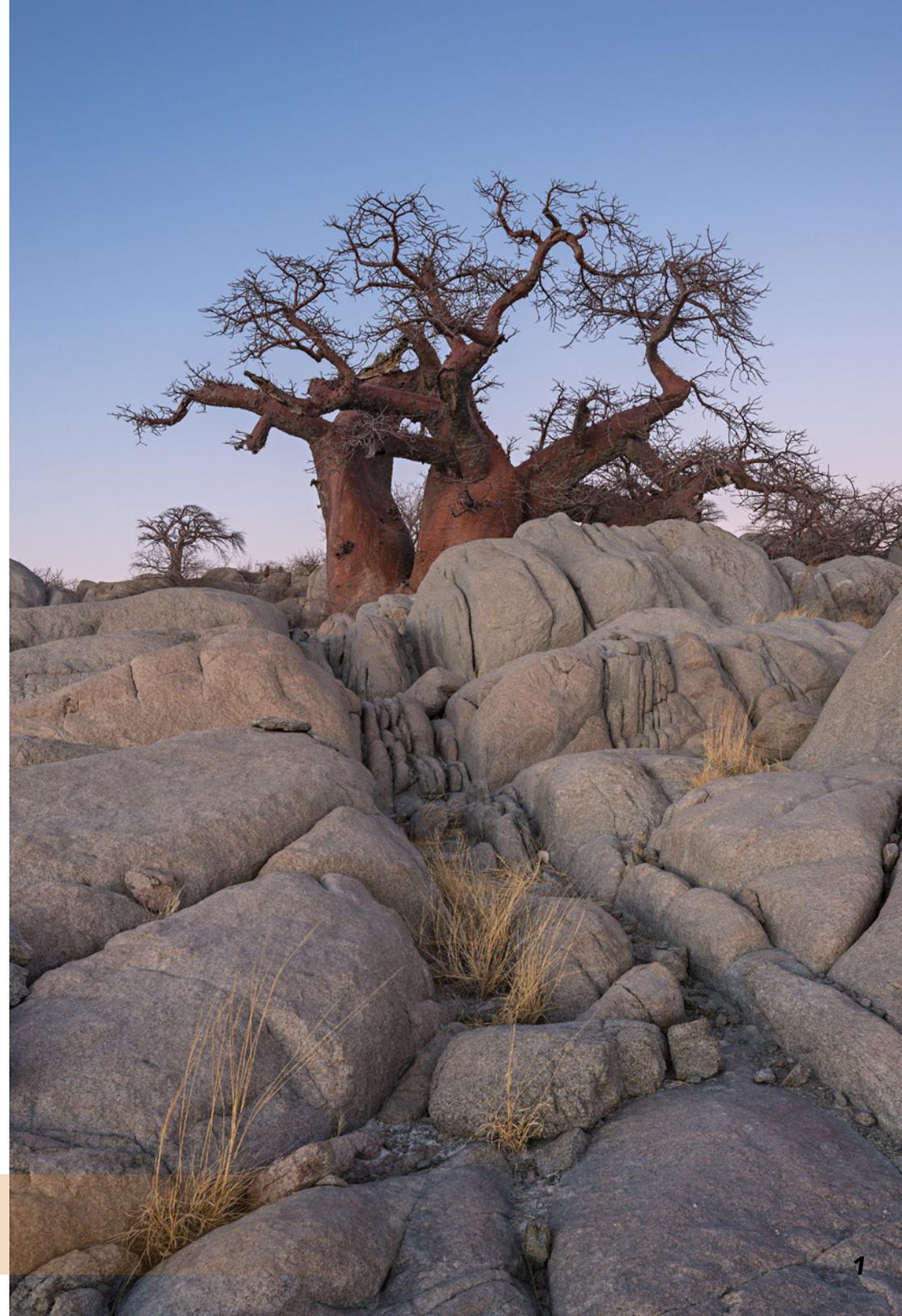
A photographic journey and
masterclass with Emil von Maltitz
and Quintin Mills



31st July - 5th August 2024

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Summary

Landscape photographers seem to have a penchant for hard to reach out of the way places. Yes, we tend to seek beauty in the landscape, but there is also the quest to find the unusual. Places like Dead Vlei in Namibia are not so much beautiful as astounding. They defy our usual imagination of the world. The much photographed Yosemite Valley is alluring, not only because it is beautiful, but because it is otherworldly. Like the hanging cliffs of Vietnam, it looks more like something out of the imagination of a science fiction novel. Of course we tend to forget that Science Fiction is very grounded in what we experience and have in our own world, just on a imaginatively

grandier scale. When that grandier scale turns out to be real, well it just floors the landscape photographer.

Kubu Island really is surreal. Situated at the western edge of Soa Pan, it is basically a prehistoric rocky mound of granite. What sets it apart from other small rocky outcrops, is the fact that it is covered in baobab trees. The surrounding Soa Pan, a flat expanse of dried mud that stretches as far as the eye can see, further adds to the surreal qualities of this unique place. Soa Pan is part of the greater Makgadigadi pan complex, which would have formed the basis for the Makgadigadi lake millennia ago. Kubu Island, with its fossilized bird guano was clearly once an island on the edge of this enormous lake system. Now,



however, the Pans only fill with a thin layer of water once a year (sometimes skipping a year or two during extended droughts), and the baobabs watch over the immense flatness that is Soa Pan.

Stepping over the rocks of Kubu Island feels like you are traveling back in time somehow. No doubt this is inspired by the vast trees, some of which are more than likely well over a 1000 years old. There is a sense of time paused on the eastern side of the island that faces the pan. Of course the sense of timelessness does disappear somewhat on the western side of the island which is where the campsites are situated for visitors.

The thing about Kubu Island is that other than photographers, most people don't want to spend more than a night there. They come, they see, they go. There is very little apart from a few long drops at the designated campsites (a new campsite office was under construction the last time I was there...and is apparently still under construction). You have to carry literally everything you need in with you. The nearest village is Mmatshumo to the south. This is 45km away on a sandy track that is easy to get bogged down in. Do not attempt to reach the island without a four wheel drive! As it is, one shouldn't even consider reaching the island at all from Mmatshumo in the wet season (there is apparently a dry route, but even this can become a muddy quagmire in the wet season). For photographers though, Kubu Island is extraordinary! This is why we spend 3 nights there.

The majestic baobabs stand like ancient sentinels on the grey granite mounds of the island. Personally, it is the only place I have visited where these gnarled arboreal giants stand in such close proximity; like spinneys of trees. Here you will spend evenings photographing the Milky Way over the baobabs, playing with panoramic of the full stretch of the ribbon of stars.

For a photographer, the island is simply one of those places that get added to the bucket list of landscape locations. The baobabs are incredible, the night sky phenomenal and the vastness of the pan mesmerizing. Non-photographers seem to get bored quickly, which is a pity. Personally, I can't wait to go back. The distances that have to be traveled and the fact that you have to carry everything with you make it very difficult to run a workshop at the island. However, undaunted by this, this is exactly what the collaboration of Nature's Light and Hunter's of Light plan to do! If spending time under the stars capturing these gentle giants under a night sky sounds appealing, then we are heading there this August and would love you to join us.

Note: the workshop has been designed so that guests can opt to continue into Botswana for the long weekend.



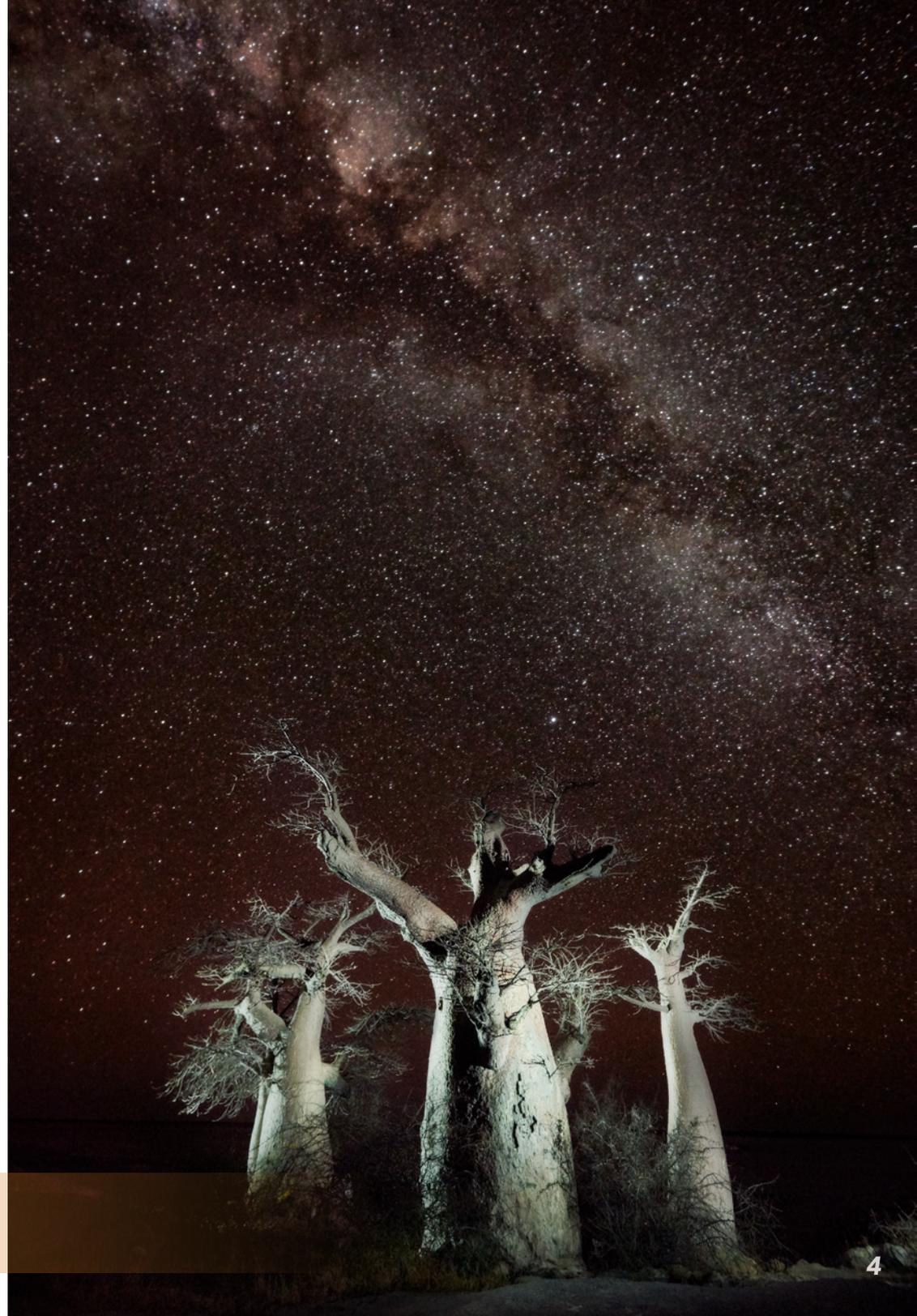
Key Highlights:

Photograph:

- The night sky in one of the clearest, light pollution free areas in Southern Africa
- Iconic Baobab trees that stand like ancient giants in the landscape.
- The vastness of Soa Pan
- The extraordinary light of the pan in the pre-dawn as the Baobab's glow red before the sun rises.

Enjoy:

- The deafening silence of the pan at night
- The camaraderie of like-minded photographers around a campfire at night
- Probably the world's best instructor to participant ratio, maximizing your learning
- Having highly experienced tutors watching over your shoulders helping you on the spot as you craft your image.
- Enough time to revisit compositions over multiple days





Learn about:

- Creative Composition: The basics and beyond, such as The Element Approach, Balancing Composition etc.
- Basic to advanced techniques in digital landscape photography. There are two instructors (on groups of 4-6 participants) meaning that virtually all levels of photographer can be catered for.
- Workflow & digital asset management.
- How to create awe-inspiring astrophotography and star trail images.
- How to create panoramic images.
- How to create time lapses (optional)
- Advanced composition for landscape imagery
- Post-production using Lightroom, Capture One and Photoshop

Reasons to Join Us

Nature's Light prides itself on 'deep-instruction'. This is a term we use to describe how we teach photographers to understand the mechanics of the camera and light as well as the subtle art of photographic composition. The goal is not just to take you to a great location and produce a great image. Our goal is that you understand how to create that image so that you can do it again, and again, and again.

Far too many photography workshops and instructors bark out settings and instruction on how to replicate an image they, the instructor, are creating. We differ in that we strive to get the photographers to create their own works by assisting with the pre-

visualization and creation of those images. We firmly believe that this approach improves the skill and workflow of the photographers that join us.

With a maximum of 6 guests and 2 instructors (1 instructor for groups of up to 3 guests) we offer one of the best instructor-participant ratios available on the market, as others typically take 5 to 8 participants per instructor. Moreover, this allows teaching simultaneously at beginner, intermediate and advanced level, as participants can choose what they would like to learn about, from which tutor and at what level. This ensures the steepest possible learning curve for you, regardless of your level of experience!





Photographing Giants

About us, description of tour leaders

Emil von Maltitz is an internationally recognized South African landscape photographer and member of the International Environmental Photographers Association. He has been involved in photography for the better part of the last two decades. After completing his postgraduate degree in Anthropology, he opted to pursue his dream and turn his passion for photography into his career. Along with freelance commercial and assignment photography, Emil spends time running a number of photographic workshops. Well-versed and knowledgeable in the Adobe suites, Emil will be able to help and guide in photo-editing and several advanced photographic techniques during the workshop. Of particular interest to Emil is the theory and practical application of advanced composition in landscape photography, which will be discussed at length during the workshop.



More about Emil can be found on the following websites. His commercial work can be seen on www.limephoto.co.za, and his fine art landscape work on www.emilvonmaltitz.com.

Quintin Mills operates from his studio in Kyalami, which expands to accommodate the type of shoots he loves doing.

He travels throughout South Africa and beyond our borders when the project requires it. To date he's been commissioned to shoot in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Mauritius and Zambia. On top of this he founded and runs the online Hunter's of Light platform, dedicated to teaching and broadening the love of photography.



More about Quintin on www.quintinmills.co.za/

What you will learn

You don't become a better photographer by buying more and more equipment, better cameras or bigger lenses. That you probably know. Better equipment doesn't mean better technique! There is no better way to improve your photography skills than to be taught by someone that has more experience than you. And there is certainly no more fun way than to do just that at some of the world's most iconic landscapes, together with a bunch of like-minded fellows! Moreover, technique and equipment can only get you so far, after that it is 'creativity' that will set you apart. Creativity is what allows someone to create captivating images, rather than an ordinary photo of a beautiful landscape. It is hard to learn to be creative yourself, and you don't learn to think out of the box from an online course. Creativity develops when someone pushes you out of your comfort zone, while giving you practical tips and hints as to what options you have from a compositional point of view. And this is exactly what we do with you in the field. We wish to inspire you so you go home with great images and better photographic knowledge!

Not only do we try to develop your creativity, (pre)visualisation skills and composition whilst in the field, we also spend time in 'classroom sessions' where we are able to view images and discuss the philosophy and technique behind the image. At the start of the workshop the tutors will sit with each participant to find out individual wishes and expectations, and to see at what level they are. In between the morning, afternoon and evening/night shoots there will be lectures on topics of the participants' choice. There will also be guided photo-editing sessions, and we have frequent informal comment & critique presentations where we discuss each

other's photos in a constructive and fun manner.

The big benefit of the Photographing Giants Photography workshop is that we're staying at the very best location possible for photographing African Baobabs. We have to stay in tents in the middle of the bush but that hat will give us access to the baobabs to photograph during the right times with the right light.



Daily Itinerary

Once again, this tour is not a traditional, relaxed, holiday. Although joining photo shoots and/or teaching sessions is of course optional and you may skip some of them if you want, be prepared for some early mornings and some late nights. A typical daily itinerary looks like:

Wake up around 5-5:30am for a do a sunrise shoot

Return for breakfast around 8:00am

Four options (or a combination of them) depending on the day:

- A few hours private time where you can relax, get a nap, download photos
- Lessons or guided editing time
- Comment & Critique sessions
- Exploring the island.

Lunch around 13:00

Three options depending on the day:

- A few hours private time where you can relax, get a nap, download photos
- Lessons or guided editing time
- Comment & Critique sessions
- Walking to a location for a photo shoot or simply experiencing the island.

Afternoons shoot from 15:30 to about 18:00

Dinner around 18:30

Possible night shoot from 20:00 onwards.

We cannot stress enough that this is not a typical lazy holiday. Some days are long, but the rewards of joining this workshop are phenomenal. Incredible location, wonderful camaraderie, excellent photographic guidance and unique photography opportunities make for a sensational 5 nights between the island and Khama Rhino Sanctuary



Kubu Island Photographic Workshop

Day 1

Much of the first day is taken up by travel to Botswana. This is predominantly a self-drive trip (unless otherwise arranged), so photographers can either drive in convoy from Pretoria, or meet at Khama Rhino Sanctuary just north of Palapye in Botswana.

The drive from Johannesburg/Pretoria is roughly 6-7 hours including border crossings at Groblersbrug. To make it easier on arrival, despite camping, we'll do dinner at the restaurant on the reserve. If there is time to spare we can do a quick game-drive, but in all likelihood, the first night is a stopover on our way to our actual destination: Kubu Island.

Day 2

After a quick breakfast we strike camp and head on north towards Mmatshumo Village. The whole drive is roughly 3 hours, but can take longer as once we exit the main road, the track to Kubu Island is extremely sandy and easy to get stuck in.

4x4 vehicles with low range are essential for this particular trip as ordinary vehicles simply cannot reach the island.

On arrival we'll find a good campsite, setup and explore the island for later photography.

An afternoon shoot leading into the evening is a great way to start the few days of photography on this extraordinary outcrop.



Day 3-4

We have two full days on Kubu Island to work on compositions and imagery. The goal is to spend early mornings shooting, followed by breakfast and some time editing and learning techniques on how to create star-trails and merging of images for astro-landscapes.

During the heat of the day we might explore a little further afield, but most of the photography will be during the best light of morning and afternoon and, end evenings themselves. We are at the island during new moon in order to get the best possible Milky Way images.

Day 5

Our last dawn shoot is followed by striking camp after a good breakfast. We'll then slowly head out back towards Mmatshumo and then on to Khama Rhino Sanctuary again. This time round there's ample time to have an afternoon game drive and hopefully photograph some White Rhino in the late afternoon light.

Day 6

Our last day, like the first is a travel day back to South Africa. As with the drive up, photographers can opt to drive in convoy or take their own pace in getting back home. Expect a fairly long drive of 7-8 hours if heading back to the airport, or about 7 hours if the northern suburbs of Johannesburg



Day	Date	Plan of Day	Accommodation
1	31 July 2024	Meet on the road or at Khama Rhino Sanctuary in Botswana where we are camping for the night	Khama Rhino Sanctuary / Camping
2	1 August 2024	Travel through to Kubu Island via Mmatshumo village. Set up camp and start with exploring the island for photographic opportunities.	Kubu Island / Camping
3	2 August 2024	Photography at Kubu Island	Kubu Island / Camping
4	3 August 2024	Photography at Kubu Island	Kubu Island / Camping
5	4 August 2024	Photography at Kubu Island in the morning, followed by striking of camp before driving through to Khama Rhino Sanctuary. Afternoon game drive in the sanctuary.	Khama Rhino Sanctuary / Camping
6	5 August 2024	Return drive to South Africa	Home

Note: As mentioned, the daily plan is flexible and will be tailor made around clients' needs and wishes. Estimated driving times are rough estimates taking into account stopping along the way for taking photos. Topics for teaching sessions will be determined during the tour after consultation with the participants, so you get to learn what you want to learn about.

Accommodation and Logistics

The table below describes the accommodation at each location:

Khama Rhino Sanctuary	The Sanctuary is a popular stop-over point and important conservation area in Botswana. Campsites are each located under a large tree with water and ablution facilities nearby.
Kubu Island	Kubu Island is as close to true bush camping as is possible for the island. Cleared areas on the west side of the island are available to camp in. There is a long drop available, but apart from this there are no other facilities available.



What to bring

Photography Equipment

- A digital SLR camera, Emil and Quintin both shoot with Full-Frame cameras, but any interchangeable lens camera will work perfectly on the workshop including, crop-sensor DSLRs, the new breed of mirrorless cameras and Micro Four Thirds cameras will also work perfectly well. We don't recommend using compact cameras because of their serious limitations or the 1" sensor cameras which don't have the same tolerances for landscape photography that M4/3s and larger sensor cameras have.
- A good quality tripod, preferably one not made of plastic. We can help you choose a suitable one if you don't already have a tripod.
- A wide angle lens (Emil and Nick use wide and ultra-wide angle lens as a matter of preference). Large aperture wide angle lenses are ideal for astro-photography. Emil uses a 18mm f2.8 and 12mm f2.8 lenses primarily for astro work.
- A telephoto zoom lens, such as a 70-200 or 70-300 is nice to have for the Khama Rhino Sanctuary leg of the trip, but for the most part we are shooting starry nightscapes which are the realm of wide-angle lenses.
- A camera remote (cable release) or intervalometer.
- For anyone serious about getting into landscape photography, a filter set consisting out of graduated Neutral Density filters and a polarizer, is indispensable. We recommend investing in a set before arrival. Let us know if you need help choosing the right set.
- A laptop with editing software already loaded. Emil and Nick personally use Lightroom and Adobe Photoshop with Nik plugins.
- A backup hard-drive for backing up images (it would be terrible to travel to the Botswana only to lose all the images if a laptop hard-drive crashes).
- Blower and/or soft brush for cleaning dust off of lenses and cameras.



What to bring

If you have opted for the self-drive package you will need to be able to 4x4 travel to an area where we will be bush-camping. There are long-drops at the campsite on Kubu, but apart from that everything needs to be brought in independently, and taken out again.

Camping Equipment (Self Drive).

- 4x4 Vehicle with low range.
- Tents and sleeping equipment.
- Camp chairs/furniture
- Cooking and eating Utensils - we will be able to make a fire to cook over, but all wood needs to be brought in (sometimes wood can be purchased at Kubu, but this is not guaranteed).
- Food and drink (including water) for the duration of the bush stay. There are NO amenities or convenience stores where additional supplies can be bought.
- It is imperative that you have sufficient water (approximately 30 - 40L per person).
- Power supply. We will have a small battery system for laptops and camera batteries, but it is advisable to be independent of the group for your power needs. A small inverter is an excellent idea for charging cameras and laptops

Camping Equipment (All).

- Clothing. Consider that there will be no washing facilities at Kubu when packing. Dress in layers as the temperatures will be low at night and in the evening and warm to hot during the day. Light trousers with shirts are ideal during the day, and warm jerseys/pullovers and jackets perfect for the evening. A beanie and light gloves can be useful in the early hours of the morning (it is mid winter after all
- Shoes. Boots are not necessary, but are comfortable and warm for this kind of location shoot. Lightweight sneakers are perfectly adequate for Kubu. Velskoene (Vellies) or bush shoes are ideal for this kind of trip.
- Hat (there will be a lot of sun)
- Sunscreen (same as above)
- Water bottle (you can also just buy a plastic bottle of water and refill)
- Head torch and or pocket torch (both for lighting trees and movement around the campsite and the island)

For photographers traveling from abroad or those who do not have camping equipment - please chat to us as we can arrange to rent out required equipment. You can also opt to join one of the instructor vehicles if you do not have your own 4x4.

Frequently asked questions

- **Do I have to do anything?** More than likely. This trip is a self-drive, self camp photographic workshop. Even if you have opted for the catered option, some help around the camp is always appreciated.
- **Do I get a discount if I bring my own vehicle?** The trip is self-drive and costed as such.
- **Can I have a room to myself?** If you have opted for the fully catered and supplied trip, please let us know if you have any concerns about sharing a tent.
- **Can you cater for special dietary requirements?** For the most part, yes. Please do let us know of any dietary requirement you have and we can see what we can do. The wilderness experience means that all food is catered on site. This means we need a little forewarning if you do have dietary requirements so that we can cater for your needs.
- **Is the area (and Botswana) safe?** In a word, yes. Kubu Island is an isolated area far from any villages. There is very little if any theft of the human sort (we cannot talk of scavenging baboons though).
- **Do the tour leaders take photos themselves?** Yes they do. However, the emphasis is on teaching and guiding you throughout the course. Our experience has taught us that most participants enjoy teaching sessions interspersed with 'try-out-alone' time, where they put the taught techniques into practice. Moreover, landscape photography is all about seeing the beauty in the land, which for each individual is different, and then to

be creative with it. To have a teacher talking you through every step along the way in the field will hinder the development of your creativity, as you are not 'pushed' to try things for yourself. Hence, our teachers will be there when you need them in the field, give tips and directions, regularly checking on each individual participant to see if they need advise, but don't be surprised if you see them taking photos themselves in between helping other participants - Also, there are two dedicated instructors on the workshop and a maximum of six participants; you are guaranteed to get assistance with your photography when you need it!

- **How fit do I have to be?** Moderately fit. Physical difficulty for this tour is rated as low as there is very little actual walking or physical exertion.
- **Should I be concerned about the water or any other health issues?** There is NO water at Kubu Island! Make sure to bring enough for your personal consumption (drinking, cooking, washing). In terms of health concerns, if you are concerned please consult with your GP or travel doctor. It is still advisable to bring your own personal medications. Antihistamine, pain-killers, insect repellent, sun-tan lotion (NB!), Antiseptic cream and plasters are always a good idea. There are some ticks in the grass wherever we go but this time of year there is little cattle or game, and very little grass.
- **Do I need anti-malarial medication?** Technically Botswana is within Southern Africa's malarial belt. However, incidents of malaria are rare. Still if you are concerned, an anti-malarial medication can be easily obtained from your GP or travel doctor

- **Is there Internet Access?** Nope, Nada, Zitelo! We are off the grid at Kubui Island, but it is possible to get a sim card for Botswana that can be used at Khama Rhino Sanctuary and along the road.

Contact and Bookings

If you would like to join us Photographing Giants, you can make a booking by contacting Nature's Light at:

email: info@nareslight.co.za

phone: +27(0)845849959

Fax: +27(0)865631530

Terms and Conditions are available on:

<http://www.natureslight.co.za/termsandconditions>



White rhinos on Khama Rhino sanctuary where we spend our last night of the journey and workshop.



Photographing Giants



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