



Bright Eyed & Bushy Tailed

"Squirrel!" Many of you who have watched the animated movie *Up* will no doubt remember Dug, the talking dog, who had a somewhat distracting obsession with squirrels. Mid-sentence he would suddenly freeze, point in the opposite direction and shout "Squirrel!" before resuming his conversation. On a recent trip to Camp Kuzuma – an intimate five-star lodge in Botswana's picturesque Kazuma Forrest Reserve – I found myself constantly channelling this rodent-obsessed canine because the lodge and its surrounds have more than their fair share of these cute bushy-tailed creatures.

They dart along the wooden walkways that link the main lodge to its five sumptuous tented suites, they chatter in the trees overlooking the nearby waterhole, and early in the mornings while still fast asleep in feather-soft king-sized beds, you will likely be roused by the nimble scampering of little toes across the roof of your tent. One afternoon, after I had already dozed off the rigours of the morning game drive and the extensive and delicious brunch that had awaited us back at camp, I snuggled up in an armchair with a book which I had every intention of reading, except for the fact that the many little visitors that popped their



noses curiously into our room were far too distracting – and enchantingly so. In fact, as I languished in the Victorian-style bathtub that evening, I couldn't help thinking that the only thing that would make my soak any better would be a squirrel sitting on the end of the bath to chat to.

Located as it is in a lush reserve in the northern part of Botswana where multiple countries intersect, the area is rich in flora and fauna, and the squirrels weren't our only visitors. Giant dung beetles often came trundling past, kingfishers swooped and darted in and out of the lodge's pool, tree frogs hopped across the bar where our aptly named tracker, Beer, was pouring us G&Ts, elephant came at night to drink from the waterhole, and we were even graced with the rare sighting of an elusive honey badger going about his business. One evening, as we sat around the fire, tempted by the heavenly aroma wafting out of the pot of vegetable curry simmering on the coals, our game ranger, Gary, identified a myriad of bird calls for us. This included ones from Pel's fishing and giant eagle owls who often perch on the trees adjacent to the lodge, the lights of which attract the insects that are their favourite food.

The reserve is, indeed, teeming with life, and guests have a chance to experience even more of it during the morning and evening game drives, where – at the right

time of year – you are almost guaranteed sightings of elephant, giraffe, buffalo, lion, zebra, and a whole variety of antelope, not to mention birdlife. June is an excellent month for birding and we were spoilt with a list of sightings that any twitcher would, er... get in a twitch about, including secretary birds, hornbills, carmine bee-eaters, vultures, and fish eagles. We were also lucky enough to happen upon a herd of 600 buffalo, ambling – and at times stampeding – across the border from Zimbabwe into the park.

The camp takes guests staying three nights or more to Kasane, where you can go on a leisurely private boat cruise along the Chobe River spotting crocodiles and hippos, accompanied by the requisite game-viewing drinks and snacks – after all, no game-viewing experience would be complete without something to toast your sightings with.

Animal sightings aside, just being in the bush – in such a lush and seemingly untouched place – is balm for the soul. Here, you can forget about time and deadlines and responsibilities for a while and just soak in the fresh air, the sound of insects or lapping water, and perhaps day-dream away while watching the tall thatching grass wave in the breeze.

All of this relaxing is hungry work though, and the small, efficient, and friendly team at the lodge are always ready and waiting to dish up yet another tasty meal – whether it's a full English breakfast with fresh-out-of-the-

oven bread, a traditional vetkoek afternoon snack, or perfectly cooked steak followed by rose petal infused chocolate fondant for dinner. But that is the beauty of a place like Camp Kuzuma: your only job is to eat, sleep, relax, and enjoy the beautiful surroundings – Squirrel! – and all who live in it.

For more info, visit www.campkuzuma.com.

For bookings and special local residents' offers, contact Shan Harker at Camp Kuzuma Reservations on +27 60 961 8584.

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