

Chasing Light in the Bush

There is a quiet debate that plays out on almost every safari, usually somewhere between a cup of early morning coffee and the first sighting of the day. Are you a morning driver, an evening chaser, or someone who commits fully to the long, winding rhythm of an all day adventure? The answer is never as simple as it sounds, because each option brings its own kind of magic, its own pace, and its own way of connecting you to the bush.

Morning drives have a reputation, and honestly, they've earned it. There is something undeniably special about being out as the gates open, when the world still feels untouched. The air is cool, sometimes even biting, and the bush is waking up around you in layers. Birds begin calling one by one, predators are often still active from the night before, and there is a sense that anything could happen. It is a time of movement and transition. Lions may still be on the road, leopards returning from a hunt, hyenas trotting with purpose. Even the light feels different, soft and gentle, slowly revealing the landscape rather than flooding it all at once.

But morning drives also ask something of you. They demand early alarms, a bit of grit, and the willingness to function before your brain has quite caught up with your body. Not everyone thrives in that space, and that's okay. Because while mornings are full of potential, they can also feel rushed. There is often a pressure to make the most of those first few hours, to chase sightings before the heat settles in and the bush begins to quieten down.

That is where the rhythm of a split day, and especially the evening drive, comes into its own.

Evening drives feel different from the moment you leave camp. There is no rush to beat the sun, no frantic scanning in half light. Instead, everything feels slower, warmer, more intentional. The golden hour does something to the bush that no other time of day can quite replicate. Colours deepen, shadows stretch, and even the most ordinary scenes take on a kind of quiet beauty. A herd of impala in harsh midday light is one thing, but in that soft glow, suddenly it feels cinematic.

Animals respond to this shift too. As the heat fades, activity begins to pick up again. You see more movement, more interaction, more life returning to the landscape. Birds become active once more, calling and feeding before dusk. Elephants head to water, antelope graze more openly, and predators begin to stir. There is also something about knowing the day is winding down that makes each sighting feel more meaningful. You are not just observing, you are closing the day with the bush.

For me, that is the sweet spot. That window from mid-afternoon into sunset feels like the bush at its most alive and most beautiful. It is where patience pays off, where light and behaviour come together, and where you feel fully present in the moment.

But then there is the all-day drive, and this is where things shift again.

A full day in the bush is less about chasing specific moments and more about surrendering to the experience as a whole. It is about distance, exploration, and allowing the day to unfold without strict structure. You leave early, knowing you will be out for hours, and there is something incredibly freeing about that. You can head to places you wouldn't normally reach,

explore quieter roads, and spend time in areas that feel far removed from the busier parts of the park.

There is also a different kind of appreciation that comes with it. You notice more than just the headline sightings. You start paying attention to the smaller things, the changing landscapes, the subtle shifts in light and temperature, the birds, the insects, the quiet moments that often get missed in shorter drives. Stopping at a hide with snacks, sitting in stillness, watching a waterhole without expectation, those are the moments that stay with you.

And then, almost without trying, you get the full cycle. Morning freshness, midday calm, and that golden evening glow, all in one continuous story.

The beauty is that there is no right answer. Your preference might change depending on the trip, the season, or even your mood that day. Some days call for the crisp promise of a morning drive. Others are made for the slow build into sunset. And sometimes, the best thing you can do is give the entire day to the bush and see where it takes you.

If anything, the real answer is not choosing one over the other but understanding what each one offers. Because the bush is never the same twice, and the way you experience it shapes the stories you take home.

So maybe the better question is not which one you are, but how you choose to experience each one when the opportunity is there.