

How Much Time Is Enough in the Bush?

Let's be honest. We've all been there, scrolling through Instagram or watching a YouTube vlog when we come across that one person. You know the type. They're spending weeks, even months, living the dream in Kruger or some remote corner of the bushveld. It's not a long weekend escape, it's a life chapter. And in that moment, while we sit in traffic or stare at homework or emails, we think, *Wow, I wish I was them right now.*

That thought recently got me thinking a bit deeper. What do we actually consider the "right" amount of time to spend in the bush? Is there a perfect number? A magic formula? A minimum quota for a "real" trip?

Well, if you ask me, the answer's simple, no amount of time is ever truly enough.

Some of my earliest memories are from time spent in the bush. I'm talking way back, before I even started school. I must've been about five when we spent a whopping 21 nights in Kruger. Yup, three full weeks. Now, before you get too jealous, I'll admit my memory from that trip is patchy at best. But what I do remember was the feeling, the *pace* of that holiday. It was slow. It was easy. It was entirely unrushed.

No pressure to be up before sunrise every morning. No panic if we skipped an afternoon drive. There was time. Time to soak things in, to watch a lilac-breasted roller for ten whole minutes if we felt like it, or to sit by the river and just *be*. And funnily enough, because there was no rush, we seemed to go out anyway, every morning and afternoon, not out of FOMO, but out of pure love for it.

A few years later, we started our annual tradition of heading to Pilanesberg in December. We'd pack up and leave home around the 12th or 13th and only head back after New Year. Those holidays were always long and lazy, stretching over two full weeks. Once again, the theme was time, we had it, so we used it. But this is where a certain little voice started to creep in. A voice I'm sure every bush lover is familiar with. The one that whispers, "*What if...?*"

The What If Bush Theory.

What if we don't go out this afternoon and the lions make a kill near camp?

What if we sleep in and miss a leopard and her cubs?

What if the elephants decide to go swimming and I'm not there to photograph it?

It's not greed, really. It's that nagging little feeling that something magical might happen while you're not looking. And no matter how long the trip is, that voice doesn't go away. You could be in the park for 21 days and still, like clockwork, half an hour before your usual drive time, someone will break the silence, "Should we just go for a short one?"

Let's all agree, there is *no such thing* as a short drive in the bush.

There's always another bend in the road, always one more call from the trees that draws you on, and always a little delay that ends up turning into a highlight. "Let's just loop past that

dam.” “Let’s take the low water bridge instead.” “Let’s check one last sighting.” And before you know it, the sun is dipping and you’re racing the gate closing time.

So, back to the original question, how much time is enough in the bush?

The truth is, it’s not about the number of nights you book. It’s about how you spend them. I’ve had two-night trips that filled my heart and memory card, and I’ve had ten-day stays where the sightings were slow but the peace was exactly what I needed. Some days, the best thing about the bush isn’t even the sightings, it’s the silence, the rhythm, the *possibility*.

Yes, longer trips are beautiful. They give you margin. Room to breathe. Time to sit still and not feel guilty about it. But even then, the bush finds a way to make you want more. And that’s part of its magic. You can spend weeks out there and still leave wondering what might happen the day after you go.

So maybe the better question isn’t how much time is *enough*. Maybe it’s, *How do I make the most of the time I have?* Whether it’s two nights or two weeks, be present. Listen to the birds before sunrise. Stop for the small stuff. Don’t be afraid to rest. And if you hear someone say “just a short drive?” — you already know the answer.

Because when it comes to the bush, no amount of time will ever feel like enough, and maybe that’s exactly how it should be.