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TO GO IN  
**2016**

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hotspots

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## Where to go in 2016

*From the Pacific to the Amazon and the African savannah, these are the 10 places you should visit this year*

### SAFARI SPOT **BOTSWANA**

The southern African nation celebrates 50 years of independence with exciting new openings, says SARAH KHAN

Botswana's appeal as a classic safari destination is timeless: It boasts a great mix of topographical diversity and a staggering range of activities – from elephant-back rides to river cruising – all in a fairly compact region. As the country celebrates its 50th anniversary, a host of new lodges and eagerly awaited reopenings are gearing up to welcome tourists.

**&Beyond Sandibe Okavango Safari Lodge** (from AED 4,190 per person all inclusive; 0027-11-809 4300, [andbeyond.com](http://andbeyond.com)) completed a rebuild in late 2014 that recast it in contemporary style, with sinuous suites that envelop their inhabitants like a cocoon while blending seamlessly into the environment. The 12-tent **Belmond Eagle Island Lodge** (from AED 3,120 per person all inclusive; 0027-21-483 1600, [belmondsafaris.com](http://belmondsafaris.com)) set on its own island

in the Delta, reopened in November with canoe, barge and helicopter safaris among its activities. Come March, **Desert & Delta Safaris** (0027-11-394 3873, [desertdelta.com](http://desertdelta.com)) will unveil its update of **Camp Okavango** (from AED 1,870 per person all inclusive): the entire property will be elevated, maximising views in all directions.

But the biggest news this year comes from bush icon **Wilderness Safaris** (from AED 8,420 per person all inclusive; 0027-11-807 1800; [wilderness-safaris.com](http://wilderness-safaris.com)). The new, nine-tent **Qorokwe Camp** is set on a private concession overlooking a lagoon that's a hit with hippos. Also on deck: the operator is staggering the renovations of its beloved **Mombo Camp** and **Little Mombo Trails Camp** to accommodate guests during the update.

For travellers looking to maximise their time in the region, celebrated safari operator **Micato Safaris** (001-212-545 7111; [micato.com](http://micato.com)), which counts David Beckham, Princes William and Harry and Robert De Niro among its clients, launches a new 13-day Cape Town to Okavango Delta itinerary in March (from AED 44,620 per person all inclusive), allowing visitors to traverse the Delta by foot, four-wheel drive and makoro canoe.

As if all this weren't enough, travelling to Botswana just got a bit easier, particularly if you were hoping to tack a little grape-and-beach break on to your trip: Beginning March 11, South Africa's **Airlink** ([flyairlink.com](http://flyairlink.com)) will launch direct flights to Maun from Cape Town, meaning flying through Jo'burg is no longer your only option. ▶

Spot wildlife from your tented room at Belmond Eagle Island Lodge in Botswana



PHOTO: MARK WILLIAMS