

Top 10 Waterholes of the Kgalagadi



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The Kgalagadi's waterholes are a lifeline for animals and a dream for wildlife photographers. Photo by Michele Nel.

Wild reveals the top 10 waterholes for wildlife viewing and photography at the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, one of the largest national parks in the world.

The waterholes of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park are every wildlife photographer's dream – but choosing the right waterhole is half the battle and can make all the difference between an action-packed day and a hot, dull one.

Wild does the work for you, rounding up the Kgalagadi's 10 best waterholes so you can concentrate on catching the action on camera!



Cheetah hunts a young springbok in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Photo by Hendri Venter.

What animals will you see?

Sparse vegetation and a high concentration of animals that frequent the Auob and Nossob's dry riverbeds and waterholes make the Kgalagadi a prime park for wildlife viewing – particularly when it comes to predators and the seasonal movement of blue wildebeest, springbok, eland and red hartebeest.

Ground squirrels and meerkats are commonly spotted, while honey badgers, pangolin and bat-eared fox are a little more elusive. You'll be sure to see big cats – cheetah, leopard and black-maned lions have all been sighted frequently at waterholes.

Don't expect to see water-dependant species such as zebra, buffalo, waterbuck or elephant in the dry Kalahari. There are also no rhinos.

Avid birders should get their fill of sightings as well: the park is well known for its variety of raptors (most commonly seen at waterholes at midday) – tawny and blackbreasted snake eagle, bateleur, whitebacked and lappetfaced vulture, as well as smaller species such as pale chanting goshawk, gabar goshawk, pygmy falcon and greater kestrel. Sandgrouse, doves and a variety of finches, canaries and sparrows can be seen early in the morning.

– See more at: <http://www.wildcard.co.za/blog.htm?action=view-post&id=4859>



Herd of giraffes drink at the 13th Borehole in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, courtesy of Arne Purves

CLOSE TO TWEE RIVIEREN

1. Samevloeiing

Wake up early and sit tight to meet the waterhole's resident leopard in morning light. In the meantime, witness gemsbok duel with their mighty horns, or a wobbling honey badger as it makes its way to the water's edge. It's a productive spot – you could spend the entire day here and see red hartebeest, caracal and black-maned lions.

Meaning: "Confluence" in Afrikaans; this is where the Nossob and Auob rivers meet

Location: 10 km north of Twee Rivieren (S26 26 6.32 E20 37 30.59)

2. Houmoed

If a brown hyena sighting is what you're after, drive to Houmoed waterhole before dusk and park at the southern tip of the Auob riverbed. Spotted hyena are also regular visitors – given that they have dens close to both Houmoed and Lijersdraai waterholes – but it can be tricky to get photos since they often appear after sunset.

Meaning: "Keep courage" in Afrikaans, since sand reportedly collapsed each time someone attempted to drill the borehole

Location: about 28 km north of Twee Rivieren, S26 20 21.5 E20 35 27.3



Springbok duel near Houmoed waterhole, photo courtesy of Carey Hobson. Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park is the only park in South Africa where springbok are truly native.

3. Monro

Keep an eye out for the majestic Kgalagadi lion, or the odd ostrich coming in for a sip.

Meaning: also known as “Munro” waterhole; Scottish land surveyor Roger “Malkop” Duke Jackson named the borehole after a policeman called “Munro” who was shot by German raiders

Location: about 36 km north of Twee Rivieren on the Auob River (S26 17 28.7 E20 34 59.5)

[CLOSE TO MATA-MATA](#)

4. Craig Lockhart

You won't have to crane your necks to see giraffe approach for a drink – the region's population of more than 30 giraffe favours the various acacia trees seen around the waterhole.

Meaning: Scottish name meaning “rock of the lake”

Location: about 15km south of Mata-Mata (S25 51 55.4 E20 06 10.5)



Gemsbok at Craig Lockhart waterhole, photo courtesy of Yovka & Ger Photography

5. 13th & 14th Boreholes

The 13th and 14th boreholes are a great place for birders: regular visitors include the rufous-cheeked nightjar, barn owl, vultures, bateleur, Verreaux's eagle-owl, and ostrich. Patience will yield bigger payoffs – the Cape fox, spotted hyena, eland, lions and an occasional leopard. Meanwhile, the fields around the boreholes are popular with grazers like wildebeest and look particularly photogenic in the evening light.

Meaning: the 13th and 14th boreholes created for the Union troops after the outbreak of World War One. Originally, they were referred to as "Grootskrij" and "Kleinskrij", with the Afrikaans word "skrij" translating to "diarrhoea" in English. The names – while odd – were meant to serve as a warning to others: rumour has it they were named after an incident when a traveller's cattle suffered the unpleasant fate after eating the region's tsamma melons and drinking its water.

Location: between Urikaruus and Mata-Mata (13th Borehole: S25 58 14.0 E20 16 43.8 / 14th Borehole: S25 56 46.7 E20 13 05.4)

CLOSE TO NOSSOB

6. Kwang

You'll see everything from lions to blue wildebeest at the Kwang waterhole and shots can be particularly lovely if you wait for evening's sunset hues to silhouette your subjects.

Meaning: Unknown

Location: 20 km north of Nossob (S25 17 57.49 E20 31 46.83)



Blue wildebeest at Kwang waterhole in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, photo courtesy of Andrew Ashton.

7. Bedinkt

Looking for cheetah and other big cats? Look no further than Bedinkt waterhole. Here you'll also see leopard and lions, as well as not-so-big "kats" - the meerkat to be exact.

Meaning: Afrikaans word meaning "reflect" or "reconsider", loosely translated "because the tsmas were finished, Scottish land surveyor Robert 'Malkop' Duke Jackson sat here and considered if he and his oxen should go on"

Location: 35 km north of Nossob (S25 13 32.22 E20 29 6.87)



Sunset drive near Nassob in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, courtesy of Piers Cruikshanks.

8. Marie se draai

This is a great waterhole to photograph in evening light, and you may spot some of the Kgalagadi's rather-shy kudu. According to staff at Nossob, park visitors are more likely to see a leopard than a herd of kudu.

Meaning: also known as "Marie's Hole", the waterhole tells the tale of a determined wife who finished drilling the borehole when her husband became too drunk to complete it

Location: 10 km south of Nossob (S25 27 8.14 E20 40 17.62)

9. Rooikop

Trees and bushes can obscure this waterhole from clear view, so photographers will have to spend time finding good angles through the branches. Keep your eyes peeled for subtle signs of life – though fairly common throughout the park, the African monarch butterfly can prove a pretty photo for those who've taken their fill of larger game.

Meaning: "Redhead" in Afrikaans, loosely translated to "prominent high dune which acts as marker"

Location: 5 km south of Nossob (S25 27 4.77 E20 36 54.13)

TOWARDS UNION'S END

10. Lijersdraai

A good spot to see spotted hyenas, jackals, leopards and gemsbok – and if you look closely – smaller wildlife like the striped grass mouse.

Meaning: from the Afrikaans phrase "draai van die rivier lyk soos 'n babadoek wat toegespeld is", meaning "the turn in the river looks like a folded baby nappy"

Location: next to Groot Brak (S25 00 12.4 E20 19 24.9)