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Nothing quite compares to the thrill of going on safari. Riding through amazing landscapes in an open-topped four-wheel drive vehicle, it gives you the chance to see wildlife a natural setting, engaging in completely natural behaviour. If you are used to the sanitised view of animals that you get at a zoo or safari park, it is best to prepare yourself in advance, especially if you are at all squeamish. In the wild, sick, weak animals become food for stronger ones and you are highly likely to see evidence of the food chain first hand.

Pack plenty of warm clothes. When people think of safari holidays, particularly those in Africa, they think of searing hot weather. While this is almost always the case most days, even during the African winter, the clear, cloudless skies mean that temperatures can plunge overnight. As most viewing trips start early in the morning, you'll need to dress accordingly. You can also remove a few layers once things start to warm up.

Vaccinations.

As you are going to be away from mainstream civilisation, it is hugely important to minimise your chance of suffering from any illnesses or health problem. Take advice from your doctor or local travel clinic at least a month before departure to make sure you have time to get any necessary vaccinations and begin taking a course of malaria medication if necessary.

Remember that, even though you have been vaccinated, malaria can still make you very unwell and could completely ruin your trip. Do your best to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes by covering up bare skin in the evenings, wearing a repellent containing DEET and sleeping under a suitable net.

Bring a spare battery or two for your camera and extra memory cards. There will be stunning photo opportunities almost everywhere you look and the last thing you want is to find yourself unable to capture the best ones because your camera is out of power or filled with earlier pictures. If you plan in advance, then your pictures of your safari activity holidays will be the envy of all your friends.

Big Five.

Although ticking off sightings of the 'big five' during your safari may be your main goal, remember to take the time to enjoy the great outdoors to the fullest extent by taking part in the sort of fun more normally associated with activity holidays. In addition to seeing wild animals, safari lodges usually offer fishing, rafting or kayaking trips, mountain climbing and hot air balloon rides. The latter, which usually requires an early morning start, can be a truly breathtaking experience, affording you a stunning, uninterrupted view across the plains.

Although your guides will be on hand to explain all that you see, you'll enjoy your trip even more if you do a little research into the local flora and fauna beforehand, as this will give you an even greater appreciation of this awe-inspiring world.

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Chris Nucci writes regularly on safari holidays for a wide range of travel-related websites and blogs. He has gone on safari numerous times in both eastern and southern Africa.

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