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Tourism interests come to aid of rhino rescue

By Nadine Godwin



Photo by Beverly Joubert

The Great Plains Foundation, an African conservation company that operates upscale tourist camps in Botswana and Kenya, will for a limited time donate 100% of customer payments for stays at selected camps to help fund a program to remove rhinos from poaching hot zones.

Supporting the effort, Extraordinary Journeys, a New York-based Africa specialist, built a 10-day Botswana Safari package

Zeros for Rhinos will transport rhinos out of poaching hot zones.

around the rhino rescue effort. It is also donating its commissions on any customer bookings for Botswana Safari or any other trip that falls within the project's parameters.

The rescue operation, called Zeros for Rhinos, plans to relocate 100 animals from South Africa and Zimbabwe to the Okavango Delta in Botswana.

Ordinarily, according to Great Plains CEO Derek Joubert, the foundation splits the proceeds of its operation, devoting one-third to the purchase and protection of lands abutting national parks, one-third to community projects and one-third to wildlife projects. Great Plains puts any and all of its revenue back into the company, communities or conservation.

However, Great Plains said it would make the special donations to Zeros for Rhinos when clients spend at least four nights at any of three Botswana camps between Nov. 1 and May 31, 2015. The three camps are Selinda Camp, Selinda Explorers Camp and Zarafa Camp. Extraordinary Journeys' 10-day package, starting at \$12,000 per person, land only, includes four nights at Zarafa. Almost \$6,000 would go to Zeros for Rhinos, the rough estimate of the value of the Zarafa stay.

Although Extraordinary Journeys is contributing its commissions, commissions due retailers and other operators are protected — unless other travel companies wish to follow suit.

In Botswana, Great Plains also has the Duba Plains Camp and Selinda Canoe Trail, a five-day canoeing and walking adventure. In Kenya, it has the Mara Plains and Mara Toto camps in the Maasai Mara and Ol Donyo Lodge in the Chyulu Hills.

Joubert said Great Plains made the unusual funding move because poaching has become rampant, even in national parks.

Extraordinary Journeys said its participation with Great Plains is part of its ongoing policy of supporting conservation in Africa. Besides, the company routinely makes a small gift on behalf of each guest to community or wildlife programs and invites clients to choose from a list of potential recipients.

Joubert referred to the Great Plains camp operations as conservation tourism because Great Plains is primarily a conservation company and is only a travel company in order to raise awareness of issues and fund projects. He said Great Plains opted for high-end operations because "we want to entertain decision-makers, those who have influence."

For more information, visit www.extraordinaryjourneys.net/blog/zeros-for-rhinos-safari-in-botswana/.

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