

A new wave of safari travel

 By Paul Steyn

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African safaris have always been notoriously exclusive and complicated to plan and book, and often the only people losing out are travellers themselves. Due to the complex nature of the industry - with its remote locations, lack of information, and the fact that travellers want to go to various lodges and countries - the continent has remained limited to the few who can pay for the services of travel agents.



Elephant Pepper camp

But smart tech is not far behind - new startups, such as the recently launched [Timbuktu](#), are empowering travellers to go online and have fun creating their own trips. The interactive platform allows you to choose, chop and change an itinerary like you would an outfit, and send through enquiries directly to people on the ground in Africa.

In the past, traditional travel agents have focused on the higher end of the market and well-known destinations (such as the Masai Mara, Kruger, and the Okavango Delta) because that's where the biggest commissions can be found. However, this model only serves to drive up the price of safaris and keep it exclusive to the wealthy few.

There is a rapidly growing segment of the market who want to take control and be involved in the creation of their trips to Africa. They are interested in some of the more far-flung places on the continent and want to have the tools and information available to make an educated choice, on their own terms and at their own pace. "The truth is that Africa's wonders are accessible to people of all needs and income brackets," says Giles Trotter, investor and founder of Scott Dunn travel in the UK. "It's just that the tools have not been available for people to take control themselves."

“Some of the greatest lodges are not necessarily the most expensive,” says Trotter. “It’s fantastic that travellers can now create their own trips and take control of their safari destiny.”

The internet has swept through the travel industry and simplified almost every aspect of the booking process. First, it was airline bookings, and then hotel bookings, then BnB's. And now, the latest industry ripe to be turned on its head is the exclusive world of multi-stage travel.

With a bit of bold thinking and nifty tech, the change is set to begin in Africa.

ABOUT PAUL STEYN

Paul Steyn is a freelance travel writer. Having guided throughout Africa for some years, he went on to edit a prominent travel magazine and now focuses on writing about Africa. In his journals, he has traversed the Okavango Delta in a mokoro and flown the Tanzania leg of the historic Great Elephant Census aerial survey.

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