



Botswana's resurrected river

The Savuti Channel in Botswana's Chobe National Park flows for the first time since the late 1970s

'The crocodiles are having a feast,' says Chocs. 'Hundreds of animals have arrived and the hyenas are lying in the river!' In 20 years as a guide, this is the first time Chocs has seen the Savuti Channel flow. The arrival of water has shaken things up. Lions used to dominate the dry riverbed, but now crocodiles are reclaiming their territory. Prey is plentiful and the atmosphere is jovial. Elephants swim in the pool at the river mouth, water buffalo munch on the lush vegetation, giraffes paddle, hippos harrumph and ever-hopeful vultures circumnavigate.

I hop on a scenic flight to get a sense of perspective from above. Records show the river has been stopping and starting for centuries, but nobody quite knows what makes it flow. Theories include earthquakes, other tectonic movements, or high rainfall at the source in Angola. Yet there's no guarantee of water; in 1925 the area had record flooding but the channel remained dry. Who knows how long this 'perfect storm' will last for this time?



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preliminary tests - making it the fastest train operating anywhere. China's high-speed rail network is now, at 4,600 miles, the longest on Earth. And government officials plan to have 25,000 miles by 2015, with routes linking up to Russia and, eventually, Europe. So it might soon be possible to board a train at London's King's Cross and alight - just two days later - in Beijing.



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just 30 hours - it normally takes six days

ON THE ROAD



MOST TRAVELLED MAN

Tony Wheeler

The ongoing adventures of Lonely Planet's co-founder - the man who can't stop exploring

Windy city

Darwin's Christmas blast from the past

Darwin is a city with two histories - before Tracy and after Tracy. On Christmas Day 1974, Cyclone Tracy flattened the Australian city. Tracy was a small cyclone, only extending 30 miles out from its 'eye', but it made up for size with power - peak wind speeds were over 150mph - and accuracy (the centre of the storm passed right over the centre of the city). Tracy killed 71 people and destroyed 70 per cent of the city's buildings.

There are still plenty of Tracy witnesses, ready to recount hairy stories of having their house dismantled around them, until they were cowering behind the bathtub watching sheets of corrugated iron spin by, striking sparks like a Catherine wheel.

The city's museum at Bullocky Point brings the cyclone alive. I wanted to cover my ears when I heard a tape recording of the howling wind, although I was impressed that someone had the nerve to record the racket.

Darwin has recovered from the impact of Tracy and with a new waterfront area and convention centre, there is something new with every visit.



Tracy destroyed more than homes in just a few hours

The peak wind speeds reached over 150mph