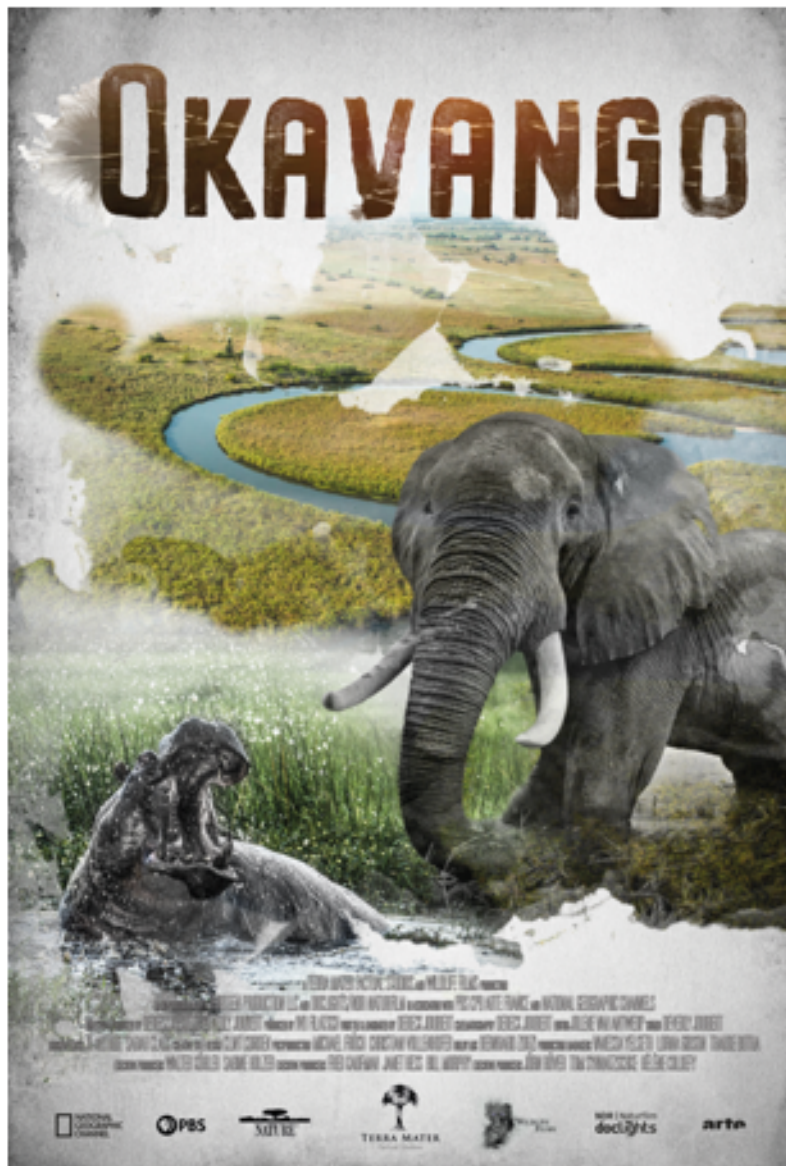


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**OKAVANGO: RIVER OF DREAMS**  
**(DIRECTOR'S CUT)**



TRT: 92 minutes

WORLD PREMIERE

2020 SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL SCREENINGS

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## OKAVANGO: RIVER OF DREAMS

*LOGLINE: The Okavango in Southern Africa is one of the greatest rivers on Earth – and it is also a river like no other. But the characters that make it, the lions, leopards, dogs, elephants are living in paradise. But here, someone's paradise is always someone else's purgatory!*

*SHORT SYNOPSIS: Drawing on Dante's "Divine Comedy", the story is told as a journey from Purgatory into Paradise, a quest for truth, for the soul of this river, the Okavango in Botswana, seeing those who use her, as well as those who are victim to the changes she brings, used by her. Floods rise up and transport trillions of liters of water, and yet, each droplet makes a difference. There are characters like Feeketsa, a wounded lioness that makes it against all odds and becomes a kind of talisman for the tale, a symbol of hope through hardship. The film is like looking through windows into stories and then moving on, until we reveal that each story binds us to the next, and to the river herself. It is also a symbol of hope against a backdrop of climate change that threatens every pristine landscape in the world.*

*LONG SYNOPSIS: The Okavango in Southern Africa is one of the greatest rivers on Earth – and it is also a river like no other. It starts in the mountains of Angola, but unlike normal rivers, its waters don't run towards the ocean. Instead, the Okavango flows inland through Angola and into Botswana - only to vanish completely in the Kalahari desert, after a journey of 1,500 kilometres. Almost all of the water eventually evaporates, and very little actually seeps away, down into the soil.*

*But it is the way the film is constructed that intrigues, as a journey drawing on Dante's "Divine Comedy", from the Inferno to Limbo to Paradise, and through the eyes of characters like male lions who climb trees to find their prides, that hunt massive herds of buffalo on termite castles of clay.*

*An extensive array of animals are shown in this film, living in harmony with the mighty river as they hunt, forage, and scavenge alongside the constantly shifting water's edge. But the water itself is a character, a female entity that is both, a nurturing force, and a seductive, even fickle one.*

*But while these lions and leopards, elephants and hippos, warthogs and crocodiles, painted dogs, bush babies, and many more, thrive and survive here, it is by one rule: that someone's paradise is someone else's purgatory. It is a testament to the interconnectedness of life on Earth, but also a chilling reminder that these pristine places can disappear under human-created bush fires, or other climate-related changes we impose. Hanging on to this precious jewel of nature should be a major rallying cry and cause for us all.*

*Filmmakers Dereck and Beverly Joubert have created an utterly breathtaking example of visual storytelling with rich clarity. Each dazzling close-up of the exotic life here is truly remarkable, as is the narration by Dereck Joubert himself, accompanying the stunning images. Calling itself a love letter to the greatest river in Africa, **Okavango** observes a unique ecosystem with a skilled and deeply perceptive eye.*

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

*We set out to explore this film really, letting it take us where it needed to at first, and spent nearly a year having it talk to us. We needed to discover it and through 'her' discover ourselves, and all those who totally depend on her. It let us into darkneses that we could not have imagined.*

*We dived with crocodiles to understand her "inner belly", walked with elephants to get to know these keepers, these architects of the Okavango. We lay on the ground as lions devoured buffalo, and hyenas denned, so we could feel the land as termites shuffled underneath built, building her structure. And only then did we feel qualified to really do our film - but little did we know it would take more than that.*

*Four years later, with 27 lost or broken cameras, over a quarter of a petabyte of footage, we were still not ready, we had still not found the soul of the Okavango. And then, ironically, as if we needed to be bumped into this knowledge with a smack on the heads as bad students, it happened.*

*After Year One, there was a terrible accident in which Beverly and I were attacked by a buffalo. She died, but I was able to recover here, bring her back from the dead four times. During her recovery and journey back from darkness, after I recovered, I dived into Dante's words again, imagining our journey, our quest for salvation, our desire to be whole again - and that became a metaphor for recovery, as well as the endless journey of this river.*

*I wrote the script, loading meaning into every sentence, and each work to deliver what I hoped was a parallel dialogue that simply resonated. This is not a wildlife documentary, but a journey each of us can take visually, without having to die first.*

*Having said that, once we were attacked, one year into a three-year project, our apparently extremely well-chosen partners, Terra Mater Factual Studios, called to say: "Take your time, recover, do not stress about getting back into the field any time." We had exactly the same from all our partners. It took nine months, and the*

*wait was worth it. Had we finished this film without our incident, it definitely would have been a "smaller" film.*

## SUBJECT BIOS

*How does one write a bio on this beautiful femme fatale? She is a river, one who was born millions of years ago, and yet looks as youthful as if she was born yesterday. 60,000 years ago, she changed direction, character, and matured into a matriarch that nourishes millions of birds, animals, trees and the human spirit. She is the great and mighty Okavango.*

*A key character is Feeketsa, a lioness who is an extension of the river, a survivor, a meanderer. Another, Moporoto, is a leopardess, with two stunning cubs she will defend to her death. Watchwe is a hybrid, half waterbuck, half lechwe - the only one of its kind, anywhere and in any time. A once-off. He deserves a mention.*

### OKAVANGO FACTS and CONSERVATION

- *This is a 15,000 sq km delta that has as its backbone the river, that starts in Angola and ends in a desert, never touching an ocean*
- *It delivers 11 trillion liters of water each year, and 98% of that simply evaporates and doesn't seep in*
- *As a result, more than 130,000 elephants, more than 1/3 of the world's remaining population, live off these waters*
- *It is home to a unique breed of lions, swamp cats that weigh nearly 15% more than savanna lions; these Okavango lions swim and wade in water for hours, and then even climb trees to cool, look out or get away from flies*
- *60 years ago, there were well over 2 million elephants, today there are under 500,000*
- *At the same time, lions have dropped from 450,000 (when I was born) to 20,000 today.*
- *Leopards have dropped from 700,000 in that time to 45,000 and falling, as Botswana opens up leopard and elephant hunting again.*
- *A rhino gets shot by poachers every 7 hours.*

## FILMMAKERS' BIOS

*Dereck and Beverly Joubert are preeminent natural history filmmakers with 9 Emmy awards and a Peabody under their belts (amongst other awards) and are National Geographic Explorers at Large, a title given to just 14 people around the world. They have lived (and died) in Africa all their lives, and have over 40 films to their production and directing credits. But it is the plight of the big cats and disappearing African wild landscapes that drives them to expose and talk about Africa.*

*The former president of Botswana referred to them as 'True Children of Africa' and that is right: their mission is to preserve the integrity of that wild places there.*

*As filmmakers, they find a "Sympatico" with Walter Koehler, Sabine Holzer and Ivo Filatsch at Terra Mater Factual Studios in making films **that matter**.*

**CREDITS**

TERRA MATER FACTUAL STUDIOS  
WILDLIFE FILMS

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*This is a love letter, from us,  
to the greatest river in Africa.*

*We hope she knows...*

---

a TERRA MATER FACTUAL STUDIOS  
and WILDLIFE FILMS production

---

in co-production with  
THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC DOCLIGHTS / NDR NATURFILM

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in association with  
PBS CPB ARTE FRANCE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNELS

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**OKAVANGO**

---

a film by  
DERECK & BEVERLY JOUBERT

---

**END CREDITS**



directed & produced by

DERECK JOUBERT

BEVERLY JOUBERT

produced by

IVO FILATSCH

executive producers

SABINE HOLZER

WALTER KÖHLER

executive producers

FRED KAUFMAN

JÖRN RÖVER

HÉLÈNE COLDEFY

writer, cinematographer & narrator

DERECK JOUBERT

edited by

JOLENE VAN ANTWERP

sound production & design by

BEVERLY JOUBERT

original music by

JB ARTHUR

SARAH CLASS

---

ADDITIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHY

TAYLOR TURNER

CASEY ANDERSON

LUKE BARNETT

	JAMES BOON
	NEL BOSHOFF
	GRANT BROKENSHA
	LUKE CORMACK
UNDERWATER EXPERT	SVEN BOURQUIN
ADDITIONAL EDITOR	MELISSA PARRY S.A.G.E.
ASSISTANT EDITORS	WARREN FREIMOND
	INNOCENTIA MAOTA
GRAPHIC DESIGNER	CLINT CORDEN
POST-PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR	MICHAEL FRÖCH
ONLINE EDITOR	SIEGFRIED KERN
PICTURE POST-PRODUCTION & VFX POSTPRODUCTION	VIENNA FX
COLOURIST	LEE NIEDERKOFER
VFX ARTISTS	CHRISTOPH STEINER
	OLIVER RAUTNER
	VALENTINA KUTTNER
DIGITAL INTERMEDIATE & MASTERING VOLLENHOFER-ROHLFING	CHRISTIAN
SOUND EFFECTS DESIGN S.A.G.E.	JULI VANDENBERG
FOLEY ARTISTS	RON NELL

	VAL NELL
SOUND POST-PRODUCTION VIENNA	BLAUTÖNE
RE-RECORDING MIXER	BERNHARD ZORZI
SOUND POST-PRODUCTION CO-ORDINATOR	EVA REITHOFER
SOUND POST-PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR	THOMAS KATHRINER
SOUND POST-PRODUCTION SOUTH AFRICA	BEYOND SOUND CHARLOTTE BUYS
ORCHESTRATION	TILO HEINRICH
MUSIC RECORDING ENGINEER	RICHARD MITCHELL
ORCHESTRA ORCHESTRA	THE JOHANNESBURG FILM
TITLE MUSIC	"SWEET DREAMS" WRITTEN BY ANNIE LENNOX / DAVE STEWART PERFORMED BY MARILYN MANSON UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP
PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE	VANESSA YELSETH
PRODUCTION MANAGERS	TRAUDE BOTHA LORNA GIBSON
LINE PRODUCER	ALDO METZELAAR

UNIT MANAGER

DINAH CZEZIK-MÜLLER

SPECIAL THANKS

THE PRESIDENT AND THE PEOPLE OF BOTSWANA  
THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, WILDLIFE AND TOURISM OF BOTSWANA

GREAT PLAINS CONSERVATION

SELINDA RESERVE AND DUBA PLAINS GUIDES

CANDICE ODGERS

MARK STOOP

JOHAN THERON

BRIDGET ZIETSMAN

JANET HESS

BILL MURPHY

TOM SYNNAZSCHKE

HÉLÈNE GANICHAUD

a production of

TERRA MATER FACTUAL STUDIOS and WILDLIFE FILMS

in co-production with

THIRTEEN DOCLIGHTS / NDR NATURFILM

in association with

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