



IT'S A BOOGIE,
JIM, BUT NOT AS
WE KNOW IT...



With Milko, Siân and Dan BC organising jumps out of a C-130 Hercules in Botswana... why wouldn't you go?

WORDS: JIM BRADWELL

The Makgadikgadi Epic Boogie was a four-day event based at a temporary dropzone outside Sowa in Botswana. On the first day, flatflyers jumped in small groups of all abilities out of a Botswana Air Defence Force CASA C-212's tailgate (think Skyvan, without the "iconic" design!). Then we moved to the BADF C-130, jumping 28-30-ways and lower-experienced 12-ways which still turned three-four points.

Milko, Siân and Dan briefed fun dives too, with fantastic debriefs full of laughter and learning. Andre du Preez from South Africa also had fun with his Freely organised group. Everyone really enjoyed the jumping and atmosphere.

The large landing area was beside a local festival and there were 2-3,000 spectators over the course of the event. Locals arrived in droves with picnic hampers and cool boxes to enjoy the open-air music and watch in amazement as we landed alongside them. And just because it could, the Herc made a



low pass over the event after every lift. It was probably just a coincidence but, late in the evening, the stage became packed with revellers... 95% of whom were skydivers!

The Boogie was “inclusive” in several ways. Transport to and from Kasane was laid on, along with accommodation and all meals. We arrived to a miniature tented village with fully functioning and clean shower and toilet facilities. ‘Tented’ implies camping, but there were proper bed frames with mattresses, your bed was made every morning and the tent was swept too! Food (included, again) was professionally prepared in a purpose-built kitchen facility adjacent to the large gazebo-style marquee where everyone ate together – all very sociable. The challenge with three different meat dishes at each meal, salad and vegetables, starters and sweets was to not eat too much!

It was also inclusive for the non-skydivers. Not only could they go for a spin in the Bell Ranger helicopter and see the beautiful countryside, but they could ride to altitude in the Herc and watch the groups

exit the tailgate too. And, if you didn’t want to ride the boat on the lake, you could sit in the sun with fresh ground coffee in the heart of the skydiving activity. Another benefit of travelling to Botswana is the lack of a time zone shift and only one hour of difference to BST – no body clock havoc.

On the last day, unfavourable weather stopped play and thoughts turned to the long return by coach to Kasane. But the Epic Boogie had one final ace to play...

“Right, everybody – go and collect your gear because the Herc is going to fly you all back.” WOW! We all loaded our bags in the back, secured with a large net and the help of the loadmaster, found a webbing seat and took off. A few minutes after that, I checked the window and realised we were still very low. Just because he could, the pilot made one final low pass over the DZ. Awesome!

But to go all that way and only skydive would have missed the point. Botswana is home to the world’s best wildlife safaris and the opportunity to experience the most stunning and densely populated game areas up close and personal should not be

missed. Chobe National Park was amazing. We travelled a few days early for a camping safari and there was a day trip to the jaw-droppingly beautiful Victoria Falls, as well as amazing game viewing by boat from the Chobe River. Lions, elephants, leopards, buffalo, zebras, giraffes, impalas, kudus, fish eagles, crocodiles, hippos and much, much more were there in abundance. It was an adventure that was not to be missed.

The event’s success was driven by a phenomenal collaboration between the Botswana Tourism Organisation, the Botswana Defence Force and the Parachute Association of Botswana in conjunction with Johannesburg Sky Events (Eugene ‘Pottie’ Potgieter and Fritz Schoeman) and the magnificent team from Johannesburg Skydiving Club. Where else in the world does that happen?

So it was a Boogie, but not as we necessarily as know it. In my opinion, it had the best activity package skydivers and non-skydivers alike will ever experience! ●

1 Exit from the incredible C-130 Hercules, by Ioannis Vlachiotis

2 By Jim Bradwell

3 Jim Bradwell landing at the Botswana temporary DZ. Credit: Botswana Unplugged

4 Wingsuiting off the tailgate, by Ioannis Vlachiotis

5 By Jim Bradwell

6 Big-way over Botswana, by Ralph Wilhelm

