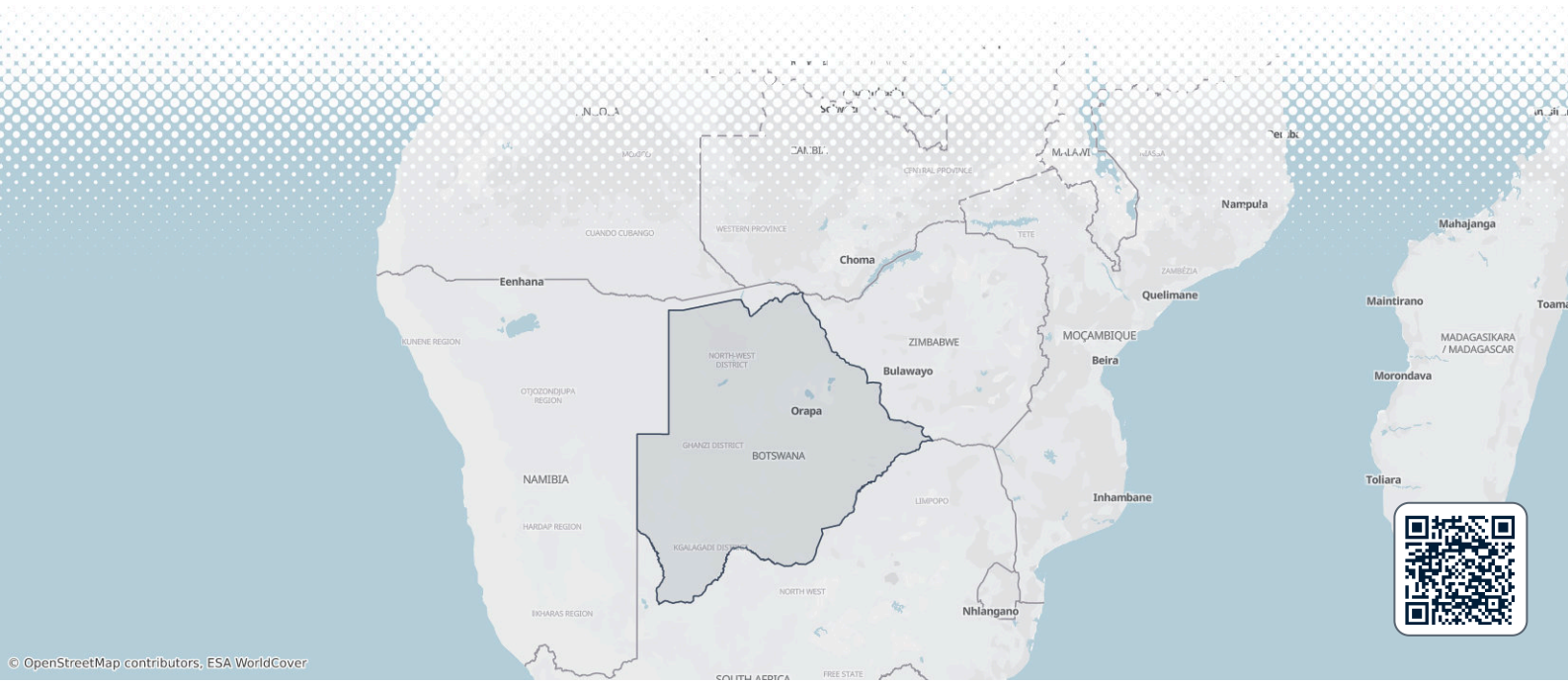


Botswana

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Botswana is a landlocked country in southern Africa, known for some of the best wildlife viewing on the continent. Most of the country is flat Kalahari sand and savanna. In the north, the Okavango Delta turns the desert into a huge network of channels, lagoons and islands. Elephants, lions, hippos and wild dogs live here in large numbers. Further east, Chobe National Park has one of the largest elephant populations in Africa.

The country has a deliberate "high-value, low-volume" tourism policy. Many camps are small, remote and expensive, and you often reach them by light aircraft. Self-drive camping in a 4x4 is the main budget alternative. Botswana suits wildlife lovers, photographers and travelers who want quiet, empty landscapes. It has been a stable democracy since independence in 1966, when *Seretse Khama* became its first president. Diamonds, found soon after independence, still fund much of the economy.

The dry season, from May to October, is the best time for wildlife viewing. Animals gather near water, and the grass is short. The rainy season, from November to April, is greener and cheaper, and it is the best time for birds and for the zebra migration in the salt pans.

Money & payments

Botswana is an expensive destination, mainly because of safari lodges. In remote Okavango and Chobe camps, prices often start around USD 600 per person per night and can exceed USD 1,500 in high season. Camp rates usually include meals, drinks and game drives. Lodges and tour operators often quote prices in US dollars.

Currency

CURRENCY	1 BWP	1 BWP
P	**0.065 EUR**	**0.0728 USD**
BWP	1 EUR = 15.378 BWP	1 USD = 13.734 BWP

Cards accepted in major venues

- **Cash**: ATMs are common in Gaborone, Maun, Kasane and Francistown. There are no ATMs inside the parks or in small villages, so carry cash before you leave town.
- **Cash only**: small shops, markets and some remote border posts or campsites accept cash only.
- **Budget**: A self-drive camping trip costs far less than a lodge safari, but 4x4 rental, park fees and fuel are expensive.

Typical costs

Rough prices in touristic areas, per person

Hotel (double room, per night) mid-range hotel in town, double room	1,000 – 2,500 P €65 – €163
Dinner (mid-range restaurant) mid-range restaurant, two people	300 – 600 P €20 – €39
Inexpensive meal	60 – 120 P €4 – €8
Local beer	20 – 40 P €1 – €3
Coffee	25 – 45 P €2 – €3
Water 1.5 l bottle	8 – 15 P €1 – €1
Transit ticket minibus (combi) in town	7 – 10 P €0 – €1

Tipping

Tipping is common in the safari industry, and guides and camp staff depend on it. In town, tipping is more relaxed.

- **Safari guides**: tip your guide directly at the end of your stay, in pula or US dollars.
- **Camp staff**: most lodges have a shared tip box for kitchen, housekeeping and other staff.
- **Mokoro polers**: tip them separately after the trip.

Restaurant about 10 % if service is not included	Optional
Tour guide USD 10–20 per guest per day	Expected
Hotel staff tip box, about USD 10 per guest per day at safari camps	Optional
Taxi round up	Optional
Bar round up	Optional

Electricity

Most sockets are the British three-pin type, and some older buildings still have round-pin sockets. Bring a universal adapter. Many remote camps run on solar power, so charging may only be possible in the main area or at set times.

ELECTRICITY



Type D

ELECTRICITY



Type G

230 V · 50 Hz

Language

English is the official language and is used on signs, in government and in business. Setswana is the national language and is spoken by most people at home. You can travel everywhere in English. A greeting in Setswana is always appreciated, especially in villages.

Useful phrases

Hello	Dumela
Thank you	Ke a leboga
Please	Tsweetswee
Yes	Ee
No	Nnyaa
Goodbye	Tsamaya sentle
How much?	Ke bokae?

Staying connected

- **SIM cards**: the main networks are Mascom, Orange and BTC. You can buy a SIM card at the airport, at network shops and in supermarkets. **You must register a SIM card with your passport.**
- **Coverage**: signal is good in towns and along main roads. Inside the Okavango Delta, the Central Kalahari and other parks, there is usually no signal. Many lodges offer Wi-Fi only in the main area, and some offer none at all.
- **Remote travel**: self-drivers in remote parks often rent a satellite phone or a satellite messenger for emergencies.

Safety & emergencies

Botswana is generally a safe country for visitors, and attacks on tourists are rare. Crime has increased in the larger towns. In Gaborone, Francistown and Maun, take normal precautions: do not leave bags visible in cars, and avoid walking alone at night.

The biggest risks are wildlife and the roads:

- **Wildlife**: many camps and campsites are not fenced. Animals walk through them day and night. Do not walk around after dark without an escort, and never leave children alone.
- **Roads**: cattle, donkeys, goats and wild animals often stand on the roads, including main highways. **Avoid driving after dark.**
- **Remote areas**: in the Kalahari and the parks, help can be many hours away. Carry extra water, fuel and a way to call for help.

Emergency numbers

GENERAL EMERGENCY	POLICE	AMBULANCE	FIRE BRIGADE
911	999	997	998

Health

- **Malaria**: there is a malaria risk in the north, including the Okavango Delta, Chobe and the Kasane area. The risk is highest from October to May, during and after the rainy season. Ask a travel doctor about antimalarial tablets, and use repellent and long sleeves in the evening.
- **Vaccinations**: you need a yellow fever vaccination certificate if you arrive from, or have transited through, a country with yellow fever risk. Check routine vaccinations and hepatitis A before you travel.
- **Water**: tap water in the main towns is treated, but many visitors prefer bottled or filtered water. Lodges provide drinking water.
- **Sun and heat**: the sun is strong all year. From October to November, daytime temperatures can pass 40 °C.
- **Medical care**: good private clinics and pharmacies are available in Gaborone, Maun, Kasane and Francistown. Pharmacies in malls often open on weekends too. For remote safaris, buy travel insurance that covers **medical evacuation by air**.

Visas & entry

Citizens of many countries can enter Botswana without a visa for up to 90 days in a 12-month period. This includes most EU countries, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Travelers who need a visa can apply for an e-visa online before the trip.

- **Passport**: it should be valid for at least six months after arrival and have blank pages for stamps.
- **Tourism Development Levy**: most international visitors pay a levy of USD 30 per person at the border. Citizens of SADC countries are exempt.
- **Children**: minors may need to show a full birth certificate, especially when they travel with only one parent.

> Visa and entry requirements change frequently. Verify current requirements with the official immigration authority or your country's embassy before travel.

Etiquette

- **Greetings matter**: always greet a person before you ask a question, even in a shop. "Dumela, rra" (to a man) or "Dumela, mma" (to a woman) is polite and friendly.
- **Handshakes**: a light handshake is common. Some people hold their right forearm with their left hand as a sign of respect.
- **Photography**: ask before you photograph people, especially in villages. Do not photograph military sites, police or border posts, and ask permission before you photograph government buildings.
- **Dress**: casual clothes are fine. Wear more modest clothing in villages and churches. On safari, choose neutral colours such as khaki, green and brown.
- **Respect the elders**: people speak to older people with extra respect. Being patient and polite gets better results than being in a hurry.

Holidays & opening hours

On public holidays, government offices and banks close. Supermarkets and malls in towns usually stay open, but small shops may close. Holiday weekends, such as Easter and the Independence Day holiday at the end of September, are busy on the roads and at border posts.

Public holidays

Jan 1	New Year's Day
May 1	Labour Day
Jul 1	Sir Seretse Khama Day
Sep 30	Independence Day
Oct 1	Botswana Day holiday
Dec 25	Christmas Day
Dec 26	St. Stephen's Day
movable — May	Ascension Day
movable — Mar/Apr	Easter Monday
movable — Mar/Apr	Good Friday
movable — Jul	Presidents' Day

In towns, shops usually open from about 8:00 to 18:00 on weekdays and close earlier on Saturday. Many small shops close on Sunday, but malls and supermarkets open on Sunday with shorter hours. Government offices close at lunchtime for about an hour.

Getting around

Distances are long and public transport is basic. Most visitors combine domestic flights with light-aircraft transfers or a self-drive 4x4 trip.

- **By air**: most international flights connect through Johannesburg. Air Botswana and smaller airlines connect Gaborone with Maun and Kasane. From Maun and Kasane, small light aircraft fly visitors to camps in the Okavango Delta and other remote areas. **Luggage on these flights is limited, often to 20 kg in a soft bag.**
- **By road**: paved highways link the main towns. The A1 runs north from Gaborone to Francistown, and the A3 continues west to Maun. Inside most parks, roads are deep sand and you need a 4x4.
- **By bus**: intercity buses and minibuses run between the main towns. They are cheap, but they often leave only when full, and they do not go into the parks.
- **By boat**: in the Delta, the traditional way to travel is by mokoro, a narrow dugout canoe. Motorboats are used in deeper channels and on the Chobe River.
- **Park campsites**: self-drivers must book campsites in the main parks in advance, often many months ahead in the dry season.
- **Organized safaris**: mobile camping safaris are a good middle option between self-drive and luxury lodges.

Botswana **drives on the left**. Plan your route around fuel stations, which can be more than 200 km apart in the west.

Driving

- **Key rules**: seat belts are required for all passengers. Police speed checks are common, including on quiet rural roads. Do not use a phone while driving.
- **Veterinary fences**: checkpoints control the movement of animal products to prevent foot-and-mouth disease. Officials may confiscate raw meat and dairy, and you may need to drive through a disinfectant bath.
- **Border fees**: foreign-registered vehicles pay for a road permit, a road safety fee and third-party insurance at the border. Smaller border posts may accept cash only.
- **Park driving**: after rain, some park tracks flood. Lower your tyre pressure in deep sand and carry recovery equipment.
- **Fuel**: stations are attended and staff fill the tank for you. Buy fuel whenever you can outside the main towns. Diesel is widely available.
- **Parking**: parking in town centres and malls is usually free or cheap, often with a guard.
- **Electric vehicles**: public charging is very limited. An EV is not practical for touring the country.

URBAN
60 km/h

RURAL
80 km/h

MOTORWAY
120 km/h

PETROL
Unleaded 93, Unleaded 95

DIESEL
Diesel 50ppm, Diesel

Drive on the left

No motorway vignette needed

No toll roads. Foreign-registered vehicles pay a road permit (about BWP 100), a road safety fee (about BWP 50) and third-party insurance (about BWP 50) at the border; small border posts may take cash only.

Food & drink

Food in Botswana is simple and filling, with a strong focus on beef. A typical meal is a stiff porridge made from maize or sorghum, served with meat stew and a vegetable relish. People usually eat a light breakfast of porridge or bread, a big lunch and a lighter dinner. In villages and small towns, many people eat at simple cafés and from food stalls.

The national dish is **seswaa**, beef slowly boiled with salt and then pounded until it is soft and shredded. It is served at weddings, funerals and national celebrations. Other local foods include morogo, a leafy wild spinach, and phane, dried mopane worms, which are a popular protein snack. Magwinya, fried dough balls, are a common breakfast and street snack.

Local lagers such as St Louis are popular, and traditional sorghum beer is common in villages. Ginger beer and rooibos tea are widely drunk. In safari camps, food is usually international, often with a local dish on the menu for dinner.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Magwinya
Fried dough balls, eaten for breakfast or as a snack.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Mopane worms · phane
Dried caterpillars, fried or stewed; a popular protein snack.

DRINKS

St Louis
Locally brewed lager.

Sorghum beer
Traditional home-brewed beer, common in villages.

SIGNATURE DISHES

Seswaa
Beef boiled with salt and pounded until shredded; the national dish.

Pap · bogobe
Stiff maize or sorghum porridge served with stew.

Morogo
Wild leafy spinach cooked as a side dish.

Botswana – Plan Your Trip

Turn the places from this guide into a real itinerary, with smart routing, time estimates, and everything you need for a perfect trip.

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Where to explore

The north: delta and rivers

- Okavango Delta is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the heart of most Botswana trips. Most visitors explore it by mokoro, boat and game drive. The town of Maun is the main gateway.
- Moremi Game Reserve protects the eastern part of the Delta. It has some of the best wildlife viewing in the country and can be visited on a self-drive trip.
- Chobe National Park is famous for large herds of elephants along the Chobe River. Boat trips on the river are a highlight. The town of Kasane is the gateway, and Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe is about 1.5 hours away by road.

The salt pans

- Makgadikgadi Pans National Park is part of one of the largest salt-pan systems in the world. In the rainy season, it hosts a big zebra migration.
- Nxai Pan National Park is home to Baines Baobabs, a group of ancient baobab trees at the edge of a white pan.
- Kubu Island is a rocky island covered in baobabs, at the edge of Sua Pan. It is only reachable by 4x4.

The Kalahari

- Central Kalahari Game Reserve is one of the largest protected areas in Africa. It is known for black-maned Kalahari lions and wide open plains.
- Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park is shared with South Africa. It has red dunes, dry riverbeds and good predator viewing.

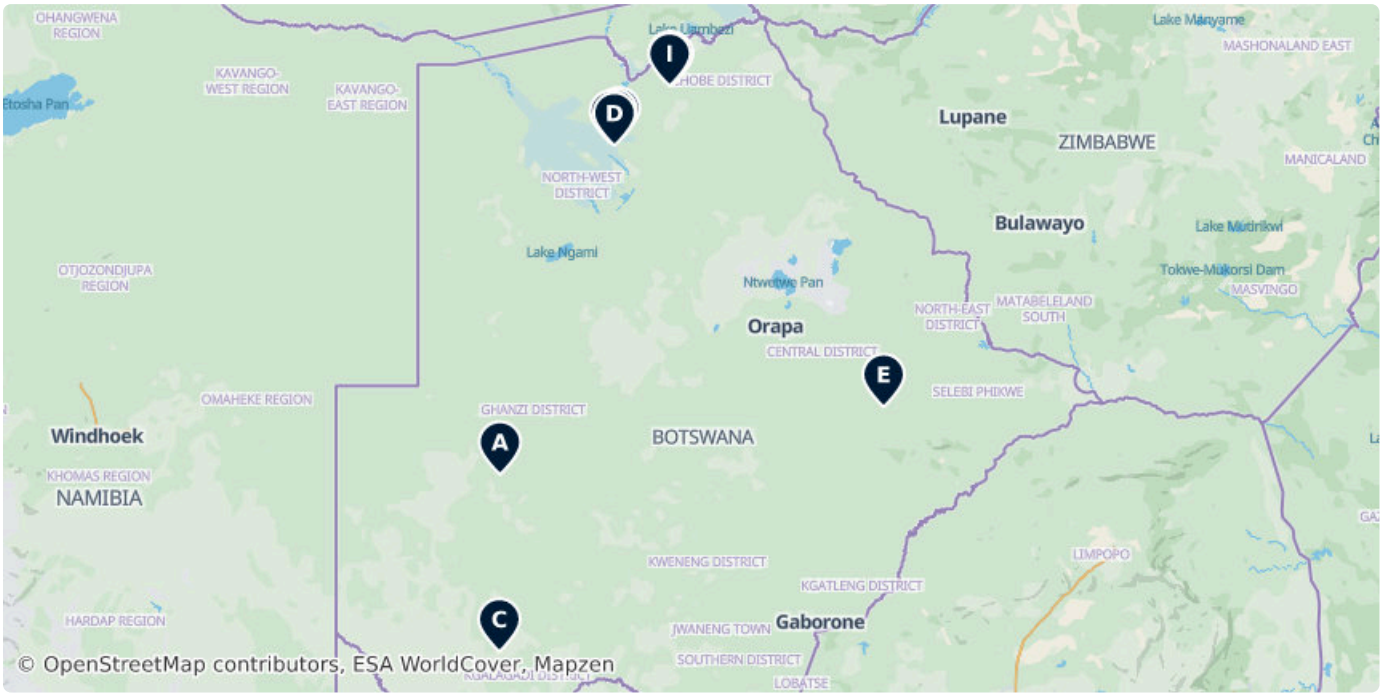
The east and the capital

- Gaborone is the capital and the main international gateway in the south. It is a practical stop before heading north.
- Khama Rhino Sanctuary is a community project that protects white and black rhinos. It is a short detour from the main road between Gaborone and the north.
- Tsodilo Hills is a remote UNESCO World Heritage Site in the northwest, with more than 4,500 rock paintings.

For more trip ideas, see the Botswana Tourism website.

Botswana Essentials

Botswana's landscape transitions from the 900,000-square-kilometre Kalahari Desert to the seasonal floodplains of the Okavango Delta. This selection features the rhino-rich Khama Rhino Sanctuary, the volcanic Goha Hills with ancient rock art, and the Savuti region of Chobe National Park. Key wildlife viewing points include the Mabuasehube salt pans, Hippo Pool in Moremi Game Reserve, and active waterholes known for elephant and wild dog sightings.





A Kalahari Desert

The Kalahari Desert is a large semi-arid sandy savannah in Southern Africa extending for 900,000 square kilometres, covering much of...

Botswana (-23.00000, 22.00000)

botswanatourism.co.bw

B Savuti Waterhole

A permanent water source in the Savuti region of Chobe National Park, attracting large herds of elephants and prides of lions, particularly during the dry season.

(-18.54481, 24.07773)

C Mabuasehube Pan

Located in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, this large salt pan is surrounded by red Kalahari dunes and serves as a mineral lick for gemsbok, springbok, and lions.

(-24.97377, 21.99138)

D Hippo pool

A deep section of the Khwai River in the Moremi Game Reserve hosting a high density of hippos and Nile crocodiles.

(-19.25459, 23.39734)

E Khama Hide

A camouflaged wildlife viewing blind overlooking a primary waterhole in the Khama Rhino Sanctuary, used for observing white and black rhinos.

(-22.23685, 26.68555)

F Goha Hills

Volcanic outcrops in northern Chobe National Park featuring ancient San rock paintings and panoramic views over the Savuti Channel.

(-18.56122, 24.10322)

G Wild Dog Den

A documented nesting and activity site for African wild dogs located within the Moremi Game Reserve.

(-19.23268, 23.35467)

H Paradies Pools

A series of scenic lagoons and floodplains in the Moremi Game Reserve known for leopard sightings and diverse aquatic birdlife.

(-19.19383, 23.45195)

I Elephant skull

A landmark and viewpoint in the Savuti area of Chobe National Park, marking a site of historical elephant mortality during extreme droughts.

(-18.56694, 24.06978)

J Lions den pools

Seasonal waterholes in the Moremi Game Reserve area frequently used by resident lion prides for drinking and hunting.

(-19.21464, 23.41187)

DATA SOURCES

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