AFRICA SAFARI TRIPS

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DUMELA BOTSWANA!

Welcome to Botswana

Short travel guide

The best preparation for your safari!

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Introduction

You are about to embark on a remarkable journey to Botswana, one of Southern Africa's most rewarding safari destinations. Renowned for its low-impact, high-quality wildlife experiences, Botswana protects vast tracts of pristine wilderness - from the lush waterways of the **Okavango Delta** to the elephant-rich plains of **Chobe National Park**, the surreal **Makgadikgadi Pans** and the timeless landscapes of the **Kalahari Desert**. This is a country where space, silence and wildlife still reign supreme.

Botswana's flagship attraction, the Okavango Delta, is recognised as one of the Natural Wonders of Africa. This unique inland delta transforms the Kalahari into a maze of lagoons, channels and floodplains teeming with wildlife. Combined with nearby Chobe National Park, home to one of Africa's largest elephant populations, it offers some of the continent's finest safari experiences.

Beyond its natural richness, Botswana stands out for its political stability, good governance and thoughtful use of its diamond wealth to support national development. It is widely regarded as one of Africa's safest and best-managed countries, with a strong democratic tradition, low levels of corruption and a well-developed tourism infrastructure, even in its most remote regions.

Travel in Botswana can feel refreshingly different: more remote, more immersive and occasionally more adventurous than many travellers may be accustomed to. This travel guide is designed to help you prepare with confidence, so you can fully enjoy everything this exceptional destination has to offer.

Overview

Botswana is a landlocked country in Southern Africa, north of South Africa, bordered by Namibia to the west and north, Zimbabwe to the east, and Zambia to the northeast. Much of its vast, flat territory is covered by the Kalahari Desert. The name Botswana means "Land of the Tswana," named after the dominant Tswana people (collectively called *Batswana*) upon independence from Britain in 1966.

Botswana has a population of 2.7 million, making it a sparsely populated nation with roughly 5 people per square kilometre. Botswana officially recognises eight major Tswana tribes (Bangwato, Bakwena, Bangwaketse, Bakgatla, Barolong, Batawana, Balete, and Batlokwa) who form the major ethnic group and speak Setswana. However, around 30 other non-Tswana tribes (like Kalanga and Basarwa) exist, with some estimates suggesting non-Tswana groups make up over 60% of the population.

Botswana has two official languages: English is used in government and business, while Setswana (Tswana) is the dominant national language, spoken by most people. While these two are primary, numerous other languages like Kalanga, Ndebele, Herero and Khoisan dialects also exist. English is widely understood, especially in urban areas, but learning a few basic Setswana phrases is always appreciated.

Cities

The capital of Botswana is Gaborone, a modern city in the southeastern part of the country, named after Chief Gaborone and established as the capital for independence in 1966. It serves as Botswana's political, economic and cultural heart.

After Gaborone, Botswana's biggest cities by population are Francistown (the so-called 'capital of the north'), Mogoditshane (a rapidly growing urban centre near Gaborone), and Maun (the 'tourism capital' and gateway to the Okavango Delta).

Putting some facts together

- Capital: Gaborone
- Currency: Pula (BPW)
- Population: 2,7 million
- Language: English and Setswana
- Surface area: 581,730 km²
- Water surface: relatively small compared to its landmass, about 2.7% of its total surface
- Neighbouring countries: South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia
- Highest point: Monalanong Hill, reaching 1,494 meters
- Time difference: Botswana is GMT+2, so generally two hours ahead of the UK and 7 to 10 hours ahead of the USA.
- The most popular destinations are the Okavango Delta, Chobe National Park, Makgadikgadi Pans and the Kalahari Desert.

Going on a safari in Botswana

In the Western world *safari* usually means observing wild animals in their habitat. Originally, however, it's a Swahili word referring to a trip or journey. The good thing is that with us, you combine both meanings: you go on a safari (trip) to see lots of wildlife!

The most popular safari animals are the Big Five: lions, elephants, buffalo, leopards, and rhinos. But the national parks in Botswana also host countless other impressive animal species and hundreds of beautiful, colourful birds. You can see them all with Africa Safari Trips! Be aware that animals are most active at sunrise and sunset. Around that time, temperatures are pleasant, and animals are looking for food. The chance to see animals in action is most significant during that time. But also in the middle of the day, there is plenty of wildlife to see.

Botswana offers unique water-based safaris, typically in the Okavango region, where you float silently in a traditional *mokoro* (dugout canoe) for intimate wildlife viewing in Africa's largest inland delta - a stark contrast to the desert surroundings. The silence of travelling in a mokoro means that birds and animals are less likely to take fright, allowing you the opportunity to capture that perfect photo and see that lesser-spotted bird. It’s an exceptionally relaxing way to explore the reed-lined waterways and discover creatures you wouldn’t typically see from a vehicle or on foot.

But traditional game drives remain key, with incredible wildlife, diverse landscapes (deltas, deserts and salt pans), and minimal crowds for a truly immersive safari experience.

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Visit local tribes

Traditional tribes are still present in Botswana. The Khwai Village, for example, is a small community on the edge of the Okavango Delta involved in running the Khwai Community Concession. This is a leading example of community-based conservation in Botswana, with tourism revenues helping to support local livelihoods while protecting the wildlife. Home to around 400 residents, life in the village has been shaped by the rhythms of the surrounding wetlands and wildlife for many centuries. A guided visit offers a respectful glimpse into daily life.

In and around the Okavango Delta and Chobe region, other culturally significant groups include the Bayei and Hambukushu, often known as the River People. They are renowned for their mastery of the mokoro (traditional dugout canoe), fishing techniques and river-based traditions. These cultural interactions add a meaningful human dimension to your journey, enriching your safari with stories and traditions that have endured alongside Botswana's wilderness for generations.

General safari rules

Many people are unsure what to expect on a day of safari and wonder what their transport looks like, or what a guide does. It's good to be aware of the national park's official and unofficial rules when going on a safari. We've listed the most important guidelines below:

1. The national parks in Botswana generally open at sunrise and close at sunset, which comes down to 6:00 AM to 6:30 PM in the dry season and 5:30 AM to 7:00 PM in the wet season. For safety reasons, opening times are dictated by daylight hours and game drives are allowed only within this period.

2. These national park opening times apply even when you sleep in the middle of the park. In some areas, night game drives are allowed, and lodges will subsequently offer them. You will be informed upon arrival if this is the case.

3. Parks only issue 24-hour permits. When spending two nights in, for example, Chobe National Park, you get two permits that allow you to stay 48 hours in the park, and there are fines for leaving the park too late. Your park permits are included in the price of your itinerary, however, and the lodge's guides will take care of all formalities.

4. All meals are included in the price of your stay, and lodges provide lunch boxes when needed. If a certain activity occurs around breakfast or dinner, the lodge will make arrangements for this and update you about it.

5. Make sure to arrive on time at the agreed meeting point for any excursions you join, and for arranged transfers to your next flight.

6. For the safety of both animals and people, the maximum speed in the parks is 40 km/h (25 mph) and driving off-road is forbidden in all national parks.

7. Inside the park, you can only leave the safari vehicle within designated campsites or rest areas. Never leave the car or hang out of the window while on a game drive.

8. It's not allowed to feed the animals.

9. Drones are not allowed in any national park or wildlife sanctuary in Botswana unless you have prior government permission.
10. At wildlife sightings, be patient and respectful. If several vehicles are already gathered around an animal, don't push to be in front or block other vehicles.
11. Keep noise to a minimum when you're close to wildlife. Avoid sudden movements, switch off your engine when it's safe to do so, and give everyone a chance to enjoy the sighting.
12. Never litter, not even cigarette butts. Keep your rubbish in the vehicle until you can dispose of it properly.
13. Never remove plants, animals, rocks or any other natural objects from the parks.
14. When encountering local people in the park, always ask permission before photographing them. A friendly conversation often comes first, and a small tip can be appreciated.
15. If you bring gifts for local communities, ask your lodge or guide for advice on the best way to distribute them fairly.

Guided fly-in safaris

When you arrive in Botswana, your journey begins straight away. Our local representative will welcome you at the airport, holding a sign with your name, and transfer you to your first destination. From there, all further transfers are taken care of. Safari activities are organised by the experienced teams at your lodges.

The role of the guides

The guide is one of the most important people during the game drive. It's his job to assist you and the other passengers to the best of his ability and ensure you all enjoy your trip. Be aware that not all clients are the same, and that he might misinterpret some of your needs. If you, for example, want more anecdotes and facts about the country, the people, or the animals, be sure to tell him. But if you need a break or a longer stop around a certain herd of animals, don't hesitate to share this with him, either.

Conversations with other drivers

Once on safari, guides tend to keep each other posted about special things they have seen. If a driver sees a special animal, he will make an effort

to let others know. This means guides might pull over if they see a car coming from the opposite direction - mainly to check if there is anything ahead that you might want to see.
Guests can misunderstand these conversations since the guides are speaking Setswana and, at first glance, just seem to have a chat. While in fact, they are trying to give you the best experience possible. It's good to keep this in mind if your guide stops to talk to other drivers.

Safari activities when staying in lodges
At each lodge on your journey, you will be offered a choice of safari activities. Upon arrival, the available options will be explained, and you can always select two experiences. In most cases, this includes sunrise or sunset game drives (sometimes even night safaris), boat or mokoro excursions, guided bush walks or a cultural visit. You don't need to worry about park entry fees or tickets for any of these, as the lodges and guides take care of all the logistics.

The activities are usually joined with other guests from the lodge who have chosen the same outing. In practice, this rarely detracts from the experience. And because the safaris are led by highly skilled local guides with a deep understanding of the ecosystem, animal behaviour, and the rhythms of the bush, you are ensured of authentic and unforgettable encounters.

If at any point, you feel like taking it easy and just spending an afternoon at the lodge, just go for it. Many lodges offer excellent wildlife viewing right from the deck, so you're not missing out.

Private game drives and excursions
Private safari game drives or excursions can be arranged at your request and at an extra cost. Don't wait to arrange this until the last minute, however, as especially in the high season, safari vehicles and guides are limited. Even when booking in advance, we cannot always guarantee availability. The sooner you book, the bigger your chance!

Altering the itinerary while on safari

It's also good to keep in mind that, once on safari, it's not advised to change the sequence of the parks, schedule an excursion or park for another day or time, or replace an excursion or park with new ones on the itinerary. Even though you have a lot of freedom, the mentioned changes can result in full cancellation charges and are, most of the time, impossible to implement. In addition, changes come with extra costs when park fees, excursions or accommodations have to be rebooked. This is why we usually advise against altering the itinerary once you are on the road.

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Before you travel

Before you fly to Botswana, there are a few things to take care of. Coming from most EU countries, the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, you don't need a visa to fly to Botswana. However, your passport must be valid for at least six months after returning from Botswana. Other than that, you only need to book your flight tickets and arrange (travel) insurance.

Just in case, we share embassy addresses with you. In the rare case something happens during your trip with us, it might be good to have these at hand.

Addresses of embassies in Botswana

Embassy of the United Kingdom
British High Commission Gaborone
Plot 1079-1084 Main Mall, off Queens Road

P.O. Box 0023
Gaborone, Botswana
+267 395 2841
e-mail: bhc@botsnet.bw
Website:https://www.gov.uk/british-high-commission-gaborone

Embassy of the United States
U.S. Embassy Gaborone
Embassy Drive, Government Enclave

P.O. Box 90
Gaborone, Botswana
+267 395 3982
e-mail: consulargaborone@state.gov
Website: https://bw.usembassy.gov/

Addresses of Botswana embassies

In the United Kingdom
Botswana High Commission
6 Stratford Place
W1C 1AY London
+44-207-6471000
e-mail: bohico@govbw.com
Website: www.gov.bw

In the United States
Embassy of the Republic of Botswana
1531-1533 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
+1 (202) 244-4990
e-mail: info@botswanaembassy.org
Website: www.botswanaembassy.org

International flight tickets

Most safari-goers will fly straight to Maun International Airport (MUB) to visit the Okavango Delta or Kasane International Airport (BBK) for Chobe National Park. Our travel consultants will be happy to advise you on this. Botswana's capital Gabarone is located outside of the safari circuit. You'll fly into Sir Seretse Khama International Airport (GBE) if you visit the capital.

Children travelling alone or with a single parent
Botswana requires children under 18 to have a valid passport, a certified unabridged birth certificate showing both parents' details, and, if travelling with one parent, an affidavit from the absent parent (or court order/death certificate) as well as a certified copy of his/her passport.

Health care

Health care in Botswana is of varying quality, generally better in urban areas but limited in rural zones, with long waits and limited access to specialists. There are 26 hospitals in Botswana, most of which are public, but in Gaborone, you also find a few world-class private hospitals. However, it's always better to prevent getting sick.

Vaccinations

Botswana is a tropical country, and some vaccinations are recommended when visiting. We advise you to ask your general practitioner or local health centre for up-to-date vaccination advice at least eight weeks before travelling to Botswana. Some health insurance plans will cover the cost of various vaccinations, so it's wise to check with your insurer.

Make sure all your vaccinations are recorded in your yellow vaccination certificate. If you don't already have one, obtain it with your first vaccination. Don't forget to take your vaccination certificate with you on your trip; it contains important information a doctor might need in case of an emergency.

Yellow fever

Botswana is mapped by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a country with no risk of yellow fever. See also this map on the CDC website. This means people coming directly from the United States or Europe do NOT need the yellow fever vaccination to enter Botswana.

However, the Botswana government does require an official yellow fever vaccination certificate from travellers arriving from, or having transited through (with a layover of 12 hours or more), a country with a risk of yellow fever transmission (find the updated list of countries where WHO has determined a risk of yellow fever transmission here).
Be aware that your doctor may advise against this vaccination because you are older than sixty or have a medical condition. If this is the case, you can still travel to Botswana from/via countries with yellow fever, carrying a letter from your doctor that exempts you from this rule.

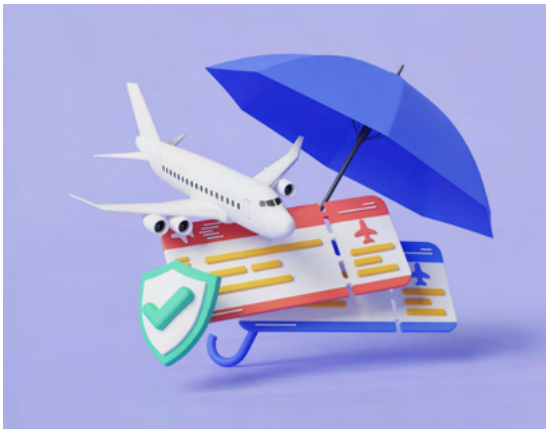
Malaria medication

Malaria is present in Botswana, especially in areas such as the Okavango Delta and Chobe National Park in the north. The transmission risk increases during the rainy season (November to May) and drops significantly in the dry winter months (June to October). The risk is generally low in the dry season due to fewer mosquitoes, and the south of the country has only a few reported cases, with Gaborone being completely malaria-free. Nevertheless, it's wise to consult a doctor for personalised advice and to use repellents, protective clothing, and nets while in the country. Most visitors take malaria medication as a precaution. At night, you can protect yourself with mosquito repellent and long-sleeved tops and trousers when going outside. Mosquito nets are provided in almost all lodges.

Allergies
If you have allergies or other special needs, please inform us in advance so we can let the lodges know.

Medical equipment
If you use (electrical) medical equipment, it's important to inform us in advance. We, in our turn, will inform the lodges where you will be staying. The power supply in Botswana is not consistent, with frequent power surges and voltage drops. The country has experienced widespread load shedding (planned power cuts) in the past few years, due to a significant gap between electricity demand and available supply, so it's advisable to take extra chargers or batteries.

Insurance



Once again, it's mandatory to have travel insurance when going to Botswana, and it's strongly recommended to have good health insurance. If anything happens, you are likely to end up in a larger and/ or private hospital (often in South Africa) for costly treatment. These private hospitals will ask for a private health insurance policy document before checking you in.

Okavango Air Rescue
In the price of our travel packages, a fee for Okavango Air Rescue is included. This means you are insured for medical emergency evacuations from remote areas, something that is not usually covered by regular travel or health insurance. You can read more about this in our FAQ.

Travel Insurance
Your (mandatory) travel insurance should cover medical costs and damage to or loss of luggage. We gladly recommend Chapka Travel Insurance (for EU citizens only). It covers any travel, and your travel consultant can easily take out the policy for you. This needs to be done within 48 hours of finalising your booking with us (when your travel dates are fixed). Please note that Chapka focuses on travel and/or cancellation insurance only, and does NOT facilitate swift evacuation from remote areas during medical emergencies. Find out more about Chapka Travel Insurance on our website.

Cancellation insurance
Travel cancellation insurance is recommended in case you need to cancel your holiday before departure or during the trip. Be aware that some insurances only partly reimburse the amount in the event of a cancellation, so be sure to check this carefully!

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Luggage and travel essentials

When you are on safari, luggage space is always limited. Therefore, we advise you to leave your hard-case suitcases at home and travel with soft-case bags that are easy to stow away. Soft-case bags are also less likely to get damaged on the road.

Baggage during your international flights

Please check with your airline to know the size, weight and number of pieces of baggage permitted on your international flight. Also, make sure you carry essential items, for example, medications, in your hand luggage during the international flight, in case your suitcases are delayed or get lost during the flight.

Domestic flight baggage allowances

Domestic airlines (like Air Botswana) generally offer 23 kilograms of checked baggage and 7 kilograms carry-on for adults, while some smaller charter flights (like Mack Air) only allow soft bags with a maximum of 20 kilograms in total, of which 5 kilograms can be taken as carry-on.

We advise you to always check your ticket or the airline's specific policy, as it varies by carrier and route! Also, trolleys are not always allowed as hand luggage, unless they fit underneath your chair. On smaller charter or light aircraft (common in Botswana safaris), wheeled bags often have to be stowed as checked luggage due to space issues. If your luggage exceeds the weight limit, airline companies usually charge 7 to 10 USD for each extra kilo, which you can pay directly at the check-in desk.

Africa Safari Trips cannot be held liable if your hard-case suitcases get damaged during the safari or when the above luggage regulations are not followed.

Medical necessities

It is wise to take your own first aid supplies in a First Aid Kit with plasters, (sterile) gauze, something for blisters, iodine, and medication for common illnesses such as headaches and stomach problems. If you use menstrual products, we recommend bringing enough for the duration of your trip, especially when travelling to remote areas where the menstrual products may be limited or non-existent.

Medication

For some medication, you need a medical certificate from your doctor stipulating that these are for your personal needs only and that the amount is adequate for the duration of your stay. Furthermore, we advise you to carry important medication in your hand luggage and not in your check-in baggage. This way, you won't miss your medication if your baggage is late or gets lost.

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What to wear during your safari

Botswana has a conservative dress code. Especially in rural areas and religious places, covering shoulders and knees (knee-length skirts and dresses) is expected. It's respectful to adhere to these customs, but don't feel obligated to do so. Western casual wear is fine in cities, lodges and safari camps, where swimwear is appropriate around the pool.

Safari clothing

During the safari, it's best to wear casual clothing, preferably cotton clothing in safari colours (see picture). We advise against wearing dark or bright colours during the safari (black, blue, red) - these will attract flies and insects. Colours that don't stand out, like khaki or olive green, are best.

Keep in mind that it can get very hot in Botswana, especially in October and November, when daytime temperatures frequently hit 40°C (104°F) or higher as the rainy season peaks. It is therefore advisable to wear a hat, dark sunglasses, long sleeves and/or sunscreen to protect yourself, as too much sun can lead to dehydration, nausea, dizziness, or headaches. After sunset, it is advisable to wear long trousers (and possibly long sleeves) to protect against mosquitoes. Bring a sweater or jacket for the early mornings and cooler evenings, since, for example, Kalahari nights can get very chilly in winter. We also recommend bringing comfortable (sports) shoes and swimwear.

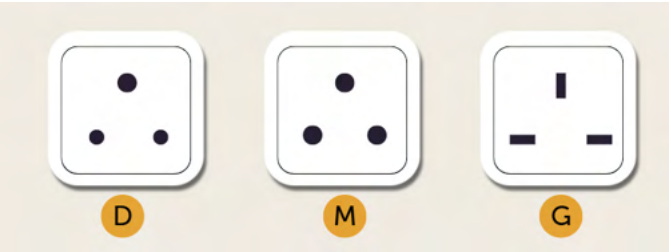
Ban on plastic bags

The Botswana government has officially banned single-use plastic carrier bags, regardless of their thickness. They can not be imported, exported, manufactured, sold, stored, supplied, or used - only biodegradable ones are allowed. This ban is primarily aimed at reducing plastic in commercial use (as opposed to tourists bringing in plastic bags to carry personal property), but we would strongly recommend avoiding bringing plastic bags into the country. Ziplock bags required by airlines for carrying liquids are allowed, as long as you take them back home.

Photography and video

If you intend to take some amazing shots, consider the following when preparing:

- Bring enough memory cards and extra batteries. It's possible to buy them in Botswana, but it's best to avoid the hassle of going into town and finding them.
- Bring lens caps, cleaning cloths, and a tight-fitting camera bag to protect the camera from dust.
- Bring a UV- or light filter to protect the lens and consider a circular polariser (CPL) filter to reduce glare and reflections, particularly on water safaris (such as in the Okavango Delta).
- A zoom lens (e.g. 300 mm) is recommended for photographing wild animals.
- When taking pictures of locals, always ask for permission. Nowadays, people are more used to cameras, but not everyone likes to have their picture taken. Especially in remote areas, it shows respect to ask for permission first.
- The use of drones is restricted and not allowed in national parks.
- Note that some tented camps offer limited power by using solar power or a generator. Botswana uses a standard voltage of 230V with a 50Hz frequency, which matches most of the world's modern devices, but check your device's input for 100-240V compatibility. However, voltages may fluctuate. We advise taking a plug adapter - best to get a universal one covering D/M/G (see illustration).



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Smart packing

- Passport and a copy of your passport
- Money belt for money and papers
- Vaccine passport
- Warm sweater and long trousers
- Memory card, spare batteries and charger for your camera
- Swimsuit
- Headgear
- High-factor sunblock and lip balm
- Body lotion
- Wetties for hands and face
- Sanitizer
- Sunglasses and, if needed, spare glasses or contact lenses
- Mosquito repellent (preferably with DEET)
- First Aid kit
- (Phone with) flashlight and alarm clock
- Linen bags for laundry or as protection from dust and moisture
- Binoculars
- World plug or travel adapter

When in Botswana…

Africa is still a very unfamiliar continent for many people, and chances are, this is your first time travelling to this side of the world. Botswana is a beautiful and safe African country, but things are different here, food-wise, culture-wise, and money-wise. To help you out, we've summed up the most important information about Botswana and explained below how things are done here (so you know what to expect once you disembark!).

Food & drinks

Food in Botswana's lodges, camps, and resorts is a delightful mix of international cuisine and local flavours, focusing on fresh, often locally sourced ingredients, grilled meats, fresh produce, and traditional dishes like *seswaa*; the national dish, made from pounded salted meat. Other popular items include *pap* (maize porridge), mopane caterpillars, fried dough *(magwinya)*, bean and corn dishes (like *dikgobe)*, and the unique melon porridge (*bogobe jwa lerotse)*. All of these are paired with excellent South African wines, local beers, and classic sundowner cocktails.

Hotels and lodges typically serve a continental breakfast spread alongside a full English-style option, with eggs cooked to order, bacon, sausages, tomatoes, cereals, freshly baked breads and seasonal fruits. Lunch and dinner are usually multi-course affairs, especially in safari lodges where dining is an integral part of the experience. In smaller, more intimate camps, meals are often served as a set menu, carefully prepared by the lodge's chefs, while larger lodges may offer buffet-style dining with a wide variety of choices. Dietary requirements are generally well catered for, provided they are communicated in advance.

Drinks

Botswana's main local beer is St. Louis Lager, a light, crisp lager that's a national favourite, brewed by Kgalagadi Breweries. *Castle and Lion* are the lagers brewed by South African Breweries' subsidiary in Botswana, widely available and very popular. There is a growing wine scene with a strong focus on South African wines alongside local producers, such as McErick Winery in Gaborone, and some imported international options in restaurants and hotels.

Tap water in Botswana's main cities is generally safe for consumption, but visitors with sensitive stomachs often prefer bottled water due to potential bacteria or chlorine. Bottled mineral water is widely available and recommended when in rural areas or when in doubt. Make sure you drink enough water. The heat in Botswana can cause you to dry out before you know it.

Money

In Botswana, payments are generally made using the local currency or by credit card. The official and overwhelmingly dominant currency is the Botswana Pula (BWP), available in banknotes of 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 pula, with coins denominated in thebe. Major credit cards (Visa and MasterCard) are widely accepted in hotels, lodges and most established restaurants, especially in safari destinations. US dollars are only accepted in top-end safari lodges, but the pula is preferred for everyday expenses, tips and small local purchases. Also, you might be given an unfavourable exchange rate if you don't pay in local pula. As exchange rates fluctuate, we recommend checking a currency converter shortly before departure or installing the app on your phone for the most up-to-date rates.

ATMs

The Botswana pula is not available or tradable outside the country, so it's best to withdraw cash or change money upon arrival. ATMs can be found in banks, at international airports, in larger towns such as Maun, Kasane and Gaborone, and in supermarkets/malls. They are scarce or non-existent in remote safari areas (so it's wise to draw some cash whenever you see an ATM).

The last reliable ATMs before heading into the bush can be found in Maun (for Okavango and Central Kalahari safaris), Kasane (for Chobe and Savuti), Gaborone and Francistown (for eastern/southern routes). There are no ATMs inside the Okavango Delta, Moremi Game Reserve, the Makgadikgadi Pans and Nxai Pans National Parks and most remote camps. We recommend carrying enough cash and using credit cards where possible.

Credit cards

Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted in hotels, lodges, major shops and restaurants, but American Express and Diners Club are often not, especially outside cities. It's best to carry a backup Visa/Mastercard ánd enough cash when going to remote areas. Cards usually work best there, but at times, remote camps have difficulty processing credit cards due to their location and poor connections.

How much cash to take?

How much cash you should have in your pocket depends, of course, on your personal needs and wishes. Prices in tourist areas are comparable to those in Europe, but your accommodation, all meals, and pre-selected activities are already paid for. You'll need cash for additional activities, drinks in the hotels, souvenirs and tips (read more about tipping in the next chapter).

Please note! ATM withdrawals may incur fees and your debit or credit card should be activated for world coverage before travelling.

Tipping
Tips are appreciated but not mandatory in Botswana. We recommend tipping local staff, knowing that wages are generally low. If you are satisfied with the service, please don't hesitate to show your appreciation. Common tipping amounts vary between 5 and 10 USD per day for the general staff, often via a communal tip box, while restaurants suggest tipping 10 to 15% (if not included in the bill - make sure to check!). Try to use pula for tips, or US dollars if not possible.

We also appreciate it if you also tip your guide at the end of an excursion, as we trust you will be satisfied with his or her service. As a general guideline, 5 USD per excursion per person in your group is a good amount. But of course, you are free to decide about this yourselves.

Phone calls and internet

Botswana's country code is +267.

All lodges and camps in the national parks have a radio to connect them to the outside world. This means you can call in case of an emergency, but this connection is not meant for lengthy long-distance calls. International calls can be made from landlines in all urban areas.

In most places, however, you'll find a mobile phone network. Roaming can be expensive, so try to use Wi-Fi to make your international calls home. Or, purchase a local prepaid SIM card from providers like Mascom, Orange, or beMobile (BTC) at the airport or certain retail stores. You can also arrange to have an eSIM before departure, for example via our partner Airalo. Please note that the network can be spotty or non-existent in remote safari areas such as the Okavango Delta.

The weather

The climate in Botswana is semi-arid. During the dry months of May through October, the days are warm, but the nights and early mornings can be very cold (especially in the Kalahari)! Many people assume that because they are travelling to Africa, it must be warm. This is not the case for Botswana's dry season; particularly June, July and August can be cold. The sun does come out quickly, though, and we recommend dressing in layers you can peel off when it warms up through the day. A lightweight jacket or fleece pullover is ideal in these months.

Botswana's rainy season runs from roughly November to April, peaking in December and January with hot, humid conditions and dramatic afternoon thunderstorms. This transforms the landscape into a lush green oasis, attracting baby animals and many migratory birds. Late October is generally the hottest time of the year, with temperatures often soaring up to 40 degrees Celsius or more.
Don't let the rainfall scare you! It tends to be unpredictable and highly regional. Frequently, a heavy downpour may occur in one area, while a few miles away, there is no rain at all. And showers are often followed by intense sun, so it's definitely possible to visit Botswana during the rainy season. Most roads will still be perfectly accessible, the national parks are all freshened up and green, and there are fewer tourists and fewer vehicles. There is, however, a chance you get stuck on a dirt road during heavy rains. Be flexible when this happens. This is also part of your safari experience.

Safety while travelling

Botswana is definitely a safe country to visit, as it's even considered to be one of Africa's safest. Of course, there are some urban areas to avoid in big cities like Gaborone, Maun and Francistown, but by taking some basic precautions (also during the safari), you will be fine. A few things to keep in mind:

- Put your valuables in a safe or leave them in special lockers at the reception, and never leave your passport, money, or valuables unattended in the room.
- Do not leave these important items (such as money or your bag) unattended in the car either, even for a short time.
- Leave valuable jewellery at home. Wear a (simple) necklace, watch, or wedding ring, but avoid flashy jewellery (that monkeys might also steal).
- Be wary of pickpockets in busy streets.
- Avoid going out by yourself at night, especially in cities. Also, avoid going out on foot at night. Always take a taxi.
- If you need a taxi, only use registered taxi companies that you can order at the hotel reception.

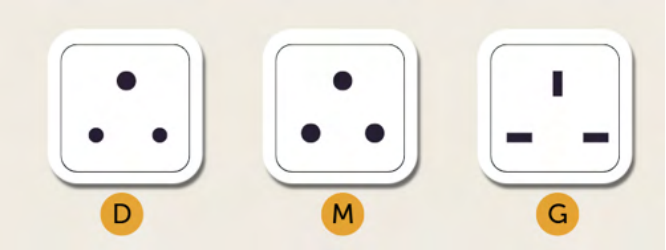
Taxis and other forms of transport

If you need to hire a taxi, please ask the reception at your lodge or camp to call a reliable company. Botswana has taxis in the cities (especially in Gaborone, Francistown, Maun and Kasane), but standard taxis are unmetered, so make sure to agree on the fares before starting your trip! There are many minibus-taxis (called *Mashuttles*) as well, but they are less recommended for tourists due to the fixed routes and potential confusion. In very remote safari areas, charter flights and *mokoro* canoes are the primary means of transport.

Electricity

Many camps in the national parks run on solar power and generators and don't offer power 24/7. Usually, power is available from 5 to 9:30 AM and from 7 to 11 PM (when guests are using facilities at the camp).

Botswana uses a standard voltage of 230V with a 50Hz frequency (which matches most of the world's modern devices, but check your device's input for 100-240V compatibility). We advise taking a plug adapter, as Botswana primarily uses Type D, G, and M plugs (three round pins in a triangle for D/M, three rectangular for G), and a voltage converter if you carry sensitive equipment.



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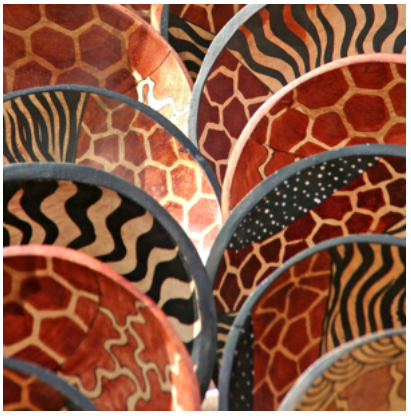
Souvenirs



In Botswana, there are many beautiful, mostly handmade, souvenirs to take home. In shopping malls and supermarkets, prices are fixed, but stalls along the road are used to bargaining. Typical souvenirs are handwoven baskets, intricate ostrich eggshell jewellery, beautifully carved wooden figures (animals, masks), traditional San hunting tools (bows, arrows, fire sticks), leather goods, and even high-quality diamond jewellery, reflecting the country's rich natural resources and skilled artistry, especially from the San people and local craft co-ops. Don't take anything made of skin, shells, coral, ebony or ivory, as exporting these is prohibited and Botswana has strict regulations for endangered species.

Handing out gifts or money

While driving outside of the national parks, you might get people asking you for money, candy, or pens. It's up to you if you give something, but our advice is not to do so. If you want to do or bring something for local people, it's best to talk to your guide or travel consultant about it and maybe bring something to hand out in places your guide deems appropriate.

National holidays

Botswana's national holidays include fixed dates:

- **January 1st:** New Year's Day
- **May 1:** Labour Day
- **July 1:** Sir Seretse Khama Day (celebrating Botswana's first President)
- **September 30:** Botswana Day (Independence Day)
- **December 25**: Christmas Day
- **December 26**: Boxing Day

Religious holidays like Good Friday, Easter, Easter Monday and Ascension Day are also celebrated, along with the unique President's Day.

- **Good Friday, Easter & Easter Monday**: Varies, usually in April
- **Ascension Day**: Varies, 40 days after Easter
- **President's Day**: Third Monday and Tuesday in July

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Preserve Botswana's nature with us!

Africa Safari Trips invests in and lives from the beautiful nature that Botswana offers. This is why we do everything in our power to preserve the environment to the best of our ability. We ask you, as our guest, not to leave waste in the national parks. Instead, please keep it with you until you or your guide can dispose of it properly when arriving back in the hotel. It's just a small gesture, but it will help future generations to enjoy this beautiful country just as we do!

*We wish you **tsamaya sentle** (safe travels) and warmly welcome you: **Dumela Botswana!***

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