

# African Sojourns

Specialists in Personalised Travel

## BOTSWANA COUNTRY INFORMATION



*In preparation for your Botswana Sojourn please find below some interesting facts about Botswana. For further information you can visit the official Botswana Tourism Authority's website [www.botswanaturism.co.bw](http://www.botswanaturism.co.bw).*



***The country:***

*Botswana is a landlocked country surrounded by Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It has a population of just over two million people. Slightly larger than France, the landmass covers 581 730 square kilometres, most of which is desert. The northern regions however, form a striking contrast with the dry Kalahari, where the stunning wetlands of the world-famous Okavango Delta and the diverse habitats of the Chobe and Linyanti add to the wealth of this wonderfully diverse country. The capital city is Gaborone while Maun and Kasane are the safari/tourist “hubs”.*

*Botswana is a stable multi-party democracy with legislative power vested in the Parliament, which comprises the president as ex-officio member and a unicameral National Assembly. Elections are held every five years. A 34-member House of Chiefs advise on tribal matters. The Botswana Democratic Party has governed Botswana since independence in 1966.*

***Currency***

*The Botswana currency is the Pula (meaning ‘rain’ in Setswana). It is divided into 100 thebe (meaning ‘shield’ in Setswana).*

*US Dollars, GBP Sterling, Euro and South African Rand can be used to pay for curios and gratuities at the safari camps. Visa and MasterCard are accepted throughout. Pula is only accepted for fuel, road tolls (if driving) and groceries/general shopping.*

***Visas:***

*Most European and USA passport holders do not require a visa to enter Botswana. However, please check with us or your embassy prior to arrival.*

***Use of plastic bags banned:***

*In an effort to prioritize the preservation of our environment, the Botswana government has taken an important measure to ban single-use plastic bags effective from **01 November 2018**.*

*According to the official government press release, "all plastic carrier bags, regardless of their thickness are prohibited from being imported, exported, manufactured, sold, stored, supplied and used in Botswana .. "The relevant authorities shall ensure that any plastic carrier bags entered in Botswana in contravention of these Regulations, are confiscated at the point of entry and disposed of or recycled in an environmentally sound manner."*

*Ziploc bags which are designed to carry toiletries will be permitted as they are expected to be in the possession of visitors and are not expected to be disposed of in the country. Any other form of plastic bags will not be permitted into the country and will need to be surrendered at the airport or any other point of entry.*

*We recommend all visitors to Botswana to be mindful of the above new regulation in order to have a smooth arrival experience and an enjoyable stay in Botswana.*

*Please do not travel with any plastic bags and please do not accept any plastic bags with purchases made in Botswana. We recommend that you travel with your own glass or metal water bottle.*

***Families travelling with children 17 years and younger:***

*All families travelling with children 17 years and younger will be required to travel with the full original birth certificate showing both parents names. Entry will be refused should you not have this document. Additional documents are required should both parents not be travelling with the child.*

***Tourism development levy:***

*All visitors to Botswana with exception of residents and citizens of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states and all children aged nine years and younger will be expected to pay a levy of USD30 per person on arrival. Payments are done at the ports of entry through electronic payment machines through cash (US Dollars), debit and credit card. After the payment, a unique receipt corresponding to the passport will be automatically generated. The receipt should then be presented to Immigration Officials. The passport and the receipt will be stamped and handed back to the traveller. The receipt will valid for a 30 day period and can be used for multiple entry.*

***Power:***

*Electricity is supplied at 220/240v. Both square and round wall plugs are used. Most camps run on generators and supply international adapters.*

***Communications:***

*Most camps are located in remote areas so cell phone and Internet connections are almost non-existent. Camps maintain contact with their head offices by radio. If you need to have guaranteed communication then we suggest your rent a satellite phone in South Africa prior to your arrival.*

***Access:***

*Most camps are accessed by light aircraft flights. There is a luggage restriction of 20kgs (44lbs) per person in soft-sided bags (no hard framed suitcases) on these flights. If an individual weighs over 100kgs (220lbs) please ensure you have advised us due to aviation rules for safety on these flights.*

***Language***

*The official language is English, with Setswana the most widely spoken Southern African language. There are eight major Tswana tribes, each of which occupies its own separate territory with its own traditional chiefs, and each tribe maintains communal ownership over its lands.*

***Time:***

*Botswana shares the same time as all southern Africa, except Namibia, which is Greenwich Mean Time – (GMT) + 2 hours.*

***Economy:***

*Since the discovery of diamonds, more than 40 years ago, Botswana has become one of Africa's most prosperous republics. Diamond mining has fuelled much of the country's*


expansion and currently accounts for more than a third of its GDP, 70 - 80% of export earnings, and about half the government's revenue. During the 1970s and 80s the former British colony boasted one of the world's highest economic growth rates, ahead of Germany, Japan, and the Netherlands. Botswana's rich mineral resources also include copper, nickel, semiprecious stones and coal. Tourism, financial services and farming are other key sectors. Tourism is the second biggest industry in the country, making huge impact on employment, infrastructure and rural development.

### **Public Holidays:**

The dates of certain public holidays change from year to year. If a public holiday falls on a Sunday, then the Monday is also declared a public holiday.

01 January, 01 May, 25 May 01 July, 17 July, 30 September, 25 December 26 December.

### **The Botswana flag:**

The Botswana flag was officially adopted on September 30, 1966. The colours on the flag correspond to those on the national coat of arms. The blue represents water; the white-black-white bands depict the racial harmony of the people as well as the pluralist nature of the society, which is inspired by the zebra, the national animal.

The Lilac-breasted Roller is the National bird of Botswana.

### **Shopping:**

Most of the safari camps carry a small selection of gifts in their shops. If you are not visiting any of the towns there is very little opportunity to buy from the local markets.

### **Climate:**

You can do a safari all year round in Botswana.

The summer is from October to March. This is the hottest time of year with the most rain falling in February and March. Since Botswana is largely desert or semi-desert it does receive very low levels of rainfall so the rainy season brings only very sporadic downpours (heavy and short) yet very high temperatures. This period is a haven for all types of migrant birds and wonderful butterflies and flowers.

The winter is from May to September. This is the dry cooler season. Temperatures in winter can drop quite dramatically at night and in the early morning, particularly when on safari in the open vehicle, so we suggest that you pack accordingly with very warm clothing including a warm winter jacket, a beanie, scarf and gloves. However, daytime temperatures are pleasantly warm. This period tends to see the higher concentration of game at the waterholes and larger herds. The bush is dry and thin and very dusty!

The in-between periods – April/early May and mid September, still tend to be dry, however, the days are cooler than in summer and the nights are warmer than in winter.

As the central point of all these regions, and therefore a good indicator of weather patterns throughout, the tables below reflect Maun's average annual climate. The following chart is a quick reference to the predominant weather conditions during different months of the year. However, please remember that there are no hard and fast rules!

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**Climate:**

**Temperature (°C) - These are the average lows and highs**

	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>
<i>Maun</i>	19/32	19/31	18/31	14/31	9/28	6/25	6/25	9/28	13/33	18/35	19/34	19/32

**Rainfall (mm). This varies according to the year and where you are.**

	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>
<i>Maun</i>	110	80	70	25	7	3	0	0	0	30	50	95

**Recommended reading (in no particular order):**

- *Botswana - The Bradt Travel Guide – Chris McIntyre*
- *Okavango: Wetland Wilderness - Adrian Bailey*
- *Okavango: An African Paradise - Daryl Balfour*
- *Chobe: Africa's Untamed Wilderness - Daryl Balfour*
- *The Lions and Elephants of the Chobe - Bruce Aitken*
- *This is Botswana - Daryl Balfour*
- *The Bushmen - A Changing Way of Life - Anthony Bannister.*
- *Botswana: A Brush with the Wild - Paul Augustinus.*
- *The Kalahari, Survival in a Thirstland Wilderness - Nigel Dennis, Dr Michael*
- *Guide to the Trees & Shrubs of the Okavango Delta - Veronica Roodt*
- *Guide to the Wildflowers of the Okavango Delta - Veronica Roodt*
- *Botswana Tourist Map & Guide - Veronica Roodt*
- *Wild About the Okavango - Duncan Butchart*
  
- *The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency; Alexander McCall Smith*
- *Tears of the Giraffe; Alexander McCall Smith*
- *The Kalahari Typing School for Men; Alexander McCall Smith*
- *When Rain Clouds Gather; Bessie Head*
- *White Dog Fell from the Sky; Eleanor Morse*
- *Cry of the Kalahari, Mark James Owens*
- *The Colour Bay: Triumph of Seretse Kama and His Nation; Susan Williams*
- *Serowe, Village of the Rain Wind; Bessie Head*
- *Saturday is for Funerals; Max Essex*

***African Sojourns wishes you a wonderful and exciting holiday!***