

AFRICA · WILDLIFE · ADVENTURE · DESERT · ROAD TRIPS · OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Botswana

Botswana built its tourism on high prices and low visitor numbers, and it shows: the Okavango Delta's papyrus channels, Chobe's riverfront elephant herds and the Makgadikgadi's salt pans feel unhurried and wild. Most trips mix fly-in camps with a self-drive or mobile safari, and dry-season lodges and campsites fill up to a year ahead.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Botswana and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 1 June 2026.

 CAPITAL Gaborone	 CURRENCY Botswana pula (BWP) £1 ≈ BWP 18.90	 LANGUAGE Setswana, English Kalanga	 BEST TIME May-Sep
 DAILY BUDGET £70-£1,100 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type D, G 230V · UK plugs fit	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 14h 30m via Johannesburg ~£850-£1,400 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+2 standard time

Botswana is a country of wilderness rather than sights. The Okavango, one of the world's largest inland deltas, spreads Angolan rainwater across the Kalahari, the flood arriving in the dry winter months and pulling wildlife into a maze of channels and islands. A classic first trip runs from Maun into the delta and Moremi Game Reserve, then north through Savuti and Linyanti to Chobe National Park and Kasane, often with a side trip to Victoria Falls across the border. The Makgadikgadi Pans and Central Kalahari add stark, empty contrast.

It is not a cheap destination. Government policy favours small, high-end camps, many reachable only by light aircraft, so a few nights in the delta can cost more than a week elsewhere in southern Africa. Budget travellers manage with self-drive 4x4s and public campsites booked well ahead, or mokoro trips from Maun. Game drives are uncrowded, private concessions allow night drives and walking safaris, and roads beyond the tar are deep sand. It suits wildlife lovers, photographers and confident off-road drivers far more than anyone after beaches or city life.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

WILDLIFE

Okavango Delta

Glide through papyrus channels by mokoro (dugout canoe), walk on palm islands and track lion, leopard and wild dog from remote camps. UNESCO-listed since 2014, the delta's floodwaters usually peak between June and August.
- 2

WILDLIFE

Chobe Riverfront

Botswana has Africa's largest elephant population, and in the dry season hundreds gather along the Chobe River near Kasane. Sunset boat cruises get you close to elephants, hippos and buffalo; Savuti's predators lie further south in the park.

3

NATURE

Makgadikgadi Pans

Among the world's largest salt flats: blinding white and silent in the dry season, when you can sleep out on the crust and meet habituated meerkats. After the rains, flamingos arrive and zebra herds migrate across the surrounding grasslands.

4

NATURE

Central Kalahari Game Reserve

One of Africa's largest reserves, at its best after the rains, when springbok and gemsbok gather in Deception Valley and black-maned Kalahari lions follow. Facilities are minimal, so go on a mobile safari or a well-equipped self-drive.

5

HISTORY

Tsodilo Hills

A cluster of quartzite hills rising from the Kalahari in the far north-west, sacred to the San and Hambukushu and UNESCO-listed for over 4,500 rock paintings. Local guides lead walks to the main panels, sometimes called the 'Louvre of the Desert'.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Gaborone

≈ 450,000 people

A young, low-rise capital planned around independence in 1966. Most safari-goers only pass through, but Mokolodi Nature Reserve and the Three Dikgosi Monument fill a pleasant day.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Francistown

≈ 103,000 people

Botswana's second city grew from a 19th-century gold rush near the Zimbabwe border. It is a practical stop for fuel and supplies on the road north to Nata and Kasane.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Maun

≈ 85,000 people

The dusty, sprawling gateway to the Okavango Delta, where light aircraft shuttle guests to camps; also the base for mokoro trips, scenic flights and stocking up before Moremi.

Gaborone's figure covers its urban area, including Mogoditshane and Tlokweng, which the census counts separately; the city proper had about 246,000 people in 2022. Francistown and Maun figures are 2022 census counts.

When to go to Botswana

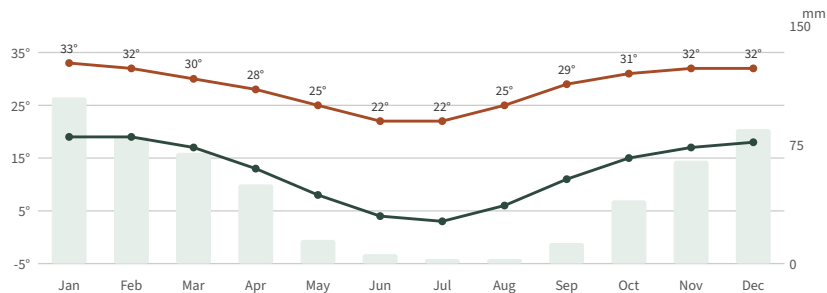
Best time: **May-Sep.**



■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Gaborone

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Aug	Kuru Dance Festival San groups from across southern Africa gather at D'Kar, near Ghanzi, for traditional dance, music and storytelling. It is usually held in August but not every year, so confirm dates first.
Sep	Botswana Day Independence from Britain in 1966 is celebrated on 30 September with parades, choirs and traditional dance; the long weekend also fills campsites and lodges across the country.

How much does Botswana cost?

SHOESTRING £70 per person / day ≈ BWP 1,323 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £300 per person / day ≈ BWP 5,671 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £1,100 per person / day ≈ BWP 20,792 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Seswaa Beef or goat boiled for hours with little more than salt, then pounded into shreds; served at weddings and national celebrations with pap (maize porridge).	Bogobe jwa lerotse Sorghum porridge cooked with lerotse, a local melon, giving a soft, faintly sweet side dish to stews and grilled meat.	Phane Mopane worms, the caterpillars of the mopane emperor moth, dried and fried with tomato and onion; a crunchy, protein-rich snack sold at markets.
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Getting around

Public transport doesn't reach the parks, so visitors join a mobile safari, fly between camps on light aircraft from Maun and Kasane, or hire a fully equipped 4x4 with rooftop tents. Tar roads link Gaborone, Francistown, Nata, Maun and Kasane, but park tracks are deep sand. Cheap long-distance buses connect the towns, and Air Botswana flies from Gaborone to Maun, Kasane and Francistown.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  D G 230V — UK plugs fit
DIALLING CODE +267
TAP WATER Varies — bottled or filtered is safer

EMERGENCY NUMBERS Ambulance: 997 Fire: 998 Police: 999 Source: FCDO “Getting help”
TIME ZONE UTC+2 (standard time)
DRIVING On the left

TIPPING

Tip safari guides around US\$10–20 per guest per day and use the camp's communal box for other staff; about 10% in restaurants.

ETIQUETTE

Greet people before asking anything: 'Dumela, rra' to a man or 'Dumela, mma' to a woman. Receive things with both hands or your right hand, and ask before photographing anyone.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Sir Seretse Khama International Airport (GBE), Gaborone; Maun Airport (MUB), Maun; Kasane Airport (BBK), Kasane

Visas & entry for Botswana

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can visit Botswana for up to 90 days without a visa.

If you want to work, study or volunteer in Botswana, see the requirements for business, study and employment visas.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Hepatitis B

Measles

Rabies

Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

High risk of malaria

- There is a high risk of malaria, from October to May, in the northern half of Botswana, including the Okavango Delta area: antimalarial tablets recommended.
- There is a low risk of malaria in the northern half of Botswana, including the Okavango Delta area during the rest of the year: awareness of risk and bite avoidance recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Botswana

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 25 Dec 2026

Christmas Day

Sat 26 Dec 2026	Boxing Day
Mon 28 Dec 2026	Boxing Day Holiday
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Sat 2 Jan 2027	New Year's Day Holiday
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sat 27 Mar 2027	Holy Saturday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Mon 3 May 2027	Labour Day Holiday
Thu 6 May 2027	Ascension Day
Thu 1 Jul 2027	Sir Seretse Khama Day
Mon 19 Jul 2027	President's Day
Tue 20 Jul 2027	President's Day Holiday
Thu 30 Sep 2027	Botswana Day
Fri 1 Oct 2027	Botswana Day Holiday

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Setswana

ENGLISH	SETSWANA	SAY IT
Hello	Dumela	<i>doo-MEH-lah</i>
Thank you	Ke a leboga	<i>keh ah leh-BOH-ha</i>
Please	Tsweetswee	<i>TSWEH-tsweh</i>
Excuse me	Intshwarele	<i>in-tshwa-REH-leh</i>
How much is this?	Ke bokae?	<i>keh boh-KAH-eh</i>

Know before you go

Book dry-season camps and the national park campsites in Moremi, Chobe and the Central Kalahari up to a year ahead; many are run by private operators who need payment in advance.

Light-aircraft transfers to delta camps usually limit luggage to about 20 kg in soft-sided bags, so pack light and leave extras at your hotel in Maun or Kasane.

Self-drivers need a high-clearance 4x4, recovery gear and confidence in deep sand; carry spare fuel and water, and avoid driving after dark, when cattle and wildlife wander onto roads.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.