

## **ATTRACTIONS IN BOTSWANA**

### **Kasane**

The gateway to Chobe National Park, Kasane is an important point of debarkation for the nearby Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe and Livingstone in Zambia, and Namibia's Caprivi Strip. Impressive!

Spread out along the banks of the Chobe River, Kasane presents an array of hotels, guest houses and campsites that accommodate all the visitors to the national park. Some are splendidly situated, with wonderful views of the river and its wildlife. Often visitors opt to have a morning game drive and an afternoon boat cruise, with an afternoon game drive the following day, as this is the time of day when elephants are usually spotted.

Another option is a day trip to Victoria Falls, which is about 80 kilometres from Kasane. Kasane now boasts small shopping malls where all basic commodities can be purchased, and arts and crafts shops. While its main attraction is the park that lies a mere 10 kilometres away, there are nevertheless attractions in and around the town.

### **Chobe National Park**

Aptly and fondly known as 'The Land of The Giants', Chobe National Park in the north of beautiful Botswana is home to Africa's largest elephant population and comprises more than 10,000km<sup>2</sup> of rich ecosystems, diverse landscapes and an almost unparalleled abundance of wildlife and birdlife all centred around the stunning Chobe River, and in close proximity to a number of Southern Africa's other safari must-sees.

Chobe National Park sits in close proximity to the borders with Zimbabwe, Zambia and Namibia, making it a popular and easy day trip destination for visitors from Victoria Falls as well as for those on tours throughout the wider region of southern Africa. With one of our exciting safari offerings, a Chobe visit can be conveniently combined with a number of Botswana's and the wider region's other unmissable safari gems including the Okavango Delta. The town of Kasane on the border of Chobe National Park has a small international airport and a good array of other services and amenities.

## Ngami Region

Ngamiland District comprises a fascinating variety of ethnic groups: the Hambukushu, Basubiya and Bayei – all of central African origins, who know the Okavango intimately, having expertly exploited and utilised its abundant resources for centuries.

### Maun

Maun is a town on the Thamalakane River in northern Botswana. It's the jumping-off point for the vast inland Okavango Delta, which becomes a lush wildlife habitat during the seasonal floods. In the delta, safari camps dot the Moremi Game Reserve, which is home to hippos, lions and rhinos. In the town, the Nhabe Museum features local art, plus history and culture exhibits about the surrounding Ngamiland region.

Botswana's tourism capital lies on the southern fringes of the Okavango Delta, and still, despite recent modernisations, carries the feeling of a dusty, frontier town. For many tourists, Maun is the point of entry into the Delta, and often into Botswana, with direct flights from both Johannesburg and Gaborone.

### Okavango Delta

The Okavango Delta is one of the most inspiring and awe-inspiring wilderness locations in Africa, if not the entire planet. The Delta is a truly unspoiled wilderness with terrain ranging from dry grasslands to swamps. Safaris and game watching are the most popular activities in the park and possible animals to be sighted include cheetahs, zebra, giraffes, elephants, crocodiles and rhinos to name only a few.

### Moremi Game Reserve

This gem of a National Park has garnered a number of important distinctions. In 2008, it was voted the 'best game reserve in Africa' by the prestigious African Travel and Tourism Association at South Africa's premier tourism fair, Indaba.

It is the first reserve in Africa that was established by local residents. Concerned about the rapid depletion of wildlife in their ancestral lands – due to uncontrolled hunting and cattle encroachment – the Batawana people of Ngamiland, under the leadership of the deceased Chief Moremi III's wife, Mrs. Moremi, took the bold initiative to proclaim Moremi a game reserve in 1963.

It is the only officially protected area of the Okavango Delta, and as such holds tremendous scientific, environmental and conservation importance.

### **Linyati, Selinda and Kwando**

At the extreme northern reaches of Botswana – the Caprivi just on the other side – lie three of the most splendid, wild and secluded destinations the country has to offer.

Sandwiched between the Chobe National Park to the east and the Okavango south, the extensive Kwando, Selinda and Linyanti concessions offer superb wildlife viewing – and terrain to rival the physical beauty of the Okavango.

And no wonder – both share geographical similarities. Like the Okavango River, the Kwando River flows south from Angola across the Caprivi Strip and into Botswana. Like the Okavango, it slowly fills the Linyanti Swamps. The outflow from the Swamps then fills the Linyanti River, which courses east into the Chobe River.

## **THE KALAHARI**

### **Khutse Game Reserve**

Because of its proximity, and relative accessibility, to the nation's capital, Khutse game Reserve is a favourite retreat for Gaborone visitors or residents. The 240 kms drive takes the traveller through a number of interesting Kalahari villages, including the 'gateway to the Kalahari,' Molepolole.

Adjoining the Central Kalahari Game Reserve to the north, and with no fences separating the two, the terrain of the 2 500 sq kms reserve combines most types of Kalahari habitat – rolling grasslands, river beds, fossil dunes and grassed and bare pans.

The reserve is part of an ancient river system that once flowed northeast to fill the prehistoric Lake Makgadikgadi. Khutse's Pans and dry river valleys are remnants of this river system.

### **Central Kalahari Game Reserve**

Nothing prepares you for the immensity of this reserve, nor its wild, mysterious beauty. There is the immediate impression of unending space, and having the entire reserve to yourself.

Waist-high golden grasses seem to stretch interminably, punctuated by dwarfed trees and scrub bushes. Wide and empty pans appear as vast white stretches of saucer-flat earth, meeting a soft, blue-white sky. At night the stars utterly dominate the land; their brilliance and immediacy are totally arresting.

The Central Kalahari game Reserve (CKGR) is the largest, most remotely situated reserve in Southern Africa, and the second largest wildlife reserve in the world, encompassing 52 800 sq kms.

The landscape is dominated by silver terminalia sandveld, Kalahari sand acacias, and Kalahari appleleaf, interspersed with grasslands, and dotted with occasional sand dunes, pans and shallow fossil river valleys.

CKGR is unique in that it was originally established (in 1961) with the intention of serving as a place of sanctuary for the San, in the heart of the Kalahari (and Botswana), where they could live their traditional hunter/ gatherer way of life, without intrusion, or influence, from the outside world.

### **Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park**

Situated in the extreme southwest corner of Botswana, and adjacent to South Africa's Northern Cape Province, the Kgalagadi Transfrontier park (KTP) is run as a single ecological unit, and gate receipts are shared. Tourist facilities, however, are still run autonomously.

Immigration and customs facilities have been designed to allow travellers to enter the park in one country and depart in the other. The main entry and departure point between the two countries is at the Two Rivers/ Twee Rivieren gate, which also has camping facilities, chalets, shops and a restaurant.

The national boundary with South Africa is along the dry Nossop River bed; and three quarters of the park lies within Botswana territory. Currently, KTP is mainly visited by self-drive campers, with a few operators offering mobile tours.

there are three main areas to explore: the Nossop River valley, along the South Africa/Botswana border, the wilderness trails on the Botswana side, and what was once the Mabuasehube Game Reserve, now incorporated into KTP at its most northeastern reaches.

To maintain KTP's pure wilderness experience, there are strict limits as to the number of vehicles that can travel the wilderness trails, how many nights a camping party can stay at a campsite (usually limited to one night), and how many people can camp at each campsite. Hence booking well in advance is essential.

Self-drive campers must comprise at least two vehicles; well-equipped 4x4s are required for the rough, sandy roads.

### **Ghanzi**

Ghanzi is the centre of the cattle farming industry in Botswana. Over 200 cattle farms, comprising approximately six percent of the national land, are backed one against the other in largely fenced holdings. This part of Botswana is regarded as one of the best cattle ranging areas in the world, renowned for the high quality, free roaming beef it produces.

The Ghanzi community is a conglomeration of ethnic groups – the San and Bakgalagadi (the original inhabitants), the Herero, the Batawana, and the Afrikaaners who first settled in the area in the late 1800s.

Several cattle farmers have developed game ranches and wildlife concessions – land allocated near their farms – and tourists come for wildlife viewing, excursions to CKGR, and desert walks with the San people, who share their ancient way of life that masterfully and respectfully

### **Dqae Qare Game Farm:**

Situated about 25km from Ghanzi, the place where the annual Kuru Dance festival is held. The festival is organised by the Kuru D'Kar Trust, part of the Kuru Family of Organisations (KFO, seven in all) which state their goal as the promotion of San culture.

Game viewing: within the camp, one gets the opportunity to see a few different kinds of game animals while driving around.

Bushman culture interaction, through bushman walks, traditional songs and dance.

### **D'kar Museum:**

An easy three-hour drive southwest of Maun on the A3 highway, just off the road is the village of D'Kar, located 35 kilometres northeast of Ghanzi. D'Kar is the home of the Kuru Museum and Cultural Centre, established in 1999 by the Kuru Development Trust, in support of preserving San (bushman) culture through education, training, marketing and sales of San crafts and art.

Visit the Cultural museum in D'kar village and learn about the culture of Basarwa, view artefacts and crafts made by the San people on display.

### **Ghanzi Crafts:**

Visit the crafts shop located in the town centre and purchase some artefacts of your choice for your admiration of the San arts.

## **Serowe**

In many ways, the sprawling village/ town of Serowe is an important custodian of Botswana's contemporary history.

Serowe is the birthplace of the country's founding father – and first president – Sir Seretse Khama. And much of the drama of his controversial marriage to an Englishwoman, Ruth Williams, was played out in this village. Today their graves are situated near the Ngwato totem, the duiker (phuti in Setswana) in the royal cemetery. (You must obtain permission to visit these sites).

At the kgotla – the traditional meeting place and customary court, situated below Serowe Hill, there stands an impressive statue of Sir Seretse Khama, erected to mark the tenth anniversary of his death.

The Khama III Memorial Museum – named after Seretse's father, who died when Seretse was young – is housed in a red Victorian building, recently restored, and containing a fascinating collection of furniture, uniforms, correspondence and photographs that chronicle the legacy of the Khama family, and the history of Serowe.

For arts and crafts lovers, there are shopping opportunities at the Boithselo project where the Bakgalagadi and San peoples manufacture attractive and unique products.

Please note that the number for Serowe museum is 4630519

### **Khama Rhino Sanctuary**

Affording the opportunity to see both black and white rhino - as well as an abundance of other wildlife species – the Khama Rhino Sanctuary (KRS) is a delightful stopover for tourists travelling by road to Botswana's northern reserves, or an ideal weekend getaway for Gaborone or Francistown visitors or residents.

A mere 20 kms from the historically important village of Serowe, the accessibility of KRS is also a draw. This community tourism project, managed and staffed by local village residents, offers game drives, birding, bush walks, and arts and crafts shopping. It also has an education centre where many young children from all over Botswana come for environmental education, as well as a fun time in the bush.

### **Old Palapye**

Old Palapye is an important multicultural historical site containing artifacts from the Middle Stone Age, the Late Stone Age, the Early Iron Age, and in contemporary times, the 19th century capital of the Bangwato (led by Khama III), who occupied the area from 1889-1902.

Situated near the village of Malaka (where there are waterfalls), Old Palapye has been earmarked for further tourism development, through the Malaka community based tourism

project, and in conjunction with developments at Tswapong. Old Palapye was gazetted as a National Monument in 1938, and falls under the jurisdiction of the National Museum and Monuments.

### **Tswapong Hills**

Situated east of Palapye, the imposing Tswapong Hills rise almost four hundred metres above the surrounding plains. These one-billion year-old titans extend 60 kms west of the village of Moremi, and measure a full 20 kms in breadth. Comprised of sandstone, ironstone and quartzite, which give them their characteristic rich hues, Tswapong holds numerous fascinating, and very beautiful, archaeological, historical and natural history sites.

### **Moremi Gorge**

Situated deep within the hills, which can only be reached by a rather vigorous climb, Moremi Gorge is the source of three permanent waterfalls. The first two are smaller, but fan out into large waterholes, whilst the uppermost falls is a full ten-metres high, giving rise to arresting scenes of clear water cascading over rocky outcrops, then collecting in a deeply hidden, lushly vegetated, fern-fringed lagoon.

The Moremi Gorge is a designated National Monument and is managed by the Department of National Museum, Monuments and Art Gallery. The Moremi Mannonye Conservation Trust, through the support of the Botswana Tourism Organisation, involves local residents in developing the area for non-consumptive eco-tourism. The area is of great religious and spiritual importance to the community.

Before venturing into the hills, you should, as a matter of courtesy, request permission from the local headman. A National Museum guide is available at Moremi village.

Tswapong is an ideal weekend getaway for residents of and visitors to Gaborone or Francistown. It doesn't require a four-wheel drive vehicle, and camping is allowed near the site, though at present visitors must come fully self-contained. Plans are underway to develop camping and ablution blocks, trail signage and wooden elevated pathways.

### **Makgadikgadi Pans National Park**

Imagine – if you will – an area the size of Portugal, largely uninhabited by humans. Its stark, flat, featureless terrain stretches – it would seem – to eternity, meeting and fusing with a milky-blue horizon. This is the Makgadikgadi – an area of 12 000 sq kms, part of the Kalahari Basin, yet unique to it – one of the largest salt pans in the world.

For much of the year, most of this desolate area remains waterless and extremely arid; and large mammals are thus absent. But during and following years of good rain, the two largest pans – Sowa to the east and Ntwetwe to the west – flood, attracting wildlife – zebra and wildebeest on the grassy plains – and most spectacularly flamingos at Sowa and Nata Sanctuary. Flamingo numbers can run into the tens – and sometimes – hundreds of thousands, and the spectacle can be completely overwhelming.

The rainwater that pours down on the pans is supplemented by seasonal river flows – the Nata, Tutume, Semowane and Mosetse Rivers in the east, and in years of exceptional rains, the Okavango via the Boteti River in the west.

During this time, the pans can be transformed into a powder blue lake, the waters gently lapping the shorelines, and flowing over the pebble beaches – a clear indication of the gigantic, prehistoric lake the Makgadikgadi once was. Research suggests that the Makgadikgadi is a relic of what was once one of the biggest inland lakes Africa has ever had.

The Makgadikgadi is in fact a series of pans, the largest of which are Sowa and Ntwetwe, both of which are surrounded by a myriad of smaller pans. North of these two pans are Kudiakam pan, Nxai Pan and Kaucaca Pan. Interspersed between the pans are sand dunes, rocky islands and peninsulas, and desert terrain.

The Makgadikgadi Pans Game Reserve – with an area of 3 900 sq kms – incorporates the western end of Ntwetwe, extensive grasslands and acacia woodland. At its northern boundary, it meets the Nxai Pan National Park, separated only by the Nata- Maun Road.

In the wet season, this reserve can offer good wildlife viewing, particularly when large herds of zebra and wildebeest begin their westward migration to the Boteti region. Other species include gemsbok, eland and red hartebeest, as well as kudu, bushbuck, duiker, giraffe, springbok, steenbok, and even elephant, with all the accompanying predators, as well as the rare brown hyena.

### **Kubu Island**

One of the most popular destinations on the Makgadikgadi is Kubu island, a rocky outcrop near the south-western shore of Sowa pan.

This crescent-shaped island is about one kilometre long, and its slopes are littered with fossil beaches of rounded pebbles, an indication of the prehistoric lake's former water levels. Many rocks on the island are covered in fossilised guano, from the water birds that once perched here.

Fantastically shaped baobabs perch on the island, and they are surrounded by the white salt surface of the pan, making for a unique otherworldly atmosphere.

Apart from the eerie isolation of this remote area - and its awesome beauty, Kubu is rich in archaeological and historical remains that chronicle both early human inhabitation and more recent history.

Stone age tools and arrowheads can still be found today along the shorelines of this tiny island; and a circular stone wall and stone cairns suggest that Kubu may have been part of the outer reaches of the great Zimbabwe empire that was centred at Masvingo in modern-day Zimbabwe.

### **Nata Bird Sanctuary**

Botswana's first community-based conservation project is managed and staffed by residents of four local communities – Nata, Maphosa, Sepako and Manxotae. It is a good example of a non-consumptive means of wildlife utilisation that brings direct financial benefit to local communities. Proceeds from tourism activities in the sanctuary are shared by the four communities for whatever development projects they decide they want and need.

About 3 000 head of cattle belonging to members of these four communities were voluntarily moved out of the area for the establishment of the sanctuary. Nata Sanctuary opened its gates to the public in 1993, and in the same year was awarded the Tourism for Tomorrow award for the southern hemisphere.

Covering an area of 250 sq kms – comprising both grasslands and pans, in an important environmentally sensitive area – the sanctuary offers easy access to the pans, and pleasant, reasonably priced camping facilities.

In the peak season, birding, and even game viewing, can be good. When there is water in the pans, thousands of flamingos, pelicans, ducks and geese congregate, and the scene is indeed awe-inspiring. An elevated hide provides an unbeatable panorama of the pans.

### **Nxai Pan National Park**

Part of the great Makgadikgadi complex, Nxai Pan National Park covers an area of 2 100 sq kms, and comprises several larger pans – Nxai Pan, Kgama-Kgama Pan and Kudiakam Pan, which were once ancient salt lakes. These larger pans are now grassed, and are scattered with islands of acacia trees, and smaller pans that fill with water during the rainy season – thus providing rich resources for wildlife.

Wildlife viewing is seasonal, and dependent on if and when the rains come, and when animals migrate. There are several artificial watering points. If the rains have been good, December to April is the best time to visit.

Common species to be sighted are zebra, wildebeest, springbok, impala, gemsbok, hartebeest, giraffe, lion, cheetah, wild dog, brown hyena, bated fox, and sometimes elephant and buffalo.

The park is one of the more accessible areas of the Makgadikgadi, a mere 50 kms from the Nata-Maun Road.

### **Baines' Baobabs**

Approximately 30 kms from the Nxai Pan National Park entrance, Baines' Baobabs are a highlight for any visitor travelling this area of Botswana.

Seven huge, gnarled baobab trees, named after the 19th century explorer Thomas Baines, are situated on a promontory or island overlooking and surrounded by the white, crusty Kudiakam Pan. Baines stood here over a hundred years ago and painted this otherworldly scene. It has essentially remained unchanged.

Thomas Baines was an explorer, artist, naturalist and cartographer. He and fellow explorer James Chapman travelled through this area during their two-year journey from Namibia to Victoria Falls (1861-63).

They travelled in horse-drawn wagons and on foot, accompanied and led at different times by Hottentots, damaras (a tribe from Namibia) and San. They encountered numerous difficulties, including the harshness of the desert, thirst, hunger, illness, and more than once, desertion by their guides, who made off with their supplies.

Despite all this, Baines' account of the journey is filled with appreciation of the beauty of africa. 'I confess,' he wrote, 'I can never quite get over the feeling that the wonderful products of nature are objects to be admired rather than destroyed; and this, I am afraid, sometimes keeps me looking at a buck when i ought to be minding my hindsight.'

Baines' painting of the small island of baobabs shows covered wagons, people tending their horses, and a huge baobab bursting with leaves. 'We walked forward to the big tree, the Mowana at Mamu ka Hoorie, and found the country much improved,' Baines wrote of the gloriously shaded area. Baines' diaries, sketches, drawings and paintings provide fascinating first-hand documentation of that most Africa.

## Francistown

The second largest city in the country welcomes you with a handshake and a “Dumilani” (hello/good morning!). Home to many Kalanga natives and often referred to as the Capital of the North, Francistown is a vibrant destination perfect for an overnight during a luxury African safari.

The city was named after the British prospector and miner Daniel Francis, who acquired prospecting licenses in 1869, eventually becoming director of the Tati Concessions Company. Francis and other prospectors often used ancient gold shafts as guiding points for their prospecting, or they simply carried on the mining which had been started in those shafts generations ago.

### Tachila Nature Reserve

Spreading over 8,000 hectares of donated land just under 5km from the Francistown city boundary, Tachila Nature Reserve is a broad-based community project that offers natural, archaeological, historical and cultural attractions unique to Francistown and North East District. Tachila – a Kalanga name meaning ‘saviour of all living things’.

Wildlife species include leopard, hyena, kudu, impala, bushbuck, steenbok, klipspringer, rock dassie and warthog. Eventually, rhino, sable and roan antelope, cheetah, giraffe, zebra, wildebeest and eland will be introduced.

A luxury lodge, with conference centre and restaurant will be built in the reserve; and all structures will be eco-friendly, utilising renewable energy, recycling programmes, grey-water reticulation and organic gardens. Whilst still in the development stages, visitors can now enter the reserve for game drives. This is on a self-drive basis, and on arrangement only. Tel: +267 241-2313, or +267 74- 086-277, email [gavshaw@iafrica.com](mailto:gavshaw@iafrica.com).

### Domboshaba

This historic site is situated in the northeast of the country, along the Masunga- Kalamati Road, Domboshaba contains excellent examples of cement-less, stone walling and enclosures; some have been reconstructed by the National Museum archaeologists. It was one of the first National Monuments to be gazetted in the country – in 1938.

The stone wall site dating back to 1450AD, is a conservation area with the most striking, even walls that despite their massive width (some are 2 metres thick) and their beautiful decorative motifs and stylistic variations, both underlining the absolute precision and aesthetic considerations with which they were built. Despite the fact that no cement was used in their construction, some walls have survived intact for centuries.

Further up the hill, the floor plan of what is believed to have been a headman's or chief's residence can be seen. And the circular remains of houses that once dotted this community reveal earthen floors with stone edgings.

Many walls have collapsed and the National Museum has prioritised this site for further restoration and development, including improved trail signage, camping and ablution facilities. An easy return day drive from Francistown that doesn't require four-wheel drive, Domboshaba gives entrance to one of Africa's greatest empires, and an important cultural heritage of the nation.

### **Supa Ngwao Museum**

Aptly named Supa Ngwao ('to show culture' in Setswana), culture vultures can rejoice as the local museum offers exhibitions on the culture and history of the Kalanga people, as well as visuals from the early years of Francistown and Botswana. Located in an old government camp, the Supa-Ngwao Museum serves as an important repository of northern Botswana's heritage. Its collection includes pottery, woodcarvings, basketry and musical instruments.

Authentic, hand-made crafts can be purchased at the Museum's Craft Shop, which supports approximately 200 craftsmen/women mostly from the surrounding areas.

The Museum also serves as information centre for Francistown and conducts guided walking tours of the city, covering most of the important historical sites. To book a tour, call +267 240-3088, or email [snm@info.bw](mailto:snm@info.bw).

### **Mashatu Game Reserve**

Located in the Northern Tuli Game Reserve of Botswana which is situated between the Tuli Safari Area, a national park in Zimbabwe and the Mapungubwe National Park, a World Heritage Site in South Africa. Mashatu shares unfenced borders with both the South African and Zimbabwean national parks in the south and north respectively. This vast area forms part of a cross boundary wildlife conservation area protecting the substantial biodiversity of fauna and flora in this region.

The Mashatu Game Reserve camps are an expression of the warm hospitality of Africa's people. Relaxation is key, regardless of whether your choice is the luxury of Mashatu Lodge (Main Camp), or the more intimate bush experience of Mashatu Tent Camp.

Daily morning and evening game drives bring visitors into close contact with the fascinating wildlife which inhabits Mashatu, promising a different nature experience with each drive.

Be connected to the soul of what life on earth is meant to be, visit Mashatu.

## **Tuli Block**

The Tuli Block in Botswana offers a wonderful wildlife area in which to view game. The Tuli Block has an abundance of mammals as well as a long list of birds. The area also offers fascinating scenery. The Tuli Block integrates the Mashatu Game Reserve, Tuli Nature Reserve and other smaller game reserves.

The Tuli Block is the largest privately-owned game conservation area in Southern Africa, and it offers a diverse range of interesting activities, from horse riding to cycling, walking and off-road driving.

Huge vistas, and stunning topography incorporating giant old trees and rocky features carved from ancient granite and basalt rocks make this region incomparable.

On the Mashatu Game Reserve in Tuli reside impressively large herds of elephant that are said to make up the biggest population on privately owned in Africa, while Tuli is also famous for leopards, as well as incredible star-gazing opportunities.

**Mashatu Tented Camp** is the leisure choice for the guest who seeks the ultimate one-on-one bush experience and who prefers a more intimate environment (and no children under the age of 12). Eight completely private tents are tucked under the branches of enormous trees, accessible via meandering pathways.

**Mashatu Main Camp** is designed for luxury safari accommodation with 14 luxury suites that lie along the camp's perimeter, and are designed to allow absolute privacy and a communion with the bush and its inhabitants.

**Tuli Wilderness Camp** is located in the northern section of the Tuli Game Reserve, in the permanently watered marsh region, which means game viewing is good year-round. This is an unfenced camp with 5 ensuite, safari-style tents that overlook an active waterhole. There is the option to embark on off-road and night time game drives at Tuli Wilderness, ensuring guests don't miss a thing.