



BOTSWANA
COUNTRY INFORMATION
FACTS & ADVISE

COUNTRY INFORMATION, FACTS & ADVICE

Botswana

Botswana is a land locked country, dominated by the Kalahari Desert, but it is more famous for its spectacular inland Okavango Delta. Botswana offers travellers truly amazing and diverse safari experiences in pristine environments. Explore the fascinating deserts, wetlands, savannahs, delta and wildlife-rich game reserves of one of the wildest regions in Africa. Botswana is a sparsely populated country and is backed by a stable, democratic government. It is often referred to as 'Africa's success story' since its independence in 1966, and continues to grow and develop economically today.

Principal sights include the Okavango Delta, the Moremi game reserve in the centre of the delta, known for its predators and big five game viewing. The Chobe National Park and river draws huge numbers of game, while the area is also home to the highest concentration of elephants in Africa. The Kalahari is an endless expanse of land that occupies the centre of Botswana where the San people live.

Getting into Botswana

Please check with your nearest Botswana Consulate for up to date information.

All visitors are required to carry a passport that is valid for six months beyond the intended length of stay. Passports should have at least 3 blank pages next to each other per entry.

Please contact your local Botswana Embassy to establish whether a visa is required.

Travelling with children

Regulations aimed at improving the safety of children travelling in and out of Namibia and Botswana have been implemented. All children under the age of 18 will require an unabridged birth certificate together with a valid passport when travelling to or from any of the above-mentioned countries, as well as travellers in transit with a transit visa. The following documents will be required when travelling:

Child and both parents

- An unabridged birth certificate (UBC)
- A valid passport for the child

Child and one parent

Parent must produce

- An unabridged birth certificate (UBC)
- A valid passport for the child
- A court order (where applicable) / death certificate (of any deceased parent reflected on the UBC) / affidavit confirming the absent parent has given permission for the child to travel.
- Certified copies of both parents' ID / passport.

Child and guardian

Guardian must produce

- An unabridged birth certificate (UBC)
- A valid passport for the child
- A court order (where applicable) / death certificate (of deceased parent/s reflected on the UBC) / affidavit confirming the parents have given permission for the child to travel.
- Copies of parents / guardian ID / passport.
- Contact details of parents / guardian

Child unaccompanied

- An unabridged birth certificate
- A valid passport
- A court order (where applicable) / death certificate (of deceased parent/s reflected on the UBC) / affidavit from both parents or legal guardian confirming permission to travel.
- A letter from the person who will receive the child including their full contact details and residential address and a certified copy of their ID / passport.
- Contact details of parents / guardian.

Keeping Healthy in Botswana

It is important that you check with a qualified health professional for the most current information concerning your travel itinerary and personal health history.

Anti-Malarial precautions are an absolute necessity when visiting the game parks in the region. It is important that you check with a qualified health professional for the most current information concerning your travel itinerary and personal health history.

The sun in the southern hemisphere is extremely strong – make sure you wear an effective sunscreen and hat. It is advisable to avoid the midday sun. Recommended SPF is 30.

Throughout Southern Africa it is safe to eat all foods and drink tap water in cities and towns. Purified water in flasks or bottled water is provided at game lodges throughout the region. It is also suggested that you bring a smaller traveller's kit with remedies for minor stomach ailments or motion sickness. You should include an adequate supply (in your hand luggage) of any prescribed medication you may require while traveling.

Travellers with physical disabilities and those who require frequent or on-going medical attention should advise A&K of their health situation at the time of booking (or at the time such a situation occurs should this be after the reservation is made).

We do recommend that you take out comprehensive travel insurance to cover you in the event of a medical emergency.

Tipping

Tipping is not compulsory. You are travelling on an independent itinerary and the cost of your program does not include gratuities. Tipping is a very personal matter and should only be considered when the staff have gone above and beyond for you. Should you feel you would like to acknowledge their service, please consider the following as a rough guide, per day.

Type of Service	Number of guests travelling					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Tour Director	15	30	45	60	75	90
Driver / Guide (Half day)	8	16	24	32	40	48
Driver / Guide (Full day)	12	24	36	48	60	72
Hotel Porters	5	10	15	20	25	30
Professional Guide	15	30	45	60	75	90
Ranger	15	30	45	60	75	90
Tracker	8	16	24	32	40	48
Lodge staff	12	24	36	48	60	72

Please note: Currency is in USD

The above tipping guidelines are recommendations only and are not compulsory. Please use your own discretion in tipping, based on quality of service.

Restaurants

It is customary to add 10% to the bill in restaurants, if the service has been satisfactory.

Taxis

Taxi drivers do not expect to be tipped but they appreciate the fare being rounded up.

Porterage

If you are being transferred by an Akorn representative from the airport to a hotel, then porterage and tipping of porters is already included. You are not expected to tip the Akorn representative. Porterage and tipping of porters for transfers from one hotel to another is as above.

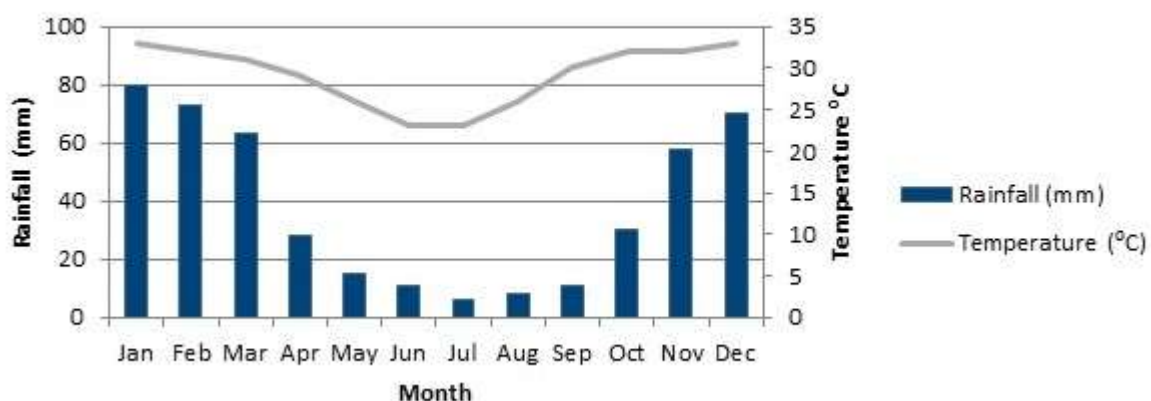
Talk the talk

The language spoken in Botswana is Tswana. English is also widely spoken and understood. Here are some useful words and phrases to help you along on your journey.

English	Tswana
Welcome	O amogetswe (sg) Le amogetswe (pl)
Hello	Dumela
Pleased to meet you	Ke itumelela go goitsi
Good morning	Dumela rra/mma (frm)
Good afternoon	Thupama ee monate
Good evening	Muitsibowa a a monate
Good night	Boroko! Robala Sentle (sleep well)
Goodbye	Tsamaya sentle
Good luck	Masego kea o / o nne le masego
Please	Tswêê-tswêê
Thank you	Ke a leboga, rra/mma

Weather

Climate Graph for Botswana



Summer

September - April, days are hot and generally sunny in the morning with possible afternoon thunderstorms. Daytime temperatures can rise to 38°C (100.4 Fahrenheit) and night temperatures drop to around 20°C (68 Fahrenheit) - 25°C (77 Fahrenheit). The afternoons can be very humid. The rainy season begins late in October/November and ends in March. The northern areas receive up to 700mm while the Kalahari Desert area averages as low as 225mm. In summer, during the morning, humidity ranges from 60 to 80% and drops to between 30 and 40% in the afternoon.

Winter

May - August, days are dry, sunny and cool to warm while evening temperatures drop sharply. Daytime temperatures generally reach 20°C (68 Fahrenheit) and can drop to as low as 5°C (41 Fahrenheit) at night. Please note that exceptionally cold spells can occur (although this is the exception rather than the rule) so it is recommended to bring appropriate clothing, just in case! In winter humidity is considerably less and can vary between 40 and 70% during the morning and fall to between 20 and 30% in the afternoon.

Best birding months are November to March when the Delta is brimming with migratory birds. Best botanical months are December to May when the vegetation is lush and green, and also when most plants are in flower.

What to Pack

Comfortable clothing is suitable throughout the year. It is certainly not necessary to bring a separate change of clothing for day and evening, and it is recommended that you keep luggage to a minimum for your own comfort and ease of transport, especially if you are using light aircraft transfers. The most practical items to pack for safari are:

- Blouses with long sleeves (even in summer, they will protect you from the sun and the mosquitos)
- Cotton t-shirts and tops
- Shorts for the day. Jeans or chinos for evenings and cooler days
- Fleece, sweater or warm jacket for game drives
- Comfortable walking shoes (hiking boots are not necessary)
- Sun block, sunglasses and hat
- Camera
- Swimwear, as most hotels/lodges have swimming pools
- A small alarm clock

Layers are most practical for the fluctuating day/night temperatures of Botswana. It is advisable that your clothing be as neutral as possible in the bush (beige and khaki is ideal). If you wear prescription glasses or contact lenses, we recommend that you bring an extra pair of glasses or a copy of the prescription.

Please note that all luxury hotels and most game lodges offer a same-day laundry service (some at additional charges). This is a good reason not to pack too many clothes!

Please take note of the below baggage restrictions at OR Tambo International Airport

- Only regular-shaped bags will be allowed to be checked in. This means that the bags must have at least one flat surface to be accepted
- Round or irregular-shaped bags will not be allowed
- Bags with long straps will not be allowed

Passengers who try to check in bags that don't conform to these rules will have the option of having their baggage wrapped with one flat side at airport-approved baggage wrapping stations.

Mack Air will accept hard case baggage, however, passengers need to adhere to the below luggage dimensions and weight restrictions:

Dimensions

30cm (11,8 inches) wide

35cm (13,8 inches) high

70cm (27,5 inches) long

Weight

20kgs Including hand luggage

Any travellers expecting to travel with oversized or overweight luggage must inform us well in advance and the appropriate provisions will be made to accommodate any needs.

Religion & Etiquette

An estimated 70 percent of Botswanan citizens identify themselves as Christians. Anglicans, Methodists, and the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa make up the majority of Christians. There are also congregations of Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Baptists, the Dutch Reformed Church, Mennonites, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, followers of Branhamism, and other movements.

According to the 2001 census, the country's Muslim community, primarily of South Asian origin, numbers slightly more than 5,000. The 2001 census also lists approximately 3,000 Hindus and 700 Bahá'ís. Members of each community estimate that these figures significantly understated their respective numbers. 6 percent of citizens are practitioners of Badimo, an indigenous religion. Approximately 20 percent of citizens espouse no religion. Religious services are well attended in both rural and urban areas.

Money

Currency

The unit of currency is the Pula (P), which is divided into 100 thebe. Notes are in P5, P10, P20, P50 and P100. Coins are in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 25, 50 (thebe) and P1 & P2.

US Dollars are accepted throughout Botswana at all lodges.

Banking hours

Monday to Friday 09h00 - 15h30

Saturday 08h15 - 11h00

Credit cards

Most international hotels accept most standard credit cards as a payment for your "extras" account.

As a general rule, we would suggest that you allow sufficient local currency to cover the cost of any additional service at hotels, as many of the small lodges and game lodges do not have credit card facilities. MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted, with more limited use placed on American Express and Diners Card.

Time Zone

GMT + Two (2) hours

Shopping

Botswana is well known for beautifully decorative baskets, which are both functional and ornamental. These can be purchased directly from the villages, or from curio shops. Weavings and textiles are usually quite expensive, but one is guaranteed quality and a unique item. Original San jewellery and leatherwork, including miniature items (like bows and arrows) can be purchased. In the northwest, traditional dolls can be bought from the Herero people. These depict Herero women in the four stages of life (childhood, puberty, adulthood and old age), dressed in their distinctive costume, as well as their traditional clothing worn before European influence.

As a courtesy to our clients, our office will, if requested, help refer you to a shop that carries the merchandise you are looking for. This is not intended as A&K's endorsement of the shop nor responsibility for merchandise (or shipping arrangements) purchased from the shop.

Local Food & Drink

The cuisine of Botswana is unique but also shares some characteristics with other cuisine of Southern Africa. Examples of Botswana food include *Pap, Samp, Vetkoek and Mopane* worms.

Seswaa or *Chotlho* is a very popular traditional meat dish made for most special occasions. Usually prepared by men, it is cooked in a three-legged iron pot, simmered until soft, with only salt and water. Another popular dish is *Serobe*: the intestines and some inside parts of goat, sheep or cow are cooked until soft. If the meat is from a sheep or goat, the trotters are included.

Porridge (*bogobe*) is made by putting sorghum, maize or millet flour into boiling water, stirring into a soft paste, and then cooking it slowly. Sometimes the sorghum or maize is fermented, and milk and sugar added. This dish is called *ting*. Without the milk and sugar, *ting* is sometimes eaten with meat or vegetables as lunch or dinner. Another way of making *bogobe* is to add sour milk and a cooking melon (*lerotse*). This dish is called *tophi* by the Kalanga tribe.

Many soft drinks and alcohol drinks are produced in factories in Botswana, including Fanta and Coca-Cola. Local beer brands are Castle and Lion. Milk is fermented to make *madila* (sour milk) which is eaten on its own or added to porridge. A favourite non-alcoholic homemade drink is ginger beer.

Communication

To assist you should you need to be reached while traveling, a complete listing of hotel contact information will be provided with your final tour materials.

Contact numbers

- Office hours (8:30 - 17:00) - Tel: 27 (0) 11 438 4600
- 24 hour emergency number - Tel: 27 (0) 82 900 3503
- Email: southafrica@akorndmc.com