

## BOTSWANA

As a guest of Wilderness Safaris, the following information has been compiled to provide you with guidelines and interesting facts about the country you will be visiting. Further information is available to you on our website [www.wilderness-safaris.com](http://www.wilderness-safaris.com) or the official Botswana Tourism Organisation's website [www.botswanatourism.co.bw](http://www.botswanatourism.co.bw).



**Botswana** is a landlocked country surrounded by Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe – with 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 “hubs”.

### INTERESTING FACTS



The colours on the flag correspond to those on the national coat of arms. The blue represents water while the white-black-white bands depict the racial harmony of the people as well as the pluralist nature of the society – inspired by the coat of the zebra, the national animal. The national bird is the Lilac-Breasted Roller.

## **Government**

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.

## **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.

## **Currency**

The currency in Botswana is the Pula (P) which is made up of 100 Thebe.

## **Language**

The official language is English, with Setswana being the most widely spoken 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.

## **Climate**

The climate is generally sub-tropical with fairly light rainfall. Droughts are frequent. Summer can be very hot and the evenings also remain fairly warm. Temperatures in winter can drop quite dramatically at night; however daytime temperatures are pleasantly warm.

The weather in southern Africa is generally pleasant throughout the year – warm to hot days, and cool to warm nights. During our winter months however (May to September), it can get really cold at night and in the early morning, particularly when on safari, so we would like to suggest that you pack accordingly – very warm clothing including an anorak/winter jacket, a beanie, scarf and gloves are recommended. Please also refer to our packing suggestions list.

Botswana, with the exception of the Okavango Delta and the eastern parts of the country, consists almost entirely of the Kalahari Desert and as such, rainfall is low. Total annual rainfall for Maun for example is only 470 millimetres (18.5 inches). Phrases like 'rainy season' or 'afternoon thundershowers' need therefore to be seen in context. Rain typically falls in short thundershowers in the late afternoon which produce spectacular dark skies and vivid rainbows before passing.

Game viewing is good year round, however, there are some seasonal highlights such as the concentrations of elephants in the Linyanti over the dry winter months, or the zebra migration or predator concentrations in Makgadikgadi and Central Kalahari respectively in the summer months. The annual seasonal inundation of the Okavango Delta and what this entails is also discussed and explained.

Summer is from October to the end of March and usually brings very high temperatures. It is also the rainy season and cloud coverage and rain can cool things down, although only usually for a short period of time. The winter season begins in May and ends in August. This is also the dry season when virtually no rainfall occurs. Winter days are invariably sunny and cool to warm; however, evening and night temperatures can drop below freezing point in some areas.

The in-between periods – April/early May and late August/early 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.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>MUB</b>	19/32	19/31	18/31	14/31	9/28	6/25	6/25	9/28	13/33	18/35	19/34	19/32

**Temperature (°F) – These are the average lows and highs:**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>MUB</b>	66/89	66/87	64/87	57/87	48/82	43/77	42/77	48/82	55/91	64/95	66/93	66/89

**Average Rainfall (mm) – This varies according to the year and location:**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>MUB</b>	110	80	70	25	7	3	0	0	0	30	50	95

**Average Rainfall (inches) – This varies according to the year and location:**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>MUB</b>	4.3	3.2	2.7	1.0	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	1.9	3.7

**Public Holidays**

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

01 January	New Year's Day
Varies	Good Friday
Varies	Easter Monday
01 May	Labour Day
25 May	Ascension Day
01 July	Sir Seretse Khama Day
17 July	President's Day (This date is subject to change)
30 September	Botswana Day
25 December	Christmas Day
26 December	Boxing Day

**USEFUL INFORMATION**

**Botswana Travel Regulations**

International travellers **must** carry a valid passport. With regards to domestic travel within Botswana, citizens must produce their OMANG national identity card, as a driver's license will not be accepted for domestic airport travel and entry will be refused by airport security and customs.

We have been advised that at this time, Botswana Immigration do not consider travelling on holiday an emergency and will therefore not grant entry to any guest travelling on an Emergency Travel Document. Please ensure you have secured all appropriate travel documentation prior to departing on your safari

**Payment**

Botswana banks only accept US Dollars, GBP Sterling, Euro and South African Rand in cash. However, US Dollar currency prior to 2007 will not be accepted, nor damaged or marked notes. Any cash payments made to camps/lodges for curios, or gratuities to guides or staff, need to be in one of these currencies. Travellers Cheques in any of the above currencies are acceptable as well.

## Credit Cards

MasterCard and Visa (both with raised credit card numbers so that an imprint may be taken) are usually accepted throughout Botswana, including Wilderness Safaris and Wilderness Adventures camps. American Express is accepted in some instances. However, Diners Club is not accepted by the banks in Botswana and, therefore, not at our camps/lodges either.

## Debit Cards

Please note that debit cards are not accepted as a form of payment at our camps/lodges.

## Banks

Barclays Bank of Botswana, First National Bank of Botswana, Stanbic, Standard Chartered Botswana Limited, Union Bank of Botswana and Zimbank of Botswana.

### Banking Hours:

Monday to Friday: 09:00 – 15:00

Saturday: 08:00 – 10:45

## Value Added Tax (VAT)

All goods and services in Botswana are priced to include value added tax (VAT) of 12%. On departing from Botswana, non-residents may claim a VAT refund on goods exported as accompanied luggage. In order to claim, the **original** tax invoice, with passport details reflected thereon, must be presented to the designated Customs Officer together with the VAT 006.1 claim form and the BW500 export declaration form.

Kindly note that a minimum amount of Pula 5 000.00, on one tax invoice, is required in order to claim back VAT. Item/s purchased will need to be declared to the revenue official at the time of claiming back VAT and is the responsibility of the guest at the point of departure. Wilderness Safaris is regrettably unable to handle this on behalf of guests.

Refunds are made by way of a transfer into your account and therefore you will be required to have your banking details on hand, as refund documents have to be submitted on the same day that the items leave the country. Bank details cannot be sent at a later stage.

## Departure Taxes

Note that on all light aircraft transfers in Botswana, additional taxes do apply. However, these costs are included in the air transfer with Wilderness Air departing Kasane Airport.

## Driving in Botswana

In Botswana, one drives on the left hand side of the road. The speed limit is usually 60 kilometres per hour in built up areas, 70 kilometres per hour on gravel roads and 120 kilometres per hour on major tar roads. Safety belts must be used at all times and children under 5 years must be in a child safety seat.

The driver or any authorized co-driver must produce a valid driver's license at time of rental and must not have been convicted of any criminal offence which resulted in the endorsement or cancellation of his/her driving license. The driver's license needs to be in English with a photograph. If not, an International driver's license will be required. In addition, please check with your travel consultant regarding the minimum age.

Whilst conducting your own self-drive itinerary, there are many factors beyond our control, e.g. parking of a vehicle/s at a meeting point or pick-up/drop-off point will be at own risk. Wilderness Safaris will therefore not accept any liability, responsibility or claim for compensation, for any incident or accident involving you (the client), your vehicle and/or any third party.

## Excess Luggage

Should you need to bring luggage in excess of the stipulated allowance, you have the option of purchasing additional weight allowance on the applicable air transfer. This allows for a maximum of 70 kg (154 lb) excess weight, on the proviso that the bag/s conform/s to our standard dimensions as above: soft bags (no frames or rigid structures), wheels only if they are not part of a solid frame or rigid structure and 25 cm (10 inches) wide x 30 cm (12 inches) high and 62 cm (24 inches) long for each bag/s.

At the discretion of the pilot, the bag/s may be placed on the light aircraft seat – as long as they can be physically secured with one seatbelt and do not impact on the comfort of other guests on the air transfer. The additional cost of this varies depending on the flight schedule and routing so please contact your travel consultant for further details.

If your journey begins in Maun and ends in Kasane, you have the option of sending excess luggage on to Kasane at an additional cost. The same applies for those whose journeys begin in Kasane and end in Maun. In each case, your luggage will be safely stored for you to collect at the end of your trip in Botswana. Please note to take advantage of this service prior notice is essential and the same dimensions as above apply for unaccompanied baggage.

Should you be starting and ending your safari in Maun, and do not require the excess luggage to accompany you on your trip, we can store this for you at our office in Maun at no extra charge. While numbered plastic seals are applied to the excess luggage for privacy and safety, we do require that you check your excess luggage prior to the bag/s being sealed, as well as on receipt to confirm that no possible tampering has occurred. Note that even with this measure in place, stored luggage remains at guests own risk. The luggage is handed back to you at Maun Airport on the day of departure.

We do not anticipate any problems with stored luggage being damaged or stolen, however, guests must ensure that they are in possession of full travel insurance including luggage cover. Wilderness Holdings and its subsidiary companies, and any person or agent acting for, through or on behalf of said companies, will not be liable for any loss or damage whatsoever arising from any cause whatsoever.

### **Communication in the Camps & Lodges**

Two way emergency radios have been fitted in the rooms at Kings Pool, DumaTau Camp, Mombo Camp, Little Mombo, Mombo Trails and Vumbura Plains Camp and may be used by guests to contact camp management in the event of an emergency only. Said radios are on a closed circuit and inter-room communication is not available.

### **Power Supply**

All our camps/lodges are situated in pristine and remote wilderness areas and as a result, we are required to generate our own electricity. This is achieved through making use of either solar power or generators which charge a bank of batteries and provide electricity to the camp/lodge through an inverter system.

This, in turn, provides 220V power in each tented room for lighting and fans. Where generators alone are used, these run for approximately 7 – 9 hours per day (mostly when guests are out on activities) charging the aforementioned battery bank during this time. Power supplied to both the rooms and main areas is by way of alternating current (AC).

Hot water is provided through solar geysers, eliminating the need to provide electricity to power demanding electrical geysers. In some cases, inclement weather may reduce the efficiency of the solar geysers and in the event that this occurs, camp managers can be contacted for alternative arrangements.

Please note that Kalahari Plains Camp, Chitabe Camp, Chitabe Lediba, Mombo Camp, Little Mombo Camp, Vumbura Plains, Pelo Camp, Seba Camp, Xigera Camp, DumaTau Camp and Kings Pool Camp are 100% solar powered.

At this time, Abu Camp, Jao Camp, Little Tubu and Mombo Trails use a combination of solar and generator power.

Most Wilderness camps/lodges in Botswana have 220V plug points in the rooms which can be used to charge batteries and sleep apnoea machines, however, are not suitable for hairdryers and electric shavers, although charging shavers is possible. Where there are no plug points in the rooms, facilities for charging batteries are available in the main area. Please ensure that you bring a spare battery/ies as a back-up as power outages may occur.

At Abu Camp, Jao Camp, Kings Pool Camp, Little Mombo Camp, Mombo Camp and Vumbura Plains Camp, specifically, hair dryers are available for use in the rooms.

At any Trails camps, batteries which need charging can be handed to the camp staff who will charge these for you.

Serious digital photographers may wish to bring a mobile device for the downloading of images. All equipment needs to be compatible with 220V power or have an adaptor to convert the 220V to 110V. You are advised to bring a spare battery for use while the other one is being charged, a power converter/adaptor if applicable, cables for computers or cameras and additional flash cards.

In cities and towns all electrical appliances run on 220V/240V. Outlets are round 3-pin, 15-amp plugs. While some camps/lodges can supply adaptors (3-prong round, 3-prong square, 2-prong round, 2-prong flat) it is advisable that you carry your own.

As a responsible ecotourism operator with conservation as our core value we strive to reduce our own energy use. Please help us save energy by using appliances sparingly.