

# Botswana Directory

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## ACCOMMODATION

Botswana has a number of comfortable campsites and an array of upper-midrange hotels and top-end lodges – but there is little in between. Budget travellers who do not want to camp may have to, so it is recommended to take a tent anyway.

Where appropriate, accommodation options are split into budget, midrange and top-end categories for ease of reference. Upmarket places tend to price in US dollars as opposed to pula, and we have listed prices using both currencies. In general, a budget double room is anything under P350. Midrange accommodation is priced anywhere from P350 to P800. Note that there's a real dearth of midrange places

in the Okavango Delta, which is largely given over to luxury camps and top-end lodges that can set you back around US\$500, although this can rise stratospherically to around US\$1000 in the delta. Discounted rates for children are rare, although a number of lodges do offer special family rooms.

While most budget and lower-midrange options tend to have a standard room price, many top-end places change their prices according to season. High season is from June to November, low season corresponds to the rains (December to March or April) and the shoulder is a short April and May window. A 10% government tax is levied on hotels and lodges (but not all campsites) and is included in prices listed in this book.

## Camping

Just about everywhere of interest, including all major national parks, has a campsite. Public camping areas in the national parks and reserves are run by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) and are invariably basic, often with pit latrines and cold showers, but they are always in superb locations. These campsites *must* be booked in advance and they fill up fast in busy periods like school holidays. For more information on how to make bookings, see p28.

A number of privately run campsites offer better facilities than the DWNP, and some hotels and lodges also provide camping areas. Most private and hotel/lodge campsites have sit-down toilets, showers (often hot), braai (barbecue) pits and washing areas. One definite attraction is that campers can use the hotel bars and restaurants and splash around the hotel swimming pool for free. These

### BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com). You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

## PRACTICALITIES

- Botswana uses the metric system for weights and measures (see inside front cover).
- Buy or watch videos on the PAL system.
- Two types of plugs are used; the South African type, with three round pins, and the UK type, with three square pins; the current is 220/240V, 50Hz.
- The government-owned *Daily News* covers government issues as well as some limited international news. Of more interest to visitors is the *Botswana Advertiser*, available in Gaborone and eastern Botswana. Gaborone newspapers include the *Mirror*, the *Botswana Gazette*, the *Botswana Guardian*, the *Midweek Sun* and *Mmegi/Reporter*, which has an Arts & Culture Review. Elsewhere, regional weeklies like Maun's *Ngami Times* are a better source of local information.
- Several radio stations broadcast news in English and Tswana and play local and foreign music. Yarona (106.6FM) and GABZFM (96.2FM) broadcast around Gaborone, while RB2 (103FM) is the commercial network of Radio Botswana. With a short-wave radio, you can easily pick up the BBC World Service and international services from Europe.
- The Botswana TV (BTV) broadcasts news (in Tswana) and sports (in English and Tswana) and an array of US sitcoms. Gaborone Broadcasting Corporation (GBCTV) can be picked up around the capital. Government-run South African stations are also available. Most midrange hotels offer M-Net, a pay-TV station, and most top-end hotels also offer satellite TV.

campsites cost about P30 to P60 (rarely up to P100) per person per night. Advance bookings are not normally required and some campsites do not accept bookings anyway.

Camping in the wild is permitted outside national parks, reserves, private land and away from government freehold areas. If you want to camp near a village, obtain permission from the village leader or police station and enquire about a suitable site.

## Hotels

Every major town has at least one hotel, and the larger towns and tourist areas, like Gaborone and Maun, offer several in different price ranges. However, you won't find anything as cheap as the budget accommodation in Namibia, and the really cheap places in Botswana are likely to double as brothels. There's a relatively high demand for hotel rooms in Gaborone from business travellers, so it pays to book ahead. Elsewhere in Botswana, advance booking is not normally necessary.

The range of hotel accommodation listed in this book includes rondavels, which are detached rooms or cottages with a private bathroom; B&B-type places, often with a shared bathroom – mostly in Gaborone; motel-style units with a private bathroom and, sometimes, cooking facilities – usually along the

highways of eastern Botswana; and luxury hotels in major towns.

## Lodges

Most of Botswana's lodges (sometimes called 'camps') are found in Chobe National Park, the Tuli Block, Moremi Game Reserve and all over the Okavango Delta. It's impossible to generalise about them: some lie along the highways and others occupy remote wilderness areas, and they range from tiny sites with established luxury tents to large areas with brick or reed-built chalets.

Prices at lodges are always high, though: US\$500/700 per person per night in the low/high season is not uncommon. And most places are only accessible by 4WD transfer or air, an extra US\$100 to US\$200.

## ACTIVITIES

Most holidays to Botswana are an action-packed blur of 4WD off-road trails, bush trekking and poling gently along the Okavango Delta's waterways in a traditional *mokoro* (dugout canoe). In all fairness, the eye-watering prices of nearly all top-end lodges include any number of exciting activities, and over the last few years a heartening number of local cooperatives have begun to spring up and are offering exciting adventures at a more affordable price.