



# Swaziland

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## Best Places to Stay

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- ➔ Bulembu (p969)

## Best Wildlife Experiences

- ➔ Mkhaya Game Reserve (p968)
- ➔ Hlane Royal National Park (p968)

## Why Go?

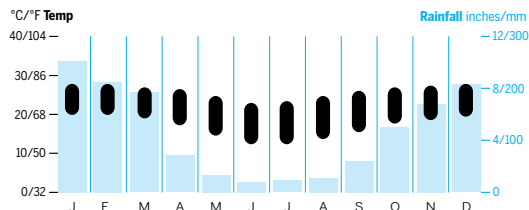
In short: big things come in small packages. The intriguing kingdom of Swaziland is diminutive, but boasts a huge checklist for any visitor. Wildlife watching? Adrenalin-boosting activities like rafting and mountain biking? Lively and colourful local culture? Tick. Tick. Tick. Plus there are superb walking trails, stunning mountain and flatland scenery, and excellent, high-quality handicrafts.

Presiding over this is King Mswati III, the last remaining absolute monarch in Africa. The monarchy has its critics but, combined with the Swazis' distinguished history of resistance to the Boers, the British and the Zulus, it has fostered a strong sense of national pride. This is exemplified in its national festivals: the Incwala ceremony and the Umhlanga (Reed) dance.

An excellent road system makes Swaziland a pleasure to navigate. Many make a flying visit on their way to Kruger National Park, but it's worth lingering here if you can.

## When to Go

### Mbabane



**Jan–Apr** Full rivers and lush vegetation for photography and adventuring (though it's hot).

**Feb–Mar** Baganu season – enjoy home-brew marula palm wine in rural Swaziland.

**May–Sep** Cooler days and winter foliage make for wonderful wildlife viewing in the lowveld.



## Swaziland Highlights

- 1 Spot black rhinos in the wild in **Mkhaya Game Reserve** (p68), one of Africa's great wildlife experiences.
- 2 Revel in a royal experience in the regal heartland of Swaziland and splurge on some handicrafts in the **Ezulwini and Malkerns Valleys** (p65).
- 3 Shoot the rapids or drift down the **Usutu River** (p66) through stunning gorges on a white-water rafting trip.
- 4 Hike in **Malotja Nature Reserve** (p70), a tantalising area of genuine, unspoilt wilderness.
- 5 Cycle or meander in the **Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary** (p66) and relax in its bargain lodges.