

# PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

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### need to know

**Currency**  
 In Southern Africa, the most recognised international currencies are the US dollar (US\$) and the South African rand (ZAR). Other currencies include the Botswana Pula (P), the Malawi Kwacha (K), the Mozambique Metical (M), the Namibian Dollar (N\$), the Swaziland Lilangeni (L), the Zimbabwean Dollar (Z\$), and the Lesotho Loti (L).

**Language**  
 English is the most widely spoken language in Southern Africa. Other languages include Afrikaans, isiXhosa, isiZulu, and Setswana.

### When to Go

Temperate climate, mild and dry winters. Hotter in summer, and wetter. Avoid July, August.

### countries at a glance

**Botswana**  
**Wildlife**  
**Landscapes**  
**Lozenges**

**Delta & Desert**  
 One of the most scenic river landscapes in the world, the Okavango Delta in Botswana is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The delta is a vast wetland area that is home to a wide variety of wildlife, including elephants, lions, and hippos. The delta is also a major attraction for tourists, who come to see the wildlife and the stunning scenery.

**Wildlife**  
 One of the best things about exploring the region is discovering the array of landscapes: from swivel desert sands and jagged ancient granite.



# UNDERSTAND SOUTHERN AFRICA

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

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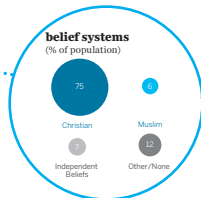
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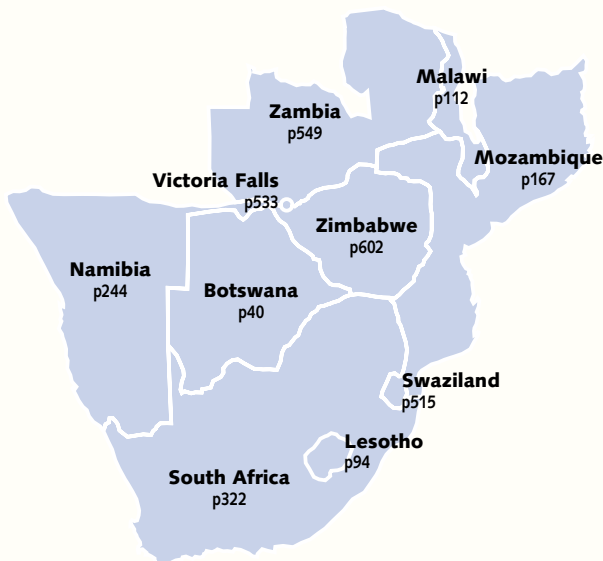
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**!KUNG SAN**  
The Khoisan languages in Namibia and Botswana are characterised by click consonants. Perhaps the most useful dialect is the !Kung people, who are concentrated in the eastern Bushmanland in Namibia and northwestern Botswana. To simplify matters, in the following text all clicks are represented by the following symbols:

!koo	!koo
!koo	!koo
!koo	!koo

THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

**Alan Murphy,**

**Kate Armstrong, Lucy Corne, Mary Fitzpatrick,  
Michael Grosberg, Anthony Ham, Trent Holden,  
Kate Morgan, Richard Waters**

➤ **Reviews are organised by author preference, except Eating and Sleeping reviews, which are organised first by budget, and then by author preference.**

➤ **Look out for these icons:**



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

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# Southern Africa



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The world's oldest sand dunes (p296)

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A classical symphony in stone (p304)

**Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park**  
Iconic desert reserve (p486)

# Top Experiences >





### **Michael Grosberg**

**Zambia** With a valuable philosophy degree in hand and business experience on a small Pacific island, Michael moved to Durban, South Africa where he wrote about political violence and helped train newly elected government officials. He also found time to travel all over Southern Africa, including forays into Zambia. Later, during his years in graduate school and while teaching in New York City, he fantasised about returning to the region, which he has been fortunate to visit on numerous Lonely Planet assignments and for other publications.



### **Anthony Ham**

**Botswana** Anthony has been travelling around Africa for more than a decade. A writer and photographer, his past Lonely Planet guidebooks include *Kenya*, *Botswana & Namibia*, *Africa*, *Libya* and *West Africa*. Anthony has written and photographed for magazines and newspapers around the world, among them *Travel Africa* and *Africa Geographic*. When he's not in Africa, Anthony divides his time between Madrid and Melbourne where he lives with his wife and two daughters.

Read more about Anthony at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/anthonyham](https://lonelyplanet.com/members/anthonyham)



### **Trent Holden**

**Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe** As a regular visitor to Africa, Trent rates Zimbabwe up there with the best of them. It's a nation that first grabbed his attention when it upset Australia in the 1983 cricket World Cup, and it's this underdog quality that continues to bowl him over to this day. World-class sights, amazing wildlife, striking *msasa* trees and friendly down-to-earth people are what makes this place so great. All it needs now is the tourists it deserves. Trent lives in Melbourne, Australia and has worked on more than 10 books for Lonely Planet – most recently *East Africa* and *India*.



### **Kate Morgan**

**Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe** Having travelled in East and North Africa, tracking mountain gorillas, spotting wildlife and winding through Moroccan medinas, Kate was keen to check out what the southern part of the continent had to offer. She was lucky enough to head off to Zimbabwe and realise a country that's been completely misrepresented. Humbled by the character of Zimbabweans and floored by the glorious Victoria Falls, Kate is hoping to get back there to do it all again soon. Kate is a freelance writer and editor based in Melbourne, and has worked on other titles such as *Philippines*, *Phuket* and *Japan*.



### **Richard Waters**

**Malawi** Richard is an award-winning journalist and works for the *Independent*, *Sunday Times*, *Wanderlust* and *National Geographic Traveller*. He lives with his fiancé and two kids in the Cotswolds.

## **Contributing Authors**

**Jane Cornwell** wrote the Music chapter. Jane is a London-based, Australian-born writer, broadcaster and journalist with a long-time interest in African music. She is world music critic for the London *Evening Standard*, a contributing editor on the world-music magazine *Songlines*, a writer for Peter Gabriel's *Real World Records* and for newspapers including the *Times*, the *Telegraph*, the *Guardian* and the *Australian*.

**David Lukas** wrote the Wildlife chapter. David teaches and writes about the natural world from his home on the edge of Yosemite National Park. He has contributed Environment and Wildlife chapters to more than 25 Lonely Planet guides, including *Tanzania*, *East Africa*, *South Africa*, *Lesotho & Swaziland* and *Botswana & Namibia*.



## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Alan Murphy

**Coordinating Author, Namibia** Alan remembers falling under Southern Africa's ambient spell after bouncing around in the rear of a *bakkie* (pick-up truck) on the way from Johannesburg airport in 1999. Since then he has been back numerous times for Lonely Planet and travelled widely throughout the region, including this trip to Namibia. Alan finds wildlife watching, in particular, exhilarating and he has certainly taken years off his life staking out waterholes. This was Alan's third trip

to Namibia, a country custom-built for road trips with landscapes that never cease to inspire. Alan lives with his wife in the Yarra Valley outside Melbourne, which he wishes was just a touch closer to Melbourne airport.



### Kate Armstrong

**Lesotho, Swaziland** Kate was bitten by the Africa bug when she lived and worked in Mozambique, and returns to Southern Africa regularly. For this edition she danced her way through Swaziland, got her car bogged (more than once) and enjoyed hanging out for a day with some black rhinos. When she's not eating, hiking and talking her way around parts of Africa, Europe and South America, she's a freelance writer for newspapers and magazines around the world from

wherever she's living at the time. For more of Kate's adventures, see [www.katearmstrong.com.au](http://www.katearmstrong.com.au).



### Lucy Corne

**South Africa** Since she first visited South Africa in 2002, Lucy has been hooked and has returned on six occasions, spending time in more than 200 towns across the country. South Africa still manages to deliver firsts at every turn and research for this book brought Lucy her first black rhino sighting (in Addo Elephant National Park), her first full-on conversation in Xhosa and her first experience of brewing *umqhomboti*. Lucy currently lives in Cape Town where

she writes about travel and beer.

Read more about Lucy at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/lucycorne](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/lucycorne)



### Mary Fitzpatrick

**Mozambique** A travel writer for more than 15 years, Mary has lived, worked and travelled in Mozambique, returning many times to explore this magnificent country, to enjoy its beaches and to keep in contact with the countless amazing Mozambicans whom she has met along the way. In addition to authoring many Lonely Planet Africa titles, Mary also writes for various newspapers and magazines, focusing on Africa.

## OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

Published by Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd

ABN 36 005 607 983

6th edition – Aug 2013

ISBN 978 1 74179 889 0

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

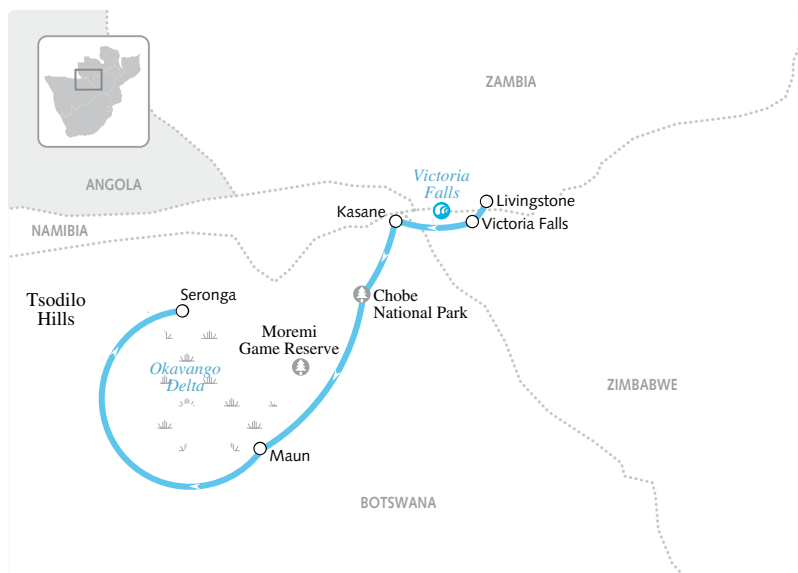
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# itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to [lonelyplanet.com/thorntree](http://lonelyplanet.com/thorntree) to chat with other travellers.



One Week

## Natural Wonder & Sensational Safaris

Start your trip at one of the great natural wonders of the world, **Victoria Falls**. For the best perspectives, visit from both **Livingstone** (Zambia) and the town of **Victoria Falls** (Zimbabwe). There's a plethora of activities on offer, including serene canoe trips on top of the falls and, for those after an adrenalin rush, rafting below the falls down the churning Zambezi. From the Zambian side, cross the nearby border at Kazungula and head for **Kasane** in Botswana, the gateway town to the stunning, wildlife-rich **Chobe National Park**. Here you can organise wildlife drives and river cruises along the Chobe River front, where nearly every Southern African mammal species is represented. From Chobe it's an easy hop, skip and jump southwest to **Maun** and the vast **Okavango Delta**, where one of the world's most impressive ecosystems breathes life into the Kalahari sands and attracts astonishing amounts of wildlife and incalculable numbers of birds. From Maun, take a minibus clockwise around the delta towards Namibia, perhaps stopping in Sepupa to take a boat to **Seronga** and do a *mokoro* (dug-out canoe) trip in the Okavango Panhandle.



Three Weeks

## Nature & Fun in the Sun

This 2000km-plus route serves up delightful variety, and you can get a good sampling of wildlife and local culture and still have time to laze on the beach. Short on time? Whiz through the Swaziland leg and stick to motorways where possible. Using **Johannesburg** as a gateway, head east via **Nelspruit** to world-renowned **Kruger National Park** (Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park). The teeming wildlife will undoubtedly mesmerise you for several days. One option here is to cross into Mozambique via official border posts within the park, taking a look around in the Mozambiquan side of this gigantic transfrontier park. The wildlife is sparse but it's a serious bush adventure. Then you could nip across to the coast and do the rest of this itinerary in reverse, making a nice loop back through Swaziland and into South Africa again. Otherwise, if you've time, duck out of Orpen Gate for a look at remote and off-the-tourist-radar **Blyde River Canyon**. This awe-inspiring natural sight has good access points such as the Three Rondavels and Gods Window, and if you're really captivated, consider a 2½-day walk along the valley floor. Continue south into Swaziland, where you can spend a few days hiking through the grasslands and forests of **Malolotja Nature Reserve** before heading on via **Mbabane** to the tiny, but brilliant **Mkhaya Game Reserve**, noted for its black rhinos. After sampling the fine hospitality and food of this tiny mountain kingdom, it's time to get your feet wet. Head for the border town of **Lomahasha** in Swaziland and cross into the former Portuguese colony of Mozambique (formalities are straightforward) via the Mozambican border town of **Namaacha**. Motor down approximately 50km to culturally intriguing **Maputo** and then head north on the EN1 and, if you're getting desperate for a dip, stop to enjoy the quiet beaches at **Xai-Xai**. Continue up the EN1 to **Inhambane**, one of the country's oldest and most charming towns. Beaches close by include legendary **Tofo**, with azure waters, and the more sedate **Barra**. If you've more steam, trundle a bit further north to **Vilankulo**, the gateway to the tropical paradise of the Bazaruto Archipelago.



Three Weeks

## A Southern African Slice

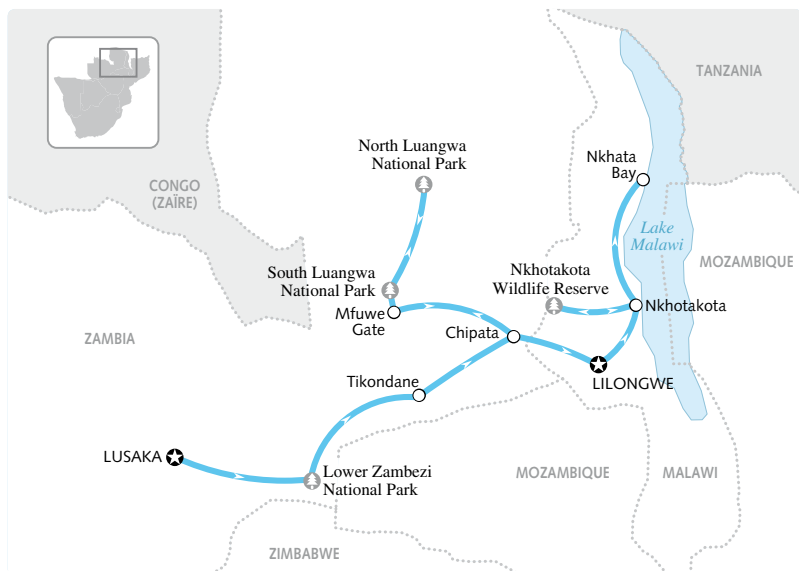
For road-trip lovers. Even if you can't squeeze in all of this 3000km-plus journey, you'll come away with an immense appreciation of this remarkable region. Looking to make cuts? Shave some kilometres off the Western Cape loop. A car (4WD useful but not necessary) is definitely your best bet for this mega road trip. After a few days in **Cape Town**, ogling Table Mountain from various vantage points around town, tear yourself away from this wonderful city and head to the fertile valleys of the Winelands, with a night or two in **Stellenbosch** or **Franschhoek**.

From here, continue east to the artists enclave of **Montagu**, and then via the scenic Route 62 through the Little Karoo to **Oudtshoorn**, South Africa's ostrich capital. Some possible detours along the way include a trip to **Hermanus** for whale-watching if the season is right, or to **Cape Agulhas** for the thrill of standing at Africa's southernmost point.

From Oudtshoorn take the N12 north and then loop back towards Cape Town via the N1, link up with the N7 and head for **Namakwa** to see the fabulous wildflower displays, which are especially good in August and September.

Keep tracking up the N7, cross into Namibia at **Violsdrif** and head to **Hobas** to see the **Fish River Canyon National Park** – a mighty gash hacked out of the Earth's surface – one of the continent's great natural wonders. The best way to appreciate this work of a master builder is a five-day trek along the valley floor.

Further north along the B1, **Keetmanshoop** has some colonial architecture; but don't linger, head west along the B4 to surreal **Lüderitz**, a coastal colonial relic sandwiched between the desert and the Atlantic seaboard. Heading back to the B1, turn north at the C13 and make a beeline for the baroque **Duwisib Castle**, which is well worth exploring. You can stay 300m from the castle on a rustic farm or camp. From there head to **Mariental** back on the B1, and it's another couple of hours to **Windhoek**, the small but colourful and cosmopolitan capital city with its bracing highland climate.



### Three Weeks

## Dusty Roads & Shimmering Waters

A 2000km route through the Southern African outback. Travelling in Zambia offers a taste of the real Africa, though the dusty roads will become a distant memory once you're lazing by the crystal-clear waters of Lake Malawi. Start with a few days in Zambia's cosmopolitan capital, **Lusaka**, with its genuine African feel and the country's best nightlife. Then head out on the highway to the stunning **Lower Zambezi National Park**, with its beautiful flood plain that's dotted with acacias and other large trees. There's no public transport to the park, so you'll need your own car to get there, or go on an organised tour.

Hook up with the Great East Rd and head to chaotic **Chipata**. Before you get here, you'll come across **Tikondane**, a small grassroots NGO working with local communities that has decent budget accommodation and meals. At Chipata you can organise a trip to **South Luangwa National Park**, one of the most majestic parks on the continent. Make sure you do a walking safari when you're here – it's one of the best places in Southern Africa to do it. From Chipata you can drive to **Mfuwe Gate**, or take one of the minibuses that make the trip to Mfuwe village. The really adventurous could try to reach the wild and spectacular **North Luangwa National Park**, but it's important that you seek local advice before doing this; you need to be well prepared.

Then it's on to Malawi and the town of **Lilongwe**, which is worth a day or two to check out the old town and the local Nature Sanctuary. From Lilongwe strike out north along the M1 to **Nkhata Bay** on Lake Malawi, which is perfect for swimming, kayaking or just lazing about after some hard weeks on the road. A possible detour on the way to/from Nkhata is historic **Nkhatakota** from where you can organise a trip to the revitalised **Nkhatakota Wildlife Reserve**. The reserve offers a good chance of seeing elephants and roan and sable antelope and there's excellent lodge accommodation available in the park.



## Three Weeks Lakeshore to Seashore

This 1500km Mozambican bush adventure could be tacked onto the Dusty Roads and Shimmering Waters itinerary, but it also stands well alone. Mozambique Island makes a wonderful contrast to the bush, and you can finish on the beach in the tropical island paradise of Quirimbas Archipelago.

Drag yourself out of the crystal waters at **Nkhata Bay** and, if you have time before heading across the lake, make a beeline to the enigmatic **Nyika National Park**. Here, you can briefly forget you're in Africa on a multiday hike among rolling grasslands and a surprisingly cool climate. When you're ready, hop on the *Ilala* ferry for the blissful **Likoma Island**, where swimming, snorkelling and local cultures are the star attractions. Splash out for a night at Kaya Mawa if you've the pennies – it's one of Africa's finest paradise retreats. Take the ferry over to the Mediterranean-esque **Chizumulu Island**, with its idyllic beaches, and return by dhow (if the waters are calm enough). From Likoma hop back on the ferry to Metangula and from there take a *chapa* up towards **Cóbue**, on the other side of the lake-shore in Mozambique. (Or take a dhow direct from Likoma to Cóbue). Stay the night just south of Cóbue at Nkwichi Lodge, a magnificent bush retreat that is part of an important development and conservation project; it's well worth a splurge. If your budget isn't up to Nkwichi, try one of several backpacker-friendly places in Cóbue itself.

After exploring the lake area, head south to cool **Lichinga**. Surrounded by scenic, rugged terrain, it is the capital of remote Niassa province. Carry on through to **Mandimba** and on to bustling **Cuamba**, where you can pick up a train all the way through to **Nampula**. Then jump on a bus to magnificent **Mozambique Island**, with its intriguing architecture and time-warp atmosphere. If you need a beach break after exploring the island, hire a dhow to take you over to **Chocas** and the lovely nearby beach at **Cabaceira Pequena**. The trip finishes up a bit further north at **Pemba**, which is the gateway to the superb Quirimbas Archipelago.



## One Month Wilderness & Culture

Starting on Namibia's Skeleton Coast, a treacherous coastline with rusting shipwrecks and desert wilderness, check out the **Cape Cross Seal Reserve**. Track north along the coast to **Torra Bay**, where you can camp, or head for **Terrace Bay** for more luxurious accommodation. Then travel east into the wonders of **Damaraland**, with its wild, open spaces, and make a beeline for **Twyfelfontein**, one of the most extensive galleries of rock art in Africa. Then journey further east into **Etosha National Park**, teeming with animals and one of the continent's great wildlife-viewing areas. Exit Etosha via von Lindequist Gate. Track along the B8 into Botswana at the Mahango-Mohembo border crossing. Drive down the west side of the **Okavango Delta**, perhaps stopping in **Sepupa** to do a boat trip in the Okavango Panhandle. The last leg of this ambitious trip is the iconic **Central Kalahari Game Reserve** to the southeast, lying at the heart of Botswana. Enter at the Matswera Gate at the north-eastern end of the reserve: wildlife includes lions and brown hyenas. You can finish your trip by exiting the same gate and travelling east to **Francistown**.

## One Month An Adventurous Spirit

Starting in the magnificent **Kafue National Park** in Zambia – classic wildlife country and one of the largest parks in the world – head south to the iconic **Victoria Falls**, a thunderous sight that will blow your mind and soak your T-shirt. From here head into **Kasane** in Botswana to duck your head into the Chobe Riverfront. Wildlife is prolific and includes huge elephant herds. Charter a plane or boat to **Mpalila Island**, a luxuriously remote retreat stranded in the middle of the Zambezi. From here, head into Namibia's **Caprivi Strip** and visit the mini-Okavango of the **Mamilili National Park**, where the rains bring a delta-like feel to the forested islands. Then drive to the untamed wilderness that is **Khaudum National Park**, a serious adventure destination. From Khaudum the road will take you south through Grootfontein, from where it's worth making a short detour to the **Waterberg Plateau Park**. North of Grootfontein the road takes you into Namibia's cultural heartland, the Owambo region, from where you can access the remote and mysterious **Kaokoveld**, homeland to the Himba people and possibly one of the last true wildernesses left in Southern Africa.

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