



# Swaziland

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## Best Wildlife Experiences

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## Best Places to Stay

- » Mandela's B&B (p521)
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## Why Go?

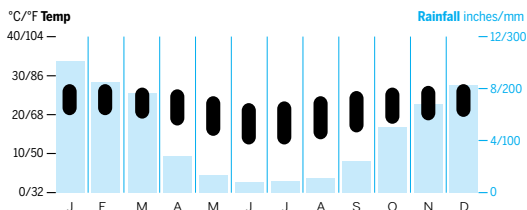
In short: big things come in small packages. The intriguing kingdom of Swaziland is diminutive, but boasts a huge checklist for any visitor. Rewarding wildlife watching? Tick. Adrenalin-boosting activities such as rafting and mountain biking? Tick. Lively and colourful local culture, with celebrations and ceremonies still common practice? Tick. Plus there are superb walking trails, stunning mountain and flat-land scenery, and excellent, high-quality handicrafts.

Presiding over this is King Mswati III, the last remaining absolute monarch in Africa, who, despite his critics, is the source of national pride, and local culture is flourishing. This is exemplified in its national festivals – the Incwala ceremony and the Umhlanga (Reed) dance.

The excellent road system makes Swaziland a pleasure to navigate. Accommodation ranges from hostels to family-friendly hotels, wilderness lodges and upmarket retreats. Many travellers make a flying visit on their way to Kruger National Park, but it's well worth lingering here if you can.

## When to Go

### Mbabane



**Jan–Apr** Hot weather; lush vegetation and full rivers provide perfect photographic backdrops

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

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



## Swaziland Highlights

**1** Watching rare black rhinos in the wild at **Mkhaya Game Reserve** (p524)

**2** Browsing the craft shops and royal heartland in the **Ezulwini Valley** (p518) and the **Malkerns Valley** (p521)

**3** Shooting wondrous white-water rapids down **Usutu River** (p520)

**4** Cycling or meandering in the wilderness, and relaxing in its lodges, at **Milwane Wildlife Sanctuary** (p518)

**5** Digging in for the night in a community-run hut and experiencing the best of **local culture** (p524)