



# Botswana

📍 27 / POP 2.183 MILLION

## Includes ➔

Gaborone .....	43
Makgadikgadi & Nxai Pans .....	54
Chobe National Park .....	58
Okavango Delta .....	65
Kalahari .....	76

## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Courtyard Restaurant (p47)
- ➔ Cafe Dijo (p47)
- ➔ Hilary's (p71)
- ➔ French Connection (p71)
- ➔ Caravela Portuguese Restaurant (p47)

## Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Zarafa Camp (p65)
- ➔ Mombo Camp (p75)
- ➔ Vumbura Plains Camp (p74)
- ➔ Sandibe Safari Lodge (p72)
- ➔ Jao Camp (p73)
- ➔ Kalahari Plains Camp (p77)

## Why Go?

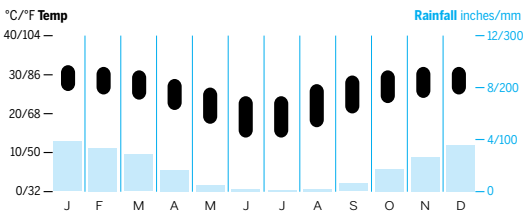
Blessed with some of the greatest wildlife spectacles on earth, Botswana is one of the great safari destinations in Africa. There are more elephants in Botswana than in any other country on earth; the big cats roam free; and you'll find everything from endangered African wild dogs to aquatic antelopes, rhinos making a comeback and abundant birdlife at every turn.

This is also the land of the Okavango Delta and the Kalahari Desert, at once iconic African landscapes and vast stretches of wilderness. Put these landscapes together with the wildlife that inhabits them, and it's difficult to escape the conclusion that this is wild Africa at its best.

Botswana may rank among Africa's most exclusive destinations – accommodation prices at most lodges are once-in-a-lifetime propositions – but self-drive expeditions are also possible. And whichever way you visit, Botswana is a truly extraordinary place.

## When to Go

### Gaborone



**Jun–Oct** Peak rates and low availability for lodges across the north. Warm days and mild nights.

**Apr, May & Nov** Lovely, cheaper time to visit. Rains can last into April and some trails are waterlogged.

**Dec–Mar** Cheaper rates, except over Christmas/New Year. High season in the Kalahari.

## GABORONE

POP 234,500

Depending on your perspective, low-key Gaborone (or Gabs to its friends) is either terribly unexciting or one of Africa's more tranquil capital cities. There aren't that many concrete reasons to come here – it's a world of government ministries, shopping malls and a seemingly endless urban sprawl – and most travellers can fly to Maun or cross overland elsewhere. Yet, it can be an interesting place to take the pulse of the nation.

The city is largely a modern creation, with little sense of history to provide interest. Indeed, ask Batswana who were born and raised in Gaborone where they're from, and they may well tell you the name of a family village or cattle post they've never seen. So while the local Batswana may not see Gaborone as a traditional family 'home', they do see it as the place where their future, and that of their nation, is forged.

### Sights

**Gaborone Game Reserve** WILDLIFE RESERVE  
(📍 318 4492; adult/child/vehicle P10/5/10; 🕒 6.30am-6.30pm) This reserve was established in 1988 by the Kalahari Conservation Society to give the Gaborone public an opportunity to view Botswana's wildlife in a natural and accessible location. It seems to be working; although the reserve is only 5 sq km, it's the third busiest in the country and boasts wildebeest, elands, gemsboks, kudus, ostriches and warthogs. The birdlife, which includes kingfishers and hornbills, is particularly plentiful and easy to spot from observation areas.

The reserve also has a few picnic sites, a game hide and a small visitor-education centre. All roads in the reserve are accessible by 2WD; guided drives are not offered. The reserve is about 1km east of Broadhurst Mall and can be accessed from Limpopo Dr.

**National Museum & Art Gallery** MUSEUM  
(Map p46; 📍 397 4616; 331 Independence Ave) **FREE** Botswana's National Museum closed in mid-2016 for a much-needed overhaul. Prior to the closure, the collection itself was fairly modest, with plenty of stuffed animals alongside sections on the country's precolonial and colonial history, while the art-gallery section had a similarly unremarkable portfolio of traditional and modern African and European art.

### Tours

**Africa Insight** TOURS  
(📍 316 0180, 72 654 323; www.africainsight.com; half-/full-day tours P545/1198) This outfit offers half- and full-day *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* tours endorsed by author Alexander McCall-Smith himself, with more wide-ranging excursions around Gaborone and beyond also possible. Among the latter are 'Predator Weekends' – weekend safaris to Khutse Game Reserve.

**Garcin Safaris** TOURS  
(📍 71 668 193, 393 6773; garcinsafaris@info.bw; half-/full-day tours from US\$140/220) Resident and Gaborone expert Marilyn Garcin does great tours of the city, including a *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*-focused jaunt. She also offers recommended safaris around Botswana.

**Kaie Tours** TOURS  
(📍 397 3388, 72 261 585; www.kaietours.com) Travel agency offering city tours, day trips in the Gabs hinterland and overnight safaris to Khutse Game Reserve and South Africa's Madikwe Game Reserve.

### Festivals & Events

**Maitisong Festival** PERFORMING ARTS  
(📍 397 1809; www.maitisong.org; 🕒 Mar-Apr) Botswana's largest performing-arts festival has been running since 1987 and is held over seven days in late March or early April. It features an outdoor program of music, theatre, film and dance, as well as an indoor program at the Maitisong Cultural Centre and the Memorable Order of Tin Hats (MOTH) Hall. Highlights include top performing artists from around Africa.

### Sleeping

Gaborone primarily caters to domestic and business travellers. Even so, the city has a good range of accommodation to suit most budgets, and unlike most tourist areas there are some reasonable midrange possibilities. Gaborone sprawls for kilometres and no matter where you stay you'll need wheels (either a rental car or taxi) to get anywhere.

**Mokolodi Backpackers** HOSTEL \$  
(📍 74 111 164; www.backpackers.co.bw; camping/dm/s P135/235/325, 2-person units/chalets P550/645, 3-person rondavels P750; @ 📍) This great place, around 14km south of the city centre, is the only accommodation with a real backpacker vibe around Gaborone. It has everything from comfortable rondavels