



# Angola

POP 25.8 MILLION / 244

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## Fast Facts

**Capital** Luanda

**Population** 25.8 million

**Languages** Portuguese, various Bantu languages

**Area** 1,246,700 sq km

**Currency** Kwanza (Kz)

## Introduction

For most people, Angola is one of Africa's last great travel mysteries. Despite its elemental landscapes and boom-bust oil-dependent economy, the country remains closed off to all but the most adventurous travellers thanks to stringent visa policies, high prices and a history that's been more about war than peace.

It's a shame. Angola has the potential to be one of Africa's dazzling highlights. Lurking within its wild borders lies the continent's second-largest waterfall, scattered remnants of Portuguese colonial history, a handful of emerging national parks, beaches galore and a diverse and unbelievably stoic cross-section of people.

Whether Angola will open up to outsiders any time soon is anyone's guess. The underdeveloped tourist industry has yet to spread its wings and take flight. The sooner the government tackles the country's nagging political issues, the quicker it can emerge from its protracted slumber and show the world what's it's been missing.

## Angola at a Glance

**Kalandula Falls** These massive waterfalls are as spectacular and large as any in Africa, but, as yet, get very few visitors.

**Miradouro de Lua** A magnificent lookout over a canyon of moonlike cliffs that cascade dramatically into the Atlantic Ocean.

**Parque Nacional da Kissama** Angola's most accessible and largest national park has been partly replenished with big fauna.

**Benguela** Angola's cultural capital has colonial architecture, reasonable restaurants and some blissfully quiet Atlantic beaches.

**Lubango** Almost untouched by the war, the highland city of Lubango has busy markets, dramatic volcanic fissures and a giant statue of Christ.

# UNDERSTAND ANGOLA

## Angola Today

Since the end of its debilitating 40-year-long civil war in 2002, Angola has enjoyed an unprecedented period of peace and stability, at least on the political front. Economically, the ride has been a little bumpier. While the Angolan economy has grown – at an average rate of 17% annually in the first six years after 2002 – niggling problems continue to grate, most pressing, corruption, huge income disparity and a worrying lack of economic diversification.

The country's heavy reliance on oil – which contributes to nearly half of Angola's GDP – came home to roost in 2015 when global oil prices fell from US\$100 to US\$30 per barrel in little over a year. Reeling from the shock, the value of the Angola kwanza dropped 25% as local prices soared. Sudden-

ly, Angola was facing its biggest economic and humanitarian crisis since the war.

As always, the poor were hit the hardest. Despite a protracted oil boom in the 2000s and 2010s, an estimated one-third of Angolans still live below the poverty line. By early 2016, conditions among the poorest sections of society were said to be as bad as the war years. The situation was exacerbated by a serious yellow-fever outbreak in Luanda coupled with a deadly drought in the south that triggered a crop failure and precipitated the worst food crisis in Angola for a quarter of a century.

Despite the economic turmoil, Angola has logged several small achievements. Landmine clearance continues, aided by humanitarian organisations such as the Halo Trust, while Unita, the one-time belligerent opposition party, appears to have permanently swapped its guns for the ballot box. In 2016 the country's ageing president, Eduardo do Santos (Africa's second-longest

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