

Botswana

Botswana is an African success story. After achieving democratic rule in 1966, three of the world's richest diamond-bearing formations were discovered within its borders. Today, the country enjoys a high standard of economic stability, education and health care, which, with the exception of South Africa, is unequalled elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa. However, its modern veneer belies the fact that much of it remains a country for the intrepid (not to mention relatively wealthy) traveller. This largely roadless wilderness of vast spaces requires time, effort and, above all else, lots of cash to enjoy it to its fullest.

Landlocked Botswana extends 1100km from north to south and 960km from east to west, making it about the same size as Kenya or France and somewhat smaller than Texas. Most of the country lies at an average elevation of 1000m, and consists of a vast and nearly level sand-filled basin characterised by scrub-covered savannah. The Kalahari, a semi-arid expanse of sandy valleys, covers nearly 85% of the country, including the entire central and southwestern regions. In the northwest, the Okavango River flows in from Namibia, and soaks into the sands to form the Okavango Delta.

With vast open savannas teeming with wildlife, Botswana is truly the Africa of your dreams. Because the Okavango Delta and the Chobe River provide a year-round water supply, nearly all southern African mammal species are present in the Moremi Wildlife Reserve and Chobe National Park. In the Makgadikgadi & Nxai Pans National Park herds of wildebeest, zebra and other mammals migrate annually in search of permanent water and stable food supplies.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 582,000 sq km
- **ATMs** Found in large towns
- **Borders** South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe (all overland crossings)
- **Budget** US\$40 to US\$70 a day
- **Capital** Gaborone
- **Language** English, Setswana
- **Money** Pula (P); US\$1 = 6.4P
- **Population** 1.63 million
- **Seasons** Wet (November to March); dry (May to August)
- **Telephone** Country code ☎ 267; international access ☎ 00
- **Time** GMT/UTC +2
- **Visa** None required for citizens of Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, the UK, Ireland, Canada or the USA



HIGHLIGHTS

- **Okavango Delta** (p848) Glide through watery expanses in a *mokoro*, a traditional dugout canoe.
- **Chobe National Park** (p856) Spot the Big Five at Botswana's premier wildlife park.
- **Makgadikgadi & Nxai Pans National Park** (p857) Follow herds of migrating zebra and wildebeest in this baobab-dotted salt-pan complex.
- **Tsodilo Hills** (p854) Wander through the 'Wilderness Louvre' of ancient San rock paintings.
- **Savuti** (p857) Test the limits of your survival instincts on an intrepid 4WD camping expedition.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Although it straddles the Tropic of Capricorn, Botswana experiences extremes in both temperature and weather. In the winter (late May through August), days are normally clear, warm and sunny, and nights are cool to cold. Wildlife never wanders far from water sources, so sightings are more predictable than in the wetter summer season. This is also the time of European, North American and – most importantly – South African school holidays, so some areas can be busy, especially between mid-July and mid-September. In summer (October to April), wildlife is harder to spot and rains can render sandy roads impassable. This is also the time of the highest humidity and the most stifling heat; daytime temperatures of over 40°C are common.

ITINERARIES

- **Three Days** Botswana's tourist highlight is the Okavango Delta (p848), and if you have only a few days, this is where you'll want to focus. Choose Maun (p851) or the Okavango Panhandle (p851) as your base and organise a *mokoro* trip through the wetlands, followed by a wildlife-viewing trip at Moremi Wildlife Reserve (p849).
- **One Week** Combine your visit to the delta with a safari through Chobe National Park (p856), one of the world's top safari experiences. Either go overland through the rugged interior or cruise along the wildlife-rich waterfront.
- **One Month** With a full month (and lots of money), you can hire a 4WD or use a reputable safari company and see the best

HOW MUCH?

- **Internet connection** US\$3 per hour
- **National park entry fee** US\$22
- **Decent binoculars from a shop in Maun** US\$35
- **Nice meal in a tourist restaurant** US\$15
- **4WD rental** US\$75 to US\$100 per day

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L petrol** US\$1.50
- **1L bottled water** US\$0.25
- **Bottle of Castle beer** US\$1.25
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$12
- **Sugar cane** US\$0.10

of the country: do a *mokoro* trip through the Okavango Delta (p848), safari in Moremi Wildlife Reserve (p849) and Chobe National Park (p856), camp and hike in the Tsodilo Hills (p854), cruise along the Okavango Panhandle (p851) and explore the very furthest reaches of the Savuti (p857).

HISTORY Pre-Colonial History

Following the fragmented trail of ancient pottery, archaeologists and anthropologists have been able to piece together the complex, criss-crossing migration of different tribal groups into southern Africa. Between AD 200 and 500 Bantu-speaking farmers started to appear on the southern landscape from the north and east. To begin with, relations between the San and Khoikhoi appear to have been cordial, and the groups mixed freely, traded and intermarried.

Perhaps the most significant development in Botswana's long history was the evolution of the three main branches of the Tswana tribe during the 14th century. It's a typical tale of family discord, where three brothers – Kwen, Ngwaketse and Ngwato – broke away from their father, Chief Malope, to establish their own followings in Molepolole, Kanye and Serowe respectively. Realistically, these fractures probably occurred in response to drought and expanding populations eager to strike out in search of new pastures and arable land.

Colonial History

From the 1820s the Boers began their Great Trek across the Vaal River. Confident that they had heaven-sanctioned rights to any land they might choose to occupy in southern Africa, 20,000 Boers crossed into Tswana and Zulu territory and established themselves as though the lands were unclaimed and uninhabited. At the Sand River Convention of 1852, Britain recognised the Transvaal's independence and the Boers informed the Batswana (people of Botswana) that they were now subjects of the South African Republic.

Prominent Tswana leaders Sechele I and Mosieele refused to accept white rule and incurred the violent wrath of the Boers. After heavy losses of life and land, the Tswana sent

their leaders to petition the British for protection. Britain, however, was in no hurry to support lands of dubious profitability and offered only to act as arbitrator in the dispute. But by 1877, the worsening situation provoked the British annexation of the Transvaal and launched the first Boer War, with violence continuing until 1881. In 1882, Boers again moved into Tswana lands and subdued Mafeking, threatening the British route between the Cape and the suspected mineral wealth in Zimbabwe.

Again, the Tswana lobbied for British protection and in 1885, thanks to petitions from John Mackenzie (a friend of the Christian Chief Khama III of Shoshong), Britain resigned itself to the inevitable. Lands south of

the Molopo River became the British Crown Colony of Bechuanaland and were attached to the Cape Colony, while the area north became the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland.

A new threat to the Tswana chiefs' power base came in the form of Cecil Rhodes and his British South Africa Company (BSAC). By 1894, the British had all but agreed to allow him to control the country. An unhappy delegation of Tswana chiefs – Bathoen, Khama III and Sebele – accompanied by a sympathetic missionary, WC Willoughby, sailed to England to appeal directly to Colonial Minister Joseph Chamberlain for continued government control but their pleas were ignored. As a last resort, they turned to the London Missionary Society (LMS), which in turn took the matter to the British public. Fearing the BSAC would allow alcohol in Bechuanaland, the LMS and other Christian groups backed Chief Khama III. Public pressure mounted and the British government was forced to concede.

Chiefs now grudgingly accepted their rites and traditions would be affected by Christianity and Western technology. The capital of the protectorate was established at Mafeking – actually in South Africa – and taxes were introduced. Chiefs were granted tribal 'reserve' (jurisdiction over all black residents and the authority to collect taxes and retain a 10% commission on all moneys collected). In addition, the local economy was bolstered by the sale of cattle, draft oxen and grain to the Europeans streaming north in search of farming land and minerals.

The honeymoon didn't last. The construction of the railway through Bechuanaland to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in the 1890s destroyed the transit trade. In 1924, South Africa began pressing for Bechuanaland's amalgamation into the Union of South Africa, and when the Tswana chiefs refused, economic sanctions destroyed what remained of their beef market.

In 1923, Chief Khama III died and was succeeded by his son Sekgoma, who died after serving only two years. The heir to the throne, four-year-old Seretse Khama, wasn't ready for the job of ruling the largest of the Tswana chiefdoms, so his 21-year-old uncle Tshekedi Khama became regent of his clan.

Resident Commissioner Sir Charles Rey determined that no progress would be forth-

coming as long as the people were governed by Tswana chiefs and proclaimed all local government officials answerable to colonial magistrates. So great was the popular opposition – people feared that it would lead to their incorporation into South Africa – that Rey was ousted from his job and his proclamation annulled.

During WWII, 10,000 Tswana volunteered for the African Pioneer Corps to defend the British Empire. After the war Seretse Khama went to study in England where he met and married an Englishwoman. Tshekedi Khama was furious at this breach of tribal custom, and the South African authorities, still hoping to absorb Bechuanaland into the Union, were none too happy. The British government blocked Seretse's chieftaincy and he was exiled from the protectorate to England. Bitterness continued until 1956 when Seretse Khama renounced his right to power and returned with his wife to Botswana to serve as a minor official.

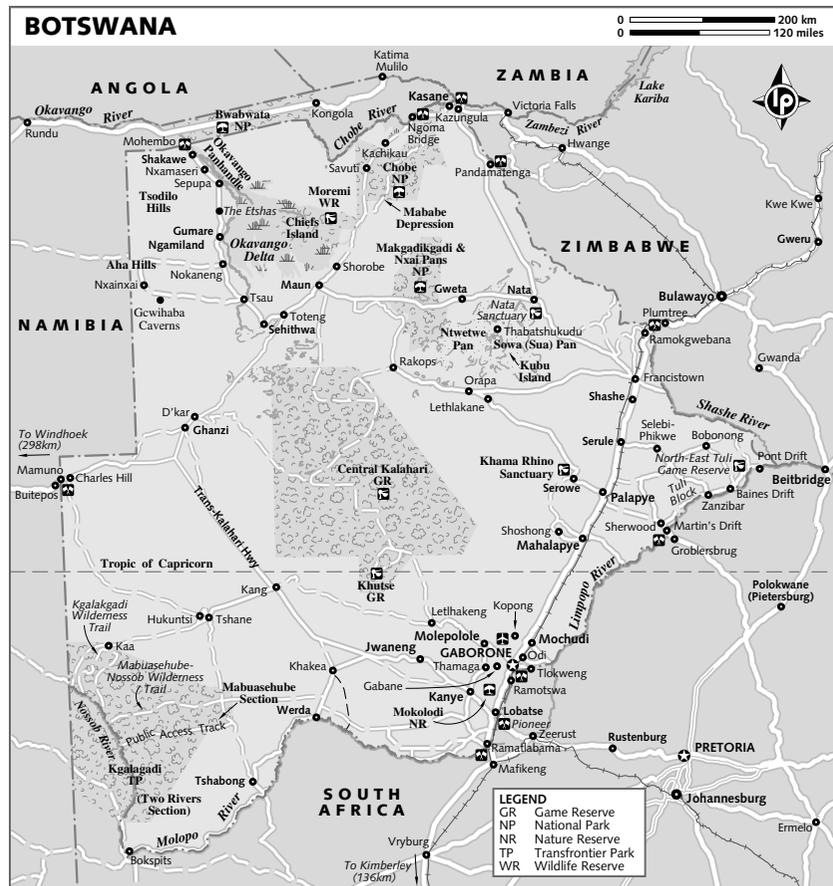
Nationalism & Independence

The first signs of nationalist thinking among the Tswana occurred in the late 1940s, and in 1955 it had become apparent that Britain was preparing to release its grip on Bechuanaland. University graduates returned from South Africa with political ideas, and although the country had no real economic base, the first Batswana political parties surfaced and began thinking about independence.

Following the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, South African refugees Motsamai Mpho of the African National Congress (ANC) and Philip Matante, a Johannesburg preacher affiliated with the Pan-Africanist Congress, along with KT Motsete, a teacher from Mafeking, formed the Bechuanaland People's Party. Its immediate goal was independence for the protectorate.

In 1962, Seretse Khama and the Kanye farmer Quett Masire formed the more moderate Bechuanaland Democratic Party (BDP), soon to be joined by Chief Bathoen II of the Ngwaketse. The BDP formulated a schedule for independence, drawing on support from local chiefs and traditional Batswana.

They promoted the transfer of the capital into the country (from Mafeking to Gaborone), drafted a new nonracial constitution and set up a countdown to independence to allow a peaceful transfer of power. General elections



were held in 1965 and Seretse Khama was elected president. On 30 September 1966, the country, now called the Republic of Botswana, gained independence.

Sir Seretse Khama – he was knighted shortly after independence – was no revolutionary, adopting a neutral stance (at least until near the end of his presidency) towards South Africa and Rhodesia. The reason, of course, was Botswana's economic dependence on these countries. Nevertheless, Khama refused to exchange ambassadors with South Africa and officially disapproved of apartheid in international circles.

Botswana was economically transformed by the discovery of diamonds near Orapa in 1967. The mining concession was given to De Beers with Botswana taking 75% of the profits.

After the death of Khama in 1980, Dr Ketumile Masire took the helm. His popular presidency ended in March 1998, when the current president, Festus Mogae, assumed control of Botswana.

Botswana Today

Botswana continues to be a shining light among its neighbours, with a nonracial, multi-party, democratic government that oversees the affairs of a peaceful and neutral state. Unlike in so many African countries, freedom of speech, association, press and religion, as well as equal rights, are all guaranteed under the constitution.

The greatest threat to Botswana's stability is the deadly AIDS virus. Botswana has the highest HIV infection rate in the world, and according to a UN report, 19% of all people

and 36% of young adults (aged 15 to 29) are currently infected. There is hope, however. Although discussion of AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and contraception continues to be taboo in Botswanan society (especially in rural areas), the government increased health spending by 41% in 2001 and established the National Aids Council, which is conducting educational programs in schools and universities throughout the country and highlighting the issue on billboards along the highway. The council is also flooding newspapers with awareness articles. The government has also purchased antiretroviral drugs to treat its infected populace, something traditionally unheard of in Africa.

In regard to malaria, Botswana actually has one of the lowest malaria rates in southern Africa, which is predominantly due to the aridity of the country.

CULTURE

Proud, conservative, resourceful and respectful, the Batswana have an ingrained feeling of national identity and an impressive belief in their government and country.

Traditional culture acts as a sort of societal glue. Respect for one's elders, firmly held religious beliefs, traditional gender roles and the tradition of the *kgotla* (a specially designated meeting place in each village where grievances can be aired in an atmosphere of mutual respect) create a well-defined social structure with some stiff mores at its core. But despite some heavyweight social responsibilities the Batswana have an easygoing and unhurried approach to life, and the emotional framework of the extended family generally makes for an inclusive network.

ARTS & CRAFTS

The original Batswana artists managed to convey individuality, aesthetics and aspects of Batswana life in their utilitarian implements. Baskets, pottery, fabrics and tools were decorated with meaningful designs derived from tradition. Europeans introduced a new form of art, some of which was integrated and adapted to local interpretation, particularly in weavings and tapestries. The result is some of the finest and most meticulously executed work in southern Africa.

Botswana's most famous modern literary figure is South African-born Bessie Head (who died in 1988). Her works reflect the

NATIONAL PARKS

National park entry fees for nonresidents are US\$22 per day for individual travellers or US\$13 per day for licensed safari participants, plus US\$5.50 per person for camping. Foreign-/Botswana-registered vehicles pay US\$10/2 per day. Children and Botswana residents and citizens get substantial discounts.

You can book accommodation in the national parks by post, phone, fax, email or in person up to one year prior to your intended visit. Contact the reservation office of the **Department of Wildlife & National Parks** (DWNP; Gaborone Map pp844-5; ☎ 318 0774; fax 318 0775; dwnp@gov.bw; PO Box 131, Government Enclave, Khama Cres; ☎ 7.30am-12.45pm & 1.45-4.30pm Mon-Fri; Maun Map p853; ☎ 686 1265; fax 686 1264; PO Box 20364, Boseja; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm & 1.45-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 7.30am-noon Sun). Chobe National Park bookings are also available from the **Kasane office** (Map p855; ☎ 625 0235; fax 625 1623; Sedudu Gate).

harshness and beauty of African village life and the Botswanan landscape. Her most widely read works include *Serowe: Village of the Rain Wind*, *When Rain Clouds Gather*, *Maru*, *The Cardinals*, *A Bewitched Crossroad* and *The Collector of Treasures* (the last is an anthology of short stories). Welcome recent additions to Botswana's national literature are the works of Norman Rush, which include the novel *Mating*, set in a remote village, and *Whites*, which deals with the country's growing number of expatriates and apologists from South Africa and elsewhere.

ENVIRONMENT

With an area of 582,000 sq km, landlocked Botswana extends more than 1100km from north to south and 960km from east to west. The Kalahari (Kgalagadi) Desert covers 85% of the country in the central and southwestern areas – but despite the name it's semidesert, and can be surprisingly lush in places. The best season for wildlife viewing takes place during the dry winter months (late May to August), when animals stay close to water sources.

Because the Okavango Delta and the Chobe River provide an incongruous water supply, nearly all southern African mammal species, including such rarities as pukas, red lechwe, sitatungas and wild dogs, are present in Moremi Wildlife Reserve, parts of Chobe National Park and the Linyanti Marshes (at the northwestern corner of Chobe). In the Makgadikgadi & Nxai Pan National Park, herds of wildebeest, zebra and other hoofed mammals migrate between their winter range on the Makgadikgadi plains and the summer lushness of the Nxai Pan region.

While much of Botswana is largely wide open and pristine, it does face several ecological challenges. The main one revolves around its 3000km of 1.5m-high 'buffalo fence', officially called the 'veterinary cordon fence' – a series of high-tensile steel wire barriers that cross some of the country's wildest terrain. The fences were first erected in 1954 to segregate wild buffalo herds from domestic free-range cattle and thwart the spread of foot-and-mouth disease. However, it hasn't been proven that the disease is passed from species to species and the fences not only prevent contact between wild and domestic bovine species, but also prevent other wild animals from migrating to water sources along age-old seasonal routes. While Botswana has set aside large areas for wildlife protection, they don't constitute independent ecosystems, and migratory wildlife numbers (particularly of wildebeest, giraffe and zebra) continue to decline. Cattle ranching is a source of wealth and a major export industry, but all exported beef must be disease-free, so understandably ranchers have reacted positively to the fences, and the government tends to side with the ranchers.

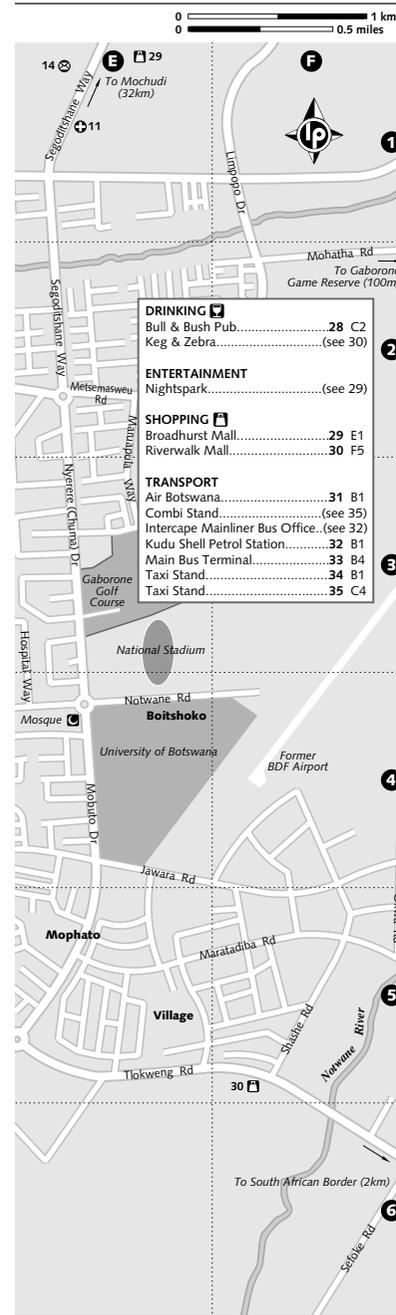
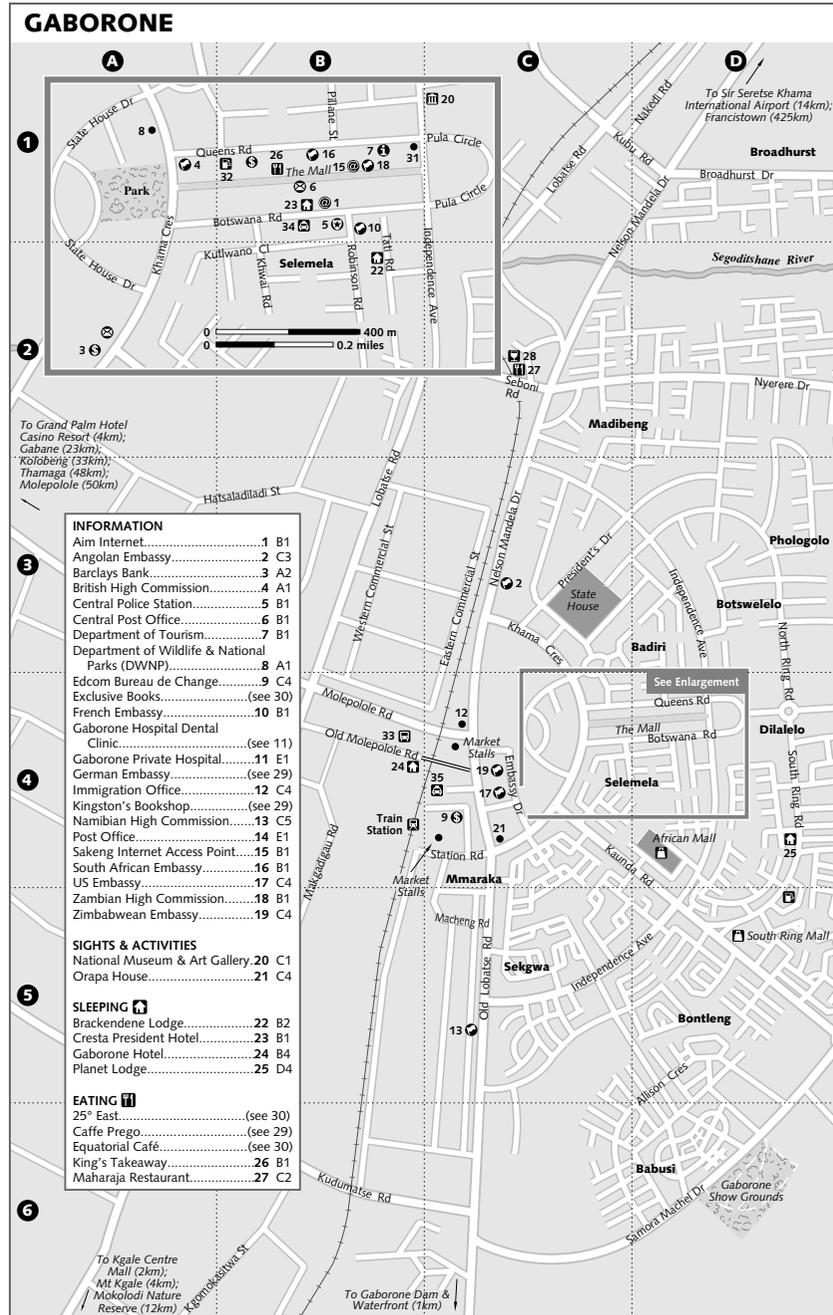
GABORONE

pop 250,000

Botswana's diminutive capital, Gaborone (normally affectionately shortened to Gabs), is little more than a rambling village suffering from growing pains, drabness and a lack of definition. However, it serves as a convenient gateway to overland travellers arriving from South Africa and is a good supply stop before heading out to the national parks.

BATSWANA

In the predominant language, Setswana (which means 'language of the Tswana'), tribal groups are usually denoted by the prefix 'ba'. Thus, Herero people are known as Baherero, the Kgalagadi as Bakgalagadi, and so on. Collectively, all citizens of Botswana (which means 'land of the Tswana') – regardless of colour, ancestry or tribal affiliation – are known as Batswana (plural) or Motswana (singular), even if they are not strictly from the Batswana tribal group. The Batswana tribal group accounts for about 60% of the people living in the country.



ORIENTATION

Although it now has a distinct skyline, Gaborone lacks any real central business district – the action focuses on its shopping malls. Most government ministries and offices are concentrated around the Government Enclave along Khama Cres, at the head of the main mall. While several shopping centres serve local neighbourhoods, the enormous Kgale Centre and Riverwalk Malls provide the widest range of retail outlets and restaurants.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Exclusive Books (Riverwalk Mall) This reader-recommended bookshop has a wide range of literature, nonfiction and travel books.

Kingston's Bookshop (Broadhurst Mall) A huge array of novels, postcards, books and maps about the region.

Emergency

Ambulance (☎ 997)

Central police station (☎ 355 1161; Botswana Rd)

Opposite the Cresta President Hotel.

Fire (☎ 998)

Police (☎ 999)

Internet Access

Aim Internet (Botswana Rd; per hr US\$3) Next to the Cresta President Hotel.

Sakeng Internet Access Point (The Mall; per hr US\$3) In the Gaborone Hardware Building.

Medical Services

Gaborone Hospital Dental Clinic (☎ 395 3777) Part of the Gaborone Private Hospital.

Gaborone Private Hospital (☎ 360 1999; Segoditshane Way) For anything serious, head to this considerably modern but expensive hospital opposite Broadhurst Mall.

Money

Barclays Bank (☎ 355 3411; Khama Cres) Head office.

Edcom Bureau de Change (☎ 361 1123) Near the train station.

Post

Central post office (The Mall)

Post office (Segoditshane Way) Across the road from Broadhurst Mall.

Tourist Information

Department of Tourism (☎ 355 3024; www .botswana-tourism.gov.bw; 2nd fl, Standard Chartered Bank Bldg, The Mall; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm & 1.45-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

Department of Wildlife & National Parks (DWNP; ☎ 318 0774; fax 318 0775; dwnp@gov.bw; PO Box 131, Government Enclave, Khama Cres; ☎ 7.30am-12.45pm & 1.45-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Accommodation booking office for all national parks and reserves run by the DWNP.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The **National Museum & Art Gallery** (☎ 397 4616; Independence Ave; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) is a repository of stuffed wildlife and cultural artefacts. It features displays on San crafts, material culture and hunting techniques; traditional and modern African and European art; and ethnographic and cultural exhibits.

The **Gaborone Game Reserve** (☎ 358 4492; admission US\$0.25, plus per vehicle US\$0.50; ☎ 6.30am-6.30pm), 1km east of Broadhurst, is accessible only by private vehicle (no bikes or motorcycles), and is home to a variety of grazers and browsers.

Orapa House (☎ 395 1131; cnr Nelson Mandela Dr & Khama Cres), owned by Debswana, is designed to make use of natural daylight – without direct sunlight – for the purpose of sorting and grading diamonds from the world's largest diamond mine at Jwaneng. If you have time and aren't put off by red tape, you can muster a group and arrange a tour.

SLEEPING

Brackendene Lodge (☎ 361 2886; Tati Rd; s/d from US\$24/45; ☎ ☎) Although there are a few recently renovated rooms located in the main building, the Brackendene is more a collection of small houses than an organised lodge. The main building is a good choice if you want to be centrally located, though the houses do feature full kitchens.

Planet Lodge (☎ 390 3295; 514 South Ring Rd; s/d from US\$36/43; ☎ ☎) A short walk from the city centre brings you to this relaxed lodge, which offers attractive rooms featuring TVs, stereos, air-con and fridges. Rooms are priced according to size, and kitchen facilities are available to guests.

Gaborone Hotel (☎ 362 2777; gabhot@info.bw; s/d US\$45/60; ☎ ☎) This large modern complex will never win any awards for beauty, but it's conveniently located next to the bus and train stations. The rooms are large, surprisingly quiet and well furnished with cable TV and air-con.

Cresta President Hotel (☎ 355 3631; www.cresta-hospitality.com; The Mall; s/d US\$107/133; ☎ ☎ ☎) The first luxury hotel in the city is located

smack-dab in the middle of the Mall, which pretty much justifies the heavy price tag.

Grand Palm Hotel Casino Resort (☎ 361 2999; www.grandpalm.bw; Molepolole Rd; d from US\$120; ☎ ☎ ☎) Located 5km west of the city centre, this Las Vegas-inspired resort complex boasts a mini-city complete with restaurants, bars, a casino, a cinema and a spa. You'll pay to stay, but it's the swishest accommodation in town.

EATING

Equatorial Café (Riverwalk Mall; mains from US\$2) The best espressos in town are served here, along with fruit smoothies, falafel and gourmet sandwiches. It even has real bagels!

King's Takeaway (The Mall; meals US\$2-4) This local favourite serves up inexpensive burgers, chips and snacks to hungry office workers.

Caffe Prego (Broadhurst Mall; mains US\$4-6) This charming little café specialises in healthy breakfasts and homemade pastas.

Maharaja Restaurant (☎ 393 1870; Seboni Rd; mains US\$4-8) The 'stylish' décor is a bit dated, though the large selection of Indian dishes (including vegetarian options) is perfect if you're looking for relief from pap and stew.

25° East (Riverwalk Mall; sushi US\$2-4, mains US\$5-10) If you can believe it, there is in fact a sushi restaurant on the edge of the Kalahari. Asian-inspired mains are probably a safer bet, though it's hard to say no to *nigiri-zushi*.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

The popular Bull & Bush Pub is the centre for expat nightlife. As well as being a restaurant, there's a good selection of cold beers on tap, and if the conversation is lacking, you can always turn your attention to the international sports telecasts on satellite TV.

Keg & Zebra (Riverwalk Mall) This popular bar packs in the crowds for its Sunday night sing-along jam sessions, though there's fun to be had here most nights of the week.

Nightspark (Broadhurst Mall; weekend cover charge US\$2) Features all sorts of musical acts and is popular with middle-class Batswana youth.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Sir Seretse Khama International Airport (☎ 35 1191) is located 15km from the city centre. **Air Botswana** (☎ 390 5500; Botswana Insurance Company House, The Mall) operates scheduled domestic flights to and from Francistown (US\$100), Maun (US\$155) and Kasane (US\$155). The office also serves as an agent for other regional airlines.

Intercity buses and minibuses to Johannesburg, South Africa (US\$12, seven hours), Francistown (US\$5, six hours), Selebi-Phikwe (US\$6, six hours), Ghanzi (US\$10, 11 hours), Lobatse (US\$1.50, 1½ hours), Mahalapye (US\$2.50, three hours), Palapye (US\$4, four hours) and Serowe (US\$4, five hours) depart from the main bus terminal. The main bus terminal also offers local services to Kanye (US\$1.50, two hours), Jwaneng (US\$4, three hours), Manyana (US\$0.80, 1½ hours), Mochudi (US\$1, one hour), Thamaga (US\$0.80, one hour) and Molepolole (US\$1.25, one hour).

To reach Maun or Kasane, change in Francistown. Buses operate according to roughly fixed schedules and minibuses leave when full.

The Intercape Mainliner to Johannesburg (US\$25, 6½ hours) runs from the Kudu Shell petrol station beside the Mall.

The day train departs for Francistown at 10am (club/economy US\$4/8, 6½ hours). The night train departs at 9pm (US\$25/20 in 1st-/2nd-class sleepers, US\$5 in economy, 8¼ hours).

To hitch north, catch the Broadhurst 4 minibus from any shopping centre along the main city loop and get off at the standard hitching spot at the northern end of town – look for a crowd of people waiting in line to thumb a lift.

GETTING AROUND

Packed white combis, recognisable by their blue numberplates, circulate according to set routes and cost US\$0.50. They pick up and drop off only at designated lay-bys marked 'bus/taxi stop'. The main city loop passes all the main shopping centres except the new Riverwalk Mall and the Kgale Centre Mall, which are on the Tlokweg and Kgale routes, respectively.

Taxis, which can also be easily identified by their blue numberplates, are surprisingly difficult to come by in Gabs. Very few cruise the streets looking for fares, and most are parked either in front of the train station or on Botswana Rd. If you manage to get a hold of one, fares (negotiable) are generally US\$3 to US\$5 per trip around the city. Note that taxis rarely turn up at the airport, though there are courtesy minibuses operated by the top-end hotels for their guests. If there's space, nonguests may talk the driver into a lift, but you'll have to pay about US\$8.

AROUND GABORONE

MOCHUDI

Mochudi, one of Botswana's most fascinating villages, was first settled by the Kwena in the mid-1500s, as evidenced by ruined stone walls in the hills. In 1871 came the Kgatla people, who had been forced from their lands by northward-trekking Boers. The Cape Dutch-style **Phuthadikobo Museum** (☎ 577 7238; fax 574 8920; admission free, donations appreciated; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 2-5pm Sat & Sun), established in 1976, is one of Botswana's best, with displays on the village and its Kgatla history. After visiting the museum, it's worth spending an hour appreciating the variety of designs in the town's mud-walled architecture.

Buses to Mochudi depart from Gaborone when full. By car, head north to Pilane and turn east; after 6km, turn left at the T-junction and then right just before the hospital, into the historic village centre.

Mokolodi Nature Reserve

This 30-sq-km private **reserve** (☎ 316 1955; www.mokolodi.com; admission per person/vehicle US\$2/4; ☎ 7.30am-6pm) was established in 1991, and is home to giraffes, elephants, zebras, baboons, warthogs, hippos, kudu, impala, waterbucks and klipspringers. The reserve also protects a few retired cheetahs, leopards, honey badgers, jackals and hyenas, as well as over 300 different species of birds. If you're not self-driving, two-hour day or night wildlife drives cost US\$28 per person. There are a number of other activities on offer including guided walks (US\$12), rhino tracking (US\$80), cheetah petting (US\$48), horse safaris (US\$24) and a visit to the popular elephant baths (US\$3).

Though pricey, the camp sites (US\$24 for two people) at Mokolodi are secluded and well groomed, and feature *braai* (barbecue) pits and thatched bush showers (with steaming hot water) and toilets. If you want to safari in style, there are also three-person chalets (US\$120) and eight-person A-frames (US\$198) situated in the middle of the reserve. Advanced bookings are recommended. If you don't have a vehicle, staff can drive you to the camp site and accommodation areas for a nominal charge.

The entrance to the reserve is 12km south of town, but it's 1.5km from the highway to the reserve itself. So, take a combi 12km south

of town until you see a sign for Mokolodi and then get off. Next, walk 1.5km along the dirt path until you reach the main entrance. You can also phone ahead for transfers from the city centre or airport (US\$28 or US\$44 for four people, respectively).

NORTHERN BOTSWANA

OKAVANGO DELTA

The 1430km Okavango River rises in central Angola, then flows southeast across Namibia's Caprivi Strip before entering Botswana east of Shakawe. There, 18.5 billion cu metres of water annually spread and sprawl like an open palm across the flat landscape as they're consumed by the thirsty air and swallowed by the Kalahari sands. Eventually, the river loses itself in a 16,000-sq-km maze of lagoons, channels and islands. In this desert country, the incongruous waters of the resulting wetland – best-known as the Okavango Delta – attract myriad birds and other wildlife, as well as most of Botswana's tourists.

Generally, the best months to visit the delta are July to September, when the weather is dry and the water levels are high – unfortunately the prices skyrocket. Because most people visit at this time, we've quoted these prices in this book. Decent deals for delta lodges can be found during the low season (December to March), but beware that *mokoro* trips out of Maun are often impossible at this time due to low water levels. *Mokoro* safaris still operate out of Seronga, where there is a permanent source of water.

The Okavango Delta is usually subdivided into four areas: Eastern Delta, Inner Delta, Moremi Wilderness Reserve and Okavango Panhandle.

Eastern Delta

The Eastern Delta includes the wetlands between the southern boundary of Moremi Wildlife Reserve and the buffalo fence that crosses the Boro and Santandadibe Rivers, north of Matlapaneng. If you're short of time and/or money, this part of the delta remains an affordable and accessible option. *Mokoro*

MOKORO TRIPS

Most visitors to the Okavango spend at least some time travelling by *mokoro* (plural, *mekoro*), a shallow-draught dugout canoe hewn from ebony or sausage tree log (or, more recently, moulded from fibreglass). The *mekoro* are poled from a standing position and their precarious appearance belies their amazing stability. A *mokoro* normally accommodates the poler, two passengers and their food and camping equipment.

While one-day trips are possible in the Eastern Delta (with a return drive lasting several hours from Maun or a more expensive fly-in trip), most people prefer a multiday trip, where travellers ride for several days with the same poler, breaking their journey with walks on palm islands and moving between established camps or wild camping along the way. In this case, the quality of the experience depends largely upon the skill of the poler, the meshing of personalities and the passengers' enthusiasms.

The importance of finding a competent poler cannot be overstated, especially when you're expecting them to negotiate labyrinthine waterways or lead you on bushwalks through wildlife country. The keenest polers can speak at least some English; warn you about dangers (never swim without first asking the poler!); recognise and identify plants, birds and animals along the way; explain the delta cultures; and perhaps even teach clients how to fish using traditional methods.

If you're organising a budget *mokoro* trip, inquire in advance whether you're expected to provide food for your poler. Even if they do bring their own supplies, many travellers prefer to share meals. The polers may, for example, provide a sack of mealie meal (ground maize) and cooking implements while travellers supply the relishes: tins of curries, stews and vegetables. If you have arranged to provide your poler's meals, the standard daily rations are 500g of mealie meal, 250g of white sugar, six tea bags and sufficient salt and powdered milk.

Although it's still possible to negotiate with independent polers, most visitors organise *mokoro* trips through delta lodges or Maun safari companies, or through the Okavango Polers Trust in Seronga (see opposite).

THE OKAVANGO POLERS TRUST

The **Okavango Polers Trust** (☎ 687 6861) was established in 1998 by the people of Seronga to provide cheaper and more accessible *mokoro* trips and accommodation for visitors. Since the collective is run entirely by the village, all profits are shared by the workers, invested into the trust and used to provide the community with better facilities. The trust directly employs nearly 100 people, including polers, dancers, cooks, managers and drivers. Since no travel agency or safari operator has its fingers in the pie, the cooperative can afford to charge reasonable prices for *mokoro* trips. Although it's not uncommon to pay upwards of US\$100 per day for a *mokoro* trip out of Maun, the trust charges US\$30 per day for two people. Keep in mind, however, that you must self-cater (ie bring your own food, water and, if necessary, camping and cooking equipment).

There's no longer a daily bus from Mohembo, near the Namibian border, to Seronga, but it's almost always possible to hitch from the free Okavango River ferry in Mohembo. Plan on paying about US\$0.75 for a lift. When they're operating, water taxis run along the Okavango between Sepupa Swamp Stop (see p851) and Seronga (US\$3, two hours); transfers from the Seronga dock to Mbiroba Camp, 3km away, cost US\$9. Otherwise, Sepupa Swamp Stop charters 18-passenger boats for US\$90.

trips in the Eastern Delta are mainly organised by Maun lodges and tour companies (see p862).

Situated near the Santandadibe River along the southern edges of the Moremi Wildlife Reserve, **Chitabe Camp** (per person US\$550) is an island-oasis renowned for the presence of Cape hunting dogs and other less-common wildlife. Book with **Wilderness Safaris** (☎ in Johannesburg 011-807 1800; www.wilderness-safaris.com).

Inner Delta

Roughly defined, the Inner Delta occupies the areas west of Chiefs Island and between Chiefs Island and the base of the Okavango Panhandle. *Mokoro* trips through the Inner Delta are almost invariably arranged with licensed polers affiliated with specific lodges, and operate roughly between June and December, depending on the water level. The following rates include lodging, meals and activities.

A comparatively affordable option is **Se-metsi Camp** (s/d US\$250/350), which consists of eight dome tents attractively scattered around a palm-fringed islet that overlooks Chiefs Island. Book with **Crocodile Camp Safaris** (☎ 686 0265; www.botswana.com), in Maun.

Delta Camp (per person US\$450) is beautifully situated beside a flowing channel near the southern end of Chiefs Island. Book with **Okavango Tours & Safaris** (☎ 686 1154; www.okavango.bw), in Maun.

Located on the shores of the Boro River, **Nxabega Okavango Camp** (per person US\$450) is an exquisitely designed tented camp with sweeping views of the delta flood plains. Book with

CCAfrica (☎ 011-809 4300; www.ccafrica.com), based in Johannesburg.

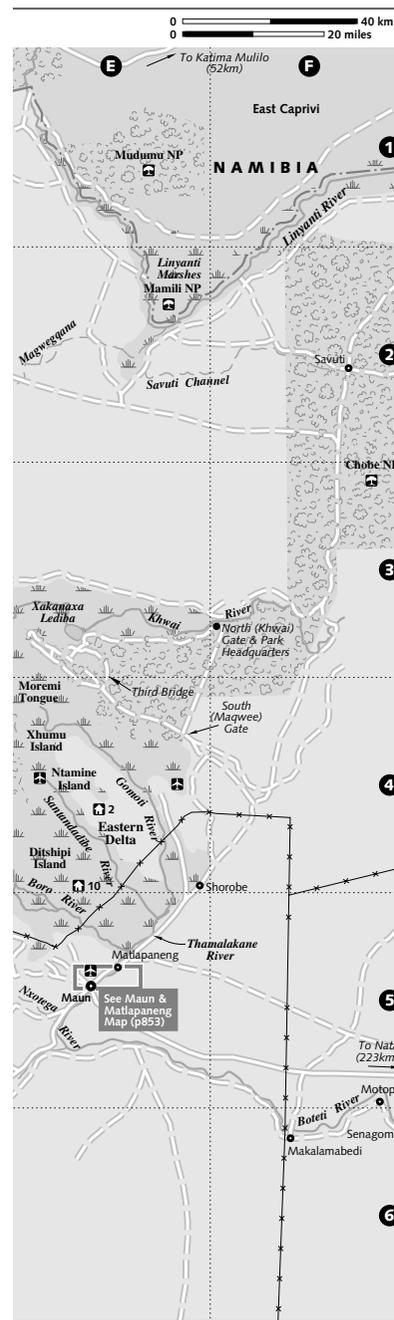
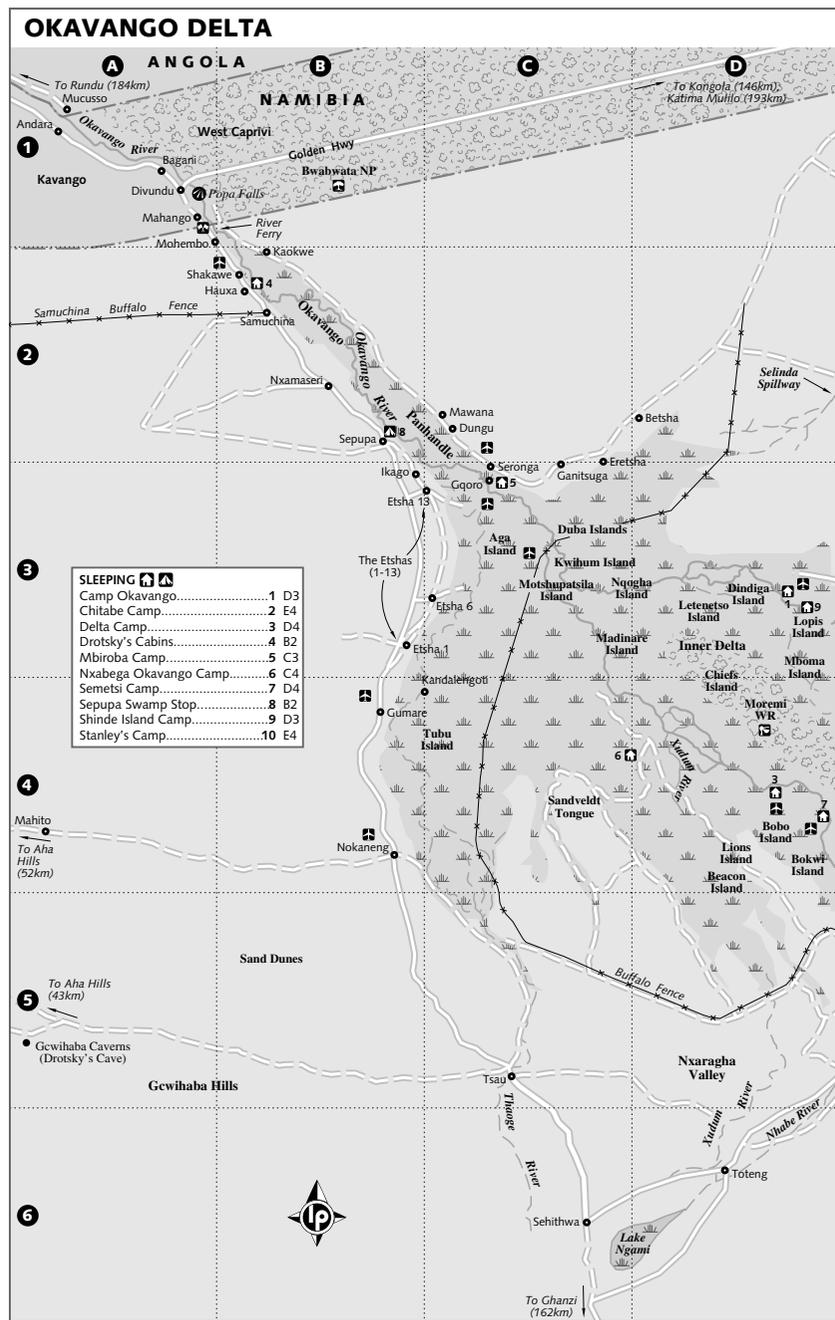
The only way in and out of the Inner Delta for most visitors is by air. Flights are typically arranged by lodges through local air charter companies.

Moremi Wildlife Reserve

The 3000-sq-km Moremi Wildlife Reserve is the part of the Okavango Delta officially designated for wildlife protection. The park has a distinctly dual personality, with two large areas of dry land – Chiefs Island and the Moremi Tongue – rising between vast wetlands. Habitats range from mopane woodland and thorn scrub to dry savannah, riparian woodlands, grasslands, flood plains, marshes, waterways, lagoons and islands.

The entry gates at North and South Gate both have developed camping grounds. Rustically beautiful Third Bridge, 48km north-west of South Gate, is literally the third log bridge on the road and has a lovely camping ground. Be aware that swimming is extremely dangerous here due to crocodiles and hippos. At Xakanaxa Lediba, the camping ground occupies a narrow strip of land surrounded by marsh and lagoon. With one of the largest heronries in Africa, it's a bird-watcher's paradise. All camping must be booked through the Department of Wildlife & National Parks (see p843).

Set amid sausage and jackalberry trees just outside Moremi, **Camp Okavango** (per person US\$325; ☎) has elegant taste, and the staff are famous for their meticulous attention to detail. Book



with **Desert & Delta Safaris** (☎ 686 1234; www.desertdelta.com), in Maun.

Significantly less ostentatious than other lodges in Moremi, **Stanley's Camp** (per person US\$450; **P**) lacks the formality and pretence commonly found in this corner of the country. You can book through any of the operators in Maun (see p862).

Shinde Island Camp (per person US\$550; **P**) is situated on the fringes of a lagoon between the savannah and the delta, just north of Moremi, and is one of the most established camps in delta. Book with **Ker & Downey** (☎ 686 0375; www.kerdowney.com), in Maun.

There's no public transport to Moremi, so you'll need a 4WD vehicle or a drive-in or fly-in safari.

Okavango Panhandle

In northwestern Botswana, the Kalahari sands meet the Okavango Delta. In the Okavango Panhandle, the river's waters spread across the valley on either side to form vast reed beds and papyrus-choked lagoons. Here a cosmopolitan mix of people (Mbukushu, Ye, Tswana, Herero, European, San and refugee Angolans) occupy clusters of fishing villages and extract their livelihoods from the rich waters. They're also increasingly catering to the growing numbers of visitors to the region, where *mokoro* trips and accommodation are more affordable than in other parts of the Okavango Delta.

Sepupa Swamp Stop (☎ 686 7073; island@info.bw; swampstop@maun.info; camping per person US\$4, s/d tents US\$30/40; **P**) is a secluded, laid-back riverside camp site handy to Sepupa village. It's very affordable and accessible (3km) from the Maun-Shakawe road.

Run by the Okavango Polers Trust, **Mbiroba Camp** (☎ 687 6861; camping per person US\$5, s/d chalet US\$35/45; **P**) is the usual launch point for *mokoro* trips into the delta.

Drotsky's Cabins (☎ 687 5035; drotskys@info.bw; camping per person US\$10, s/d A-frames US\$60/110, 4-person chalets US\$120; **P**) is a lovely, welcoming lodge beside a channel of the Okavango River about 5km southeast of Shakawe and 4km east of the main road.

MAUN

pop 35,000

A schizophrenic apparition of donkey-drawn carts and flash 4WDs, Maun (pronounced 'mau-oon') is the self-proclaimed gateway to

the Okavango Delta. Although it was once a rough-and-tumble outpost for graziers, hunters and poachers, the sealing of the road in from Nata lead to the burgeoning safari industry that now drives the town's economy. Although Maun is anything but inspiring, it the obvious start and/or finish for most trips into the delta, and it's by far the most tourist-friendly town in Botswana.

Information

The Mall has branches of Barclays Bank and Standard Chartered Bank, which both have foreign-exchange facilities and offer better rates than the bureaux de change.

Afro-Trek I-Café (Sedia Hotel, Shorobe Rd, Matlapaneng; per hr US\$6)

Department of Wildlife & National Parks (DWNP; ☎ 686 1265; fax 686 1264; Maun; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm & 1.45-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 7.30am-noon Sun) Book national park camp sites at the reservations office, which is housed in a caravan behind the main building.

Post office (Maun; ☎ 8.15am-1pm & 2.15-4pm Mon-Fri, 8.30-11.30am Sat) Near The Mall.

PostNet (Score Centre, Maun; per hr US\$6; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3pm Sat)

Tourist office (☎ 686 0492; Tsheke Tsheko Rd, Maun; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm & 1.45-4.30pm Mon-Fri) This office is improving, and you'll also find good information at the town's many tour companies (see p862) and the Matlapaneng lodges.

Sights

The **Maun Environmental Education Centre** (☎ 686 1390; admission free; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm & 1.45-4.40pm), on the eastern bank of the Thamalakane River, aims to provide school children with an appreciation of nature.

The **Nhabe Museum** (☎ 686 1346; Sir Sereste Khama Rd, Maun; admission free, donations appreciated; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat), housed in a historic building, features art exhibitions and outlines the natural history and cultures of the Okavango.

The community-run **Crocodile Farm** (☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Sat; admission US\$2) is basically all the encouragement you need to keep your hands and feet inside the *mokoro* while cruising through the delta.

Tours

Most delta lodges are affiliated with specific agencies and lots of safari companies run *mokoro* trips and 4WD safaris, so it's wise to check around before choosing one (see p862).

Sleeping

Okavango River Lodge (☎ 686 3707; freewind@info.bw; Matlapaneng; camping per person US\$3, s/d chalet US\$35/40; **P**) This down-to-earth spot has a lovely setting on the riverbank, and it's often quiet because it's not as popular as Audi Camp.

Sitatunga Camp (☎ 686 4539; groundhogs_@hot mail.com; delta.rain@dynabyte.bw; camping per person US\$4; **P**) This camp enjoys a nice bush setting 14km south of Maun and boasts a serious party atmosphere.

Maun Rest Camp (☎ 686 3472; simonjoyce@info.bw; Shorobe Rd, Matlapaneng; camping per person US\$4, basic pre-erected tents per person US\$6, linen per person extra US\$7; **P**) This no-frills rest camp is spotless, and boasts what justifiability may be 'the cleanest ablution blocks in Maun'.

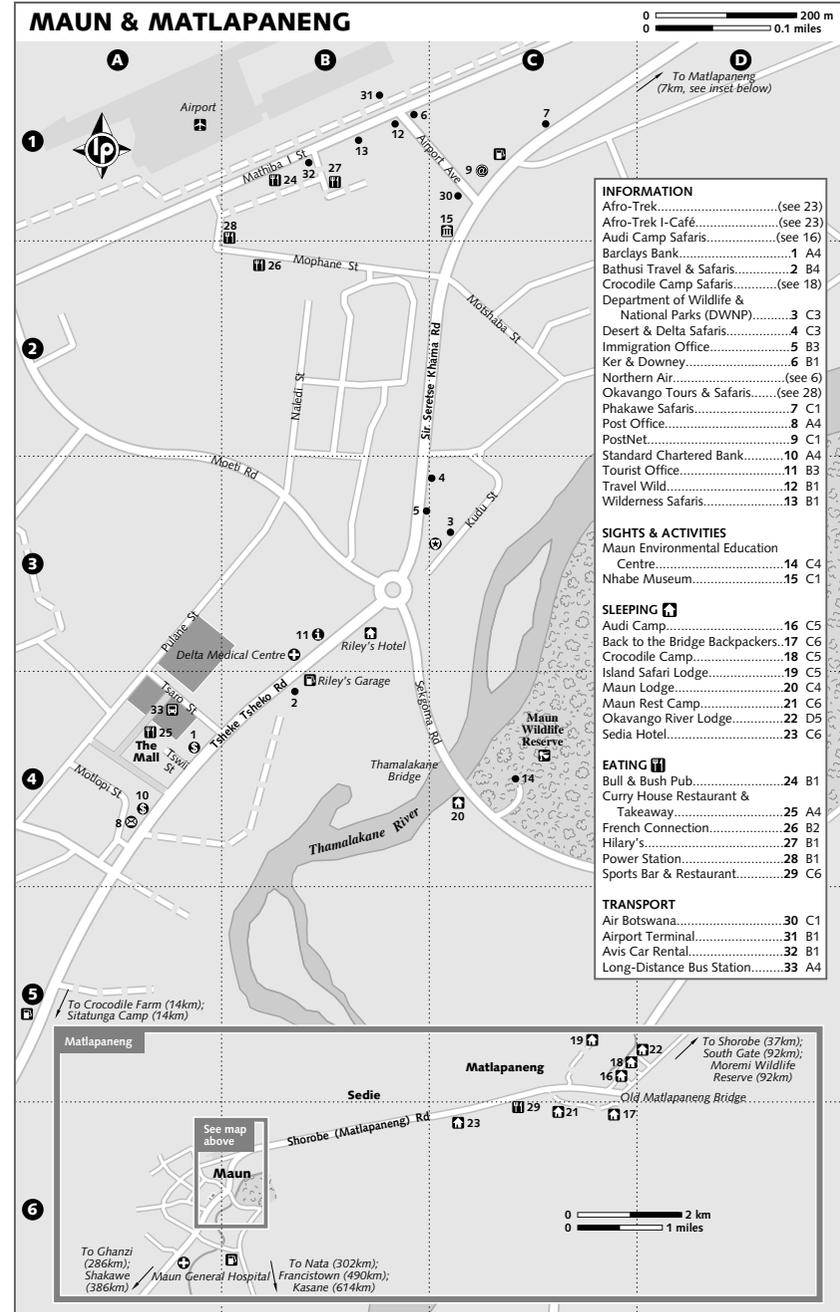
Audi Camp (☎ 686 0599; www.okavangocamp.com; Matlapaneng; camping per person US\$4, s/d tents from US\$20/26; **P**) The most-established budget accommodation in Maun is always packed with backpackers. It's by far the most sociable of the lodges, and a good choice if you're feeling a bit lonely, though it lacks the personality of some of the smaller lodges.

Crocodile Camp (☎ 686 0265; www.crocodilecamp.com; Matlapaneng; camping per person US\$5, s/d tents US\$20/40, s/d chalet from US\$40/60; **P**) Arguably the most attractive lodge in Maun, the 'Croc Camp' occupies a superb spot right on the river and is usually packed with all sorts of interesting characters.

Back to the Bridge Backpackers (☎ 686 2037; hellish@info.bw; Hippo Pools, Old Matlapaneng Bridge, Matlapaneng; camping per person US\$5, s/d tents from US\$32/48; **P**) This new and friendly option occupies a leafy spot beside the historic Old Matlapaneng Bridge. The atmosphere is chilled out and the riverside setting is tranquil, so there's definitely a lot of potential here.

Island Safari Lodge (☎ 686 0300; island@info.bw; Matlapaneng; camping per person US\$5, s/d chalet US\$55/60; **P**) One of the original lodges in the city, Island Safari Lodge is starting to show its age, though the riverside setting is still relaxing and tranquil.

Sedia Hotel (☎ 686 0177; sedia@info.bw; Shorobe Rd, Matlapaneng; camping per person US\$5, s/d from US\$75/90; **P**) This resort-like complex features an outdoor bar, a Continental-inspired restaurant and a huge swimming pool. You have the choice of a number of rooms as well as self-contained chalets, or you can simply pitch a tent and take advantage of all the hotel facilities.



Maun Lodge (☎ 686 3939; www.sausage.bw/maun lodge; maun.lodge@info.bw; Old Maun Rd, Maun; s/d US\$95/125; P ☎) The newest upmarket hotel in Maun is located just south of the town centre and boasts all the luxuries you'd expect at this price.

Eating & Drinking

Hilary's (Mathiba I St, Maun; meals from US\$3; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-12pm Sat) This homely place offers a choice of wonderfully earthy meals, including homemade bread, baked potatoes, soups and sandwiches.

Curry House Restaurant & Takeaway (The Mall, Maun; meals US\$3-6) The smell of curry wafts across the Mall and attracts many locals to this unpretentious place. It serves cheap, delicious and authentic curries as well as other tasty Indian delicacies.

Power Station (Mophane St, Maun; meals US\$4-8) Although it's better known as a bar and nightclub, this 'industrial' Maun institution serves a good mix of pastas, burgers, salads, local specialities and vegetarian meals.

French Connection (Mopane St, Maun; meals US\$5-8) This stylish café is a good choice if you're looking to put a little flair in your day. You can get all the classic European standards here including croissants, cappuccinos and baguettes, and specialty salads.

Sports Bar & Restaurant (Shorobe Rd, Matlapaneng; meals US\$5-9) This popular watering hole also boasts a classy restaurant with a huge range of Western-style dishes, all lovingly created by a renowned chef.

Bull & Bush Pub (Mathiba I St, Maun; meals US\$5-10) The Bull & Bush pub is probably the most popular haunt amongst expats in town. The pub hosts a variety of regular events, and is your best bet if you're after a thick steak and cold beer.

Getting There & Away

Air Botswana (Airport Ave; www.airbotswana.co.bw) has daily flights between Maun and Gaborone (US\$156). Flights into the delta are typically arranged by lodges through local air-charter companies.

At the long-distance bus station northeast of the Mall you'll find buses to Nata (US\$6, three hours), with connections to Kasane (US\$12, six hours) and Francistown (US\$9, five hours); Shakawe (US\$10, five hours); Shorobe (US\$1, one hour); and Ghanzi (US\$4.50, five hours). Get to the terminal

as early as possible if you want to connect in Nata with a bus to Kasane.

Getting Around

Local minibuses between town and Matlapaneng (US\$0.30) run when full from the bus terminal and airport; taxis cost around US\$4.

TSODILO HILLS

The four Tsodilo Hills (Male, Female, Child and North Hill) rise abruptly from a rippled, oceanlike expanse of desert and are threaded with myth, legend and spiritual significance for the San people, who believe this was the site of Creation. More than 2750 ancient rock paintings have been discovered at well over 200 sites. And as in most of southern Africa, the majority of these are attributed to ancestors of today's San people.

There's now a **museum** near Main Camp extolling the undeniably spiritual nature of the hills, as well as several unmarked tracks that pass the main paintings and sacred sites. Normally, local San people will guide groups for around US\$13 per day.

Visitors can camp at either the Main (Rhino), Malatso or Makoba Woods **camping grounds** (camping per person US\$6), but there are no shops and services.

You need a 4WD to explore the hills area, though tour operators in Maun (see p862) can help arrange private tours to the area.

KASANE & KAZUNGULA

Kasane sits in a riverine woodland at the meeting of four countries – Botswana, Zambia, Namibia and Zimbabwe – and the confluence of the Chobe and Zambezi Rivers. It's also the gateway to Chobe National Park. As such, this town of just a few thousand people is a focus of activity in northern Botswana. Immediately to the east, the tiny settlement of Kazungula serves as the border crossing between Botswana and Zimbabwe, and the landing for the Kazungula ferry, which connects Botswana with Zambia.

Information

Barclays Bank (President Ave, Kasane) Offers better exchange rates than the bureaux de change. Be sure to stock up on US dollars (post-1996) if you're heading to Zimbabwe.

Chobe Private Clinic (☎ 625 1555; President Ave, Kasane) 24-hour emergency service.

Department of Wildlife & National Parks (DWNP; ☎ 625 0235; Sedudu Gate) The booking office for camp sites within Chobe National Park.

Kasane Hospital (☎ 625 0333; President Ave, Kasane) Public hospital on the main road.

Kasane Internet (☎ 625 0736; Audi Centre, Kasane; per hr US\$4; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) Internet in Kasane is dead slow and unreliable.

Police Station (☎ 625 0335; President Ave, Kasane) Along the main road.

Sights

If you're unsuccessful in spotting crocs along the Chobe riverfront, you can get up close and personal with these scaly beasts at the **Kazungula Crocodile Farm** (admission US\$4), located about 1km west of Kazungula.

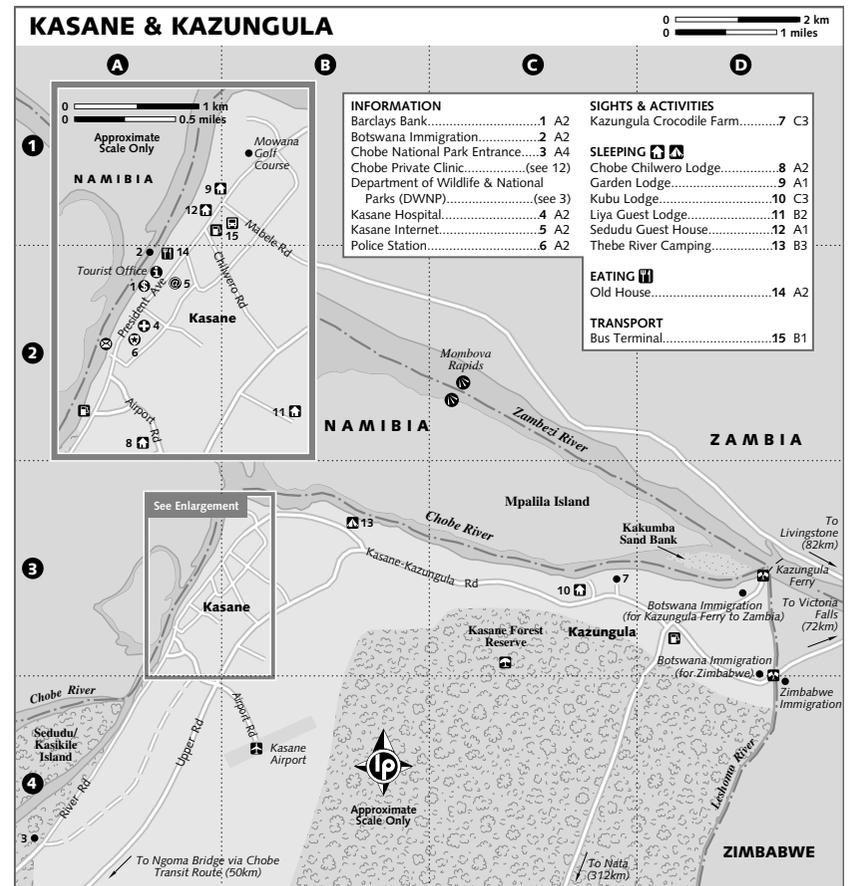
Sleeping & Eating

Thebe River Camping (☎ 625 0314; Kasane-Kazungula Rd; camping per person US\$8; P ☎) Provides a green riverside setting, along with a bar, meals and Chobe wildlife drives and cruises (US\$15).

Sedudu Guest House (☎ 625 1748; sedudu@botsnet .bw; President Ave, Kasane; s/d from US\$38/50; P ☎) This budget-orientated hotel has a variety of rooms featuring varying amenities.

Liya Guest Lodge (☎ 71-756903; liyaglo@botsnet.bw; 1198 Tholo Cres, Kasane; s/d from US\$38/56; P ☎) This warm and friendly family-run lodge is a very economical option on the hillside.

Garden Lodge (☎ 625 0051; www.thegardenlodge .com; President Ave, Kasane; s/d US\$70/90; P ☎) This simple but charming lodge is built around



a tropical garden and features a number of well-furnished rooms that exude a homely atmosphere.

Kubu Lodge (☎ 625 0312; kubu@botsnet.bw; Kasane-Kazungula Rd, Kazungula; s/d/tr US\$130/170/198; 📍 🚗 🚰) Located 9km west of Kasane, this riverside lodge lacks the stuffiness and formality found in most other top-end lodges. Rustic wooden chalets are lovingly adorned with thick rugs and wicker furniture, and are scattered around an impeccably manicured lawn dotted with fig trees.

Chobe Chilwero Lodge (☎ 625 1362; www.sancuarylodges.com; Airport Rd, Kasane; per person US\$560; 📍 🚗 🚰) Chilwero means 'place of high view' in Setswana, and indeed this exclusive lodge boasts panoramic views across the Chobe River.

Old House (President Ave, Kasane; mains US\$5-10; ☎ Tue-Sun) Kasane's only true restaurant has a relaxed atmosphere and a varied menu. There are a number of excellent beef, chicken and fish dishes on order here, though there are also several vegetarian options.

Getting There & Away

Air Botswana connects Kasane's airport to Maun (US\$100) and Gaborone (US\$157).

Minibuses to Nata (US\$8, three hours), with connections to Maun and Francistown, run when full from the Shell petrol station bus terminal. Between Kasane and Victoria Falls (US\$42, two hours), **UTC** (☎ in Victoria Falls 4225) operates a morning transfer service. Thebe River Camping, Mowana Lodge and Chobe Safari Lodge also run Victoria Falls transfers (US\$40, two hours). All these options usually pick up booked passengers at hotels and guest houses between 9.30am and 10am.

CHOBENATIONAL PARK

Chobe National Park, which encompasses 11,000 sq km, is home to Botswana's most varied wildlife. The riverfront strip along the northern tier, with its perennial water supply, supports the greatest wildlife concentrations, but when they contain water, the lovely Savuti Marshes of the Mababe Depression in western Chobe also provide prime wildlife habitat and attract myriad water birds. Rarely-visited Ngwezumba, with its pans and mopane forests, is the park's third major region, and Chobe's northwestern corner just touches the beautiful Linyanti Marshes.

The northern park entrance lies immediately west of Kasane and is accessible to conventional vehicles. However, to proceed through the park or approach from Maun, you'll need a high-clearance 4WD. Due to mud and flooding, Savuti may be inaccessible from January to March.

CHOBERIVERFRONT

The Chobe riverfront is packed with wildlife. The most obvious feature of the landscape is the damage done by the area's massive elephant herds, but virtually every southern African mammal species, except the rhino, is represented here. You can also see puku, a rare antelope species. In addition, the abundance and variety of birdlife in this zone of permanent water is astonishing.

A great way to enjoy Chobe is on a river trip or wildlife drive. The best time to cruise is late afternoon, when hippos amble onto dry land and the riverfront fills with elephants heading down for a drink and a romp in the water. All hotels and lodges arrange 2½- to three-hour wildlife drives and cruises in the morning and afternoon for US\$14 to US\$22 (plus safari-discounted park fees). Note that if you take a morning wildlife drive you can also do an afternoon 'booze cruise' and pay park fees for only one day.

The closest DWNP camp site to Kasane is **Ihaha Camp Site** (camping per person US\$5.50). It's located along the riverfront about 27km from the Sedudu Gate.

Buffalo Ridge Camping (☎ 625 0430; camping per person US\$5.50; 📍) is a basic camping area located immediately uphill from the Ngoma Bridge border crossing near the western end of the Chobe transit route. Unlike Ihaha, Buffalo Ridge is privately owned, so you do not need a reservation with the DWNP to camp here.

One of Botswana's pinnacles of luxury, **Chobe Game Lodge** (☎ 625 0340; www.chobegamelodge.com; per person US\$325; 📍 🚗) is a highly praised safari lodge. Individually decorated rooms are elegant yet soothing, and some have views of the Chobe River and Namibian flood plains. Service is attentive and professional, and there's a good chance you'll spot herds of elephants along the riverfront as you walk around hotel grounds. The lodge is located about 9km from the Sedudu Gate.

The northern park entrance lies 5km west of Kasane and is accessible by conventional

vehicle (some Chobe riverfront drives require 4WD), but to reach Savuti or other places in the interior of the park requires 4WD and high clearance. To transit between Kasane and the Namibian border at Ngoma Bridge is free of charge.

SAVUTI

Savuti's flat expanses are an obligatory stop for safaris and overland trips between Kasane and Maun. Gobabis Hill, south of the Savuti gate near the Savuti Channel, bears several sets of 4000-year-old rock art, which are thought to be of San origin. The wildlife populations, particularly the number of elephants and antelopes, can seem overwhelming, especially after heavy rains. Due to potential high water, Savuti is normally closed (and inaccessible) between January and March.

There are a number of camping grounds in Savuti. **Savuti Camp Site** (camping per person US\$5.50) is a brand-new DWNP camp site with sit-down flush toilets, *braai* pits, (hot!) showers and plenty of shade.

Beside the former site of legendary Lloyd's Camp, **Savute Safari Lodge** (per person US\$325; 📍) is a relatively new upmarket retreat. It consists of 12 contemporary thatched chalets that are simple yet functional in their design. For booking information, contact **Desert & Delta Safaris** (☎ 686 1243; www.desertdelta.com), based in Maun.

The premier camp in Savuti, **Savute Elephant Camp** (per person US\$575; 📍 🚗) comprises 12 lavishly appointed East African-style linen tents complete with antique-replica furniture. For booking information, contact **Orient-Express Safaris** (☎ 686 0153; www.gametrackers.orient-express.com), in Maun.

Under optimum conditions, it's a four- to six-hour drive from Kasane to Savuti. The road is passable by 2WD as far as Kachikau, but after it turns south into the Chobe Forest Reserve, the road deteriorates into parallel sand ruts that require high-clearance 4WD. Coming from Maun, you'll need 4WD to proceed north of Shorobe.

MAKGADIKGADI & NXAI PANS NATIONAL PARK

Botswana's great salt pans, Sua, Ntwetwe and Nxai, comprise the expansive Makgadikgadi & Nxai Pans National Park, and are like no other landscape on earth.

Especially during the sizzling heat of late winter days, the stark pans take on a disorienting and ethereal austerity. Heat mirages destroy all sense of space or direction, imaginary lakes shimmer and disappear, ostriches fly and stones turn to mountains and float in mid-air.

There is a beautiful 230-sq-km wildlife refuge at Sua Pan. The **Nata Sanctuary** (☎ 71-656969; admission US\$5; ☎ 7am-7pm) has a range of birdlife, as well as antelopes and other grassland animals. It's 15km southeast of Nata. In the dry season, you don't need a 4WD, but high clearance is advisable. The admission fee includes camping.

Near the southwestern corner of Sua Pan is **Kubu Island**, surrounded by salt and covered with ghostly baobab trees and Iron Age ruins. You can camp on the salt or at the otherworldly camp site on the island, but there's no water. Campers must register with the Game Scouts, located at the camping ground, who expect 'donations' of US\$6 per group; get a receipt. To get here, you need a 4WD. The route is signposted 'Lekehubu' from the Nata-Maun road, 24km west of Nata; after 65km, you'll reach desultory Thabatshukudu village, on a low ridge. South of here, the route skirts a salt pan and after 15km passes a veterinary checkpoint; 1.5km south of this barrier is the signposted left-turn toward the island, which is about 20km away.

To explore any parts of the pans on your own, you need a 4WD and a good map and GPS system, as well as common sense and confidence in your driving and directional skills. Drive only in the tracks of other vehicles, and keep to the edges of the pan.

GWETA

The dust bowl town of Gweta serves as another gateway to the Makgadikgadi Pans, as well as an obligatory fuel stop if you're heading to either Kasane or Maun. The name of the village is derived from the croaking sound made by large bullfrogs, which incredibly bury themselves in the sand until the rains provide sufficient water for them to emerge and mate.

About 4km east of Gweta, you'll see a huge concrete aardvark (no, you're not hallucinating) that marks the turn-off for **Planet Baobab** (☎ 72-338344; camping per person US\$8, s/d grass huts with shared bathroom US\$34/52, s/d mud huts with private bathroom US\$75/100; 📍 🚗), one of the most bizarre

lodges in the country. Campers can pitch a tent beneath the shade of a baobab tree while others can choose between Bakalanga-style mud huts or San-style grass huts. The lodge is also a great base for organising quad bike and 4WD trips to the surrounding salt pans.

Hourly combis and buses travelling between Kasane (US\$6.50, four hours) and Francistown (US\$4, three hours), and Maun (US\$4.50, four hours) and Francistown (US\$3, three hours) pass by the Maano Restaurant.

EASTERN BOTSWANA

FRANCISTOWN

pop 95,000

Although the second-largest city in Botswana is known primarily for its wholesale shopping, Francistown is a useful (and often necessary) stopover on the way to/from Kasane, Nata, Maun or Victoria Falls.

The only site of interest to travellers is the **Supa-Ngwao Cultural & Historical Museum** (☎ 240 3088; New Maun Rd; admission free, donations appreciated; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat), which displays local and regional culture and history, as well as visiting art exhibitions.

Along Blue Jacket St you'll find most of the banks, the post office, the laundrette and several shopping centres.

Superbly situated on banks of the Tati River, the **Marang Hotel** (☎ 241 3991; marang@info.bw; Matsiloje Rd; camping per person US\$5, s/d US\$80/95, 2-person rondavel US\$40; P 📞) is a long-standing favourite among travellers. The serene setting and relaxed ambience make this an excellent choice, regardless of your budget. From the Cresta Thapama roundabout, the hotel is about 3.5km along Matsiloje Rd.

If you want to stay in the city centre, the **Grand Lodge** (☎ 241 2300; s/d US\$35/40; P 📞) is an excellent choice. Standard rooms become something special when you add air-con, cable TV, a fridge and a hotplate.

You'll enjoy the cosy atmosphere at the popular **Tina's Coffee Shop** (Blue Jacket St; meals US\$2-5), whether you're there for a cuppa with cake or a heavy plate of chicken and rice.

Air Botswana (☎ 241 2393; www.airbotswana.co.bw; Francis Ave) flies between Francistown and Gaborone (US\$100) at least once daily, except Sunday.

From the main bus terminal, between the train line and Blue Jacket Plaza, bus and

minibus services connect Francistown with Nata (US\$3, two hours), Maun (US\$9, five hours), Gaborone (US\$5, six hours), Serowe (US\$3, 2½ hours), Selebi-Phikwe (US\$2, two hours) and Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (US\$2.80 to US\$3.50, two hours).

The overnight train to Gaborone (US\$25/20 in 1st-/2nd-class sleepers, US\$5 in economy, 8¼ hours) leaves at 9pm and the day train (US\$4/8 in economy/club, 6½ hours) leaves at 10am.

KHAMA RHINO SANCTUARY

In response to declining rhinoceros populations in Botswana, the residents of Serowe, which is the birthplace of Seretsi Khama and the spiritual capital of the Batswana, banded together in 1989 to establish the 4300-hectare **Khama Rhino Sanctuary** (☎ 463 0713; www.khamarhino-sanctuary.org; admission per person/vehicle US\$2/3; ☎ 8am-6.30pm). Today, the sanctuary protects Botswana's last remaining rhinos – thirty-two white and one black rhino currently reside in Khama. The sanctuary is also home to zebras, giraffes, wildebeests, impalas, kudu, elands, ostriches, hyenas, leopards and over 230 species of birds.

The main roads within the sanctuary are normally accessible by 2WD in the dry season, though 4WD vehicles are necessary in the rainy season. However, all vehicles can reach the camp site and accommodation areas in any weather. The office at the entrance sells useful maps of the sanctuary as well as basic nonperishable foods and cold drinks and firewood.

If you're not self-driving, two-hour day/night wildlife drives cost US\$55/80, and can accommodate up to four people. Nature walks (US\$8 per person) and rhino tracking (US\$20 per adult) can also be arranged.

Shady camp sites (US\$9 per person) with *braai* pits are adjacent to clean toilets and (steaming hot) showers. If you're looking to splurge for a night or two, rustic four-person chalets (US\$50) and six-person A-frames (US\$85) have basic kitchen facilities and private bathrooms. If you don't have a vehicle, staff can drive you to the camp site and accommodation areas for a nominal charge.

The entrance gate to the sanctuary is located about 26km from Serowe along the road to Orapa (turn left at the unsigned T-junction about 5km northwest of Serowe). Khama is accessible by any bus or combi heading towards Orapa, and is not hard to reach by hitching.

BOTSWANA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation (with the exception of camp sites) is subject to a 10% accommodation bed tax. Payment by credit card normally requires an additional charge of 10% to 12%. Rates given in this chapter are for cash payments only. Note that these rates are high-season prices, and that prices for the low season are 20% to 40% cheaper.

Every town has at least one hotel, and larger towns and tourist areas offer several options in different price ranges. However, you won't find anything as cheap as in most other African countries, and the less expensive hotels in Botswana sometimes double as brothels.

Quite a few hotels and lodges along the road system have camp sites with varying amenities. Wild camping is permitted only outside national parks, private land and government freehold lands.

Safari camps and lodges range from tiny tented camps to large complexes of brick or reed chalets. While a few lodges are accessible by car or 4WD, most Okavango Delta camps are accessed only by air, which will add around US\$150 to US\$200 to your bill. All remote camps and lodges require prebooking, but some road-accessible options around Kasane and Maun may accept walk-ins. Note that lodge prices in this chapter include accommodation, meals and activities.

ACTIVITIES

Things to do in Botswana are centred on wildlife viewing, either by 4WD safari vehicle, boat or *mokoro*. There are inexpensive opportunities for quad-biking on the Makgadikgadi Pans (see p857). Hiking opportunities are limited to the Tsodilo Hills in the northwest and several small ranges in the eastern and southeastern parts of the country.

BUSINESS HOURS

Most businesses in Botswana keep standard opening hours (p1102).

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

The greatest dangers in Botswana are posed by natural elements, combined with a lack of preparedness. While police and veterinary roadblocks, bureaucracy and bored officials

may become tiresome, they're mostly just a harmless inconvenience. Although theft occurs, Botswana enjoys a very low crime rate compared to other African (and many Western) countries.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Botswanan Embassies & Consulates

Botswana has diplomatic representation in the following countries, among others:

Australia (☎ 612-6290 7500; 5 Timbarra Cres, O'Malley, ACT 2606, Canberra)

EU (☎ 32-2-732 2070; fax 735 6312; 169, Ave de Tervuren, B-1150 Brussels, Belgium)

Namibia (☎ 221941; fax 236034; 101 Nelson Mandela Dr, Windhoek; ☎ 8am-12.30pm)

South Africa Cape Town (☎ 021-421 1045; 4th fl, Southern Life Centre, 8 Riebeeck St, City Bowl); Johannesburg (☎ 011-5403 3748; 2nd fl, Future Bank Bldg, 122 De Korte St, Braamfontein); Pretoria (☎ 012-430 9640; 24 Amos St, Colbyn)

UK (☎ 020-7499 0031; fax 7495 8595; 6 Stratford Pl, London W1N 9AE)

USA (☎ 202-244 4990; fax 244 4164; 1531-33 New Hampshire Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008)

Zambia (☎ 01-250 019; 5201 Pandit Nehru Rd, Diplomatic Triangle, PO Box 31910, Lusaka)

Zimbabwe (☎ 794645/7/8; 22 Phillips Ave, Harare)

Embassies & Consulates in Botswana

Countries with diplomatic representation in Gaborone (Map pp844-5) include the following:

Angola (☎ 390 0204; angolaemb@info.bw; 5131 Nelson Mandela Dr)

France (☎ /fax 397 3863; 761 Robinson Rd, PO Box 1424)

Germany (☎ 395 3143; fax 395 3038; 3rd fl, Professional House, Broadhurst, PO Box 315)

PRACTICALITIES

- Weights, measures and road distances use the metric system.
- Electricity is 220-240V AC, 50Hz (use South African-style two- or three-round-pin plugs).
- For English-language news see www.gazette.bw.
- Radio Botswana broadcasts in both English and Setswana, while Botswana TV (BTV) broadcasts local, African and international news.

Namibia (☎ 397 2685; BCC Bldg, 1278 Old Lobatse Rd, PO Box 1586)

South Africa (☎ 390 4800; sahcgabs@botsnet.bw; 29 Queens Rd, PO Box 00402)

UK (☎ 395 2841; fax 395 6105; Queens Rd, The Mall, Private Bag 0023)

US (☎ 395 3982; pausemb3@botsnet.bw; Government Enclave, Embassy Dr, PO Box 90)

Zambia (☎ 395 1951; fax 395 3952; Zambia House, The Mall, PO Box 362)

Zimbabwe (☎ 391 4495; fax 390 5863; Embassy Dr, PO Box 1232)

HOLIDAYS

As well as religious holidays listed in the Africa Directory (p1106), the principal public holidays in Botswana are:

New Year's Day 1 January

Day after New Year's Day 2 January

Labour Day 1 May

Ascension Day April or May (40 days after Easter)

Sir Seretse Khama Day 1 July

President's Day 3rd Friday of July

Botswana/Independence Day 30 September

Day after Independence Day 1 October

MAPS

The most accurate country map is the *Shell Tourist Map of Botswana* (US\$3), which shows major roads and includes insets of tourist areas and central Gaborone. It's sold in a packet with a small tourist guide in bookshops all over the region.

MONEY

Botswana's unit of currency is the pula (P), which is divided into 100 thebe. 'Pula' means 'rain' – a valuable commodity in this desert land.

Full banking services are available only in major towns, although ATMs are sprouting up all over the country. Most credit cards are accepted at hotels and restaurants and cash advances are available at major banks (but not through ATMs).

TELEPHONE

Botswana's country code is ☎ 267; there are no internal area codes, so when you're phoning from outside Botswana, dial ☎ 267 followed by the phone number. Calling from Botswana, the international access code is ☎ 00, which should be followed by the country code, area code (if applicable) and telephone number.

Reliable coin and card telephone boxes are found at Botswana Telecom and post offices, and in shopping centres in all major towns. Phonecards in varying denominations are sold at shops, post offices and some petrol stations. Mobile phones and accessories are readily available in major cities.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The continually improving **Department of Tourism office** (☎ 395 3024; fax 390 8675; botsswana tourism@gov.bw; 2nd fl, Standard Chartered Bank Bldg, The Mall, Private Bag 0047, Gaborone) dispenses tourist information and distributes brochures, maps, and the annual *Botswana Focus* and *Discover Botswana* magazines. The offices in **Kasane** (☎ 625 0357) and **Maun** (☎ 686 0492) are also becoming more useful.

VISAS

All visitors to Botswana need a valid passport, but no visas are required by citizens of most Commonwealth countries, EU countries (except Spain and Portugal), Israel, Norway, South Africa, Switzerland and the USA. On arrival you'll get a 30-day entrance stamp.

Extensions are available for up to three months. You may be asked to show an onward air ticket or proof of sufficient funds for your intended stay. For more than a three-month extension, apply to the **Immigration & Passport Control Office** (☎ 361 1300; fax 355 2996; cnr Molepole Rd & Nelson Mandela Dr, PO Box 942, Gaborone) before your trip.

Visas for Onward Travel

Visas for the following neighbouring countries can be obtained in Gaborone. See p859 for information on embassies and consulates in Botswana.

Namibia No visas are required for citizens of Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, the UK, Ireland, Canada and the US.

South Africa No visas are required for citizens of Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, the UK, Ireland, Canada and the US.

Zambia Visas are required by citizens of the US, Australia and Britain. In Gaborone, they take one day to process and cost US\$60/100 for a single-/double-entry visa, and US\$190 for a multiple-entry visa. Note that they're available at the border for considerably less.

Zimbabwe Visas are required by citizens of the US, Australia and New Zealand, and can be processed at the border (US\$30/45 for a single-/double-entry visa).

TRANSPORT IN BOTSWANA

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Botswana's main airport is **Sir Seretse Khama International Airport** (☎ 35 11 91) 15km north of the capital Gaborone. Although this is well served with flights from Johannesburg (South Africa) and Harare (Zimbabwe) it is seldom used by tourists as an entry point into the country. Far more popular are **Maun Airport** (☎ 66 02 38) and **Kasane Airport** (☎ 65 01 36).

Land

Overland travel to or from Botswana is usually straightforward as most travellers either arrive by private vehicle or by **Intercape Mainliner** (www.intercape.co.za). At border crossings, arriving travellers are often requested to clean their shoes, even those packed away in their luggage, in a disinfectant dip to prevent them carrying foot-and-mouth disease into the country. Vehicles must also pass through a pit filled with the same disinfectant.

Border opening hours change all the time, but major crossings between Botswana and Namibia or South Africa generally open sometime between 6am and 8am and close sometime between 6pm and 10pm. The main crossings between Botswana and Zimbabwe are open from 6am to 8pm, and the Kazungula ferry to Zambia runs from 6am to 6pm.

NAMIBIA

The Trans-Kalahari Hwy crosses the border at Mamuno–Buitepos (open 8am to 1am). In the Caprivi Strip, you can cross the border into Namibia at Ngoma Bridge (8am to 6pm) or between Molembo and Mahango (6am to 6pm). The border crossing between Kasane and Mpalila Island (7am to 12.30pm and 1.45pm to 4pm) exists mainly for guests of safari lodges on the island. Note that during the winter months (late May to August), Namibia is one hour behind Botswana.

SOUTH AFRICA

Most overland traffic between Botswana and South Africa passes through the Ramatlama, Tlokweng or Pioneer border crossings. Other border crossings serve back roads across the Limpopo River, in the Tuli Block,

DEPARTURE TAX

The international air departure tax of US\$9 is included in ticket prices.

and the Molopo River in southern Botswana; some of these are impassable to 2WD vehicles, and may be closed altogether during periods of high water.

ZAMBIA

Botswana and Zambia (along with Zimbabwe and Namibia) share what's certainly the world's shortest international border – a single point in the middle of the Zambezi River. Direct travel between the two countries is on the Kazungula ferry, which operates from 6am to 6pm daily and costs US\$0.50 per person and US\$5 for motorbikes, US\$15 for cars and US\$20 for larger vehicles. If there's a long queue or the ferry isn't operating, it's not difficult to reach Livingstone via Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

If you're hitching from Kasane–Kazungula or the Zambian shore of the Zambezi, ask truck drivers about lifts to Livingstone.

ZIMBABWE

The two most commonly used borders are at Ramokgwebana–Plumtree and at Kazungula, west of Victoria Falls. There's also a lesser-used back-road crossing at Pandamatenga.

GETTING AROUND

Air

The national carrier, **Air Botswana** (www.airbotswana.co.bw), operates scheduled domestic flights between Gaborone, Francistown, Maun and Kasane.

Car & Motorcycle

The best way to travel around Botswana is to rent a vehicle. With your own car, you can avoid public transport (which is limited to routes between major towns) and organised tours. The downside is that distances are long and the cost of renting a vehicle is high in Botswana. You can expect to pay about US\$50/100 for a rental car/4WD in Botswana, though long-term rentals in South Africa can bring this figure down substantially. Plus, it's hassle free to cross the border, assuming you have a written permission from the rental agency.

When driving anywhere look out for donkeys. At times main highways will be thick with these large-eared asses standing immobile in the roadway, with a few sheep and goats thrown in for good measure. Other (larger) animals also wander onto major highways. The biggest problems are elephants and kudu (if you hit one of these you're really screwed). Drive slowly, keep calm and remember that the extra amount of time it will take you to get from point A to B is just part of the journey.

If you're determined to rent a vehicle in Botswana, the following are some reputable companies:

Avis (☎ 391 3093; fax 391 2550; www.avis.com; Sir Seretse Khama International Airport, Gaborone)

Budget (☎ 390 2030; www.budget.co.za; Sir Seretse Khama International Airport, Gaborone)

Holiday (☎ 686 2429; Maun, Maun Airport)

Imperial (☎ 390 7333; www.imperialcarrental.co.za; Sir Seretse Khama International Airport, Gaborone)

Tempest (☎ 390 0011; www.tempestcarhire.co.za; Sir Seretse Khama International Airport, Gaborone)

Hitching

Because public transport is somewhat erratic, hitching is relatively safe and fairly common although it is still always a risk (see p1126). On main routes there should be no major problems, but ascertain a price before climbing aboard. Most drivers expect the equivalent of the bus fare.

Hitching the back roads isn't as straightforward. If you're hitching along the Trans-Kalahari Highway, through the Tuli Block or from Maun to Kasane through Chobe National Park, carry camping gear and enough food and water for several days of waiting.

Local Transport

Public transport in Botswana is geared towards the needs of the local populace and is confined to main roads between major population centres. Although cheap and reliable, it is of little use to the traveller as most of Botswana's tourist attractions are off the beaten track.

Tours

From Maun (p851), which is the traditional jumping-off point for the Okavango Delta, it's also easy to book tours to other parts of Botswana, most notably to Chobe National Park and Tsodilo Hills. These excursions are

often added to the end of delta tours. Maun is also the base for overland safaris to Kasane via Chobe National Park.

A good place to start is at **Travel Wild** (Map p853; ☎ 686 0822; travelwild@dynabyte.bw; cnr Airport Ave & Mathiba I St), opposite the airport in Maun, which serves as a central booking and information office for lodges, safaris and other adventures.

The following tour operators, all located in Maun (Map p853), are also recommended:

Afro-Trek (☎ 686 0177; www.afrotrek.com; Shorobe Rd) This company specialises in mid-market safaris. It's located in the Sedia Hotel (p852).

Audi Camp Safaris (☎ 686 0500; www.okavango camp.com) This budget operator is run out of the popular Audi Camp (p852).

Back to the Bridge Backpackers (☎ 686 2406; hellish@info.bw; Shorobe Rd) This budget operator is run out of Back to the Bridge Backpackers (p852).

Bathusi Travel & Safaris (☎ 686 0647; www.info.bw/~bathusi; Tsheke Tsheko Rd) This company specialises in upmarket safaris. It's located next to Riley's Garage.

Crocodile Camp Safaris (☎ 686 0265; www.botswana.com; Shorobe Rd) This budget operator is located at the Crocodile Camp (p852).

Island Safari Lodge (☎ 686 0300; island@info.bw; Mathiba I St) This budget operator is run out of the Island Safari Lodge (p852).

Ker & Downey (☎ 686 0375; www.kerdowney.com; Mathiba I St) One of Botswana's most exclusive tour operators.

Maun Rest Camp (☎ 686 3472; simonjoyce@info.bw; Shorobe Rd) This budget operator specialises in mobile safaris, and is run out of the Maun Rest Camp (p852).

Okavango River Lodge (☎ 686 3707; freewind@info.bw; Shorobe Rd) This budget operator is run out of the Okavango River Lodge (p852).

Okavango Tours & Safaris (☎ 686 1154; www.okavango.bw; Mophane St) This well-established operator specialises in upmarket lodge-based tours.

Phakawe Safaris (☎ 686 4337; www.phakawe.demon.co.uk; Sir Seretse Khama Rd) This operator runs informal participation safaris, and is housed in a bright orange building called the Pumpkin Patch.

Wilderness Safaris (☎ in Johannesburg 011-807 1800; www.wilderness-safaris.com) This operator specialises in upmarket safaris and is located near the airport.

Train

The Botswana Railways system is limited to one line running through eastern Botswana. It stretches from Ramokgwebana on the Zimbabwean border to Ramathlabama on the South African border, and was once part of the glori-

ous Johannesburg-Bulawayo service, which is now sadly defunct. Although cheap and reliable it is painfully slow and serves places of little or no interest to the tourist.

There are two different types of train – the quicker and more expensive 'day train', and the slower and cheaper 'night train'. Both travel the route between Lobatse and Fran-

cistown, via Gaborone, Pilane, Mahalapye, Palapye, Serule and other villages.

Schedules and tickets are available at all train stations, but reservations are only possible at Gaborone, Francistown and Lobatse. For 1st and 2nd class, advance bookings are essential; economy-class passengers can buy a ticket in advance or on the train.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'