



## TOPICS

### BOTSWANA



With an area of almost 600 000 square kilometers, Botswana is virtually the same size as France or Texas. Situated in the centre of southern Africa, it is a landlocked country. Three-quarters of Botswana is technically a desert. This is what makes the Okavango Delta even more remarkable. It is a wonderful wetland within a desert, getting its waters from rain falling in central Africa, 1000km away. Botswana is well known for having some of the best wilderness and wildlife areas on the African continent. With 38 percent of its total land area devoted to national parks, reserves and wildlife management areas – for the most part unfenced, allowing animals to roam wild and free – travel through many parts of the country has the feeling of moving through an immense Nature wonderland. Botswana is the last stronghold for a number of endangered bird and mammal species, including Wild Dog, Cheetah, Brown Hyena, Cape Vulture, Wattled Crane, Kori Bustard, and Pel's Fishing Owl. This makes your safari experience even more memorable, and at times you will feel simply surrounded by wild animals.

#### ACCESS

Air Botswana, Botswana's national and only airline, provides international flights between Johannesburg and Gaborone, Johannesburg and Maun and Johannesburg and Kasane. Once you arrive in Botswana to get into the Okavango Delta travelers are ferried in light aircraft from either Maun Airport or Kasane airports as most camps are not accessible by land. Camps in the Chobe area are accessible by road from Kasane airport. Guests can transfer by road transfer from Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe or Livingstone, Zambia to Kasane in Botswana. This transfer is approximately 1 hour via the Kazungula Border post. To get from Livingstone or Victoria Falls to Kasane guests can also do a hop in light aircraft which is about a 15 minute flight. Guests can then from Kasane either continue by road to a lodge of their choice in Chobe or by light aircraft to a camp in the Okavango Delta.

#### AIR TRANSFERS

They use 6- to 12-seater planes which criss-cross the region between a plethora of small bush runways. Flights are usually organised by the operator who arranges your camps as an integral part of your trip; there's no other way to reach most camps. Several people usually end up sharing these small flights, and the flight companies schedule the timings a few days beforehand. Expect them to take about an hour, during which time you may stop at one or two other airstrips to pick-up and drop-off other guests before reaching your destination. As most of the transfers in Botswana are done in light aircraft there are certain luggage restrictions. If you need to bring luggage in excess of your allowance, you may have the option of buying an extra seat which will allow an additional 70 kgs (soft bag only). The additional cost of this varies depending on your flight schedule so please contact your agent for further details.

## PLACES OF INTEREST

### The Okavango Delta

The Okavango is a labyrinth of lagoons, lakes and hidden channels and is the largest inland delta in the world. Trapped in the parched Kalahari sands it is a magnet for the wildlife who depend on the permanent waters of this unique feature.

Sometimes called a 'swamp', the Okavango is anything but. Moving, mysterious, placid, gentle and beautiful, from a wide and winding channel it spreads through tiny, almost unnoticeable channels that creep away behind a wall of papyrus reed, into an ever expanding network of increasingly smaller passages. These link a succession of lagoons, islands and islets of various sizes, open grasslands and flooded plains in a mosaic of land and water. Palms and towering trees abound, throwing their shade over crystal pools, forest glades and grassy knolls. The Okavango's water is remarkably clean and pure and this is almost certainly due to the fact that it passes through very sparsely populated areas on its journey from Angola. Despite this, a staggering 660 000 tons of sediment a year are delivered to its great alluvial fan.

### The Moremi Game Reserve

Moremi Game Reserve is situated in the central and eastern areas of the Okavango, and includes Chief's Island, boasting one of the richest and most diverse ecosystems on the continent. This area offers spectacular game viewing and bird watching. Both Black and White Rhino have recently been re-introduced, now making the reserve a 'Big Five' destination.

### The Linyanti

To the north of the Okavango Delta lies the Linyanti Wildlife Reserve, a 125 000 hectares area of pristine wilderness and Botswana's most underrated wildlife area. Fed by the Kwando River, the Linyanti Swamp is the heart of the reserve and is the attraction for the tens of thousands of elephants, one of Africa's largest Elephant populations, and other animals that concentrate during the dry season. Across the water is Namibia's Caprivi Strip and to the east is the Chobe National Park.

### Chobe National Park

The second largest national park in Botswana and the most accessible, frequently visited of Botswana's big game country, Chobe is most famous for its large herds of elephants and Cape buffalo. A major feature of Chobe National Park is its elephant population. The Chobe elephants are migratory, making seasonal movements of up to 200 km from the Chobe and Linyanti rivers, where they concentrate in the dry season, to the pans in the southeast of the park, to which they disperse in the rains.

### The Central Kalahari Game Reserve

The Central Kalahari Game Reserve is the largest, most remotely situated reserve in Southern Africa, and the second largest wildlife reserve in the world. Activities here include Game drives, Birding, Walks with the San, Walks with the meerkats, Quad-biking the pans and visits to Historical and Archaeological sites.



## BEST TIME TO TRAVEL

Each period of the year offers different highlights to the traveler visiting the Delta. It is generally true in any wildlife area that the drier times (April – November) means better game viewing because all the animals are forced to visit permanent water areas to drink each day. The predators then simply have to wait near the water sources for the prey animals to come to drink. April to October brings about milder temperatures. This is when the bush is at its thinnest, so game viewing is easier. There is also no rainfall. The animals begin to congregate in permanent water areas more frequently, as the seasonal pans begin to dry.

The rainy season (December through March) offers spectacular highlights which should not be overlooked. Photographically and aesthetically, the colors of the Delta are far richer with the lush green growth everywhere and the dramatic and sometimes stormy skies in the background. Additionally, many of the herbivores such as the Impalas have their babies during the rainy.

During the rainy season, there are literally babies everywhere and, naturally, many are preyed upon by the major predators as well, offering ample opportunity to see more lions, leopards and cheetahs and wild dogs to name a few.

