

BIG FIVE®

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys

Destination Information Guide

Botswana



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Welcome to the World of Big Five!

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



Gaborone ~ Elevation: 3280 feet / Latitude: 24 40S / Longitude: 025 55E												
Average Temperature												
°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	80	78	76	70	64	57	57	63	70	75	77	78
Average Precipitation												
in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	3.8	3.3	2.8	1.6	0.5	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.6	1.7	2.6	3.5
Francistown ~ Elevation: 3280 feet / Latitude: 21 13S / Longitude: 027 30E												
Average Temperature												
°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	78	77	75	71	65	59	59	65	72	76	77	77
Average Precipitation												
in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	3.9	3.3	2.4	1	0.3	0.1	---	---	0.3	1.1	2.3	3.6
Maun ~ Elevation: 3101 feet / Latitude: 19 59S / Longitude: 023 25E												
Average Temperature												
°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	78	77	75	72	65	59	59	65	73	79	80	78
Average Precipitation												
in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	3.8	3.3	2.8	1.6	0.5	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.6	1.7	2.6	3.5

WEATHER

Botswana is very dry and semiarid. The northern two-thirds of the country lie within the tropics. Most of the country has a subtropical climate, with cooler temperatures prevailing in the higher altitudes. Winter days are warm and nights are cool, with heavy frost common in the desert. Temperatures range from maximums of 80°F-90°F (26.6°C - 32°C) from October to February to minimums of 30°- 40°F (2° to 4.4°C) from June to August. In August, seasonal winds begin and blow from the west, carrying sand and dust across the country. Summer rainy seasons run from November to March. Rain is rare between the months of May to August. Rainfall averages 18 inches but ranges from 27 inches in the north to less than 9 inches in the Kalahari. The rains, however, are extremely unpredictable, and the country suffers frequent droughts.

Summer: (Sept-April) Frequent rain and thunderstorms; days and nights are very hot, but cooling off after rain spells.

Winter: (May-July) Dry and cold days and nights especially in the early hours of the morning.

TIME ZONES

Botswana is Greenwich Mean Time GMT +2 hours.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

PASSPORTS: For International Travel, A U.S. Passport Valid For At Least Six Months From Date Of Departure, Containing At Least Two Blank Pages Are Necessary.

VISAS: Many countries require travelers to obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Trivisa to process required visas for our passengers. You can find the necessary forms from Trivisa's website at: www.trivisa.com. Please use account code JP1551, and follow the directions.

Important: Even if you do not need a visa prior to departure, please check your passport well in advance of departure to insure:

- 1) It is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa/entry stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

Note: Remember to carry with you in a safe place photocopies of all important documents in the event your passport or other documents are lost or stolen.

Also, it's a good idea to have a passport photo with you. As a tourist, you will need to produce your passport when booking in at hotels, changing money or travelers' checks and prove your identity whenever requested by a policeman.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Upon arrival, proceed through immigration and baggage claims and customs. Handy baggage carts are available free of charge. You can also exchange money at this time at the bank windows located in the airport. Big Five personnel or their representatives will assist you with your baggage and escort you to your hotel. They will assist with check-in formalities.

BOTSWANA CUSTOMS

Duty-Free Items: The following goods may be imported into Botswana without incurring customs duty: 400 cigarettes and 50 cigars and 250g of tobacco; 2l of wine and 1l of spirits; 50ml of perfume and 250ml of eau de toilette; goods up to the value of P500.

VALUE ADDED TAX (VAT)

VAT of 10% is levied on all goods and services.

On departing from Botswana, non residents may claim a VAT refund on goods exported as accompanied luggage. In order to claim, the original tax invoice, with passport details reflected thereon, must be presented to the designated Customs Officer together with the VAT 006.1 claim form and the BW500 export declaration form. The value of the goods must exceed P 5,000 per export and the goods must be available for inspection. Refunds are made by way of a check payment which is mailed.

Prohibited Import Items: The import of fruit, plants and seeds, all narcotics and imitation firearms is prohibited. International penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

U.S. CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. There are limits on some items. Regulations frequently change. For a list of exempt items and more information contact your nearest Customs office or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Visitors to Africa should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. Be prepared to take precautions against sunburn.

Yellow Fever: Yellow fever inoculation is required if one of the following applies:

- If you are coming from any area other than the United States, Europe, or Canada.
- If you plan on visiting more than one African country.

Note: *Most of southern Africa is not within the Yellow Fever endemic zone, according to CDC. At this time, people traveling directly between Zambia, Botswana and South Africa do not require yellow fever vaccinations.*

Malaria: There is a malaria risk for anyone traveling to Africa south of the Sahara Desert. Malaria exists throughout the year in all areas including urban areas. Resistance to Chloroquine is confirmed. Although you will have little exposure to malaria, it is better to be cautious. **We strongly recommend that you consult your physician regarding these matters.** It is highly recommended that you obtain a prescription for a malaria precaution. The best protection against malaria is to avoid being bitten by a mosquito. Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants in the evening hours. Take along a good insect repellent and apply to all exposed skin.

Cholera: Inoculation recommended. Cholera is reported in areas of the country.

Medical Treatment: While traveling with Big Five, you are automatically enrolled in the Flying Doctors Society. This service is designed to bring first rate medical care to outlying remote areas. Should the need arise; you will receive prompt medical attention and transportation to the nearest medical facility.

Please Note: If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage.

Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel. For the most current information, please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

CLOTHING ON SAFARI

Winters (June, July & August) are usually mild to warm, which call for light clothing in the middle of the day. Layers are most practical for the fluctuating day/night temperatures of Botswana. Dull and/or neutral colors are more suitable for safari than bright colors; and white is not practical. Khaki is fine. It is best to pack hardy, durable clothing. As it can become cold at night and in the early morning, a warm sweater and jacket should be brought along. Weather conditions at the coast can be quite cold and windy, for which warm clothing, including a windbreaker, are necessary.

As no formal clothes are needed, we recommend that you keep your luggage to the basics. **Army camouflage uniforms or army hats are forbidden.** Cotton clothing and natural materials, which are cooler than synthetics, are recommended for hot Namibian summers. They can be bought at shops in Windhoek that specialize in lightweight safari garments. Laundry can be done at all camps. Most camps charge a modest and nominal fee for this facility but others do provide this service for free. The camp staff will not, however, wash underwear because of local traditions prevailing in the country.

LUGGAGE

Please see general luggage and clothing sheet in your pre-departure materials.

RECENT CHANGES: The most common mode of transport in Botswana is light aircraft, which is usually done on a seat-in-plane shared basis, which has certain luggage restrictions. Please note that recently all charter companies in Botswana have changed their policies to **allow a maximum of 20kg/44lbs of luggage per person.** This applies to the total amount of luggage per person, meaning both checked bag **and** carry-on luggage such as a handbag or camera are included in that 20kg/44lbs luggage allowance. Please be aware of this restriction in your planning, especially if you are travelling with heavy photographic equipment, which must be included in the 20kg/44lbs luggage allowance. *This ruling is very strictly enforced due to safety considerations.* Also, there is another factor to consider. The main luggage is stored in a hold compartment either underneath or at the back of the plane. This space is limited so each bag must not exceed certain dimensions. These dimensions are a width of 25cm (10 inches); height of 30cm (12 inches) and length of 62cm (24 inches).

MONEY

Currency: Pula (P) = 100 thebe. Notes are in denominations of P100, 50, 20 and 10. Coins are in denominations of P5, 2 and 1, and 50, 25, 10 and 5 thebe. Various gold and silver coins were issued to mark

the country's 10th anniversary of independence, and are still legal tender.

Money should be exchanged in banks at market rates. There are four main commercial banks in the country (Barclays Bank of Botswana, First National Bank, Stanbic Bank Botswana and Standard Chartered Bank) with branches in major towns and villages. Owing to limited facilities in small villages, it is advisable to change money at the airport or in major towns, where credit card cash advances may also be available. There are also Exchange Bureaus at major border posts. Credit & debit cards: **International Visa and MasterCard are usually accepted throughout Botswana but American Express and Diners Club are often not accepted.** Please note some camps such as Wilderness Safaris' camps are unable to accept American Express cards. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services available. **Botswana banks only accept US Dollars, Pound Sterling, Euro and South African Rand in cash.** Any cash payments made to camps for curios, or gratuities to guides or staff, need to be in one of these currencies. **Traveler's checks:** Most hotels accept traveler's checks, but the surcharge may be high. Travelers' checks in any of the above currencies are acceptable.

Currency restrictions: There are no restrictions on the import of local or foreign currencies, provided declared on arrival. Export of local currency is limited to P50 and foreign currencies up to amount declared on arrival.

COMMUNICATION

Language: English is the official language. Setswana is the national language, with minorities speaking Kalanga and Sekgalagadi.

ELECTRICITY

Electricity: 220-240 volts AC, 50Hz. 15- and 13-amp plug sockets are used. Camps in remote areas have to generate their own electricity, usually with a generator which runs for about six or seven hours per day (split between morning and afternoon). In most camps, these generators charge a bank of batteries that provide 220v power for lighting and ceiling fans.

FOOD & DRINK

Throughout Botswana at hotels, inns, lodges, and other public places, tap water is purified and safe to drink. While tap water is considered safe, drinking water outside main cities and towns may be contaminated and need sterilization. Milk is pasteurized and dairy products are safe for consumption. Other beverages include forms of soured milk, bottled or canned soft drinks, and lager beers. The traditional beer, called *kadi* or *bojalwa*, is made from sorghum or millet.

Remember that water is a scarce resource, especially in a drought-stricken area such as Botswana, so please be respectful and help to conserve water.

Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are generally considered safe to eat. Meat is the basis for the traditional diet in Botswana as well as agricultural staples such as millet, sorghum, maize (corn), and beans. Often these foods are combined with tomato, greens, potato, cabbage, and onions in stews and other dishes. Wild berries and the wild morula plum are also popular.

Beef is becoming more available (though cattle remain a source of wealth rather than a food in many places) along with mutton and goat, but such dishes as antelope or ostrich stew are also popular. Phane caterpillars from mopane wood are considered a delicacy and are eaten as relish or snacks.

Note: If you have food allergies or special/restricted dietary requests, please notify your travel agent or our office in advance, so that we may try to comply with your needs. Also, please advise your travel agent or our office if you have any mobility restrictions, so that we may inform our representatives accordingly. They will always strive to accommodate you to the best of their ability.

TIPPING

Tipping should be done at your discretion and as a reward for good or exceptional service.

For general tipping guidelines please refer to:

www.cntraveler.com/travel-tips/travel-etiquette/2008/12/Etiquette-101-Tipping-Guide

SHOPPING

Botswana **strictly enforces** its laws about animal trophies. Under this law, it is not permitted to possess or remove from Botswana, without a government permit or a receipt from a licensed shop, any living or dead animal or trophy from an animal. ***Violators are subject to arrest and may face a penalty of up to five years imprisonment and a substantial fine.*** A trophy is any horn, ivory, tooth, tusk, bone, claw, hoof, hide, skin, hair, feather, egg, or other durable portion of an animal, whether the item has been processed or not. Curio shops and vendors throughout the country sell items such as animal skins, plain and decorated ostrich eggs and egg shells, and carved bones or teeth of animals protected by this law. All souvenirs, although widely sold, are subject to the national trophy law. Travelers departing the country with a trophy must have a receipt from a store licensed to sell such items.

Botswana crafts people make excellent woodcarvings, handcrafted jewelry, woven goods and baskets. Basketry, in fact, is the most famous craft in Botswana. Baskets have been made and used in Botswana for thousands of years. Closed baskets are traditionally used for storing

grain, seeds, and sorghum beer. Open bowl-shaped baskets are used primarily by women for carrying items on their heads or winnowing grain. Today, these baskets are among the finest in the world. Some of the larger more intricate baskets can take months to make. Bargaining is expected. *See your pre-departure materials for tips on bargaining.*

DRIVER/GUIDES

Big Five understands the tremendously positive affect a guide can have on the success and smooth operation of your tour. There is no area where we're more particular than in selecting the guides that accompany our clients. All of our guides and tour escorts have more than 10 years experience in the safari business. All our guides are English-speaking, highly educated, and experts in locating wildlife. They are eager to share their love of the land and their insights into the African culture, wildlife, flora, as well as the many discoveries that will make your safari a memorable one. Beyond their roles as knowledgeable hosts, our guides are consummate professionals, experienced in dealing with hotel and government officials, and in smoothing the way through check-ins, entry formalities, and other procedures critical to your trip. Their caring professionalism is consistently commended by our travelers, and is a tradition on which we stake our reputation.

ABOUT WILDLIFE

Please keep in mind that Africa is not a giant theme park. The animals you will encounter here live and die in this land, and many of them are potentially dangerous to humans. Attacks by wild animals are exceedingly rare, but no one in Africa can guarantee that such incidents will not occur. Please follow all rules and regulations established by the camps and your guides and drivers. This will help insure a satisfying and safe safari.

A REMINDER: WALKING SAFARIS & RIFLES:

On safari, we walk where possible, but local area and national regulations will determine the extent to which we can do this. NOTE: Walking is at your own risk as these walks can take you close to dangerous wild animals.

Unlike some areas where rangers escort guests on walking safaris armed with rifles; historically, this has not been the case in Botswana. There are several reasons for this. No guns are allowed in Botswana's National Parks. Also, many people believe that the presence of rifles in situations of extreme danger are of little use and can indeed endanger lives.

Our Botswana rangers are extremely well trained and professional, and they know how to deal with a wide variety of situations that can occur on walking safaris. The majority of properties used by Big Five in Botswana

are nearly equally divided, with slightly more favoring a 'no rifles' policy.

Respect Wildlife

- Observe animals silently and with a minimum of disturbance to their natural activities. Loud talking on game drives can frighten animals away. The less you impact environment of the animals you want to see, the longer they will stay in your presence, and the better you'll be able to observe their natural behavior.
- Never attempt to attract an animal's attention. Do not imitate animal sounds, clap your hands, pound the vehicle or throw objects.
- Please respect your driver-guide's judgment about proximity to lions, cheetahs, and leopards. **Big Five drivers are strictly prohibited from harassing or chasing the animals.** Don't insist that he take the vehicle closer so you can get a better photograph. A vehicle driven too close can hinder a hunt, or cause animals to abandon a hard-earned meal. * Never attempt to feed or approach any wild animal on foot. This is especially important near lodges or in campsites where animals get accustomed to human visitors.
- Refrain from smoking on game drives. **Fire is a very real danger.** The dry African bush ignites easily, and a flash fire can kill countless animals.

Flashlights: As the grounds of all lodges/camps in Botswana are unfenced, it is essential that you bring a small flashlight as you may encounter wild animals in camp at night. You should also bring a spare bulb as well as batteries as they will be difficult to obtain outside the cities. Most camps can supply a flashlight, but it is good to have your own backup.

Driving Conditions: African roads are frequently rough and bumpy, and occasionally we will travel "off road" and it is possible that injuries may occur if for example a hidden pothole or other obstruction is struck. This also means that much traveling is done on dirt roads, so conditions do become dusty.

Power in the Camps: Camps are situated in remote areas and must generate their own electricity. Generally, each camp has a generator that runs for about 6 hours per day – two, three- hour sessions – in the morning and in the afternoon when guests are out on activities. These generators then charge batteries located at each tented room, which, in turn, provide good 12v lights all night if used sensibly. There are no 220v or 110v power points in camp. If you need to have your video battery re-charged, we can do so while you are out on an activity, so bring a spare to use while the other is being charged. These systems are simple but perfectly functional.

SUGGESTED READING LIST

Many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, etc., many books relating to East Africa. Here are a few selections we thought might interest you. Longitude Books at <http://www.longitudebooks.com> has an extensive collection of books, searchable by country

BESSIE HEAD

Craig MacKenzie

When the depredations of apartheid forced most of her contemporaries into exile in Britain, Europe, and the United States, the South African writer Bessie Head (1937-1986) chose to move to neighboring Botswana, by South African standards then a dry, dusty, and undeveloped backwater. And where her fellow writers chose apartheid's depredations as the subject for their searing social indictments, Head turned for inspiration to local sources, recording in stories of parable-like intensity the daily lives of people in a remote African village. She is perhaps the only black African writer who has successfully dealt with the tensions and torments of her own life - madness, guilt, vexed personal relationships, loneliness, exile - and the often haunting results have won her a growing following in critical circles, most notably among feminists, who see her as having been victimized not only by South Africa's brutal racial politics but also by patriarchal attitudes among African men. In this overview of Head's work, Craig MacKenzie argues that the physical journey Head took from South Africa to Botswana has a special resonance in her writing, in which she moves from disintegration to wholeness.

OKAVANGO: AFRICA'S LAST EDEN

Frans Lanting, Christine Eckstrom, Editor

Okavango is the first major celebration in text and photographs of Africa's last Eden. More than 130 extraordinary photographs, taken during a year-long assignment in the region by award-winning photographer and naturalist Frans Lanting, capture with powerful immediacy the beauty and drama of Africa's breathtaking Okavango Delta. Spreading over 8,600 square miles, this vast wetland in the heart of the Kalahari supports an unparalleled diversity of wildlife. From its origins in the highlands of Angola, the Okavango River descends to the near-desert of northern Botswana, where it fans out as the world's largest inland delta; one of the most complex ecosystems on earth.

KING KHAMA, EMPEROR JOE, AND THE GREAT WHITE QUEEN: VICTORIAN BRITAIN THROUGH AFRICAN EYES

Neil Parsons

In 1895 three African chiefs traveled to England to persuade Queen Victoria not to give their lands to Cecil Rhodes. Appealing to the middle-class morality of Victorian society, the chiefs began a tour of the British Isles for their cause. They were remarkably successful in gaining support, eventually swaying Secretary of State for the Colonies Joseph Chamberlain into drafting the agreement that secured their territories against the encroachment of Rhodesia, leading indirectly to the independence of present-day Botswana. Historian Neil Parsons has reconstructed this unusual journey with the help of African archival materials and press clippings from British newspapers, gathered by a clippings service the chiefs had the foresight to employ. A full record of an African Journey of exploration in the nineteenth century, the book provides as well a view from the other side of colonialism and imperialism, and does so with the richness and depth of a fully realized novel.

PRIDES: THE LIONS OF MOREMI

Chris Harvey, Pieter W. Kat

Illustrated with two hundred color photographs, this striking volume reveals the worlds of four neighboring prides that roam the diverse habitats of Botswana's Okavango Delta. Drawing on continuing field research begun in 1995, Pieter Kat shows how Okavango lions challenge long-held assumptions about sociability, mating strategies, and hunting techniques. Pride males readily mate with females from other prides; females often leave their offspring vulnerable to predators; and lions are more prone to hunting mistakes and scavenging than has been commonly believed.

WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T RUN: TRUE TALES OF A BOTSWANA SAFARI GUIDE

by **Peter Allison**

A hilarious, highly original collection of essays based on the Botswana truism: “only food runs!” In the tradition of Bill Bryson, a new writer brings us the lively adventures and biting wit of an African safari guide. Peter Allison gives us the guide’s-eye view of living in the bush, confronting the world’s fiercest terrain of wild animals and, most challenging of all, managing herds of gaping tourists. Passionate for the animals of the Kalahari, Allison works as a top safari guide in the wildlife-rich Okavango Delta. As he serves the whims of his wealthy clients, he often has to stop the impulse to run as far away from them as he can, as these tourists are sometimes more dangerous than a pride of lions.

THE GOOD HUSBAND OF ZEBRA DRIVE: THE NO. 1 LADIES' DETECTIVE AGENCY SERIES

by **Alexander McCall Smith**

The eighth installment in the universally beloved, internationally bestselling series. In the life of Mma Ramotswe – a woman duly proud of her fine traditional build – there is rarely a dull moment, and in her newest round of adventures, challenges and intrigues, the same certainly holds true. But one thing above all else is keeping her occupied – her estimable husband, Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni. He has been hinting for some time now that he intends to do something special for their adopted daughter, Motholeli, and it seems that the time for this good deed has come. Of course, good deed or not, his plan is bound to hit some snags. And that’s when he will undoubtedly consider himself doubly – perhaps even triply – lucky to be married to the ever-resourceful, ever-understanding Precious Ramotswe.

MORTALS

Norman Rush

It is set in the 1990s in Botswana—the African country Rush has indelibly made his own fictional territory. *Mortals* chronicles the misadventures of three ex-pat Americans: Ray Finch, a contract CIA agent, operating undercover as an English instructor in a private school, who is setting out on perhaps his most difficult assignment; his beautiful but slightly foolish and disaffected wife, Iris, with whom he is obsessively in love; and Davis Morel, an iconoclastic black holistic physician, who is on a personal mission to “lift the yoke of Christian belief from Africa.” The passions of these three entangle them with a local populist leader, Samuel Kerekang, whose purposes are grotesquely misconstrued by the CIA, fixated as the agency is on the astonishing collapse of world socialism and the simultaneous, paradoxical triumph of radical black nationalism in South Africa, Botswana’s neighbor. And when a small but violent insurrection erupts in the wild northern part of the country, inspired by Kerekang but stoked by the erotic and political intrigues of the American trio—the outcome is explosive and often explosively funny.