

Featured neighbouring country

Written by Administrator

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BOTSWANA - one of the "wildest" countries in Africa; and also one of the continent's success stories - s



Botswana is a landlocked country with a population of approximately 1,6 million. 85% of the country consists of Kgalagadi (Kalahari) semi-desert, a vast, flat, sand-filled basin with permanent dunes and valleys between. The only arable part of the country is the "Eastern corridor" bordering South Africa – 15% of the total land with 80% of the country's population.

The vegetation of the country consists largely of scrubland and savanna grasslands, except for the Okavango and Linyanti wetlands, where riparian and swamp vegetation (water-lilies, reeds and papyrus) occur, as well as larger trees like acacia, jackalberry, sausage tree and leadwood.

Botswana's economy is one of the world's fastest-growing, due to the stable political climate and abundance of natural resources. Since 1966, the country has experienced an economic growth of between 7 and 13% annually. Diamonds are the cornerstone of the economy, with

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cattle farming making up the major agricultural contribution to GDP.

Get hold of **Alexander Mc Call Smith's** series of novels – starting with *The Number One Ladies' Detective Agency*
– for a marvelous introduction to this country!

Some of the most beautiful areas of this remarkable country are listed below :

MASHATU PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

Africa's largest private game reserve, Mashatu lies between the Limpopo, Motloutse (Great Elephant) and Shashe Rivers in the south-eastern Tuli Block region of Botswana. The name "Mashatu" comes from the giant Nyalaberry trees that grow profusely in the Limpopo valley. On the estate are situated the Motloutse Ruins, a Great Zimbabwe-era stone village. Mashatu is home to the largest herd of elephant on privately-owned land in the world (800-plus). A "Big Five" reserve, with the added attraction of African Wild Dog (the most endangered animal in Africa) and Brown Hyaena. See www.mashatu.com

CHOBE NATIONAL PARK

Created in 1968, the park has a variety of habitats – ranging from the Chobe River frontage to classic savanna grasslands, pans and mopane forests. It is one of the "big" game parks of Africa, is home to four of the "Big Five", and guarantees the best elephant game viewing on the continent! Unique to Chobe is the opportunity of game-viewing cruises – watching animals come to drink while cruising gently down the Chobe River.

KASANE

A tiny tourist town on the edge of the Chobe National Park, Kasane's great claim to fame is that it is sited at the point where 4 countries (Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and 2

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rivers (Chobe and Zambezi) meet!

THE OKAVANGO DELTA

The Okavango River rises in central Angola, on the extremely wet Benguela Plateau. It flows south for 1 300km into Botswana, then disappears into a maze of lagoons and channels, and is finally absorbed by the air and the Kalahari Basin sands. What makes the Okavango Delta unique is its location in an arid area, and the fact that its waters don't reach an ocean. The delta consists of 2 main parts :

1. permanent swamp – the permanently flooded part of the Delta, with Wild Date Palms, papyrus beds, and a number of permanently dry islands;

2. seasonal swamp – the seasonally flooded part of the Delta, consisting mainly of floodplain grasslands which become shallow wetlands during the annual flood.

The Delta has a remarkable array of wildlife, including 2 unique amphibious antelope, the Sitatunga and the Red lechwe; and a greater variety of birdlife than anywhere else in the world due to the variety of ecosystems, with wetland, swamp, forest, savanna and desert all in close proximity.

VICTORIA FALLS

Though not in Botswana (they're actually shared by Zimbabwe and Zambia), Victoria Falls - another of the "must-see" African destinations - is easily reachable (an hour's drive) from the Botswana town of Kasane.

The Zambezi River is Africa's 4th-largest river after the Nile, Zaire and Niger. It is 2 700km long, and traverses 6 countries on its way to the Indian Ocean. The Victoria Falls – or their Kololo name – “Mosi-oa-Tunya” (“the smoke that thunders”), situated on the Zambezi, is one of the

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Natural Wonders of the world. 546 million cubic metres of water per minute pour over the basalt cliff that forms the edge of the Falls, plunging 107 metres into the chasm below!

The formation of the Falls began millions of years ago, when tectonic activity forced the Zambezi from a southerly to an easterly flow, towards a massive bed of basalt 300m thick and 208km long. The basalt had many joints and cracks, with a dominant series of joints running east-west containing soft material within the basalt. These joints were easily eroded by the water to form the east-west gorges. A second series of joints running north-south caused the river to be concentrated into a narrow fissure, leading to the upstream retreat of the Falls – in fact, the current Victoria Falls is actually Vic. Falls 8! The Devil's Cataract shows how the force of water is starting to cut back along another line of weakness, eroding its way back to another east-west joint where a future line of the falls will eventually be established.

Dr. Livingstone first sighted the Falls in 1855, when he spent a night on Kalai Island, before being taken by canoe to the island on the lip of the Falls the next day. He named the Falls after his Queen, Victoria. The Victoria Falls railway bridge was commissioned by Cecil John Rhodes in 1900. He never visited the Falls himself, but wanted the bridge there "to have the spray of the falls over the carriages"! Designed by Douglas Fox, and built out from each side over a period of 14 months, the bridge was finally completed in 1905.