



# KAVANGO ZAMBEZI

TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREA (KAZA TFCA)



## TRAVELLING

### 8. TRAVELLING IN THE KAZA TFCA

The KAZA TFCA offers some of Africa's best game viewing. This huge area, much of which is a vast and beautiful wilderness of deserts, savannas and endless marshes, is a safari connoisseur's dream destination. Allow yourself sufficient time to explore the region by 4x4, mokoro (traditional canoe) and to relax in superlative accommodation.

#### Culture

In addition to its abundant wildlife and scenic splendour, the region has an incredibly rich cultural heritage, so rich and varied it is difficult to describe. Given the huge diversity of ethnic groups and sub-groups across the landscape, each with its own particular customs and traditions, culture dominates daily life — influencing the harvesting and use of natural resources, directing the preparation of foods, dictating the types of dwellings and mode of construction, through to shaping dress fashions and styles of music, song and dance.

Culture is reflected in the livelihood strategies of the communities, with some individuals basing their lives around access to large bodies of water for fishing and harvesting aquatic resources, whilst others live in forested areas, and yet others in harsh dry desert with minimal access to water. This rich heritage provides the magical backdrop to the "people" side of the KAZA TFCA.

Cultures have been moulded by history, from the slave trade to colonisation; from recent civil strife to disease and famine. The cultures of the KAZA TFCA represent a vast resource of their own and, it is hoped that this resource will be increasingly celebrated through recognition and promotion of indigenous knowledge, establishment of cultural villages and determination of national heritage sites. More than 3 000 national heritage sites have been identified in Zambia alone.

#### Climate

Over the KAZA TFCA region, rainfall is largely confined to the months from October to March with December, January and February being the wettest. This varies enormously both in rainfall distribution, period and amount. In some years it may be hot and dry with very little rain and in others it may rain on five days out of seven. Generally the rain is confined to afternoon thundery downpours that cool the air and which are quickly over. These summer months are hot, and very hot in the Zambezi and Luangwa valleys. Temperatures may reach maxima of 27°C to 35°C or even more. The winter months are dry and much cooler with maxima falling in the range of 15°C to 25°C with night-time lows sometimes falling to near freezing. In the winter months there may sometimes be days of overcast and drizzly weather — so come prepared.

#### Driving in KAZA TFCA

Traffic in the TFCA countries drives on the left except in Angola. Driving in the region is safe, provided you are aware, and understand that there are many un-roadworthy vehicles on the roads and that in general, driving discipline and understanding of a highway code is less developed than in Europe or America.

Adhere to speed limits and try to complete your journey in daylight. In many areas people, wildlife and livestock randomly cross the roads and may even lie on the road after dark enjoying the warmth of the road surface.

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All of these can be very difficult to see at night. If you must travel after dark, reduce your speed so as to see well within your stopping distance.

Use of seatbelts, front and rear is mandatory, use of cellphones when driving is prohibited, and penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol are severe.

For the most part, the KAZA TFCA is readily accessible to visitors travelling in ordinary two-wheel-drive vehicles, but the more remote areas such as within Moremi and Chobe nature reserves, the Zambezi Valley of Zimbabwe, parts of Namibia, Angola and Zambia require the security of a four-wheel-drive vehicle. Heavy sand, and in the rainy season, mud, river fords and flooded low-level bridges present challenges to the unprepared. When venturing into the less frequented areas we would recommend travelling if possible, with another vehicle as a back-up in case of problems. Ensure you have an inflated spare wheel and the tools to change wheels, always be sure to carry a good supply of drinking water and some food in the event of a breakdown that may leave you stranded for several days.

## Vehicle Hire

Four-wheel-drive and two-wheel-drive vehicles suitable for travel in the TFCA, are widely available for hire. These include camper vehicles and trailers for independent travellers. Insurance is essential and we would advise that you shop around and read the fine print in the hire agreement carefully. It is well worthwhile taking out the fully covered insurance as some companies may charge for a new tyre if you have had a puncture.

## Air Travel

Major centres are served by scheduled flights. Most lodges in the region have airstrips, and charter flights are readily available

for transfers to the more remote lodges. There are direct flights to Maun from O. R. Tambo International in South Africa. Charter flights are essential for travel to lodges in the Okavango Delta.

## Public Transport — Road and Rail

Public transport exists throughout the region and there are some luxury buses between major centres that are safe, fast, reliable and affordable, however in general, public transport is erratic and may be unsafe. We recommend that you hire your own vehicle to get around.

## Currency

Whilst the SADC is working towards a common currency for the member states, each of the partner countries still has its own currency.

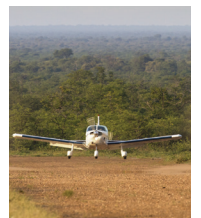
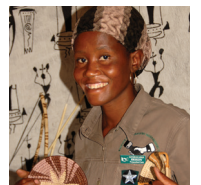
Angola — Kwanza

Botswana — Pula

Namibia — Namibian Dollar - South African Rands can be used freely in Namibia alongside the the Namibian Dollar.

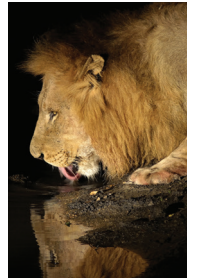
Zambia — Kwacha

Zimbabwe — In January 2009, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe permitted the use of foreign currency. In April 2009, the Zimbabwe dollar was suspended indefinitely. The government has adopted a multiple currency framework which includes the Australian Dollar, United States Dollar, British Sterling Pound, Euro, South Africa Rand, Indian Rupee, Chinese Yuan and Japanese Yen.





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Except in Angola, most towns have ATMs and local currency can generally be drawn from these against a credit or debit card. Most hotels and restaurants in the larger centres and tourist hubs will accept credit cards, although not always American Express or Diners Club. It is important to notify your bank of where you will be travelling so that withdrawals will not be suspected as fraudulent and result in cancellation of your card.

Always carry some cash in mixed denomination bills on your person. American dollars are most widely accepted. Some national parks will only accept dollars for entry fees and some airports charge airport fees in US currency.

Changing money on the street is ubiquitous but illegal and may result in you being cheated, robbed or arrested.

## Accommodation

There is a wide variety of accommodation in each of the partner countries of the region, ranging from campsites to up-market lodges amongst the finest in the world. Prices reflect

this. Botswana's tourism strategy is focused on a low volume/high yield tourism policy, which can make it a relatively costly destination when compared to the other partner countries. Nevertheless, many of the lower cost lodges offer superlative experiences and a total immersion in the Africa you have come to experience.

## Communications

Mobile phone access is widespread throughout the region when close to towns. Public landlines in working order may be difficult to find. Most major towns, hotels and lodges offer Internet facilities.

## Tipping

Tipping is customary throughout the region if the service is good. This is generally 10% but a larger tip would be appropriate if you are tipping on behalf of a group. Check that your bill has not already included a service charge or you may find you are tipping too much.

## Angola

Angola is a relatively new destination for the African traveller but it has much to offer, a range of geographic highlights, cultural richness and the recently proclaimed national parks in the south-eastern sector that fall within the KAZA TFCA. In general, travel in Angola is more demanding for the tourist because of its less sophisticated infrastructure — more suited to the rough-and-ready adventurer. It is advisable to have at least some proficiency in Portuguese when travelling there.



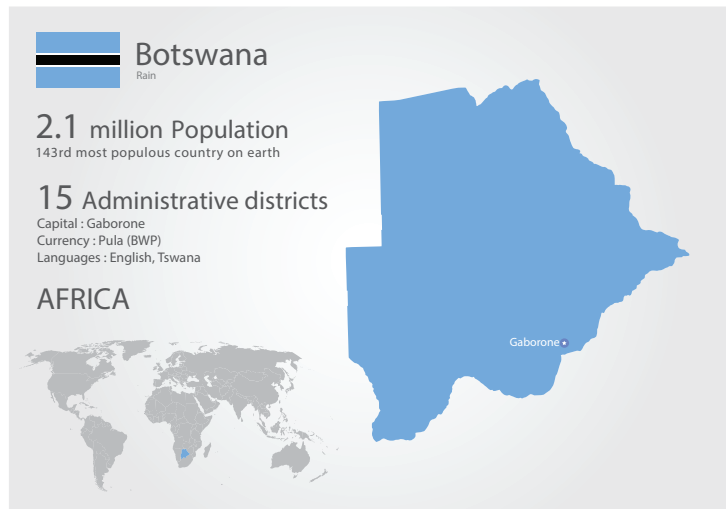
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## Botswana

Botswana is at the hub of the TFCA and it is true to say that this prosperous country with its population of only about two million, is a renowned and well-established international tourist destination. Its immense wildlife areas of Chobe, Moremi and the Okavango Delta are world famous and are easily accessible. Tourism facilities are generally excellent throughout the country. The north-eastern centre of Kasane is a convenient focus providing easy access to Chobe Game Reserve and, across the border in Zimbabwe and Zambia, to the international airport at Livingstone, and to the Victoria Falls. The Okavango Delta is best reached by air charter to one of its many lodges.

To the south, is the parched immensity of the Makgadikgadi Pans. This vast salt flat is actually a cluster of salt pans separated by desert. These are the remains of a lake that dried millennia ago, probably as a result of slight tectonic movements that tilted the landscape and drained the lake. The pans may seasonally be covered by water and they then provide an important refuge for waterbirds; ducks, geese and vast flocks of flamingos. During this wet period the pans also attract grazing herds of wildlife and their predators.

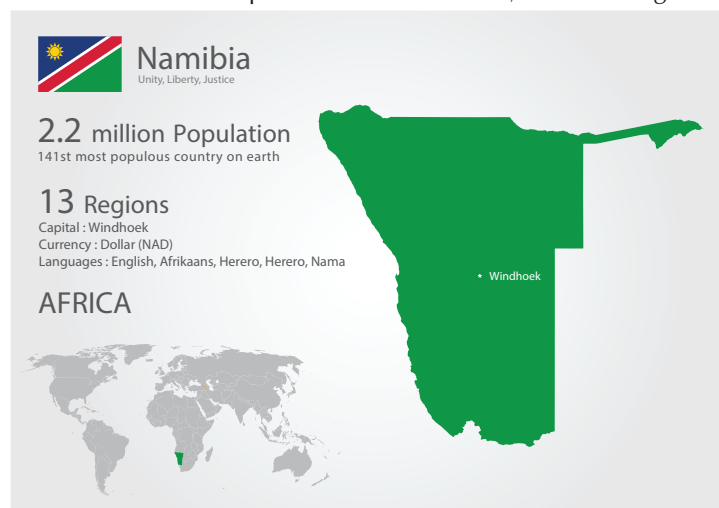
Away to the north-west are Tsodilo Hills, great granite outcrops with more than 4 000 rock paintings and a human history extending 100 000 years into the mists of the past. English is spoken throughout the country.



## Namibia

Namibia is an enormous country, which, like Botswana, has a tiny population of about two million. Travel is easy and the roads are generally very good, both tarred and gravel — but be aware that some of the gravel roads can be merciless to tyres so ensure you have a spare and that your insurance covers tyre replacement.

Namibia has spectacular well-known attractions such as the Fish River Canyon and Sossusvlei in the far south, and Etosha in the north, but in the relatively unexplored north-west, in the KAZA TFCA, there are more! These include protected wildlife areas, the hidden gem of the Popa Falls, for relaxation, fishing and



enjoyment of nature, and the golden, grass-covered Kalahari Desert with its abundant wildlife. The Kalahari is no longer a sand desert, but a fossil sand desert that now may receive up to 250 mm of rain per year — not very much — so it is still classified as desert. A trip through the Caprivi leads you to Zambia and Botswana and the greater extent of the KAZA TFCA.

Nine languages are spoken in Namibia but you will be fine with English as a lingua franca, although some German is spoken and it is useful to have some proficiency in Afrikaans.

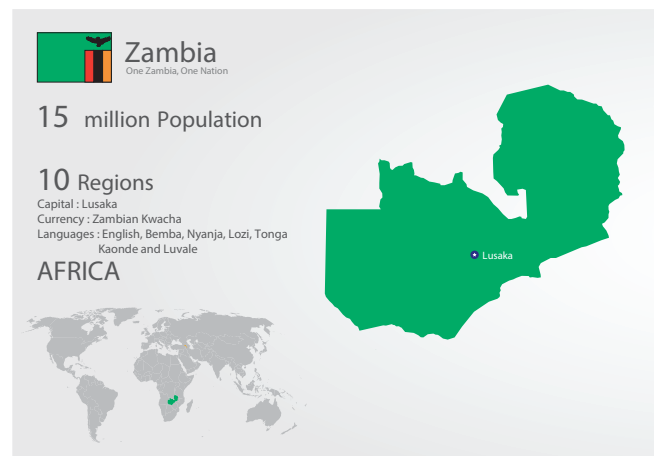
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## Zambia

Zambia is famous for its numerous cultural festivals, although planning for these can be difficult since they are not always on the same date and not always annually. The most famous of these, and a spectacle you should try to witness, is the Kuomboka on the Zambezi River in the Western Province of Barotseland, held around Easter (March-April according to river flows). The most famous of Zambia's festivals, this is the ceremonial migration of the Lozi king (litunga) from his dry season abode at Lealui to his wet season palace at Limulunga. Wearing an elaborate Victorian ambassador's costume, the litunga is taken by a flotilla of barges down the river, with musical accompaniment and, of course, much feasting at the destination.

No visit to the Victoria Falls would be complete without experiencing the views from the Zambian side of the river. The Zambian portion of the TFCA also includes the spectacular Sioma/Ngonye Falls in the Sioma-Ngwezi National Park, now easily accessible from Sesheke on the Zambezi. These magnificent falls vary in height according to the season but are at their highest in about August/September.

Kafue National Park is the second largest in Africa extending over about 22 400 km<sup>2</sup>. The jewel in Kafue's crown is the Zambezian flooded grasslands ecoregion in the north, including the Busanga Swamp and plains. These grasslands and swamps support large herds of grazing wildlife and their predators. In the dry season the animals keep close to the swamps and marshy creeks and are easily seen. The area is also extremely rich in birdlife. There are many excellent lodges in the park. Seven vernacular languages have official status but English is generally an adequate lingua franca.



## Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a fantastic place for tourism. In spite of the fragile economy it remains an excellent safari destination where lodges and hotels are less costly than over much of the TFCA region.

The main show has to be the Victoria Falls, Mosi-oa-Tunya ('the smoke that thunders') where a 2 km wide curtain of water plunges 108 m into the Zambezi Gorge through a great rent in the Earth creating a misty cloud that can be seen from 30 km distant. Zimbabwe's largest national park is the Hwange National Park that hosts over 100 mammal and more than 400 bird species. Elephant are numerous and the wild dog population is one of the largest remaining in Africa.

In the north-east of the Zimbabwean sector of the TFCA is Kariba Dam that forms the world's largest man-made lake. The dam wall is 128 m high and 1 900 m long. The lake stretches eastward for more than 200 km and contains about 185 cubic kilometres of water.



On the southern shores, not far from Kariba town, lies Matusadona National Park, one of Zimbabwe's finest with its beautiful scenery and prolific wildlife. The big five, including both black and white rhino are found here. Along the lakeshores are excellent safari lodges offering guided walks, game drives, boat and canoe trips to explore and watch wildlife. A stunning place to end your day in the bush with traditional sundowners as the sun sets over the lake. English is spoken throughout the country.