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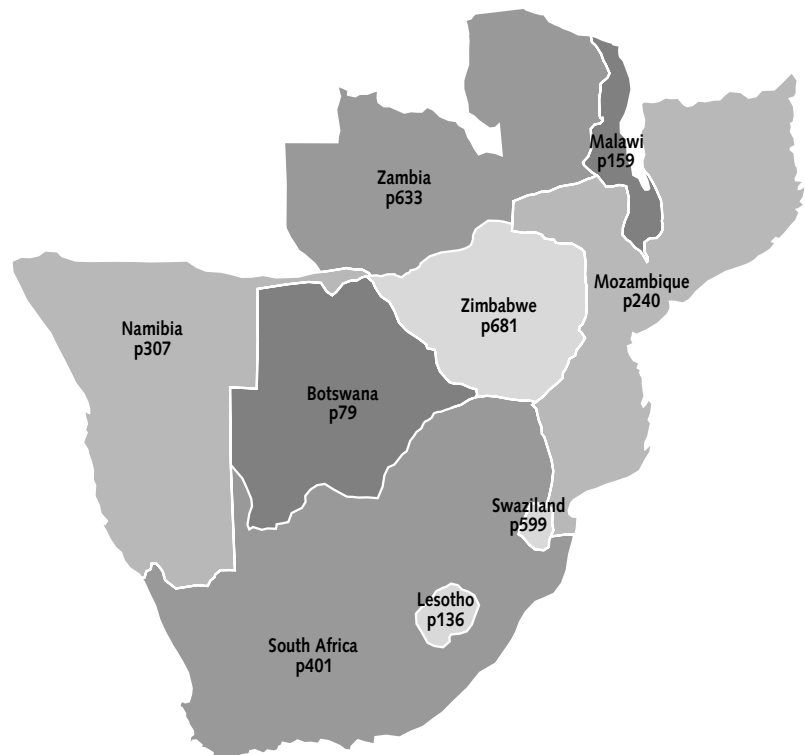
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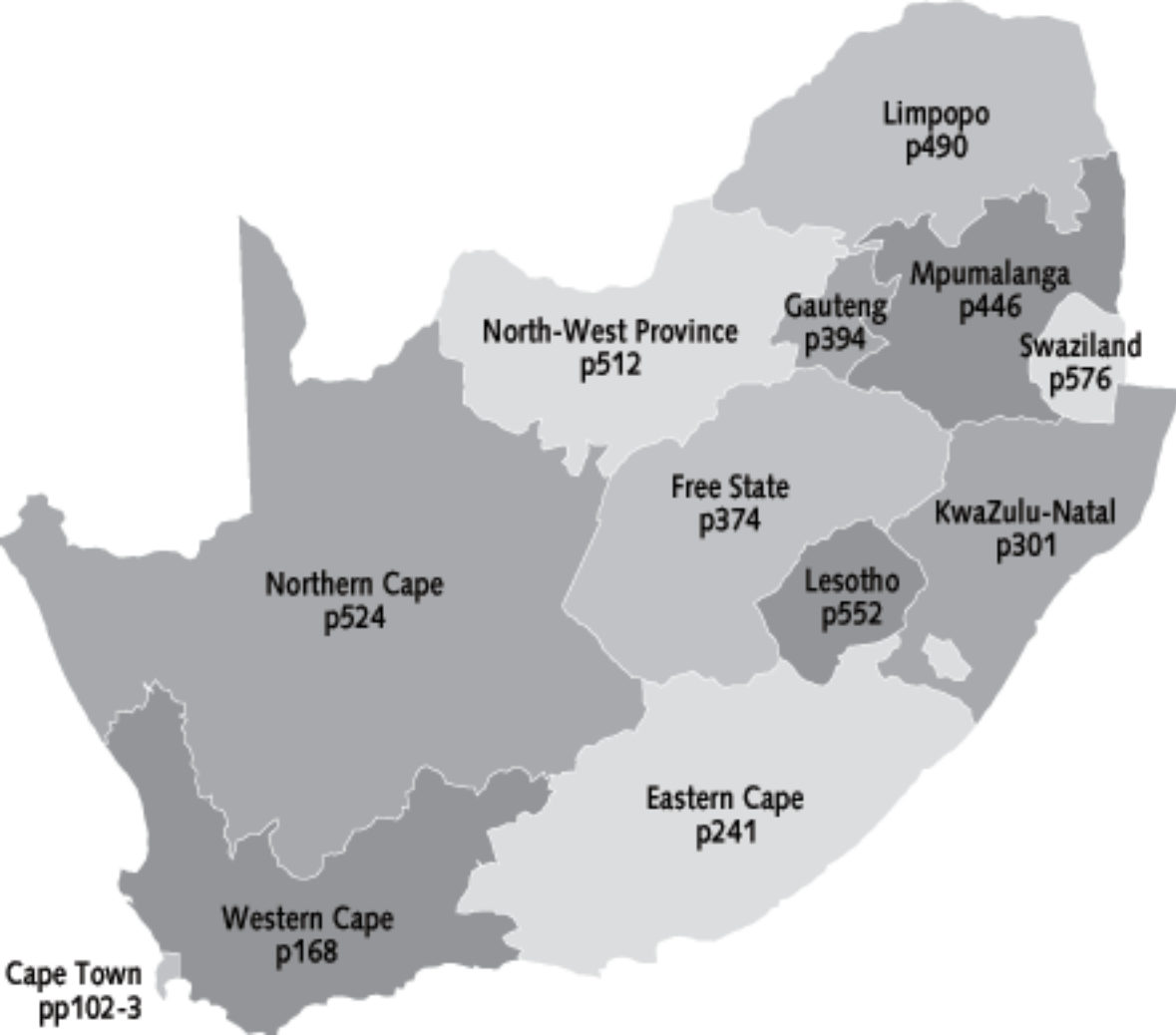
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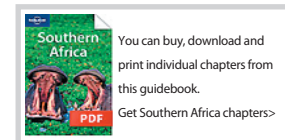
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Regional Map Contents







Getting Started

Southern Africa varies tremendously; it's suitable for backpackers getting by on packets of chewy biltong, right through to those who prefer their cocktails by the saltwater pool. It all depends on the country you want to spend time in and the activities you pursue.

Anyone with limited time will want to plan their trip carefully, while those with more time may prefer to just follow their whims and take life at a leisurely pace, stopping whenever something takes their fancy. Remember that the right attitude is what's most important – take precautions but don't be paranoid, whether in Johannesburg or sunning yourself by Lake Malawi.

Don't run around trying to fit too much into your time – Africa needs to be approached with a sense of fun and laid-back nonchalance. Before long you'll find yourself in tune to the rhythm of its friendly people, wild landscapes and majestic wildlife.

WHEN TO GO

High season is from April to August, when most of Southern Africa is basking in temperate sunshine, with comfortable (but often very chilly) nights. The shoulder seasons of February to March and September to October are also usually quite comfortable in the central part of the region. In the north, you can plan on inclement weather from November to March; the heat can be oppressive and travel can be more difficult due to flooded rivers and washed-out roads. Wildlife viewing is also less rewarding than in the winter (and some parks close completely), but bird-watching is at its best, and you're likely to see the most dramatic skies and thunderstorms imaginable.

The Cape area, however, experiences a Mediterranean climate with winter rain, which means that the high season is just the opposite of the rest of Southern Africa. The high season in Cape Town runs from October to March, while May to August is characterised by rains and blustery winds. April and September can go either way.

Winter is best for hiking, because it's dry and cool in the highlands and not too hot in the lowlands.

Another factor to consider is the South African school holidays, when vast numbers of people head for the coast and national parks of South Africa and neighbouring countries. Hotels and camping grounds can fill completely, and prices skyrocket. See the individual Climate and When to Go sections at the beginning of the country chapters for country-specific details.

COSTS & MONEY

Generally speaking, prices in Southern Africa are around 50% to 75% of what they are in Europe, Australasia or North America. Although the rand has strengthened in recent years, South Africa still remains very good value and the crisis in Zimbabwe (see p682 for some background) has caused foreign-currency prices to plummet. Botswana is always considerably more expensive than these countries, while Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique offer a wide range of options, from dirt cheap to exceptionally expensive. In general, locally produced items will be good value wherever you go, while imported goods may be twice what they cost in the West (thanks to import duties).

Serious backpackers may get by on an average of US\$12 to US\$15 per day, including accommodation, food and transport, although US\$20 allows more flexibility. For a bit more comfort, US\$25 to US\$30 per day is a reasonable budget for day-to-day living expenses. To stay in midrange hotels, eat well

See Climate Charts (p742) for more information.

HOW MUCH?

2WD car hire US\$50-100
Box of fruit at roadside US\$1-2
Wildlife safari US\$100 and up
Hourly internet access US\$0.50-\$4
Traditional dance US\$5-15

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT

- A sense of fun and a relaxed attitude about African travel.
- Binoculars for wildlife viewing and a schmick camera for taking great wildlife shots.
- An appetite for biltong, boerewors and mealie pap (see p48).
- Your yellow fever vaccination card, if you've been travelling in affected countries (see p770).
- Reading the Malaria section of the Health chapter (p769) in this book if you'll be travelling in malarial areas.
- Warm, waterproof clothing, a hat and warm socks for cold highland areas (even in summer).
- Reading a few books (see below), or bringing one along for long bumpy bus rides.
- A tent, sleeping bag and sheet liner (which may also come in handy at budget hotels) for camping. A camping stove is also essential for overnight hiking, as fires are not allowed in many areas – one that runs on petrol will be the least hassle.

and travel in comfort when possible, you're looking at around US\$50 per day or more. Top-end travellers should expect to pay at least US\$75 per day, but US\$100 upward is more realistic (note that your budget will skyrocket if you're staying in private game reserves).

Along with these basic costs, you'll have to consider visa and national park fees, plus the cost of any tours or activities (such as wildlife safaris or whitewater rafting). To hire a car, you'll find the cheapest deals in South Africa (p593), where some companies will allow you to take the vehicle into neighbouring countries for a minimal extra charge.

See the Transport sections of individual country chapters, and the Money sections in country-specific Directories, for more information on costs.

READING UP

Books

No Place Like & Other Stories by Southern African Women Writers, edited by Robin Malan, is a compelling collection of short stories that focus on the women of Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia. The tone varies between ironic, intimate and emotionally charged, often within the larger political landscape, encapsulating the hope and political futures of colonial and post-colonial times.

Mukiwa by Peter Goodwin is a book that grabs your heart and stays in your head. It is the story of a small Rhodesian boy who witnesses the murder by guerrillas of a neighbour...and then the tumultuous end of white rule. *Mukiwa* captures much of the beauty and mystery of Zimbabwe and Southern Africa.

Lost World of the Kalahari by Laurens Van der Post is a captivating account of the author's rediscovery of the San at a time when Southern Africa was under colonial rule. The book details the author's arduous expedition deep into the wild Kalahari and reveals the unique indigenous culture of Africa's last Stone Age people.

The Scramble for Africa: White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876 to 1912 by Thomas Pakenham details the colonial history of Africa in well-written and entertaining prose. It was one of the first studies to tell both sides of the story and has become established as the standard work on the topic.

Indaba My Children by Credo Mutwa is a book of legends – a historic account of age-old Bantu traditions and beliefs. From the creation myth to the colonial era, this revealing book is a testament to the spirituality of Africa's people.

Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier by Alexandra Fuller winds its way through Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Fuller travels into a war-scarred past with her companion, revealing a legacy of conflict and its effects on themselves and the region's indigenous peoples.

One of the most prominent contemporary South African authors is Zakes Mda, who – with the publication of *Ways of Dying* in 1995 – made a successful transition from poetry and plays to become an acclaimed novelist. His most recent book, *The Whale Caller* (2005), takes a somewhat sceptical look at the optimism surrounding the new South Africa.

In *The History of Southern Africa*, Kevin Shillington objectively and sensitively discusses Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, covering prehistory plus African and colonial history.

Websites

Africanet (www.africanet.com) A site with an African search engine covering many different aspects of Africa, including tourism.

BackPacker (www.backpackafrica.com) This site has a South Africa bias, but lists lots of travel-related companies and has a live booking system and useful links.

Ecological Safaris (www.ecologicalafrica.com) A great website for planning personalised tours around Southern Africa with an experienced operator.

iafrica.com (www.iafrica.com) This diverse South African-dominated site includes travel, news and lifestyle sections, plus links to sites on other Southern African countries.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Here you will find several pages of information on each country in Southern Africa and the Thorn Tree notice board, where you can ask questions before you go or dispense advice when you get back. There are also travel services, including an accommodation-booking facility with dedicated Lonely Planet author reviews.

Political Africa (www.politicalafrica.com) Here you'll find the latest stories on Africa, from various news services around the world.

MUST-SEE MOVIES

- *Tsotsi* (Director Gavin Hood, 2006)
- *Yesterday* (Director Darrell James Roodt, 2005)
- *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony* (Director Lee Hirsch, 2003)
- *Drum* (Director Zola Maseko, 2005)

FAVOURITE FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Seeing a local festival can be a highlight of your trip to Southern Africa and a window into the local culture. There's plenty of traditional celebrations throughout the year – here's a list of our favourites:

- /Ae//Gams street festival, Namibia, September (p319)
- Harare International Festival of the Arts, Zimbabwe, late April (p698)
- Incwala ceremony, Swaziland, late December/early January (p607)
- Kuomboka ceremony, Zambia, late March/early April (p666)
- Maitisong Festival, Botswana, March or April (p125)
- Morija Arts & Cultural Festival, Lesotho, early October (p149)
- Rustler's Valley One World Unity Party, South Africa, Easter (p585)
- National Arts Festival, South Africa, July (p486)
- Timbilas Festival, Mozambique, date varies between June and August (p295)
- Umhlanga (Reed) Dance, Swaziland, August/September (p607)

- *Zulu Love Letter* (Director Ramadan Suleman, 2004)
- *Wah-Wah* (Director Richard E Grant, 2005)
- *Boy Called Twist* (Director Timothy Greene, 2004)
- *In My Country* (Director John Boorman, 2005)
- *Red Dust* (Director Tom Hooper, 2005)
- *Flame* (Director Ingrid Sinclair, 1996)

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

Tourism has a substantial effect on the destinations most frequented by foreign visitors. While some of these effects are absolutely beneficial, providing local income and incentive for environmental conservation, other aspects of tourism can seriously disrupt local economies and ecologies. Please take note of the following guidelines and help minimise the negative aspects of tourism while reinforcing its benefits to local communities:

- Save water; it's a precious resource, especially in Namibia, where you should be extra careful about water conservation – particularly during the dry season.
- Don't – ever! – litter on trails, in parks or in cities. When there's a choice, don't stay in guesthouses or hotels that dump sewage into rivers, canals or lakes.
- Support local enterprise. But when buying locally made souvenirs, avoid items made from natural material – wood, skin, ivory etc – unless they come from a sustainable source (admittedly, this is difficult to check).
- Recognise land tenure. Indigenous people who use the land are entitled to it by international law, whether or not local governments respect that law.
- Ask permission before taking close-up photographs of people, and if payment is requested, either pay up or put the camera away.
- Don't give money or sweets as gifts for children. If you want to help them, find the village school and donate some pens or schoolbooks, or seek out the clinic and donate unwanted first-aid items. Don't allow schoolkids to guide you during school hours as this encourages them to play truant.

CONDUCT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

A few straightforward courtesies may greatly improve a foreigner's chances of acceptance by the local community, especially in rural areas. In Southern Africa, pleasantries are taken quite seriously, and it's essential to greet or say goodbye to someone entering or leaving a room. Learn the local words for hello and goodbye and use them unsparingly. Emphasis is placed on handshakes all over the region. The Batswana (in Botswana) are particularly sensitive to proper greetings (always be polite) and handshakes (grab your right elbow with your left arm while shaking). In Zambia it's customary to greet someone who is walking if you are the one who is stationary, not the other way around. The African handshake consists of three parts: the normal Western handshake, followed by the linking of bent fingers while touching the ends of upward-pointing thumbs, and then a repeat of the conventional handshake.

As in most traditional societies, the achievement of old age is an accomplishment worthy of respect, and elders are treated with deference – their word should not be questioned and they should be accorded utmost courtesy. Teachers, doctors and other professionals often receive similar treatment.

When visiting rural settlements, it's a good idea to request to see the chief to announce your presence and ask permission before setting up camp or wandering through.

If you're offered a gift, don't feel guilty about accepting it, as refusal may bring shame on the giver. To receive a gift politely, accept it with both hands and perhaps bow slightly.

- Budget your trip, and devote 10% (or more!) before you go to donate to charities that will directly help the areas you visit – such as Future Forests, which battles airplane fuel's contribution to global warming.
- Don't watch sacred dances staged solely for tourists, and don't go to sacred sites that offend local beliefs. Respect the fragility and cultural importance of rock paintings throughout the region – no touching, rubbing or interference.
- Respect local protocol with regard to clothing – avoid very skimpy or ripped/dirty clothes, and topless sunbathing.
- Don't drive 4WDs off road or on sand dunes and especially don't drive on beaches in Mozambique, where it's harmful to the environment and illegal.
- Be aware of the source of your seafood. Overfishing and inappropriate fishing methods mean that although Southern Africa's waters are bountiful, many species are overexploited and some stocks are running dangerously low.

Organisations with information on responsible travel and sustainable environmental practices include **Tourism Concern** (☎ 020 7133 3330; www.tourismconcern.org.uk; Stapleton House, 277-281 Holloway Rd, London N7 8HN); and **Action for Southern Africa** (☎ 020 7833 3133; www.actsa.org; 28 Penton St, London N1 9SA), which campaigns for (among other things) sustainable tourism throughout the region.

For further information on responsible tourism, see p65.

Itineraries

CLASSIC ROUTES

NATURE & FUN IN THE SUN

Three Weeks to One Month /
Kruger to southern Mozambique

Using **Johannesburg** (p540) as a gateway, head east via **Nelspruit** (p533) to South Africa's world-renowned **Kruger National Park** (p528). The teeming wildlife will undoubtedly mesmerise you for at least several days.

If you've time, duck out of Orpen Gate for a look at **Blyde River Canyon** (p536). From Kruger, continue south into Swaziland, where you can spend a few days hiking through the grasslands and forests of **Malolotja Nature Reserve** (p610) before heading on via **Mbabane** (p603) to the tiny but brilliant **Mkhaya Game Reserve** (p612), which is noted for its black rhinos.

Then head to culturally intriguing **Maputo** (p246) via the Mozambican border town of **Namaacha** (p258). Head north on the EN1 and if you're getting desperate for a dip, stop at **Xai-Xai's** (p259) quiet beaches. Continue up the EN1 to **Inhambane** (p261), one of the country's oldest and most charming towns. Beaches close by include legendary **Tofo** (p262), with azure waters, and the more sedate **Barra** (p263). If you've more steam, trundle a bit further north to **Vilankulo** (p265), the gateway to the tropical paradise of Bazaruto Archipelago.

This trip serves up delightful variety, and if you've a month up your sleeve you can get a good sampling of the wildlife and local culture and still have time to laze on the beach along this 2000km-plus route. Short on time? Whiz through Swaziland and stick to motorways where possible.



NATURAL WONDER & SENSATIONAL SAFARIS

One Week / Victoria Falls to the Okavango Delta

Start your trip at one of the great natural wonders of the world, **Victoria Falls** (p618), whose mighty spray can be seen from 50km away. For the best perspective visit from both **Livingstone** (Zambia; p621) and the town of **Victoria Falls** (Zimbabwe; p626). There's a plethora of activities including serene canoe trips on top of the falls, or rafting down the churning Zambezi, below the falls, if you're after an adrenalin rush. Also be sure to check out **Mosi-oa-Tunya Game Park** (p626) and the rainforests of Victoria Falls National Park.

From the Zimbabwean side catch a shuttlebus or drive to **Kasane** (p101) in Botswana, the gateway town to the stunning, wildlife-rich **Chobe National Park** (p101). Here you can organise wildlife drives and river cruises to the Chobe Riverfront wonderland, where nearly every Southern African mammal species is represented.

From Chobe it's an easy hop, skip and a jump southwest to **Maun** (p106) and Botswana's tourist magnet, the vast **Okavango Delta** (p106), where one of the world's most impressive ecosystems breathes life into the Kalahari sands and attracts astonishing amounts of wildlife and incalculable birds.

Once in Maun, you can do a mokoro (dugout canoe) trip in the **Eastern Delta** (p112), take a safari in **Moremi Wildlife Reserve** (p114), or splash out on a fly-in trip into the **Inner Delta** (p112). From Maun, take a minibus clockwise around the delta towards Namibia, perhaps stopping in Sepupa to take a boat to **Seronga** (p116) and do a mokoro trip in the Okavango Panhandle (p116). A rewarding side trip will take you to the **Tsodilo Hills** (p117), which the San people maintain is the site of creation.



A delightful itinerary, this will take you 700km through some of the biggest draws in Southern Africa. When viewing wildlife, remember to take a break here and there – don't try to squeeze too much in. You could whiz along in about seven days, or relax along the way and stretch things out to 10 days or even two weeks.

LAKESHORE TO SEASHORE

Three Weeks to One Month /
Nkhata Bay to Pemba

Drag yourself out of **Nkhata Bay's** (p188) crystal waters and hop onto the *Ilala* ferry for the blissful **Likoma Island** (p192), where swimming, snorkelling and local cultures are the star attractions. Splash out at Kaya Mawa if you've the pennies – it's one of Africa's finest paradise retreats. Take the ferry over to the Mediterranean-esque **Chizumulu Island** (p194), with its idyllic beaches, and return by dhow (only if the waters are calm).

On Likoma hop back on the ferry, or take a dhow, and head over to **Côbuê** (p284) on the other side of the lakeshore in Mozambique. Stay just south of Côbuê at Nkwichi Lodge, a magnificent bush retreat and part of an important development and conservation project. If your budget isn't up to Nkwichi Lodge, there's the backpacker-friendly Mchenga Wede nearby. Then continue south to tiny **Metangula** (p284), and on to cool **Lichinga** (p283), surrounded by scenic, rugged terrain and the capital of remote Niassa province. Carry on through to **Mandimba** (p283) and on to bustling **Cuamba** (p282), where you can pick up a train all the way to **Nampula** (p276). Then jump on a bus through to magnificent **Ilha de Moçambique** (p278), with its intriguing architecture and time-warp atmosphere. If you need a beach break on the way to the island, detour to nearby **Chocas** (p281). Finish up a bit further north at **Pemba** (p285), the gateway to the superb Quirimbas Archipelago.

This 1500km trip could be tacked onto 'Dusty Roads and Shimmering Waters' and is a great way to combine the fourth largest lake in Africa with a Mozambican bush adventure. Ilha de Moçambique makes a wonderful contrast to the bush, and you can finish on the beach in the tropical island paradise of Quirimbas Archipelago.



MESMERISING WILDERNESS & CULTURE

Three Weeks / Skeleton
Coast to the Kalahari

Starting on Namibia's Skeleton Coast, a treacherous coastline with its rusting shipwrecks and desert wilderness, check out the **Cape Cross Seal Reserve** (p354). Track north along the coast to **Torra Bay** (p355), where you can camp, or to **Terrace Bay** (p355) for more luxurious accommodation. Then travel west into the wonders of **Damaraland** (p347), with its wild, open spaces, and head for **Twyfelfontein** (p349), one of the most extensive galleries of rock art in Africa. Then journey further east to **Outjo** (p327), a staging post for visits to **Etosha National Park** (p332), teeming with animals and one of the continent's great wildlife-viewing sites.

Exit Etosha via Von Linquist Gate and proceed to **Tsumeb** (p330), one of the country's prettiest towns with its vivid jacarandas and flame trees. Track northeast along the B8 into Botswana at the border town of Molembo. Drive down the west side of the **Okavango Delta** (p106), perhaps stopping in Sepupa to take a boat to **Seronga** (p116) to do a mokoro trip in the Okavango Panhandle. Detour to the mystical **Tsodilo Hills** (p117), soaked in San legend, culture and spiritual significance: a highlight is the prolific rock art in the area.

The last leg of this ambitious trip is the gigantic **Central Kalahari Game Reserve** (p119) to the southeast, lying at the heart of Botswana. Enter at the Matswere Gate at the northeastern end of the reserve: wildlife includes lions and brown hyenas. You can finish your trip by exiting the same gate and travelling east to **Francistown** (p95).



This is a 3000km-plus challenging jaunt into some of Southern Africa's most inhospitable and magnificent terrain – you definitely need a car, and note that much of it is 4WD territory. You could push through in three weeks, but consider taking a month, especially if you want to spend some time in the Kalahari.

TAILORED TRIPS

WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Southern Africa's Unesco-protected World Heritage Sites encapsulate some of the most valuable cultural icons, historical sites and natural landscapes on the continent. South Africa hosts fossil hominid sites including **Sterkfontein** (see p37), referred to as the Cradle of Humankind. Further north, **Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape** (p575) incorporates wonderful historical sites from an ancient kingdom. **Greater St Lucia Wetlands** (p513) is a brilliant ecotourism destination, and the **Ukhahlamba-Drakensberg Park** (p516) is an otherworldly mountainous area

splashed with San rock art. In the west, just offshore from Cape Town, **Robben Island** (p419) is a shrine to the struggle, with tours led by former inmates.

Zimbabwe boasts impressive cultural sites such as **Great Zimbabwe** (p716), once the greatest medieval city in sub-Saharan Africa, and the **Khami Ruins** (p722). Close by, **Matobo National Park** (p722) has one of the world's best collections of San rock art. In the north, **Mana Pools National Park** (p705) is known for its walking safaris. **Victoria Falls** (p618), to the west, is one of the world's seven natural wonders.

Ilha de Moçambique (p278) in Mozambique is a portal to the past with its intriguing architectural legacy. **Lake Malawi** (p187) is a snorkelling paradise, and the **Tsodilo Hills** (p117) in Botswana is the site of creation according to the San.

BEACH PARADISE

Sun worshippers will do well along South Africa's Garden Route. Further east, **Jeffrey's Bay** (p468) is South Africa's foremost centre of surfing, where you'll find locals waxing lyrical about the supertubes. But if you are looking for something more remote head to the aptly named Wild Coast. Here dramatic beaches are backed by indigenous forest in one of the wildest, most unspoilt areas in the country. **Durban's** (p495) holiday atmosphere makes for the ultimate beachside playground complete with warm water, sun, surf and sand.

In Mozambique, try **Tofo** (p262) with its long arc of white-sand beach and excellent offshore diving. The **Bazaruto Archipelago** (p267) has clear waters of turquoise and jade waters filled with colourful fish. Beaches north and south of **Inhambane** (p261) are long, palm-fringed and backed by low cliffs or dunes. The **Quirimbas Archipelago** (p288) has beaches with stunning patches of deserted white sand, with diving and snorkelling just offshore.

But you don't need a coastline to find a beach! Try **Lake Malawi** (p187), its waters filled with stunning marine life, for some of the best snorkelling in the region. There's no better place to start than in the crystal waters off **Likoma** (p192) and **Chizumulu** (p194) islands, with their sublime beaches and unparalleled diving. Back on the lakeshore get seduced into lazing at **Nkhata Bay** (p188).



MAJESTIC WILDLIFE & AFRICAN LANDSCAPES

Africa and its wildlife have a mystique that's simply awe-inspiring. In South Africa, world-class **Kruger National Park** (p528) has an astonishing variety and number of animals, while surreal **Pilanesberg National Park** (p569) with its extinct volcanoes is good for spotting wild dogs. At **Mkhuze Game Reserve** (p515) sit by a pan at dawn listening to the sounds of the bush, watching the wildlife parade before you. For unforgettable sunsets and wild storms, head to the hauntingly beautiful **Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park** (p462), with its shifting red and white sands. If you're after separation from the world, try **Sehlabathebe National Park** (p147) in Lesotho.

In Malawi, hippos, elephants and kingfishers dominate the lush surroundings and tranquil Shire River at **Liwonde National Park** (p206), while **Nyika National Park** (p181) has antelope, endless views and clean, crisp air. Magnificent **Kafue National Park** (p666) is Zambia's foremost park for spotting the Big Five.

One of the largest herds of elephants in the world roam around **Hwange National Park** (p723) in Zimbabwe, and the breathtaking **Eastern Highlands** (p706) are a wilderness wonderland of formidable peaks, savanna valleys and hiking trails.

Namibia's **Etosha National Park** (p332) is one of the continent's great wildlife-viewing destinations, while the **Okavango Delta** (p106) in Botswana contains water-soaked Kalahari sands, a staggering animal population and magnificent desert vistas.

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

Southern Africa's historical roots are firmly planted in the extraordinary San rock art sprinkled around the region. Some of the best examples are in **Matobo National Park** (p722) in Zimbabwe; the **Tsodilo Hills** (p117) in Botswana; and **Twyfelfontein** (p349) in Namibia.

The stone ruins of **Great Zimbabwe** (p716), a rare example of medieval African architecture, are well worth a ramble, as are the 16th-century **Khami Ruins** (p722).

In Mozambique, European extravagance is evident in **Palace of São Paulo** (p280) and the oldest European building in the southern hemisphere, **Chapel of Nossa Senhora de Baluarte** (p280); both are found on timeless Ilha de Moçambique, which has a diverse cultural heritage.

A unique pocket of colonial Africa can be found at unspoilt **Livingstonia** (p179) in Malawi, where the fascinating museum details European missionary work. At **Nkhatakota** (p196) you can sit under the tree where Livingstone persuaded a local chief to end the slave trade.

Reminiscent of a medieval castle with its maze of dusty corridors and stairways, bizarre **Shiwa House** (p652) in Zambia is a rambling European edifice situated in the middle of the African bush.

In Jo'burg the **Apartheid Museum** (p544) tells the chilling apartheid story with sensory verve, while **Cape Town** (p415) is awash with European history.



Snapshot Southern Africa

ECONOMICALLY SPEAKING, DID YOU KNOW?

Botswana: one of the world's fastest-growing economies, has a per-capita GDP of around \$10,000

Lesotho: unemployment rate is 45%, literacy rate is 85%

Malawi: tobacco generates over 60% of export earnings

Mozambique: annual per capita income is about US\$300 (compared with about US\$26,000 in the UK)

Namibia: world's fifth-largest producer of uranium

South Africa: world's largest exporter of gold

Swaziland: receives nine-tenths of its imports from and sends almost two-thirds of its exports to South Africa

Zambia: benefits from the exploding economies of India and China, which have pushed up the price of its copper

Zimbabwe: fastest-shrinking economy in the world outside a war zone

Southern Africa received a boost in 2005 when the world's richest nations agreed to write off the debt owed by the world's poorest countries, which include Zambia and Mozambique, with Malawi expected to qualify for the same debt relief in coming years.

The establishment of transfrontier parks (p67) linking wildlife migration routes across borders in pursuit of sustainable development is picking up momentum, with Malawi and Zambia recently agreeing in principle to the first such park outside South Africa.

Ever-looming food shortages swept across Southern Africa in 2005–06 (see p43); rains and food aid have helped to avert a potential large-scale famine, although food shortages remain a critical problem. Wreaking even more havoc is HIV/AIDS, which is devastating Southern Africa – Botswana and Swaziland have the highest infection rate in the world, and South Africa has an estimated 4.5 million infected citizens (p42).

Zimbabwe attracts most of the headlines for all the wrong reasons as Mugabe's madness shows no sign of relenting (see p680). Artists are perhaps redefining what it means to be Zimbabwean in the troubled country, moving away from Western influences and returning to the music and instruments of their ancestors – the mbira (thumb piano) is a classic example of this (p55).

Botswana and Namibia are beacons of political stability in the region. The subject of diamonds and when they'll run out is an issue in both countries, as is the fate of the San, an ancient nomadic hunter-gather group who has been relocated from its ancestral lands into government-sponsored settlements in the Central Kalahari. The Botswana government has dug its heels in over the relocations, stubbornly insisting such moves are necessary, but the issue remains highly controversial and a political nightmare for the government (see p119).

In South Africa the subject of President Mbeki's successor is fervently discussed, as is the unrelenting crime rate, which is finally showing tentative signs of abating (p407). Mbeki's conspicuous failure to condemn the forced reclamation of white-owned farms in neighbouring Zimbabwe has unnerved both South African landowners and foreign investors.

The mood in Mozambique is generally upbeat, with tourism booming and Celtel advertising '*orgulhosamente Moçambicano*' (proudly Mozambican) pasted everywhere around the country.

In Malawi, political infighting and corruption tend to be the 'normal' state of affairs, while Zambia's corruption problems are a daily topic in the country's main newspapers. Many people say that President Mwanawasa is not in touch with the needs of common Zambians, though it is assumed he will win the coming election (p635).

Corruption also features in Lesotho's dam projects (p145), selling water to South Africa and, in the process, displacing villages and causing environmental concerns. However, since elections in 2002 it has enjoyed a period of relative stability. In Swaziland the new constitution was unveiled in 2003 and promptly dismissed by reform-minded Swazis, who want King Mswati III to loosen his grip on power and phase in a democratic system of government (p600).

If you're planning ahead, the spotlight will be turned on football-mad Southern Africa in 2010 as South Africa hosts the World Cup, a great time for travel in the region.

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The Authors



ALAN MURPHY

Coordinating Author

Alan remembers falling under Southern Africa's ambient spell after bouncing around in the rear of a bakkie on the way from Jo'burg airport in 1999. Since then he's been back three times working for Lonely Planet, including the *South Africa* and *Africa* guides. Whether spotting elephants at a water hole, tracking rhino in the bush, glimpsing elusive wild dogs or chuckling at the clownish behaviour of curious baboons, he finds wildlife watching exhilarating. Besides, any place where you can bribe officials with mangoes at road blocks has got to be special. More than anything, though, he never ceases to be amazed and humbled at the fortitude and verve of Southern Africa's resilient people.

The Coordinating Author's Favourite Trip

I have to top a list of my faves with Kruger National Park (p528) – my first wildlife excursion in Africa, where I was greeted by two dwarf mongoose shagging by the roadside. Following closely is Mkhaya Game Reserve (p612) and rustling around the bush trying to spot black rhino. Unforgettable was snorkelling the aquarium that is Lake Malawi's crystal waters, off Likoma island (p192), and kayaking up the lakeshore.

Next is waking up to a hippo munching outside my rondavel at Liwonde National Park (p206); hiking in Chimanimani National Park (p714), with its jaw-dropping views; and dropping into Livingstone for canoeing up the Zambezi along the top of Victoria Falls (p618), alert for 'rising hippo ears' and skittish elephants.



KATE ARMSTRONG

Lesotho, Swaziland

Kate was bitten by the Africa bug when she lived and worked in Mozambique, and on her subsequent travels around East Africa. She jumped at the chance to explore new territory for this Lonely Planet edition. While she successfully avoided malarial mosquitoes, she was less able to escape an obsession with Zulu culture, giraffes and the overwhelming hospitality of the local people (not to mention several flat tyres along the way). When Kate's not eating, hiking and dancing her way around parts of Africa, Europe and South America, her itchy feet are grounded in Sydney where she works as a freelancer, writing travel articles and children's educational books.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are independent, dedicated travellers. They don't research using just the internet or phone, and they don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage. They travel widely, to all the popular spots and off the beaten track. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, cafés, bars, galleries, palaces, museums and more – and they take pride in getting all the details right, and telling it how it is. For more, see the authors section on www.lonelyplanet.com.



MATTHEW D FIRESTONE

Botswana, Namibia, Victoria Falls

Matt is a trained biological anthropologist and epidemiologist who is particularly interested in the health and nutrition of indigenous populations. His first visit to Botswana and Namibia in 2001 brought him deep into the Kalahari, where he performed a field study on the traditional diet of the San. Unfortunately, Matt's promising academic career was postponed due to a severe case of wanderlust, though he has relentlessly travelled to more than 50 countries in search of a cure. Matt is hoping that this book will help ease the pain of other individuals bitten by the travel bug, though he fears that there is a growing epidemic on the horizon.



MARY FITZPATRICK

Mozambique

Originally from Washington, DC, Mary set off after graduate studies for several years in Europe. Her fascination with languages and cultures soon led her further south to sub-Saharan Africa, where she has spent much of the past decade living and working, including almost four years in Mozambique. Mary has travelled extensively throughout the country, and has authored and co-authored numerous other guidebooks covering Mozambique and elsewhere in the region. She calls Cairo home at the moment and travels to points south (preferably those with beaches) whenever she gets the chance.



MICHAEL GROSBERG

South Africa

After a childhood in the Washington, DC area and with a valuable philosophy degree in hand, Michael took a job developing a resort on an island in the Pacific, after which he left for a long overland trip through Asia. He later found his way to the seaside resort of Durban, South Africa, where he investigated and wrote about political violence, prison abuse and other fun issues, and helped train new local government officials in the province of KwaZulu Natal while finding time to travel all over Southern Africa. He returned to NYC for graduate school in comparative literature, and he has taught literature and writing in several NYC colleges in addition to Lonely Planet assignments around the world.



NANA LUCKHAM

Malawi & Northern, Eastern & Western Zambia

Born in Tanzania to a Ghanaian mother and an English father, Nana started life crisscrossing Africa by planes and bouncing along the roughest of roads. A rather less glamorous childhood on the south coast of England followed, albeit punctuated with periods living in Ghana and a then-thriving Zimbabwe. After a degree in history and French and a Masters in international relations she headed off, with an impressively small backpack, to explore Southern and Eastern Africa and beyond, supplementing her travels with periods of gainful employment at UN headquarters in New York. She now lives in the exotic wilds of southwest London but still spends most of her time on the road.



ANDY REBOLD

Lusaka, Copperbelt & Southern Zambia

Born in the Bronx, Andy was dragged kicking and screaming to suburban New Joisey, where he grew up. In 1998, after surviving the Peace Corps in Mali, Andy spent three years with Lonely Planet as an author and cartographer. Tired of being impoverished, he earned a MPH at Columbia University and then joined the UN Population Fund, which sent him to myriad African nations whose peace hung by a string of dental floss. He now manages government-funded public health projects in Zambia. In his spare time, Andy listens to Lou Reed, guzzles Brooklyn lager and cheers for New York Yankee Johnny Damon (#18) when he scores against the Boston Red Sox.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Jane Cornwell wrote the Music chapter. Jane is an Australian-born, London-based journalist writing on music for publications including the *Evening Standard*, *Guardian*, *Songlines* and *Jazzwise*. Her articles also appear regularly in the *Australian* newspaper. She holds a postgraduate honours degree in anthropology and has worked for the Institute of Contemporary Arts; Real World Records; World of Music, Arts and Dance (WOMAD); and Sydney's Ignite Festival.

Harriet Martin wrote the Zimbabwe chapter. Born in Tanzania to Australian parents, Harriet lived in Southern Africa until she was 12. She then studied in Sydney, but the travel gene was never far from the surface. She backpacked and worked in South and Central America, the Middle East, India and West Africa, before returning 'home' to sub-Saharan Africa.

The image shows the cover of a Lonely Planet guidebook titled 'Southern Africa'. It features a green background with a photograph of two people in traditional African attire. The title 'Southern Africa' is at the top, and 'PDF' is written in a red box at the bottom.

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History

Precolonial history of Southern Africa is a compelling, interwoven web of peoples on the move throughout this vast region – the original travellers on our planet. It's also a story of technology and its impact on our early ancestors. Although Southern Africa's history stretches far back into the mists of time, the only records today are intriguing fossil remains and an extraordinary human diary of Stone Age rock art.

The region has revealed many archaeological records of the world's earliest human inhabitants. It's generally agreed among scientists that the first 'hominids' (upright-walking humanlike creatures) became established in the savannas of East and Southern Africa nearly four million years ago. (Further north in Chad the discovery of a well-preserved skull and other hominid remains dating to between six and seven million years old – the most ancient yet discovered – recently had anthropologists quivering with excitement.)

In Southern Africa, evidence of early hominid fossils dating back 3.5 million years has been discovered at the Sterkfontein Caves in Gauteng, northwest of Johannesburg in South Africa. Sterkfontein is regarded as one of the richest places on the planet for early human remains and is a World Heritage Site. In Malawi, archaeologists have found remains thought to date back as far as 2.5 million years.

It is surmised that about two million years ago several hominid species evolved with *Homo erectus* developing basic tool-making abilities and eventually becoming dominant. Later evolving into *Homo sapiens* (modern humans), these early Africans are believed to have backpacked to other parts of the world, where local factors determined the racial characteristics of each group.

Today, remains of temporary camps and stone tools are found throughout Southern Africa, and one site in Namibia suggests that 750,000 years ago, these early people were hunting elephants and cutting up carcasses with large stone axes. By 150,000 years ago, people were using lighter spear heads, knives, saws and other tools. (Archaeologists classify this period of tool making as the Stone Age, subdivided into the Early, Middle and Late stages, although the term applies to the people's level of technological development, rather than to a specific period.) See Matobo in Zimbabwe p722 and Morija in Lesotho p149, for details of where to see early Stone Age artefacts.

EARLY KHOISAN INHABITANTS

By about 30,000 years ago, humans in Southern Africa had developed an organised hunting and gathering society. Tools were more sophisticated – made from wood and animal products as well as stone – and make-up, natural pigments used for personal adornment, was in fashion. These Boskop people (named after the site in South Africa where their remains were discovered) are believed to be the ancestors of the San people, who still exist in isolated pockets today.

By about 20,000 years ago, the San had made significant technological progress. Tools became smaller and better designed, which increased hunting efficiency and allowed time for further innovation, artistic pursuits and admiring the fiery African sunsets. This stage is called the Microlithic Revolution because it was characterised by the working of small stones. The remains of microliths are often found alongside clear evidence of food gathering, shellfish remains and working of wood, bone and ostrich eggshell.

See www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/humans/humankind for an overview of human evolution in Southern Africa

To learn more about the San, including their history and current issues for survival, see www.kalaharipeoples.org, a nonprofit organisation dedicated to the people of the Kalahari.

ANCIENT ROCK ART

Ogling some of the magnificent rock art sprinkled around Southern Africa, a remarkable human diary left by an ancient people, is a major highlight for many visitors. There's a lot of speculation about the origins of the ancient rock paintings and engravings. Due to the tools and animal remains left around major sites, and the scenes depicted, it's believed the artists were the early San people.

A tantalising sliver of mankind's Stone Age existence, these sites provide a snapshot of the way the San lived and hunted, and their spirituality. The most poignant thing about rock art is that it remains in the spot where it was created. Unlike in a museum, you may catch a glimpse of the inspiration that actually went into the paintings. Although rock art is found all over Southern Africa, the best examples are probably in Matobo National Park (p722), Domboshawa and Ngomakurira (p702), all in Zimbabwe; the Tsodilo Hills (p117) in Botswana; Twyfelfontein (p349) in Namibia; and Giant's Castle (p520) in South Africa.

Most rock paintings reflected people's relationship with nature. Some rock paintings are stylised representations of the region's people and animals, but the majority are realistic portrayals of hunters, giraffes, elephants, rhinos, lions, antelopes and so on in rich red, yellow, brown and ochre.

Common themes include the roles of men and women, hunting scenes and natural medicine. The latter includes examples of trance dancing and spiritual healing using the San life force, known as *nxum*, which was invoked to control aspects of the natural world, including climate and disease. All these elements still feature in San tradition.

Although climatic onslaught means the earliest works have long faded, flaked and eroded into oblivion, the dry climate and sheltered granite overhangs have preserved many of the more recent paintings. Three distinct periods have been identified: the earliest paintings seem to reflect a period of gentle nomadism, during which people were occupied primarily with the hunt; later works, which revealed great artistic improvement, suggest peaceful arrivals by outside groups, perhaps Bantu or Khoikhoi; the final stage indicates a decline in the standard of the paintings – or they may be imitations of earlier works by more recently arrived peoples.

Red pigments were ground mainly from iron oxides, which were powdered and mixed with animal fat to form an adhesive paste. The whites came from silica, powdered quartz and white clays, and were by nature less adhesive than the red pigments. For this reason white paintings survive only in sheltered locations, such as well-protected caves. Both pigments were applied to the rock using sticks, the artists' fingers and brushes made from animal hair.

While admiring the rock art of the Southern Africa, please keep in mind the fragility of the paintings (p26).

By about 10,000 years ago, the San began producing pottery. The artistic traditions of these people are also evidenced by the wonderful paintings that can be seen today in rock shelters and caves all over Southern Africa (see the boxed text, above). The better examples capture the elegance and movement of African wildlife with astonishing clarity. More recent paintings even depict white farmers.

Despite these artistic and technical developments, the San had no knowledge of metal working, and thus remain classified as Stone Age people. For visitors interested in San culture, consider visiting sites of spiritual significance, especially the Tsodilo Hills (p117) in Botswana.

During this same period (around 8000 BC), the San came under pressure from another group called the Khoikhoi (or Khoi-Khoi), known in more recent times as Hottentots. The San and Khoikhoi are thought to share a common ancestry: differences were slight, based more on habitat and lifestyle than on significant physiological features. (The Khoikhoi kept cattle, which were a source of food and transport, and were even trained to charge the enemy in warfare.) They also shared a language group, characterised by distinctive 'click' sounds. Today these two peoples are regarded as one,

In 1660 Jan Van Riebeeck planted a bitter-almond hedge separating the Dutch from the Khoikhoi. Parts of the hedge can still be seen today (p426).

termed Khoisan or Khoi-San, and are mostly found in remote parts of Namibia and Botswana.

Sadly, in recent times the San have been controversially and forcibly relocated from their ancestral lands to new government settlements such as New Xade in the central Kalahari in Botswana. For more information see the boxed text, p119.

THE BANTU MIGRATION

While the Khoisan were developing, in West Africa another group with larger body types and darker skin was emerging: the Bantu. By around 3000 to 4000 years ago, they had developed iron-working skills, which enabled them to make tools and weapons.

Their skills led to improved farming methods and the ability to make unwanted guests of themselves on their neighbours' lands. Over 2000 years ago the Bantu moved into the Congo Basin and, over the next thousand years, spread across present-day Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania and migrated south into Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and other parts of Southern Africa. The term 'migration' here refers to a sporadic and very slow spread over many hundreds of years. Typically, a group would move from valley to valley, or from one water source to the next. This process inevitably had a knock-on effect, as weaker tribes were constantly being 'moved on' by invaders from other areas.

At first, the Bantu in Southern Africa apparently lived in relative harmony with the original Khoisan inhabitants, trading goods, language and culture. However, as Bantu numbers increased, some Khoisan were conquered or absorbed by this more advanced group of peoples, while the remainder were pushed further and further into inhospitable lands.

BANTU CULTURE & EARLY KINGDOMS

A feature of Bantu culture was its strong social system, based on extended family or clan loyalties and dependencies, and generally centred on the rule of a chief. Some chiefdoms developed into powerful kingdoms, uniting many disparate tribes and covering large geographical areas.

Cattle played an essential role in the lives of Southern Africa's Bantu population. Apart from providing food, skins and a form of capital, cattle were also most essential when it came to bridewealth. Marriage involved the transfer of a woman to the household of her husband. In turn, the cattle from the husband's family were reassigned to the family of the bride's father. A man who had many daughters would one day end up with many cattle.

One of the earliest Bantu kingdoms was Gokomere, in the uplands of Zimbabwe. The Gokomere people are thought to be the first occupants of the Great Zimbabwe site (p716), near present-day Masvingo.

Between AD 500 and 1000 the Gokomere and subsequent groups developed gold-mining techniques and produced progressively finer-quality ceramics, jewellery, textiles and soapstone carvings.

THE BANTU

The Bantu peoples could more accurately be called 'Bantu-speaking peoples' since the word 'Bantu' actually refers to a language group rather than a specific race. However, it has become a convenient term of reference for the black African peoples of Southern and Eastern Africa, even though the grouping is as ill-defined as 'American' or 'Asian'. The Bantu ethnic group comprises many subgroups or tribes, each with their own language, customs and traditions.

History of Southern Africa by JD Omer-Cooper provides an excellent, highly readable account of the early peoples of Southern Africa, including fascinating cultural detail that differentiates the many Bantu-speaking groups.

EARLY TRADERS

Meanwhile, from the latter half of the 1st millennium, Arabs from the lands around the Red Sea were sailing southwards along the eastern seaboard of Africa. They traded with the local Bantu inhabitants, who by this time had reached the coast, and bought ivory, gold and slaves to take back to Arabia.

Between AD 1000 and 1500 the Arab-influenced Bantu founded several major settlements along the coast, from Mogadishu (in present-day Somalia) to Kilwa in southern Tanzania, including Lamu (Kenya) and Zanzibar (Tanzania). In Kenya and Tanzania particularly, the Bantu people were influenced by the Arabs, and a certain degree of intermarriage occurred, so that gradually a mixed language and culture was created, called Swahili, which remains intact today.

From southern Tanzania the Swahili-Arabs traded along the coast of present-day Mozambique, establishing bases at Quelimane (p273) and Ilha de Moçambique (p278).

From the coast the Swahili-Arabs pushed into the interior, and developed a network of trade routes across much of East and Southern Africa. Ivory and gold continued to be sought after, but the demand for slaves grew considerably, and reached its zenith in the early-19th century when the Swahili-Arabs and dominant local tribes are reckoned to have either killed or sold into slavery 80,000 to 100,000 Africans per year.

LATER BANTU KINGDOMS & PEOPLE

As early as the 11th century, the inhabitants of Great Zimbabwe had come into contact with Arab-Swahili traders from the coast. Great Zimbabwe became the capital of the wealthiest and most powerful society in Southern Africa – its people the ancestors of today's Shona people – and reached the zenith of its powers around the 14th century (see p682), becoming the greatest medieval city in sub-Saharan Africa.

From around the 11th century it appears that more advanced Bantu-speaking Iron Age people migrated to the area, absorbing the earlier immigrants. As they settled they branched out into a number of cultural groups. One of these groups, the Nguni, were distinguished from their neighbours by strict matrimony rules – marriage was forbidden to a partner that could be traced to a common ancestor. The Xhosa were the southernmost of these people: see p466. Covering large areas of present-day South Africa, Botswana and Lesotho were the Sotho-Tswana, who encouraged inter-cousin marriage. The Venda, who have a matriarchal culture and are thought to be related to the Shona people of Zimbabwe, occupied the north of Limpopo province in South Africa (see p575).

Further north, between the 14th and 16th centuries, another Bantu group called the Maravi (of whom the Chewa became the dominant tribe, see p163) arrived in Southern Africa from the Congo Basin and founded a powerful kingdom covering southern Malawi and parts of present-day Mozambique and Zambia. Masks made by a men's secret society called *Nyau* were an integral part of ceremonies for this group. As well as representing cultural ideals with themes such as wisdom, sickness, death and the ancestors, masks also caricatured undesirables such as slave traders, invaders and colonial figures.

At about the same time the Tumbuka and the Phoka groups migrated into the north of Malawi (see p158). The Tumbuka are known for their healing practices, which combine traditional medicine and music.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, another Bantu group called the Herero migrated from the Zambezi Valley into present-day Namibia, where they came into conflict with the San and competed with the Khoikhoi for the best grazing lands. Eventually most indigenous groups submitted to the Herero. Only the Nama people, thought to be descended from early Khoikhoi groups,

held out. One of Africa's most traditional cultures, the Himba people (see the boxed text, p352) in Namibia, are descended from the Herero.

The power of the Bantu kingdoms started to falter in the late 18th and early 19th centuries due to a major dispersal of indigenous tribes called the *difaqane*, and a rapid increase in the number of European settlers.

THE DIFAQANE

The *difaqane* (meaning 'forced migration' in Sotho, or *mfeqane*, 'the crushing', in Zulu) was a period of immense upheaval and suffering for the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa. It originated in the early 19th century when the Nguni tribes in modern KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) changed rapidly from loosely organised collections of chiefdoms to the more centralised Zulu Nation. Based on its highly disciplined and powerful warrior army, the process began under Chief Dingiswayo, and reached its peak under the military commander Shaka Zulu.

Shaka was a ruthless conqueror and his reputation preceded him. Not surprisingly, tribes living in his path chose to flee, in turn displacing neighbours and causing disruption and terror across Southern Africa. Tribes displaced from Zululand include the Matabele, who settled in present-day Zimbabwe, while the Ngoni fled to Malawi and Zambia. Notable survivors were the Swazi (see p598) and Basotho (p136), who forged powerful kingdoms that became Swaziland and Lesotho.

EUROPEAN COLONISATION & SETTLEMENT

Although there had been a European presence in Southern Africa for several hundred years, in 1820 the British Cape Colony saw a major influx of settlers. Around 5000 were brought from Britain on the promise of fertile farmland around the Great Fish River, but in reality to form a buffer between the Boers (to the west of the river) and the Xhosa (to the east), who competed for territory.

From this point, European settlement rapidly spread from the Cape Colony to Natal and later to the Transvaal – especially after the discovery of gold and diamonds. In many cases Europeans were able to occupy land abandoned by African people following the *difaqane* (see p402).

From South Africa, over the next 100 to 150 years an ever-increasing number of Europeans settled in areas that became the colonies of Swaziland, Nyasaland (Malawi), Northern and Southern Rhodesia (Zambia and Zimbabwe), Bechuanaland (Botswana), Basotholand (Lesotho), German South West Africa (Namibia) and Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique). With this change Southern Africans would never again be permitted to follow entirely traditional ways.

For colonial and modern history of the individual countries, see the relevant country chapters.

Today's Herero women are distinguished by their extravagant neck to ankle Victorian dresses, petticoats and large hats – a by-product of contact with German missionaries.

To read more about Shaka Zulu (and for links to the *difaqane*), see www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/zulu-shaka.htm

A journey through South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe, *The Electronic Elephant* by Dan Jacobson combines frequently depressing contemporary encounters with fascinating historical flashbacks.

An Introduction to the History of Central Africa – Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe by AJ Wills provides a comprehensive work on the region and is considered one of the best around.

The Culture

DAILY LIFE

Giving an accurate picture of everyday life in Southern Africa is virtually impossible given the chasm of wealth differentiation between and within the countries of the region. That said, there are some generalisations we can make that represent very real (and in some cases very terrifying) trends afflicting the everyday life of Southern Africa's diverse population. For more country-specific detail, please see this section near the beginning of each country chapter.

In Southern Africa, life varies considerably between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. Middle-class and wealthy families live in homes reflecting that wealth, and many leafy, richer neighbourhoods could be just about anywhere in the Western world. Leisure time is often defined by time spent at shopping centres (and in the case of South Africa, heavily guarded shopping centres). Upmarket shopping malls mean alfresco dining, plenty of retail therapy and certainly a place 'to be seen'.

However, for the millions of Southern Africans (the vast majority of the population) who still live in great poverty, life is about survival. Simple huts or enclosures contain large extended families, and obtaining and preparing food is the focus of daily life.

Southern Africa is largely still a male domain, and black African men will not normally give up a seat to a woman, never mind that she is carrying a baby and luggage and minding two toddlers. Local whites, however, generally follow Western conventions.

There are two major plights affecting the households of the majority of Southern Africa's population. Firstly, the food insecurity afflicting the region is a distressing problem that devastates households and seems to have no end in sight. Dependent on the rains, the region is caught up in a merciless cycle of drought that, when combined with other factors (see the boxed text, opposite), leads to regular food shortages. Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe are the worst-affected countries, but people in Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland are also suffering.

The largest problem facing the people of Southern Africa, though, is AIDS. The sub-Saharan region is the worst-affected region in Africa and, while the statistics are simply dreadful, the socioeconomic effects are overwhelming. South Africa has the world's largest HIV-positive population, and national adult HIV prevalence has risen higher than previously thought possible in countries such as Botswana and Swaziland.

Unlike diseases that attack the weak, AIDS predominantly hits the productive members of a household, young adults. It's particularly rife among those who are highly educated, and have relatively high earnings and mobility. This has an enormous impact on household incomes, with the region facing the loss of a large proportion of a generation in the prime of their life. This has also meant a sharp increase in the number of orphans, pressure on grandparents to assume parenting roles of young children and children pulled out of school to care for the sick, grow food or earn money. There's still a lot of stigma attached to AIDS too, and many locals won't admit to the cause of a loved one's death.

AIDS has led to a sharp decrease in life expectancy in Southern Africa. Recent projections have put life expectancy by 2010 at 29 in Botswana, 30 in Swaziland, 33 in Namibia and Zimbabwe and 36 in South Africa and Malawi. Without AIDS it would be around 70 in most of these countries.

Masters of Illusion: The World Bank and the Poverty of Nations by Catherine Caufield discusses the influence that the global development lending agency has had on poor countries around the world.

Have a look at www.safaid.org.zw for the latest news on the battle against HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa.

With hundreds of thousands dying every year in Southern Africa from AIDS alone, population growth is estimated to be near zero in most countries and even falling into the negative. Swaziland and Mozambique in particular are suffering from an increase in the epidemic. The only good news comes from Zimbabwe (for a change), which recently recorded a decline of HIV-infected people.

All the countries in Southern Africa are conservative in their attitudes towards gay men and lesbians (see p745). In traditional African societies gay sexual relationships are a cultural taboo. In practice, rights for gay citizens contrast strongly between countries. South Africa's progressive constitution, for example, outlaws discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and gay couples have won many rights. On the other hand Namibia and Zimbabwe have strongly condemned homosexuality with President Mugabe describing them as 'worse than pigs and dogs'.

South Africa has one of the highest incidence of rape in the world (p407) and, as many are too afraid to report the crime, the true extent of the problem is probably much worse than official figures. Another tragic issue in the region is sexual abuse in schools; the sexual abuse of girls by teachers

THE FAMINE

In 2005 much of the Southern African region was lurching headlong towards famine. Fortunately, in early 2006, it appeared a real crisis had been temporarily averted through good rains and aid delivery, although food shortages and hunger remain critically serious problems. At one stage it was feared that between 10 and 12 million people faced potential starvation. Heard it all before? Well, that's probably because the region suffers from a seemingly endless cycle of food insecurity – but that doesn't make it any less real or less horrifying. Some countries in this region are in their fourth consecutive year of severe food shortages.

The simple reason is prolonged dry spells, which lead to crop failure. The reasons behind the region's continued problems in feeding itself are more complex and deeply rooted. There are a multitude of causes including inadequate agricultural policies, the ripping away of a generation of workers through the HIV/AIDS epidemic, a lack of employment opportunities, bad governance and environmental degradation.

The situation varies between countries in Southern Africa with Malawi (see the boxed text, p162), Zambia and Zimbabwe possibly facing the worst of the current crisis. For more on how the famine has affected Lesotho, see p138, and for Swaziland, see p602.

If you're looking to make a financial donation to assist in alleviating this continuing crisis or would like information, you can get in touch with the following organisations (most accept donations online):

UN World Food Programme (www.wfp.org) Make a direct donation to help feed people in the region specifying that you want your money to go towards the effort in Southern Africa.

Oxfam (www.oxfam.org.uk) Plenty of up-to-date information about the crisis and their work in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Save the Children (www.savethechildren.org) Working in Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Zambia, this organisation has a special emphasis on the protection of children.

Care International (www.care.org) Care is contributing food, tools, fertilisers and training for local farmers in the affected countries in Southern Africa.

Red Cross (www.redcross.org.uk) Provides emergency food aid in Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Swaziland, Namibia and Lesotho.

World Vision (www.worldvision.org) As one of the largest long-term development and relief NGOs operating in the region, World Vision provides emergency food distribution and help to recover lost livelihoods.

Christian Charity Tearfund (www.tearfund.org) Local Christian organisations work in conjunction with Tearfund running food-for-work programmes, distributing food aid and supporting agricultural projects.

is an enormous problem, and as a result, many girls are reluctant to attend school. The perpetrators often cite low wages and poor working conditions as justification for partaking of this perceived 'fringe benefit'. Sadly, national and local governments and individuals have so far done little to express their intolerance for such unacceptable behaviour.

The contribution of foreign aid to the development of Southern Africa and improvement of the daily life of its citizens is difficult to quantify. While aid that increases grassroots development capability and food production is basically seen as positive, an unhealthy culture of aid dependency is seen as a serious issue in the region, and it's particularly bad in Malawi, Zambia and Lesotho.

MULTICULTURALISM

Southern Africa's population is made up of Bantu-speaking people (the majority) who migrated from the north and west of the African continent (p39), later-arriving Europeans (including Dutch, British, Portuguese and Germans), Indians and pockets of the Khoisan, an ancient Stone Age people who survives in small numbers, mainly in Botswana and Namibia (p37). 'Bantu' refers to a convenient language-grouping, not a race, and in reality the Bantu ethnic group comprises many subgroups or tribes, each with their own language, customs and traditions, living all over the region.

Broadly speaking, two societies and cultures (Western and African) run in parallel, and they rarely cross. As you might expect, in a Western situation social customs are similar to those in Europe, although often a touch more formal – but at the same time more friendly – than in other parts of the Western world. For example, Afrikaners will often shake hands and say their name, even if you're only meeting them briefly. While you'll meet locals of European origin and 'Europeanised' black Africans all over the region, the societies and cultures are predominantly African.

Southern Africa is very multicultural and surprisingly peaceful given the extraordinary number of ethnic groups. This concoction of peoples is exemplified in South Africa, which has 11 official languages! While much of the focus has been on black and white relations here, there is also friction and distrust between blacks, coloureds and South Africans of Indian descent. However, in the case of South Africa, the relatively peaceful transition to democracy from the last remaining white minority government in the region in 1994 (p406) was a true miracle of multiculturalism, despite ongoing racial friction.

Integrating European and African populations has been a source of tension for many years in the region, exacerbated by colonial rule, apartheid governments and, in Zimbabwe, a policy of reclaiming white-owned farms in recent years. However, disharmony stretches much further back with the destruction and dispersal of the *difaqane* (p41), which led to tribal affiliations being disrupted among various Bantu groups in the region. This was exacerbated in South Africa by the Great Trek and the Voortrekkers, who settled into areas they believed were 'vacant' (see p402).

Migration from the poorer countries to the wealthier countries in the region has also brought about tensions and hostility. South Africa for example has far more job opportunities than other countries in the region, and this has led to a great number of migrant workers (many illegal) drifting there. Many come through and are from Mozambique. Africans who look different or don't speak the local language are often harassed by officialdom and the police. Locals are often suspicious of such people too as they think they are stealing their jobs and are responsible for crime (although there are no statistics to back that up).

'Southern Africa is very multicultural and surprisingly peaceful given the extraordinary number of ethnic groups'

MOVERS & SHAKERS

For every country chapter in this book we've included a boxed text called 'Movers & Shakers', which profiles an influential African from that country, including: Oliver Mtshudzi (Zimbabwe; p701); Nelson Mandela (South Africa; p408); Sir Seretse Khama (Botswana; p83); Samuel Nujoma (Namibia; p310); Jack Mapanje (Malawi; p164); Malangatana Valente Ngwenya (Mozambique; p244); King Mswati III (Swaziland; p600); Fanuel Musi of Malealea (Lesotho; p149); and Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia; p636). If you want an insight into some of the extraordinary people who have influenced life in Southern Africa, keep an eye out for these boxes.

Likewise, there has been a drift (some say avalanche) of Zimbabweans looking for work illegally in Botswana. The reason is simple – Botswana has a booming economy while Zimbabwe has the fastest-shrinking economy in the world outside a war zone.

Back home, a migrant's money makes a big difference to the local economy – Lesotho is a good example, with many travelling to South Africa to work in mines and send money back home to their families. It is widely agreed, however, that this type of migration has also contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

SPORT

Football (soccer) is without doubt the most popular sport across Southern Africa, especially for black Africans. You'll see dusty fields everywhere with ragtag balls used for informal matches – training grounds for the big leagues.

Essentially the national leagues work in a similar way to European football. Unsurprisingly, South Africa has the major league (www.psl.co.za), which runs from August to May. The winners of each league qualify for the African Champions League, in which the champions of countries from all over the continent compete. The best countries compete in the African Cup of Nations, held every two years: the next one is in Ghana in 2008. Although no Southern African countries qualified for the 2006 World Cup, South Africa is hosting it in 2010.

The Cosafa Castle Cup, run by the Council of Southern Africa Football Associations, is the annual regional competition, with participation by 13 countries, including all nine Southern African countries. Zambia and Zimbabwe are the most successful, having both won the Cup twice each.

Although cricket, rugby and golf have traditionally been the domain of the white population, they have grown in stature and popularity, especially in South Africa, with that country's return to the international scene. Zimbabwe also fields an international cricket side, but availability of foreign exchange (through international TV rights) has meant that the national cricket body is corrupt and has almost ruined the sport.

RELIGION

Christianity

Most people in Southern Africa follow Christianity or traditional religion, often combining aspects of both. South Africa, Malawi, Botswana and Namibia have very high Christian populations (anywhere between 70% and 80% of the general population), while Mozambique has the lowest (around 35%). All the Western-style Christian churches are represented (Catholics, Protestants, Baptists, Adventists etc), most of which were introduced in colonial times by European missionaries. Their spread across the region reflects their colonial roots – the dominant Christian sect in Namibia is German

For all your Southern African football news, including the regional competition, see www.cosafa.com, or check out www.cafonline.com for the African football confederation, including details on club and country competitions.

Lutheranism, while Malawi is dominated by Protestant churches, founded by British missionaries. Mozambique's Portuguese heritage means Roman Catholicism is favoured among that country's Christians.

The influence of missionaries has been beneficial in education, campaigning against the slave trade and in trying to raise the standard of living in Southern Africa; however, this was tempered by their search for ideological control and disruption to traditional cultures. They were certainly influential in Malawi (see p159) where the country's history and existence was shaped by missionaries such as Dr Livingstone.

Although Christian denominations in Southern Africa are generally conservative, many churches actively participate in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Organisations such as **CUAHA** (Churches against HIV/AIDS; www.cuaha.info) and **CRWRC** (Christians Reformed World Relief Committee; www.crwrc.org/development/aids.html) work with local churches to support families, care for those afflicted by the disease and reduce the stigma associated with AIDS. Roman Catholic bishops in Southern Africa, however, have controversially condemned the use of condoms in the fight against AIDS.

Many indigenous Christian faiths have also been established, ranging from a small congregation meeting in a simple hut to vast organisations with millions of followers, such as the Zion and Apostolic churches in Zimbabwe and South Africa. In South Africa alone the Zion Church claims four million followers (the largest in the country).

Islam

Islam is also followed in some areas, predominantly in the north of Malawi and along its lakeshore, and in the northern provinces of Mozambique, where 35% of the population attest to the Islamic faith, the highest percentage in Southern Africa. There are also Hindus and Jews, particularly in South Africa, but their numbers are small.

Traditional

There are many traditional religions in Southern Africa, but no great temples or written scriptures. For outsiders, beliefs can be complex (and to the Western mind, illogical), as can the rituals and ceremonies that surround them. Most traditional religions are animist – based on the attribution of life or consciousness to natural objects or phenomena – and many accept the existence of a Supreme Being, with whom communication is possible through the intercession of ancestors. Thus, ancestors play a particularly strong role. Their principal function is to protect the tribe or family, and they may on occasion show their pleasure (such as a good harvest) or displeasure (such as a member of the family becoming sick).

WITCHCRAFT

Within many traditional African religions, there is a belief in spells and magic (usually called witchcraft or, in some places, *mutu*). In brief simplistic terms it goes like this: physical or mental illnesses are often ascribed to a spell or curse having been put on the sufferer. Often, a relative or villager is suspected of being the 'witch' who placed the curse, usually for reasons of spite or jealousy. A traditional doctor, also called a diviner or witchdoctor, is then required to hunt out the witch and cure the victim. This is done in different ways in various parts of the region, and may involve the use of herbs, divining implements, prayers, chanting, dance or placing the spell in a bottle and casting it into a remote spot (if you find such a bottle in the bush, don't touch it!).

However, services do not come free of charge, and many witchdoctors demand high payments – up to US\$20, in countries where an average month's

earnings may be little more than this. It's a sad fact that the 'witches' who are unearthed are frequently those who cannot defend themselves – the sick, the old or the very poorest members of society. There are even reports of very young children being accused by witchdoctors of harbouring evil spirits.

ARTS

Rock art created by the San people since time immemorial is the one artistic tradition that unifies the region, and can still be seen today in many Southern African countries (see the boxed text, p38).

The countries and indigenous peoples of Southern Africa all have their own artistic traditions, often interwoven with culture and beliefs. See the individual country chapters for country-specific information.

When travelling around the region the more popular handicrafts you're likely to see (and be able to purchase) include the following: San crafts (particularly in Namibia and Botswana) such as jewellery and leatherwork, bows and arrows and ostrich shell beads; mohair products such as tapestries and ponchos, especially in Lesotho and South Africa; wooden carvings, especially in places where tourists are likely to wander – wildlife carvings such as huge giraffes are popular, and you'll even find earthmovers, aeroplanes and helicopters; exquisite palm-woven and African-themed baskets, particularly renowned in Botswana; pottery, often highly decorative and of course very practical; Shona sculpture (Zimbabwean), renowned worldwide, with recurring themes like the metamorphosis of man into beast and Makonde sculpture (Mozambican); glassware and candles (Swazi) in the shape of regional wildlife and in the case of the former often made from recyclable material; and township art, which has developed sober themes in an expressive, colourful and usually light-hearted manner. Ranging from complex wirework toys to prints and paintings, deceptively naive images in township art can embody messages far from simple. It developed through the political trauma in South Africa, and this is often reflected in the violent themes of the work. It has also spread to other countries in the region.

Galleries in the region display works from Southern African artists and include more traditional sculpture and paintings. Painters often interpret the landscape, wildlife and the diverse peoples of the region – Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique and Zambia in particular have galleries that display work from local artists.

Literature

Southern Africa has a strong tradition of oral literature among the various Bantu groups. Traditions and stories were preserved and transmitted orally from generation to generation. In many parts of the region written language was introduced only by Christian missionaries and assumed more importance in the 20th century. Common forms of literature that have developed include short stories, novels and poetry.

Although writers have focused on themes usually concerning their own country, there are common threads. Nationalism, white minority rule, the struggle for independence and life after colonialism are all themes explored by Southern African writers. In Malawi (p165) oppression and abuse of power were common themes through the Banda years, after independence. Guerrilla poets such as Marcelino dos Santos from Mozambique (p243) make fascinating reading. In many countries the growth of literature has paralleled the struggle for independence and freedom.

Works by authors like Bessie Head from Botswana (p84) address African village life and landscape, and Zimbabwean writers (p689) include precolonial traditions, myths and folk tales in their writings.

South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, 'When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said, "Let us pray." We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land.'

Images of Power by D Lewis-Williams & T Dowson is a fascinating study of the art of the San people, utilising modern scientific techniques and rediscovered records of discussions between the San and early European settlers.

If you've developed a taste for wonderful Shona sculpture but had no room in your bag to bring some home, see www.shonaart.co.za to order online.

The Penguin Book of Southern African Stories, edited by Stephen Gray, features stories (some of which are thousands of years old) from around the region. The stories show the similarities and common threads in various literary traditions.

Stephen Gill has written several historical books on Lesotho (p152) and, thanks to him, archives were established and much local history saved.

White South African writers have had much overseas success, with literary giants such as Nadine Gordimer and JM Coetzee both awarded Nobel Prizes for literature. If you want to get a sense of where South Africa has come from and where it's going, delving into its literary roots is a good start (p410). Local literature takes you back into the days of apartheid (from both a black and white perspective) and the realities of building the rainbow nation.

Architecture

The greatest indigenous architectural legacy is in the past – in Zimbabwe the ruins of great stone cities such as Khami (p722) and Great Zimbabwe (p716) are rare examples of medieval African architecture in the region. Mapungubwe (p575) in South Africa also contains excellent examples of ancient historical buildings from a forgotten kingdom.

Architecturally, the colonial legacy in Southern Africa is dominated by European designs, with South Africa containing by far the best examples. Pretoria's stately Union Building has won acclaim, while Art Deco design sprang up in Durban and Cape Town after building booms in the early 20th century. Unique Cape Dutch buildings, especially townhouses, can be seen in Cape Town. Examples of 19th- and 20th-century English architecture (especially Victorian) can be seen in many parts of the region and at times in the most unlikely of places (such as Livingstonia in Malawi, p179, and Shiwa Ng'andu in Zambia, p652), while in Namibia, Germany has left a colonial legacy of late 19th century–designed places, including Art Nouveau design. In Mozambique, Ilha de Moçambique is an architectural treasure trove and includes the oldest European building in the southern hemisphere (p278).

Safari lodges, such as those in Zimbabwe, can be architecturally exceptional – a mix of an English sensibility with African pieces and environment.

Dance

In Southern Africa, dance, along with music, is often closely linked with, and plays an important role in, social function rather than being mere entertainment. Movement is regarded as an important type of communication in traditional African societies, and dance can be associated with contact between spirits and the living, and traditional healers often performed curative dances to rid patients of sickness. Symbolic gestures, mime, props, masks, costumes and body painting can all play a part. If you have the chance to see traditional song and dance while you're in Southern Africa, try not to miss out; places where it's possible to do this are listed throughout the country chapters.

Dance also helps to define culture and in Swaziland, for example, the Umhlanga (reed) dance (see the boxed text, p607) plays a very important role in society, drawing the nation together and reinforcing Swazi culture. Mozambicans are excellent dancers, and Arabic influence is evident in their slow swaying rhythms – check out the Mozambique National Company of Song & Dance (p253).

FOOD & DRINK

Although food is not a real highlight of Southern Africa, things are improving all the time. Certainly an urban setting will usually mean more variety, and the colonial legacy in some countries does mean some intriguing culinary combinations.

The business of eating tends to be all about survival for most of the population, and much of the day's activity is associated with the preparation of

meals. In a region racked by famine (see the boxed text, p43), with many countries not able to consistently produce enough food to feed their own population, food is about functionality, not creativity.

South Africa is the best place to eat and certainly has the most variety, an inheritance of its varied African, European and Asian population. Here you'll find a fusion of influences from the curry and coriander that wafted over the Indian Ocean to Afrikaner favourites such as steaks that resemble half a cow and boerewors, a tasty Afrikaner sausage, and Cape Malay cuisine, an exotic mix of spices and local produce.

Seafood is popular in places that have a coastline (be it lake or ocean), both with locals and travellers. In Swaziland you'll readily find prawns on menus, courtesy of Mozambique, which itself blends a variety of influences (African, Indian and Portuguese) into its delectable seafood offerings. In Malawi eating *chambo* (fried fish) by the lake is a highlight. Around the Cape and Winelands of South Africa look for lightly spiced fish stews, *snoekbraai* (grilled snoek), mussels, oysters and even lobster.

A favourite for many visitors to Southern Africa is the fruit, and depending on the season you'll find bananas, pineapples, pawpaw (papaya), mangoes and avocados in plentiful supply.

Staples & Specialities

In parts of Southern Africa, especially in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, meat features as a staple and anything that can be grilled is, including ostrich, crocodile, warthog and kudu – just a few of the variants you'll find. Meat also features in local celebrations.

Takeaway snack food found on the street may include bits of grilled meat, deep-fried potato or cassava chips, roasted corn cobs, boiled eggs, peanuts (locally called ground nuts), biscuits, cakes, fried dough balls, which approximate doughnuts, and miniature green bananas. Prices are always dirt cheap (unfortunately, often with the emphasis on dirt).

For something more substantial but still inexpensive, the most common meal is the regional staple, boiled maize meal, which is called *miekie pap* in South Africa and Namibia, *sadza* in Zimbabwe, and *nshima* or *nsima* in countries further north. In Botswana, the staple is known as *bogobe*, in which sorghum replaces the maize. When fresh and well cooked, all varieties are both tasty and filling, and are usually eaten with a *relish*, which is either very simple (eg boiled vegetable leaves) or something more substantial, such as a stew of beef, fish, beans or chicken.

The main meal is at noon, so most cheap eateries are closed in the evening. In the morning you can buy coffee or tea (with or without milk – the

'meat features as a staple and anything that can be grilled is, including ostrich, crocodile, warthog and kudu'

The excellent *Traveller's Literary Companion to Africa*, edited by Oona Strathern, includes over 250 prose and poetry extracts from all over Africa, with an introduction to the writing of each country, plus a list of 'literary landmarks' – real features that appear in novels written about the country.

The *Heinemann Book of African Poetry in English*, edited by Adewale Maja-Pearce, includes poetry by writers from several African countries, including Zimbabwe and South Africa.

TRAVEL YOUR TASTEBUDS

If you're not squeamish about watching wildlife during the day and then sampling it in the evening, meat lovers can try some (non-endangered) local produce: such dishes as warthog stew, buffalo steak or impala sausages go down a treat. They can be hard to find, but wildlife lodges and upmarket restaurants are usually the best bet.

Bunny chow is a South African favourite, also popular in Swaziland. It's basically curry inside a hollowed-out loaf, messy to eat but quite delicious. Finally, that South African delight you'll find all over the region – biltong – dried meat that should be wrestled from the pack with a strong set of teeth and a sturdy jaw; it's especially good as fuel for trekking.

African bush tucker varies across the region among Southern Africa's indigenous groups – for example, the San still eat many desert creatures including caterpillar-like mopane worms, prepared in many different ways, such as deep-fried, or just eaten raw.

latter is cheaper) and bread, sometimes with margarine, or maybe a slightly sweetened bread-like cake.

Up a notch and popular with tourists are traditional meals of *mielies* (cobs of maize) and *relish*, or Western dishes, such as beef or chicken served with rice or chips (fries). More elaborate options, such as steaks, pies, fish dishes, pasta and something that resembles curry over rice, are worth trying, especially for a change.

Most cities also have speciality restaurants serving genuine (or at least pretty close to it) Indian, Thai, Chinese, Lebanese, Mexican or ethnic African (such as Ethiopian or West African) cuisine.

Drinks

You can buy tea and coffee in many places, from top-end hotels and restaurants to humble local eating houses.

In bars, hotels and bottle stores you can buy beer and spirits, either imported international brands or locally brewed drinks. South African and Namibian beers (Windhoek is excellent) are available throughout the region, and in many areas they dominate local markets. Wonderful South African wines are widely available, as is a growing range of extremely popular spirit coolers.

Traditional beer of the region is made from maize, brewed in the villages and drunk from communal pots with great ceremony on special occasions, and with less ado in everyday situations. This product, known as *chibuku* (or shake-shake), is commercially brewed in many countries and sold in large blue paper cartons, or by the bucketful. It's definitely an acquired taste, and it does pack a punch.

Where to Eat & Drink

Street food is sold at roadsides, bus stations (and sometimes through windows of moving buses) or markets all over Africa; cleanliness is not a top priority but it's cheap and convenient.

A food stall (also called a tea stall or a *barraca* in Mozambique), which is a basic eatery selling inexpensive African food housed in a shack or hut, is typically found in markets, bus stations, and around industrial areas or any part of town with low rent and a good passing trade. Chowling down at one of these places can be a good way to meet locals. Meals at food stalls are served in a bowl, and while some locals prefer to eat with their hands, spoons are normally available. You may eat standing up, or at a simple table with chairs.

A grade above the food stalls are the takeaways and cheap restaurants in cities, large towns, and areas frequented by tourists. These tend to be slightly larger and cleaner and have better facilities.

FOOD ETIQUETTE

Most travellers will have the opportunity to share an African meal sometime during their stay and will normally be given royal treatment and a seat of honour. Although concessions are sometimes made for foreigners, table manners are probably different from what you're accustomed to. The African staple, maize or sorghum meal, is the centre of nearly every meal. It is normally taken with the right hand from a communal pot, rolled into balls, dipped in some sort of sauce or *relish* – meat, beans or vegetables – and eaten. As in most societies, it is considered impolite to scoff food, or to hoard it or be stingy with it. If you do, your host may feel that he or she hasn't provided enough. Similarly, if you can't finish your food, don't worry; the host will be pleased that you have been satisfied. Often, containers of water or home-brew beer may be passed around from person to person. However, it is not customary to share coffee, tea or bottled soft drinks.

THE SAN HELP OVERWEIGHT WESTERNERS

A new diet fad has been sweeping the Western world, and North America in particular, thanks to the San people (p37) of Southern Africa. The San eat *hoodia*, a prickly, cucumber-like plant, to suppress their appetite on long hunting treks. Some bright spark realised that if it works for some of the last Stone Age people on earth then it should be good for overweight couch potatoes. Plausible? Maybe. *Hoodia*-based products are now in production, although scientific tests on humans have been minimal to date and there are a lot of 'fake *hoodia*' products going around. Still, some recipients swear by them.

Hopefully the money made from the sale of this drug in the lucrative weight-loss market makes its way back to the impoverished San.

Up another level are cheap to midrange restaurants (called a *salā de cha* in Mozambique), with tablecloths, menus and waiters, where meals cost from US\$3 to US\$5. Moving up the scale to the midrange, you'll typically pay US\$5 to US\$10 per person for the standard beef, chicken, fish, lamb and other dishes, but the price is justified by better quality, presentation, location and cleanliness.

At top-end hotels and restaurants in cities and tourist areas, you'll find straightforward international standards, including plenty of steak places as well as French, British and Italian options.

South Africa, Namibia and Botswana are also going through something of a fast-food revolution – particularly popular are places specialising in fried or *peri peri* (hot chilli) chicken. Ubiquitous chains are becoming common, and in new shopping malls you'll even find fast-food Thai, seafood and Middle Eastern outlets.

Vegetarians & Vegans

Vegetarianism isn't widely understood in Africa, and many locals think a meal is incomplete unless at least half of it once lived and breathed. That said, if you're not worried about variety or taste, finding inexpensive vegetarian options isn't that difficult. In the cheapest places, you may have to stick to the *mielies* and greens. A step above that would be eggs and chips (which may be fried in animal fat) with whatever vegetables may be available. Those who eat fish should have even more luck, but note that many places will even serve chicken as a vegetarian dish, on the notion that it's not really meat. Nearly all midrange and upmarket restaurants offer some sort of genuine vegetarian dish, even if it's just a vegetable omelette or pasta and sauce. In larger cities and towns, a growing number of places specialise in light vegetarian cuisine – especially at lunchtime – and of course, Lebanese, Indian and Italian restaurants usually offer interesting meat-free choices.

'Traditional beer of the region is made from maize, brewed in the villages and drunk from communal pots'

Music in Southern Africa

Jane Cornwell

Long before there were borders, there was music. Thousands of years ago, right across the handful of countries we now loosely term Southern Africa, a host of cultures were singing, dancing and creating rhythms to accompany their lives. And arguably it is music, more than any other aspect of culture, that has best survived the onslaught of Western influences. Not always untarnished, though: while some traditions persist, others have merged, shape-shifted, formed new genres. South Africa alone has the greatest range of musical styles on the African continent, helped along by its gargantuan recording industry. Some of these styles have spilled over into neighbouring countries, all of which have styles of their own.

Music still marks the important stages of a Southern African person's life. It still enlightens, heals, invokes spirits. It still makes people dance, sing, holler. It does all this whatever the instrument – whose form can change according to ethnicity, geography, gender of the player and, sometimes, whatever objects are lying around. Expressing oneself through music isn't always easy: think long-suffering, government-censored Zimbabwe. Or Namibia, whose music industry lacks distribution networks, major record labels, direction. Or Mozambique, where most artists don't receive royalties, and promoters frequently don't pay. Regardless, music still pulses in Southern Africa like a heartbeat. So remember: just because you can't buy it – or even see or hear it – doesn't mean that it isn't there.

A POTTED HISTORY

It's better, initially, to think ethnicity rather than country. Southern Africa is one of the world's oldest inhabited regions, after all. So old, in fact, that its earliest music can be traced back some 4000 years to the Stone Age, when groups of hunter-gatherer San played basic flutes and rattles and sang in their unique click language. Today's San still sound wonderfully ethereal, their singing, clapping trance dance the stuff of ritual, tourist haunts and left-field record labels. But it's the glorious vocal polyphony of the Bantu-speaking people – the Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho of the present day – that has come to characterise the region; this is the music that attracted Paul Simon before he recorded his seminal 1988 album *Graceland*.

Long before the Christian missionaries and colonialists arrived in the 19th century, there were kingdoms. In Zambia, each king had his own royal musician, just as each kingdom had its own music. Singing often accompanied instrumental music played on horns, percussion, drums and the stringed *babatone* – the inspiration for the contemporary Zambian style, *kalindula*. Elsewhere, herders used flutes and other instruments to help control the movement of cattle. (Oh, and the first major style of South African popular music? None other than pennywhistle jive, later known as *kwela*.) The Bantu of Namibia played gourds, horn trumpets and marimbas, while the various ethnic groups of Malawi travelled widely, spreading musical influences from the Zulu of South Africa and the Islamic Yao people of Tanzania.

Colonial rule altered everything. The folk forms of Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony, bear hallmarks of the latter – though its main style, *marabenta*, flourished after independence. Mozambican bands played a roots

style similar to that heard in Tanzania and Zambia, while musicians in the heart of country played a style like that of Zimbabwe. The music of southern Mozambique was altered by the influx of workers returning from the South African mines (revolutionary lyrics were delivered over regional melodies), just as the workers who migrate from Lesotho to the mines and cities of neighbouring South Africa have developed a rich genre of sung oral poetry – or word music – that focuses on the experiences of migrant life. African folk

INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS MAPFUMO

The Lion of Zimbabwe isn't exactly roaring, but he's pretty furious. Over 25 years of misrule by Robert Mugabe's government has seen his country's economy collapse. Crime, unemployment and food prices are soaring; corruption and censorship are rife. Human rights abuses abound. 'These are not good circumstances,' says Thomas Mapfumo, who left Harare for the USA after the April 2000 elections, when his life was threatened. What makes things worse for the Zimbabwean musician is that this is a government he helped to bring about.

The politicisation of TM, as he is known, began in the mid-1970s in what was then Rhodesia. With the traditions and customs of his country subjugated by the ruling white minority, he began his career playing covers of American hits. But as the country lurched towards civil war, Mapfumo adopted a more revolutionary stance. He was banned from the airwaves. Decades later, his latest album, *Rise Up* (Real World Records), has been similarly censored, though it pulses from Harare's short-wave underground outfits. Its songs exhort the poor of Zimbabwe to fight for their rights. To, indeed, rise up.

As a boy from the countryside Mapfumo had learned Shona music from his grandparents, members – like 70% of the population – of an old culture with its own language and traditions. The Shona's signature instrument was the mbira, an instrument with a sound known to invite ancestor spirits to possess the living during religious ceremonies. Mapfumo began to arrange its splattering rhythms for the guitars of his band, Blacks Unlimited. Their Shona-language lyrics sustained guerrilla fighters in the bush.

'We were an oppressed people in our own land,' he says. 'When civil war came I found a focus.' He called the music *chimurenga*, which is Shona for 'struggle'. The white population were unable to understand the Shona language, but there was no ignoring Mapfumo's popularity in the wake of his album, *Hokoyo* (Watch Out). The Ian Smith regime arrested Mapfumo, detaining him without trial for 90 days.

'They thought my music was encouraging youngsters to leave the country to train and come back fighting the government,' says Mapfumo, who cites Malcolm X and Martin Luther King as inspirations. 'I kept telling them it was just the traditional music of the people of Zimbabwe. There was no way I wasn't going to sing it.'

He remained prolific until Zimbabwean independence in 1980, releasing album after socially aware album and influencing other home-grown stars such as Oliver 'Tuku' Mtshudzi. With over 30 years of touring to his credit, his Blacks Unlimited *pungwes* – dance marathons featuring songs decrying AIDS, alcoholism and domestic violence – are the stuff of legend. He was unofficially bestowed with Zimbabwe's national symbol, the lion, as an alias, and exile has only increased his ire.

The year 2003 was the first time since 1962 that Mapfumo did not perform his traditional year-end shows in his homeland. Wisely, it seems: a bootleg release of a concert in England – featuring 'Masojha Nemapurisa', a song that told of police brutality – had youths loyal to Mugabe's Zanu-PF party destroying any copies they found. In 2005 Mapfumo opened the Live8 Africa concert in Cornwall, England. 'Down with dictatorships!' he declared at the outset.

It took Mapfumo a while to admit that Mugabe's government was failing to deliver. 'We supported them when they were fighting in the bush. When they came to power they promised us many things, but the people are still suffering and the country is a mess. So what did we fight for?' He sighs. 'I see myself as a representative,' he adds. 'If anyone points a finger at me, they're pointing it at the people.'

Rage (www.rage.co.za) is an online South African magazine with black urban music news, reviews and fashion.

Namibia's recording industry is virtually non-existent – you'll often see artists selling their own CDs on street corners.

The Drum Café's Traditional Music of Black South Africa (2005), by Laurie Levine, is an exploration of the traditional music of black South Africa in ceremonies and rituals. The book includes samples of musical scores, a look at some well-known artists and a handy CD.

became popular in Zambia, as troubadours entertained exhausted miners. In South Africa, Dutch farmers brought a European folk music that became what is known today as *boeremusiek*.

It's no wonder, then, that the banjo, violin, concertina and electric guitar have all had a profound influence on Southern African music. Malawian banjo-and-guitar duos were huge in the 1950s and '60s, after which South African *kwela* took over. The influence of guitar-based rumba from Zaire (now the Congo) was felt right across the region (political upheaval saw many Congolese musicians relocate to Southern Africa); its upstart cousin, soukous, has made its presence felt in everything from Zambian *kalindula* to Malawian *kwasa kwasa*. The gospel mega-genre has evolved from the teachings of 19th-century Christian missionaries, which were customised accordingly. Reckon those chord sequences in South African songs are familiar? Blame the church.

Numerous musical styles have been born out of oppression, too. Ladysmith Black Mambazo's 'tiptoe' *isicathimiya* music, with its high-kicking, soft-stepping dance, has its origins in the all-male miners' hostels in South Africa's Natal Province (now KwaZulu-Natal) in the 1930s, with workers at pains not to wake their bosses. *Kwela* music, like most modern South African styles, came out of the townships; *kwela*, meaning 'jump up', was the instruction given to those about to be thrown into police vans during raids. Thomas Mapfumo's *chimurenga* is once again the music of resistance in Zimbabwe, even if – for the majority of Zimbabwean musicians – outspokenness is just not the Zimbabwean way (see the boxed text, p53). Even the prolific Oliver 'Tuku' Mtukudzi (whose infectious dance pop, informed by the country's *jit-jive* and *tsava* rhythms, is known simply as 'Tuku music') has never done more than express his 'great disappointment'. (For more on Mtukudzi, see the boxed text, p701.)

In Malawi the deliberately controversial songs of reggae giant Lucius 'The Soldier' Banda has spawned a slew of similarly antsy reggae outfits; there is also a softer reggae led by Malawian Rastafarians and a sort of Afro-pop reggae courtesy of Kid Mkandawire. In post-apartheid South Africa, freedom of expression is pretty much expected: rap, hip-hop and their indigenous sibling *kwaito* are as socially concerned as they are un-PC, depending on who you're listening to. South African jazz remains some of the best in the world; the international success of the likes of Thandiswa from Bongo Maffin and Afropop outfit Freshlyground has new audiences in new countries taking notice.

The popular music of Southern Africa has created itself by mingling local ideas and forms with those from outside the region. And while every country has its own distinctive and constantly evolving array of styles supported by local audiences, that doesn't mean you won't be in one place and hear something from somewhere else.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

As with most traditional African instruments, the membranophones, chordingophones, aerophones and idiophones of Southern Africa (OK, it's drums and string, wind and percussion instruments) tend to be found in rural areas. Local materials and found objects are often used to musical effect. In Namibia and Zimbabwe they tie dry cocoons together and strap them to dancers' ankles and waists; in Swaziland and South Africa, ankles rattle with dried fruit. Right across the region, everything from seeds, sticks and stalks to horse hair, oryx horns and goat skins are being shaken and blown, plucked and beaten. Some people in Namibia customise their drums by carving human faces into them.

The MaNyungwe people of northeastern Zimbabwe and northwestern Mozambique play *nyanga* music on panpipes, using different interlocking

parts and quick bursts of singing in a sort of highly melodic musical round called *hocketting*. The Tonga people of Zambia do a similar thing with the animal horns called *nyele*. Variations on musical themes abound. The people of Sesfontein, Namibia play reed pipes made from papaya stems. Basotho herding boys fashion their *lekolulo* flutes from sticks, cords and reeds. Everywhere, too, there is men's music and women's music, just as there are men's dances and women's dances. In Lesotho men use their mouths to play the stringed *setolo-tolo*. Namibian women play the scraped mouth-resonated bow.

There is a huge variety of drums (*ngoma* is the general term in the Bantu language). Stick-struck and hand-struck. Square, round and goblet-shaped. Small cowhide-covered ones for Zulu children. *Khetebu* 'bush-tom' drums beloved by the South African Tsonga. *Namalwa* 'lion-drums' of Zambia, played by inserting a stick through the drum head and rubbing. High-pitched talking drums (which are more commonly found in West Africa), held tight under the armpit and beaten with hook-shaped sticks; the Chewa people of Zambia call theirs the *vimbuzo*. Drum families – mother, father, son, played in sets of three – like the conical drums of the northeast of Namibia. Drums to accompany reed ensembles, a cappella groups and, more often than not, ankle-rattling dances.

If drums are the region's collective heartbeat, then the bow is its lonely soul. Southern Africa has several kinds of musical bow, many resembling the Brazilian *berimbau*: braced, mouth and/or gourd-resonated bows. Large hunting bows used as mouth bows. Two-stringed bows, played while simultaneously singing and resonating. Multiple bows with multiple strings. Mouth bows that use palm leaves instead of strings. String instruments abound: the lute (both strummed and bowed) is present in several forms. The Tswana of Botswana sing and strum the violin-like *segaba* (that's one string attached to a tin). The dances of the Nama of Namibia use flutes, drums and strings to emulate animal sounds.

The xylophone is also prevalent: the xylophone music of southern Malawi has influenced contemporary music in both East and Southern Africa. Mallet instruments with wooden keys are the main instrument of the Lozi and Nkoya of western Zambia, who place slats of wood over a long platform and gourds in descending size; up to four people play simultaneously. The marimbas of South Africa feed into the mbaqanga (township jive) style. It's an entirely different sound from that of the *mbila* (plural *timbila*) as played by the Chopi people of coastal Mozambique, which features resonators made from gourds and a buzzing tone created via a sheet of plastic (formerly an animal skin) over a hole in the ground. The master of *timbila* is the great Venancio Mbande, who rehearses with his large orchestra each Sunday afternoon at his house in the Zavala district.

But perhaps no instrument is as distinctively Southern African as the mbira, a hand-held instrument with small metal keys attached to an amplifying wooden box or calabash; attached shells and/or bottle tops distort and fuzz its sound. There are many traditions of so-called 'thumb pianos', each with a different name according to size and origin – it's the *kankobela* for the Tonga of Zambia. But it is Zimbabwe with which the mbira is generally identified: central to the Shona's marathon religious trance ceremonies known as *bira*, interlocking mbira patterns are considered both healing and spiritual. Since independence the mbira has been adapted to modern styles, such as the *chimurenga* guitars' bands.

Oh, and then there's the voice. Be they roaring Zulu choirs or clicking San, four-part Nama harmonies or ululating Zambian churchgoers, the people of Southern Africa really do sing up some glorious polyphonic storms. Keep an ear out.

Commissioned by the watchdog organisation Freemuse, *Shoot the Singer: Music Censorship Today* (ed Marie Korpé, 2004) is a fascinating book that surveys contemporary cases of music censorship worldwide for the first time. It includes a series of essays on South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe's first feature film, *Jit* (director Michael Raeburn, 1993), is an endearing romantic comedy, lifted by its exotic setting and irresistible *jit-jive* soundtrack. Boy, who has a pesky, beer-obsessed ancestral spirit, decides to get girl – who happens to have a gangster boyfriend. Fun, uplifting stuff.

Featuring music and interviews by Abdullah Ibrahim, Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba among others, Lee Hirsch's documentary *Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony* (2002) explores the role of music in the fight against apartheid. Made over nine years, this is a deeply affecting film.

Karoo Kitaar Blues (director Liza Key, 2003) is a documentary about a group of talented but isolated 'coloured' farm workers from South Africa's desolate Karoo region. Having developed a unique musical style played on homemade instruments, they eventually tour South Africa to rapturous response.

Radio Chikuni (www.chikuniradio.org) is a community radio station broadcasting from Zambia's Chikuni Mission Station. Dedicated to preserving Batonga music and culture.

INTERVIEW WITH STELLA CHIWESHE

The majestic Stella Chiweshe has been performing with the mbira – the classic Zimbabwean thumb piano – for over 40 years. She is the first Southern African female mbira player to gain international recognition; her recordings capture the power and enchantment of this ancient instrument, traditionally revered as a medium of healing and of contact with ancestral spirits. Though based in Germany, Chiweshe recorded her latest offering, double album *Double Check* (Piranha), in Zimbabwe, though she was plagued by a range of distractions from petrol shortages to computer breakdowns. It features drums, guitars, marimbas – and the trancy, shimmering mbira sound.

'I first heard mbira from an old man when I was eight years old,' says Chiweshe, who was born in 1946 in Mujumhi, a village in Mhondoro, Zimbabwe. 'The people were listening to the drums, whose rhythm stayed so loud inside me I thought people could hear it.' She liked to accompany her grandfather on cattle-herding duty, insisting they go as far away as possible so she could sing loud and hard. Throughout her childhood – before independence and the success of the Second Chimurenga (1972–80) – mbiras were kept hidden, because the colonial government and the church had banned the instrument, fearing its power over the Shona.

Playing mbira was punished with prison and the ceremonies were secret: 'They told us when we were children to run away from people who played those instruments and to run towards the mission to tell the priest that we had seen the people of Diabore (Satan's people).' Chiweshe, the great-granddaughter of Munaka, a resistance fighter hanged by the British in days of the First Chimurenga (1896–97), was undeterred. She wasn't prepared to be limited by her sex, either. Her nonstop rhythm-making on any object she could find saw her creeping into ceremonies to watch. Only once did a man try to eject her: 'I screamed so much that I filled the house and they let me stay.'

By the time Chiweshe was 17 her passion to play mbira was like 'a ball of fire' and over the next decade, with the guidance of her uncle, she became a gifted *maridzambira* (mbira player), playing at healing ceremonies, weddings, funerals, concerts and parties, and even releasing a single, *Kasahwa*, in 1975, which went gold. After independence in 1980 she was invited to join the National Dance Company, newly formed to familiarise the liberated Zimbabweans of the richness of their cultural heritage. They toured throughout Zimbabwe, Mozambique and then Australia, India, North Korea and Europe. Chiweshe returned on solo tours.

Following the counsel of her spirit guide, she took the mbira to the denizens of Harare ('I was told that I must introduce this music to the city people') and to new generations in Zimbabwe and across the globe with her band, the Earthquake. So far she's recorded 22 local singles and seven international albums, been awarded an MA from Harare University, won two ZIMA Awards in 2005 and healed countless troubled souls.

MUSICAL STYLES

A rich network of musical styles has developed in Southern Africa. And although those of South Africa are probably the best known, the entire region is humming with musical traditions, expressions and textures. In most countries there are polyphony, repetitive patterns and call-and-response singing. There are styles that reflect ethnic diversity and geography. Cities are dominated by pop, rock, jazz and urban music, much of which combines core African principles with Western influences. Electric guitars fuel genres such as *afropa* in Malawi, *jit-jive* in South Africa, Zam-rock in Zambia. Local sounds keep migrating, metamorphosing. New genres keep forming. Following is a by-no-means definitive roundup of what is being listened to.

Chimurenga

In Zimbabwe in the late 1970s the musician Thomas Mapfumo and the Blacks Unlimited transferred traditional Shona mbira patterns to the electric guitar. They sang songs of resistance against the white-controlled Rhodesian government using bright, harmonised vocals. *Chimurenga*, meaning 'struggle',

became a tool of social activism and, with lyrics in Shona, a secret means of communication. Banned by Zimbabwean state radio now as then, today's *chimurenga* bubbles away underground, in stark contrast to the apolitical, good-time *sungura* guitar music (the current industry's favoured genre) and bland Shona impersonations of hip-hop and ragga (a dance-oriented style of reggae).

Gospel

Gospel music is huge everywhere. In Malawi spiritual songs are sung in church, at school assemblies and political functions, and during everyday tasks. Many of Zambia's Christian churches boast US-style gospel synthesizers and guitars. The effects of popular influences on the realm of the church can be heard in the music of top-sellers Zambian Acappella and the Glorious Hosanna Band. Traditional Botswanan music is present in their church singing. Zimbabwe's lucrative gospel market is dominated by Charles Charamba and his *sungura*-based songs (gospel singers in Zimbabwe are as big as the biggest popular music stars). South Africa is the really commercial holy roller: a mega-selling amalgam of European, American, Zulu and other African traditions, neatly divided into traditional and modern styles. Look out for Rebecca Malope, Youth in Action and the Soweto Gospel Choir.

Jazz

What Malawi calls 'jazz' began in the late 1960s when, inspired by South African *kwela* music, bands such as Chimvu Jazz featured semirural musicians on acoustic instruments – a tradition that continues today. In Botswana most popular music tends to be labelled 'jazz'; it is probably *gumba-gumba* ('party-party') music – modernised Zulu and Tswana music mixed with traditional jazz – that comes closest to it. Zambia's Zam-rock has its jazzy elements. But if you're after jazz that is structurally, harmonically and melodically distinctive – and is, unequivocally, jazz – then head to South Africa. What was famously an expatriate music representing the suffering of a people is now a thriving, progressive force. Arno Carstens, Moses Khumalo, Judith Sephumo, Yenana and myriad others are at the vanguard.

Kalindula

The urban dance style known as *kalindula* has its roots in the Bemba traditions of northern Zambia's Luapula Province – where a stringed instrument called the *babatone* swings like a double bass. Inspired (like many Southern

Held each July in Selebi-Phikwe, between Gaborone and Francistown, Botswana's National Music Eisteddfod showcases traditional dances and music from around the country, courtesy of its schools, colleges and choirs.

Dandemutande (www.dandemutande.org) is a resource for people who love Zimbabwean music and culture. Articles, mail order catalogue, discussion board, resource guide.

Featuring big name UK and African live acts and DJs, the three-day Lake of Stars Malawi Music Festival is held on the palm-fringed shores of Lake Malawi each September. Attracts around 1500 punters; proceeds go to charity.

TOP 10 SOUTHERN AFRICAN ALBUMS

- *Rise Up* (Real World), Thomas Mapfumo
- *Double Check* (Piranha), Stella Chiweshe
- *Best of Miriam Makeba and the Skylarks* (BMG), Miriam Makeba
- *Soul Marrabenta* (Riverboat), Mabula
- *Shaka Zulu* (Warner), Ladysmith Black Mambazo
- *Urban Zulu* (Melt 2000), Busi Mhlongo
- *Indestructible Beat of Soweto Volume One* (Earthworks), various artists
- *Vana Va Ndota* (Milan), Ghorwane
- *Zambia Roadside* (Sharp Wood Productions), various artists
- *A Handful of Namibians* (On the Corner), various artists

African genres) by Congolese rumba, *kalindula* took hold in the mid-1970s in the wake of the presidential decree that 95% of broadcast music should be Zambian. Most *kalindula* bands broke up following the country's economic collapse in the 1990s. But with the likes of Brian Chilala fusing rock, reggae and *kalindula* beats, and the popularity of Black Muntu's 'kalifunku' sound, *kalindula* seems to be enjoying a renaissance.

Kwaito

Post 1994, *kwaito* (*kway-to*, meaning hot or angry) exploded onto South Africa's dance floors. A rowdy mix of bubblegum, hip-hop, R&B, ragga, mbaqanga, traditional, jazz, British and American house music – *kwaito* is nothing short of a lifestyle. Chanted or sung in township slang (usually over programmed beats), *kwaito*'s lyrics range from the anodyne to the fiercely political. Given an international lease of life as the soundtrack for the feature film *Tsotsi* (which bagged the 2006 Oscar for Best Foreign Film, and saw *kwaito* star Zola playing a gangster), *kwaito* is similarly huge across the Southern African region. It's Lesotho's favourite music style. If you're in Namibia, look out for Paul Gazza. In Zambia, try gospel *kwaito* act the Cherubs. If you're in South Africa, take your pick.

Kwasa kwasa

Beginning in Zaire in the mid-1980s and spreading quickly to surrounding areas, *kwasa kwasa* took its cue from Congolese rumba and soukous. Characterised by an all-important lead guitar and lighter background drumming, *kwasa kwasa* (from the French street slang, *quoi ça?* – what's this?) songs typically let guitar and drums set the pace before the vocals enter, with an intricate guitar solo somewhere in the middle. Arguments rage over whether *kwasa kwasa* is actually just rumba; for others it's simply a dance style. Everyone from politicians to street vendors knows how to do the *kwasa kwasa*, booties wildly gyrating – à la American hip-hop – while legs and torsos are kept still.

Marrabenta

Sounding a little like salsa or merengue, *marrabenta* is the best-known urban dance music in Mozambique, and one created from a fusion of imported European music played on improvised materials: oil cans, wooden stakes and fishing lines. Taking its name from the Portuguese word 'to break' (hard-playing musos frequently snapped their guitar strings), *marrabenta*'s local-language songs of love and social criticism were banned by Portuguese colonialists – ensuring its popularity post-independence. Stalwart *marrabenta* band Ghorwane uses horns, guitars, percussion and strong vocal harmonies; *marrabenta*-meets-hip-hop outfit Mabulu is making waves.

Rap & Hip-hop

The genre that was born in New York over three decades ago now has another home in (or has come back to) Africa – with some fascinating hybrids as a result. In Namibia, artist Yellow fuses reggae, hip-hop and his roots in the Nama culture. In Botswana, top-rating radio show *Strictly Hip Hop*, with presenters/rappers Draztik and Slim (from Cashless Society Crew), is transforming the local scene. Young Swaziland rap groups – and indeed, rap groups across Southern Africa – are using the medium to educate listeners about AIDS. South Africa's rappers are exploring uncharted territory: Tumi and the Volume combine *kwaito*, new school and house music and put politics centre stage. Jo'burg outfit Kwani Experience mould rap with African folk, jazz, drum 'n' bass and funk. The beat is 'somehow familiar yet like nothing that you've heard in these times', they say.

Celebrating peace, social harmony and international solidarity, Avante Mozambique! is Maputo's new two-week cultural tourism festival each August/September. Expect exhibitions, seminars, films and, of course, music.

Mozambique Music Magazine (www.mozambique-music.com) is a Maputo-based site, offering news about local events and music releases, Mozambican bands and music projects as well as info for visitors.

Yfm (www.yfm.co.za) is South Africa's most popular youth station, with a 50% self-imposed local music quota – more than any other station in the country.

Environment

Southern Africa's environment is as fragile as elsewhere on the continent, with exploitation and mismanagement the cause of many long-term problems. In order to ensure you have a minimal impact on this unique place, please keep in mind every visitor's shared responsibility (p26).

THE LAND

Southern Africa consists of a plateau rising from 1000m to 2000m, with escarpments on either side. Below the escarpments lies a coastal plain, which is narrowest in Namibia and widest in southern Mozambique.

The most prominent break in the Southern African plateau is the Great Rift Valley – a 6500km-long fissure where tectonic forces have attempted to rip the continent of Africa in two. This enormous fault in the earth's crust runs from the Jordan Valley (between Israel and Jordan) in the north, southward through the Red Sea, where it enters Ethiopia's Danakil Depression. At this point, it heads south across Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi, dividing in two at one stage, to form the great lakes of East Africa. Lake Malawi is the third-largest lake in Africa and lies in a trough formed by the valley. This feature has created unique fish life. The lake has more fish species than any inland body of water in the world – there are over 500, and 350 of these are endemic to the lake (see the boxed text, p199). This spreading zone ends at the present site of Lake Kariba (p703), between Zimbabwe and Zambia.

The highest part of the region is Lesotho (often called the Kingdom in the Sky) and the neighbouring Drakensberg area, where many peaks rise above 3000m, including Thabana-Ntlenyana (p146; 3482m), which is the highest point in Southern Africa. Other highland areas include the Nyika Plateau (in northern Malawi and northeastern Zambia; p181), Mt Mulanje (in southern Malawi; p219), the Eastern Highlands (between Zimbabwe and Mozambique; p706) and the Khomas Hochland (Central Namibia; p323).

These highlands provide jaw-dropping scenery, as well as some of the best-preserved and most distinctive plants, wildlife and ancient rock art (see the boxed text, p38) in the region. Hiking, climbing and mountain-biking are just some of the myriad activities on offer in these often wonderfully preserved patches of African wilderness.

Lower and more isolated hills include the characteristic inselbergs of Namibia (see Spitzkoppe, p347) and South Africa's Karoo (p488), and the lush Zomba Plateau (p210) in central Malawi.

WILDLIFE

Southern Africa contains some of the most accessible and varied wildlife watching found anywhere on the continent, and it's the major attraction of the region. Countries all over the region provide opportunities, and each has its highlights (even smaller countries such as Swaziland have magnificent wildlife viewing, which can offer great alternatives to better-known parks), but for sheer variety and numbers, South Africa and Botswana top the list.

The best times of day for wildlife viewing are early in the morning and in the late afternoon/evening, when many animals are looking for their next meal. Planting yourself at a water hole at these times can be very rewarding. Night safaris provide wonderful wildlife-viewing opportunities, especially to see many nocturnal animals such as genets and bushbabies (look in the trees, not just on the ground).

Earthlife Africa (www.earthlife.org.za) is an active environmental group operating in South Africa and Namibia; it's a good contact for anyone wanting to get involved.

Good safari companions: *Field Guide to Mammals of Southern Africa* and *A Field Guide to the Tracks and Signs of Southern and East African Wildlife* – both by Chris & Tilde Stuart – and *The Safari Companion: A Guide to Watching African Mammals* by Richard Estes.

Happily, Southern African parks are some of the best managed in Africa, and the development of the massive transfrontier parks (see the boxed text, p67) in the region, which link national parks and wildlife migration routes in different countries, should open up even more opportunities for wildlife viewing.

Animals

Nowhere else on the planet is there such a variety and quantity of large mammal species. Southern Africa boasts the world's largest land mammal (the African elephant), as well as the second largest (white rhino) and the third largest (hippopotamus). It's also home to the tallest (giraffe), fastest (cheetah) and smallest (pygmy shrew). You stand a great chance of seeing the Big Five – the black rhino, Cape buffalo, elephant, leopard and lion. However, the region also supports a wonderful array of birds, reptiles, amphibians and even insects (but often in less-appreciated quantities). The longer you spend in Southern Africa the more you'll appreciate the subtleties of the region, including the delight of spotting some of the less-famous species. If you're up for a challenge there's also a lesser-known 'Little Five' – the rhinoceros beetle, buffalo weaver, elephant shrew, leopard tortoise and ant lion. See the colour Wildlife Guide (p69) for a glimpse of the region's spectacular wildlife.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

After years of poaching, the black rhino is the highest-profile entry on Southern Africa's endangered species list (good places to spot these include Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park in South Africa, p512; Etosha National Park in Namibia, p332; and Mkhaya Game Reserve in Swaziland, p612); and the recent lifting of a hunting ban on this rare species seems ludicrous. See p68 for more on this issue. The beautiful African wild dog (seen with luck in Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park, p512, and Kruger National Park, p528), with its matriarchal system, is also listed as endangered, as are the mountain and Cape mountain zebra. The riverine rabbit is one of Southern Africa's most endangered mammals, while the hippopotamus and African lion are considered vulnerable in the wider region.

Turtles don't fair well, with the loggerhead, green turtle and olive ridley listed as endangered, while hawksbill and leatherback turtles are critically endangered.

BIRDS

Birds rate highly among the many attractions of Southern Africa. For sheer abundance and variety, few parts of the world offer as much for the bird-watcher, whether expert or beginner. Southern Africa is host to nearly 10% of the world's bird species – over 900 species have been recorded in the region. More than 130 are endemic to Southern Africa or are near-endemic, also being found only in adjoining territories to the north.

This astonishing variety can be attributed to the number of habitats. These habitats are well defined and can be separated into eight main categories: forest; savanna-woodland; fynbos; grassland-semidesert; Karoo (South Africa's desert-like interior); the Namib Desert; freshwater areas (rivers, marshes, lakes, pans and their adjoining shores); and seashore areas (including areas of brackish water where fresh water meets salt water in lagoons and estuaries).

All the national parks and reserves are home to a great range of bird life, especially Mana Pools (p705), Victoria Falls (p618) and Hwange (p723) National Parks in Zimbabwe; Etosha (p332), Mudumu (p345) and Mamili (p345) National Parks in Namibia; and Chobe National Park (p101) and virtually any part of the Okavango Delta (p106) in Botswana. Mozambique

Rhinos aren't named for their colour, but for their lip shape: 'white' comes from *wijde* (wide) – the Boers' term for the fatter-lipped white rhino.

The Johannesburg-based Endangered Wildlife Trust (www.ewt.org.za) is a good source of information on South Africa's endangered species with links to broader Southern African conservation projects.

Ian Sinclair's Field Guide to the Birds of Southern Africa by Ian Sinclair is a comprehensive work with colour plates of all avian species in the region. An abridged version, *Illustrated Guide to the Birds of Southern Africa*, concentrates on commonly observed species.

has over half of all bird species identified in Southern Africa; on Inhaca Island (p255) alone, about 300 bird species have been recorded.

Highlights in the region include the world's largest bird (the ostrich) and its heaviest flying bird (Kori bustard). Also in abundance are weavers, which share their huge city-like nests (often attached to telephone poles) with pygmy falcons, the world's smallest raptors. Also keep an eye out for majestic birds of prey such as the fish eagle, bateleur eagle, martial eagle, red-necked falcon

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE WILD KIND

Although you'll hear plenty of horror stories, the threat of attack by wild animals in Africa is largely exaggerated and problems are extremely rare. However, it is important to remember that most African animals are *wild* and that wherever you go on safari, particularly on foot, there is always an element of danger.

The tips below will further diminish your chances of a close encounter of the unpleasant kind, and on organised safaris you should always get advice from your guide.

- Buffaloes are usually docile in a herd, but lone individuals can be unpredictable, making them particularly dangerous. If you encounter a buffalo while walking in the bush, back away quietly and slowly. If it charges, climb the nearest tree or dive into the bush and 'run like a rat'.
- Elephants are not bloodthirsty creatures, but those who have had trouble from humans previously may feel the need to go on the offensive. Lone males can be skittish, and a herd of females with baby elephants will almost always be protective and wary of an approach. Keep your distance – if an elephant holds its trunk erect and sniffs the air, it probably detects your presence and may charge rather than retreat. In this case you should be the one who retreats – but move away slowly.
- Hippos aren't normally vicious, but they may attack if you get too close or come between them and the water, or between adults and young. It's true that hippos kill more humans in Africa than any other animal. When boating or canoeing, paddle well away from them, and never pitch a tent in an open area along vegetated riverbanks, as it's probably a hippo run.
- Crocodiles also present risks, and when they're snoozing in the sun, they look more like logs or branches. Never swim, paddle or even collect water without first making a careful assessment of what's occupying the water in question. Local advice is best but, if it's not available, assume the worst.
- Hyenas are potentially dangerous, although they're normally just after your food. They aren't particularly fussy either: they'll eat boots and equipment left outside a tent, and have been known to gnaw right through vehicle tyres!
- Lions have also been known to investigate lodges and camp sites. If you're camping out in the bush, zip your tent up completely. If you hear a large animal outside, lie still and don't try to leave your tent. While walking in the bush, if you encounter a lion try to avoid an adrenalin rush (easier said than done), and don't turn and run. If you act like prey, the lion could respond accordingly.
- Rhinos tend to be wary of humans, although they may charge vehicles that get too close. Remember, too, that black rhinos are far more aggressive than white rhinos – unsurprising, as they were hunted almost to extinction. If you are caught out on foot and can't immediately climb a tree, face the charge and step to one side at the last moment in bullfight style (again, easier said than done).
- Most importantly, don't let the above scare you! Wildlife viewing just requires a bit of common sense, and by following a few simple guidelines you're sure to have a trouble-free experience. Remember that viewing wildlife in their natural habitat may present dangers not associated with a zoo, but it's a large part of what makes a visit to Southern Africa so special, and is incomparable to seeing an animal in a cage.

and chanting goshawk, as well as secretary birds, rollers, vividly coloured bee-eaters, sunbirds and rainbow-flecked kingfishers.

Bird-watching is good all year round, with spring (August to November) and summer the best.

REPTILES

Southern Africa's most notable reptile is the Nile crocodile. Once abundant in lakes and rivers across the region, its numbers have been greatly reduced by hunting and habitat destruction. Female crocs lay up to 80 eggs at a time, depositing them in sandy areas above the high-water line. After three months' incubation in the hot sand, the young emerge. New crocs are avocado green in colour; as they age, they darken to nearly black. Many live up to 70 years.

Southern Africa has a complement of both venomous and harmless snakes, but most fear humans and you'll be lucky to even see one. The largest snake – although generally harmless to humans – is the python, which grows to over

5m in length. The puff adder, which inhabits mainly mountain and desert areas, grows to about 1m long. Like all reptiles it enjoys sunning itself, but it is very slow and sometimes trodden on by unwary hikers – with very unpleasant results.

Other seriously dangerous snakes include the fat and lazy gaboon viper; the black mamba; the boomslang, which lives in trees; the spitting cobra, which needs no introduction; and the zebra snake, which is one of the world's most aggressive serpentine sorts. If you're tramping in snake country, be sure to watch your step.

Lizards are ubiquitous from the hot and dusty Kaokoveld in Namibia to the cool highlands of the Nyika Plateau in Malawi, and from the bathroom ceiling to the kitchen sink. The largest of these is the water monitor, a docile creature that reaches over 2m in length and is often seen lying around water holes, perhaps dreaming of being a crocodile. Two others frequently seen are chameleons and geckos – the latter often in hotel rooms; they are quite harmless and help to control the bug population.

For information on campaigns to save elephants and the fight against the illegal international trade in wildlife, see the International Fund for Animal Welfare (www.ifaw.org).

IVORY & ELEPHANT CULLING CONTROVERSY

A major issue all over Southern Africa concerns the emotive issue of elephant conservation. In the West people generally hold a preservationist viewpoint, that elephant herds should be conserved for their own sake or for aesthetic reasons; however, the local sentiment maintains that the elephant must justify its existence on long-term economic grounds for the benefit of local people, or for the country as a whole (a conservationist view). In fact, the same arguments can be applied to most other wildlife.

Since the 1970s various factors (especially the value of ivory) led to an increase in elephant poaching in many parts of Africa. By the late 1980s the price of 1kg of ivory (US\$300) was three times the annual income of over 60% of Africa's population. Naturally, the temptation to poach was great, although the real money was made not by poachers – often villagers who were paid a pittance for the valuable tusks – but by the dealers, who acted with the full knowledge (and support) of senior government figures. The number of elephants in Africa went from 1.3 million to 625,000 between 1979 and 1989, and in East Africa and in some Southern African countries – notably in Zambia – elephant populations were reduced by up to 90% in about 15 years. But in other Southern African countries where parks and reserves are well managed, in particular South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, elephant populations were relatively unaffected.

In 1989, in response to the illegal trade and diminishing numbers of elephants, a world body called the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) internationally banned the import and export of ivory. It also increased funding for anti-poaching measures. When the ban was established, world raw ivory prices plummeted by 90%, and the market for poaching and smuggling was radically reduced.

Although elephant populations recovered in some ravaged areas, Southern African human populations continued to grow, and another problem surfaced. Elephants eat huge quantities of foliage but, in the past, herds would eat their fill then migrate to another area, allowing time for the vegetation to regenerate. However, an increasing human population pressed the elephants into smaller and smaller areas – mostly around national parks – and the herds were forced to eat everything available. In many places, the bush began to look as if an atom bomb had hit. This also leads to human/elephant conflict: in far-north Mozambique, for example, elephants are eating and destroying crops, while drought in Zimbabwe has led to conflict between humans and elephants for water resources.

Increasingly across the region, park authorities are facing elephant overpopulation. Botswana, parts of Namibia's Caprivi region, Zimbabwe and South Africa's Kruger National Park are particularly affected. Proposed solutions include relocation (whereby herds are permanently transplanted to other areas) and contraception. The only other alternative is to cull herds, sometimes in large numbers; this seems a bizarre paradox, but illustrates the seriousness of the problem. The issue is currently being debated in South Africa. In Kruger, park authorities have recommended elephant

culling to return the population to around a manageable 7000 (down from the current 12,500). This has caused an outcry from some conservation groups such as the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), as culling has been banned for 10 years in South African parks. In early 2006 the South African government decided to postpone a decision regarding a cull, but it wasn't known for how long.

This is an issue sure to generate much debate, with proponents citing the health of the parks, including other wildlife and the elephants themselves, and organisations such as IFAW appalled at such a solution, which they claim is cruel, unethical and scientifically unsound. IFAW believes aerial surveys of elephant numbers are inaccurate, that population growth has not been accurately surveyed and, further, that other solutions have not been looked at carefully enough, including more transfrontier parks crossing national borders.

Southern African countries such as South Africa and Botswana currently have large ivory stockpiles due to natural attrition and through the seizure of illegal ivory hauls. Culling obviously provides large quantities of legal ivory too. In the past this could have been sold to raise funds for elephant management; however, the CITES ban stopped that.

In March 1999, however, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe were permitted by CITES to resume strictly controlled ivory exports. Despite these measures, opponents of the trade warned that elephant poaching would increase in other parts of Africa, as poached ivory could now be laundered through the legal trade. Sure enough, 1999 saw an increase in poaching all over Africa, from Kenya to Gabon, and in late 1999 a Zimbabwean newspaper reported that 84 elephants had been poached in Zimbabwe that year.

At the 2002 CITES conference Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe requested limited sales of their existing ivory stockpiles. Botswana, Namibia and South Africa had only a one-off sale of 60 tonnes of ivory approved in principle, once certain conditions were met. However, this plan was put on ice by CITES in 2004 as the conditions set down in 2002 had not been met; particularly concerning was a solution on how to conduct sales without triggering poaching in vulnerable countries. Poaching is still a problem in Malawi for example – it was hurting the elephant population so badly in Kasungu National Park that the British military was called in 2005 to train game rangers in anti-poaching strategies.

There is much dispute about whether controlled ivory sales should be reintroduced, with Southern African countries with excessive elephant populations and large ivory stockpiles pushing hard for a relaxation of the ban. Some argue that Southern Africa is paying for the inability of other African countries to manage and protect their wildlife, and that the ban on the ivory trade is an unfair punishment to these countries.

It remains to be seen whether the ban will be lifted, but meanwhile debate about the ivory trade, and the culling solution to overpopulation, rages on.

Plants

The following rundown of major vegetation zones (arranged roughly south to north, and from the coasts to the inland areas) is greatly simplified, but provides a useful overview.

Southern Africa's distinctive fynbos zone occurs around the Cape Peninsula and along the south coast of South Africa, interspersed with pockets of temperate forest, where you'll find trees such as the large yellowwood, with its characteristic 'peeling' bark.

The west coast of Southern Africa consists largely of desert, which receives less than 100mm of precipitation per year. Vegetation consists of tough grasses, shrubs and euphorbias, plus local specialities, including the bizarre welwitschia (a miniature conifer) and kokerboom (a type of aloe).

Along the east coast of Southern Africa, the natural vegetation is coastal bush, a mixture of light woodland and dune forest; high rainfall has also created pockets of subtropical forest.

In South Africa's Karoo, typical vegetation includes grasses, bushes and succulents that bloom colourfully after the rains. Much original Karoo vegetation has been destroyed since the introduction of grazing animals and alien plants (see below).

To the east lie the temperate grasslands of the 'highveld' and to the north, a vast arid savanna, characterised by acacia scrub, which takes in most of central Namibia, much of Botswana and the northern parts of South Africa.

To the north and east is the woodland savanna, consisting of mainly broadleaf deciduous trees. Dry woodland, dominated by mopane trees, covers northern Namibia, northern Botswana, the Zimbabwean lowveld and the Zambezi Valley. In wetter areas – central Zimbabwe, northern Mozambique and most of Zambia and Malawi – the dominant vegetation is moist woodland, or miombo. A mix of the two, which occurs in northeastern South Africa and central Mozambique, is known as mixed woodland, or 'bushveld'.

Small pockets of high ground all over the region have a vegetation zone termed afro-montane, which occurs in highland areas where open grasslands are interspersed with heathland and isolated forests.

INTRODUCED SPECIES

Introduced plant species present a real threat to Southern African ecosystems. There are more than 700 alien plant species in the region, and about 10% of these are classed as invasive aliens – that is, they thrive to the detriment of endemic species. For example, Australian wattle trees and Mexico mesquite flourish by sinking their roots deeper into the soil than indigenous trees, the latter suffering from lack of nourishment. The Australian hakea shrub was introduced to serve as a hedge, and is now rampant, displacing native trees and killing off smaller plants. Areas such as South Africa's unique Cape fynbos floral kingdom are threatened by Australian acacias, which were introduced for their timber products, or to stabilise sand dunes.

Many rivers and dams are also clogged with invasive species and introduced European grasses, especially on sand dunes, are also a threat. Recognition of these problems means that alien plants, originally introduced as commercial plants or as ornamental garden plants, may often not be grown on public or private property.

NATIONAL PARKS

The term 'national park' is often used in Southern Africa as a catch-all term to include wildlife reserves, forest parks, or any government conservation area; there are also several privately owned reserves.

The beauty of the parks and reserves is that they all have an individual identity – a unique character born from the varied landscapes, wildlife and vistas. Happily, this means you can spend a lot of time visiting parks and never get bored!

Most parks in Southern Africa conserve habitats and wildlife species and provide recreational facilities for visitors. South African parks are among the best managed in the world, and most of the rest are very good, although Zimbabwean parks have declined and those in Mozambique are still being developed.

In most parks and reserves harbouring large (and potentially dangerous) animals, visitors must travel in vehicles or on an organised safari, but several do allow hiking or walking with a ranger or safari guide.

Nearly all parks charge an entrance fee, and in almost all cases foreigners pay substantially more than local residents or citizens. This may rankle some visitors – and some parks are seriously overpriced – but the idea is that residents and citizens pay taxes to the governments that support the parks, and therefore are entitled to discounts.

Park Accommodation

Most parks and reserves contain accommodation, so you can stay overnight and take wildlife drives in the early morning and evening. Accommodation ranges from simple camp sites to luxury lodges run by companies that have concessions inside the parks. Prices vary to match the quality of facilities. In some countries you can just turn up and find a place to camp or stay; in other countries reservations are advised (or are essential at busy times). For details, see individual country chapters.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

All over Southern Africa, an ever-growing human population places demands on the land and other natural resources. To conserve these resources – and the region's wild areas and ecosystems – most experts agree that population growth must be contained by improving education (especially for women) and raising living standards by fostering economic growth. Human–elephant conflict, for example, is becoming a problem in areas such as Mozambique (p245), where elephants eat and destroy crops in large areas of Niassa province, as well as in coastal sections of Quirimbas National Park and elsewhere in the north.

Land degradation is a serious regional problem; about one quarter of South Africa's land is considered to be severely degraded (see p413). In former Homeland areas, years of overgrazing and overcropping have resulted in massive soil depletion. This, plus poor overall conditions, is pushing people to the cities, further increasing urban pressures. Lesotho has severe land erosion (see p140) due to large-scale ploughing and introduced merino sheep and mohair goats.

Water is another issue and droughts are common in the region (see the boxed text, p43). To meet demand rivers have often been dammed or modified. While this has improved water supplies to some areas, it has also disrupted local ecosystems and caused increased silting.

Deforestation wreaks havoc across Southern Africa, especially when indigenous trees are replaced by more aggressive introduced species. In Malawi (p166) the level of use of wood for fuel is very high and because of food insecurity, people increasingly rely on woodlands to serve their needs. Illegal timber practices are more difficult to combat, with entrenched interests at every level. An illustration of the challenges is seen in northern and central Mozambique, where tropical hardwoods are felled with little or no regulation.

Trees of Southern Africa by Keith Coates Palgrave provides the most thorough coverage of the subcontinent's arboreal richness, illustrated with colour photos and paintings.

Flowers of Southern Africa by Auriol Batten is less a field guide than a large-format celebration of major flowering species, illustrated with colourful paintings.

See www.peaceparks.org for all the latest news on the transfrontier parks in the region, including a map of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park.

The Southern African regional office of the International Conservation Union (www.iucnrosa.org.zw) has plenty of detail on projects involving wetlands, forests, biodiversity and plenty more.

NATIONAL PARKS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Southern Africa's national parks are simply outstanding. Facilities, geography and wildlife-viewing opportunities vary considerably across the region though. World-famous national parks such as Kruger, Etosha, South Luangwa and Chobe offer excellent wildlife viewing, usually with a dazzling array of accommodation options, while lesser-known parks and reserves such as Hlane Royal National Park (p611) or Mkhaya Game Reserve (p612) in Swaziland are real gems. The latter are usually smaller and often quieter than their more famous counterparts, with rewarding wildlife-viewing and bird-watching opportunities. Below is a sample of the parks in the region:

Botswana

- Makgadikgadi & Nxai Pans (p100) – vast and remote, this is the site of Southern Africa's last great wildlife migrations.
- Chobe (p101) – a large and varied park with both a wildlife-rich riverfront and broad savanna plains. It's particularly known for its large elephant herds.
- Moremi (p114) – this beautiful park takes in a portion of the expansive and stunning Okavango Delta.
- Central Kalahari (p119) – Botswana's largest national park takes in the widest horizons you're ever likely to see.

Malawi

- Liwonde (p206) – a magical lowland park with wonderful bird life, including a stunning rainbow-flecked kingfisher population, excellent elephant and hippo viewing, and plans to reintroduce lions and rhinos.
- Mt Mulanje (p219) – the 'island in the sky', with sheer peaks and excellent hiking.
- Nyika (p181) – unique montane grassland area, with endless views and splendid horse riding.
- Lengwe (p224) – this lovely park in southern Malawi protects a range of antelopes (including the rare nyala), as well as diverse bird species.

Mozambique

- Bazaruto Archipelago (p267) – a tropical paradise of reefs, islands and beaches, and opportunities for sailing and diving.
- Great Limpopo Transfrontier – the former Limpopo National Park (p260) has been combined with South Africa's Kruger (p528) and Zimbabwe's Gonarezhou (p717) parks to form this enormous conservation area. Mozambique's portion was devastated by war, but has now been stocked with wildlife from elsewhere.

Namibia

- Waterberg Plateau Park (p328) – this sky island features walking tracks and a repository for endangered wildlife.
- Fish River Canyon (p385) – Africa's grand canyon presents one of the most spectacular scenes on the continent and Namibia's most popular hiking track.
- Etosha (p332) – this vast park is one of Africa's most renowned wildlife-viewing venues – and deservedly so. It features an enormous pan and numerous water holes, and is one of the best places in the region to see black rhinos.
- Namib-Naukluft (p367) – one of the world's largest national parks, this stunning and magical desert wilderness takes in world-famous sand dunes and wild desert mountains, with excellent hiking.

South Africa

- Drakensberg (p516) – this mountain region may be low on the Big Five, but it's high on awe-inspiring mountain scenery, rock art and extensive hiking opportunities.
- St Lucia (p513) – this coastal wetland in a remote part of the country presents a unique ecosystem of global significance.

- Tsitsikamma (p466) – a lovely coastal park with forests, fynbos, beaches, rocky headlands and a world-renowned hiking trail.
- Hluhluwe-Imfolozi (p512) – near the Zulu heartland, this bushland park is best known for its rhino populations.
- Kruger (p528) – South Africa's most popular national park covers an enormous area and offers the classic wildlife experience, while boasting top-notch facilities.
- Pilanesberg (p569) – protects an unusual complex of extinct volcanoes with towering rocky outcrops and an impressive variety and number of wildlife, including wild dogs.

Zambia

- Kafue (p666) – massive and genuinely wild, with an impressive range of habitats and wildlife.
- Kasanka (p651) – pioneering, privately managed park, noted for sightings of the rare sitatunga antelope.
- Lower Zambezi (p655) – spectacular setting, escarpments and plains, plus the great river itself. It's best appreciated on multiday canoe trips.
- South Luangwa (p658) – this wild and pristine wildlife park is growing more popular, but many still consider it 'Africa's best-kept secret'.
- Mosi-oa-Tunya (p625) – taking in both Zambia's portion of Victoria Falls and a small game park, this park is one of the country's most visited attractions.

Zimbabwe

- Matusadona (p705) – with both lakefront and mountain habitats south of Lake Kariba, this rewarding wildlife park is known for its enormous buffalo herds and lion populations.
- Nyanga (p710), Bvumba (p708), Chimanimani (p714) – these three parks in the misty Eastern Highlands offer mountain retreats and excellent hiking opportunities.
- Hwange (p723) – Zimbabwe's best-known wildlife park holds one of the most dense wildlife populations in Africa. It's conveniently close to Victoria Falls.
- Mana Pools (p705) – combines the Zambezi Escarpment, a swathe of bushland and beautiful riverine scenery to create a varied wildlife experience. Canoe safaris are popular.

Transfrontier Peace Parks

In addition to national parks there are several transfrontier parks at various stages of completion. These mammoth ventures cross national borders and are flagship conservation ventures designed to re-establish age-old migration routes. They include the following:

- Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (p462) – combines Northern Cape's old Kalahari Gemsbok National Park with Botswana's Gemsbok National Park
- Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park – this spreads nearly 100,000 sq km (larger than Portugal) across the borders of South Africa (Kruger; p528), Mozambique (former Limpopo National Park; p260) and Zimbabwe (Gonarezhou; p717)
- Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park – incorporates the spectacular desert mountain scenery of Ai-Ais Hot Springs Game Park (p385) in Namibia and the Richtersveld National Park (see the boxed text, p465) in South Africa
- Limpopo/Shashe Transfrontier Conservation Area – a proposed conservation area straddling the borders of South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe
- Maloti/Drakensberg Transfrontier Project – a project (with a completion date of 2007) to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the Maloti-Drakensberg Mountains

Malawi and Zambia have agreed to set up the first transfrontier park outside South Africa. The proposed area combines the Nyika Plateau on both sides of the border, Malawi's Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve and Kasungu National Park, with Zambian forest reserves, Musalangu Game Management Area and Lukusuzi National Park.

HUNTING – ANIMAL WELFARE VS ECONOMICS

In some parts of Southern Africa, areas of land are set aside for hunting, and hunters are charged 'trophy fees' to shoot animals. This is abhorrent to many people – especially in Western countries.

On the one hand it is argued that trophy or sport hunting is a form of tourism that stimulates local economies and thereby fosters 'conservation-minded' attitudes. For people who lack other resources the trophy fees are large (thousands of US dollars for animals such as elephants or lions) and an invaluable source of income. Paradoxically, the financial benefits of hunting tourism encourages the management and protection of these animals and their environment. Hunting, it is argued, provides an enticement to landowners to maintain the natural habitats that provide a home for the hunted animals.

On the other hand, killing an animal for fun is simply morally and ethically wrong to many people, and this is accentuated once the beauty, grace and intelligence of many African animals is witnessed in the wild. Can killing for fun ever be justified in a modern society? Hunters claim that killing is not the purpose of hunting; instead, it's all about outwitting and learning behavioural patterns of their prey. Then why not take a camera instead of a rifle?

It is also argued that slaughtering wildlife in order to raise conservation funds to save it is a twisted way of thinking. Further, improperly managed, trophy hunting can have seriously detrimental effects on wildlife, especially threatened and endangered species.

Although conservation organisations do not agree on policy towards hunting, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has a pragmatic attitude, stating that 'for endangered species, trophy hunting should only be considered when all other options have been explored...and that trophy hunting, where it is scientifically based and properly managed, has proven to be an effective conservation and management method in some countries and for certain species'.

In 2004, CITES lifted a ban on hunting the black rhino, once a potent symbol of endangered African animals, allowing an annual hunt quota of five each for South Africa and Namibia. Conservationists opposed to the move say that the rhino is still a target for poachers, with its horn being highly valued in Asia and the Middle East. It is claimed that hunting quotas would make it far easier to cover up the illegal trade of rhino horns from poached animals. Also, the black rhino remains critically endangered in most countries outside Southern Africa. Namibia and South Africa have pledged to spend the substantial revenues to improve conservation in their countries.

In 2006 South Africa proposed a new law that would end the practice of 'canned hunting', in which wildlife bred in captivity are killed by tourists in sealed reserves. The law would make breeding predators like cheetahs, lions or leopards specifically for hunting illegal. The average price paid for canned hunting of a white rhinoceros is US\$25,000.

Poaching is still a problem in countries such as Malawi and has increased dramatically in Zimbabwe since the land seizures where world-class parks and anti-poaching policies are under threat.

Many Africans believe conservation for its own sake is a luxurious Western notion that the people of Southern Africa simply cannot afford. To concede the benefits of conservation, locals need to see some of these benefits, and that's where tourism comes in. If the money earned from visitors coming to enjoy the animals and the environment stays in the pockets of locals (or in the country as a whole), then this will encourage wildlife and environmental protection.

Income is also generated by the jobs that hunting and wildlife tourism create, such as guides, game rangers, tour guides and various posts in the associated hotels, lodges and camps. Further spin-offs include the sale of crafts and curios.

For community initiatives and projects designed to combat local issues, as well as examples of ecotourism, see the Environment section in country-specific chapters.

Wildlife Guide

Southern Africa's animal kingdom will captivate, mesmerise and provide you with an unforgettable experience of the region. Thanks to its varied terrain, Southern Africa hosts an amazing diversity of species and you're practically guaranteed to see plenty of hoofed, tusked, winged and other creatures, not to mention the fabled big cats and great herd animals.

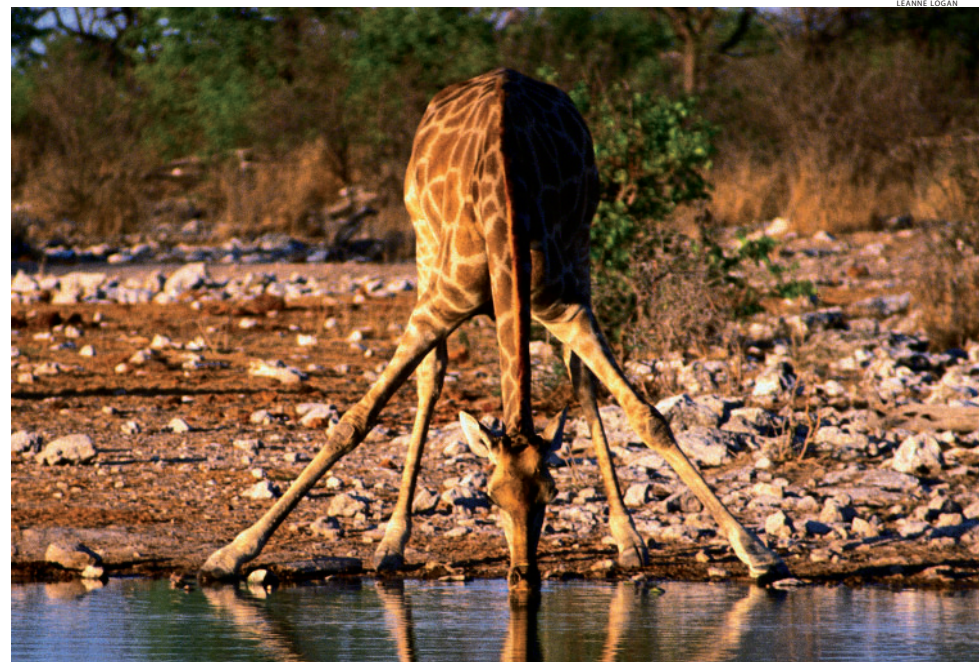
The beauty of the wildlife is not just the Big Five (lion, leopard, Cape buffalo, black rhino and elephant) either. You may be entertained by the clownish antics of the dwarf mongoose, captivated by the speed and grace of a cheetah, awed by the beauty of a gemsbok, outraged at the cheek of a curious baboon or startled at the rippling power of a hippo.

Habitat plays a big role when watching wildlife in Southern Africa – the animals are a part of this land, and when you see their interactions with the temperate grasslands, dry woodland or arid savanna, you'll know that you're seeing Africa.

As wildlife tourism is one of the main sources of revenue for conservation efforts in Southern Africa, the money you spend in national parks and reserves is often ploughed back into these areas, thus ensuring the protection and sustainability of these magnificent creatures.

The following tips will help you get the most out of wildlife watching:

- Wildlife viewing is generally best in the dry season, when sparse vegetation opens up the view and thirsty animals congregate around water sources.
- Be patient – take time to notice the environment. After spotting an animal, stop to look around and you'll usually notice a lot more activity. Staking out a water hole for several hours will almost always reward you with a greater understanding of what's going on.
- Warthogs, baboons, zebras, giraffes and many antelope species happily associate with each other, so it's common to see several species at once. However, the presence of feeding herbivores doesn't preclude the possibility of a predator nearby, so be alert for stalking lions.
- Don't forget your binoculars, which will allow you to turn a speck in the distance into something much more interesting, and will enhance bird-watching opportunities.



LEANNE LOGAN



ANDREW PARKINSON

Lion

Lions are surprisingly easy to spot in Southern Africa. They have a wide habitat tolerance, spend most of their days lying about and largely ignore the sounds of camera shutters snapping. To see this massive predator in top form, arrange for a guided night drive – lions prefer to hunt under the cover of darkness.

Size: Shoulder height 1.2m; length 2.5m to 3m, including tail up to 1m; weight up to 260kg (male), 180kg (female).

Distribution: Largely confined to protected areas and present in all savanna and woodland parks in the region.



ANDREW PARKINSON



ADRIAN BAILEY



ANDREW PARKINSON



DENNIS JONES

African Elephant

The largest land mammal is also one of the most social, and it is very common to see tremendous herds of elephants in Botswana and Namibia. Elephants drink an average of 65 litres of water per day, so it's usually safe to assume that they're congregating near a water source.

Size: Shoulder height up to 4m (male), 3.5m (female); weight 5 to 6.5 tonnes (male), 3 to 3.5 tonnes (female). **Distribution:** Widely distributed in the region, though large populations occur only in protected areas.



ANDREW PARKINSON



ADRIAN BAILEY

African Buffalo

The African buffalo is regarded as the most dangerous of the Big Five, primarily because it will incessantly pursue a perceived attacker. Furthermore, solitary males employ the 'attack is the best defence' tactic, though large herds are fairly relaxed and unlikely to charge. Buffalo herds have fairly predictable movements, seeking out good grazing and water during the early morning and late afternoon. **Size:** Shoulder height 1.6m; weight 400kg to 900kg; horns up to 1.25m long; female somewhat smaller than male.

Distribution: Widespread, but large populations occur only in parks.



DAVE HAMMAN



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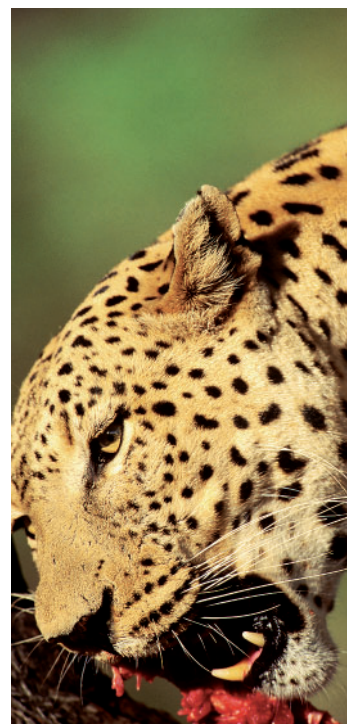
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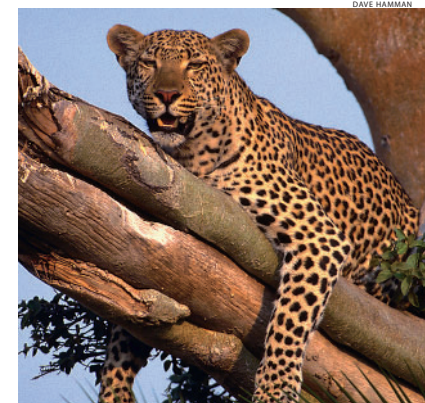
Leopard

Africa's most common cat, the leopard, is also its most difficult to spot. True to their feline roots, leopards spend most of their days sleeping in the tree tops (which is where they also store kills). The services of a well-trained guide are invaluable if you want to spot a leopard. However, rare sightings do occur in the open, particularly in woodland-savanna mosaics.

Size: Shoulder height 50cm to 75cm; length 1.6m to 2.1m, including 70cm to 1.1m tail; weight up to 90kg; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Widely spread throughout the region, they also persist in human-altered habitat due to their adaptability.



CHRISTER FREDRIKSSON



DAVE HAMMAN

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Black Rhinoceros

Black rhinos are edgy and nervous animals. When disturbed, they are quick to flee, though they will confront an aggressor head-on, particularly if offspring are present. As a result, they are difficult to observe in the wild, and are fewer in number than white rhinos. Black rhinos can be identified by their triangular (rather than square) lip and the lack of a neck hump.

Size: Shoulder height 1.6m; length 3m to 4m; weight 800kg to 1.4 tonnes; front horn up to 1.3m long.

Distribution: Restricted to relict populations in a few reserves (highly endangered).



DENNIS JONES



MITCH BEARDON



ANDREW PARRINSON

Steenboks are one of seven small species of antelopes that operate in monogamous pairs. They usually graze by day but will raid crops by night with astonishing stealth.

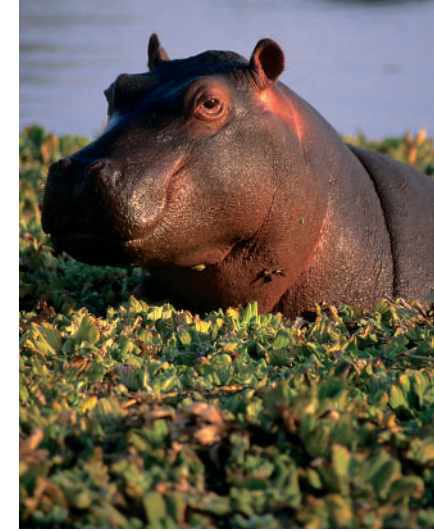
The world's fastest land mammal, cheetahs can reach speeds over 105km/h, but become exhausted after a few hundred metres and therefore stalk prey to within 60m before unleashing their tremendous acceleration. On average, only one in four hunts is successful.



DAVE HAMMAN

The hippopotamus is found close to fresh water where it spends the majority of its day before emerging at night to graze. It is distantly related to the domestic pig.

CAROL POLICH



Zebras are dependent on water and are rarely found more than an easy day's walk away. Lions converge on water holes to lay ambushes. Single lions are able to take down a zebra, but it's a dangerous task; zebras defend themselves with lethal kicks that easily break a jaw or leg.

ANDREW PARKINSON



JASON EDWARDS

Meerkats have refined keeping a lookout to a dedicated art. While the troop forages for scorpions, insects and lizards, a lone sentinel watches for eagles and jackals. One shrill alarm shriek from the guard and the band rushes for cover.

Baboons live in troops of eight to 200; contrary to popular belief, there is no single dominant male. Social interactions are complex, with males accessing only certain females, males forming alliances to dominate other males, and males caring for unrelated juveniles.

DAVE HAMMAN



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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. Its modern veneer, however, belies the fact that much of Botswana 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 roughly the same size as Kenya, France or Texas. Most of the country is covered with scrub brush and savanna grassland, although small areas of deciduous forest thrive near the Zimbabwean border. With vast open savannas teeming with free-ranging 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 Game Reserve and in Chobe National Park. In the Makgadikgadi & Nxai Pan National Park, however, herds of wildebeest, zebra and other hoofed mammals migrate annually in search of permanent water and stable food supplies.

FAST FACTS

- **Area:** 582,000 sq km
- **Capital:** Gaborone
- **Country code:** ☎ 267
- **Famous for:** Okavango Delta, Chobe National Park, the Kalahari
- **Languages:** English, Setswana
- **Money:** Pula (P)
- **Phrases:** *Dumela?* (How are you?); *dankie* (thank you)
- **Population:** 1.61 million



HOW MUCH?

- **One-day mokoro trip** US\$66
- **Ostrich egg-shell bracelet** \$5
- **Stalk of sugar cane** \$0.25
- **Foreign newspaper** US\$1.65
- **Night in a budget hotel** US\$24.75

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L of petrol** US\$0.75
- **1L of bottled water** US\$0.50-1
- **Bottle of beer** US\$1
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$5-10
- **Snack** US\$1-2

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Okavango Delta** (p106) Glide through the watery expanses in a mokoro, a traditional dugout canoe.
- **Chobe National Park** (p101) Spot the Big Five at Botswana's premier safari park.
- **Central Kalahari Game Reserve** (p119) Test the limits of your survival instincts on a 4WD camping expedition.
- **Makgadikgadi Pans & Nxai Pan National Park** (p100) Follow the herds of migrating zebras and wildebeests in this baobab-dotted salt-pan complex.
- **Off the beaten track** (p117) Wander through the 'Wilderness Louvre' of ancient San paintings at Tsodilo Hills.

ITINERARIES

- **Three Days** Botswana's tourist highlight is the **Okavango Delta** (p106), and if you have only a few days, this is where you'll want to focus. Choose **Maun** (p106) or the **Okavango Panhandle** (p116) as your base and organise a mokoro trip through the

wetlands, followed by a wildlife-viewing trip through **Moremi Game Reserve** (p114).

- **One Week** Combine your visit to the delta with a safari through **Chobe National Park** (p101), one of the world's top safari experiences. Either go overland through the rugged interior of the park, or cruise (or boat) along the wildlife-rich waterfront.
- **One Month** With a month (and lots of money), you can hire a 4WD or use a reputable safari company and see the best of the country: do a mokoro trip in the Delta (see the boxed text, p112); safari in Moremi and Chobe; camp and hike in the **Tsodilo Hills** (p117); cruise on the Okavango Panhandle; and explore the furthest reaches of the **Kalahari** (p118).

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

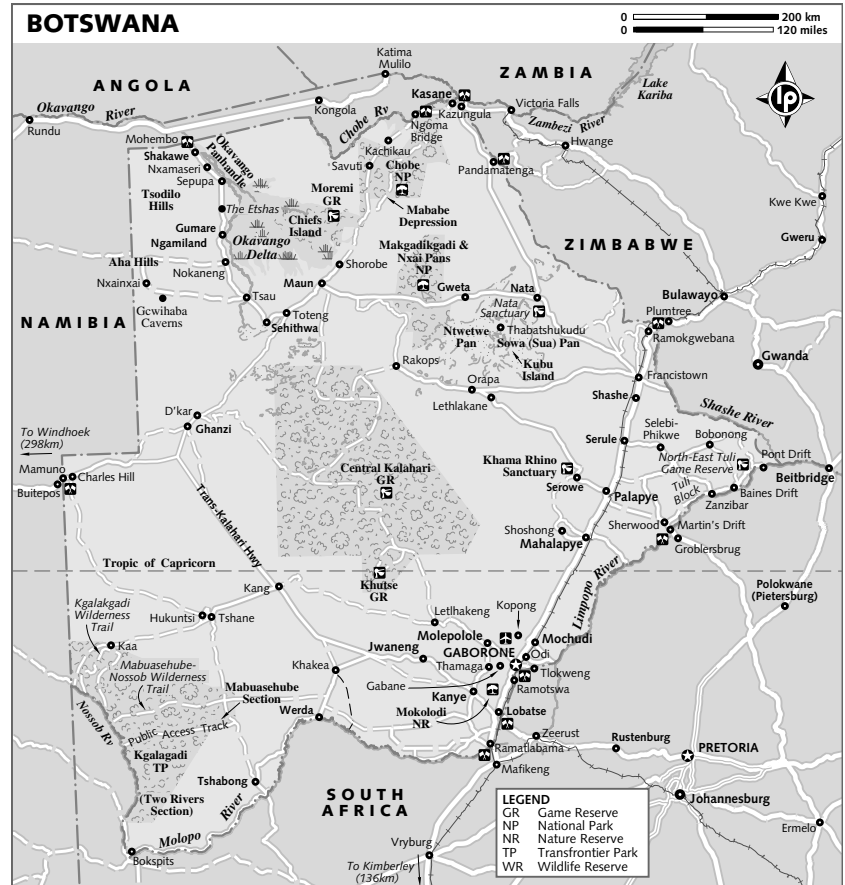
Although it straddles the Tropic of Capricorn, Botswana experiences extremes in both temperature and weather. In the winter (late May to August), days are normally clear, warm and sunny, and nights are cool to cold. Wildlife never wanders far from water sources so sightings are more predictable than 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. See p742 for more information on the climate in Southern Africa.

HISTORY

For a detailed account of the pre-colonial history of the whole Southern African region, including Botswana's precolonial history, see p37.

TRAVEL TIPS

Travelling cheaply in Botswana isn't impossible, but if you can't afford a flight into the Okavango, a day or two at Moremi Game Reserve or Chobe National Park, or a 4WD trip through the Kalahari, you may want to think twice before visiting. Safari lodges – especially those in the Okavango Delta and Chobe National Park – are for the most part exclusive haunts of the wealthy, and you'll rarely find anything for less than US\$300 for a double. Hotels, camping, car hire, domestic air flights, meals, alcohol and self-catering prices are comparable to those in Europe, North America and Australasia, and although buses and trains are quite economical (US\$1 per hour of journey time), they won't take you to the most interesting parts of the country.



The Boers & the British

In 1836, feeling pressured by the British in the Cape, about 20,000 Boers set out on the Great Trek across the Vaal River into Batswana and Zulu territory, staking out new farms for themselves and displacing local villagers.

Bent on establishing trade links with the Dutch and Portuguese, the Boers set up their own free state ruling the Transvaal – a move ratified by the British in the Sand River Convention of 1852. This effectively placed the Batswana under the rule of the so-called new South African Republic and a period of rebellion and heavy-handed oppression ensued. Following heavy human and territorial losses, the Batswana chiefs petitioned the British government for protection from the Boers.

Britain, though, already had its hands full in Southern Africa and was in no hurry to take on and support a country of dubious profitability. Instead, it offered to act as arbitrator in the dispute. By 1877, however, animosity against the Boers had escalated to such a dangerous level that the British conceded and annexed the Transvaal – thereby starting the first Anglo-Boer War. The war continued until the Pretoria Convention of 1881, when the British withdrew from the Transvaal in exchange for Boer allegiance to the British Crown.

With the British out of their way, the Boers once again looked northwards into Batswana territory and pushed westwards into the Molopo Basin. In 1882, the Boers managed to subdue the towns of Taung and

Mafikeng and proclaimed them the republics of Stellaland and Goshen. They may have gone much further if it wasn't for a significant event that was to change regional politics radically. This was the annexation of South West Africa (modern-day Namibia) by the Germans in the 1890s.

With the potential threat of a German-Boer alliance across the Kalahari, cutting them off from their expansionist dreams into mineral-rich Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), the British started to look seriously at the Batswana petitions for protection. And in 1885 they proclaimed a protectorate over their Tswana allies, known as the British Crown Colony of Bechuanaland.

Cecil John Rhodes

To alleviate them of the heavy burden of colonial expense, British expansion in Southern Africa came in the form of a private venture under the auspices of the British South Africa Company (BSAC), owned by millionaire businessman Cecil John Rhodes.

By 1889 Rhodes already had a hand in the diamond-mining industry in Kimberley, South Africa, and he was convinced that other African countries had similar mineral deposits just waiting to be exploited. He aimed to do this through the system of land concessions that companies could obtain privately in order to colonise new land for the Crown. The system was easily exploited by the unscrupulous Rhodes, who fraudulently obtained large tracts of land from local chiefs by passing off contracts as treaties. For their part, the British turned a blind eye as they eventually hoped to transfer the entire Bechuanaland Protectorate to the BSAC and relieve themselves of the expense of colonial administration.

Realising the implications of Rhodes' aspirations, three Batswana chiefs, Bathoen, Khama III and Sebele, accompanied by a sympathetic missionary, WC Willoughby, sailed to England to appeal directly to the British parliament for continued government control of Bechuanaland. Instead of taking action, Colonial Minister Joseph Chamberlain advised them to contact Rhodes directly and work things out among themselves. Chamberlain then conveniently forgot the matter and went on holiday.

Naturally, Rhodes was immovable, so the delegation turned to the London Missionary Society (LMS) who in turn took the matter

to the British public. Fearing that the BSAC would allow alcohol in Bechuanaland, the LMS and other Christian groups backed the devoutly Christian Khama and his entourage. The British public in general felt that the Crown should be administering the empire, rather than the controversial Cecil Rhodes. When Chamberlain returned from holiday, public pressure had mounted to such a level that the government was forced to concede to the chiefs. Chamberlain agreed to continue British administration of Bechuanaland, ceding only a small strip of the southeast (now known as the Tuli Block) to the BSAC for the construction of a railway line to Rhodesia.

Colonial Years

By 1899, Britain had decided it was time to consolidate the Southern African states and declared war on the Transvaal. The Boers were overcome in 1902, and in 1910 the Union of South Africa was created, comprising Natal, the Cape Colony, Transvaal and the Free State – with provisions for the future incorporation of Bechuanaland and Rhodesia.

By selling cattle, draught oxen and grain to the Europeans streaming north in search of farming land and minerals, Bechuanaland enjoyed an initial degree of economic independence. However, the construction of a railway through Bechuanaland to Rhodesia, and a serious outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in the 1890s, destroyed the transit trade. This new economic vulnerability, combined with a series of droughts and the need to raise cash to pay British taxes, sent many Batswana to South Africa to look for work on farms and in mines; as many as 25% of Botswana's male population was abroad at any one time. This accelerated the breakdown of traditional land-use patterns and eroded the chiefs' powers.

The British government continued to regard the protectorate as a temporary expedient, until it could be handed over to Rhodesia or the new Union of South Africa. Hence investment and administrative development within the territory were kept to a bare minimum. Even when there were moves in the 1930s to reform administration or initiate agricultural and mining development, these were hotly disputed by leading Tswana chiefs, on the grounds that they would only enhance colonial control. So the territory remained divided into eight largely self-administering 'tribal' reserves, five white settler farm blocks with

THE SAN

The Past

Traditionally, the San were nomadic hunter-gatherers who travelled in small family bands (usually between 25 and 35 people) within well-defined territories. During the driest parts of the year these groups camped together at seasonal water holes; then in the wet season they'd scatter over the country. They had no chiefs or hierarchy of leadership, and decisions were reached by group consensus. With no animals, crops or possessions the San were highly mobile. Everything that they needed for their daily existence they carried with them.

Initially, the San's social flexibility enabled them to evade conquest and control. But as powerful tribes with big herds of livestock and farming ambitions moved into the area an inevitable conflict arose over the land. The San's wide-ranging, nomadic lifestyle (some territories extended over 1000 sq km) was utterly at odds with the settled world of the farmers and soon became a source of bitter conflict between the two groups. It was a trend widely accelerated by European colonists who arrived in the mid-17th century. The early Boers hatched an extermination campaign that lasted 200 years and killed as many as 200,000 indigenous people. Such territorial disputes, combined with modern policies on wildlife conservation, have seen the San increasingly disenfranchised and dispossessed. What's more, in the modern world their disparate social structure has made it exceedingly difficult for them to organise pressure groups to defend their rights and land as other tribes have done.

The Present

Unlike most other African countries, where the San have perished or disappeared through war and interbreeding, Botswana and Namibia are privileged to retain the remnants of their San communities, barely 55,000 individuals in total. Of these around 60% live in Botswana (the !Kung, G//ana, G//wi and !xo being the largest groups) and 35% in Namibia (the Naro, !Xukwe, Hei//kom and Ju//hoansi), with the remainder scattered throughout South Africa, Angola, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Today, the San are unequivocally impoverished. Many work on farms and cattle-posts or languish in squalid, handout-dependent and alcohol-plagued settlements centred around boreholes in western Botswana and northeastern Namibia, as debate rages around them as to their 'place' in modern African society and the practicality of their lifestyle.

Nearly all of Botswana's and Namibia's San have now been relocated from their ancestral lands to new government settlements such as New Xade in the central Kalahari. It's the biggest political hot-potato that the Botswana government currently faces (see the boxed text, p119). In March 2006 this resettlement programme earned the government a stinging reprimand from the UN's Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, who advised them 'to pay particular attention to the close cultural ties that bind the San to their ancestral land'. The Botswana government maintains that their relocation policies have the San's best interests at heart (see the section 'Relocation of Basarwa' on the government website, www.gov.bw). Development, education and modernisation are their buzz-words. The trouble is, many San actively reject the government's version of modernisation if it means giving up their ancestral lands and traditions.

The Future

The outlook for the San people is uncertain, whatever happens. One of Africa's greatest dilemmas in the 21st century is how to preserve old cultures and traditions while accepting and adapting to the new.

Historical precedents like Native Americans, the Innu of Canada and Australian Aboriginals certainly don't bode well. But the groundswell of protest generated by grass-roots organisations like **WIMSA** (Working Group for Indigenous Minorities of Southern Africa; www.san.org.za) is gaining ever more international attention, increasingly so now that **Survival International** (www.survival-international.org) has joined the campaign of Botswana's First Peoples of the Kalahari (FPK) for the restitution of their land rights in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR). The High Court of Botswana ruled in favour of the San in December 2006, but the government appears to be obstructing their return to the CKGR.

the remainder classified as 'crown' (ie state) lands. Similarly, the administrative capital, Mafikeng, which was actually situated outside the protectorates' border in South Africa, remained where it was until 1964.

Independence

The extent of Botswana's subordination to the interests of South Africa during this period became clear in 1950. In a case that caused political controversy in Britain and across the Empire, the British government banned Seretse Khama from the chieftainship of the Ngwato and exiled him for six years. This, as secret documents have since revealed, was in order to appease the South African government which objected to Seretse's marriage to a British woman at a time when racial segregation was enforced in South Africa.

Such meddling only increased growing political agitation and throughout the 1950s and '60s Botswana political parties started to surface and promote the idea of 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, joined with KT Motsete, a teacher from Malawi, to form the Bechuanaland People's Party (BPP). Its immediate goal was independence.

In 1962, Seretse Khama and Kanye farmer Ketumile 'Quett' Masire formed the moderate Bechuanaland Democratic Party (BDP). The BDP formulated a schedule for independence, drawing on support from local chiefs such as Bathoen II of the Bangwaketse, and traditional Batswana. The BDP also called for the transfer of the capital into Botswana (ie from Mafikeng to Gaborone) and a new nonracial constitution.

The British gratefully accepted the BDP's peaceful plan for a transfer of power, and Khama was elected president when general elections were held in 1965. On 30 September 1966, the country – now called the Republic of Botswana – was granted full independence.

With a steady hand, Seretse Khama steered Botswana through its first 14 years of independence. He guaranteed continued freehold over land held by white ranchers and adopted a strictly 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

the giant to the south, from where they imported the majority of their foodstuffs and where many Batswana worked in the diamond mines. Nevertheless, Khama refused to exchange ambassadors with South Africa and officially disapproved of apartheid in international circles.

Modern Politics

Sir Seretse Khama died in 1980 (not long after Zimbabwean independence), but his Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), formerly the Bechuanaland Democratic Party, continues to command a substantial majority in the Botswana parliament. Sir Ketumile 'Quett' Masire, who succeeded Khama as president (1980–98), followed the path laid down by his predecessor, and continued to cautiously follow pro-Western policies.

Over the last 35 years the BDP have also managed the country's diamond windfall wisely. Diamond dollars have been ploughed into infrastructure, education and health. Private business has been allowed to grow and foreign investment has been welcomed. From 1966 to 2005, Botswana's economy has grown faster than any other in world. Yet cabinet ministers have not awarded themselves mansions and helicopters, and even the current president, Festus Mogae, has been seen doing his own shopping. All in all, it is an impressive record.

Diamond Dementia

Following independence, Botswana ranked as one of the world's poorest countries with a shocking GDP per capita below US\$200. Educational facilities were minimal, with less than 2% of the population having completed primary school and fewer than 100 students enrolled in university. And in the entire country there was only one 12km-long paved road. Hardly surprising then that the country played no role in either regional or continental politics.

Then, in 1967, Botswana effectively won the jackpot with the discovery of diamonds at Orapa. Two other major mines followed at Letlhakane in 1977 and Jwaneng in 1982, making Botswana the world's leading producer of gem-quality stones and catapulting the country from a poor, provincial backwater to a regional player of some substance, able to form the Southern African Development Community (SADC), whose function it is

to coordinate the disparate economies of the region.

But the diamond boon also has its dark side and with a lifespan estimated at only 35 years, the Botswana government is looking at a bleak future if they fail to find alternative revenue streams. With diminishing reserves the mining of diamonds is set to become increasingly contentious, as the court case brought by the First Peoples of the Kalahari against the government has proved (see the boxed text, p119). One of the allegations against the government is that the San were resettled to free the way for a Debswana mining concession. In her evidence, Pelonomi Venson, Minister for Wildlife & Tourism in 2002, stated, 'That development may take place...I cannot say conclusively. Should the state discover minerals anywhere, they will be mined for the benefit of Botswana'.

THE CULTURE

The National Psyche

Proud, conservative, resourceful and respectful, the Batswana have an ingrained feeling of national identity and an impressive belief in their government and country. Their history – a series of clever manoeuvres that meant they avoided the worst aspects of colonisation – does them proud and lends them a confidence in themselves, their government

and the future that is rare in post-colonial Africa. Admittedly this faith in government and progress has been facilitated by Botswana's incredible diamond wealth, which has allowed for significant investment in education, health and infrastructure.

Daily Life

Traditional culture also 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 easy-going and unhurried approach to life, and the emotional framework of the extended family generally makes for an inclusive network. As the pace and demands of modern life increase this support is becoming ever more vital as men and women migrate to cities to work in more lucrative jobs, usually leaving children behind to be cared for by other family members.

Population

Botswana's population in 2006 was estimated at 1,640,000 people, a figure that takes into

MOVERS & SHAKERS: SERETSE KHAMA

When Bangwato chief (*kgosi* in Setswana) Khama III died in 1923, he was succeeded by his son, Sekgoma, who died only two years later. Because the next heir to the throne, Seretse Khama, was only four years old, the job of regent went to his 21-year-old uncle, Tshekedi Khama, who left his studies in South Africa to return to Serowe.

Uproar in the Khama dynasty occurred in 1948 when Seretse married an Englishwoman, Ruth Williams, while studying law in London. As a royal, Seretse was expected – and required – to take a wife from a Batswana royal family. Indignant at such a breach of tribal custom, Tshekedi stripped his nephew of his inheritance. Seretse was exiled from Serowe by Bangwato leaders, and from the protectorate by the British, who assured him that he'd be better off in London.

However, Tshekedi lost his regency when an overwhelming majority of the Bangwato backed Seretse over his uncle, forcing Tshekedi to gather his followers and settle elsewhere. Subsequent breakdowns in Bangwato tribal structure prompted Tshekedi to return to Serowe in 1952 with a change of heart. Seretse was still being detained in Britain though, and it wasn't until 1956, when he renounced his claim to the Bangwato throne, that he was permitted to return to Serowe with his English wife.

While in Serowe, Seretse and his wife began campaigning for Botswana's independence. Eventually, Seretse was knighted for his efforts, and became the country's first president, a post he held until his death 14 years later. In a final act of reconciliation, Sir Seretse Khama was buried in the Royal Cemetery in Serowe. His son, Ian, is still chief of the Bangwato and currently vice president of Botswana.

account the fact that Botswana has one of the highest rates of HIV infection in the world. Since the early 1990s, the annual birth rate has dropped from 3.5% to about 2.3% and in 2006 the annual population growth rate was estimated at -0.04%. Officially, life expectancy soared from 49 years at the time of independence (1966) to about 70 years by the mid-1990s, and it's thought that without the scourge of AIDS life expectancy in Botswana would now be around 74 years, on a par with the USA. Instead, today's figure is a depressing 33 years of age and this is expected to decrease even further by 2010 to a devastating 27 years.

Immigration & Emigration

Due to the political and economic instability that swept through Zimbabwe in recent years, the volume of illegal immigrants crossing into Botswana in search of work is on the rise. According to Botswana's Department of Immigration, over 25,000 Zimbabwean illegal immigrants were apprehended and repatriated from Botswana in 2005 alone. When interviewed, immigrants claimed that their motivation for fleeing Zimbabwe was the lack of opportunities for stable employment. Furthermore, many Zimbabwean families survive on remittances from family members working abroad, especially considering that the value of the Zimbabwean dollar is undergoing hyperinflation. However, although most Botswana empathise with the plight of Zimbabweans, the situation is threatening to spiral out of control.

ARTS

Arts & Crafts

The original Botswana artists managed to convey individuality, aesthetics and aspects of Botswana 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.

Literature

As indigenous languages have only been written since the coming of the Christian missionaries, Botswana lacks an extensive literary tradition. What survives of the ancient myths

and poetry of the San, Tswana, Herero and other groups has been handed down orally and only recently written down.

Botswana's most famous modern literary figure was Bessie Head, who settled in Sir Seretse Khama's village of Serowe and wrote works that reflected the 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*, *A Question of Power*, *The Cardinals*, *A Bewitched Crossroad* and *The Collector of Treasures*; the last is an anthology of short stories. Head died in 1988.

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

The Land

With an area of 582,000 sq km, landlocked Botswana extends 1100km from north to south and 960km from east to west, making it about the same size as Kenya or France.

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 savanna. The Kalahari (Kgalagadi), a semi-arid expanse of wind-blown sand deposits and long, sandy valleys, covers nearly 85% of Botswana, including the entire central and southwestern regions. In the northwest the Okavango River flows in from Namibia and soaks into the sands, forming the Okavango Delta, which covers an area of 15,000 sq km. In the northeast are the great salty clay deserts of the Makgadikgadi Pans.

Wildlife

Most of the country is covered with scrub brush and savanna grassland, although small areas of deciduous forest (mopane, msasa and Zambezi teak) thrive on the Zimbabwean border. The Okavango and Linyanti wetlands of the northwest are characterised by riverbank and swamp vegetation, which includes reeds, papyrus and water lilies as well as larger trees such as acacia, jackalberry, leadwood and sausage trees.

Because the Okavango Delta and the Chobe River provide an incongruous water supply in

the otherwise dry savanna, nearly all Southern African mammal species, including such rarities as pukus, red lechwes, sitatungas and wild dogs, are present in Moremi Game Reserve, parts of Chobe National Park and the Linyanti Marshes. In the Makgadikgadi & Nxai Pan National Park, herds of wildebeests, zebras and other hoofed mammals migrate between their winter range on the Makgadikgadi plains and the summer lushness of the Nxai Pan region.

National Parks

Botswana's national parks are among Africa's wildest, characterised by open spaces where nature still reigns supreme, and although they do support a few private safari concessions, there's next to no infrastructure and few amenities.

The major parks include the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Chobe National Park, Khutse Game Reserve, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (an amalgamation of Botswana's former Mabuasehube-Gemsbok National Park and South Africa's Kalahari-Gemsbok National Park), Makgadikgadi & Nxai Pan National Park and Moremi Game Reserve. The North-East Tuli Game Reserve is not a national park, but rather is cobbled together from several private reserves.

Fees for parks (except for Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park) for nonresidents are US\$22/13 (P133/79) per day for individual travellers/ licensed safari participants, plus US\$5.50 (P33) per person for camping; foreign/Botswana-registered vehicles pay US\$10/2 per day. Children and Botswana residents and citizens get substantial discounts (residents of Botswana pay US\$6/4 per day to enter/camp and citizens pay US\$2/1). At Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, everyone pays US\$4 per day to enter and non-residents pay US\$6 to camp plus US\$37 per day to use the wilderness 4WD tracks (see p118).

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; Map pp88-9; ☎ 318 0774; fax 318 0775; dwnp@gov.bw; PO Box 131, Government Enclave, Khama Cres, Gaborone; ☎ 7.30am-12.45pm & 1.45-4.30pm Mon-Fri). You can also book through the **Maun office** (☎ 686 1265; fax 686 1264; PO Box 20364, Boleja, Maun), beside the police station. Chobe National Park bookings are also available from the **Kasane office** (☎ 625 0235; fax 625 1623).

When booking, include the name of the park, the camping ground, the dates of arrival and departure, the total number of campers and whether they are citizens, residents or nonresidents of Botswana. Payment in Botswana pula or by credit card must be received within one month or you forfeit the booking.

Environmental Issues

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 wildebeests, giraffes and zebras) 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.

Botswana also has water issues. From the time of the first European colonists, both settlers and developers have been eyeing the Okavango Delta as a source of water to transform northwestern Botswana into lush, green farmland. Nowadays, pressure from population growth, mining interests and increased tourism – particularly around Maun – are straining resources and placing the delta at the crux of a debate between the government, ranchers, engineers, developers, tour operators, rural people and conservationists.

See p26 for information on what you can do to travel responsibly in Botswana.

FOOD & DRINK

Food

Although eating out isn't particularly exciting – Botswana has no great national cuisine to knock

TRADITIONAL FOODS IN BOTSWANA

Traditionally, the Tswana staple was beef, the Yei depended on fish, and the Kalanga ate mainly sorghum, millet and maize; while the Herero subsisted on thickened, soured milk. Nowadays, most people get their food from agriculture or the supermarket, but before South African imports arrived, people herded animals and looked to the desert, which dished up a diverse array of wild edibles to augment their staple foods.

Historically, Batswana men were responsible for fishing or tending the herds, and lived mainly on meat and milk, while women were left to gather and eat wild fruits and vegetables. In remote areas, people still supplement their diets with these items. A useful desert plant is the *morama*, an immense underground tuber that contains liquid and is a source of water. Above ground, the *morama* grows leguminous pods that contain edible beans. Other desert delectables include marula fruit, plums, berries, tubers and roots, tsama melons, wild cucumbers and honey.

A fungus that grows on the *Grewia flavia* bush is related to the European truffle. In San mythology, these so-called Kalahari truffles are thought to be the eggs of the lightning bird because their presence is revealed by rings of cracked soil around the bush after electrical storms. The bush itself produces a small shrivelled berry, used locally to make *kgadi* wine. The nutritious and protein-rich mongongo nut, similar to the cashew, is eaten raw or roasted, and has historically been a staple for some San groups.

Traditional people – mainly the San – still gather wild animal products, such as birds and their eggs, small mammals and reptiles and even ant eggs. Mopane worms, caterpillar-like inhabitants of mopane trees, are normally gutted and cooked in hot ash for about 15 minutes. Alternatively, they're boiled in salt water or dried in the sun to be later deep-fried in fat, roasted or eaten raw.

your socks off – self-caterers will find the pickings among the best in Africa. Restaurants normally serve up decent, if unimaginative, fare. Vegetarian and international cuisines haven't really caught on, but in Gaborone, Francistown and Maun, you'll find Chinese, Indian, French and Italian options. In smaller towns, expect little menu variation: chicken, chips, beef and greasy fried snacks are the norm.

Forming the basis of most traditional Batswana meals are *mabele* (sorghum) or *bogobe* (sorghum porridge), or the increasingly popular imported *mielies* (maize) and *mielie pap* (maize porridge). All of these are typically served with some sort of meat relish and eaten with the fingers.

Open markets aren't as prevalent here as in neighbouring countries, but Gaborone, Francistown and Maun do have growing informal markets where you'll find inexpensive produce and other staples.

Drinks

A range of 100% natural fruit juices from South Africa are sold in casks in supermarkets in the major cities and towns. You'll also find a variety of tea, coffee and soft drinks.

Botswana's main domestic drop is the very light St Louis Special Light lager (you can't

drink it fast enough to feel it). You'll also find Castle, Lion and Windhoek Lager (from Namibia), as well as a growing range of spirit coolers. Some of the more popular traditional alcoholic drinks are less than legal, including mokolane wine, a potent still made from distilled palm sap. Another is *kgadi*, made from a distilled brew of brown sugar and berries or fungus. Other home brews include the common *bojalwa*, an inexpensive, sprouted sorghum beer that is also brewed commercially; a wine made from fermented marula fruit; light and nonintoxicating *mageu*, made from *mielies* or sorghum mash; and *madila*, a thickened sour milk.

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. For most international travellers flying into Botswana, the bustling town of Maun (p106), located on the banks of the Okavango Delta, serves as the principal port of entry. However, Gaborone serves as a con-

venient gateway to overland travellers arriving from South Africa, and it's a good supply stop before heading out to the national parks.

HISTORY

In 1964, when the village of Gaborone (named for an early Tlokwa chief) was designated as the future capital of independent Botswana, the task of designing the new city was assigned to the Department of Public Works, which never envisaged a population of more than 20,000. By 1990, however, the population was six times that, and Gaborone is now amongst the fastest-growing cities in Southern Africa.

ORIENTATION

Although it now has a distinct skyline, Gaborone lacks any real central business district, and 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) Has a huge array of novels, postcards, books and maps about Botswana and 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; US\$3 per hour) 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 more serious, head to

this considerably more modern, but expensive, hospital, opposite Broadhurst Mall.

Money

Major branches of Standard Chartered and Barclays Banks have foreign-exchange facilities and ATMs, and offer cash advances. The few bureaux de change around the city offer quick service at better rates than the banks, but charge up to 2.75% commission.

Barclays Bank (☎ 355 3411; Khama Cres)

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

Post

In addition to the **central post office** (The Mall), there is also a post office located across the road from Broadhurst Mall.

Tourist Information

Department of Tourism (☎ 355 3024; www.gov.bw/tourism; 2nd fl, Standard Chartered Bank Bldg, the Mall; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm & 1.45-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Has greatly improved over recent years.

Department of Wildlife & National Parks (DWNP; ☎ 318 0774; dwnp@gov.bw; Government Enclave, Khama Cres, Gaborone; ☎ reservations 7.30am-12.45pm & 1.45-4.30pm Mon-Fri) One of the two accommodation booking offices (the other is in Maun; see p107) for national parks and reserves run by the DWNP.

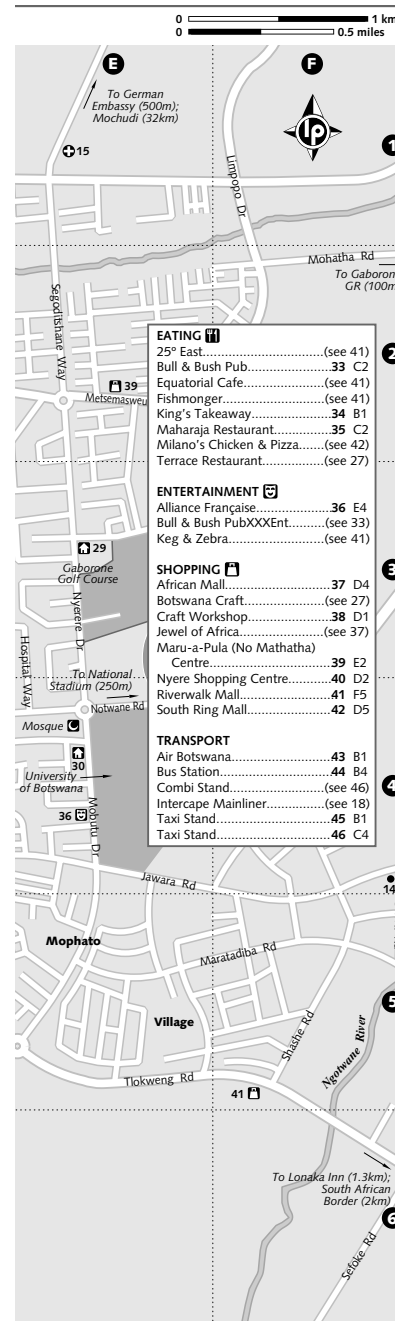
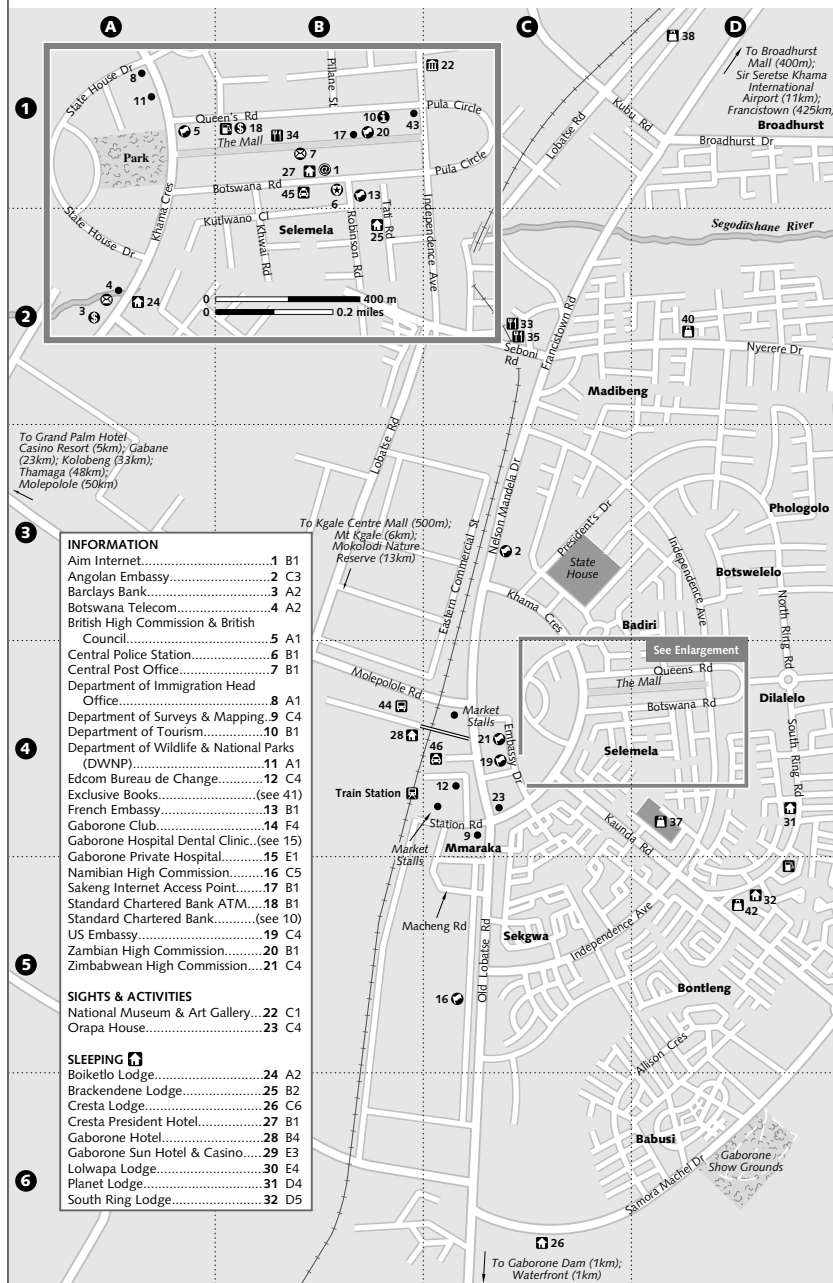
SIGHTS

The **National Museum & Art Gallery** (☎ 397 4616; Independence Ave; Private Bag 0014; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) is a repository of stuffed wildlife and cultural artefacts, including 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. Access is from Limpopo Dr; turn east immediately south of the Segoditshane River.

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.

GABORONE



ACTIVITIES

Visitors are welcome at the 18-hole **Gaborone Golf Course** (☎ 361 2262; Chuma Dr; ☹ closed Mon). Temporary membership, which includes use of the swimming pool, bars and restaurants, costs US\$10 per day. Green fees for 9/18 holes are an extra US\$3/6, and equipment is available for rental at the pro shop. The **National Stadium** (☎ 395 3449; Notwane Rd; tickets from US\$1) plays host to matches between teams in the countrywide Super League as well as the occasional international game. Matches start at 4pm on Saturdays and Sundays, and are usually advertised and publicised in the local English-language newspapers.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The national holidays of **Sir Seretse Khama Day**, **President's Day** and **Botswana/Independence Day** (see p125) are always cause for celebration in the capital. Details about these events are advertised in local English-language newspapers and in the 'What's On' column of the *Botswana Advertiser*. Gaborone also plays host to a number of local festivals and events:

Maitisong Festival Established in 1987, the Maitisong Festival is the largest performing arts festival in Botswana, and is held annually for seven days during the last week of March or the first week of April.

Traditional Dance Competition Late March.

Industry & Technology Fair Held at the Gaborone Show Grounds in May.

International Trade Fair Also held at the Gaborone Show Grounds, in August.

SLEEPING Budget

The best camping in the Gaborone area is at the nearby Mokolodi Nature Reserve (p93).

Boiketlo Lodge (☎ 355 2347; Khama Cres; s/d with shared bathroom US\$18/30; (P)) The most affordable hotel in town is dirt cheap and centrally located, though grungy rooms and questionable security are serious drawbacks. Boiketlo is poorly signed, though it can be found opposite the Botswana Post building.

our pick Brackendene Lodge (☎ 361 2886; Tati Rd; s/d from US\$24/45; (P) ☹) 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.

Midrange

Lolwapa Lodge (☎ 318 4865; 2873 Mobutu Dr; s/d with shared bathroom US\$27/34, s/d US\$36/45; (P) (24)) Although basic and decidedly lacking in character, carpeted rooms are clean and well furnished. Unfortunately, Lolwapa is on a noisy road and convenient to nothing except the university.

South Ring Lodge (☎ 318 5550; 3487 South Ring Rd; s/d with shared bathroom US\$30/35, s/d US\$37/42, suite US\$42/47; (P) (24)) Shabby rooms are offset by the convenient location (right next to the South Ring Mall). Splurge for the 'suite', which is highlighted by a massive bathtub (a rarity in these parts).

Planet Lodge (☎ 390 3295; 514 South Ring Rd; s/d from US\$36/43; (P) (24)) 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.

our pick Gaborone Hotel (☎ 362 2777; gabhot@info.bw; s/d US\$45/60; (P) (24)) This large and 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.

Top End

Cresta President Hotel (☎ 355 3631; www.cresta-hospitality.com; The Mall; s/d US\$107/133; (P) (24)) 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.

Gaborone Sun Hotel & Casino (☎ 355 1111; www.suninternational.com/resorts/gaborone/; Chuma Dr; standard/luxury d US\$115/140; (P) (24)) Once known for its highbrow atmosphere, the seemingly abandoned Gaborone Sun fails to compete with its upmarket rivals. Still, it's not a bad choice, especially since guests can take advantage of on-site restaurants, a casino, swimming pool and golf course.

Cresta Lodge (☎ 367 5375; www.cresta-hospitality.com; Samora Machel Rd; s/d US\$119/139; (P) (24)) Located 2km outside the city centre, the attractively landscaped Cresta Lodge is a good choice if you're looking for a quiet night's rest in a three-star setting outside the urban sprawl.

our pick Grand Palm Hotel Casino Resort (☎ 361 2999; www.grandpalm.bw; Molepolole Rd; d from US\$120; (P) (24)) Located 5km west of the city centre,

this Las Vegas-inspired resort complex boasts a mini-city complete with restaurants, bars, a casino, cinema and spa. You'll pay to stay, but it's the swishest accommodation in town.

EATING

Equatorial Cafe (Riverwalk Mall; mains from US\$2) The best espressos in town are served here, along with fruit smoothies, falafel and gourmet sandwiches. They even have 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.

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*.

our pick Kgotla Restaurant & Coffee Shop (Broadhurst Mall; meals US\$4-6; (24) closed Monday) This deservedly popular expat hang out above Woolworth's is renowned for its hearty breakfasts, vegetarian fare and coffee specialities.

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

Milano's Chicken & Pizza (South Ring Mall; mains US\$4-7) This popular chain of Italian restaurants is your top spot for, well, chicken and pizza. There's also an outlet at Broadhurst Mall.

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.

our pick Bull & Bush Pub (☎ 397 5070; mains US\$5-10) This long-standing Gaborone institution is popular with expats, tourists and locals alike. There's something on the menu for everyone, but the Bull & Bush is renowned for its thick steaks and cold beers. On any given night of the week, the outdoor beer garden is buzzing with activity, and you can bet there's always some sporting event worth watching on the tube.

Fishmonger (Riverwalk Mall; mains US\$5-10) So long as you don't think about where the nearest ocean is, you're going to enjoy the fish here.

our pick Terrace Restaurant (☎ 395 3631; The Mall; mains US\$6-10) On the terrace of the Cresta President Hotel, this eclectic restaurant is a good spot for surveying the passing Mall scene below. The Terrace serves up a variety of dishes including curries, grilled meats, continental cuisine and a few local specialities.

ENTERTAINMENT

Bull & Bush Pub (☎ 397 5070) This popular restaurant is also the centre for expat nightlife. 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 admission US\$2) Features all sorts of musical acts and is popular with middle-class Batswana youth.

Waterfront (Gaborone Dam) South of the city, it occasionally hosts live performances.

Alliance Française (☎ 395 1650; Pudulogo Way) Frequently screens classic films.

SHOPPING

For shoppers, Gaborone is a series of shopping malls, headed up by the lovely Riverwalk Mall and the enormous Kgale Centre. Lesser options include Broadhurst/Kagiso Centre, the Mall and the increasingly seedy Maru-a-Pula (No Mathatha), Nyerere Shopping Centre and African Malls.

Botswanacraft (www.botswanacraft.bw; Warehouse ☎ 362 4471; The Mall ☎ 355 3577; Airport ☎ 361 2209) Botswana's largest craft emporium sells traditional souvenirs from all over the country, including weavings from Oodi and pottery from Gabane and Thamaga. If you're deficient at bargaining, fear not – prices are fixed.

Jewel of Africa (☎ 361 4359; jewel@global.bw; African Mall) This attractive shop offers an eclectic range of carvings, sketches, shawls and other assorted African knick-knacks. Although not everything is made in Botswana, prices here are reasonable (and fixed).

Craft Workshop (☎ 355 6364; 5648 Nakedi Rd, Broadhurst Industrial Estate) This small complex of shops sells crafts and souvenirs, and also plays host to a flea market on the morning of the last Sunday of each month. To get there take the 'Broadhurst Route 3' combi.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

From Sir Seretse Khama International Airport, 14km from the centre of town, **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.

For information about international flights to/from Gaborone, see p127.

Bus

Intercity buses and minibuses to Johannesburg (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, you'll need to change in Francistown. Buses operate according to roughly fixed schedules and minibuses leave when full.

The Intercap Mainliner to Johannesburg (US\$25, 6½ hours) runs from the Kudu Shell petrol station beside The Mall. For more information, see p128).

Hitching

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. There's no need to wave down a vehicle – anyone with space will stop for passengers. Plan on around US\$6 to Francistown, where you can look for onward lifts to Nata, Maun and Kasane.

Train

The day train departs for Francistown daily at 10am (club/economy class US\$4/8, 6½ hours). The night train departs nightly at 9pm (economy/1st-class sleeper/2nd-class sleeper/US\$5/20/25, 8½ hours). Coming from Francistown, the overnight service continues to Lobatse (US\$1, 1½ hours) early in the morning, with only economy-class seats available from Gaborone. For current information, contact **Botswana Railways** (☎ 395 1401).

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Taxis rarely turn up at the airport; if you do find one, you'll pay between US\$4 and US\$10 per person to the centre. The only reliable

transport between the airport and town is the 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.

Combis

Packed white combis, recognisable by their blue number plates, 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, which are on the Tlokweng and Kgale routes, respectively. Combis can be hailed either along major roads or from the combi stand.

Taxis

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.

AROUND GABORONE

Kopong

Country Horse Safaris (☎ 721 34567; Lentsweletau Rd) is a friendly, Swedish-run ranch specialising in horse riding, though it also offers cheap and tranquil accommodation. Camping costs US\$5 per person, while double rooms with private bathrooms in the rustic guesthouse costs US\$20. Take the road from Gaborone towards Molepolole, then head to Kopong and follow the signs.

Odi

This small village (pronounced Oo-dee) is best known for its internationally acclaimed **Odi Weavers** (☎ 339 2268; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4.30pm Sat & Sun), which produces and sells a range of locally made weavings, tapestries, bedspreads and cushions. Take a northbound minibus from Gaborone and get off at Odi Junction; from here, you'll probably have to hitch the final 7km to the workshop.

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 suggested; ☎ 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.

Thamaga

The delightful but unexciting village of Thamaga is home to the **Botswelole Centre** (☎ 499 9220; Molepolole Rd; tours US\$0.50; ☎ 8am-5pm), also called Thamaga Pottery. This nonprofit community project was started by missionaries in the 1970s and now sells a wide range of creations for good prices. Tours must be booked in advance. Buses run frequently from the main bus terminal in Gaborone (US\$0.80, one hour).

Molepolole

The tongue-twisting name of this hillside village (pronounced *mo-lay-po-lo-lay*) is often sensibly shortened to 'Moleps'. The main attraction, the **Kgosi Sechele 1 Museum** (☎ 592 0917; Gaborone Rd; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-4pm Tue-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat), is housed in the 1902 police station and features traditional housing, paintings, historic photos and David Livingstone memorabilia. It's reputed that Chief Sechele was the only person the missionary Livingstone ever managed to convert to Christianity. This was accomplished after Livingstone visited the Kobokwe Cave (5km from town along the Thamaga road) and survived, despite dire warnings from local shamans that to approach the cave would bring about a speedy death.

You may also want to visit the **Schacter & Namder Diamond Factory** (☎ 592 0815; Thamaga Rd), which is Botswana's only diamond-cutting facility.

Mafanya-Thala Hotel (☎ 595 0522; ciaron@mega.bw; Gaborone Rd; s/d US\$37/48) offers comfortable and well-decorated rooms. Camping is also sporadically possible and the attached restaurant serves up classy meals.

Minibuses run frequently from the main bus terminal in Gaborone (US\$1, 1½ hours).

Mt Kgale

The 'sleeping giant', Mt Kgale, overlooks Gaborone, and you can easily hike to the summit for a sweeping view over the capital. Take any Lobatse bus or head out along the new Lobatse road to the car park (opposite an obvious satellite dish, just beyond the Kgale Centre Mall). Cross the white concrete stile and follow the track through a shallow gully to the trail of whitewashed stones that lead to the summit. Due to recent robberies, it's wise not to walk alone or carry anything of value.

Mokolodi Nature Reserve

This 3000 hectare private reserve (☎ 316 1955; www.mokolodi.com; ☎ 7.30am-6pm) was established in 1991, and is home to giraffes, elephants, zebras, baboons, warthogs, hippos, kudus, impalas, 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. Park entry fees are US\$2 per person per day and US\$4 per vehicle per day. If you're not self-driving, two-hour day or night wildlife drives cost US\$28 per person. There is 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** (2 people US\$24) 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 3-person **chalets** (US\$120) and 8-person **A-frames** (US\$198) situated in the middle of the reserve. Advance 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 located 12km south of Gaborone. By public transport, take a bus to Lobatse-bound combi to the signed turn-off. From there, it's a 1.5km walk to the entrance. You can also phone ahead for transfers from the city centre/airport (US\$28/44 for four people).

Kanye

Built around the base of Kanye Hill, the capital of the Bangwaketse people is home to the

Kanye Gorge, where the entire population of the town once hid during a Ndebele raid in the 1880s. A short, 1.5km walk along the cliff face from the eastern end of Kanye Gorge will take you to **Kanye Ruins**, the remains of an early 18th-century stone-walled village. Buses regularly travel between Gaborone and Kanye via Thamaga (US\$1.50, two hours). The bus station is 1.5km west of the main shopping centre.

EASTERN BOTSWANA

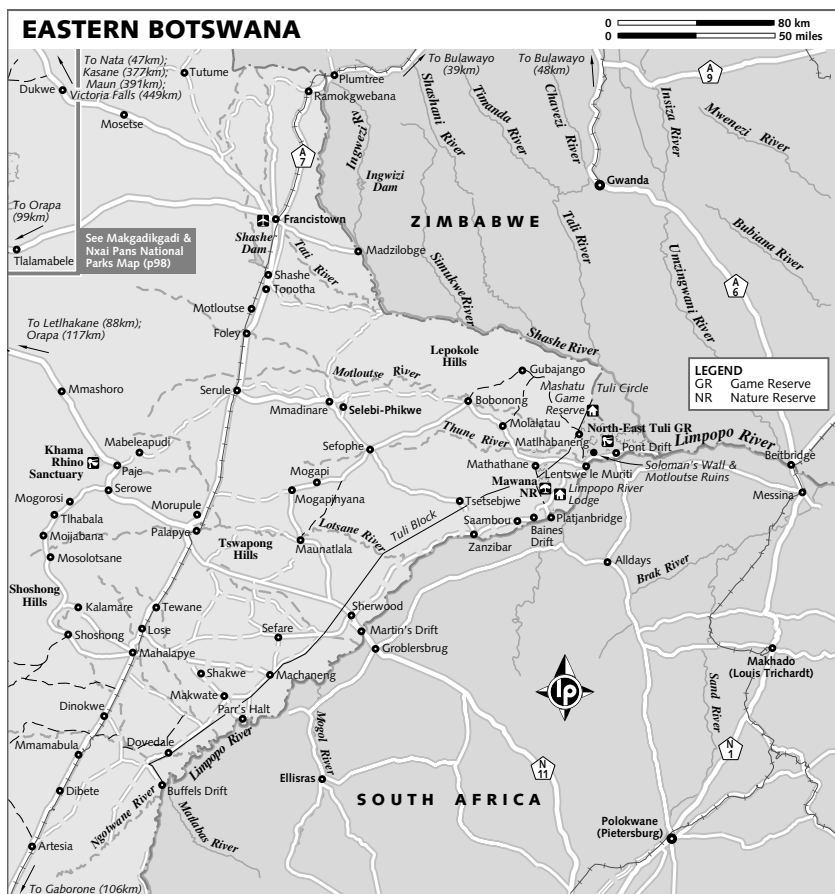
Eastern Botswana is largely comprised of granite-strewn scrubland that is amenable to agriculture and human habitation. Along the borders with South Africa and Zimbabwe, there are a number of large towns that subsist primarily on seasonal farming and ranching. Although the majority of these population centres are of little interest to tourists, the region is also home to a number of private game reserves that serve as a refreshing alternative to the heavily trafficked national parks.

SEROWE

In 1902, Chief Khama III abandoned the Bangwato capital in Phalatswe, and built Serowe on the ruins of an 11th-century village at the base of Thathaganyana Hill. Serowe was later immortalised by South African writer Bessie Head, who included the village in several of her works, including renowned *Serowe – Village of the Rain Wind*.

Although the modern town centre is drab and of little interest to travellers, it's worth visiting the **Khama III Memorial Museum** (☎ 463 0519; admission free but donations welcome; ☎ 8am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4.30pm Sat), which was opened in 1985 and outlines the history of the Khama family. The museum includes the personal effects of Chief Khama III and his descendants as well as various artefacts illustrating Serowe's history. The museum is about 800m from the central shopping area on the road towards Orapa.

Before leaving town, hike up to the top of Thathaganyana Hill where you'll find the **Royal Cemetery**, which contains the grave of Sir Seretse Khama (see the boxed text, p83) and Khama III; the latter is marked by a bronze duiker (a small antelope), which is the Bangwato totem. Be advised that police consider this area to be sensitive, so visitors need to



seek permission (and possibly obtain a guide) from the police station in the barracks house. To reach the station, follow the road opposite the Dennis petrol station until you reach the *kgotla* and the surrounding barracks; one of the buildings houses the police station.

The small but quaint **Tshwaragano Hotel** (☎ 463 0377; s/d US\$26/30; P) is built on the slopes of Thathaganyana Hill, and boasts great views of the town. The attached bar-restaurant is usually the most hopping place in town. Tshwaragano is located above the shopping area on the road to Orapa.

Buses travel between Serowe and Gaborone (US\$4, four hours) about every hour. Alternatively, from Gabs catch a Francistown-bound bus, disembark at the turn-off to Serowe just

north of Palapye, and catch a shared taxi or combi to Serowe. Combis and shared taxis also depart for Orapa (US\$7, 4 hours) when full (this combi passes by the entrance to the Khama Rhino Sanctuary). Most buses, combis and taxis leave from a spot near Elleries furniture shop in the central shopping area, while the mammoth bus station nearby remains empty.

KHAMA RHINO SANCTUARY

In response to declining rhinoceros populations in Botswana, the residents of Serowe banded together in 1989 to establish the 4300-hectare **Khama Rhino Sanctuary** (☎ 463 0713; fax 463 5808; krst@botsnet.bw; per person US\$2, per vehicle US\$3; ☎ 8am-6.30pm). Today, the sanctu-

ary protects the country's last remaining population of rhinos – thirty-two white and one black rhino currently reside in Khama. The sanctuary is also home to zebras, giraffes, wildebeests, impalas, kudus, 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, cold drinks and firewood.

Park entry fees are US\$2 per person per day and US\$3 per vehicle per day. 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** (per person US\$9) with braai pits are adjacent to clean toilets and steaming hot showers. If you're looking to splurge for a night or two, rustic 4-person **chalets** (US\$50) and 6-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 about 26km from Serowe on 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 (see p131 for information on hithing in Botswana).

FRANCISTOWN

pop 95,000

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

Information

The Barclays and First National Banks along Blue Jacket St, among other banks, have ATMs and foreign exchange facilities.

Copy Shop (☎ 241 0177; Northgate Centre, Blue Jacket St; per hr US\$2; ☎ 8am-8pm) For internet and email access.

Ebrahim Store (☎ 241 4762; Francis Ave) The place to buy camping gear.

Nyangabgwe Hospital (☎ 241 1000, emergency ☎ 997)

Police (☎ 241 2221, emergency ☎ 999; Haskins St)

Polina Laundromat (Blue Jacket St)

Post office (Blue Jacket St)

Sights

The main site of tourist interest is the cultural and historical **Supa-Ngwao Museum** (☎ /fax 240 3088; snm@info.bw; off New Maun Rd; admission free but donations suggested; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat). It's housed in a 100-year-old Government Camp, which includes a prison and a police canteen. Displays include local and regional culture and history, as well as visiting art exhibitions.

Sleeping

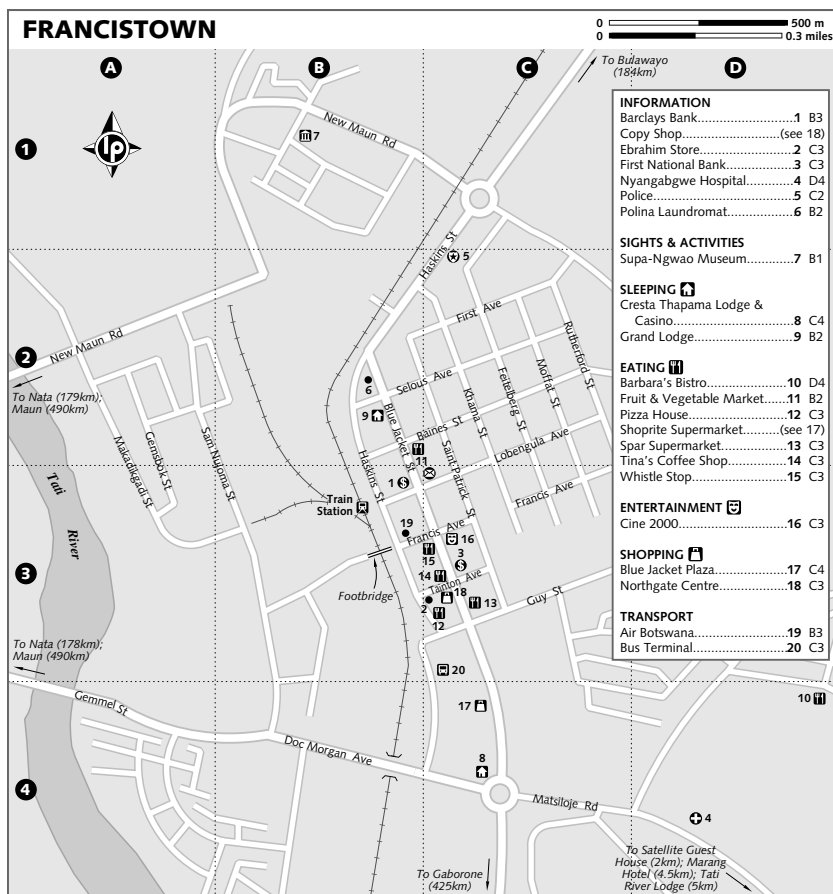
Marang Hotel (☎ 241 3991; marang@info.bw; Matsiloje Rd; camping per person US\$5, 2-person rondavel US\$40, s/d US\$80/95; P) Superbly situated on the banks of the Tati River, the Marang Hotel is a long-standing favourite among travellers. The serene setting and relaxed ambience make this an excellent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

Tati River Lodge (☎ 240 6000; trl@info.bw; camping per person US\$5, s/d from US\$70/85; P) On the other side of the Tati River from the Marang Hotel, this newer place lacks the character of its rival, though it's perfectly acceptable if you're just looking for a place to crash.

Satellite Guest House (☎ 241 4665; s/d US\$28/36; P) This walled compound of motel-style units is uninspiring, though it's certainly cheap if you're counting every pula. Unfortunately, it's located out in the suburbs, and can get noisy if there are a lot of guests.

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

Cresta Thapama Lodge (☎ 241 3872; www.cresta-hospitality.com; Thapama roundabout, cnr Blue Jacket St & Doc Morgan Ave; s/d with breakfast from US\$132/166; P) Francistown's most upmarket hotel boasts a 4-star rating, though the overall ambience is bit stuffy. But, if you're fan of luxury and formality, you'll revel in the colonial-inspired rooms, and unwind in the casino or on the squash and tennis courts.



Eating

Self-caterers have a choice of several well-stocked supermarkets (including Shoprite and Spar Supermarkets), as well as the fruit and vegetable market on the corner of Blue Jacket and Baines Sts.

Barbara's Bistro (Francistown Sports Club; US\$2-4) This quaint, leafy spot is a good choice for inexpensive local specialities.

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

Whistle Stop (Blue Jacket St; mains US\$2-5) Start your day right with a hearty breakfast from the Whistle Stop. If you're not an early riser,

they also serve a good variety of grilled meats, fish, burgers and desserts.

Pizza House (Haskins St; pizzas from US\$4) If you're getting ready to head out to the wilds, savour every last bite of the wood-fired pizzas served here.

Entertainment

To find out what's going on, check the notice board at the museum and the 'What's On' column in the *Northern Advertiser*.

Cine 2000 (Blue Jacket St; US\$2) If you need your Western-culture fix, this small cinema shows recent English-language films.

Cresta Thapama Hotel & Casino (Blue Jacket St) The bar here attracts mostly business travelers, though there's a good selection of hard spirits here.

Marang Hotel (Old Gaborone Rd) Even if you're not staying here, it's worth the trip to the Marang for a drink in their popular garden bar overlooking the Tati River.

Getting There & Away

Air Botswana (☎ 241 2393; 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 the Blue Jacket Plaza, bus and minibus services connect Francistown with Nata (US\$3, two hours), Maun (US\$7.50, five hours), Gaborone (US\$6.50, 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\$24/20/5 1st/2nd/economy, 8¼ hours) leaves at 9pm and the day train (US\$7/3.50 club/economy, 6½ hours) leaves at 10am.

NORTH-EAST TULI GAME RESERVE

The Tuli Block is a 10km- to 20km-wide swathe of freehold farmland extending over 300km along the northern bank of the Limpopo River. Once owned by British South Africa Company (BSAC), the land was ceded to white settlers after the railway route was shifted to the northwest. However, much of the land proved to be unsuitable for agriculture, and has since been developed for tourism.

The main attraction of Tuli Block is the North-East Tuli Game Reserve, which is a collection of private game reserves. This area is rich in wildlife, and is home to elephants, hippos, kudus, wildebeests and impalas as well as small numbers of lions, cheetahs and leopards. More than 350 species of birds have also been recorded in the North-East Tuli Game Reserve.

The landscape in Tuli Block is defined by its unusual rock formations. The most famous feature is **Solomon's Wall**, a 30m-high dolerite dyke cut naturally through the landscape on either side of the river bed. Nearby are the **Motloutse Ruins**, a Great Zimbabwe-era stone village that belonged to the kingdom of Mwene Mutapa.

Sleeping

Advance bookings are recommended for all of these options.

Limpopo River Lodge (☎ 72-106098; www.limpopo-riverlodge.co.za; camping per person US\$12, chalet/rondavel

per person from US\$48; (P)) This lovely riverside retreat is the most affordable accommodation option in Tuli Block, though the wildlife along the river can be as rich as anywhere else. The lodge is located 12km northeast of Baines Drift.

Tuli Game Reserve (☎ 264 5303; www.tulilodge.com; tent camp per person with full board & game drives US\$57, standard/executive/luxury per person with full board & game drives US\$210/255/299; (P) ☎ ☎) The Tuli Game Reserve is situated in a riverine oasis, and surrounded by red rock country that teems with wildlife. Advance reservations are strongly recommended. Rates include transfer from the Limpopo Valley Airfield or the Pont Drift Border Post. The game reserve is located just beyond the Pont Drift Border Post.

Mashatu Game Reserve (☎ 27-11 442 2267; www.mashatu.com; luxury tent/chalet with full board & game drives US\$180/300; (P) ☎ ☎) The largest private wildlife reserve in Southern Africa is renowned for its big cats and frighteningly large elephant population (current estimates are well over a thousand). The main camp is one of Botswana's most exclusive resorts, though those with lighter wallets can still indulge in luxury at the tent camp. Rates include transfer from the Limpopo Valley Airfield or the Pont Drift Border Post. The game reserve is located just beyond the Pont Drift Border Post.

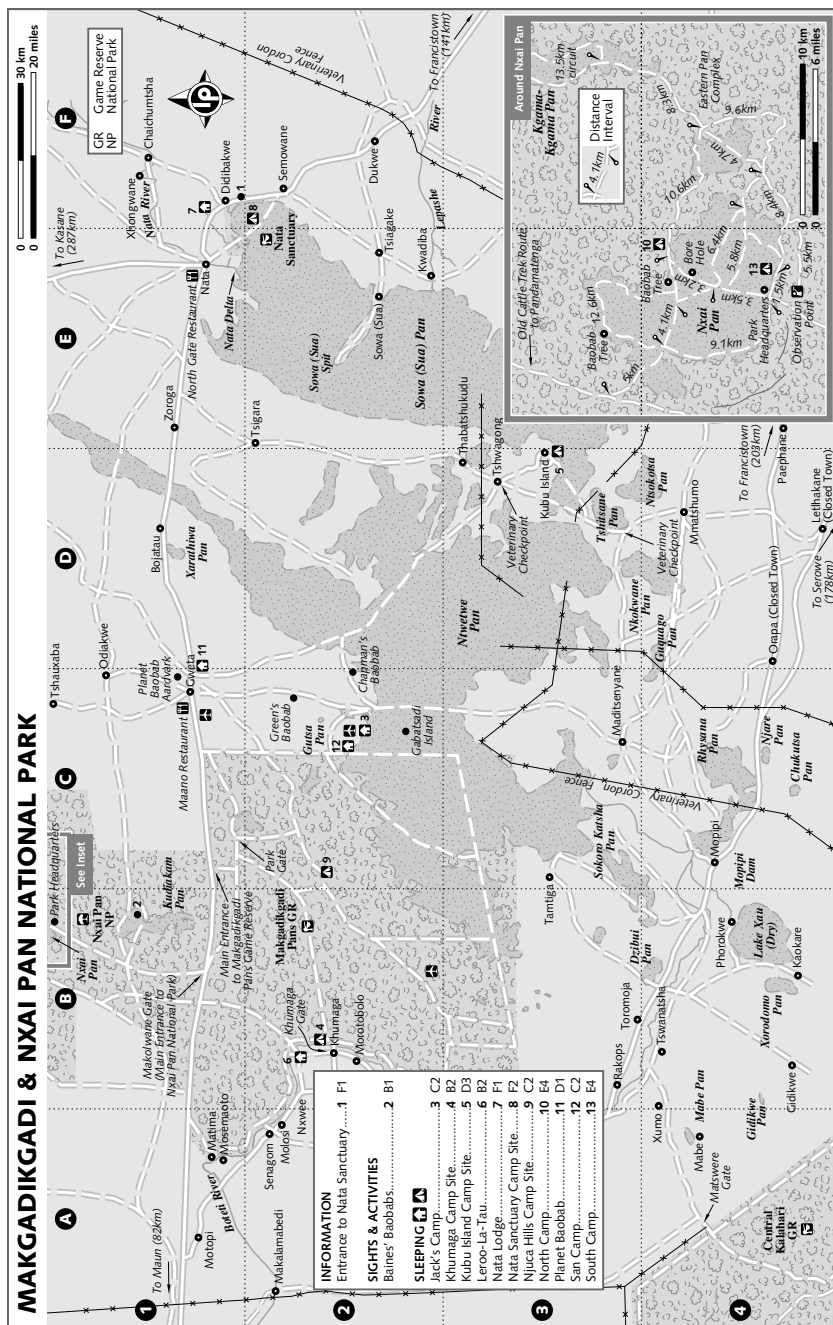
Getting There & Away

Mashatu and Tuli support a scheduled Air Botswana flight between Johannesburg, Kasane and the Limpopo Valley Airfield, which is usually booked as part of a package with either of the reserves.

Most roads in Tuli Block are negotiable by 2WD, though it can get rough in places over creek beds, which occasionally flood during the rainy season. If you're coming from South Africa, note that the border crossing at Pont Drift usually requires a 4WD, and can even be closed when the river is too high.

MAKGADIKGADI PANS

The Sowa (Sua), Nxai and Ntwetwe Pans collectively make up the 12,000 sq km Makgadikgadi Pans. In the sizzling heat of late winter, the stark pans take on a disorienting and ethereal austerity. Heat mirages destroy the senses as imaginary lakes shimmer and disappear, ostriches take flight and stones turn to mountains



EXPLORING THE MAKGADIKGADI PANS

It is important to stress that to explore the pans properly and independently requires more of a 4WD expedition than a casual drive. Lost travellers are frequently rescued from the pans, and there have been a number of fatalities over the years. Prospective drivers should keep in mind that salt pans can have a mesmerising effect, and even create a sense of unfettered freedom. Once you drive out onto the salt, remember that direction, connection, reason and common sense appear to dissolve. You should be aware of where you are at all times by using a map and compass (remember, GPS units are not foolproof).

It's often safer (and sometimes cheaper in the long run) to explore the pans on an organised tour with a knowledgeable guide. The pans can be visited on day trips or overnight trips offered by the lodges listed in this region, or on an overnight trip from lodges in Maun (p109).

and float in mid-air. But, as the annual rains begin to fall in the late spring, depressions in the pans form temporary lakes and fringing grasses turn green with life. Herd animals arrive to partake of the bounty, while water birds flock to feed on algae and tiny crustaceans.

NATA

The dust-bowl town of Nata serves as the gateway to the Makgadikgadi Pans, as well as an obligatory fuel stop if you're heading to Kasane or Maun. Be aware that elephants graze alongside the highway in this region, so take care during the day and avoid driving at night.

10km southeast of Nata is the **Nata Lodge** (☎ 621 1210; www.natalodge.com; camping per person US\$10, d luxury tent US\$105, d chalet US\$120; 🚰) a verdant oasis of monkey thorn, marula and mokolane palms. Luxury tents and chalets are safari chic, and the open-air bar-restaurant and shady pool are perfect for unwinding after touring the nearby pans.

Hourly combis (minibuses) between Kasane (US\$7.50, five hours) and Francistown (US\$3, two hours), and Maun (US\$5.50, five hours) and Francistown (US\$2, two hours), pass by the North Gate Restaurant.

SOWA (SUA) PAN

Sowa (also spelt Sua) Pan is mostly a single sheet of salt-encrusted mud stretching across the lowest basin in northeastern Botswana. Sowa means 'salt' in the language of the San, who once mined the pan to sell salt to the Bakalanga. Today, it is mined by the Sua Pan Soda Ash Company, which sells sodium carbonate for industrial manufacturing.

Nata Delta

During the rainy season, huge flocks of water birds congregate at the Nata Delta, which is

formed when the Nata River flows into the northern end of the Sowa Pan. When the rains are at their heaviest from December to February, the pan is covered with a thin film of water that reflects the sky and obliterates the horizon. Access is via a 4WD track from the village of Nata.

Nata Sanctuary

This 230 sq km community-run **wildlife sanctuary** (☎ 71-656969; admission per person per day US\$4, per vehicle US\$2; 🕒 7am-7pm) was proposed in 1988 by the Nata Conservation Committee, and established four years later with the help of several local and international nongovernmental organisations (NGOs).

Nata Sanctuary offers several serene and isolated **camp sites** with clean pit toilets, braai pits and cold showers. Camping here costs US\$5 per person, and all sites are accessible by 2WD if it hasn't been raining heavily. From the camp sites, it's possible to access the pan on foot (7km), though you should bring a compass with you, even if you're only walking a few hundred metres into the pan.

The entrance to the sanctuary is located 7km southeast of Nata.

Sowa (Sua) Spit

This long, slender protrusion extends into the heart of the pan, and is the nexus of Botswana's lucrative soda ash industry. Although security measures prevent public access to the plant, private vehicles can proceed as far as Sowa (Sua) village on the pan's edge. Views of the pan from the village are limited, though it's ideal if you're travelling through the area in a 2WD.

Kubu Island

Along the southwestern edge of Sowa Pan is this ghostly, baobab-laden rock, which

is entirely surrounded by a sea of salt. In Setswana, *kubu* means 'hippopotamus', and as unlikely as it may seem given the current environment and climate, this desolate area may have been inhabited by people as recently as 500 years ago. On one shore lies an ancient crescent-shaped stone wall of unknown origin, which has yielded numerous artefacts. Kubu Island is now protected as a national **monument** (admission per person US\$4.50, per vehicle US\$5.50) with proceeds going to the local community. There is also a small **camp site** (☎ 297 9612; per person US\$5.50) with pit toilets, though you will have to carry in your own water.

Access to Kubu Island (GPS coordinates: S20°53'740 & E25°49'426) involves negotiating a maze of grassy islets and salty bays. Increased traffic has now made the route considerably more obvious, but drivers still need a 4WD and a compass or GPS equipment

GWETA

The dusty town of Gweta serves as another gateway to the Makgadikgadi Pans, and stop here for fuel 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** (☎ 72-338-344, camping per person US\$8, s/d grass huts with shared bathroom US\$34/52, s/d mud huts US\$75/100; (P) (Q)), 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' (both are much plusher than they sound). The highlight of the lodge, however, is the funky open-air bar, complete with vaulted wooden ceilings, cowhide barstools, beer-bottle chandeliers and framed memorabilia celebrating the glory days of African travel.

Hourly combis 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.

NTWETWE PAN

Although the Ntwetwe Pan was once fed by the Boteti River, it was left permanently dry following the construction of the Mopipi

Dam, which provides water for the diamond mines in Orapa. Ironically, Ntwetwe is now famous for its extraordinary lunar landscape, particularly the rocky outcrops, dunes, islets, channels and spits found along the western shore.

If you've got some serious cash to burn, the highly recommended **San Camp** (s/d US\$500/840; (P)) and **Jack's Camp** (s/d US\$625/930) are among the most luxurious lodges in the whole of Africa. Accommodation at either camp is in classic 1940s East African-style canvas tents furnished with regal linen and romantically lit by paraffin lanterns. The central 'mess tent' operates as a field museum where local guides and world-renowned experts deliver lectures and lead discussions on the area's flora and fauna. Rates include full board, wildlife drives, bush walks and a range of activities. Air fares cost US\$150 per person one way from Maun. Road transfer from Gweta costs US\$110 per person one way, and escorts (with your own 4WD) from Gweta cost US\$165 per vehicle.

MAKGADIKGADI & NXAI PAN NATIONAL PARK

West of Gweta, the main road between Nata and Maun slices through Makgadikgadi Reserve and Nxai Pan National Park, which protects large tracts of salt pans, palm forests, grasslands and savannas. Since both parks compliment one another in enabling wildlife migrations, Makgadikgadi Pans Game Reserve and Nxai Pan National Park were established concurrently in the early 1970s, and combined into a single park in the mid 1990s.

Makgadikgadi Pans Game Reserve

This 3900 sq km park extends from the Boteti River in the west to the Ntwetwe Pan in the east. Although the Boteti River only flows after good rains, wildlife congregates along the river during the dry season when the flow is reduced to a series of shallow pools, which are the only source of permanent water in the reserve. During years of average to low rainfall, the Boteti experiences one of Southern Africa's most spectacular wildebeest and zebra migrations between May and October.

The DWNP runs two camp sites in the reserve. The Khumaga Camp Site (GPS: S:20°27'350 & E24°46'136) is well developed with sit-down flush toilets, cold showers and running water (nondrinkable). The Njuka Hills Camp Site (GPS: S:20°25'807 & E24°52'395) is

less developed with pit latrines and no running water, but the surrounding hills boast staggering views of migrating wildlife.

Leroo-La-Tau (☎ 686 8407; www.kalahari-desert.com/Leroo_La_Tau_Bush_Camp_Kalahari_desert.asp; s/d US\$200/275; (P) (Q)) This recommended safari lodge is comprised of several East African-style canvas tents with private verandas overlooking the Boteti River bed. Although the atmosphere is luxurious and the price is affordable (at least compared to other top-end lodges), Leroo-La-Tau is not as well known as other luxury lodges in Botswana. However, wildlife viewing in the surrounding reserve is an awesome spectacle, and readers consistently rave about the spotless rooms, wonderful facilities and professional service. Rates include full board, game drives, bush walks and a range of activities. Transfers from Maun cost US\$100 per vehicle (with six passengers).

The main entrance to the national park is 141km west of Nata and 164km east of Maun. Another gate is located at Khumaga to the west. A 4WD is needed to drive around the park, though the camp sites and lodge are accessible by 2WD.

Nxai Pan National Park

This 2578 sq km park lies on the old **Panda-matenga Trail**, which connected a series of boreholes and was used until the 1960s for overland cattle drives. The grassy expanse of the park is most interesting during the rains when large animal herds migrate from the south, and predators arrive to take advantage of the bounty. The region is speckled with umbrella acacias, and resembles the Serengeti in Tanzania (but without all the safari vehicles).

In the south of the park are the famous **Baines' Baobabs** (GPS: S:20°06'726 & E24°46'136), which were immortalised in paintings by the artist and adventurer Thomas Baines in 1862. Today, a comparison with Baines' paintings reveals that in almost 150 years, only one branch has broken off.

The DWNP runs two camp sites in the reserve. South Camp (GPS: S:19°56'159 & E24°46'598) is located about 1.5km east of the Park Headquarters, while North Camp (GPS: S:19°52'797 & E24°47'358) is 6.5km north of the Park Headquarters. Both have sit-down flush toilets, running (nondrinkable) water and braai pits (though firewood is scarce).

The entrance to the park is at Makolwane Gate, which is about 140km east of Maun and

60km west of Gweta. The Park Headquarters is another 35.5km north along a terrible sandy track. A 4WD is required to get around the national park.

CHOBE NATIONAL 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 River, 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 need a high-clearance 4WD. Due to mud and flooding, Savuti may be inaccessible from January to March.

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 and, 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

EMERGENCY

Chobe Private Clinic (☎ 625 1555; President Ave)

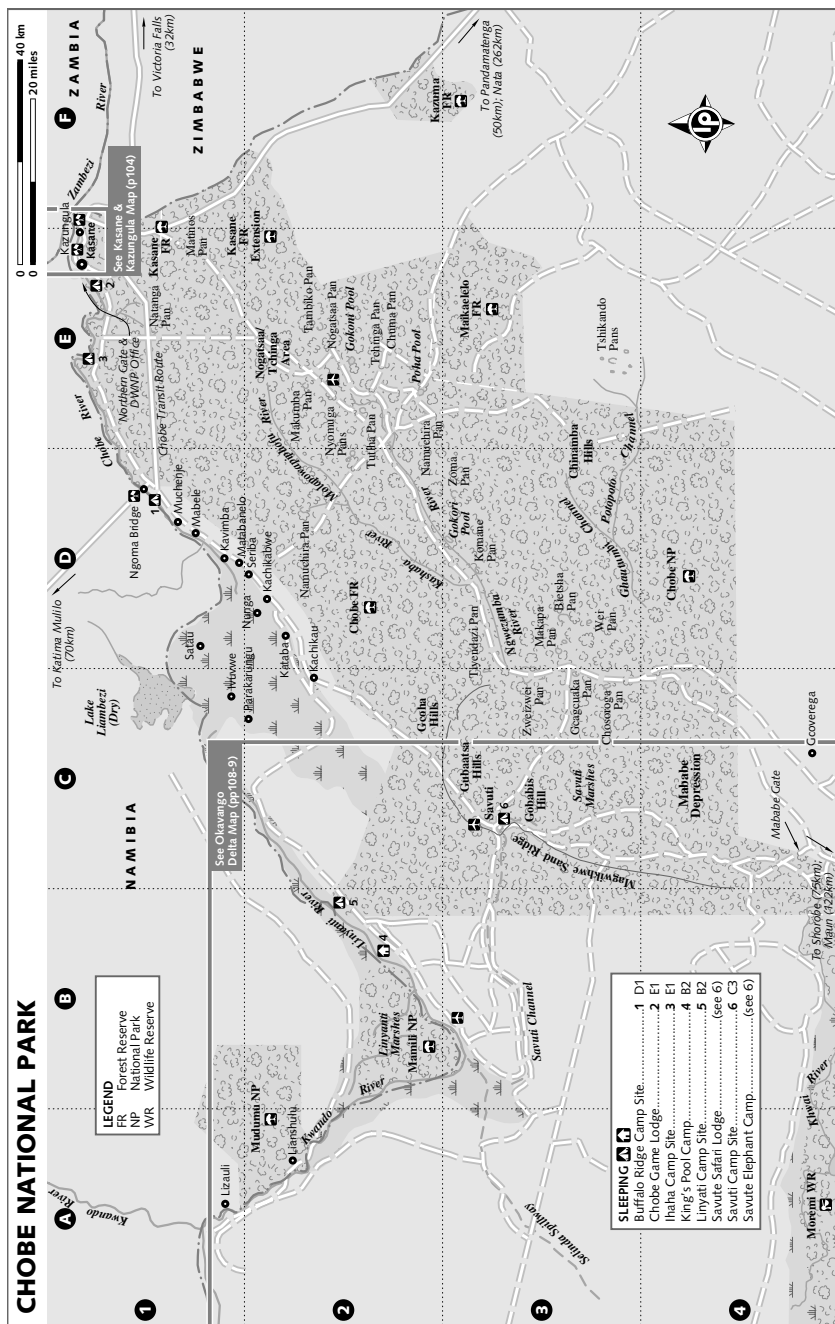
24-hour emergency service.

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

Police (☎ 625 0335) Along the main road.

INTERNET ACCESS

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



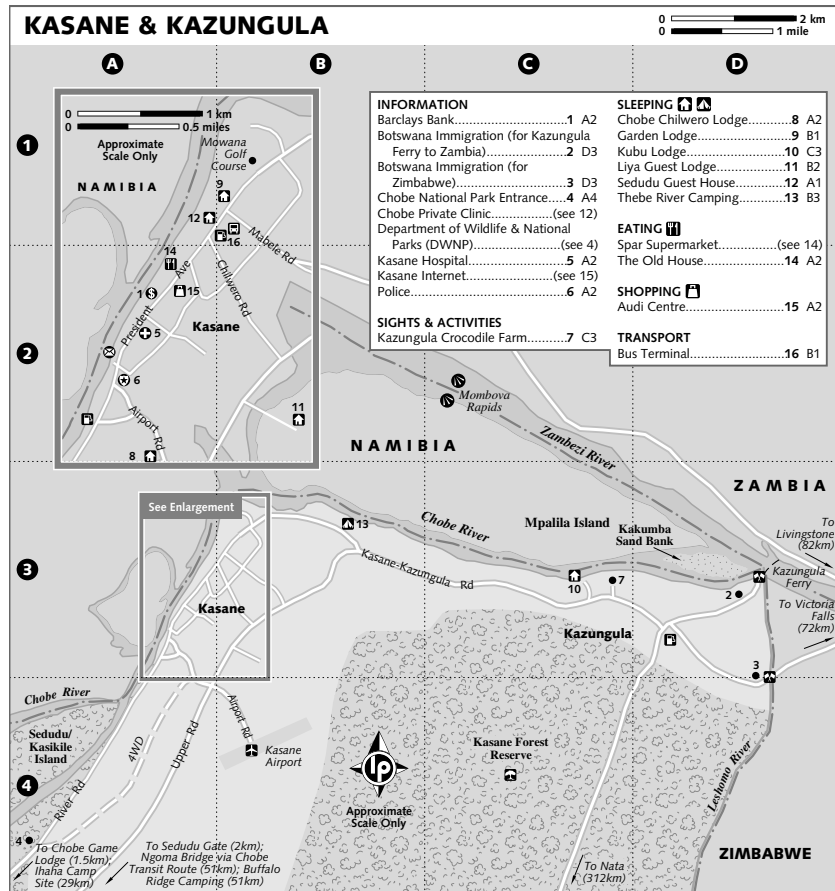
WILD DRIVING IN BOTSWANA

Although there is an extensive network of both sealed and gravel roads throughout Botswana, the thrill and adventure of bush driving is unequalled. Not surprisingly, Botswana is among the favourite destinations of veteran off-road enthusiasts. However, just because you've read a survival manual doesn't mean that you're ready to head out into the wilds – 4x4 driving is serious business, and tourists have died in the past due to careless mistakes. Remember, real (and safe) 4x4 driving is nothing like what you see on the TV.

The following is a list of road-tested tips to help you plan a safe and successful 4WD expedition:

- Although a good map and a compass may be sufficient for navigating in your own country, it is strongly advisable to invest in a good global positioning system (GPS) before travelling in Southern Africa. Although GPS units are *not* a substitute for a map and a compass, they are useful for establishing waypoints and helping you determine which direction you're heading. As a general rule, you should always be able to identify your location on a map, even if you're navigating with a GPS unit.
- As a general rule, stock up on emergency provisions, even if you are going to be sticking to the main highways. The distances between towns can be extreme, and you never know where you're going to break down (and when someone is going to pick you up). Petrol and diesel tend to be available in most major towns, though it's wise to never pass a station without filling up. If you're planning a long expedition in the bush, carry the requisite amount of fuel in metal jerry cans, and remember that engaging 4WD burns nearly twice as much fuel as highway driving. In terms of water and food, a good rule is to carry five litres of water per person per day, as well as a good supply of high-calorie, nonperishable emergency food items.
- In terms of spare parts, garages throughout Botswana are surprisingly well stocked with basic 4WD parts, and you haven't truly experienced Southern Africa until you've seen the ingenuity of a bush mechanic. The minimum you should carry with you is a tow rope, shovel, extra fan belt, vehicle fluids, spark plugs, baling wire, jump leads, fuses, hoses, a good jack and a wooden plank (to use as a base in sand and salt), several spare tyres and a pump (see also p130 for some general advice on car travel). A good Swiss Army knife or Leatherman tool combined with a sturdy roll of duct tape will also do in a pinch.
- Although 4WD exploration and bush camping go hand in hand, Botswana remarkably offers an extensive network of well-maintained camp sites, located even in the remotest of places. Camping equipment varies according to personal preference, though the list of essentials includes a waterproof tent, a three-season sleeping bag (you will need a warmer bag in the winter), a ground mat or Therm-a-Rest, fire-starting supplies, firewood, a basic first-aid kit and a torch (flashlight) with extra batteries. Although some seasoned hikers stick to the adage 'less is best', again, it's best to err on the side of caution, especially if you have extra room in your 4WD.
- Sand tracks are most easily negotiated and least likely to bog vehicles in the cool mornings and evenings, when the air spaces between grains of sand are smaller. To further prevent bogging or stalling, move as quickly as possible and keep the revs up, but avoid any sudden acceleration. Shift down gears in advance of deep sandy patches or the vehicle may stall and bog. When negotiating a straight course through rutted sand, allow the vehicle to wander along the path of least resistance. Anticipate corners and turn the wheel slightly earlier than you would on a solid surface – this allows the vehicle to ski smoothly round – then accelerate gently out of the turn. Driving on loose sand may be facilitated by lowering the air pressure in the tyres, thereby increasing their gripping area.
- Driving in the Kalahari is often through high grass, and the seeds it disperses can quickly foul radiators and cause overheating. If the temperature gauge begins to climb, stop and remove as much plant material as you can from the grille.

KASANE & KAZUNGULA



MONEY

Barclays Bank (President Ave) 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.

TOURIST INFORMATION

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

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 north of Kazungula.

Sleeping

All of the following places can organise Chobe wildlife drives and cruises, as well as other excursions.

Thebe River Camping (☎ 625 0314; 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; s/d from US\$38/50; 📍 🚶) This is a budget-oriented hotel offering a variety of different rooms and featuring varying amenities.

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

Garden Lodge (☎ 625 0051; www.thegardenlodge.com; President Ave; s/d US\$70/90; (P) 🚗) The simple but charming lodge is built around a tropical garden, and features a number of well-furnished rooms that exude a homey atmosphere.

Kubu Lodge (☎ 625 0312; kubu@botsnet.bw; Kasane-Kazungula Rd; 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 scattered around an impeccably manicured lawn dotted with fig trees.

Chobe Chilwero Lodge (☎ 625 1362; www.sanc-tuarylodges.com; low/high season per person US\$385/560;   ) Chilwero means 'place of high view' in Setswana, and indeed this exclusive lodge boasts panoramic views across the Chobe River. Accommodation is in one of fifteen elegant bungalows that feature romantic indoor and outdoor showers, private terraced gardens and colonial fixtures adorned with plush linen.

For further options see also p344.

Eating

Kasane is decidedly lacking in eating options, though all of the restaurants in the upmarket lodges are open to the public. If you're self-catering, there's a **Spar** near Barclays.

The Old House (mains US\$5-10; closed Mon) 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. Thebe River Camping, Mowana Lodge and Chobe Safari Lodge 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.

CHOBÉ RIVERFRONT

The Chobe riverfront is packed with wildlife, and for most visitors, appreciation of this natural wonderland will entail a river cruise

or a wildlife drive. 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 pukus, a rare antelope species. In addition, the abundance and variety of bird life in this zone of permanent water is astonishing.

Activities

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.

Sleeping

Ihaha Camp site (Map p102) is the closest DWNP camp site to Kasane, located along the riverfront about 27km from the Sedudu Gate.

Buffalo Ridge Camping (Map p102; ☎ 625 0430; camping per person US\$5.50; **P**) This basic camping area is 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 DPNP to camp here.

Chobe Game Lodge (Map p102; ☎ 625 0340; www.chobegamelodge.com; low/high season per person US\$250/325; (P) (S)) This highly praised safari lodge is one of Botswana's pinnacles of luxury. The lodge itself is constructed in the Moorish style, and flaunts high arches, barrel-vaulted ceilings and tiled floors. 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.

Getting There & Away

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 make 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 probably of San origin. The wildlife populations, particularly 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.

Sleeping

Savuti Camp Site (Map p102) is a new DWNP camp site, with sit-down flush toilets, braai pits, (hot!) showers and plenty of shade.

Savute Safari Lodge (Map p102; ☎ Bookings through Desert & Delta Safaris, Maun 686 1243; www.desertdelta.com; low/high season per person US\$250/325; (P)) Located next to the former site of the legendary Lloyd's Camp, this relatively new upmarket retreat consists of 12 contemporary thatched chalets that are simple yet functional in design. The main safari lodge is home to a sitting room, an elegant dining room, a small library and cocktail bar. There is also a viewing deck where you can watch the breathtaking sunset over the bush.

Savute Elephant Camp (Map p102; ☎ Bookings through Orient Express Safaris, Maun 686 0153; www.game trackers.orient-express.com; low/high season per person US\$500/575; (P) (A)) The premier camp in Savuti is comprised of 12 lavishly appointed East African-style tents, complete with replica antique furniture. The main tent houses a dining room, lounge and bar, and is located next to a swimming pool that overlooks a pumped water hole.

Getting There & Away

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.

LINYANTI MARSHES

West of Chobe, on the Botswana–Namibia border, lies the Kwando area, which is dominated by the 900 sq km Linyanti Marshes. The area may be reminiscent of the Okavango Delta, but it's just a broad, flooded plain along the Linyanti River, which is home to large herds of elephants and buffaloes. As yet, there's no easy access, but several concessionaires run luxury camps.

Sleeping

Linyati Camp Site (Map p102) is a DWNP-operated camp site, with sit-down flush toilets, braai pits, (hot!) showers and, in the dry season, lots of elephants – be careful.

King's Pool Camp (Map p102; ☎ Bookings through Wilderness Safaris, Johannesburg 27-11 807 1800; www.wilderness-safaris.com; low/high season US\$550/875; (P)) Occupying a magical setting on a Linyanti River oxbow overlooking a lagoon, this 10-person camp is the most luxurious of the two properties. Accommodation at King's Pool is in private thatched chalets featuring indoor and outdoor showers.

Getting There & Away

With a 4WD vehicle, you can reach Chobe's Linyanti Camp along a very rough track from Savuti. Otherwise, air transfers are organised by individual lodges; Kwando Lagoon Camp is also accessible by river from Lianshulu Lodge in Namibia.

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 cubic metres of water annually spread 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 – known as the Okavango Delta – attract myriad birds and other wildlife, as well as most of Botswana's tourists.

MAUN

A schizophrenic apparition of donkey-drawn carts and flash 4WDs, Maun (pronounced 'mau-UUnn') 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 is the obvious start and/or finish for most trips into the delta, and it's by far the most tourist-friendly town in Botswana.

Orientation

Central Maun contains most of the restaurants, shops and travel agencies, while the village of Matlapaneng, 10km northeast of the centre, has most of the budget lodges and camp sites. In between are the Sedia Hotel and several other tourist-oriented businesses.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

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

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

MONEY

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

POST

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

TOURIST INFORMATION

Department of Wildlife & National Parks (DWNP; ☎ 686 1265; fax 686 1264; ☎ 7.30am–12.30pm & 1.45–4.30pm Mon–Sat, 7.30am–noon Sun) To book national park camp sites, you need to go to the reservations office, which is housed in a caravan behind the main building.

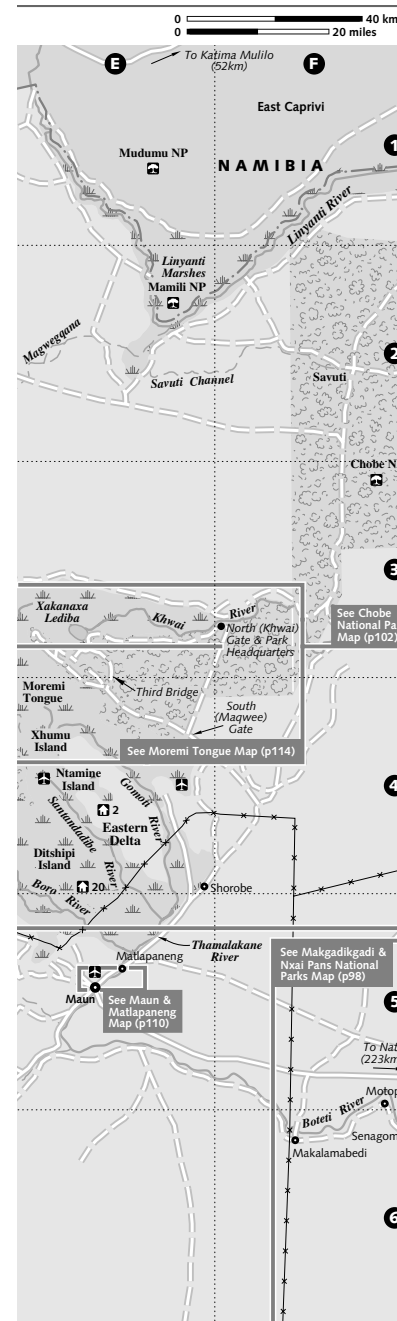
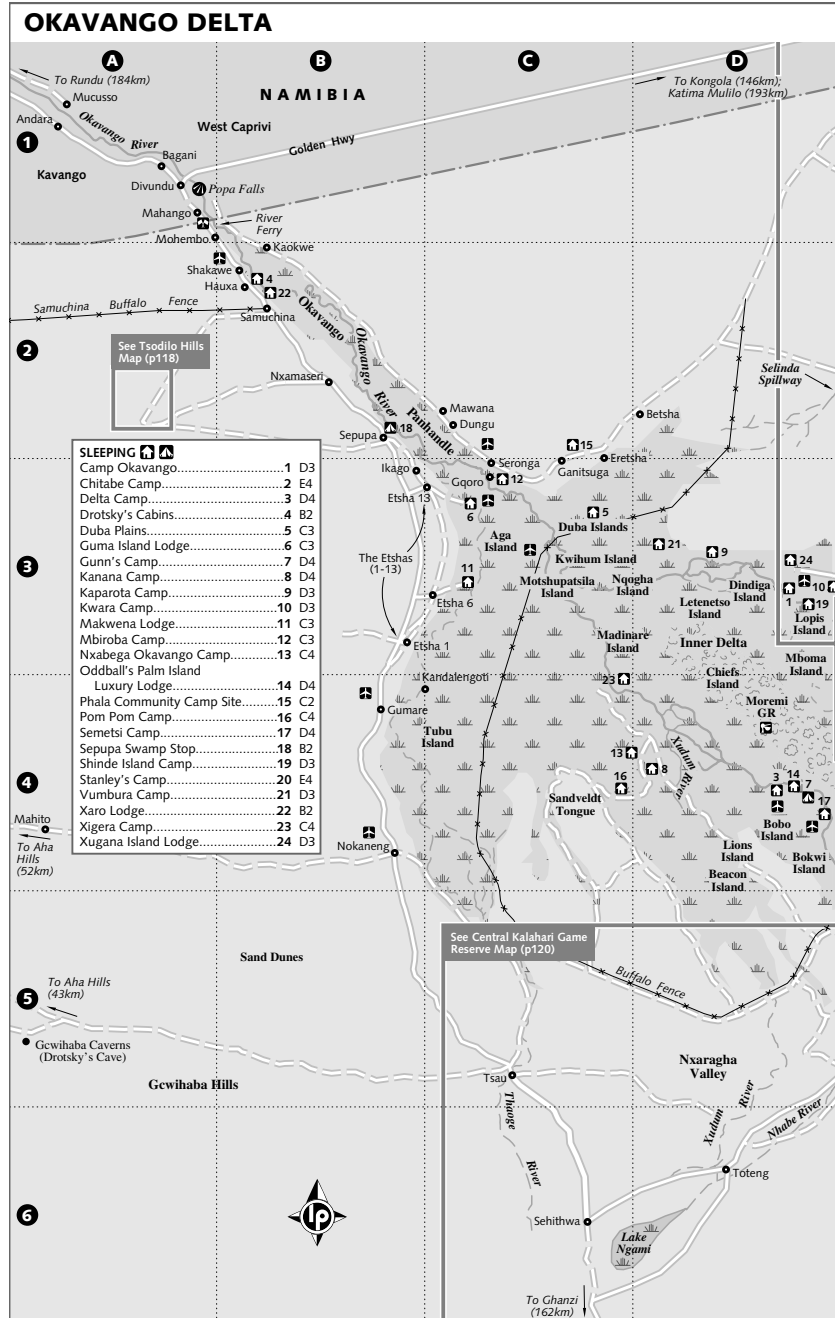
Tourist office (☎ 686 0492; Tsheke Tsheko Rd; ☎ 7.30am–12.30pm & 1.45–4.30pm Mon–Fri) This is improving, and you'll also find good information at the town's many tour companies (see p132) and the Matlapaneng lodges.

EXPLORING THE OKAVANGO DELTA

Stretching like an open palm across northwestern Botswana, the Okavango Delta is a complex and unique ecosystem as well as Botswana's premier tourist attraction. Although the size and scope of the region is often a deterrent for independent travellers, it's easier to plan a trip through the region than you'd imagine, especially if you think of the delta as having four distinct areas:

- **Eastern Delta** – this part of the delta is far more accessible, and therefore cheaper to reach, from Maun than the Inner Delta and Moremi. You can easily base yourself in Maun and arrange a day trip by mokoro (traditional dugout canoe) or an overnight bush camping trip for far less than the cost of staying in (and getting to) a lodge in the Inner Delta or Moremi.
- **Inner Delta** – the area west, north and south of Moremi is classic delta scenery where you can truly be seduced by the calming spell of the region. Accommodation is in top-end luxury lodges, almost all of which are only accessible by expensive chartered flights.
- **Moremi Game Reserve** – this region includes Chiefs Island and the Moremi Tongue, and is the most popular destinations within the delta. The Moremi Game Reserve is the only protected area within the delta, so wildlife is plentiful, but you will have to pay daily park entry fees. Moremi has a few camp sites run by the DWNP as well as several truly decadent lodges with jaw-dropping prices. The Moremi Game Reserve is accessible by 4WD from Maun or Chobe as well as by charter flight.
- **Okavango Panhandle** – this swampy extension of the Inner Delta stretches northwest towards the Namibian border, and is the main population centre in region. Although this area does not offer the classic delta experience, it is growing in popularity due to its ease of accessibility via public transportation or 2WD. Since the area is not controlled by a lodge or by the DWNP, a number of villages in the panhandle have established accessible camp sites, and also offer affordable mokoro trips and fishing expeditions.

If you're planning a 4WD expedition through the park, you will have to be completely self-sufficient as petrol and supplies are only available in Kasane and Maun. If the prospect of driving yourself through the wilds of Botswana is a little too much to handle, the hotels and lodges in Maun can also help you organise a trip through the delta. For more information, see p109.



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. If you're in town, it's worth an hour or so rambling around the bush here.

The **Nhabe Museum** (☎ 686 1346; admission free, donations welcome; ☎ 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. Peripheral activities include local theatre presentations and sales of locally produced arts and crafts.

The community-run **Okavango Swamps Crocodile Farm** (admission US\$2; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Sat) 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 p132). **Travel Wild** (☎ 686 0822; fax 686 0493; travelwild@dynabyte.bw), opposite the airport, serves as a central booking and information office.

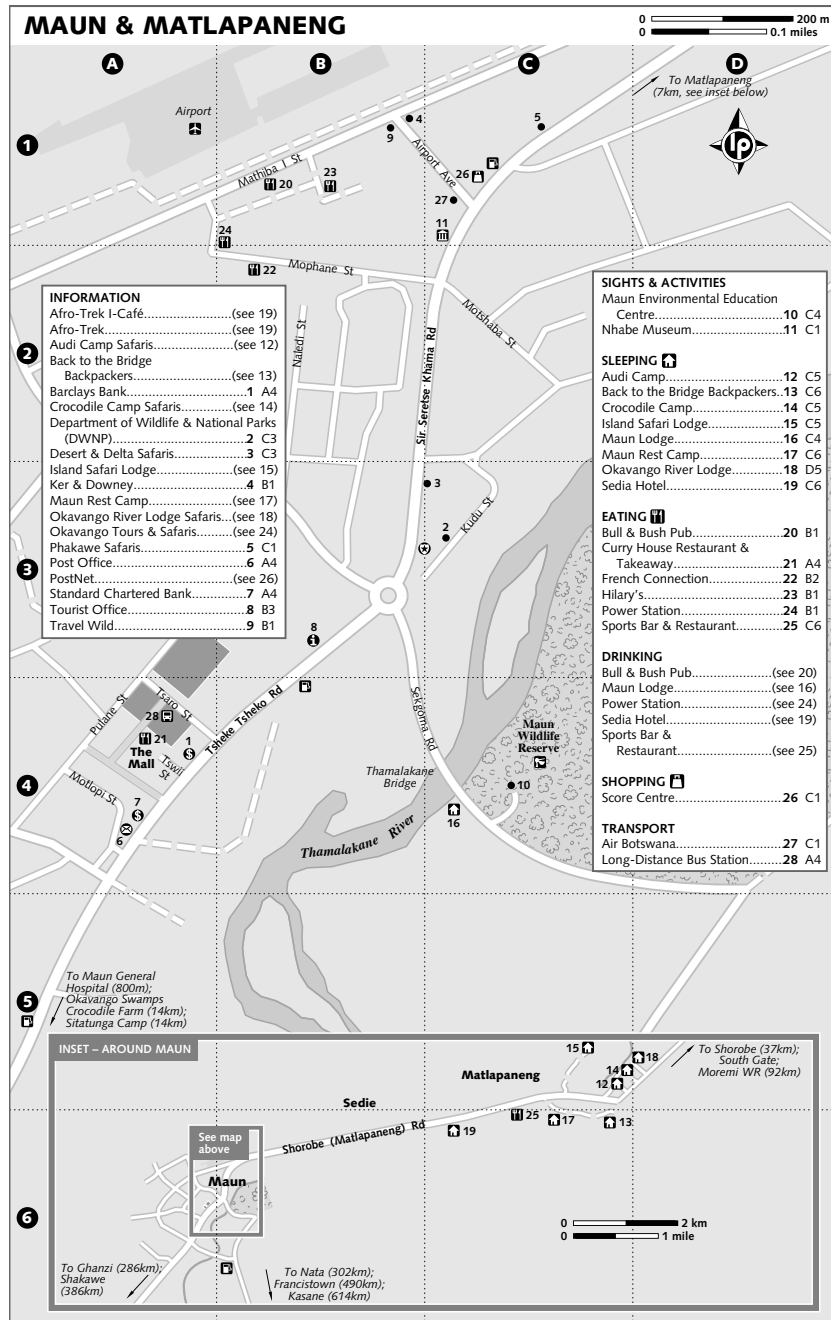
Sleeping

Okavango River Lodge (☎ 686 3707; freewind@info.bw; 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.

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 may justifiably be 'the cleanest ablution blocks in Maun'.

Audi Camp (☎ 686 0599; fax 686 0581; www.okavango.com; camping per person US\$4, s/d double 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.

Sitatunga Camp (☎ 686 4539; fax 686 4540; groundhogs@hotmail.com or 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.



Crocodile Camp (☎ 686 0265; www.botswana.com; camping per person US\$5, s/d tent 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; 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; fax 686 2932; island@info.bw; camping per person US\$5, s/d chalet US\$55/60; (P)) One of the original lodges in Maun, Island Safari Lodge is starting to show its age, although the riverside setting is still relaxing and tranquil.

Sedia Hotel (☎ 686 0177; sedia@info.bw; Shorobe Rd; camping per person US\$5, s/d from US\$75/90; (P) (B) (D)) This resort-like complex features an outdoor bar, a Continental-inspired restaurant and huge swimming pool. You can choose from a number of rooms and self-contained chalets, or 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; s/d US\$95/125; (P) (B) (D)) 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

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

Curry House Restaurant & Takeaway (The Mall; 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; 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 Rd; 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, baguettes and speciality salads.

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

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

Drinking

While entertainment in Maun is usually of the liquid kind, check out the Friday edition of the *Ngami Times* for the occasional cultural offering.

Bull & Bush Pub (Mathiba I St) Even if you're not in the mood to eat, it's worth stopping by the Bull & Bush for a few rounds.

Maun Lodge (☎ 686 3939; Old Maun Rd) The bar at this upmarket hotel usually has live jazz or traditional performers during the evenings from Thursday to Sunday.

Power Station (Mophane St) Housed in the ruins of an old power station, the most popular nightspot in Maun takes the power-generation theme to its limit with its industrial art-covered bar and restaurant.

Sedia Hotel (Shorobe Rd) The poolside English-style pub at this popular hotel also serves as a popular disco on Friday and Saturday nights.

Sports Bar & Restaurant (Shorobe Rd) This local landmark attracts expats, pilots, safari operators and tourists with its cold beer, strong drinks, satellite TV, pool tables and classy food.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air Botswana has daily flights between Maun and Gaborone (US\$156). Flights into the delta are typically arranged by lodges through local air charter companies.

BUS

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.

EASTERN DELTA

The Eastern Delta includes the wetlands between the southern boundary of Moremi Game 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 trips in the Eastern Delta are mainly organised by Maun lodges and tour companies (see p132).

Sleeping

Chitabe Camp (Map pp108-9; ☎ bookings through Wilderness Safaris, Johannesburg 27-11 807 1800; www.wilderness

-safaris.com) low/high season US\$225/550 per person; 📍 Situated near the Santandadibe River along the southern edges of Moremi Game Reserve, Chitabe is an island-oasis renowned for the presence of Cape hunting dogs and other less common wildlife.

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.

Sleeping

Oddball's Palm Island Luxury Lodge (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through Okavango Tours & Safaris, 686 1154; www.okavango.bw; s/d US\$250/350) For years, this lodge catered primarily to backpackers, and was by far the most affordable option in the delta. Although it's still one of the cheapest lodges in the region, Oddball's has gone

TRAVELLING BY MOKORO

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' enthusiasm.

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 as to 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 p116).

DELTA LODGES

If you've got a little bulge in your budget, the delta is one place where it's worth dusting off the coat-tails and living it up to your heart's content.

The rates for all lodges in the Eastern Delta, Inner Delta and Moremi Game Reserve include accommodation or camping equipment, all meals and several activities or excursions, such as mokoro trips, nature walks and wildlife drives. The more expensive places also include drinks (beer and wine only), and entry fees to Moremi Game Reserve. All rooms, chalets and tents have private bathrooms (unless stated otherwise).

Transfers (if required) by road or, more usually, by air, from Maun are never included in normal daily rates. (Transfers may be included in package deals, however.) Air fares listed are per person return from Maun. Most lodges and booking agencies deal exclusively with a particular Maun-based air-charter company, so your chances of finding other charter companies offering discounted fares to a certain lodge are negligible.

Most lodges have different rates for 'high season' (about July to October) and 'low season' (about November to June), but if only one rate is listed, this is the rate charged all year. Some places offer unadvertised discounted rates for 'shoulder seasons' (early March to mid-June and mid-October to late November), but you'll have to ask. The rates listed are always per person sharing a twin/double room. Single supplements are usually charged, but will be normally waived if a single traveller is willing to share twin accommodation with another single traveller. Rates listed include all government taxes and service charges. Tips are always extra.

The rates shown in this chapter are for 'foreigners'; most lodges offer substantial (but rarely published) discounts to Botswana citizens and residents and to citizens of 'regional countries', ie mainly South Africa and Namibia. Although tariffs are quoted in US dollars by the lodges, payment is possible in pula – but at a rate that suits the lodge. Payment by credit card may incur an additional surcharge, so check first with the lodge.

All lodges in the Eastern Delta, Inner Delta and Moremi Game Reserve must be pre-booked, preferably before you arrive in Maun.

upmarket in recent years. Its new price tag is a little high, though, considering you're still staying in budget dome tents.

Semetsi Camp (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through Crocodile Camp Safaris, 686 0265; www.botswana.com; s/d US\$250/350) Another comparatively affordable option, Semetsi Camp consists of eight dome tents attractively scattered around a palm-fringed islet that overlooks Chiefs Island.

Delta Camp (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through Okavango Tours & Safaris, 686 1154; www.okavango.bw; low/high season per person US\$350/450) This long-standing camp is beautifully situated beside a flowing channel near the southern end of Chiefs Island.

Nxabega Okavango Camp (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through CCAfrica, Johannesburg 27-11 809 4300; www.ccafrica.com; low/high season per person US\$350/450) On the shores of the Boro River, this exquisitely designed tented camp has sweeping views of the delta floodplains.

Vumbura Camp (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through Okavango Tours & Safaris, 686 1154; www.okavango.bw; low/high season per person US\$400/600) This twin-camp is located on the Duba Plains at the transition zone between the savannas and swamps north

of the delta, and is famous for attracting large buffalo herds.

Xigera Camp (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through Wilderness Safaris, Johannesburg 27-11 807 1800; www.wilderness-safaris.com; low/high season per person US\$400/600) Pronounced 'kee-jera', this isolated spot is located deep in the heart of the Inner Delta, and is renowned for its rich bird life and tropical ambience.

Kanana Camp (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through Ker & Downey, 686 0375; www.kerdowney.com; low/high season US\$425/500) This classy retreat occupies a watery site in a maze of grass- and palm-covered islands.

Gunn's Camp (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through Crocodile Camp Safaris, 686 0265; www.botswana.com; s/d US\$425/650) Much like Oddball's, Gunn's Camp has worked hard in past years to redefine itself as an upmarket luxury lodge. Unlike Oddball's however, the conversion has been more effective, so it's likely that the memory of the old camp will fade quickly.

Pom Pom Camp (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through Okavango Tours & Safaris, 686 1154; www.okavango.bw; low/high season per person US\$450/600) This intimate

camp was one of the original luxury retreats in the delta, though frequent renovations have kept it up to speed with recent properties.

Duba Plains (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through Okavango Tours & Safaris, 686 1154; www.okavango.bw; low/high season US\$550/750 per person) North of the Moremi Game Reserve, Duba Plains is one of the most remote camps in the delta.

Getting There & Away

The only way in and out of the Inner Delta for most visitors is by air. This is an expensive extra, but the pain is less if you look at it as two scenic flights. Chartered flights to the lodges listed above typically cost about US\$150 to US\$200 roundtrip, Mekoro or 4WD vehicles will meet your plane and take you to the lodge.

MOREMI GAME RESERVE

This reserve (📍 6am-6.30pm Mar-Sep, 5.30am-5.30pm Oct-Feb), encompassing 3000 sq km, was set aside in the 1960s to protect the most wildlife-rich part of the Okavango Delta. The park has a distinctly dual personality, with large areas of dry land rising between vast wetlands.

The two most prominent dry features are Chiefs Island, deep in the Inner Delta, and the Moremi Tongue, comprising the reserve's northeastern extent. Habitats range from mopane woodland and thorn scrub to dry savanna, riverbank woodlands, grasslands, floodplains, marshes, permanent waterways, lagoons and islands.

Sights

THIRD BRIDGE

This is literally the third log bridge after entering the reserve at South Gate (Map pp108-9). It's a rustic and beautiful bridge spanning a sandy, tannin-coloured pool on the Sekiri River, which is an idyllic spot to camp and enjoy a picnic. Contrary to official advice, and despite DWNP regulations, many ignorant visitors swim here, but it's a very bad idea – and foolhardy because of the risk of hippos and crocs among the reeds.

MBOMA ISLAND

The grassy savanna of this 100 sq km island (Map p114), which is actually just a long extension of the Moremi Tongue, contrasts

sharply with surrounding landscapes. The 25km sandy Mboma Loop starts about 2km west of Third Bridge and is a pleasant side trip.

XAKANAXA LEDIBA

With one of Africa's largest heronries, Xakanaxa Lediba (Xakanaxa Lagoon; Map p114) is renowned as a bird-watchers' paradise. Potential sightings here include herons, marabouts, saddle-bill storks, egrets and ibises (wood, sacred and glossy). The area also supports an array of wildlife and large numbers of fish.

The lagoon is home to several upmarket lodges that operate boat and mokoro trips for guests. The public may be able to join an organised boat or mokoro trip for a high – but negotiable – fee.

The drive between North Gate and Xakanaxa Lediba follows one of Botswana's most scenic tracks. Worthwhile stops include Dombo Hippo Pool (about 14km southwest of North Gate), where hippos crowd along the shore. Their shenanigans can be enjoyed in relative safety from an elevated observation post. The two water holes at Paradise Pools are as lovely as the name suggests.

Sleeping CAMPING

The DWNP operates each of the four camp sites in the Moremi Game Reserve.

Khwai Camp Site (Map p114; North Gate; 📍) The camp site here is shady and well developed. There are a couple of small shops in Khwai village on the other side of the river.

Maqwee Camp Site (Map p114; South Gate; 📍) The camp site here is reasonably-developed, though the ablution blocks are a bit run down.

Third Bridge Camp Site (Map p114; Third Bridge; 📍) On the edge of a lagoon (so watch out for hippos and crocs), the most popular camp site in Moremi is starting to show its age, though it's still a beautiful place to pitch for the night.

Xakanaxa Camp Site (Map p114; Xakanaxa Lediba; 📍) This camp site occupies a narrow strip of land surrounded by marshes and lagoons.

LODGES

Camp Okavango (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through Desert & Delta Safaris, 686 1234; www.desertdelta.com; low/high season per person US\$250/325; 📍) Set amid

sausage and jackalberry trees just outside of Moremi, this charming lodge shows elegant taste, and the staff is famous for their meticulous attention to detail.

Camp Moremi (Map p114; ☎ Bookings through Desert & Delta Safaris, 686 1234; www.desertdelta.com; low/high season per person US\$550/750/325; 📍) This long-standing wilderness retreat sits amid giant ebony trees next to Xakanaxa Lediba, and is surrounded by game-rich grasslands.

Xugana Island Lodge (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through Desert & Delta Safaris, 686 1234; www.desertdelta.com; low/high season per person US\$250/350; 📍) Set on a pristine lagoon just north of Moremi, this lodge offers superb bird-watching and fishing.

Kaparota Camp (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through Wilderness Safaris, Johannesburg 27-11 807 1800; www.wilderness-safaris.com; low/high season per person US\$250/400) Situated on a remote island north of Moremi, this modest camp is named after the heavy concentration of sausage trees that grow on the grounds.

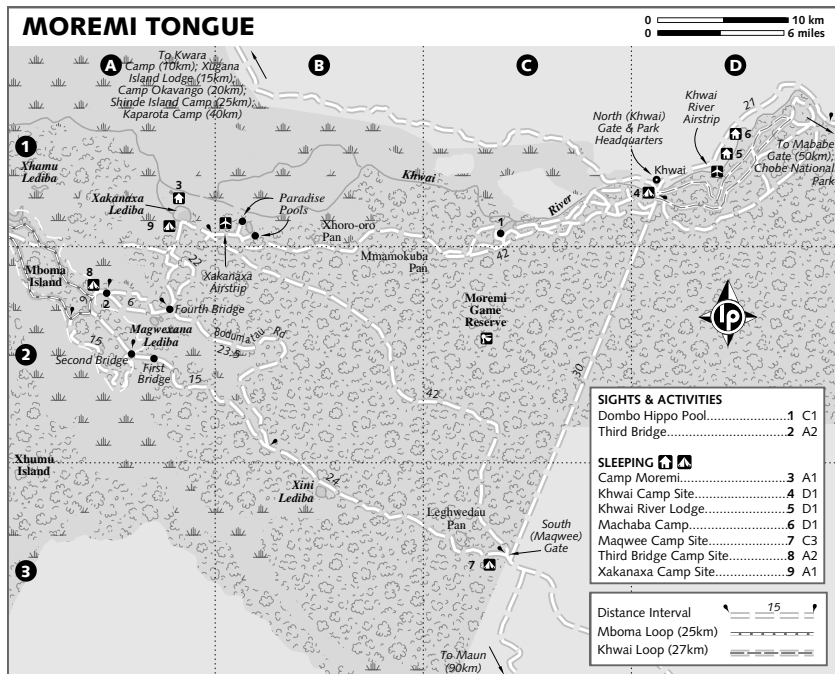
Stanley's Camp (Map pp108-9; low/high season US\$250/450 per person; 📍) Significantly less ostentatious than other lodges in Moremi, Stanley's lacks the formality and pretence commonly found in this corner of the country. You can book through any of the Maun operators (see p132).

Kwara Camp (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through Kwando Safaris, 686 1449; www.kwando.co.za; low/high season per person US\$250/650; 📍) This island camp lies in an area of subterranean springs, which form pools that support enough fish to attract flocks of pelicans (the name means 'Where the Pelicans Feed').

Xakanaxa Camp (Map p114; ☎ Bookings through Okavango Tours & Safaris, 686 1154; www.okavango.bw; low/high season per person US\$300/425; 📍) This camp offers a pleasant mix of delta and savanna habitat, and teems with huge herds of elephants and other wildlife.)

Machaba Camp (Map p114; ☎ Bookings through Ker & Downey, 686 0375; www.kerdowney.com; low/high season US\$375/450, supplement US\$150/200; 📍) Named after the local word for the sycamore fig trees that shelter the camp, Machaba sits along with the Khwai River, which becomes an evening drinking venue for hundreds of animals, including elephants, antelopes and zebras.

Shinde Island Camp (Map pp108-9; ☎ Bookings through Ker & Downey, 686 0375; www.kerdowney.com; low/high season US\$450/550; 📍) This lagoon-side camp, one of the oldest in the delta, is situated on the fringe between the savanna and the delta, just north of Moremi.



Khwai River Lodge (Map p114; ☎ Bookings through Orient-Express Safaris, 686 0302; www.gametrackers.orient-express.com; low/high season per person US\$500/575; (P)) Perched on the northern shores of the Khwai River, this opulent lodge overlooks the Moremi Game Reserve, and is frequently visited by large numbers of hippos and elephants.

Getting There & Away

There's no public transport to Moremi, so you'll need a 4WD vehicle or a drive-in or fly-in safari. If you're booked into one of the delta camps, air, road or boat transport is normally arranged by the camp, but usually for an additional charge.

THE 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, Yei, 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.

Sleeping CAMPING

Camping is also available at most of the lodges.

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 to Seronga, but it's almost always possible to hitch from the free Okavango River ferry in Mohembo (see p121 for more on hitching in Botswana). 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 above) and Seronga (US\$3, two hours); transfers from the Seronga dock to Mbiroba Lodge, 3km away, cost US\$9. Otherwise, Sepupa Swamp Stop charters 18-passenger boats for US\$90.

Phala Community Camp Site (Map pp108-9; Ganitsuga; camping per person US\$4; (P)) This rustic camp site is friendly, welcoming and far from the tourist crowd. Phala is near Ganitsuga village, about 23km east of Seronga and accessible by a sturdy 2WD or hitching from Seronga.

LODGES

Sepupa Swamp Stop (Map pp108-9; ☎ 686 7073; island@info.bw; Sepupa village; swampstop@maun.info; camping per person US\$4, s/d tents US\$30/40; (P)) This laid-back riverside camp site is secluded, handy to Sepupa village, very affordable and accessible (3km) from the Maun-Shakawe road.

Mbiroba Camp (Map pp108-9; ☎ 687 6861; camping US\$5, s/d chalet US\$35/45; (P)) This impressive camp is run by the Okavango Polers Trust, and is the usual launch point for mokoro trips into the delta.

Guma Island Lodge (Map pp108-9; ☎ 687 4022; gumacamp@info.bw; camping per person US\$5, family chalets US\$150; (P)) Fishing is the focus at this secluded camp, though Guma Island also advertises itself as a 'family resort' – if you're travelling with the little ones, they will be well catered for.

Makwena Lodge (Map pp108-9; ☎ 687 4299; fax 687 4302; camping per person US\$6, backpackers' s/d from US\$30/45; (P)) Located on Qhaaxhwa (Birthplace of the Hippo) Lagoon at the base of the panhandle, this stretch of the panhandle closely resembles the Inner Delta.

Drotsky's Cabins (Map pp108-9; ☎ 687 5035; drotskys@info.bw; camping per person US\$10, s/d A-frames US\$60/110, 4-person chalets US\$120; (P)) This lovely, welcoming lodge lies beside a channel of the Oka-

vango River about 5km southeast of Shakawe and about 4km east of the main road.

Xaro Lodge (Map pp108-9; s/d chalet US\$50/75; (P)) The lodge is remote – about 10km downstream from Drotsky's – but serene and extremely picturesque. Book through Drotsky's.

GCWIHABA CAVERNS (DROTSKY'S CAVE)

In the !Kung language, the name of this decorated cavern system in the Gcwihaba Hills means 'Hyena's Hole'. They weren't brought to European attention until the mid-1930s when the !Kung showed them to a Ghanzi farmer, Martinus Drotsky, and for years they were known as Drotsky's Cave. The two entrances are 300m apart but the route through the cave is about 800m.

There are no lights and no indication of which route to take, so you must carry several powerful torches as well as emergency lights, such as matches and cigarette lighters. The hardest part is a short, vertical climb down into a pit and then up the other side to a shelf, where there's a tight squeeze before you emerge in a large room. The nearest water is the borehole at Nxainxai (variously spelt Cae Cae, Xai Xai and Cgae Cgae) village.

However inconvenient it may be, visitors are advised to check in with the village of Nxainxai before visiting the caves, as villagers claim ownership of the caves and gates must be installed to prevent visitors entering without paying local guides and admission fees (around US\$5 per person) through the Dutch-organised Cgae Cgae Tlhabolo Trust.

Tours to the cave (and to the nearby Aha Hills) can be arranged in Maun, but only with enough people paying enough money. Self-drivers need a 4WD with high clearance, long-range petrol tanks, water reserves and camping equipment. Take an unsignposted turn-off 2km northwest of Tsau and follow the roving track for about 90km to the signposted turn-off to the Xhaba borehole. Turn south here and after 27km you'll reach the borehole; another 27km gets you to the caverns. Alternatively, you can approach from the Aha Hills.

AHA HILLS

Straddling the Botswana-Namibia border, the 700-million-year-old limestone and dolomite Aha Hills rise 300m from the flat, thorny Kalahari scrub. They're scenic enough, but the

foremost attraction is their end-of-the-world remoteness and utter silence, due mainly to the almost total absence of water. There are no facilities in the Aha Hills, but unofficial camping is allowed within 100m of the main track. Basic supplies and drinkable bore water are available in the villages of Nxainxai and Gcangwa.

Two taxing 4WD routes lead to the Aha Hills. One follows the Gcwihaba Caverns route (see left), and the other turns west from the Maun-Shakawe road, north of a small bridge near Nokaneng. From there, it's 190km west to the Aha Hills.

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.

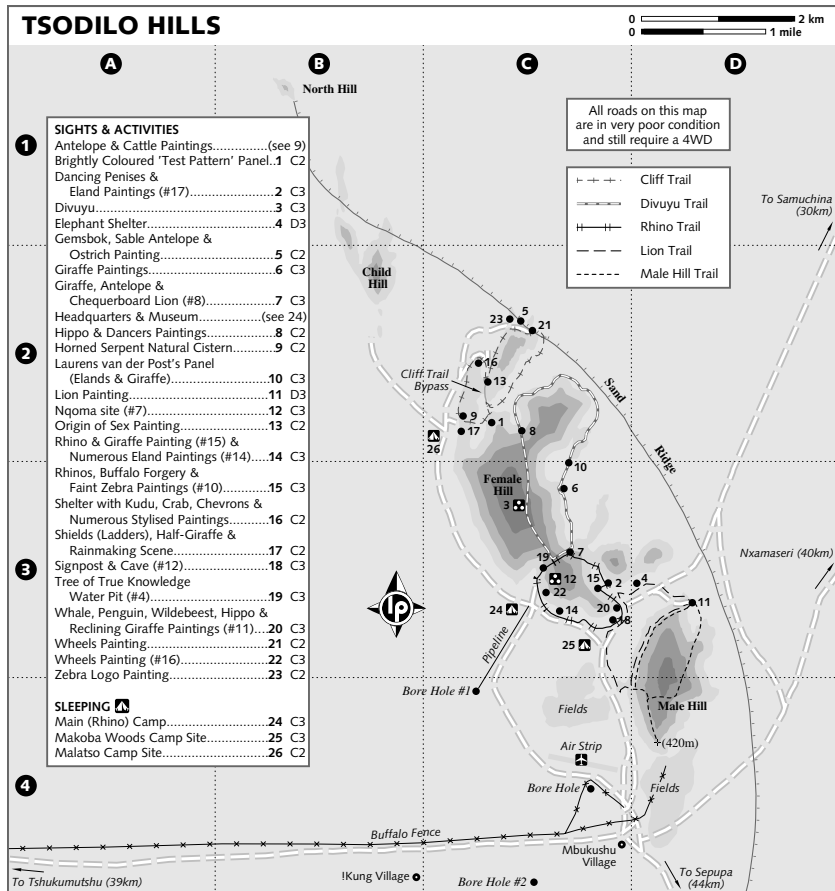
Sleeping

Visitors can camp at either the Main (Rhino), Malatso, Makoba Woods camping grounds for US\$6 per person, or at wild camp sites around the base of the hills, but there are no shops or services. Water is sometimes available at the Main Camp and at the borehole several hundred metres from the airstrip (this water is intended for cattle, so it's wise to purify it).

Getting There & Away

Most Maun safari companies and agencies can organise one-day air charters starting at US\$450 for five people, but they'll allow only three hours of sightseeing, with little time to climb or explore in this remarkable area. Safari companies also run custom safaris, but they need advance notice and enough paying clients to make it worthwhile.

Thanks to three notorious access routes, Tsodilo was once one of Botswana's most



inaccessible wonders. The good news (or bad news, depending on your perspective) is that the middle (Nxamaseri) road is currently being upgraded and, by the time you read this, will have turned from a four-hour grind through deep sand in a low 4WD to a 30-minute 2WD jaunt through the bush. Note, however, that you'll still need a 4WD to explore the hills area.

THE KALAHARI

The Kalahari sands stretch across parts of seven countries: Congo (Zaire), Angola, Zambia, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa, and form one of Africa's most

prominent geographical features. While a small portion is classic desert, most of the Kalahari is a vast deposit of sandy sediments that receive too much rainfall to be officially classified as an arid zone.

In Botswana, the Kalahari (*Kgalagadi* in Setswana) offers a solitude all its own. Distances are vast, transport is rare and facilities are few and far between, and off main routes, the scant villages huddle around feeble boreholes.

KHUTSE GAME RESERVE

The 2600 sq km Khutse Game Reserve makes a popular weekend excursion for adventurous Gaborone dwellers. Expect to see a variety of antelopes, as well as such predators as lions,

leopards, brown and spotted hyenas, jackals, caracals (which the San people believe to be the incarnation of the morning star) and even hunting dogs.

Khutse has eight DWNP-operated camp sites, but only Wildlife Camp, near the entry gate, has (brackish) running water and showers. Khutse Camp Site, with a rudimentary camp site, is 14km west of the entry gate. The most distant site is the very pleasant Moreswa Pan, 67km from the gate, which has a natural water source that attracts wildlife. All sites must be pre-booked through the DWNP (Map pp88-9; ☎ 318 0774; dwnp@gov.bw; PO Box 131, Government Enclave,

leopards, brown and spotted hyenas, jackals, caracals (which the San people believe to be the incarnation of the morning star) and even hunting dogs.

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CENTRAL KALAHARI GAME RESERVE

The Central Kalahari Game Reserve covers 52,000 sq km and is Africa's largest protected area, sprawling across the nearly featureless heart of Botswana. It's perhaps best known

VOICES AGAINST RELOCATION

Informal government programmes aimed at removing the San from the central Kalahari began in 1986, and forced relocations intensified from 1997 to 2002. During this time, Survival International (www.survival-international.org), an NGO that advocates for the self-determination of indigenous populations, worked in conjunction with the First People of the Kalahari (FPK), the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) San organisation, in an attempt to reverse the relocation process. In 2005 the actions of FPK were recognised with the bestowment of the Right Livelihood Award, which is regarded as the 'Alternative Nobel Prize'. The following is an excerpt from the acceptance speech by Roy Sesana:

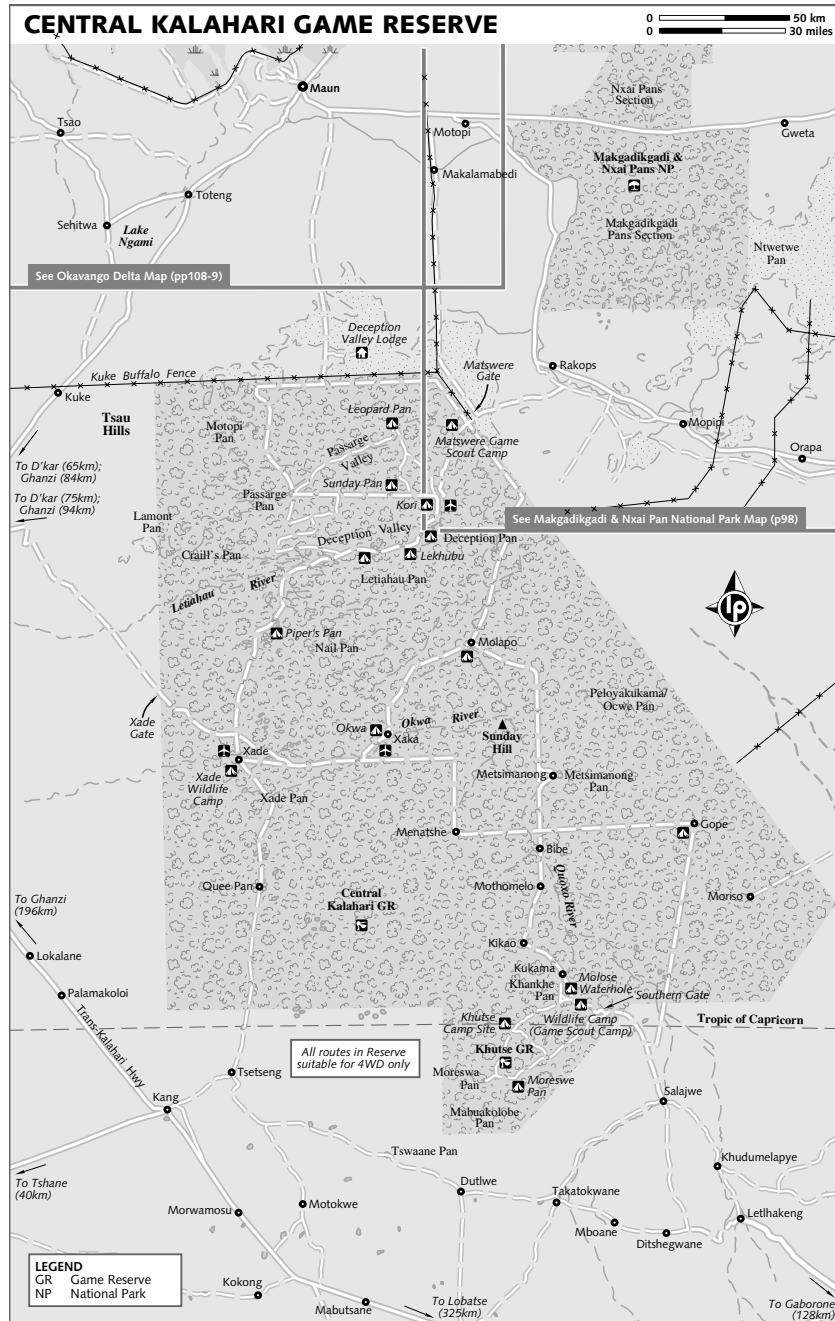
'Why am I here? Because my people love their land, and without it we are dying. Many years ago, the president of Botswana said we could live on our ancestral land forever. We never needed anyone to tell us that. Of course we can live where God created us! But the next president said we must move and began forcing us away... I say what kind of development is it when the people live shorter lives than before? They catch HIV/AIDS. Our children are beaten in school and won't go there. Some become prostitutes. They are not allowed to hunt. They fight because they are bored and get drunk. They are starting to commit suicide. We never saw that before. It hurts to say this. Is this 'development'?

Following Survival International's campaign to bring the forced relocations into the international spotlight, the CKGR achieved global notoriety. The international media has been quick to condemn the Botswana government while praising the efforts of Survival International, but the background is complex.

The CKGR was a legacy of the British colonial administration in Botswana. Before the British administration departed in 1961, it set aside the area to protect the interests of San, and for two decades the Botswana government provided health and education services to the residents in the CKGR. However, in the 1990s it established a more accessible external settlement called New Xade, and relocations began in 1997 – some voluntary, some not. The subsequent course of events is murky, but it seems that at least one model for shared use was put forward, but that shared use was never seriously considered by the Botswana government, which remained intractable to discussion with the FPK.

Survival International staged a series of international demonstrations intended to persuade the government to back down. These efforts were undoubtedly well-intended – the organisation has a long-standing record of good works – but this particular campaign appears to have been less than successful. The FPK and the government were unable to resume discussions, and the FPK took the matter to the High Court, supported by Survival International. The situation appeared to have been resolved in the favour of the San in December 2006 when the High Court of Botswana ruled that the San were wrongly evicted from the CKGR. However, whether the victory makes a material difference to the condition of the San depends to some extent on the way the ruling is interpreted by the government.

CENTRAL KALAHARI GAME RESERVE



for Deception (or Letiahau) Valley, the site of Mark and Delia Owens' 1974 to 1981 brown hyena study, which is described in their book *Cry of the Kalahari*. At Deception Pan brown hyenas emerge just after dark and you may also see lions. Three similar fossil valleys: the Okwa, the Quoxo (or Meratswe) and the Passarge also bring topographical relief to the virtually featureless expanses, although the rivers ceased flowing more than 16,000 years ago. Other pans in the northern area of the reserve – Letiahau, Piper's, Sunday and Passarge – are artificially pumped to provide water for wildlife.

The only reasonably convenient public access is via the Matswere gate in the north-eastern corner of the reserve.

Sleeping

There are basic DWNP camp sites at Deception Pan, Leopard Pan, Kori, Lekhubu, Letia-hau Pan, Sunday Pan and Piper's Pan, but all lack facilities. The well-known Deception Pan enjoys a few rare, shady acacia trees, while Piper's Pan is known for its bizarre ghost trees. Other remote camp sites include **Xaka**, **Molpapo**, **Gope** and **Xade** in the southern part of the reserve. Marginally drinkable water is available only at the **Matswere Game Scout Camp**, near the northeastern gates of the reserve.

Deception Valley Lodge (South Africa) ☎ 27-12 665 8554; www.deceptionvalley.co.za; low/high season per person US\$305/550; 📍) is an exclusive bush retreat located on the edge of the reserve. It was designed to blend into the surrounding nature without detracting from its ambience. The soothing rooms combine Victorian and African design elements, and feature a private lounge and outdoor shower. The lodge is approximately 120km from Maun, and the route is accessible to 2WD vehicles during the dry season.

Getting There & Away

Xade, Okwa and Deception Pan have airstrips that attract upmarket fly-in safaris from Maun.

Most Maun-based safari operators can organise custom drive-in tours, but independent access requires a high-clearance 4WD vehicle, a compass or GPS, and reserve petrol (the nearest supplies are at Ghanzi, Kang and Rakops). From Matswere Game Scout Camp, it's 70km to Deception Pan. The alternative approach, from Makalamabedi near the Maun-Nata road, heads south for about

105km along the eastern side of the buffalo fence to the Matswere Gate. The very remote southern gate is accessed from Khutse Game Reserve and the Xade Gate is reached from a turn-off near D'kar.

GHANZI

The principal attraction of the Kalahari's administrative centre is **Gantsi Craft** (☎ 659 6241; Henry Jankie Dr; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat), which was established in 1953 as a craft outlet and training centre for the San. It's an excellent place to shop for traditional San crafts including dyed textiles, decorated bags, leather aprons, bows and arrows, musical instruments and woven mats.

The **Thakadu Camp** (☎ 72-249221; thakadu@botsnet.bw; camping per person US\$4, s/d chalet US\$30/45; **P** ) has a modern ablution block with flush toilets and hot showers, as well as a refreshing swimming pool and a pub-style restaurant and bar.

The **Kalahari Arms Hotel** (☎ 659 6298; kalahariarms hotel@botsnet.bw; camping per person US\$4, s/d US\$60/75; ) is a long-standing Ghanzi institution with modern and well-furnished rooms. The complex has expanded over the years, and now has a pub, take-away, bakery and bottle shop in addition to its popular dining room.

In the morning buses run from the main terminal to Mamuno (US\$3, three hours) and Gaborone (US\$10, 11 hours); the daily bus to Maun (US\$4.50, five hours) leaves at 2.30pm.

D'KAR

The Ncoakhoe San people at the 7500-hectare game ranch **Dq̄ae Qare** (☎ 659 6574; www.kuru.co.w; admission US\$2, camping per person US\$5, San huts per person without/with half-board US\$35/45; (P) offer guided hunting and gathering bushwalks (US\$4 per hour), wildlife drives (US\$6 per hour), and other activities providing insight into the lifestyles of the traditional Kalahari San. Transfers from Ghanzi cost US\$22.

KGALAGADI TRANSFRONTIER PARK

The former Mabuasehube-Gemsbok National Park has now been combined with South Africa's former Kalahari-Gemsbok National Park into the new Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. The result is one of the world's largest (28,400 sq km) and most pristine wilderness areas (see p462 for information on the South African side).

Direct road access from Botswana is limited to the Mabuasehube and Kaa gates, both via Kang and Hukuntsi, while the Nossob River section is best accessed from South Africa.

Mabuasehube Section

The Mabuasehube section of the park (the name means 'Red Earth'), covers 1800 sq km and focuses on the low red dunes around three major pans and several minor ones. **Mabuasehube** (📍 for day visitors 6.30am-6.30pm Mar-Sep, 5.30am-7.30pm Oct-Feb) is best in late winter and early spring when herds of eland and gemsbok migrate from the rest of the park. This section has eight rudimentary camp sites, for two groups of up to 12 people each, at the Entrance Gate, Lesholoago Pan, Monamodi, Mpaathutlwa Pan, Bosobogolo Pan and Khiding Pan, as well as two sites at Mabuasehube Pan. Facilities are limited to pit toilets, but all but Khiding Pan and Bosobogolo Pan have water (it's still wise to carry a good supply of drinking water).

Two Rivers Section

Although you can now reach the Two Rivers section from either Kaa or Mabuasehube, access is still best from South Africa. The Two Rivers Camp, over the Nossob River from South Africa's Twee Rivieren Camp, has cold showers and toilets. There are also two basic sites further north on the Botswanan side: Rooiputs, 30km northeast of Two Rivers, and Polentswe Pan, at Grootbrak, 223km north of Two Rivers and 60km north of South Africa's Nossob Camp.

Wilderness Trails

There are now two challenging wilderness 4WD tracks through this remote corner of Botswana. The Kgalakgadi Wilderness Trail, with two obligatory camp sites along the way, is a bone-shaped 285km loop beginning at Polentswe Pan, at Grootbak on the Nossob River, and winding north to Kaa (where there's water) before looping back toward the Nossob. The other is a two-day 150km route between the Nossob and Mabuasehube (there's also a parallel transit track to the south), which can be done only from east to west. Only one group is permitted per day, and must include two to five 4WD vehicles. Either route (US\$37 per person per night) must be pre-booked through **DWNP** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 318 0774; dwnp@gov.bw; PO Box 131, Government Enclave, Khama Cres, Gaborone; 📅 reservations 7.30am-12.45pm & 1.45-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

in Gaborone. For fees and booking information, see p85.

Getting There & Away

All tracks into the park require a 4WD, reserve petrol and self-sufficiency. The Mabuasehube section has only one entrance gate, which is accessed from Tshabong in the south, Hukuntsi in the north or along the cut line from Kokotsha (useful if you're coming from Gaborone). For the Two Rivers section, you can enter only at Kaa, which is accessed via Kang, Hukuntsi and Tshatswa (Zutshwa), or via South Africa.

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.

In general, a budget double room is anything under US\$50. You'll then have to make the leap to US\$80 to US\$150 for comfortable midrange accommodation. Note that there's a real dearth of midrange places in the Okavango Delta, which is largely given over to luxury camps and top-end lodges that can set you back around US\$300, although this can rise stratospherically to around US\$500 in the delta. Most top-end places quote their prices in US dollars although payment can be made in local currency.

Camping

Quite a few hotels and lodges along the road system have camp sites with varying amenities for around US\$7 per person, which normally includes access to the lodge bar and swimming pool. Wild camping is permitted only outside national parks, private land and government freehold lands. If you can't escape local scrutiny, visit the local *kgosi* or police station to request permission to camp and get directions to a suitable site.

In national parks, the typically rudimentary camps have little more than braai pits and flush toilets; many are simply clearings in the dust. However, you can't just turn up at the park gates and get a camp site; they must be pre-booked through Department of

PRACTICALITIES

- Botswana generates electricity at 220 volts AC, 50Hz, though they confusingly use two types of plugs: the South African type with its three round prongs, and the UK type with the three square prongs.
- *Daily News*, published by the Department of Information & Broadcasting, is distributed free in Gaborone and includes government news, plus major national and international news.
- Print and slide film, batteries and accessories as well as video cartridges are available in Gaborone, Francistown and Maun, though it's not cheap, and you might not find your desired brand.
- Nationwide programming is provided by Radio Botswana, broadcasting in both English and Setswana, while most of the country has access to Botswana Television (BTV), which broadcasts local, African and international news.
- Botswana uses the metric system for everything.

Wildlife & National Parks (DWNP) offices (see p85).

Hotels

Every town has at least one hotel, and larger towns and tourist areas offer several 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.

Safari Camps & Lodges

Most safari camps and lodges are found around Chobe National Park, the Tuli Block, the Linyanti Marshes, the Moremi Game Reserve and all over the Okavango Delta. They 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 pre-booking, but some road-accessible options around Kasane and Maun may accept walk-ins.

ACTIVITIES

Since Botswana is largely a high-budget, low-volume tourist destination, activity tourism focuses on the softer or more expensive options: wildlife viewing, 4WD safaris etc. If you're really flush with cash, the sky is the limit, and you can choose between elephant or horseback safaris in the Okavango, learning to fly in Maun, quadbiking on the Makgadikgadi Pans, or hiring a 4WD and heading out into the Kalahari. Hiking opportunities are limited to the Tsodilo Hills in the north-

west and several small ranges in the eastern and southeastern parts of the country. Wildlife hikes can also be arranged for guests of Okavango Delta lodges or participants on mokoro safaris.

BOOKS General

Kalahari – Life's Variety in Dune and Delta, by Michael Main, and *Okavango – Jewel of the Kalahari*, by Karen Ross, study the faces of the Kalahari and the Okavango Delta, respectively, with particular attention to their vegetation, wildlife and geological and cultural histories. They're full of personality and good colour photos.

A Story Like the Wind, by Laurens van der Post, is an entertaining, fictional treatment of a meeting between European and San cultures. Its sequel is *A Far Off Place*.

The Sunbird, by Wilbur Smith, is a light read telling two fanciful and highly entertaining tales about the mythical 'lost city of the Kalahari'.

Guidebooks

African Adventurer's Guide to Botswana, by Mike Main, concentrates on off-road information, including GPS coordinates, for those venturing into the great unknown with their own vehicles. It's available in better bookshops around Southern Africa.

History & Culture

Ditswammung – The Archaeology of Botswana, by P Lane, A Redi and A Segobye, is a weighty tome, compiled by the Botswana Society, and is the definitive work for archaeology buffs.

History of Botswana, by T Tlou & Alec Campbell, is the most readable account of Botswana's history, from the Stone Age to modern times.

A Marriage of Inconvenience: The Persecution of Seretse and Ruth Khama, by Michael Dufield, details the negative responses to the marriage of Ngwato heir and Botswana's first president, Sir Seretse Khama, and Englishwoman Ruth Williams in the 1950s.

Travel Literature

Lost World of the Kalahari, by Laurens van der Post, is a classic work dealing with the San people and contains some wonderful background on the Tsodilo Hills. The author's quest for an understanding of San religion and folklore is continued in *Heart of the Hunter* and *The Voice of the Thunder*.

Starlings Laughing, by June Vendall-Clark, is a memoir describing the end of the colonial era in Southern Africa. The author spent many years in the Maun area.

Cry of the Kalahari, by Mark & Delia Owens, is an entertaining and readable account of an American couple's seven years studying brown hyenas in the Central Kalahari.

With My Soul Amongst Lions and Last of the Free, by Gareth Patterson, carry Joy and George Adamson's *Born Free* legacy from Kenya to Mashatu, in Botswana's Tuli Block. These rather tragic tales may make depressing reading for anyone inspired by Adamson's early efforts and visions.

BUSINESS HOURS

Normal business hours are 8am to 5pm (often with a one- or two-hour closure for lunch). On Saturday shops open around 8am and close at noon or 1pm; on Sunday there's scarcely any activity anywhere. In larger towns, banking hours are from 9am to 3.30pm Monday to Friday and 8.30am to 11am Saturday. Post offices are open from 8.15am to 4pm (closing for lunch between 12.45am and 2pm). Government offices are open from 7.30am to 12.30pm and 1.45pm to 4.30pm Monday to Friday.

Restaurant opening hours vary according to the type of establishment – as a rule cafés and cheap eats will be open all day, closing in early evening. More expensive restaurants will be open from around 10.30am to 11pm Monday to Saturday, usually with a break between lunch and dinner. Run-of-the-mill bars open around 5pm until late, while nightclubs and late-night

drinking spots open their doors around 9pm (or 10pm) and keep going until 5am.

In this chapter we have only listed opening hours where they differ significantly from these broad guidelines.

CHILDREN

Although Botswana is a safe country for children to travel in, be advised that child-related goods and services are extremely limited, particularly in the far fringes of the Kalahari and the Okavango Delta.

CUSTOMS

Botswana is a member of the Southern African Customs Union, which allows unrestricted carriage of certain items between member countries duty free. From outside the union, you can import up to 400 cigarettes, 50 cigars and 250g of tobacco duty free. Edible animal products such as untinned meat, milk and eggs are confiscated at the border.

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 with other African (and many Western) countries.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Botswana Embassies & Consulates

Botswana has embassies and high commissions in Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe (see the relevant country chapters), as well as in the following countries. Where Botswana has no diplomatic representation, information and visas are available through the British High Commission.

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

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)

Embassies & Consulates in Botswana

All of the following are in Gaborone:

Angola (Map pp88-9; ☎ 390 0204; fax 397 5089, angolaemb@info.bw; 5131 Nelson Mandela Rd, Private Bag BR111, Broadhurst)

France (Map pp88-9; ☎ /fax 397 3863; 761 Robinson Rd, PO Box 1424)

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

Namibia (Map pp88-9; ☎ 397 2685; BCC Bldg, 1278 Lobatse Rd, PO Box 1586)

UK (Map pp88-9; ☎ 395 2841; fax 395 6105; Queen's Rd, Private Bag 0023, the Mall)

USA (Map pp88-9; ☎ 395 3982; fax 395 6947; pausemb3@botsnet.bw; Government Enclave, Embassy Dr, PO Box 90)

Zambia (Map pp88-9; ☎ 395 1951; fax 395 3952; Zambia House, the Mall, PO Box 362)

Zimbabwe (Map pp88-9; ☎ 391 4495; fax 390 5863; Orapa Close, PO Box 1232)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Botswana stages few major celebratory events. Gaborone's **Maitisong Festival** (☎ 367 1809; fax 358 4946; www.info.bw/~maitisong), in March or April, features local and regional music, dance and drama. Celebrations are held all over the country on Sir Seretse Khama Day, President's Day and Botswana/Independence Day.

HOLIDAYS

Public holidays in Botswana include the following:

New Year's Day 1 January

Day after New Year's Day 2 January

Easter March/April – Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Monday

Labour Day 1 May

Ascension Day April/May

Sir Seretse Khama Day 1 July

President's Day July

Botswana/Independence Day 30 September

Day after Independence Day 1 October

Christmas 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet and email access is now available at internet cafés in Gaborone, Maun, Francistown, Kasane and Ghanzi, and it's relatively fast and inexpensive. The most popular ISP is **botsnet.bw** (www.botsnet.bw), based in Gaborone.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Following is a list of helpful websites:

Botswana Government (www.gov.bw) Contains current news and links to business and government departments.

Info Botswana (www.info.bw) Includes links to tourism operators, plus the latest news and weather.

On Safari (www.onsafari.com) Gives details on tour companies and lodges in Botswana and Southern Africa.

University of Botswana (www.ub.bw) Provides information on history, archaeology, politics, society and tourism.

LANGUAGE

English is the official language of Botswana and the medium of instruction from the fifth year of primary school. The most widely spoken language, however, is Setswana, which is the first language of over 90% of people. For more on language, see p772.

MAPS

The most accurate country map is the *Shell Tourist Map of Botswana*, which shows major roads and includes insets of tourist areas and central Gaborone. Almost as good is Rainbird Publishers' 1:2,500,000 *Explorer Map Botswana*. The 1:1,750,000 *Republic of Botswana*, published by Macmillan, also contains insets of Gaborone and the tourist areas. The detailed *ContiMap* is a decent road map that sells for US\$10.

MONEY

Botswana's unit of currency is the pula (meaning 'rain'), which is divided into 100 thebe (meaning 'raindrops'). Bank notes come in denominations of P5, P10, P20, P50 and P100, and coins in denominations of 5t, 10t, 25t, 50t, P1, P2 and P5.

ATMs

ATMs are common in major cities and towns, and accept most major Western cards.

Credit Cards

Most major credit cards (especially Visa and MasterCard) are accepted at tourist hotels and restaurants in the larger cities and towns.

Moneychangers

To change cash, both Barclays and Standard Chartered banks charge 3% commission, while the former charges 3% to change travellers cheques.

Tipping

In most places a service charge is added as a matter of course, but the official policy of courting upmarket tourists only has increased expectations.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques are falling into disuse in Botswana, though they can still be changed in tourist centres such as Maun and Kasane.

POST

Although generally reliable, postal services can be extremely slow, so allow at least two weeks for delivery to an overseas address. Postcards and standard letters (weighing up to 10g) cost P3.10 (US\$0.50) to other African countries, P3.90 (US\$0.70) to Europe and P4.70 (US\$0.80) to the rest of the world. Designate an airmail letter by clipping one corner off the envelope.

TELEPHONE & FAX

Botswana's country code is ☎ 267; there are no internal area codes, so when phoning from outside Botswana, dial ☎ 267 followed by the phone number. 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 (Map pp88–9) 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.

Botswana has two global mobile (cell) phone networks, **Mascom Wireless** (www.mascom.bw) and **Orange Botswana** (www.orange.co.bw), of which Mascom is by far the largest provider. Still even Mascom's coverage is patchy, and is confined to the eastern corridor from Gaborone in the southeast to Francistown in the east. Outside of these areas you'll find reception is minimal, with little areas of coverage over Maun, Ghanzi and Mamuno. This is set to change as the market is moving forward steadily, and it is worth contacting your mobile operator.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The continually improving office of the **Department of Tourism** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 395 3024; fax 390 8675; botswanaturism@gov.bw; 2nd fl, Standard Chartered Bank Bldg, the Mall, Private Bag 0047, Gaborone) dispenses tourist information and also distributes brochures, maps and the annual *Botswana Focus* and *Discover Botswana* magazines. The offices located in **Kasane** (☎ 625 0357) and **Maun** (☎ 686 0492) are also becoming more useful.

VISAS

Visas are not required by citizens of most Commonwealth countries, most European countries or the USA; however, Israelis do need visas. On entry, everyone is granted a 30-day stay.

VISA EXTENSIONS

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 Officer at the **Department of Immigration Head Office** (☎ 361 1300; fax 355 2996; cnr State House Dr & Khama Cres, PO Box 942, Gaborone) before your trip.

Working visas are also available for non-residents – see following.

WORK

Botswana is developing rapidly and the education system cannot produce enough skilled professionals in several fields. Those with training and experience as medical doctors, secondary school teachers, professors, engineers and computer professionals will find the warmest welcome. Most foreigners choose to remain in or around Gaborone, Francistown or Maun, but if you're willing to work in the bush, your chances of employment will increase. Foreigners are normally granted a three-year renewable residency permit. Applications must be submitted from outside the country to the **Department of Immigration** (☎ 361 1300; fax 355 2995; PO Box 942, Gaborone).

Numerous NGOs and international volunteer organisations – the Peace Corps, VSO etc – are also active in Botswana, and accept volunteer placements.

TRANSPORT IN BOTSWANA

GETTING THERE & AWAY

This section covers travel between Botswana and its neighbouring countries only. Information on travel to Southern Africa from elsewhere in Africa or from other continents is outlined in the Transport in Southern Africa chapter (p752).

Passport

All visitors entering Botswana must hold a passport that is valid for at least six months.

Also, allow a few empty pages for stamp-happy immigration officials, especially if you're crossing over to Zimbabwe and/or Zambia to see Victoria Falls.

Members of the EU, the USA, South Africa, Scandinavia, Balkan countries and all members of the Commonwealth (with the exception of Ghana, India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria and Mauritius) will be granted a one-month entry permit on arrival (passport photos required). Other nationalities will need to obtain a visa before they arrive in the country.

Air

Botswana's main airport is **Sir Seretse Khama International Airport** (GBE; ☎ 35 1191), located 15km north of the capital Gaborone. Although the airport is well served with flights from Johannesburg and Harare, it is seldom used by tourists as an entry point into the country. Far more popular are **Maun Airport** (MUB; ☎ 66 02 38) and **Kasane Airport** (BBK; ☎ 65 01 36). The international air departure tax of US\$9 is included in ticket prices.

The national carrier, Air Botswana, flies routes within Southern Africa. It has offices in Gaborone, Francistown, Maun, Kasane and Victoria Falls (Vic Falls) in Zimbabwe.

No European or North American airline flies directly into Botswana. The country is only served by two airlines and a number of special charter flights. Most travellers fly into either Johannesburg or Cape Town in South Africa (both of which are served by an array of international and domestic carriers) and hop on a connecting flight.

Air Botswana (BP; ☎ 390 55 00; www.airbotswana.co.bw; hub Gaborone)

South African Airways (SA; ☎ 020-22 96 63; www.flysas.com; hub Johannesburg)

Border Crossings

Overland travel to or from Botswana is usually straightforward. 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. Minor crossings, such as the many crossings over the Limpopo and Molopo Rivers between Botswana and South Africa, are normally open between 8am and 4pm, but close in periods of high water. Some minor crossings close for lunch from 12.30pm to 1.45pm.

Those entering by vehicle need current registration papers and third-party insurance valid in the Southern African Customs Union. On entry, foreign-registered vehicles are subject to a road safety levy of US\$10.

NAMIBIA

The three main border crossings are at Ngoma Bridge, Mahango–Mohembo and Mamuno–Buitepos. Note that during the winter months (late May to August), Namibia is one hour behind Botswana.

Bus

There's at least one daily combi between Ghanzi and Mamuno (US\$3, three hours), on the border, but from there, you'll have to wait for a minibus on to Gobabis or Windhoek. Unfortunately, on the Namibian side they only run when full, so you may have to hole up on the border at the useful East Gate Petrol Station & Rest Camp.

At 7.30am on Monday **Audi Camp** (☎ Maun 686 0599, ☎ Windhoek 0811-272870) runs a useful shuttle service from Maun to Windhoek (US\$55, 10 hours), via Ghanzi. From Windhoek, it departs at 7.30am on Wednesday. Pre-booking is essential.

Although the Intercap Mainliner bus between Windhoek and Victoria Falls passes through Kasane, passengers may not embark or disembark in Botswana. There are no cross-border buses through the Mahango–Mohembo border crossing.

Hitching

From Kasane the sealed 54km transit route through Chobe National Park to Ngoma Bridge is relatively well travelled, and doesn't require payment of park fees. Nearly everyone refuels at Kasane, so you may want to look for lifts at the Shell petrol station, which also serves as the bus terminal. There's no longer any serious strife in Namibia's Caprivi region, so hitching isn't inordinately risky (see also p131 for more on hitching), but the stretch

between Kongola and Divundu still sees little traffic.

To hitch along the Trans-Kalahari Highway from Ghanzi to Gobabis (Namibia), inquire about lifts at the Kalahari Arms Hotel or the Oasis petrol station, both located in Ghanzi. Most people head out in the morning. To improve your chances, you can also hitch with a Gaborone-bound vehicle to New Junction, 40km south of Ghanzi, and wait there; be sure you have lots of water.

SOUTH AFRICA

Most overland traffic between Botswana and South Africa passes through the Ramatlabama, Tlokweng or Pioneer border crossings. Other border crossings serve back roads across the Limpopo River, in the Tuli Block, and the Molopo River in southern Botswana; some of these are impassable to 2WD vehicles, and may be closed during periods of high water.

Bus & Minibus

Minibuses between Gaborone and Jo'burg (US\$12, six hours) leave when full, 6am to 5.30pm, from the northwest corner of the main bus terminal. Minibus services also connect Lobatse with Mafikeng (US\$3, 1½ hours) and run between Palapye and Jo'burg (US\$14, eight hours), via Martin's Drift.

Intercape Mainliner (Gaborone Map pp88-9; ☎ 357 4294; Kudu Shell, Queen's Rd; Pretoria ☎ 012-654 4114; 108 Klerk St) travels daily between Gaborone and Jo'burg (US\$18, six hours), leaving Gaborone at 6.30am and Jo'burg Station at 3.30pm.

Hitching

Between Botswana and South Africa, hitching is straightforward, especially at the main border crossings, but you may be expected to pay for lifts (see p131).

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\$7.50 for motorbikes, US\$12 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.

Bus

Between Francistown and Bulawayo (US\$3.50, three hours), buses leave five to seven times daily in either direction. Alternatively, take a combi from Francistown to Ramokgwebana (US\$1.50, 1½ hours), on the border, and then another combi to Bulawayo.

Golden Bridge also has a bus service on Monday and Friday from Maun to Gweru (US\$11, 10 hours), via Bulawayo (US\$5, eight hours). It returns from Gweru on Wednesday and Sunday. The same company also runs a nightly bus from Gaborone (US\$5, 10 hours).

In Kasane, Thebe River Safaris and Chobe Safari Lodge offer Victoria Falls transfers (US\$28, two hours). If they don't have enough passengers, ask them to ring around and find a bus that is going. In Victoria Falls, Gareth McDonald at the **Victoria Falls Backpackers' Lodge** (☎ Victoria Falls 013-42209; www.victoriafallsbackpackers.com; 357 Gibson Rd) runs inexpensive transfers (US\$10 per person) to Kazungula, but doesn't cross the border. Taxis between Victoria Falls and the Kazungula border cost around US\$30.

Although the Intercape Mainliner bus service between Victoria Falls and Windhoek passes through Kasane, passengers cannot embark or disembark in Botswana.

Train

Due to Zimbabwe's failure to pay its share of the costs for the rail link between Gaborone and Bulawayo, this service no longer operates, and it's unlikely to resume as long as Zimbabwe's political and economic crises continue.

Hitching

It is fairly easy to hitch between Francistown and Bulawayo, using the Ramokgwebana–Plumtree border crossing. Mornings are best for hitching into Botswana, while most afternoon traffic is headed towards Bulawayo.

From Kasane to Victoria Falls, it's best to wait for a lift at the Kazungula border post; from Victoria Falls to Kasane, wait at the Kazungula road turn-off 1.5km southeast of the town centre (see page 131 for more).

GETTING AROUND

Botswana's public-transport network is limited and, at times, expensive. Although domestic air services are fairly frequent and usually reliable, Air Botswana (and charter flights) are not cheap and only a handful of towns are regularly served. The railway service is inexpensive and dependable, but it is terribly slow and is restricted to one line along the thin populated strip of eastern Botswana. Public buses and combis (minibuses) are also cheap and reasonably frequent, but are confined to the limited number of paved roads so the more interesting places are not accessible. All in all, hiring a vehicle is the best and most practical.

Air

The national carrier, Air Botswana, operates a limited number of domestic flights between larger towns around the country, namely Gaborone, Francistown, Maun and Kasane. They also run occasional packages between Gaborone and Maun, including hotels and sightseeing tours – check with the airline, or look for advertisements in the local English-language newspapers.

One-way fares are more expensive than return fares, so plan your itinerary accordingly; children aged under two sitting on the lap of an adult cost 10% of the fare and children aged between two and 12 cost 50% of the fare. Passengers are allowed 20kg of luggage (unofficially, a little more is often permitted if the flight is not full).

For details about the costs and frequency of domestic flights, and the contact details for Air Botswana offices, see under Getting There & Away in the relevant regional chapters of this book.

CHARTER FLIGHTS

Charter flights are often the best and, sometimes, the only way to reach remote lodges and isolated villages, but they are an expensive extra cost.

On average a one-way fare between Maun and a remote lodge in the Okavango Delta will set you back around US\$100 to US\$150. These services are now highly regulated and

flights must be booked as part of a safari package with a mandatory reservation at one of the lodges. This is essential; you can't simply turn up in these remote locations and expect to find a bed for the night as many lodges are very small. Likewise, you are not permitted to book accommodation at a remote lodge in the delta without also booking a return air fare at the same time. Packages can be booked through agencies in Maun.

It is very important to note that passengers on charter flights are only allowed 10kg to 12kg of luggage each (check the exact amount when booking). However, if you have an extra 2kg to 3kg the pilot will usually only mind if the plane is full of passengers.

Bicycle

Botswana is largely flat – and that's about the only concession it makes to cyclists. Some travellers still take a bicycle in the hope of avoiding the uncertainties of hitching and public transport, but unless you're an experienced cyclist and equipped for the extreme conditions, abandon any ideas you may have about a Botswana bicycle adventure. Also bear in mind that bicycles are not permitted in Botswana's national parks and reserves, and cyclists may encounter potentially dangerous wildlife while travelling along any highway or road.

Bus

Buses and minibuses travel regularly along all major highway routes in Botswana, but services are less frequent in the western part of the country than along the eastern corridor. With few exceptions, small villages are served only if they lie along major highways. On the most popular runs, minibus services operate according to demand and depart when full, while buses follow a fixed schedule. Botswana's small population means that its public-transport service is quite limited. In all cases, there are no advance bookings; tickets are sold only on board.

Note that there's no bus service through Chobe National Park between Kasane and Maun but safari companies offer three-day 4WD safaris via Moremi Game Reserve (see p132).

Car & Motorcycle

The best way to travel around Botswana is to hire (or buy) a vehicle. With your own car or

motorbike, 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 hiring a vehicle is high in Botswana – but probably cheaper in South Africa.

You cannot hire a motorbike in Botswana and although it can be great fun to ride dirt bikes along desert tracks, in between are roads and tracks where clouds of dust and sand kicked up by other vehicles could make for a miserable experience on a motorbike. It's also important to note that motorbikes are *not* permitted in national parks and reserves for safety reasons.

DRIVING LICENCE

Your home driving licence is valid for six months in Botswana, but if it isn't written in English you must provide a certified translation. In any case, it is advisable to obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP). Your national automobile association can issue this and it is valid for 12 months.

FUEL & SPARE PARTS

The cost of fuel (petrol) is relatively expensive in Botswana, around US\$0.75 per litre, but prices vary according to the remoteness of the petrol station. Petrol stations are open 24 hours in Gaborone, Francistown, Maun, Mahalapye and Palapye; elsewhere, they open from about 7am to 7pm daily.

As a general rule you should never pass a service station without filling up and it's advisable to carry an additional 100L of fuel (either in long-range tanks or jerry cans) if you're planning on driving in more remote areas.

Spare parts are readily available in most major centres, but not elsewhere. If you are planning on some 4x4 driving it is advisable to carry the following: two spare tyres, jump leads, tow rope and cable, a few litres of oil, wheel spanner and a complete tool kit. See p103 for more about bush driving.

If you're renting a hire car make sure you check you have a working jack (and know how to use it!) and a spare tyre.

HIRE

To rent a car you must be aged at least 21 (some companies require drivers to be over 25) and have been a licensed driver in your home country for at least two years (sometimes five).

Most major international car-rental companies will allow you to take a vehicle to South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia and Zimbabwe, but only if you have cleared it with the company beforehand so they can sort out the paperwork. Rental companies are less happy about drivers going to Zambia and will not allow you to go anywhere else in Africa. It is possible to hire a car, for example, in Gaborone and return it to Johannesburg (South Africa) or Windhoek (Namibia), but this will cost extra.

Naturally, always check the paperwork carefully and thoroughly examine the vehicle before accepting it; make sure the 4WD engages properly and that you understand how it works. Also, check the vehicle fluids, brakes, battery and so on – the Kalahari is a harsh place to find out that the company (or you) has overlooked something important.

It is probably best to deal with one of the major car-rental companies listed below. For information about hiring a car in South Africa and then driving it to Botswana, see p589.

Avis (www.avis.com) Offices in Gaborone, Francistown, Maun, Kasane and all over Southern Africa.

Budget (www.budget.co.za) Offices in Gaborone, as well as in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

Imperial (www.imperialcarrental.co.za) Offices in Gaborone and Francistown, and in the major cities of South Africa, Namibia and Zambia.

Tempest (www.tempestcarhire.co.za) This large South African-based company has offices in Gaborone and throughout South Africa, and in Namibia.

Additional charges will be levied for the following: a fee for may be charged for dropping off or picking up the car at your hotel (rather than the car-rental office); a 'tourism levy' of 1% is sometimes charged (but this seems fairly arbitrary); a 'cleaning fee' (which can amount to US\$50!) may be incurred at the discretion of the rental company; and a 'service fee' may be added. Also check to make sure the government sales tax (10%) is included. Most companies can also provide baby seats, for an extra cost.

It is nearly always advisable to pay with a 'gold level' credit card, which will offer you some protection should anything go wrong and will possibly cover you for collision as well.

INSURANCE

Although insurance is not compulsory, it is *strongly* recommended. No matter who you

hire your car from make sure you understand what is included in the price (unlimited kilometres, tax, insurance, collision-waiver and so on) and what your liabilities are. Most local insurance policies do not include cover for damage to windshields and tyres.

Third-party motor insurance is a minimum requirement in Botswana. However, it is also advisable to take Damage (Collision) Waiver, which costs around US\$20 extra per day for a 2WD, and about US\$40 per day for a 4WD. Loss (Theft) Waiver is also an extra worth having. For both types of insurance, the excess liability is about US\$1500 for a 2WD and US\$3000 for a 4WD. If you're only going for a short period of time it may be worth taking out the Super Collision Waiver, which covers absolutely everything, albeit at a price.

PURCHASE

Unless you're going to be staying in Botswana for several years, it's not worth purchasing a vehicle in-country. The best place to buy a vehicle is across the border in South Africa. For more information on purchasing a vehicle in South Africa see p761.

If you do buy a car with hard currency and resell it in Botswana, you can remit the same amount of hard currency to your home country without hassles – just keep the papers and inform the bank in advance.

ROAD CONDITIONS

At the time of independence in 1966, Botswana's only paved road extended for 5km from the Lobatse train station to the High Court building. (The road was completed in 1947 in preparation for the visit by King George VI.)

These days good paved roads link all the major population centres. Tracks with sand, mud, gravel and rocks (and sometimes all four) – but normally accessible by 2WD except during exceptional rains – connect most villages and cross a few national parks.

Most other 'roads' are poorly defined and badly mapped tracks that should only be attempted by 4WD. In the worst of the wet season (December to February), 4WDs should carry a winch on some tracks (eg through Chobe National Park); and a compass or, better, global positioning system (GPS) equipment. A GPS is essential for driving by 4WD around the salt pans of the Kalahari or north-eastern Botswana at any time.

ROAD RULES

To drive a car in Botswana, you must be at least 18 years old. Like most other Southern African countries, traffic keeps to the left side of the road. The national speed limit is 120km/h on paved roads, 80km/h on gravel roads and 40km/h in all national parks and reserves. When passing through towns and villages, assume a speed limit of 60km/h, even in the absence of any signs.

Highway police use radar and love to fine motorists (about US\$10, plus an additional US\$1 for ever 10km you exceed the limit) for speeding. Sitting on the roof of a moving vehicle is illegal, and wearing seat belts (where installed) is compulsory in the front (but not back) seats. Drink-driving is also against the law, and your insurance policy will be invalid if you have an accident while drunk. Driving without a licence is also a serious offence.

If you have an accident causing injury, it must be reported to the authorities within 48 hours. If vehicles have sustained only minor damage and there are no injuries – and all parties agree – you can exchange names and addresses and sort it out later through your insurance companies.

Wild animals, including elephants and the estimated three million wild donkeys in Botswana, can also be a hazard, even along the highways. The Maun–Nata and Nata–Kasane roads are frequently trafficked by elephants and should be driven with caution. The chances of hitting a wild or domestic animal is far, far greater after dark, so driving at night is definitely not recommended.

One common but minor annoyance is the so-called 'buffalo fences' (officially called Veterinary Cordon Fences; see p85). These are set up to stop the spread of disease from wild animals to livestock. Unless you're driving, or travelling in, a cattle truck, simply slow down while the gate is opened and make an effort to offer a friendly wave to the bored gate attendant.

HITCHING

Hitching in Botswana is an accepted way to get around given that public transport is sometimes erratic in remote areas. There are even established rates for main routes. Travellers who decide to hitch, however, should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk. People who do choose to hitch will be safer if they travel in pairs

and let someone know where they are planning to go.

The equivalent of a bus fare will frequently be requested in exchange for a lift, but to prevent uncomfortable situations at the end of the ride determine a price before climbing in.

Local Transport

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

COMBI (MINIBUSES)

Combis, recognisable by their blue numberplates, circulate according to set routes around major towns such as Gaborone, Kasane, Ghanzi, Molepolole, Mahalapye, Palapye, Francistown, Selebi-Phikwe, Lobatse and Kanye.

TAXI

Licensed taxis are also recognisable by their blue numberplates. They rarely bother hanging around the airports at Gaborone, Francistown, Kasane and Maun, so the only reliable transport from the airport is usually a courtesy bus operated by a top-end hotel or lodge. These are free for guests but anyone else can normally negotiate a fare with the bus driver. Taxis are always available to the airports, however.

It is not normal for taxis to cruise the streets for fares – even in Gaborone. If you need one, telephone a taxi company to arrange a pick-up or go to a taxi stand (usually near the bus or train stations). Fares for taxis are negotiable but fares for occasional shared taxis are fixed. Taxis can be chartered – about US\$45 to US\$60 per day, although this is negotiable depending on how far you want to go.

Tours

From Maun (p106), 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, Tsodilo Hills and the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. 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** (☎ 686 0822; fax 686 0493; travelwild@dynabyte.bw), opposite the airport, which serves as a central booking and information office for lodges, safaris and other adventures.

The following Botswana tour operators are recommended:

Afro-Trek (Map p110; ☎ 686 0177; www.afrotrek.com; Shorobe Rd, Maun) This company specialises in midmarket safaris, and is located in the Sedia Hotel (p111).

Audi Camp Safaris (Map p110; ☎ 686 0500; www.okavangocamp.com; Mathiba I St, Maun) This budget operator is run out of the popular Audi Camp (p109).

Back to the Bridge Backpackers (Map p110; ☎ 686 2406; hellish@info.bw; Shorobe Rd, Maun) This budget operator is run out of Back to the Bridge Backpackers (p111).

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

Crocodile Camp Safaris (Map p110; ☎ 686 0265; www.botswana.com; Shorobe Rd, Maun) This budget operator is located at the Crocodile Camp (p111).

Island Safari Lodge (Map p110; ☎ 686 0300; island@info.bw; Mathiba I St, Maun) This budget operator is run out of the Island Safari Lodge (p111).

Maun Rest Camp (Map p110; ☎ 686 3472; simonjoyce@info.bw; Shorobe Rd, Maun) This budget operator specialises in mobile safaris, and is run out of the Maun Rest Camp (p109).

Ker & Downey (Map p110; ☎ 686 0375; www.kerdowney.com; Mathiba I St) One of Botswana's most exclusive tour operators.

Okavango River Lodge (Map p110; ☎ 686 3707; freewind@info.bw; Shorobe Rd, Maun) This budget operator is run out of the Okavango River Lodge (p109).

Okavango Tours & Safaris (Map p110; ☎ 686 1154; www.okavango.bw; Mophane St, Maun) This well-established operator specialises in upmarket lodge-based tours.

Phakawe Safaris (Map p110; ☎ 686 4337; www.phakawe.demon.co.uk; Sir Seretse Khama Rd) This reader-recommended operator runs informal participation safaris, and is housed in a bright-orange building called the Pumpkin Patch.

Wilderness Safaris (Johannesburg ☎ (27) 11 807 1800; www.wilderness-safaris.com) This operator specialises in upmarket safaris and is located near the airport.

Train

The Botswana railway system is limited to one line running along eastern Botswana. It stretches from Ramokgwebana on the Zimbabwean border to Ramatlabama on the South

African border, and was once part of the glorious Johannesburg–Bulawayo train 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 trips beyond Gaborone). For 1st and 2nd class, advance bookings are essential; economy-class passengers can buy a ticket in advance or on the train.

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Lesotho

Lesotho (le-soo-too) is called Southern Africa's 'kingdom in the sky' for good reason. This stunningly beautiful, mountainous country is nestled island-like in the middle of South Africa and it is a fascinating travel detour from its larger neighbour. The country offers superb mountain scenery in forbidding terrain, a proud traditional people, endless hiking trails, and the chance to explore remote areas on Basotho ponies.

The 'lowland' areas (all of which are still above 1000m) offer some craft shopping and dinosaur footprints, while the highlands in the northeast and centre feature towering peaks (over 3000m) and verdant valleys.

Lesotho came into being during the early 19th century, when both the *difaqane* (forced migration) and Boer incursions into the hinterlands were at their height. Under the leadership of the legendary king Moshoeshoe the Great, the Basotho people sought sanctuary and strategic advantage amid the forbidding terrain of the Drakensberg and Maluti Ranges. The small nation they forged continues to be an intriguing anomaly in a sea of modernity.

Getting around is reasonably easy – ordinary hire cars will get you to most places; public transport is extensive, albeit slow. Hiking or pony trekking from village to village are the best ways of exploring.

FAST FACTS

- **Area:** 30,355 sq km
- **Capital:** Maseru
- **Country code:** ☎ 266
- **Famous for:** Ponies, royalty, dams, Basotho hats and blankets
- **Languages:** South Sotho, English
- **Money:** Loti (plural maloti)
- **Phrases:** *khotso* (hello, or literally 'peace'); *kea legoha* (thank you)
- **Population:** 2.1 million



HOW MUCH?

- **Traditional dance/cultural group** US\$4.50-22
- **Internet** US\$0.10-0.20 per minute
- **Coffee** US\$0.35-1.20
- **Banana** US\$0.15
- **Genuine (wool) Basotho blanket** US\$60

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- **1L petrol** \$0.90
- **1L bottled water** US\$0.80-1
- **Bottle of beer** US\$1
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$4.50-9
- **Bag of fat cakes (fried savoury donuts)** US\$0.30

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Malealea** (p149) Pony trekking through the rugged interior with breathtaking scenery.
- **Sani Top** (p147) Absorbing the awesome vistas from Sani Pass and hiking the challenging wilderness hikes of the northern highlands.
- **Ts'ehlanyane National Park** (p146) Revelling in the splendid isolation of this stunning park.
- **Off the beaten track** (p148) Hiking from Semonkong in the beautiful Thaba Putsoa mountains to the Ketane Falls.

ITINERARIES

- **One week** From **Maseru** (p140), head south to **Morija** (p149) where you'll find Morija Museum & Archives, a great museum with Basotho culture displays. Continue to **Malealea** (p149) or **Semonkong** (p148) – the 'gems' of Lesotho – to go pony trekking. You may be able to squeeze in a trip to **Quthing** (Moyeni; p150) to check out the 180-million-year-old dinosaur footprints.
- **Two weeks** Visit **Teyateyaneng** (p145), north of Maseru, the craft centre of Lesotho, or slightly further north, **Bokong Nature Reserve** (p146). Get a taste of the mountainous 'lowlands' by heading to **Morija** (p149), **Malealea** (p149) or **Semonkong** (p148), and **Quthing** (p150). Continue northeast on

to the remote **Sehlabathebe National Park** (p147) or **Mt Moorosi** (p151).

- **One month** Head northeast to **Teyateyaneng** (p145) and **Butha-Buthe** (p146), with a side trip to the beautiful **Bokong Nature Reserve** (p146) or **Ts'ehlanyane National Park** (p146). Then take in some of the country's most impressive scenery on a circuit to **Mokhotlong** (p147) and up to the magnificent **Sani Top** (p147). Return to Maseru via **Thaba-Tseka** (p146) and the **Katse Dam** (p145), or via the **Mohale Dam** (p144) and **Roma** (p144), before heading east to **Morija** (p149) and following the two-week itinerary. Note: unfortunately it's difficult to circumnavigate the country – the road between Sehlabathebe in the east and Sehonghong in the northeast requires a 4WD.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Clear, cold winters, with frosts and snow (and unpredictable changes) in the highlands, await you in Lesotho, so pack warm clothing. During summertime (late November to March), dramatic thunderstorms are common, as are all-enveloping clouds of thick mist, and roads can be affected by flooding rivers. Temperatures at this time can rise to over 30°C in the valleys, though it's usually much cooler in the mountains, even dropping below freezing. Most of Lesotho's rain falls between October and April. Throughout the year, the weather is notoriously changeable.

Visits are possible at any time, with spring and autumn optimal.

HISTORY

Lesotho was settled by Sotho peoples as late as the 16th century. The Khoisan, and possibly some Nguni people, lived among them, intermarrying and mingling their languages.

The early society was made up of small chiefdoms. Cattle and cultivation were the economy's mainstays. Their products were traded for iron from the northeast of South Africa.

By the early 19th century white traders were on the scene, exchanging beads for cattle. They were soon followed by the Voortrekkers (Boer pioneers) and pressure on Sotho grazing lands grew. Even without white encroachment, Sotho society had to accept that it had expanded as far as it could and would have to adapt to living in a finite territory. On top of this came the disaster of the *difaqane* (forced migration; see p41).

view, criticising apartheid, allegedly offering refuge to ANC guerrillas, and flirting with Cuba. Relations soured; South Africa closed Lesotho's borders, strangling the country.

The Lesotho military took action. Jonathan was deposed in 1986 and the king was restored as head of state. This was a popular move, but eventually agitation for democratic reform rose again. In 1990 King Moshoeshoe II was deposed by the army in favour of his son, Prince Mohato Bereng Seeisa (Letsie III). Elections in 1993 resulted in the return of the BCP.

The BCP was split between those who wanted Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle to remain as leader and those who didn't. Mokhehle formed the breakaway Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) party and continued to govern.

In 1995 Letsie III abdicated in favour of his father and, five years after being deposed, Moshoeshoe II was reinstated. He restored calm to Lesotho after a year of unrest. Tragically, less than a year later he was killed when his 4WD plunged over a cliff in the Maluti Mountains. Letsie III was again made the king.

Elections, Invasion & Peace

Elections were held in 1998 amid accusations of widespread cheating by the LCD, which won with a landslide. Tensions between the public service and the government became acute, and the military was also divided. Meanwhile, Mokhehle handed over to his successor Pakalitha Mosisili.

Following months of protests, the government realised it was losing control and in September 1998 called on the Southern Afri-

can Development Community (SADC) treaty partners, Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe, to help restore order. Troops, mainly South African, invaded the kingdom.

Rebel elements of the Lesotho army put up a strong resistance and there was a short burst of heavy fighting in Maseru, where many shops and other businesses were looted and torches.

The government agreed to call new elections, but the political situation remained tense and political wrangling delayed the elections until May 2002. The LCD won again and Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili began a second five-year term, which has until now been peaceful.

Lesotho Today

The elections of 2007 may bring challenges of another kind. Questions being considered are whether to back Mosisili for a third term, whether corruption is being tackled vigorously enough, and whether the grass roots is being neglected in favour of a more gentrified party.

Meanwhile, Lesotho ranks among the region's poorer countries, and has few natural resources other than water and gem diamonds. During the last century, Lesotho's main export was labour – approximately 60% of males worked mainly in mining in South Africa. In the late 1990s, the restructuring of the South African gold-mining industry, mechanisation and the closure of some mines resulted in huge job losses. Meanwhile, the Lesotho economy – under transformation due to a rapid growth of the textile industry – also collapsed due to stiff competition from China and changes to international agreements.

FAMINE IN LESOTHO

Lesotho, particularly rural Lesotho, is extremely vulnerable to food shortages; the mountain kingdom's annual cereal production is declining because of unpredictable weather, long-term soil erosion and the impact of HIV/AIDS. On top of this, the country faces trade constraints and declining employment opportunities, leaving many vulnerable to food insecurity. Subsistence farming used to be the main food source for most people, but today many rent out their land for others to cultivate, thereby losing their ability to grow their own food. Per capita agricultural production in real terms has been falling for decades, and today, tens of thousands of the most vulnerable people are relying on external food aid. The World Food Programme estimates that 26% of the population is malnourished. Many people in the country's lowlands do not have access to water for domestic use, and travel long distances each day to fetch it, an irony given that the Lesotho Highlands Water Project supplies South Africa with millions of cubic metres of water each year (see the boxed text, p145).

THE CULTURE

The National Psyche

Pride is at the core of the Basotho people, not surprisingly given the incredible history of their nation. The Basotho are remarkably free of the effects of apartheid and warmly welcome travellers to their kingdom. Like their African neighbours, they have a wonderfully carefree attitude to time. The traditional class system has altered – herding, once a revered position, is done by the poorest boys (many families are said to sell their sons to wealthy families to be herders), although the population continues to rely on and respect its community chiefs. The Basotho blanket, worn proudly by many in the rural areas, reflects one's status in the community, according to the quality, material and design of the blanket itself.

Daily Life

Traditional culture, which is still strong, consists largely of the customs, rites and superstitions with which the Basotho explain and enrich their lives. Music also plays an important part in their lives (see right).

Traditional medicine mixes rites and customs with a *sangoma* (witchdoctor), who develop their own charms and rituals. The Basotho are traditionally buried in a sitting position, facing the rising sun – ready to leap up when called.

Poverty and death is ever-present in Lesotho. Life for most people is harsh, with the majority determinedly trying to eke out a living on the land or subsistence agriculture, especially livestock; unemployment currently stands at about 45%. The spectre of AIDS is high – the infection rate (adult prevalence) is estimated at a massive 30%.

Most Lesotho in rural communities live in rondavels, round huts with mud walls (often decorated) and thatched roofs.

Population

The citizens of Lesotho are known as the Basotho people. Most are Southern Sotho and most speak South Sotho. The melding of the Basotho nation was largely the result of Moshoeshoe the Great's 19th-century military and diplomatic triumphs; many diverse subgroups and peoples have somehow merged into a homogeneous society. Maseru, with a population of 175,000, is the largest town.

RELIGION

Around 80% of the population is believed to be Christian (mainly Roman Catholic, Anglican and Episcopal). The remaining 20% live by traditional Basotho beliefs. There are many churches throughout the country, many of which were (or continue to be) built by missionaries (see p136).

ARTS & CRAFTS

Architecture

Traditional Basotho huts, also known as rondavels, are one-room huts that serve as the living area, kitchen and bedroom. Most rondavels are made of stone (plastered over with mud) and have thatched roofs. Many are exquisitely decorated with murals, often imbued with symbols and meaning, such as visual prayers for rain. For further information, you might like to check out *African Painted Houses* by Gary N Van Wyk (1998).

Music

Music and dance are important components of ceremony and everyday life. There are various musical instruments, from the *lekolulo* (a flutelike instrument played by herd boys), to the *thomo* (a stringed instrument played by women) and the *setolo-tolo* (a stringed instrument played with the mouth, by men). For more information see p52.

Tapestry Weavings

Tapestry and rug weaving is practised in many regions of Lesotho and good-quality items can be found around the country, especially around Teyateyaneng and on the fringes of Maseru. Often, the woven pieces convey typical life in the villages, with bright figures undertaking daily activities or celebrations. Most handwoven goods are from pure wool and mohair. Other handicrafts specific to the area include Basotho hat baskets and grass and clay products.

ENVIRONMENT

The Land

From Lesotho's northern tip to its western side where it juts out almost to the town of Wepener in South Africa, the border is formed by the Mokare (Caledon) River. The eastern border is defined by the rugged escarpment of the Drakensberg Range, and high country forms much of the southern border.

All of Lesotho exceeds 1000m in altitude, with peaks in the central ranges and near the

Drakensberg reaching to more than 3000m. Lesotho has the highest lowest point of any country. The tallest mountain in Southern Africa (the highest point south of Mt Kilimanjaro) is the 3482m Thabana-Ntlenyana, near Sani Pass in eastern Lesotho.

Wildlife

ANIMALS

Due mainly to its altitude, Lesotho is home to fewer animals than many Southern African countries. You may come across rheboks and reedbucks, and in the Drakensberg, elands are still present. Baboons and jackals are reasonably common and there are also mongooses and meerkats.

The bird life is rich, with just under 300 species recorded. The Drakensberg is an excellent place for bird-watching, and bearded vultures and black eagles are both found here. Lesotho is one of the few places you may spot the extremely rare bald ibis.

PLANTS

The high plains and mountains are home to Cape alpine flowers. The national flower, spiral aloe, is a strange plant unique to Lesotho. Its leaves form rows of striking, spiral patterns and you'll see it in left- and right-handed varieties on the slopes of the Maluti Mountains.

National Parks

Sehlabathebe is Lesotho's most famous national park. Its high-altitude grasslands, lakes, bogs and otherworldly rock formations offer a wonderful wilderness experience and are ideal for hiking. Sehlabathebe is under the jurisdiction of the **National Environment Secretariat** (Map p142; ☎ 2231 1767; Raboshabane Rd, Maseru).

The country's other main conservation areas – Ts'ehlanyane National Park, Bokong, Nature Reserve and the Liphofung Cave Cultural Historical Site (see p146) – are all under the jurisdiction of the **Lesotho Highlands Development Authority Nature Reserves** (LHDA; ☎ 2246 0723, 2291 3206; www.lesothoparks.com), which handles all accommodation bookings. All have simple accommodation (with the exception of Bokong which has camping only), established trails and helpful staff, are relatively easy to access and are well worth visiting.

Environmental Issues

This high, corrugated and often freezing kingdom is a tough environment at the best

of times. Serious erosion exists in Lesotho due to the pressures of modern farming techniques and overgrazing. Heavy summer rains wash away unacceptably large amounts of topsoil, as well as create dongas (eroded gullies). Action is being taken to tackle erosion, including the reclamation of dongas through the building of rock dams–cum–terraces to capture silt and detritus, but in the future, large tracts of land will become uncultivable.

There are also serious environmental concerns about the controversial Lesotho Highlands Water Project, which provides water and electricity to South Africa (see the boxed text, p145). Traditional Basotho communities have been disrupted by the project and the Mohale Dam is said to have flooded some of the most fertile land in the country. There is also concern about the potential effect on the ecology of the Senqu (Orange) River and the impact on Namibia, a downstream user with its own water shortage problems; these are all troubling unknowns.

In order to protect and develop the eastern-alpine ecosystem of the Maluti-Drakensberg Mountains, the multimillion-dollar Maluti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation and Development Project between South Africa and Lesotho was established in 2001.

FOOD & DRINK

You won't be writing home about the food in Lesotho. It's not notably bad, but it's nothing special either. The staples here are much the same as in South Africa. Maseru now boasts a decent selection of restaurants serving a range of local and foreign foods, but outside the capital, you'll usually have to take what you're given.

MASERU

pop 175,000 / elevation 1600m

Maseru is the kind of place that grows on you. It sprawls across Lesotho's lower-lying western edge, rimmed by the Berea and Qeme Plateaus. The city has been a quiet backwater for much of its history. However, it has rapidly expanded over the past few decades, and boasts a modest array of modern amenities. A major city rebuilding programme has hidden many of the once-visible scars of the 1998 political unrest (see p138).

ORIENTATION

Most food and shops are found on Maseru's main street, Kingsway (paved in 1947 for a visit by the British royals). Kingsway runs from the border crossing at Maseru Bridge right through town to the Circle, a traffic roundabout and landmark. At the Circle the street splits to become two important highways: Main North Rd (for Teyateyaneng and points north) and Main South Rd (for Mole's Hoek and points south). A bypass road rims the city to the south.

Maps

The **Department of Land, Surveys & Physical Planning** (☎ 2232 2376; Leretholi Rd; ☎ 9am–3pm Mon–Fri) sells good topographic maps. The tourist information office has free maps of Maseru city.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Basotho Hat (☎ 2232 2523; Kingsway; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Sat) This craft shop has books on Lesotho.

Maseru Book Centre (Kingsway; ☎ 8am–4.30pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat) Near Nedbank.

Emergency

Ambulance (☎ 2231 2501)

Fire Department (☎ 115)

Police (☎ 2231 9900)

Internet Access

Data Kare (LNDC Centre, Kingsway; per hr US\$1.50; ☎ 8am–9pm) The best and cheapest place for internet access.

Leo (Orpen Rd; per min US\$0.10; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri) Behind the Basotho Hat building.

Medical Services

For anything serious, you'll need to go to South Africa. In an emergency, also try contacting your embassy (p153), as most keep lists of recommended practitioners.

Maseru Private Hospital (☎ 2231 3260) In Ha Thetsane, about 7km south of Maseru.

Queen Elizabeth II Hospital (☎ 2231 2501; Kingsway) Opposite Husters Pharmacy.

Money

The top-end hotels will do forex transactions (at poor rates). Otherwise try the following.

International Business Centre (ground fl, Lesotho Bank Tower, Kingsway; ☎ 8.30am–3.30pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–noon Sat)

Nedbank (Kingsway) Does forex transactions Monday to Friday.

Standard Bank (Kingsway) Has an ATM.

Post

Post office (cnr Kingsway & Palace Rd) Has unreliable poste restante.

Telephone

Public phone shop (LNDC Centre, Kingsway) Public telephones can be found here.

Tourist Information & Travel Agencies

City Centre Maseru Travel (☎ 2231 4536; Kingsway) In the Book Centre building next to Nedbank; does regional and international flight bookings. It can also arrange tickets for Intercape and other long-distance buses.

Tourist information office (☎ 2231 2427; touristinfo@ltdc.org.ls; Kingsway; ☎ 8am–4.30pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–5pm Sat) Managed by the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation, this is a helpful office that has lots of brochures, lists of tour guides, information on public transport and free Maseru city maps.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Maseru is reasonably safe, but walking around at night, especially off the main street, is definitely not recommended. Bag-snatching and pickpocketing are the main risks during the day.

TOURS

The **tourist information office** (☎ 2231 2427; Kingsway) keeps an updated list of tour operators, and many of the main lodges listed in this chapter arrange tours and activities in Lesotho.

A few South African operators run tours up Sani Pass and over the border into Lesotho; see p522.

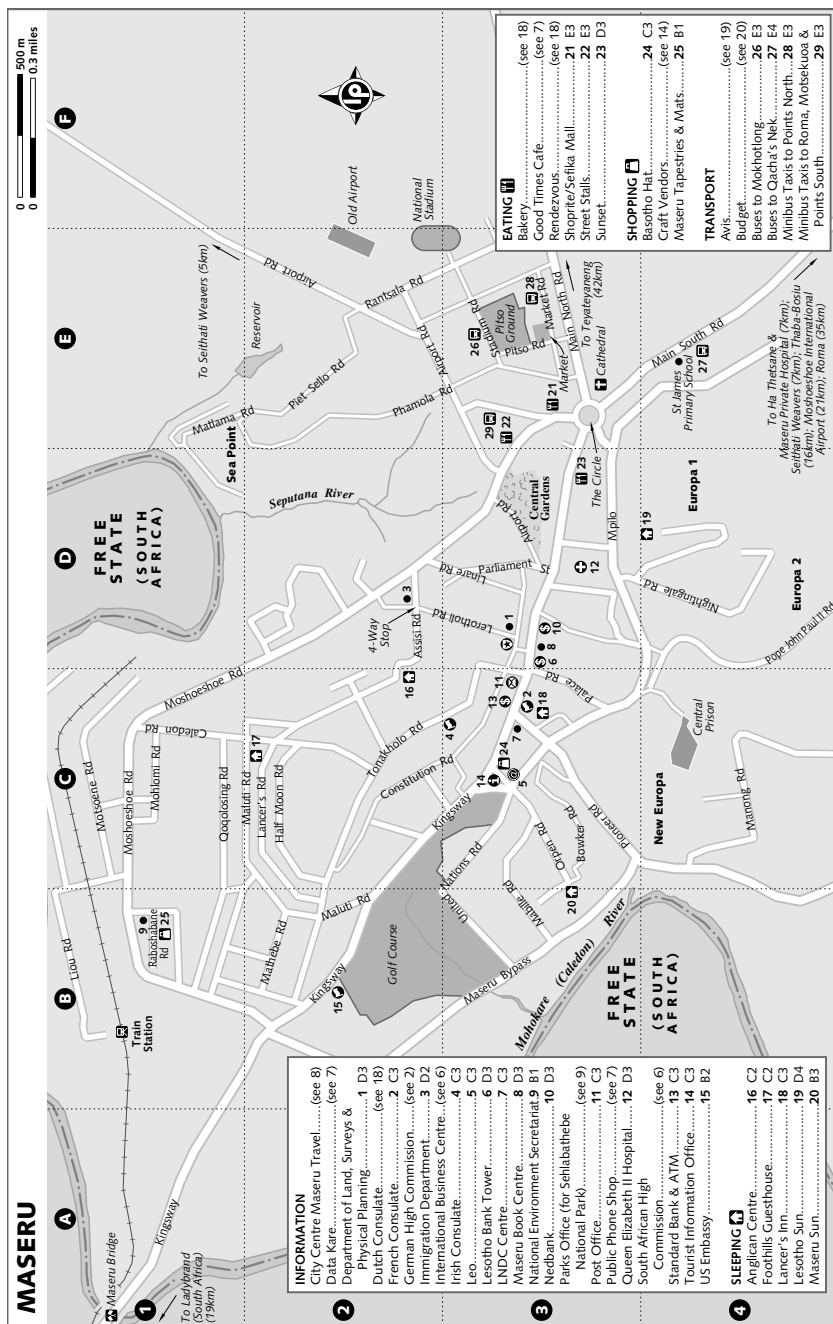
SLEEPING

Budget

Anglican Centre (☎ 2232 2046; dm/tw with shared bathroom US\$7/14) Austere with clean rooms, and meals available with advance notice. It's next door to St James Church, about 500m north of Kingsway on the bend where Assisi Rd becomes Lancer's Rd.

Midrange & Top End

Foothills Guesthouse (☎ 5870 6566; melvin@xsinet.co.za; 121 Maluti Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$41/62) This converted sandstone house has large and airy rooms with décor c 1960s, and a pleasant enclosed veranda for breakfasts.



Lancer's Inn (☎ 2231 2114; lancers-inn@ilesotho.com; cnr Kingsway & Pioneer Rd; s/d/tr with breakfast US\$66/79/96; ☎) Business travellers flock to this central option for its pleasant colonial-era ambience and excellent restaurant. A bit overinflated for what you get.

Maseru Sun (☎ 2231 2434; maseru@sunint.co.za; 12 Orpen Rd; r US\$130; ☎) These comfortable, modern rooms with a grassy outlook are a safe bet, although the slot machines might eat your extra pennies. Maseru Sun is just southwest of the junction of Kingsway and Pioneer Rd, and is signposted.

Lesotho Sun (☎ 2231 3111; lesoserv@sunint.co.za; r US\$134; ☎) A predictable gamble (ask about specials) is Lesotho's other Sun. Perched on a quiet hillside with a great setting overlooking town, it boasts a casino and two restaurants.

EATING

Sunset (☎ 6276 0030; Kingsway; mains US\$2-4; ☎ lunch & dinner) This pleasant, corporate-looking place offers Maseru's most authentic à la carte dining experience. It's above Fruit & Veg City.

Good Times Cafe (☎ 2231 7705; Level 1, LNDC Centre; mains US\$2.50-7; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The funky red and blue suede sofas, stylish lights, and oh-so-shiny chrome trimmings make this 'it' for the local cool crowd.

Rendezvous (☎ 2231 2114; Lancer's Inn, cnr Kingsway & Pioneer Rd; mains US\$5-10; ☎ lunch & dinner) A fave among the expats and locals who goss in the garden café or have a tippie in the traditional chandeliered restaurant.

On the eastern end of Kingsway towards the minibus stations are a number of **street stalls** (meals about US\$1.50; ☎ lunch) selling grilled snacks and curries. Shoprite is the best option for self-caterers.

Next to Lancer's Inn is a good **bakery** (☎ 7am-8.30pm), with pies, cakes and other delicacies.

SHOPPING

Basotho Hat (☎ 2232 2523; Kingsway; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat) This government-run craft shop is the best place to start, although prices are generally higher than elsewhere in the country. If you plan on walking or pony trekking, the horsehair fly whisks sold here make good investments.

The craft vendors in front of the tourist information office have a supply of woven Basotho hats and other souvenirs. For tapes-

tries, try **Maseru Tapestries & Mats** (☎ 2231 1773; Raboshabane Rd), and **Seithathi Weavers** (☎ 2231 3975), about 7km from town along the airport road.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus & Minibus Taxi

The hectic bus and minibus taxi departure points are in or around the Pitso Ground (and nearby streets) to the northeast of the circle. To avoid feeling overwhelmed by the throngs of people and buses, check first with the tourist office for specific departure points.

Shoprite's 'Money Market' kiosk in the LNDC Centre sells Greyhound and Intercape bus tickets.

From Maseru buses depart to many destinations. Sample fares include Mafeteng (US\$2), Roma (US\$1.10) and Mohale's Hoek (US\$2).

Car

For car-rental agencies, **Avis** (☎ 2232 0087) is at Lesotho Sun and the airport, and **Budget** (☎ 2231 6344) at Maseru Sun.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Moshoeshe International Airport is 21km from town, off Main South Rd. Minibus taxis (from the transport stand at Shoprite/Sefika Mall) cost US\$0.70. Private taxi companies charge around M7.

Taxi & Minibus Taxi

The standard minibus taxi fare around town is US\$0.40. Taxi companies include **Moonlite** (☎ 2231 2605), **Planet** (☎ 2231 7777) and **Luxury** (☎ 2232 6211). These can also be chartered for long-distance transport elsewhere in the country.

AROUND MASERU

Most towns in Lesotho have risen around trading posts or protectorate-era administration centres, but none of these towns approach Maseru in size or facilities.

Thaba-Bosiu

Moshoeshe the Great's mountain stronghold, first occupied in July 1824, is about 16km east of Maseru. Thaba-Bosiu (Mountain at Night) played a pivotal role in the consolidation of the Basotho nation. The name may be a legacy of the site being first occupied

at night, but another legend suggests that Thaba-Bosiu, a hill in daylight, grows into a mountain at night.

At the mountain's base is a **visitors information centre** (admission US\$0.70; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) with maps and an information pamphlet. Arrange for an official guide to accompany you on the short walk to the top of the mountain.

Good views from here include those of the **Qiloane Hill** (inspiration for the Basotho hat), along with the remains of fortifications, Moshoeshoe's grave, and parts of the original settlement.

SLEEPING & EATING

Mmelesi Lodge (☎ 5250 0006; s/d US\$30/34.50) Offers well-organised flowery rondavels, about 2km before the visitors information centre. It also has a dining room.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Minibuses to Thaba-Bosiu (US\$1.10, 30 minutes) depart from Maseru at the transport stand at Shoprite/Sefika Mall. If you're driving, take the Mafeteng Rd for about 13km and turn left at the Roma turn-off; after about 6km take the signposted road left. Thaba-Bosiu is 10km further along.

Roma

Roma, 35km from Maseru, is Lesotho's centre of learning, with the country's only university. Several attractive sandstone buildings are dotted around the town, and the entry to town by the southern gorge is spectacular.

Just north of Roma are the **Ha Baroana** rock paintings. They are one of Lesotho's more publicised rock-art sites (there are many being discovered and not publicised), and are worth a visit if you have extra time, although neglect and vandalism have taken their toll.

To reach the paintings from Roma head back to the Maseru road and turn right in the direction of Thaba-Tseka for about 12km to Nazareth. Just before Nazareth follow the signposted gravel track to the paintings for 3km to Ha Khotso. Turn right at a football field and continue 2.5km to a hilltop. A footpath zigzags down the hillside to the rock shelter with the paintings. Minibus taxis go as far as Nazareth.

SLEEPING & EATING

Trading Post Guest House (☎ 2234 0202/67; www.tradingpost.co.za; camping per person US\$7, dm US\$11, rondavels

WORTH A VISIT – MOHALE DAM

The Mohale Dam is worth seeing only if you haven't visited Katse Dam or if you're passing by. Built across the Senqunyane River, the impressive 145m-high rock-fill dam was completed in 2004 as the second phase of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. There are commanding views of the lake and massive mountains beyond. This is easiest done with your own wheels if you're passing Likalaneng on the way to Roma or Thaba-Tseka. You can drive as far as the Mohale Tunnel through which water can flow 32km to the Katse Dam and vice versa. Alternatively, the Thaba-Tseka-Maseru bus stops at Likalaneng, from where it's a short walk to the visitors centre (tours available).

per person US\$24, s/d with shared bathroom US\$21/42; ☎) This lovely, relaxing place in a lush garden 2km west of Roma off the Maseru road offers various accommodation options. The trading post has been here since 1903: the Thorn family runs the mill and guesthouse. Pre-ordered breakfasts (US\$5) and dinners (US\$9) are available and there's a kitchen. *Minwane* (dinosaur footprints) are a 20-minute walk away. The same owners run the nearby Trading Post Adventures Guesthouse, which also offers tours, hiking trails and horse rides.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Minibus taxis run throughout the day between Maseru and Roma (US\$1.10, 30 minutes).

NORTHERN LESOTHO

Northern Lesotho – the area from Maseru up to Butha-Buthe and the main gateway to the spectacular northeastern highlands – is relatively densely populated, and dotted with a series of bustling lowland towns. While there are few formal tourist sights, the region's local flavours – markets, welcoming locals and the unique geographical backdrop – provide a genuine experience.

Regular minibus taxis run between Maseru and the towns. Maputsoe is a major transport junction, and for northbound transport from Maseru, you'll usually need to change vehicles there. Minibus taxis to Maseru (US\$2.50, one hour), Butha-Buthe (US\$1.80, 45 minutes)

and Leribe (US\$1, 30 minutes) run throughout the day from the Total petrol station in Maputsoe.

TEYATEYANENG

Referred to as 'TY', Teyateyaneng (Place of Quick Sands) has been developed as the craft centre of Lesotho. It has several places worth visiting, including **Helang Basali Crafts** (☎ 2250 0382; ☎ 8am-5pm) at St Agnes Mission, 2km before TY on the Maseru road; Setsoto Design; and Hatooa Mose Mosali. Eelloang Basali Weavers is about 4km to the north of TY.

The **Blue Mountain Inn** (☎ 2250 0362; s/d US\$32/39) has blue rooms, cottages and a restaurant.

Minibus taxis run between Teyateyaneng and Maseru (US\$1.70, 45 minutes, 35km). Chartering a taxi from Maseru costs about US\$18 one way.

LERIBE

Leribe (also known as Hlotse) is a busy regional market hub. It served as an administrative centre under the British, as witnessed by a few old buildings slowly decaying in the leafy streets. The main sight is the crumbling **Major Bell's Tower** near the market, a government storehouse (1879).

The **Leribe Craft Centre** (☎ 2240 0323; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat) sells a range of high-quality woollen goods. There is a set of **dinosaur footprints** a few kilometres south of Leribe at Tsikoane village. To get there, head north and take the small dirt road to the right at the Tsikoane Primary School, towards some rocky outcrops. Follow it up to the church and ask someone to direct you

to the *minwane*, a 1km slog up the mountainside in caves.

About 7km north of Leribe are the **Subeng River dinosaur footprints**. At the signpost indicating the river, walk down about 250m to a concrete causeway. The worn footprints of at least three species of dinosaur are about 15m downstream on the right bank.

Leribe Hotel (☎ 2240 0559; Main St; s/d US\$25/39) has an olde-worldie *Fawltly Towers*-style dining room (meals from US\$3.50), with a pleasant tea garden.

HIGHLANDS WATER PROJECT Katse

Tiny Katse is the purpose-built former base for the Lesotho Highlands Water Project and the site of Africa's highest dam wall (185m). The green hilly area makes for a relaxing pause – even if you don't give a damn about engineering feats.

Two kilometres east of the Katse village junction on the main road is the **visitors centre** (admission US\$20). There's a video about and tours of the dam (daily at 9am and 2pm) and a dam viewpoint. Exposed and windy camping is also on offer here. In the village itself, **Katse Lodge** (☎ 2291 0202; dm US\$20, s/d with breakfast US\$33/59) offers hospital-style rooms, but ask about the more appealing and better-value 'dorm' accommodation with clean twin rooms and massive shared bathrooms.

The spectacular road from Leribe to Katse passes the lowland village of Pitseng before climbing over the Maluti Mountains. Be careful in the rain – the roads are slick. A comfortable accommodation option in Pitseng is **Aloes Guest House** (☎ 2700 5626; s/d US\$21/25).

LESOTHO'S WHITE GOLD

It might not seem like a valuable commodity, but for Lesotho water is a big money spinner. For more than 15 years the US\$8-billion Highlands Water Project has created dams and conduits for the water in Lesotho's highlands.

The scheme pipes water to rand-rich but water-poor Johannesburg. The first stages – the Katse Dam (see above) and Mohale Dam (near Likalaneng; see the boxed text, opposite) and associated waterworks – are complete, and by 2020 five dams and more than 200km of piping will supply water to South Africa.

In many ways the project has been a positive for the country – new roads and many jobs have been created – but it has not been without controversy.

Bribery scandals overshadowed the 1999 inauguration and hundreds of people who moved from their homes to make way for the project never received their promised compensation. Environmental concerns over the loss of habitat and fears that the dam will silt up over the long term have also been raised.

There are minibus taxis from Leribe to Katse (US\$5, three to five hours) and plenty of traffic if you want to hitch.

BUTHA-BUTHE

Moshoeshe the Great named this frontier town Butha-Buthe (Place of Lying Down); it was here that his people first retreated during the *difaqane*. The Maluti Mountains form a beautiful backdrop.

Ask for directions to **Ha Thabo Ramakatane Youth Hostel** (dm US\$4.50). It's about 4km from the village and accessible only via 4WD or walking. We're talking basic – part of the house has no electricity, there's gas cooking, and water comes from the well – but it's as authentic as it comes.

Crocodile Inn (☎ 2246 0223; Reserve Rd; s/d/tr from US\$28/32/46) is definitely a bit of a croc – it looks nice enough, although water is infrequent and 'day rests' are advertised. The restaurant here is Butha-Buthe's main dining establishment.

A minibus taxi from Maputsoe to Butha-Buthe costs M13 (20 minutes).

OXBOW

Oxbow, over the dramatic 2820m Moteng Pass, consists of several lodges and huts nestled amid some wonderful mountain scenery.

(Beware the treacherous hairpin bends in winter.) Skiing is available through **Afri-Ski** (www.afriski.co.za), 11km past Oxbow.

New Oxbow Lodge (☎ in South Africa 051-933 2247; www.oxbow.co.za; s/d with breakfast M310/545) is an incongruous Austrian-style chalet on the banks of the Malibamat'so River, with accommodation, cosy bar, restaurant and ski-hire.

A bus between Maseru and Mokhotlong goes via Oxbow (US\$7, 4½ hours), and there are daily minibus taxis between Butha-Buthe and Oxbow (US\$3.50, 1½ hours).

EASTERN LESOTHO

The awesome eastern highlands area is defined by the rugged escarpment of the Drakensberg. It's probably best known for the Sani Pass, but it also boasts the highest mountain in Southern Africa, the 3482m Thabana-Ntlenyana. This stunning mountain region features highland villages, rondavels, shepherds and sandstone rock shelters. It's *the* place for serious hikers.

THABA-TSEKA

This remote scrappy town is on the eastern edge of the Central Range, over the sometimes-tricky Mokhoabong Pass. It was estab-

lished in 1980 as a centre for the mountain district.

You can bunk down at the **Farmer Training Centre** (☎ 2290 0294; r/dm US\$14/7), on the street behind the tower, or at **Mountain Star Hotel** (☎ 2290 0415; s/d US\$20/23.50), where the most creative aspects are the 'Adam' and 'Eve' toilet signs. The Lilala Butchery & General Cafe serves sandwiches and drinks.

Three buses run daily between Maseru and Thaba-Tseka (US\$5, seven hours). Minibuses also go as far as Sehonghong (US\$3, two hours); from here to Qacha's Nek you'd need to try your luck for a lift – roads are poor. For Mokhotlong, change at Likalaneng (US\$3, two hours).

MOKHOTLONG

Mokhotlong (Place of the Bald Ibis) is 270km from Maseru and the first major town north of Sani Pass. It has an appealing Wild West feel to it, with locals – sporting Basotho blankets – on their horses, and basic shops.

A worthwhile effort is **Molumong Guesthouse & Backpackers** (☎ in South Africa 033-394 3072; molumong@worldonline.co.za; camping per person M45, dm/d US\$10/25), a rustic lodge and former colonial trading post, about 15km southwest of Mokhotlong. It's a basic (electricity-free) self-catering stay so bring your own food. Pony trekking is available.

The **Senqu Hotel** (☎ 2292 0330; s/d with shared bathroom US\$25/33, s/d US\$28/39) is at the western end of town along the main road. Nearby **Grow** (☎ 2292 0205; dm US\$7), a Lesotho-registered development office, has basic dorms and a simple kitchen.

Regular public transport runs to/from Butha-Buthe (US\$7.60, six hours), Maseru (US\$10, eight hours), Linakaneng (ask for Molumong Lodge) and Sani Top.

SANI TOP

Sani Top sits atop the steep Sani Pass, the only dependable (albeit winding!) road into Lesotho through the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg mountain range in KwaZulu-Natal. It offers stupendous views on clear days and unlimited hiking possibilities.

From the Sani Top Chalet at the top of the pass there are several day walks, including a long and strenuous trek to **Thabana-Ntlenyana** (3482m), the highest peak in Southern Africa. A guide is a good idea.

Hodgson's Peaks (3257m) is a much easier hike 6km south, from where you can see into

Sehlabathebe National Park and KwaZulu-Natal.

There is a rugged three-day hike from Sani Top Chalet south along the remote escarpment edge to **Sehlabathebe National Park**. The altitude of much of this remote area is more than 3000m; try this only if you're well prepared, experienced and in a group of at least three people with a guide.

Other hikes in this area are outlined in the excellent booklet *A Backpacker's Guide to Lesotho* by Russell Suchet (US\$6.50), available through most lodges, **Morija Museum & Archives** (☎ 2236 0308; www.morijafest.com) and **Sani Lodge** (☎ in South Africa 033-702 0330; www.sanilodge.co.za) at Sani Pass.

Sleeping & Eating

Sani Top Chalet (☎ in South Africa 033-702 1158; www.sanitopchalet.co.za; camping per person US\$7, dm US\$12, r with shared bathroom US\$42) On the edge of the escarpment at a lofty 2874m, this popular but monopolistic ski chalet boasts the highest pub in Africa, plus simple, cosy rooms and excellent meals. Less lofty praise applies to the backpackers' dorm – its now-draughty, stained room detracts from an otherwise high. (Fingers crossed for the new rondavels under construction.) Pony trekking and sometimes skiing are on offer.

On the KwaZulu-Natal side of the pass, Sani Lodge is a convenient and pleasant sleeping option; see p522.

Getting There & Away

A minibus taxi runs daily from Mokhotlong via Sani Top down to Underberg (South Africa) and back (US\$9 one way, five hours).

If you're driving up the pass from KwaZulu Natal, a 4WD is obligatory; 2WD with clearance can make it down, though with difficulty. The South African border crossing is open 8am to 4pm daily; the Lesotho side stays open until 5pm to let the last vehicles through. Hitching is best at weekends.

Hostels on the KwaZulu-Natal side arrange transport up the pass, and various agencies in Himeville and Underberg (the nearest South African towns) arrange tours – see p522.

SEHLABATHEBE NATIONAL PARK

Lesotho's first national park, proclaimed in 1970, is remote, rugged and beautiful. Getting there is a worthwhile adventure, especially for wilderness, seclusion and fishing. The rolling

HIGHLAND PARKS & RESERVES

While the building of a series of dams on the Senqu (Orange) River has created controversy, not least over environmental concerns, it has also led to the creation of the following nature reserves. For bookings and inquiries contact **LHDA Nature Reserves** (☎ 2246 0723; fax 2246 1226; nature@lhda.org.ls; PO Box 333, Butha-Buthe 400, Lesotho). The website www.lesothoparks.com has greater (although outdated) detail.

Bokong Nature Reserve

The bearded vulture, the ice rat and the Vaal rhebok are just some of the denizens of this **reserve** (adult/child US\$0.80/0.50; camping US\$3, basic huts US\$5.50), at the top of the 3090m Mafika-Lisiu Pass, near the Bokong River. The park is also home to Afro-alpine wetland sponges. There are a number of day walks, a visitors centre and an overnight camping ground. Guides (per person M20) and pony trekking (from M50) can be arranged.

Ts'ehlanyane National Park

Deep in the rugged Maluti Mountains this 5600-hectare **national park** (admission US\$1.50; camping from US\$3, 6-person guesthouse US\$48) has some interesting fauna – woodland and berg bamboo – but little in the way of big flora. There are walks, horse trails, a guesthouse and camp sites.

Liphofung Cave Cultural Historical Site

San rock art and historical links that go back as far as the Stone Age are the attractions of this small 4-hectare **reserve** (adult/child US\$2/0.70; camping US\$3, rondavels per person US\$7), just off the main Butha-Buthe–Oxbow road. There are also horse trails and a small craft centre.

grasslands, wildflowers and silence provide a sense of isolation, which is indeed the case, apart from the prolific bird life (including the bearded vulture) and the odd rhebok. Hiking (and horse riding from Sani Top or the Drakensberg) is the main way to explore the waterfalls and surrounds.

You'll need to bring all your food, and be well prepared for the elements. This summer rainfall area has frequent thick mists, potentially hazardous to hikers. Winters are clear but cold at night, with occasional light snowfalls.

Sleeping & Eating

If you're travelling by public transport, the buses reach Sehlabathebe in the evening, which means you'll need to overnight in Mavuka village near the park gate.

Camping is permitted throughout the park, though there are no facilities besides plenty of water.

Sehlabathebe Park Lodge (☎ bookings 2232 3600; camping per person US\$4.50, r per person US\$11) Built in the 1970s for the prime minister of the time, and the park's only option with facilities, this time-warped lodge makes for a groovy stay. It's set on a remote flat grassland, and looks onto hills and ponds. Bring all your own food, plus extra petrol or diesel – there's none available at the park. Coal is available for purchase from the caretaker. The lodge takes up to 12 people, and has bedding and a fully equipped kitchen. Due to its isolation, it's not recommended for lone travellers. Bookings are made through the **National Environment Secretariat** (☎ 2231 1767, 2232 6075; Raboshabane Rd, Maseru).

Range Management Education Centre (dm US\$5) This clean and modern centre, 2km down the road to the left after the Mavuka Primary School, has dorm beds, but at the time of research had no water or gas.

Getting There & Away

A daily bus connects Qacha's Nek and Sehlabathebe, departing from Qacha's Nek at around noon and Sehlabathebe at 5.30am (US\$4.50, five hours). The bus terminates in Mavuka village, near the park gate. From here, it's 12km further on foot to Sehlabathebe Park Lodge. If you're driving, the main route into the park is via Quthing and Qacha's Nek but a 4WD is recommended. The road from Qacha's Nek is unpaved but in reasonable condition, and negotiable at most times of the

year in a 2WD. You can arrange to leave your vehicle at the police station in Paolosi village while you're in the park.

Keen walkers can hike the 10km up the escarpment from Bushman's Nek in Kwa-Zulu-Natal. From Bushman's Nek to the Nkonkoana Gate border crossing takes about six hours. Horses can also be arranged through **Khotsotrails** (☎ in South Africa 033-701 1502; www.khotsotrails.co.za) in Underberg.

QACHA'S NEK

This pleasant town was founded in 1888 near the pass (1980m) of the same name. It has an attractive church, several colonial-era sandstone buildings and California redwood trees, some over 25m high.

Letloepelodge (☎ 2295 0383; www.letloepelodge.co.ls; dm/s/d with breakfast US\$10/39/55) is the frilliest of accommodation choices. This 'palace just below the clouds' has a serene outlook.

The more modest **Anna's B&B** (☎ 2295 0374; annasb&b@leo.co.ls; s US\$14-42, d US\$25-39) offers a variety of rooms.

Minibus taxis go from Qacha's Nek and Maseru via Quthing (US\$13, six hours). An early morning bus runs between Maseru and Qacha's Nek (US\$9, nine hours), and the bus from Qacha's Nek to Sehlabathebe National Park departs around noon (US\$4.50, five hours).

SOUTHERN LESOTHO

Southern Lesotho – from Semonkong to Morija and southeast to Quthing – is less developed than the northwest between Maseru and Butha-Buthe, with massive mountain ranges, awesome valleys, and villages that have an enticing off-the-beaten-track feel.

SEMONKONG

Semonkong (Place of Smoke) is a one-horse town in the serene and lofty Thaba Putsoa range. **Maletsunyane Falls** (Lebahane Falls; 204m) are a 1½-hour walk away and are at their most awesome in summer – especially from the bottom of the gorge, where there are **camp sites** (per person US\$3). **Ketane Falls** (122m) are an exciting day's ride (30km) from Semonkong.

The highly recommended **Semonkong Lodge** (☎/fax in South Africa 051-933 3106; www.placeofsmoke.co.ls; camping per person US\$5.50, dm/s/d US\$11/32/59),

near the Maletsunyane River, is one of the places to stay, with camping and rondavels up for grabs. Hikes and pony treks are on offer, as is the well-promoted world's longest commercially operated single-drop abseil (204m) down the Maletsunyane Falls (US\$63 per person; less if more people). The lodge is signposted from the town centre.

Buses between Maseru and Semonkong (US\$3.50) leave from either town in the morning, arriving in late afternoon.

MORIJA

Morija is a tiny town with a big history, and the site of the first European mission in Lesotho. It's a must for anyone interested in Lesotho's history and culture. **Morija Museum & Archives** (☎ 2236 0308; www.morijafest.com; admission US\$0.80; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun), the best museum in Lesotho, holds well-presented Basotho ethnographical exhibits, archives and artefacts.

The annual **Morija Arts & Cultural Festival** (www.morijafest.com) is organised by the museum. This popular, annual event is held in early October and showcases the diversity of Sotho culture through dance, music and theatre, and includes horse racing and *moraba-raba* (similar to chess) competitions. The festival began in 1999 as a means of reuniting the people of Lesotho after the turmoil created by the 1998 political upheaval, and to revive aspects of culture and boost tourism.

Mophato Oa Morija (☎ 2236 0219; mophatooa@leo.co.ls; dm US\$8.50) is an ecumenical conference centre that is sometimes willing to accommodate travellers.

Morija Guest Houses (☎ 6306 5093; mgh@leo.co.ls; r per person US\$25) is a selection of several comfortable guesthouses, some with stunning outlooks, around Morija. For reservations,

contact the manager through the details listed here.

Minibus taxis run throughout the day between Maseru and Morija (US\$1.50, 45 minutes, 40km).

MALEALEA

Shortly before reaching Malealea is the Gates of Paradise Pass. A plaque announces 'Way-farer – pause and look upon a Gateway of Paradise'. This says it all – about the region, village and the lodge. The breathtaking mountains feature caves with **San paintings**, and you can enjoy a well-organised pony trek from here or wander on foot through the region.

Today, the heart of the village is Malealea Lodge, which offers a smorgasbord of cultural and outdoor activities.

Activities

PONY TREKKING

Malealea Lodge (p150) is one of the best places in Lesotho to arrange pony trekking, which offers a good chance to meet Basotho villagers and experience the awesome scenery of the mountains, valleys and waterfalls. The villagers provide the ponies and guide; this provides a significant contribution to the local village economy.

The pony treks are priced on a per-day basis (around US\$22). Overnight rides start at US\$36 to US\$46 per person, plus US\$7 for each night spent in one of the Basotho village huts.

WALKING

Malealea Lodge has route maps for overnight and longer jaunts and can arrange pack ponies for your gear. Stunning destinations include **Botso'ela Waterfall** (two hours return); **Pitseng Gorge** (six hours return, bring

MOVERS & SHAKERS: FANUEL MUSI

Throughout Lesotho you may spot massive gullies or ravines stemming from the tops of hills and snaking all the way to the bottom of a valley. Known as dongas, these eroded areas developed primarily from the use of steel ploughs and an increase in arable farming during the latter part of the 19th century. The unstable duplex soils were quickly disturbed by the heavy summer storms. In 1986 Mr Fanuel Musi of Malealea was one of the first Basothos to reclaim a donga. Over 11 years he painstakingly built rock dams (or terraces) to capture silt and detritus. As the area above the dam wall or terrace filled, he built another dam lower down, until the gully was refilled with fertile soils, grasses or stabilising tree species. Many external aid organisations come to view the project. Mr Musi died in 1997 at the age of 74, but you can visit his family at their working farm at Malealea to see his stunning green legacy (see p150).

swimwear); **Pitseng Plateau** (one hour return); and along the Makhaleng River. The walks include visits to surrounding villages and **San art sites**.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Village visits provide a stimulating insight into the local people and their customs. You can visit the tiny **museum**, housed in a traditional Basotho hut, a **sangoma** (witchdoctor; only for the genuinely interested) and a **reclaimed donga** (see the boxed text, p149). There are some good, scenic drives suitable for both 2WD and 4WD vehicles (see www.malealea.co.ls/scenic_drives.html).

Sleeping

Our pick **Malealea Lodge** (☎ in South Africa 051-436 6766, 082-552 4215; www.malealea.com; camping per person M50, backpacker huts with shared bathroom per person US\$11, r per person US\$14-28) The hub of local life, award-winning Malealea Lodge – a former trading post established by Mervyn Smith (1905) – provides an extraordinary entrée into the ‘Kingdom in the Sky’. The extremely friendly Jones family works closely with community – its foundation (from tourist revenue and donations) supports projects in the area. Almost every night the local choir performs at the lodge.

Hungry hikers love the bar, hearty meals (breakfast/lunch/dinner US\$5.5/7/10) and self-catering facilities. A village shop stocks basic goods. Bookings must be made through South Africa. September to November are the busy months.

Getting There & Away

Two Sprinter minibus taxis depart Maseru at around 11.30am and 4.30pm and Malealea at 6am and 2pm (US\$5.50, 2½ hours, 83km). Otherwise, catch a minibus taxi from near Maseru’s Shoprite/Sefika Mall to the junction town of Motsekuoa (US\$2, two hours); there are frequent connections to Malealea (US\$1.50, 30 minutes).

If you’re driving, head south from Maseru on Main South Rd for 52km to Motsekuoa. Look for the Malealea Lodge sign and the proliferation of minibus taxis. Turn left (east) onto a tarmac road. Ten kilometres further on take the right fork and continue another 15km. At the signposted turn-off to Malealea, head 7km along an unsealed road to the lodge.

You can also approach Malealea from the south, via Mpharane and Masemouse, but the road is rough and most drivers travel via Motsekuoa.

MAFETENG

Mafeteng (Place of Lefeta’s People) is named after an early magistrate Emile Rolland, who was known to the local Basotho as Lefeta (One who Passes By). Little has changed; you’d do best to move on. That said, the town is an important transport interchange, a border junction (it’s 22km to Wepener in Free State) and a possible stocking-up point.

Straight out of the ‘60s TV sitcom *Lost in Space*, polygon-shaped **Mafeteng Hotel** (☎ 2270 0236; r US\$28-35) is a blast from the past. To bring you back to earth, there’s a garden, restaurant and disco.

Frequent minibus taxis connect Mafeteng with Maseru (US\$2, 1½ hours) and Mohale’s Hoek (US\$1.50, 30 minutes). For Quthing, change at Mohale’s Hoek.

MOHALE’S HOEK

More agreeable than Mafeteng, this comfortable town is 125km from Maseru. The younger brother of Moshoeshe the Great, Mohale, gave this land to the British for administrative purposes in 1884.

Mohale’s Hoek has **Monateng Lodge** (☎ 2278 5337; s/d US\$24/28), but it seriously lacks something – security and the ‘it’ factor. Much better is the quality **Hotel Mount Maluti** (☎ 2278 5224; www.hotelmountmaluti.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$36/52). There’s a large garden and a restaurant.

QUTHING

Quthing, the southernmost major town in Lesotho, is also known as Moyeni (Place of the Wind). It was established in 1877, abandoned during the Gun War of 1880 and then rebuilt at the present site.

The town comprises Lower Quthing and Upper Quthing, the former colonial administrative centre, with good facilities and even better views overlooking the dramatic Senqu (Orange) River Gorge. There are minibus taxis between Lower and Upper Quthing.

About 1.5km off the highway, 5km west of Quthing, is the intriguing **Masitise Cave House Museum** (☎ 5879 4167; admission free, donation appreciated), now a museum, built into a San rock shelter in 1866 by Reverend Ellenberger. Ask for the key from the caretaker in the house

next to the small church. Accommodation is also available on a B&B basis or in the rustically unrenovated rondavels. There are San paintings nearby.

Quthing’s other claim to fame is a proliferation of **dinosaur footprints**. The most easily accessible are just off the main road to Mt Moorosi; watch for the small, pink building to your left. These footprints are believed to be 180 million years old.

Between Quthing and Masitise, and visible from the main road, is **Villa Maria Mission**, with a striking, twin-spired sandstone church.

At Qomoqomong, 10km from Quthing, there’s a collection of **San paintings**; ask at the General Dealers store about a guide for the 20-minute walk to the paintings.

The road from Quthing to Qacha’s Nek, along the winding Senqu (Orange) River Gorge and through some striking canyon scenery, is one of Lesotho’s most stunning drives. If you’re equipped, the whole area is ideal for hiking.

En route is the village of **Mt Moorosi**, named after a Basotho chieftain who in 1879 stuck it out for eight months against the British on his fortified mountain until he was killed; the pretty **Mphaki** village, a possible base for hiking; and **Christ the King Mission**, with wide views over the Senqu River valley. From the mission, it’s a good two- to three-day hike north to Semonkong (p148).

Sleeping & Eating

Fuleng Guest House (☎ 2275 0260; r per person from US\$11) Perched in Upper Quthing, this is the place for excellent-value rooms and rondavels with a view, plus a friendly local experience.

Moorosi Chalets (☎ in South Africa 051-436 6766, 082-552 4215; www.malealea.co.ls; chalets per person US\$11-42) The chalets are part of a community programme and are secondary to amazing activities on offer – from village stays to fishing, best organised in advance. The chalets are 6km from Mt Moorosi village; take the turn-off to Ha Moqalo 2km out of the village in the direction of Qacha’s Nek.

Getting There & Away

Minibus taxis run daily between Quthing and Maseru (US\$7, 3½ hours) and Qacha’s Nek (US\$7, three hours). The Quthing–Qacha’s Nek road is tarmac the entire way despite what many maps indicate.

LESOTHO DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Maseru has a reasonable range of hotel accommodation. Most towns have small hotels that have survived from protectorate days, although many are run-down bars and liquor stores that also provide accommodation. New lodges and B&Bs have sprung up over recent years.

Camping is most viable away from population centres. Always ask permission of the local landowners and chief, and expect to pay a small fee. Camping is also possible in highland parks.

For a small fee, you can sometimes score a bed at the missions or Agricultural Training Centres; the latter are at Thaba-Tseka and Qacha’s Nek.

Prices for accommodation in this chapter are: budget US\$40 and below, midrange US\$40 to US\$100, top end US\$100 and above.

ACTIVITIES

Abseiling

Hit the heights at Semonkong Lodge for the longest commercially operated single-drop abseil (204m) down the Maletsunyane Falls (see p148).

Bird-Watching

About 280 species of bird have been recorded in Lesotho – a surprising number for a landlocked country. The mountainous terrain provides habitats for many species of raptor (birds of prey). You might see the Cape vulture or the rare bearded vulture or lammergeyer.

PRACTICALITIES

- Several newspapers such as *Southern Star* are available in Maseru and other towns. Day-old South African newspapers are also available in Maseru.
- Thanks to a transmitter, you can pick up the BBC’s World Service on short wave, medium wave (1197kHz) and FM.
- Lesotho’s electricity is generated at 220V. Appliances have three round prongs as used in South Africa.
- Lesotho uses the metric system.

Good bird-watching places include eyries in the Maluti Mountains and near the eastern Drakensberg escarpment.

Fishing

Trout fishing is very popular in Lesotho; the season runs from September to the end of May. There is a minimal licence fee, a bag limit of 12 fish and a minimum size limit of 25cm; only rod and line and artificial nonspinning flies may be used. For more information contact the **Livestock Division of the Ministry of Agriculture** (☎ 2232 3986; Private Bag A82, Maseru 100).

The closest fishing area to Maseru is the Makhalaneng River (a two-hour drive from Maseru). Other places where you can cast a line include Malibamat'so near Butha-Buthe, 2km below Oxbow Lodge; in the De Beers' Dam, Khubelu and Mokhotlong Rivers near Mokhotlong; the Tsoelikana River, Park Ponds and Leqooa River near Qacha's Nek; Thaba-Tseka main dam and Katse and Mohale Dams.

Indigenous fish include barbel in lowland rivers, yellowfish in the mountains and the Maloti minnow in the upper Tsoelikana.

Hiking

Lesotho offers great remote-area trekking in a landscape reminiscent of the Tibetan plateau. The eastern highlands and the Drakensberg crown attract serious hikers, with the walk between Qacha's Nek and Butha-Buthe offering the best challenge.

As well as the appropriate hiking gear, you will need a compass and the relevant 1:50,000 or 1:250,000 maps from the **Department of Land, Surveys & Physical Planning** (Map p142; ☎ 2232 2376; Lerotholi Rd, Maseru; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri).

Be prepared – walking can be dangerous – zero temperatures (even in summer), thunderstorms and thick fog are common. In summer many of the rivers flood, and fords can become dangerous: route changes might be necessary. By the end of the dry season clean water can be scarce.

Bring all your own supplies, especially specialist hiking supplies.

Hikers should respect the mounds of stones (cairns) marking graves. However, a cairn near a path, especially between two hills, can be added to by passing travellers; ensure your good luck by spitting on a stone and throwing it onto the pile.

Note that a white flag waving from a village means that *joala* (sorghum beer) has just been brewed; a yellow flag indicates maize beer; red is for fresh meat; and green is for vegetables.

Pony Trekking

This is an excellent and popular way of seeing the Lesotho highlands, and is offered by Malealea Lodge (p150), Trading Post Guest House (p144) and Semonkong Lodge (p148).

You will usually need to bring food, a sleeping bag, rainwear, sunscreen, warm clothing, a torch (flashlight) and water purification tablets.

BOOKS

A Backpacker's Guide to Lesotho by Russell Suchet features walks around Lesotho and is a must for hikers. Poignant personal accounts by Basotho include *Singing Away the Hunger* by Mpho Matsepo Nthunya et al, and *Shepherd Boy of the Maloti* by Thabo Makoa. For history, read *A Short History of Lesotho* by Stephen Gill.

BUSINESS HOURS

Most businesses are open from 8am to 5pm weekdays (8.30am to 1pm Wednesdays) and 8am to 1pm Saturdays. The civil service works between 8am and 4.30pm weekdays with a break for lunch from 12.45pm to 2pm.

CUSTOMS

Customs regulations are broadly the same as those for South Africa (see p583). Visitors from the South African customs union – Botswana, Swaziland and South Africa – cannot bring in alcohol.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

You may receive unmenacing requests for money, especially if hiking somewhere without a guide. In the highlands, you'll receive incessant requests for 'sweets! sweets!' from school children and herd boys. Tourists throwing out sweets has become an increasing problem in encouraging begging. Children throwing stones at cars is on the increase, mainly in the highlands.

Several lives (mainly herd boys) are lost each year from lightning strikes. Keep off high ground during electrical storms and avoid camping in the open.

Never go out into the mountains, even in summer or for an afternoon, without a sleeping bag, tent and sufficient food for a couple of days in case you get fogged in.

On the last Friday of the month, many people are paid and some get drunk; things can get boisterous.

There's a slight risk of being robbed in Lesotho; muggings are common in Maseru.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES Lesotho Embassies & Consulates

Lesotho has an embassy in South Africa (see p584). Elsewhere in the world, countries with a Lesotho embassy include the following.

Belgium (☎ 02-705 3976; Blvd General Wahis 45, 1030 Brussels)

Germany (☎ 30 257 5720; Dessau Strasse 28/29, 10963 Berlin)

Italy (☎ 06-854 2419; les.rome@flashnet.it; Via Serchio 8, 00198 Rome)

UK (☎ 020-7235 5686; 7 Chesham Pl, Belgravia, London SW1 8HN)

USA (☎ 202-797 5533/4; 2511 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20008)

Embassies & Consulates in Lesotho

A number of countries have representation in Maseru.

China (☎ 2231 6521; http://ls.china-embassy.org/eng; United Nations Rd, Maseru)

France (Map p142; ☎ 2232 5722; alliancefrancaise@ilesotho.com; Alliance Française Bldg, cnr Kingsway & Pioneer Rd, Maseru)

Germany (Map p142; ☎ 2233 2292; c/o Alliance Française Bldg, cnr Kingsway & Pioneer Rd, Maseru)

Ireland (Map p142; ☎ 2231 4068; Tonakholo Rd, Maseru)

Netherlands (Map p142; ☎ 2231 2114; Lancers Inn, Kingsway, Maseru)

South Africa (Map p142; ☎ 2231 5758; 10th fl, Lesotho Bank Tower, Kingsway, Maseru)

USA (Map p142; ☎ 2231 2666; http://maseru.usembassy.gov; 254 Kingsway, Maseru; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-4pm Mon & Wed)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Morija Arts & Cultural Festival (www.morijafest.com) is held in Morija in early October (see p149).

HOLIDAYS

Lesotho's public holidays:

New Year's Day 1 January

Moshoeshoe Day 11 March

Good Friday March/April

Easter Monday March/April

Hero's Day 4 April

Workers' Day 1 May

Ascension Day May

King's Birthday 17 July

Independence Day 4 October

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

INTERNET RESOURCES

African Studies – Lesotho Page (www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/Country_Specific/Lesotho.html) Reliable links to a number of other Lesotho websites.

Kingdom in the Sky (www.seelesotho.com) An excellent resource with all kinds of tourist information for planning a trip to Lesotho.

Lesotho Government (www.lesotho.gov.ls) Useful although sometimes outdated information.

LANGUAGE

The official languages are South Sotho and English. For some useful words and phrases in South Sotho, see p780.

MAPS

The **Department of Land, Surveys & Physical Planning** (Map p142; ☎ 2232 2376; Lerotholi Rd, Maseru; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri) sells a good 1:50,000 map of Maseru (US\$7), a 1:250,000 map of Lesotho (US\$7), plus 1:50,000 hiking maps covering the country (US\$5). Look for the brown building marked 'LSP'. Maseru's tourist information office also sells a Lesotho map (US\$0.80).

MONEY

The unit of currency is the loti (plural maloti; M), which is divided into 100 liesente. The loti is fixed at a value equal to the South African rand, and rands are accepted everywhere (however, maloti are not accepted outside Lesotho).

ATMs & Cash

If changing foreign currency, do it in South Africa before you come – rates are better. There are a few ATMs in Maseru, but not all take international cards.

The only banks where you can reliably change foreign currency, including travellers cheques, are in Maseru (see p141).

Credit Cards

Most hotels, restaurants and travel agencies will accept credit cards. As a last resort, you

can change money for low rates at larger hotels.

Tipping

Wages are low in Lesotho. In rural parts of Lesotho it's normal to round up the bill, and in tourist areas it's usual to tip around 10%.

POST

Post offices are open from 8am to 4.30pm weekdays and 8am to noon Saturday.

TELEPHONE

Lesotho's telephone system works reasonably well, but only where there is access – there's no telephone network in the highlands. The main mobile service is **Vodacom Lesotho** (www.vodacom.co.ls) – off the beaten track, signals can be picked up on a few mountain passes only.

There are no area codes within Lesotho. Lesotho's country code is 266; to call Lesotho from South Africa dial the prefix 09-266. To call South Africa from anywhere in Lesotho, dial 00-27 and then the South African area code and phone number.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The only **tourist information office** (Map p142; ☎ 2231 2427; touristinfo@ltdc.org.ls; Kingsway; 🕒 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5pm Sat) is in Maseru and is managed by the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation. It provides brochures, lists of tour guides, information on public transport and basic maps.

VISAS

Citizens of most Western European countries, the USA and most Commonwealth countries are granted an entry permit (free) at the border or airport. The standard stay permitted is 14 days and is renewable by leaving and re-entering the country or by application to the **Director of Immigration & Passport Services** (☎ 2232 3771, 2232 1110; PO Box 363, Maseru 100).

For citizens of other countries, if you arrive at the Maseru Bridge border without a visa you might be given a temporary entry permit, which allows you to apply for a visa in Maseru at the Ministry of Immigration. Don't count on this, though, as it depends on the whim of the border officials.

Visa requirements change, so first check with an embassy. No vaccination certificates are required unless you have recently been in a yellow-fever area.

TRANSPORT IN LESOTHO

GETTING THERE & AWAY

This section covers travel between Lesotho and its neighbour, South Africa. (For information on reaching Lesotho from elsewhere on the African continent and from other continents, see p752.)

Entering Lesotho

Most travellers enter Lesotho overland from South Africa, although it's also possible to fly in from Johannesburg. A passport is required for entering Swaziland.

Entry permits are easy to get at any of Lesotho's borders and at the airport. If you are a citizen of a country for which a visa is required (see p749), it's best to arrange this in advance. Vaccination certificate requirements are the same as for South Africa.

Air

Lesotho's Moshoeshe International Airport is 21km from Maseru.

South African Airways (SAA; ☎ 27 11 978 5313) flies daily between Moshoeshe International Airport and Johannesburg for around US\$140, one way.

Border Crossings SOUTH AFRICA

All Lesotho's borders are with South Africa. Most people enter via Maseru Bridge (open 24 hours). Other main border crossings include Ficksburg (open 24 hours), Makhaleng Bridge (open 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm Saturday and Sunday), and Sani Pass (open 8am to 4pm daily), but these often have long queues.

Most of the other entry points in the south and the east of the country involve very difficult, rough roads.

Bus

Big Sky Coaches (www.bigskycoaches.co.za) and **Intercape** (www.intercape.co.za) operate daily in each

DEPARTURE TAX

A US\$4.50 departure tax is payable on leaving the airport.

direction between Bloemfontein and Maseru Bridge (US\$5, three hours). For Big Sky, buy tickets at the Big Sky booths at Bloemfontein's Central Park, or on the bus at Maseru Bridge. There are express services from Bloemfontein (two hours) on Friday and Saturday morning, and from Maseru Bridge on Friday and Sunday afternoon. Intercape tickets can be purchased at Maseru's Shoprite.

Via minibus taxi, the best connections are from Bloemfontein to Botshabelo (Mtabelo; US\$4.50, one hour), and from there to Maseru (US\$2, 1½ hours).

There are at least three buses weekly between Johannesburg and Maseru (six to seven hours), as well as daily minibus taxis between both Johannesburg and Ladybrand (16km from the Maseru Bridge border crossing) and Maseru. All these services will bring you into Maseru coming from South Africa; if you are leaving Maseru, you'll need to go to the South Africa side of Maseru Bridge.

Car & Motorcycle

You can't enter Lesotho via Sani Pass unless your vehicle is 4WD, but you can leave in a conventional vehicle; however, most 2WDs won't have the necessary ground clearance to get to Sani Pass.

GETTING AROUND Air

For charter flights within Lesotho, the best contact is **Mission Aviation** (☎ 2232 5699).

Bicycle

Extremely mountainous Lesotho is an excellent mountain-bike cycling destination – for the seriously fit only. Dangers include icy roads, thunderstorms and flooding. The classic mountain-bike route in Lesotho is over the Sani Pass. The odd lodge rents out bicycles (most on the South African) side of the Sani Pass.

Bus & Minibus Taxi

A good network of slow, no-frills buses and faster minibus taxis access many towns. Minibuses leave when full; no reservations are necessary. You'll be quoted long-distance fares on the buses but it's best to just buy a ticket to the next major town, as most of the passengers will get off there and you might be stuck waiting for the bus to fill up again, while other buses leave before yours. Buying tickets

in stages is only slightly more expensive than buying a direct ticket.

Car & Motorcycle DRIVING LICENCE

An international or domestic driving licence is necessary.

FUEL & SPARE PARTS

Fuel – including unleaded fuel and diesel – is available in the major towns; fill up whenever possible and carry a jerry can with extra fuel. Spare parts are extremely limited; carry tools and spare tyres. Tyre repairers are as common as mountains in 'them-thar parts'.

HIRE

In Lesotho it is far more economical to use a car hired in South Africa; just ensure that you have the written agreement from the hirer. There is a road tax of US\$0.70, payable on entering Lesotho.

Avis (☎ 2235 0328) and **Budget** (☎ 2231 6344) have offices in Maseru (see p143).

INSURANCE

Insurance is strongly recommended (and in many cases incorporated in the rental price), including for third-party damage and damage to or loss of your vehicle. Check carefully what you are covered for – hail damage is a possibility in Lesotho.

ROAD CONDITIONS & HAZARDS

Driving in Lesotho is getting easier with new sealed roads in the country's north but a 4WD is obligatory for the country's rough unsealed roads. Main routes are numbered with the letter 'A'; secondary roads take a 'B'. Motorcycles are fine on the sealed roads. Beware of treacherously slippery roads in winter.

Unsealed roads can be rough. Before attempting a difficult drive, try to get local info on current conditions: ask at a police station as no warning signs are displayed. Major hazards are: steep hairpin bends, flooding rivers (after summer storms), ice and snow in winter, people and animals. The occasional army roadblock does random checks, usually for stolen cars.

ROAD RULES

In Lesotho, vehicles are driven on the left-hand side. The national speed limit is 80km/h and the speed limit in villages is 50km/h. Seat belts must be worn at all times. A vehicle

registration booklet must be carried always, along with your licence.

Tours

Tour operators in Lesotho are hard to find. The tourist information office in Maseru publishes a list of local operators.

Malealea Lodge (p150) and Semonkong Lodge (p148) probably offer the best range of tours, ranging from crosscountry horse treks to 4WD excursions and walks between the two lodges. However, they don't offer a comprehensive overland tour of the entire country.

Malawi

Flick through the glossy tourist brochures and the clichés come thick and fast. Malawi is ‘the warm heart of Africa’ or ‘Africa for beginners’, and its lake ‘the lake of stars’. It all seems too good to be true, but, with stunning and varied scenery and supremely friendly natives, along with the relative ease of travel here, Malawi really does live up to the hype.

Malawi’s big draw is the lake – a magnificent shard of crystal water stretching some 500km along Malawi’s eastern border, separating it from the wild and mountainous coast of Mozambique and Tanzania. Isolated villages pepper the northern lakeshore, and the beautiful Liwonde National Park rests at its southern tip. Around 500 species of fish inhabit the lake, and the freshwater diving and snorkelling here are excellent.

Malawi’s not just for waterbabies and sun worshippers though, there’s plenty here to keep you active, and Malawi’s landscape is surprisingly diverse. Head for the misty peaks of Mt Mulanje or to the Nyika Plateau, where you find sheer escarpments, dramatic peaks, endless rolling grassland and some of the most enjoyable hiking routes in the whole of Africa.

Many travellers only pass through the country for a couple of days on their way elsewhere, intent on racing through to Africa’s ‘bigger’ attractions. This is a shame, as Malawi has much to offer. Take some time to explore the highland wilderness, dive and swim in the lake’s warm waters, or simply soak up the vibrant local flavour and you’re sure to find yourself seduced.

FAST FACTS

- **Area:** 118,484 sq km
- **Capital:** Lilongwe
- **Country code:** ☎ 265
- **Famous for:** The lake, laid-back beach resorts and friendly locals
- **Languages:** English, Chichewa
- **Money:** Malawi kwacha
- **Phrase:** *Muli bwanji?* (How are you?)
- **Population:** 12 million



HOW MUCH?

- **100mL bottle of Nali (Malawi's own chilli sauce)** US\$0.80
- **30mL sachet of Malawi Gin** US\$0.30
- **Live chicken** US\$2.50
- **Bottle of wine** US\$10-20
- **Carving** US\$12

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L of petrol** US\$1
- **1L of bottled water** US\$2
- **Bottle of Kuche Kuche** US\$0.90
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US \$10
- **Plate of chips** US\$1

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Lake Malawi** (p187) Explore the untouched islands by kayak, commune with the underwater world or kick back on a near-deserted beach.
- **Nyika National Park** (p181) A sweeping, magnificent wilderness filled with antelope and zebra, to be explored on foot, by bike or on horseback.
- **Mt Mulanje** (p219) Hike the majestic peaks and take in the dramatic views.
- **Liword National Park** (p206) Cruise past hippos and crocs on the Shire River, or take a walking safari and get up close and personal with the elephants.
- **Off the beaten track** (p225) Head to the little visited swamplands of the Elephant Marsh to enjoy some of the best bird-watching in Malawi.

ITINERARIES

- **Three days** Head down to **Senga Bay** (p198) from **Lilongwe** (p167) for a couple of days of sun worshipping, then visit the museum at the **Mua Mission** (p200) for an eye-opening glimpse into Malawi's cultural heritage.
- **One week** Head down to **Blantyre** (p212) through the hills and waterfalls of the **Zomba Plateau** (p210), then meander through Malawi's stunning tea plantations before getting in some hiking on the misty peaks of **Mt Mulanje** (p219).
- **Two weeks** Head north from **Lilongwe** (p167) to **Mzuzu** (p185), from where you

can reach the wild open spaces of **Vwaza Marsh** (p184) and **Nyika Plateau** (p181) and the colonial hilltop town of **Livingstonia** (p179). Then head for **Nkhata Bay** (p188) for some fun in the sun, before catching the **Ilala** ferry over to **Likoma** (p192) and **Chizumulu Islands** (p194). Charter a flight or wait for the **Ilala** to take you back to the mainland.

- **One month** With a month or longer you could encompass all of these highlights and more: check out the southern beach resorts of **Cape Madear** (p201); go hippo spotting on a canoe in **Liword National Park** (p206); or head to the little-visited but beautiful wilderness spots of the **Majete Wildlife Reserve** (p224) and **Lengwe National Park** (p224).

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Malawi has a single wet season, from November to April, when daytime temperatures are warm and conditions humid. The best time to visit Malawi is during the dry season from April/May to October. From May to July the landscape is attractive and vegetation green and lush, and temperatures cooler. The months of October and November, at the end of the dry season, are the best time for wildlife viewing; however, the temperatures can be uncomfortably hot. Average daytime maximums in the lower areas are about 21°C in July and 26°C in January. In highland areas, average daytime temperatures in July are between 10°C and 15°C, while in September they reach 20°C and above. See p742 for climate charts.

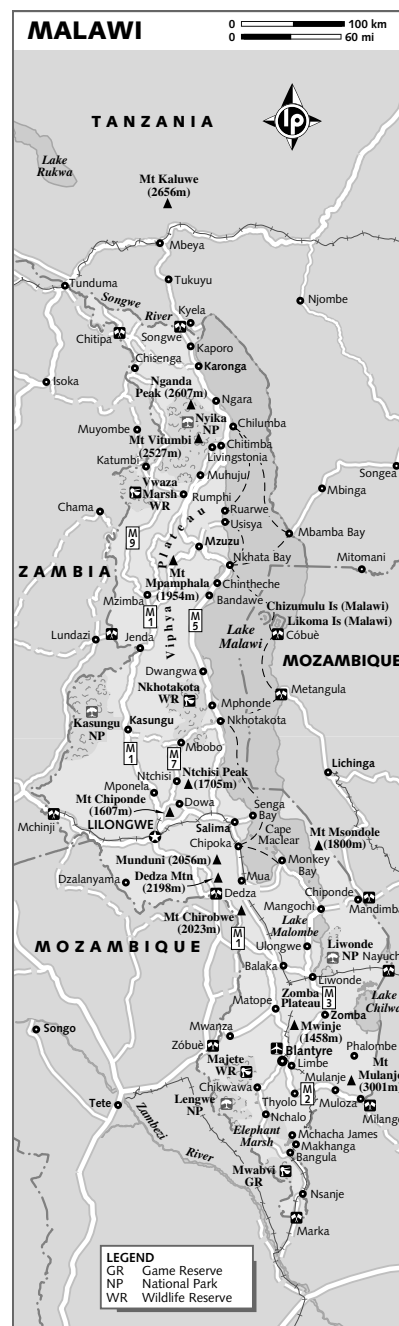
HISTORY

The pre-colonial history of Malawi is linked to the history of Southern Africa as a whole. For more detail see p37.

Early Migrations

Since the first millennium, the Bantu people had been migrating from Central Africa into the area now occupied by Malawi. Migration to the area stepped up with the arrival of the Tumbuka and Phoka groups, who settled around the highlands of Nyika and Vipha during the 17th century, and the Maravi people (from whom the modern-day Chewa are descended), who established a large and powerful kingdom in the south.

The early 19th century brought with it two more significant migrations. The Yao invaded



southern Malawi from western Mozambique, displacing the Maravi, while groups of Zulu migrated northward to settle in central and northern Malawi (where they became known as the Ngoni).

The Rise of Slavery

Slavery, and a slave trade, had existed in Africa for many centuries, but in the early 19th century demand from outside Africa increased considerably. Swahili-Arabs, who dominated the trade on the east coast of Africa, pushed into the interior, often using the services of powerful local tribes such as the Yao to raid and capture their unfortunate neighbours. Several trading centres were established in Malawi, including Karonga and Nkhatakota – towns that still bear a strong Swahili-Arab influence today.

Early Europeans

The first Europeans to arrive in Malawi were Portuguese explorers who reached the interior from Mozambique. One of these was Gaspar Bocarro who, in 1616, journeyed from Tete (on the Zambezi River) through the Shire Valley to Lake Chilwa (to the south of Lake Malawi), then through the south of what is now Tanzania and back into Mozambique.

The most famous explorer to reach this area was David Livingstone from Scotland, whose exploration heralded the arrival of Europeans in a way that was to change the nature of the region forever.

Livingstone & the First Missionaries

Livingstone's first foray into Malawi was unplanned. Returning to Africa in 1858, after a short spell drumming up missionary support back home, he found his planned route up the Zambezi was blocked at Cahora Bassa, so he followed a major Zambezi tributary called the Shire into southern Malawi. He reached Lake Malawi in September 1859, named it Lake Nyasa and provided fodder for thousands of tourist brochures to come by reportedly dubbing it the 'lake of stars'. He returned in 1861 with some fellow missionaries to establish a mission in the Shire Highlands, and later on the Lower Shire. In 1864, ravaged by malaria and other illnesses, and plagued by conflict with slave-traders and local people, the surviving missionaries withdrew to Zanzibar.

In 1866 Livingstone returned to Malawi again, on his quest to find the source of the

Nile. He died near the village of Chief Chitambo, southeast of Lake Bangweulu in Zambia, in 1873.

Livingstone's death inspired a legion of wannabes to come to Africa and help save the 'poor natives'. In 1875 a group from the Free Church of Scotland built a new mission at Cape Maclear, which they named Livingstonia; and 1876 the Established Church of Scotland built a mission in the Shire Highlands, which they called Blantyre. Cape Maclear proved to be malarial, so the mission moved to Bandawe, then finally in 1894 to the high ground of the eastern escarpment. This site was successful; the Livingstonia mission flourished and is still there today (see p179).

The Colonial Period

The early missionaries blazed the way for various adventurers and pioneer traders. In 1878 the Livingstonia Central African Mission Company (later renamed the African Lakes Corporation) was formed and built a trading centre in Blantyre. The company then established a commercial network along the Shire River and the shores of Lake Nyasa. As intended, this had a serious effect on the slave trade in the area, and after several clashes many slave-traders were forced to leave the area.

By the 1880s the competition among European powers in the area was fierce. In 1889 Britain allowed Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company to administer the Shire Highlands, and in 1891 the British Central Africa (BCA) Protectorate was extended to include land along the western side of the lake. In 1907 the BCA Protectorate became the colony of Nyasaland.

Colonial rule brought with it an end to slave-traders and intertribal conflicts, but it also brought a whole new set of problems. As more and more European settlers arrived, the demand for land grew, and the hapless local inhabitants found themselves labelled as 'squatters' or tenants of a new landlord. A 'hut tax' was introduced and traditional methods of agriculture were discouraged. Increasing numbers of Africans were forced to seek work on the white-settler plantations or to become migrant workers in Northern and Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zambia and Zimbabwe) and South Africa. By the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries some 6000 Africans were leaving the country every year. (The trend continued through the colonial period: by the 1950s this number had grown to 150,000.)

Early Protest

The first serious effort to oppose the Nyasaland colonial government was led by Reverend John Chilembwe, who protested in his preaching about white domination, and later about the forced conscription of African men into the British army at the outbreak of WWI.

In January 1915 Chilembwe and his followers attacked and killed the manager of a large estate. His plan had been to trigger a mass of uprisings, but these failed or didn't materialise, and the rebellion was swiftly crushed by the colonial authorities. Chilembwe was executed, his church was destroyed, and many supporters were imprisoned. Today Chilembwe is remembered as a national hero, with many streets named in his honour.

Transition & Independence

After WWI the British began allowing the African population a part in administering

BANNING THE PRESS *David Else*

It's worth noting that it wasn't only works of literature that incurred the wrath of President Banda. Several books on contemporary history were also banned, including, perhaps not surprisingly, *Malawi – the Politics of Despair*. Newspapers from other countries and from within Malawi were also frequently barred from circulation, especially if they were seen to be critical, but sometimes even if they weren't. Any form of pornography was also prohibited, but this included several medical textbooks, on the grounds that the diagrams were indecent. Even guidebooks didn't escape; an early Lonely Planet book called *Africa on the Cheap* was critical of the regime in the Malawi chapter, and was promptly banned as well. This meant travellers with a low-budget look were often searched for the scurrilous tome, and when I first visited Malawi in the early 1980s, getting across the Songwe border with the book intact was notoriously difficult.

the country, although it wasn't until the 1950s that Africans were actually allowed to enter the government. The economic front was similarly sluggish; Nyasaland proved to be a relatively unproductive colony with no mineral wealth and only limited plantations.

In 1953, in an attempt to boost development, Nyasaland was linked with Northern and Southern Rhodesia in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. But the federation was opposed by the pro-independence Nyasaland African Congress (NAC) party, led by Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda. The colonial authorities declared a state of emergency and Banda was jailed.

By mid-1960 Britain was losing interest in its African colonies. Banda was released, and returned to head the now renamed Malawi Congress Party (MCP), which won elections held in 1962. The federation was dissolved, and Nyasaland became the independent country of Malawi in 1964. Two years later, Malawi became a republic and Banda was made president.

The Banda Years

President Banda began consolidating his position and demanded that several ministers declare their allegiance to him. Many resigned rather than do so and took to opposition. Banda forced them into exile and banned other political parties. He continued to increase his power by becoming 'President for Life' in 1971, banning the foreign press, and waging vendettas against any group regarded as a threat. He established Press Holdings, effectively his personal conglomerate, and the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation, to which all agricultural produce was sold at fixed rates, and thus

gained total economic control. In a blow to travellers all over the region, miniskirts, women in trousers, long hair for men, and other such signs of Western debauchery were outlawed.

Alongside this move towards dictatorship, Banda remained politically conservative, giving political support to apartheid South Africa, who, in turn, rewarded Malawi with aid and trade. This angered the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which was furious at Banda's refusal to ostracise the apartheid regime.

As well as the usual dictatorial behaviour of living it up at the expense of his citizens and clamping down on freedom of expression, Banda had a bizarre range of habits. He developed a fondness for wearing jaunty gangster-style hats and carrying an African flywhip; and at public appearances he was often accompanied by a group of women who would dance and chant words of praise, clad in customised outfits with his face printed all over them.

With the end of the East/West 'cold war' in the 1990s, things began to get dicey for Banda. South Africa and the West no longer needed to support him, and inside the country opposition was swelling. In 1992 the Catholic bishops of Malawi condemned the regime and called for change, and demonstrations, both peaceful and violent, added their weight to the bishops' move. As a final blow, donor countries restricted aid until Banda agreed to relinquish total control.

In June 1993 a referendum was held for the people to choose between a multiparty political system and Banda's autocratic rule. Over 80% of eligible voters took part; those voting for a new system won easily, and Banda accepted the result.

THE NAMING OF MALAWI

The derivation of the name Malawi is disputed. When David Livingstone first came across Lake Malawi, he called it Lake Nyasa (derived from the word *nyanja*, which simply means 'lake' in the language of the indigenous Chewa people) and recorded in his journal that Maravi people (of whom the Chewa people were part) inhabited the area.

At independence in 1964 a commission was given the task of finding a new name for a new country. Malawi was chosen – inspired by the word *malavi*, which means 'reflected light', 'haze', 'flames' or 'rays' in Chichewa. (The word is also spelt *maravi* – 'l' and 'r' seem interchangeable in Chichewa.) This new name was seen as a reference to the sun rising over the lake, bringing fresh light to the country. It may also be connected to the Maravi people.

The 'w' in Malawi was originally pronounced as a soft 'v'. Nowadays the name of the country is generally pronounced with the 'w' sound.

Multiparty Democracy

At Malawi's first full multiparty election in May 1994, the victor was the United Democratic Front (UDF), led by Bakili Muluzi. On becoming President, Muluzi moved quickly – political prisons were closed, freedom of speech and print was permitted, and free primary school education was to be provided. The unofficial night curfew that had existed during Banda's time was lifted. For travellers, the most tangible change was the repeal of that notorious dress code.

The Muluzi Government also made several economic reforms with the help of the World Bank and the IMF; these included the withdrawal of state subsidies and the liberalisation of foreign exchange laws.

In April 1995 former president Banda was brought to trial accused of ordering the murder of three government ministers who died in a mysterious car accident in 1983. He was acquitted and the result was greeted with general approval, especially when Banda went on to apologise publicly. As the population warmed once more to Banda, it became clear that the UDF's honeymoon period was well and truly over.

By 1996 the economic reforms were hitting the average Malawian citizen very hard. Food prices and unemployment soared. There were reports of increased malnutrition, and crime, particularly robbery, increased in urban areas. Matters were made worse by a slow resumption of international aid, after it had been frozen in the final years of Banda's rule.

In November 1997 Dr Banda finally died. His age was unknown, but he was certainly over 90.

In July 2002 Muluzi attempted to change the constitution by proposing an Open Terms Bill to parliament, which would have given him life presidency. When it was defeated,

he aired the idea of proposing a Third Term Bill instead, which would have extended his presidency for one more term.

When this failed, Muluzi chose Bingu wa Mutharika as his successor, and in 2004 he duly won the election. Many thought he would simply follow in Muluzi's footsteps, but he soon declared his independence by quitting the UDF and setting up his own party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). His presidency seemed like a breath of fresh air and he set about stemming corruption, stepping up the fight against HIV/AIDS, attempting to attract greater foreign investment, and, more controversially, restoring Banda's reputation as a great African hero.

The massive famine in 2005 put the pressure on, though, and in early 2006 the Mutharika government was rocked by scandal and political infighting that threatened to undermine its effectiveness.

THE CULTURE The National Psyche

Most Malawians live up to and are proud of their reputation as some of the friendliest people in Africa. They tend to be very generous and will go out of their way to help others. People will offer you food, invite you to their homes for dinner and take you on tours around their hometown, and they're always keen to chat and tell you (with a great deal of pride) about their country. Look a little lost and you'll soon have offers of help. And unlike in some other countries, there's no sense that they're just doing so just because they want something from you.

Malawians have a great sense of humour, and any misunderstanding will usually be greeted with peals of laughter. They're also laid back, and don't see the point in com-

THE CHEWA

The Chewa are the largest ethnic group in Malawi, although their ancestors hail from the Congo. During the first millennium, they migrated through Zambia and then on to central Malawi, conquering land as they went and eventually establishing a powerful kingdom in 1480 that covered southern Malawi as well as swathes of Mozambique and Zambia. During the 17th century, Malawi experienced an influx of diverse cultures and dynasties, but the Chewa kept their ethnicity distinct through language, tattoos and secret societies.

The Chewa believe that God (Chiuta or Chautu) created all living things during a thunderstorm, at a mountain range that straddles the Malawi and Mozambique border. They also believe that contact between spirits and the living is achieved through a dance called *gule wamkulu*, in which leading dancers dress in ragged costumes of cloth and animal skins, usually wearing a mask and occasionally standing on stilts. Today, however, Chewa culture is a mixture of traditional beliefs and European influences; although Christianity is the dominant religion, it's common practice to consult a witch doctor in times of trouble. If you are interested in this process, you can arrange a consultation with a witch doctor on Likoma Island (see p193).

To really experience Chewa culture, it's best to immerse yourself in a village. There are cultural villages offering overnight stays near Liwonde National Park (p206) and the Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve (p184).

plaining about or stressing over the small things in life.

Malawians can be pretty conservative, though. Women tend to dress modestly and respectable ladies are not seen in bars unaccompanied. Walking around in revealing clothing is seen as inappropriate for both men and women. Public drunkenness is frowned upon, as are open displays of affection between men and women. Great respect is accorded to the older generation, who should always be treated in a courteous manner.

Daily Life

For the average Malawian, economic conditions are not good. Malawi remains one of the world's poorest countries, with a per capita gross national product (GNP) of around US\$170. Other socioeconomic indicators paint a grim picture: infant mortality is around 9% and, although the population growth rate has dropped in recent years, the fall is due largely to AIDS. The HIV/AIDS infection rate in Malawi is estimated to run at over 14%. Driven by this scourge, life expectancy has fallen to around 40.

Malawi is urbanising rapidly, and the rate of population growth in the cities is far higher than that in rural areas. Natural resources struggle to support the burgeoning population, and schools, hospitals and other social institutions are overflowing.

Family life is very important here and most Malawians, even more affluent urbanites, will

live at home until they are married. The legal age for marriage in Malawi is 15, but there are many cases of girls getting married as young as 11 or 12. Because of this phenomenon, the average age of marriage in Malawi is amongst the lowest in the world, while the percentage of teenage mothers is one of the highest.

Like many other African countries, gender inequality is evident in all walks of life and is particularly reflected in the disproportionate amount of work that women do. For example, as well as doing most of the work around the home, women also undertake the bulk of farm work.

Population

Estimates put Malawi's total population at around 12 million. Because the country is small, this creates one of the highest population densities in Africa. About 85% of the people live in rural areas and are engaged in subsistence farming or fishing, or working on commercial farms and plantations. Around half the population is under 15 years of age.

Multiculturalism

The main ethnic groups are: Chewa, dominant in the central and southern parts of the country; Yao in the south; and Tumbuka in the north. Other groups are: Nguni, in parts of the central and northern provinces; Chipoka, also in the central area; and Tonga, mostly along the lakeshore.

FAMINE IN MALAWI

In 2005, after a shorter than average rainy season and the worst harvest for a decade, Malawi, as with much of Southern Africa, was affected by severe drought and famine. Around five million Malawians – almost half the population – were experiencing food shortages, prompting President Mutharika to declare a national disaster. Many expected there to be loss of life and famine on a huge scale. However, although there is still widespread hunger, it seems that for the time being that scenario has been averted. Early 2006 saw greater food aid, longer rains, a bumper harvest, and successful government initiatives, including a sponsored fertiliser program. Until more long-term steps are taken, however, it seems that there is little to prevent such a large-scale disaster from happening again.

MOVERS & SHAKERS: JACK MAPANJE

Poet and activist, Malawi's Jack Mapanje is one of the most influential living writers to come out of Africa. Born in 1944 in a small, poor Malawian village, he started writing poems inspired by the corruption and maltreatment that he saw all around him. Through his book *Of Chameleons & Gods*, he voiced his anger, albeit couched in metaphor, at the brutal Banda regime and was one of the few who dared to do so.

The volume was soon won international acclaim for which Mapanje received the Rotterdam International Poetry Prize. In 1985, once the government cottoned on to what his poems were really about, the book was withdrawn from all bookshops and libraries. A mere two years later, while drinking in a bar in Zomba, Mapanje was arrested and imprisoned without trial or charge for over three years. His arrest and subsequent incarceration provoked an international outcry and writers and linguists all over the world took up his cause, including Harold Pinter, Noam Chomsky and Wole Soyinka. While in prison he composed a number of poems which would later be published in the volume *The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison*, where he would describe cells filled with 'blood-bloated' mosquitos where 'desperate voices of fractured souls' struggled to make themselves heard.

Upon his release, he went into exile in England, where he continues to teach today, and to promote and support African writers. Most recently he edited *Gathering Seaweed*, a collection of poems, plays and memoirs from Africans who, like Mapanje himself, were imprisoned by their governments.

The number of Malawians of European descent is less than 1% – the country was only a British protectorate and few chose to settle here. Most Westerners in Malawi are here on a short-term basis and involved in business, aid or the diplomatic service.

There is also a small Indian population in Malawi, who are mostly involved in commerce. Indians first came to the country when they were brought in by the British in the early 1900s to help construct a railway line between Malawi and Mozambique. During the Banda regime, they were not allowed to participate in politics and certain sections of the economic sector, and many were forced to leave the country.

SPORT

The most popular sport in Malawi is football, which is played throughout the country at all levels, from young boys on makeshift pitches to the national team. Malawi's national team is nicknamed the Flames. They are not major players on the world stage and are currently ranked 26th in Africa and 107th in the world. Each year, regional teams in Malawi battle it out for the Super League championships and the most popular teams in the country are the Big Bullets and the MTL Wanderers. For details of local fixtures, check the newspapers, look out for billboards or check out the website of the **Football Association of Malawi** (www.fam.mw).

Sailing is popular among more affluent Malawians and expats, and every July the Lake Malawi 500km Sailing Marathon takes place. It's the world's longest freshwater race, during which catamarans race the entire length of the lake.

Other popular sports include volleyball, golf and basketball. In 2006 Malawi sent a team of squash players to the Commonwealth Games.

Athletics and cross-country running are also gaining more prominence, thanks in part to the international success of long-distance runner Catherine Chikwakwa.

RELIGION

Christianity is the majority religion in Malawi, making up about 75% of the population, although for many Malawians, Western beliefs are intertwined with traditional African practices.

Muslims make up almost 20% of the population. The people of the Yao tribe along the southern lakeshore are the most closely associated with Islam.

See p45 for more information.

ARTS & CRAFTS Dance

Dance is an important social element across Malawi, and most dances are rooted in traditional beliefs and customs. The most famous

traditional dance is known as the Gule Wamkulu, which reflects the traditional belief in spirits (see p163).

Literature

Like most countries in Africa, Malawi has a very rich tradition of oral literature. Since independence, a new school of writers has emerged, although thanks to the despotic President Banda's insensitivity to criticism, many were under threat of imprisonment and lived abroad until the mid-1990s. Not surprisingly, oppression, corruption, deceit and the abuse of power are common themes in their writing.

If you want a taste of current literature by well-known or new writers, try any of the short novels or poetry collections under the Malawi Writers Series imprint, available in good bookshops in Blantyre and Lilongwe. Most cost less than US\$1.

Poetry is very popular. Steve Chimombo is a leading poet whose collections include *Napolo Poems*. His most highly acclaimed work is a complex poetic drama, *The Rainmaker*. To many Malawians he is better known for his popular short stories in newspapers and magazines, with their vivid combination of traditional themes and harsh urban settings.

Jack Mapanje's first poetry collection, *Of Chameleons and Gods*, was published in 1981

(see the boxed text, opposite). Much of its symbolism was obscure for outsiders, but not for President Banda – in 1987 Mapanje was arrested and imprisoned without charge; he was eventually released in 1991.

Another significant literary figure is David Rubadi, who has compiled an anthology called *Poetry from East Africa* (which includes a section on Malawi) and also writes poetry himself. His novels include *No Bride Price*, which discusses the familiar themes of corruption and oppression.

Most critics agree that Malawi's leading novelist is Legson Kayira, whose semiautobiographical *I Will Try* and *The Looming Shadow* earned him local acclaim in the 1970s. A later work is *The Detainee*. Another novelist is Sam Mpasu. His *Nobody's Friend* was a comment on the secrecy of Malawian politics – it earned him a 2½-year prison sentence. After his release he wrote *Prisoner 3/75* and later became minister for education in the new UDF government. His comments on Banda's rule sum up the situation for all Malawian writers, and the people of Malawi too: 'We had peace, but it was the peace of a cemetery. Our lips were sealed by fear.'

Music

Home-grown contemporary music is becoming increasingly popular in Malawi,

THE MARTYR & THE MUSIC

In 2000 a young musician named Evison Matafale made his mark on Malawi's popular reggae scene, amassing huge domestic and growing international support with his charismatic melodies and outspoken social and political expression. His future was bright and he was soon declared Malawi's unofficial king of the genre.

Not all were charmed by his assessment of the government, though, and on 24 November 2001 he was arrested for allegedly writing a seditious letter criticising President Bakili Muluzi. Three days later, while still in police custody, Matafale was declared dead at Lilongwe Central Hospital.

The official post mortem indicated that he died from acute pneumonia, and Matafale was certainly ill at the time of his incarceration. However, a second post mortem, conducted at the request of his brother – a UDF regional governor – suggested the cause of death was less clear and that Matafale had sustained internal bleeding in the days leading to his death. An avalanche of public outrage ensued, prompting a joint commission of inquiry to probe the circumstances of the musician's death.

The official finding maintained the hospital's autopsy conclusion, but also found that the police had exercised negligence by incarcerating Matafale when he was visibly ill. What is without question is that the life of a talented and revered musician was tragically cut short, creating a martyr for all avenues of free expression in Malawi.

Matafale released two albums in his short-lived career – *Kuyimba 1* and *Kuyimba 2*; both can be bought on virtually any street corner in Malawi's larger towns and cities.

due largely to influential and popular musicians such as Lucius Banda, who performs soft 'Malawian-style' reggae with his band Zembani, and the late Evison Matafale (see the boxed text, p165). Other reggae names to look out for are Billy Kaunda and Nyasa Gurus. Bubulezis plays Jamaican-style reggae, while the Sapitwa Band tends towards Congo-style rhumba. Also popular is Ethel Kamwendo, one of Malawi's leading female singers. For more on other musical styles in the region, see p52.

Sculpture

You'll see woodcarvings and stone carvings in craft shops and markets all over the country, but you won't find anything there by Kay Chirombo, Lemon Moses, Willie Nampeya, Berling Kaunda, Charley Bakari or Louis Dim-pwa. These are some of Malawi's leading artists, producing sculpture, batiks and paintings, and many have exhibited outside Malawi. Possibly the best-known artist is Cuthy Mede – he is also actively involved in the development and promotion of Malawian art within the country and around the world.

ENVIRONMENT The Land

Malawi is wedged between Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique, measuring roughly 900km long and between 80km and 150km wide, with an area of 118,484 sq km.

Lake Malawi covers almost one-fifth of Malawi's total area. A strip of low ground runs along the western lakeshore, sometimes 10km wide, sometimes so narrow there's only room for a precipitous footpath between the lake and the steep wall of the valley. Beyond the lake, escarpments rise to high rolling plateaus covering much of the country. Malawi's main highland areas are Nyika and Vipha in the north and Mt Mulanje in the south.

Malawi's main river is the Shire (pronounced *shir-ee*); it flows out of the southern end of Lake Malawi, through Lake Malombe and then southward as the plateau gives way to low ground, to flow into the Zambezi River in Mozambique. In this area, the lowest point is a mere 37m above sea level.

Wildlife

Malawi is not often thought of as a great place to see wildlife and if you're looking for a stereotypical safari experience, you'll be

disappointed. However, for those less concerned with simply ticking off the 'Big Five', the country has plenty to offer. The main park is Liwonde, which is home to plenty of elephants, hippos, antelope species and bird life. Kasungu National Park is also home to elephants, as is Nkhosakota Wildlife Reserve, where you'll also meet several antelope species, buffaloes and if you're lucky, leopards. Nyika National Park is renowned for roan antelopes and reedbucks; you'll also see zebras, warthogs and jackals, and at night you could well hear hyenas prowling around your tent. Nearby Vwaza Marsh is known for its hippos and, in the dry season, is the best place in the country to get up close and personal with elephants. In southern Malawi, Lengwe National Park supports a population of nyalas – at the northern limit of its distribution in Africa.

For bird-watchers, Malawi is a dream come true; over 600 species have been recorded, and a visit to any of the parks or wildlife reserves will reward serious ornithologists, tourists and everyone in between with a diverse and colourful array of species.

Lake Malawi has more fish species than any other inland body of water in the world, with a total of over 500, of which more than 350 are endemic. (For more information see the boxed text, p199.)

National Parks

There are five national parks in Malawi: Lengwe, Liwonde, Kasungu, Nyika and Lake Malawi (around Cape Maclear). There are also four wildlife reserves: Vwaza Marsh, Nkhosakota, Mwabvi and Majete, which are less developed than the national parks, with fewer accommodation options and a more limited network of roads and tracks (if they exist at all). Malawi also has many forest reserves including Mt Mulanje and the Zomba Plateau. For more information on the facilities at each park and reserve see their individual listings.

All parks and reserves cost US\$5 per person per day (each 24-hour period), plus US\$2 per car per day. Citizens and residents pay less. Other costs are for optional services: a fishing licence costs US\$4 and the hire of a wildlife scout guide costs US\$5 to US\$10. All fees are payable in kwacha.

Environmental Issues

The main environmental challenges facing Malawi are deforestation and soil erosion,

which result from a rapidly growing population and increasing pressures on the land – the vast majority of Malawians live without electricity and therefore the use of wood as a source of fuel in Malawi is very high. In the mid-1970s Malawi's forest cover was 4.4 million hectares. It's now under two million, with over 50,000 hectares being cleared each year, mostly for fuel. Although some replanting is taking place, at this current unsustainable rate the woodlands and forests will eventually disappear.

Another environmental challenge faced by Malawi is overfishing. Population growth over the years means that the demand for fish has grown, to an extent that stocks are now taken from the lake at an unsustainable level. In an effort to minimise overfishing, the government imposes an 'off-season' moratorium, which prohibits the capture of certain fish for several months starting in November. In 2003 the Malawi Fisheries Department launched a 10-year plan to restore depleted fish stocks to maximum sustainable yields.

Poaching of wildlife from national parks was a major environmental problem in the 1980s and early 1990s, and wildlife was severely depleted. Although the situation is better than it once was, poaching still threatens the wildlife of some of Malawi's national parks and reserves.

To learn more, or to help, get in touch with Ripple Africa (see p191) or the **Wildlife Action Group of Malawi** (www.wag-malawi.org). They both run admirable conservation projects, and both organisations accept volunteers.

FOOD & DRINK

The staple diet for most Malawians is *nsima*, a porridge made out of maize meal and water, which is eaten with vegetables and/or hot *relish*, and occasionally meat or fish. Fish is particularly good here, and *chambo*, the popular, bream-like variety, can be found on every menu, from cheap cafés to top-end restaurants. If you're self-catering, Peoples Supermarkets are found all over Malawi and Shoprite has made an entrance in larger cities. Both stock locally produced and imported goods, many of them from South Africa or Europe and sold at similar prices.

Markets and bus stations usually harbour a collection of food stalls, where you can get tea with milk for US\$0.30 and a bread cake or deep-fried cassava for US\$0.20, or a simple

meal of beans or meat and *nsima* for about US\$0.50.

Local restaurants in small towns provide simple meals for around US\$1.50. In cities and larger towns, cheap restaurants serve traditional Malawian food as well as chicken or fish (the most popular being *chambo*) with rice or chips for around US\$2.50.

Most midrange hotels and restaurants serve European-style food such as steak, chicken or fish, which is served with vegetables and chips or rice – usually around the US\$5 mark.

If you're hankering for something different, in Blantyre and Lilongwe you can find restaurants serving Ethiopian, Indian, Korean, Chinese and Portuguese food. Main courses range from around US\$5 to US\$10.

Traditional beer of the region is made from maize; in Malawi this is commercially brewed as Chibuku, and sold all over the country in large red-and-blue cartons. For most travellers, the thick texture and bittersweet taste are not appealing. Malawi's local larger is called Kuche Kuche.

Most travellers (and many Malawians) prefer the beer produced by Carlsberg at its Blantyre brewery (the only one in Africa). There are three main types of beer: 'greens' (lager), 'browns' (like a British ale) and 'golds' (a stronger brew). If you're a beer fan, you can visit the brewery (see p214).

LILONGWE

Lilongwe is hardly awash with excitement – it's a sleepy little city that, while perfectly pleasant, isn't particularly interesting or memorable. The quiet buzz of the Old Town, with its craft stalls, market, nice little cafés and drinking holes, is at its heart, and this is where you're likely to spend most of your time. The more modern city centre has little to offer – it's a soulless collection of banks, office buildings and embassies. At the week-ends movement in Lilongwe is reduced to a trickle, particularly on Sunday, when sleeping and church attendance seem to be the main activities.

Most travellers will spend a day or two here at some point, which isn't all bad news. There are good facilities in Lilongwe, and it's a decent enough spot to refuel and get things done before heading off to discover Malawi's real attractions.

HISTORY

Originally a small village on the banks of the Lilongwe River, Lilongwe became a British colonial administrative centre around the turn of the 20th century, after its chief requested protection from warlike neighbours. Due to its central location on the main north-south route and the road to Northern Rhodesia (later Zambia), Lilongwe soon became Malawi's second-largest urban centre. Plans announced in 1968 to relocate the country's administration from Blantyre were fully realised in 1975, when Lilongwe was officially declared the capital.

ORIENTATION

Lilongwe is unusually spread out and rather than one CBD, has two centres: City Centre and Old Town. City Centre is rather loose and sterile. Three kilometres south, Old Town has a good range of places to stay, the bus station, the market and several restaurants, all in a condensed area easily covered on foot.

Maps

Survey maps of Malawi and some of its cities are available from the Department of Surveys Map Sales Office (Map p169), about 500m south of the roundabout where Glyn Jones Rd meets Kamuzu Procession Rd. See also p229.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Bookmart (Map p171; Mandala Rd) An excellent second-hand bookshop with a wide range of recent bestsellers, classics, and travel books. It also has a small coffee bar so you can have a latte while you browse.

Central Africana (Map p171; Old Town Mall) Has a diverse selection of travel, history and nature books. It also does a nice line in leather-bound, secondhand Africana books and old colonial-style maps.

LILONGWE IN...

Two Days

Start your day with breakfast in one of the many local cafés in the **Old Town** (see p174) to take in a slice of Malawi daily life. Then barter for carvings at the **craft stalls** (p175) outside the post office on Mandala Rd after which you can spend your afternoon at the nearby **market** (p171) by the main bus station, to soak up the lively atmosphere and snap up some bootleg CDs. After all the excitement, head into the City Centre for a leisurely dinner at **Buchanan's Grill** (p174) at the Four Seasons Centre followed by a cocktail or two at the **Chameleon Bar** (p175).

On your second day, head for the **tobacco auction floors** (p171) to see the heart of Malawi's economic life in action. Then spend the afternoon at the **Nature Sanctuary** (p171) before exploring **Old Town's bars and restaurants** (p174 and p175) for the evening.

Central Bookshop (Map p171; Nico Shopping Centre, Kamuzu Procession Rd) Sells a surprisingly good stock of African literature and local guidebooks.

TBS bookshop (Map p171; Nico Shopping Centre, Kamuzu Procession Rd) In Old Town; sells international and local newspapers and magazines, and some paperback novels.

Emergency

The emergency number for police and ambulance is ☎ 199 (Lilongwe and Blantyre only), but there are never enough vehicles, so if you need assistance you'll probably have to go to the police station by taxi and bring an officer back to the scene of the crime. Once you've contacted the police, put aside several hours while they laboriously take a statement, which will then cost you around US\$30. If you are seriously injured, don't waste time phoning an ambulance – get a taxi straight to hospital.

Internet Access

Internet access is readily available in Lilongwe and there are several cheap options both in Old Town and the City Centre.

Comptech Cyber Café (Map p171; Mandala Rd; per hr US\$3) Fast internet connection, printing and photocopying as well as Skype telephone service.

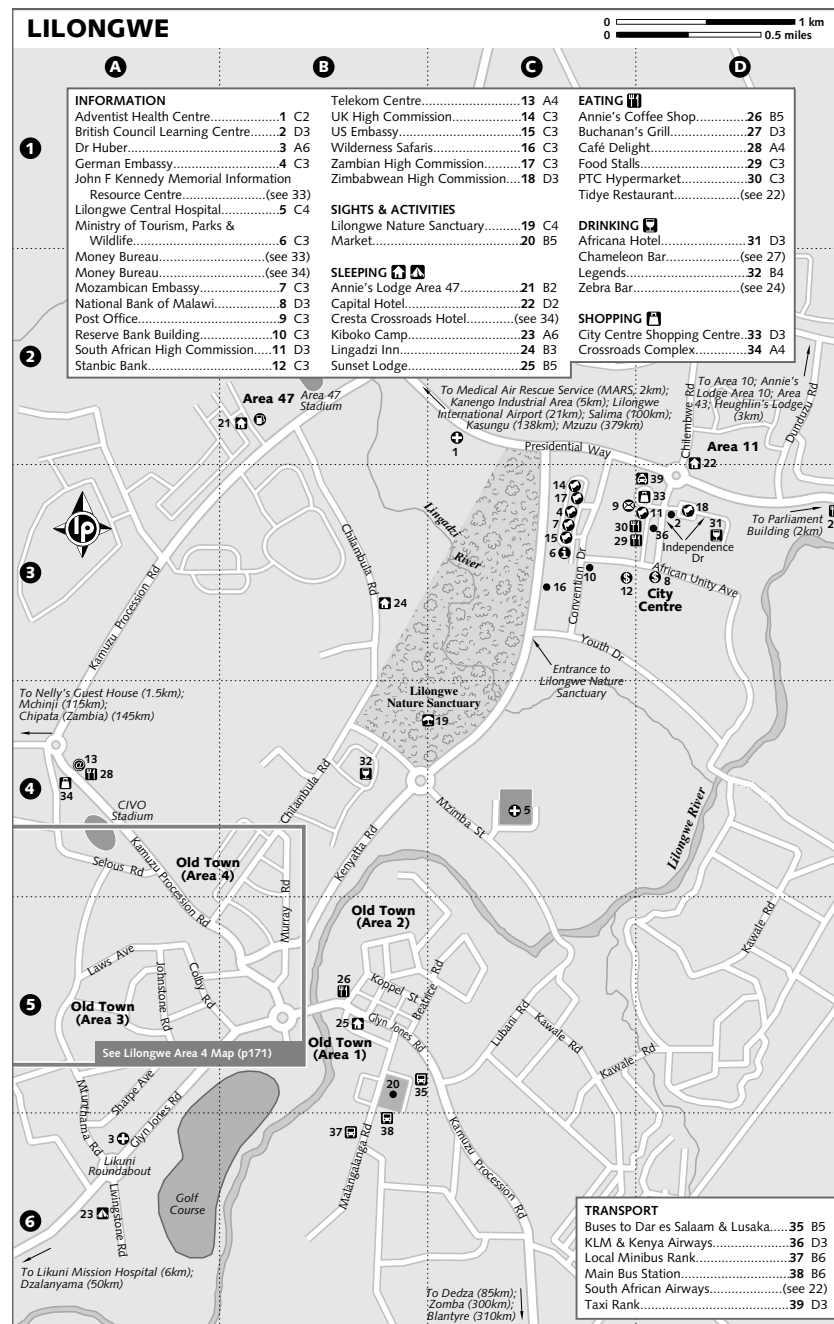
Globe Computer Systems (Map p169; ADL House; per hr US\$3)

MGI Cyber Café (Map p171; Nico Shopping Centre, Kamuzu Procession Rd; per hr US\$2.80) Offers quick access.

Telekom Centre (Map p169; Kamuzu Procession Rd; per hr US\$5) Opposite Crossroads Complex. Speedy internet as well as international telephone services.

Libraries

The **British Council Learning Centre** (Map p169; ☎ 01-773244; info@britishcouncil.org.mw; ☎ 12pm-5.30pm Mon, 8.30am-5.30pm Tue-Thu, 8.30am-12pm Sat), off Independence Dr, and the **John F Kennedy**



Memorial Information Resource Center (Map p169; ☎ 01-772222; Old Mutual Bldg, City Centre Shopping Centre; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Wed, 8.30am-12.30pm Thu) allow nonmembers to read books and magazines in the library, but not to take them away. Both places also show films on some afternoons and evenings. Check their noticeboards for details.

Medical Services

There are MPL pharmacies at the Nico Shopping Centre in Old Town and in City Centre Shopping Centre.

Adventist Health Centre (Map p169; ☎ 01-775456; Presidential Way) Good for consultations, plus eye and dental problems.

Dr Huber (Map p169; ☎ 01-750404, 09-919548; Glyn Jones Rd) Has been highly recommended to us for private consultations, although can be expensive.

Likuni Mission Hospital (☎ 01-766602; Glyn Jones Rd) A better option than Lilongwe Central Hospital, 7km southwest of Old Town, with public wards, private rooms, and some expat European doctors on staff. Fees for those who can afford them start at US\$100 per day.

Lilongwe Central Hospital (Map p169; ☎ 01-753555) Off Mzimba St. Conditions and facilities are not good, but an 'expat bed' (a private ward) costs about US\$50 per night.

Medical Air Rescue Service Clinic (MARS; ☎ 01-794036, 236644; www.mars.co.zw; Ufulu Rd, Area 43) The best place for major matters. Fees are US\$60 per consultation, US\$120 after hours and US\$100 for an overnight stay. MARS also has ambulances with staff highly trained in emergency treatment. They will rescue you anywhere within 50km of Lilongwe for US\$50 per half-hour, but need proof that you are insured or can pay. MARS is linked to Health International and can arrange evacuation to Harare or Jo'burg if things get really serious.

Money

Money Bureau (City Centre Map p169; ☎ 01-772239; Centre House Arcade, City Centre Shopping Centre; City Centre Map p169; ☎ 01-750789; Crossroads Complex; Old Town Map p171; ☎ 01-750659; Nico Shopping Centre, Kamuzu Procession Rd, Old Town) has good rates and quick service, and doesn't charge commission.

National Bank of Malawi (City Centre Map p169; African Unity Ave; Old Town Map p171; Kamuzu Procession Rd; ☎ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) You can change money here and get a cash advance on your Visa card. There's a 24-hour ATM that accepts Visa, Mastercard, Cirrus and Maestro.

Stanbic Bank (City Centre Map p169; African Unity Ave; Old Town Map p171; Kamuzu Procession Rd) Offers the same facilities as National Bank of Malawi.

Victoria Forex (Map p171; ☎ 08-825545; Nico Shopping Centre) Offers a similar service to Money Bureau.

Photography

Lee Photo Studio (Map p171; Nico Shopping Centre) Print film, developing, printing, prints from digital cameras and instant passport photos are available here. Digital printing costs US\$0.80 per photo. Developing from film costs US\$9 for a roll of 24 and US\$11 for 36.

Post

Post office (Map p171; Kamuzu Procession Rd; ☎ 7.30am-12pm and 1-5pm, Mon-Fri)

Post office (Map p169; ☎ 7.30am-12pm and 1-5pm, Mon-Fri) Located next to the City Centre Shopping Centre.

Telephone & Fax

Many lodges and hotels have phones that their guests can use to make international phone calls. In addition, several internet cafés also offer an international telephone service, or can hook you up to the Sykpe web telephone service on their computers. At **Globe Computer Systems** (Map p169; ☎ 01-774834; ADL House) and the **Telekom Centre** (Map p169; Kamuzu Procession Rd) you can make international calls for US\$4 per minute to anywhere outside Africa, at any time.

Tourist Information

Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Wildlife (Map p169; ☎ 01-771295; Tourism House; ☎ 7.30am-5pm Mon-Fri & 8-10am Sat) The tourist office is located here, off Convention Dr, but information and advice is minimal. For details on tours, flights and hotels you're better off at a travel agency. There's also a bimonthly magazine, called *The Traveller*, which carries features on lodges, restaurants and events in the Malawi tourist calendar. You can normally find copies in tourist offices, hotels, cafés and on Coachline buses.

Immigration office (Map p171; ☎ 01-754297; Murray Rd)

Travel Agencies

Land & Lake Safaris (Map p171; Mandala Rd; ☎ 01-757120; www.landlake.net) Well-established and knowledgeable company organising tours for all budgets in both Malawi and Zambia.

Ulendo Safaris (Map p171; Old Town Mall; ☎ 01-754947; info@ulendo.malawi.net) Organises a variety of tours and safaris in Malawi and Zambia as well as hotel bookings and air charter flights.

Wilderness Safaris (Map p169; Bisnowaty Complex; Kenyatta Dr; ☎ 01-771393/153; www.wilderness-safaris.com) Excellent operator providing top-end safaris and lodge bookings throughout Southern Africa.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Muggings and the occasional stabbing have become a serious problem around the Nature Sanctuary over the past few years, and if you plan to visit get a taxi to inside the gate. Even inside the sanctuary, it's wise to get a guard to show you around if you're alone. Even minibuses can be unsafe, as the bus stop itself has become a target. Walking there is extremely risky. Ask at your lodge, hostel or hotel for up-to-date info regarding security around this area.

During the day, once you leave Malangalanga Rd, things are OK and you can walk to Area 3. At night, Malangalanga Rd can be dangerous, and walking to Area 3 is not recommended. The bridge between Area 2 and Area 3 is a favourite haunt for muggers. If you arrive on a bus after dark, take a minibus or taxi to your accommodation.

Scams

Bus tickets should be only bought at the bus station or the Shire Bus Lines depot near Shoprite; some travellers have been conned out of money by buying tickets on the street when there is no such service.

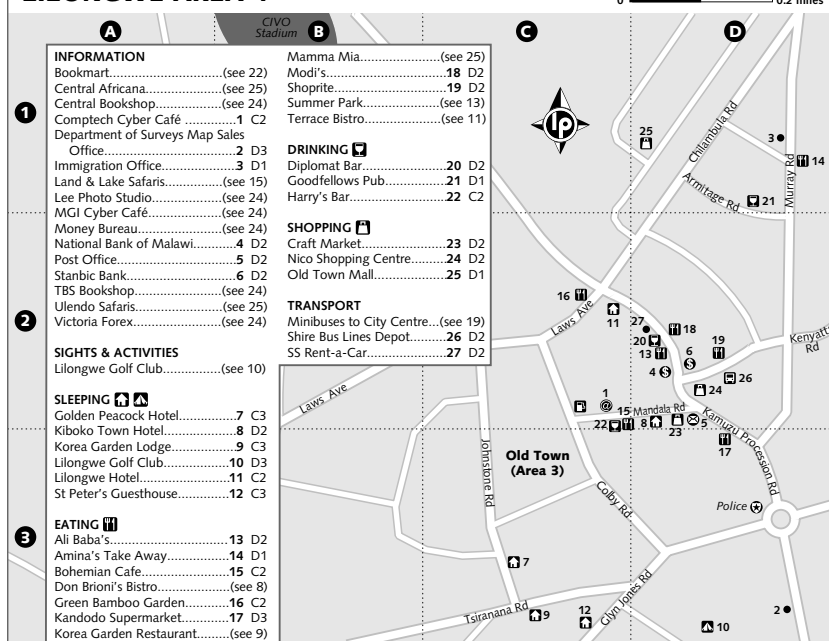
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The main **market** (Map p169; Malangalanga Rd) is a pocket of frenetic activity, with traders, market stalls and food vendors packed into a swarming, small area. It's also a good place to pick up cheap bootleg CDs from the dozens of little stores that line the streets immediately around the market.

For a view of Malawi's economic heart, go to the public gallery overlooking the **tobacco auction floors** (☎ 01-710377; Kenango Industrial Area; admission free) at the vast Auction Holdings warehouse about 7km north of the city centre, east of the main road towards Kasungu. This is best reached by taxi, but local minibuses serve the industrial area. The auction season is May to September. See the boxed text, p172 for more information on this vital commodity.

For a total change of pace, however, head for the **Nature Sanctuary** (Map p169; Kenyatta Rd; admission US\$0.50; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat), an incredibly peaceful wilderness area by the Lingadzi River. Take a taxi here, though; it's not safe to walk (see Dangers & Annoyances, left). There is a signposted network of walking trails, and the information centre lists the

LILONGWE AREA 4



TOBACCO

Tobacco is Malawi's most important cash crop, accounting for more than 60% of the country's export earnings, and Lilongwe is the selling, buying and processing centre of this vital industry. Most activity takes place in the Kenango industrial area on the northern side of Lilongwe, the site of several tobacco-processing factories and the huge and impressive tobacco auction rooms.

Tobacco was first grown in Malawi by a settler called John Buchanan, who planted the crop on his farm near Blantyre in the 1880s. Large-scale tobacco farming started in the area around Lilongwe in the 1920s and has grown steadily in importance ever since. Two types of tobacco are produced in Malawi: 'flue', which is a standard quality leaf, and 'burley', which is of a higher quality and in demand by cigarette manufacturers around the world.

Tobacco is grown on large plantations or by individual farmers on small farms. The leaves are harvested and dried, either naturally in the sun or in a heated drying room, and then brought to Lilongwe for sale (in southern Malawi the crops go to auction in Limbe).

In the auction room (called auction 'floors'), auctioneers sell tobacco on behalf of the growers. It's purchased by dealers who resell to the tobacco processors. The tobacco comes onto the floors (the size of several large aircraft hangars) in large bales weighing between 80kg and 100kg and is displayed in long lines. Moisture content determines the value of the leaves: if the tobacco is too dry, the flavour is impaired; if it's too wet, mould will set in and the bale is worthless.

A small proportion of tobacco is made into cigarettes for the local market, but most gets processed in Malawi before being exported to be made into cigarettes abroad. Most processed tobacco goes by road to Durban, South Africa, to be shipped around the world.

birds and animals that may be seen. There is also a small, and rather unpleasant 'zoo' area, which consists of a few rather precarious-looking cages filled with mangy-looking monkeys, hyenas and crocs.

If you'd prefer a political view, head to the **Parliament Building** (Presidential Way), which moved from Zomba in the mid-1990s to the palace of former president Banda on the outskirts of Lilongwe. At least this obscenely grandiose monstrosity is being used now – during Banda's rule he stayed here only one night.

If you're the sporting type, **Lilongwe Golf Club** (Map p171; see right) offers daily membership for US\$10. This allows you to enter the club and use the bar or restaurant. To use the sports facilities there's a small extra charge.

TOURS

Kiboko Safaris (p236) do an excellent half-day tour of Lilongwe, which incorporates both the tobacco auction floors, the Nature Sanctuary and the Parliament Building.

SLEEPING

Lilongwe has a number of decent accommodation options, although there's not much in the top-end bracket. Most budget options are located in the Old Town, the most convenient area of the city to stay due to its eating, drinking and transport facilities.

Budget

All the budget places to stay are in Old Town.

Kiboko Camp (Map p169; ☎ 01-754978; www.kiboko-safaris.com; Livingstone Rd; camping per person US\$3, dm US\$5, d US\$15; 📶) The most popular place in town for those on a budget. There's plenty of space for campers, as well as dorms and double and twin A-frame chalets. Staff can give you info and tips on travelling in Malawi. The reception doubles as a small bar (it closes at 10.30pm) and breakfast, lunch and evening meals can be ordered, although order well in advance if you're eating dinner. If arriving at the bus station at night grab a taxi here for around US\$5.

Lilongwe Golf Club (Map p171; ☎ 01-753598/118; camping per person US\$5; 📶) A clean, safe and comfortable (hot showers!) option for campers, just off Glyn Jones Rd. Discounts are common for two or more people, and rates include access to the members bar, restaurant and swimming pool.

Golden Peacock Hotel (Map p171; ☎ 01-756632; Johnstone Rd; s/d/tr with shared bathroom US\$7/8.50/10.50) Has large but shabby rooms, which vary considerably in size and condition so check out a few. There's a nice terrace café dishing up good burgers and Indian food.

St Peter's Guesthouse (Map p171; ☎ 01-752812, 08-317769; Glyn Jones Rd; r with shared bathroom US\$8.50, 3-bed

dm US\$4) Offers excellent, clean and safe rooms with nets, all of which open onto a peaceful courtyard garden. It's quiet and part of the parish so guests should be respectful.

Sunset Lodge (Map p169; ☎ 01-724770, 724718; sunset lodge@globemw.net; Glyn Jones Rd; s/d from US\$11/22) Upstairs in a large building near the bus station. The bright blue exterior hides a pleasant, airy lodge, with wide corridors, breezy rooms with fans, mosquito nets and hot water. Ask for a room overlooking the river at the back, as these are much quieter. Bathrooms come equipped with plastic cups and buckets if you fancy bathing traditional style. Breakfast is US\$2.

Korea Garden Lodge (Map p171; ☎ 01-753467, 757854; Tsuranana Rd; s/d with shared bathroom US\$18.40/23.30, s/d US\$29.40/44.65; www.kglodge.net; 📶 📶) A large complex with a variety of rooms for most budgets, a bar, pool and the Korea Garden restaurant set by the pool in a grassy backyard. All rooms have nets and fans, but the cheapest ones are best avoided – you'll feel like an extra in a prison drama. It also offers business facilities including internet, which is free for the first 30 minutes.

Midrange

The following all have restaurants for residents and rates include breakfast, unless otherwise specified.

Annie's Lodge Area 47 (Map p169; ☎ 01-762163; Area 47/3; s/d US\$25/28) This place is all jungle prints and wooden décor with a small bar and a pleasant veranda, although the staff's obsession with Western pop music may interrupt any plans for relaxation. Breakfast is included for one guest only, regardless of occupancy.

Nelly's Guest House (☎ 01-59514; Area 9/156; s/d US\$32/42; 📶) This is cosy and popular, with conservatively decorated rooms, a pretty garden, and an internet café.

Annie's Lodge Area 10 (☎ 01-794572; annieslodge@globemw.net; Area 10/285; r US\$38-45) Area 47's classier and more sedate cousin has a variety of tranquil rooms, some with private bathroom. There's also an inviting TV lounge, and the restaurant serves inventive meals (US\$5 to US\$11). Breakfast is included for one guest only, regardless of occupancy.

our pick Kiboko Town Hotel (Map p171; ☎ 01-752201; imperial@eomw.net; Mandala Rd; s/d from US\$40/45; 📶) This is the best-value place in town. It's located bang in the centre of the Old Town

action. The rooms are spacious, comfortable and stylish – all white gauze and linen topped off with bright African prints. There's a good little café downstairs, complete with children's play area constructed around an old 4WD. Best of all is the beautiful residents bar with its low Moroccan-style seating, twinkling fairy lights, open-air fireplace and mellow atmosphere. The staff are helpful and charming, and there's wireless internet available.

Heuglin's Lodge (☎ 01-795364; Area 43; s/d from US\$40/60) A lovely guesthouse with tasteful rooms, pleasant gardens and a pool. There's also a great wildlife library here. It's 3km north of the City Centre.

Lingadzi Inn (Map p169; ☎ 01-754166; lingadzi@sdpn.org.mw; Chilambula Rd; d US\$78) It's a little faded and the bar and restaurant are a tad poky, but the rooms are comfortable and there's a picturesque, sprawling garden out the back. Rates don't include breakfast.

Top End

Facilities at the following include travel and car hire agents, business centres, swimming pools, restaurants and bars.

Lilongwe Hotel (Map p171; ☎ 01-756333; Kamuzu Procession Rd; d from US\$95; 📶 📶) Set amid sprawling, manicured gardens, this hotel is well appointed (there's a business centre, car hire and an Air Malawi desk) but rather uninspiring. If you do stay here, it's best to part with the extra cash for one of the superior rooms, which are huge with comfy velour sofas and doors opening onto the gardens.

Capital Hotel (Map p169; ☎ 01-773388; capital@sunbirdmalawi.com; Chitembwe Rd; s/d from US\$106/142; 📶 📶) This hotel with its leafy compound and good facilities attracts top-end tourists, business travellers and diplomats. Superior rooms are nice, but the standard ones are looking a bit rough around the edges and the staff aren't that friendly. Prices include breakfast. It also has Tidy Restaurant (p174).

Cresta Crossroads Hotel (Map p169; ☎ 01-750333; Crossroads Complex, Mchinji Roundabout; www.cresta-hospitality.com; s/d from US\$120/140; 📶 📶) Lilongwe's newest top-end hotel has all the facilities you'd expect, and the rooms are just that little bit more swanky than those of its rivals. There's a large central courtyard and the reception is pretty jazzy, with large windows and a sunken lounge area. It also has a wonderfully cheesy drinking hole called the Cat-chy Saloon.

EATING

Lilongwe has a good selection of places to eat, from cafés serving cheap, local food (mostly found around Old Town) to stuffy, European-style places, as well as very good Indian and Chinese restaurants.

Restaurants

Korea Garden Restaurant (Map p171; ☎ 01-753467; starters US\$1-3, mains US\$5-10; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Within the Korea Garden Hotel, this place serves a large selection of Korean meals including vegetarian options and *bugolgi* dishes. The food is plentiful if a little bland.

Modi's (Map p171; ☎ 01-757694; Kamuzu Procession Rd; starters US\$2, mains US\$5-6; lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Has delicious and filling Indian food; the seafood and vegetarian options are particularly good.

Green Bamboo Garden (Map p171; ☎ 01-750075; Laws Ave; starters US\$2.50, mains US\$10; ☎ lunch & dinner) This place, opposite the Lilongwe Hotel, serves great, fresh Chinese food (the stewed fish head in brown sauce is actually quite tasty); and for those of you who wish to reveal your inner diva, there are three private rooms that have karaoke thrown in for free.

Don Brioni's Bistro (Map p171; ☎ 01-756998; Mandala Rd; mains US\$4-10; ☎ dinner) Usually buzzing with a lively infusion of locals and tourists, this place under the Kiboko Town Hotel is suitably Italian in décor and flavour, and the eccentric English owner is sure to come over and chat. Excellent steak, fish, chicken accompany pizzas and pastas on the menu.

Mamma Mia (Map p171; ☎ 01-758362; Old Town Mal; mains US\$5-7; ☎ lunch & dinner) A light and airy restaurant away from the maddening crowds, serving plenty of pizzas and pasta dishes as well as tasty Lake Malawi chambo and steaks.

Buchanan's Grill (Map p169; ☎ 01-772846/772859; Four Seasons Centre, Presidential Way; mains US\$6-14; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) One of Lilongwe's newest offerings, this place is set in the gardens of beautiful Four Seasons Centre. It's a lovely spot; if you can, eat out on the terrace, which overlooks a beautiful rockery and pond. As the name suggests, this place specialises in grilled meat and the menu is a carnivore's dream.

Hotel Restaurants

Most of the midrange and top-end hotels listed have restaurants open to nonresidents, where standards and prices are on a par with the hotel.

Kiboko Town Hotel (Map p169; ☎ 01-752201; dishes US\$3-6; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Has a courtyard restaurant serving tasty sandwiches, omelettes and a nice selection of savoury Dutch pancakes.

Terrace Bistro (Map p171; ☎ 01-773388; Lilongwe Hotel; light dishes from US\$4; ☎ lunch) This place is open-air and a popular lunch spot and meeting place for business travellers and well-heeled tourists.

Tidy Restaurant (Map p169; ☎ 01-773388; Capital Hotel; starters US\$5-8, mains US\$10-15; ☎ dinner) This is suitably stylish with exquisite dishes to match – it's all roast salmon and spiced guinea fowl here with not a chambo or chip to be seen.

Cafés & Quick Eats

Summer Park (Map p171; dishes US\$1-3; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Behind Ali Baba's; chose from a small selection of sundaes, milkshakes, burgers and pizzas at the counter and then your choice is brought out to you in the large garden. Enormous yellow-striped awnings provide shade, and there's a constant stream of African pop hits.

Ali Baba's (Map p171; ☎ 01-751523; Kamuzu Procession Rd; light dishes US\$2, mains US\$3-7; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Fast-food joint serving good burgers and shawarmas, but with a smattering of chicken, steak and fish dishes.

Annie's Coffee Shop (Map p169; Conforzi Rd; dishes US\$2-3; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Dishes up tasty breakfasts, curries, burgers and sandwiches in a cosy bistro-style restaurant.

Amina's Take Away (Map p171; Murray Rd; dishes US\$2-5; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Serves the usual burgers, sandwiches and curries and is popular with local office workers. Has a quirky roadside terrace complete with makeshift gazebo.

Bohemian Cafe (Map p171; ☎ 01-757120; Mandala Rd, Old Town; dishes US\$3; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Serves excellent sandwiches, snacks and cakes in a plant-filled courtyard overlooking, but sheltered from, the buzz of the street.

Café Delight (Map p169; Kamuzu Procession Rd; dishes US\$3-6; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Serves Lebanese and Indian fast food, shawarmas, samosas and curries. The plastic tables overlooking the Total petrol station don't make this the most romantic of settings, but the food is mighty tasty.

Self-Catering

There are decent supermarkets all over the city. **Shoprite** (Map p171; Kenyatta Rd) in Old Town

has the best range. **Kandodo Supermarket** (Map p171; Kamuzu Procession Rd) has more limited and cheaper stock. Near the City Centre Shopping Centre is the large PTC Hypermarket (Map p169), where you can get everything from imported South African biscuits to camping supplies.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT Bars & Nightclubs

In Old Town the streets near the market have several bottle stores, which are basic bars that play music loud and late. This area has a very hard edge, so go here only with a streetwise friend, enough money for an evening's supply of beer and nothing that you can't afford to lose.

Africana Hotel (Map p169; off Independence Dr) A lively place with a large outdoor patio that is popular with nearby office workers and government types. It's easy to make friends here and you're sure to strike up a conversation with one of the locals over a few beers.

Chameleon Bar (Map p169; Four Seasons Centre, Presidential Way) Swanky cocktail bar that has regular live events including the 'pillow talk' unplugged session on the last Thursday of every month, which welcomes poets, musicians and comedians.

Harry's Bar (Map p171; Mandala Rd) Above Bookmart, this circular bar has a relaxed atmosphere with a happy, mixed crowd of expats and locals. It's a popular meeting place, although Harry's taste in music can be atrociously cheesy.

Legends (Map p169; Onions Rd; admission US\$2; ☎ 5pm-late) This is a bar most evenings and a nightclub at weekends, where young expats and well-to-do Malawians mix it up in a happy and energetic atmosphere. The music is a fair blend of Western and African.

Lilongwe Hotel (Map p171; ☎ 01-756333; Kamuzu Procession Rd) Has a smart residents' bar open to nonguests, while the nonresidents' bar is livelier. A disco or live band performs on some evenings, when a US\$2 cover charge is applied.

Diplomat Bar (Map p171; Kamuzu Procession Rd; ☎ Mon-Sat, noon-late) Tiny little bar with a few outdoor tables overlooking the street. It gets lively at the weekends when it throngs with a mixed crowd of expats, backpackers and locals.

Goodfellows Pub (Map p171; Armitage Rd; ☎ 11.30am-late Mon-Sat) Another lively spot and an expat haven. You can socialise at the pool tables,

find a cosy corner, or plant a stool at the impressive wooden bar.

Zebra Disco (Map p169; Lingadzi Inn; admission US\$2; ☎ Fri & Sat) The place to go for a more local feel. It plays mostly African music to a mostly Malawian clientele.

Spectator Sport

Football matches are played at the **CIVO stadium** (Map p169; Area 9), off Kamuzu Procession Rd, on Sunday, and at the Area 47 stadium. Look out for posters, or ask local fans for information.

SHOPPING

Nico Shopping Centre (Map p171; Kamuzu Procession Rd) has a bookshop, travel agency, pharmacy and several other shops.

Old Town Mall (Map p171; Off Chilambula Rd) houses a small corridor of shops including African Habitat, selling a variety of African arts and crafts, and Central Africana with an impressive selection of decorative and antique maps well worth framing.

Crossroads Complex (Map p169; Kamuzu Procession Rd) is Lilongwe's newest shopping area and houses banks, a swanky hotel, minigolf, a variety of upscale shops, supermarkets and services, and a branch of the South African Steers.

City Centre Shopping Centre (Map p169), off Independence Dr, is a collection of buildings containing shops, travel agents, restaurants, a bank and a post office.

Markets

To see what Malawians buy go to the city's main market (Map p169) by the bus station. It's always lively and colourful, and is a great place to buy second-hand clothes, although photography is not appreciated. Note also that pickpockets operate in the crowds and that some visitors with large bags have been violently robbed, so travel lightly here.

There's also a craft market (Map p171) outside the Old Town post office, where vendors sell everything from trinket woodcarvings, basketware and jewellery to traditional Malawi chairs. If you go late in the day you're likely to get a better deal.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

For details of flights, see p231 and p233. If you're buying a ticket, it's worth trying an

agent first (see p170) as they offer a wider range of options, charge the same rates as the airlines and sometimes have special deals. Airlines with offices in Lilongwe include the following:

Air Malawi (☎ 01-700811; Lilongwe International Airport)

KLM & Kenya Airways (Map p169; ☎ 01-774227; City Centre)

South African Airways (Map p169; ☎ 01-772242; Capital Hotel, City Centre)

Bus

Coachline buses run between Lilongwe and Blantyre (US\$20, four hours, two daily) Book tickets at the **Shire Bus Lines Depot** (Map p171; ☎ 01-756226; Kenyatta Rd), from where the buses depart. The bright orange Sacramento Bus runs to Mzuzu daily (US\$18, four hours) from the main bus station near the market.

Express and ordinary buses operate out of the bus station near the market in Old Town. Express buses run to Blantyre via Zalewa (US\$6, five hours, one daily), Zomba (US\$4, six hours, one daily), Mzuzu (US\$12, seven to eight hours, two daily) and Kasungu (US\$3, four hours, two daily). For information on any route, go to the back of one of the booths (you may have to look for one that's open) and speak to the supervisors inside. You can buy tickets once the buses have pulled into the station.

All other buses are ordinary (ie slow) and travel between Lilongwe and Mchinji (US\$1.50, two to three hours, three daily), Salima (US\$1.50, two hours, two daily) and Nkhosakota (US\$2.50, 4½ hours, two daily). Getting to Monkey Bay can be a nightmare (see p201).

Long distance minibuses depart from behind the bus station to nearby destinations such as Salima, Mchinji and Dedza (all around US\$1.50).

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Lilongwe international airport is 21km north of the city. A taxi from the airport into town costs US\$15.

The Airport Shuttle collects passengers from most of the hotels and lodges in town around three hours before a flight departure. The cost is US\$9 and your hotel should be able to make a booking. If you've booked a hotel in advance, the hotel can arrange for

you to be picked up by airport shuttle when you arrive.

Local buses and minibuses run between Old Town and the commercial part of the airport (about 200m from the passenger terminal) for just US\$1, or you can catch any minibus running along the main road towards Kasungu and get off at the airport junction, from where it's 3km to the airport. From the airport, you can hoof it to the main road, where minibuses run to Lilongwe, or hitch.

Bus

The most useful local minibus service for visitors is between Old Town and City Centre. From Old Town, local minibuses (marked area 12) leave from either the bus rank near the market, or outside Shoprite. They then head north up Kenyatta Rd, via Youth and Convention Drs or via Independence Dr, to reach City Centre. From City Centre back to Old Town, the bus stop for the return journey is at the northern end of Independence Dr. The fare between the two centres is US\$0.50.

Taxi

The best places to find taxis are the main hotels. There's also a rank on Presidential Way, just north of City Centre Shopping Centre. Taxis also congregate outside Shoprite in Old Town. The fare between Old Town and City Centre is about US\$4. Short journeys within either City Centre or Old Town cost around US\$3. It's always best to negotiate a price with the driver first.

AROUND LILONGWE Dzalanyama

Dzalanyama is a beautiful forest reserve in a range of hills about 50km by road southwest of Lilongwe. The log cabin-style **Forest Rest-house** (Map p195; s/d with shared bathroom US\$18/24) is run by Land & Lake Safaris (p170) and offers walking trails, mountain biking (at US\$5 per day), bird-watching or simply relaxing. It also arranges transfers to the forest for US\$22, as there's no public transport here.

Dedza

Dedza is a small town 85km southeast of Lilongwe, just off the main road between Lilongwe and Blantyre. It's surrounded by forested hills, and the opportunity for good walks and spectacular views in the nearby

Dedza Mountain Forest Reserve, as described in *Day Outings from Lilongwe* (see p227), are the main attractions. The road south of Dedza skirts the border of Mozambique, revealing on both sides vast plains broken by conical granite peaks and a quilt of farmland, trees, rust-red earth and grass.

For camping, the **Golf Club** (camping US\$2.50, s/d with shared bathroom US\$4.50/9) is close to the wooded backdrop, but its camping terrain is dry and the rooms are fairly uninspiring. You're better off at one of the cheapie rest-houses on the main street. **Rainbow Resthouse & Restaurant** (☎ 01-223403; s/d US\$3/4) is clean, friendly and good value.

On the northern outskirts of town is **Dedza Pottery** (☎ 01-223069; www.dedzapottery.com; ☎ 6am-7pm), with garishly kitsch ceramic products aimed squarely at the expat and tourist market. The **coffee shop** (lunches US\$2-3), however, makes for a pleasant stopover, dishing out good cheesecake, as well as excellent filter coffee.

If you're a serious hiker, the Forest Rest-house, 8km north of town in the forest reserve, makes a good base, although at the time of writing, Dedza Pottery was about to open a few chalets with private bathroom overlooking the mountains.

NORTHERN MALAWI

This section covers most parts of the Northern Province, from the northern tip of the country down to the Mzuzu and Nkhata Bay areas. Places are described roughly from north to south.

In contrast to the more densely populated region of central and southern Malawi, the north has an air of the remote about it, and holds some of Malawi's most fascinating attractions – the beautiful wilderness of the Nyika Plateau, the colonial hilltop town of Livingstonia and the laid-back, lakeside backpackers favourite, Nkhata Bay.

KARONGA

In the surrounding dry and dusty country, Karonga is a relaxed little town with wide streets, wandering cattle and shop fronts straight out of a western; you can almost see the tumbleweed rolling down the street. It's the first and last town on the road between Malawi and Tanzania and has some good

facilities, including the only bank north of Mzuzu and a couple of internet cafés. It's very spread out, which can be tough work with luggage, but there are plenty of bicycle taxis that will take you anywhere you want to go in town for around US\$0.50.

The pretty, green town is strung out for about 2km along the main street between a roundabout on the north-south road and the lakeshore.

Culture and Museum Center Karonga (CMCK; www.palaeo.net/cmck; ☎ 01-362574/579) is Karonga's biggest tourist attraction and home to the Malawisaurus – a 130-million-year-old fossil that was unearthed some 45km south of Karonga. The museum also holds a display entitled 'From Dinosaurs to Democracy' that chronicles the history of the area, and a cultural activity space that hopes to become host to a regular range of drama, dance and musical productions.

For transport details, see p233.

Sleeping & Eating

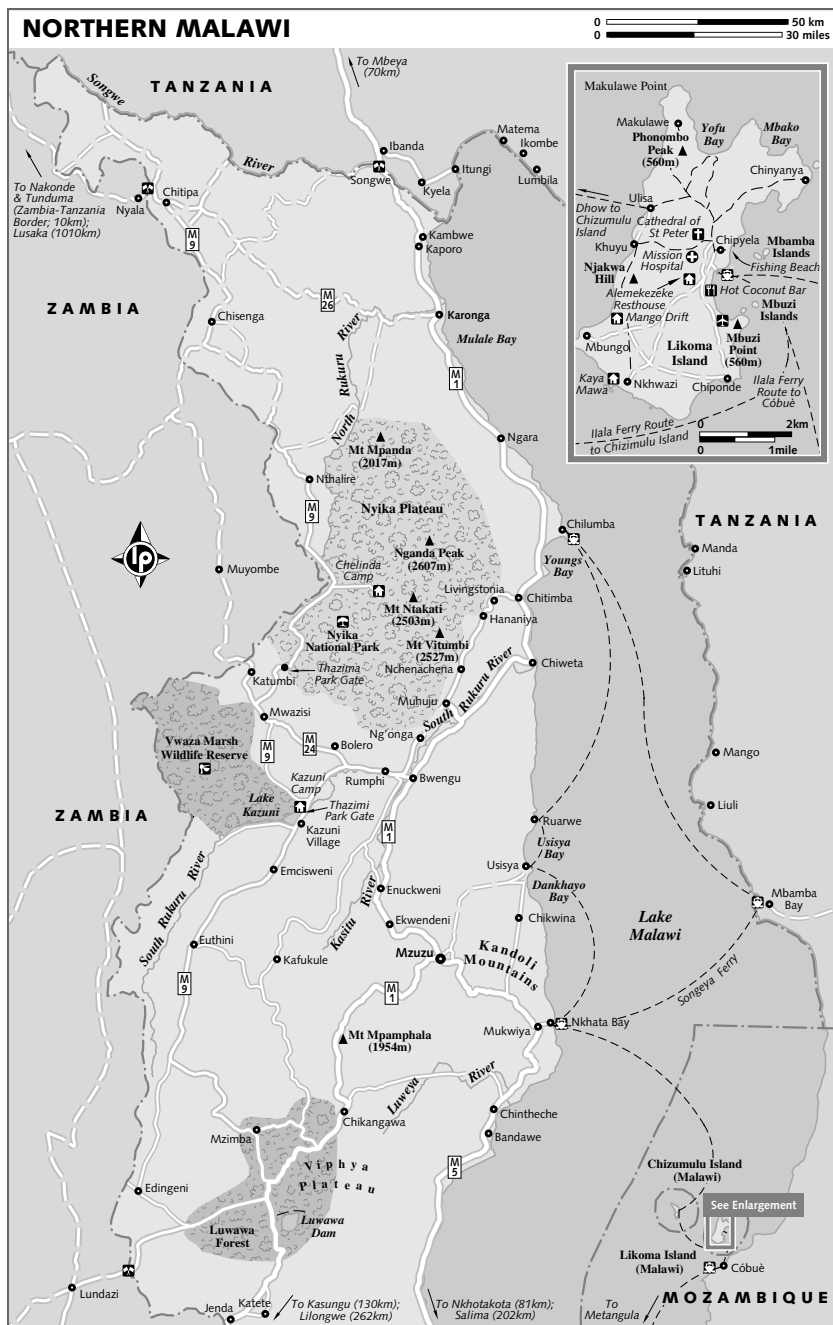
Mufwa Lakeshore Lodge & Camping (☎ 01-362390; camping US\$2, s/d with shared bathroom US\$10/14, s/d US\$14/19) This is a large, quiet property that can be difficult to find – there is no identifying sign and it's set back from the road; the turn-off is located between Club Marina and the National Bank of Malawi. There's a large grassy camping ground with plenty of trees but the rooms are quite small and dark. Still, it's a good deal cheaper than Club Marina down the road and it's wonderfully located, bang on a long stretch of beach. Rates include breakfast.

Zgambota Resthouse (s/d US\$2.50/3) Opposite the Mobil petrol station at the roundabout; has clean and basic rooms with nets.

Safari Lodge (☎ 01-362340; s/d US\$6/8) On the road to the lake, this is a friendly place, but the rooms, although large, are rather spartan and shabby.

Club Marina (☎ 01-362302; standard chalet s/d US\$20/30, superior chalet s/d US\$40/55) Near Mufwa is this excellent, upmarket place. Classy chalets (superior ones have hot water) are set in a beautiful, leafy area and the large outdoor bar is perfect for a cold drink. Rates include breakfast.

Half Cast Fast Food (mains US\$0.80-1.50) is a hole in the wall near the roundabout selling sausages, burgers, samosas and other cheap and tasty snacks.



CHITIMBA

Chitimba is little more than a stretch of beach on Lake Malawi, a couple of places to stay and some shops straggled along the highway where you turn off the main north-south road to reach Livingstonia. It's a nice place to chill out, especially if you've just travelled down from Tanzania, but otherwise there's little to see or do.

Sleeping

There are four places to stay close to the junction with the main road. They can store your gear and arrange a guide if you want to walk up to Livingstonia.

Mdoker's Beach Campsite (camping US\$2, beds in tree or tent US\$4) About 5km north of Chitimba, this place is close to the road and the beach, run by a friendly Malawian couple and comes complete with a bed in the tree and a tree shower! Meals in the simple and clean restaurant range from US\$1 to US\$4, and there's a visitors book of hints and comments, which your host will proudly show you.

Namiashi Resort (camping US\$2, s/d US\$10/15, chalet US\$20) About 5km south of Chitimba, this resort may have seen better days, but it's quiet and has a couple of enormous trees that offer good shade for lazing on the beach. Rooms are a decent size (although only one has nets) and the chalet is particularly good for families. Room rates include breakfast.

Chitimba Campsite (camping per person US\$3, dm US\$5, stilt chalets with shared bathroom US\$10, d US\$15) Right on the beach, about 1km north of the Livingstonia turn-off, and very popular with overland trucks, which makes the place rather rowdy. The shabby rooms and chalets aren't good value, but good food is available all day and there are two bars so plenty of space for party animals.

Sangilo Sanctuary Lodge (☎ 09-395203, 08-392611; sanctuary@sangilo.net; chalets US\$25) About 8km north of Chitimba, this is the newest offering on the strip. It has a stunning setting, with wonderfully decked-out cliff-top cottages, camping, an empty stretch of beach, and an excellent open-air deck restaurant. If you call in advance you can arrange a pick up from the Livingstonia turn-off or the Ilala.

Getting There & Away

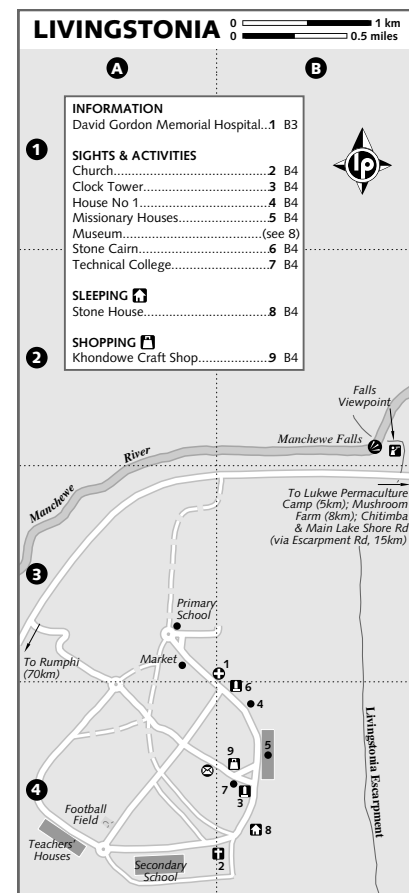
A minibus or *matola* (pick-up) between Chitimba and Mzuzu or Karonga is around MK600.

LIVINGSTONIA

The story of the founding of Livingstonia is covered on p159. The town provides a fascinating glimpse into Malawi's colonial past; and the mixture of old colonial architecture, wide, dusty tree-lined streets and panoramic views of the hills and the lake is quite beguiling. Relative isolation, maintained by arduous access, has kept it quiet and unspoiled, making it an ideal place to recover from hard travel in Tanzania or the rigours of beach life on the lake.

Sights & Activities

The fascinating **museum** (admission US\$2; ☎ 7.30am-5pm) in the Stone House details early European exploration and missionary work



in Malawi. In many regards, the exhibits are a tribute to the efforts and achievements of Dr Robert Laws, who established the Livingstonia mission. On display is an excellent collection of original magic-lantern slides, letters and photos, and an early anaesthesia machine. More bizarrely, there's a stuffed bird and a broken chicken leg, displayed in a drawer along with one of Dr Laws' cloaks. Outside the Stone House, embedded in the grass, are huge stone letters, designed to be read by anyone who happens to be flying overhead in a small plane. They read *Ephesians 2-14*. Visit the museum for an explanation.

Nearby is the **church**, dating from 1894, with a beautiful stained-glass window featuring David Livingstone with his sextant, his medicine chest and his two companions, with Lake Malawi in the background. Sunday services are conducted, and visitors are welcome to attend the English one at 8am.

Other places of interest include the **clock tower**. The nearby **industrial block** was built by the early missionaries as a training centre and is now a technical college. The excellent **Khondowe Craft Shop** sells inexpensive carvings and crafts made by local people; all proceeds go to directly to the hospital and mission.

Down the road from here is the **David Gordon Memorial Hospital**, once the biggest hospital in Central Africa, and the **stone cairn** marking the place where missionary Dr Robert Laws and his African companion Uriah Chirwa camped in 1894 when they decided to build the mission here. Also nearby is **House No 1**, the original home of Dr Laws before he moved into the Stone House.

Manchewe Falls, about 4km from the town, is a spectacular 50m-high waterfall with a cave behind it where local people hid from slave-traders a hundred years ago. Allow an hour going down and 1½ hours back up. Alternatively, if you're walking to/from Chitimba, you can visit on the way.

The more adventurous can also arrange abseiling trips for half a day or longer. For more details contact either Lukwe Permaculture Camp or Mushroom Farm (below).

Sleeping & Eating

Mushroom Farm (mickmitchell2001@yahoo.com; camping per person US\$2, s/d US\$5/10) Has gained quite a reputation on the backpackers' circuit. It's a sustainable bush retreat in a forest setting,

with stunning views over the lake, hot solar showers and composting toilets. It offers a range of adventure activities in the area including waterfall abseils and rap jumping. The food, produced in most part from the organic veggie gardens and animals, is raved about. The owner provides regular transport to and from Chitimba Beach Camp.

Lukwe Permaculture Camp (☎ 08-204648, 01-332261; www.lukwe.com; camping per person US\$2.50, 2-bed cabins per person US\$7.50) On the northern side of the escarpment road, above the steep zigzags, an hour's walk east (downhill) from Livingstonia, or about 10km from Chitimba if you're coming up. It's a beautiful, shady, restful place, with stunning views, great chill-out area with fire pit, comfy chairs and a friendly atmosphere. Hot showers with a view and clean compost toilets complete this sustainable paradise. All food comes from the garden, with meals costing around US\$2 to US\$5. Hikes, with or without local guides, can be arranged to surrounding hills and peaks, or down to Chitimba.

Stone House (☎ 01-368223; camping per person US\$3, dm incl breakfast US\$8) This was built by missionaries in the early 20th century and still has original Victorian furniture, along with a friendly caretaker, clean bathrooms and occasional hot water. The wooden-floor dorms have the feel of a Victorian boarding school and the views from the veranda are superb. Meals are around US\$6, but the food leaves much to be desired. You can provide your own food for the cook to prepare, or simply use the kitchen yourself.

Getting There & Away

From the main north-south road between Karonga and Mzuzu, the road to Livingstonia turns off at Chitimba, forcing its way up the escarpment in a series of acute hairpin bends. Drivers should attempt this only in a 4WD, and only if there's been no rain. The road varies between dirt road, very rutted and difficult track, and smooth, recently paved concrete. There are plans to pave the entire road, but so far this hasn't been completed. There's no bus, and you'll wait a very long time if you're hitching.

The alternative is to walk up – it's about 15km, and steep, so it takes four hours from Chitimba if you follow the road. There are short cuts that can cut it to three or four hours, but these are even steeper. Local children will

offer to carry your pack for about US\$2. Take care on this road; isolated incidents of muggings have occurred so it's best to check the latest situation before you set off, or take a local guide.

The other way to reach Livingstonia, especially if you're coming from the south, is to go to Rumph (see following), and catch a minibus or *matola* up the scenic 'old road' (west of the main north-south road) to Livingstonia (US\$3.80). Sometimes these go only as far as Nchenachena (17km from Livingstonia) or Hananiya (7km from Livingstonia), from where you'll have to walk the remaining distance. If you're driving this route, a 2WD is adequate in dry conditions.

A third option is to walk to Livingstonia from the Nyika Plateau. See the boxed text, p182 for details.

RUMPHI

Rumph (rum-pee) is a small town west of the main road between Mzuzu and Karonga, which you'll probably visit if you're heading for Nyika National Park, Vwaza Marsh or Livingstonia.

The **Chitukoko Resthouse & Restaurant** (☎ 01-372394; d US\$5.50) on the main road has small clean rooms with hot water. Also on the main road and a better option is the lurid green **Country Lodge** (☎ 01-372395; s/d US\$5/7), where clean and spacious rooms come with electricity, nets and fans. It is also the home of **Chef's Pride Restaurant** (snacks US\$1, mains US\$2-3.50), which serves a variety of meals all day, including toasted sandwiches, chicken and beef stews, veggie dishes and curries.

Matola to Nyika (US\$6) and Vwaza (US\$3) leave from opposite the Rumph Superette. You can ask here about *matola* to Livingstonia (US\$4). Minibuses also run to Mzuzu (US\$1.50).

NYIKA NATIONAL PARK

Established in 1965, Nyika National Park is the oldest and the largest in the country, covering some 3000 sq km; much of the park is above 1800m. The main feature of the park is the Nyika Plateau, with a landscape and climate unique in Malawi, and unusual in Africa – almost like the Scottish highlands with more exotic inhabitants. The plateau is a vast range of high rolling hills, sweeping wide valleys and flower-studded grasslands; and there's a pocket of dense pine forest, where the

air is cool and crisp, and the views (on clear days) are endless. What is most appealing about Nyika is the sense of peace; you won't see many other tourists here and can quite easily spend the day hiking in the hills without happening upon another soul. There's a wild, mystical air to the place that is at its most seductive in the mornings, when the air is cold and crisp and the hills enveloped in blue mist.

Wildflowers contribute to the park's visual feast; the best time for viewing them is during and just after the wet season (December to April), when the grassland is covered in colour and small outcrops turn into veritable rock gardens. Around 200 species of orchid alone grow on the plateau.

Rather than simply wildlife viewing, what also makes Nyika alluring is the chance to explore a unique and preserved patch of the African wilderness in a variety of ways: trotting over the plains on horseback, taking a more energetic route on a mountain bike, rambling through the hills on foot, or simply sitting down by a stream for a spot of fishing. Common animals here include zebras, bushbucks, reedbucks and roan antelopes (rare elsewhere), and you may also spot elands, warthogs, klipspringers, jackals, duikers and possibly hyenas and leopards. In the grassland, spotting is easy – in fact the Nyika zebras seem to delight in posing for photos on the skyline. More than 400 species of bird have been recorded here.

Entry fees are payable (see p166). All accommodation, tourist activities and charter flights are operated by the **Nyika Safari Company** (☎ 01-330180; www.nyika.com), a small professional outfit based at Chelinda Camp, at the heart of the plateau.

It can get surprisingly cold on the Nyika Plateau, especially at night from June to August, when frost is not uncommon. Log fires are provided in the chalets and rooms, but bring a warm sleeping bag if you're camping. During dry periods, sectors of the park are burnt to prevent larger fires later in the season. Before setting off for drives or walks, inquire at the park headquarters and avoid areas that are being burnt.

Activities

WILDLIFE WATCHING

To appreciate the animals and flowers of Nyika, you can tour the park tracks in your

meals in the restaurant (continental breakfast US\$5, buffet breakfast or lunch US\$10, dinner US\$15), where full-boarders are catered for. There's a cosy bar, where a beer by the roaring fire after a day's activities is one of Malawi's great pleasures. There's also a shop at reception.

Chelinda Lodge (full-board cabins per person US\$310) About 1km from Chelinda Camp, nestled against the side of the hill in a clearing of trees, this place looks like something out of a Bavarian fairytale. Rooms are in luxurious log cabins housing tasteful furniture, Victorian baths, roaring fireplaces and individual balconies (deck chairs provided). Each affords stunning views over the plateau; and rates also include full bar, wildlife drives and walks.

All self-caterers should stock up in either Mzuzu or Rumphi. There's a small shop at Chelinda for National Parks staff but provisions are often basic and supplies sporadic.

Getting There & Away

Despite most maps showing otherwise, there is *no road of any sort* between Chelinda and Livingstonia or any other town on the eastern side of the plateau.

AIR

The quickest way to reach Chelinda Camp is on a flight by Nyika Air Services. Flights for up to five people can be chartered from Lilongwe (US\$999), while rates from Mzuzu are US\$150 per person. It also flies to other Malawian destinations as well as Tanzania and Zambia (see p231 for details) and it has regular promotional offers. Contact the company for more information.

BICYCLE

It's possible to bring a mountain bike into Nyika and you can cycle from Thazima gate to Chelinda, but an early start is recommended due to the distance.

BUS

There are no public buses into the park; the nearest you can get is the service from Mzuzu to Rumphi (US\$1). From there, you can get a *matola* or minibus to Chelinda Camp (US\$6). To get from Chelinda Camp to either Nthali in the north or Rumphi, contact the radio operator at Chelinda Camp, who will advise *matola* or minibuses heading through the park to divert to Chelinda for you.

CAR

The main Thazima gate (pronounced and sometimes spelt Tazima) is in the southwest of the park, 54km from Rumphi; to Chelinda Camp it's another 55km. The road is dirt after Rumphi and in fair condition as far as Thazima gate. In the park the tracks are rough and really only suitable for 4WD vehicles or 2WD vehicles with high clearance, although at the time of writing the road to Chelinda Camp was about to be upgraded to a full-gravel standard, making it accessible to all cars. Kaperekezi gate, in the west of the park, is rarely used by travellers. Fuel is available at Chelinda but in limited supply, so it's best to fill up before you enter the park.

TAXI

You can hire a taxi (or a *matola*) in Mzuzu or Rumphi to take you all the way to Chelinda Camp. This costs around US\$100 (less from Rumphi), which is not too bad if you get a few people together. Of course, if the taxi has to wait around for a few days to take you out again this will be more expensive, but we've heard from several travellers who used this method to reach Chelinda and then hitched out a few days later, or walked off via the Livingstonia route. If you take the taxi option, it's essential to leave early in the morning so your driver has time to get back.

VWAZA MARSH WILDLIFE RESERVE

For one reason or another this reserve seems to be one of Malawi's best-kept secrets, but it's possibly your best chance to get up close and personal with elephants and well worth a visit. Vwaza is an ideal destination for any budget; it's compact and accessible, the accommodation is close to the main gate, and public transport here is straightforward. Entry fees are payable (p166). All tourist activities, places to stay and charter flights are operated by the Nyika Safari Company (see p181 for details).

The main camp is conveniently located a safe but rewarding distance from the hippo-heavy Lake Kazuni, which also lures impalas, buffaloes (rumoured to be particularly aggressive here), waterbucks, elands, roans, sables, zebras, hartebeests and puku. The main attraction, however, is the 160-plus elephants within the park. There are regular parades in front of the camps, and between July and September, diners at Kazuni Safari Camp

often have to share their personal space with bulls munching on nuts around the restaurant. Vwaza's bird-watching is also excellent – this is one of the best places in Malawi to see waders. The best time of year to visit is in the dry season; just after the rainy season, the grass is high and you might go away without seeing anything.

There's a range of vegetation and habitats in the reserve, from large areas of open swamp to more dense woodlands. The Luwewe River runs through the reserve (draining the marshland) and joins the South Rukuru River (the reserve's southern border), which flows into Lake Kazuni.

A good network of driveable tracks in the reserve is easily explored in a 4WD or high-clearance vehicle; if you're in a 2WD, ask at Kazuni Camp for advice on the condition of the tracks. The best driving route is along the southern edge of the reserve, parallel to the river, heading to Zoro Pools. A better way to witness wildlife is on foot – either around Lake Kazuni or on a longer wilderness trail, but you must be accompanied by a guide (US\$5 per person).

It's also possible to arrange a **cultural tour** at Kazuni Safari Camp. The local Natural Resources Committee (p166) has established cultural centres in three of the surrounding villages, where visitors can witness traditional dancing, singing (participation is encouraged!) and day-to-day activities including blacksmithing, agricultural activities and cooking. It's a rewarding experience and an excellent opportunity to meet Malawian people in a genuine setting. Tours (US\$8 per person) can be done by car or bicycle and all proceeds go to education, health and welfare programmes within the villages. An additional donation after the tour is appreciated and can be as small or large as you like. You can also arrange to stay overnight, sleep in a traditional village hut and sample some traditional Malawian dishes.

Sleeping

Kazuni Camp (camping per person US\$5, chalet s/d with shared bathroom US\$10/20) Has simple, rustic chalets with beds, clean sheets and mosquito nets. They are separated by a decent stretch of bush, so you still get a sense of privacy and wilderness while being within a camp; and they're close to the water so that elephants and hippos are frequent night-time visitors. You must

bring food, and there are cooking stations with barbecues. It's best to stock up in Rumphi or Mzuzu.

Kazuni Safari Camp (full board per person US\$190) Accommodates guests in smart and stylish chalets with thatched roofs and verandas in a prime position overlooking the lake. Rates also include game drives and walks, but if you don't want the whole package, cheaper rates may be available.

Getting There & Away

The Nyika Safari Company operates flights for a minimum of two people between Vwaza Marsh and Mzuzu (US\$150 per person) or Chelinda Camp in the Nyika National Park (US\$112 per person).

If you're travelling by public transport, first get to Rumphi (reached from Mzuzu by minibus for US\$1.50). From there fairly frequent *matolas* and minibuses run to the main gate (US\$3).

By car, head west from Rumphi. Turn left after 10km (Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve is signposted), and continue for about 20km. Where the road swings left over a bridge, go straight on to reach the park gate and camp after 1km.

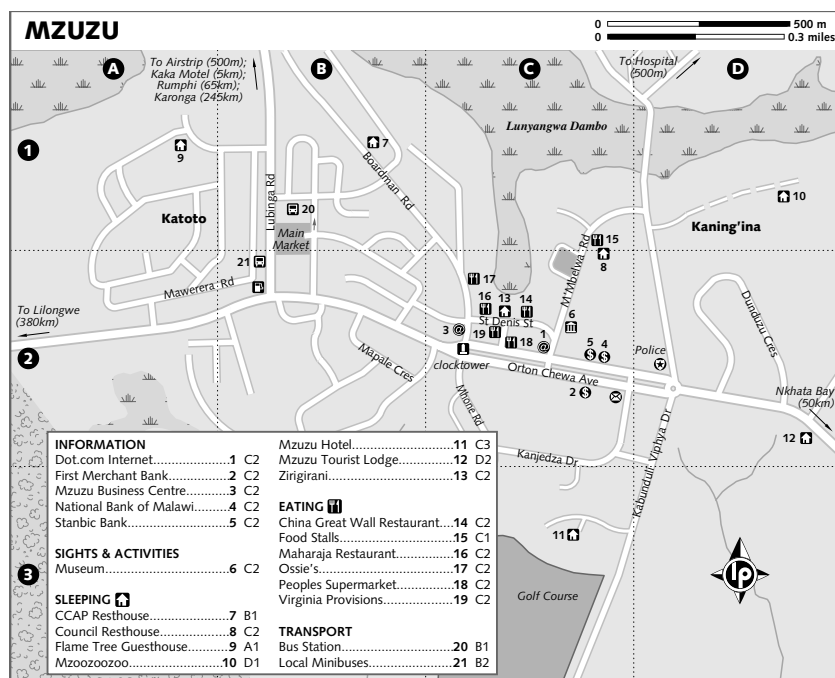
MZUZU

Mzuzu is the largest town north of Lilongwe and the transport hub for all north-related activities. Most travellers will stay in Mzuzu for at least one night as a stopover on the north-south route, or as a jumping-off point for Vwaza, Vipha, Nyika or Nkhata Bay. The town is centred around a grand tree-lined avenue. It has banks, shops, a post office, supermarkets, pharmacies, petrol stations and other facilities, which are especially useful if you've come into Malawi from the north.

Information

The National Bank of Malawi, Stanbic Bank and First Merchant Bank, all on Orton Chewa Ave, exchange travellers cheques and money, and offer credit-card withdrawals. National and Stanbic banks have ATMs that accept foreign cards. If you're heading to the lake, cash up here as there is no foreign exchange facility in Nkhata Bay.

Internet access is available at the **Mzuzu Business Centre** (St Denis St; per hr US\$10), or at the **Dot.com Internet** (Orton Chewa Ave; per hr US\$9) next to the Peoples Supermarket.



Sights

The **museum** (museums@malawi.net; M'Mbelwa Rd; admission MK200; 7am-noon & 1-5pm) has interesting displays on the history of African and European peoples in northern Malawi and a section on indigenous plants and wildlife. The best feature, however, is the cultural dancing, which staff can organise if they know visitors are coming.

Sleeping

CCAP Resthouse (William Koyi Guest House; 01-333050; Boardman Rd; camping per person US\$0.80, dm US\$2.50, r with shared/private US\$6/9.50) Northeast of the bus station, this is spotless and well organised. It's operated by the church so a respectful code of conduct is appropriate.

Mzoozoozoo (08-864493; camping US\$1, dm US\$3, d US\$7) This is Mzuzu's only hostel and the friendly owners make it a good one. Dorms are in a big timber bungalow, and a stream of activity buzzes around the funky outdoor bar. There's tasty food (dishes MK700), and the place is a mine of info about the locale.

Council Resthouse (s/d US\$1.50/3) Off M'Mbelwa Rd, near the small market, this place has basic

rooms that will suffice if you're really short of cash.

Zirikirani (01-332622; mzh@sdpn.org.mw; St Denis St; s/d US\$3/6) Mzuzu's newest offering for budget travellers had just opened and was in final stages of development at the time of research. It was shaping up to be a good choice, though. Bang in the centre of town, it has clean, simple and cheap rooms opening onto a pleasant courtyard.

Kaka Motel (01-332337; s/d with shared bathroom US\$3.80/5, d US\$13-15) This place, 6km north of town, has plenty of clean and simple rooms in a sprawling bush setting. Breakfast is included, the staff are accommodating and there's secure parking.

Mzuzu Tourist Lodge (01-332097; Orton Chewa Ave; camping per person US\$5, s/d with shared bathroom US\$20/27, s/d US\$29/36) Set on a pretty property east of town, the Mzuzu has pleasant but arguably overpriced rooms (although the room rates do include breakfast) and a green and secure camping area. The evening meals cost around US\$3.

Flame Tree Guesthouse (01-333053; r with shared/private bathroom US\$12/15) A relaxed option,

with clean, cool and homely rooms, and a lovely veranda restaurant overlooking the flower-filled courtyard. Rates here include breakfast.

Mzuzu Hotel (01-332622; mzh@sdpn.org.mw; s/d US\$50/64) Mzuzu's plushiest hotel has large rooms with all the requisite trimmings, but

has a rather staid atmosphere and the rooms look old fashioned. There's a good restaurant (starters US\$3, mains US\$5 to US\$10) and a quiet bar for residents. It's off Kabunduli Viphya Dr. Next to the hotel the Choma Bar provides loud evening entertainment with a local flavour.

WHERE TO ON THE LAKE?

Dominating the country's landscape, the irresistible Lake Malawi draws in visitors with the promise of clear waters, beautiful marine life and days spent lazing on picture-perfect beaches. It has often been described as an inland sea and, when trying to spot Mozambique's hazy silhouette on the horizon, it's easy to see why. The lake's enigmatic weather often entertains storms thick enough to rouse 5m waves and intimidating swells, shifting within an hour to flawless blue skies reflected in the water's glassy veneer.

The lakeshore's environment changes starkly from dramatic escarpments in the north to flat, sandy bays in the south. It can be tough figuring out where to go, so the following should help you decide.

The North

The least developed section of the lake is home to Chitimba, which serves as a magnet to overland trucks coming in from Tanzania. To escape from the partying hordes, head for the remote and tranquil villages of Ruarwe and Usisya.

Nkhata Bay

This scenic town is the most popular backpackers' haunt on the lake. There's a wide range of accommodation here that will satisfy most tastes and budgets, and the excellent diving, kayaking, socialising and laid-back atmosphere leads to many an unintentionally long visit.

Likoma & Chizumulu Islands

Sublime beaches, unparalleled diving, breathtaking walks, preserved cultures and a beautiful missionary cathedral make these islands a must-see. There's excellent accommodation, from budget beach huts to five-star luxury, and a rare opportunity to immerse yourself in untainted village life.

Chintheche Strip

A secluded collection of camping grounds, lodges and resorts pepper this picturesque stretch of the lake, a hop, skip and jump from the wooded hills of the Viphya Plateau.

Senga Bay

The nearest beach paradise to Lilongwe offers a wide range of places to stay, excellent snorkelling and bush walking, and trips to the nearby islands to see giant monitor lizards.

Cape Maclear

The crowds once swarmed this popular backpackers' haunt in Malawi, but have now moved on, prompted by increasing hassle from beach boys. It's still a nice spot to swim, sail and dive, though, and perfectly placed to explore Lake Malawi National Park.

Monkey Bay to Mangochi

A smattering of top-end hotels, midrange resorts and budget lodges here all have a few kilometres of private beach and the facilities to keep you from moving far.

Eating

Ossie's (meals MK250) A lovely café, shielded by trees from the bustle of the road, and set in a little palm-filled garden squeezed in between the road and a cornfield. Food includes decent burgers and curries.

China Great Wall Restaurant (☎ 01-333609; St Denis St; starters US\$1.30, mains US\$1.50-3; ☎ lunch & dinner) Serves a huge assortment of tasty Chinese dishes in virtually any variation, including seafood and vegetarian.

Maharaja Restaurant (☎ 09-351550; St Denis St; starters US\$2, mains US\$4; ☎ lunch & dinner) Satisfy your chilli cravings here with a wide variety of tasty curries and tandoori dishes.

Virginia Provisions (St Denis St; meals US\$2) Neat little place serving local Malawian food on a wide, wicker-filled balcony overlooking the street.

For cheap eats, there are food stalls around the market and the Council Resthouse. Self-caterers can stock up at the **Peoples Supermarket** (Orton Chewa Ave).

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air Malawi flies between Lilongwe and Mzuzu (see p233 for details).

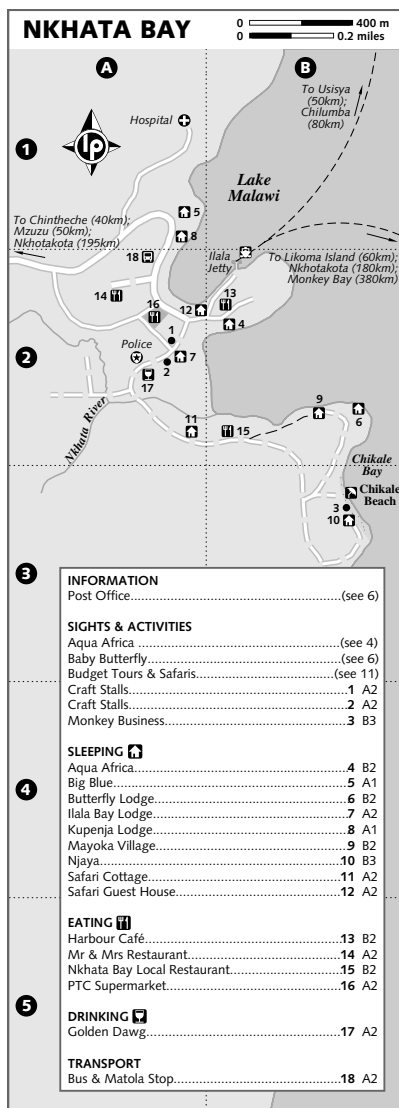
BUS

The Sacramento bus runs between Mzuzu and Lilongwe (US\$18, four hours, Monday, Wednesday, Saturday) and express buses travel to/from Lilongwe (US\$12, seven to eight hours, two daily) via Kasungu (US\$2.50, three hours). Ordinary buses go to Rumphu (US\$1, 1½ hours, four daily), Nkhata Bay (US\$1, two hours, two daily) and Karonga (US\$3.80, seven hours, four daily) through Chitimba (US\$2, four hours). Minibuses also go to these destinations and are slightly more expensive, but also more frequent.

A bus originating in Lilongwe travels between Mzuzu and Dar es Salaam (US\$35, 17 hours, Tuesday and Saturday). Departing Mzuzu around midnight, it crosses the border at first light, goes through Mbeya in the morning and gets to Dar es Salaam late in the afternoon.

NKHATA BAY

Nkhata Bay is a lush tropical indent on the northern lakeshore that lures a constant stream of travellers with its Caribbeanesque milieu. This may be a touch fanciful, but the bay is quite picturesque at sunrise and sun-



set, and most recreation certainly involves a good deal of lounging by the water. 'Town', nestled into a gully with the bay to the west and a gentle rise of dense forest to the east, is a bustling clutch of markets, craft stalls, local activity and visitors. The good cross section of 'lodges' here are all fully equipped to entertain you from dawn to well past bedtime,

and it's easy to get lulled into eating, sleeping and drinking within their confines. However, patronising local eateries, mixing with the locals and general meandering are good fun and well worth the extra energy.

Information

There's nowhere to change money so make sure you cash up in Mzuzu, Nkhotakota or Lilongwe. Alternatively, several of the lodges accept credit cards, US currency and travellers cheques for payment. Internet access is available at Aqua Africa (p190).

Dangers & Annoyances

Although security is less of a problem here than it was a couple of years ago, it still pays to be cautious. Travellers have been attacked and robbed when walking outside the town centre (especially to/from Chikale Beach), so take extra care when walking this route. Most travellers will encounter a fair amount of hassle from local beach boys offering a bewildering amount of services from beach barbecues to personalised key rings. If you're not interested, be polite but very firm and they should leave you alone.

Activities

SWIMMING

On the southern side of Nkhata Bay, **Chikale Beach** is a popular spot for swimming and lazing on the sand, especially at weekends. Snorkelling equipment is free for guests at most of the lodges.

KAYAKING

For something more active, **Monkey Business** (☎ 01-252365) on Chikale Beach operates fully inclusive (meals, kayaks, guides and tents) kayak excursions from two to seven days, from US\$35 per person per day. Typical itineraries include idyllic spots along the northern lakeshore such as Usisya and Ruwae, or spectacular trips to Likoma and Chizumulu Islands, sailing aboard the *Ilala* ferry, then paddling around the Mozambique shore. Journeys are broken by stopovers at fishing villages and empty beaches, and these trips are a great way to explore the area. It also arranges one-day kayak-bushwalk-dive tours for US\$40 per person.

DIVING

If you want to learn scuba diving, **Aqua Africa** (☎ 01-352284; www.aqua-africa.co.uk) has a variety

of options, including five-day PADI courses for US\$260 and casual day dives for US\$20. Travellers rave about these guys, particularly the company's attention to safety; groups are a maximum of six people. You should try to book in advance, but if they're full you only have to wait a few days for the next course to start.

VOLUNTEERING

If you want to give something back to the community during your stay, **Africa Unplugged** (☎ 09-471742; www.africaunplugged.org.uk) is an excellent place to start. Run by the owner of Kupenja Lodge, it has several projects in the area including a victim support centre, learning and resource centre and a nursery school. In return for lending their support, volunteers can stay at Kupenja (below) at a reduced rate.

Tours

Baby Butterfly (☎ 09-265065; Butterfly Lodge; www.lake-paradise.com) Based at Butterfly Lodge; organises tours on request to Likoma and Chizumulu Islands, Mozambique, Usisya and Ruwae on a speed boat for US\$300 per day (maximum four people).

Budget Tours & Safaris (☎ 09-278903; www.budget-safaris.com) Based at Safari Cottage; organises well-run and interesting safaris around northern Malawi. A five-day safari to Vwaza Marsh Reserve, Nyika National Park, Livingstonia and Karonga costs from US\$195, including all meals and camping. For those who want to explore the region with a bit more flexibility, they can also arrange a car with driver from US\$110 per day.

Sleeping

Nkhata Bay has several places to stay, all strung out in a line along the road into town and along the lakeshore. Places are described roughly north to south. All beds at the following have mosquito nets. To get from town to the lodges at Chikale Beach, stay on the dirt road, cross the bridge and head up hill and down dale (always seems harder with a backpack). It's about 30 minutes' walk.

Big Blue (☎ 01-352316; bigblue@sdnp.org.mw; camping per person US\$1.50, dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$3/4/6) Large, ramshackle place that has clearly seen better days. However, the staff are very friendly, it's a good deal cheaper than the options in Chikale and it frequently has special offers and discounts.

Kupenja Lodge (☎ 09-471742; camping US\$1.50, s/d US\$3.50/5) A quiet, homely place with cosy stone chalets, a relaxed lounging area and delicious

food. It has a nice stretch of sandy beach, which is blissfully hassle-free and provides a great antidote to the party atmosphere of some of the Chikale Beach lodges. The owner runs the charity Africa Unplugged (see Volunteering, p189; volunteers get a discount at the lodge) and ploughs a lot of profits back into the local community.

Safari Guest House (☎ 01-352371; s/d/tr with shared bathroom US\$2/2.50/3) Has small, clean, safe rooms with fans and a secluded garden laden with brilliant bougainvillea.

Butterfly Lodge (☎ 09-265065; www.lake-paradise.com; camping per person US\$3, dm US\$4, hut s/d with shared bathroom US\$8/15, cottages per person US\$17) Quieter than its neighbours, with comfortable rooms, a good restaurant and an atmospheric bar, all scattered over a rocky, tree-coated incline. Cottage rates include breakfast, and use of the kitchen is free for self-caterers.

Njaya (☎ 01-352342; www.njayalodge.com; camping per person US\$3, dm \$5, bandas per person US\$8, chalets US\$20, cottages from US\$25) Offers Asian-style reed chalets (*bandas*) on Chikale Beach and a range of cabins and bungalows strewn over the hillside overlooking the lake on a wide sandy beach. The bar/restaurant has panoramic views, but the food is only average. You can get your laundry done here, and for all you city slickers, credit cards are accepted.

our pick Mayoka Village (☎ 01-352421; info@mayoka-village.com; camping US\$3, chalet s/d with shared bathroom US\$5/8, chalet s/d US\$15/20) A very popular place and deservedly so – it's a sprawling, buzzing collection of picturesque chalets and beach huts, all meticulously constructed out of stone, bamboo and wood, with fans and private chairs and tables overlooking the bay. There's no beachfront to speak of, but there are plenty of chill-out spots near the water, perfect for sunbathing and shooting the breeze. There's also an extensive menu and the food is excellent, helped by vegies and herbs grown in their very own garden. What really attracts people, though, is the infectious, lively atmosphere. The energetic bar – an open, breezy spot overlooking the water – plays host to regular barbecue nights and Malawian buffets, as well as Malawian music nights; and the friendly owners make a real effort to chat to the punters, get the party started and ensure that everyone feels right at home.

Ilala Bay Lodge (☎ 01-352362; B&B s/d US\$15/20) Clean simple rooms with good bathrooms and balconies, set on a private stretch of beach.

It's mostly popular with Tanzanians and Malawians and has a more local feel than other places, so is a good place to stay if you want to avoid the backpacker hordes.

Aqua Africa (☎ 01-352284; www.aqua-africa.co.uk; tw US\$20; ☑) Has a few secluded and comfortable rooms with balconies overlooking the private beach. It's also home to Nkhata Bay's only internet café, which has a superfast connection for US\$6 an hour.

Safari Cottage (☎ 09-278903; www.safari-cottage.com; cottage per day/week/month US\$45/215/520) An excellent self-catering option if you fancy a change from the lodges. It has three bedrooms, kitchen, living room and a great big veranda with those prerequisite stunning views of the lake. The price includes secure parking, 24-hour security, satellite TV and a daily cleaning service.

Eating & Drinking

Mr & Mrs Restaurant (mains US\$1; ☎ 11am–7pm) On a small side road leading off the main drag, this is a small local joint offering healthy portions of fish and meat with *nsima* (boiled maize meal) or rice. It's a great place to watch the world go by while listening to the reggae tunes blasting out of the barbers next door.

Harbour Café (snacks & mains US\$1.45–5; ☎ 10am–9pm) Opposite Aqua Africa is this open-air place with views of the lake as well as the village streets. It serves good breakfasts and light lunches as well as more substantial dinners, such as toad-in-the-hole, pizzas and roasts. It also does a great line in homemade cakes.

Nkhata Bay Local Restaurant (mains US\$2–3; ☎ noon–9pm) A small and charming wood, reed and thatch café, complete with jaw-dropping views over the bay, perched on the side of the hill on the road up to Chikale Beach. Dishes from the small menu (butterfish is their speciality) must be ordered about an hour in advance, but are well worth the wait. The owners are keen drummers and can always be persuaded to show off, or to teach you, their skills.

Golden Dawg (☎ 01-352397; ☎ 11am–late) Named after the resident Golden Retriever, this is a large bar with a (normally empty) dance floor and a big screen TV for those all-important footy matches. There's also a movie theatre (ie a room with a big TV in it) at the back, which can be rented for a couple of hours for up to 15 people; there are a selection of DVDs to choose from and the whole deal costs \$10.

For self-catering, the PTC Supermarket on the main drag is the best bet, although the range is rather limited.

Getting There & Away

All buses and minibuses go from the bus stand on the main road. Ordinary buses run to Mzuzu (US\$1, two hours, two daily) and minibuses and *matola* run to Nkhotakota (US\$4, six hours), Chintheche (US\$1, one hour) and Mzuzu (US\$1.30, 1½ hours). To reach Lilongwe, go to Mzuzu and transfer. Many travellers also come or go on the *Ilala* ferry (see p234).

AROUND NKHATA BAY

North of Nkhata Bay, the steep slopes of the Rift Valley escarpment plunge straight down to the lake, and there's no room for a road alongside the shore. The isolated villages along this stretch provide a remote experience that is well worth the trek.

Usisya Lodge (bigblue@sdnp.org.mw; hammocks per person US\$1.30, camping per person US\$2, dm US\$2.50, reed hut s/d with shared bathroom US\$5/10), approximately 50km north of Nkhata Bay, is a small, Robinson Crusoesque beach lodge, sheltered by dense vegetation and spectacular mountains. An open bar furnished with cushioned benches, planted firmly near the water's edge, makes for some healthy lazing and free-flowing conversation, as do the communal meals.

Fifteen kilometres further north and barely perceptible from the water is **Wherearewe** (www.lake-paradise.com; camping per person US\$1.30, dm US\$2, chalet s/d with shared bathroom from US\$5/10). This hidden retreat, near the village of Ruarwe, has stone and thatch chalets and an impressive bar sculpted around natural rock formations, with rock art and pillars carved by Nkhata Bay artists. A troop of fish eagles, kingfishers and otters regularly entertain guests, and on a clear day it's possible to spot tin roofs shimmering in the distance on the Tanzanian mountain ranges. This is also a great base to walk for an hour, or three days, on paths well trodden by local feet.

The *Ilala* ferry (see p234) stops at both Usisya and Ruarwe villages, which are a 20-minute walk north and south of the lodges respectively. Both lodges also transfer guests from Nkhata Bay by speed boat. It takes around 4½ hours to get to Usisya Lodge and six to Wherearewe, and both destinations cost US\$20. Book at the Big Blue (p189) for

Usisya Lodge or at Butterfly Lodge (opposite) for Wherearewe.

It's also possible to walk south from Chintimba Bay. This journey takes two to three days, and you should be well prepared with water, food and a tent. The tracks are clear, and it's an excellent way to explore the untouched northern shore and visit the many villages along the way. Speak to the lodges at either end before you set out for an update on track conditions.

CHINTHECHE STRIP

Chintheche is an unremarkable village about 40km south of Nkhata Bay. Nearby is a long and beautiful stretch of lakeshore known as the 'Chintheche Strip'. It's lined with hotels, lodges and camping grounds, each catering for different types of traveller. They all lie between 2km and 5km east of the main road that runs between Nkhata Bay and Nkhotakota, and usually involve a drive or walk along a dirt track through forest or farmland. If you're travelling by bus, the express services may not stop at every turn-off, but minibuses stop almost anywhere on request.

Chintheche is the site of the **Lake of Stars Malawi Music Festival** (www.lakeofstarsfestival.co.uk), every September. It attracts live music acts from around Africa and the UK and lasts for three days. Proceeds go to the charity Children in the Wilderness.

Activities

VOLUNTEERING

A good place to lend your support is **Ripple Africa** (www.rippleafrica.org). Formerly the budget Mwaya Beach Lodge, it now serves as a base for the charity and mostly houses volunteers, although the occasional tourist may pass through. Projects to get involved in include reforestation, tree conservation and the construction of a new secondary school. Volunteers are given free accommodation in return for their assistance, and available positions include teaching assistants, health care assistants and environmental volunteers. They don't accept walk-in applicants, so you must apply in advance, preferably from your home country.

DIVING

Aquanuts Dive School (☎ 01-357376; www.aquanuts.info) has an on-site training pool and offers PADI courses for US\$265, casual dives from

US\$30 and PADI Scuba refresher courses for US\$45. It's well run and pays excellent attention to safety and the environment.

YOGA

If you've come to Malawi to find inner peace, this is the place to be. **Makuzi Beach Lodge** (www.makuzibeach.com) has a variety of yoga and meditation retreats on offer. The lodge has its own qualified Sivananda yoga instructor and offers five-day courses for US\$550, including all meals and accommodation. For an extra US\$40, you can add on a Reiki attunement to the end of your course. Lushes and carnivores be warned: all retreats are run in strict observation of a yoga lifestyle and there's no smoking, booze or red meat allowed.

Sleeping

London Cottages (☎ 01-357291; camping US\$2.50, chalets US\$6.50) A second track leading west culminates here, with slightly neglected two-bed chalets, set on a sprawling, green site by the beach. There's also a bar and restaurant (dishes US\$2) serving the usual chicken or *chambo* and chips fare.

Flame Tree Lodge (camping per person US\$2.50, chalets US\$19) About 2km down the main road, and another 2km along a track, this is a peaceful place with smart and pleasant two-bed chalets set on a beautiful promontory jutting into the lake. The showers are hot, and there's an open-air bar and restaurant (dishes US\$5). This is a suitable place for families, couples or small groups.

Nkhwazi Lodge (camping US\$3) A good place overlooking a small sandy cove. It can be found by travelling another 1km south down the main road where you'll reach a signpost to the 'CCAP School' (also called New Bandawe); go through here to reach this South African-run place. There are basic but clean ablution blocks, and a 'pub' with home-cooked meals from US\$3 to US\$5.

Kande Beach Camp (☎ 01-357376; www.kandebeach.com; camping US\$3, dm US\$5, chalets US\$30) About 7km from the Makuzi turn-off (55km south of Nkhata Bay). It's a legendary stop for overland trucks, where beach life, good times and late-night partying is the name of the game. All accommodation is excellent (chalets sleep three to four people) and the smorgasbord of facilities include a large bar, a games room, a book exchange and the Soft Sand Cafe (dishes US\$4 to US\$6), which serves great pizzas. For

activities, there's Aquanuts PADI resort and Kande Horse Trails offering three-hour rides (including swimming on horseback!). If that doesn't float your boat you can hire mountain bikes, canoes, kayaks, sailboards, windsurfers or snorkelling equipment. Pick ups from any lodge on the strip for activities.

Kawiya Kottages (sosmalawi@globemw.net; camping per person US\$5, chalets US\$10) About 3km north of Chintheche village, it has two simple cabins in a shady site on a private bit of beach. Each is fully self-contained, including an equipped kitchen.

Chintheche Beach Lodge (r US\$5) This is nearer to town, down the track running west from the Peoples Supermarket. It has clean, two-bed rooms with bathroom and, although you need to bring your own food, the friendly caretaker will cook it for you.

Chintheche Inn (☎ /fax 01-357211; chininn@malawi.net; camping per person US\$5.50, s/d US\$59/88) A grand and beautiful property, with cabanas on the beach and cane furniture under shady trees on the expansive lawns. Tasteful and elegant rooms each have their own veranda and path leading to the beach, and rates include full buffet breakfast. The restaurant (dishes US\$5 to US\$10) serves very good food. Activities on offer include windsurfing (US\$2 per hour), village visits and birding walks. If you want to reserve a room and can't get through, call Wilderness Safaris (p170) in Lilongwe.

Makuzi Beach Lodge (☎ 01-357296; www.makuzibeach.com; camping per person US\$10, chalet s/d US\$82/144) This can be found by continuing south down the main road where you'll reach the turn-off to Bandawe (also called Old Bandawe); it's another 3.5km down the track. The accommodation and facilities here are a step up in quality, and the restaurant (lunch US\$5 to US\$7, dinner US\$17 to US\$20) serves the best food on the strip. If you're feeling active you can hire a windglider, power boat, mountain bike or even a yacht.

LIKOMA ISLAND

Likoma and Chizumulu Islands are on the Mozambican side of Lake Malawi, but are part of Malawi.

The blissful island of Likoma measures 17 sq km and is home to around 6000 people. Isolation from the mainland has enabled the locals here to maintain their reserved culture, shaped partly by the religious legacy of missionaries, but also by the lack of any transient

population – international or domestic. These are possibly the friendliest people in Malawi and there is no crime on the island.

Likoma's flat and sandy south is littered with stately baobabs, and has a constant panorama of Mozambique's wild coast only 40km away. In the hilly north, prolific eucalypts and mango trees compete for views over the vast enormity of the lake. The main drawcard is an abundance of pristine beaches and the activities revolving around them, but there's a healthy dose of other activities, both cultural and physical, to fill several days here. Those looking for wild parties or another beach to conquer will be disappointed, however; Likoma's beauty is its preservation, and both the lodges and locals are happy to keep it that way.

See the map on p178 for details of facilities on Likoma Island.

Sights

In Chipypela, the impressive Anglican **Cathedral of St Peter** should not be missed (see the boxed text, below). You can climb the tower for spectacular views. Nearby, the neat **market place** contains a few shops and stalls, and an old baobab overtaken by a strangler fig, now rotted away from underneath and used by the locals as a storeroom. Down on the lakeshore is a beach where local boats come and go, and the people wash and sell fish. Don't be surprised if some people greet you in Portuguese;

traders come here from nearby Mozambique to sell firewood, vegetables and – bizarrely – fish. The *Ilala* stops at another beach about 1km to the south.

Activities

Swimming is a must on Likoma and best on the long stretches of beach in the south, although Yofu Bay in the north is also good. The tropical fish population has been unaffected by the mainland's overfishing, and the **snorkelling** is excellent. For a closer look, Mango Drift (below) arranges four-day open-water PADI **scuba-diving** courses for US\$250, including accommodation. The island's compact but diverse area is perfect for **walking or mountain biking** – you can bring bikes across on the ferry or hire them from Mango Drift for US\$10 per day.

When exploring, remember that this isn't the Costa del Sol – the people here live a very traditional way of life, so keep your clothing and behaviour suitably modest.

A greater understanding of Chewa culture can be experienced by a consultation with Likoma's witch doctor. His clinic is near Khuyu Village and you will need to make an appointment.

Sleeping & Eating

Mango Drift (camping per person US\$1, dm US\$3, chalet s/d with shared bathroom US\$4/8) A series of simple stone and thatched chalets and a bright, breezy bar,

LIKOMA MISSIONARIES & THE CATHEDRAL OF ST PETER

European involvement on Likoma Island began in 1882 when members of UMCA (Universities Mission to Central Africa) established a base here. The leaders of the party, Will Johnson and Chauncey Maples, chose the island as protection from attacks from the warlike Ngoni and Yao peoples.

Maples became the first bishop of Likoma, but he died only a few months after being appointed, drowning in the lake off Monkey Bay. Despite the setback, missionary work on the island continued. Between 1903 and 1905 the huge cathedral was built and dedicated to St Peter – appropriately a fisherman. Today it remains one of Malawi's most remarkable buildings.

The cathedral measures over 100m long by 25m wide, and has stained-glass windows and elaborate choir stalls carved from soapstone. The crucifix above the altar was carved from wood from the tree where Livingstone's heart was buried in Zambia.

It was built at a part of the island called Chipypela, meaning 'Place of Burning', because the early UMCA arrivals had witnessed suspected witches being burned alive here. The island's main settlement grew up around the cathedral and is still called Chipypela today.

The UMCA missionaries remained on Likoma until the 1940s. During that time they were hard at work – they claimed 100% literacy among the local population at one point. The cathedral fell into disrepair but was restored in the 1970s and 1980s, and local people are understandably very proud of it.

spread across a beautiful beach on the western side of the island. At the time of writing, Mango Drift was about to go through a major refurbishment, though it will remain squarely aimed at the budget traveller.

Alemekezeke Resthouse (s/d with shared bathroom US\$2/3.80) In Chipyla, this place offers basic rooms with nets around a central courtyard. It has a small restaurant (dishes US\$3) and is a nice place to immerse yourself in the village atmosphere.

Kaya Mawa (www.kayamawa.com; full-board chalets per person from US\$180) Run by the same friendly bunch as Mango Drift. This luxury lodge is one of Africa's finest paradise retreats, and its beauty lies in the ingenuity of its design. Each chalet has been meticulously constructed around the natural landscape, using rock faces as walls or screens for open-air showers and stone baths. There are two honeymoon islets, one of which even has its own loveseat cable car. The bar, perched on the top of a huge rock buttress, offers seamless views of mango-hued sunsets, and the meals are possibly the finest in Malawi. The owners have gone to painstaking length to be unobtrusive on both the landscape and local population, and this aim is fully realised.

Hot Coconut Bar (mains US\$0.50-1) A little dive where you can grab a drink and a snack and converse with the locals.

Getting There & Away

Several companies can arrange flights to Likoma Island, including **Wilderness Safaris** (☎ 01-771393/153; www.wilderness-safaris.com) and **Uleno Air Services** (☎ 01-754717/950; air-services@uleno.malawi.net). The cost of a five-seater plane from Lilongwe is US\$755, but you can purchase an empty seat in either direction for a discounted price; contact the companies directly for details.

The *Ilala* ferry (see p234) stops at Likoma Island twice a week, usually for three to four hours, so even if you're heading elsewhere, you might be able to nip ashore to have a quick look at the cathedral (see the boxed text, p193). Check with the captain before you leave the boat.

Heading south, the *Ilala* then sails to Cóbue (*kob-way*) and Metangula on the Mozambican mainland. Local dhows also sail to Cóbue for US\$0.80. Alternatively, if you're planning to go to the exceptional **Mchenga Nkwichi** (Lake Niassa, Mozambique) nearby on the opposite side of the

lake, this lodge can organise a boat transfer. For more details, see p284.

CHIZUMULU ISLAND

'Chizzie' is smaller than Likoma (and just a few kilometres away) and even more detached from the mainland. Stretches of lucid azure water and white rocky outcrops give this island a Mediterranean flavour, while the backdrop of dry scrub is positively antipodean. The slow and friendly village activity on the perimeter of idyllic beaches, however, is unmistakably Malawian. If you want to visit both islands, transport links make it best to go to Chizumulu first.

Wakwenda Retreat (camping US\$2, dm US\$2.50, r from US\$4), smack bang on a postcard-perfect beach, is utter chill-out material. The sizeable bar is constructed around a massive, hollow baobab tree, and the shaded lounge area is often the focus of lazy activity. The **restaurant** (breakfasts US\$1.50, dishes US\$2.50) serves good beachy fare, including sandwiches, omelettes and burgers. Snorkelling gear is free, and you can hire diving equipment for US\$15 to US\$25 depending on where you dive.

About 4km south on Mocho Beach, there's a basic resthouse where rates are cheaper.

The *Ilala* ferry (see p234) stops right outside Wakwenda Retreat, so even if you're not staying on the island you can pop over for a drink. A dhow ferry departs Mocho Beach daily between 10am and 1pm, and sails to Ulisa on Likoma Island (US\$1.30). The trip can take anything from one to three hours depending on the weather; it's an extremely choppy ride when the wind is blowing, and potentially dangerous if a storm comes up. If you're unsure ask Nick at Wakwenda for advice.

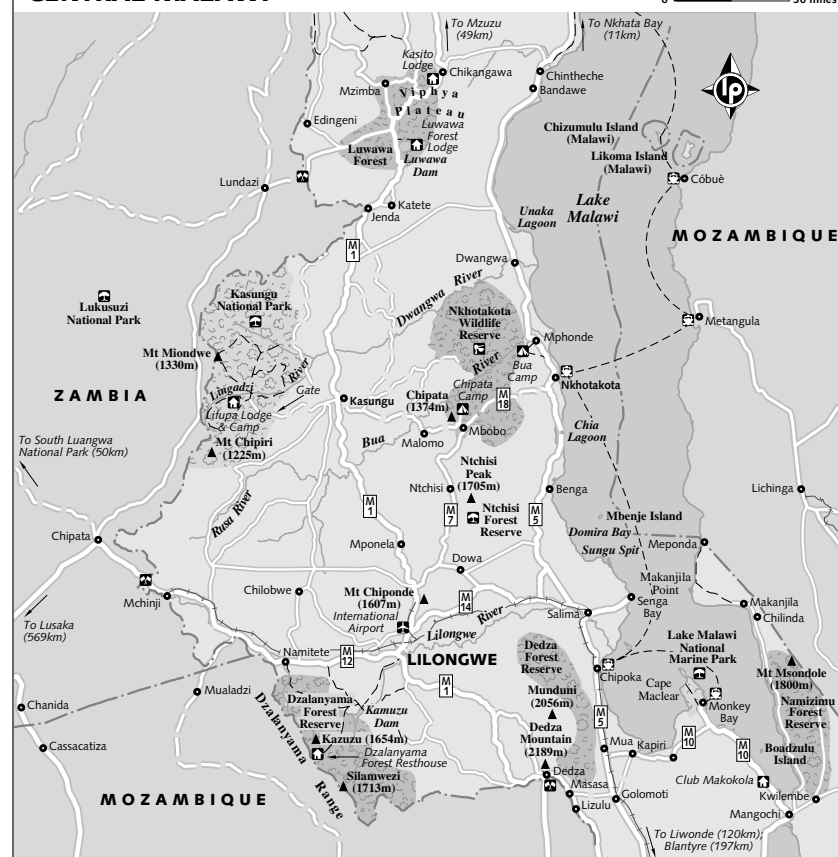
CENTRAL MALAWI

Central Malawi is home to the country's most popular beach resorts and a fantastic cultural museum at the Mua Mission. This section covers most parts of Malawi's Central Province with the addition of the Viphya Plateau. Places are described north to south.

VIPHYA PLATEAU

Viphya Plateau is a highland area, running like a broad backbone through northcentral Malawi. Despite its name, this area is not flat but consists mostly of rolling hills, cut by river

CENTRAL MALAWI



valleys and punctuated by occasional rocky peaks. The dense bush of the plateau's south gives way to pine plantations and colourful patches of jacaranda trees in the beautiful north. The journey along the main road between Kasungu and Mzuzu is stunning, particularly when a sunny day reveals distant mountains breaking through the western horizon (but don't be surprised if there's dense mist and rain). If you've got a few days to spare this is a good area to relax away from the hubbub of towns or cool down from the heat of the lakeshore.

Sleeping

Kasito Lodge (Map p195; ☎ 01-343219; camping per person US\$1.30, s/d with shared bathroom US\$6.50/13) Less than

1km west of the main road between Kasungu and Mzuzu, this is an absolute gem. There are five rooms in this colonial house, each varying in bed number, and some still have their original furniture. The communal showers are hot, the toilets are clean and the large, stately lounge has a roaring wood fire. You can supply your own food and the friendly staff will cook (a tip is appropriate), or you can utilise the restaurant. There are excellent views of the surrounding forests inside and out.

To reach Kasito by car from the south, you continue 27km beyond the Mzimba junction on the main sealed road towards Mzuzu; the lodge is signposted on your left. Coming from the north, you pass a large wood factory at Chikangawa village, and the turn-off to the

lodge is a few kilometres beyond here on the right. If you're travelling by bus, ask the driver to drop you at the junction. Kasito Lodge is less than 1km from the junction.

Luwawa Forest Lodge (Map p195; ☎ 08-829725; www.plusdata.uklinux.net; camping per person US\$5, chalets from US\$50) Lies 8km east of the main road between Kasungu and Mzuzu; take the sign-posted road marked Luwawa D37. The lodge used to belong to the forestry department, but it's managed now by the energetic George Wardlow. The comfortable chalets include a kitchen and sleep two to four people. Breakfast and lunch costs US\$5, and a hearty three-course dinner is US\$15. But you'll soon work off the calories with the activities offered by the lodge: walking trails, mountain biking (US\$5 per hour), sailing, boating (US\$10 per hour), fishing and long-distance wilderness walks, and rides to Chintheche on the lakeshore. There's no public transport to Luwawa, so if you haven't got wheels you'll have to walk, although you may be lucky and be able to get a ride from the main road on a logging truck.

KASUNGU

Kasungu is a fairly large town, just off the main north-south road, and about 130km northwest of Lilongwe. It has no major attractions, but you may find yourself changing transport here.

A good option is **Teja Resthouse** (☎ 01-253387; s/d US\$2.50/3.50). It looks a little dilapidated outside, but the clean rooms have nets and some have bathrooms (for the same price) so look at a few. It's east of the bus station, just as the sealed road becomes dirt. The **Kasungu Inn** (☎ 01-253306; s/d with bath US\$36/48), at the western end of town on the main road, is set in pleasant and picturesque grounds and has neat and spacious rooms.

There are several cheap local restaurants on the main street and around the market. **Golden Dish** (breakfasts US\$1, mains US\$1.30), on the main road, is a clean and friendly joint serving the usual meat and *nsima* fare. Of similar quality and price is the nearby Mr Spice. The bar at the Kasungu Inn is a nice place to relax with a beer.

All buses and minibuses between Mzuzu and Lilongwe come through the town, and there are infrequent *matola* along the road through Nkhokotakota Wildlife Reserve to the lakeshore.

KASUNGU NATIONAL PARK

Kasungu National Park lies to the west of Kasungu town, and covers more than 2000 sq km. The gently rolling hills, with a few pointed rocky outcrops, are covered in miombo woodland, which is relatively dense because the park's elephant population (which would naturally act as 'gardeners') has been seriously reduced since the 1970s by poaching.

Optimistic estimates suggest about 200 elephants still remain, and the chances of seeing some is best in the dry season (May to October). Buffaloes, zebras, hippos and several antelope species, which were also drastically reduced due to poaching, have begun to reappear in recent years. The bird life is excellent, with woodland and grassland species, and waders.

Entry fees are payable (see p166). The park has a network of driveable tracks that can be toured in your own vehicle or on a wildlife drive (US\$40) organised at Lifupa Lodge. Guided walks can also be arranged here.

Sleeping

Lifupa Camp (Map p195; camping per person US\$5) Near Lifupa Lodge. If you're taking this option you'll need to bring your own food (you can stock up at the Peoples Supermarket in Kasungu), which you can prepare in a communal kitchen.

Lifupa Lodge (Map p195; ☎ 01-70576; s/d US\$108/132) Has a tall thatched central bar and restaurant with a beautiful veranda overlooking the dam (where animals often come to drink). The simple, stylish twin-bedded chalets have private balconies, and rates include breakfast. The lodge has been taken over by Wilderness Safaris and is undergoing renovations.

Getting There & Away

The park entrance is 35km west of Kasungu town. From the entrance, it's 17km by the shortest route to Lifupa Lodge. There's no public transport, so without a car you'd have to hitch from Kasungu – the best place to wait is the turn-off to the park (signposted) near the petrol station on the main road.

NKHOTAKOTA

This was once the centre of slave trading in this region and is reputedly one of the oldest market towns in Africa. Today it's strung out over 4km between the busy highway and

the lake. Nkhokotakota makes a good break in any journey along the lakeshore, but don't expect much action. Nevertheless, the sleepy and quiet pace in the village-like outskirts may be just what's needed after buses and tourist mayhem. There's a branch of the Commercial Bank of Malawi on the main north-south road, which offers foreign exchange facilities but no credit-card withdrawals.

Things to see include the **mission**, with a spectacular tree in the grounds, under which Livingstone persuaded Chief Jumbe to end the slave trade in the 19th century. In the part of town called Kombo is another '**Livingstone Tree**', where an aspiring politician called Hastings Banda made political speeches in the 1960s. Next to the BP petrol station and set back from the highway, an aspiring group of artists headed by the affable Oster runs **Black History** out of a thatched shack, where you can pick up good wooden carvings, pottery and batiks.

Sleeping & Eating

Pick & Pay Resthouse (☎ 01-292459; camping US\$2, r with shared/private bathroom US\$3/5) A clean and basic option off the highway. Follow the signpost from the main road and head towards the lake for 500m. There are nets and fans in the rooms, and the restaurant (dishes US\$2) serves filling portions of barbecued fish.

Kulinga Resthouse (r with shared bathroom US\$2.50) Next door to Pick & Pay, this is more basic, and the shared bathrooms are best described as rustic.

Nawo Guesthouse (☎ 01-292453; s/d US\$3.80/5) On the main north-south road, it offers the most accommodating rooms in town and has safe parking.

Yamikani Restaurant & Bar (mains US\$1-2.50) On the main road, it serves simple, tasty meals, as does the Prime Kitchen Restaurant, a few doors down.

Getting There & Away

You can get to Nkhokotakota by the *Ilala* ferry (see p234). To get here by bus from Lilongwe, take the 'Mzuzu via Lakeshore' ordinary bus (US\$2.50, 4½ hours, two daily), which also stops in Salima. The bus will drop you off roughly outside Nkhokotakota's BP petrol station, which is on the highway. *Matola* leave 100m further north and go to Salima (US\$1.80, three hours) and Nkhata Bay (US\$4, 5½ hours).

SOUTH OF NKHOTAKOTA

About 24km south of Nkhokotakota is the entrance to **Chia Lagoon**, a large bay linked to the main lake by a narrow channel, which is crossed by a bridge near the main road. Local people fish here using large triangular nets on poles, and seem resigned to having their photos taken by tourists on the bridge.

Nkhokotakota Pottery (☎ 01-292444; www.dedza pottery.com; s/d US\$12/24) is signposted another 2.5km further south from the main road. If you feel like resting here for a few days you could do a pottery course. They run a bewildering array of courses from a couple of days to a few weeks. Course participants are housed in lovely chalets on the beach and accommodation is included in the price. Courses start at around US\$90.

Sleeping

Sani Beach Resort (☎ 01-292511; camping per person US\$1.30, hut s/d US\$10/19, chalet s/d US\$13/24) A few kilometres off the main north-south road. Simple huts and larger brick and thatch chalets sit on a sandy beach, but aside from the great bar, which almost has 360-degree views, it's a little lacking in atmosphere.

Njobvu Safari Lodge (☎ 01-292506; camping per person US\$2.30, s/d US\$35/50) Has appealing round chalets with thatched roofs and cane décor, all right on the lakeshore. Rates include breakfast, and meals in the stylish restaurant (snacks US\$1.50, dishes US\$2.50 to US\$6) include roasted guinea fowl, vegetarian stir-fries, curries and of course fresh fish. The owners know a lot about wildlife in the area and arrange day safaris to Nkhokotakota Wildlife Reserve (below) for US\$60, including meals, transport, entry fees, professional guide and a good chance of spotting elephants.

NKHOTAKOTA WILDLIFE RESERVE

Nkhokotakota Wildlife Reserve lies west of the main lakeshore road, and covers around 1800 sq km of dense miombo forests with pockets of evergreens carpeting hills and escarpments. It's the largest reserve in Malawi, but was virtually abandoned during the 1980s and early 1990s. There's a healthy elephant population here, as well as roan and sable antelopes, waterbucks, buffaloes and even a few lions and leopards. Several large rivers cross the reserve, so the bird life is also varied and rewarding. Walking is the best way to experience the area, and at least a few hours is needed to spot wildlife.

Entry fees are payable (see p166). You can hire a scout (ranger) here to be a guide or do a day safari from Njobvu Safari Lodge (p197).

There are some dilapidated rondavels at Chipata Camp (Map p195), the reserve headquarters, which is about 5km north of the end of the dirt road from Lilongwe, about 35km southwest of Nkhokotakota town. The best place to aim for is **Bua Camp** (Map p195; camping US\$3), a beautiful clearing on the banks of a rocky river. The turn-off to Bua is 10km north of Nkhokotakota town, then 15km on a dirt track; without your own wheels the only way to get here is on foot.

SALIMA

The town of Salima is spread out about 20km from the lake, where the road from Lilongwe meets the main lakeshore road, a wide sweeping central boulevard, bustling with bicycle traffic.

Mai Tsalani Motel (☎ 01-262622; s with shared bath-room US\$3, d US\$5-13), about 10 minutes' walk from the bus station and close to the PTC Supermarket, has a variety of rooms from small and basic singles with shared bathrooms to large doubles with sitting rooms and bathrooms. Bed and breakfast rates are also available.

Mwambiya Lodge (☎ 262314; s/d US\$10/12.50), across the train line from the bus station, is more of a hotel set-up, with bland but clean rooms. Rates include breakfast.

To reach Salima from Lilongwe, it's easiest to take a minibus (US\$1.50). Minibuses and *matola* also run frequently between Salima and Senga Bay (US\$1) and less frequently to Nkhata Bay (US\$6.50), Mzuzu (US\$8.50) and Blantyre (US\$4), via Mangochi. There are also ordinary buses to Mzuzu (US\$6, seven hours, two daily) via Nkhata Bay (US\$5.50, five hours).

SENGA BAY

Senga Bay is at the eastern end of a broad peninsula that juts into the lake from Salima. The water is remarkably clear here, and the beaches, while a little more crowded than those at Cape Maclear or Nkhata Bay, are also good. Senga Bay is also very spread out, and you might have to take bicycle taxis to get from place to place.

Dangers & Annoyances

Take great care when swimming near the large rocks at the end of the beach at Steps Camp-

site; you'll find there's a surprisingly strong undertow. Some of the beaches here are flat and reedy – perfect conditions for bilharzia, so get advice from your hotel or lodge to see if it's safe.

Many travellers have complained about persistent hassling from local youths, all wanting to sell souvenirs or arrange boat rides. Be aware especially of the enthusiastic guys at the craft stalls who offer to wrap your purchase – they'll charge more for this than you paid for the carving, and swapping your souvenir for a lump of wood has been tried more than once. Be polite and firm in your dealings, and you should be OK.

Sights & Activities

As a break from lazing on the beach, you can go windsurfing or snorkelling, take a boat ride or learn to dive. You could also take a trip out to nearby **Lizard Island** to see its population of giant monitor lizards and its cormorant colony. Many lodges and local guides can arrange this and it should cost about US\$25. Alternatively, you can go hiking in the nearby **Senga Hills**. It's best to hire a local guide to show you the way (also because there have been isolated incidents of robbery and harassment here). The bird-watching is excellent, with a good range of habitats close by. If you're looking for souvenirs, there's a strip of craft stalls a few kilometres out of Senga Bay, on the Salima road.

About 10km south of Senga Bay is **Stewart Grant's Tropical Fish Farm** (☎/fax 263165), which breeds and exports cichlids. If you're genuinely interested you can do a half-hour tour of the farm (US\$0.50). **Red Zebra Tours** (☎ 01-263165; www.lakemalawi.com), based here, offers lake safaris with an experienced guide from US\$25/30 per person for a half/full day. For something less active, two-hour sundowner cruises are also available for US\$15 per person (minimum charge for the boat US\$50). Children are half price.

Sleeping & Eating

There's a good choice of places to stay and a couple of eateries in Senga Bay.

Baobab Chalets (☎ 01-263495; camping per person US\$1.30, s/d US\$14/15) Near Carolina, it has small brick chalets and a few grassy patches to pitch a tent. On weekends this is a popular spot for Malawians.

Carolina Holiday Resort (☎ 01-263220; shelagh@malawi.net; camping per person US\$1.50, dm US\$5, s/d with

CICHLID FISH

There are around 500 species of fish in Lake Malawi. Most of these are of the family *Cichlidae* – the largest family of fish in Africa – and 99% of these cichlids are endemic to the lake. *Chambo*, familiar to anyone who has eaten in a restaurant in Malawi, are one type of cichlid. Others include the small *utaka*, which move in big shoals and are caught by fisherman at night. But Lake Malawi is most famous for the small and colourful *mbuna*, of which there are many species. As well as being attractive to snorkellers and divers, *mbuna* are popular with aquariums, and for scientists they provide a fascinating insight into the process of evolution. *Mbuna* identification and classification is an ongoing process, and it is thought that many species of *mbuna* remain undiscovered.

Cichlids have evolved over the millennia from one common species into many hundreds, yet they have continued to coexist. This has been achieved by different species developing different ways of feeding. *Chambo* eat phytoplankton, which they filter out of the water through their mouths, whereas *mbuna* have different methods of feeding. Some have developed special teeth to help them scrape algae off the rocks; there are also 'snail eaters' with strong flat teeth, perfect for crushing shells; and 'sand diggers', which filter insects and small animals out of the sand.

Also interesting is the cichlid breeding process. The male attracts the female with his bright colours and, if suitably impressed, she lays eggs, which she immediately takes in her mouth for protection. The male has a pattern near his tail resembling the eggs, which the female tries to pick up, at which point the male releases his sperm into the water, which the female invariably inhales. This process is repeated until all or most of the eggs are fertilised. The female keeps the eggs in her mouth, and when they become baby fish, they stay there for protection. They emerge only to feed, but at the slightest sign of danger, the mother opens her mouth and the young swim straight back in.

shared bathroom US\$18/23, chalets US\$35) This is 3km down a dirt road, at the western end of the main street. It's a friendly spot with a good restaurant (dishes US\$3 to US\$5), and breakfast is included in the rates. There's also a bar, outside terrace and shady gardens overlooking the lake. While the chalets have verandas and are quite spacious, the double and single rooms are tiny and poor value.

our pick Wheelhouse Marina (☎ 01-263139; wheelhouse@mw.celtelplus.com; camping per person US\$2, caravans \$12, 2-/10-bed house US\$30/50) A rambling, ramshackle paradise with a sense of character and charm; it consists of the ruins of an old marina, a grassy camp site, two self-catering cottages nestled into the hillside and a groovy old caravan for two. The cottages are lovely with shaded veranda and great views onto the beach and the lushly green gardens. The camp site has clean ablutions, barbecue facilities (with clean grills!) and picnic tables. To up the romance factor you can have a barbecue or dinner in the ruins of the marina. There's also a quirky round bar raised above the water on stilts that serves great steaks and fish.

Steps Campsite (camping per person US\$3) Beautifully situated on a wide clean sandy beach right beside the water, with plenty of shady

areas to put up your tent, a beach volleyball pitch, excellent security and socket points for fridges. The bathrooms are spotlessly clean and have hot showers. There's a good circular bar, and food can be brought to you from the restaurant at the Livingstonia Beach next door.

Red Zebra Lodge (☎ 01-263165; www.lakemalawi.com; s/d US\$15/20) Based at Stewart Grant's Tropical Fish Farm; has several brick bungalows with spacious and comfortable interiors. More expensive B&B rates are also available, and the restaurant (dishes US\$4 to US\$6) cooks up a good variety of dishes, including vegetarian options.

Cool Runnings (r with shared bathroom US\$20) An extremely homely and friendly place; small enough to feel cosy and intimate but with enough space to chill out on your own if you chose. It's obvious that a lot of thought has been put into its design, and there are plenty of extra touches that make a stay here memorable – there's comedy reading material in the shared bathrooms, for instance; and each bedroom is named after a different African country, with corresponding maps and framed snippets of information adorning the walls. Best of all, though, is the tantalising food: you discuss

the options with the owner a couple of hours in advance, and come dinnertime, a specially tailored feast will arrive at your table.

Lakeside Hotel (☎ 01-263400/500; s/d/US\$25/38/102; 📶) On the same dirt road as Carolina Holiday Resort, this place is a tad sterile, but the commodious rooms come with TV, fridge, air-con and expansive verandas with lake views and breakfast. There's also a garden and a large outdoor bar. The facilities and room to move in this hotel make it a good choice for families.

Safari Beach Lodge (☎ 01-263143; safwag@malawi.net; s/d US\$44/65) This is 1km off the main road; turn off just before the gates to Livingstonia Beach. Clean and airy rooms in a colonial-style building look out to the gardens or the water. There are also safari tents perched on the side of the hill with fans and electricity, wooden balconies with superb lake views and private open-air bathrooms attached by wooden walkways. There is an elevated wooden walkway leading from the lodge gardens down to the shore, and a fantastic wooden platform built into the surrounding rocks. It's home to the bar and makes a great spot for sundowners or dining al fresco.

Kambiri Holiday Resort (☎ 01-263052/352; kam.biri@alexanderhotels.net; s/d US\$45/90) Large rambling hotel with airy rooms (slightly spoiled by the unfortunate satin bedspreads) and gardens leading down to a large empty stretch of beach. The resort attracts a mostly Malawian clientele.

Livingstonia Beach (☎ 01-263222; livingstonia@lemeridienmalawi.co.mw; s/d US\$115/130; 📶) All glistening white and opulent, it sits at the end of the main street, past a set of imposing gates. It's a stylish affair; perfectly spaced sunlounges under thatched shades line the beachfront and the rooms house a host of comforts including telephone, TV, tea- and coffee-making facilities, fans and private verandas overlooking the beach. On site is a tennis court, swimming pool (in case the lake at your doorstep is too far), bar and restaurant, all set amid lush gardens and made-for-a-brochure views.

Tophill Restaurant (dishes US\$1-2.50) Just down the road from Red Zebra Cafe, this has simpler surrounds and fare, and its speciality banana pancakes are excellent.

Red Zebra Cafe (breakfast & snacks US\$1-3, dishes US\$3.50-4; ☎ 6am-10.30pm) Little café in a large garden by the side of the main road, 500m from the Livingstonia Beach Hotel. It's deco-

rated with jolly murals of palm trees and seaside scenes and has shady verandas; there's also a simple menu of burgers, pizzas, *chambo* and curries.

Getting There & Away

First get to Salima (for details see p198). From here, local pick-ups run to Senga Bay (US\$1), dropping you in the main street. If you want a lift all the way to Steps Campsite, negotiate an extra fee with the driver. If you're travelling to/from Cape Maclear consider chartering a boat; it's not too expensive (around US\$100) if you get a group together, it's good fun and it saves one hell of a trip on the bus.

MUA

Mua is a small town between Salima and Balaka, and consists mostly of a large mission with a church, a school and a hospital, which has been here since the beginning of the 20th century. It is also home to the **KuNgoni Art & Craft Centre** (☎ 01-262706; admin@kungoni.org), which features a library and research centre, a school and workshop for wood carvers – you can visit to see them in action – and a craft shop, full of paintings and wood sculptures by local people. Some is of very high quality and quite unusual, covering religious and secular subjects. Prices are reasonable. There's accommodation here in two-bed chalets (US\$30 including breakfast), and meals can also be provided for overnight guests. They also run sporadic courses on Malawian history and culture, and there are frequent performances of dances and songs from Chewa, Ngoni and Yao cultures. Contact the centre for further details.

For a deeper understanding of the ideas behind the sculptures, a visit to the **Chamare museum** (☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat) is an absolute must. It has three exhibition rooms – beautifully decorated with vibrant murals depicting scenes from Malawian history – that concentrate on the three main cultural groups of the region (Chewa, Ngoni and Yao) and their approach to traditional beliefs, with fascinating exhibits from rituals and rites of passage. A guided tour is essential; it takes an hour and costs US\$5.

See opposite for transport connections to/from Mua.

MONKEY BAY

Monkey Bay is a port at the southern end of Lake Malawi, which most travellers pass through on the way to Cape Maclear. Monkey

Bay also has a market and a Peoples Supermarket but no ATM or money exchange.

The **Back to School Foundation** (www.monkeybay.bravehost.com) is based at Njovubu Backpackers. Volunteers get free accommodation and airport pick-up and drop-off in return for helping this scheme, which raises money to send children and young adults to secondary school. The friendly host also arranges trips for volunteers to areas of interest around Malawi.

Sleeping

Venice Beach Backpackers (camping per person US\$1.30, dm US\$2, d with shared bathroom US\$2.50) This place is about 1.5km from the main road and offers dorms and rooms in a two-storey thatch building set on a beautiful stretch of beach. There's a bar with a small menu of local food; fish and *nsima* is about US\$2. It seems to have been permanently under renovation for the past few years, though, and plays host to a number of beach boys keen on giving the hard sell.

Njovubu Backpackers (☎ 01-587214; www.monkeybay.bravehost.com/backpackers.htm; camping US\$1.50, dm/r US\$1.50/3; 📶) Just off the main street is this small and friendly joint with an internet café, tidy rooms and dorms, and splendid home-baked cakes. Many of the guests are volunteers working for the Back to School Foundation, and a new annex was under construction at the time of writing.

Ziwadi Resthouse (☎ 01-587232; s/d with shared bathroom MKUS\$2/3, s/d US\$3.50/4.50) Just off the main road. Offers tidy, simple rooms, as well as a basic restaurant, but there's a lot of noise from the street.

Getting There & Away

From Lilongwe, ordinary buses go to Monkey Bay, either via Mua and the southern lakeshore (US\$3.80, seven hours, two daily) or the long way round, via Balaka, Liwonde and Mangochi (US\$4.50, 10 hours, two daily). From Lilongwe you're probably better off going by minibus to Salima (US\$1.50), from where you might find a minibus or *matola* going direct to Monkey Bay. If not, take a minibus towards Balaka, get off at the Matakataka road junction near Mua (look out for the craft stalls), then take a *matola* (US\$2) along the Matakataka road to the main road between Monkey Bay and Mangochi. Another option if you're in a group is to charter your own *matola*.

It's much easier to reach Monkey Bay from Blantyre on the ordinary bus that travels via Liwonde and Mangochi (US\$3.80, eight hours, one daily). A quicker option is to go by minibus (US\$5, four hours), but you'll need to leave in the morning and you're likely to change at Limbe, Mangochi and sometimes Zomba.

To avoid the bus hassles, many travellers use the *Ilala* ferry to travel up and down the country to or from Monkey Bay (see p234).

From Monkey Bay, a *matola* ride to Cape Maclear should cost US\$1, although some travellers have reported paying more so be assertive when negotiating. Although not far away, it can take all day to get there and you could wait anything from 30 minutes to five hours for a *matola* departure.

CAPE MACLEAR

Cape Maclear sits on a scenic jut of land at the southern end of Lake Malawi, with the alluring Domwe and Thumbi Islands anchored offshore. It was once a travellers' byword for sun, sand, rest and recreation, but the crowds seem to have moved on elsewhere and the beach is no longer as clean as it once was. It is still a picturesque and relaxing place to experience the beauty, lifestyle and activities of the lake, however. There's nowhere to change money in Cape Maclear, so make sure you bring enough with you.

Dangers & Annoyances

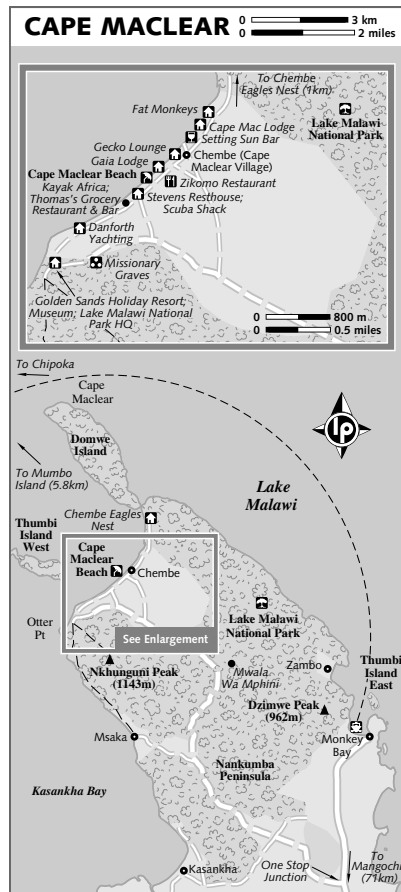
Scams to watch out for at Cape Maclear include the boys who take money in advance for a boat ride or barbecue and then disappear, or who take you on a boat then go through your day-pack while you're snorkelling. Real robberies do occasionally happen on the beach or surrounding hills; violence is very unlikely, but don't carry anything valuable.

Sights

Much of the area around Cape Maclear, including several offshore islands, is part of **Lake Malawi National Park**, one of the few freshwater aquatic parks in Africa. The park headquarters are at Golden Sands Holiday Resort.

There's also a **museum**, which is well worth a visit to learn about the formation of the lake and the evolution of the fish. The information is nontechnical and well presented.

Near the entrance gate to the Golden Sands, a path leads towards the hills overlooking



the bay. A few hundred metres up here is a small group of **missionary graves**, marking the last resting place of the missionaries who attempted to establish the first Livingstonia Mission here in 1875 (see p159 and p179).

Activities

SNORKELLING

Guides registered with the Chembe Village Tourist Association can organise day trips to nearby islands for about US\$10 to US\$40 per boat, plus around US\$15 per person, including snorkelling and lunch (fish and rice cooked on an open fire). If you want to stretch this out into a night or two on the islands, the cost is US\$25/45 for one/two days, including tents. Your lodge can put you in contact with

guides, but before you arrange anything, get recommendations from other travellers and negotiate a price.

If you prefer to go snorkelling on your own, many places rent gear (rates start at about US\$2 – but check the quality of your mask). Otter Point, less than 1km beyond Golden Sands, is a small rocky peninsula and nearby islet that is very popular with fish and snorkellers. You may even see otters here.

DIVING

For diving, go to **Scuba Shack** (☎ 09-934220; www.scubashackmalawi.com), based within Stevens Resthouse, **Kayak Africa** (☎ 09-942661; www.kayakafrika.net) or Danforth Yachting (p204). All three offer PADI open-water courses for around US\$250, as well as casual dives for experienced divers. Scuba Shack also has an Instructor Development Centre (IDC) so you can become a qualified instructor here.

KAYAKING

If you prefer to stay on top of the water, Kayak Africa has top-of-the-range kayaks (single and double) suitable for experts or beginners, which can be hired from around US\$12 for a few hours. A day trip with lunch costs from US\$50. The best option, if you've got the money, is to take a guided two- or three-night island-hopping trip, using Kayak Africa's delightful camps on Domwe and Mumbo Islands. The charge per night is US\$150 per person for Mumbo Island and US\$130 for Domwe, and includes a tent with mattress and duvet, good meals, hot showers, snorkel gear and park fees. Anyone who's done this trip raves about it.

BOAT CRUISES

Yet another option is sailing on a yacht with an outfit called **Danforth Yachting** (☎ 09-960077; www.danforthyachting.com). A sunset cruise around Cape Maclear aboard the *Mufasa* costs US\$25 per person (minimum six people required); a full-day island-hopping cruise costs US\$75 per person (minimum four people), including lunch; and an overnight cruise including all meals as well as snorkelling and fishing equipment costs US\$150 per person (minimum four people). The owners also have exquisite accommodation (see p204).

HIKING

There's a good range of hikes and walks in the hills that form a horseshoe around the plain

behind the village and the beach. You can go alone (see p201) or arrange a guide, either from the village or at the national park headquarters at Golden Sands Holiday Resort; the park's rate for a guide is US\$9 for a full-day trip. The main path starts by the missionary graves and leads up through woodland to a col below **Nkhunguni Peak**, the highest on the Nankumba Peninsula, with great views over Cape Maclear, the lake and surrounding islands. It's six hours return to the summit; plenty of water and a good sun hat are essential.

Another interesting place to visit on foot is **Mwala Wa Mphini** (Rock of the Tribal Face Scars), which is just off the main dirt road into Cape Maclear, about 5km from the park headquarters. This huge boulder is covered in lines and patterns that seem to have been gouged out by long-forgotten artists, but are simply a natural geological formation.

If you want a longer walk, a small lake-side path leads southwest from Otter Point, through woodland above the shore, for about 4km to a small fishing village called **Msaka** (which has a small bar/shop serving cold drinks). From here a track leads inland (west) to meet the main dirt road between Cape Maclear and Monkey Bay. Turn left and head back towards Cape Maclear, passing Mwala Wa Mphini on the way. The whole circuit is about 16km and takes four to five hours.

VOLUNTEERING

Billy Riordan Memorial Trust (www.billysmalawiproject.com) was set up in memory of a young man, Billy Riordan, who sadly drowned in the lake in 1999. The trust provides medical care in the area and is currently working on establishing an HIV/AIDS treatment centre. The trust needs medical volunteers (doctors, nurses, lab technicians) as well as builders, electricians and carpenters. Work in administration, agriculture and horticulture is also available. They prefer volunteers who can commit for a minimum of three months.

Sleeping

Golden Sands Holiday Resort (camping per person US\$0.50, 1-/2-/3-person rondavels US\$1/1.50/2) At the far western end of the beach. This is also Lake Malawi National Park headquarters, and as it's inside the park you have to pay fees (see p166). It offers camping and basic, small rondavels. The beach here is cleaner and the atmosphere is generally much quieter than some

other places in Cape Maclear, so it's ideal for families, drivers and people who don't want to drink and smoke all night.

Stevens Resthouse (☎ 01-587541; camping per person US\$0.50, s/d US\$4/7; 🍽️) Large, simple rooms with nets are good value, and there are pleasant camping areas close to the water. The bar and restaurant are close to the beach, although both have seen kinder days and better maintenance. There's a book exchange, though, and an internet café (US\$9 an hour).

Fat Monkeys (☎ 09-948501; camping per person US\$1, r with shared bathroom US\$5) Almost 1km east of the village centre and away from the crowds, this is a huge camping ground aimed primarily at overland trucks and car-campers. It also has small and comfortable rooms, good security, showers, and the ubiquitous bar and restaurant by the water.

Gaia Lodge (☎ 09-300559, 374631; gaiahouse@mw.celtelplus.com; camping US\$2, dm US\$2.50, s/d US\$3/6) The rooms are on the small side, but there's a great, shady waterfront garden, excellent food and a supremely chilled-out atmosphere.

Chembe Eagles Nest (☎ 09-960628, 966507; www.chembenest.com; camping US\$6, half-board cottages & safari tents per person US\$60) At the far eastern end of Cape Maclear beach, this is about as far from the tourist trap as you can get. It's an idyllic spot on a beautiful and very clean broad stretch of private beach, strewn with palm trees and shaded tables, nestled against the side of the hills. There are airy thatch and brick rooms with wooden four posters and spacious verandas. There's a catamaran for hire (\$35 per person for a full day including lunch), and a swimming pool is being built.

Gecko Lounge (☎ 09-833856; kite@africa-online.net; dm US\$10, d US\$40) From the beach, you can't miss this place – with its bright orange building and excessively manicured lawns. It's a good bet for families and groups, with spacious cottages with self-catering facilities that sleep up to four people. The dorm, while more expensive than most, is also a good deal nicer, and the food is top-notch; the menus change daily.

Cape Mac Lodge (☎ 09-966520; rogerl@africaonline.net; s/d/US\$65/85/90) Has dark pink thatch buildings, manicured lawns and well-appointed rooms with fans, large, plush bathrooms and cool tile floors. All rooms have large verandas with great views of the lake. It also has a restaurant, Froggies, which serves excellent French cuisine.

Danforth Yachting (☎ 09-960077; danforth@malawi.net; full-board r per person US\$150) About 500m towards the village, this is by far the swankiest place on the cape. Plush and pristine rooms sleep up to four people, and rates include use of all equipment and activities (including cruises). There's also a bar, restaurant and outdoor lounge area in front of a stretch of rich grass with prime views of the lake.

Eating & Drinking

Zikomo Restaurant (breakfast \$1.20, dishes from US\$1) Serves good breakfasts and stews in a sandy courtyard setting off the main drag.

Thomas's Grocery Restaurant and Bar (dishes US\$2) This is a great local eatery if you want to leave the confines of your lodge. Meals are filling, tasty and predictable (although they do serve spaghetti and Indian chapatis), and the outdoor bench seating is the perfect spot to watch the village operate around you.

The Setting Sun Bar is a lively, loud, mural-adorned bar on the waterfront. It's the most popular bar in town and a good place to chat with the locals, although it can get a little raucous.

Getting There & Away

By public transport, first get to Monkey Bay, from where a *matola* should cost US\$1 (see p201 for more details). If you're driving from Mangochi, the dirt road to Cape Maclear (signposted) turns west off the main road, about 5km before Monkey Bay. Be warned, however: it's a bumpy ride and unless you're in a 4WD or high-clearance vehicle, it'll be slow going.

From Cape Maclear, if you're heading for Senga Bay, ask at the dive schools about chartering a boat. It will cost around US\$100, but it's not bad when split between four to six people and much better than the long, hard bus ride.

MONKEY BAY TO MANGOCHI

From Monkey Bay the main road runs south to Mangochi. Along this stretch of lake are several places to stay, catering for all tastes and budgets.

Palm Beach Leisure Resort (☎ 09-943050; www.palmbeach-mw.com; camping per person US\$2, s/d from US\$15/25) North of Mangochi, this was once a smart resort on a beautiful beach surrounded by (not surprisingly) a grove of palm trees. Its large thatched chalets with nets and fans

could now do with a lick of paint, but it's a friendly and pleasant spot with loads of space and lush green lawns for camping. The restaurant (breakfasts US\$1.50, dishes US\$1.25 to US\$4.50) serves fish, steaks, burgers, curries, pasta and good vegetarian dishes. This place is quiet during the week, but livelier at weekends when people come from Blantyre and Lilongwe for boating and fishing.

Boadzulu Lakeshore Resort (☎ 01-594725; camping US\$2.50, walk-in tent s/d US\$5/7.50, s/d from US\$36/54, family chalets US\$68) About 10km further south from Club Makokola, this is a smart, spacious resort and great value for all budgets. The comfortable rooms here come with fans and nets, and for a little extra you can go up in standard to include a TV, lounge and fridge. The restaurant is good, the bar is on the beach and, if you're feeling adventurous, a boat accommodating up to 45 people can be hired to go to nearby Boadzulu Island for around US\$100.

OK Lake Shore Hotel (r US\$7) This place is 1.5km off the main road, and is Malawian-run and a good, quiet, budget option. Basic rooms have nets and, although meals aren't available, you can make use of the kitchen and the chef.

Nkopola Lodge (☎ 01-580444; nkopola@sunbirdmalawi.com; camping US\$12, walk-in tents US\$18, r from US\$60, chalets US\$72) Just 1km down the road from Boadzulu Lakeshore Resort, this is another top-end establishment. Cool and unfussy rooms in well-kept gardens overlook a beach, while the camping area, set further back, has spotless ablution blocks. Room rates include breakfast, and the restaurant (dishes US\$5 to US\$8, weekend buffet US\$12) serves suitably delectable fare. Sailboards, canoes and small sailing boats are free for guests' use; motorboats cost US\$7.50 per person per hour and paddle boats US\$2.50. More-questionable attractions include a bird sanctuary, petting zoo and casino.

Club Makokola (☎ 01-580244/445; www.clubmak.com; s/d from US\$103/165; ☎) About 50km from Monkey Bay, Club Mak (as it's known) is a luxury holiday resort, with nicely decorated chalets and rooms (the newer bush-style ones are better than the original ones), two swimming pools, restaurants, bars, water sports, floodlit football fields, squash, tennis and volleyball courts, and a long strip of private beachfront. Rates include full buffet breakfast, and a three-course meal costs US\$15. It has its own airport, which is served by Air Malawi

flights to/from Blantyre and Lilongwe (see p233). Based at the club, Scuba Blue offers beginner courses for around US\$250. Paradise Watersports offers fishing, boat trips to the islands, and water-skiing.

MANGOCHI

Mangochi lies near the southern end of Lake Malawi, strung out between the main lakeshore road and the Shire River. This place was once an important slave market, and then an administrative centre in colonial days, when it was known as Fort Johnston. Relics of these times within the wide, tree-lined streets include a large mosque and the Queen Victoria clock tower. Even today the town has a vaguely Swahili feel, with palm trees, Arab-looking people and coconuts for sale in the street. The Shire Bridge is scenic, and the excellent **Lake Malawi Museum** (admission US\$0.80; ☎ 7.30am-5pm) houses ethnographic, environmental and historical exhibits. There's also a replica of the foredeck and bridge of HMS *Guendolin* (see the boxed text, below). Facilities include several shops, supermarkets, a post office and banks.

Sleeping & Eating

The hospitality industry hasn't really taken off in Mangochi but there's a few cheap options.

HMS GUENDOLIN

HMS *Guendolin* was a military boat, made in Britain and assembled in Mangochi in 1899. At 340 tonnes, it was for many years the largest boat on the lake and had a top speed of 12 knots. It also had two powerful guns on board. Such a show of strength was thought necessary by the colonial authorities in order to deter slave-traders, who crossed the lake in dhows with their human cargo, but also because colonial rivals Germany and Portugal had territory facing Lake Malawi and were believed to want to increase their influence in the region.

The Germans also had a gunboat, called *Herman von Wissemann*, but despite the friction between their two governments, the captains of the two ships were apparently great friends, and would often meet at various points around the lake to drink beer and shoot the breeze.

When WWI was declared in 1914, the *Guendolin* was ordered to destroy the German boat. The British captain knew where the *von Wissemann* would be, as he and the German captain had previously arranged a rendezvous.

But the German captain wasn't aware that war had erupted, and his ship was completely unprepared. The *Guendolin* steamed in close, then bombed the *von Wissemann* and rendered it unusable. The German captain and crew were then informed of the commencement of hostilities and taken prisoner. This rather unsporting event happened to be the first British naval victory of WWI and Lake Malawi's only recorded battle at sea.

In 1940 the *Guendolin* was converted to a passenger ship, and one of the guns was set up as a memorial in Mangochi, near the clock tower. Some years later the ship was scrapped. All that remains today is the gun, and the compass and the ship's bell are on display at the museum.

OK Restaurant & Resthouse (r with shared bathroom US\$2.50; ☎) Near the main minibus station and market, off the main road through town, it only has single rooms, but they're clean and cosy and have fans or air-con. The attached restaurant serves cheap and filling meals.

Mangochi Lodge (r with shared bathroom US\$4.50) Near the clock tower, this place is friendly and offers a few comfortable bedrooms with nets and fans.

Mangochi Holiday Motel (☎ 01-594789; s/d with shared bathroom US\$5/7, s/d US\$7.50/10) Larger than Mangochi Lodge, this place offers simple, clean rooms, a cheap restaurant, big bar and good bakery.

Mangochi Icecream Den & Restaurant (dishes US\$1.25-6) On the highway, it has tranquil outdoor tables amid leafy gardens. Its eclectic menu includes Malawian dishes, steaks, curries, burgers, fish and, of course, ice cream.

Getting There & Away

All buses between Blantyre and Monkey Bay stop in Mangochi. There are minibuses to/from Liwonde (US\$1.20), Zomba (US\$2) and Blantyre (US\$2.50). To get to Liwonde National Park take a *matola* to Ulongwe (US\$1). You can get a *matola* to the border town of Chiponde (US\$3) if you're heading to Mozambique (for border crossing information, see p232).

has very accommodating rooms, and the friendly host is a walking wealth of information on the park's flora and fauna. Delicious, home-cooked meals are taken *en famille* and at night guests gather to chat in the lantern- and candle-lit lounge; or there's a private nook behind the fireplace if you're feeling unsociable. Walking and canoeing safaris are US\$12.50 per person and night drives are US\$15. It also has a camp site, a few minutes' walk away, with dorms, tented rooms and fantastic views over the park.

Mvu Camp (camping per person US\$5, accommodation-only/full-board chalets per person US\$35/140) Managed by Wilderness Safaris (p170) in Lilongwe, this camp is deep in the northern part of the park on the banks of the river. Stone chalets have tented roofs, lavish interiors and verandas overlooking the river, and the small but accommodating camp site has spotless ablution blocks and self-catering facilities, including utensils. Alternatively, you can eat at the open-plan thatched restaurant; the food is excellent. There's also a bar and lounge area with wide lake views. Full-board rates include two wildlife activities, and children between four and 12 are charged half price, but those under six are not allowed on wildlife-viewing trips.

Njobvu Cultural Village (full-board huts per person US\$50) This village is actually 6km from the western boundary of Liwonde National Park and offers visitors a rare opportunity to stay in a traditional Malawian village. The experience includes dancing and crafts displays and allows you to participate in the daily activities of village life. All proceeds go directly to the community; you can book at Mvu Camp or through Wilderness Safaris (p170).

Mvu Wilderness Lodge (full-board chalets per person US\$240; 📞) A short distance upriver from Mvu Camp (and also managed by Central African Wilderness Safaris), this lodge has large luxury double tents with private balconies overlooking a water hole where wildlife and birds are active. There's a maximum of 10 guests, so this place is relaxed and intimate, with attentive staff and excellent food. There's also a small swimming pool. Rates includes park fees and all wildlife drives, boat rides, bird walks etc.

Getting There & Away

The main park gate is 6km east of Liwonde town. There's no public transport beyond

here. From the gate to Mvu Camp is 28km along the park track (closed in the wet season), and a 4WD or high-clearance vehicle is recommended for this route.

Another way in for vehicles is via the dirt road (open all year) from Ulongwe, a village between Liwonde town and Mangochi. This leads for 14km through local villages to the western boundary. A few kilometres inside the park is a car park and boat jetty, where a watchman hoists a flag to arrange a boat from Mvu Camp to come and collect you. This service is free if you're staying at the camp.

Alternatively, if you make a booking in advance for Mvu Camp through Wilderness Safaris in Lilongwe (see p170), the camp can arrange a boat transfer from Liwonde town for US\$20 per person (it's half price if you're paying full-board at the camp).

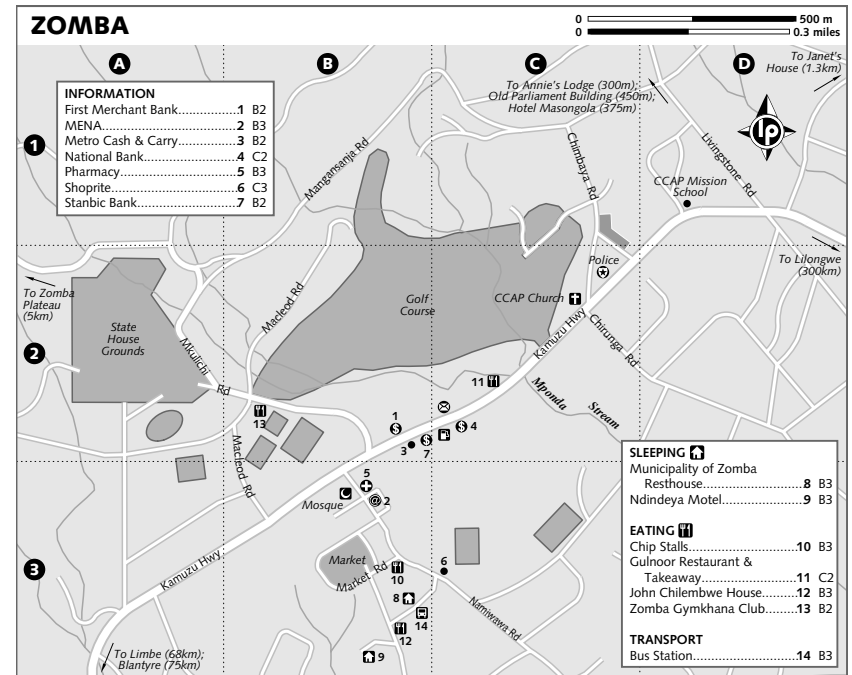
For those without wheels, the best option is to get any bus or minibus between Liwonde town and Mangochi and get off at Ulongwe (make sure you say this clearly, otherwise the driver will think you want to go to Lilongwe). In Ulongwe local boys wait by the bus stop and will take you by bicycle to the park gate (US\$2) or all the way to the boat jetty (US\$3). If you've got a lot of luggage there may be an extra charge or you may need two bikes. The ride takes about an hour, and you should leave with plenty of time before dusk; otherwise you may encounter elephants, and either way your cyclist will demand extra money for the trouble.

Another option is the boat transfer service along the Shire River offered by Waterline River Safaris (p206). Approaching Mvu by river is very enjoyable; along the way you're likely to see elephants and certain to see some hippos.

ZOMBA

Zomba was the capital of Malawi until the mid-1970s and it's still a large, busy place. It's not as friendly as Blantyre or Lilongwe, though; the town centre is dirtier and you're likely to receive more hassle here than in the large towns further north.

Overshadowing the town, though, is the serenely beautiful Zomba Plateau, and a walk through the suburbs in the lush and peaceful foothills reveals the faded but still impressive old Parliament Building – a reminder of Zomba's historical importance.



Information

Internet access is available at **MENA** (per hr US\$12; 📞 8am-5pm Mon-Sat), off Namiwawa Rd. There are Stanbic, National and First Merchant Banks in the town.

For supplies, there's a Shoprite and a Metro Cash and Carry.

Sleeping

Municipality of Zomba Resthouse (r with shared bathroom US\$2, d US\$3) If you arrive at the bus station late at night, strapped for cash and unable to walk more than a few metres, then this is the place to come. Otherwise it might be wise to give it a miss. While the rooms are dirt cheap, they're not the cleanest.

Ndindeya Motel (📞 08-855700, 385540; s/d with private bathroom US\$4/8) A good budget option. The rooms are large and all rates include breakfast. The downside is that it's next door to a bar, which is very noisy even during the day.

Janet's House (📞 01-542708; Mulunguzi Rd; s/d with shared bathroom from US\$20/25, d US\$38) A friendly Malawian B&B with a healthy resident dog and cat population. There are only three rooms and the largest is absolutely charming.

Annie's Lodge (Map p211; 📞 01-527002; Livingstone Rd; r from US\$35) North of the town centre, it's a rambling old place made up of colonial-style buildings with wide verandas. The rooms are great value and incredibly spacious, and there's a very nice rondavel bar. There's not a great deal of difference between the standard and executive level rooms, so plump for a cheaper one.

Hotel Masongola (Map p211; 📞 01-524688; Livingstone Rd; hotel.masongola@clm.com.net; s/d from US\$40/75) At the top of the hill and price scale. This was the house of the first colonial governor. Rates include breakfast. The older rooms are in the brick bungalows out the back, and rooms in the garden are more expensive and modern. The real attraction here is the pleasant beer garden on the private lawns and the restaurant (dishes US\$5 to US\$10), which serves rare treats including guinea fowl, and fillet steak.

Eating & Drinking

John Chimbwe House (dishes US\$1.50; 📞 11am-late) A very lively restaurant and bar, near the main bus station, selling cheap beer and Malawi

dishes. It's a good place to strike up a conversation with the locals.

Zomba Gymkhana Club (☎ 01-527818; Mkulichi Rd; dishes US\$1.50-3, 2-/3-course buffet lunch US\$4/7.50; ☺ lunch & dinner) Another colonial relic, this place offers good curries, stews, and fish and chicken dishes in pleasant surroundings. Nonmembers need to pay US\$0.70 entry.

Gulnoor Restaurant & Take Away (dishes US\$2-4; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Specialises in Pakistani curries and also does Malawian food. *Chambo* marinated in chillies and yoghurt, balti and shish kebabs are on offer.

There are several cheap roadside cafés outside the bus station where you can pick up dishes of *nsima* and meat for around US\$0.80.

Getting There & Away

Zomba is on a main route between Lilongwe and Blantyre. Express buses run to/from Zomba and Lilongwe (US\$3.50, six hours, one daily), Blantyre (US\$1.80, one hour, one daily) and Liwonde (US\$1, 45 minutes, three daily). Minibuses go every hour or so to Limbe (US\$1).

ZOMBA PLATEAU

Zomba Plateau is divided into two halves by the Domasi Valley. The southern half has a road to the top, a hotel (the landmark Ku Chawe Inn), a camping ground, several picnic places and a network of driveable tracks and hiking paths that wind through pine forest or patches of indigenous woodland. There are several narrow ridges along the edge of the escarpment, with viewpoints overlooking the plains below. The plateau also has streams, waterfalls and a couple of lakes, where fishing is allowed. Some people prefer to drive around, but Zomba is a good place for hiking. The cool air makes a welcome change from the heat of the lowland areas.

Note that some travellers have reported being hassled by 'ruffians' when hiking on the plateau. Locals say these are outsiders rather than people from Zomba. To avoid trouble, it's recommended to arrange a guide with the forest officer stationed at the Model Hut.

Sights & Activities

A few kilometres from Ku Chawe Inn are **Mandala Falls**, not as impressive as they used to be since Mlunguzi Dam was significantly enlarged in 1999. A nature trail leads upstream

from Mandala Falls, through some beautiful indigenous forest and a trout farm, to **Williams Falls**, another fairly impressive cascade.

A popular place to visit is **Chingwe's Hole**, on the western side of the plateau, supposedly bottomless and the basis of various local legends, although now overgrown and not especially impressive. Nearby, however, is a splendid viewpoint, looking westward over the Shire Valley.

For even more impressive views, head for the eastern side of the plateau, where **Queen's View** (named after Queen Elizabeth, wife of King George VI, who visited Zomba in 1957) and **Emperor's View** (after Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, who visited in 1964) overlook Zomba town and out towards Mulanje.

HIKING

The southern half of the plateau is ideal for hiking. The network of tracks and paths can be confusing, though, so for more help with orientation, there's a 3-D map of the plateau in the **Model Hut**.

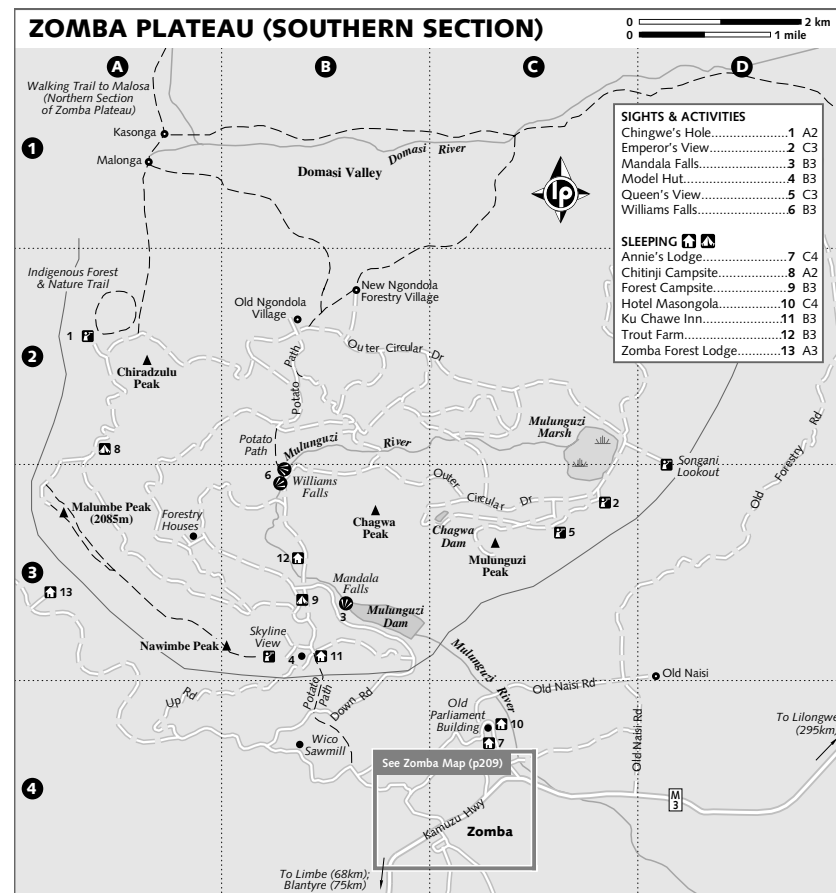
For detailed information on hiking routes on the southern half of the plateau, *A Guide to Zomba Plateau* (US\$2) is a single-sheet map with information on the back, including several suggested hiking routes, produced by the Wildlife Society. It's available in Blantyre and at the Ku Chawe Inn (p212). For more information still, the Zomba Plateau is covered in Lonely Planet's *Trekking in East Africa*.

Keen hikers may find the northern half of the plateau more interesting. There are few tracks here, and no pine plantation – the landscape is similar to that of Mt Mulanje and Nyika Plateau. For advice on hiking on the northern plateau, contact Chitinji Campsite (opposite).

It's recommended either to walk in a group or to use a guide when hiking as there have been several robberies on the plateau in recent years. There are guides registered with the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Environmental Affairs based at the Model Hut, who charge around US\$20 per day, although the rate is open to negotiation as there's no set price. More expensive guides are also available from Ku Chawe Inn.

Potato Path

You can hike all the way from Zomba town to the plateau via a direct route called the Potato Path, signposted at a sharp bend



on the road up to the plateau about 2km from Zomba town. The path climbs steeply through woodland to reach the plateau near Ku Chawe Inn.

From near Ku Chawe Inn, the Potato Path then goes straight across the southern half of the plateau, sometimes using the park tracks, sometimes using narrow short cuts, and leads eventually to Old Ngondola Village, from where it descends quite steeply into the Domasi Valley.

The Domasi Valley is well known for its fertile soil, plentiful water and good farming conditions, so here the local people grow vegetables (especially potatoes) and take them along the Potato Path (hence the name) down to Zomba town to sell in the market.

Allow two to three hours for the ascent, and about 1½ hours coming down.

Sleeping & Eating

If you're camping, you should bring most of what you need from Zomba town, as there's no shop on the plateau, although there are a local-style tearoom and some stalls selling fruit, vegetables and (sometimes) bread between the Ku Chawe Inn and the Forest Campsite.

Chitinji Campsite (admission US\$0.80; camping per person US\$2.50, basic r per person US\$5) Near Malumbe Peak in the west, this is an excellent place to stay, although even more likely to be shrouded in mist. The owner can advise on hikes in the surrounding area, and is especially keen to

help people who want to explore the wilderness zone on the northern section of the plateau.

Forest Campsite (camping per person US\$1) An aptly named spot with toilets and wood-fired hot showers all among large pine trees. It's one of those places that is beautiful in sunlight and a bit miserable in mist (you've got a 50:50 chance).

Trout Farm (r per person US\$8) The owner of the Chitinji Campsite has also taken over the running of this place.

Zomba Forest Lodge (☎ 09-926122; landlake@africa-online.net; s/d US\$30/50, full-board s/d US\$40/65) On the western slopes of the plateau, 6km by winding dirt road past the entrance gate to the plateau. This is the former Kachere Forest Resthouse, which was renovated a few years ago, and has a kitchen for self-catering and comfortable rooms; rates include breakfast. You can get more info from Land & Lake Safaris (p170).

Ku Chawe Inn (☎ 01-514237; superior/deluxe r US\$80/110) This is like a small palace, built right on the edge of the escarpment with excellent views and spacious rooms with fireplaces to keep you warm on those chilly mountain nights. There's a good restaurant (buffet breakfast US\$6.50, dishes US\$9) and the terraced gardens are particularly pleasant. Non-residents can drink in the bar or dine here.

Getting There & Away

A sealed road leads steeply up the escarpment from Zomba town to the top of the plateau (about 8km). After the entrance gate, a two-way sealed road, known as the Down Rd, veers east and continues for another 2km, before turning to a dirt track. There is also an Up Rd, but this is now open only to walkers.

There's no bus up to the plateau, but local people hitch by the junction on the main street in Zomba town near the PTC Supermarket. Alternatively, you can take a taxi (negotiable from around US\$8). If this is beyond your means, get a taxi part way through the suburbs, say as far as Wico Sawmill or the Zomba Forest Lodge turn-off, then simply walk up the Up Rd. The views are excellent!

Alternatively, you can walk all the way from Zomba town to the plateau via the road or on the Potato Path (see p210).

BLANTYRE & LIMBE

Blantyre – the commercial and industrial capital of Malawi – is a more happening city than Lilongwe, although that's not saying

much. It stretches for about 20km, merging into Limbe, its 'sister city', and during the week the city centre is a hive of energy. Most travellers stop only for a few days to send or receive mail, buy maps and books or pick up a visa for Mozambique. This is probably long enough to exploit some interesting sights, the most global selection of cuisine in Malawi, several enjoyable bars, and a fair selection of places to stay. (Unless stated otherwise, every address in this section is in Blantyre, rather than Limbe.)

Orientation

Despite the sprawling suburbs and townships surrounding Blantyre, the city centre is very compact, with most places of importance to travellers within easy walking distance. Central Blantyre's main street is Victoria Ave; along here are several large shops, the tourist office, the map sales office, banks, foreign exchange bureaus and travel agents. To the east is Haile Selassie Rd, which contains many smaller shops. At the northern end of Victoria Ave is the landmark Mount Socho Hotel.

East of the Mount Socho Hotel is a major traffic roundabout, from where the main road north leads to the airport, Mwanza and Lilongwe. This road has no official name but is known as New Chileka Rd. approximately 500m further east is another roundabout, with a small clock on a concrete pedestal in the middle: from here Chileka Rd leads north to the bus station and outer suburbs; and Chipembere Highway, heading south, turns into the Kamuzu Highway, which veers east towards Limbe, and ultimately Zomba, Mulanje and Liwonde.

MAPS

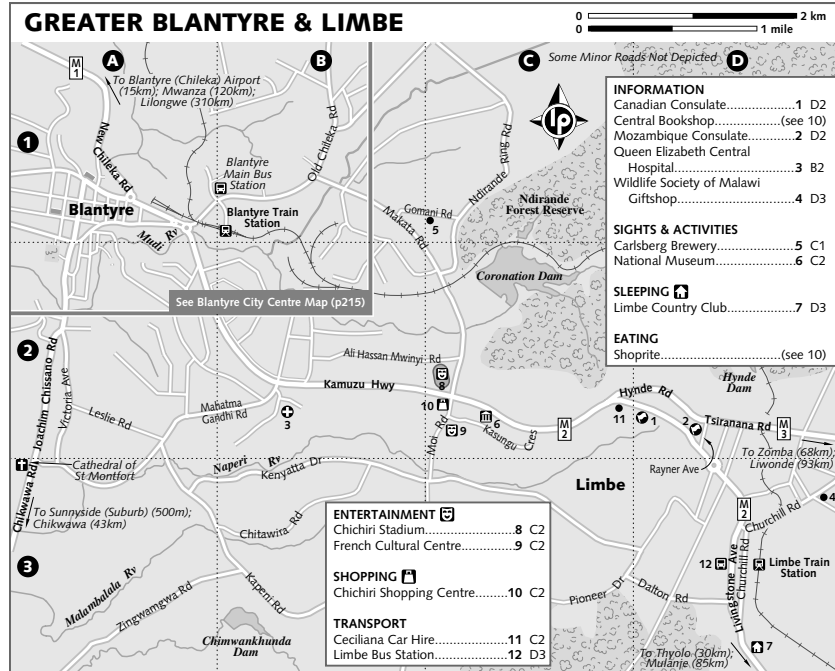
Survey maps of Blantyre and the surrounding area are available from the **Department of Surveys Map Sales Office** (Map p215; Victoria Ave). See also p229.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Central Africana bookshop (Map p215; Victoria Ave) Specialises in antiquarian and specialist African titles, plus old prints and maps.

Central Bookshop (Map p213; Chichiri Shopping Centre) For a much wider selection than TBS, visit this bookshop. It stocks stationery, books and guides about Malawi, local-language dictionaries and a good range of novels by local writers. There's also a pleasant coffee shop.



TBS bookshop (Map p215; Victoria Ave) There's a TBS bookshop in town and a smaller one at the Mount Socho Hotel.

Wildlife Society of Malawi giftshop (Map p213; Churchill Rd, Limbe) At the Heritage Centre. Specialises in books about natural history and national parks; its prices are very reasonable.

EMERGENCY

The advice in Blantyre is the same as for Lilongwe; see p168.

INTERNET ACCESS

You will find plenty of internet bureaus in Blantyre.

CelTel Cyber Café (Map p215; Victoria Ave; per 30min US\$2)

E Internet Café (Map p215; cnr Victoria Ave & Independence Dr; per 30min US\$2.20)

Icon Internet Café (Map p215; per 30min US\$2) Off Livingstone Ave.

MEDICAL SERVICES

MPL pharmacy (Map p215; Victoria Ave) There's a large MPL pharmacy on Victoria Ave, and several smaller ones elsewhere around the city centre.

Mwaiwathu Private Hospital (Map p215; ☎ 01-622999; Chileka Rd; ☒ 24hr) For private medical consultations or blood tests, this hospital, east of the city centre, is good. A consultation is US\$10; all drugs and treatment are extra. An overnight stay in a private ward is US\$80 – before any treatment, you must put down a US\$220 deposit.

Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital (Map p213; ☎ 01-674333; ☒ 24hr) The Malaria Test Centre at this government-run hospital, off Chipembere Highway, charges US\$10 for a malaria test. Ask for directions as the Test Centre is hard to find.

Seventh Day Adventist Clinic (Map p215; ☎ 01-620006; Robins Rd) For medical or dental problems, this clinic charges US\$6 for a doctor's consultation and US\$10 for a malaria test.

MONEY

All of the following banks are on Victoria Ave. There are branches of the National Bank of Malawi and Stanbic Bank, both of which can change cash and travellers cheques and have 24-hour ATMs that accept Visa, MasterCard, Cirrus and Maestro. **Victoria Forex** (☎ 01-621026) usually has more competitive rates and charges no commission. You can

get a speedy cash advance on your credit card here for a fee of US\$3.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Green Photo (Map p215; cnr Livingstone Ave & Henderson St) The large and busy Green Photo sells print film, develops and can provide passport photos.

POST

Post office (Map p215; Glyn Jones Rd; ☎ 7.30am–5pm) Has poste restante.

TELEPHONE

There are several small phone bureaus around the main bus station, from which you can make national calls. Doogles (p216) has international telephone facilities for guests.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Immigration office (Map p215; Building Society House, Victoria Ave) If you need to extend your visa, Blantyre has an immigration office.

Tourist office (Map p215; ☎ 01-620300; Victoria Ave; ☎ 7.30am–noon & 1–5pm Mon–Fri) The central tourist office has a few leaflets, and the people here make quite an effort to provide information and assistance.

Dangers & Annoyances

Don't wander around alone at night. Some travellers walking between the city centre and Doogles, east of the city, have been attacked at night under the railway bridge on Chileka Rd. During daylight this route is fine but after dark a taxi is recommended (from the centre to Doogles is US\$5). At night taxi drivers will take you from the bus station to Doogles – all of 300m – but still charge US\$1! As always, watch your back in busy bus stations. Limbe (Map p213) is particularly crowded, so stay alert there.

Sights & Activities

Probably the most impressive building in Blantyre is the **CCAP Church** (Map p215), off Chileka Rd, officially called the Church of St Michael and All Angels. This magnificent church was built in 1891 by Scottish missionaries who had no construction training, using only local handmade bricks and wood. It has a basilica dome, towers, arches and bay windows. Although extensively renovated in the 1970s, what you see today is pretty much how it looked the day it was completed.

PAMET (Map p215; Paper Making Education Trust; ☎ 01-623895; 10 Chilembwe Rd; www.pamet.org.mw) is

an inspiring project that was set up to teach people how to recycle paper. This is an important issue in Malawi, where some people are too poor to buy exercise books for their children. For US\$0.80 you can take a tour of their workshop to see how it's all done. They sell a lovely variety of cards and other paper products made from a range of different material including elephant dung! To help slow down the rate of deforestation, PAMET makes paper briquettes that are used as an alternative to charcoal and firewood.

The **National Museum** (Map p213; Kasungu Cres; admission US\$0.70, ☎ 7.30am–5pm) is midway between Blantyre and Limbe. There's a small collection of traditional weapons and artefacts, and exhibits relating to traditional dance, European exploration and slavery.

A visit to the **Carlsberg Brewery** (Map p213; ☎ 01-670022; Gomani Rd), east of the centre, may also appeal. Free tours are conducted at 2.30pm every Wednesday; you must book. The tour ends with a free tasting session. Some places to stay in Blantyre arrange transport here. Alternatively, you can walk or get a taxi.

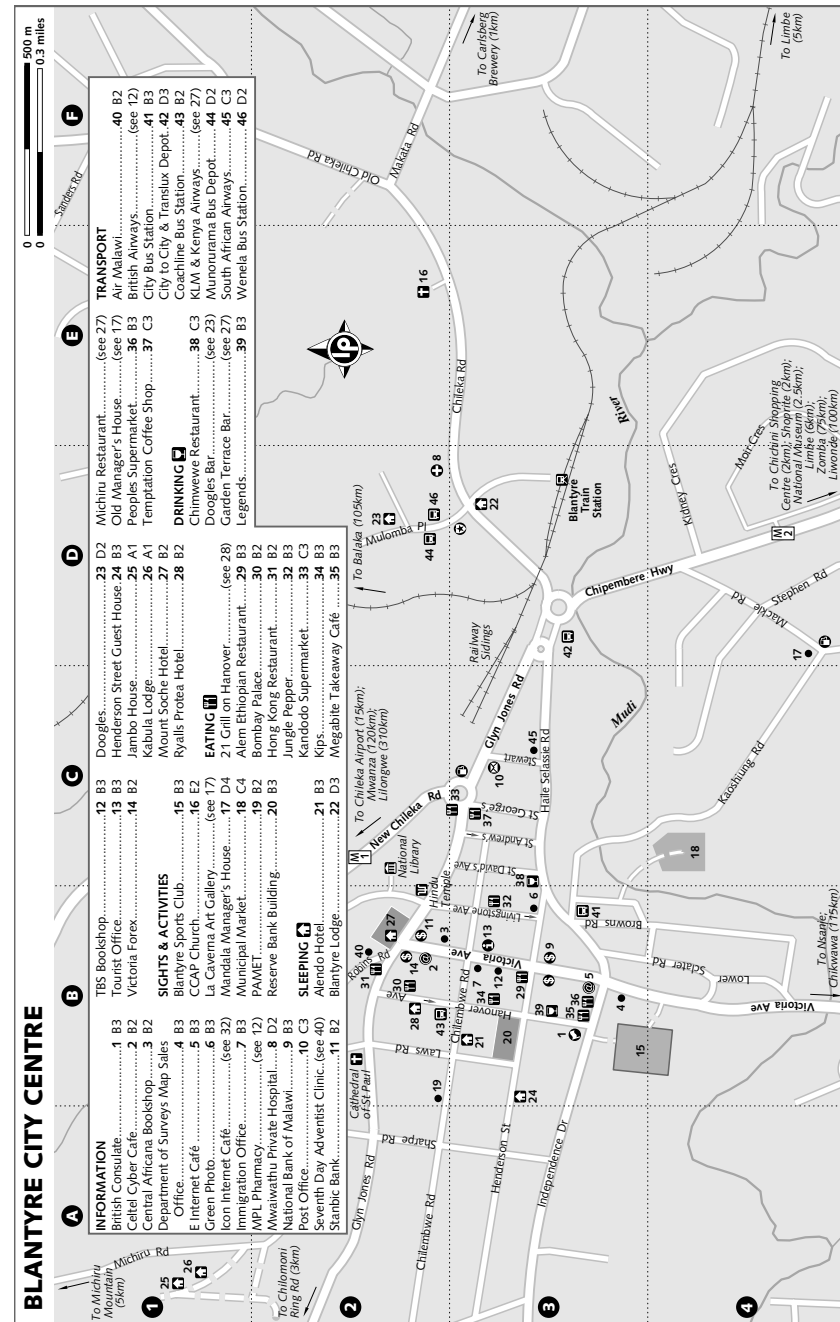
A nice way to spend an hour or two is a visit to the **Mandala Manager's House** (Map p215; ☎ 01-671932; Mandala House; ☎ 8.30am–4.30pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–1pm Sat). Set in pleasant gardens, this old colonial house was built in 1882 and is now home to a café, **La Caverna Art Gallery** (lacaverna@malawi.net) and the Society of Malawi Library & Archive.

Blantyre Sports Club (Map p215), off Independence Dr, offers daily membership for US\$5, which allows you to enter the club and use the bar and restaurant. To use the pool or to play squash or tennis costs another US\$0.80. Nine holes of golf costs US\$3; equipment can be hired.

There are very good **craft stalls** (Victoria Ave) outside the Peoples Supermarket. The modern buildings of the **Municipal Market** (Map p215; Kaoshiung Rd) give it a more formal feel than the hectic market in Lilongwe; it's still worth a visit even if you don't want to buy anything.

Sleeping

Blantyre has a couple of good budget options for backpackers, as well as excellent midrange and top-end choices. Most hotels are located in Blantyre city centre, although a couple of the budget options are near the main bus station.



BUDGET

Doogles (Map p215; ☎ 01-621128; www.doogleslodge.com; Mulomba Pl; camping US\$3, dm US\$5.50, chalets with shared bathroom US\$16, d US\$21; 🏠) Backpackers can pitch their tents here, and there's also room for a few trucks and cars with tents. The rooms and dorms are decent enough, but some of the chalets are looking a little rough and it's not the most friendly of places. The bar is open to the general public and is always lively – fine if you want to party, not so good if you want to relax or get some sleep (see opposite). There's a limited menu of snacks and burgers at the bar (snacks US\$1 to US\$2.50, dishes US\$4), and an internet café. They also run budget tours.

Limbe Country Club (Map p213; ☎ 01-641145; Livingstone Ave, Limbe; camping per person US\$7.50) An alternative for those with wheels. Here you can park and camp on the edge of the playing fields. Rates include club membership, so you can use the showers and restaurant inside.

Kabula Lodge (☎ 01-621216; Kabula Hill; dm/s/d US\$10/35/45; 🏠) Northwest of the city centre, off Michiru Rd, this is highly recommended. Dorms have only two or three beds, and rates for the spotless, comfortable rooms include breakfast. A cool veranda wraps around the back of the building, offering great views of the city. The friendly Malawian lady who runs this place can prepare meals with advance notice, or you can self-cater. There's also an internet café with cheap, fast access. There are discounts for long stays, and this place is very popular with volunteers so it pays to book in advance.

Blantyre Lodge (Map p215; ☎ 01-834460; Chileka Rd; r US\$15) Large hotel near the bus station. It has a rather clinical feel to it, but the rooms are good value (although they could do without the wall-to-wall, plush maroon carpeting) and the premises secure.

Henderson Street Guest House (Map p215; ☎ 01-823474, 794572; 19 Henderson St; r US\$21) This small and welcoming guesthouse has five rooms with large baths and DSTV. The house itself sits in a massive garden and is a great place to shut yourself away from the noise of the city. Rates include breakfast.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Jambo House (Map p215; ☎ 01-623709; jambofrica@africa-online.net; Kabula Hill; s/d with shared bathroom US\$30/40, s/d US\$40/50; 🏠) A homely little place, off Michiru Rd, with just four bedrooms, a swimming pool and gardens with excellent views of the sur-

rounding hills. There's also a TV lounge and a self-service 'honesty' bar. There's no restaurant as such, but meals can be provided if you ask in advance. All prices include breakfast.

Alendo Hotel (Map p215; ☎ 01-621866; 15 Chilembwe Rd; s/d from US\$55/65) In the centre, this is the Malawian Institute of Tourism training school and has super-eager staff and bright airy corridors but tight rooms. The facilities are good, however, and there's secure parking. The attached Kachere Restaurant (three-course dinner US\$10) is good value.

Mount Soche Hotel (Map p215; ☎ 01-620588; mountsoche@sunbirdmalawi.com; Glyn Jones Rd; B&B/s/d US\$120/135; 🏠) Popular with business travellers, it also has all the required facilities although it's not quite as swish as Ryalls. Ask for a room at a back; they have balconies with grand views over the hills.

Ryalls Protea Hotel (Map p215; ☎ 01-620955; ryalls@proteamalawi.com; 2 Hanover Ave; s/d US\$210/243; 🏠) Very classy old-fashioned place, with a grand entrance hall and sophisticated rooms decorated with old black-and-white photos and African artefacts. It's also home to the superb 21 Grill on Hanover.

Eating

Blantyre has a good selection of places to eat to suit all budgets and the widest variety available in Malawi.

RESTAURANTS

Alem Ethiopian Restaurant (Map p215; ☎ 01-622529; Victoria Ave; dishes US\$1-7.50; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Sat) For some different African flavours, this place serves *injera* (sour millet pancake) and *wot* (sauce), but you can also get 'normal' meals like chicken and chips or curry.

Hong Kong Restaurant (Map p215; ☎ 01-620859; Robins Rd; dishes US\$2.50-4; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Housed in a grand pagoda-style building that belies the rather mediocre food. For a Chinese restaurant the menu is surprisingly limited and the food, although it arrives in large portions, is nothing special.

Bombay Palace (Map p215; ☎ 08-400400, 600600; Hanover Ave; starters US\$2, mains US\$6-10; 🕒 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This place serves the best Indian food in the city. It's stylishly decorated and the food tastes surprisingly fresh and light. Their specialty is the Rumali Basket Masala – a light crispy batter filled with onions, tomatoes and green chillies.

Old Manager's House (Map p215; mains US\$5; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat) This charming little

café is set in the grounds of the Mandala Manager's House (p214) and has excellent home-made cakes, salads and good coffee. Mains include homemade lasagne and fishcakes.

21 Grill on Hanover (Map p215; Ryalls Protea Hotel; starters US\$3, mains US\$9-17; 🕒 lunch & dinner) This is a highly rated eatery, with swanky interior complete with soft lighting, mahogany bookcases, comfortable cushioned chairs and the soft tinkle of piano music in the background. Serves seriously good steaks and seafood.

Michiru Restaurant (Map p215; Mount Soche Hotel; mains US\$12-17; 🕒 dinner Mon-Sat) This is the smart, top-floor restaurant at the Mount Soche Hotel. Excellent steak, fish, chicken and prawn dishes come with a hefty price tag, but the views are pretty fine.

FOOD STALLS & CAFÉS

Kips (Map p215; ☎ 01-635247; Hanover Ave; breakfast US\$1, dishes US\$1.30-5; 🕒 8am-10pm Sun-Thur, 8am-midnight Fri & Sat) Dishes up a real mix of pizzas, burgers, fish, steak, Malawian and Indian meals. It's clean and deservedly popular with locals.

Jungle Pepper (Map p215; ☎ 01-635135; pizzas US\$4-5; 🕒 10.30am-9pm Thu-Tue) Off Livingstone Ave. Teems with office workers over the lunch hour, due to a tasty and diverse selection of fresh pizzas and hotdogs.

Temptation Coffee Shop (Map p215; Glyn Jones Rd; dishes US\$2-5; 🕒 8am-6pm) Serves good burgers, tasty Malawian dishes and a tempting selection of pastries for sweet tooth.

Megabite Takeaway Café (Map p215; Independence Dr; dishes US\$1.50-5; 🕒 11am-9pm Mon-Sat) Little courtyard café that is popular with the lunchtime office crowd. Serves fish and chips and Malawi curries.

SELF-CATERING

The main **Peoples Supermarket** (Map p215; Independence Dr) sells food and other goods, much of it imported from South Africa or Europe and sold at similar prices. Cheaper but more limited supplies can be bought at **Kandodo supermarket** (Map p215; Glyn Jones Rd). There's also a huge **Shoprite** (Map p213; Kamuzu Highway) a few kilometres out of town.

Drinking & Entertainment

BARS, NIGHTCLUBS & PERFORMANCE VENUES

Legends (Map p215; Hanover Ave; admission US\$1, live music US\$3) A popular American-style bar and nightclub that gets hot and busy after 10pm.

Garden Terrace Bar (Map p215; Mount Soche Hotel) Caters to a more composed market and its tranquil surrounds are appealing. At the same hotel, the Sportsman's Bar is favoured by local businessmen and other movers and shakers.

Doogles bar (Map p215; ☎ to late) Like a constant happy hour, where a fluent stream of travellers chill out and socialise with devoted expats and well-to-do Malawians.

Chimwele Restaurant (Map p215; cnr Henderson St & Haile Selassie Rd) Despite its name, this is more like a bar. Loud music and gaming machines mean it's low on charm, but the congenial crowd and cheap drinks compensate.

French Cultural Centre (Map p213; ☎ 01-671250; ccf@malawi.net; cnr Moi Rd & Kasungu Cres; 🕒 8am-12pm & 2pm-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) Not just for French lessons. The Centre has a regular programme of concerts, plays and readings. Performances have been known to include such international luminaries as Angelique Kidjo.

Blantyre Sports Club, off Independence Dr, features live music on the last Friday of every month. Occasional live music is played at both the Mount Soche Hotel and Ryalls Protea Hotel, where entry is about US\$3.

SPECTATOR SPORT

Blantyre's main sports venue is the Chichiri Stadium (Map p213), off Makata Rd, between the city centre and Limbe. This is also Malawi's national stadium; international football and other events are held here. There's no regular programme, but matches are advertised in the newspaper and on billboards around town.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Blantyre's Chileka airport is about 15km north of the city centre. For details on the airport and flights to/from Blantyre see p231 and p233.

Airline offices in Blantyre include **Air Malawi** (Map p215; ☎ 01-620811; Robins Rd); **KLM & Kenya Airways** (Map p215; ☎ 01-620106; Mount Soche Hotel); **British Airways** (Map p215; ☎ 01-624333; Victoria Ave); and **South African Airways** (Map p215; ☎ 01-620627; Haile Selassie Rd).

BUS & MINIBUS

Coachline buses run between Blantyre and Lilongwe (US\$18, four hours, three daily), stopping at the Total petrol station near Ryalls Protea Hotel on Hanover St. The booking office is also here.

Blantyre's main bus station (for Shire Bus Lines long-distance express and ordinary services) is east of the centre on Mulomba Pl. Express buses run between Blantyre and Lilongwe via Zalewa (the junction with the Mwanza road; US\$5, five hours, one daily); this route is also serviced by ordinary buses (US\$3.80, seven hours, four daily). There's an express service to Zomba (US\$2, one hour, one daily), which also continues to Lilongwe (US\$6, seven hours). Ordinary buses travel between Blantyre and Zomba (US\$1, 1½ hours, frequently), Mulanje (US\$1.25, 1½ hours, seven daily), Mwanza (US\$1.30, one hour, two daily) and Monkey Bay (US\$3.80, eight hours, one daily), via Liwonde (US\$2, three hours) and Mangochi (US\$3, six hours).

Other buses (ie not Shire Bus Lines) and long-distance minibuses go from the bus station in Limbe; most leave on a fill-up-and-go basis. It's often quicker to get a local minibus to Limbe bus station, and then a long-distance bus or 'half-bus' from there rather than wait for the Shire express or ordinary buses in Blantyre. Routes include Zomba (US\$1), Mulanje (US\$1.50), and Mangochi (US\$3).

TRAIN

For information on trains that stop at Blantyre and Limbe, see p232 and p236.

Getting Around TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

A taxi from the airport to the city costs around US\$10, but agree on a price with the driver

first. The price can be negotiated down a bit if you're going from the city to the airport. If your budget doesn't include taxis, frequent local buses between the Blantyre city centre bus station and Chileka township pass the airport gate. The fare is US\$0.30.

BUS

Blantyre is a compact city, so it's unlikely you'll need to use public transport to get around, apart from the minibuses that shuttle along Chipembere Highway between Blantyre city centre bus station and Limbe bus station. The one-way fare is US\$0.30.

TAXI

You can find private hire taxis at the Mount Soche Hotel or at the bus stations. A taxi across the city centre is around US\$3; between the centre and the main bus station costs from US\$3 to US\$4; and from Blantyre to Limbe costs around US\$5.

AROUND BLANTYRE

Blantyre is surrounded by three 'mountains', Michiru, Soche and Ndirande, all actually large hills that can all be hiked to the summit. Some hikers have been attacked on **Mt Ndirande**, so you should go here only with a guide. These can be arranged from Doogles (see p216) for around US\$2 per day. The path up **Mt Soche** starts at Soche Secondary School.

The most rewarding excursion is to **Mt Michiru**, 8km northwest of the city, a conser-

MALAWI'S CUP OF TEA

South and east of Blantyre, on the rolling hills of the Shire Highlands, the climate is ideal for growing tea, and the area is covered with plantations (or 'estates'). The first tea bushes were imported from India during the early days of the Nyasaland colony, and the tea production quickly became a major industry. It's now a major export crop (along with tobacco and sugar), providing thousands of people with jobs.

As you travel along the main road between Limbe and Mulanje, the seemingly endless fields of tea appear as vivid green girds carpeting the hillsides. The tea-pickers (men and women) work their way slowly down the lines, picking just a few leaves and a bud from the top of each bush and throwing them into large baskets on their backs. At the end of each shift, the baskets are taken to a collection area, where they are weighed and each worker's wages are calculated. The leaves are then transported to a tea factory, where they are trimmed and dried before being packed in bags and boxes ready for export. A small proportion of low-quality tea stays within the country to be sold locally.

If you have a genuine interest in tea production it may be possible to arrange a tour of an estate and factory. There is no established set-up; you simply call the estate and ask a senior manager if it's possible to visit. You'll probably need your own vehicle, or have to take a taxi, as most estate offices are off the main road and difficult to reach by public transport. The best place to start with is **Satemwa Estate** (☎ 01-473233/500; www.satemwa.com) near the small town of Thyolo (*cho-low*) on the main road between Limbe and Mulanje. Highly recommended is a night in their Chawani Bungalow (US\$70 per night), which sleeps up to eight guests and includes the services of a caretaker/cook. From the bungalow you can walk through the tea estates or go through the evergreen forest remnants on nearby Thyolo Mountain, which is a popular bird-watching spot.

Another estate that sometimes allows visits is **British Tea Estates** (☎ 01-472266). The tourist office in Blantyre (p214) may have more suggestions.

vation area with nature trails. Animals found here include monkeys, klipspringers and even leopards, but you're unlikely to see very much of them. Bird-watching is much more rewarding – more than 400 species have been recorded in the area. To reach the visitor centre (where the trails start), take Kabula Hill Rd from the city and Michiru Rd through a select suburb and then a township. At the end of the sealed road (3km from Blantyre), a dirt road leads along the eastern foot of the mountain. Take the left turn that is signposted 'nature trails', which takes you to the visitor centre, where you can buy a map. There's no public transport, but you can get a taxi as far as the driver is prepared to go along the dirt road, and then you will need to walk the rest of the way. You may be able to get a lift back with other visitors.

MULANJE

This small town is the centre of Malawi's tea-growing industry. You may stay overnight here if you're going to Mozambique, but most travellers come on the way to Mt Mulanje.

Mulanje Golf Club (☎ 01-466260; camping per person US\$3.80), on the eastern side of town, is planted

in a scenic spot below the mountain. The first night's rate includes membership, so you can use the showers and bar, and consecutive nights only cost US\$2.

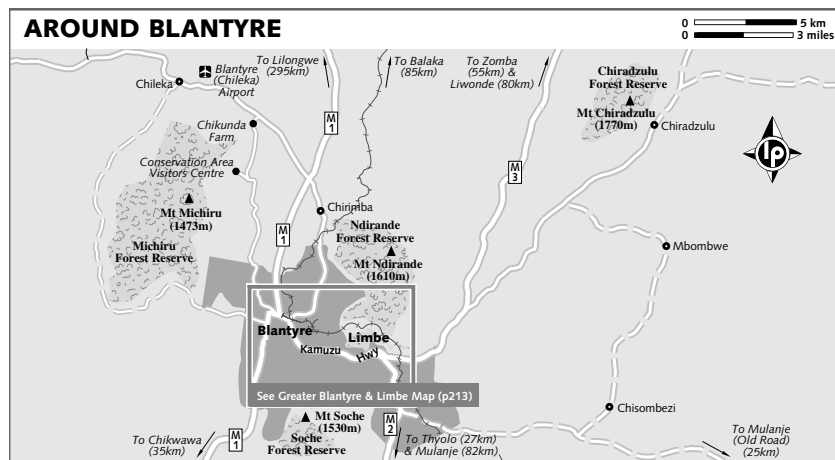
The **Council Resthouse** (r with shared/private bathroom US\$0.50/1), close to the bus station, is bargain basement in price and quality. Heading closer to Likhubula on the main road, **Mulanje Motel** (☎ 01-466245; r with shared/private bathroom US\$3/6.50) is a much better budget option.

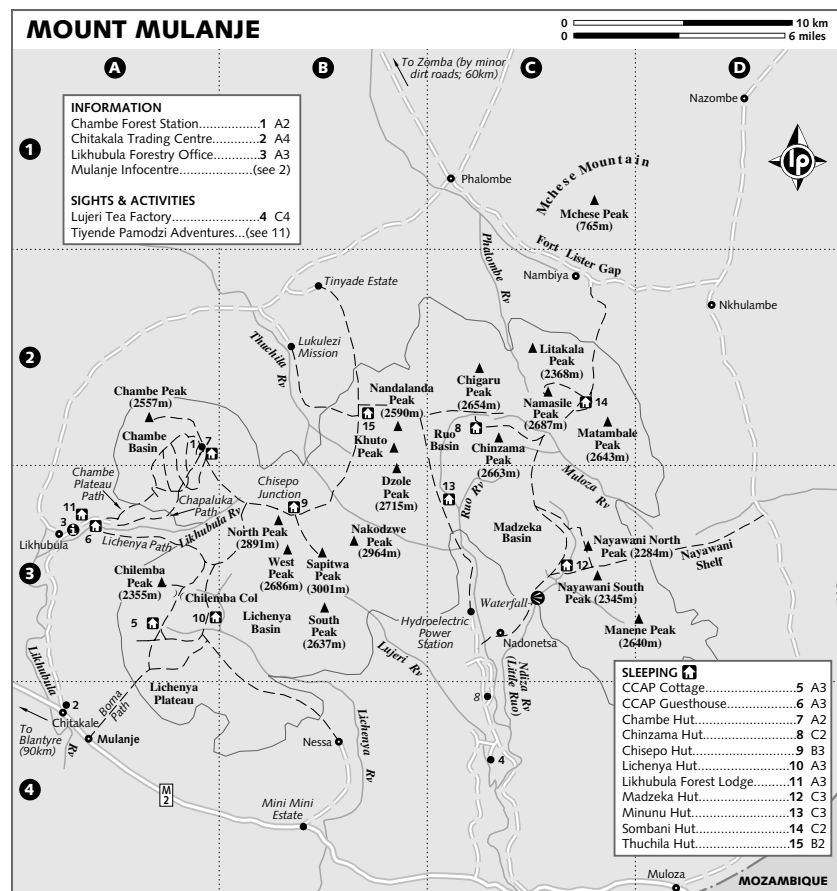
Limbani Lodge (☎ 01-466390; s/d US\$5/7.50, VIP r US\$13), near the School for the Blind, has the best beds in town. Standard rooms are comfy and the 'VIP' rooms contain TV and fully equipped kitchens.

Ordinary buses go to/from Blantyre and Limbe (US\$1.30, 1½ hours, seven daily) as do minibuses (US\$1.50, 40 minutes). If you're heading for the border of Mozambique, minibuses, *matola* and buses all run to Muloza (US\$0.50, 40 minutes). For more border crossing information, see p232.

MOUNT MULANJE

Mt Mulanje (also called the Mulanje Plateau) rises steeply from the undulating plain of the highlands, surrounded by near-vertical cliffs





of bare rock, many over 1000m high. The cliffs are dissected by vegetated valleys, where rivers drop in spectacular waterfalls. It is often misty here and Mulanje's high peaks sometimes jut above the cloud, giving rise to the local name 'Island in the Sky'. Some people come to the base of the mountain just for a day visit, but the stunning scenery, easy access, clear paths and well-maintained huts make Mulanje a fine hiking area and many travellers spend at least a few days here.

Mulanje measures about 30km from west to east and 25km from north to south, with an area of at least 600 sq km. On its northeastern corner is the outlier Mchese Mountain, separated from the main massif by the Fort Lister Gap. The massif is composed of several

bowl-shaped river basins, separated by rocky peaks and ridges. The highest peak is Sapiwa (3001m), the highest point in Malawi and in all Southern Africa north of the Drakensberg. There are other peaks on the massif above 2500m, and you can reach most of the summits without technical climbing.

For hikers, it's worth remembering that Mulanje is a big mountain with notoriously unpredictable weather. After periods of heavy rain, streams can become swollen and impassable – do not try to cross them! Wait until the flood subsides (sometimes after a few hours) or adjust your route to cross in safety further upstream. Even during the dry season, it's not uncommon to get rain, cold winds and thick mists, which make it easy to

get lost. Between May and August, periods of low cloud and drizzle (called *chipero*) can last several days, and temperatures drop below freezing. None of this is a problem as long as you've got warm, waterproof gear and don't get lost. Otherwise, you risk suffering from severe exposure. In 1999 an unfortunate traveller died up here.

Information

Hiking on Mt Mulanje is controlled by the **Likhubula Forestry Office** (PO Box 50, Mulanje; ☎ 7.30am–noon & 1–5pm), at the small village of Likhubula, about 15km from Mulanje town. The friendly and helpful staff can arrange guides and porters from an official list. You must register here and make reservations for the mountain huts (you can also call or write in advance). Camping is permitted only near huts and only when they're full. Open fires are not allowed – this is especially important during the latter part of the dry season, when there is a serious fire risk. The collecting of plants and animals is forbidden.

Also good for information is the **Mulanje Infocentre** (☎ 01-466466, infomulanje@malawi.net) based at Chitakale Trading Centre, on the corner of Phalombe Rd. It's set up to give travellers all pertinent information about hiking on the mountain and carries a good selection of books and maps.

An excellent company based in the area is **Tiyende Pamodzi Adventures** (☎ 01-467737; www.cholemawili.com/pamodzi). Located at Likhubula Forest Lodge, it gets rave reviews from travellers and offers packages from US\$145 for a two-day package to \$370 for six days.

There is nowhere you can buy food on Mt Mulanje, so you must carry all you need. At Likhubula there's a small market, but you're better off getting supplies at Chitakale (where the dirt road to Likhubula turns off the main

sealed Blantyre–Mulanje road), which has shops, stalls and a small supermarket, or in Blantyre.

Guidebooks & Maps

The *Guide to Mulanje Massif*, by Frank Eastwood, has information on ascent routes and main peaks plus a large section on rock climbing, but nothing on the routes between huts. There's more detail on Mulanje in Lonely Planet's *Trekking in East Africa*, which also covers Nyika and Zomba.

If you need detailed maps, the Department of Surveys prints a map of the mountain at 1:40,000, which shows most of the paths and huts. The 1:30,000 *Tourist Map of Mulanje* covers a similar area, overprinted with extra information for hikers. These maps are usually available from the Department of Surveys Map Sales Offices in Lilongwe (p168) and Blantyre (p212), but stocks occasionally run dry.

Guides & Porters

Porters are not obligatory, but they make the hiking easier, especially for the first day's steep hike from Likhubula Forestry Office. Guides are definitely recommended to help you through the maze of paths.

As you arrive in Likhubula (or Mulanje town) you'll be besieged by hopeful locals looking for work, but you should arrange guides and porters only at Likhubula, as the forest station keeps a registered list, which works on a rotation system. Some porters are not on the list but are 'cleared' by the office staff.

There is a standard charge of around US\$7 per day per porter and US\$8 per guide (regardless of group size), payable in kwacha (you should avoid hiring porters who undercut this price in their eagerness to get work). The total

PINES ON MULANJE

The pine plantations on Mulanje were first established by the colonial government in the early 1950s, mainly around Chambe. The sides of all the massif are too steep for a road, so all timber is cut by hand and then carried down on a cableway (called the skyline) or on the heads of forest labourers. As you're going up the Chambe Plateau Path you'll see these incredibly hardy guys walking downhill, sometimes running, with huge planks of wood balanced on their heads.

The plantations provide employment for local people and wood for the whole of southern Malawi. A bad side effect, apart from the ugliness of the plantations, is the tendency of pine trees to spread slowly across the natural grassland as seeds are blown by the wind. These introduced trees disturb the established vegetation balance – which is always precarious in highland areas.

fee for the whole trip should be agreed before departure and put in writing. Fees are paid at the end of the trip but porters are expected to provide their own food, so about 25% may be required in advance. Make sure guides and porters bring everything they need, and tell them no other food can be provided. Even if you do this, you'll still feel guilty when you stop for lunch and your escorts sit and watch you, so take a few extra packets of biscuits for them. You may want to tip your porters and guides if the service has been good; a rule of thumb is to pay something around an extra day's wage for every three to five days. The maximum weight each porter can carry is 18kg.

Hiking Routes

There are about six main routes up and down Mulanje. The three main ascent routes go from

Likhubula: the Chambe Plateau Path (also called the Skyline Path), the Chapaluka Path and the Lichenya Path. Other routes, more often used for the descent, are: Thuchila Hut to Lukulezi Mission; Sombani Hut to Fort Lister Gap; and Minunu Hut to Lujeri tea estate.

Once you're on the massif, a network of paths links the huts and peaks, and many different permutations are possible; we outline some choices in the boxed text, below. Be warned that some of the routes are impassable or otherwise dangerous. The route from Madzeka Hut to Lujeri is very steep, and the wooden ladders required to cross the steepest sections have rotted away, making it effectively impassable. On the southwestern side of Mulanje, the Boma Path and the path from Lichenya to Nessa are both dangerously steep and very rarely used.

A MULANJE TRAVERSE

There are many ways to traverse the Mulanje massif. The route we describe briefly here, from Likhubula to Fort Lister, is one of several options, although it seems to be the most popular. It can be done in four days, but there are several variations that can extend this period, and plenty of opportunities for sidetracking, to take in a few peaks and ridges or explore small valleys.

Likhubula Forestry Office to Chambe Hut

There are two options: the Chambe Plateau Path, which is short and steep (two to four hours); and the Chapaluka Path (3½ to five hours), which is less steep and more scenic. From the hut veranda, there are good views of the southeastern face of Chambe Peak (2557m), but if you fancy reaching the summit of this spectacular peak, from Chambe Hut it will take you five to seven hours to get to the top and back. The ascent is stiff and the paths are vague, so you may need a guide. About two to 2½ hours from the hut, you reach a large cairn on a broad level part of the ridge at the foot of the main face. You might be happy with reaching this point, which offers excellent views over the Chambe Basin to the escarpment edge and the plains far below.

Chambe Hut to Chisepo or Thuchila Hut

This route is 12km (five to six hours). About two hours from Chambe, you reach Chisepo Junction, where a path leads up to the summit of Sapitwa Peak (3001m). You can hike to the summit of Sapitwa, but it's a toughie – not surprisingly, perhaps, Sapitwa means 'Don't Go There' in the local language – and the upper section involves some tricky scrambling among large boulders and dense vegetation. From Chisepo Junction you should allow three to five hours for the ascent, plus two to four for the descent. You can then either spend the night at Chisepo Hut or push on through to either Chambe or Thuchila Hut. If you're short of time, you can do a shorter loop by descending from Thuchila Hut to Lukulezi Mission, then hiking or catching a *matola* back to Likhubula.

Thuchila Hut to Sombani Hut

This stage (12km, four to five hours) takes you across a small col and down into the Ruu Basin. About two hours from Thuchila Hut, you reach Chinzama Hut, where you can stop if you want an easy day. The large mountain directly opposite Sombani Hut is Namasile (2687m), which takes about three hours to ascend, plus two hours on the descent. The path is steep and strenuous

It normally takes about three to six hours to hike between one hut and the next, which means you can walk in the morning, dump your kit, then go out to explore a nearby peak or valley in the afternoon.

Sleeping

BELOW THE MOUNTAIN

CCAP Guesthouse (camping US\$1, chalets per person US\$6.50) At the CCAP Mission it has cosy rooms, self-catering chalets and camping.

Likhubula Forest Lodge (☎ 01-467737; likhubula@cholemalawi.com; camping per person US\$5, s/d/tr with shared bathroom US\$15/20/25, s/d/tr US\$20/25/30) At Likhubula, this stylish lodge has a kitchen, comfortable lounge and several bedrooms and is spotless all over. A cook will prepare your food and wash up. You can camp in the grounds. The entire lodge can be rented for US\$150 a night.

in places, spiralling round the northern side of the mountain to approach the summit from the west. A guide is recommended unless you're competent on vague paths in bad weather.

Sombani Hut to Fort Lister Gap

This stage (5km, three hours) is all downhill, with great views over the surrounding plains. There are a lot of forks, so a guide is useful to show you the way, but otherwise at every fork keep going down. For the last section you follow a dirt track, past Fort Lister Forest Station, from where it's another 8km along the dirt road to Phalombe village. There's little or no traffic, so you'll have to hike (about two hours), but it's pleasant enough. Most porters include this stretch in the fee you pay for the final day.

From Phalombe ordinary buses go back to Likhubula or Mulanje (US\$0.50, one hour, three daily), as do *matola* (US\$1).

CHAMBE-LICHENYA LOOP

This short but beautiful route is not an officially named trail, but we give it this title and recommend it for a good taste of Mulanje if you haven't got time for a traverse of the whole massif. It starts and finishes at Likhubula Forestry Office, and takes three days and two nights, but could be shortened to two days.

Likhubula Forestry Office to Chambe Hut

This stage is the same as the first stage of the Mulanje traverse.

Chambe Hut to Lichenya Basin

This stage is four to five hours. Heading east from Chambe Hut (towards Thuchila), turn right at a junction about 1½ hours from Chambe Hut to reach the Lichenya Basin, and either the CCAP Cottage or Lichenya Hut.

Lichenya Basin to Likhubula Forestry Office

This stage is four to five hours. Go across a col to the east of Chilemba Peak (you could side-track up here for fine views – allow two hours return) then descend through beautiful forest to eventually reach Likhubula.

ON THE MOUNTAIN

Forestry huts (camping per person US\$0.80, huts per person US\$1.30) On Mulanje are eight forestry huts: Chambe, Chisepo, Lichenya, Thuchila (*chuchila*), Chinzama, Minunu, Madzeka and Sombani. Each is equipped with benches, tables and open fires with plenty of wood. Some have sleeping platforms (no mattresses); in others you just sleep on the floor. You provide your own food, cooking gear, candles, sleeping bag and stove (although you can cook on the fire). A caretaker chops wood, lights fires and brings water, for which a small tip should be paid.

Payments must be made at Likhubula Forestry Office – show your receipt to the hut caretaker. The huts are an absolute bargain. Camping is permitted near the huts when there are no more beds. Some huts may be full

at weekends, but you can normally adjust your route around this. As the reservation system doesn't require a deposit, some local residents book and then don't turn up – it's worth checking to see if this has happened.

CCAP Cottage (beds US\$1.30) On the Lichenya Plateau, this is similar to the forestry huts, but there are utensils in the kitchen, plus mattresses and blankets. You can make reservations at the CCAP Mission in Likhubula.

Getting There & Away

See p217 and p219 for information on buses between Blantyre and Mulanje town. The dirt road to Likhubula turns off the main sealed Blantyre–Mulanje road at Chitikali, about 2km west of the centre of Mulanje town – follow the signpost to Phalombe. If you're coming from Blantyre on the bus, ask to be dropped at Chitikali. From here, irregular *matola* run to Likhubula (US\$0.50). If you're in a group, you can hire the whole *matola* to Likhubula for around US\$10. Alternatively, you can walk (10km, two to three hours); it's a pleasant hike through tea estates, with good views of the southwestern face of Mulanje on your right.

LOWER SHIRE

The main road south from Blantyre plunges down the Thyolo Escarpment in a series of hairpin bends to reach the Lower Shire, which is a thin spine of Malawian territory jutting into Mozambique. From the escarpment road, there are excellent views across the Shire River floodplains and out towards the Zambezi on the hazy horizon. Even when it's cool in the highlands, it can be blisteringly hot down here. The sharp change of temperature and landscape, in less than 30km, is most striking.

This is one of the least-visited areas of Malawi, very different from the rest of the country, and it contains Lengwe National Park, the reserves of Majete and Mwabvi, and the Elephant Marsh, a vast area of seasonally flooded swampland. Lengwe, Majete and Mwabvi are often overlooked, but slowly their infrastructure and facilities are improving so this may change in the future.

Majete Wildlife Reserve

Majete Wildlife Reserve lies west of the Shire; it's mainly miombo woodland, with dense patches of forest along the river. Animals re-

corded here include elephants, sabres, kudus and hartebeests. Poaching has taken a heavy toll on the mammal population, but numbers are returning. You'll still be able to appreciate the reserve as a beautiful wilderness area, though, and you're almost certain to have the place to yourself. The bird-watching is good, and hiking is allowed (with a game scout). Entry fees are payable (see p166).

The only driveable track in the reserve runs parallel to the Shire River (although not near enough for you to see it from the track), to the Shire River's confluence with the Mkurumadzi River, where you can pitch a tent at the Mkurumadzi Camp ranger post (Map p207; although there are no facilities. This was one of the notorious barriers to Livingstone's exploration; he camped in this very spot in 1858 – for more details see p159).

If you're in a car, this track crosses some steep gullies so high clearance is essential. If you're hiking you can go from the gate to Mkurumadzi in a day, stay the night and hike back. Just past the gate, a track leads east to the spectacular Kapichira Falls, although the view is tarnished slightly by the vast dam and power station.

Majete Safari Camp (Map p207; camping US\$3, chalets per person US\$5) is a friendly camp outside the reserve, just a few kilometres from the gate, overlooking the Shire River and the Matitu Falls, the southernmost of the Shire cataracts. The camp has seen better days but the chalets are fair value. The service is relaxed: there's a bar and a kitchen for self-catering, or you can buy meals (US\$2 to US\$5) if you order long in advance. Motorboat hire for fishing or birding costs US\$2 per hour.

Majete Safari Camp is 15km north of Chikwawa, on the road to Majete Wildlife Reserve. By bus, the nearest you can get is Chikwawa; there are several per day to/from Blantyre. From Chikwawa, *matola* run to Kapichira village, which is on the eastern bank of the Mkurumadzi River (this place has recently grown to house staff from the dam and power station).

Lengwe National Park

Lengwe is Malawi's southernmost park. Much of the surrounding area has been turned into sugarcane plantations, but the natural vegetation – mixed woodlands and grassy *dambo* (wetlands) – is protected here. Mammals include nyalas (at the northern limit of their

distribution in Africa), bushbucks, impalas, duikers, kudus and buffaloes. There's also a large and varied bird population.

Standard entry fees must be paid at the gate (see p166). There's a network of vehicle tracks for driving (some are impassable), but it's more rewarding to walk in the park or spend some time at the hides overlooking water holes; there's one within walking distance of the Visitors Camp.

SLEEPING

Sucoma Sports Club (☎ 01-428200 ext 287; chalets per person US\$5.50) This place, 8km east of Nchalo, is an option if you've got a car and seek more comfortable accommodation. It has comfortable chalets overlooking the river. This club is for senior staff at the sugar estate; meals and drinks are also available.

Nyala Lodge (bookings through Jambo Africa; ☎ 01-623709, www.jambo-africa.com; chalets/d US\$60/100) Large cottages with private bathrooms and spacious verandas sleeping two to four. There's also a pool and a camp site with clean ablutions and barbecue facilities. Antelope are often seen around the lodge.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

By car, take the main road from Blantyre south towards Nsanje. By public transport, take a bus from Blantyre to Nchalo or Nsanje. About 20km from the Shire Bridge a signpost indicates Lengwe National Park to the right. The park entrance is another 10km to the west through sugarcane plantations. If you're without wheels you may be able to hitch this last bit on a tractor.

To reach Sucoma Sports Club, enter the sugar estate at the main gates in Nchalo, then follow the signs to the 'Sports Club' (not the Shire Club).

Mwabvi Wildlife Reserve

In the southernmost tip of Malawi, Mwabvi is the country's smallest (under 350 sq km) and least-visited game reserve, and has a genuine wilderness atmosphere. It consists of low hills covered by mixed woodland, with numerous streams in rocky gorges and spectacular views over the Shire and Zambezi Rivers. Mwabvi was virtually abandoned in the 1980s and early 1990s. Rhinos and lions were once recorded here, but apart from a few buffaloes and nyalas it's unlikely that any large wildlife remains today.

Fees are payable (see p166).

Access is possible only with a 4WD or great determination. The reserve office is reached from the main road between Chikwawa and Nsanje, just east of the village of Sorgin, and about 10km west of Bangula. The Wildlife Society of Malawi is currently involved in projects to protect the reserve that encourage local people to benefit from its resources. These may also improve access for visitors, so it would be worth inquiring about the latest situation at the Wildlife Society of Malawi giftshop in Limbe (see p213).

Elephant Marsh

The Elephant Marsh is a large area of seasonally flooded plain on the Shire River about 30km downstream from Chikwawa, just south of the vast Sucoma sugar estates. Despite the name, there are no elephants here any more, although vast herds inhabited the area less than 100 years ago. Some hippos and crocodiles occur in quiet areas, but the main draw is the spectacular selection of birds – predominantly water species. This is one of the best **bird-watching** areas in Malawi, but it's well worth considering a visit here if you simply want to sample this peaceful and very unusual landscape.

As mornings and evenings are the best times to see birds (it's also not so hot), travellers without wheels may find it convenient to stay overnight in the village of Makhanga, about 10km northeast of Bangula. The Makhanga Leisure Centre has cheap rooms, and the New Makhanga Restaurant offers cheap food. If you have a car, you could stay at Sucoma Sports Club (left).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The only way to see the marsh properly is by boat. The usual way of doing this is to hire a boatman and his dugout canoe from the Fisheries Depot at a small village called Mchacha James on the east side of the marsh, about 7km from Makhanga.

If you're driving, head southwest of Blantyre for 30km and turn left (east) at Thabwa (the bottom of the escarpment). Makhanga is another 65km or so further south, following the Thyolo Escarpment. From Makhanga, head north towards Muona village. After 2.5km a dirt track leads west for 4.5km through villages and small fields to Mchacha James. This route is not signposted, so ask for

directions – it may be worth arranging a local guide in Makhanga.

If you're without wheels, take the bus from Blantyre that travels to Nchalo and Nsanje. You can get a *matola* from either of these towns to Makhanga. Alternatively, you can get off this bus at Bangula, then walk 3km to the point where the road is washed away, get a canoe across, and then take a *matola* through Chiromo to Makhanga. From Makhanga, you can walk, take a bicycle taxi, rent a bike or charter a *matola* to Mchacha James. Another option is to visit the Department of Fisheries office in Makhanga, on the Muona road, about 1km west of the train tracks – the staff here have motorcycles and may be able to help you with a lift to the jetty.

MALAWI DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Malawi's range of places to stay has expanded rapidly in the last few years. Several smart new hotels and lodges have been built along the lake and in the national parks. Backpackers are well catered for in lakeshore lodges and cheap resthouses in towns and villages. Mosquito nets are fairly important as malaria is a real problem; fortunately most places to stay provide nets in their rooms.

Budget

At the budget end of the price range, in almost every town there is a council or government resthouse. Prices vary from as little as US\$1 up to around US\$5 a double, but conditions are generally spartan to say the least and downright disgusting at worst. In national parks and along the lakeshore, many places offer camping and self-catering chalets or cabins. Some camping grounds are pretty basic, while others have good facilities.

Backpacker hostels are present in the main cities, and numerous in popular lakeshore destinations such as Cape Maclear and Nkhata Bay. Prices range from US\$3 for a dorm up to about US\$8 per person for a double or triple. Camping is usually about US\$1 to US\$3.

Midrange & Top End

Midrange hotels range from about US\$25 to US\$75 per double, including taxes, usually with private bathroom and breakfast. The quality of service at a smaller place can be just

as good as or even better than at the pricey establishments.

Top-end hotels or lodges generally range from US\$100 to US\$250 for a double room, with facilities such as private bathroom, TV, air-con and telephone, and including taxes and breakfast.

ACTIVITIES

This section provides only a brief overview of what's available throughout Malawi; for more information see the relevant sections.

Lake Malawi's population of colourful fish (see the boxed text, p199) attracts travellers to scuba diving. The lake is reckoned by experts to be among the best freshwater diving areas in the world – and one of the cheapest places to learn how to dive. Places where you can hire scuba gear and learn to dive include Nkhata Bay, Cape Maclear, Likoma Island and Senga Bay, plus Club Makokola and some of the other hotels and camping grounds on the southern lakeshore. Most hotels and camps also rent snorkelling equipment.

Many of the more upmarket places along the lake have facilities for water-skiing or windsurfing. You can also go sailing, or join luxurious 'sail safaris' where everything is done for you. Canoeing is available at Cape Maclear and Nkhata Bay.

PRACTICALITIES

- Malawi's main newspapers are *the Daily Times*, *Malawi News* and *The Nation*. *The Chronicle* is a smaller publication but with a stronger independent voice (read relentless criticism of the government).
- Malawi's national radio station, the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, combines music, news and chat shows in English, Chichewa and some other local languages. International news is brief but wide-ranging. There are also commercial music stations in the large cities.
- Malawi's national TV station was launched in 1999 and consists mostly of imported programs, news, regional music videos and religious programs. International satellite channels are available in most midrange and top-end hotels.

You can go fishing in Lake Malawi for *mpasa* (also called lake salmon), *ncheni* (lake tiger), *sungwa* (a type of perch), *kampango* or *vundu* (both catfish). There are trout in streams on Nyika, Zomba and Mulanje Plateaus, and tigerfish can be hooked in the Lower Shire.

The main areas for hiking are Nyika and Mulanje. Other areas include Zomba and various smaller peaks around Blantyre. Mulanje is Malawi's main rock-climbing area, and has some spectacular routes (including the longest in Africa), although local climbers also visit smaller crags and outcrops.

The main area for horse riding is the Nyika Plateau, which lends itself perfectly to travel on horseback. You can go on short rides or longer multiday safaris. If you prefer non-animated transport, Nyika's hilly landscape and good network of dirt tracks are also great for mountain biking.

BOOKS

This section covers books specific to Malawi; titles on the whole Southern Africa region are covered on p24. Literature by Malawian writers is covered on p47.

Field Guides

Birds of Malawi: A Supplement to Newman's Birds of Southern Africa, by KB Newman, 'bridges the bird gap' between species covered in Southern Africa and East African guides.

Cichlids & Other Fishes of Lake Malawi, by A Koning, is encyclopaedic – in both size and coverage.

Guide to the Fishes of Lake Malawi, by D Lewis et al, is sometimes called the 'WWF guide' as this organisation was the publisher. In contrast to Koning's tome, this guide is small, portable and perfect for amateurs, although not easy to find as it was published in 1986.

Trees of Malawi, by JS Pullinger & AM Kitchen, is a large-format book with detailed colour illustrations.

General

Between the Cape and Cairo, by artist Tony Grogan, is a splendid coffee-table book, with a collection of sketches and paintings from all parts of Malawi.

Jungle Lovers, by Paul Theroux, is a light humorous novel, set in a mythical country immediately recognisable to many as Banda-

era Malawi. It neatly captures life in Africa for locals and foreigners.

Malawi – Lake of Stars, by Frank Johnston, features a collection of beautiful photographs with evocative text by Vera Garland.

Malawi – The Warm Heart of Africa, by Frank Johnston and Sandy Ferrar, is a coffee-table book with excellent photography, but meatier text, focusing largely on Malawi's grave environmental issues.

Guidebooks

Malawi, Lonely Planet's specific guide, gives more in-depth coverage of Malawi. *Trekking in East Africa* includes a good section on Malawi and is recommended for trekkers and hikers.

Day Outings from Lilongwe and *Day Outings from Blantyre*, both published by the Wildlife Society of Malawi, are highly recommended. They are well written and researched, and include suggestions on places to visit, things to see and local walks in the region. They have an emphasis on wildlife and cover a surprisingly wide area. The only problem is that they're aimed mostly at people with cars – thereby precluding many travellers and about 99% of Malawi's population.

Malawi's National Parks & Game Reserves, by John Hough, covers all parks and reserves in the country, with full details of flora and fauna occurring in each.

Lake Malawi's Resorts, by Ted Sneed, covers in detail every place to stay (more than 70) on the lakeshore. It took so long to research that by the time Ted got to the southern end, some new places had opened in the north!

History

Livingstone's Lake, by Oliver Ransford, a classic book on Lake Malawi and the surrounding countries, was published in the 1960s and is now quite rare.

Nyasa – A Journal of Adventures, by ED Young, is a local history book written in the 1870s (reprinted in 1984); it's a missionary's account of the original Livingstonia mission at Cape Maclear.

A Short History of Malawi, by BR Rafael, is difficult to find, but the writing is quite accessible.

Travel Literature

Venture to the Interior, by Laurens van der Post, describes the author's 'exploration' of Mt

Mulanje and the Nyika Plateau in the 1940s, although in reality this was hardly trailblazing stuff.

BUSINESS HOURS

Offices and shops in the main towns are usually open from 8am to 5pm weekdays, with an hour for lunch between noon and 1pm. Many shops are also open Saturday morning. In smaller towns, shops and stalls are open most days, but keep informal hours. Bank hours are usually from 8am to 3.30pm weekdays. Post and telephone offices are usually open from 7.30am to 5pm weekdays, sometimes with a break for lunch. In Blantyre and Lilongwe, they also open Saturday morning.

CHILDREN

Malawi isn't awash with childcare facilities or formal children's activities. However, many of the beach lodges have family rooms, and some of the bigger hotels in Lilongwe and Blantyre provide babysitting services. Disposable nappies and formula are widely available in supermarkets and speciality shops in Lilongwe, Blantyre and Mzuzu but can be difficult to find elsewhere.

CUSTOMS

There aren't any restrictions on the amount of foreign currency that tourists can bring into or take out of Malawi. The import or export of more than MK300 is technically forbidden, however a small amount shouldn't be a problem.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Crime

Unfortunately, reports of travellers being robbed in Lilongwe and Blantyre have increased. However, incidents are still rare compared with other countries, and violence is not the norm. Some safety advice is given in the Lilongwe and Blantyre sections. There have also been robberies at popular lakeshore areas such as Cape Maclear and Nkhata Bay, but here violence is very rare.

Scams to be aware of if you're buying curios are the eager young men who offer to wrap your purchase in paper and cardboard, then want more for this job than you paid for the carving. Also on the economic front, beware of locals asking you to break a US\$100 bill into US\$10 bills and US\$20 bills. Naturally, the US\$100 bill is a fake.

Bilharzia (Schistosomiasis)

Bilharzia (or schistosomiasis) is a disease that occurs all over Africa. It is transmitted by minute worms carried by infected humans and water snails (see p770).

Although parts of the lake might be very low risk, in other areas – including some popular tourist destinations – you undoubtedly have a risk of contracting bilharzia. There's no need to panic, and no reason to avoid coming to the lake – but you should be aware of the risk.

If you do decide to swim, and you do contract bilharzia, you might suffer from some symptoms almost immediately, in which case you should seek treatment fast. But usually symptoms do not show until the disease is well established – and this can be weeks or months after exposure. Long-term effects can be very harmful so it is *essential* that you have a check-up for the disease when you get home or reach a place with good medical services.

Wildlife

Potential dangers at Lake Malawi include encountering a hippo or crocodile, but for travellers the chances of being attacked are extremely remote. Crocodiles tend to be very wary of humans and are generally found only in quiet vegetated areas around river mouths (although they may sometimes be washed into the lake by floodwater). Therefore you should be careful if you're walking along the lakeshore and have to wade a river. Popular tourist beaches are safe, although, just to be sure, you should seek local advice before diving in. The most dangerous animals in Malawi are the mosquitoes that transmit malaria.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Malawian Embassies & Consulates

Malawi has diplomatic missions in the following African countries: Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe (embassies in the countries covered in this book are listed in the relevant country chapters). Elsewhere around the world, Malawian embassies include the following:

Canada (☎ 613-236 8931; 7 Clemow Ave, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 2A9)

France (☎ 01 4070 1846; 20 Rue Euler, 75008 Paris)

Germany (☎ 49 228 343 016; Mainzerstrasse 124, 53179 Bonn)

Tanzania (☎ 255 22 113 239; 6th fl, Nic Life House, Dar es Salaam)

UK (☎ 020-7491 4172; 33 Grosvenor St, London W1X 0DE)
USA (☎ 202-797 1007; 2408 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20008)

Although Malawi has no high commission in Australia, it is represented by the **Consular Office, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade** (☎ 02-6261 3305; John McEwen Cres, Barton, ACT 2600).

Embassies & Consulates in Malawi

The following countries have diplomatic representation in Malawi.

Canada (Map p213; ☎ 01-651450; Accord Centre, Limbe)

Germany (Map p169; ☎ 01-772555; Convention Dr, City Centre, Lilongwe)

Mozambique Embassy (Map p169; ☎ 01-774100; Convention Dr, City Centre, Lilongwe); Consulate (Map p213; ☎ 643189; 1st fl, Celtel Bldg, Rayner Ave, Limbe)

South Africa (Map p169; ☎ 01-773722, sahe@malawi.net; Kang'ombe Bldg, City Centre, Lilongwe)

UK High Commission (Map p169; ☎ 01-772400; City Centre, Lilongwe); Consulate (Map p215; Hanover Ave, Blantyre)

USA (Map p169; ☎ 01-773166; Convention Dr, City Centre, Lilongwe)

Zambia (Map p169; ☎ 01-772590; Convention Dr, City Centre, Lilongwe)

Zimbabwe (Map p169; ☎ 01-774997; City Centre, Lilongwe) Off Independence Dr.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The **Lake of Stars Malawi Music Festival** (www.lakeofstarsfestival.co.uk) takes place each September at Chintheche (p191) and attracts live music acts from around Africa and the UK. It last sfor three days, and proceeds go to the charity Children in the Wilderness.

HOLIDAYS

Public holidays in Malawi:

New Year's Day 1 January

John Chilembwe Day 15 January

Martyrs' Day 3 March

Easter March/April – Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Monday

Labour Day 1 May

Freedom Day 14 June

Republic Day 6 July

Mother's Day October – second Monday

National Tree Planting Day December – second Monday

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

When one of these dates falls at a weekend, normally the following Monday is a public holiday. Islamic holidays are also observed throughout Malawi by the Muslim population.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access is available in Lilongwe, Blantyre and Mzuzu. Internet bureaux are also making an appearance elsewhere in the country but tend to be more expensive. Some hotels and lodges will let guests send or receive email for a nominal fee.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Malawi Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Wildlife

(www.tourismmalawi.com) A comprehensive resource for all things tourism in Malawi.

Malawi/Cities.Com (www.malawi.com) A glossy and informative site with some useful links.

Malawi.Net (www.malawi.net) This has links to sites of local newspapers and political parties.

LANGUAGE

English is the official language and very widely spoken. The different ethnic groups in Malawi also have their own languages or dialects.

The Chewa are the dominant group and Chichewa is the national language, widely used throughout the country as a common tongue. The 'Chi' prefix simply signifies 'language of'. Of all the other languages spoken, Tumbuka is dominant in the north and Yao in the south. See p775 for some useful words and phrases in Chichewa, Tumbuka and Yao.

MAPS

Useful maps, available in local bookshops, include the government-produced *Malawi* (1:1,000,000), showing shaded relief features and most roads, and the *Malawi Road & Tourist Map* (same scale), showing all main roads, some minor roads and national parks (but no relief) plus street maps of the main towns.

For more detail, government survey maps (1:50,000 and 1:250,000) are available from the Department of Surveys Map Sales Offices in Blantyre and Lilongwe. Specific maps and guidebooks on national parks and hiking areas are detailed under the listings for these areas.

MONEY

Malawi's unit of currency is the Malawi kwacha (MK). The kwacha is divided into 100 tambala (t).

Bank notes include MK200, MK100, MK50, MK20, MK10 and MK5. Coins include MK1, 50t, 20t, 10t, 5t and 1t, although the small tambala coins are virtually worthless.

Inflation is high in Malawi, so quoting costs in MK is not helpful, as prices may have changed significantly by the time you arrive. Therefore we have used US dollars (US\$) throughout this chapter. Although the actual exchange rate will have changed by the time you reach Malawi, the cost of things in US dollars (or any other hard currency) should not have altered as much. At big hotels and other places that actually quote in US dollars you can pay in hard currency or kwacha at the prevailing exchange rate.

ATMs

Stanbic and National Bank ATMs accept foreign cards and are found in most cities and towns including Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu, Karonga, Liwonde, Salima and Zomba.

Black Market

There's no real black market in Malawi. You may get one or two kwacha more for your dollar on the street, but the chance of robberies or cons (or fake US\$50 and US\$100 bills) means that the risk is not really worth taking compared to going to a bank or exchange bureau.

Credit Cards

You can get cash with a Visa card at Stanbic Bank and the National Bank of Malawi in Blantyre and Lilongwe. The charge is around US\$5 and it can take several hours. You're best off going to a foreign exchange bureau that will provide the same service for around US\$3 and complete the transaction on the spot.

You can use Visa cards at some but not all of the large hotels and top-end restaurants (be warned that this may add a 5% to 10% surcharge to your bill). It seems even harder to use a MasterCard. If you usually rely on plastic, you're better off using it to draw out cash and paying with that.

Tipping

Tipping is not generally expected in Malawi, as many restaurants and services will add on a service charge to your bill.

Travellers Cheques

You can change travellers cheques at most major banks and foreign exchange bureaus,

although you will need to show them the original purchase receipt. You can sometimes use travellers cheques to pay at large hotels and lodges.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

General aspects of photography in the region are covered on p747. In Malawi film and camera parts are generally available only in Blantyre and Lilongwe.

In the cities, Fuji or Konika 100 ASA 36-exposure print film costs about US\$3.50 and developing and printing costs about US\$9 for 24 exposures or US\$12 for 36. Two passport pictures will cost you around US\$5.

POST

Post in and out of Malawi is a bit of a lottery. Some letters get from Lilongwe to London in three days, others take three weeks. Mail from Lilongwe or Blantyre to Cape Town often takes a month. In rural areas, the post can be very slow. Post offices in Blantyre and Lilongwe have poste restante services.

To African destinations, letters less than 10g and postcards cost US\$0.60. To Europe, India, Pakistan and the Middle East it's US\$0.90 and to the Americas, Japan or Australasia postage is US\$1. It's quicker (and probably more reliable) to use the EMS Speedpost service at post offices. Letters up to 500g cost US\$5 to Europe and US\$7 to Australia and the USA.

For airmail parcels it costs about US\$10 plus US\$3 per kilo to send items outside Africa. Surface mail is cheaper.

TELEPHONE

International calls (to destinations outside Africa) from public phone offices cost around US\$4 per minute. Cheaper rates are technically available from 6pm Friday to 7am Monday, but this often doesn't translate at phone bureaus.

Telephone calls within Malawi are inexpensive – around US\$0.30 per minute depending on the distance – and the network between main cities is reliable, although the lines to outlying areas are often not working. Calls to mobiles within Malawi cost around US\$0.50 per minute. Public phones (called 'booths') take new MK1 coins only.

Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are used everywhere in Malawi. Mobile phone prefixes are 08 or 09 and

the two major networks are Celtel and Tel-ekom. Sim cards are readily available from electronic stores, internet cafés and dedicated mobile-phone stores. They cost around US\$5 and include another US\$3 to US\$4 dollars worth of airtime. You can buy top-up cards at supermarkets, internet cafés, petrol stations and roadside booths, and they come in US\$2, US\$5 and US\$10 denominations.

Phone Codes

The international code for Malawi if you're dialling from abroad is 265.

Malawi does not have area codes, but all landline numbers begin with 01, so whatever number you dial within the country will have eight digits. Numbers starting with 7 are on the Lilongwe exchange; those starting with 6 are in Blantyre, although this will be slowly changing to 8 over the next couple of years; 5 is around Zomba; 4 is the south; 3 is the north; and 2 is the Salima area.

TOURIST INFORMATION

There are tourist offices in Lilongwe (p170) and Blantyre (p214), and an office at the Ministry of Wildlife and Tourism in Lilongwe (p170). Outside Malawi, tourism promotion is handled by UK-based **Malawi Tourism** (☎ 0115-982 1903; fax 0115-981 9418; www.malawitourism.com), which responds to inquiries from all over the world.

VISAS

Visas are not needed by citizens of Commonwealth countries, the USA and most European nations (except Switzerland). Visas are limited to 30 days, although extensions are easy to get.

Visas for Onward Travel

If you need visas for neighbouring countries while in Malawi, these are the conditions.

Mozambique Visas are available in Lilongwe and Limbe; both offices are open from 8am to noon weekdays. One-month single-entry visas cost US\$15 and take four working days to issue, but you can pay extra to have it issued in one day.

South Africa Visas are free and take two days to issue. The high commission in Lilongwe is open from 8am to noon weekdays.

Tanzania There is no Tanzanian representation in Malawi, but visas are administered at the border or on arrival at the airport, and cost US\$50.

Zambia The cost of a single-entry visa depends on your nationality: Brits pay US\$60; all others pay US\$30.

Applications can be made between 8am and 4.30pm (closed between 12.30pm and 2pm) on Monday and Tuesday, or Wednesday morning and passport collection is on Friday only, between 8am and noon.

Visa Extensions

You can get an extension on your visa at immigration offices in Blantyre or Lilongwe or at regional police stations. The process is straightforward and free.

VOLUNTEERING

Malawi has some great, grassroots volunteering opportunities in Nkhata Bay (p189), the Chintheche Strip (p191), Monkey Bay (p200) and Cape Maclear (p203).

TRANSPORT IN MALAWI

GETTING THERE & AWAY

This section covers access to Malawi from neighbouring countries only. Information about reaching Southern Africa from elsewhere on the African continent and from other continents is outlined on p752.

Air

Malawi's main airport for international flights is at Lilongwe. It has a pharmacy, a post office, a bookshop, banks and car hire desks, plus a restaurant and bar overlooking the runway where you can use up the last of your kwacha before flying out (although beware of waiters overcharging).

There is also an airport at Blantyre, which is mostly served by regional and domestic flights. It has a small cafeteria, a bookshop and an Avis desk.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Air Malawi (www.airmalawi.net) has a pretty good regional network, with three flights a week to Harare, and two flights a week to both Lusaka and Johannesburg (Jo'burg). The following regional airlines also serve Malawi, usually flying on the days Air Malawi doesn't (so you

DEPARTURE TAX

For travellers flying out, the airport departure tax for international flights is US\$20, payable in US dollars in cash. No other currency is accepted.

get a wider choice of flights), with fares mostly on a par: **Air Zimbabwe** (www.airzimbabwe.com) flies three times per week to/from Harare (with connections to Victoria Falls and other parts of Southern Africa); and **South African Airways** (www.flysaa.com) flies twice per week to/from Jo'burg (with connections to Durban, Cape Town etc).

Kenya Airways (www.kenya-airways.com) flies four times per week to/from Nairobi.

Ethiopian Airways (www.flyethiopian.com) flies four times a week from Addis Ababa.

Ulendo Air Services (☎ 01-754717/950; air-services@ulendo.malawi.net) has flights from Lilongwe to Mfuwe in Zambia (US\$220) and to Livingstone in Zambia (US\$320).

Border Crossings

MOZAMBIQUE

South

The quickest way to reach Mozambique south of the Zambezi is to take a minibus to the Mozambique border crossing at Zóbuè (*zob-way*; US\$2.50) and then a minibus to Tete (US\$1.50), from where buses go to Beira and Maputo. You could also get a Blantyre–Harare bus to drop you at Tete and then get a bus to Beira or Maputo.

Central

If you are heading for central Mozambique, there are several buses per day from Blantyre to Nsanje (US\$2.80), or all the way to the Malawi border at Marka (*ma-ra-ka*; US\$3.30). It's a few kilometres between the border crossings – you can walk or take a bicycle taxi – and you can change money on the Mozambique side. From here pick-ups go to Mutarara, Nhamilabue and Vila de Sena.

North

There are three border crossings from Malawi into northern Mozambique: Muloza, from where you can reach Mocuba in Mozambique, and Nayuchi and Chiponde, both of which lead to Cuamba in Mozambique.

Regular buses run from Blantyre, via Mulanje, to Muloza (US\$2). From here, you walk 1km to the Mozambique border crossing at Milange, from where it's another few kilometres into Milange *vila* (town) itself. There's a *pensão* (cheap hotel) and bank here if you need them. From Milange there's usually a chapa (pick-up or converted minibus) or truck about every other day in the dry sea-

son to Mocuba (US\$4), where you can find transport on to Quelimane or Nampula.

Further north, minibuses and *matola* run a few times per day between Mangochi and Namwera (US\$2), where there are resthouses. You can also get a bicycle taxi for the remaining 10km to the border crossing at Chiponde (US\$3). If you get stuck at Namwera, you can take a bicycle taxi to Chiponde (US\$3). It's 7km to the Mozambique border crossing at Mandimba and the best way to get there is by bicycle taxi (US\$2). Mandimba has a couple of *pensões*, and there's at least one vehicle daily, usually a truck, between here and Cuamba (US\$4).

The third option is to go by minibus from Liwonde to the border at Nayuchi (US\$3). You can walk to the Mozambique border post at Entre Lagos and possibly to hitch to Cuamba. Be warned, though, that there's very little transport of any sort on this route so you could be waiting a long time; the Mandimba crossing is a better option.

Boat

The Lake Malawi steamboat *Ilala* (see p234) stops at both Cóbue (*kob-way*) and Metangula on the Mozambican mainland. If you're planning a visit you must get your passport stamped at the immigration post in Chipela (the main village) on Likoma Island. For short visits, you can pay US\$1.30 for a lakeshore pass, which enables you to spend 10 days on the Mozambican lakeshore only (you must return to Malawi).

Another way to get to the Mozambican lakeshore is to take a dhow (local sailing boat) from Likoma Island to Cóbue (US\$0.80). A road connecting Cóbue and Metangula is scheduled for upgrading, so you may be able to hitch a ride. Alternatively, you could do this section by boat (often on the same boat that brought you over from Likoma). A motorboat (US\$5) takes six hours and a dhow (US\$2.50) can take one or two days, so bring your own food and water.

For more information on the Mozambique side of Lake Malawi, see p284.

Train

If you're heading to northern Mozambique, a passenger train departs Limbe on Wednesdays at 7am, travelling via Balaka and Liwonde to Nayuchi. The fare from Limbe to Nayuchi is US\$3.30, but it's more popular to get on at Liwonde, from where it costs US\$2. From

Nayuchi (where there are moneychangers) you can walk to Entre Lagos, but transport from here into Mozambique is limited.

SOUTH AFRICA

If you need to get to South Africa quickly and cheaply, **City to City** (☎ 09-937499) and **Translux** (☎ 09-937499) run direct luxury coaches from Blantyre to Jo'burg every day between them, for US\$40 to US\$50. **Vaal Africa** (☎ 01-621265) also operates a service between Blantyre and Jo'burg on Tuesday and Sunday for US\$80. All companies depart at 9am, arriving in Jo'burg around mid-afternoon the next day. **Ingwe** (☎ 01-622313, 829879) runs services to Jo'burg on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday for US\$86.

TANZANIA

If you want to go the whole way between Lilongwe and Dar es Salaam, two buses a week (Tuesday and Saturday) depart from Devil St in Lilongwe. There's a ticket office where you can book; fares are US\$33. If you're travelling from the south, your first sight of a Tanzanian bus – like something from the movie *Mad Max* or the worst carnival ride you've ever had – may be quite a shock. These buses also pick up and drop off in Mzuzu and Mbeya (Tanzania) and are handy for going between northern Malawi and southern Tanzania.

If you're going in stages, buses and minibuses run between Mzuzu and Karonga (US\$4, 3½ hours), from where minibuses and *matola* travel to the Songwe border crossing (US\$1.30). It's 200m across the bridge to the Tanzanian border crossing.

Once you're on the Tanzanian side of the border, minibuses and bicycle taxis travel the 5km distance to Kyela, from where you can get a bus to Dar es Salaam. You can change money with the bicycle taxi boys but beware of scams.

Boat

The *Songeya* ferry sails between Mbamba Bay in Tanzania and Nkhata Bay on Malawi's northern lakeshore every Saturday. The journey takes 3½ hours, and the fares for 1st-/economy-class deck are US\$11/6.50. Cabins are also available; children travel for US\$3.

ZAMBIA

There are three direct buses per week between Lilongwe and Lusaka (US\$25), also departing from Devil St, but it's a long haul

and you're better off doing the trip in stages. There is no specific office to ask at the Tanzanian bus ticket office for information. Regular minibuses run between Lilongwe and Mchinji (US\$2). From here, it's 12km to the border. Local shared taxis shuttle between Mchinji and the border post for around US\$1.50 per person, or US\$8 for the whole car.

From the Zambian side of the border crossing, shared taxis run to Chipata (US\$2), which is about 30km west of the border, from where you can reach Lusaka or South Luangwa National Park (for more details see p661).

ZIMBABWE

Although Zimbabwe doesn't border Malawi, many travellers go directly between the two countries. The cheapest option is the daily **Munorurama Bus** (☎ 01-6248735), between Blantyre and Harare (US\$15). The bus departs from opposite the Chileka Rd bus station at 7.30am and arrives in Harare by late afternoon. The service in this direction is good, and on Wednesday and Saturday it continues all the way to Jo'burg (US\$38). Travelling from Harare to Blantyre costs the same, but is a much slower trip because local people bring in loads of Zimbabwean goods and there are big searches at the border. Some travellers have been on the northbound bus for over two days! If you do get interminably stuck at the Mwanza border crossing, you're better off abandoning the big bus and getting a local minibus to Blantyre (US\$2.50).

GETTING AROUND

You can travel around Malawi by air, road, rail or boat. Compared to other countries in the region, distances between major centres are quite short, and generally roads and public transport systems are quite good, making independent travel fairly straightforward.

Air

For domestic flights, departure tax is US\$2.

AIRLINES IN MALAWI

Fares for all vary according to the number of people in your group, so contact these companies direct for more details.

Air Malawi (☎ 01-772123, 753181, 788415; www.airmalawi.com) Has daily flights between Lilongwe and Blantyre, and four flights a week between Lilongwe and Mzuzu, both for US\$77 one way. You can also fly from Lilongwe or Blantyre to Lake Malawi's Club Makokola for US\$75 (you don't

have to be a guest), from where you can reach other points on the lake. Domestic flights can be paid for in kwacha. Air Malawi's booking system is not always reliable, so be prepared for lost reservations or double bookings.

Nyika Safari Company (☎ 01-330180; www.nyika.com) Mainly services Nyika National Park, but often has promotional offers to other Malawian destinations.

Ulendo Air Services (☎ 01-754717; air-services@ulendo.malawi.net) Has charter and seat only flights to major destinations around the country.

Bicycle

Bicycles are available for hire at many lodges throughout Malawi. You can also hire bicycles or arrange mountain bike tours through Land & Lake Safaris (p170).

Boat

The **Ilala ferry** (☎ 01-587311; ilala@malawi.net) chugs passengers and cargo up and down Lake Malawi once per week in each direction. Travelling between Monkey Bay in the south and Chilumba in the north, it makes 13 stops at lakeside villages and towns in between. (You can get to the Mozambique mainland via the *Ilala*; see p232.) Many travellers rate this journey as a highlight of the country, although there are occasionally nasty storms. If you're unlucky, be prepared for some pitching and rolling.

The whole trip, from one end of the line to the other, takes about three days. The official schedules are detailed in the table (only selected ports are shown).

Northbound port	Arrival	Departure
Monkey Bay	–	10am (Fri)
Chipoka	1pm	4pm (Fri)
Nkhotakota	12am	2am (Sat)
Metangula	6am	8am (Sat)
Likoma Island	1.30pm	6pm (Sat)
Nkhata Bay	1am	5am (Sun)
Ruarwe	10.15am	11.15am (Sun)
Chilumba	5pm (Sun)	–
Southbound port	Arrival	Departure
Chilumba	–	1am (Mon)
Ruarwe	6.45am	8am (Mon)
Nkhata Bay	12.45pm	8pm (Mon)
Likoma Island	3.15am	6.15am (Tue)
Metangula	12.00pm	2.00pm (Tue)
Nkhotakota	5.30pm	7.30pm (Tue)
Chipoka	3.30am	7.30am (Wed)
Monkey Bay	10.30am (Wed)	–

The *Ilala* has three classes. Cabin Class was once luxurious and the cabins are still in reasonable condition. The spacious First Class Deck is most popular with travellers, due largely to the sociable bar, around which you are likely to meet a new soulmate or two. There are also seats, a shaded area and mattresses for hire (US\$2) in case you're doing the long-haul journey. Economy covers the entire lower deck and is dark and crowded, and engine fumes permeate from below.

Cabin and First Class Deck passengers can dine in the ship's restaurant, where a beef curry, *peri-peri* chicken or meal of similar standard costs US\$5. Food is also served from a galley on the Economy Deck; a meal of beans, rice and vegetables costs under US\$1.

Reservations are usually required for Cabin Class. For other classes, tickets are sold only when the boat is sighted. However, there's no question of anyone being refused – it just keeps filling up! If you travel Economy Class, you can visit the First Class Deck to buy a beer, but you'll have to pay extra for the privilege.

SAMPLE ROUTES & FARES

All of the following sample fares are from Nkhata Bay.

Destination	Cabin (US\$)	1st class (US\$)	Economy (US\$)
Likoma Island	20	11	5
Metangula	33	20	6
Ruarwe	18	10	4
Monkey Bay	50	35	10

When the *Ilala* stops at lakeside towns or villages, the water is too shallow for it to come close; the lifeboat is used to ferry passengers ashore. On its southbound journey, the *Ilala* docks at Nkhata Bay for seven hours and traders come aboard, selling food, drinks and newspapers.

Bus & Minibus CLASSES

There are three options for bus travel in Malawi. Top of the range is Coachline, operated by **Shire Bus Lines** (☎ 01-756226). This luxury nonstop service with air-con, toilet, snacks, steward service and good drivers travels three times a day between Blantyre and Lilongwe (see Getting There & Away under Lilongwe,

Mzuzu and Blantyre for details). There's a daily express service operated between Lilongwe and Mzuzu by Sacramento Bus. You can't reserve in advance, but these are more comfortable than other express buses, with comfortable reclining seats and music. Other buses, also operated by Shire Bus Lines, fall under the category of express – fast buses between the main towns with limited stops and no standing passengers allowed – and ordinary, which cover long-distance routes but stop everywhere, so are very slow.

All journey durations for ordinary buses in this chapter are best estimates of the real length, which is usually double the official length. There are also many private buses and minibuses on the roads, either slotting in between Shire bus services or serving the routes they don't. Fares are about the same as express buses, or slightly more, depending on the route. There are also local minibus services around towns and to outlying villages, or along the roads that the big buses can't manage. (In Malawi vehicles with about 30 seats are called 'half-buses' to distinguish them from big buses and minibuses.)

In rural areas, the frequency of buses and minibuses drops dramatically – sometimes to nothing. In cases like this, the 'bus' is often a truck or pick-up, with people just piled in the back. In Malawi this is called a *matola*.

COSTS

As a rule of thumb, express buses charge between US\$1.50 and US\$2.50 per 100km, and ordinary buses slightly less. In rural areas there are also local services that cover the quieter routes and tend to be slow and crowded. Everyone pays a fare to the driver – normally a bit more than a bus would charge (ie around US\$3 per 100km).

RESERVATIONS

You can buy a ticket in advance for Coachline services and are allocated a reserved seat; a week's notice is sometimes needed, particularly for Friday and Sunday services.

Car & Motorcycle

The majority of main routes are mostly good-quality sealed roads, but in recent years several stretches of road have not been repaired and potholes are opening up. In some areas these have made driving slow, difficult and dangerous. Secondary roads are usually graded dirt

and also vary. Some are well maintained and easy to drive on in a normal car; others are very bad, especially after rain, and slow even with 4WD. Rural routes are not so good, and after heavy rain they are often impassable, sometimes for weeks.

If you're bringing a car into Malawi from any other country without a carnet, a temporary import permit costs US\$2.50 (payable in kwacha) and compulsory third-party insurance is US\$25 for one month. There's also a US\$20 road tax fee – you must produce the documentation for this if you are driving the car out. When you leave Malawi, a permit handling fee of US\$3 is payable. Receipts are issued.

DRIVING LICENCE

You need a full driver's licence (international diving licence is not necessary), which normally requires a minimum age of 23 and one year's driving experience.

FUEL & SPARE PARTS

Fuel costs around US\$1 per litre for petrol and US\$0.80 per litre for diesel. Supplies are usually reliable and distances between towns with filling stations are not long in Malawi, so you rarely need to worry about running dry. Spare parts are available in Lilongwe, Blantyre and Mzuzu.

HIRE

Most car hire companies are based in Blantyre and Lilongwe. Those with offices in more than one city can arrange pick-up-drop-off deals. International names include Avis, and there are several independent outfits. You should shop around as companies often have special deals and some will negotiate. You can also hire a car through a travel agent – they may have access to special deals. Whoever you hire from, be prepared for a car that is not up to Western standards. Check the tyres and as much else as you can. If anything is worn or broken, demand repairs or a discount.

Self-drive rates for a small car with unlimited mileage start at around US\$70 per day. To this add 20% government tax, plus another US\$3 to US\$7 a day for insurance.

Rental companies in Malawi include the following:

Avis (☎ in Lilongwe 01-756103, 756105, in Blantyre 692368) Also has offices at Lilongwe and Blantyre airports and at some large hotels.

Ceciliana Car Hire (☎ 01-643206; Blantyre)

Sputnik Car Hire (☎ 01-761563, 08 823139; Lilongwe)

SS rent-a-car (☎ in Lilongwe 01-751478, in Blantyre 622836)

INSURANCE

Third-party insurance is a requirement for all drivers, but this can be arranged through car hire companies or purchased at border posts.

ROAD RULES

Malawians drive on the left, and seat belts are compulsory. Speed limits are 80km per hour on main roads and 60km in built-up areas.

Tours

Several companies organise tours around the country, ranging from a few days to three weeks. Trips into Zambia or Mozambique are also available, although Malawi's safari scene is much smaller than, say, South Africa's or Zimbabwe's. Tours may be 'mobile' (ie moving from camp to camp every few days) or based in one place, with excursions each day. Most are vehicle-based, although some outfits also organise walking trips, horseback safaris, or boating on the lake. Tours normally include transport, accommodation and food, but prices vary considerably according to standards – from budget to luxury. There are only a few budget companies that can arrange tours on the spot – most prefer advance bookings, although sometimes a couple of days is enough. Budget tours usually cost between US\$30 and US\$50 per day. Most midrange and top-end companies also need advance bookings, and charge from US\$80 per person per day, easily climbing to US\$200 per day or more.

The following is a list of major tour operators in Malawi, with a variety of budgets to suit most wallets.

Barefoot Safaris (☎ 01-707346; www.barefoot-safaris.com) Offers budget and midrange tours, mostly geared towards wildlife watching in Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania. It also arranges good walking tours, encompassing Lengwe National Park, Mt Mulanje, Liwonde National Park and Lake Malawi. Whether you're walking or viewing, tours cost from US\$85 per person per day and include all meals and accommodation.

Jambo-Africa (☎ 01-823709; www.jambo-africa.com)

Based at the Mount Soche Hotel in Blantyre. They offer tours to Lengwe National Park for US\$385 per person and Mt Mulanje hiking packages from US\$230 for three days.

Kayak Africa (☎ 09-942661; www.kayakafrica.net)

Based in Cape Maclear, it offers guided one-, two- or three-night island-hopping kayak tours from US\$130 per person per night. The charge includes tented accommodation, meals, snorkel gear and park fees. It also operates PADI open-water courses for US\$250.

Kiboko Safaris (☎ 01-751226; www.kiboko-safaris.com) Specialises in budget tours; fully inclusive and four-day trips to South Luangwa cost US\$325.

Monkey Business (☎ 01-352342; info@njayalodge.com; Nkhata Bay) Offers excellent kayak excursions along the northern lakeshore. Typical itineraries include idyllic spots such as Usisya and Ruarwe, or spectacular trips to Likoma and Chizumulu Islands. Journeys are broken by stopovers at fishing villages and empty beaches, and these trips are a great way to explore the area. Tours cost from US\$30 per person per day (you can design your own itinerary ranging from two to seven days), which includes meals, kayaks, guides and tents. It also arranges one-day Kayak-Bushwalk-Dive tours for US\$40 per person.

Nyika Safari Company (☎ 01-330180; www.nyika.com) Operates purely indulgent horseback safaris on the Nyika Plateau from US\$320 per person per day, which includes all meals, rides and accommodation in luxury safari tents (hot showers and all!) or at the luxurious Chelinda Lodge. These tours operate only between May and October and last anywhere from two to 10 days.

Red Zebra Tours (☎ 01-263165; www.lakemalawi.com) Based in Senga Bay, it specialises in diving and lake safaris with an experienced guide.

Wilderness Safaris (☎ 01-771393; info@wilderness.malawi.net; Bisnowaty Service Centre, Kenyatta Rd, Lilongwe) Operates all accommodation and facilities in Liwonde National Park. It can also arrange flights, air charters, car hire and mid- to top-end safaris to South Luangwa National Park in Zambia, starting from US\$500 per person all inclusive.

Train

Trains run every Wednesday between Blantyre and Balaka (US\$1.50), but passengers rarely use them as road transport on this route is quicker and cheaper. The service of most use to travellers is the continuation of this line from Liwonde to the Malawi–Mozambique border crossing at Nayuchi (US\$2). For details, see p232.

The twice-weekly train service between Limbe and Nsanje (US\$2), in the far south of Malawi, is popular as the line reaches areas where road transport is limited. Since a bridge washed away in 1998, trains terminate at Makhanga.

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Mozambique

With its stunning beaches, magical offshore islands, excellent diving, fascinating cultures and charming waterside capital, Mozambique is one of the region's best-kept secrets. The dark war days are well in the past, and the country is now firmly part of the Southern Africa travellers' loop, yet enough off the beaten track to be satisfyingly adventurous.

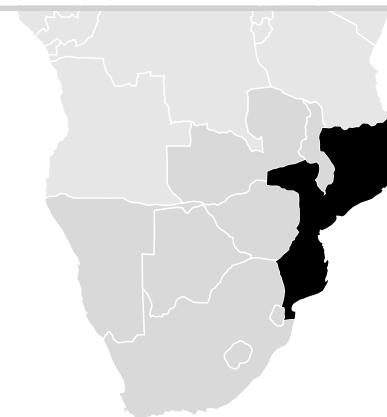
Laze under the palms or go snorkelling around the islands of the Bazaruto Archipelago, sail on a dhow through mangrove channels in the Quirimbas Archipelago, take an off-beat safari in the wilds of Gorongosa National Park, wander past stately colonial-era churches on Ilha de Moçambique, sip a *café espresso* at one of Maputo's lively sidewalk cafés (or maybe a *caipirinha* at one of its jazz bars), watch Makonde sculptors bring blocks of hard wood to life or dance to the country's trademark *marrabenta* music. In contrast to its more strait-laced neighbours – all former British colonies or protectorates – Mozambique's modern face reflects a unique fusion of African, Arabic, Indian and Portuguese influences. Its cuisine is spicier, its rhythms more tropical and its pace more laid-back.

While infrastructure is less developed and more expensive than in most other countries in the region, especially South Africa, reconstruction has proceeded at a remarkable pace and tourism is off to an ambitious start.

The easiest introduction is in the south, where roads are good and accommodation options abound. Elsewhere, allow time for getting around and be prepared to rough it. Wherever you go, get here soon, before the rest of the world wakes up to Mozambique's charms.

FAST FACTS

- **Area:** 801,590 sq km
- **Capital:** Maputo
- **Country code:** ☎ 258
- **Famous for:** Ilha de Moçambique, *marrabenta* music, Makonde woodcarvings
- **Languages:** Portuguese, various African languages
- **Money:** Metical nova família (Mtc)
- **Phrases:** *Bom dia* (good morning); *obrigado/a* (thank you – m/f)
- **Population:** 19.7 million



HOW MUCH?

- **Plate of grilled prawns** US\$12
- **Single-day dive** US\$40-50
- **Short taxi ride** US\$2
- **Daytime dhow safari** US\$45
- **Maputo–Inhambane bus fare** US\$9

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L of petrol** US\$1
- **1L of bottled water** US\$0.70
- **Bottle of 2M beer** US\$1
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$10
- **Plate of xima and sauce** US\$1

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Bazaruto Archipelago** (p267) The quintessential tropical paradise with turquoise and jade waters full of colourful fish.
- **Ilha de Moçambique** (p278) Quiet, cobbled streets lined with colonial-era buildings, and a surreal time-warp atmosphere.
- **Quirimbas Archipelago** (p288) Sublimely beautiful islands, enchanting Ibo and some of the region's most exclusive getaways.
- **Maputo** (p246) Jacaranda- and flame tree-lined streets, lively sidewalk cafés, good museums and an excellent nightlife.
- **Off the beaten track** (p284) Secluded coves, crystal-clear waters, pristine wilderness and a wonderful ecolodge on Lake Niassa.

ITINERARIES

- **One Week** In the south: start with a few nights enjoying **Maputo's** (p246) vibe before heading further north to **Inhambane** (p261), **Tofo** (p262) or one of the other beaches. In the north: fly or travel overland from Malawi to **Nampula** (p276) and on to **Ilha de Moçambique** (p278). Finish with a few days in and around **Pemba** (p285).
- **Two Weeks** In the south: follow the outline under the one-week itinerary. From the beaches around Inhambane, head to **Vilankulo** (p265) for a dhow safari or snorkelling around the **Bazaruto Archipelago** (p267). Fly or take the bus back to Maputo or Johannesburg. In the north: proceed as under the one-week itinerary,

but now you'll have time for an excursion to the **Quirimbas Archipelago** (p288). Fly back to Maputo, or continue overland or by air to Tanzania. Alternatively: combine the southern and northern one-week itineraries.

- **One Month** Follow the previous itineraries' southern routings, but adding **Ponta d'Ouro** (p256) or **Maputo Special Reserve** (p258), or perhaps another beach or two. From Vilankulo, continue by bus or air to **Beira** (p268) for a detour to **Gorongosa National Park** (p270), or go straight to Nampula and Ilha de Moçambique. Continue with the northern two-week itinerary. Alternatively go by train or plane from Nampula to **Cuamba** (p282), and then to **Lichinga** (p283), beautiful **Lake Niassa** (p284) and on to Malawi via the **Ilala** ferry.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Sunshine, blue skies and temperatures averaging between 24°C and 27°C along the coast are the norm, except during the wet summer season from about December/January through April when the heavy rains come and everything gets unpleasantly soggy. Temperatures are also higher during the rainy season – averaging 30°C and above in some areas. The hottest areas are in the north around Pemba, in the dry west around Tete and along the Zambezi Valley. Rainfall averages 750mm annually in Maputo.

The best time to visit is from May/June to November, during the cooler dry season. At the height of the rainy season between about February and April, many roads are impassable, flooding is common in the south and centre of the country, and chances are high you'll get stuck somewhere. During the Christmas–New Year holidays, around Easter and again in August, the southern resorts fill up with the vacationing South African neighbours.

HISTORY

From Bantu-speaking farmers and fishers to Arabic traders, Goan merchants and adventuring Europeans, Mozambique has long been a crossroads of cultures. For more on the country's early history, along with the history of Southern Africa, see p37.

The Portuguese Arrive

The long and often torturous era of European involvement in Mozambique began over 500

years ago when Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama landed at Ilha de Moçambique in 1498 en route to India. Over the next 200 years, the Portuguese established trading enclaves along the coast and several settlements in the interior along the Zambezi River Valley. Trade – fuelled by oft-overblown tales of legendary riches in the interior – focused first on ivory, and then on gold. By the late 18th century, slaves had been added to this list. Mozambican ports became one of the continent's main slave channels, with hundreds of thousands (some estimates say as high as a million) of Africans sold through them into slavery.

Beginning in the 17th century, the Portuguese divided much of the interior into *prazos* – vast agricultural estates, nominally under the Portuguese crown, but actually run as private fiefdoms with their own slave armies. Yet there was little cohesion to the Portuguese ventures, and they never managed to get the grip over their vast hinterlands that they sought.

Colonial Era Repression

In the late 19th century, as the rest of the continent began to be torn apart in the 'Scramble for Africa', growing competition from the other colonial powers forced Portugal to strengthen its claims on its territories. In 1891 Portugal signed a treaty with the British giving the country – then known as Portuguese East Africa – its present shape, and formalising Portuguese control. However, even then, the Portuguese were only able to directly administer the southern part of the vast territory.

In the early 20th century, expansion of the nearby Witwatersrand gold mines and oppressive Portuguese labour laws led to a mass labour migration from southern Mozambique to South Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). A rail line was built between Beira and Mutare (Rhodesia), and the Portuguese moved their capital south from Ilha de Moçambique to Lourenço Marques, as Maputo was then known.

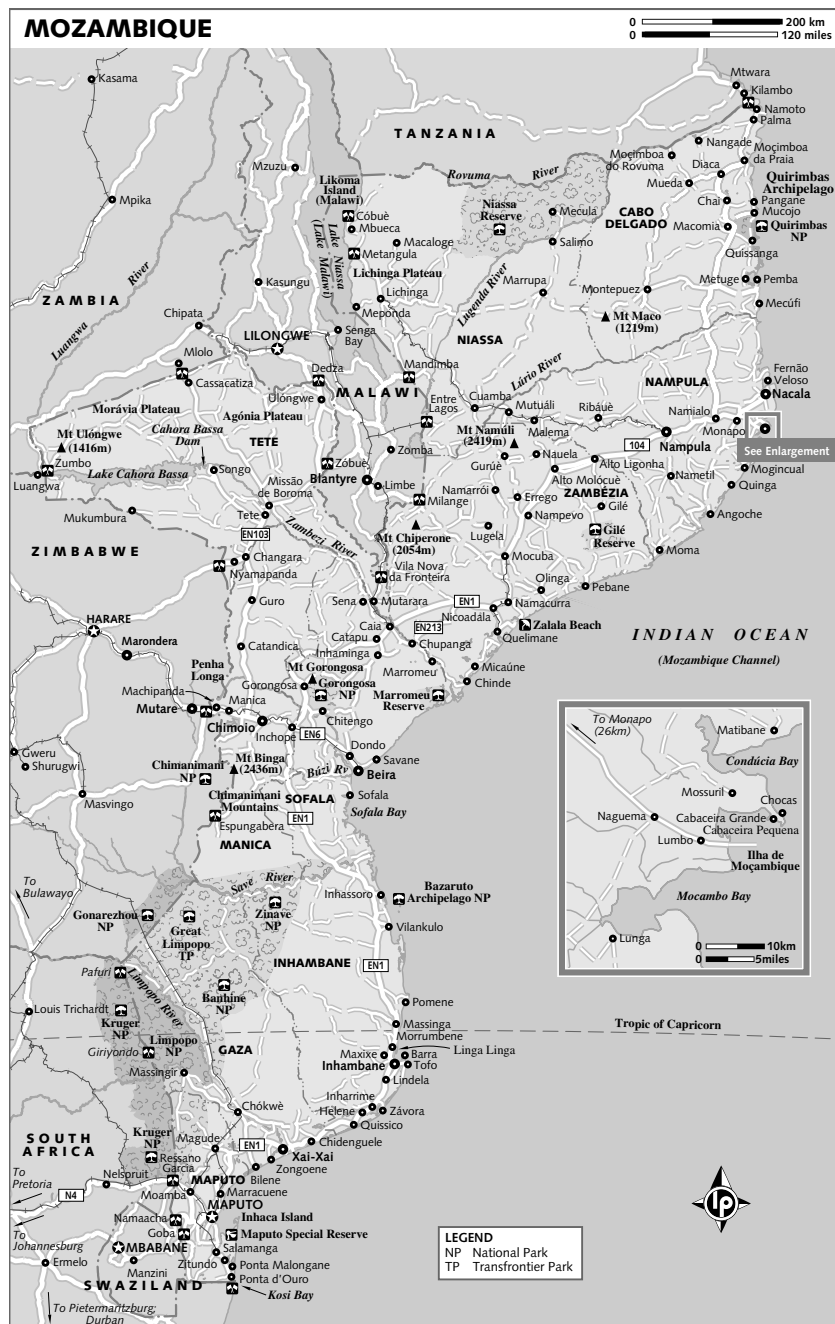
In the late 1920s António Salazar took the reins in Portugal, and sealed off the colonies from non-Portuguese investment. Over the next three decades, the numbers of Portuguese in Mozambique steadily increased, as did repression by the colonial administration. There was not even a pretence of social investment in the African population, and of the few schools and hospitals that did exist, most were in the cities and reserved for Portuguese, other whites and *asimilados* (Africans who assimilated to European ways).

The Independence Struggle Begins

In June 1960, at Mueda in northern Mozambique, a meeting was held by villagers protesting peacefully about taxes. Portuguese troops opened fire, killing a large number of demonstrators. Mozambicans had had enough, and a resistance movement was born, with this 'massacre of Mueda' kindling the first sparks of the independence struggle. Resistance to colonial rule coalesced in 1962 with the formation of Frelimo, the Mozambique Liberation Front. In 1964 shots fired in the unlikely northern village of Chai set off the struggle that finally culminated in independence in 1975.

TRAVEL TIPS

- Allow plenty of time, and don't try to cover too much distance. If your time is limited, stick to the coast – Mozambique's beaches are among the best in the region – and focus on either the south or the north of the country. To link the two, consider an internal flight.
- Carry a mix of finances – a Visa card for ATMs (essential!), plus some cash (US dollars and rand) and a few travellers cheques for emergencies.
- Learn a few words of Portuguese or greetings in local languages.
- Don't insulate yourself from Mozambique or Mozambicans. Travel at least some of the time on public transport. Try to get away from the tourist resorts and from South Africans, and learn about local life.
- Enjoy the prawns, crayfish and delicious coastal cuisine.
- Relish the country's 'off-beatness', and forget about comparisons with other regional destinations; Mozambique is in a class of its own.



Led by the charismatic Eduardo Mondlane (who was assassinated in 1969), and operating from bases in Tanzania, Frelimo's aim was the complete liberation of Mozambique. By 1966 it had freed two northern provinces, but progress was slow and the war dragged on into the 1970s. The Portuguese attempted to eliminate rural support for Frelimo with a scorched earth campaign and by resettling people in fenced villages. However, squabbling within Portugal's colonial empire and increasing international criticism sapped the government's resources. The final blow for Portugal came in 1974 with the overthrow of the Salazar regime. On 25 June 1975 the independent People's Republic of Mozambique was proclaimed with wartime commander Samora Machel as president.

Independence – the Early Years

The Portuguese pulled out almost overnight, sinking ships and pouring cement down wells as they went, and leaving Mozambique in a state of chaos, with few skilled professionals and virtually no infrastructure. Frelimo found itself faced with the task of running the country, and threw itself headlong into a policy of radical social change. Ties were established with the former USSR and East Germany, private land ownership was replaced with state farms and peasant cooperatives, and schools, banks and insurance companies were nationalised.

However, Frelimo's socialist programme proved unrealistic, and by 1983 the country was almost bankrupt. The crisis was compounded by a disastrous three-year drought and by South African and Rhodesian moves to destabilise Mozambique because the African National Congress (ANC) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) – both fighting for majority rule – had bases there.

Onto this scene emerged the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo), which had been established in the mid-1970s by Rhodesia as part of its destabilisation policy, and which was later backed by the South African military and certain sectors in the West.

Ravages of War

Renamo had no desire to govern – its only objective was to paralyse the country. Roads, bridges, railways, schools and clinics were destroyed. Villagers were rounded up, anyone with skills was shot, and atrocities were com-

mitted on a massive and horrific scale. Many commentators have pointed out that the war that went on to ravage the country for the next 17 years was not a 'civil' war, but one between Mozambique's Frelimo government and Renamo's external backers.

Faced with this dire situation, Frelimo opened Mozambique to the West in return for Western aid. On 16 March 1984 South Africa and Mozambique signed the Nkomati Accord, under which South Africa undertook to withdraw its support for Renamo and Mozambique agreed to expel the ANC and open the country to South African investment. While Mozambique abided by the agreement, South Africa exploited the situation to the full and Renamo activity continued unabated.

Samora Machel died in a plane crash in 1986 in questionable circumstances, and was succeeded by the more moderate Joaquim Chissano. While the war between the Frelimo government and the Renamo rebels continued, by the late 1980s, political change was sweeping through the region. The collapse of the USSR altered the political balance, and the new president of South Africa, FW de Klerk, made it more difficult for right-wing factions to supply Renamo.

By the early 1990s, Frelimo had disavowed its Marxist ideology and announced that multiparty elections were to be scheduled. After protracted negotiations in Rome during 1990, a cease-fire was arranged, followed by a formal peace agreement in October 1992 and a successful UN-monitored disarmament and demobilisation campaign.

Peace at Last

In October 1994 Frelimo won Mozambique's first democratic elections against a surprisingly strong showing by Renamo. Results were similar in the 1999 elections, with Renamo making an even stronger showing. However, unlike the first elections, which earned Mozambique widespread acclaim as an African model of democracy and reconciliation, the

HER MAJESTY'S TROPICAL GETAWAY

Since 1995 Mozambique has been part of the Commonwealth of Nations, to which all its neighbours belong. It is the first member not to have been ruled by Britain at some point.

1999 balloting sparked protracted discord. Renamo protested its loss, boycotted the presidential inauguration and held demonstrations in northern Mozambique that led to a wave of rioting and several dozen deaths.

Mozambique Today

Since then, things have settled down. In December 2004 prominent businessman and long-time Frelimo insider Armando Guebuza was elected with a solid majority to succeed Chissano, who had earlier decided to step down. With a long-running banking and corruption scandal dominating the headlines, Frelimo is now working to polish its public image, while Renamo is still striving to prove itself as a viable political party. Progress has been interrupted by natural calamities, including severe flooding in 2000 and 2001. Yet Mozambique has a remarkable ability to rebound in the face of adversity, and most observers now count the country among the continent's rising stars.

THE CULTURE The National Psyche

You don't need to travel long in Mozambique before hearing the word *paciência* (patience). It's the great Mozambican virtue, and most Mozambicans have it in abundance, with each other and with outsiders. You'll be expected to display some in return, especially in dealings with officialdom, and Western-style impatience is always counterproductive. Yet don't let the languid, tropical pace sway you

completely: underlying it is a rock-hard determination that has carried Mozambique from complete devastation following two decades of war to near the top of the list of the continent's success stories.

Daily Life

About 80% of Mozambicans are involved at least part-time in subsistence agriculture, tending small plots with cassava, maize and other crops, and you'll see these *machambas* (farm plots) wherever you travel. Along the coast, fishing is a major source of livelihood, with the small ports fascinating to watch at dawn and in the late afternoon when the boats come in with their catches.

Especially in the south and the far north, tourism has become increasingly important, and the economy is growing rapidly. Yet daily life continues to be a struggle for many, with an annual per capita income of about US\$300 (compared with about US\$26,000 in the UK). If one family member is lucky enough to have a good job, it is expected that their good fortune will filter down to even distant relatives and others in the community.

HIV/AIDS infection rates are highest in the south and centre, where they exceed 20% in some areas, and about 20,000 children die annually of AIDS-related causes. Public discussion has opened up in recent years, although it still remains muted, and deaths are often explained away as 'tuberculosis' or with silence.

SOCIAL ETIQUETTE

Most Mozambicans are fairly easy-going towards foreigners. However, keeping a few basics in mind will help to smooth your interactions.

- Always greet others and inquire about their well-being prior to launching into questions or conversation.
- When shaking someone's hand, the custom in many areas is to touch your left hand to your right elbow.
- When receiving a gift, it's polite to accept it with both hands, sometimes with a slight bow or, alternatively, with the right hand while touching the left hand to the right elbow.
- Elders and those in positions of authority are treated with deference and respect. It smoothes things considerably to follow suit.
- In villages, ask to see the chief (*régulo*) to announce your presence and request permission before setting up camp or wandering around. You will rarely be refused.
- Shorts and sleeveless tops are fine at beach resorts. Elsewhere, you'll have an easier time if you wear more conservative garb.

Population

There are 16 main tribes. The Makua – who are the largest group, and who are often further divided into various sub-groups – live primarily in the provinces of Cabo Delgado, Niassa, Nampula and parts of Zambézia. Other major groups include the Makonde in Cabo Delgado; the Sena in Sofala, Manica and Tete; and the Shangaan, who dominate the southern provinces of Gaza and Maputo. Although Mozambique is relatively free of tribal rivalries, there has long been an undercurrent of north/south differences, with geographically remote northerners often feeling neglected by powerhouse Maputo.

About 1% of Mozambique's population is of Portuguese extraction, most of whom are at least second generation and consider themselves Mozambicans first. There are also small numbers of other Europeans and of Asians, particularly from the Indian subcontinent.

SPORT

Football (soccer) is a national passion, and games always draw large and enthusiastic crowds.

Second to football is basketball, which also draws crowds – especially women's basketball, with the famed Clarisse Machanguana (now back in Mozambique after a pro-career in the USA) leading the way.

The track-and-field scene is dominated by the internationally acclaimed 800m runner Maria de Lurdes Mutola (the 'Maputo Express'), who in 2000 became Mozambique's first Olympic gold medallist.

RELIGION

About 35% of Mozambicans are Christians, about 25% to 30% are Muslims, and the remainder are adherents of traditional religions based on animist beliefs. Among Christians, the major denomination is Roman Catholicism. However, membership of evangelical Protestant churches is growing rapidly, particularly in the south. Muslims are found primarily in the northern provinces of Nampula, Cabo Delgado and Niassa, with the highest concentrations on the coast and along old trading routes.

ARTS & CRAFTS

Mozambique has rich artistic traditions that continue to thrive despite decades of colonial occupation and civil war.

Dance

Mozambicans are superb dancers, and experiencing the rhythms and moves – whether in a Maputo nightclub or at a traditional dance performance in the provinces – is an opportunity not to be missed.

One of the most common traditional dance styles on Ilha de Moçambique and along the northern coast is *tufo*. This is a slower-paced dance of Arabic origin, generally performed only by women, all usually wearing matching *capulanas* (sarongs) and scarves.

Masked dancing is done primarily by the Makonde in northern Mozambique (see the boxed text, p290) and the Chewa-Nyanja in Tete province, who are known for their Nyau masks.

Literature

The development of Mozambican literature has closely paralleled the country's struggle for independence. During the colonial era, local literature focused on nationalist themes. Two of the most famous poets of this period were Rui de Noronha and Noémia de Sousa.

In the late 1940s José Craveirinha (1922–2003) began to write poetry focusing on the social reality of the Mozambican people and calling for resistance and rebellion – which eventually led to his arrest. Today, he is honoured as Mozambique's greatest poet, and his work, including *Poem of the Future Citizen*, is recognised worldwide.

As the armed struggle for independence gained strength, Frelimo freedom fighters began to write poems reflecting their life in the forest, their marches and the ambushes. One of the finest of these guerrilla poets was Marcelino dos Santos.

Post-independence freedom was soon shattered by Frelimo's war against the Renamo rebels, but new writers emerged. They included the prolific Mia Couto, whose works include *Voices Made Night* and *Every Man is a Race*, and who continues to dominate Mozambican literary circles. Other writers from this period include Ungulani Ba Ka Khossa, Heliodoro Baptista and Eduardo White.

One of the best known contemporary female writers is Lília Mompole, known for *Neighbours – The Story of a Murder* and *The Eyes of the Green Cobra*. Paulina Chiziane's *Balada de Amor ao Vento* (1990) was the first novel to be published by a Mozambican woman.

Music

Traditional music is widely played. The Makonde in the north are noted for their *lupembe* (wind instruments), made from animal horn or sometimes from wood or gourds. In the south, Chopi musicians play the *timbila*, a form of marimba or xylophone, and are famed throughout the continent for their timbila orchestras.

Modern music flourishes in the cities, and the live music scene in Maputo is excellent. *Marrabenta* is Mozambique's national music, with a light, upbeat style and distinctive beat inspired by the traditional rural *majika* rhythms of Gaza and Maputo provinces. One of *marrabenta*'s best-known proponents was Orchestra Marrabenta, formed in the 1980s by members of another popular band, Grupo RM, together with dancers from Mozambique's National Company of Song and Dance. When Orchestra Marrabenta split in 1989, several members formed Ghorwane, who perform frequently in Maputo; check their website www.ghorwane.com for upcoming events. The late Fany Mpfumo was one of Mozambique's best-known *marrabenta* musicians and still features on popular cassettes.

Kapa Dêch is one of the best-known new generation bands. Another is Mabulu, a band that combines classic *marrabenta* rhythms and hip-hop.

For more information on music in Southern Africa, see p52.

Sculpture & Painting

Mozambique is famed for its woodcarvings, particularly for the sandalwood carvings found in the south and the ebony carvings of the Makonde. The country's most famous sculptor is the late Alberto Chissano, whose work received wide international acclaim and inspired many younger artists.

The main centre of Makonde carving is in Cabo Delgado province, around Mueda, with carving communities also around Pemba and in Nampula province. One of the leading members of the new generation of Makonde sculptors is Nkatunga, whose work portrays different aspects of rural life.

The most famous painter in the country is Malangatana (see the boxed text, below), whose art is exhibited around the world. Other internationally famous artists include Bertina Lopes, whose work reflects her research into African images, colours, designs and themes, and Roberto Chichorro, known for his paintings dealing with childhood memories. All of these painters and sculptors have exhibits in the National Art Museum in Maputo.

ENVIRONMENT

Mozambique spreads out over about 800,000 sq km, or more than three times the size of the UK, including a superb 2500km coastline. It's bordered to the east by a wide lagoon-fringed

plain that rises gradually to lush mountains and plateaus on the borders with Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi. The highest peak is Mt Binga (2437m) in the Chimanimani Mountains on the Zimbabwe border.

Two of Southern Africa's largest rivers – the Zambezi and the Limpopo – cut through the country on their way to the sea. Other major rivers are the Savé and the Rovuma, which forms the border with Tanzania.

Wildlife

ANIMALS

Mozambique doesn't have the animal herds that you'll see in neighbouring Tanzania, Zambia or South Africa, and many of its large animal populations were decimated during the war. Yet there's still plenty left, although challenging access, dense vegetation and skittishness on the part of the animals can make spotting challenging.

The largest wildlife concentrations are found in the Niassa Reserve, which has vast herds of elephants, buffaloes and zebras. Modest populations of elephants, hippos and other large mammals also live in Gorongosa National Park. With the recent opening of Limpopo National Park, work is underway to encourage wildlife populations in the south to rebound.

Mozambican waters are full of life, including dolphins, seasonal whales, five of the world's seven species of sea turtles and the region's largest dugong population.

If you have an adventurous bent, Mozambique is an ornithologist's paradise, with close to 600 bird species, including several near endemics, and rare or endangered species, such as the wattled crane and the Cape vulture.

PLANTS

Mozambique's abundant flora includes lavender jacarandas, brilliant red flamboyants and other flowering trees, plus endless stands of coconut palms, especially in Inhambane and Zambézia provinces. Large tracts of central and north-central Mozambique are covered by miombo or light woodland. Highly biodiverse areas include the Chimanimani Mountains, with at least 45 endemic plant species, and the Maputaland area south of Maputo, which is considered a site of global botanical significance. For general information on local vegetation zones, see p64.

National Parks

Mozambique has six national parks: Gorongosa, Zinave, Banhine and Limpopo National Parks in the interior; Bazaruto National Park offshore; and Quirimbas National Park, encompassing coastal and inland areas in the north.

Bazaruto (p267) is the most accessible park and the most visited, famed for its coral reefs, fish and dugong. Various islands within Quirimbas (p288) can now also be easily (albeit rather expensively) visited, and diving can be arranged with all the island lodges both here and on Bazaruto.

Gorongosa (p270) is easy to visit if you have your own vehicle, and has received a major boost, thanks to the involvement of the US-based Carr Foundation.

Limpopo (p260) is also now open to visitors, and easy to enter from South Africa's Kruger park.

There are several wildlife reserves, although the only ones with tourism infrastructure are Niassa Reserve (p284) and the Maputo Special Reserve (p258).

Environmental Issues

Some of the most exciting progress is being made in protecting Mozambique's marine resources. Highlights here include the creation of Quirimbas National Park and the recent extension of Bazaruto National Park.

On the terrestrial side, as conservation measures and anti-poaching efforts have begun to show success, with increasing populations of elephants and other wildlife, the instances of human/elephant conflict are also increasing, especially in the north. In addition to fences, more sustainable techniques are also being introduced. These include encouraging cultivation of Mozambique's famous piri-piri (hot peppers), which elephants don't seem to like, and roping off crop areas with strings soaked in a mixture of oil and chilli peppers.

FOOD & DRINK

Mozambique has some of the best cuisine in the region, blending African, Indian and Portuguese influences, with a dash of piri-piri (hot pepper sauce) to top things off. It's especially noted for its seafood, including excellent *camarões* (prawns), *lagosta* (crayfish) and the ubiquitous and usually delicious *peixe grelhado* – grilled catch of the day. The maize and cassava-based staples are *xima* and *upshwa*.

MOVERS & SHAKERS: MALANGATANA VALENTE NGWENYA

Malangatana Valente Ngwenya – universally known as 'Malangatana' – has almost single-handedly put Mozambique on the international artistic and cultural stage. He is considered to be one of Mozambique's and Africa's greatest painters, and continues to be a major force in Mozambican cultural and political circles.

Malangatana was born in Matalana village, near Marracuene, in 1936. After spending his early years as a herdboys and attending local mission schools, he began working as an *empregado* (house help) in colonial-era Maputo. Along the way, he began to develop his artistic talents, and in 1959 displayed his first paintings.

Since then, he has continued painting, drawing and creating with a prodigious output, despite an almost two-year interlude as a colonial-era political prisoner, and later post-independence political involvement. Although best known for his paintings, Malangatana has also worked in various other media, including murals and sculptures. His work is characterised by its dramatic figures and flamboyant yet restrained use of colour, and by its highly symbolic social and political commentary on everything from colonialism and war to peacetime rebuilding to the universality of the human experience.

In addition to his works of art, which is now displayed in galleries worldwide, Malangatana has left his mark across a broad swath of Mozambican cultural life. This has included playing founding roles in the establishment of the National Art Museum (p250) and the Núcleo de Arte (p250) and setting up a cultural centre (currently in process) in his natal Matalana.

One local speciality is *matapa*, cassava leaves cooked in peanut sauce, often with prawns or other additions. *Caril* (curry) dishes are also common, as are *chamusas* (samosas – triangular wedges of fried pastry, filled with meat or vegetables) and other snacks. Wash everything down with a cold Dois M (2M) – the national lager.

All larger towns have at least several restaurants. In Maputo, Beira, Nampula and other major centres, there are also wonderful sidewalk cafés or *pastelarias* where you can enjoy a light meal or snack with a cup of tea (*chá*) while watching the passing scene. And everywhere, you'll find small food stalls (*bar-racas*), often along the roadside or at markets, where you can get a plate of local food such as *xima* and sauce for about US\$1 or less.

Self-catering is easy in Maputo, Beira, Chimoio, Nampula (all with branches of Shoprite) and in other major towns, where there's a wide selection of produce and imported items. Along the coast, you can buy seafood at the fish markets and ask your hotel to grill it for you.

MAPUTO

21

With its Mediterranean-style architecture, wide avenues lined by jacaranda and flame trees and waterside setting, Maputo is easily one of Africa's most attractive capitals. In the bustling, low-lying *baixa*, *galabiyya*-garbed men gather in doorways for a chat, and women wrapped in colourful *capulanas* sell everything from seafood to spices at the massive Municipal Market. Along the seaside Avenida Marginal, fishermen hawk the day's catch while banana vendors loll on their carts in the shade.

For decades, Maputo's charms and its economic potential were overshadowed, first by colonialism, then by war, and it's only recently that the city has come into its own. Today it's a lively, bustling place with an abundance of sidewalk cafés and cultural offerings, and great nightlife. Don't miss spending time here before heading north.

ORIENTATION

Maputo sits on a low escarpment overlooking Maputo Bay, with the long avenues of its upper-lying residential sections spilling

down into the busy port and commercial area, or *baixa*.

Many businesses, the train station, banks, post and telephone offices and some budget accommodation are in the *baixa*, on or near Avenida 25 de Setembro, while embassies and most better hotels are in the city's more staid upper section, especially in and around the Sommerschild diplomatic and residential quarter. Maputo's tallest building and a good landmark is the 33 Storey Building (*'trinta e três andares'*), in the *baixa* on the corner of Avenida 25 de Setembro and Rua da Imprensa. At the northernmost end of the Marginal and about 7km from the centre is Bairro Triunfo and the Costa do Sol area, with a small beach and several places to stay and eat.

Maps

There's a slightly dated but excellent city map put out by Conselho Municipal and Coopération Française, sometimes for sale at bookstores and hotels.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Publicações Europa-América Livraria (Avenida José Mateus) A modest selection of English-language books and magazines.

Cultural Centres

Centro Cultural Franco-Moçambicano (☎ 21-320787; www.ccfmoz.com; Praça da Independência; ☎ 2-6pm Mon, 9am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) An excellent place, with art exhibitions, music and dance performances, films, theatre and more.

Centro Cultural Português (Instituto Camões; ☎ 21-493892; www.instituto-camoes.pt/ccp/ccp.maputo.htm; 720 Avenida Julius Nyerere) Art and photography exhibits; opposite the South African high commission.

Centro de Estudos Brasileiros (☎ 21-306840, 21-306774; ceb.eventos@tv cabo.co.mz; cnr Avenida Karl Marx & Avenida 25 de Setembro) Exhibitions by artists and Portuguese language courses.

Emergency

For emergency medical treatment, see Medical Services, opposite. Official emergency numbers are listed, but it's better to seek help from your hotel or embassy.

Central Hospital (☎ 21-325000/9)

Fire (☎ 197, 198)

Police Station (☎ 21-325031, 119)

MAPUTO IN....

Two Days

After breakfast at your hotel or a sidewalk café, head to **Praça da Independência** (p250) and get an early start on some of the sights. Walk to the **Municipal Market** (p250), buying some textiles at the nearby shops. Then hire a **laranjinha** (see the boxed text, p255) to take you on a ride along Avenida Marginal to **Restaurante Costa do Sol** (p253) for lunch.

The **National Art Museum** (p250) is an essential afternoon stop, before resting up for an evening at **Chez Rangel** (p253), or a pub- and club-hopping tour in a **habana** (see the boxed text, p255).

Spend day 2 visiting more museums – the **Núcleo de Arte** (p250) and **Malangatana's house and gallery** (p250) are highlights – and **craft shopping** (p253). For dinner, enjoy the local cuisine and ambience at **Feira Popular** (p253) before heading out for another night on the town.

Four Days

Follow the two-day itinerary. On day 3, take the ferry to **Catembe** (p255) and lunch at **Restaurante Marisol** (p255). On day 4 go to **Inhaca Island** (p255) to relax on the beach on Portuguese Island or snorkel around Cabo Santa Maria.

Internet Access

Mundo's Internet Café (Avenida Julius Nyerere; per hr US\$2; ☎ 8am-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10.30pm Sun)

Next to Mundo's restaurant.

Pizza House Internet Café (Avenida Mao Tse Tung; per hr US\$1.60; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun) Upstairs at Pizza House (p252).

Teledata (Avenida 24 de Julho; per hr US\$1.20;

☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat) One block west of Avenida Vladimir Lenine.

Medical Services

Clínica 222 (☎ 82-000 2220, 21-312222, 21-313000; cnr Avenida 24 de Julho & Rua Augusto Cardoso; ☎ 24hr) Similar to Clínica de Sommerschild.

Clínica de Sommerschild (☎ 82-305 6240, 21-493924/6; 52 Rua Pereira do Lago; ☎ 24hr) Just off Avenida Kim Il Sung, with a lab and a doctor on call. Advance payment required (meticals, rand, dollars or Visa card).

Farmácia Capital Franca Centro Comercial (☎ 82-301 4055; ground fl, Franca Centro Comercial, cnr Avenidas 24 de Julho & Amílcar Cabral; ☎ 24hr; Avenida Mao Tse Tung (☎ 82-301 4056; Avenida Mao Tse Tung; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Sat) The Mao Tse Tung branch is just up from Pizza House.

Money

There are 24-hour ATMs all over town.

BIM Expresso (cnr Avenidas Mao Tse Tung & Tomás Nduda) ATM.

Cotacambios airport (☎ 6am-9.30pm Mon-Thu, 6am-10pm Fri, 7am-10pm Sat, 11.30am-10.30pm Sun); city centre (ground fl, Polana Shopping Centre, cnr Avenidas 24 de Julho & Julius Nyerere; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) For changing cash out of hours.

Standard Bank (Headquarters, Praça 25 de Junho)

Changes travellers cheques (minimum US\$35 commission, original purchase receipt required). A branch at Hotel Polana.

Post

Main post office (CTT; Avenida 25 de Setembro; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun)

Telephone

Telecomunicações de Moçambique (TDM; ground fl, 33 Storey Bldg, Rua da Imprensa; ☎ 8am-10pm) International calls. There's a branch at Pestana Rovuma hotel.

Tourist Information

Fundo Nacional de Turismo (Futur; www.futur.org.mz; 1203 Avenida 25 de Setembro) Various brochures covering Maputo and all of Mozambique's provinces.

Travel Agencies

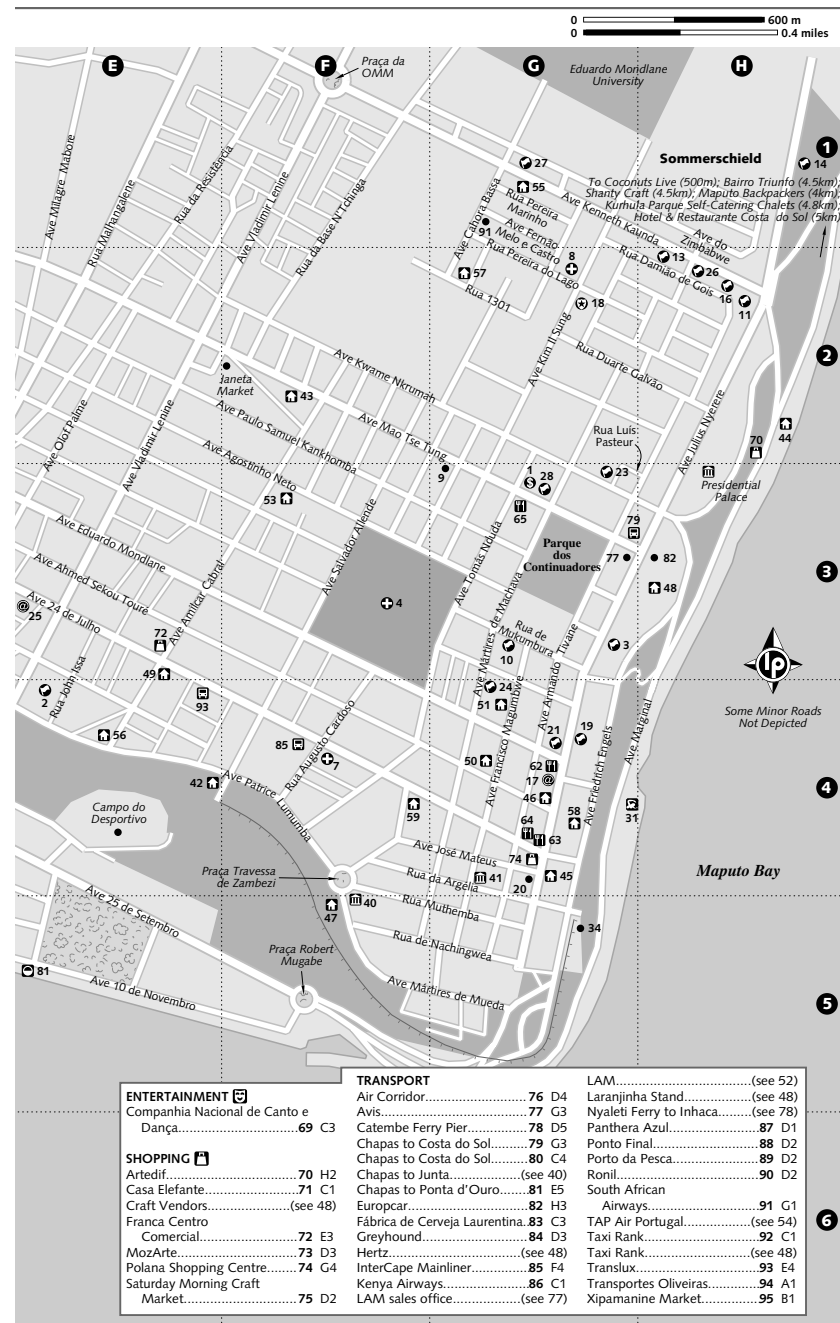
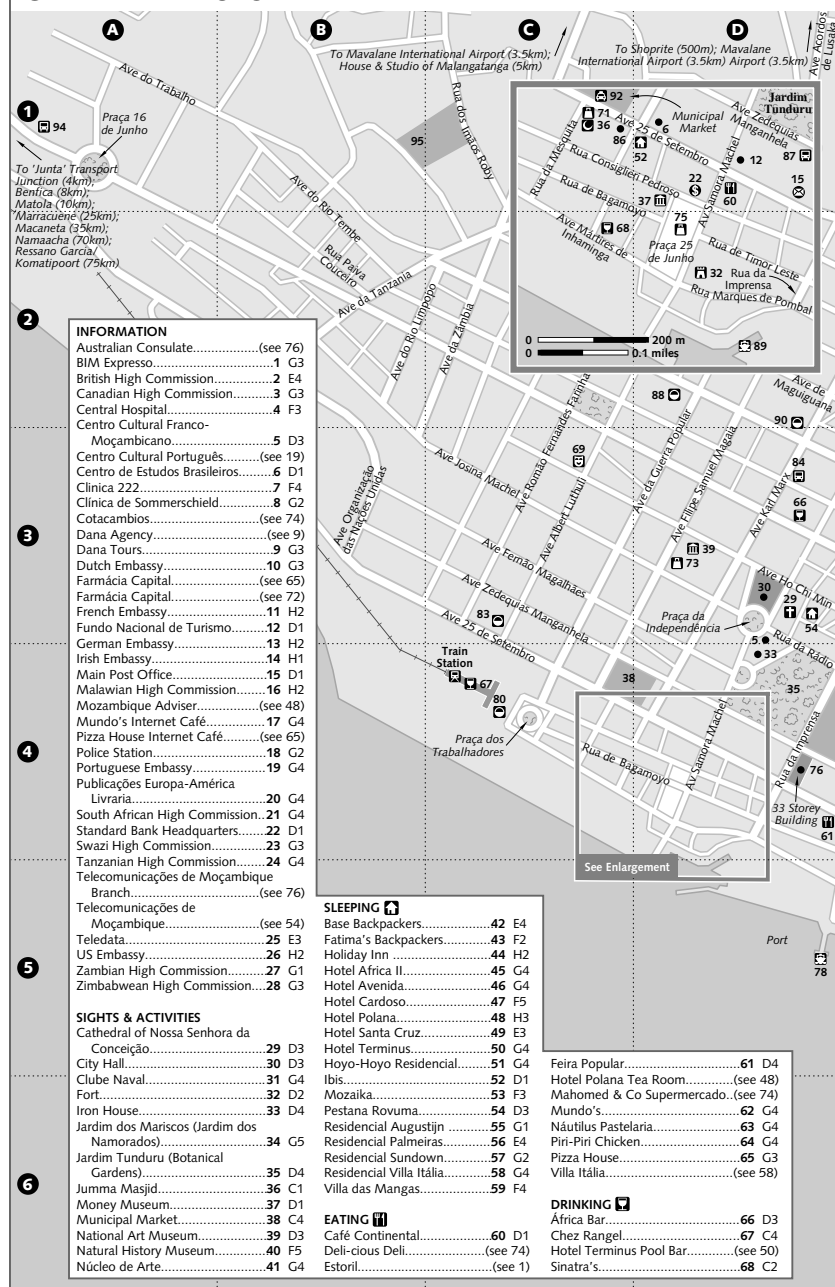
Dana Agency (☎ 21-484300; travel@dana.co.mz; 729 Avenida Mao Tse Tung) Sister agency to Dana Tours, and in the same compound; does domestic and international flight bookings.

Dana Tours (☎ 21-497483, 21-495514; info@danatours.net; 729 Avenida Mao Tse Tung) A top-notch agency specialising in the coast. Can also sort you out for destinations throughout Mozambique (plus a few in Swaziland and South Africa). Midrange and up, with occasional budget offerings.

Mozambique Adviser (☎ 21-309477; www.adviser.co.mz) Bookings desk in the lobby of Hotel Polana; southern Mozambique travel arrangements, car rentals and boats to Inhaca.

Nau Tours (☎ 21-380034; www.nautours.co.mz) Budget trips to Catembe, Maputo Special Reserve and Ponta d'Ouro, plus boats to Inhaca and Cabo Santa Maria.

CENTRAL MAPUTO



DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

While Maputo is considerably safer than nearby Johannesburg, crime does occur, and it can be violent. Although most tourists visit the city without mishap, be vigilant when out and about both during the day and at night, and take the precautions discussed on p293. In particular, try not to carry a bag, wear expensive jewellery or otherwise give a potential thief reason to think that you might have something of value. At night, always take a taxi and, day or night, don't put yourself in isolating situations. Areas to avoid during the day include the isolated stretches of the Marginal between Praça Robert Mugabe and the Holiday Inn, and the two access roads leading down to the Marginal from Avenida Friedrich Engels. Also avoid the area below the escarpment just south of Avenida Patrice Lumumba.

Carry a notarised copy of your passport when out and about (see the boxed text, p294). It's rarely checked, but when it is, it's usually by underpaid policemen looking to top up their meagre salaries with bribes. If you do get stopped, always insist on going to the nearest police station (*esquadrão*).

There are several restricted areas that are off-limits to pedestrians (no photos). These include the eastern footpath on Avenida Julius Nyerere in front of the president's residence and the Ponta Vermelha zone in the city's southeastern corner.

SIGHTS

National Art Museum

The **art museum** (Museu Nacional de Arte; <http://musart.tvcabo.co.mz>; 1233 Avenida Ho Chi Min; admission free; ☎ 2-6pm Tue-Sun), half a block west of Avenida Karl Marx, has a wonderful collection of paintings and sculptures by Mozambique's finest contemporary artists.

Núcleo de Arte

At this long-standing **artists' cooperative** (☎ 21-492523; www.africaserver.nl/nucleo; 194 Rua da Argélia; ☎ closed Sun), housed in a dilapidated colonial-era mansion, you can see guns transformed into moving sculptures, and chat with the artists and purchase some of their work.

House & Studio of Malangatana

It is possible to visit the **house and studio of Malangatana** (☎ 21-465286, 21-465681; Rua de Camões,

Bairro do Aeroporto; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat), Mozambique's most renowned painter. It's filled with dozens of his own paintings as well as sculptures of Alberto Chissano. Call ahead to arrange an appointment. The house is located several kilometres outside the city centre; ask directions when arranging the visit.

Natural History Museum

The recently renovated **Natural History Museum** (Museu da História Natural; ☎ 21-490879; www.museu.org.mz; Praça Travessa de Zambezi; admission US\$2; ☎ 9-11.30am & 2-4pm Tue-Sun), opposite the Hotel Cardoso, is worth a stop to see its Manueline architecture and its garden with a mural by Malangatana. Inside are some moderately interesting taxidermy specimens and what is probably the region's only collection of elephant foetuses.

Other Sights

Maputo's **fort** (Praça 25 de Junho; admission free; ☎ 8am-5pm) was built by the Portuguese in the mid-19th century near the site of an earlier fort. Inside are a garden and a small museum with remnants from the era of early Portuguese forays to the area.

Several blocks west is the landmark pale-green **train station** dating from 1910, with a dome designed by an associate of Alexandre Gustav Eiffel (of Eiffel Tower fame).

Between the fort and the station is the oldest part of town, centred around **Rua de Bagamoyo**, with the new **Jumma Masjid** on the site of what was once Maputo's oldest mosque, and the **Money Museum** (Praça 25 de Junho; admission US\$0.20; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-4.30pm Tue-Sat, 2-5pm Sun), in a colonial-era house, with exhibits of local currency ranging from early barter tokens to modern-day bills. The museum was temporarily closed at the time of writing.

Near the train station is the lively **Municipal Market** (Mercado Municipal; Avenida 25 de Setembro) with colourful stalls overflowing with fruit, vegetables and spices.

Northeast of the market is **Praça da Independência**, fringed by the white, spired **cathedral**, the hulking, neo-classical **City Hall** building, the overgrown **Botanical Gardens** (Jardim Tun-duru), and the **Iron House** (Casa de Ferro). This house was designed (also by Eiffel or an associate) in the late 19th century as the governor's residence, but its metal-plated exterior proved unsuitable for tropical conditions.

MAPUTO FOR CHILDREN

There's a large lawn, a playground and several eateries at **Jardim dos Mariscos** (Jardim dos Namorados; Avenida Friedrich Engels), and a small playground attached to Mundo's restaurant (p253). Another good bet is the pool at **Clube Naval** (☎ 21-492690, 21-494881; www.clubenaval.com; admission US\$4; ☎ from 7am Mon-Fri).

TOURS

The best way to see the sights is to charter a *laranjinha* or *habana* (see the boxed text, p255).

The Mozambique Adviser desk at Hotel Polana also arranges reasonably priced half- and full-day city tours, pub crawls ('Maputo by Night') and other excursions.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Avante Mozambique! (avantemozambique@yahoo.com) is a celebration of Mozambique's art and cultures, including song, music and dance. It's just getting started, but is planned to be an annual event, held in Maputo over two weeks in late August to early September.

SLEEPING

If you want to be in the thick of things, choose somewhere in or near the *baixa*. For sea breezes and more tranquillity, head to the upper part of town in and around Sommerschild, or to Avenida Marginal and Costa do Sol.

Budget

The closest camping grounds are about 35km north of Maputo at Marracuene and Macaneta. Maputo has three good backpackers, all with English-speaking staff and heaps of city info. All can also help with airport pickups and transfers to the bus depots for early morning buses north.

Fatima's Backpackers (☎ 21-302994, 82-414 5730; www.mozambiquebackpackers.com; 1317 Avenida Mao Tse Tung; camping per person US\$5, dm US\$6-12, d with shared/private bathroom US\$24/32) In the upper part of town and Maputo's longest-running backpackers, with an outdoor kitchen-bar area, and rooms, plus dorm beds, in a house next door.

Base Backpackers (☎ 21-302723; thebaseb@tvcabo.co.mz; 545 Avenida Patrice Lumumba; dm US\$8, d US\$20) Popular and often full, with a convenient location on the edge of the *baixa*, a kitchen, and a backyard bar, terrace and braai (barbecue) area with views to the port in the distance.

Maputo Backpackers (☎ 21-451213; Quarta Avenida, Bairro Triunfo; dm US\$8-10, d/tw US\$32/35, tr with shared/private bathroom US\$49/55) This cosy place near Costa do Sol has spotless rooms with fans, and cooking is permitted if the house isn't too crowded. Chapas to/from town stop nearby.

Other than the backpackers, good, safe shoe-string accommodation in Maputo is scarce, and most people opt to pay a bit more for one of the places hovering between budget and midrange. Some recommendations:

Hotel Santa Cruz (☎ 21-303004; www.teledata.mz/hotelsantacruz; 1417 Avenida 24 de Julho; s/d with shared bathroom US\$28/32, s/d US\$32/38) The most basic of the bunch, with reasonable rooms in a nondescript high-rise near the corner of Avenida Amílcar Cabral. Not optimal for solo women travellers.

Hotel Costa do Sol (☎ 21-450115; rcs@teledata.mz; Avenida Marginal; s/d US\$31/47; ☎) Above Restaurant Costa do Sol (p253), with straightforward rooms with fan, and the beach across the road. Continental breakfast included.

Hotel África II (☎ 21-488729; hotel.africa.tvcabo.co.mz; 322 Avenida Julius Nyerere; s/d with shared bathroom US\$40/50, US\$50/65; ☎ ☎) Pleasant, straightforward rooms in a convenient central location. Prices include continental breakfast.

Midrange

Residencial Palmeiras (☎ 21-300199; carlos.pereira@tvcabo.co.mz; 948 Avenida Patrice Lumumba; s with shared bathroom US\$35, s/d US\$40/55; ☎ ☎) A converted residence with comfortable, good-value rooms – all but one with private bathroom, and all with TV – near the British high commission. Continental breakfast included.

Hoyo-Hoyo Residencial (☎ 21-490701; promotour@tvcabo.co.mz; 837 Avenida Francisco Magumbwe; s/d US\$38/45; ☎ ☎) This solid, no-frills hotel rather lacks in pizzazz, but rooms are quite decent and fairly priced, with TV and breakfast included. The in-house restaurant, Petiscos, is known for its delicious Goan cuisine (meals from US\$5).

Ibis (☎ 21-352200; www.accorhotels.com; 1743 Avenida 25 de Setembro; r US\$49; ☎ ☎ ☎) Ibis is centrally located in the *baixa*, with small, spiffy rooms at very reasonable prices, plus a restaurant, business facilities and disabled access. If you're on a tight budget but looking for some comforts, it's a good deal.

Residencial Villa Itália (☎ 21-497298; vitalia@vircon.com; 635 Avenida Friedrich Engels; s/d/ste US\$55/65/75) This large colonial-era house has a popular restaurant downstairs, a homey ambience and a few

spacious, spotless rooms on the upper level. Breakfast included.

Mozaika (☎ 21-303939; 21-303965; www.mozaika.co.mz; 769 Avenida Agostinho Neto; s/d from US\$60/70; ☎ ☎ ☎) In a convenient, central location, Mozaika has small but well-equipped rooms – each decorated with its own theme – set around a garden courtyard. There's a bar, though no restaurant. Breakfast included.

Villa das Mangas (☎ 21-497507; villadasmangas@tvocabo.co.mz; 401 Avenida 24 de Julho; s/d from US\$60/75; ☎ ☎ ☎) Villa das Mangas offers tiny, bright rooms with TV around a little garden, and a sleek restaurant (meals from US\$9) and bar.

Hotel Terminus (☎ 21-491333; www.terminus.co.mz; cnr Avenidas Francisco Magumbwe & Ahmed Sekou Touré; s/d from US\$60/100; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This three-star establishment in the upper part of town has small but spotless and well-appointed rooms with TV, plus good service and facilities, a business centre, a garden and a restaurant. It's popular with business travellers and often fully booked. Breakfast is included.

Kurhula Parque Self-Catering Chalets (☎ 21-450115; rcs@teledata.mz; Avenida Marginal; 4-person chalets US\$90; ☎) Under the same management as Hotel Costa do Sol (p251), and just next door, with serviced self-catering chalets – each with a double bed and a loft with two twin beds – set behind a fence on the inland side of the beach road.

There are several private houses in Sommerschild offering B&B-style accommodation, with nicely furnished rooms, most with bathroom. They include **Residencial Augustijn** (☎ 21-493693; t.theunissen@tvocabo.co.mz; 204 Rua Pereira Marinho; s/d US\$50/55) and the larger **Residencial Sundown** (☎ 21-497543; www.hotelmaputo.com; 107 Rua 1301; s/d with full breakfast from US\$55/65; ☎ ☎ ☎), which also has wireless internet access.

Top End

Except as noted, rates at these places include a buffet breakfast.

Hotel Cardoso (☎ 21-491071; www.hotelcardoso.co.mz; 707 Avenida Mártires de Mueda; s/d US\$135/150, with sea view from US\$160/175; ☎ ☎) Opposite the Natural History Museum, and on the cliff-top overlooking the bay, this 130-room hotel is a Maputo classic, with good service, a business centre and a bar with sunset views over the water.

Pestana Rovuma (☎ 21-305000; www.pestana.com; 114 Rua da Sé; s/d from US\$115/150; ☎ ☎ ☎) Centrally located just off Praça da Independência,

the four-star Rovuma is another venerable Maputo establishment, with a business centre and package excursions from Johannesburg that include sister hotels on Inhaca and the Bazaruto Archipelago.

Hotel Polana (☎ 21-491001; www.polana-hotel.com; 1380 Avenida Julius Nyerere; s/d from US\$150/168, ste from US\$450; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) In a prime location on the cliff-top with uninterrupted views over the sea, the Polana is Maputo's classiest hotel and one of the best hotels in the region. It has rooms in the elegant main building or in the newer 'Polana Mar' section closer to the water. There's a beautiful pool, a business centre, and a restaurant with daily breakfast and weekend dinner buffets. If you're thinking of splurging in Maputo, this is one of the best places to do it.

Other recommendations:

Hotel Avenida (☎ 21-492000; www.hotelavenida.co.mz; 627 Avenida Julius Nyerere; s/d from US\$160/175; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) A five-star high-rise in the upper part of town with a business centre and sleek rooms with all the amenities.

Holiday Inn (☎ 21-495050; www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/hi/1/en/hd/mpmt; Avenida Marginal; s/d from US\$150/165; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Directly on the water (though there's no beach or swimming), with rooms and services on a par with those of all Holiday Inns in the region.

EATING

Cafés & Quick Eats

Pizza House (☎ 21-485257; 601/607 Avenida Mao Tse Tung; pizzas & light meals US\$2-5; ☎ 6.30am-10.30pm) Indoor and outdoor seating, plus pastries, sandwiches, burgers, grilled chicken and other light meals, and a small convenience store. Upstairs is an internet café (p247).

Hotel Polana Tea Room (☎ 21-491001; Hotel Polana, Avenida Julius Nyerere; light meals US\$2-15; ☎ 8am-10pm) This genteel place has plush chairs, wonderful homemade ice cream and a lunchtime salad buffet.

Piri-Piri Chicken (Avenida 24 de Julho; takeaway/eat-in chicken to US\$6.50/8) A long-term place with grilled chicken (with or without piri-iri).

There are dozens of sidewalk cafés (all open from about 8am to 9pm daily) where you can get pastries and light meals, and watch the passing scene, including **Café Continental** (☎ 21-302005; cnr Avenidas 25 de Setembro & Avenida Samora Machel; light meals from US\$1.50), which has been around since colonial days; **Estoril** (Avenida Mao Tse Tung); and **Náutilus Pastelaria** (cnr Avenidas Julius Nyerere & 24 de Julho; light meals US\$2-5; ☎ 6am-9pm).

Restaurants

Maputo has dozens of good restaurants, enough to keep you busy sampling new places for weeks. Main dishes at most range from US\$5 to US\$12.

Restaurante Costa do Sol (☎ 21-450038; Avenida Marginal; meals from US\$5; ☎ 11am-10.30pm Sun-Thu, 11am-midnight Fri & Sat) A Maputo classic, this beachside place draws the crowds on week-end afternoons. There's seating on the large sea-facing porch or indoors, and an array of seafood dishes and grills. It's about 5km from the centre at the northern end of Avenida Marginal.

Mundo's (☎ 21-494080; cnr Avenidas Julius Nyerere & Eduardo Mondlane; meals US\$5-9; ☎ 7am-1am) Burritos, burgers, pizzas, all-day breakfasts and other hearty fare – all served up in large portions on wooden tables set around a street-side veranda.

Villa Itália (☎ 21-497298; 635 Avenida Friedrich Engels; meals from US\$6; ☎ Tue-Sun) This popular restaurant is an amenable spot for a quiet evening, with outdoor garden seating and well-prepared pasta dishes, pizzas, salads and seafood.

Feira Popular (Avenida 25 de Setembro; admission US\$0.60; ☎ lunch & dinner) Another Maputo institution, with dozens of small bars and restaurants set inside a large, walled compound, including O Escorpião with hearty Portuguese dishes for US\$6, and Coqueiro with Zambéian cuisine.

Self-Catering

Excellent tropical fruits and vegetables are available at Maputo's markets and from street-side vendors.

Deli-cious Deli (Polana Shopping Centre, cnr Avenidas Julius Nyerere & 24 de Julho) Deli meats and cheeses, sandwiches, wine and other imported items.

Mahomed & Co Supermercado (Polana Shopping Centre, cnr Avenidas Julius Nyerere & 24 de Julho; ☎ 10am-8pm) Small, but conveniently located.

Shoprite (Avenida Acordos de Lusaka; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) There's also a Shoprite super-market just out of the city centre.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT Bars & Nightclubs

Thursday to Saturday are the main nights, with thirds getting going only after 11pm.

Chez Rangel (☎ 82-311 6670; ☎ Wed-Sat) This jazz café at the train station is one of Maputo's best night spots, with live music on Saturdays (admission US\$12), and otherwise your choice

of a large collection of old jazz gramophone records. An ideal spot to sip a *caipirinha* while taking in Afro-jazz beats.

África Bar (☎ 21-314821; 2182 Avenida 24 de Julho; admission US\$2; ☎ from 5pm Wed-Sun) This sleek spot draws the crowds on Thursday (jazz night, admission free).

Coconuts Live (☎ 21-322217; Complexo Mini-Golfe, Avenida Marginal; admission disco US\$8, lounge free; ☎ disco Fri & Sat, lounge Wed-Sun) A weekend disco, plus a popular chill-out lounge.

Also recommended:

Sinatra's (cnr Avenida Mártires de Inhamitanga & Travessa do Varieta; ☎ from 9pm Mon-Sat) Live Brazilian-Mozambican fusion music and cuisine to match.

Hotel Terminus Pool Bar (☎ 21-491333; cnr Avenidas Francisco Magumbwe & Ahmed Sekou Touré) Good for a quiet drink, or if you want to stick close to your hotel.

Traditional Music & Dance

Check with the Centro Cultural Franco-Moçambicano (p246) for upcoming music and dance performances.

Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança (National Company of Song & Dance; ☎ 21-400913; www.cncd.org.mz; Casa de Cultura, 1719 Avenida Albert Luthuli) Mozambique's renowned national dance company is based at the Casa de Cultura, near the intersection with Avenida Ho Chi Min. Rehearsals are often open to the public.

SHOPPING

In addition to the **Saturday morning craft market** (Praça 25 de Junho; ☎ about 8am-1pm Sat) and the craft vendors in front of Hotel Polana, craft shops include the following:

Artedif (Avenida Marginal; ☎ 9am-2.30pm Tue, 9am-3.30pm Wed-Mon) A cooperative for disabled people, selling carvings and basketry.

Casa Elefante (Ave 25 de Setembro; ☎ closed Sun) The best place to buy *capulanas* (sarongs); opposite the Municipal Market.

MozArte (Avenida Filipe Samuel Magaia; ☎ 8am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Around the corner from the National Art Museum, with artists' workshops and crafts for sale.

Shanty Craft (☎ 21-450305; Segunda Avenida, Bairro Triunfo; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat) An excellent selection of high-quality crafts from around the country.

GETTING THERE & AWAY Air

For domestic and international flights to/from Maputo, see p297. Airline offices include the following:

Air Corridor (☎ 21-311582, 21-311585; 33 Storey Bldg, cnr Avenida 25 de Setembro & Rua da Imprensa)

Kenya Airways (☎ 21-320337/8; aquarium@tv cabo.co.mz; 171 Avenida Karl Marx) At Aquarium Travel.

LAM central reservations (☎ 21-4680000, 21-326001, 21-465801; www.lam.co.mz; cnr Avenidas 25 de Setembro & Karl Marx); sales office (☎ 21-490590; cnr Avenidas Julius Nyerere & Mao Tse Tung)

South African Airways (☎ 21-495483, 21-495484, 21-498097; www.flysaa.com; Avenida Fernão Melo e Castro, Sommerschield)

Swazi Express (☎ in South Africa 031-408 1115; www.swaziexpress.com; Maputo airport)

TAP Air Portugal (☎ 21-303927/8, 431006/7; www.tap-airportugal.pt; Hotel Pestana Rovuma)

TransAirways (☎ 21-465108; fax 21-465011; transairways@virconn.com; Maputo airport)

Bus

Most long-distance depots are well outside the city centre. For upcountry fares and journey times, see the town headings.

Benfica (Avenida de Moçambique) Chapas to Marracuene.

Fábrica de Cerveja Laurentina (cnr Avenidas 25 de Setembro & Albert Luthuli) Chapas to Swaziland, South Africa, Namaacha, Boane and Goba depart from behind the beer factory.

'Junta' (Avenida de Moçambique) Maputo's chaotic long-distance bus depot about 7km from the centre; most departures are about 5am. Coming into Maputo, some buses continue into the city to Ponto Final (cnr Avenidas Eduardo Mondlane & Guerra Popular), from where it's about US\$2 in a taxi to the central area.

Panthera Azul (☎ 21-302077/83; www.pantherazul.com; 273 Avenida Zedequias Manganhela) Weekly bus to Beira (US\$44, 18 hours), departing at 5am Tuesday from its office.

Transportes Oliveiras (☎ 21-405108, 21-400475; Avenida 24 de Julho) The place to go to catch the ailing Oliveiras buses to Inhambane (departing at 6am and 11am). It's about 4km from the centre, just beyond Praça 16 de Junho (US\$6 in a taxi).

Departure and ticketing points for express buses to Johannesburg include the following (see p299 for times and prices).

Greyhound (☎ 21-355700; www.greyhound.co.za; 1242 Avenida Karl Marx) At Cotur Travel & Tours.

InterCape Mainliner (☎ 21-431006; www.intercape.co.za; 899 Avenida 24 de Julho) At Tropical Air Travel.

Panthera Azul (☎ 21-302077/83; www.pantherazul.com; 273 Avenida Zedequias Manganhela) Behind the main post office.

Translux (☎ 21-303825, 21-303829; www.translux.co.za; 1249 Avenida 24 de Julho) At Simara Travel & Tours.

Train

Slow trains connect Maputo with Ressano Garcia, departing Maputo at 7.45am daily, and Ressano Garcia at 12.10pm (US\$0.60, four to five hours). For onward connections to Johannesburg, see p299.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Maputo's Mavalane International Airport is 6km northwest of the city centre (US\$8 to US\$10 in a taxi).

Bus & Chapa

Buses are numbered, and have name boards with their destination. City rides cost US\$0.15.

Chapas go everywhere (US\$0.20). Some have name boards; otherwise listen to the destination called out by the conductor. To get to Junta, look for a chapa going to 'Jardim'; coming from Junta into town, look for a chapa heading to 'Museu'.

Useful transport stands:

Museu (Natural History Museum) Chapas to the airport and 'Junta'.

Ponto Final (cnr Avenidas Eduardo Mondlane & Guerra Popular) Terminus for some upcountry buses, and for chapas running along Avenida Eduardo Mondlane.

Praça dos Trabalhadores Chapas to Costa do Sol; these also depart from the corner of Avenidas Mao Tse Tung and Julius Nyerere.

Ronil (cnr Avenidas Eduardo Mondlane & Karl Marx) Chapas to 'Junta', Benfica and Matola.

Car

Car crime is rife in Maputo – park in guarded lots when possible, or tip the young boys on the street to watch your vehicle. Rental agencies include the following:

Avis (☎ 21-465497/8, 21-494473; www.avis.co.za; intersection Avenidas Julius Nyerere & Mao Tse Tung) Diagonally opposite Hotel Polana, and at the airport.

Europcar (☎ 21-497338, 21-466172; europcar@virconn.com; 1418 Avenida Julius Nyerere) Next to Hotel Polana and at the airport.

Hertz (☎ 21-494982, 21-303171/3; hertz.reservations@tropical.co.mz) At Hotel Polana, and at the airport.

Imperial (☎ 82-300 5180, 21-494459, 21-315345; www.imperialcarrental.co.za) At the airport.

Taxi

There are taxi ranks at Hotel Polana (call ☎ 21-493255 for a cab), at most other top-end

TREAT YOURSELF

In keeping with its Afro-Latino rhythms, Maputo now boasts its own fleet of *habanas* – sleek 1950s-vintage cars imported from Cuba, with huge, comfortable seats and period tunes on the sound system. They can be chartered for sightseeing tours, airport pick-ups or evenings on the town pub- and club-hopping.

The same company also has a fleet of brightly coloured *laranjinhas* – Maputo's version of Cuba's *cocos* taxis – that can be chartered for daytime sightseeing or rides along Avenida Marginal. The *laranjinhas* have meters, with prices roughly equivalent to city taxi prices, or about US\$30 per hour; *habana* charters are about US\$45 per hour. Contact **Laranjinhas Turismo e Taxis Lda** (☎ 21-491071/5, ext 2618, 82-410 0001; egrafica@virconn.com) at Hotel Cardoso for bookings of both. You can also catch *laranjinhas* at stands in front of Hotel Polana or Holiday Inn.

hotels and at the Municipal Market. Town trips start at US\$2. From Costa do Sol to Junta costs about US\$12.

AROUND MAPUTO Catembe

☎ 21

Across the bay from Maputo is the quiet town of Catembe, with views of Maputo's skyline and a taste of upcountry life for those who won't have a chance to leave the capital.

Catembe Gallery Hotel (☎ 21-380050; www.catembe.net; ste from US\$95, tr US\$95; ☎) enjoys a waterside setting, pleasant, breezy rooms with small balconies overlooking the bay, and a handful of suites boasting Jacuzzis and original paintings by local artists. This all combines to make this a great city getaway. There's also a small beach and the good **Restaurante Marisol** (meals from US\$5), with Mozambican cuisine, homemade pasta and cheeses, make-your-own-pizzas and live music on Sundays. Next door and under the same management is **Pensão Catembe** (dm US\$15, r US\$50), with dorm beds and doubles sharing facilities. It's 4km north of the ferry dock; call first, and staff will come and collect you.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

A ferry runs daily from the dock near the Ministry of Finances (per person day/evening US\$0.15/0.20, per vehicle US\$6, 20 minutes). The first boat from Maputo departs at 5am, then 6am, 7am, 8.30am and thereafter every few hours or so until 10pm. From Catembe, the first departure is at 5.30am; evening departures are at 5pm, 6pm, 7.30pm, 9.30pm, 10.45pm and 11.30pm (final boat sometimes leaves early). Smaller, passenger-only boats (US\$0.20) also run throughout the day between about 7am and 7pm.

Inhaca Island

☎ 21

Inhaca, about 40km east of Maputo, is an important marine research centre and a popular weekend getaway. Its offshore coral reefs are among the most southerly in the world, and parts of the island and surrounding waters have been designated a protected reserve. On Inhaca's southwestern edge at the research station is a small **museum** (admission US\$3; ☎ 8.30-11.30am & 2-3.30pm Mon-Fri, from 9.30am Sat, Sun & holidays) with specimens of local fauna.

About 3km northwest of Inhaca is tiny **Portuguese Island**, a patch of white sand surrounded by crystal-clear waters, and just south of Inhaca is **Cabo Santa Maria**, with quiet beaches and good snorkelling. Cabo Santa Maria is usually visited by boat from Inhaca or direct from Maputo, although there's also an overland route through the Maputo Special Reserve and a self-catering camp; for more information see p258.

SLEEPING & EATING

Marine Biology Research Station (☎ 21-760009, 21-760013; fax 21-492176; r per person US\$15) Just in from the town on the island's southwestern edge, with no-frills rooms that share facilities, and are open to the public on a space-available basis. Bring your own food, and book rooms well in advance.

Pestana Inhaca Lodge (☎ 21-305000; www.pestana.com; s/d/family room with half board US\$125/218/250; ☎) This four-star place is set in expansive gardens just north of the ferry pier. The pleasant rooms have mosquito nets, fan and air-con, and there are larger family rooms, most of which are wheelchair-friendly.

Restaurante Lucas (☎ 21-760007; meals US\$5-8, 1-/2-person seafood platter US\$18/26, lobster or prawns about US\$17; ☎ from 7am) The main place to eat, with

pricey but delicious seafood grills and slow service. It's next to Pestana Inhaca Lodge.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are daily flights to/from Maputo on **TransAirways** (☎ 21-465108; transairways@virconn.com) for US\$50 return.

For speedboat charters to Inhaca (US\$35 to US\$50 per person, minimum four people, about one hour) or to Cabo Santa Maria get in touch with **Desemar** (☎ 82-301 8070, 82-309 7920; sergio302003@yahoo.com), which can also be booked through Hotel Polana (p252) or Nau Tours (p247) in Maputo.

The slow Vodacom ferry departs from Maputo's Porto da Pesca (off Rua Marques de Pombal) at 8am on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday (US\$16 one way, 2½ to three hours). Departures from Inhaca are about 3pm. The less reliable *Nyaleti* departs from the Catembe ferry pier at 7am on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday (1st/2nd class US\$6/3.20 one way, two to three hours), returning about 3pm the same day.

Charter speedboats stop at Portuguese Island en route to Inhaca, or you can arrange something with local fishermen on the beach in front of Pestana Inhaca Lodge.

Marracuene & Macaneta Beach

☎ 21
Breezy Macaneta is the closest open-ocean beach to Maputo and an easy day trip from the capital. It's on a narrow peninsula divided from the mainland by the Nkomati River, and reached via the colonial-era town of Marracuene, 35km north of Maputo along the EN1.

SLEEPING & EATING

Marracuene Lodge (☎ 21-494529; marracuene@teledata.mz; camping per person US\$8, 1 per person self-catering/with half-board US\$39/55; 📍) On the Nkomati River about 4km south of Marracuene off the EN1, with good camping and hot water ablutions, plus two- and six-person self-catering chalets and a restaurant. Boat transfers to Macaneta beach are included in half-board rates, and otherwise cost US\$16 per person.

Jay's Beach Camp (☎ 82-300 1430; camping per adult/child US\$12.50/6.25, 2-/4-/6-person chalets US\$62/94/125; 📍) Large, grassy grounds on the inland side of the dunes with camping and an ablutions block, no-frills chalets and a braai area. Just over the dunes is a long, surf-pounded beach. It's 12km from the ferry and signposted (4WD

only). Day use of the compound is US\$4 per vehicle.

Macaneta Lodge (Complexo Turístico de Macaneta; ☎ 82-322 9920; macanetalodge@tdm.co.mz; 2-/4-person bungalows US\$70/140; 📍) Popular with day visitors, with a beachside restaurant (meals from US\$5), straightforward chalets and a weekend discotheque.

Motapa Estuary Lodge (☎ in South Africa 015-793 3816; info@transfrontiers.com; 8-person lodge with full-board/self-catering US\$586/312; 📍) A lovely, tranquil place on the Nkomati River, with four double bungalows and a restaurant-bar. Transport to the beach can be arranged. Advance bookings are essential; overnight visitors only.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Take any northbound chapa from Benfica (US\$1.20, one hour) to Marracuene, from where it's a 10-minute walk through town to the Nkomati River ferry (round trip per vehicle US\$6.50, five minutes, runs until about 6pm). On the other side, follow the rutted road for about 5km to a junction of sorts, from where most of the Macaneta places are about 5km to 8km further, and signposted. There's no public transport; hitching is slow except at weekends. For drivers, 4WD is essential, except for Macaneta Lodge.

SOUTHERN MOZAMBIQUE

Excellent beaches, heaping plates of prawns, wonderful diving and snorkelling, good tourism infrastructure, and easy road and air access from South Africa make the southern coast Mozambique's most popular destination, and an easy introduction to the country.

PONTA D'OURO & PONTA MALONGANE

☎ 21
Ponta d'Ouro, with its long, wide beach, is the first Mozambique stop for many travellers doing a larger Southern Africa loop. Offshore waters host abundant sea life, including dolphins, whale sharks and – from July to October – whales. Thanks to the area's proximity to South Africa, it fills up completely at holiday weekends.

About 5km north is the quieter Ponta Malongane, with a beautiful and seemingly

endless stretch of windswept coastline fringed by high, vegetated dunes.

Activities DIVING

Visibility that's consistently better than just over the border, a profusion of corals, and the chance to see dolphins and sharks have made Ponta d'Ouro one of Mozambique's diving hubs. Tandje Beach Resort is the base for a number of operators that run dive camps.

Dolphin Encounters (☎ 82-920 8952, in South Africa 011-462 8103; www.dolphin-encounters.co.za; per person with half-board in reed/wooden huts US\$44/55) Wooden huts with nets or simpler reed huts; dolphin tours.

Simply Scuba (☎ in South Africa 011-678 0972; www.simplyscuba.co.za; per person sharing from US\$22)

Scuba Adventures (☎ 21-650026; www.scubatravel.co.za; per person sharing tent/hut US\$23/27)

Whaler (☎ in South Africa 011-213 0213; www.thewhaler.co.za; hut s/d from US\$29/42)

In addition to the operators based at Tandje Beach Resort, local dive bases include **Devocean Diving** (www.devoceandiving.com) and Ponta Malongane (right). There's a dive equipment shop under Fishmonger Barracas (p258).

DOLPHIN TOURS

Dolphins frequent the nearby waters, and catching a glimpse of them can be a beautiful experience. However, remember that they're wild creatures, and sightings can't be guaranteed. The best tours are with Dolphin Encounters (above), and are generally part of a three-night package from Johannesburg, priced from about US\$422 per person; walk-ins are accommodated if space is available.

Sleeping

PONTA D'OURO

Tandje Beach Resort (☎ in South Africa 011-678 0972; camping per person US\$13, 2-/4-/6-person chalets US\$47/112/180) Shaded camping near the beach at the southern end of town, plus tatty self-catering chalets with shared ablutions. There's a charge of US\$0.40 per vehicle. It's also the base for a handful of dive camps (see Diving, above), which is where most budget travellers stay. Except as noted, all have simple tented and/or reed hut accommodation, sharing ablutions with the camping ground, catered or self-catering options, diving courses and equipment rental.

Bugan Villa Sol (☎ 82-310 4360, 84-752 0973; bougainvillasol@gmail.com; B&B per person from US\$70; 📍) This cosy B&B-style guesthouse makes a good weekend retreat, with impeccably decorated rooms set around the garden, braai facilities, and the beach just a five-minute walk away. It's near the police station, and signposted from the entrance to town.

Motel do Mar (☎ 21-650000; www.pontadoouro.co.za; 4-person chalets with/without sea view US\$105/85) In a good seaside location, this motel is a throwback to colonial days, with a restaurant, and blocks of faded two-storey self-catering chalets, each with two twin-bedded rooms.

Praia de Ouro Sul (☎ in South Africa 082-871 2791; www.praiaedourosul.co.za; 4-person tents US\$156, 6-person luxury chalets US\$344) Luxurious logwood chalets on a high, vegetated dune with commanding sea views and American-style kitchens, plus safari-style tents on a forested hillside, and a restaurant. It's about 5km south of Ponta d'Ouro town, and signposted from town.

PONTA MALONGANE

Ponta Malongane (☎ in South Africa 013-741 1975; www.malongane.co.za; camping per person US\$13, dive camp tents from US\$16, rondavel/log-hut d from US\$24/25) Based at the sprawling Parque de Malongane, with shaded camping, two-person rondavels, small twin-bedded log cabins, a restaurant and a self-catering area.

Tartaruga Marítima Luxury Camp (☎ in South Africa 083-309 3469, www.tartaruga.co.za; s/d US\$95/147; 📍) About 2km further north is this lovely and tranquil retreat, with safari-style tents tucked away in the coastal forest behind the dunes, and a self-catering area.

Ponta Mamoli (☎ in South Africa 083-444 6346; www.pontamamoli.com; chalet s/d with half-board US\$176/281; 📍) Log-cabin chalets, plus a restaurant, bar and braai area in a beautiful setting 11km north of Ponta Malongane. Diving, fishing and horseback riding can be arranged.

Eating

Café del Mar (☎ 21-650048; cafedelmarponta@tropical.co.mz; meals US\$3-6; 📍 lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) The best food in town, featuring crêpes and other French fare, plus live music at weekends until dawn. They also have rooms (per person with half-board US\$59). Look for the orange building on the hilltop in the town centre.

Also recommended:
Scandals (meals US\$1.50-5) Just outside Tandje Beach Resort, with all-day breakfasts, omelettes and light meals.

Fishmonger Barracas (☎ 21-650026; meals from US\$5) Opposite Café del Mar, with filling breakfasts and seafood platters.

A Florestinha do Índico (meals US\$5-8) Lawn seating, burgers and grills.

Getting There & Away

Ponta d'Ouro is 120km south of Maputo (3½ hours in a private vehicle), about 60km of which is soft deep sand (4WD only).

Chapas depart from Maputo's Catembe ferry pier at 8am on Tuesday and Friday (US\$5, five hours), and from Ponta d'Ouro at 8am Wednesday and Saturday. Otherwise, take the ferry to Catembe, where you can find transport to Salamanga (US\$2.50, 1½ hours) or Zitundo (US\$4.50, 4½ hours). From Zitundo, there's sporadic transport to Ponta d'Ouro (US\$1), 20km further south.

Kosi Bay border post is 11km south of Ponta d'Ouro (4WD), but there's no public transport. Coming from South Africa, there's a guarded lot at the border where you can leave your vehicle (about US\$5 per day). All the hotels do pick-ups from the border, and it's easy hitching at weekends.

MAPUTO SPECIAL RESERVE

En route to Ponta d'Ouro and two hours from Maputo is the **Maputo Special Reserve** (Reserva Especial de Maputo; adult/child/vehicle US\$8/2/8), which was gazetted in 1969 to protect the local elephant population and several turtle species. Due to the war and poaching, it's estimated that only about 180 elephants remain, most of which are quite skittish and seldom seen. The main attractions are the pristine wilderness feel of the place – it offers a true bush adventure close to the capital – and its 300-plus bird species, including fish eagles and many wetland species. The coastline here is also an important nesting area for loggerhead and leatherback turtles; peak breeding season is November to January. For the **camping ground** (camping per adult/child US\$6/3), on the beach, you'll need to bring food, water and everything else with you.

Continuing north within the reserve, past its northern boundary and on to the tip of the Machangula Peninsula, brings you to **Ponta Torres Camp** (☎ 82-252 4670, in South Africa 083-460 9492; www.africafrica.co.za/Pontatorres.htm; per person US\$38), a self-catering place (minimum four persons) on Cabo Santa Maria (p255) targeted at anglers and birders. A 4WD is essential,

and you'll need to pay vehicle and entry fees for the reserve.

Getting There & Away

Catembe Gallery Hotel (p255) operates all-inclusive day trips for US\$85 (US\$130 including a night in one of their luxury rooms). Otherwise, you'll need your own transport (4WD). The main entrance, known as *campeamento principal*, is marked with a rusty signboard about 65km from Catembe along the Ponta d'Ouro road. From the turnoff, it's 3km to the park gate, and then about 35km further through the reserve to the coast and the camping ground.

NAMAACHA

☎ 21

Cool Namaacha sits on the Swaziland border 70km west of Maputo, with an ornate colonial-era church and streets lined by jacaranda and flame trees. East of town is a rusty sign marking the way down to a small *cascata* (waterfall), 3.6km north of the main road.

Xisaka (☎ 21-960330; s/d/ste Mon-Thu US\$50/80/102, Fri-Sun US\$39/55/70; ☎ ☎ ☎), behind the church, has rooms with TV, and a restaurant.

Chapas run frequently to/from Maputo (US\$2).

BILENE

☎ 281

This small resort town sits on a large lagoon separated from the open sea by a sandy spit. Its calm waters are good for swimming, although conditions vary markedly with the seasons. If you're based in Maputo and have a car at your disposal, it's an enjoyable weekend excursion, but if you're touring and want some beach, it's better to head further north to Tofo or south to Ponta d'Ouro.

Sleeping & Eating

Complexo Palmeiras (☎ 281-59019; www.palmeiras.itgo.com; camping per site US\$12, plus per person US\$5, 4-person chalets US\$45) At the northern edge of town on the beach, with camping, no-frills chalets and braai facilities. Follow the main road into town to the final T-junction, then go left for about 1km.

Pousada São Martinho (☎ 281-59058; d US\$20, 4-person chalets US\$80-100; ☎) Simple rooms, plus block-style self-catering chalets, each with a tiny porch and a small living room. It's just up from the beachfront road.

Girassol Bilene Lodge (☎ 282-59071; www.girassolhoteis.co.za; chalets with half-board per person US\$85; ☎) On the eastern banks of the lagoon, and just over the dunes from the sea, with four- and six-person chalets scattered around the hillside, and a restaurant. Access is via a short boat ride across the lagoon. In Bilene, leave your car at the guarded lot opposite the Petro-moc petrol station, and follow the short path from there to the beach.

Praia do Sol (☎ 82-3193040; www.pdsol.co.za; chalets or r with half-board per person US\$86) About 4km south of town along the beach, with A-frame chalets overlooking the lagoon, plus some double rooms. All come with bathroom and nets, and there's a restaurant (no self-catering), a bar and diving, canoeing, quadbikes and boat trips across the lagoon. Turn right onto the beachfront road and continue for about 3km, staying right at the fork.

Eateries – all on or just off the beachfront road – include Estrela do Mar and **Complexo Aquarius** (☎ 281-59000; meals US\$3-5), both with seafood grills; the basic **Tchin-Tchin** (meals US\$1-3), with grilled chicken and chips to go; and **Café O Bilas** (pizzas from US\$3), next to the petrol station, with pizzas and upstairs seating.

Getting There & Away

Bilene is 140km north of Maputo and 40km off the main road. A direct chapa departs Maputo's Xipamanine market (beyond the western end of Avenida Eduardo Mondlane) at about 7am. Otherwise, go to Junta and have any northbound transport drop you at Macia junction, from where pick-ups run throughout the day to/from Bilene (US\$0.50, 30 minutes).

Departing from Bilene, a bus to Maputo leaves daily at 6am (and sometimes again at 1pm) from the town centre near the market (US\$3.60, four to five hours). Otherwise, take a chapa (from the roundabout at the entrance to Bilene, about 2km from the beach) to Macia, and then get onward transport from there.

XAI-XAI

☎ 282

Xai-Xai ('shy-shy'), the capital of Gaza province, is a long town stretched out along the EN1. It's of little interest to tourists, but its beach (Praia do Xai-Xai or Xai-Xai Beach), about 10km from the town centre, has invigorating sea breezes and makes an agreeable

overnight stop if you're driving to/from points further north.

Sleeping & Eating

Xai-Xai Camping & Caravan Park (☎ 282-35022; Praia do Xai-Xai; camping per site US\$5, 2-person bungalows from US\$22, 4-bed self-catering house US\$55) Xai-Xai Camping (ask for the *campismo*) has a shaded, beachside location, with rundown facilities. It's just north of Complexo Halley.

Kaya Ka Hina (☎ 282-22391; EN1; s/d with shared bathroom US\$15/19, with air-con & private bathroom from US\$24/26; ☎) Clean, no-frills rooms in the town centre, and a restaurant (meals US\$2 to US\$5). It's about 100m north of the *praça* transport stand.

Complexo Halley (☎ 282-35003, 282-35014; Praia do Xai-Xai; d with sea view US\$36, ste from US\$40; ☎) This long-standing beachfront hotel is the first place you reach coming down the access road from town. It has a breezy seaside esplanade, a restaurant (meals from US\$2.50), pleasant, homey rooms (ask for one that's sea-facing), and a weekend disco.

Getting There & Away

Buses to/from Maputo depart daily in each direction at about 6am and 1pm (US\$5, four hours) from the Oliveiras depot on the main road opposite Banco Austral. However, it's faster to take one of the north-south through buses. Wait by the Pôr do Sol complex on the main road at the southern end of town or, better, take a chapa to the bridge control post (*pontinha*), where all traffic needs to stop.

Chapas, including to Macia (for Bilene), depart from the *praça* transport stand near the old Pôr do Sol complex.

To Praia do Xai-Xai (US\$0.20), chapas depart from the *praça* transport stand (or catch them anywhere along the main road) and go to within at least 700m of the beach.

AROUND XAI-XAI

The lagoon-studded coast north and south of Xai-Xai has a string of attractive beaches – all quiet, except during South African school holidays, and a fine destination if you have your own vehicle.

Protea Zongoene Lodge (☎ in South Africa 012-346 8868; www.zongoene.com; camping per site US\$8, plus per person US\$14, 4-person self-catering house from US\$195, s/d with half-board US\$161/258) is a luxurious South African-run place just south of the Limpopo River Delta offering chalets, beachside cabins,

camping, a restaurant and the usual array of activities. Turn off the EN1 about 15km south of Xai-Xai, from where it's 35km further down a sandy track.

Paraíso de Chidenguele (☎ in South Africa 082-550 7559; www.chidbeachresort.com; 4-/6-/8-person chalets US\$155/208/258, 'overnight rooms' per person US\$36) is a low-key self-catering resort about 70km north of Xai-Xai and 5km off the main road, with self-catering thatch-and-wood chalets, a bar, and meals with advance notice.

Nhambavale Lodge (☎ in South Africa 082-326 6350; www.nhambavale.co.za; camping per person US\$14, chalet d US\$64) is a relaxing lodge just north of Paraíso de Chidenguele and 2km in from the sea on Lake Inhampavala.

Sunset Beach (☎ 82-057 5960; www.sunsetbeache.com; 6-person chalets US\$225, 3-person rondavels US\$90), at the southern edge of Chidenguele beach, has stone-and-thatch self-catering chalets, small rondavels and a restaurant.

LIMPOPO NATIONAL PARK

Together with South Africa's Kruger and Zimbabwe's Ghonarezhou National Park, this **park** (Parque Nacional do Limpopo; ☎ 21-713000; adult/child US\$8/2) forms part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (see the boxed text, p67). Ghonarezhou connections are still in the future, but Kruger and Limpopo are now linked via the Giryondo border post.

The most interesting area is the 'sanctuary' – a 30,000 hectare tract along the Kruger border where wildlife translocation efforts are focused. While sightings are still hit and miss, the bush ambience is alluring. There are people living within the park boundaries, so it's likely that you'll also see some of these communities and their livestock on the park's eastern fringes.

Most visitors use Limpopo as a transit corridor between Kruger and the coast. There's also a four-day 4WD 'ecotrail' (per vehicle US\$594) between Kruger's Punda Maria camp and the Komatiport border post (book through www.dolimpopo.com or www.sanparks.org), plus several multiday hiking trails (see www.dolimpopo.com for details and bookings).

Sleeping

Campismo Agua Pesqueira (camping per person US\$4) This park-run camping ground with cold-water ablutions is along the edge of the escarpment overlooking Massingir Dam, and about

50km from Giryondo border post. Tent rental is US\$4 per day.

Covane Community Lodge (covane2006@yahoo.com.br; camping per person US\$8, 3-person tent US\$18, bungalow d US\$28, 5-person chalets US\$64) A recommended community-run place on a rise overlooking Massingir Dam and Nova Lake, with camping, plus traditional houses and chalets, good local meals and sunset views over the water. Staff can help you organise trips into the park and boat trips on the lake. Chapas run daily from Maputo's Junta to Massingir town (US\$7), where staff will come and collect you.

Machampane Wilderness Camp (www.dolimpopo.com; tent s or d with full-board US\$285) Limpopo park's only luxury camp, with five well-located safari tents directly overlooking the Machampane River in the sanctuary area, and about 20km from Giryondo border post. Guided day and overnight walks can be arranged, as can vehicle safaris.

Getting There & Away

The Giryondo border post is about 70km west of Massingir; see p299. If entering Limpopo from South Africa, you'll also need to pay Kruger park entry fees, and Kruger's gate quota system (see www.sanparks.org for information) applies. Only 4WDs are permitted to cross. The main Mozambique park entrance is **Massingir Gate** (☎ 6am-6pm), about 5km from Massingir town.

QUISSICO

☎ 293

Quissico, capital of Zavala district, sits on an escarpment overlooking a chain of shimmering, pale blue lagoons. The surrounding area is famed for its Chopi *timbila* (marimba) players, and Quissico is the site of an annual *timbila* festival, usually held sometime between June and August.

Pousada de Zavala 'Quissico' (☎ 293-65007; EN1; r US\$10-14), in the town centre, has undistinguished rooms with shared bathrooms, and a restaurant.

Praia Mar e Sol (www.reviteresort.com; camping per adult/child US\$12/6, chalet per person US\$34) offers camping and a six-person self-catering chalet on the inland side of the dunes, about 11km from Quissico near the lagoon.

Quissico is 130km northeast of Xai-Xai. To reach the lagoon and Praia Mar e Sol, take the signposted turn-off just north of town, from where it's 11km further (4WD).

ZÁVORA

About 55km north of Quissico and about 80km south of Inhambane is Závora beach, with the rustic **Závora Lodge** (www.zavoralodge.com; camping per person US\$8.50-12.50, 4-/6-bed bungalows US\$94/140, 8-bed house US\$212). In addition to camping, including a few sites on the sea side of the dunes, it has self-catering reed bungalows and serves meals with advance notice. The bungalows and houses come with bedding and nets, but otherwise, bring everything with you. It's 17km from the EN1 (usually negotiable with 2WD); the turn-off is signposted 11km north of Inharrime town.

INHAMBANE

☎ 293

Inhambane is one of Mozambique's most charming towns and one of its oldest settlements. Well before the Portuguese arrived, it was a stop for Muslim dhows plying the coast, and from the 18th century, Inhambane was an important trading port for ivory and slaves. In 1834 it was ravaged by Chief Soshangane's warriors, but soon recovered to become one of the largest towns in the country. During the 20th century, focus shifted southwards, and Inhambane declined.

Today, it's a sleepy place with quiet, shaded streets lined with old houses and buildings.

Information

Banco Austral (Avenida da Independência) ATM; on the north side of the road.

BIM (Avenida Acordos de Lusaka) ATM; opposite Á Maçaroca restaurant.

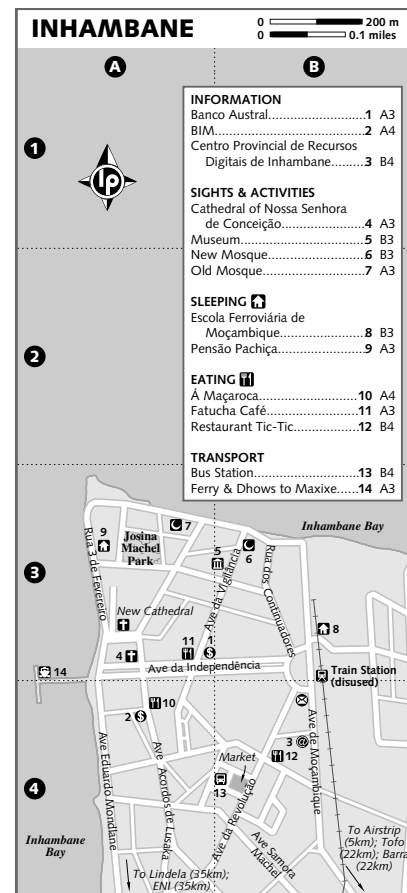
Centro Provincial de Recursos Digitais de Inhambane (per min US\$0.02; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) Internet access.

Sights

Attractions in Inhambane include the 18th-century **cathedral** near the water, and the old and new **mosques**. There's a tiny **museum** (Avenida da Vigilância; admission free; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Sat) near the new mosque.

LAND OF THE GOOD PEOPLE

On arrival in Inhambane, the 15th-century Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama was reportedly so charmed by the locals that he gave the area the name *terra da boa gente* or 'land of the good people'.



Sleeping & Eating

Pensão Pachiça (☎ 293-20565, 293-20046; faroliturismo@teledata.mz; Rua 3 de Fevereiro; dm US\$11, d US\$40) This backpackers on the waterfront has been given a complete refurbishing and is the best place to stay, with dorm beds, rooms, a restaurant-bar and a rooftop terrace. Take a left coming off the ferry jetty and continue about 300m.

Escola Ferroviária de Moçambique (☎ 293-20781; Avenida de Moçambique; r with/without fan US\$19/15) By the train station at the eastern edge of town, this is the only other option, with functional but soulless attached doubles (no nets) sharing a bathroom. From the ferry jetty, continue straight through town to the end of the main road and look for the grey monstrosity.

À **Maçaroca** (☎ 293-20489; Avenida Acordos de Lusaka; meals US\$6-10; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Sat) One block south of Avenida da Independência; has grilled fish, meat and curries.

For inexpensive local meals try **Fatucha Café** (Avenida da Independência; meals from US\$2) or **Restaurant Tic-Tic** (Avenida da Revolução 227a; meals US\$2-3), diagonally opposite the market.

Getting There & Away

AIR

LAM has three flights weekly to/from Maputo (US\$164 one way), and there are frequent charters to/from Johannesburg, best booked with hotels in Tofo and Barra.

BOAT

An old and precipitously overloaded ferry operates from sunrise to sundown between Inhambane and Maxixe (US\$0.50, 25 minutes), alternating with smaller motorboats. Dhows do the trip more slowly for US\$0.15. The first boats to Maxixe depart at dawn.

BUS

The bus station is behind the market. Chapas to Tofo run throughout the day (US\$0.60, one hour). Oliveiras buses to Maputo depart at 6am and 11am (US\$9, seven hours, 450km). It's faster to catch one of the 30-seaters, such as Inhambane Ceu and Inhambane Expresso, which depart at 5am (US\$8). For other southbound buses, and for all northbound transport, you'll need to head to Maxixe.

Coming from Maputo, Inhambane Ceu and other smaller buses depart Junta between 5am and 7am. Alternatively, take any northbound bus to Maxixe.

For shuttles between Swaziland and Tofo, see p299.

AROUND INHAMBANE

The string of beaches south of Inhambane are mostly geared towards drive-in visitors looking for a self-catering vacation, and they fill up completely during South African holidays. Most also organise diving and instruction. They include **Jeff's Palm Resort** (☎ 293-56063; www.jeffsmoz.com; 8-person camping barracas US\$34, plus per person US\$10, 4-/8-person houses US\$129/300), about 20km southeast of Inhambane, with self-catering houses and camping *barracas* (shelters) in the palm groves behind the dunes; and **Jangamo Beach Resort** (☎ in South Africa 013-750 2439; www.jangamo.co.za; d US\$55, 6-person chalets

US\$155, 6-person houses US\$219), just south, with large reed-and-thatch chalets and a restaurant on the dunes.

About 35km southeast of Inhambane is Pandane beach, where the family-friendly **Paindane Beach Resort** (☎ 082-569 3436; www.paindane.com; camping per adult/child US\$10/5, 4-/6-person chalets from US\$91/118, 8-person villas from US\$250) offers camping *barracas*, reed-and-thatch chalets on the dunes, a restaurant and snorkelling just off shore.

All places are accessed by signposted access roads (4WD) off the main road south of Inhambane, and most can also organise transfers to/from Inhambane.

TOFO

☎ 293

Tofo has long been legendary on the Southern Africa holidaymakers' scene, with its azure waters, long arc of beach, easy access and perpetual party-time atmosphere. Just to the south and easily accessed from Tofo is **Tofinho**, Mozambique's unofficial surfing capital.

Tofo On-Line (per hr US\$5; ☎ 10am-6pm Thu-Tue) has internet access. The closest ATMs and banks are in Inhambane.

Activities

Together with Tofo's beach, diving has put Tofo on the map. Operators (both PADI Gold Palm) include **Diversity Scuba** (☎ 293-29002; www.diversityscuba.com) and **Tofo Scuba** (☎ 82-826 0140; www.tofoescuba.com).

Tofinho's Turtle Cove (below) is 'surfing Mozambique'. The Waterworks Surf & Coffee Shop (opposite) rents and sells gear.

Sleeping

Fatima's Nest (☎ 82-414 5730; www.mozambiquebackpackers.com; camping per person US\$5, dm US\$7-9, 2-/3-person bungalows US\$24/36) A friendly, low-key and rather makeshift place about 1.5km south of Bamboozzi's on low dunes overlooking the beach. On offer: camping, tents for rent (US\$18), no-frills reed bungalows, a kitchen, bar, pool table and evening beach bonfires.

Turtle Cove (☎ in South Africa 011-803 4185; www.feralsurf.com; camping per person US\$8, dm US\$12, r per person with bathroom in reed/stone bungalows US\$16/22) This place is in Tofinho and it's the spot to go if you're interested in surfing or chilling, with a mix of stone or reed bungalows, evening bonfires, yoga instruction and surfboard rental. Bring your own bedding for the dorms.

Casa Barry (☎ 293-29007; www.casabarry.com; camping per site US\$8, reed/brick casita d US\$70/86, 4-/6-person chalets US\$172/206) Well located on the beach at the southern end of town, with a camping area to the back, a beachfront collection of closely spaced, rustic reed-and-thatch self-catering chalets and a restaurant.

Pensão Tofo (☎ 82-827 4590; dm US\$8, d US\$23; ☎) Small, clean and without the beach vibes, but nevertheless a good budget bet. There's a dorm and a double with shared bathroom, a kitchen, fan and nets. It's opposite Tofo On-Line in the town centre.

Bamboozzi (☎ 293-29040; camping US\$9, dm US\$14, 2-/4-person bungalows US\$23/46, 4-person chalets US\$94, honeymoon ste US\$94; ☎) Bamboozzi has a large, circular dorm, camping, bungalows and a kitchen area set under the palms on the back side of a high dune, plus a dune-top bar-restaurant. It's 3km north of town along a sandy road. Wednesday and Friday are party nights.

Mango Beach (☎ 82-943 4660; luckylil@webmail.co.za; r US\$20, 4-person houses US\$55, 6-person chalets US\$102) A large place behind the dunes about 4km north of town, with a cluster of simple bungalows and some nice, well-equipped self-catering chalets behind the dunes, plus a dune-top restaurant.

Hotel Tofo Mar (☎ 82-294 5150; hoteltofomar@yahoo.com.br; s/d US\$38/70, with sea view from US\$42/75; ☎) Situated in a prime location directly on the beach in the town centre, this is the only hotel (ie nonbungalow-style place), and quite faded these days, though there are renovations planned.

Nordin's Lodge (☎ 293-29009; 2-/4-person chalets US\$50/100) The quiet Nordin's is at the far northern end of town, and just south of Fatima's Nest on the beach. It has thatched chalets that come with hot water, fridge and self-catering facilities.

Eating

Dino's Beach Bar (meals from US\$2; ☎ 10am-late Thu-Tue) Tofo's main hangout, with good vibes, good music and good food on the beach just past Fatima's Nest.

Waterworks Surf & Coffee Shop (breakfasts & light meals US\$2-4; ☎ 7am-5pm Tue-Sun) Great breakfasts with muesli, waffles and more, plus light meals. It's next to Diversity Scuba in the town centre.

Albatroz (☎ 293-29005; restalbatroz@teledata.mz; meals from US\$5, breakfast buffet US\$14; ☎ breakfast Sun, lunch & dinner daily) At the top of the hill in the

town centre, with delicious seafood dishes and a Sunday breakfast buffet.

Casa de Comer (☎ 82-764 8160; meals US\$7; ☎ 10am-9pm Wed-Mon) Mozambique-French fusion cuisine in the town centre.

Getting There & Away

There are chapas throughout the day along the 22km sealed road between Tofo and Inhambane, departing Tofo from about 6am (US\$0.60, one hour). To Maputo or points north, you'll need to go via Inhambane or Maxixe, which means that to catch an early north/southbound express bus, you'll need to stay in Inhambane the night before.

BARRA

☎ 293

Barra sits at the tip of the Barra peninsula, where the waters of Inhambane Bay mix with those of the Indian Ocean. It's beautiful, but unlike Tofo, there's no town, and everything's spread out. Many self-drivers prefer Barra's quieter scene and its greater range of mid-range accommodation options, but Tofo is a better bet if you're backpacking.

Dive operators include **Barra Lodge Scuba Diving** (www.barradiveresorts.com; Barra Lodge) and **Barra Reef Divers** (www.barrareef.co.za; Barra Reef).

Sleeping & Eating

Farol de Barra (☎ 82-960 3550; www.barralighthouse.com; camping per adult/child US\$12/6) Under the same management as Pensão Pachica in Inhambane, with good camping on the beach at Barra point and a small bar-restaurant. Electricity per day is US\$5. Take the signposted sandy (4WD only) right off the Barra road, when coming from Bar Babalaza.

Barra Lodge (☎ 293-20561; www.barralodge.co.za; dm US\$13, casita s/d with half-board US\$132/221, 6-person self-catering cottages US\$181) One of Barra's largest, longest-running and most outfitted places, with a range of accommodation – from small twin-bedded reed *casitas* with bathroom to larger self-catering cottages – plus a beachside bar-restaurant, a full range of activities and excursions to Pomene, further up the coast. For backpackers, there's a divers' bunkhouse with hot showers and a cooking area.

Barra Reef (☎ 293-56035; www.barrareef.co.za; bunkhouse s/d US\$26/31, 4-person casitas US\$109, 5- or 6-person self-catering villas US\$125) About 1km beyond Barra Lodge, directly on the beach with no dunes in between, and self-catering chalets, bungalows,

a bunkhouse, a beachside restaurant-bar and lots of activities.

Flamingo Bay Water Lodge (☎ 293-56001; www.flamingobay.co.za; s/d with half-board US\$250/391; ☎ ☎ ☎) The most upscale choice, with luxurious wood-and-thatch stilt houses lined up in a row over the bay past Barra Lodge, and a restaurant. No children under 12 years of age.

Bar Babalaza (meals from US\$2) About 6km from Barra at the junction where the roads to Tofo and Barra diverge, with meals, drinks and air for your tyres.

Getting There & Away

Barra Lodge and several other places offer fly-in packages from Johannesburg.

The turn-off for Barra is about 15km from Inhambane en route to Tofo – go left at Bar Babalaza. There are daily chapas between Inhambane and Conguiana village along the Barra road, from where you'll need to sort out a pick-up or walk (about 4km to Barra Lodge).

MAXIXE

☎ 293

Maxixe (ma-sheesh), about 450km northeast of Maputo on the EN1, has little to recommend it except its convenient location as a stopping point for traffic up and down the coast. It's also the place to get off the bus and onto the boat if you're heading to Inhambane, across the bay.

Maxixe Camping (☎ 293-30351; EN1; camping per person US\$5, 2-person beach bungalows from US\$32) is next to the jetty, with camping and faded bungalows. You can leave your vehicle here while visiting Inhambane.

Pousada de Maxixe (☎ 293-30199; EN1; d with shared/private bathroom US\$16/24), across the road from Maxixe Camping, has grubby rooms, but surprisingly good evening meals.

Stop (☎ 293-30025; EN1; meals from US\$2; ☎ 6am–10pm), next to the jetty, has meals and also rents clean rooms with air-con for US\$26 nearby.

For self-catering, try Taurus, which is just off the EN1.

Getting There & Away

Buses to Maputo (US\$8, 6½ hours, 450km) depart from the bus stand by the Tribunal from 6am. Chapas to Vilankulo (US\$6, 3½ hours) and other points north leave from Praça 25 de Setembro, in front of the Conselho Municipal. For information about the Inhambane ferry, see p262.

LINGA LINGA

Ponta Linga Linga has a small village and the very no-frills, backpacker-oriented **Funky Monkeys** (camping per person US\$4, dm US\$4), with nothing more to do than relax under the palms. Prices are negotiable the longer you stay, and you can go canoeing in the nearby mangroves.

Take a chapa to Morrumbene (US\$0.80 from Maxixe, US\$3 from Vilankulo), then walk about 20 minutes to the water (ask for the *ponta*) to catch a dhow to Linga Linga (US\$0.20). Sailings depend on the winds, but there's usually a public boat departing daily except Sunday about 11am. Otherwise, hire your own for about US\$6. When approaching Linga Linga, ask the captain to take you all the way to the point. It's also possible to hire a dhow in Inhambane (about US\$5, bring water and shade); ask at Pensão Pachica (p261) in Inhambane.

MASSINGA & MORRUNGULO

☎ 293

Bustling Massinga has an ATM, and accommodation and meals at **Dalilo's Hotel** (☎ 293-71043; EN1; r with shared/private bathroom from US\$20/30; ☎) at the northern end of town.

Several kilometres further north is the signposted turn-off for the beautiful Morrungulo beach.

Morrungulo Beach Resort (www.morrungulo.co.za; camping per adult/child US\$11/5.50, bungalow d US\$78, 4-person chalets US\$144, bunkhouse per person about US\$31) is a large self-catering complex (no restaurant), set among the palms, with a range of chalets, a bunkhouse and a dive centre. Bookings are essential during South African school holidays; bring your own bed sheets.

Baobab Lodge (☎ 82-865 6980, 21-455010; baobab_lodge@yahoo.co.uk; camping/barraca per person US\$5/8, dm US\$8, cliff/beach d US\$30/35, 6-person cottages US\$75–100) has good camping, rooms and a self-catering cottage at the top of the small escarpment (five minutes' walk from the sea), plus more self-catering cottages and camping down near the water. There's also a restaurant, and staff can help you organise visits to nearby villages.

Getting There & Away

Most north–south buses stop at Massinga. Morrungulo is 13km from the main road; sporadic chapas run to within walking distance of the lodges.

VILANKULO

☎ 293

Vilankulo is the finishing (or starting) point of Mozambique's popular southern tourist circuit, and the gateway for visiting the nearby Bazaruto Archipelago. During holidays, it's overrun with 4WDs, but otherwise is very quiet.

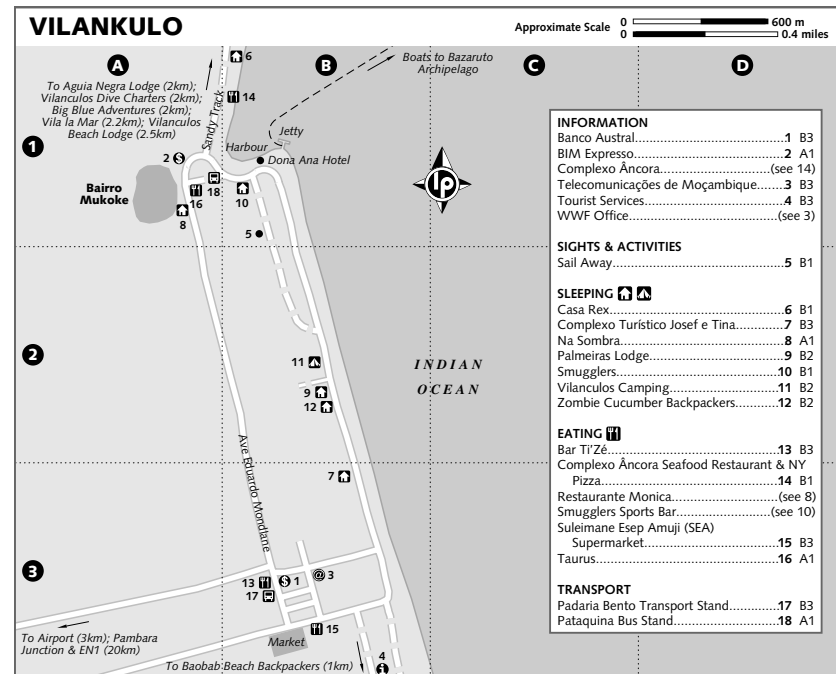
Orientation

The bus stand, market and ATMs are at the southwestern end of town near the main junction. About 3km northeast of here following the tarmac Avenida Eduardo Mondlane is Bairro Mukoke, with another ATM, the old Dona Ana Hotel (closed) and a cluster of sleeping options within easy reach. The beach-front road, with Sail Away and more sleeping places along it or just inland, parallels Avenida Eduardo Mondlane to the east.

Information

BIM Expresso (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; Bairro Mukoke) ATM.

Banco Austral (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane) ATM, and changes cash dollars; at the junction near the town entrance.



Adventures (☎ 293-82425, bigblue@teledata.mz; Aguiã Negra Lodge).

Sleeping BUDGET

Baobab Beach Backpackers (☎ 293-82202, 82-731 5420; baobabmoz@yahoo.com; camping US\$6, dm US\$8, chalet d US\$20, beachfront chalet d US\$40) A beachside setting (though camping and most accommodation is inland) and a definite party vibe. It's at the southern end of town, reached from the bus station and market area via a sandy path winding through the village. It is not safe to walk this stretch alone – call and they'll send someone to meet you.

Complexo Turístico Josef e Tina (☎ 293-82140; camping per tent US\$10, rondavel d US\$24, d from US\$30) Just up from Zombie Cucumbers with camping, a self-catering area, basic reed bungalows and several self-catering rooms in the main house.

Zombie Cucumber Backpackers (www.zombiecucumber.com; dm US\$10, chalet d US\$28; ☎) Lots of green space, hammocks, a bar and a circular dorm, small chalets and great meals. It's just back from the beach road, south of Palmeiras Lodge.

Vilanculos Camping (☎ 293-82043; www.vilanculoscamping.co.za; camping per person US\$11, chalets per person US\$16-23) This large, shaded camping area on the inland side of the beach road also has a few straightforward rooms and bungalows with bedding.

Na Sombra (☎ 293-82429; Bairro Mukoke; s/tw/d with shared bathroom US\$11/14/16) Small, no-frills rooms, and a good restaurant.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Smugglers (☎ 293-82253; www.smugglers.co.za; s/d with shared bathroom US\$38/55, s/d US\$44/66; ☎ ☎) Just north of the Dona Ana Hotel on the inland side of the road, with pleasant rooms around cool, lush gardens, and a restaurant.

Aguiã Negra Lodge (☎ 293-82387; www.aguiãnegra.co.za; chalet s/d US\$55/86, with air-con US\$86/140, 6-person chalets about US\$147; ☎ ☎ ☎) About 2km north of the Dona Ana Hotel, with breezy A-frame chalets on large, grassy grounds overlooking the sea, plus newer air-con rooms, good breakfasts and a restaurant.

Palmeiras Lodge (☎ 293-82257; cottage s/d US\$66/109; ☎) Just in from the beachfront road, with nice whitewashed stone-and-thatch cottages set in green grounds. Continental breakfast is included; there's no restaurant.

It can also be booked through Vilanculos Beach Lodge.

Casa Rex (☎ 293-82048; www.casa-rex.com; s/d from US\$95/150; ☎) A small, upmarket getaway in peaceful, manicured grounds about 500m north of the Dona Ana Hotel.

Vilanculos Beach Lodge (☎ 293-82388; www.vilanculos.co.za; s/d from US\$117/203; ☎ ☎) A large, busy resort-style place about 1km north of Aguiã Negra Lodge, with chalets set back from the water on a hillside, a restaurant and a range of water sports.

Vila la Mar (☎ 293-82302; vilalamar@teledata.mz; 6-/10-person houses US\$250/280) Spacious, beautiful and well-equipped self-catering chalets, just up from Aguiã Negra Lodge.

Eating

Bar TiZe (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; meals from US\$1) A small local eatery on the main road near the bus stand, with fresh, inexpensive meals.

Restaurante Monica (Na Sombra; meals US\$2.50-6) has delicious local cuisine.

Smugglers Sports Bar (at Smugglers; meals from US\$3) Has good breakfasts and hearty pub fare.

Complexo Ancora Seafood Restaurant/NY Pizza (☎ 293-82444; pizzas & meals US\$4-10; ☎ 7am-10pm Wed-Mon) A piece of Americana in the middle of Mozambique, with large portions, pizza, apple pie and a waterside eating area.

For self-catering, try the Suleimane Esep Amuji (SEA) Supermarket near the market, or Taurus, diagonally opposite BIM.

Getting There & Away

AIR

LAM flies four times weekly to/from Maputo (US\$216 one way), three times weekly to/from Chimoio and weekly to/from Beira. **Pelican Air** (☎ 293-82348, in South Africa 011-973 3649; www.pelicanair.co.za; airport) flies daily between Johannesburg and Vilankulo (US\$266 one way), sometimes via Nelspruit, and with onward connections to Bazaruto and Benguela Islands. **Swazi Express** (☎ in Swaziland 518-6840; www.flyswazi.com; airport) has three flights weekly between Vilankulo, Durban and Swaziland's Matsapha Airport.

The airport is 3km from town. There are no taxis, so you'll need to arrange a lift with a hotel, or hitch.

BUS

Vilankulo is 20km east of the EN1 down a tarmac access road, with the turn-off at Pambara junction. Chapas run between the

two throughout the day (US\$0.80). Except as noted, all transport departs from the main road just down from Padaria Bento.

To Maputo (US\$16, nine to 10 hours), there are two to three buses daily, departing town by 4.30am (no advance bookings). If you're staying in the Mukoke section of town, it's easier to board the bus at Pataquina (down the small street opposite BIM Expresso); the first bus of the day usually departs from here between 3am and 3.30am before stopping at the main stand near Padaria Bento. Coming from Maputo, get to Junta by about 4.30am. One of the better lines is Xiluva, which departs from Junta about 5am.

To Beira (US\$12, nine hours), 30-seater buses depart Vilankulo at 4.30am; book the afternoon before.

To Chimoio, there's a daily 30-seater bus departing Vilankulo at 4am (US\$14, 8½ to nine hours).

To Maxixe (for Inhambane), minibuses run daily throughout the day (US\$6, four hours).

Getting Around

Vilankulo is very spread out. There are no taxis, but lifts are easy to find. Occasional chapas run along the main road, but not out to the beach places on the northeastern edge of town.

BAZARUTO ARCHIPELAGO

The Bazaruto Archipelago is the quintessential tropical paradise, with clear, turquoise waters filled with pretty fish, colourful birds and top diving and snorkelling. There are five main islands – Magaruque (Santa Isabel), Benguera (Santo António), Santa Carolina (Paradise Island), Bazaruto and tiny Bangué – spread out 10km to 25km offshore between Vilankulo and Inhassoro. Much of the area is protected as a **national park** (adult/child US\$8/2).

Sleeping & Eating

Ponta Dundo Camp (Bazaruto Island; camping per person US\$15) The only budget accommodation in the archipelago, this place was soon to open at the time of writing. It's run by the local community in partnership with the national park, with fixed double tents. Bring food and drink, and get an update in Vilankulo before heading over.

Bazaruto Lodge (☎ 21-305000; reservas@pestana.co.mz; Bazaruto Island; s/d with full board from US\$225/365;

☎) An unpretentious four-star getaway on a tranquil bay with A-frame chalets amid lush gardens beneath the sand dunes, and a honeymoon suite.

Indigo Bay (☎ 293-82340; www.indigobayonline.com; Bazaruto Island; s/d US\$365/540) The largest and most outfitted lodge in the archipelago, with rooms and beachfront chalets, and a range of activities.

Benguerra Lodge (☎ in South Africa 011-452 0641; www.benguerra.co.za; Benguerra Island; s/d with full board from US\$534/790; ☎) One of the best and most intimate of the island lodges, with spacious luxury chalets near the beach, and a few honeymoon suites.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Pelican Air flies between Johannesburg, Nelspruit and Vilankulo, with connections to Benguerra and Bazaruto islands; see opposite.

BOAT

All the top-end lodges can arrange speedboat transfers for their guests. To charter your own speedboat (from about US\$100 return), contact Vilankulo dive operators or Big Blue Adventures (opposite).

Alternatively, you can reach the islands by dhow from Vilankulo, best arranged through Sail Away (p265). There are also numerous freelancers who will offer to take you over, some reliable, and others not. Check with tourist information or with your hotel for recommendations. Expect to pay from about US\$60 per boat for a day sail, and don't pay until you're safely back on land.

For nonmotorised dhows, allow plenty of extra time to account for wind and water conditions; from Vilankulo to Benguerra or Magaruque takes two to six hours.

INHASSORO

Inhassoro is the last of the southern beaches before the EN1 turns inland, and a popular destination for South African anglers.

Hotel Seta (☎ 293-91000/1, 82-302 0990; camping per adult/child US\$8/4, chalets US\$32-45) has camping, plus agreeable white stone-and-thatch cottages and a restaurant.

Inhassoro is about 15km east of the main road. Chapas run daily to/from Vilankulo (US\$2, 45 minutes), and there's a daily bus to/from Maputo (US\$15, 10 hours). To Beira, go to Macovane (the junction with the EN1)

and wait for passing northbound buses from there. Driving northwards, there's a bridge (toll US\$0.80, open 5am to 8pm) across the Save River.

CENTRAL MOZAMBIQUE

Central Mozambique – Sofala, Manica, Tete and Zambézia provinces – doesn't draw the tourist crowds, but it's a convenient transit zone for travel to/from Malawi and Zimbabwe. Among its attractions are wild Gorongosa National Park, beautiful hill landscapes and Mozambique's highest peaks.

BEIRA

Beira, Mozambique's second-largest city and busiest port, is as famed for its steamed crabs and prawns as for its tawdry nightlife.

About 40km south is the site of the ancient gold-trading port of Sofala, which in its 15th-century heyday was one of East Africa's most influential centres, with links to Madagascar, India and beyond, though nothing remains of this today.

Orientation

At the heart of the city are the adjacent squares of Praça do Município and Praça do Metical, with shops, banks and internet nearby. North of here is the old commercial area and the port. Various streets lead south and east from Praça do Município through the Ponta Gêa residential area to Avenida das FPLM, which runs for several kilometres along the ocean to Makuti Beach and the lighthouse.

Information

There are ATMs at the airport, at Shoprite (opposite) and at **BCI Fomento** (Rua Major Serpa Pinto), opposite LAM.

Clínica Avicena (☎ 23-327990, 84-302 1520; Avenida Poder Popular; ☹ 24hr) For medical emergencies; just north of Praça do Metical.

POUNDS STERLING

Unlike Portuguese-dominated Maputo, British influence was strong in late-19th- and early-20th-century Beira, and for a time the Bank of Beira even circulated sterling currency.

Post office (Rua Correia de Brito)

Standard Bank (Praça do Metical) ATM; changes travellers cheques (minimum US\$35 per transaction, purchase receipts required).

Telecomunicações de Moçambique (Rua Companhia de Moçambique; ☎ 7am–10pm) Domestic and international telephone calls. Just off Praça do Município.

Teledata (Rua Companhia de Moçambique; per hr US\$2; ☎ 7.30am–7pm) Internet; diagonally opposite the telecom office.

Sights & Activities

For relaxing, try **Makuti beach**, with breezes and sunset views, or the **swimming pool** (Avenida das FPLM; per day US\$4) at Clube Náutico.

Beira's **cathedral** (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane) was built in the early 20th century with stones from the old San Caetano fort (1505) in Sofala. The streets around the **port** are lined with faded colonial-era buildings.

Sleeping BUDGET

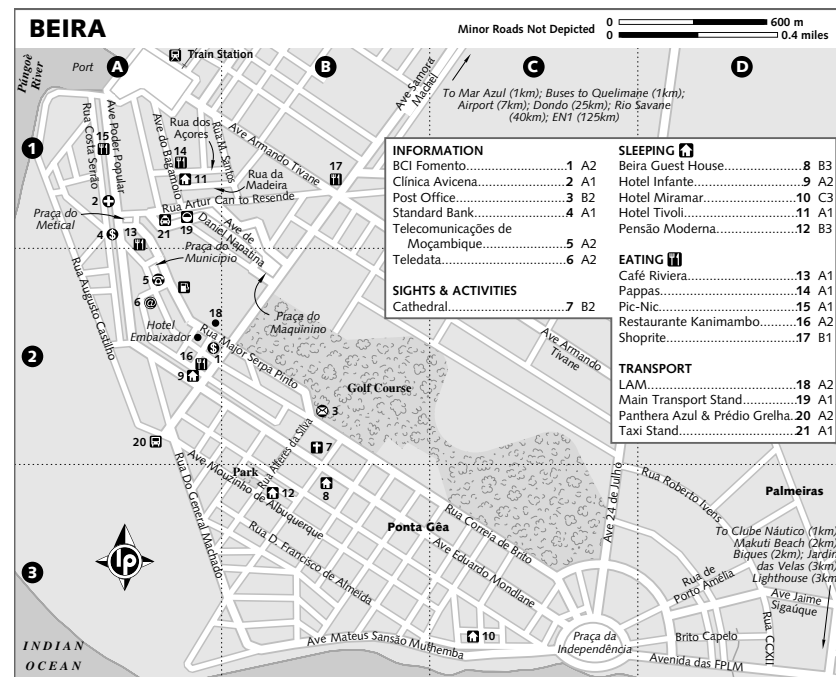
Rio Savane (☎ 23-323555, 82-385 7660; camping per person US\$3, 5-person barracas US\$6 plus per person US\$6, self-catering bungalows d/q US\$50/100) About 40km north of town on the Savane River, with camping, *barracas* with mattresses and bedding, self-catering chalets and meals. Take the Dondo road past the airport to the signposted turn-off. Continue 35km to the estuary, where there's secure parking and a boat (until 5pm) to take you to the camp. Pick-ups from Beira can be arranged.

Biques (☎ 23-313051; Makuti Beach; camping per person US\$3.50; ☎) This faded camping ground has seen much better days. However, the bar and restaurant are popular, and have sunset views. Take any chapa towards Makuti and ask them to drop you at the turn-off, from where it's 400m further on foot. Taxis from town cost US\$3.

Hotel Miramar (☎ 23-322283; Rua Vilas Boas Truão; s/d/tw US\$14/20/16; ☎) A faded classic, with no-frills rooms – some with private bathroom – near the water (no beach), but inconvenient for the rest of town.

Hotel Infante (☎ 23-326603; Rua Jaime Ferreira; s/d with fan & shared bathroom US\$24/28, with air-con & private bathroom US\$26/30; ☎) In a high-rise building a few blocks from LAM, with small, clean rooms and a restaurant.

Pensão Moderna (☎ 23-329901; Rua Alferes da Silva; d/tr with shared bathroom US\$24/31, d with air-con & private bathroom US\$34; ☎) One of the better budget



bets, with adequate rooms – most with fan and shared bathroom. It's two blocks south of the cathedral.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Jardim das Velas (☎ 23-312209; jardimdasvelas@yahoo.com; 282 Avenida das FPLM, Makuti Beach; d/f US\$75/85; ☎) Near the lighthouse, and another good place with well-equipped doubles and a family room with kitchenette. No meals.

Beira Guest House (☎ 23-324030; 1311 Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; r/st US\$75/100; ☎ ☎) A nice residential style B&B in the Ponta Gêa area with pleasant rooms with minifridge, TV and laundry service. Breakfast is included, and there's a cook.

Hotel Tivoli (☎ 23-320300; h.tivoli-beira@teledata.mz; cnr Avenida de Bagamoyo & Rua da Madeira; s/d US\$83/99; ☎ ☎) The Tivoli, with small but tidy rooms with TV and amenities has captured Beira's business market. There is also an on-site restaurant-bar.

Eating

Café Riviera (Praça do Município; snacks & light meals from US\$1.50; ☎ 7.30am–9pm) A good spot to sit with a

cup of coffee and *bolo de mandioca* (almond cake) and watch the passing scene.

Pappas (Rua dos Açores; meals from US\$2.50) A bar-eatery with steak and seafood grills on sizzle platters. It's just down from Hotel Tivoli.

Restaurante Kanimambo (☎ 23-323132; meals US\$4-7; ☎ lunch & dinner Sun-Fri) Behind Hotel Embaixador; has Beira's best Chinese food.

Pic-Nic (☎ 23-326518; Rua Costa Serrão; meals from about US\$4.50; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Once one of Beira's best restaurants and rather riding on its past reputation these days, though portions are large and service reasonable.

For waterside dining, try the restaurants at Biques (opposite) or **Clube Náutico** (☎ 23-311720; Avenida das FPLM; meals US\$6-11, plus per person entry US\$0.40; ☎ lunch & dinner).

Self-caterers should head to **Shoprite** (cnr Avenidas Armando Tivane & Samora Machel).

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are flights on **LAM** (☎ 23-324141/2; 85 Rua Major Serpa Pinto) weekly to/from Johannesburg, daily to/from Maputo, and several times weekly to/from Tete, Nampula, Quelimane,

Pemba, Vilankulo and Lichinga. The LAM office is opposite Hotel Embaixador. **Air Corridor** (☎ 23-302222/3; airport) stops at Beira on its daily run up and down the coast. **SAairlink** (☎ 23-301569/70; www.saairlink.co.za; airport) flies three times weekly between Beira and Johannesburg.

BUS & CHAPA

Beira's main transport stand is at Praça do Maquinino. There's no real order to things – ask locals where to go for buses to your destination.

To Maputo, **Panthera Azul** (☎ 23-325042, 82-394 4551; www.pantherazul.com; Complexo SNJ, 43 Avenida Mouzinho de Albuquerque) departs at 5am on Thursday from the Panthera Azul office at Prédio Grelha, at the southwestern end of Avenida Samora Machel (US\$44, 17 to 18 hours). Otherwise, there's usually an 'express' bus (US\$30, 18 hours) and/or one regular bus daily (US\$24), both departing by about 4.30am from the main transport stand; buy tickets the day before. Coming from Maputo, the express bus departs Junta by 5.30am, and the normal buses – which overnight at the Save River bridge – between about 6am and 7.30am.

To Vilankulo (US\$12, nine hours, 470km), there's a direct bus daily departing the main transport stand by about 5am.

To Chimoio (US\$5, three hours, 200km) and Machipanda (US\$6, four hours), minibuses go throughout the day from the main transport stand.

To Tete (US\$16, 10 hours, 600km), there are direct buses several times weekly, but it's best to go first to Chimoio and get transport there (requiring an overnight in Chimoio).

To Quelimane (US\$16.50, nine hours), buses depart from Mar Azul in Pioneiros bairro, 1km north of the centre.

Another option, for any northbound or southbound transport, is to go to Inchope, 130km west of Beira (US\$2, two to three hours via chapa), where the EN6 joins the EN1, and try your luck with passing buses there.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The airport is 7km northwest of town (US\$8 in a taxi).

CHAPA

Chapas to Makuti (US\$0.30) depart from the main transport stand.

CAR

Rental agencies include **Imperial** (☎ 23-302650/1; www.imperial.co.za) and **Avis** (☎ 23-301263, 82-502 5360; avis.beira@teledata.mz), both at the airport.

GORONGOSA NATIONAL PARK

About 170km northwest of Beira is **Gorongosa National Park** (Parque Nacional de Gorongosa; www.gorongosa.net; adult/child/vehicle US\$8/2/8; ☎ closed 1 Dec-1 Apr), once one of Southern Africa's premier wildlife parks, and now getting a second wind thanks to assistance from the US-based Carr Foundation. Admission is payable in meticaís only.

While animal numbers still pale in comparison with those of the park's heyday, wildlife is making a definite comeback, and the park is well worth a visit if you're in the area. It's likely that you will see impalas, waterbucks, oribis, kudus, warthogs, hippos, elephants and – with luck – even a lion or two, and the bird life (with over 300 species, including endemics and near endemics) is wonderful.

Vehicle rental and guides for wildlife drives and (soon) walking safaris can be arranged at **park headquarters** (☎ 23-535012, 23-535003; travel@gorongosa.net) in Chitengo, about 15km east of the entry gate. There's also a **camping ground** (camping per person US\$4) here, a good restaurant and several pleasant **rondavels** (s/d US\$26/38), with more camping and rondavels, plus luxury accommodation coming soon. Check the website for updates. Pink Papaya backpackers (opposite) in Chimoio also organises overnight trips to the park.

Getting There & Away

The park turn-off is at Inchope, about 130km west of Beira, from where it's 43km north along excellent tarmac to Nota village and then 17km east along an all-weather gravel road to the park gate. Within the park, 4WD is necessary.

MOUNT GORONGOSA

Just northwest of Gorongosa park is Mt Gorongosa (1864m), Mozambique's fourth-highest mountain. It's steeped in local lore, and known for its rich plant and bird life (it's the only place in Southern Africa for spotting the green-headed oriole) and its lovely waterfalls.

The Carr Foundation, which is financing the rehabilitation of Gorongosa National Park, is also supporting a community-based

ecotourism and reforestation project on the mountain, centred on day or multiday hiking trails and birding. A base camp for hikers and birders is being set up near the beautiful **Morumbodzi Falls**, which are on the mountain's western side at about 950m. From the camp, there are paths to the falls, birding walks and overnight climbs to the summit (about six hours one way). A booking office and information centre for the mountain and park is planned for Gorongosa town, where guides and porters can also be arranged. Meanwhile, to organise hikes contact park headquarters at travel@gorongosa.net. All fees (to be determined soon – watch the park website for details) will go to the local communities.

The climb is quite steep on the mountain's upper reaches, and good shoes and a reasonable level of fitness are essential.

To get to the Morumbodzi base camp area, follow the EN6 from Beira to the turnoff at Inchope. Continue north along the sealed road, passing the turn-off for Gorongosa park and continuing about 25km further to Gorongosa town. About 10km beyond Gorongosa town, turn off the main highway to the right, and continue 10km along an unpaved track to the base camp. Via public transport, take any northbound bus or chapa to Gorongosa town, where inexpensive transfers will be available from the Gorongosa information centre to the base camp and the park.

CHIMOIO

☎ 251

Low-key Chimoio is the jumping-off point for exploring the Chimanimani Mountains, well southwest on the Zimbabwe border.

There are ATMs at **Standard Bank** (cnr Avenida 25 de Setembro & Rua Patrice Lumumba) and at Shoprite, and internet at **Teledata** (cnr Avenida 25 de Setembro & Rua Mossurize; per min US\$0.04; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat).

About 5km northeast of town is **Cabeça do Velho**, a large rock resembling the face of an old man at rest. To get here, continue past Magarafa market on Rua do Bárue. It takes about 10 minutes to climb.

About 35km west of Chimoio is the signposted turn-off for **Chicamba Real Dam**, a popular bass anglers' getaway. To the southwest on the Zimbabwe border is **Mt Binga** (2437m), Mozambique's highest peak, which is best climbed from Zimbabwe (see p714).

Sleeping & Eating

Pink Papaya (☎ 82-555 7310, 82-237 2980; http://pinkpapaya.atspace.com; cnr Ruas Pigivide & 3 de Fevereiro; camping per person US\$4, dm US\$8, d US\$24) The best budget option, with camping, dorm beds and doubles, and a kitchen and braai area. The owner can also help arrange local excursions, including to Gorongosa National Park. With the bus stand to your right and train station to your left, walk straight and take the fourth right into Rua 3 de Fevereiro. Go one block to Rua Pigivide.

Residencial Flôr de Vouga (☎ 251-22469; cnr Avenida 25 de Setembro & Rua Dr Araújo de la Cerda; s/d with shared bathroom US\$8/19) A homey place above the old Banco Austral building, which has no-frills rooms.

Hotel-Residencial Castelo Branco (☎ 251-23934; Rua Sussundenga; r with/without breakfast US\$62/50; ☎ ☎) Catering to business travellers, this place has modern twin-bed rooms, and is just off Praça dos Heróis.

Elo 4 (Avenida 25 de Setembro; meals US\$3-8) Good pizzas and Italian dishes.

Shoprite (EN6) About 2km east of the town centre.

Getting There & Away

AIR

LAM (☎ 251-22531; Mafúia Comercial, Rua dos Operários) flies several times weekly to Vilankulo, Tete and Maputo. The airfield is 10km from town, and signposted about 5km west of Chimoio off the Manica road.

BUS & CHAPA

All transport leaves from near the train station. Buses depart daily at 4am to Tete (US\$9, six hours) and Vilankulo (US\$14, 10 hours). Chapas to Beira (US\$5, three hours) and Manica (US\$1.80, one hour) run throughout the day.

MANICA

☎ 251

Tiny Manica, 70km west of Chimoio, lies in what was once the heart of the kingdom of Manica and an important gold-trading area. About 5km from town and signposted (*pinturas rupestres*) are the **Chinamapere rock paintings**.

BIM Expresso (EN6) has an ATM.

About 20km north of Manica and straddling the Zimbabwe border is the scenic **Penha Longa** area, where there are good walking (stick to the beaten path).

SACRED FORESTS

The beautiful foothills of the Chimanimani Mountains are dotted with sacred areas. One of these is the *dzimbahwe* or chief's compound. Each chiefdom has its own spot, generally in a densely forested area, to which access is strictly limited. Another is the *gwasha*, a forest area used by chiefs, elders and spirit mediums for rainmaking and other ceremonies. Both the *dzimbahwe* and the *gwasha* are treated with great respect by local communities, and no development, wood cutting or harvesting are permitted. Hunting is under the control of the chiefs, as is the gathering of medicinal and other plants.

Sleeping & Eating

Pensão Flamingo (☎ 251-62385; EN6; r US\$18) Spiffy, no-frills rooms with fan, and a restaurant.

Manica Lodge (☎ 251-62452; manica.lodge@teledata.mz; small/large rondavels US\$20/30) About 400m off the main road at the western end of town, with a restaurant and pleasant stone rondavels (the large ones are much nicer than the small ones) scattered around tranquil, manicured grounds.

Quinta da Fronteira (camping US\$3, r US\$6) In Penha Longa, this old mansion has camping and a few basic rooms. Bring food and drink.

Getting There & Away

All transport departs from the market, diagonally opposite BIM Expresso. Chapas run frequently to/from Chimoio (US\$1.80, one hour) and to the Zimbabwe border (US\$0.60, 30 minutes), and several times daily between Manica and Penha Longa (US\$1, one hour). From the chapa terminus in Penha Longa, it's a 20-minute walk to the Mutombomwe area, and then about 3km further to Quinta da Fronteira.

TETE

☎ 252

Tete was an important trading outpost well before the arrival of the Portuguese and today continues to be a major transport junction. Apart from the suspension bridge over the Zambezi River, there are few attractions, and Tete's reputation as one of the hottest places in Mozambique discourages visitors. Yet the baobab-studded landscape cut by the wide

swathe of the Zambezi gives it a unique charm and an atmosphere quite unlike that pervading Mozambique's other provincial capitals.

Information

MBC Internet Café (Avenida Julius Nyerere; per min US\$0.04; ☎ 7.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) Diagonally opposite Unividnas.

Standard Bank (cnr Avenida Julius Nyerere & Avenida Eduardo Mondlane) ATM, and changes cash dollars; next to Hotel Zambeze.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Zambeze (☎ 252-23100/3; Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; s/d US\$10/14, with air-con from US\$16/22; ☎) Cheap and centrally located, but otherwise unappealing. It's next to Standard Bank.

Prédios Unividnas (☎ 252-23198/9, 252-22670; Avenida Julius Nyerere; s/d with shared bathroom US\$22/31, s/d from US\$42/52; ☎) Near Standard Bank, with clean, spacious rooms, most sharing bathrooms. There's no food.

Motel Tete (☎ 252-22345; EN103; r US\$42; ☎) On the river about 25 minutes' walk from town along the Changara road, this is Tete's best, with pleasant rooms and a good riverside restaurant (meals from US\$3); no alcohol.

Pastelaria Confiança (Avenida 25 de Junho; light meals from US\$0.80; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Sat; ☎) has light meals, and **Pino's Pizza** (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane, Hotel Zambeze; pizzas from US\$2.50; ☎ dinner) has good pizzas.

Supermercado Tete (Avenida 25 de Junho) is the best bet for self-caterers.

Getting There & Away

AIR

LAM (☎ 252-22056; Avenida 24 de Julho) flies several times weekly to/from Maputo, Beira, Lichinga, Nampula, Quelimane and Chimoio. The airport is 6km from town; take any chapa heading to Moatize. There are no taxis.

BUS & CHAPA

For Malawi, chapas run to Zóbuê (US\$2, two hours) and Dedza from Mercado da OUA on the western side of town.

For Harare (Zimbabwe), take a chapa to Changara (US\$2.80, 1½ hours) from Mercado 1 de Maio, and get transport from there. Alternatively, wait at the intersection of the bridge road and the road to Harare, and catch one of the daily Harare–Blantyre buses.

For Zambia, take a Moatize chapa over the bridge past the SOS compound to the petrol

station, where you'll find chapas to Matema, and then on to the border.

For Chimoio (US\$9, six hours), transport leaves from opposite Prédio Emose near Unividnas; the first departures are between 4.30am and 5am.

Chapas to Moatize (US\$0.35) depart throughout the day from Rua do Qua.

To Songo (for Cahora Bassa dam), several pick-ups daily depart from the old Correios (post office) building near the cathedral.

CAHORA BASSA DAM & SONGO

☎ 252

About 150km northwest of Tete at the head of a magnificent gorge in the mountains is Cahora Bassa, the fifth-largest dam in the world. It harnesses the waters of the Zambezi River, creating the massive Cahora Bassa Lake, a prime angling destination.

To arrange visits to the dam, contact **Hidro-elétrica de Cahora Bassa** (HCB; ☎ 252-82157, 252-82221/4; rp.sng@hcb.co.mz) in nearby Songo town and ask for Relações Públicas.

Sleeping & Eating

Centro Social do HCB (☎ 252-82215, 252-82454, 252-82508; r/ste US\$30/36; ☎) Comfortable twin-bed rooms overlooking green lawns in the centre of Songo. Its restaurant, Restaurante O Teles, is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner (meals US\$5 to US\$10).

Ugezi Tiger Lodge (☎ 82-599 8410; c61@mweb.co.za; camping per person US\$11, chalets per person US\$19-25, with air-con US\$23-30; ☎) A rustic fishing camp on a hillside overlooking Lake Cahora Bassa, 14km from Songo town and 6km beyond the dam. It has camping, no-frills chalets, a restaurant and boat charter.

Getting There & Away

Chapas run daily between Tete and Songo (US\$4, three to four hours), departing Tete from the old Correios (post office) building. From Songo, it's 7km down to the dam (walk or hitch). Ugezi Tiger Lodge does pick-ups from Tete.

ZUMBO

Remote Zumbo is the home of **Tchuma Tchato** (camping per person US\$3, bungalows per person US\$10), a community-based natural resources project with a small campsite on the riverbank opposite Zumbo and about 5km from the Zimbabwe border. There are also some basic

bungalows; bring food. For bookings, contact the **Direcção Provincial do Turismo** (☎ 252-24225; dpturismo@teledata.mz; Rua 3 de Fevereiro) in Tete.

SENA & MUTARARA

About 250km downstream from Tete along the Zambezi are the twin villages of Sena and Mutarara, connected by the Dona Ana railway bridge (now converted to take vehicles). There are basic *pensões* in both towns.

CAIA

This village is the main north-south crossing point over the Zambezi River. About 32km south of Caia along the main road in Catapu is the good **M'phingwe Camp** (www.dalman.com; cabins s/d with shared bathroom US\$18/24, cabins s/d US\$22/30), which has spotless double cabins, meals and good birding.

The new highway from Inchope (on the EN6) to Caia via the western edge of Gorongosa park is excellent tarmac. From Caia northwards, it's under rehabilitation. A bridge is being built over the Zambezi. For now, the river is crossed by two ferries (per vehicle with driver US\$4, per person US\$0.05, running from 7am to 5pm).

QUELIMANE

☎ 24

Quelimane is the capital of Zambézia province and heartland of the Chuabo people. It stands on the site of an old Muslim trading settlement built on the banks of the Bons Sinais (Qua Qua) River in the days when it was linked to the Zambezi River. At one time it was the main entry port to the interior. Few traces of Quelimane's long history remain, but the town's compact size and energetic atmosphere make it an agreeable stop.

Information

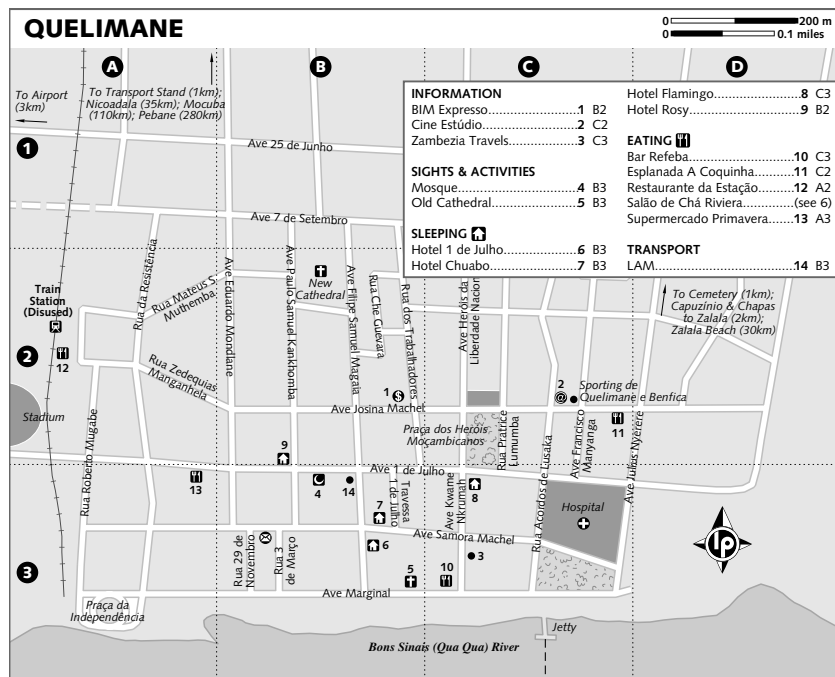
BIM Expresso (Avenida Josina Machel) Has an ATM.

Cine Estúdio (cnr Avenida Josina Machel & Rua Acordos de Lusaka, 1st fl; per min US\$0.04; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-7pm Sat) Internet access.

Zambezia Travels (☎ 24-216174; www.zambezia.ch; Avenida Kwame Nkrumah) The best contact for arranging visits to Gurúê, climbing Mt Namúli and other central Mozambique travels. It's diagonally opposite Hotel Chuabo.

Sights

The main sights are the abandoned Portuguese **cathedral** on the waterfront and the nearby **old mosque**. About 30km northeast of



town through the coconut plantations is the wide **Zalala beach**.

Sleeping

Hotel 1 de Julho (cnr Avenida Samora Machel & Avenida Felipe Samuel Magaia; tw with shared bathroom US\$16, with private bathroom & air-con US\$28; ☎) Near the old cathedral, with reasonable no-frills rooms. Breakfast costs extra.

Hotel Rosy (☎ 24-214969; cnr Avenidas 1 de Julho & Paulo Samuel Kankhomba; s/d US\$24/28; ☎) Near the old mosque, with good-value rooms with bathrooms, breakfast and air-con (downstairs) or fan (upstairs).

Complexo Kass-Kass (☎ 24-212302; 4-person bungalows US\$32) At Zalala beach, there's this place, with grubby bungalows and meals.

Hotel Flamingo (☎ 24-215602; sogetra@teledata.mz; cnr Avenida Kwame Nkrumah & Avenida 1 de Julho; s/d US\$50/60; ☎) New-ish rooms, and full breakfasts and a restaurant.

Hotel Chuabo (☎ 24-213181/2; fax 24-213812; Avenida Samora Machel; s/d US\$56/60; ☎) A ageing Quelimane institution, with spacious rooms, most with river views, and a usually empty rooftop restaurant.

Eating

Bar Refeça (Avenida Marginal; meals from \$2.50) Near the old cathedral overlooking the river, with grilled prawns, grilled chicken and drinks.

Salão de Chá Riviera (cnr Avenida Samora Machel & Avenida Felipe Samuel Magaia; light meals US\$3) Underneath Pensão 1 de Julho, with snacks and light meals.

Esplanada A Coquinha (cnr Avenidas Josina Machel & Julius Nyerere; meals from US\$4, Sun lunch buffet US\$6; ☎ lunch & dinner) The place to go for local Zambézia cuisine.

Restaurante da Estação (☎ 24-213730; Rua da Resistência; meals from US\$5) A pizza oven and good-value Italian meals, with porch seating.

Supermercado Primavera (Avenida 1 de Julho) For self-catering, try this supermarket, a block down from and opposite Hotel Rosy.

Getting There & Away

AIR

LAM (☎ 24-212801; Avenida 1 de Julho) flies four to five times weekly to/from Maputo, Beira, Nampula and Tete. **Air Corridor** (☎ 24-216333/93; Avenida 25 de Junho) stops in Quelimane on its run along the coast.

The airport is 3km northwest of town along Avenida 25 de Junho.

BUS & CHAPA

The transport stand is at the northern end of Avenida Eduardo Mondlane. Chapas run frequently to/from Nicoadala at the junction with the main road (US\$1.50, 45 minutes).

To Nampula, a Grupo Mecula bus departs daily at 4.30am (US\$14, 10 hours). Several vehicles also run daily to Mocuba (US\$4, two to three hours), for onward transport to Nampula via Alto Molócuê, or to Milange (Malawi border).

To Gurúê (US\$9.60, six to seven hours), there's a bus daily at 4.30am; buy your ticket the day before.

Buses heading to Beira depart daily at 5am (US\$16.50, nine hours).

Chapas to Zalala (US\$1) depart Quelimane from the Capuchin mission (*capuzínio*), about 1km from the cemetery on the Zalala road.

MOCUBA

☎ 24

Mocuba is the junction town for travel between Quelimane and Nampula or Malawi.

Pensão Cruzeiro (☎ 24-810184; Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; r US\$14) on the main street has basic rooms and meals (US\$2).

Transport to Quelimane (US\$4, two to three hours) leaves from the market. Transport to Nampula (US\$11, eight hours) leaves from the northern end of the main street. There are several vehicles daily between Mocuba and Milange (US\$6.50, four hours) departing from Mocuba's market, though you'll maximise your chances of a lift by walking west past the airstrip to the Milange road junction.

MILANGE

Milange is on the border with southeastern Malawi. BIM Expresso has an ATM, and **Pensão Lili** (r US\$12) has no-frills rooms and meals.

CLIMBING MT NAMÚLI

Rising up about 15km northeast of Gurúê are the mist-shrouded slopes of Mt Namúli (2419m), Mozambique's second-highest peak. The mountain is considered sacred by the local Makua people, so while climbing is permitted, you'll need to observe the local traditions. Before setting out, buy some *farinha de mapira* (sorghum flour), rice and sugar at the market in Gurúê (it shouldn't cost more than US\$1.50 for everything) for appeasing the spirits and the local *régulo* (chief).

The climb begins about 6km outside Gurúê near UP5, an old tea factory: head south out of Gurúê along the Quelimane road, go left after about 2km and continue several kilometres further to UP5.

Shortly before reaching UP5 you'll see a narrow but obvious track branching left. Follow this through unrehabilitated tea plantations and stands of bamboo and forest until a high valley about 800m below the summit. On the edge of this valley is Mugunha Sede, where you should seek out the chief, request permission to climb further and get a guide. The sorghum flour that you bought in Gurúê should be presented to the chief as a gift, who may save some to make traditional beer, and scatter the remainder on the ground to appease the ancestors.

About two-thirds of the way from the village is a spring where you can refill your water bottle, although it's considered a sacred spot and it may take some effort to persuade your guide to show you where it is. After the spring, the climb steepens. Once near the summit, the path evens out and then gradually ascends for another 1.5km to the mountain's highest point. After descending the mountain, present the rice that you bought at the Gurúê market to the chief as thanks.

It's possible to do the climb in a long day from Gurúê if you get an early start and drive as far as Mugunha Sede (about 40km from Gurúê by road), from where it's about three hours on foot to the summit. To do the entire climb on foot from Gurúê, allow three days, walking the first day as far as Mugunha Sede (seven to eight hours from Gurúê), where the *régulo* will show you a spot to camp. The second day, head up to the summit and back, sleeping again in Mugunha Sede, and returning the next day to Gurúê. With an early start, it's possible to combine the second and third stages into one long day. Camping on the summit isn't permitted; be prepared for rain and cold during the climb. Guides can also be arranged in Quelimane through Zambézia Travels (p273), or in Gurúê through Pensão Monte Verde and Residencial Likungo (see p276).

The road between Milange and Mocuba is fairly well travelled, and finding a lift usually isn't a problem. To Gurúê, there's sporadic public transport along a rehabilitated road to Molumbo, and from there to Lioma, from where you can get a chapa to Gurúê. Also see p298.

GURÚÊ

Gurúê sits amid the hills and tea plantations in one of the coolest, highest and rainiest parts of the country. There are some good walks in the surrounding area, including a stroll through the jacarandas on the northern edge of town.

BIM (Avenida da República) has an ATM, and **Telecomunicações de Moçambique** (per min US\$0.04) has internet access.

Residencial Likungo (☎ 82-442 0290; Avenida 25 de Setembro; d & tw from US\$16) and **Pensão Monte Verde** (☎ 24-910245; Avenida da República; s/d US\$20/30) have no-frills rooms, and the Monte Verde also has meals. Residencial Likungo can also be booked through Salão de Cha Riviera (p274) in Quelimane.

For self-catering, try **Aquil Comercial** (Avenida da República) near BIM.

Getting There & Away

A chapa departs at 4.30am daily to Quelimane (US\$9.60, six to seven hours) from near the market. Otherwise there are several vehicles daily to Mocuba (US\$5, 3½ to four hours), from where you can continue to Quelimane.

For Nampula, there's a daily vehicle to Alto Molócuê, with onward connections from there. Alternatively, catch a chapa to Mutuali and wait for the train to Nampula (or Cuamba). Ask chapa drivers on the route about the train schedule. Cuamba can also be reached via a decent road, though there's little traffic. If you leave Gurúê early enough (no later than 5am), you can take any Mocuba or Quelimane transport to Nampevo junction, get out there and wait for a passing bus on to Nampula.

To Milange, it's fastest to go via Mocuba.

ALTO MOLÓCUÊ

This agreeable town is a refuelling point between Mocuba and Nampula.

Pensão Santo António (d US\$16) on the main square has clean doubles and serves food (meals from US\$3). Several vehicles daily go to/from Nampula (US\$4, 3½ hours) and Mocuba (US\$4, four hours).

NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE

Beautiful Lake Niassa and the cool Lichinga Plateau to the west, the wild Niassa Reserve in the centre and palm-fringed beaches, fascinating island archipelagos and magical Ilha de Moçambique along the coast combine to make the north one of Mozambique's most alluring and adventurous destinations for visitors.

NAMPULA

☎ 26
Bustling Nampula is a convenient transport hub and the jumping-off point for visiting Ilha de Moçambique (p278). While there are few tourist attractions, the city's good facilities and its main plaza, rimmed by flowering trees and the imposing white cathedral, make it an amenable stop.

Information

As well as at the banks, there's also an ATM at Shoprite (p278).

BIM Expresso (cnr Avenidas da Independência & Francisco Manyanga) ATM

Centro Comercial de Nampula (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane) Has an ATM.

Farmácia Calêndula (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) One block up from the museum.

IT Services (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; per hr US\$2; ☎ 7am-9pm) Internet; next to Frango King.

Standard Bank (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane) Near the museum; has an ATM, and changes travellers cheques (minimum US\$35 commission plus purchase receipts).

Telecomunicações de Moçambique (Rua Monomotapa) Telephone calls; near the cathedral.

Teledata (Centro Comercial de Nampula, Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; per hr US\$1.60; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-1pm, 3-8pm Sat) Internet access.

Sights & Activities

The National Ethnography Museum (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; admission free, donations welcome; ☎ 2-4.30pm Tue-Thu & Sat, 2-6pm Fri, 10am-noon & 2-4pm Sun) has a collection on local culture (English and Portuguese explanations).

There are swimming pools at **Clube CFM** (Rua 3 de Fevereiro; admission US\$2) and **Complexo Bamboo** (admission US\$3); see opposite.

Sleeping BUDGET

Hotel Lúrio (☎ 26-218631; Avenida da Independência; s/d US\$20/32, ste s/d US\$48/60) A cavernous high-rise several blocks south of the train station, with threadbare rooms with fan and without hot water.

Hotel Brasília (☎ 26-217531; 26 Rua dos Continuadores; tw/d US\$26/30; ☎) Near Shoprite, and a 20-minute hike from the bus and train depots; has clean rooms and a restaurant.

Residencial A Marisqueira (☎ 26-213611; cnr Avenidas Paulo Samuel Kankhomba & Eduardo Mondlane; s/d/tw US\$36/41/53; ☎) A convenient, central location, decent no-frills rooms (ask for one of the newer ones) without hot water, and a restaurant.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Residencial Expresso (☎ 26-218808/9; Avenida da Independência; s/d from US\$53/67; ☎) Six large, spotless rooms with fridge and TV.

Complexo Bamboo (☎ 26-217838; www.teledata.mz/bamboo; Ribáuê Rd; s/d/tw US\$60/80/80; ☎) Good for families; has well-maintained rooms (the twins are nicer than the doubles) in ex-

pansive grounds and a restaurant. It's 5km west of town – follow Avenida do Trabalho west from the train station, then right onto the Ribáuê road for 1.5km.

Hotel Girassol (☎ 26-216000; www.girassolhoteis.com.mz; Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; s/d from US\$90/105; ☎) In the Centro Commercial de Nampula high-rise, this four-star place has Nampula's best rooms, some with views over the cathedral and town.

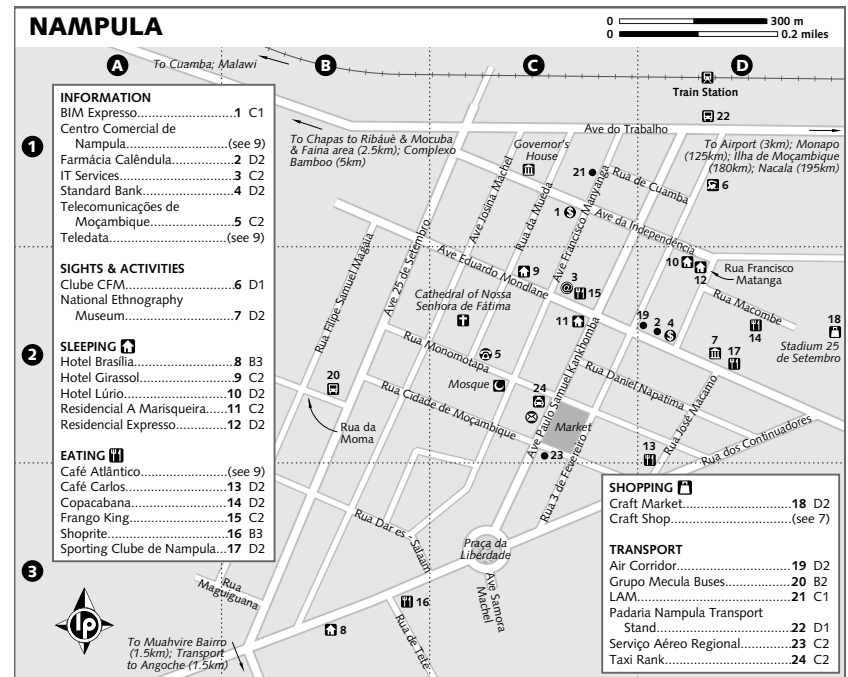
Eating

Café Atlântico (Centro Comercial de Nampula, Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; snacks & meals from US\$1; ☎ 6am-9pm) Pregos (thin steak sandwiches), burgers, pizzas and other light meals.

Frango King (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; half/whole chicken US\$3/5; ☎ 7.30am-4am) Grilled chicken to go.

Café Carlos (☎ 26-217960; Rua José Macamo; meals from US\$4; ☎ closed Sun) A small courtyard place just off Rua dos Continuadores; does seafood grills and has a pizza oven.

Copacabana (☎ 26-218121; Rua Macombe; pizzas & meals US\$4-8; ☎ closed Sun) Covered outdoor seating, fresh pasta, pizzas, and seafood and meat grills.



Sporting Clube de Nampula (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; meals US\$4-8; ☎ 8am-10pm) Next to the museum, with chicken and fish grills and *fejoada* (traditional Brazilian bean and sausage dish).

Self-caterers can try **Shoprite** (Rua dos Continuadores; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun).

Shopping

There's a Sunday morning **craft market** (☎ dawn-dusk) in the stadium field downhill from Copacabana (best from about 7am), and a craft shop between the museum with Makonde carvings and clay pots.

Getting There & Away

AIR

LAM (☎ 26-213322, 26-212801; Avenida Francisco Mananga; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri) flies to Maputo (daily), Beira, Lichinga, Quelimane, Tete and Pemba (all several times weekly).

Air Corridor (☎ 26-214444, 26-213333; aircorridor@teledata.mz; cnr Avenida Eduardo Mondlane & Rua 3 de Fevereiro) stops in Nampula on its daily flight up and down the coast.

Serviço Aéreo Regional (SAR) (☎ 26-212401; sargaw@teledata.mz; Rua Cidade de Moçambique), opposite the market, flies twice weekly between Nampula and Cuamba (US\$72 one way).

The airport is 4km northeast of town (US\$4 in a taxi).

BUS & CHAPA

Grupo Mecula buses go daily to Nacala (US\$4, two to three hours), Pemba (US\$7, seven hours), Quelimane (US\$14, 11 hours), Montepuez (US\$7, eight hours) and Mueda (US\$12, 13 hours). All depart at 5am except the Nacala bus (1pm) from the Grupo Mecula garage on Rua da Moma, off Avenida 25 de Setembro.

To Ilha de Moçambique (US\$3.60, three to four hours), chapas depart between 5am and 11am from the Padaria Nampula transport stand along Avenida do Trabalho east of the train station. Look for one that's going direct – many go only to Monapo, where you'll need to wait for another vehicle. The best connections are on one of the 'tanzanian' chapas, which depart Nampula between around 7am and 10am, depending on how early they arrive from Ilha. The Padaria Nampula transport stand is also the place to find chapas to Mossuril, Namapa, and other points north and east.

Transport to Angoche (US\$4.80, three hours) departs from about 5am from Muah-

vire *bairro*, along the extension of Avenida das FPLM.

Chapas to Ribáuè, Mocuba (US\$11, eight hours) and Cuamba leave from 'Faina', about 2.5km west of the train station along Avenida do Trabalho near the Ribáuè road junction.

TRAIN

A six-times weekly passenger train connects Nampula and Cuamba; see p283.

Getting Around

The main **taxi rank** (Moti Taxi; ☎ 82-352 0970; Avenida Paulo Samuel Kankhomba) is near the market. For car rentals, try **Imperial** (☎ 26-216312, 82-300 5170; imperial.npl@teledata.mz; airport).

ANGOCHÉ

☎ 26

Angoche, an old Muslim trading centre dating from at least the 15th century, was one of the earliest settlements in Mozambique, an important gold- and ivory-trading post and, in the 18th century, one of the major centres along the northern coast. Today, little remains, but there's the good Praia Nova beach about 7km north of town, and the Primeiras and Segundas Islands (soon to be Mozambique's newest protected area) offshore.

For sleeping, try the basic **Pensão Mafamede** (r US\$4) or the much nicer **Inas Casa de Hospedes** (☎ 26-720232; r US\$52; ☎). **Restaurante O Pescador** (Avenida Liberdade; meals from US\$2) has meals.

Chapas go daily to/from Nampula (US\$4.80, three hours). Dhows to the islands can be arranged at the fish market.

ILHA DE MOÇAMBIQUE

☎ 26

Ilha de Moçambique (Mozambique Island), about 3km off the mainland, is a Unesco World Heritage Site and one of Mozambique's most fascinating destinations. In the staid Stone Town, quiet, cobbled streets lead onto graceful *praças* rimmed by once-grand churches and stately colonial buildings. In the adjoining Makuti Town, narrow alleyways echo with the sounds of playing children and squawking chickens, while fishermen sit on the sand repairing their nets.

History

As early as the 15th century Ilha de Moçambique was an important boat-building centre, and its history as a trading settlement –

with ties to Madagascar, Persia, Arabia and elsewhere – dates back well before that. Vasco da Gama landed here in 1498, and in 1507 a Portuguese settlement was established on the island. Unlike Sofala to the south, where the Portuguese established a settlement at about the same time, Ilha de Moçambique prospered as both a trading station and a naval base. In the late 16th century, the sprawling fort of São Sebastião was constructed. The island soon became the capital of Portuguese East Africa – a status that it held until the end of the 19th century when Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) moved into the spotlight.

Over the years various small waves of immigration from locations as diverse as

East Africa, Goa, Macau and elsewhere have all contributed to the ethnic mix on the island. Today this heterogeneity continues to be one of Ilha de Moçambique's most marked characteristics, although Muslim influence, together with local Makua culture, now dominates.

Information

BIM (Avenida Amílcar Cabral) Has an ATM, and changes cash US dollars, euro and rand.

Telecomunicações de Moçambique (per min US\$0.04; ☎ 7.30am-8pm) Near the tourist information office; internet access and international calls.

Tourist information office (☎ 26-610081; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm, in theory) Next to the museum, with island info, guides and accommodation listings.



Sights

PALACE & CHAPEL OF SÃO PAULO

This imposing **edifice** (Palácio de São Paulo; ☎ 26-610081; adult/child US\$4/1; ☹ 9am-4pm) – the former governor's residence and now a museum – dates from 1610 and is the island's historical showpiece. The renovated interior gives a remarkable glimpse into what upper-class life must have been like during the island's 18th-century heyday. In addition to a collection of knick-knacks from Portugal, Arabia, India and China, there are pieces of original furniture, including an important collection of heavily ornamented Indo-Portuguese pieces. In the chapel, don't miss the altar and the pulpit, which was made in the 17th century by Chinese artists in Goa. On the ground floor is the small **Maritime Museum** (Museu da Marinha), and behind the palace are the **Church of the Misericórdia** and the **Museum of Sacred Art** (Museu de Arte Sacra; closed at the time of writing), with religious ornaments, paintings and carvings. The ticket price includes entry to all three museums.

FORT OF SÃO SEBASTIÃO

Dominating the island's northern end, this is the oldest complete **fort** (admission free, guide US\$2; ☹ 8am-5pm) still standing in sub-Saharan Africa. Immediately beyond the fort, on the island's tip, is the **Chapel of Nossa Senhora de Baluarte**, built in 1522 and considered to be the oldest European building in the southern hemisphere.

OTHER SIGHTS

At the island's southern end is the **Church of Santo António**, while in the Stone Town are many interesting buildings, including the restored **bank** (Avenida Amílcar Cabral) and the ornate **colonial administration offices**. Nearby is a **Hindu temple**, and to the south is a **cemetery** with Christian, Muslim and Hindu graves.

Activities

Dugong Dive Centre (☎ 26-610027, 82-454 7810; caku@teledata.mz; Centro Náutico; ☹ 8am-5pm Tue-Sun), opposite Hotel Omuhipiti, arranges diving around nearby Goa and Sena Islands, plus overnight dhow safaris (September to November).

The island has several small beaches, though if it's beach you're after, it's better to head across Mossuril Bay to Chocas, or to the beaches near Nacala.

MUSIRO

On Ilha de Moçambique and along the northern coast, you'll often see women with their faces painted white. The paste is known as *musiro*, and is used as a facial mask to beautify the skin, and sometimes as a medicinal treatment (though the medicinal paste usually has a yellow tinge).

Sleeping BUDGET

Casuarina Camping (lenavie@hotmail.com; camping per person US\$3, r per person US\$20) On the mainland opposite Ilha de Moçambique, and a two-minute walk from the bridge. On offer: camping on a small beach, simple bungalow-style rooms, ablution blocks with bucket-style showers, and meals. Entry is US\$4 for vehicles and day visitors pay US\$0.40.

Otherwise, the cheapest options are in local homes, most with small, no-frills rooms in the family quarters. Some recommendations:

Casa de Dona Kero (☎ 26-610034; Contracosta; r US\$10, d or tr US\$14) Small rooms with fans but no nets, and continental breakfast. It's opposite Complexo Índico.

Residencial Amy (Avenida dos Heróis; d/tr US\$16/18) Near the park, with several basic, dark rooms, most without exterior windows. Breakfast costs US\$2.

Casa de Yasmin (☎ 26-610073; Rua dos Combatentes; r US\$20) At the island's northern end, with a handful of small rooms – some with bathroom – in an annex next to the family house. Air-con rooms are planned. There's no food.

MIDRANGE

Patio dos Quintalinhos (Casa de Gabriele; ☎ 26-610090; www.patiodosquintalinhos.com; Rua do Celeiro; s/d with shared bathroom US\$20/25, d/q/ste US\$30/35/35; ☹) Opposite the unmissable green mosque, with creatively designed rooms around a small courtyard, including a suite with a star view skylight and private rooftop balcony. Breakfast is included, and staff can help with bicycle and vehicle rental, and excursions.

Mooxeleliya (☎ 26-610076; iannika@teledata.mz; d/f US\$22/48) Under the same management as Casa Branca, and equally good value, with large, high-ceilinged rooms upstairs and two darker family-style rooms downstairs, all with bathroom and breakfast. It's just down from the Church of the Misericórdia.

Casa Branca (☎ 26-610076; flora204@hotmail.com; Rua dos Combatentes; r US\$24) On the island's eastern

side overlooking the sea near the Camões statue, with three simple, bright and spotless rooms – one with bathroom – and a kitchen. Rates include breakfast.

O Escondidinho (☎ 26-610078; ilhatur@itservices.co.mz; Avenida dos Heróis; s/d from US\$36/52; ☹) An atmospheric place with high-ceilinged rooms, some with bathroom, and all with nets and ceiling fans, plus a garden courtyard and the island's best restaurant (below). It's near the public gardens.

Hotel Omuhipiti (☎ 26-610101; h.omuhipiti@teledata.mz; s/d from US\$60/72; ☹) At the island's northern tip, this three-star establishment has quiet, modern rooms with sea views. There is also a restaurant.

Eating

O Paladar (meals from US\$3; ☹ lunch & dinner) At the eastern corner of the old market, unmarked, and the place to go for local cuisine. Stop by in the morning and place your order with Dona Maria for lunch or dinner.

Relíquias (☎ 26-610092; Avenida da República; meals US\$4-10; ☹ 10am-10pm) Another good spot, with seafood and meat dishes, plus prawn curry, *matapa* (cooked cassava leaves with peanut sauce) and coconut rice. It's near the museum.

O Escondidinho (☎ 26-610078; meals US\$6-8) The restaurant at this hotel (above) has some of Ilha's best dining, featuring seafood with French overtones.

Café-Bar Âncora (☎ 26-610006; brunch US\$9; ☹ 8am-11pm) Newly reopened, Café Âncora, diagonally opposite the Church of the Misericórdia, has delicious brunches (10am to 2pm Sunday), with fresh yoghurt and juice, muesli, waffles and more, plus a menu featuring sandwiches, seafood and homemade ice cream.

For self-caterers, there's a reasonably well-stocked shop in an old shipping container next to the market.

Getting There & Away

Ilha de Moçambique is joined by a 3.5km bridge to the mainland. Most chapas stop about 1km before the bridge in Lumbo, where you'll need to get into a smaller pick-up to cross over Mossuril Bay (due to vehicle weight restrictions on the bridge).

Leaving Ilha, all transport departs from the bridge. The only direct cars to Nampula (US\$3.60, three hours) are the *tanzaniano*

minibuses, departing daily between 3am and 5am. Go the day before to the minibuses stop in Lumbo and arrange with the driver to be picked up at your hotel, or ask your hotel to get a message to the driver. After about 6am, the only option is open pick-up trucks to Monapo (US\$1.20, one hour), where you can get transport on to Nampula (US\$2.20, two to three hours) or Nacala (US\$2, one hour). Once in Nampula, there are daily buses north to Pemba and south to Quelimane, though both leave early so you'll need to overnight in Nampula. To head direct to Pemba, take the 4am *tanzaniano* as far as Namialo, where – with luck – you can connect with the Mecula bus from Nampula, which passes Namialo about 6am.

Chapas to Lumbo cost US\$0.20. Wide vehicles won't pass over the bridge, and maximum weight is 1.5 tonnes. There's a US\$0.40 per vehicle toll payable on arrival on the island.

CHOCAS

☎ 26

Diagonally opposite Ilha de Moçambique across Mossuril Bay is the old Portuguese holiday town of Chocas. Nearby are some attractive nearby beaches; **Cabaceira Grande**, with a late 16th-century church and the ruins of the mid-19th-century governor-general's palace; and **Cabaceira Pequena**, a few kilometres southeast, with an old Swahili-style mosque and the ruins of a cistern used as a watering spot by Portuguese sailors.

Sleeping & Eating

Verandas (camping per person US\$2) Camping under simple thatched shelters on the beach at Cabaceira Pequena, several kilometres past Carushka. Bring along everything with you, although more facilities are planned.

Carushka (☎ 82-516 0173; ophavela@teledata.mz; 4-/8-person bungalows US\$32/64) Rustic, spotless bungalows set between the mangroves and one of the best stretches of beach. A restaurant is planned; for now bring food and drink, and staff will prepare it. It's about 2km south of Chocas town, en route to Cabaceira Pequena. Get here by road (4WD) or on foot from Chocas town, or hire a boat from Ilha de Moçambique.

Complexo Turístico Namarralo (☎ 26-660049; 2-/4-person bungalows US\$40/80; ☹) Straightforward stone bungalows located in a large, beachside

compound at the edge of Chocas town. Breakfast is included, and there's a restaurant.

Getting There & Away

Chapas daily go between Chocas and Nampula, with the best being the *tanzanian* chapa departing Nampula between 10am and noon, and departing Chocas about 4am (US\$4). Otherwise, take any transport between Monapo and Ilha de Moçambique to the signposted Mossuril junction 25km southeast of Monapo. Sporadic chapas go from here to Mossuril (20km), and on to Chocas (12km further).

From Chocas, it's a 30-minute walk at low tide to Cabaceira Pequena, and from one hour to 1½ hours to Cabaceira Grande. Dhows depart every morning for Cabaceira Pequena from the fish market near the green mosque on Ilha de Moçambique (US\$0.20). To return the same day, you'll need to charter a boat (about US\$20 for a motorised dhow). Dugong Dive Centre (p280) organises Chocas excursions, as do all of Ilha's midrange hotels and the tourist office.

NACALA

26 Nacala is northern Mozambique's busiest port, and a gateway to diving and some attractive beaches, including **Fernão Veloso**, 10km from town.

The main street runs from Nacala-Porto (the port) to Nacala-Alta (the higher town). There are ATMs at **Banco Austral** (cnr Rua Principal & Rua 8) in the town centre and at the BP petrol station in Nacala-Alta. **Telecomunicações de Moçambique** (per min US\$0.04; ☎ 7.30am–10pm), diagonally opposite Hotel Maiaia, has internet access.

Sleeping & Eating

Bay Diving (☎ 26-520017; www.fimdomundosafaris.com; Fernão Veloso; camping per person US\$6, dm US\$8, d US\$21.50, 2- to 4-person chalets US\$31–41; 📞) This popular divers' base on an escarpment overlooking the beach at Fernão Veloso is where almost everybody heads. It has rustic reed-and-thatch A-frame chalets, dorm beds, camping, a good restaurant, diving instruction and dhow safaris. Breakfast is US\$6 per person. Follow directions to Fernão Veloso (see Getting There & Away, right), and then follow the Bay Diving signs. Pick-ups can be arranged from Nacala town, or pay any chapa

heading to Fernão Veloso a bit extra to take you to Bay Diving.

Hotel Maiaia (☎ 26-526842; inturhoteis@teledata.mz; Rua Principal; s/d from US\$60/70; 📞) A centrally located three-star place catering to business travellers; has good rooms and a restaurant.

Getting There & Away

Grupo Mecula buses to Nampula (US\$4, 2½ hours) and Pemba (US\$7, seven hours) depart Nacala daily at 5am from the Mecula garage in the town centre, uphill from the large roundabout near Mozstar.

There are also chapas each morning to Nampula and Monapo (US\$1.20, one hour), departing from TDM, and from next to the BP petrol station in Nacala-Alta. From Monapo, there's onward transport to Ilha de Moçambique and Namialo (the junction town for Pemba).

To Fernão Veloso: take the turn-off for the airport and military base at the Nacala town entrance. After about 9km watch for the signposted Bay Diving turn-off opposite the base, from where it's another 1.5km. Chapas to Fernão Veloso (US\$0.20) depart from the Nacala-Alta market near the Catholic church, or you can catch them at the airport turn-off.

CUAMBA

271

This lively rail and road junction, with its dusty streets, flowering trees and large university student population, is the economic centre of Niassa province and a convenient stopping point if you're travelling to/from Malawi. **BIM Expresso** (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane) near the post office has an ATM, and there's internet access at **Telecomunicações de Moçambique** (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; per min US\$0.04).

For budget accommodation, try **Namacha** (s/d US\$12/18), off Avenida Eduardo Mondlane and just down from Hotel Vision 2000. **Hotel Vision 2000** (☎ 271-62632; h-vision2000@teledata.mz; cnr Avenidas Eduardo Mondlane & 25 de Junho; r US\$50–70; 📞), at the main intersection, is the best midrange choice.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are twice weekly flights to/from Nampula on **Serviço Aéreo Regional** (sargaw@teledata.mz) for US\$72 one way. Vision 2000 is the booking agent.

BUS & CHAPA

Most transport leaves from Maçaniquera market, at the southern edge of town, and chapas also come to meet arriving trains. To Nampula, there's at least one vehicle daily, though most people take the train.

To Gurúê, the best way is via train to Mutuali, from where you can find vehicles for the remainder of the journey. This generally works best going from Cuamba to Gurúê, as waits can be long in the other direction.

To Lichinga (US\$12, six to eight hours), there are several cars daily.

To Malawi, there are daily vehicles from Cuamba both to Entre Lagos (US\$3.50, four hours) and to Mandimba (US\$6, 3½ hours). Once at Entre Lagos, you'll need to walk across the border, where there's a weekly train on the Malawi side to Liwonde. For more on these routes, see p298.

TRAIN

The Cuamba–Nampula train (1st/2nd/economy class US\$20/10/4, 10 to 11 hours, sometimes much longer) departs in each direction at 5am on alternate days. Currently departures from Cuamba are on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday; there are no trains in either direction on Monday. First class has been temporarily discontinued, and 2nd class sometimes doesn't run. If you're travelling on a day when there's 3rd class only, try heading to the more comfortable dining car and ingratiating yourself with staff – though we've heard from some travellers that they had to buy something every hour or so for the privilege of sitting there.

To transport your vehicle on the train (about US\$90), you'll need to load it the night before and arrange a guard. During the journey you can ride with the car.

MANDIMBA

The best place to stay in this border town with Malawi is **Pensão Massinga** (r US\$8–32), which has clean rooms with fan, and meals.

Vehicles go daily to Lichinga and Cuamba. For border information, see p298.

LICHINGA

271

'Fim do mundo' ('the end of the world') is how many Mozambicans describe Niassa – the least populated of Mozambique's provinces – and as far as the rest of the country is concerned, it might as well be. Yet, if you're after

adventure and time in the bush, it's an ideal destination, with scenic, rugged terrain and the beautiful Lake Niassa coastline.

Niassa's capital is Lichinga, a low-key town at about 1300m altitude with jacarandas, pine groves and an invigorating climate.

Hotel Girassol (below) and **Acord** (Avenida Filipe Magaia; ☎ 9am–4pm Mon–Fri) have internet access, and **Banco Austral** (Avenida Samora Machel) and **BIM** (cnr Avenida Samora Machel & Rua Filipe Samuel Magaia) have ATMs.

Sleeping & Eating

Ponto Final (☎ 271-20912; Rua Filipe Samuel Magaia; r US\$22, with fridge & TV US\$27) At the northeastern edge of town, with reasonable, low-ceilinged rooms and a bar.

Hotel Chiwindi (☎ 271-20345; Avenida Julius Nyerere; r with shared/private bathroom US\$25/30) No-frills and somewhat overpriced rooms near the bus stand and market.

Pousada de Lichinga (☎ 271-20176/7; Rua Filipe Samuel Magaia; s/d with shared bathroom US\$30/34, s/d US\$36/40) A convenient central location, straightforward rooms and a restaurant. Prices include continental breakfast.

Hotel Girassol Lichinga (☎ 271-21280; www.girassolhoteis.com.mz; Rua Filipe Samuel Magaia; s/d US\$85/92; 📞 ☎) Hovering between three and four stars, this is Lichinga's most upmarket option, with satellite TV and a restaurant.

O Chambo (☎ 271-21354; meals from US\$2.50) In the Feira Exposição Niassa (FEN) compound next to the market; has great soups and local meals.

Well-stocked supermarkets in Lichinga include **Translândia** (Avenida Julius Nyerere), en route to the airport, and **Comércio Geral** (☎ 271-20819; Avenida Samora Machel), which also has rooms (per person US\$20) to let.

Getting There & Away

AIR

LAM (☎ 271-20434, 271-20847; Rua da LAM), just off the airport road, operates four flights weekly to/from Maputo, going via Tete, Nampula and/or Beira.

BUS & TRUCK

All forms of transport depart from beside the market, with vehicles to most destinations leaving by around 6am. There are daily chapas to Cuamba (US\$12, 6½ hours) via Mandimba, to Metangula (US\$5, 2½ hours) and to Meponda (US\$2.50, 1½ hours).

LAKE NIASSA

The Mozambican side of beautiful Lake Niassa (Lake Malawi) is much less developed than the Malawian side, and sees a small but steady stream of adventure travellers. The main area for exploring is between Metangula and Cóbue.

Metangula

Bustling Metangula is the largest Mozambican town along the lakeshore, with little for visitors. However, about 8km north is **Chuwanga**, an attractive beach and a popular getaway.

Chuwanga Beach Hotel (Complexo Cetuka; Catawala's; Chuwanga Beach; camping per person US\$5, s/d bungalows US\$15/20) is where everyone stays. It has camping, simple bungalows on the sand, meals and a grill.

Daily chapas connect Metangula and Lichinga (US\$5, 2½ hours), most departing early. Departures in Metangula are from the fork in the road just up from the market. There are occasional chapas between Metangula and Chuwanga, and hitching is easy at weekends.

For information on the *Ilala* ferry between Metangula and Cóbue, see p298. Local boats leave Metangula from the small dhow port below the Catholic church.

Cóbue

Tiny Cóbue is the gateway into Mozambique if you're travelling from Malawi via Likoma Island, 10km offshore.

SLEEPING & EATING

Mchenga Wede (per person US\$5) About 5km south of Nkwichi Lodge near Mbueca village. It has camping, basic bungalows and pricey meals (around US\$7 to US\$10), plus bush walks and canoe trips. It's run by some enterprising staff from Nkwichi Lodge, and bookings can be made through Nkwichi or you can just show up.

Nkwichi Lodge (www.mandawilderness.org; s/d with full board US\$240/380) This wonderful place about 15km south of Cóbue on the lakeshore is part of the Manda Wilderness Area – a privately initiated conservation area that also promotes community development and responsible tourism. It offers the chance to explore an area of Southern Africa that's about as remote as it gets while enjoying all the comforts. Accommodation is in hand-crafted chalets that each look out onto their own little white-sand cove,

and the lake is crystal clear and safe for swimming. The surrounding bush is full of birds, and with luck you may even see an occasional elephant or antelope. Staff will come to meet you in Cóbue, and boat transfers on the lodge's *Miss Nkwichi* can be arranged from Cóbue, Likoma Island, Mbueca village or Metangula. Advance bookings are essential.

Hotel Inyati Yoyela (White Buffalo; r US\$12) and **Mira Lago** (r about US\$10; (P)), just behind, have good budget lodging.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There's an airstrip in Cóbue for charter flights.

The weekly *Ilala* ferry connects Cóbue with Metangula and Likoma Island; see p298. Otherwise, a few slow boats sail weekly between Cóbue and Metangula; allow two days for the journey.

The road between Cóbue and Metangula (75km) is rough (4WD) but improving, and there's secure parking at Mira Lago in Cóbue and at Mchenga Wede in Mbueca. Walking takes about two days, going along the river via the villages of Ngoo and Chia. Guides and porters can be arranged at Nkwichi Lodge or Mchenga Wede. Allow four to five hours on foot between Cóbue and Mchenga Wede.

NIASSA RESERVE

About 160km northeast of Lichinga on the Tanzanian border is the 42,000-sq-km **Niassa Reserve** (Reserva do Niassa; www.niassa.com; entry per person/vehicle for 3 days US\$5/10), a vast tract of wilderness with the largest wildlife populations in Mozambique. It's particularly notable for its elephants and buffaloes; there are also populations of duikers, zebras, elands, leopards and more. Vehicle safaris are possible using the limited network of bush tracks, and walking safaris can be arranged at reserve headquarters.

At **reserve headquarters** (rdn01@bushmail.net) there are twin-bedded **chalets** (per chalet US\$30) with bathroom, and three double **tents** (per tent US\$20) sharing hot and cold-water ablutions, plus a communal kitchen and dining area. **Bush camping** (per person US\$5) is also permitted; bring all supplies.

Lugenda Bush Camp (www.raniresorts.com), on the Lugenda River near the eastern edge of the park, is set to open soon, primarily offering fly-in safaris based at the Pemba Beach Hotel (p287).

Air charter is the main way to reach the reserve. During the dry season, road access (4WD) is possible with time and tenacity from Lichinga, Cuamba and Pemba.

MONTEPUENZ

(☎ 272

Montepuez, a busy district capital, is home to **Aurora** (☎ 84-781 3820; www.auroramozambique.com; dm/s/d/tr with full board & cultural activities US\$50/75/120/165), which offers the chance to take botanical walks, watch *mapiko* dancing and otherwise immerse yourself in local life while staying in a refurbished colonial-era house with comfortable rooms and good meals.

Several chapas daily go between Pemba and Montepuez (US\$4, three hours). For Aurora, ask to be dropped at the turnoff about 2km east of town, from where it's about 600m further on foot.

PEMBA

(☎ 272

Pemba has a beautiful setting on a peninsula jutting into the enormous, stunning Pemba Bay. It was established in 1904 as administrative headquarters for the Niassa Company. Today, it's the capital of Cabo Delgado province, the main town in Mozambique's far north, and gateway to the Quirimbas Archipelago. The town is a relaxing, enjoyable stop in its own right, with a long beach and a laid-back pace.

Orientation

At the peninsula's southwestern tip is the low-lying *baixa* area around the port and old town. East of here and up the hill is the town centre, with a few hotels and restaurants. About 5km further east is Wimbi (Wimbe) Beach, the main hub of tourist activity and the favoured destination of most visitors.

Information

Complexo Náutilus (p287) has an ATM.

BIM Expresso (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane) ATM.

Kaskazini (☎ 272-20371, 82-309 6990; www.kaskazini.com; Pemba Beach Hotel, Avenida Marginal, Wimbi Beach; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat) A good first stop, with lots of info on Pemba and the surrounding area, plus flight and accommodation bookings.

PrestaServe/Skylink (Avenida 25 de Setembro; per hr US\$3; ☎) Internet.

Standard Bank (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane) ATM; also changes travellers cheques (minimum US\$35 commission per transaction, original purchase receipts required).

Super Wimbi (Avenida Marginal, Wimbi Beach; per hr US\$5) Internet.

Telecomunicações de Moçambique (cnr Avenidas Eduardo Mondlane & 25 de Setembro; per hr US\$4, ☎ 7am-10pm) Internet and telephone calls.

Activities

CI Divers (☎ 272-20102; www.cidivers.com; Complexo Náutilus, Avenida Marginal, Wimbi Beach) has PADI instruction and equipment rental, plus windsurfing and other water sports equipment rental and boat charters.

Kaskazini (left) arranges day trips around Pemba Bay (from about US\$40 per person per half day) and overnight dhow safaris to the Quirimbas islands (from about US\$150 per boat).

Sleeping

BUDGET

Nacole Jardim (☎ 82-661 1530; info@kaskazini.com; camping per person US\$5, chalet per person US\$15) Tranquil, and a good camping ground for families. There's also a self-catering chalet and a beachside bar and braai area, and botanical walking tours can be arranged. It's about 10 minutes from town (US\$6 in a taxi), behind the airport on the bay, and about 5km off the main road along an unpaved track. Bookings can also be made through Pemba Dive, on Wimbi Beach.

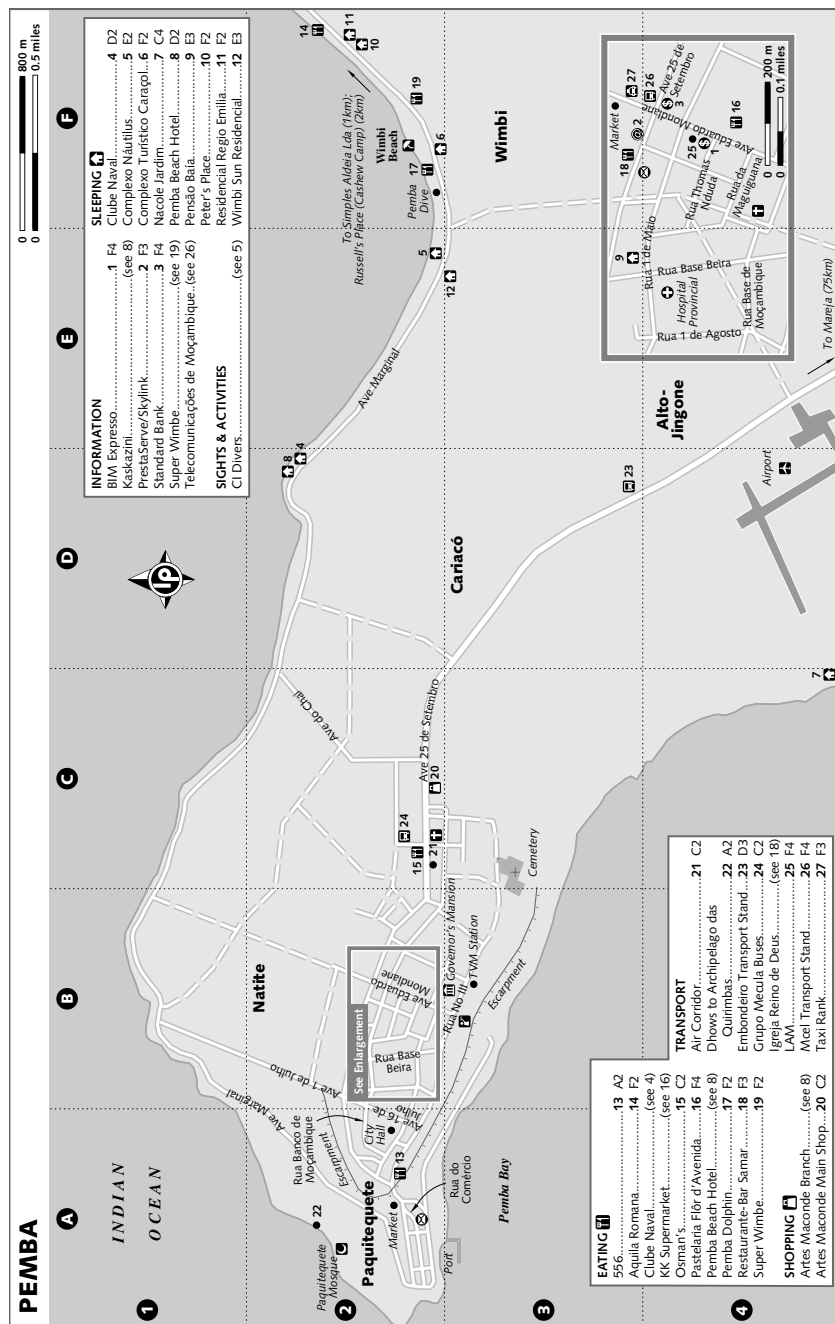
Russell's Place (Cashew Camp; ☎ 82-686 2730; www.pembamagic.com; Wimbi Beach; camping per person US\$6, dm US\$4, 2-/3-person chalets US\$35) Around 3.5km beyond Complexo Náutilus along the beach-road extension, this enclosed camping ground also has dorm beds, a few A-frame chalets, a bar and pizzas, and is a good place for lining up lifts or getting the scoop on local road conditions.

Pensão Baía (cnr Rua 1 de Maio & Rua Base Beira; d with shared bathroom & fan US\$16, with private bathroom & air-con US\$20; ☎) Spartan budget rooms in the town centre.

MIDRANGE

Complexo Turístico Caraçol (☎ 272-20147; sulemane@teledata.mz; Avenida Marginal; s/d US\$40/50, 1-/2-room apt US\$75/85; ☎) On the inland side of the beach road just beyond Complexo Náutilus, with straightforward rooms and small apartments, some with kitchenettes.

Peter's Place (☎ 272-20102; cidivers@teledata.mz; Avenida Marginal; d US\$45) Along the extension of the Wimbi beach road with one small, airy



room in shaded grounds and more rooms planned. There's no food.

Wimbi Sun Residencial (☎ 82-318 1300; Avenida Marginal; r US\$45-60; ☎) Clean, modern rooms (ask for a 'suite') diagonally opposite Complexo Náutilus. Breakfast costs US\$6.

Residencial Regio Emilia (☎ 272-21297; c.foma@teledata.mz; Avenida Marginal; r from US\$50; ☎) Next door to Peter's Place, and good value, with self-catering chalets in green, quiet grounds. Continental/full breakfast costs US\$5/10.

Complexo Náutilus (☎ 272-21520; nautiluscas@teledata.mz; Avenida Marginal; 2-/4-person bungalows from US\$120/140; ☎) A good beachside setting, though marred by indifferent management. Accommodation is in closely spaced bungalows with TV and mini-fridge (ask for one of the newer ones), and there's a restaurant.

TOP END

Pemba Beach Hotel (☎ 272-21770; www.pemba-beachresort.com; Avenida Marginal; s/d from US\$160/220; ☎) This five-star establishment is Pemba's best, with expansive grounds overlooking the water, a good restaurant (right) and a luxury yacht for charters around the Quirimbas Archipelago. Package deals from Johannesburg are available, also including sister lodges in the Quirimbas and Bazaruto Archipelagos.

Clube Naval (Avenida Marginal, Wimbi Beach; 4-6-person apt US\$312) Next door to Pemba Beach Hotel and under the same management are upmarket self-catering apartments accommodating up to four adults and two children.

Eating

TOWN CENTRE

Restaurante-Bar Samar (☎ 272-20415; Avenida 25 de Setembro; light meals US\$1-3, meals US\$3-8; ☎ 9am-10pm Sun-Fri) In the parking lot of the Igreja Reino de Deus, with good-value and tasty Portuguese cuisine served on a shaded porch.

Pastelaria Flôr d'Avenida (☎ 272-20514; Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; meals from US\$3) A wide selection of standard dishes and pastries served at tables on a small streetside plaza.

556 (☎ 272-21487; Rua No 1; meals US\$6-14; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Sat) On the hill overlooking the port and bay, with South African meats, plus chicken grills, pizzas and pub food.

For self-catering, try **Osman's** (Avenida 25 de Setembro), about 1.5km east of the main junction, or **KK Supermarket** (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane), next to Pastelaria Flôr d'Avenida.

WIMBI BEACH

Super Wimbe (Avenida Marginal; meals US\$2-3; ☎ from 7am) Burgers and omelettes, just past Complexo Caracol.

Aquila Romana (☎ 272-21972; Avenida Marginal, Wimbi Beach; pizzas & meals US\$4-10; ☎ 6.30-10pm Tue-Fri, 9am-10pm Sat & Sun) Pizza, homemade pasta and delicious Italian food served in a tranquil, beachside setting.

Clube Naval (☎ 272-21770; Avenida Marginal, Wimbi Beach; meals US\$5-11; ☎ 10am-midnight) Next door to Pemba Beach Hotel, this beachside place has salads, seafood, chicken, ribs, pizzas and desserts.

Pemba Dolphin (Avenida Marginal; seafood grills US\$5-15) Directly on the beach, with a beach bar ambience and seafood grills.

Pemba Beach Hotel (☎ 272-21770; Avenida Marginal, Wimbi Beach; breakfast/dinner buffet US\$14/18) Breakfast and dinner buffets, plus à la carte dining.

Shopping

The excellent **Artes Maconde** (☎ /fax 272-21099, 272-21100; ceebee@teledata.mz; Town Centre Avenida 25 de Setembro; Wimbi Beach Pemba Beach Hotel) has a wide range of quality carvings and other crafts.

Getting There & Away

AIR

LAM (☎ 272-21251; Avenida Eduardo Mondlane; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) flies daily to/from Maputo (via Nampula and/or Beira), and three times weekly to/from Dar es Salaam (Tanzania).

Air Corridor (☎ 272-20799, 272-28012; Avenida 25 de Setembro), diagonally opposite Osman's supermarket, has daily flights down the coast, stopping at Nampula, Beira, Quelimane and Maputo.

For charters to the Quirimbas Archipelago or Lake Niassa, contact Kaskazini (see Information, p285).

BUS & CHAPA

Grupo Mecula (☎ 272-20821) has daily buses to Nampula (US\$7, seven hours), Nacala (US\$7, seven hours), Moçimboa da Praia (US\$6.50, 7½ hours) and Mueda (US\$6.50, eight hours). For Ilha de Moçambique, take the Nacala bus to Monapo, where you'll need to get out and catch a chapa for the remaining 55km. All departures are at 4.45am from the Grupo Mecula office, just off the main road and about 1.5km from the centre on a small side street behind Osman's supermarket. All buses also pass

CABO DELGADO

Cabo Delgado province was the birthplace of Mozambique's independence struggle, which began here and was supported from bases in nearby Tanzania. At the height of the war, it could take up to a month to travel – convoy-style, and moving only at night – between Pemba and Moçimboa da Praia, which makes the seven-hour bus ride today seem like a stroll in the park.

by the Mcel office (corner of Avenidas 25 de Setembro and Eduardo Mondlane) before departing town by around 5am.

Otherwise, try your luck with other transport at Mcel, or head to Embondeiro transport stand, 3km from the centre (US\$2 in a taxi). Alternatively, 'tanzanian' chapas depart in all directions from Igreja Reino de Deus from 4am, with high speeds and prices marginally cheaper than those of the Mecula buses.

Getting Around

Pemba's **taxi rank** (☎ 272-20187; Avenida Eduardo Mondlane) is just down from Mcel (town to Wimbi beach costs from US\$2).

Moti Rent-A-Car (☎ 272-21687; motimoz@teledata.mz) is at the airport.

Sporadic chapas run to/from Wimbi Beach, and it's easy to find lifts.

AROUND PEMBA

In the area around Pemba are several new camps and lodges that offer visitors a chance to experience Cabo Delgado's wild, untamed bush, learn about local life, and perhaps see an elephant or two. One to try is **Mareja** (www.mareja.com; camping per person US\$10, r with shared/private bathroom US\$20/30), an impressive community-focused project where you can experience local life in the bush, including traditional dancing, wildlife watching and walks. Luxury fly-camps are planned, but for now, there's camping, dorm beds and a couple of rustic guesthouse rooms. It's about 40km north-west of Pemba as the crow flies; allow 2½ hours by road. Staff may be able to help with transfers.

QUIRIMBAS ARCHIPELAGO

☎ 272

In the Quirimbas Archipelago, stunningly white patches of soft sand and brilliant tur-

quoise waters alternate with green, vegetated islands fringed in part by mangroves. Dense mangrove forests also link some of the islands to each other, and with the coast. Only skilled dhow captains are able to navigate among the intricate channels that were cut during Portuguese times.

The Quirimbas Archipelago consists of about two dozen islands and islets strewn among the turquoise waters along the 400km stretch of coastline between Pemba and the Rovuma River. Some are waterless and uninhabited, while others have histories as long as the archipelago itself.

Ibo, the best known of the islands, was already an important Muslim trading post when the Portuguese arrived in the 15th century, and by the late 18th century, it had become a major slave-trading port and the second-most important town in Mozambique after Ilha de Moçambique. Today, it's a fascinating, almost surreal place with wide streets lined with dilapidated villas and crumbling, moss-covered buildings. At its northern end is the star-shaped fort of São João dating from the late 18th century, known now for its silversmiths.

Other islands include **Quirimba**, with extensive coconut plantations, and **Matemo** and **Quisiva**, both sites of large Portuguese plantation houses. Tiny **Rolas**, between Matemo Island and Pangane, is uninhabited except for some seasonal fishing settlements. **Quilaluia**, formerly also a seasonal fishing base, is now a protected marine sanctuary. **Vamizi**, **Rongui** and **Macaloé Islands** are part of the **Maluane Project** (www.maluane.com) – a privately funded community-based conservation project that will ultimately also encompass an adjoining coastal strip, and an inland area where wildlife safari–tropical island combinations will be possible.

COCONUT CRABS

Tiny Rolas island is known for its fascinating population of giant coconut-eating land crabs. These nocturnal creatures, considered to be the largest arthropods in the world, sometimes grow up to 1m long. They get their name from their proclivity for climbing coconut palms, shaking down the nuts, and then prying the cracked shells open to scoop out the flesh.

Many of the southern islands, including Ibo and Matemo, are part of the **Quirimbas National Park** (Parque Nacional das Quirimbas; adult/child US\$8/2), which also includes large inland areas on the fringing coastline. Fees are collected by hotels within the park area.

In addition to its pristine natural beauty, the archipelago is known for its diving, which is especially good around Quilaluia, Vamizi and Rongui.

Sleeping & Eating

Almost all accommodation in the archipelago is moving upmarket, and everything – especially on Ibo – was in flux as this book was researched, so ask around in Pemba before heading over.

Karibuni (Casa de Janine; ibo_pemba@yahoo.fr; Ibo Island; camping per person US\$3, r with shared bathroom US\$24) Cheap and friendly, with no-frills rooms, bucket baths, and meals on order. It's northwest of the dhow port.

Ibo Island Lodge (☎ in South Africa 021-702 0643; www.iboisland.com; Ibo Island; s/d with half-board US\$360/560) An atmospheric 12-room boutique luxury hotel that was about to open as this book went to press. It's in three restored mansions overlooking the water near the dhow port, and operated by Ocean Island Safaris (p303); check with them for an update.

Quilalea (☎ 272-21808; www.quilalea.com; Quilaluia Island; all-inclusive full board per person from US\$375) Just offshore, this luxurious private resort, with nine chalets facing the sea and diving and snorkelling, is the place to come for a secluded tropical island retreat.

Vamizi Island Lodge (www.vamizi.com; Vamizi Island; r per person with full-board & activities from US\$485) A beautiful 24-bed luxury getaway on a long arc of white sand, and the first of the Maluane lodges to open. Activities include diving, snorkelling, walking and birding.

Medjumbe Island Resort (☎ in South Africa 011-465 6904; www.medjumbeisort.com; Medjumbe Island; s/d with half board US\$389/576; ☎ ☎) and **Matemo Island Resort** (☎ in South Africa 011-465 6904; www.matemoisort.com; Matemo Island; s/d with half board US\$389/576; ☎ ☎) are operated by Rani Africa, which also runs the Pemba Beach Hotel in Pemba.

Getting There & Away

All lodges organise charters, and individual seats are often available (US\$65 per person one way from Pemba to Ibo).

BOAT

Under your own steam, you'll need to go first to Quissanga, on the coast north of Pemba. A direct chapa departs Pemba from the fish market behind the mosque in Paquiteque *bairro* (US\$4, four to five hours) at about 4am daily.

From Quissanga, most vehicles continue on to Tandanhangue village (US\$4 from Pemba), which is the departure point for dhows to Ibo (locals pay US\$0.80) and Quirimba islands.

For drivers (4WD), there's secure parking at Casa de Isufo (signposted 2km before the Tandanhangue port) for US\$1.50 per day.

Dhows leave Tandanhangue only at high tide, and take from one to six hours to Ibo. There's no accommodation, but if you get stuck waiting, Isufo (at Casa de Isufo) can help you find a meal, and has an enclosed area where you can sleep on the ground.

Alternatively, try and charter a local motor boat (about US\$40 to Ibo). For those with larger budgets, it's easy to arrange speedboat charters from Pemba direct to the islands; contact the lodges, or Kaskazini (p285).

MACOMIA

Macomia is the turn-off point for the beach at Pangane. **Pensão Kwetu-Kumo** (r US\$9), west of the main road, has basic rooms. Daily chapas go to Mucojo, sometimes continuing on to Pangane. About 40km north of Macomia is **Chai**, where Frelimo's military campaign against colonial rule began in 1964 with an attack on a Portuguese base.

PANGANE

This village sits on a long, beautiful palm-fringed beach 9km north of Mucojo, and 50km off the main north–south road.

Hashim's Camp (camping per person US\$6, bungalows US\$10) is a laid-back camp on the point that's run by the helpful Hashim, with reed bungalows on the sand, and grilled fish meals. Alternatively, try **Pensão Suki** (r US\$12), a no-frills guesthouse.

Guludo (☎ in UK 01323-766 655; www.guludo.com) is an upscale fair-trade camp that makes a fine base if you want to combine a beach holiday with support for local community development initiatives. There are sea-facing safari-style tents, island excursions, diving and even elephant tracking. It's on a beautiful stretch of sand about 15km south of Mucojo junction; transfers can be arranged from Pemba and Macomia.

There's a daily chapa between Macomia and Pangane, and several chapas daily between Macomia and the Mucojo junction (US\$2), from where you can find a pick-up on to Pangane (US\$0.80). Dhows to the Quirimbas Archipelago can be arranged at Hashim's Camp and Guludo.

MUEDA

Mueda, the main town on the cool Makonde Plateau, was the site of the infamous 'massacre of Mueda' (see p239), and there's a statue commemorating the town's role in Mozambican independence at the western end of town. Many Makonde carvers live in the outlying villages.

Pensão Takatuka (Rua 1 de Maio; r US\$10, annexe r US\$12) and the nearby **Motel Sanzala** (Rua 1 de Maio; r US\$10), both along the main road, have basic rooms.

Grupo Mecula has daily buses to Pemba (US\$7, eight hours) and Nampula (US\$12, 13 hours), departing at 5am. There are several vehicles each morning to Moçimboa da Praia (US\$3.50, seven hours). All transport leaves from the main road opposite the market.

MOÇIMBOA DA PRAIA

☎ 272

This bustling outpost, with its colourful dhow port, is the last major town before the Tanzanian border. If you're travelling by dhow and enter or leave Mozambique here, have your passport stamped at the immigration office near Complexo Miramar. **Banco Austral** (Avenida Eduardo Mondlane) changes US dollars cash, and

Telecomunicações de Moçambique (Avenida 7 de Março; per min US\$0.60) has internet access.

Sleeping & Eating

Pensão Leeta (☎ 272-81147; Avenida Samora Machel; camping US\$5, r US\$10) At the town entrance near the transport stand, with no-frills and slightly scruffy twin-bedded rooms sharing bucket-style baths. They'll let you pitch a tent on their grounds.

Hotel Chez Natalie (☎ 82-527 9094; natalie@teledata.mz; camping per tent US\$8, 4-person chalets US\$68) The best bet in town, especially if you have your own transport, with camping (though only minimal ablutions), three nice, family-style chalets and a grill. Breakfast is included. It's 2km from the town centre overlooking the estuary; watch for the signposted turn-off near Clubé de Moçimboa.

Complexo Miramar (Complexo Natasha; ☎ 272-81135/6; s/d US\$18/24) A breezy waterside location at the lower end of town, three no-frills rondavels, and a popular restaurant-bar. Follow the main road downhill to the water; it's near the police station.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

It's easy to arrange dhows from Moçimboa da Praia. Expect to pay from US\$10 to US\$15 per day, and see the general tips on opposite.

BUS & PICK-UP

The transport stand is near the market at the town entrance. Pick-ups daily go to/from the Rovuma via Palma, leaving Moçimboa da Praia

THE MAKONDE

Like many tribes in the north for the country, Mozambique's Makonde are matrilineal. Children and inheritances normally belong to the woman, and it's common for husbands to move to the village of their wives after marriage, setting up house near their mother-in-law.

between 3.30am and 4am, latest (US\$10, four hours); arrange with the drivers the afternoon before to be collected from your hotel. Coming from Tanzania, the last vehicle to Moçimboa da Praia leaves the Rovuma by about noon.

To Pemba, there's a daily Mecula bus departing at 4.30am sharp (US\$7, seven hours). Get it at its garage, midway between Complexo Miramar and the bus stand, or at the main transport stand. A few chapas also do the journey, departing by 7am from the main road in front of the market.

PALMA

This large fishing village is nestled among coconut groves about 45km south of the Tanzania border. Offshore are Rongui and Vamizi Islands, both privately owned as part of the Maluane Project (p288).

The immigration office and the post office are in the upper part of town.

Hotel Palma (r US\$8), 2km downhill from the immigration office, has basic rooms, and meals with advance notice.

All transport leaves from the Boa Viagem roundabout at the entrance to town, 3km from Hotel Palma. For travel to/from Tanzania see p756. From Palma to the Rovuma River, chapas charge US\$5, and depart from about 6am. Transport to Moçimboa da Praia (US\$5, 2½ hours) passes Palma between about 11am and 2pm. Dhows to offshore islands can be arranged from the harbour near Hotel Palma; take everything with you, including water.

MOZAMBIQUE DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in Mozambique tends to be pricier than elsewhere in the region, and midrange options are more limited, though

there are some wonderful island lodges. All backpackers hostels and most resort hotels fill up around Christmas and during the South African school holidays (see p585); book in advance if you'll be travelling then.

When quoting prices, many places distinguish between a *duplo* (room with two twin beds) and a *casal* (double bed). Many hotels offer midweek and low-season discounts, and most places have children's discounts.

Budget

The cheapest options are small local hotels or *pensões*, which start at about US\$8 per room. Expect shared bathrooms with cold water and poor ventilation, though sometimes you'll be pleasantly surprised.

Backpackers are the best budget value. Most are along the southern coast; dorm beds average US\$10.

There are many camping grounds, especially along the coast. Free camping isn't advisable due to security concerns and the possibility of land mines. In rural areas, ask the village *régulo* (chief) for permission to camp.

Midrange & Top End

For midrange standards, including a private bathroom, hot running water, electricity, air-conditioning (sometimes) and a restaurant on the premises, expect to pay from about US\$40 per room.

Top-end hotels offer all the amenities you would expect from around US\$150 per room, and often have special weekend deals.

ACTIVITIES

Bird Watching

Prime birding areas include the Bazaruto Archipelago, Gorongosa National Park and nearby Mt Gorongosa, the Chimanimani Mountains, Mt Namuli, the southern coastal wetlands and Maputo Special Reserve. Recommended contacts for bird lists and birding trips include the Pretoria-based **Indicator Birding** (www.birding.co.za), **Southern African Birding** (www.sabirding.co.za) and the **African Bird Club** (www.africanbirdclub.org). The Mozambique Bird Atlas Project can be contacted through the **Avian Demography Unit** (http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/stats/adu/p_mozat.htm) at the University of Cape Town.

Dhow Safaris & Boating

The best places for arranging dhow safaris are Vilankulo and the Bazaruto Archipelago

MAPIKO DANCING

If you hear drumming in the late afternoons while travelling around Cabo Delgado, it likely means *mapiko* – the famed masked dancing of the Makonde.

The dancer – always a man – wears a special wooden mask or *lipiko* (plural: *mapiko*), decorated with wildly exaggerated features, hair (often real) and facial etchings. Before *mapiko* begins, the dancer's body is completely covered with large pieces of cloth wrapped around the legs, arms and body so that nothing can be seen other than the fingers and toes. All evidence that there is a person inside is supposed to remain hidden. *Mapiko* supposedly grew out of male attempts to limit the power of women in matrilineal Makonde society. The idea is that the dancer represents the spirit of a dead person who has come to do harm to the women and children, from which only the men of the village can protect them. While boys learn the secret of the dance during their initiation rites, women are never supposed to discover it, and remain in fear of the *mapiko*.

Once the dancer is ready, distinctive rhythms are beaten on special *mapiko* drums. The dance is usually performed on weekend afternoons, and must be finished by sunset. The best places to see *mapiko* dancing are in and around Mueda, and in Macomia. To take a mask home, look in craft shops in Pemba and Nampula.

PRACTICALITIES

- Mozambique's main daily is *Notícias*. For English-language news, try the website of **Mozambique News Agency (AIM)**; www.poptel.org.uk/mozambique-news/.
- **Radio Mozambique** (www.rm.co.mz) is state run, with programming in Portuguese, English and local languages.
- TV stations include TVM (state run), RTK (commercial), RTP1 (Portuguese TV).
- Electricity is 220V to 240V AC, 50Hz, accessed with South African-style three-round-pin plugs or two-round-pin plugs. Adaptors are easily found in major cities.
- Weights, measures and road distances use the metric system.

(contact Sail Away, p265), Pemba (contact Kaskazini, p285) and Pangane (contact Guludo, p289). To organise things on your own (from around US\$15 per boat per day) ask at your hotel for recommendations of reliable captains; travel with the prevailing winds (which blow south to north from about April/May to August/September and north to south from November/December through February); bring plenty of extra food, water and sun protection; and don't set sail in bad weather.

Upmarket boat charters around the Quirimbas and Bazaruto Archipelagos can be arranged through the island lodges. In Maputo, contact **Clube Naval** (☎ 21-492690, 21-494881; Avenida Marginal, Maputo) or the speedboat charter operators listed in the *Inhaca Getting There & Away* section (p256).

Diving & Snorkelling

Mozambique offers wonderful diving and snorkelling. Quality equipment, instruction and certification are readily available in the main coastal areas, including Ponta d'Ouro (known for its sharks and corals); Tofo and Barra (manta rays and whale sharks); Vilankulo and the Bazaruto Archipelago (dolphins, dugongs and fantastic fish diversity, plus excellent snorkelling); Ilha de Moçambique (historic wreck); Nacala (corals and dhow-based diving); and Pemba and the Quirimbas Archipelago (excellent fish diversity and coral gardens, wall dives and won-

derful snorkelling). Prices are comparable to what you would pay elsewhere in East Africa, though somewhat higher than in South Africa. Humpback whales are seen all along the coast between about July and September. The best time to see whale sharks is between about November and March.

Fishing

Popular fishing areas include in the south between Ponta d'Ouro and Inhassoro, and in the far north around Pemba, which is within easy reach of the famed St Lazarus Bank, east of Quilaluia in the Quirimbas Archipelago. Inland, head to Lake Cahora Bassa, near Tete. Contacts include **Visagie World Charters** (www.world-charters.com) for Pemba and the Quirimbas islands, and Ugezi Tiger Lodge (p273) for Lake Cahora Bassa.

Hiking

The best mountain climbs are up Mt Namúli (see the boxed text, p275) and Mt Gorongosa (p270). For hiking, there's the Penha Longa area near Manica (p271) and the Chimanimani Mountains, though there's no infrastructure and you'll need a guide and tent.

Surfing

The best waves are at Tofinho (see p262).

Wildlife Watching

Unlike in some neighbouring countries, where the herds practically come to you, in Mozambique you'll need to spend considerable time, effort and, in some cases, money to seek them out. Niassa Reserve, Maputo Special Reserve, and Gorongosa and Limpopo National Parks are the main destinations.

BOOKS

To get started on Mozambique, look for *Kalashnikovs and Zombie Cucumbers: Travels in Mozambique* by Nick Middleton and *With Both Hands Waving – A Journey Through Mozambique* by Justin Fox. Both are highly entertaining travelogues with lots of historical snippets.

BUSINESS HOURS

Banks are open from 8am to 3pm Monday to Friday. Shops open from about 8am to noon and from 2pm to 6pm Monday to Friday, and from 8am to 1pm Saturday. Most forex bureaux (*casas de câmbio*) are open from about

8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday, and on Saturday until about noon. Restaurants are generally open daily – many from about 9am, otherwise from noon – until about 10pm, or earlier in smaller towns. Some close between lunch and dinner. Exceptions are listed in individual reviews. Also see Business Hours in the regional Directory chapter, p742.

CHILDREN

For general information on travelling with children in the region, see p742.

The southern beach resorts are among the best areas for visiting with young children, and most offer significant children's discounts.

Powdered full-cream milk (but not skimmed milk) is available in almost all mid-sized and larger towns, as is bottled water. Nappies (diapers) are available in Maputo, Beira, Chimoio and Nampula, as is prepared baby food. Shoprite branches and well-stocked pharmacies are the best places to find baby supplies in all these towns. Cots and spare beds are easily arranged at most midrange and top-end places. For infants, pushchairs (strollers) are not practical. Much better is some sort of harness or cloth that allows you to carry the baby on your back, Mozambican style, or in front of you.

In beach areas, be aware of the risk of hookworm infestation in populated areas, as well as the risk of bilharzia in lakes. Other things to watch out for are sea urchins at the beach, and thorns and the like in the brush.

For malaria protection, it's essential to bring nets from home for your children and ensure that they sleep under them. Also bring mosquito repellents from home, and check with your doctor regarding the use of prophylactics. Long-sleeved shirts and trousers are the best protection at dawn and dusk.

Childcare is easy to arrange informally through your hotel.

CUSTOMS

It's illegal to export any endangered species or their products, including anything made from ivory or tortoiseshell. If you bring in a bicycle, laptop computer, video camera or major camping and fishing equipment into Mozambique, you'll need to fill out a temporary import permit. You'll then be given a receipt, which you'll need to present again (with the item(s) declared) when leaving the

country. You're also supposed to declare any cash that you bring in excess of US\$5000. Local currency cannot be exported. Import of food and other consumables is limited to a maximum value of US\$200.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Mozambique has calmed down considerably from the war days when going anywhere by road meant a convoy and a high risk of attack. Today, it's a relatively safe place, and most travellers shouldn't have any difficulties. That said, there are a few areas where caution is warranted. Also see p302.

Crime

Thefts and robberies are the main risks: watch your pockets in markets, and avoid carrying a bag; don't leave personal belongings unguarded on the beach or elsewhere; and minimise (or eliminate) trappings such as jewellery, watches, headsets and external money pouches. Never hold your wallet or money in your hand while bargaining for prices. If you leave your vehicle unguarded, expect windscreen wipers and other accessories to be gone when you return. Don't leave anything inside a parked vehicle. When at stoplights or slowed in traffic, keep your windows up and doors locked, and don't leave anything on the seat next to you where it could be snatched.

In Maputo and southern Mozambique, due to the proximity to South African organised crime rings, carjackings and more violent robberies do occur, although the situation is nowhere near as bad as in Johannesburg, and most incidents can be avoided by taking the usual precautions – avoid driving at night, don't wander around isolated or dark streets, and don't put yourself in isolating situations, including on the beach. If you are driving and your car is hijacked, hand over the keys straight away.

WARNING!

All travellers, but especially women, and especially at Tofo and Vilankulo, should avoid isolating situations, particularly isolated stretches of beach. Enjoy the coastline, but always stay within sight of your hotel or the crowds, and don't go jogging or walking on the beach alone.

AVISO! (NOTICE)

All foreigners are required to carry a copy of their passport when out and about. Rather than carrying the original, it's much better to carry a notarised copy of the name and visa pages, as well as notarised copies of your driving licence, and to hand these over if you're asked. Notary facilities are available in Maputo and other major cities; ask at your hotel for a recommendation.

Hassles & Bribes

More likely than crime are simple hassles such as underpaid authorities in search of bribes. If you do get stopped you shouldn't have any problem as long as your papers are in order. Being friendly and respectful helps, as does trying to give the impression that you know what you're doing and aren't new in the country. Sometimes the opposite tack is also helpful – feigning complete ignorance if you're told that you've violated some regulation, and apologising profusely. If you are asked to pay a *multa* (fine) for a trumped-up charge, playing the game a bit (asking to speak to the supervisor or *chefe*, and requesting a receipt) helps to counteract some of the more blatant attempts, as does insisting on going to the nearest police station or *esquadrão* (which you should always do anyway).

Land Mines

Thanks to a massive demining effort, many of the unexploded land mines littering Mozambique – a legacy of the country's long war – have been eliminated. However, mines are still a risk in some areas, so stick to well-used paths, and don't free camp or go wandering off into the bush anywhere without first seeking local advice.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES**Mozambican Embassies & Consulates**

Mozambican diplomatic representations:

France (☎ 01 47 64 91 32; 82 Rue Laugier, Paris 75017)

Germany (☎ 030-3987 6500; emozaa@aol.com; Stromstrasse 47, 10551 Berlin)

Malawi Lilongwe (☎ 01-774100); Limbe (☎ 01-643189; 1st fl, Cetel Bldg, Rayner Ave, Limbe) The Lilongwe office is off Convention Dr.

Portugal (☎ 021-797 1747, 797 1994; Avenida de Berna 7, 1050-036 Lisbon)

South Africa Cape Town (☎ 021-426 2944; 45 Castle St, Castle Bldg, 7th fl); Durban (☎ 031-304 0200; 320 West St, Room 520); Johannesburg (☎ 011-484 6427; 11 Boundary Rd, cnr Carse O'Gowrie Rd, Houghton); Nelspruit (☎ 013-752 7396; 32 Bell St); Pretoria (☎ 012-401 0300, 012-321 2288; 529 Edmund St, Arcadia)

Swaziland (☎ 404 3700; Mountain Inn Rd, Mbabane)

Tanzania (☎ 022-211 6502; 25 Garden Ave, Dar es Salaam)

UK (☎ 020-7383 3800; www.mozambiquehc.org.uk; 2 1 Fitzroy Sq, London W1T 6EL)

USA (☎ 202-293 7146; www.embamoc-usa.org; 1990 M St, NW, Suite 570, Washington, DC 20036)

Zambia (☎ 01-239135; 9592 Kacha Rd, Northmead, Lusaka) Off Paseri Rd.

Zimbabwe (☎ 04-253871; 152 Herbert Chitepo Ave, Harare)

Embassies & Consulates in Mozambique

For a more complete listing check the telephone directory. Except as noted, most are open from about 8.30am to 3pm, often with a midday break.

Australia (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-322780; www.embassy.gov.au/mz.html; 1st fl, 33 Storey Bldg, cnr Avenidas Zedequias Manganhela & Vladimir Lenine)

Canada (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-492623; www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/mozambique/menu-en.asp; 1128 Avenida Julius Nyerere)

France (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-490444, 21-492896; www.ambafrance-mz.org; 2361 Avenida Julius Nyerere)

Germany (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-492714; www.maputo.diplo.de; 506 Rua Damião de Gois)

Ireland (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-483524/5, 21-491440; ireland@virconn.com; 3332 Avenida Julius Nyerere)

Malawi (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-492676; 75 Avenida Kenneth Kaunda)

Netherlands (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-490031; www.nlemassy.org.mz; 285 Rua de Mukumbura)

Portugal (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-490316; embaixada@embpormaputo.org.mz; 720 Avenida Julius Nyerere)

South Africa (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-490059, 21-491614; consular@tropical.co.mz; 41 Avenida Eduardo Mondlane)

Swaziland (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-492117, 21-492451; swazimoz@teledata.mz; Rua Luis Pasteur)

Tanzania (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-490110; 852 Avenida Mártires de Machava)

UK (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-320111, 21-310111; bhc.maputo@teledata.mz; 310 Avenida Vladimir Lenine)

USA (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-492797; www.usembassy-maputo.gov.mz; 193 Avenida Kenneth Kaunda)

Zambia (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-492452; 1286 Avenida Kenneth Kaunda)

Zimbabwe (Map pp248-9; ☎ 21-490404, 21-486499; 1657 Avenida Mártires de Machava)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Apart from national holidays, Mozambique has few countrywide festivals. Smaller events abound, though, most with no advertising. For concerts and performances, watch for posters around town and announcements in *Notícias*, and check with the Centro Cultural Franco-Moçambicano (p246). Local festivals to watch for include **Gwaza Muthini**, held in Marracuene (p256) in early February to commemorate the Battle of Marracuene and the start of the *ukanhi* (traditional brew) season; and the Chopi **Timbilas Festival**, held somewhere between June and August in Quissico (p260). Maputo's new two-week **Avante Mozambique!** festival is held each August/September; see p251.

HOLIDAYS

New Year's Day 1 January

Mozambican Heroes' Day 3 February

Women's Day 7 April

International Workers' Day 1 May

Independence Day 25 June

Lusaka Agreement/Victory Day 7 September

Revolution Day 25 September

Christmas/Family Day 25 December

For travel in southern Mozambique, also check the South African school holidays (p585), when everything fills up.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access is easy and fast in Maputo, where there are numerous internet cafés. Elsewhere, there are internet cafés in most provincial capitals and some larger towns – often at the local Telecomunicações de Moçambique (TDM) office. Rates average US\$2 per hour, and connections range from reasonable to good.

INTERNET RESOURCES

African Studies Centre Mozambique Page (www.africa.upenn.edu/Country_Specific/Mozambique.html) Many links.

Kanimambo (www.kanimambo.com) In Portuguese, with English listings and links.

Mozambique Art Portal (www.artemz.org.mz) An overview of Mozambican art and artists.

Mozambique Home Page (www.mozambique.mz) Mozambique's official website.

Mozambique Music Magazine (www.mozambique-music.com) Mozambican music.

Mozambique News Agency (www.poptel.org.uk/mozambique-news/) Mozambique news in English.

LEGAL MATTERS

The use or possession of recreational drugs is illegal in Mozambique. However, grass and more are readily available in several places along the coast. If you're offered anything, it will invariably be part of a set-up, and if you're caught, penalties are very stiff. At the least, expect to pay a large bribe to avoid arrest or imprisonment.

Driving on the beach, driving without a seatbelt (for driver and front-seat passengers), exceeding speed limits and driving without two red hazard triangles in the boot are all illegal, and are common ways of attracting police attention and demands for a bribe or fine (*multa*).

MAPS

The best is the *Ravenstein* map (1:2,000,000), readily available outside Mozambique. Futur (p247) puts out a good country map with city inserts, available at their Maputo office and some hotels and bookshops.

MONEY

Mozambique's currency is the metical (plural meticaís, pronounced me-ti-caish), abbreviated Mtc. In July 2006 the 'metrical nova família' (new family metical) was introduced, at a rate of 1000 old meticaís to one metical nova família. Metical nova família note and coin denominations include notes of Mtc20, Mtc50, Mtc100, Mtc200, Mtc500 and Mtc1000, and coins of Mtc1, Mtc2, Mtc5 and Mtc10. One metical nova família is equivalent to 100 centavos (Ct), and there are also coins of Ct1, Ct5, Ct10, Ct20 and Ct50. For exchange rates, see the inside front cover of this guide.

Outside Maputo, the best way to travel in Mozambique is with a good supply of cash in a mixture of US dollars (or South African rand, especially in the south) and meticaís (including a good supply of small-denomination notes, as nobody ever has change). Supplement this with a Visa card for withdrawing meticaís at ATMs (the best way of accessing money), and a few travellers cheques for emergencies (though they are difficult to change – see p296).

ATMs

All larger towns have ATMs for accessing cash meticaís. Most accept Visa card only, and many have a limit of Mtc3,000,000 (US\$120) per transaction.

Black Market

There's essentially no black market, so if you are offered good rates on the street, assume it's a set-up.

Cash

US dollars are easily exchanged everywhere, and – together with South African rand – are the best currency to carry. Other major currencies can be changed in Maputo.

Most banks don't charge commission for changing cash, and together with forex bureaux, these are the best places to change money, although some banks (including most BIM branches) will let you change cash only if you have an account.

In Maputo and other larger cities there are foreign exchange bureaux (*casas de câmbio*), which usually give a rate equivalent to or slightly higher than the banks, and are open longer hours. Changing money on the street isn't safe anywhere, and is illegal – asking shopkeepers is a much better bet.

Credit Cards

Credit cards are accepted at most top-end hotels and car-rental agencies, but otherwise are of only limited use. Visa is the most useful, and is also the main (often only) card for accessing money from ATMs.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques can be changed only in Maputo, Beira and a few other provincial capitals, only at Standard Bank, and only with high commissions (minimum US\$35 per transaction, original purchase receipt required). So, while it's a good idea to bring some along as an emergency standby, they shouldn't be relied on as a source of funds in Mozambique.

TELEPHONE

The cheapest international dialling is with the Telecomunicações de Moçambique (TDM) Bla-Bla Fixo card, sold at all TDM branches and sometimes nearby shops. It's a pre-paid card for fixed lines (including those at TDM offices and card phones), and is cheaper than

dialling internationally from TDM directly. Collect (reverse-charge) calls are possible only to Portugal.

Domestic calls cost about US\$0.10 per impulse; most short calls won't use more than two or three impulses. Calls to Europe, the USA and Australia cost from about US\$5 for the first three minutes (minimum), plus US\$2 for each additional minute. Regional calls cost about US\$3 for the first three minutes. Rates are cheaper on weekends and evenings.

All land-line telephone numbers now have eight digits, including provincial area codes, which must always be dialled (even when calling a number in the same city). Codes are included with all telephone numbers in this book, and are also listed at the beginning of each town section. No initial zero is required.

Mobile Phones

Mobile phone numbers are seven digits, preceded by ☎ 82 for **Mcel** (www.mcel.co.mz) or ☎ 84 for **Vodacom** (www.vn.co.mz). No initial zero is required. If you see an old-style Mozambique mobile number listed as '082-xxx xxx', just move the initial zero to the end of the old six-digit number before dialling. Otherwise, assume that seven-digit mobile numbers listed with zero at the outset are in South Africa; these must be preceded by the South Africa country code (☎ 27). Check the Mcel and Vodacom websites for coverage (*cobertura*) maps. Mcel, the main provider, has outlets everywhere where you can buy Sim-card starter packs (US\$2) and linked to the network. Vodacom has shops in major towns, with similar services.

Telephone Codes

When calling Mozambique from abroad, dial the international access number (☎ 09 from South Africa), then the international code for Mozambique (☎ 258), followed by the provincial or city code (no zero) and the number. For mobile numbers, dial the international access number, followed by the international code, the mobile prefix (no zero) and the seven-digit number.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The national tourist organisation, **Fundo Nacional de Turismo** (Futur; www.futur.org.mz) is primarily geared to tourism promotion, but it's worth checking its English-language website for an introduction to the country.

VISAS

Visas are required by all visitors except citizens of South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Botswana. They are available at most major land and air entry points (US\$25 for a one-month, single-entry visa). However, visa lines at busy borders are often long, and it's best (and often cheaper) to arrange your visa in advance. If you're arriving in Maputo via bus from Johannesburg it's essential to get your visa in advance, as most buses won't wait.

Fees vary according to where you buy your visa, ranging from US\$20 to US\$70 for a one-month single-entry tourist visa outside Africa. Within the region, same-day visa service is available at several places including Johannesburg and Nelspruit (South Africa). The Mozambican representations in South Africa and Swaziland are the cheapest places in the region to get visas, charging US\$13 for same-day service. Note that for getting a visa in Johannesburg, you'll need to go first to a branch of Nedbank and make a cash deposit of the visa fee. Then, take the deposit slip with you to the embassy and make your visa application. Call the embassy (see p294) for bank account details. Wherever you get your visa, your passport must be valid for at least six months from the dates of intended travel, and have at least two blank pages.

Visa Extensions

Visas can be extended at the immigration office (*migração*) in all provincial capitals provided you haven't exceeded the three-month maximum stay. Processing takes one to three days and is usually straightforward. Don't wait until the visa has already expired, as hefty fines (US\$100 per day) are levied for overstays.

VOLUNTEERING

Most volunteer work is in teaching or health care, and school construction. Good initial contacts include **InterAction** (www.interaction.org), whose excellent twice-monthly subscriber newsletter advertises both paid and volunteer positions internationally, including in Mozambique; and the Mozambique page of **Volunteer Abroad** (www.volunteerabroad.com/Mozambique.cfm), which has links to volunteer opportunities in the country. There is extensive missionary work in Mozambique, so another possibility would be to make inquiries through your local church.

TRANSPORT IN MOZAMBIQUE

GETTING THERE & AWAY

This section covers access to Mozambique from neighbouring countries. For getting to Southern Africa from outside the region, see the regional Transport chapter (p752).

Entering the Country

Only a valid passport and visa are required to enter, plus the necessary vehicle paperwork if you are driving (p301).

Air

Maputo's **Mavalane International** (MPM; ☎ 21-465827/8; www.aeroportos.co.mz) is the main airport. Regional flights also go to the airports at **Vilankulo** (VNX; ☎ 223-82207), **Beira** (BEW; ☎ 23-301071/2), **Nampula** (APL; ☎ 26-213100, 26-213133) and **Pemba** (POL; ☎ 272-20312).

The national carrier is **Linhas Aéreas de Moçambique** (LAM; code TM; ☎ 21-4680000, 21-490590; www.lam.co.mz; hub Mavalane International, Maputo), which has flights connecting Johannesburg with Maputo (daily), Vilankulo and Beira (both twice weekly); Dar es Salaam with Pemba (five weekly); and Lisbon (Portugal) with Maputo (five weekly). Other airlines flying into Mozambique:

Kenya Airways (code KQ; ☎ 21-320337/8; www.kenya-airways.com; hub Jomo Kenyatta International, Nairobi) Twice weekly between Maputo and Nairobi.

Pelican Air Services (code 7V; ☎ in South Africa 011-973 3649; www.pelicanair.co.za; hub OR Tambo International, Johannesburg) Daily between Johannesburg and Vilankulo via Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport, with connections to the Bazaruto Archipelago.

SAairlink (code SA; ☎ 21-495483, 21-495484; www.saairlink.co.za; hub OR Tambo International, Johannesburg) Three times weekly between Beira and Johannesburg, and between Maputo and Durban.

South African Airways (SAA; code SA; ☎ 21-495483, 21-495484; www.flysaa.com; hub OR Tambo International, Johannesburg) Daily between Maputo and Johannesburg.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE TAXES

There's an arrival tax of US\$2. Departure tax is US\$20 for intercontinental and regional flights, payable in cash in meticaís, US dollars or South African rand.

Swazi Express (code Q4; ☎ in South Africa 031-408 1115; www.swaziexpress.com; hub Durban) Two to three flights weekly between Durban, Matsapha (Swaziland), Maputo and Vilankulo.

TAP Air Portugal (code TP; ☎ 21-303927/8, 21-431006/7; www.tap-airportugal.pt; hub Lisbon) Five flights weekly between Maputo and Lisbon.

Border Crossings

Everyone entering Mozambique overland needs to pay an immigration tax of US\$2 or the equivalent in meticaís, rand or the local currency of the country from which you're arriving. Have exact change, and get a receipt. For additional fees and requirements for drivers, see p301). Except as noted, most borders are open from 6am to 6pm.

For information on getting to Mozambique from Tanzania and elsewhere outside Southern Africa, see p752.

MALAWI

The busiest border is at Zóbuè, on the Tete Corridor route linking Blantyre (Malawi) and Harare (Zimbabwe). Others include crossings at Dedza (85km southwest of Lilongwe), Milange (120km southeast of Blantyre), Entre Lagos (southwest of Cuamba), Mandimba (northwest of Cuamba), Vila Nova da Fronteira (at Malawi's southern tip), and Cóbue and Metangula (both on Lake Niassa).

To/From Blantyre

The Zóbuè crossing has good roads and public transport connections on both sides. There are daily vehicles from Blantyre to the border via Mwanza (US\$4). Once on the Mozambique side there are daily chapas to Tete. Buses between Blantyre and Harare via Zóbuè will also drop you at Tete.

Vila Nova da Fronteira sees a reasonable amount of traffic, although it's an off-the-beaten track journey. There are daily minibuses from Blantyre to Nsanje and on to the border. Once across, you can find chapas along a reasonable road via Mutarara to Sena, and from there on to Caia on the main north-south road.

The Milange crossing is convenient for Quelimane, Gurúè, and on to Ilha de Moçambique. There are regular buses from Blantyre via Mulanje to the border. Once across, there are several vehicles daily to Mocuba, and then frequent transport on to both Quelimane and Nampula.

The crossing at Entre Lagos (for Cuamba and northern Mozambique) is possible with your own 4WD, or via chapa between the border and Cuamba. On the Malawi side, there are minibuses from the border to Lilongwe. Another option is the weekly Malawi train, from where you'll need to take a chapa to Cuamba.

More common is the Mandimba crossing. There's frequent transport on the Malawi side to Mangochi, from where you can get minibuses to Namwera, and on to the border at Chiponde. Once in Mozambique, there are several vehicles daily from Mandimba to both Cuamba and Lichinga.

To/From Lilongwe

The Dedza border is convenient for Lilongwe, and is linked with the EN103 to/from Tete by a tarmac road. From Tete, there's usually at least one chapa daily to Ulongwé and on to Dedza. Otherwise, go in stages from Tete via Moatize and the junction about 15km southwest of Zóbuè. Once across the border, it's easy to find transport for the final 85km to Lilongwe. If planning to enter Mozambique at this border, arrange your visa in advance.

Boat

The *Ilala* ferry services several Mozambican ports on its way up and down Lake Niassa, departing Monkey Bay (Malawi) at 10am Friday, arriving in Metangula (via Chipoka and Nkhotakota in Malawi) at 6am Saturday, reaching Cóbue around noon, Likoma Island (Malawi) at 1.30pm, and Nkhata Bay (Malawi) at 1am Sunday. Southbound, departures are at 8pm Monday from Nkhata Bay and at 6.30am Tuesday from Likoma Island, reaching Cóbue at 7am and Metangula at noon.

The schedule changes frequently; get an update from **Malawi Lake Services** (ilala@malawi.net). Fares are about US\$40/20 for a 1st-class cabin/economy class between Nkhata Bay and Cóbue.

There are immigration posts in Metangula and Cóbue (and on Likoma Island and in Nkhata Bay, for Malawi). You can get a Mozambique visa at Cóbue, but not at Metangula. Slow sailing boats also go between Likoma Island, Cóbue and Metangula.

Meponda was formerly linked with Malawi's Senga Bay via the weekly MV *Mtendere*. It's currently not running, but worth asking to see if services have resumed.

SOUTH AFRICA

The busiest crossing is **Komatipoort–Ressano Garcia** (☎ 6am–10pm), northwest of Maputo. Others include **Kosi Bay–Ponta d'Ouro** (☎ 8am–4pm), 11km south of Ponta d'Ouro; **Pafuri** (☎ 8am–4pm), in Kruger park's northeastern corner; and **Giriyondo** (☎ 8am–4pm Oct–Mar, 8am–3pm Apr–Sep), northwest of Massingir.

To/From Johannesburg

The best option between Johannesburg and Maputo is one of the large 'luxury' buses that do the route daily (US\$30 to US\$38 one way, eight to nine hours), listed below (see p254 for Maputo location and contact details). All lines also service Pretoria. You can also travel in each direction on these lines between Maputo and Nelspruit, but not between Nelspruit and Johannesburg. Organise your Mozambique visa in advance.

Greyhound (☎ in South Africa 011-276 8500; www.greyhound.co.za) Daily from Johannesburg's Park Station complex at 6.45am, and from Maputo at 7.30am.

InterCape Mainliner (☎ in South Africa 021-380 4400; www.intercape.co.za) Daily from Johannesburg's Park Station complex at 8am, and from Maputo at 7.45am.

Panthera Azul (☎ in South Africa 011-618 8811/3; www.pantherazul.co.za) Daily from Johannesburg (34 Bezuidenhout Ave, Troyville) at 7am; from Maputo at 6.45am Monday, Wednesday and Friday, at 4am on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, and at 7am on Sunday.

Translux (☎ in South Africa 011-774 3333; www.translux.co.za) Daily from Johannesburg at 8.45am; from Maputo at 7.45am.

For drivers, there's a good toll road connecting Maputo with Johannesburg via Ressano Garcia.

Train is the other option. South Africa's **Komati line** (☎ 011-774 4555; www.spoornet.co.za) travels between Johannesburg and the Komatipoort border post daily (13 hours). Once across, it's possible in theory to continue to Maputo by rail. However, service in Mozambique is very slow; it's much faster to take a chapa.

To/From Kruger National Park

There are two border points between Mozambique and South Africa's Kruger park, neither accessible via public transport, and both requiring 4WD on the Mozambique side.

Giriyondo sees a small but steady stream of 4WD adventurers looking for an alternative route to the Mozambican coast. See p260 for more.

Pafuri can be used to access the rough tracks across Gaza and Inhambane provinces to Mapinane (at the junction with the EN1) and the coast, or to go southeast into Limpopo National Park, or towards Chokwé and the EN1 – all 4WD territory. There's also a 4WD track sponsored by **Sanparks** (www.sanparks.org) and **Limpopo National Park** (www.dolimpopo.com) that uses this crossing; see the websites for details. The Limpopo River is unbridged and crossable only in the dry season. Mozambique visas are not issued at Pafuri, and there are no fuel points anywhere along the route to Vilankulo until the EN1.

Other routes

Between Durban and Maputo, **Panthera Azul** (☎ in Durban 031-309 7798) has buses via Namaacha and Big Bend in Swaziland (US\$35, 8½ hours) departing Maputo at 7am Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, and Durban at 7am Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

For travel via the Kosi Bay border post, see the Ponta d'Ouro Getting There & Away section (p258).

SWAZILAND

The main crossing is at **Lomahasha–Namaacha** (☎ 7am–8pm) in Swaziland's northeast corner, with another, quieter post at **Goba–Mhlumeni** (☎ 7am–6pm).

To/From Manzini

Minibuses depart Maputo throughout the day for Namaacha (US\$2, 1½ hours), with some continuing on to Manzini (US\$5, 3½ hours).

Bill's Bus runs an occasional shuttle between Manzini and Maputo, with connections to Tofo; get details through **Grifter's Lodge** (www.grifterslodge.com) in Swaziland or Diversity Scuba in Tofo (p262). Maputo Backpackers (p251) and **Sobantu Guest Farm** (www.swaziplace.com/sobantu) also have a shuttle between Maputo and various points in Swaziland, connecting to Tofo. Prices for both are about US\$23 one way between Swaziland and Maputo, and US\$55 from Swaziland to Tofo.

The Namaacha border is notoriously slow at holiday weekends; the quiet border at Goba (Goba Fronteira) makes a good alternative. The new, good road from Swaziland's Mananga border, connecting north to Komatipoort–Ressano Garcia, is another option.

ZAMBIA

The main crossing is at **Cassacatiza** (☎ 7am-5pm), 290km northwest of Tete. There's another crossing at **Zumbo** (☎ 7am-5pm), at the western end of Lake Cahora Bassa.

To/From Lusaka

The road on both sides of the Cassacatiza/Chanida border crossing is reasonably good, but the crossing is seldom used as most travellers combining Mozambique and Zambia go via Malawi. If you want to try it, chapas go daily from Tete to Matema, from where there's sporadic transport to the border. On the other side, there are daily vehicles to Katete (Zambia), and then on to Lusaka or Chipata.

The rarely used crossing at Zumbo is difficult to access from Mozambique, and of interest primarily to anglers and bird-watchers heading to the western reaches of Lake Cahora Bassa. See p273.

ZIMBABWE

The main crossing points are at Nyamapanda on the Tete Corridor, linking Harare with Tete and Lilongwe (Malawi), and at Machipanda on the Beira Corridor linking Harare with the sea. Other crossings are at Espungabera, in the Chimanimani mountains, and at **Mukumbura** (☎ 7am-5pm), west of Tete.

To/From Harare

Both the Nyamapanda and Machipanda border crossings have reasonably good tarmac access roads, and are easy to cross using public transport or hitching.

From Tete there are frequent vehicles to Changara (US\$3, 1½ hours) and on to the border at Nyamapanda, where you can get transport to Harare. Through buses between Blantyre and Harare are another option, though schedules have been erratic due to fuel shortages in Zimbabwe.

From Chimoio there is frequent transport to Manica and from there to the border, from where you'll need to take a taxi for the 12km to Mutare, and then get Zimbabwe transport or the night train to Harare. In theory, this departs Mutare at 9pm, arriving in Harare at 5.30am the next morning, although schedules have been interrupted in recent times.

The seldom-used route via Espungabera is slow and scenic, and an interesting dry-season alternative for those with a 4WD. Public transport on the Mozambique side is scarce.

Mukumbura, best done with 4WD, is of interest mainly to anglers heading to Cahora Bassa dam. There is no public transport on the Mozambique side.

Tours

For tour operators who organise travel to Mozambique, as well as in-country itineraries, see p303.

GETTING AROUND

Air

AIRLINES IN MOZAMBIQUE

The national airline is **Linhas Aéreas de Moçambique** (LAM; ☎ 21-468000; www.lam.co.mz), which together with its subsidiary, Moçambique Expresso (Mex), runs most noncharter flights within Mozambique, linking Maputo with Inhambane, Vilankulo, Beira, Chimoio, Quelimane, Tete, Nampula, Lichinga and Pemba. Service has improved markedly in recent years, and flights are generally reliable. Always reconfirm your ticket, and check in well in advance.

LAM offers frequent specials; watch for advertisements in the daily newspaper, *Notícias*, or ask for one of their 'Jacto Popular' fares, which require three to five days advance purchase.

Other domestic carriers and routes are listed below.

Air Corridor (☎ 21-311582; 26-213333; aircorridor@teledata.mz) The single Air Corridor plane does a daily run up and down the coast, stopping at Maputo, Beira, Quelimane, Nampula and Pemba; cheaper than LAM.

Serviço Aéreo Regional (SAR; ☎ 26-212401; sargaw@teledata.mz) Twice weekly between Nampula and Cuamba.

TransAirways (☎ 21-465108; transairways@virconn.com) Daily between Maputo and Inhaca Island.

TTA (☎ 21-465484, 21-465015, 822-8348) Daily between Vilankulo and the Bazaruto Archipelago, together with Pelican Air Services (see p297).

Bicycle

Cycling is a seldom used but good way to see the 'real' Mozambique, but you'll need plenty of time to cover the long distances. You'll also need to plan the legs of your trip

fairly carefully and to carry almost everything with you, including all spares, as there are long stretches with little or nothing en route. Avoid cycling in central Maputo and along main roads whenever possible, as there's often no shoulder, traffic is fast and drivers have little respect for cyclists. Carrying a tent is essential. However, because of land mines, the odd chance of encountering roaming wildlife (especially in the north), and general security concerns, it's not a good idea to free camp. Much better is to arrange something with villagers, who will invariably warmly welcome you. Bicycles can be transported on buses (US\$2 to US\$5, depending on the journey).

Bus

Bus travel is the most straightforward and economical way to get around, and relatively reliable services connect all major towns at least daily.

A large bus is called a *machibombo*, and sometimes also *autocarro*. The main companies are Transportes Oliveiras, with an extensive but slow route network in southern and central Mozambique; the buses (including 30-seater minibuses) that once belonged to the now-defunct TSL, and which operate on the southern routes; and the good Grupo Mecula, which has an extensive network in northern Mozambique. Many lines run both express and stopping services. If there's a choice, it's worth paying the small difference between the two, as express is significantly faster.

Most towns don't have central bus stations. Rather, transport usually leaves from the bus company garage, or from the start of the road towards the destination (which frequently involves a hike of 1km to 2km from the centre of town). Long-distance transport in general, and all transport in the north, leaves early – between 3.30am and 7am. And, unlike many countries, Mozambican transport usually leaves quickly and close to the stated departure time. If a driver tells you they will be departing at 4.30am, get there by 4.15am, at the latest.

CLASSES & COSTS

All buses have just one class. Showing up on the morning of travel (about an hour prior to departure for heavily travelled routes) is generally enough to ensure you get a place. If you are choosy about your seat or want one in the front, get to the departure point earlier.

Sample journey fares and times: Maputo to Inhambane (US\$9, seven hours); Nampula to Pemba (US\$7, seven hours); Maputo to Beira (US\$30, 18 hours). For schedule information, see individual town listings.

Car & Motorcycle

BRING YOUR OWN VEHICLE

In addition to a passport and driving licence, drivers need third-party insurance, a temporary import permit, the original vehicle registration papers and an authorisation document from the rental agency or registered vehicle owner, plus two red hazard triangles in the boot. If you're towing a trailer or boat, a hazard triangle needs to be displayed on your front bumper and at the back of the trailer, and trailers also require reflective tape. You'll also need a sticker on the back of the vehicle (or at the end of the trailer) showing the country of registration (eg ZA for South Africa).

Temporary import permits (TIP, about US\$2) and third-party insurance (US\$23 to US\$31 for 30 days, depending on vehicle size; trailers from US\$12) are available at most land borders, and you'll be required to show the paperwork at all checkpoints (and will be fined if you can't produce it). Fees can be paid in meticaís, US dollars or the local currency of the country you are leaving. As some smaller border posts don't always issue third-party insurance, it's worth arranging this in advance with your local automobile association if planning to enter Mozambique via an out-of-the-way routing. If you find yourself in Mozambique without it, contact **Holland Seguros** (☎ 21-313114; www.holland.co.za) to help you sort it out.

DRIVING LICENCE

You'll need either a South African or an international driving licence to drive in Mozambique. Those staying longer than six months will need a Mozambique driving licence.

FUEL & SPARE PARTS

Petrol is a scarce commodity off main roads, especially in the north. Diesel supplies are cheaper and more reliable. Always carry an extra jerry can or two and tank up at every opportunity, as filling stations run out with some frequency. Or sometimes the fuel may be there but, if there's a power outage, it may not be accessible. In some places, the only choice will be petrol sold from roadside *barracas*

DOMESTIC DEPARTURE TAX

Departure tax on domestic flights is US\$8, payable in US dollars, meticaís or rand.

(stalls); watch for petrol that has been mixed with water or kerosene. Unleaded fuel (*gasolina sem chumbo*) is available in major centres, but not elsewhere. Fuel prices in Mozambique average US\$1 per litre for petrol, somewhat less for diesel.

A limited supply of spare parts is available in Maputo and in major towns. Otherwise, they'll need to be ordered from South Africa.

HIRE

There are rental agencies in Maputo, Beira, Nampula and Pemba, most of which take credit cards. Elsewhere, you can usually arrange something with upscale hotels. Rates start at US\$100 per day for 4WD, excluding fuel. No rental agencies offer unlimited kilometres. Rental cars from Mozambique can be brought into South Africa and Swaziland, but not into other neighbouring countries. Let the rental agency know in advance so that they can prepare the necessary paperwork.

INSURANCE

All private vehicles entering Mozambique are required to purchase third-party insurance at the border (see Bring Your Own Vehicle, p301), which covers you to some degree in the event of hitting a pedestrian or another Mozambican vehicle. It's also advisable to take out good insurance coverage at home or (for rental vehicles) with the rental agency to cover damage to the vehicle, yourself and your possessions. Car-rental agencies in Mozambique have wildly differing policies (some offer no insurance at all, those that do often have high deductibles and most won't cover off-road driving) so inquire before signing any agreements. If renting in South Africa, ask whether Mozambique is included in the coverage.

PURCHASE

High duties and associated costs, as well as problems with stolen cars, make it not really worth considering purchasing a vehicle in Mozambique for most travellers. If you will be in Mozambique for an extended period, embassy notice boards are the best place to check for ads for used vehicles. As many of these will have been imported under special tax provisions applicable to diplomats, check out the fees and taxes you'll need to pay in addition to the selling price.

ROAD CONDITIONS

Mozambique's road network is steadily improving, and most southern coastal areas between Maputo and Vilankulo are reachable with 2WD, with the exception of some sandy resort access roads. A 2WD vehicle is also fine for the roads connecting Nampula, Nacala, Ilha de Moçambique and Pemba, for the Beira corridor, and for the Tete corridor between Harare (Zimbabwe) and Tete. For most other routes, you'll need 4WD with high clearance. However, all it takes is a heavy rainstorm or some flooding to change the road map, so ask around to get the latest updates.

Most of the main north-south highway has been sealed and is in reasonable to good shape except for the stretches between the Save River and Beira (under construction), from Caia north to Quelimane and on to Nampula (also under construction), and from Palma north to the Rovuma River. The Beira corridor (EN6) is generally good tarmac, except between Beira and Inchope (under construction). The road from Chimoio to Tete and Zóbuê is generally good tarmac, as is that from Tete to Harare.

From Lichinga to Cuamba and on to Nampula, the road is reasonably good to Mandimba, good from there into Cuamba, and in rough but reasonable condition from there on to Nampula. Milange to Mocuba is unpaved but fine during the dry season.

ROAD HAZARDS

Drunk driving is common, as are excessive speeds, and there are many road accidents. Armed robberies and carjackings are a risk, especially in Maputo. Throughout the country, travel as early in the day as possible, and avoid driving at night. If you must drive at night, use appropriate speeds, watch for pedestrians and obstacles (including parked vehicles with no lights) in the middle of the road and keep the doors locked and windows up. Tree branches in the road are the local version of flares or hazard lights, and mean there's a stopped vehicle, crater-sized pothole or similar calamity ahead. For public transport, where there's a choice, always take buses rather than chapas.

ROAD RULES

In theory, traffic in Mozambique drives on the left. At roundabouts, traffic in the roundabout has the right of way (again, in theory). There's a seatbelt requirement for the driver

and front-seat passenger. Speed limits (usually 80km/h on main roads, and 50km/h or less when passing through towns) are enforced by radar, and should be strictly adhered to as controls are frequent. Fines for speeding and seatbelt and other traffic infringements vary, and should always be negotiated (in a polite, friendly way), keeping in mind that the standard speeding fine is about US\$20. In addition to avoiding fines, another reason to limit your speed is to escape axle-shattering potholes that can appear out of nowhere, or children or livestock running unexpectedly into the road.

Although the rule is frequently violated, driving on the beach is illegal (fines are about US\$80), and driving off-road anywhere isn't recommended because of the risk of land mines.

Hitching

In parts of rural Mozambique, your only transport option will be hitching a lift. See p764 for general considerations. In Mozambique, hitching is usually easy enough, though often quite slow off main routes. Payment for lifts is usually not expected, though it's best to clarify before getting in, and a small token of thanks, such as paying for a meal or making a contribution for petrol, is always appreciated. To flag a vehicle down, hold your hand out at about waist level and wave it up and down. Try to avoid hitching alone, especially women. Throughout the country, the prevalence of drunk drivers makes it worth trying to assess the driver's condition before getting into a vehicle.

Local Transport

The main form of local transport is the chapa – the name given to converted minivans or any other public transport that isn't a bus

or truck. On some routes, your only option will be a *camião* (truck). Many have open backs, and on long journeys the sun and dust can be brutal unless you get a seat upfront in the cab.

Chapas can be hailed down anywhere, and prices are fixed. Intra-city fares average US\$0.20; long-haul fares are usually slightly higher than the bus fare for the same route. Chapa drivers aren't known for their safe driving, and there are many accidents. If you have a choice, bus is always a better option.

Tours

All of the following companies organise travel to Mozambique, as well as in-country itineraries. Top-end hotels and lodges in Maputo and Pemba also offer fly-in packages from Johannesburg.

Dana Tours (www.danatours.net) Covers most of Mozambique, plus Mozambique-South Africa combination itineraries.

Makomo Safaris (www.makomo.com) Combination itineraries for northern Mozambique, southern Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi.

Mozambique Connection (www.mozambiqueconnection.co.za) Covers most of the country and all price ranges.

Ocean Island Safaris (www.oceanislandsafari.com) Luxury travel to the Quirimbas Archipelago, and itineraries combining Mozambique and other Indian Ocean islands.

Wildlife Adventures (www.wildlifeadventures.co.za) Coastal Mozambique, and itineraries combining Mozambique with elsewhere in Southern and East Africa.

Zambezia Travels (www.zambezia.ch) Focuses on central and northern Mozambique, including Gurúê, Mt Namúli, Cuamba and Ilha de Moçambique.

Train

The only passenger train regularly used by tourists is the slow line between Nampula and Cuamba; see p283.

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Namibia

Wedge between the Kalahari and the South Atlantic, Namibia enjoys both vast potential and promise as one of the youngest countries in Africa. In addition to a striking diversity of cultures and national origins, Namibia is also a photographer's dream – it boasts wild seascapes, rugged mountains, lonely deserts, stunning wildlife, colonial cities and nearly unlimited elbow room.

A predominantly arid country, Namibia can be divided into four main topographical regions: the Namib Desert and coastal plains in the west, the eastward-sloping Central Plateau, the Kalahari along the borders with South Africa and Botswana, and the densely wooded bushveld of the Kavango and Caprivi regions. Despite its harsh climate, Namibia has some of the world's grandest national parks, ranging from the wildlife-rich Etosha National Park to the dune fields and desert plains of the Namib-Naukluft Park.

The Namib is one of the oldest and driest deserts in the world, and is the result of the Benguela Current sweeping north from Antarctica, which captures and condenses humid air that would otherwise be blown ashore. Its western strip is a sea of sand comprised mainly of apricot-coloured dunes interspersed with dry pans. However, the barren and inhospitable landscapes of the Namib are markedly different from those present in the Kalahari. Unlike the Namib, the Sahara and other 'true' deserts, the Kalahari is a semi-arid landscape that is covered with trees and crisscrossed by ephemeral rivers and fossil watercourses. It is one of the continent's most prominent geographical features, and stretches across parts of Congo, Angola, Zambia, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

FAST FACTS

- **Area:** 825,000 sq km
- **Capital:** Windhoek
- **Country code:** ☎ 264
- **Famous for:** Namib Desert, Kalahari, Etosha Pan
- **Languages:** English, Afrikaans, German, Oshivambo, Herero, Nama
- **Money:** Namibian dollar (N\$)
- **Phrase:** Howzit? (How are you?)
- **Population:** 1.83 million



HOW MUCH?

- **Dune surfing** US\$25
- **Foreign newspaper** US\$1.70
- **Night in a budget hotel** US\$12.50
- **Package of kudu biltong** US\$1
- **Traditional German dinner** US\$6

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L of petrol** US\$0.75
- **1L of bottled water** US\$0.50-1
- **Bottle of beer** US\$1
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$5-10
- **Snack** US\$1-2

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Sossusvlei** (p371) Watch the sun rise from the tops of flaming red dunes on the edge of ephemeral salt pans.
- **Etosha National Park** (p332) Go on a self-drive safari in one of the continent's premier wildlife venues.
- **Swakopmund** (p355) Get your adrenaline fix at this popular extreme-sports capital of Namibia.
- **Fish River Canyon** (p385) Test your endurance on the five-day hike through one of the world's largest canyons.
- **Off the beaten track** (p354) Leave the sealed road along the Skeleton Coast, a desolate strip of fog-covered coastline.

ITINERARIES

- **Three Days** Namibia's tourist highlight is the expansive sand sea of the **Namib** (see p373), and if you have only a few days to visit, this is where you'll want to focus. From **Sesriem** (p371), spend a day hiking through the dunes, or arrange for a scenic flyover from the beach town of **Swakopmund** (p355).
- **One Week** Combine a visit to the Namib with a safari through **Etosha National Park** (p332), one of the continent's most distinctive safari experiences. Splurge on a rental car, and get ready for some hair-raising, self-driven good times.
- **One Month** With a month, you can hire a 4WD or use a reputable safari company and see the best of the country: take a tour of the **Namib** (p373), splurge on some

extreme sports in **Swakopmund** (p360), take a safari through **Etosha** (p332), hike the **Fish River Canyon** (p385) and go on an expedition through the northwest and along the **Skeleton Coast** (p354).

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Namibia's climatic variations correspond roughly to its geographical subdivisions. In the arid Central Namib, summer daytime temperatures may climb to over 40°C, but can fall to below freezing during the night. Rainfall is heaviest in the northeast, which enjoys a subtropical climate, and along the Okavango River, rainfall reaches over 600mm annually. The northern and interior regions experience the 'little rains' between October and December, while the main stormy period occurs from January to April.

Note that accommodation is frequently booked out in national parks and other tourist areas, especially during public holidays. The busiest times are consistently during the Namibian, South African (see p585) and European school holidays. See p742 for more on the climate in Southern Africa.

HISTORY

For information on the general history of Southern Africa, see p37.

The Scramble for Africa

The Germans, under chancellor Otto von Bismarck, were late entering the European scramble for Africa. Bismarck had always been against colonies; he considered them an expensive illusion, famously stating, 'My map of Africa is here in Europe. Here is Russia and here is France and here we are in the middle. That is my map of Africa.' But he was to be pushed into an ill-starred colonial venture by the actions of a Bremen merchant called Adolf Lüderitz.

Having already set up a trading station in Lagos in 1881, Lüderitz convinced the Nama chief, Joseph Fredericks, to sell Angra Pequena, where Lüderitz established his second station trading in the stinking guano of thousands of cormorants who nest along the coast. He then petitioned the German chancellor for protection. Bismarck, still trying to stay out of Africa, politely requested the British at Walvis Bay to say whether they had any interest in the matter but they never bothered to reply and in 1884 the newly named Lüderitz was officially declared part of the German Empire.

later a South African administration was set up in Windhoek.

By 1920, many German farms had been sold to Afrikaans-speaking settlers and the German diamond-mining interests in the south were handed over to the South Africa-based Consolidated Diamond Mines (CDM), which retains the concession rights to the present day.

South African Occupation

Under the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, Germany was required to renounce all its colonial claims, and in 1921 the League of Nations granted South Africa a formal mandate to administer Namibia as part of the Union. After a brief rebellion in 1924, the Basters at Rehoboth, who were descendants of liaisons between the Cape Colony Dutch and indigenous African women, were granted some measure of autonomy, and the following year the territorial constitution was amended to permit South Africa to set up a territorial legislature.

The mandate was renewed by the UN following WWII. However, South Africa was more interested in annexing Southwest Africa as a full province in the Union and decided to scrap the terms of the mandate and rewrite the constitution. In response, the International Court of Justice determined that South Africa had overstepped its boundaries and the UN established the Committee on South West Africa to enforce the original terms of the mandate. In 1956, the UN decided that South African control should be terminated.

Undeterred, the South African government tightened its grip on the territory, and in 1949 granted the white population parliamentary representation in Pretoria. The bulk of Namibia's viable farmland was parcelled into some 6000 farms for white settlers, while other ethnic groups were relegated to newly demarcated 'tribal homelands'. The official intent was ostensibly to 'channel economic development into predominantly poor rural areas', but it was all too obvious that it was, in fact, simply a convenient way of retaining the majority of the country for white settlement and ranching.

As a result, a prominent line of demarcation appeared between the predominantly white ranching lands in the central and southern parts of the country, and the poorer but

better-watered tribal areas to the north. Perhaps the only positive result of this effective imposition of tribal boundaries was the prevention of territorial disputes between previously mobile groups now forced to live under the same political entity. This arrangement was retained until Namibian independence in 1990, and to some extent continues up to the present day.

Swapo

Throughout the 1950s, despite mounting pressure from the UN, South Africa refused to release its grip on Namibia. This intransigence was based on its fears of having yet another antagonistic government on its doorstep and of losing the income that it derived from the mining operations there.

Forced labour had been the lot of most Namibians since German annexation, and was one of the main factors that led to mass demonstrations and the increasingly nationalist sentiments during the late 1950s. Among the parties was the Owamboland People's Congress, founded in Cape Town under the leadership of Samuel Daniel Shafishuna Nujoma and Adimba Herman Toivo ja Toivo.

In 1959, the party's name was changed to the Owamboland People's Organisation and Nujoma took the issue of South African occupation to the UN in New York. By 1960, his party had gathered the support of several others and they eventually coalesced into the South West African People's Organisation (Swapo) with its headquarters located in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania). Troops were sent to Egypt for military training and the organisation prepared for war.

In 1966, Swapo took the issue of South African occupation to the International Court of Justice. The court upheld South Africa's right to govern South West Africa, but the UN General Assembly voted to terminate South Africa's mandate and replace it with a Council for South West Africa (renamed the Commission for Namibia in 1973) to administer the territory.

In response, on 26 August 1966 (now called Heroes' Day), Swapo launched its campaign of guerrilla warfare at Ongulumbashe in the Owambo region of northern Namibia. The next year, one of Swapo's founders, Toivo ja Toivo, was convicted of terrorism and imprisoned in South Africa, where he would remain

until 1984; Nujoma stayed in Tanzania. In 1972, the UN finally declared the South African occupation of Southwest Africa officially illegal and called for a withdrawal, proclaiming Swapo the legitimate representative of the Namibian people.

In 1975 the independence of Angola finally gave Swapo a safe base just across the border from the action in Namibia, which enabled them to step up their guerrilla campaign. South Africa responded by invading Angola in support of the opposition party Unita (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola). The attempt failed, and by March 1976 the troops had been withdrawn, although incursions continued well into the 1980s.

In the end, however, it was not the activities of Swapo alone or international sanctions that forced the South Africans to the negotiating table. People were growing tired of the war and the economy was suffering badly. South Africa's internal problems also had a significant effect. By 1985, the war was costing some R480 million (around US\$250 million) per year and conscription was widespread. Mineral exports, which once provided around 88% of the country's GDP, had plummeted to just 27% by 1984.

Independence

In December 1988 a deal was finally struck between Cuba, Angola, South Africa and Swapo that provided for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and South African troops from Namibia. It also stipulated that the transition to Namibian independence would formally begin on 1 April 1989, and would be followed by UN-monitored elections held in November 1989 on the basis of universal suffrage. Although minor score-settling and unrest among some Swapo troops threatened to derail the whole process, the plan went ahead and in September, Samuel Nujoma returned from his 30-year exile. In the elections, Swapo garnered two-thirds of the votes but the numbers were insufficient to give the party the sole mandate to write the new constitution, an outcome that went some way to allaying fears that Namibia's minority groups would be excluded from the democratic process.

Following negotiations between the Constituent Assembly (which was soon to become the National Assembly) and international

advisers including the USA, France, Germany and the USSR, a constitution was drafted. The new constitution established a multiparty system and an impressive bill of rights, covering provisions for protection of the environment, the rights of families and children, freedom of religion, speech and the press, and a host of other matters. It also limited the presidential executive to two five-year terms. The new constitution was adopted in February 1990 and independence was granted a month later, with Sam Nujoma being sworn in as Namibia's first president.

In 1999, Swapo won 76.8% of the vote, although concerns arose when President Nujoma amended the constitution to allow himself a rather unconstitutional third presidential term.

In 2004 the world watched warily to see if Nujoma would cling to the office of power for a fourth term, and an almost audible sigh of relief could be heard in Namibia when he announced that he would finally be stepping down in favour of his chosen successor Hifikepunye Pohamba.

THE CULTURE

The National Psyche

On a national level, Namibia is still struggling to attain a cohesive identity. History weighs heavy on generations who grew up during the struggle for independence. As a result, some formidable tensions endure between various social and racial groups. Although most travellers will be greeted with great warmth and curiosity, some people may experience unpleasant racism or apparently unwarranted hostility (this is not confined to black/white relations but can affect travellers of all ethnicities as Namibia's ethnic groups are extremely varied in colour).

Acquainting yourself with Namibia's complex and often turbulent past will hopefully alert you to potentially difficult or awkward situations. Taking care to follow basic etiquette such as dressing appropriately (see p310), greeting people warmly or learning a few words of the local languages will also stand you in good stead.

Socially, Namibians enjoy a rock-solid sense of community thanks to the clan-based system. Members of your clan are people you can turn to in times of need. Conversely, if someone from your clan is in trouble you are obligated to help; this may mean providing

food for someone who is hungry, care for someone who is sick, or even the adoption of an orphaned child in some cases. This inclusivity also extends to others – any traveller who is willing is sure to be asked to participate in a spontaneous game of football or a family meal.

Such an all-embracing social structure also means that the family nucleus is less important. Indeed many Namibian ‘families’ will include innumerable aunts and uncles, some of whom might even be referred to as mother or father. Likewise, cousins and siblings are interchangeable and in some rural areas men may have dozens of children, some of whom they might not even recognise. In fact, it is this fluid system that has enabled families to deal in some way with the devastation wreaked by the AIDS crisis.

Daily Life

On the whole Namibians are conservative and god-fearing people (90% of the country is Christian, with about 10% of people following indigenous belief systems). Education is technically compulsory for all children (the literacy rate is 84%) and the motivation to get a good education is high. Since independence the government has built some 832 classrooms and 700 literacy centres around the country and now at least 80% of the population is receiving a basic primary-school education. But getting an education is by no means easy for everyone and for families living in remote rural areas it often means that very young children must be sent to schools far away, where they board in hostels.

Most Namibians still live in homesteads in rural areas and lead typical village lives. Villages tend to be family- and clan-based and are presided over by an elected *elenga* (headman). The *elenga* is responsible for local affairs, everything from settling disputes to determining how communal lands are managed. He in turn reports to a senior headman, who represents a larger district comprised of several dozen villages. This system functions alongside Namibia’s regional government bodies and enables traditional lifestyles to flourish side by side with the country’s modern civic system.

Modesty in dress and manner are important in Namibia. T-shirts and shorts are unheard of and while foreign men may *just* be able to pull it off, you may feel like the only person at the wedding who came in casual dress! Modest dress is required of women, but probably to an even greater degree. Keeping up appearances is also all-important and extends from dressing well, behaving modestly, performing religious and social duties to fulfilling all essential family obligations.

A Woman’s Place

Namibian society is unquestionably patriarchal, although women have traditionally worked hard to contribute to the family income. As head of the family, men are expected to project their authority through material wealth, charisma or often just their own physical size. Status – according to profession, wealth and family – is also important. One of the key obstacles to the AIDS outreach programme was convincing men with local

status to get tested, the objection being that they were ‘uncomfortable with youngsters or junior officers coming to them and telling them to go for testing’. Being disrespectful to or undermining one’s elders or social and professional superiors is a heinous social crime.

In a culture where male power is mythologised, it’s unsurprising that women’s rights lag behind. It’s not uncommon for men to have multiple partners and, until recently, in cases where women and their children were abandoned by their husbands there was very little course for redress. Part of the problem was that Namibia inherited the rather backward Roman-Dutch law that governed the country during apartheid. However, since independence the Namibian government has been committed to improving women’s rights with bills like the Married Persons Equality Act (1996), which equalised property rights and gave women equal rights of custody over their children.

However, the government acknowledges that achieving gender equality is more about changing grassroots attitudes than passing laws, as a survey into domestic violence in 2000 revealed. Of the women interviewed for the survey in Lüderitz, Karasburg and Keetmanshoop, 25% said they had been abused or raped by their husbands. Endemic social problems, such as poverty, alcohol abuse and the feeling of powerlessness engendered by long-term unemployment, only serve to increase feelings of disaffection and fuel the flames of abuse. And although the government passed one of the most comprehensive rape acts in the world in the same year, it remains to be seen how effectively the laws are enforced.

Population

Namibia’s population in 2006 was estimated to be 2.04 million. This figure takes into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS, which became the leading cause of death in Namibia in 1996. With approximately two people per square kilometre Namibia has one of Africa’s lowest population densities, with an annual population growth rate of over 2.3% according to the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2006.

The population of Namibia comprises 11 major ethnic groups. The majority of people come from the Owambo tribe (50%), with the

other ethnic groups making up a relatively small percentage of the population: Kavango (9%), Herero/Himba (7%), Damara (7%), Caprivian (4%), Nama (5%), Afrikaner and German (6%), Baster (6.5%), San (1%) and Tswana (0.5%).

Although this ethnic diversity is overlain with Western cultural influences, since independence there have been efforts to emphasise the history and traditions of each group. About 75% of the people inhabit rural areas, but urban drift in search of work or higher wages has resulted in increased homelessness, unemployment and crime in the capital and other towns.

Like nearly all other African nations Namibia is struggling to contain its HIV/AIDS epidemic, which is impacting heavily on average life expectancy and population-growth rates. According to the WHO, life expectancy in Namibia has dropped to a shocking 54 years, although some sources place it as low as 46. In 2003 it was estimated that about 21% of the population were HIV-positive and by 2021 it is estimated that up to a third of Namibia’s children under the age of 15 could be orphaned.

RELIGION

About 80% to 90% of Namibians profess to being Christians, and German Lutheranism is the dominant sect in most of the country. As a result of early missionary activity and Portuguese influence from Angola, there is also a substantial Roman Catholic population, mainly in the central and northern areas.

Most non-Christian Namibians – mainly Himba, San and some Herero – live in the north and continue to follow animist traditions. In general, their beliefs are characterised by ancestor-veneration, and most practitioners believe that deceased ancestors continue to interact with the living and serve as messengers between their descendants and the gods.

ARTS & CRAFTS

Namibia is still in the process of developing a literary tradition, but its musical, visual and architectural arts are fairly well established. The country also enjoys a wealth of amateur talent in the production of material arts, including carvings, basketware and tapestry, along with simple but resourcefully designed and produced toys, clothing and household implements.

MOVERS & SHAKERS: SAMUEL NUJOMA

Samuel Daniel Shafiishuna Nujoma was born on 12 May 1929 in the small village of Ongandjera in Owambo. His first rise to power was in the 1950s when he assumed control of the Owamboland People’s Organisation (OPO), which aimed to end the South African occupation of Southwest Africa, and to resist the implementation of apartheid. In 1960, OPO developed into the South West African People’s Organisation (Swapo), and began its multidecade campaign of guerrilla warfare under the helm of Nujoma and other Namibia patriots. During the struggle, Nujoma took the combat name ‘Shafiishuna’, which means lightning in the Owambo language.

Following independence, Nujoma was unanimously declared president after Swapo’s victory in a UN-supervised election in 1989, and was sworn in by UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar on 21 March 1990. Nujoma was re-elected in 1994 and in 1999 after changing the constitution of Namibia to allow a third five-year term. In 2005, he stepped down despite having an approval rating of over 75%, and hand-picked his successor, the current Namibian president Hifikepunye Pohamba. Nujoma has stepped out of the limelight, and is studying geology at the University of Windhoek in the hopes of improving Namibia’s lucrative mining sector.

Music

Namibia's earliest musicians were the San, whose music probably emulated the sounds made by their animal neighbours and was sung to accompany dances and storytelling. The early Nama, who had a more developed musical technique, used drums, flutes and basic stringed instruments, also to accompany dances. Some of these techniques were later adapted by Bantu peoples, who added marimbas, gourd rattles and animal-horn trumpets to the range. A prominent European contribution to Namibian music is the choir; the German colonists also introduced their traditional 'oom-pah-pah' bands, which feature mainly at German festivals.

For more information on music in Southern Africa, see p52.

Architecture

The most obvious architectural contribution in Namibia was made by the German colonists, who attempted to re-create late 19th-century Germany along the desert coast. In deference to the warmer climate, however, they added features such as shaded verandas to provide a cool outdoor living space. The best examples can be seen in Lüderitz, Swakopmund and Windhoek. The most memorable structures were built in Wilhelminischer Stil and Jugendstil (Art Nouveau) styles.

Painting & Sculpture

Most of Namibia's renowned modern painters and photographers are of European origin; they mainly interpret the country's colourful landscapes, bewitching light, native wildlife and diverse peoples. Artists include François de Mecker, Axel Eriksson, Fritz Krampe and Adolph Jentsch, as well as colonial landscape artists Carl Ossman and Ernst Vollbehr. Non-European rural Namibians, on the other hand, have generally concentrated on wood and stone sculpture. Township art, which develops sober themes in an expressive, colourful and generally light-hearted manner, first appeared in the townships of South Africa during the apartheid years. Names to watch out for include Tembo Masala and Joseph Madisia, among others.

Dance

Each Namibian group has its own dances, but common threads run through most of them. San dancing tends to mimic the animals

they hunt. The Himba *ondjongo* dance is performed only by cattle owners, who dance to demonstrate the care and ownership of their animals. Herero dances feature the *outjina* for women and *otjipirangi* for men, in which dancers strap planks to one foot in order to deliver a hollow, rhythmic percussion. In the Kavango and Caprivi regions, traditional dancing involves rhythmic and exaggerated stamping and gyrating, accompanied by repetitive chanting and a pervasive drumbeat.

ENVIRONMENT The Land

The Namib is one of the oldest and driest deserts in the world, and is the result of Benguela Current sweeping north from Antarctica, which captures and condenses humid air that would otherwise be blown ashore. Its western strip is a sea of sand comprised mainly of apricot-coloured dunes interspersed with dry pans, of which Sossusvlei is the best known. In fact, the oft-photographed dunes near Sossusvlei, which tower 300m above the underlying strata, are regarded as among the tallest in the world.

The barren and inhospitable landscapes of the Namib are markedly different from those of the Kalahari. Unlike the Namib, the Sahara and other 'true' deserts, the Kalahari is a semi-arid landscape that is covered with trees and crisscrossed by ephemeral rivers and fossil watercourses. It is one of the continent's most prominent geographical features, and stretches across parts of Congo, Angola, Zambia, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Wildlife

Etosha, Namibia's greatest wildlife park, contains a variety of antelope species, as well as other African ungulates, carnivores and pachyderms. Damaraland, in the northwest, is home to antelopes and other ungulates, and also harbours desert rhinos, elephants and other species that have specially adapted to the arid climate. Hikers in the Naukluft Massif may catch sight of the elusive Hartmann's mountain zebra, and along the desert coast live jackass penguins, flamingoes, Cape fur seals and the rare *strandwulf* (brown hyena).

As Namibia is mostly arid, its typical vegetation features mainly scrubby bushveld and succulents such as *Euphorbia*. Some unique

floral oddities include the kokerboom (quiver tree; see the boxed text, p378), which is a species of aloe, and the bizarre *Welwitschia mirabilis* (the welwitschia plant). Along the coastal plain around Swakopmund lie the world's most extensive and diverse lichen fields; in dry weather, they appear to be merely plant skeletons, but with the addition of water they burst into colourful bloom.

National Parks

Despite its harsh climate, Namibia has some of the world's grandest national parks, ranging from the world-famous wildlife-oriented Etosha National Park to the immense Namib-Naukluft Park, which protects vast dunefields, desert plains, wild mountains and unique flora. There are also the smaller reserves of the Caprivi region, the renowned Skeleton Coast Park and the awe-inspiring Fish River Canyon, which ranks among Africa's most spectacular sights.

In addition to national parks, Namibia has a network of conservancies, which are individual farms supporting either tourist lodges or hunting opportunities. Examples of these are the 200,000-hectare Namib-Rand Nature Reserve and the 102,000-hectare Gondwana Cañon Park.

Access to most wildlife-oriented parks is limited to enclosed vehicles only; no bicycles or motorcycles are allowed. For some parks, such as Etosha and Namib-Naukluft, a 2WD is sufficient, but you need a 4WD in Mambili National Park and the Khaudom Game Reserve.

Facilities in Namibian national parks are operated by the semiprivate **Namibia Wildlife Resorts** (NWR; ☎ 061-2857000; reservations@mweb.com.na; Independence Ave, Windhoek; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri). When booking park camp sites or accommodation by post, phone, fax or email, include your passport number; the number of people in your group (including the ages of any children); your full address, telephone/fax number or email address; the type of accommodation required; and dates of arrival and departure (including alternative dates). Bookings may be made up to 12 months in advance. Fees must be paid by bank transfer or credit card before the bookings will be confirmed. Note that camping fees are good for up to four people; each additional person up to eight people will be charged extra. In addition, parks charge a daily admission fee

per person and per vehicle, payable when you enter the park.

Prebooking is always advised for national parks. While you may be able to pick up accommodation at the last minute by just turning up at the park gates, it isn't recommended (especially for Etosha and Sesriem). Note that pets aren't permitted in any wildlife-oriented park.

Environmental Issues

With a small human population spread over a large land area, Namibia is in better environmental shape than most African countries, but challenges remain. The Ministry of Environment & Tourism (MET) is largely a holdover from pre-independence days and its policies strongly reflect those of its South African counterpart. Although changes are afoot, at the time of research the country still lacked coherent environmental guidelines.

While local people are increasingly seeing more benefits from wildlife-oriented tourism, their activities in and around protected areas continue to affect local ecosystems. Many ranchers in the south view wildlife as a nuisance, while people in the more densely populated north see wildlife reserves as potential settlement areas and wildlife itself as a food resource, and a threat to crops and human life.

In the wilder areas of Damaraland and Kaokoveld, which aren't officially protected, the desert lion is now extinct, but small numbers of desert elephants and black rhinos still roam freely. Although the white rhino was wiped out in Namibia prior to 1900, some have now been reintroduced into Waterberg and Etosha parks and are doing relatively well. Namibia was a pioneer in using dehorning to protect its rhino, but happily, recent declines in the international market for rhino horn have made such measures less relevant than in the past. The nongovernmental **Save the Rhino Trust** (☎ 064-403829; www.rhino-trust.org.na) and the **Desert Research Foundation of Namibia** (☎ 061-229855; drfn@drfn.org.na) both promote conservation education.

Although Namibia's lion population fluctuates greatly from season to season, the lions in Etosha National Park are free of both feline immunodeficiency virus (a feline form of HIV) and canine distemper virus (which has killed 30% of the lions in some Tanzanian parks).

Other major environmental issues involve projects designed to provide water and power resources for the country's growing industrial and human needs. It appears that the Kunene River dam project has now been shelved, but Namibia continues to examine the possibilities of bringing water to populated areas from the country's five perennial rivers.

See p26 for information on travelling responsibly in Southern Africa.

FOOD & DRINK

Food

Outside Windhoek and Swakopmund, you'll find few gourmet pretences. Most hotels serve three meals, but menus are usually meat-oriented and are rarely very creative. For a treat, try one of the German-style *konditorei* (pastry shops) in Windhoek or Swakopmund, or one of the pleasant cafés that exist in most towns.

Small hotels normally provide a cooked breakfast with cereal and toast, and big hotels may include a buffet breakfast. In addition to bread, cereals, fruit, yogurt and cold meat, they may offer kippers (smoked kingclip) and mielie meal (porridge, also called *pap*). Cooked breakfasts always include eggs, bacon and boerewors (farmers' sausages), as well as steaks and often even curried kidneys.

For lunch, many people go for takeaway snacks, which may include fish and chips, meat pies and sandwiches in *brötchen* (little bread rolls). Evening meals normally feature meat, and restaurants serve typically high-quality cuts. Fish (normally kingclip) is best eaten in Swakopmund or Lüderitz, where it's probably fresh. Chicken is often prepared with a fiery piri-piri sauce.

Drinks

NONALCOHOLIC DRINKS

Tap water is generally safe to drink, but in some locations it may be salty or otherwise unappealing, especially in desert areas and around Windhoek and Etosha. Packaged fruit juices provide an alternative. Every café and takeaway serves coffee and tea, as well as the strong herbal tea known as rooibos (red bush).

ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

Namibia's dry heat means big sales for Namibia Breweries. The most popular drop is Windhoek Lager, a light and refreshing

lager-style beer, but the brewery also produces Tafel Lager, the stronger and more bitter Windhoek Export and the slightly rough Windhoek Special. Windhoek Light (a tasty beer with just 2% alcohol) and the similarly light Das Pilsner are both drunk as soft drinks. The same brewery also produces a 7% stout known as Urbock.

Namibia Breweries' main competitor is Hansa, in Swakopmund, which produces both standard and export-strength beer. South African beers such as Lion, Castle and Black Label are widely available and you'll also find a range of refreshing spirit coolers and typically excellent and great-value South African wines. The best place to buy beer, wine or spirits is a *drankwinkel* (bottle store), but small convenience shops may also sell beer and coolers.

In the rural areas – especially the Owambo regions – people socialise in tiny makeshift bars, enjoying such traditional local brews as *oshikundu* (millet beer), *mataku* (watermelon wine), *tambo* (fermented millet and sugar), *mushokolo* (a beer made from small seeds), and *walende*, which is distilled from the makalani palm and tastes similar to vodka. Apart from *walende*, all of these rural confections are brewed in the morning and drunk the same day, and they're all dirt cheap – around US\$0.20 per glass.

WINDHOEK

☎ 061 / pop 240,000

Namibia's Central Highlands are dominated by its small, German-influenced capital, Windhoek, which serves as the country's geographical heart and commercial nerve centre. Set among low hills at an elevation of 1660m, the capital city enjoys dry, clean air, a healthy highland climate and an optimistic outlook that sets an example for all of Africa.

Windhoek's population reflects the country's ethnic mix: on the city streets, you will see Owambo, Kavango, Herero, Damara and Caprivian peoples, together with Nama, San, coloureds and Europeans, all contributing to the hustle and bustle – but only during working hours. While Windhoek provides about as much action as Namibia has to offer, 'vibrant' probably isn't the best word to describe its surprisingly staid and orderly capital city.

HISTORY

Windhoek has only existed for just over a century. The modern name Windhoek, or 'windy corner', was corrupted from the original 'Winterhoek' during the German colonial occupation. At that time, it became the headquarters for the German Schutztruppe, which was ostensibly charged with brokering peace between the warring Herero and Nama. For over 10 years around the turn of the 20th century, Windhoek served as the administrative capital of German South-West Africa.

ORIENTATION

Central Windhoek is bisected by Independence Ave, where most shopping and administrative functions are concentrated. The shopping district is focused on the pedestrianised Post St Mall and the nearby Gustav Voigts Centre, Wernhill Park Centre and Levinson Arcade. Zoo Park, beside the main post office, provides a green lawn and shady lunch spots.

Maps

Free city maps are available from the tourist office on Post St Mall. You can buy topographic sheets (US\$3 for maps and US\$2.50 for photocopies) for much of Namibia from the office of the **Surveyor General** (☎ 245055; fax 290 2050; cnr Robert Mugabe Ave & Lazarett St).

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Windhoek Book Den (Map p318; ☎ 239976; wbd@mweb.com.na) Just off Post St Mall, the best place to look for novels, European and African literature, and travel books.

Emergency

Ambulance & Fire Brigade (☎ 211111)

Crime report (☎ 290 2239) 24-hour phone service.

Police (☎ 228328)

Police – national (☎ 10111)

Internet Access

Most backpackers' hostels also offer internet and email services. You can also try **Club Internet** (Map p318; Bülow St; per hr US\$3; ☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Fri, 9am–2pm Sat), near John Meinert St.

Laundry

Tauben Glen Laundrette (Map p316; ☎ 252115) At Village Sq.

Medical Services

Rhino Park Private Hospital (Map p316; ☎ 225434; Sauer St) Provides excellent care and service, but patients must pay up-front.

Windhoek State Hospital (Map p316; ☎ 303 9111) An option for those who are short of cash but have time to wait; the hospital is located off Harvey Rd.

Money

Major banks and bureaux de change are concentrated around Independence Ave, and all will change foreign currency and travellers cheques and give credit-card advances. First National Bank's BOB and other ATM systems handle Visa, MasterCard and home ATM transactions.

Post & Telephone

The modern main post office on Independence Ave (Map p318) can readily handle overseas post. It also has telephone boxes in the lobby, and next door is the Telecommunications Office, where you can make international calls and send or receive faxes.

Tourist Information

Namibia Tourism (Map p318; ☎ 220640, 284 2360; www.namibiatourism.com.au; Independence Ave, Private Bag 13346) The national tourist office; can provide information from all over the country.

Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR; Map p318; ☎ 285 7000; reservations@mweb.com.na; cnr John Meinert & Moltke Sts) In the Oode Voorpost. Books national park accommodation and hikes.

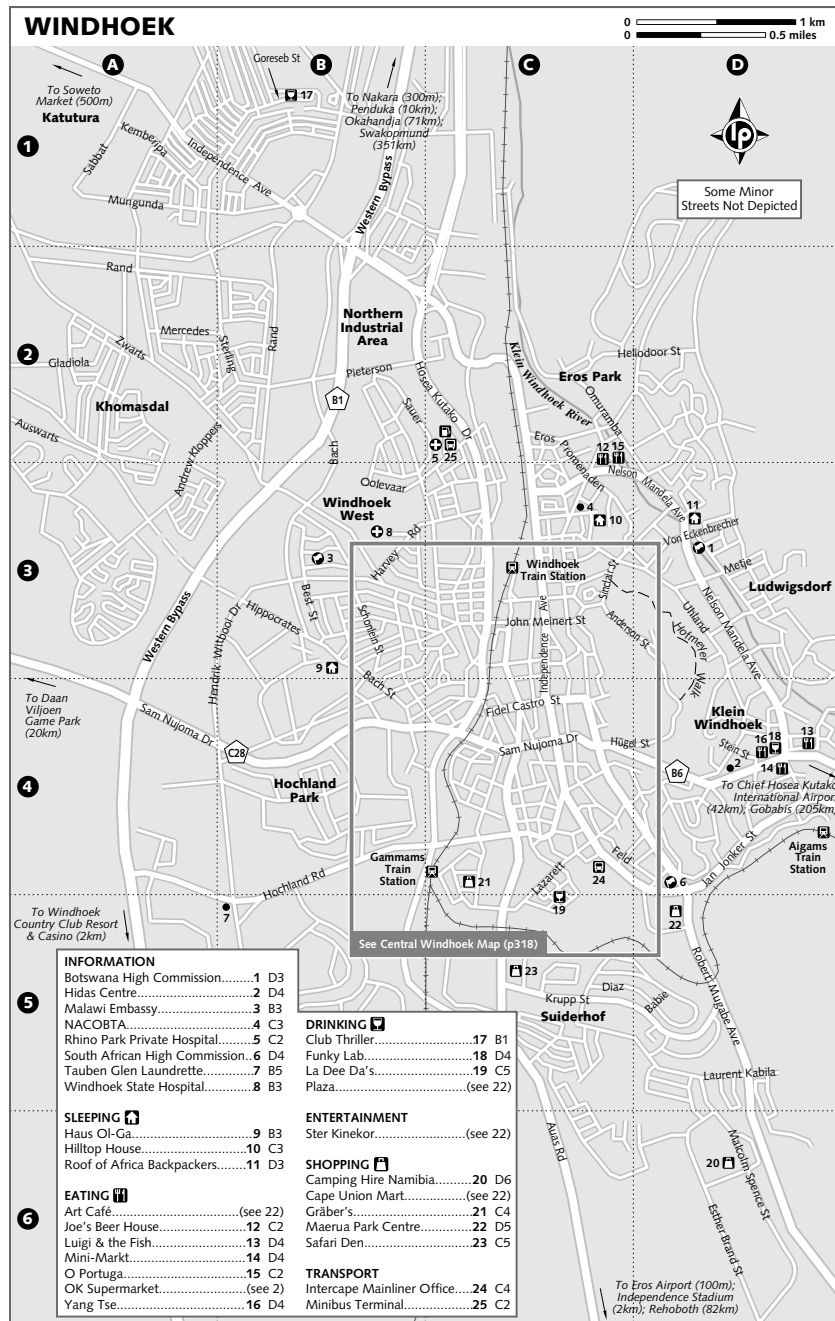
Windhoek Information & Publicity Office (Map p318; ☎ 290 2058; fax 290 2050; Post St Mall) This friendly office answers questions and distributes local publications including *What's On in Windhoek*.

Travel Agencies

Cardboard Box Travel Shop (Map p318; ☎ 256580) Attached to the backpackers' hostel of the same name, this recommended travel agency can arrange both budget and upmarket bookings all over the country.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Windhoek is generally safe by day, but avoid going out alone at night, and be wary of newspaper sellers, who may shove the paper in your face as a distracting ruse. Don't use bum bags or carry swanky camera or video totes, and never leave anything of value visible in a vehicle. Parts of Katutura and other northwestern suburbs, where boredom and unemployment are rife, should be avoided unless you have



a local contact and/or a specific reason to go there.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Hofmeyer Walk

This walking track (Map p316) through Klein Windhoek Valley starts from either Sinclair St or Uhland St and heads south through the bushland to finish at the point where Orban St becomes Anderson St. It takes about an hour and affords a panoramic view over the city, as well as a look at the *Aloe littoralis* aloes, which characterise the hillside vegetation. Hikers have recently been robbed along this route, so don't go alone and avoid carrying valuables.

Christuskirche

One of Windhoek's most recognisable landmarks, the 1907 Christuskirche (Map p318) stands at the top of Fidel Castro St. This unusual building, constructed of local sandstone, was designed by Gottlieb Redecker in neogothic and Art Nouveau styles. To see the interior, pick up the key during business hours from the church office on Fidel Castro St.

Alte Feste & the Owela Museum

The whitewashed ramparts of the Alte Feste (National Museum of Namibia; Map p318), Windhoek's oldest surviving building, dates back to 1890–92. It originally served as the headquarters of the Schutztruppe, which arrived in 1889, but now houses the Historical Section of the **State Museum** (Map p318; ☎ 293 4437; Robert Mugabe Ave; admission by donation; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 3–6pm Sat & Sun). The other half of the State Museum, known as the **Owela Museum** (Map p318; ☎ 293 4358; 4 Lüderitz St; admission US\$1.20; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 3–6pm Sat & Sun), features exhibits that focus on Namibia's natural and anthropological history.

National Art Gallery

This **gallery** (Map p318; ☎/fax 240930; cnr Robert Mugabe Ave & John Meinert St; admission free; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9–11am Sat) contains a permanent collection of works that reflects Namibia's historical and natural scene. It also hosts visiting exhibitions.

Tintenpalast

Now the Parliament building, the Tintenpalast (Map p318) was designed by architect Gottlieb Redecker and built in 1912–13 as

the administrative headquarters for German South-West Africa. The name, 'ink palace', honours the ink spent on the typically bureaucratic paperwork it generated. It has also served as the nerve centre for all subsequent governments, including the present one. On the lawn is Windhoek's first **post-independence monument**, which depicts Herero chief Hosea Kutako, known for his vociferous opposition to South African rule. On weekdays – except when the assembly is in session – you can reserve a place on a 45-minute tour by calling ☎ 288 5111.

Other Historic Buildings

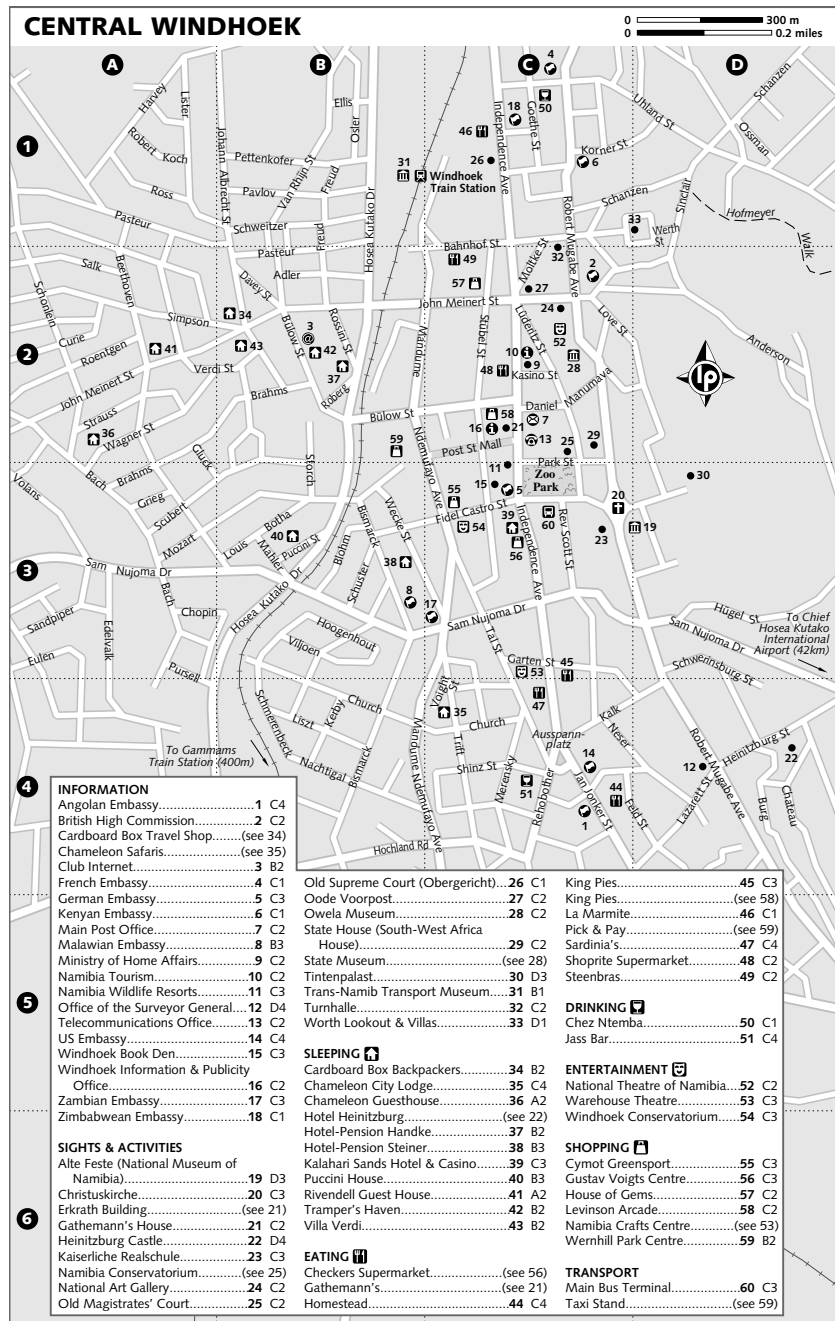
Near the corner of Lüderitz and Park Streets, take a look at the **Old Magistrates' Court** (Map p318). It was built from 1897 to 1898 as quarters for Carl Ludwig, the state architect, and now houses the **Namibia Conservatorium**. Down Park St towards Robert Mugabe Ave lies South-West Africa House, now called the **State House** (Map p318). The site was once graced by the residence of the German colonial governor, but it was razed in 1958 and replaced by the present building. After independence, it became the official residence of the Namibian president.

Robert Mugabe Ave affords good city views and colonial architecture. The **Kaiserliche Realschule** (Map p318), Windhoek's first German primary school, dates back to 1907–08. The curious turret with wooden slats, which was part of the original building, was designed to provide ventilation. The **Old Supreme Court** (Map p318; Obergericht; cnr Korner St & Robert Mugabe Ave) is a gabled brick structure which dates back to 1908.

Further south is the **Turnhalle** (Map p318; cnr Bahnhof St & Robert Mugabe Ave), designed by Otto Busch and built in 1909 as a gymnasium. On 1 September 1975, the first Constitutional Conference on Independence for Southwest Africa (subsequently known as the Turnhalle Conference) was held here. In the 1980s it hosted political summits and debates, which later resulted in Namibian independence.

The classic 1902 **Oode Voorpost** (Map p318; cnr John Meinert & Moltke Sts) originally held the colonial surveyors' offices, where government maps were stored in fireproof archives. It was restored in 1988 and now houses a portion of the Ministry of Finance.

Southward along Independence Ave are three colonial buildings designed by architect



Willi Sander. The southernmost building was built in 1902 as the Kronprinz Hotel. In 1920, Heinrich Gathemann bought it and converted it into a private business, to adjoin **Gathemann House** (Map p318) next door, which he had built in 1913. The northernmost building is the **Erkrath building**, which dates from 1910.

Train Station & Trans-Namib Transport Museum

Windhoek's Cape Dutch-style train station dates from 1912, and near the entrance sits the German steam locomotive *Poor Old Joe*, shipped to Swakopmund in 1899 and reassembled for the run to Windhoek. The small but worthwhile **Trans-Namib Transport Museum** (Map p318; ☎ 298 2186; admission US\$0.70; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri), upstairs in the station, gives the history of Namibian transport, particularly railroads.

Post St Mall & Meteorite Exhibit

The busy heart of the Windhoek shopping district is the bizarrely colourful Post St Mall, and its odd architecture that could have been part of the film *Dick Tracy*. It's lined with vendors selling curios, artwork, clothing and other tourist items, and in the centre is a prominent display of 33 meteorites from the Gibeon me-

teor shower, which deposited at least 21 tonnes of mostly ferrous extraterrestrial boulders around Gibeon in southern Namibia.

Katutura

The lively black township of Katutura (Map p316) is relatively safe by day if you stick to the northern areas or find a local who can act as a guide. If you want to visit, *Outside Adventures* (p398) runs day trips, guided by a Katutura resident. A taxi from Windhoek centre to Katutura costs US\$1.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Windhoek's annual cultural bash is September's **/Ae//Gams Festival**, which replaces the former Mbapira/Enjando Street Festival; it features colourful gatherings of dancers, musicians and people in ethnic dress. True to its partially Teutonic background, Windhoek also stages its own **Oktoberfest** in late October. Similarly, the German-style **Windhoek Karnival** (or WIKa) is held in late April and features a week of events.

SLEEPING Budget

Puccini House (Map p318; ☎ 236355; puccinis@mweb.com.na; 4 Puccini St; camping per person US\$3, dm US\$6,

KATUTURA – A PERMANENT PLACE?

In 1912, during the days of the South African mandate – and apartheid – the Windhoek Town Council set aside two 'locations', which were open to settlement by black Africans who were working in the city: the Main Location, which was west of the centre, and Klein Windhoek, to the east. The following year, people were forcibly relocated to these areas, which effectively became communal areas of haphazard settlement. In the early 1930s, however, streets were laid out in the Main Location and the area was divided into regions set aside for each ethnic group. Each subdivision within these regions was referred to by the name of its assigned ethnic group (eg Herero, Nama, Owambo, Damara), followed by a soulless numerical reference.

In the 1950s, the Windhoek municipal council – with encouragement from the South African government (which regarded Namibia as a province of South Africa) – decided to 'take back' Klein Windhoek and consolidate all 'location' residents into a single settlement northwest of the main city. However, there was strong opposition to the move, and in early December 1959, a group of Herero women launched a protest march and boycott against the city government. On 10 December, unrest escalated into a confrontation with the police, resulting in 11 deaths and 44 serious injuries. Frightened, the roughly 4000 residents of the Main Location submitted and moved to the new settlement, ultimately named 'Katutura', which is Herero for 'we have no permanent place' – but it can also be translated as 'the place we do not want to settle'.

In modern, independent Namibia, Katutura is a vibrant Windhoek suburb – Namibia's Soweto – where poverty and affluence brush elbows. Sadly and inexplicably, Katutura's once-lovely independence murals along Independence Ave have been removed, but the town council has now extended municipal water, power and telephone services to most areas of Katutura and has also established the colourful and perpetually busy Soweto Market.

s/d 10/18; (P) (Q) (R) The closest backpacker option to the city centre is located near the Wernhill Park Centre, and is characterised by its relaxed atmosphere and friendly staff.

our pick Cardboard Box Backpackers (Map p318; ☎ 228994; www.namibian.org; 15 Johann Albrecht St; camping per site US\$4, dm US\$6, d US\$18; (P) (Q) (R)) This lively, colourful and perennial shoestringers' favourite is conveniently located just 15 minutes by foot from the city centre. 'The Box' runs an excellent travel centre that gives unbiased information about Namibian tour operators, and can help sort out all your future travel plans. Backpacker amenities include use of the cooking facilities and access to the swimming pool and the lively bar and restaurant.

Chameleon City Lodge (Map p318; ☎ 244347; www.chameleonbackpackers.com; 5 Voight St; camping per site US\$4, dm US\$6, d from US\$18; (P) (Q) (R)) This well-matched rival to the Cardboard Box is also extremely convenient to the city centre, and boasts an inviting atmosphere, immaculate facilities, comfy couches for lounging and a professional and well-informed staff.

Tramper's Haven (Map p318; ☎ 223669; 78 Bülow St; dm US\$10, s/d US\$15/20; (P)) A sparkling, Christian-oriented backpackers' lodge that has kitchen facilities and plenty of showers.

Chameleon Guesthouse (Map p318; ☎ 247668; www.chameleonbackpackers.com; 22 Wagner St; d incl breakfast & shared bathroom US\$20, d incl breakfast \$25; (P) (Q) (R)) Occupying a quiet spot in Windhoek West, the older sister to the Chameleon City Lodge is a budget-oriented guesthouse that is home to a couple of friendly meerkats.

Rivendell Guest House (Map p318; ☎ 250006; rivendell@toothfairy.com; d/tr US\$20/25, self-catering flat US\$45; (P) (Q) (R)) Provides quiet, comfortable accommodation within easy walking distance of the centre – you can choose between doubles and self-catering apartments, but all have use of the swimming pool and communal kitchen.

Midrange & Top End

All rates include breakfast.

our pick Roof of Africa Backpackers (Map p316; ☎ 254708; www.roofof africa.com; 124-126 Nelson Mandela Ave; camping per site US\$5, dm US\$8, s/d US\$35/40, d with air-con US\$50; (P) (Q) (R) (S)) This pleasant haven is located about 30 minutes by foot from the city centre, and has a rustic barnyard feel complete with a frog pond and goats and ducks in a pen by the pool. Recent renovations have made

the property feel distinctly upmarket, though guests remain laid-back travellers looking for a quiet retreat from the city. Amenities include a communal kitchen, swimming pool, internet, TV lounge and a swish bar.

Haus Ol-Ga (Map p316; ☎ 235853; 91 Bach St; s/d US\$25/35; (P)) This German-oriented place is named after the owners, Gesa Oldach and Erno Gauerke. The establishment enjoys a nice, quiet garden atmosphere in Windhoek West.

Hotel-Pension Handke (Map p318; ☎ 234904; pensionhandke@iafrica.com.na; 3 Rossini St; s/d US\$40/60; (P)) Run by a caring mother-and-son duo, this homely option in Windhoek West is more reminiscent of staying with family friends than it is a guesthouse.

Hotel-Pension Steiner (Map p318; ☎ 222898; steiner@iafrica.com.na; 11 Wecke St; s/d from US\$45/70; (P) (Q) (R)) This recently renovated hotel features well-equipped rooms with modern amenities that overlook a thatched bar and swimming pool.

Villa Verdi (Map p318; ☎ 221994; villav@mweb.com.na; 4 Verdi St; s/d US\$70/115; (P) (Q) (R) (S)) This utterly unique Mediterranean-African hybrid features whimsically decorated rooms complete with original paintings and artsy finishing. Amenities include a pool, a dining room and a conference centre where you can send faxes and emails.

Hilltop House (Map p316; ☎ 249116; hilltop@iafrica.com.na; 12 Lessing St; s/d US\$85/135; (P) (Q) (R)) Featuring individually decorated rooms, this six-room guesthouse oozes personality.

Hotel Heinitzburg (Map p318; ☎ 249597; heinitz@mweb.com.na; 22 Heinitzburg St; s/d from US\$130/200; (P) (Q) (R)) Located inside Heinitzburg Castle, this is Windhoek's most royal B&B option, and probably one of the best and most personable upmarket accommodations.

Windhoek Country Club Resort & Casino (☎ 205 5911; www.legacyhotels.co.za; s/d from US\$150/165; (P) (Q) (R) (S)) Constructed specifically for the 1995 Miss Universe pageant (Miss Namibia, Michelle McLean, who now has a street named for her, had won the pageant the previous year), this place offers a taste of Las Vegas in Windhoek.

Kalahari Sands Hotel & Casino (Map p318; ☎ 22230; Gustav Voigts Centre, 129 Independence Ave; s/d from US\$150/185; (P) (Q) (R) (S)) This high-rise hotel in the heart of the city primarily appeals to business travellers with its international four-star standards.

EATING Budget

King Pies (Map p318; ☎ 248978, Levinson Arcade; pies US\$1-2) If you're looking for a quick bite, this popular Namibian institution serves up a variety of filled meat and vegetable pies.

Steenbras (Map p318; ☎ 231445; Bahnhof St; light meals US\$2-4) Near Independence Ave, this is one of Windhoek's best takeaways, serving memorable fish, chicken burgers and spicy chips.

Sardinia's (Map p318; ☎ 225600; 39 Independence Ave; dishes US\$2-5) This rather loud and boisterous place is good for pizza and standard Italian fare, as well as great coffee and gelato.

Art Café (Map p316; ☎ 255020; Maerua Park Centre; US\$2-5) This fashionable spot specialises in breakfast, sweet and savoury crepes and light lunches – with excellent results.

Yang Tse (Map p316; ☎ 234779; /Ae//Gams Shopping Centre, 351 Sam Nujoma Dr; mains US\$3-6) This locally popular cheap Chinese joint is a good choice, especially if you're just coming back from (or heading out to) a long stint of bush cooking.

Midrange & Top End

O Portuga (Map p316; ☎ 272900, 151 Nelson Mandela Ave; mains US\$4-8) The best place in town for genuine Portuguese and Angolan dishes, including numerous seafood options. There is also a good selection of wines.

Joe's Beer House (Map p316; ☎ 232457, Green Market Sq, 160 Nelson Mandela Ave; mains US\$4-9; ☎ 5pm-late) Similar to Carnivore's in Nairobi, Joe's Beer House is a popular tourist spot where you can indulge in a game meat-oriented evening meal – with prolonged drinking until early in the morning.

Luigi & the Fish (Map p316; ☎ 256399; 320 Sam Nujoma Dr, meals US\$4-10) This famous Windhoek restaurant specialises in reasonably priced seafood (fish, shellfish, seafood paella, calamari etc) as well as steaks, game, pasta, chicken, Cajun dishes and vegetarian cuisine.

La Marmite (Map p318; ☎ 248022; Independence Ave; mains US\$7-10; ☎ 6-10pm) Here you can sample wonderful North and West African cuisine, including Algerian, Senegalese, Ivorian, Cameroonian and Nigerian dishes.

Gathemann's (Map p318; ☎ 223853; 179 Independence Ave; mains US\$7-12) Located in the prominent colonial building, Gathemann House, overlooking Independence Ave, this splash-out spot serves gourmet German and Continental food; it's a good choice for a gateaux and pastry on the sundek.

Homestead (Map p318; ☎ 221958; 53 Feld St; meals US\$8-15) Arguably Windhoek's best restaurant, it features a range of starters, salads, pasta, vegetarian dishes, fresh fish, beef and chicken dishes, as well as oryx, crocodile, fondues and a hunters' grill featuring zebra.

Self-Catering

The big names are Pick & Pay in the Wernhill Park Centre and Checkers in the Gustav Voigts Centre. The cheapest supermarket is the crowded Shoprite on lower Independence Ave. The Mini-Markt in Klein Windhoek is larger than it sounds and is open from 7am to midnight daily. The well-stocked OK supermarket at Hidas Centre is the best place for foreign and ethnic ingredients.

DRINKING

Chez Ntemba (Map p318; 154 Uhland St; admission Thu & Sun US\$1.25, Wed, Fri & Sat US\$3.50; ☎ 9pm-5am Wed-Sun) Music from across the continent is played here – Angolan, Zambian, Congolese and South African tunes all in the same night.

Club Thriller (Map p318; Samuel Shikongo St, Katutura; admission US\$3) Lies in a rough area, but beyond the weapons search at the door, the music is Western and African and the atmosphere upbeat and relatively secure.

Funky Lab (Map p316; /Ae//Gams Centre; ☎ 4pm-late Sun-Thu, 2pm-late Fri & Sat) This very popular (and very blue) club is one of Windhoek's hottest night-time dancing spots, especially if you're craving a little disco in your life.

Jass Bar (Map p318; Shinz St 4; ☎ 6pm-late Tue-Sat) This chilled-out club and cigar bar provides a leisurely respite for the more sophisticated crowd.

La Dee Da's (Map p316; ☎ 0812 434432, Ferry St, Southern Industrial Area; admission before/after midnight US\$2.50/3.50; ☎ 10.30pm-4am Thu-Sat) La De Da's boasts Namibia's largest national flag; here you can dance to Angolan *kizomba*, hip-hop, rave, traditional African, rock and commercial pop. Near Patterson.

Plaza (Map p316; ☎ 0812 560780; Maerua Park Centre; ☎ 5pm-late) This relaxed and pleasant gay-friendly venue is the right choice if you like to listen to your music at levels below ear-shattering.

ENTERTAINMENT

Whether you're in the mood for a night out at the theatre or a Hollywood screening, Windhoek has just the ticket for you.

National Theatre of Namibia (Map p318; ☎ 237 966; 12 John Meinert St, ntn@iafrica.com.na) The national theatre stages infrequent theatre presentations; for information see the Friday edition of the *Namibian*.

Ster Kinekor (Map p316; ☎ 249267; Maerua Park Centre, off Robert Mugabe Ave) This place shows recent films and has half-price admission on Tuesday.

Warehouse Theatre (Map p318; ☎ 225059, old South-West Brewery Bldg, 48 Tal St; admission US\$3.50) A delightfully integrated club staging live African and European music and theatre productions, though unfortunately it's only open when there's a scheduled event.

Windhoek Conservatorium (Map p318; ☎ 293 3111; Peter Müller St) The conservatorium occasionally holds classical concerts.

SHOPPING

Handicrafts

Namibia Crafts Centre (Map p318; ☎ 222236; 40 Tal St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) This craft centre is an outlet for heaps of wonderful Namibian inspiration, including leather work, basketry, pottery, jewellery, needlework, hand-painted textiles and other material arts. Information about the artist and the origin of each piece is documented.

House of Gems (Map p318; ☎ 225202; scrap@iafrica.com.na; 131 Stübel St) This is the most reputable shop in Windhoek for buying raw minerals and gemstones.

Penduka (☎ 257210; penduka@namibnet.com) The names means 'wake up'. Penduka operates a nonprofit women's needlework project at Goreangab Dam, northwest of the centre. You can purchase needlework, baskets, carvings and fabric creations for fair prices and you can be assured that all proceeds go to the producers. To be picked up from town call ☎ 081-129 4116.

Camping Gear

Try **Camping Hire Namibia** (Map p316; ☎ /fax 252995; http://natron.net/tour/camping/hiree.html; 78 Malcolm Spence St, Olympia) to hire camping gear, but phone first.

Cymot Greensport (Map p318; ☎ 234131; 60 Mandume Ndemufayo Ave) is good for quality camping, hiking, cycling or vehicle outfitting equipment, as is **Cape Union Mart** (Map p316; Maerua Park Centre). Gear for 4WD expeditions is sold at **Safari Den** (Map p316; ☎ 231931; 20 Bessemer St); alternatively, try **Gräber's** (Map p316; ☎ 222732; Bohr St) in the Southern Industrial Area.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Chief Hosea Kutako International Airport, which is located 42km east of the city centre, serves most international flights into and out of Windhoek. Air Namibia operates flights daily between Cape Town and Johannesburg, as well as twice-weekly flights to/from London and Frankfurt. Several airlines also offer international services to/from Maun, Botswana, and Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. For more information, see p393.

Eros Airport, immediately south of the city centre, serves most domestic flights into and out of Windhoek. Air Namibia offers occasional flights to/from Katima Mulilo, Lüderitz, Ondangwa, Rundu, Swakopmund/Walvis Bay and Tsumeb.

Coming from Windhoek, make sure the taxi driver knows which airport you are going to (ie in-town Eros versus the more distant international airport).

Airlines with flights into and out of Windhoek include the following:

Air Namibia (code SW; ☎ 299 6333; www.airnamibia.com)

British Airways (code BA; ☎ 248528; www.ba.com)

Lufthansa Airlines (code LH; ☎ 226662; www.lufthansa.com)

South African Airways (code SA; ☎ 237670; www.flysaa.com)

Bus

From the main bus station, at the corner of Fidel Castro and Rev Michael Scott Sts, the Intercape Mainliner runs on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday to and from Cape Town (US\$45, 19½ hours) and Johannesburg (US\$58, 24½ hours, with a change in Upington). There are also daily services to Swakopmund (US\$14, 4¼ hours); and Monday and Friday departures to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe (US\$52, 19¼), via Okahandja, Otjiwarongo, Grootfontein, Rundu and Katima Mulilo.

Local combis (minibuses) leave when full from the Rhino Park petrol station and can get you to most urban centres in Namibia: Gobabis (US\$5, 2½ hours), Buitepos (US\$7, five hours), Swakopmund (US\$7, four hours), Walvis Bay (US\$7.50, 4½ hours), Rehoboth (US\$2.50, 1½ hours), Mariental (US\$6, three hours), Keetmanshoop (US\$8, six hours), Lüderitz (US\$13, 10 hours), Otjiwarongo (US\$7, three hours), Outjo (US\$7.50, four hours), Grootfontein (US\$8, seven hours), Tsumeb (US\$8,

seven hours), Oshakati (US\$9, 11 hours), Ruacana (US\$15, 15 hours), Rundu (US\$10.50, 10 hours), Divundu (US\$12, 12 hours) and Katima Mulilo (US\$14, 15½ hours).

Car & Motorcycle

Windhoek is literally the crossroads of Namibia – the point where the main north-south route (the B1) and east-west routes (B2 and B6) cross – and all approaches to the city are extremely scenic, passing through beautiful desert hills. Roads are clearly signposted and those travelling between northern and southern Namibia can avoid the city centre by taking the Western Bypass.

Hitching

Due to its location and traffic, hitching to or from Windhoek is easier than anywhere else in Namibia.

Train

The station has a **booking office** (☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri); note that from Monday to Thursday, fares are about 60% of those quoted here, and that economy-class fares are around 10% lower. Overnight trains run daily except on Saturday between Windhoek and Keetmanshoop, leaving at 7.10pm/6.30pm southbound/northbound. Travel times and Friday to Sunday business-class fares from Windhoek are: Rehoboth (US\$4.30, 2¼ hours), Mariental (US\$6, six hours) and Keetmanshoop (US\$7.50, 9½ hours). The Keetmanshoop run now offers sleepers on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

On Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday, the northern-sector line connects Windhoek with Tsumeb (US\$7, 16 hours) via Okahandja (US\$3, 2½ hours) and Otjiwarongo (US\$5.25, 10½ hours). Other train lines connect Windhoek with Swakopmund (US\$8, 9½ hours) and Walvis Bay (US\$8, 11 hours) daily except Saturday; and Windhoek with Gobabis (US\$4.25, 7½ hours) on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday.

GETTING AROUND

To/From the Airport

To the Chief Hosea Kutako International Airport, the **Elena Airport Shuttle** (☎ 244443, 0811 246286; elena@namibweb.com) provides 24-hour door-to-door airport transport for US\$17 per bus; they also meet international flights. Alternatively, try the **Marenko Shuttle** (☎ 226331)

or **VIP Shuttle** (☎ 0812 563657), which charges US\$12 per person for the trip; coming from the airport, you'll be able to choose between several shuttle services. Airport taxis on the same trip cost a maximum of US\$27.

Taxi

City buses have been phased out in favour of inexpensive shared taxis and minibuses. Collective taxis from the main ranks at Wernhill Park Centre follow set routes to Khomasdal and Katutura, and if your destination is along the way, you'll pay less than US\$1. With taxis from the main bus stations or by radio dispatch, fares are either metered or are calculated on a per-kilometre basis, but you may be able to negotiate a set fare per journey. Plan on spending US\$3 to US\$3.50 to anywhere around the city centre. Try **Crown Radio Taxis** (☎ 211115, 0811 299116), **Express Radio Taxis** (☎ 239739) or **Sunshine Radio Taxis** (☎ 221029).

AROUND WINDHOEK

Daan Viljoen Game Park

The beautiful Daan Viljoen Game Park (admission per person US\$2.50, per vehicle US\$2.50; ☎ day visitors sunrise-6pm) is situated in the Khomas Hochland about 18km west of Windhoek. Because there are no dangerous animals, hikers can wander freely through lovely desertlike hills and valleys. You'll almost certainly see gemsboks, kudus, mountain zebras, springboks, hartebeests, elands and up to 200 bird species.

The 3km **Wag'n-Bietjie Trail** follows a dry riverbed from near the park office to Stengel Dam. A 9km circuit, the **Rooibos Trail** crosses hills and ridges and affords great views back to Windhoek in the distance. The 34km **Sweet-Thorn Trail** circuits the empty eastern reaches of the reserve. One group of three to 12 people is permitted on this trail each day for US\$8 per person, including accommodation in a shelter halfway along. Advance bookings through NWR are required.

Daan Viljoen Rest Camp (camping for up to 4 people US\$15, s/d bungalows US\$25/31, 4-bed self-catering units US\$65) sits on the shores of Auegas Dam; there's also a **restaurant** (☎ 7.30-9am, noon-2pm & 7-10pm) further along the road. Prebook at NWR in Windhoek.

There's no public transport to Daan Viljoen, but taxis charge around US\$17 each way and persistent hitchhikers will eventually get a lift. No motorcycles are permitted.

DORDABIS

☎ 062

The lonely ranching area around Dordabis is the heart of Namibia's karakul country, and supports several sheep farms and weaveries. At the **Farm Ibenstein Weavery** (Map p325; ☎ 573524; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat), located 4km down the C15 from Dordabis, you can learn about spinning, dyeing and weaving, as well as purchase hand-woven rugs and carpets. You can also try the **Dorka Teppiche Weavery** (Map p325), which produces some of the finest original rugs and weavings in the country and progressive marble and soapstone sculpture. The weavery is located in the grounds of the Eningu Clay House Lodge (below).

Sleeping

Holiday Farm Scheidthof (Map p325; ☎ 573584; discovaf@africa.com.na; camping per person US\$5, r per person incl breakfast US\$45; P) This lovely 7400-hectare farm offers a full complement of activities for the visitor, but the highlights are a 32km hiking trail and two 4WD tracks (which may also be used for hiking). Turn south on the M51, east of the international airport, then east on the DR1506. The farm is 6km down this road.

Eningu Clay House Lodge (Map p325; ☎ 226979; logufa@mweb.com.na; Peperkorrel Farm; s/d per person with half-board US\$65/115; P) Yes, the name sounds a lot like the title of a children's book and appropriately, this place is a bit of a fantasy. It was painstakingly designed and constructed by Volker and Stephanie Hümmer, whose efforts with sun-dried adobe have resulted in an appealing African-Amerindian architectural cross. To get to the lodge, follow the D1458 for 63km southeast of Chief Hosea Kutako International Airport and then turn west on the D1471; travel for another kilometre to the Eningu gate.

Getting There & Away

To reach Dordabis, head east from Windhoek on the B6 and turn right onto the C23, 20km east of town; the town centre is 66km down this road. At 7.30am on Friday, Star Line runs a bus from Windhoek to Dordabis (US\$5); the bus returns at 4.45pm the same day.

ARNHEM CAVE

At 4.5km, Arnhem Cave is the longest cave system in Namibia. It was formed in a layer of

limestone and dolomite, sandwiched between quartzite and shale, in the rippled Arnhem Hills synclines and anticlines (folds of stratified rock). The cave was discovered in 1930 by farmer DN Bekker and, shortly thereafter, mining operations began extracting the deposits of bat guano, which were used as fertilizer.

Guided tours cost US\$8, plus US\$3.50 to hire helmets and torches. The route dives into darkness, beyond the reach of sunlight. Because it's dry, there are few stalagmites or stalactites, but it's possible you could see up to six bat species. It's also inhabited by a variety of insects, worms, shrews and shrimps. The grand finale is the indescribable first view of the blue-cast natural light as you emerge from the depths.

Note that it gets extremely dusty, so wear old clothing and avoid wearing contact lenses. Tours must be booked in advance through Arnhem Cave Guest House.

Sleeping

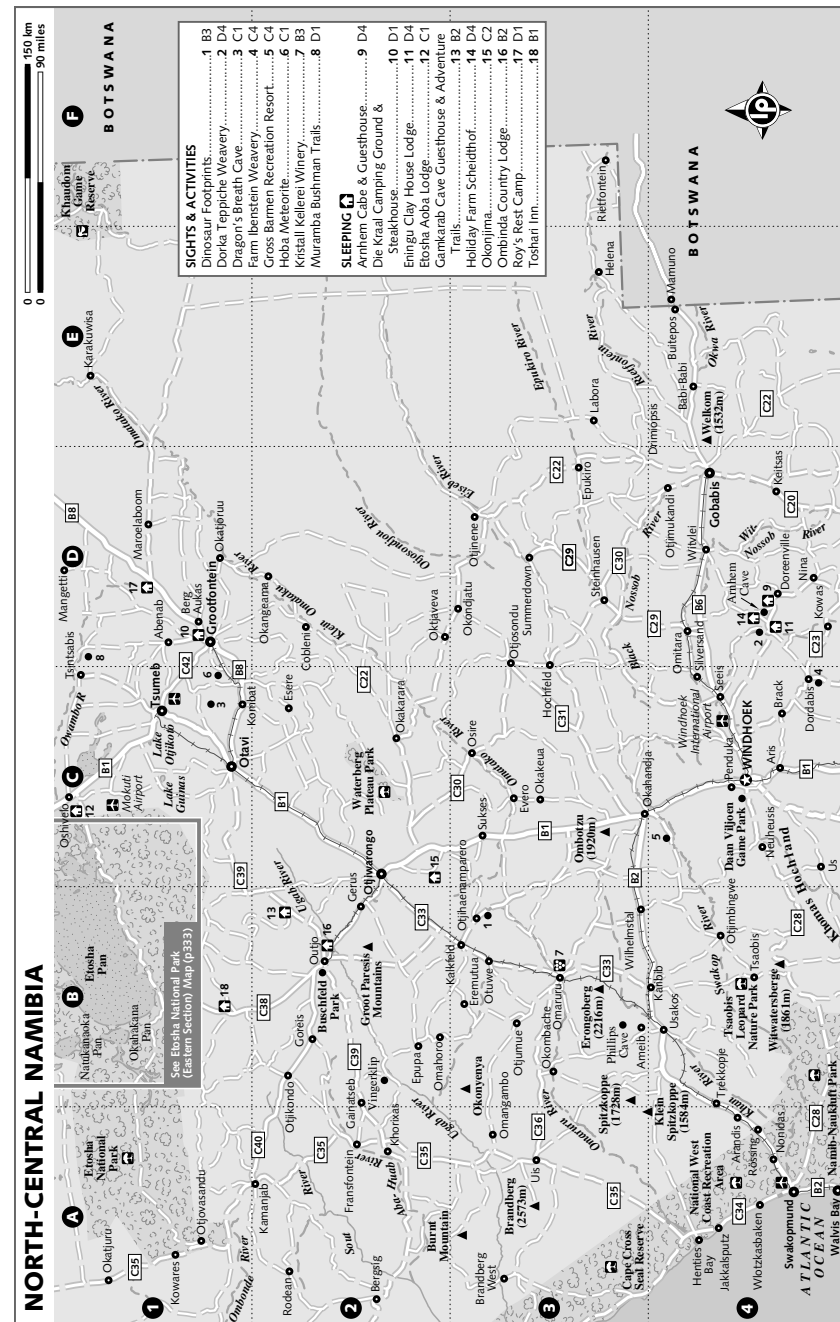
Arnhem Cave Guest House (Map p325; ☎ 581885; arnhem@mweb.com.na; camping per person US\$7, d self-catering chalets US\$35, s/d with half board US\$40/65; P) This pleasant place offers an excellent overnight getaway from Windhoek, and lies within an hour's walk of Arnhem Cave, on the same farm.

Getting There & Away

The cave is on the private farm of Mr J Bekker. To get there, turn south 3km east of Chief Hosea Kutako International Airport on the D1458. After 66km, turn northeast on the D1506 and continue for 11km to the T-junction, where you turn south on the D1808. The farm is 6km down this road.

NORTH-CENTRAL NAMIBIA

The tourist trail in North-Central Namibia leads directly to Etosha National Park, one of the world's pre-eminent wildlife areas. Unlike most safari parks in Africa, roads inside Etosha are 2WD-accessible and open to private vehicles. This of course means that if you've been fortunate enough to rent your own vehicle, you're in for one of the most memorable safaris of your life. Anyone call tell their friends and



family back home how quickly their guide spotted a leopard in a tree, but how many people can say they drove on the edges of a salt pan while spotting elephant herds in the distance?

OKAHANDJA

☎ 062

Okahandja, the Herero administrative centre, is best-known for its two immense **craft markets** – one near the junction of the B1 and B2, the other about 1km out on the B1 towards Windhoek. At the southern end of Church St is **Friedenskirche**, the Rhenish mission church, which was consecrated in 1876. Both in the churchyard and over the road are the **graves** of several historical figures, including those of Herero leader Willem Maherero, Nama leader Jan Jonker Afrikaner and Hosea Kutako, the ‘father of Namibian independence’. Okahandja’s big events are **Maherero Day** in August and the **gathering** of the Green Flag Herero people in June.

Okahandja Rest Camp (☎ 504086; camping per site US\$9, d bungalows with shared bathroom US\$12, d bungalows US\$22; ☎) is a secure camp located just outside of town that offers modern ablution blocks, communal kitchens and braai (barbecue) facilities.

Pleasant **Sylvanette B&B** (☎ 501213; sylvanet@iafrica.com.na; s/d incl breakfast US\$24/36; ☎) has seven tidy rooms, and is in a quiet and garden-like suburban setting.

Bäckerei Dekker & Café (☎ 501962; Main St; meals & snacks US\$1.50-3) is a German café and bakery serving full breakfasts, toasted sandwiches, healthy snacks, pies, light lunches – and desserts.

Okahandja lies on the Intercape Mainliner, minibus and train routes between Windhoek and points north. For train information, phone **Trans-Namib** (☎ 503315).

GROSS BARMEN RECREATION RESERVE

The former mission station of **Gross Barmen** (Map p325; ☎ 062-501091; admission per person US\$2.50, per vehicle US\$1.50; camping for up to 4 people US\$12, d US\$24, 5-bed bungalows from US\$40; ☎ ☎), 26km southwest of Okahandja, has hot springs, short hikes and fine bird-watching around the adjacent dam. Book your accommodation through (NWR) in Windhoek.

KARIBIB

☎ 064

The rustic ranching town of Karibib began as a station on the narrow-gauge rail line between Windhoek and Swakopmund. It’s now dominated by the Palisandro marble quarries, which annually yield more than 1200 tonnes of aragonite, the world’s hardest and highest-quality marble. For tourist information, contact **Henckert Tourist Centre** (☎ 550028; fax 550720; www.henckert.com; 38 Main St; ☎ 8am-5.30pm), which also sells mineral specimens and local weavings.

Hotel Erongoblick (☎ /fax 550009; dm US\$6, s/d with shared bathroom US\$12/22, s/d US\$18/30; ☎) offers nice digs and a swimming pool. The best place to eat in Karibib is the Western Restaurant, on the main road. Karibib Bakery, which dates from 1913, does great breakfasts and brewed coffee.

All of the bus and train services between Windhoek and Swakopmund pass through Karibib.

OMARURU

☎ 064

Dusty Omaruru, beside the shady Omaruru Riverbed, has a real outback feel to it. For a view over the town, you can climb **Captain Franke’s tower**, which was erected in honour of

German Captain Victor Franke, who defended the colonial town in 1904 against a Herero attack. The **Rhenish mission station** (admission free), constructed in 1872 by missionary Gottlieb Viehe, now houses a small **town museum**. Pick up keys to either place at the Central Hotel in the town centre.

A highlight is the **Kristall Kellerei Winery** (Map p325; ☎ 570083; winery@omaruru.na; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, dinner by appointment only). This, Namibia’s only winery, produces colombar and ruby cabernet, and offers wine tasting and great meals just 4km from town on the D2328. Don’t miss its wonderful mineral water, Oasis, which is sold only in Omaruru.

Each year on the weekend nearest 10 October, the White Flag Herero people hold a **festive procession** in Omaruru.

A worthwhile day trip from Omaruru would be to the Otjihaenampanero **dinosaur footprints**, 23km east of Kalkfeld, which features the 170-million-year-old tracks of a three-toed dinosaur.

Sleeping & Eating

Omaruru Rest Camp (☎ 570516; jdg@iway.na; camping per person US\$4, s bungalows US\$20-30, d bungalows US\$25-40; ☎ ☎) This travellers’ rest camp at the edge of town also attracts locals with its popular restaurant (meals US\$3 to US\$7) and sports bar. Internet access is available for US\$4 per hour.

Hotel Staebe (☎ 570035; staebe@iafrica.com.na; camping per person US\$5, s/d incl breakfast US\$35/50; ☎ ☎) This quaint German-run hotel occupies a shady riverside setting, and features comfortable rooms with modern amenities as well as a decent restaurant specialising in German fare.

Central Hotel (☎ 570030; central@africaonline.com.na; Wilhelm Zeraua St; s/d US\$30/45; ☎ ☎) This small and spartan place enjoys a central location and friendly staff.

Omaruru Souvenirs & Kaffeetube (☎ 570230; Wilhelm Zeraua St) This cosy café is housed in a historic building dating from 1907. It’s a good choice for a strong cup of coffee and traditional German baked goods, as well as a cold pint of Hansa and some pub grub in the outdoor beer garden.

Getting There & Away

Trains to Tsumeb from either Walvis Bay or Windhoek pass through Omaruru. For train information, call **Trans-Namib** (☎ 570006).

OUTJO

☎ 067

Bougainvillea-decked Outjo, settled in 1880, was never a mission station, but in the mid-1890s it did a short, uneventful stint as a German garrison town. For visitors, it best serves as a staging point for trips to Okaukuejo, in Etosha National Park. The 1899 military residence, the Franke House, now houses the **Outjo Museum** (admission US\$0.60; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 3-5pm Mon-Fri).

Sleeping & Eating

Outjo Backpackers (☎ 313470; camping US\$4, dm US\$7, d with shared bathroom US\$15; ☎) Behind the African Curios Shop, this no-frills shoestringers’ spot is centrally located, and has basic but clean rooms and a well-stocked communal kitchen.

Ombinda Country Lodge (Map p325; ☎ 313181; ombinda@ovt.namib.com; camping US\$5 per person, s/d incl breakfast US\$35/50; ☎ ☎ ☎) This jacaranda-studded lodge is located 1km south of town, and features reed-and-thatch chalets with modern amenities including satellite TV and air-con.

Etosha Garden Hotel (☎ 313130; www.etosha-garden-hotel.com; s/d US\$30/50; ☎ ☎ ☎) This is an Austrian-run oasis just a short walk from the town centre. It features well-furnished rooms that surround a manicured garden and spotless swimming pool.

Outjo Cafe-Bäckerei (☎ 313055; light meals US\$2-4) Although it’s regionally famous for its bread and sweet treats, this is also a good choice for light meals including chicken, schnitzels and burgers.

Getting There & Away

Minibuses connect Outjo with Otjiwarongo (US\$2.50, one hour) from the bakery and the OK supermarket, but there’s currently no public transport to Etosha or Khorixas.

GAMKARAB CAVE

Gamkarab Cave, 50km northeast of Outjo, is replete with lovely stalagmites and stalactites, and the surrounding area has an abundance of hiking trails, unusual vegetation and the world’s only source of *pietersite* mineral.

Gamkarab Cave Guesthouse & Adventure Trails (Map p325; ☎ 067-313827; evg@agrinamibia.com.na; camping per person US\$5, chalet per person US\$12) offers cave tours (US\$4.50), horse riding (US\$6 per hour), three-day horse tours (US\$110) and

FIREWOOD

Firewood – normally split camelthorn acacia – is available for around US\$2 per bundle at national park rest camps, most private camping grounds and general stores. Firewood gathering and open fires are prohibited in national parks, but even outside the parks wilderness hikers are advised to carry a fuel stove and avoid lighting open fires, which can scar the landscape and may get out of control in the typically dry conditions. If you must gather your own firewood, note that it’s technically illegal in Namibia to use anything but mopane or acacia; burning or even carrying any other sort of wood will incur a fine, even outside national parks.

Warning: *do not* burn dried branches of Euphorbia, as the plant contains a deadly toxin and it can be fatal to inhale the smoke or eat food cooked on a fire containing it. If you’re in doubt about any wood you’ve collected, leave it out of the fire.

hiking trails (US\$6 per day). With your own equipment, you can also go cave diving in the underground lake (US\$7) or participate in camping tours to Moehoe Cave and the upper Ugab Canyon (US\$85 including meals).

OTJIWARONGO

☎ 067

Otjiwarongo ('the pleasant place' in Herero) lies at the junction of the roads between Windhoek, Swakopmund, Outjo, Etosha and the Golden Triangle. At the train station sits **Locomotive No 41**, which was manufactured by the Henschel company of Kassel, Germany, in 1912 and was brought to Namibia to haul ore between the Tsumeb mines and the port at Swakopmund.

The **Otjiwarongo Crocodile Ranch** (☎ 302121; admission US\$2; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm Sat & Sun), beside the caravan park, provides a marginally interesting attraction.

The very basic **tourist office** (☎ 303830; otjtc@iafrica.com.na) is in the mineral shop opposite the Hamburger Hof Hotel.

Sleeping & Eating

Falkennest B&B (☎ 302616; otjbb@iafrica.com.na; 21 Industria Ave; s/d incl breakfast US\$18/30; ☎) This welcoming guesthouse is a friendly and affordable option – bird lovers will appreciate the colourful aviary, and everyone else will enjoy the pool and braai pits.

Out of Africa Town Lodge (☎ 303397; www.out-of-africa.com; Long Street; s/d US\$50/60; ☎) This attractive whitewashed, colonial-style lodge has recently renovated rooms featuring satellite TV and air-con. There is also an on-site bistro, pool, outdoor bar and restaurant.

Okonjima (Map p325; ☎ 304563; www.okonjima.com; s/d with half board US\$180/245) The 'Place of Baboons' is home to the AfriCat Foundation, which sponsors a cheetah and leopard rehabilitation centre as well as a sanctuary for orphaned or problem lions, cheetahs and other cats. Guests can take part in cheetah and leopard tracking expeditions, in addition to more relaxing activities including hiking, birding and wildlife drives. To reach Okonjima, turn west onto the D2515, 49km south of Otjiwarongo; follow this road for 15km and turn left onto the farm road for the last 10km.

Carstensen's (☎ 302326; St George's St) This excellent bakery and takeaway in the town centre is a long-standing Otjiwarongo institution.

Getting There & Away

The Intercape Mainliner service between Windhoek and Victoria Falls passes through Otjiwarongo and minibuses between Windhoek and the north stop at the Engen petrol station. All train services between Tsumeb and Windhoek or Walvis Bay (via Swakopmund) also pass through.

WATERBERG PLATEAU PARK

Taking in a 50km-long and 16km-wide Etjo sandstone plateau, **Waterberg Plateau Park** (per person US\$2.50, plus per vehicle US\$2.50; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2pm-sunset year-round) looms 150m above the plain. Around this sheer-sided 'Lost World' are numerous freshwater springs supporting a lush mosaic of trees and lots of wildlife. The park is also a repository for rare and threatened species, including sables, roans and white rhinos.

Visitors may not explore the plateau in their own vehicles, but twice daily, NWR conducts three-hour wildlife drives (US\$12/5 per adult/child).

Hiking

There are nine short walking tracks around Bernabé de la Bat Rest Camp, including one up to the plateau rim at Mountain View. A four-day, 42km unguided hike around a figure-eight track (US\$12 per person) starts at 9am every Wednesday from April to November. Groups are limited to between three and 10 people. Hikers stay in basic shelters and don't need a tent, but must otherwise be self-sufficient.

Also from April to November, the four-day guided **Waterberg Wilderness Trail** (US\$24 per person) operates every second, third and fourth Thursday of the month and is open to groups of six to eight people. Accommodation is in huts, but participants must carry their own food and sleeping bags. All hikes must be prebooked through NWR in Windhoek.

Sleeping & Eating

Bernabé de la Bat Rest Camp (camping for up to 4 people US\$12, d/tr bungalows US\$40/50, 5-bed bungalows/ste US\$50/65; ☎) Offers a range of accommodation with fans, braais and outdoor seating areas. The camp restaurant serves meals during limited hours and a shop sells staple foods in the morning and afternoon.

Getting There & Away

There's no public transport, but taxis from Otjiwarongo will get you there for around

THE RED LINE

Between Grootfontein and Rundu, and between Tsumeb and Ondangwa, the B8 and B1 cross the Red Line, the Animal Disease Control Checkpoint (veterinary control fence) separating the commercial cattle ranches of the south from the communal subsistence lands to the north. This fence bars the north-south movement of animals as a precaution against foot-and-mouth disease and rinderpest, and animals bred north of this line may not be sold to the south or exported to overseas markets.

As a result, the Red Line also marks the effective boundary between the developed and developing Worlds. The landscape south of the line is characterised by a dry scrubby bushveld (open grassland) of vast ranches, which are home only to cattle and a few scattered ranchers. However, north of the Animal Disease Control Checkpoint, travellers enter a landscape of dense bush, baobab trees, mopane scrub and small kraals, where people and animals wander along the road and the air is filled with smoke from cooking fires and bush-clearing operations.

US\$25 each way and quite a few budget safaris include it in their itineraries. Note that bicycles and motorcycles aren't permitted.

GROOTFONTEIN

☎ 067

With a pronounced colonial feel, Grootfontein (Big Spring) has an air of uprightness and respectability, with local limestone construction and avenues of jacaranda trees that bloom in September. It was the water that attracted the earliest travellers, and in 1885, the Dorsland (Thirst Land) trekkers set up the short-lived Republic of Upingtonia. By 1887, the settlement was gone, but six years later Grootfontein was selected as the headquarters for the German South-West Africa Company, thanks to the area's agricultural potential and mineral wealth. In 1896, the German Schutztruppe constructed a fort and it became a garrison town.

You'll find the most useful tourist information at **Meteor Tours** (☎ /fax 240086; dirkv@namibnet.com; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri), which also provides email and internet access.

Sights

GERMAN FORT & MUSEUM

In 1968 it was only a last-minute public appeal that saved the old German fort from demolition, and in 1974 it was restored to house the **municipal museum** (Map p330; ☎ 242478; ☎ 4-6pm Tue & Fri, 9-11am Wed). To visit at other times, phone Mrs Prickett or Mrs Blumer (☎ 242479).

Hoba Meteorite

Near the Hoba Farm, 25km west of Grootfontein, the world's largest **meteorite** (Map p325; admission US\$1.30) was discovered in 1920

by hunter Jacobus Brits. This cuboid bit of space debris is composed of 82% iron, 16% nickel and 0.8% cobalt, along with traces of other metals. No-one knows when it fell to earth (it's thought to have been around 80,000 years ago), but since it weighs in at 54,000kg it must have made a hell of a thump. There's no public transport, but taxis from town charge about US\$15 each way.

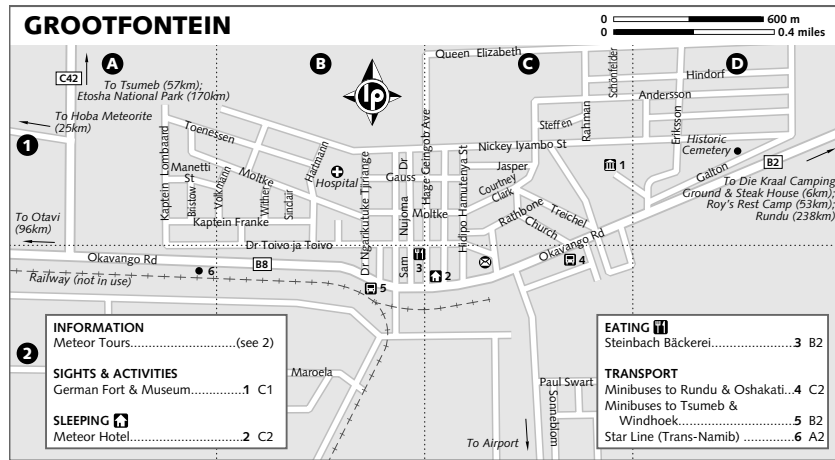
DRAGON'S BREATH CAVE

On Harasib Farm, 46km northwest of Grootfontein, is the Dragon's Breath Cave (Map p325), which holds the world's largest known underground lake. This fabulous 2-hectare subterranean reservoir occupies an immense chamber 60m below the surface. Its waters are crystal clear and, with sufficient light, allow visibility for 100m. The name is derived from the spontaneous condensation caused by warm, moist outside air forcing its way into the cool chamber.

At the time of writing, the cave was closed to the public and permission to explore it was granted only to professional caving expeditions. However, following a recent change in ownership, there are currently plans to develop the site for tourism.

Sleeping & Eating

Die Kraal Camping Ground & Steak House (Map p325; ☎ 240300; camping per person US\$4; ☎) Located 6km from town on the Rundu road, this German-run guest farm provides the safest and most attractive camping in the immediate Grootfontein area. Die Kraal is locally famous for its top-prize steaks and game meat – even if you're not spending the night, be sure to stop by for a meal.



Roy's Rest Camp (Map p325; ☎ 240302; royscamp@iway.na; PO Box 755; camping per person US\$5, s/d US\$32/45, 3-/4-bed bungalows US\$60/65; **P** **☎**) Accommodation in this recommended place appears to jump straight from a fairy-tale illustration – the handmade wood furnishings are all fabulously rustic, while the thatched bungalows are tranquil beneath towering trees. Meals are US\$4 to US\$8. Roy's is located 53km outside of Grootfontein on the road towards Rundu, and it's a convenient stop if you're heading to Tsumkwe (p346).

Meteor Hotel (Map p330; ☎ 240278; s/d incl breakfast B&B US\$30/50; **P** **☎**) Modern rooms with satellite TV and air-con are bright and airy, and the attached dining room is an excellent choice for local and European dishes.

Steinbach Bäckerei (Map p330; ☎ 242348; snacks US\$2-3.50) This Grootfontein institution is a good bet if you're hankering for a slice of German chocolate cake or fresh-baked brown bread.

Getting There & Away

Minibuses run frequently between Grootfontein and Tsumeb, Rundu, Katima Mulilo and Windhoek, departing when full from informal bus stops along Okavango Rd at the appropriate ends of town. The Intercape Mainliner bus between Windhoek (US\$33, seven hours) and Victoria Falls (US\$25, five hours) also passes through. On Thursdays at 11.30am, Star Line runs buses from the train station to Tsumkwe (US\$8, 6½ hours); it returns the next day, leaving Tsumkwe at 10.15am.

TSUMEB

☎ 067

Tsumeb, which is perhaps Namibia's loveliest town, enjoys quiet streets lined with flame trees and jacarandas and surroundings that have geologists salivating. Of the 184 minerals that have been discovered here, 10 are found nowhere else in the world, and mineral collectors justifiably rank the area as one of the world's great natural wonders.

The town's name is derived from a melding of the San word *tsoumsoub* (to dig in loose ground) and the Herero *otjume* (place of frogs). Tsumeb isn't really known for little croakers, but the red, brown, green and grey streaks created by minerals of the area resemble dried frog spawn, and both the frogs and digging equipment appear on the town's crest.

Information

Travel North Namibia tourist office (Map p331; ☎ 220728, 0811 246722; travelnn@tsu.namib.com; 1551 Omeg Allee, PO Box 799) The friendly tourist office provides information about the whole country, accommodation and transport bookings, as well as car hire anywhere in northern Namibia (with special rates for Etosha trips). It also provides Etosha bookings; fax, email and internet services; and laundry (US\$2 to wash and dry; US\$3 for a service wash).

Sights & Activities

Tsumeb's history and mineralogical heritage is recounted in the worthwhile **Tsumeb Mining Museum** (Map p331; ☎ 220447; Main St; admission US\$1;

9am–noon & 2–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat), in the 1915 Old German Private School.

The **Tsumeb Cultural Village** (☎ 220787; admission US\$1.30), on the Grootfontein road, presents Namibia's many cultures with artefacts, demonstrations and buildings from around the country.

Lake Otjikoto (admission US\$1.30), meaning 'deep hole' in Herero, lies on the B1 about 24km northwest of Tsumeb. It was created when the roof of a 150m by 100m limestone sinkhole collapsed; the resulting 55m-deep lake and nearby Lake Guinas are the only natural lakes in Namibia. In 1915, during WWI, the retreating Germans dumped weaponry and ammunition into Lake Otjikoto – most of which is still there – to prevent the equipment falling into South African hands. If you'd like to dive in the lake, contact the **Windhoek Underwater Club** (☎ 061-238320, 0811 281945; theo@schoemans.com.na).

Sleeping & Eating

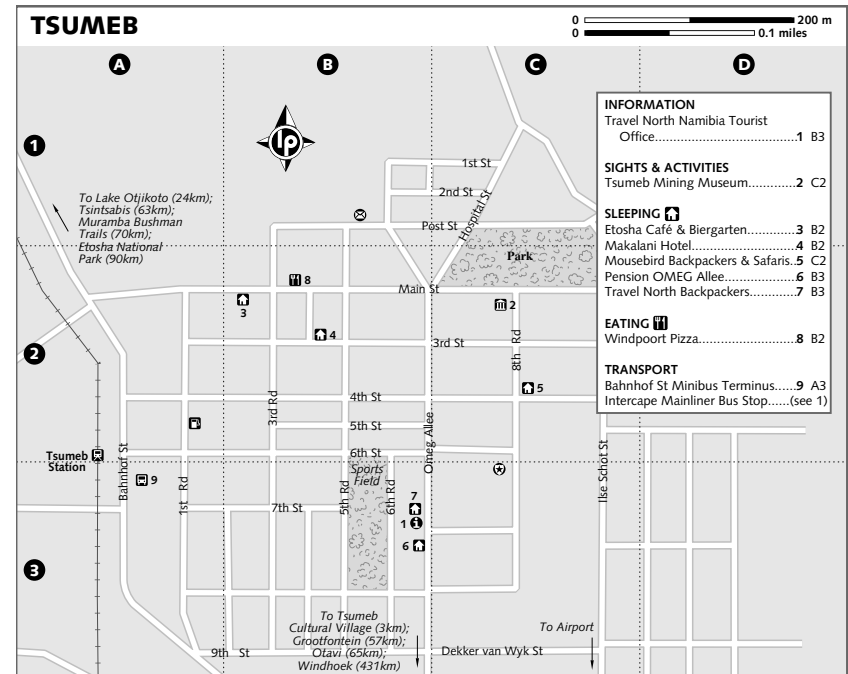
Travel North Backpackers (Map p331; ☎ 220728; travelnn@tsu.namib.com; Omeg Allee; camping per person US\$4, dm US\$7, s/d from US\$14/25; **P**) Adjacent to the tourist office, this no-frills lodge lacks the

personality of Mousebird, though it's still a cheap and comfortable option if you're counting your Nam dollars.

Mousebird Backpackers & Safaris (Map p331; ☎ 221777; www.mousebird.com; 533 4th St; camping per person US\$4, dm US\$8, d US\$16; **P**) Tsumeb's friendliest and most economical accommodation, Mousebird offers comfortable rooms, excellent kitchen facilities and a nice little bar. If you don't have a car, it also operates affordable safaris to Etosha (US\$160 for three days) and Otjozondjupa region (US\$125 for two days).

Etosha Café & Biergarten (Map p331; ☎ 221207; Main St; s/d with shared bathroom US\$13/22; **P**) This quaint place offers clean, inexpensive accommodation, and it's also one of the best places in town for a hearty breakfast (with real brewed coffee!) or a relaxed lunch or dinner in the shady beer garden.

Pension OMEG Allee (Map p331; ☎ 220631; 858 Omeg Allee; s/d incl breakfast US\$30/45; **P** **☎**) For a healthy dose of German hospitality, this friendly, family-run *pension* (boarding house) is a good choice. Comfortable rooms with modern amenities are warm and homely.



Makalani Hotel (Map p331; ☎ 221051; www.makalani-hotel.com; 3rd St; s/d incl breakfast US\$60/85; P ☎) Located in the town centre, the Makalani is the most established and upmarket hotel in Tsumeb. Modern rooms feature satellite TV and air-con, and surround a sparkling swimming pool and a shady lapa.

Windpoort Pizza (Map p331; ☎ 220243; Main St; medium pizzas US\$2.50-4; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm & 5-7.30pm Sat, 5-7.30pm Sun) Housed in a video shop, Windpoort does a range of excellent (and often bizarre) pizza concoctions.

Getting There & Away

The Intercape Mainliner between Windhoek and Victoria Falls calls in at the Travel North Namibia office. Minibuses travel frequently from the Bahnhof St terminus in Tsumeb to Grootfontein, Oshakati and Windhoek.

Trains run three times weekly to and from Windhoek and Walvis Bay. For train information, contact **Trans-Namib** (☎ 220358).

ETOSHA NATIONAL PARK

☎ 067

Etosha National Park, the 'Great White Place of Dry Water', takes in more than 20,000 sq km surrounding its namesake, the vast white- and greenish-coloured Etosha Pan. This vast park protects 114 mammal species, as well as 340 bird species, 16 reptiles and amphibians, one fish species and countless insects.

The first Europeans in Etosha were traders and explorers John Andersson and Francis Galton, who arrived by wagon at Namutoni in 1851, but Etosha didn't attract the interest of tourists or conservationists until after the turn of the 20th century, when the governor of German South-West Africa, Dr F von Lindequist, became concerned over diminishing animal numbers and founded a 99,526 sq km reserve. In subsequent years, the park boundaries were altered several times, and by 1970 Etosha had been pared down to its present 23,175 sq km.

Orientation

Only the eastern two-thirds of Etosha is open to the general public; the western third is reserved exclusively for tour operators. All roads are passable with 2WD vehicles and it's in the eastern section that you'll find the rest camps. Each of the three rest camps has an information centre, and the staff and shops at either of the main gates sell maps and provide basic info.

Information

Visitors to the park must check in at von Lindequist, Andersson or King Nehale gates and purchase a daily permit, which costs US\$3.50/0.30 per adult/child and US\$2.50 per vehicle. The permits must then be presented at your reserved rest camp, where you pay any outstanding camping or accommodation fees, which must be prepaid through a travel agency or to **NWR** (☎ 061-2857000; reservations@nwweb.com.na; Independence Ave, Windhoek; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri) in Windhoek.

Book well in advance for visits during Namibian or South African school holidays (normally mid-December to mid-January, around Easter, late July to early August, and for two weeks in mid-October). During this period, you may be limited to three nights in each of the three camps, although exceptions can sometimes be made.

Note that pets and firearms are prohibited in the park. Those booked into the rest camps must arrive before sunset and can only leave after sunrise; the daily times are posted on the gates.

Sleeping & Eating

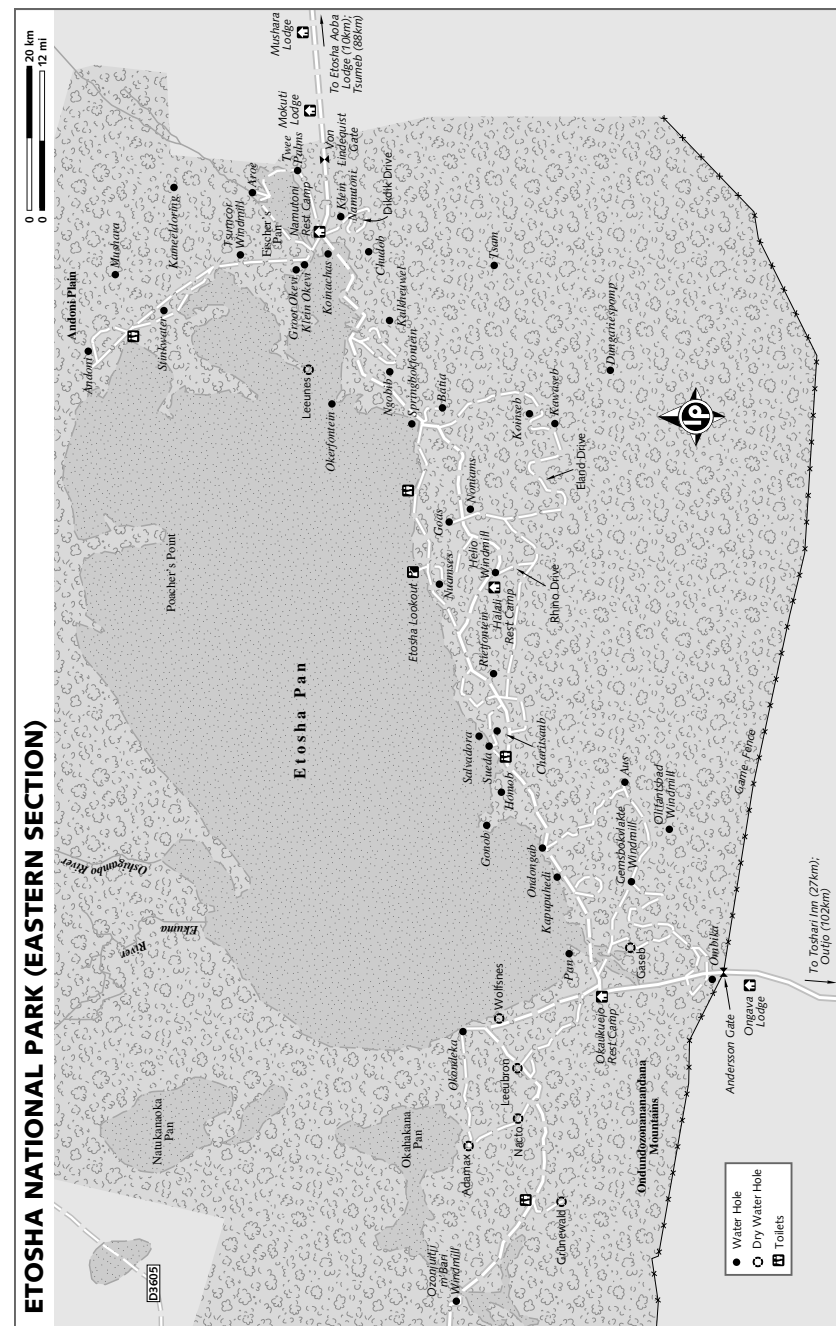
Etosha is open to day visitors, but it's impossible to see much of the park in less than two or three days. Most visitors spend a couple of nights at one of its three rest camps, Namutoni, Halali and Okaukuejo, which are spaced at 70km intervals. Each has its own character, so it's worth visiting more than one if you have the time.

Each camp is open year-round and has a restaurant, which is open from 7am to 9am, noon to 2pm and 6pm to 10pm daily, as well as a bar, a shop, a swimming pool, picnic sites, a petrol station and a kiosk. The restaurants serve meals from 7am to 8.30am, noon to 1.30pm and 6pm to 8.30pm; at other times, the kiosks are open. If you're self-catering, however, it's considerably cheaper if you stock up on groceries prior to entering the park.

IN THE PARK

Prebooking for the NWR-run rest camps listed following is mandatory. Although it is sometimes possible to reserve a space at either of the park gates, it's best to contact the NWR office in Windhoek (see p315) well in advance of your visit.

Okaukuejo Rest Camp (camping for 4 people US\$20, economy r or bungalows US\$33, 2-bed r US\$41, 3-bed bungalows US\$41, 4-bed chalets US\$50, 4-bed 'luxury' bungalows



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO TRACKING GAME

Visitors to Africa are always amazed at the apparent ease with which professional guides locate and spot their quarry. While most of us can't hope to replicate their skills in a brief visit, a few pointers can hone your approach.

- **Time of day** – this is possibly the most important factor for determining animal movements and behaviours. Dawn and dusk tend to be the most productive periods for mammals and many birds. They're the coolest parts of the day, and also produce the richest light for photographs. Although the middle of the day is usually too hot for much action, this is when some antelope feel less vulnerable at a watering hole, and when raptors and reptiles are most obvious.
- **Weather** – prevailing weather conditions can greatly affect your wildlife-viewing experience. For example, high winds may drive herbivores and birds into cover, so concentrate your search in sheltered areas. Summer thunderstorms are often followed by a flurry of activity as insect colonies and frogs emerge, followed by their predators. Overcast or cool days may prolong activity such as hunting by normally crepuscular predators, and extremely cold winter nights force nocturnal species to stay active at dawn.
- **Water** – most animals drink daily when water is available, so water sources are worthwhile places to invest time, particularly in the dry season. Predators and very large herbivores tend to drink early in the day or at dusk, while antelopes tend to drink from the early morning to midday. On the coast, receding tides are usually followed by the appearance of wading birds and detritus feeders such as crabs.
- **Food sources** – knowing what your quarry eats will help you to decide where you should spend most of your time. A flowering aloe might not hold much interest at first glance, but knowing that it is irresistible to many species of sunbirds might help to change your mind. Fruiting trees attract monkeys while herds of herbivores with their young are a predator's dessert cart.
- **Habitat** – knowing which habitats are preferred by each species is a good beginning, but just as important is knowing where to look in those habitats. Animals aren't merely randomly dispersed within their favoured habitats. Instead, they seek out specific sites to shelter – hollows, trees, caves and high points on plains. Many predators use open grasslands, but also gravitate towards available cover such as large trees, thickets or even grass tussocks. Ecotones – where one habitat merges into another – can be particularly productive because species from both habitats overlap.
- **Tracks and signs** – even when you don't see animals, they leave many signs of their presence. Spoor (tracks), scat (droppings), pellets, nests, scrapes and scent-marks provide information about wildlife, and may even help to locate it. Check dirt and sand roads when driving – it won't take long for you to recognise interesting spoor. Elephant footprints are unmistakable, and large predator tracks are fairly obvious. Also, many wild cats and dogs use roads to hunt, so look for where the tracks leave the road – often they mark the point where they began a stalk or sought out a nearby bush for shade.
- **Equipment** – probably the most important piece of equipment you can have is a good pair of binoculars. These help to not only spot wildlife, but also correctly identify it (this is essential for birding). Binoculars are also useful for viewing species and behaviours where close approaches are impossible. Field guides, which are pocket-sized books that depict mammals, birds, flowers etc of a specific area with photos or colour illustrations, are also invaluable. These guides also provide important identification pointers and a distribution map for each species.

Remember, although the majority of foreign visitors to Southern Africa choose to join an organised safari, nothing is comparable to the thrill of doing it yourself.

US\$58, 4-bed self-catering bungalows US\$95; (P) (E) Okaukuejo's camping ground is a bit of a dust hole, but the self-catering accommodation may be the nicest in the park. The bungalows and chalets all have a kitchen, braai pit, and bathroom and toilet facilities.

The floodlit water hole is probably Etosha's best rhino-viewing venue, particularly from 8pm to 10pm. Also popular is the sunset photo frenzy from Okaukuejo's landmark stone tower, which affords a view across the spaces to the distant Ondundozonanandana (Lost Shepherd Boy) Mountains; try saying that after three pints of Windhoek lager (or even before!).

Halali Rest Camp (camping for 4 people US\$20, 2-bed r US\$37, economy bungalows US\$42, self-catering bungalows US\$48-81) Etosha's middle camp, Halali, nestles between several incongruous dolomite outcrops. The name comes from a German term for the ritual horn-blowing to signal the end of a hunt, and a horn is now Halali's motif. A floodlit water hole extends wildlife viewing into the night, and allows observation of nocturnal creatures. The watering hole at Halali is arguably the best wildlife-viewing venue in the park. The bungalows are for four people.

Namutoni Rest Camp (camping for 4 people US\$20; 2-bed r with shared bathroom US\$18, 2-bed r US\$41, 2-bed economy flats inside/outside the fort US\$38/27, 4-bed chalets US\$45, 4-bed flats US\$42/50, 4-bed luxury ste US\$87) The most popular and best kept of the camps is Namutoni, with its landmark whitewashed German fort. It originally served as an outpost for German troops, and in 1899 the cavalry built a fort from which to control Owambo uprisings.

OUTSIDE THE PARK

Pre-booking for the lodges listed below is strongly recommended.

Toshari Inn (Map p325; ☎ 333440; toshari@out.namib.com; camping per site US\$16, r per person incl breakfast US\$42; (P) (E)) Located 27km south of Andersson

Gate, Toshari is the most affordable option outside the park, and a convenient place to crash if you can't reach the park by sunset or if the rest camps are fully booked.

Mokuti Lodge (☎ 229084; www.namibsunhotels.com.na/english/e_mokuti.htm; s/d incl breakfast from US\$120/165, f incl breakfast US\$215; (P) (E) (E)) This sprawling lodge, located just 2km from von Lindequist gate, has more than 100 rooms as well as several swimming pools and tennis courts, though the low-profile buildings create an illusion of intimacy. The lodge seeks to create an informal, relaxed atmosphere, and is a good choice if you're travelling with the little ones.

Mushara Lodge (☎ 229106; www.mushara-lodge.com; s/d chalet incl breakfast US\$140/225; (P) (E) (E)) Located on a 25-sq-km concession just 8km east of the von Lindequist gate, this rustic lodge is dotted with 'mushara' or purple pod terminalia trees, and attractively blends modern and traditional design elements. Accommodation is in 12 reed and thatched chalets that are scattered across a manicured lawn.

Etosha Aoba Lodge (Map p325; ☎ 229100; www.etosha-aoba-lodge.com; s/d incl breakfast US\$145/225; (P) (E) (E)) Situated on a 70-sq-km private concession about 10km east of von Lindequist gate, this tranquil lodge is located in Tamboti forest next to a dry riverbed. The property is comprised of 10 light and airy thatched cottages that blend effortlessly into the surrounding riverine forest.

Hobatere Lodge (Map p348; ☎ 067-330261; res.africa.net/hobatere-lodge; s/d with full board US\$155/280; (P) (E) (E)) Located 80km north of Kamanjab on the western border of Etosha, Hobatere is a fine base for exploring the western Etosha (closed to private vehicles) and the Kaokoveld (p350), though it's a bit far from Etosha Pan. Accommodation is in 12 pastel-washed cottages located close to a popular water hole (elephants gather here in the dry season).

THE NAME OF THE GAME

The word 'game' actually hails from hunting: originally the game was the thrill of the sport, but gradually the quarry itself came to be called game. Derivation notwithstanding, the term pops up regularly in Southern Africa when people refer to wildlife, and doesn't necessarily mean that some poor beast is about to receive a lethal dose of lead poisoning. 'Game viewing' is the most common local term for wildlife watching, and is usually done on a 'game drive', a guided tour by vehicle. 'Big Game' is, of course, the Big Five (the black rhino, Cape buffalo, elephant, leopard and lion), whereas 'general game' collectively refers to the diverse herbivore community, ranging from duikers to giraffes. Of course, while 'game' in its various forms is used widely, hunters also still employ the term, most often as 'Big Game', as well as 'Plains Game,' their term for herbivores.

Ongava Lodge (☎ 061-274500; www.wilderness-safaris.com; s/d with full board & activities US\$600/830; (P) (B) (E)) The most exclusive luxury lodge in the Etosha area is located on a private game reserve near Andersson Gate that protects several prides of lions, a few black and white rhinos and your standard assortment of herd animals. Ongava is divided into two properties; the main Ongava Lodge is a collection of safari-chic chalets surrounding a small water hole, while the Ongava Tented Camp is six East African-style canvas tents situated deep in the bush.

Getting There & Away

Air Namibia flies daily between Windhoek's Eros Airport and Mokuti Airport (US\$90/145 one way/return), immediately south of Von Lindequist Gate.

Etosha's two main entry gates are Von Lindequist (Namutoni), west of Tsumeb; and Andersson (Okaukuejo), north of Outjo. There's no public transport into the park, but Tsumeb, the nearest bus and rail terminal, 110km away, has several car-hire agencies. Otherwise, plenty of safari companies run Etosha tours, including some very economical options (see p397).

Hitching is prohibited inside Etosha, but hitchhikers may be able to find lifts from Tsumeb to Namutoni or Outjo to Okaukuejo. Sort out entry permits when you enter the park or your driver may have problems when trying to exit the park (it will appear that some of their original party has vanished!) Your best bet is to explain when you enter the park that you need separate entry permits for your own records.

Getting Around

As well as hitching, pedestrians, bicycles and motorcycles are prohibited in Etosha, and open bakkies must be screened off. Outside the rest camps, visitors must stay in their vehicles (except at toilet stops).

NORTHERN NAMIBIA

Known as the 'Land of Rivers', Northern Namibia is bounded by the Kunene and Okavango Rivers along the Angolan border, and in the east by the Zambezi and the Kwando/Mashe/Linyanti/Chobe river systems. Although Windhoek may be the capital,

Northern Namibia, which is the country's most densely populated region, is undeniably its cultural heartland.

OSHAKATI

(☎ 065)

The Owambo capital is an uninspiring commercial centre that is little more than a strip of characterless development along the highway. While it lacks specific attractions, it's worth spending an hour at the large and odorous covered market, which proffers everything from clothing and baskets to mopane worms and glasses of freshly brewed *tambo* (beer).

Information

For changing money, major banks (Bank of Namibia, Bank of Windhoek, First National Bank and Standard Bank) are represented along the bustling commercial centre. Email and internet access are available at the **Iway I-café** (☎ 224070; per hr US\$4.50; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri). Alternatively, there's the **Pick-a-Phone** (☎ 221300; per hr US\$3.50; ☎ 8am-6pm), in the Yetu Centre.

The **Angolan Consulate** (☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) issues 30-day visas for around US\$50. Drop off

your passport in the morning and pick it up in the afternoon.

Sleeping & Eating

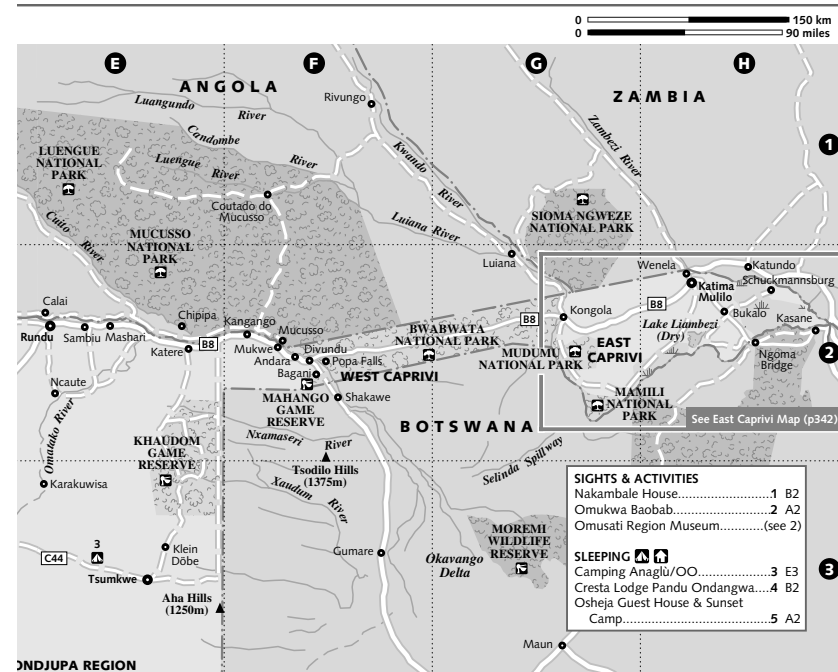
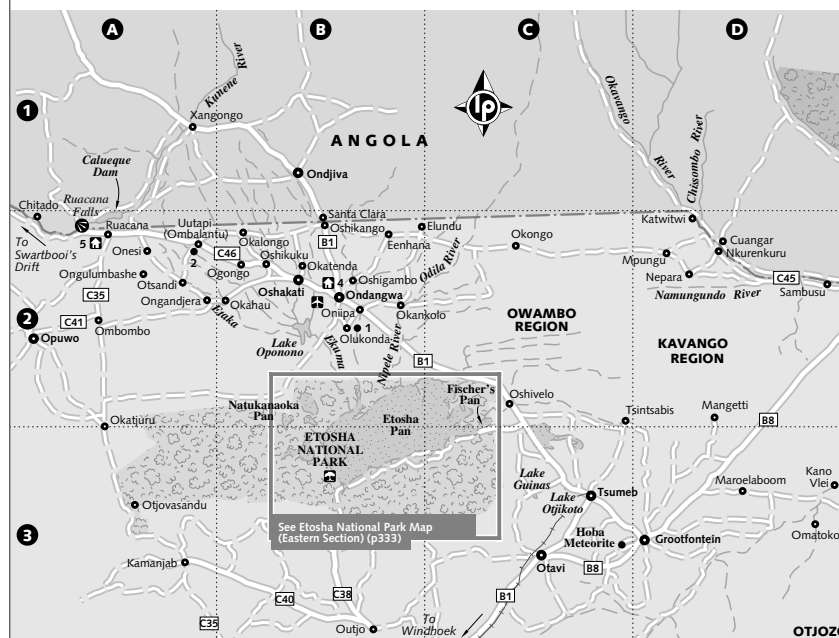
Oshakati International Youth Hostel (☎ 224294; San Nujoma Rd; dm US\$4, r per person US\$10; (P)) Caters mainly to Namibian school groups, but the hostel is clean and friendly to foreigners. Men and women are housed in separate rooms.

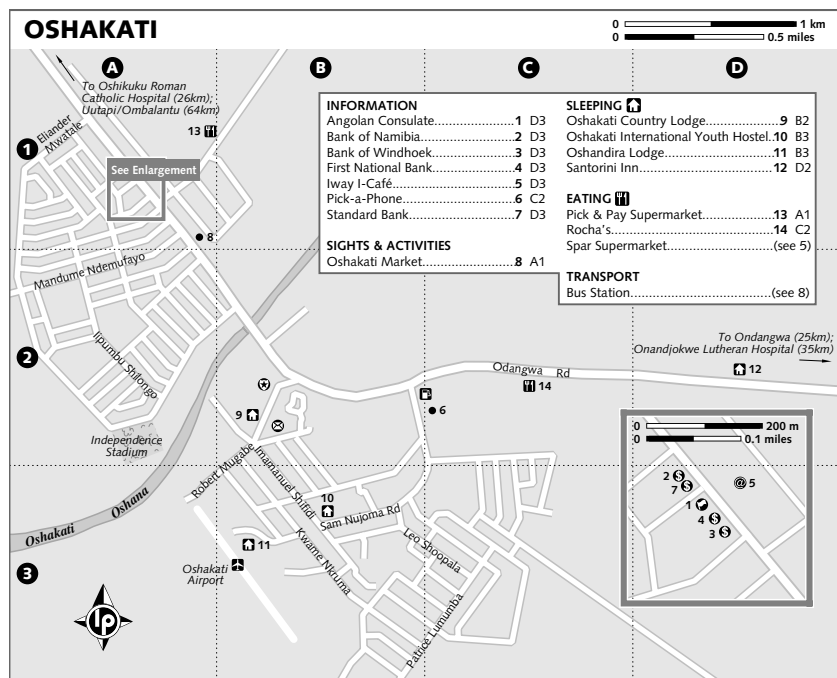
Santorini Inn (☎ 220457; bookings@santorini-inn.com; s/d incl breakfast from US\$45/60; (P) (B) (E)) This somewhat out-of-place inn may inspire the sensation that you've died and gone to Florida. With a distinctly tropical feel, the Santorini features a pool, bar, digital satellite TV, restaurant, and a refrigeration shop that ensures that the air-con is functional.

Oshandira Lodge (☎ 220443; oshandira@iway.na; per person incl breakfast US\$45; (P) (B)) Located next to the airport, this pleasant lodge is a good choice – simple but spacious rooms surround a landscaped pool and thatched open-air restaurant.

Oshakati Country Lodge (☎ 222380; countrylodge@mweb.com; Robert Mugabe Rd, per person US\$70; (B) (E)) Provides posh but fairly heartless accommodation for business travellers and government

NORTHERN NAMIBIA





officials. Rooms are well furnished and come equipped with air-con and satellite TV.

Rocha's (☎ 222038; Ondangwa Rd; mains US\$4-8) For a taste of Angola, head to Rocha's where you can feast on Portuguese-style fare including a wide range of local fish dishes.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Oshakati's airport is used for charters only. Commercial flights use the airport in Ondangwa, 25km down the road.

BUS & COMBI

From the bus terminal at the market, white (minibuses) leave frequently for Ondangwa (US\$1.50, one hour) and Uutapi/Ombalantu (US\$2, two hours). Minibuses for Windhoek (US\$10, 11 hours), via Tsumeb (US\$3, four hours) set out when full, with extra departures on Sunday afternoon.

CAR

The C46 and B1 through the Owambo region are tarred and in good condition, but off these routes, road maintenance is poor and 4WD

is required in places, especially after rain. Petrol is available at Oshakati, Ondangwa, Oshikango and Uutapi (Ombalantu).

ONDANGWA

☎ 065

The second-largest Owambo town, Ondangwa boasts several colourful buildings, a booming market and warehouses that provide stock to the 6000 tiny *cuca* shops (small bush shops named after the brand of Angolan beer that they once sold) that serve the area's rural residents.

Lost in the maze of routes and tracks south of Ondangwa lies **Lake Oponono**, a large wetland fed by the Culevai *oshanas* (underground river channels). After rains, the region attracts a variety of bird life, including saddle-bill storks, crowned cranes, flamingoes and pelicans. The edge of the lake lies 27km south of Ondangwa.

Also worthwhile is **Nakambale House** (Map pp336-7; admission US\$0.75; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun), which was built in the late 1870s by Finnish missionary Martti Rautanen, and is the oldest building in northern

Namibia. It now houses a museum. In 1889, Reverend Rautanen also constructed the area's first church, which is open by request.

Sleeping & Eating

Ondangwa Rest Camp (☎ 240351; restcamp@osh.namib.com; camping per person US\$4) Surrounds a rather fetid pond behind Ondangwa's very obviously pink shopping centre. Although the camp site is less than appealing, the attached Oasis Restaurant & Beer Garden is probably the best place in town for a beer and a bite to eat.

Olukonda National Monument (☎ 245668; olukonda.museum@eldin.org.na; camping per tent US\$4 plus per person US\$1.50, traditional huts per person without/with linen US\$5/8, cottages per person incl breakfast US\$10) Here's your opportunity to sleep in a basic missionary cottage or a hut that would have been used historically by an Owambo chief or one of his wives. The site is located in Olukonda village (which also contains Nakambale House), just 6km southeast of Ondangwa along the D3606.

Cresta Lodge Pandu Ondangwa (Map pp336-7; ☎ 241900; ondangwa@crestanamibia.com.na; s/d from US\$55/70; ☎ ☎ ☎) This plush new business-travellers' option features bright rooms decorated with tasteful artwork as well as modern furnishings. The attached Chatters restaurant prepares decent Continental-inspired cuisine, and there's also a small takeaway in the lobby.

WHAT'S BREWING IN THE OWAMBO COUNTRY?

Forget the Pig & Whistle, Hare & Hounds and King George & the Dragon. The Owambo have their own pub culture, and the bars, nightclubs and bottle shops – better known as '*cuca* shops' – along the northern highways bear wonderfully colourful names. One bottle store is called Serious, another is the Fruit of Love and yet another is California B5. Perhaps the best is simply the unpretentious Botol Stor.

Then there are the bars: the Clinic Happy Bar, Hot Box, Daily Needs, Salon for Sure, Club Jet Style, Sorry to See, Bruce Lee Bar, Oversize Bar, Club Euro Frique, Let's Push, California City Style, Come Together Good Life, Happy Brothers & Sisters, Join Us, Hard Workers Bar, Every Day Bar, Bar We Like and USA No Money No Life. A few are more philosophical: The System, Just Another Life, The Agreement Centre, Take Time, Keep Trying No 1, Keep Trying No 2, Tenacity Centre and Try Again. There also seems to be a new hydrological theme emerging: Sea Point, Quay 4, Club LA Coast, Pelican, Friend Ship, Titanic, Titicaca, and Seven Seas Up & Down.

Some names, however, boggle the mind. Who, for example, came up with the Sign of Mr Hans, We Push & Pull, One Moo, No Wally Let's Support Bar, Far Well Mr Happy Bar, Let's Sweat for Tailor Bar, Club Say Father of Mustache, Let We Trust Uncle Simon, Three Sister in Beer Garden and Wet Come to Big Mama? And given the choice, would you prefer to down a drop in the Peace Full Bar or the Water is Life, or choke down a foul brew in the Oshakati establishment known as Vile Waters?

Getting There & Away

All transport services between Oshakati and Tsumeb or Windhoek stop at Ondangwa's BP petrol station.

UUTAPI (OMBALANTU)

Dusty Uutapi (frequently spelled Outapi, or called Ombalantu, after a formerly adjacent village) is one of Namibia's most typically African commercial towns.

Its main attraction is its former South African army base, which is dominated by the enormous **Omukwa Baobab**. In the past, this amazing hollow tree was used to shelter cattle from invaders, and later used as a turret from which to ambush invading tribes. It didn't work against the South African army, however, which invaded and used the tree for everything from a chapel to a coffee shop (a sign outside reads 'Die Koffiekamer Koelte', meaning 'The Coffee Chamber Cult'), a post office, a storage shed and an interrogation chamber for prisoners of war. The site, 1km off the D3612, is loosely described as the **Omusati Region Museum** (Map pp336-7; admission free; ☎ 24hr) and includes a nearby bunker and watchtower from the South African days.

RUACANA

☎ 065

The tiny Kunene River town of Ruacana (the name comes from the Herero words *orua hakahana* – 'the rapids'), was constructed as

a company town to serve the 320-megawatt underground Ruacana hydroelectric project, which currently supplies more than half of Namibia's power requirements.

The dramatic 85m-high **Ruacana Falls** was once a great natural wonder, but thanks to Angola's Calueque Dam the water flows only during heavy rains, when the power station is satisfied and excess water is released over the dam. In 2001 and 2002, the falls roared to life in March and April, presenting a spectacle comparable to Victoria Falls – if you hear that it's flowing, you certainly won't regret a side trip to see it. To enter the border area, visitors must sign the Namibian immigration register.

Osheja Guest House & Sunset Camp (Map pp336-7; ☎ 0812 424916; camping per person US\$4, Sunset bungalows per person US\$10, Osheja guest house per person US\$18; (P)) is a two-part lodge consisting of a leafy camping and bungalow area as well as the nearby Osheja Guest House. During business hours, you can register with Venessa at the BP petrol station. Meals are available with advance booking.

Minibuses connect Ruacana with Oshakati daily from the BP petrol station.

RUNDU

☎ 066

Rundu, a sultry tropical outpost on the bluffs above the Okavango River, has little of specific interest for tourists, but it's great to laze at one of the lodges alongside the river, especially if you want to break up the long drive to/from the Caprivi Strip. It's also a centre of activity for Namibia's growing Angolan community. Every May at Rundu Beach, locals put on the **'Anything that Floats' regatta**, accompanied by the usual drinking, dining and socialising.

The **tourism centre** (☎ 256140; ngandu@mweb.com; Kakakuru St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) is run by the same folks who operate the Ngandu Safari Lodge (see below). It can provide basic tourist information.

The well-stocked **Okavango Pharmacy** (Siwaronga St) is probably the best place for pharmaceuticals in northern Namibia.

If you're shopping for crafts, be sure to visit the **Khemo Open Market** (Khemo St), which has a good selection of Kavango woodcarvings.

Sleeping & Eating

Sarasungu River Lodge (☎ 255161; sarasungu@mweb.com.na; camping per person US\$4, s/d US\$30/40; (P) (E))

This brand-new lodge is situated in a secluded riverine clearing 4km from the town centre, and features a number of attractive thatched chalets that surround a landscaped pool.

Ngandu Safari Lodge (☎ 256723; ngandu@mweb.com.na; Sarasungu Rd; camping per person US\$4, s/d from US\$30/40; (P) (E)) With a wide range of accommodation to suit travellers of all budgets, this long-standing Rundu lodge draws a diverse mix of guests. Ngandu is conveniently situated near the centre town, though it's about 1km from the riverfront.

N'Kwazi Lodge (☎ 255467; nkawasi@iafrica.com.na; camping per person US\$4, African huts US\$25, d incl breakfast US\$55) Makes a great riverside retreat, with family-style meals and hospitality. In the evening, you can take a sunset cruise on the

Okavango; the lodge also organises cultural evenings with residents of adjacent Mayana village, and visits to Mayana School, which is supported by the lodge. Transfers from town cost US\$29 per group.

Tambuti Lodge (☎ 255711; tambuti@namibnet.com; s/d incl breakfast US\$35/40, honeymoon ste US\$80; (P) (E)) This small Swiss-run lodge is located at Rundu Beach, and combines the convenience of being in town with beauty of a riverside setting. Highlights are the on-site restaurant feature a host of traditional Swiss dishes, and the honeymoon suite, which has one of the most bizarre Jacuzzis you've ever seen.

Hakusembe Lodge (☎ 257010; www.natron.net/hakusembe; camping per person US\$4, s/d with half-board US\$140/215; (P) (E) (E)) This secluded hideaway sits amid lush riverside gardens, and features eight luxury chalets (one of which is floating) decked out in safari prints and locally crafted furniture. It lies 17km down the Nkurenkuru road, then 2km north to the riverbank.

Antja's (☎ 256973; Main St; breakfast US\$2, meals US\$2-4) A good option for breakfast, burgers, toasted sandwiches, pies, sweets and coffee (including espresso and cappuccino).

Ozzy's Beer House (☎ 256723; meals US\$3-5) This popular restaurant serves up greasy local fare, though it's cheap and has a good number of vegetarian options as well.

Getting There & Away

Intercape Mainliner's weekly buses between Windhoek (US\$38, nine hours) and Victoria Falls (US\$36, 11 hours) pass Rundu's Shell petrol station at 5.15am Saturday northbound and 7.15pm Sunday southbound.

Star Line's twice-weekly services between Windhoek (US\$15, 11 hours) and Katima Mulilo (US\$12, seven hours) also call in at Rundu. Star Line runs a bus from Rundu to Tsumeb (US\$9, four hours), via Grootfontein, at 8pm on Wednesday and Sunday. The bus that runs from Grootfontein to Rundu (US\$8, three hours) leaves at 7.30pm on Tuesday and Friday.

A car ferry and border crossing are expected soon between Rundu and Calai, across the river in Angola.

KHAUDOM GAME RESERVE

If you're looking for a truly wild and untouristed wildlife venue in Namibia, head for the undeveloped **Khoudom Game Reserve** (day admission per person US\$2.50 plus per vehicle US\$2.50),

which takes in 384,000 hectares. Along its meandering sand tracks you'll see roams, wild dogs, elephants, zebras and most other species you'd encounter at Etosha National Park, but in a much lonelier context.

Namibia Wildlife Resorts asks visitors to travel in a two-vehicle convoy and be self-sufficient in food, water and spares. Caravans, trailers and motorcycles are prohibited. The two camps **Khoudom** (camping for 4 people US\$12, 4-bed huts US\$14) and **Sikereti** (camping for 4 people US\$12, 4-bed huts US\$14) won't disappoint. All visitors must prebook through NWR in Windhoek.

BWABWATA NATIONAL PARK

☎ 066

Bwabwata National Park includes five main zones: the 20,500-hectare West Caprivi Triangle around Kongola (also known as the Kwando Core Area), the Mahango Game Reserve, Popa Falls, the Buffalo Core Area near Divundu and the now-defunct West Caprivi Game Reserve. Bwabwata aims to rehabilitate wildlife populations that were virtually destroyed by poaching.

Prior to the 2002 Angolan ceasefire, this area saw almost no visitors. Now that peace has returned, however, tourism is slowly starting to pick up again. If you're looking to get off the beaten path, this is a great area to explore while it's still relatively undiscovered.

Sights

MAHANGO GAME RESERVE

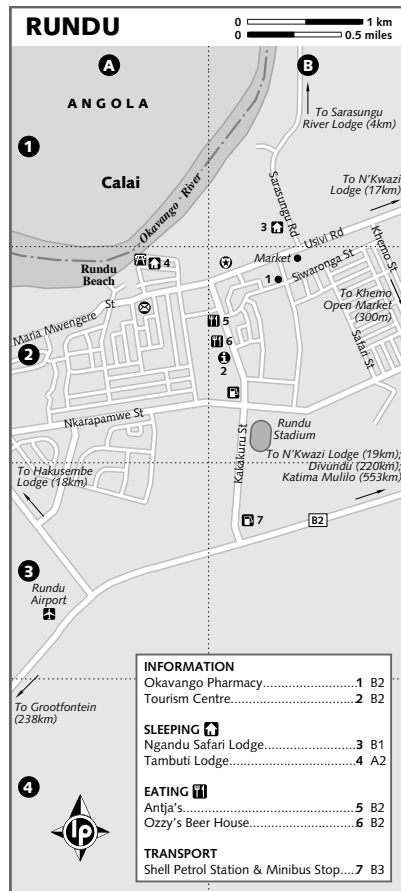
The 25,400-hectare **Mahango Game Reserve** (admission per person US\$3.50 plus per vehicle US\$3.50) occupies a broad flood plain that's best known for its dry-season concentrations of thirsty elephants. This is the only national park unit in Namibia where visitors are permitted to walk at will; winter is the best time for observing the area's ample wildlife. The nearest NWR camp is Popa Falls, 15km north of Mahango.

DIVUNDU

Nondescript Divundu, which serves as a commercial centre for the adjacent villages of Mukwe, Andara and Bagani, has a couple of supermarkets and three (ostensibly) 24-hour petrol stations.

POPA FALLS

Near Bagani, the Okavango River tumbles down a broad series of cascades known as



Popa Falls (day admission per person US\$2.50 plus per vehicle US\$2.50). They're nothing to get steamed up about, but low water does expose a 4m drop. A kiosk sells the basics: tinned food, beer, candles and mosquito coils.

Sleeping

WESTERN SECTION

Following are the accommodation options in the western section of the park.

Popa Falls Rest Camp (camping for 4 people US\$12, each additional person US\$2, standard/luxury 4-bed huts US\$26/28; **P**) Although it's getting a bit shabby, this NWR-run camp site does afford great views of the cascades. A small on-site shop sells the essentials while a field kitchen is available for self-catering. Facilities include cold showers, sit-down flush toilets and braai pits.

N/goabaca Camp (camping per person US\$4; **P**) This locally run camp site is a member of Namibia Community Based Tourism Association (Nacobta; www.nacobta.com.na), a collective of various organisations that aims to foster increased community-based tourism. The camp sits beside the Okavango River

opposite the Popa Falls Rest Camp, and has similar facilities.

Mahangu Safari Lodge (☎ 259037; www.mahangu.com.na; camping per person US\$4, small/large tent per person with half-board US\$20/35, chalet per person with half-board US\$50; **P** ☎) Situated among a grove of jackalberry trees along the Okavango River near the entrance to the Mahangu Game Reserve gate, this reader-recommended lodge has a variety of accommodation to suit all budgets. Note that during rainy periods, the access road leading to the lodge may be impassable to 2WD vehicles.

Ngepi Camp (☎ 259903; www.ngepicamp.com; camping per person US\$5, huts US\$22; **P**) Ngepi is Mbukushu for 'How are you?', and folks who stay here are normally just fine. Travellers rave about this place, and we agree: it's probably one of the best backpacker lodges in Namibia. Entire days can be spent sunbathing and reading on the green lawns or swimming in the Okavango River 'cage' (it keeps you and the crocs at a safe distance from one another). Entire nights can be spent boozing it up in the inviting bush bar. Crash for the night in a reed hut or pitch a tent by the river, and let

the sounds of hippos splashing ease you into a restful sleep. The camp is located 4km off the main road, though the sandy access can prove difficult without a 4WD. Phone the lodge if you need a lift from Divundu.

Sudabo Lodge (☎ 259005; marlon@ravemail.com.na; camping B&B per person US\$7, s/d bungalows B&B US\$75/100; **P** ☎) This German-run lodge occupies a scenic bluff above the Okavango River about 500m upstream from Popa Falls. It's a good base for organising boat trips (US\$9) and Mahango wildlife drives (US\$20), though non-Germans may feel a bit out of place.

EASTERN SECTION

At the eastern end of the park are a number of accommodation options. See also p345.

Nambwa Camp Site (Map p342; camping per person US\$5) Nambwa, 14km south of Kongola, lacks facilities, but it's the only official camp in the park. Book and pick up a permit at the Susuwe ranger station, about 4km north of Kongola (4WD access only) on the west bank of the river. To reach the camp, follow the 4WD track south along the western bank of the Kwando River.

Susuwe Island Lodge (Map p342; ☎ South Africa 27-11-706 7207; www.islandsinafrica.com; low/high season per person US\$305/465) This chic safari lodge is located on a remote island in the Kwando River, and it is surrounded by a wildlife-rich habitat of savanna, woodland and wetland. Accommodation is in six stylish brick and thatch chalets adorned in soft earth tones. Susuwe is accessible only by charter flight or 4WD. Prebooking is mandatory.

Getting There & Away

All buses and minibuses travelling between Katima Mulilo and Rundu pass through Divundu. The gravel road between Divundu and Mohebo (on the Botswana border) is accessible by 2WD, and there's lots of traffic but no public transport; drivers may transit the park without charge, but incur national park entry fees to use the loop drive through the park.

KATIMA MULILO

☎ 066

Out on a limb at the eastern end of the Caprivi Strip lies remote Katima Mulilo, which is as far from Windhoek as you can get in Namibia. This very African town features lush vegetation and enormous trees, and was once known

for the elephants that marched through. Nowadays little wildlife remains, but the ambience is still pleasant.

Information

Tourist information is dispensed at **Tutwa Tourism & Travel** (Map p344; ☎ 253048; tutwa@mweb.com.na; PO Box 126), which also organises custom tours around the region. On weekdays, the Bank of Windhoek, beside the main town square, changes cash and travellers cheques at an appropriately tropical pace. For fax, email and internet access, see **IWAY** (Map p344; per hr US\$2.50; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, 1-9pm Sun), in a nondescript building beside the Caprivi Arts Centre. If you're either entering or leaving Namibia, be sure to pay the road tax (US\$10) at the Cross-Border Charge Office.

Sights

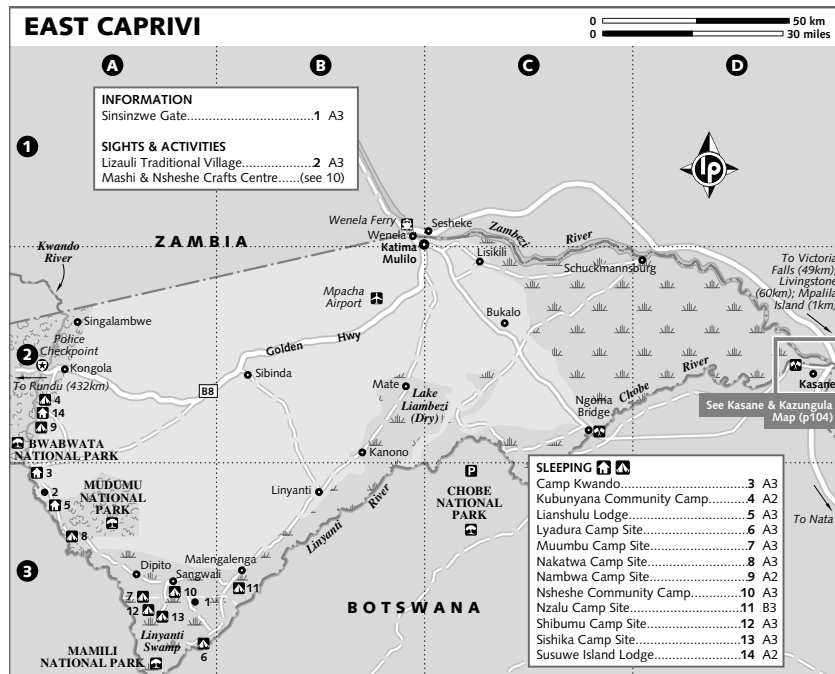
The **Caprivi Arts Centre** (Map p344; ☎ 8am-5.30pm), run by the Caprivi Art & Cultural Association, is a good place to look for local curios and crafts, including elephant and hippo wood-carvings, baskets, bowls, kitchen implements and traditional knives and spears.

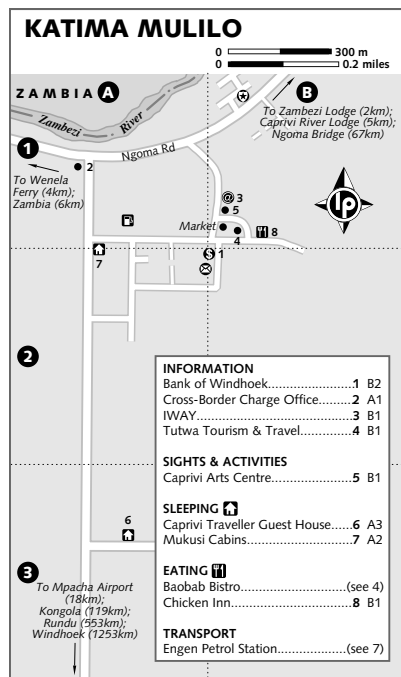
Sleeping

Caprivi Traveller Guest House (Map p344; ☎ 252788; dm US\$5, s/d US\$14/16; **P**) Although it advertises itself as a backpackers' lodge, the Caprivi Traveller is actually more of a budget hotel. But it's a cheap and clean option if you're just looking to crash for the night. To get there, follow the Rundu road 800m from the centre, turn left onto the nameless gravel road and continue on for 50m; the guesthouse is on the left.

Caprivi River Lodge (☎ 253300; www.capriviriverlodge.net; camping per person US\$4; budget r s/d US\$45/80, chalet incl breakfast US\$90/110; **P** ☎) This reader-recommended riverside lodge offers rustic chalets and modest wooden cabins with shared bathrooms, as well as grassy camp sites to suit travellers of all budgets. The lodge is located 5km from Katima Mulilo along the Ngoma road.

Zambezi Lodge (☎ 253149; www.namibsun.com.na; camping per person US\$4, s/d incl breakfast US\$65/95; **P** ☎) This stunning, riverside lodge is perched on the banks of the Zambezi, and features a floating bar from where you can watch the crocs and hippos below. The lodge is located 2km from town along the Ngoma road.





Mukusi Cabins (Map p344; ☎ 253255; Engen petrol station; budget per person US\$14, s/d cabins US\$20/28; (P) (E)) This oasis in the centre of town has everything from simple backpackers' rooms with fan to small but comfortable air-con cabins. The lovely bar-restaurant dishes up a range of unexpected options such as calamari, snails, king-clip, as well as steak and chicken standbys.

Eating

If you're self-catering, there are two supermarkets to be found in the main square, as well as an open-air market near the Caprivi Arts Centre. Proper restaurants are scarce in Katima Mulilo, though there are a couple of takeaways – the **Chicken Inn** (Map p344; meals US\$2-5) and the **Baobab Bistro** (Map p344; ☎ 252047; meals US\$2-5) both offer your standard selection of greasy-spoon fare.

Getting There & Away

The Intercape Mainliner passes Katima Mulilo en route between Windhoek and Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe). Minibuses run when full to and from Windhoek (US\$15, 1½ hours) and points in between.

Drivers of foreign-registered vehicles leaving Namibia at Ngoma Bridge or Wenela need a US\$10 road tax certificate; if you did not receive one on entry, purchase one at the road tax office in town. For information on the Wenela ferry, see p394.

MPALILA ISLAND

☎ 066

Mpalila Island (also spelt Impalila) resembles a wedge driven between the Chobe and Zambezi Rivers. The island represents Namibia's outer limits at the 'four-corners meeting' of Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and Zambia, and actually reaches out and touches the mid-Zambezi point common to all four countries. In fact, on an area map, this international convergence resembles Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel (really – check it out!).

The island, which is within easy reach of Chobe National Park and Victoria Falls, is home to a handful of exclusive lodges catering to upmarket tourists in search of luxurious isolation.

Sleeping

Prebooking for all of the accommodation listed below is essential. All lodges offer a variety of activities for guests including cruises on the Chobe River, guided wildlife drives, fishing expeditions, island walks and mokoro (traditional dugout canoe) trips. Rates include full-board as well as transfer from Kasane, Botswana (p101).

King's Den/Zambezi Queen (☎ 6250814; www.namibsun.com.na; s/d Zambezi Queen US\$85/130, s/d King's Den US\$170/275; (E) (E)) The King's Den consists of five rustic chalets that are perched along the Chobe River and surrounded by tropical gardens. The *Zambezi Queen* is a riverboat moored opposite Sedudu Island on the Chobe River, and features eight luxury cabins with bathrooms.

Chobe Savannah Lodge (☎ Bookings through Desert & Delta Safaris, Maun 686 1243; www.desertdelta.com; low/high season per person US\$250/325; (E) (E)) The sister lodge of the Chobe Game Lodge is renowned for its panoramic views of the Puku Flats. Each stylishly decorated room has a private veranda where you can spot wildlife without ever having to change out of your pyjamas.

Impalila Island Lodge (☎ in South Africa 27-11-706 7207; www.islandsinafrica.com; low/high season per person US\$305/465; (E) (E)) Overlooking the impressive

Mombova rapids, this stylish retreat has eight luxury chalets built on elevated decks at the water's edge. The centrepiece of the lodge is a pair of ancient baobab trees, which tower majestically over the grounds.

Ichingo Chobe River Lodge (☎ 26-76 250143; www.ichingo.com; per person US\$360) Ichingo consists of eight East African-style luxury safari tents complete with thatched bathrooms. The ambience is more relaxed and rustic than some in of its chic counterparts, though the lodge is perfect for a tranquil, worry-free escape.

Getting There & Away

Access to Mpalila Island is either by charter flight (US\$100 to US\$150) or by boat from Kasane, Botswana, though lodges will organise all transport for their booked guests.

MUDUMU NATIONAL PARK

☎ 066

Until the late 1980s, Mudumu was a hunting concession gone mad, and over the years the wildlife was depleted by both locals and trophy hunters. In 1989, Mudumu National Park and Mamili National Park were officially proclaimed in a last-ditch effort to rescue the area from environmental devastation.

In hopes of linking wildlife conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources and local economic development, the former managers of Lianshulu Lodge helped the local community establish **Lizaui Traditional Village** (Map p342; tours per person US\$2.30; ☎ 8.30am-5pm), where visitors learn about rural Caprivan life. To get there, follow the D3511, south of the Kongola petrol station.

Sleeping

Nakatwa Camp Site (Map p342; camping free; (P) (E)) Mudumu's only camp site, 7km southeast of Lianshulu, is little more than a dry spot to pitch a tent. Although it lacks any kind of facilities, it overlooks extensive wetlands, and the price is certainly right.

Kubunyana Community Camp (Map p342; Choyi village; camping per person US\$4, fixed tents per person US\$8; (P) (E)) This locally run camp site 7km south of Kongola petrol station is a member of Nacobta (www.nacobta.com.na), a collective of various organisations that aims to foster increased community-based tourism. Here you can rent canoes (US\$3 per hour) to paddle around the adjacent backwater or take a guided walk (US\$3.50 per hour). The camp

site is accessible in the dry season by 2WD, though the road frequently floods after the rains.

Camp Kwando (Map p342; ☎ 6860221; www.campkwando.com; camping per person US\$6.50, luxury tents s/d US\$90/140, treehouses s/d US\$165/260; (P) (E)) Near the park entrance, 25km south of Kongola, this is a convenient base for exploring Mudumu. Whether you're camping, bedding down in a luxury tent or climbing up a tree to your bungalow in the sky, you'll be able to relax and unwind at this secluded lodge. Rates include meals and activities.

Lianshulu Lodge (Map p342; ☎ 254317; www.lian-shulu.com.na; per person US\$195; (P) (E)) Occupying a private concession inside the boundaries of Mudumu National Park, Lianshulu is one of the most beautifully situated accommodations in Namibia. The lodge is dominated by an impressive bar and dining area that overlooks the surrounding wetlands. Rates include meals and activities. To reach the lodge, follow the D3511 about 40km south of Kongola and turn west on the signposted track. Rates include meals and activities.

MAMILI NATIONAL PARK

☎ 066

Wild and little visited, 320-sq-km Mamili National Park is Namibia's equivalent of the Okavango Delta, and when there's water, the park combines river channels, delightful wetlands and wildlife-rich islands. The forested areas brim with stands of sycamore figs, jackalberry, leadwood and sausage trees, and are fringed by vleis and reed-choked marshes. Mamili's crowning glory is its bird life – more than 430 species have been recorded. The best time to visit is from September to early November.

Accommodation in the park is limited to the Lyadura and Nzalu wilderness camp sites in the eastern part of the park and Muumbu, Shibumu and Sishika in the west (see Map p342), but no facilities are available and campers must be self-sufficient. Camping permits (US\$3.50 per person and US\$3.50 per vehicle) are available at Sinsinzwe Gate or from the **MET office** (☎ 253027, 253341; Katima Mulilo). Access is by 4WD only.

At Sangwali village, north of the park, Nacoba runs the **Mashi & Nsheshe Crafts centre** (Map p342), which produces and markets Caprivan wood carvings, basketry and jewellery. It also operates the **Nsheshe Community**

Camp (Map p342; ☎ 696999; PO Box 1707, Ngweze; camping per person US\$3.50), 1km north of Sangwali.

OTJOZONDJUPA REGION

☎ 067

The eastern part of Otjozondjupa region is commonly referred to as Bushmanland, a pejorative term that unfortunately seems incapable of dying away. This largely flat landscape of scrub desert lies at the edge of the Kalahari, and is part of the traditional homeland of the Ju/'hoansi San. Following a spurt in worldwide interest in the San, there has been a recent increase in tourist traffic throughout the region. Although Westerners typically perceive the San as a self-sufficient hunter-gatherer society, witnessing the stark reality of their modern lifestyle is a sobering experience.

Fortunately, a number of influential Westerners ranging from academics and journalists to development workers and cultural survivalists have long been interested in the advocacy of indigenous rights throughout Southern Africa. In Northern Namibia, US film-maker John Marshall and his British colleague, Claire Marshall, established the Nyae Nyae Development Fund in the late 1980s to encourage the Ju/'hoansi San to return to their traditional lands. Over the years, however, the foundation has suffered from a number of ideological conflicts, including to what extent tourism should be fostered in the region.

If you're thinking about whether or not to visit Otjozondjupa, please consider the impact that you might have on the San community. On one hand, revenue from tourism can play a vital role in the development of the region, particularly if you are buying locally produced crafts or paying for the services of a San guide. However, Otjozondjupa is not a human zoo, though unfortunately indigenous tourism is usually an exploitative force. If you do decide to visit, please remember that Western interests have already caused an irreversible amount of damage to the region; be aware of your surroundings, and be sensitive to the plight of the San.

Information

Tourism is regulated by the **Nyae Nyae Conservancy** (☎ 244011; nndfn@iafrica.com.na; entry per person US\$3.50), which also collects fees and activities charges from visitors. You can arrange activi-

ties such as hunting with the San (US\$8) and gathering wild foods (US\$4). Fees are per guide (up to three or four guides); there will also be a fee for the translator (US\$15 per group). In the evening, you can experience traditional music and dancing by up to 15 performers for US\$33. Book through the Nyae Nyae office during regular business hours.

Sights

The dry hard-crust landscape supports baobabs, including several giants. The imaginatively named **Grootboom** (Big Tree) has a circumference of over 30m, and the historic **Dorslandboom** (Thirst Land Tree) bears carvings made by the Dorsland trekkers who camped here on their 1891 trek to Angola. The immense **Holboom** (Hollow Tree) grows near the village of **Tjokwe** (also spelled Djokhoe).

The region's diminutive service centre, **Tsumkwe**, provides little more than basic groceries, snacks and a tourist lodge.

Sleeping & Eating

The conservancy has set up five very basic camp sites (US\$5 per person) beneath notable baobab trees: Makuri, Kremetart/N=amapan, !O'baha, Holboom/Tjokwe and !A=0. Water is normally available in adjacent villages, but otherwise, campers must be self-sufficient. Avoid building fires near the baobabs, as it damages the tree roots.

Omatoko Valley Rest Camp (camping per person in tents/thatched shelters US\$2.50/3) Outside the conservancy at the junction of the C44 and D3306, this rest camp has solar power, a water pump, hot showers and a caretaker. It offers both hunting/gathering trips (US\$3 per person) and traditional music presentations (US\$20 per group).

Camping Anaglü/oo (Anaglü/oo Village; camping per person US\$3) This village has a nice little camp site with picnic areas, rubbish barrels, firewood, water, a pit toilet and showers. It lies 11km west of Tsumkwe along the C44, then 1km north.

Bushmanland Safari Camp (☎ 061-246708; camping per person US\$6) This wilderness outpost is located about 80km west of Tsumkwe, and offers basic meals, fuel, mechanical repairs and a small shop.

Tsumkwe Lodge (☎ 244028; www.tsumkwel.iway.na; camping per person US\$9, s/d bungalows US\$65/105, full board US\$95/170) The only tourist lodge in the

area is run by Arno and Estelle, who have lived in the area for several years and are well respected by the local communities. From Tsumkwe, go 1.5km south of the crossroads, turn right at the Ministry of Housing and continue for 500m.

There's a restaurant at Tsumkwe Lodge, and Tsumkwe Winkel sells limited groceries, but beyond that, you must be self-sufficient.

Getting There & Away

Remote Tsumkwe is surprisingly accessible on the Thursday Star Line bus from Grootfontein (US\$8, 6½ hours), but beyond there, you'll need to either have a private vehicle or be part of an organised tour.

There are no sealed roads in the region, and only the C44 is passable to low-clearance vehicles. Petrol is sometimes available at the Bushmanland Safari Camp and the Tsumkwe Lodge, though it's best to carry a few jerry cans with you. If you're planning to explore the bush around Tsumkwe, it is recommended that you hire a local guide and travel as part of a convoy.

The Dobe border crossing to Botswana requires 4WD and extra fuel to reach the petrol stations at Maun or Etsha 6, which are accessed by a difficult sand track through northwestern Botswana.

NORTHWESTERN NAMIBIA

For 4WD explorers, Namibia is synonymous with the Skeleton Coast, a formidable desert coastline engulfed by icy breakers. Here, seemingly endless stretches of foggy beach are punctuated by rusting shipwrecks and flanked by wandering dunes. As one moves inland, the sinister fogs give way to the wondrous desert wildernesses of Damaraland and the Kaokoveld. The former is sparsely populated by the Damara people, and is known for its unique geological features; the latter is known as one of the last great wildernesses in Southern Africa, as well as the home of the oft-photographed Himba people.

DAMARALAND

The territory between the Skeleton Coast and Namibia's Central Plateau has traditionally been known as Damaraland, after the people

who make up much of its population. Although it's not an officially protected area, its wild open spaces are home to many desert-adapted species, including giraffes, zebras, lions, elephants and rhinos. In addition to its sense of freedom, the region is rich in both natural and cultural attractions, including Brandberg, Namibia's highest massif, and the rock engravings of Twyfelfontein.

Spitzkoppe

☎ 064

The 1728m **Spitzkoppe** (D3716, Groot Spitzkoppe village; admission per person US\$1.80, plus per car US\$1; ☎ sunrise-sunset), one of Namibia's most recognisable landmarks, rises miragelike above the dusty pro-Namib plains of southern Damaraland. Its dramatic shape has inspired its nickname, which is the Matterhorn of Africa, but similarities between this granite inselberg and the glaciated Swiss alp begin and end with its sharp peak. Beside the Spitzkoppe rise the equally impressive Pondoks, another inselberg formation that comprises enormous granite domes.

Around the massif are dotted a number of beautiful wild **camp sites** (☎ 530879; camping per person US\$4; ☐), which are maintained by the local community. Near the entrance, a small shop sells staples and a range of local rocks and minerals. Water (US\$0.05/L) is scarce; it's wise to bring all you'll need.

There's no public transport, and although Swakopmund agencies offer day tours, you'd probably regret not allowing more time to explore this incredible place.

Brandberg

☎ 064

The Brandberg (Fire Mountain) is named for the effect created by the setting sun on its western face, which causes the granite massif to resemble a burning slag heap. Its summit, Königstein, is Namibia's highest peak at 2573m. Its best-known attraction, the gallery of rock art in **Tsisab Ravine**, features the famous *White Lady of the Brandberg*. The figure, which isn't necessarily a lady, stands about 40cm high, and is part of a larger painting that depicts a bizarre hunting procession. In one hand, the figure is carrying what appears to be a flower or possibly a feather. In the other, the figure is carrying a bow and arrows. However, the painting is distinct because 'her' hair is straight and light-coloured – distinctly



The company town of Uis (Khoikhoi for 'Bad Water') sprang up in 1958 when the South African corporation Iscor started a large-scale tin mine in the area. However, the mine closed in 1991 due to low world tin prices, and today Uis appears to be a ghost town in the making.

Admission is US\$4 per person, and guides are compulsory (tips are their only income); plan on US\$2 per group for the 500m walking

Mowani Mountain Camp (Map p348; ☎ 232009; www.mowani.com; standard/luxury tent per person with full board US\$310/345;  ) There's little to prepare you for this beautiful lodge – hidden among a jumble of boulders, its domed buildings seem

to disappear into the landscape and you don't see it until you're there. The mountain camp is located 5km north of the Twyfelfontein turn-off from the D2612.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There's no public transport in the area and little traffic. Turn off the C39 73km west of Khorixas, turn south on the D3254 and continue 15km to a right turning signposted Twyfelfontein. It's 5km to the site.

Vingerklip

The unusual Vingerklip lies on the Bertram farm, 54km east of Khorixas on the C39, then 21km south on the D2743. This towering 35m-high pillar of limestone is an erosional remnant of a plateau formed more than 15 million years ago.

Vingerklip Lodge (Map p348; ☎/fax 061-255344; vingerkl@mweb.com.na; PO Box 11550, Windhoek; s/d US\$85/130; (P) (E)) affords spectacular views that include the Vingerklip itself, and the panorama from the bar recalls the famous scenes of Monument Valley in old John Ford westerns.

Sesfontein

☎ 067

Sesfontein (Six Springs), which seems reminiscent of the Algerian Sahara, is built around a petrol station and a 1901 German fort. You'll

find food staples at a small shop featuring a painting of a Score *mielie* meal.

Camel Top Camp Site (Map p348; camping per person US\$3.50; (P)) is a well-run community camping ground with hot showers and large, shady trees. It's located 2km west of town, then 1km north of the road.

Although accommodation at **Camp Aussicht** (Map p348; ☎ 064-203581, ask for radio 217; nomad@namibnet.com; camping per person US\$4.50, d US\$25; (P)) is quite simple, the friendliness, the views and the geology are sure to inspire. Turn east off the D3704 at the Camp Aussicht signpost, 55km north of Sesfontein; the final 5km requires a high-clearance vehicle.

Ever fancy spending the night in a German fort in the middle of the desert? At **Fort Sesfontein** (☎ 065-275534; www.fort-sesfontein.com; camping US\$6, r per person incl breakfast US\$100; (P) (E)), you and 63 other guests can live out all your bizarre colonial fantasies.

The road between Palmwag and Sesfontein is good gravel, and you'll only have problems if the Hoanib River is flowing.

KAOKOVELD

☎ 065

The northwest corner of the country represents Namibia at its most primeval. The Kaokoveld (also known as the Kaokoland) is a vast repository of desert mountains that is crossed only by sandy tracks laid down by

the South African Defence Force (SADF). It is one of the least-developed regions of the country, and is oft described as one of the last true wildernesses in Southern Africa. It is also home to the Himba (p352), a group of nomadic pastoralists native to the Kaokoveld who are famous for covering their skin with a traditional mixture of ochre butter and herbs to protect themselves from the sun.

There's no public transport in the region and hitching is near impossible, so the best way to explore Kaokoveld is with a well-outfitted 4WD vehicle or an organised camping safari (see p397). In the dry season, the routes from Opuwo (via Swartbooi's Drift) and Sesfontein to Purros may be passable with high-clearance 2WD vehicles, otherwise, you'll need 4WD.

Opuwo

☎ 065

Although it's the regional 'capital', Opuwo is little more than a dusty collection of commercial buildings ringed by traditional rondavels. You'll see lots of Himba and Herero people here; the going rate for a 'people photo' is about US\$1, but many people will ask for US\$2. Please either respect local wishes or put the camera away.

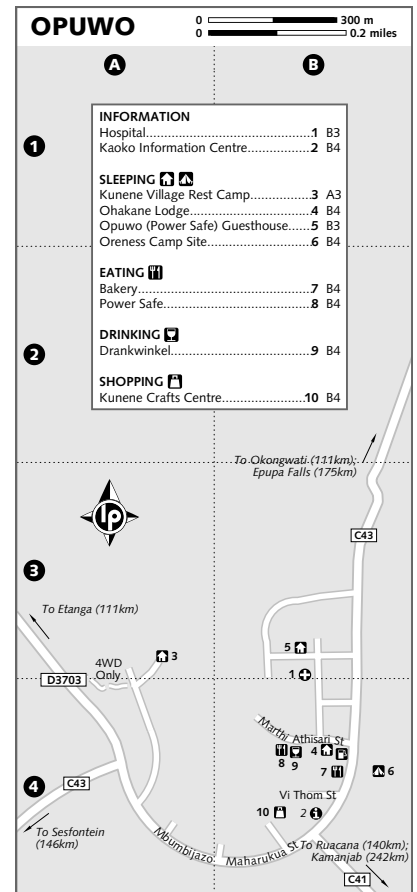
To meet local artisans and purchase arts and crafts, see the **Kunene Crafts Centre** (☎ 273209; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat).

KK and Kemuu, the friendly guys at the **Kaoko Information Centre** (☎ 273420; gnn@iway.na; PO Box 217; ☎ 8am-6pm), provide direction and guides for your trip through the Kaokoveld region. Ohakane Lodge runs half-day visits to Himba villages (from US\$22) and camping trips around Kaokoveld, including Epupa Falls (from US\$105 per day). Book tours at least a week in advance.

SLEEPING & EATING

Opuwo (Power Safe) Guesthouse (☎ 273036; camping per person US\$4, dm US\$9; (P)) Offers camping on the green lawn, pleasantly cool dorms and kitchen facilities. Coming from the south, turn left at the BP petrol station then take the next right; turn left after the hospital and it's several houses down on the right (look for the large reeds and fence).

Oreness Camp site (☎ 273572; camping per person US\$4, bungalows per person with shared bathroom US\$15; (P)) This French-owned camping ground occupies a compound immediately east of the centre,



and is relaxed and comfortable choice featuring a shady camp site and rustic bungalows.

Kunene Village Rest Camp (☎ 273043; camping per person US\$5, s/d huts with shared bathroom US\$16/20; (P)) This amenable rest camp has well-groomed camp sites with adequate facilities as well as basic thatched huts. Follow the signposted turn-off from the government housing project at the edge of town, en route to Sesfontein.

Ohakane Lodge (☎ 273031; ohakane@iafrica.com.na; s/d US\$40/55; (P) (E)) The most established lodge in town is your best bet if you need modern amenities such as air-con, cable TV, Western-style furniture and a pool.

You'll find the Opuwo equivalent of quick culinary delights at the bakery beside the petrol station on the main road, which sells

SAVE THE RHINO TRUST

The group **Save the Rhino Trust** (SRT; www.rhino-trust.org.na) was formed by a concerned group of individuals in order to cease illegal poaching. Since the trust was formed, it has actively collaborated with both the Namibian government and local communities in order to provide security for the rhino, monitor population size and bring benefit to the locals through conservation and tourism initiatives.

Save the Rhino Trust operates in Damaraland, a sparsely populated region that is lacking in resources and deficient in employment opportunities. As a result, SRT has worked to include locals in conservation efforts in the hope that they will benefit from the preservation of the species. This is especially important as Damaraland does not have a formal conservation status, and thus does not receive government funding. To date, SRT has successfully protected the only free-ranging black rhino population in the world, and allowed the group to expand in size. In fact, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has identified the population as the fastest growing in Africa.

For visitors interesting in tracking black rhinos through the bush, SRT operates the exclusive **Palmwag Rhino Camp** (Map p348; ☎ 061-225178; www.wilderness-safaris.com; s/d luxury tent low season US\$445/630, high season US\$530/800), a joint-venture with Wilderness Safaris. Accommodation is in eight East Africa-style linen tents with en-suite toilets and hot-water bucket showers. Rates include all meals, wildlife drives and rhino-tracking excursions. Prebooking is essential, and 4WD transfers and air charters are available.

BEYOND THE CLICHÉS: A TRAVELLER'S PERSPECTIVE *Ian Ketcheson*

It's hard to write about the Himba in a way that doesn't sound like a cliché or a bad *National Geographic* article. They are the widely photographed subject of many travel brochures and glossy coffee-table books. They are often portrayed as an 'early people' who have lived untouched by outside influence for thousands of years. Their practice of smearing red ochre over their bodies, and their not-so-modest attire of leather miniskirt and loin cloths, has also made them quite popular on the tourist circuit for those wishing to travel to a remote corner of the continent for a glimpse of 'traditional' Africa.

While these stereotypes might seem at first glance to be accurate, the reality is much more complex. The Himba have only lived in this part of Namibia for about 200 years. After being on the losing end of many ethnic battles during the 18th and 19th centuries, this group of people managed some success on the battlefield in the late 19th century, stole a bunch of cattle and goats, and headed off to the remote northwestern corner of the country where they could finally get some peace and quiet – at least until the tourists started turning up.

As for their attire, it's just a sign of the lack of success that Christian missionaries have had in colonising the Himba. One of the top priorities of missionaries across Namibia (and beyond) was to convince people that the first thing a 'civilised' person could do was to put on hot, uncomfortable and expensive clothes. After they had 'proper' clothes, all they had to do was get a 'real' (read Christian) name, exchange their mistresses for wives, and sit through long church services. Next stop, heaven.

Although the Himba are also widely portrayed as victims of the steady march of modernisation, their leaders have shown themselves to be quite adept at dealing with the outside world. In the late 1990s the Namibian government was moving ahead with plans to dam Epupa Falls in order to reduce the country's dependence on imported electricity. The plan would have flooded large areas of Himba land and posed a major threat to their way of life. Chief Kapika, the Himba leader for the area bordering the falls, with the assistance of some of the top lawyers in the country, mounted a campaign of opposition to the scheme that included a high-profile trip to Europe where he spoke to foreign investors, nongovernmental organisations and activists. Chief Kapika quite successfully managed to shine an international spotlight on his cause, attracting attention and generating support to help in their fight against the government. In recent years, the dam proposal has fallen through, and it's unlikely that the government will raise the issue again in the near future.

Ian Ketcheson lived in Namibia for two years in the village of Odibo.

doughnuts, yogurt, beer, bread and renowned sausage rolls. The best-stocked supermarket is the Power Safe, and the Drankwinkel next door sells soft drinks and alcohol.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There's currently no public transport to Opuwo, but minibuses can be hired from Ruacana or Outjo for a negotiated rate. The most economical option for visiting Opuwo and the surrounding Himba villages would be a budget safari from Windhoek; a recommended company is Enyandi Safaris (see p397).

Epupa Falls

☎ 065

At this dynamic spot, whose name means 'falling waters' in Herero, the Kunene River fans

out and is ushered through a 500m-wide series of parallel channels, dropping a total of 60m over 1.5km. The greatest single drop – 37m – is commonly identified as the Epupa Falls, where the river tumbles into a dark, narrow cleft. During periods of low water flow, the pools above the falls make fabulous natural Jacuzzis. Here you are safe from crocodiles in the eddies and rapids, but be sure to hang on to the rocks and keep away from the lip of the falls, where there's a real risk of being swept over; swimming here isn't suitable for young children.

SLEEPING & EATING

Epupa Falls public camp site (Map p348; camping per person US\$4; ☐) This enclosed camp, right at the falls, can get very crowded, but it has

hot showers and flush toilets that are maintained by the local community. There's a less-crowded overflow section east of its neighbour, Omarunga Camp.

Epupa Camp (Map p348; ☎ 695102, reservations 061-232740; epupa@mwweb.com.na; PO Box 26078, Windhoek; s/d US\$135/205) This place, 800m upstream from the falls, was originally used as an engineering camp for a now-shelved hydro project. It has been converted into a beautifully situated camp where rates include tented accommodation with meals, drinks and activities (including Himba visits, sundowner hikes, bird-watching walks and trips to rock-art sites).

Epupa village now boasts a real supermarket where visitors and locals alike buy food staples or gather to socialise and drink a cold beer in the shade.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Opuwo or Swartbooi's Drift, it's possible to drive to Epupa Falls via Okongwati in a high-clearance 2WD, but the route remains very rough. Via the Kunene River road, it's 93km to Epupa Falls from Swartbooi's Drift. Even with a 4WD vehicle it takes at least 12 hours, but this lovely stretch – known as the Namibian Riviera – serves as an increasingly popular hiking route.

Swartbooi's Drift

☎ 065

From Ruacana, a rough track heads west along the Kunene to Swartbooi's Drift, where a monument commemorates the Dorsland trekkers who passed en route to their future homesteads in Angola.

Kunene River Lodge (Map p348; ☎ 274300; www.kuneneriverlodge.com; camping per adult US\$12, s/d hut US\$65/100, s/d hut incl breakfast, s/d US\$110/150; ☐ ☎), 5km east of Swartbooi's Drift, makes a lovely, leafy riverside stop. You can hire canoes (US\$12), fishing gear (US\$8.50) and mountain bikes (US\$12), and organise a range of quadbiking tours (from US\$47) and white-water rafting trips on the Kunene River (from US\$47).

The Northwest Corner

West of Epupa Falls lies the Kaokoveld of travellers' dreams: stark, rugged desert peaks, vast landscapes, sparse scrubby vegetation, drought-resistant wildlife and semipermanent settlements of beehive-shaped Himba huts. This region, which is contiguous with

the Skeleton Coast Wilderness, has been designated as the Kaokoveld Conservation Area.

A large number of 4WD tracks cross the area, but some that appear on maps are now impassable, or may be used only during dry periods (mainly due to flooding of the potentially raging Hoarusib River).

Obvious destinations include the wild Otjinjange (also called Marienflüss) and Hartmann's Valleys, both of which end at the Kunene River. From Okongwati, follow the westward route through Etengwa to Otjitanda, where you can choose between the dramatic and treacherously steep Van Zyl's Pass (which may only be traversed from east to west) or head south over the equally beautiful but much easier Otjihaa Pass towards the scenic desert country around Orupembe. About 9km north of Orupembe, a track turns north and follows a broad valley to a fork where you can choose between Hartmann's and Otjinjange Valleys; note that wild camping is prohibited in either valley.

An easier but equally spectacular route leads westward from Sesfontein through a series of desert valleys to the tiny settlement of Purros, on the Hoarusib River. A logical circuit heads south from Purros to the river junction known as Amspoort, then northeast back to Sesfontein via the Hoanib riverbed. Note that the Hoanib lies within the Palmwag Concession, and access costs US\$7 per vehicle plus US\$2.50 per person per day, payable at Elephant Song Camp. Wild camping is possible anywhere away from the Hoanib riverbed.

SLEEPING

Okarohombo Camp Site (Map p348; Otjinungwa; camping per person US\$4; ☐) This community-run camp site is located at the mouth of the Otjinjange Valley. Facilities are limited to long-drop toilets and a water tap, and travellers must be self-sufficient.

Elephant Song Camp (Map p348; ☎ 064-403829; Hoanib River track, PO Box 339, Swakopmund; camping per person US\$4, bungalows per person US\$8; ☐) In the Palmwag Concession a very rough 25km down the Hoanib River from Sesfontein, the Elephant Song offers hot showers, great views, hiking, bird-watching and the chance to see rare desert elephants. There is a bar, but otherwise, you'll have to be self-sufficient. Access is by 4WD only.

Ngatutunge Pamwe Camp Site (Map p348; camping per person US\$4, double bungalows US\$20; (P) (E)) Perched along the Hoarusib River in Purros, this community-run camping area is a real surprise – there are hot showers, flush toilets, well-appointed bungalows, a communal kitchen and (believe it or not!) a pool.

Serra Cafema Camp (Map p348; ☎ 061-225178; www.wilderness-safaris.com; 4-day fly-in/s/d US\$3900/5900; (E)) This exclusive luxury camp is centred on a grove of Albida trees overlooking the Kunene River, and consists of eight canvas and thatched chalets with en-suite bathrooms. Although you're going to pay dearly for the privilege to stay at Serra Cafema Camp, the unworldly isolation of the camp almost justifies the price tag. Advance bookings are mandatory.

SKELETON COAST

The term 'Skeleton Coast' is derived from the treacherous nature of the coast – a foggy region with rocky and sandy coastal shallows that has long been a graveyard for unwary ships and their crews. Early Portuguese sailors called it *As Areias do Inferno* (the Sands of Hell) as once a ship washed ashore, the fate of the crew was sealed.

Although it has been extrapolated to take in the entire Namib Desert coastline, the Skeleton Coast actually refers to the coastal stretch between the mouths of the Swakop and Kunene Rivers. For our purposes, it covers the National West Coast Recreation Area and the Skeleton Coast Park (including the Skeleton Coast Wilderness). These protected areas stretch from just north of Swakopmund to the Kunene River, taking in nearly two million hectares of dunes and gravel plains to form one of the world's most inhospitable waterless areas.

National West Coast Recreation Area

☎ 064

A 200km-long, 25km-wide strip from Swakopmund to the Ugab River, the National West Coast Recreation Area makes up the southern end of the Skeleton Coast. It's extremely popular with anglers, and no-one needs a permit to visit.

Most visitors head for the **Cape Cross Seal Reserve** (Map p348; admission per person US\$3 & per vehicle US\$3; (E) 10am-5pm), a breeding reserve for thousands of Cape fur seals. There's a basic snack bar with public toilets. No pets or motorcycles

are permitted and visitors may not cross the low barrier between the seal-viewing area and the rocks where the colony lounges.

For keen hikers, a new **40km trail** begins at the southern end of Henties Bay and follows the coast south to Jakkalsputz (Jackals' Well), then back north to the Omaruru River Mouth. Highlights include the sand dunes, freshwater springs and fields of desert lichen that flank the route.

SLEEPING

Along the salt road in the National West Coast Recreation Area are several bleak beach camp sites used mainly by sea anglers. Basic camp sites (see Map p348) at Mile 14 and Jakkalsputz cost US\$15 for two people plus US\$2 for each additional person, including showers and drinking water, while Mile 72 and Mile 108 cost US\$12 for two people plus US\$2 for each additional person, without water.

Myl 4 Caravan Park (Map p348; ☎ 064-461781; camping per site US\$4, plus per person US\$2, plus per vehicle US\$2 & for electricity US\$1, 6-bed bungalows US\$45, 2-bed self-catering r US\$15, 4-/6-bed self-catering flats US\$30/45) This bleak beachfront camping ground 6km north of Swakopmund is exposed to the wind, sand and drizzle. Having said that, it's definitely one of the world's more unusual places to pitch a tent.

De Duine Country Hotel (☎ 061-374750; www.namibia lodges.com; per person incl breakfast US\$45; (P) (E) (E)) The most established hotel in Henties Bay sits on the coast, though not a single room has a sea view – go figure that! However, the German-colonial style property does feature rooms with swimming pool and garden views.

Cape Cross Lodge (Map p348; ☎ 064-694012; www.capecross.org; s/d from US\$175/265; (P) (E)) The odd architecture is self-described as a cross between Cape Dutch and fishing-village style, but it's quite amenable and well sheltered from the odiferous seal colony. The lodge is located just before the official reserve entrance.

Skeleton Coast Park

At Ugabmund, 110km north of Cape Cross, the salt road crosses into the Skeleton Coast Park. Only the zone south of the Hoanib River is open to individual travellers, and everyone requires a permit (US\$2.50 per person and US\$2.50 per vehicle). To reach the accommodation options at Terrace Bay or Torra Bay, you must pass the Ugabmund gate before 3pm or the Springbokwater gate before 5pm.

Day visits are not allowed, but transit permits (US\$2.50 per person and US\$2.50 per vehicle) for the road between the Ugabmund and Springbokwater gates are available at the Springbokwater and Ugabmund checkpoints. You must enter through one gate before 1pm and exit through the other before 3pm the same day. Transit permits can't be used to visit Torra Bay or Terrace Bay, but in December and January transit travellers may refuel in Torra Bay.

All park accommodation must be pre-booked through NWR in either Windhoek or Swakopmund.

UGAB RIVER HIKING TRAIL

The 50km Ugab River guided hiking trail crosses the coastal plain before climbing into hills and following a double loop through fields of lichen and past caves, natural springs and unusual geological formations. Groups of three to eight people can leave from Ugabmund at 9am on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. It costs US\$24 per person and must be prebooked through the NWR in Windhoek (p315). Hikers must provide and carry their own food and camping gear.

TORRA BAY

The **camping ground** (camping for 4 people US\$12; (E) Dec & Jan only) here is open to coincide with Namibian school holidays. Petrol, water, firewood and basic supplies are available, and campers may use the restaurant at Terrace Bay.

TERRACE BAY

The more luxurious **Terrace Bay Resort** (s/d US\$60/85, self-catering ste for up to 8 people US\$265; (P)) attracts mainly surf anglers, but there's also a nice line of dunes to the north.

UGAB RIVER SAVE THE RHINO TRUST CAMP

Located just outside the Skeleton Coast Park, the **Ugab River Camp Site** (Map p348; ugab@rhino-trust.org.na; camping per person US\$4; (P)) is administered by the Save the Rhino Trust (see the boxed text, p350). This remote landscape is truly enigmatic, and those who've visited have only glowing comments. It's also one of the best places in Namibia to see the elusive black rhino – multiday rhino-tracking expeditions cost US\$90 per day. To get there, turn east onto the D2303, 67km north of Cape Cross; it's then 76km to the camp.

Skeleton Coast Wilderness

The Skeleton Coast Wilderness makes up the northern half of the Skeleton Coast Park. Here, seemingly endless stretches of foggy beach are punctuated by rusting shipwrecks and the cries of gulls and gannets. The most commonly visited sites lie around **Sarasus Springs**, near Wilderness Safaris' Skeleton Coast Wilderness Camp (Map p348). Other sites of interest include the coastal dunes, the **Cabo Frio seal colony**, the Clay Castles in **Hoarusib Canyon** and the **Roaring Sands**.

A lone park ranger at **Möwe Bay** maintains a small museum of shipwreck detritus and newspaper clippings recounting the stories of shipwreck survivors.

SLEEPING

Skeleton Coast Wilderness Camp (Map p348; ☎ 061-274500; www.wilderness-safaris.com; s/d for 4 days US\$2586/4372, for 5 days US\$2966/4932) Located close to Sarasus Springs, this exclusive luxury retreat is the most remote camp in the Wilderness Safari collection. Activities include viewing desert elephants along the Hoarusib, ocean fishing, dune climbing, hiking through the Clay Castles and appreciating the sparse local vegetation. Rates include accommodation, air transfers from Windhoek, meals, drinks and two activities per day. Prebooking is mandatory.

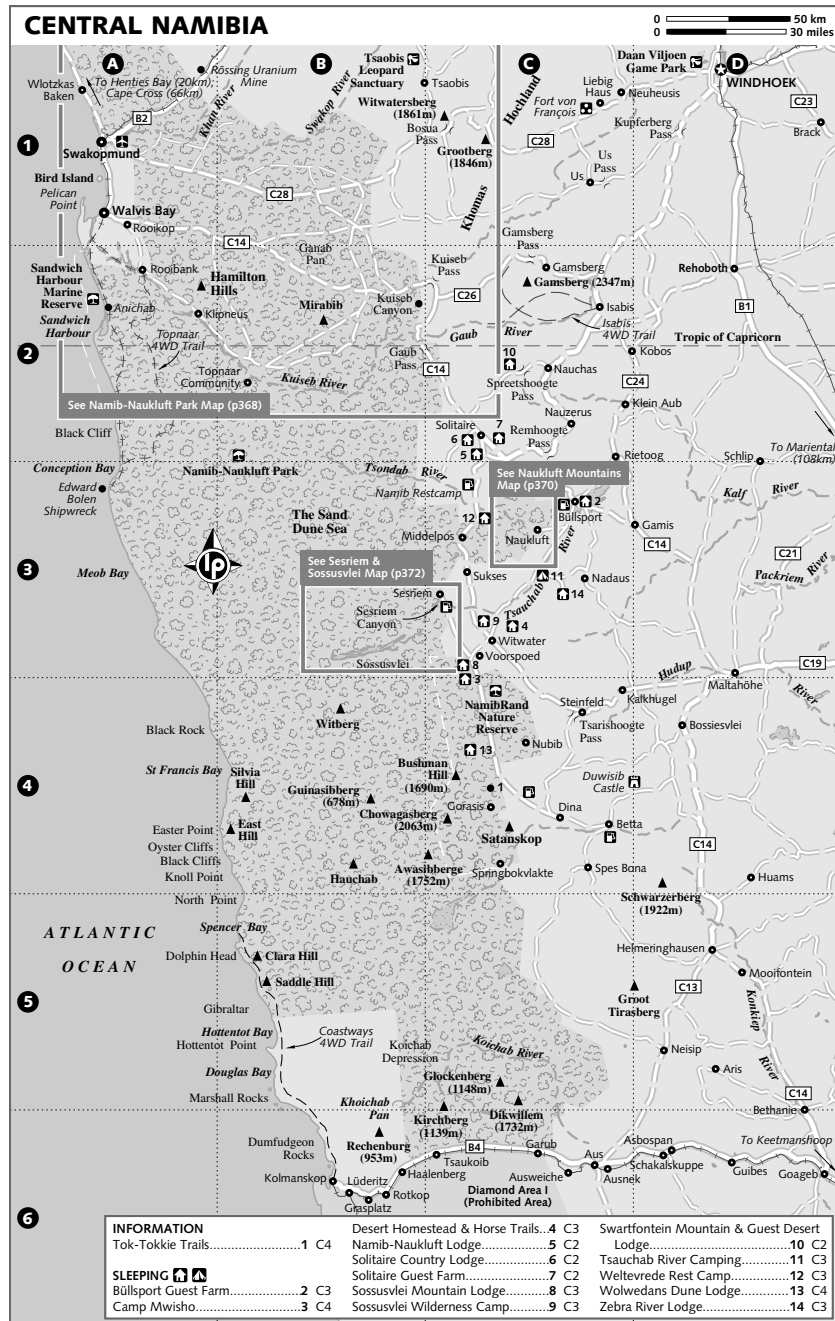
CENTRAL NAMIBIA

Central Namibia is defined by the barren and desolate landscapes of the Namib Desert. The Nama word 'Namib', which inspired the name of the entire country, rather prosaically means 'Vast Dry Plain'. Although travellers to Namibia and Botswana are often surprised by the lushness of the Kalahari, the soaring sand dunes of the Namib rarely disappoint. Much of the surface between Walvis Bay and Lüderitz is covered by enormous linear dunes, which roll back from the sea towards the inland gravel plains that are occasionally interrupted by lone mountain ranges.

SWAKOPMUND

☎ 064

Often described as being more German than Germany, Swakopmund (population 25,000) is a quirky mix of German-Namibian residents and overseas German tourists, who feel right at



home with the town's pervasive *Gemütlichkeit*, a distinctively German appreciation of comfort and hospitality. With its seaside promenades, half-timbered homes and colonial-era buildings, it seems that only the wind-blown sand and the palm trees distinguish Swakopmund from holiday towns along Germany's North Sea and Baltic coasts.

Swakopmund is Namibia's most popular holiday destination, and it attracts surfers, anglers and beach lovers from all over Southern Africa. However, Swakopmund has recently reinvented itself as the adventure-sports capital of Namibia, and now attracts adrenaline junkies jonesing for a quick fix. Whether you race through the sand sea in a quad bike, slide down the dunes on a greased-up snowboard, jump from a Cessna with a parachute strapped to your back or live out your Lawrence of Arabia fantasies on a camel safari, there's no shortage of gut-curdling activities to choose from.

Orientation

The streets in Swakopmund were recently renamed, which means that navigation can be extremely difficult if you're using an old street map. The map in this edition contains the new street names.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

CNA bookshop (Roon St) Sells popular paperbacks.

Die Muschel Book & Art Shop (☎ 402874; 10 Roon St) More esoteric works on art and local history are available here.

Swakopmunder Büchhandlung (☎ 402613; Sam Nujoma Ave) A wide selection of literature from various genres.

EMERGENCY

Ambulance (☎ 405731)

Fire brigade (☎ day 402411, after-hours pager 405544)

Police (☎ 10111)

INTERNET ACCESS

Swakopmund I-Café (Woermann & Brock Centre; per hr US\$2; ☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun)

LAUNDRY

Swakopmund Laundrette (☎ 402135; 15 Swakop St; wash up to 6kg US\$1.30, dry US\$0.80; ☎ 7.30am-midnight Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat & Sun) Opposite the Hansa Brewery; doubles as a local bar and entertainment centre.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Bismarck Medical Centre (☎ 405000; Bismarck St) For doctors' visits, see the recommended Drs Swiegers, Schikerling, Dantu and Biermann, all at this centre.

MONEY

The most convenient option for changing money is the **Bureau de Change** (Sam Nujoma Ave; ☎ 7am-7pm), which charges no commission to change travellers cheques – the catch is that you'll need the slips verifying proof of purchase.

POST

Main post office (Garnison St)

TELEPHONE

Main post office (Garnison St) Sells rechargeable telephone cards and also offers fax services (per page US\$0.50, plus per telephone unit US\$0.15).

TOURIST INFORMATION

Namib i Information Centre (☎ /fax 403129; swainfo@iafrica.com.na; Sam Nujoma Ave, PO Box 829; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 3.30-5.30pm Sat, 9.30am-noon & 3.30-5pm Sun) This centre is helpful. **Namibia Wildlife Resorts** (NWR; ☎ 204172; fax 402697; Woermannhaus; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri) This office is also useful, selling Namib-Naukluft Park and Skeleton Coast permits until 3.30pm. Note that park permits are no longer available from petrol stations in Swakopmund and Walvis Bay – they must be purchased either from this office or in Windhoek (p315).

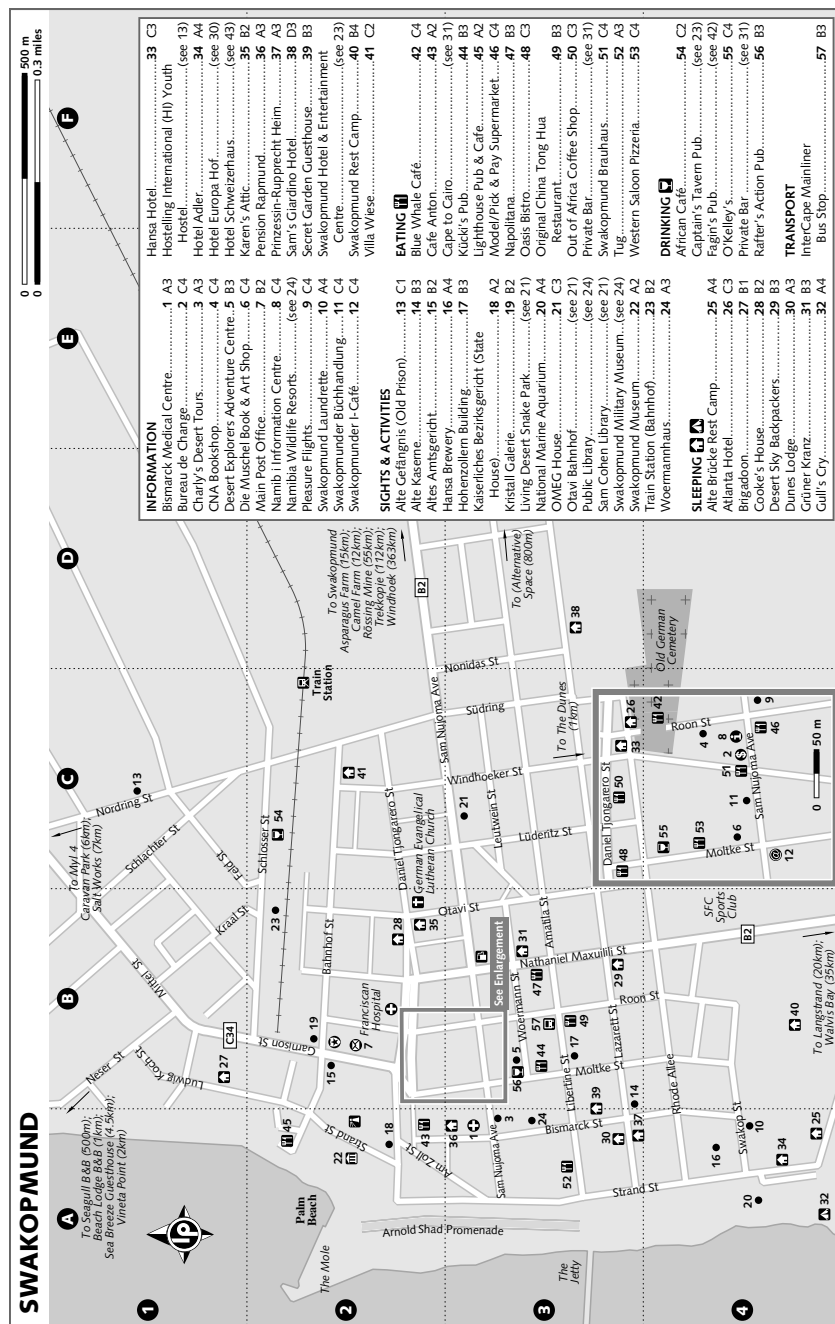
Sights

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Swakopmund is brimming with picturesque historic buildings; a good source of information is *Swakopmund – A Chronicle of the Town's People, Places and Progress*, sold at the museum and in local bookshops.

The imposing, fortlike **Alte Kaserne** (Old Barracks; Bismarck St) was built in 1906 by the railway company, which got Swakopmund's economic ball rolling by completing the pier two years earlier. It now houses the **Hostelling International** Hostel.

The **Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht** (State House; Am Zoll St), which originally served as the District Magistrate's Court, was designed by Carl Schmidt in 1901 and constructed the following year. It was extended in 1905 and a tower was added in 1945. After WWI, the building was modified to serve as an official holiday home of the territorial administrator.



The impressive **Alte Gefängnis** (Old Prison; Nordring) was designed by architect Heinrich Bause and dates back to 1909. If you didn't know this building was a prison, you'd swear it was either an early German train station or a health-spa hotel. In fact, the main building was used only for staff housing, while the

SWAKOPMUND MUSEUM
In an old harbour warehouse near the light-house, this **museum** (☎ 402046; Strand St; museum@mweb.com.na; adult/student US\$2/1; 🕒 10am-1pm & 2-5pm)

displays exhibits on Namibia's history, ethnology, flora and fauna. It also contains a well-executed reconstruction of early colonial home interiors and an informative display on the nearby Rössing Uranium Mine.

HANSA BREWERY

Aficionados of the amber nectar will want to visit the **Hansa Brewery** (☎ 405021; 9 Rhode Allee), which is the source of Swakopmund's favourite drop. Free brewery tours – with ample opportunity to sample the product – run on Tuesday and Thursday at 10am and 2pm if there are at least six participants; prebook at the office on Rhode Allee near the corner of Bismarck St.

DUNES

A short hike across the Swakop riverbed from town will take you into the dunes, where you can easily spend several hours exploring the sand formations and their unique vegetation. Alternative Space loans dune carts to its guests, and several tour companies offer sandboarding and quadbiking (see the section opposite).

Activities

After aspiring for years to become a dry version of Victoria Falls, Swakopmund is one of the top destinations in Southern Africa for extreme-sports enthusiasts. Although filling your days with adrenaline-soaked activities is certainly not cheap, there are few places in the world where you can climb up, race down and soar over towering sand dunes.

Your one-stop booking agency for just about every breathtaking activity you'd like to pursue is the **Desert Explorers Adventure Centre** (☎ 406096; www.swakop.com/adv). Here you can organise sandboarding (US\$30), ecologically sensitive quad-biking (US\$55), tandem skydiving (US\$160), dolphin cruising (US\$40), deep-sea fishing (US\$60), hot-air ballooning (from US\$130), dune parasailing (US\$40), descending on the flying fox (cable slide) at Rössing Mountain (US\$55), paragliding (US\$55), horse riding (US\$35), and kayaking (from US\$15) in Walvis Bay. Check out Desert Explorers 10-minute introductory video, which describes what's on offer.

BALLOONING

Whenever life gets you down, just hold onto the thought of hot-air balloon rides over the

desert. **African Adventure Balloons** (☎ 403455; flylow@mweb.com.na) offers a half-/full-hour flight for US\$140/190 per person, with a minimum of three people.

CAMEL RIDES

If you want to play Lawrence of Arabia in the Namib Desert, visit the **Camel Farm** (☎ 400363; ☎ 2-5pm), 12km east of Swakopmund on the D1901. Camel rides cost US\$15 for half an hour. To book or arrange transport from town, phone and ask for Ms Elke Elb.

HORSE RIDING

Okakambe Trails (☎ 0811 246626) runs 1½-hour horse-riding trips along the Swakop River to the Moon Landscape for US\$45. It can also organise moonlight rides and rides along the beach and dunes.

ROCK CLIMBING

If you want to climb or abseil on a 15m climbing tower, contact **Walker's Rock & Rope Adventures** (☎ 403122; walker@iafrica.com.na). Note that it is currently in the process of moving, and will eventually wind up in the desert somewhere east of town.

SANDBOARDING

Sandboarding with **Alter Action** (☎ 402737; www.alter-action.com; lie-down/stand-up US\$20/30) is certain to increase your heart rate while going easy on your wallet (it's by far the cheapest trip in town). If you have any experience snowboarding or surfing, it's recommended that you go for the stand-up option. You'll be given a new snowboard, gloves, goggles and enough polish to ensure a smooth ride. The lie-down option (which makes use of a greased-up sheet of masonite) requires much less finesse but is equally fun. The highlight is an 80km/h 'schuss' down a 120m mountain of sand with a big jump at the end. Slogging up the dunes can be rather taxing work, so you need to be physically fit and healthy (which isn't a bad idea anyway). Trips depart in the morning and last about four hours. The price includes equipment rental, transport to and from the dunes, instruction, lunch and beer or soda upon completion.

SCENIC FLIGHTS

Pleasure Flights (☎ 404500; www.pleasureflights.com.na) offers 'flightseeing' tours over the colourful salt works, Sandwich Harbour, Welwitschia Drive,

the Brandberg, the dunes, the Skeleton Coast and beyond. Rates start at around US\$80 per person for a one-hour circuit, though prices vary according to the length of the flight and the number of passengers on board.

SKYDIVING

Ground Rush Adventures (☎ 402841; www.skydiveswakop.com.na; tandem jump US\$160) provides the ultimate rush, and skydiving in Swakopmund is sweetened by the outstanding dune and ocean backdrop. The guys at Ground Rush have an impeccable safety record, and make even the most nervous participant feel comfortable about jumping out of a plane at 3000m and freefalling for 30 seconds (1500m) at 220km/h! The price includes a 25-minute scenic flight.

QUAD-BIKING

Outback Orange (☎ 400968; www.outbackorange.com; rides from US\$50) offers stomach-dropping tours on quad bikes (motorcycle-style 4WD). In two hours, you'll travel over 60km and race up and down countless dunes. The safety-conscious owners tailor trips to ability, but if you're feeling comfortable, ask them to let you fly down one of the really big dunes.

Tours

The most popular operators are **Charly's Desert Tours** (☎ 404341; charlydt@mweb.com.na), **Namib Tours** (☎ 404072), **Turnstone Tours** (☎ 403123; www.turnstone-tours.com) and **Swakop Tour Company** (☎ 404088; proverb@mweb.com.na). The operators listed above don't have central offices, so it's best to make arrangements through your hostel or hotel. **Hata-Angu Cultural Tours** (☎ 0812 515916; hata-angu@hotmail.com) operates tours to the outlying Mondesa township, where you'll visit a shebeen, eat at a traditional restaurant and meet local people. Reactions to township tours are always mixed – some individuals walk away feeling as if they've made a strong connection, while others find the whole experience to be reminiscent of a human zoo. Your experience depends ultimately on your attitude and your expectations for the trip.

Sleeping BUDGET

Hostelling International (HI) Youth Hostel (☎ 404164; Alte Kaserne, Nordring St; dm US\$4, d US\$14; ☎) The ambience here is appropriately military (the building is the old German barracks), though

mature adults may feel a bit cramped, and there's not a backpackers' vibe (but it certainly is cheap).

Desert Sky Backpackers (☎ 402339; dsbackpackers@swakop.com; 35 Lazarett St; camping per person US\$6, dm US\$8, d US\$24; ☎ ☎) This centrally located backpackers' haunt is an excellent place to drop anchor in Swakopmund. The indoor lounge is simple and homey, while the outdoor picnic tables are a nice spot for a cold beer and hot conversation.

Grüner Kranz (☎ 402039; swakoplodge@yahoo.com; 7 Nathaniel Maxuili St; dm US\$7, s/d US\$27/30; ☎ ☎) This budget hotel is the epicentre of the action in Swakopmund. The hotel is extremely popular with overland trucks, so it's a safe bet that the upstairs bar is probably bumping and grinding most nights of the week.

Karen's Attic (☎ 404825; katic@iafrica.com.na; Daniel Tjongarero St; dm US\$8; ☎) This quiet and low-key backpackers' lodge offers simple yet comfortable rooms as well as immaculate kitchen facilities and a cosy communal TV lounge.

Gull's Cry (☎ 461591; rdwning@iafrica.com.na; camp sites US\$9 plus per person US\$2; ☎) This camping ground sits right on the sand at the beachfront, sheltered from the wind by lovely tamarisk trees. It's convenient to the city centre, but facilities are basic.

Villa Wiese (☎ 407105; www.villawiese.com; cnr Bahnhof & Windhoek Sts; dm US\$14, d US\$38; ☎ ☎) This friendly and funky upmarket backpackers' place is housed in a historic colonial mansion complete with vaulted ceilings, rock gardens and period furniture, and draws a good mix of overlanders and independent travellers.

Dunes Lodge (☎ 463139; www.africadestinations.co.za; 12 Lazarett St; dm US\$14, d US\$43; ☎ ☎ ☎) Although more expensive than other budget options, the Dunes Lodge features a number of attractive perks including an indoor pool and billiards table as well as traditional backpackers' amenities including a communal kitchen, internet, a TV lounge and laundry service.

(Alternative) Space (☎ 402713; nam0352@mweb.com.na; 46 Dr Alfons Weber St; suggested donation d US\$25 incl breakfast; ☎ ☎) Located on the desert fringe, this delightfully alternative budget choice is run by Frenus and Sybille Rorich. The main attractions are the castlelike architecture, saturation artwork and an industrial-scrappy-recycling theme. The catch is that only 'friends of Frenus' are welcome, but he's a great guy and makes friends easily.

MIDRANGE

Swakopmund Rest Camp (☎ 410 4333; www.swakopmund-restcamp.com; Swakop St; 2-bed/4-bed fishermen's shacks US\$17/27, 4-bed flats US\$30, 4-bed A-frame huts US\$43, self-contained 6-bed bungalows/flats US\$53/58; ☎) This municipal rest camp was recently renovated, and now boasts some quite smart accommodation.

Alte Brücke Rest Camp (☎ 404918; accomod@iml-net.com.na, The Strand; 6-person camp site US\$25, s/d/tr/q chalet US\$50/70/85/115; ☎) This upmarket version of the Swakopmund Rest Camp features spacious camp sites with private braai pits and power points as well as fully equipped chalets featuring modern kitchens, full bathrooms, TV lounges and private patios.

Cooke's House (☎ 462837; cooks.b@mwweb.com.na; 32 Daniel Tjongarero St; s/d incl breakfast US\$26/40; ☎) Housed in a 1910 historic home, this three-bedroom inn is an excellent choice if you're looking for personalised attention at the hands of the delightful owners.

Seagull B&B (☎ 405278; www.seagullbandb.com.na; 60 Strand St North; s/d from incl breakfast US\$30/50; ☎) This well-priced B&B is run by an accommodating Brit, and features a variety of uniquely decorated rooms that will suit a wide range of travellers.

Pension Rapmund (☎ 402035; rapmund@iafrica.com.na; 6-8 Bismarck St; s/d incl breakfast from US\$35/55; ☎) This friendly pension overlooks the promenade, and has a number of bright and airy rooms – the more expensive have ocean views.

Sea Breeze Guesthouse (☎ 463348; www.seabreeze.com.na; Turmalin St; s/d incl breakfast US\$35/65, self-catering flat US\$60; ☎) This reader-recommended guesthouse is situated right on the beach approximately 4.5km north of town, and is an excellent option if you're looking for a secluded retreat. The Italian owners have incredible design sense, which is evident the moment you enter.

Secret Garden Guesthouse (☎ 404037; secretgarden@iway.na; 36 Bismarck St; s/d/tr US\$45/60/75; ☎) The 'secret garden' is the lush, palm-fringed courtyard in the centre of the guesthouse, which is the perfect oasis if you're in search of a little solitude.

Atlanta Hotel (☎ 402360; atlantah@iafrica.com.na; 6 Roon St; s/d US\$45/65; ☎) Although the rooms are basic and slightly worn here, the Atlanta is centrally located, and it's upstairs (or an easy stumble away) from the popular Fagin's Pub (opposite).

Prinzessin-Rupprecht Residenz (☎ 412540; www.prinzrupp.com.na; 15 Lazarett St; s/d incl breakfast US\$40/75; ☎) Housed in the former colonial military hospital, this family-run *pension* contains a lovely palm-fringed courtyard and features distinctly German-style hospitality.

TOP END

Brigadon (☎ 406064; brigadon@iafrica.com.na; 16 Ludwig Koch St; s/d US\$60/70; ☎) This Scottish-run B&B is comprised of four Victorian-style cottages with period furniture that occupy a pleasant garden setting opposite Palm Beach.

Beach Lodge B&B (☎ 400933; volkb@iafrica.com.na; Stint St; s/d/tr/q US\$60/75/90/105) This boat-shaped place, which sits right on the beach sand, offers some of the most unusual architecture and best sea views in town (through your own personal port-hole!). If the beach is your bag, you can't beat it.

Hotel Adler (☎ 405045; adler@natron.net; 3 Strand St; standard s/d US\$60/95; ☎) This chic and modern hotel would probably feel more at home somewhere in German suburbia, though it is an excellent choice if you're a fan of creature comforts.

Hotel Schweizerhaus (☎ 400331; www.schweizerhaus.net; 1 Bismarck St; s/d incl breakfast from US\$60/95; ☎) This beachside hotel has a spectacular view of the lighthouse, and offers German-style rooms with regal wooden furniture and overlooking either the ocean or the landscaped courtyard.

Hotel Europa Hof (☎ 405061; europa@iml-net.com.na; 39 Bismarck St; s/d/tr US\$65/85/100; ☎) This hotel resembles a Bavarian chalet, and simply overflows with European atmosphere, complete with colourful flower boxes, aloof service, a German-style beer garden and European flags flying from the 1st-floor windows.

Sam's Giardino Hotel (☎ 403210; www.giardino.com.na; 89 Lazarett St; s/d from US\$90/105, ste US\$125; ☎) A slice of central Europe in the desert, Sam's Giardino Hotel mixes Swiss and Italian hospitality and architecture while emphasising fine wines, fine cigars and relaxing in the rose garden with a St Bernard named Mr Einstein.

Hansa Hotel (☎ 400311; hansa@iml-net.com.na; 3 Roon St; s/d US\$115/150; ☎) Swakopmund's most established upmarket stand-by bills itself as 'luxury in the desert'; individually decorated rooms are tasteful and elegant, the service is top-notch and its restaurant is arguably the best in town.

Swakopmund Hotel & Entertainment Centre (☎ 400800; www.legacyhotels.co.za; 2 Bahnhof St; s/d US\$125/195; ☎) This posh, four-star hotel is located in the shell of the historic train station, and boasts a Mermaid Casino, a cinema, several restaurants, a large swimming pool, a conference centre, a gymnasium and a spa.

Eating

BUDGET

Out of Africa Coffee Shop (☎ 404752; 13 Daniel Tjongarero St; snacks & meals US\$2-4) This place has the motto 'Life is too short to drink bad coffee', and it does something about it by welcoming you in the morning with Namibia's best coffee.

Original China Tong Hua Restaurant (☎ 402081; cnr Libertine & Roon Sts; mains US\$2.50-5) If you're looking for a cheap alternative to Namibian or German fare, look no further than this Chinese greasy spoon.

Western Saloon Pizzeria (☎ 403925; fax 464176; 8 Moltke St; pizzas US\$3-5) This popular local spot is famous for its enormous pizzas and its boisterous clientele.

Kücki's Pub (☎ 402407; Moltke St; meals US\$3-6) This local haunt is a good choice for cheap pub grub, which is all the better after a pint or two of frothy Hansa.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Oasis Bistro (☎ 402333; 5 Moltke St; lunches US\$3-5.50, dinners US\$5-8) This excellent bistro does imaginative breakfasts, lunches and dinners, including a variety of salads, crepes, gyros, steaks and seafood specials.

Cafe Anton (☎ 402419; Hotel Schweizerhaus, Bismarck St; US\$4-6) This somewhat pretentious spot serves up superb coffee, *apfelstrudel* (apple strudel), *kugelhof* (cake with nuts and raisins), *mohnkuchen* (poppyseed cake), *linzertorte* (cake flavoured with almond meal, lemon and spices and spread with jam) and other European delights.

Blue Whale Café (☎ 0811 294018; Atlanta Hotel, Roon St; mains US\$5-9) This popular lunch spot has alfresco pavement seating, which is perfect for people watching.

Napolitana (☎ 402773; 33 Nathaniel Maxuillili St; US\$5-9) This quaint and romantic Italian bistro specialises in gourmet pizzas and pasta as well as heartier meat and seafood dishes.

Swakopmund Brauhaus (☎ 402214; 22 Sam Nujoma Ave; mains US\$5-9) This excellent restaurant and boutique brewery offers one of Swakopmund's

most sought-after commodities (traditional German-style beer) as well as excellently prepared beef and seafood.

Lighthouse Pub & Café (☎ 400894; Palm Beach; mains US\$6-10) With a view of the beach and crashing surf, the Lighthouse Pub & Café is an atmospheric choice that serves up good-value seafood including kabeljou, calamari, kingclip and lobster.

Cape to Cairo (☎ 463160; 7 Nathaniel Maxuillili St; mains US\$7-12) The most popular tourist restaurant in Swakopmund serves up a gourmet variety of dishes from across the continent. Its game meats are exceptional, though vegetarians will have no problem feasting here on hearty chapatis and other veggie treats.

Tug (☎ 402356; mains US\$7-12) Housed in the beached tugboat *Danie Hugo* near the jetty, the Tug is an atmospheric, upmarket choice for fresh fish and seafood, and is regarded by locals as the best restaurant in town.

Drinking

African Café (3B Schlosser St) Here you can choose between live music at the jazz bar or dancing the night away at the adjacent disco.

Captain's Tavern Pub (Swakopmund Hotel & Entertainment Centre, Bahnhof St) This upmarket tavern attracts highbrow clientele from the Swakopmund Hotel, and sometimes has live music.

Fagin's Pub (Roon St) This extremely popular, down-to-earth watering hole is reminiscent of a US truckies' stop, complete with jocular staff, faithful clientele and evening videos of your day's adrenaline activities.

O'Kelley's (Moltke St) Emphasises local disco music, dancing and billiards – this is the place to go when you don't want to go home and you're too drunk to care.

Rafter's Action Pub (cnr Moltke & Woermann Sts) At Rafter's, it's a safe bet that the music is always pounding, the strobes are always flashing and hot young things are strutting their stuff on the dance floor, regardless of the time of night.

Private Bar (Grüner Kranz, 7 Nathaniel Maxuillili St) Although it's certainly not private, the Private Bar upstairs in the Grüner Kranz is becoming the most popular tourist bar in Swakopmund.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air Namibia (☎ 405123) flies between Eros Airport in Windhoek and Swakopmund (US\$90) daily.

BUS

From Roon St, the Interscape Mainliner bus travels to and from Walvis Bay (US\$8, 30 minutes) and Windhoek (US\$14, 4¼ hours) on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, with connections to and from South Africa.

The Friday Star Line bus between Khorixas (US\$8, 6½ hours) and Walvis Bay (US\$2, one hour) passes through Swakopmund, and returns on Sunday.

There are occasional combis between Swakopmund and Windhoek (US\$7, three hours) and Swakopmund and Walvis Bay (US\$2, 45 minutes), which depart from the Engen petrol station.

HITCHING

Hitching isn't difficult between Swakopmund and Windhoek or Walvis Bay, but conditions can be rough if you're heading for Namib-Naukluft Park or the Skeleton Coast; hitchhikers risk heatstroke, sandblasting and hypothermia – sometimes all in the same day.

TRAIN

Overnight trains connect Windhoek with Swakopmund (US\$7, 9½ hours) and Walvis Bay (US\$3.80, 1½ hours) daily except Saturday. The three-times-weekly trains between Walvis Bay and Tsumeb (US\$7, 17½ hours) also pass through Swakopmund. For rail or Star Line information, telephone **Trans-Namib** (☎ 463538).

THE MARTIN LUTHER

In the desert 4km east of Swakopmund, a lonely and forlorn steam locomotive languished for several years. The 14,000kg machine was imported to Walvis Bay from Halberstadt, Germany in 1896 to replace the ox-wagons used to transport freight between Swakopmund and the interior. However, its inauguration into service was delayed by the outbreak of the Nama-Herero Wars, and in the interim, its locomotive engineer returned to Germany without having revealed the secret of its operation.

A US prospector eventually got it running, but it consumed enormous quantities of precious local water. It took three months to complete its initial trip from Walvis Bay to Swakopmund and subsequently survived just a couple of short trips before grinding to a halt just east of Swakopmund. Clearly, this particular technology wasn't making life easier for anyone, and it was abandoned and dubbed the *Martin Luther*, in reference to the great reformer's famous words to the Diet of Reichstag in 1521: 'Here I stand. May God help me, I cannot do otherwise'.

Although the *Martin Luther* was restored in 1975 and declared a national monument, over the past several decades it suffered once more from the ravages of nature. At the time of writing, the locomotive was in the process of being removed from the ground, and it is likely that it will find a new home in a museum sometime in the near future.

AROUND SWAKOPMUND

Rössing Uranium Mine

The world's largest open-cast uranium mine, **Rössing Uranium Mine** (☎ 402046), 55km northeast of Swakopmund, certainly merits a visit. The scale of operations is staggering and at full capacity the mine processes about one million tonnes of ore per week. Three-hour mine tours (US\$2.50) leave from Cafe Anton at Hotel Schweizerhaus in Bismarck St at 10am on the first and third Friday of each month; book the previous day at the museum.

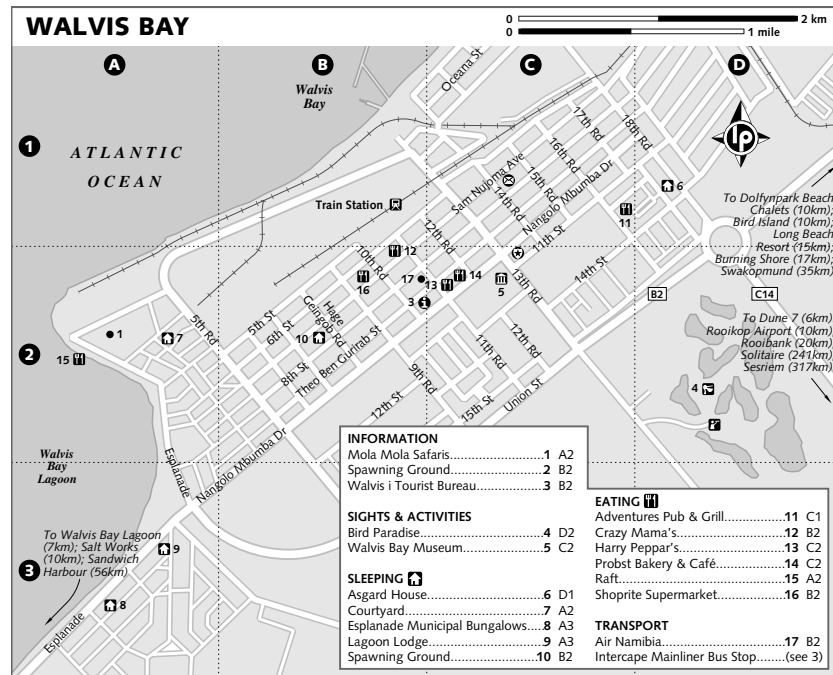
Welwitschia Drive & Moon Landscape

A worthwhile excursion by vehicle or organised tour is to Welwitschia Drive, east of Swakopmund. The NWR office in Swakopmund issues entry permits and a leaflet describing the drive, with numbered references to 'beacons', or points of interest, along the route. The drive can be completed in two hours, but allow more time to experience this otherworldly landscape. The **Welwitschia camp site** (Map p368; up to 4 people US\$10) at the Swakop River must also be booked through NWR in Swakopmund or Windhoek.

WALVIS BAY

☎ 064

Due to the city's strategic location, Walvis Bay (population 54,000) has a long and storied history of British and South African occupation. Since 1992, however, the city has rested firmly in Namibian hands, and is the country's second-largest city after Windhoek.



Today, Walvis Bay boasts a tanker berth, a dry dock and container facilities as well as a lucrative salt works and fish-processing industry.

Unlike neighbouring Swakopmund, Walvis Bay was snatched by the British years before the German colonists could get their hands on it. As a result, Walvis Bay is architecturally uninspiring, and lacks the old-world ambience of its northerly neighbour. However, although most visitors fail to see the city's charms, the area around Walvis Bay is home to a number of unique natural attractions including one of the largest flocks of flamingoes in the whole of Southern Africa.

Orientation & Information

Although some streets have been renamed after Swapo luminaries, Walvis Bay streets, from 1st St to 15th St, run northeast to southwest. The roads, from 1st Rd to 18th Rd, run northwest to southeast.

The helpful **Walvis i Tourist Bureau** (Map p365; ☎ 209170; fax 209171; Shop 6, Hickory Creek Spur Bldg, Theo-Ben Gurirab St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) provides visitor information.

Sights & Activities

The **Walvis Bay Museum** (Map p365; Nangolo Mbumba Dr; admission free; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-4.30pm Mon-Fri), in the library, describes the town's maritime and natural history and archaeology.

About 10km north of town on the Swakopmund road, look out to sea and you'll see the huge wooden platform known as **Bird Island**, which was built to provide a roost and nesting site for sea birds and to provide 1000 tonnes of smelly bird guano annually.

Dune 7 (Map p368) rises above the bleak expanses just off the C14, 6km northeast of town; there's a picnic site, but water is available only sporadically.

Three diverse wetland areas – the **Walvis Bay Lagoon**, the **Bird Paradise** and the **Walvis Bay Salt Works** (Map p368; ☎ 202376) – together form the single most important coastal wetland for migratory birds in Southern Africa, annually attracting up to 150,000 transient avian visitors. The 45,000-hectare Walvis Bay Lagoon, a shallow bay southwest of town, boasts about half the flamingo population of Southern Africa, as well as pelicans, chestnut banded plovers, avocets, damara terns and curlew

sandpipers, plus other migrants and waders. Southwest of the lagoon is the salt works, a 3500-hectare complex that supplies over 90% of South Africa's salt and also attracts flamingoes with its mineral content; tours are available with advance booking. At the municipal sewage works immediately east of town, an observation tower overlooks a series of shallow artificial pools, fringed by reeds, and provides rewarding bird-watching. The site is known locally as the Bird Paradise.

Tours

Eco-Marine Kayak Tours (☎ 203144; jeannem@iafrica.com.na) Run by Jeanne Mientjes, this company offers wonderful sea-kayaking trips around the beautiful Walvis Bay wetlands (US\$20) as well as trips to Pelican Point (US\$35).

Mola Mola Safaris (Map p365; ☎ 205511; www.mola-mola.com.na; cnr Esplanade & Atlantic St) Runs an extremely popular dolphin and seal cruise (US\$40).

Spawning Ground (Map p365; ☎ 204400; spawning@iafrica.com.na) Runs backpacker trips to Walvis Bay Lagoon, Dune 7 and Bird Paradise (US\$20) as well as Pelican Point, Sandwich Harbour, Cape Cross and Welwitschia Drive (US\$40).

Sleeping

Accommodation is located either in the city centre or at Langstrand (Long Beach), which is 10km north of Walvis Bay on the road to Swakopmund.

CITY CENTRE

Spawning Ground (Map p365; ☎ 204400; spawning@iafrica.com.na; cnr 8th St & 8th Rd; camping per person US\$5, dm US\$10, d US\$25; (P) (Q)) Owner, manager and all-around great guy, Wayne, knows exactly how to create a great vibe – guests often check in for one night and check out days later.

Asgard House (Map p365; ☎ 205955; www.gateway-africa.com/asgard; 72 17th Rd; s/d US\$38/50; (P)) This quaint family-run guesthouse features a nice homey lounge, a tropical garden and a frog pond (the frogs do their bit by eating the mosquitoes).

Esplanade Municipal Bungalows (Map p365; ☎ 206145; gkruger@walvisbaycc.or.na; 5/-7-bed bungalows US\$45/55; (P)) Perched on the Esplanade between the dunes and the lagoon, this affordable municipal-run rest camp comprises several bungalows featuring full kitchens and braai pits.

Courtyard (Map p365; ☎ 206252; courtyard@iafrica.com.na; 16 3rd Rd, s/d US\$55/65, ste from US\$75; (P) (Q))

This recently renovated hotel is now under new ownership, and is regarded as one of the better hotels in Walvis Bay.

Lagoon Lodge (Map p365; ☎ 200850; www.lagoonlodge.com.na; 2 Nangolo Mbumba Dr; s/d US\$75/120, ste US\$130; (P) (Q)) This pastel-drenched French-run lodge commands a magnificent location next to the lagoon, and features individually decorated rooms with private terraces facing out towards the flamingoes.

LANGSTRAND (LONG BEACH)

Long Beach Resort (☎ 203134; camping per site US\$10, plus per person US\$1, 2-/4-bed bungalows US\$30/40; (P) (Q)) This municipal camp site is about as otherworldly as you can get, particularly during a heavy fog or a sandstorm when the entire property is reminiscent of a desert mirage.

Dolfynpark Beach Chalets (☎ 204343; gkruger@walvisbaycc.org.na; 2-/4-bed self-catering chalets US\$30/50; (P) (Q)) You couldn't imagine a structure more alien to its setting than this – kids will love the pool and hydro-slide, while the parents will wonder how a water park can operate at the edge of a dune sea.

Burning Shore (☎ 207568; www.burningshore.info; d standard/luxury/ste with full board US\$165/215/335; (P) (Q) (Q)) This upmarket luxury retreat received a huge publicity boost in 2006 following Angelina Jolie's and Brad Pitt's surprise trip to Namibia. If the Burning Shore is good enough for Hollywood, it's probably good enough for you too.

Eating

The best self-catering option is the Shoprite Supermarket on Sam Nujoma Ave.

Probst Bakery & Café (Map p365; ☎ 202744; cnr 12th Rd & 9th St; US\$2-5) If you're feeling nostalgic for Swakopmund, take comfort in knowing that Probst specialises in stodgy German fare: pork, meatballs, schnitzel and the like.

Harry Peppar's (Map p365; ☎ 203131; cnr 11th Rd & Nangolo Mbumba Dr; pizzas US\$3-5) Harry comes up with all sorts of creative thick-crust pizzas, and if you're feeling lazy, he'll deliver his mad creations right to your hotel.

Crazy Mama's (Map p365; ☎ 207364; cnr Sam Nujoma Ave & 11th Rd; mains US\$3-6) The service and atmosphere are great, the price is right and the eclectic menu features fabulous pizzas, salads and vegetarian options.

Adventures Pub & Grill (Map p365; ☎ 206803; 230 12th St; meals US\$3-7; ☎ 10am-late) This popular night spot serves up traditional Namibian fare

by day including *potjies* (stew) and braais, as well as a heavy dose of beer, booze and pool.

Raft (Map p365; ☎ 204877; Esplanade; mains US\$5-12) This Walvis Bay institution sits on stilts offshore (though it looks more like a porcupine than a raft), and has a great front-row view of the ducks, pelicans and flamingoes.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air Namibia (☎ 203102) flies twice weekly between both of Windhoek's airports and Walvis Bay's Rooikop Airport (US\$85), 10km southeast of town on the C14.

BUS & COMBI

Intercape Mainliner has Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday services from Windhoek (US\$14, five hours) to the Spur Restaurant bus terminal in Walvis Bay, via Swakopmund.

Star Line has a Friday bus from Walvis Bay to Khorixas (US\$20, 7½ hours); it returns on Sunday. Book at the train station. Book Star Line buses at the **train station** (☎ 208504).

Combis occasionally run to Windhoek (US\$7, three hours) via Swakopmund (US\$2, 45 minutes).

HITCHING

Hitching is easy between Walvis Bay and Swakopmund, though you need to be prepared for rough conditions if you're trying to thumb a ride to the Namib-Naukluft Park or the Skeleton Coast.

TRAIN

The overnight rail service to Windhoek (US\$9, 11 hours) runs daily except Saturday. On Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday northbound, it leaves for Tsumeb (US\$7, 17½ hours) at 4.15pm, meeting a train from Windhoek at Kranzberg, where carriages are added/exchanged. For info, phone **Trans-Namib** (☎ 208504).

NAMIB-NAUKLUFT PARK

The present boundaries of Namib-Naukluft Park, one of the world's largest national parks, were established in 1978 by merging the Namib Desert Park and the Naukluft Mountain Zebra Park with parts of Diamond Area 1 and bits of surrounding government land. Today, it takes in over 23,000 sq km of desert and semidesert, including the diverse habitats of the Namib Desert Park between the Kuiseb and Swakop Rivers, the Naukluft, the dune fields around

Sossusvlei and the bird lagoon at Sandwich Harbour.

The main park transit routes, the C28, C14, D1982 and D1998, are open to all traffic, but use of the minor roads (note that some minor routes require 4WD), picnic sites or sites of interest require park permits (US\$3.50 per person plus US\$2.50 per vehicle). They're available at NWR offices in Windhoek, Swakopmund and Sesriem.

Camp sites in Namib Desert Park and Sesriem/Naukluft must be prebooked through the NWR offices in Windhoek or Swakopmund. Permits for the Naukluft 4WD Trail, the multiday Naukluft hikes and day entry to Sesriem/Sossusvlei are most successfully booked in Windhoek.

Sandwich Harbour

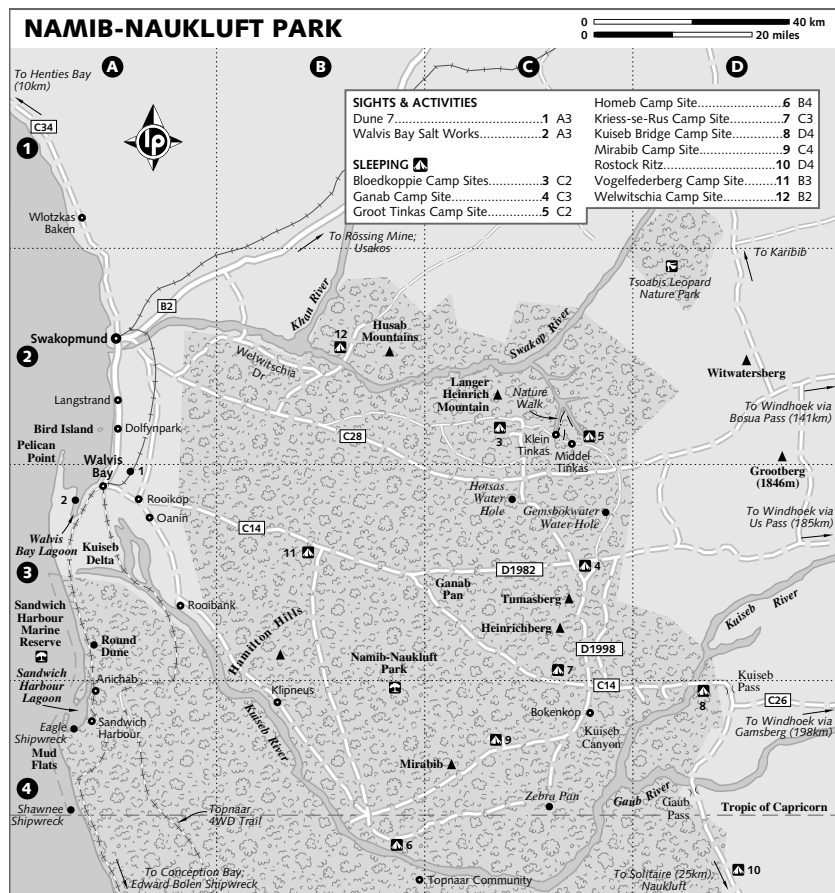
This **harbour** (☎ 6am-8pm), which is 50km south of Walvis Bay, historically served as a commercial fishing and trading port. Despite a period of silting in recent years, it seems to be recovering and the northern end of the lagoon continues to attract large numbers of migratory birds. There are no visitor facilities – not even a camp site – and it's accessible only with a sturdy 4WD high-clearance vehicle. The final 20km is tricky and, depending on dune conditions, may involve timing your arrival with low tide in order to run down to the sandy beach.

TOPNAAR 4WD TRAIL

The 4WD trail from Walvis Bay through the sand sea to Sandwich Harbour, Conception Bay and the renowned *Edward Bolen* shipwreck creates a challenge for 4WD enthusiasts. Only guided trips are available and while you can use a private vehicle, it's probably better to rent a Uri – a desert-adapted vehicle that is produced in Namibia. Currently, a six-day camping trip covering the entire route costs US\$700 per person in your own vehicle and US\$950 in a rented Uri. Other options that cover parts of the route start at US\$350/570 in a private/rented vehicle. Book through **Tourist Junction** (☎ 061-231246; www.touristjunction.com.na; PO Box 1591, Windhoek).

Namib Desert Park

The relatively accessible Namib Desert Park lies between the canyons of the Kuiseb River in the south and the Swakop River in the north. Although it has a small area of linear dunes,



it's characterised mostly by broad gravel plains punctuated by abrupt and imposing ranges of hills.

Although this area doesn't support a lot of large mammals, you may see chacma baboons, as well as dassies, which like to bask on the kopjes (small rocky hills).

The **Kuiseb Canyon**, on the Gamsberg Route between Windhoek and Walvis Bay, is also home to klipspringers and even leopards. Spotted hyenas are often heard at night and jackals make a good living from the springbok herds on the plains.

SLEEPING

The following camp sites must be booked through NWR in Windhoek (p315).

Bloodkoppie Camp Site (Map p368), or 'Blood Hill', has among the most beautiful and popular sites in the park. If you're coming from Swakopmund, they lie 55km northeast of the C28, along a signposted track. The northern sites may be accessed with a 2WD, but they tend to attract ne'er-do-wells who drink themselves silly and get obnoxious. The southern sites are quieter and more secluded, but can be reached only by 4WD.

Groot Tinkas Camp Site (Map p368) must be accessed with 4WD, and rarely sees much traffic. It enjoys a lovely setting beneath shady rocks and the surroundings are super for nature walks. During rainy periods, the brackish water in the nearby dam attracts a variety of bird life.

Vogelfederberg Camp Site (Map p368) is a small facility 2km south of the C14 and makes a convenient overnight camp just 51km from Walvis Bay, but it's more popular for picnics or short walks.

Ganab Camp Site (Map p368), 'Camelthorn Acacia', is a dusty, exposed facility that sits beside a shallow stream bed on the gravel plains. It's shaded by hardy acacia trees, and a nearby borehole provides water for antelopes.

Kriess-se-Rus Camp Site (Map p368) is a rather ordinary site in a dry stream bank on the gravel plains, 107km east of Walvis Bay on the Gamsberg Pass Route. It is shaded, but isn't terribly prepossessing and is best used simply as a convenient stop en route between Windhoek and Walvis Bay.

Kuiseb Bridge Camp Site (Map p368) is a shady site at the Kuiseb River crossing on the C14 and is handy for breaking a trip between Windhoek and Walvis Bay. The location is scenic, but dust and noise from passing vehicles makes it less appealing than other sites.

Mirabib Camp Site (Map p368) is a pleasant facility that accommodates two parties at separate sites and is comfortably placed beneath rock overhangs in a large granite inselberg. There's evidence these shelters were used by nomadic peoples as many as 9000 years ago, and also by nomadic shepherds in the 4th or 5th century.

Homeb Camp Site (Map p368), which can accommodate several groups, is located in a scenic spot upstream from the most accessible set of dunes in the Namib Desert Park. Residents of the nearby Topnaar Khoikhoi village dig wells in the riverbed to access water beneath the surface, and one of their dietary staples is the !nara melon.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There's no public transport to any of these sites, but the rare minibuses between Mariental and Walvis Bay pass within walking distance of Kuiseb Bridge, Kriess-se-Rus and Vogelfederberg Camp Sites.

Naukluft Mountains

📍 063

The Naukluft Mountains, which rises steeply from the gravel plains of the central Namib, is mainly a high-plateau area cut around the edges by a complex of steep gorges, forming an ideal habitat for mountain zebras, kudus, leopards, springboks and klipspringers.

Most visitors to the Naukluft come to hike one of the area's two day-walks, the Waterkloof Trail or the Olive Trail. These day hikes need not be booked, but the amazing four-day and eight-day loops have more restrictions attached. Thanks to stifling summer temperatures and potentially heavy rains, the multiday hikes are only open from 1 March to the third Friday in October, on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday of the first three weeks of each month. The price (US\$12 per person) includes accommodation at the Hikers Haven Hut on the night before and after the hike, as well as camping at trailside shelters and the Ubusis Canyon Hut. In addition, you'll have to pay US\$3.50 per person per day and another US\$2.50 per day for each vehicle you leave parked. Groups must be three to 12 people.

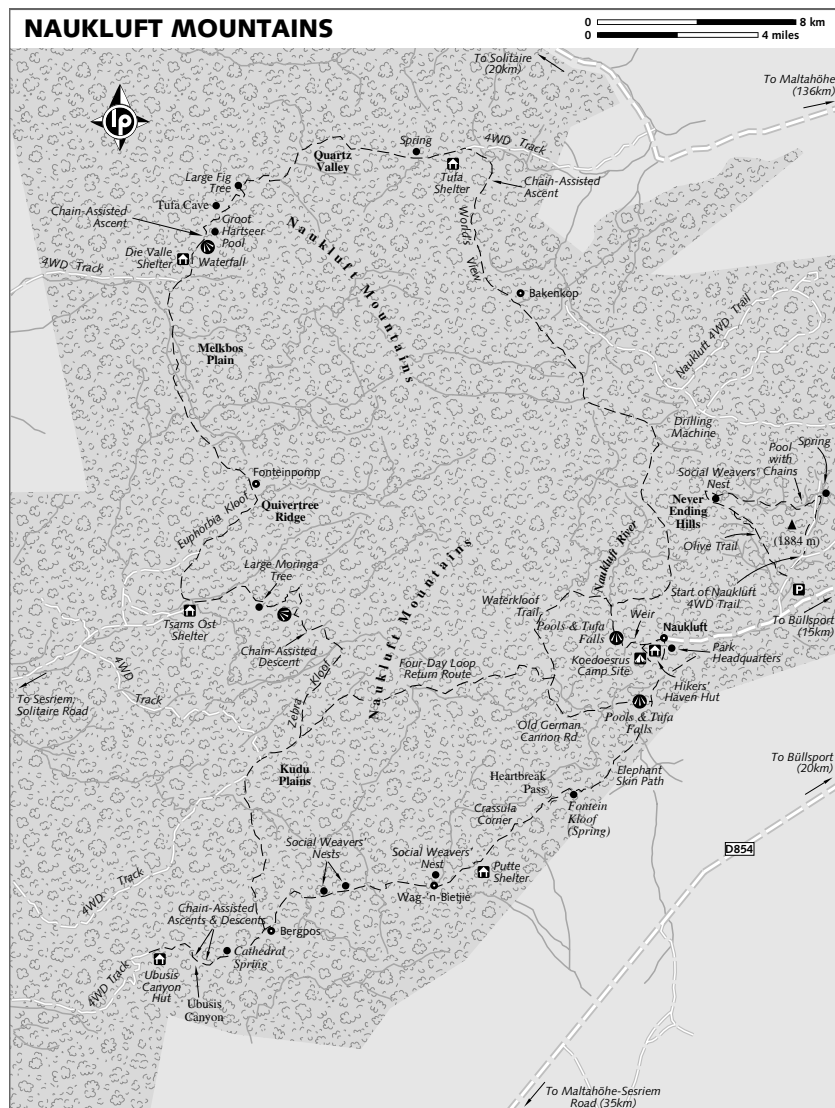
Due to the typically hot, dry conditions and lack of reliable natural water sources, you must carry at least 3L to 4L of water per person per day – and use it sparingly.

WATERKLOOF TRAIL

The lovely 17km Waterkloof Trail begins at the Koedoesrus Camp Site and follows a counter-clockwise loop that takes about seven hours to complete. It first crosses a weir on the Naukluft River and climbs past a series of pools offering refreshing swimming. After climbing out of the canyon, 6km later, the trail turns west and traverses more open country. After the halfway mark, it climbs to a broad 1910m ridge that affords fabulous desert views in all directions. It then descends steeply into several inviting pools filled with reeds and tadpoles before dropping past an impressive tufa waterfall and meeting up with the normally dry Naukluft River.

OLIVE TRAIL

The 10km Olive Trail leaves from the car park about 4km northeast of the park headquarters and follows a four- to five-hour triangular route. The route begins with a steep climb onto the plateau, affording good views of the Naukluft Valley. It then turns sharply east and descends a kloof, which becomes deeper and steeper until it reaches a point where hikers must traverse a canyon wall – past a pool – using anchored chains. Near the end of the route, the trail strikes the Naukluft 4WD route and swings sharply south, where it makes a beeline back to the car park.



FOUR-DAY & EIGHT-DAY LOOPS

The two big loops through the massif can be hiked in four and eight days. The four-day, 60km loop is actually just the first third of the eight-day 120km loop, combined with a 22km cross-country jaunt across the plateau back to park headquarters. It joins up with the Waterkloof Trail at its halfway point and follows

it the rest of the way back to park headquarters. Alternatively, you can finish the four-day route at Tsams-Ost Shelter, midway through the eight-day loop, where a road leads out to the Sesriem-Solitaire road. However, you must pre-arrange to leave a vehicle there before setting off from park headquarters. Note that hikers may not begin from Tsams-Ost

without special permission from the rangers at Naukluft.

Conditions are typically hot and dry, and water is reliably available only at overnight stops (at Putte, it's 400m from the shelter). Hikers must carry at least 4L of water per day. Eight-day hikers can lighten their packs by dropping off a re-supply cache of food and stove fuel at Tsams-Ost Shelter prior to the hike. In four places – Ubusis Canyon, above Tsams-Ost, Die Valle and just beyond Tufa Shelter – hikers must negotiate dry waterfalls, boulder-blocked kloofs and steep tufa formations with the aid of chains. Some people find this off-putting, so be sure you're up to it.

NAUKLUFT 4WD TRAIL

Off-road enthusiasts can now exercise their machines on the new National Parks 73km Naukluft 4WD Trail. The route costs US\$24 per vehicle plus US\$3.50 per person per day, including accommodation in one of the four stone-walled A-frames at the 28km point. Facilities include shared toilets, showers and braais. Up to four vehicles per 16 people are permitted at a time. Book through NWR in Windhoek.

SLEEPING

Koedoesrus Camp Site (Map p370; camping for 2 people US\$12, plus for each additional person US\$2; Pleasantly situated in a deep valley, it has running water, hot showers and flush toilets. It books out quickly and the maximum stay is three nights. Firewood is sold at the park entrance ranger office.

Tsauchab River Camping (Map p356; 293416; tsauchab@triponline.net; camping per site US\$5, plus per person US\$5, 4WD exclusive camp US\$8 plus per person US\$6; If you're an avid hiker or just love excellent settings you're in for a treat. The shady named camp sites sit beside the Tsauchab riverbed – one occupies a huge hollow tree – and each has private ablutions, a sink and braai area.

Zebra River Lodge (Map p356; 693265; www.zebrariver.com; s/d with full board US\$115/200; Occupying a magical setting in the Tsaris Mountains, this is Rob and Marianne Field's private Grand Canyon. The surrounding wonderland of desert mountains, plateaus, valleys and natural springs is accessible on a network of hiking trails and 4WD tracks (guided drives to the springs cost US\$18).

Büllsport Guest Farm (Map p356; 693371; www.natron.net/tour/buellspt; s/d with half board US\$125/190; This scenic farm owned by Ernst and Johanna Sauber occupies a lovely, austere setting below the Naukluft Massif, and features a ruined colonial police station, the Bogenfels arch and several resident mountain zebras.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The Naukluft is accessible only with a private vehicle or an organised tour.

Sesriem & Sossusvlei

063

Despite being Namibia's number-one tourist attraction, Sossusvlei still manages to feel isolated. Hiking through the dunes, which are part of the 32,000-sq-km sand sea that covers much of Western Namibia, is a sombre experience. The dunes, which reach as high as 325m, are part of one of the oldest and driest ecosystems on earth. However, the landscape here is constantly changing – wind forever alters the shape of the dunes while colours shift with the changing light. If possible, try to visit Sossusvlei at sunrise when the colours are at the peak of their brilliance.

The gateway to Sossusvlei is Sesriem (Six Thongs), named for the number of joined leather ox-wagon thongs necessary to draw water from the bottom of the nearby gorge.

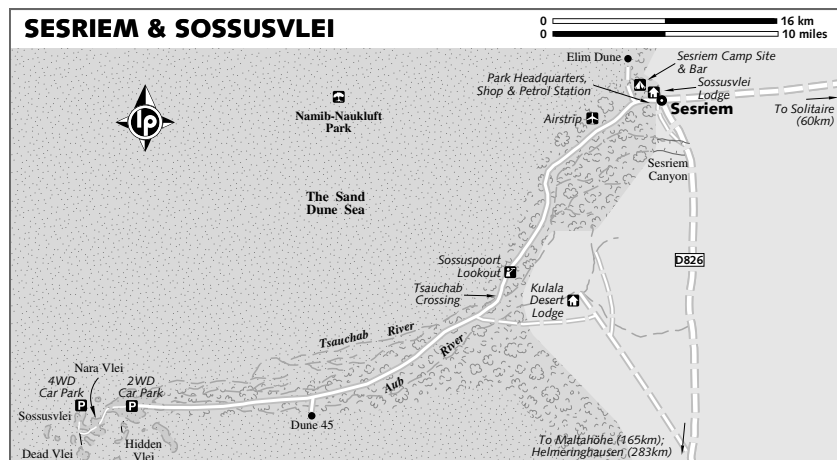
Both Sesriem Canyon and Sossusvlei are open year-round between sunrise and sunset. If you want to witness the sunrise over Sossusvlei – as most people do – you must stay at or near Sesriem. Otherwise, you can't pass the gate early enough to reach Sossusvlei before sunrise.

SIGHTS

Sesriem

The park headquarters, a small food shop, a petrol station, the camp site and the Sossusvlei Lodge are all found at Sesriem. All visitors headed for Sossusvlei must check in at the park office and secure a park entry permit (US\$3.50 per person plus US\$2.50 per vehicle).

The 2km-long and 30m-deep **Sesriem Canyon**, 4km south of the Sesriem headquarters, was carved by the Tsauchab River through the 15-million-year-old deposits of sand and gravel conglomerate. From the car park, you can hike upstream to the brackish pool at its head or downstream to the canyon mouth.



Dune 45

The most accessible of the red dunes along the Sossusvlei road is the 150m Dune 45, so called because it's 45km from Sesriem and 45 dunes from Sossusvlei. For tour groups, it's a popular sunrise and bush breakfast venue.

Sossusvlei & Around

Sossusvlei, a large ephemeral pan, is set amid red sand dunes that tower up to 200m above the valley floor and more than 300m over the underlying strata. This is the most accessible part of the 300km-long and 150km-wide sand sea that contains the world's highest, oldest and arguably most picturesque dunes. The pan rarely holds water, but when the Tsauchab River has gathered enough volume and momentum to push beyond the thirsty plains to the sand sea (as it did in 1997 and 2001), it's transformed into a verdant oasis.

A rugged 5km return walk from Sossusvlei takes you to **Dead Vlei**, which, despite its name, is even more impressive than its popular neighbour. Alternatively, from the 2WD car park, a rewarding 4km return hike marked by white-painted posts leads to **Hidden Vlei**, an unearthly dry vlei amid lonely dunes.

From Sesriem, take the 65km 2WD road to the 2WD car park; the last 4km to Sossusvlei requires 4WD, so visitors with lesser vehicles park at the 2WD car park and walk, hitch or take the Sossus 4WD Shuttle Service (US\$3.50/6 one way/return). If you're walking, carry enough water for a hot sandy slog in the sun.

TOURS

Most Namib-area lodges run day tours to Sossusvlei, and prices are generally proportional to the amount you're paying for accommodation. In addition, nearly every Namibian tour operator includes it in their itineraries; see p397.

SLEEPING & EATING

Pre-booking is mandatory at the lodges listed following.

Sesriem Camp Site (Map p372; camping for 4 people US\$20; (P)) Sesriem is the most convenient camp site for Sossusvlei, though it must be booked in advance at the NWR office in Windhoek (p315). However, you must arrive before sunset or the camp staff will reassign your site on a stand-by basis; anyone who was unable to book a site in Windhoek may get in on this nightly lottery. A small shop at the office here sells snacks and cold drinks, and the camp-site bar provides music and alcohol nightly.

Desert Homestead & Horse Trails (Map p356; ☎ 293243; www.deserthomestead-namibia.com; s/d/tr US\$115/190/250 incl breakfast; (P) (E)) This reader-recommended lodge specialises in horse riding through the Namib-Naukluft park. Whether you're keen for a sundowner or an overnight desert 'sleep-out' ride, the professional staff and exceptional horses at the Desert Homestead will make your experience a memorable one.

Sossusvlei Lodge (Map p372; ☎ 293223; www.sossusvleilodge.com; s/d US\$265/365; (P) (E)) This curious

place, which bears a strong resemblance to what happens when squabbling children topple a stack of coloured blocks, sits right at the Sesriem Camp Site fence. People either love it or hate it, but it does make a statement. Pre-dawn transfer to Sossusvlei is possible as the lodge is located within the park gate.

Kulala Desert Lodge (Map p372; ☎ 061-274500; www.wilderness-safaris.com; s/d with full board US\$345/475; (P) (E)) Located approximately 15km south of Sesriem on the banks of the Tsauchab, this refreshingly unobtrusive luxury retreat

resembles a Bedouin camp amid the dunes. The biggest perk of staying at Kulala is its private entrance to Sossusvlei, which means that guests can easily enter the park before sunrise.

Sossusvlei Wilderness Camp (Map p356; ☎ 061-274500; www.wilderness-safaris.com; s/d with full board & activities US\$600/835; (P) (E)) If money is no object, then splash out at this exclusive tented camp, which is situated on a mountainous 7000-hectare private ranch about 40km southeast of Sesriem. Accommodation is in beautiful

THE NAMIB DUNES

The Namib dunes stretch from the Orange to the Kuiseb Rivers in the south (this area is known as the 'dune sea') and from Torra Bay in Skeleton Coast Park to Angola's Croce River in the north. They're composed of colourful quartz sand, and come in varying hues – from cream to orange and red to violet.

Unlike the ancient Kalahari dunes, those of the Namib are dynamic, which means that they shift with the wind, and are continuously sculpted into a variety of distinctive shapes. The top portion of the dune, which faces the direction of migrations, is known as the slipface, and is formed as the sand spills from the crest and slips down. Various bits of plant and animal detritus also collect here and provide a meagre food source for dune-dwelling creatures, and it's here that most dune life is concentrated.

The following is a list of the major types of dunes found in the Namib:

- Parabolic dunes: along the eastern area of the dune sea, including around Sossusvlei (p371). The dunes are classified as parabolic or multicyclic, and are the result of variable wind patterns. These are the most stable dunes in the Namib, and therefore the most vegetated.
- Transverse dunes: the long, linear dunes along the coast south of Walvis Bay (p364), which lie perpendicular to the prevailing southwesterly winds. Therefore, their slipfaces are oriented towards the north and northeast.
- Seif dunes: around Homeb in the Namib Desert Park (p367), also known as linear dunes, which are enormous northwest-southeast sand ripples. With heights of up to 100m, they're spaced about 1km apart and show up plainly on satellite photographs. They're formed by seasonal winds; during the prevailing southerly winds of summer, the slipfaces lie on the northeastern face. In the winter, the wind blows in the opposite direction, which causes slipfaces to build up on the southwestern faces.
- Star dunes: in areas where individual dunes are exposed to winds from all directions, a formation known as a star dune appears. These dunes have multiple ridges, and when seen from above may appear to have a star shape.
- Barchan dunes: these dunes prevail around the northern end of the Skeleton Coast (p355) and south of Lüderitz (p379). These are the most mobile dunes as they are created by unidirectional winds. As they shift, barchan dunes take on a crescent shape, with the horns of the crescent aimed in the direction of migration. In fact, it is barchan dunes that are slowly devouring the ghost town of Kolmanskop near Lüderitz. These are also the so called 'roaring dunes' of the Skeleton Coast Wilderness area, which let out a haunting roar when air is pressed out from the interstices between the sand granules on the slipface.
- Hump dunes: typically form in clusters near water sources, and are considerably smaller than other dune types. They are formed when sand builds up around vegetation (such as a tuft of grass), and held in place by the roots of the plant, forming a sandy tussock. Generally, hump dunes rise less than 3m from the surface.

stone, timber and thatched bungalows nestled between rock outcroppings for maximum privacy – each bungalow features a private plunge pool. The camp is located 30km west of Sesriem near the junction between the C36 and D845; chartered fly-ins can also be arranged.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Sesriem is reached via a signposted turn-off from the C19. You'll find petrol at Solitaire, Namib Rest Camp, Sesriem and a bush BP station 93km south of Sesriem on the D826.

Solitaire Area

Solitaire is a lonely and aptly named settlement of just a few buildings about 79km north of Sesriem. Although the town is nothing more than an open spot in the desert, the area is home to several guest farms and lodges, which serve as an alternative base for exploring Sossusvlei.

SLEEPING

Solitaire Guest Farm (Map p356; ☎ 062-572024; www.solitaireguestfarm.com; camping US\$8.50, r incl breakfast per person US\$50; (P) (S)) This inviting guest farm, located 6km east of Solitaire on the C14, is a peaceful oasis situated between the Namib plains and the Naukluft Mountains.

Solitaire Country Lodge (Map p356; ☎ 061-256598; www.namibialodges.com; camping US\$8.50, s/d incl breakfast US\$60/85; (P) (S)) This swish new lodge, located next to the petrol station, offers 23 country-inspired rooms that surround a grassy courtyard with a spotless swimming pool.

Weltevrede Rest Camp (Map p356; ☎ 293374; camping for 3 people US\$12, s/d with half board US\$75/130; (P) (S)) Willie and Zanne Swarts' simple rest camp, located 30km south of Solitaire, offers shady camping and spacious bungalows amid a lonely desert setting.

Rostock Ritz (Map p368; ☎ 064-403622; kuecki@mweb.com.na; s/d chalets US\$115/180; (P) (S)) Established by the owner of Kücki's Pub in Swakopmund, this unique accommodation is known for its bizarre water gardens and cool, cave-like cement-domed chalets. The Ritz is situated east of the C14, just south of the C26 junction.

Swartfontein Mountain & Desert Guest Lodge (Map p356; ☎ 062-572004; info@swartfontein.com; s/d with half board US\$125/225; (P) (S)) This Italian-run guest farm lies at the top of the 1850m Spreetshoogte Pass, and is situated on the

8100-hectare Namib-Spreetshoogte Private Nature Reserve. The lodge is in a 1900-era farmhouse constructed by a German colonial soldier, though the stylish décor is Italian all the way.

Namib-Naukluft Lodge (Map p356; ☎ 061-263082; afex@afex.com.na; s/d with half board US\$130/210; (P) (S)) This modernist lodge located on a 13,000-hectare farm 20km south of Solitaire occupies a boulder-strewn landscape. Rooms are designed to be functional, though they're still extremely plush.

EATING

Adjacent to the petrol station is the Solitaire Country Store, a warm and friendly spot that remains a favourite with travellers. If you're just stopping here for petrol, be sure to step inside and visit Moose, who continues to bake the best bread and *apfelstrudel* in Africa.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Solitaire is located 79km north of Sesriem along the A46.

NamibRand Nature Reserve

Abutting the Namib-Naukluft Park, the NamibRand Nature Reserve is the largest privately owned property in Southern Africa. It was formed from a collection of private farms, and protects over 200,000 hectares of dunes, desert grasslands and wild, isolated mountain ranges. Currently, several concessionaires operate on the reserve, offering a range of experiences amid one of Namibia's most stunning and colourful landscapes.

TOURS

Tok-Tokkie Trails (Map p356; ☎ 061-264668 ext 5230, 061-235454; www.namibweb.com/tok.htm; per person per day US\$300) is a company that guides one- to four-day walking tours through the desert, dunes and mountains of NamibRand. The rate includes meals, equipment and a guide; camping is under the stars and bucket showers are available.

SLEEPING

Pre-booking is mandatory at the lodges listed below. Transfer by 4WD or a fly-in is arranged in conjunction with your lodge reservations.

Camp Mwisho (Map p356; ☎ 063-293233; namibsky@mweb.com.na; s/d will full board plus hot-air balloon ride US\$465/580; (P) (S)) This intimate camp consists solely of four East Africa-style luxury

canvas tents surrounding a rustic farmhouse, though the main attraction is the included hot-air balloon ride over Sossusvlei. Guests depart from Mwisho at dawn, and watch the sunrise as you glide through the air high above the dunes.

Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge (Map p356; ☎ 27-11 809 4300; www.ccafrica.com; r per person with meals & activities US\$585; (P) (S)) This fashionable destination frequently appears in *Condé Nast* as one of the top lodges in the world. The property is comprised of 10 chalets, which are constructed from locally quarried stone, and which appear to blend effortlessly into the surrounding landscape.

Wolwedans Dune Lodge (Map p356; ☎ 061-230616; www.wolwedans.com; s/d with full board & activities US\$700/900; (P) (S)) This elite, upmarket destination features an architecturally arresting collection of raised wooded chalets that are scattered amid towering red sand dunes.

Getting There & Away

Access to the NamibRand Nature Reserve by private vehicle is restricted.

SOUTHERN NAMIBIA

Southern Namibia takes in everything from Rehoboth in the north to the Orange River along the South African border, and westward from the Botswana border to the Diamond Coast. The Central Plateau is characterised by wide-open country, and the area's widely spaced and largely uninspiring towns function primarily as commercial and market centres. This is rich cattle-ranching country, and around Mariental, citrus fruit and market vegetables are grown under irrigation. Further south, however, the landscape opens up into seemingly endless desert plains, ranges and far horizons – and the surprising Fish River Canyon forms a spectacular gash across the landscape.

REHOBOTH

☎ 062

Rehoboth lies 85km south of Windhoek, and just a stone's throw north of the Tropic of Capricorn. The original German mission was abandoned in 1864, but the town was revived in the early 1870s by the Basters, an ethnic group of mixed Khoikhoi/Afrikaner origin who migrated north from the Cape under Her-

manus van Wyk. The **town museum** (☎ 522954; admission US\$1.50; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat), which is housed in the 1903 residence of the settlement's first colonial postmaster, recounts this history.

If you're looking to rehabilitate your travel-worn body, consider spending a night at the **Reho Spa Recreation Resort** (Map p376; ☎ 522774; camping for 2 people US\$12, plus for each additional person US\$2, 4-/5-/6-bed self-catering bungalows US\$24/27/35; (P) (S)), which was originally known by its Nama name *aris* (smoke), after the steam that rose from ground. Book through NWR in Windhoek (p315).

Another relaxing retreat is the **Lake Oanob Resort** (Map p376; ☎ 522370; oanob@iafrica.com.na; km6 D1237, PO Box 3381; camping per site from US\$14-22, s/d US\$43/53, 6-bed chalets US\$78-100, 8-bed chalets US\$125-160; (P) (S)), which is situated next to the 2.7-sq-km lake created by the Oanab Dam just west of town.

Intercape Mainliner buses running between Windhoek and South Africa stop at Rehoboth, as does the train between Windhoek and Keetmanshoop.

HARDAP DAM RECREATION RESORT & GAME PARK

The 25-sq-km **Hardap Dam** (per person US\$2.50 plus per vehicle US\$2.50; ☎ sunrise-6pm), 15km north-west of Mariental, offers good fishing and a 25,000-hectare wildlife park with 80km of gravel roads and a 15km hiking loop. Hardap is Nama for 'nipple', and it was named after the conical hills topped by the dolerite knobs dotting the area.

Most travellers come here for **Blue Lake**, which breaks up the arid plateau landscape and provides anglers with carp, barbel, mud-fish and blue karpers. The lake also supports countless species of water birds including flamingoes, fish eagles, pelicans, spoonbills and Goliath herons.

The **Hardap Dam Rest Camp** (Map p376; 2-bed bungalow US\$28-30, 4-bed bungalow US\$48, 5-bed bungalow US\$37-42, 4-bed luxury suite US\$59, 12-bed dormitory US\$48; (P) (S)) offers a variety of accommodation, plus a shop, restaurant, kiosk and swimming pool. Make reservations through NWR in Windhoek (p315).

To get to the resort and game park, take the signposted turning off the B1, 15km north of Mariental, and continue 6km to the entrance gate. For cruises on the lake, contact **Oasis Ferries** (☎ 240805, 243292).



MARIENTAL

📍 063

The small administrative and commercial centre of Mariental sits on the bus and rail lines between Windhoek and Keetmanshoop, and serves as a popular petrol stop. It's also home to the large-scale Hardap irrigation scheme, which allows citrus-growing and ostrich farming.

If you get stuck for the night, the well-established **Mariental Hotel** (📞 242466; mrlhotel@iafrica.com.na; Marie Brandt St; s/d US\$50/60; 📍 📞) has plush rooms with modern amenities as well as a decent dining room.

All trains, buses and minibuses between Windhoek and Keetmanshoop pass through Mariental.

DUWISIB CASTLE

📍 063

This **castle** (Map p376; 📞 066-385303; admission US\$2.50; 🕒 8am-1pm & 2-5pm), a curious baroque structure 70km south of Maltahöhe, was built in 1909 by Baron Captain Hans-Heinrich von Wolf. After the German-Nama Wars, he commissioned architect Willie Sander to design a castle that would reflect his commitment to the German military cause.

Although the stone for the castle was quarried nearby, much of the raw material was imported from Germany, and required 20 ox-wagons to transport it across the 330km of desert from Lüderitz. Artesians and masons were hired from as far away as Ireland, Denmark, Sweden and Italy. The result was a U-shaped castle with 22 rooms, suitably fortified and decorated with family portraits and military paraphernalia. Rather than windows, most rooms have embrasures, which emphasise Von Wolf's apparent obsession with security.

Sleeping

Duwisib Castle Rest Camp (Map p376; camping for 4 people US\$13). This very amenable camping ground occupies one corner of the castle grounds; the adjoining kiosk sells snacks, coffee and cool drinks. Bookings are through NWR in Windhoek (p315).

Farm Duwisib (Map p376; 📞 223994; duwisib@iway.na; rper person with half board US\$35) Located 300m from the castle, this pleasant guest farm has rustic self-catering rooms for two to four people. While you're there, be sure to check out the historic blacksmith shop up the hill.

Getting There & Away

There's no public transport to Duwisib Castle. If you're coming from Helmeringhausen, head north on the C14 for 62km and turn northwest on to the D831. Continue for 27km, then turn west onto the D826 and travel a further 15km to the castle.

MALTÄHÖHE

📍 063

Maltahöhe, in the heart of a ranching area, has little to recommend it, but thanks to its convenient location along the back route between Namib-Naukluft Park and Lüderitz, the area supports a growing number of guest farms and private rest camps.

Hotel Maltahöhe (📞 293013; s/d US\$25/40; 📍) has won several national awards for its amenable accommodation. It also has a restaurant and bar, and organises good-value day trips to Sossusvlei (p371).

Located 2km south of Maltahöhe, **Daweb Guest Farm** (Map p376; 📞 293088; daweb@natron.net; camping per person US\$4, s/d with half board US\$35/45; 📍) is a working cattle ranch that offers accommodation in a lovely Cape Dutch-style farmhouse. Guests are invited to participate in guided walking or 4WD expeditions in the surrounding countryside.

Travel in this region typically requires a private vehicle or a well-oiled thumb (and a good measure of patience).

HELMERINGHAUSEN

📍 063

Tiny Helmeringhausen is little more than a homestead, hotel and petrol station, and has been the property of the Hester family since 1919. The highlight is the idiosyncratic **Agricultural Museum** (📞 283083; Main St; admission free; 🕒 on request), established in 1984 by the Helmeringhausen Farming Association. It displays all sorts of interesting old furniture and farming implements collected from local properties, as well as an antique fire engine from Lüderitz.

Helmeringhausen Hotel (📞 233083; s/d incl breakfast US\$40/45; 📍) is a friendly and pleasant country hotel with a restaurant and bar. The food is excellent, the beer is always cold and there's a well-stocked cellar. However, even those who like game meat may feel uncomfortable being watched by all those accusing trophies.

Helmeringhausen is 130km south of Maltahöhe on the C4.

BRUKKAROS

With a 2km-wide crater, this extinct volcano dominates the skyline between Mariental and Keetmanshoop. It was formed some 80 million years ago when a magma pipe encountered ground water about 1km below the earth's surface and caused a series of volcanic explosions. From the car park, it's a 3.5km hike to the crater's southern entrance; along the way, watch for the remarkable **quartz formations** embedded in the rock. From here, you can head for the otherworldly **crater floor** or turn left and follow the southern rim up to the abandoned **sunspot research centre**, which was established by the US Smithsonian Institute in the 1930s.

Brukkaros Community Campsite (Map p376; camping per person US\$3, day visits US\$1.25; (P)) offers camping with toilets and a bush shower, but campers must supply all their own water.

Brukkaros rises 35km west of Tses, on the B1. Follow the C98 west for 40km and then turn north on to the D3904 about 1km east of Berseba. It's then 8km to the car park.

KEETMANSHOOP

063

Keetmanshoop (pronounced *kayt-mahns-hoo-up*) sits at the main crossroads of southern Namibia and has more petrol stations per capita than any other town in Namibia, which may hint at its main function for travellers. However, if you're looking to break up a long

drive, there is some noteworthy accommodation in the area, especially if you've yet to photograph Namibia's most famous tree, the kokerboom (quiver tree).

Sights

The most prominent example of colonial architecture is the 1910 **Kaiserliches Postamt** (Imperial Post Office; cnr 5th Ave & Fenschel St). The **town museum** (☎ 221256; admission free; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-4.30pm Mon-Fri), housed in the 1895 **Rhenish Mission Church**, outlines the history of Keetmanshoop with old photos, early farming implements, an old wagon and a model of a traditional Nama home.

The area surrounding Keetmanshoop is home to large concentrations of **kokerbooms**, which belong to the aloe family and can grow to heights of 8m (see the boxed text, left).

Sleeping & Eating

//Garas Park (Map p376; ☎ 223217; morkel@namibnet.com; camping per person US\$3, plus per vehicle US\$1, day admission per person US\$1 plus per vehicle US\$1) Located 25km north of town, //Garas boasts stands of kokerbooms and lots of hiking tracks and drives through a fantasy landscape of stacked boulders. It's enhanced by a series of sculptures made from spare junk.

Quivertree Rest Camp (Map p376; ☎ 222835; quiver@iafrica.com.na; camping per person US\$4, s/d 'igloo' bungalows US\$20/30, day admission per person US\$2 plus per vehicle US\$2) On Garaganus Farm 14km east of town, this boasts Namibia's largest stand of kokerbooms. Rates include use of the picnic facilities and entry to the Giant's Playground, a bizarre natural rock garden 5km away.

Pension Gessert (☎ 223892; gesserts@iafrica.com.na; 138 13th St; s/d incl breakfast US\$25/35; (P) (E)) Located in the quiet Westdene neighbourhood, this quaint pension offers homely rooms, a beautiful garden, a refreshing swimming pool and country-style cooking to the weary traveller.

Schutzen-Haus (☎ 223400; 8th Ave; mains US\$2-5) This German-style pub and restaurant serves up cheap pub grub, and is also a good choice for a cold pint of Hansa or a game or two of billiards.

Getting There & Away

Intercape Mainliner buses between Windhoek (US\$24, 5¼ hours) and Cape Town (US\$32, 13¼ hours) stop at the Du Toit BP petrol station four times weekly in either direction; they also leave for Johannesburg (US\$46, 17 hours)

FERAL DESERT HORSES

On the desert plains west of Aus live some of the world's only wild desert-dwelling horses. Among the several theories about the origins of these eccentric equines is the one that suggests they're descended from German Schutztruppe cavalry horses abandoned during the South African invasion in 1915. Others claim they were brought in by Nama raiders moving north from beyond the Orange River. Another tale asserts that they're descended from a load of shipwrecked horses en route from Europe to Australia. Still others maintain they're descended from the stud stock of Baron Captain Hans-Heinrich von Wolf, the owner of Duwisib Castle, who set off for Germany in search of more horses but was killed in battle in France and never returned to Namibia.

At present, the population fluctuates between 150 and 160, but there have never been more than 280 individuals. Their only source of water is Garub Pan, which is fed by an artificial borehole.

via Upington. The Engen station, opposite, serves as the bus terminal for minibuses to and from Windhoek, Lüderitz and Noordoewer. Star Line buses to Lüderitz (US\$9, five hours) depart from the train station at 7.30am Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Overnight trains run Sunday to Friday between Windhoek and Keetmanshoop (US\$9, 11 hours). On Wednesday and Saturday at 9am, trains continue to Upington (US\$7.50, 12½ hours) in South Africa; from Upington, they run on Sunday and Thursday. For train or Star Line information, phone **Trans-Namib** (☎ 292202).

AUS

063

After the Germans surrendered to the South African forces in 1915, Aus became one of two internment camps for German military personnel – military police and officers were sent to Okanjanje in the north while non-commissioned officers went to Aus. As the camp quickly grew to 1500 prisoners and 600 South African guards, residents were forced to seek shelter in flimsy tents. However, the resourceful inmates turned to brickmaking and constructed houses for themselves – they even sold the excess bricks to the guards for 10 shillings per 1000. The houses weren't opulent – roofs were tiled with unrolled food tins – but they did provide protection from the elements. The prisoners also built several wood stoves and even sank boreholes.

After the Treaty of Versailles, the camp was dismantled and by May 1919 it was closed. Virtually nothing remains, though several of the brick houses have been reconstructed. The former camp is 4km east of Aus village, down a gravel road, then to the right; there's now a national plaque commemorating it.

Sleeping

Klein-Aus Vista (Map p376; ☎ 258021; www.namibhorses.com; camping for 2 people US\$20, 10-person hut per person US\$30, s/d US\$75/130, s/d chalet US\$130/200; (P) (E) (A)) This 10,000-hectare ranch, located 3km west of Aus, is a hiker's paradise – the highlight of the ranch is a magical four-day trekking route, which traverses fabulous wild landscapes. Accommodation is in the main lodge or one of the two wonderful hikers' huts: the dormitory hut Geister Schlucht, in a Shangri-La-like valley, or the opulent Eagle's Nest complex, with several chalets built right into the boulders.

Namtib Biosphere Reserve (Map p376; ☎ 061-233597; namtib@iafrica.com.na; bungalows per person with full board US\$45; (P)) In the beautiful Tirasberge, this private reserve is run by ecologically conscious owners who've created a self-sustaining farm in a narrow valley, with distant views of the Namib plains and dune sea. To reach the reserve, take the C13 north of Aus for 55km, then turn west on the D707; after 48km turn east onto the 12km farm road to the lodge.

Getting There & Away

Aus is located 125km east of Lüderitz on the B4.

LÜDERITZ

063

Lüderitz is a surreal colonial relic sandwiched between the barren Namib Desert coast and the windswept South Atlantic. Barely touched by the 21st century, this remote town might recall a Bavarian *dorfchen* (small village), with its churches, bakeries, cafés and Jugendstil (Art Nouveau) architecture. The local community is fiercely proud of its town's unique heritage, and travellers often find that they're greeted in Lüderitz with warm smile and a cold pint.

KOKERBOOMS

Kokerbooms (*Aloe dichotoma*), or quiver trees, are widespread throughout southern Namibia and northwestern South Africa. They are in fact aloes and can grow to heights of 8m. The name is derived from the lightweight branches, which were formerly used as quivers by San hunters; they removed the branches' fibrous heart, leaving a strong, hollow tube.

The slow-growing plants occur mainly on rocky plains or slopes – they need rocks to anchor their shallow root systems, storing water in their succulent leaves and fibrous trunk and branches. Loss of water through transpiration is prevented by a waxy coating on the leaves and branches. In June and July, their yellow blooms appear, lending bright spots of colour to the desert.

GRAVEL ROADS

Many of Namibia's roads – even major routes – are surfaced with unsealed gravel, and while some are well maintained, others are rutted, potholed, corrugated and unevenly surfaced. For drivers, this can be at best tricky and at worst treacherous. In fact, the price of car hire relates directly to the number of cars rolled by foreigners who are inexperienced at driving on gravel roads. The following points may help.

- Keep your tyre pressure slightly lower than you would when driving on sealed roads.
- Try to avoid travelling at night when dust and distance may create confusing mirages.
- Keep your speed down to a maximum of 100km/h.
- Maximise your control by keeping both hands on the steering wheel.
- Follow ruts made by other vehicles.
- If the road is corrugated, gradually increase your speed until you find the correct speed – it'll be obvious when the rattling stops.
- Be especially careful on bends; slow right down before attempting the turn.
- If you have a tyre blowout, *do not* hit the brakes or you'll lose control and the car will roll. Instead, steer straight ahead as best you can and let the car slow itself down before you attempt to bring it to a complete stop.
- You don't meet other cars very often, but when you do, it's like dust clouds passing in the night. When a vehicle approaches from the opposite direction, reduce your speed and keep as far left as possible. On remote roads, it's customary to wave at the other driver as you pass.
- In rainy weather, gravel roads can turn to quagmires and desert washes may fill with water. If you're uncertain about the water depth in a wash, get out to check the depth (unless it's a raging torrent, of course!) and only cross when it's safe for the type of vehicle you're driving.
- Be on the lookout for animals. Kudus, in particular, often bound onto the road unexpectedly, resulting in an unpleasant meeting.
- Avoid swerving sharply or braking suddenly on a gravel road or you risk losing control of the vehicle. If the rear wheels begin to skid, steer gently into the direction of the skid until you regain control. If the front wheels skid, take a firm hand on the wheel and steer in the opposite direction of the skid.
- Dust permeates everything on gravel roads; wrap your food, clothing and camera equipment in dust-proof plastic or keep them in sealed containers. To minimise dust inside the vehicle, pressurise the interior by closing the windows and turning on the blower.
- In dusty conditions, switch on your headlights so you can be more easily seen.
- Overtaking (passing) can be extremely dangerous because your view may be obscured by flying dust kicked up by the car ahead. Try to gain the attention of the driver in front by flashing your high beams, which will indicate that you want to overtake (this isn't considered obnoxious in Namibia). If someone behind you flashes their lights, move as far to the left as possible.

Information

Several banks, including Commercial Bank of Namibia, First National Bank and Standard Bank, will change cash and travellers cheques.

Extreme Communications I-café (☎ 04256; Waterfront Complex; per hr US\$3.50; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat) Provides email and internet access.

Lüderitzbucht Tours & Safaris (☎ 02719; ludsaf@ldz.namib.com; Bismarck St; ☎ 8am–1pm & 2–5pm Mon–Fri, 8am–noon Sat, 8.30–10am Sun) Provides reliable tourist information, organises visitor permits for the Sperrgebiet and sells curios, books, stamps and postcards.

Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR) (☎ 02752; Schinz St; ☎ 7.30am–1pm & 2–4pm Mon–Fri) This helpful office can help with national park information.

Dangers & Annoyances

Stay well clear of the Sperrgebiet or the Diamond Area 1. The northern boundary is formed by the B4 and extends almost as far east as Aus. The Sperrgebiet boundary is patrolled by some fairly ruthless characters and trespassers will be prosecuted (or worse).

Sights

Just about every view in Lüderitz reveals its German Imperial and Art Nouveau architectural heritage. Prominent buildings include the **colonial train station** (cnr Bahnhof & Bismarck Sts), and the **Goerke Haus** (Diamantberg St; admission US\$1.30; ☎ 2–4pm Mon–Fri, 4–5pm Sat & Sun).

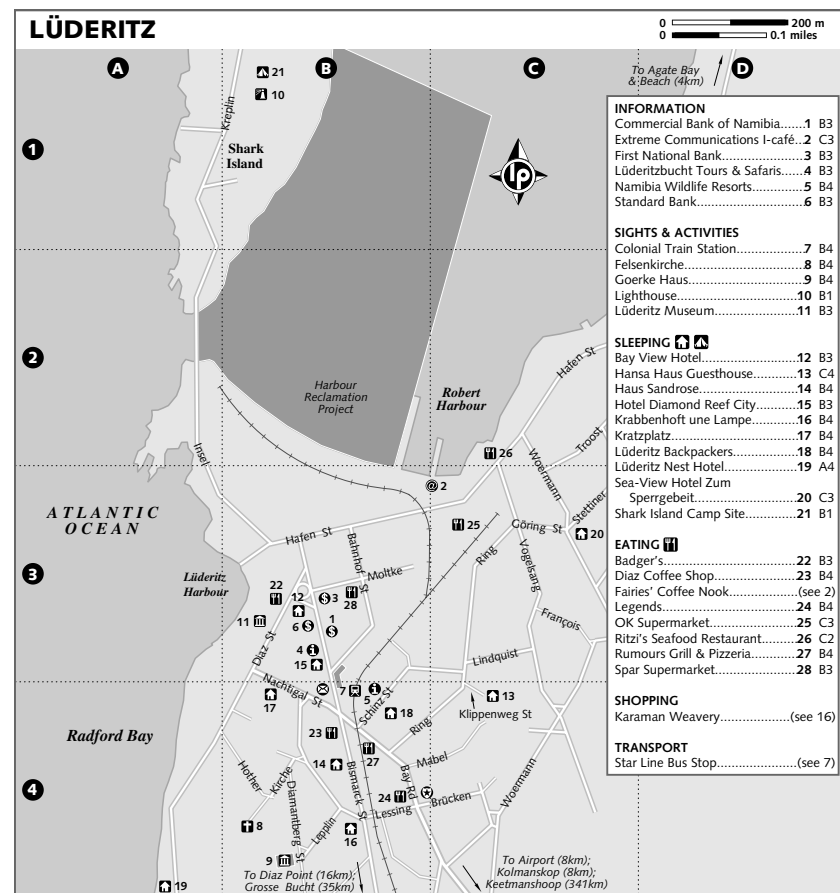
The prominent 1912 Evangelical Lutheran church, **Felsenkirche** (☎ 5.30–7pm Mon–Sat summer,

4.30–6pm Mon–Sat winter), dominates Lüderitz from high on Diamond Hill. It was designed by Albert Bause, who implemented the Victorian influences he'd seen in the Cape, and the stained-glass panel over the altar was donated by Kaiser Wilhelm II himself. Go to see the late-afternoon sun shining through the extraordinary stained-glass work.

The **Lüderitz Museum** (☎ 02582; Diaz St; admission US\$1.30; ☎ 3.30–5pm Mon–Fri) details Lüderitz's diamond-mining heritage and other aspects of its natural and cultural history.

Tours

Atlantic Adventure Tours (☎ 04030; sedina@iafrica.com.na) Weather permitting, it sails daily with the schooner *Sedina* past the Cape fur seal sanctuary at Diaz



Point and the penguin colony on Halifax Island. The two- to three-hour trips cost US\$25; book at the tourist office.

Coastway Tours Lüderitz (☎ 202002; lewiscwt@iway.na) Runs day tours (US\$80) to the 55m Bogenfels sea arch, Maerchental Valley and the ghost town of Pomona in the Sperrgebiet. This tour also requires at least four participants and must be booked at least one week in advance.

Ghost Town Tours (☎ 204033; kolmans@iafrica.com.na; Goerke Haus) This company operates day trips to Elizabeth Bay (US\$30), deep in the Sperrgebiet, and a full day taking in Kolmanskop, Elizabeth Bay and the Lüderitz Peninsula (US\$55). These trips run with a minimum of four people and permits must be issued at least a week in advance.

Sleeping BUDGET

Lüderitz Backpackers (☎ 202000; luederitzbackpackers@hotmail.com; 7 Schinz St; dm US\$10, d US\$25; Ⓟ) Housed in a historic colonial mansion, this friendly place is the only true backpacker spot in town. The vibe is congenial and low-key, and the friendly management is helpful in sorting out your onward travels.

Shark Island Camp Site (camping for 4 people US\$12, 5-bed bungalows US\$70; Ⓟ) This is a beautifully situated but aggravatingly windy locale. It's connected to the town by a causeway, but is no longer an island, thanks to the recent harbour reclamation project that attached it to the mainland. Book through NWR (NWR) in Lüderitz (see p380), or in Windhoek (p315) – if space is available, camp sites and bungalows can also be booked at the entrance.

MIDRANGE

Hansa Haus Guesthouse (☎ 203581; mcloud@africaonline.com.na; 5 Mabel St; s/d with shared bathroom US\$30/35; Ⓟ) This imposing hilltop home boasts dramatic sea views and quiet surroundings. Rooms feature high ceilings and picture windows, while amenities include a TV lounge and a communal kitchen.

Krabbenhof une Lampe (☎ 202674; taurus@ldz.namib.com; 25 Bismarck St; s/d with shared bathroom US\$30/40, flats from US\$55; Ⓟ) One of the more unusual accommodation options in town, the Krabbenhof is a converted carpet factory that now offers a number of basic rooms and self-catering flats upstairs from a weaver.

Kratzplatz (☎ 202458; kratzmr@iway.na; 5 Nachtigal St; s/d from US\$30/45; Ⓟ) Housed in a converted church complete with vaulted ceilings, this centrally located B&B offers a variety of homey rooms to choose from.

Haus Sandrose (☎ 202630; sandrose@ldz.namib.com; clooser@africaonline.com.na; 15 Bismarck St, PO Box 109; 2-/4-bed r US\$35/50; Ⓟ) This intimate B&B is an excellent choice if you're looking for individualised attention and service. The Sandrose features three uniquely decorated rooms that surround a sheltered garden.

Hotel Diamond Reef City (☎ 203850; fotofun@iafrica.com.na; Bismarck St; s/d US\$40/60; Ⓟ) With a popular restaurant and friendly reception, this rambling place is a good, comfortable choice right in the centre of town. All rooms have high ceilings and satellite TV. Guests can take advantage of the next-door bar and casino.

Bay View Hotel (☎ 202288; bayview@ldz.namib.com; Diaz St; s/d US\$45/75; Ⓟ) This historic complex owned by the Lüderitz family is one of the most established hotels in town. Airy rooms with satellite TV surround a courtyard and a swimming pool, and there's also an on-site bar and seafood restaurant.

TOP END

Sea-View Hotel Zum Sperrgebiet (☎ 203411; michael@ldz.namib.com; cnr Woermann & Göring Sts; s/d US\$85/135, f US\$225; Ⓟ Ⓞ) This modern hotel boasts a glassed-in indoor swimming pool, a sauna, sweeping terraces, harbour views and even an indoor banana tree – it's a natural favourite with German visitors.

Lüderitz Nest Hotel (☎ 204000; www.nesthotel.com; 820 Diaz St; s/d US\$120/175, ste US\$315; Ⓟ Ⓞ) Lüderitz's most upmarket hotel occupies a jutting peninsula in the southwest corner of town complete with its own private beach. Each room, which is stylishly appointed with modern furnishings, faces out towards the sea.

Eating

If you're self-catering, there are a number of supermarkets as well as small seafood merchants in town.

Diaz Coffee Shop (☎ 203147; cnr Bismarck St & Bay Rd; snacks & meals US\$1-4) This quaint and cosy coffee shop serves excellent toasties, light meals, coffee and cakes – its Sunday Continental breakfast is popular among locals.

Fairies' Coffee Nook (☎ 0812 456158; Waterfront Complex; snacks & meals US\$1-4) This waterfront café offers sea views and is the perfect spot to linger over a steaming cup of coffee and a sweet snack.

Badger's (☎ 202855; Diaz St; meals US\$3-6) Although it primarily serves as the town watering hole, Badger's also serves up cheap pub grub as well as takeaway.

Rumours Grill & Pizzeria (☎ 202655; Bismarck St; mains US\$5-9; ☎ lunch & dinner) This is a popular steak house-pizzeria, which also boasts a bustling sports bar and German-style beer garden.

Legends (☎ 203110; Bay Rd; mains US\$5-10) This understated restaurant has a relaxed atmosphere, and serves up a healthy mix of seafood,

grilled meats, pizzas and burgers as well as the odd vegetarian option or two.

Ritzi's Seafood Restaurant (☎ 202818; Hafen St, Waterfront; mains US\$6-12) This long-standing institution is the top spot in town for seafood. Not surprisingly, it's always fully booked, so reservations are essential. Imaginative dishes are concocted from fish, lobster, oysters, game

DIAMOND DEMENTIA

Diamonds are the best known allotrope (form) of carbon, and are characterised by their extreme hardness (they are the hardest naturally occurring mineral) and high dispersion of light (diamonds are prismatic when exposed to white light). As a result, they are valued for industrial purposes as abrasives since they can only be scratched by other diamonds, and for ornamental purposes since they retain lustre when polished. It's estimated that 130 million carats (or 26,000kg) of diamonds are mined annually, which yields a market value of over US\$9 billion.

Diamonds are formed when carbon-bearing materials are exposed to high pressures and temperatures for prolonged periods of time. With the exception of synthetically produced diamonds, favourable conditions only occur beneath the continental crust starting at depths of about 150km. Once carbon crystallises, a diamond will continue to grow in size so long as it is exposed to sufficient temperatures and pressures. However, size is limited by the fact that diamond-bearing rock is eventually expelled towards the surface through deep-origin volcanic eruptions. Eventually, they are forced to the surface by magma, and are expelled from a volcanic pipe.

Although diamonds were discovered along the Orange River in South Africa and among the guano workings on the offshore islands as early as 1866, it apparently didn't occur to anyone that the desert sands might also harbour a bit of crystal carbon. In 1908, however, railway worker Zacharias Lewala found a shiny stone along the railway line near Grasplatz, and took it to his employer August Stauch. Stauch took immediate interest and, to his elation, the state geologist confirmed that it was indeed a diamond. Stauch applied for a prospecting licence from the Deutsche Koloniale Gesellschaft (German Colonial Society), and set up his own mining company, the Deutsche Diamanten Gesellschaft (German Diamond Society), to begin exploiting the presumed windfall.

In the years to follow, hordes of prospectors descended upon Lüderitz with dreams of finding fabulous wealth buried in the sands. As a result, Lüderitz became a boomtown as service facilities sprang up to accommodate the growing population. By September 1908, however, diamond dementia was threatening to escalate out of control, which influenced the German government to intervene by establishing the Sperrgebiet. This 'forbidden area' extended from 26°S latitude southward to the Orange River mouth, and stretched inland for 100km. Independent prospecting was henceforth *verboten* (forbidden), and those who'd already staked their claims were forced to form mining companies.

In February 1909, a diamond board was created to broker all diamond sales and thereby control prices. However, after WWI ended, the world diamond market was so depressed that in 1920, Ernst Oppenheimer of the Anglo-American Corporation was able to purchase Stauch's company, along with eight other diamond-producing companies. This ambitious move led to the formation of Consolidated Diamond Mines (CDM), which was administered by De Beers South Africa and headquartered in Kolmanskop.

In 1928, rich diamond fields were discovered around the mouth of the Orange River, and in 1944, CDM relocated to the purpose-built company town of Oranjemund. Kolmanskop's last inhabitants left in 1956, and the dunes have been encroaching on the town ever since.

In 1994, CDM gave way to Namdeb Diamond Corporation Limited (Namdeb), which is owned in equal shares by the Government of Namibia and the De Beers Group. De Beers is a Johannesburg- and London-based diamond-mining and trading corporation that held a virtual monopoly over the diamond trade for much of its corporate history.

meats and beef, but there's usually a few vegetarian options on the menu.

For self-catering, see the Spar and OK supermarkets (Map p381).

Shopping

Karaman Weavery (☎ 202272; 25 Bismarck St) This shop specialises in locally woven high-quality rugs and garments in pastel desert colours, with Namibian flora and fauna the favoured designs. It accepts special orders and can post them worldwide.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air Namibia travels four times a week between Windhoek and Lüderitz, once weekly

to and from Swakopmund and twice weekly to and from Walvis Bay.

BUS

Star Line buses to Keetmanshoop (US\$9, five hours) go from the historic train station at 12.30pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Lüderitz and the scenery en route (see opposite) are worth the 300km trip from Keetmanshoop via the tarred B4.

AROUND LÜDERITZ

Kolmanskop Ghost Town

A popular trip from Lüderitz is the ghost town of Kolmanskop, 14km away, which was once

a substantial diamond-mining town. It was named after an early Afrikaner trekker, Jani Kolman, whose ox-wagon became bogged in the sand here. It once boasted a casino, skittle alley and theatre with fine acoustics, but the slump in diamond sales after WWI and the discovery of richer deposits at Oranjemund ended its heyday. By 1956 it was deserted. Several buildings have been restored, but many have already been invaded by the dunes.

Kolmanskop tours (adult/child US\$4/2; ☎ 9.30am & 10.45am Mon-Sat, 10am Sun) last 45 minutes; pick up a permit from the Lüderitzbucht Tours & Safaris tourist office (see p380) at least 30 minutes prior to each tour. Participants must provide their own transport from town. After the tour, you can eat a light lunch in the Ball Hall restaurant.

Lüderitz Peninsula

The Lüderitz Peninsula, much of which lies outside the Sperrgebiet prohibited area, makes an interesting half-day excursion from town. The picturesque and relatively calm bay, **Sturm-vogelbucht**, has a lovely beach and is viable for swimming, but the water temperature would only be amenable to a seal or a penguin. A Norwegian whaling station was sited there in 1914, but is now a rusty ruin.

At **Diaz Point**, 22km west of Lüderitz, is a lovely, classic lighthouse and a replica of a cross erected in July 1488 by Portuguese navigator Bartolomeu Dias on his return voyage from the Cape of Good Hope. The point is frequented by sea lions, and from the nearby car park you can observe the jackass penguin colony on **Halifax Island**. You can also observe cormorants, wading birds and even the occasional school of dolphins.

Grosse Bucht (Big Bay) at the southern end of the peninsula, is another wild and scenic beach. This normally cold, windy spot is favoured by flocks of flamingoes that feed in the tidal pools. It's also the site of a small but picturesque shipwreck on the beach. Just a few kilometres north lies the small seaside rock arch known as **Klein Bogenfels**.

FISH RIVER CANYON NATIONAL PARK

Nowhere else in Africa will you find anything quite like Fish River Canyon. Fish River, which joins the Orange River 70km south of the canyon, has been gouging out this gorge for aeons. The canyon measures 160km in length and up to 27km in width, and the

dramatic inner canyon reaches a depth of 550m. Although these figures by themselves are impressive, it's difficult to get a sense of perspective without actually witnessing the enormous scope of the canyon.

Information

The main access points for Fish River Canyon are at Hobas, near the northern end of the park, and Ai-Ais, near the southern end. Both are administered by NWR, and all accommodation must be booked in advance through the Windhoek office (p315) or the Lüderitz office (p380). Daily park permits, which cost US\$3 per person and US\$3 per vehicle, are valid for both Hobas and Ai-Ais. The **Hobas Information Centre** (Map p376; ☎ 7.30am-noon & 2-5pm) at the northern end of the park is also the check-in point for the five-day canyon hike. Packaged snacks and cool drinks are available here, but little else.

Sights

HOBAS

From Hobas, it's 10km on a gravel road to the **Hikers' Viewpoint** (the start of the hiking route), which has picnic tables, braai pits and toilets. Just around the corner is a good overview of the northern part of the canyon. The **Main Viewpoint**, a few kilometres south, has probably the best – and most photographed – overall canyon view. Both these vistas take in the sharp river bend known as Hell's Corner.

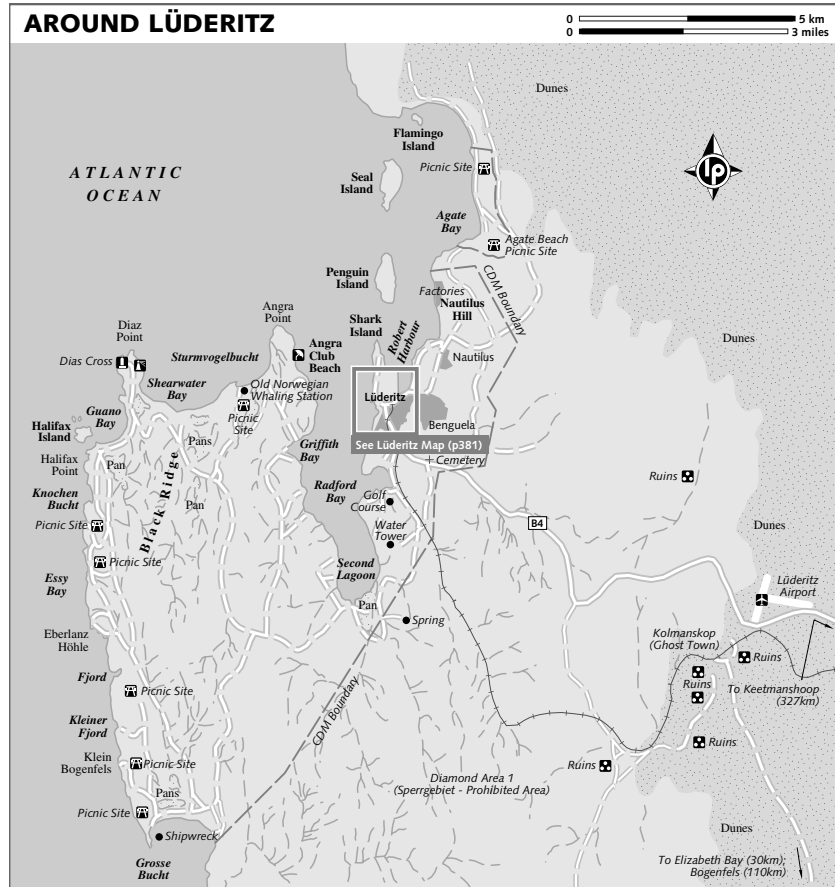
AI-AIS

The **hot springs** (admission per session US\$3; ☎ 9am-9pm) at Ai-Ais (Nama for 'Scalding Hot') are located beneath the towering peaks at the southern end of Fish River Canyon National Park. Although the 60°C springs have probably been known to the San for thousands of years, the legend goes that they were 'discovered' by a nomadic Nama shepherd rounding up stray sheep. They're rich in chloride, fluoride and sulphur, and are reputedly therapeutic for sufferers of rheumatism or nervous disorders. The hot water is piped to a series of baths and Jacuzzis as well as an outdoor swimming pool.

Activities

FISH RIVER HIKING TRAIL

The five-day **hike** (per person US\$11) from Hobas to Ai-Ais is Namibia's most popular long-distance walk – and with good reason. The



magical 85km route, which follows the sandy riverbed past a series of ephemeral pools (in May and June the river actually does flow), begins at Hikers' Viewpoint, and ends at the hot-spring resort of Ai-Ais.

Due to flash flooding and heat in the summer months, the route is open only from 1 May to 30 September. Groups of three to 40 people may begin the hike every day of the season, though you will have to book in advance as the trail is extremely popular. Reservations can be made at the NWR office in Windhoek (p315) or Lüderitz (p380).

Officials sometimes require a doctor's certificate of fitness, issued less than 40 days before your hike, though if you look young and fit they might not ask. Hikers must arrange their own transport to and from the start and finish as well as accommodation in Hobas and Ai-Ais.

Thanks to the typically warm, clear weather, you probably won't need a tent, but you must carry a sleeping bag and food. In Hobas, check on water availability in the canyon. In August and September, the final 15km of the walk can be completely dry and hikers will need several 2L water bottles to manage this hot, sandy stretch. Large plastic soft-drink bottles normally work just fine.

Sleeping

Accommodation must be prebooked through the NWR office in Windhoek (p315) or in Lüderitz (p380).

Hobas Camp Site (Map p376; camping for 4 people US\$15; (P) (E)) This pleasant and well-shaded camping ground near the park's northern end is situated about 10km from the main viewpoints. Facilities are clean, and there's also a kiosk and swimming pool, but no restaurant or petrol station.

Ai-Ais Hot Springs Resort (Map p376; camping for 4 people US\$15, 4-bed bungalows US\$30, 2-/4-bed flats US\$35/35; (P) (E)) Amenities include washing blocks, braai pits and use of the resort facilities. All flats have private baths and basic self-catering facilities. There is also an on-site restaurant and small grocery store.

Getting There & Away

There's no public transport to either Hobas or Ai-Ais, but hitching is fairly easy during the hiking season from mid-March to 31 October. Thanks to South African holiday traffic, the best-travelled route is to Ai-Ais via two turn-

ings, one 36km north of Noordoewer and the other 30km south of Grünau. Once in Ai-Ais, plenty of holiday-makers head for the viewpoints around Hobas, thus facilitating hitching between Ai-Ais, Hobas and the beginning of the Hikers' Viewpoint trailhead.

AROUND FISH RIVER CANYON

Canyon Adventures Guest Farm

The friendly **Canyon Adventures Guest Farm** (Map p376; ☎ 063-266018; www.resafrica.net/fish-river-lodge; bush camping per person US\$6, dm US\$8, r per person incl breakfast from US\$32; (P) (E)) is situated on a ranch cradled in the confluence of the Löwen and Fish River Canyons amid some of the most amazing geology imaginable – don't just take our word for it! Highlights include the 4WD trip (US\$10) into the canyon to swim in the river pools, a 'garnet crawl', and the bizarre petroglyphs in the rippled black dolerite.

From April to October, there's also the wonderful five-day, 85km Löwenfish hiking trail (US\$45 per person, including two nights' accommodation at the Stable). This hike takes in the Löwen Canyon and several days along Fish River Canyon, interrupted by several ascents to the plateau and descents down scenic cliffs. Camp sites (with no facilities) are situated at water sources along the way and the last night you can stay at the **Koelkrans Camp** (per person US\$14), with cooking facilities and hot showers. On the last day, hikers climb out of the canyon for the last time and follow a scenic route back to the lodge. Stages of the trip may be done as one- to four-day hikes. Note that prebooking is essential.

To reach the guest farm, head west from Keetmanshoop and turn south on the D545; after 33km, bear left at the junction. After a further 32km, you'll see the signpost for Canyon Adventures Guest Farm on the right-hand side of the road. At this point, it's 22km west to the lodge. It's passable with a 2WD but in several places you will have to take it very easy.

Gondwana Cañon Park

Founded in 1996, the 100,000-hectare Gondwana Cañon Park was created by amalgamating several former sheep farms, and removing the fences to restore the wilderness country immediately northeast of Fish River Canyon National Park. Water holes have been established, and wildlife is now returning to this wonderful, remote corner of Namibia.

In the process, the park absorbed the former Augurabies-Steenbok Nature Reserve, which was created earlier to protect Hartmann's mountain zebras, steenboks, gemsboks and klipspringers.

SLEEPING

Funding for the park is derived from a 5% bed levy at Cañon Lodge and Cañon Roadhouse. To make bookings, contact **Cañon Travel Centre** (☎ 061-230066; www.namibiaweb.com/canyon; PO Box 80205, Windhoek).

Cañon Roadhouse (Map p376; www.natron.net/canyon; camping per site US\$6.50 plus per person US\$2.50, s/d US\$50/84; (P) (E)) This wonderfully unique place attempts to re-create a roadhouse out on the wildest stretches of Route 66 – at least as it exists in the collective imagination. Buffets are served on an antique motorcycle, the stunning window shades are made from used air filters, and the bar stools are air filters from heavy-duty vehicles – and then there's the obligatory collection of number plates (where donations from your home country are gratefully accepted).

Cañon Lodge (Map p376; www.natron.net/canyonlodge; mountain camp per person US\$15, s/d incl breakfast US\$65/100; (P) (E)) This mountain retreat, which is one of Namibia's most stunning accommodation options, consists of 26 red stone bungalows that are perfectly integrated into the boulder-strewn backdrop. The restaurant, housed in a restored 1908 farmhouse, is decorated with historic farming implements and rambling gardens.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Gondwana Cañon Park can be accessed via private vehicle along the C37.

NOORDOEWER

☎ 063

Noordoewer sits astride the Orange River, which has its headwaters in the Drakensberg Mountains of Natal, South Africa, and forms much of the boundary between Namibia and South Africa. The river was actually named not for its muddy colour, but for Prince William V of Orange, who was the Dutch monarch in the late 1770s. Although the town primarily serves as a border post and a centre for viticulture (the cultivation of grapes), it serves as a good base for organising a canoeing or rafting adventure on the Orange River.

Activities

RIVER TRIPS

Canoe and rafting trips are normally done in stages and last from three to six days. The popular trips from Noordoewer to Aussenkehr aren't treacherous by any stretch – the white water never exceeds class II – but they do provide access to some wonderfully wild canyon country. Other possible stages include Aussenkehr to the Fish River mouth, the Fish River mouth to Nama Canyon (this one has a few more serious rapids) and Nama Canyon to Selingsdrif. For more information, contact **Amanzi Trails** (☎ South Africa 21-559 1573; www.amanzitrails.co.za).

Sleeping

Abiqua Camp (Map p376; ☎ 297255; camping per person US\$3.50; (P)) This friendly and well-situated camp, 13km on the Orange River Rd, sits on the riverbank opposite some interesting sedimentary formations. Abiqua camp is also the launch site for Amanzi Trails and Rivers Incorporated river-trip operators.

Camel Lodge (Map p376; ☎ 797171; s/d incl breakfast US\$30/35; (P) (E) (E)) This affordable motel-style lodge offers recently renovated rooms complete satellite TV and air-con, as well as a refreshing swimming pool and braai pits.

NAMIBIA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Namibia has an exhaustive (and growing) array of hotels, rest camps, camping grounds, caravan parks, guest farms, backpackers' hostels, B&Bs, guesthouses and safari lodges. It would take an enormous volume to mention everything that's available, so those included in this book are recommended and/or provide accommodation in areas with few options. Note, however, that the lack of a mention here doesn't mean that an establishment *isn't* recommended.

For further information, see the following annual publications, which are distributed at tourist offices: *Where to Stay – Namibia; Welcome to Namibia – Tourist Accommodation & Info Guide; Namibia Holiday & Travel* and the listings and accompanying map published by the Hospitality Association of Namibia (HAN).

Hotels and most other establishments are graded using a star system; awards are based

PRACTICALITIES

- Botswana generates electricity at 220V AC, 50Hz, though they confusingly use two types of plugs: the South African type with three round prongs, and the UK type with three square prongs.
- Most of Namibia's English-language newspapers are based in Windhoek: the *Namibian*, published weekdays; the *Windhoek Observer*, published on Saturday; and the government-owned *New Era*.
- Print and slide film, batteries and accessories as well as video cartridges are available in Windhoek and Swakopmund, though they're not cheap, and you might not find your desired brand.
- The Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) operates nine radio stations, broadcasting on different wavebands in 12 languages.
- Namibia uses the metric system for measurements.

on guidelines from the Ministry of Environment & Tourism. The accommodation rates listed in this chapter are rack rates for overseas bookings, and include 15% value-added tax (VAT). In most cases, you'll get the best rates when booking from within Namibia.

The accommodation breakdown used in this chapter is budget less than US\$25, mid-range US\$25 to US\$50, and top end above US\$50.

Camping

Most towns have caravan parks with bungalows or rondavels (round African-style huts) where you can stay for very reasonable rates. For information on camping in national parks, see right. Anyone is welcome to camp on communal lands, but if you can't get out of sight, it's polite to ask locals to direct you to an unobtrusive place to set up. On private land, you must secure permission from the landowner.

Guest Farms

A growing number of predominantly German-Namibian private farms welcome guests, and provide insight into the white rural lifestyle. Many of these farms have also established

hiking routes and set aside areas as wildlife and hunting reserves. In all cases, advance bookings are essential.

Hostels & B&Bs

Backpacker hostels now operate in Windhoek, Swakopmund, Walvis Bay, Outjo, Keetmanshoop and Lüderitz, and more are planned. They provide dorm accommodation and cooking facilities, and range from US\$5.50 to US\$8 per person. Bed-and-breakfast establishments are also emerging around the country; for listings, contact the **Budget & Home Association of Namibia** (☎ 061-222899; www.bed-breakfast-namibia.com; PO Box 90270, Klein Windhoek).

Hotels

The Namibian hotel-classification system rates everything from small guesthouses to four-star hotels. Most are locally owned and managed, and most have at least a breakfast room, if not a dining room and a bar. Any hotel with a name that includes the word *garni* lacks a full dining room, but does offer a simple breakfast. The most luxurious hotels include the Kalahari Sands and Windhoek Country Club, both in Windhoek, and the Swakopmund Hotel & Entertainment Centre.

National Parks Accommodation

Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR) oversees accommodation in the national parks and offers a range of camp sites, bungalows, chalets and 'bus quarters' (for bus tours). Most sites include access to a swimming pool, shop, kiosk, restaurant, braai (barbecue) facilities and well-maintained ablutions (amenities) blocks. During school holidays, visitors may be limited to three nights at each of the three Etosha National Park camps and 10 nights at other camps. Pets aren't permitted in any camp, but kennels are available at the gates of Daan Viljoen, Von Bach Dam, Gross-Barmen, Ai-Ais and Hardap Dam. For booking information, see p313.

Safari Lodges

Most of Namibia's lodges offer luxury accommodation and superb international cuisine. Rates are very reasonable when compared with similar places in other countries in the region and there's little multitrailer pricing. Even around the popular Etosha National Park, you'll pay a third of what you'd pay for similar lodges in the Okavango Delta. Other areas are even more reasonably priced.

ACTIVITIES

Hiking is a highlight in Namibia, and a growing number of private ranches have established wonderful hiking routes for their guests to enjoy; the finest ones include Klein-Aus Vista, near Aus, and Canyon Adventures Guest Farm, south of Keetmanshoop. You'll also find superb routes in the national parks: Daan Viljoen, Namib-Naukluft, Fish River Canyon, Waterberg Plateau and the Ugab River area of the Skeleton Coast. For more about the latter, see p313.

A burgeoning craze is sandboarding, which is commercially available in Swakopmund. In the same area, operators offer horse and camel riding, quad-biking, deep-sea fishing, sea kayaking, bird-watching and skydiving. A growing number of 4WD routes are opening up for a largely South African market, including several popular routes along remote sections of the Namib Desert. Whitewater rafting is available on the Kunene River, but it's extremely expensive; more down to earth is the whitewater canoeing along the Orange River, on the South African border.

BOOKS

Guide to Namibian Game Parks, by Willie and Sandra Olivier, has the lowdown on national parks, wildlife reserves and other conservation areas, with useful maps and advice on wildlife viewing. It's available locally.

Horns of Darkness – Rhinos on the Edge, by conservationists Carol Cunningham and Joel Berger, describes a journey through the Namibian wilds to find and protect the country's remaining desert rhinos. *The Sheltering Desert*, by Henno Martin, is a Namibian classic recounting the adventures of German geologists Henno Martin and Hermann Korn, who spent two years in the Namib Desert avoiding Allied forces during WWII.

The Colonising Camera, by Wolfram Hartmann et al (eds), is part of the new historical writings. This book is an illustrated history of the country. *To Free Namibia: The Life of the First President of Namibia*, by Sam Nujoma, is an autobiography of the president. *Herero Heroes*, written by JB Gewald, blends oral and written accounts to provide a fascinating history of Namibia's Herero people. *Namibia – The Struggle for Liberation*, by Alfred T Moleah, is an account of Swapo's independence struggle and describes the situation before success was certain.

The Burning Shore, by Wilbur Smith, is highly entertaining and is probably the best novel set in Namibia. *Kaokoveld – the Last Wilderness*, by Anthony Hall-Martin, J du P Bothma and Clive Walker, is a breathtaking compilation of beguiling photos and will have you heading for northwestern Namibia.

BUSINESS HOURS

Normal business hours are from 8am to 1pm and 2.30pm to 5pm weekdays. In the winter, when it gets dark early, some shops open at 7.30am and close at around 4pm. Lunchtime closing is almost universal. On Saturday, most city and town shops open from 8am to 1pm. Banks, government departments and tourist offices also keep these hours, but some petrol stations, especially along highways, are open 24 hours.

Restaurant opening hours vary according to the type of establishment – as a rule cafés and cheap eats will be open all day long, closing in the early evening. More expensive restaurants will be open from around 10.30am to 11pm Monday to Saturday, usually with a break between lunch and dinner. Run-of-the-mill bars open from around 5pm until late, while nightclubs and late-night drinking spots open their doors at around 9pm (or 10pm) and keep going until 5am.

In this chapter we have only listed opening hours where they differ significantly from these broad guidelines. See above for information on business hours in the Southern Africa region.

CHILDREN

Although Namibia is a safe place for children to travel in, be advised that child-related goods and services are extremely limited, particularly in the far fringes of the country.

CUSTOMS

Any item (except vehicles) from elsewhere in the Southern African Customs Union – Botswana, South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland – may be imported duty free. From elsewhere, visitors can import duty free 400 cigarettes or 250g of tobacco, 2L of wine, 1L of spirits and 250mL of eau de Cologne.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Theft isn't particularly rife in Namibia, but in Windhoek and Swakopmund, avoid walking alone at night and conceal your valuables.

Similarly, don't leave anything in sight inside a vehicle or at camp sites, and keep valuables inside your sleeping bag at night.

Kavango and Caprivi both have malarial mosquito problems, and bilharzia is present all over northern Namibia; in the eastern Caprivi, the tsetse fly is especially active at dusk, and all of northern Namibia's rivers harbour very large crocodiles.

East of Lüderitz, keep well clear of the Sperrgebiet, the prohibited diamond area, as well-armed patrols can be overly zealous. The area begins immediately south of the Lüderitz-Keetmanshoop road and continues to just west of Aus, where the off-limits boundary turns south towards the Orange River.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Namibian Embassies & Consulates

Namibia has embassies and high commissions in South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe (see the relevant country chapters). If you need a visa and your home country lacks a Namibian diplomatic mission, fax or post your passport details and desired length of stay to the **Ministry of Home Affairs** (Map p318; ☎ 061-292 2111; fax 292 2185; mlusepani@mha.gov.na; Private Bag 13200, Windhoek) and hope for the best.

Namibian diplomatic representatives elsewhere include the following:

Angola (☎ 02-395483; fax 333923; 95 Rua Dos Coqueiros, PO Box 953, Luanda)

France (☎ 01-44 17 32 65; fax 44 17 32 73; 80 Ave Foch, Sq de l'Ave Foch, F-75116 Paris)

Germany (☎ 0228-346021; fax 346025; Mainzerstr 47, D-53179 Bonn)

UK (☎ 020-7636 6244; fax 7637 5694; namibia-high comm@btconnect.com; 6 Chandos St, London W1G 9LU)

USA (☎ 202-986 0540; fax 986 0443; embnamibia@aol.com; www.grnnet.gov.na; 1605 New Hampshire Ave NW, Washington DC 20009)

Embassies & Consulates in Namibia

All of the following representations are in Windhoek (area code ☎ 061); opening hours are weekdays only:

Angola (Map p318; ☎ 227535; fax 221498; Angola House, 3 Ausspänn St, Ausspännplatz, Private Bag 12020; ☎ 9am-1pm)

Botswana (Map p316; ☎ 221941; fax 236034; 101 Nelson Mandela Dr, PO Box 20359; ☎ 8am-12.30pm)

EU (☎ 220099; 4th fl, Sanlam Centre, 154 Independence Ave, PO Box 231; ☎ 9am-12.30pm)

France (Map p318; ☎ 229022; fax 231436; 1 Goethe St, PO Box 20484; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm)

Germany (Map p318; ☎ 223100; fax 222981; 6th fl, Sanlam Centre, 154 Independence Ave, PO Box 231; ☎ 9am-12.30pm)

Kenya (Map p318; ☎ 226836; fax 221409; Kenya House, Robert Mugabe Ave, PO Box 2889; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-5pm)

Malawi (Map p318; ☎ 221391; fax 227056; 56 Bismarck St, Windhoek West, PO Box 23547; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm)

South Africa (Map p316; ☎ 205 7111; fax 224140; RSA House, cnr Jan Jonker St & Nelson Mandela Dr, Klein Windhoek, PO Box 23100; ☎ 8.15am-12.15pm)

UK (Map p318; ☎ 223022; fax 228895; bhcmweb.com.na; 116A Robert Mugabe Ave, PO Box 22202; ☎ 9am-noon)

USA (Map p318; ☎ 221601; fax 229792; www.usembassy.namibnet.com; 14 Lossen St, Ausspännplatz, Private Bag 12029; ☎ 8am-noon Mon, Wed & Fri)

Zambia (Map p318; ☎ 237610; fax 228162; cnr Sam Nujoma Dr & Mandume Ndemufayo Ave, PO Box 22882; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-4pm)

Zimbabwe (Map p318; ☎ 228134; fax 226859; Gamsberg Bldg, cnr Independence Ave & Grimm St, PO Box 23056; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-3pm)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

A major local event is **Maherero Day**, on the weekend nearest 26 August, when the Red Flag Herero people gather in traditional dress at Okahandja for a memorial service for the chiefs killed in the German-Nama wars. A similar event, also at Okahandja, is staged by the Mbanderu or Green Flag Herero on the weekend nearest 11 June. On the weekend nearest 10 October, the White Flag Herero gather in Omaruru to honour their chief Zeraua.

Among the ethnic European community, events include the **Windhoek Karnival** (WIKa) in late April/early May; the **Küska** (Küste Karnival) at Swakopmund in late August/early September; the **Windhoek Agricultural Show** in late September; and the **Windhoek Oktoberfest** in late October.

HOLIDAYS

Resort areas are busiest over both Namibian and South African school holidays, which normally occur from mid-December to mid-January, around Easter, from late July to early August, and for two weeks in mid-October.

New Year's Day 1 January

Independence Day 21 March

Good Friday March or April

Easter Sunday March or April

Easter Monday March or April

Ascension Day April or May, 40 days after Easter

Workers' Day 1 May

Cassinga Day 4 May

Africa Day 25 May

Heroes' Day 26 August

Human Rights Day 10 December

Christmas 25 December

Family/Boxing Day 26 December

INTERNET ACCESS

Both email and internet access are available at backpackers' hostels, internet cafés and hotels in larger towns, and also at several tourist offices and remote lodges.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Cardboard Box Travel Shop (www.namibian.org)

Namibia's best budget and adventure travel agency is the place for a range of travel options, excellent background information and efficient bookings.

Gorp Travel (www.gorp.com) This is another useful trip-planning site, with links to adventure outfits featuring Namibia.

Namibia Holiday & Travel (www.holidaytravel.com.na) This site provides information from the glossy publication of the same name.

Namibia Tourism (www.tourism.com.na) The national tourist office site provides a wide range of local travel information.

Namibia Wildlife Resorts (www.namibiawildliferesorts.com) Includes guidelines on booking national parks, permits and accommodation.

Namibian (www.namibian.com.na) For up-to-date news from Namibia, try the *Namibian* newspaper site.

Natron.Net (www.natron.net/etour.htm) This is a good tourism site, with useful links.

For more information, see p25.

LANGUAGE

At independence in 1990, the official language of Namibia was designated as English, but the first language of most Namibians is either a Bantu language, which would include Owambo, Kavango, Herero and Caprivan languages; or a Khoisan language, including Khoikhoi (Nama/Damara) and San dialects. In addition, Afrikaans is used as a lingua franca, and is the first language of more than 100,000 Namibians of diverse ethnic backgrounds. German is also widely spoken but is the first language of only about 2% of the population. In the far north, Portuguese is the first language of an increasing number

of Angolan immigrants. (See p772 for some useful words and phrases.)

MAPS

The *Shell Roadmap – Namibia* is probably the best reference for remote routes; it also has an excellent Windhoek map. Shell also publishes the *Kaokoland-Kunene Region Tourist Map*, which depicts all routes and tracks through this remote area. It's available at bookshops and tourist offices for US\$3.

The Macmillan *Namibia Travellers' Map*, at a scale of 1:2.4 million, has clear print and colour-graded altitude representation, but minor routes aren't depicted.

Beautiful but generally outdated government survey topographic sheets and aerial photos are available from the **Office of the Surveyor General** (Map p318; ☎ 061-245055; fax 249802; Ministry of Justice, Robert Mugabe Ave, Private Bag 13267, Windhoek). The 1:250,000 series maps cost US\$4 each and the 1:50,000 maps are US\$3.

MONEY

The Namibian dollar (N\$) equals 100 cents, and in Namibia it's pegged to the South African rand (in South Africa, it fetches only about R0.70), which is also legal tender at a rate of 1:1. This can be confusing, given that there are three sets of coins and notes in use, all with different sizes: old South African, new South African and Namibian. Namibian dollar notes come in denominations of N\$10, N\$20, N\$50, N\$100 and N\$200, and coins in values of 5¢, 10¢, 20¢ and 50¢, and N\$1 and N\$5.

ATMS

ATMs are common in major cities and towns, and accept most major Western cards.

Credit Cards

Most major credit cards (especially Visa and MasterCard) are accepted at tourist hotels and restaurants in the larger cities and towns.

Moneychangers

To change cash, both Barclays and Standard Chartered banks charge 3% commission, while the former charges 3% to change travellers cheques.

Tipping

Tipping is expected only in upmarket tourist establishments, but many places add a

service charge as a matter of course. Tipping is officially prohibited in national parks and reserves, and bargaining is only acceptable when purchasing handicrafts and arts directly from the artist or artisan.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques are falling into disuse in Namibia, though they can still be changed in large cities.

POST

Domestic post generally moves slowly; for example, it can take several weeks for a letter to travel from Windhoek to Lüderitz or Katima Mulilo. Overseas airmail post is normally more efficient, and is limited only by the time it takes the letter to get from where you post it to Windhoek. Poste restante works best in Windhoek (Poste Restante, GPO, Windhoek, Namibia). Photo identification is required to collect mail.

TELEPHONE & FAX

Namibian area codes all have three digits and begin with 06. When phoning Namibia from abroad, dial the international access code (09 from South Africa, 011 from the US and 00 from most other places), then the country code (264), followed by the area code (without the leading zero) and the desired number. To phone out of Namibia, dial 00 followed by the country code, area code and number.

Telecom Namibia Flexicards (you buy only as much time as you want) are sold at post offices and some retail shops, and most internet cafés also have fax services. Some remote bush locations subscribe to a message service operated by **Walvis Bay Radio** (064-203581), which relays messages. Although mobile coverage is usually fine in major towns and cities, reception disappears as soon as you reach the open road.

TOURIST INFORMATION Local Tourist Offices

Windhoek has both city and national tourist offices, and Karibib, Usakos, Omaruru, Okahandja, Gobabis, Keetmanshoop, Lüderitz, Swakopmund, Grootfontein and Tsumeb all have private or municipal tourist information offices. Keep an eye out for the free publication *Welcome to Namibia – Tourist Accommodation & Info Guide*, which

is distributed by the **Namibia Tourism** (Map p318; 061-284 2360; www.tourism.com.na; Continental Bldg, ground fl, 272 Independence Ave, Private Bag 13346, Windhoek). Also very useful is the glossy **Namibia Holiday & Travel** (061-225665; www.holidaytravel.com.na; PO Box 21593, Windhoek), which provides background information and listings. Those with a long-term interest in the country may want to subscribe to **Travel News Namibia** (061-225665; www.travelnews.com.na; PO Box 21593, Windhoek).

Namibia Community Based Tourism Association (Map p316; Nacobta; 061-250558; www.nacobta.com.na; 3 Weber St, PO Box 86099, Windhoek) provides information on its network of community camping grounds and craft outlets around the country.

Tourist Offices Abroad

Kartagener Associates Inc (0516-858 1270; kainyc@att.net; 631 Commack Rd, Suite 1A, Commack, NY 11725, USA)

Namibia Tourism South Africa Cape Town (021-419 3190; namibia@saol.com; Main Tower, Standard Bank Centre, Ground fl, Adderley St, PO Box 739, Cape Town 8000, South Africa); Sandton (011-784 80240; namtour@netdail.co.za; 11 Alice Lane, 3rd fl, East Wing, Standard Bank Bldg, PO Box 78946, Sandton 2146 South Africa)

Namibia Tourism UK (020-7636 2924; www.namibiatourism.co.uk; 6 Chandos St, London W1G 9LU)

Namibia Verkehrsbüro (069-1337 3620; www.namibia-tourism.com; Schillerstrasse 42-44, D-60313 Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany)

VISAS

All visitors require a passport that is valid for at least six months after their intended departure date from Namibia, as well as a means of leaving the region (a vehicle or an onward plane or bus ticket). No visas are required for visitors from Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, the UK, Ireland, Canada or the USA. Tourists receive entry for an initial 90 days, but extensions are available from the immigration offices.

Windhoek is useful for picking up visas for Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania; for Angolan visas, your best option is the Angolan Consulate in Oshakati (see p337).

Visas for Onward Travel

You can pick up visas for several countries in Windhoek; for details about how to go about this, see p390.

Angola Visas are readily available only to Namibian citizens and residents; others must apply in their home country (usually limited to fly-in visas for arrival in Luanda) or attempt to secure an overland visa in Oshakati.

Kenya UK citizens need a visa, which costs US\$50 and takes two days to process. A multiple-entry visa costs US\$100 and can take up to six weeks to issue. Citizens of the USA and Australia can enter Kenya for 30 days without a visa; longer stays require a visa, which is issued in two days and costs US\$53.

Zambia Visas are required by US, Australian and UK citizens. In Windhoek, they take one day to process and cost US\$60/100/200 for a single-entry/double-entry/multiple-entry visa. Note that they're available at the border for considerably less (normally US\$25 for US citizens and \$65 for UK citizens). However, they're free if you're 'introduced' to Zambia by a Zambian company (such as a hotel, backpackers' hostel or tour company).

Zimbabwe Australian, New Zealand and US citizens need a visa, which can be processed at the border (US\$30/45 for single/double entry). However, you can also secure a visa in advance for the same rates; multiple-entry visas cost US\$55 and aren't available at the border.

WORK

The chances of a foreigner scoring a long-term Namibian work or residence permit are remote, but some are successful. Namibia's current policy is to accept only wealthy overseas investors starting up a business in the country or those who can provide skills and expertise that's not locally available. If you are offered a job, you (or better, your prospective employer) must secure a temporary residence permit from the **Ministry of Home Affairs** (Map p318; 061-292 2111; mlusepani@mha.gov.na; Private Bag 13200, Windhoek). While it may be relatively easy to get a three-month work permit, to extend it or secure a one-year permit is usually quite difficult. Getting a permanent residence permit may well subject you to more insanity-inspiring bureaucracy than you're prepared to face. Note that even marrying a Namibian citizen won't guarantee a permanent residence permit.

TRANSPORT IN NAMIBIA

GETTING THERE & AWAY

This section covers access into Namibia from neighbouring countries. You'll find info about reaching Southern Africa from elsewhere in Africa and other continents on p752.

Entering Namibia

All visitors entering Namibia must hold a passport that is valid for at least six months. Also, allow a few empty pages for stamp-happy immigration officials, especially if you're crossing over to Zimbabwe and/or Zambia to see Victoria Falls.

Members of the EU, USA, South Africa, Scandinavia, Balkan countries and all members of the Commonwealth (with the exception of Ghana, India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria and Mauritius) will be granted a one-month entry permit on arrival (passport photos required). Other nationalities will need to obtain a visa before they arrive in the country.

Air

Most international flights into Namibia land at Windhoek's **Chief Hosea Kutako International Airport** (WDH; 061-299 6602; www.airports.com.na), 42km east of the capital city. Shorter-haul international flights may also use Windhoek's in-town **Eros Airport** (ERS; 051 299 6500), although this airport mainly serves internal flights and light-aircraft.

The main carrier is Air Namibia, which flies routes to and within Southern Africa as well as some international flights to London and Frankfurt. Reservations are best handled either by telephone or via the internet, rather than through agencies.

AIRLINES FLYING TO & FROM NAMIBIA

Air Namibia (code SW; 061-299 6363; www.airnamibia.com.na; hub Windhoek)

British Airways (code BA; 199 712 266; www.ba.com; hub Heathrow)

LTU (code LT; 49-211 9418 333; www.ltu.com; hub Frankfurt)

South African Airways (code SA; 020-22 96 63; www.flysaa.com; hub Johannesburg)

TAAG Angola (code DT; 244-222 333 139; http://pages.zdnet.com/taagangola; hub Luanda)

Border Crossings

Thanks to the Southern African Customs Union, you can drive through Namibia, Botswana, South Africa and Swaziland with a minimum of ado. To travel further to the north requires a carnet de passage, which can amount to heavy expenditure and serious consideration.

If you're driving a hire car into Namibia you will need to present a letter of permission from the rental company saying the

car is allowed to cross the border. For more information on taking a vehicle into Namibia see p756.

ANGOLA

To enter Namibia overland, you'll need an Angolan visa permitting overland entry. See p392 for more information on visas. The main border crossings into Namibia are at Ruacana, Oshikango and Rundu.

BOTSWANA

On Monday and Friday you can catch a very useful shuttle-bus service from Windhoek to Maun, via Ghanzi, with Audi Camp (see p109). The fare is US\$55 per person one way (10 hours). Shuttles leave Windhoek on Monday and return from Maun on Wednesday. Prebooking is essential. Contact Audi Camp to arrange a pick-up or drop-off in Ghanzi for a negotiable fare. This may also be done as a return trip, including an inexpensive Audi Camp safari in Botswana's Okavango Delta.

Other than this, the public transport options between the two countries are few and far between. The Trans-Kalahari Hwy from Windhoek to Botswana, via Gobabis, crosses the border at Buitepos/Mamuno. A supposedly weekly Trans-Namib Star Line bus leaves Gobabis at 9am Friday for Ghanzi, in Botswana (where you'll find at least one or two daily buses to Maun), but this service is highly unreliable.

Unfortunately, passengers on the Intercape Mainliner between Windhoek and Victoria Falls may not disembark in Botswana.

SOUTH AFRICA

The **Intercape Mainliner** (☎ 0861 287287; www.intercape.co.za) service from Windhoek to Cape Town (US\$70, 19½ hours) runs four times weekly. Travelling between Jo'burg and Windhoek (US\$50, 10½ hours, four times weekly) involves a connection in Upington. Students and seniors receive a 15% discount.

Bus tickets can be easily booked either by phone or via the internet.

ZAMBIA

The only crossing between Namibia and Zambia is via the Zambezi pontoon ferry at Wenela/Sesheke. The only realistic way to cross the border at this point is if you have your own car as there is no reliable public transport on the Zambian side of the border.

The cost of the ferry is US\$12 per vehicle; pedestrians ride free. It's about 4km from Katima Mulilo (Namibia), and 5km from Sesheke (Zambia). If you don't want to wait for the ferry, you can opt for the small private boats that carry passengers across the river for a negotiable fee – usually between US\$0.50 and US\$1.50. The Zambian border crossing is 500m from the ferry crossing and the Namibian border crossing is 1km away.

ZIMBABWE

There's no direct border crossing between Namibia and Zimbabwe: to get there you must take the Chobe National Park transit route from Ngoma Bridge through northern Botswana to Kasane–Kazungula, and from there to Victoria Falls.

At present, the only public transport between Namibia and Zimbabwe is the weekly **Intercape Mainliner** (www.intercape.co.za), which travels between Windhoek and Victoria Falls (US\$73/144 one way/return, 21 hours, three times weekly) via Grootfontein, Rundu and Katima Mulilo. It departs Windhoek at 5pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and arrives in Victoria Falls at 2pm the following day. In the other direction, it leaves at 11am Sunday, Wednesday and Friday and arrives in Windhoek at 5.30am the following day. Although this bus passes through Botswana en route, it's not possible to disembark there.

Bus

There is only really one main inter-regional bus service connecting cities in Namibia with Botswana and South Africa. Intercape Mainliner (see p591) runs services between Windhoek and Gaborone (Botswana) and Johannesburg and Cape Town (South Africa). It also travels west to Swakopmund and Walvis Bay.

Car & Motorcycle

Crossing land borders with your own vehicle or a hire car is generally straightforward as long as you have the necessary paperwork – the vehicle registration documents, proof of insurance and a letter from the hire company stating that you have permission to take the car over the border. You won't need a carnet de passage to drive around Namibia and other countries in the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), ie Lesotho, Botswana, South

Africa and Swaziland, although if you're planning on travelling further north you will need to obtain one.

A vehicle registered outside Namibia can be driven around the country so long as you have proof of insurance and a letter from the hire-car agency giving you permission to cross the border with the car. Everyone entering Namibia with a foreign-registered car must pay a Cross Border Charge (CBC). Passenger vehicles carrying fewer than 25 passengers are charged N\$70 (US\$10) per entry. Keep the receipt, because you may be asked to produce it at police roadblocks.

GETTING AROUND

Air

Air Namibia (www.airnamibia.com.na) has an extensive network of local flights operating out of Eros Airport in Windhoek. There are regular flights to Tsumeb; Rundu and Katima Mulilo; Lüderitz and Alexander Bay (South Africa); and Swakopmund and Oshakati/Ondangwa. Passengers are allowed a baggage limit of 20kg; additional weight is US\$2 per kilogram. For details of Air Namibia's local offices log on to the website.

Bicycle

Namibia is a desert country and totally unsuitable for a biking holiday. Distances are great and horizons are vast; the climate and landscapes are hot and very dry; and, even along major routes, water is scarce and villages are widely spaced. What's more, the sun is intense and prolonged exposure to the burning ultraviolet rays is hazardous. Also bear in mind that bicycles are not permitted in any national parks.

Bus

Namibia's bus services aren't extensive. Luxury services are limited to the **Intercape Mainliner** (☎ 061-227847; www.intercape.co.za), which has scheduled services from Windhoek to Swakopmund, Walvis Bay, Grootfontein, Rundu and Katima Mulilo. You're allowed only two items of baggage, which must not exceed a total of 30kg. Fares include meals. Reservations can be made in advance either over the phone or via the internet.

The rail service, **Trans-Namib** (☎ 061-29 22 02; www.transnamib.com.na/Starline.htm), has a system of Star Line buses that service Lüderitz, Ghanzi (Botswana), Outjo, Khorixas, Henties Bay,

Grootfontein, Oshakati, Rundu and a route across the Central Namib between Mariental and Walvis Bay. There's also a connection from Lüderitz to the border post at Noordoewer (US\$9, five hours). These buses operate on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Car & Motorcycle

The easiest way to get around Namibia is by road, and an excellent system of tarred roads runs the length of the country from the South African border at Noordoewer to Ngoma Bridge on the Botswana border and Ruacana in the northwest. Similarly, tarred spur roads connect the main north–south routes to Buitepos, Lüderitz, Swakopmund and Walvis Bay. Elsewhere, towns and most sites of interest are accessible on good gravel roads. Most C-numbered highways are well maintained and passable to all vehicles, and D-numbered roads, although a bit rougher, are mostly (but not always) passable to 2WD vehicles. In the Kaokoveld, however, most D-numbered roads can only be negotiated with a 4WD.

See opposite for information on the documentation required for self-drivers.

DRIVING LICENCE

Foreigners can drive in Namibia on their home driving licence for up to 90 days, and most (if not all) car-hire companies will accept foreign driving licences for car hire. If your home licence isn't written in English then you'd be better off getting yourself an International Driving Permit (IDP) before you arrive in Namibia.

FUEL & SPARE PARTS

The cost of fuel (petrol) is relatively expensive in Namibia, around US\$0.75 per litre, but prices vary according to the remoteness of the petrol station. Although the odd petrol station is occasionally open 24 hours, most are open from 7am to 7pm.

As a general rule you should never pass a service station without filling up and it is advisable to carry an additional 100L of fuel (either in long-range tanks or jerry cans) if you're planning on driving in more remote areas.

Spare parts are readily available in most major towns, but not elsewhere. If you are planning on some 4WD driving it is advisable to carry the following: two spare tyres, jump

leads, tow rope and cable, a few litres of oil, a wheel spanner and a complete tool kit.

HIRE

For a compact car, the least-expensive companies charge US\$40 to US\$60 per day (the longer the hire period, the lower the daily rate) with unlimited kilometres. Hiring a 4WD vehicle opens up remote parts of the country, but it can get expensive at an average of US\$80 per day.

Most companies include insurance and unlimited kilometres in their standard rates, but some require a minimum hire period before they allow unlimited kilometres. Note that some internationally known companies, such as Avis and Budget, charge amenable daily rates but only allow 200 free kilometres per day. If one company's rates seem quite a bit higher than another's, check whether it includes VAT, which would otherwise add 15.5% to the quoted figure. Most companies also require a N\$1000 (about US\$155) deposit and won't hire to anyone under the age of 23 (although some go as low as 21).

It's cheaper to hire a car in South Africa and drive it into Namibia, but you need permission from the rental agency and paperwork to cross the borders. Drivers entering Namibia in a foreign-registered vehicle must pay a N\$70 (US\$10) road tax at the border. Most major international car-hire companies will also allow you to take a vehicle to neighbouring South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe, but only if you have cleared it with the company beforehand so they can sort out the paperwork. Rental companies are less happy about drivers going to Zambia and will not allow you to go anywhere else in Africa.

It is probably best to deal with one of the major car-hire companies listed below.

Avis (www.avis.com) In Windhoek, Swakopmund, Tsumeb and Walvis Bay as well as at the international airport.

Budget (www.budget.co.za) Another big agency with offices in Windhoek and Walvis Bay as well as at the airport.

Imperial (www.imperialcarrental.co.za) Offices in Windhoek, Swakopmund, Tsumeb, Lüderitz, Walvis Bay and at both Hosea Kutako and Eros airports.

Triple Three Car Hire (www.333.com.na) A competitive local car-hire firm with offices in Swakopmund and Walvis Bay.

INSURANCE

Although insurance is not compulsory it is *strongly* recommended. No matter who you

hire your car from, make sure you understand what is included in the price (unlimited kilometres, tax, insurance, collision-waiver and so on) and what your liabilities are. Most local insurance policies do not include cover for damage to windshields and tyres.

Third-party motor insurance is a minimum requirement in Namibia. However, it is also advisable to take Damage (Collision) Waiver, which costs around US\$20 extra per day for a 2WD; and about US\$40 per day for a 4WD. Loss (Theft) Waiver is also an extra that is worth having. For both types of insurance, the excess liability is about US\$1500 for a 2WD and US\$3000 for a 4WD. If you're only going for a short period of time it may be worth taking out the Super Collision Waiver, which covers absolutely everything, albeit at a price.

It is nearly always advisable to pay with a 'gold level' credit card which will offer you some protection should anything go wrong and will possibly cover you for collision as well.

PURCHASE

Unless you're going to be staying in Namibia for several years, it's not worth purchasing a vehicle in-country. The best place to buy a vehicle is across the border in South Africa.

If you do buy a car with hard currency and resell it in Namibia, you can remit the same amount of hard currency to your home country without hassles – just keep the papers and inform the bank in advance.

ROAD HAZARDS

In addition to its fantastic system of tarred roads, Namibia has everything from high-speed gravel roads to badly maintained main routes, farm roads, bush tracks, sand tracks and challenging 4WD routes. Driving under these conditions requires special techniques, appropriate vehicle preparation, a bit of practice and a heavy dose of caution, see p380 for some tips.

ROAD RULES

To drive a car in Namibia, you must be at least 21 years old. Like most other Southern African countries, traffic keeps to the left side of the road. The national speed limit is 120km/h on paved roads, 80km/h on gravel roads and 40km/h in all national parks and reserves. When passing through towns and villages, assume a speed limit of 60km/h, even in the absence of any signs.

Highway police use radar and love to fine motorists (about US\$10, plus an additional US\$1 for every 10km you exceed the limit) for speeding. Sitting on the roof of a moving vehicle is illegal, and wearing seat belts (where installed) is compulsory in the front (but not back) seats. Drink-driving is also against the law, and your insurance policy will be invalid if you have an accident while drunk. Driving without a licence is also a serious offence.

If you have an accident causing injury, it must be reported to the authorities within 48 hours. If vehicles have sustained only minor damage and there are no injuries – and all parties agree – you can exchange names and addresses and sort it out later through your insurance companies.

Hitching

Hitching is possible in Namibia, but it's illegal in national parks, and even main highways see relatively little traffic. Truck drivers generally expect to be paid around US\$1.50 per 100km, so agree on a price before climbing in. Your best options for lifts are Windhoek backpackers' lodges, where you can post notices about rides wanted or offered. (For warnings about hitching, see p764.)

Tours

Namibia's public transport system will get you to population centres, but not the sites most visitors want to see: the Skeleton Coast, Damaraland, the Kaokoveld, the Kunene River, Fish River Canyon, Sossusvlei, the Naukluft and so on. Therefore, even those who'd normally spurn organised tours may want to consider joining an inexpensive participation safari, or a more luxurious option:

Afro Ventures (☎ 064-463812; www.afroventures.com; PO Box 1772, Swakopmund) Afro Ventures offers several Namibian highlights tours, focusing on fine lodges and 4WD tours. Its five- and seven-day Namib Desert tours explore the desert coast and dunes. It also runs the beautiful Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge.

Campfire Safaris (☎ 062-523946, 081 242 6116; namibia@bigfoot.com; PO Box 4500, Rehoboth) This economically priced company offers combi tours through a range of Namibian highlights. The booking agent is the Cardboard Box Travel Shop.

Cardboard Box Travel Shop (Map p318; ☎ 061-256580; www.namibian.org; PO Box 5142, Windhoek) This friendly agency offers bookings (including last-minute options) for all budget safaris; lodge, safari, car-hire and

transport bookings; national parks bookings; good advice; and other travel services.

Chameleon Safaris (Map p318; ☎ /fax 061-247668; www.chameleonsafaris.com; 8 Voight St, PO Box 6017, Windhoek) This budget safari company is geared to backpackers and does a range of good-value safaris: six-day Damaraland/Skeleton Coast (US\$400); three-day Sossusvlei (US\$150); 18-day 4WD tour (US\$950); 14-day Northern & Southern Highlights (US\$600); and seven-day Northern/Southern Highlights (US\$350 each).

Crazy Kudu Safaris (☎ 061-222636; fax 255074; www.crazykudu.com; Windhoek) One of Namibia's friendliest and most economical safari companies, Crazy Kudu does 10-day all-inclusive 'Namibia Explorer' adventures through northern and central highlights (US\$440); a six-day northern highlights tour (US\$275); and a three-day Sossusvlei Express tour (US\$130), which may also be joined in Swakopmund. All departures are guaranteed. They'll also organise custom safaris: an Okavango Delta and Victoria Falls excursion; and Fish River or Kaokoveld extensions for the best possible price.

Enyandi Safaris (☎ 061-255103; enyandi@iafrica.com.na) This recommended company runs budget tours mainly in northwestern Namibia, starting at US\$245 per person for a seven-day trip.

Felix Unite (☎ 061-255488; fax 251400; rvanrooyen@aficansolutions.org; www.felixunite.com) This water-oriented company runs river-rafting and canoeing adventures on the Kunene (US\$700 for 10 days) and Orange Rivers (US\$160/180 for four/six days).

Kaokohimba Safaris (☎ /fax 061-222378; www.natron.net/tour/kaoko/himbae.htm; PO Box 11580, Windhoek) Kaokohimba organises cultural tours through Kaokoveld and Damaraland and wildlife-viewing trips in Etosha National Park. A highlight is Camp Syncro, in remote Marienflus.

Magic Bus Safaris (☎ 061-259485, 0811 298093; magicbus@iafrica.com.na; 5 Grieg St, Windhoek) This small company runs budget trips from Windhoek to Sossusvlei (US\$160 to US\$190), Etosha (US\$170), a seven-day combination (US\$360) and other options.

Muramba Bushman Trails (Map p325; ☎ 067-220659; bushman@natron.net; PO Box 689, Tsumeb) This recommended company, owned by Reinhard Friedrich, provides a unique introduction to the Heikum San people. **Namib Sky** (☎ 061-293233; namibsky@mweb.com.na; PO Box 5197, Windhoek) For those who dream of looming over the dunes in a balloon, this company offers Namib Desert balloon flights for US\$246 per person. The early-morning flight departs before sunrise, when not a breath of wind is stirring.

Okakambe Trails (☎ 064-402799/405258, 0811 246626; D1901, PO Box 1668, Swakopmund) With Okakambe, you can ride on horseback along the Swakop River to a moon landscape; it also organises longer trips.

Outside Adventures (☎ 061-245595, 0812 2470329; www.namibia-adventures.com) These folks run excellent day tours from Windhoek: brewery tours (US\$17), mountain biking in Daan Viljoen (US\$28), Arnhem Caves tours (US\$45 to US\$85), Katutura township tours (US\$17) and tours to see cheetahs, leopards and rhinos (US\$45 to US\$70).

Turnstone Tours (☎ 064-403123; www.turnstone-tours.com; PO Box 307, Swakopmund) Turnstone runs 4WD camping tours around Swakopmund, including Sandwich Harbour and Damaraland. Day tours are US\$75 and all-inclusive longer trips cost US\$300 per person per day.

West Coast Safaris (☎ /fax 061-256770) The company runs camping participation safaris, including seven-day tours through Kaokoland (US\$460); eight days in Kaokoland and Etosha (US\$447); seven-day wildlife tours to Etosha; Damaraland and Waterberg (US\$442); seven-day Bushmanland tours (US\$442); and Damaraland tours (US\$460).

Wild Dog Safaris (☎ 061-257642; www.wilddog-safaris.com; 19 Johann Albrecht St, PO Box 26188, Windhoek) This friendly operation runs seven-day Northern Namibia Adventures and Southern Swings (US\$340 each); three-day Etosha or Sossusvlei circuits (US\$160 each, or

US\$350 for both); as well as longer participation safaris and accommodated excursions.

Trains

Trans-Namib Railways (☎ 061-2982032; www.transnamib.com.na) connects most of the major towns, but trains are extremely slow – as one reader remarked, moving ‘at the pace of an energetic donkey cart’. In addition, passenger and freight cars are mixed on the same train, and trains tend to stop at every post. As a result, rail travel isn’t popular and services are rarely fully booked.

Windhoek is Namibia’s railway hub, with services south to Keetmanshoop and Upington (South Africa), north to Tsumeb, west to Swakopmund and Walvis Bay and east to Gobabis. Trains carry economy- and business-class seats but, although most services operate overnight, sleepers are no longer available. Bookings can be made at train stations or through the Windhoek Booking Office. The tickets must be collected before 4pm on the day of departure.

South Africa

It's no wonder that South Africa draws more visitors than anywhere else in sub-Saharan Africa. World-class wildlife watching, cosmopolitan cities, stunning natural panoramas and vibrant cultures make the country appealing to almost every taste and budget. Within the space of a day, you can journey from vineyard-clad hillsides in the Western Cape to the vast open spaces of the Kalahari, from Cape Town's waterfront chic to isolated Zulu villages, from elephant spotting in Kruger National Park to the pounding surf and sublime seascapes of the coast. And, unlike many other areas of the continent, it's possible to do all this while still enjoying Western amenities and, for the most part, getting by in English.

Yet, while it's easy to travel around South Africa focusing on the glitz and first-world infrastructure, you'll only get below the surface by seeking out the country's other face – most visible in the sprawling townships where far too many people live stalked by the shadows of hunger, poverty and one of the highest HIV/AIDS infection rates in the world. Behind its incredible natural beauty, South Africa is the stage for the daily drama of one of the world's greatest experiments in racial harmony. The intensity of this drama surrounds you wherever you go, and will likely be one of the most fascinating and challenging aspects of your travels. And, there's never been a better time to experience this than now, as the colours of the 'rainbow nation' finally begin to fuse.

FAST FACTS

- **Area:** 1,233,404 sq km
- **Capital:** Pretoria (administrative), Bloemfontein (judicial) and Cape Town (legislative)
- **Country code:** 27
- **Famous for:** Nelson Mandela, ending apartheid, Zululand, cosmopolitan Cape Town, Big Five wildlife
- **Languages:** English, Afrikaans, Ndebele, Sepedi, Setswana, Sotho, Swati, Tsonga, Tswana, Tshivenda, Venda, Xhosa, Xitsonga, Zulu
- **Money:** Rand
- **Phrases:** *Dumela* (hello; Sotho/Swati, Zulu), *howzit* (hello; English), *sala hantle/sala kahle* (goodbye; Sotho/Swati, Zulu)
- **Population:** 46.9 million



HOW MUCH?

- **Bottle of wine** US\$9
- **Car hire per day** US\$40
- **Kilo of mangoes** US\$0.80
- **Kruger National Park entry per person** US\$16
- **Surfboard** US\$200

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L of petrol** US\$0.70
- **1L of bottled water** US\$0.80
- **Can of Black Label beer** US\$0.95
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$8
- **Roasted mealie (corn)** US\$0.30

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Cape Town** (p415) Marvel at the city's majestic setting and take a tippie tour of the area's wineries.
- **Kruger National Park** (p528) Stay in a remote bushveld camp and fall asleep to the sounds of grunting hippos.
- **Drakensberg mountain range** (p516) Hike the peaks of Royal Natal National Park's magnificent Amphitheatre.
- **Wild Coast** (p491) Bum around the spectacular beaches, hidden waterfalls and isolated reserves.
- **Off the beaten track** (p488) Leave everything behind but the sun in the vast and magical Karoo.

ITINERARIES

- **Two weeks** Using **Johannesburg** (p540) as a gateway, head east to South Africa's most convenient safari showpiece, **Kruger National Park** (p528). The teeming wildlife here and in the neighbouring **private wildlife reserves** (p532) will undoubtedly hold you captivated for at least several days. If time is really tight, get a good taste of things at **Madikwe Game Reserve** (p569) or **Pilanesberg National Park** (p569), both easily reached from Johannesburg. From Kruger, head south into KwaZulu-Natal, where the dramatic valleys and peaks of the Drakensberg mountains **Royal Natal National Park** (p518) provide an endless array of captivating hikes. Head up **Sani Pass** (p522) to the Lesotho border for

brehtaking views before returning to the throbbing heart of the country to get a taste of township life in **Soweto** (p544).

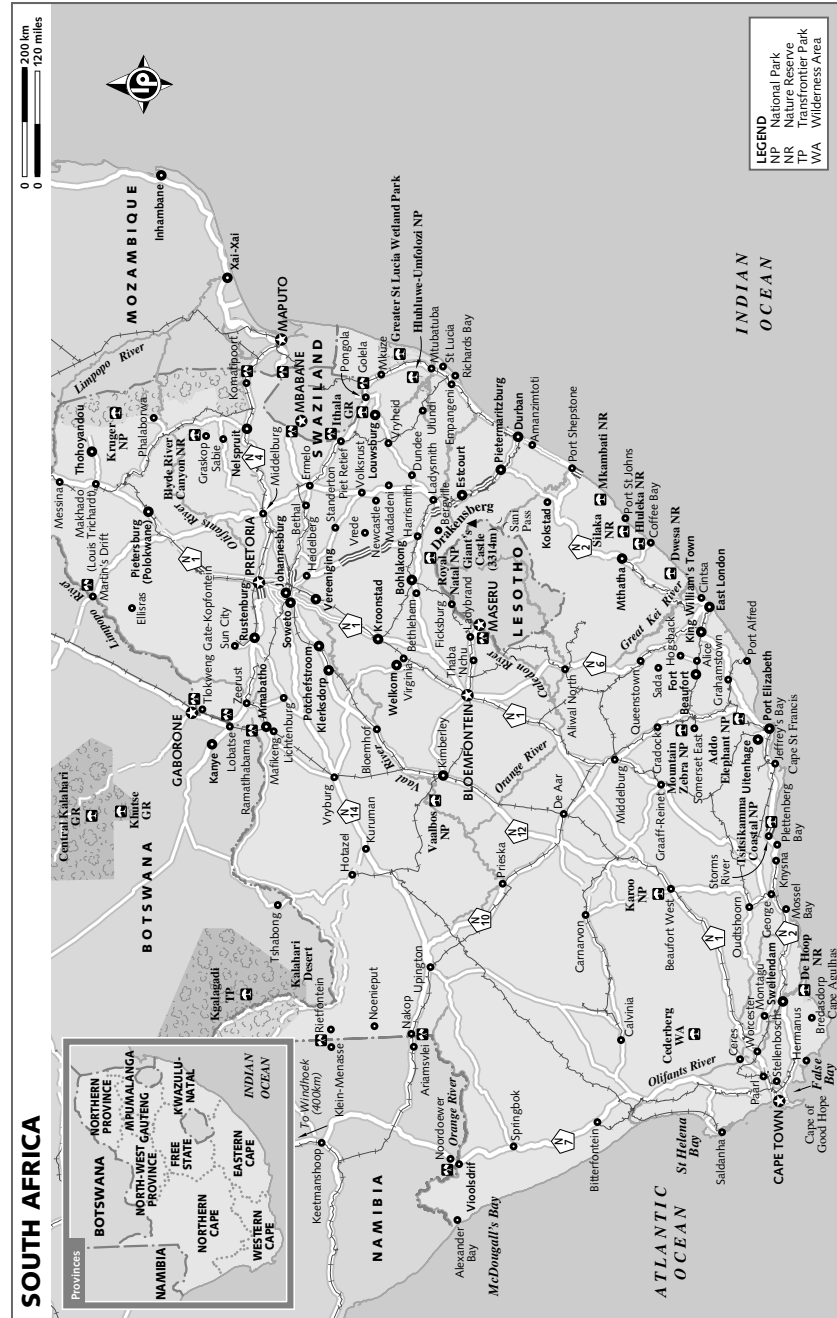
- **One month** After a few days in **Cape Town** (p415) and a trip to the top of **Table Mountain** (p419), tear yourself away from this wonderful city and head to the fertile valleys of the Winelands, with a night or two in **Stellenbosch** (p438) or **Franschhoek** (p442), and then via the scenic Route 62 through the Little Karoo to **Oudtshoorn** (p448), South Africa's ostrich capital. Possible detours along the way include to **Hermanus** (p444) for whale watching, if the season is right; **Cape Agulhas** (p446) for the thrill of standing at Africa's southernmost point; or **De Hoop Nature Reserve** (p446). Make your way south, joining the N2 along the Garden Route, near **Knysna** (p453), with its sylvan setting, and **Plettenberg Bay** (p456), a relaxed beachside resort town. Recommended stops along the coast include **Tsitsikamma Coastal National Park** (p466) and **Addo Elephant National Park** (p481). Move eastwards through the striking **Wild Coast** (p491), before spending a day or so on the beach in **Durban** (p495). Head north into the heart of **Zululand** (p509) or the **Drakensberg** (p516) or continue north for as much time as possible enjoying the parks, including **Mkhuze Game Reserve** (p515) and **Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park** (p512) before returning to Durban or making your way to Johannesburg for the flight home.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

South Africa has been favoured by nature with one of the most temperate climates on the African continent, which can be visited comfortably any time. However, depending on what you plan to do, it's worth paying attention to the seasons, which are the reverse of those in the northern hemisphere. Winter (June to September) is cooler, drier and ideal for hiking and outdoor pursuits. Because vegetation is less dense, and thirsty animals congregate around rivers and other permanent water sources, winter is also the best time for wildlife watching. In the eastern highveld, nights are often crisp and clear, with occasional frosts.

Summer (late November to March) brings rain, mists and – in the lowveld – some uncomfortably hot days. Along the Indian Ocean

SOUTH AFRICA



coast, conditions are sultry and tropical, with high humidity.

More of a consideration than weather are school holidays. From mid-December to January, waves of vacation-hungry South Africans stream out of the cities, with visitors from Europe and North America adding to the crush. The absolute peak is from Christmas to mid-January, followed by Easter. Accommodation in tourist areas and national parks is heavily booked, and prices can more than double. On the plus side, the high summer months offer some great festivals.

Spring (mid-September to November) and autumn (April and May) are ideal almost everywhere. Spring is also the best time to see vast expanses of Northern Cape carpeted with wildflowers.

HISTORY

South Africa's history extends back to around 40,000 BC when the San people first settled Southern Africa. By the 3rd century AD, Bantu-speaking peoples were well established in South Africa. Competing colonial European powers began settling here in small numbers from the 17th century, mostly in the Cape. Widespread colonial settlement of South Africa began in the 19th century.

The Great Trek

From the 1820s, groups of Boers dissatisfied with British rule in the Cape Colony trekked off into the interior in search of freedom. From the mid-1830s increasing numbers of Voortrekkers (Fore-trekkers, pioneers) abandoned their farms and crossed the Orange River in a decade of migration known as the Great Trek. Reports from early treks told of vast, uninhabited – or at least poorly defended – grazing lands.

Tensions between the Boers and the government had been building for some time, but the reason given by many trekkers for leaving was the 1833 act banning slavery.

The Great Trek coincided with the *difaqane* (forced migration; see p41) and the Boers mistakenly believed that what they found – deserted pasture lands, disorganised bands of refugees and tales of brutality – was the normal state of affairs. This mistaken assessment gave rise to the Afrikaner myths that the Voortrekkers moved into unoccupied territory or arrived at much the same time as the blacks.

The Voortrekkers Meet the Zulu

The Great Trek's first halt was at Thaba 'Nchu, near present-day Bloemfontein, where a republic was established. Following disagreements among their leadership, the various Voortrekker groups split apart, with most crossing the Drakensberg into Natal to try and establish a republic there. As this was Zulu territory, the Voortrekker leader Piet Retief paid a visit to King Dingaan, and was promptly massacred by the suspicious Zulu. This massacre triggered others, as well as a revenge attack by the Boers. The culmination came in December 1838 at the Ncome River in Natal. Several Boers were injured, while several thousand Zulus were killed, reportedly causing the Ncome's waters to run red.

After such a 'miraculous' victory (the result of good tactics and vastly superior weaponry) it seemed Boer expansion really did have that long-suspected stamp of divine approval, and the 16 December victory was celebrated as the Day of the Vow until 1994, when it was renamed the Day of Reconciliation.

The Boer Republics

Several short-lived Boer republics sprang up but soon the only serious contenders were the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. The British government, which commanded the strongest forces in the area, wasn't at all sure what it wanted. British officials in Africa often had no idea whether they should be restraining Boers, protecting blacks, enforcing British treaties or carving out new British colonies.

The Orange Free State was intermittently at war with the powerful Basotho people – sometimes with British assistance, sometimes without. Finally, in 1871, the British annexed Basotholand. The Transvaal Republic's problems were mostly internal, with several leaders and breakaway republics threatening civil war until Paul Kruger (president of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek; ZAR – South African Republic, 1883–1900) settled the issue with a short, sharp campaign in 1864.

The financial position of the republics was always precarious and their economies depended entirely on cattle. Most trade was by barter. Just when it seemed that the republics, with their thinly spread population of fiercely independent Boers, were beginning to settle into stable states, diamonds were discovered near Kimberley in 1869. Britain stepped in quickly and annexed the area.

The Boers were disturbed by the foreigners, both black and white, who poured in following the discovery and were angry that their impoverished republics were missing out on the money the mines brought in.

Meanwhile, Britain became nervous about the existence of independent republics in Southern Africa, especially as gold had been found in the Transvaal. The solution, as usual, was annexation and in 1877 the Transvaal lost its independence.

Anglo-Boer Wars

After the annexation, the Transvaal drifted into rebellion and the First Anglo-Boer War, known by Afrikaners as the War of Independence, broke out. It was over almost as soon as it began, with a crushing Boer victory at the Battle of Majuba in early 1881, and the republic regained its independence as the ZAR.

With the discovery of a huge reef of gold in the Witwatersrand (the area around Johannesburg) in 1886 and the ensuing explosive growth of Johannesburg itself, the ZAR was suddenly host to thousands of *uitlanders* (foreigners), black and white.

With little experience of towns, none of cities, and a deep suspicion of foreign ways, Kruger's ZAR government did its best to isolate the republic from the gold rush. The foreigners paid taxes but were not allowed to vote.

In 1899 the British demanded that voting rights be given to the 60,000 foreign whites on the Witwatersrand. Kruger refused, demanding that British troops massing on the ZAR borders be withdrawn by 11 October – if they weren't, he asserted, he would consider the republic to be at war.

The British, confident that their vastly superior numbers of experienced troops would win swiftly, took him on. Shocked to find that the Boers were no pushover, the British fell into disarray until reinforcements arrived. Lords Roberts and Kitchener led an army of 450,000 men against the 80,000 Boers from the ZAR, the Free State and the Cape. The Boers gave way rapidly and by 5 June 1900 Pretoria, the last of the major towns, had surrendered.

It seemed that the war was over but instead it entered a second, bitter phase. Commando raiders denied the British enemy control of the countryside. There was no possibility that the British could be defeated, but maintaining an occupying army would be an expensive proposition for them.

Without an enemy army to face, just commandos who could instantly become innocuous farmers, the British decided to exact reprisals. If a railway line was blown up, the nearest farmhouse was destroyed; if a shot was fired from a farm, the house was burnt down, the crops destroyed and the animals killed. The women and children from the farms were collected and taken to concentration camps – a British invention. By the end of the war 26,000 people, mainly children, had died of disease and neglect in the camps.

On 31 May 1902 the Peace of Vereeniging was signed and the Boer republics became British colonies.

British Rule

The British response after their victory was a mixture of appeasement and insensitive imperialism. It was essential for the Boers and British to work together. The nonwhites were scarcely considered, other than as potential labour, despite the fact that they constituted about 80% of the combined population of the provinces.

Political awareness was growing, however. Mohandas (later Mahatma) Gandhi was working with the Indian populations of the Natal and Transvaal, and men like John Jabavu, Walter Rubusana and Abdullah Abdurahman laid the foundations for new nontribal, black political groups.

Hard-up Boers flooded into the cities to find a world dominated by the English and their language. Worst of all, they were forced to compete for jobs with blacks. Partly as a backlash to this, Afrikaans came to be seen as the *volkstaal* (people's language) and as a symbol of Afrikaner nationhood.

The former republics were given representative government in 1906–7, and moves towards union began almost immediately.

Union of South Africa

The Union of South Africa was established on 31 May 1910. The British High Commission Territories of Basotholand (now Lesotho), Bechuanaland (now Botswana), Swaziland and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) were excluded from the Union.

English and Dutch became the official languages – Afrikaans was not recognised as the official language until 1925.

The first election was held in September 1910. The South African National Party (soon known as the South African Party, or SAP), a

diverse coalition of Boer groups under General Louis Botha and the brilliant General Jan Smuts, won the election and Botha became the union's first prime minister.

General Barry Hertzog raised some of the most divisive issues, championing Afrikaner interests, advocating separate development for the two white groups and independence from Britain. He and his supporters formed the National Party (NP).

Soon after the union was established a barrage of repressive legislation was passed. It became illegal for black workers to strike; skilled jobs were reserved for whites; blacks were barred from military service; and pass laws, restricting black freedom of movement, were tightened.

In 1912, Pixley ka Isaka Seme formed a national democratic organisation to represent blacks. It was initially called the South African Native Congress, but from 1923 it was known as the African National Congress (ANC).

In 1913 the Natives Land Act set aside 7.5% of South Africa's land for black occupancy. No black (and blacks made up over 70% of the population) was allowed to buy, rent or become a sharecropper outside this area. Thousands of squatters were evicted from farms and forced into increasingly overcrowded reserves, or into the cities.

In 1914 South Africa, as a part of the British Empire, was drawn into war with Germany and saddled with the responsibility of dealing with German South West Africa (now Namibia). This involvement on the British side prompted the last major violent Afrikaner rebellion – more than 300 men were killed. After the war, South West Africa became a part of South Africa under 'mandate' from the League of Nations.

Fusion

In 1924 the NP under Hertzog came to power, with an agenda that included promoting Afrikaner interests, independence and racial segregation. In the 1929 election the *swaartgevaar* (black threat) was made the dominant issue for the first time.

In reality, the NP and the SAP were not so far apart politically and, in 1933, the two formed a coalition (or fusion government), with Hertzog as the prime minister and Smuts as his deputy.

Fusion was rejected by Dr DF Malan and his followers. They formed the Purified National

Party, which quickly became the dominant force in Afrikaner political life. The Afrikaner Broederbond, a secret ultra-nationalistic Afrikaner brotherhood, became the extraordinarily influential force behind the party. From 1948 to 1994 every prime minister and president was a member of the Broederbond.

At the far right, the Ossewa-Brandwag (Sentinels of the Ox-wagon, or OB) became a popular militaristic organisation with strong German sympathies and an obvious affinity with Hitler's doctrine of a master race.

Apartheid

The NP won the 1948 election on a platform of establishing apartheid (literally, the state of being apart). With the help of creative electoral boundaries it held power right up to the first democratic election in 1994.

Mixed marriages were prohibited and inter-racial sex was made illegal. Every individual was classified by race. The Group Areas Act enforcing the physical separation of residential areas was promulgated. The Separate Amenities Act created separate public facilities – separate beaches, separate buses, separate toilets, separate schools and separate park benches. The pass laws were further strengthened and blacks were compelled to carry identity documents at all times and were prohibited from remaining in towns, or even visiting them, without specific permission. Thanks to the Dutch Reformed churches, apartheid was even given religious justification.

Black Action

In 1949 the ANC for the first time advocated open resistance in the form of strikes, acts of public disobedience and protest marches. These continued intermittently throughout the 1950s, with occasional violent clashes.

In June 1955, at a congress held at Kliptown near Johannesburg, a number of organisations, including the Indian Congress and the ANC, adopted a Freedom Charter setting out a vision of a nonracial democratic state.

On 21 March 1960 the Pan African Congress (PAC) called for nationwide protests against the hated pass laws. When demonstrators surrounded a police station in Sharpeville police opened fire, killing 69 people and wounding 160. To people in South Africa and the rest of the world, the struggle had now crossed a crucial line – there could no longer be any doubts about the nature of the white regime.

Soon after, the PAC and ANC were banned and the security forces were given the right to detain people indefinitely without trial. Prime Minister Verwoerd announced a referendum on whether the country should become a republic. A slim majority of white voters gave their approval to the change and in May 1961 the Republic of South Africa came into existence.

Nelson Mandela became the leader of the underground ANC and Oliver Tambo went abroad to establish the organisation in exile. As more black activists were arrested, the ANC and PAC began a campaign of sabotage through the armed wings of their organisations, respectively Umkonto We Sizwe (Spear of the Nation; usually known as MK) and Poqo (Pure). In July 1963 Nelson Mandela, along with a number of other ANC and communist leaders, was arrested, charged with fomenting violent revolution and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The Homelands

Verwoerd was assassinated in parliament in 1966 (there was apparently no political motive) and was succeeded by BJ Vorster, who was followed in 1978 by PW Botha. Both men continued to pursue the insane dream of separate black Homelands and a white South Africa.

The plan was to restrict blacks to Homelands that were, according to the propaganda, to become self-sufficient, self-governing states on the traditional lands of particular tribal groups. In reality, they had little infrastructure and no industry and were therefore incapable of producing sufficient food for the burgeoning black population. Under the plan, 13% of the country's total land area was to be the home to 75% of the population.

Intense and widespread suffering was the result as blacks could not even move beyond their Homeland without a pass and explicit permission.

Power proved irresistible to the leaders of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei. Between 1976 and 1981 the collaborators accepted a nominal independence, and they then proceeded to crush all resistance to their rule and to that of the South African government.

International Conflict

In 1980 Robert Mugabe was elected prime minister of an independent Zimbabwe, and South Africa became the last white-controlled state in Africa. Increasing numbers of Western

countries imposed sanctions and the ANC and PAC received direct support from the governments of black Africa (with the exception of Malawi and Swaziland). South Africa's white governing elite increasingly saw the country as a bastion besieged by communism, atheism and black anarchy.

Soweto Uprising

On 16 June 1976 the Soweto Students' Representative Council protests against the use of Afrikaans (considered the language of the oppressor) in black schools. Police opened fire on a student march, starting a round of nationwide demonstrations, strikes, mass arrests and riots that, over the next 12 months, took more than 1000 lives.

Steve Biko, the charismatic leader of the Black Consciousness movement, which stressed the need for psychological liberation and black pride, was killed in September 1977. Unidentified security police beat him until he lapsed into a coma – he went without medical treatment for three days and finally died in Pretoria. At the subsequent inquest, the magistrate found that no one was to blame.

South Africa was never the same again – a generation of young blacks committed themselves to a revolutionary struggle against apartheid and the black communities were politicised.

After changes to the constitution in 1983, the powers of the state president were increased and coloureds (mixed race) and Indians were given a token role in government. Blacks were given no role at all.

Violent protest built up steadily over the next two years until, in 1985, the government declared a state of emergency that was to stay in force for the next five years. The media was strictly censored and, by 1988, 30,000 people had been detained without trial. Thousands were tortured.

Botha repealed the pass laws, but this failed to mollify black protesters and created a white backlash. His reforms also failed to impress the rest of the world, and economic sanctions began to bite. Foreign banks refused to roll over government loans and the rand's value collapsed. In late 1989 Botha was replaced by FW De Klerk.

Reform

At his opening address to the parliament on 2 February 1990 De Klerk announced that he

would repeal discriminatory laws and that the ANC, PAC and Communist Party were legalised. Media restrictions were lifted, and De Klerk undertook to release political prisoners. On 11 February he released Nelson Mandela, after 27 years in jail. During 1990 and 1991 virtually all the old apartheid regulations were repealed.

On 21 December 1991 the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) began negotiations on the formation of a multiracial transitional government and a new constitution extending political rights to all groups.

The Codesa negotiations did not proceed smoothly but both the NP and the ANC were determined that free elections would take place at some time. However, thrashing out the details was complex and the ANC suspected the government of dragging out the process.

The talks, by now a negotiation between the NP and the ANC, excluded the smaller parties, including the predominantly Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party, which demanded a federal structure for the new constitution. Right-wing whites, who wanted a *Volkstaat* (literally People's State; a Boer Homeland), joined them in an unlikely alliance.

Now, with white support drifting to the right-wing parties, the National Party needed to hurry negotiations. A compromise was reached and both sides accepted a five-year, post-election interim government of national unity.

Free Elections

Across the country at midnight on 26–27 April 1994, 'Die Stem' (the old national anthem) was sung and the old flag was lowered. Then the new rainbow flag was raised and the new anthem, 'Nkosi Sikelele Afrika' (God Bless Africa), was sung.

The ANC won 62.7% of the vote, less than the 66.7% which would have enabled it to overrule the interim constitution. As well as deciding the national government, the election decided the provincial governments, and the ANC won in all but two of the provinces. The National Party won 20.4% of the vote, enough to guarantee it representation in cabinet.

Rewriting History

After the elections, focus turned to the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (1994–99), which worked to expose crimes of the apartheid era under the dictum of Archbishop Desmond Tutu: 'Without forgiveness there

is no future, but without confession there can be no forgiveness'. Many stories of horrific brutality and injustice were heard by the commission, offering some catharsis to people and communities shattered by their past.

The commission operated by allowing victims to tell their stories and perpetrators to confess their guilt, with amnesty on offer to those who made a clean breast of it. Those who chose not to appear before the commission would face criminal prosecution if their guilt could be proven. Yet, while some soldiers, police and 'ordinary' citizens have confessed their crimes, it seems unlikely that the human-rights criminals who gave the orders and dictated the policies will present themselves (PW Botha is one famous no-show), and it has proven difficult to gather evidence against them.

Free Elections – Round Two

In 1999, South Africa held its second democratic elections. In 1997 Mandela had handed over ANC leadership to his deputy, Thabo Mbeki, and there was speculation that the ANC vote might therefore drop. In fact, it increased to put the party within one seat of the two-thirds majority that would allow it to alter the constitution.

The NP, restyled as the New National Party (NNP), lost two-thirds of its seats, as well as official opposition status to the Democratic Party (DP) – traditionally a stronghold of liberal whites, with new force from conservatives disenchanted with the NP, and from some middle-class blacks. Coming in just behind the DP was the KwaZulu-Natal-based Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), historically the voice of Zulu nationalism. While the IFP lost some support, its leader, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, held onto power as the national Home Affairs Minister.

South Africa Today

While Mbeki is viewed with far less affection by the ANC grassroots than the beloved 'Madiba' (Mandela), he has proven himself a shrewd politician, maintaining his political pre-eminence by isolating or coopting opposition parties. The 2004 national elections were won decisively by the ANC with 70% of the votes, with Mbeki at the helm, and today the ANC continues its dominance in daily political life.

Yet it has not been all clear sailing. In the early days of his presidency, Mbeki's effective

denial of the AIDS crisis invited global criticism, and his conspicuous failure to condemn the forced reclamation of white-owned farms in neighbouring Zimbabwe unnerved both South African landowners and foreign investors.

In the coming years – in addition to choosing a successor for Mbeki, who has announced that he will step down in 2009 – attention is likely to focus overwhelmingly on crime, economic inequality, overhauling the education system and, especially, AIDS. With an estimated 4.5 million South Africans affected – more than in any other country in the world – this scourge threatens to eclipse all of South Africa's other problems.

In recent years, efforts by AIDS activists and NGOs have focused on urging the government to make anti-retroviral drugs available for treatment for all AIDS sufferers, and on reducing the major social stigma associated with infection. While huge strides have been made – with many provinces now providing widespread access to treatment – there is still a long way to go.

THE CULTURE The National Psyche

More than a decade has passed since South Africa's first democratic elections, and the country is still finding its way. While the streets pulsate with the same determination and optimism that fuelled the liberation struggle, the beat is tempered by the sobering social realities that are the legacy of apartheid's long years of oppression and bloodshed. Freedom has also brought with it a whole new set of challenges.

Unemployment, crime and HIV/AIDS are the top concerns of most South Africans today, and the nation is fast becoming a society divided by class rather than colour. The gap between rich and poor is vast – one of the highest in the world, according to World Bank statistics. Manicured suburbs rub shoulders with squalid townships where clean drinking water is a scarce commodity, and palatial residences overlook cramped tin-roofed shanties. Violent crime has stabilised at unacceptably high levels, and a generation that saw almost daily brutality and uncertainty during its formative years is now coming of age. Although the formal racial divisions of apartheid have dissolved, shadows and old ways of interacting remain, and suspicions and distrust still run high.

While crime continues to grab headlines and undermine South Africa's reputation as a tourism destination, it's important to keep it in perspective. The slowly and often fitfully emerging new South Africa is a unique and refreshing place to visit, and one of the most inspiring and hope-filled places that you'll find anywhere on the continent. Visiting is a rare chance to experience a nation that is rebuilding itself after profound change. As a backdrop to all this is the stunning natural magnificence, and the remarkably deep bond that most South Africans feel for their land.

South Africa has the highest incidence of reported rape in the world, with approximately 52,000 cases reported to the police annually, and a woman is assaulted every 26 to 60 seconds on average. Some women's groups say the real figures are much worse, because many women are too afraid to report the crime. Even more saddening is the fact that at least 20% – some places the figure is closer to 40% – of reported rapes and attempted rapes are of girls below 18 years of age.

Daily Life

It's difficult to present a unified picture of everyday life in South Africa. Many middle-class and wealthy families live in heavily secured homes and spend their leisure time in equally fortified shopping centres. Guards patrol the walkways and shops to keep criminals at bay, there's still a lingering sense of fear and loss connected with the passing of the old regime, and conversations are peppered with gloomy predictions about the government and the future.

Life is very different for the millions of South Africans who are still living in poverty. Tiny matchbox houses are home to large extended families, clean drinking water remains a luxury in some areas, and health facilities are not uniformly available.

Yet, township life is vibrant and informal. People gather on street corners and in local bars known as 'shebeens'. Weddings are big events, and frequently spill onto the streets with plenty of dancing. If you're passing by, don't be surprised if you're encouraged to join in.

Unfortunately, funerals are becoming one of the most common gatherings in South Africa, and on weekends, cemeteries are routinely crowded with mourners. Many of those who are dying are youth, and people spend their time attending the funerals of one relative after the next.

MOVERS & SHAKERS: NELSON MANDELA

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela is without doubt one of the global leaders of the millennium. Once vilified by South Africa's ruling whites and sentenced to life imprisonment, he emerged from 27 years of incarceration calling for reconciliation and forgiveness, and was able to rally together all South Africans at the most crucial of times.

Mandela, son of a Xhosa chief, was born on 18 July 1918 in the small village of Mveso on the Mbashe River. When he was young the family moved to Qunu, south of Umtata in what is now Eastern Cape. Here he grew up living a typical rural life, while at the same time being groomed for a future position in the tribal leadership. After attending school at the University College of Fort Hare, Mandela headed to Jo'burg, where he soon became immersed in politics. He also finished his law degree and, together with Oliver Tambo, opened South Africa's first black law firm. Meanwhile, in 1944, together with Tambo and Walter Sisulu, Mandela formed the Youth League of the African National Congress (ANC), which worked to turn the ANC into a nationwide grassroots movement. During the 1950s, Mandela was at the forefront of the ANC's civil disobedience campaigns. Various arrests and detention followed. After the ANC was banned in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre, Mandela advocated establishing its underground military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe. In 1964, Mandela was brought to stand trial for sabotage and fomenting revolution in the widely publicised Rivonia Trial. After brilliantly arguing his own defence, he was sentenced to life imprisonment, and spent the next 18 years in the infamous Robben Island prison, before eventually being moved to the Victor Verster prison near Paarl, from where he was later released.

Throughout his incarceration, Mandela repeatedly refused to compromise his political beliefs in exchange for freedom, saying that only free men can negotiate. Among other things, he rejected offers of release in exchange for recognising the independence of the Transkei (and thereby giving tacit approval of the legitimacy of the apartheid regime).

On 18 February 1990, Mandela was released and in 1991 he was elected president of the ANC. From this position, he continued the negotiations (which had started secretly while he was in prison) to demolish apartheid and bring an end to minority rule. In 1993, Mandela shared the Nobel peace prize with FW de Klerk and, in the first free elections the following year, was elected president of South Africa. In his much-quoted speech, 'Free at Last!', made after winning the 1994 elections, he focused the nation's attention firmly on the future, declaring, 'This is the time to heal the old wounds and build a new South Africa'.

In 1997, Mandela – or Madiba, his traditional Xhosa name – stepped down as ANC president, although he continues to be actively involved in politics as an elder statesman.

Thousands of households in South Africa are now headed by children whose parents have died from AIDS. AIDS is the leading cause of death in South Africa (it accounts for about 30% of deaths nationwide). Sometimes the only survivors from an entire family are the eldest children, who were born before their parents became infected. A large number of grandparents who have nursed and lost their adult offspring to AIDS are also looking after their orphaned grandchildren, many of whom are also HIV-positive.

Population & People

During the apartheid era, the government attempted to categorise everyone into one of four major groups – easily enough said, perhaps, but disastrous to implement. The clas-

sifications – as African (at various times also called 'native' and 'Bantu', and sometimes now also 'black'), coloured, Asian or white – were often arbitrary and highly contentious. They were used to regulate where and how people could live and work, and became the basis for institutionalised inequality and intolerance.

Today, these times are fading into history, although now discrimination based on wealth is threatening to replace racial discrimination. Yet the apartheid-era classification terms continue to be used. While we've also used these terms in this chapter, they work only to a certain extent, and within each of the four major categories are dozens of subgroups that are even more subjective and less clearly defined.

Most of the 'coloured' population lives in Northern Cape Province and Western Cape.

Cape Muslims are South Africans of long standing. Although many were brought to the early Cape Colony as slaves, others were political prisoners from the Dutch East Indies. Most South Africans of Indian descent live in KwaZulu-Natal.

Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the Free State are the Afrikaner heartlands. People of British descent are concentrated in KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape and Eastern Cape.

The Homelands no longer have any political meaning and were never realistic indicators of the area's cultural diversity, however it's still useful to have some idea of where the Homelands were and who lived (and still live) in them. Zulus are the largest group (seven million), followed by the Xhosa (six million) and the various Northern Sotho peoples, most of whom are Tswana. The smallest group are the Venda (500,000).

Superficially, urbanised European culture doesn't seem to differ much from other Western countries. However, the unique experience of the white people of Africa has given them a self-awareness that has raised culture to an issue of central importance. Those of Afrikaner and British descent form distinct subgroups.

South Africa's Gauteng province, which includes Johannesburg (Jo'burg) and Pretoria, is the most densely populated and urbanised

province. At the other end of the scale is the rural and underdeveloped Eastern Cape, where up to 20% of adults have never received any formal schooling.

Millions of immigrants from across the continent make their way to South Africa to take advantage of the country's powerhouse economy. Many of these who are considered illegal live in Jo'burg's impoverished inner city, causing resentment among some South Africans who accuse the outsiders of taking jobs and creating crime.

SPORT

South Africans are sports fanatics, and after decades of being shut out of international competition, the national teams are now hungry for glory. Football, followed by rugby and cricket, is the most popular spectator sport. The majority of football fans are black, while cricket and rugby attract predominately white crowds, although this is slowly changing.

South African rugby, in particular, is still struggling to shake its reputation as a whites-only domain, despite the inclusion of black players and officials. Development programmes are nurturing talent across the colour divides, and both rugby and cricket are now played regularly in Soweto and in some other townships. Victory in the 1995

ABUSING RIGHTS OF ADMISSION *Simon Richmond*

Because of its recent history of apartheid, racial discrimination remains a prominent issue in South Africa, one that nearly everyone is sensitive about. When a Cape Town newspaper, the *Cape Argus*, recently ran an investigation into whether backpacker lodges were using race-based criteria when they accepted guests, what they found was disturbing. Two undercover reporters – one young black man, one young white woman – were sent to six of the city's lodges; at three the black reporter was told the lodge was full, while his white counterpart was offered a room.

The lodges that had refused entry to the black reporter defended their rights to decide whom to grant admission to. Such rights of admission policies are common – not just in backpacker lodges, and not just in South Africa. The security and comfort of existing guests has to be respected, and we acknowledge the necessity for establishments to make split-second decisions on whether a potential customer should be allowed entry or not – and how difficult it is to get this right all the time.

From the *Cape Argus's* investigation and other reports sent to Lonely Planet it would seem that rights of admission policies are occasionally abused. In particular, if you're a black or coloured South African male, the chances of you being refused entry are likely to be higher than if you're a black or coloured South African female, a white South African or an overseas visitor. This could happen whether you just turn up at a hostel or make an advance booking.

Establishments rated by the South African Grading Council can be stripped of their stars if found to be racially discriminating against guests. We urge all travellers who experience racial discrimination to share their stories with both local tourism authorities and us – such information is taken into account for upcoming guides.

Rugby World Cup was a turning point, and the image of President Nelson Mandela celebrating while wearing a Springboks jersey became a symbol of reconciliation.

In 2010, South Africa will host the football World Cup. The big local match is the Soweto Derby, pitting Jo'burg's 'Orlando Pirates' and 'Kaizer Chiefs' teams against each other. Wherever you are in the country, if a local invites you to a game, don't miss it. And if you're in the townships, watch for football stars cruising the streets in their expensive cars, enjoying their pop-star status among their fans.

RELIGION

Around 75% of South Africans identify themselves as Christians. Major South denominations include the Nederduitse Gereformeerde (NG) or Dutch Reformed Churches, which have a national congregation of more than 3.5 million people and more than 1200 churches across the country, and the considerably more flamboyant Zion Christian Church (ZCC), with an estimated four million followers. Every year more than one million ZCC members gather at Zion city near Polokwane in Limpopo Province during festivals at Easter and in September.

Despite their disproportionately large social influence, Muslims, Hindus and Jews combined make up less than 6% of South Africans. The rest of the population are atheist, agnostic and a small number of people who follow traditional African beliefs.

Up to two-thirds of South Africa's Indians have retained their Hindu faith, and today most of the country's Hindus are of Indian decent. Islam has a small but growing following, particularly in the Cape. The Jewish community is estimated to be around 100,000, mostly in Jo'burg.

African traditional believers are a small group, although their traditions and practices have a significant influence on the cultural fabric and life of the region. The use of *muti*, or traditional medicine, is widespread, even among those who practise Christianity.

ARTS

For information on music in South Africa and the region, see p52.

Literature

Many of the first black South African writers were missionary-educated, including Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, who was also the first

Secretary-General of the ANC. In 1930, his epic romance, *Mhudi*, became one of the first books published in English by a black South African.

In 1948, Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* became an international bestseller. Today, this beautifully crafted, lyrical tale of a black priest who comes to Jo'burg to find his son is still one of the country's most widely recognised titles. Another Paton classic is *Too Late the Phalarope*, which looks at the Afrikaner psyche and the inhumanity of apartheid.

During the 1950s, *Drum* magazine became the focal point of lively satire, fiction and comment, and routinely drew attention as a major anti-apartheid mouthpiece, eventually launching the careers of numerous prominent journalists and authors.

In the 1960s, future Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer began publishing her first books, but her most famous novel, *July's People*, was released in 1981, and depicts the collapse of white rule.

It was also in the 1960s and into the '70s that Afrikaner writers like Breyten Breytenbach and André Brink began to gain prominence as powerful voices for the opposition. Brink's classic novel, *A Dry White Season*, portrays the lonely struggles of a white South African who discovered the truth about a black friend who died in police custody. Another Brink title, *The Rights of Desire*, is a tale of post-apartheid South Africa.

The 1970s also gave rise to several influential black poets, including Mongane Wally Serote, a veteran of the liberation struggle. His work, including the moving epic poem 'No Baby Must Weep', served as a rallying force for those living under apartheid.

John Maxwell (JM) Coetzee was also published in the 1970s, although it wasn't until two decades later that he gained international acclaim. His novel *Disgrace* – a powerful, brittle and complex look at South African social realities – was released in 1999 and won Coetzee his second Booker Prize. Coetzee won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003.

One of the most prominent contemporary authors is Zakes Mda, who – with the publication of *Ways of Dying* in 1995 – made a successful transition from poetry and plays to become an acclaimed novelist. His most recent book, *The Whale Caller* (2005), takes a somewhat sceptical look at the optimism surrounding the new South Africa.

Visual Arts

South African art had its beginnings with the San, who left their distinctive designs on rock faces and cave walls throughout the region. When European painters arrived, many of their early works centred on depictions of Africa for colonial enthusiasts back home, although with time, a more South Africa-centred focus developed.

Black artists were sidelined for many decades. Gerard Sekoto was one of the first to break through the barriers. At about the same time that Sekoto was gaining prominence, a Sophiatown neighbour, John Koenakeefe Mohl, began spearheading artistic instruction and schooling for young black artists. In 1960, he was one of the founding members of the Artists' Market Association, which was set up to provide a showcase for young talent – today continued in Artists Under the Sun.

Theatre & Dance

During the colonial era, South African theatre was dominated by European and American plays staged for local audiences. But home-grown playwrights, performers and directors gradually emerged, particularly in the 1930s, when theatre began to gain popularity in the townships. One of the first black South African writers to have his work published in English was Herbert Dhlomo, who won acclaim for his 1936 drama *The Girl Who Killed to Save*.

Athol Fugard played a crucial role in developing and nurturing black theatrical talent by establishing troupes in Port Elizabeth and Jo'burg during the 1950s. By the 1960s and '70s, theatre and politics were inextricably intertwined and several artists were arrested and others had their work banned. The innovative two-man show *Woza Albert!*, portraying Jesus Christ arriving in apartheid-era South Africa, won rave reviews and international acclaim.

In 1974, run-down buildings at Jo'burg's old 'Indian' fruit market were converted to become the Market Theatre, with patrons and performers defying the apartheid government's notorious Group Areas Act to ensure that it become an all-race venue. Today, the Market Theatre is still one of the best-known performance spaces in the country (see p549).

ENVIRONMENT

The Land

South Africa spreads over 1,233,404 sq km – five times the size of the UK – at the tip of the

African continent. On three sides, it's edged by a windswept and stunningly beautiful coastline, winding down the Atlantic seaboard in the west, and up into the warmer Indian Ocean waters to the east.

Much of the country consists of a vast plateau averaging 1500m in height, and known as the highveld. To the east is a narrow coastal plain (the lowveld), while to the northwest is the low-lying Kalahari Basin. The dramatic Drakensberg Escarpment marks the point where the highveld plummets down towards the eastern lowlands.

Wildlife

ANIMALS

South Africa is home to one of the most magnificent groupings of wildlife on the planet. You probably have a better chance of seeing the Big Five – the black rhino, Cape buffalo, elephant, leopard and lion – in South Africa than anywhere else. On even just a short visit to the country's parks you are almost guaranteed to see dozens of creatures, and the chance to spot the big cats and great herd animals is one of the region's prime attractions. See the boxed text, p61 for tips on wildlife viewing.

The best time for wildlife watching is the cooler, dry winter (June to September) when foliage is less dense, and animals congregate at waterholes, making spotting easier. Summer (late November to March) is rainy and hot, with the animals more widely dispersed and often difficult to see. However, the landscape turns beautiful shades of green around this time and bird life is abundant.

South Africa hosts over 800 bird species, including the world's largest bird (the ostrich), its heaviest flying bird (Kori bustard), and vividly coloured sunbirds and flamingos. Also here in abundance are weavers, who share their huge city-like nests with pygmy falcons, the world's smallest raptors.

Bird-watching is good year-round, with spring (August to November) and summer the best.

Endangered Species

The black rhino is the highest-profile entry on South Africa's threatened species list (good places to spot these include Mkhuzi Game Reserve, p515 and Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park, p512), and the riverine rabbit is the country's most endangered mammal. The wild dog

(seen with luck in Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park) is also endangered, as is the roan antelope.

Endangered bird species include the grace-ful wattled crane and the blue swallow. The African penguin and the Cape vulture are considered threatened.

PLANTS

Over 20,000 plant species sprout from South Africa's soil – an amazing 10% of the world's total, although the country constitutes only 1% of the earth's land surface.

Dozens of flowers that are domesticated elsewhere grow wild here, including gladiolus, proteas, birds of paradise and African lilies. South Africa is also the only country with one of the world's six floral kingdoms within its borders.

In the drier northwest, there are succulents (dominated by euphorbias and aloes), and annuals, which flower brilliantly after the spring rains, and are one of Northern Cape's major tourist attractions.

In contrast to this floral wealth, South Africa has few natural forests. They were never extensive, and today only remnants remain. Temperate forests occur on the southern coastal strip between George and Humansdorp, in the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg and in Mpumalanga. Subtropical forests are found northeast of Port Elizabeth in the areas just inland from the Wild Coast, and in KwaZulu-Natal.

In the north are large areas of savanna, dotted with acacias and thorn trees.

National Parks & Reserves

South Africa has close to 600 national parks and reserves, collectively boasting spectacular scenery, impressive fauna and flora, excellent facilities and reasonable prices. Many are enclosed within fences, intended to minimise conflict between the animals and their human neighbours. Yet, due to the vast spaces, you'll generally only see the fences when you drive through the park gates – the wildlife itself is satisfyingly and completely wild. Visiting the parks and reserves will likely be the highlight of your visit. The most famous feature wildlife, while others are primarily wilderness sanctuaries or hiking areas.

When on safari, it's worth remembering that wildlife tourism is one of the main sources of revenue for conservation efforts in South Africa. The money you spend in

national parks and reserves is ploughed back into these areas, thus ensuring that future visitors will be able to collect their own unforgettable memories.

The majority of the larger wildlife parks are under the jurisdiction of the **South African National (SAN) Parks Board** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org), except for those in KwaZulu-Natal, which are run by **KZN Wildlife** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com). Several other provinces also have conservation bodies that oversee smaller conservation areas within their boundaries. **Komatiland Eco-Tourism** (☎ 013-754 2724; www.komatiecotourism.co.za) oversees forest areas, promotes ecotourism and manages several hiking trails around Mpumalanga. Other useful contacts include **Cape Nature Conservation** (☎ 021-426 0723; www.capenature.org.za) and the **Eastern Cape Tourism Board** (☎ 043-701 9600; www.ectb.co.za).

All South African national parks charge a daily entry ('conservation') fee. Amounts vary; see individual park listings for detail. One way to save is to consider purchasing a Wild Card from SAN Parks. There are different versions of the card, including one for foreign tourists which gives you 10 days' entry into any one park for US\$107 (US\$188 per couple, US\$241 per family). This isn't much of a saving for some of the less expensive parks, but if you're planning at least five days in Kruger National Park (where the daily entry fee is US\$16), it's worth buying. SAN Parks also has cards targeted at different park clusters. For details on acquiring a Wild Card, see www.wildinafrica.com.

In addition to its national parks, South Africa is also party to several transfrontier parks joining conservation areas across international borders. These include Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (p121), combining Northern Cape's old Kalahari Gemsbok National Park with Botswana's Gemsbok National Park; and the ambitious Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, which spreads nearly 100,000 sq km (larger than Portugal) across the borders of South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Private wildlife reserves also abound and while entry to these generally costs more than their public equivalents, you can often get closer to the animals.

In total, just under 7% of South African land has been given protected status. The government has started teaming up with private landowners to bring private conservation land under government protection, with the goal

TOP PARKS & RESERVES

Location Park	Features	Activities	Best Time to Visit	Page
Cape Peninsula				
Table Mountain National Park	rocky headlands, seascapes; water birds, bonteboks, elands, African penguins	hiking, mountain biking	year-round	p419
Western Cape				
Cederberg Wilderness Area	mountainous and rugged; San rock paintings bizzare sandstone formations, abundant plant life	hiking	year-round	p457
Mpumalanga/ Limpopo				
Kruger National Park	savanna, woodlands, thornveld; the Big Five and many more	vehicle safaris, guided wildlife walks	Jun-Oct	p528
Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve	canyon, caves, river; stunning vistas	hiking, kloofing	year-round	p536
Northern Cape				
Augrabies Falls National Park	desert, river, waterfalls; klipspringers, rock dassies; striking scenery	hiking, canoeing, rafting	Apr-Sep	p464
Richersveld National Park	mountainous desert; haunting beauty klipspringers, jackals, zebras, plants, birds	hiking	Apr-Sep	p465
Eastern Cape				
Addo Elephant National Park	dense bush, coastal grasslands, forested kloofs; elephants, black rhinos, buffaloes	vehicle safaris, walking trails, horse riding	year-round	p481
Tsitsikamma National Park	coast, cliffs, rivers, ravines, forests; Cape clawless otters, baboons, monkeys, rich birdlife	hiking	year-round	p466
KwaZulu-Natal				
Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park	lush, subtropical vegetation, rolling savanna; rhinos, giraffes, lions, elephants, lots of birds	wilderness walks, wildlife watching	May-Oct	p512
Greater St Lucia Wetland Park	wetlands, coastal grasslands; elephants, birds, hippos	wilderness walks, vehicle/boat safaris	Mar-Nov	p513
Mkhuze Game Reserve	savanna, woodlands, swamp; rhinos and almost everything else; hundreds of bird species	guided walks, bird walks, vehicle safaris	year-round	p515
uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park	awe-inspiring Drakensberg escarpment; fantastic scenery and wilderness areas	hiking	year-round	p516
Free State				
Golden Gate Highlands National Park	spectacular sandstone cliffs and outcrops; zebras, jackals, rheboks, elands, birds	hiking	year-round	p565

of ultimately increasing the total amount of conservation land to over 10%.

Environmental Issues

South Africa is the world's third most biologically diverse country. It's also one of Africa's most urbanised, with approximately 60% of the population living in towns and cities. Major challenges for the government include managing increasing urbanisation and population growth while protecting the environment. The picture is complicated by a distorted rural-urban settlement pattern – a grim legacy

of the apartheid era – with huge population concentrations in townships that generally lack adequate utilities and infrastructure.

Land degradation is one of the most serious problems, with about 25% of South Africa's land considered to be severely degraded. In former homeland areas, years of overgrazing and overcropping have resulted in massive soil depletion. This, plus poor overall conditions, is pushing people to the cities, further increasing urban pressures.

Water is another issue. South Africa receives an average of only 500mm of rainfall

annually, and droughts are common. To meet demand, all major South African rivers have been dammed or modified. While this has improved water supplies to many areas, it has also disrupted local ecosystems and caused increased silting.

FOOD & DRINK

It's only since the dismantling of apartheid that anyone has talked of South African cuisine as a unified whole. Earlier, the Africans had their mealie pap (maize porridge), the Afrikaners their boerewors (spicy farmer's sausages), and the Indians and Cape Malays their curries. Today, along with divisions in other aspects of life, the culinary barriers are starting to fall.

Awaiting the visiting gastronome is a fusion of influences: hearty meat and vegetable stews that resulted when the Dutch encountered the bush; the seemingly endless variety of maize dishes that have been at the centre of African family life for centuries; a sprinkling of *piri-piri* (hot pepper) from Mozambique; and scents of curry and coriander that have wafted over the Indian Ocean from Asia.

Perhaps more than anything else, it's the braai (barbecue) – an Afrikaner institution that has broken across race lines – that defines South African cuisine. It's as much a social event as a form of cooking, with the essential elements boerewors and beer. The Winelands and Cape Town remain the best places to eat well.

BILTONG & BOEREWORS

Your first introduction to traditional Afrikaner cuisine is likely to be *biltong* (dried meat) or *boerewors*. If you're having trouble getting used to boerewors, it could be that you're eating *braaiwors* (barbecue sausages), an inferior grade. *Potjiekos* (pot food) traditionally features stewed meat and vegetables that has bubbled away for hours in a three-legged pot over hot coals.

CAPE CUISINE

Often referred to as Cape Malay cuisine, Cape cuisine has its roots in the mixing of the 'Malay' slaves (many of whom were from Madagascar and Indonesia) with the Dutch settlers. Often stodgy and overly sweet, it's nonetheless well worth trying. The central feature is a mixture of Asian spices and local produce. Dishes to watch for include bobotie (traditional Malay dish of delicately flavoured curry with a topping of beaten egg baked to

a crust, served with stewed fruits and chutney), *waterblommetjie bredie* (water-flower stew; meat stewed with the flower of the Cape pondweed) and *malva* (apricot pudding).

CURRIES

Along with Mahatma Ghandi, India's other great export to South Africa has been the curry. Durban is the place to go for the spiciest curries. Curries are also popular in Cape cuisine, though they're usually not as spicy. If you're in Durban and hungry for a quick bite try a filling *bunny chow* (curry-to-go: half a loaf of bread, scooped out and filled with curry).

MEALIE PAP

Mealie pap is the most widely eaten food in South Africa. It's thinner or stiffer (depending on where you eat it), bland and something of an acquired taste. However, it's ideal if you want something filling and economical, and can be quite satisfying served with a good sauce or stew.

BEER

Beer is the national beverage. There are numerous reasonable brands, including Castle, Black Label and Namibia's all-natural Windhoek. In the Cape provinces try Mitchell's and Birkenhead's. Lager-style beer comes in cans or dumpies (small bottles) for around US\$1.10. Bars serve long toms (750ml bottles) for around US\$1.40. Draught beers are uncommon.

WATER

Tap water is generally safe in South Africa's cities. However, in rural areas (or anywhere that local conditions indicate that water sources may be contaminated), stick to bottled water and purify stream water.

WINE

South African wine debuted in 1659. Since then, it's had time to age to perfection, and is both of a high standard and reasonably priced. Dry whites are particularly good – try Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Colombard and Chenin Blanc – while popular reds include Cabernet Sauvignon, pinotage (a local cross of Pinot and Cinsaut, which was known as Hermitage), Shiraz and Pinot Noir.

Wine prices average from around US\$8 in a restaurant or bottle store. Most restaurants stock a few varieties in dinkies (250ml bottles).

CAPE TOWN

☎ 021 / pop 3,140,600

Good looking, fun-loving, sporty and laid-back. If Cape Town was in the dating game that's how her profile would read. And – for once – it's all true. The Mother City occupies one of the world's most stunning locations, with an iconic mountain slap-bang in its centre. As beautiful as the surrounding beaches and vineyards can be, as cosmopolitan and lively as its cultural scene, it's the rugged wilderness of Table Mountain, coated in a unique flora, that is the focus of attention.

Complementing this natural beauty is Cape Town's eye-catching way with design and colour – in everything from the brightly painted façades of the Bo-Kaap and the Victorian bathing chalets of Muizenberg, to the contemporary Afro-chic décor of the many excellent guesthouses, restaurants and bars. The city's multiethnic population is proof of South Africa's 'rainbow nation' and a visual record of the city's tumultuous recorded history of over 350 years.

It's a place of extremes, with the wealth of Camps Bay and Constantia side by side with the poverty of townships such as Khayelitsha. Even in the townships and the deprived coloured areas of the city – home to the vast majority of Capetonians – there are huge differences in lifestyle and many great examples of civic pride and optimism to balance against the shocking crime and HIV/AIDS statistics. Discovering the Mother City's true diversity and spirit is all part of getting the most out of a visit here.

HISTORY

Long before the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie; VOC) established a base here in 1652, the Cape Town area was settled by the San and Khoekhoen nomadic tribes, collectively known as the Khoesaaan. The indigenous people shunned the Dutch, so the VOC was forced to import slaves from Madagascar, India, Ceylon, Malaya and Indonesia to deal with the colony's chronic labour shortage. Women were in even shorter supply, so the Europeans exploited the female slaves and the local Khoesaaan for both labour and sex. In time the slaves also intermixed with the Khoesaaan. The offspring of these unions formed the basis of sections of today's coloured population and also helps

explain the unique character of the city's Cape Muslim population.

In the 150-odd years of Dutch rule, Kaapstad, as the Cape settlement became known, thrived and gained a wider reputation as the 'Tavern of the Seven Seas', a riotous port used by sailors travelling between Europe and the East. But by the end of the 18th century the VOC was almost bankrupt, making Cape Town an easy target for British imperial interests. Following the British defeat of the Dutch in 1806 at Bloubergstrand, 25km north of Cape Town, the colony was ceded to the Crown on 13 August 1814. The slave trade was abolished in 1808, and all slaves were emancipated in 1833.

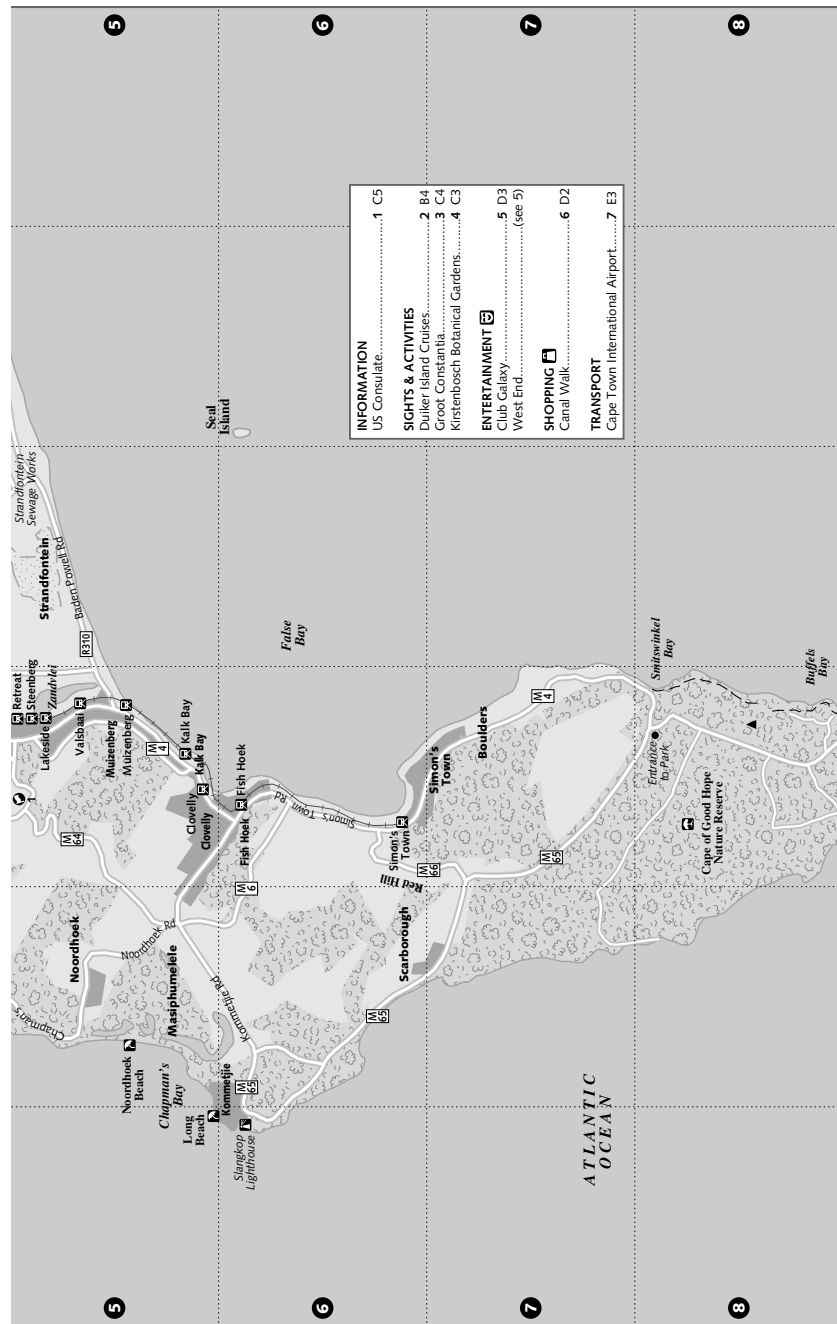
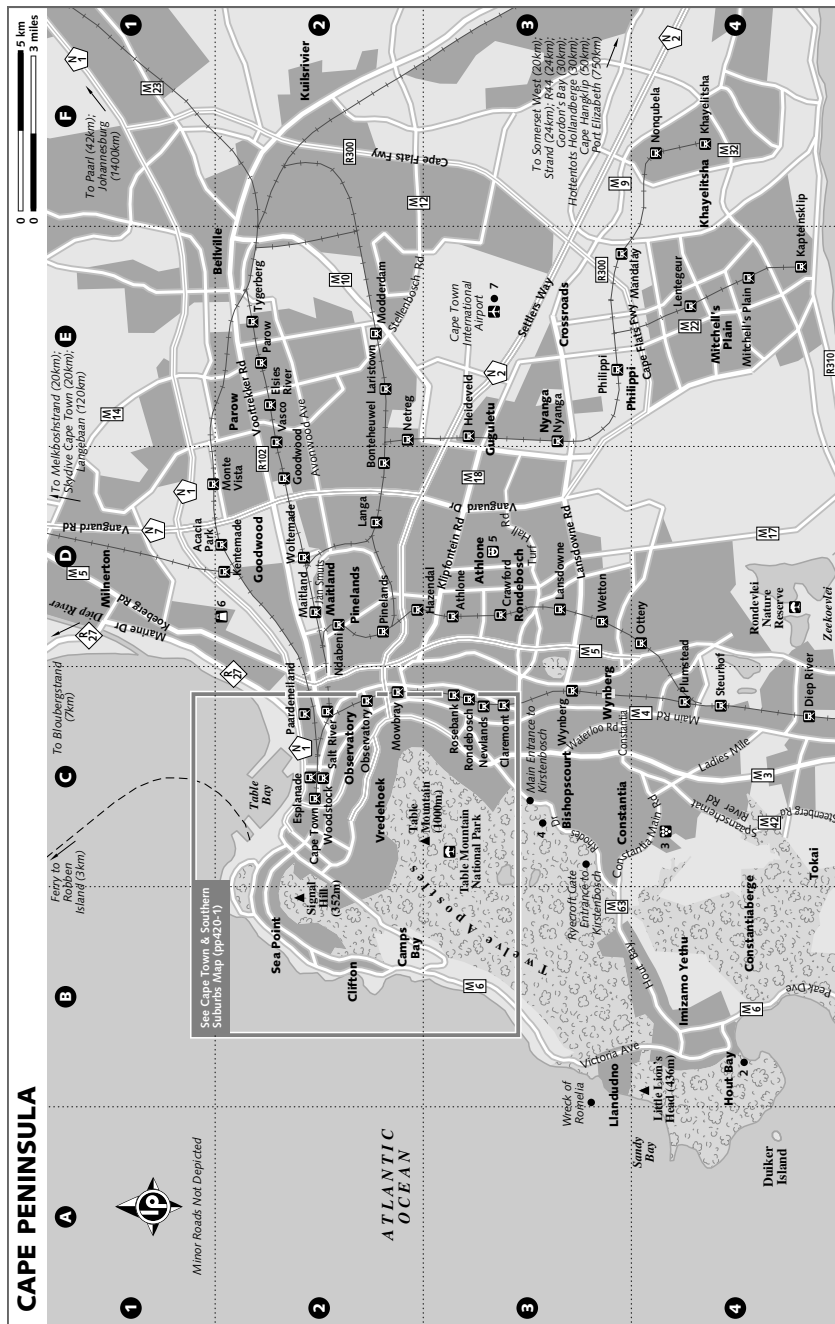
The discovery and exploitation of diamonds and gold in the centre of South Africa in the 1870s and 1880s led to rapid changes. Cape Town was soon no longer the single dominant metropolis in the country, but as a major port it too was a beneficiary of the mineral wealth that laid the foundations for an industrial society. The same wealth led to imperialist dreams of grandeur on the part of Cecil John Rhodes (premier of the Cape Colony in 1890), who had made his millions at the head of De Beers Consolidated Mines.

An outbreak of bubonic plague in 1901 was blamed on the black African workers (although it actually came on boats from Argentina) and gave the government an excuse to introduce racial segregation: blacks were moved to two locations, one near the docks and the other at Ndabeni on the western flank of Table Mountain. This was the start of what would later develop into the townships of the Cape Flats.

In 1948 the National Party stood for election on its policy of apartheid and narrowly won. In a series of bitter court and constitutional battles, the limited rights of blacks and coloureds to vote in the Cape were removed and the insane apparatus of apartheid was erected. This resulted in whole communities, such as District Six, being uprooted and cast out to the bleak Cape Flats.

The government tried for decades to eradicate squatter towns, such as Crossroads, which were focal points for black resistance to the apartheid regime. In its last attempt between May and June 1986, an estimated 70,000 people were driven from their homes and hundreds were killed. Even this brutal attack was unsuccessful in eradicating the towns, and the government accepted the inevitable and began to upgrade conditions.

CAPE PENINSULA



Hours after being released from prison on 11 February 1990, Nelson Mandela made his first public speech in decades from the balcony of Cape Town's City Hall, heralding the beginning of a new era for South Africa. Much has improved in Cape Town since – property prices keep booming and the city centre is a safer and more pleasant place to shop, work and live, with the development of ritzy loft-style apartments in grand old structures such as Mutual Heights.

Full integration of Cape Town's mixed population, however, remains a long way off, if it's achievable at all. The vast majority of Capetonians who live in the Cape Flats remain split along race lines and suffer horrendous economic, social and health problems, not least of which are the HIV/AIDs pandemic and high levels of drug-related crime. At the most recent local elections in March 2006, among the issues that helped the Democratic Alliance receive a higher percentage of the vote than the ruling African National Congress (ANC) were local government corruption, the rolling power outages in the city and lack of funds for the overstretched fire brigade.

CLIMATE

Great extremes of temperature are unknown in Cape Town, although it can be relatively cold and wet for a few months in winter (between June and August) when temperatures range from 7°C to 18°C. Spring weather from September to November is unpredictable. December to March is hot, although the average maximum temperature is only 26°C with the strong southeasterly wind (known as the Cape Doctor) generally keeping things bearable. From March to April, and to a lesser extent in May, the weather remains good and the wind is at its most gentle.

ORIENTATION

Cape Town's commercial centre – known as the City Bowl – lies to the north of Table Mountain and east of Signal Hill. The inner-city suburbs of Gardens, Oranjezicht and Tamboerskloof are all within walking distance of it. Nearby Signal Hill, Green Point and Sea Point are other densely populated seaside suburbs.

The city sprawls quite a distance to the northeast (this is where you'll find the beachside district of Bloubergstrand and the enormous Canal Walk Shopping Centre). To the south, skirting the eastern flank of the mountains and

running down to Muizenberg at False Bay, are leafy and increasingly rich suburbs including Observatory, Newlands and Constantia.

On the Atlantic Coast, exclusive Clifton and Camps Bay are accessible by coastal road from Sea Point or via Kloof Nek, the pass between Table Mountain and Lion's Head. Camps Bay is a 10-minute drive from the city centre and can easily be reached by public transport, but as you go further south, the communities of Llandudno, Hout Bay and Noordhoek are better explored with your own car or bike.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

The main mass-market bookshop and newsagent is CNA, with numerous branches around the city.

Clarke's Bookshop (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 5739; www.clarkesbooks.co.za; 211 Long St, City Bowl) Stocks an unsurpassed range on South Africa and the continent.

Exclusive Books Waterfront (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-419 0905; Victoria Wharf); Cavendish Sq Mall (Map pp420-1; Claremont); Lifestyles on Kloof (Map p431; Kloof St) Has an excellent range, including some books in French.

Emergency

In an emergency call ☎ 107, or ☎ 112 if using a mobile phone. Other useful phone numbers:

Ambulance (☎ 10177)

Fire brigade (☎ 021-535 1100)

Mountain Rescue Services (☎ 021-948 9900)

Police (☎ 10111)

Internet Access

Cape Town is one of the most wired cities in Africa. Most hotels and hostels have internet facilities and you'll seldom have to hunt far for an internet café. Rates are pretty uniform at US\$1.40 per hour.

Catwalk TV (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 8999; www.catwalk.co.za; 16 Burg St, City Bowl; ☎ 24hr) Central and handy.

Medical Services

Christian Barnard Memorial Hospital (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-480 6111; www.netcare.co.za; 181 Longmarket St, City Bowl) The best private hospital; reception is on the 8th floor.

Groote Schuur Hospital (Map pp420-1; ☎ 021-404 9111; capegateway.gov.za/gsh; Main Rd, Observatory)

SAA-Netcare Travel Clinic (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-419 3172; 11th fl, Picbal Arcade, 58 Strand St, City Bowl; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) For vaccinations and travel health.

Money

Money can be changed at the airport, most commercial banks and at Cape Town Tourism (below). Rennie's Travel (below), the local agent for Thomas Cook, has foreign-exchange offices.

There are ATMs all over town.

American Express City Bowl (☎ 021-425 7991; Thibault Sq); Waterfront (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-419 3917; V&A Hotel Mall, Waterfront)

Post

General post office (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-464 1700; Parliament St, City Bowl; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Has a poste restante counter.

Tourist Information

Cape Town Tourism (www.tourismcapetown.co.za) City Centre (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-487 6800; cnr Castle & Burg Sts, City Bowl; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Oct-Mar, 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Apr-Sep); Waterfront (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-405 4500; Clock Tower Centre; ☎ 9am-9pm) At this impressive and well-run centre, you'll find advisers who can book accommodation, tours and rental cars. At the City Centre branch you can also get advice on Cape Nature Conservation Parks (☎ 021-426 0723) and the National Parks & Reserves (☎ 021-423 8005). There's also an internet café and a foreign-exchange booth.

Travel Agencies

Africa Travel Centre (Map p432; ☎ 021-423 5555; www.backpackers.co.za; Backpack, 74 New Church St, Tamboerskloof) Books all sorts of tours and activities, including day trips, hire cars and extended truck tours of Africa.

Atlantic Tourist Information Centre (Map pp420-1; ☎ 021-434 2382; www.arokan.co.za; 242 Main Rd, Three Anchor Bay) Gay-run tour company and travel agent.

Rennie's Travel (www.renniestravel.co.za) City Bowl (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 7154; 101 St George's Mall); Sea Point (Map pp420-1; ☎ 021-439 7529; 182 Main Rd); Waterfront (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-418 3744; Victoria Wharf) Handles international and domestic bookings and is the agent for Thomas Cook travellers cheques. It can arrange visas for neighbouring countries.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Cape Town remains one of the most relaxed cities in Africa, which can instil a false sense of security. Thefts are most likely to happen when visitors do something stupid like leaving their gear on a beach while they go swimming.

Paranoia is not required, but common sense is. There is tremendous poverty on the penin-

sula and the 'informal redistribution of wealth' is reasonably common. The townships on the Cape Flats have an appalling crime rate and unless you have a trustworthy guide or are on a tour they are not places for a casual stroll.

Stick to the roads when you walk around the city, and always listen to local advice. There is safety in numbers.

Swimming at any of the Cape beaches is potentially hazardous, especially for those inexperienced in surf. Check for warning signs about rips and rocks and only swim in patrolled areas.

SIGHTS

Table Mountain National Park

Covering some three quarters of the peninsula **Table Mountain National Park** (www.tmnp.co.za) stretches from flat-topped Table Mountain (*Hoerikwaggo*, its indigenous Khoesaaan name means 'mountain in the sea') to Cape Point. For the vast majority of visitors the main attraction is the 1086m-high mountain itself, the top of which can easily be accessed by the **Cableway** (☎ 021-424 5148; www.tablemountain.net; adult one-way/return US\$8/16, child US\$4/6; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Feb-Nov, to 10pm Dec & Jan), which runs every 10/20 minutes in high/low season.

The views from the revolving cable car and on the summit are phenomenal. Once you're at the top there are souvenir shops, a café and some easy walks to follow. The Cableway doesn't operate when it's dangerously windy, and there's little point going up if you are simply going to be wrapped in the cloud known as the 'tablecloth'. The best visibility and conditions are likely to be first thing in the morning or in the evening. For details of climbing the mountain see p427.

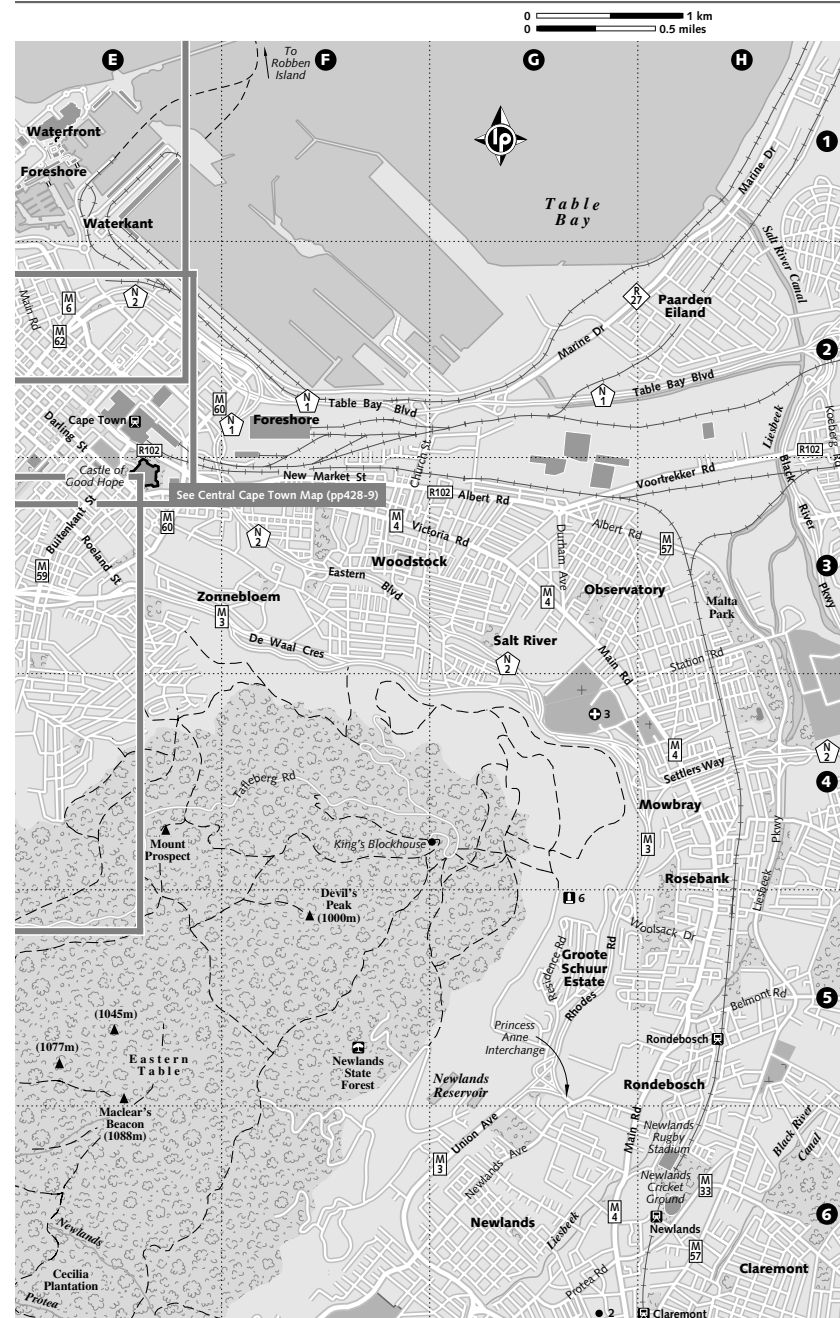
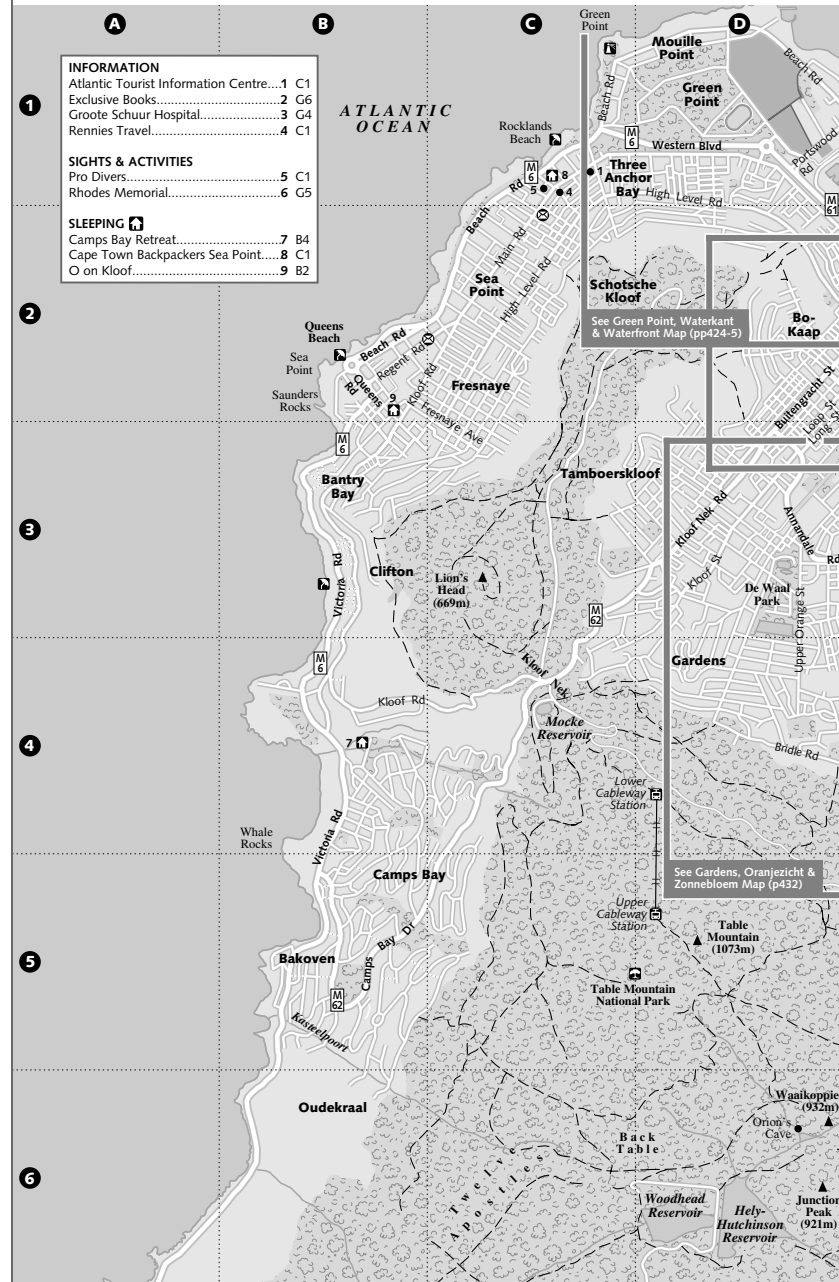
If you don't have your own transport, Rikis (small, open vans; see p437) will drop you at the cable car from the city centre for US\$2; a nonshared taxi will cost around US\$7.

Robben Island & Nelson Mandela Gateway

Prisoners were incarcerated on **Robben Island** (☎ 413 4220; www.robben-island.org.za; adult/child US\$20/10; ☎ hourly ferries 9am-3pm, sunset tour 5pm Dec & Jan) from the early days of the VOC right up until 1996. Now a museum and UN World Heritage Site, it is one of the most popular destinations in all of Cape Town.

While we heartily recommend going to Robben Island, a visit here is not without

CAPE TOWN & SOUTHERN SUBURBS



its drawbacks. Most likely you will have to endure crowds and being hustled around on a guided tour that at a maximum of two hours on the island (plus a 30-minute boat ride in both directions) is woefully short. You will learn much of what happened to Mandela and others like him, since one of the former inmates will lead you around the prison.

The standard tours, which have set departure and return times when you buy your ticket, include a walk through the old prison, as well as a 45-minute bus ride around the island with commentary on the various places of note. If you're lucky, you'll have about 10 minutes to wander around on your own. We recommend heading straight to the prison's A-section to view the remarkable and very moving exhibition 'Cell Stories'. In each of 40 isolation cells is an artefact and story from a former political prisoner.

Tours depart from the **Nelson Mandela Gateway** (Map pp424-5; admission free; ☎ 9am-8.30pm) beside the Clock Tower at the Waterfront. Even if you don't plan a visit to the island, it's worth dropping by the museum here, with its focus on the struggle for freedom. Book at the Nelson Mandela Gateway departure point or at Cape Town Tourism (see p419) in the city. At holiday times all tours can be booked up for days.

City Bowl

The commercial heart of Cape Town, City Bowl is squeezed between Table Mountain, Signal Hill and the harbour. Immediately to the west is the Bo-Kaap and the Waterkant, and to the east Zonnebloem (once known as District Six).

DISTRICT SIX MUSEUM

If you see only one museum in Cape Town make it the **District Six Museum** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-466 7200; www.districtsix.co.za; 25A Buitenkant St; adult/child US\$2/1.30; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon, to 4pm Tue-Sat). Note that almost all township tours stop here first to explain the history of the pass laws. This emotionally moving museum is as much for the people of the now-vanished District Six as it is about them. Displays include a floor map of District Six on which former residents have labelled where their demolished homes and features of their neighbourhood once stood.

You can also arrange a **walking tour** (☎ 021-466 7208; per person US\$7, 10 people minimum) of the old District Six.

CASTLE OF GOOD HOPE

Many are surprised to find a **castle** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-787 1249; www.castleofgoodhope.co.za; entrance on Buitenkant St; Mon-Sat adult/child US\$2.70/1.30, Sun US\$1.40/0.70; ☎ 9am-4pm, tours 11am, noon & 2pm Mon-Sat) in Cape Town. Built between 1666 and 1679 to defend the city, this stone-walled pentagonal structure is commonly touted as the city's oldest building. A tour is worthwhile, but you can quite easily find your own way around. A key ceremony at the castle gate – when the keys to the gate are handed over in an orchestrated ceremony – is held at 10am Monday to Friday.

COMPANY'S GARDENS

These shady green **gardens** (Map p432; ☎ 7am-7pm) in the heart of the city are a lovely place to relax during the heat of the day. The surviving six hectares of what started as the vegetable patch for the Dutch East India Company are found around Government Ave.

HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

Although it sounds unlikely, visiting South Africa's **parliament** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-403 2266; www.parliament.gov.za; Parliament St; admission free; ☎ tours by appointment Mon-Fri) can be fascinating, especially if you're interested in the country's modern history. Opened in 1885, the hallowed halls have seen some pretty momentous events, including when president Hendrik Verwoerd, architect of apartheid, was stabbed to death in 1966. You must present your passport to gain entry.

LONG STREET

Whether you come to browse the antique shops, secondhand bookstores and the streetwear boutiques, or to party at the host of bars and clubs that crank up at night, a stroll along Long St (Map pp428-9) is an essential element of a Cape Town visit. The most attractive section, lined with Victorian-era buildings with lovely wrought-iron balconies, runs from the junction with Buitensingel St north to around the Strand.

SIGNAL HILL & NOON GUN

Once also known as Lion's Rump, as it's attached to Lion's Head by a 'spine' of hills, Signal Hill (Map pp428-9) separates Sea Point from the City Bowl. There are magnificent views from the 350m-high summit, especially at night.

At noon Monday to Saturday, a cannon known as the Noon Gun (Map pp428-9) is

fired from the lower slopes of Signal Hill. Traditionally this allowed the burghers in the town below to check their watches. It's a stiff walk up here through the Bo-Kaap – take Longmarket St and keep going until it ends.

SLAVE LODGE

One of the oldest buildings in South Africa, dating from 1660, **Slave Lodge** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-460 8240; www.museums.org.za/slavelodge; 49 Adderley St; adult/child US\$1.40/0.70; ☎ 10am-4.30pm Mon-Sat) has a fascinating history. Until 1811 the building was home, if you could call it that, to as many as 1000 slaves, who lived in damp, insanitary, crowded conditions. Up to 20% died each year. The slaves were bought and sold just around the corner on Spin St.

The museum today is increasingly devoted to the history and experience of slaves and their descendants in the Cape, although the displays on the 2nd floor, including artefacts from ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, hark back to the building's former use as the Cultural History Museum.

BO-KAAP MUSEUM

Giving some insight into the history and lifestyle of the people of the Bo-Kaap is this small but engaging **museum** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-481 3939; www.museums.org.za/bokaap/index.html; 71 Wale St, Bo-Kaap; adult/child US\$0.70/0.30; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat). It's worth a stroll around the area (during the day) to admire the traditional architecture.

Gardens & Around

Rising up Table Mountain's slopes are the ritzy suburbs of Gardens, Tamboerskloof, Oranjezicht and Vredehoek. Most of the major sights here are clustered around the Company's Gardens (opposite).

SA NATIONAL GALLERY

South Africa's premier **gallery** (Map p432; ☎ 021-467 4660; www.museums.org.za/sang; Government Ave, Gardens; adult/child US\$1.40/0.70, Sat by donation; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) is a must for art lovers. The permanent collection harks back to Dutch times and includes some extraordinary pieces, but it's often contemporary works that stand out the most.

SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH MUSEUM & CAPE TOWN HOLOCAUST CENTRE

The **South African Jewish Museum** (Map p432; ☎ 021-465 1546; www.sajewishmuseum.co.za; 88 Hatfield St, Gardens;

adult/child US\$4.70/0.30; ☎ 10am-5pm Sun-Thu, to 2pm Fri) is one of the most imaginatively designed and interesting of the city's museums. Entry is through the beautifully restored Old Synagogue (1862).

In the same complex you'll also find the **Cape Town Holocaust Centre** (Map p432; ☎ 021-462 5553; www.museums.org.za/ctholocaust; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Sun-Thu, to 1pm Fri). Although small, the centre packs a lot in with a considerable emotional punch.

Green Point & Waterfront

Cape Town's prime Atlantic Coast suburbs start at the Waterfront, from where you depart for Robben Island (p419). Near here you'll also find Green Point, which has lately seen development of a shopping and dining complex.

VICTORIA & ALBERT WATERFRONT

Commonly referred to as just the **Waterfront** (www.waterfront.co.za), this tourist-oriented precinct offers masses of shops, restaurants, bars, cinemas and other attractions, including cruises of the harbour (see p426). Its success is partly down to the fact that it remains a working harbour still used by tugs, harbour vessels of various kinds and fishing boats; there are always seals splashing around or lazing near the docks.

Recent developments at the Waterfront include the millionaires' playground of the **V & A Marina** with some 600 apartments and 200 boat moorings, and the construction of **Nobel Square** (Map pp424-5; Dock Rd). Check out the larger-than-life statues of South Africa's four Nobel Prize winners: Nkosi Albert Luthuli, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and former presidents FW De Klerk and Nelson Mandela.

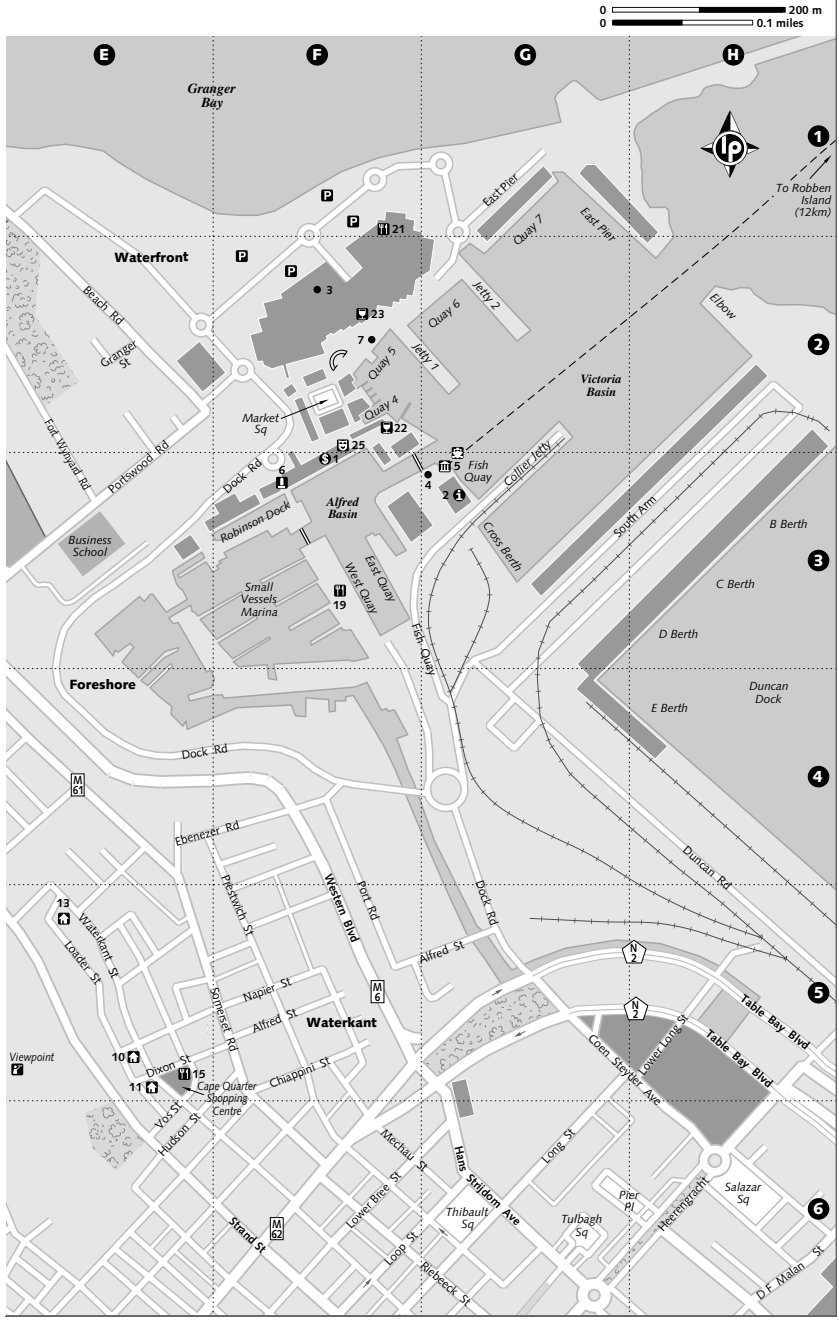
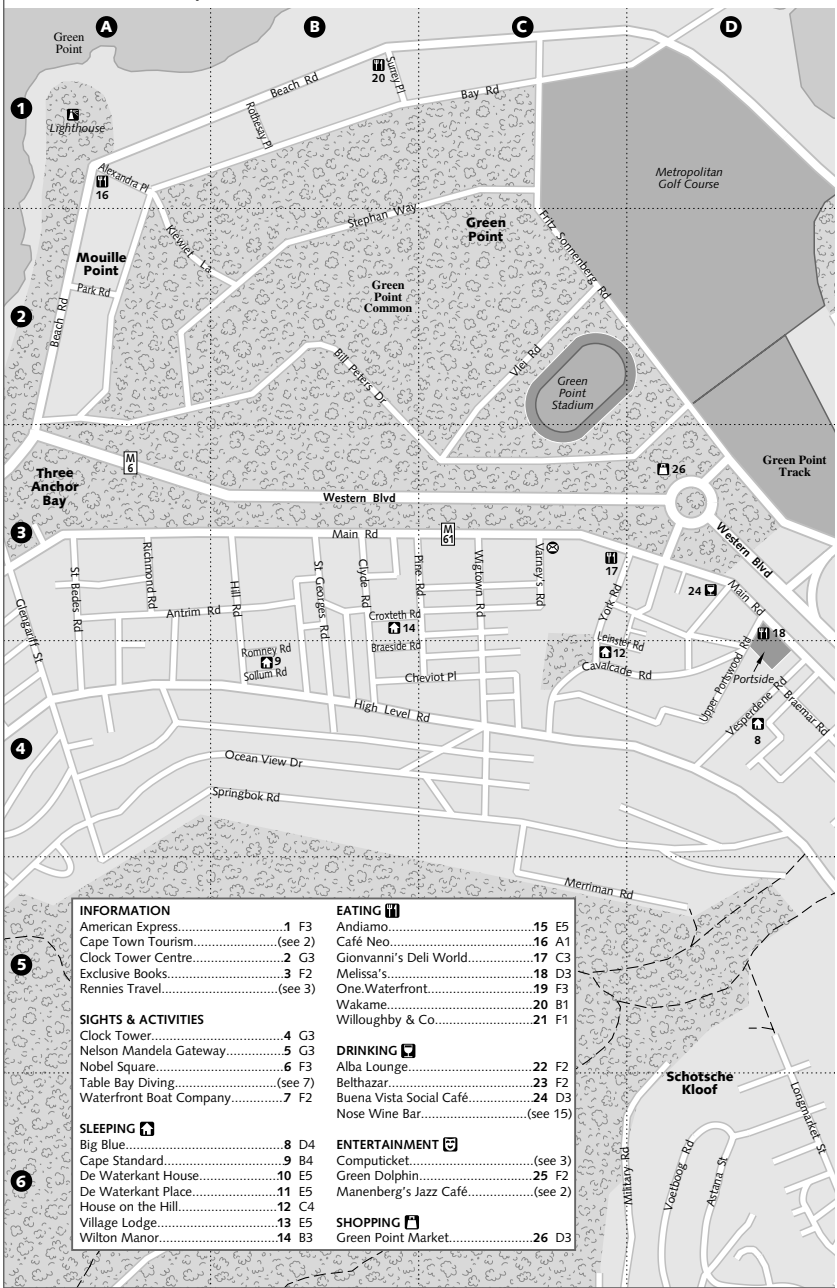
Atlantic Coast

Cape Town's Atlantic Coast is all about spectacular scenery and soft-sand beaches. Strong winds can be a downer and although it's possible to shelter from the summer southeasterlies at some beaches, the water at them all, flowing straight from the Antarctic, is freezing. From Sea Point (best visited for its excellent outdoor swimming pavilion), you can head down to Clifton and Camps Bay.

CLIFTON BEACHES

Giant granite boulders split the four linked beaches at Clifton (Map pp420-1), accessible by steps from Victoria Rd. Almost

GREEN POINT, WATERKANT & WATERFRONT



always sheltered from the wind, these are Cape Town's top sunbathing spots. Local lore has it that No 1 and No 2 beaches are for models and confirmed narcissists, No 3 is the gay beach and No 4 is for families.

CAMPS BAY BEACH

With the spectacular Twelve Apostles of Table Mountain as a backdrop, and soft white sand, Camps Bay (Map pp420–1) is one of the city's most popular beaches. It's within 15 minutes' drive of the city centre so can get crowded, particularly on weekends. The beach is often windy, and the water is decidedly on the cool side.

LLANDUDNO & SANDY BAY BEACHES

Surfing at Llandudno (Map pp416–17) on the beach breaks (mostly rights) is best at high tide with a small swell and a southeasterly wind.

Nearby is Sandy Bay (Map pp416–17), Cape Town's nudist beach and gay stamping ground. It's a particularly beautiful stretch of sand and there's no pressure to take your clothes off if you don't want to. Like many such beaches, Sandy Bay has no direct access roads.

Southern Suburbs

Heading west around Table Mountain and Devil's Peak will bring you to the Southern Suburbs, beginning with the bohemian, edgy areas of Woodstock and Observatory and moving through to Rondebosch, Newlands and wealthy Constantia, home to South Africa's oldest vineyards and wine estates.

KIRSTENBOSCH BOTANICAL GARDENS

Location and unique flora combine to make Cape Town's **botanical gardens** (Map pp416–17; ☎ 021-799 8783, Sat & Sun 021-761 4916; www.sanbi.org; Rhodes Dr, Newlands; adult/child US\$3.40/0.70; ☎ 8am–7pm Sep–Mar, to 6pm Apr–Aug) among the most beautiful in the world. The 36-hectare landscaped section seems to merge almost imperceptibly with the 492 hectares of *fynbos* (fine bush) vegetation cloaking the mountain slopes.

The gardens are at their best between mid-August and mid-October.

You can hire a rikki (p437) to get you here or hop on the City Sightseeing Cape Town bus (see p430).

GROOT CONSTANTIA

A superb example of Cape Dutch architecture, **Groot Constantia** (Map pp416–17; ☎ 021-794

5128; www.grootconstantia.co.za; Groot Constantia Rd, High Constantia; tastings incl glass US\$3.40; ☎ 9am–6pm Dec–Apr, to 5pm May–Nov) is set in beautiful grounds. Not surprisingly, it can become busy with tour groups but the estate is big enough for you to escape the crowds, if need be. In the 18th century, Constantia wines were exported around the world and were highly acclaimed. The beautifully restored homestead is now a **museum** (☎ 021-795 5140; www.museums.org.za/groot-con; adult/child US\$1/0.30; ☎ 10am–5pm).

RHODES MEMORIAL

Modelled after the arch at London's Hyde Park Corner, this impressive **granite memorial** (Map pp420–1) to the mining magnate and former prime minister is on the eastern slopes of Table Mountain. There are sweeping views from the memorial to the Cape Flats and the mountain ranges beyond. Behind the memorial there's a pleasant tearoom. The exit for the memorial is at the Princess Anne Interchange on the M3.

ACTIVITIES

Abseiling & Kloofing

Abseil Africa (Map pp428–9; ☎ 021-424 4760; www.abseilafrika.co.za; 1 Vredenburg Ln, City Bowl; US\$40) is the one to see if you want to shimmy 112m down a rope off the top of Table Mountain.

Abseil Africa also offer kloofing (canyoning) trips around Cape Town. The sport of clambering into and out of kloofs (cliffs or gorges) also entails abseiling, climbing, hiking, swimming and jumping.

Another reliable operator is Day Trippers (see p430).

Cruises

DUIKER ISLAND CRUISES

From Hout Bay's harbour you can catch regular daily cruises to Duiker Island, also known as Seal Island because of its colony of Cape fur seals. Three companies run these cruises daily, usually with guaranteed sailings in the mornings. The cheapest is **Circe Launches** (☎ 021-790 1040; www.circelaunches; adult/child US\$4.70/1.30).

HARBOUR CRUISES

If only to take in the panoramic view of Table Mountain from the water, a cruise into Table Bay should not be missed. **Waterfront Boat Company** (Map pp424–5; ☎ 021-418 5806; www.waterfrontboats.co.za; Shop 7, Quay 5, Waterfront) offers a variety of cruises, including the highly recommended 1½-hour sunset cruises (US\$24).

Cycling

Thrill-meisters **Downhill Adventures** (☎ 021-422 0388; www.downhilladventures.com; cnr Orange & Kloof Sts, Gardens) offers a variety of cycling trips and adventures. Try a mountain-bike ride down from the lower cable car station on Table Mountain (US\$47).

Diving

Cape Town offers a number of excellent shore and boat dives, although it's the shark-cage diving in Gansbaai, some 150km southeast of city, that is the big draw.

A couple of good local dive operators:

Pro Divers (Map pp420–1; ☎ 021-433 0472; www.prodiversa.co.za; 88B Main Rd, Sea Point)

Table Bay Diving (Map pp424–5; ☎ 021-419 8822; www.tablebaydiving.com; Shop 7, Quay 5, Waterfront)

Hiking & Rock Climbing

The mountainous spine of the Cape Peninsula is a hiker's and rock climber's paradise, but it's not without its dangers, chief of which is the capricious weather conditions.

Kabba African Adventures (☎ 021-701 0867, 072 024 6537; www.kabbadventures.com) Runs its own version of the Hoerikwaggo Trails. An overnight trip to the mountain costs US\$98, while a summit hike or sunrise/sunset walk is US\$43.

Venture Forth (☎ 021-556 4150; www.ventureforth.co.za) Enthusiastic guides will tailor a hike or climb to your requirements. The fee of US\$55 includes all refreshments and city centre transfers.

CLIMBING TABLE MOUNTAIN

More than 300 routes up and down the mountain have been identified, perhaps indicating how easy it is to get lost. Bear in mind that the mountain is over 1000m high and conditions can become treacherous quickly. Unprepared and foolhardy hikers die here every year.

None of the routes is easy but the **Platteklip Gorge** walk on the City Bowl side is straightforward. It takes about 2½ hours from the upper cableway station to the lower, taking it fairly easy. Be warned that the route is exposed to the sun and, for much of the way, a vertical slog.

Another option, far trickier and recommended for experienced climbers only, is the **Indian Windows** route that starts from directly behind the lower cableway station and heads straight up. The hikers you see from the cable car, perched like mountain goats on apparently sheer cliffs, are taking this route.

In 2005 Table Mountain National Park launched the first of its planned suite of three

Hoerikwaggo Trails (www.hoerikwaggotrails.co.za) designed to allow visitors, for the first time, to sleep on the mountain, and eventually to hike 80km or so from the City Bowl to Cape Point.

The three-day Table Mountain Trail is a fully guided hike starting at the Waterfront and proceeding through the City Bowl to the lower northern slopes of the mountain to the summit before descending down the eastern slopes to Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens (opposite). The trail costs US\$250 per person (based on double occupancy of a room), which includes all meals, portering of luggage and accommodation of a very high standard.

By the start of 2007 the less-pampered Tip to Top Trail should be running. This six-day, five-night hike beginning at Cape Point will involve carrying your own food, gear and sleeping bag, and camping at fixed spots in the national park. By the end of 2007 a luxury version, running in the opposite direction (Top to Tip), and sleeping in comfortable huts, should be available.

LION'S HEAD

The 2.2km hike from Kloof Nek to the peak of Lion's Head (Map pp420–1) is one of the best you can do in Cape Town and is highly recommended on a full-moon night, when many people gather at the summit to watch the sun go down. Always bring a torch (flashlight).

THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

You'll need to book to walk the two-day/one-night Cape of Good Hope Trail, which traces a spectacular 33.8km circular route through the reserve. The cost is US\$12 (not including the Cape Point entry fee) with accommodation at the basic Protea and Restio huts at the southern end of the reserve. Contact the reserve's **Buffelfontein Visitors Centre** (☎ 021-780 9204) for further details.

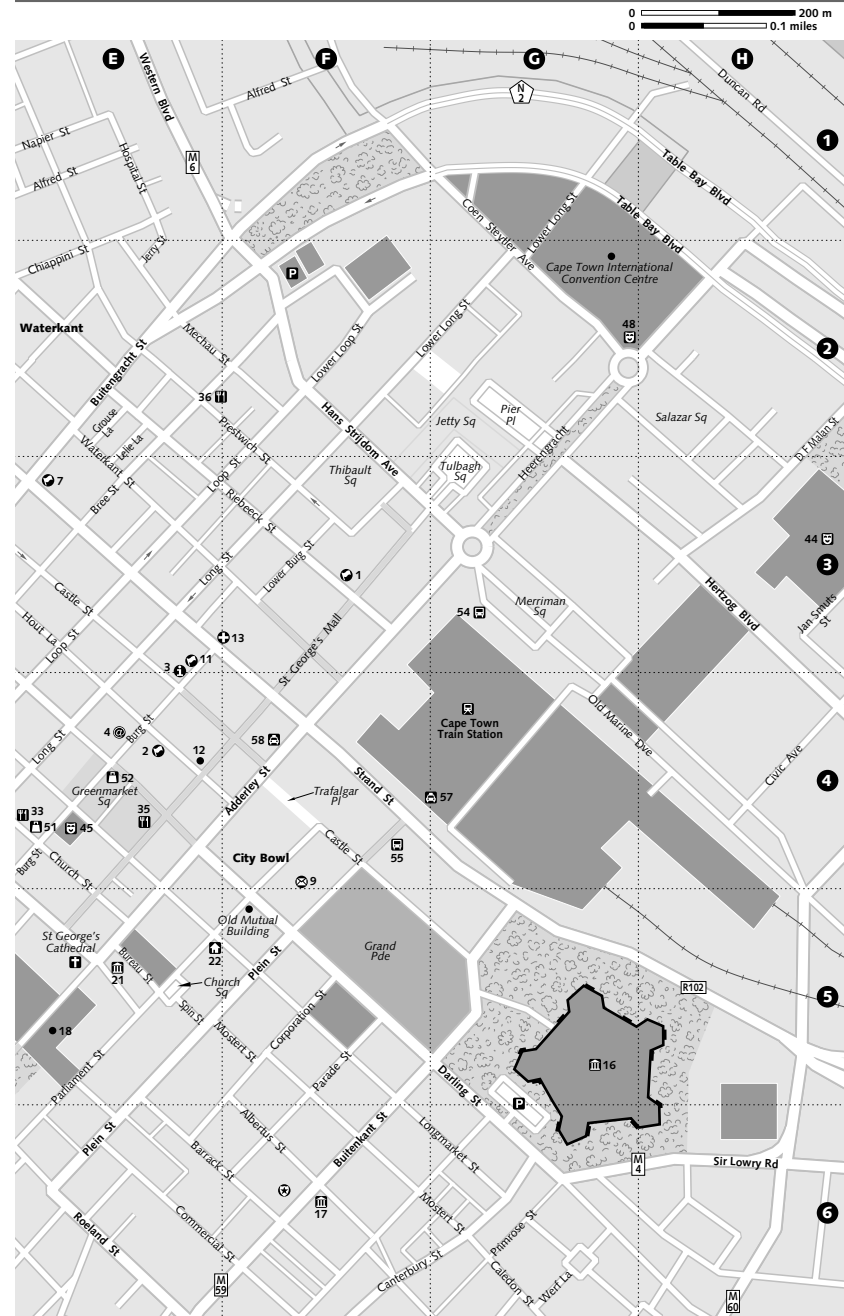
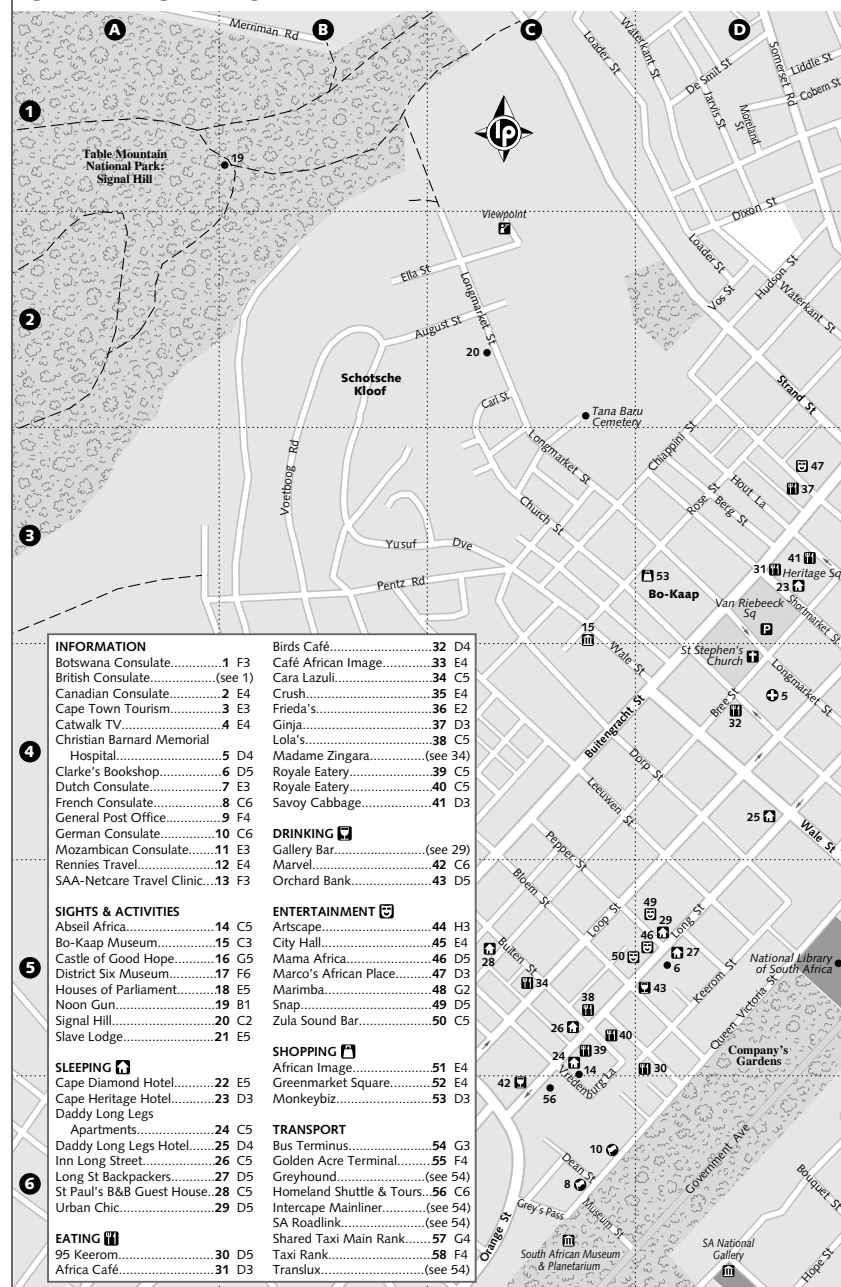
Surfing & Sandboarding

The Cape Peninsula has plenty of fantastic surfing possibilities, from gentle shore breaks ideal for beginners to 3m-plus monsters for experts only. In general, the best surf is along the Atlantic side. Water temperatures as low as 8°C mean a steamer wet suit and booties are required.

Kommetjie, pronounced Kommi-kee, is the Cape's surf mecca, offering an assortment of reefs that hold a very big swell.

And if you don't want to get wet there's always sandboarding, which is like snowboarding except on sand dunes. **Downhill Adventures**

CENTRAL CAPE TOWN



(Map p432; ☎ 021-422 0388; www.downhilladventures.com; cnr Orange & Kloof Sts, Gardens) offers an introductory surfing course for US\$47. A sandboarding trip to Atlantis, north of the city centre, is US\$67.

TOURS

Cape Town Tourism (p419) should be your first stop to find out about the many tours on offer in and around the city.

City & General Bus Tours

The double-decker bus tour **City Sightseeing Cape Town** (☎ 021-511 1784; www.hyltonross.co.za; adult/child US\$12/5.50) is good for a quick orientation on a fine day. The hop-on, hop-off services run at roughly half-hourly intervals between 9.30am and 3.30pm, with extra services in peak season.

Andulela (☎ 021-790 2592; www.andulela.com) This innovative company can arrange a number of offbeat adventures.

Charlotte's Walking Tours (☎ 083-982 5692; northunzie@webmail.co.za) The ebullient Charlotte Swatbooi will take you on a walking tour of the township of Masiphumelele, on the way to Kommetjie.

Day Trippers (☎ 021-511 4766; www.daytrippers.co.za) Many of the tours include cycling. Most tours cost around US\$52 and include Cape Point, the Winelands and whale-watching (in season).

Ferdinand's Tours & Adventures (☎ 021-913 8800, 072-32 2482; ferdinand@telkomsa.net; tours US\$45) This backpacker-focussed Winelands tour takes in at least four wineries and includes lunch.

Grassroute Tours (☎ 021-706 1006; www.grassroute.tours.co.za) One of the most experienced operators of townships tours (half/full day US\$39/61).

Sunpath (☎ 072-417 6800; www.sunpath.co.za; tours US\$13-44) Offering a series of fascinating tours and hikes around the peninsula. Discover the ancient sunpaths thought to have been used by the indigenous people of the Cape.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

A short list:

Cape Town New Year Karnaal (☎ 021-696 9538) The main parades are held on 31 December and 2 January.

Cape Town Pride (☎ 083-274 3579; www.capetownpride.co.za) A 10-day gay and lesbian event in February where the Mother City flies its rainbow colours with pride.

Cape Town Festival (☎ 021-465 1242; www.capetownfestival.co.za) This arts festival runs for three weeks from early March throughout the City Bowl and at the Waterfront.

Cape Town International Jazz Festival (☎ 021-4122 5651; www.capetowninternationaljazzfestival.com) Cape Town's biggest jazz event, held at the end of March.

SLEEPING

Remember location is everything here. During school holidays from mid-December to the end of January and at Easter, prices can double and many places are fully booked. Unless otherwise mentioned rates also include breakfast. Parking is often an extra US\$3.40 to US\$5.50 per day.

City Bowl

BUDGET

Inn Long Street (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-424 1660; innlongstreet@ataris.co.za; 230 Long St; dm US\$10, d without/with bathroom US\$32/39; ☎ ☑ ☑) There's a calm vibe at this backpackers despite it being in the thick of Long St. There's a wrap-around balcony that all rooms access, and a recent paint job and funky lights give it some style.

Long St Backpackers (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 0615; www.longstreetbackpackers.co.za; 209 Long St; dm/s/d US\$11/16/22) Backpackers dot the length of Long St, but this one remains the best. In a block of 14 small flats, with four beds and a bathroom in each, accommodation is arranged around a leafy, quiet courtyard decorated with funky mosaics.

St Paul's B&B Guest House (Map pp428-9; ☎ /fax 021-423 4420; stpaul@absamail.co.za; 182 Bree St; s/d US\$20/34; ☎) A quiet alternative to a backpackers. The simply furnished and spacious rooms have high ceilings and there's a vine-shaded courtyard where you can relax.

MIDRANGE

Cape Diamond Hotel (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-461 2519; www.capediamondhotel.co.za; cnr Longmarket & Parliament Sts, City Bowl; s/d from US\$50/71; ☎ ☑ ☑) A great-value new hotel that has kept features of its Art Deco building such as the wood-panelled floors. There's a rooftop Jacuzzi with a view to Table Mountain. Breakfast and parking are extra.

our pick **Daddy Long Legs** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-422 3074; www.daddylonglegs.co.za; 134 Long St; City bowl; r US\$100; ☑) This boutique hotel/art installation is what you get when artists are given free reign to design the boudoirs of their dreams. The results range from bohemian garret to a hospital ward! Favourites include the karaoke room (with a mike in the shower), and the room designed by pop group Freshly Ground. There's nowhere to put your luggage – hey, these are artists not hoteliers! – but a stay here is anything but boring. They also offer super stylish apartments (same price) at 263 Long St, an ideal choice if you crave hotel-suite luxury and want to self-cater.

Cape Heritage Hotel (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-424 4646; www.capeheritage.co.za; -12 Bree St; s/d from US\$111/161, ste from US\$178; ☎ ☑ ☑ ☑) Gracious service matches the Cape Dutch style of this elegant boutique hotel that's part of the Heritage Square redevelopment of 18th-century buildings.

Urban Chic (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 2086; www.urbanchic.co.za; cnr Long & Pepper Sts, City Bowl; r US\$167; ☎ ☑ ☑) Rooms with fabulous floor-to-ceiling views towards Table Mountain feature at this stylish new boutique hotel. The ground floor Gallery Bar is currently a very hip watering hole.

Gardens & Around

BUDGET

Ashanti Lodge (Map p432; ☎ 021-423 8721; www.ashanti.co.za; 11 Hof St, Gardens; camp sites US\$7, dm/d with shared bathroom US\$12/34; guesthouse d US\$50; ☎ ☑ ☑) One of Cape Town's premier party hostels, with much of the action focussed on its lively bar and deck overlooking Table Mountain. For something quieter, opt for the excellent en-suite rooms in two houses around the corner.

Backpack (Map p432; ☎ 021-423 4530; www.backpackers.co.za; 74 New Church St, Tamboerskloof; dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$12/34/41, s/d US\$40/48; ☎ ☑ ☑ ☑) Cape Town's longest-running backpackers remains a relaxed and comfortable place with something for everyone, be it a lively time at the Thursday night African drumming sessions or just chilling out in the chic en-suite rooms.

Cape Town Backpackers (Map p432; ☎ /fax 021-426 0200; www.capetownbackpackers.com; 81 New Church St; dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$12/24/30; guesthouse s/d US\$37/43; ☎ ☑ ☑) The backpacker hostel grows up at this stylish place that offers both pleasant dorms, and a chic guesthouse with en-suite rooms on neighbouring Kohling St.

MIDRANGE

An African Villa (Map p432; ☎ 021-423 2164; www.cape-towncity.co.za/villa; 19 Carstens St, Tamboerskloof; s/d from US\$86/108; ☎ ☑ ☑) There's a sophisticated and colourful African Zen look at this appealing guesthouse, sheltering behind the façade of three 19th-century terrace houses.

Dunkley House (Map p432; ☎ 021-462 7650; www.dunkleyhouse.com; 38 Gordon St, Gardens; d/ste from US\$94/122; ☎ ☑ ☑) Ultra-stylish guesthouse on a quiet street. All rooms have CD players and satellite TV; there's a plunge pool in the courtyard.

Hippo Boutique Hotel (Map p432; ☎ 021-423 2500; www.hippotique.co.za; 5-9 Park La; Gardens; s/d US\$110/162; ☎ ☑ ☑ ☑) This appealing boutique property offers spacious, stylish rooms with a small

kitchen. Gadget lovers will also be pleased with the DVD player and music system.

Abbey Manor (Map p432; ☎ 021-462 2935; www.abbey.co.za; 3 Montrose Ave, Oranjezicht; s/d from US\$134/173; ☎ ☑ ☑ ☑) A luxurious guesthouse occupying a grand home built in 1905 for a shipping magnate. Fine linens, antique furnishings, a decent-sized pool and courteous staff enhance the experience.

TOP END

Alta Bay (Map p432; ☎ 021-487 8800; www.altabay.com; 12 Invermark Cres, Higgovale; d US\$282; ☎ ☑ ☑ ☑) Cascading down the hillside, Alta Bay is a haven of tranquillity as well as designer heaven. The six luxury rooms mix locally handcrafted furnishings (including king-size beds) with European artworks.

Kensington Place (Map p432; ☎ 021-424 4744; www.kensingtonplace.co.za; 38 Kensington Cres, Higgovale; d with breakfast US\$343; ☎ ☑ ☑ ☑) One of Cape Town's finest boutique properties, with eight spacious and tastefully decorated rooms, all with balconies and beautifully tiled bathrooms. There's also free internet access, fresh fruit and flowers, a small pool and faultless service.

Waterkant

MIDRANGE

De Waterkant Place (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-419 2476; www.dewaterkantplace.com; 35 Dixon St; s/d from US\$67/81; ☑) This appealing guesthouse with five antique decorated rooms offers good value. Guests are free to use the kitchen and there's a lovely view from the roof.

Village Lodge (Map pp424-5; ☎ /fax 021-421 1106; www.thevillagelodge.com; 49 Napier St; s/d US\$100/165; ☑ ☑ ☑) Rooms at this chic guesthouse are smart if somewhat cramped. The rooftop pool is a prime spot for guests to check each other out, as is the lodge's good Thai restaurant Soho.

De Waterkant House (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-409 2500; www.dewaterkant.com; cnr Napier & Waterkant Sts, Waterkant; s/d US\$63/97; ☎ ☑ ☑) A pleasant B&B in the heart of the gay village, with a plunge pool and rooms with glossy magazine-style furnishings. There's also a wide range of apartments in the area kicking off at single/double US\$88/128.50, as well as popular budget-level 'crash pads' (single/double US\$38/54).

Atlantic Coast

GREEN POINT & WATERFRONT

Big Blue (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-439 0807; www.bigbluebackpackers.hostel.com; 7 Vesperdene Rd, Green Point; dm/s/d

GARDENS, ORANJEZICHT & ZONNEBLOEM

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with shared bathroom US\$11/30/36, d US\$43; (P) This brightly painted hostel remains a leading light of the Capetonian backpacking scene – come and enjoy its grand hallway, Zen garden and friendly atmosphere.

House on the Hill (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-439 3902; www.houseonthehillct.co.za; 25 Leinster Rd, Green Point; d/tr sharing bathroom US\$35/42, d/tr US\$35/52) This self-catering house is a fine alternative to the bigger hostels. Book ahead for the five rooms which are very pleasantly furnished in African style, with the added bonus of a TV and CD player.

Wilton Manor (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-434 7869; www.wiltonmanor.co.za; 15 Croxeth Rd, Green Point; s/d from US\$74/81; (P) (P) (P)) A stylish guesthouse where each of the seven rooms is individually decorated. Guests are free to use the kitchen. The owners also run a budget guesthouse on Croxeth Rd – check the website for further details.

Cape Standard (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-430 3060; www.capestandard.co.za; 3 Romney Rd, Green Point; s/d US\$100/134; (P) (P) (P)) This secluded boutique hotel, one of Cape Town's nicest, offers whitewashed beachhouse chic rooms downstairs, or more edgy, contemporary rooms upstairs.

SEA POINT & CAMPS BAY

Cape Town Backpackers Sea Point (Map pp420-1; ☎ /fax 021-426 0200; www.capetownbackpackers.com; 1 Rocklands Rd; dm/d US\$12/54; (P) (P) (P)) Easily the best budget option in Sea Point, steps away from the seafloor. There's a six-bed dorm and three en-suite double rooms with giant rain showers, as well as a spacious communal kitchen.

Camps Bay Retreat (Map pp420-1; ☎ 021-437 0485; www.campsbayretreat.com; 7 Chilworth Rd, The Glen; s/d from US\$160/203; (P) (P) (P) (P)) This is a splendid option with a choice of 16 rooms in either the main house or the contemporary Deck House, reached by a rope bridge over a ravine. There's also a couple of decent, self-catering rooms (per person US\$51) next to the tennis court.

O on Kloof (Map pp420-1; ☎ 021-439 2081; www.oonkloof.co.za; 92 Kloof Rd, Bantry Bay; d from US\$200; (P) (P) (P) (P)) A gorgeous contemporary guesthouse with six spacious rooms. The cheapest rooms don't have full sea views but the good facilities, including a big indoor pool and gym, are ample compensation.

EATING

Dining in the Mother City is a pleasure. There are places to suit practically everyone's taste and budget, with a particularly strong selec-

tion of cafés and delis. Don't miss the opportunity to sample some traditional Cape Malay food, and there are several good African restaurants in Cape Town, too.

City Bowl & Bo-Kaap

Long St has many great places to eat, plus fantastic street life. Head to the Bo-Kaap to sample authentic Cape Malay dishes in unpretentious surroundings.

CAFÉS & QUICK EATS

Crush (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-422 5533; 100 St George's Mall, City Bowl; mains US\$2.80-4) One of the most pleasant and interesting places to eat on St George's Mall, Crush offers freshly squeezed juices, smoothies and tasty wraps.

Lola's (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 0885; 228 Long St, City Bowl; mains US\$2.80-4; ☎ 8am-midnight) Whether you come for breakfast or a late-night coffee or beer, a visit to pastel-painted Lola's is a rite of passage on Long St. Grab a street table and watch the passing parade.

Frieda's (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-421 2404; 15 Bree St, City Bowl; mains US\$4-5; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Jumble-sale chic is the look at this cavernous and highly convivial café in the louche but up-and-coming area at the base of Bree St. They do a fine line in sandwiches, wraps, salads and comfort food such as lasagne.

Café African Image (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 1857; 48 Church St, City Bowl; mains US\$4-6; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat) Easily Cape Town's most colourful café, sporting groovy African-print cushions and table cloths. Sample Tanzanian fish curry, African village stew or a range of healthy salads.

Birds Café (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 2534; 127 Bree St, City Bowl; mains US\$5.50) The sophisticatedly rustic style matches the artisan food including delicious homemade pies, strudles and chunky scones.

RESTAURANTS

95 Keerom (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-422 0765; 95 Keerom St, City Bowl; mains US\$7-13; ☎ 12.30-2pm Mon-Fri, 7pm-11pm Mon-Sat) Bookings are essential for this super-stylish Italian restaurant round the back of Rhodes House. Given the quality of food the prices are very reasonable, particularly for the handmade pastas.

our pick **Madame Zingara & Cara Lazuli** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 2458; 192 Loop St, City Bowl; mains US\$9; ☎ 7-11pm Mon-Sat) Every night is party night at this bohemian, crowd-pleasing restaurant with two sections. Unless you're a committed

carnivore we'd advise against its infamous whopper stack of beef fillets doused in chilli-chocolate sauce. Magic tricks, tarot-card readings, belly dancing and dressing up in silly hats is all part of the fun.

Ginja (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 2368; 121 Castle St, Bo-Kaap; 1/2/3 courses US\$13/24/26; ☎ 7pm-10pm Mon-Sat) Book well ahead for this dining gem that can conjure up inventive fusion dishes. Upstairs is the more casual Shoga bar and brasserie.

Royale Eatery (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-422 4536; 279 Long St, City Bowl; mains US\$8; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Sat) Our favourite gourmet burger bar keeps growing, opening a cute satellite branch around the corner on Vredenburg Lane. For something different try the Big Bird ostrich burger.

Savoy Cabbage (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-424 2626; 101 Hout St, City Bowl; mains US\$9.50-12) The standard bearer of the city's contemporary dining scene remains a great place for inventive cooking, including the chance to try local game meats such as zebra and wildebeest.

Africa Café (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-422 0221; www.africacafe.co.za; 108 Shortmarket St, City Bowl; set banquet US\$20; ☎ 6.30pm-11pm) A Cape Town institution, the Africa Café is best known for its set feast comprising some 15 dishes from across the continent. The décor and friendly staff, who dance and sing through the restaurant are equally fantastic.

Gardens & Around

Kloof St offers the best dining selection in Gardens.

CAFÉS & QUICK EATS

Vida e Café (Map p432; ☎ 021-426 0627; www.caffe.co.za; 34 Kloof St, Gardens; mains US\$2.80; ☎ 7.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) Capetonians have taken this home-grown chain's freshly brewed coffee, orange juice, Portuguese-style pastries and filled rolls to their hearts. There are other branches all over town.

Wild Things (Map p432; ☎ 021-424 3445; 96 Kloof St, Tamboerskloof; mains US\$4; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-7pm Sat, 8am-5pm Sun) Specialising in game meats, this deli-café prepares its own biltong, bakes its own pies and offers a range of tempting preserves.

Mount Nelson Hotel (Map p432; ☎ 021-483 1000; www.moutnelsonhotel.orient-express.com; 76 Orange St; afternoon tea US\$16; ☎ 2.30-5.30pm) There's always a splendid afternoon tea, including local delicacies such as samosas, as well as the usual finger sandwiches, cakes and scones.

RESTAURANTS

Café Gainsbourg (Map p432; ☎ 021-422 1780; 64 Kloof St, Gardens; mains US\$5.50-7) This minimalist decorated café has expanded its dining area and menu range. It's a great spot for any of the day's meals, with the lamb shank, burgers and salads especially recommended.

Aubergine (Map p432; ☎ 021-465 4909; www.aubergine.co.za; 39 Barnet St, Gardens; mains US\$9-17; ☎ 7pm-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-3pm Thu) It's about the food here – and it's world class. Innovative dishes, such as warthog confit or salmon trout ice-cream are on the à la carte menu.

Manna Epicure (Map p432; ☎ 021-426 2413; 151 Kloof St, Tamboerskloof; ☎ 8am-7pm Tue-Sat, to 3pm Sun) Join the in set for deliciously simple breakfast or lunch at this trendy café; or try afternoon cocktails and tapas on the street-front veranda.

Green Point & Waterfront

The Waterfront's plethora of restaurants and cafés have nice ocean views although it's essentially a giant tourist trap. Better value and a less touristy dining experience is on offer a short walk away in Green Point and Mouille Point.

CAFÉS & QUICK EATS

Gionvanni's Deli World (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-434 6983; 103 Main Rd, Green Point; mains US\$2.80-4; ☎ 8.30am-9pm) Gionvanni's can make up any sandwich you fancy and their pavement café is a popular hangout.

Melissa's (Map pp424-5; www.melissas.co.za; 1 Portside, cnr Upper Portwood & Main Rds, Green Point; mains US\$4; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat & Sun) We love the latest in Melissa's chain of distinguished deli and café emporiums, located on the corner of the trendy Portside complex.

Café Neo (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-433 0849; 129 Beach Rd, South Seas, Mouille Point; mains US\$4-5.40; ☎ 7am-7pm) Our favourite seaside café has a relaxed vibe and pleasingly contemporary design.

RESTAURANTS

Willoughby & Co (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-418 6115; Shop 6132 Victoria Wharf, Waterfront; mains US\$8-9.50; ☎ restaurant 11.30am-10.45pm, deli 9am-8.30pm) Huge servings of sushi are the standout from a good-value fish-based menu at this casual eatery and deli, on the ground floor of Victoria Wharf.

Wakame (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-433 2377; www.wakame.co.za; cnr of Beach Rd & Surrey Pl, Mouille Point; mains US\$9.50; ☎ noon-10pm) Tucking into Wakame's salt and pepper squid or sushi platter while gazing at the glorious coastal view is a won-

derful way to pass an afternoon. Book for a balcony spot for sunset drinks.

One Waterfront (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-418 0520; Cape Grace Hotel, West Quay, Waterfront; mains US\$9.50-13) It's the daring combinations of ingredients that catch the eye on the menu, though some of the best dishes are those that keep it simple such as the lovely fishcakes.

DRINKING

Cape Town didn't become known as the 'Tavern of the Seven Seas' for nothing. Head out on a Friday or Saturday night to Long St, the Waterkant or Camps Bay for an eye-opening experience of how the locals like to party. Most bars open around 3pm and close after midnight, and much later Friday and Saturday.

City Bowl & Waterkant

Marvel (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 5880; 236 Long St, City Bowl; ☎ 1pm-4am Mon-Sat) Stuffed as a sardine can, Marvel is a fantastic bar where cool kids of all colours rub shoulders (not to mention practically everything else).

Gallery Bar (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 2086; cnr Long & Pepper Sts, City Bowl) The chic urban black set gather beneath the Urban Chic Hotel at this sophisticated bar, with windows opening onto Long St and a nice line in cocktails.

Orchard Bank (Map pp428-9; www.orchardbank.co.za; 229B Long St, City Bowl) One of Long St's more interesting and laid-back venues, with a roster of events including stand-up comedy.

Nose Wine Bar (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-425 2200; www.thenose.co.za; Cape Quarter, Dixon St, Waterkant) First-class wine bar where you can sip your way around 38 of the Cape's best wines. It also serves excellent food and runs wine-tasting courses.

Gardens & Around

Relish (Map p432; ☎ 021-422 3584; 70 New Church St, Tamboerskloof; ☎ noon-2am Mon-Fri, 5pm-2am Sat & Sun) You'll get panoramic views of Table Mountain and Lion's Head from this trendy place with a wide outdoor deck. The food is good and during happy hour (6pm to 7pm) cocktails are only US\$1.60.

Café Vespa (Map p432; ☎ 021-426 5042; www.cafevespa.com; 108 Kloof St, Tamboerskloof; ☎ 9am-midnight) This hipsters' hangout does a mean line in cocktails, coffee and tapas, all of which can be enjoyed on the terrace with a grandstand view of Table Mountain.

Planet (Map p432; ☎ 021-483 1000; Mount Nelson Hotel, 76 Orange St, Gardens) Cocktails and champers at

the Mount Nelson's deliciously chic bar – who could resist?

Green Point & Waterfront

Alba Lounge (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-425 3385; 1st fl Hildegards, Pierhead, Waterfront) Easily the most stylish place for cocktails at the Waterfront. The view across the harbour is seductive, the drinks inventive and there's a roaring fire in winter.

Belthazar (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-421 3753; Shop 153, Victoria Mall, Waterfront) Offering 600 different South African wines, 170-odd of which you can get by the glass! The restaurant specialises in top-class Karan beef and also does plenty of seafood dishes.

Mitchell's Scottish Ale House (☎ 021-419 5074; www.mitchellsbreweries.co.za; East Pier Rd, Waterfront; ☎ 11am-2am) Check all airs and graces at the door of this traditional pub serving a variety of freshly brewed beers and good-value meals.

Buena Vista Social Café (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-433 0611; Exhibition Bldg, 81 Main Rd, Green Point) The staff mix a nice mojito cocktail at this Cuban-themed bar and restaurant, which takes its inspiration from the famous CD. Come on Sunday if you want to salsa dance.

ENTERTAINMENT

Check the weekly arts guide in the **Mail & Guardian** (www.chico.mweb.co.za/art/daily/menu-guide.htm) to find out what's going on.

You can book seats for practically anything through **Computicket** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 083-915 8000; www.computicket.com). There is an outlet at the Waterfront as well as other locations throughout the city.

Cinemas

The big multiplexes can be found in Victoria Wharf at the Waterfront, Cavendish Sq and Canal Walk.

Labia (Map p432; ☎ 021-424 5927; www.labia.co.za; 68 Orange St, Gardens; tickets US\$3.40), together with its two-screen **Labia on Kloof** (Map p432; ☎ 021-424 5727) around the corner, is the best cinema for 'mainstream alternative' films.

Live Music

CLASSICAL

The incredibly active **Cape Town Philharmonic** (www.cpo.org.za) leads the way on the Mother City's classical music scene, performing concerts mainly at **City Hall** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-410 9809; Darling St, City Bowl) as well as at Artscape, the Waterfront and elsewhere around the Cape.

Consisting of three different-sized auditoria, the performing-arts complex **Artscape** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-410 9800; www.artscape.co.za; 1-10 DF Malan St, Foreshore) is the hub of classical and theatrical performances in Cape Town. Walking around this area at night is not recommended.

JAZZ

Green Dolphin (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-421 7471; www.greenolphin.co.za; Waterfront; cover US\$3.40) There's a consistently good line-up of artists at this upmarket jazz venue and restaurant (serving decent food). Shows kick off at 8.15pm daily.

Marimba (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-418 3366; www.marimbasa.com; Cape Town Convention Centre, City Bowl; diners US\$2.80, nondiners US\$4) Yes, they do have a marimba band playing occasionally at this slick Afro-chic venue as well as a packed schedule of other jazz artists. The food is good and the music sets get going at 8pm.

West End (Map pp416-17; ☎ 021-637 9132; Cine 400 Bldg, College Rd, Ryelands Estate, Athlone; cover US\$4; ☎ 8pm-late Fri & Sat) Mainstream jazz is the name of the game here. This is one of Cape Town's top venues, attracting a well-heeled clientele and top performers.

Manenberg's Jazz Café (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-421 5639; Clock Tower Centre, Waterfront; cover US\$4-11) Swing to jazz and African jive at this famed club that seems to have survived its move to the Waterfront. On Friday and Saturday it's free to see the bands playing the sundowner set from 5pm to 7pm, but a cover charge kicks in later.

ROCK/AFRICAN

Mercury Live (Map p432; ☎ 021-465 2106; www.mercuryrl.co.za; 43 De Villiers St, Zonnebloem; cover US\$2.80-5.50) Cape Town's premier rock venue plays host to top SA bands and overseas visitors. If you don't like the band, there's always the DJ bar Mercury Lounge below and the Shack bar next door.

Otherwise for African bands head to these long-running restaurants:

Marco's African Place (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 5412; 15 Rose Lane, Bo-Kaap; cover US\$1.40; ☎ noon-11pm)

Mama Africa (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 1017; 178 Long St, City Bowl; cover US\$2, if dining US\$1.40; ☎ 7pm-2am Mon-Sat)

Nightclubs

The major nightclubs are concentrated in the City Bowl around Long St and in the Waterkant. The big nights are Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

Snap (Map pp428-9; ☎ 083-940 3983; 6 Pepper St, City Bowl; cover US\$2.80) The Cape Flats comes to the city at this urban African club with a welcoming, predominantly black audience. Dance to music from across Africa.

Club Galaxy (Map pp416-17; ☎ 021-637 9132; College Rd, Ryelands Estate, Athlone; cover US\$4) Long-time Cape Flats dance venue where you can get down to R&B, hip-hop and live bands with a black and coloured crowd. The equally legendary West End jazz venue is next door.

Zula Sound Bar (Map pp428-9; ☎ 424 2442; 194 Long St, City Bowl; cover US\$2.80) Hosts an interesting range of events including live bands, DJs and even open-mike poetry sessions. The long balcony is the place to watch Long St go by.

SHOPPING

Shops in the city centre and the Waterfront stock most things you'll need, but if you hunger for a suburban mall, visit **Canal Walk** (Map pp416-17; ☎ 0860-101 165; www.canalwalk.co.za; Century Blvd, Century City, Milnerton; ☎ 9am-9pm), the largest mall on the continent, about 5km north of the city centre.

There are craft shops all over town but few of the traditional African items come from the Cape Town area itself. Great buys include the local township-produced items, such as beadwork dolls, toys made from recycled tins cans and wire sculptures.

Browse the markets at **Green Point Market** (Map pp424-5; Western Blvd, Green Point; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Sun) and **Greenmarket Sq** (pp428-9; cnr Shortmarket & Burg Sts, City Bowl; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat). Also check out **African Image** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 8385; www.african-image.co.za; cnr Church & Burg Sts), which has a fabulous range of ancient African artefacts and a lot of township crafts here, as well as wildly patterned shirts. **Monkeybiz** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 0145; www.monkeybiz.co.za; 65 Rose St, Bo-Kaap) sells brilliant, beaded products all made by women in the townships, with the profits going to a HIV/AIDS clinic (held upstairs every Friday).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Cape Town International Airport (Map pp416-17; ☎ 021-937 1200; www.airports.co.za) is 20km east of the city centre, approximately 20 minutes' drive depending on traffic.

Apart from **South African Airways** (SAA; ☎ 0860 359 722; www.flysaa.com) there are two budget airlines operating out of Cape Town: **Kulula.com**

(☎ 0861 585 852; www.kulula.com) and **1time** (☎ 0861 345 345; www.1time.co.za). All three fly to the major South African cities. The following are the cheapest one-way fares you might pay from Cape Town to Durban (US\$67); East London (US\$80); Jo'burg (US\$93); Port Elizabeth (US\$97); and Upington (US\$96).

Bus

Four major long-distance bus lines operate out of Cape Town. Their booking offices and main arrival and departure points are at the Meriman Sq end of Cape Town train station (City Bowl).

Greyhound (☎ 021-75 6363; www.greyhound.co.za)

Intercape Mainliner (☎ 021-380 4400; www.intercape.co.za)

SA Roadlink (☎ 021-425 0203; www.saroadlink.co.za)

Translux (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za)

For more information on bus routes and fares, and on the Baz Bus, see p592.

Minibus Taxi

Most long-distance minibus taxis start picking up passengers in townships, especially Langa and Nyanga, perhaps also making a trip into Cape Town train station if they need more people. The townships are not great places to be wandering around in the early hours of the morning so *do not* go into them without good local knowledge or a reliable local guide. A local-area minibus taxi from Cape Town train station to Langa costs about US\$0.70.

Train

All trains leave from the main Cape Town train station. It can take a long time to reach the front of the queue at the **booking office** (☎ 021-449 4596; ☎ 7.30am-4.55pm Mon-Fri, 7.30-10.30am Sat).

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Both **Backpacker Bus** (☎ 021-447 4991, 82-119 9185; www.backpackerbus.co.za) and **Homeland Shuttle & Tours** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 0294, 083-265 6661; www.homeland.co.za; 305 Long St, City Bowl) pick up from accommodation in the city and offer airport transfers for US\$12 per person (US\$16 between 5pm and 8am).

Expect to pay around US\$27 for a non-shared taxi; the officially authorised airport taxi company is **Touch Down Taxis** (☎ 021-919

4659). If there are four of you, consider making a booking with Rikkis (below) who charge US\$17 for hire of the tiny minivan cabs.

Bus

For local bus services the main station is the **Golden Acre Terminal** (Map pp428-9; Grand Parade, City Bowl). From here **Golden Arrow** (☎ 0800 656 463; www.gabs.co.za) buses run, with most services stopping early in the evening. Buses are most useful for getting along the Atlantic Coast from the city centre to Hout Bay. When travelling short distances, most people wait at the bus stop and take either a bus or a shared taxi, whichever arrives first.

Destinations and off-peak fares (applicable from 8am to 4pm) from the city include the Waterfront (US\$0.40), Sea Point (US\$0.40), Kloof Nek (US\$0.40), Camps Bay (US\$0.60) and Hout Bay (US\$0.90). Peak fares are about 30% higher. If you're using a particular bus regularly, it's worth buying 'clipcards', with 10 discounted trips.

Minibus Taxi

Minibus taxis cover most of the city with an informal network of routes and are a cheap way of getting around. Hail them from the side of the road and ask the driver where they're going.

Rikkis

A cross between a taxi and a shared taxi are the tiny minivans of **Rikkis** (☎ 021-418 6713; www.rikkis.co.za; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat). These can be booked or hailed on the street and travel within a 5km radius of the city centre. A trip from the main train station to Camps Bay is US\$2; from the City Bowl to Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens costs US\$9.50 for the first four people.

Although cheap, Rikkis may not be the quickest way to get around, as there is usually a certain amount of meandering as passengers are dropped off, and they are notoriously slow to turn up to a booking.

Taxi

It's worth considering taking a nonshared taxi late at night or if you're in a group. Rates are about US\$1.40 per km. There's a taxi rank at the Adderley St end of the Grand Parade in the city, or call **Marine Taxi** (☎ 021-434 0434), **SA Cab** (☎ 0861-172 222; www.sacab.co.za) or **Unicab Taxis** (☎ 021-447 4402).

Train

Metro commuter trains are a handy way to get around, although there are few (or no) trains after 6pm Monday to Friday and after noon on Saturday. For information contact **Cape Metro Rail** (☎ 0800 656 463; www.capemetrorail.co.za).

Metro trains have 1st- and economy-class carriages only. The difference in price and comfort is negligible, although you'll find the 1st-class compartments to be safer on the whole.

The most important line for visitors is the Simon's Town line, which runs through Observatory and then around the back of Table Mountain through upper-income white suburbs and along the False Bay coast. These trains run at least every hour from around 5am to 7.30pm Monday to Friday (to 6pm on Saturday), and from 7.30am to 6.30pm on Sunday.

Metro trains run some way out of Cape Town, to Strand on the eastern side of False Bay, and into the Winelands to Stellenbosch and Paarl. They are the cheapest and easiest means of transport to these areas; security is best at peak times.

Some economy/1st-class fares include Observatory (US\$0.50/0.70), Muizenberg (US\$0.75/1.10), Simon's Town (US\$1/1.40), Paarl (US\$1.10/1.50) and Stellenbosch (US\$1/1.40).

WESTERN CAPE

The Western Cape is without a doubt one of the world's premier destinations, a place often so picture-perfect it's hard to describe without using clichés. The diversity of the landscape is unparalleled and the number of adventures to experience almost overwhelming. Dive with sharks, jump out of an airplane, surf some of Southern Africa's best breaks, cruise with whales, eat fresh crayfish at a beachside barbecue, stand at the southernmost tip of Africa and sample some of the world's finest wines.

The region is the country's most popular tourist destination, so at times you may feel a bit like a zebra in a herd travelling around here, particularly along the Garden Route. But it's a magical place, with ample opportunity to flee the crowds. Whichever way you go, however, in the Western Cape there's no escaping the beauty.

WINELANDS

The Boland, stretching inland and upwards from Cape Town, is not the only wine-growing region in South Africa, but it's certainly the most famous. It's name means 'Upland', a reference to the dramatic mountain ranges that shoot up to over 1500m, on whose fertile slopes the vineyards form a patchwork.

With its centuries-long history of colonial settlement, there's a distinctly European feel to the Boland, particularly in French-themed culinary hot spot Franschhoek (French Corner). Lively student-town Stellenbosch offers the most activities, while Paarl is a busy commercial centre with excellent estates.

Stellenbosch

☎ 021 / pop 220,000

South Africa's second-oldest European settlement, established on the banks of the Eerste River in 1679, Stellenbosch wears many faces. At times it's a rowdy joint for Stellenbosch University students and at others it's a stately monument to colonial architectural splendour. But most times it's just plain busy, as Capetonians, wine farm workers and tourists descend on its museums, buzzing markets, quality hotels and varied eating and nightlife options.

INFORMATION

Fandangos Internet Café (per hr US\$4) Mill St (☎ 021-887 4628); Drostyd Centre (☎ 021-887 7501; Bird St) Internet access.

Java Café (☎ 021-887 6261; cnr Church & Andringa Sts; per hr US\$2) Internet access.

Rennies Travel (Mill St) A block from Dorp St, with a Thomas Cook foreign-exchange office.

Stellenbosch Publicity Association (☎ 021-883 3584; www.tourismstellenbosch.co.za; 36 Market St; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun) Excellent brochures are available.

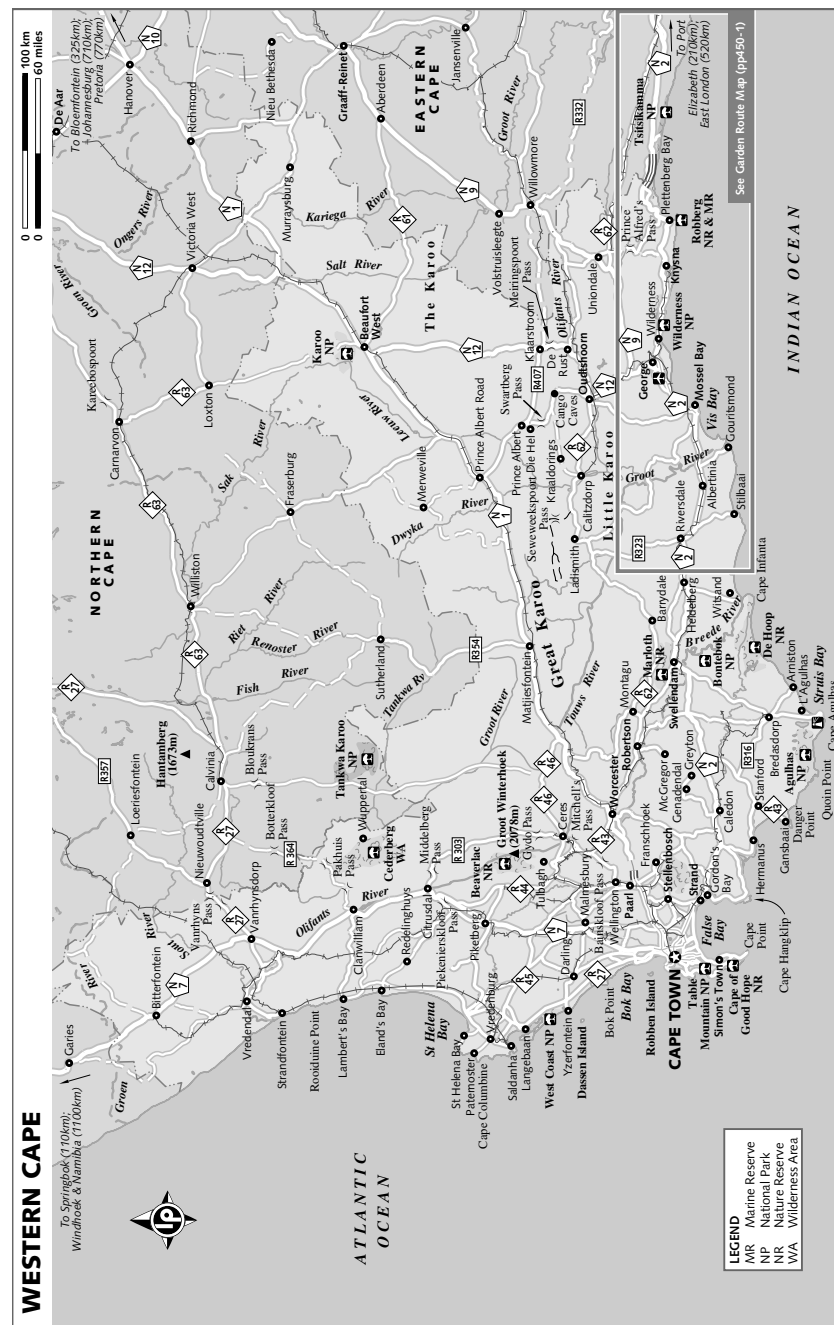
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Village Museum

Charming gardens and a group of exquisitely restored and period-furnished houses dating from 1709 to 1850 make up this must-see **museum** (☎ 021-887 2902; 18 Ryneveld St; adult/child US\$2/1.40; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun), which occupies the entire city block bounded by Ryneveld, Plein, Drostyd and Church Sts.

Sasol Art Museum

Featuring one of the country's best selections of local art both famous and emerging, this



museum (☎ 021-808 3693; 52 Ryneveld St; adult/child US\$1.20/0.70; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Tue-Fri, to 4pm Sat) also contains an irreplaceable collection of African anthropological treasures.

Braak

At the north end of the **Braak** (Town Sq), an open stretch of grass, you'll find the neo-Gothic **St Mary's on the Braak Church**, completed in 1852. To the west is the **VOC Kruihuis** (Powder House; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-1pm Mon-Fri), which was built in 1777 to store the town's weapons and gunpowder and now houses a small military museum. On the northwest corner is **Fick House**, also known as the Burgerhuis, a fine example of Cape Dutch style from the late 18th century.

Wineries

There are too many good wineries in the Stellenbosch area to list all of them, so it's sometimes best to drive around and stop on a whim. We do, however, recommend a visit to **Blaauwklippen** (☎ 021-880 0133; www.blaauwklippen.co.za; tastings US\$3.40; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-4pm Sun), a rustic 300-year-old estate. Also unmissable is **Delaire** (☎ 021-885 1756; www.delairewinery.co.za; tastings US\$1.40; ☎ 10am-5pm), which is known as the 'vineyard in the sky' because of its high-altitude location at the top of the Helshoogte Pass on Rte 310 towards Franschhoek.

The Helderberg area around Somerset West, 20km south of Stellenbosch, has some 20 wineries, including **Vergelegen** (☎ 021-847 1334; www.vergelegen.co.za; Lourensford Rd, Somerset West; admission US\$1.40, tastings US\$0.30-1.40; ☎ 9.30am-4pm), arguably the most beautiful estate in the Cape.

TOURS

Easy Rider Wine Tours (☎ 021-886 4651; 12 Market St) is a long-established company offering good value for a full-day trip at US\$34 including lunch and all tastings.

SLEEPING

Stumble Inn (☎ 021-887 4049; 12 Market St; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$8, d with shared bathroom US\$20; ☎ ☎) With a lively and welcoming atmosphere, this place is split over two old houses, one with a pool and the other with a pleasant garden. They also run Easy Rider Wine Tours.

De Oude Meul (☎ 021-887 7085; www.deoudemeul.snowball.co.za; 10A Mill St; s/d with breakfast US\$50/74;

☎ ☎) Above an antiques shop in the centre of town, the accommodation here is very good and reasonable for the price. Some rooms have balconies.

Stellenbosch Hotel (☎ 021-887 3644; www.stellenbosch.co.za/hotel; 162 Dorp St; s/d with breakfast from US\$57/95;

☎ ☎) A comfortable country-style hotel with a variety of rooms, including those with self-catering facilities and others with four-poster beds. The brasserie is a good spot for a drink.

Wild Mushroom (☎ 021-886 9880; 15 Ryneveld St; s/d with breakfast US\$60/105; ☎ ☎) Surprisingly quiet for being slap-bang in the middle of Stellenbosch's trendy restaurant zone, this chic multilevelled guesthouse offers plush accommodation.

De Goue Druiif (☎ 021-883 3555; goudedruif.hypermart.net; 110 Dorp St; s/d with breakfast US\$88/95; ☎ ☎ ☎) In a Cape Dutch building dating back to 1792, this 'Golden Grape' is a charming guesthouse run by a Belgian couple. There is a small gym and sauna.

Lanzerac Hotel (☎ 021-887 1132; www.lanzerac.co.za; Jonkershoek Valley; s/d/ste with breakfast US\$230/400/560; ☎ ☎ ☎) This unashamedly opulent place consists of a 300-year-old manor house and winery. Some suites have private pools.

EATING

De Soete Inval (☎ 021-886 4842; 5 Ryneveld St; mains US\$7; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Known primarily for its choice of 40 different pancakes, this cheerful place also does a fine Dutch-Indonesian rijst-tafel (rice with many dishes) with six dishes for US\$10 or a half portion for US\$7.

Fishmonger (☎ 021-887 7835; cnr Ryneveld & Plein St; mains US\$7; ☎ lunch & dinner) The choice for seafood. It's a snazzily designed place with a relaxed vibe. A platter goes for a reasonable US\$11.

96 Winery Rd (☎ 021-842 2945; Zandberg Farm, Winery Rd; mains US\$9.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) Off Rte 44 between Stellenbosch and Somerset West, this is one of the most respected restaurants in the area, known for its dry aged beef and belief in simply cooked, real food.

De Volkskombuis (☎ 021-887 2121; Aan de Wagenweg; mains US\$10; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) A local favourite that's open 365 days a year, this no-frills, atmospheric place specialises in traditional Cape Malay cuisine and features a terrace with fine mountain views.

Moyo (☎ 021-119 1100; Spier Estate, Vlotenburg; buffet US\$24; ☎ lunch & dinner) This tourist-pleasing place brings a fantasy vision of Africa to the middle of the Spier wine estate. It's a lot of

STELLENBOSCH



fun, with roving musicians and dancers and alfresco dining in tents and up in the trees.

DRINKING

Nu Bar (☎ 021-886 8998; 51 Plein St) This place has a nightclub feel, with a small dance floor beyond the long bar where the DJ pumps out hip-hop and house.

Mystic Boer (☎ 021-886 8870; 3 Victoria St) Cool Afrikaans kids hang out here in surroundings perhaps best described as post-transformation era retro-Boer chic.

Dros (☎ 021-886 4856; Drostdy Centre, Bird St), the **Terrace** (☎ 021-887 194; Drostdy Centre, Bird St) and **Tollies** (Drostdy Centre, Bird St), clustered together in the complex just off Bird St and north of the Braak, are among the liveliest bars.

The classic student watering holes include **Bohemia** (☎ 021-882 8375; cnr Andringa & Victoria Sts), and **De Akker** (☎ 021-883 3512; 90 Dorp St), which has an upstairs cellar for live music.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus

Long-distance bus services charge high prices for the short sector to Cape Town and do not take bookings. You're better off using **Backpacker Bus** (☎ 021-447 4991; www.backpackerbus.co.za), which charges US\$19 to US\$30 one way and will pick you up from where you are staying.

Minibus Taxi

A minibus taxi ride to Paarl is about US\$4 (45 minutes), but you may have to change taxis en route at Pniel.

Train

Metro trains run the 46km between Cape Town and Stellenbosch (1st/economy class US\$1.60/\$0.90, about one hour). Note there are no 2nd-class tickets. For inquiries, call **Metrarail** (☎ 0800 656 463). To be safe, travel in the middle of the day.

GETTING AROUND

The town is navigable on foot and bicycles, a good way to get around, can be hired from the Stumble Inn (p440) for US\$2.80 per hour or US\$12 for the day.

Franschhoek

☎ 021 / pop 13,000

Billing itself as the country's gastronomic capital, the toughest decision you'll face in Franschhoek is where to eat. It certainly has

one of the loveliest settings in the Cape and with a clutch of art galleries, wine farms and stylish guesthouses thrown in, it may feel a little like a tourist theme park. As long as you have transport this a good base from which to visit both Stellenbosch and Paarl.

The **Franschhoek Wine Valley Tourism** (☎ 021-876 3603; www.franschhoek.org.za; Huguenot St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, to 4pm Sun) office can provide a map of the area's scenic walks.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The engrossing **Huguenot Memorial Museum** (☎ 021-876 2532; Lambrecht St; adult/child US\$0.70/0.30; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun) celebrates South Africa's Huguenots and houses the genealogical records of their descendants.

Wineries

Many of Franschhoek's wineries are within walking distance of the town centre, but you'll need transport to reach famous **Boschendal** (☎ 021-870 4210; www.boschendal.com; Pniel Rd; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm), the classic Winelands estate, which has lovely architecture, food and wine.

SLEEPING

Chamonix Guest Cottages (☎ 021-876 2494; www.chamonix.co.za; Uitkyk St; cottages per person from US\$27) Pleasant cottages sleeping up to four are set in the middle of the winery's vineyards, a 10-minute walk uphill north of Huguenot St.

Cottage (☎ 021-876 2392; thecottage55@iafrica.com; 55 Huguenot St; s/d US\$35/47) There is just one cottage sleeping two, or four at a pinch, but it's a beauty. It's private, quiet, just a few minutes' walk from the village centre and now has self-catering facilities.

Le Ballon Rouge (☎ 021-876 2651; www.ballon-rouge.co.za; 7 Reservoir St East; s/d with breakfast US\$70/90; ☎ ☎ ☎) A small guesthouse with good-quality rooms and stylish suites all opening on to a patio. It also has a popular restaurant.

La Fontaine (☎ 021-876 2112; www.lafontainefranchoek.co.za; 21 Dirkie Uys St; s/d with breakfast US\$80/100; ☎ ☎) Offering a quieter accommodation alternative off the town's main drag, this is a stylishly appointed family home featuring 12 spacious rooms with wooden floors and mountain views.

Le Quartier Français (☎ 021-876 2151; www.lequartier.co.za; 16 Huguenot St; d from US\$320; ☎ ☎ ☎) This is one of the best places to stay in the Winelands. Set around a leafy courtyard and

pool, guest rooms are very large with fireplaces, huge beds and stylish décor. There's also the fine restaurant, Ici, here.

EATING

Goederust (☎ 021-876 3687; Main Rd, La Motte; mains US\$4-5; ☎ breakfast & lunch) A new take on Cape farm-kitchen food is served in this charming old-fashioned farm-restaurant set in a pleasant garden. The spicy calamari salad (US\$5.50) is a knockout, as are the filled pancakes.

Ici (☎ 021-876 2151; 16 Huguenot St; mains US\$7-38; ☎ lunch & dinner) This Franschhoek stalwart is now split into two dining options: a stylish bistro offering food such as zebra carpaccio; and a set-menu restaurant offering a four-course meal (US\$38). The hotel's bar does lighter meals for around US\$8.

Topsi & Company (☎ 021-876 2952; 7 Reservoir St; mains US\$8-11; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) This place is quirky and very relaxed, and renowned chef Topsi Venter pops out from her open kitchen to serve the totally delicious food and chat with guests; BYO wine.

La Petite Ferme (☎ 021-876 3016; Franschhoek Pass Rd; mains US\$11; ☎ noon-4pm) A must-visit for foodies who hanker for romantic views, boutique wines and smoked, deboned salmon trout, its delicately flavoured signature dish.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The best way to reach Franschhoek is in your own vehicle. Some visitors choose to cycle here from Stellenbosch, but roads are winding and can be treacherous. Shared taxis run from Stellenbosch (US\$1.10) or Paarl station (US\$1.20).

Paarl

☎ 021 / pop 165,000

Less touristy and more spread out than Stellenbosch, Paarl is a large commercial centre, surrounded by mountains and vineyards, on the banks of the Berg River. It's not really a town to tour on foot but there is still quite a lot to see and do, including vineyards within town limits. There are some great walks in the Paarl Mountain Nature Reserve, some excellent Cape Dutch architecture and some significant monuments to Afrikaner culture.

INFORMATION

Paarl Tourism (☎ 021-863 4937; www.paarlonline.com; 86 Main St; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat & Sun) Information on the whole region.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Paarl Museum

This **museum** (☎ 021-872 2651; www.museums.org.za/paarl; 303 Main St; adult/child US\$0.70/donation; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) is housed in the Oude Pastorie (Old Parsonage), built in 1714. It has a fascinating collection of Cape Dutch antiques and relics of Huguenot and early Afrikaner culture.

Afrikaans Language Museum

Paarl is considered the wellspring of the Afrikaans language, a fact covered well by this interesting **museum** (☎ 021-872 3441; www.taalmuseum.co.za; 11 Pastorie Ave; adult/child US\$1.40/0.30; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat).

Paarl Mountain Nature Reserve

The three giant granite domes that dominate this popular reserve and loom over the western side of town apparently glisten like pearls if they are caught by the sun after a fall of rain. The reserve has mountain *fynbos*, a cultivated wildflower garden, and numerous walks with excellent views over the valley.

Bainskloof Pass

This is one of the country's great mountain passes, with a superb caravan park halfway along. It's a magical drive, which, if you have the lungs for it, would be even better experienced on a bicycle. Rte 303 runs from Wellington across Bainskloof to meet Rte 43, which runs south to Worcester and north to Ceres.

There are several nearby walks, including the five-hour **Bobbejaans River Walk** to a waterfall. You need to buy a permit (US\$4), which is available from the Cape Nature Conservation desk at Cape Town Tourism (see p419).

SLEEPING

Manyano Centre (☎ 021-872 2537; manyano@eject.co.za; Sanddrift St; dm with full board US\$15) An enormous YMCA-style accommodation complex with spartan three-bed dorms; you'll need to bring a sleeping bag. Call in advance, especially on weekends. Huguenot train station is closer than the main Paarl station.

Berg River Resort (☎ 021-863 1650; berg@mwweb.co.za; camp sites US\$25, d chalets US\$70; ☎) An attractive municipal campground beside the Berg River, 5km from Paarl on the N45 towards Franschhoek. Facilities include canoes, trampolines and a café.

Bakkies B&B (☎ 021-873 5161; www.bakkiesbb.co.za; Bainskloof Rd; s/d US\$23/38; ☹ ☹ ☹) This place offers good-value, well-equipped rooms out on the Bainskloof Rd and is an excellent budget base for exploring the area. Lunch and dinner need to be booked, and a daily breakfast (US\$5.50) is offered.

Rodeberg Lodge (☎ 021-863 3202; www.rodeberg-lodge.co.za; 74 Main St; s/d with breakfast US\$39/62; ☹ ☹) Good rooms are sensibly located away from the busy main road, and breakfast is taken in the conservatory, opening onto a leafy garden.

EATING

Several of the local vineyards have restaurants or do picnic lunches and they are among the best places to eat.

Kostinrichting (☎ 021-871 1353; 19 Pastorie Ave; mains US\$4; ☹ lunch Mon-Sat) Ideal if you're looking for a pleasant central café. It's in a Victorian building that once was a school, and has an attached crafts shop.

De Malle Madonna (☎ 021-863 3925; 127 Main St; mains US\$5.50-9; ☹ breakfast & lunch Wed-Sun, dinner Wed & Sun) Mediterranean comfort food is the emphasis at this breezy café-bistro and the biltong and glazed beetroot salad (US\$5.50) is a winner.

Marc's Mediterranean Cuisine & Garden (☎ 021-863 3980; 129 Main St; mains US\$8-10; ☹ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Mon-Sat) A light and bright place with food to match and a Provence-style garden to dine in.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus

All the major long-distance bus companies offer services going through Paarl, so it's easy to build it into your itinerary. The bus segment between Paarl and Cape Town is US\$15, so consider taking the cheaper train to Paarl and then linking up with the buses.

Train

Metro trains run roughly every hour between Cape Town and Paarl (1st/economy class US\$2/1.10, 1½ hours, Monday to Friday). Note there is no 2nd class. The services are less frequent on weekends. Take care to travel on trains during the busy part of the day.

You can travel by train from Paarl to Stellenbosch: take a Cape Town-bound train and change at Muldersvlei.

THE OVERBERG

All roads heading east from Cape Town suddenly and unforgivably come against a mountainous barrier, forcing you to hit the lower gears. Once you're up and over the top, you're 'over the mountain', the literal meaning of Overberg.

Roughly the region south and west of the Franschhoek Range, and south of the Wemmershoek and Riviersonderend Ranges, which form a natural barrier with the Breede River Valley, the Overberg is reached from Cape Town via the N2 (quicker) or via Rte 44 from Strand, a breathtaking coastal drive. The first major stop is Hermanus, a seaside resort famous for the whales that frequent its shores.

This region's wealth of *fynbos* is unmatched; most species flower somewhere in the period between autumn and spring.

Hermanus

☎ 028 / pop 24,700

Hermanus (pronounced 'Hair-maan-es') was founded as a fishing village, and while it retains vestiges of its heritage, its proximity to Cape Town (122km) has made it a day-tripper's paradise, in part thanks to the fact that it is considered the best land-based whale-watching destination in the world. As a result, the town has become highly commercialised and crowded, particularly during the **Hermanus Whale Festival** (www.whalefestival.co.za) in September and during school holidays in December and January.

There is respite to be found at the appealing beaches, most east of the town centre, and the surrounding rocky hills offer good walks and a nature reserve protecting some of the prolific *fynbos*.

INFORMATION

Hermanus Tourism (☎ 028-312 2629; www.hermanus.co.za; Old Station Bldg, Mitchell St; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun) East of the town centre.

Internet City (☎ 028-312 4683; Waterkant Bldg, Main Rd; per hr US\$2.80; ☹ 8am-8pm) Offers reliable and speedy internet connections.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Between June and November, southern right whales come to Walker Bay to calve. There can be up to 70 whales in the bay at once and the numbers visiting seem to grow every year. Humpback whales are also sometimes seen.

Whales often come very close to shore and there are some excellent vantage points from the cliff paths that run from one end of Hermanus to the other. The best places are Castle Rock, Kraal Rock and Sievers Point.

Shark Cage Diving

Many operators in Hermanus heavily promote this, but most boats actually depart from Gansbaai, some 53km along the coast (all companies transport you there). Operators use bait to attract the sharks to the cage, which means that these killer fish are being trained to associate humans with food. It's not a pleasant scenario, especially if you're a surfer – attacks on whom have increased of late.

An internationally recognised diving qualification is required in order to take part in the dive, although some allow snorkellers into the cage. The most highly recommended operators are **Brian McFarlane** (☎ 028-312 2766; www.sharkcagediving.net; trips US\$110) and **Shark Lady Adventures** (☎ 028-313 3287; www.sharklady.co.za; 61 Marine Dr; trips US\$135).

Walking

The **Cliff Path Walking Trail** meanders from town along the sea to Grotto Beach, a long narrow surf beach with excellent facilities. The walk takes about 1½ hours and along the way you'll pass Kraaiwater, a good whale-watching lookout, and Langbaai and Voelklip beaches. The 1400-hectare **Fernkloof Nature Reserve** (☎ 028-313 8100; Fir Ave; admission free; ☹ 9am-5pm) is worth a visit if you are interested in *fynbos*.

SLEEPING

Hermanus Backpackers (☎ 028-312 4293; moobag@mweb.co.za; 26 Flower St; dm US\$10, d with shared bathroom & breakfast US\$28; ☹ ☹) This is a smashing place with clued-up staff, great décor and facilities, including a reed-roof bar. Free breakfast is served in the morning.

Moby's Traveller's Lodge (☎ 028-313 2361; www.mobys.co.za; 9 Mitchell St; dm US\$11, s/d with shared bathroom US\$27/35; ☹ ☹) Travellers give this place rave reviews. You can party the night away at the big bar or chill out in the awesome rock pool with its own waterfall. There's a daily pub lunch on offer and an internet café (US\$4 per hour).

Zoete Inval Travellers Lodge (☎ 028-312 1242; www.zoeteinval.co.za; 23 Main Rd; dm US\$11, d with shared bathroom & breakfast US\$46) More a guesthouse than a hostel, this is a quiet place with good ameni-

ties (including a Jacuzzi) and neatly furnished rooms.

Potting Shed (☎ 028-312 1712; www.thepottingshedguesthouse.co.za; 28 Albertyn St; s/d with breakfast from US\$40/59; ☹ ☹) An excellent-value guesthouse that's drawn glowing reader reviews. The neat rooms are comfortable, but the bathrooms are shower-only.

Auberge Burgundy (☎ 028-313 1202; www.hermanus.co.za/accom/auberge; 16 Harbour Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$99/132; ☹ ☹) This is a wonderful place, built in the style of a Provençal villa, with fine facilities, wrought-iron balconies and unique art on the walls.

Marine Hermanus (☎ 028-313 1000; www.marine-hermanus.co.za; Marine Dr; s/d with breakfast from US\$230/377; ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹) Right on the sea with immaculate grounds and amenities, this place is as posh as a five-star hotel should be. The hotel has two restaurants, both sea-facing, open for dinner only.

EATING

Savannah Café (☎ 028-312 4259; Village Theatres Bldg, Marine Dr; mains from US\$5.50; ☹ breakfast & lunch) Enjoy a 'Whale of a Breakfast' – eggs, juice, coffee, bacon, chips, mushrooms and boerewors, or a sweet pastry while staring at the sea. There's also a decent selection for vegetarians, vegans and diabetics.

Marimba Café (☎ 028-312 2148; 9 Royal La off Main Rd; mains US\$6-11; ☹ dinner) The lively atmosphere matches the eclectic menu at this rather unkempt but recommended restaurant and bar, where you can eat traditional African dishes from around the continent.

Bientang's Cave (☎ 028-312 3454; Marine Dr; mains US\$7; ☹ lunch & dinner) Nestled in the cliffs beside the water in an actual seaside cave, this restaurant's remarkable setting overshadows the only so-so food.

Casa do Zé (☎ 028-313 0377; 12 Mitchell St; mains US\$8; ☹ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) A quaint Portuguese restaurant specialising in fresh grilled fish and the famous LM (Lourenço Marques) prawns.

Burgundy Restaurant (☎ 028-312 2800; Marine Dr; mains US\$8-13; ☹ lunch & dinner) Housed in one of the oldest buildings in town, with garden and sea views, this highly acclaimed restaurant serves up mostly seafood.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

All three hostels run a shuttle service (US\$2.80) to the Baz Bus drop-off point;

otherwise there are no regular bus services to Hermanus from Cape Town.

L'Agulhas

☎ 028

Once described, somewhat cruelly, as 'nothing more than a seagull and a mussel', the settlement of L'Agulhas does unfortunately offer little for the visitor in and of itself, but **Cape Agulhas**, just south of town, is the southernmost point of Africa.

On a stormy day the low, shattered rocks and crashing seas can be atmospheric. Otherwise, there's no real reason to linger longer than it takes to snap a photo and peek at the nearby **lighthouse**, the second-oldest in South Africa.

De Hoop Nature Reserve

Covering 36,000 hectares, plus 5km out to sea, is **De Hoop Nature Reserve** (☎ 028-425 5020; bredasdorp@capenature.org.za; admission US\$2.80, camp sites US\$13, 4-person cottages from US\$44; ☎ 7am-6pm). One of Cape Nature Conservation's best reserves, it includes a scenic coastline with stretches of beach, dunes and rocky cliffs, plus a freshwater lake and Potberg Mountain. Fauna includes the Cape mountain zebra, the bontebok (antelope) and a wealth of bird life. The coast is an key breeding area for the southern right whale.

Although there are numerous day walks, an overnight mountain-bike trail and good snorkelling along the coast, the reserve's most interesting feature is the five-day **Whale Route** (per person US\$94). Covering 55km, it offers excellent opportunities to see whales between June and December. Accommodation is in modern fully equipped self-catering cottages. The trail needs to be booked in advance, and only groups of at least six are accepted.

Those just looking to spend the night in the reserve can choose from a variety of sleeping options, including basic cottages and a 10-person beach house. Accommodation prices include entrance fees into the reserve.

The reserve is about 260km from Cape Town. The only access to the reserve is via Wydegeleë on the Bredasdorp to Malgas road. At Malgas a manually operated *pont* (river ferry) on the Breede River still operates (between dawn and dusk).

Swellendam

☎ 028 / pop 30,000

Rapidly growing Swellendam, dating back to 1776, offers an unbeatable combination of

location, beauty and history. It's a disarming town, dotted with old oaks and surrounded by rolling wheat country and mountains, which makes a great base for exploring the Overberg and the Little Karoo. It's also a handy stopover between Cape Town and the Garden Route.

The town backs up against a spectacular ridge, part of the 1600m Langeberg Range, and is particularly impressive on a cloudy day when the mist rolls in over the mountains.

INFORMATION

Swellendam Tourism Bureau (☎ 028-514 2770; Voortrek St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) In the old mission on the main street.

SIGHTS

The main sight in town is the excellent **Drostyd Museum** (☎ 028-514 1138; 18 Swellengrebel St; adult/child US\$1.60/0.30; ☎ 9am-4.45pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3.45pm Sat & Sun). The centrepiece is the beautiful *drostyd* (residence of an official) itself, which dates from 1746. The museum ticket also covers entrance to the nearby **Old Gaol**; the **Gaoler's Cottage** and a watermill; and **Mayville**, another residence dating back to 1853, with a formal Victorian garden.

Take a picture of the **Dutch Reformed Church** (Voortrek St) in the centre of town; Swellendam residents swear it's the third-most-photographed site in the Southern Hemisphere!

ACTIVITIES

Swellendam has adventures for all ages, budgets and tastes. A good place to sort yourself out is at **Bontebok Tours & Travel** (☎ 028-514 3650; info@bontebok.co.za; 23 Swellengrebel St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun), which seems to arrange just about anything.

Popular day trips include De Hoop Nature Reserve (US\$40), day wine trails (US\$40) and mountain-bike hire (US\$12 per day).

For permits to walk in **Marloth Nature Reserve** in the Langeberg Range, 3km north of town, contact the **Nature Conservation Department** (☎ 028-514 1410; day permits US\$2) at the entrance to the reserve.

SLEEPING

Swellendam Backpackers Adventure Lodge (☎ 028-514 2648; backpack@telkomsa.net; 5 Lichtenstein St; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$9.50, d with shared bathroom US\$23) Set on a huge plot of land with its own river, 15 horses and Marloth Nature Reserve a stone's throw away, this is an excellent hostel

with enthusiastic management. Homemade dinners (around US\$5.50) are mouth-watering and gigantic. The Baz Bus will drop you right outside.

Cypress Cottage (☎ 028-514 3296; www.cypresscotage.info; 3 Voortrek St; s/d US\$34/67; ☎ ☎) There are five individually decorated rooms in this 200-year-old house with a gorgeous garden and a saltwater pool.

Rooijs Van de Kaap (☎ 028-514 3001; www.rooijevandekaap.com; 5 Drostyd St; s/d US\$43/59; ☎) Take a swim with a mountain view. This Cape country inn has 10 cosy rooms and an excellent restaurant (mains US\$9.50 to US\$11) serving Cape Malay dishes and wood-fired pizzas.

Braeside B&B (☎ 028-514 3325; www.braeside.co.za; 13 Van Oudtshoorn Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$47/67; ☎) This quiet, gracious Cape Edwardian home boasts a beautiful garden, fantastic views and knowledgeable, friendly hosts.

De Kloof (☎ 028-514 1303; www.dekloof.co.za; 8 Weltevrede St; s/d with breakfast US\$120/202; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) One of Swellendam's swankiest options, set in an estate dating back to 1801, the De Kloof is a supremely stylish guesthouse with a surprisingly personal touch and free daily wine tastings.

EATING

La Belle Alliance (☎ 028-514 2252; 1 Swellengrebel St; mains US\$2.80-7; ☎ ☎ breakfast & lunch) This appealing tearoom, a good spot for lunch, is in an old Masonic lodge with shaded outdoor tables beside the Koringlands River.

Old Gaol Coffee Shop (☎ 028-514 3847; Old Gaol Complex, Swellengrebel St; light meals US\$4; ☎ ☎ lunch) This is a wonderful little coffee shop, offering delicious snacks, traditional breads, excellent service and high-quality African curries.

Mattsen's Steak House (☎ 028-514 2715; 25 Swellengrebel St; mains US\$4-8; ☎ ☎ lunch & dinner) The delicious pizzas here are large enough for two.

Koorlands Restaurant (☎ 028-514 3567; 5 Voortrek St; mains US\$10; ☎ ☎ dinner) An eclectic menu of mostly African meat – everything from crocodile to ostrich – is served in an intimate candlelit setting.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Intercape, SA Roadlink, Greyhound and Translux plus the Baz Bus pass through Swellendam on their runs between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, stopping at Bontebok Tours & Travel (see opposite). Bontebok also offers a shuttle to Cape Town (US\$19).

Intercape fares include Cape Town (US\$13, 2½ hours, twice daily) and Mossel Bay (US\$12, two hours).

Minibus taxis depart from the corner of Voortrek and Stasie Sts, by the Caltex petrol station. Service includes Cape Town (US\$1.40, 2½ hours, daily) and Mossel Bay (US\$11, two hours).

The weekly *Southern Cross* train that runs between Cape Town and Oudtshoorn stops in Swellendam.

Bontebok National Park

Some 6km south of Swellendam is **Bontebok National Park** (☎ 028-514 2735; adult/child US\$8/4, camp sites US\$10, d cottages US\$27; ☎ 7am-7pm Oct-Apr, to 6pm May-Sep), set aside to ensure the preservation of the endangered bontebok, the unusually marked antelope that once roamed the region in large numbers.

The park falls within the coastal *fynbos* area and is on the banks of the Breede River, where swimming is possible. In the late winter and early spring, the veld (grassland) is covered with flowers. In addition to the bonteboks there are rheboks, grysboks, duikers, red hartebeests and mountain zebras. Bird life is abundant.

ROUTE 62

This area, promoted as the longest wine route in the world, provides an excellent hinterland alternative to the N2 for travel between Cape Town and the Garden Route. Breathtaking mountain passes and intensively cultivated valleys, perfectly preserved 18th-century towns and vast stretches of semi-arid plains dotted with ostriches provide eye-candy, while delectable wine, country cafés, charming B&Bs and even a hot-springs resort enchant the palate and relax the body.

The Little (Klein) Karoo is east of the Breede River Valley and is more fertile and better watered than the harsher Great Karoo to the north.

The towns in this region are presented in the order they would be reached driving the route from Cape Town.

Montagu

☎ 023 / pop 9500

Populated by artists, dreamers and other escapees, country hospitality is spread thick in picturesque, invigorating Montagu. Founded in 1851, it's a good place to go if you want to

escape the 21st century and get a brief taste of the Little Karoo.

There are some 24 restored national monuments, including fine examples of Art Deco architecture, but it's Montagu's splendid range of activities – hot springs, hikes, hearty meals in old-world buildings – that have turned it into a top Route 62 destination.

The **Tourism Bureau** (☎ 023-614 2471; www.tourismmontagu.co.za; 24 Bath St; ☹ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm Sat, 9.30am–12.30pm & 3–5pm Sun) office is extremely efficient and helpful.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Water from the **hot mineral springs** (☎ 023-614 1150; admission US\$3.40, parking US\$2; ☹ 8am–11pm) finds its way into the concrete pools at the Avalon Springs Hotel, about 3km from town. Heated to 43°C, energising and renowned for their healing properties, the pools are lively on weekends.

A great way to get here is to hike along the 2.2km **Lover's Walk Trail**, which starts at the car park at the end of Barry St. Pick up the *Hiking Trails* leaflet from the tourism bureau. The route leads past Montagu's top rock-climbing spots and can get tricky (and wet).

Interesting displays and some good examples of antique furniture can be found at the **Montagu Museum** (☎ 023-614 1950; 41 Long St; adult/child US\$0.40/0.10; ☹ 9am–1pm & 2–5pm Mon–Fri, 10.30am–12.30pm Sat & Sun) in the old mission church. **Joubert House** (☎ 023-614 1774; 25 Long St; adult/child US\$0.40/0.10; ☹ 9am–1pm & 2–4.30pm Mon–Fri, 10.30am–12.30pm Sat, 10am–12pm Sun), a short walk away, is the oldest house in Montagu (built in 1853) and has been restored to its Victorian finery.

For hikers, the **Bloupoint Trail** is 15.6km long and can be walked in six to eight hours; it traverses ravines and mountain streams, and climbs to 1000m. The **Cogmansloof Trail** is 12.1km and can be completed in four to six hours. Both trails start from the car park at the end of Tanner St. To hike either trail costs US\$2.40 per person. The tourist bureau handles bookings for overnight cabins near the start of the trails.

SLEEPING

De Bos (☎ 023-614 2532; www.debos.co.za; Bath St; camp sites per person US\$4, dm US\$6, s/d US\$16/23; ☹) A genuine farm-stay for backpackers – there's a river, chickens and pecan-nut trees in this 7-hectare property, where colourful old workers' cottages have been converted into self-catering cottages (US\$27).

Airlies Guest House (☎ 023-614 2943; www.airlies.co.za; Bath St; s/d with breakfast US\$52/79; ☹) Quaint accommodation in a roomy thatched-roof house with spacious wood-floored rooms looking out on the mountains. The hosts are obliging and the breakfast excellent.

Kingna Lodge (☎ 023-614 1066; www.kingnalodge.co.za; 11 Bath St; s/d US\$54/81; ☹) Each room at this elegant guesthouse is uniquely decorated but all come with marble bathrooms and fireplaces. The five-course dinners (US\$20) draw rave reviews.

7 Church Street (☎ 023-614 1186; www.7churchstreet.co.za; 7 Church St; s/d with breakfast US\$54/81; ☹) A luxury guesthouse in a charming Karoo building with a manicured garden and an ideal location just a few minutes' walk from both the hot springs and hiking trails.

EATING

Succulent Café (20 Bath St; mains US\$2.80–8; ☹ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Streamlined design, quality coffee, a solid vegetarian menu and fresh ingredients characterise this breezy café loved by local artists. There's internet access (US\$6 per hour), too. Closed Monday nights.

Jessica's (☎ 023-614 1805; 47 Bath St; mains US\$8–12; ☹ dinner) Named after the family dog, Jessica's serves up inventive bistro dishes, such as butternut ravioli and pan-fried springbok strips, in a cosy atmosphere.

Josephine's (☎ 023-614 3939; 63 Bath St; mains US\$8–12; ☹ lunch & dinner Mon–Fri, dinner Sat) A local favourite, with seasonal menus and plenty of fresh fish specials. We love the burgundy-and-pumpkin colour theme.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Translux (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za) buses stop at Ashton, 9km from Montagu, on the run between Cape Town (US\$16, 2½ hours, daily) and Port Elizabeth (US\$23, six hours, daily).

Munnik's (☎ 021-637 1850; per person US\$9.50; ☹ Wed, Fri, Sat & Sun) runs a shuttle between Montagu and Cape Town. It'll also take you on to the hot springs for an extra US\$1.40.

Local minibus taxis leave from the **OK Supermarket** (Bath St) near the corner of Market St and run to Cape Town (US\$15, 3½ hours) and Oudtshoorn (US\$5.50, 2½ hours).

Oudtshoorn

☎ 044 / pop 85,000

That it bills itself as the ostrich capital of the world is no overstatement. These birds

have been bred hereabouts since the 1870s, and at the turn of the 20th century fortunes were made from the fashion for ostrich feathers. Oudtshoorn boomed, and the so-called 'feather barons' built the grand houses that lend the town its distinct atmosphere today.

The town still turns a pretty penny from breeding the birds for meat and leather, and the ostriches also pay their way with tourists – you can buy ostrich eggs, feathers and biltong all over town – but more importantly Oudtshoorn is a great base for exploring the different environments of the Little Karoo, the Garden Route (it's 55km to George along the N12) and the Great Karoo.

The helpful **Oudtshoorn Tourism Bureau** (☎ 044-279 2532; www.oudtshoorn.com; Baron van Rheede St; ☹ 7am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat & Sun) is next to the CP Nel Museum.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Extensive displays about ostriches, as well as Karoo history, make up this large and interesting **CP Nel museum** (☎ 044-272 7306; 3 Baron van Rheede St; adult/child US\$1.40tt/3; ☹ 9am–5pm Mon–Sat). Included in the ticket price is admission to the **Le Roux Townhouse** (☎ 044-272 3676; nr Loop & High St; ☹ 9am–1pm & 2–5pm Mon–Fri), as good an example of a 'feather palace' as you're likely to see.

Everyone loves a meerkat, but none with as much devotion as Grant McIlrath, the so-called Meerkat Man of Oudtshoorn. On his **meerkat experience** (☎ 044-272 3077; www.meerkatmagic.com; minimum donation US\$40; ☹ sunset & sunrise) at a natural meerkat colony a few kilometres west of town, you will get to see up close how these curious, highly intelligent creatures communicate and live. If you have only one wildlife encounter in the Western Cape, make it this one.

If you're going to one of the ostrich farms north of town or to the Cango Caves, carry on driving and take the **Swartberg Pass** all the way to Prince Albert, then return to Oudtshoorn via the **Meiringspoort Pass**. Both are engineering masterpieces, and halfway down the latter there is a waterfall and small visitor centre.

Named after the Khoesaa word for 'a wet place', the **Cango Caves** (☎ 044-272 7410; www.cango.caves.co.za; admission from US\$7; ☹ 9am–4pm) are heavily commercialised but impressive. There's a choice of tours on offer. The caves are 30km north of Oudtshoorn.

SLEEPING

Oasis Shanti (☎ 044-279 1163; oasis@mailbox.co.za; 3 Church St; camp sites per person US\$4.70, dm US\$8, d with shared bathroom from US\$24; ☹) Friendly and well run, this recently refurbished hostel is in a large house with a spacious braai and swimming pool area, and shady camping spots.

Backpackers Paradise (☎ 044-272 3436; www.backpackersparadise.hostel.com; 148 Baron van Rheede St; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$9, r from US\$24, d with bathroom US\$34; ☹) In a large old house, this excellent hostel has a separate dorm-bed annexe and free ostrich-egg breakfasts. There's an adventure centre attached.

Kleinplaas Resort (☎ 044-272 5811; kleinpls@mwweb.co.za; 171 Baron van Rheede St; camp sites US\$16, 4-person chalets US\$51; ☹) A terrific caravan park, with a restaurant and a big pool.

Oakdene Guesthouse (☎ 044-272 3018; www.oakdene.co.za; 99 Baron van Rheede St; s/d US\$53/84; ☹) Elegant cottage furniture, wooden floors, ostrich eggs, and quality linen make each room special. There's lush gardens and an excellent pool.

Adley House (☎ 044-272 4533; www.adleyhouse.co.za; 209 Jan van Riebeeck Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$70/95; ☹) Rooms, all with private entrance, in the 1905 'Feather Palace' have bags of charm, though the separate add-on ones less so. There's a couple of pools and a beautiful outdoor braai and bar area.

EATING

As you'd expect, most places serve ostrich in one form or another.

Jemima's (☎ 044-272 0808; 94 Baron van Rheede St; mains from US\$7; ☹ lunch Fri, dinner daily) Jemima's delights both the palate and the eyes, but it's the food that ultimately takes centre stage. The Cape Malay dishes are legendary.

De Fijne Keuken (☎ 044-272 6403; 114 Baron van Rheede St; mains US\$7–9.50; ☹ lunch & dinner) The funky atmosphere is just another good mark for this highly recommended restaurant. There's loads of outdoor seating, and the varied menu includes ostrich cooked every way imaginable, and a large selection of pastas.

Kalinka (☎ 044-279 2596; 93 Baron van Rheede St; mains US\$8–11; ☹ lunch & dinner daily, breakfast Sat & Sun) A stylish bistro with an imaginative menu interspersed with Russian delights thanks to skilful chef Olga's love for Muscovite ingredients.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Intercape (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) has service to Jo'burg (US\$43, 14½ hours, daily).

Otherwise you can take a **Translux bus** (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za) to Mossel Bay (US\$7, one hour, daily) and from there you can get to multiple destinations (see opposite).

The Baz Bus stops at George, from where you can arrange a transfer to Oudtshoorn with Backpackers' Paradise (US\$4.70).

Every Saturday the *Southern Cross* train leaves for Cape Town at 5pm.

GARDEN ROUTE

The Garden Route is perhaps the most internationally renowned South African destination after Cape Town and the Kruger National Park, and with good reason. Within a few hundred kilometres, the range of topography, vegetation, wildlife and outdoor activity is breathtaking.

Roughly encompassing the coastline from Mossel Bay in the west to just beyond Plettenberg Bay in the east, it caters to all kinds of travellers. Backpackers are taken care of with plenty of hostels, and midrange and top-end folks will be pleased with the range of swanky hotels and charming guesthouses.

You can hike in old-growth forests, bike through wildlife reserves, commune with monkeys, chill out on superb white beaches and canoe in lagoons. Inland, the Outeniqua and Tsitsikamma Ranges, which are between 1000m and 1700m high and crossed by some spectacular road passes, split the coast from the semidesert Karoo. The towns most commonly used as bases are Knysna and Plettenberg Bay, though we prefer less crowded Wilderness and Buffalo Bay.

In recent years development has spiralled seemingly out of control, and at times you might feel like you're a cog in a huge tourist machine. All in all, the Garden Route is great, but if you leave South Africa without having seen it, it isn't a disaster. If you leave having seen nothing else, it might be.

Mossel Bay

☎ 044 / pop 78,000

Once one of the jewels of the Garden Route, Mossel Bay was marred by rampant industrial sprawl in 1980s. Following a clean-up (and an aggressive marketing campaign), the town is enjoying a revival, thanks in large part to its historic buildings, excellent places to stay, plenty of activities, the only north-facing beach in the country and some top surf spots.

The **Tourism Bureau** (☎ 044-691 2202; Market St; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun) is extremely helpful.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The highlight of the **Bartholomeu Dias Maritime Museum complex** (☎ 044-691 1067; Market St; admission US\$0.80; ☎ 8.30am-4.45pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3.45pm Sat & Sun) is the replica of the vessel that Dias, the first European to visit the bay, used on his 1488 voyage of discovery.

There are regular boat trips on the **Romonza** (☎ 044-690 3101) and the **Seven Seas** (☎ 044-691 3371) to Seal Island from the harbour behind the train station. The trips last one hour and cost around US\$8. In late winter and spring

the **Romonza** also runs special whale-watching trips (US\$54, two hours).

Shark Africa (☎ 044-691 3796; sharkafrica@mweb.co.za; Ochrebaan Sq, Market St; trips US\$160) organises cage dives and snorkelling to view great white sharks.

If you're interested in seeing how the other three-quarters live, contact **Meet the People** (☎ 083-262 2307; 4-hr tour US\$55), which offers home visits with traditional meals in nearby Tarka and KwaNonqaba townships – immensely preferable to the zoo-like township tours offered in larger cities.

SLEEPING

Mossel Bay Backpackers (☎ 044-691 3182; www.gardenrouteadventures.com; 1 Marsh St; camp sites per person US\$7.50, dm US\$11, d with shared bathroom US\$30; ☎) Close by the beach at the Point and the bars on Marsh St, this long-established place is reliable and well run. It offers a pool and bar and an impressive new and fully equipped kitchen. A higher-end guesthouse is attached.

Park House Lodge & Travel Centre (☎ 044-691 1937; www.park-house.co.za; 121 High St; dm US\$12, d with shared bathroom from US\$30; ☎) This place in an 1860s stone mansion is friendly, smartly decorated and has beautiful pond-filled gardens, though the doubles are hardly quiet since the shared bathrooms are located between the rooms.

Santos Express (☎ 044-691 1995; www.santosexpress.co.za; Santos Beach; dm US\$10, s/d with breakfast & shared bathroom US\$14/28) The location of this converted train, right beside the beach, can't be beat, but the compartments sleeping two or four

are undeniably cramped. There's an attached bar-restaurant (mains US\$5.50 to US\$8) with a very large menu, overlooking the water.

Protea Hotel Mossel Bay (☎ 044-691 3738; www.proteahotels.com/mosselbay; Market St; s/d from US\$93/120; ☎) One of the more individual of the Protea chain's hotels, this is a characterful refurbishment of the old post office building. Its restaurant (breakfast/lunch/dinner US\$5.50/6/11) has a large seafood, meat and pizza menu.

EATING

Marsh St is the party strip in Mossel Bay. Take a cruise and see what tickles your fancy.

Pavilion (☎ 044-690 4567; Santos Beach; mains US\$5.50-8; ☎ lunch & dinner) In a 19th-century bathing pavilion (hence the name), this is a fine choice for a beachside meal. The menu offers just about everything.

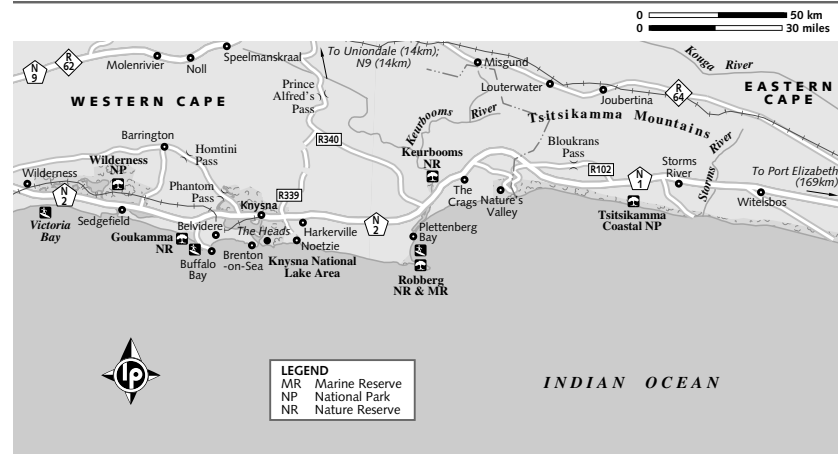
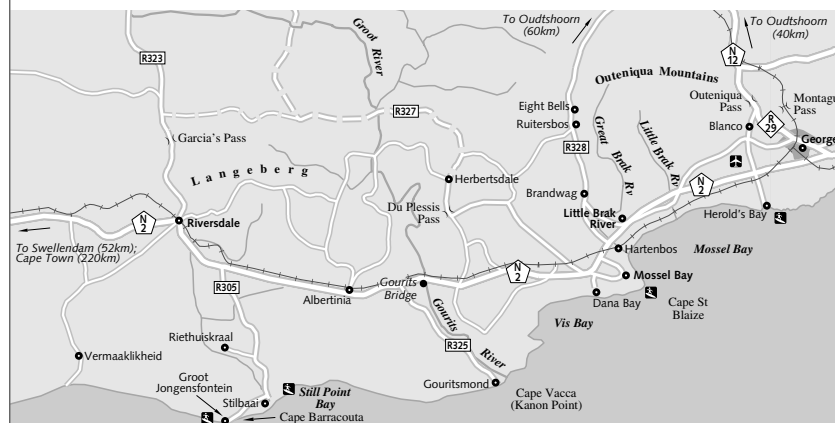
Jazzbury's (☎ 044-691 1923; 11 Marsh St; mains US\$5.50-9.50; ☎ dinner) Jazzbury's has beefed up its traditional African dishes, so now you can try *mopane* worms and Cape Malay food as well as the more common ostrich, beef and seafood creations.

Kingfisher (☎ 044-690 6390; Point Rd; mains US\$6-13; ☎ lunch & dinner) Locals love the seafood dishes and ocean views dished up here. You can choose between sushi, seafood platters, fish and salads.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Mossel Bay is off the highway, so long-distance buses don't come into town; they drop you at the Voorbaai Shell petrol station,

GARDEN ROUTE



7km away. The hostels can usually collect you if you give notice. The Baz Bus will drop you in town.

Greyhound, Intercape and Translux buses stop here on their Cape Town to Port Elizabeth services. Intercape fares from Mossel Bay include Knysna (US\$15, 1½ hours, twice daily), Plettenberg Bay (US\$15, 2½ hours, twice daily), Cape Town (US\$17, 7½ hours, twice daily) and Port Elizabeth (US\$15, 5½ hours, twice daily).

George

☎ 044 / pop 170,000

George, founded in 1811, is the largest town on the Garden Route yet remains little more than an important commercial centre with little to keep visitors for long. It has some attractive old buildings, but it's 8km from the coast and for most people its chief draw is the *Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe* steam train.

Check out **George Tourism** (☎ 044-111 9295; www.tourismgeorge.co.za; 124 York St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) for help on accommodation.

SIGHTS

The starting point and terminus for journeys on the *Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe* steam train is the **Steam Train Museum** (☎ 044-111 8295; admission by donation; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Sat), just off Courtenay St. It's worth visiting in its own right. Some 11 locomotives and 15 carriages, as well as many detailed models, are retired here.

SLEEPING & EATING

French Lodge International (☎ 044-874 0345; www.frenchlodge.co.za; 29 York St; s/d with breakfast US\$67/108; 🍷🍷) French style meets bush-lodge chic at this friendly hotel – possibly the best deal in town. Rooms are in thatched-roof rondavels, with satellite TV and a bathroom with a six-jet Jacuzzi.

Fancourt Hotel (☎ 044-804 0000; www.fancourt.com; Montagu St, Blanco; d from US\$363; 🍷🍷) This is the area's most luxurious place, about 10km from the town centre, and has four 18-hole golf courses. The hotel and country club has a range of top-notch accommodation options, a health spa and a few restaurants.

Reel n' Rustic (☎ 044-884 0707; Courtenay St; mains from US\$7; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Specialising in Creole and Cajun steaks and seafood, this is one of the best restaurants hereabouts, with another popular branch in nearby Wilderness.

Het Vijfde Seizoen (☎ 044-870 7320; 3 Maitland St, Blanco; mains US\$7-9.50; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Continental European and traditional South African cuisine combine for buffet breakfasts, lunches on the terrace and atmospheric candlelit dinners at this well-appointed eatery just outside George.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Kulula (www.kulula.com) and **Nationwide Airlines** (☎ 0861-737 737; www.flynationwide.co.za) fly to **George airport** (☎ 8044-76 9310), which is about 15km west of town.

Bus services stop in George on their route between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth and on their runs between Johannesburg and the Garden Route. Greyhound services stop in St Mark's Sq behind the Geronimo Spur steakhouse situated on the main street, while Intercape and Translux stop at the train station located 2km south of the tourism office. Intercape fares include Knysna (US\$13, one hour, twice daily), Mossel Bay (US\$14.40, 45 minutes, twice daily), Plettenberg Bay (US\$13, 1½ hours, twice daily), Port Elizabeth (US\$17, five hours, twice daily), Cape Town (US\$15, 6½ hours, twice daily), Bloemfontein (US\$38, 10 hours, daily) and Johannesburg (US\$50, 16 hours, daily).

The Baz Bus drops off in town and you can call the hostels in Oudtshoorn for shuttle services there.

The weekly *Southern Cross* train between Cape Town and Oudtshoorn stops here.

Wilderness

☎ 044

The name says it all: dense old-growth forests and steep hills run down to a beautiful stretch of coastline of rolling breakers, miles of white sand, bird-rich estuaries and sheltered lagoons. All this has made Wilderness very popular but thankfully it doesn't show. The only drawback is everything is quite widely scattered, making life very difficult if you don't have a vehicle.

INFORMATION

Internet Café (☎ 044-877 0951; 5 Wilderness Centre; per hr US\$8; ☎ 8am-5pm)

Wilderness Tourism Bureau (☎ 044-877 0045; Milkwood Village, George Rd; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat, 3-5pm Sun) This office is just off the N2 as you pull into the village. Takes reservations for the *Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe* steam train.

ACTIVITIES

Wilderness is jam-packed with activities. You can try **Eden Adventures** (☎ 044-877 0179; www.eden.co.za; Wilderness National Park) if you're looking to rent a canoe (US\$15 per day) or try your hand at abseiling (US\$32) and kloofing and canyoning (US\$32). The company also organises tours of the area.

The beach here is beautiful, but be warned: a strong rip means bathing is not advised.

SLEEPING & EATING

Fairy Knowe Backpackers (☎ 044-877 1285; www.redcard.co.uk/fairyknowe; Dumbleton Rd; camp sites per person US\$8, dm US\$11, d with shared bathroom US\$32; 🍷) Overlooking a river, set in spacious, leafy grounds, this 1874 farmhouse has yellowwood floors and some original fittings. The bar and café are in another pretty little building some distance away. The Baz Bus comes to the door and the steam train stops just along the lane.

Village B&B (☎ 044-877 1187; George Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$24/40) Without a doubt the best-value B&B in town, all rooms are three minutes from the beach, and have décor best described as 'African cute'.

Interlaken (☎ 044-877 1374; www.interlaken.co.za; 713 North St; d with/without breakfast US\$70/59; 🍷) Rave reviews from readers, and we can't argue: this is a well-run guesthouse offering a choice between B&B doubles or self-catering units, all with magnificent lagoon views. Delicious dinners are served.

Palms Wilderness Guest House (☎ 044-877 1420; www.palms-wilderness.com; George Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$120/132; 🍷) Blending perfectly into the surrounding landscape, this luxurious place, only a two-minute walk from the beach, is a good choice. Its restaurant is highly recommended (mains US\$11).

Wilderness Grille (☎ 044-877 0808; George Rd; mains US\$3.40-9; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Sit outside among the trees and murals in the garden area. There is an interesting selection of steaks, from blackened sirloin to Cajun, as well as decent pizzas.

Wilderness National Park

This **national park** (☎ 044-877 1197; adult/child US\$8/4; ☎ 8am-5pm Jan-Nov, to 7pm Dec) covers a unique system of lakes, rivers, wetlands and estuaries that are vital for the survival of many species. The rich bird life includes the beautiful Knysna lourie and many species of kingfisher.

There are several nature trails taking in the lakes, the beach and the indigenous forest. The lakes offer anglers, canoeists, windsurfers and sailors an ideal venue.

There are two similar **camp**s (camp sites US\$20, d rondavels with shared bathroom US\$28, d forest cabins US\$47) in the park, Ebb & Flow North and Ebb & Flow South. It's possible to walk to the park from Wilderness.

Buffalo Bay

☎ 044

Buffalo Bay, 17km west of Knysna, is distinctly un-Garden Route: a long, almost deserted surf beach, only a tiny enclave of holiday homes, a beach-shack backpackers and a nature reserve. That's about it, and it's more than enough.

Wild Side Backpackers (☎ 044-383 0609; dm US\$9.50, d with shared bathroom US\$24, meals US\$4-7) is one of the best hostels in the country, at least in part because of its legendary parties. There's not much luxury but tons of atmosphere and attitude.

Knysna

☎ 044 / pop 54,000

Perched on the edge of a serene lagoon and surrounded by forests, Knysna's (pronounced 'ny-znah') sylvan setting, gay-friendly vibe, good places to stay, eat and drink, and wide range of activities, mean it has plenty going for it. But if you're after something quiet and undeveloped, you should look elsewhere, particularly in season, when the number of visitors swells and getting around can be hell.

There's an **arts festival** in late September and early October and an **oyster festival** in July, while in May the town confirms its gay-friendly credentials with the **Pink Loerie Festival** (www.pinkloerie.com).

INFORMATION

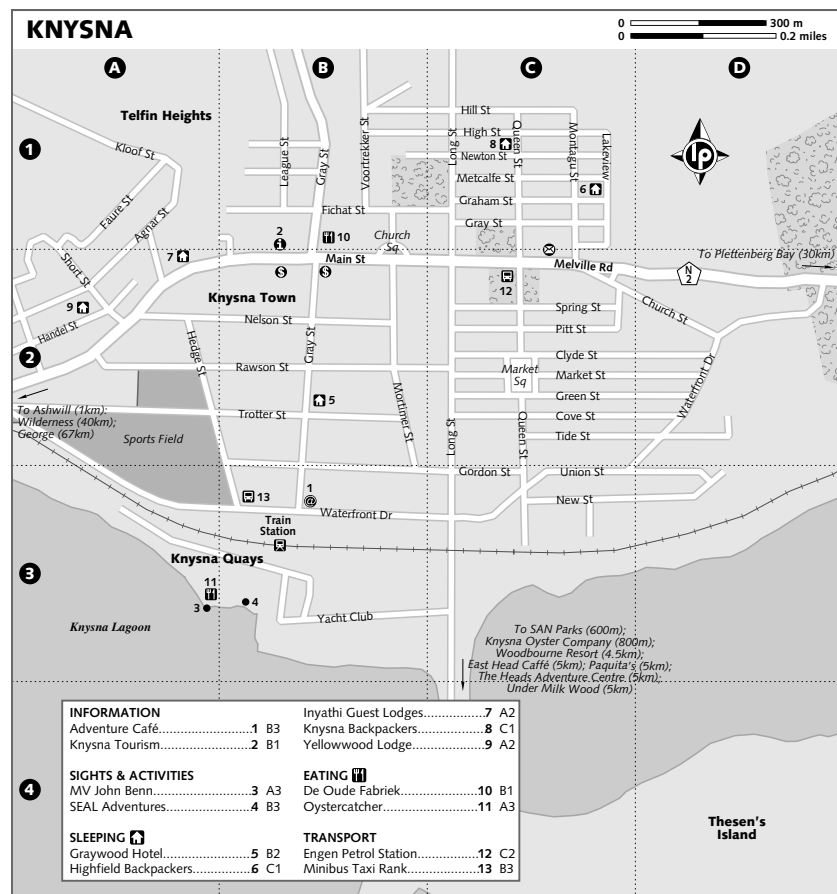
Adventure Café (☎ 044-382 4959; 1 Gray St; per hr US\$5.50; ☎ 9am-7pm) High-speed internet access.

Knysna Tourism (☎ 044-382 5510; www.tourismknysna.co.za; 40 Main St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat year-round, plus 8.30am-1pm Sun Dec, Jan & Jul) Look for the enormous elephant skeleton in the storefront.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Knysna Lagoon

Although regulated by **SAN Parks** (☎ 044-382 2095; www.sanparks.org; Long St, Thesen's Island), Knysna Lagoon (13 sq km) is not a national park or wilderness area. Much is still privately owned,



and the lagoon is used by industry and for recreation. The lagoon opens up between two sandstone cliffs, known as the Heads. There are good views from a lookout on the eastern head, and a private nature trail on the western head.

The best way to appreciate the lagoon is to take a cruise. The **MV John Benn** (☎ 044-382 1697; www.featherbed.co.za; Waterfront; adult/child US\$11/4.70, with lunch US\$34/15; ☎ departs 10am, 11.30am & 12.30pm) riverboat offers the recommended Featherbed cruise, a four-hour affair that includes lunch and takes you to the privately owned **Featherbed Nature Reserve**, where you'll be driven around.

Township Tours & Homestays

Sprawling above and behind town is the township of Concordia, best visited on an excellent

tour run by **Eco Afrika Tours** (☎ 082-925 0716; tours US\$27) or **The Heads Adventure Centre** (☎ 044-384 0831; the Heads; tours US\$34). Homes here are built mostly with timber from the nearby forests. The two-hour tours are led by local guides and take you through the usual township sites but then add a twist. You'll also get to visit the Grass Routes neighbourhood, the largest community of Rastafarians in the country.

If you want to stay overnight in either the Rastafarian community or in the township, contact Glendyr at Knysna Tourism.

Knysna Forest Trails

There are excellent hikes in the Knysna forests, and you can book walking trails and collect maps and information at the regional

office of **SAN Parks** (☎ 044-382 2095; www.sanparks.org; Long St, Thesen's Island). Overnight hikes cost US\$6 per day including the use of trail huts.

Other Activities

There are plenty of other activities on offer in the area; start by making inquiries at **The Heads Adventure Centre** (☎ 044-384 0831; the Heads). Among the possibilities are boat and short-entry scuba dives (US\$11 to US\$16) to some of South Africa's best spots. Snorkelling equipment can be rented for US\$12.

Quad-biking trips in the Featherbed Nature Reserve are available with **SEAL Adventures** (☎ 044-382 5599; Shop 1, Protea Hotel, Knysna Quays; 2½hr trip US\$38; ☎ departs 11am & 3.30pm). The company also runs an Awesome Foursome adventure trip – quad biking, abseiling, canoeing and cliff-jumping for US\$54.

SLEEPING

Budget

Knysna Backpackers (☎ 044-382 2554; knyback@netactive.co.za; 42 Queen St; dm US\$9.50, d with shared bathroom from US\$24) You'll find mainly dorm beds at this large and spruce Victorian house on the hill a few blocks up from the main street. It's quieter and more relaxing than other places.

Highfield Backpackers (☎ 044-382 6266; www.highfieldbackpackers.co.za; 2 Graham St; dm US\$9.50, d without/with bathroom from US\$27/34) Located in a spacious old house, Highfield, with its focus on attractive doubles with brass beds, feels more like a B&B. *Potjiekos* dinners are often served.

Woodbourne Resort (☎ 044-384 0316; w48@mweb.co.za; George Rex Dr; camp sites US\$16, chalets from US\$44) Here you'll find spacious, shaded camping and simple chalets with TVs. It's a quiet place a little way out of town. Follow the signs to the Heads.

Midrange

Yellowwood Lodge (☎ 044-382 5906; www.yellowwoodlodge.co.za; 18 Handel St; s/d from US\$54/108; ☎) A traditional and sumptuously decorated guesthouse, Yellowwood boasts a lovely garden setting and views of the lagoon. There's one room with air con.

Inyathi Guest Lodges (☎ 044-382 7768; www.inyathi-sa.com; 52 Main St; s/d from US\$59/77) This is the most imaginatively designed guesthouse in Knysna, with accommodation in uniquely decorated timber lodges – some with Victorian bath tubs, others with stained-glass windows.

Graywood Hotel (☎ 044-382 5850; reservations@thegraywood.co.za; cnr Gray & Trotter Sts; s/d US\$64/85; ☎) The recently rebranded Graywood, the former Caboose Hotel, has rooms about the size of sleeping compartments. Still, the upgrading is impressive and the furnishings top-notch.

Top End

Under Milk Wood (☎ 044-384 0745; www.proteahotels.com; Waterfront Dr; cottages from US\$245; ☎) A poetically named place, this is a series of highly impressive self-catering log cabins on the shores of Knysna Lagoon.

Phantom Forest Eco-Reserve (☎ 044-386 0046; www.phantomforest.com; s/d US\$270/323, dinner US\$30; ☎) This 137-hectare private ecoreserve 6km west of Knysna overlooks the lagoon and comprises 14 cleverly designed and elegantly decorated tree houses. At least visit for the award-winning six-course Pan-African dinner served from 6.30pm to 8.30pm daily; booking is essential.

EATING

Oystercatcher (☎ 044-382 9995; Knysna Quays; tapas US\$4.70; ☎ lunch & dinner) The Oystercatcher is a relaxed place serving four sizes of farmed oyster, and other seafood tapas dishes, in a great waterside setting.

Knysna Oyster Company (☎ 044-382 6941; www.mbendi.co.za/koyster; Thesen's Island; mains from US\$5.50; ☎ lunch & dinner) This company, opened in 1949, grows its own oysters out in the lagoon; you can take a tour of the processing plant and have a tasting of a cultivated and wild oyster for US\$2.80 at its restaurant afterwards.

Paquta's (☎ 044-384 0408; the Heads; mains from US\$5.50; ☎ lunch & dinner) Seafood, steaks, pizza and pasta are available at this ideally located restaurant and bar next to the Heads right on the water. There's also a Sunday carvery.

East Head Caffé (☎ 044-384 0933; the Heads; mains US\$5.50-7; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Our favourite breakfast spot. There's an outdoor deck overlooking the lagoon and ocean, and the smoked salmon, eggs and cream cheese breakfast (US\$5) is scrumptious.

De Oude Fabriek (☎ 044-382 5723; cnr Main & Gray Sts; mains US\$6-11; ☎ lunch & dinner) Despite its shopping centre setting, this restaurant is a convivial spot to sample some interesting South African dishes – game meat, crocodile and Knysna oysters are all on the menu.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus

The major companies, **Translux** (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za), **Greyhound** (☎ 021-75 6363; www.greyhound.co.za) and **Intercape** (☎ 0861 287 287; www.intercape.co.za), all stop at the **Engen petrol station** (Main St); Baz Bus will take you where you want. For travel between nearby towns on the Garden Route, you're better looking for a minibus taxi than travelling with the major bus lines, which are expensive on short sectors. Intercape fares include George (US\$11, one hour, twice daily), Mossel Bay (US\$12, 1½ hours, twice daily), Port Elizabeth (US\$11, 3¼ hours, twice daily), Cape Town (US\$20, eight hours, twice daily) and Jo'burg (US\$52, 17 hours, daily).

Minibus Taxi

The main minibus taxi stop is at the Shell petrol station next to the tourist office. Routes include Plettenberg Bay (US\$2.80, 30 minutes, daily) and Cape Town (US\$20, 7½ hours, daily).

Train

The historic *Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe* steam train runs between Knysna and George daily except Saturday and public holidays.

Plettenberg Bay

☎ 044 / pop 34,000

Plettenberg Bay, or 'Plett' as it's more commonly known, is a resort town through and through, with mountains, white sand and crystal-blue water making it one of the country's top local tourist spots. As a result, things can get very busy and somewhat overpriced, but the town retains a relaxed, friendly atmosphere and has very good-value hostels. The scenery to the east in particular is superb, with some of the best coast and indigenous forest in South Africa.

INFORMATION

Computer Shop & Internet Café (☎ 044-533-6007; First National Bank Bldg, Main St; per hr US\$4; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun) Internet access.

Plett Tourism (☎ 044-533 4065; www.plettenbergbay.co.za; Mellville's Corner Shopping Centre, Main St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar year-round, plus 9am-1pm Sat April-Oct)

ACTIVITIES

Apart from lounging on the beaches or hiking on the Robberg Peninsula (see opposite) there's a lot to do in Plett.

Boat trips to view dolphins and whales in season are available with **Ocean Blue Adventures** (☎ 044-533 5083; www.oceanadventures.co.za; Milkwood Centre, Hopewood St) and **Ocean Safaris** (☎ 044-533 4963; Milkwood Centre, Hopewood St). Trips cost about US\$39 for 2½ hours on 12-person boats.

Equitailing (☎ 044-533 0599), located 11km east of Plett on the N2, offers horse riding through the forest for US\$15 per hour. **Dolphin Adventures** (☎ 072-751 1798) has sea kayaking (US\$34, 2½ hours).

Those wanting to try surfing can take a lesson through the **International Surf School** (☎ 082-636 8431; 3½hr lesson US\$40), which caters to all levels of surfers. It doesn't have an office, so just phone.

SLEEPING

Albergo for Backpackers (☎ 044-533 4434; www.albergo.co.za; 8 Church St; camp sites per person US\$7, dm US\$10, d with shared bathroom US\$30; ☎) Well run and friendly, Albergo can organise just about anything. Try for the upstairs dorm with huge windows and stellar ocean views from the balcony.

Nothando Backpackers Hostel (☎ 044-533 0220; info@nothando.co.za; 5 Wilder St; dm US\$10, d with/without shared bathroom US\$31/28) Our choice for best budget option in town, this spotless and spacious, YHA-affiliated, award-winning hostel is owner-run and it shows. There's a happening bar area with satellite TV, yet you can still find peace and quiet in the large grounds.

Abalone Beach House (☎ 044-535 9602; beachhouse@global.co.za; 50 Ifafi Properties, Keurboomstrand; d with shared bathroom US\$24; ☎) It's a hop to the beach from this great hostel run by friendly people. Surf and boogie boards can be hired (US\$1.40). It's about 6km east of Plett.

Periwinkle Guest Lodge (☎ 044-533 1345; www.periwinkle.co.za; 75 Beachy Head Dr; d with breakfast from US\$155) This bright, colourful beachfront guesthouse offers individually decorated rooms, all with great views – you might even be able to spot whales and dolphins.

Plettenberg (☎ 044-533 2030; www.plettenberg.com; 40 Church St; s/d from US\$200/350; ☎ ☎ ☎) Built on a rocky headland with breathtaking vistas, this five-star palace is pure decadence, with fantastic rooms, a spa and a first-class restaurant. The (heated) pool here alone is worth the stay.

EATING

Miguel's (☎ 044-533 5056; Mellville Corner Shopping Centre, Main St; breakfast/dinner US\$4/11; ☎) breakfast,

lunch & dinner) A modern place with an eclectic menu, it's bright and airy with floor-to-ceiling windows and patio seating.

Cranzgot's Pizzeria (☎ 044-533 1660; 9 Main St; mains US\$5.50-8; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) This perennial favourite serves mouthwatering pizzas, pastas and char-grilled steaks.

Cornuti Al Mare (☎ 044-533 1277; 1 Perestrella St; mains US\$7-9.50; ☎) lunch & dinner) A stylishly decked out Italian oyster bar with hearty pizzas and refreshing cocktails served on a sun terrace. Try the homemade spinach and cream-cheese ravioli (US\$6).

Pansy Shell (☎ 044-533 6016; Old Nick Shopping Centre; mains US\$8; ☎) dinner) This formal restaurant gets rave reviews for its steaks, seafood and overall ambience.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

All the major buses stop at the Shell Ultra City on the N2; the Baz Bus will come into town. **Intercape** (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) sample fares from Plett include: George (US\$12 1½ hours, three times daily), Port Elizabeth (US\$11, three hours, twice daily), Cape Town (US\$20, eight hours, twice daily), Jo'burg (US\$52, 18 hours, daily), Graaff-Reinet (US\$26, 5½ hours, daily) and Bloemfontein (US\$40, 12 hours, daily).

If you're heading to Knysna (US\$1.20, 30 minutes) you're better off taking a minibus taxi – services leave from the corner of Kloof and High Sts.

Robberg Nature & Marine Reserve

This **reserve** (☎ 044-533 2125; admission US\$2.80; ☎ 7am-5pm Feb-Nov, to 8pm Dec & Jan), 9km south-east of Plettenberg Bay, protects a 4km-long peninsula with a rugged coastline of cliffs and rocks. There's a great circular walk approximately 11km long, with rich intertidal marine life and coastal-dune *fynbos* , but it's very rocky and not for the aged or anyone with knee problems! To get here head along Robberg Rd, off Piesang Valley Rd, until you see the signs.

WEST COAST & SWARTLAND

If you're keen to do the Western Cape the way locals do it, head north of Cape Town and explore the jagged coastline, rugged, desolate mountains and windswept hills of the West Coast and Swartland, a peaceful and undeveloped getaway. You'll come across quiet whitewashed fishing villages, beautiful

lagoons, hidden camping spots in dramatic valleys and a country town serving up a big dish of South African cabaret all within a few hours from the Cape Peninsula.

West Coast National Park

Encompassing the clear, blue waters of the Langebaan Lagoon and home to an enormous number of migratory wading birds is the **West Coast National Park** (☎ 022-772 2144; admission flower/nonflower season US\$4/2.70; ☎ 7am-7.30pm Apr-Sep, 6am-8pm Oct-Mar). The park covers around 18,000 hectares and is made up of a peculiar mix of semi-independent zones, some of which are only leased by the national park authorities.

The park protects wetlands of international significance and important seabird breeding colonies. Wading birds flock here by the thousands in summer. The offshore islands are home to colonies of jackass penguins.

The park is famous for its wildflower display, which is usually between August and October. Several animal species can be seen in the part of the park known as the Postberg section, which is open from August to September.

The park is only about 120km from Cape Town, 7km south of Langebaan. The return trip from Langebaan to the northern end of the Postberg section is more than 80km. The rainy season is between May and August.

Olifants River Valley

The scenery changes dramatically at the Piekenierskloof Pass; coming north on the N7 you suddenly overlook the intensively cultivated Olifants River Valley. On the valley floor are some acclaimed wineries and co-ops, immaculately maintained by a huge labour force. The eastern side is largely bounded by the spectacular Cederberg Range. Citrusdal and Clanwilliam, to the southwest and northwest of the wilderness area, are the two main towns in the region.

CEDERBERG WILDERNESS AREA

Bizarrely shaped weathered sandstone formations, San rock art, craggy and rugged mountains and green valleys all make the desolate Cederberg a must-see. The peaks and valleys extend roughly north-south for 100km, between Citrusdal and Vanrhynsdorp. A good proportion is protected by the 71,000-hectare Cederberg Wilderness Area, which is

administered by the Porterville offices of **Cape Nature** (☎ 022-931 2088; www.capenature.org.za).

Spring is the best time to see the wildflowers, although there's plenty of interest at other times of the year. There are small populations of baboons, rheboks, klipspringers and grysboeks; and predators such as caracals, Cape foxes, honey badgers and the elusive leopard.

Orientation & Information

The Cederberg is divided into three excellent hiking areas of around 24,000 hectares. Each area has a network of trails. However, this is a genuine wilderness area with a genuine wilderness ethos. You are *encouraged* to leave the trails, but it's up to you to survive on your own.

There's no real season for walking; from May to the end of September expect rain and possibly snow. From December to April there's likely to be very little water.

A Cape Nature permit (adult/child US\$2.70/1.30) is required if you want to walk, and the number of visitors per hiking area and maximum group size is limited. Apply well in advance. Outside school holidays and weekends you may be able to get one on the spot.

The entrance to the Algeria Camping Ground closes at 4.30pm (9pm on Friday). You can only collect your permit (if you haven't already organised it in Cape Town or had it posted to you) during office hours, so if you're arriving on Friday evening you'll need to make arrangements.

There are no eating places in the area so you will need to bring your own food.

Sleeping

See Citrusdal and Clanwilliam, both following, for places to stay outside the Cederberg Wilderness Area.

Kleinkliphuis (☎ 027-482 2564; camp sites US\$3.40, dm US\$7, cottages per person US\$13) Another option is this charming place near the Pakhuis Pass on Rte 364, about 15km northeast of Clanwilliam. It's a small country home in attractive grounds, with excellent self-catering huts.

Algeria (☎ 027-482 2404; 6-person camp sites US\$13, d cottages US\$51) This is the main camping spot, with exceptional grounds in a beautiful, shaded site alongside the Rondegat River. There are swimming holes and lovely spots to picnic and fully equipped stone cottages for

noncampers. Rates do not include the park entry fee. If Algeria is full, call Cape Nature (☎ 022-931 2088) for other camping areas.

Getting There & Away

The Cederberg Range is about 200km from Cape Town, accessible from Citrusdal, Clanwilliam and the N7.

Public transport into Algeria is nonexistent. It takes about two days to walk from Citrusdal to Algeria, entering the wilderness area at Boskloof. The Chief Nature Conservator's office in Citrusdal has information on this route.

Citrusdal & Around

☎ 022 / pop 9000

The small town of Citrusdal is a good base for exploring the Cederberg. August to September is wildflower season, and the displays can be spectacular. This is also one of the best times for hiking.

The **tourism bureau** (☎ 022-921 3210; www.citrusdal.info; 39 Voortrekker St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) can help you find accommodation and provide information on mountain biking and hiking trails.

There are several interesting and beautiful places to stay in the surrounding mountains including the **Elephant Leisure Resort** (☎ 022-921 2884; d US\$64; ☎ ☎), a serene spot 9km outside Citrusdal and the hard to reach but impossible to forget camping spot of **Beaverlac** (☎ 022-931 2945; Beaverlac Nature Reserve; camp sites US\$4).

Intercape buses stop at the petrol station on the N7 highway outside town. Destinations include Cape Town (US\$18, three hours) and Springbok (US\$19, five hours).

Clanwilliam & Around

☎ 027 / pop 37,000

The adjacent dam and some adventurous dirt roads into the Cederberg make the compact town of Clanwilliam a popular weekend resort. Well-preserved examples of Cape Dutch architecture and trees line the main street.

The **information centre** (☎ 027-482 2024; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, to 12.30pm Sat) is at the top end of the main street, across from the old *tronk* (jail in Afrikaans), which doubles as the town's museum.

A 120-year-old banyan tree looms over **Saint du Barrys** (☎ 027-482 1537; 13 Augsborg Dr; s/d with breakfast US\$40/67; ☎ ☎), a pleasant thatched-roofed guesthouse with a charming garden.

All the buses that go through Citrusdal also go through Clanwilliam. It's about 45 minutes between the two. Minibus taxis running between Springbok (US\$15, five hours) and Cape Town (US\$12, three hours) go through Clanwilliam, stopping at the post office.

NORTHERN CAPE

Covering nearly a third of the country, the vast and sparsely populated Northern Cape surely is South Africa's last great frontier. With a restless air of untamed energy, this is a place where the Africa of storybooks comes alive. In this land of stark contrasts the red sands of the Kalahari tumble into the

churning, inky waters of the desolate Atlantic Coast; while the Karoo's strange-shaped *kopjes* (small, rocky hills) collide with the sun-scorched lunar landscape of Namaqualand, where roads dissolve into an oblivion of endless space and burst into a miraculous sea of technicolour wildflowers in spring. Lions stalk prey across crimson plains in remote Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park at dawn, and in the evening big, orange-ball sunsets made for Hollywood movies steal the show.

The Northern Cape is one of only two provinces in South Africa (the other is Western Cape) where coloureds, and not blacks, make up the majority of the population. Afrikaans is the most widely spoken language with about 66% of the province speaking it.



KIMBERLEY

☎ 053 / pop 166,000

Kimberley is the epicentre of the region. An old diamond town with a chequered past, it's also the capital of the Northern Cape and definitely worth a few days' pause. Step inside one of the atmospheric old pubs with their dark smoky interiors or spend a night in one of the old-world hotels and you'll feel you've been transported back to the rough-and-ready diamond heyday of the late 1800s.

By 1872 there were an estimated 50,000 miners in the vicinity and Cecil John Rhodes had arrived on the scene (he would later buy out all claims and found one of the world's most powerful diamond conglomerates, De Beers Consolidated Mines Company) and would change the course of the country's history.

After a long slog across the Karoo the relatively bright lights of Kimberley are a welcome sight. The Big Hole is amazing and the Galeshewe Township is inextricably linked with the history of the struggle against apartheid – although unfortunately at the time of research the once highly regarded tours were no longer running.

Orientation & Information

The town centre is a tangle of streets inherited from the days when Kimberley was a rowdy shantytown.

Kimberley's most noticeable tall building is Harry Oppenheimer House, south of the centre, where South Africa's diamonds are graded and valued. The **Diamantveld Visitors Centre** (☎ 053-832 7298; toursm@kbymun.org.za; 121 Bultfontein Rd; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) has good maps and can arrange tours of the area.

Sights

THE BIG HOLE

The area surrounding the largest manually dug hole in the world was undergoing renovations worth US\$4 million when we stopped by. When completed, the touristy complex, dubbed the **Big Hole Project** (☎ 053-833 1557; West Circular Rd), will have numerous hotels, restaurants, shops, a cinema and a giant diamond display. Phone for admission prices and opening hours. As for the Big Hole itself, you'll be able to view it through a glass-enclosed complex with interactive displays and underground experiences. At 800m deep, water now fills it to within 150m of the surface,

which still leaves an impressive void. Diamond mining stopped here in 1914, but not before 14.5 million carats of diamonds were carted away.

The complex will also incorporate the already excellent **Kimberly Mine Museum**, set up as a reconstruction of Kimberley in the 1880s. It also includes a diamond-digging area perfect for the kids.

The renovations were scheduled to conclude in November 2006.

GALESHEWE TOWNSHIP

The satellite township of Galeshewe rates with Soweto as an important source of activists in the struggle against apartheid. Unfortunately, at the time of research organised township tours were no longer operating, however this could easily change. The township is not particularly dangerous, and if you have transport and go during the day you'll likely be met more with smiles than trouble.

WILDEBEEST KUIL ROCK ART TOURISM CENTRE

Built with a grant from the government to help create jobs for the poor local communities and promote a renewed understanding of the Khoesaaan past, this **tourism initiative** (☎ 053-833 7069; www.museumscn.co.za/wildebeestkuil.htm; Barkly West Rd; adult/child US\$1.40/0.70; ☎ 9am-5pm) is worth visiting for the cause alone. There are 10 rock-art displays on the property. Each is marked and you will be given headphones and a cassette player before you start out on the self-guided walking tours. Also check out the 20-minute film on the Xun and Khwe peoples. The centre is 10km west of town.

Tours

De Beers Tours (☎ 053-842 1321; tours US\$2; ☎ 9am & 11am Mon-Fri) offers group visits to the diamond treatment and recovery plants at Bultfontein Mine, 5km east of the centre on the city's outskirts.

Diamond Tours Unlimited (☎ 053-861 4983; www.diamondtours.co.za; tours from US\$20) offers a variety of tours including battlefield trips, diamond digs and city-sightseeing trips.

Underground tours (☎ 053-842 1321; tours US\$11; ☎ 9.30am Mon, 8am Tue-Fri), also run by De Beers, takes you deep under the earth to get a feel for the life of a miner. The tours depart from the visitors centre at the mine gate.

Sleeping

Big Hole Caravan Park (☎ 053-830 6322; West Circular Rd; camp sites US\$3.40, plus per person US\$2; ☎) Cool off in the swimming pool on a hot day or lounge in the grass under shady trees; either way this centrally located camp site is an appealing spot.

Stay-A-Day (☎ 053-832 7239; 72 Lawson St; s/d from US\$15/24) It doesn't have much atmosphere and the rooms are tiny, but it's also sparkling clean and you'll feel good knowing profits go towards an orphaned children's home. Most rooms share bathrooms.

Savoy Hotel (☎ 053-832 6211; 15 Old De Beers Rd; r from US\$40) An old-fashioned hotel that charms with cosy well-loved rooms and the soft-spoken gracious ambience of a time long past. An old-style restaurant is attached.

Bishop's Lodge (☎ 053-831 7876; www.bishoplodge.co.za; 9 Bishops Ave; r from US\$40; ☎ ☎) Modern and spotless inside, the self-contained flats come with sitting rooms, TV and full kitchenettes; cheaper doubles are in the main house.

Edgerton House (☎ 053-831 1150; 5 Edgerton Rd; r US\$135; ☎ ☎) Exquisite furniture, African hospitality and a tea garden make this charming guesthouse the best luxury option in Kimberley.

Eating

Umbertos (☎ 053-832 5741; 229 Du Toitspan Rd; mains US\$4.70-11; ☎) lunch & dinner) Big hearty portions of Italian food and pizza are served along with loads of ambience and a rooftop patio.

Star of the West Hotel (☎ 053-832 6463; North Circular Rd; mains US\$4.70; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Step back into Kimberley's mining heyday at this atmospheric city staple that serves up hearty pub grub.

Barnato's (☎ 053-833 4110; 6 Dalham Rd; mains US\$8-12; ☎) lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat, lunch Sun) Known for its creative gourmet menu, elegant atmosphere and professional service, posh Barnato's is a favourite with locals and tourists alike.

Getting There & Away

AIR

SA Express (☎ 011-978 5315; www.saexpress.co.za) has regular direct services from Jo'burg (US\$135, 1½ hours). **SAirlink** (☎ 054-838 3337; www.sairlink.co.za) has a direct service to Cape Town (US\$200, two hours).

BUS

Translux (☎ 011-774 3333; www.translux.co.za) stops in Kimberley on its run between Jo'burg/Pre-

toria (US\$19, seven hours, daily) and Cape Town (US\$31, 10 hours, daily). **Greyhound** (☎ 012-323 1154; www.greyhound.co.za) and **Intercape** (☎ 0861 287 287; www.intercape.co.za) have similar fares and routes.

Book tickets for all three companies through **Tickets for Africa** (☎ 053-832 6043), at the Diamantveld Visitors Centre. Buses stop at the Shell Ultra City long-distance bus terminal on the N12.

MINIBUS TAXI

The main minibus taxi area in Duncan St is around the Indian shopping centre in the city centre. Destinations from Kimberley include Bloemfontein (US\$7, 2½ hours), Kuruman (US\$10, two hours), Jo'burg (US\$16, seven hours), Upington (US\$10, four hours) and Cape Town (US\$18, 10 hours).

TRAIN

The *Trans Karoo* runs daily between Cape Town (US\$20, 18 hours) and Jo'burg/Pretoria (US\$11, nine hours) via Kimberley; the *Diamond Express* runs overnight between Jo'burg/Pretoria and Bloemfontein via Kimberley (US\$11, nine hours, three times weekly); and the *Trans Oranje* between Cape Town and Durban (US\$16, 18 hours, weekly) takes a slow and circuitous route via Kimberley.

Getting Around

The Kimberley airport is about 7km south of the city centre. A taxi costs about US\$20.

Kimberley has one surviving antique tram (one way/return US\$1/1.90) that departs from the terminus near the town hall every hour on the hour (9am to 4pm daily) and runs to the Big Hole complex.

A minibus taxi around town costs about US\$0.20.

UPINGTON

☎ 054 / pop 53,000

On the banks of the Orange River, orderly and prosperous Upington is a good place to catch your breath on either end of a long Kalahari slog. Wide boulevards slightly cluttered with supermarkets and chain stores line the centre of town, but step onto one of the side streets and you'll enter a world where lazy river views and endless rows of trees create a calm and quiet atmosphere perfect for an afternoon stroll (if the heat is not too stifling).

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 054-332 6046; greenkal@mweb.co.za; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) is in the Kalahari Oranje Museum.

Sleeping

Eiland Holiday Resort (☎ 054-334 0286; tourism@kharahais.gov.za; camp sites US\$8, r from US\$20; 🏠) The town's cheapest option offers a range of huts and bungalows and shaded camping spots on tranquil grounds adjacent to the eastern bank of the river.

Affinity Guesthouse (☎ 054-331 2101; www.affinityguesthouse.co.za; 4 Budler St; s/d US\$38/51; 🏠) Right on the river, this place is great value for money. The rooms are small, but very comfortable with firm mattresses.

Riviera Garden Lodge (☎ 054-332 6554; 16 Budler St; d with breakfast US\$54; 🏠) The gardens at this friendly lodge with two cosy rooms are a fairy-tale creation, and run all the way down to the river.

Le Must River Residence (☎ 054-432 3971; www.lemustupington.com; 14 Budler St; s/d from US\$80/95; 🏠) The classiest of the Le Must franchises, this guesthouse has impeccable service and facilities and luxuriously decorated rooms.

Getting There & Away

AIR

SAAirlink (☎ 054-838 3337; www.saaairlink.co.za) flies to/from Jo'burg (US\$260, daily) and to/from Cape Town (US\$260, Sunday to Friday). Hotels in Upington usually provide a free taxi from the airport.

BUS

For tickets go to the **Intercape Mainliner office** (☎ 054-332 6091; Lutz St). Buses run to Jo'burg and Pretoria (US\$35, 10 hours, daily), Windhoek, Namibia (US\$34, 12 hours, four times weekly) and Cape Town (US\$30, 10½ hours, four times weekly).

CAR RENTAL

There's an agent for **Avis** (☎ 054-332 4746) at Upington airport. There is a **Europcar** (☎ 082-426 8489) agent inside the River City Inn. Both rent 4WDs for about US\$130 per day, and compact cars for US\$54.

MINIBUS TAXI

You'll find minibus taxis near the Checkers supermarket near the corner of Mark and Basson Sts. Fares from Upington include Jo'burg (US\$23, 10 hours), Cape Town (US\$24, 10

hours) and Windhoek (US\$23, 10 hours). There's usually at least one bus per day.

VIP Taxis (☎ in Port Nolloth 027-111 8780) operates a weekday taxi service from Port Nolloth to Upington, via Springbok. It costs US\$11 to travel from Upington to Springbok.

KGALAGADI TRANSFRONTIER PARK

If you have the means (a vehicle), a visit to the otherworldly **Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park** (☎ 054-561 0021; www.sanparks.org; adult/child US\$16/8) is more than worth the effort it takes to get there. The scenery in this magical place is phenomenal. Even the drive in, a seemingly endless jostle down dusty crimson roads, is an invigorating trip, evoking images of the grand African safaris of lore. Once inside, the sight of a giant black-maned lion napping under the shade of a camel thorn tree in a land of shifting red and white sands is an awesome experience.

Proclaimed a national park in April 1999, Kgalagadi is the result of a merger between the former Kalahari-Gemsbok National Park in South Africa and the Mabuasehube-Gemsbok National Park in Botswana, making it one of the largest protected wilderness areas in Africa.

Although the countryside is described as semidesert, it is richer than it appears and supports large populations of birds, reptiles, rodents, small mammals and antelopes. These in turn support a large population of predators. Most of the animals are remarkably tolerant of cars, allowing you to get extremely close.

Orientation & Information

Visitors are restricted to four gravel/sand roads. Make sure to take one of the roads linking the rivers for unobstructed views of the empty expanses of the Kalahari. Visitors must remain in their cars, except at a small number of designated picnic spots.

The best time to visit is in June and July when the days are coolest (below freezing at night) and the animals have been drawn to the bores along the dry river beds. September to October is the wet season and if it does rain, many of the animals scatter out across the plain to take advantage of the fresh pastures.

All the rest camps have shops where basic groceries, soft drinks and alcohol can be purchased; these are open from 7am until 30 minutes after the gates close. Petrol and diesel



are available at each camp. There are public phones, a pub, a swimming pool and a good information centre.

The gate opening hours generally follow the rising and setting sun. Gates open between 5.30am and 7.30am and shut between 6pm and 7pm.

The minimum travelling time from the entrance gate at Twee Rivieren to Nossob rest camp is 3½ hours; to Mata Mata rest camp it's 2½ hours. No driving is permitted after dark.

If you want to venture into the Botswana side of the park, this is only possible via a 4WD trail. Make arrangements with the **Botswana Department of Wildlife & National Parks** (☎ 09-267 580774) in Gaborone.

Wildlife

About 215 species of bird have been spotted in the park, including the secretary bird, the kori bustard and the sociable weaver. There are also 19 predator species, including dark-maned Kalahari lions, cheetahs, leopards, wild dogs, hyenas, jackals, bat-eared foxes and suricates. The most numerous species is the springbok.

Sleeping & Eating

Inside the park there are three rest camps and six luxury wilderness camps. All can be booked through **SAN Parks** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org; 643 Leyds St, Muckleneuk, Pretoria). The park's only restaurant (Lion's Den Restaurant) is at Twee Rivieren.

All of the rest camps have **camp sites** (per 2 people US\$15, extra person US\$5) without electricity and with shared ablutions facilities. The camps also have a range of huts, bungalows and cottages equipped with bedding, towels, cooking and eating utensils, and with kitchens and bathrooms.

Twee Rivieren Rest Camp (6-bed cottage per 2 people US\$70, extra adult/child US\$15/7; 🏠) is the closest camp to the park's entrance, and the one that offers the most facilities. It is also the only rest camp with a swimming pool and air-con.

The six wilderness camps give you the opportunity to really get off the beaten path. None is fenced, which means animals can wander in at will, although a ranger is on duty at all times. Make sure to stock up on petrol and drinking water before visiting. **Kalahari Tent Camp** (2-person desert tents US\$93, 3-person tents US\$110, honeymoon tents US\$110; 🏠) is the most accessible of the wilderness camps and is also the most luxurious.

Outside the park there are a few interesting options near the road to the Twee Rivieren gate, including the **Kalahari Trails Nature Reserve** (☎ 054-122 ask for 91634; www.kalahari-trails.co.za; camp sites US\$8, s/d from US\$23/340).

Getting There & Away

It's a solid, 385km, six-hour drive from Kuruman to Twee Rivieren. The drive from Upington to Twee Rivieren gate is 250km with about 60km on dirt roads.

We've had several letters from travellers who wrecked their cars on this trip. Petrol is not available between Upington and Twee Rivieren.

It's important to carry water, as you may have to wait a while for help if you break down.

UPINGTON TO SPRINGBOK

The N14 southwest of Upington follows the course of the Senqu (Orange) River and passes through oases of vineyards and the quaint and quiet little towns of Keimos and Kakamas. The turn-off to Augrabies Falls National Park is just west of Kakamas.

With big grassy lawns where springbok graze between self-contained cottages, **Die Werf** (☎ 054-461 1634; s/d US\$29/48; ☺ ☹) is the best sleeping option in Keimos. Die Werf is on the N14.

In Kakamas, the **Kalahari Gateway Hotel** (☎ 054-431 0838; www.kalaharigateway.co.za; Main Rd; s/d US\$37/52; ☺ ☹) has massive rooms and a zebra-themed restaurant (mains from US\$7, pizzas US\$4).

Augrabies Falls National Park

☎ 054

The Khoesaaan people called it 'Aukoerbis', meaning place of great noise. And when the waterfall for which this park (☎ 054-452 9200; www.sanparks.org; adult/child US\$8/4; ☺ dawn-dusk) is named is fat with rainy season run-off, its thunderous roar is nothing short of spectacular. You won't find any big animals here, but the place doesn't suffer for it. The park, set in a rocky mosaic around an 18km ravine through which the Senqu (Orange) River flows, has a harsh climate.

The three-hour, 9km **Dassie Trail** is well worth doing, particularly if your time is short. It involves clambering over rocks through some magical landscape. The popular three-day, 40km **Klipspringer Hiking Trail** (US\$17) runs along the southern bank of the Senqu (Orange) River and the **Gariep 3-in-1 Route** includes canoeing, walking and mountain biking.

Accommodation in the park can be booked through the **SAN Parks** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org; 643 Leyds St, Muckleneuk, Pretoria), or you can take your chance and just show up. Options include **camp sites** (per 2 people US\$15, extra person US\$5) and a variety of **self-contained chalets** (from US\$57).

The friendly **Augrabies Falls Backpackers** (☎ 054-451 0177; www.kalahari.co.za; camp sites per person US\$4, s/d US\$10/20) has a chilled-out atmosphere and is about 10km before Augrabies Falls National Park on the road from Kakamas.

NAMAQUALAND

In the Northern Cape's rugged northwestern corner the roads stretch on forever, traversing the unspoiled expanses of ever-shifting scenery that is Namaqualand and the Hantam Karoo. The region is huge – a wild void stretching from the Namibian border in the north to the west coast's bleak beaches, then south towards Vanrhynsdorp in the Western Cape before merging with Bushmanland in the east. This is a land of immense sky and stark country, where you can drive for ages without seeing another car.

Springbok

☎ 027 / pop 10,400

Springbok lounges in a valley surrounded by harsh rocky hills that explode with colour in flower season. Outside of flower season there's little to see or do, although the town's remoteness is alluring. The air always feels fresh, the desolate landscape is endearing and step outside at night and it will be thoroughly still.

From an edgy frontier town, Springbok has been transformed into a busy service centre for the copper and diamond mines in the region. The **Tourism information office** (☎ 027-718 2985; Voortrekker St; ☺ 7.30am-4.15pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat & Sun) has loads of information about flow-ers, attractions and drives in the area.

SLEEPING

Cat Nap Accommodation (☎ 027-718 1905; Voortrekker St; dm US\$11, r from US\$40; ☺) Cat Nap has a good vibe, in part because of the beautiful photographs and artwork adorning the walls of the spacious old home. Backpackers can shack up in dorm beds in the barn.

Annie's Cottage (☎ 027-712 1451; annie@springbokinfo.com; 4 King St; s/d from US\$25/50; ☹) Each of the 10 rooms is decorated differently, but all are lovely. The pool and garden area is quaint with fountains, trees, flowers and benches.

Blue Diamond Lodge (☎ 027-718 2624; 19 Union St; s/d with breakfast US\$36/54; ☹) An attractive place north of the centre with neat units set around a swimming pool.

Old Mill Lodge (☎ 027-718 1705; 69 Van Riebeeck St; d/tr US\$54/67) Pleasantly situated in a peaceful garden up against the rocks on a quiet side street, the rooms here are plush and done up with modern art.

EATING

Springbok Restaurant (☎ 027-712 1321; 37 Voortrekker St; mains US\$2.80-7; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☺)

Don't let the mounted animal heads cluttering the walls destroy your appetite; the steaks, pizza and burgers are good.

Titbits Restaurant (☎ 027-718 1455; cnr Namaqua & Voortrekker Sts; mains US\$3.40-7; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This place does have a certain titillating atmosphere with loads of tasty options, including sandwiches, steak, pasta, pizzas and breakfast choices.

BJ's (☎ 027-718 2270; cnr Van der Stel & Hospital Sts; mains US\$4.70-7; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☺) This classy basement joint with a cellar vibe serves tasty, and very reasonably priced, steak cooked exactly how you like it.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Intercape (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) has buses to Cape Town (US\$28, 7½ hours, twice weekly) that leave from opposite the Springbok Lodge near the *kopje*. Buses leave for Windhoek, Namibia (US\$44, 12 hours, four times weekly) at 6.45pm from the same spot.

Springbok is a popular jumping-off point for Namibia and Richtersveld National Park. For 4WD hire, stop by **Cat Nap Accommodation** (☎ 027-718 1905; Voortrekker St); it rents vehicles for US\$100 per day, or US\$120 per day including camping equipment.

Van Wyk's Busdiens (☎ 021-559 1601) runs a daily door-to-door minibus taxi to Cape Town (US\$20, five hours) and Kamieskroon (US\$6, one hour). Ordinary minibus taxis run to Cape Town (US\$20, five hours, daily) and Port Nolloth (US\$5.50, 2½ hours, five times weekly).

VIP Taxis (☎ 027-111 8780) runs from Springbok to Upington (US\$11, four hours, Monday to

Friday), departing from the Masonic Hotel (across the street from the Springbok Hotel).

Goegap Nature Reserve

Don't miss this semidesert **nature reserve** (☎ 027-712 1880; admission US\$1.40; ☺ 7.45am-4.15pm), famous for its extraordinary display of spring flowers and a nursery of 200 amazing Karoo and Namaqualand succulents at the **Hester Malan Wildflower Garden**.

There are a couple of driving routes around the reserve, but you'll see more on one of the circular walks (4km, 5.5km and 7km). There are two incredible **mountain-biking routes** (14km and 20km); bring your own bikes. There's a biking permit fee of US\$0.90 per person.

Vioolsdrif

This town is at the border post with Namibia on the N7, 677km north of Cape Town. The short drive from Steinkopf, with its views of the Senqu (Orange) River carving its way through desolate mountains, is spectacular. The border is open from 7am to 7pm.

Peace of Paradise (☎ 027-761 8968; camp sites US\$20, s/d US\$27/40) is 22km west of Vioolsdrif on the banks of the Senqu (Orange) River. It's very pleasant with hot showers, clean toilets and electricity for campers, and you can cool off with a swim in the river.

Kamieskroon & Around

☎ 027

Out amid the tumbleweed and scrub brush, forgotten-looking Kamieskroon sits in the heart of wild country. Craggy mountains and boulder-strewn hills surround this remote and desolate place.

WORTH THE TRIP

Within a mountainous desert – a spectacular wilderness of jagged rocky peaks, grotesque rock formations, deep ravines and gorges – the enormous (185,000 hectares) **Richtersveld National Park** (☎ 027-831 1506; www.sanparks.org; adult/child US\$11/5.50; ☺ 7am-6pm) is a special place. It's especially spectacular during the spring flower season, when the park turns into a technicolour wonderland. The hiking possibilities in this surreal, almost lunar-like landscape, are excellent (though demanding).

In the northern loop of the Senqu (Orange) River, the park is the property of the local Nama people who continue to lead a semitransitional, seminomadic pastoral existence.

There is a brand-new rest camp at **Sendelingsdrift** (2-person camp sites US\$15, chalets from US\$56; ☺ ☹), which is surprisingly luxurious for such a remote area. There are also two remote wilderness camps (chalets and cabins US\$56) where you must bring your own water.

Most of the park is virtually inaccessible without a properly equipped 4WD vehicle and maybe a local guide.

The **town clerk** (☎ 027-672 1627; Voortrekker St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) serves as the tourist information office.

About 18km southwest of Kamieskroon is the newly established **Namaqua National Park** (☎ 027-672 1948; www.sanparks.org; admission US\$8; ☎ 8am-5pm Jul-Oct) where the shrubland and old wheat fields burst into flower in spring. Note that the park is only open during flower season and that it has no sleeping or eating facilities.

Just off the N7 (follow the signs), you'll find the comfortable and popular **Kamieskroon Hotel & Caravan Park** (☎ 027-672 1614; www.kamieskroonhotel.com; camp sites per person US\$6, s/d US\$20/34; ☎).

Kamieskroon is 80km south of Springbok on the N7. **Van Wyk's Busdiens** (☎ 021-559 1601) runs a bus service to Springbok (US\$6, one hour, daily).

EASTERN CAPE

At once semidesert, forested, mountainous and subtropical, for its relative size the Eastern Cape has a remarkable range of differing climates, topographies and vegetation. Your entry into the province is likely to be along the N2 highway from Cape Town, where you'll be struck by the beauty of the Tsitsikamma Coastal National Park, before the landscape flattens out past Cape St Francis and Jeffrey's Bay (famous for their surf), through Port Elizabeth and the Sunshine and Shipwreck Coasts to East London. Yet just inland to the north are the rolling hills of the former British stronghold of Grahamstown and surrounding 'settler country', which itself soon gives way to the desolate majesty of the semi-arid Karoo, dotted with intriguing towns such as Graaff-Reinet. Beyond East London, as far as Port Edward just over the border in KwaZulu-Natal lies the spectacular, subtropical Wild Coast, and to the north the dramatic mountain ranges of the North-Eastern Highlands.

History

In the 19th century, Trekboers (nomadic pastoralists descended from the Dutch) clashed with the Xhosa eight times along the Great Kei River, and just about everywhere in a guerrilla conflict with the British. Later the area would become a wellspring of resistance heroes including activists such as President Thabo Mbeki, Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko,

Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, Chris Hani and Oliver Tambo.

Xhosa culture dominates the former apartheid 'homelands' of Transkei (the Wild Coast) and Ciskei, nominally independent republics that were used as a dumping ground for economically unviable populations.

NATURE'S VALLEY TO PORT ELIZABETH

☎ 044

Nature's Valley is a small village nestled in yellowwood forest next to a magnificent beach in the west of Tsitsikamma National Park. This is where the Otter Trail ends and the Tsitsikamma Trail begins (see p468) but if you don't want to walk for that long, there are plenty of shorter hikes possible in the area.

A lovely place to stay is **Nature's Valley Rest Camp** (☎ 042-281 1607, bookings ☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org; 1-2 person camp sites US\$1.40, forest huts d US\$35) on the edge of a river east of town.

There's no public transport to Nature's Valley, although the **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com) will drop off or pick up here on request.

Tsitsikamma National Park Area

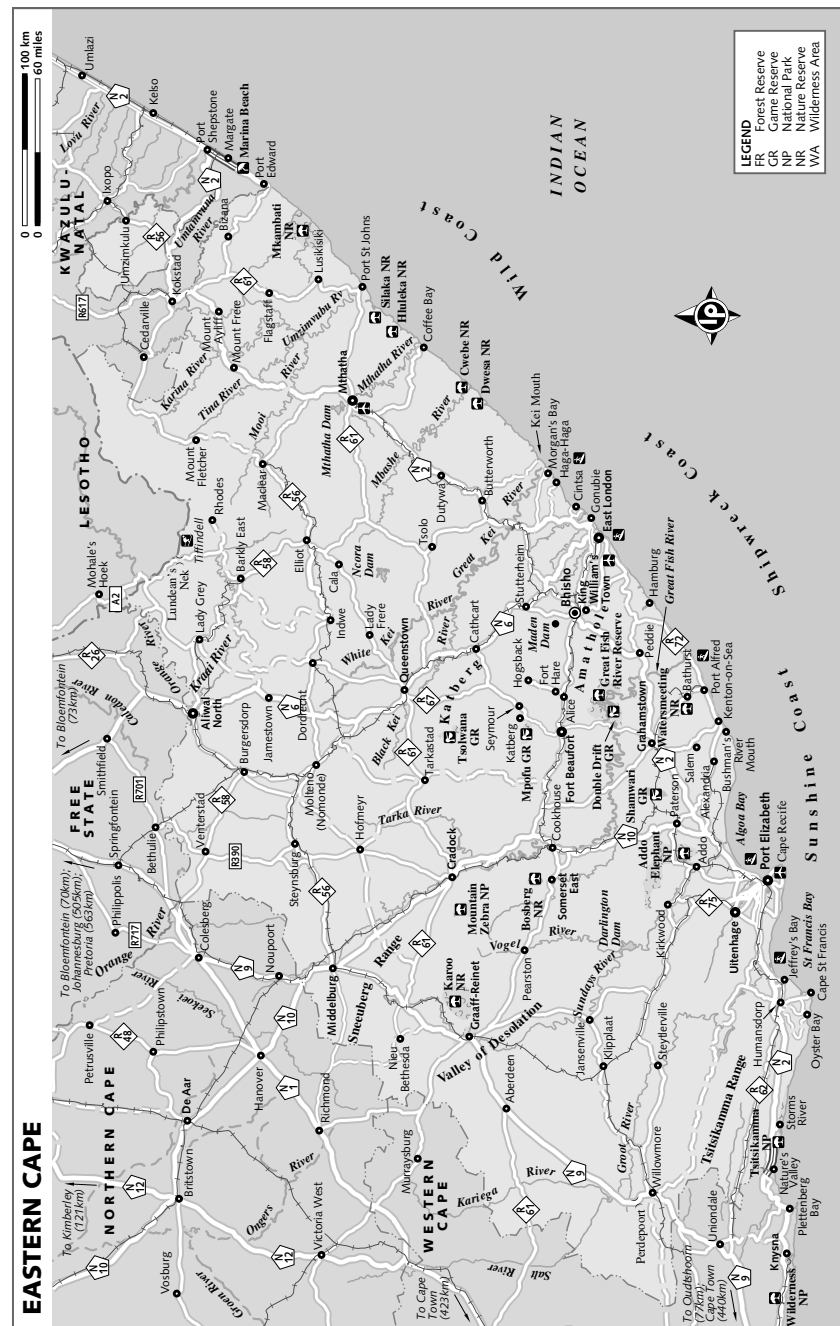
This **park** (adult/child US\$11/6) protects 82km of coast between Plettenberg Bay and Humansdorp, including the area 5km out to sea. Located at the foot of the Tsitsikamma Range and cut by rivers that have carved deep ravines into the ancient forests, it's a spectacular area to walk through.

Elusive Cape clawless otters, after which the Otter Trail is named, inhabit this park; there are also baboons, monkeys and small antelopes. Bird life is plentiful.

Several short day walks give you a taste of the coastline. The waterfall circuit (four hours) on the first part of the Otter Trail is recommended.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The main information centre for the national park is Storms River Mouth Rest Camp (p468), 68km from Plettenberg Bay, 99km from Humansdorp and 8km from the N2. The park gate is 6km from the N2. It's 2km from the gate to the main camp, which is open 24 hours. You can also pay park entrance fees and get information at Nature's Valley Rest Camp (see above).



OTTER, TSITSIKAMMA & DOLPHIN TRAILS

The 42km **Otter Trail** (per person US\$70) is one of the most acclaimed hikes in South Africa, hugging the coastline from Storms River Mouth to Nature's Valley. The walk, which lasts five days and four nights, involves fording a number of rivers and gives access to some superb stretches of coast. A good level of fitness is required for the walk.

Book the trail through **SAN Parks** (☎ 012-426 5111). The trail is usually booked up one year ahead. There are often cancellations, however, so it's always worth trying. Single hikers are not permitted.

Accommodation is in six-bed rest huts with mattresses but without running water. Camping is not allowed.

The 64km **Tsitsikamma Trail** commences at Nature's Valley and ends at Storms River, running parallel to the Otter Trail but taking you inland through the forests. This hike also takes five days and four nights, although it's considered to be easier than the Otter Trail. You only need to pay accommodation costs for the hiking **huts** (per person per night US\$9.50).

Book both the trail and accommodation through the **Forestry Department** (☎ 042-281 1712), or contact Nature's Valley Rest Camp (p466) for information.

The **Dolphin Trail** (www.dolphintrail.co.za; per person US\$363) is ideal for hikers who don't want to carry heavy equipment or sleep in huts. Accommodation on this three-night, four-day hike, which runs from Storms River Mouth to the banks of the Sanddrif River, is in comfortable hotels, and luggage is carried on vehicles between overnight stops. To book, contact **Tsitsikamma National Park** (☎ 042-281 1607) or visit the trail's website.

SLEEPING

Storms River Mouth Rest Camp (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org; camp sites/forest huts/family cottages US\$19/31/99) This camp offers forest huts, chalets, cottages and 'oceanettes'; all except the forest huts are equipped with kitchens, bedding and bathrooms.

Tsitsikamma Falls Adventure Park (☎ 042-280 3770; www.tsitsikammaadventure.co.za; Witelsbos; s/d with breakfast from US\$24/49) A family-run guesthouse about halfway between Nature's Valley and Jeffrey's Bay, and near a beautiful waterfall.

Misty Mountain Reserve (☎ 042-280 3699; www.misty-sa.co.za; chalets per person US\$54, 4-person cottage US\$135). A great place to stay if hiking the Dol-

phin Trail, Misty Mountain has luxury wooden cottages or chalets with wonderful views.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Greyhound, Intercape and Translux buses run along the N2, from where it's an 8km walk to Storms River Mouth. The **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) stops at Nature's Valley on request.

Storms River

☎ 042

Storms River is an odd little hamlet with tree-shaded lanes, a few places to stay and an outdoor centre. From the N2 the Storms River signpost points to this village which lies outside the national park. The turn-off is 4km east of the turn-off to the national park, which is signed as Storms River Mouth (or Stormsrivermond in Afrikaans).

Tsitsikamma Tourism Information Office (☎ 042-280 3561; www.tsitsikamma.net) at the PetroPort petrol station, 4km east on the N2, provides information.

Most activities on offer are organised by **Storms River Adventures** (☎ 042-281 1836; www.stormsriver.com; Darnell St, Storms River). These include a tree canopy slide (US\$53) and an overnight bush experience (all equipment provided) at the Konga Bush Eco-Camp (US\$47). The world's highest bungee jump (216m) is at the **Bloukrans River Bridge** (☎ 042-281 1458; www.faceadrenalin.com; per jump US\$78), 21km west of Storms River.

If you're after a post-bungee rest try **Tube'n Axe** (☎ 042-281 1757; tube-n-axe@telkomsa.net; cnr Darnell & Saffron Sts; camp sites US\$7, dm/d with shared bathroom US\$9.50/27; ☑). Another option is **Ploughman's Rest** (☎ 042-281 1726; www.ploughmansrest.co.za; 31 Formosa St; s/d with breakfast US\$28/53), a friendly B&B.

The **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) stops at Storms River, but there's no other public transport to the village.

Jeffrey's Bay

☎ 042 / pop 25,000

A far cry from its origins as a sleepy seaside town frequented by young families, 'J-Bay' takes its place as one of the world's top surfing destinations. Boardies from all over the planet flock here to ride waves such as the famous Supertubes, once described as 'the most perfect wave in the world'. June to September are the best months for experienced surfers, but novices can learn year-round.

(Continued from page 468)

Development is raging at a furious pace, with shopping in the myriad clothing stores almost overtaking surfing as the main leisure activity, but so far the local board-waxing vibe has been retained. The biggest surf crowd comes to town every July for the Billabong Pro championship.

INFORMATION

Atlantic Internet Café (☎ 042-293 2399; Da Gama Rd; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) For Internet access.

Jeffrey's Bay Tourism (☎ 042-293 2923, fax 293 2924; Da Gama Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat)

SLEEPING

Peggy's Place (☎ 042-293 2160; pegjbay@yahoo.com; 8a Oriibi St; camp sites/dm/d US\$4.70/7/27) A wonderfully rustic, friendly place in a comfortable old house on the outskirts of town, near the surf area and justifiably loved by readers.

Island Vibe (☎ 042-293 1625; ivibe@lantic.net; 10 Dageraad St; camp sites/dm/d US\$5.50/9.50/24) The most popular backpackers in town, Island Vibe is a couple of kilometres south of the city centre. Activities on offer include surf lessons (US\$24), plus of course plenty of drinking and partying. The new beautifully decorated beach house has double rooms (US\$34) only and a separate kitchen.

Cristal Cove (☎ 042-293 2101; www.cristalcove.co.za; 49 Flame Cres; dm US\$8, d from US\$20; ☑) Offering a choice of either new en-suite, sea-facing doubles or neat rooms within self-catering flats, Cristal Cove is a chilled-out backpackers with a personal touch.

Lazee Bay (☎ 042-296 2090; lazeebay@worldonline.co.za; 25 Mimosa St; d with breakfast US\$40; ☑) One of J-Bay's best guesthouses, up on a hill above Da Gama Rd, is memorable for its funky décor and great sea views. There's a pool deck, a braai area and a bar.

Supertubes Guesthouse (☎ 042-293 2957; super tubes@agnet.co.za; 10/12 Pepper St; s/d with breakfast US\$47/67, s/d luxury rooms with breakfast US\$70/108; ☑) A stalwart of J-Bay accommodation, this is right in the prime surfing spot and provides luxurious accommodation.

EATING

Sunflower Café (☎ 042-293 1682; 20 Da Gama Rd; mains US\$5.50; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, breakfast & lunch Sun & Mon) This bright, cheerful and friendly

café prepares some healthy and vegetarian options.

Tapas Lapa Seaside (☎ 042-292 0119; Marina Martinique; mains US\$7-11; ☎ dinner) Tapas Lapa is just across the car park from the seashore, so the sand on the floor has to be shovelled in! Meals feature decent seafood, and there's a bar next door.

Die Walkipper (☎ 042-293 9478; Marina Martinique; seafood platters US\$16; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) This alfresco restaurant specialising in seafood, and crocodile and ostrich steaks, is just metres from the lapping sea at the Marina Martinique beach.

Getting There & Away

The **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) stops daily at hostels in both directions. A fare from Jeffrey's Bay to Cape Town costs US\$51 and takes 12 hours; Port Elizabeth to Jeffrey's Bay costs US\$9.50 and takes two hours. The **Sunshine Express** (☎ 021-293 2221) runs door-to-door between Port Elizabeth and Jeffrey's Bay (US\$1.40, one hour).

PORT ELIZABETH

☎ 041 / pop 1.5m

Port Elizabeth, the Eastern Cape's biggest town and its major transport hub, seems to have something of an identity crisis. It's known by South Africans as 'PE', by locals as the 'friendly city', by marketers as part of the 'Sunshine Coast' and by local government as the core of 'Nelson Mandela Bay', an area incorporating the city centre, a nearby industrial area and the huge, sprawling townships that surround both. Its buildings are a hodgepodge of styles and have a dishevelled charm: monuments at once to its growth period (1880s) and boycott-era stagnation (1970s).

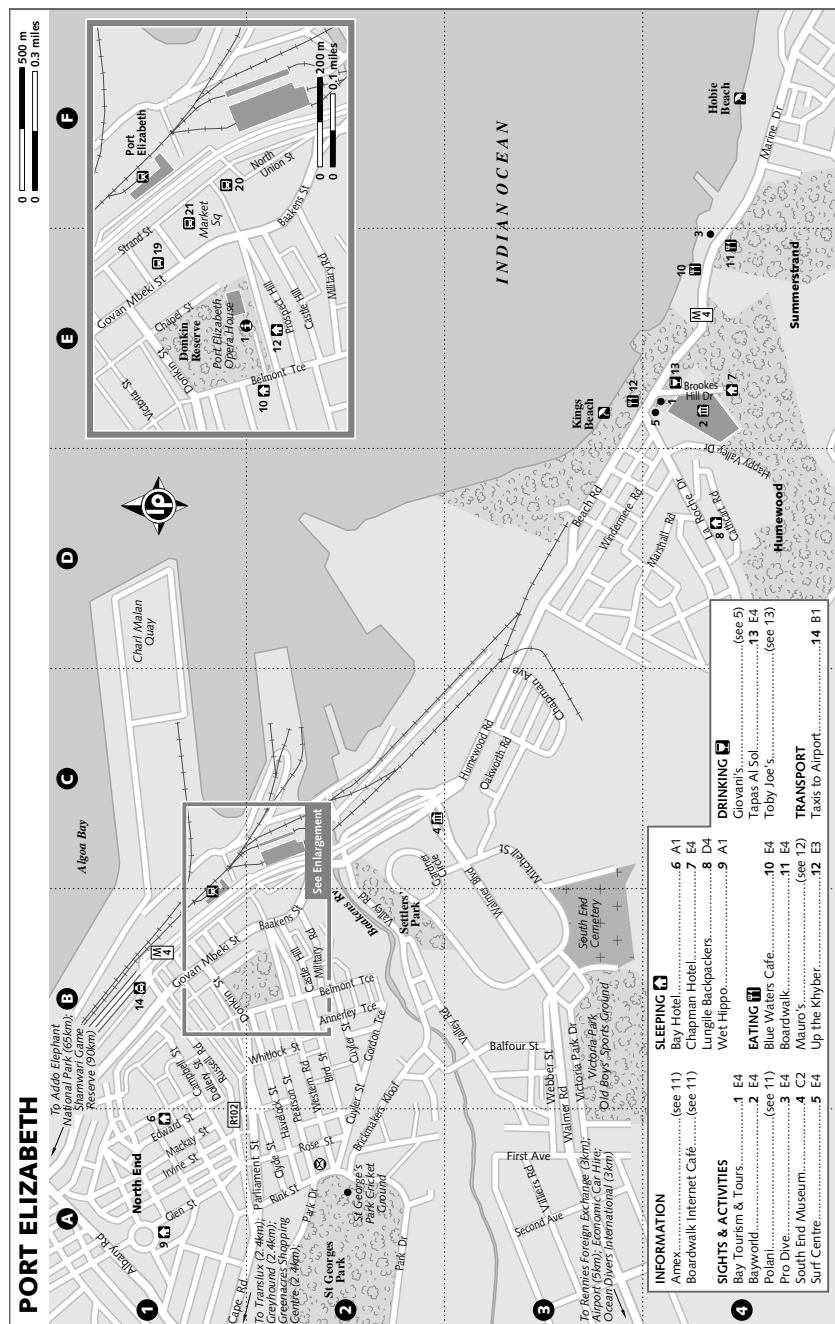
While many travellers consider Port Elizabeth no more than a charmless, convenient place to stop for a rest and stock up on supplies before moving onward, it does offer some of the Eastern Cape's best bathing beaches.

Information

Amex (☎ 041-583 2025; the Boardwalk, Marine Dr, Summerstrand; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun)

Boardwalk Internet Café (☎ 041-583 4725; the Boardwalk, Marine Dr, Summerstrand; per hr US\$5.50; ☎ 9.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) For Internet access.

(Continued on page 477)



Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism (☎ 041-585 8884; www.nmbt.co.za; Donkin Reserve; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3.30pm Sat & Sun) Has an excellent supply of information and maps.

Rennies Foreign Exchange (☎ 041-368 5890; Walmer Park Shopping Centre; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) About 3km from the town centre.

Dangers & Annoyances

The city centre can be dangerous at night – take a taxi if you're going out. The main beachfront, however, is considered one of the safest in the country.

Sights

SOUTH END MUSEUM

This small but fascinating museum (☎ 041-582 3325; admin@semuseum.co.za; cnr Walmer Blvd & Humewood Rd; admission free; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) records multicultural Port Elizabeth, a vibrant district once known as South End. The apartheid bulldozers put an end to the neighbourhood during forced removals between 1965 and 1975 under the infamous Group Areas Act.

BAYWORLD

One of the best and largest museum complexes in the country, **Bayworld** (☎ 041-584 0650; www.bayworld.co.za; Beach Rd; adult/child US\$4.20/2; ☎ 9am-12.45pm & 1.45-4.30pm) incorporates the Port Elizabeth Museum, an oceanarium and a snake park.

Activities

The wide sandy beaches to the south of central Port Elizabeth make the town a major watersports venue. Kings Beach stretches from the harbour breakwater to Humewood Beach; both beaches are sheltered.

Good diving sites around Port Elizabeth include some wrecks and the St Croix Islands, a marine reserve. Contact either **Ocean Divers International** (☎ 041-581 5121; www.odipe.co.za; 10 Albert Rd, Walmer) or **Pro Dive** (☎ 041-583 5316; www.prodiver.co.za; Shark Rock Pier, Beach Rd, Summerstrand; per dive US\$37).

The **Surf Centre** (☎ 083-656 8429; Marine Dr, Humewood; surfboards/body boards per day US\$13/4) sells and hires surfboards and body boards. Its surf school will teach you how to use them for US\$20 per day.

Tours

Bay Tourism & Tours (☎ 041-584 0622; www.baytours.co.za; Beach Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm) runs local tours, in-

cluding trips to Addo Elephant National Park (US\$74) and city/townships (US\$34).

There are several cross-cultural township tours, which give the opportunity to visit squatter camps and shebeens. The cost is from US\$27 to US\$34 per person for a half-day tour and includes a light lunch or dinner. Contact **Calabash Tours** (☎ 041-585 6162; calabash@iafrica.com), **Tanaqua Tours** (☎ 041-452 7692) or **Molo Tours** (☎ 082-970 4037).

For a sunset yacht cruise, including a fish barbeque, contact **Polani** (☎ 041-583 2141; info@polani.co.za; the Boardwalk, Marine Dr, Summerstrand). Boats go towards Cape Recife, and there's a good chance of seeing dolphins en route. The US\$16 price tag doesn't include drinks.

Sleeping

Most of Port Elizabeth's fairly unexciting hotel choices are lined up along the beachfront.

BUDGET

Lungile Backpackers (☎ 041-582 2042; lungile@netactive.co.za; 12 La Roche Dr, Humewood; camp sites/dm/tw/d with shared bathroom US\$5.50/9/22/24; ☎ ☎) Port Elizabeth's most popular backpackers is contained in an airy Swiss-style home minutes from the beachfront. There are also some handsome stone-flagged doubles with their own bathrooms (US\$26).

Wet Hippo (☎ 041-533 6260; www.wethippo.com; 14 Glen St, Richmond Hill; dm/d with shared bathroom US\$8/22; ☎ ☎) Port Elizabeth's newest backpackers is pretty smart, with a sunny kitchen, a big pool and a pretty garden, all set in a leafy suburban street far from the hustle of the beachfront.

Port Elizabeth Backpackers (☎ 041-586 0697; pebakpak@global.co.za; 7 Prospect Hill; dm/d with shared bathroom US\$10/24; ☎ ☎) This friendly, laid-back hostel is in a 100-year-old building within walking distance of places to eat and drink up on the headland.

MIDRANGE

Bay Hotel (☎ 041-585 1558; info@bayberry.co.za; 7 Lutman St; s/d with breakfast US\$34/51) An upmarket place that feels more like a B&B than a hotel, with very reasonable rates for elegant rooms with plenty of character. It also has an attractive restaurant (mains US\$5.50) and bar attached.

Edward Protea Hotel (☎ 041-586 2056; edward@pehotels.co.za; Belmont Tce; s/d US\$55/74) The Edward Protea Hotel, in the heart of the city, is a

gracious, old-style Edwardian hotel with comfortable rooms and charming colonial décor.

Chapman Hotel (☎ 041-584 0678; www.chapman.co.za; 1 Lady Bea Cres, Brookes Hill, Summerstrand; s/d with breakfast US\$62/74; ☹️ ☹️ ☹️) The family-run Chapman, overlooking the sea south of the city centre, is an upmarket choice with a waterfall horizon pool. Modern rooms have private balconies with sea views.

Eating

Most of Port Elizabeth's best cafés are in the Boardwalk casino complex in Summerstrand, at the far end of Beach Rd. The atmosphere is a bit artificial, but here you can at least sip a cappuccino in peace away from the plastic fast-food joints of the beachfront.

Blue Waters Cafe (☎ 041-583 4110; Marine Dr, Summerstrand; mains US\$4-12; ☺️ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) A bright, lively café-restaurant with lots of seafood platters, salads and pasta.

Up the Khyber (☎ 041-582 2200; MacArthur Leisure Centre, Beach Rd; mains US\$6-9; ☺️ lunch & dinner) Next door to Mauro's, Indian food at this classy restaurant has recently taken a back seat to the usual steaks and burgers.

Mauro's (☎ 041-582 2700; MacArthur Leisure Centre, Beach Rd; mains US\$7-11; ☺️ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) Mauro's is something of an anomaly among the bucket-and-spade kitsch of the beachfront – a Californian-style trendy bistro.

Drinking & Entertainment

Wednesday seems to be the biggest night in the pubs and clubs, although Friday and Saturday are popular as well.

Toby Joe's (☎ 041-584 0082; Brookes Pavilion, Beach Rd, Humewood; ☺️ Tue-Sun) Port Elizabeth's current hot spot for the young is this cavernous pub, filled to bursting every night. There are live DJs at weekends, karaoke on Thursday, and Sunday deck parties on the wooden terrace.

Giovani's (☎ 041-586 3189; Dolphin's Leap Centre) A buzzy, trendy bar-diner with a long cocktail menu, loud music and American diner-style booths to cosy up in.

Tapas Al Sol (☎ 041-586 2159; Brookes Pavilion, Beach Rd, Humewood) No tapas here, but live bands play most nights and the Sunday afternoon deck party is legendary.

Getting There & Away

AIR

SAA (☎ 041-507 1111) has daily flights between Jo'burg (US\$175 return), Durban (US\$150),

Cape Town (US\$160) and Port Elizabeth. **SA Airlink** (☎ 0861-359 722) flies daily from Port Elizabeth to East London (around US\$100), Durban (US\$120) and Cape Town (US\$120). **Kulula** (☎ 0861-585 852; www.kulula.com) flies daily to Jo'burg. Return fares start at around US\$120.

BUS

Greyhound (☎ 041-363 4555) buses depart from opposite Checkers at Greenacres Shopping Centre, around 3km from Humewood. **Translux** (☎ 041-392 1333) also operates out of the Greenacres Shopping Centre. **Intercape** (☎ 041-586 0055) only accepts telephone bookings.

The 12-hour or so trip to Cape Town averages around US\$24. The **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) runs daily from Port Elizabeth to Cape Town (US\$110 one way – hop-on, hop-off).

All three bus companies service Jo'burg. Via East London the 15-hour trip averages around US\$45.

Translux runs to Durban daily (US\$38, 15 hours) via Grahamstown (US\$10, 2½ hours), East London (US\$17, five hours), Mthatha (US\$23, nine hours) and Port Shepstone (US\$32, 13 hours). Greyhound runs to Durban daily (US\$40, 15 hours). Intercape runs between Port Elizabeth and East London daily (US\$16, six hours).

The **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) runs Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday from Port Elizabeth to Durban, and returns on Monday, Wednesday Thursday, Saturday and Sunday; it's US\$97 for a one-way hop-on, hop-off ticket.

CAR

All the big car-rental operators have offices situated in Port Elizabeth or at the airport, including **Avis** (☎ 041-581 4291), **Budget** (☎ 041-581 4242) and **Imperial** (☎ 5041-81 1268). Also try **Economic Car Hire** (☎ 041-581 5826; 104 Heugh Rd, Walmer).

MINIBUS TAXI

J-Bay Sunshine Express (☎ 042-293 2221) minibus taxis run between Jeffrey's Bay, Port Elizabeth and other coastal areas.

TRAIN

The **Shosholoz Meyl** (☎ 0860-008 888; www.spoornet.co.za) runs overnight to Jo'burg (1st/2nd class US\$49/33, 18 hours) via Bloemfontein.

Getting Around

The **airport** (Allister Miller Rd, Walmer) is about 5km from the city centre. Taxis (US\$9) and hire cars are available at the airport.

PORT ELIZABETH TO KEI RIVER

Addo Elephant National Park

This **national park** (☎ 042-223 0556; www.sanparks.org; adult/child US\$11/5; ☺️ 7am-7pm) is 72km north of Port Elizabeth, near the Zuurberg Range in the Sundays River Valley. Following a recent expansion, Addo now encompasses around 120,000 hectares of malaria-free wildlife viewing.

The park protects the remnants of the huge elephant herds that once roamed Eastern Cape. When Addo was proclaimed a national park in 1931, there were only 11 elephants left. Today there are more than 300 in the park, and you'd be unlucky not to see some. A day or two at Addo is a highlight of any visit to this part of the Eastern Cape, not only for the elephants but for the zebras, elands, kudus, warthogs, myriad birds and even lions and hyenas, relatively new introductions to the park.

INFORMATION

The park is closed if there has been heavy rain. There is a well-stocked **shop** (☺️ 8am-7pm) at the park headquarters, 7km from the village of Addo on Rte 335. Midsummer heat can be intolerable.

For optimum wildlife-spotting, pick up one of the **'hop-on rangers'** (US\$7) at the gate, who can give you advice on where to go and explain what you're looking at in interesting detail. The park's own **vehicle** (2hr drive per person US\$20) can also be used for elephant-spotting drives.

SLEEPING

Addo Rest Camp (bookings ☎ 042-223 0556; www.sanparks.org; camp sites/safari tents/forest cabins with shared bathroom US\$14/35/47, 4-person chalets US\$52) Some of the accommodation overlooks a waterhole where elephants come to drink. Addo also has a bush camp (one to four people US\$59) and bungalows (one to four people US\$16) in the northern section of the park.

Homestead B&B (☎ 042-223 0354; homestead@webmail.co.za; camp sites US\$3.40, backpackers s/d US\$14/24, B&B s/d US\$34/67; ☹️) Homestead has a few backpackers' rooms and self-catering units, as well as camping, alongside the normal B&B accommodation.

Chrislin (☎ 042-233 0022; www.africanhuts-addo.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$60/95; ☹️) This place has friendly owners and very pretty African-style huts on a working citrus farm. A big braai dinner can be provided for US\$1.40 per person.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The park is signposted from the N2. Alternatively you can travel via Uitenhage on Rte 75.

Port Alfred

☎ 046 / pop 32,500

Port Alfred is an odd little place that's one part unkempt seaside town and the other part upmarket holiday resort, making it at once an exemplar of the province's lack of funds and an island of style and serenity. Which face it wears depends largely on the season: off-peak it's staid and quiet except on weekends, when students from Grahamstown come to lounge on the beach and drink in the pubs. In season (mid-December to January) it bustles with life as people arrive from other parts of the province to soak up the holiday atmosphere, and prices surge.

ACTIVITIES

If you're into equestrian endeavours, contact **Fish River Horse Safaris** (☎ 046-675 1271; www.fishriverhorsesafaris.co.za; 2½hr trails US\$24, 5hr trails US\$70).

For **surfers**, there are good right- and left-hand breaks at the river mouth. There's also an 8km **walking trail** through the Kowie Nature Reserve. For the more aerobically fit, **Rufanes River Trails** (☎ 041-624 1469) has mountain-bike trails.

The two-day **Kowie Canoe Trail** (☎ 041-624 2230; per person US\$11) is a fairly easy 18km canoe trip upriver from Port Alfred, with an overnight stay in a hut.

Keryn's Dive School & Maximum Exposure (☎ 046-624 4432; keryn@compushop.co.za; NAUI scuba-diving course US\$200) offers diving courses between May and August.

SLEEPING

Bretton Beach Crest (☎ 046-624 1606; www.brettonbeach.co.za; Freshwater Rd; self-catering cottages from US\$32) A charming collection of self-contained beach cottages 3km from the Kowie River mouth with wonderful sea views and neat rooms.

Medolino Caravan Park (☎ 046-624 1651; www.caravanparks.co.za/medolino; 23 Stewart Rd; camp sites US\$1.40, 2-/4-bedroom chalets US\$43/57) This park, in town off Princes Ave, is near both Kowie River

and Kelly's Beach. The chalet rates double in high season.

Residency (☎ 046-624 5382; www.theresidency.co.za; 11 Vroom Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$35/62) The Residency is a gracious B&B in a magnificently restored Victorian house built in 1898. A big breakfast is served on the wide veranda every morning.

Halyards Hotel (☎ 046-84 3300; www.riverhotels.co.za; Royal Alfred Marina, Albany Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$70/95; ☎) This comfy waterfront hotel with attractive Cape Cod-style architecture has large well-equipped rooms overlooking the harbour.

EATING

Guido's Restaurant (☎ 046-624 5264; West Beach Dr; mains US\$2.80-6; ☎ lunch & dinner) Guido's is a trendy pizza-and-pasta restaurant on the beach. Though service is slow the ambience is lively.

Buck & Hunter (☎ 046-624 5960; Main St; mains US\$4.70-7; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Sun Feb-Nov except Easter) The Buck & Hunter is a pub-restaurant serving game dishes, such as kudu and ostrich, and more than 35 types of pizzas to a macho clientele.

Butler's (☎ 046-624 3464; 25 Van der Riet St; mains US\$6-13; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) Widely considered one of the country's best restaurants, Butler's imaginative, oft-changing menu always features a great fish and seafood selection.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) stops at Station Backpackers (off Pascoe Crescent) on its run from Port Elizabeth (1½ hours) to Durban (12 hours) on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

The **minibus taxi rank** (Biscay Rd) is outside the Heritage Mall. There are daily services to Port Elizabeth (US\$7), Grahamstown (US\$3) and East London (US\$9). Local daily services include Bathurst (US\$1.20).

Shipwreck Coast

The coast between the Great Fish River and East London is also known as the Shipwreck Coast, as it is the graveyard for many ships. The 64km **Shipwreck Hiking Trail** (per person per night US\$5.50) leads from the Great Fish River to the Ncera River, but it is possible to do any section as there are several easy entry and exit points. This is one of the few walking areas in South Africa where hikers can set their own pace and

camp more or less where they choose. They are rewarded with wild, unspoilt sections of surf beach and beautiful estuaries. The trail must be booked through **Wild Coast Reservations** (☎ 043-743 6181) in East London

East London

☎ 043 / pop 980,000

The country's only river port, with a good surf beach and a spectacular bay that curves round to huge sand hills. Few cities in the world can be as equally populous and dour as East London, yet a strange, inescapable malaise hangs over the town. Unless you're a surfer (or a shark), there isn't really much to keep you here, though it can be a good base for moving on to holiday spots along the Sunshine or Wild Coasts. The main downtown street is Oxford St, with the city centre extending from about Argyle St south to Fleet St.

Its Khoesaaan name means 'Place of the Buffalos', and the whole area has been named 'Buffalo City' by the tourism authorities.

INFORMATION

Internet Access

Cyber Lounge (☎ 083-375 9040; 58 Beach Rd, Nahoon; per 21min US\$2.80; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Thu, to 6.30pm Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 3-6pm Sun)

Tourist Information

There are two tourist offices in East London, both in **King's Tourist Centre** (cnr Longfellow & Aquarium Rds) on the beachfront and both not especially helpful.

Eastern Cape Tourism Board (☎ 043-701 9600; www.ectourism.co.za; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Covers the wider area.

Tourism Buffalo City (☎ 043-722 6015; www.visitbuffalocity.co.za; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) Deals with matters relating to the city and neighbouring townships.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

The eastern end of Eastern Beach and the area around Nahoon River mouth are not considered safe to walk on. Take care on the Esplanade and get a taxi home from anywhere in East London after dark. Watch out for pickpockets if you end up in the area around Buffalo St and the minibus taxi ranks.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The **East London Museum** (☎ 043-743 0686; Dawson Rd; admission US\$0.70; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 2-5pm Sat,

11am-4pm Sun) displays the stuffed original of a coelacanth, a strange-looking fish that until 1938 had been thought to have been extinct for 50 million years. Other exhibits at the museum include trace-fossil human footprints and a living beehive.

If you have children, there's the small **East London zoo** (☎ 043-722 1171; adult/child US\$2/1.20; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Sun) at Queen's Park, and a small **aquarium** (☎ 043-705 2637; Esplanade; adult/child US\$2/1.20; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sun) on the beachfront.

The best **surfing** is at Nahoon Reef at the southern end of Nahoon Beach.

SLEEPING

Sugarshack Backpackers (☎ 043-722 8240; www.sugarshack.co.za; Eastern Esplanade, Eastern Beach; camp sites/dm/d with shared bathroom US\$4.70/9/22; ☎) With the beach just metres away, the surf's always up at this lively backpackers. Activities on offer include cliff jumping (US\$3.40), and surf lessons (US\$10) are always available. Private wooden garden cottages are also available.

Niki Nana Backpackers (☎ 043-722 8509; www.nikinana.co.za; 4 Hillview Rd; camp sites/dm/d with shared bathroom US\$6/9/22; ☎) This backpackers is small but perfectly formed, with comfy inside spaces plus a private garden with a large swimming pool and braai area. Meals can be arranged on request.

East London Backpackers (☎ 043-781 1122, 084-782 7780; www.elbackpackers.co.za; 11 Quanza St; dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$8/14/20, d US\$24; ☎) This well-maintained place is much quieter and less vibey than Sugarshack, but has spacious and clean chilling areas and dorms, a braai area and a plunge pool. There are also good-quality doubles with their own bathroom.

Mike's Guest House (☎ 043-743 3647; mikes@his.co.za; 22 Clifford St; s/d with shared bathroom & breakfast US\$16/24, s/d US\$27/36) Unfortunately up a rather dubious-looking road near the beachfront, this spick and span guesthouse is terrific value for money, if a bit characterless.

Gonubie Caravan Park (☎ 043-705 9748; fax 740 5937; Beachfront, Gonubie, camp sites/2-bedroom chalets low season US\$9/43, high season US\$19/70) A great escape from the city, with log cabin-style chalets right on the beachfront of rustic outer suburb Gonubie, 20km from town.

White House (☎ 043-740 0344; www.thewhitehousebandb.co.za; 10 Whitthaus St, Gonubie; s/d with breakfast US\$40/53; ☎) A stylish guesthouse with glass windows for panoramic views of cliffs and sea –

you can watch whales and dolphins passing by while you're having breakfast!

EATING

Buccaneers (☎ 043-743 5171; Eastern Esplanade; mains US\$2-5; ☎ lunch & dinner) Next to Sugarshack Backpackers, this down-to-earth pub serves steaks, toasted sandwiches and pizzas to soak up the alcohol.

Guido's (☎ 043-743 4441; Esplanade; mains US\$2.80-5; ☎ lunch & dinner) This chain Italian, complete with faux-Grecian columns and a water feature, is a good standby for pizza and pasta.

Le Republik (☎ 043-722 0076; King's Tourist Centre, cnr Longfellow & Aquarium Rds; mains US\$5.50-8; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This bright, noisy diner above the tourist office offers good hearty food and elevated seaside views.

Strandloper Café (☎ 043-735 4570; 95 Old Transkei Rd; mains US\$8-12; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) This very elegant, simple and classy restaurant specialises in seafood, with dishes such as paella and Cajun fish of the day. There's a good wine list and a couple of veggie options too.

Smokey Swallows (☎ 043-727 1349; Devereux Ave; mains US\$8-13; ☎ lunch & dinner) A perfect cross-section of East London life, frequented by everyone from the emerging black middle class to jazz aficionados disappearing in a fog of pipe smoke. There are frequent live acts.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

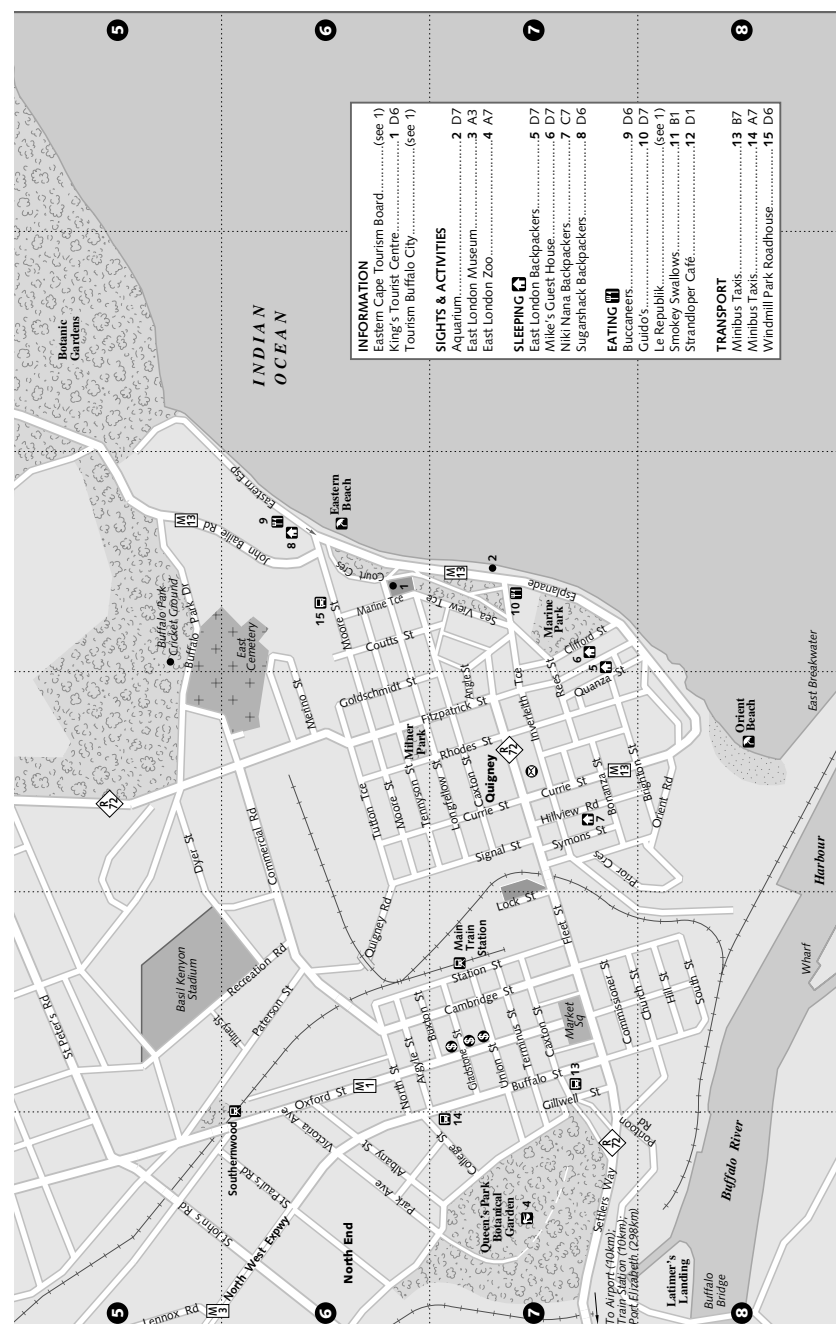
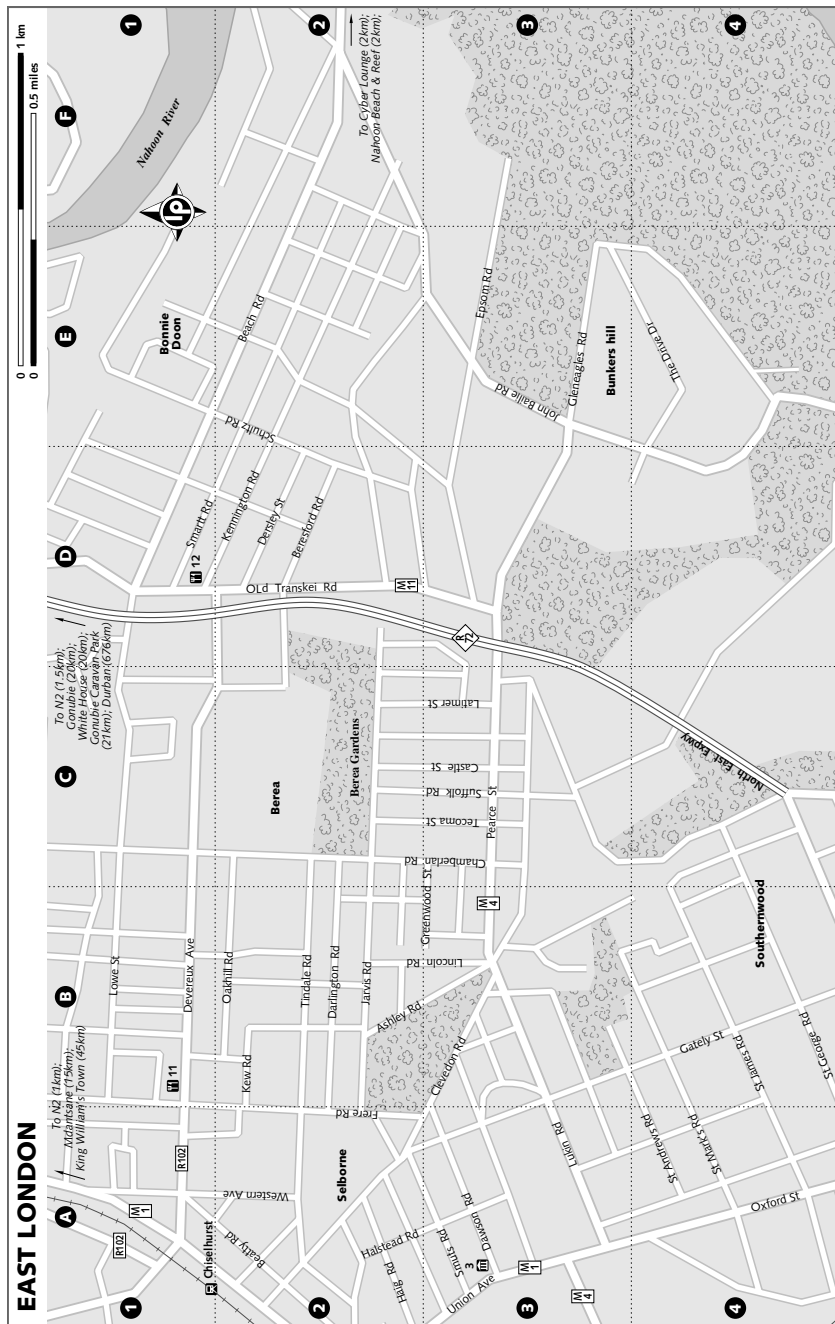
The airport is 10km from the centre. **South African Airways** (SAA; ☎ 043-706 0203) has an office at the airport and flies from East London daily to Port Elizabeth (around US\$95), Durban (around US\$150) and Cape Town (around US\$250).

Bus

Translux, Greyhound and SA Connection stop at the **Windmill Park Roadhouse** (Moore St). Intercape buses stop at the **main train station** (Station St) and at the airport.

Translux (☎ 043-700 1999; www.translux.co.za) has daily buses to Mthatha (US\$17, four hours), Port Elizabeth (US\$25, four hours), Durban (US\$26, 10 hours), Cape Town (US\$40, 15 hours) and Jo'burg/Pretoria (US\$38, 14 hours).

Greyhound (☎ 043-743 9284; www.greyhound.co.za) has a daily bus between Durban (US\$27, 10 hours) and Cape Town (US\$46, 16 hours) via Port Elizabeth (US\$19, 5½ hours).



Intercape (☎ 043-743 9284; www.intercape.co.za) has daily buses from East London to Cape Town (US\$43, 7½ hours) and Port Elizabeth (US\$17, five hours).

SA Connection (☎ 086-110 2426) has buses weekly to Jo'burg (US\$44) and a twice-weekly connection to Cape Town (US\$47).

The **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) runs from Port Elizabeth to Durban via East London Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. It runs in the other direction Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday. It picks up from hostels.

Minibus Taxi

On the corner of Buffalo and Argyle Sts are long-distance minibus taxis to destinations north of East London. Nearby on the corner of Caxton and Gillwell Sts are minibus taxis for King William's Town, Bhisho and the local area. The following are sample fares: King William's Town (US\$2, one hour), Butterworth (US\$4.70, three hours), Mthatha (US\$9.50, five hours), Port Elizabeth (US\$11, six hours), Jo'burg (US\$30, 15 hours) and Cape Town (US\$32, 18 hours).

Train

The overnight **Shosholoza Meyl** (☎ 0860-008 888) *Amathole* from East London to Jo'burg (1st/2nd class US\$45/32, 18 hours) departs daily via Bloemfontein.

GETTING AROUND

Most city buses stop at the **city hall** (Oxford St). For information on times and routes, contact **Buffalo City Municipal Buses** (☎ 043-705 2666).

SETTLER COUNTRY & AROUND

This section covers the area around Grahams-town, the heart of Settler Country, as well as most of the old Ciskei Homeland.

Grahamstown

☎ 046 / pop 100,000

Grahamstown is the capital of Settler Country. The town's genteel conservatism and its English-style prettiness belie a bloody history. The town centre has some fine examples of Victorian and early Edwardian building styles, with beautiful powder-blue and lemon-yellow shop fronts.

Socially, the students from Rhodes University dominate the town. But as established artists settle here and the population ages, a

new side of Grahamstown is developing, as evidenced by a sudden breed of beautiful people fraternising a raft of newly opened, trendy restaurants and chic bars.

Visit the nearby townships for a glimpse into the culture of the Xhosa – once rulers of the region, they were defeated by British and Boer forces after a fierce struggle.

INFORMATION

Go Sure Travel (☎ 046-622 2235; marianl.gbstravel@galileosa.co.za; Pepper Grove Mall, cnr African & Allen Sts) Handles bookings for all local travel and cashes travellers cheques (no commission charged).

Makana Tourism (☎ 046-622 3241; www.grahams-town.co.za; 63 High St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) This office is an agent for Translux buses and also has internet access (US\$4 per hour).

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Grahamstown is rightly proud of its museums, four of which are administered by the **Albany Museum Group** (☎ 046-622 4450; www.ru.ac.za/albany-museum). The most interesting is the wonderfully eccentric **Observatory Museum** (Bathurst St; adult/child US\$1.10/0.70; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat).

Also under the Albany aegis is **Albany History Museum** (Somerset St; admission US\$0.70; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat), which details the history and art of the peoples of the Eastern Cape.

There's also the **National English Literary Museum** (Beaufort St; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri), which contains the first editions of just about every work by famous South African writers.

The best examples of preserved Victorian and Edwardian shop fronts are **Grocott's Mail**, still a working newspaper office, and **Birch's Gentlemen's Outfitters**.

For a taste of local student life, head to the **Dam** up Grey St on the way out of town. It's a place to chill out and have a swim, and on Fridays there are drumming sessions.

TOURS

Umthathi (☎ 046-622 4450; www.umthathi.co.za; Station Bldg, High St), with an office in the old train station building, organises township visits including a traditional Xhosa meal (US\$7), and visits to a herbal nursery in Rhini township.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Grahamstown bills itself as 'Africa's Festival Capital', with events of various kinds happening

several times a year. The biggest is the hugely popular **National Arts Festival** (☎ 046-603 1103; www.nafest.co.za) and its associated Fringe Festival which run for 10 days at the beginning of July. Accommodation at this time can be booked out a year in advance, and nights can be freezing.

SLEEPING

Old Gaol Backpackers (☎ 046-636 1001; Somerset St; dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$9.50/14/23) This former jail – now a national monument – offers the chance to feel like an inmate, complete with fingerprinting upon registration. The cells are all considerably more comfortable than in their previous incarnation, though you'll probably spend most of your time in the atmospheric bar anyway.

Lantern Hill (☎ 046-622 8782; www.lanternhill.co.za; 2 Thompson St; s/d US\$37/51) Superbly refurbished recently, this friendly B&B has cosy and comfy wooden-floored rooms with TV and safe.

137 High Street (☎ 046-622 3242; 137highstr@xsinet.co.za; 137 High St; s/d with breakfast US\$40/64; ☎ ☎) Well-situated within walking distance of museums and shops, this guesthouse in a charming Georgian cottage also has a private courtyard and a restaurant.

Cock House (☎ 046-636 1287; www.cockhouse.co.za; 10 Market St; s/d with breakfast US\$52/89) Named after one of the 1820 settlers, today this building houses a hugely popular guesthouse with comfortable rooms in converted stables and a pretty garden. The rustic restaurant (three-course menu US\$15) is highly regarded.

7 Worcester Street (☎ 046-622 2843; www.worcestertreet.co.za; 7 Worcester St; s/d with breakfast US\$70/150; ☎ ☎) This luxurious guesthouse is filled with sumptuous period furniture and price-less artworks. Three-course dinner is available for US\$16.

EATING

Gino's Italian Restaurant (☎ 046-622 7208; 8 New St, entrance via Hill St; mains US\$3.40-5; ☎ lunch & dinner) Grahamstown's most popular student restaurant is a very average pizza and pasta joint with an attached bar.

Trading Store (☎ 046-622 9987; 131 High St; mains US\$4.70; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sun, dinner Wed, Fri & Sat) A supremely stylish New York-style café that serves bistro food and has live jazz and an outdoor cocktail bar.

Calabash (☎ 046-622 2366; 123 High St; mains US\$7-9.50; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Calabash offers traditional South African food and specialities

like Xhosa hotpots and *pap en wors* (maize meal and sausage).

Maxwell's (☎ 046-622 5119; cnr Somerset St & High St; mains US\$9.50-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Offering excellent service and hearty lunches of self-styled 'colonialised' food, Maxwell's is deservedly gaining attention.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses depart from the **terminus** (cnr High & Bathurst Sts). The **Bee Bus** (☎ 082-652 0798) runs to Port Elizabeth and Port Alfred from Sunday to Friday, and **Mini Lux** (☎ 043-741 3107) runs to East London and Port Elizabeth from Sunday to Friday. Check with the tourist office for prices and times.

Intercape (☎ 046-622 2235; www.intercape.co.za) stops in Grahamstown on its daily run between Cape Town (US\$32, nine hours) and East London (US\$15, 2½ hours).

Translux (☎ 046-622 3241; www.translux.co.za) buses stop at the terminus on the daily run between Cape Town (US\$31, 15 hours), Port Elizabeth (US\$10, two hours) and Durban (US\$38, 12 hours), via East London and Mthatha.

Greyhound (☎ 046-622 2235; www.greyhound.co.za) buses also stop at the terminus on their way to Durban (US\$36, 13 hours) and Port Elizabeth (US\$9.50, two hours).

You'll find minibus taxis on Raglan St, but most leave from Rhini township. Destinations include Fort Beaufort (US\$3.40, two hours), King William's Town (US\$4.70, three hours), Port Elizabeth (US\$4.70, 2½ hours) and East London (US\$4.70, four hours).

King William's Town

☎ 043

Established by the London Missionary Society in 1826, King William's Town (known as 'King') was a colonial capital and an important military base in the interminable struggle with the Xhosa. The main reason for a visit is the excellent **Amathole Museum** (☎ 043-642 4506; 3 Albert Rd; admission US\$0.70; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat), one of the finest in the region, with an excellent Xhosa Gallery featuring in-depth explanations of Xhosa culture, mysticism and history.

It's probably better to stay in East London and visit for the day.

Bhisho

pop 171,000

Bhisho, once capital of Ciskei, is now the administrative capital of Eastern Cape. The

centre of Bhisho was built to house Ciskei's bureaucrats and politicians, so there is a compact bunch of suitably grandiose and ugly public buildings, which are now in the service of the new provincial bureaucracy.

Regular minibuses travel from the King William's Town train station to Bhisho.

Amathole & Katberg Mountains

The area north and west of King William's Town is partly degraded grazing land and partly rugged mountains with remnant indigenous forest. There are some good walks. When the mists are down on the Amathole Mountains, the forests take on an eerie silence.

The easiest way into this area is via King William's Town or Queenstown. Daily **City to City** (☎ 011-773 2762) buses stop in Katberg, Seymour and Alice on the Jo'burg–King William's Town run. There are occasional minibus taxis too.

The 121km, six-day **Amathole Trail** (per person US\$24) ranks as one of South Africa's top mountain walks, but is pretty tough and should only be attempted if you are reasonably experienced and fit.

The trail must be booked with the **Department of Water Affairs & Forestry** (☎ 043-84 5433; www.dwaf.co.za; 9 Chamberlain St, King William's Town).

HOGSBACK

☎ 045 / pop 1500

Improbably located 1300m up in the beautiful Amathole Mountains, about 100km north-west of Bhisho, the small village of Hogsback has enjoyed a recent renaissance. Its English climate (four distinct seasons), organic food, and mind-boggling views of mountains and forested valleys in all directions, make it an ecodestination *par excellence*.

There are some great walks, bike rides and drives in the area. Snow falls, though rarely heavy, in 11 out of 12 months. Be prepared for rain at any time, and in winter for temperatures that can drop to -1°C.

Away with the Fairies (☎ 045-962 1031; hogsback1@africa.com; Hydrangea Lane; camp sites/dm/d with shared bathroom US\$5.50/9.50/23; ☎) is a majestic little getaway with a superb view of Hogsback Ridge.

Another option is the **Edge** (☎ 045-962 1159; info@theedge_hogsback.co.za; Bluff End; self-catering cottages from US\$47; ☎), a collection of 12 stunningly decorated cottages strung out along the mountain's edge.

The easiest way to get to Hogsback without a car is by shuttle bus from the Sugarshack Backpackers (p483) in East London, Buccaneer's Backpackers (p492) in Cintsu (Chintsa), or Old Gaol Backpackers (p487) in Grahamstown (US\$6 one way).

THE KAROO

The Karoo is pure magic. It's a vast semi-arid plateau (its name is a Khoesaa word meaning 'land of thirst') that promises stunning sunsets and starscapes and delivers. Here you'll feel simultaneously dry at the mouth (for the mercury can hit 45°C in summer), slack at the jaw (the landscape is spare, violent and beautiful) and *tiny* – the horizons have been known to send agoraphobics scrambling for the nearest metropolis.

Perhaps the best thing about the Karoo, though, is the way life moves slowly, and how off the main highways you can drive for hours without seeing another car. If you've had your fill of the Garden Route, head over the Swartberg Pass and unwind here.

The Karoo covers almost one-third of South Africa's total area and is demarcated in the south and west by the coastal mountain ranges, and to the east and north by the mighty Orange River. It's often split into the Great Karoo (north) and the Little Karoo (south), but it doesn't respect provincial boundaries and sprawls into three provinces, though for our purposes it's all covered here.

Graaff-Reinet

☎ 049 / pop 43,300

Town nicknames are often no more than marketing slogans, but that Graaff-Reinet is often referred to as the 'jewel of the Karoo' is no exaggeration – it's a safe, exquisite, fascinating town that should not be missed.

It's the fourth-oldest European town in South Africa, and it has a superb architectural heritage with more than 220 buildings designated as national monuments. These range from Cape Dutch houses, with their distinctive gables, to classic flat-roofed Karoo cottages and ornate Victorian villas. Added to all this beauty is a charming small-town quirkiness, some excellent-value accommodation and a variety of eccentric local characters who add to the benignly surreal feel of the whole place.

The wild and beautiful Karoo Nature Reserve is within walking distance of Graaff-Reinet.

INFORMATION

Graaff-Reinet Publicity Association (☎ 049-892 4248; www.graaffreinet.co.za; Church St; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat & Sun) Offers an abundance of maps and information about the area.

Karoo Connections (☎ 049-892 3978; www.karoo tours.co.za; Church St) Internet access next to the publicity association.

SIGHTS

The Hester Rupert Art Museum (☎ 049-892 2121; Church St; adult/child US\$0.70/0.40; ☎ 9am–12.30pm & 2–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat & Sun) was originally a Dutch Reformed Mission church, consecrated in 1821. The beautiful interior space and permanent collection of paintings and sculptures are refreshingly contemporary.

The Old Library (☎ 049-892 3801; cnr Church & Somerset Sts; adult/child US\$0.70/0.50; ☎ 8am–12.30pm & 2–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–3pm Sat, 9am–4pm Sun) houses a collection of photographs, historical clothing, rock paintings and fossils from the Karoo.

Reinet House (☎ 049-892 3801; Murray St; adult/child US\$0.90/0.30; ☎ 8am–12.30pm & 2–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–3pm Sat, 9am–4pm Sun), the Dutch Reformed parsonage built between 1806 and 1812, is a beautiful

example of Cape Dutch architecture and the rear courtyard has one of the largest grapevines in the world.

TOURS

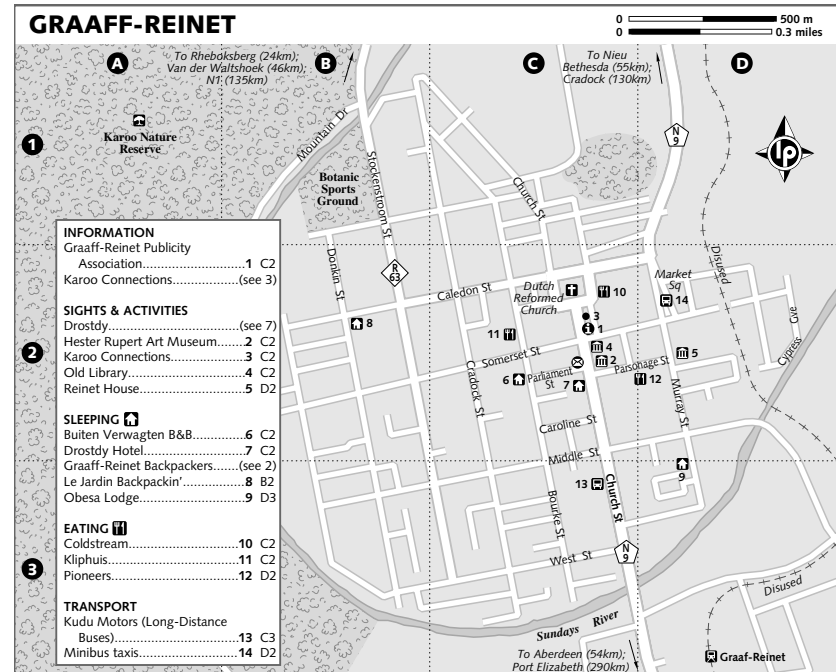
Several readers have recommended **Irhafu Tours** (☎ 082-844 2890) for its three-hour township tour (US\$10), which gives an insight into both Xhosa culture and history and modern township life. The company can also organise homestays and group meals.

Karoo Connections (☎ 049-892 3978; www.karoo tours.co.za; Church St) operates tours in the area including to the Karoo Nature Reserve (US\$19). It can also arrange township walks, wildlife drives, nature walks and city tours.

SLEEPING

Le Jardin Backpackin' (☎ 049-892 5890, 082-644 4938; cnr Donkin & Caledon Sts; s/d with shared bathroom US\$12/24; ☎) Welcoming Le Jardin provides homely rooms and a large garden for excellent prices. The owners are mines of information about the area's attractions.

Graaff-Reinet Backpackers (☎ 049-892 5334; cnr Church & Parsonage Sts; dm US\$11, d/tr/q with shared bathroom



INFORMATION

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SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

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SLEEPING

Buiten Verwagten B&B.....6 C2
Drosty Hotel.....7 C2
Graaff-Reinet Backpackers.....(see 2)
Le Jardin Backpackin'.....8 B2
Obesa Lodge.....9 D3

EATING

Coldstream.....10 C2
Kliphuis.....11 C2
Pioneers.....12 D2

TRANSPORT

Kudu Motors (Long-Distance Buses).....13 C3
Minibus taxis.....14 D2

US\$27/36/46; 📞) This newer backpackers benefits from its location but is still second best in the budget stakes thanks to its subdued atmosphere, though the rooms are airy and bright.

Obesa Lodge (📞 082-588 5900; www.graaffreinet.co.za; 64 Murray St; s/d without breakfast US\$19/31, 2-bedroom cottages US\$47; 📞) With cheerfully designed psychedelically coloured cottages with names like Moody Blues and Bad Mama, Obesa is a change of pace from staid B&Bs.

Buiten Verwagten B&B (📞 049-892 4504; www.buitenverwagten.co.za; 58 Bourke St; s/d with breakfast from US\$46/65; 📞) The beautiful Buiten Verwagten, surrounded by a lovely garden, has charming rooms, some with self-catering facilities.

Drostdy Hotel (📞 049-892 2161; www.drostdy.co.za; 30 Church St; s/d US\$55/86; 📞) The main part of this beautiful old hotel is in Graaff-Reinet's restored *drostdy*. Guests stay in restored mid-19th-century cottages and the courtyard café is particularly enchanting.

EATING

Pioneers (📞 049-892 6059; 3 Parsonage St; light meals US\$1.40-4, mains US\$8; 📞 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This café-restaurant serves so-so sandwiches but delicious cakes and big cooked breakfasts. There's street-side seating, tourist info, an internet café and a small curio shop.

Coldstream (📞 049-891 1181; 3 Church St; mains US\$6-8; 📞 breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) An excellent restaurant in a converted family home specialising in local variations on old favourites, such as the beloved 'trio' platter of beef, ostrich and kudu or springbok.

Kliphuis (📞 049-892 2345; 46 Bourke St; mains US\$5.50-9; 📞 breakfast, lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch & dinner Sun) With the Sunday carvery of Karoo lamb or venison a speciality, and grease-free dishes such as moussaka and quiche, it's no wonder Kliphuis is one of Graaff-Reinet's best.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Long-distance buses stop at **Kudu Motors** (Church St). The Publicity Association office acts as the Translux agent. Translux stops here on the run from Cape Town (US\$34, 8½ hours) to Queenstown (US\$19, three hours) via Cradock (US\$16, 1½ hours) and on the way to Port Elizabeth (US\$27, three hours).

Intercape (www.intercape.co.za) passes through Graaff-Reinet daily on its run to Jo'burg (US\$42, 11 hours).

Minibus taxis leave from Market Sq. Major destinations are Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Jo'burg.

Karoo Nature Reserve

A donation in 2005 from the World Wildlife Fund has meant that the 16,000 hectares of the Karoo Nature Reserve is to become a national park under the auspices of SAN Parks.

There are plenty of animals, but the real draw is the spectacular rock formations and great views overlooking the town of Graaff-Reinet and the plains. The park is subdivided into three main sections: the wildlife-viewing area to the north of the dam; the western section with the Valley of Desolation, a hauntingly beautiful and rugged place; and the eastern section with the overnight hiking trail.

You'll need to have your own car to get around the reserve, or contact Karoo Connections in Graaff-Reinet for a tour. Accommodation (except on the overnight trail) is only available in Graaff-Reinet.

Prince Albert & Around

📞 023 / pop 2500

To many urban South Africans, Prince Albert – a charming village dating back to 1762 and dozing at the foot of the Swartberg Pass – represents an idyllic life in the Karoo. Despite being surrounded by very harsh country, the town is green and fertile, thanks to the runoff from the mountain springs. A system of original water channels runs through town and most houses have a sluice gate, which they are entitled to open for a set period each week.

If you have your own transport and are short on time, you can easily visit on a day trip from Oudtshoorn or even from the coast.

Contact the helpful **tourist information office** (📞 023-541 1366; www.patorism.co.za; Church St; 📞 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) for more information.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Prince Albert is a good base for exploring the Karoo and hiking on the more than 100km of trails in the Swartberg Nature Reserve. Overnight walks have to be booked through **Cape Nature** (📞 044-279 1739; Queen's Mall, Baron van Rheede St, Oudtshoorn).

There's a good drive east to **Klaarstroom**, a tiny *dorp* (small town) along the foot of the mountains. The road runs along a valley, beneath the Groot Swartberg Range, which is

cut by dramatic gullies, clefts and waterfalls. On Rte 407 between Prince Albert (40km) and Klaarstroom (10km), **Remhoogte Hiking Trail** can be walked in about five hours but there is a camping place on the trail.

SLEEPING & EATING

Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg Lodge (📞 023-541 1267; www.saxecoburg.co.za; 60 Church St; s/d from US\$24/49; 📞) This place offers lovely rooms with satellite TV, and its owners are a great source of information and offer guided hikes in the area.

Karoo Lodge (📞 023-541 1647; www.karoolodge.com; 66 Church St; s/d from US\$30/61; 📞) This lodge is an owner-run guesthouse with a large garden and beautiful antique furniture. Hosts George and Elsabe are terrific, and very knowledgeable about the area.

Swartberg Hotel (📞 023-541 1332; www.swartberg.co.za; 70 Church St; s/d with breakfast US\$51/75; 📞) Swartberg is a three-star country inn; you can choose from thatched-roof huts or rooms in the main hotel. There are amazing gardens to relax in and the hotel organises area activities. The attached coffee shop (mains US\$2.40 to US\$5) and Swartberg Arms restaurant (mains US\$4) are popular with locals.

Karoo Kombuis (📞 023-541 1110; Karoo Kitchen; 18 Deurdrift St; mains US\$8; 📞 dinner Mon-Sat) As good a reason to come to Prince Albert as any, this excellent restaurant serves traditional home-cooked dishes with panache.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Most people visit by driving over one of the area's passes from Oudtshoorn, or from the N1 between Cape Town and Jo'burg. There is no direct bus or train service to Prince Albert; the closest drop-off point is at the train station on Prince Albert Rd, 45km northwest of Prince Albert. Private taxis from there cost US\$7, but most places to stay will pick you up from the train station.

Karoo National Park

Just 5km north of Beaufort West, the **Karoo National Park** (📞 023-415 2828/9; www.sanparks.org; adult/child US\$8/4, camp sites US\$14, d cottages US\$55; 📞 5am-10pm), proclaimed in 1979, covers 33,000 hectares of impressive Karoo landscapes and representative flora and is run by SAN Parks.

The park has 61 species of mammal, the most common of which are dassies (agile,

rodent-like mammals, also called hyraxes) and bat-eared foxes. The antelope population is small but growing. Mountain zebras have been reintroduced, as has the odd black rhino. There are a great many reptiles and birds.

Facilities include a shop and restaurant. There are two short nature trails and an 11km day walk. There are also vehicle routes and day or overnight 4WD guided trails.

Accommodation is either at pleasant camp sites or in Cape Dutch-style cottages.

Public transport will take you to Beaufort West, from where you will need to either hike in or catch a taxi from town; however the rest camp is 10km further into the park.

WILD COAST

With its rugged cliffs plunging into the sea, remote coves sheltering sandy beaches and a history of shipwrecks and stranded sailors, the aptly named Wild Coast is a place for adventure and intrigue.

The Wild Coast stretches for 350km from East London to Port Edward. Dotted along its shore are tiny Xhosa settlements and the occasional holiday resort or backpacker hostel.

You may hear some people refer to the area as the 'Transkei', which was the name of the apartheid-era homeland that once covered this part of the country. 'Transkei', however, still bears the stigma of an area once feared for its crime rate and its extreme poverty.

Whatever the name for the region, the Xhosa people are some of the friendliest you'll meet anywhere in South Africa, and chances are you'll be invited inside a few of their brightly painted homes which dot the landscape.

This is the place to forego the bus or your car for a while and make use of the walking paths that connect the coastal villages. The five-day walk between Port St Johns and Coffee Bay is the most popular route.

If you plan to hike or drive around inland on the Wild Coast, always ask permission before camping. Don't drive after dark, and remember that most of the roads here don't appear on maps, and signposts are few and far between.

Cintsa (Chintsa)

📞 043 / pop 2000

Heading up the N2, the sea spray starts to hit your face at an unspoilt stretch of white-sand beach called Cintsa, 38km from East London.

US\$12, s/d with breakfast US\$65/97; ☎) Clean, comfortable rooms and rustic fishermen's cabins are on offer at this friendly, family hotel, in a spectacular location over the ferry from town on the banks of the Umzimvubu River. There's a cosy pub and a restaurant.

Island Backpackers Lodge (☎ 047-564 1958; www.theislandbackpackers.co.za; 4 Berea Rd; dm/d/tr with shared bathroom US\$9.50/24/30; ☎) During the day this hostel is an island in a sea of calm, but at night it comes alive as a popular Israeli restaurant (dishes US\$4.70 to US\$7) and nightclub. Island also has laundry service, movies, book swap and a splash pool.

Gwyneth's Barn & Ekuphumleni (☎ /fax 047-564 1506; off Pussfoot Lane, First Beach; d with shared bathroom US\$30, 2-bedroom cottage US\$47-59) A raised walkway connects an adorable group of wooden cottages to a shared braai area, kitchenette and a dreamy outdoor shower. Each room is beautifully decorated, with scented candles and fluffy towel. Accommodation is also available in other buildings on the property.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Most backpacker places will pick you up from the Shell Ultra City, 4km south of Mthatha (where the Baz Bus stops) for around US\$6, but it's essential to book ahead. There are also regular minibus taxis to Port St Johns from here (US\$4, two hours) that drop you at the roundabout.

If you're driving, there is a good sealed road to Lusikisiki and then 17km of dirt road. The road from Mthatha to Port St Johns is sealed.

NORTH-EASTERN HIGHLANDS

Roughly comprising the out-of-the-way area that stretches from the lush valleys of the Wild Coast to the sharply ascending peaks of Lesotho, the North-Eastern Highlands enjoys the best of both worlds: stunning scenery and tourist scarcity. Summer brings excellent hiking and fishing, while snowfalls in winter provide the opportunity to ski (albeit on mostly artificial pistes). In the more remote parts, you'll need your own vehicle.

Rhodes & Tiffindell

☎ 045

Grassy, gorgeous Rhodes is a heavenly place: the top (in all senses of the word) place to visit in the Highlands and what locals jokingly refer to as 'the centre of the universe'.

Tiffindell (2800m), around 23km up a mountain pass (4WD only) from Rhodes, is a purpose-built winter sports resort. Its snow-making facilities mean that a season of 95 days (late May to mid-August) is possible here. Enjoy an après-ski or two in Ice Station 2720 (elevation: 2720m), South Africa's highest pub.

The **Ben Macdhui Hiking Trail** (☎ 045-974 9305; 3-night trail with accommodation per person US\$27) is a sometimes-rough three-day hike that includes accommodation in a cottage, on a guest farm and in a hiker's hut. This is considered one of South Africa's best hikes (especially at these prices).

SLEEPING & EATING

Rhodes Campsite & Caravan Park (☎ 045-974 9290; camp sites US\$5.50) The village camp site is in a great spot under shady trees right in the middle of the village. Inquire at Walkerbouts Inn for the key.

Rhodes Hotel (☎ 045-974 9305; www.rhodesvillage.co.za; s/d with full board US\$44/89, self-catering cottages per person from US\$14) Rhodes' only hotel is a charming establishment that looks very much as it would have a century ago. Rooms are comfy, with wooden floors and antique furniture and there's a restaurant (mains US\$7).

Walkerbouts Inn (☎ 045-974 9290; www.walkerbouts.co.za; per person with full board US\$47) Walkerbouts is a cosy guesthouse with a convivial bar and hearty country breakfasts. Meals are available in the evenings.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The road to Rhodes from Barkly East, through the exquisite Mosheshesford, is rough but fine for 2WD cars (60km, 1½ hours), but don't attempt the route from Maclear unless you have a 4WD. The road to Tiffindell is now 2WD friendly, but Walkerbouts Inn does organise a shuttle (US\$15 return).

Aliwal North

☎ 051 / pop 28,500

Aliwal North was in the early 20th century a major tourist drawcard because of its thermal spas; today it's a rather obscure and somewhat tatty town. The original **spa complex** (admission US\$2; ☎ 6am-10pm) has dwindled to a few grubby swimming pools, but the surrounding countryside is still ravishing. Contact the **Eastern Cape Tourism Board** (☎ 051-633 3567; www.ectourism.co.za; 97 Somerset St) for information.

Conville (☎ 051-633 2203; www.conville-farm.com; s/d with breakfast US\$24/43), an exquisite 1906 farmhouse, sits in stunning gardens overlooking a lake just outside town, and inside it's all rather grand, with brass beds and antique furniture.

A daily City to City bus stops here on the Jo'burg to Queenstown run. Translux, Greyhound and Intercape stop at Nobby's Restaurant (on the N6 near the junction with the Rte 58). The minibus taxi and local bus stop is on Grey St, near the corner of Somerset St.

KWAZULU-NATAL

Rough and ready, smart and sophisticated, rural and rustic, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) is as eclectic as its cultures, people and landscapes. It has its metropolitan heart in the port of Durban and its nearby historic capital, Pietermaritzburg. The beaches along this coast attract local holiday-makers and visitors wishing to soak up the sand, sea, surf and sun. Head north and you enter Zululand and the Elephant Coast, home to some of Africa's most evocative traditional settlements and cultural sites, where Zulu culture and heritage are proudly displayed. The region also boasts alluring national parks and isolated, wild coastal reserves.

Head northwest of Durban, and you enter another realm: the historic heartland where the history of the province was thrashed out on the Battlefields during the Anglo-Zulu and Anglo-Boer Wars. The province's border in the far west, the heritage-listed uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Range, features awesome peaks, unforgettable vistas and excellent hiking opportunities.

HISTORY

Battled over by Boers, Brits and Zulus, Natal was named by Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama, who sighted the coastline on Christmas Day 1497, and named it for the natal day of Jesus. It took the British Empire more than 300 years to set its sights on the region, proclaiming it a colony in 1843. Briefly linked to the Cape Colony in 1845, Natal again became a separate colony in 1856, when its European population numbered less than 5000.

The introduction of Indian indentured labour in the 1860s – sections of the province still retain a subcontinental feel – and the

subsequent development of commercial agriculture (mainly sugar) boosted development, and the colony thrived from 1895, when train lines linked Durban's port with the booming Witwatersrand.

The recorded history of the province up until the Union of South Africa is full of conflict: the *difaqane* the Boer-Zulu and the Anglo-Zulu Wars, which saw the Zulu kingdom subjugated; and the two wars between the British and the Boers.

Just after the 1994 elections, Natal Province was renamed KwaZulu-Natal, in recognition of the fact that the Zulu homeland of KwaZulu comprises a large part of the province. From that time, Ulundi (the former KwaZulu capital), and Pietermaritzburg (the former Natal homeland capital) enjoyed joint status as capital of the KwaZulu-Natal until 2005, when Pietermaritzburg was named the province's official capital.

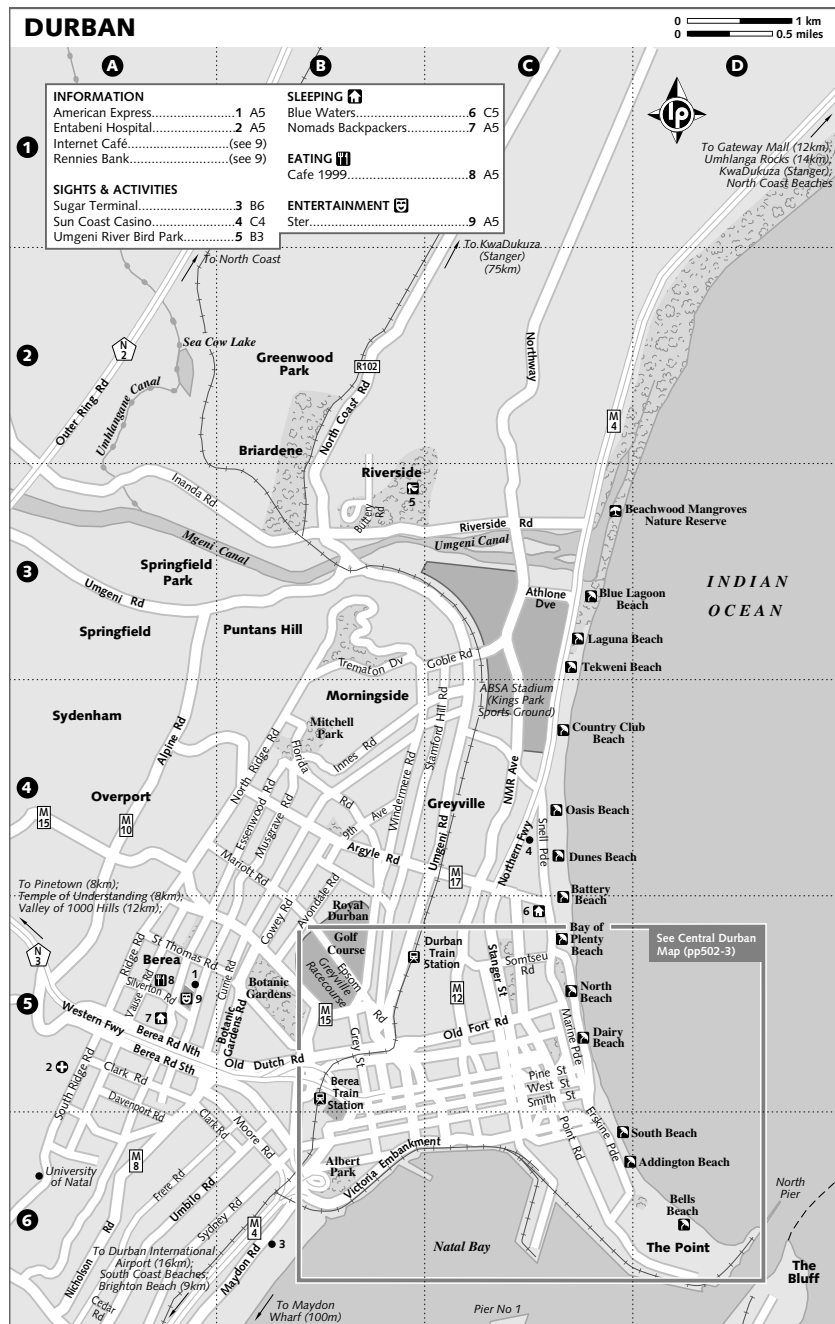
DURBAN

☎ 031 / pop 3.5 million

Durban is like a maturing adolescent: sophisticated, sinful and ever-changing. Stretching along a swathe of butter-yellow sand, South Africa's third-largest city has always been known as one of the country's great escapes, offering a lively, if slightly tacky, prepackaged seaside holiday. But this has changed over the past few years. More recently, Durban is frequented as much for its stylish cafés, good shopping and cultural offerings.

The beachfront, with its multikilometre stretch of high-rise hotels and snack bars, remains a city trademark and the city centre, peppered with some grandiose colonial buildings and fascinating Art Deco architecture, throbs to a distinctly African beat. Home to the largest concentration of people of Indian descent in the country, Durban also boasts a distinctive Asian twang, with the marketplaces and streets of the Indian area teeming with the sights, sounds and scents of the subcontinent.

Today, much of Durban's seafront looks the worse for wear and the centre's streets have lost some shimmer, especially when the sun goes down. While the beachfront is still a favourite spot (the popular uShaka Marine World, casino and the Point developments have added some safer beach zones to those that were previously no-go areas), many visitors, wary of the city's increasing reputation for



Centre (Map p498; ☎ 031-202 8733; FNB House, 151 Musgrave Rd, Musgrave)

Rennie's Bank Central Durban (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-305 5722; ground fl, 333 Smith St); Musgrave Centre (Map p498; ☎ 031-202 7833; Shop 311, Level 3, Musgrave Centre; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 11.30am Sat)

POST

Main post office (Map pp502-3; cnr West & Gardiner Sts; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Has a poste restante service.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Durban Africa Tourist Junction (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-304 4934; www.durbanexperience.co.za; 1st fl, Tourist Junction) Covers Durban; Airport (☎ 031-408 1000; ☎ 7am-9pm) In the arrivals hall; Marine Pde (☎ 031-332 2595; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun) Next to Joe Kool's; uShaka Marine World (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-337 8099; ☎ 9am-6pm).

KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority Information

Office (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-366 7516/7; www.zulu.org.za; ground fl, Tourist Junction) Deals with the whole province and offers a smorgasbord of reference and promotional brochures.

Tourist Junction (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-304 4934; 160 Pine St, cnr Soldiers Way; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) The main tourist information centre is in the old train station (built in 1894).

There are various booking agencies in the Tourist Junction complex, including the following:

KZN Wildlife (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-304 4934; www.kzn.wildlife.com; 1st fl, Tourist Junction) Here you can reserve accommodation in KZN Wildlife parks and reserves.

SAN Parks Board (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-304 4934; www.sanparks.org; 1st fl, Tourist Junction) Takes accommodation bookings for national parks across the country.

Dangers & Annoyances

Muggings and pickpockets are a problem around the beach esplanade and some central areas. Particular care should be taken around Point Rd and the area behind the esplanade. Avoid South Beach and areas around the Wheel Shopping Centre. Extra care should also be taken around the train station and the informal settlements nearby.

Many areas including the centre and beachfront are potentially dangerous (especially at night) and central Durban becomes a ghost town as people head to the suburbs for entertainment. Always catch a cab to nightspots (and with a group) if possible.

If you have a car, make sure you park it in a locked garage after dark – 'smash and grabs' have been increasing occurrences.

Sights BEACHFRONT

If you dip into the city's summer surf and sun, you have a playground of more than 6km of warm-water beaches (protected by the requisite shark nets). The 'Golden Mile' Beaches run from Blue Lagoon (at the mouth of the Umgeni River) to uShaka Marine World on the Point. The 'private' beaches near the casino and uShaka Marine World are accessed through the venues themselves.

But Durban's beachfront ain't for everyone. To some, its smorgasbord of bars and restaurants and hectic holiday atmosphere are garish and tacky. If you do take the plunge, always swim in patrolled areas, which are indicated by flags.

uShaka Marine World (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-368 6675; www.ushakamarineworld.co.za; Addington Beach, the Point; Wet'n'Wild adult/child/senior US\$8/6/6, Sea World US\$11/7/5/10; ☎ 9am-6pm high season, 10am-5pm low season) is a massive new investment in improving the southern beachfront area. Divided into several areas (Sea World, Wet'n'Wild World and uShaka Beach), the park boasts one of the world's largest aquariums, the biggest collection of sharks in the southern hemisphere, a seal stadium, Africa's largest dolphinarium, two classy restaurants, enough freshwater rides to make you seasick, and a beach featuring activities from surfing lessons to kayaking and more.

The **Promenade** is the pedestrianised tourist superhighway running up the beach from Smith St north of uShaka. On the other side of the road, mainly on Marine Pde, you will find the canyon of high-rise hotels, bars, restaurants and nightclubs typical of seaside cities from Florida to Queensland's Gold Coast.

In summer, rickshaws ply their trade along the beachfront, many sporting exotic Zulu regalia. A 15-minute ride costs about US\$3.40 (plus US\$1.40 for a happy snap).

The glitzy nouveau Art Deco of **Sun Coast Casino** (Map p498; ☎ 031-328 3000; www.suncoastcasino.co.za; Snell Pde) is popular among the locals and features slot machines, cinemas and some well-attended restaurants. The casino's **Sun Coast Beach** (admission US\$0.70; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) is a safe and pleasant spot to lie and bake. It has lawn, deck chairs and brollies.

VICTORIA EMBANKMENT

Maydon Wharf, which runs along the south-western side of the harbour and south of Victoria Embankment, contains the **Sugar Terminal** (Map p498; ☎ 031-365 8153; 51 Maydon Rd; adult/concession US\$1.80/90; ☎ tours 8.30am, 10am, 11.30am & 2pm Mon–Thu, 8.30am, 10am & 11am Fri), which offers an insight into the former importance of the sugar trade.

A little further north, **Wilson's Wharf** (Map pp502–3; www.wilsonswarf.co.za) is a reasonably hip waterside development, with a clutch of decent eateries, boat-charter outfits, shops and a theatre.

BAT Centre (Map pp502–3; Maritime Pl) is a colourful bohemian arts centre housing upmarket art and craft shops, artists' studios, occasional live music, and a bar-restaurant all cut through with a lively trans-Africa theme.

Durban's **harbour** is the busiest in Southern Africa (and the ninth busiest in the world). There are several restaurants at the Point, at the southern end of the beachfront. The Point is an old area on a spit of land between the harbour and the ocean; there are plans to widen the channel mouth in 2007. Point Rd, leading down to the Point, runs through a notoriously dodgy area and is definitely unsafe at night.

CITY CENTRE

Dominating the city centre is the opulent 1910 Edwardian neobaroque **City Hall** (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-311 2137; Smith St). In front of the hall is Francis Farewell Sq. Upstairs is the **Art Gallery** (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-311 2264; City Hall; admission free; ☎ 8.30am–4pm Mon–Sat, 11am–4pm Sun), an outstanding collection of contemporary South African works, especially Zulu arts and crafts. Also in the same building is the **Natural Science Museum** (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-311 2256; City Hall; admission free; ☎ 8.30am–4pm Mon–Sat, 11am–4pm Sun), boasting an impressive display of stuffed birds and insects, plus African animals.

The excellent **KwaMuhle Museum** (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-311 2237; 130 Ordinance Rd; admission free; ☎ 8.30am–4pm Mon–Sat, 11am–4pm Sun), in the former Bantu Administration building, has a permanent display with good oral history tapes on the 'Durban System' by which whites historically subjugated blacks.

On the eastern side of the main post office on West St is **Church Square** (Map pp502–3), with its old vicarage and the 1909 **St Paul's Church** (Map pp502–3).

INDIAN AREA

The big **Juma Mosque** (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-306 0026; cnr Queen & Grey Sts; ☎ 9am–4pm Mon–Fri, to 11am Sat) is the largest in the southern hemisphere; call ahead for a guided tour. **Madrasa Arcade** (Map pp502–3) is next to the mosque between Grey St and Cathedral Rd near the Catholic Emmanuel Cathedral.

At the western end of Victoria St, **Victoria St Market** (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-306 4021, Victoria St; ☎ 6am–6pm Mon–Sat, to 4pm Sun) offers a typically rip-roaring, subcontinental shopping experience, with more than 160 stalls selling wares from across Asia. It's the main tourist attraction in the area, but watch your wallet. Most Muslim shops close between noon and 2pm on Friday.

Alayam Hindu Temple (Map pp502–3; Somtseu Rd; ☎ 7am–6pm) is the oldest and biggest in South Africa. It's away from the main Indian area, on Somtseu Rd, which runs between Stanger St and NMR Ave.

GREYVILLE, MORNINGSIDE & BEREA

The 20-hectare **Botanic Gardens** (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-309 1170; Sydenham Rd; admission free; ☎ 7.30am–5.15pm 16 Apr–15 Sep, to 5.45pm 16 Sep–15 Apr) is a pleasant place to wander. On weekends local bridal parties galore pose with their petals for the photographers.

NORTH & WEST DURBAN

Umgini River Bird Park (Map p498; ☎ 031-579 4600; Riverside Rd; adult/child US\$2.80/2; ☎ 9am–5pm), on the Umgini River, makes for a relaxing escape from the throng. You can see many African bird species in lush vegetation and aviaries.

Temple of Understanding (☎ 031-403 3328; Bhaktiedanta Sami Rd; ☎ 10am–1pm & 4–8pm), situated 8km west of Durban, is the biggest Hare Krishna temple in the southern hemisphere. Follow the N3 towards Pietermaritzburg and then branch off to the N2 south. Take the Chatsworth turn-off and turn right towards the centre of Chatsworth.

Activities

DIVING & FISHING

Underwater World (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-332 5820; www.underwaterworld.co.za; 251 Point Rd) organises dives to sites around Durban over the weekend (from US\$19).

Dozens of outfits offer sport-fishing charters across Durban. The bar **Cool Runnings** (Map pp502–3; ☎ 084-701 6912; 49 Milne St; per day from US\$400)

offers a laid-back, distinctly Jamaican-style experience.

SURFING

For surfers, Durban has a multitude of good surfing beaches with any number of breaks. **Surf Zone** (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-368 5818; Ocean Sports Centre, North Beach; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Sat, 8am–5pm Sat & Sun) rents out boards (US\$9.50/14 per half/full day) and offers lessons (US\$24 per hour).

WHITE-WATER RAFTING

The Umkomaas River and mighty Tugela River are the rafting places in KwaZulu-Natal. The Umkomaas offers some of the best white-water rafting, especially from November to April, when you can rip through Grade II–IV rapids. **180° Adventures** (☎ 031-566 4955; www.180.co.za) offers rafting on both rivers (from US\$84 for Tugela and from US\$47 for Umkomaas).

CRUISES

The luxury yacht **African Queen** (Map pp502–3; ☎ 032-943 1118; Durban Yacht Harbour; US\$20; tours 10am & 1pm) cruises dolphin waters for three hours. Several other boat and charter trips can be arranged from Wilson's Wharf.

Sleeping

Durban Africa's accommodation website, www.bookabedahead.co.za, allows you to browse and book online.

Despite what you think when you see the hotel-lined beachfront promenade, much of Durban's accommodation is in the western and northwestern suburbs. Unless you are in Durban for the sun and sand alone, accommodation in the suburbs is better value than the beachfront options.

BEACHFRONT

Parade Hotel (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-337 4565; www.paradehotel.co.za; 191 Marine Pde; s/d with breakfast US\$44/59; ☎) The Parade Hotel is a bit old, with a slightly dowdy array of 1970s salesroom furniture and saggy mattresses, but it's charming Art Deco dining room resembles a 1950s ballroom. Request a sea-facing room.

Blue Waters (Map p498; ☎ 031-368 3877; www.bluewatershotel.co.za; 175 Snell Pde; s/d with breakfast US\$88/97; ☎) At the northern end of the beachfront away from the madding Promenade crowd, Blue Waters is a classic hotel. All the rooms have balconies, quilted bedheads, and velvet chairs.

Southern Sun Garden Court – Marine Parade (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-337 3341; www.southernsun.com; 167 Marine Pde; s/d with breakfast US\$95/115; ☎) One of Southern Sun's four beachfront offerings, this comes from the steel-and-glass school of architecture, with modernish décor and uncluttered rooms.

Protea Hotel Edward Durban (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-337 3681; www.proteahotels.com/edwarddurban; 149 Marine Pde; s/d US\$112/125; ☎) King of the sea-front hotels, this is classic and comfortable, with fresh-polish smells and full-on décor with piped music to match.

VICTORIA EMBANKMENT

Durban Manor (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-366 0700; fax 031-366 0701; 93-96 Victoria Embankment; s/d with breakfast US\$52/77; ☎) Housed in the former Durban Club, one of the city's finest and most opulent colonial-era landmarks, Durban Manor is an impressive jumble of Victorian and Edwardian architecture.

CITY CENTRE

City Lodge (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-332 1447; www.citylodge.co.za; cnr Brickhill & Old Fort Rds; s/d US\$75/93; ☎) This secure place offers motel styling and slick service though little charm.

Royal Hotel (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-333 6000; www.theroyal.co.za; 267 Smith St; s/d with breakfast US\$220/292; ☎) This five-star institution overlooking City Hall is one of the city's most historical and swankiest offerings and has hosted royalty and Nelson Mandela.

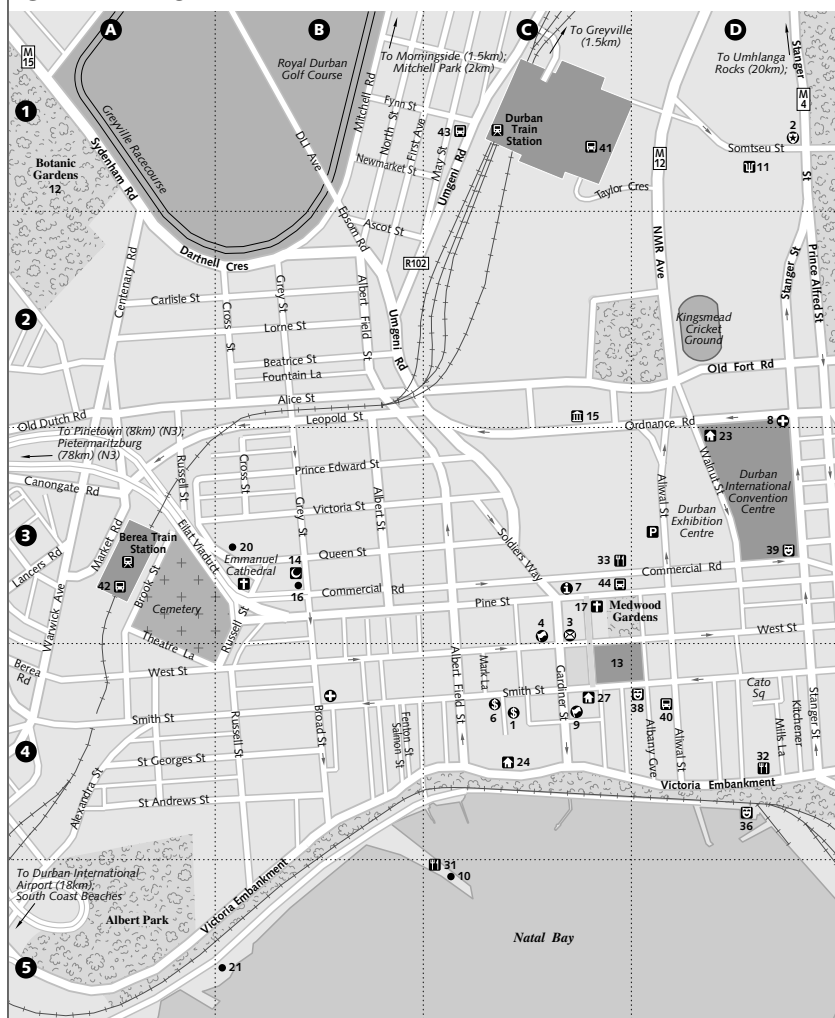
Durban Hilton International (Map pp502–3; ☎ 031-336 8100; www.hilton.com; 12 Walnut St; r with breakfast US\$245; ☎) Glitzy and chic, this slick, modern behemoth is arguably Durban's most exclusive hotel, with crowds of business travellers and local movers-and-shakers filling the downstairs bar.

GREYVILLE, MORNINGSIDE & BEREA

Hippo Hide Lodge & Backpackers (Map p505; ☎ 031-207 4366; www.hippohide.co.za; 2 Jesmond Rd, Berea; dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$10/16/24; ☎) There's not much room to swing a hippo in this cosy hide, but it pulls in the punters with its friendly, informal style and high standards. It's out on a limb in terms of location but the staff will help you organise outings.

Gibela Backpackers Lodge (Map pp424–5; ☎ 031-303 6291; www.gibela.co.za; 119 Ninth Ave, Morningside; dm/s/d with shared bathroom & breakfast US\$12/24/34; ☎) Housed in a stylish terracotta-coloured 1950s

CENTRAL DURBAN



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19 F5

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City Lodge.....

22 E2

Durban Hilton International.....

23 D3

Durban Manor.....

24 C4

Parade Hotel.....

25 E3

Protea Hotel Edward Durban.....

26 F3

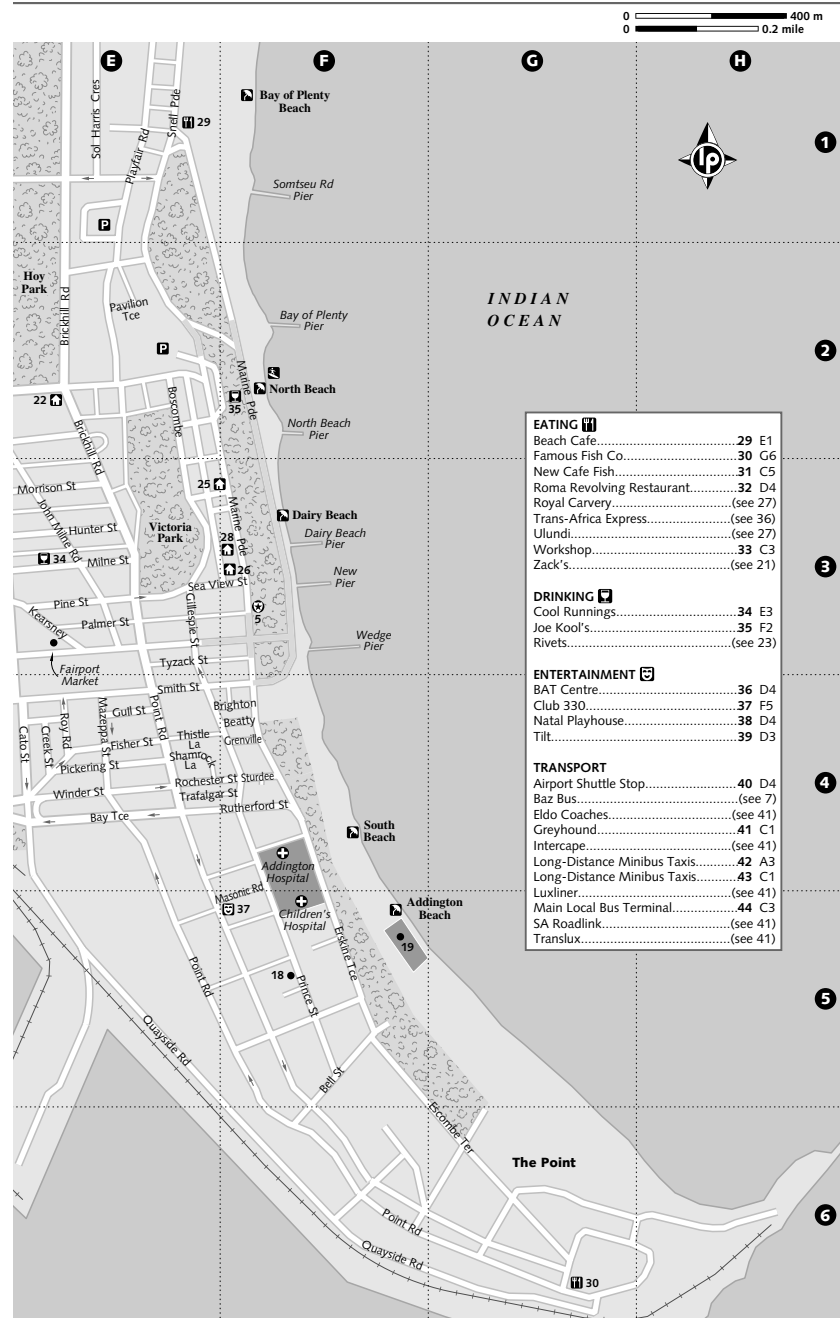
Royal Hotel.....

27 C4

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Parade.....

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building with a Tuscan feel, this place has tasteful ethnic décor and a friendly feel in a secure location. The delicious breakfasts are a highlight.

Nomads Backpackers (Map p498; ☎ 031-202 9709; www.durban.co.za/nomads; 70 Essenwood Rd, Berea; dm US\$8, d with/without bathroom US\$27/22; P) An organised and neat, yet relaxed kind of joint, and one that likes to party. If the pool or the hostel's 'Bambooz' bar is not your thing, then you're a jump away from the cinemas and cappuccino bars of the Musgrave Centre.

Madeline Grove B&B (Map p505; ☎ 031-303 5425; www.madeline.co.za; 116 Madeline Rd, Morningside; s/d with breakfast US\$40/61; P) This large mansion is configured into various comfortable self-contained apartments both upstairs and down. The separate poolside room is popular among waterbabies.

La Bordello (Map p505; ☎ 031-309 6019; www.beanbagbohemia.co.za; 47/49 Campbell Ave, Morningside; s/d US\$54/81; P) In former times, this boutique hotel was a house of ill-repute. Nowadays it's owned by the Bean Bag Bohemia team, who do good trade with the beautiful people who enjoy its plush Moroccan interiors, aromatherapy oils and breakfast in its small fountain court.

Quarters (Map p505; ☎ 031-303 5246; keres@threecities.co.za; 101 Florida Rd; s/d US\$111/158; P) Right in the throbbing heart of Durban's most fashionable eating and drinking quarter, this attractive boutique hotel balances colonial glamour with small-scale home comforts. The cosy rooms have balconies, and the restaurant is one of the best in the area.

Eating

BEACHFRONT & THE POINT

While the beachfront is chock-a-block with cheap and cheerful diners, you'll be hard-pressed to find much more than the usual spread of burgers, pizza and candy floss. Several of the beachfront hotels house some passable restaurants.

Beach Cafe (Map pp502-3; ☎ 082-762 9223; Bay of Plenty Beach; mains US\$3.50-6; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Durbs' hot new beach hang-out. Soak up the sun in a sun lounge (hire per day US\$3.40), or chill out with a cocktail on the restaurant deck, overlooking the beach and life guards.

Famous Fish Co (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-368 1060; King's Battery, the Point; mains US\$10-26; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎) This reliable fish restaurant is something of a Durban institution, with a dreamy view of the sea and cargo ships.

VICTORIA EMBANKMENT

Zack's (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-305 1677; Wilson's Wharf, Victoria Embankment; mains US\$3.60-10; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎) Offering café-style dining, this stylish (chain) eatery serves up good bistro fare washed down with a blast of fresh sea air.

Trans-Africa Express (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-332 0804; 1st fl, BAT Centre, Victoria Embankment; mains US\$3.80-13; ☎ lunch & dinner) Upstairs at the Bat Centre, with terrace views over the docks, this restaurant serves taste-tempting meals from Madagascar to Morocco.

New Cafe Fish (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-305 5062; 31 Yacht Mole, Victoria Embankment; mains US\$6-27; ☎ lunch & dinner) Looking like an upside-down ship, this uniquely designed restaurant serves seafood dishes as appealing as its views.

CITY CENTRE

Takeaway places around Victoria St Market (p500) have good Indian snacks including *bunny chow*. For daytime munchies follow your nose to near the main post office where there's usually someone with a braai cooking sausages, or try one of the fast food chains at the Workshop (Map pp502-3).

Roma Revolving Restaurant (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-332 3337; 32nd fl, John Ross House, Victoria Embankment; mains US\$7-13; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎) One of the few central restaurants surviving in Durban, this reasonably priced Italian eatery offers stunning views over Durban.

The **Royal Hotel** (☎ 031-333 6000; www.theroyal.co.za; 267 Smith St) has several renowned restaurants (closed Sundays): **Ulundi** (Map pp502-3; mains US\$5-8) is the place to sample a Bombay fish curry or a lamb dish; and the **Royal Carvery** (Map pp502-3; buffet US\$17) has a buffet for both lunch and dinner.

GREYVILLE, MORNINGSIDE & BEREA

The adjoining arteries of Florida and Windermere Rds are the best places to start foraging for a meal.

Bean Bag Bohemia (Map p505; ☎ 031-309 6019; 18 Windermere Rd; mains US\$4-10; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The food and flavours are as creative as the mosaics, chandeliers and gothic décor of the artistically hip restaurant (upstairs) and downstairs café-bar.

Cat Man Du (Map p505; ☎ 031-312 7893; 411 Windermere Rd; mains US\$4-13; ☎ lunch & dinner) This groovy diner-come-cocktail bar serves international fusion-style tucker in bar-like surrounds.

GREYVILLE, MORNINGSIDE & BEREA



Carnivores might like the kudu fillet in red wine (US\$11) and vegetarians are extremely well catered for.

Cafe 1999 (Map p498; ☎ 031-202 3406; Silvervaux Centre, Silverton Rd, Berea; mains US\$6-13; ☎ lunch & dinner) The place to eat for trendy Durbanites. This buzzing restaurant serves creative fusion food which comes in 'bitparts' – 'titbit' and 'bigbit'. Try the crispy roast duck on vanilla-seed risotto (US\$7/11).

A Gruta (Map p505; ☎ 031-312 8675; 200C Florida Rd; mains US\$6-18; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎) If you're not heading on to Mozambique (or Portugal for that matter), this is a great place to sample the flavours of Iberia.

Butcher Boys (Map p505; ☎ 031-312 8248; 170 Florida Rd; mains US\$8-12; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎) A stylish

joint serving 'steak as you like it', Butcher Boys is popular with business people and the 'in' group.

Drinking

The best options are found in the suburbs.

Zeta Bar (Map p505; ☎ 031-312 9436; 258 Florida Rd) Voluptuous red-plush seats and curvy soft lines provide the backdrop for this lounge lizard's favourite.

Billy the Bum's (Map p505; ☎ 031-303 1988; 504 Windermere Rd, Morningside) Attracting a crowd of Durban's upwardly mobile, this suburban cocktail bar is reliably raucous.

Cool Runnings (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-368 5604; 49 Milne St) This (in)famous place has a truly Rasta bohemian feel and it stays open until 6am.

Come late as it fills up after 11pm and catch a cab – this is *not* an area to walk around.

Joe Kool's (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-332 9697; Lower Marine Pde, North Beach) The inevitable finish line for any day on the beach, this venerable night-spot cooks up a cocktail of cold beer, big-screen TV, dance music and feisty crowds. Sunday night is party night.

Rivets (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-336 8100; Durban Hilton International, 12 Walnut St) As glossy as you'd expect a bar in the guts of the Hilton to be, Rivets boasts Thursday jazz nights, chichi décor, a contingent of the beautiful set and pricey cocktails.

Entertainment

Many events, from the Natal Sharks games to Shakespeare performances, can be booked through **Computicket** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 083-915 8000; 1st fl, the Workshop, Commercial Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat).

CINEMAS

There are cinemas in all of the major malls: **Imax** (☎ 031-566 4415; Gateway Mall, Umhlanga Ridge) Big-screen action in the Gateway Mall.

Ster Musgrave Centre (Map p498; ☎ 0860-300 222; www.sterkinetor.com; Musgrave Centre, Musgrave Rd); Gateway Mall (☎ 031-566 3222; Gateway Mall, Umhlanga Ridge)

LIVE MUSIC

KwaZulu-Natal Philharmonic Orchestra (☎ 031-369 9438; www.kznpo.co.za) The orchestra has an interesting spring concert programme with weekly performances in the City Hall.

BAT Centre (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-332 0451; www.batcentre.co.za; 45 Maritime Pl, Victoria Embankment) One of Durban's more interesting haunts, this venue features everything from DJs on Friday and Sunday evenings, regular drum circles, and top-flight jazz musicians.

Rainbow Restaurant & Jazz Club (☎ 031-702 9161; 23 Stanfield Lane) In Pinetown, 8km west of the centre, Rainbow is considered the centre of the jazz scene and still the preferred local haunt. It features concerts and headline acts on the first or last Sunday of the month.

NIGHTCLUBS

Tilt (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-306 9356; 11 Walnut Rd) This place shares DJs with the Hilton's Rivets bar. Friday is often the big one, with quality music from deep house to chunky bass.

Club 330 (Map pp502-3; www.330.co.za; 330 Point Rd) Clubbing in a point-blank sense. In-your-face

full-on rave scene and throb city, depending what level you're on. This is not an area to walk around.

THEATRE

Natal Playhouse (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-369 9444; www.playhousecompany.com; Smith St) Opposite the City Hall, Durban's central theatre has dance, drama and music most nights.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Durban International Airport (☎ 031-451 6666) is off the N2, 16km south of the city. Several airlines link Durban with South Africa's other main centres. Prices quoted (internet fares) are for the cheapest available one-way fares and may cost less than prices quoted by travel agents.

1time (☎ 0861-345 345; www.1time.co.za) A no-frills airline offering some great deals to Jo'burg (US\$41).

Kulula (☎ 0861-585 852; www.kulula.com) A no-frills competitor to 1time, it links Durban with Jo'burg (US\$61), Cape Town (US\$77) and Port Elizabeth (US\$68).

Nationwide Air (☎ 0861-737 737; www.nationwideair.co.za) Flies at least once daily to Jo'burg (US\$60), Cape Town (US\$80) and Port Elizabeth.

South African Airlink (SAAirlink; ☎ 011-978 1111; www.saaairlink.co.za) Flies daily to Port Elizabeth (US\$57), Bloemfontein (US\$201) and Nelspruit (US\$260).

South African Airways (SAA; ☎ 031-978 1111; www.flysaa.com) Flies at least once daily to Jo'burg (US\$105), Port Elizabeth (US\$128), East London (US\$128), Cape Town (US\$195), George (US\$200) and Nelspruit (US\$103).

BUS

The popular and useful **Baz Bus** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-304 9099; www.bazbus.com; 1st fl, Tourist Junction; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) has an office next to Durban Africa. The seven/14-day (US\$115/220) passes allow you to travel in any direction and as often as you like within the time period.

Long-distance buses leave from the bus stations near the Durban train station (Map pp502-3). It's safest to enter from NMR Ave, not Umgeni Rd. The following long-distance bus companies have their offices here:

Eldo Coaches (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-307 3363) has three buses daily to Jo'burg (US\$18 to US\$23, eight hours).

Greyhound (Map pp502-3; ☎ 083-915 9000; www.greyhound.co.za) has daily buses to Richards Bay (US\$1.40, 2½ hours), Jo'burg (US\$26 to US\$30, eight hours), Cape Town (US\$63, 22

to 27 hours), Port Elizabeth (US\$44, 15 hours) and Port Shepstone (US\$16, 1½ hours).

Buses also run daily to Pietermaritzburg (US\$12, one hour), Estcourt (US\$13, 2½ hours), Ladysmith (US\$19, four hours) and Newcastle (US\$23, 5½ hours).

Intercape (Map pp502-3; ☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) has several daily buses to Jo'burg (US\$26 to US\$30, eight hours), Cape Town (US\$66, 23 hours), Gaborone (via Jo'burg; US\$47, 15½ hours) and Maputo (via Jo'burg; US\$31, 15 hours).

Luxliner (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-305 9090; www.intercity.co.za) has daily services from Durban to Margate (US\$11, 2½ hours), Jo'burg International Airport and Park Station (US\$24, 8½ hours) and Pretoria (US\$24, nine hours).

SA Roadlink (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-307 5424; www.saroadlink.co.za) has double-decker buses to Cape Town (via Bloemfontein; US\$62, 23 hours), Jo'burg (US\$26, 6½ hours) and Port Elizabeth (via Mthatha and East London; US\$40, 15 hours).

Translux (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-308 8111; www.translux.co.za) has daily buses to Jo'burg (US\$27 to US\$28, eight hours) and Cape Town (US\$63, 27 hours). City to City buses, operated in partnership with Translux, go to destinations across the country.

CAR

Most major car-rental companies also have offices at the airport:

Around-about Cars (☎ 021-422 4022; www.aroundaboutcars.com)

Avis (☎ 031-304 1741, 086-102 111)

Budget (☎ 086-101 6622)

Comet Car Rental (☎ 031-903 4994; www.cometcar.co.za) Has some reasonable deals.

Imperial (☎ 031-337 3731)

MINIBUS TAXI

Some long-distance taxis leave from stops in the streets opposite the Umgeni Rd entrance to the train station (Map pp502-3). Others running mainly to the south coast and the Wild Coast region of Eastern Cape leave from the Berea train station (Map pp502-3). To Jo'burg it costs US\$18. The areas in and around the minibus taxis' ranks are unsafe and extreme care should be taken if entering them.

TRAIN

Durban train station (Map pp502-3; ☎ 0860-008 888) is huge. Use the NMR Ave entrance, 1st level.

The local inner-city or suburban trains are not recommended for travellers; even hardy travellers report feeling unsafe.

Long-distance services are another matter – they are efficient and arranged into separate male and female sleeper compartment for Jo'burg (1st-/2nd-class US\$34/22, 12½ hours), and the *Trans Oranje*, which makes a weekly run (phone the station for the departure day) to Cape Town (US\$87/59, 38 hours).

The **Rovos** (www.rovosrail.co.za) is a luxury steam train on which, for a mere US\$1100 starting price, you can enjoy old-world luxury on a three-day choof from Durban to Pretoria via Swaziland and Kruger National Park.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Some hostels run their own taxi shuttle services for clients at competitive prices. By taxi, the same trip should cost about US\$20. The **Airport Shuttle Bus** (☎ 031-465 1660) departs the airport regularly to the beach and city centre's major hotels (US\$4). Buses return to the airport on the hour between 5am to 10pm from the corner of Aliwal and Smith Sts (Map pp502-3).

BUS

The main bus terminal and information centre (Map pp502-3) for inner-city and metropolitan buses is on Commercial Rd across from the Workshop.

Durban Transport (☎ 031-309 5942) runs the bus services Mynah and Aqualine. Mynah covers most of the beachfront and central residential areas. Trips cost around US\$0.40. The larger Aqualine buses run through the outer-lying Durban metropolitan area.

TAXI

A taxi between the beach and Florida Rd, Morningside costs about US\$4. **Mozzie Cabs** (☎ 0860-669 943) runs a reliable 24-hour service.

AROUND DURBAN

A pleasant and hassle-free (if slightly kitsch) getaway from the steamy streets of Durban, the **Valley of 1000 Hills** (also known as the Umgeni Valley) runs from the city's western outskirts to Nagle Dam, east of Pietermaritzburg. The area abounds in touristy craft shops and eateries, but the rolling hills, sleepy villages and traditional Zulu communities make for

an interesting visit. You can drive on the Rte 103, which begins in Hillcrest, off the M13 freeway, or head to Hillcrest from the N3 between Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

Surprisingly, Route 2 of the 1000 Hills experience is one of the region's best kept secrets. The 600-hectare **Krantzkloof Nature Reserve** (adult/child US\$1.40/0.70; ☎ 6am-6pm year-round) has a variety of stunning gorge, wetland and grassland walks of between one to six hours' duration. Maps of self-guided trails (US\$0.70) are available from the security guard.

SOUTH OF DURBAN

The South Coast is a 160km-long string of sea-side resorts and suburbs running from Durban to Port Edward, near the Eastern Cape border. There's a bit of a Groundhog Day feel about this mass of shoulder-to-shoulder getaways along the N2 and Rte 102, albeit a pleasant one. The region is a surfers' and divers' delight (the latter because of the Aliwal Shoal), and in summer there ain't much room to swing a broom. The stunning Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve, close to Port Shepstone, provides beautiful forest walks, eating and accommodation options.

The South Coast's first official town is Amanzimtoti, a huge resort and residential area about 10km from Durban International Airport. Further south, other major centres are Umkomaas, Scottburgh, Park Rynie and Hibberdene. The area from Hibberdene to Trafalgar is called the Hibiscus Coast. Information is available from **Hibiscus Coast Tourism** (☎ 039-312 2322; www.hibiscuscoast.kzn.org.za; Panorama

Pde, Main Beach, Margate; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun).

Port Shepstone is the South Coast's industrial administrative centre, but has some pleasant surrounding areas, while 10km south, frantic Margate is the claustrophobic holiday hub. Port Edward is the last main centre in the region.

Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve

☎ 039

This **nature reserve** (☎ 039-679 1644; www.kznwildlife.com; admission US\$1.40, camp sites US\$4, 2-bed huts US\$15; ☎ 6am-6pm) is inland from Port Shepstone, off the N2. The spectacular gorge, on the Umzimkulwana River, is one of the highlights of the South Coast with beautiful scenery, animals and birds.

Wild 5 Extreme Adventures (☎ 082-566 7424) is based at the Oribi Gorge Hotel. It offers a 100m Gorge Swing (read bungee jump) off Lehr's Falls (US\$40), abseiling (US\$27) and white-water rafting (US\$47). These are 11km off the N2 along the Oribi Flats Rd.

To overnight in the area, check out the **Oribi Gorge Hotel** (☎ 039-687 0253; www.oribigorge.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$58/89; ☎), a large pine place close to a viewing area of the gorge.

Margate & Around

☎ 039 / pop 34,000

The south coast's tourist mecca is loud and lively, with a string of bars and clubs pumping up the volume, and a knot of hotels putting up the visitors. This claustrophobic concrete jungle's string of chain restaurants and shops ensures that it's not a 'glamour'

resort, but it's fun if you're into the bump-and-grind brand of beach life. Nearby Ramsgate is a quieter version of Margate, with a nice little beach.

SLEEPING

Sunlawns Hotel (☎ /fax 039-312 1078; Uplands Rd, Margate; per person with breakfast US\$28; ☎ ☎) This long-established hotel has delightful old-English charm. There is a Ladies Lounge and pub, as well as a good-sized pool.

Wailana Beach Lodge (☎ 039-314 4606; www.wailana.co.za; 436 Ashmead Dr, Ramsgate; r per person with breakfast from US\$47; ☎ ☎) This svelte guest-house, 200m from the sea in nearby Ramsgate, has five 'designer' bedrooms with contemporary, individual styling and private sun decks, leafy gardens and a bar.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The **Margate Mini Coach** (☎ 031-312 1406; www.margate.co.za/minicoach) links Durban and Margate twice daily (US\$11 single, US\$15 for a same-day return). Book through **Hibiscus Coast Tourism** (☎ 039-312 2322; www.hibiscuscoast.kzn.org.za; Panorama Pde, Main Beach, Margate; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun).

Luxliner (☎ 039-317 4628; www.luxliner.co.za) has an office in Hibiscus Coast Tourism, and runs regular buses between Margate and Jo'burg (US\$34, 10 hours).

NORTH OF DURBAN

The stretch of coast from Umhlanga Rocks north to the Tugela River is a profusion of upmarket timeshare apartments and retirement villages with some pleasant beaches. The section from Zimbali, slightly north of Umhlanga, to the Tugela is known as the Dolphin Coast because of the bottlenose dolphins that favour the area.

Dolphin Coast Publicity (☎ 032-946 1997; www.dolphincoast.co.za; Ballito Dr; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) is near the BP petrol station, just where you leave the N2 to enter Ballito. It books B&Bs and lists other accommodation.

The North Coast is home to a fascinating mix of peoples: descendants of former colonialists, Indians, French Mauritian sugarcane growers and indentured labourers from the Indian subcontinent, plus colourful Zulu cultures.

Metropolitan buses run between Durban and Umhlanga Rocks, and buses and minibus taxis also run between Durban and

KwaDukuza (Stanger) and several other inland towns.

Umhlanga Rocks

☎ 031

The buckle of Durban's chichi commuter belt, Umhlanga (the 'h' is pronounced something like a 'sh') is a cosmopolitan mix of upmarket beach resort, moneyed suburbia and small malls.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The **Natal Sharks Board** (☎ 031-566 0400; www.shark.co.za; 1A Herrwood Dr; audiovisual & dissection adult/child US\$2.80/1.60; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, noon-6pm Sun) is a research institute dedicated to studying sharks, specifically in relation to their danger to humans. There are audiovisual presentations and shark dissections at 9am and 2pm Tuesday to Thursday. The public can accompany the Sharks Board personnel on their boat trips. The institute is about 2km out of town.

Umhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve

The **Umhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve** (admission free; ☎ 6am-6pm) is on a river mouth just north of town. Despite its small size (26 hectares) there are many bird species. The trails lead through stunning dune forest, across the lagoon and onto the beach.

SLEEPING & EATING

Oyster Box (☎ 031-561 2233; www.oysterbox.co.za; 2 Lighthouse Rd; s with breakfast US\$72-107, d per person US\$58-84; ☎ ☎ ☎) In the shadow of Umhlanga lighthouse, this spot exudes colonial-era grace with an old-school atmosphere that offers an antidote to Umhlanga's concrete towers.

Beverley Hills Sun Intercontinental (☎ 031-561 2211; www.southernsun.com; Lighthouse Rd; s & d US\$370; ☎ ☎ ☎) They didn't pull out the stops on the exterior, but this top-notch classic is deliciously stylish on the inside.

There's a huge choice of eating options for breakfasts, lunches and dinners and many pleasant pavement cafés.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Metro buses 716 and 706 run between Umhlanga and Durban.

ZULULAND

Evoking images of wild landscapes and tribal rhythms, this beautiful swathe of KwaZulu-Natal offers a different face of South

SOUTH COAST DIVING

The highlight of this strip is the Aliwal Shoal, touted as one of the 10 best dive sites in the world. Named after the wrecked ship, the *Aliwal*, which ran aground on the reef in 1849, other ships have since met a similar fate here. Today, the shoal's ledges, caves and pinnacles are home to everything from wrecks, rays, turtles, 'raggies' (ragged-mouth sharks), tropical fish and soft corals.

Numerous operators along the South Coast offer day dives and four-day courses with dives, equipment hire and air-tank refills. Rates range from US\$230 to US\$250.

Aliwal Dive Charters (☎ 039-973 2542; www.aliwalshoalscubadiving.co.za; Umkomaas) On the main road past the village.

La La Manzi Dive Charters (☎ 039-973 1345; www.divealiwal.co.za; Umkomaas) On the main road past the village.

Quo Vadis (☎ 039-978 1112; www.raggiecave.com; Scottburgh) Based at the Cutty Sark Hotel, and recommended for its charters.

Sea Fever Dive Centre (☎ 039-973 1328; www.seafever.co.za; Umkomaas) Towards the front of the village facing the sea.

Africa, where fine coastline, mist-clad hills and traditional settlements are in contrast to the ordered suburban developments around Durban. Dominated by the Zulu tribal group, the region offers a fascinating historical and contemporary insight into one of the country's most enigmatic, and best-known, cultures. Intense poverty and all the social problems that come with it are still commonplace.

The region is most visited for the spectacular Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park and its many traditional Zulu villages. Here, you can learn about Zulu history and the legendary King Shaka.

Umhlathuze (Richards Bay & Empangeni)

☎ 035 / pop 115,000

Umhlathuze incorporates the industrial port of Richards Bay and the nearby town of Empangeni, and is a mass of modern suburbia, aluminium smelters and a web of roads linking very little. Bird-watchers may be rewarded by the 350 or so bird species that favour the surrounding lakes and marshes, but for most visitors there are better places to spend your time.

Greyhound buses run daily to Durban (US\$1.40, 2½ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$30, eight hours).

Eshowe

☎ 035 / pop 14,700

Situated around a beautiful indigenous forest and surrounded by green rolling hills, Eshowe typifies idiosyncratic Zululand. The centre has a rural, rough-and-tumble atmosphere, but the suburbs are leafy and quiet. It is well placed for exploring the wider region and there are many decent attractions and accommodation options on offer.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The **Fort Nongqayi Museum Village** (☎ 035-474 1141; zhm@umlalazi.org.za; Nongqayi Rd; adult/child US\$2.80/4; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun) includes access to the Zululand Historical Museum, the Vukani Zulu Basketry Collection, Zululand Missionary Museum, and the Museum Crafter's Market, where local crafts are sold.

From the museum you can also walk to **Mpushini Falls** (40 minutes return), but note that bilharzia has been reported here in the past.

When war approached, King Shaka is said to have hidden his wives in the thick stand of forest that now makes up the 200-hectare **Dlinza Forest Reserve** (☎ 035-474 4029; www.zbr.co.za/boardwalk; admission free; ☎ 6am-6pm Sep-Apr, 8am-5pm May-Aug). There is prolific bird life as well as some walking trails.

The 100m-long **Dlinza Forest Aerial Boardwalk** (www.zbr.co.za/boardwalk; adult/child US\$3.40/0.70) offers some great views of the canopy and bird life. This is the start of the Prince Dabulamanzi Trail, a three-day circuit through nature reserves and rivers. **Entumeni Nature Reserve** (☎ 035-474 5084; admission free; ☎ 6am-6pm) is larger than Dlinza, and preserves indigenous mist-belt forest in a sugar-cane region. It's 16km west of town, off the road to Entumeni and Nkandla.

SLEEPING

Amble Inn (☎ 035-474 1300; ambleinn@corpdial.co.za; 116 Main St; s/d with breakfast US\$30/42) Filling the guts of an old British Army brothel, this place offers slightly shabby but spacious backpacker charm, complete with a giant gargoyles.

George Hotel & Zululand Backpackers (☎ 035-474 4919; www.eshowe.com; 38 Main St; s/d with breakfast US\$33/47; ☎ ☎) March into this attractive, whitewashed building with rooms that ooze colonial-era pretensions. There's a separate backpackers (camp sites US\$7, dorm/single/double with shared bathroom US\$10/18/24), as well as the George's microbrewery and 101 activities on tap.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Minibus taxis leave from the bus and taxi rank (downhill from KFC near the Osborne/Main Sts roundabout – go across the bridge and to the right) to Empangeni, (US\$4, one hour), Gingindlovu (US\$0.90) and Melmoth (US\$2.80, 45 minutes), the best place to catch taxis deeper into Zululand.

Nkwalini Valley

Shaka's kraal (fortified village), KwaBulawayo, once loomed over this beautiful valley but today Nkwalini is regimented with citrus orchards and cane fields rather than Zulu warriors. From Eshowe head north for 6km on Rte 66, and turn right onto Rte 230 (a dirt road that will eventually get you to Rte 34).

Across the road from the KwaBulawayo marker is **Coward's Bush**, now just another marker, where warriors who returned from

battle without their spears, or who had received wounds in the back, were executed.

Shakaland & Simunye

☎ 035

Created as a set for the telemovie *Shaka Zulu*, the Protea-managed **Shakaland** (☎ 035-460 0912; www.shakaland.com; Nandi Experience US\$26; ☎ display 11am) beats up a touristy, but entertaining, blend of perma-grin performance and informative authenticity. The Nandi Experience (Nandi was Shaka's mother) is a display of Zulu culture and customs; the Zulu dance performance is said to be the best in the country. You can also stay overnight at the four-star **hotel** (s/d with Nandi Experience & full board US\$155/132).

Shakaland is at Norman Hurst Farm, Nkwalini, 3km off Rte 66 and 14km north of Eshowe.

Simunye Zulu Lodge (☎ 035-450 3111; s/d with dinner, bed & breakfast US\$185/277), a collection of cottages, beehive huts and rondavels, is owned by renowned 'white Zulu' Barry Leitch. It's located between Melmoth and Eshowe, and nestled at the bottom of cliffs on the banks of the Mfuli River. Guests meet local Zulus and learn about their traditional and contemporary culture.

Ulundi & Around

☎ 035 / pop 15,200

Once the hub of the powerful Zulu empire and until recently joint capital of KZN (with Pietermaritzburg, which gained pre-eminence), Ulundi has lost much of its heart and its small centre (cum-shopping mall) has a temporary and merely functional feel. For Zulu fanatics, however, there are still plenty of historic sites to explore in the immediate area.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Established as Cetshwayo's capital in 1873, **Ondini** (High Place; ☎ 035-870 2050; admission US\$2; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun) was razed by British troops after the Battle of Ulundi (July 1879), the final engagement of the 1879 Anglo-Zulu War. The royal kraal section of the Ondini site has been rebuilt and you can see where archaeological digs have uncovered the floors of identifiable buildings.

Also located at Ondini is the **KwaZulu Cultural-Historical Museum** (incl in Ondini admission; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun), with good exhibits on Zulu history and culture. It also

has one of the country's best collections of beadwork on display.

The **Emakhosini Ophathe Heritage Park** (Valley of the Kings; admission free; ☎ 8am-4pm) is of great significance to the Zulu. The great *makhosi* (chiefs) Nkhosinkulu, Senzangakhona (father of Shaka, Dingaan and Mpande) and Dinizulu are buried here. A monument, the **Spirit of eMakhosini**, sits on a hill.

SLEEPING

uMuzi Bushcamp (☎ 035-450 2531; d with breakfast US\$53) Inside the Ondini complex is this privately run group of traditional beehive huts. The owners seemed to have capitalised on the location; the price stings for what you get.

Holiday Inn Garden Court (☎ 035-870 1012; fax 035-870 1220; Princess Magogo St; s/d US\$95/101; ☎ ☎ ☎) Catering to passing dignitaries and bureaucrats, this offers the predictably safe comforts of a chain hotel. Ask about the weekend specials.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The minibus-taxi park is opposite the Holiday Inn, with services to destinations including Vryheid (US\$5.50, 1½ hours) and Eshowe (US\$6, 1½ hours).

THE ELEPHANT COAST

Not far from the top of the scribbled list marked 'Places I Must See in South Africa', the tourism authority-labelled Elephant Coast (which incorporates the northern region known as Maputaland) is a phenomenal stretch of natural beauty, with a fabulously diverse mix of environments and wildlife. The Elephant Coast is bound in the south by the Imfolozi River just below the St Lucia Estuary, and to the northwest by the Lebombo Mountains.

KwaMbonambi

☎ 035

KwaMbonambi (often called Kwambo) is a tiny town off the N2, between Empangeni and Mtubatuba. Some believe that KwaMbonambi means 'Place of the Gathering of Kings', while others believe it means 'Place of the Blacksmith', as Shaka's spears were made here. Nowadays it's a place where very little happens, although it's close to the wildlife parks.

Cuckoos Nest (☎ 035-580 1001; www.cuck-nest.com; 28 Albizia St; dm/d with shared bathroom US\$9.50/22; ☎), especially the tree house (US\$20), has lost

some of its perkiness since the former owners moved on, but it's spacious and friendly and a pleasant stopover if stuck.

Mtubatuba & Around

☎ 035

For travellers, the only real reason to visit this chaotic place is that minibus taxis run through here on their way south to Durban (US\$9.50, two hours) north to Phongolo (US\$11 to US\$14, two hours; via Hluhluwe and Mkuze) and west into Zululand. Coming from those destinations, Mtubatuba is the stop for St Lucia (St Lucia Estuary is 25km east; take Rte 8 by minibus taxi).

On the southern side of Mtubatuba is Riverview, a neat town with a sugar mill. Here, **Wendy's B&B Country Lodge** (☎ 035-550 0407; www.wendybnb.co.za; 3 Riverview Rd, Riverview; r with breakfast US\$76; 🍷) drips with soft furnishings and old-fashioned homey charm.

Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park

☎ 035

Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park (☎ 035-550 8476; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$9.50/4.70; 🕒 5am-7pm Nov-Feb, 6am-6pm Mar-Oct) is one of South Africa's best-known and most evocative parks. Covering 96,000 hectares, the park has lions, elephants, rhinos (black and white), leopards, giraffes and wild dogs. The land is quite hilly except on the river flats: the White Imfolozi River flows through Imfolozi, and the Black Imfolozi forms the northern border of the park; the Hluhluwe River bisects Hluhluwe, and the dam on it attracts wildlife.

The **Centenary Centre** (🕒 8am-4pm), a wildlife-holding centre with an attached museum and information centre, is in the eastern section of Imfolozi.

The wildlife drives here are very popular. **Hilltop Camp** (☎ 035-562 0848) offers morning and night drives, while **Mpila Camp** offers night drives only. The drives are open to resort residents only and cost US\$20 per person.

Bear in mind that the reserves are in a (low-risk) malarial area and there are lots of mosquitoes – come prepared.

WILDERNESS TRAILS

One of Imfolozi's main attractions is its trail system, in a special 24,000-hectare wilderness area (note: trails are seasonal). The **Base Trail** (three nights/four days, US\$363) is, as the name suggests, at a base camp.

The **Short Wilderness Trail** (two nights/three days, US\$200) is at satellite camps, which have no amenities (bucket shower) but are fully catered. Similar is the **Extended Wilderness Trail** (three nights/four days, US\$300) but guests must carry their gear for 7km into camp. On the **Primitive Trail** (four nights/five days, US\$240), you carry equipment, help prepare the food (provided) and hikers must sit up in 1½-hour watches during the night.

SLEEPING & EATING

You must book accommodation in advance through **KZN Wildlife** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com) in Pietermaritzburg or at Durban's **Tourist Junction** (☎ 035-304 4934; 160 Pine St, cnr Soldiers Way; 🕒 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat). Last-minute bookings – those made 48 hours ahead – should be made direct with the camp site.

Hilltop Camp (☎ 035-562 0848; rest huts/chalets per person US\$31/63, 2-bed units with full board per person US\$63) This is the signature resort on the Hluhluwe side, with stupendous views, a restaurant and a much-needed bar. Try one of the smaller and more sedate accommodation centres in Imfolozi for more peace and quiet.

Muntulu Bush Lodge (8-bed bush lodges per person US\$70) is perched high above the Hluhluwe River; and **Munywaneni Bush Lodge** (8-bed bush lodges per person US\$63, minimum US\$418) is secluded and self-contained. There's also a fully hosted and catered nine-bed lodge at **Mtwazi Lodge** (per person incl wildlife drives & walks, price on application).

The main accommodation centre on the Imfolozi side is spectacular **Mpila Camp** (4-bed rest huts per person US\$29, 2-bed safari camps per person US\$33) in the centre of the reserve and **Masinda** (9-bed lodge per person incl wildlife drives & walks US\$240), near the Centenary Centre, is fully hosted and catered.

Be warned: all accommodation options are billed per person but are subject to a minimum charge.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The main entrance, Memorial Gate, is about 15km west of the N2, about 50km north of Mtubatuba. The second entrance, the Nyalazi Gate, is accessed by turning left off the N2 onto the Rte 618 just after Mtubatuba to Nongoma. The third, Cengeni Gate, on Imfolozi's western side, is accessible by road (tarred for 30km) from Ulundi.

Greater St Lucia Wetland Park

☎ 035

The Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, a Unesco World Heritage Site, stretches for 280 glorious kilometres, from the Mozambican border near Kosi Bay in the north of Maputaland, to Mapeplane (Maphelana), at the southern end of Lake St Lucia. With the Indian Ocean on one side, and a series of lakes on the other (including Lake St Lucia), the 328,000-hectare area is made up of a jigsaw of reserves and protects five distinct ecosystems, offering everything from offshore reefs and beaches, to lakes, wetlands, woodlands and coastal forests. The ocean beaches pull big crowds during the holiday season.

Lake St Lucia itself is Africa's largest estuary. Despite its past healthy water levels, it is currently at its lowest level for 50 years, due to a severe drought. Controversy surrounds a long-term solution to the management of the lake, with both animal and plant species being affected by the changing ecological factors.

Remember that unless specified, all KZN Wildlife accommodation must be booked at **KZN Wildlife** (☎ in Pietermaritzburg 033-845 1000, ☎ in Durban 031-304 4934) with 48 hours' notice. Within 48 hours, try your luck directly with the lodges and camp sites.

ACTIVITIES & TOURS

Most hostels rent snorkelling equipment and run or can organise tours through tour operators. Many of these have offices based in St Lucia Estuary and are useful first stops for information.

Birding

Zululand Birding Route (☎ 033-753 5644)

Boat Tours

St Lucia Tours & Charters (☎ 035-590 1259; www.zululink.co.za; cnr MacKenzie & Katonkel Rds; 🕒 6.30am-6pm) In St Lucia Estuary.

Canoeing

St Lucia Kayak Safaris (☎ 035-590 1555)

Hiking

Hiking is awesome around the region. The main trails are all in the Eastern Shores area (see p514) and are guided walks.

Horse Riding

Bhangazi Horse Safaris (☎ 035-550 4438)
Exodus Adventures (☎ 083-349 8575)

Turtle Tours

Bhanga Nek (☎ 082-968 3766)
Euro Zulu Safaris (☎ 035-590 2173)
Shaka Barker (☎ 035-590 1162)

Whale Watching

Advantage Tours (☎ 035-590 1259)

Wildlife Drives

Leisure EcoTours (☎ 035-590 1075)
Shaka Barker Tours (☎ 035-590 1162)

ST LUCIA ESTUARY

St Lucia Estuary, the park's main resort town and the region's gateway, is a good place in which to get your bearings of the region. In high season, this pleasant village is a hotbed of activity as the population swells from 600 to the thousands. Hippos sometimes amble down the town's quieter streets (beware, these are not cute).

Information

Internet café (☎ 035-590 1056; 310 MacKenzie St; per hr US\$4; 🕒 7am-10pm) At BiB's International Backpackers.
KZN Wildlife (☎ 035-590 1340; fax 035-590 1343; Pelican Rd; 🕒 8am-12.30pm & 2-4.30pm) Offers information on the reserves.

St Lucia Tours & Charters (☎ 035-590 1259; www.advantagetours.co.za; cnr MacKenzie St & Katonkel Rd; 🕒 6.30am-6pm) Offers plenty of information and tour bookings.

Sleeping

In St Lucia Estuary itself, you can camp at three sites run by **KZN Wildlife** (☎ 033-845 1000, 590 1340; www.kznwildlife.com; Pelican St). The pretty **Sugarloaf** (per person US\$7) is on the estuary, as are **Eden Park** (per person US\$9), near the KZN Wildlife office, and **Iphiva** (per person US\$7), off MacKenzie St.

BiB's International Backpackers (☎ 035-590 1056; www.bibs.co.za; 310 MacKenzie St; camp sites US\$6, dm/d with shared bathroom US\$9.50/20, d US\$27; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Occupying a series of sprawling buildings, the rooms are tarnished but the atmosphere makes up for it: BiB's offers all the backpacker staples – a busy bar, a huge (serviced) kitchen for cooking, and organised fun.

Santa Lucia Guest House (☎ 035-590 1151; www.santalucia.co.za; 30 Pelican St; s/d with breakfast US\$39/78; 🍷 🍷) This highly acclaimed B&B with friendly and hospitable owners adds some old-fashioned luxury to the usual standard fare.

Hippo Hideaway (☎ 035-590 1025; www.hippo-hideaway.co.za; 70 MacKenzie St; s/d US\$70/76; 🚰 🚽 🚿) This smart place caters to the better-heeled traveller: the small complex of self-catering apartments is spanking new and sparkling clean.

Getting There & Away

The **Baz Bus** (☎ in Durban 031-304 9099; www.bazbus.com) drops backpackers off several times a week. If you're not doing tours out of St Lucia Estuary, the only way of getting around is to have your own wheels.

EASTERN SHORES (MFABENI) RESERVE

☎ 035
Two kilometres north of St Lucia Estuary, on the eastern side of the lake, is the boom gate for the **Eastern Shores (Mfabeni) Reserve** (☎ 035-590 1202; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$2.80/2/4.70; 🚰 🚽 5am-7pm), which has the sea on its eastern flank. This section of the park has an excellent selection of wildlife, and a variety of ecosystems to explore. Fourteen kilometres north of the boom gate are the **Mission Rocks**, where you will find the **ranger station** (☎ 035-590 1202) for the hiking trails. At low tide, the Mission Rocks are covered in rock pools containing a fabulous array of sea life.

Hiking Trails

By far the best way to see this section of the park is to hike one of the trails. Reservations should be made and you should check in at the Mission Rocks ranger station.

The **Mziki Trail** (☎ 035-590 1202; per person per night US\$9.50) is a guided, three-day trail of about 40km. You must bring your own food.

The **Emoyeni Trail** (☎ 035-590 1202; per person US\$7) is a guided, 65km long, five-day excursion. You must bring your own food, cooking equipment, sleeping bag and tent.

CAPE VIDAL

☎ 035
This beautiful **coastal camp** (☎ 033-845 1000, 590 1224; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$2.80/2/4.70; 🚰 🚽 6am-6pm) takes in the land between the lake and the ocean, north of Cape Vidal itself. Some of the forested sand dunes are 150m high and the beaches are excellent for swimming.

There is KZN Wildlife accommodation at the **Bhangazi Complex** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com; camp sites US\$10, 5-8-bed log cabins

per person US\$32, 8-bed bush lodge US\$47), near Lake Bhangazi.

From St Lucia Estuary head north, past the Crocodile Centre and through the entrance gates. Cape Vidal is approximately 35km further on.

FANI'S ISLAND & FALSE BAY PARK

Both Fani's Island and False Bay Park desperately need the rainbird to sing. Due to a drought lasting several years, there is no water in the lake and the area has been closed. It will reopen as soon as there is sufficient rainfall. Check with KZN Wildlife – there are two excellent camps.

SODWANA BAY

☎ 035
Spectacular Sodwana Bay, a sheltered recess at the very northern tip of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, isn't a whole lot more than sand, sea and silence. And that's its appeal. The spread-out village of Sodwana Bay is also here, but the two nearby parks – Sodwana Bay National Park and Ozabeni – provide most of the highlights. This little slice of paradise offers stunning coastal scenery, guided walking trails and some serious deep-sea game fishing. It's possibly best known on the tourist trail for its scuba diving and its diversity of underwater marine life.

Sodwana Bay National Park (☎ 035-571 0051; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/2; 🚰 🚽 6am-6pm) is located on the coast, east of Mkuze. There are some animals, and the dunes, swamps and offshore coral reefs are well worth visiting, but the area can become very congested during holidays. Between November and February there are turtle-viewing tours (US\$20 per person).

If you opt for accommodation in the park's massive camp-site area (some of the lodges are also here), you pay a one-off charge of US\$6 at reception; day visitors pay US\$0.70.

For a more peaceful look at a similar ecosystem, head south to the adjoining **Ozabeni** (☎ 035-571 0268; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$2.80/1.40/2; 🚰 🚽 6am-6pm), which runs all the way down to Lake St Lucia. Bird-watchers are in for a treat here.

Orca Launches (☎ 035-571 5000, 083-654 7204; www.orcasafaris.co.za; 🚰 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat), on the main street of the village, organises a host of activities from snorkelling to turtle tours (activities from US\$20 per person).

The nearest ATM is in Mbazwana, 14km west.

Sleeping & Eating

KZN Wildlife (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com; Ozabeni camp sites per person US\$4, Sodwana Bay National Park camp sites/5-bed cabins per person US\$19/30) Offers camping at Ozabeni, and hundreds of camp sites and cabins at Sodwana Bay National Park.

Coral Divers (☎ 035-571 0290; coraldivers@mweb.co.za; Sodwana Bay National Park; s/d with shared bathroom from US\$25/40; 🚰 🚽) This Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) resort is a factory-style operation, nevertheless it has cabins in a lovely setting, satellite TV, a pool and a bar. For US\$20, staff will pick you up from Hluhluwe.

Sodwana Bay Lodge (☎ 035-571 0095; www.sodwanadelodge.com; s/d with half board US\$100/164) This slick resort, with neat boardwalks, banana palms and thatched roofs, caters to high-life divers, offering combinations of dive packages (from US\$190 per person sharing). It's on the main road through the village.

Getting There & Away

Minibus taxis run from the N2 up to the small town of Jozini. From there to Sodwana Bay you shouldn't have trouble finding transport (taxis) as it's a fairly densely populated region.

Tongaland

The area north of Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park up to the Mozambique border was settled by Mozambique's Tsonga people. It's a distinct ecological zone: flat and hot with sandy soil and sluggish rivers harbouring crocodiles and hippos. Forests of huge figs spread inland, especially along the Pongola River. Nearer the coast, palms grow among salt pans and thornveld (thorny vegetation areas).

MKHUZE GAME RESERVE & AROUND

☎ 035
A possible trip highlight is the **Mkhuze Game Reserve** (☎ 031-845 1000, 573 9001; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$4.70/2.40/4.70; 🚰 🚽 6am-6pm). Established in 1912, this reserve, covering some 36,000 spectacular hectares, is a well-kept 'secret'. It lacks lions, but just about every other sought-after animal is represented, as well as more than 400 species of birds.

Better still, the reserve has hides at water holes, which offer some of the best wildlife viewing in the country. Morning is the best time. It's 15km from Mkuze. Wildlife drives (US\$12) are available.

KZN Wildlife (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com; Nhlonhlela bush lodge US\$27, Mantuma rest huts/2- & 4-bed safari camps & chalets per person US\$13/33) offers a bush lodge at Nhlonhlela, and a variety of accommodation at Mantuma. Minimum charges apply.

The town of Mkuze is west of the Lebombo range on the N2. **Ghost Mountain**, south of the town, was an important burial place for the Ndwandwe tribe; occasionally human bones, which date from a big battle between rival Zulu factions in 1884, are found near Ghost Mountain.

Ghost Mountain Inn (☎ 035-573 1025; www.ghostmountaininn.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$70/126; 🚰 🚽) is an old-school colonial with a modern and luxurious touch. A massive indoor-outdoor lounge area with blooming gardens, tennis courts and drives to the Mkhuze Game Reserve all add to the appeal.

TEMBE ELEPHANT PARK

☎ 035
Heading back to the N2 from Kosi Bay, South Africa's last free-ranging elephants are protected in the sandveld (dry, sandy belt) forests of **Tembe Elephant Park** (☎ 035-592 0001; www.tembe.co.za; adult/child/vehicle US\$4/2/4.70; 🚰 🚽 6am-6pm) on the Mozambique border. There are now about 160 elephants in the area, many of them the last survivors of elephant herds from the Maputo Elephant Reserve, saved from Mozambique's civil war. The park also boasts the Big Five (lion, leopard, buffalo, elephant and black rhino).

Tembe Lodge (☎ 035-592 0545; www.tembe.co.za; r with full board & activities from US\$200; 🚰) offers accommodation in secluded safari tents built on wooden platforms. In the centre of the camp there is a large dining area, a shaded pool and braai facilities.

Only 4WD vehicles are allowed to drive through the park itself.

NDUMO GAME RESERVE

☎ 033
A little further west, the **Ndumo Game Reserve** (☎ 033-845 1000, 035-591 0004; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$4.70/2.40/4.70; 🚰 🚽 5am-7pm) is beside the Mozambique border and close to

the Swaziland border, about 100km north of Mkuze. On some 10,000 hectares, there are black and white rhinos, hippos, crocodiles and antelope species but it is the bird life on the Pongola and Usutu Rivers, and their flood plains and pans, which attracts visitors. It's known as a 'mini Okavango'.

Wildlife-viewing and bird-watching, guided walks (US\$6) and vehicle tours (US\$1.40) are available.

Fuel and limited supplies are usually available 2km outside the park gate. Camping and rest huts are offered by **KZN Wildlife Accommodation** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com; camp sites per person US\$7, 2-bed rest huts per person US\$27).

Coastal Forest Reserve

This reserve stretches from Mozambique in the north to Sodwana Bay in the south, and includes Lake Sibaya, Kosi Bay, Bhanga Nek, Black Rock, Rocktail Bay, Manzengwenya, Mabibi and Nine-Mile Beach. The reserve is administered by KZN Wildlife.

LAKE SIBAYA NATURE RESERVE

Protecting the largest freshwater lake in South Africa, **Lake Sibaya Nature Reserve** (www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$2.80/1.40/4.70; ☎ 6am-6pm) covers between 60 and 70 sq km, depending on the water level. It lies very close to the coast, and between the eastern shore and the sea is a range of sand dunes up to 165m high. There are hippos, some crocs and a large range of bird life. The lake is popular for fishing.

There is currently no accommodation in the reserve. The main route to the reserve is via the village of Mbazwana, south of the lake, either from Mkuze or from Mhlosinga, off Rte 22.

KOSI BAY NATURE RESERVE

☎ 033

The jewel of the Elephant Coast, **Kosi Bay Nature Reserve** (☎ 033-845 1000, 035-592 0234; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$2.80/1.40/4.70; ☎ 6am-6pm) features a string of four lakes that tip down the hillside into an estuary lined with some of the most beautiful (and quietest) beaches in South Africa. A coral reef offers excellent snorkelling just offshore. There are hippos, Zambezi sharks and some crocs in the lake system, and more than 250 bird species have been identified here.

The 44km **Kosi Bay Trail** (4 days per person for group of 10 US\$47, minimum charge US\$470) is a self-catered,

guided hike around the Kosi estuarine system, stopping each night in remote camps.

There are camp sites and basic cabins in the reserve, but very little else. **KwaNgwanase** is the nearest service centre, some 10km west of the reserve. There are two entrances to the reserve – Kosi Bay Camp (7km north of KwaNgwanase) and Kosi Bay Mouth (19km north of KwaNgwanase).

Sleeping & Eating

Most lodge accommodation is dispersed around the region's sandy dunes and often away from the water. In many cases, 4WDs are needed to negotiate the sandy tracks.

I Gwala Gwala Lodge (☎ 084-588 0564; camp sites US\$7, s/d US\$20/40) Around 1km from the parks board office on the Kosi Bay Camp access road, this excellent place offers transfers to all beaches, picks up from Mkuze and organises snorkelling, dolphin swims, and diving. Accommodation is in basic chalets.

Utshwayelo Campsite (☎ 033-592 9626, 073-134 3318; camp sites per person US\$8) This quiet, community-run camp site offers camping right by the parks board office on the Kosi Bay Mouth access road. You can walk to one of the country's best beaches in 20 minutes.

Maputaland (☎ 033-592 0654; maputaland@polka.co.za; Posbus 757, KwaNgwanase; s/d with breakfast US\$47/80) These 10 modern chalets have all the mod cons including DSTV, bar and restaurant, plus large mozzie nets.

Getting There & Away

To get here, take the Jozini turn-off from the N2 and head towards Ndumo Game Reserve, but turn hard right (east) just before Ndumo village – you might need a 4WD.

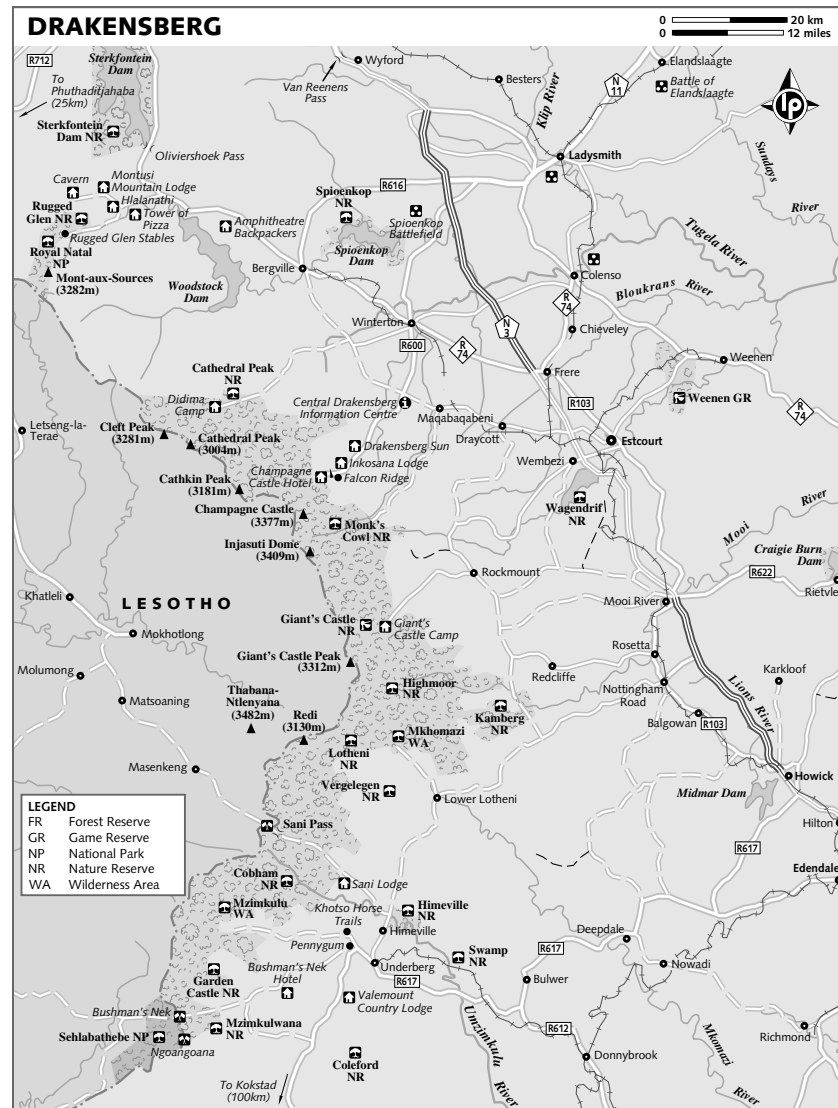
UKHAHLAMBA-DRAKENSBURG PARK

The tabletop peaks of the uKahlamba-Drakensberg Range, which form the boundary between South Africa and the mountain kingdom of Lesotho, offer some of the country's most awe-inspiring landscapes. This vast 243,000-hectare sweep of basalt summits and buttresses was formally granted World Heritage status in November 2000, when it was renamed uKahlamba-Drakensberg Park. Today, some of the vistas are so recognisably South African that they have become tourist-brochure clichés. If any landscape lives up to its airbrushed, publicity-shot alter ego, it is the jagged, green sweep of the Drakensberg.

Drakensberg means 'Dragon Mountains'; the Zulu named it Quathlamba, meaning 'Battlement of Spears'. The Zulu word is a more accurate description of the sheer escarpment but the Afrikaans name captures something of the Drakensberg's otherworldly atmosphere. People have lived here for thousands of years – this is evident by

the many San rock-art sites – yet many of its peaks were first climbed little more than 50 years ago.

There's no single road linking all the main areas of interest so you're better off selecting one (or a few only) places rather than spending most of your time behind a wheel in search of sites and sights.



Information

In general, you must book all KZN Wildlife accommodation (except camping) in advance through either the Pietermaritzburg or Durban KZN Wildlife branches. There are also several local information offices:

Central Drakensberg Information Centre (☎ 036-488 1207; www.cdic.co.za; Thokozisa; ☹ 9am-6pm)

Based in the Thokozisa complex, 13km outside Winterton on Rte 600, this private enterprise is extremely helpful.

Okhahlamba Drakensberg Tourism (☎ 036-448 1557; www.drakensberg.org.za; Tatham Rd, Bergville; ☹ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) Covers the northern and central Drakensberg.

Southern Drakensberg Escape Tourism Centre (☎ 033-701 1471; www.drakensberg.org; Clocktower Centre, Old Main Rd, Underberg; ☹ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) Covers the southern region from Underberg, Himeville and Sani Pass.

When to Go

If you want to avoid most of the sharp frosts and, on the heights, snowfalls, you should visit in summer, although this is when most of the rain falls and views can be obscured by low cloud. However, what you lose in vistas you'll gain in atmosphere, as the stark and eerie peaks are at their best looming out of the mist.

Much of the rain falls in sudden thunderstorms so you should always carry wet-weather gear. Cold snaps are possible even in the middle of summer.

Royal Natal National Park

☎ 036

Spanning out from some of the range's loftiest summits, the 8000-hectare **Royal Natal Park** (☎ 036-438 6310; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$3.40/2; ☹ 5am-7pm) has a presence that far outstrips its relatively meagre size, with many of the surrounding peaks rising as high into the air as the park stretches across. With some of the Drakensberg's most dramatic and accessible scenery, the park is crowned by the sublime Amphitheatre, an 8km wall of cliff and canyon, which is equally spectacular from below or from up on high. Here the Tugela Falls drop 850m in five stages. Looming up behind is Mont-aux-Sources (3282m), so called because the Tugela, Elands and Western Khubedu Rivers rise here; the last of these eventually becomes the Orange River and flows all the way to the Atlantic.

Other notable peaks in the area are Devil's Tooth, the Eastern Buttrass and the Sentinel.

Rugged Glen Nature Reserve adjoins the park on the northeastern side.

The park's **visitors centre** (☎ 8am-12.30pm & 2-4.30pm) is about 1km in from the main gate. There's also a shop selling basic provisions. Fuel is available in the park.

WILDLIFE

With plentiful water, a range of more than 1500m in altitude and distinct areas such as plateaus, cliffs and valleys, it isn't surprising that the park's flora is extremely varied. Broadly speaking, much of the park is covered in grassland and small yellowwood forests in the valleys. At higher altitudes grass yields to heath and scrub.

Royal Natal is not as rich in wildlife as Giant's Castle and other sections of the Drakensberg but there is still quite a lot to be seen. Of the six species of antelope, the most common is the mountain reedbuck. Hyraxes are everywhere, as are hares. Royal Natal also has a large population of baboons, the feeding of which has become a growing problem.

ROCK ART

There are several San rock-art sites, although Royal Natal's are fewer and not as well preserved as those at Giant's Castle; the latter has many more rock shelters and caves, and has suffered less from vandalism. The notable sites are Sigubudu Shelter, north of the road just past the main gate, and Cannibal Caves, on Surprise Ridge, outside the park's northern boundary.

HIKING TRAILS

Except for the **Amphitheatre-to-Cathedral** (62km, four to five days) and the **Mont-aux-Sources** (20km, 10 hours) hikes, most of the 25-odd walks in Royal Natal are day walks. The hike to the summit starts from the Mahai camp site and takes you up to Basotho Gate.

If you plan to camp on the mountain, you should book with the **QwaQwa tourist officer** (☎ 058-713 4415). Otherwise there's a basic hut on the escarpment near Tugela Falls. There's no fee for the hut, but an overnight hiking permit costs US\$4.

HORSE RIDING

Just outside the park gates, the **Rugged Glen Stables** (☎ 036-438 6422) organises a wide range of horse-riding activities, including two-day trails.

CLIMBING

The park has become a mecca for climbers. You must apply for a permit from the KZN Wildlife office before you attempt a climb; unless you are experienced, it may not be granted.

SLEEPING & EATING

Thendele (☎ 033-845 1000; chalets per person US\$43-47) The park's main camp has a variety of accommodation, including some reasonable two-bed chalets.

You can also camp at **Mahai** (☎ 033-845 1000, 438 6303; fax 033-438 6231; camp sites per person US\$8) inside the park, or in the nearby **Rugged Glen Nature Reserve** (☎ 033-845 1000, 438 6303; fax 438 6231; camp sites per person US\$8).

The following places are all outside the park.

Amphitheatre Backpackers (☎ 036-438 6106; amp hibackpackers@worldonline.co.za; camp sites US\$5.50, dm/US\$10/22) Facing out over the Amphitheatre, this recently relocated backpackers is 21km north of Bergville. On offer are tours to Lesotho (US\$35) and a rock-climbing wall is in the works. Note, there are no locks on the dorm room doors.

Hlalanathi (☎ 036-438 6308; www.hlalanathi.za.net; camp sites per person US\$7, 2-/4-bed chalets US\$52/93; ☹) With a location lifted straight from an African chocolate-box lid, this pretty resort offers camping and excellent accommodation on a finger of land overlooking the Tugela River.

Tower of Pizza (☎ 036-438 6480; towerofpizza.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$28/50; mains US\$3.50-7; ☹ lunch & dinner; ☹) Yep, there really is a tower, where very good oven-fired pizza is prepared. It also offers comfortable cottages and internet access.

Cavern (☎ 036-438 6270; www.cavernberg.co.za; s/d with full board US\$93/124) North of Royal Natal, this award-winning resort offers family-friendly service in lush forest surrounds.

Montusi Mountain Lodge (☎ 036-438 6243; www.montusi.za.net; s/d with half board US\$140/260; ☹ ☹ ☹) With oodles of bush-lodge exclusivity, this opulent place blends a thatch-and-fireplace homeliness with plenty of five-star comforts. The turn-off is just after the Tower of Pizza.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The road into Royal Natal runs off the Rte 74, about 30km northwest of Bergville and about 5km from Oliviershoek Pass.

Bergville

☎ 036

Small and a little rough around the edges, Bergville is nevertheless a useful jumping-off point for the northern Drakensberg.

The **Drakensberg Inn** (☎ 036-448 2946; www.drakensberginn.com; 3 Tatham Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$31/57) is a slightly plain, small town inn with a nice terrace restaurant.

Bergville's swankier option is the **Sanford Park Resort** (☎ 036-448 1001; sanfordparklodge@mweb.co.za; s/d with half board US\$70/112; ☹), which offers cosy rooms in thatched rondavels or in a creaking, 150-year-old farmhouse.

You'll have to get to Ladysmith and take a minibus taxi from there (US\$2.80, 45 minutes). A daily Greyhound bus stops at Estcourt and Ladysmith.

Central Berg

Crowned with some of the Drakensberg's most formidable peaks – Giant's Castle Peak (3312m), the Monk's Cowl (3234m) and Champagne Castle (3377m) are found here – the Central Berg is a big hit with climbers. But with dramatic scenery aplenty, this beautiful region is just as popular with those who prefer to admire their mountains from a safe distance.

Seven kilometres from the Drakensberg Sun turn-off is **Falcon Ridge** (☎ 082-774 6398; adult/child US\$4/1.40; ☹ talks 10.30am), with awesome falcon-, kite- and eagle-flying demonstrations and talks.

WINTERTON

☎ 036

Quaint and sedate, this peaceful little town is the gateway to the Central Drakensberg and makes a pleasant stopover. **Winterton Museum** (☎ 036-488 1885; Kerk St; admission by donation; ☹ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) offers an excellent insight into San rock art, Zulu history and the Battle of Spioenkop.

Doubling as the town's favoured nightspot, the **Bridge Lodge** (☎ 036-488 1554; thebridge@futurenet.co.za; Main Rd; s/d US\$20/35) has a pleasant thatched restaurant and dowdy rooms. Another alternative is the **Lilac Lodge** (☎ 036-488 1025; www.wheretostay.co.za/lilac; Springfield Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$24/48), a string of cottages and units, set on an expanse of lawn.

There are minibus taxis to Cathedral Peak (US\$1.10, 30 minutes), Bergville (US\$0.80, 15 minutes) and Estcourt (US\$1.60, 45 minutes).

CATHEDRAL PEAK NATURE RESERVE

☎ 036

A beautifully photogenic area in the shadow of the ramparts of Cathedral Peak, **Cathedral Peak Nature Reserve** (☎ 036-488 8000; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$3.40/1.80; ☞ 6am-6pm) includes the Bell (2930m), the Horns (3005m) and Cleft Peak (3281m). Cathedral Peak is a long day's climb (10km, seven hours return) but other than being physically fit, no special ability or equipment is required.

The **park office** (☎ 036-488 8000; www.kznwildlife.com), in Didima Camp, sells permits for the scenic drive (4WD only) up Mike's Pass (per person/vehicle US\$2/4.70) and arranges guides.

One of KZN Wildlife's swankiest offerings, **Didima Camp** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com; camp sites per person US\$6, chalets per person US\$44-49; ☞ ☞) has a thatched lodge boasting huge views, a restaurant, and a range of excellent self-catering chalets. There is also camping near the main gate. The art centre here offers an excellent multimedia insight into San rock art.

MONK'S COWL NATURE RESERVE

☎ 036

Monk's Cowl Nature Reserve (☎ 036-468 1103; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40; ☞ 6am-6pm), another stunning slice of the Drakensberg, offers superb hiking and rock climbing. Within Monk's Cowl are the two peaks Monk's Cowl and Champagne Castle.

The **park office** (☎ 036-468 1103; camp sites per person US\$9.50) is 3km beyond Champagne Castle Hotel, which is at the end of Rte 600 running southwest from Winterton. The office takes bookings for camping and overnight hiking (US\$4 per person).

The **Inkosana Lodge** (☎ 036-468 1202; www.inkosana.co.za; dm/d with shared bathroom US\$11/34, thatched rondavels with/without en suite US\$25/17; ☞), one of the best backpackers in KZN, boasts an indigenous garden and clean rooms. Excellent cuisine and heaps of activities and walks are on offer. It's on Rte 600, en route to Champagne Castle.

One of the better-known resorts in the area is the **Champagne Castle Hotel** (☎ 036-468 1063; www.champagnecastle.co.za; s/d with full board US\$92/157; ☞), conveniently located in the mountains at the end of the road to Champagne Castle Peak. Staff will collect you from Estcourt (US\$16) and Durban (US\$54).

Giant's Castle Game Reserve

☎ 036

Rising up to Injasuti Dome (3409m), South Africa's highest peak, **Giant's Castle Game Reserve** (☎ 033-845 1000, 353 3718; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$3.40/1.80; ☞ 5am-7pm) is one of the Drakensberg's loftiest – even its lowest point sits at 1300m above sea level. Established in 1904, mainly to protect the eland, it is a rugged, remote and popular destination, with huge forest reserves to the north and south and Lesotho's barren plateau over the escarpment to the west.

Limited supplies (including fuel) are available at Giant's Castle Camp and there's a kiosk selling limited provisions.

WILDLIFE

The reserve is mainly grassland, wooded gorges and high basalt cliffs with small forests in the valleys and swathes of wildflowers in the spring.

Altogether there are thought to be about 60 mammal species, the rarest is a small, short-tailed rodent called the ice rat, which lives in the boulders near the mountain summits.

The rare lammergeier, or bearded vulture, which is found only in the Drakensberg, nests in the reserve. The **Lammergeier Hide** (☎ 036-353 3718; giants@kznwildlife.com; per person US\$20, minimum US\$65; ☞ May-Sep) is the best place to see the vultures.

ROCK ART

Giant's Castle Game Reserve is rich in San rock art, with at least 50 sites. It is thought that the last San lived here at the beginning of the 20th century.

You can see the paintings at **Main Cave** (adult/child US\$3.40/0.70; ☞ 9am-4pm), 2km south of Giant's Camp (a 30-minute walk), which can only be visited as part of a tour that departs from Giant's Camp.

Battle Cave (admission US\$3.40) is near Injisuthi and must be visited on a self-guided tour; it's an 8km walk each way. The cave's name reflects the paintings here, which record a clash between San groups.

HIKING

Trails begin at Giant's Camp and lead to Meander Hut (5.5km, two hours), on a cliff above the Meander Valley; Giant's Hut (10.5km, four hours), under Giant's Castle itself; and Ban-

nerman's Hut (11km, 4½ hours), close to the escarpment near Bannerman's Pass.

Hikers can stay at **mountain huts** (US\$4), for which you'll need sleeping bags and cooking utensils. The fee for the huts is a one-off 'hiking fee'.

There are other trails as well, but for each trail you must fill in the rescue register before setting out.

SLEEPING

There are several accommodation centres inside the reserve, as well as trail huts and caves for hikers. Note that hikers are not allowed to light fires, so you'll need to bring a stove. There's a small shop at reception with basic supplies only.

Injasuti Huttet Camp (☎ 033-845 1000, 036-431 7849; camp sites per person US\$6.50) This secluded and pleasant spot on the northern side of the reserve has camp sites. It is accessed from Loskop, northwest of Estcourt.

Giant's Castle Camp (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com; mountain hut per person US\$4, chalet per person US\$42-47) The main camp has two-, four- and six-bed chalets and four- and eight-bed mountain huts. Book through KZN Wildlife in Pietermaritzburg or Durban.

There are several places outside the reserve, on and around Rte 600.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The roads from both Mooi River and Estcourt are sealed – do not take the unsealed back roads as they can become unpassable and in the past, robberies have been reported.

Infrequent minibuses run from Estcourt to villages near the main entrance (KwaDlamini, Mahlutshini and KwaMankonjane) but these are still several kilometres from Giant's Castle Camp.

Southern Drakensberg Wilderness Areas

Best accessed from the pleasant towns of Himeville and Underberg, the Southern Berg boasts one of the region's highlights: the journey up to Lesotho over the Sani Pass. It is also renowned as a serious hiking area and as well as some great walks, including the fabulous Giant's Cup Trail, the region also offers a smorgasbord of wilderness areas.

KAMBERG NATURE RESERVE

Southeast of Giant's Castle and a little away from the main escarpment area, **Kamberg Na-**

ture Reserve (☎ 033-267 7251; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40, 2-bed huts US\$27; ☞ 6am-6pm) has a number of antelope species and guided rock-art walks.

You can get there from Rosetta, off the N3 south of Mooi River, travelling via either Nottingham Road or Redcliffe.

HIGHMOOR NATURE RESERVE

The park office of **Highmoor Nature Reserve** (☎ 033-845 1000, 033-263 7240; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40; camp sites per person US\$5.50; ☞ 6am-6pm) is off the road from Rosetta to Giant's Castle and Kamberg. Turn off to the south just past the sign to Kamberg, 31km from Rosetta.

Camp sites are available.

LOTHENI NATURE RESERVE

Lotheni (☎ 033-702 0540; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40; ☞ 6am-6pm) has a Settlers' Museum and some very good day walks.

KZN Wildlife (☎ 033-845 1000; camp sites US\$7, 3-bed chalets per person US\$24) offers camp sites and chalets.

The access road runs from the hamlet of Lower Loteni, about 30km northeast of Himeville or 65km southwest of Nottingham Road. The roads aren't great and heavy rain can close them.

MKHOMAZI & VERGELEGEN NATURE RESERVES

The **Mkhomazi Nature Reserve** (☎ 033-266 6444; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40; ☞ 6am-6pm) is one of the few places where you can hike for days without seeing anyone else. The **Vergelegen Nature Reserve** (☎ 033-702 0712; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2/1.40; ☞ 6am-6pm) has trout fishing. There are no established camp sites in the area, but you can camp on hikes (US\$4). The turn-off is 44km from Nottingham Road, off the Lower Lotheni to Sani Pass road, at the Mzinga River. From there the area is another 2km.

COBHAM NATURE RESERVE

The Mzimkulu Wilderness Area and the Mzimkulwana Nature Reserve are in **Cobham Nature Reserve** (☎ 033-702 0831; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40; ☞ 6am-6pm). The park office is about 15km from Himeville on the D7; it's a good place to get information on the many hiking trails, some with trail huts (US\$8 per person). Basic camp sites (US\$5.50 per person) are available.

GARDEN CASTLE

The park office of **Garden Castle** (☎ 033-701 1823; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40; camp sites per person US\$5.50, huts per person US\$8; ☹ 6am-6pm) is 30km west of Underberg – carry along the road past Khotso Horse Trails.

This reserve incorporates beautiful **Bushman's Nek Valley**, dominated by the 3051m Rhino Peak. The area has many sandstone buttresses and rock-art sites and a good (long) day walk.

Overnight hikers can use trail huts, camp sites or even caves.

SANI PASS

☎ 033

The drive up the Sani Pass is a trip to the roof of South Africa: a spectacular ride around hairpin bends into the clouds to the kingdom of Lesotho. At 2865m, this is the highest pass in the country and the vistas (on a clear day!) are magical. There are hikes in almost every direction and inexpensive horse rides are available. Amazingly, this is also the only road link between Lesotho and KwaZulu-Natal.

At the top of the pass, just beyond the Lesotho border crossing, is the Sani Top Chalet. Various operators run 4WD trips up to the chalet. You need a passport to cross into Lesotho. The border is open daily from 8am to 4pm on the South African side (until 5pm on the Lesotho side).

At the bottom of the pass you can sleep at the **Sani Lodge** (☎ 033-702 0330; www.sani-lodge.co.za; camp sites US\$6; dm/d with shared bathroom US\$9/11, 2-bed rondavels US\$30) which besides accommodation offers a range of fabulous tours and activities and insider tips about the region through its tour company.

GIANT'S CUP TRAIL

Without doubt, the Giant's Cup Trail (68km, five days and five nights), running from Sani Pass to Bushman's Nek, is one of the nation's great walks. Any reasonably fit person can walk it. Early booking (up to nine months ahead, through **KZN Wildlife** (☎ in Pietermaritzburg 033-845 1000) is advisable. Fees are based on the composition of the hiking party.

Highlights include the **Bathplug Cave** with San rock paintings and the breathtaking mountain scenery on day four. Accommodation is in limited **shared huts** (adult/child per trail US\$9/7). No firewood is available so you'll need

a stove and fuel. Sani Lodge is almost at the head of the trail; arrange for the lodge to pick you up from Himeville or Underberg.

BUSHMAN'S NEK

☎ 033

This is a South Africa–Lesotho border post (no vehicles!). From here there are hiking trails up into the escarpment, including to Lesotho's Sehlabathebe National Park. You can trot through the border and into Lesotho on horseback.

Accommodation options include **Silverstreams Caravan Park** (☎ 033-701 1249; www.silverstreams.co.za; camp sites per person US\$12), which has camp sites right next to the border, and the **Bushman's Nek Hotel** (☎ in Pinetown 031-701 9999; r with half board US\$40), east of the border post.

Underberg

☎ 033 / pop 1500

Clustered in the foothills of the southern Drakensberg, this small farming town fills up in summer, when Durbanites head to the peaks for a breath of the fresh stuff. It has good infrastructure, and is the place to go for money, shopping and to organise activities in the region. The more sedate Himeville, just down the road, is also a pleasant place to stay.

Sani Pass Tours (☎ 033-701 1064; www.sanipasstours.com; Clocktower Centre, Old Main Rd; day tours per person US\$38; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat & Sun) offers day tours up the Sani Pass, as well as packages tailored to more specialist interests.

The cosy, thatched farmhouse **Valemount Country Lodge** (☎ 033-701 1686; www.valemountafrica.com; s/d with breakfast US\$52/92) oozes graceful charm, and has 48 hectares of grounds to explore. It's 8km from Underberg on the Kokstad road.

Sani Pass Carriers (☎ 033-701 1017; spc@y.co.za) runs minibuses to Underberg from Kokstad (US\$17, 1½ hours) on Monday and Thursday, and daily except Sunday to Pietermaritzburg (US\$15, two hours). Minibus taxis run to Himeville (US\$0.40, 10 minutes) and Pietermaritzburg (US\$4, 1½ hours) and you might find one running to the Sani Pass Hotel.

Himeville

☎ 033

A skip and a jump from Underberg, Himeville is a prettier, more-sedate jumping-off point for the southern Drakensberg. The **Himeville**

Museum (☎ 033-702 1184; admission by donation; ☹ 9am-12.30pm), one of the best rural museums in the country, contains an incredible array of bric-a-brac.

For accommodation, the **Himeville Arms** (☎ 033-702 1305; www.himevillehotel.co.za; Main Rd; dm US\$13, s US\$36-39, d US\$65-70) is a homey inn, with cosy bar, comfy rooms and lashings of rustic, village-green atmosphere.

About the only regular transport from Himeville is minibus taxis to Underberg (US\$0.70, 10 minutes).

THE MIDLANDS

The Midlands run northwest from Durban to Estcourt, skirting Zululand to the north-east. This is mainly farming country with little to interest visitors. The main town is Pietermaritzburg. West of Pietermaritzburg is picturesque, hilly country, with horse studs and plenty of European trees.

Pietermaritzburg

☎ 033 / pop 457,000

Billed as the heritage city, and KZN's administrative and legislative capital (previously shared with Ulundi), Pietermaritzburg's (usually known as PMB) grand historic buildings hark back to an age of pith helmets and mid-day martinis. Today, these proudly house museums and refurbished hotels. By day, the city is vibrant: its large Zulu community sets a colourful flavour and the Indian community brings echoes of the subcontinent to its busy streets. A large student population adds to the city's vitality.

INFORMATION

IDS Computers (☎ 342 7135; Victoria Centre, 157

Victoria Rd; per hr US\$2.80) For internet access.

KZN Wildlife Headquarters (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com; Queen Elizabeth Park, Duncan McKenzie Dr; ☹ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Provides information and accommodation bookings for all KZN Wildlife parks and reserves.

Pietermaritzburg Tourism (☎ 033-345 1348; www.pmbtourism.co.za; 117 Commercial Rd; ☹ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) Has excellent information on the city and surrounds.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

One of the city's finest sights is the **Tatham Art Gallery** (☎ 033-342 1804; fax 394 9831; Commercial Rd; admission free; ☹ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), a fine collection of French and English 19th- and early-

20th-century works housed in the beautiful Old Supreme Court. The nearby, colonial-era **City Hall** (cnr Church St & Commercial Rd) is the largest load-bearing red-brick building in the southern hemisphere.

For trekker relics, head to the **Voortrekker Museum** (☎ 033-394 6834; cnr Longmarket & Boshoff Sts; adult/student/child US\$0.40/0.20/0.10; ☹ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat). Afrikaner icons on display include Retief's prayer book and water bottle, and a replica of a trek wagon.

Back in the centre, there are two **Hindu temples** at the northern end of Longmarket St. The main **mosque** is nearby, on East St. A **statue of Gandhi**, who was famously ejected from a 1st-class carriage at Pietermaritzburg station, also stands defiant opposite the **old colonial buildings** on Church St.

SLEEPING

Umphiti Backpackers (☎ 033-394 3490; umphiti@mweb.co.za; 317 Bulwer St; dm US\$10, d from US\$23; ☹) The many wagging tails reflect the warm welcome at this friendly, if a little dog-eared, bohemian place. Offers a wealth of information and activities.

Prince Alfred Street Backpackers (☎ 033-345 7045; www.chauncey.co.za; 312 Prince Alfred St; s/d US\$11/23) This bright place, with multicoloured mosquito-net extravaganzas and ethnic adornments, is one of the most stylish renovated backpackers around and handy to the centre.

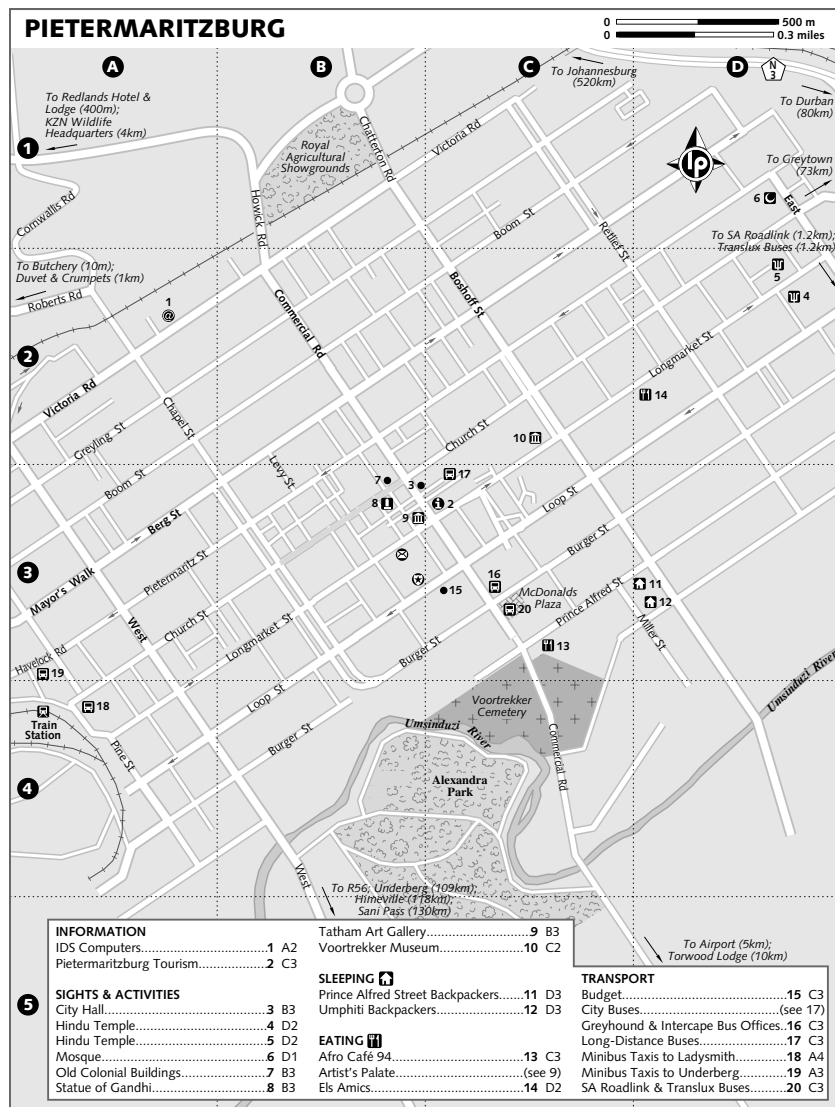
Duvet & Crumpets (☎ 033-394 4133; www.duvetandcrumpets.co.za; 1 Freeland Pl; s/d without breakfast US\$27/40; ☹) In a quiet, leafy location, this place offers a combo of unpretentious, clean rooms and self-catering units.

Torwood Lodge (☎ 033-390 1072; www.torwood.co.za; tw US\$57; ☹) With a quaint rural setting and a landscaped rock pool, this excellent out-of-town option is great for those seeking city days and rustic nights. It's 10km out of town; the owners are happy to pick you up or lead the way.

Redlands Hotel & Lodge (☎ 033-394 3333; www.guestnet.co.za; cnr Howick Rd & George McFarlane Lane; s US\$74-104, d US\$91-119; ☹) Swish and stately, this elegant place offers contrived but tasteful colonial-style surrounds and personal service.

EATING

Artist's Palate (☎ 033-342 8327; Commercial Rd; lunch US\$3.40-5; ☹ breakfast & lunch) Upstairs at the Tatham Gallery, this arty little café whips up



a range of creative and fresh, healthy fare. It's open during gallery hours.

Els Amics (☎ 033-345 6524; 380 Longmarket St; mains US\$5.50-13; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Fri, dinner Sat) The city's fine-dining option is located in a cosy Victorian house with a series of rooms and a classy Spanish-influenced menu. Bookings are essential.

Afro Cafe 94 (☎ 033-345 0773; 266 Prince Alfred St; mains US\$3.40-11; ☎ lunch & dinner) Carnivores can get their mouths around 'world African cuisine': from Hluhluwe Impala salad to springbok loin and cuban oxtail.

Butchery (☎ 033-342 5239; www.thebutchery.co.za; 101 Roberts Rd; mains US\$6-9.50; ☎ noon-late) Ladies (200g) and gents (300g) steaks of every type, racks of

drying biltong, wall-to-wall wine racks and a packed deck of eaters make for a sizzling night out. Vegetarians are also catered for.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

SAAirlink (☎ 033-386 92861), with an office at the airport, flies to Jo'burg daily (US\$114 high season).

Bus

Most bus companies' head offices are in Burger St, or directly opposite in McDonalds Plaza. **Greyhound/Cityliner** (☎ 083-915 9000), **Translux** (☎ 031-308 8111), **SA Roadlink** (☎ 345 6890), **Luxliner** (☎ 011-914 4321) and **Intercap** (☎ 0861 287 287) offer similar prices depending on the level of onboard services. Destinations offered by the listed companies from Pietermaritzburg include Jo'burg (US\$17 to US\$27, six to seven hours), Pretoria (US\$26, seven to eight hours), Cape Town (US\$54, 22 hours), Port Elizabeth (US\$42, 15 hours) and Durban (US\$7 to US\$24, 1½ hours).

Cheetah Coaches (☎ 033-342 4444) runs daily (US\$8) between Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Durban International Airport.

Sani Pass Carriers (☎ 033-701 1017; spc@y.co.za) runs buses up into the Southern Drakensberg.

The **Baz Bus** (☎ in Durban 031-304 9099; www.bazbus.com) travels between Durban and Pietermaritzburg twice a week.

Car

Most of the major car-rental companies have agents here. **Budget** (☎ 033-342 8433; 224 Loop St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) is in the Imperial Protea Hotel.

Minibus Taxi

Minibus taxis generally congregate in Church St in front of the train station. Destinations from Pietermaritzburg include Durban (US\$4, one hour), Estcourt (US\$5.50, 1¼ hours), Ladysmith (US\$7, 2½ hours), Underberg (US\$5.50, 2½ hours), Newcastle (US\$11, 3½ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$16, eight hours). Other taxis depart from Market Sq (behind Pietermaritzburg Tourism).

Train

Pietermaritzburg is serviced by the *Trans Natal*, which runs daily (except Tuesday and Saturday) to Jo'burg (1st/2nd class US\$29/20, 10 hours) and Durban (US\$74/4.70, 2½ hours);

and the *Trans Oranje*, which heads to Cape Town (1st/2nd class US\$82/56, 36 hours) on Wednesday, returning on a Monday. There is a **train information line** (☎ 0860-008 888).

Estcourt & Around

☎ 036

Once a thriving town, the Estcourt of today has a quieter and more rough-and-tumble feel, although it's surrounded by pleasant farming communities. It's connected on the Durban to Jo'burg/Pretoria bus route, and an excellent wildlife reserve is nearby.

Around 25km northeast of Estcourt is the 5000-hectare undulating thornveld of the **Weenen Game Reserve** (☎ 036-354 7013; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$1.60/1.60/2; ☎ 6am-6pm), which has black and white rhinos, giraffes and several antelope species. There are two short self-guided trails, a **camp sites** (per person US\$6) and a **five-bed cottage** (per person US\$15) in the reserve.

A lovely place ringed by tropical gardens, the **Ashtonville Terraces** (☎ 036-352 7770; dlsa@telkomsa.net; 76 Albert St; s/d with breakfast US\$35/53; ☎), boasts plenty of extras such as Victorian baths and massive breakfasts.

Greyhound buses stop outside the Bushman's River Tourism Association office, on Upper Harding St. The buses run daily to Durban (US\$1.40, 2½ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$24, 7½ hours).

The main minibus taxi rank is at the bottom of Phillips St, in the town centre. Fares from Estcourt include Winterton (US\$1.40, 40 minutes), Ladysmith (US\$2.40, one hour), Pietermaritzburg (US\$6, 1¼ hours), Durban (US\$7, 2½ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$13, eight hours).

THUKELA

History buffs will be happy in Thukela, in the northwest of KwaZulu-Natal. The area is often described as the Battlefields Route as some of the more important conflicts in South Africa's recent history took place here. They include the Siege of Ladysmith, the Battle of Spioenkop, the defeat of the British by the Zulu at the Battle of Isandlwana, the heroic defence of Rorke's Drift and the Majuba Hill and Blood River Battles.

Spioenkop Nature Reserve

☎ 036

The 6000-hectare **Spioenkop Nature Reserve** (☎ 036-488 1578; www.kznwildlife.com; admission US\$2;

(☎ 6am-6pm; 📍) is based on the Spioenkop Dam on the Tugela River. The reserve is handy for most of the area's battlefield sites and not too far from the Drakensberg for day trips into the range. Animals include white rhinos, giraffes, various antelope species and over 270 bird species. There's a swimming pool, horse riding and vulture hide.

Inside the reserve in a valley, **iPika** (camp sites per person US\$7, bush camp per person US\$20) offers camp sites and one four-bed tented bush camp.

Spion Kop Lodge (☎ 036-488 1404; www.spionkop.co.za; r per person with full board US\$120, 4-/6-person cottages US\$120/132), overlooking the Spioenkop battlefield, is a luxury 'barracks' with converted barn dining room.

The reserve is northeast of Bergville but the entrance is on the eastern side, 13km from Winterton off the Rte 600. You will need a car to get here. If coming by car, the Spioenkop battlefield is accessed from the Rte 616 (not the Rte 600; follow the signs).

Ladysmith

☎ 036

Ladysmith was named after the wife of Cape governor Sir Harry Smith, but it could well have had a much more colourful moniker; her actual name was Lady Juana Maria de los Dolores de Leon Smith.

The town achieved fame during the 1899–1902 Anglo-Boer War, when it was besieged by Boer forces for 118 days. More recently, it has hit the world headlines as the home-place of the vocal group, Ladysmith Black Mambazo. Apart from the historical aspect – several buildings in the city centre were here during the siege – Ladysmith is a pleasant place to walk around.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The excellent **Siege Museum** (☎ 036-637 2231; adult/child US\$0.30/0.10; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat), next to the town hall in the Market House (built in 1884), was used to store rations during the siege.

There's also the small **Cultural Museum** (☎ 036-637 2231; 25 Keate St; adult/child US\$0.30/0.10; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri), with some dusty displays including a room dedicated to Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

Outside the town hall are two guns, **Castor** and **Pollux**, used by the British in defence of Ladysmith. Nearby is a replica of **Long Tom**, a Boer gun capable of heaving a shell 10km.

TOURS

Two highly recommended guides who specialise in the Anglo-Boer War and are based out of Ladysmith are **Elizabeth Spiret** (☎ 036-637 7702, 072-262 9669; lizs@telkomsa.net) and **John Snyma** (☎ 036-631 0660).

SLEEPING

Boer & Brit (☎ 036-631 2184; fax 036-637 3957; 47-49 Convent Rd; s/d US\$23/30; 📍) True to its name, this straightforward pleasant B&B (and its dogs) welcomes all travelling types. It has a little slice of jungle for a garden and might let you set up camp if you're trying to save the pennies.

Buller's Rest Lodge (☎ 036-637 6154; www.bullersrestlodge.co.za; 61 Cove Cres; s/d with breakfast US\$44/59; 📍) You'll want to dig in long-term at this smart thatched abode. There's snug rooms with battlefields artefacts, scrumptious home cooking and views of the Drakensbergs from the sundeck.

Royal Hotel (☎ 036-637 2176; royalhotel@intekom.co.za; 140 Murchison St; s/d with breakfast US\$44/77; 📍) Enjoy these historical digs and old school pub which combine old-style grandeur with some 1980s renovations (shagpile carpet).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus

Bus tickets can be purchased from Shoprite/Checkers in the Oval Shopping Centre. Buses depart from the Caltex petrol station on Murchison Rd, and connect Ladysmith with Durban (US\$20, four hours), Jo'burg (US\$26, six hours), Pretoria (US\$26, seven hours) and Cape Town (US\$52, 19 hours).

Minibus Taxi

The main taxi rank is east of the town centre near the corner of Queen and Lyell Sts. Taxis bound for Jo'burg are nearby on Alexandra St. Some destinations are Newcastle (US\$4.70, one hour), Durban (US\$10, 2½ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$15, five hours).

Train

The *Trans Oranje* (Durban to Cape Town) and the daily *Trans Natal* (Durban to Jo'burg/Pretoria) both stop here, but at inconvenient times.

Majuba Hill

The first Anglo-Boer War ended abruptly with the British defeat at Majuba Hill, 40km north of Newcastle, in early 1881. The site

(adult/vehicle US\$0.50/1.40; ☎ 7am-5pm) is off the N11. The more remote Laing's Nek battlefield is signposted and Schuinshoogte battlefield is also in the vicinity.

Peace negotiations took place at **O'Neill's Cottage** at the foothills near Majuba. The cottage, used as a hospital during the battle, has a photographic display.

Isandlwana & Rorke's Drift

☎ 034

If you have seen *Zulu*, the film that made Michael Caine a star, you will have doubtless heard of Rorke's Drift, a victory of the misty-eyed variety, where on 22–23 January 1879, 139 British soldiers successfully defended a small mission station from around 4000 Zulu warriors. Queen Victoria lavished medals on the survivors and the battle was assured its dramatic place in British military history.

For the full picture, however, you must travel 15km across the plain to Isandlwana, the precursor of Rorke's Drift, where only hours earlier the Zulus dealt the Empire one of its great battlefield disasters by annihilating the main body of the British force in devastating style. Tellingly, *Zulu Dawn* (1979), the film made about the Battle of Isandlwana, never became the cult classic *Zulu* (1964) is now.

Ideally, the two battlefields should be visited together. Start at the **Isandlwana Visitors centre** (☎ 034-271 8165; adult/child US\$2/0.70; ☎ 8am-4pm), where there is a small museum. Spread out from the base of Isandlwana hill, white cairns and memorials mark the spot where each British soldier fell.

The scenery around Rorke's Drift is beautifully rugged and the **Rorke's Drift Orientation Centre** (☎ 034-642 1687; adult/child US\$2/0.70; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun), on the site of the original mission station, is excellent. The Zulu know this site as Shiyane, their name for the hill at the back of the village.

SLEEPING

Rorke's Drift Lodge (☎ 034-642 1805; www.rorkesdriftlodge.co.za; Rorke's Drift; s/d with half board US\$39/77; 📍) With wonderful views over the battlefields, this hospitable place is 5km up a rough track from the Rorke's Drift Orientation Centre. The lodges organise tours of the battlefields.

Fugitives' Drift Lodge (☎ 034-642 1843; www.fugitives-drift-lodge.com; Fugitives' Drift; s/d with half board US\$38/58; 📍) This opulent private

wildlife reserve is dripping in colonial-style class and military memorabilia. There are rooms in a slightly less-glamorous guesthouse (single/double US\$250/297). It's about 10km from Rorke's Drift.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The battle sites are both southeast of Dundee (Isandlwana is 70km and Rorke's Drift is 42km) and accessible from Rte 66. A dirt road connects Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift.

Blood River Monument

☎ 034

On 16 December 1838 a small force of Voortrekkers avenged the massacre of Piet Retief's diplomatic party by crushing an army of 12,000 Zulus. More than 3000 Zulus died – the river ran red with their blood – while the Voortrekkers sustained barely a few casualties. The Battle of Blood River became a seminal event in Afrikaner history, seen as proof that the Boers had a divine mandate to conquer and 'civilise' Southern Africa. Afrikaners still visit the site on 16 December, but the former 'Day of the Vow' is now the 'Day of Reconciliation'.

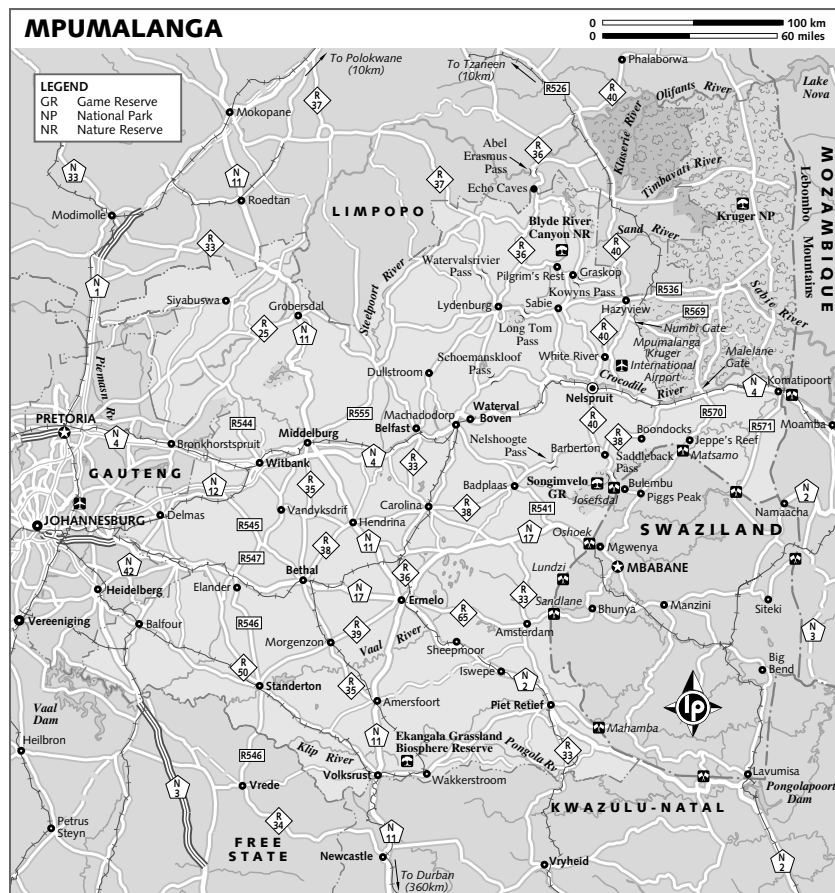
The battle site is marked by a full-scale bronze re-creation of the 64-wagon *laager* (wagon circle). The monument and the nearby **Blood River Museum** (☎ 034-632 1695; adult/child US\$2/0.70; ☎ 8am-4.30pm) are 20km southeast of the Rte 33; the turn-off is 27km from Dundee and 45km from Vryheid.

The **Ncome Museum** (☎ 034-271 8121; admission by donation; ☎ 8am-4.30pm), on the other side of the river, offers the Zulu perspective of events.

MPUMALANGA

From the sluggish flow of the Crocodile River to the relaxed rhythm of its old mining towns and peaceful silence of its nature reserves, unassuming Mpumalanga (Place of the Rising Sun; pronounced M-poo-ma-lan-ga) adheres to a quieter pace of life.

This inland province, South Africa's smallest, is where the plateaus of the highveld begin their spectacular tumble onto the lowveld plains at the dramatic Drakensberg Escarpment. Many travellers zip through on their way to Kruger National Park, but it's well worth setting aside a few days to explore the historic towns, roaring waterfalls and some of the best hiking trails in South Africa.



EASTERN LOWVELD

It's in Mpumalanga's hot, dry eastern lowveld that you'll get a taste for bygone days, when vast bush-covered expanses were the playing fields for the ancestors of the animals that now roam Kruger National Park. While the area lacks the drama and scenic splendour of the Drakensberg Escarpment, it has numerous attractions. These include its location at Kruger National Park's doorstep and a laid-back, untouristed pace away from major towns.

Kruger National Park

Try to imagine a national park the size of Israel, with huge tracts of acacia, sycamore figs and bushwillow interrupted by open savanna, rushing rivers and the occasional rocky bluff.

Now fill it with lions, leopards, elephants, Cape buffaloes and black rhinos (the Big Five), plus cheetahs, giraffes, hippos and many species of smaller animals, and you'll start to have some notion of what it's like to visit Kruger National Park.

Kruger is one of the world's most famed protected areas – known for its size, history of conservation, diversity of wildlife and ease of access. It's a place where the drama of life and death is played out on a daily basis. One morning you may spot a pride of lions feasting on a recent kill and the next day you might spot a newborn impala struggling to take its first steps.

The park has an extensive network of sealed roads and comfortable camps, but if you pre-

fer to keep it rough, there are also 4WD tracks, and mountain bike and hiking trails. Even when you stick to the tarmac, the sounds and scents of the bush are never more than a few metres away.

Additionally, as long as you avoid weekends and school holidays, or stick to areas north of Phalaborwa Gate and along gravel roads, it's easy to travel for an hour or more without seeing another vehicle.

Southern Kruger is the most popular section of the park, with the highest animal concentrations and the easiest access. Kruger is at its best in the far north, around Punda Maria and Pafuri. Here, although animal concentrations are somewhat lower, the bush setting and wilderness atmosphere are all-enveloping.

ORIENTATION

Kruger is a long, narrow wedge bordered by Mozambique to the east, Limpopo Province to the west and Mpumalanga to the west and south. It averages about 65km across, and is about 350km long. Rimming the park to the west, and sharing the same unfenced terrain, is a chain of private wildlife reserves.

Terrain ranging from the flat to the gently undulating covers the majority of the park, with the Lebombo Mountains rising up to the east along the Mozambique border. Major rivers flowing across Kruger from west to east include the Limpopo, Luvuvhu, Shingwedzi, Letaba, Olifants, Timbavati and Sabie.

There are 10 *heks* (entry gates). On the park's southern edge are **Malelane** (☎ 013-735 6152) and **Crocodile Bridge** (☎ 013-735 6012). Both are readily accessible from the N4 from Jo'burg. The **Numbi** (☎ 013-735 5133), **Phabeni** (☎ 013-735 58-12) and **Paul Kruger** (☎ 013-735 5107) gates are easily accessed from Hazyview (turn off the N4 before Nelspruit); Paul Kruger Gate is the closest to Skukuza, Kruger's main rest camp. **Orpen** (☎ 013-735 6355), to the west, is convenient if you're coming from the Blyde River area. **Phalaborwa** (☎ 013-735 6509) is nearest to Polokwane; **Punda Maria** (☎ 013-735 6870) is reached via Makhado (Louis Trichardt); and **Pafuri** (☎ 013-735 6888), in the far north, is accessed from Thohoyandou in the Venda region. In addition, it is now possible to enter Kruger from Mozambique at the Giryondo Gate, which doubles as an international border crossing (visas are available on both sides).

INFORMATION

Bookings

Accommodation can be booked through **SAN Parks** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.parks-sa.co.za; 643 Leyds St, Muckleneuk, Pretoria). It's also possible to book directly through tourism offices in Nelspruit, Cape Town and Durban.

Except in the high season (school holidays, Christmas and Easter) and weekends, bookings are advisable but not essential.

Entry

Day or overnight entry to the park costs US\$16/8 per adult/child, with significant discounts available for South African citizens and residents, and for South African Development Community (SADC) nationals. The SAN Parks Wild Card (see p412) also applies to Kruger.

Bicycles and motorcycles are not permitted to enter the park. During school holidays you can stay in the park for a maximum of 10 days, and at any one rest camp for five days (10 days if you're camping). Throughout the year, park authorities restrict the total number of visitors within the park.

Entry gate opening times vary slightly according to the season, and are currently as follows:

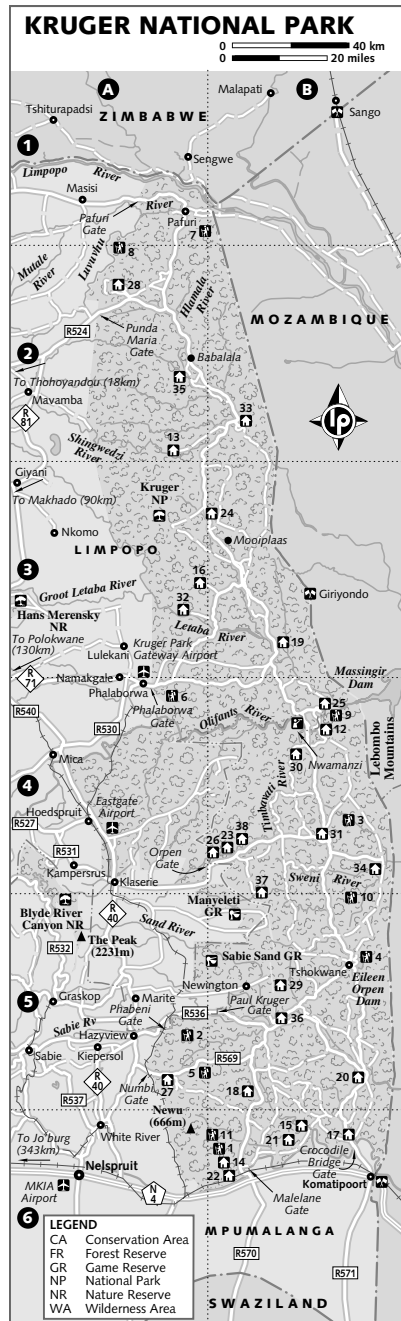
Month	Gates/camps open (am)	Gates/camps close (pm)
Jan	4.30/5	6.30
Feb	5.30	6.30
Mar	5.30	6
Apr	6	6
May-Aug	6.30	5.30
Sep	6	6
Oct	6/5.30	6
Nov & Dec	5.30/4.30	6.30

It's an offence to arrive late at a camp and you can be fined for doing so (the camps are fenced).

Wildlife

Impalas, buffaloes, Burchell's zebras, blue wildebeests, kudus, waterbucks, baboons, vervet monkeys, cheetahs, leopards and other smaller predators are all widespread. Bird life is prolific along the rivers and north of the Luvuvhu River.

Rainfall is highest (700mm a year) in the southwestern corner between the Olifants and



TRAILS	
Bushman Trail.....	1 B6
Madlabantu Adventure Trail.....	2 A5
Mananga Adventure Trail.....	3 B4
Metsimeisi Trail.....	4 B5
Napi Trail.....	5 A5
Nonokani Adventure Trail.....	6 A4
Northern Plains Adventure Trail.....	7 A1
Nyalaland Trail.....	8 A2
Olifants Trail.....	9 B4
Sweni Trail.....	10 B5
Wolhuter Trail.....	11 B6
SLEEPING	
Balule Satellite Camp.....	12 B4
Bateleur Bushveld Camp.....	13 A2
Berg-en-dal Rest Camp.....	14 B6
Biyamiti Bushveld Camp.....	15 B6
Boulders Bush Lodge.....	16 A3
Crocodile Bridge Rest Camp.....	17 B6
Jock Safari Lodge.....	18 B5
Letaba Rest Camp.....	19 B3
Lower Sabie Rest Camp.....	20 B5
Lukimbi Safari Lodge.....	21 B6
Malelane Satellite Camp.....	22 B6
Maroela Satellite Camp.....	23 B4
Mopani Rest Camp.....	24 B3
Olifants Rest Camp.....	25 B4
Orpen Rest Camp.....	26 B4
Pretoriuskop Rest Camp.....	27 A5
Punda Maria Rest Camp.....	28 A2
Rhino Post Camp.....	29 B5
Roodewal Bush Lodge.....	30 B4
Satara Rest Camp.....	31 B4
Shimuwini Bushveld Camp.....	32 A3
Shingwedzi Rest Camp.....	33 B2
Singita Lebombo Lodge.....	34 B4
Sirheni Bushveld Camp.....	35 A2
Skukuza Rest Camp.....	36 B5
Talamati Bushveld Camp.....	37 B4
Tamboti Satellite Camp.....	38 B4
TRANSPORT	
Avis.....	(see 36)

Crocodile Rivers. This terrain is particularly favoured by white rhinos and buffaloes, but is less favoured by antelope and, therefore, by predators.

The eastern section of the park, to the south of the Olifants River on the plains around Satara rest camp and south to the Crocodile River, experiences reasonable rainfall (600mm). In this region there are large populations of impalas, zebras, wildebeests, giraffes and black rhinos. Joining them are predators, particularly lions, who prey on impalas, zebras and blue wildebeests.

North of the Olifants River the rainfall drops below 500mm and the dominant tree is mopani. The mopani is a favoured food of elephants, which are most common north of Olifants River, and is also eaten by tsessebes, elands, roans and sables.

Perhaps the most interesting area is in the far north around Punda Maria and Pafuri, which has a higher rainfall (close to 700mm at Punda Maria) than the mopani country. There is woodland, bushveld, grass plains and, between the Luvuvhu and Limpopo Rivers, a tropical riverine forest. It's arguably one of the best birding areas on the continent.

Note that even outside the park borders there are still areas that support wildlife. The most prominent among these areas is along the Crocodile River on the southern border.

ACTIVITIES

Although it's possible to get a sense for Kruger in a day, the park merits at least four to five days, and ideally at least a week. Allow plenty of time for simply sitting still – preferably by a water hole, river or lake. Bush walks and drives can be booked from the gate and camps.

4WD Trails

The longest and most established of Kruger's 4WD trails is the **Lebombo Motorised Eco Trail**, a rough, rugged 500km 4WD route along the eastern boundary of the park. The trail lasts five days and costs US\$668 per vehicle (maximum of four people per vehicle). You'll need to provide your own vehicle, food and drink. Only five vehicles are permitted at a time on the trail (plus the vehicle of the ranger who accompanies you).

There are also four shorter trails, all averaging about four hours, and costing US\$62 per vehicle plus a US\$14 refundable deposit. They (and the points where you can reserve them) are: **Northern Plains Adventure Trail** (Shingwedzi camp); **Nonokani Adventure Trail** (Phalaborwa Gate); **Mananga Adventure Trail** (Satara camp); **Madlabantu Adventure Trail** (Pretoriuskop camp). All are closed after rains, and can only be booked on the morning of the day that you want to drive.

Bush Walks

Better than the drives are guided morning and afternoon **bush walks** (morning/afternoon per person US\$30/24), which are possible at all the larger camps, including Satara, Skukuza, Lower Sabie and Pretoriuskop. All walks are accompanied by armed rangers. You have a better chance of seeing wildlife on the move in the morning.

Wilderness Trails

Kruger's wilderness walking trails are one of the park's highlights, and a major attraction of the Southern African safari experience. They are done in small groups (maximum eight people), and guided by highly knowledgeable armed guides. The walks are not particularly strenuous, covering about 20km per day at a modest pace.

Most wilderness trail walks last two days and three nights, with departures on Wednesday and Sunday afternoon. They cost US\$340 per person, including accommodation in rustic, pleasant huts, plus food and equipment. The walks should be booked well in advance. No children under 12 are allowed. Make bookings through central reservations (p529).

TOURS

At the budget level, the best places to contact are the backpacker lodges in Hazyview (see p535), Nelspruit (see p533) and Graskop (see p538) all of which can organise tours into Kruger from about US\$60 per day, plus entry fees and meals. Another good budget option is **African Routes** (☎ 031-563 5080; www.africanroutes.co.za), which also includes Swaziland and the Drakensberg in its Kruger itineraries.

Wildlife Safaris (www.wildlifesaf.co.za) has four-day panorama tours taking in the Blyde River and Kruger for US\$570 per person, including half board.

SLEEPING & EATING

Most visitors stay in one of the park's 12 rest camps. These offer camping, plus a range of huts, bungalows and cottages and several other styles of accommodation, as well as shops, restaurants and other facilities. Several of the rest camps have satellite camps, which are set some distance away, and are much more rustic, without any facilities.

Huts (around US\$32 to US\$39 for two people) are the cheapest option, with shared ablutions and communal cooking facilities; bungalows (around US\$64 to US\$72 for two people) range from simple to luxurious; cottages (about US\$121 for up to four people) are the next step up in both comfort and price.

Some camps also offer the option of staying in safari tents (about US\$32 for two people), all of which are furnished and have a refrigerator and fan.

For those with tents or caravans, camping (camp sites for one to two people US\$14) is

available at many rest camps; booking is not generally necessary.

There are swimming pools at Pretoriuskop (a converted natural rock pool), Berg-en-dal, Lower Sabie, Skukuza, Mopani and Shingwedzi; banks at Skukuza and Letaba; and an ATM at Skukuza. Wildlife drives and bush walks can be arranged at all of the rest camps.

There are also five bushveld camps (smaller, more remote clusters of self-catering cottages without shops or restaurants) and two bush lodges, which are set in the middle of the wilderness, and must be booked in their entirety by a single group. Prices range from US\$106 to US\$120 for four people, plus US\$25 per additional person, to a maximum of six people.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, there's very luxurious accommodation in many of the private reserves bordering Kruger to the west (right). Another possibility is to stay outside the park. For budget travellers, the best places for this are Hazyview (p535) and Nelspruit (opposite).

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Air

SAairlink (☎ 011-978 1111; www.saairlink.co.za) has daily flights linking both Jo'burg and Cape Town with Mpumalanga Kruger International Airport (MKIA) near Nelspruit (for Numbi, Malelane and Crocodile Bridge Gates), and with Kruger Park Gateway Airport in Phalaborwa (2km from Phalaborwa Gate). Some one-way fares and flight times: Jo'burg to Phalaborwa (US\$175, one hour); Jo'burg to MKIA (US\$160, one hour); Cape Town to MKIA (US\$300, 2¼ hours).

South African Airways (☎ 086-035 9722, 011-978 1111; www.flysaa.com) flies six times weekly between Durban and MKIA (US\$190, 1½ hours), while **South African Express** (☎ 011-978 5577; www.saexpress.co.za) flies daily between Jo'burg and Hoedspruit Eastgate Airport (US\$175, 1½ hours), with connections to Cape Town.

Bus & Minibus Taxi

For most visitors, Nelspruit is the most convenient large town near Kruger, and is well served by buses and minibus taxis to and from Jo'burg (see p534). Numbi Gate is about 50km away, and Malelane Gate about 65km away. Phalaborwa, in the north on the edge of Kruger, is the gateway for northern Kruger.

Car

Skukuza is 500km from Jo'burg (six hours) and Punda Maria about 620km (eight hours). **Avis** (☎ 013-735 5651; www.avis.co.za) has a branch at Skukuza, and there is car rental from the Nelspruit, Hoedspruit and Phalaborwa airports.

Most visitors drive themselves around the park, and this is the best way to experience Kruger. There are petrol stations at the biggest rest camps.

Train

The **Komati** (p596) runs from Jo'burg via Nelspruit to Komatipoort (1st/2nd/economy class US\$25/17/9), which is about 12km from Kruger's Crocodile Bridge Gate.

Private Wildlife Reserves

Spreading over a vast lowveld area just west of Kruger is a string of private reserves that offer comparable wildlife-watching to what you'll experience in the park. The main reserves – Sabie Sand, Manyeleti and Timbavati – directly border Kruger (with no fences), and the same Big Five populations that roam the park are also at home here.

There are around 200 lodges and camps in the private reserves and most are pricey – from around US\$270 to over US\$800 per person sharing, all-inclusive. (Prices listed here are based on the high season rate.)

The private reserves offer among Africa's best opportunities for safari connoisseurs, and are the place to go for those who want to experience the bush in the lap of luxury. Note that many of these places like to call themselves 'game reserves'. They're not. They are simply lodges inside a designated wildlife reserve.

Because of the personalised safari attention, rangers can train you in the art of wildlife watching before you head to Kruger for a self-guided trip. There are hundreds of operators running tours into the private parks so it's worth talking to a travel agent to help you find a good deal. The better-known reserves include those within the large **Sabie Sand Game Reserve** (http://sabi.krugerpark.co.za), **Londolozi Private Game Reserve** (☎ 011-119 4300; www.londolozi.com; all-inclusive r from US\$1100; ☞ ☞) and **Mala Mala Game Reserve** (☎ 011-442 2267; www.malamala.com; all-inclusive r from US\$800; ☞ ☞). There are many more lodges and smaller reserves in this area. Hoedspruit has emerged as the gateway to the private lodges.

Nelspruit

☎ 013 / pop 235,000

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga's largest town and provincial capital, sprawls along the Crocodile River Valley in the steamy, subtropical lowveld. There are some good, affordable accommodation options and plenty of restaurants, making it a good place to sort out your stuff while you consider the next direction of your plunge.

INFORMATION

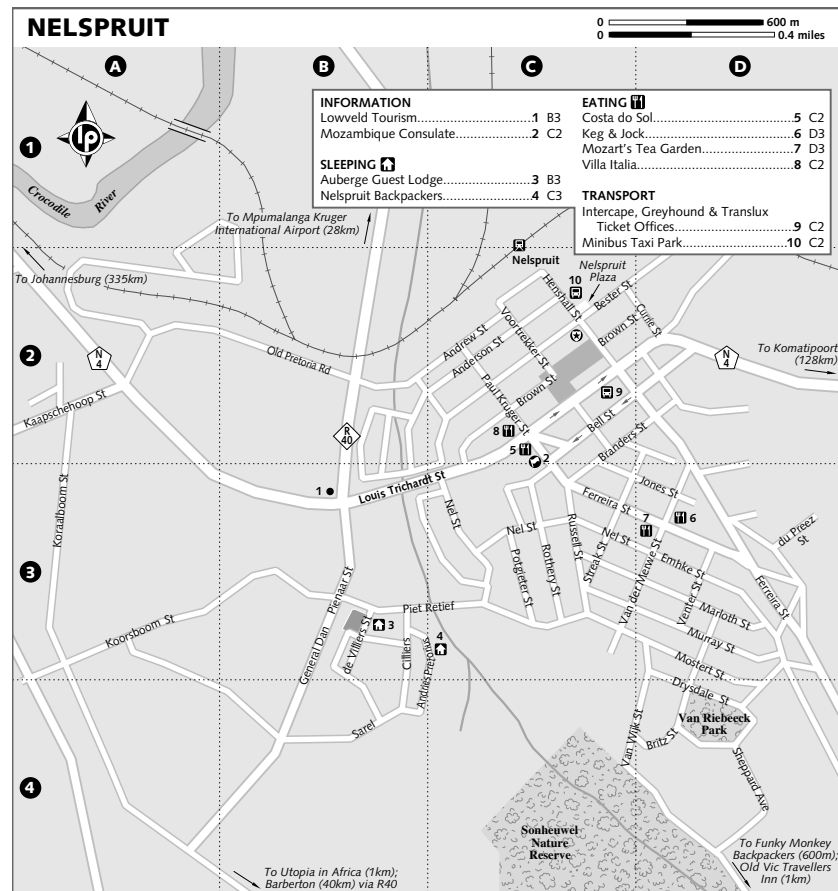
Lowveld Tourism (☎ 013-755 1988/9; www.lowveld.info; cnr General Dan Pienaar & Louis Trichardt Sts; ☞ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri, to 1pm Sat) This helpful office at Nelspruit Crossing Mall takes bookings for all national parks.

Mozambique Consulate (☎ 013-752 7396; mozconns@mweb.co.za; 32 Bell St; ☞ 8am–2pm Mon–Fri) Does same-day visa processing for US\$11 – half the price of a visa at the border.

SLEEPING

Nelspruit Backpackers (☎ 013-741 2237; nelback@hotmail.com; 9 Andries Pretorius St; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$9.50, s/d with shared bathroom US\$18/24; ☞) Among Nelspruit's backpackers, this one best combines service, comfort and location. Rooms have recently been upgraded. It's a Baz Bus stop and its travel wing, Mbombela safaris, can organise itineraries in the area.

Funky Monkey Backpackers (☎ 083-310 4755; www.funkymonkeys.co.za; 102 Van Wijk St; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$9.50, s/d with shared bathroom US\$18/24;



☎ ☎) A popular, well-run place in a spacious house, with a pool table, braai area and friendly staff. It's a little far from town, but it is a Baz Bus stop, and pick-ups from the bus terminal can be arranged.

Auberge Guest Lodge (☎ 013-741 2866; www.aubergeguestlodge.com; 3 de Villiers St; s/d with breakfast US\$38/52; ☎) A quiet, well-maintained guest-house with comfortable rooms in the main house, and a small yard.

Old Vic Travellers Inn (☎ 013-744 0993; www.krugerandmore.co.za; 12 Impala St; dm US\$12, d with/without bathroom US\$40/34, 4-person self-catering cottages US\$57; ☎ ☎) A friendly, somewhat upscale backpackers, with self-catering facilities or meals on request, tents for rent and lots of information on the area. It's about 3km south of the centre near a Baz Bus stop.

Utopia in Africa (☎ 013-745 7714; www.utopiainafrica.com; 6 Daleen St; s/d with breakfast US\$57/97; ☎ ☎) An exquisite guest villa with thoughtful décor and friendly service. This one overlooks the Sonheuwel Nature Reserve.

EATING

Villa Italia (☎ 013-752 5780; cnr Louis Trichardt & Paul Kruger Sts; mains US\$4.70-8; ☎ lunch & dinner) This long-time local favourite serves a wide range of good pastas, pizzas and other Italian fare.

Costa do Sol (☎ 013-752 6382; cnr Louis Trichardt & Paul Kruger Sts; meals US\$5.50-7; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) A quaint little Portuguese place opposite Villa Italia featuring seafood, good soups and classic Portuguese cuisine.

Keg & Jock (☎ 013-755 4969; Ferreira St; mains from US\$4; ☎ lunch & dinner) Probably the best late-night hang-out in Nelspruit, the Keg & Jock is a lively place with good pub food and a street-side patio. There's live music on Wednesday and Friday nights.

Mozart's Tea Garden (☎ 013-755 2287; cnr Ferreira & Van der Merwe; light meals US\$3.40-5; breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Offering a wide variety of healthy foods, Mozart's is a good place to go if you are on a diet. Of course, there's also a few fattening items on offer if you are not.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Air

Mpumalanga Kruger International Airport (MKIA; code MQP; ☎ 013-753 7500; www.kmiairport.co.za) is the closest commercial airport. There are daily flights with **South African Airways** (SAA; ☎ 013-750 2531; www.flysaa.com) and **SAairlink** (☎ 013-750 2531; www.saairlink.co.za) to Jo'burg (US\$160; one

hour), Cape Town (US\$275; 2½ hours) and Durban (US\$240; 1½ hours).

Nationwide Airlines (☎ 086-173 7737; www.nationwideair.co.za) flights also connect Nelspruit several times weekly with Jo'burg and Cape Town.

Bus

Baz Bus (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com) connects Nelspruit with Jo'burg/Pretoria and Manzini (Swaziland), and stops at all the backpackers in town.

Intercape (☎ 086-1287 287; www.intercape.co.za), **Greyhound** (☎ 013-753 2100; www.greyhound.co.za) and **Translux** (☎ 013-755 1453; www.translux.co.za) all operate daily between Jo'burg (and Pretoria) and Maputo (Mozambique) via Nelspruit. Among these, Greyhound offers the best service and charges US\$20 to US\$24 for Jo'burg or US\$19 to Maputo. The **ticket offices** (Louis Trichardt St) are together opposite Promenade Mall.

Minibus Taxi

The local bus and minibus taxi park is behind Nelspruit Plaza. Minibus taxi destinations and fares include White River (US\$0.90, 20 minutes), Barberton (US\$1.80, 40 minutes), Sabie (US\$2, one hour), Hazyview (US\$2.30, one hour), Graskop (US\$3.40, 1½ hours), Komatipoort (US\$6, two hours) and Jo'burg (US\$1.40, five hours).

City Bug (☎ 013-741 4114; www.citybug.co.za) operates a convenient shuttle service in town for US\$2.80 per person door-to-door. It also has a chauffeur service to/from Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport, a weekly shuttle to Durban (US\$51 per person one way) and a three-times-daily shuttle between Nelspruit and OR Tambo International Airport (US\$24 per person).

Train

The *Komati* (see p596) runs daily between Jo'burg and Komatipoort via Nelspruit.

Hazyview

☎ 013 / pop 20,000

Strung out along Rte 40, the town of Hazyview acts as a service centre and gateway for nearby Kruger National Park. There are reasonable facilities, but consider it little more than an overnight stop before the early morning dash to the Phabeni (12km), Numbi (15km) or Paul Kruger (47km) Gates.

For information stop by the **Big 5 Country tourist office** (☎ 013-737 7414, in Perry's Bridge 013-737 8191; www.big5country.com; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) in the Rendezvous Tourism Centre.

SLEEPING

Kruger Park Backpackers (☎ 013-737 7224; www.krugerparkbackpackers.com; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$10, d huts with shared bathroom US\$18; ☎) Another spacious, somewhat rustic place, with trips to Kruger and accommodation in dorms or Zulu huts. It's about 2km south of the four-way stop, and about 500m along the road to Kruger's Numbi Gate.

Gecko Bushpackers & Campsite (☎ 013-737 8140; www.gecko-bushpackers.co.za; dm US\$9.50, d with/without bathroom US\$25/23; ☎) Perhaps the most welcoming and cosy backpackers in the area, Gecko is about 2.5km from Hazyview. It has bright dorm rooms, some doubles, shaded camping, a self-catering area and a pool table. Meals can also be arranged.

Big 5 Backpackers (☎ 013-737 7534, 083-524 6615; www.big5backpackers.co.za; dm/d US\$10/24; ☎ ☎) This popular backpackers is in a wooded setting with cooking facilities and safaris to Kruger. It's 3km up from the junction of Rte 40 and Rte 538.

Thulamela (☎ 013-737 7171; www.thulamela.co.za; s/d cottages US\$70/114) An upscale, comfortable place set in the bush about 13km from Kruger, with majestic views and free-roaming wildlife in the area. To get here, take the Umbhaba turn-off from Rte 40.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

City to City's daily Jo'burg-Acornhoek bus stops at the Shell petrol station in Hazyview (US\$13 from Jo'burg). The backpacker places do organise pick-ups from Nelspruit from about US\$2.

Minibus taxis go daily to Nelspruit (US\$2.80, one hour) and Sabie (US\$2.80, one hour).

Komatipoort

☎ 013 / pop 4700

This border town is at the foot of the Lebombo Mountains, near the confluence of the Komati and Crocodile Rivers and only 10km away from Kruger National Park's Crocodile Bridge Gate. It's a convenient stop if you're travelling to/from Mozambique or Swaziland.

Komati River Chalets (☎ 013-793 7623, 082-347 4669; www.komatiriverchalets.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$35/62, 5-/7-person self-catering chalets US\$120/142; ☎ ☎) has plain stucco-and-thatch chalets set around large clipped grounds and a popular pub.

Minibus taxis leave from just off Rissik St near the Score supermarket, and regularly do the run between Komatipoort and Maputo (Mozambique; US\$9, 1½ to two hours). If you're driving on to Mozambique, exit procedures are fairly swift and on the Mozambique side you can buy a visa for US\$24.

Barberton

☎ 013 / pop 29,500

The splendid town of Barberton dates to the gold rush days of the late 19th century, when it was a boom town and home to South Africa's first stock exchange. However, Barberton's prominence declined and the town plods along in a relaxed country manner.

The helpful **Tourist Information Centre** (☎ 013-712 2121; www.barberton.co.za; Market Sq, Crown St; ☎ 7.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun) in the town centre can assist with accommodation, tours of historic sites and day hikes in the area.

SLEEPING

Barberton Chalets & Caravan Park (☎ 013-712 3323; www.barbertonchalets.co.za; General St; camp sites per person US\$8, caravan sites US\$11, s/d/tr cottages 23/34/43; ☎) This caravan park is conveniently close to the town centre, with lots of shade and grassy areas, camping and self-catering chalets.

Chill Inn (☎ 013-712 3477, 082-733 6755; cnr De Villiers & Tate Sts; d US\$20-34) This welcoming hotel has a braai area and double rooms with TV.

Fountain Baths Holiday Guest Cottages (☎ 013-712 2707; www.fountainbaths.co.za; 48 Pilgrim St; cottages per person US\$27) This pleasant place has self-catering cottages.

Kloof House (☎ 013-712 4268; www.kloofhuis.co.za; 1 Kloof St; s/d with breakfast US\$27/49; ☎) A cosy B&B up a steep hill just southeast of Market Sq, with pleasant rooms, including some with private bathroom, and good views.

EATING

Co-co Pan (☎ 013-712 2653; Crown St; mains US\$3.40-5; ☎ 5.30-9pm Mon-Sat, 5.30-8pm Sun) This casual eatery opposite the museum is a good budget choice, with burgers, salads and other basics.

Bye Apart Ate (☎ 013-712 2846; 27 De Villiers St; meals from US\$3.40; ☎ 9am-9pm Wed-Mon, to 5pm Tue)

The theme is a tongue-in-cheek send-off to the old system and what you'll find is a very relaxed, welcoming atmosphere. Choose from pasta, steak, pork or lamb chops.

Victorian Tea Garden & Restaurant (☎ 013-712 4985; light meals from US\$3.40; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) The gazebo here is a great spot to relax and watch the passing parade. It's next to the tourist information office. The menu features sandwiches and fast food.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

A few minibus taxis stop in town near Shoprite, but it's better to go to the minibus taxi park near Emjindini (3km from town on the Nelspruit road). The fare to Nelspruit is US\$2 (40 minutes). Most departures are in the early morning, by 8am.

KLEIN DRAKENSBURG

The Drakensberg Escarpment (the section here is known as the Klein Drakensberg or the Transvaal Drakensberg) marks the point where the highveld plunges down over 1000m, before spilling out onto the eastern lowveld. It's one of South Africa's most scenic areas, marked by stunning views and an abundance of adventure activities. It's also prime holiday territory, which means that accommodation is pricier than in some other parts of the country, and invariably fills up during high season. While it's possible to get around via minibus taxi, the going is slow; car hire is the best option for really exploring the area.

Blyde River Canyon

The Blyde River's spectacular canyon is nearly 30km long and one of South Africa's most impressive natural features. Much of it is rimmed by the 26,000-hectare **Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve** (admission per person US\$2.80), which snakes north from Graskop, following the escarpment and meeting the Blyde River as it carves its way down to the lowveld. Most visitors drive along the edge of the canyon, with stops at the many wonderful viewpoints, but if you have the time, it's well worth exploring on foot.

Heading north from Graskop, look first for the **Pinnacle**, an impressive rock formation jutting out from the escarpment. Just to the north along Rte 534 (a loop off Rte 532) are **God's Window** and **Wonder View** – two viewpoints with amazing vistas and batteries of souvenir

sellers. At God's Window take the trail up to the rainforest (300 steps).

When you return to Rte 532, take a short detour 2km south to the impressive **Lisbon Falls** (or if you are coming back to Graskop, catch it in the afternoon).

The Blyde River canyon starts north of here, near **Bourke's Luck Potholes**. These bizarre cylindrical holes were carved into the rock by whirlpools near the confluence of the Blyde and Treuer Rivers. There's a **visitor's centre** (☎ 013-769 6019), where you can pay the reserve entrance fee and find information about the canyon.

Continuing north past Bourke's Luck Potholes and into the heart of the nature reserve, you'll reach a viewpoint overlooking the **Three Rondavels** – huge cylinders of rock with hut-like pointed 'roofs' rising out of the far wall of the canyon. There are a number of short walks in the surrounding area.

West of here, outside the reserve and off Rte 36, are **Echo Caves** (admission US\$3.40) where Stone-Age relics have been found. The caves get their name from dripstone formations that echo when tapped. Be wary of the volunteer guides that attach themselves to you. Only pay them US\$0.70 even if they demand US\$7 (they will show you a doctored record showing that others paid US\$7. They didn't.).

HIKING

The main route is the popular and very scenic **Blyde River Canyon Hiking Trail** (US\$8; 2½ days), which begins at Paradise Camp and finishes at Bourke's Luck Potholes. Bookings should be made through the **Mpumalanga Parks Board** (☎ 013-759 5432; mpbinfo@dis.co.za), or at the booking office at Bourke's Luck Potholes. You'll need to sort out onward transport from the end of the trail.

The short but reasonably strenuous **Belvedere Day Walk** (admission US\$0.70; five hours) takes you in a circular route to the Belvedere hydroelectric power station at Bourke's Luck Potholes; there are some beautiful waterfalls and rock pools on this walk. Bookings should be made at Potholes.

SLEEPING

It's easy to explore the canyon by car as a day jaunt from Graskop, Sabie or Pilgrim's Rest. If you're continuing further north, a good alternative is to stay in or around the nature reserve.

Aventura Resort Swadini (☎ 015-795 5141; www.ventura.co.za; camp sites US\$8, plus per person US\$4, 6-person self-catering chalet US\$70; ☎) Accommodation here is made more appealing by its location at the northern end of the reserve along the Blyde River. The resort can organise hiking, white-water rafting, abseiling and more.

Rushworth's Trackers (☎ 015-795 5033; www.trackers.truepath.com; camp sites per person US\$6, r per person with half board US\$39, self-catering r per person US\$20) This is in a good setting just northwest of Swadini, with views over the lowveld. Staff can also help you organise bird-watching and botanical trips. The easiest access is from Hoedspruit in Limpopo province.

Aventura Blyde Canyon (☎ 013-769 8005; www.ventura.co.za; camp sites US\$15 plus per person US\$3; 2-/4-

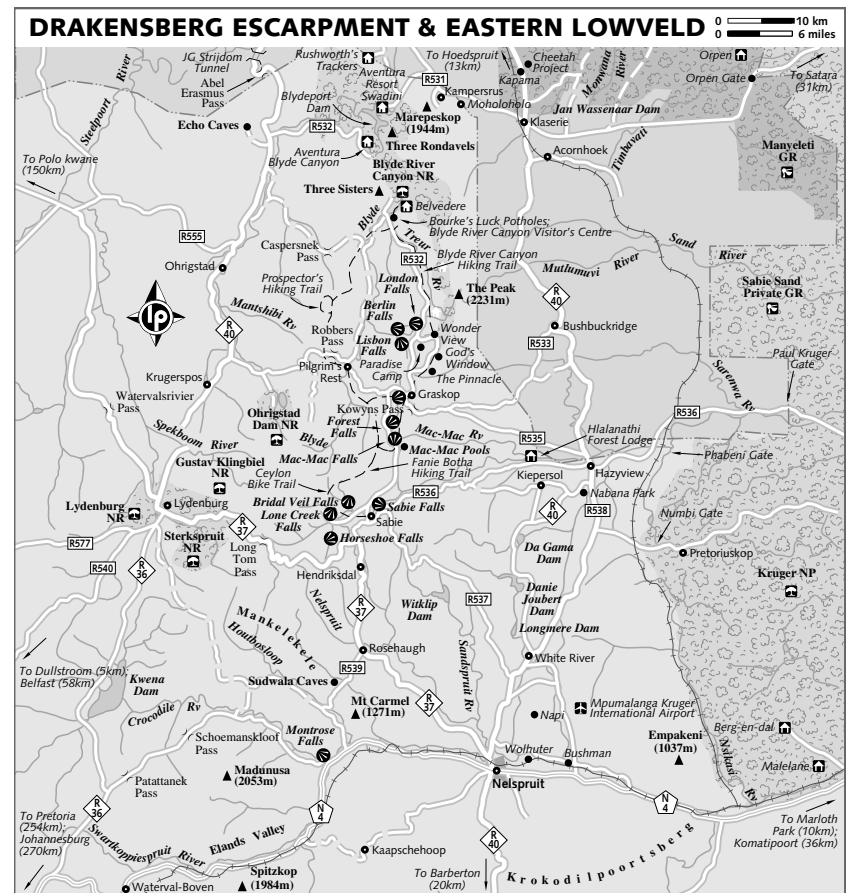
person self-catering chalets US\$75/93; ☎) This popular resort is located just off Rte 532, and is convenient for discovering the surrounding area. It offers a full range of resort amenities, including a golf course nearby, and horse and hiking trails.

Graskop

☎ 013 / pop 2000 / elevation 1450m

A useful base to explore the dramatic Blyde River Canyon, the quiet town of Graskop is slowly emerging as a tourist destination. The nearby views over the edge of the Drakensberg Escarpment are hard to beat.

The best places for information are the **tourist information office** (☎ 013-767 1833; www.wildadventures.co.za; Pilgrim St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat),



inside Spar supermarket and Green Castle Backpackers.

SLEEPING

Green Castle Backpackers (☎ 013-767 1761; <http://home.global.co.za/~graskop>; 63 Feufees St; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$8, s/d with shared bathroom US\$16/22, with bathroom US\$20/27) Located in an atmospheric old house west of the centre across the train line, Green Castle has a very communal feel and backpacker vibe. The staff can arrange great-value safaris to Kruger National Park.

Graskop Valley View Backpackers (☎ 013-767 1112; www.yebo-afrika.nl; 47 de Lange St; camping US\$6, dm US\$9.50, s/d from US\$21/26, self-catering rondavel US\$37; ☎) This Dutch-run backpackers has a variety of rooms, plus rondavels, tent sites and a self-catering flat. The owners can organise adventure tours.

Autumn Breath (☎ 013-767 1866, 082-877 2811; autumnbreath@cfmail.co.za; Louis Trichardt St; s/d with breakfast from US\$28/49) This quaint B&B has three modern rooms and a charming restaurant downstairs.

Graskop Hotel (☎ 013-767 1244; www.graskophotel.co.za; cnr Main & Louis Trichardt Sts; s/d with breakfast US\$38/67) This is an efficient and cosy hotel with spacious rooms, bar, restaurant and lounge area. Avoid rooms facing the street as timber trucks roll by in the night.

EATING

Harrie's Pancake Bar (☎ 013-767 1273; Louis Trichardt St; pancakes US\$1.60-4; ☎ 8am-5.30pm) Don't expect a stack of buttermilk pancakes with butter and maple syrup – most are stuffed with a choice of tasty meats or vegetables.

Southern Breeze (☎ 082-890 2587; dishes US\$4-7 ☎ dinner) Located in the Magodi Lodge about 1km out of town on the road to Hazzyview, this local favourite serves up traditional South African dishes with a Malay influence.

Boat House (☎ 013-767 1980; 7 Main St; meals US\$5.50-8; ☎ 8am-9pm Tue-Sun) Designed like the interior of a ship, this newcomer offers English breakfasts and excellent seafood.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The minibus taxi stand (Main St) is at the southern end of town, with daily morning departures to Pilgrim's Rest (US\$1.40, 30 minutes), Sabie (US\$2.40 minutes) and Hazzyview (US\$2.40, one hour).

Sabie

☎ 013 / pop 12,000 / elevation 1100m

Perhaps the most inviting town on Drakensberg Escarpment, Sabie offers a good range of accommodation, easy access to Kruger National Park and activities to keep your pioneer spirit occupied for several days.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The area around Sabie is dotted with beautiful **waterfalls** (admission to each US\$0.70-1.40), including the 70m **Bridal Veil Falls** and the 68m **Lone Creek Falls**. Both are northwest of Sabie off Old Lydenburg Rd. The popular **Mac-Mac Falls** is about 12km north of Sabie off Rte 532 to Graskop. About 3km southeast of the falls are the **Mac-Mac Pools**, where you can swim.

Hardy Ventures (☎ 013-751 1693; www.hardyventure.com) and **Sabie Xtreme Adventures** (☎ 013-764 2118; www.sabiextreme.co.za) can help organise abseiling, rafting and bungee jumping.

SLEEPING

Sabie Backpackers Lodge (☎ 013-764 2118; www.sabiextreme.co.za; Main St; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$9, d with shared bathroom US\$20; ☎) This popular establishment has a busy 'backpacker vibe' with lots of activities and all the usual amenities, including cooking facilities and a pub. It's also the base for Sabie Xtreme Adventures.

Billy Bongo Backpackers (☎ 072-370 7219, 072-720 2130; www.billybongo.co.za; Old Lydenburg Rd; camp sites per person US\$6, dm US\$9.50, s/d US\$11/22) This place, with a handful of clean doubles and dorm rooms, has a definite party atmosphere and can arrange adventure tours by day and bongo drumming sessions by night.

Merry Pebbles (☎ 013-764 2266; www.merrypebbles.co.za; camp sites per person US\$11; cabins s/d US\$20/51; 4-/8-person chalets US\$110/162) Just north of town off Old Lydenburg Rd, Merry Pebbles is a large camping site in shaded, spacious grounds on the banks of the Sabie River.

Sabie Townhouse (☎ 013-764 2292; www.sabietownhouse.co.za; Power St; s/d US\$44/90; ☎) This upscale B&B is a good choice for a treat, with arched windows, plush rooms with private entrances, and a quiet location.

EATING

Petena's Pancakes (☎ 013-764 1541; Main St; pancakes US\$2.80; ☎ 9am-5.30pm) Dine on your choice of sweet or savoury pancakes in a cosy setting.

Wild Fig Tree (☎ 013-764 3098, 013-764 2239; markuren@soft.co.za; 6 Third Lane; meals US\$4.70-12; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This place features local specialities such as biltong pâté, ostrich fillet, grilled crocodile, and warthog stew.

Smokey Train Diner (☎ 013-764 3445; Main St; mains about US\$5.50; ☎ lunch & dinner) An Afrikaner diner in a refurbished train car, Smokey's menu features *potjiekos* (stew cooked in a three-legged pot) and other Afrikaner dishes, plus a range of standards.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are daily buses from Jo'burg to Nelspruit, from where you can get minibus taxis to Sabie (US\$2.80, one hour between Nelspruit and Sabie). Minibus taxis also run frequently to/from Hazzyview (US\$2.80, one hour). The transport stand (Main St) is behind Spar supermarket.

Pilgrim's Rest

☎ 013 / pop 600

Tourist shops, craft stalls and historic buildings are the fabric of tiny Pilgrim's Rest, located a short detour off the main route between Sabie and Graskop. Founded in 1873 when gold was discovered nearby, when the stuff finally fizzled out in 1972 the town was sold to the government as a ready-made historical village (it's now a national monument).

There's an **information centre** (☎ 013-768 1060; Main St, Uptown; ☎ 9am-12.45pm & 1.15-4.30pm) at the museums building, and an ATM just down the road.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The town's three main **museums** (☎ 013-768 1060; total admission US\$1.40) feature a printing shop, a restored home and a general store. More interesting is historic **Alanglade** (☎ 013-768 1060; admission US\$2.80; ☎ tours 11am & 2pm Mon-Sat), a former mine-manager's residence at the northern edge of town furnished with period objects from the 1920s. Just east of town along the Graskop road is the open-air **Diggings Museum** (guided tours adult/child US\$1.40/0.70) where you can see how gold was panned. Visits are arranged through the information centre.

SLEEPING

Pilgrims Rest Caravan Park (☎ 013-768 1427; pilgrimsrestcamp@mweb.co.za; camp sites per person US\$5.50, 2-person tents US\$19, d with shared bathroom US\$19; ☎)

The cheapest place in town, with fixed tents, basic rooms and large grounds. It's just past the town centre on the Blyde River.

Royal Hotel (☎ 013-768 1100; s/d with breakfast US\$38/62; ☎) This is the historic centrepiece of the town and a fine example of wooden Victorian architecture. The rooms are elegantly furnished in period style and include brass four-poster beds. Church Bar, adjoining, is a good spot for a drink.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Sporadic minibus taxis run between Pilgrim's Rest and Graskop (US\$1.40, 30 minutes).

GAUTENG

If Africa, as the cliché goes, is the mother of all life, then Gauteng is a province born of the Western love for her gold-bearing ore. Fast, bustling and a cabaret of contradictions, Gauteng (pronounced 'how-teng') covers just 1.5% of the country's land surface, yet accounts for 34% of its gross domestic product (GDP) and, perhaps more extraordinarily, 10% of the GDP of the whole of Africa.

The laid-back, friendly atmosphere of Pretoria, the country's administrative capital, belies a turbulent past. Fifty or so kilometres down the M1 motorway away is Johannesburg, the provincial capital and third-largest city on the continent. Sprawling and booming, it's a strange conurbation of opulent suburbs set alongside some of the country's starkest urban poverty.

History

The area now called Gauteng remained a relatively quiet and chiefly rural place right through until 1886, when gold was discovered, and the area was catapulted into the modern age.

Boers, escaping British rule in the Cape Colony, had been here since the mid-19th century, founding the independent Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR; South African Republic) and establishing its capital in the then frontier village of Pretoria. But as the British turned their attentions to the colossal profits being made in the gold mines, it was only a matter of time before the events that led to the 1899–1902 South African War were set in motion.

After suffering severe losses, particularly in British concentration camps, the Boers



conceded defeat, leading to the Treaty of Vereeniging and ultimately the Union of South Africa in 1910. The fledgling city of Jo'burg exploded into life, but little changed for the thousands of black miners. Apartheid would be managed from Pretoria, and the townships surrounding Jo'burg – not least of them Soweto – would become the hub of both the system's worst abuses and its most energetic opponents. Consequently Gauteng, then known as Transvaal, was at centre stage in South Africa's all-too-familiar 20th-century drama.

JOHANNESBURG

☎ 011 / pop 5.7 million

Jo'burg, or Jozi as it's more commonly known, is without a doubt the great big beating heart

of South Africa and has long played a Jekyll-and-Hyde role in the global consciousness. Often the stage on which the epic of this extraordinary nation has been played out, the colossus of Jo'burg – with all its thrills and foibles – is today a fascinating, multitudinous city, where all the ups and downs of 21st-century South Africa can be witnessed in three, multicoloured dimensions.

In the past, the city's darker personality proved the most enduring. The Jo'burg of the newflash was a city where fear and loathing reigned supreme; a city where spiralling gun crime and poverty had manifested itself in a society where one half of the population stagnated, while the other looked on impassively through coils of razor wire.

As ever, there is an element of truth to the stereotypes. Jo'burg does bear the scars of South Africa's turbulent 20th century, and many will take time to heal. Stark inequalities persist, but armed with a new self-confidence – ironically most pronounced in the infamous township of Soweto – Africa's giant hub is beginning to introduce itself to a healthier diet of urban renewal and social regeneration.

Orientation

Cars are king here, so getting around with one is surprisingly easy and getting around without one can be extremely time-consuming. OR Tambo International Airport (JIA; formerly Johannesburg International) is 25km north-east of the city centre.

The large city centre, which is laid out on a straightforward grid, is dominated by office blocks – in particular the 50-storey Carlton Centre on Commissioner St. There's no reason to stay in the city centre; after the shops close, the centre becomes a virtual ghost town. However, redevelopment of the Newtown cultural precinct, at the northwestern edge of the city, is at the core of an effort to clean up central Jo'burg. North of the city centre, a steep ridge runs west-east from Braamfontein across to the dangerous suburb of Hillbrow. To the northeast of the centre is the equally dangerous Yeoville.

The northern suburbs are predominantly white middle- and upper-class areas, within an arc formed by the N1 and N3 freeways. These suburbs of big houses, big trees and big fences are where most travellers stay. Sterile shopping malls form the centre of most social life. The inner-suburban restaurant enclaves of Melville, Greenside, Parkhurst and Norwood make a refreshing change.

The black townships ring the city and present a stark contrast to the northern suburbs. Conditions within them range from the stereotypically suburban to the appalling. The main township is Soweto (p544), but other big townships surround the city in all directions.

Information

EMERGENCY

AIDS line (☎ 0800 012 322)

Fire (☎ 10111)

SA Police Headquarters (Map p547; ☎ 10111; Headquarters, Main Rd)

Rape Crisis Line (☎ 011-806 1888)

INTERNET ACCESS

Most of the city's hostels and hotels have internet facilities, charging anything from US\$2.80 to US\$8 per hour. Alternatively, most Jo'burg malls and suburbs have an internet café and wi-fi hot spots are popping up everywhere. **Out of Print Books** (☎ 011-482 6026; 78 4th Ave, Melville; per min US\$0.10; ☎ 10am-9pm), in the centre of Melville, is pricey but open later than most.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Johannesburg General Hospital (Map pp542-3;

☎ 011-488 4911; M1/Jubilee Rd, Parktown) Jo'burg's main public hospital.

Rosebank Clinic (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-328 0500; 14 Sturdee Ave, Rosebank; ☎ 7am-10pm) A private hospital in the northern suburbs.

MONEY

There are banks with ATMs and exchange facilities at every commercial centre. American Express and Rennie's Travel (an agent for Thomas Cook) have branches at the airport and in major malls.

POST

There is a poste restante service at the **main post office** (Map p547; ☎ 0800 110 226; Jeppe St; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat).

TOURIST INFORMATION

Gauteng Tourism Authority (Map p547; ☎ 011-639 1600; www.gauteng.net; 1 Central Place, cnr Jeppe & Henry Nxumalo St, Newtown; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

The tourist body's glistening new headquarters are in the middle of the Newtown Cultural Precinct. Staff members are eager but woefully undertrained.

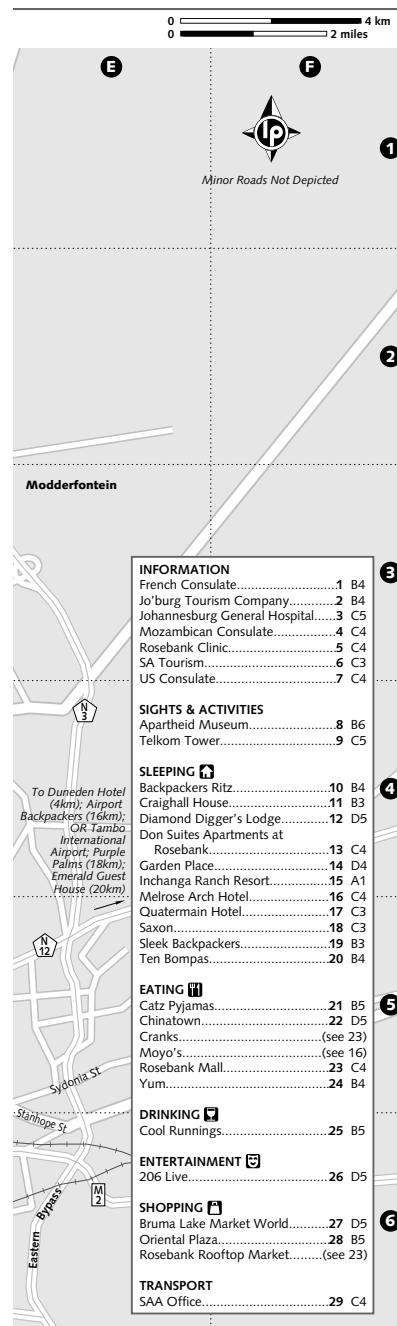
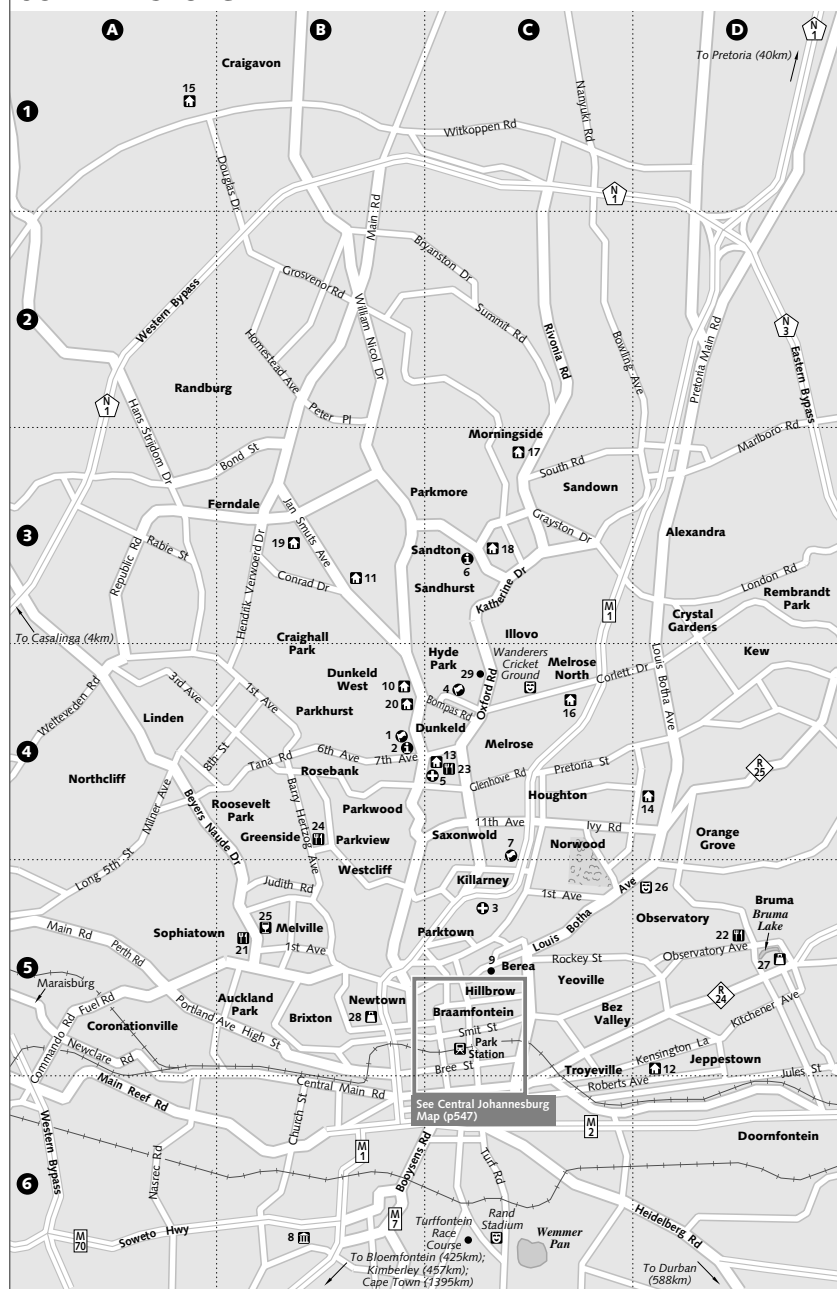
Jo'burg Tourism Company (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-214 0700; deon@joburgtourism.com; ground fl, Grosvenor Cnr, 195 Jan Smuts Ave, Parktown North; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) A private endeavour; covers the city of Jo'burg.

SA Tourism (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-895 3000; fax 895 3001; 90 Protea Rd, Sandton; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) Can be contacted for general South Africa information.

Dangers & Annoyances

Pay careful attention to your personal security in Jo'burg. Daylight muggings in the city centre and other inner suburbs, notably Hillbrow, are not uncommon and you must be constantly on your guard. You'd be crazy to walk around central Jo'burg at night – if you arrive after dark and don't have a car, catch a taxi to your final destination.

JOHANNESBURG



Crime is a big problem, but it is important to put things in perspective: remember that most travellers come and go without incident and that much of the crime afflicts parts of the city you would have little reason to stray into. It's when using ATMs that you're most vulnerable.

The secret to success is simple: seek local advice, listen to it and remain aware of what's going on around you.

Sights & Activities

CITY CENTRE

The city centre choked and largely died in the mid-1990s, with many white businesses fleeing to the northern suburbs, leaving the district to vanish under a mountain of none-too-promising crime statistics and buildings to turn 'bad'. The area retains its edgy atmosphere today, but regeneration projects in Newtown to the south and university-oriented Braamfontein to the north are gradually helping to boost confidence once more in the heart of the city.

On the Noord St side of Joubert Park (itself a no-go area) is the **Johannesburg Art Gallery** (Map p547; ☎ 011-725 3130; Joubert Park; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun). This place has a reputable collection of European and South African landscape and figurative paintings, and exhibitions featuring more adventurous contemporary work and long-overdue retrospectives of black artists.

To get an overview of the hub of Jo'burg, take the lift to the **Top of Africa** (Map p547; ☎ 011-308 1331; 50th fl, Carlton Centre, 152 Commissioner St; adult/child US\$1.40/1; ☎ 9am-7pm). From the quiet remoteness of the observation deck, the sprawling city seems positively serene.

NEWTOWN

Today, Newtown is at the centre of efforts to rejuvenate the downtown area. Surrounded by museums and cafés, Newtown's cultural precinct, which occupies the newly brushed-up **Mary Fitzgerald Square** (Map p547; named after South Africa's first female trade unionist), is a good place to start a tour.

At the heart of the cultural precinct, **Museum Africa** (Map p547; ☎ 011-833 5624; museumafrica@joburg.org.za; 121 Bree St; adult/child US\$1.10/0.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun), next to the Market Theatre complex has several excellent exhibitions, including ones on the Treason Trials (1956-61) and Sophiatown.

The nearby **Market Theatre** complex (see p549), with its shows, bars and restaurants, is an excellent place to while away a few hours between museum visits.

Looming over Newtown is the **Nelson Mandela Bridge** (Map p547; www.blueiq.co.za). Officially opened by Nelson Mandela on 20 July 2003 (two days after his 85th birthday), the 295m, cable-stayed bridge is the longest of its kind in Southern Africa.

The **SAB Centenary Centre** (Map p547; ☎ 011-836 4900; 15 President St; admission US\$1.40; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat) unlocks the secrets of the country's brewing industries and there is a re-creation of a 1965 Soweto shebeen.

HILLBROW & CONSTITUTION HILL

Crowned by the looming, 269m **Telkom Tower** (Map pp542-3; Goldreich St), Hillbrow was once among the liveliest and most interesting suburbs in the city, becoming one of the first districts in Jo'burg where blacks and whites were officially allowed to live side by side. These days, however, it has a reputation for very real lawlessness and a trip into its guts,

without an extremely savvy guide, is not recommended.

Inspiring, impressive **Constitution Hill** (Map p547; ☎ 011-381 3100; www.constitutionhill.co.za; Kotze St; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40; ☎ 9am-5pm Wed-Mon) is slowly becoming one of the city's – if not the country's – chief tourist attractions. Built within the ramparts of the **Old Fort**, which dates from 1892 and was once a notorious prison, the development focuses on South Africa's new **Constitutional Court**, itself a very real symbol of the changing South Africa with cases heard in all 11 official languages.

SOUTHERN SUBURBS

The **Apartheid Museum** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-309 4700; www.apartheidmuseum.org; cnr Gold Reef Rd & Northern Parkway; adult/child US\$3.40/1.60; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) details South Africa's era of segregation with chilling accuracy. This remains one of South Africa's most evocative museums, using film, text, audio and live accounts to provide a colourful insight into the architecture, implementation and eventual unravelling of the apartheid system.

SOWETO

No township in South Africa, even the world, has as much political and historical meaning as Soweto, born of an idea as simple and soulless as the acronym devised for its name – South-Western Townships. This sprawling conurbation of the country's migrant labour force and their descendants is the biggest, most political, troubled and dynamic township too, and has of late embarked on a journey of self-discovery that is as much about the future as the past. Tourists now flood into the area, attracted by some of the most poignant landmarks in South Africa's narrative and, after an initial exodus, local blacks are also returning, intent on forging a new identity for their community.

And so the face of this sprawling community – anything from 2.3 million (the latest official figure) to 4 million (local estimates) people live in Soweto – is changing. Large sections of the township are still characterised by desperate poverty, while others, such as Diepkloof Extension and Orlando West, are indicative of the growth of a new moneyed class. Against the Western media's beloved image of Soweto as a crime-ridden wasteland, the sprinkler-fed lawns of these middle-class suburbs are pleasant stereotype squashers.

Soweto is by far the most visited township in the country, so don't feel that coming here as a tourist is either unsafe or inappropriate. Most visitors still come on a tour, but moves are being made to improve signposting (a perennial problem), and the infrastructure is now such that a self-guided tour is not out of the question – although heed local advice carefully. If you choose to do this, stick to the area surrounding Vilakazi St and Hector Pieterse St.

If you are on a tour and want extra flexibility while avoiding the aloofness, take a tour as far as Vilakazi St (the greatest danger is getting hopelessly lost on the way into Soweto) and then rely on your guesthouse owner to get you safely between the various attractions. See opposite for tours operating from Jo'burg.

Most transport in and out of Soweto is by motor vehicle, usually by one of the minibus taxis (US\$1.50 one way) that arrive in Diepkloof or Orlando from the taxi rank near Joubert Park in the Jo'burg city centre.

Tours

Imbizo Tours (☎ 011-838 2667) Specialises in tours to Jo'burg's gritty townships, including half-day tours to Alexandra (per person US\$40), perhaps the city's grimmest township, and Soweto (per person US\$42).

Taste of Africa (☎ 082-565 2520) Offers something different from the zoo-like township tours, with a cheap shuttle (US\$8) from Melville to Soweto. It also offers tours where you can meet locals, drink in a shebeen, watch backyard theatre, milk a cow, listen to jazz and even visit a local healer.

Walks Tours (☎ 011-444 1639; www.walktours.co.za; per person from US\$16) Offers regular weekend walking tours around parts of Jo'burg.

Sleeping

Some of the places to stay in central Jo'burg are excellent value but that's because crime has scared away customers; you're better off in the 'burbs. Yeoville was for years a backpacker favourite but is no longer. All hostels have either closed or relocated to safer areas.

MELVILLE & NORWOOD

Melville is located northwest of central Jo'burg and Norwood is to the north.

Pension Idube (☎ 011-482 4055; idube@mail.com; 11 Walton Ave, Auckland Park; d without/with bathroom and breakfast US\$36/45; ☎ ☎) This positively unpretentious place bedecked in zebra motifs can't be beaten for its combination of comfort, price and location. It serves inexpensive meals and has a patio that is the launch pad for some excellent braais.

Thulani Lodge (☎ 011-482 1106; www.thulanilodge.co.za; 85 Third Ave; s/d with breakfast US\$54/67; ☎ ☎) Despite its top location just metres from Melville's nightlife, Thulani manages to offer peace and quiet in a series of small, neat rooms clustered intimately around a sparkling swimming pool.

Die Agterplaas (☎ 011-726 8452; agterplaas@icon.co.za; 66 Sixth Ave; s/d with breakfast US\$57/72; ☎ ☎) Oozing 'old' Melville grace, this colonial-era villa has lashings of comfy class, with Oregon pine flooring, a sun terrace and plenty of old-school bric-a-brac for décor.

Garden Place (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-485 3800; 53 Garden Rd, Orchards; s/d with breakfast US\$60/101; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) It's slightly away from Grant Ave, but offers clean and comfortable rooms, superior service and facilities for overnighters, longer stayers, business people and even newlyweds.

NORTHERN SUBURBS

Budget

Inchanga Ranch Resort (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-708 2505; www.inchangaresort.co.za; 51 Inchanga Rd, Craigavon; camp sites US\$5.50, dm/s/d US\$10/27/34, cabins from US\$20; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) A wonderful country retreat just minutes from the shops and casino of Montecasino. Accommodation is in cute private A-frame huts with animal-print linens.

Sleek Backpackers (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-787 8070; www.sleekhostel.150m.com; 477 Jan Smuts Ave, Randburg; dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$11/14/27; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) A converted house is now a small hostel run with a personal touch. Dorms and doubles are basic but clean. It's in a handy location about halfway between the city centre and Fourways.

Backpackers Ritz (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-325 7125; www.backpackers-ritz.co.za; 1A North Rd, Dunkeld West; dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$11/24/35; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Certainly not 'The Ritz', this backpackers is in a characterful old mansion a safe hop-and-a-skip from Hyde Park Mall, and plenty of bars and restaurants. Curiously the dorm rooms are very large and the doubles a bit cramped.

MIDRANGE

Craighall House (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-326 0326; craighallhouse@mweb.co.za; 10 Alexandra Ave, Craighall; s/d with breakfast US\$40/67; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Well located more or less halfway between Rosebank and Sandton, this guesthouse has neatly designed rooms each with private entrance and patio, a beautiful garden and swimming pool.

Don Suites Apartments at Rosebank (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-880 1666; fax 880 3366; 10 Tyrwhitt Ave, Rosebank; s/d with breakfast US\$72/88; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This is the only black-owned hotel chain in the land and it offers excellent rooms.

Quatermain Hotel (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-290 0900; www.quatermain.co.za; 137 West Rd South, Morningside; s/d ind breakfast US\$103/143; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This is one of Jo'burg's best midrange accommodation options with stylish fittings, excellent service and a great location near the glitz of Sandton. Its award-winning restaurant, the Courier, is another huge bonus.

Top End

Ourpick Melrose Arch Hotel (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-214 6666; 1 Melrose Sq, Melrose Arch; s/d with breakfast from US\$236/392 ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This is certainly not the cheapest place to stay in town. Worse, it has none of the old Jo'burg charm of suburban

B&Bs, nor the homespun urban African chic of Soweto's guesthouses. But for a taste of everything that is forward-looking, brash and unashamedly positive about contemporary Johannesburg, this is the place to be. Its tasteful, unconventional styling and thoroughly mixed staff and clientèle hint at a future South Africa of integration and prosperity. Dare to dream...

Ten Bompas (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-341 0282; www.tenbompas.com; 10 Bompas Rd, Dunkeld West; r with breakfast US\$320; P ☎ ☎ ☎) A true original, with 10 individually styled, five-star suites, a restaurant with an excellent wine list and floor-mounted televisions in its unisex lobby toilet.

Saxon (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-292 6000; www.thesaxon.com; 36 Saxon Rd, Sandhurst; r with breakfast from US\$570; P ☎ ☎ ☎) The *ne plus ultra* of impossibly opulent Jo'burg, this gorgeous, all-suite boutique hotel offers no-holds-barred luxury.

EASTERN SUBURBS

Diamond Digger's Lodge (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-624 1676; www.oneandonly.co.za; 36 Doris St, Kensington; dm/d with shared bathroom US\$9.50/24; P ☎ ☎) An excellent backpackers, with every imaginable amenity, including a Jacuzzi, sauna, a big-screen home cinema and a pub for post-tour frolics.

Purple Palms (☎ 011-393 4393; info@purplepalms.co.za; 1 Boompeiper Ave, Kempton Park; d without/with shared bathroom US\$30/35 tr US\$44; P ☎ ☎) In a quiet suburb 10km from the airport, this is a friendly, well-run way station for backpackers passing through Gauteng.

Emerald Guest House (☎ 011-394 1198; 19 Halifax St, Rhodesfield, Kempton Park; s/d US\$37/54; P ☎ ☎ ☎) Readers recommend this guesthouse, which is within easy striking distance of the airport and has plenty of home comforts and decent rooms. Airport transfers are offered.

Eating

Jo'burg is stacked with restaurants to satisfy every whim, craving, occasion and budget. Unfortunately for visitors, especially those without cars, most of the best places are scattered around the northern suburbs.

For self-caterers, head to the glitzy supermarkets in the bowels of every shopping mall for the widest range of produce.

CITY CENTRE & NEWTOWN

For a cheap meal of *mealie pap* and meat cooked on the braai, try the stalls on and around Diagonal St – just follow your nose.

our pick Kapitan's (Map p547; ☎ 011-834 8048; 11A Kort St; mains US\$4-8; ☎ lunch & dinner) Jo'burg is awash with award-winning restaurants offering just about every world cuisine, but for a taste of the new city in surroundings that reflect its past, there's nothing quite like Kapitan's. It is positively unpretentious (though chef/patron Madanjit Ranchod *does* call it the 'only good Indian restaurant in the country') despite having attracted luminaries (including Mandela) for years. It's one of the few places in town where you'll see young lions black and white drinking with hepcats and grizzly city stalwarts groaning about how it's all gone to the dogs.

Guildhall Bar & Restaurant (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-833 1770; 88 Market St, Marshalltown; mains US\$4.70-7; ☎ lunch & dinner) Established way back in 1888, you can while away the day in the dark English-style pub below, or sit out on the upstairs balcony and watch the city pass you by over a pie and chips.

Gramadoela's (Map p547; ☎ 011-838 6960; Bree St, Newtown; mains US\$5.50-12; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎) Full of curios and character, this gay-friendly Newtown classic in the Market Theatre complex whips up a mean mix of African and Asian cuisine.

Moyo's (www.moyo.co.za; mains US\$7-13; ☎) Melrose Arch (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-684 1477; 5 Melrose Sq; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎) Newtown (☎ 011-838 1715; Bree St; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎) Rosebank (☎ 011-646 0058; Zoo Lake; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Oozing chi-chi African charm, this busy chain offers an innovative menu of contemporary African eats.

MELVILLE

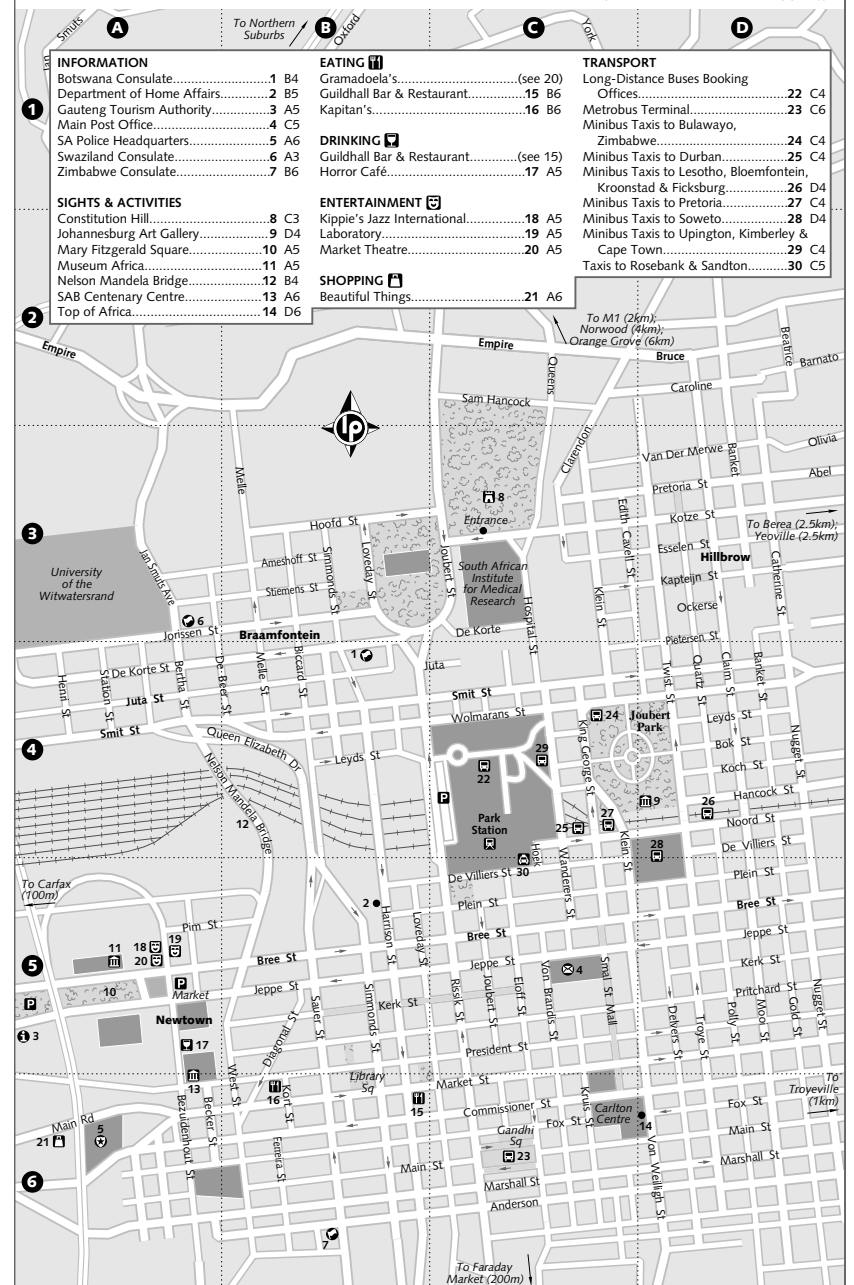
Northwest of Braamfontein, Melville has become the trendiest eating strip in Jo'burg. Restaurants and cafés have sprung up in the area around 7th St, known as 'Old Melville', and around the busier Main Rd about 1km away, known as 'New Melville'.

The best food is in Old Melville, where a Bohemian, youthful atmosphere prevails. In the warmer months 7th St takes on a Parisian ambience, with patrons sipping drinks and watching the world go by from pavement tables.

Cafés & Quick Eats

Ish Caffé (☎ 011-482 4320; cnr 7th St & 4th Ave; light meals US\$3.40; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Chic design, yummy breakfas, great cappuccinos and gorgeous staff – what more could you ask for?

CENTRAL JOHANNESBURG



De La Creme (☎ 011-726 7716; cnr 7th St & 4th Ave; mains US\$5.50-8; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) One of Jo'burg's best patisseries, with a daily selection of freshly baked delicious sweet treats such as homemade gateaux, and a full meal menu. It's closed on Monday nights.

Spiro's Cafe (☎ 011-482 1162; cnr 7th St & 2nd Ave; mains US\$5.50-9.50; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) With terrace seating outside and huge, comfy sofas inside, this place heaves at breakfast time. Come nightfall, it serves up some tasty restaurant tucker before slowly transforming into a bar.

Restaurants

Catz Pyjamas (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-726 8596; cnr Main Rd & 3rd Ave) A fairly sterile place with cheap food but after a long night out this 24-hour restaurant is hard to beat.

Soulsa (☎ 011-482 5572; 16 7th St; mains US\$4.70-12; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☺) Funky décor, differing day and night menus featuring fusion South African cooking, and outdoor sofas have made Soulsa a Melville favourite. Breakfast is served on weekends.

Soi (☎ 011-726 5775; cnr 7th St & 3rd Ave; mains US\$6-12; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☺) Flash, oh-so-trendy Asian décor gives this place a hip, stylish edge. The Thai and Vietnamese food is fresh and zesty, and there's an attached bar filled with beautiful people.

Chaplin's (☎ 011-482 4657; 85 4th Ave; mains US\$11-15; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☺) This twee little bistro, a veteran of the neighbourhood, whips up some legendary food. European meat and fish dishes predominate.

Melville Grill (☎ 011-727 28-12; cnr 7th St & 3rd Ave; mains US\$7-16; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☺) The only place for a hardcore meat feast, this upmarket steakhouse serves sublime aged cuts in modern surrounds. They also claim to cater for vegetarians.

NORTHERN SUBURBS

The many eating options in these affluent suburbs are centred on the huge shopping malls that form the core of northern suburbs society.

Cranks (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-880 3442; Shop 52, Rosebank Mall; mains US\$4.70-8; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☺) Still going after almost 20 years, Cranks was one of the first Thai-Vietnamese places in Johannesburg. Among the tried-and-tested favourites of the house is fish fillet with lemongrass (US\$6).

Yum (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-486 1645; www.yum.co.za; 26 Gleneagles Rd, Greenside; mains US\$5.50-27; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☺) A small restaurant with a big reputation. One of the city's most celebrated dining rooms, Yum specialises in innovative fusion cooking. Closed for most of January.

OTHER SUBURBS

The suburb of Norwood has an enclave of restaurants that has grown and matured into an east Jo'burg version of Melville's 7th St. There are more than 20 bars, restaurants and cafés along Grant Ave, most of which are open every day.

Other places to eat in the eastern suburbs is near Bruma Lake on Derrick Ave, Cyrildene, off Observatory Rd, and there's an established Chinatown (Map pp542-3) with a number of cheap Taiwanese, Korean, Sichuan, Shanghai and Hong Kong style restaurants; most close at about 9.30pm.

Drinking

Party-loving Jo'burg has a constantly changing mix of bars, pubs and clubs, ranging from the outrageous to the downright conservative. Much of the nightlife is in the northern suburbs, particularly around Melville, Norwood and Rosebank. The area around the cultural precinct in Newtown also has a few decent places.

CITY CENTRE & NEWTOWN

Horror Café (Map p547; ☎ 011-838 6735; 5 Becker St, Newtown) The neon green décor is indeed a horror, but this place is never short of action. Thursdays is reggae night, while Saturday is gay and lesbian night.

Guildhall Bar & Restaurant (Map p547; ☎ 011-833 1770; 88 Market St) A great place to soak up some history while stoking the fires with a pint or two of lager. There's an upstairs terrace for people-watching.

MELVILLE

Berlin Bar (Map p547; ☎ 011-482 9345; 6 7th St) With an ultra-cool design and Jo'burg's most tortured artists lounging on its retro furniture, this was definitely Melville's hippest hangout when we swung through town.

Ratz Bar (☎ 011-726 2019; 9B 7th St) This cosy place has rats daubed on the walls rather than running across the floors and is only for over-24s. Try one of the tasty and well-priced cocktails (US\$2.40).

Tokyo Star (☎ 011-834 9187; 78 4th Ave) Anime chic and loads of plastic characterise this trendy, noisy Tokyo-style bar. Asian snacks such as tempura (US\$3) are served.

Cool Runnings (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-482 4786; 27A 4th Ave) Reggae is a perennial favourite in Jo'burg, so it is no surprise that this franchise of Jamaican-style bars is popular. A relaxed atmosphere, thumping bass-lines and late, lively nights are a sure thing.

NORWOOD

Sundek Bar (☎ 011-728 2279; 72 Grant Ave) The upstairs terrace bar at this place is the perfect spot to sip a cocktail and watch Norwood drift by.

Mo Café (☎ 011-728 8256; Grant Ave) This camp, retro-style affair offers beautiful people and lashings of orange décor. There's a full food menu for late-night munchies.

English Pub (☎ 011-483 1101; cnr Algernon St & Grant Ave) Offering plenty of rough-and-tumble action and an English pub-style ambience, this is a good spot at the weekends for determined drinkers.

Entertainment

The best entertainment guide is in Friday's *Mail & Guardian*. 'Tonight' in the daily *Star* is also good. For entertainment bookings by credit card, contact **Computicket** (☎ 011-915 8000; www.computicket.com).

CINEMAS

Huge cinema centres are found across Jo'burg, with one in almost every shopping centre. **Ster-Kinekor** (central bookings ☎ 082 16789; www.sterkinetor.co.za) has the widest distribution of multiplexes, with screens in the Fourways, Westgate, Eastgate, Sandton and Rosebank malls.

LIVE MUSIC & NIGHTCLUBS

Jo'burg is home to a thriving live music scene, but it's on weekends when Jo'burgers really come out to play and regularly hold enormous raves.

Classical

Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra (☎ 011-789 2733; www.jpo.co.za) The city's budding orchestra stages a regular circuit of concerts, utilising venues from Wits University to City Hall.

Contemporary

Carfax (☎ 011-834 9187; 39 Pim St, Newtown; admission US\$9.50) This industrial space symbolises

integrated Jo'burg and is one of the hottest club tickets in town, with weekend DJs and a house-oriented music scene.

Kippie's Jazz International (Map p547; ☎ 011-833 3316; www.kippies.co.za; Bree St, Newtown; admission US\$7) Kippie's is a 'must do' in Jo'burg as it's one of the best places to see South African jazz talent. Gigs kick off on Friday and Saturday nights at around 9.30pm.

206 Live (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-728 5333; 206 Louis Botha Ave, Orange Grove) Garage, ragga, drum 'n' bass and rock tracks keep the feet tapping here. Next door, 208 keeps the flag flying over the local hip-hop crowd.

THEATRES

Market Theatre (Map p547; ☎ 011-832 1641; www.markettheatre.co.za; Bree St) The Market Theatre is the most important venue for live theatre. There are three live theatre venues – the Main, Laager and Barney Simon Theatres – as well as galleries, a café and the excellent Kippie's Jazz International.

Other theatres include the **Laboratory** (Map p547; ☎ 011-836 0516; Bezuidenhout St), an offshoot of the Market Theatre that acts as a showcase for community talent, with free local theatre shows every Saturday at 1pm.

Shopping

ARTS & CRAFTS

Rosebank Rooftop Market (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-788 5530) One of the most convenient places to shop for traditional carvings, beadwork, jewellery, books and fertility dolls. Held every Sunday in Rosebank Mall's multilevel car park.

Beautiful Things (Map p547; ☎ 011-492 3696; Bus Factory, 2 President St, Newtown; ☺ 10am-4pm) This is a community-run initiative selling arts and crafts from across the country.

Bruma Lake Market World (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-622 9648; Observatory Rd) This place sells a wide range of crafts and lots of kitsch.

Faraday Market (cnr Eloff St & N2) This is an interesting place to wander around, with plenty of *muti* stalls.

MALLS

Jo'burg prides itself on its malls jammed with Western consumer goods of every description. They are as much a wealthy white habitat as a place to go shopping. A short walk from Newtown, you'll find **Oriental Plaza** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-838 6752; Bree St, Fordsburg; ☺ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri,

8.30am-3pm Sat), our favourite for a look at the real Jo'burg in all its diversity.

Getting There & Away

AIR

South Africa's major international and domestic airport is **OR Tambo International Airport** (JIA; ☎ 011-9216262; www.acsa.co.za), formerly Johannesburg International.

For regular flights to national and regional destinations try **South African Airways** (SAA; Map pp542-3; ☎ 0861 359 722; www.flysaa.com), **South African Airlink** (SAirlink; ☎ 011-961 1700; www.sairlink.co.za) and **South African Express** (☎ 011-978 5577; www.saexpress.co.za). All flights can be booked through SAA, which also has offices in the domestic and international terminals of JIA.

Smaller budget airlines, including Comair, Kulula, 1Time and Nationwide, also link Jo'burg with major destinations and often offer much cheaper fares.

BUS

A number of international bus services leave Jo'burg from the Park Station complex for Mozambique, Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. The main long-distance bus lines (national and international) also depart from and arrive at the Park Station transit centre, in the northwest corner of the site, where you will also find the booking offices.

Backpackers can now be connected from Jo'burg to the most popular parts of the region (Swaziland, Durban, Garden Route and Cape Town) by **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com). All hostels have timetables and prices.

The most comprehensive range of services to/from Jo'burg is provided by the government-owned lines of **Translux** (☎ 0861-589 282; www.translux.co.za) and **City to City** (☎ 0861-589 282). For more information about these, as well as the other major bus lines – **Greyhound** (☎ 012-323 1154; www.greyhound.co.za), **SA Roadlink** (☎ 011-333 2223; www.saroadlink.co.za) and **Intercape** (☎ 0861 287 287; www.intercape.co.za) – see p592.

Except for City to City buses, which start in Jo'burg, all services not heading north commence in Pretoria at the Pretoria station.

To Cape Town

Intercape, Greyhound and Translux all have at least one bus running daily to Cape Town (US\$51 to US\$63, 19 hours).

Intercape also runs to Cape Town (US\$59, 19 hours) via Upington (US\$35, 10 hours).

From Upington, you can also get an Intercape bus to Windhoek, Namibia (US\$34, 12 hours), but there isn't a direct connection.

SA Roadlink, the newest bus company, offers highly competitive rates from Jo'burg to Cape Town (US\$34, 19 hours). Buses depart daily.

To Durban & KwaZulu-Natal

Greyhound has four daily buses to Durban (US\$28, eight hours), including slower services that run through Newcastle (US\$26, five hours), Ladysmith (US\$24, 6½ hours) and Estcourt (US\$24, 7½ hours), and then onto Richard's Bay (US\$30, eight hours). Translux has at least one bus a day to Durban (US\$23, eight hours), as does Intercape (US\$17, eight hours).

To Mpumalanga & Kruger National Park

The nearest large town to Kruger National Park is Nelspruit. Greyhound runs there daily (US\$25, five hours). Note that this service starts in Jo'burg and picks up in Pretoria an hour later. Translux runs to Maputo, Mozambique daily (US\$20, nine hours) via Nelspruit (US\$1.40, five hours).

City to City has some slow, cheap services from Jo'burg to Nelspruit (US\$11, seven hours) and Hazyview (US\$10, eight hours). Hazyview is closer to Kruger than Nelspruit, and has backpackers' hostels that can arrange trips into the park.

Translux also has daily buses running to Phalaborwa (US\$20, 7½ hours), which is a good option if you're staying at a more northerly Kruger National Park camp.

To the North

At the time of writing, no bus companies were offering services to Zimbabwe. Most now only go as far as Polokwane (Pietersburg). From there you'll have to get a local bus or minibus taxi to get to the border.

Translux does have a daily service as far as Makhado (Louis Trichardt; US\$18, 6½ hours), but this strangely arrives at 2am! It goes via Mokopane (Potgietersrus; US\$17, four hours) and Polokwane (Pietersburg; US\$18, 4½ hours). Translux also has services that head east through Limpopo, stopping in Tzaneen (US\$17, 6½ hours) and Phalaborwa (US\$20, 7½ hours).

Greyhound has daily services to Polokwane (Pietersburg; US\$19, five hours). Intercape

also heads north to Gaborone, Botswana (US\$20, seven hours).

North Link Tours (☎ 015-291 1867) runs buses between Jo'burg and Polokwane (Pietersburg; US\$16, 4½ hours) via Pretoria, and the smaller towns en route. From Polokwane, there are connections to Tzaneen and Phalaborwa.

To the South

Translux operates a daily service to East London (US\$43, 15 hours) via Bloemfontein (US\$20, seven hours). Translux also has five services a week (not on Sunday and Tuesday) from Jo'burg to Port Elizabeth (US\$47, 14½ hours) via Bloemfontein (US\$30, 10 hours) and Graaff-Reinet (US\$40, 14½ hours), and a Tuesday and Sunday service via Cradock (US\$40, 14½ hours).

Intercape has daily services to Port Elizabeth via Cradock (US\$40, 15 hours) and on to Plettenberg Bay (US\$42, 18 hours).

Greyhound has daily buses that travel overnight from Jo'burg to Port Elizabeth (US\$42, 15 hours) and East London (US\$36, 13 hours).

Translux runs to Knysna (US\$36) via Kimberley three times weekly or Bloemfontein four times weekly, then Oudtshoorn, Mossel Bay and George (all US\$38 from Jo'burg); the trip takes 17 hours. Intercape also operates to Knysna for the same price.

CAR

All the major rental operators have counters at OR Tambo International Airport and at various locations around the city. Many of the main operators offer a limited number of free kilometres and you may end up with a nasty bill when it comes to returning the car.

MINIBUS TAXI

The majority of minibus taxis already use the new road-transport interchange in Park Station over the train tracks between the Metro Concourse and Wanderers St. Because of the risk of mugging, it isn't a good idea to go searching for a taxi while carrying your luggage.

You can also find minibus taxis going in the direction of Kimberley, Cape Town and Upington on Wanderers St near Leyds St; Bulawayo taxis at the northern end of King George St; Pretoria taxis on Noord St; Lesotho, Bloemfontein (and other Free State destinations) on Noord St, east of Joubert Park; and

Durban taxis near the corner of Wanders and Noord Sts. Fares fluctuate, but rates for trips from Jo'burg include the following:

Destination	Fare (US\$)
Bulawayo (Zimbabwe)	38
Cape Town	47
Durban	26
Gaborone (Botswana)	19
Harrismith	13
Kimberley	23
Komatipoort	22
Manzini (Swaziland)	18
Maputo (Mozambique)	30
Nelspruit	23
Polokwane (Pietersburg)	14
Pretoria	4
Thohoyandou (Venda)	18
Tzaneen	18

fares work on a zonal system ranging from zone one (US\$0.50) to zone eight (US\$1.40). Metrobus prefer you to use its tag system (starter tag US\$6). Travellers buy tags from the bus terminal or Computicket (☎ 011-915 8000; www.computicket.com).

MINIBUS TAXI

Fares differ depending on routes, but US\$0.70 will get you around the inner suburbs and the city centre and US\$1.20 will get you almost anywhere.

If you do take a minibus taxi into central Jo'burg, be sure to get off before it reaches the end of the route and avoid the taxi rank – it's a mugging zone.

TAXI

Taxis are an expensive but necessary evil in this city. They operate meters if they work. It's wise to ask a local the likely price and agree on a fare at the outset. From the taxi rank at Park Station a trip to Rosebank should cost around US\$10, and significantly more to Sandton.

Three reputable firms:

International Taxi (☎ 011-390 1502)

Maxi Taxi Cabs (☎ 011-648 1212)

Rose's Radio Taxis (☎ 011-403 9625)

TRAIN

For inquiries about **Metro** (☎ 011-773 5878) services call, or visit the helpful information office in the Park Station concourse. There has been a very serious problem with violent crime on the Metro system, mostly on lines connecting with black townships. The Jo'burg–Pretoria Metro line should also be avoided.

PRETORIA

☎ 012 / pop 1.65 million

At once the 'Afrikaner Jerusalem', former headquarters of the apartheid state and site of the presidential inauguration of Nelson Mandela, the pretty, laid-back city of Pretoria – the administrative capital – carries a remarkable amount of history for its age.

Ironically, the city that for so long was a byword for white domination is now home to the liberated country's black president. Thabo Mbeki has his office in the Union Buildings, while a black mayor and a black-dominated council hold seat in the less grandiose local government buildings.

Pretoria is just 50km from Jo'burg, and is expected within 15 years to form part of a

megalopolis of 20 million people. Yet it moves at a slower pace than its giant neighbour and remains Afrikaans culturally. Military and educational institutions associated with the capital remain while the tens of thousands of university students drive Pretoria's vibrant nightlife.

History

The Great Trek reached its logical conclusion in the early 1850s when the British granted independence to the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek north of the Vaal River, and to the, then Orange, Free State between the Orange and Vaal Rivers.

In 1853 two farms on the Apies River were bought as the site for the republic's capital. The ZAR was a shaky institution though. There were ongoing wars with the black tribes and violent disputes among the Boers themselves. Pretoria, which was named after Andries Pretorius, hero of the Battle of Blood River, was the scene of fighting during the 1863–69 Boer Civil War.

The discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in the late 1880s revolutionised the situation. A small community of farmers suddenly controlled some of the richest real estate in the world and within 20 years the Boers would again be at war with the British. Self-government was again granted to the Transvaal in 1906, and through an unwieldy compromise Pretoria was made the administrative capital. The Union of South Africa came into being in 1910 but Pretoria was not to regain its status until 1961, when the Republic of South Africa came into existence under the leadership of Hendrik Verwoerd.

Orientation

You will likely arrive in Pretoria by road from Jo'burg, or from OR Tambo International Airport. From Jo'burg, the M1 freeway quiets suddenly, and you'll notice the University of South Africa (Unisa) building, looking like a grounded spaceship. A couple of kilometres further on is the city proper, spreading west to east below a long *koppie*, on the northern side of which stand the Union Buildings.

If you enter the city from the airport, you should hit the eastern edge of Church St, which runs through the main nightlife and restaurant zones of the suburbs of Hatfield, Menlyn, Brooklyn and Arcadia, before heading west to Church Sq, the historic centre of

the city and home to hotels, embassies and the Union Buildings.

Information

EMERGENCY

Fire (☎ 10111)

Metro Emergency Rescue Service (☎ 10177)

Police (☎ 10111) There is a police station on Railway St.

INTERNET ACCESS

Most hostels and hotels offer internet facilities, but cheaper alternatives are available.

Odyssey Internet Cafe (☎ 012-362 2467; Hatfield Galleries, Burnett St; per 30min US\$2; ☎ 9am–11pm) is a good bet for logging on.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Hatfield Clinic (☎ 012-362 7180; 454 Hilda St) A well-known suburban clinic.

Pretoria Academic Hospital (☎ 011-354 1000; Dr Savage Rd) The place to head for in a medical emergency.

MONEY

There are banks with ATMs and change facilities across town.

American Express (☎ 012-346 2599; Brooklyn Mall; ☎ 9am–5pm)

Nedbank (cnr Burnett & Festival Sts) Next to Hatfield Galleries.

POST

Main post office (cnr Church St & Church Sq; ☎ 8am–4.30pm Mon–Fri, to noon Sat) In an historic building on the main square.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The **Tourist Information Centre** (☎ 012-358 1430; www.tshwane.gov.za; Old Nederlandsche Bank Bldg, Church Sq; ☎ 7.30am–4pm Mon–Fri) is pretty useless and, astonishingly for a city this size, closes on weekends.

Also in Pretoria is the national head office of **South African National Parks** (SAN; ☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org; 643 Leyds St, New Muckleneuk; ☎ offices 8am–4pm Mon–Fri, to noon Sat; call centre 7.30am–5pm Mon–Fri, 8am–2pm Sat) for all your wildlife reserve bookings and inquiries.

Dangers & Annoyances

Pretoria is certainly safer and more relaxed than Jo'burg. That said, crime is a problem, particularly in the city centre and Sunnyside, with restaurants and other businesses moving to the safer Hatfield and Brooklyn areas. The square roughly formed by Vermeulen,

Du Toit, Boom and Schubert Sts has a bad reputation.

Sights & Activities

VOORTREKKER MONUMENT & MUSEUM

The looming **Voortrekker Monument & Museum** (☎ 012-323 0682; Eeufees Rd; adult/child US\$3.40/1.40, vehicle US\$1.40; ☎ 8am–6pm) is hallowed turf for many Afrikaners. Built between 1938 and 1949 to commemorate the achievements of the Voortrekkers, the structure remains a testament to the Boers' pioneering and independent spirit. In particular, it commemorates the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838, during which 470 Boers, under the command of Andries Pretorius, defeated approximately 12,000 Zulus.

The building's inauguration in 1949 was attended by 250,000 people and still remains a powerful symbol of the 'White Tribe of Africa' and their historical relationship to South Africa.

The edifice is surrounded by a stone wall carved with 64 wagons in a traditional defensive *laager*. The building itself is a huge stone cube inspired by the ruins of Great Zimbabwe. Inside, a highly impressive bas-relief tells the story of the trek and of the Battle of Blood River. A staircase and elevator lead to the roof and a great panoramic view of Pretoria and the highveld.

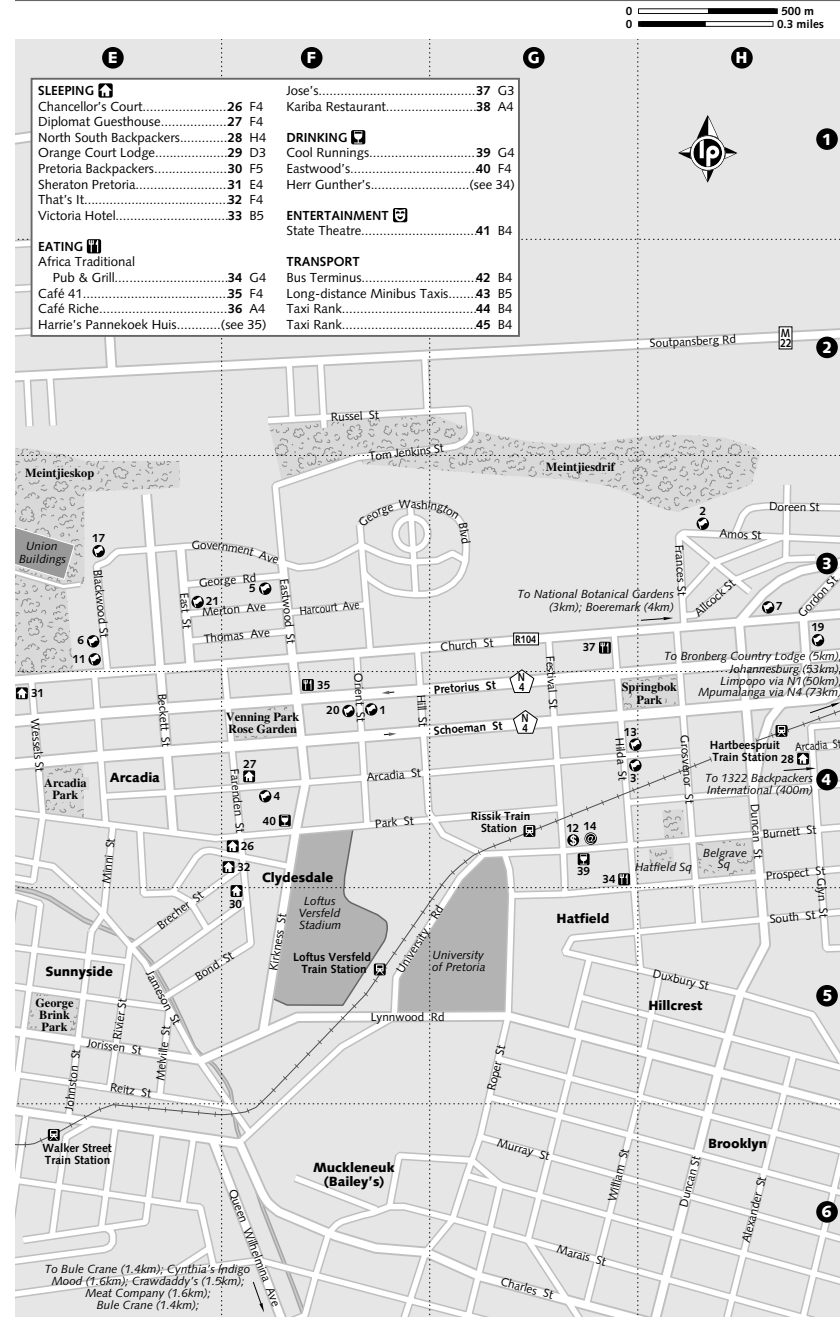
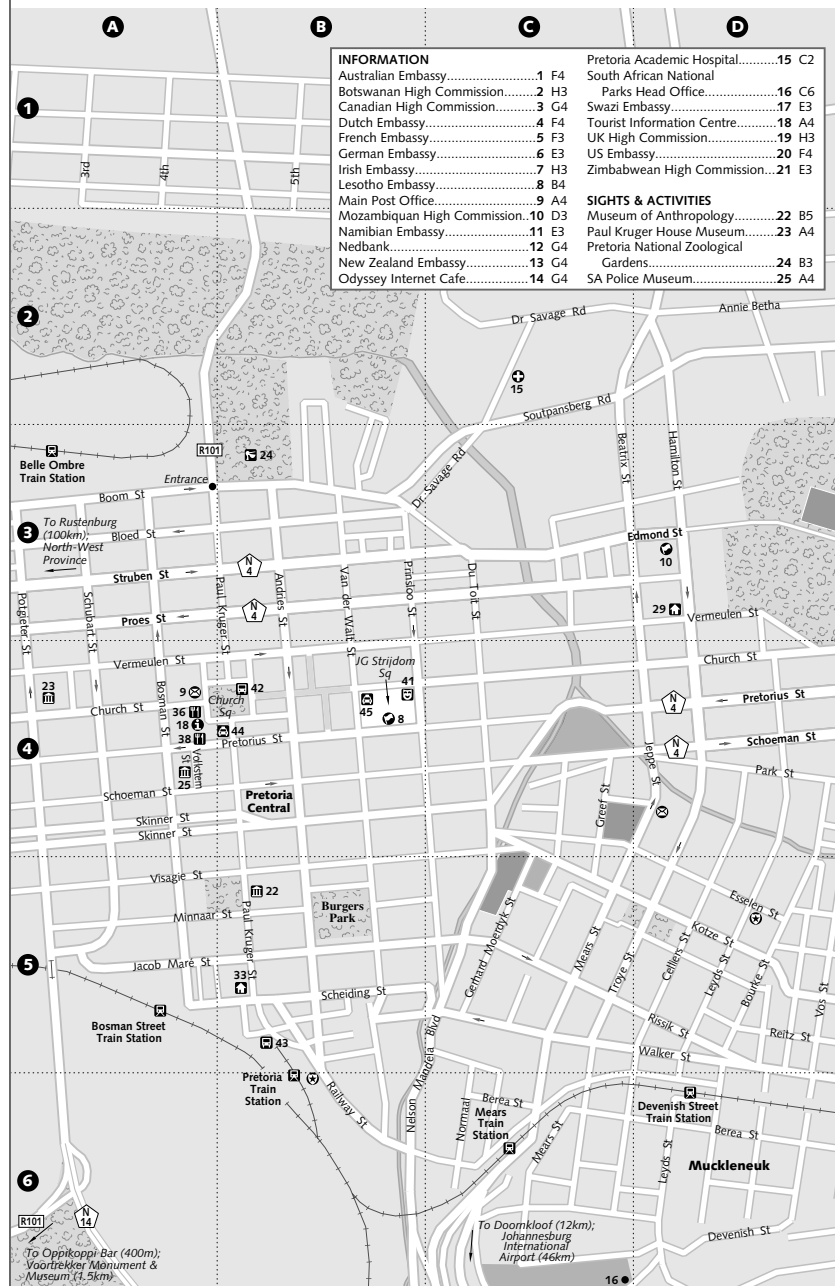
The monument is 3km south of the city. It is possible to catch the Voortrekkerhoogte or Valhalla bus from Kruger St near the corner of Church Sq. Ask the driver to let you off at the entrance road to the monument, from where it's a 10-minute walk uphill.

CHURCH SQUARE

At the heart of Pretoria, imposing public buildings surrounds **Church Square**. These include the Ou Raadsaal (Old Government) building on the southern side; the Old Capitol Theatre in the northwestern corner; First National Bank in the northeastern; the Palace of Justice, where the Rivonia Trial that sentenced Nelson Mandela to life imprisonment was held, on the northern side; the Old Nederlandsche Bank building, which adjoins the Café Riche and houses the Tourist Information Centre; and the main post office at the western side.

In the centre, a bronze sculpture of the 'Old Lion', Paul Kruger, looks disapprovingly at office workers lounging on the grass.

PRETORIA



PAUL KRUGER HOUSE MUSEUM

A short walk west from Church Sq is the **Paul Kruger House Museum** (☎ 012-326 9172; 60 Church St; adult/child US\$1.40/0.70; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri), the former residence of Paul Kruger. It's interesting, but it's difficult to get a feeling for the man among all the bric-a-brac.

MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Opposite City Hall, this **museum** (☎ 012-322 7632; Paul Kruger St; adult/child US\$1.40/0.90; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) has dioramas of various indigenous animals and birds. It's not exactly the Kruger, but you can't get malaria either.

SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE MUSEUM

The **police museum** (cnr Pretorius & Volkstem Sts; adult/child US\$1.40/0.90; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) is one of the city's better museums, with scores of exhibits covering the turbulent history of the nation's police force.

PRETORIA NATIONAL ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

About 1km north of the city centre is the **zoological gardens** (☎ 012-328 3265; cnr Paul Kruger & Boom Sts; adult/child US\$4.70/3; ☎ 8am-6pm). It's an impressive and pleasant enough spot to while away an afternoon, however the highlight is probably the cable car that runs up to the top of a hill that overlooks the city.

UNION BUILDINGS

These buildings are the headquarters of government. The impressive red sandstone structures – with a self-conscious imperial grandeur – are surrounded by expansive gardens and are home to the presidential offices.

Sleeping

Hatfield, with its bars and restaurants, has developed into something of a backpacker ghetto and along with Brooklyn and New Muckleneuk, is also the best place to start looking for midrange B&B options. The city also has its fair share of upmarket business and boutique hotels. Again, these tend to be east of the centre.

BUDGET

1322 Backpackers International (☎ 012-362 3905; www.1322backpackers.com; 1322 Arcadia St, Hatfield; camp sites/dm/s/d US\$6/9/13/16; ☎ ☎) A friendly hostel cleverly designed to mimic log-cabin accom-

modation despite its suburban setting. Dorm beds are made of chunky wood and have their own night lights.

North South Backpackers (☎ 012-362 0989; info@northsouthbackpackers.com; 355 Glyn St, Hatfield; camp sites/dm US\$6/11, s/d with shared bath US\$18/24; ☎ ☎ ☎) This hostel is within easy walking distance of the high life of Burnett St, but has a tirelessly convivial buzz of its own. Trimmings include tasty dinners, a savvy travel agency and a pleasant garden.

Bronberg Country Lodge (☎ 012-811 0497; www.bronbergbackpackers.co.za; Plot 207, Lynwood Rd, Tiegerpoort; camp sites/dm/d US\$7/9.50/28; ☎) On the eastern reaches of Pretoria, this rustic place offers a breath of fresh, country air. It's the perfect spot to escape back into the bush, or reinvigorate weary feet with a soak in the Jacuzzis.

Pretoria Backpackers (☎ 012-343 9754; www.pretoriabackpackers.net; 425 Farenden St; dm US\$11, s/d with shared bathroom US\$20/30; ☎ ☎ ☎) This is a large converted home close to Hatfield with a pleasant garden and fish pond, open-plan chilling area and spacious, wood-floored rooms.

MIDRANGE

That's It (☎ 012-344 3404; www.thatshit.co.za; 5 Brecher St, Clydesdale; s/d with breakfast US\$42/55; ☎ ☎ ☎) Located near the corner of Farenden St, this pleasant guesthouse in a leafy suburb has good-sized rooms.

Chancellor's Court (☎ 012-344 1404; www.chancellorscourt.co.za; 797 Park St, Clydesdale; s/d US\$47/54; ☎ ☎ ☎) A well-located, reader-recommended guesthouse with spacious (if somewhat old-fashioned) rooms. It's a good option for groups or families because of the four-bed self-catering family unit (US\$70).

Orange Court Lodge (☎ 012-326 6346; orangecourt@absamail.co.za; 540 Vermeulen St; 1-/2-/3-bedroom apt US\$54/108/162; ☎ ☎) On the corner of Hamilton St and not far from the Union Buildings, this oasis among the concrete jungle offers serviced apartments, with TV and kitchen.

TOP END

Victoria Hotel (☎ 012-323 6054; fax 012-324 2426; 200 Scheiding St; s/d with breakfast US\$60/83; ☎ ☎) Built in 1894, this gracious, historic place has 10 Victorian-style rooms with all the creature comforts.

Diplomat Guesthouse (☎ 012-344 3131; www.thediplomat.co.za; 822 Arcadia St, Arcadia; s/d with breakfast US\$78/103; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) An early-20th-century

home and its beautiful garden are the setting for this immaculately designed four-star guesthouse filled with impressive looking furniture.

Sheraton Pretoria (☎ 012-429 9999; www.sheraton.com; cnr Church & Wessels Sts; r from US\$109; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Pretoria's glitziest place, it offers all the reliable, spick-and-span Sheraton trimmings and top-notch service.

Eating

Most people head to Hatfield, Brooklyn and New Muckleneuk. There are few eating recommendations in the city centre due to safety considerations.

CITY CENTRE

Kariba Restaurant (☎ 012-326 5654; 1 Parliament St; mains US\$2.80-5.50; ☎) breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Based in the beautiful former Capitol Theatre, this efficient restaurant is a lunchtime favourite with local business types, thanks largely to its selection of hearty West- and South African dishes.

Café Riche (☎ 012-328 3173; 2 Church St; mains US\$4-8; ☎ lunch & dinner) This is one of Pretoria's more historic eateries, enjoying a choice spot right in the heart of the city's Church Sq.

HATFIELD & ARCADIA

Harrie's Pannekoek Huis (Harry's Pancake House; ☎ 012-342 3613; Eastwood Sq, Eastwood Rd; mains US\$4-5.40; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) A slick outfit offering something different for the palate – savoury and sweet pancakes with extremely imaginative fillings. We tried the pickled fish and sultana chutney variant.

Café 41 (☎ 012-342 8914; Eastwood Sq, Eastwood Rd; mains US\$4.70-13; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) A beautifully designed bistro-style restaurant with a massive menu and swift service. There's a large outdoor deck, and a hidden section that makes you forget you're in a shopping village.

Africa Traditional Pub & Grill (☎ 012-362 1604; cnr Prospect & Hilda Sts; mains US\$5.50; ☎ lunch & dinner) An outdoor deck, good food and traditional African beats make this one of the more upbeat, laid-back options in distinctly bourgeois Hatfield.

Jose's (☎ 012-430 7778; 235 Hilda St; mains US\$8; ☎ lunch & dinner) Platters of delicious Mediterranean foods mean you'll understand why this quality eatery is a local favourite. When it's plate-breaking nights (Fridays and Satur-

days), you'll understand why there's so much outdoor seating.

BROOKLYN & NEW MUCKLENEUK

Crawdaddy's (☎ 012-460 0589; Shop 3, Brooklyn Piazza, cnr Middle & Dey Sts; mains US\$5.50-8; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎) With faux-Louisiana-swamp styling, this surf-and-turf place has a jumping, bar-style atmosphere and no-nonsense steak and seafood tucker.

Blue Crane (☎ 012-460 7615; Melk St; mains US\$5.50-11; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎) This restaurant overlooks a lake that is the breeding site for the endangered blue crane, South Africa's national bird. It does Afrikaner *potjiekos* and the pub is great at sundown.

Cynthia's Indigo Moon (☎ 012-346 8926; 283 Dey St; mains US\$7-20; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎) A lot of cows laid down their lives to make this menu possible, but the steak is fabulous, the seafood sublime and the atmosphere cosy and stylish. It also has a colossal wine cellar.

Meat Company (☎ 012-460 2515; 273 Middle St; mains US\$9-16; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎) The house burger (US\$6) is becoming a local legend at this cavernous paeon to the carnivorous. Vegetarians don't despair: there's an impressive platter of greens (US\$7), too.

Drinking

There are several bars and nightspots in trendy Hatfield, catering for all types. Burnett St offers a high density of bars, eateries and clubs, all cut through with lashings of backpacker bravado and student shenanigans.

Cool Runnings (☎ 012-362 0100; 1075 Burnett St) Reggae rules the roost at this perennially popular drinking haunt, but anyone's welcome at the party. Nights get hot, steamy and really quite drunken after 10pm.

Herr Gunther's (☎ 012-362 6975; Hatfield Sq, Burnett St) A Germanic answer to the Irish bar, this raucous place serves 2L jugs of beer, and sausages to soak them up.

Eastwood's (☎ 012-344 0243; cnr Eastwood & Park Sts) This Arcadia institution is packed before, during and after any rugby encounter. It's won the 'best pub in Pretoria' award three years in a row, though clearly not in the integration stakes.

Oppikoppi Bar (☎ 082-499 7668) On Magasyn Hill (opposite the Voortrekker Monument), this is one of the best-located pubs in Pretoria. The views over the city are great, particularly at sunset, and the bar offers DIY braais.

Entertainment CINEMAS

There are several large cinema complexes in Pretoria. The *Pretoria News* lists screenings daily.

Ster-Kinekor (central bookings ☎ 082 16789; www.sterkinekor.co.za) also provides listings and makes bookings.

LIVE MUSIC & NIGHTCLUBS

Despite being home to a large student population, Pretoria's live-music scene can be a bit uninspiring. Check out the *Pretoria News* for the latest listings.

The surrounding townships, especially Mamelodi and Atteridgeville, have plenty of shebeens; these are best visited with a black friend or as part of a tour.

THEATRES

State Theatre (☎ 012-392 4000; www.statetheatre.co.za; cnr Prinsloo & Church Sts) hosts a range of productions – including opera, music, ballet and theatre.

Getting There & Away

AIR

OR Tambo International Airport is South Africa's international hub, with flights from across the globe. See p752 for information.

BUS

Most national and international bus services commence in Pretoria before picking up in Jo'burg, unless the general direction is north. Most long-distance buses leave from the **1928 Building** (Scheiding St) in the Pretoria train-station forecourt. You will also find booking and information offices here.

Most **Translux** (☎ 0861-589 282; www.translux.co.za), **City to City** (☎ 0861-589 282), **Intercape** (☎ 0861 287 287; www.intercape.co.za), **Greyhound** (☎ 012-323 1154; www.greyhound.co.za) and **SA Roadlink** (☎ 012-323 5105; www.saroadlink.co.za) services running from Jo'burg to Durban, the south coast and Cape Town originate in Pretoria. Services running north up the N1 also stop here – see p550 for full details of these services.

Translux, Greyhound and Intercape fares from Pretoria are identical to those from Jo'burg regardless of the one-hour difference in time. If you only want to go between the two cities, it will cost about US\$6.

Baz Bus (Cape Town ☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com) will pick up and drop off at Pretoria hostels.

North Link Tours (☎ 012-323 0379) also runs from the 1928 Building and heads north to Polokwane (Pietersburg; US\$1.40, 3½ hours), Tzaneen (US\$20, five hours) and Phalaborwa (US\$26, 6½ hours).

CAR

Many larger local and international companies are represented in Pretoria.

MINIBUS TAXIS

Minibus taxis go from the main terminal by the train station and travel to a host of destinations including Jo'burg (US\$4).

TRAIN

Main Line (☎ 0860 008 888; www.spoornet.co.za) trains running through Pretoria are the *Trans Karoo* (daily from Pretoria to Cape Town) and the *Komati* (daily from Jo'burg to Komatipoort via Nelspruit). The *Bosvelde* runs north via Polokwane (Pietersburg) to Musina, near the Zimbabwe border. The luxury *Blue Train*, which links Pretoria, Jo'burg and Cape Town originates here.

Pretoria train station is about a 20-minute walk from the city centre. Buses run along Paul Kruger St to Church Sq, the main local bus terminal.

METRO

Because of high incidents of crime, we don't recommend travelling between Pretoria and Jo'burg by Metro.

Getting Around TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

If you call ahead, most hostels, and many hotels, offer free pick-up.

Get You There (☎ 012-346 3175) runs shuttles between OR Tambo International Airport and Pretoria day and night about every hour, charging US\$13 to/from hostels and hotels.

BUS & MINIBUS TAXI

There's an extensive network of local buses. A booklet of timetables and route maps is available from the inquiry office in the main **bus terminus** (☎ 012-308 0839; Church Sq) or from pharmacies. Fares range from US\$0.70 to US\$0.90, depending on the distance.

TAXI

There are taxi ranks on the corner of Church and Van der Walt Sts, and on the corner of

Pretorius and Paul Kruger Sts. Or you can get a metered taxi from **Rixi Taxis** (☎ 0800 325 807; per km US\$1.10).

AROUND PRETORIA Smuts' House Museum

General JC Smuts was a brilliant scholar, Boer general, politician and international statesman. An architect of the Union of South Africa, he was the country's prime minister from 1919 to 1924, and 1939 to 1948.

Smuts' home was once known as Doornkloof and has been turned into an excellent **museum** (☎ 012-667 1941; smutshouse@worldonline.co.za; Nelmapius Rd, Irene; adult/child US\$0.70/0.40, picnic garden per car US\$0.70; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun). Surrounded by a wide veranda and shaded by trees, it has a family atmosphere, and gives a vivid insight into Smuts' amazing life.

The house is signposted from both the N14 freeway (US\$3.80) and Rte 21. The most direct route from Pretoria is along Louis Botha Ave to Irene.

De Wildt Cheetah Research Centre

Just past Hartbeespoort, about 50km north-west of Pretoria, is the highly impressive **De Wildt Cheetah Research Centre** (☎ 012-504 1921; www.dewildt.org.za; Farm 22, Rte 513 Pretoria North Rd; tours US\$25, cheetah runs US\$14; ☎ tours 8.30am & 1.30pm Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun, cheetah runs summer/winter 7am/8am Tue & Fri), famous for its breeding success of rare and endangered animals.

Work began at De Wildt in the 1960s and to a large degree it's thanks to the work done here that the cheetah is now off the endangered species list.

Tours provide a fascinating insight into some of Africa's most endangered predators. In an open truck you'll see cheetahs of different age groups being fed, and learn about their precarious existence in the wild. You can also go on a thrilling cheetah run, but only if you're fit! Bookings for all activities are essential and you should call at least a week in advance.

To get to De Wildt from Pretoria (via Hartbeespoort), take Rte 5131 northwest for 34km – the centre is on the left, about half a kilometre off the main road.

National Botanical Gardens

Around 9km east of the city centre, the **gardens** (☎ 012-114 3200; Cussonia Ave, Brummeria; adult/child

US\$1.40/0.70; ☎ 6am-6pm) cover 77 hectares and are planted with indigenous flora from around the country.

By car, head east along Church St (Rte 104) for about 8km, then turn right into Cussonia Rd; the gardens are on the left-hand side. Take the Meyerspark or Murrayfield bus from Church Sq.

FREE STATE

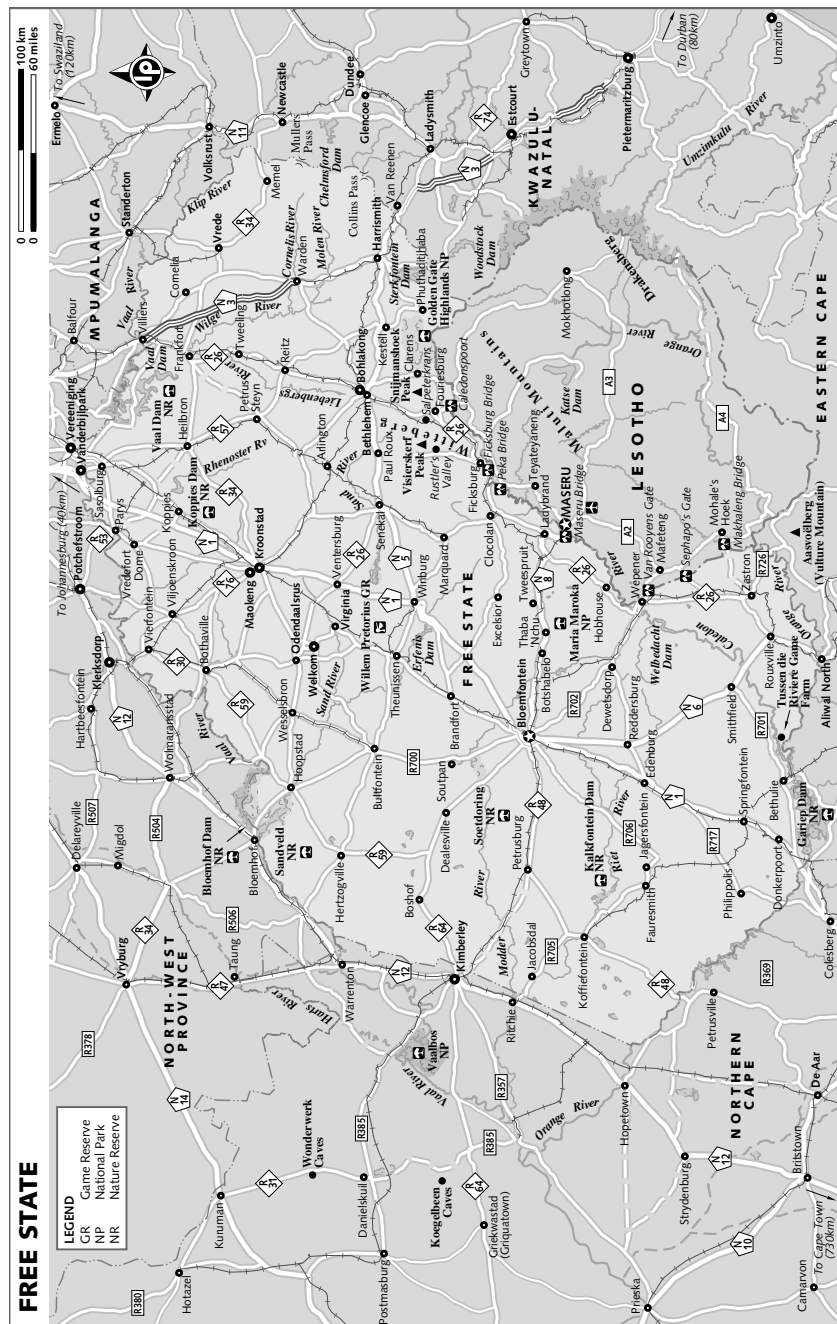
This is a place where farmers in floppy hats and overalls drive rusty bakkies full of sheep over bumpy roads; where giant fields of sunflowers languish by brightly painted Sotho houses. It's true that Free State doesn't hold any trump cards when it comes to South Africa's not-to-be-missed attractions. But if you travel to dig beneath the surface, a journey through the Free State can be a mind-opening experience. In this staunchly Afrikaans region it often seems the clock stopped ticking in the early 1990s. The line between the colours is stark, and dreams of an Afrikaner Arcadia live on. While there's no question that Free State has a long way to travel on the road to racial harmony, progress is happening. Today, even in the smallest rural villages, the once-impenetrable barrier between black and white is beginning to break apart.

BLOEMFONTEIN

☎ 051 / pop 480,499

Whether you're coming from Jo'burg or Cape Town, Kimberley or Lesotho, Bloemfontein's location, smack in the middle of the country at the intersection of a few major highways, makes it an ideal place to crash. Easy and safe to navigate, there are sophisticated restaurants and more than a few great pubs to drown the memory of a hard day's drive with icy pints of lager.

As the provincial capital of the Free State and South Africa's judicial capital, tourism in 'Bloem' (as the locals call it) is generally business oriented. But it's also a university town, so when school's in session, nightlife is raging. There's no real reason to go out of your way to visit Bloem, although it has a few interesting sights if you are in the neighbourhood. It's definitely more of a jumping-off point than anything else. However, if you've got some time to kill within city limits this relaxed place boasts a few interesting attractions,



including one of South Africa's most striking galleries.

History

Originally called Manguang (Place of Cheeta's) by the Tswana people who inhabited it, today the Afrikaans name translates to 'Fountain of Flowers'. Bloemfontein became the capital of the newly minted Orange Free State in 1854. At the time it was a struggling frontier village in constant danger of being wiped out by the soldiers of Sotho king Moshoeshoe. By the end of Johannes Brand's 25-year term as president, however, Bloem had grown into a wealthy city with imposing buildings and rail links to the coast.

Information

Connix Internet (☎ 051-448 5648; Loch Logan Waterfront; per hr US\$4) A flash place in the Waterfront shopping centre, with fast connections and prices to match.

Free State Department of Environmental Affairs & Tourism (☎ 051-405 4062; fax 051-403 3778; PO Box 264, Bloemfontein 9300) For information about national parks and reserves in the area.

Information centre (☎ 051-405 8489; www.bloemfontein.co.za; 60 Park Rd; ☎ 8am-4.15pm Mon-Fri; to noon Sat) Pick up a walking-tour map.

Tourist centre (Park Rd) Long-distance buses arrive here, and there are ticket counters for all major bus companies.

Sights & Activities

OLIEWENHUIS ART MUSEUM

One of South Africa's most striking art galleries, the **Oliewenhuis Art Museum** (☎ 051-447 9609; oliewen@nasmus.co.za; 16 Harry Smith St; admission by donation; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun), housed in an exquisite 1935 mansion, holds a collection of works by South African artists.

The museum's café has breakfast and lunch mains for US\$2.80 to US\$4.70 (it's closed on Monday).

NATIONAL WOMEN'S MEMORIAL & ANGLO-BOER WAR MUSEUM

Commemorating the 26,000 women and children who died in British concentration camps during the 1899-1902 Anglo-Boer War, the National Women's Memorial depicts a bearded Afrikaner, setting off on his pony to fight the British, bidding a last farewell to his wife and baby, who are to perish in one of the camps. It's a powerful image and one still buried in the psyche of many Afrikaners.

The memorial is in front of the **Anglo-Boer War Museum** (☎ 051-447 3447; Monument Rd; admission US\$0.70; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 2-5pm Sun), which has some interesting displays, including photos from concentration camps set up not only in South Africa, but also in Bermuda, India and Portugal.

MANGUANG

You can hang out in the shebeens or eat a simple meal at a local dive with people you're unlikely to meet on a trip to the Waterfront or the Mystic Boer (p563) in the vibrant Manguang township. Tours are informal and usually run for as long as you want. They cost about US\$27, with discounts for groups. Book at the Information Centre.

NAVAL HILL

This was the site of the British naval-gun emplacements during the Anglo-Boer War. On the eastern side of the hill is a large white horse, a landmark for British cavalry during the war.

There are good views from the top of the hill, where you'll also find the **Franklin Game Reserve** (☎ 051-405 8124; admission free; ☎ 8am-5pm). Walking is permitted, so get out of the car and hit the trail for a good old-fashioned bush romp.

WATERFRONT

Yes, Bloemfontein has a Waterfront, modelled on Cape Town's. Although it's a bit tacky, Bloem's Waterfront is more pleasant than a shopping mall. It's outside, set on a small body of water.

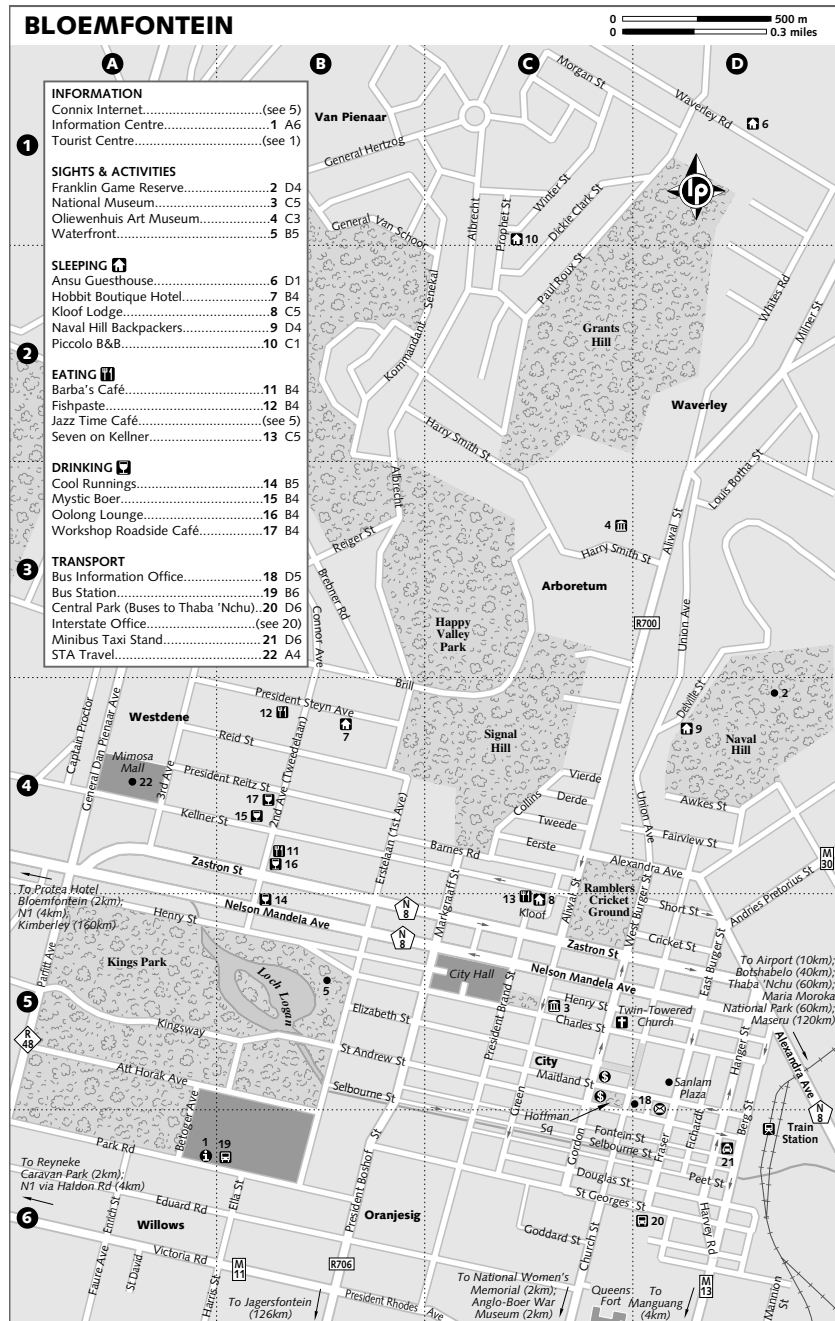
NATIONAL MUSEUM

A great re-creation of a 19th-century street, complete with sound effects, is the most interesting display at this **museum** (☎ 051-447 9609; 36 Aliwal St; admission US\$0.70; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, noon-5.30pm Sun). There is also a shop and a café here.

Sleeping BUDGET

Reyneke Caravan Park (☎ 051-523 3888; fax 051-523 3887; Petrusburg Rd; camp sites US\$9.50, s/d chalets US\$24/30; ☎) Two kilometres out of town, this well-organised park has a swimming pool, a trampoline and a basketball court. It's a good place for kids.

Naval Hill Backpackers (☎ 051-430 7266; www.navalhillbackpackers.co.za; Delville St; dm/d US\$11/24;



(P) This is an über-cool looking hostel with funky industrial décor. Unfortunately, we've had numerous reports from travellers of management giving the distinct impression that guests were intruding on a private party. Places can switch owners faster than guidebooks are published, however, so if the personnel change this has serious kickass backpacker potential.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Ansu Guesthouse (☎ 051-436 4654; www.ansuguesthouse.com; 80 Waverley Rd; s/d US\$30/35; (P) (Q)) The three modern rooms here are light and airy, done up in earthy colours and open onto a leafy garden area where there's a gazebo by the pool.

Piccolo B&B (☎ 051-436 1483; kay@imagineta.co.za; 4 Prophet St; r from US\$34; (P)) A perfect choice for families or small groups, Piccolo's offers an African-themed unit that can sleep four and a few other roomy options. The garden is filled with all sorts of birds.

Kloof Lodge (☎ 051-447 7603; kloof@global.co.za; 7 Kellner St; s/d US\$40/54; (P) (Q) (X)) This rambling place is nothing fancy, but perfectly fine for a night. There's a cosy bar and lounge and a very good restaurant, Seven on Kellner (right), just next door. Ask for the luxury room – it's huge, boasts cooler furniture and costs the same.

Hobbit Boutique Hotel (☎ 051-447 0663; www.hobbit.co.za; 19 President Steyn Ave; s/d with breakfast US\$80/108; (P) (Q) (Q) (Q)) Don't be scared off by the local Tolkien society that meets here, the charming, old-world Hobbit is the winner of numerous awards attracting romantics and dignitaries alike. The bedrooms are cottage-style and great views from the outdoor patio.

Protea Hotel Bloemfontein (☎ 051-444 4321; bloemf@iafrica.com; 202 Nelson Mandela Ave, Brandweg; s/d US\$87/130; (P) (Q) (Q)) Part of the Protea Luxury Collection, this upmarket place has all-white Asian-inspired rooms. You can order drinks on the terrace by the long, skinny pool in summer or check out the year-round on-site gourmet restaurant and cocktail bar with a fireplace.

Eating

Jazz Time Café (☎ 051-430 5727; Waterfront; mains US\$2.80-5; (Q) lunch & dinner) This hip eatery has an interesting menu featuring zippy zivas – Yemeni-style layered dough wrapped around a variety of fillings (such as Cajun chicken,

feta and avocado), folded and toasted. There are cocktails and jazz recitals of an evening.

Fishpaste (☎ 051-430 2662; 31 President Steyn Ave; mains US\$4-5; (Q) lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) Choose from blackened Canadian salmon with green-bean salad, Vietnamese prawn rolls or rolled pork fillet at this trendy, modern restaurant. The bar is buzzy and the prices extremely reasonable.

Barba's Café (☎ 051-430 2542; 16 2nd Ave; (Q) breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Barba's is recommended by locals and rightly so: it's one of Bloem's hidden secrets. The Greek specialities, including chicken souvlaki (US\$5), are delicious. It also has a large cocktail list and live music on Wednesday.

Seven on Kellner (☎ 051-447 7928; 7 Kellner St; mains US\$7-8; (Q) lunch & dinner) This place does everything from wood-fired pizzas to delicious Middle Eastern and Indian inspired delights. Afterwards, chill on the patio with a bottle of bubbly picked from the extensive wine list.

Drinking & Entertainment

As a university town, Bloemfontein has a good range of places to drink, party and listen to live music. The corners of 2nd Ave and Kellner St, and Zastron St and Nelson Mandela Ave, bustle with revellers in the evening and compete for the nightlife scene with the Waterfront.

Mystic Boer (☎ 051-430 2206; 84 Kellner St) Bloem's most popular pub and live music venue provides an eccentric twist to Afrikaner culture, with psychedelic pictures of long-bearded Boers on the walls. One 'big' band plays per month, plus there are regular gigs by unsigned rock and (sometimes) hip-hop outfits. Pizza and burgers provide the fuel.

Oolong Lounge (☎ 051-448 7244; 16A 2nd Ave; (Q) Tue-Sat) Bloem's latest hot spot, this ultra hip lounge attracts a trendy young crowd. The super-mod interior is slick and shiny with black leather chairs and space for dancing.

Cool Runnings (☎ 051-430 7364; 163 Nelson Mandela Ave; admission US\$7-10) Part of a nationwide chain of Caribbean-themed bar-restaurants, this Cool Runnings has DJs and live bands – mostly rock and blues – at weekends and karaoke on Sunday.

Workshop Roadside Café (☎ 051-447 2761; cnr 2nd Ave & President Reitz St) A large, raucous pub with loud music, a big-screen TV and a reputation as a bit of a bikers' hangout, it's a good place to sink a few beers.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Bloemfontein airport is 10km from the city centre and there is no transport to/from the airport, except private taxi.

SAAirlink (☎ 051-433 3225) and **Nationwide Airlines** (☎ 011 344 7200; www.flynationwide.co.za) connect Bloemfontein with Cape Town (US\$160) and Jo'burg (US\$135) among many other destinations.

STA Travel (☎ 051-444 6062; laudep@statravel.co.za; Mimosa Mall) can organise flights.

BUS

Long-distance buses leave from the tourist centre in Park Rd. **Translux** (☎ 051-408 4888; www.translux.co.za) runs daily buses to Durban (US\$20, nine hours), Jo'burg/Pretoria (US\$20, five hours), Port Elizabeth (US\$27, nine hours), East London (US\$24, seven hours), Knysna (US\$36, 12 hours) and Cape Town (US\$43, 10 hours).

Greyhound (☎ 051-447 1558; www.greyhound.co.za) runs daily buses to Durban (US\$31, 9½ hours), Pretoria (US\$27, seven hours), Cape Town (US\$48, 12 hours) and Port Elizabeth (US\$31, 10 hours).

A bus called **Interstate** (☎ 051-448 4951) runs from the information centre in Bloem to Thaba 'Nchu every hour (US\$1.40). There's also a shuttle bus to Bloem run by the hotels in Thaba 'Nchu daily except Tuesday and Thursday. The ticket price of US\$7 includes vouchers for drinks, food and a game on the casino tables. Book both at the tourist centre.

Big Sky Buses (www.bigskycoaches.co.za) operate from the Central Park shopping centre in St Georges St to Maseru in Lesotho (US\$4.70, three hours) at 6.10am and 2.10pm Monday to Friday.

MINIBUS TAXI

Most minibus taxis leave from opposite the train station for Maseru, Lesotho (US\$6, three hours), Kimberley (US\$7, four hours) and Jo'burg (US\$11, six hours). There's usually at least one bus daily, but times vary.

TRAIN

The **Shosholozo Meyl** (☎ 0860 008 888; www.spoor.net.co.za) *Trans Oranje* travels weekly via Bloemfontein between Cape Town (1st/2nd/economy class US\$52/36/21) and Durban (US\$36/25/15). The *Algoa* runs five times weekly via Bloemfontein between Jo'burg

(1st/2nd/economy US\$19/14/7, about seven hours) and Port Elizabeth (US\$32/22/13). The *Amatola* runs five times weekly via Bloemfontein on the run between Jo'burg (1st/2nd/economy US\$19/14/7) and East London (US\$28/20/11). The *Diamond Express* runs three times weekly between Bloemfontein and Jo'burg (1st/2nd/economy US\$19/14/12).

Getting Around

Bloem's public-bus system, Interstate, provides infrequent services that finish early in the evening. The best place for schedules and information is the **Interstate office** (☎ 051-448 4951) in the Central Park shopping centre in St Georges St. There is also a **bus information office** (Hoffman Sq).

NORTHERN FREE STATE

Gold was discovered in this part of the Free State in April 1938 and a rush started immediately. Now the Free State goldfields produce more than a third of the country's output. Unless you're really interested in mining or yearning to spend a few days on a farm, there's not much to attract travellers to the northern Free State.

Kroonstad

☎ 056 / pop 106,064

Kroonstad, on the N1, is a typical large, rural Free State town and makes a good base for exploring nearby Koppies Dam Nature Reserve.

The **old market building** (cnr Mark & Murray Sts), opposite the pretty magistrate's building, is a national monument. You can see the **Celliers statue** in the grounds of the impressive **NG Moederkerk** (Mother Church; Cross St). Sarel Celliers is standing on a gun carriage making the Blood River vow.

The 4000-hectare **Koppies Dam Nature Reserve** (☎ 056-72 2521; ☎ 7am-9pm), located about 70km northeast of Kroonstad on the Rhenoster River, is popular with anglers.

It's easy to find the **Arcadia Guesthouse** (☎ 056-212 8280; arcadia@gcs.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$38/47) in town. The classical theme extends from the rooms to large garden scattered with faux-Greek statues. Dinner can be arranged (US\$8).

There are daily Translux, Intercape and Greyhound services to Jo'burg/Pretoria (US\$20, four hours), East London (US\$30, 10 hours) and Paarl (US\$32, 14 hours). All

buses stop out on the highway at the Shell Ultra City.

EASTERN HIGHLANDS

Bumped up against the wild and rugged mountains that guard Lesotho's border, this is the most beautiful portion of the Free State and well worth exploring. The region boasts sandstone monoliths towering above undulating golden fields, hippy hideaways, fabulous country retreats and South Africa's newest art destination, trendy little Clarens.

Golden Gate Highlands National Park

The **Golden Gate Highlands National Park** (☎ 058-255 0012; fax 255 0022; admission per vehicle US\$8) might not boast any of the Big Five, but if you're in the area don't miss spending a sunset here. The scenery from the western approach is pretty tempting – loads of blazing sandstone and rusting old cars – but only stop here for a few moments, then head out into the open and take the turn-off for the Basatho Cultural Village. You'll now be off the main road and in the middle of the grasslands. Pull out a bottle of good South African red and toast the end of another perfect African day.

There are plenty of animals in the park, including blesboks, elands, oribis, grey rheboks, Burchell's zebras, jackals, baboons and numerous bird species, including the rare bearded and Cape vulture. Winters (June to August) in the park can be very cold, with frost and snow; summers (January to March) are mild but rain falls at this time and cold snaps are possible. Buy entry permits at the park reception.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Rhebok Hiking Trail

This well-maintained, circular, 33km trail (US\$9.50 per person) is a two-day trek and a great way to see the park. On the second day the track climbs up to a viewpoint on the side of Generaalskop (2732m), the highest point in the park, from where Mont-aux-Sources and the Malutis can be seen. The return trail to Glen Reenen passes Langtoon Dam.

Hikers need to be reasonably fit. The trail is limited to 18 people at a time and must be booked through **SAN Parks** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org).

There are also shorter hiking trails in the foothills, ranging from 45 minutes to half a day.

Basotho Cultural Village

Within the park you'll find the small **Basotho Cultural Village** (☎ 058-721 0300; basotho@dorea.co.za; tours US\$2.80; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun), essentially an open-air museum, peopled by actors depicting various aspects of traditional Sotho life. There's a curio shop and an outdoor restaurant, open for lunch and dinner, serving a few Sotho dishes.

A two-hour guided hiking trail (US\$3.40 per person) explores medicinal and other plants, and a rock-art site. You can stay in two-person self-catering rondavels (US\$54), but bring your own food.

SLEEPING

Glen Reenen Rest Camp (☎ 011-428 9111; 2-person camp sites US\$13, d chalets US\$51) Popular with South Africans on holiday, with well-maintained chalets and camp sites by the river.

Protea Hotel Golden Gate (☎ 058-255 1000; www.proteahotels.com/goldengate; s/d around US\$48/67, d chalets US\$63, buffet dinner US\$11; ☎) The park's only 'proper' hotel is fabulously located up against red sandstone cliffs, boasting wonderful terrace views and a snug coffee shop.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Minibus taxis run between Bethlehem and Harrismith, via Clarens and Phuthaditjhaba, and go right through the park. Alternatively, with your own vehicle you can approach from Harrismith on Rte 74 and then Rte 712.

Clarens

☎ 058

The jewel of the Free State, Clarens is one of those places you stumble upon expecting little then find yourself talking about long after you depart. Set against a backdrop of craggy limestone rocks, hunter-green hills, spun-gold fields and the magnificent Maluti Mountains, this town of whitewashed buildings, sophisticated art galleries and quiet shady streets is the perfect bucolic country retreat.

Mountain Odyssey Tourism (☎ 058-256 1173; www.infoclarens.com; Main St; ☎ 8am-6pm) is a one-stop shop for all things outdoors. Popular excursions include white-water rafting (US\$51, three hours) and horse riding (US\$24, two hours).

SLEEPING

Clarens Inn (☎ 058-256 1119; schwim@netactive.co.za; 93 Van Reenan St; r per person US\$14) Run by the same

friendly folks that operate Mountain Odyssey Tourism, this is the town's best budget option.

Lake Clarens Guesthouse (☎ 058-256 1436; weyer@intercom.co.za; r per person with breakfast from US\$30) This impeccably maintained guesthouse offers buckets of intimate country charm and luxuriously appointed bedrooms. There are fabulous views from the terrace, where you can enjoy a hearty morning breakfast or a cup of late afternoon tea.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are a few minibus taxis to Bethlehem and Harrismith from Clarens – although frequencies and costs weren't exactly clear.

Fouriesburg

☎ 058

Entirely surrounded by wild, craggy mountains, Fouriesburg occupies a magnificent spot just 12km north of the Caledonspoor border post to Lesotho. Two nearby peaks are the highest in Free State.

Fouriesburg was a stronghold in the Anglo-Boer War and was pronounced the capital of Free State after the British occupied Bethlehem. There are a number of fine old **sandstone buildings** in the town including President Steyn's house.

About 11km outside Fouriesburg, and just 800m from the Lesotho border, **Camelroc Guest Farm** (☎ 058-223 0368; www.camelroc.co.za; dm US\$8, r per person US\$25, chalets from US\$52) sits in a spectacular location against a camel-shaped sandstone outcropping with fine views over the Maluti Mountains. It's a great rustic retreat, offering a variety of sleeping options.

Rustler's Valley

☎ 051

To journey into the wildly beautiful heart of nowhere, ditch the pavement and head down brown dusty byways to random oases scattered amid this rough-and-ready countryside. This remote valley is located off Rte 26 between Fouriesburg and Ficksburg.

Rustler's Valley Retreat (☎ 051-933 3939; www.rustlers.co.za; dm US\$9, r from US\$34; 🍷), the country's original hippy hangout, is an 'experimental area' meaning you'll find people in various altered mental states. There's an on-site restaurant and digs in either dorms or private cottages. A variety of workshops, from drumming to permaculture are taught.

The retreat does pick-ups (US\$2.80) from Ficksburg.

In the same area, just a few kilometres in the other direction, is the **Franshoek Mountain Lodge** (☎ 051-933 2828; www.franshoek.co.za; r per person US\$34; 🍷), perfect if you're looking for a completely opposite experience. It's a working farm with comfortable sandstone cottages, a terrific round swimming pool, Zulu steam room and great views of the valley.

Ficksburg

☎ 051

Nestled against the purple majesty of the Maluti Mountains on the banks of the Caledon River, Ficksburg is particularly spectacular in winter when the mountains are topped with whipped-cream dollops of snow.

Ficksburg is the centre of the Free State's cherry industry. There's a **Cherry Festival** (www.cherryfestival.co.za) in November but September and October are the best times to see the trees in bloom. The **Cherry Trail** is a tourist route around the district; get a map from the **tourist office** (☎ 051-933 2130; 🗺️ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) in the Caltex office on the main road.

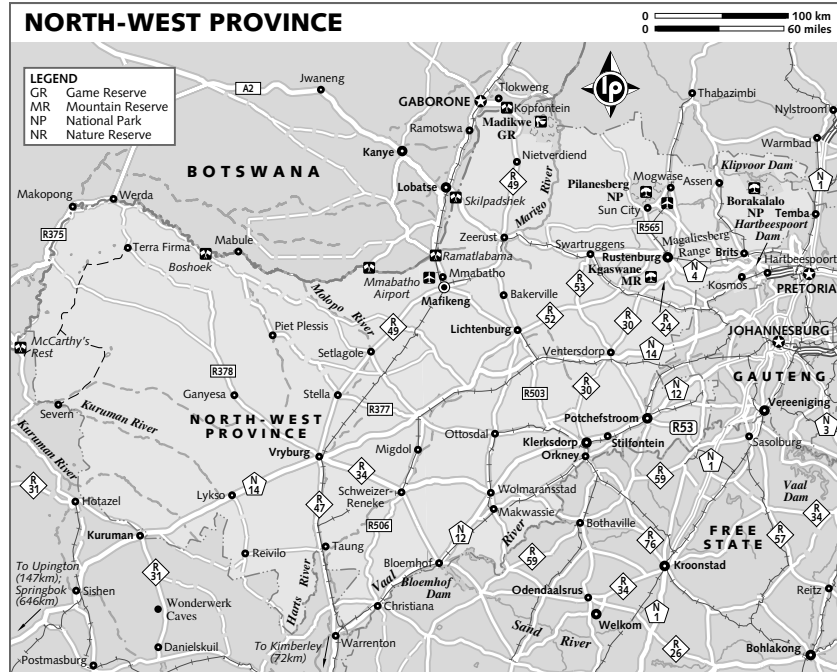
The **Bella Rosa Guesthouse** (☎ 051-933 2623; bellarosa@telkomsa.net; 21 Bloem St; r per person US\$34; 🍷) is in a charming, Victorian sandstone building. The 12 guest rooms are decked out with fine antiques and modern artwork. Dinner can be arranged, and there's a cosy pub with a well-stocked wine cellar.

NORTH-WEST PROVINCE

With some of its most revered attractions just two hours from Jo'burg, the North-West Province provides the perfect antidote for escaping big-city clutter. Home to some of the country's best-kept secrets, the region offers something for anyone – from music lovers to safari addicts to gamblers.

The Disney-esque Sun City and Lost City casino resorts are South Africa's most opulent and kitschy theme parks. Once an exclusive sanctuary for the white elite, today the apartheid-era's most famous retreat is a multicultural place popular with South Africans of all colours (along with plenty of tourists).

When you tire of artificial beaches, head into the wild. Nearby Pilanesberg National Park is our pick for a quick safari. Further afield, Madikwe Game Reserve is one of



South Africa's best open secrets. Even though it's closer to Jo'burg than Kruger, and teeming with the same animals, it sees far fewer visitors.

HISTORY

The North-West Province takes in much of the area once covered by the fragmented apartheid homeland of Bophuthatswana (often shortened to 'Bop'), dumping ground for thousands of 'relocated' Tswana people. The nominally independent homeland became famous for the excesses of the white South African men, who visited its casinos and pleasure resorts for interracial encounters with prostitutes, which would have been illegal in South Africa itself.

The North-West Province was the site of a complex and sophisticated Iron-Age civilisation centred on the 'lost city' of Kadiitshwene, about 30km north of modern-day Zeerust. The people who lived here had an economy so developed they traded copper and iron jewellery with China. By 1820, when European missionaries first visited the city, it was bigger than Cape Town. In the end the peace-loving

inhabitants of Kadiitshwene proved no match for the aggression of the Sotho, displaced by Zulu incursions into the Free State. The city was sacked by a horde of 40,000 people and fell into ruins.

Diamonds were discovered in the province in the 1870s, resulting in an enormous rush to the fields around Lichtenburg. Mining is still important here and there are extensive platinum mines near Rustenburg.

RUSTENBURG

☎ 014 / pop 123,000

Sitting at the edge of the Magaliesberg Range, Rustenburg is a large and prosperous mining town about 115km northwest of Jo'burg. There's no particular reason to visit, other than it makes a handy base if you're visiting nearby Sun City or Pilanesberg National Park and wanting to stay elsewhere (budget travellers will find this option particularly appealing).

On the way into Rustenburg, you'll find the well-stocked **tourist information centre** (☎ 014-597 0904; Main Rd; 🗺️ 7.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat).

Sleeping & Eating

Joan's B&B (☎ 014-533 3086; joan@joansbnb.co.za; 61 Wildevy Ave, Protea Park; s/d with breakfast US\$20/34) Joan's is a good old-fashioned B&B offering simple but tidy rooms; the owners serve a hearty breakfast.

Bushwillows B&B (☎ 014-537 2333; wjmcgill@lantic.net; s/d US\$20/41) This is a lovely option about 12km outside town off Rte 24. Set in natural bush, it's a tranquil B&B and the friendly owner (an artist) knows a lot about South African wildlife.

Traveller's Inn (☎ 014-592 7658; travinn@mweb.co.za; 99 Leyds St; s/d with half board US\$40/74) This guest-house is our top choice in town considering rates include breakfast and dinner and the rooms are comfy and well appointed.

Karl's Bauernstube (☎ 014-537 2128; Rte 24; mains US\$2.80-5; ☞ lunch & dinner Tue-Fri, dinner Sat, lunch Sun) An Austrian restaurant offering delights such as smoked warthog and sauerkraut (US\$5.50), and crocodile ragout (US\$4.70).

Getting There & Away

Intercape (☎ 0861 287 287; www.intercape.co.za) stops in Rustenburg daily on its run between Pretoria (US\$15, four hours) and Gaborone, Botswana (US\$20, five hours). The bus stops at the **BP petrol station** (cnr Van Staden & Smit Sts), from where you can catch a minibus taxi into town (about US\$0.70).

SUN CITY

☎ 014

Welcome to Sun City, South African style. At **Sun City** (☎ 014-557 1000; www.suncity.co.za; admission US\$8), the legendary creation of entrepreneur Sol Kerzer, Disneyland collides with ancient Egypt in a demented attempt to look like Vegas. Filled with gilded statues of lions and monkeys, acres of artificial beaches, exploding volcanoes and hundreds upon hundreds of clinking slot machines, there's no question this gambling-centric resort is almost grotesquely gaudy, yet a visit here can also be pretty damn fun.

Started as an apartheid-era haven for wealthy whites, these days one of Sun City's best features is the mix of black, white and especially Asian people who flock here at weekends. Losers at the tables can also console themselves with the thought that they are helping to pay over 3500 salaries.

If you're tired of just hanging around the hostel, Sun City is a pretty good bargain. The

admission fee covers all the main attractions, and you'll also be given 30 'Sunbucks' (equal to about US\$4), which can be spent at the various restaurants, shops or slot machines. Of course if you've got the cash to splash out, this place also boasts one of the world's most luxurious hotels.

Sights & Activities

The best part of Sun City is undeniably **Lost City**, which is entered over a bridge flanked by life-sized fake elephants, and basically consists of **Valley of the Waves**, a pool with a large-scale wave-making machine, a sandy beach, numerous water slides and other amusement park rides. Every hour or so a voice booms out some nonsense about lost civilisations and earthquakes from a hidden mike, and the bridge shakes while dry ice pours out of either side. It's cheesy, but fun.

You'll find separate smoking and non-smoking casinos in the **entertainment centre**. Done up in a jungle theme with animal murals painted on the dome ceiling, it also houses food courts, shops and movie theatres.

In the heart of Lost City is **Palace of the Lost City**, a hotel that could inspire hallucinations, but to which access is prohibited to all but its lucky – and wealthy – guests.

Eighteen holes at the superb **Gary Player Country Club** or the **Lost City Golf Course** cost US\$67 (US\$47 for hotel guests).

Near the main entrance is **Waterworld**, on the shores of a large artificial lake, which has facilities for parasailing (US\$50), jet skiing (US\$32) and water-skiing (US\$32).

Sleeping

If the Sun City hotels are too expensive (and you have your own transport), consider staying at Pilanesberg National Park (opposite) or the town of Rustenburg (left) and making the complex a day trip only.

All the following hotels can be booked through **Sun City** (☎ 014-557 1000; www.suncity.co.za) or **Sun International central reservations** (☎ 011-780 7800; www.suninternational.com).

Sun City Cabanas (r from US\$160; ☞ ☞) The cheapest option in the complex, is laid-back and aimed at family groups. Rooms are modern with all the typical upmarket conveniences.

Sun City Hotel (r from US\$280; ☞ ☞) The most lively of the hotels, with gambling facilities on the premises, as well as a number of res-

taurants, a nightclub and an entertainment centre.

Cascades (r from US\$322; ☞ ☞) The Cascades has been displaced by the Palace of the Lost City as the most luxurious hotel in the complex, but the rooms are still easily described as palatial.

Palace of the Lost City (r from US\$470; ☞ ☞) This over-the-top property redefines the fantasy of luxury. The rooms are done up with bold-coloured carpets and duvets and hand-painted ceilings but they seem almost unimaginative compared with the awesome public spaces and water-filled botanical gardens.

Eating

All the hotels have a selection of restaurants. There are plenty of fast-food joints in the entertainment centre. Your 30 Sunbucks will just about get you a burger and a soft drink.

Getting There & Away

Tiny Pilanesberg Airport is about 9km east of the Sun City complex. **SAairlink** (☎ 011-978 1111; www.sairlink.co.za) operates flights six times a week from Jo'burg (US\$70) and three times a week from Cape Town (US\$140). From the airport, you'll need to hire a car or arrange for your hotel to pick you up.

From Jo'burg it's a two-hour drive. The most straightforward route is via Rustenburg and Boshhoek on the Rte 565.

PILANESBERG NATIONAL PARK

Don't be fooled into thinking this **national park** (☎ 014-555 5356; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40, per vehicle US\$2; ☞ dawn-dusk) is some kind of tacky superannuated zoo just because it's nearly on top of Sun City. In reality, at over 500 sq km it's the fourth-largest national park in South Africa, with impressive scenery, particularly in the area around Mankwe Lake, which is the centre of an extinct 1200-million-year-old volcano.

All the big cats are here, and along with the lions and leopards and cheetahs, you'll also find jackals, hyenas, white and black rhinos, elephants, giraffes, hippos, buffalos, zebras and a wide variety of antelopes. Since early 2000, African wild dogs can be seen here too. The region also has a diverse population of birds.

There is an excellent 100km network of gravel roads, hides and picnic spots, and some good-value accommodation. Since it is no more than 25km from one end of the park to

the other, it is easy to cover the range of different environments in the park and to see a wide variety of animals. On no account should you miss the viewpoints over the crater from Lenong Lookout.

You'll either need to join an organised tour from Jo'burg or Pretoria or have your own transport to visit the park. **Footprints in Africa** (☎ 083-302 1976; www.footprintsinafrica.com; 425 Farenden St, Pretoria) based at the Pretoria Backpackers runs two-day Pilanesberg safaris, that also visit Sun City, starting at US\$160 per person.

Sleeping & Eating

Manyane Complex & Caravan Park (☎ 014-555 5351; www.goldenleopard.co.za; camp sites US\$19, 2-person safari tent US\$47, d/tr chalet with breakfast from US\$98/152; ☞ ☞) Near Manyane Gate, this complex has posh chalets with high-quality facilities, including a shop and a decent restaurant. Rates include a hearty breakfast buffet.

Bakgatla Complex (☎ 014-555 5351; www.goldenleopard.co.za; camp sites US\$25, d safari tent US\$118, d/tr chalet with breakfast US\$123/132; ☞ ☞) The luxury safari tents at this site north-west of Manyane gate come with full baths and covered porches. Rates include a buffet breakfast.

Kwa Maritane Lodge (s/d with breakfast & dinner US\$216/297; ☞ ☞ ☞), **Bakubung Lodge** (s/d with breakfast & dinner US\$216/297; ☞ ☞ ☞) and **Tshukudu Lodge** (s/d with full board US\$472/675; ☞ ☞ ☞), all run by **Legacy hotels** (☎ 011-806 6806; www.legacyhotels.co.za), are the park's three main luxury options; Tshukudu is the most exclusive.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are four gates into Pilanesberg. Enter from the direction of Sun City using either Bakubung Gate to the west (via Rte 556) or Manyane Gate to the northeast (via Rte 556 and Rte 510 if you're coming from Pretoria and Jo'burg).

Madikwe Game Reserve

One of the largest reserves in South Africa, **Madikwe** (☎ 083-629 8282) comprises 760 sq km of bushveld, savanna grassland and riverine forest on the edge of the Kalahari Desert. The reserve was established in 1991, not only to protect the endangered wildlife, but as a job-creation scheme and a way of providing a more sustainable environment for local people. A massive seven-year translocation operation, called Operation Phoenix, brought more than 10,000 animals into the area. All

of the Big Five, plus the endangered wild dog, are now present, together with over 350 bird species. It's also malaria-free, making it a good option for children. In all Madikwe is one of South Africa's best-kept secrets.

SLEEPING & EATING

Madikwe is not open to day visitors, so to visit you'll have to book into one of the 24 lodges and camps within the park, all of which do guided wildlife drives in open vehicles.

Mosethla Bush Camp (☎ 011-444 9345; www.thebushcamp.com; s/d with full board & shared bathroom US\$216/337) There's nothing fancy about this intimate camp with abodes in open-fronted log cabins, especially since there's no electricity or running water – canvas bucket showers and hot water boilers ensure it's still comfortable. Rates include bush walks, wildlife drives and all meals.

Jaci's Lodges (☎ 083-00 2071; www.madikwe.com; s/d with full board around US\$870/1081, children US\$200; ☎ ☎ ☎) For sheer luxury, panache and design flair, Jaci's two lodges – Safari Lodge and Tree Lodge – can compete with anywhere else in Africa.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

It takes about four hours to drive from Gauteng to the reserve gates via the N4 and the Rte 510 from Rustenburg, or Rte 49 from Zeerust. Buses on their way from Gaborone can be prevailed upon to stop in the reserve.

MAFIKENG

☎ 018 / pop 50,900

Mafikeng and Mmabatho were originally twin towns about 3km apart, but are now combined and Mmabatho is part of Mafikeng. Mmabatho was built as the capital of the 'independent' homeland of Bophuthatswana, and became famous for the monumental and absurd buildings erected by corrupt Bophuthatswana president, Lucas Mangope.

Today Mafikeng is a friendly and relaxed town with a large middle-class black population. The main reason to visit is the excellent **Mafikeng Museum** (☎ 018-381 6102; cnr Carrington & Martin Sts; admission by donation; ☎ 8am–4pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat), which has reams of quirky exhibits and photos on the region dating from prehistoric times onward.

For help and information visit the rather grand **Mafikeng Tourism Info & Development Centre** (☎ 018-381 3155; www.tourismnorthwest.co.za;

cnr Lichtenburg Rd & Nelson Mandela Dr; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, to noon Sat).

Sleeping

Garden View Guest Lodge (☎ 018-381 3110; cnr North & Havenga Sts; s/d with shared bathroom from US\$20/30; ☎) This is Mafikeng's best option in this price bracket; pay around US\$14 extra and you'll get an en-suite room. All the spick-and-span rooms have a TV, fridge and kitchenette, and there's a very convivial restaurant-bar.

Ferns Country Lodge (☎ 018-381 5971; ferns@worldonline.co.za; 12 Cook St; r US\$80; ☎ ☎ ☎) Ferns is stylish and elegant with ultramodern furnishings and a beautiful garden. It's well sign-posted off Shippard St.

Tusk Mmabatho Resort (☎ 018-389 1111; mma batho@tusk-resorts.co.za; Nelson Mandela Dr; r US\$120; ☎ ☎ ☎) Mafikeng's luxury option, this opulent resort and casino, 3.5km from the town centre, is a legacy of the old Bophuthatswana homeland.

Eating

Café Farma (☎ 018-381 4906; 17 Nelson Mandela Dr; mains US\$2.80; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon–Sat) In Era's Pharmacy, this is the place for breakfast, light meals and heavy cakes. The atmosphere is buzzing.

Karibu Restaurant (☎ 018-386 2222; Nelson Mandela Dr; mains US\$6–8; ☎ lunch & dinner) This grand restaurant in the Belvoir Place Hotel does good meals and has delightfully old-fashioned service: the plates come covered with silver domes, which the tuxedoed waiters remove with a flourish.

Getting There & Around

Many people come through Mafikeng on their way to/from Botswana. Ramatlabama, 24km to the north, is the busiest border post and lies on the main route to/from Gaborone (Botswana).

SAairlink (☎ 011-978 1111; www.saairlink.co.za) has flights four days a week to Jo'burg (US\$120) with connections to other cities. The airport is 16km northwest of Mafikeng.

Mmabatho Buses (☎ 018-381 2680; Megacity) operates daily services from Megacity to Jo'burg (US\$1.40, six hours).

Long-distance minibus taxis leave from the forecourt of the Mafikeng train station, headed for the Botswana border (US\$0.70, running all day); Zeerust (US\$2); Lobatse (Botswana; US\$2.80); Gaborone (US\$4.70);

and Rustenburg (US\$4). Most leave early in the morning.

City buses run along the route between the **Mafikeng stop** (cnr Main St & Station Rd) and Megacity for a few rand.

LIMPOPO

Modern Limpopo sits at a key crossroads between Botswana, Zimbabwe, Kruger National Park and Gauteng, and is often considered a doormat into more exotic destinations. But driving along the busy N1 highway that connects these places gives little impression of what gems lie off the beaten path.

Heading north from Jo'burg, southwest Limpopo (the Bushveld) undulates into scrubby hills that are home to several wildlife parks, lodges and resorts, including the hot springs at Bela-Bela. Big Five spotters will be better off heading north to the spectacular Mapungubwe National Park, a World Heritage Site that gives Kruger a run for its money.

East of the N1, the dry landscape gives way to the tropical fruit farms of the Letaba Valley and the intriguing traditional homeland of the Venda people.

HISTORY

Sites in the area have offered up an archaeological record stretching back more than 500,000 years, while the area that is now Mapungubwe National Park was once the heart of one of Africa's most technologically advanced civilisations, holding sway over an area of 30,000 sq km and enjoying its heyday in the 8th and 9th centuries.

The Voortrekkers made this region home in the mid-19th century, establishing their base in Pietersburg (now Polokwane) in 1886. Conflict with the local Ndebele people marked a period of resistance against the settlers.

Around the turn of the 20th century, eastern Limpopo, near the borders with Mozambique and Zimbabwe, earned a reputation as a haven for ivory hunters, gunrunners and other outlaws – so much so that it was dubbed 'Crook's Corner'.

The province, which has one of the highest poverty rates in the country, is also a hot spot of racial tension: in 2005 some 35 farms were attacked, leading to the deaths of 13 white farmers.

THE N1 HIGHWAY

The wide, mostly straight (but heavily tolled) N1 highway running from Jo'burg and Pretoria to the Zimbabwe border divides Limpopo. The province's major towns line this route, including the provincial capital of Pietersburg/Polokwane.

Translux, Greyhound and City to City buses run along the N1, and the *Bosveld* train stops at towns along the N1.

Bela-Bela (Warmbaths)

☎ 014 / pop 37,200

The small, soporific town of Bela-Bela (Warmbaths) has grown on the back of the hot springs discovered by the Tswana in the early 19th century. Around 22,000L of the warm stuff bubble out of the earth every hour and there's no shortage of folk from the big cities to soak it up.

The **hydro spa** (☎ 014-736 2200; www.aventura.co.za; Voortrekker St; adult/child US\$8/7, 5–10pm adult & child US\$5.50; ☎ 7am–4pm & 5–10pm), at the Aventura Resort, is said to be the second biggest of its kind in the world and certainly sits at the centre of the Bela-Bela universe. Admission is cheaper in the evening.

Nylsley Nature Reserve

The 3000-hectare **Nylsley Nature Reserve** (☎ 014-743 1074; adult/child/vehicle US\$1.40/0.70/2.70; ☎ 6am–6pm), 20km south of Naboom, is one of the country's best places to see birds (there are 426 species listed) and has a basic **camp site** (☎ 014-743 1074; camp sites US\$7). For the reserve, head 13km south on the N1 and turn east on to the road to Boekenhout for 8km.

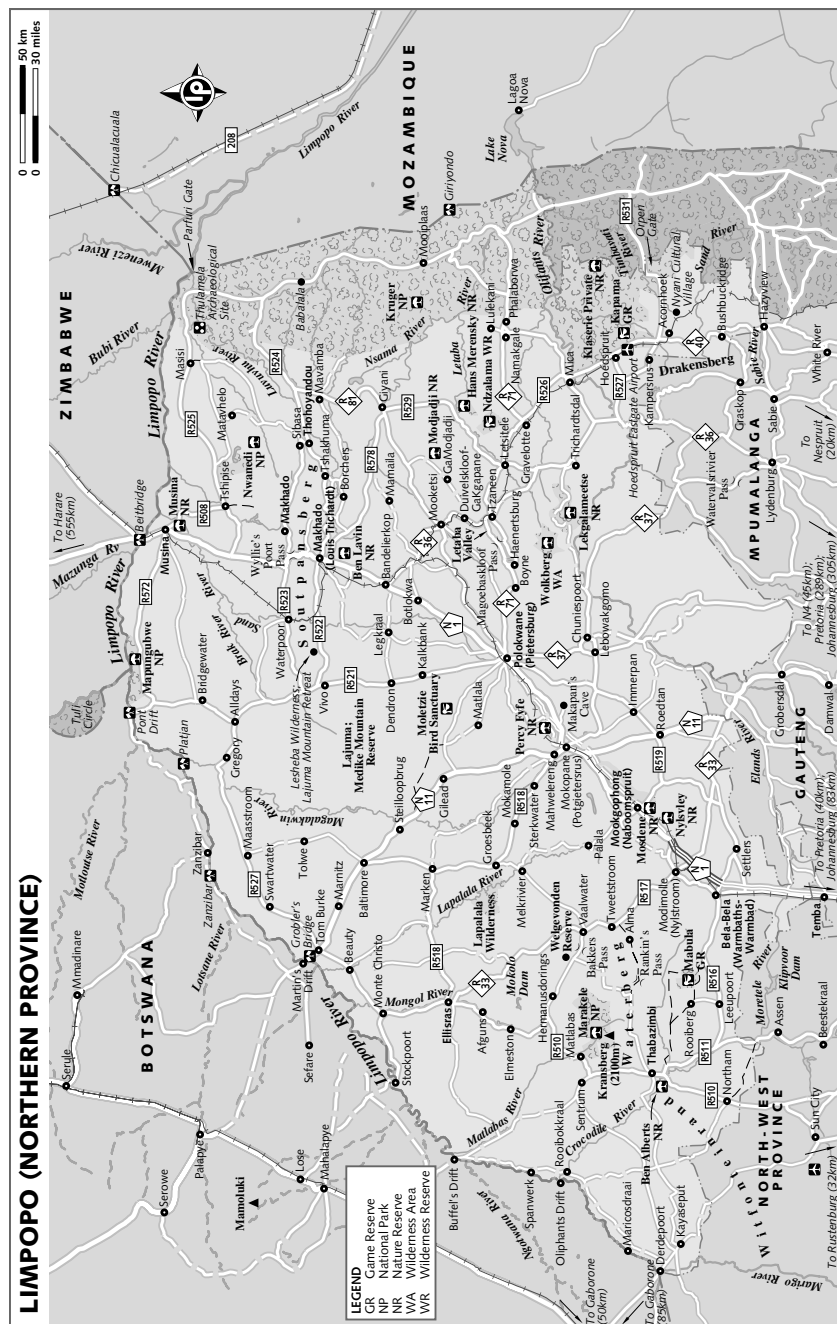
Mokopane (Potgietersrus) & Around

☎ 015 / pop 120,000

This conservative town (they all seem to be up this way), 227km north of Pretoria, was settled early by Voortrekkers, not without resistance from the people already living there. Things are quieter now, and the town is a key base of operations for platinum and diamond mining. The largest citrus farm in the southern hemisphere, the Zedebiela Citrus estate, is nearby.

The **Arend Dieperink Museum** (☎ 015-491 9735; adult/student/child US\$0.40/0.10/0.10; ☎ 7.30am–4.30pm Mon–Fri), at the back of the Publicity Association, tells the story of the local people's resistance to the Voortrekkers.

Makapan's Caves (☎ 015-491 8458; adult/student US\$3.40/2), 23km northeast of Mokopane, is a



palaeontological site of world significance, and has yielded bones of an early human, known as *Australopithecus africanus*, radiocarbon-dated to be three million years old. You must prebook visits with the Mokopane Tourism Association.

Polokwane (Pietersburg)

☎ 015 / pop 140,000

A rather agreeably sedate cluster of suburban streets surrounding a bustling commercial centre, Polokwane was founded in 1886 by Voortrekkers seeking to escape the usual cocktail of tropical disease and the 'hostile natives'. Much of this conflict now seems to have dissipated and if you are wandering through the backstreets of South Africa's safest provincial capital these days, the biggest risk seems to be getting soaked by an overzealous garden sprinkler.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Polokwane Game Reserve (☎ 015-290 2331; adult/child/vehicle US\$1.60/1.10/2.70; ☞ 7am-4.30pm) is one of the largest municipal wildlife reserves in the country, with 21 wildlife species including zebras, giraffes and white rhinos, plus a 20km hiking trail. It is south of the town centre in Union Park. Camping and chalets are available.

The **Bakone Malapa Northern Sotho Open-Air Museum** (☎ 015-295 2432; adult/child US\$0.40/0.20; ☞ 8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-3.30pm), 9km southeast of Polokwane on Rte 37 to Chuniespoort, is devoted to northern Sotho culture and includes an authentic 'living' village where locals produce handicrafts.

SLEEPING

Travellers Lodge (☎ 015-291 5511; incatrav@worldonline.co.za; 43 Bok St; s/d US\$37/39; ☞) Despite the name, this smart, self-catering place doesn't cater to the backpacker market.

Vivadi Guest House (☎ 015-295 6162; vivadi1@mweb.co.za; 2 Voortrekker St; s/d with breakfast US\$40/52; ☞) Surrounded by a cycad-filled garden and with a soundtrack provided by a brace of talking parrots, this tip-top hideaway offers friendly welcomes and oodles of home comforts.

Plumtree Lodge (☎ 015-295 6153; www.plumtree.co.za; 138 Marshall St; s/d with breakfast US\$57/72; ☞ ☞ ☞) The crowds vote with their feet at this busy little place, where rooms are in twee bungalows and all the couch potato creature comforts come as standard.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Many town names in Limpopo, including the name of the province itself, have been changed in recent years. We list the new name then give the old name in brackets. Unfortunately, while all names have been changed on the official record, some road signs and many local residents have yet to catch up. As a result, travel in the province can be confusing at times.

EATING

You can find all the usual takeaways in Librery Gardens, but the Savannah Centre on Grobler St offers the widest selection of steak-based eats.

Cock 'n' Bull (☎ 015-296 0961; Savannah Centre; mains US\$4-7; ☞ lunch & dinner; ☞) This pub-style place serves up steaks the size of a springbok's thighs in yee-har surrounds.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

SAairlink (☎ 015-288 0166; www.saairlink.co.za), with offices at the airport, flies daily to/from Jo'burg (US\$110 to US\$157 one way). **Polokwane airport** (☎ 015-288 0122) is 5km north of town.

Bus

Translux (☎ 015-295 5548; www.translux.co.za; cnr Joubert & Thabo Mbeki Sts) runs services to Pretoria (US\$19, 3½ hours), Jo'burg (US\$19, 4½ hours), and Lusaka (US\$47, 24 hours). It also runs the cheaper City to City buses, which serve a number of smaller towns.

Greyhound (☎ 011-276 8500; www.greyhound.co.za) links Polokwane with Jo'burg (US\$25, five hours) and Harare (US\$38, 12 hours). Buses stop on Civic Sq.

North Link Tours (☎ 015-291 1867; 13 Library Gardens, Hans Van Rensburg St) runs daily (10am) buses between Polokwane and Jo'burg. The bus stops at Mokopane (US\$6, 40 minutes), Mookgophong (US\$5.50, 1¼ hours), Pretoria (US\$1.40, 3½ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$16, 4½ hours). Buses depart from outside Library Gardens.

Minibus Taxi

The main minibus taxi rank is on the corner of President Kruger and Devenish Sts. Fares from Polokwane include Thohoyandou (US\$4, 2½ hours), Makhado (US\$2.80, 1¼ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$14, five hours).

Train

The **Bosvelder** (☎ 086-000 8888) passes through Polokwane daily (except Saturday) en route between Jo'burg and Musina. Fares include: Jo'burg (1st/2nd class US\$15/10, eight hours), Makhado (1st/2nd class US\$9.50/5.50, four hours) and Musina (1st/2nd class US\$14/9.50, 7½ hours).

Makhado (Louis Trichardt)

☎ 015 / pop 90,000

Scruffy Makhado is a little hard on the eyes – a stark contrast to the verdant countryside that surrounds it. Treat the town as a springboard to some worthwhile country lodges, nature reserves and hiking trails in the nearby mountains, which boast an extraordinary diversity of flora and fauna, including 615 of South Africa's 900 bird species.

For a reliable tour operator, contact **Face Africa** (☎ 015-516 2076; faceafrica@mweb.co.za; per day up to 4 people US\$160) or **Travel Africa Trails** (☎ 082-139 0102; africa@lantic.net; per day up to 4 people US\$189).

SLEEPING

Makhado Municipal Caravan Park (☎ 015-519 3025; www.caravanparks.co.za/makhado; Grobler St; camp sites per person US\$6) A central camping option.

Louis Trichardt Lodge (☎ 015-516 2222; www.ltt lodge.co.za; Hlanganani St; s/d US\$27/36; ☎ ☎) This welcoming place on the main road has some basic rooms, kitchenette and a braai area.

Mountain View Hotel (☎ 015-517 7031; www.mountainviewhotel.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$37/52) This resort-style place, on the road to Musina, has clipped gardens, charming staff and the (often empty) Merry Monk pub. The rooms, however, are a little dowdy.

Ultimate Guest House (☎ 015-517 7005; ultimategh@lantic.net; s/d with breakfast US\$42/55; ☎ ☎) With buckets of quirky character and colourfulness, individually styled rooms, this beautifully remote place prides itself on its convivial atmosphere and good nature. It's 10km from the centre.

EATING

Cafe d'Art (☎ 015-516 5760; 129 Krogh St; mains US\$2.80-7; ☎ ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Kick back in the garden and enjoy a lazy breakfast, lunch or light dinner.

Ricky's Takeaway (☎ 015-516 0414; 36 Boabab St; ☎ ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) This place gets absolutely packed with people trying to get hold of locally famous sausages, burgers and sandwiches.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The **Louis Trichardt Travel Agency** (☎ 015-516 5042; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-4pm Mon-Fri, 9-11am Sat), down an alley off Burger St (opposite Bradlows), is the local agent for Greyhound and Translux buses. Most buses linking Makhado with Jo'burg (US\$24, 5½ hours) and Harare (US\$50, 11 hours) stop by the Caltex petrol station on the corner of the N1 and Baobab St.

The train station is at the southwestern end of Kruger St. The **Bosvelder** (☎ 086-000 8888) stops here and links Makhado with Jo'burg (1st/2nd class US\$20/14, 11 hours).

The minibus taxi rank is in the Shoprite supermarket car park off Burger St, a block northeast of Songozwi St.

Around Makhado (Louis Trichardt)**SOUTPANSBERG HIKING TRAILS**

The two-day, 20.5km **Hanglip Trail** includes a climb up a 1719m peak; it begins at Hanglip forest station. Take precautions against malaria, bilharzia and ticks. Overnight accommodation is in huts and there's a trail fee of US\$5.50 per person per day.

LESHEBA WILDERNESS

Perched in the clouds, **Lesheba Wilderness** (☎ 015-593 0076; www.lesheba.co.za; rondavel/full-board r per person US\$34/115; ☎ ☎) is an excellent hideaway based on a Venda-style village. Surrounded by wildlife, including rare brown hyenas and leopards, the resort offers self-catering accommodation in rondavels, or a full-board option in bedrooms with cosy fireplaces and outdoor showers. It's 36km west of Makhado on Rte 522.

BEN LAVIN NATURE RESERVE

Although somewhat neglected, this **reserve** (☎ 015-516 4534; www.satis.co.za/benlavin; adult/child US\$4/1.40; ☎ ☎ 6am-6pm) is still worth visiting for its walking and mountain bike trails. The reserve contains 240 bird species, as well as giraffes, zebras and jackals. A range of **accommodation** (camp sites per person US\$5.50; d hut US\$29, per extra person US\$9; d lodge US\$35, per extra person US\$11) is available.

Take the N1 south from Makhado for about 10km, then take the Fort Edward turn-off to the left. After about 3km, you'll see the entrance gate on your left.

Musina

☎ 015 / pop 20,000

The closest town to the Zimbabwe border, Musina is a hot, dusty settlement with a fron-

tier feel to it. The town grew around now-defunct copper mines and the still-active DeBeers Venetia diamond mine, the second largest in the southern hemisphere. The town centre is a sleepy place close to the excellent Mapungubwe National Park.

Stop in at the **Musina Tourism** (☎ 015-534 3500; www.golimpopo.com; National Rd; ☎ ☎ 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) office for information on the area. It's in a thatched hut on the way into town on the N1 from Polokwane.

SLEEPING & EATING

Limpopo River Lodge (☎ 015-534 0204; riverlodge@limpopo.co.za; 6 National Rd; s US\$17-22, d US\$27-38; ☎ ☎) Inspiration didn't play a role in the planning of this place, and the décor is rather flaky, but the rooms are fine and mercifully cheap for Limpopo.

Ilala Country Lodge (☎ 015-534 3220; www.places.co.za/html/2175.html; Rte 572; s/d US\$42/56; ☎ ☎) This pleasant lodge has some nice self-catering units, surrounded by plenty of bush-style hush and wide, open spaces. It is located 8km from Musina along Rte 572, on the way to Mapungubwe.

Dongola Ranch (☎ 015-533 1948; www.dongola.co.za; s/d US\$42/56; ☎ ☎) Considered one of Limpopo's better private wildlife reserves, Dongola Ranch has a rich variety of wildlife species, including white rhinos, giraffes, leopards and hyenas. It's on the road to Mapungubwe, about 45km out of Musina.

Buffalo Ridge Spur (☎ 015-534 1127; National Rd; mains US\$4-8; ☎ ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎ ☎) Corporate cowboy attitude and large platters of steak and ribs feature prominently at this chain restaurant, located near the tourist office.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The Zimbabwean border at Beitbridge, 14km north of Musina, is open 24 hours. If you are coming from Zimbabwe, there is a large taxi rank on the South African side of the border, 1km from the crossing itself.

Bus

Translux (☎ 015-295 5548; www.translux.co.za) buses stop here on their way to Jo'burg (US\$25, 7½ hours) or Harare (US\$34, 10 hours).

Minibus Taxi

If you're coming from Zimbabwe and want to take a minibus taxi further south than Musina, catch one at the border as there are many

more there than in Musina. Destinations and fares from Musina include Makhado (US\$4, 1½ hours), Polokwane (US\$5.50, 2½ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$1.40, 7½ hours). Taxis between the border and Musina cost US\$2 (20 minutes).

Train

The daily (except Saturday) **Bosvelder** (☎ 086 000 8888) terminates at Musina. It travels (very slowly) to Jo'burg (1st/2nd class US\$25/17, 14 hours) via Makhado and Polokwane.

Mapungubwe National Park

The call of the wild is perhaps nowhere louder than in Limpopo's newest attraction, the **Mapungubwe National Park** (☎ 015-534 2014; www.sanparks.org/parks/mapungubwe; adult/child US\$8/4; ☎ ☎ 6am-6pm). Opened up to the public in September 2004, this spectacular park covers 28,000 hectares and boasts populations of all of the Big Five, with almost unparalleled opportunities for wildlife-spotting.

Mapungubwe Hill offers an excellent insight into Zimbabwe civilisation and many Iron Age artefacts can be seen in an on-site museum. Short walks (US\$4) and fully catered, three-day trails (US\$240) to the major sites are already available.

At the Leokwe Rest Camp you can **camp** (US\$9.50), or stay in opulent, two-bed **chalets** (US\$54; ☎ ☎).

The park is at the confluence of the Shashe and Limpopo Rivers, north of the Musina to Pontdrift road. It's a 60km drive from Musina on Rte 572.

VENDA REGION

Perhaps the most enigmatic section of the Soutpansberg region, this is the traditional homeland of the Venda people, who moved to the area from modern-day Zimbabwe at the start of the 18th century. Long neglected under the apartheid regime, the Venda region is a world away from the South Africa of uptown Jo'burg; here even a short diversion from the freeway takes you through an Africa of mist-clad hilltops, dusty streets and mud huts, a land where myth and legend continue to play a major role in everyday life.

Thohoyandou & Sibasa

☎ 015 / pop 50,000

Created as the capital of the apartheid-era Venda Homeland, the city of Thohoyandou

(Elephant Head) blends some impressively functional town-planning with a healthy dose of African chaos, matching a looming shopping centre and adjacent casino resort with all the push-and-shove of the backstreet marketplace. The adjacent town of Sibasa is a few kilometres north. Most public transport leaves from Sibasa.

Thohoyandou is an easy 65km drive to Kruger's Punda Maria Gate, and a good entry/exit point if you plan to explore the park's far north.

Tours to nearby sights, including Lake Fundudzi, can be arranged through **Thohoyandou Arts & Culture Centre** (☎ 082-401 9756; Punda Maria Rd, Thohoyandou; ☎ 6am-6pm).

SLEEPING

Bougainvillea Lodge (☎ 015-962 4064; www.bougainvillalodge.com; Mphephu St; s/d with breakfast US\$34/45) As promised by the name, there is plenty of blooming bougainvillea here – and plenty of smiles too.

Vevisa Lodge (☎ 015-962 5252; vevisa@iafrica.com; 758 Mphephu St; s/d with breakfast US\$40/44) This place opts for mock-traditional décor, with fake mud walls and thatched roofs, and has clean rooms.

Tusk Vanda (☎ 015-962 4600; www.tusk-resorts.co.za; Mphephu St; s/d with breakfast US\$70/96; ☎ ☎) A little slice of Vegas in the heart of Venda, this casino resort looks rather incongruous among the local hustle and bustle. It offers plenty of trimmings and plenty of ways to fritter away a penny or two.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

City to City (☎ 015-295 5548; www.translux.co.za) buses run from a terminal just up Rte 524 from the centre of Sibasa. Buses leave every morning at 8.30am for Jo'burg (US\$1.40, 8½ hours) and Pretoria (US\$1.40, 7½ hours).

The main minibus taxi rank is in Sibasa. Destinations and fares include Makhado (US\$2.80, 1½ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$1.40, nine hours).

In Thohoyandou, minibus taxis congregate in the car park of the shopping centre near the Tusk Vanda. The fare to Sibasa is US\$0.50.

Nwanedi National Park

The dry northern side of the Soutpansberg Range provides an extremely scenic backdrop to **Nwanedi National Park** (☎ 015-539 0723; adult/vehicle US\$1.40/2; ☎ 6am-6pm), although it's a

contrast to the Venda's lush landscapes. The major walk in the park is to the very scenic **Tshihovhohovho Falls**.

The park has **camp sites** (per person US\$2.80, plus per tent US\$7), and four-person **rondavels** (US\$47). Basic supplies are available and there's a fully licensed restaurant.

You can reach the park from Thohoyandou, entering at the Nwanedi gate; though the road is scenic there's a good chance of getting lost, and there are several kilometres of bad dirt road. It's simpler to come via Tshipise and enter from the west.

Lake Fundudzi

This lake is a sacred site, as its water is believed to have come from the great sea that covered the earth before land was created. The python god, who holds an important place in the rites of the Venda's matriarchal culture and once required human sacrifice, lives here.

The lake is 35km northwest of Thohoyandou, but you can't visit it without permission from the lake's custodians, the Netshivha tribe. The easiest way to get permission is to have a tour organised from Thohoyandou or Makhado. Remember that when you approach the lake you must do so with proper respect; turn your back to it, bend over, and view it from between your legs. And try not to look silly doing it.

THE WATERBERG

The 150km-long Waterberg Range, which makes up part of the Bushveld region, stretches from Thabazimbi in Limpopo's southwest up to the Lapalala River. It is a wild and inspirational place etched by rivers.

The rolling terrain of the Waterberg Range is ideal for exploring on horseback, and several operators and lodges near the town of Vaalwater can set you up with a steed. Each one charges around US\$24 to US\$34 for a two- to three-hour ride. **Horizon Horseback Adventures** (☎ 014-755 4003; www.ridinginafrica.com) offers the greatest variety of options, including an eight-day horse safari in the Dinaka Wildlife Reserve.

The rather isolated **Marakele National Park** (☎ 014-777 1745; www.sanparks.org/parks/marakele; adult/child US\$8/4; ☎ 7.30am-6pm) is in the heart of the Waterberg's spectacular mountain country. Elephants, rhinos and many other large wildlife species and the largest colony of the

endangered Cape vulture in the world (800 breeding pairs) call the park home.

It can be reached from Thabazimbi by sealed road, but in the park itself the roads deteriorate markedly and a 4WD is needed to access some of the best trails. From the north, there is a rough access road 6km past Vaalwater, over the spectacular Bakkers Pass.

The **booking office** (☎ from 8am) is located on the Thabazimbi-Alma road, 3km from where this road intersects with the Matlabas-Rooiberg road.

There is four-bed tented accommodation in the **Tlopi Tent Camp** (d US\$75, extras per person US\$14), located 17km from reception on the banks of the Matlabas River.

THE EAST

Eastern Limpopo is an attractive, culturally rich area, being the traditional home of the Tsonga, Shangaan and Lobedu people. It's also popular for a north-south traverse through Kruger National Park, or a visit to one of the many private reserves in the Hoedspruit area.

Letaba Valley

The Letaba Valley is east of Polokwane, between two chunks of the former Lebowa Homeland. The valley is subtropical and lush, with tea plantations and crops of tropical fruits below, and forested hills above.

At Haenertsburg the road splits in two, with the Rte 71 reaching Tzaneen via the steep Magoebaskloof Pass, while the Rte 528 runs along the more gentle George's Valley. Rte 71 is arguably the better drive, and there are plenty of places where you can get out and go for short hikes signposted from the road.

Magoebaskloof Pass

The Magoebaskloof is the escarpment on the edge of the highveld, and the road here drops quickly down to Tzaneen and the lowveld, passing through plantations and large tracts of thick indigenous forest.

The high summer rainfall means there are a number of waterfalls in the area including **Debengeni Falls** in the De Hoek State Forest.

Two recommended walking trails are the two-day, 21km **Debengeni Falls Trail** and the three-day, 40km **Dokolewa Waterfall Trail**. To book huts on these trails, contact **Komatiland Forestry Association** (☎ 012-481 3615; ecotour@safcol.co.za).

The Wheelbarrow (☎ 015-305 3039; www.tzaneen.com/thewheelbarrow; meals US\$4-8; ☎ 9am-4.30pm) is a great place to break up the road trip between Haenertsburg and Tzaneen. You can get good country breakfasts plus locally produced jams and juices. It's on the bottom stretch of Rte 71, near the junction with Rte 36.

Tzaneen

☎ 015 / pop 81,000

At the hub of a rich fruit-growing area, Tzaneen, the largest town near the Letaba Valley and the second-largest in Limpopo, is perhaps best known for its avocados and mangoes. Surrounded by lush, subtropical hills, this is a pleasant spot with plenty of quiet corners and chances to bike, climb or hike in the nearby mountains.

SLEEPING & EATING

Satvik Backpackers Village (☎ 015-307 3920; satvik@pixie.co.za; George's Valley Rd; camp sites US\$5.50, dm/d US\$9.50/24) Less technicolour tacky than many backpackers, Satvik offers a more rustic blend of budget accommodation, with a farm setting and beds in old workers' cottages.

Fairview River Lodge (☎ 015-307 2679; www.fairviewlodge.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$47/69; ☎ ☎ ☎) One of the town's swankiest options, this thatched, four-star place has some very comfortable self-catering chalets and a leafy tropical garden. There are also some basic rooms for US\$27.

High Grove Lodge (☎ 015-307 7242; highgrove@tzaneen.co.za; Agatha Rd; mains US\$5.50-8; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Probably the classiest place in town, High Grove serves decent steaks, salads and a healthy continental breakfast. This is also an upmarket hotel (single/double rooms US\$50/61) with 18 rooms and a pub.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

North Link Tours buses run from to Jo'burg (US\$20, six hours) four days a week. You can book tickets at the **Caltex petrol station** (☎ 015-305 2424; Danie Joubert St).

Translux buses run to Pretoria (US\$19, 4½ hours), Jo'burg (US\$19, 5½ hours) and Phalaborwa (US\$1.40, one hour).

Most minibus taxis depart from a rank behind the Tzaneen Mall.

Modjadji Nature Reserve

Covering just 305 hectares, **Modjadji Nature Reserve** (☎ 082-393 5551; adult/vehicle US\$1.40/2.70;

(☞ 7.30am-6pm) protects forests of the ancient Modjadji cycad. In the summer mists, this place and the surrounding Vulovedu Mountains take on an ethereal atmosphere. The reserve has accommodation in **rondavels** (per person US\$17).

Take the GaKgapane turn-off from Rte 36 about 10km north of Duivelskloof; the turn-off to the reserve is a further 18km.

Phalaborwa

☎ 015 / pop 109,000

Phalaborwa is a neatly tended stretch of well-watered suburbia – the 'Beware Hippios' signs seem rather out of place – with a group of guesthouses and hotels thriving on the back of the town's proximity to Kruger National Park.

Phalaborwa makes an ideal starting point if you're intending to explore central and northern Kruger. For people with limited time in South Africa, it is possible to visit Kruger by flying from Jo'burg to Phalaborwa, hiring a car for touring the park and then returning by air to Jo'burg. **Mad Safari Tours** (☎ 072-536 0667; www.madsafari.com; Airport) runs trips into Kruger, Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

Phalaborwa is also a new gateway to Mozambique as it's now possible to drive across Kruger and into Mozambique at the **Giriyondo border gate** (☎ 013-735 8919). See p299. This route is only for 4WD vehicles.

You can tour the nearby **copper mine** (☎ 015-780 2911; admission free), said to boast the largest artificial hole in Africa, at 9am on Friday, but you must phone in advance.

SLEEPING & EATING

Daan & Zena's (☎ 015-781 6049; www.daanzena.co.za; 15 Birkenhead St; camp sites per person US\$6, dm/s/d from US\$11/17/27; ☞ ☞ ☞) Bridging the gap between backpackers and B&B, this place is brought to life by lashings of colourful paint and a friendly atmosphere. It's a tad crumbly, but it's a good spot if you're looking for a comfy bed and a youthful vibe.

Elephant Walk (☎ 015-781 5860; www.elewalk.com; 30 Anna Scheepers Ave; camp sites US\$7, dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$10/19/27, d with private bathroom US\$40) Close enough to Kruger to hear the lions roar, this is a great spot to plan your foray into the park. The owners will pick you up from town and offer an excellent range of reasonably priced tours and activities.

Sefapane Lodge (☎ 015-780 6700; www.sefapane.co.za; cnr Koper & Essenhout Sts; s/d with breakfast US\$54/95;

☞ ☞) Sefapane has plenty of safari-park styling, a sunken bar, one of the town's best eateries and a whiff of genuine exclusivity. Accommodation is in rondavels.

Buffalo Pub & Grill (☎ 015-781 0829; 1 Lekkerbreek St; mains US\$4-10; ☞ lunch & dinner; ☞) This tourist-orientated place has a nice terrace for alfresco dining and African trimmings aplenty.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

SAAirlink (☎ 015-781 5823; www.sairlink.co.za), with an office at the airport, flies daily to Jo'burg (US\$180). The **airport** (☎ 015-781 5823) is 2km north of town.

Bus

Sure Turn Key Travel (☎ 015-781 7761; Shop 42, Phalaborwa Mall, Nelson Mandela St; ☞ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) is the local agent for Translux and City to City buses. Translux services travel via Polokwane and connect Phalaborwa with Tzaneen (US\$1.40, one hour), Polokwane (US\$1.40, 2½ hours), Makhado (US\$23, four hours), Pretoria (US\$25, six hours) and Jo'burg (US\$23, seven hours). City to City buses travel to Jo'burg (US\$18, 9½ hours) via Middleburg, and are cheaper but slower.

CAR

Hiring a car is often the cheapest way of seeing the Kruger Park. **Avia** (☎ 015-781 3169; ☞ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1pm Sat, 4-6pm Sun), **Imperial** (☎ 015-781 0376; ☞ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1pm Sat, 4-6pm Sun) and **Budget** (☎ 015-781 5404; ☞ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1pm Sat, 4-6pm Sun) all have offices at the airport.

Minibus Taxi

There aren't many minibus taxis in this area, and most run from the township of Namakale (US\$0.70, 20 minutes). From here, you can catch connections to Tzaneen (US\$4.70, 1½ hours).

SOUTH AFRICA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Whatever your budget, you'll generally find high standards, often for significantly less than you would pay for the equivalent in Europe, Australasia or North America.

PRACTICALITIES

- South Africa uses the metric system for weights and measures.
- Access electricity (220-250V AC, 50Hz) with a three-pin adaptor (round pins, though South Africa has its own unique version); these are easy enough to find – check in camping supply stores.
- Best weekly: *Mail & Guardian*. Best daily: the *Sowetan*. Others to look for: the *Sunday Independent*; the *Sunday Times*; the *Johannesburg Star*; and *Business Day*. Check out *Getaway* magazine for travel news.
- Tune the TV to SABC for the news (SABC3 is mostly English). e-TV has a more independent viewpoint. M-Net has movies and sports.
- SABC radio comes in 11 languages. BBC's World Service is available on short wave, medium wave and (in and near Lesotho) FM.

Prices for accommodation in this chapter are: budget US\$40 and below, midrange US\$40 to US\$100, top end US\$100 and above.

At the budget level, the main options are camping, backpackers hostels and self-catering cottages. The main caveat with places in this price category is that there aren't enough of them; away from tourist areas sometimes the only budget option is camping.

Midrange accommodation is particularly good value, especially for B&Bs. Expect a private or semiprivate bathroom and a clean, comfortable room. Self-catering accommodation at national parks – usually priced in the budget to midrange category – also tends to be very good value.

At the top end, South Africa boasts some of the best wildlife lodges in the region, as well as classic guesthouses and several superb hotels. Places at this level offer all the amenities you would expect for prices that are similar to, or slightly less than, those you would pay in Europe or North America.

There are significant seasonal price variations, with rates rising steeply during the December–January school break, and again around Easter, when room prices often double, and minimum stays are imposed. Advance bookings are essential during these times. The other school holidays are also often classified as high season, although it's more common to have 'midseason' pricing. Conversely, you can get some excellent deals during the winter low season, which is also the best time for wildlife watching.

Be aware that minimum charges apply at many of the accommodation options with the national parks and at other private parks and lodges.

ACTIVITIES

Thanks to South Africa's diverse terrain and favourable climate, just about anything is possible – from ostrich riding to the world's highest bungee jump. Good facilities and instruction mean that most activities are accessible to all, whatever their experience level.

There are dozens of operators. In addition to the ones listed here, ask other travellers and at hostels. Try to book day or overnight trips as close to your destination as possible.

Aerial Pursuits

Ideal weather conditions and an abundance of high points from which to launch yourself make South Africa a fine destination for aerial pursuits. A helpful contact for getting started is the **Aero Club of South Africa** (☎ 0861-018 018; www.aeroclub.org.za).

South Africa is one of the world's best destinations for paragliding, particularly Cape Town's Table Mountain. **South African Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association** (☎ 012-668 1219; www.sahpa.co.za) can provide names of operators, and numerous schools offer courses for beginners. In Cape Town, try **Paragliding Cape Town** (☎ 021-554 0592).

Good places to float over the countryside in a hot air balloon include Sabie (p538) and the surrounding Mpumalanga area.

South Africa boasts the world's highest bungee jump at Bloukrans River Bridge (p468), between Plettenberg Bay and Storms River.

Bird-Watching

With its enormous diversity of habitats, South Africa is a paradise for bird-watchers. Top spots include the following:

Cape Peninsula & West Coast Cape of Good Hope, within Table Mountain National Park (p419), is excellent for seabird-watching, as is West Coast National Park (p457), about 120km to the north.

Kruger National Park One of the continent's best areas for birding; the south and the far north are considered the prime areas, and the park is known particularly for its raptors and migratory species. See p528.

Northern KwaZulu-Natal Mkhuzi Game Reserve (p515) hosts over 400 species within its 36,000 hectares, and the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (p513) protects one of the most significant water-bird breeding grounds in Southern Africa.

Canoeing, Kayaking & Rafting

South Africa has few major rivers, but the ones that do flow year-round offer rewarding canoeing and rafting. Popular ones include the Blyde and Sabie Rivers, both in Mpumalanga province; the waterways around Wilderness (p452) and Wilderness National Park (p453) in the Western Cape; and the Orange River, especially through Augrabies Falls National Park (p464). There's some serene canoeing at the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (p513).

Rafting is highly rain-dependent, with the best months in most areas from December/January to April. Good contacts include **Felix Unite** (☎ 021-425 5181; www.felixunite.com), **Hardy Ventures** (☎ 013-751 1693; www.hardyventure.com) and **Intrapid Rafting** (☎ 021-461 4918).

For sea kayaking, try the Cape Town-based **Coastal Kayak** (☎ 021-439 1134; www.kayak.co.za) and the **Sea Kayaking Association of South Africa** (☎ 021-790 5611; www.doorway.co.za/kayak/recskasa).

Diving

To the west, the main dive sites are around the Cape Peninsula, known for its many wrecks and giant kelp forests. To the east, the main area is the KwaZulu-Natal north coast where – particularly around Sodwana Bay – there's some excellent warm-water diving with beautiful coral reefs and the chance to see dolphins and sometimes whale sharks. There are several sites off the Eastern Cape coast near Port Elizabeth, and many resort towns along the Garden Route have diving schools.

The best time to dive the KwaZulu-Natal shoreline is from May to September, when visibility tends to be highest. In the west, along the Atlantic seaboard, the water is cold year-round, but at its most diveable, with many days of high visibility, between November and January/February.

With the exception of Sodwana Bay during the warmer months (when a 3mm wetsuit will be sufficient), you will need at least a 5mm wetsuit for many diving sites, and a drysuit for some sites to the south and west. Strong currents and often windy conditions mean that advanced divers can find challenges all along the coast.

Hiking

South Africa is wonderful for hiking, with an excellent system of well-marked trails varied enough to suit every ability. Some trails have accommodation – from camping to simple huts with electricity and running water – and all must be booked well in advance. Many have limits as to how many hikers can be on them at any one time. Most longer trails and wilderness areas require hikers to be in a group of at least three.

Designated wilderness areas, such as Cedarberg Wilderness Area (p457), have off-trail hiking only. Little information is available on suggested routes, and it's up to you to survive on your own.

KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation (KZN Wildlife; ☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com) controls most trails in KwaZulu-Natal. Elsewhere, most trails are administered by the **SAN Parks Board** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org) or the various Forest Region authorities. To find out about local hiking clubs, contact **Hiking South Africa** (☎ 083-535 4538; www.hiking-south-africa.info).

Shorter hikes, from an hour up to a full day, are possible almost everywhere and require no advance arrangements. Prime areas include the Cape Peninsula near Cape Point and the Drakensberg.

Hiking is possible year-round, although you'll need to be prepared in summer for extremes of wet and heat. The best time is March to October.

Kloofing (Canyoning)

Kloofing (or canyoning), is a mix of climbing, hiking, swimming and some serious jumping. Places where you can give things a try include Cape Town and along the Drakensberg Escarpment in Mpumalanga. Operators who can sort you out include **Adventure World** (www.adventurevillage.co.za), **Day Trippers** (www.daytrippers.co.za) and **Abseil Africa** (www.abseilfrica.co.za). There's a definite element of risk in the sport, so when hunting for operators, check their credentials carefully before signing up.

SOUTH AFRICA'S TOP HIKES

Following are some of South Africa's top hiking trails and their booking contacts; more details are given in throughout the chapter.

Cape Peninsula & Western Cape

Hoerikwaggo Trails (p427; Table Mountain National Park; ☎ 021-465 8515; www.hoerikwaggotrails.co.za) A series of three trails (one now open, the other two to open soon) that take you from City Bowl over the mountain, and ultimately along the stunningly beautiful Atlantic Coast to Cape Point.

Whale Hiking Trail (De Hoop Nature Reserve; ☎ 028-425 5020) Five days of hiking along the coastline in De Hoop Nature Reserve, with the added bonus of whale-watching opportunities in season.

Eastern Cape

Otter Trail (p468; SAN Parks; ☎ 012- 428 9111; www.sanparks.org) Five days on the coast along the Garden Route (note that this trail is nearly always booked out).

Tsitsikamma Trail (p468; Forestry Department; ☎ 042-281 1712) A five-day hike running inland through the forests, parallel to the Otter Trail but hiked in the opposite direction (this trail is rarely booked out).

Free State

Rhebok Hiking Trail (p565; SAN Parks; ☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org) Two days in Golden Gate Highlands National Park.

KwaZulu-Natal

Giant's Cup (p522; KZN Wildlife; ☎ 033-845 1000) Up to five days in the southern Drakensberg. There are also wilderness trails and guided walks in Hluhluwe-Imfolozi, Mkhuzi and Lake St Lucia parks and reserves.

Limpopo

Hanglip Trail (p574; Komatiland Eco-Tourism; ☎ 013-754 2724; www.komatiecotourism.co.za) Up to two days in the verdant Soutpansberg Range.

Mpumalanga

Blyde River Canyon Hiking Trail (p536; Mpumalanga Parks Board; ☎ 013-759 5432; mpbinfo@cis.co.za) Up to 2½ days in the Blyde River Canyon area.

Kruger National Park (p531; SAN Parks; ☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org) Wilderness trails and guided walks.

Northern Cape

Klipspringer Hiking Trail (p464; Augrabies Falls National Park; ☎ 054-452 9200) Three days of stunning scenery along the banks of the Orange River.

Kodasiek Trail (Richtersveld National Park; ☎ 027-831 1506) Two days wandering amid incredible mountain desert landscapes.

Mountain Biking

There are trails almost everywhere in South Africa. Some suggestions to get you started: the De Hoop Nature Reserve (p446), with overnight and day trails; the ride up (and down) Sani Pass, on the border between South Africa and Lesotho (p522); Citrusdal (p458),

with a network of trails; the area around Cedarberg Wilderness area (p457); and Knysna (p453) and surrounding area, with a good selection of trails. Cape Town is something of an unofficial national hub.

Useful sources of information include **Mountain Bike South Africa** (www.mtbsa.co.za) and

Mountain Bike South Africa e-zine (www.mtb.org.za). The bimonthly *Ride* is the main South African mountain-biking magazine.

Rock Climbing

Some of the most challenging climbing is on the close-to-sheer faces of the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg. The **South African Climbing Info Network** (www.saclimb.co.za) has listings and photos of many other climbing and bouldering sites. For information on regional clubs, contact the **Mountain Club of South Africa** (MCSA; ☎ 021-465 3412; www.mcsa.org.za). **Roc-n-Rope** (☎ 013-257 0363; www.roc-rope.com) is another useful contact.

Surfing

Most surfers will have heard of Jeffrey's Bay, but South Africa offers myriad alternatives, particularly along the Eastern Cape coast from Port Alfred northwards. The best time of the year for surfing the southern and eastern coasts is autumn and early winter (from about April to July).

For more information check out www.wavescape.co.za, and **Zig Zag** (www.zigzag.co.za), South Africa's main surf magazine.

Whale-Watching

South Africa is considered one of the world's best spots to sight these graceful giants from land, without needing to go out in a boat. Southern right and humpback whales are regularly seen offshore between June/July and November, with occasional sightings also of Bryde's and killer whales. Hermanus (p444) – where southern right whales come to calve – is the unofficial whale-watching capital of the country, complete with a whale crier and an annual Whale Festival.

Other favoured spots include the False Bay shoreline, especially between Cape Point and Muizenberg, and from Gordon's Bay southeast; and Mossel (p450) and Plettenberg (p456) Bays. The whales continue their progress around the Cape and up the KwaZulu-Natal coast, although by the time they reach Durban, they're often considerably further out to sea.

Wildlife Watching

South Africa's populations of large animals are one of the country's biggest attractions. In comparison with other countries in the region (Botswana and Zambia, for example), wildlife watching in South Africa tends to be

very accessible, with good roads and excellent accommodation for all categories of traveller. It is also comparatively inexpensive, although there are plenty of pricier choices for those seeking a luxury experience in the bush.

BOOKS

Following is a listing of some books – a mix of fiction and nonfiction – to begin immersing yourself in regional life and culture.

A Short History of Lesotho from the Late Stone Age to the 1993 Elections by Stephen J Gill – A concise and readable history of the Mountain Kingdom.

Country of my Skull by Antjie Krog – A wrenching recounting of the hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission by a prominent Afrikaans journalist.

The Heart of the Hunter: Customs & Myths of the African Bushman by Laurens van der Post – An intriguing accounting of Southern Africa's San people and their culture.

Indaba, My Children by Credo Mutwa – An excellent compendium of traditional mythology and folktales.

No Future Without Forgiveness by Desmond Tutu – Another, somewhat more hope-filled, chronicling of the work of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission by its chairman.

Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life by Emma Mashinini – A powerful recounting of one woman's struggle against domination and injustice.

The Wild Almond Line by Larry Schwartz – A memoir of growing up in a segregated country and being a conscript in the apartheid-era army.

CHILDREN

South Africa is an eminently suitable destination if you're travelling with children. With its abundance of national parks, beaches, swimming pools and hiking trails, plus a good collection of museums and a handful of amusement parks, it offers plenty to do for travellers of all ages in a generally hazard-free setting. Most South Africans are welcoming to children, and you should have no shortage of offers for assistance. For some help sorting things out, and for equipment rental or purchase, try the Cape Town-based **Tiny Tourists** (www.tinytourists.com).

COURSES

Language

There are numerous language schools for learning Xhosa, Zulu and Afrikaans, including the following:

Interlink Cape Town (☎ 021-439 9834; www.interlink.co.za) Afrikaans, Xhosa.

Language Teaching Centre Cape Town (☎ 021-425 3585; www.language-teaching-centre.co.za) Afrikaans, Xhosa.

University of Natal (☎ 031-260 2510; www.nu.ac.za/departement/default.asp?dept=zuludund; Durban) Zulu.

University of the Witwatersrand (☎ 011-717 4245; http://sls.uiplay.co.za/index.aspx?Action=AFL) Zulu.

A good contact if you want to get below South Africa's surface is **TALK** (Transfer of African Language Knowledge; ☎ 011-487 1798; www.phaphama.org). It organises 'immersion visits' in which you live in a homestay arrangement in either a township or rural area while receiving an hour or so daily of instruction in an African language. Costs vary, but average US\$80 per person for a three-night stay. The main focus is Soweto, but the organisation can also sort out tours and visits in other parts of the country.

Wine Tasting

Some useful contacts:

Cape Wine Academy (☎ 021-889 8844; www.cape-wineacademy.co.za) Based in Stellenbosch, and runs courses in both Stellenbosch and Cape Town.

Nose Wine Bar (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-425 2200; www.thenose.co.za; Cape Quarter, Dixon St, Waterkant) Runs wine-tasting courses.

CUSTOMS

You're permitted to bring 1L of spirits, 2L of wine, 400 cigarettes and up to US\$165 worth of souvenirs into South Africa without paying duties. For more details, contact the **Department of Customs & Excise** (☎ 012-422 4000, 0800 002 870; Private Bag X923, Pretoria 0001). The import and export of protected animal products such as ivory is not permitted.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Crime is the national obsession and, apart from car accidents, it's the major risk that you'll face in South Africa. However, try to keep things in perspective, and remember that despite the statistics and newspaper headlines, the majority of travellers visit the country without incident.

The risks are highest in Jo'burg, followed by some township areas and other urban centres. Daylight muggings are common in certain sections of Jo'burg, and the city's metro train system has had a problem with violent crime. No matter where you are, you can minimise the risks by following basic safety precautions, including the following:

- One of the greatest dangers during muggings or carjackings, especially in Jo'burg, is that your assailants will assume that you are armed, and that you will kill them if you get a chance. Stay calm, and don't resist or give them any reason to think that you will fight back.
- Listen to local advice on unsafe areas.
- Avoid deserted areas day and night, and especially avoid the commercial business district areas of larger cities at night and weekends.
- If you're going to visit a township – and it will certainly be one of the highlights of your visit to South Africa – go with a trusted guide or as part of a tour.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

South African Embassies & Consulates

Diplomatic representations abroad include the following. For a full listing see www.dfa.gov.za/foreign/sa_abroad/index.htm.

Australia (☎ 02-6273 2424; www.sahc.org.au; Rhodes Pl, Yarralumla, Canberra ACT 2600)

Botswana (☎ 390 4800; sahcgabs@botsnet.bw; 29 Queens Rd, Gaborone)

Canada (☎ 613-744 0330; www.southafrica-canada.com; 15 Sussex Dr, Ottawa, Ontario K1M 1M8)

France (☎ 01 53 59 23 23; www.afriquesud.net; 59 Quai d'Orsay, 75343 Paris, Cedex 07)

Germany (☎ 030-22 0730; www.suedafrika.org; Tiergartenstrasse 18, Berlin 10785)

Ireland (☎ 01-661 5553; information@saedublin.com; 2nd fl, Alexandra House, Earlsfort Centre, Earlsfort Tce, Dublin 2)

Israel (☎ 03-525 2566; www.safis.co.il; 16th fl, Top Tower, 50 Dizengoff St, 64332, Tel Aviv)

Kenya (☎ 020-282 7100; sahac@africaonline.co.ke; Roshanmaer Place, Lenana Rd, Nairobi)

Malawi (☎ 01-773 722; sah@malawi.net; 3rd fl, Kang'ombe House, Robert Mugabe Cres, Lilongwe)

Mozambique (☎ 01-490059, 491614; sah@tropical.co.mz; Avenida Eduardo Mondlane 41, Maputo)

Namibia (☎ 061-205 7111; sahwin@iafrica.com.na; RSA House, cnr Jan Jonker St & Nelson Mandela Ave, Windhoek - 1200)

Netherlands (☎ 70-392 4501; www.southafrica.nl; Wassenaarseweg 40, The Hague 2596 CJ)

New Zealand Representation accredited from Australia, see that entry.

UK (☎ 020-7451 7299; www.southafricahouse.com; South Africa House, Trafalgar Sq, London WC2N 5DP)

USA (☎ 202-232 4400; www.saembassy.org; 3051 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20008) Also consulates in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

Zimbabwe (☎ 04-753147; dhacon@mweb.co.zw; 7 Elcombe St, Belgavia, Harare)

Embassies & Consulates in South Africa

Most countries have their main embassy in Pretoria, with an office or consulate in Cape Town (which becomes the official embassy during Cape Town's parliamentary sessions). Some countries also maintain consulates in Jo'burg and in Durban.

South Africa is a gold mine for travellers hunting for visas for other African countries.

The following list includes some of the more important embassies and consulates; most are open in the mornings only for visa services, usually between 9am and noon.

Australia (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-342 3740; www.australia.co.za; 292 Orient St, Arcadia, Pretoria)

Botswana High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-430 9640; 24 Amos St, Colbyn); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-421 1045; 4th fl, Southern Life Centre, 8 Riebeeck St, City Bowl); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map p547; ☎ 011-403 3748; 2nd fl, Future Bank Bldg, 122 De Korte St, Braamfontein)

Canada High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-422 3000; www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/southafrica/; 1103 Arcadia St, Hatfield); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 5240; 19th fl, Reserve Bank Bldg, 60 St George's Mall, City Bowl)

France Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-425 1600; france@ambafrance-rsa.org; 250 Melk St, New Muckleneuk); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 1575; 2 Dean St); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-778 5600; 3rd fl, Standard Bank Bldg, 191 Jan Smuts Ave, Rosebank)

Germany Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-427 8977; 180 Blackwood St, germanembassypretoria@gonet.co.za); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-405 3000; 19th fl, Safmarine House, 22 Riebeeck St)

Ireland Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-342 5062; 1st fl, Southern Life Plaza, 1059 Schoeman St); Consulate in Cape Town (☎ 021-423 0431; 54 Keerom St, City Bowl)

Lesotho High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-460 7648; 391 Anderson St, Menlo Park) Consulate in Jo'burg (☎ 011-339 3653; 76 Juta St, Indent House, Braamfontein) Consulate in Durban (☎ 031-307 2168; 2nd fl, Westguard House, cnr West & Gardiner Sts)

Mozambique High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-401 0300; 529 Edmond St, Arcadia); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-327 2938, 327 2944; 252 Jeppe St); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 2944; 3rd fl, Castle Bldg, 45 Castle St); Consulate in Durban (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-304 0200; Room 520, 320 West St); Consulate in Nelspruit (Map p533; ☎ 013-753 2089; 43 Brown St)

Namibia (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-481 9100; secretary@namibia.org.za; 197 Blackwood St, Arcadia, Pretoria)

Netherlands Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-344 3910; www.dutchembassy.co.za; 825 Arcadia St); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-421 5660; 100 Strand St, City Bowl)

New Zealand (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-342 8656; Block C, Hatfield Gardens, Arcadia, Pretoria)

Swaziland High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-344 1910; 715 Government Ave, Arcadia); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map p547; ☎ 403 7372, 403 2036; 6th fl, Braamfontein Centre, 23 Jorissen St)

UK High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-421 7500; bhc@icon.co.za; 255 Hill St, Arcadia); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-425 3670; Southern Life Centre, 8 Riebeeck St, City Bowl); Consulate in Durban (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-305 3041; 22 Gardner St)

USA Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-431 4000; http://pretoria.usembassy.gov; 877 Pretorius St, Arcadia); Consulate in Cape Town (Map p416-17; ☎ 021-421 4280; 4th fl, Broadway Industries Centre, Foreshore); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-646 6900; 1 River St, Killarney); Consulate in Durban (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-304 4737; 29th fl, Durban Bay House, 333 Smith St)

Zimbabwe High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-342 5125; 798 Merton Ave, Arcadia); Consulate in Cape Town (☎ 021-461 4710; 55 Kuyper St, Zonnebloem); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map p547; ☎ 011-838 2156; 17th fl, 20 Anderson St)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

South Africa hosts dozens of festivals, and there's always something going on somewhere in the country. For other events, see the destination chapters. **South Africa Tourism** (www.southafrica.net) also has listings of festivals around the country.

January

Cape Town New Year Carnival (Cape Town Minstrel Carnival) Cape Town's longest-running street party is held 1–2 January, with ribald song and dance parades, colourful costumes and general revelry. It's followed by a Jazzathon at the Waterfront.

February

Kavadi Festival The major Hindu festival, held twice annually (January–February and April–May) in Durban, in honour of the Hindu god Muruga. It's accompanied by the piercing of the body with skewers as a sign of devotion.

March

Cape Argus Cycle Tour (www.cycletour.co.za) Held in the second week of March, this spin around the Cape

Peninsula is the largest bicycle race in the world, with over 30,000 entries.

Absa Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (☎ 044-203 8600; info@kknk.co.za) Enjoy all things Afrikaans at this festival that aims to seek unity between Afrikaans speakers of all races; held in Oudtshoorn (Western Cape) in late March/early April.

April

Rustler's Valley One World Unity Party (www.rustlers.co.za) An off-beat music-centred party held around Easter weekend that's an annual highlight for alternative lifestyle lovers of every sort. Rustler's Valley, Free State.

Splashy Fen Music Festival (www.splashyfen.co.za) Rock, pop and jazz with a fringe; held in late April at Splashy Fen Farm, about 20km north of Underberg in the foothills of the southern Drakensberg.

July

National Arts Festival (www.nafest.co.za) Get in touch with South Africa's creative pulse at the country's largest arts festival, held annually in early July at Grahamstown (Eastern Cape).

November

Diwali The Durban Indian community's three-day Festival of Lights.

HOLIDAYS

New Year's Day 1 January

Human Rights Day 21 March

Good Friday March/April

Easter Sunday March/April

Easter Monday March/April

Family Day 17 April

Constitution or Freedom Day 27 April

Workers' Day 1 May

Youth Day 16 June

Women's Day 9 August

Heritage Day 24 September

Day of Reconciliation 16 December

Christmas Day 25 December

Day of Goodwill 26 December

School Holidays

South Africa's major holiday periods are the December–January school holidays as well as the Easter break. Many shops and businesses close, accommodation in national parks and tourist areas is fully booked and peak-season prices are in effect. At the beginning and end of these holiday periods, public transport fills up, as do seats on domestic and international flights, and you'll likely encounter long queues at popular border posts.

The situation is similar during other school holidays, but not as intense. During these times, accommodation prices are often increased, but not by as much.

The provinces stagger their school holidays. They are approximately late March to early April (varying, depending when Easter is); late June to mid-July; late September to early October; and early December to mid-January. For exact dates, see www.saschools.co.za/sas/calendar.htm.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access is widely available in South Africa. Many hostels offer email facilities, and there are internet cafés in every major town. Costs average US\$1.40 to US\$4 per hour. Most top hotels have wireless access and/or broadband (for which they should be able to provide the cable).

MAPS

Some good country maps to look for are Map Studio's *Tourist Map* (1:2,500,000) and the Automobile Association of South Africa (AASA) series of maps covering the entire country. A good place to look for any of these is **Map Studio** (www.mapstudio.co.za), with branches in Cape Town, Durban and Jo'burg. Many bookstores in the CNA chain also usually stock a good selection of road atlases that will be helpful.

For any hiking done away from established trails, a topographical map is highly recommended. Government maps are available from **Maps Unlimited** (☎ 011-882 1741; www.mapoffice.co.za; 10 Rembrandt Park Plaza, cnr Lister & Heine Rds, Rembrandt Park, Jo'burg). Drakensberg maps – essential if you plan on hiking there – are available from KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation (see p580).

MONEY

South Africa's currency is the rand (R), which is divided into 100 cents. There is no black market for the currency. The coins are one, two, five, 10, 20 and 50 cents, and R1, R2 and R5. The notes are R10, R20, R50, R100 and R200. There have been forgeries of the R200 note and some businesses are reluctant to accept them.

The value of the rand has fluctuated wildly in recent years, and is currently on the upswing, although South Africa is still less expensive than Europe and North America.

The best currencies to bring are US dollars, euros or British pounds in a mixture of travellers cheques and cash, plus a Visa or MasterCard for withdrawing money from ATMs.

ATMs

There are ATMs in all cities in South Africa, most of which give cash advances against cards belonging to the Cirrus network.

Credit Cards

These are widely accepted in South Africa, especially MasterCard and Visa, and can also be used at many ATMs for cash advances. Nedbank is an official Visa agent and Standard Bank is a MasterCard agent – both have branches across the country.

Moneychangers

Cash is readily exchanged at banks (First National, Nedbank and Standard Bank are usually the best) and foreign-exchange bureaux in all major cities.

Most banks change travellers cheques in major currencies with varying commissions. Nedbank is associated with American Express, and First National Bank and Nedbank are associated with Visa. Thomas Cook has travellers cheques in rand, though it works out best in the end to buy US dollar cheques.

The Thomas Cook agent in South Africa is Rennies Travel, a large chain of travel agencies, and there are American Express offices in major cities. Neither charges a commission for its own travellers cheques, though you'll usually get a higher rate of exchange from a bank. Rennies also changes other travellers cheques without fees.

Keep at least some of your exchange receipts as you'll need these to reconvert leftover rand when you leave.

Tipping

Wages are low, and tipping is expected; around 10% to 15% is usual in tourist areas.

POST

Post offices are open from 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday and 8am to noon Saturday. For mailing anything of value consider using one of the private mail services, such as Postnet. Poste restante is available in all major cities.

TELEPHONE

South Africa has good telephone facilities. Local calls are relatively inexpensive (about US\$0.10 for three minutes), whereas domestic long-distance calls (from about US\$0.30 per minute) and international calls (from US\$0.90 per minute to Europe) can be pricey. Phonecards are widely available. There are also private phone centres where you can pay cash for your call, but at double the rate of public phones. International calls are cheaper after 8pm on weekdays, and between 8pm Friday and 8am Monday. For reverse-charge calls, dial ☎ 0900.

PHONE CODES

South Africa's country code is ☎ 27. To make an international call from South Africa, dial ☎ 09, followed by the country code, local area code (without the initial zero) and telephone number.

Telephone numbers in South Africa are 10 digits, including the local area code, which must always be dialled, unless you are in the same town. South African area codes are given at the start of each section, or with the telephone number. There are also several four-digit nationwide prefixes (for use within South Africa only) followed by six-digit numbers. These prefixes include: ☎ 0800 (toll free), ☎ 0860 (charged as a local call), and ☎ 0861 (flat-rate calls).

MOBILE PHONES

The mobile-phone network covers most of the country, and the network operates on the GSM digital system.

The three major mobile networks are **Vodacom** (www.vodacom.co.za), **MTN** (www.mtn.co.za) and **Cell C** (www.cellc.co.za). Hiring a mobile phone is relatively inexpensive, but call charges average about US\$0.40 per minute. An easy alternative is to use your own phone (check ahead that it's compatible), and insert a local prepaid or pay-as-you-go SIM card from one of the three mobile networks.

The main codes for mobile phones are ☎ 082 (Vodacom), ☎ 083 (MTN) and ☎ 084 (Cell C).

TOURIST INFORMATION

The main government tourism organisation is **South African Tourism** (☎ 011-895 3000, 083-123 6789; www.southafrica.net), which has a helpful website with news of upcoming events and links.

For more details on individual provinces, there are provincial tourism organisations, of varying quality. In addition to these, almost every town in the country has at least one tourist office. These are private entities, and rely on commissions (5% is usually built into their hotel rates) for their existence. Also, be aware that many tourist offices will only recommend the services of member organisations (ie those that have paid up).

Provincial tourist offices include the following:

Eastern Cape Tourism Board (☎ 043-701 9600;

www.ectb.co.za)

Free State Tourism Board (☎ 051-447 1362; www.dteea.fs.gov.za)

Gauteng Tourism Authority (☎ 011-832 2780; www.gauteng.net)

KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority (☎ 031-366 7500; www.kzn.org.za)

Limpopo Tourism Board (☎ 015-295 8262, 0860-730 730; www.golimpopo.com)

Mpumalanga Tourism Authority (☎ 013-752 7001; www.mpumalanga.com)

North-West Province Parks & Tourism Board (☎ 018-397 1500, 293 1611; www.tourismnorthwest.co.za)

Northern Cape Tourism Authority (☎ 053-832 2657; www.northerncape.org.za)

Western Cape Tourism Board (☎ 021-426 5639; www.tourismcapetown.co.za)

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

South Africa is one of the best destinations on the continent for disabled travellers, with an ever-expanding network of facilities catering to those who are mobility impaired or blind. **SAN Parks** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org) has an excellent and inspirational overview of accommodation and trail accessibility for the mobility impaired at all its parks.

Another helpful initial contact is the **National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities in South Africa** (☎ 011-726 8040; www.ncppdsa.co.za).

VISAS

Visitors on holiday from most Commonwealth countries (including Australia and the UK), most Western European countries, Japan and the USA don't require visas. Instead, you'll be issued with a free entry permit on arrival. These are valid for a stay of up to 90 days.

If you aren't entitled to an entry permit, you'll need to get a visa (also free) before you arrive. These aren't issued at the borders, and must be

obtained at a South African embassy or consulate. Allow up to several weeks for processing. South Africa has consular representation in most countries; for a partial listing see p583. The website of the South African High Commission in London (www.southafricahouse.com) has an overview of visa requirements, and lists the nationalities that require visas.

VISA EXTENSIONS

Applications for visa or entry-permit extensions, and for re-entry visas, should be made at the **Department of Home Affairs** (http://home-affairs.pwv.gov.za), with branches in Cape Town, Durban, Jo'burg and Pretoria.

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteer work is possible, especially if you're interested in teaching or wildlife conservation. A good initial contact is **Volunteer Abroad** (www.volunteerabroad.com), with extensive listings of volunteer opportunities in the country.

Unless you have a UK passport, anyone coming to South Africa to do volunteer work needs to get a work permit. Applications for these should be made through the South African embassy or consulate in your home country; processing usually takes one month.

TRANSPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

GETTING THERE & AWAY Entering South Africa

Once you have an entry permit or visa, South Africa is straightforward and hassle-free to enter. Travellers arriving by air are often required to show an onward ticket – preferably an air ticket, though an overland ticket also seems to be acceptable.

If you're coming to South Africa after travelling through the yellow-fever zone in Africa (which includes most of East, West and Central Africa) or South America, you must have an international vaccination certificate against yellow fever. No other vaccinations are mandatory, although there are some you should consider (see p766).

Air

AIRPORTS & AIRLINES

The major air hub for South Africa, and for the entire surrounding region, is **OR Tambo**

International Airport (JIA or JNB; ☎ 011-921 6262; www.worldairportguides.com/johannesburg-jnb) – formerly Johannesburg International. It has a full range of shops, restaurants, internet access, ATMs, foreign-exchange bureaus and mobile-phone and car-rental outlets.

Cape Town International Airport (CPT; ☎ 021-937 1200; www.airports.co.za) receives many direct flights from Europe, and is becoming an increasingly important gateway. It has a forex bureau, and mobile-phone and car-rental outlets.

The smaller **Durban International Airport** (DUR; ☎ 031-451 6758; www.airports.co.za) handles several regional flights, as does **Mpumalanga Kruger International Airport** (MQP; ☎ 013-753 7500; www.kmiairport.co.za) near Nelspruit and the Kruger National Park.

South African Airways (SAA; airline code SA; ☎ 0861-359 722, 011-978 5313; www.flysaa.com; hub JIA) is the national airline, with an excellent route network and safety record. In addition to its international routes, it operates regional flights together with its subsidiaries **South African Airlink** (SAAirlink; ☎ 011-978 5313; www.sairlink.co.za) and **South African Express** (☎ 011-978 5577; www.saexpress.co.za).

Some other international carriers flying to/from Jo'burg (except as noted):

Air France (AF; ☎ 0860-340 340; www.airfrance.fr)

Hub: Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris.

British Airways (BA; www.britishairways.com) Jo'burg (☎ 011-441 8600); Cape Town (☎ 021-936 1200) Hub: Heathrow Airport, London. Also serves Cape Town.

Cathay Pacific (CX; ☎ 011-9.500 8-120; www.cathaypacific.com) Hub: Hong Kong International Airport.

Egyptair (MS; ☎ 011-3-12 2202, 011-880 4126/9; www.egyptair.com.eg) Hub: Cairo International Airport.

Emirates Airlines (EK; ☎ 011-883 8420; www.emirates.com) Hub: Dubai International Airport.

Kenya Airways (KQ; ☎ 011-881 9795, 011-571 8817; www.kenya-airways.com) Hub: Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi.

KLM (KL; ☎ 0860-247 474, 011-881 9696; www.klm.com) Hub: Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam. Also serves Cape Town.

Lufthansa (LH; ☎ 0861-842 538, 021-415 3506; www.lufthansa.com) Hub: Frankfurt International Airport. Also serves Cape Town.

Qantas (QF; ☎ 011-441 8550; www.qantas.com.au) Hub: Kingsford Smith Airport, Sydney.

Singapore Airlines (SQ; www.singaporeair.com) Jo'burg (☎ 011-880 8560); Cape Town (☎ 021-674 0601) Hub: Singapore Changi Airport. Also serves Cape Town.

Virgin Atlantic (VS; ☎ 011-340 3400; www.virgin-atlantic.com) Hub: London. Also serves Cape Town.

Bicycle

There are no restrictions on bringing your own bicycle into South Africa. Two helpful sources of background information are the **International Bicycle Fund** (☎ in the USA 206-767 0848; www.ibike.org) and **SA-Cycling** (www.sa-cycling.com).

Border Crossings

BOTSWANA

There are 18 official South Africa/Botswana border posts. All are open between 8am and 4pm, and many have longer hours.

Grobler's Bridge (☎ 8am-6pm) Northwest of Polokwane/Pietersburg.

Kapfontein/Tlokweng Gate (☎ 6am-10pm) North of Zeerust; a main border post.

McCarthy's Rest (☎ 8am-4.30pm) Near Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

Ramatlhabama (☎ 6am-8pm) North of Mafikeng; a main border post.

Skilpadshok/Pioneer Gate (☎ 6am-10pm) Northwest of Zeerust; a main border post.

Some of the more remote crossings are impassable to 2WD vehicles, and may be closed completely during periods of high water. Otherwise, the crossings are hassle-free.

LESOTHO

All of landlocked Lesotho's borders are with South Africa and are straightforward to cross. The main crossing is at Maseru Bridge, east of Bloemfontein; queues here are often very long exiting Lesotho and, on some weekend evenings, coming into Lesotho.

MOZAMBIQUE

The South Africa/Mozambique border posts are as follows:

Giriyondo (☎ 8am-4pm Oct-Mar, 8am-3pm Apr-Sep) West of Massingir (Mozambique).

Komatipoort/Ressano Garcia (☎ 6am-10pm) East of Nelspruit and heavily travelled.

Kosi Bay/Ponta d'Ouro (☎ 8am-4pm) On the coast, well north of Durban.

Pafuri (☎ 8am-4pm) In Kruger National Park's north-eastern corner.

NAMIBIA

South Africa/Namibia border posts include those at Nakop/Ariamsvlei (24 hours) west of Upington; at Violsdrif/Noordoewer (24 hours) north of Springbok and en route to/from Cape Town; and at Rietfontein/Aroab (8am to 4.30pm) just south of Kgalagadi

Transfrontier Park. It's not possible to cross the border at Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park itself; Rietfontein is the closest crossing. There's also a border post at Alexander Bay/Oranjemund (6am to 10pm) on the coast, but public access is usually not permitted. Note that Namibian visas are not available at any of these border posts.

SWAZILAND

There are 11 South Africa/Swaziland border posts, all of which are hassle-free. Note that small posts close at 4pm. The busiest crossing (and a good place to pick up lifts) is at Oshoek/Ngwenya (☎ 7am-10pm) approximately 360km southeast of Pretoria. Some others include the following:

Golela/Lavumisa (☎ 7am-10pm) En route between Durban and Swaziland's Ezulwini Valley.

Josefsdal/Bulembu (☎ 8am-4pm) Along the unpaved road from Piggs Peak to Barberton (Mpumalanga) and tricky in wet weather.

Mahamba (☎ 7am-10pm) The best crossing to use from Piet Retief is Mpumalanga.

Mananga (☎ 7am-6pm) Southwest of Komatipoort.

Matsamo/Jeppe's Reef (☎ 7am-8pm) Southwest of Malelane and a possible route to Kruger National Park.

Onverwacht/Salitje (☎ 8am-6pm) North of Pongola in KwaZulu-Natal.

ZIMBABWE

The only border post between Zimbabwe and South Africa is at Beitbridge (24 hours) on the Limpopo River. There's lots of smuggling, so searches are thorough and queues often long. The closest South African town to the border is Musina (15km south), where you can change money.

When entering or leaving South Africa, vehicles pay a toll at the border to use the Limpopo Bridge. South Africans need a visa (free) to get into Zimbabwe but can obtain it at the border. Most other nationalities, including Commonwealth and US passport holders, require visas, which are available at the border and payable in US dollars only.

Ignore the touts on the Zimbabwe side trying to 'help' you through Zimbabwe immigration and customs. Despite their insistence, there's no charge for the government forms needed for immigration.

Bus

Numerous buses cross the borders between South Africa and all of its neighbours. These

are the most efficient way to travel overland, unless you have your own vehicle. Other than sometimes lengthy queues, there are usually no hassles. At the border, you'll need to disembark to take care of visa formalities, then reboard your same bus and continue on. Visa prices are not included in the ticket price for trans-border routes. Many bus lines offer student discounts, upon presentation of a student ID.

It's also possible to travel to/from all of South Africa's neighbours by local minibus taxi. A few routes go direct, though sometimes it's necessary to walk across the border and change vehicles on the other side.

Car & Motorcycle

If you're arriving in South Africa via car or motorcycle, you will need the vehicle's registration papers, liability insurance and your driving licence. You'll also need a *carnet de passage en douane*, which acts as a temporary waiver of import duty; arrange for this through your local automobile association. South African-registered vehicles don't need a carnet to visit any of South Africa's neighbouring countries.

Border posts generally don't have petrol stations or repair shops; you'll need to go to the nearest large town.

From Botswana BUS

From Jo'burg/Pretoria, **Intercape Mainliner** (☎ 0861 287 287, 021-380 4400; www.intercape.co.za) runs daily buses to Gaborone (US\$20, six hours). A cheaper but less safe and less comfortable alternative is one of the minibuses that run throughout the day between Jo'burg and Gaborone (about US\$1.40, six hours) via Mafikeng (North-West Province). In Gaborone, these leave from the northwest corner of the main bus terminal, starting at 6am. In Jo'burg, departures are from Park Station. To do the trip in stages, take a City Link bus from Jo'burg to Mafikeng, from where there are direct minibuses over the border to Lobatse (1½ hours). There are also direct minibuses between Jo'burg and Palapye (Botswana) via Martin's Drift (eight hours).

TRAIN

There are no cross-border trains, but it's possible to travel the Botswana leg of the journey between Francistown, near the border with

Zimbabwe, and Lobatse, near the border with South Africa, via Gaborone.

From Lesotho

BUS
Big Sky Coaches (www.bigskycoaches.co.za) runs two buses daily in each direction between Bloemfontein and Maseru Bridge (US\$4.70, three hours), with express services from Bloemfontein (two hours) on Friday and on Saturday morning, and from Maseru Bridge on Friday and on Sunday afternoon. Tickets are sold at the Big Sky booths at Bloemfontein's Central Park, and on the bus at Maseru Bridge.

Via minibus taxi, the quickest connections are from Bloemfontein to Botshabelo (Mtabelo; US\$4, one hour), and then from there to Maseru (US\$2, 1½ hours). There are also at least three buses weekly between Jo'burg and Maseru (six to seven hours), and daily minibus taxis between both Jo'burg and Ladybrand (16km from the Maseru Bridge border crossing) and Maseru. All these routes will bring you into Maseru coming from South Africa; leaving Maseru, you'll need to go to the South Africa side of Maseru Bridge.

Other useful connections include a daily minibus taxi between Mokhotlong (Lesotho) and Underberg (South Africa) via Sani Pass (see p522); and several taxis daily between Qacha's Nek (Lesotho) and Matatiele (South Africa; about US\$2, 45 minutes). If you are travelling between Jo'burg and northern Lesotho, take a minibus taxi to Ficksburg, cross the border, and then get a minibus taxi on to Butha-Buthe and points north. There are sometimes direct taxis between Jo'burg and Butha-Buthe via Caledonspoort border (about US\$17, five hours).

CAR

The easiest entry points for car and motorcycle are on the northern and western sides of the country. Most of the entry points to the south and east are unpaved, though all are possible in a 2WD except Sani Pass. You'll need a 4WD to enter Lesotho via Sani Pass; it's possible to exit via this route with a 2WD with sufficient clearance, but a 4WD is recommended.

From Mozambique

BUS
Several large 'luxury' buses run daily between Jo'burg/Pretoria and Maputo via Nelspruit

and Komatipoort (US\$20 to US\$30, eight to nine hours). These include the following:

Greyhound (☎ 012-323 1154; www.greyhound.co.za)
Intercape Mainliner (☎ 0861 287 287, 021-380 4400; www.intercape.co.za)

Panthera Azul (☎ 011-618 8811, Maputo 021-302 077, 302 083; www.pantherazul.com)

Translux (☎ 011-774 3333; www.translux.co.za)

You can also travel in each direction on these lines between Nelspruit and Maputo, but not between Nelspruit and Jo'burg.

Alternatively, the **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com) links Jo'burg/Pretoria, Nelspruit and Durban with Manzini (Swaziland), from where you can get a minibus taxi to Maputo. See p592 for more on the Baz Bus.

Panthera Azul has buses three times weekly between Durban and Maputo (US\$31, 8½ hours), passing through Big Bend (Swaziland) and Namaacha.

Minibuses depart Maputo daily in the morning for the Namaacha/Lomahasha border post (US\$2, 1½ hours) with some continuing on to Manzini (US\$4.50, 3½ hours).

CAR

For travel to/from Mozambique via the Kosi Bay border, you will need your own vehicle (4WD is necessary on the Mozambique side). Alternatively, most places to stay in Ponta d'Ouro (Mozambique) will arrange transfers for around US\$20. Hitching between the border and Ponta d'Ouro is easy at weekends and also during the South African school holidays.

There's a good tarmac toll road connecting Jo'burg with Maputo via Ressano Garcia, with tolls on the South Africa side between Middelburg and Witbank, at Machadodorp and 45km east of Nelspruit.

TRAIN

The daily (except Saturday) *Komati* train, operated by Shosholoza Meyl, links Jo'burg and Komatipoort via Pretoria and Nelspruit (1st/2nd/3rd class from US\$25/17/9, 13 to 14 hours). Once at Komatipoort, you can change to the Mozambican train to Maputo (Mtc15,000, economy class only, five hours), but as service on the Mozambique side is so slow, it's much better to take a minibus (US\$3.50, 1½ hours). Even if you take the train the whole way, you'll need to buy the ticket for the Mozambique section at the border.

From Namibia

BUS
Intercape Mainliner (www.intercape.co.za) runs four times weekly between Cape Town and Windhoek via Upington (US\$65, 20 hours). It's possible to travel from Jo'burg to Windhoek with Intercape Mainliner (US\$83, 25 hours) on the same days, with a change of bus in Upington.

TRAIN

The **Trans-Namib** (☎ Namibia 061-298 2175; www.transnamib.com.na) 'StarLine' runs twice weekly between Windhoek and Upington (25 hours).

From Swaziland

BUS
The best connections are on the **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com), which runs from Jo'burg/Pretoria to Manzini via Nelspruit, and between Durban and Manzini via the KwaZulu-Natal coast.

Minibus taxis run daily between Jo'burg (Park Station), Mbabane and Manzini (US\$0.90, four hours), between Manzini and Durban (US\$16, eight hours), and between Manzini and Maputo (Mozambique; US\$4.50, 2½ hours). For many routes, you'll need to change minibuses at the border. Most long-distance taxis leave early in the morning.

From Zimbabwe

BUS
At the time of research, bus services between Jo'burg and Zimbabwe were suspended, due in part to fuel shortages.

TOURS

Dozens of tour and safari companies organise package tours to South Africa including for various special interests (bird-watching, flower-watching etc). Following is a list of possible tour companies:

Adventure Centre (☎ 510-94 1879, 800-228 2747; www.adventurecenter.com) Budget to midrange tours including a 22-day South Africa circuit that takes in bits of Swaziland and Lesotho; it's also the US agent for several overland operators.

Africa Adventure Company (☎ 954-491 8877, 800-882 9453; www.africa-adventure.com) Upper-end wildlife safaris, including the private reserves around Kruger National Park, plus other itineraries in Cape Town and the Garden Route.

African Wildlife Safaris (☎ 03-9696 2899; www.africanwildlifesafaris.com.au) Customised wildlife safaris in South Africa and neighbouring countries.

Born Free Safaris (☎ 800-472 3274; www.bornfreesafaris.com) Offers a good range of Cape to Kruger itineraries.
Guerba (☎ 01373-826 611; www.guerba.com) Overland tours.

In the Saddle (☎ 01299-272 997; www.inthesaddle.com) Strictly for horse aficionados, with various rides in South Africa, including in the Western Cape and in the Greater St Lucia Wetlands Park.

Peregrine Travel (☎ 03-8601 4444; www.peregrine.net.au) Caters to all budgets, from overland truck tours to upscale wildlife safaris, and including a South Africa and Swaziland cycling itinerary.

Wilderness Travel (☎ 015-558 2488, 800-368 2794; www.wildernesstravel.com) Offers various Southern Africa packages, including a two-week Cape Town and Garden Route itinerary.

GETTING AROUND

Air
In addition to being the international flag carrier, **South African Airways** (SAA; ☎ 0861-359 722, 011-978 5313; www.flysaa.com) is the main domestic carrier, with an extensive and efficient route network to major cities. Its subsidiaries, **SAairlink** (☎ 011-978 5313; www.sairlink.co.za) and **SA Express** (☎ 011-978 5577; www.saexpress.co.za), also service domestic routes and share SAA's excellent safety record.

Domestic fares aren't cheap. One way to save significantly is to book online.

In addition to SAA and its affiliates, airlines flying domestically include the following:
1time (☎ 0861-345345; www.1time.co.za) No-frills flights linking Jo'burg with Cape Town, Durban and East London, George and Port Elizabeth, and between Cape Town and East London. Also offers car rentals.

Comair (☎ 0860-435 922, 011-921 0222; www.comair.co.za) Operates British Airways flights within Africa, and has flights linking Cape Town, Durban, Jo'burg and Port Elizabeth.

Kulula.com (☎ 0861-585 852; www.kulula.com) Operates no-frills flights linking Jo'burg, Cape Town, Durban, George, Port Elizabeth and Mpumalanga Kruger. Also offers airport transfer services and car rentals.

Nationwide Airlines (☎ 0861-737 737, 011-344 7200; www.nationwideair.co.za) Operates in partnership with Virgin Atlantic, and has flights linking Jo'burg, Cape Town, Durban, George, Port Elizabeth, Sun City and Nelspruit.

Bicycle

South Africa offers some rewarding cycling. The Cape Peninsula and the Winelands of the Western Cape are excellent biking areas. The Wild Coast in the Eastern Cape is beautiful

and challenging, while the northern lowveld offers wide plains.

When planning, keep in mind that much of the country (except for Western Cape and the west coast) gets most of its rain in summer (late November to March), in the form of violent thunderstorms. When it isn't raining, summer days can be unpleasantly hot, especially in the steamy lowveld and distances between major towns are often long.

SA-Cycling (www.sa-cycling.com) posts cyclists diaries, suggests several routes, and has listings of cycling clubs. Other things to remember are that it's illegal to cycle on highways, and that roads near urban areas are too busy for comfort.

Mixing cycling with public transport doesn't work well, as most bus lines don't want bicycles in their luggage holds, and minibuses don't carry luggage on the roof.

Bus

Buses in South Africa aren't the deal that they are in many other countries. However, together with the less-appealing minibuses taxis, they're the main form of public transport, with a reliable and reasonably comfortable network linking all major cities. Note that many long-distance services run through the night.

A good alternative to the standard bus lines is **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com), catering almost exclusively to backpackers and travellers. It offers hop-on, hop-off fares and door-to-door service between Cape Town and Jo'burg via the Northern Drakensberg, Durban and the Garden Route. It also has a loop from Durban via Zululand and Swaziland to Jo'burg, passing near Kruger National Park. Point-to-point fares are more expensive than on the other major lines, but can work out more economically if you take advantage of the hop-on/hop-off feature. It's also worth checking out their one- and two-week travel passes.

The Baz Bus drops off and picks up at many hostels along the way, and has transfer arrangements with those off the main routes for a nominal extra charge. You can book directly with Baz Bus, as well as with most hostels.

In partnership with Translux, **City to City** (☎ 011-774 3333, 0861-589 282; www.translux.co.za) has taken over the routes that once carried people from the Homelands to and from the big cities during the apartheid regime.

Services are less expensive than on the other lines, and go to many off-the-beaten-track places, including townships and mining towns. Destinations from Jo'burg include Mthatha, Nelspruit, Hazzyview, Beitbridge (for Zimbabwe), Piet Retief, and various towns in KwaZulu-Natal. Many services originate at Jo'burg's Park Station transit centre, where there are booking counters and an information desk.

Offering an extensive network, with routes and pricing similar to those for Translux, **Greyhound** (☎ 083-915 1200; www.greyhound.co.za) also has a Jo'burg to Durban route via Zululand and Richards Bay, and offers frequent special deals.

Servicing primarily the western half of the country, plus Nelspruit (en route to Mozambique), **Intercape Mainliner** (☎ 0861 287 287, 021-380 4400; www.intercape.co.za) prices are somewhat less than Translux and Greyhound. For longer hauls, it's worth paying more (about 8% above regular fares) for a reclining seat on one of Intercape's new Sleepliner buses.

SA Roadlink (☎ 011-333 2223; www.saroadlink.co.za) is a new line linking Pretoria and Johannesburg with Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, East London, Mthatha, Durban and points in between.

The main long-distance bus operator **Translux** (☎ 011-774 3333, 0861-589 282; www.translux.co.za), has services connecting Cape Town, Knysna, Plettenberg Bay, Durban, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, East London, Mthatha, Nelspruit (en route to Mozambique) and various towns along the Garden Route.

There are no class tiers on any of the bus lines, although Translux, Intercape and Greyhound, as well as SA Roadlink's newer buses would be the equivalent of 'luxury' lines, with air-con and often video and a toilet. City to City's service is no-frills.

Except for the Baz Bus, which has its own pricing structure, fares are roughly calculated by distance, although short runs are disproportionately expensive. Some approximate one-way fares and durations: Jo'burg to Cape Town (US\$59, 19 hours); Jo'burg to Durban (US\$11 to US\$20, eight hours); and Cape Town to Knysna (US\$23, eight hours). Baz Bus one-way fares for hop-on, hop-off service are: Cape Town to Durban via the Garden Route (US\$215); Jo'burg-Swaziland-Durban-Drakensberg-Jo'burg loop (US\$136)

Prices rise during school holidays; all lines offer student and senior citizen discounts, and Intercape has backpacker discounts. Also inquire about travel passes, if you'll be taking several bus journeys, and always check with the bus companies to see if they are running any specials, which can sometimes save you up to 40%.

For the main lines, reservations should be made at least 24 hours in advance (72 hours in advance for Intercape Mainliner, and as much in advance as possible for travel during peak periods). It's sometimes possible to get a seat at the last minute, but this shouldn't be counted on.

Car & Motorcycle

South Africa is ideal for driving, and away from the main bus and train routes, having your own wheels is the best way to get around. If you're in a group, it's also often the most economical. Most major roads are in excellent condition, and off the main routes there are interesting back roads to explore.

The country is crossed by many national routes (eg N1). On some sections a toll is payable, based on distance. There's always plenty of warning that you're about to enter a toll section (marked by a black 'T' in a yellow circle), and there's always an alternative route (marked by a black 'A' in a yellow circle). On alternative routes, signposting is sparse, generally only directing you to smaller towns or giving route numbers, rather than the direction of the next large city. Smaller roads are numbered (eg R44 – shown in this book as Rte 44), and when you ask directions most people will refer to these numbers rather than destinations, so it pays to have a good road map.

DRIVING LICENCE

In South Africa, you can use your driving licence from your home country if it is in English (or if you have a certified translation), and if it carries your photo; otherwise you'll need an international driving permit, obtainable from a motoring organisation in your home country.

FUEL

Petrol costs about US\$0.70 per litre for leaded or unleaded in all three countries, and must be paid for in cash. There's no self-service. An attendant will always fill up your tank for you, clean your windows and ask if the oil or

water needs checking, and should be tipped between US\$0.30 and US\$0.70.

Along main routes in South Africa there are plenty of petrol stations, many open 24 hours.

HIRE

Car rental is relatively inexpensive in South Africa. Most companies have a minimum age requirement of 21 years. Rates start at about US\$40 per day including insurance and 200km free per day. Rental of a 4WD starts at about US\$60. For cheaper rates and unlimited mileage deals, it's best to book and prepay through your agent at home before coming to South Africa.

Around About Cars (☎ 0860 422 0422; www.aroundaboutcars.com)

Avis (☎ 0861-113 748, 011-923 3660; www.avis.co.za)

Budget (☎ 0861-016 622, 011-398 0123; www.budget.co.za)

Europcar (☎ 0800 011 344, 011-574 4457; www.europcar.co.za)

Hertz (☎ 021-935 4800, 011-390 9700; www.hertz.co.za)

Local car-rental companies are usually less expensive, though they tend to come and go. Also check with backpackers' hostels; many can arrange better deals, from around US\$25 per day or less.

Imperial (☎ 0861 131 000, 011-574 1000; www.imperialcarrental.co.za)

Tempest (☎ 0860-031 666, 011-396 1080; www.tempestcarhire.co.za; South Africa)

Renting a camper van is another option, although one-way rentals are often not possible, or attract large fees. Some camper-van rentals include camping gear. Bakkie campers, which sleep two in the back of a canopied pick-up, are cheaper. Two places to try, both in Jo'burg, are **African Leisure Travel** (☎ 011-792 1884; www.africanleisure.co.za) and **Britz 4x4 Rentals** (☎ 011-396 1860; www.britz.co.za).

For motorcycle rental, good contacts include **Motozulu** (www.motozu.lu.ms) in Port Shepstone (KwaZulu-Natal), and **Le Cap Motorcycle Hire** (Map p432; ☎ 021-423 0823; www.lecap.co.za) in Cape Town.

INSURANCE

Insurance for third-party damage and damage to or loss of your vehicle is highly recommended, though not legally required

for private-vehicle owners. The AASA is a good contact and Insurance agencies include **African Independent Brokers** (☎ 086-100 1002), **Lions Head Insurance Brokers** (☎ 021-761 8332) and **First Bowring** (☎ 021-425 1460), all based in Cape Town.

ROAD HAZARDS

South Africa has a horrific road-accident record, with the annual death toll around 10,000 (although some estimates place it at over 15,000). The N1 between Cape Town and Beaufort West is considered to be the most dangerous stretch of road in the country.

The main hazards are your fellow drivers, with overtaking blind and overtaking with insufficient passing room the major dangers. Drivers on little-used rural roads often speed and they often assume that there is no other traffic. There is alcohol breath-testing in South Africa, but given the high blood-alcohol level permitted (over 0.08% in South Africa) drunk drivers remain a danger.

Animals and pedestrians on the roads are another hazard, especially in rural areas. Standard advice is that if you hit an animal in an area in which you're uncertain of your safety, it's best to continue to the nearest police station and report it there. During the rainy season, and especially in higher areas of steamy KwaZulu-Natal, thick fog can slow you to a crawl. In the lowveld, summer hailstorms can damage your car.

Carjacking

In Jo'burg, and to a lesser extent in the other big cities, carjacking is a problem, though it's more likely if you're driving something flash rather than a standard rental car. The car-jackers are almost always armed, and people have been killed for their cars. Stay alert, keep windows wound up and doors locked at night, and keep your taste in cars modest. If you're stopped at a red light and notice anything suspicious, it's standard practice to check that the junction is clear, and run the light. If you do get carjacked, don't resist, just hand over the keys immediately.

ROAD RULES

Driving is on the left-hand side of the road, as in the UK, Japan and Australia. Seatbelts are mandatory for the driver and front-seat passenger.

There are a few local variations on road rules. The main one is the 'four-way stop' (crossroad), which can occur even on major roads. All vehicles are required to stop, with those arriving first the first to go (even if they're on a minor cross street). On freeways, faster drivers will expect you to move into the emergency lane to let them pass, and will probably flash their hazard lights as thanks. At roundabouts, vehicles already in the roundabout, and those approaching it from the right, have the right of way.

In Johannesburg and other urban areas, you'll encounter car guards – usually otherwise unemployed Africans from elsewhere on the continent who will (most usefully) keep an eye on your parked car while you do your shopping or other errands. Be nice to them (they don't bite) and tip them between US\$0.30 and US\$0.70 for their services.

Hitching

Hitching is never entirely safe in any country. This is especially true in South Africa, particularly in and near urban areas, and it's not a form of travel we can recommend. However, sometimes in rural areas it may be the only way to get somewhere.

Local Transport

For getting around within a city or town, the main options are city buses, minibus taxis and regular taxis – either shared or private hire. In a few places, such as Cape Town and Durban, you'll have other options such as the rikki (small open vans) and *tuk-tuk* (motorised tricycle), and Cape Town, Jo'burg and Pretoria have metro commuter trains.

BUS

Cape Town, Jo'burg, Pretoria and several other urban areas have city bus systems. Fares are cheap and routes, which are signboarded, are extensive. However, services usually stop running early in the evening, and there aren't many buses on weekends.

Minibus Taxi

Minibus taxis run almost everywhere in South Africa – within cities, to the suburbs and to neighbouring towns. They leave when full and, happily – especially if you've travelled elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa – 'full' in South Africa isn't as full as it is in many neighbouring countries. Most accommodate 14 to

16 people, with the slightly larger 'Sprinters' taking about 20.

Minibus taxis have the advantages of an extensive route network and cheap prices. These are outweighed, however, by the fact that driving standards and vehicle conditions often leave a lot to be desired, and there are many accidents. The reputation of minibus taxis has also been tarnished by isolated outbreaks of gangster-style shoot-outs between the various companies competing for business, including incidents where crowded taxis were machine-gunned. Although things have settled down in recent years, minibuses in some areas and on some routes are still considered highly unsafe, and reports of muggings and other incidents remain a regular feature. In other areas – notably central Cape Town, where they're a handy and popular way to get around – they are fine.

Away from train and main bus routes, minibus taxis may be the only choice of public transport. They're also a good way to get insights into local life. If you want to try one, read the newspapers, don't ride at night, and always ask for local advice on lines and areas to avoid before using minibus taxis as transport. As most minibus taxis don't carry luggage on the roof, stowing backpacks can be a hassle.

Private Taxi

Larger cities have a private taxi service. Occasionally, you'll find a taxi stand, but usually you'll need to telephone for a cab. Prices average about US\$1.10 per kilometre.

Shared Taxi

In some towns (and on some longer routes), the only transport option is a shared taxi, basically a smaller version of the minibus taxi. These are slightly more expensive than minibus taxis, and comparable in safety.

Tours

There are dozens of tours available, ranging from budget-oriented overland truck tours to exclusive luxury safaris. The best way to get information on tours geared to budget travellers is from the network of backpackers' hostels around the country. Many have travellers bulletin boards, and some are directly affiliated with budget-tour operators.

Some tour operators to try include the following:

African Routes (☎ 031-563 5080; www.africanroutes.co.za) Offers camping and overland itineraries for younger travellers, plus various tours for seniors.

BirdWatch Cape (☎ 021-762 5059; www.birdwatch.co.za) A small outfit for twitchers, focusing on Cape Town and surrounding areas.

Bundu Safari Company (☎ 011-675 0767; www.bundusafaris.co.za) Budget-oriented tours ranging from one to several days, focusing on Kruger National Park and the surrounding area.

Cape Town Gourmet Adventure Tours (☎ 083-693 1151; <http://gourmet.cape-town.info>) Wining and dining in Cape Town, plus 'wellness' tours and other options in and around Cape Town and the Western Cape.

Eco-1st (☎ 021-559 2420; www.eco-tourisminvestments.co.za) Outdoor-oriented 'biodiversity' tours around Cape Town, plus longer itineraries taking in Kruger National Park, the Garden Route and other areas.

Encompass Africa (☎ 021-434 9932; encompassafrica@yabo.co.za) A backpacker-oriented outfit offering various itineraries based out of Cape Town.

Springbok Atlas (☎ 021-460 4700; www.springbokatlas.com) One of the major coach-tour operators, offering midrange tours along popular routes, including day tours. Aimed at older tourists.

Thompsons South Africa (☎ 031-201 3100; www.thompsonssa.com) Midrange and top-end package tours and safaris, including a two-week tour taking in South Africa's main tourist spots.

Wilderness Safaris (www.wilderness-safaris.com) Upmarket specialist operator offering high-end luxury safaris and special-interest trips; also operates several luxury bush camps.

Train

South Africa's Shoshololo Meyl passenger trains are run by **Spoornet** (☎ 011-773 2944; www.spoornet.co.za, click on 'Passengers'), and offer regular services connecting major cities on 'name trains' (some of the main routes are listed, p596). These are a good and safe, albeit slow, way to get around, and more comfortable than taking the bus. The trains are also relatively affordable and, unlike the long-distance buses, fares on short sectors are not inflated.

On overnight journeys, 1st- and 2nd-class fares include a sleeping berth, but there's an additional charge for bedding hire. Alternatively, you can hire a private compartment (which sleeps four in 1st class and six in 2nd class) or a coupe (which sleeps two in 1st class and three in 2nd class) – these are a good way of travelling more securely. Meals are available in the dining car, or in the comfort of your compartment.

Tickets must be booked at least 24 hours in advance (you can book up to three months in advance). Bookings for anywhere in the country can be done at any individual station, or through the **Shosholozu Meyl Reservations Centre** (☎ 0860-008 888, 011-774 4555). For an overview of the South African rails, check out **The Man in Seat 61** (www.seat61.com/SouthAfrica.htm).

ROUTES

Main routes include the following:

Algoa Jo'burg–Port Elizabeth via Bloemfontein; daily; 20 hours.

Amatola Jo'burg–East London via Bloemfontein; Sunday to Friday; 20 hours.

Bosveld Jo'burg–Musina via Makhado; daily; 17 hours.

Diamond Express Jo'burg–Bloemfontein; three times weekly; nine hours.

Komati Jo'burg–Komatipoort via Pretoria, Midleburg and Nelspruit; daily; 13 hours; connects to the Komatipoort–Maputo train.

Trans Karoo Pretoria/Joh'burg–Cape Town via Kimberly; daily; 28 hours.

Trans Natal Jo'burg–Durban via Ladysmith and Pietermaritzburg; five times weekly; 13½ hours.

Trans Oranje Cape Town–Durban via Kimberley, Bloemfontein and Kroonstad; weekly; 31 hours.

Some 1st-/2nd-/economy-class sample fares: Jo'burg–Durban US\$34/22/13; Cape Town–Pretoria US\$70/47/31; Jo'burg–Port Elizabeth US\$49/33/20. Return fares are double the one-way fares. It's possible to put a vehicle on board the *Trans Karoo* for an extra US\$180.

METRO TRAINS

There are metro services in Jo'burg, Cape Town and Pretoria, though most lines aren't recommended for security reasons. The new **Gautrain** (www.gautrain.co.za) may soon connect Jo'burg and Pretoria.

Swaziland

Embedded between Mozambique and South Africa, the kingdom of Swaziland is one of the smallest countries in Africa. What the country lacks in size it makes up for in its rich culture and heritage, and relaxed ambience. With its laid-back, friendly people and relative lack of racial animosity, it's a complete change of pace from its larger neighbours.

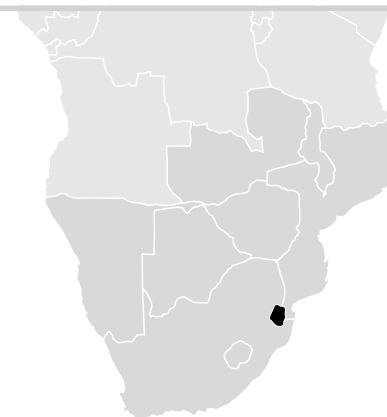
Visitors can enjoy rewarding and delightfully low-key wildlife watching, adrenaline-boosting activities, stunning mountain panoramas and lively traditions. Swaziland also boasts superb walking and high-quality handicrafts.

Overseeing the kingdom is King Mswati III, one of three remaining monarchs in Africa. The monarchy has its critics, but combined with the Swazis' distinguished history of resistance to the Boers, the British and the Zulus, it has fostered a strong sense of national pride, and local culture is flourishing. This is exemplified in its national festivals – the Incwala ceremony and the Umhlanga (Reed) dance (see the boxed text, p607).

The excellent road system makes Swaziland easy to get around. Accommodation includes a decent network of hostels, family-friendly hotels and upscale retreats. Many travellers make a flying visit on their way to South Africa's Kruger National Park, but it's well worth lingering here if you can.

FAST FACTS

- **Area:** 17,364 sq km
- **Capital:** Mbabane
- **Country code:** ☎ 268
- **Famous for:** Monarchy, cultural festivals, high incidence of HIV/AIDS
- **Languages:** Swati, English
- **Money:** Lilangeni, plural emalangeni (E)
- **Phrase:** *Sawubona/sanibona* (hello)
- **Population:** 1.1 million



HOW MUCH?

- **Traditional dance/cultural group** US\$6.50
- **Internet per hour** US\$4.50
- **Coffee** US\$0.80-1.70
- **Batik hanging** US\$8
- **Basket** US\$5

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L of petrol** US\$0.80
- **1L of bottled water** US\$0.80
- **Bottle of beer** US\$1.10-1.50
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$11
- **Barbecued maize** US\$0.40

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Mkhaya Game Reserve** (p612) Seeing rare black rhinos in the wild.
- **Malolotja Nature Reserve** (p610) or **Ngwempisi Gorge** (p613) Hiking in two of Swaziland's most enchanting and unspoilt wilderness areas.
- **Usutu River** (see the boxed text, p608) Shooting wondrous white-water rapids.
- **Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary** (p606) Wandering through a wilderness and relaxing in its comfortable bargain lodges.
- **Off the beaten track** (p611) Camping high on the Lebombo Plateau and overlooking typical Africa from Shewula Mountain Camp.

ITINERARIES

- **One Week** With only a week at your disposal, a half-day in **Mbabane** (p603) is plenty. Spend two days poking around the pretty **Ezulwini** (p606) and **Malkerns Valleys** (p608), including **Lobamba** (p606), and make a trip into the relaxing **Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary** (p606); you'll probably see zebras, giraffes, many antelope species and a variety of birds. If you have time and you want to see rare black rhinos in the wild, continue east to the stunning **Mkhaya Game Reserve** (p612).
- **Two Weeks** Do the one week itinerary, plus view wildlife at the extensive **Hlane Royal National Park** (p611) and **Mlawula Nature Reserve** (p612). On your circular route back to Mbabane, drop into **Piggs Peak** (p610),

an area known for its handicrafts, and take a detour to hike in **Malolotja Nature Reserve** (p610), an unspoiled wilderness area, or visit the fascinating ghost village of **Bulembu** (p611). You could do this route clockwise, starting in Mbabane and heading north to Malolotja.

- **One month** You can absorb most of Swaziland in this time. Join the previous two itineraries and take extra time out for some action: hike in the **Ngwempisi Gorge** (p613) and shoot the rapids on the **Usutu River** (p608). If Swaziland is incorporated into your one-month trip through South Africa, it's well worth diverting here for its friendly people, relaxed atmosphere, unique culture, and pretty and accessible wildlife parks and reserves.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Most rain falls in summer, usually in torrential thunderstorms and mostly in the western mountains. Summers on the lowveld are very hot, with temperatures often over 40°C; in the high country the temperatures are lower and in winter it can get cool. Winter nights on the lowveld are sometimes very cold.

The rains usually begin around early December and last until April. May to August are the coolest months, with frosts in June and July.

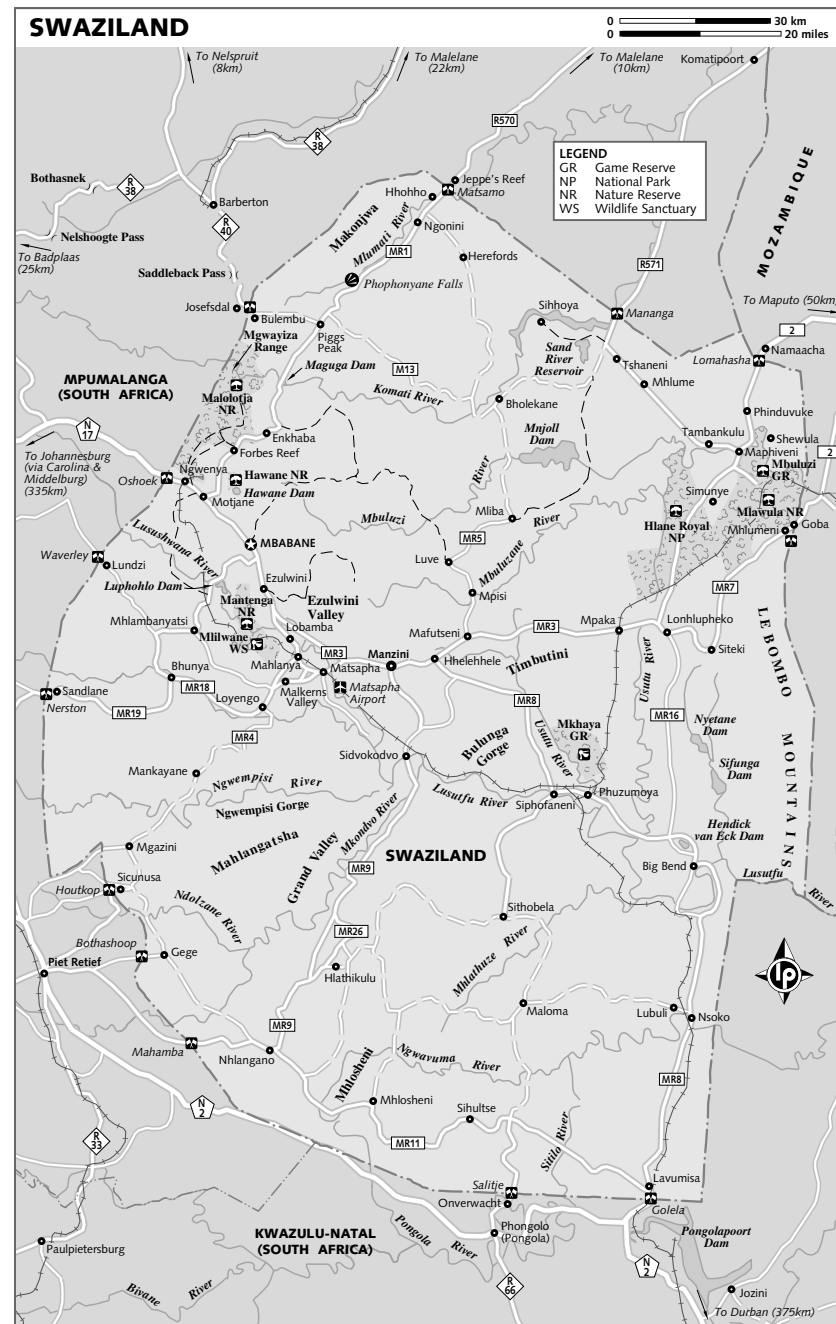
HISTORY

The area that is now Swaziland has been inhabited for a long time – in eastern Swaziland archaeologists have discovered human remains dating back 110,000 years – but the Swazi people arrived relatively recently.

During the great Bantu migrations into Southern Africa, one group, the Nguni, moved down the east coast. A clan settled in the area near what is now Maputo in Mozambique, and a dynasty was founded by the Dlamini family. (For detailed information on the Bantu migrations, see p39.)

In the mid-18th century increasing pressure from other Nguni clans forced King Ngwane III to lead his people south to lands by the Pongola River, in what is now southern Swaziland. Today, Swazis consider Ngwane III to have been the first king of Swaziland.

Clan encroachment continued, and the next king, Sobhuza I, also came under pressure from the Zulu. He withdrew to the Ezulwini Valley, which remains the centre of Swazi



royalty and ritual today. Trouble with the Zulu continued, though the next king, Mswazi (or Mswati), managed to unify the whole kingdom and, by the time he died in 1868, a Swazi nation was secure. Mswazi's subjects called themselves people of Mswazi, or Swazis.

European Interference

During the same period the Zulu were coming under pressure from both the British and the Boers, creating frequent respite for the Swazis. However, from the mid-19th century the arrival of increasing numbers of Europeans brought new problems. Mswazi's successor, Mbandzeni, inherited a kingdom rife with European carpetbaggers – hunters, traders, missionaries and farmers, many of whom leased large expanses of land.

The Boers' South African Republic (ZAR) decided to extend its control to Maputo along with Swaziland, which was in the way. Before this could happen, however, the British annexed the ZAR itself in 1877.

The Pretoria Convention of 1881 guaranteed Swaziland's 'independence', but also defined its borders, and Swaziland lost large chunks of territory. 'Independence' in fact meant that both the British and the Boers had responsibility for administering their various

interests in Swaziland, and the result was chaos. The Boer administration collapsed with the 1899–1902 Anglo-Boer War, and afterwards the British took control of Swaziland as a protectorate.

During this troubled time, King Sobhuza II was only a young child, but Labotsibeni, his mother, acted ably as regent until her son took over in 1921. Throughout the regency and for most of Sobhuza's long reign, the Swazis sought to regain their land, a large portion of which was owned by foreign interests. Labotsibeni encouraged Swazis to buy the land back, and many sought work in the Witwatersrand mines (near Johannesburg) to raise money. By the time of independence in 1968, about two-thirds of the kingdom was again under Swazi control.

Independence

In 1960 King Sobhuza II proposed the creation of a legislative council, composed of elected Europeans, and a national council formed in accordance with Swazi culture. One of the Swazi political parties formed at this time was the Mbokodvo (Grindstone) National Movement, which pledged to maintain traditional Swazi culture, but also to eschew racial discrimination. When the British finally agreed

to elections in 1964, Mbokodvo won a majority and, at the next elections in 1967, won all the seats. Independence was achieved on 6 September 1968.

The country's constitution was largely the work of the British. In 1973 the king suspended it on the grounds that it did not accord with Swazi culture. Four years later, the parliament reconvened under a new constitution that vested all power in the king. Sobhuza II, then the world's longest-reigning monarch, died in 1982.

The young Mswati III ascended the throne in 1986 and continues to represent and maintain the traditional way of life and to assert his pre-eminence, for better or worse, as absolute monarch (see the boxed text, opposite).

Swaziland Today

Attempts by unions and (officially illegal) opposition groups to press for democratic change have met with legislation to curb their activities. Yet, despite these political tensions and increasing popular dissatisfaction with recent abuses of royal privilege, it's likely that the king and his advisers will continue to hold the upper hand in Swazi politics for the foreseeable future. Even reformers have called only for modification of the monarchy (demanding a constitutional instead of an absolute monarchy), rather than its complete abandonment.

Putting these constitutional wranglings into sharp perspective is the scourge of AIDS: Swaziland has now surpassed Botswana as the country with the world's highest HIV infection rate in the world (almost 39% for adults between 15 and 49 years of age), and life expectancy has fallen as a result from 58 to 33 years. There are currently more than 200,000 AIDS orphans in the country, and by 2010 one in six people will be a child under 15 who has lost both parents. For more information, see the boxed text, p602.

THE CULTURE The National Psyche

What Swaziland lacks in size is made up for in its laid-back, friendly people and relative lack of racial animosities. The Swazis' distinguished history of resistance to the Boers, the British and the Zulus – along with the monarchy – has fostered an extraordinary sense of Swazi identity and ethnic pride, integral to their being. A nonconfrontational people,

they dislike embarrassment of any kind; Swazis are as gracious and good-humoured as they are proud of their small but culturally strong kingdom.

That said, there is widespread dissatisfaction with the lack of progress in their country's current socio-economic climate, as well as the perceived disintegration in family life and morals, as reflected in the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS. Swazi critics and women's rights advocates rally against the current system, which stifles individual autonomy and rights, especially those of women. But the patriotic and deeply religious Swazis tend to dislike outsiders meddling in internal political and social affairs and cultural practices. As the symbolic head of the Swazi family, the king is, in general, very highly regarded and disrespect for him as often interpreted as a lack of respect for the identity of the Swazi themselves (see the boxed text, opposite).

Daily Life

Ancient traditions are vital to and inherent in everyday life – business may be conducted in *emahiya* (traditional Swazi dress, often complemented with a shield and knobkerries) or Western suits – and cultural festivals are followed closely.

As in other parts of Africa, the extended family is integral to a person's life. While polygamy is permitted and exists, it is not always practised. Traditional marriage allows for the husband to take a number of wives, although many Swazis also follow Western marriage conventions, rejecting polygamy but permitting divorce. Marriage arrangements are traditionally initiated by a request to the fathers of the couple by the mothers of the couple.

Many people in rural areas continue to live in the traditional beehive huts, while others, particularly in the cities, live in Western-style houses.

Schooling is not compulsory. The rate of attendance is decreasing due to social circumstances, particularly the effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Population

The ancestors of modern-day Swazis were part of the general, gradual migration of Bantu-language speakers from Central Africa who broke from the main group and settled in Mozambique, finally moving in the mid-18th

MOVERS & SHAKERS: KING MSWATI III

King Mswati III, Africa's last absolute monarchy, courts both popularity and controversy. The second of 67 sons, King Mswati III was crowned in 1986 when he was 18, and he has since ruled the country with his mother. He has taken 13 wives, including one fiancée (those who've not borne him a child), and has more than 200 siblings.

His actions – most notably his expensive tastes and opulent lifestyle in the face of his country's extreme poverty and high incidence of HIV – have upset critics. His constitution has been strongly criticised for its nonprogressive and authoritarian nature by Swazi critics, foreign governments and human rights groups.

The king has caused royal ripples several times over choosing a wife: in 2001 he married a 17-year-old, two months after imposing a five-year sex ban on the kingdom's teenage females to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS. He ended the ban a year early.

At the 2002 Reed festival, again in keeping with tradition, he chose a young woman, 18-year-old Zena Mahlangu, to become his 10th wife. Zena's mother tried to take the king to court, accusing him of abducting and holding Zena against her will.

Reformers, however, must reckon with the fact that the king is a highly revered figurehead; he is the Ngwenyama (Lion), a descendant of the great kings (and queen mothers) who secured the independence of the Swazi nation. Even pro-democracy advocates seek to maintain a constitutional monarch under a democratic system of government.

Meanwhile, for the king, traditional laws and customs reign supreme. He believes in perpetuating customs important to his country, including polygamy. Indeed, a Swazi king's power and the clan links resulting from his marriages might be seen as the source of Swaziland's relative stability, as well as being the foundation of its continued independence.

HIV/AIDS & FAMINE

Swaziland has now surpassed Botswana as the country with the highest HIV infection rate in the world – around 39% of the adult population in Swaziland is HIV positive (compared to 3.9% in 1992). According to a survey by the national health ministry, a quarter of Swaziland's population is predicted to be dead from the disease by 2010, and already 200,000 children have lost either one or both parents to the disease.

This situation has a great impact on food insecurity, with poor and vulnerable households not being able to secure work or means to buy food. Overseas food agencies are currently supplying food to individuals and their families, including out-of-school children, pregnant women and orphans. In 2004–05, drought conditions meant that emergency food aid was supplied to around a quarter of the population. The Lebombo Plateau has been particularly hard hit.

century into what became known as Swaziland. Today, Swazis still share a close cultural and linguistic heritage with other Southern African peoples including the Zulu and the Ndebele.

Almost all people here are Swazi. The rest are Zulu, Tsonga (Shangaan) and European. There are also a number of Mozambican refugees, of both African and Portuguese descent. About 5% of Swazis live and work in South Africa.

The population, which was about 85,000 in 1904, today hovers around just over a million people, although the future for many of them looks bleak. The HIV/AIDS pandemic here is almost beyond comprehension – 39% of Swazi adults are thought to be infected – making a horrific reversal of its population statistics in the next couple of decades seem certain.

RELIGION

Around 70% of the population is Zionist, a mix of Christianity and traditional indigenous worship, with Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Methodists making up the balance. Muslims, Baha'i and Jewish faiths have small followings also.

ARTS & CRAFTS Music

Traditional music is integral to Swazi festivals and dancing, most prominently the Incwala and Reed festivals. Music and rhythm also play an important role in other festivals, such as harvest and marriage. Traditional instruments include the calabash, kudu horn, rattle and reed flute.

The most prominent jazz musician (formerly lumped under the banner of South African musicians) was Zakes Nkosi, whose career in jazz began in the 1940s.

For more information on music in Southern Africa, see p52.

Architecture

The architecture of Swaziland ranges from the traditional round beehive hut of the rural areas to the more Western-style house in the suburbs and larger towns. The beehive huts are thatched with dry grass and often surrounded by reed fences.

The traditional *umuti* (homestead) is important to the Swazi social unit. In a polygamous homestead, each wife has her own huts, plus a yard surrounded by reed fences for privacy. Larger homesteads have huts for bachelors' quarters and guest housing. The cattle byre, a circular area enclosed by logs and branches, is central to the traditional homestead. This area has an important ritual and practical significance, reflecting both wealth and prestige. The hut opposite the cattle byre is occupied by the mother of the headman. Nowadays, while many construct square houses from cement blocks and corrugated iron, they still maintain the layout of the traditional homestead.

Dance

Dance is an integral part of Swazi cultural festivals (see the boxed text, p607).

The Sibhaca dance is a vigorous foot-stamping dance performed by teams of males. The energy and physical nature of this rhythmic dance is awesome. As well as being performed at festivals and formal occasions, it is sometimes performed competitively and occasionally done for fun.

Handicrafts

Swaziland's handicrafts include jewellery, pottery, weapons and implements. Woven grasswares such as *liqhaga* (grassware 'bottles')

and mats are popular, as are wooden items, ranging from bowls to knobkerries.

ENVIRONMENT The Land

Swaziland, although tiny, has a wide range of ecological zones, from rainforest in the northwest to savanna scrub in the east.

The western edge of the country is highveld, consisting mainly of short, sharp mountains. There are large plantations of pine and eucalyptus. The mountains dwindle to middleveld into the heavily populated centre of the country. The eastern half is scrubby lowveld, lightly populated, but now home to sugar estates. To the east, the harsh Lebombo Mountains form the border with Mozambique.

Wildlife ANIMALS

Swaziland has about 121 species of mammals, representing a third of nonmarine mammal species in Southern Africa. These days the larger animals are restricted to the nature reserves and private wildlife reserves dotted around the country. Many species (such as elephants, warthogs, rhinos and lions) have been reintroduced to nature reserves. Mon-gooses and large-spotted genets are common throughout the country, while hyenas and jackals are found in the reserves. Leopards are present, but you'd be lucky to see one.

The most common of the 19 recorded species of bat is the little free-tailed bat, which can be found roosting in houses in the lowveld and middleveld.

PLANTS

Although small in size, Swaziland is rich in flora and accounts for 14% of the recorded plant life in Southern Africa. The remoteness of parts of the countryside means there are probably species that have not yet been brought to the attention of botanists. Nature reserves, particularly those administered by the National Trust Commission, help to conserve indigenous plants.

National Parks

The five main reserves reflect the country's geographical diversity. Easiest to get to is Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary (p606) in the Ezulwini Valley. Hlane Royal National Park (p611) and Mkhaya Game Reserve (p612) are also well worth visiting. These three reserves

are privately run as part of the **Big Game Parks** (Map p606; ☎ 528 3943/4; www.biggame.co.sz).

The booking office of the **National Trust Commission** (Map p606; ☎ 416 1151, 416 1178; www.sntc.org.sz) is run from the reception at the Mantenga Nature Reserve, near Lobamba. **Swazi Trails** (Map p606; ☎ /fax 416 2180; www.swazitrails.co.sz; Mantenga Craft Centre, Ezulwini Valley) in Ezulwini Valley is also a booking agent for the reserves. The National Trust Commission runs Mantenga, Hawane, Malolotja and Mlawula Nature Reserves. Malolotja (p610) is a rugged highlands reserve with some very good hiking trails. Mlawula (p612) is in harsh lowveld country near the Mozambican border.

Environmental Issues

While the importance of traditional practices and customs provides a strong sense of cultural identity and national cohesiveness, some traditional practices are not kind to the environment. As in Lesotho, the overgrazing of cattle has caused soil erosion. Some items of male traditional attire, such as the *majobo*, which is made from the skin of the grey duiker, have resulted in illegal hunting. The use of and reliance on natural medicinal plants has led to the loss of certain indigenous plants. Poverty is a major cause of land degradation; land-management issues focused on sustainability are simply not on the agendas of individuals struggling to eke out a living or dealing with the impact of HIV/AIDS.

FOOD & DRINK

Although it's not exactly a gourmet's paradise, you won't eat badly in Swaziland. There's a good range of places to eat in Mbabane and the tourist areas of the Malkerns and Ezulwini Valleys. Portuguese cuisine, including seafood, can be found. In more remote areas, African staples such as stew and pap (also known as *mealie meal*) are common.

MBABANE

pop 60,000

Mbabane (pronounced mba-baa-nay), the largest town in Swaziland, is pretty nondescript and there isn't that much to see or do here. It's in a pleasant setting in the Dlangeni Hills. These make Mbabane cooler than Manzini, one reason why the British moved their administrative centre here from Manzini in

1902. The adjacent Ezulwini and Malkerns Valleys have plenty of attractions.

ORIENTATION

Mbabane is a little disjointed. The main street is Gwamile St. Swazi Plaza is off Western Distributor Rd. The Mall, another shopping area, is on Plaza Mall Dr.

INFORMATION

Emergency

Fire (☎ 404 3333)

Police station (☎ 404 2221) The police emergency number is ☎ 999.

Traumalink 911 (☎ 606 0911) A 24-hour paramedic ambulance service.

Internet Access

Internet centres are dotted around town including in the Mall and Swazi Plaza. Prices are from US\$3.50 per hour.

Medical Services

Mbabane Clinic (☎ 404 2423; St Michael's Rd)

Medisun Clinic (☎ 416 2800) In Ezulwini.

Impilo Clinic (☎ 505 7430) In Manzini.

Money

First National Bank (cnr Msunduzi St & West)

NedBank (Swazi Plaza)

Standard Bank (Swazi Plaza) Has an ATM.

Tourist Information

Tourist information office (☎ 404 2531; www.welcometoswaziland.com; ☎ 9am-4.45pm Mon-Thu, 9am-4pm Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) At the edge of Swazi Plaza. Free publications and brochures at hotels, restaurants and entertainment. These include the tourist bible *What's Happening in Swaziland* and the smaller *What's on in Swaziland*.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Mbabane is becoming unsafe at night, so don't walk around by yourself away from the main streets. Take precautions in the streets even during the day – muggings are on the increase.

SIGHTS

There's not really much to see in Mbabane. The Ezulwini and Malkerns Valleys are where most people would head for sightseeing, activities and crafts.

However, while in Mbabane it is worth visiting the **Swazi Market** (Msunduzi St), with its neat rows of stalls and colourful handicrafts. Further into the market, fruit and vegetable stalls provide a bustling atmosphere.

SLEEPING

Budget

Grifters (☎ 404 5342, 617 0218; www.grifterslodge.com; End St; camping per person US\$6, dm US\$10, d with shared bathroom US\$23) This laid-back and likeably scruffy house, within walking distance of the town centre, is a popular hang-out for travellers and aid workers. Self-catering only.

Thokoza Church Centre (☎ 404 6681; Polinjane Rd; s/d with shared bathroom US\$17/22, s/d US\$26/29) Fittingly monastic in nature, these small clean rooms might be just the thing to convert you to Mbabane. To get here from Gwamile St, turn onto Mhlonhlo St, cross the bridge, turn left at the police station and head up Polinjane Rd for about 10 minutes. Take a taxi at night (US\$3 from Swazi Plaza).

Midrange & Top End

Cathmar Cottages (☎ 404 3387; www.swazilodgings.com/cathmar; 167 Likhalo St; r US\$27-44; ☎) Offers self-catering cottages and dolls-house-style cabins, about 3.5km north of Mbabane (off Pine Valley Rd).

Kapola Guest House (☎ 404 0906; www.kapola_edu.co.sz; s/d with breakfast US\$54/89) This comfortable abode's massive porch overlooks greenery. Busy rooms, but busier à la carte chef (meals E26 to E65). It's about 5km from Mbabane just off the MR3; watch for the wall painted with flags.

Foresters Arms (☎ 467 4177; www.forestersarms.co.za; r with half board from US\$61) Penelope Keith (from BBC-TV's *To the Manor Born*) would enjoy the cream teas and British-style interiors here. Situated 27km southwest of Mbabane in the hills around Mhlambanyatsi. Cosy rooms and attractive gardens plus a smorgasbord of activities await you.

Mountain Inn (☎ 404 2781; www.mountaininn.sz; s/d with breakfast from US\$72/92; ☎) A throwback to the colonial era, complete with stains here and there and great panoramas. The restaurant is open for all meals (mains from US\$6).

EATING

4 Ways Chicken (Gwamile St; mains US\$2; ☎ 7am-6pm) The tastiest hen quarter in Swaziland.

Indingilizi Gallery & Restaurant (☎ 404 6213; indingi@realnet.co.sz; 112 Dzeliwe St; snacks from US\$3;

☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2pm Sat) Outdoor gallery café with snacks, decadent desserts and crafts.

Plaza Tandoori Restaurant (☎ 404 7599; Swazi Plaza; mains US\$5-12; ☎ lunch & dinner) A miniature eatery with a Taj Mahal atmosphere and great-value curries.

Finesse (☎ 404 5936; the Mall; mains US\$10-14; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This fancy French-owned place serves a good range of seafood and meat dishes.

For international food, try **La Casserole** (☎ 404 6426; Gwamile St; mains US\$7-11; ☎ lunch & dinner) and **Mediterranean Restaurant** (☎ 404 3212, Gwamile St; mains US\$7-14; ☎ lunch & dinner).

There's a Shoprite at Swazi Plaza and a Spar at the Mall. For fast food, try the street food vendors at Swazi Market.

SHOPPING

Swazi Plaza is a large, modern shopping centre with most services and a good range of shops. Nearby, the Mall also has a number of shops and services.

Indingilizi Gallery & Restaurant (☎ 404 6213; indingi@realnet.co.sz; 112 Dzeliwe St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2pm Sat) Has a range of contemporary art and collectables from Swaziland and elsewhere in Africa. Exhibitions are held regularly.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Minibus taxis to South Africa (mostly north-bound) leave from the taxi rank near Swazi Plaza; otherwise your best bet is to catch one from Manzini.

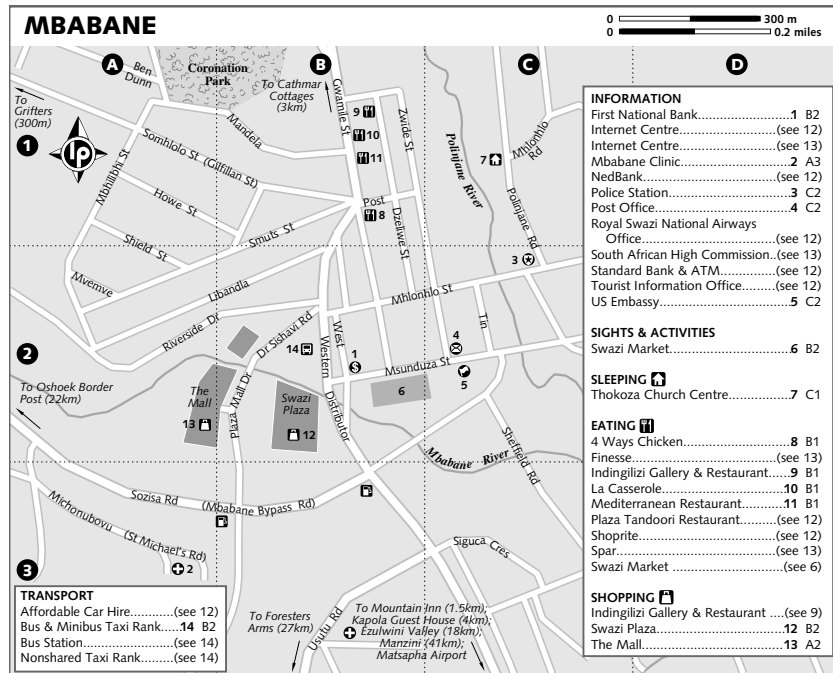
GETTING AROUND

To/From the Airport

A taxi from Mbabane to Matsapha airport costs around US\$19. Buses and minibuses from Mbabane to Manzini go past the turn-off to the airport, from where it's a long walk to the terminal.

Bus & Minibus Taxi

The main bus and minibus taxi rank is near Swazi Plaza. All vehicles heading towards Manzini (US\$1, 35 minutes) or Matsapha pass through the Ezulwini Valley. There are several minibus taxis daily to Piggs Peak (US\$2, one hour), Ngwenya and the Oshoek border post (US\$0.70, 50 minutes), and Malkerns Valley (US\$1, 45 minutes). All vehicles heading towards Manzini and points east pass through



luxurious and tranquil accommodation. This 'quaintly colonial' dwelling has striking views of the valley and Mdzimba Mountains.

The Sun group's hotels (www.suninternational.com) offer the most opulent accommodation in the country. There's the **Royal Swazi Spa** (☎ 416 5000; s/d US\$263/280; ♀♂); the **Lugogo Sun** (☎ 416 4500; s/d US\$169-182; ♀♂) in the grounds of the Royal Swazi; and the **Ezulwini Sun** (☎ 416 6500; s/d US\$183/196; ♀♂), across the road from the other two. At the Royal Swazi there's a golf course and a casino.

EATING

Woodlands Restaurant (☎ 416 3466; mauriswazi@realnet.co.sz; mains US\$5-17; ☞ lunch & dinner) Good vegetarian options as well as international cuisine on a lovely shady veranda.

Quatermain's (☎ 416 3023; mains US\$8-11; ☞ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Mouth-watering culinary journey through Africa.

Calabash Continental (☎ 416 1187; mains US\$8-14; ☞ lunch & dinner) Specialises in German and Swiss cuisine.

There's a supermarket in the Gables Shopping Centre, and for light meals, head to **Guava Café** (☎ 416 1343; light meals from US\$4; ☞ 9am-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun).

DRINKING

Several nightspots feature at the Sun hotels. At the Happy Valley Hotel, **Why Not?** (☎ 416 1061; Happy Valley Hotel), a thumping disco, and the **If**

Not Go-Go Bar (☎ 416 1061; Happy Valley Hotel; admission US\$4.50) let you let it all hang out.

SHOPPING

The best crafts are to be found at the **Roadside Craft Market** (☞ sunrise to sunset) opposite the Royal Swazi Spa. The rather tired-looking **Mantenga Craft Centre** (☎ 416 1136; ☞ 8am-5pm) has the usual clutch of tourist-oriented shops. The more modern **Gables Shopping Centre** (☞ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) has a supermarket and also offers internet and necessities, including an ATM.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

During the day you could get on a Manzini-bound minibus, but make sure the driver knows that you want to alight in the valley, as many aren't keen on stopping.

Nonshared taxis from Mbabane cost US\$8.50 to US\$14, depending on how far down the valley you go.

If you're driving from either Mbabane or Manzini, take the Ezulwini Valley/Lobamba exit off the bypass road to the MR103.

Malkerns Valley

About 7km south of Lobamba on the MR103 is the turn-off to the fertile Malkerns Valley, known for its arts and crafts outlets, and offering a scenic and fun drive.

There's internet access and tourist information at **Ziggy's Internet Cafe & Tourist Information** (☎ 528 3423; per hr \$6.20; ☞ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat) at Mandela's complex.

GO WILD!

Wildlife Drives

For wildlife drives, the Big Game Parks reserves organise good-value tours. Mkhaya offers Land Rover day trips (US\$55, minimum two people, includes lunch). These trips must be pre-booked through **Big Game Parks** (Map p606; ☎ 528 3943/4; www.biggame.co.sz). Set arrival and departure times are 10am and 4pm. Hlane has a two-hour sunrise/sunset drive (US\$20, minimum two people); Mhlwane offers a shorter game drive (US\$16, minimum two people). Check the website www.biggameparks.org for the latest on offer, as these do change.

White-Water Rafting

One of Swaziland's highlights is white-water rafting on the **Usutu River**. This largely sluggish river turns to rapids through the narrow Bulungu Gorge near the reserve.

At one stage you'll have to portage a 10m waterfall. The second half of the day is a sedate trip through scenic country with glimpses of the 'flat dogs' (crocodiles) sunning on the riverbanks.

Swazi Trails (Map p606; ☎/fax 416 2180; www.swazitrails.co.sz; Mantenga Craft Centre, Ezulwini Valley) offers a full-day trip (per person US\$84, minimum two people), including lunch and all equipment. Trips run from the Ezulwini Valley.

SLEEPING & EATING

Nyanza Cottages (Nyanza Horse Trails; ☎ 528 3090; nyanza@africaonline.co.sz; dm US\$9, caravan s/d US\$22/30, d US\$27, cottages per adult £220) A working farm with stables, backpackers dorm and a well-equipped caravan. Signposted next to Baobab Batik.

Malandela's B&B (☎ 605 2598, 528 3448; r per person with breakfast US\$25; ♀♂) Along the MR27, this place offers stylish, ethnic African rooms, a pool and a sculpture garden.

Willows Lodge (☎ 602 1284; www.swaziwillows.com; s/d US\$38/55) These self-catering cottages overlook the sugar-cane fields. Set off the MR27 in Malkerns Valley, near Mandela's B&B.

Malandela's Restaurant (☎ 528 3115; entrées from US\$2, mains US\$5-9; ☞ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) Part of the Mandela's complex, this is one of the best restaurants in the region.

ENTERTAINMENT

House on Fire (☎ 528 2001; houseonfire@africaonline.co.sz) This well-known venue, at the Mandela's complex is a fantastically decorated experimental-performance space – it hosts everything from African theatre to raves.

SHOPPING

Gone Rural (☎ 528 3436; www.goneruralswazi.com; ☞ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun) The place to go for baskets, mats and traditional clay pots.

Baobab Batik (☎ 528 3242; www.baobab-batik.com; ☞ 8am-5pm) If you're dye-ing for a hanging there's this place.

Swazi Candles (☎ 528 3219; www.swazicandles.com; ☞ 8.30am-5pm) Wax lyrical about the designs here.

Manzini

Manzini, Swaziland's largest town and the country's industrial centre, was the administrative centre for the squabbling British and Boers from 1890 to 1902. During the Anglo-Boer War a renegade Boer commando burnt it down.

Today Manzini is an active commercial and industrial hub whose small centre is dominated by office blocks and a couple of shopping malls; it feels like a different country from easy-going rural Swaziland. There is a hint of menace – watch out for pickpockets and be careful; the city's crime rate is rising – muggings (some violent) are common.

Manzini's main drawcard is its colourful **market** (cnr Mhlakuvane & Mancishane Sts; ☞ closed Sun). The upper section is packed with handicrafts. Apart from visiting the market, you can hap-

pily move on. The **Impilo Clinic** (☎ 505 7430) is located in Manzini.

TOURS

Village visits with overnight stays are available through **Woza Nawe** (☎ 604 4102; wozanawe@realnet.co.sz). For about US\$60 you'll have an authentic Swazi experience.

SLEEPING & EATING

Swaziland Backpackers (☎ 518 7225; www.swazilandbackpackers.com; camping per person US\$6.50, dm US\$10.30, d with shared bathroom US\$25; ♀♂) Formerly a doctor's house, this place operates as efficiently as a surgery but with much more fun – activities, 'jungle' bar and pool. Head 8km west of town along the M103 towards Ezulwini Valley, opposite the Taiwanese Agricultural Mission compound. It's a Baz Bus stop (see p616).

Tum's George Hotel (☎ 505 8991; www.tgh.sz; cnr Ngwane & du Toit Sts; s/d with breakfast from US\$85/110; ♀♂) Manzini's newest and fanciest hotel caters for the conference crowd, with gym, pool bar and several stylish restaurants.

Fontana di Trevi Pizzeria (☎ 505 3608; the Hub, Villiers St; pizza/breakfast from US\$4/3; ☞ breakfast, lunch & dinner) In an African *piazza* – a shopping mall – this place is the best spot to head for a decent coffee, plus pizza, pasta, salads and burgers at good prices.

Takeaways abound in Bhunu Mall and on Ngwane St.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The main bus and minibus taxi rank is at the northern end of Louw St, where you can also find some nonshared taxis. A minibus taxi up the Ezulwini Valley to Mbabane is US\$1.10 (35 minutes). A nonshared taxi to Matsapha airport costs around US\$7. Minibus taxis to Mozambique leave from the car park next to the 'old' KFC up the hill. Most long-distance taxis (to South Africa and Mozambique) go early in the morning. See p299 and p591 for more info.

NORTHWESTERN SWAZILAND

Lush hills, plantations and woodlands, streams and waterfalls and plunging ravines are the main features of Swaziland's beautiful north, along with some excellent hiking and accommodation options. Beware the heavy

mists that roll in during the summer months – they can limit visibility to almost zero.

NGWENYA

Tiny Ngwenya (Crocodile) is 5km east of the Oshoek border crossing on the road to Mbabane. At the **Ngwenya glass factory** (☎ 442 4142; ☎ 7am–5pm Mon–Fri, 8am–4.30pm Sat & Sun) recycled glass is used to create African animals and birds as well as vases and tableware. **Endlotane Studios/Phumulanga Swaziland Tapestries** (☎ 442 4196; ☎ 8am–5pm), which features beautiful tapestries, is 1km further up the road.

Also near here is the **Ngwenya iron ore mine** (admission US\$3.50; ☎ 8am–4pm), dating from around 40,000 BC and one of the world's oldest known mines.

Hawane Resort (☎ 627 6714, 442 4744; www.hawane.co.sz; dm US\$12, chalet d with breakfast US\$72, bee-hives per person US\$17) offers stylish chalets that are a blend of traditional Swazi materials and glass with ethnic African interiors. Backpackers are stabled in a converted barn. It's about 8km up the Pigg's Peak road from the junction of the MR1 and MR3, and 1.5km off the main road.

MALOLOTJA NATURE RESERVE

This beautiful middleveld/highveld **reserve** (☎ 416 1151, 442 4241; www.sntc.org.sz; adult/child US\$3/1.70; ☎ 6am–6pm) is a true wilderness area, rugged and for the most part unspoiled. The terrain ranges from mountainous and high-altitude grassland to forest and lower-lying bushveld, all with streams and cut by three rivers, including the Komati River.

It's an excellent walking destination, with around 200km of hiking trails, and an ornithologist's paradise, with over 280 species of birds. Wildflowers and rare plants are added attractions; several are found only in this part of Africa.

Hiking trails range from short walks to a week-long jaunt that extends from Ngwenya in the south to the Mqwayiza Range in the north. For all longer walks, you'll have to bring whatever food you'll need, as well as a camp stove, as fires are not permitted outside the base camp. You'll also need to arrange a permit (US\$0.70) with the reserve office at the entrance gate. Wildlife drives can be arranged with advance notice.

Accommodation consists of **camping** (per person at main camp/on trails US\$9/6), either at the well-equipped (but infrequently used) main

site, with ablutions and braai area, or along the overnight trails (no facilities). There are also self-catering wooden **cabins** (per person US\$32, children half price), for six persons. Book through **Swazi Trails** (Map p606; ☎ /fax 416 2180; www.swazitrails.co.sz; Mantenga Craft Centre, Ezulwini Valley) or with the **National Trust Commission** (Map p606; ☎ 416 1151, 416 1178; www.sntc.org.sz), both in Ezulwini Valley.

The entrance gate for Malolotja is about 35km northwest of Mbabane, along the Pigg's Peak road (MR1); minibus taxis will drop you here.

PIGGS PEAK

This small, gritty town is the centre of Swaziland's logging industry and there are huge pine plantations in the area. The town was named after a prospector who found gold here in 1884.

As well as its scenery, including the **Phophonyane Falls** about 8km north of town, this area is known for its handicrafts. Check these out at the Peak Craft Centre just north of Orion Pigg's Peak Hotel & Casino, where you'll find **Ethnic Bound** (☎ 437 3099; ethnicbound@africaonline.co.sz), **Likhweti Kraft** (☎ 437 3127), and **Tintsaba Crafts** (☎ 437 1260; www.tintsaba.com). There are also numerous craft vendors along the road up from Mbabane.

Sleeping

Our pick **Phophonyane Lodge & Nature Reserve** (☎ 437 1319; www.phophonyane.co.sz; tents US\$66–94, cottage s/d with breakfast from US\$97/135) This stunning hideaway – in a nature reserve of lush indigenous forest on the Phophonyane River – is one of the best places to stay in Swaziland. Meals are available in the restaurant. Entry to the reserve (to access the lodge) is an additional US\$3/1.50 per adult/child. Day visitors pay US\$4.50/3 per adult/child to enter the reserve. The lodge is about 14km from Pigg's Peak: head northeast (towards the casino), and the signposted turn-off (minibus taxis will drop you here) is about 1.5km before the casino. Continue until you cross a bridge over a waterfall; the turn-off to the lodge is about 500m further, on the right. You can arrange with the lodge to be picked up from Pigg's Peak; a taxi costs about US\$8.50.

Jabula Guest House (☎ 437 1052; www.swaziplace.com/jabulaguesthouse; s/d US\$31/52; ☎) Turn right at the Pigg's Peak Clinic sign and then take the first right again. Even its promo-speak is right: 'With so many rights you can't go wrong'.

The best B&B in Pigg's Peak; it has small, neat rooms in a residential setting.

Getting There & Away

The minibus taxi stand is next to the market at the top end of the main street, with several vehicles daily to Mbabane (US\$2, one hour).

If you're heading east towards Hlane Royal National Park, the roads are mainly dirt and in reasonably rough condition, although a 2WD can handle them if you take it slowly.

The stretch of dirt road running west from Pigg's Peak to Bulembu can be boggy when wet. The road can be rough further towards Barberton (Mpumalanga) in South Africa.

BULEMBU

An interesting detour from Pigg's Peak is to wind your way 20km through scenic plantation country to the historic town of Bulembu, built in 1936 for the former Havelock asbestos mine. Following its closure, the 10,000 workers left; today there are around 100 residents and no amenities. It's a true-life time warp; thousands of deserted corrugated iron houses and many Art Deco buildings nestle on a pretty hilly landscape, complete with the former cableway. Stunning hikes include the highest mountain in Swaziland, Emlembe Peak (1863m). Note: asbestos dumps exist around the village.

At the time of research, the entire village had just been sold so check ahead to see if there's still accommodation at **Bulembu Lodge** (☎ 437 3888; bulembulodge@realnet.co.sz; r per person from US\$20), the former General Manager's residence, stylish Directors' cottages, or the converted backpackers cottage (per person US\$11).

WORTH THE TRIP

For a more cultural and rural experience away from the crowds, head to **Shewula Mountain Camp** (☎ 605 1160, 603 1931; shewula@realnet.co.sz; dm/r US\$10/31), a community-owned camp northeast of Simunye in the Lebombo Mountains, 36km by dirt road (15km as the crow flies). As well as amazing views, on offer are guided cultural walks to nearby villages plus nature and bird-watching walks (guided walks per person US\$1.50). You can camp or stay in basic rondavels, with shared ablutions and self-catering facilities. Local meals can also be arranged (breakfast/lunch/dinner US\$3.50/5.50/5.50; must be booked in advance). You can organise a visit through **Swazi Trails** (Map p606; ☎ /fax 416 2180; www.swazitrails.co.sz; Mantenga Craft Centre, Ezulwini Valley) or, if you're arriving via public transport, get a minibus taxi from Simunye to the camp (US\$1.50, one hour).

Several minibus taxis run daily to Simunye (and further north to the junction for Mlawula and Mbuluzi) from Manzini (US\$2.50, one hour). There's also at least one minibus taxi daily to/from Pigg's Peak (US\$4.50, 2½ hours).

EASTERN SWAZILAND

The hot, northeastern corner of Swaziland is a major sugar-producing area. The arid foothills of the Lebombo Mountains epitomises what most people think of as 'Africa'.

This area's notable parks and reserves are Hlane, Mlawula and Mkhaya. The towns of Tshaneni, Mhlume, Tambankulu and Simunye are the main population centres in the country's northeast.

SITEKI

Siteki is the fastest route to Mozambique from Manzini through the Mhlumeni–Goba border. It's a nice enough little place and lies above the surrounding lowveld, with wide views, cooler temperatures and a bustling market.

The town was originally named when Mbandzeni (great-grandfather of the present king) gave his frontier troops permission to marry – Siteki means Marrying Place.

Siteki (Stegi) Hotel (☎ 343 4126; s/d with half board US\$27/39) harks back to colonial days. It offers no-frills rooms and meals.

The highly recommended **Mabuda Farm** (☎ 343 4124; www.geocities.com/mabudafarm; s/d with breakfast US\$30/60) has cottages fitted out with colonial relics, on a working farm just outside Siteki.

Minibus taxis from Manzini run twice daily (US\$2, one hour). Daily minibus taxis connect Siteki with Big Bend (US\$1.50, one hour) and Simunye (US\$1, 30 minutes).

HLANE ROYAL NATIONAL PARK

Hlane Royal National Park (☎ 528 3943/4; www.biggameparks.org; admission US\$3.50; ☎ 6am–6pm) in the northeast is near the former royal hunting

grounds and offers wonderfully low-key wildlife watching. There are white rhinos and many antelope species. Elephants and lions have been reintroduced. There are guided walking trails (per person US\$4.50), two-hour wildlife day drives (per person US\$18, minimum two), a cultural village tour with dance performances (per person US\$5.50, minimum four) and mountain bike rentals (per hour US\$9). Minibus taxis to Simunye will drop you at the entrance to Hlane (US\$0.70; 7km from Simunye).

Ndlovu Camp (camping per person US\$5.50, rondavel s/d from US\$32/45, 8-person cottage per person US\$27) is a pleasant and rustic fenced-off camp, with no electricity, a communal area, and a restaurant.

Bhubesi Camp (cottage s/d US\$27/54) has self-contained huts with electricity.

Book for both through the **Big Game Parks office** (Map p606; ☎ 528 3943/4; www.biggame.co.sz).

MLAWULA NATURE RESERVE

This tranquil **reserve** (☎ 416 1151; www.sntc.org.sz; adult/child E25/12; ☎ 6am-6pm), where the lowveld plains meet the Lebombo Mountains, boasts antelope species and hyenas, and crocodiles plus rewarding birdwatching. You can hire fishing rods for US\$3 and bring your own mountain bike. Check the status of schistosomiasis (bilharzia).

There's tented accommodation at **Sara Camp** (camping per person E150), and **Siphiso camping ground** (camping per person E60). **Mapelepele Cottage** (cottage US\$70) is self-catering and can accommodate four people. Book accommodation through the **National Trust Commission** (Map p606; ☎ 416 1151, 416 1178; www.sntc.org.sz).

MBULUZI GAME RESERVE

The small and privately owned **Mbuluzi Game Reserve** (☎ 383 8861; mbuluzi@swazi.net; adult/child E20/10) boasts a range of animals, including giraffes, zebras, hippos, antelope species and wildebeests. There have also been over 300 bird species recorded here.

Accommodation here, in some lovely self-catering **lodges** (5-/8-person lodges US\$52/73; ☎), is more luxurious than at neighbouring Mlawula Nature Reserve. Some lodges have spacious verandas and wooden viewing decks and are set on the Mlawula River. **Camp sites** (camping per person US\$5) are also available near the Mbuluzi River.

The turn-off for Mbuluzi is the same as for Mlawula; the reserve entrance is about 600m from the turn-off on the left.

MKHAYA GAME RESERVE

This top-notch **private reserve** (☎ 528 3943; www.biggameparks.org), off the Manzini-Big Bend road near the hamlet of Phuzumoya, was established in 1979 to save the pure Nguni breed of cattle from extinction. Its focus expanded to antelopes, elephants, and white and black rhinos. The reserve's name comes from the *mkhaya* (or knobthorn) tree – valued not only for its fruit, from which Swazis brew beer, but also for the insect and bird life it supports.

You can't visit or stay in the reserve without booking in advance, and even then you can't drive in alone; you'll be met at Phuzumoya at a specified pick-up time, usually 10am or 4pm. While day tours can be arranged (E390), it's ideal to stay for at least one night.

Stone Camp (all-inclusive s/d with full board US\$143/245) is reminiscent of a 19th-century hunting camp, with accommodation in rustically luxurious stone and thatch cottages surrounded by bush. The price includes wildlife drives, walking safaris, park entry and meals, and is good value compared to many of the private reserves near Kruger National Park in South Africa.

Bookings are made through the **Big Game Parks office** (Map p606; ☎ 528 3943/4; www.biggame.co.sz).

SIMUNYE

Simunye is a manicured sugar-company town with little of interest for travellers, except as a possible stocking-up point for visiting nearby Hlane Royal National Park, or Mlawula and Mbuluzi Nature Reserves, or a bed if you're caught short.

Simunye Country Club (☎ 313 4792; www.visitswazi.com; s/d from US\$43/49, cottage s/d US\$48/80; ☎) is a friendly and tranquil spot with small single rooms, modern self-catering cottages and a bar-restaurant. Although it's a club, visitors are welcome and can use the club facilities (swimming pool, golf course, tennis and squash courts).

BIG BEND

Picturesque Big Bend is a sleepy sugar town on – not surprisingly – a big bend in the Lusutfu River and makes a convenient stop en route to/from KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. It may pay to book accommodation ahead.

The **Bend Inn Hotel** (☎ 363 6855; s/d US\$26/40; ☎) is on a hill just south of town, with pleasant

views across the river from the restaurant and outdoor bar. It is OK value.

Lismore Lodge (☎ 363 6613; d from US\$28) has small, comfortable, good-value doubles. Next door, **LL Restaurant Bar** (☎ 363 6380; mains US\$5-11; ☎ lunch & dinner) offers great seafood dishes, including calamari, seafood kebabs and seafood curry.

Minibus taxis go daily to Manzini (US\$2, one hour) and to the Lavumisa border post (US\$2.50, one hour).

SOUTHERN SWAZILAND

In former years, because of its easy access to KwaZulu-Natal, southern Swaziland was frequently visited for its roulette tables, rather than its surroundings. Nowadays many tourists don't gamble on a visit; they think it lacks the north's dramatic scenery. While the entire area is quiet and rural, it's a good place to set off on a bike or on foot to discover the 'real' Swaziland, especially around the Ngwempisi Gorge.

NGWEMPISI GORGE

The **Ngwempisi Gorge** (☎ 625 6004), 30km south of the Malkerns Valley, is one of the country's few remaining untouched environments with beautiful natural forests and the Ngwempisi River. Adventure-seekers will be thrilled by the Ngwempisi Hiking Trail, a community-run 33km trail in the Ntfungula Hills on the Mankayane-Vlelwezweni road. You can spend two to three days exploring the area and sleep en route in two different huts.

SWAZILAND DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

There are few designated camp sites in Swaziland except in many of the national parks and reserves. It's usually possible (and safe) to camp in rural areas, but *always* ask permission from local people.

You'll find hostels in Mbabane, Manzini and Ezulwini Valley. Many of the country's hotels are geared towards South African tourists and are expensive, but there are some good midrange B&B options available.

Prices for accommodation in this chapter are: budget US\$40 and below, midrange US\$40 to US\$100, top end US\$100 and above.

PRACTICALITIES

- The **Times** (www.times.co.sz), a virtual mouthpiece for royalty and a would-be lurid tabloid, is a fascinating read as much for what it doesn't say as what it does.
- The *Swazi Observer* is a daily publication.
- The electricity supply in Swaziland is 220V. Plugs have three large round pins as used in South Africa.
- Swaziland uses the metric system.

ACTIVITIES

Small in size, big on action. Swaziland offers some terrific white-water rafting (in the rainy season), horse riding and mountain biking.

Hikers can enjoy the walking trails in several parks, plus the countless ancient walking tracks. Make sure you are well prepared and seek local advice on conditions.

BOOKS

The Kingdom of Swaziland, by D Hugh Gillis, is a history (to independence) of the kingdom seeking to maintain its traditional way of life in the face of an overwhelming European influence.

All the King's Animals: The Return of Endangered Wildlife to Swaziland, by Cristina Kessler and Mswati III, is the story of the conservationist Ted Reilly and the successful reintroduction of endangered wildlife into the kingdom.

BUSINESS HOURS

Offices and shops are usually open 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Bank hours are 8.30am to 2.30pm Monday to Friday and some banks, 8.30am to 11.00am on Saturday.

CHILDREN

Travelling with little 'uns should be hassle-free in Swaziland. Most accommodation options, especially the more upmarket establishments, cater to young visitors. Many hotels have pools and entertainment facilities. Elsewhere, national parks are good to visit with kids. It's best to bring a baby-rucksack – negotiating a pram anywhere in the country would be tricky. It's probably best to stock up on baby food before heading to remote areas.

CUSTOMS

Customs regulations are similar to those for South Africa (see p583).

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Beware of both schistosomiasis (bilharzia) and malaria. (For more information on how to avoid contracting these potentially deadly diseases, see p768.) Malaria is a risk in the northeast near Mozambique; you'll be at highest risk from November to April. In the late 1990s there was a sturdy eradication programme around this area to eliminate malaria (controversially, in the form of DDT), but it's best to be cautious.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Swaziland Embassies & Consulates

In countries without Swazi representation, contact the UK representative.

UK (☎ 020-7630 6611; www.swaziland.org.uk; 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB)

USA (☎ 202-234 5002; 1712 New Hampshire Ave, NW, Washington DC 20009)

Embassies & Consulates in Swaziland

Mozambique (☎ 404 3700; Princess Dr, Mbabane)

South Africa (Map p604; ☎ 404 4651; The Mall, PO Box 2507, Mbabane)

USA (Map p604; ☎ 404 4441; <http://mbabane.usembassy.gov>; 2350 Mbabane Pl, Mbabane ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm Mon & Thu) There are extended hours for emergency services.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Sibhaca dancing competitions are held – ask the Mbabane tourist office for details. The Sun hotels in the Ezulwini Valley sometimes have performances.

The most important cultural events in Swaziland (near Lobamba in the Ezulwini Valley) are the Incwala ceremony, held sometime between late December and early January, and the Umhlanga (Reed) dance held in August or September (see the boxed text, p607). Photography and sound recording is not permitted at the Incwala, but photography is allowed at the Umhlanga dance.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Swaziland is more conservative than South Africa or some other African countries. Gay sexual relationships are culturally taboo and officially illegal in Swaziland – imprisonment or fines apply. Open displays of affection are

generally frowned upon whatever your gender or orientation.

HOLIDAYS

Public holidays observed in Swaziland:

New Year's Day 1 January

Easter (March/April) Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Monday

King Mswati III's Birthday 19 April

National Flag Day 25 April

King Sobhuza II's Birthday 22 July

Umhlanga (Reed) Dance August/September

Somhlolo Day (Independence) 6 September

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

Incwala Ceremony December/January (dates vary each year)

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet facilities are scarce outside Mbabane and Manzini. A couple of places in Ezulwini and Malkerns Valleys have internet facilities.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Ministry of Tourism (www.mintour.gov.sz) Best used for details about Swaziland's hotels, restaurants and other facilities.

Swazi.com (www.swazi.com) Slightly chaotic portal to many other Swazi sites.

Swaziland National Trust Commission (www.sntc.org.sz) Helpful site with information about Malolotja and Mlawula Nature Reserves as well as Swaziland's cultural heritage.

LANGUAGE

The official languages are Swati and English, and English is the official written language. For some useful words and phrases in Swati, see p781.

MAPS

The main tourist information office hands out a free map of Swaziland, which has city plans for Mbabane and Manzini shown on the reverse. The Swaziland Tourism Authority also has hiking maps of most popular hiking spots including Shewula, Mlawula, Sibebe, Mlilwane, Mantenga, Mahamba, Ngwepisi and Malolotja. Topographical maps (1:50,000) are available from the **Ministry of Public Works** (☎ 404 6267; Mhlambanyatsi Rd, Mbabane), although these maps have not been reprinted for years while the office is digitising new data.

MONEY

The unit of currency is the lilangeni (plural emalangeni – E), which is fixed at a value equal to the South African rand. Rand are accepted everywhere and there's no need to change them. Emalangeni are difficult to change for other currencies outside Swaziland. (For more details on exchange rates, see the Quick Reference page on the inside front cover of this book.)

Only a few ATMs accept international credit or debit cards. The most convenient are at Standard Bank in Swazi Mall, Mbabane and inside the Royal Swazi Spa's casino.

NedBank and First National change cash and travellers cheques. Most banks ask to see the receipt of purchase when cashing travellers cheques.

The normal practice for tipping in rural parts of Swaziland is to round up a bill. In smarter tourist establishments, 5% to 10% is usual.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Film and photographic accessories are available in Mbabane and Manzini.

Don't take photos of soldiers, police, airports or government buildings. It is prohibited to photograph or sound record the Incwala ceremony. It goes without saying that you should always ask permission before taking a photo of anyone, particularly in tribal villages.

POST

Post offices are open from 8am to 4pm weekdays, and until 11am Saturday.

TELEPHONE

Swaziland has a reasonable telephone network. The international country code is ☎ 268; there are no area codes. International calls are most easily made using MTN phone cards. The lowest card value is US\$2 and the highest is US\$8.50. Dial ☎ 00 for international, then the country code and city code.

Mobile-phone services are MTN and **Vodacom** (www.vodacom.co.za). These do not generally reach mountainous regions.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Swaziland's main **tourist information office** (Map p604; ☎ 404 2531; www.welcometoswaziland.com; Swazi Plaza, Mbabane; ☎ 9am-4.45pm Mon-Thu, 9am-4pm Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) is in Mbabane. The websites of

Swazi National Trust (www.sntc.org.sz) and **Big Game Parks** (www.biggame.co.sz) offer useful parks information. The privately run **Swazi Trails** (Map p606; ☎ /fax 416 2180; www.swazitrails.co.sz; Mantenga Craft Centre, Ezulwini Valley) also supplies tourist information.

VISAS

Most people don't need a visa to visit Swaziland. Those who do can obtain them free of charge at border posts and at the airport. Anyone staying for more than 30 days must apply for an extension of stay. If staying for longer than 60 days you must apply for a temporary residence permit from the **Chief Immigration Officer** (☎ 404 2941; PO Box 372, Mbabane) whose offices are in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

TRANSPORT IN SWAZILAND

GETTING THERE & AWAY

This section covers travel between Swaziland and its neighbours, South Africa and Mozambique. (For information on reaching Swaziland from elsewhere on the African continent and from other continents, see p752.)

Entering Swaziland

Most travellers enter Swaziland overland from South Africa, although it's also possible to fly in from Johannesburg and Mozambique. A passport is required for entering Swaziland and entry is usually hassle-free. No vaccination certificates are required unless you have recently been in a yellow-fever area.

Air

Swaziland Airlink (☎ 518 6155; www.saairlink.co.za) operates out of Matsapha airport, north of Manzini. It flies daily between Swaziland and Johannesburg (one way US\$127).

Swazi Express Airways (☎ 518 6840; www.swaziexpress.com) flies four times a week to Durban (US\$63 to US\$175) in South Africa, and twice a week to Maputo (US\$21 to US\$63) and Vilankulo (US\$21 to US\$197) in Mozambique.

DEPARTURE TAX

A US\$7 departure tax is levied at Matsapha airport.

Border Crossings

SOUTH AFRICA

There are 11 South Africa–Swaziland border crossings, including the following:

Houtkop–Sicunusa (🚌 8am–6pm)

Golela–Lavumisa (🚌 7am–10pm)

Josefsdal–Bulembu (🚌 8am–4pm)

Mahamba (🚌 7am–10pm)

Oshoek–Ngwenya (🚌 7am–10pm)

To/From Durban & Johannesburg

The **Baz Bus** (📞 in South Africa 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com) runs from Jo'burg/Pretoria to Durban via Mbabane and Manzini three times a week, returning direct to Jo'burg/Pretoria on alternate days.

Minibus taxis run daily between Jo'burg (Park Station), Mbabane and Manzini (US\$15, four hours) and between Manzini and Durban (US\$17, eight hours). For many routes, you'll need to change minibuses at the border. Most long-distance taxis leave early in the morning.

MOZAMBIQUE

Swaziland shares two border crossings with Mozambique: **Lomahasha–Namaacha** (🚌 7am–8pm) in the extreme northeast of the country, and **Goba–Mhlumeni** (🚌 7am–6pm).

To/From Maputo

Panthera Azul (📞 in South Africa 27 11 337 7438) has buses three times weekly between Durban and Maputo via Big Bend and Namaacha. An excellent alternative is to take the **Baz Bus** (📞 in South Africa 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com) to Manzini (see above), from where you can catch a minibus to Maputo (US\$4, 3½ hours). Minibuses depart Maputo daily in the morning for the Namaacha–Lomahasha border crossing (US\$5, 1½ hours) with some continuing on to Manzini (US\$2, 3½ hours). See also p299.

Bicycle

There are no restrictions on bringing your own bicycle into Swaziland.

Car & Motorcycle

If you're arriving in Swaziland via car or motorcycle you'll need the vehicle's registration papers, liability insurance and your licence. If carrying any expensive spare parts, such as a gearbox, you'll also need an import waiver, or *carnet de passage en douane*. Border

posts generally don't have petrol stations or repair shops.

GETTING AROUND

Bicycle

Swaziland is great for cycling, if a little mountainous. The main towns and heavily travelled Ezulwini Valley are not ideal for leisurely meanders. Minor roads are often unsealed. Both Hlane Royal National Park and Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary offer mountain-bike rentals and trails.

Bus & Minibus Taxi

There are a few infrequent (but cheap) domestic buses, most of which depart and terminate at the main stop in the centre of Mbabane. Minibuses leave when full; no reservations necessary. These are plentiful, run almost everywhere and stop often. Sample fares include Mbabane to Manzini (US\$1, 35 minutes), Big Bend (US\$1, one hour) and Piggs Peak (US\$2, one hour).

There are also nonshared taxis in some of the larger towns.

Car & Motorcycle

DRIVING LICENCE

A domestic (with photo ID) or international driving license is compulsory.

FUEL & SPARE PARTS

Many petrol stations are open 24 hours, and the price of petrol is similar to that of South Africa (see p593). There are Automobile Association (AA) agents in Manzini, Piggs Peak and Mbabane.

HIRE

Hiring a car will allow you to cover much of the country in a couple of days. Note: if you have hired your car in South Africa, ensure that you have the written agreement from the rental company to enter Swaziland. There's a US\$1 road tax payable on entry.

Car hire in Swaziland is available from **Avis** (📞 518 6226) and **Imperial** (📞 518 4862/393), both at Matsapha airport. **Affordable Car Hire** (Map p604; 📞 404 9136; affordable@posix.co.sz; Swazi Plaza, Mbabane) can offer competitive rates. You have to be 23 years old to hire cars from most companies.

INSURANCE

Insurance for third-party damage and damage to or loss of your vehicle is highly recommended.

ROAD CONDITIONS & ROAD HAZARDS

Swaziland has good sealed roads and highways. The main one from east to west is the MR3. There are some rough back roads through the bush. The road northwest of Hlane Royal National Park and Piggs Peak is gravel for most of the way. Beware slippery and boggy conditions when wet. The other main dangers are people and animals on the road, plus the odd kamikaze minibus driver.

ROAD RULES

In Swaziland, vehicles are driven on the left-hand side. Wearing seat belts is compulsory. Always pull over and stop for official motorcades or road stops. The speed limit is 80km/h on the open road and 60km/h in built-up areas.

Hitching

Hitching is easier here than in South Africa but hitching alone is foolhardy, especially for women. Hitchhikers might wait a long time for a car on back roads, and there's keen competition from locals.

Tours

Swazi Trails (Map p606; 📞 /fax 416 2180; www.swazitrails.co.sz; Mantenga Craft Centre, Ezulwini Valley) specialises in one-day or half-day tours around the country, including white-water rafting, cultural tours and hiking.

Bundu Bus (📞 in South Africa 011-675 0767; www.bundusafaris.co.za; PO Box 697, Wilgeheuwel, 1735 Gauteng, South Africa) is a South African operator that runs a seven-day South African tour including a day in Swaziland.

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Victoria Falls

When an awestruck David Livingstone first saw Victoria Falls in 1855 during his four-year journey from the upper Zambezi to the mouth of the river, he wrote in his journal, 'On sights as beautiful as this, angels in their flight must have gazed.' He named the falls after the queen of England, but they were (and still are) known as Mosi-oa-Tunya (The Smoke that Thunders) in the Kololo language.

It's easy to loft lengthy adjectives at Victoria Falls (indeed, it's aptly described as one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World), though perhaps the stats are more telling. Victoria Falls is 1.7km wide and 108m high and has an annual average flow of one million litres per *second*. During the rainy season (March to May), the flow can be ten times higher, while in the dry season (September to December), the volume of water can be as low as 4% of the peak flow.

In other words, climate plays a crucial factor in shaping your experience at Victoria Falls, though any time of year is a fine time to visit. During the rainy season, the spray from the falls can be seen (and felt) from kilometres away. Although you *will* get wet (don't worry, local entrepreneurs will be happy to rent you raincoats), the sight of Victoria Falls at full volume is simply awe-inspiring. During the dry season, the grandeur of the falls is somewhat checked, though the lack of spray makes it's easier to appreciate the size and scope of the falls. And of course, you'll probably walk away a lot drier. However, for whitewater rafting it is the most dangerous time as many more rocks are exposed – thus, this is the time that adrenaline junkies choose to visit.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Gaze in amazement at **Victoria Falls** from the **Zambian** (p625) or **Zimbabwean** (p630) side (or preferably both)
- Visit the falls during the full moon and see the enigmatic **lunar rainbow** (p626)
- Brush up on your history of the area at the **Livingstone Museum** (p622)
- Enjoy a spot of high tea at the **Terrace** (p629) at the elegant Victoria Falls Hotel
- Get your **adrenaline kicks** (opposite) with bungee jumping, microlighting, white-water rafting, jet-boating or canoeing



ACTIVITIES

Adrenaline junkies of the world unite – if you've got the cash, they've got the fix. All activities listed in this section can be booked and started from either Livingstone or Victoria Falls for about the same cost, though be sure to confirm any extra government charges and taxes. Note rates given in this section are approximate.

Abseiling

Spend the day scrambling up rocks, rapelling down cliffs and swinging across canyons in the scenic Batoka Gorge. Half-/full-day excursions cost US\$80/100.

Bungee Jumping

Tackling the third-highest jump in the world (111m) costs a mere US\$90 (US\$130 for tandem).

Canoeing & Kayaking

Although most travellers are set on rafting the Zambezi River, there are plenty of thrills to be had by canoe or kayak; half-/full-day trips along the Zambezi cost from US\$60/75; overnight jaunts cost about US\$150, and three-night trips start at US\$300.

Elephant-Back Safaris

Live out your wildest African dreams on an elephant-back safari through the bush. A half-day excursion costs US\$120 plus US\$10 in park fees.

Fishing

Care to tackle the mighty tiger fish of the Zambezi? A half-day trip including tackle, rods, lures and bait is just US\$90.

Fixed-Wing Flights

Whether you cruise over the falls in a modern Cessna or a vintage Tiger Moth, you'll never forget the views of the spray from above. Flights range from US\$60 to US\$160 depending on the type of craft and the route.

Helicopters

The aptly named 'Flight of the Angels' is a 15-minute joy ride (US\$90) over the falls or 30 minutes (US\$180) across the falls and Zambezi National Park.

Hiking

Hike with guides around the Zambezi National Park (Zimbabwe) or Mosi-oa-Tunya

National Park (Zambia) in search of the rare Taita Falcon. Day hikes cost US\$50, while overnight camping is an additional US\$10.

Horse Riding

Spot herds of game while horse riding alongside the Zambezi. Two-/three-hour rides cost about US\$45/60, while half-/full-day rides (US\$85/160) can also be arranged.

Interactive Drumming

Spend your evening by a campfire under the Southern African sky drumming alongside locals and travellers alike. A one-hour session followed by a traditional meal costs US\$25.

Jet Boats

Why avoid whirlpools in a raft when you can drive straight into them in a jet boat? This hair-raising trip costs US\$90, and is combined with a cable-car ride down into the Batoka Gorge.

Lion Walk

This is an amazing opportunity to walk alongside lion cubs that are between the ages of six weeks and one year. A half-day excursion to the Zambezi Nature Sanctuary (p628) in Zimbabwe costs US\$100 (excluding visa fees).

Microlights & Ultralights

These motorised hang-gliders offer the best views from the air, and the pilot will take pictures for you with a camera fixed to the wing. Microlight/ultralight flights cost about US\$85/104 (15 minutes) over the falls and about US\$160/185 (30 minutes) over the falls and Zambezi National Park.

Quadbiking

Appreciate the beauty and grandeur of Mother Nature by burning litres upon litres of her precious natural resources – a one-hour spin costs US\$60.

Rafting

High-water runs through rapids 11 to 18 (or 23), which are relatively mundane and can be done between 1 July and 15 August, though in high rainfall years they may begin as early as mid-May. Wilder low-water runs operate from roughly 15 August to late December, taking in the winding 22km from rapids 4 to 18 (or 23) if you put in on the Zimbabwean side, and from Rapids 1 to 18 (or 23) if you put in on the Zambian side. Half-/full-day trips cost

about US\$110/125, and overnight trips about US\$165. Longer jaunts can also be arranged.

River-Boarding

What about lying on a boogie board and careering down the rapids? 'Waterfall surfing', as it's sometimes called, costs from US\$135/150 for a half/full day. The best time of year for river-boarding is February to June.

River Cruises

It's easy enough to spot wildlife from a boat, though some passengers seem more interested in the free drinks. River cruises along the Zambezi range from civilised jaunts on the *African Queen* to full on, all-you-can-drink booze cruises. Prices range from US\$30 to US\$60.

Wildlife Drives

A guided safari in Mosi-oa-Tunya Game Park will maximise your chances of a face-to-face encounter with one of the few remaining white rhinos in Zambia. Wildlife drives cost around US\$45.

TRAVEL & ADVENTURE COMPANIES

If you're looking for independent advice, visit the **Backpackers Bazaar** (Map p627; ☎ 013-45828; bazaar@mweb.co.zw; off Parkway; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat & Sun) in the town of Victoria Falls. This well-established agency can book activities and accommodation on both sides of the falls, and its knowledgeable staff can help you make sense of everything. A new rival to Backpackers Bazaar is **Travel Junction** (Map p627; ☎ 013-41480; junction@mweb.co.zw; Trading Post Shopping Centre, Livingstone Way), which is also located in the town of Victoria Falls, and provides similar services.

ZIM OR ZAM?

From the Zimbabwean side, you're further from the falls, though the overall views are better. From the Zambian side, you can almost stand on top of the falls, though your perspective is narrowed. Admission is cheaper on the Zambian side, but the Zimbabwean side is less tourist-oriented and much quieter.

The town of Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe was built for tourists, so it's easily walkable and located right next to the entrance to the falls. These days, however, the town can feel abandoned as most travellers are avoiding Zimbabwe outright. The town is perfectly safe, though, and local business owners rely on tourism for their livelihoods.

Livingstone, in Zambia, is an attractive town with a relaxed ambience and a proud, historic air. Since the town of Victoria Falls was the main tourist centre for so many years, Livingstone feels more authentic, perhaps because locals earn their livelihood through means other than tourism. Livingstone is bustling with travellers all year, though the town is fairly spread out, and located 11km from the falls.

Below is a list of well-established and reputable tour operators. Keep in mind, however, that this list is by no means comprehensive, and that the industry is changing rapidly, particularly on the Zimbabwean side of the falls.

Note the majority of companies do not have offices, and instead work in conjunction with tour operators, booking agencies, hotels and hostels.

Companies in Livingstone

The area code for the following is ☎ 03.

Abseil Zambia (☎ 321188; www.thezambeziswing.com) Operates the gorge swing across Batoka Gorge.

African Extreme (☎ 324423) Operates the bungee jump over the Victoria Falls Bridge.

Batoka Sky (☎ 323672; www.batokasky.com) Specialises in flights over the falls.

Bwaato Adventures (☎ 324227; bwaato@zamnet.zm) Runs wildlife drives and walks.

Bundu Adventures (☎ 324407; www.bundu-adventures.com) Offers riverboarding and rafting.

Jet Extreme (☎ 321375; www.jetextreme.com) Does jet-boating in the Batoka Gorge.

Makora Quest (☎ 324574; quest@zamnet.zm) Organises tranquil canoeing trips in Klepper canoes.

Raft Extreme (☎ 323929; www.raftextreme.com) Also offers riverboarding and rafting.

Safari Par Excellence (☎ 326629; www.safapar.com) Offers a variety of activities, though they're well regarded for their rafting trips.

Taonga Safaris (☎ 324081) Runs booze and sunset cruises.

Touch Adventure (☎ 321111; www.touchadventure.com) Another whitewater rafting operator.

Wild Side Tours & Safaris (☎ 323726; www.wildside-safaris.com) Runs cruises and wildlife drives.

Zambezi Elephant Trails (☎ 321629; www.zambezi-safari.com) Specialises in elephant-back safaris.

Companies in Victoria Falls

The area code for the following is ☎ 013.

Adrift (Kandahar Safaris) (☎ 43589; www.adrift.co.uk) Organises riverboarding and rafting.

Bad Dog Rafting (☎ 41082; baddog@telcovic.co.zw) Another whitewater rafting operator.

Kalambeza Safaris (☎ 45938; kalambez@mweb.co.zw) Specialises in river cruises and canoeing expeditions.

Safari Par Excellence (☎ 44424; www.safapar.com) Offers a variety of activities, though they're well regarded for their rafting trips.

Shearwater Adventures (☎ 45806; www.shearwater-adventures.com) One of the most established whitewater rafting companies in the area.

Southern Cross Aviation (☎ 44018; sca@zol.co.zw) Arranges scenic flights over the falls.

Untamed Africa (☎ 42158; www.untamed-africa.com) Offers a variety of excursions from wildlife drives and walks to river rafting.

Zambezi Horse Trails (☎ 42054; www.horsesafari.co.zw) Takes riders on horseback safaris through nearby wildlife parks.

ZAMBIA

While Zimbabwe struggles to maintain its crumbling infrastructure, Zambia has reason to celebrate. The country remains stable, each of the 73 tribes are co-existing peacefully and the currency (the kwacha) is strengthening. Of course, Zambians are renowned for their friendly and laid-back demeanour, so even if things were collapsing around them, you'd probably still be greeted with a smile.

On the contrary, however, the recent tourist swing to the Zambian side of the falls has initiated a construction boom. Local business owners are riding the tourism wave straight to the bank, and the Zambezi waterfront is rapidly being developed as one of the most exclusive destinations in Southern Africa. But it's still fairly easy to experience the 'real Africa' in Zambia, and chances are you'll be greeted by a few smiling locals along the way.

LIVINGSTONE

☎ 03

The historic town of Livingstone, named after the first European to set eyes on the falls, sprung to life following the construction of the Victoria Falls Bridge in 1904. During the

remainder of the 20th century, Livingstone existed as a quiet provincial capital. However, following the recent political collapse of neighbouring Zimbabwe, Livingstone quickly emerged as the tourist capital of the Victoria Falls area. Historic buildings in the town centre are receiving a much-needed facelift, new construction projects are popping up on the town's outskirts and rumours abound of increased transportation links.

Today, Livingstone is the preferred base of most travellers visiting Victoria Falls. The town abounds with hotels, restaurants and bars catering to shoestringers and well-to-do travellers alike, and there are enough adrenaline activities on offer to make you think twice about leaving town after *only* seeing the falls.

Orientation

Livingstone is a modern, bustling African town that is redefining itself as a tourist hub. The town centre is 11km from the entrance to the falls, though it is not safe to walk this route.

Information

EMERGENCY

Police (☎ 320116; Maramba Rd)

Livingstone General Hospital (☎ 321475; Akapelwa St)

INTERNET ACCESS

Cyber Post (216 Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; per hr US\$4) Also offers international phone calls and faxes.

MONEY

Barclays Bank (cnr Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd & Akapelwa St) and **Standard Chartered Bank** (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd) accept major brands of travellers cheques, offer cash advances on Visa and MasterCard and changes money.

POST

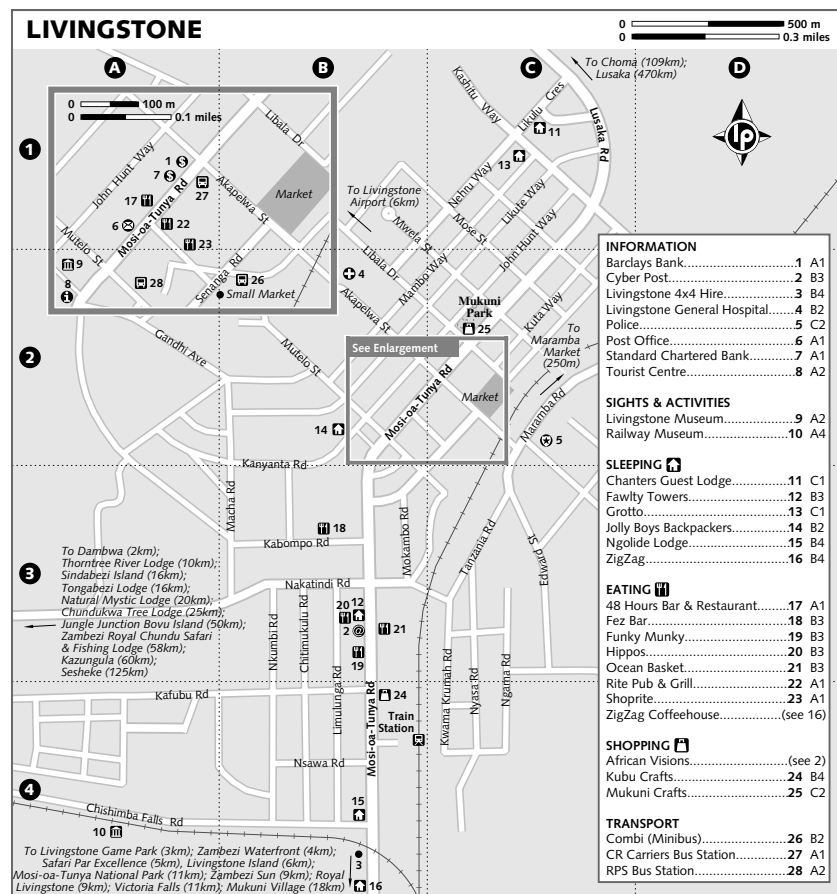
Post office (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd) Has a poste restante and fax service.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist Centre (☎ 321404; Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12pm Sat) This is mildly useful, but has few brochures and maps.

Dangers & Annoyances

Don't walk from town to the falls as there have been a number of muggings along this stretch of road – even tourists on bicycles have been attacked.



Sights

One of the most popular attractions in the area is **Livingstone Island** (Map pp624–5), which is where the famous explorer caught his first glimpse of the falls. The island is located in the middle of the Zambezi River at the top of the falls, so you can literally hang your feet off the edge. Tours to the falls (from US\$45) can be arranged at your hotel or hostel.

The stately **Livingstone Museum** (Mosi-oi-Tunya Rd; adult US\$2; 9am–4.30pm) is divided into five sections covering archaeology, history, ethnography, natural history and art.

The **Railway Museum** (Chishimba Falls Rd; admission US\$5; 8.30am–4.30pm) features a charming but motley collection of locomotives, rolling stock and rail-related antiques.

Mukuni Village (admission US\$3; dawn–dusk) is a 'traditional' Leva village that welcomes tourists on guided tours. Although the village can be inundated with tourists at times, the admission fee does fund community projects.

Festivals

The annual three-day **Livingstone Festival** takes place in late August, and features concerts, traditional dancing and special exhibitions.

Sleeping

Accommodation on the Zambian side of the falls is located in Livingstone and along the Zambezi riverfront. The advantage of staying in town is that you'll be within walking distance of all the bars and restaurants. The

advantage of staying along the riverfront is that you'll be able to relax in seclusion along some gorgeous stretches of the Zambezi.

Reservations are recommended during the busy summer months. Contact accommodation in advance to arrange for a visa-waiver in exchange for a pre-booking.

TOWN CENTRE

Budget

Grotto (☎ 323929; grotto@zamnet.zm; 2 Mambo Way; camping per person US\$3; P) This shady camp site, next to a lovely colonial home and a manicured garden, caters mostly for overland trucks.

Jolly Boys Backpackers (☎ 324229; www.backpackzambia.com; 34 Kanyanta Rd; camping per person US\$4, dm from US\$6, d from US\$25; P) The entire property, from the sunken pillow lounge to the lofty observation tower, was painstakingly designed by the fun-loving owners.

Fawltly Towers (☎ 323432; www.adventure-africa.com; 216 Mosi-oi-Tunya Rd; camping per person US\$5, dm from US\$8, d from US\$20; P) This lush oasis next to the Livingstone Adventure Centre has a large enclosed garden with a shady lawn and a sprawling pool as well as a relaxed, congenial backpacker vibe.

Midrange

Zambezi Waterfront (☎ 330696; www.safpar.net; camping per person US\$7, s/d pre-set tents US\$36/48, s/d with breakfast from US\$80/120, f US\$170; P) Accommodation is varied, and includes luxury tents, standard and riverside chalets as well as posh executive rooms and family suites.

ZigZag (☎ 322814; www.zigzagzambia.com; Mosi-oi-Tunya Rd; s/d US\$35/60, f US\$70; P) Cutesy rooms are well decorated with African paraphernalia, while the grounds feature the quaint ZigZag Coffee House (p624), a lovely swimming pool and a small craft shop.

Chanters Guest Lodge (☎ 323412; www.chanters-livingstone.com; Likulu Cres; s/d with breakfast US\$50/65; P) This simple, family-run guest lodge is a comfortable option if you're looking for personalised service and quiet surroundings.

Ngolide Lodge (☎ 321113; www.ngolide.com; 110 Mosi-oi-Tunya Rd; s/d/ste US\$66/87.50/104; P) This thatched lodge features natural stone-walled rooms with modern amenities including air-con, satellite TV and en suite.

Top End

Zambezi Sun (☎ 321122; www.sunint.co.za; s/d from US\$275/300; P) This huge complex, which

features restaurants, bars and a casino, is Moroccan-inspired, and designed to simulate a north African casbah.

Royal Livingstone (☎ 321122; www.sunint.co.za; s/d from US\$415/450; P) Although the building itself is only a few years old, grassy courtyards, vaulted ceilings and an atmosphere of indulgent excess give the Royal Livingstone an air of yesteryear.

ZAMBEZI RIVERFRONT

Pre-booking for hotels along the riverfront is mandatory.

Budget

Jungle Junction Bovu Island (☎ 323708; www.junglejunction.info; camping per person US\$8–15, huts per person incl all meals US\$40–50; P) Located on a lush island in the middle of the Zambezi, the Jungle Junction attracts travellers who want to do nothing more than lounge beneath the palm trees.

Midrange & Top End

All prices include meals and transfers from Livingstone.

Chundukwa Tree Lodge (☎ 324452; www.maplanga.co.za/lodge1.html; camping per person US\$10; huts per person US\$125; P) This simple but rustic lodge consists of thatched huts perched directly on the water.

Natural Mystic Lodge (☎ 324436; www.naturalmysticlodge.com; s/d from US\$85/125; P) The atmosphere at Natural Mystic is significantly less lavish than at some of the more upmarket lodges, though it makes for a peaceful retreat.

Zambezi Royal Chundu Safari & Fishing Lodge (☎ 097-653719; www.royalchundu.com; chalets per person US\$200; P) Accommodation is one of six dark wooden chalets on stilts that jut out over the water. Because of its remote location, the owners emphasise a number of activities including mokoro (dug-out canoe) trips, fishing excursions and riverboat safaris.

Thorn tree River Lodge (☎ 324480; www.safpar.com/thorn tree.htm; chalets per person US\$250; P) The Thorn tree River Lodge is located within the borders of Mosi-oi-Tunya National Park, and features rustic chalets with panoramic views of elephants frolicking along the Zambezi.

Tongabezi Lodge (☎ 323235; www.tongabezi.com; cottages/open-faced houses per person US\$430/530; P) The Tongabezi comprises several

spacious cottages and open-faced 'houses', which incorporate living trees as part of their structures. Guests are also invited to spend an evening on nearby Sindabezi Island (US\$350/person/night).

Eating & Drinking

Although there's no shortage of local haunts in Livingstone, the town is home to a number of high-quality tourist-oriented restaurants.

48 Hours Bar & Restaurant (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; snacks & mains US\$2-3) This unassuming spot serves up cheap eats and takeaway including burgers, meats and local dishes.

Funky Munky (216 Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; snacks & mains US\$2-4) This laid-back bistro is a popular backpackers' hang out and prepares baguettes, salads and pizzas in a comfortable setting.

ZigZag Coffee House (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; US\$3-5) This alluring hang out offers an eclectic range of dishes, from tacos to tandoori, and is ideal for a coffee or milk shake.

Fez Bar (Kabompo Rd; US\$3-6) This Moroccan-inspired bar and lounge serves tasty and eclectic meals throughout the day, though things really get kicking here once the sun goes down.

Hippos (Limulunga Rd; mains US\$3-6) This raucous bar-cum-restaurant at the back of Fawlti Towers is housed underneath a soaring two-storey thatched roof.

Rite Pub & Grill (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; mains US\$4-7) This centrally located pub draws in a good mix of travellers and locals, and serves tasty pub grub amid a kitschy Wild West setting.

Ocean Basket (82 Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; US\$4-8) Sure, you're dining on seafood in a land-locked country, but the quality and selection here is surprisingly good.

Shopping

African Visions (216 Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd) Near the Livingstone Adventure Centre, this is a charming place selling quality fabrics and crafts from all over Africa.

Kubu Crafts (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd) Offers a vast selection of classy souvenirs. You can admire your purchases while sipping a tea or coffee in the shady tea garden.

Mukuni Crafts (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd) The craft stalls in the southern corner of this park are a pleasant, and relatively hassle-free place to browse for souvenirs.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Nationwide Airlines (☎ 323360; www.flynationwide.co.za; Zambezi Sun hotel) and **Zambian Airways** (☎ 322967; www.zambianairways.co.zm; Livingstone Airport) connect Livingstone to destinations throughout Zambia and South Africa. **South African Airways** (www.flysaa.com) and **British Airways** (www.britishairways.com) fly every day to Johannesburg for around US\$110 return.

BICYCLE

Bikes can be ridden to/from Zimbabwe; however, bear in mind that cyclists have been mugged while riding to/from the Zambian border and the falls.

BUS & COMBI (MINIBUS)

Domestic

RPS (Mutelo St) has two bus services a day to Lusaka (US\$8, seven hours). **CR Carriers** (cnr Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd & Akapelwa St) runs four services a day to Lusaka (US\$9, seven hours). Buses to Shesheke (US\$7, five hours) leave at around 10am from Mingongo bus station next to the Catholic church at Dambwa village, 3km west of the town centre. Direct buses to Mongu (US\$11, nine hours) leave at midnight from Maramba market, though you might feel more comfortable on a morning bus to Sesheke, and then transfer to a Mongu bus (US\$5, four hours).

Combis to the Botswana border at Kazungula (US\$2.50, one hour) depart from Dambwa, 3km west of the town centre, on Nakatindi Rd.

International

For information about international buses, see p759.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If you're driving a rented car or motorcycle, be advised that the vast majority of companies do not ensure their vehicles in Zambia (surprisingly, most companies allow their vehicles to enter Zimbabwe).

HITCHING

With patience, it's fairly easy to hitch from Kazungula, Botswana, and Katima Mulilo, Namibia, to Livingstone. The best place in all three towns to arrange a lift is at any petrol

station. See warnings about hitching in each country's Directory.

TRAIN

The *Zambezi Express* leaves Livingstone for Lusaka (US\$4/5/7/8 economy/standard/1st class/sleeper, 15 hours), via Choma, on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday at 7pm. Reservations are available at the **train station** (☎ 320001), which is signed off the Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The Livingstone Airport is located 6km north-west of town, and is easily accessible by taxi (US\$5 each way).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If you're planning on renting a car in Zambia, consider using **Livingstone 4X4 Hire** (☎ 320888; www.4x4hireafrica.com; Industrial Rd). This is the only operator in town that rents 4WD vehicles.

COMBIS & TAXIS

Combis run regularly along Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd to Victoria Falls and the Zambian border, and cost (US\$0.50, 15 minutes). Taxis, which can be easily identified by their sky-blue colour, cost about US\$4 and are a good option if you can split the fare with others.

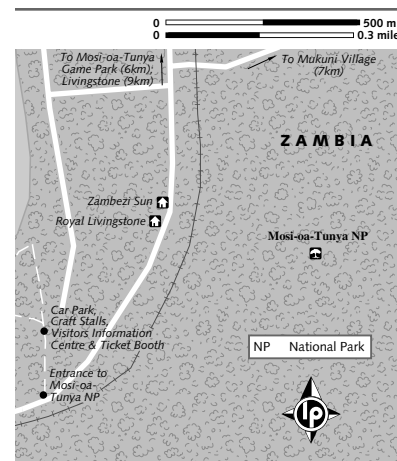
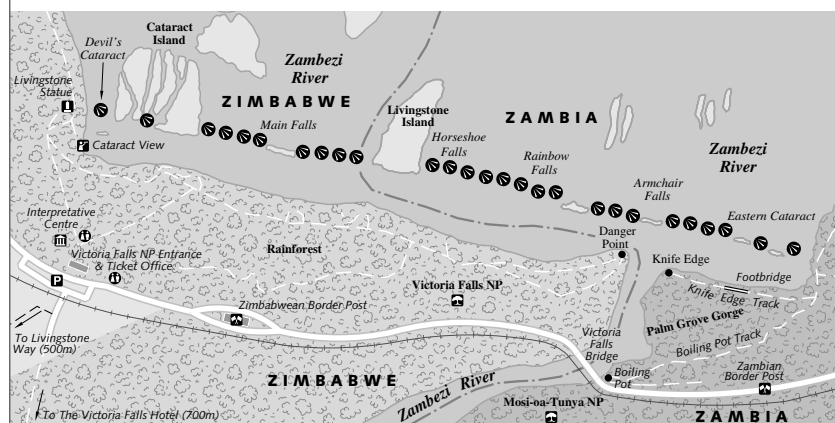
MOSI-OA-TUNYA NATIONAL PARK

Zambia's smallest national park is located 11km from Livingstone, and is divided into two sections – the Victoria Falls World Heritage National Monument Site and Mosi-oa-Tunya Game Park.

Victoria Falls World Heritage National Monument Site

The entrance to the **park** (admission US\$10, ☎ 6am-6pm) is located just before the Zambian border post. For close-up views of the **Eastern Cataract**, nothing beats the hair-raising (and hair-wetting) walk across the **footbridge**, through swirling clouds of mist, to a sheer buttress called the **Knife Edge**. If the water is low, or the wind is favourable, you'll be treated to a magnificent view of the falls as well as the yawning abyss below. Otherwise, your vision (and your clothes) will be drenched by spray. Then you can walk down a steep track to the banks of the great Zambezi to see the huge whirlpool called the **Boiling Pot**.

VICTORIA FALLS & MOSI-OA-TUNYA NATIONAL PARKS



Dangers & Annoyances

Don't walk or even cycle along Zambezi Dr to the Big Tree, because of the danger of being mugged. And of course, do not change money on the streets as you are liable to get caught.

Sights

Zambezi Dr heads north from near the entrance to the falls to the **Big Tree**, which is, well, a big tree. In fact, it's a baobab with a 20m circumference.

The impressive new **Victoria Falls Aquarium** (Livingstone Way; admission US\$5; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm) is apparently the largest freshwater aquarium in Africa.

The new **Elephant's Walk Museum** (Elephant's Walk Shopping Village, off Adam Stander Dr; admission free; ☎ 8am-5pm) houses a small but worthwhile private collection detailing the cultural heritage of local ethnic groups.

The **Falls Craft Village** (☎ 44309; Adam Stander Dr; admission US\$8; ☎ 8am-5pm) is a touristy mock-up of a traditional Zimbabwean village.

The **Zambezi Nature Sanctuary** (☎ 44604; Parkway; admission with guided tour US\$5; ☎ 8am-5pm) offers lots of crocs, as well as lions and leopards.

Sleeping

Unlike in the rest of Zimbabwe, accommodation options quote – and usually require payment – in US dollars.

BUDGET & MIDRANGE

Shoestrings Backpackers (☎ 40167; 12 West Dr; camping per person US\$3, dm US\$5, d US\$20; ☎ 24h) Shoestrings is a popular stop for the overland truck crowd, though the laid-back ambience also draws in a good number of independent travellers.

Victoria Falls Backpackers (☎ 42209, www.victoriafallsbackpackers.com; 357 Gibson Rd; camping per person US\$4, dm US\$8, s/d with shared bathroom \$10/20; ☎ 24h) Although it's a bit further out than other places, Victoria Falls Backpackers is superbly set up for independent and budget travellers.

Tokkie Lodge (☎ 43306; www.safarisouth.co.zw; 224 Reynard Rd; camping per person US\$5, dm US\$10, s/d with shared bathroom US\$15/30; ☎ 24h) Although the basic rooms and camp sites at Tokkie are primarily reserved for overland trucks, independent travellers are welcome.

Victoria Falls Restcamp & Lodges (☎ 40509; www.vicfallsrestcamp.co.zw; Park Way & West Dr intersection; camping per person US\$5, dm US\$5, s/d chalets with shared bathroom US\$15/20, s/d cottages with bathroom US\$20/30; ☎ 24h) This former government-run camp-

ing ground was recently renovated by the new management.

Savanna Lodge (☎ 42115; savanna@telcovic.co.zw; 68 Courtney Selous Cres; dm US\$13, d with shared bathroom & breakfast US\$26; ☎ 24h) This family-run budget lodge has basic rooms and dormitories that surround a tranquil garden and swimming pool.

Lorrie's Lodge (☎ 011-406584; lorrie@mweb.co.zw; 397 Reynard Rd; r per person without bathroom with breakfast US\$15, r with breakfast US\$25; ☎ 24h) This quaint pension is a great option if you're looking for personalised attention and an intimate atmosphere.

TOP END

Ilala Lodge (☎ 44737; www.ilalalodge.com; 411 Livingstone Way; s/d with breakfast from US\$195/270; ☎ 24h) This colonial relic is adorned with mounted rifles, hunting trophies and faded oil paintings; classically decorated rooms face out towards the manicured lawns and elaborate gardens.

Kingdom (☎ 44275; www.zimsun.co.zw; Livingstone Way; s/d with breakfast from US\$205/228; ☎ 24h) Although it claims to be a humble recreation of the ruins at Great Zimbabwe, the Kingdom looks more like a Las Vegas hotel, right down to the casino, food court and palm-fringed pool complex.

Victoria Falls Hotel (☎ 44751; www.lhw.com; Mallet Dr; s/d with breakfast from US\$295/328; ☎ 24h) This historic hotel (the oldest in Zimbabwe) oozes elegance and sophistication, and occupies an impossibly scenic location across from the gorge and bridge.

Victoria Falls Safari Lodge (☎ 43201; www.vfsl.com; Squire Cummings Rd; s/d from US\$315/395 with breakfast; ☎ 24h) Everything from the rambling gardens and spray views to the dramatic thatched lobby and meticulously appointed rooms is a class act.

Eating

Restaurants in Vic Falls have taken a hit following the reduction in Zimbabwean tourism, but there are still a few memorable spots in town.

If you're self-catering, you can try **Jay's Spar Supermarket** (Courtney Selous Cres) or the **Fruit & Veg Centre** (Soper's Arcade), but don't be surprised if stocks are somewhat lacking.

Three 10 Parkway (☎ 43468; 310 Parkway; meals US\$2-4) This relaxed café serves up enticing dishes amid a tranquil garden setting.

In-Da-Belly Restaurant (☎ 332077; Victoria Falls Restcamp & Lodges; meals US\$4-8) In-Da-Belly (a play on Ndebele, one of the two major population

groups in Zimbabwe) serves an impressive array of gourmet bistro-style cuisine.

Mama Africa (☎ 091-380430; meals US\$5-8) This perennial tourist haunt behind the Landela Centre exudes a hip and trendy atmosphere, and specialises in local dishes, steaks and game meats.

Terrace (Victoria Falls Hotel, Mallet Dr; meals US\$5-12) The Terrace at the stately Victoria Falls Hotel overlooks the hotel gardens and the Victoria Falls Bridge, and brims with English colonial ambience.

Boma (☎ 43201; Victoria Falls Safari Lodge, Squire Cummings Rd; meals US\$5-15) The Boma is consistently recommended by readers, and is highlighted by its incredible views of a nearby water hole in Zambezi National Park.

Drinking & Entertainment

There's unfortunately not much life left in Vic Falls after sunset, though the bars at Shoestrings Backpackers and Mama Africa are usually bustling.

Shopping

The **craft market** (Adam Stander Dr) has an impressive selection of curios, while the nearby Elephant's Walk Shopping Village complex stocks mainly upmarket crafts.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air Zimbabwe (☎ 44316; www.airzimbabwe.com) connects Victoria Falls to destinations through-

out Zambia and South Africa. **South African Airways** (☎ 011-808678; www.flysaa.com) and **British Airways** (www.britishairways.com) fly every day to Johannesburg for around US\$150 return. **Air Namibia** (www.airnamibia.com) flies to Windhoek for around US\$300 return.

BUS & MINIBUS

Combis depart irregularly from **Chinotimba Bus Terminal** (Pioneer Rd, Chinotimba) for Bulawayo (US\$5, five hours) and Harare (US\$11, 11 hours).

For information about international buses, see p759.

BICYCLE

Bikes can be ridden to/from Zambia; however, bear in mind that cyclists have been mugged while riding to/from the Zambian border and the falls.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If you're driving a rented car or motorcycle, you'll need a letter from your rental company stating that you are permitted to enter Zimbabwe.

HITCHING

It's fairly easy to hitch between Victoria Falls and Kazungula, Botswana. If you head to the petrol station in both towns you'll have the best chance of a lift; see also p131.

Hitching in the rest of Zimbabwe is not recommended; see p731.

VISITING ZAM FROM ZIM (OR VICE VERSA)

From Vic Falls, you can walk or take a taxi to the Zimbabwean immigration post, and then continue 1.3km on foot over the Victoria Falls Bridge. Just past the bridge is the Zambian border crossing, and 100m beyond it, the entrance to Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park.

Combis (US\$0.50) and share taxis (US\$4) leave when full to Livingstone, about 11km away. Mugging is common along this route, so it may be unwise to walk or ride a bicycle (and don't stop your car to take photos either).

Most travel agencies and hotels in Vic Falls and Livingstone charge about US\$25 for minibus transfers between the two towns. If you're planning on spending several days in Zamiba, contact your accommodation in advance as it's sometimes possible to arrange for a visa-waiver in exchange for a pre-booking. Note that a similar programme does not exist if you're crossing into Zimbabwe from Zambia.

If you're crossing into Zambia for the day, advise the Zimbabwean officials before leaving the country so you won't need to buy a new visa when you return later in the day. Similarly, Zambian officials charge only US\$10 for day visas – this is a concession for participants in adrenaline activities 'north of the border', though it applies to all foreign tourists. Note Zimbabwean day visas do not exist – if you're heading into the country from Zambia, you will need to buy a proper visa at the border.

TRAIN

The *Mosi-oa-Tunya* train leaves Vic Falls daily at 6.30pm for Bulawayo (US\$1/3/4 for economy/2nd/1st class, 12 hours). Make reservations at the **ticket office** (☎ 44391; 🕒 7am-12pm & 2-4pm Mon-Fri, 7am-10am Sat & Sun) inside the train station.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Victoria Falls Airport is located 20km south-east of town, and is easily accessible by taxi (US\$20 each way).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Be advised that petrol is a rarity scarce commodity in Zimbabwe, so it's best to keep your driving to a minimum.

TAXIS

A taxi around town costs about US\$5; slightly more after dark. None of them use meters, so you'll have to bargain.

VICTORIA FALLS NATIONAL PARK

The entrance to the **national park** (Map pp624-5; admission US\$20, 🕒 6am-6pm) is located just before the Zimbabwean border post. The admission

price must be paid in US dollars. One of the most dramatic spots is the westernmost point known as **Cataract View**. Another track leads to the aptly named **Danger Point**, where a sheer, unfenced 100m drop-off will rattle your nerves. From there, you can follow a side track for a view of the **Victoria Falls Bridge**.

Like its counterpart on the Zimbabwean side, the park is open again in the evenings during (and just before and after) a full moon in order to see the amazing **lunar rainbow**. The tickets cost an extra US\$10 – hours of operation vary, though you can inquire through your accommodation.

ZAMBEZI NATIONAL PARK

This **national park** (Map p627; admission US\$10; 🕒 6am-6.30pm) consists of 40km of Zambezi River frontage and a spread of wildlife-rich mopane forest and savanna. The national park is best known for its herds of sable antelopes, but it is also home to lions, giraffes and elephants. The entrance to the park is situated only 5km northwest of the Victoria Falls town centre, and is easily accessible by private vehicle.

Zambia

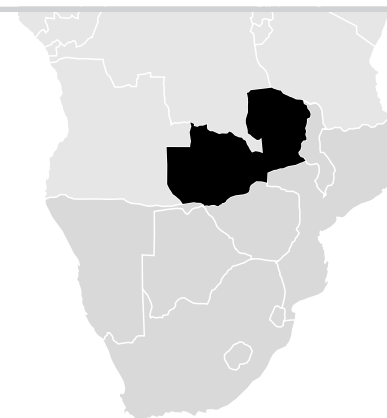
Zambia is that diamond in the rough: the country boasts some of the continent's best wildlife parks and is bordered by the Zambezi River, along which are three of the region's major highlights: Victoria Falls, Lake Kariba and Lower Zambezi National Park. (For further details on Victoria Falls and Livingstone, see p618.) Zambia's South Luangwa National Park is one of the best wildlife parks in the world, while the monstrous Kafue National Park (it's larger than Switzerland) boasts plenty of animals beyond the Big Five. Zambia is also an angler's dream, as fishermen hail from all over the world to try their luck on the mighty Zambezi River with the hopes of landing a toothy tigerfish or the rare, giant vundu. Avid birders also flock to Zambia to glimpse its fabulous diversity of birds, most notably Chaplin's barbets. Unfortunately, however, diamonds don't come cheap (even if they are mined in Zambia), but the sparkle is mesmerising.

For independent travellers, Zambia can be a challenge: distances between major towns and attractions are long, and getting around by car or public transport takes time and patience. But for many, this challenge is part of Zambia's appeal; this is the 'real' Africa – which is becoming rare among the increasingly developed parts of the region – and 'safe' Africa, as Zambia is devoid of the harsh ethnic tensions that abound in its western, northern and eastern neighbours.

And although it sounds cheesy, Zambians really do have the market cornered on 'friendly' and 'welcoming'. If you enjoy a raw edge, few tourists, gorgeous scenery and warm people, Zambia is the place you're looking for.

FAST FACTS

- **Area:** 752,614 sq km
- **Capital:** Lusaka
- **Country code:** ☎ 260
- **Famous for:** National parks with the Big Five, fishing for tigerfish along the Lower Zambezi and Victoria Falls
- **Languages:** English, Bemba, Lozi, Nyanja and Tonga
- **Money:** Zambian kwacha
- **Phrases:** *muli shani* (hello; Bemba), *muli bwanji* (hello; Nyanja), *natotela* (thanks; Bemba), *zikomo* (thanks; Nyanja)
- **Population:** 11.5 million



HOW MUCH?

- **Small wood carving** US\$15
- **Soapstone ashtray** US\$12
- **Wastebasket made of beer caps** US\$8
- **Box of three Maximum condoms** US\$0.10
- **Batik** US\$11

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L of petrol/diesel** US\$1.80/1.50
- **1L of bottled water** US\$3
- **Bottle of Mosi lager** US\$1.80
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$15
- **Street snack** US\$2

HIGHLIGHTS

- **South Luangwa National Park** (p658) Soak up the wildlife in one of the most majestic parks in Africa.
- **Lower Zambezi National Park** (p655) Watch in awe as elephants stroll along the bank, hippos teem in the river, and fish eagles soar overhead.
- **Kafue National Park** (p666) Explore vast, classic wildlife country in Zambia's largest national park.
- **Northern Zambia** (p650) Gaze in wonder at the hills, lakes, wetlands and waterfalls, with rarely another tourist in sight.
- **Lake Kariba** (p663) Boating, fishing or just sunbathing at a resort along one of the world's largest artificial lakes.

ITINERARIES

One consideration is your method of travel; travellers without transport cannot reach the remote places that are easily accessible by private vehicle or organised tour. Also, the bizarre shape of Zambia can frustrate your travel plans.

- **One Week** With only one week, hit one of the attractions of Southern Africa: **Victoria Falls** (p618) or **South Luangwa National Park** (p658).
- **Two Weeks** With two weeks, you'll have time for the great Victoria Falls as well as one or two of the national parks – probably **South Luangwa**, **Lower Zambezi** (p655) or **Kafue** (p666).
- **Three Weeks** With extra time and money, go to Victoria Falls, South Luangwa Na-

tional Park, a lodge on the Lower Zambezi, the **Copperbelt Province** (p649) and **Kasanka National Park** (p651). If you are travelling to or from Tanzania or Malawi, or are able to set aside even more time, explore the Northern Province, including the **Bangweulu Wetlands** (p651) and the dramatic southern tip of Lake Tanganyika.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Zambia's altitude creates a temperate climate. There are three distinct seasons: the dry season (mid-April to August), when temperatures drop at night and the landscape is green and lush; the hot season (September to mid-November), which is the best time to see wildlife as flora is sparse; and the wet season (mid-November to mid-April), which is ideal for bird-watching, though some camps and lodges in the national parks close due to flooded roads. Rainfall is higher in the north of the country.

Refer to the Victoria Falls chapter (p618) for details about the best time to visit, and see p742 for climate charts.

HISTORY

The precolonial history of the area that became Zambia, along with the rest of Southern Africa, is covered on p37.

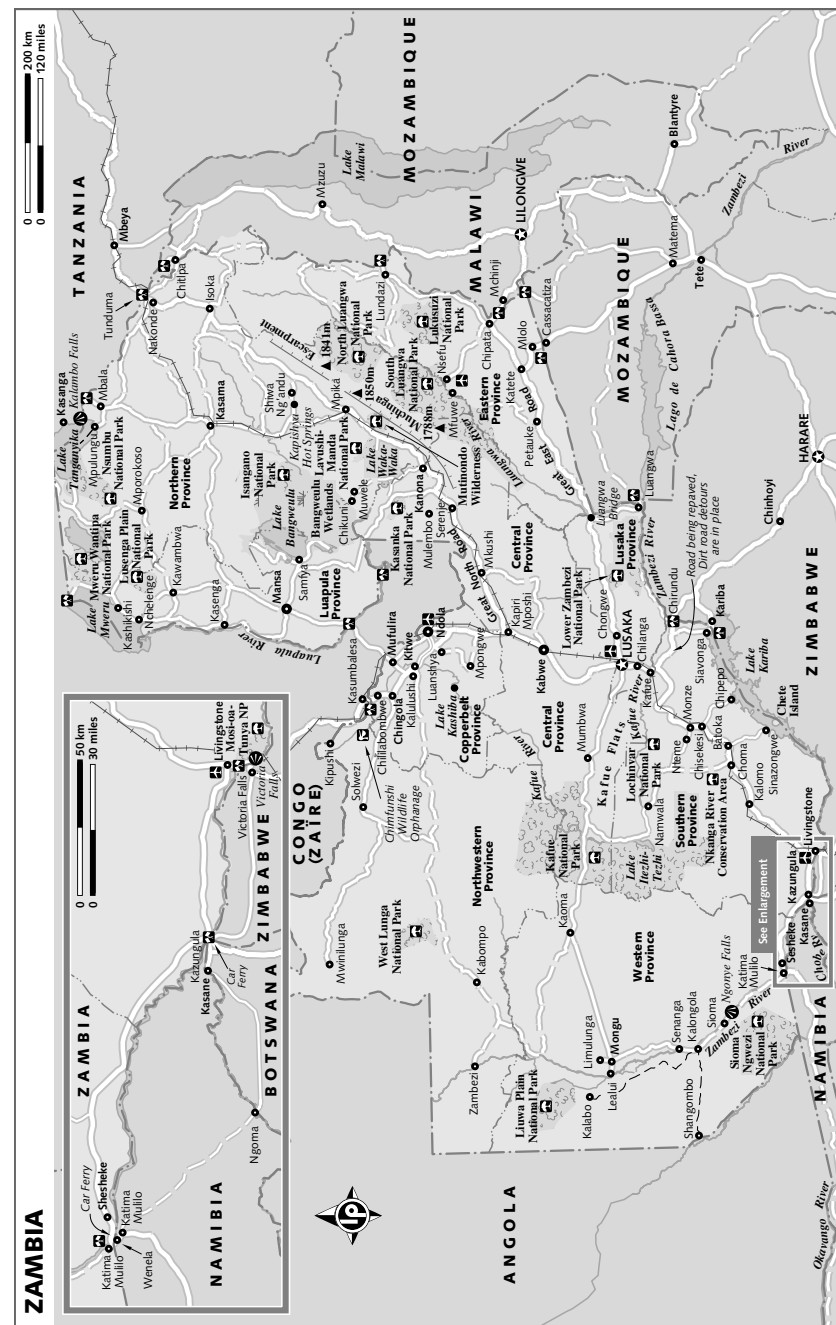
The Slave Trade & Early Europeans

The first Europeans to enter what is now Zambia were Portuguese explorers. In the 1790s, several of them travelled from Angola as far as the headwaters of the Zambezi River. Around the same time, another group of Portuguese pushed inland from Mozambique to Lakes Mweru and Bangweulu.

The Portuguese generally followed routes established many centuries earlier by Swahili-Arab slave-traders, who had penetrated the

TRAVEL TIPS

Zambia is a gargantuan country, many of the roads are crap, and transport is frustratingly slow. The Tazara railway from Tanzania will save considerable time across northern and eastern Tanzania, though in Zambia, snails move faster than the train. And don't ignore the Copperbelt Province just because it's a little out of the way.



region from their city-states on the east coast of Africa. Often in collaboration with the chiefs of powerful tribes, the slave-traders captured many people from Zambia and took them across Lake Malawi and through Mozambique or Tanzania to be sold in the slave markets of Zanzibar.

In the 1820s, the effects of the *difaqane* (forced migration in Southern Africa; see p41) rippled through to Zambia. Matabele migrants entered western Zimbabwe and threatened the Makololo, who moved into southern Zambia, displacing the Tonga people and threatening the Lozi people on the upper Zambezi.

The celebrated British explorer David Livingstone travelled up the Zambezi in the early 1850s in search of a route to the interior of Africa and hoped to introduce Christianity and the principles of European civilisation to combat the horrors of the slave trade. In 1855, he reached the awesome waterfall that he coined Victoria Falls.

Livingstone's work and writings inspired missionaries to come to the area north of the Zambezi; close on their heels came explorers, hunters and prospectors searching for whatever riches the country had to offer. The 'new' territory did not escape the notice of entrepreneur Cecil John Rhodes, who was already establishing mines and a vast business empire in South Africa. Rhodes' British South Africa Company (BSAC) laid claim to the area in the early 1890s and was backed by the British Government in 1895 to help combat slavery and prevent further Portuguese expansion in the region.

The Colonial Era

Like many parts of Southern Africa, Zambia's history was largely influenced by the BSAC during the next few decades. Two separate territories were initially created – Northwestern Rhodesia and Northeastern Rhodesia – but these were combined in 1911 to become Northern Rhodesia. In 1907, Livingstone became the capital.

At around the same time, vast deposits of copper were discovered in the area now called the Copperbelt. The indigenous people had mined there for centuries, but now large European-style opencast pits were dug. The main source of labour was Africans, who had to earn money to pay the new 'hut tax'; in any case, most were driven from their land by European settlers.

In 1924 the colony was put under direct British control and in 1935 the capital was moved to Lusaka. To make them less dependent on colonial rule, settlers soon pushed for closer ties with Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Malawi), but various interruptions – including WWII – meant the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland did not come about until 1953.

Nationalist Resistance

Meanwhile, African nationalism was becoming a more dominant force in the region. The United National Independence Party (UNIP) was founded in the late 1950s by Dr Kenneth Kaunda, who spoke out against the federation on the grounds that it promoted the rights of white settlers to the detriment of the indigenous African population.

Through the 1960s, as many other African countries gained independence, Zambian nationalists opposed the colonial forces. This resulted in a massive campaign of civil disobedience and a small but decisive conflict called the Chachacha Rebellion.

The federation was dissolved in 1963 and Northern Rhodesia became independent a year later, and changed its name to Zambia. While the British government had profited enormously from Northern Rhodesia, the colonialists chose to spend a large portion of this wealth on the development of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Zambia still suffers from the effects of this staggering loss of capital and the difference between the development of the two countries during and since colonial times is obvious.

Independence

After gaining independence, Zambia inherited a British-style multiparty political system. Kaunda, as leader of the majority UNIP, became the new republic's first president. The other main party was the African National Congress (ANC), led by Harry Nkumbula. But Kaunda disliked opposition. In one swift move during 1972, he disbanded the Zambian ANC, created the 'second republic', declared UNIP the sole legal party and made himself the only presidential candidate.

Consequently, Kaunda remained in power for the next 27 years. His rule was based upon 'humanism' – his own mix of Marxism and traditional African values. The civil service was increased, and nearly all private businesses

(including the copper mines) were nationalised. But corruption and mismanagement, exacerbated by a fall in world copper prices, doomed Zambia to become one of the poorest countries in the world by the end of the 1970s. The economy continued to flounder while Zambia's trade routes to the coast through neighbouring countries (eg Zimbabwe and Mozambique) were closed in retaliation for Kaunda's support for several liberation movements in the region.

The 1980s

By the early 1980s two important events occurred that had the potential to significantly improve Zambia's economy: Rhodesia gained independence (and had become Zimbabwe), which allowed Kaunda to take his country off a war footing; and the Tazara railway to Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) was completed, giving Zambia unencumbered access to the coast. Yet the economy remained on the brink of collapse: foreign exchange reserves were almost exhausted, serious shortages of food, fuel and other basic commodities were common, and unemployment and crime rates rose sharply.

In 1986, an attempt was made to diversify the economy and improve the country's balance of payments. Zambia received economic aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) but the IMF conditions were severe and included cutting basic food subsidies. Subsequent price rises led to country-wide riots in which many people lost their lives. Kaunda was forced to restore subsidies.

Turning Point

The winds of change blowing through Africa during the late 1980s, coupled with Zambia's disastrous domestic situation, meant something had to give. Following another round of violent street protests against increased food prices in 1990, which quickly transformed into a general demand for the return of multiparty politics, Kaunda was forced to accede to public opinion.

He announced a snap referendum in late 1990 but, as protests grew more vocal, he was forced to legalise opposition parties and announce full presidential and parliamentary elections for October 1991. Not surprisingly, UNIP (and Kaunda) were resoundingly defeated by the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), led by Frederick Chiluba,

a former trade union leader. Kaunda admirably stepped down without complaint, which may have saved Zambia from descending into anarchy.

President Chiluba moved quickly to encourage loans and investments from the IMF and World Bank. Exchange controls were liberalised to attract investors, particularly from South Africa, but tough austerity measures were also introduced. Once again, food prices soared. The civil service was rationalised, state industries privatised or simply closed, and thousands of people lost their jobs.

By the mid-1990s, the lack of visible change in Zambia allowed Kaunda to confidently re-enter the political arena. He attracted strong support and soon became the UNIP leader. Leading up to the 1996 elections, the MMD panicked and passed a law forbidding anyone with foreign parents to enter politics (Kaunda's parents were from Malawi). Despite intercessions from Western aid donors and world leaders like Nelson Mandela – not to mention accusations that Chiluba's parents were from Congo (Zaire) – the law was not repealed. The UNIP withdrew all its candidates in protest and many voters boycotted the election. Consequently, Chiluba and the MMD easily won, and the result was grudgingly accepted by most Zambians.

In October 1997 a bungled coup attempt allowed Chiluba to announce a state of emergency, and many opposition figures were arrested. Kaunda, who claimed the coup was a setup, was placed under house arrest until March 1998. This endeared him further to UNIP supporters and MMD opponents.

Zambia in the 21st Century

The political shenanigans continued unabated at the start of the new millennium: in mid-2001, Vice-President Christon Tembo was expelled from parliament by Chiluba, so he formed an opposition party: the Forum for Democratic Development (FDD). Later, Paul Tembo, a former MMD national secretary, joined the FDD, but was assassinated the day before he was due to front a tribunal about alleged MMD corruption.

Chiluba was unable to run for a third presidential term in December 2001 (though he badly wanted to change the constitution so he could). He anointed his former vice-president, Levy Mwanawasa, as his successor, but Mwanawasa only just beat a coalition of

opposition parties known as the United Party for National Development (UPND). Again, allegations from international observers about the MMD rigging the results and buying votes fell on deaf ears. Because he ran on a platform of anticorruption, Mwanawasa has been trying to get the government to charge Chiluba with massive embezzlement while in office. The Supreme Court in Lusaka is currently deciding whether to lift Chiluba's immunity from prosecution (as a former president).

Because Zambia was deemed to be a Heavily Indebted Poor Country, most of its US\$7 billion international debt was eliminated in 2005. Though Zambia is still a poor country, recent years have shown the emergence of a middle class. The minerals (copper and cobalt) that knocked Zambia off its feet in the early '70s are the very same ones that are bringing it back up today. World copper prices jumped by 82% of their original value within the first five months of 2006, quickly appreciating the value of the kwacha, which is now one of the most volatile currencies in the world. Coupled with foreign investment in the mines, South African-owned businesses are exploding in towns across the country, as there is finally a local demand

for their businesses. That said, the newly appreciated kwacha is hurting the tourism industry as it has become far more expensive to enjoy Zambia.

The next presidential election will take place in October or November of 2006.

THE CULTURE

The National Psyche

At the time of writing, the hottest topic was the coming presidential elections. Because of allegations regarding Chiluba embezzling huge sums of money from the treasury, a lot of people have fully forgiven Kenneth Kaunda and are calling for another leader like him; others think the current president is similar to the father of their country.

HIV is, unfortunately, a big topic as the urban prevalence of the disease might be as high as a whopping 35%, far higher than the reported number a few years ago. People are finally starting to get tested, though not in the droves that aid agencies have been hoping for.

A social issue that is seemingly always discussed on the radio is cohabitation rather than marriage. Many Zambians feel that cohabitation will rock the foundations of their

traditional values and will, hence, be the beginning of the end of society.

Finally, soccer (football) is always a topic on the minds of Zambians, whether it be domestic, within Africa, or the premiership or World Cup.

Daily Life

HIV/AIDS has had a huge effect on the daily lives of Zambian people. A new population of 'street kids' has emerged, who live in roadside sewers and on middle-of-the-road dividers in urban centres. It's become a national problem, and you'll find them begging at most sets of traffic lights in Lusaka, Kitwe and Livingstone. There are also funeral processions on a daily basis, as the disease has claimed enough lives to lower the average life expectancy to under 33 years.

Life is difficult for many Zambians. Almost 45% of Zambians live in urban centres; Compounds designed for 50,000 now house more than 150,000. Cholera has become a problem in overpopulated Kapiri Mposhi and Lusaka during the wet season. And most unskilled labourers work six to seven days per week, making around US\$60 per month, therefore forcing families to live on less than US\$1 per day.

In rural Zambia, life has not changed much. Traditional religions melded with Christian beliefs, subsistence agriculture and village hierarchies are the mainstays of rural life.

Population

The population density is about 15 people per sq km, making Zambia one of the most thinly populated countries in Africa. The concentration of people in urban centres (mostly Lusaka and the cities of the Copperbelt) is a high percentage for a developing country. This is noticeable as you travel through rural areas; you can go for hours without seeing more than a couple of small villages.

Intermarriage among the 73 officially recognised ethnic groups (tribes) is common, and Zambia is justifiably proud of its almost complete lack of tribal problems. The groups are (in order of size) the Bemba, originally from the Congo (Zaire) and now settled in northern Zambia, the Copperbelt and Lusaka; the Tonga, who are linked to other groups in Zimbabwe and live in southern Zambia; the Nyanja, a collective term for about 1.5 million people living in eastern Zambia and Lusaka;

the Ngoni, descendants of Zulus from South Africa now settled in the east around Chipata; and the Lozi in western Zambia.

Immigration & Emigration

Zambia has an interesting immigration history – both recent and historical – of demographic change. While most descendants of the original white settlers have since moved away, one can still find a fair number of those of English and Eastern European descent, mostly farmers and business types respectively. Indians and Pakistanis have long been a part of the mix, so don't be surprised to hear them proudly call themselves Zambians.

Newcomers to the country are South African businesspeople and Zimbabwean farmers who lost their land thanks to Robert Mugabe. Zimbabwean farmers mostly live in rural areas and farm tobacco and flowers.

SPORT

Football (soccer) is by far the country's biggest sport. No matter what the season, it's the talk of the town. Though Lusaka is dotted with soccer stadiums, the two main places to catch a game are Independence Stadium in Matero and the stadiums in the Showgrounds. Other sports played in Lusaka include golf (there are more than a few courses), polo and polo-cross – a mixture of polo and lacrosse. Polo games can be seen at the Showgrounds at around 11.30am on weekends between May and August.

RELIGION

The majority of Zambians are Christians (75%), though other religions include Muslims and Hindus (24%) or animists (1%). Most Christians follow either Jehovah's Witness, Catholic or Evangelical sects, though beliefs in sorcery are still strong.

Churches have been playing a major role in trying to mitigate the spread of HIV, while also providing a strong support system for those living with AIDS.

ARTS & CRAFTS

Zambia has a thriving contemporary art scene. One of the country's most famous and respected painters is the late Henry Tayali. His works – described by critics as 'crowded social realism' – have inspired many other Zambian painters and enjoyed a popular following among ordinary folk. If you want to

MOVERS & SHAKERS: KENNETH KAUNDA

Revered as the father of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda – also known as KK – was instrumental in bringing independence to Zambia in 1964, and served as president until 1991. Born in 1924, in 1949 he served as interpreter and adviser on African affairs to liberal white settler Sir Stewart Gore-Brown, of the legislative council. He then went on to join the anticolonial African National Congress (ANC), of which he became secretary-general in the early 1950s. When members of the ANC started to quarrel over its direction in 1958–59, he started the breakaway Zambia African National Congress, which he used to rally against the British plan for a federation of the three colonies: Nysaland, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia. He managed to dissuade the British from forming the federation and was also jailed, making a martyr of himself and elevating him to hero status among the Zambian people.

After being released in early 1960, KK was elected president of the United National Independence Party (UNIP). He was invited by the British to discuss decolonisation, which began in 1962 and was completed in 1964. After general elections, the UNIP won by a small margin over the ANC, and Kaunda became the first Zambian president.

In the 1970s, KK imposed sanctions on Southern Rhodesia and allowed black guerrillas to use Zambia as a base to attack its southern neighbour to dissuade white rule. In 1976, he assumed emergency powers and was re-elected president in 1978 and 1983 in one-candidate elections. The plummet in copper prices during the 1970s and KK's continued grip on the presidency led to public dissatisfaction, which 'forced' him to legalise multiparty elections in 1990. In 1991, KK stepped down as president.

In 1986, KK's son died of AIDS, and since then Kaunda has become a champion in the nation's fight against the disease. He also has his own political column in the independently-owned *Post* newspaper.

know more about the local art scene, the studio and exhibition centre named after him in Lusaka is worth a visit (see p644).

Other internationally recognised artists include Agnes Yombwe, who works with purely natural materials and uses traditional ceramics and textile designs in her striking sculptures; Shadreck Simukanga, arguably the finest painter working in Zambia; and the country's best-known artist, Stephen Kapata. Prominent sculptors include Eddie Mumba and the prolific Friday Tembo.

Zambian artistry includes skilfully woven baskets from Barotseland (Western Province) and Siavonga; malachite jewellery from the north; and woodcarvings and soapstone sculptures from Mukuni village, near Livingstone. Most of these crafts are sold in markets around the country, along the roadsides of intercity highways and in souvenir shops in touristy areas.

Dance

The most notable traditional dance is the *makishi*, which features male dancers wearing masks of stylised human faces with grass skirts and anklets. It probably originated in the Congo (Zaire) region and was brought to northwestern Zambia by the Luvale or Luchasi people, before being adopted by other ethnic groups. *Makishi* is now found in many parts of Zambia, mainly at boys' initiation ceremonies. But any local celebration seems to be a good excuse for the men to boogie down.

Music

All of Zambia's ethnic groups have their own musical traditions. The Lozi are famous for the large drums played during the remarkable Kuomboka ceremony (see the boxed text, p666), while the Bemba are also renowned drummers. Other traditional musical instruments used by most groups include large wooden xylophones, often with gourds underneath the blocks for resonance, and tiny thumb pianos with keys made from flattened metal.

Contemporary Zambian musicians who have achieved some international fame include Larry Maluma and Ricki Ilonga, both exponents of a traditional style called *kalin-dula* (a rumba-inspired sound). Other popular musicians who play traditional styles include the Sakala Brothers from the Eastern Province and Mpunda Mutale from the Northern

Province. Younger Zambians prefer reggae – both the old-school Jamaican style and the softer version popular in Southern Africa – and contemporary Zambian bands such as Exile and JK. Most Zambians love Congolese *soukous* (termed *rumba* in Zambia), which is always blasted at deafening levels at local bars and nightclubs.

Theatre

Once thriving, Lusaka's theatre scene has taken a turn for the worse, though many Zambian writers still produce plays and other works, from slapstick comedy through to hard political comment. From time to time, the Lusaka Playhouse has a show worth seeing (see p646).

ENVIRONMENT The Land

Landlocked Zambia is one of Africa's most eccentric legacies of colonialism. Shaped like a contorted figure of eight, its borders do not correspond to any tribal or linguistic area. And Zambia is monstrous, about the size of France, England and the Republic of Ireland combined.

Zambia sits on an undulating plateau, sloping to the south. To the north, the plateau drops steeply to Lake Tanganyika, one of the Rift Valley lakes that Zambia shares with Tanzania, Burundi and Congo (Zaire).

Zambia's main river is the Zambezi, which flows in the west of the country. It forms the border between Zambia, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe, and flows into the Victoria Falls and Lake Kariba. Other major rivers include the Kafue, which starts in the highlands between Zambia and Congo (Zaire) and flows into the Zambezi southeast of Lusaka; and the Luangwa, which rises near the Tanzanian border and also flows into the Zambezi.

Wildlife

ANIMALS

Because of Zambia's diverse landscape, plentiful water supplies, and position between Eastern, Southern and Central Africa, the diversity of animal species is huge. The rivers, of course, support large populations of hippos and crocs, and the associated grasslands provide plenty of fodder for herds of zebras, impalas and pukus (antelopes common in Zambia, but not elsewhere). Other

antelopes found in Zambia include waterbuck and lechwe; in fact, vast herds of rare black lechwe live near Lake Bangweulu, and endemic Kafue lechwe settle in the area around the Kafue River. Kasanka National Park is one of the best places on the continent to see rare water-loving antelopes called sitatungas. Two more endemic species are Thornicroft giraffes and Cookson's wildebeests, both found in South Luangwa National Park.

These antelopes naturally attract predators, so most parks contain lions, leopards, hyenas (which you'll probably see) and cheetahs (which you probably won't). The other two big drawcards – buffaloes and elephants – are also found in huge herds in the main national parks.

Bird lovers can go crazy in Zambia, where about 750 species have been recorded. Twitchers used to the 'traditional' Southern African species listed in the *Roberts* and *Newman's* field guides will spend a lot of time identifying unusual species – especially in the north and west. Most notable are the endangered shoebill storks (found in the Bangweulu Wetlands); fish eagles (Zambia's national bird); and endemic Chaplin's barbets (mostly around Monze).

PLANTS

The country's main vegetation zones are miombo woodland, which covers the plateau areas (about 65% of Zambia); mopane woodland in the hotter, lower parts of the country, such as the Zambezi and Luangwa Valleys; and acacia woodland and semi-evergreen forest in the south and west.

National Parks

Zambia boasts 19 national parks and reserves, but after decades of poaching, clearing and general bad management, many are just lines on the map that no longer protect (or even contain) much wildlife. However, four national parks do accommodate healthy stocks of wildlife, and are among the best in Southern Africa: South Luangwa (p658), Lower Zambezi (p655), Kafue (p666) and Mosi-oa-Tunya (p625).

In a scheme unique in Zambia (and unusual in Southern Africa), Kasanka National Park has been leased to a private operator since 1990. This park is now fully funded by donations and tourism, and functions very well. Another example of successful coopera-

tion between an ecofriendly tour operator, an international conservation group (the World Wildlife Fund) and the Zambian park authorities is the renovation of the previously neglected Lochinvar National Park (p664).

Zambia also has 34 vaguely defined game management areas (GMAs). These mainly act as buffer zones around the major national parks, and are mostly used for commercial hunting. All the GMAs and national parks/reserves (except Kasanka) are administered by the semi-autonomous Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) – see p641 for contact details.

Admission fees to the parks vary, so they're listed in the appropriate sections later in this chapter. Each ticket is valid for 24 hours from the time you enter the park, but if you're staying inside the park at official accommodation this admission fee is valid for seven days. Taking a vehicle inside the park costs between US\$15 and US\$30 per day, depending on the size and weight. Landing a plane costs US\$30 per aircraft, and using a private boat is US\$20 a day.

Environmental Issues

Although the population is growing rapidly, it is still relatively sparse, so Zambia doesn't suffer many of the environmental problems encountered by its neighbours. However, around Lusaka, Livingstone and the cities of the Copperbelt, denudation of local vegetation is apparent. And unsustainable deforestation (and associated soil erosion) in the countryside is a pressing environmental problem.

During the 1970s and 1980s, many Zambian parks were effectively abandoned and poaching became a major problem. Then, under pressure from international conservation organisations, the government slowly realised that tourism was a major source of foreign currency for the government (and local people) – and that this depended on healthy national parks. Despite successes in some parks, notably South Luangwa, Lower Zambezi and Mosi-oa-Tunya National Parks, poaching and poor management remain major problems. And the detrimental impact of tourism is obvious along the Zambezi River (particularly near Victoria Falls), where lodges continue to be built unabated and dozens of cruise boats shuttle along every day looking for the diminishing wildlife.

See p26 for information on how you can do your part to contribute to responsible travel.

FOOD & DRINK Food

The national dish is unquestionably *nshima*, a bland but filling maize porridgelike substance. It's eaten with your hands and always accompanied by a relish, such as beans or vegetables (in inexpensive eateries), or chicken or fish (in slightly better restaurants). Most other cheap meals are an unimaginative and unhealthy choice of fried eggs, fried sausages, fried chicken and burgers – all laden with chips (French fries).

In the cities and larger towns, many restaurants – especially those in the hotels – offer Western meals such as steak and grilled chicken. Prices start from US\$5, depending on the surroundings as much as the food itself, and whether you eat in or take away. More elaborate French and Italian cuisine is also available from better hotels, while several restaurants in Lusaka serve Chinese and Indian food. At most top-end establishments, main courses start from about US\$12.

Most cheaper restaurants serve meals without meat, because locals can't afford anything but *nshima*, rice and vegetables anyway. In the cities and larger towns, it's not hard to find an Indian- or Chinese-owned restaurant offering one or two meatless dishes.

In better restaurants a 10% service charge is often added (which technically means tipping is not required), as well as the normal 17.5% value-added tax (VAT). All prices in this chapter, and the Zambian section of the Victoria Falls chapter, include all charges and taxes, though most restaurants list prices *without* service charge and VAT.

SSELF-CATERING

Markets and stalls on the roadside sell fresh vegetables and fruit, while supermarkets in the cities and larger towns are well stocked.

Drinks

Tea, coffee, bottled mineral water and soft drinks are widely available and inexpensive; for a refreshing drink on a hot day, try a Malawi or rock shandy. If you like lagers, the local beer is good: Mosi is arguably tastier than Castle, Windhoek and the Ndola-brewed Rhino Lager. Traditional 'opaque' beer made

from maize is sold commercially in cardboard cartons, but make sure you shake the carton before drinking.

LUSAKA

☎ 01 / pop 1.2 million

The capital of Zambia is a small city, part modern and part traditional African, where the dusty markets sit alongside very Soviet-looking high-rise blocks. Although Zambia is a fascinating country, Lusaka will never be a highlight for tourists. There are few notable buildings, monuments or other sights, but it does boast a lively ambience and genuine African feel. The markets are good, there's a decent arts scene and the nightclubs throb at weekends. If you have to be in Lusaka for a few days (eg while waiting for yet another visa), you'll have no trouble passing the time pleasantly enough.

ORIENTATION

The main street, Cairo Rd, is lined with shops, cafés, supermarkets, travel agencies, banks and bureaux de change. To the north is a major traffic circle and landmark, the North End Roundabout; to the south is the creatively named South End Roundabout. East of Cairo Rd are the wide jacaranda-lined streets of the smarter residential suburbs and the area officially called Embassy Triangle (not surprisingly, home to many embassies and high commissions). West of Cairo Rd are 'compounds' (read 'townships').

See p648 for more information on getting around Lusaka.

Maps

The dusty government-run **Map Sales office** (☎ 8.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri) is beneath the Ministry of Lands & Natural Resources building, southwest of the junction of Independence Ave and Nationalist Rd, though most maps are no newer than 1986. Modern commercial maps (k20,000 to k35,000) are available at bookshops and supermarkets at the **Manda Hill Shopping Centre** (Great East Rd) and **Arcades Shopping Centre** (Great East Rd).

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Book Cellar (Manda Hill Shopping Centre, Great East Rd) The best bookshop in Zambia, it sells novels, coffee-table

books about Zambia and regional guidebooks – including those published by Lonely Planet.

Emergency

Ambulance (☎ 992)

Police (☎ 991; Church Rd)

Specialty Emergency Services (☎ 273303) For evacuations.

Internet Access

I-Zone (Arcades Shopping Centre, Great East Rd) This café has the highest speed connection in Lusaka, and you can even bring a laptop.

TheCafé@la.com (Cairo Rd; Longacres Roundabout) With two branches, this place is incredibly popular and modern.

Media

The *Lowdown* monthly magazine (k3000) is available at bookshops and supermarkets at the **Manda Hill Shopping Centre** (Great East Rd) and **Arcades Shopping Centre** (Great East Rd). At Arcades, the brand-new **NewspaperDirect** (☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-5pm Sun) offers 328 newspaper titles from around the world on a daily basis.

Medical Services

Though cheap, conditions and medical supplies are less than ideal at **University Teaching Hospital** (☎ 251200; Nationalist Rd).

Far better are the private clinics **Care for Business** (☎ 254396; Addis Ababa Rd) and **Corpmad** (☎ 222612; Cairo Rd), behind Barclays Bank. Both clinics work with **Specialty Emergency Services** (☎ 273303).

Money

Along Cairo Rd, Barclays, Indo-Zambian Bank, Stanbic Bank and Standard Chartered Bank have branches with ATMs. These banks also have ATM branches elsewhere in Lusaka, such as on Haile Selassie Ave, and at the **Manda Hill Shopping Centre** (Great East Rd) and **Arcades Shopping Centre** (Great East Rd). Keep in mind that the only debit and credit cards ATMs accept are those bearing the Visa logo.

To change cash, try the **Zampost Bureau de Change** (cnr Cairo & Church Rds) inside the main post office, **Fx Bureau de Change** (Cairo Rd) or **Stero Bureau de Change** (Findeco House, South End Roundabout, Cairo Rd), which also offers reasonable rates for AmEx travellers cheques. The only bureau de change open on Saturday afternoon and Sunday is **Mo Money Bureau de Change** (Fairview Hotel, Church Rd).

Post

Main post office (cnr Cairo & Church Rds; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm Sat) Contains Zambia's only reliable poste restante.

Telephone & Fax

International calls and faxes can be made at the **Zamtel** (cnr Cairo & Church Rds) telephone office upstairs from the main post office, while a dozen telephone booths (using tokens and phonecards) can be found outside the post office. Other 'phone shops' and 'fax bureaux' are dotted along Cairo Rd.

Tourist Information

Zambia National Tourist Board (☎ 229087; www.zambiatourism.com; Century House, Cairo Rd; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12pm Sat) The head office has friendly enough staff, but information is limited to Lusaka and its environs.

Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA; ☎ 278524; zawaorg@zamnet.zm; Kafue Rd; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) In Chilanga, about 16km south of the city centre, facing Munda Wanga. Paradoxically, staff seem more interested in issuing hunting licences than helping foreigners visit national parks. The ZAWA office is accessible on the minibus to Chilanga or Kafue town from the City Bus Station or South End Roundabout.

Travel Agencies

Airmasters Travel (☎ 250000; www.zambiatourism.com/airmasters; 34 Omelo Mumba Rd) This Rhodes Park agency books flights and hires cars and 4WDs.

Bimm Travel Agency (☎ 234372; www.bimm.co.zm; Luangwa House, Cairo Rd) Just south of the post office, it's reliable and locally run. It can also arrange car hire.

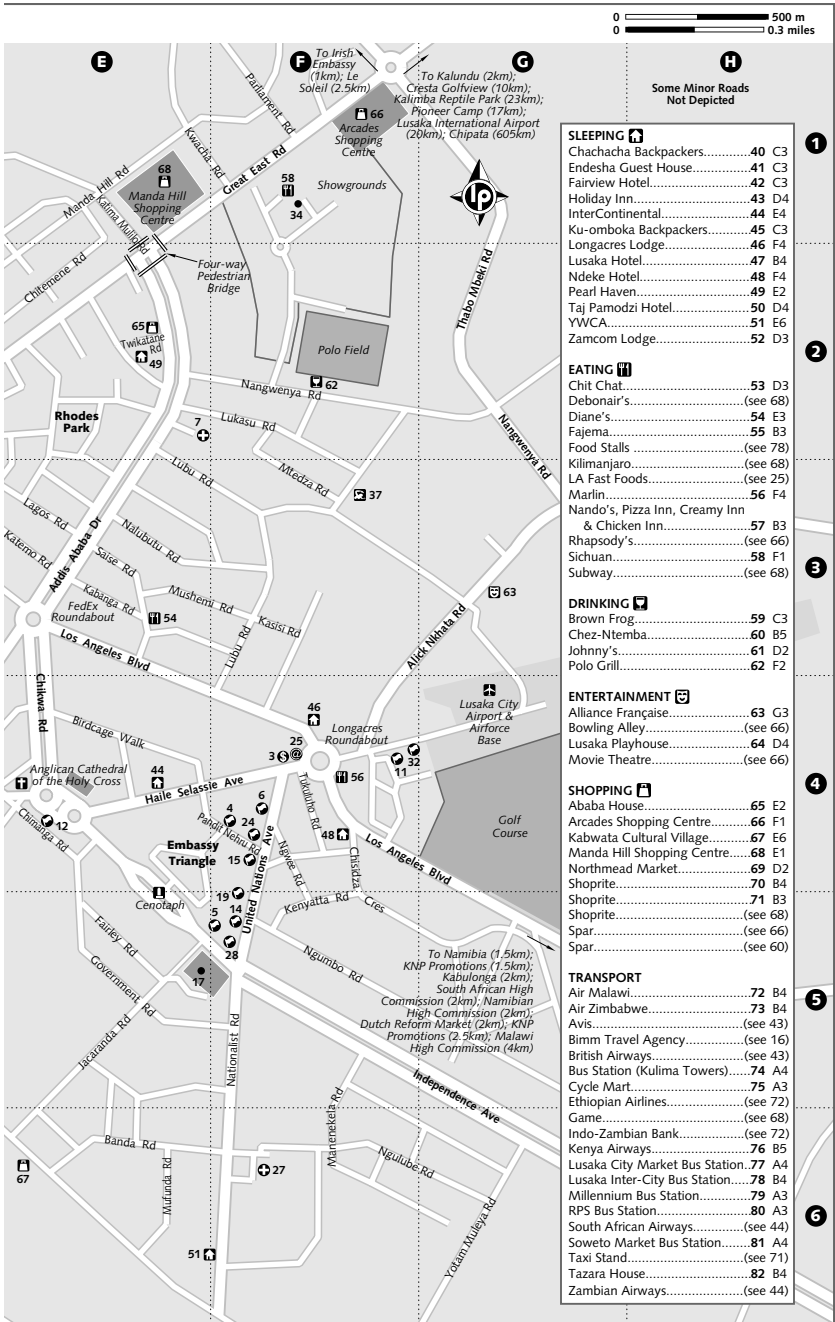
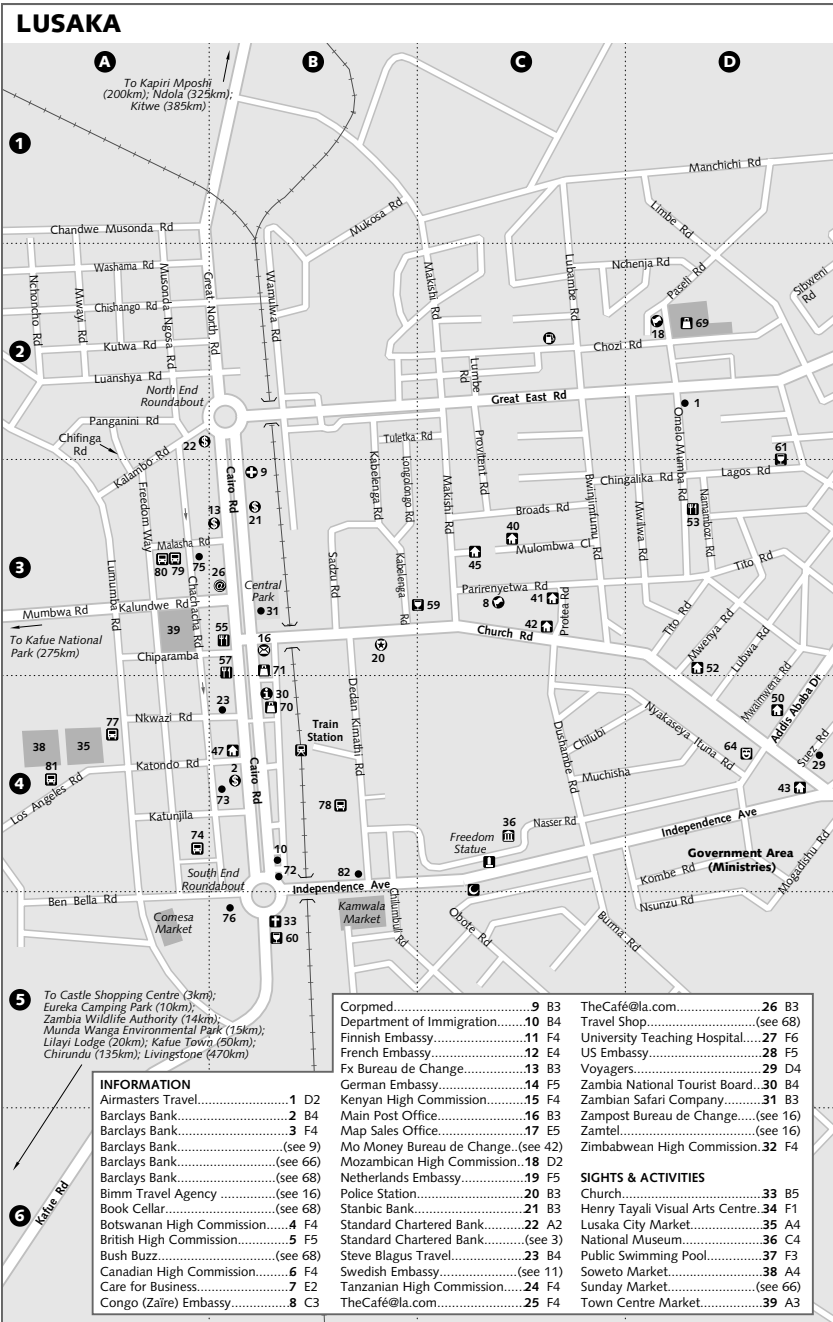
Bush Buzz (☎ 256992; www.bush-buzz.com; Manda Hill Shopping Centre, Great East Rd) At the back of Kilimanjaro, this agency is especially popular for trips to Kafue and Lower Zambezi National Parks.

KNP Promotions (☎ 266276; www.knp-promotions.com; 13 Chindo Rd Ext) This agency, located in the Woodlands neighbourhood, arranges for every lodge and camp in and around Kafue National Park.

Steve Blagus Travel (☎ 227739; www.steveblagus.com; 24 Nkwazi Rd) This is the agency for AmEx and a dozen upmarket lodges/camps.

Travel Shop (☎ 255559; www.travelshopzambia.com; Arcades Shopping Centre, Great East Rd) Another agency for lodges/camps and safari companies, and it sells discounted airline tickets.

Voyagers (☎ 253048; www.zambiatourism.com/voyagers; Suez Rd) Perhaps the most popular agency in Zambia, it arranges flights, hotel reservations and car hire.



Zambian Safari Company (☎ 231450; www.zambian-safari.com; Central Park, Cairo Rd) Also a booking agency for upmarket lodges/camps throughout Zambia.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Like most African cities, pickpockets take advantage of crowds, so be alert in the markets and bus stations and along the busy streets immediately west of Cairo Rd. At night, most streets are dark and often empty, so even if you're on a tight budget, take a taxi. If you have your own wheels, be aware that the incidence of armed carjacking is on the rise in Lusaka – especially around Christmas and Easter.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Though there's not much to see, the downstairs galleries in the **National Museum** (Nasser Rd; US\$2; ☎ 9am–4.30pm) offer a perfect snapshot of Zambia, both past and present. Highlights are the displays of contemporary Zambian paintings and sculpture. Upstairs are exhibits of cultural, ethnographical and archaeological interest; don't miss the display about witchcraft.

Also check out **Henry Tayali Visual Arts Centre** (Showgrounds; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2.30pm Sat & Sun) if you're in a buying mood for local contemporary art.

The **Town Centre Market** (Chachacha Rd; ☎ 7am–7pm) is chaotic and, frankly, malodorous, but fascinating. Zambians get their bargains here, whether it's fruit or veggies, new or second-hand hardware, tapes or clothes. The market is relaxed and tourists don't get hassled.

The **Lusaka City Market** (Lumumba Rd; ☎ 7am–5pm) is large and lively, but not as atmospheric (or smelly) as the Town Centre Market. The nearby **Soweto Market** (Los Angeles Rd; ☎ 7am–7pm) is the largest market in Lusaka, but is more functional and lacks the traditional ambience of the other two. This is one place where you are most likely to be relieved of your valuables – so be careful. The **Dutch Reform Market** (Kabulonga Rd; k2000; ☎ 8am–1pm last Saturday of each month) and the **Sunday market** (Great East Rd; ☎ 10am–6pm Sun) at the Arcades Shopping Centre feature artisanal goodies that are a step up in quality from markets elsewhere.

Munda Wanga Environmental Park (☎ 278456; www.mundawanga.com; Kafue Rd, Chilanga; adult/child k12,000/6000; ☎ 8am–5pm) rehabilitates all sorts of animals for re-entry into the wild, unless they are too injured. The park features plenty

of regional flora and fauna, including two cheetahs and seven lions, though the American black bear (a gift from Kenneth Kaunda) looks a little out of place. For visitors, the pool, bar and braai (barbecue) grills are welcome additions. It's about 16km south of central Lusaka and accessible by any minibus heading towards Chilanga or Kafue from the City Bus Station or South End Roundabout.

A bit of a schlep northeast from town, **Kalimba Reptile Park** (☎ 213272; off District Rd; adult/child k18,000/9000) is not only a crocodile and snake zoo (not for petting!), but is also a pleasant place to grab a beer and a crocodile sandwich, though you'll need a 4WD to get there. Go east on the Great East Rd 13km from Arcades. Then make a left at the Caltex filling station, take the road to the end (11km) and the park is on the right.

The spotlessly clean Olympic-sized **public swimming pool** (off Mangwenya Rd; admission US\$1; ☎ 9am–5pm Tue–Sun) is surrounded by a pleasant shaded area and is a great place to relax and unwind. Horse riding among wildlife can be arranged at Lilayi Lodge (see opposite) for US\$25 per person (two hours).

If you're in need of a massage, try **Le Soleil** (☎ 212437; off Zambezi Rd; ☎ 8am–5pm Tue–Sun) in Roma. Lastly, if you want to blow a few hours bowling or seeing a Hollywood movie, there is a bowling alley and a movie theatre at **Arcades Shopping Centre** (Great East Rd).

SLEEPING Budget

Chachacha Backpackers (☎ 222257; www.chachacha-safaris.com; 161 Mulombwa Cl; camping per person US\$5, dm US\$10, d with shared bathroom US\$25; ☎ ☎) Traditionally popular with young backpackers, when we visited it was being renovated. The courtyard, pool and bar are inviting, and other facilities include a restaurant (serving basic meals), laundry service, a communal kitchen and baggage store. Like many hostels in Southern Africa, however, it can be noisy, crowded and scruffy. On the other hand, it's a mine of information and a great spot to organise budget-priced tours. Singles/doubles should be reserved in advance.

Pioneer Camp (☎ 096-432700; www.pioneercampzambia.com; Palabana Rd, off Great East Rd; camping per person US\$5, double chalets incl breakfast US\$30–50) Signposted 5km south of Great East Rd and 17km east of the Manda Hill Shopping Centre. If you don't want to self-cater, there's a bar and restaurant.

The friendly owners offer free transfers to/from the city on weekdays; otherwise, contact them beforehand for current advice about how to reach the camp by minibus.

Eureka Camping Park (☎ 272351; eureka@zamnet.zm; camping per person k19,000, chalets with shared showers k93,000–110,000, chalets k130,000–185,000) About 12km south of the city centre. The camp site is grassy and the security is good, while the swimming pool and bar (which sells snacks) are nice touches. Also, firewood is for sale and there is an abutting walkable safari area with animals that don't want to eat you. minibuses from the City Bus Station or South End Roundabout go past the gate.

Ku-omboka Backpackers (☎ 222450; kvkirkley@zamtel.zm; Makanta Close; dm k30,000, d with shared bathroom k100,000) A fairly new kid on the block, this is the best value for a backpacker passing through Lusaka as it's clean, safe and cheap.

YWCA (☎ 252726; Nationalist Rd; d with shared bathroom k80,000) Offers budget accommodation with a local feel for men and women. It's basic but very clean and friendly – and often full. The restaurant serves basic meals and is open to the public.

Midrange

All rooms in the hotels listed below contain a private bathroom, fan and TV, and all rates include breakfast.

Endesha Guest House (☎ 225780; Parirenyetwa Rd; d without bathroom k160,000, d k200,000) A cosy *pension* (guesthouse) with eight rooms (so book ahead). The 'standard' rooms have unattached but private bathrooms, while the more expensive rooms have a private bathroom inside. The bar is chill and a great place to meet some interesting characters.

Zamcos Lodge (☎ 251811; Church Rd; d k200,000–300,000) This is not well known yet – even by taxi drivers. The rooms in this motel-style complex are devoid of charm, but they also have no dirt or mosquitoes. Importantly, it offers the best value for a midrange hotel in central Lusaka.

Longacres Lodge (☎ 254847; off Los Angeles Blvd; s/d k230,000/280,000, ste US\$53) A revamped government hostel with functional rooms. Though friendly and spotless, it's not the most interesting place to stay.

Pearl Haven (☎ 252455; Twikatan Rd; s/d k250,000/300,000; ☎) In the shady Rhodes Park suburbs. With an interesting second-storey bar

on stilts, this place is a good option for a quick walk to Manda Hill Shopping Centre.

Lusaka Hotel (☎ 229049; lushotel@zamnet.zm; cnr Cairo & Katondo Rds; s/d k264,000/288,000, d with air-con k336,000; ☎ ☎) Remarkably, this is the *only* hotel in the city centre. It's the longest-standing hotel in Lusaka and has almost top-end facilities for a midrange price. But the rooms are small and some are noisy.

Ndeke Hotel (☎ 251734; cnr Chisidza Cres & Los Angeles Blvd; d/ste k290,000/380,000; ☎) An overpriced but clean hotel. Adorned with modern sculpture that is welcome, but out-of-place, it has small but spotless rooms. Just watch out for the prostitutes lingering outside who may want business.

Fairview Hotel (☎ 222604; www.fairview.co.zm; Church Rd; s/d k316,000/344,000) Offers small, comfortable and well-furnished rooms – if you like 70s furniture – within walking distance of the city centre. The attached restaurant is only just adequate, but the terrace bar is inviting.

Top End

All rooms in the hotels listed here have a bathroom, air-con and TV, and all rates include breakfast. The three hotels in the city also offer a business centre, swimming pool and travel desk.

Lilayi Lodge (☎ 279022; www.lilayi.com; s/d incl breakfast from US\$90/100, incl all meals & activities approx US\$250/290; ☎ ☎) This is one of Lusaka's finest options. The bungalows in this private wildlife reserve are very comfortable, and the gardens and pool are lovely. It offers horse riding and the chance to learn to play (horse) polo. The lodge is about 8km off Kafue Rd and about 12km south of the city centre, and only accessible by taxi or private/rented car.

Cresta Golfview (☎ 290718; www.cresta-hospitality.com/zambia.htm; Great East Rd; s/d k380,000/520,000; ☎ ☎) This newcomer and outsider is just as good as its more expensive cousins, though it is on the outskirts of town.

Taj Pamodzi Hotel (☎ 254455; pamodzi@zamnet.zm; Church Rd; s/d from US\$165/190; ☎ ☎) By far the fanciest – and strangely the cheapest of the fancy-shmancy hotels in Lusaka. It's a large multistorey complex with comfortable rooms offering views and all the mod cons.

Holiday Inn (☎ 251666; admin@holidayinn.co.zm; cnr Church Rd & Independence Ave; s/d US\$240/260; ☎ ☎) This is convenient and popular, and features several Western-style restaurants and bars.

Discounted rates of about US\$105/130 are possible with little prompting.

InterContinental (☎ 250000; lusaka@interconti.com; Haile Selassie Ave; s/d from US\$250/275; 🍷 🍷) Offers the sort of bling-bling amenities and rooms found in most of the hotels run by this chain throughout the world.

EATING

Fajema (Cairo Rd; meals about US\$2) Just back from the main road, this is a far better place than the food stalls to try some tasty Zambian food while sitting inside a restaurant.

Kilimanjaro (Manda Hill Shopping Centre, Great East Rd; snacks k9000-18,000) With a travel agency and an internet café, it serves tasty coffee and pastries, which can be enjoyed at the tables or on couches.

LA Fast Foods (Longacres Roundabout, Haile Selassie Ave; meals US\$2-3) An ideal place to grab a meal if you have to wait a while for your visa from any of the nearby embassies. Allow some time to plough through the confusing array of menus on the counter offering Chinese food, burgers, steaks and a hundred variations of 'chicken and chips'.

Premuni (☎ 224209; 61 Great East Rd; mains k25,000-55,000; 🍷 lunch & dinner) A cheap and decent upstairs Indian restaurant with terrace seating and an attached Indian foods shop, featuring homemade sweets. The array of meatless options will delight frustrated and hungry vegetarians.

Sichuan (☎ 253842; Showgrounds, off Nangwenya Rd; mains k35,000-50,000; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) The best Chinese restaurant in Lusaka, which is bizarrely situated in a warehouse at the Showgrounds. However, the prices are reasonable and the ambience relaxing.

Diane's (☎ 097-847157; 5018 Saise Rd; mains k20,000-30,000; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, 11.30am-10.30pm Sat & Sun) Popular with Japanese expats, this place has superb cook-it-at-the-table Korean barbecue, as well as vegetarian dishes.

Marlin (☎ 252206; Longacres Roundabout, Los Angeles Blvd; mains k45,000-60,000; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Mon) Housed in the colonial-era Lusaka Club, this perennial, wood-panelled favourite is the best steakhouse in Zambia. While it does serve gargantuan portions of every cut of meat under the sun, most guests come for the aged fillet with mushroom or pepper sauce. Reservations are strongly recommended.

Chit Chat (☎ 097-774481; 5A Omelo Mumba Rd; mains k45,000-60,000; 🍷 10am-midnight Tue-Sat, 10am-8pm

Sun) A popular place for lunch or dinner in a relaxed, open-air atmosphere, it has the most eclectic menu in Lusaka and features a rotating exhibition of purchasable modern art from local artists.

Several food stalls at the **Town Centre Market** (Chachacha Rd) serve cheap local food, but the scavenging dogs roaming the increasing piles of garbage around the market may affect your appetite. Cleaner food stalls are at the **Lusaka Inter-City Bus Station** (Dedan Kimathi Rd).

Junk-food junkies can flock to the corner of Cairo and Nkwazi Rds, where Pizza Inn, Nando's, Chicken Inn and Creamy Inn all share the same premises.

Alternatively, jump on a minibus to one of the two modern shopping centres: **Manda Hill** (Great East Rd) and **Arcades** (Great East Rd). At Manda Hill, you'll find **Debonairs** (small/large pizzas k15,000/18,000); the incredibly popular Subway; and Irish-themed pub **O'Hagans** (☎ 255555; mains k25,000-60,000; 🍷 9am-midnight), popular with South Africans. Arcades has a cluster of up-market restaurants, the most popular being the wine bar-restaurant **Rhapsody's** (☎ 256705/6; mains k50,000-80,000; 🍷 noon-11pm), which is a gathering points for nongovernmental organisation (NGO) types and well-to-do Zambians at weekends.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

Johnny's (9 Lagos Rd; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Thu, 7pm-late Fri & Sat; 🍷) An extremely popular nightclub with a tiki feel, Johnny's is the only disco in Zambia with an indoor pool, into which the occasional drunken dancer jumps. At weekends, it costs k45,000 to enter.

Brown Frog (Kabelenga Rd; 🍷 10am-8pm Mon-Thu, 10am-3am Fri & Sat) Popular with NGO workers who come to dance at weekends, this British-style pub is a bit of an institution. At weekends you'll have to shell out k5000 to enter.

Chez-Ntemba (Kafue Rd; admission k30,000; 🍷 9pm-6am Wed & Fri & Sat) This is the best nightclub in the downtown area, but only blasts loud rhumba. It warms up at midnight and rocks until dawn.

Polo Grill (2374 Nangwenya Rd; 🍷 8am-midnight) Overlooking the polo field, where you can catch a live match around 11.30am at weekends between May and August, they also occasionally get big local acts like Exile. If there's a band, admission is k25,000.

Lusaka Playhouse (cnr Church & Nasser Rds; tickets k10,000-30,000) From time to time, local perform-

ers put on a good show. Check signs outside to see what's playing.

Alliance Française (☎ 253467; Alick Nkhata Rd; tickets free-k5000) The Alliance brings in performers and films from Europe and from Francophone Africa. The programmes are advertised on posters around town and mentioned in the *Lowdown* magazine.

SHOPPING

Northmead Market (Choi Rd; 🍷 9am-5pm) The best place for kitschy souvenirs. The choice is limited, but the carvings, fabrics and pottery on offer are reasonably priced.

Kabwata Cultural Village (Burma Rd; 🍷 9am-5pm) You'll find a scruffy collection of huts and stalls at this place southeast of the city centre. Prices are cheap, however, because you can buy directly from the workers who live here. The specialities are carvings, baskets, masks, drums, jewellery and fabrics.

Ababa House (cnr Addis Ababa Dr & Twikatane Rd; 🍷 9am-5.30pm Tue-Sat) A smart boutique full of imaginative creations from Zambian and Zimbabwean artists, furniture-makers and weavers. Most items are made for Western tastes and are not the sort of things you'll see in the markets.

The swish **Manda Hill Shopping Centre** (Great East Rd) and **Arcades Shopping Centre** (Great East Rd) are easy to reach by minibus from along Cairo Rd or from the Millennium Bus Station, or by taxi (k12,000). As well as banks, bookshops, internet cafés, furniture stores, restaurants and fast-food outlets, the two shopping centres boast huge Shoprite and Spar supermarkets, respectively. Another Shoprite is located along Cairo Rd.

For the rest of Lusaka's markets, see p644.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

For details about international and domestic flights to/from Lusaka, see p675 and p677.

Bus & Minibus

To avoid some inevitable confusion and frustration, take a taxi to whichever station your bus/minibus leaves from.

DOMESTIC

From in front of the massive and chaotic **Lusaka City Market Bus Station** (Lumumba Rd) buses and minibuses leave for nearby towns such as Chirundu (k40,000) and Kapiri Mposhi

(k35,000, 2½ hours), and destinations are more or less signposted. Public transport to other places, including Siavonga (k50,000, three hours), leave from the **Soweto Market Bus Station** (Los Angeles Rd), where *nothing* is signposted, so you'll have to ask again and again for the bus/minibus you want.

To add to the confusion, minibuses to places not far south of Lusaka, such as Kafue town (k7000), via Chilanga, leave from the **City Bus Station** (off Chachacha Rd), also called the Kulima Towers Station. And minibuses heading to the north (eg the Manda Hill Shopping Centre) depart from the **Millennium Bus Station** (Malasha Rd).

All long-distance public buses (and a few private ones) use the **Lusaka Inter-City Bus Station** (Dedan Kimathi Rd), where there is a left-luggage office and inquiries counter. From this terminal, buses and minibuses go several times a day to Ndola (k40,000, four hours), Kitwe (k45,000, five hours), Livingstone (k60,000, six hours) and Chipata (k65,000, eight hours); buses operated by CR Holdings and Marks Motorways go to Mongu (k50,000, seven hours) daily. It's certainly worth double-checking the schedules and booking your tickets one or two days before you leave. The bright-yellow buses operated by Marks Motorways have buses every day to Kitwe via Ndola; one travels (at 8am) to Livingstone, and two leave (at 6am and 2pm) for Chipata. Fares are about the same as those charged by other private bus companies. Buses operated by CR Holdings, the best bus company in Zambia, also depart from here. Every day, several comfortable buses leave for Kitwe, via Ndola, as well as Livingstone; and one goes to Mongu and Chipata. Fares are more expensive than those charged by other companies, but CR Holdings is well worth it, as it runs a two-storey, 1st-class bus with reclining seats.

The RPS bus company uses a chaotic lay-by along Freedom Way, and is worth avoiding because most buses leave at about 5am (or even earlier). It operates buses to Kasama (k80,000, 14 hours) most days; to Solwezi (k70,000, eight hours) and Mpulungu (k100,000, 18 hours) three times a week; to Chipata (k65,000) and Mongu (k50,000) every day. There are also buses to Livingstone (k45,000) at 7am and 1.30pm every day.

Another option worth considering is the post bus, which carries mail (and passengers) to Kasama (k40,000) from outside the

main post office (cnr Cairo & Church Rds) at 7am on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Tickets are available in advance at the post bus counter inside the post office, between 7am and noon Monday to Friday, and between 7am and 11am on weekends.

INTERNATIONAL

All buses mentioned here (unless stated otherwise) leave from the **Lusaka Inter-City Bus Station** (Dedan Kimathi Rd).

To Botswana, Seabelo Express has buses to Gaborone (k220,000, 22 hours), via Kasane and Francistown on Saturday and Tuesday.

For South Africa, City to City has buses leaving every day for Johannesburg (k250,000, 26 hours). Chat Boeing travels to Jo'burg four days per week, but its buses are not as comfortable as those offered by City to City, though tickets are slightly cheaper. In addition, the reliable CR Holdings has buses to Johannesburg (k280,000) every day except Thursday and Friday. All buses between Lusaka and Jo'burg travel via Harare, Masvingo and Pretoria.

To Zimbabwe, take any bus going to South Africa, or a Zupco bus goes directly to Harare (US\$12, nine hours) on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday.

The bizarrely named Scandinavian Express runs buses to Dar es Salaam (k325,000, 27 hours) every day at 5pm, but services are less reliable these days (so take the train).

Hitching

Although we don't recommend hitching, many locals do it. There are several recognised places to wait for lifts: for eastern Zambia, including Chipata, wait just beyond the airport turn-off; for places to the south, go to the Chirundu-Livingstone junction 10km past Kafue town; and to the north, try at the junction north of Kapiri Mposhi.

Train

The *Zambezi Express* travelling to Livingstone (economy/standard/1st class/sleeper k18,500/23,000/32,000/39,500, 18 hours), via Choma, leaves Lusaka at 7pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Tickets are available from the reservations office inside the **train station** (btwn Cairo & Dedan Kimathi Rds) from 3pm to 5pm on the day of departure. Get there early and be prepared to hustle and bustle. Slow, 'ordinary' trains to Ndola (standard class k16,500, eight

hours), via Kapiri Mposhi, depart Monday, Wednesday and Friday at about 10pm.

For information about the Tazara train between Kapiri Mposhi and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), see p676.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

The international airport is about 20km northeast of the city centre. Taxis to and from the airport to central Lusaka cost k100,000. There's no airport bus, but the upmarket hotels send courtesy minibuses to meet international flights, so you may be able to arrange a ride into town with the minibus driver (for a negotiable fee).

Bus & Minibus

Local minibuses run along Lusaka's main roads, but there are no route numbers or destination signs, so the system is difficult to work out. See p647 for explanations about the confusing array of bus and minibus stations.

Otherwise, it is possible to flag down a minibus along a route. For instance, from the South End Roundabout, the 'Kabulonga' minibus goes along Independence Ave to Longacres Roundabout and then heads back towards the city along Los Angeles Blvd and Church Rd; the 'Chakunkula' or 'Chelston' minibuses shuttles down Kafue Rd to Kafue town; and the 'Chilanga' minibuses heads to Chilanga, via Kafue Rd. The standard fare is k1500 to k2000.

Car & Motorcycle

Several international car-rental companies have counters at the airport, such as **Avis** (Airport ☎ 271303; Lusaka ☎ 251652; Holiday Inn, cnr Church Rd & Independence Ave) – who also have an office at the Holiday Inn – and **Imperial** (☎ 271221).

Bimm Travel Agency (☎ 234372; www.bimm.co.zm; Luangwa House, Cairo Rd) offers the cheapest rates. Vehicles cost from US\$45 per day and US\$0.30 per kilometre, plus US\$10 per day for insurance, but the company inexplicably charges extra for keeping the car outside of Lusaka overnight.

Taxi

Official taxis can be identified by the numbers painted on the doors, but hundreds of unofficial taxis also cruise the streets. Taxis can be hailed along the street or found at ranks near

the main hotels and markets, and outside the Shoprite supermarket on Cairo Rd. Fares are negotiable, but, as a guide, k15,000 to k20,000 will get you from the train station to Manda Hill Shopping Centre.

THE COPPERBELT

The Copperbelt Province is the industrial heartland of Zambia and the main population centre outside of Lusaka. The world copper market slumped during the 1970s, so vast opencast mines cut back production, thereby creating high unemployment in the area. The cost of copper and cobalt went through the roof in early 2006, possibly bringing the region back on its feet. Experts say that copper mining will be done for in Kitwe in the next 10 years; however, Solwezi, to the west, is quickly becoming the hot mining spot for copper. Over the coming years, Kitwe will become the refining centre for copper mined in Solwezi. The region is rarely visited by tourists, but it does boast a few off-the-beaten-path attractions that are definitely worth the trip.

KAPIRI MPOSHI

This dismal town, about 200km north of Lusaka, is at the southern end of the Tazara railway from Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) and at the fork in the roads to Lusaka, the Copperbelt and the Northern Province. If you get stuck at Kapiri Mposhi, there are some local resthouses along the main street, but the best option is the dingy **Harvest Inn Guesthouse** (☎ 097-571580; s/d k75,000-85,000); avoid staying in Kapiri Mposhi if possible.

If you're coming from Tanzania, there's a passport check before you can get out of the station, then from outside the station there's a mad rush for buses to Lusaka and elsewhere. Thieves and pickpockets thrive in the crowds and confusion, so take great care.

Buses and minibuses from Lusaka leave regularly (see p647) and are a quicker and more convenient option than the local train from the capital. Note that the train station for the daily Lusaka-Kitwe service, which stops at Kapiri Mposhi, is 2km from New Kapiri Mposhi station, the official name of the Tazara station. Refer to p676 for details about the trains from Kapiri Mposhi to Dar es Salaam.

NDOLA

☎ 02 / pop 500,000

About 325km north of Lusaka, Ndola, a sleepy town, is the capital of the Copperbelt Province. So, it makes sense to visit the city's only real attraction: the **Copperbelt Museum** (Buteko Ave; admission US\$3; ☎ 9am-4.30pm) at the north-eastern end of the main road (Buteko Ave). It showcases the local industry and, surprisingly, includes one of the best butterfly collections in Southern Africa.

If you are looking for somewhere to stay, the **Royal Hotel** (☎ 610331; royalhotel@zamnet.zm; Vitanda St; s/d incl breakfast k100,000/185,000), though slightly dilapidated, is the best value in town. All rooms come with TV and bathroom. It's 1km north of the public bus station and 200m southwest of the train station.

The **New Savoy Hotel** (☎ 611103-9; savoy@zamnet.zm; Buteko Ave; s/d incl breakfast & bathroom k300,000/380,000) is a bit snazzier and pricier than the Royal, and features a funky terrace bar and pool. It practically faces the museum and is 600m north of the public bus station.

If you're hungry, **Michelangelo** (☎ 620325; Broadway; mains k35,000-55,000; ☎), 1km west of the museum, is an upscale guesthouse (rooms including breakfast are k450,000) resembling the Parthenon and is the best place in the region for Italian food, including 'real' coffee and wood-fired pizzas. The restaurant is closed on Sunday.

Every day, **Zambian Airways** (code Q3; ☎ 621466; www.zambianairways.com) flies between Lusaka and Ndola (US\$95 to US\$130 one way), while **South African Airlink** (code 42; ☎ 612206; www.saaairlink.co.za) has daily flights to Johannesburg. **Zambian Airways** also flies from Ndola to Lumumbashi (US\$135 one way). The airport is 3.5km south of the public bus station.

See p647 for information about buses and trains between Lusaka and Ndola. From the **public bus station** (cnr Broadway & Maina Soko Rd), three blocks south of Buteko Ave, minibuses also run every few minutes to Kitwe. The **train station** (☎ 617641; off President Ave Nth) is 700m north of the museum. **Avis** (☎ 620741) and **Voyagers/Imperial Car Rental** (☎ 620604) both have offices at the airport.

KITWE

☎ 02 / pop 700,000

About 60km northwest of Ndola is Zambia's second-largest city and the centre of the country's mining industry. Kitwe feels far more

urban than quiet Ndola and has an extensive **market** (Chisokone Ave; ☎ 7am-7pm) one block west of the main street (Independence Ave).

The **YMCA** (☎ /fax 218108; Independence Ave; d incl breakfast k90,000, with shared bathroom k60,000) is spotless and has cool blue satin blankets on every bed. It's 1.5km north of the city centre.

Lothian House (☎ /fax 222889; Chandamali Ave; s/d incl breakfast from k100,000/150,000) is a former government hostel with clean but boring rooms. The more expensive rooms contain a private bathroom. It's 1km northeast of the city centre.

Mukwa Lodge (☎ 224266; Mpezeni Ave; r incl breakfast k310,000; ☎ ☎) has 11 gorgeous rooms and a modern courtyard with an aviary full of parrots and parakeets. It also has a top-notch restaurant.

The finest restaurant in the Copperbelt hands down is **Arabian Nights** (☎ 221097; dcole@zamnet.zm; Mushita Dr; mains US\$7-12), with a constantly changing menu and a reputation for rich desserts. The fancy adjoining **Africaza Guesthouse** (d incl breakfast k300,000-350,000) has eight rooms, each with its own theme.

Refer to p647 for details about buses and trains to Kitwe.

The public bus station is situated 500m west of Independence Ave, and the **train station** (☎ 223078) is at the southern end of Independence Ave. **Voyagers/Imperial Car Rental** (☎ 227169; 17 Enos Chomba Ave) is just to the east of Independence Ave.

CHIMFUNSHI WILDLIFE ORPHANAGE

On a farm approximately 70km northwest of Chingola is this magnificent **chimpanzee sanctuary** (☎ 311293; www.chimfunshi.org.za; admission US\$15; ☎ 10am-5pm), home to 84 adult and young chimps that have been confiscated from poachers and traders in neighbouring Congo (Zaire) or other parts of Africa, and apparently the largest of its kind in the world. This is not a natural wildlife experience, but it's still fascinating to observe the chimps as they feed, play and socialise.

The sanctuary is *not* interested in mass tourism, so only small numbers of visitors are allowed. And *please* do not come if you're sick in any way; the chimps can easily die of a simple disease like the flu. Visitors can stay at the **camp site** (US\$5 per person) or **dormitory** (US\$20) at the education centre, which has self-catering facilities. Bookings are essential through accommodation manager, Sylvia Jones – email her on 2sylvia@bushmail.net.

By car, take the Solwezi Rd for about 50km northwest from Chingola, then turn right at the signposted junction and follow it for 19km. Buses between Chingola and Solwezi can drop you off at the junction, from where you'll have to hike to the sanctuary.

LAKE KASHIBA

West of Mpongwe is this sunken lake, which was created millions of years ago when surface rock collapsed into underlying limestone caves beneath it. Popular with private divers and swimmers, the lake is strangely rectangular and is more than 100m deep *on the sides* (no one is really sure how deep it is in the centre), giving the water a strange aquamarine colour. **Kafue Lodge** (vojchin@zamnet.zm; self-serving chalets per person US\$100), located along the bank of the Kafue River, arranges trips to the lake for US\$25 per person.

NORTHERN ZAMBIA

Northern Zambia starts once you've passed the 'Pedicel' – the great tongue of Congo (Zaire) territory that almost splits Zambia into two parts. Travel in the north can be arduous – distances between towns are great and many of its attractions are way off the beaten track, so it's easier to get around in a private/hired vehicle. On the flipside, the rewards of travel in this region are many. The north is a beautiful and sparsely populated area of hills, valleys, lakes, rivers, wetlands and waterfalls, where you will rarely meet another tourist.

SERENJE

☎ 05

Serenje is a lively and friendly little place and if heading up to the north you might end up refuelling here. There are two main hubs in the town: the turn-off at the junction, which has a petrol station, a couple of shops and a few basic restaurants; and the town centre, 3km north of the Great North Rd, which has a bank, a market and a couple of accommodation choices.

Sleeping

Mapontela Inn & Restaurant (☎ 382026; d & tw US\$65) The nicest option. It has cool, clean rooms with fans, TVs, large swanky bathrooms and verandas that look out onto a green courtyard

and the resident Village Inn Pub – a great place to mingle with the locals.

Siga-Siga Motel (☎ 382362; d with shared bathroom US\$8) A cheaper option, at the junction along the main road. It offers basic but clean rooms and a friendly manager who can advise on local transport.

Getting There & Away

All buses between Lusaka and the Northern Province pass through Serenje. The Tazara train also stops at the Serenje train station, 3km north of the town centre.

KASANKA NATIONAL PARK

Zambia's only privately managed **national park** (www.kasanka.com; admission US\$10; ☎ 6am-6pm) is highly recommended. It's one of the best places in Africa to see sitatungas, which are shy, swamp-loving antelope; and during the months of November and December, this 450-sq-km park is home to five *million* migratory fruit bats, which can blanket the sky for several minutes at dusk.

Activities such as **boat rides**, **bush walks** and **canoeing** trips can be arranged at both camps (see below). All profits from the park help fund projects that benefit the community and local environment.

Sleeping

The only places to stay are **Wasa Camp** (☎ 873-762067957; www.kasanka.com), which also acts as the park headquarters, and **Luwombwa Camp** (www.kasanka.com). Both offer simple self-catering rondavels for US\$30 per person, or US\$200 per person with full board, transfers (from the nearest airstrip) and several activities. Wasa is open all year, while Luwombwa is more likely to be closed in the wet season. Camping may be possible at the **Musande Camp Site** (per person US\$10), but check first.

Getting There & Away

From Lusaka, take a bus towards Mansa, or take any bus heading north and change at Serenje for a minibus to Mansa. After turning off the Great North Rd, ask the driver to drop you off at the gate to Kasanka National Park near Mulembo village – not at Kasanka village. From the gate it's a pleasant 12km hike to Wasa Camp or radio for a lift from the gate (US\$10 per vehicle).

With your own wheels, continue north along the Great North Rd from Serenje for

36km, turn left towards Mansa, and then drive 55km to the gate.

BANGWEULU WETLANDS

South and east of **Lake Bangweulu** is a vast seasonally flooded area known as the Bangweulu Wetlands (or Bangweulu Swamps). This fascinating, rarely visited part of Zambia supports vast herds of black lechwes (antelopes with long, curved antlers). About 400 species of birds have been noted, including the strange and rare shoebill storks. The ideal time for bird-watching is April to June, though July and August are still good. May to July is best to see the lechwes.

Sleeping

Shoebill Camp (www.kasanka.com; camping per person US\$10, self-catering chalets with shared bathroom per person US\$30, incl meals, transfers from the nearest airstrip & several activities per person US\$200; ☎ Apr-Nov) In the heart of the wetlands and splendidly positioned, with only birds, hippos, lechwes and the occasional passing fishermen for company. Bookings are essential, especially if you want meals and need to be taken to the camp by boat.

Getting There & Away

The only way into the wetlands is by vehicle (2WD is normally OK) and chartered planes. From the Kasanka park gate (where you can get help with directions), dirt roads lead via Lake Waka-Waka and Muwele to the Chikuni ranger post, from where you can drive to Shoebill Camp if it's dry. In the wet, you'll have to travel the last 2km by boat.

SAMFYA

Perched on the western shore of Lake Bangweulu, about 10km east of the main road between Mansa and Serenje, is Samfya. This small trading centre and lake transport hub is small enough to get to know people and large enough to have resthouses, restaurants and bars. Just outside town is the majestic, sandy **Cabana Beach**. But stay away from the water; it may look inviting but it's full of crocs.

Transport Hotel (s/d with shared bathroom US\$3/4, d with bathroom US\$10), at the port, has basic rooms. A bar and restaurant is next door.

Bangweulu Lodge (camping per person US\$5, s/d with shared bathroom US\$15/25) offers comfortable accommodation along Cabana Beach. Staff can arrange boat trips for any anglers who want to fight tigerfish. Look for the signs about 2km from town.

Samfya is regularly served by minibuses from Serenje. Buses from Lusaka may drop you into town or at the junction 10km away, from where local pick-ups shuttle passengers to and fro. Ask around about jumping on a passenger boat around the lake.

MUTINONDO WILDERNESS

This is a beautiful 10,000-hectare wilderness area and the perfect place to escape into the bush for a few days. The landscape is dominated by whaleback hills – huge, sweeping domes of granite in varying shades of black, purple, green and brown – that frame the woodland, rivers and endless valleys below.

our pick **Mutinondo Wilderness Lodge** (www.mutinondozambia.com; camping US\$15, s/d inc meals & activities from US\$90/150) is an eco-friendly paradise that makes a trip here even more worthwhile. Individually designed chalets are built into the hillside and blend in seamlessly with their natural environment. They are far enough apart from each other to give a real sense of privacy, have stunning views, and the majority are open to the elements so it feels as if you're sleeping out in the middle of the wild. There is also a great camp site here with plenty of thoughtful touches – the sinks have framed pieces of information to read while you brush your teeth, the large open-air (hot) showers have plenty of room for hanging clothes and changing, and best of all, the toilets have reading material and strategically placed viewing windows, so you can stargaze while you pee!

The friendly and energetic owners are keen to protect the environment and the lodge uses a number of alternative sources of energy such as solar panels, a wind generator and sunstoves.

Activities

Other than hiking and taking in the views you can canoe and swim in the river, ride horses and, during the mushroom-friendly rainy season, go in search of the largest edible mushroom in the world! The area also contains newly found rock paintings and Iron Age workings.

Getting There & Away

The turn-off to Mutinondo is 164km past Serenje heading north on the Great North Rd. Signposted to the right, Mutinondo is 25km down a 2WD-friendly track.

Road transfers for a maximum of five people can be arranged from Mpika (US\$100), Lusaka (US\$500) or nearby Kalonje railway station (US\$25). An airstrip has recently been built and should be in operation soon.

SHIWA NG'ANDU

The vast estate of **Shiwa Ng'andu** (www.shiwangandu.com; tours US\$20; ☎ 9-11am Mon-Sat, 10-11am Sun) was established in the 1920s by Stewart Gore-Brown, a paternalistic British aristocrat. At its heart is **Shiwa House**, a splendid English-style mansion as described in *The Africa House* by Christina Lamb (p669). Tours take about two hours and include the house, a visit to Sir Stewart's grave and the lake.

Kapishya Hot Springs is about 20km west of Shiwa House, but still on the Shiwa Ng'andu estate. The setting is marvellous – a blue-green steaming lagoon surrounded by palms and the springs are bath-water hot. If staying at Kapishya Lodge (below), then you can use the springs for free; otherwise the cost for day visitors is US\$5. From the lodge, **walking, fishing** and **canoeing** trips are also offered, as well as trips to Buffalo Lodge in North Luangwa National Park (p662).

Sleeping

Kapishya Lodge (☎ 01-229261; www.shiwasafaris.com; camping per person US\$10, self-catering chalets per person US\$60, with meals & activities per person US\$130) This is a beautiful spot. The chalets are light and spacious, with wide wooden decks complete with inbuilt fireplaces. The chalets look down over the river and the tree-, flower- and sculpture-filled garden. Bring your own food for the staff to prepare, or meals (and very good ones at that) can be provided with enough notice.

Shiwa House (bookings through Kapishya Lodge; full board from US\$350) Rooms here are all suitably attired for a grand old English manor, with fireplaces, paintings and big old roll-top baths. There's also a glorious guest sitting room looking out onto the front lawn and tasty dinners are taken in the rather grand dining room. The hosts (the grandchildren of Sir Stewart Gore-Brown) are happy to chat and to give you personal tours of the house.

Getting There and Away

To reach Shiwa House, head along the highway by bus (or car) from Mpika for about 90km towards Chisoso. Look for the signpost

STEWART GORE-BROWN

Shiwa Ng'andu was the brainchild of Stewart Gore-Brown, an eccentric Englishman, who first came to Northern Rhodesia in 1914 when working for the Anglo-Belgian border commission. He decided to look for somewhere to settle in the area, came across the lake of Shiwa Ng'andu (the 'Lake of the Royal Crocodiles' in the local language) and negotiated with the local chief to buy the land surrounding it. He then went back home, but returned to Africa after the end of WWI to build his little piece of England in Africa. What was built was an English-style manor, made entirely from materials found locally, or transported on foot by porters from the nearest town of Ndola – an eye-watering 110km and three weeks' walk away. It sprang up on a hill overlooking the lake, complete with manicured lawns and servants clad in white gloves and pillbox hats. Around the manor grew an estate, which included workers' houses, schools and a post office.

Gore-Brown became a well-known figure in Northern Rhodesia and in England. He was knighted by George VI and served as an adviser to Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia's first president. When he died in 1967 he was, unusually for a foreigner, given a full state funeral and is buried on the hill overlooking the lake at Shiwa.

to the west, from where a 13km dirt road leads to the house. Kapishya Hot Springs and the Lodge are a further 20km along this track. There is no public transport along this last section but vehicle transfers are available from the Great North Rd turn-off for US\$45 per vehicle (maximum four people). Transfers can also be arranged from Mpika (US\$200 per vehicle) or from Kasama (US\$325 per vehicle). Transfers are also available between Kapishya and Shiwa House for US\$40 per vehicle.

KASAMA

☎ 04

Kasama is the capital of the Northern Province and the cultural centre for the Bemba people. You might find yourself stuck there overnight if you're travelling between Lusaka and Mpulungu, or getting off the Tazara train before exploring the north.

Thorn Tree Guesthouse (☎ 221615; www.thorn-treesafaris.com; 612 Zambia Rd; s US\$20, d US\$30) offers very comfortable rooms (all with breakfast) in lush and colourful gardens. The restaurant is recommended. As you reach Kasama from Lusaka, turn left at the first crossroads, keep right at the forks and continue past the Heritage Centre for 1km.

Also recommended are the **Elizabeth Guesthouse** (s/d with shared bathroom US\$6/12) near the Tazara station and the **Kapongolo Resthouse** (d with bathroom & breakfast US\$12), which offers small but clean rooms.

Most days, buses and minibuses leave for Lusaka (US\$10/13 ordinary/express, 14 hours), via Serenje. From Kasama, minibuses also run to Mpulungu, via Mbala.

The Tazara train station is 5km south of the town centre.

MBALA

Mbala is perched on the edge of the Great Rift Valley. From this small town, the road north drops over 1000m in less than 40km down to Mpulungu and Lake Tanganyika. All buses/minibuses travelling between Mpulungu and Kasama stop in Mbala.

The main reason to come is the **Moto Moto Museum** (admission US\$8; ☎ 9am-4.45pm), about 3km from the town centre. This huge and fascinating collection of artefacts centres on the cultural life of the Bemba people, with sections on prehistory and ethnography, including a replica of a young girl's initiation hut, and there's also an art gallery with an excellent exhibition of musical instruments.

Grasshopper Inn (☎ 04-450589; s/d US\$11/15) is about 750m off the main street. The rooms are simple, but clean, and the bar and restaurant are appealing. **Old Soldier's Restaurant** (meals about US\$1.50), along the main street, offers good company and helpful information about local attractions.

KALAMBO FALLS

About 40km northwest of Mbala, and along the border between Zambia and Tanzania, is the 221m-high **Kalambo Falls** (admission free; ☎ 24hr). Twice as high (but nowhere near as expansive) as Victoria Falls, Kalambo is the second-highest single-drop waterfall in Africa (after Tugela Falls in South Africa). From spectacular viewpoints near the top of the falls, you can see the Kalambo River

plummeting off a steep V-shaped cliff cut into the Rift Valley escarpment into a deep valley, which then winds down towards Lake Tanganyika.

There is nowhere to stay, so you'll have to visit on a day trip from Mbala. If you don't have a vehicle, ask around the Old Soldier's Restaurant in Mbala, where someone will take you for a negotiable US\$20 to US\$30 per person return.

Alternatively, the falls are accessible from Mpulungu. It takes about two hours on foot from Mpulungu to Nyamba village, from where you can walk to the falls (two to three hours one way). A local guide (about US\$2) is essential and can be arranged in Nyamba. This part of Zambia is always hot, so start early and be prepared.

A daily taxi boat serves villages along the lakeshore east of Mpulungu, but just getting to Nyamba village can take all day. However, it's possible to hire a private boat from Mpulungu harbour, which will cost around US\$40 a day including fuel. The lodges around Mpulungu (see below) also arrange trips to the falls but they will charge about double this.

MPULUNGU

☎ 04

Zambia's only international port is the terminal for the ferry across Lake Tanganyika to Tanzania. Mpulungu is also a lively crossroads between Eastern, Central and Southern Africa. Although it's always very hot, don't be tempted to swim in the lake in this area because there are a few crocs.

Sleeping

Tanganyika Lodge (☎ 455130; camping per person US\$5, chalets with shared bathroom per person US\$12-15) In a superb spot about 6km west along the lake. A bar and restaurant are attached, and staff can help arrange fishing boats to Kalambo Falls. Look for the signpost along the main road about 5km before town. Otherwise, jump in any taxi boat going towards Kasakalbwé village from near the Mpulungu market.

Isanga Bay Lodge (☎ 096-646991/992; www.isangabay.com; chalets per person from US\$40) A beautiful Robinson Crusoe-esque lodge, perfect for a few days of snorkelling, water-skiing, beach volleyball or just plain lazing. Road access is possible with a 4WD and boat transfers from Mpulungu are possible for \$80 per round trip.

Getting There & Away

Most buses/minibuses tie in with the Lake Tanganyika ferry. To/from Lusaka, RPS buses (US\$20, 18 hours) travel three times a week via Kasama and Mbala. Alternatively, take the Tazara train to Kasama, from where minibuses leave when bursting. Minibuses also depart from near the BP petrol station in Mpulungu for Mbala. See p676 for information on getting the ferry to Tanzania.

NSUMBU (Sumbu) NATIONAL PARK

This frequently overlooked **park** (admission US\$10; ☎ 6am-6pm) covers a beautiful area of hilly grassland and escarpment, bisected by rivers and wetland zones, on the southern shore of Lake Tanganyika. Like other remote parks in Zambia, Nsumbu was virtually abandoned in the 1980s and wildlife was decimated by poaching. Conditions have improved, and herds of elephants and buffaloes are now seen regularly and the number of leopards and lions, the park's main predators, is increasing. Other animals include bushbucks, waterbucks and puku.

Most visitors come for the seriously good **fishing**, especially to catch large and feisty Goliath tigerfish. Bring your own fishing gear, though you can charter a boat through the lodges listed here.

Sleeping

Ndole Bay Lodge (☎ 02-711150; ndolebay@coppernet.zm; camping per person US\$15, 4-bed chalets with full board per person from US\$125) Spectacularly located on the lakeshore just outside the northwestern boundary of the park. This is probably the best place to arrange activities, including boat hire for wildlife viewing or angling, bird walks (free for guests), wildlife drives and various water sports. Campers can also eat at the lodge.

Kasaba Bay Lodge (☎ book via Kachelo Travel 01-263973; ind all meals per person US\$220) This place is at the northern tip and has an airstrip. It caters mainly for anglers, so if you don't like fishing you'll have nothing to talk about to anyone else staying here.

Getting There & Away

Each lodge will arrange transfers for guests from the airstrip at Kasaba Bay, or across the lake from Mpulungu. The only way to fly to Kasaba Bay is by charter. **Proflight Commuter Services** (☎ 01-271035; www.proflight-zambia.com) arranges flights from Mfuwe to Kasaba for up to five people for US\$1165 return. Hardy

overlanders can drive, but come from the southwest, via Mporokoso, where the roads are not so treacherous. If travelling independently, charter a boat from Mpulungu.

EASTERN ZAMBIA

This section covers the area to the east of Lusaka, including the border towns of Chirundu and Chipata, and the Lower Zambezi and South Luangwa National Parks. Eastern Zambia contains some of the country's key attractions and has decent transport options. There are several buses a day up to Chipata and through to Malawi and frequent flights between Lusaka and South Luangwa National Park/Lower Zambezi National Park.

CHIRUNDU

☎ 01

This border town is on the main road between Lusaka and Harare. The only reason to stay here is if you're going on to Zimbabwe or planning to explore the Lower Zambezi National Park. The town isn't up to much – there are a few shops and bars, as well as a bank and a number of moneychangers, but that's about it. What's more, the roads are permanently clogged with snaking queues of heavy-duty trucks, all heading for or coming from the Zimbabwe border.

There is no petrol station in town. Gwabi Lodge has a couple of fuel pumps but there is a limited supply, so it's safer to stock up

in Lusaka or Kafue. If all else fails, there are always a few people selling black-market fuel in the street.

Sleeping

Gwabi Lodge (☎ 01-515062; camping per person US\$8, chalets with bathroom incl breakfast per person from US\$60; ☎) Located 11km from Chirundu towards the Lower Zambezi National Park. Head north through the truck park just before the border, then along the dirt road. Unless you've got your own wheels, you'll have to hitch or walk. The lodge is spacious with a large grassy and well-equipped camping ground, chalets, a swimming pool and a terrace with good views over the river. Boat rides are also available.

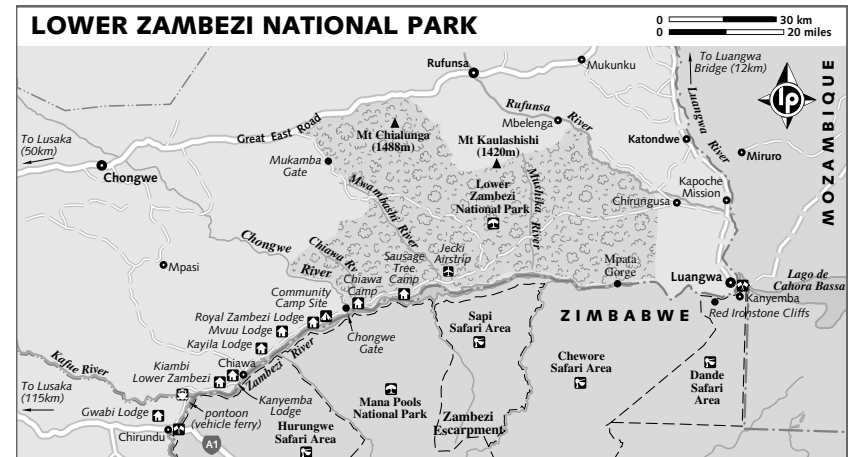
Nyambadwe Motel (d with shared bathroom US\$12, d US\$15) Right on the border in Chirundu, this motel is noisy and unappealing, but certainly convenient. The dearer rooms with a bathroom are worth paying extra for.

Getting There & Away

Minibuses leave regularly for Chirundu from Lusaka (US\$3, 3½ hours). To reach Siavonga (on Lake Kariba) from Chirundu, catch a minibus towards Lusaka, get off at the obvious turn-off to Siavonga and wait for something else to come along. See p677 for more on getting to Zimbabwe from Chirundu.

LOWER ZAMBEZI NATIONAL PARK

Zambia's newest **national park** (admission US\$20; ☎ 6am-6pm) covers 4092 sq km along the north-western bank of the Zambezi River opposite



the Mana Pools National Park in Zimbabwe. Overlooked for many years, this is now one of Zambia's premier parks, with a beautiful flood plain alongside the river, dotted with acacias and other large trees, and flanked by a steep escarpment on the northern side, covered with thick miombo woodland.

The best wildlife viewing is on the flood plain and along the river itself, so **boat rides** are a major feature of all camps and lodges. Seeing groups of elephants swim across the river could be the highlight of your trip. The best time to visit is March to December.

The main entrance is at **Chongwe Gate** along the southwestern boundary, though there are gates along the northern and eastern boundaries for hardy travellers.

Sleeping

We can only mention a few of the numerous places to stay in and outside of the park. The rates listed here are per person during the high season (April to October) staying in twins/doubles unless mentioned otherwise; single supplements are usually 30% extra. (The rates for camping are also per person.) Also, add on transfers – eg about US\$100 per person return by road from Lusaka. None of the lodges described in this section are fenced and all offer wildlife-viewing activities by boat or by safari vehicle.

Community Camp site (camping US\$5; ☑ all year) A basic place a few kilometres before Chongwe Gate. It's mainly set up for travellers with their own vehicles. Run by local people, the modest profits are put back into the community.

Kiambi Lower Zambezi (☎ 097-876003; in South Africa 031-5639774; www.kiambi.co.za; camping US\$12, per person sharing, full board US\$98, tw full board per person US\$98; ☑ Mar–mid-Jan; 📍) Follow the signs from the Chirundu border for 23km. Offers tented rooms on raised wooden platforms overlooking the river. It's a very sociable place with a lively bar, and guests congregate around the fire pit at night to swap stories of their safari adventures. Kiambi is extremely popular with South African and Zimbabwean anglers (tigerfish) because of the cheap camping rates. There's a self-catering kitchen for campers and if you have brought your own food, there's even a cook to prepare it for you.

Mvuul Lodge (www.mvuulodge.com; ☎ in South Africa 27-16-9871837; safari tents d & tw US\$100) Has comfortable tented rooms overlooking the Zambezi River, with balconies and sandy outdoor

fireplaces that are lit outside your tent every night. The food is good and the hosts super friendly. There are plans to upgrade it into a luxury lodge over the next couple of years, however.

our pick Kanyemba Lodge (☎ 097-755720, 096-784516; www.kanyemba.com; s/d incl 2 activities & all meals US\$220; 📍) This lodge has phenomenal river views and proximity to big wildlife, as well as authentic, homemade Italian food and a cappuccino machine that's ready to roll 24 hours a day. Though the dining area makes you feel like you're on the set of *Survivor*, Kanyemba offers smart chalets facing a river full of hippos and elephants. Make sure you take a guided canoeing safari or try your luck at tigerfishing. You're sure to see more wildlife here than in many of the big parks. If you don't have your own wheels, take a bus to Chirundu and someone will collect you there. Transfers from Lusaka cost US\$100.

our pick Kayila Lodge (☎ Bookings through Safaris Par Excellence 332 0606; www.safpar.com; full board US\$250; ☑ all year; 📍) A beautiful lodge with chalets smack bang on the river. The chalets have mosquito screen walls so you have a fantastic feeling of space all around you – at night it's as if you're sleeping under the stars – but there are curtains to draw if you feel you need more privacy. The ordinary chalets are nice enough but the best is the tree-house suite – a chalet accessed by ladder, high up in a sausage tree, with a massive shower room constructed around its base.

The dining and bar area also has one of the funkiet toilets around, built inside the hollow of a baobab tree – great fun, and you'll also have the odd bat for company.

Sausage Tree Camp (☎ 01-212597; www.sausagetree.com; incl meals & activities US\$465; ☑ May–mid-Nov) Further downstream from Chiawa Camp. Unlike the usual green canvas and thatch, the six tented chalets come cool white Bedouin-style, each in its own private clearing, with minimal furniture and open-air bathrooms. You can dine with your hosts and other guests, or if you need privacy, your own table, bar and fire can be set up in front of your tent.

Chiawa Camp (☎ 01-261588; www.chiawa.com; incl meals & activities US\$500; ☑ Apr–Oct) A luxurious lodge inside the park at the junction of the Chiawa and Zambezi Rivers. The large walk-in tents feature pine-clad private bathrooms, while the food is always top quality. The bar-lounge has an upstairs deck with majestic

views over the river and there's a viewing platform high up in the trees. The food is top quality and for the romantics among you, candlelit private tables can be set up in the bush, on a boat, or, when the full moon is out, on a sand bar in the middle of the river.

Getting There & Away

There's no public transport to Chongwe Gate, nor anything to the eastern and northern boundaries, and hitching is very difficult. Most people visit the park on an organised tour, and/or stay at a lodge that offers wildlife drives and boat rides as part of the deal.

For budget travellers, the Chachacha Backpackers (p644) operates popular five-day safaris from Lusaka. These are great value: US\$495 per person includes transport from Lusaka, river cruises, canoe trips, bush walks, wildlife drives and fishing trips.

Getting Around

Drivers can reach the park independently and use the track from Chongwe Gate that runs alongside the Zambezi, but if you're going anywhere east of Jecki Airstrip you'll need a 4WD vehicle. There are several loops inside the park for wildlife viewing, but these change from year to year, so pick up a guide at any of the gates.

One adventurous way to visit the park is by canoe along the Zambezi. Most of the lodges listed previously offer two- or three-day **canoe trips**, with stops at seasonal camps along the river or makeshift camps on mid-stream islands.

LUANGWA BRIDGE

The Great East Rd crosses the Luangwa River on a large suspension bridge about halfway between Lusaka and Chipata. The nearby settlement of Luangwa Bridge is about 80km north of Luangwa village, which is near the eastern end of the Lower Zambezi National Park, and far from the South and North Luangwa National Parks. It serves as an ideal place to break up a journey. There's no petrol station but there's a lively little market, which seems to specialise in dried fish.

Luangwa Bridge Camp (☎ 873-763 981 315; bridge camp@amosconnect.com; camping per person US\$5, s/d chalets with shared bathroom US\$15/25; 📍) is on the western side of the river, about 3km south of the main road. This is an excellent place to base yourself for a couple of days of rest and relaxation. It

features clean ablution blocks, cooking facilities and shady lawns, as well as a bar, restaurant and plunge pool. The chalets are built on a hill with river views, while the camp site is shady and clean. Short and long hikes and canoe trips can be arranged at the camp.

Get off any bus between Lusaka and Chipata at the place called 'Luangwa station', from where it's a 3km walk to the camp.

CHIPATA

☎ 062

Chipata is the primary town near the Zambian side of the border with Malawi, and a base from which to venture into the South Luangwa National Park. Many travellers rush through, but it's worth staying overnight, if only to recover from the arduous bus trip from Lusaka. Chipata is lively and friendly, and boasts a large **market** (500m north of the town centre), as well as several bars, cafés, petrol stations and banks. There's an internet café on Pererenyatwa Rd opposite the Finance Bank.

Sleeping

Chachacha Backpackers (☎ 01-222257, 097-805483; www.chachachabackpackers.com; camping US\$5, dm/d US\$10/25) This place has tidy dorms, space for camping in the small front garden, a backpackers' kitchen and a bar-lounge. It's the only place in town with dorms but unfortunately it's not the friendliest of places, and the staff make you feel as if you're in their way. It does run excellent budget safaris though, and five days in South Luangwa National Park costs US\$495.

Dean's Hill View Lodge (☎ 221673; deanmitch@zamtel.zm; camping US\$5, tw US\$20) Take the first right after the welcome arch, just before the petrol station. It's a great little place run by an affable British chap who has lived in the area for several years. It features twin rooms and camping, a nice big sloping garden, spacious and spotless shared ablutions and grand views over Chipata and the hills. Good, simple meals can be provided with prior notice. An internet café is planned.

Kapata Resthouse (☎ 222498; Umodzi Hwy; d with shared bathroom US\$6) About 150m north of the bus station and 1km north of the town centre. It's cheap, safe and fairly clean, and food is available.

Mama Rula (mamarula@iwayafrica.com; camping US\$8; B&B s/d US\$80/100) Located 4km out of Chipata

CROSSING THE BORDER

From Chipata regular minibuses and shared taxis go to the Malawi border crossing, 30km east of the town (US\$2). Once you've passed through Zambian customs, it's a few minutes' walk to the Malawian entry post. Visas are free for most nationalities. From the border post you can catch a shared taxi to Mchinji (US\$1.50) before getting a minibus all the way to Lilongwe. See p676 for more information about crossing the border to into Malawi.

along the Mfuwe Rd. Huge grassy garden camp site with a large bar that's very popular with the overland crowd. Next door is the bed and breakfast, which has a swimming pool, a good restaurant, an internet café, cosy rooms and a resident parrot.

Eating

Food Garden Restaurant (Umodzi Hwy; meals about US\$3) About 100m east of the traffic lights next to the Konica Photo Studio, bang on the main road. It serves decent Zambian food and there's a good area outside to watch the world go by. The only downside is there's no beer.

Getting There & Away

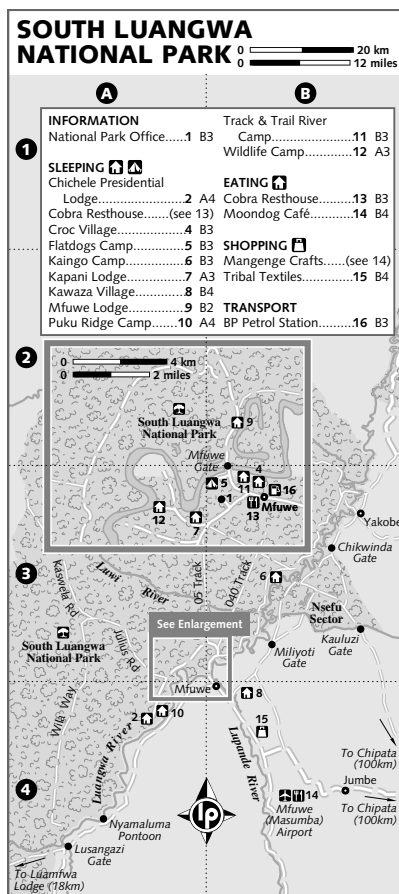
Several bus companies in Lusaka offer services to Chipata – refer to p647 for details. See below for details about travelling between Chipata and South Luangwa National Park.

SOUTH LUANGWA NATIONAL PARK

☎ 062

For scenery, variety of animals, accessibility and choice of accommodation, **South Luangwa** (admission per person/vehicle US\$25/15; ⏰ 6am–6pm) is the best park in Zambia and one of the most majestic in Africa. Impalas, puku and buffaloes wander on the wide-open plains; leopards, of which there are many in the park, hunt in the dense woodlands; herds of elephants wade through the marshes; and hippos munch serenely on nile cabbage in the Luangwa River. The bird life is also tremendous: about 400 species have been recorded. But the insect life is also plentiful, so take precautions against malarial mosquitoes and tsetse flies.

The wide Luangwa River is the lifeblood of the park. It flows all year, but gets very shallow in the dry season (May to October).



At this time, the vast sandbanks are exposed, but usually covered by groups of hippos and/or crocs basking in the sun. Steep exposed banks mean animals often have to drink at the park's numerous oxbow lagoons, formed as the river continually changes its course.

The focal point is Mfuwe, a village with shops, as well as a petrol station and market. Around 1.8km further along is **Mfuwe Gate**, the main entrance to the park, where a bridge crosses Luangwa River and several cheaper lodges/camps and camp sites are set up. This part of the park can get quite busy with vehicles in the high season, but only because it's the best wildlife-viewing area. But in Zambia everything is relative: compared to the rush-hour-rally-style safaris in South

Africa's Kruger National Park, for example, it's positively peaceful around Mfuwe. (Note that lots of wild animals in this area makes walking around at night very dangerous.)

Although South Luangwa is hard to visit on the cheap, there are more options for the budget-conscious here than at most other parks in Zambia. But remember: one night's budget accommodation, park fees, meals and a wildlife drive will give you little change from US\$100. If this is out of your range, it's probably not worth coming.

Most of the park is inaccessible between November and April (especially February and March), so many lodges close at this time.

Activities

Unlike other parks in Zambia, boat trips are not available in South Luangwa, but all lodges/camps run excellent day or night **wildlife drives** (all year) and **walking safaris** (June to November). These activities are included in the rates charged by the upmarket places, while the cheaper lodges/camps can organise things with little notice. A two-hour morning or evening wildlife drive normally costs around US\$35, while a night drive (US\$40) offers the chance to spot an elusive leopard.

Sleeping

We can only list a few of the numerous camp sites and lodges/camps in and around the park. Most lodges/camps in South Luangwa are along the banks of the river or at

an oxbow lagoon. Several lodges/camps also have smaller 'bush camps' deep in the park, where they operate walks or drives away from the busier areas. Despite the rustic title, most 'bush camps' are very comfortable, with large tents, private bathrooms and excellent food. Joining a walking safari for a few days from one bush camp to the next is a popular and wonderful way to really experience the sights, sounds and smells of the bush.

Several budget places are just outside the park boundary, so you don't pay admission fees until you actually enter the park. Note that some lodges/camps open only in the high season (April to November), but those in and around Mfuwe are open all year. Places that open in the low (or 'green') season offer substantial discounts – often up to 40%. However, at this time of year, the grass is high, walking safaris are for the most part unavailable and many tracks are impassable, so while it's cheaper you mightn't actually see that much wildlife.

The rates listed here are per person during the high season for double/twin rooms; single supplements usually cost 30% more. The camping rates are also per person. None of the lodges or camps described here are fenced.

BUDGET & MIDRANGE

All places mentioned here are outside the park and open all year.

Cobra Resthouse (s/d with shared bathroom US\$5/7) This is particularly useful if you arrive after

NORMAN CARR & SOUTH LUANGWA

The history of South Luangwa National Park is inextricably linked with the story of Norman Carr, a leading wildlife figure whose influence and contribution to conservation has been felt throughout Africa.

One year after the North and South Luangwa Game Reserves were created in 1938 to protect and control wildlife populations, Carr became a ranger there. With the full backing of the area's traditional leader, Carr created Chief Nsefu's Private Game Reserve in 1950 and opened it to the public (until this time reserves had been for animals only). All visitor fees were paid directly to the chief, thus benefiting the wildlife and the local community.

Carr was years ahead of his time in other fields too: he built Nsefu Camp, the first tourist camp in Zambia, and developed walking safaris. In the following decades, other game reserves were created, more tourists came to Luangwa parks and more camps were built along the river.

In 1972 Nsefu and several game reserves were combined to form the South Luangwa National Park, but poaching of elephants and rhinos soon became an increasing problem. So, in 1980 Carr and several others formed the Save the Rhino Trust, which helped the government parks department to deter poachers.

In 1986 Carr opened yet another camp, Kapani Lodge, and continued operating safaris from this base. He retired from 'active service' in the early 1990s, and died in 1997, aged 84.

dark or need to catch a crack-of-dawn mini-bus out. For this price, however, amenities are fairly basic.

our pick Flatdogs Camp (☎ 45068; www.flatdogscamp.com; camping US\$5, self-catering chalets per person US\$35; ☑ ☒) Has excellent facilities and is a great place to base yourself for a few days. The chalets are surprisingly luxurious, with large, mosaic-tiled bathrooms and self-catering facilities. The camping pitches in the riverside camp site all have barbecues, washstands and wastebins and, even better, there are several platforms high up in the trees, where the dextrous among you can pitch your tent. They're perfect for spying on the wildlife below and a night sleeping among the branches and the swinging monkeys should not be missed. There's also an internet café, a pool, a bar and a restaurant with some of the best food in the valley. Wildlife drives and walking safaris can be organised at affordable rates.

Croc Village (☎ 246074; mfucroc@super-hub.com; camping US\$5, chalets US\$35; ☑ ☒) It's an appealing location along the river, with a pool and bar-restaurant. There are plenty of hammocks and shaded chill-out spots and the chalets, made of grass and bamboo with sunken bathrooms, are great value. Wildlife drives and walking safaris can be arranged, and in the dry season you can play beach volleyball on the river bed.

Wildlife Camp (☎ www.wildlifecamp-zambia.com; camping US\$7.50, safari tents US\$25; chalets per person US\$30; ☑ ☒) A spacious, secluded place, about 5km west of Mfuwe village. The chalets sleep up to three people and there's a shared kitchen, but they don't have great views and could do with a little maintenance. The safari tents and camp site are much better situated, with their own bar and pool and perfect sundowner views.

Kawaza Village (www.kawazavillage.co.uk; full board US\$70; day visits US\$20) This enterprise is run by the local Kunda people and gives tourists the opportunity to visit a real rural Zambian village while helping the local community. The village has four rondavel huts (each sleeps two) reserved for visitors and there are open-air reed showers and long-drop toilets. Visitors are encouraged to take part in all aspects of village life, such as learning how to cook *nshima* and other traditional food, attending local church services, visiting local schools and perhaps participating in a lesson. Other activities include visits to the local healer or to the chief's palace, and bushwalking. Tra-

ditional meals are eaten in the *chitenge* – a thatched, open-sided shelter with traditional wooden chairs and reed mats; and evenings are filled with dancing, drumming, and storytelling around the fire. Many visitors describe a visit here as the highlight of their trip to South Luangwa.

TOP END

South of Mfuwe Gate

Track & Trail River Camp (☎ 246020; www.trackandtrailrivercamp.com; full board US\$250; ☑ ☒) About 400m east of Mfuwe Gate. Split-level chalets sleep up to four people and there's a shady camp site. The food here is excellent and they cater to vegetarians, as well as to gluten-free and diabetes diets. The bar and restaurant are built around a lime tree, so unsurprisingly, lime cocktails is its speciality! There's also a 'wellness area' where you can indulge in an aromatherapy massage and other such treats. Camping is also available (US\$10).

Luamfwa Lodge (☎ 01-261683/732; www.luamfwacom; full board US\$335; ☑ May-Dec; ☒) In the far south of the park, about 65km southwest of Mfuwe village. It has a pool and bar-restaurant, and offers wildlife drives and walks. Special weekend packages are often advertised in the *Lowdown*. The price includes transfers from Mfuwe airport.

Kapani Lodge (☎ 45015; www.normancarrsafaris.com; cottages per person full board US\$350; ☑ all year) About 4km southwest of Mfuwe Gate. The most famous of the top-end lodges is this classic Luangwa camp built by Norman Carr (see the boxed text, p659) with thatched cottages overlooking a lagoon frequented by weed-chewing hippos. Communal areas include a large wooden deck with inbuilt fireplace that hangs over the river and a cosy sitting area for those chilly evenings. The staff here are incredibly friendly and the lodge runs highly rated walking safaris.

our pick Puku Ridge Camp (☎ 01-271366; www.starofafrica.com; full board US\$440; ☑ ☒) Drop-dead luxurious. The voluminous safari tents, of which there are only six, are a travel agent's dream – they have massive mahogany beds, separate seating areas, sunken corner baths, indoor and outdoor showers (complete with puku skull towel rails) and expansive balconies. There's a small, sumptuous open lounge and bar area with a curved infinity pool below and a deck for wildlife watching. And the views are incredible – the plains stretch on for miles and

there's so much wildlife on display that you hardly need to go on a safari drive. You can just have a relaxing drink in the pool while watching the elephants prance around in front of you. It doesn't get better than that.

Chichele Presidential Lodge (☎ 01-271366; www.starofafrica.com; full board US\$500) In the south of the park, near Puku Ridge. This used to belong to Kenneth Kaunda back in the day, and, with its white-brick chalets and green-tiled roof, provides a breath of fresh air if you're sick of all the canvas and thatch. It has solid hotel-like rooms decked out in white and mahogany with four-poster beds and large roll-top baths. The large lounge with its wraparound veranda, grand piano, old gramophone and fireplace gives the place the feel of a colonial hunting lodge.

North of Mfuwe Gate

North of the main gate are several other options; each is inside the park. Again, rates are per person and inclusive of meals and activities – but not transfers.

Mfuwe Lodge (☎ 254041; www.mfuwelodge.com; r US\$295; ☑ all year; ☒) This lodge was rebuilt in 1998 and the results are impressive: there's a central restaurant and bar area with a gigantic thatched roof and open sides, leading out onto a deck with swimming pool and splendid views over a lagoon. The hotel-standard rooms in the cottages (each cater for two or three people) have private verandas and fab bathrooms with floor-to-ceiling windows and baths with views of the river.

Kaingo Camp (☎ 45064; www.kaingo.com; r US\$325; ☑ mid-May–Oct) On the western bank of the Luangwa, this is small, exclusive, relaxed and friendly, with five delightful cottages surrounded by bush overlooking the river. Skilled guides operate walks and wildlife drives, and there's also a bush camp that can be reached on a walking safari from the main camp.

Eating

All the lodges/camps and camping grounds provide meals – from simple snacks to haute cuisine at the top-end lodges/camps. There are also a couple of basic eateries in Mfuwe village.

Cobra Resthouse (meals US\$2.50-4) Offers cheap Zambian stews, burgers and breakfasts.

Moondog Café (meals US\$6-12) Next to the airport, Moondog has a small menu of standard café food such as burgers, samosas and fish

cakes but the small portions are not particularly good value. Still, it has a nice outdoor seating area and a book corner selling a variety of maps and volumes on wildlife, including gems such as *Frogs and Frogging*.

Shopping

Most of the lodges/camps have souvenir shops selling the usual array of carvings. Other locally made mementos include ceramics and elephant-dung paper (mostly made in Malawi, however). Splendidly decorative fabrics, jewellery and carvings are available from next to the Moondog Café.

Tribal Textiles (www.africantribalcrafts.com; ☎ 7am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 7am-3pm Sat & Sun) Along the road between Mfuwe village and the airport is a large enterprise that employs a team of local artists to produce, among other things, wall hangings, bed linens and sarongs, much of which is sold abroad. Short (free) tours around the factory are good fun.

Mangenge Crafts, next to the Moondog Café, sells decorative fabrics, jewellery, carvings and a surprising variety of chilli-sauce products.

Getting There & Away

Most people reach South Luangwa by air. Mfuwe (Masumba) airport is about 20km southeast of Mfuwe Gate and served by chartered flights from Lusaka and, occasionally, from Lilongwe (Malawi). **Zambian Airways** (code Q3; ☎ 01-256586/7, 01-271142) offers regular flights between Lusaka and Mfuwe every day except Monday, for US\$200 one way. Most lodges will meet clients who have made reservations. The airfare may seem steep (it is), but it beats the hell out of two days of torture on buses and minibuses from Lusaka which may cost you about US\$60 anyway (with bus fares, food and accommodation). Some travellers who endured the torturous trip from Lusaka bit the bullet, found the credit card and bought a flight out of Mfuwe back to Lusaka.

To get to Mfuwe Gate from Chipata and the surrounding camps you can use a 2WD but you're better off in a 4WD vehicle. In the dry season the dirt road is usually poor and the drive takes about three hours. In the wet season, however, the drive can take all day (or be impassable), so seek advice before setting off. Hitching may be possible, but make sure your lift goes all the way to Mfuwe village or the gate.

Minibuses leave when *really* full one or two times a day between Chipata and Mfuwe village. Fares are squarely priced for foreigners (about US\$8). From Mfuwe village, it's easy to walk (about 1km) to Flatdogs and Croc Village, or hitch to the Wildlife Camp – but, we repeat, do *not* walk at night. Otherwise, offer some extra kwacha to the minibus driver to take you to one of these three camp sites or to Mfuwe Gate.

Some travellers have hitched all the way from Chipata – but start at dawn. The junction by the Chipata Motel is the best place to wait for a lift; in Mfuwe, wait outside the BP petrol station.

If you're in a group, consider chartering your own minibus from Chipata for a negotiable US\$70 to US\$80 one way. Or just take the easy way out and fly.

NORTH LUANGWA NATIONAL PARK

This **park** (admission US\$20, vehicle US\$15; ☞ 6am–6pm) is large, wild and spectacular, but nowhere *near* as developed or set up for tourism as its southern counterpart. The big draw of North Luangwa is its walking safaris, where you can get up close to the wildlife in a truly remote wilderness.

Natungwe Community Camp Site (camping US\$5) is run by the Mukungule Community and is set in woodland by the northern park entrance gate. The camp sites are very pleasant with spotless hot showers, toilets and barbecue spots (you need to be fully self-sufficient) and you can sometimes arrange to visit one of the villages in the area.

Buffalo Camp (☎ 01-229261; www.shiwasafaris.com; self-catering chalets per person US\$90, chalets incl meals & activities per person US\$220, game drives US\$25, game walks US\$10; ☞ May–Oct) is a quiet, secluded place run by knowledgeable and helpful staff. Book ahead for the 'self-catering rates', because these are normally only available when there's a paucity of big-spending guests on the all-inclusive package. Transfers for those without vehicles are possible from Kapishya Lodge (see p652) or Mpika for US\$300 per vehicle (maximum four people).

Mwaleshi Camp (☎ 061-240561; www.remotefaris.com; incl meals & activities per person US\$300; ☞ Jun–Oct) is relaxed and luxurious. Most guests on organised tours fly in and out on chartered planes.

Despite the proximity of the two parks, road access between North and South Luangwa is not easy. It is possible to reach the main gate

to North Luangwa from the highway, about 65km north of Mpika. But this is no doddle – the track is rough and rarely used, and plunges steeply down the Muchinga Escarpment into the Luangwa Valley. High clearance in a 4WD is essential.

SOUTHERN ZAMBIA

This section covers the area between Livingstone and Kafue National Park. See the Victoria Falls chapter (p618) for detailed information about Livingstone, the Zambezi waterfront and the magnificent falls.

Anyone who's into birding will tell you that Southern Zambia is where it's at. The rare Chaplin's barbet is endemic to the area, along with several other colourful and rare birds. The area is also home to the remote Lochinvar National Park, a World Heritage Wetland site, as well as the massive Lake Kariba, with Siavonga's sandy beaches and Chinkanka Island (smack in the middle of the lake) providing fascinating views of the night sky and a glimpse of the 60 elephants that make their way between the islands.

CHOMA

☎ 03

This busy market town 188km northeast of Livingstone is the capital of the Southern Province. Most visitors zip through on their way to Lusaka or Livingstone, but Choma is a pleasant stopover and staging post for trips to Lake Kariba and Kafue National Park.

For anyone interested in regional history, the excellent **Choma Museum** (admission free; ☞ 9am–4pm) is well worth a visit. Based in a former school dating from the 1920s (one of the oldest preserved colonial buildings in Zambia), the exhibits concentrate on the Tonga people, most of whom were forcibly displaced when the Kariba Dam was built. It also houses contemporary art exhibitions and a craft shop. The museum is about 1.5km east of the town centre along the road to Lusaka.

Gwembe Safari Lodge (☎ 220169; www.gwembesafaris.com; camping per person k20,000, s/d incl breakfast with shared bathroom k160,000/240,000) is signposted 1km southwest of town and is a further 2km north off the tar road. The camping ground is grassy and shady, and the shared bathrooms are spotless. Breakfast costs an extra k30,000 and dinner k58,000.

Masuku Lodge (☎ 220225; www.masukulodgezambia.com; incl all meals per person US\$95) is signposted 3km northeast of town and is a further 20km northwest of the tar road. Nestled in the Nkanga River Conservation Area, a bird's paradise (the lesser-spotted Chaplin's barbet is endemic to this area), this comfortable lodge has six spacious rondavels in an attractive, remote area.

All daily buses and trains between Livingstone and Lusaka stop at Choma.

LAKE KARIBA

The Zambian side of Lake Kariba is not *nearly* as developed or as popular as the southern and eastern shores in Zimbabwe. The Zambian side is more relaxed and authentic, but a bit rough around the edges.

Refer to p703 for information about this huge artificial lake.

Chikanka Island

This beautiful private island, 8km from Sinazongwe, has five excellent self-catering chalets (d k270,000), and **camping** (per person US\$10) on a separate site. Meals are hard to arrange, so bring your own food and the staff in the kitchen will cook it for you. **Fishing boats** can be hired for trips around the lake. Return-trip boat transfers are from Sinazongwe (k200,000 per person). Reservations are essential and can be made through Gwembe Safari Lodge (see opposite).

Siavonga

☎ 01

Siavonga is the main town and resort along the Zambian side of Lake Kariba. Just a few kilometres from the massive Kariba Dam, Siavonga is a quiet and low-key village in contrast to Kariba town (in Zimbabwe) across the lake.

The tiny bank at the end of the laneway east of the petrol station changes money, and

so do the moneychangers at the turn-off to Siavonga along the road between Lusaka and the border.

Tours (free, but donations welcome) of Kariba Dam are run by the dam authorities. These tours can be arranged through your hotel/lodge. If you visit the dam, make sure you tell the Zambian immigration officers if you're not going on to Zimbabwe.

Leisure Bay Lodge also rents out canoes (k25,000 per person per hour) and **Vundu Adventure** (☎ 097 485208), also based there, runs one- to six-day camping canoe tours of the lake and river (US\$75 to US\$530 per person).

SLEEPING & EATING

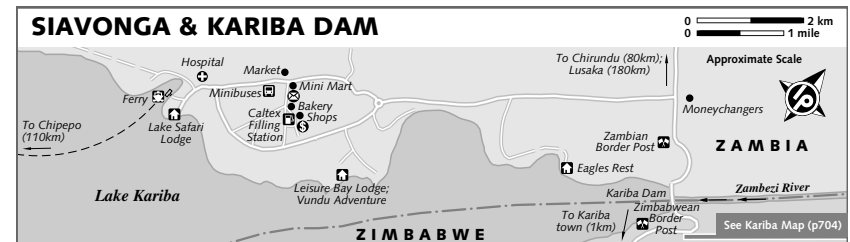
Lake Safari Lodge (☎ 511148; info@lake-safari.com; camping k18,000, s/d incl breakfast 200,000/270,000; ☞ ☎) Slightly upscale and with a lot of boating options. Nicely situated on the shore, it's the longest-standing lodge in town and has more of a resort feel. Inquire about activities such as fishing and sundowner cruises.

Eagles Rest (☎ 511168; www.eaglesrestresort.com; camping per person k35,000, chalets k150,000; ☞ ☎) Popular with families. Twelve chalets overlook the lake, with meals available in the restaurant. The camp site is secluded and shady. There's a nice sandy beach; just don't go in the lake, as the crocs would love to eat you.

Leisure Bay Lodge (☎ /fax 511136; s/d incl breakfast k180,000/250,000; ☞ ☎) Faces a beach along the lakeshore. By far the best value in Siavonga, though the food is nothing to write home about. Guests can pre-order meals (k35,000). Note that the beach is sometimes commandeered by resident hippos!

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Minibuses from Lusaka (k30,000, three hours) leave when bursting to capacity for Siavonga and the nearby border. From the makeshift bus stop in Siavonga, you can easily walk to Leisure Bay Lodge or Lake Safari Lodge. There

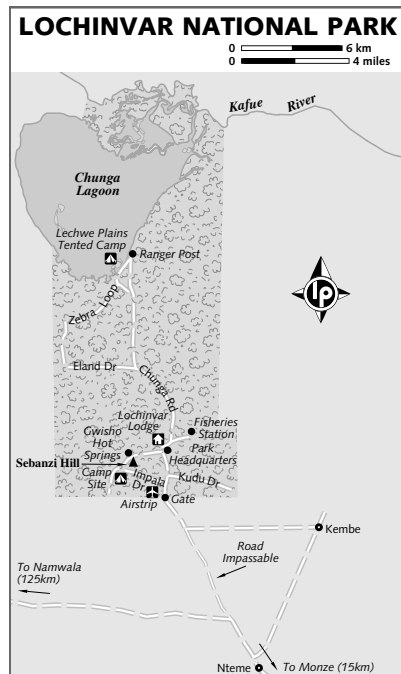


are no taxis in Siavonga, but your hotel may be able to arrange a private car to the border; otherwise, take the Lusaka minibus, which detours to the border.

For the adventurous, a local ferry runs Tuesday between Siavonga and Chipeco (k33,500 one way, 12 hours). There's no official accommodation in Chipeco, so ask about for a room in a private home. Check at the ferry jetty in Siavonga about the current timetable (if there is one).

LOCHINVAR NATIONAL PARK

This small (410-sq-km) **park** (admission US\$15; ☎ 6am-6pm), northwest of Monze, consists of grassland, low wooded hills, and the seasonally flooded Chunga Lagoon – all part of a huge World Heritage Wetland Site called the Kafue Flats. You may see buffaloes, wildebeests, zebras, kudus and some of the 30,000 Kafue lechwes residing in the park. Lochinvar is also a haven for bird life, with more than 400 species recorded. An excellent selection of wetland birds (including wattled cranes) occur near the ranger post along the edge of Chunga Lagoon.



Lochinvar was virtually abandoned in the 1980s. Plans to rehabilitate the park and the lodge were announced in 1999, but almost immediately stalled through a lack of funds and a dearth of tourists. By late 2001, however, a tour operator, **Star of Africa** (www.star-of-africa.com), had started to redevelop the park. It also built the superb **Lechwe Plains Tented Camp** (with meals & activities per person US\$450), under a clump of acacia trees along the shores of the Chunga Lagoon. Otherwise, provided you bring all your own gear, you can stay at the **camp site** (☎ 062-254226; wcz@zamnet.zm; camping per person US\$10), run by the Wildlife Society of Zambia, about 2km west of the park gate. Facilities are poor, and don't forget to bring your own food.

The network of tracks around the park is still mostly overgrown, with only the track from the gate to Chunga Lagoon reliably open. By car from Monze, take the dirt road towards Namwala. After 15km, just past Ntame village, turn right and continue north along the narrow dirt road for 13km. Near Kembe village, turn left (west) and grind along the road for another 13km to the park gate. A 4WD is necessary anywhere *inside* the park, though you may get stuck if you don't also have a winch. For those without wheels, minibuses go to Namwala, but after the first junction at Ntame you'll have to walk or hitch. Star of Africa have opened an airstrip in the park for guests of the Lechwe Plains Tented Camp.

WESTERN ZAMBIA

This section covers most of the Western Province, including Barotseland, plus various other places along the Upper Zambezi. Most of this area is ideal for travellers with plenty of time, patience and endurance.

Make sure you read the information on p675 if you intend to cross the border into Namibia or Botswana.

SESHEKE

Sesheke is on the northeastern bank of the Zambezi River, 200km upstream from Livingstone and virtually opposite the Namibian town of Katima Mulilo.

Council Resthouse (d with shared bathroom US\$6, d US\$8), just off the main street and opposite the hospital, offers basic rooms. Meals are available and the bar sells cold beers to accompany wonderful views at sunset.

A GOOD CAUSE

Located 11km north of Monze on an old farm, **Moorings Campsite** (☎ 03-250049; www.mooringscampsite.com; camping per person US\$5, chalets per person US\$20) is perhaps the most beautifully landscaped camp site in Zambia. Run by Zambian farmer Tom Savory and his Dutch wife, Dr Thea Savory, proceeds are used to support an on-site clinic and the Malambo Women's Craft Centre, a women's textile collective run by AIDS widows, who themselves look after orphans. The collective is walking distance from the camp site, and for sale is a colourful myriad of bedspreads and other knitted and sewn arts. Though the camp site is self-catering, the Savorys sell meat, as well as vegetarian fare, that you can cook. There is also a well-stocked kitchen on the premises.

Brenda's Best & Baobab Bar (camping per person US\$5) is a newish place almost next door to the resthouse. It offers a relaxing but basic camp site with a popular bar built around a massive baobab. Canoes can be hired for leisurely floats along the river.

At least one bus a day and several minibuses link Sesheke with Livingstone (US\$10, six hours), but this trip is laborious and arduous. Occasional minibuses also link Sesheke with Katima Mulilo.

See p676 for more information on crossing the border to Namibia from Sesheke.

NGONYE FALLS

These **falls** (admission free; ☎ 24hr), also called Sioma Falls, are an impressive 1km-wide chain of waterfalls, rapids and rocky islands cutting across the Zambezi. It would be a major attraction if it wasn't so difficult to reach; imagine something almost as majestic as the Victoria Falls, but with almost no other person (local or foreign) in sight.

The falls are less than 1km east of the main dirt road between Sesheke and Senanga. For drivers, access is not difficult from Sesheke, but far more problematic from Senanga (see below). Otherwise, hitch a ride and ask to be dropped by the turn-off (look for the 'Wildlife Department' sign).

SENANGA

If you're coming from Lusaka, Senanga has a real 'end of the line' feel. It is the best place to break up a journey between Mongu and Ngonye Falls or Sesheke.

The rooms at the **Council Resthouse** (per person from US\$8) are basic, so a better option is **Senanga Safaris** (camping per person US\$10, d incl breakfast US\$50). It offers comfortable rondavels with splendid views over the Zambezi plains – spoilt only by the giant satellite TV dish in the garden. The bar sells cold beer and the restaurant serves

expensive meals. Several cheaper restaurants are dotted along the main street nearby.

Minibuses and pick-ups run between Senanga and Mongu (US\$4, two to three hours) several times a day. About 30km south of Senanga (and accessible by minibus), a pontoon carries passengers (normally free) and vehicles (US\$20/30 for 2/4WD) across the Zambezi to Kalongola. Often the ferry doesn't operate between February and June, so passengers take a small boat, but car drivers may have to charter a larger, different pontoon.

MONGU

☎ 07

The largest town in Barotseland, and the capital of the Western Province, is on high ground overlooking the flat and seemingly endless Liuwa Plain. The town itself is spread out, but boasts a pleasant, lively feel, so a walk along the main street is always interesting. From a harbour on the southwestern outskirts of town, an 8km canal runs westwards to meet a tributary of the Zambezi. Around the harbour is a fascinating settlement of reed and thatch buildings, where local fishermen sell their catch and passenger boats take people to outlying villages.

Mongu really comes alive once a year, when thousands of people flock there for the annual **Kuomboka ceremony** (see the boxed text, p666). Not surprisingly, the prices for rooms (if you can find one) skyrocket at this time.

Sleeping & Eating

Lyamba Hotel (☎ 21138; Lusaka Rd; d incl breakfast US\$15) This is a bit run-down, but good value, and guests can enjoy fine views from the garden. It's 1.2km west of the public bus station and past the post office.

Mongu Lodge (☎ 221501; Mwanawina St; d with shared bathroom US\$30, d with air-con US\$60; ☎) Just south of the Lyamba Hotel. It's worth paying

KUOMBOKA CEREMONY

The Kuomboka (literally, 'to move to dry ground') is probably one of the last great Southern African ceremonies. It celebrates the move of the *litunga* (the Lozi king) from his dry-season palace at Lealui, near Mongu, to his wet-season palace on higher ground at Limulunga. It usually takes place in late March or early April, and sometimes ties in with Easter. The dates are not fixed, however; they're dependent on the rains. In fact the Kuomboka does not happen every year: in 1994, 1995 and 1996 the floods were not extensive enough to require the *litunga* to leave Lealui.

Central to the ceremony is the *nalikwanda*, a huge wooden canoe, painted with black-and-white stripes, that carries the *litunga*. It is considered a great honour to be one of the hundred or so paddlers on the *nalikwanda*, and each paddler wears a head-dress of a scarlet beret with a piece of a lion's mane and a knee-length skirt of animal skins. Drums also play a leading role in the ceremony.

The journey from Lealui to Limulunga takes about six hours. The *litunga* begins the day in traditional dress, but during the journey changes into the full uniform of a British admiral, complete with all regalia and ostrich plumed hat. The uniform was presented to the *litunga* in 1902 by the British King Edward VII, in recognition of the treaties signed between the Lozi and Queen Victoria.

Visiting the Palaces

Limulunga Because the *litunga's* palace is not open to the public, visit the **Nayuma Museum** (admission US\$1; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, erratic hours weekends), which contains exhibits about the Lozi, *litunga* and Kuomboka. Minibuses run between Mongu and Limulunga throughout the day.

Lealui The *litunga's* Main Palace is on the plain about 15km northwest of Mongu. It's not easy to reach, but the journey by boat (along a canal from Mongu to a branch of the Zambezi, then upstream to Lealui) is spectacular, passing local villages and plenty of bird life. Avoid visiting at weekends, when *litunga's* *kotu* (court) is closed, because you need permission from his *indunas* (advisors) to get a close look at the palace and even to take photos – and the *kotu* is only open from Monday to Friday.

Public longboats between Mongu harbour and Lealui (US\$2, one hour) leave once or twice a day. Alternatively, charter a longboat to Lealui for about US\$80 return or a smaller, slower boat for about US\$30 return. Prices include fuel and are negotiable. Buses do the trip in the late months of the dry season (March to April).

extra for the renovated rooms with a bathroom and air-con. All room prices include breakfast.

Getting There & Away

The public bus station is on the southeastern edge of town, behind the Catholic church. Several companies offer buses between Lusaka and Mongu (US\$10, 12 hours) at least every day. Those run by RPS and JR Investments leave from stands along Senanga Rd in Mongu at about 4am. Book your ticket at least the day before and sleep on the bus before departure.

A bus operates between Livingstone and Mongu (US\$10, 10 hours) twice a week via Sesheke, Kalongola and Senanga, but you're advised to break up this horror journey in Senanga. Better still, go to Lusaka from Liv-

ingstone and take the bus along the tarred road from Lusaka.

Minibuses and pick-ups leave on a fill-up-and-go basis from near the Caltex filling station in Mongu for Senanga (US\$4, three hours), from where minibuses head to Sesheke.

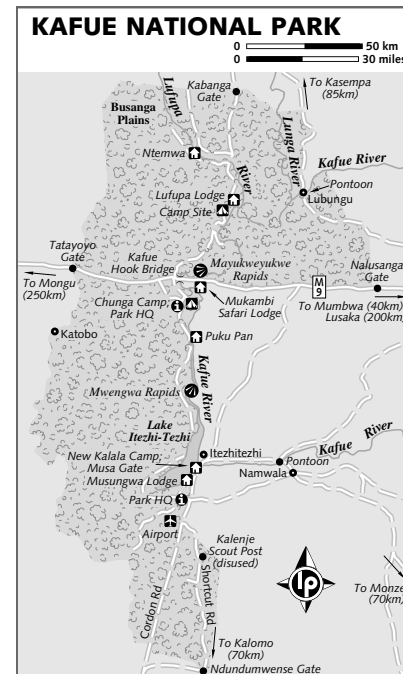
KAFUE NATIONAL PARK

This **park** (admission per person/vehicle US\$15/5; ☎ 6am-6pm) is about 200km west of Lusaka. Covering more than 22,500 sq km (nearly the size of Belgium), it's the largest park in Zambia and one of the biggest in the world. This is classic wildlife country and the foremost park for spotting the Big Five. Elephants and buffaloes are often seen in wooded areas, and carnivores include lions and hyenas. Antelope species include impalas, roans, kudus, sables, red

lechwes and sitatungas, and the rivers contain huge numbers of crocs and hippos. Bird life is also prolific, with more than 400 species recorded.

The vegetation in Kafue National Park is diverse and includes riverine forest around Lake Itzhi-Tezhi and Kafue River and its main tributaries (the Lunga and Lufupa); areas of open mixed woodland in the north as well as the Busanga Plains, which become infested with hippos during the floods (March to May); and the vast open grasslands in the south, where it is easier to spot groups of antelopes or predators.

The main road between Lusaka and Mongu runs through the park, dividing it into northern and southern sectors. (You don't pay park fees if you're in transit.) There are several gates, but three main ones: **Nalusanga Gate** along the eastern boundary, for the northern sector; **Musa Gate**, near the New Kalala Camp, for the southern sector; and **Tatayoyo Gate**, for either sector if you're coming from the west. Rangers are also stationed at the two park headquarters: at Chunga Camp and another 8km south of Musa Gate.



Some lodges/camps arrange **walking safaris**, but visitors are not allowed to walk in the park without an armed ranger. Most guests feel safer exploring the park in a 4WD, during a day or night wildlife drive, or by boat.

Sleeping

We can only list a few of the numerous camp sites and lodges/camps offered in and around the park. Several lodges/camps are just outside the park boundaries, which means that you don't have to pay admission fees until you actually visit the park. The inexplicable 'bed levy' (US\$10) charged to tourists is usually included in the rates charged by the upmarket lodges, but elsewhere the levy is added to your accommodation bill (unless you're just camping).

SOUTHERN SECTOR

The places listed here are outside the park (except for Chunga Camp) and south of the main road between Lusaka and Mongu. All rates are per person.

Puku Pan (☎ 01-266927; www.pukupan.com; camping US\$7, chalets with full board US\$120; ☎ all year) A low-key spot that has eight cottages with verandas overlooking the hippo- and croc-filled river. There's a comfortable viewing area overlooking the swamps at the back of the lodge. Walking safaris, boat trips and visits to local villages are available as well as the usual wildlife drives.

Musungwa Lodge (☎ 01-273493; zamker@zamnet.zm; camping US\$10, s/d with half-board US\$75/130; ☎ Jun-Oct; 🍷) A large place near New Kalala Camp. Originally built as a lakeside resort, it features comparatively lush gardens with a big swimming pool and tennis court. The comfortable rooms contain verandas overlooking the lake. The lodge offers wildlife drives and boat trips.

Chunga Camp (☎ 01-272307; fax 01-272308; camping US\$8, rondavels US\$35; ☎ all year) In a gorgeous spot overlooking a bend in the river. If you bring your own food, staff will prepare it in the kitchen. The accommodation is basic, but the advantages are the number of animals in and around the camp (so be careful at all times), and the proximity to the park headquarters for arranging walking safaris and wildlife drives.

Mukambi Safari Lodge (☎ 01-293848; www.mu-kambi.com; d full board US\$160; ☎ all year) Easy to reach, along the northeastern bank of the

Kafue River. It offers stylish, well-designed chalets and friendly staff. Discounts are offered through travel agents in Lusaka.

NORTHERN SECTOR

Several lodges/camps are inside the northern section of the park, north of the main road from Lusaka. Again, all rates listed are per person.

Lufupa Lodge (☎ 01-227739; www.busangatrails.com/lufupa; camping US\$15, chalets with all meals US\$120; ☹ Jun-Oct; ☹) At the confluence of the Lufupa and Kafue Rivers. It's a large place in a lovely position, with comfortable rondavels and an inviting swimming pool. The lodge offers boat rides, walking safaris and wildlife drives, and the guides are reportedly adept at spotting elusive leopards. Campers can hire a tent if arranged with plenty of notice for an extra US\$10 per night, and eat in the restaurant.

Ntemwa (☎ 01-265814; incl meals & activities US\$275; ☹ Jun-Oct) A superluxurious camp with enormous tents and excellent meals. Guests have raved about the quality of the activities, particularly the walks and drives.

Getting There & Away

Most guests of the top-end lodges/camps fly in on chartered planes. Transfers from the airstrip to the lodges/camps are often included in the rates.

For drivers, the main road into Kafue National Park is along the road between Lusaka and Mongu. About 35km west of Nalusanga Gate, a road leads southwest towards Lake Itzhi-Tezhi. The road is shockingly potholed and only accessible by a 4WD with high clearance. Just past Itzhi-Tezhi village is Musa Gate, from where the road crosses Lake Itzhi-Tezhi to the New Kalala Camp and Musungwa Lodge.

If you're staying at Mukambi Safari Lodge, continue west along the main road from Lusaka until about 10km before Kafue Hook Bridge and look for the signposted turn-off to the south. On the western side of the bridge, a main track leads into the northern sector of the park, and a dirt road leads southeast to Chunga Camp.

There's no public transport in the park, but you could get off the bus between Lusaka and Mongu and reach Mukambi Safari Lodge on foot, or get off at the Chunga junction and wait for a lift to Chunga Camp. Alternatively,

take the slow daily bus, or one of the more regular minibuses, from Lusaka to Itzhi-Tezhi village (US\$11, six hours). From the village bus stop wait around for a lift (because of the number of wild animals it may not be safe to hike).

The easiest way to reach the park – and get around it – is on an organised tour, but surprisingly few are offered by agencies in Lusaka or Livingstone. Chachacha Backpackers (p644) promises to recommence tours if/when the roads to and around the park improve. Otherwise, contact Jolly Boys Backpackers (p623) about what it might have on offer.

ZAMBIA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Prices for all accommodation listed in this chapter, and in the Zambian section of the Victoria Falls chapter, are for the high (dry) season – ie April/May to October/November – and are based on the 'international rates'. Often, lodges offer resident rates that are at an unfairly and far reduced rate, sometimes cut by as much as half.

It's worth noting that prices for rooms with private bathrooms are about 50% higher than rooms without, and that all accommodation in Lusaka is about 50% higher than anywhere else in Zambia. Most midrange and top-end hotels include breakfast in their rates.

Budget

Most cities and larger towns have camp sites where you can pitch your tent, but most are way out in the suburbs. Camping is also possible at privately run camp sites at the national parks, though most are located just outside the park boundaries to avoid admission fees (until you actually want to visit the park). Unlike in Zimbabwe, no camp sites are run by the national wildlife authority. There's little to stop you pitching your tent in the wild – except the chance of being interrupted by a hungry lion or rhino, of course.

The few youth hostels around Zambia are not part of any international organisation, so hostel cards are useless. But many hostels in Lusaka and the major tourist areas are well set up with swimming pools, bars, restaurants and travel agencies offering organised tours.

Some of the cheapest hotels in the cities are actually brothels. The better budget hotels

charge by the room, so two, three or even four people travelling together can get some real (if crowded) bargains. Single travellers may find some prices steep, though negotiation is always possible.

Midrange to Top End

All national parks are dotted with expensive privately operated lodges and 'camps' (a confusing term often used to describe expensive lodges). They offer the same sort of luxury and exclusivity as other lodges and camps in Southern and East Africa – all at US\$200 or more per person per night (twin share). Foreigners usually pay 'international rates' for lodges/camps, while tourists from Southern Africa get a 'regional rate' of 25% less, and Zambians pay about half the 'international rates'. These rates usually include all meals, drinks and activities, such as wildlife drives, but not transfers by road, air and/or boat. Lodges/camps should be booked in advance, either directly by phone, fax or email, or through an agent in Lusaka or abroad. Some lodges/camps close in the wet season (November to April); if they're open, discounts of up to 50% are common.

ACTIVITIES

More information about the various activities mentioned here is included under the relevant sections throughout this chapter and in the Victoria Falls chapter.

Companies in Livingstone (and Victoria Falls town in Zimbabwe) offer a bewildering array of activities, such as whitewater rafting in the gorge below the falls or river boarding and canoeing on the quieter waters above the falls. Those with plenty of nerve and money can try bungee jumping or abseiling, or take a ride in a microlight or helicopter. The less adventurous may want to try hiking and horse riding.

Canoeing is also a great way to explore the Zambezi River and can be arranged in Siavonga (or Kariba in Zimbabwe). Fishing along the Zambezi, and at several lakes in northern Zambia, is also popular; the tigerfish are almost inedible, but provides a tough contest for anglers. Fishing and boating are also possible on Lakes Kariba, Bangweulu and Tanganyika. Kasanka, Lower Zambezi and South Luangwa National Parks have activities for visitors.

Many tour companies in Livingstone offer short wildlife drives in Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park near Victoria Falls, while companies in Lusaka and Livingstone can also arrange longer wildlife safaris to more remote national parks. In some parks (eg Kasanka and South Luangwa), you can turn up and arrange wildlife drives or walking safaris on the spot.

BOOKS

The following titles are books specific to Zambia. For titles on the Southern Africa region, see p24.

PRACTICALITIES

- The *Daily Times* and *Daily Mail* are dull, government-controlled rags. The independent *Post* (www.postzambia.com), featuring a column by Kenneth Kaunda, continually needles the government. Published in the UK but printed in South Africa, the *Weekly Telegraph*, the *Guardian Weekly* and the *Economist* are available in Lusaka and Livingstone.
- The monthly *Lowdown* magazine (www.lowdown.co.zm; k3000), aimed at well-off residents in Lusaka, has useful information for visitors such as restaurant reviews and lists of upcoming events in the capital, as well as handy adverts for package deals for lodges around Zambia. The semi-annual *Kapaso* magazine (k5000) is the Copperbelt's answer to the *Lowdown*.
- Both of the Zambian National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) radio stations can be heard nationwide; they play Western and African music, as well as news and chat shows in English. ZNBC also runs the solitary government-controlled TV station every evening, but anyone who can afford it will subscribe to South African satellite TV. *BBC World Service* can be heard in Lusaka (88.2FM) and Kitwe (89.1FM); *Radio France Internationale* (RFI) can also be heard in Lusaka.
- Televisions use the PAL system.
- Electricity supply is 220V to 240V/50Hz and plugs are of the British three-prong variety.
- The metric system is used in Zambia.

The Africa House, by Christina Lamb, relates the story of Stewart Gore-Brown and his grand plans for a utopian fiefdom in a remote part of Zambia during the 1920s. His country mansion at Shiwa Ng'andu still stands (see p652).

Although a personalised selection of observations on wildlife and humans, *Kakuli* by Norman Carr also raises deeper issues and suggests some practical solutions to current conservation problems. The author spent a lifetime working with animals and people in the South Luangwa National Park (see p658).

Alexandra Fuller's *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* tells her own riveting story about growing up as the daughter of white farmers in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi during the Rhodesian civil war.

Spirit of the Zambezi, by Jeff and Fiona Sutcliffe, is a personal and knowledgeable account of three decades living and working in, on and around the great river between Zambia and Zimbabwe. It's illustrated with beautiful photos.

Mark and Delia Owens (authors of the famous *Cry of the Kalahari*) based *Survivor's Song* in the North Luangwa National Park. They launch themselves single-mindedly into the hard fight against elephant poachers, putting their lives and relationship seriously on the line.

Zambia, by Richard Vaughan, is a highly recommended coffee-table book with superb photographs. It not only covers the magnificent landscape and wildlife, but also the less 'touristy' aspects such as city life and mining.

BUSINESS HOURS

Government offices are open from 8am or 9am to 4pm or 5pm Monday to Friday, with an hour for lunch sometime between noon and 2pm. Shops keep the same hours, but also open on Saturday. Supermarkets are normally open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm Saturday and 9am to 1pm Sunday. Banks operate weekdays from 8am to 2.30pm, and from 8am to 11am on the first and last Saturday of each month. Post offices open from 8am or 9am to 4pm or 4.30pm weekdays. Restaurants are normally open for lunch between 11.30am and 2.30pm and dinner between 6pm and 10.30pm, though bars/restaurants in Lusaka are often open until 11pm on Friday and Saturday. Reviews in this

chapter won't list business hours unless they deviate from these standards.

See p742 for more information on business hours throughout Southern Africa.

CHILDREN

While most people do not travel with children in Zambia, lodges will accommodate them and perhaps even offer lower rates for them.

CUSTOMS

There are no restrictions on the amount of foreign currency tourists can bring in or take out of Zambia. Import or export of Zambian kwacha, however, is technically forbidden, but if you bring in/out a small amount (say, US\$25 worth), it's unlikely to be a problem.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Generally, Zambia is very safe, though in the cities and tourist areas there is always a chance of being targeted by muggers or con artists. As always, you can reduce the risk considerably by being sensible.

For as long as the seemingly endless civil strife continues in Congo (Zaire), avoid any areas along the Zambia-Congo (Zaire) border, especially around Lake Mweru. Foreign embassies in Zambia warn of landmines (left over from the Rhodesian civil war) in the Sinazongwe area on the shores of Lake Kariba. Avoid trekking off the beaten track in this area.

The possession, use and trade of recreational drugs is illegal in Zambia and penalties are harsh: in 1999, two New Zealand travellers received six months in jail with hard labour after being caught with a relatively small amount.

It's also worth noting that some travellers, who have an Asian background, have reported annoying glares and racial slurs from Zambians.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Hostel cards and senior cards are useless, though student or youth cards may be useful for buying tickets on major international airlines and the Tazara railway between Zambia and Tanzania.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Zambian Embassies & Consulates

Zambia has high commissions in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa

and Zimbabwe – see the relevant chapters in this book for contact details. Elsewhere in Africa, Zambian embassies and high commissions are located in Angola, Kenya and Tanzania, as well as in the following countries:

Belgium (☎ 02-343 5649; embassyofzambia@skynet.be; 469 Ave Molière, 1060 Brussels)

Germany (☎ 030-2062940; www.sambia-botschaft.de; Axel-Springer-Strasse 154A, 10117 Berlin)

Sweden (☎ 08-6799040; www.zambiaembassy.se; Engelbrektsgratan 7, Stockholm)

UK (☎ 020-7589 6655; www.zhcl.org.uk; 2 Palace Gate, London W8 5NG)

USA (☎ 202-265 9717; www.zambiaembassy.org; 2419 Massachusetts NW, Washington, DC 20008)

Embassies & Consulates in Zambia

The following countries have embassies or high commissions in Lusaka (Map pp642-3; area code ☎ 01). The British high commission looks after the interests of Aussies and Kiwis because the nearest diplomatic missions for Australia and New Zealand are in Harare. Most consulates are open from 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday and from 8.30am to 12.30pm Friday, though visas are usually only dealt with in the mornings. (See p727 for contact details for the consulates and embassies in Zimbabwe.)

Botswana (☎ 250555; fax 253895; 5201 Pandit Nehru Rd)

Canada (☎ 250833; fax 254176; 5119 United Nations Ave)

Congo (Zaire; ☎ 235679; fax 229045; 1124 Parirenyetwa Rd)

Finland (☎ 251988; fax 253783; Haile Selassie Ave)

France (☎ 251322; fax 254475; 74 Independence Ave, Cathedral Hill)

Germany (☎ 250644; 5209 United Nations Ave)

Ireland (☎ 290650; 6663 Katima Mulilo Rd)

Kenya (☎ 250722; kenhigh@zamnet.zm; 5207 United Nations Ave)

Malawi (☎ 096 437573; fax 260225; 31 Bishops Rd, Kabulonga)

Mozambique (☎ 220333; fax 220345; 9592 Kacha Rd, off Paseli Rd)

Namibia (☎ 260407/8; fax 263858; 30B Mutende Rd, Woodlands)

Netherlands (☎ 253819; fax 253733; 5208 United Nations Ave)

South Africa (☎ 260349; 26D Cheetah Rd, Kabulonga)

Sweden (☎ 251711; fax 254049; Haile Selassie Ave)

Tanzania (☎ 253223/4; fax 254861; 5200 United Nations Ave)

UK (☎ 251133; fax 251923; 5210 Independence Ave)

USA (☎ 250955; cnr Independence & United Nations Aves)

Zimbabwe (☎ 254006; fax 254046; 11058 Haile Selassie Ave)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

One remarkable festival to look out for is **Ukusefya pa Ng'wena**, practised by the Bemba people of northern Zambia. This programme of music, drama and dance, which is held near Kasama over four days in August, commemorates the victory of the Bemba over the marauding Ngoni in the 1830s.

N'cwala is a Ngoni festival held near Chipata in eastern Zambia on 24 February. At this time, food, dance and music are all enjoyed by participants who celebrate the end of the rainy season and pray for a successful harvest.

Refer to the boxed text for details about the remarkable **Kuomboka Ceremony** (p666).

Information about these and other festivals are on the official Zambian tourism website: www.zambiatourism.com.

HOLIDAYS

During the following public holidays, most businesses and government offices are closed:

New Year's Day 1 January

Youth Day Second Monday in March

Easter March/April

Labour/Workers' Day 1 May

Africa (Freedom) Day 25 May

Heroes' Day First Monday in July

Unity Day First Tuesday in July

Farmers' Day First Monday in August

Independence Day 24 October

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

INTERNET ACCESS

Zamnet is the country's largest internet service provider. Internet centres are in Lusaka (p641) and Livingstone (p621), and a few upmarket lodges allow guests (only) to use their internet facilities for a small charge. Access at internet centres is cheap – about US\$1.50 for 30 minutes – but irritatingly slow at times.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Your first 'cyber-stop' should be the outstanding website run by the **Zambia National Tourist Board** (www.zambiatourism.com). Other websites worth checking out include the following: **Zambia Online** (www.zambia.co.zm) Has excellent links, and offers chat rooms with Zambians.

Zambiz (www.zambiz.co.zm) Ideal for all business, including booking lodges and tours.

Zamnet (www.zamnet.zm) Provides links to all major national newspapers and several other useful sites.

Other useful addresses are given throughout this chapter. For a more comprehensive listing, see also p25.

LANGUAGE

Of the 70 languages and dialects spoken in Zambia, seven are recognised by the government as official 'special languages'. These include Bemba (mainly spoken in the north); Tonga (in the south); Nyanja (in the east), which is similar to Chichewa, spoken in Malawi; and Lozi (in the west).

As a lingua franca, and the official national language, English is widely spoken across Zambia. The Language chapter (p772) contains some useful words and phrases in Chichewa and Lozi.

MAPS

Macmillan's *Traveller's Map* (1:2.2 million) is the best map of Zambia, and includes detailed – but slightly dated – maps of several cities, national parks and tourist areas. Also worthwhile are the *Zambia Map Pac*, published by Directory Publishers, which includes maps of Zambia, Kitwe, Ndola, Livingstone and Lusaka, and *Street Guide Lusaka and Livingstone* (k35,000), which is a book-form collection of blow-ups of the two cities. All are available at bookshops in Lusaka. If you're trekking or driving into more remote regions, detailed survey maps at various scales from 1986 (for k20,000 to k30,000) are available from the government-run Map Sales office in Lusaka (p640).

MONEY

Zambia's unit of currency is the kwacha (k), sometimes listed as 'ZMK' (Zambian kwacha) or 'kw'. Bank notes come in denominations of k50,000, k20,000, k10,000, k5000, k1000, k500, k100, k50 and k20 notes, the last of which are extremely rare and virtually worthless. One hundred ngwee equals one kwacha, so, not surprisingly, ngwee coins have become souvenirs.

Inflation is high in Zambia, and, due to elections in late 2006 and the skyrocketing price of copper, some prices in this chapter are quoted in kwacha and others in US dollars

(US\$), as different businesses base their rates on the different currencies.

Most tourist-oriented places in Zambia quote prices in US dollars, but you must by law pay in kwacha – except for international airlines, top-end hotels/lodges, visas and most organised tours. In reality however, US dollars are commonly (and gratefully) accepted by most hotels, budget camp sites, tour operators and national park rangers.

Cash & ATMs

You can obtain cash (kwacha only) over the counter at Barclays and Standard Chartered banks in the cities and larger towns with a Visa card. But it can take most of the day and you may be slapped a fee of about US\$10. Larger branches of both banks have ATMs that accept Visa, but only kwacha can be withdrawn, and ATMs have a habit of malfunctioning. Traveler reports say that Indo-Zambian Bank ATMs are the most reliable insofar as not eating your card. ATM cards bearing the MasterCard mark are fairly useless.

Credit Cards

Some shops, restaurants and better hotels/lodges accept major credit cards, though Visa is the most readily recognised. A surcharge of 4% to 7% may be added to your bill if you pay with a credit card, so you're probably better off using it to draw cash and paying with that.

Moneychangers

The best currencies to take to Zambia (in order of preference) are US dollars, UK pounds and South African rands. Euros have yet to take off and the currencies of most neighbouring countries are worthless in Zambia, except at the relevant borders. The exception is Botswana pula, which can also be exchanged in Lusaka.

In the cities and larger towns, you can change cash and travellers cheques (see opposite) at branches of Barclays Bank and Standard Chartered Bank. In smaller towns, try the Zambia National Commercial Bank.

Foreign-exchange offices – almost always called bureaux de change – are easy to find in all cities and larger towns. Their rates for cash and travellers cheques (if accepted) are around 5% better than the banks' rates; the service is also faster and there are no additional fees.

There is no black market. You might get a few kwacha more by changing money on the street, but it's illegal and there is a chance that you'll be ripped off, robbed or set up for some sort of scam. However, moneychangers at the borders are more or less legitimate, but may take (slight) advantage of your ignorance about the current exchange rates. If you can't change cash at a bank or bureau de change, try a hotel or a shop that sells imported items.

Tipping

While most restaurants add a 10% service charge, rarely does it actually get into the pockets of waitstaff. Therefore, you may choose to tip the waitstaff directly.

Travellers Cheques

It's worth avoiding travellers cheques for several reasons: they are not accepted at all bureaux de change, and they attract high charges and lower exchange rates (5% to 8% lower than for cash). Commission rates vary, so it's always worth shopping around. The standard commission charged by Barclays and Standard Chartered banks is about 1%, but often with a minimum of US\$15. If you're likely to be charged a ridiculous commission – eg US\$15 (!) on a US\$20 travellers cheque – try negotiating a lower commission. One reader did so and paid only US\$2 commission at a bank for a US\$20 travellers cheque.

You can pay for some items (such as tours, activities, hotels and lodges) directly with travellers cheques, but a few hotel and tour operators have a nasty habit of adding a surcharge (up to US\$20) for this.

When you change travellers cheques at a bank, and at some bureaux de change, staff may check your original purchase receipt. Barclays, AmEx, Thomas Cook and Visa are by far the most accepted brands.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

In Lusaka and Livingstone, it costs k18,000/24,000 for a roll of 24-/36-exposure print film, while a roll of 36 exposure slide film is about k35,000 (without processing). Developing and printing 24/36-exposure print film costs about k16,000/20,000, but developing slide film is almost impossible. Bring everything you need for video cameras.

Zambian officials do not like foreigners photographing any public buildings, bridges, dams, airports or anything else that could be

considered strategic. If in doubt, ask; better still, save your camera for the national parks.

POST

Postcards and normal letters (under 20g) cost k2700 to send to Europe and k3300 to the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Sending international letters from Lusaka is surprisingly quick (three or four days to Europe), but from elsewhere in the country it's less reliable and much slower. Parcels up to 1kg to Europe cost k55,500 by airmail and k60,600 to the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The cost is about half this for surface mail.

Poste-restante service is available at the main post office in Lusaka (p641) for a negligible fee.

TELEPHONE

Almost all telecommunication services are provided by the government monopoly, Zamtel. Public phones operated by Zamtel use a token, which are available from post offices (k500) or local boys (k1000) hanging around phone booths. These tokens last three minutes but are only good for calls within Zambia. Phone booths operated by Tele2Africa use phone cards (from k20,000), available from post offices and grocery shops; these phone cards can be used for international calls. But it's often easier to find a 'phone shop' or 'fax bureau', from where all international calls cost about k12,000 per minute.

International services are generally good, but reverse-charge (collect) calls are not possible. The international access code for dialling outside of Zambia is 00, followed by the relevant country code. If you're calling Zambia from another country, the country code is 260, but drop the initial zero of the area code.

Mobile Phones

MTN, Celtel and Zamcell all offer mobile (cell) phone networks. It's almost impossible to rent mobile phones in Zambia, though if you own a GSM phone, you can buy a SIM card for k15,000 without a problem. Scratch cards come in denominations of k5000, k10,000, k20,000, k50,000, k100,000 and k500,000 denominations. Numbers starting with 095, 096, 097 and 099 are mobile phone numbers.

Mobile phone reception is pretty good within the cities, though ☎ 097 numbers get poor reception in the Southern Province. And in rural areas, you can forget it. However, companies are erecting mobile radio signal towers all over the place, so this may well change.

Phone Codes

Every landline in Zambia uses the area code system; you only have to dial it if you are calling outside of your area code. Remember to drop the zero if you are dialling from outside of Zambia.

Area Code Province(s)

☎ 01	Lusaka
☎ 02	Copperbelt & Luapula
☎ 03	Southern
☎ 04	Northern
☎ 05	Central
☎ 06	Eastern
☎ 07	Western
☎ 08	Northwestern

TOURIST INFORMATION

The regional tourist offices in Lusaka and Livingstone are worth visiting for specific inquiries, but provide limited information about Zambia in general. Refer to the relevant sections for contact details.

The **Zambia National Tourist Board** (ZNTB; www.zambiatourism.com; UK ☎ 020-7589 6343; zntb@aol.com; 2 Palace Gate, Kensington, London W8 5NG; South Africa ☎ 012-326 1847; zahpta@mweb.co.za; 589 Ziervogel St, Arcadia, Pretoria) is worth contacting for some guidance with your planning. The official website is outstanding, and provides links to dozens of lodges, hotels and tour agencies.

The **Tourism Council of Zambia** (tcz@zamnet.zm) is an umbrella group of private companies throughout the country involved in the promotion of tourism.

VISAS

All foreigners visiting Zambia need visas, but for most nationalities tourist visas are available at major borders, airports and ports. But it's important to note that you should have a **Zambian visa** *before* arrival if travelling by train or boat from Tanzania.

Citizens of South Africa and Zimbabwe can obtain visas on arrival for free. For all other nationalities, tourist visas are issued

on arrival, but cost about US\$25 for a transit visa (which is valid for seven days), US\$25/40 for a single/double-entry visa (valid for three months) and US\$100 for a multiple-entry visa (valid for three years). Brits, however, are slugged US\$60/60/80/80 for transit/single/double/multiple-entry visas. Note that the multiple-entry visas are useful, for example if you plan to travel to/from Zimbabwe several times. Payment can be made in US dollars, UK pounds, euros, South African rand, Botswana pula or Namibian dollars, regardless of which border you use.

Tourist and business visas can also be obtained from **Zambian diplomatic missions** abroad, and application forms can be downloaded from the websites run by the **Zambian high commission** (London www.zhcl.org.uk; Stockholm www.zambiaembassy.se; USA www.zambiaembassy.org).

If you arrive in Zambia on an organised tour, tourist visas are normally issued free for all nationalities on arrival – in any case, your tour operator should be aware of the regulations and arrange everything for you. The boxed text (p629) explains how to obtain a free seven-day (extendable) transit visa when travelling from Zimbabwe. But if you come to Zambia from Zimbabwe on a free-visa transfer from Victoria Falls, make sure you keep all your paperwork, because you may be asked later why there is no indication on your passport that you have paid for a Zambian visa, and then be forced to buy one. This has happened to unlucky readers travelling to Tanzania from Kapiri Mposhi by train.

Visa Extensions

Extensions for all types of tourist visas are possible at any Department of Immigration office in any main town in Zambia, though you're likely to be more successful in Lusaka (Memaco House, Cairo Rd) and Livingstone (Mosi-oo-Tunya Rd). Normally, a three-month extension can cost up to US\$100 (depending on your nationality).

If the paperwork seems overwhelming, and the fees exorbitant, simply cross into Zimbabwe, Mozambique or Malawi (the easiest options) and pay for a new visa when you return to Zambia.

Visas for Onward Travel

It's always best to visit any embassy or high commission in Lusaka between 9am and noon

from Monday to Friday. You will probably need two passport-sized photos.

Your chances of obtaining a visa for Congo (Zaire) or Angola are extremely remote in Lusaka, so get it before you arrive in Zambia.

Visas for Zimbabwe, Malawi, Tanzania and Botswana are easy to obtain on arrival at the border of these countries for most visitors. Because of this, the high commissions in Lusaka for these countries will only issue visas to the few nationalities that need them before arrival. However, if you're travelling by train or boat to Tanzania, check with the Tanzanian high commission in Lusaka about whether you need a visa beforehand. If so, three-month visas cost from US\$30 to US\$50 (depending on your nationality). The visa is usually ready later the same day if you apply before noon. You cannot obtain a visa for Namibia at the border; tourist visas are either free or cost US\$30, depending on your nationality, in Lusaka.

For Mozambique transit visas (valid for seven days) cost US\$11, single-entry visas (for one month) cost US\$20, and multiple-entry visas (for three months) cost US\$40. Visas are ready in two days, but for an extra fee you can get same-day service.

TRANSPORT IN ZAMBIA

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Information about travelling to Southern Africa, including Zambia, from elsewhere in the continent, and from some Western countries, is included in the Transport in Southern Africa chapter (p752).

Entering Zambia

See opposite for full information on visa requirements for entering Zambia.

A yellow fever certificate is not required before entering Zambia, but it is often requested by Zambian immigration officials if you have come from a country with yellow fever. And it is certainly required if you're travelling from Zambia to South Africa (and, possibly, Zimbabwe). For all sorts of reasons, it pays to get a jab before you come to Southern Africa and carry a certificate to prove it.

Air

Zambia's main international airport is in Lusaka, though some international airlines fly to the airport at Livingstone (for Victoria

DEPARTURE TAX

The departure tax for all international flights is US\$20. This tax is *not* included in the price of your airline ticket and must be paid at the airport (in US dollars only).

Falls), Mfuwe (for the South Luangwa National Park) and Ndola. The major domestic and international carrier is **Zambian Airways** (code Q3; www.zambianairways.com).

Zambia is well connected with Southern Africa. **Zambian Airways** flies daily between Lusaka and Harare (US\$155/305 one way/return), while **Air Zimbabwe** (code UM; www.airzim.co.zw) also flies to Lusaka (US\$150/295) from Harare on the way to Nairobi each Thursday.

Air Malawi (code QM; www.airmalawi.net) connects Lusaka with Lilongwe three times a week (US\$150/200) and with Blantyre (US\$185/299) twice a week. Comair, a subsidiary of **British Airways** (code BA; www.britishairways.com), and **South African Airways** (code SA; www.flysaa.com) both fly daily between Lusaka and Johannesburg for about US\$200/295.

Refer to p624 for information about international flights to/from Livingstone.

Airlines flying to and from Zambia:

Air Malawi (code QM; ☎ 0-228120; www.airmalawi.net) Hub: Lilongwe

Air Zimbabwe (code UM; ☎ 0-225431; www.airzim.babweb.com) Hub: Harare

British Airways (code BA; ☎ 0-254444; www.britishairways.com) Hub: London

Ethiopian Airlines (code ET; ☎ 0-236402/3; www.flyethiopian.com) Hub: Addis Ababa

Kenya Airways/KLM (code KQ; ☎ 0-228886; www.kenya-airways.com) Hub: Nairobi/Amsterdam

South African Airways (code SA; ☎ 0-254350; www.flysaa.com) Hub: Johannesburg

Zambian Airways (code Q3; ☎ 0-256586; www.zambianairways.com) Hub: Lusaka

Border Crossings

Zambia shares borders with eight countries, so there's a huge number of crossing points. All are open daily from 6am to 6pm, though the border closes at 8pm at Victoria Falls and at 7pm at Chirundu. The following borders issue visas to foreigners on arrival:

Botswana Zambia and Botswana share what is probably the world's shortest international boundary: 750m across the Zambezi River at Kazungula. The pontoon (car ferry) across the Zambezi is 65km west of Livingstone and 11km

south of the main road between Livingstone and Sesheke. You can buy the Botswana visa at the border, when you get off the ferry there.

Congo (Zaire) The main border is between Chililabombwe (Zambia) and Kasumbalesa (Congo). Visas are issued to tourists in Lusaka, but can be difficult to obtain.

Malawi Most foreigners use the border at Mchinji, 30km southeast of Chipata, because it's along the road between Lusaka and Lilongwe.

Mozambique The main border is between Mlolo (Zambia) and Cassacatiza (Mozambique), but most travellers choose to reach Mozambique through Malawi.

Namibia The only border is at Katima Mulilo (Zambia), on the northern bank of the Zambezi, while the Namibian border is near the Namibian town with the same name.

Tanzania The main border by road, and the only crossing by train, is between Nakonde (Zambia) and Tunduma (Tanzania).

Zimbabwe There are three easy crossings: at Chirundu, along the road between Lusaka and Harare; between Siavonga (Zambia) and Kariba (Zimbabwe), about 50km upstream from Chirundu; and between Livingstone (Zambia) and Victoria Falls town (Zimbabwe). Tourist visas for Zimbabwe are not currently offered at the embassy in Lusaka. If you're a tourist, you can only get a visa when crossing the border.

BOTSWANA

Several very crowded minibuses (US\$4, 12 hours) leave Livingstone every day for the terminal used by the pontoon ferry to Kazungula. The pontoon carries motorbikes/cars/4WDs for US\$5/15/20; foot passengers are free. Payment is also possible in kwacha, Botswana pula or South African rand. From the Botswana border, minibuses regularly leave for Kasane.

A quicker and more comfortable (but more expensive) way to reach Botswana from Zambia is to cross from Livingstone to Victoria Falls (in Zimbabwe), from where shuttle buses head to Kasane – refer to the Victoria Falls chapter for details.

Buses to Gaborone, via Kasane and Francistown, leave several days a week from Lusaka (see p647).

MALAWI

Direct buses between Lusaka and Lilongwe are infrequent and slow, so it makes sense to do this trip in stages. From the BP petrol station on the main street in Chipata, regular minibuses (US\$2) run the 30km to the Zambian border. The two border crossings are 12km apart, connected by shared taxis and pick-ups (US\$2), which continue to Mchinji, from where minibuses run to Lilongwe.

MOZAMBIQUE

There is no public transport between Zambia and Mozambique and the only common border leads to a remote part of Mozambique. Most travellers, therefore, choose to visit Mozambique from Lilongwe in Malawi.

NAMIBIA

Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at 6am, Mazhandu Family Bus runs trips from Lusaka to Sesheke (k75,000, 12 hours). From Livingstone, at least one bus per day and several minibuses leave for Sesheke (US\$7, six hours). The trip can take longer, because the road between the pontoon ferry terminal across to Kazungula and Sesheke is a shocker. The bus may terminate in Sesheke or continue another 5km to the pontoon (car ferry). The pontoon carries motorbikes/cars/4WDs for US\$10/20/30, while foot passengers travel for free; payment is also possible in Botswana pula, Namibian dollars and South African rands. If the pontoon isn't operating, foot passengers pay about US\$1.50 to cross by dugout canoe and vehicles are stuck at the border.

From the Namibian side, it's a 5km walk to Katima Mulilo, from where minibuses depart for other parts of Namibia.

Alternatively, cross from Livingstone to Victoria Falls (in Zimbabwe) and catch a shuttle bus to Windhoek – see p625 for details.

SOUTH AFRICA

There is no border between Zambia and South Africa, but several buses travel daily between Jo'burg and Lusaka (see p647 for details), via Harare and Masvingo in Zimbabwe. But make sure you have a Zimbabwean visa (if you need one before arrival) and a yellow fever certificate for entering South Africa (and, possibly, Zimbabwe).

TANZANIA

Although travelling by bus to the border is quicker, the train is a better alternative.

GETTING TO TANZANIA

The MV *Liemba* leaves from Mpulungu harbour every Friday, arriving in Kigoma, Tanzania on Sunday. Fares for 1st, 2nd and economy class are US\$60/45/35 respectively. Visas can be issued on the ferry and cost US\$50.

Comfortable, but frighteningly fast, buses leave Lusaka for Dar es Salaam once or twice a week, but services are less reliable these days. Alternatively, walk across the border from Nakonde, and take a minibus from Tunduma to Mbeya in Tanzania.

The Tazara railway company usually runs two international trains per week in each direction between Kapiri Mposhi (207km north of Lusaka) and Dar es Salaam. The 'express train' (42 to 45 hours) leaves Kapiri Mposhi at 4pm on Tuesday and Friday, while the 'interstate train' (50 to 52 hours) leaves Kapiri Mposhi at noon on Friday. The fares on both trains are k180,000/150,000/110,000 in 1st/2nd/3rd class (1st and 2nd class are sleeping compartments). A discount of 50% is possible with a student card.

Tickets are available on the spot at the New Kapiri Mposhi (Tazara) train station in Kapiri Mposhi and up to three days in advance from **Tazara House** (☎ 01-222280; Independence Ave, Lusaka). If there are no more seats left at the Lusaka office, don't despair because we've heard from travellers who easily bought tickets at Kapiri Mposhi, and upgraded from one class to another while on board.

It's prudent to get a Tanzanian visa in Lusaka (or elsewhere) before you board the train; at least, contact the Tanzanian high commission in Lusaka about getting a Tanzanian visa on the train or at the border. You can change money on the train but take care because these guys are sharks. The buffet car on the train uses the currency of the country it's passing through at the time.

ZIMBABWE

Plenty of buses travel every day between Lusaka and Harare, via Chirundu – see p647 for details. If you're travelling from Siavonga, take a minibus or charter a car to the border, and walk (or take a shared taxi) across the impressive Kariba Dam to Kariba, from where buses leave daily to Harare. Most travellers cross at Livingstone – see p625 for details.

Along the road on the Zambia side, you'll find young men waving tons of Zimbabwean currency for black market exchange. Do it at your own risk.

GETTING AROUND

Air

The main domestic airports are at Lusaka, Livingstone, Ndola, Kitwe, Mfuwe, Kasama

DOMESTIC DEPARTURE TAX

The departure tax for domestic flights is US\$5. It is *not* included in the price of airline tickets bought in or outside of Zambia, and must be paid at the airport in US dollars.

and Kasaba Bay, though dozens of minor air strips cater for chartered planes.

AIRLINES IN ZAMBIA

The only scheduled internal flights are offered by **Zambian Airways** (code Q3; ☎ 0-256586-8; www.zambianairways.com) and, occasionally, **South African Airlink** (code 4Z; www.saairlink.co.za). Tickets can be booked through any travel agent in Zambia.

The schedule for Zambian Airways is as follows:

Between	Schedule (one way)	Fare (US\$)
Lusaka & Ndola	daily	130
Lusaka & Mfuwe	daily	200
Lusaka & Livingstone	daily	180

Charter-flight companies cater for guests staying at upmarket lodges/camps in national parks. Charter flights only leave with a minimum number of prebooked passengers and fares are always high, but it's sometimes worth looking around for a last-minute stand-by flight. Check for special deals advertised in *Lowdown* magazine in Lusaka, or contact **Proflight Air Services** (☎ 0-271139; www.proflight-zambia.com), based at the airport in Lusaka.

Bicycle

If you plan on cycling around Zambia, do realise that Zambian drivers tend not to give you any room, even if there is no vehicle in the oncoming lane. Save being hit by a car, it is safe to cycle Zambia. Mountain biking is rapidly becoming popular in and around Lusaka.

The two best places to purchase mountain bikes are in Lusaka: **CycleMart** (☎ 0-222062; nr Chachacha & Malasha Rds) and **Game** (Manda Hill Shopping Centre, Great East Rd). Road cyclists will have to bring their own bikes and gear.

Bus & Minibus

Distances are long, buses are often slow and many roads are badly potholed, so travelling

around Zambia by bus and minibus can exhaust even the hardiest of travellers, even if they *do* like a good butt massage.

All main routes are served by ordinary public buses, which either run on a fill-up-and-go basis or have fixed departures (these are called 'time buses'). 'Express buses' are faster – often terrifyingly so – and stop less, but cost about 15% more. In addition, several private companies run comfortable European-style express buses along the major routes, eg between Lusaka and Livingstone, Lusaka and Chipata, and Lusaka and the Copperbelt region. These fares cost about 25% more than the ordinary bus fares and are well worth the extra kwacha. First-class double-decker CR Holdings buses are especially comfortable, with reclining seats on the lower level. It's better not to look at how fast the driver is going, anyway. Tickets for these buses can often be bought the day before.

Many routes are also served by minibuses, which only leave when full – so full that you might lose all feeling in one butt cheek. Their fares can be more or less the same as ordinary buses. In remote areas the only public transport is often a truck or pick-up.

Car & Motorcycle

BRING YOUR OWN VEHICLE

If you're driving into Zambia in a rented or privately owned car or motorcycle, you will need a carnet; if you don't have one, a free Customs Importation Permit will be issued to you at major borders instead.

While it is certainly possible to get around Zambia by car or motorbike, many sealed roads are in bad condition and the dirt roads can range from shocking to impassable, particularly after the rains. If you haven't driven in Africa before, this is no place to start. Wearing a seat belt in the front seat is compulsory.

DRIVING LICENCE

Foreign licences are fine as long as they are in English, and it doesn't hurt to carry an international driver's licence (also in English).

FUEL & SPARE PARTS

Diesel costs k4400 per litre and petrol k5100. Shortages do occur from time to time. Distances between towns with filling stations are great and fuel is not always available, so fill the tank at every opportunity.

It is advisable to carry at least one spare wheel, as well as a filled jerry can, though petrol is far more volatile than diesel. If you need spare parts, the easiest (and cheapest) vehicle parts to find are those of Toyota and Nissan.

HIRE

Cars can be hired from international and Zambian-owned companies in Lusaka, Livingstone, Kitwe and Ndola, but renting is expensive, so consider hiring a car in Zimbabwe and taking it across to Zambia (see p730).

For example, **Voyagers/Imperial Car Rental** (www.voyagerszambia.com/imperialrates.htm) charges from US\$51 per day for the smallest vehicle, plus US\$0.38 per kilometre (less per day for longer rental periods). Add to this insurance (from US\$36 per day), VAT and petrol. Other companies, such as **4x4 Hire Africa** (www.4x4hireafrica.com), rent old-school Land Rover Discovery vehicles, which are fully decked out with everything you would need for trip to the bush, with prices starting at \$120 per day, though hiring a private driver will cost US\$100 extra per day.

Most companies insist that drivers are at least 23 years old and have held a licence for at least five years. Vehicles can be taken to Zimbabwe, Botswana, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique if you give the car-hire company enough notice.

INSURANCE

Compulsory third-party insurance for Zambia is available at major borders (or the nearest large towns) and costs about US\$8 per month. However, it is strongly advised to carry insurance from your own country on top of your Zambian policy.

ROAD CONDITIONS

While most main stretches of sealed road are excellent, beware of the occasional pothole. Most gravel roads are pretty good, though they also suffer from potholes. It is best to travel by 4WD if using a private vehicle.

ROAD RULES

Speed limits in and around cities are enforced, though on the open road buses and Land Cruisers fly at speeds of 140kph to 160kph. Beware of vehicles in front of you that signal; if they signal right, it could mean that they are turning, or that there is another vehicle in the

oncoming lane. If the vehicle signals left, they are turning or the oncoming lane is clear and you can pass. Or else, it's possible that their signal lights are simply broken.

If you break down, you must place an orange triangle about 6m in front of and behind the vehicle.

Hitching

Despite the general warning (see p764), hitching is a common way to get around Zambia. Some drivers, particularly expats, may offer you free lifts, but you should expect to pay for rides with local drivers (normally about the same as the bus fare, depending on the comfort of the vehicle). In such cases, agree on a price beforehand.

Local Transport

The minibuses that zip around main roads in all cities and larger towns are quick and plentiful. For more comfort, however, taxis are also very good value. They have no meters, so rates are negotiable.

TRAIN

The Tazara trains between Kapiri Mposhi and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania (see p676) can also be used for travel to/from northern Zambia. While the Lusaka–Kitwe service does stop at Kapiri Mposhi, the Lusaka–Kitwe and Tazara trains are not timed to connect with each other, and the domestic and international train terminals are 2km apart.

Zambia's only other railway services are the 'ordinary trains' between Lusaka and Kitwe, via Kapiri Mposhi and Ndola, and the 'express trains' between Lusaka and Livingstone. Refer to the relevant sections for schedules and costs.

Domestic trains are unreliable and slow, so buses are always better. Conditions on domestic trains generally range from slightly dilapidated to ready-for-scrap. Most compartments have no lights or locks, so take a torch and something to secure the door at night.

Tickets for all classes on domestic trains (but not the Tazara service) can be bought up to 30 days in advance.

Classes

On the 'express train' between Lusaka and Livingstone, a 'sleeper' is a compartment for two people; 1st class is a sleeper for four; 2nd (or 'standard') class is a sleeper for six; and 'economy' (or 3rd) class is a seat only. On the 'ordinary train' between Lusaka and Kitwe, 'standard' class – the only class – is also just a seat.

Tours

Tours and safaris around Zambia invariably focus on the national parks. Since many of these parks are hard to visit without a vehicle, joining a tour might be your only option anyway. Budget-priced operators run scheduled trips, or arrange things on the spot (with enough passengers), and can often be booked through a hostel or camp site. Upmarket companies prefer to take bookings in advance, directly, or through an agent in Zambia, South Africa or your home country.

For companies running tours around Zambia as part of wider trips around Southern Africa, see p757. Most Zambian tour operators are based in Lusaka and Siavonga, as well as Livingstone. Several companies in Lilongwe, Malawi may also offer tours to South Luangwa National Park.

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Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe continues to make headlines for all the wrong reasons. In 2005 the Government stole another election, the opposition imploded, and half a million of the poorest people were evicted in the midst of winter. Unemployment is at 70%, inflation has topped 1000%, and women die younger in Zimbabwe than anywhere else on the planet.

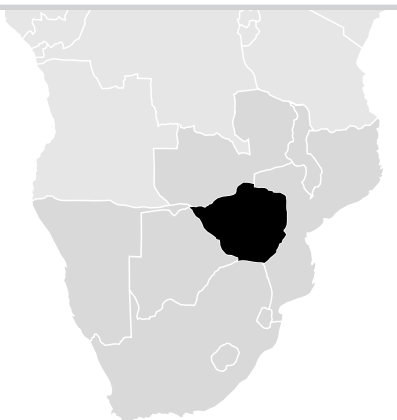
But behind the grim data lies one of Southern Africa's most beautiful – and today, un-touristed – countries. And despite being forced to sacrifice so many things, Zimbabweans have not lost their humour or resolve. With so few visiting the country, those who do can expect royal treatment. They need you.

While the world's media focuses on the fall of Zimbabwe, visitors will see a very different image of the country. From the absolute wilderness of Mana Pools National Park, the ruins of Great Zimbabwe and the mountains looking over Mozambique, to fine dining in the capital, Zimbabwe continues to be a great place to visit.

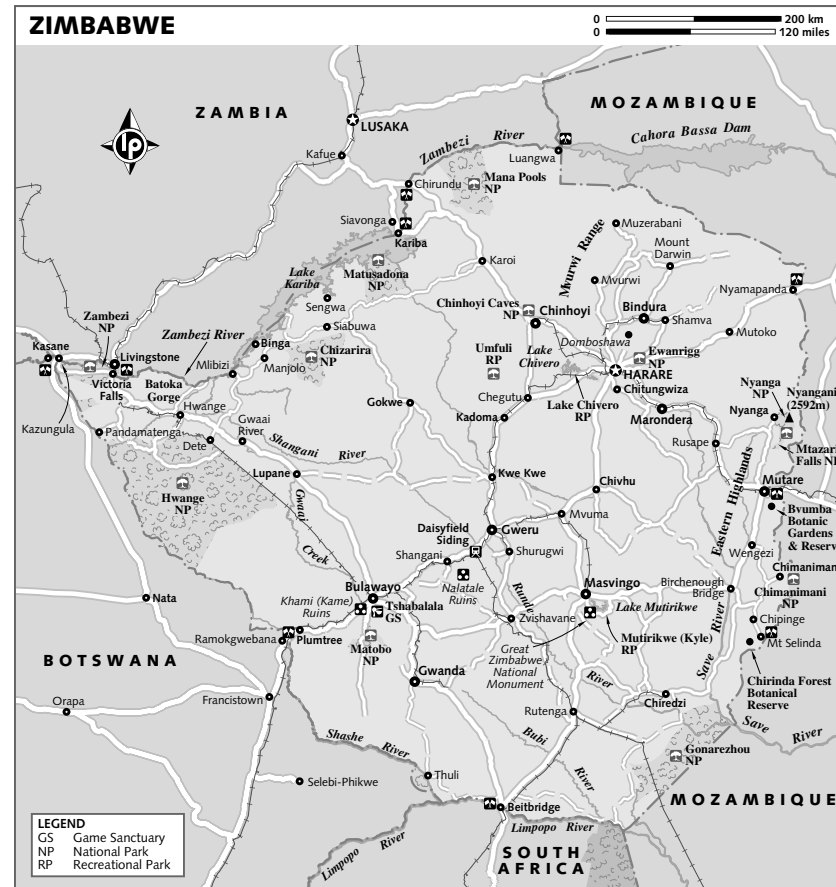
Zimbabwe is no longer nearly as cheap as it once was, but its richness in culture and colour remain. Colonialism remains etched in all sorts of ways, but local traditions are visible. If you're willing to join a tour group, or *pay* and plan your own trip, then a country of charm, political intrigue and magnificent wilderness awaits. Oh, and Zimbabwe's got one of the world's best climates...even the worst government can't destroy that.

FAST FACTS

- **Area:** 390,580 sq km (slightly larger than Germany)
- **Capital:** Harare
- **Country code:** ☎ 260
- **Famous for:** Great Zimbabwe, Hwange National Park, Zambezi River canoe safaris, Victoria Falls
- **Languages:** English, Shona, Ndebele
- **Money:** Zimbabwe dollar (ZWS)
- **Phrases:** *Siyabonga kakulu* (thank you; Ndebele); *ndatenda/masvita* (thank you; Shona)
- **Population:** 13 million (official, though up to three million Zimbabweans are thought to have emigrated since 2001)



ZIMBABWE



HIGHLIGHTS

- **Mana Pools** (p705) Africa's only national park (with lions) that allows unguided walking safaris. Canoe the Zambezi past hippos and crocs.
- **Great Zimbabwe** (p716) Visit this ancient city with Africa's largest stone structures south of the pyramids.
- **Harare** (p692) Go to Harare's International Festival of the Arts in April or play golf on a world-class course any time.
- **Eastern Highlands** (p706) Fish, safari on horseback, win millions (read: US\$5) at the casino, or climb Zimbabwe's second-highest peak.
- **Off the beaten track** (p723) Observe the Big Five in Hwange National Park, Zim-

babwe's largest and most wildlife-packed park.

ITINERARIES

- **One to two weeks** It's best to base yourself in one or two places – eg **Harare** (p692); **Masvingo** (p715), from where you can visit **Great Zimbabwe** (p716); **Bulawayo** (p718), from where you can access **Matobo National Park** (p722); or **Mutare** (p707), good for visiting the **Eastern Highlands** (p706). Make sure you also visit Victoria Falls (see p626).
- **Three weeks** Spend longer at (and around) the places mentioned in the one- to two-week itinerary, and add in **Gweru** (p714), **Kariba** (p703) and **Hwange** (p723), **Nyanga** (p710) or **Mana Pools** (p705) **National Parks**.

HOW MUCH?

- **Soapstone sculpture** US\$2-200
- **Safari** US\$50-350
- **Wooden carving** US\$1-100
- **Steak** US\$7
- **Sunscreen** US\$7

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L of petrol** US\$1
- **1L of bottled water** US\$0.75
- **Bottle of beer** US\$1
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$3
- **Plate of chips** US\$0.80

Alternatively, try a semicircular route: ie Victoria Falls, Hwange National Park, Bulawayo, Gweru, Masvingo, Mutare, the Eastern Highlands, Harare, Kariba and Mana Pools National Park.

- **One month** You can take your time with one month up your sleeve. One excellent route is to fly from Johannesburg to Victoria Falls (see p626), spend a few days there, then be driven to **Hwange National Park** (p723) for a stunning safari. You could then fly to **Harare** (p692) and take a road trip to the **Bvumba Mountains** (p708) overlooking Mozambique. Another would be to land in Harare, take a charter flight to **Lake Kariba** (p703) or **Mana Pools** (p705) on the banks of the Zambezi, safari, fish, then fly back to Harare and drive south for three hours to **Masvingo** (p715) and the **Great Zimbabwe** (p716) ruins.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Zimbabwe stretches over a high plateau and enjoys a pleasantly temperate climate during the dry season. The cooler, drier months (May to October) are similar to the Mediterranean summer, with warm, sunny days and cold, clear nights. It never snows, though overnight frosts and freezing temperatures are not uncommon.

The lowveld and the Zambezi Valley experience hotter and more humid temperatures, but in winter there's still very little rainfall. Most of Zimbabwe's rain falls in brief afternoon deluges and electrical storms in the relatively humid and warmer months from November

to April. Zimbabwe has the second-highest incidence of lightning strikes in the world, so do be careful during those storms.

Generally, the dry winter months are the most comfortable for travelling, though in truth Zimbabwe has a beautiful climate all year round, and given the chance of drought, even the wettest wet season isn't a great hindrance. In winter night-time temperatures can fall below freezing, while in summer daytime temperatures can climb to 35°C, but may be tempered by afternoon thunderstorms.

Winter is the best time for wildlife viewing because animals tend to congregate around a diminishing number of water holes, and are therefore easier to glimpse. At the end of a drought in 2005, herds of 300 elephants were seen at Hwange National Park. Obviously this is an incredible sight, though it can also be a stressful one, as many animals don't gain access to the scarce water and die.

No matter when you choose to come, you will have so much of the country to yourself. Tourism is a fraction of what it was just five years ago. This is awful news for Zimbabweans, though does mean that those who do come to Zimbabwe will have a choice of the full range of remaining lodges and activities, and will be spoiled by their hosts.

HISTORY

The precolonial history of the area that became Zimbabwe, along with the rest of Southern Africa, is covered on p37.

The Shona Kingdoms & the Portuguese

Historians believe that in the 11th century, the Great Zimbabwe society encountered Swahili

TRAVEL TIPS

The currency is an ongoing and unmitigated disaster that sadly greatly impacts upon the tourist (see the boxed texts, p684 and p686). At the time of writing petrol was now readily available in all petrol stations (for the first time since January 2005). But a capricious government could change laws on the importation of fuel at any moment. These two – fuel and money – are two central reasons why almost all visitors to Zimbabwe will organise their trip through a travel agent, or a friend in the country.

SHOULD YOU GO?

If your only doubts about holidaying to Zimbabwe concern your dollars going to government cronies, then pack away your worries and get out your passport. This is a debate for international donors, and if they still see a role in Zimbabwe (and they do), then you shouldn't worry. Yes, the government has a stake in some hotels and the national airline, but more than that there are thousands of talented sculptors, guides, small businesses, waiters and artists who are all on the bread line because tourism has all but dried up in Zimbabwe. They need you in Zimbabwe, both for your business, your tips, but also so that the country and its people continue to get an outsider's perspective. There could be nothing worse for everyday Zimbabweans than a boycott from tourists.

traders who had been plying the Mozambique coast for over four centuries. They traded gold and ivory for glass, porcelain and cloth from Asia, and Great Zimbabwe became wealthy and powerful. However, by the 15th century, its influence was in decline because of overpopulation, overgrazing, political fragmentation and uprisings.

During Great Zimbabwe's twilight period, Shona dynasties fractured into autonomous states. In the 16th century Portuguese traders arrived in search of riches and golden cities in the vast empire of Mwene Mutapa (Monomatapa to the Europeans), where they hoped to find King Solomon's mines and the mysterious land of Ophir.

Alliances between Shona states led to the creation of the Rozwi state, which encompassed over half of present-day Zimbabwe. This state continued until 1834 when raiders known as the Ndebele (Those Who Carry Long Shields), under the command of Mzilikazi, invaded from the south and assassinated the Rozwi leader. Upon reaching the Matobo Hills, Mzilikazi established a Ndebele state. After Mzilikazi's death in 1870, his son Lobengula ascended the throne and relocated the Ndebele capital to Bulawayo.

Lobengula soon found himself face to face with the British South African Company (BSAC). In 1888 Cecil Rhodes, the founder of the company, coerced him to sign the Rudd Concession, which granted foreigners mineral rights in exchange for 10,000 rifles, 100,000 rounds of ammunition, a gunboat and £100 each month.

But a series of misunderstandings followed. Lobengula sent a group of Ndebele raiders to Fort Victoria (near Masvingo) to prevent Shona interference between the British and the Ndebele. The British mistook this as aggression and launched an attack

on Matabeleland. Lobengula's *kraals* (hut villages) were destroyed and Bulawayo was burned. A peace offering of gold sent by Lobengula to the BSAC was commandeered by company employees. Ignorant of this gold token, the vengeful British sent the Shangani River Patrol to track down the missing king and finish him off. In the end, Lobengula died in exile of smallpox.

Without their king, the Ndebele continued to resist the BSAC and foreign rule. In the early 1890s they allied themselves with the Shona, and guerrilla warfare broke out against the BSAC in the Matobo Hills. When Rhodes suggested a negotiated settlement, the Ndebele, with their depleted numbers, couldn't refuse.

Meanwhile, finding little gold, the colonists appropriated farmlands on the Mashonaland plateau. By 1895 the new country was being called Rhodesia, after its heavy-handed founder, and a white legislature was set up. European immigration began in earnest: by 1904 there were some 12,000 settlers in the country, and seven years later the figure had doubled.

The First Chimurenga

The government of Rhodesia was set up 'for, by and of' the whites. The Ndebele had effectively been quashed, but trade between the Shona and Europeans continued until it became apparent that the colonists intended to control both African and Rhodesian interests. Spotting a weakness in the BSAC army, the Ndebele came back with a vengeance, gathering forces and single-mindedly attempting to drive the enemy from their land forever. This warlike spirit proved contagious; the Shona, traditional enemies of the Ndebele, joined in, and by 1896 the First Chimurenga, (War for Liberation) had begun. Although the

MONEY MATTERS *Matthew D Firestone*

At the time of writing, the official exchange rate between the US dollar and the Zimbabwean dollar was 1:250. Just a few weeks earlier, the rate was 1:250,000. For more on the volatile money situation, see the boxed text, p686.

For the uninitiated, changing money in Zimbabwe can be a head-splitting (and potentially dangerous) endeavour. For starters, it helps to know that locals change money on the 'parallel market', and that the exchange rate can be three or four times as favourable as the official rate. At the time of writing, the parallel exchange rate was US\$1 to Zimbabwean \$750.

Keep in mind that changing money outside a bank is illegal, and the consequences for being caught are severe – you will be fined and possibly imprisoned.

If you do decide to use the parallel market, always seek out the latest information. Talk to the people at your hotel, hostel or tour operator as they're likely to be able to help you change money in a safe environment. Finally, never change money on the streets as the majority of touts work hand-in-hand with the tourist police and it's likely that you will get caught.

Before arriving in Zimbabwe, stock up on post-1996 US dollars (the ones with the big heads), though euros or British pounds are usually easy to change. Credit cards, travellers cheques and ATM cards occasionally work, though your money won't go very far since you'll be given the official exchange rate. Generally, hotels and tour operators prefer payments in foreign currency, though transactions in town are best paid for in Zim dollars.

revolt gained some momentum, it was stalled in 1897 when its leaders were captured and subsequently hanged.

Beginnings of Nationalism

Conflicts between black and white came into sharp focus after the 1922 referendum in which the whites chose to become a self-governing colony rather than join the Union of South Africa. Although Rhodesia's constitution was in theory nonracial, suffrage was based on British citizenship and annual income, so few blacks qualified. In 1930 white supremacy was legislated in the form of the Land Apportionment Act, which disallowed black Africans from ownership of the best farmland, and a labour law that excluded them from skilled trades and professions. Poor wages and conditions eventually led to a rebellion, and by the time Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were federated in 1953, mining and industrial concerns favoured a more racially mixed middle class as a counterweight to the radical elements in the labour force.

Two African parties soon emerged – the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo, and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), a breakaway group under the leadership of Ndabaningi Sithole. Following the federation's break-up in 1963 – which paved the way for the independence of Northern

Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi) – the ZAPU and ZANU were banned and their leaders imprisoned.

Ian Smith & the Second Chimurenga

In 1964 Ian Smith took over the Rhodesian presidency and began pressing for independence. British prime minister Harold Wilson countered by outlining conditions to be met before Britain would agree: guarantee of racial equality, course towards majority rule, and majority desire for independence. Smith realised the whites would never agree, so in 1965 he made a Unilateral Declaration of Independence.

Britain responded by declaring Smith's action illegal and imposed economic sanctions (which were also adopted by the UN in 1968). However, the sanctions were ignored by most Western countries and even by British companies. By this stage, both ZANU and ZAPU had opted for guerrilla warfare. Their raids struck deeper into the country with increasing ferocity, and whites, most of whom had been born in Africa and knew no other home, abandoned their properties.

On 11 December 1974 South Africa's John Vorster and Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda persuaded Smith to call a cease-fire and release high-ranking nationalists – including Robert Mugabe – and to begin peace negotiations. The talks, however, broke down; ZANU split and Mugabe fled to Mozambique. The follow-

ing year, ZANU chairman Herbert Chitepo was assassinated in Lusaka by Rhodesian intelligence.

The nationalist groups fragmented and re-formed. ZANU and ZAPU created an alliance known as the Patriotic Front (PF), but the expected spirit of cooperation was never realised. Similarly, Zipra and Zanla (the military arms of ZAPU and ZANU respectively) combined to form the Zimbabwe People's Army.

Smith, facing a wholesale white emigration and a collapsing economy, was forced to try an 'internal settlement'. Sithole, and the leader of the ANC, Abel Muzorewa, joined a so-called 'transitional government' in which whites were guaranteed 28 out of the 100 parliamentary seats; veto over all legislation for 10 years; guarantee of their property and pension rights; and control of the armed forces, police, judiciary and civil service. And an amnesty was declared for PF guerrillas.

The effort was a dismal failure. Indeed, the only result was an escalation of the war, now known as the Second Chimurenga. To salvage the settlement, Smith entered into secret negotiations with Nkomo, offering to ditch both Sithole and Muzorewa, but Nkomo proved to be intransigent. Finally, Smith was forced to call a general, nonracial election and hand over leadership to Muzorewa, but on much the same conditions as the 'internal settlement'.

Independence

On 10 September 1979 delegations met at Lancaster House, London, to draw up a constitution favourable to both the PF of Nkomo and Mugabe, and the Zimbabwe-Rhodesian government of Muzorewa and Smith. Mugabe, who wanted ultimate power, initially refused to make any concessions, but after 14 weeks the Lancaster House Agreement was reached. It guaranteed whites (then 3% of the population) 20 of the 100 parliamentary seats.

In the carefully monitored election of 4 March 1980, Mugabe prevailed by a wide margin and Zimbabwe and its majority-rule government joined the ranks of Africa's independent nations.

Soon after, the economy soared, wages increased, and basic social programmes – notably education and healthcare – were initiated. However, the initial euphoria, unity and optimism quickly faded: a resurgence of rivalry

between ZANU (run mostly by Shona people) and ZAPU (mostly by Ndebele) escalated into armed conflict, and the ZAPU leader Nkomo was accused of plotting against the government. Guerrilla activity resumed in ZAPU areas of Matabeleland, and Mugabe deployed the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade in early 1983 to quell the disturbances. The brigade launched an orgy of killing; innocent villagers were gunned down and prominent members of ZAPU were eliminated in order to root out dissidents. The result was horrific massacres in which tens of thousands of civilians, sometimes entire villages, were slaughtered. A world that was eager to reverse Mr Mugabe closed its eyes. The eyes of Zimbabweans were forced shut.

Nkomo, meanwhile, fled to England until Mugabe (realising the strife threatened to erupt into civil war) publicly relented and guaranteed his safe return. Talks resulted in a ZAPU-ZANU confederation (called ZANU-PF) and amnesty for the dissidents, thereby masterfully sweeping the matter – but not the underlying discontent – under the rug. Zimbabwe's one-party state had begun.

Increasing Taxes & Tensions

Despite tragic experiments with one-party socialism in neighbouring countries, President Mugabe's Marxist dream remained alive. In 1988 the abolition of the law that guaranteed 20 parliamentary seats to whites, and the imposition of strict controls on currency, foreign exchange and trade, were steps in this direction.

In the 1990 elections, ZANU-PF was challenged by the newly formed Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM), which promoted free enterprise and a multiparty democratic state. A gerrymander engineered by Mugabe, however, enabled ZANU-PF to post a landslide victory. Soon afterwards, Patrick Kombayi, a ZUM candidate, was wounded in an assassination attempt and those with ZUM ties immediately sought a low profile. In 1990, despite Mugabe's persistence, members of parliament voted against the implementation of Marxism in Zimbabwe.

In 1995, with his popularity waning and elections due, Mugabe revealed a US\$160-million antipoverty programme. The election, however, was characterised by general apathy and voter turnout was poor, so Mugabe won. A year later, government officials had ripped

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY – IT'S ALMOST FUNNY

How did it come to this?

In 1980 US\$1 was worth ZW\$1.50. By 1990, after 10 very successful years of independence, the Zimbabwe dollar was still very strong against the world's major currencies and one of the healthiest in Africa. (US\$1 was worth ZW\$2.60). In July 2006, the parallel (or market rate) was US\$1 to ZW\$400,000 and the biggest bank note was ZW\$100,000 note (or 25 cents). That same month the government changed currencies, lopping three zeroes from the old currency and introducing a new set of notes. Today there is a new ZW\$100,000 note (formerly worth ZW\$100,000,000) which, officially, at the time of writing was worth a whopping US\$400. Beware of counterfeiters – it's suddenly super profitable.

Zimbabwe's decline began in earnest in late 1997 when President Mugabe paid billions of dollars of unbudgeted gratuities to war veterans. The veterans had seen their fund sucked dry by ruling party corruption. They remained a force to rival the President's, and his financial move was both to improve his waning popularity and placate angry war vets. Within a day after the payments, Zimbabwe's currency crashed.

In 1998 Mugabe sent Zimbabwean troops to back government soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, ostensibly to appease and fund party generals and other big shots. The burden of massive military expenses was another hefty blow to the suffering economy.

The last five years has seen a string of antimarket economic policies, with funds thrown at corrupt and inefficient state-run organisations, the currency fixed, 'land reform' extended with economic devastation on *all* other industries that relied on agriculture, and trillions of local dollars printed to pay salaries and the IMF (International Monetary Fund). Inflation has topped 1300% and some warn it may go to 3000%, while the president has promised to no longer follow 'orthodox economic policies' and to print money when he wants to.

off the War Victims' Compensation Fund. Veterans began demonstrating and demanding their rightful compensation; their demands culminated in a confrontation with Mugabe at the 1997 Heroes' Day rally. Mugabe hastily promised money for the veterans, and an increase in income and fuel taxes was announced.

Already heavily burdened by excessive taxes, the normally passive Zimbabweans found the new tax levies unsustainable. They rebelled and boycotted work. Throughout the country, all colours united in a peaceful demonstration of disapproval, but in Harare, police attempted to halt the demonstration by firing tear gas into the crowds. The parliament soon rejected the proposed income-tax increase and mandated that the fuel price be dropped. The president and his ministers were incensed.

Meanwhile, the Zimbabwe dollar lost over 50% of its value. The increased cost of imports caused immediate price hikes for most goods, including basic foodstuffs. In Harare, protesters again took to the streets and rioting ensued. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) called on the government to address the problems or face a two-day work

stoppage. The government simply threatened 'stern action' if the boycott went ahead. Undaunted, workers stayed home on 3 and 4 March 1998. Riot police came out in force and waited for a demonstration that never happened.

Life as the Opposition

In 1999 thousands attended a ZCTU rally to launch the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Morgan Tsvangirai, the secretary general, stated he would lead a social democratic party fighting for workers' interests.

The arrival of the MDC brought waves of new hope and real opportunity for the end of Mugabe's era. Ironically, the MDC's greatest success led to its ultimate defeat. In 2000 Mugabe's chief propaganda architect, Jonathan Moyo, led the president's campaign for a new constitution. Three months later – and despite the full weight of state media and Treasury – the president's constitution was given the thumbs down by the people. It was Mugabe's first defeat and it notified him of MDC's very real strength at the ballot box. A parliamentary election was due later that year.

The tide had turned and it seemed a clear majority of a highly educated populace wanted

change. Mugabe responded to the threat of defeat with waves of violence, voter intimidation, and a chaotic and destructive land reform programme. Despite this, and the election being damned by the US and European Union as 'neither free nor fair', the MDC lost by a mere four seats. Two years later Mugabe's rule was under even greater threat during the country's presidential elections. Again, an election marred by violence and intimidation, backed by a new set of repressive laws, with no independent monitors and huge numbers of voters turned away, was stolen by Mugabe.

The next parliamentary election – in 2005 – was not so close. Mugabe and his security and propaganda networks had five years since 2000 to readjust the playing field. Newspapers were closed (bombed in one case), the state dominated print, radio and TV, voters were bought with food (and threatened with no food), the leader of the opposition, Morgan Tsvangirai, went through two treason trials, and up to one million ghost voters were created on the role. The result was that Mugabe not only guaranteed victory in the 2005 elections, but was brazen enough to steal a two-thirds majority and hence win the ability to change Zimbabwe's constitution and pave the way for a successor of his choice. Part of the changes made in the constitution was to create a senate. Another arm for Mugabe to offer political patronage, the senate also saw the acrimonious division of the opposition over whether or not to contest the 'elections'. At the time of writing Morgan Tsvangirai controlled the anti-senate faction of the MDC, and former Rhodes scholar, Arthur Mutambara, the pro-senate faction (though Mutambara says he too is anti-senate). Mass protests are continually planned against the government, but people appear more concerned with feeding their families than fighting the well-armed state.

The Land Fiasco

With the economy in dire straits and Mugabe furious that white farmers had supported the MDC, the president played the race card. Hoping to win the support of the majority peasant population and pacify war vets he began violently confiscating land from white commercial farmers for resettlement by African farmers.

Few independent observers will disagree that land reform was necessary in Zimbabwe, where prior to 2000 70% of the best land was

owned by around 4000 white commercial farmers. But Mugabe's policy had little to do with equitable distribution of land, and much to do with power. Hundreds of black farm workers were killed, along with scores of white farmers. Land was given to ministers, party faithfuls and foreign friends. Some genuine farmers attempted to work their new land, though critical shortages of fuel, seed and fertiliser meant their efforts were in vain. Other farm invaders simply stole crops, stripped houses, machinery and irrigation systems, then fled, leaving millions of acres of land idle. From time to time various ministers mention that it may be time to invite some white farmers back, but in reality as recently as the middle of 2006 farm invasions continued.

The result has been absolutely devastating. Production of the staple meal, maize, has plummeted by 60%, leaving one-quarter of the entire population dependent on food aid. From 2001 to 2003, Zimbabwe lost 20% of its wildlife to poaching. Tobacco production – the mainstay of foreign currency earnings – has fallen from 262 million tonnes in 2000 to 69 million tonnes in 2005.

It is, of course, necessary to put Zimbabwe's current tragedy into the colonial context from which it emerged. However, none of this is much use to Zimbabweans, who now find themselves suffering more than during colonial days.

Most recently, Mr Mugabe has reiterated his intention to nationalise Zimbabwe's mining sector, which produces what little foreign exchange the country still earns. And government's amended constitution cancels all freehold title to property and bars those whose property has been expropriated from appealing to the courts. It has been called, 'the most draconian measure introduced since independence' and that's a tough list to top.

THE CULTURE The National Psyche

Zimbabweans are fascinating. Whether black, white or in-between, they have a philosophic stoicism reminiscent of bygone eras. In Zimbabwe, the Southern African expression to 'make a plan' can be defined as: If it's broke, fix it. If you can't fix it, live with it, or, change your life (overnight if need be). This pretty much sums up the Zimbabwean approach to life. For instance, Zimbabwe has the highest number of orphans (per capita) in the

world – almost one in three children – and yet despite an economic crisis, 90% of these orphans are still cared for by the extended family. This kind of mental strength and generosity, combined with a love of their country for its abundant mix of wild and tailored beauty and wonderful climate is key to their survival.

Daily Life

Zimbabwe's wonderful infrastructure, world-class climate, rich soil, and leading education rates should allow for nothing less than a comfortable lifestyle for almost all. Unfortunately great gains made in everything since independence – life expectancy, education, health – have all been reversed in the last five years. Today Zimbabwe's lifestyle is one of survival or escapism. Survival for the masses who live below the poverty line; escapism for the rest (from the reality of the masses).

Somehow, despite the immense hardship for everyday Zimbabweans, crime remains relatively low. Locals here laugh that if this was West Africa there would have been a coup once a week since 2001. Others argue that Zimbabweans today are paying for their genteel demeanour. The truth – as ever – lies somewhere in between.

Population

About 65% of the population lives in rural areas; while around 40% of the population is under 18 years old. Only a few years ago, the average life expectancy was nearly 60 years;

today, with the onslaught of AIDS, it's about 40 years.

Most Zimbabweans are of Bantu origin; 9.8 million belong to various Shona groups and about 2.3 million are Ndebele. The remainder are divided between the Tonga (or Batonga) people of the upper Kariba area, the Shangaan (or Hlengwe) of the Lowveld, and the Venda of the far south. Europeans (18,000), plus Asians (10,000), and mixed Europeans and Africans (25,000) are scattered around the country. Local whites today joke that there are more elephants in Zimbabwe today than white Zimbabweans.

SPORT

Football is the country's lone national sporting passion. Stadiums regularly fill to capacity (anywhere between 5000 and 40,000) and neutral visitors would be welcomed to this intense event. Zimbabwe qualified for the 2006 African Nations Cup and football today is one of a few things that regularly puts smiles on the faces of the people. Unfortunately, like the rest of society, it is often sullied by greed and corruption.

Cricket – although at first only played by whites – was in the late 1990s and early 2000s gaining increasing exposure on the back of several leading black players and an overall team progressing on the world stage. Most recently, Tatenda Taibu was made captain of the team after some of the players (white and black) boycotted the World Cup games bemoaning the 'death of democracy' and were banned. Taibu led a young and terribly inexperienced

team with courage and skill, but quit in 2005, citing power struggles within the sport.

RELIGION

The majority of Zimbabweans are Christian, although traditional spiritual beliefs and customs are still practised, especially in rural areas, where merciless economic times are leading to an increase in faith and fraud.

Meanwhile, noticing this drive towards religion, more and more government ministers are tying themselves to the Church. Most worryingly, perhaps, senior church leaders are tying themselves to government! For years concerned church leaders have tried to meet President Mugabe. In mid-2006 the president finally agreed. In a country with the lowest life expectancy for women, the highest rises in child mortality, and the world's fastest-falling economy, it was a God-given opportunity for church leaders to discuss the suffering of Zimbabweans.

Somehow, though, the church leaders lost their nerve. At the end of the meeting the head of the delegation and president of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches told national TV cameras that, 'we know we have a government that we must support, interact with and draw attention to concerns. Those of us who have different ideas about this country must know we have a government who listens.' It was the most immoral of sell-outs.

ARTS & CRAFTS

Zimbabwe's festivals and fairs, live music, poetry, dance, art, and sculpture are great expressions of Zimbabwe and a wonderful way for visitors to meet the locals and learn about their lives. All Zimbabweans are creative in some way: whether they knit, embroider, weave, sculpt, carve, sing or act, they do it anywhere and everywhere (so long as they're allowed to).

Unfortunately, during Operation Murambatsvina (see opposite), the Government destroyed the ubiquitous street-side stalls and markets that lined the main roads of Zimbabwe, offering all manner of handicrafts. But, as a metaphor to Zimbabweans, the stalls do keep popping back up here and there.

For information on music in Southern Africa, see p52.

Literature

Although oral traditions perpetuated a large body of stories, legends, songs and poetry,

the first written works by black authors didn't appear in print until the publication (in Shona) of *Feso*, by S Mutswairo, in 1956. The first Ndebele novel, published in 1957, was *Uthawakazi*, by PS Mahlangu.

Subsequent works dealt with pre-colonial traditions, myths and folk tales, and focused on the experiences of blacks under a white regime. The first serious treatise on this topic was Stanlake Samkange's *On Trial for My Country* (1966).

Since independence, Zimbabwean literature has focused on the liberation effort and the struggles to build a new society. The 1992 Commonwealth Prize for Literature went to Zimbabwean writer Shimmer Chinodya for *Harvest of Thorns*, an epic novel of the Second Chimurenga. Another internationally renowned writer is Chenjerai Hove, who wrote the war-inspired *Bones*, the tragic *Shadows* and the humorous *Shebeen Tales*.

Mukiwa (A White Boy in Africa), by Peter Godwin, is an engrossing book. It's the story of a small boy who witnesses the death of his neighbour by guerrillas, and then the beginning of the end of white rule in Africa.

Traditional Crafts

Even before Arab traders brought cloth from India, Zimbabweans were spinning and weaving garments from wild cotton that grew on the plateau. They were also making blankets, mats and clothing from strands of the soft and pliable tree bark known as *gudza*. Zimbabwean women have also developed nontraditional crafts, such as crochet and batik.

Pottery, another traditional female activity, has been an enduring art form. Intricately designed pots have always played a practical role in everyday life. They are used for storage, cooking, serving, carrying, preparing curdled milk and even brewing yeast beer.

Wooden stools, whose intricate decorations reach their highest level in the Tonga culture of western Lake Kariba, are also carved from a single piece of wood. Historically, only men were allowed to sit on them and male heads of households used them as 'thrones' from which to oversee family affairs.

ENVIRONMENT The Land

Landlocked Zimbabwe is roughly three times the size of England and half as big as Texas. It lies within the tropics and consists of highveld

OPERATION 'DRIVE OUT THE TRASH'

In May 2005 the Zimbabwean government began a demolition campaign that over the next three cold months destroyed urban markets and homes, arbitrarily arresting market vendors, and locking up street children. The operation – named Murambatsvina (or 'drive out the trash') – particularly targeted the poor. Coming on top of massive unemployment and in the midst of winter, the operation brought almost one million Zimbabweans closer to their knees.

President Mugabe said he wanted people to return to their rural homes, and that the operation was to clean up 'a chaotic state of affairs' in the informal sector. A more widely held view is that after successful revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, the Zimbabwean government – now by any measure a dictatorship – was making a pre-emptive strike against densely populated, and largely opposition areas. By de-urbanising cities, the government could send people to rural areas where it controlled food.

The result was devastating. A report released by a United Nation's Special Envoy to Zimbabwe said the nationwide operation had destroyed the homes and/or livelihood of 700,000 Zimbabweans, indirectly affected one out of five Zimbabweans, and had left the country 'deeper in poverty, deprivation and destitution'. It was, said the UN, 'the worst possible thing at the worst possible time'.

and middleveld plateaus between 900m and 1700m above sea level. A low ridge running northeast to southwest across the country marks the divide between the Zambezi and Limpopo-Save River systems.

The northwest consists mostly of plateaus, characterised by bushveld dotted with kopjes (small rocky hills) and bald knob-like domes of smooth rock known as *dwalas*. The hot, dry lowveld of southern Zimbabwe is mainly the level savanna of the Save Basin, sloping almost imperceptibly towards the Limpopo River.

The predominant mountainous region is the Eastern Highlands, which straddles the Zimbabwe–Mozambique border. Zimbabwe's highest peak, Nyangani, rises to 2592m near the northern end of the range.

Wildlife

ANIMALS

Most of the animals highlighted in the Wildlife Guide (p69) are represented in Zimbabwe. The largest lizards are the leguans (or water monitors), docile creatures that are often over 2m long. Other reptiles include geckos, chameleons and legless snake lizards. The rivers, dams and lakes are home to 117 species of fish; most visitors prefer bream on their plate, while anglers love the fight put up by the powerful tigerfish.

Twitchees will be delighted with the hundreds of bird species found all over the country, including buff-spotted fluff tails and stripe-cheeked bulbuls. Matobo National Park, for example, is home to one-third of the world's eagle species.

PLANTS

The vegetation is uniform throughout Zimbabwe. Most of the central and western plateau is covered with bushveld (thorny acacia savanna) and miombo (dry open woodland), while the drier lowlands of the south and southeast are characterised by thorny scrub and baobabs. Among this are towering cactus-like euphorbias resembling pipe organs, 30 diverse species of aloes, wildflowers (that bloom between September and November), jacarandas (whose flowers bury the streets of Harare, Bulawayo and Mutare in October), and a host of succulent tropical flowers and palms.

National Parks

Zimbabwe's national parks and reserves offer larger animal populations, and as much variety

of species, as most countries in Southern and Eastern Africa. (And with the current paucity of tourists, you will have stretches of the parks and reserves to yourself.) Some 13% of Zimbabwe's surface area is protected, or semiprotected, in national parks or safari areas. This doesn't include privately protected areas such as game ranches and nature conservancies, as well as recreational parks – all of which would increase the percentage considerably. Sadly, however, much of this is under threat as land seizures continue. The focus in Zimbabwe's chaotic land reform – which is now more a 'smash and grab' – is shifting from farms to profitable lodges and reserves.

VISITING PARKS & RESERVES

It was never guaranteed that the majority of fees paid by foreigners ended up back in national parks, but today the parks face a far bigger problem. That is, no revenue at all. Foreign visitors to Zimbabwe's national parks are at an all-time low. The result is twofold. Firstly, parks face constant problems, eg artificially pumped water holes often go dry, facilities are becoming increasingly shabby, and the reservations system has its difficulties. Secondly, the main source of revenue now for the national parks comes through hunters.

Admission fees to all government-run parks are valid for 24 hours if you're just visiting for the day, but valid for up to seven days if you have pre-booked accommodation inside the park for that amount of time. If you stay longer than seven days, you must pay an extra fee at the gate on departure. Admission fees vary for each park (see the relevant sections for details). The only standard fee is for vehicles: those with more than six seats pay US\$10 per vehicle per entry (ie valid for the length of your stay in the park); other vehicles are free. For obvious safety reasons, motorbikes are not allowed in the parks.

Zimbabwe is famed for some rare activities, such as walking safaris, horse riding and wildlife drives, which are offered by the national parks. You can expect to pay for all safaris in US dollars. Given the currency issues (see the boxed texts, p684 and p686), this matters little now, though certainly Zimbabwe is no longer the relatively cheap African safari experience of a few years ago.

Hitching is forbidden in all national parks, though park officials realise that not everyone has a vehicle and usually tolerate discreet or

informal hitching that originates from outside the park. However, hitching in Zimbabwe is not recommended. Cats and dogs are forbidden inside all parks.

Each of Zimbabwe's national parks has its own special attraction: Hwange (p723) is well-known for its abundant wildlife (100 species of animals and 400 species of birds) and for being one of the few great elephant sanctuaries left in Africa – herds of up to 100 can be seen. Matobo (p722) has a bizarre landscape of round balancing boulders. Among these exist ancient cave paintings and a vast amount of predators and birds. It has long been considered the centre of spiritual power. Chimanimani (p712) has lush top-of-the-world mountain scenery and Mana Pools (p705) and its Zambezi riverside environment is about walking with the animals – or gently paddling right past them.

Park entry fees range from US\$5 to US\$20 per day, and you can book your accommodation through tour operators or the National Parks offices.

See p695 for information about booking lodges and camp sites run by National Parks & Wildlife Zimbabwe (NPWZ).

Environmental Issues

The usual ecological problems faced by countries in Southern African – eg land degradation, urban sprawl, soil erosion, poaching, and slash-and-burn farming – have been greatly exacerbated by the frenzied and anarchic land-reform programme (that is ongoing) and Zimbabwe's continued political and economic crises.

THE ELEPHANT 'PROBLEM'

Zimbabwe's 70,000 elephants are not endangered, but according to some the country faces ecological disaster because of their destructive habits. For instance, Zambezi Valley elephants have already proven a menace by destroying thousands of hectares of crops. But others claim that crops are often planted in areas that have always been frequented by elephants and that popular water holes are often drained by farmers.

Some have even suggested that elephant numbers could be reduced by culling (to half the current number) and trophy hunting. Currently, hunters pay about US\$20,000 to shoot a bull elephant, providing badly needed revenue. Sadly this alluring revenue stream

has led to more and more operators with no conservation background entering the market.

In late 2002 Cites (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) allowed Zimbabwe and several other Southern and Eastern African countries to sell ivory already collected and stockpiled through natural causes. Conservationists believe this will give poachers the green light to start illegally slaughtering more of these endangered beasts (see the boxed text, p68). In reality, poachers are running wild in Zimbabwe (with or without the new convention).

CONSERVATION EFFORTS

In 1989 increasing disquiet over the government's 'shoot to kill' policy to combat poaching gave rise to Campfire (the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources). This channelled revenue from hunting on communal lands, where wildlife had become a nuisance to subsistence farmers, back into the communities. From its inception to 2000, Campfire participation prospered and the amount of land in Zimbabwe dedicated to conservation doubled. By mid-2001 poaching had also slowed and populations of endangered species – including rhinos – were rising. About 90% of Campfire's revenue is derived from leases on sport hunting and tourism concessions to commercial safari operators, as well as from foreign sources.

Unfortunately all this good work is now being unravelled. From 2001 to 2003, Zimbabwe lost at least 20% of its wildlife to poaching. There are no figures beyond this time, though experts estimate that the same number again has been lost until today. Zimbabwe's land-reform programme has become a free for all among ministers and party heavies, as assets from farms to mining to lodges are seen as fair game. The result is that this precious – and free – natural asset is considered just that: an asset that is there to be stripped.

Despite Zimbabwe's relentless problems, there is good reason to believe that if Mugabe went, things would quickly normalise in Zimbabwe. Tourism, with agriculture, would be the mainstay of a recovery. However, the fearful question now is can Zimbabwe's wildlife survive long enough to see the change?

If you're interested in learning more about Zimbabwe's ecological problems, contact

Wildlife & Environment Zimbabwe (www.zimwild.org). This organisation educates Zimbabweans about the environment and assists projects involved in the prevention of soil erosion and the protection of endangered species.

FOOD & DRINK

Food

Zimbabwean cuisine is mostly the legacy of bland British fare – soggy sausages, greasy eggs and fatty chips (French fries) – as well as stodgy African dishes, such as the dietary staple *sadza*, the white maize meal porridge most locals are raised on. The second component is meat (or *nyama*), though *sadza ne nyama* is more likely to be *sadza* with meat gravy only.

Zimbabwe was once one of the world's great beef producers and, despite the decline, good meat remains available nearly everywhere. Popular fish include bream and the whitebait-like dried *kapenta*, both plentiful in Lake Kariba, and trout from rivers and dams in the Eastern Highlands.

The cities and bigger towns offer a variety of restaurants, mostly in homes with beautiful gardens and swings for kids (though be warned, the swings are from an era when no one sued if their child cut themselves on jagged metal!). There is good Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Lebanese and continental cuisine, though you will need local advice if you want to find a decent coffee. Most mid- to upper-range restaurants offer decent vegetarian options. All tourist hotels harbour expensive restaurants serving average European dishes. Generally the restaurants in Harare are excellent, though the poor currency conversion forced on visitors will mean an exquisite three-course meal is more likely to cost US\$60 than US\$15 (if you could change at the black-market rate).

Drinks

NONALCOHOLIC DRINKS

The water in Zimbabwe is no longer safe to drink. As with basically every sector, a critical shortage of foreign currency has meant an inability to buy essential parts and chemicals to treat the water. The result was that in 2005–06, Harare faced a cholera outbreak that killed dozens of people.

Plastic bottles of mineral water, boxed fruit juices and soft drinks are widely available.

Although tea and coffee are grown in the Eastern Highlands, the best is exported. An

increasing number of cafés and restaurants serve real local or imported coffee (though few know how to make it), while others sell a revolting blend made of 10% instant coffee and 90% chicory. Although it isn't the optimum-quality stuff, Nyanga tea is pretty good and available throughout the country.

ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

The tippie of the masses is Chibuku, which, as its advertising asserts, is 'the beer of good cheer'. Served up in large plastic containers which, after the 1991 Gulf War, came to be known as scuds, it has the appearance of vomit, the consistency of thin gruel and a deceptively mellow build-up to the knockout punch. It's sold mainly in roadside and township beer halls, and is distinctly a male social scene.

The beer you will more commonly see and drink is lager, which is always served cold. A popular brand is the South African-owned Castle, though the domestically brewed Zambezi and Bohliger lagers are superb.

Although the climate isn't suited to grape growing, Zimbabwe does sustain a limited wine industry, particularly east and southeast of Harare. The largest and most renowned winery is Mukuyu, near Marondera. And like it or not, you may have to experience the local wines – imported wines start at US\$15, though some of the best safaris offer South African and Australian wines included in the price.

HARARE

☎ 04 / pop 2 million

Harare is the capital and heart of the nation. More attractive than most other regional African cities (eg Lusaka), Harare has just enough attractions and restaurants to keep most weary and jaded travellers satisfied for several days.

Harare is a bizarre mix of visual information – in any one day you can feel as though you've stepped back into the '50s, '60s, '70s, '80s or '90s.

Most travellers will spend their time in the fairly orderly streets of 'town' with its high-rise buildings ranging from cool to quirky. The relatively small city centre is busy, a mix of office workers and shoppers from all walks of life. Shopping in and around Robert

Mugabe St is more hectic with Indian fabric shops, cheap shoe and clothes shops from other Eastern markets and outlets for car spares.

Contrast this with the quiet, green suburban streets (known as 'low density' areas) which heave with oversized gardens (complete with tennis courts and pools) spilling out over high, house-concealing walls onto handsome grass-and-tree-lined roads, which themselves, are busy with knitting uniformed maids, gentlemen on bicycles and snappily dressed school kids.

The transit routes out of town are dotted with designated pick-up spots and hordes of hopefuls waiting patiently for rides to their rural areas – either for good or just for the weekend. Waiting with a bed or an entire lounge suite does not seem to make a lot of difference to one's prospects.

But cut to the places where visitors rarely go, the 'high-density areas', or townships, and you'll find a timeless and vibrant African feel where people promenade, sit and chat, or upturn boxes to create a fresh produce stall – even with as little as two tomatoes.

ORIENTATION

The city centre is formed by the collision of two grids, and further confused by a complicated one-way traffic system. But the city is compact and easy to get around on foot. Most decent shops, restaurants, bars and banks are between Samora Machel Ave and Robert Mugabe Rd, while classier homes, shops and eateries are dotted around the area between Samora Machel and Josiah Tongogara Aves. Cheaper shops and markets, and much of Harare's seedier nightlife, are concentrated in the bustling area southwest of Robert Mugabe Rd. The rest of Harare sprawls outwards in both high- and low-density suburbs, while the industrial area is in the southwestern suburbs.

Samora Machel Ave cuts from east to west through the centre of Harare – it morphs into Mutare Rd if you go east or Bulawayo Rd if you go west. Julius Nyerere Way cuts through the absolute centre in a north to south direction. This is the heart of the city, with Harare Gardens and the National Gallery at this junction. There are several pretty, shady gardens and squares close to the centre including, in the eastern part of the city, Africa Unity Sq. There are really only a handful of main routes;

they lead away from the city centre and on to other parts of Zimbabwe: Enterprise Rd, Borrowdale Rd, Second St, Simon Mazorodze Rd and Samora Machel Ave.

Maps

Your hotel or travel agent will be able to give you a map (and hopefully a driver and car... and some fuel).

If you get lucky you may find a compact *Central Harare* map at a service station.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Book Café (Map pp696-7; Fife Ave Shopping Centre, Fife Ave) Offers an appealing selection of African literature and reference material, and is the place for literary buffs with a healthy appetite.

Kingston's (Map pp696-7; cnr Second St & Jason Moyo Ave) Kingston's offers an excellent selection.

Emergency

Medical Air Rescue Service (MARS; ☎ 727540)

Police station (Map pp696-7; ☎ 733033; cnr Inez Tce & Kenneth Kaunda Ave)

Internet Access

Most internet centres in Harare also offer phone and fax services. A few with reliable power are listed. All charge around US\$2 per hour.

One Stop Internet Café (Map pp696-7; 60 Speke Ave)

Quick N Easy Internet Shop (Map pp696-7;

☎ 799224/5; Linquenda House, Nelson Mandela Ave)

Telco Internet (Map pp696-7; ☎ 751263; Shop 22, Ximex Mall, cnr Angwa St & Jason Moyo Ave)

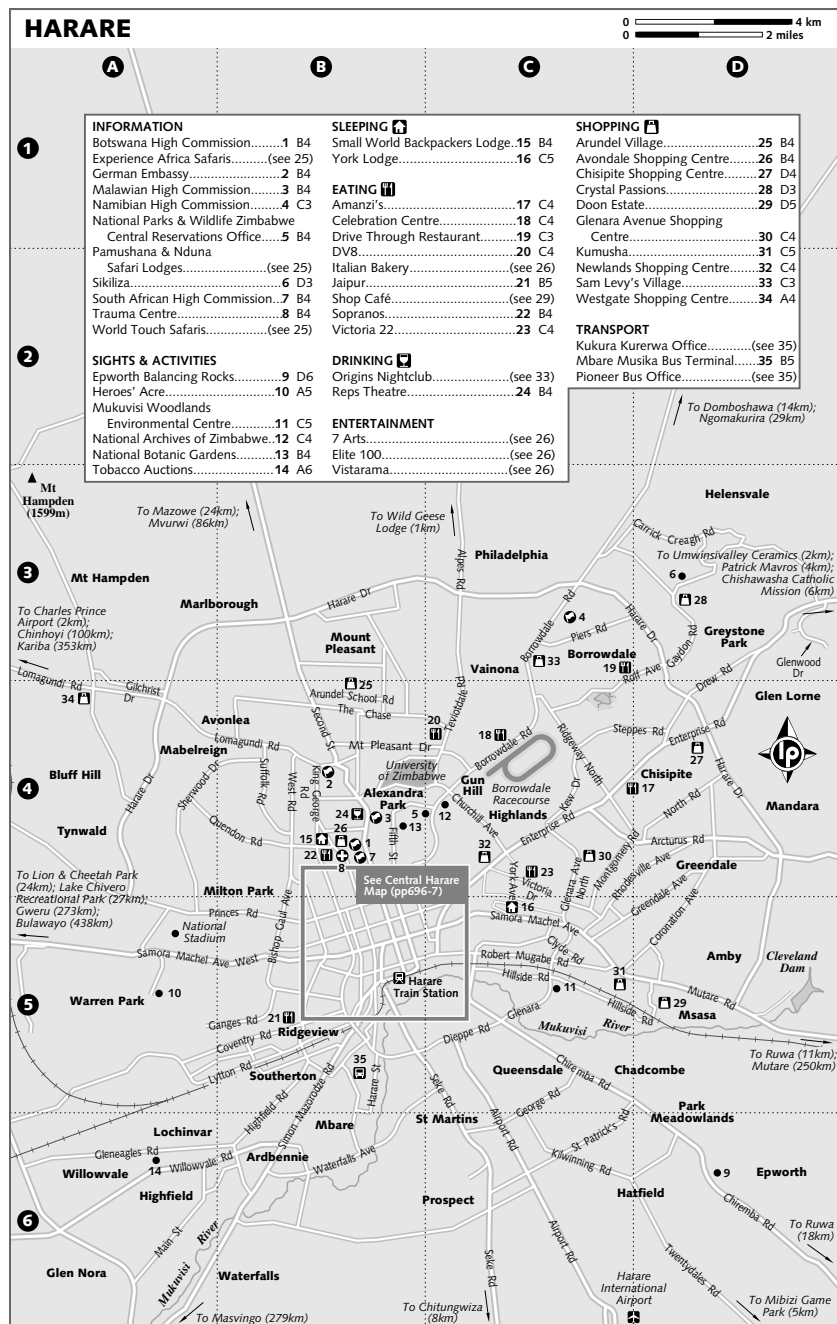
Internet Resources

Commercial Farmer's Union (www.cfu.co.zw) The on-line classifieds service is good for all from shipping goods home to holidays and travel (especially for houseboats on Kariba). Email aisdadmin@cfu.co.zw and subscribe for free. Its website is not updated frequently.

Twin Arts (www.twinarts.co.zw) Reliable source of up-to-date information and what's on in Harare. The site covers everything from live music, festivals and shopping to bushwalking and other activities, with links to NGOs, Civic Organisations and newslinks relevant to Zimbabwe.

Laundry

Dry cleaners can be found in most shopping centres, but the only place to do it yourself is the **Fife Avenue Laundrette** (Map pp696-7; Fife Ave Shopping Centre, Fife Ave). Otherwise, use your hotel. It remains cheap.



Media

Zimbabwe's media is heavily controlled. The state runs the radio and lone TV station, together with the only daily newspapers. The most popular newspaper was the *Daily News*, though it was bombed a few years back and has since been closed by the government. Dissent is allowed through Friday's *Independent* and in part Thursday's *Financial Gazette* (although recently it was alleged that Zimbabwe's CIO – Central Intelligence Organisation – is a part-owner of the *Financial Gazette*). TV broadcasts national news (mainly government propaganda), international news and music programmes in English, Shona and Ndebele.

Medical Services

Night pharmacies are listed in the *Herald*.

Avenues Clinic (Map pp696-7; ☎ 251180-99; cnr Mazowe St & Baines Ave) Recommended by expats.

Parirenyatwa Hospital (Map pp696-7; ☎ 701555; Leopold Takawira St) Large and central, but not recommended for tourists (as it has a shortage of key drugs).

Trauma Centre (Map p694; ☎ 700666/815; Lanark Rd, Belgravia) Also recommended by expats.

Money

If you use your credit card you will be billed at the lowest bank rate. See the boxed texts, p684 and p686 for information about Zimbabwe's currency problems and changing money.

Post

Main post office (Map pp696-7; Inez Tce; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8-11.30am Sat) Stamp sales and post-restante facilities are in the arcade, while the parcel office is in a separate corridor downstairs.

Telephone

Most public telephones along the main streets were vandalised and gutted long ago, so use your hotel.

Tourist Information

Department of Immigration Control (Map pp696-7; ☎ 791913; 1st fl, Linquenda House, cnr Nelson Mandela Ave & First St) To extend your visa, contact this office.

Harare Publicity Association (Map pp696-7; ☎ 781810; Second St; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) This association is waning, but you find more information from travel companies, newspapers and online.

National Parks & Wildlife Zimbabwe central reservations office (Map p694; ☎ 706077; fax

726089; national-parks@gtg.gov.zw; cnr Borrowdale Rd & Sandringham Dr; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Information and accommodation bookings relating to Zimbabwe's national parks and reserves are available here. It's near the northern end of the National Botanic Gardens, and a fair hike from town, so take a taxi.

Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (Map pp696-7; ☎ 758712; fax 758826; www.zimbabwe-tourism.co.zw; 1 Union Ave; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) For information about Zimbabwe in general.

Travel Agencies

The following are good for all flights, safaris, lodges and local knowledge. For information on tours of Zimbabwe, see p731.

Premier Travel & Tours (Map pp696-7; ☎ 704783; jenny@premier.co.zw; 24 Cleveland Ave, Milton Park)

Rennies Travel (☎ 703423; rennies@renniestravel.co.zw; Kenilworth Gardens, Newlands)

Sikiliza (Map p694; ☎ 861286; sikiliza@zol.co.zw; 3 Rye Hill Rd, Greystone Park)

World Touch Safaris (Map p694; ☎ 301496; belinda@zol.co.zw; Shop 37, Arundel Village, Mount Pleasant)

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Given rates of unemployment and suppression, Zimbabwe's crime rates are impressively low. Most crime remains petty, though it would be foolish to think Zimbabwe today is as safe as it once was. It is not. Bag snatching and car jacking are both on the rise, as are robberies at bars and nightclubs.

Be particularly careful when coming from the airport. 'Coca-Cola corner' (Seke Rd and Crips St) has become a favourite for robbers, who work with cohorts at the airport who tell them who has left the airport and where they put their baggage. As ever, ensure your bags are in the boot, or if not possible, safely locked under your feet.

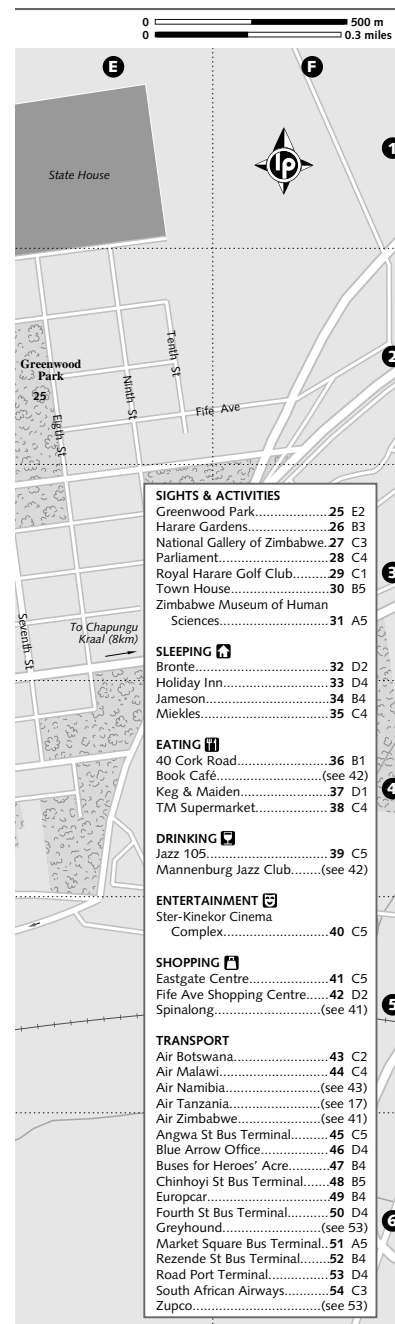
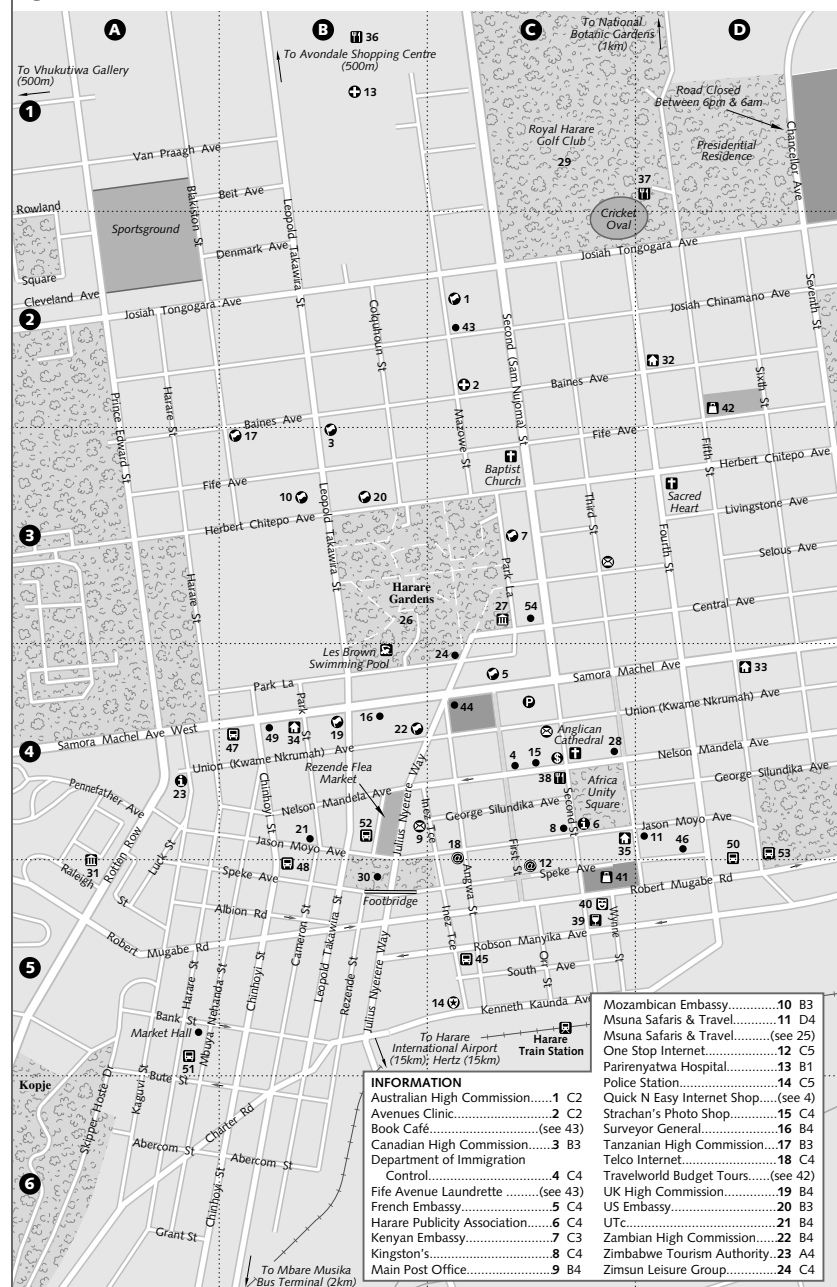
None of the internal political hostilities are directed at visitors, though this should not tempt you to openly espouse your political views (particularly if they are critical of President Mugabe – this is a crime). Nonetheless, compared with the way Zimbabwe is featured in foreign press, the country is surprisingly safe for the visitor, and the locals endlessly generous.

SIGHTS

National Archives of Zimbabwe

Founded in 1935, this **building** (Map p694; Ruth Taylor Rd; admission US\$3; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat),

CENTRAL HARARE



off Borrowdale Rd, is the repository for the history of Rhodesia and modern Zimbabwe. It features fascinating colonial artefacts and photos, accounts of early explorers and settlers, and a display about the Second Chimurenga. Prints of excellent oil paintings of Victoria Falls, among other places, are sold at the entrance.

Zimbabwe Museum of Human Sciences

This small **museum** (Map pp696-7; Civic Centre, btwn Pennefather Ave & Raleigh St; admission US\$1; ☎ 9am-5pm) has enough fossils and dioramas to keep most museum buffs happy for an hour or so. The highlights are the archaeological displays and the exhibits of traditional Shona crafts, arts and music. The museum is a 10-minute walk west of the city centre.

National Gallery of Zimbabwe

This **collection** (Map pp696-7; ☎ 704666; cnr Julius Nyerere Way & Park Lane; admission US\$0.25; ☎ 9am-5pm) is in the southeast corner of Harare Gardens. It has a mix of contemporary Zimbabwean and African art including paintings, (you can usually purchase paintings) stone sculptures, masks and carvings. The attached shop is excellent for sculptures, crafts and books on art.

Harare Gardens

The city's largest **park** (Map pp696-7; admission free) is a haven from the city bustle just a few blocks south, and a favourite spot for wedding photos and canoodling couples. Look for the island-like stand of rainforest with its miniature Victoria Falls and Zambezi Gorge.

Despite its peaceful atmosphere, Harare Gardens is notorious for crime, so always avoid short-cutting through the park at night and watch your belongings carefully by day. No cycling is allowed.

National Botanic Gardens

The 58-hectare **botanical gardens** (Map p694; Fifth St; admission US\$5; ☎ dawn-dusk) contain examples of the diverse flowers and greenery that thrive in Harare's pleasant climate. Most Zimbabwean species are also represented, as well as specimens from Southern Africa. It's a great place to spend the day.

Historic Buildings

For background on Harare's colonial architecture, look for a copy of *Historical Buildings of Harare* by Peter Jackson.

The **Parliament** (Map pp696-7; cnr Nelson Mandela Ave & Third St) was originally built as a hotel in 1895, but was soon commandeered for army barracks. It has undergone several renovations since and is now used by the senate and legislative assembly. It's not normally open to the public, but requests to sit in the gallery during the fiery political debates can be arranged by ringing the **Chief Information Officer** (☎ 700181). You may also be lucky enough to join a free weekly tour.

The **Town House** (Map pp696-7; ☎ 752577; Julius Nyerere Way) dates back to 1933. This primarily Italian Renaissance-style structure houses the mayoral, city council and town clerk's offices. The centrepiece of the gardens is a colourful floral clock and fountain. Free visits are available by calling the official number.

Mukuvisi Woodlands Environmental Centre

The nearest thing to a zoo in Harare is the **Mukuvisi Woodlands** (Map p694; ☎ 747152; Glenara Ave; admission US\$1; ☎ 8am-5pm), also given the trendy title of 'environmental centre'. Two-thirds of this 265-hectare woodland reserve, 7km east of the city centre, is natural msasa parkland, ideal for picnics, walking and bird-watching. The remaining area is a wildlife park where antelopes, zebras, giraffes and warthogs roam free.

Mukuvisi is at its best when they have special events on, such as lectures or family days, which they advertise via banners around town.

Heroes' Acre

On a hill overlooking Harare is the obelisk of **Heroes' Acre** (Map p694; ☎ 774208; Fourth Ave; admission free; ☎ dawn-dusk). This dominating monument – built in true North Korean style – serves as a memorial to the Zipra and Zanla forces who died during the Second Chimurenga (see p684).

Tobacco Auctions

Tobacco used to be one of Zimbabwe's major foreign-exchange earners and the country produced the best leaf in the world. Today there is talk that the famous **tobacco floor** (Map p694; ☎ 668921; Gleneagles Rd; ☎ 8am-noon Mon-Fri Apr-Oct) will be closed. If you get the chance, check it out before it goes! Although the quantity traded now is a fraction of the amount in years gone by, it remains a fascinating look at where the cigarette begins.

ACTIVITIES

The most famous of the seven golf courses around Harare is the internationally acclaimed **Royal Harare Golf Club** (Map pp696-7; ☎ 702920; Fifth St; ☎ 6am-6pm), a 15-minute walk north of the city centre. Guests are welcome for a temporary membership fee of US\$12.

HARARE FOR CHILDREN

Harare remains a good place for kids, though many of the previous attractions (including Water Whirl) have closed. Most restaurants are very child-friendly, with children's menus, swings, jumping castles etc. One remaining favourite is **Greenwood Park** (Map pp696-7; cnr Herbert Chitepo & 7th; all-day pass US\$10; ☎ 10am-5pm) with rides for kids, particularly for those under seven.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Harare International Festival of Arts (☎ 300119; www.hifa.co.zw) is the annual event, held in the last week of April. Embassies and corporate sponsors bring out international acts to produce a crammed timetable alongside Zimbabwean artists. Performances include classical music, jazz, soul, funk, theatre and dance. Workshops and craft markets feature alongside the action during the day and at night, it's time to eat and party. If you're in the region don't miss it.

The **Bulawayo Music Festival** is held for a week in mid-June.

Zimbabwe International Film Festival is held for 10 days over the last week of August and the first few days of September.

SLEEPING

Small World Backpackers Lodge (Map p694; ☎ 335341; mail@backpackerslodge.com; 25 Ridge Rd; r US\$55) The problem with backpackers lodges is that they have seen so few backpackers that if they have survived, they are now pretty sleazy. But this one is still good. Close to Avondale shopping centre, it has a bar and a city view from its rooftop deck.

Jameson (Map pp696-7; ☎ 774106; cnr Samora Machel Ave/Park Street; s/d US\$87/122) Right in the centre of town with 123 rooms, this place is dated but has most mod cons plus a beauty salon and chapel.

Bronte (Map pp696-7; ☎ 700691, 796631; 132 Baines Ave; s/d US\$97/122) Located on the eastern edge of town within a pretty and peaceful walled garden, it has plain rooms but is walking distance from town.

Holiday Inn (Map pp696-7; ☎ 7795611; cnr Samora Machel Ave & Fifth St; s/d US\$125/155) This hotel is centrally located and although a bit tired has no pleasant or unpleasant surprises.

York Lodge (Map p694; ☎ 746622; 1 York Ave, Newlands; s/d US\$130/170) This is a lovely safari-style lodge set in the suburbs and is a nice alternative to a city hotel. Run by a very nice couple.

Meikles (Map pp696-7; ☎ 795655; www.meikles.com; cnr Jason Moyo Ave & Third St; r US\$240; ☎) This is the fanciest hotel in town, sister of the Victoria Falls Hotel. Has fine dining, a smart bar, a gym, pool, bar and beautician on the rooftop, and a couple of great shops in the foyer.

EATING Cafés

Most cafés serve coffee for US\$2, cakes and snacks from US\$4, and light meals from US\$7. Cafés are generally open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, with some open later on Friday and Saturday. Many are closed on Sunday.

Italian Bakery (Map p694; ☎ 339732; ground fl, Avondale Shopping Centre, King George Rd; ☎ 7.30am-11pm) Despite views of the car park, the décor is old-world Italian as the owners are Italian-Ethiopian. This means the coffee is good and the meals – rolls, wraps and pastas – tasty.

Sopranos (Map p694; ☎ 333833; Argyle Rd, Avondale; ☎ 8am-8pm) Named after the long-running American TV series, Sopranos caters for the whole family, with food and an indoor climbing gym for kids, and steak, fish and vegetarian meals for grown-ups.

40 Cork Road (Map pp696-7; ☎ 253585; 40 Cork Rd, Belgavia) Like many businesses in Harare, this is a house-turned-restaurant with a huge garden. It also has an art gallery and an interiors and plant shop. It has some of the best coffee and cakes in Harare.

Shop Café (Map p694; ☎ 446086; Doon Estate, 1 Harrow Rd, Msasa) Most perfect for brunch and lunch any day except Sunday, the Shop Café serves some of the most appetising food in Zimbabwe, from its amazing homemade muesli, yogurt and stewed fruit to vegetable moussakas and fish curries. The food here will put you in the right mood for shopping in the attached shop for hand-printed textiles, hand-painted ceramics and cane and teak furniture.

Book Café (Map pp696-7; ☎ 792551; 1st fl, Fife Ave Shopping Centre; ☎ 8am-10pm) This café is fairly dead during the day but at night hosts popu-

lar local musicians, poets and writers, and is crowded and lively when there's a performance. You can eat traditional food here, especially *sadza* (maize-meal porridge) – the staple and national obsession.

Celebration Centre (Map p694; ☎ 850875; 162 Swan Dr) A huge new church/concert hall/event centre with a café on the ground floor at the entrance which stays open later than other cafés. You don't have to be religious to pitch up for the best cakes in Harare, and great coffee too. Rub shoulders with regionally famous gospel singers. Swan Dr is parallel to Borrowdale Rd.

Restaurants

Restaurants are open for lunch and dinner but most are closed on Sundays.

Keg & Maiden (Map pp696-7; ☎ 700037; Harare Sports Club; mains US\$4) Tuck into bangers and mash or steak and chips in a cheerful pub atmosphere. You can also order a veg meal. Try this place, off Fifth St, for a pub meal and check out the magnificent international cricket ground (sadly, minus cricketers). On Saturday nights there's live music.

DV8 (Map p694; ☎ 745202; Groombridge shops, cnr the Chase & Teviotdale Rd; mains US\$8) The steaks here are divine. It also serves chicken and pasta dishes.

Jaipur (Map p694; ☎ 740919; Sunrise Sports Club, Hurtsview Rd, Ridgeview; meals per person US\$9) This place is open on Sundays. Delicious Indian food – including vegetarian thalis – upstairs overlooking a cricket ground where Harare's Indian community plays cricket.

Amanzi's (Map p694; ☎ 497768; 158 Enterprise Rd, Highlands; dinner US\$40) Set in a stunning former colonial house with African décor and an even more amazing garden, Amanzi's has delicious food from around the world and a great vibe. You can also buy a painting from a local artist on the way out. A must.

Victoria 22 (Map p694; ☎ 776429; 22 Victoria Rd, Newlands; dinner US\$50) Yet another restaurant set in what was once a colonial house, this is a favourite of well-heeled locals. It is pretty formal (for Harare standards), with choices within a set menu of four courses, and probably has the best food in town.

Drive Through Restaurant (Map p694; ☎ 253 585/6; cnr Rolf Valley Rd & Fisher Ave) An incredibly casual affair where you buy fish and then have it cooked for you. Delicious food and laid back, though you can make bookings.

Wild Geese Lodge (☎ 860466; 2 Buckland Lane) One restaurant that is open on Sundays for a good ol' Sunday roast is this place off Alpes Rd. It's a thatched complex 10 minutes' drive north with views across the grassy highveld to wildlife. It also has accommodation: nine private suites.

Self-Catering

Every shopping centre (see Shopping, right) has supermarkets. In the city centre, try **TM Supermarket** (Map pp696-7; cnr Nelson Mandela Ave & Second St).

ENTERTAINMENT

Harare is a great place to shake your booty to live African bands or to Western-style electronic music at a disco. For information about upcoming events, and to find out what's hot and what's not, check the listings in the *Daily News* and the weekly Standardplus supplement in the *Standard*.

Never walk to or from any of these (or any other) late-night spots after dark; always take a taxi.

Bars & Nightclubs

Harare's music scene rocks, and you can catch many traditional and contemporary music performances at bars and cafés around the capital where well-known local musicians play regularly. To see who's playing where, look at the entertainment page of the Friday and Saturday editions of the *Herald* or online at www.twinnarts.co.zw.

Reps Theatre (Map p694; ☎ 308159; Second Street Extension Shopping Centre) One of the only true bars in town for just a drink and a chat is behind the foyer here.

Origins Nightclub (Map p694; Sam Levy's Village, cnr Borrowdale & Piers Rds) If you wanna disco there's this nightclub at Sam Levy's Village.

Jazz 105 (Map pp696-7; ☎ 722516; cnr Second St & Robson Manyika Ave) This trendy place has live Afro jazz on Sunday and Wednesday evenings.

The Book Café and the **Mannenburg Jazz Club** (Map pp696-7; ☎ 730902), right next door, have live performances every night except Sunday.

Cinemas

Cinemas offering recent films, and cheap and comfortable seats (\$3), include the **Ster-Kinekor Cinema complex** (Map pp696-7; Robert Mugabe

Rd), opposite the Eastgate Centre, and the Elite 100, Vistarama and 7 Arts cinemas, all at the Avondale Shopping Centre (Map p694).

SHOPPING

Shopping centres around Harare include the Eastgate Centre, Fife Ave Shopping Centre and Arundel Village in the centre (Map pp696-7); and Chisipite, Glenara Ave, Newlands, Sam Levy's Village and Westgate further out (Map p694).

Visit the Avondale markets situated on top of the old car park at Avondale Shopping Centre for carvings, beaded jewellery and other crafts.

Doon Estate (Map p694; 1 Harrow Rd, Msasa) Has a number of shops, including Art Mart, which is stocked with the work of dozens of local artisans and crofters. The Cocoa Tree (more commonly known as The Belgian chocolate shop), also here, has to be experienced to be believed. Eat and drink in or takeaway – its novelty chocolates make great presents.

Kumusha (Map p694; ☎ 446944; 2 Coronation St, Musasa) Sublime, handmade Zimbabwean furniture and household goods for interiors and exteriors. A must to check out.

Umwinsivalley Ceramics (☎ 883959) Along the Umwinsedale Rd, this is a workshop, gallery and shop, specialising in hand painted china and set on the top of a hill overlooking a valley. The view alone is worth the trip.

Patrick Mavros (☎ 860131; www.patrickmavros.com) Follow the signpost to the studio and gallery at the end of Haslemere Lane, 1km off the Umwinsedale Rd. Set atop a spectacular hill, overlooking a picture perfect valley complete with giraffe and buffalo, a visit is a must. This place sells designer silverware from jewellery to tableware and whimsical paperweights (collector items or presents for the person who has everything). Mavros's signature style in his jewellery is the ndoro shell, the original currency of Zimbabwe. He also has a shop in Knightsbridge, London, though this one is cheaper!

Crystal Passions (Map p694; ☎ 882466; www.ourcrystalpassion.com; 24 Newbold Rd, Greystone Park) Hand-cut and polished Zimbabwean crystal jewellery for beauty and healing.

Spinalong (Map pp696-7; Sam Levy's Village) This music shop has a great selection of local music CDs, including artist such as Oliver Mtukudzi, Thomas Mapfumo, Simon Chimbetu and mbira groups.

MOVERS & SHAKERS: OLIVER MTUKUDZI

Oliver Mtukudzi is so ubiquitous in Zimbabwe, so accomplished and so loved, that he is seen across generations as a father figure. His lyrics are largely socially driven and are an inspiring force in a country where most of the people have been silenced. He is candid about AIDS, honest about politics and savvy about mixing it all with essential doses of hope.

Mtukudzi's music is called 'soul and R&B, a mix of his homeland and South African townships' which is all true enough. But the man cannot be tied down so easily. In Zimbabwe he is known as 'Tuku' and across Southern Africa people will talk of 'Tuku' tunes and the sounds borne by Mtukudzi.

A prolific musician with more than 30 albums to his name, the composer of three movie soundtracks, and a contributor to Mahube, Southern Africa's super-group, Oliver Mtukudzi has made the most of his 54-years.

His own heroes – Otis Redding and Jamaica's Toots Hibbert – would be proud.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

For details about international flights to and from Harare, see p729.

Air Zimbabwe (Map pp696-7; ☎ 253752; Eastgate Centre) operates flights to/from Bulawayo (US\$140/250 one way/return, 45 minutes) and Victoria Falls (US\$230/375 one way/return). The following airlines also have offices in Harare: **Air Botswana** (Map pp696-7; ☎ 793195/228/229; Travel Plaza); **Air Namibia** (Map pp696-7; ☎ 732094/5; Travel Plaza); **South African Airways** (Map pp696-7; ☎ 794511/2/6/47/83; SCC House); **Air Tanzania** (Map pp696-7; ☎ 752537/8); **Air Malawi** (Map pp696-7; ☎ 752563).

Air France, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, KLM, Lufthansa can all be reached by calling ☎ 703880.

Bus

Most buses to destinations within Zimbabwe leave from the Mbare Musika Bus Terminal (Map p694) next to the market 5km from the city centre. A few buses leave from the Road Port terminal (Map pp696-7) in town, which is where international services leave from. Bus companies include the following:

Blue Arrow (Map pp696-7; ☎ 729514; barrow@africaonline.co.zw; Chester House, Speke Ave)

Greyhound (Map pp696-7; ☎ 720801; Road Port Terminal)

Kukura Kurerwa (Map p694; ☎ 669973/6; Mbare Musika Bus Terminal)

Pioneer Bus (Map p694; ☎ 795863, 790531; Mbare Musika Bus Terminal)

Zupco (Map pp696-7; ☎ 704933; Road Port Terminal)

Train

The train station is near the corner of Kenneth Kaunda Ave and Second St. In theory, trains

go from Harare to Bulawayo (sleeper US\$10, nine hours, 9pm); Harare to Mutare (US\$6, 8½ hours, 9.30pm) and from Bulawayo to Victoria Falls (sleeper US\$11, 8pm).

In reality, train timetables are constantly changing and trains are not particularly safe for tourists and are frequently used as travelling brothels. See p731 for more information.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

All international and domestic airlines use the Harare International Airport, 15km southeast of the city centre. Charter flights and other light aircraft operate out of Charles Price airport, 2km northwest of Harare.

Car & Motorcycle

Major international car rental companies in Harare include **Europcar** (Map p694; ☎ 752559; carhire@europcar.co.zw; 19 Samora Machel Ave West) and **Hertz** (☎ 706254; admin@hertz.co.zw).

Minibus

There are too few minibuses these days for locals. Tourists use taxis or private cars.

Taxi

Always take a taxi at night, and even consider using one during the day to save your legs. There are taxi stands on the corner of First St and Nelson Mandela Ave; on Samora Machel Ave near First St; on Union Ave between Angwa St and Julius Nyerere Way; and in front of large hotels. All taxis are private hire. Official services include **Rixi Taxi** (☎ 753080). To or from anywhere in the city centre costs from US\$3 to US\$8 and to the suburbs costs from US\$10 to US\$30.

AROUND HARARE

Most places listed in this section can be visited on day trips from the capital.

Epworth Balancing Rocks

Although better examples of balancing rocks can be found all over Zimbabwe, those at **Epworth** (admission with guided tour US\$4; ☎ 6am-6pm), 13km southeast of Harare, off Chiremba Rd, are probably the most famous. The main attraction is the group known as the 'Bank Notes', which were catapulted to rock stardom by being featured on Zimbabwe's bank notes.

Ewanrigg National Park

This small **national park** (admission US\$12; ☎ 6am-6pm), 40km northeast of Harare, consists of 240 hectares of elaborate gardens and woodland. The gardens are characterised by an array of prehistoric-looking aloes, cacti and palm-like cycads, and during winter the slopes glow with the brilliant red and yellow blooms of the succulents and the variegated hues of tropical flowers. The best time for blooms is June to October. But don't go on Saturday or Sunday, because the crowds will easily spoil the tranquillity.

Lion & Cheetah Park

This **park** (admission per adult/vehicle US\$15/3; ☎ 8am-5pm) sits on a private estate, 24km west of Harare and just off the road to Bulawayo. It's the only place close to Harare where visitors can 'ooh' and 'aah' at the variety of big cats (many of which are offspring from orphans that have lived in the park since 1968). You can also see baboons, crocodiles, giraffes and elephants, and even Tommy, a 250-year-old tortoise. Visitors must have a rented, chartered or private vehicle; walking and hitching are not permitted, though you can now take lion cubs for a walk (with a guide and a gun). The Lion and Cheetah Park regularly has new cubs.

Lake Chivero Recreational Park

This 5500-hectare park is 32km southwest of Harare. It focuses on the 57-sq-km **Lake Chivero** (formerly Lake McIlwaine), where

day-trippers from Harare love to spend their weekends fishing, boating and partying. But avoid swimming: if the crocs don't get you, the nasty bilharzia bugs might.

On the northern shore, **Kuimba Shiri Bird Sanctuary** (admission US\$7; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) boasts over 450 types of birds, apparently the largest variety of indigenous species in Africa. The Admiral's Cabin (below) offers all sorts of activities, such as horse riding and boat/canoe hire.

SLEEPING & EATING

National Parks Accommodation (camping per person ZW\$125, lodges with 2/4/5 beds US\$2/3/4, chalets with 1/4/5 beds US\$1/2/3; ☎) Guests at this place on the northern shore of the lake can use the swimming pool and braai pits.

Admiral's Cabin (☎ 062-2309; bird.park@mango.zw; camping per person US\$3, chalets with breakfast per person US\$12) Offers comfy accommodation inside the bird sanctuary. A bar and restaurant are attached.

Domboshawa & Ngomakurira

Domboshawa ('Red Rock' in the Shona language), 16km northeast of Harare, is renowned for its rock paintings. From the small **museum** at the car park, a well-marked 15-minute walk takes you to the **Domboshawa Caves** (☎ 790044; admission US\$4; ☎ 6am-6pm) where the paintings are concentrated.

Ngomakurira (☎ 790044; admission US\$2; ☎ 6am-6pm) offers even more spectacular rock paintings (especially photogenic in the afternoon).

Both sites make an interesting day or half-day trip. Domboshawa is 30km north of Harare. Drive north along the Borrowdale Rd to Domboshawa village or take the Bindura via Chinamora bus, from Harare's Mbare Musika bus station (Map p694). The bus can drop you at the turn-off, and you'll need to walk 1km from there to the entry gate.

For Ngomakurira, follow the same directions but go 15km further to Ngomakurira village (45km north of Harare). The entrance is 2km in from the main road.

NORTHERN ZIMBABWE

The major attractions in this part of the country are the eastern section of Lake Kariba and the Mana Pools National Park, though the Chinhoyi Caves and Matusadona National Park are also worth the effort.

KARIBA

☎ 061 / pop 15,000

The small lakeside town of Kariba is spread out along the steep lakeshore and across a hill (Kariba Heights) overlooking the lake. The road alongside the lake is, not surprisingly, called Lake Dr. From here another road winds up through the tree-covered hills to Kariba Heights. There are lovely lake views through the trees, and wildlife often comes through town.

Information

The **Kariba Publicity Association** (☎ 2328; www.kpa@mweb.co.zw; ☎ 8am-5pm), a steep 15-minute walk uphill from Lake Dr, has an impressive view of the dam wall and the deep gorge below. The staff are friendly but can't help with much. However, it's worth coming here for the views.

Sights

The main road leads to the **dam wall**, which straddles the Zimbabwe-Zambia border. You can walk or drive across the dam wall into Zambia or just to look at the spectacular view. If you want to visit the dam wall independently, tell the Zambian or Zimbabwean immigration officials of your intention so that you don't have to pay any extra visa fees.

In Kariba Heights (or 'the Heights') the quaint **Church of Santa Barbara** (Kariba Heights; admission free; ☎ 8am-6pm) is dedicated to the patron saint of Italian military engineers, as well as to the Virgin Mary and St Joseph (the patron saint of carpenters). Workers from the Italian company that helped create Kariba Dam built the church in memory of 21 colleagues who died during construction. The **Operation Noah Monument** nearby commemorates the 1959 rescue of wildlife from the rising waters of Lake Kariba.

Activities

There's not a lot to do in Kariba town, apart from book a trip to Matusadona or Mana Pools National Parks, or a Lower Zambezi canoeing safari. You can also arrange houseboats and canoeing trips on Lake Kariba.

Al Cove (☎ 3338; rstubs@ecoweb.co.zw; Heights Shopping Centre, Kariba Heights) operates houseboat trips (US\$7 per person per day). **Kariba Houseboats** (☎ 2766; houseboats@zol.co.zw; Andora Harbour) is another operator.

Several operators run canoeing safaris between Chirundu and Mana Pools (two/three days from US\$120/300), and walking or driving safaris to Mana Pools and Matusadona National Parks (from US\$80 per day). There is a small charter plane based in Kariba that does fairly reasonable charters from Kariba to Mana and back. Rates for activities in national parks do not include park admission fees. Recommended companies include: **Buffalo Safaris** (☎ 3041; buffalo@ecoweb.co.zw; Kariba Kushinga Lodge) and **River Horse Safaris** (☎ 2447; www.riverhorse.co.zw; Kariba Breezes Hotel).

WILDLIFE DRIVES

Several companies offer wildlife drives around the Matusadona National Park. The best time for wildlife viewing is between July and November.

River Horse Safaris (☎ 2447; www.riverhorse.co.zw; Kariba Breezes Hotel) specialises in a full-day, four-in-one 'combo' including a wildlife drive, walking safari, canoe trip and lake cruise (about US\$100 per person).

Buffalo Safaris (☎ 3041; buffalo@harare.iafrica.com; Kariba Kushinga Lodge) provides experienced guides and has better than average access to Matusadona.

Sleeping & Eating

The plummet in tourism has led to the demise of several lodges including the once-popular Breezes Hotel.

If you want to stay on the edge of the lake, hiring a house is a good option. With sweeping views, pools and often tennis courts, these can be a great option for a family or two. And as prices can be paid direct in US dollars, you will avoid painful exchange rate differences. Travel agents or the Commercial Farmers Union's online classifieds has a good listings service for houses and houseboats. Email aidsadmin@cfu.co.zw and subscribe for free.

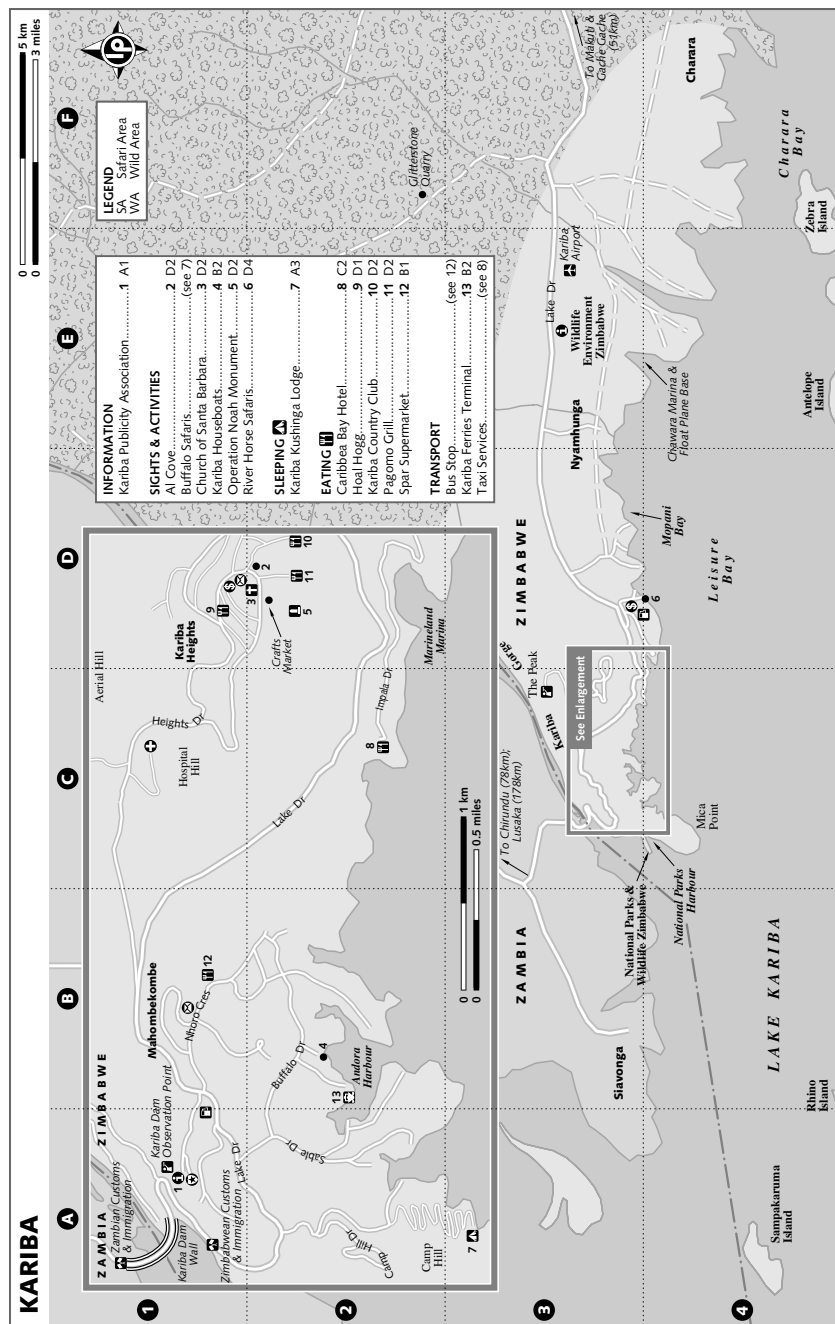
For self-catering lodges, buy your food at ZV Spar Supermarket in Kariba town or bring food from Harare, as Kariba prices tend to be higher than Harare.

Kariba Kushinga Lodges (☎ 3041/2/3; kushinga@zol.co.zw; Stand 780, Camp Hill; camping US\$5, chalets with 2/4/6/12 beds US\$40/60/70/120) Beautifully appointed and overlooking the lake; fully self-catering, cooking and camping facilities, toilets and laundry.

Hoal Hogg (Kariba Heights; meals US\$7) Behind Barclays Bank, it offers hot and cold (soft) drinks,

WARNING

Despite almost everyone's greatest efforts, almost everything in Zimbabwe is on the slide. This includes safety. If something looks dangerous, it probably is.



Pagoma Grill (☎ 2894; Kariba Heights; meals US\$8) Serves up light snacks and grilled dinners in a tasteful setting, but ironically most dishes on offer are not fish. If you've made the trek up to Kariba Heights anyway, it's well worth enjoying a nice cold beer while savouring the views from the terrace.

Other recommendations:
Caribbea Bay Hotel (Impala Dr) Has good food too.
Kariba Country Club (Kariba Heights) Known for its home cooking.

Around Karibe

The following places can be booked through any of the travel agents in Kariba.

Musango is the most popular tented camp in Kariba because of its location, good guiding and abundant game, given its proximity to Matusadona National Park. The park is not very child-friendly, though, with a lack of activities and electric fences surrounding the camp.

Rhino Island is also wonderful – very remote and very wild. But, again, not a place to take children. It's rustic and basic and there are many lions in the area.

Spurwing is a great lodge for kids, safely fenced and has babysitters.

Sanyati is gorgeous and luxurious, though the food is only OK.

Gache Gache is in a beautiful setting with the best fishing of the islands, but not much game.

MANA POOLS NATIONAL PARK

This magnificent 2200-sq-km **national park** (admission US\$15; ☞ 6am-6pm) is a Unesco World Heritage Site, and its magic stems from its remoteness and pervading sense of the wild and natural. The word *mana* means four in the Shona language, and refers to the four pools around the park headquarters that are popular with crocs and hippos. This is one park in Zimbabwe where you're almost guaranteed to see plenty of hippos, crocs, zebras, antelopes and elephants.

There are two main options for visitors to the unparalleled Mana.

The first is to book a tented camp through a travel agent – this is the easiest option and the one that most people do. There are different levels of tented camps, from fairly basic to wonderful luxury. (Note that a ‘tented

camp' does not mean you have to pitch your own tent – at the very least there are normal pre-erected walk-in tents with comfortable camp beds, and a camp cook to provide three full meals per day, usually around a table set up on the banks of the Zambezi or similar stunning location.) The level of luxury varies greatly, and some of the camps are not much different from a normal safari camp. The central difference everywhere in Mana is that nowhere is fenced in, so there can be elephants strolling by while you have your breakfast. This is what sets Mana Pools apart from just about any other safari park in the world and makes it a truly magical experience. You're also allowed to walk around without a guide, as you can see for miles around. Talk to a travel agent about the different options, they'll be able to clue you up on what's good and what you get at each camp.

Try a tented camp safari with Craig Van Zyl or Natureways through travel agent **Experience Africa Safaris** (Map p694; ☎ 301494/369185; Shop 37 Arundel Village, Quorn Avenue, Mt Pleasant, Harare).

The second option is to book a self-catering lodge through **National Parks & Wildlife Zimbabwe** (Map p694; ☎ 706077; fax 726089; national-parks@qta.gov

zw; cnr Borrowdale Rd & Sandringham Dr; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri). There are two main self-catering lodges at Mana Pools, each sleeping up to eight people, with four people in two enclosed bedrooms and four sleeping under mosquito nets on the balcony. Each has a gas stove, but no gas, so you cook your own food outside on the braai. There is also a gas fridge inside but you need to take ice blocks to bolster it; buy this in Kariba. There is limited electricity through solar panels, which literally run a couple of light bulbs – and you need to take a car battery to charge it.

The lodges are pretty basic – more or less like camping in a lot of ways, only that you have solid brick walls, and comfortable chairs and beds, and can sit inside at night time when the lions are on the prowl! The best thing is cooking bacon and eggs on the braai in the morning, keeping an eye on the monkeys who will steal food the second you turn your back, and the elephants that are approaching in the distance.

All of the animals – elephants, lions, buffalo, hippos, bushbucks – come right up to the lodge. With the upstairs balcony you also have your own private viewing platform, so if the animals get a bit too close for comfort

you can retire up there with a G&T and watch them in comfort!

Booking is open three months in advance. September/October is the best time of year to go there and it's incredibly popular. You need to get to the National Parks office at 3am on the morning of 1 June/July to book for those months.

MIDDLE ZAMBEZI CANOE SAFARIS

For many locals, the Zambezi River is the highway system around this stretch of northern Zimbabwe. To take advantage of this awesome wilderness route, several companies run canoe trips between Kariba and Kanyemba (on the river junction with Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mozambique).

The trip is normally done in stages: ie Kariba to Chirundu (three days), Chirundu to Mana Pools National Park (three to four) and Mana Pools to Kanyemba (four to five). Any combination is possible, but if you can do only one stage, the Chirundu to Mana Pools segment offers the best scenery and diversity of wildlife, and the departure point is accessible by public transport. July to October are peak months for wildlife viewing. Some readers have even complained about too *much* wildlife at times, because thirsty hippos and frisky elephants can be dangerous obstacles.

Most canoe safaris include transport to and from Kariba or Harare and visas (if required). You can always save some money by making your own way to Kariba, Chirundu or Siavonga (in Zambia) if you've booked your trip elsewhere, or simply book and start the canoe trip in Kariba town. There are places to stay and eat at the Chirundu villages on the Zimbabwean and Zambian sides.

Most canoe safaris run from April/May to October/November, but some operate year-round. Since Zimbabwe limits the number of operators allowed on each of the three segments (and restricts their days of operation), some companies run from the less-regulated Zambian side of the river. Please encourage your operator to observe good environmental practice if this is the case.

Finally, two points to remember. Firstly, the currents along this part of the Zambezi are deceptively strong. Secondly, all canoeists must stay within the territorial waters, and remain close to the bank, of the country they started in. Operators from Zambia are not permitted to cross the invisible border along

the Zambezi into Zimbabwe (or vice versa), despite what they may claim.

Canoe Safari Operators

The rates listed here are per person (but negotiable), and include transport from the booking office, guides, canoes, food and tented accommodation. Rates usually do not include admission fees (if required) to Mana Pools National Park. The high season is about July to October.

Buffalo Safaris (Map p704; ☎ 061-3041; buffalo@harare.jafrica.com; Kariba Kushinga Lodge, Kariba) In low/high season it charges US\$250/315 from Kariba to Chirundu, US\$470/620 from Kariba to Mana Pools, and US\$650/977 from Kariba to Kanyemba. Costs are lower if you start in Chirundu.

River Horse Safaris (Map p704; ☎ 061-2447; www.riverhorse.co.zw; Kariba Breezes Hotel, Kariba) Offers one-day canoe trips down the gorge for US\$75 and two-/three-/four-day excursions for US\$120/300/395.

CHINHOYI CAVES NATIONAL PARK

This small but worthwhile 'roadside' **national park** (admission US\$12; ☎ 6am-6pm) is 115km north-west of Harare. It's riddled with limestone and dolomite caves and sinkholes, which have been used for storage and refuge by traditional people for nearly 1500 years. The focus is **Sleeping Pool** or Chirorodzira (Pool of the Fallen), so named because locals were cast into the formidable hole by the invading Ngoni tribes in the early 19th century. The pool maintains a constant temperature of 22°C.

From **Dark Cave** (the rear entrance to Chirorodzira), the views through the sombre shadows to the sunlit waters far below reveal a magical effect. The clear water admits light so perfectly that the water line disappears and the pool takes on the appearance of a smoky blue underworld.

Caves Motel (☎ 067-22340; fax 22113; s/d with breakfast US\$25/31; 🚽) is at the park entrance. It also has a restaurant, poolside terrace and petrol supplies.

EASTERN HIGHLANDS

Few travellers to Zimbabwe expect to find anything like the Eastern Highlands, but once they discover them, fewer still can get enough. The narrow strip of mountain country that makes up Manicaland isn't the Africa that normally crops up in armchair travellers'

fantasies. It's a land of mountains, national parks, botanical gardens, rivers, dams and secluded getaways.

MUTARE

☎ 020 / pop 200,000

Mutare has a pretty setting in a bowl-like valley surrounded by hills. Zimbabwe's third-largest city, it has a relaxed rural-town atmosphere. Its real value, though, is its proximity to either Mozambique or the Bvumba region and Nyanga National Park.

Information

Chip Board Internet Café (Old Mutual Bldg)

Internet Cyber Café (☎ 67939; 67 Fourth St; per hr US\$2.20)

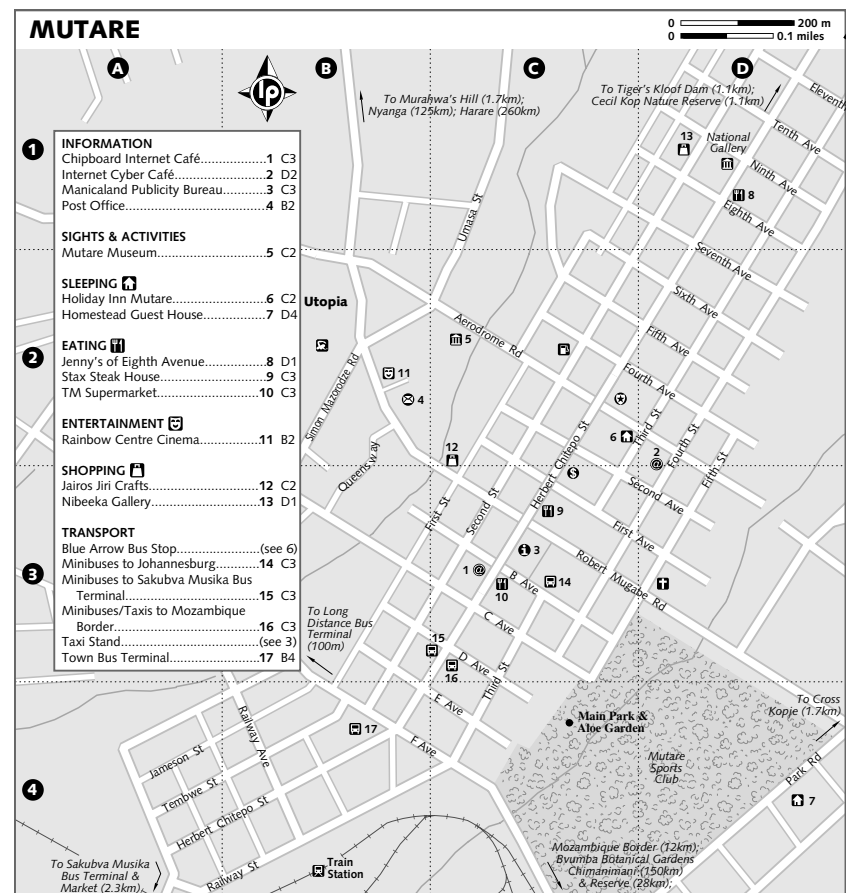
Manicaland Publicity Bureau (☎ 64711; fax 67728; cnr Herbert Chitepo St & Robert Mugabe Rd; ☎ 8.30am-12.45pm & 2-4pm Mon-Fri) Offers a book exchange and informal luggage-storage facility as well as accommodation, activities and transport information.

Post office (Robert Mugabe Rd) Four blocks west of the publicity bureau.

Sights

The Mutare Museum (☎ 63630; Aerodrome Rd; admission US\$10; ☎ 9am-5pm) is close to the centre and has interesting exhibits on geology, history, anthropology, technology, zoology and the arts.

The National Trust nature reserve located on **Murahwa's Hill** (admission free) has great views and natural landscapes. The complex encloses



some **rock paintings** and the crumbled **ruins** of an Iron Age village. Look for the *mujejeje* (rocks that resonate when struck).

The 1700-hectare **Cecil Kop Nature Reserve** (☎ 61537; admission US\$3; ☒ dawn-dusk) wraps around the northern side of Mutare and abuts the Mozambique border. Part of the park that can be reached without a vehicle is **Tiger's Kloof Dam**. Try to visit Tiger's Kloof at feeding time (about 4pm) when rhinos, antelopes, giraffes and zebras congregate at the dam.

Sleeping & Eating

Most travellers stop only briefly in Mutare on their way up to or down from the Eastern Highlands.

Homestead Guest House (☎ 65870; 52 Park Rd; s/d US\$10/15; ☒) This renovated late-19th-century home is set in a pretty garden with a pool. It has clean and comfortable rooms.

Holiday Inn Mutare (☎ 64431; reservations@him.zimsun.co.zw; cnr 3rd St & Aerodrome Rd; r US\$130) Typical of Holiday Inns. Not flash, but clean and good service.

Stax Steak House (☎ 62653; First Mutual Arcade, Herbert Chitepo St; mains US\$1-2, dinner US\$25) As well as succulent steaks, this restaurant serves veggie burgers, salads and delicious desserts.

Jenny's of Eighth Avenue (☎ 67764; cnr Eighth Ave & Herbert Chitepo St; mains around US\$8) You can pop into this craft shop café for a coffee or lunch.

Self-caterers can stock up at the **TM Supermarket** (cnr Herbert Chitepo St & B Ave) or visit the large fruit and vegetable market at the Sakubva Musika Bus Terminal.

Entertainment

Rainbow Centre Cinema (Robert Mugabe Rd) Shows rubbishy American films that fill in a rainy afternoon.

Shopping

Jairos Jiri Crafts (41 First St) Offers a number of cheap souvenirs, such as batiks, carvings, wall hangings and T-shirts, with the added bonus that all profits go to charity.

Nibeeka Gallery (Green Coucal Café, 111 Second St) This is more avant-garde, with hand-painted textiles and other crafts.

BVUMBA MOUNTAINS

☎ 020

Just 28km southeast of Mutare, the Bvumba (Vumba) Mountains are characterised by cool, forested highlands alternating with deep,

densely vegetated valleys. In the language of the Manyika Shona people, Bvumba means 'drizzle' and you'll probably have the opportunity to determine the name's validity. With its meadows, apple orchards, country gardens and tea-houses, the area seems to recreate the British countryside. If you're staying for more than a few days, pick up *Bvumba: Magic in the Mist* by David Martin from any decent bookshop in Zimbabwe.

Sights

BUNGA FOREST BOTANICAL RESERVE

This sprawling 1558-hectare **reserve** (admission free) is a rare pocket of forest that has not been (nor can be) chopped down or burnt off. There are no facilities, but the 39 hectares that straddle the main road to the botanical gardens do feature some ill-defined and overgrown hiking tracks, with plenty of butterflies, chameleons and birds to keep you company. These tracks are a bit of a crime spot, however, so take care.

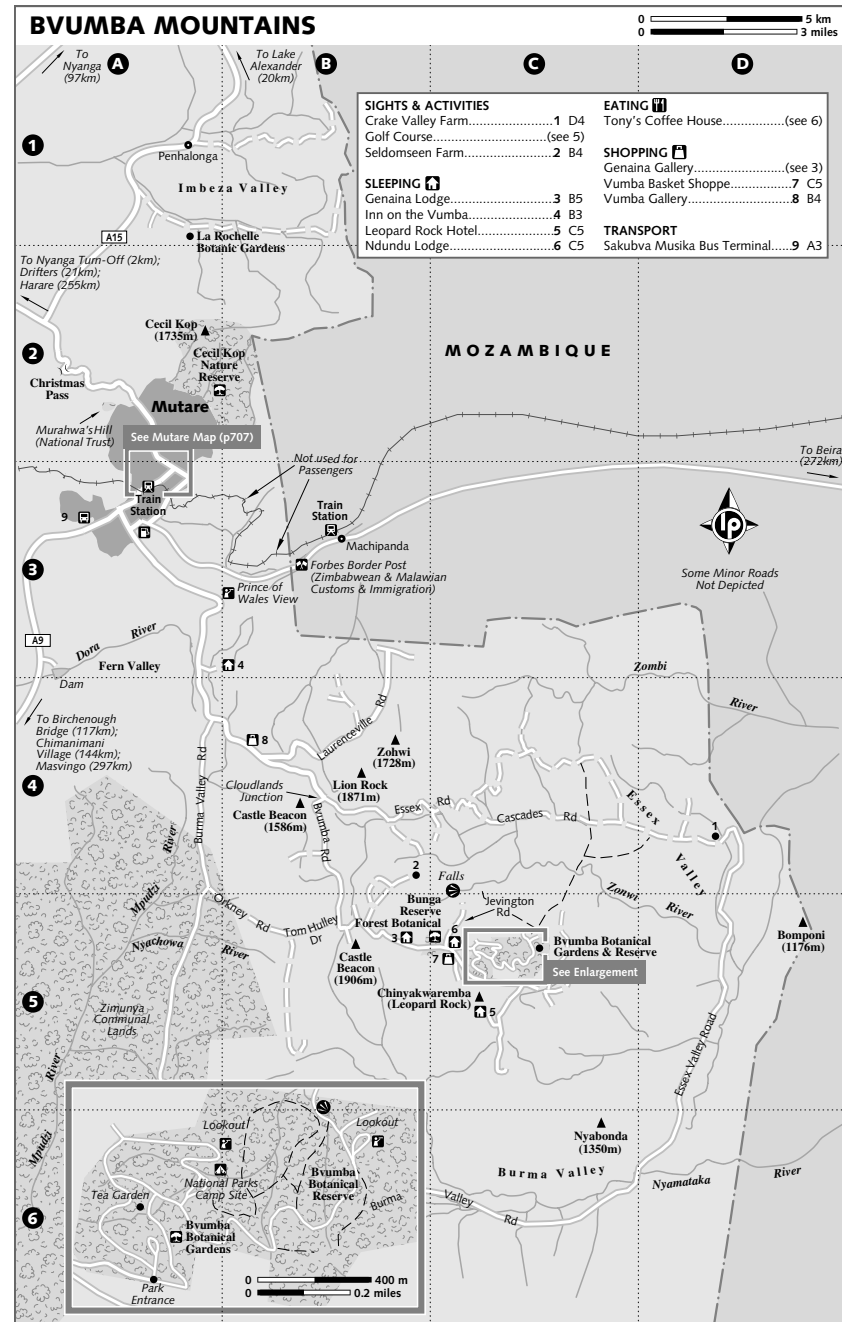
BVUMBA BOTANICAL GARDENS & RESERVE

These **gardens** (admission US\$14; ☒ 7am-5pm) are divided into a landscaped botanical garden (159 hectares), with specimens from around the world and wide lawns, and a wild botanical reserve (42 hectares), crisscrossed with footpaths through natural bush. Wildlife includes samango monkeys (unique to the Eastern Highlands), as well as elands, duikers, bushbucks and sables. Watch the forest floor for the odd little elephant shrews, tiny but ferocious beasts that hop like kangaroos and have long ears and elongated snouts.

BURMA & ESSEX VALLEYS

These two densely populated valleys, nearly 900m lower than Bvumba, are accessed by a 70km scenic loop road. The partially paved route passes through coffee, banana, tobacco and cotton plantations, and over some beautiful forest-laden mountains with views into Mozambique.

A favourite stop is the **Crake Valley Farm** (☎ 61769; Essex Valley Rd). It produces and sells the famous, soft Bvumba cheese, as well as a dozen or more other regional varieties. Tours and samplings are available from 10am to 3pm Monday to Saturday, but ring to make sure it's open before making a special trip out there.



Activities

Even if you can't tell a putter from a wedge, don't miss out on a round of golf at the Leopard Rock Hotel (below), with its superb grounds and breathtaking vistas. The European PGA called it the second-toughest course in the world. Budget travellers may never play on a course like this anywhere in the world so cheaply: nine/18 holes cost US\$12/24 (guests get a discount), while clubs cost less than US\$2 for 18 holes and caddies, who are compulsory, charge even less. There is a dress code (shirts with collar), though the authorities can be pretty relaxed about this.

Twitters should book (in advance) a two-hour bird life walk with **Seldomseen Farm** (☎ 68482). Keep your eyes peeled for a buff-spotted fluff tail or stripe-cheeked bulbul.

Sleeping & Eating

Ndundu Lodge (☎ 63777; www.ndundu.com; Bvumba Rd; camping or dm per person US\$5, s/d US\$10/14) This delightful thatched cottage, 10 minutes' walk from Bvumba Botanical Reserve, has a library, and impressive CD collection, a well-stocked bar and a restaurant offering veg and meat dishes. The enthusiastic owners have mapped out great walking and bike trails (for free) through the Bvumba.

Genaina Lodge (☎ 68177; s/d US\$100/140, cottages US\$200) Located 24km along Bvumba Rd from Mutare-Bvumba. Has tiny private, thatched cottages with a sometimes-open gallery of African artefacts.

Leopard Rock Hotel (☎ 60192; s/d US\$150/200) A favourite of the Queen Mother and the late Lady Di, Leopard Rock Hotel, at the end of the Bvumba Rd, is one of Zimbabwe's grand old dames. Although it reeks of glory from another era, it is still fancy and luxurious with views across one of the most stunning – and most difficult (championship rated) golf courses in the world.

Inn on the Vumba (☎ 67449; 📍) At the start of Bvumba Rd, 5km from Mutare. Has five cottages and two family rooms. Great for kids with swimming pool and playground

Tony's Coffee House (Bvumba Rd; coffees from US\$1, cakes from US\$3; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Mon) This legendary little thatched-roof café is an experience. The entertaining host will give you a lowdown on the area while he watches you devour delectable but sinful cakes, coffees, teas and hot chocolates. You won't need to eat for the rest of the day.

Shopping

Along Bvumba Rd you'll see women sitting underneath embroidered tablecloths, aprons and hankies, all strung up and swaying in the breeze.

Vumba Basket Shoppe (Hivu Nursery, Tea Garden & Lodge, Bvumba Rd) Sells cheap basketware, as well as the famous Bvumba cheese.

Vumba Gallery (Bvumba Rd) This massive gallery houses an extensive range of cheap T-shirts, baskets and pottery,

Genaina Gallery (Bvumba Rd) Sells more expensive, high-quality crafts from Zimbabwe and the region.

NYANGA NATIONAL PARK

 029

The 47,000-hectare **Nyanga National Park** (admission US\$10; ☞ 6am–6pm) is a scenically distinct enclave in the Eastern Highlands. Cecil Rhodes fell in love with the area, so he simply bought it for his own residence. Near Nyanga (Rhodes) Dam, he built a luxurious homestead and created an English-style garden with imported European hardwoods.

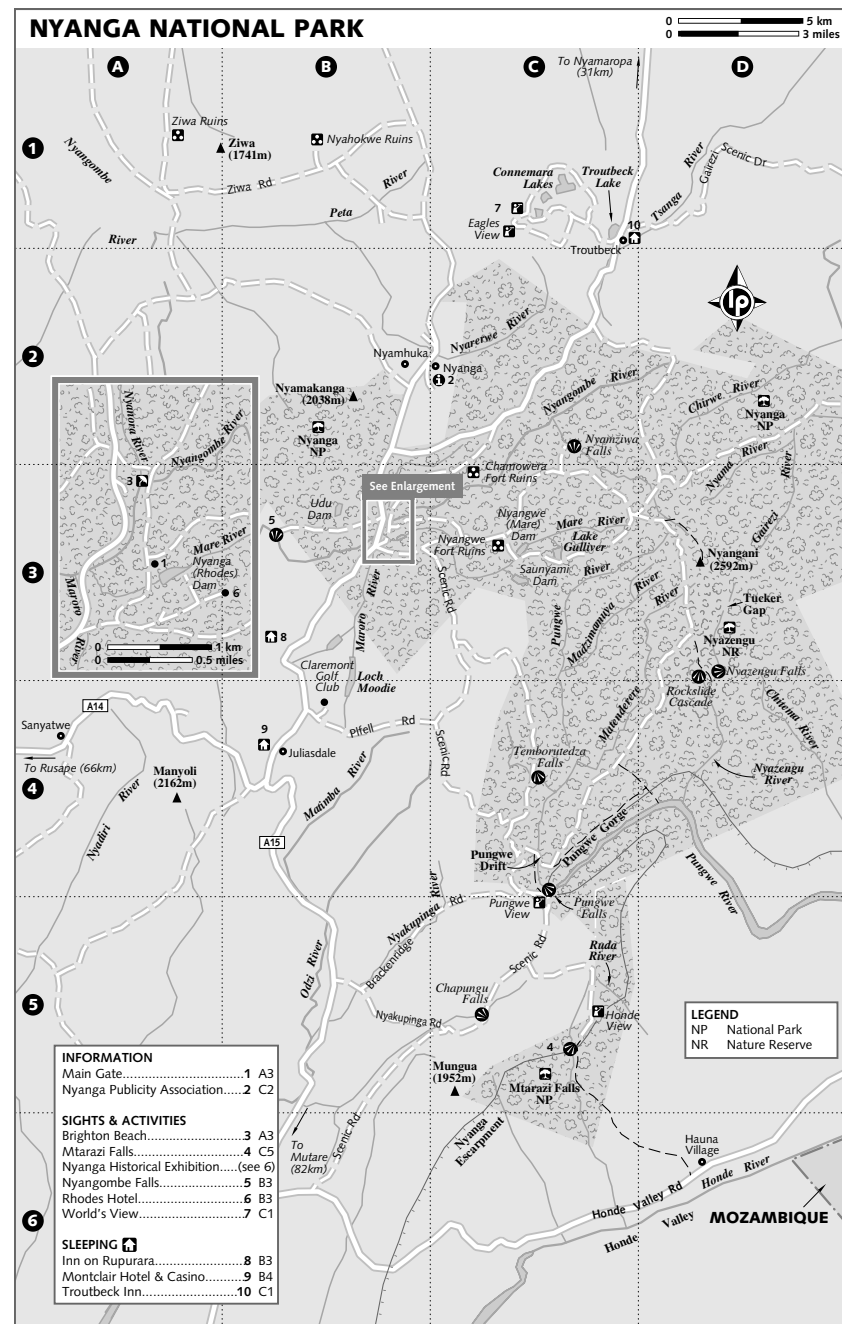
Close to the old hotel is the **main gate** (☎ 8274) to Nyanga National Park. The **Nyanga Publicity Association** (☎ 8435; 📧 8am-1pm & 2-4pm Tue-Fri, 9-11am Sat) is housed in the Nyanga village library, halfway between the village centre and the appropriately named Village Inn.

Sights & Activities

The **Rhodes Hotel**, with its tropical veranda and well-kept gardens overlooking the Nyanga Dam, was once the home of Cecil Rhodes. It's worth a visit for a meal or drink or to admire the gardens.

The **Nyanga Historical Exhibition** (Rhodes Museum; admission US\$4; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2.30pm-5.30pm Thu-Tue) is housed in the old man's former stables in the grounds of what is now the Rhodes Hotel. It features displays about Rhodes, as well exhibits about black African history, the struggles of the Second Chimurenga and the admirable works of Zimbabwean war hero and philanthropist **Rekayi Tangwana**.

Near the Nyangombe Camp Site is a natural wide spot below a cascade in the Nyangombe River. The sandy beach, unofficially known as **Brighton Beach** (admission free), features changing rooms, bilharzia-free swimming (if you're prepared to brave the chilly mountain water) and a green lawn.



Just outside the park's western boundary, the Nyangombe River tumbles over terraced stacks of cuboid boulders and plunges into a steep but shallow gorge called **Nyangombe Falls** (admission free). Once you've seen the upper falls, have a look downstream where there's a higher and louder single drop into a deep river pool.

World's View (admission US\$4; permanently open) is perched atop the Troutbeck Massif on a precipice above Troutbeck. This National Trust site affords broad views of northern Zimbabwe, but not of the rest of the world! It's 11km up a winding, steep road from Troutbeck – follow the signposts.

The flat-topped and myth-shrouded **Nyan-gani** (2592m) is Zimbabwe's highest mountain. From the car park 14km east of Nyanga Dam, the climb to the summit takes two to three hours. Note that the weather can change abruptly, and when the mists drop the view becomes irrelevant. Local inhabitants even believe that the mountain devours hikers! Visitors must register at the main gate to the national park before setting off, and check back in on their return.

The tiny **Mtarazi Falls National Park** (admission US\$12; 6am–6pm) lies just south of Nyanga National Park and is, for all practical purposes, a part of the same park. The central attraction is the 762m-high **Mtarazi Falls**, but it's little more than a trickle of water that reaches the lip of the escarpment and nonchalantly plummets over the edge. It is, nevertheless, the highest waterfall in Zimbabwe. Along the main road from Mutare, turn right along the Honde Valley Rd and then turn left (northeast) after 2km for Scenic Rd. It's then 16km to the turn-off to the falls and another 7km to the car park.

Sleeping & Eating

Many hotels listed here are popular with expats in Mutare, and business conferences from Harare, so it's worth booking ahead.

Montclair Hotel & Casino (☎ 2441; fax 2447; s/d with breakfast US\$16/20; ♿) A three-star place with luxurious trappings, such as a casino, swimming pool and mini-golf course, as well as tennis courts, croquet pitches and horse-riding facilities. The rooms are large and cosy, and the roaring fires in the foyer are a nice touch. Bookings on weekends are essential.

Inn on Rupurara (☎ 3021/4; rupurara@innsofzimbabwe.co.zw; full-board s/d US\$110/140) A beautifully appointed hotel of African-style lodges with

verandas. Ask for views overlooking the valley to Rupurara Mountain (or bald man's head).

Troutbeck Inn (☎ 8305; zimsuncro@zimsun.co.zw; s/d US\$140/156) A very English-style inn with a lake, roaring fires and hearty English food including high tea. Fish for trout, walk or go shooting. Good for families.

CHIMANIMANI

☎ 026

Chimanimani village, 150km south of Mutare, is enclosed by green hills on three sides, and opens on the fourth side to the dramatic wall of the Chimanimani Mountains. Even if you're not going to Chimanimani National Park, the village is certainly worth visiting for its serenity and scenery.

There are information notice boards at the Chimanimani Hotel, Blue Moon Bar and Msasa Café. There's a post office on the street past the village green. For information on hiking in the national park, see p714.

Sights & Activities

Be careful about muggings while walking in remote areas.

You can walk (or drive) around **Nyamzure**, also known as Pork Pie Hill (because of the shape). The well-defined path (5km uphill) to the summit starts near the church and offers spectacular views all around.

The same path continues for another 2km to the entrance of the **Chimanimani Eland Sanctuary** (admission US\$6; dawn–dusk). The odd thing about this 18-sq-km park is the conspicuous absence of elands; apparently, there were flaws in the sanctuary concept and all were poached, presumably by Mozambican insurgents. You may, however, see waterbucks, baboons, duikers, klipspringers and zebras.

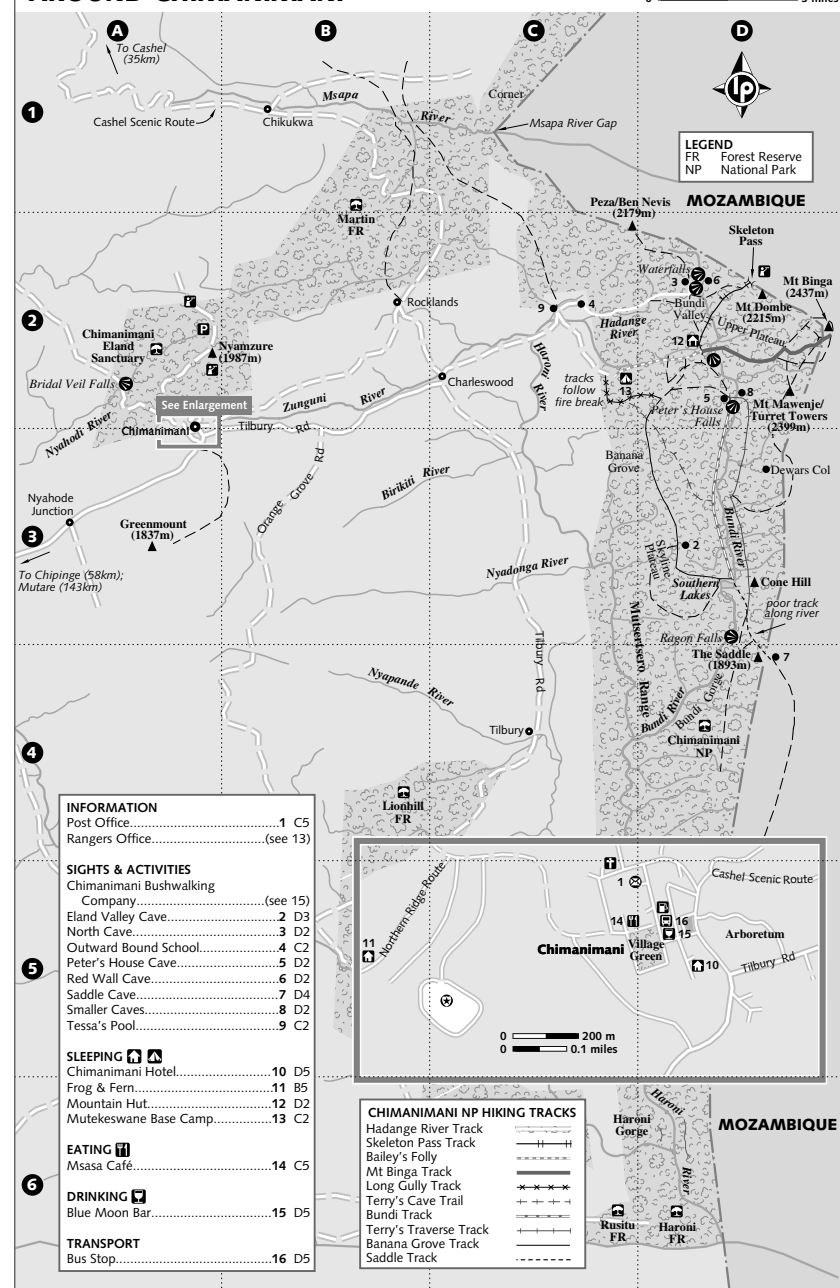
Sleeping, Eating & Drinking

Unfortunately, most of the lodges and hotels that were located on farms have been taken over by war veterans and therefore have ceased to exist.

Chimanimani Hotel (☎ 2511; full-board s/d US\$75/100; ♿) In the village, this place is tired but decent, surrounded by pleasant gardens, a pool and buzzing casino. Ask for a room with mountain views.

Frog & Fern (☎ 2294) It's very hard to contact this hotel but it's worth it for its three pretty stone lodges, or the Round House for six, with

AROUND CHIMANIMANI



great views of the mountains. It is located 1.2km west of the village.

Msasa Café (mains around US\$4; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Sat) This place is the best spot in the village for eating out. It offers a wide variety of meals and snacks from local *sadza* and stew to delicious Mexican tortillas.

For a cheap drink, and a long chat with some locals, head to Blue Moon Bar.

CHIMANIMANI NATIONAL PARK

Chimanimani National Park is a hiker's paradise. To go hiking in **Chimanimani National Park** (admission US\$10; ☎ 6am–6pm), 19km from Chimanimani village, you must sign in and pay park fees at Mutekeswane Base Camp. There's a road to the base camp, but after that the park is accessible only on foot.

From base camp, Bailey's Folly is the shortest and most popular route to the mountain hut (around three hours). Another option is the gentler Banana Grove Track. From the mountain hut, it's an easy 40-minute walk to **Skeleton Pass**, a former guerrilla route between Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Go in the late afternoon for an unsurpassed view into Wizard Valley in Mozambique.

The highest point in the Chimanimani Range is the 2437m-high **Mt Binga** on the Mozambique border, a stiff three-hour climb from the hut. Carry plenty of water. The last stream for a fill-up is less than halfway between the hut and the summit.

Hadange River Track is a good but challenging exit route that comes out near the **Outward Bound School** (☎ 026-2935). But you'll need to walk back along the road to sign out at base camp. Near Outward Bound is **Tessa's Pool**, a lovely swimming hole and a great place to cool off. Tessa's Pool is used by Outward Bound for some of its courses, and at these times it's closed to the public. So phone in advance to find out when it's available.

The Bundi Valley is riddled with **caves** and rock overhangs, which make ideal (free) camp sites. The most accessible caves lie near the valley's northern end. **North Cave**, a 30-minute walk north of the mountain hut, overlooks a waterfall and opens onto views of the highest peaks. Above the waterfall is a pool, ideal for a teeth-chattering dip, if you need some refreshment. **Red Wall Cave** lies 10 minutes further on.

Chimanimani Bushwalking Company (☎ 026-2932; www.bushwalking.co.mz; Chimanimani village) at the filling station in Chimanimani village, offers hik-

ing and camping trips in the park (one/five days per person US\$45/240). Rates include a guide, porter, transport, meals, camping gear and park admission fees. You camp in caves.

Sleeping & Eating

At Chimanimani National Park you can either camp at **Mutekeswane Base Camp** (camping per person US\$2), which is at the park entrance, or stay in the **mountain hut** (per person US\$5), which is a long and steep half-day walk from the base camp.

THE MIDLANDS & SOUTHEASTERN ZIMBABWE

Geographically, the Midlands are known as the highveld, while the warmer, lower-lying southeast is the lowveld. At the transition of the two regions is the appealing town of Masvingo. Nearby, is the expansive Lake Mutirikwe and the fabulous Great Zimbabwe, which gave its name to the country. The lowveld's finest attraction is the wildly beautiful but often-ignored Gonarezhou National Park.

KWE KWE

☎ 055 / pop 75,000

Kwe Kwe is a worthy place to break up the journey between Harare and Bulawayo, though you're unlikely to spend the night there.

The worthwhile **National Mining Museum** (First Ave; admission incl guided tour US\$2; ☎ 9am–5pm daily) provides a fascinating introduction to commercial gold-mining in Zimbabwe, past and present.

GWERU

☎ 054 / pop 128,000

Zimbabwe's fourth-largest city isn't a travelers' destination, though many pass through at some stage.

The **Gweru Publicity Association** (☎ 28606; cnr Eighth St & Robert Mugabe Way; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri) is inside the front door of the grand Municipal Offices.

Sights

The **Zimbabwe Military Museum** (Midlands Museum; Lobengula Ave; admission ZW\$400; ☎ 9am–5pm) is the

only one of its kind in the country. It houses a predictable collection of weapons, costumes and medals, as well as tanks, planes and other big toys.

Sleeping & Eating

Pamusha Guest House (☎ 23535; 73 Kopje Rd; s/d with shared bathroom US\$14/25, s/d US\$9/11) Offers the best value in town. It's quaint and friendly, some rooms contain massive, new bathrooms and all rooms come with breakfast.

Waldorf Café (54 Fifth St; meals under US\$1) This place serves African fare. The bakery inside is good.

OK Supermarket (Robert Mugabe Way) You can stock up here.

AROUND GWERU

Nalatala (also spelt Nalatala or Nalatele) rates among the best of Zimbabwe's 150 walled ruins. This simple structure on a remote granite hilltop enjoys a commanding view across the hills, plains and *kopjes*. The main feature, a decorated wall, exhibits in one collection all the primary decorative wall patterns found in Zimbabwe: chevron, chequer, cord, heringbone and ironstone.

The ruins are well signposted. From Gweru, turn south off the Bulawayo road at Daisyfield Siding and follow the gravel road approximately 27km to the signposted left turn-off. The site is 1km uphill from the parking area.

Commonly known as Dhlo Dhlo (approximate pronunciation: 'hshlo hshlo'), **Danangombe** isn't as lovely or as well preserved as Nalatala, but it is quiet and unspoilt. The most interesting feature is a crumbling enclosure formed partially by natural boulders, but the whole thing is overgrown by wandering tree roots and sheltered by large trees. Relics of Portuguese origin have been uncovered by amateur treasure hunters, but Danangombe's past largely remains a mystery. After the Ndebele invasions of the 1830s, the site was abandoned and only rediscovered by white settlers after the 1893 Ndebele uprising.

MASVINGO

☎ 039 / pop 51,000

Masvingo emits a clean and routine small-town laziness, while Mucheke township, 2km to the southwest, is typically African – vibrant and chaotic. The name Masvingo, which was adopted after Zimbabwean independence, is derived from *rusvingo*, the Shona word

for 'walled-in enclosures', in reference to the nearby Great Zimbabwe. Masvingo is easy-going and compact, though there are warmer bases for trips to Great Zimbabwe and Lake Mutirikwe (see p717 for details).

Information

Kingston's (Robert Mugabe St) This bookshop sells maps and international magazines.

Masvingo Publicity Association (☎ 62643; mgpa@mweb.co.zw; Robert Mugabe St; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9–11am Sat) Sells a useful map of Lake Mutirikwe (US\$3).

Telco Internet Cafe (Shop 5, 2nd fl, Old Mutual Centre, Robert Mugabe St) The only place to surf the Net.

Sights

The **Church of St Francis of Assisi** (Italian Chapel; admission free; ☎ 8am–6pm) was constructed between 1942 and 1946 by Italian POWs to commemorate 71 of their compatriots who died in Zimbabwe during WWII. The simulated mosaics in the apse were the work of an Italian engineer, while the wall murals were completed 10 years later by Masvingo artists. Drive (or walk) 4km east towards Mutare from the caravan park, take the left turn at the signpost and then turn immediately left again. Just in front of the military barracks, turn left yet again.

The small **Shagashwe Game Park** (admission US\$8; ☎ dawn–dusk) lies 5km north of Masvingo along the road to Harare. You can either drive or charter a taxi from Masvingo, or take a guided tour at the park (the extra cost depends on the number of passengers). It's easy to spot wildlife from the viewing platforms during daily feeding times (usually at 4.30pm and 6pm).

Sleeping

Backpackers Rest (☎ 63960; Josiah Tongogara Ave; dm US\$20, s/d with breakfast & shared bathroom from US\$36/48) Offers dark, musty and noisy rooms, but it is convenient and friendly. The hostel is upstairs and easy to miss; the entrance is along Robertson St.

Flame Lilly (s/d with breakfast US\$40/60) Set within a large garden, this is secure and friendly and right in the centre of town.

Chevron Hotel (☎ 63581; chevron@icon.co.zw; 2 Robert Mugabe St; s/d with breakfast US\$60/90; ☎) Don't expect your usual 'Chevron', but this is convenient, and most rooms have a TV, and overlook the pool and garden.

GREAT ZIMBABWE

☎ 039

Great Zimbabwe (admission US\$20; ☎ 6am-6pm) is the greatest medieval city in sub-Saharan Africa and provides evidence that ancient Africa reached a level of civilisation not suspected by earlier scholars. As a religious and temporal capital, this city of 10,000 to 20,000 dominated a realm that stretched across eastern Zimbabwe and into modern-day Botswana, Mozambique and South Africa. The name is believed to come from one of two possible Shona origins; *dzimba dza mabwe* (great stone houses) or *dzimba woye* (esteemed houses). The grand setting and history-soaked walls certainly qualify as a highlight of Southern Africa.

If you need more information about the site than we can provide here, try and find one of the latest *Great Zimbabwe* booklets (US\$6) at the main gate or a *Trail Guide to the Great Zimbabwe National Monument* at any decent bookshop around Zimbabwe. Alternatively, arrange a two-hour guided tour (about US\$12 per person) at the **main gate** (☎ 7055) or Information Centre, a grandly

named open-air building at the start of the walking trails.

Inside the complex, Matombo Curios offers a huge selection of tacky souvenirs at reasonable prices. It also sells cold drinks.

History

Despite nearly 100 years of effort by colonial governments to ascribe the origins of Great Zimbabwe to someone else (in fact, anyone else), conclusive proof of its Bantu origins was established in 1932 by British archaeologist Gertrude Caton-Thompson. Outside influences did, however, play a role in the development of Great Zimbabwe. Swahili traders were present along the Mozambique coast from the 10th century, and trade goods – Chinese porcelain, Persian crockery and beads, and Indian trinkets – have been found in the ruins.

Historians do know that what became Great Zimbabwe was first occupied in the 11th century. The settlers probably comprised several scattered groups that recognised the safety of numbers. Construction of the Hill Complex commenced in the 13th century,

while the remainder was built over the next 100 years.

Fuelled by Swahili gold trade, the city grew into a powerful religious and political capital, and became the heart of Rozwi culture. Royal herds increased and coffers overflowed. But eventually Great Zimbabwe probably became a victim of its own success: by the 15th century, the growing human and bovine population, and their associated environmental impacts, had depleted local resources, necessitating emigration to more productive lands. Great Zimbabwe soon declined rapidly, and when the Portuguese arrived in the 16th century, the city was virtually deserted.

Sights

The site is divided into several major ruins. Probably the first of the Great Zimbabwe structures to be completed, the **Hill Complex** (once known as the Acropolis) was a series of royal and ritual enclosures. Its most salient feature is the Western Enclosure, where the Ancient Ascent and Terrace Ascent converge.

The **Valley** is a series of 13th-century walls and *daga* (traditional round house) platforms. The area yielded metal tools and the soapstone birds that became the national symbol of Zimbabwe.

The **Great Enclosure**, thought to have served as a royal compound, is the structure most identified with Great Zimbabwe. Nearly 100m wide and 255m in circumference, it's the largest ancient structure in sub-Saharan Africa. The mortarless walls rise 11m and, in places, are 5m thick. The greatest source of speculation is the 10m-high **Conical Tower**, a solid and ceremonial structure that probably had phallic significance.

Leading north from the Conical Tower is the narrow 70m-long **Parallel Passage**. It may have been a means of moving from the northern entrance to the Conical Tower without being detected by those within the enclosure. It may also have been that the construction skills of the builders had improved so dramatically over time that they decided to rebuild the entire wall in a superior manner. The outside wall of the Parallel Passage, perhaps the most architecturally advanced structure in Great Zimbabwe, is 6m thick at the base and 4m thick at the top, with each course of stone tapering to add stability to the 11m-high wall. This stretch is capped by three rings of decorative chevron patterns.

Sleeping & Eating

If it's the ruins you want, it's better to stay at Great Zimbabwe than Masvingo, as the town is basically a truck stop and 26km away.

Great Zimbabwe Campground (☎ 7055; camping per person US\$3, dm per person US\$1.50, rondavel s/d US\$5/9) This camp, run by National Museums & Monuments, is inside the main gate within sight of the Hill Complex. Watch out for the thieving baboons and monkeys.

National Park Accommodation (camping per person US\$8, dm US\$25, rondavels with shared bathroom per person US\$40) Strung out along a trail that heads south of the main gate. The rondavels are small, but cheap, while the camp site offers little shade or security. The dormitory building is fenced off, but isolated – about 1km from the main gate. These places are not run by National Parks & Wildlife Zimbabwe, so book at the main gate.

Lodge at the Ancient City (☎ 7205; B&B US\$145) Beautifully designed individual African lodges set among recreated 'ruins' to blend beautifully with the landscape and the concept of the place.

Inn on Great Zimbabwe (☎ 64879; iogz@innsofzimbabwe.co.zw; B&B US\$180) This tranquil place on a wooded hill above Lake Mutirikwe, 6km east of Great Zimbabwe, is good value. Dated décor, comfortable, though like everywhere it lacks some life due to a lack of visitors!

LAKE MUTIRIKWE (KYLE) RECREATIONAL PARK

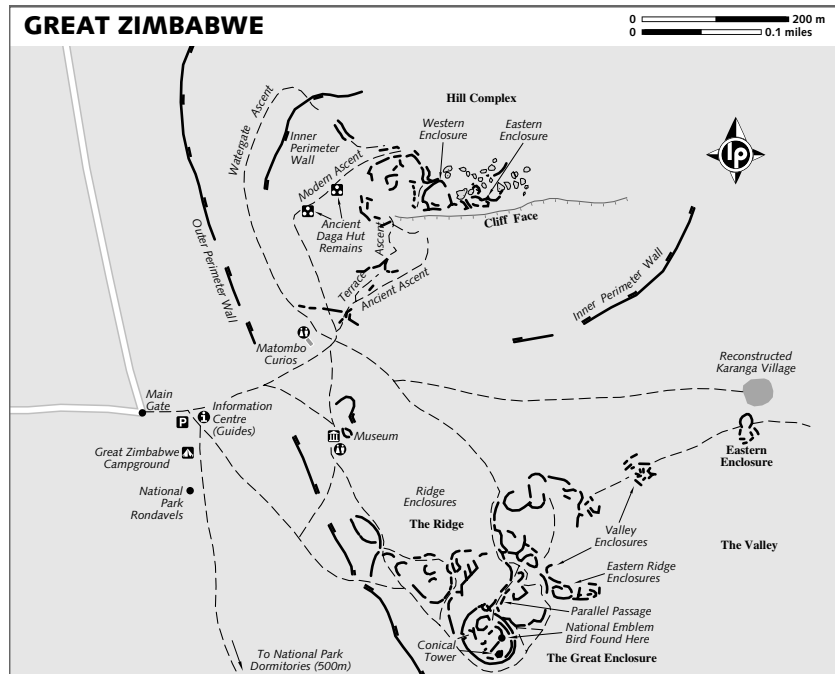
☎ 039

In 1961 a 305m-wide wall was built across Mutirikwe River to create Lake Mutirikwe, Zimbabwe's second-largest dam (90 sq km).

The lake is part of the 22,000-hectare Lake Mutirikwe Recreational Park (still often called the Kyle Recreational Park). Along the northern shore, the main feature of **Lake Mutirikwe (Kyle) Game Park** (admission US\$20; ☎ 6am-6pm) is that it hosts a healthy number of white rhinos. It also has more species of antelopes than any other park in Zimbabwe. Your best bet for accommodation is around Great Zimbabwe; then make a day trip to the park. Alternatively, Kyle is close enough to Harare to do a day trip from the capital.

GONAREZHOU NATIONAL PARK

When large-scale agriculture began encroaching on wildlife habitats during the late 1960s, tsetse-fly control measures (involving both



large-scale bush-burning and shooting) claimed the lives of 55,000 large animals. Pressure for a wildlife refuge and a poaching-control corridor along the border grew, so a scenic, 5055-sq-km chunk of southeastern Zimbabwe became the Gonarezhou Game Reserve. (In 1975 the reserve became a national park.)

Gonarezhou National Park (admission US\$10; ☎ 6am-6pm May-Oct) is virtually an extension of South Africa's Kruger National Park and borders Mozambique. So, in late 2002 the relevant authorities in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique created the **Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park**, a 35,000-sq-km park across the three countries (with no boundaries).

Although some roads in the park are passable to 2WD vehicles, most are rough and require a 4WD, especially in the south. From November to April, access is not allowed to the national park camps at Chipinda Pools, Mbalauta and Swimuwini.

Sleeping

The costs of camping range from US\$20 to US\$50 per person, while chalets at Swimuwini cost about US\$70. Book at National Parks & Wildlife Zimbabwe in Harare (p695) or Bulawayo (opposite).

The most accessible camp site in the Save-Runde subregion is the idyllic Chipinda Pools, 63km from Chiredzi along a badly corrugated but easily passable gravel road. The camp site overlooks vegetation-lined pools teeming with hippos. Further upstream is Chinguli Camp. Both Chipinda and Chinguli have showers and flush toilets, and in the dry season both are accessible without a 4WD.

WESTERN ZIMBABWE

With three of the country's major attractions, Victoria Falls (see p626), Hwange National Park and Lake Kariba, western Zimbabwe is an excellent place to spend a majority of your time in Zimbabwe.

BULAWAYO

☎ 09 / pop 1 million

Zimbabwe's intriguing second city was originally called Gu-Bulawayo (Killing Place), which probably came about because of the executions undertaken on Thabas Indunas (Hill of Chiefs) under Mzilikazi. These days, Bulawayo styles itself as the 'City of the Kings',

a prosperous and historic metropolis with plenty of attractions and great places to stay and eat. Bulawayo is also a base for trips to nearby attractions, such as the Khami Ruins and Matobo National Park (see p722). It's also an ideal staging point for trips to Hwange National Park, on the way to Victoria Falls.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Kingston's (Map p721; 91 Jason Moyo St) Kingston's bookshop sells maps, novels and a few international magazines.

EMERGENCY

Main police station (Map p721; ☎ 72516; cnr Leopold Takawira Ave & Fife St) For emergencies contact this office, or the smaller office in Central Park.

Medical Air Rescue Service (MARS; Map p721; ☎ 60351; 42 Robert Mugabe Way) For ambulance services.

INTERNET ACCESS

Kwik Net (Map p721; cnr Ninth Ave & Main St; per hr US\$0.30; ☎ 8am-10pm) Has phone, fax and internet facilities.

Tshaka's Communications (Map p721; ☎ 66992; Bulawayo Centre; ☎ 8am-6pm) Has a phone, fax and internet service.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Bulawayo Central Hospital (Map p719; ☎ 72111) The best-equipped and most accessible public hospital; near the Ascot Racecourse, off St Lukes Ave.

Galen House Emergency Medical Clinic (Map p721; ☎ 540051; cnr Josiah Tongogara St & Ninth Ave) This privately run clinic is better than the central hospital.

POST

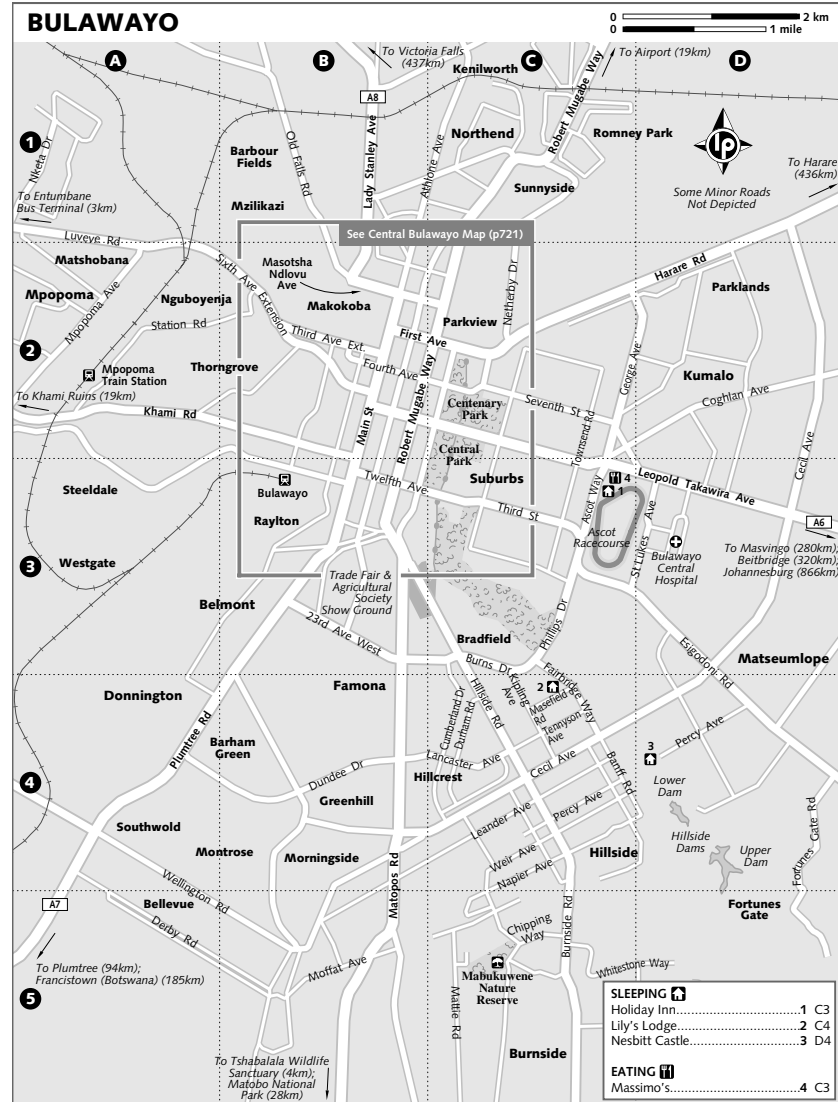
Main post office (Map p721; ☎ 62535; cnr Eighth Ave & Main St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8-11am Sat) Has poste restante.

TELEPHONE

Telephones booths are inside and around the post office. Note that some Bulawayo phone numbers have five digits and others six.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Bulawayo Publicity Association (Map p721; ☎ 60867; www.arachnid.co.zw/bulawayo; ☎ 8.30am-4.45pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat) In the City Hall car park, off Leopold Takawira Ave; has information on accommodation, transport, tours, activities and events in Bulawayo. It sells the detailed *Bulawayo Mobil Street Atlas*



(US\$0.60) and distributes *Bulawayo This Month*, which lists upcoming events and useful addresses.

National Parks & Wildlife Zimbabwe (Map p721; ☎ 63646; cnr Herbert Chitepo St & Tenth Ave; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat) Takes accommodation bookings for Matobo National Park. For other parks you'll be better off booking at the Harare headquarters (p695), where the system is more reliable.

Wildlife & Environment Society of Zimbabwe (Map p721; ☎ 77309; 105 Fife St)

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Rennies Travel (Map p721; ☎ 880531; rtzim@africaonline.co.zw; Fidelity Life Centre, cnr Fife St & Eleventh Ave) Can arrange international travel bookings.

Dangers & Annoyances

Bulawayo is more laid-back than Harare, but massive increases in unemployment and general desperation mean it's not nearly as safe as it once was. Avoid walking alone anywhere at night.

Sights

Train enthusiasts must visit the **Railway Museum** (Map p721; ☎ 322452; cnr Prospect Ave & First St; admission US\$0.05; ☎ 9am-4pm). It has an impressive collection of antique locomotives, rolling stock, Cecil Rhodes' extravagant carriage built in the 1890s and even a 'museum on wheels' – a 1904 passenger coach with original fittings.

The **National Art Gallery** (Map p721; ☎ 70721; Douglas House, cnr Main St & Leopold Takawira Ave; admission US\$0.20; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun), in a beautiful hundred-year-old colonial building, has temporary and permanent exhibitions of contemporary Zimbabwean sculpture and paintings. There's also a souvenir shop, a café and studios where you can see artists at work.

Sleeping

Packer's Rest (Map p721; ☎ 251111; packers@mweb.co.zw; 1 Oak Ave, Suburbs; camping per person US\$3, dm per person US\$4, s/d US\$8/12; ☎) Convenient to the city, this welcoming backpackers offers phone and internet access. The entrance is off Twelfth Ave.

Lily's Lodge (Map p719; ☎ 245356; nyararai@excite.com; 3 Masefield Rd, Malindela; r US\$30) This large house has a local atmosphere. Lily organises traditional evenings with food and dancing for guests.

Holiday Inn (Map p719; ☎ 252464; Milnerton Rd; r US\$124) Convenient, clean and has some useful advice on surrounding areas. Breakfast is a mere US\$36!

Nesbitt Castle (Map p719; ☎ 282726/735/736; nesbitt.castle@nanbb.co.zw) Built by an eccentric Englishman as his house, this place is quite surreal in its décor, each of the eight guestrooms being totally different – a great place for a decadent and romantic interlude. The place is beautiful and so is the food.

Eating

Brooks Fabrics Coffee Shop (Map p721; ☎ 66373; Fife St) Set in an old fabric factory/shop; the cakes and coffee are some of the best in Zimbabwe.

Café Baku (Map p721; ☎ 883809; Bulawayo Centre, Main St; snacks from US\$3; ☎ to late) This small, trendy café serves coffee, cakes and sandwiches.

Massimo's (Map p719; inside Ascot Shopping Centre; mains around US\$15) The Italian cuisine and the décor is authentic, its host is eccentric – he chooses his clientele from the queue outside, others are sent away.

Bonne Journée (Map p721; ☎ 64839; Robert Mugabe Way, btwn Tenth & Eleventh Aves; mains US\$20) Specialising in cappuccinos and ice cream, this popular choice also serves steaks, excellent *piri-piri* chicken and snacks.

Tunku's (Map p721; Eighth Ave, btwn Robert Mugabe Way & George Silundika St; dishes US\$4) and **Chop Suey Centre** (Map p721; ☎ 72828; Eighth Ave, btwn Robert Mugabe Way & George Silundika St; dishes US\$4) are neighbouring takeaways that serve Chinese dishes.

SELF-CATERING

Try the **Spar Supermarket** (Map p721; Herbert Chitepo St) and the truly massive **TM Hypermarket** (Map p721; Eleventh Ave) or even better, the **Haddon & Sly Department Store** (Map p721; cnr Eight Ave & Fife St).

Entertainment

Most Bulawayo pubs and clubs are fairly laid-back.

Old Vic Pub (Map p721; ☎ 881273; Bulawayo Rainbow Hotel) exudes an Anglo-Zimbabwean atmosphere.

Alabama (Map p721; Bulawayo Rainbow Hotel; ☎ Wed-Sun) A pleasant, casual bar with live jazz most evenings.

Walkers Pub & Restaurant (Map p721; ☎ 69527; Bulawayo Centre, Main St) Good for a drink.

Brass Monkey (Map p719; ☎ 880495; Zonk/Izizwe Centre, Hillside Rd) Also a good pub for a drink.

Amakhosi Theatre (Map p721; ☎ 62652; Township Square Cultural Centre, Basch St; admission US\$1.50) This African theatre, off the Old Falls Rd, stages traditional and contemporary theatre, dance and music productions. It also organises the annual Inxusa Festival, a traditional folk culture festival, around June and July.

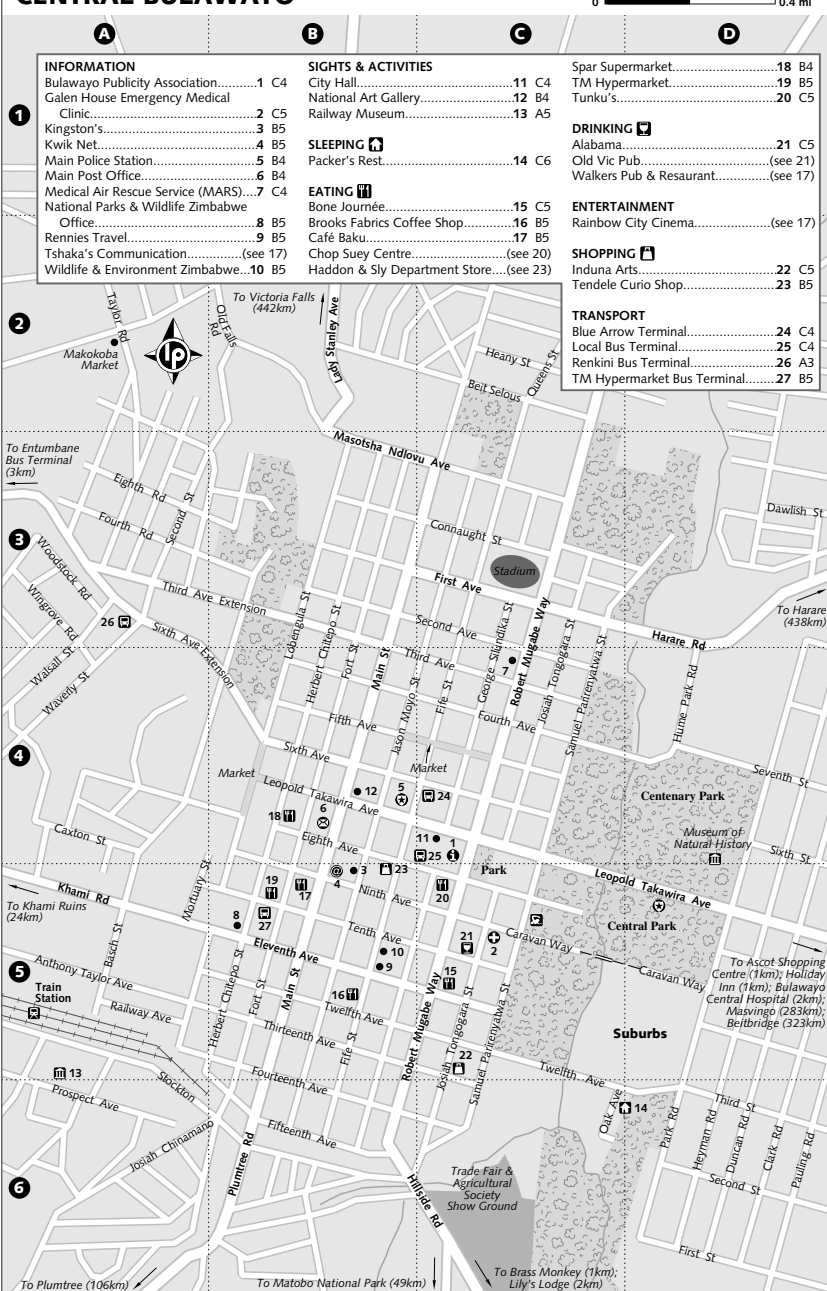
Rainbow City Cinema (Map p721; Bulawayo Centre, cnr Main St & Ninth Ave) This multiscreen complex still shows a few flicks.

Shopping

The footpath along Fife St near the City Hall is lined with craft stalls. **Ascot Shopping Centre** (Map p721; cnr Ascot Way & Leopold Takawira) is good for general shopping.

Bulawayo is also a good place for art and craft galleries selling local jewellery, textiles, carvings, paintings and artefacts. Try **Tendele**

CENTRAL BULAWAYO



Curio Shop (Map p721; ☎ 52391; 90 Fife St) and **Induna Arts** (Map p721; ☎ 69179; 121 Josiah Tongogara St).

Eezee Kamping (Map p721; ☎ 62105; 95 George Silundika St) is probably the best outdoors shop in Zimbabwe – which isn't saying much – but it only sells (not rents) camping equipment.

Getting Around

The meters on Bulawayo taxis have been beaten by inflation, so ensure you agree on a price before setting out. **Rixi Taxi** (☎ 261933) and **Skyline** (☎ 470502) are reasonable options.

TSHABALALA GAME SANCTUARY

This small **sanctuary** (admission US\$9; ☎ 6am–6pm May–Oct, 8am–5pm Nov–Apr) is 9km south of central Bulawayo. It was established on land formerly owned by Fairburn Usher, a British sailor who arrived in 1883, and his Ndebele wife, one of Lobengula's daughters. The small interpretative centre at the main gate explains a bit more about the history and fauna.

Adventure Trails (contact through Bulawayo Publicity Association) offers half-day mountain-bike tours (US\$25 per person) of the sanctuary, including transport to and from Bulawayo.

KHAMI (KAME) RUINS

This **Unesco World Heritage Site** (admission US\$5; ☎ 8am–4.30pm), 22km west of central Bulawayo, was built by the Torwa dynasty in the 16th century. In the late 17th century, Torwa was apparently absorbed by the larger Rozwi state, which destroyed Khami.

At the northern end of the ruins, the **Hill Complex** served as the royal enclosure. The complex features several hut platforms and Khami's greatest concentration of stone walling. Also at the northern end is an odd platform with a stone Dominican cross, reputedly placed there by an early Portuguese missionary.

MATOBO (MATOPOS) NATIONAL PARK

Matobo (☎ 083-8258; admission US\$23; ☎ 6am–6pm), 33km south of Bulawayo, is the oldest national park in the country. Dotted around the 425-sq-km park are 3000 officially registered **rock-art sites**, including one of the best collections in the world of San paintings (many over 20,000 years old). Some hidden niches still shelter clay ovens, which were used as iron smelters in making the infamous *assegai*s (spears) used against the colonial hordes.

Some peaks, such as Shumba Shaba and Imadzi (Bald One), are now considered sacred, and locals believe that even to point at them will bring misfortune.

With the history comes a superb array of wildlife, including leopards. The bird life is also extensive. You may have the chance to see African hawk eagles or rare Cape eagle owls; in fact, Matobo is home to one-third of the world's species of eagles, including the greatest concentration of black eagles.

Information

Maps of the park are available from the main (northern) gate; or from Wildlife & Environment Zimbabwe or the Bulawayo Publicity Association (see p718).

Sights & Activities

Stroll along the granite ridges and experience the overwhelming sense of tranquillity. Find solitude within an intimate retreat as secluded as the original Kalanga grain bins that nestle among the rocks. Check out World's View, the famous rock art galleries; visit an Ndebele village; go horse riding in the Matobo Game Park or on an organised walk.

The busiest part of Matobo is **Maleme Dam**, with its camp site, general store, horse stables, rangers offices and picnic sites. The area west and northwest of Maleme Dam is home to antelopes, baboons, hyraxes and zebras.

The **Northern Wild Area** offers glorious views down the Mjelele Valley to the Mjelele Dam. Surprisingly, it's not unusual to see rhinos outside the park, grazing on the dry grasses of the valley floor. The **White Rhino Shelter** lies a short walk from the signposted car park. Rather than polychrome paintings, outline drawings are found here – a rare art form in Zimbabwe. Most prominent are the finely executed outlines of five white rhinos and the head of a black rhino, with human figures behind them, and five well-observed and exquisitely drawn wildebeest. On the basis of this painting, rhinos were successfully reintroduced into Matobo.

Cecil Rhodes' Grave is atop the mountain he called **World's View**, which the Ndebele people knew as Malindidzimu (Dwelling Place of Benevolent Spirits). The **Shangani River Memorial**, just downhill from Rhodes' Grave, was erected in 1904 to the memory of Allan Wilson and 33 soldiers of his Shangani River Patrol. (The entire troop was wiped out by General Mtjaan

and his 30,000 Ndebele warriors.) A display at the bottom of the hill outlines highlights of Rhodes' remarkable life and career.

Tours

Safari operators and lodges offer walking and driving excursions to Matobo National Park and Whovi Game Park (day-trip/overnight from US\$50/90). Safari operators offering day trips or overnight trips to Matobo include **Black Rhino Safaris** (☎ 09-241662; www.blackrhino-safaris.com), **Circle Court Tours & Safaris** (☎ 09-881309; www.cirtours.co.zw) and **Khangela Safaris** (☎ 09-289733; www.khangela.com).

Adventure Trails (☎ 09-72702; adventuretrails2000@hotmail.com) offers mountain biking tours – an ideal way to explore Matobo (all day US\$70, half day US\$55).

Sleeping & Eating

Matobo National Park (loydmasine@yahoo.com; camping per person US\$11, chalet/lodge tw US\$74/112; executive r US\$326) There are several camp sites in the park, and there are chalets and lodges at Maleme Dam. You must book in advance at the parks office in Bulawayo (p719). Vehicle use is US\$5.

Big Cave Camp (☎ 0861 312 312; afrizim@flameofafrica.com) In Matobo Hills, this is 46km from Bulawayo and located on the edge of the National Park. There are seven thatched A-frame cottages with private bathrooms and balconies.

HWANGE

☎ 081

Hwange (sometimes still pronounced Wankie) is a stopover town along the road between Bulawayo and Victoria Falls and a gateway (of sorts) to the Hwange National Park. Your best bet is to arrange everything either before you come, or in Harare or Victoria Falls (p626).

HWANGE NATIONAL PARK

Hwange (admission per day US\$15; ☎ about 6am–6pm) is the largest (14,651 sq km) and most wildlife-packed park in Zimbabwe.

Hwange is home to some 400 species of birds and 107 types of animals, including one of the largest numbers (30,000) of elephants in the world. The best time for wildlife viewing is July to October when animals congregate around the 60 water holes or 'pans' (most of which are artificially filled by noisy, petrol-powered pumps). But when the rains come

and the rivers are flowing, successful viewing requires more diligence, because the animals spread across the park seeking a bit of trunk and antler room. Most visitors will only see a fraction of this park, though wildlife viewing is good throughout.

Access is possible in any sturdy vehicle between May and October, but seek advice if driving a 2WD during the wet season. And always consult a ranger (at any of the three camps) about road conditions before heading off too far into the park, regardless of what sort of vehicle you're driving.

Information and maps about the park are available at the rangers offices at the Hwange Main Camp, Sinamatella Camp and Robins Camp. Robins Camp is 60km west of Sinamatella, and park regulations stipulate that you must leave Robins by 3pm to reach Sinamatella (and vice versa). Also, Robins is 150km west of Hwange Main Camp, so you must depart Robins by noon (and vice versa). Similarly, Sinamatella is 125km northwest of Hwange Main Camp, so you must leave Sinamatella by 2pm (and vice versa).

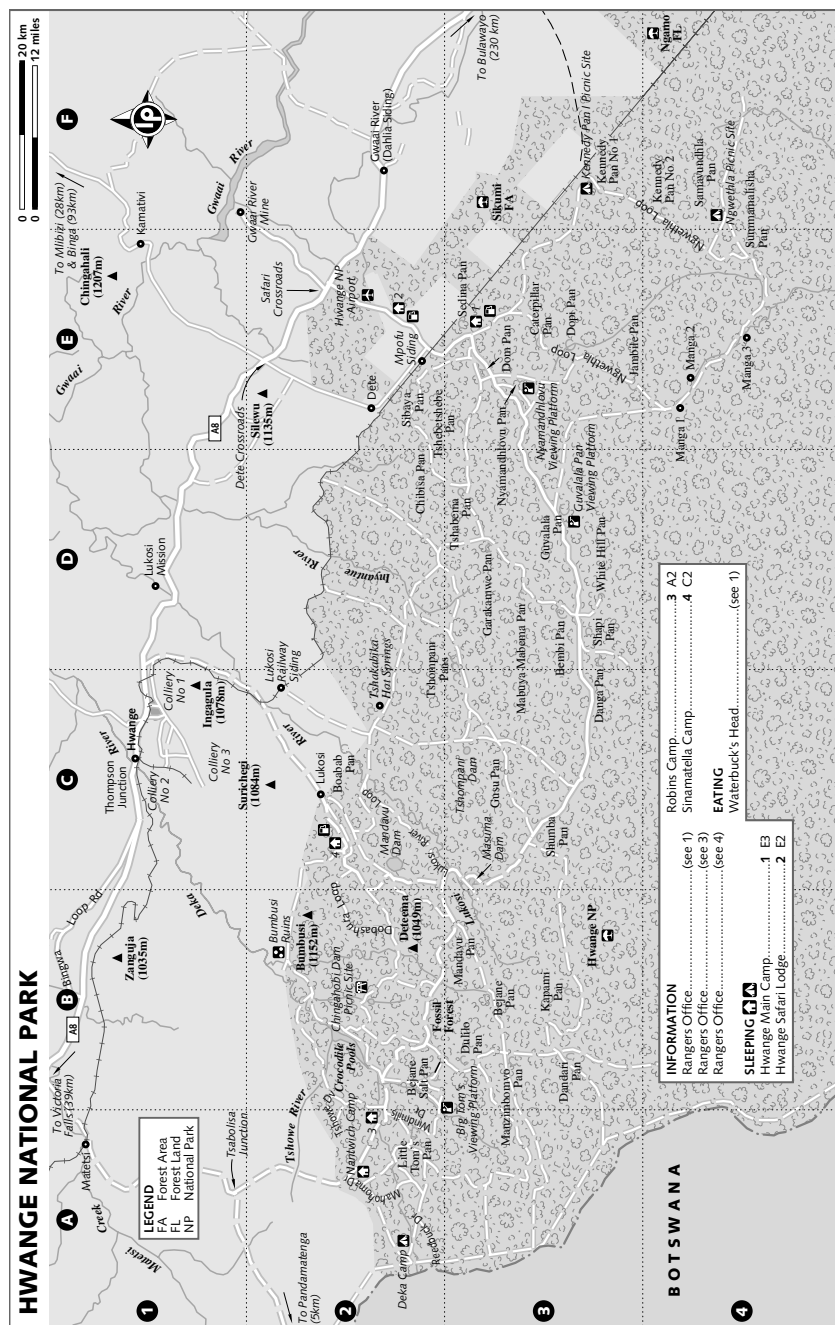
Activities

Two-hour **walking safaris** (per person US\$45) with armed guards to Sedina Pan can be organised at Hwange Main Camp, and to Mandavu Dam from Sinamatella Camp. These walks must be booked in advance at Hwange Main Camp, Sinamatella Camp or Robins Camp. Children under 12 are not permitted. Other walks can be organised through your lodge/operator and are included in your cost.

Hwange Main Camp

The main **camp** (☎ 371; fax 378; ☎ office 7am–6pm) is at the major park entrance. It offers most services, including a rangers office, grocery shop (open 7am to 7pm daily), souvenir shop and petrol station.

Most visitors make a few convenient loops starting near the main camp. One highlight is the **Nyamandhlovu Pan**, which features the high-rise **Nyamandhlovu Viewing Platform** overlooking a popular water hole. On the way from the main camp, check to see if there's any wildlife hanging around **Dom Pan**. South of the main camp is **Ngwethla Loop**, accessible to any vehicle. It passes the magnificent **Kennedy Pans**, particularly popular with elephants, though the greatest variety of wildlife can be found at the **Ngwethla Picnic Site**.



Hwange Main Camp is accessible along two sealed roads from the highway between Bulawayo and Victoria Falls: via Dete, and via the airport and Hwange Safari Lodge.

Robins Camp

This camp (☎ 3503; office ☎ 7am-6pm), at the western boundary, has a sparsely stocked shop and restaurant/bar. The best wildlife viewing spots nearby are **Big Tom's Viewing Platform** and **Little Tom's Pan**.

Sinamatella Camp

Sinamatella (☎ 2775; office ☎ 7am-6pm) is the nicest of the three main camps. It sits atop a 55m mesa with a commanding 50km panorama. By day, you'll see buffaloes and antelopes in the grassy patch below the camp, but it's at night time that Sinamatella really comes alive: expect to be haunted by the roaring of lions and the disconcerting howling of hyenas at the foot of the hill, along with a host of unidentified screeches, thumps and bumps. At any time, vicious little honey badgers skitter around the restaurant looking for hand-outs and even invade the chalets if given half a chance.

Amenities on offer include a rangers office, museum display, souvenir shop, virtually empty grocery shop, and horrid restaurant/bar.

Sleeping & Eating

Hwange Safari Lodge (☎ 750; fax 337; s/d incl meals & activities US\$180/220; 🍴) On a massive private estate within the Sikumi Forest Area. It looks more like a motel than a lodge, though all rooms thoughtfully overlook a popular water hole. Amenities include a restaurant/bar (open to nonguests) and swimming pool, and tours and activities are also available to the public.

Hide Safari Camp (☎ 4 498835; www.thehide.com; per person all-inclusive US\$275) One of the best safari camps in the country. Named after the man-made hiding points for viewing elephants close-up, The Hide has good guides, lovely accommodation and decent food. Bookings can be made at its office in the Triton Centre, 176 Enterprise Rd, Chipisite, Harare.

Waterbuck's Head (meals US\$2) A charming bar/restaurant right outside the main gate and rangers office at Hwange main camp.

WESTERN LAKE KARIBA

The western half of Lake Kariba, which bears little resemblance to the eastern half (see p703), is characterised by wilderness out-

posts, traditional Tonga culture and wild rolling hills.

Binga

The most interesting and accessible town along the western side of Lake Kariba is Binga. It was constructed expressly as a government administrative centre, with the purpose of resettling Tonga people displaced by the Lake Kariba dam. So, Binga is a good place to look for Tonga crafts, including decorative stools, headrests and drums. The town sprawls from the shore to the hills, and getting around without a vehicle entails some hot and tiring walks.

ZIMBABWE DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Although it has enjoyed little development since 2001, Zimbabwe's tourism infrastructure remains some of the best in the region. While many lodges and hotels have closed, those that remain offer stunning locations, good amenities, and smiley if slow service.

The array of hotels and lodges is no longer there, but those which have survived the collapse of the tourism sector clearly have something to show. The biggest hurdle for the visitor may be reconciling very real first-world prices with slipping standards.

National Park Accommodation

Zimbabwe's national parks provide the chance to stay in the best locations in Zimbabwe, indeed some of the best places in Africa. Given that they are in the national parks, the lodges will be located closer to the lakes, rivers, waterfalls and mountain views than larger commercial hotels are. They are very cheap and very basic, often with just beds, a bath and a braai stand outdoors. The NPWZ in Harare is very efficient or you can book through travel agents.

Reservations for national park accommodation are available through the NPWZ offices in Harare (p695) and Bulawayo (p719).

ACTIVITIES

Victoria Falls (see p618) is the epicentre of activities in Zimbabwe, if not all of Southern Africa. The adventurous can get their adrenaline pumping with white-water rafting, abseiling and bungee jumping; the less excitable can

PRACTICALITIES

- The government's relentless campaign to control all media – initially by force – has resulted in much self-censorship and bland press (though for the visitor on a short stay, newspapers and TV can be quite comical).
- The only surviving dailies are both state-run. Friday's *Independent* offers the week's only dose of propaganda-free political reporting.
- Oddly enough, the latest issues of *Vanity Fair* and *The Economist* can be found at some service stations for a fraction of the US-dollar cover price.
- The government controls all TV and radio, though most hotels and many lodges have satellite TV. Zimbabwe boasts the best coverage of world sport in Southern Africa.

enjoy wildlife drives and horse riding. Most other activities centre around Zimbabwe's natural features: hiking in the cool Eastern Highlands and Chimanimani National Park, horse riding and wildlife viewing in national parks, canoeing safaris on the lower Zambezi River, boating and houseboating on Lake Kariba, and a great round of golf almost anywhere.

BOOKS

This section covers books specific to Zimbabwe. For details on books about the Southern Africa region, see p24.

Guidebooks & Coffee-Table Books

Great Zimbabwe Described & Explained, by Peter Garlake, attempts to sort out the history, purpose and architecture of the ancient ruins at Great Zimbabwe.

The Painted Caves – An Introduction to the Prehistoric Art of Zimbabwe, by Peter Garlake, is a detailed guide uncovering major prehistoric rock-art sites in Zimbabwe.

Beneath a Zimbabwe Sun is a classy souvenir book containing plenty of awesome photos. The hardback and paperback versions are available throughout Zimbabwe.

History & Politics

The Great Betrayal, by Ian Smith, is the autobiography of colonial Rhodesia's most con-

troversial leader chronicling a tumultuous, emotion-charged period in Zimbabwean history.

Mugabe, by Colin Simpson and David Smith, is a biography of the Zimbabwean president tracing his controversial rise to power.

The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War, by David Martin & Phyllis Johnson, is a popular history of the Second Chimurenga, the tragic war that led to independence.

Where We Have Hope, by Andrew Meldrum, is a good overview of post-Independence Zimbabwe, up to 2003. It's not beautifully written, but as the last foreign correspondent to get the boot, Meldrum has some good insights.

Lonely Planet

Songs to an African Sunset: A Story of Zimbabwe, by Sekai Nzenza Shand, is an excellent introduction to Shona traditions and culture. Shand tells of her childhood in Zimbabwe, and of her return to the country after spending many years living in the West. Packed with cultural info about rural life, it also gives an insight into the lives of middle-class urban Zimbabweans. *Songs* is one of many titles in *Journeys*, Lonely Planet's travel literature series.

BUSINESS HOURS

Shops are generally open from 8am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm Monday to Friday, and from 8am to noon on Saturday. Very little (including restaurants) is open on Sunday.

CHILDREN

Zimbabwe is a pretty good place to travel with kids. In the current climate most travellers will organise their tours through agents, booking lodges and hotels and can therefore determine who caters for children. Most lodges these days accept children, though many won't take those under 12 years (for safety reasons).

CUSTOMS

Visitors may import a maximum of US\$250 in nontrade items, excluding personal effects. Travellers over 18 years of age can also import up to 3L of alcohol, including 1L of spirits.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Zimbabwe is nowhere near as dangerous as foreign media makes out, but nor is it anywhere near as safe as it once was. And crime is on the rise. Carjacking and smash and grabs

are the current dangers. Although the number of incidents and degree of violence are a far cry from Johannesburg and others, it is a reality. Drivers should take the following precautions: avoid stopping at traffic lights at night; lock all doors; lock all valuables in the boot; and unwind windows to a minimum level.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Zimbabwean Embassies & Consulates

Zimbabwe has high commissions in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia (see the relevant chapters for details). Zimbabwean diplomatic missions are also located in the following countries:

Australia (☎ 02-6286 2700; fax 02-6290 1680;

zimbabwe@dynamite.com.au; 11 Culgoa Circuit, O'Malley, Canberra, ACT 2606)

Canada (☎ 613-237 4388; fax 613-563 8269; zim.highcomm@sympatico.ca; 332 Somerset St West, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0J9)

France (☎ 01 56 88 16 00; fax 01 56 88 16 09; 12 Rue Lord Byron, Paris 75008)

Germany (☎ 0228-356071; fax 0228-356309; Villichgasse 7, 5300 Bonn 2)

UK (☎ 020-7836 7755; fax 020-7379 1167; 429 The Strand, London WC2R 0SA)

USA (☎ 202-332 7100; fax 202-438 9326; 1608 New Hampshire Ave NW, Washington, DC 20009)

Embassies & Consulates in Zimbabwe

The following embassies and high commissions are based in Harare.

Angola (☎ 04-790070; Doncaster House; 26 Speke Ave)

Australia (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-253661; www.zimbabwe.embassy.gov.au; 29 Mazowe St)

Belgium (☎ 04-700112; www.diplomatie.be/harare; 5th fl, Tanganyika House, cnr Kwame Nkrumah Ave & Third St)

Botswana (Map p694; ☎ 04-794645/7/8; 22 Phillips Ave)

Canada (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-252181/2/3/4/5; www.harare.gc.ca; 45 Baines Ave)

Ethiopia (☎ 04-725822; ethemb@ecoweb.co.zw; 14 Lanark Rd, Belgravia)

Finland (☎ 04-751654; inemb@id.cozw; 4 Duthie Ave)

France (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-703216; www.ambafrance-zw.org; First Bank Bldg, 74-76 Samora Machel Ave)

Germany (Map p694; ☎ 04-308655; germemb@earth.co.zw; 30 Ceres Rd, Avondale)

Italy (☎ 04-497200; segretaria@ambitalia.co.zw; 7 Bartholomew Cl, Greendale)

Kenya (Map pp696-7; 95 Park La; kenhicom@africaonline.co.zw)

Malawi (Map p694; ☎ 04-798584; emba@embamoc.org.zw; 42-44 Harare St, Alexandra Park)

Mozambique (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-253871; 152 Herbert Chitepo Ave)

Namibia (Map p694; ☎ 04-885841; 69 Borrowdale Rd)

Norway (☎ 04-252426; www.norway.org.zw/info/em-bassy.htm; 5 Lanark Rd, cnr Sam Nujoma St, Belgravia)

Russia (☎ 04-701957/8; russemb@africaonline.co.zw; 70 Fife Ave)

South Africa (Map p694; ☎ 04-753147/8/9; dhacon@mweb.co.zw; 7 Elcombe Ave)

Sudan (☎ 04-700111; www.sudaniharare.org.zw; 4 Pascoe Ave, Belgravia)

Switzerland (☎ 04-703997/8; 9 Lanark Rd, Belgravia)

Tanzania (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-721870; tanrep@icon.co.zw; Ujamaa House, 23 Baines Ave)

UK (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-772990; www.britisheembassy.gov.uk/zimb; 7th fl, Corner House, cnr Leopold Takawira St & Samora Machel Ave)

USA (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-250593/4; www.usembassy.state.gov/zimbabwe; Arax House, 172 Herbert Chitepo Ave)

Zambia (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-773777; 6th fl, Zambia House, 48 Union Ave)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Harare International Festival of Arts (☎ 300119; www.hifa.co.zw) Held annually in the last week of April. See p698 for more information.

Bulawayo Music Festival Held for a week in mid-June.
Zimbabwe International Film Festival Held for 10 days over the last week of August and the first few days of September.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Homosexual activities for men is illegal and officially punishable by up to five years in jail (though penalties are invariably not nearly as severe), yet lesbianism is not illegal.

For information about gay and lesbian clubs and meeting places in Zimbabwe, contact **Gays & Lesbians of Zimbabwe** (☎ 04-741 736; fax 778 165; galz@samara.co.zw; 35 Colenbrander Rd, Milton Park, Harare).

HOLIDAYS

During the following public holidays, most government offices and other businesses are closed.

New Year's Day 1 January

Independence Day 18 April

Workers' Day 1 May

Africa Day 25 May

Heroes' Day 11 August

Defence Forces' Day 12 August

National Unity Day 22 December

Boxing Day 26 December

INTERNET ACCESS

There are internet centres in all the main cities and towns. Internet access is US\$1 to US\$3 per hour, though it can take you that long to get connected.

LANGUAGE

The official language of Zimbabwe is English. It's used in government, legal and business proceedings, but is the first language for only about 2% of the population. Most Zimbabweans speak Shona (mainly in the north and east) or Ndebele (in the centre and west). Another dialect, Chilapalapa, is actually a pidgin version of Ndebele, English, Shona and Afrikaans, and isn't overly laden with niceties, so most people prefer you sticking to English.

See p778 and p779 for phrases in Ndebele and Shona.

MAPS

Hotels are the best place to find any decent 'Tourist Maps'. More detailed maps of the cities and national parks are available from the **Surveyor General** (Map pp696-7; Samora Machel Ave, Harare).

MONEY

The unit of currency is the Zimbabwe dollar (ZWL\$1 = 100 cents).

Zimbabwe is nowhere near as cheap as it once was. Several years ago a main at a good restaurant cost the equivalent of US\$3 to US\$5. Now, if forced to convert at the weak bank rate, the same meal would cost a visitor the equivalent of US\$20. A lodge in Matobo National Park used to cost US\$2. It's now US\$112.)

For those goods that are locally made – beer, beef, sculptures and crafts – prices remain reasonable. But for a growing amount of products that must be imported, prices are often two to four times what they would be in neighbouring South Africa.

Therefore, most prices in this book will be quoted in US dollars and for those where you will ultimately pay in local currency, our conversion is done at the more expensive bank rate (currently about one-quarter of the parallel market).

See the boxed texts, p684 and p686 for more information on money in Zimbabwe. For exchange rates see the inside front cover of this guide.

ATMs

Generally speaking, ATMs at Barclays Bank accept Visa, and Standard Chartered Bank take MasterCard and any card with a Cirrus logo. But ATMs have strict – and small – limits on the amount that can be withdrawn and you will get the lowest bank rate.

Tipping

Some restaurants automatically add a 10% service charge to the bill; if so, no tip is required, though any tip is hugely appreciated. Most prices at markets and street stalls are negotiable, and vendors will happily 'sell' you things in exchange for clothes (especially designer brands), caps, pens and electronic items.

Travellers Cheques

All major brands of travellers cheques in US dollars or UK pounds can be exchanged for Zimbabwe dollars at most major banks.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Print and slide film and basic photographic accessories are easy to buy in Harare though increasingly more difficult in other towns.

Strachan's Photo Shop (Map pp696-7; 66 Nelson Mandela Ave) is the best place in Zimbabwe for all your photographic needs. It sells all sorts of films and accessories, offers one-hour photo processing, and you can take in your digital camera or flash card and download or print.

POST

Sending letters and postcards by surface mail to Europe and the UK costs US\$0.80, and US\$1.10 to the rest of the world.

TELEPHONE

You can make international calls from your hotel or lodge. It is impossible to buy a sim card in Zimbabwe. It's best to put mobile phones on international roaming.

If calling from overseas, the country code for Zimbabwe is 263, but drop the initial 0 for area codes. The international access code from within Zimbabwe is 00.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Local Tourist Offices

The **Zimbabwe Tourism Authority** (Map pp696-7; ☎ 758730; www.zimbabwe-tourism.co.zw; 55 Samora Machel, Harare; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) has general tourist info. There are Publicity Associations in Harare, Bulawayo, Victoria Falls, Kariba, Masvingo and

Nyanga. Some are very efficient, helpful and have useful info, brochures and advice, but others have little more to offer than a smile.

Tourist Offices Abroad

Germany (☎ 069-920 7730; fax 920 7731; An der Hauptwache, 60313 Frankfurt am Main)

South Africa (☎ 011-331 3137; fax 616 8692; 2nd fl, Finance House, Oppenheimer Rd, Bruma Park, Johannesburg)

UK (☎ 020-7240 6169; fax 7240 5465; zta.london@btclick.com; 429 The Strand, London WC2R 0SA)

USA (☎ 212-486 3444; fax 486 3888; 128 East 56 St, New York 10022)

VISAS

With a few exceptions, visas are required by nationals of all countries. They can be obtained at your point of entry. Single-/double-entry visas cost US\$30/45 (and can be issued upon arrival) and multiple-entry visas (valid for six months) cost US\$55, but are only issued at Zimbabwean diplomatic missions (see p727). British citizens pay US\$55/70 for single/double entry. A good website for checking changes in requirements and other immigration news is www.safemigrationzimbabwe.com.

Vaccination for yellow fever is not required for entry to Zimbabwe unless you have recently been to an infected area. However, for all sorts of reasons, get a jab before you come to Southern Africa and carry a certificate to prove it.

Visas for Onward Travel

Harare is one of the best places in Southern Africa to pick up visas for regional countries (see p695). Requirements constantly change, but nearly all require a fee (most in US dollars) and two passport-sized photos.

Visas for Zambia, Namibia, Malawi, South Africa and Botswana are easy to obtain on arrival in those countries for most visitors, so there no need to obtain them in advance. In theory South Africa is easy too, though such are the queues at the South African Embassy each day, that it's best to get that one in advance.

TRANSPORT IN ZIMBABWE

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Information about travelling to Southern Africa from elsewhere in the continent, and from overseas, see p752.

Air

Most international flights arrive in Harare, and there are also direct flights between Victoria Falls and Johannesburg. International flights link Zimbabwe to Johannesburg (one way/return US\$227/339, 1½ hours), Gaborone (US\$572/906, 1½ hours), Windhoek (US\$716/962, 2½ hours), Maputo (US\$468/767, 1½ hours), Lilongwe (US\$999/1112, one hour), Lusaka (US\$729/956 50 minutes), Dar es Salaam (US\$1154/1888, 2½ hours) and Nairobi (US\$1070/1274, 3½ hours).

Airlines with services to/from Zimbabwe:

Air Botswana (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-793195/228/229)

Air Namibia (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-732094/5)

Air Malawi (☎ 04-752563).

Air Tanzania (☎ 04-752537/8)

Air Zimbabwe (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-253752; Eastgate Centre)

South African Airways (Map pp696-7;

☎ 04-794511/2/6/47/83)

There has been a reduction in the number of airlines that service Zimbabwe. Qantas and Singapore Airlines no longer offer a route to Harare.

Border Crossings

Most of Zimbabwe's border posts are open from 6am to 6pm with the exception of Beitbridge (to South Africa, open 24 hours) and Victoria Falls (to Zambia, open 6am to 10pm). Its other border posts are Plumtree and Kazungula (Botswana); Kariba and Chirundu (Zambia); and Mutare and Nyamapanda (Mozambique).

BOTSWANA

Zupco (\$15) and PCJ Coaches (\$60) run from Harare to Francistown. Zupco departs 6.30am Tuesday, Thursday and Friday; PCJ departs every day at 6pm.

MALAWI

The most direct route between Malawi and Zimbabwe is via Mozambique's Tete Corridor. You'll need a transit visa for Mozambique if travelling through Mozambique to Malawi.

Zupco runs from Harare to Blantyre (US\$35) every day from 6.30am.

MOZAMBIQUE

You can go to Beira via Mutare. Take a mini-bus from Mutare to the border, then catch

another bus on the Mozambique side. You can get to Malawi from Nyamapanda by minibus. Minibuses run infrequently between Nyamapanda and Tete (Mozambique) and more frequently between Tete and Zóbuè on the border with Malawi.

NAMIBIA

There's no direct overland connection between Zimbabwe and Namibia. The most straightforward route is to take the Botswana bus and then connect from Botswana.

SOUTH AFRICA

The following companies have services to Johannesburg (around US\$70, payable in local currency if bought in Zimbabwe).

Blue Arrow (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-729514; barrow@africaonline.co.zw; Chester House, Speke Ave, Harare)

Kukura Kurerwa (Map p694; ☎ 04-669973/6; Mbare Musika Bus Terminal, Harare)

Pioneer Bus (Map p694; ☎ 04-795863, 790531; Mbare Musika Bus Terminal, Harare)

Greyhound (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-720801; Road Port Terminal, Harare)

Departure times are subject to change without notice. It's best to call ahead.

Trains are once again running between Zimbabwe and South Africa. Rovos Rail operates its train from Pretoria to Victoria Falls travelling through Zimbabwe via Bulawayo. This trip is a three-day, two-night journey each way.

ZAMBIA

Zupco (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-704933; Road Port Terminal, Harare) has buses departing for Lusaka (via Chirundu) at 6.30am every day (US\$25).

GETTING AROUND

Air

Air Zimbabwe (Map pp696-7; ☎ 04-253751; Eastgate Centre, Harare) has one flight per day between Harare and Bulawayo (US\$140/250 one way/return) and Harare and Victoria Falls (US\$230/375 one way/return). There's a domestic departure tax of US\$5. Air Zimbabwe no longer flies to Hwange or Kariba, but agents will be able to organise charter flights.

Boat

Kariba Ferries (Map p704; ☎ 04-65476; Andora Harbour, Kariba) occasionally runs a ferry service between Kariba at the eastern end of the lake and

Mlibizi at the western end. The ferry departs when there is sufficient demand.

Bus

There are two types of local buses: express and local. The express buses operate according to published timetables (and depending on fuel). Local buses normally depart when full from township markets outside the centre of a town. These days they are full in about two seconds and most people wait hours for a ride.

Car & Motorcycle DRIVING LICENCE

All foreigners can use their driving licence from their home country for up to 90 days in Zimbabwe as long as it's written in English. However, given the growing propensity of police to illicit bribes, it's best to ensure you also have an International Driver's Licence.

FUEL & SPARE PARTS

Petrol – which is called 'blend' because it's mixed with ethanol – has gone up 500% in the last year, though it is now simply in line with most countries. The cost of petrol usually determines the black market rate, so is around US\$1.

HIRE

The minimum driving age required by rental companies varies, but is usually between 23 and 25 years. The maximum age is normally about 65 years.

Two of the more reliable car-rental agencies are **Hertz** (☎ 04-706254; admin@hertz.co.zw) and **Europcar** (www.europcar.co.zw). Per day it's US\$147 for 2WD and US\$216 for 4WD (unlimited mileage).

It's important to note that most collision damage waiver (CDW) insurance policies do not cover 2WD vehicles travelling on rough roads in national parks, especially in Mana Pools National Park.

ROAD HAZARDS

Zimbabwe has some awful drivers and many locals make a rule of not driving outside the major towns after dark. Roads remain pretty good, though in cities drink driving is a huge problem.

ROAD RULES

Seat belts must be worn by drivers and front-seat passengers, but almost every Zimbabwean

ignores this law. In most national parks and reserves private cars are not allowed to drive after sunset and motorbikes are banned for safety reasons. Driving (in theory) is on the left-hand side of the road.

Hitching

Hitching is no longer recommended in Zimbabwe, for issues of safety and practicality.

Local Transport

Buses and minibuses are always packed to way beyond capacity and are no longer used by travellers.

Taxis are largely safe, and can be booked direct or through your hotel. There are no meters, so be sure to check the price before starting.

Tours

Zimbabwe is best seen today with the assistance of a tour and/or safari operator.

Musuna Safaris & Travel (Map pp696-7;

☎ 04-705716; fax 704792; musuna@mweb.co.zw; ground fl, Travel Centre, 93-5 Jason Moyo Ave) Can book any tour and lodge around the country.

Pamushana & Nduna Safari Lodges (Map p694;

☎ 04-369523; www.pamushana.com; Shop 37, Arundel Village, Quorn Ave, Harare) These two lodges – both

based in Malilangwe Wildlife Reserve – are part of a private trust that runs one of the most eco-friendly safaris in Southern Africa. Neither are budget lodges, though Nduna is certainly cheaper. Pamushana is simply one of the most stunning safari lodges in the world. Recent guests include Catherine Zeta-Jones, Michael Douglas and Tom Cruise.

Zimsun Leisure Group (Map pp696-7; ☎ 737944; 735681; 99 Jason Moyo Avenue, Causeway, Harare; www.zimsun.com) Books larger 2- to 4-star family-style hotels as well as bush retreats and lodges in the main destinations of Zimbabwe. Perfect for groups and/or those who like entertainment and activities on tap.

Train

Zimbabwe's railway network connects Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare and Victoria Falls. Trains are very slow, and the tracks and trains are in desperate need of servicing and parts, and serious accidents continue to occur. All major services travel at night, and sleeping compartments with bedding are available. Check with local operators first as to the current safety of long distance train travel.

If considering this form of transport, contact the **National Railways of Zimbabwe** (☎ Bulawayo 09-322210; Harare 04-78604416, 78604519; Mutare 020-62825; Victoria Falls 013-44391) in the appropriate centre.

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Southern Africa Directory

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This chapter describes general aspects of travel, including activities, accommodation and common facilities in the Southern African region. There is also a separate Directory in each country chapter, which provides more detailed and specific information.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in Southern Africa encompasses a wide variety of definitions, from a patch of turf to pitch a tent on to opulent lodges that defy any star rating. Options in this book are listed in order of price. Although prices vary immensely from country to country, budget travellers can generally get a night's sleep for under US\$50, or even under US\$40 in South Africa, Mozambique, Malawi, Swaziland and Lesotho. Midrange options cost US\$50 to US\$100, peaking at around US\$125 in some parts of Zimbabwe.

Top-end options charge from US\$100. Check individual directories for the budget breakdown used in that chapter.

B&Bs & Guesthouses

B&Bs and guesthouses are interchangeable terms in much of Southern Africa. They range from a simple room in someone's house to well-established B&Bs with five-star ratings and deluxe accommodation. B&Bs and guesthouses are most prevalent in South Africa, where the standards are high and features such as antique furniture, private verandas, florid gardens and a pool are common. Indeed some of the finest accommodation on the continent is found in B&Bs along the Garden Route. Breakfast is usually included and almost always involves gut-busting quantities of eggs, bacon, toast and other cooked goodies.

Camping

Camping is also popular, especially in national parks, at coastal and lakeshore areas, and in more expensive destinations, such as Botswana. Some camping grounds are quite basic, while others have a range of facilities, including hot showers and security fences. Wild (or free) camping (ie not at an official site) is another option, but security can be a problem and wild animals are always a concern, so choose your tent site with care.

In the national parks and wildlife reserves, there's a wide choice of accommodation, ranging from simple camping grounds to cabins, chalets, bungalows and luxurious camps and lodges. It's important to note that 'camp' doesn't necessarily denote a camp site (although it may). A camp is usually a well-

BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

PRACTICALITIES

- News magazines that cover the continent include *Africa Today*, *Business Africa* and the best, BBC's *Focus on Africa*. All are available from newsagents in South Africa and bookshops in capital cities elsewhere. *Getaway to Africa* magazine covers travel in Southern Africa, with articles ranging from epic 4WD trips to active and not-so-active tours all over the region.
- The beautiful, glossy *Africa Geographic*, published bimonthly, should be considered an essential subscription for every Africa buff. Bird-watchers will also want to read the excellent bimonthly *Africa Birds & Birding*. For subscriptions to these magazines contact **Africa Geographic** (☎ 27-21-686 9001; www.africa-geographic.com; Black Eagle Publishing, PO Box 44223, Claremont 7735, South Africa).
- All the countries covered in this book use the metric system. To convert between metric and imperial units, refer to the conversion chart on the inside front cover of this book.
- Electricity in Southern Africa is generated at 220V to 240V AC. Most plugs have three prongs (or pins), either round or rectangular ('square') in section. In South Africa, round-pin plugs are used. Outside South Africa, British-style square three-pin plugs are common. A voltage adaptor is needed for US appliances.

appointed upmarket option run by a private company. Accommodation is usually in tents or chalets made from natural materials. The contact number for these places will be at their office in a larger town, and are for bookings and inquiries only, not for direct contact with the lodge or camp.

In upmarket lodges and camps, the rates will typically include accommodation plus half board, activities (wildlife drives, boat trips etc) and perhaps even house wine and beer. It may also include laundry and transfers by air or 4WD (although these are usually extra).

Hostels

Many towns and cities on the main tourist trail have at least one hostel, and in some places – such as South Africa's Garden Route and increasingly Mozambique and Namibia – you'll have a wide choice. The hostels generally mirror small hostels anywhere else in the world and offer camping space, dorms and a few private doubles. Many also have a TV room, swimming pool, bar, restaurant, and email and phone service, as well as a travel desk where you can book tours and safaris. Several of the smarter places accept credit cards.

Another budget option, albeit dwindling but still available in Malawi and Zambia, are resthouses run by local governments or district councils. These are peppered throughout the region, and many date from colonial times. Some are very cheap and less than ap-

pealing; others are well kept and good value. In resthouses and other cheap hotels, the definition of single and double rooms is not always consistent. It may be determined by the number of beds rather than the number of people. Therefore it is not unusual for two people to share a single room (which may have a large bed), paying either the single rate or something just a bit higher. If you want to save money, it's always worth asking.

Hotels

In towns and cities, top-end hotels offer clean, air-conditioned rooms with private bathrooms, while midrange hotels typically offer fans instead of air-con. At the budget end, rooms aren't always clean (and may be downright filthy), and bathrooms are usually shared and may well be in an appalling state. Often, your only source of air will be a hole in the window. Many cheap hotels double as brothels, so if this is your budget level don't be surprised if there's a lot of coming and going during the night. Some countries, including Malawi and Botswana, offer little in the way of hotels between budget and top end.

Many hotels offer self-catering facilities, which may mean anything from a fridge and a hotplate in the corner to a full kitchen in every unit. In some cases, guests will have to supply their own cooking implements – and perhaps even water and firewood.

Throughout the region you'll probably encounter hotels and lodges that charge in tiers. That is, overseas visitors are charged

international rates (full price), visitors from other Southern African countries pay a regional rate (say around 30% less) and locals get resident rates (often less than half the full rate). Most places also give discounts in the low season. In this book, where possible we've quoted the international high season rates, including the value added tax (VAT), which ranges from 10% to 30%. If you intend staying at mostly top-end hotels and lodges, it's worth scanning the internet beforehand as you may discover some heavily discounted rates.

ACTIVITIES

Southern Africa's climate and landscape make the region ideal for numerous outdoor activities – from peaceful and relaxing to energetic and downright terrifying. The following list is not exhaustive, but provides some tantalising food for thought. For finer detail check the Directory of each country chapter.

Adrenaline Activities

Southern Africa is something of a gathering place for adrenaline nuts, and a range of weird and wonderful activities keep them happily crazed. The top spot for extreme sports is Victoria Falls and Livingstone, where white-water rafting in the Zambezi and bungee jumping off the Victoria Falls bridge are hourly occurrences. The highest bungee jump in the world (allegedly) can be found in South Africa at Bloukrans River Bridge (p468), but if you're only half-nuts you can try any number of smaller ones.

Swakopmund is the adventure capital of Namibia, and sandboarding, skydiving and quad-biking through the dunes are popular pastimes arranged by hostels and hotels. In Malawi waterfall abseils and rope swings around Manchewe Falls (p180) near Livingstonia are all the rage.

Finances and infrastructure make South Africa the easiest destination to scare yourself silly. The latest growing craze is kloofing; a mix of climbing, hiking, swimming and jumping, which is commonly known elsewhere as canyoning. Hot spots include Cape Town and the Drakensberg Escarpment in Mpumalanga. See p580 for more information.

South Africa is also one of the world's top destinations for paragliding, particularly at Cape Town's Table Mountain. Although the flying is good year-round, the strongest ther-

mals are from November to April. See p579 for more information.

There is excellent and challenging climbing on the close-to-sheer faces of the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg (see p582) in South Africa. Climbing Namibia's Spitzkoppe (p347) is not for beginners and requires technical expertise and proper equipment, though plenty of locals and travellers tackle the summit each year.

Canoeing, Kayaking & White-Water Rafting

The Zambezi River lures white-water rafters from around the globe to tackle its angry churn, and there are plenty of operators in Zimbabwe (see p621) and Livingstone, Zambia (see p620). Canoeing is a less treacherous way to appreciate the river's flora and fauna and equally easy to organise.

In South Africa canoeing and white-water rafting are popular pursuits on the Blyde and Sabie Rivers, both in Mpumalanga province. Other watery avenues include the waterways around Wilderness National Park in the Western Cape; the Orange River, particularly through Augrabies Falls National Park; and the Tugela. See p580 for more information. There's also some serene canoeing at the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (p513). In Swaziland, the classic rafting destination is the Great Usutu River (see the boxed text, p608).

Rafting is highly rain-dependent, and the best months usually fall between December/January to April.

Sea kayaking is popular in sporadic locations along the coast, but it's best experienced on Lake Malawi. There are outfits in Nkhata Bay (p189) that can oblige.

Diving & Snorkelling

The best diving and snorkelling in the region is along the coast of Mozambique, particularly the Bazaruto Archipelago (p267) and Vilankulo (p265), Ponta D'Ouro (p257), Tofo (p262), Pemba (p285), Nacala (p282) and Inhaca Island (p255). Quality equipment, instruction and certification are readily available at most of these locations. But the country's least explored but arguably finest diving is the Quirimbas Archipelago; see p288 for more information. March to June and November are generally the best months for diving in Mozambique, and February (due to heavy rains) is the worst.

RESPONSIBLE DIVING

Please consider the following tips when diving and help preserve the ecology and beauty of reefs:

- Never use anchors on the reef, and take care not to ground boats on coral.
- Avoid touching or standing on living marine organisms or dragging equipment across the reef. Polyps can be damaged by even the gentlest contact. If you must hold on to the reef, touch only exposed rock or dead coral.
- Be conscious of your fins. Even without contact, the surge from fin strokes near the reef can damage delicate organisms. Take care not to kick up clouds of sand, which can smother organisms.
- Practise and maintain proper buoyancy control. Major damage can be done by divers descending too quickly and colliding with the reef.
- Take great care in underwater caves. Spend as little time within them as possible as your air bubbles may be caught within the roof and thereby leave organisms high and dry. Take turns to inspect the interior of a small cave.
- Resist the temptation to collect or buy corals or shells or to loot marine archaeological sites (mainly shipwrecks).
- Ensure that you take home all your rubbish and any litter you may find as well. Plastics in particular are a serious threat to marine life.
- Do not feed fish.
- Minimise your disturbance of marine animals. *Never* ride on the back of turtles.

In South Africa the Cape Peninsula offers superb wreck diving and giant kelp forests. The east coast is home to good coral formations and there is excellent warm-water diving on the KwaZulu-Natal north coast, particularly around Sodwana Bay (p514). The best visibility here occurs in May to September.

For a freshwater flutter, Lake Malawi offers some of the best snorkelling and diving in the world. There are good outfits in Nkhata Bay (p189) and Cape Maclear (p202).

Fishing

Southern Africa's wild and varied coastline and wealth of rivers and lakes make for profitable fishing expeditions. Cape Maclear is a good launching pad for fishing trips along Lake Malawi (see p202), and you can also fish for trout on the Zomba Plateau and at Nyika National Park (p183).

In Zambia the tigerfish of the Lower Zambezi River give a good fight, but not as good as the vundu, a catfish weighing upwards of 45kg. Most lodges along the river's banks include fishing in rates.

In South Africa anglers fish for introduced trout in many of the country's parks and

reserves; there are some particularly good highland streams in the Drakensberg.

Lesotho is an insider's tip among trout anglers. The season runs from September to May (same in South Africa), and there is a small licence fee, a size limit and a bag limit of 12 fish. The nearest fishing area to Maseru is the Makhaleng River. Other places to fish are the Malibamat'so River near Oxbow; the Mokhotlong River in the northeast; and the Thaba-Tseka main dam. See p152 for more information.

Mozambique's coast is legendary among anglers, particularly in the south between Ponta d'Ouro and Inhassoro, and in the far north around Pemba. Saltwater fly-fishing is also becoming increasingly popular. Inland, the most popular fishing areas are Barragem de Cahora Bassa near Tete, and Barragem de Chicamba Real near Chimoio. Species you are likely to encounter include marlin, kingfish, tuna, sailfish and more. Marlin season is from October/November to February/March. Tag and release is encouraged at many resorts. Officially, no more than 6kg of any one type of catch from sports and deep-sea fishing can be taken out of the country. See p292 for more information.

Football (Soccer)

Football is Africa's most popular participation and spectator sport. If you want to play, the universities and municipal stadiums are the best places to find a good-quality game, but nearly every town in Africa has pitches where informal matches are played most evenings (in coastal areas, the beach works equally well). Foreigners are usually warmly welcomed, and joining in a game is one of the best ways to meet the locals. Bring along your own ball (which could be deflated for travelling), and you'll be the hit of the day.

Otherwise, the ball used may be more suitable for tennis, or it may be half-deflated or

just a round bundle of rags, and each goal a couple of sticks, not necessarily opposite each other. You may have to deal with puddles, ditches and the odd goat or donkey wandering across the pitch, but the game itself is taken very seriously, and play is fast and furious, with the ball played low.

Hiking

Across Southern Africa there are many excellent opportunities for hiking, and this is one of the most popular activities in the region.

Namibia's Fish River Canyon (p385) is one of Africa's most spectacular hikes, but proper gear, food, water and experience are musts. In

RESPONSIBLE HIKING

To help preserve the ecology and beauty of Southern Africa, consider the following tips when hiking.

Rubbish

- Carry out *all* your rubbish. Don't overlook easily forgotten items, such as silver paper, orange peel, cigarette butts and plastic wrappers. Empty packaging should be stored in a dedicated rubbish bag. Make an effort to carry out rubbish left by others.
- Never bury your rubbish: Digging disturbs soil and ground cover and encourages erosion. Buried rubbish will likely be dug up by animals, who may be injured or poisoned by it. It may also take years to decompose.
- Minimise waste by taking minimal packaging and no more food than you will need. Take reusable containers or stuff sacks.
- Sanitary napkins, tampons, condoms and toilet paper should be carried out despite the inconvenience. They burn and decompose poorly.

Human Waste Disposal

- Contamination of water sources by human faeces can lead to the transmission of all sorts of nasties. Where there is a toilet, please use it. Where there is none, bury your waste. Dig a small hole 15cm deep and at least 100m from any watercourse. Cover the waste with soil and a rock. In snow, dig down to the soil.

Washing

- Don't use detergents or toothpaste in or near watercourses, even if they are biodegradable.
- For personal washing, use biodegradable soap and a water container (or even a lightweight, portable basin) at least 50m away from the watercourse. Disperse the waste water widely to allow the soil to filter it fully.
- Wash cooking utensils 50m from watercourses using a scourer, sand or snow instead of detergent.

Erosion

- Hillsides and mountain slopes, especially at high altitudes, are prone to erosion. Stick to existing trails and avoid short cuts.

Malawi you can trek the scenic peaks of Mt Mulanje (p219), the Zomba Plateau (p210) and the Nyika Plateau (see the boxed text, p182).

Mozambique boasts beautiful vantage points to trek to but little infrastructure so you'll likely be on your own. The country's best mountain climb is up Mt Namuli (see the boxed text, p275), which is relatively accessible and needs no special equipment. Mt Gorongosa (p270) is also good and equally straightforward. The Chimanimani Mountains are beautiful for hiking, but lack any infrastructure other than a handful of basic camp sites. Other areas for hikes include

Penha Longa (see Manica, p271), west of Chimoio, and the verdant hills around Gurúé (p276). Elsewhere, a combination of minimal infrastructure, the risk of land mines, and vast expanses of trackless bush make hiking and trekking the domain of adventurers, well equipped with compasses or a good GPS (global positioning system), camping equipment and provisions.

South Africa's undulating topography offers superb hiking opportunities. The best time to embark on any trek is March to October, outside the heat and wet of summer. Among the best walks are: the Hoerikwaggo hiking trails of Table Mountain National

- If a well-used trail passes through a mud patch, walk through the mud so as not to increase the size of the patch.
- Avoid removing the plant life that keeps topsoils in place.

Fires & Low-Impact Cooking

- Don't depend on open fires for cooking. The cutting of wood for fires in popular trekking areas can cause rapid deforestation. Cook on a light-weight kerosene, alcohol or Shellite (white gas) stove, and avoid those powered by disposable butane gas canisters.
- If you are trekking with a guide and porters, supply stoves for the whole team. In alpine areas, ensure that all members are outfitted with enough clothing so that fires are not a necessity for warmth.
- If you patronise local accommodation, select those places that do not use wood fires to heat water or cook food.
- Fires may be acceptable below the tree line in areas that get very few visitors. If you light a fire, use an existing fireplace. Don't surround fires with rocks. Use only dead, fallen wood. Remember the adage 'the bigger the fool, the bigger the fire'. Use minimal wood, just what you need for cooking. In huts, leave wood for the next person.
- Ensure that you fully extinguish a fire after use. Spread the embers and flood them with water.

Wildlife Conservation

- For information on hunting on Southern Africa, see the boxed text, p68.
- Don't buy items made from endangered species.
- Don't attempt to exterminate animals in huts. In wild places, they are likely to be protected native animals.
- Discourage the presence of wildlife by not leaving food scraps behind you. Place gear out of reach and tie packs to rafters or trees.
- Do not feed the wildlife as this can lead to animals becoming dependent on hand-outs, to unbalanced populations and to diseases.

Camping

- Always seek permission to camp from landowners.

Park (see p427), the five-day Whale Route in De Hoop Nature Reserve (p446) and the celebrated Otter Trail (p468), a five-day journey along the Garden Route that needs to be booked months in advance. Other notable hikes include the Tsitsikamma Trail (p468), which runs parallel to the Otter Trail, Kwa-Zulu-Natal's Giant's Cup Trail (p522) – up to five days in the southern Drakensberg and Mpumalanga's Blyde River Canyon Hiking Trail (p536). See the relevant chapters and the South Africa Directory (p580) for more information.

TRAILS

Most hiking trails in Southern Africa are established and maintained by national park authorities, conservation bodies and private landowners. In South Africa, Namibia and sometimes in other countries you must pay a fee to use the trail, which covers the use of camp sites or accommodation (ranging from simple shelters to comfortable cabins) along the route. These trails are sometimes called overnight hikes; routes that take more than

one day. Typically, you can do the route in only one direction (some are traverses while others are circular), and to preserve the condition of the trail, only a limited number of people are allowed to hike on any one day. In fragile areas, departures are permitted only once or twice per week, and even day and time of departure is sometimes stipulated. You must complete the trail in the set number of days and may not link two days together (except perhaps the last two) or stay extra nights at any camp site or hut, so they never become overcrowded.

Some trails have their own regulations. For example, few hikes allow fires (hikers need to carry camping stoves), and most are limited to parties of no fewer than three and no more than 10 people. For some of Namibia's tougher routes, participants must provide a doctor's certificate of health.

In South Africa and Namibia, popular multiday hiking trails typically require a reservation through the national parks office or other relevant authority. Only the popular classics such as the Otter Trail and Fish River

Canyon are likely to be fully booked out. In South Africa, you can sometimes find a slot when someone else has cancelled (this is no longer allowed in Namibia unless it's privately arranged).

Once space has been confirmed, you are issued with a permit. This is sent by post if you have a local address, or is held ready for collection at the national park headquarters. You can pay in advance with a credit card, or on arrival. Included in the price may be an information sheet or map of the route. You must turn up at the start of the trail on the arranged date and report to the 'officer-in-charge'. You'll also have to fill in a register (with details of the number of people in your party, experience, equipment, colour of backpacks), to be used in case of an emergency. Although this sounds like an incredibly complicated way to just take a walk, travellers who have completed the popular routes – especially in South Africa – recommend the hikes highly.

Because of the bureaucracy surrounding the national parks' routes in Namibia, a growing number of private landholders have established their own long-distance routes, and many are just as rewarding as the well-known ones, but tend to cost a bit more. The best of these are outlined on p389.

One last point – in South Africa and Namibia the Afrikaans word *wandelpad* seems to refer to any kind of trail. Therefore, it's best to check the English translation, just to make sure your planned day-walk doesn't turn into a week's expedition.

Horse Riding

One of Malawi's greatest treats is a bout of horse riding in Nyika National Park (p182). Exploring the park on horseback is an excellent way to get up close and personal with the diversity of antelopes on the plateau, and you can opt for an hour, a 10-day safari or anything in between. Also in Malawi, Kande Beach Camp prides itself on its horse-riding expeditions along the Chintheche Strip; see p192 for more information.

In South Africa it's easy to find rides ranging from several hours to several days, and for all experience levels. Particularly good areas include the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (p513) and Limpopo's Waterberg range (p576). Riding is also offered in several national parks.

Lesotho is horse-riding utopia, with ample possibilities to navigate the mountainous terrain by horseback. The best places to organise rides are through Malealea Lodge (p150), where the rides are operated by locals, with the profits being ploughed back into the local community, and Semonkong Lodge (p148), which has a similar arrangement. You can ride for as many days as you like. Highlights include traditional Basotho villages and the jaw-dropping scenery.

Mountain Biking

It goes without saying that a region so rich in hiking opportunities will have equally rewarding mountain-biking possibilities. Outside South Africa and the main tourist areas in the region, it's relatively difficult to hire bikes, so you'll need to bring your own. For information on bringing your own bike to Southern Africa, see p755.

You can also hire local-style sit-up-and-beg steel roadsters. These are good for getting around towns (especially flat ones) or exploring rural areas at a leisurely pace.

South Africa is littered with excellent biking trails, but among the best are in the De Hoop Nature Reserve (p446), with overnight and day trails, and Citrusdal (p458), with a network of trails. Then there's Cape Town (see p427), which is something of an unofficial national hub. Nearby in Swaziland there are trails in the Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary (p606).

A series of dirt and gravel roads and a massive network of single-track trails in the hills south and east of Lusaka in Zambia provide hundreds of miles of mountain biking opportunities for those who want to get some exercise while exploring Zambia's rural villages. Many of the trails link together to form loops ranging from pleasant two-hour excursions to epic seven-hour circuits that wander through the rugged terrain at the edge of the Zambezi Escarpment.

In Malawi you can pedal your way through the trails in the Nyika National Park (p181), where you can also hire bikes.

Surfing

Any surfer worth their wax is familiar with the legendary waves at J-Bay, better known to nonconverts as Jeffrey's Bay (p468). Situated on the Garden Route, the town's choppy surf lures experts and amateurs from around the globe. South Africa also offers a myriad

DESERT HIKING

While desert areas of Southern Africa – especially parts of Namibia, Botswana and South Africa – offer a host of hiking opportunities, the conditions are quite different from those to which most visitors are accustomed. Tramping through this lonely countryside is a wonderful experience, but hiking isn't recommended during the heat of the summer months, when temperatures can exceed 40°C. In national parks, summer hiking is officially forbidden, and most hiking trails are closed from November or December to April or May.

In the desert heat, hikers should carry 4L of water per person per day (an excellent way to carry water is in 2L plastic Coke bottles, which are available all over the region). The most effective way to conserve water isn't necessarily to drink sparingly. Before setting off in the morning (assuming that water is available at your overnight stop), flood your body's cells with water. That is, drink more water than you feel you can possibly hold! After a few hours, when you grow thirsty, do the same again from the supply you're carrying. Believe it or not, with this method you'll actually use less water and feel less thirsty than if you drink sparingly all day long.

Another major concern is the desert sun, which can be brutal. Wear light-coloured and lightweight clothing, use a good sunscreen (at least UV Protection Factor 30) and never set off without a hat that shelters your neck and face from the direct sun.

If the heat is a major problem, it's best to rise before the sun and hike until the heat becomes oppressive. You may then want to rest through the heat of midday and begin again after about 3pm. (Note, however, that summer thunderstorms often brew up at around this time and may continue into the night.) During warmer months, it may also be worthwhile timing your hike with the full moon, which will allow you to hike at night.

Because many trails follow canyons and riverbeds, it's important to keep a watch on the weather. Rainy periods can render normally dry kloofs and streambeds impassable, and rivers with large catchment areas can quickly become raging torrents of muddy water, boulders and downed trees. Never camp in canyons or dry riverbeds, and always keep to higher ground whenever there's a risk of flash-flooding.

of less-celebrated alternatives, particularly along the Eastern Cape coast from Port Alfred northwards. The best time of the year for surfing the southern and eastern coasts is autumn and early winter (from about April to July).

Although undeveloped for surfers, Namibia's Skeleton Coast (p354) is famous for rough waves and unspoilt beaches. This stretch is only for the seriously experienced and brave, though; savage rips, icy water temperatures and the odd Great White add new dimensions of difficulty to the task at hand.

Mozambique's best waves are at Ponta d'Ouro (p256) in the far south of the country and (for skilled surfers) at Tofinho – Mozambique's unofficial surfing capital, just south of Tofo (p262). Boards can be rented at both places.

Wildlife Watching

Wildlife and bird-watching are two of the main activities that lure travellers to Southern Africa. Details on the region's fascinating wildlife are provided in the Environment chapter (p59), while visual aid is found in the colour Wildlife Guide (p69). The obvious place to spot the region's furred, feathered and scaled delights is in one of the numerous national parks – see p64 for more information. Individual country chapters also provide specifics about the best spots. For direction on organising wildlife safaris, see Tours in the Transport sections of each country.

In most places in Southern Africa, large animals are confined to national parks (or similar conservation areas), and the only way to see them is by vehicle – this is both by law and by default, as there's rarely any public transport. If you don't have a vehicle (motorcycles and bicycles don't count), your only option is to join an organised safari.

The term 'safari' (which means 'we go' in Swahili) may conjure up the image of a single-file procession of adventurers and porters stalking through the bush behind a large elephant gun, but modern usage is broader and may extend to bushwalking, river rafting, horse riding, canoeing, playing golf or just warming a seat on a train or vehicle. That said, most safaris involve wildlife viewing, which is most often done from a vehicle with open sides, large windows, or a pop-up roof to allow clear views and photographic opportunities. A driver (who doubles as guide) comes with the vehicle.

The range of wildlife-viewing safaris available in Southern Africa is enormous. They can last from a day to a month, and participants may camp outside and cook over an open fire or stay in luxury lodges and be served gourmet meals. You could charter a safari customised for your group's interests or join an already established group or prescheduled safari. You could spend a frantic day ticking species off a list or spend hours by a single water hole watching the comings and goings.

And of course, there's also a range of prices available. The best value will be participation safaris, in which clients muck in to pack and unpack the vehicle, put up their own tents, and help with cooking and washing up. These are typically good value, and are almost always highly rewarding, especially when you get off the beaten track. At the other end of the spectrum, you can pay up to US\$400 per person per day and enjoy all the comforts of home, with a camp staff to take care of all the chores.

Lots of overseas agencies (see p757) cobble together programmes using local operators, but these are typically quite expensive. Packages are generally more economical when organised on site (the exception is for safaris involving upmarket lodges, which are often block-booked by overseas agents who can get deals that are lower than rack rates). Locally, the best places to organise safaris are Cape Town, Windhoek, Harare, and the tourist towns of Livingstone and Vic Falls.

If you're on a real shoestring budget and can't afford even the cheapest of safaris, you'll probably be frustrated by the rules and regulations that appear to be designed specifically to keep you out of the parks. There is no public transport, and hitching is forbidden. Even in parks where walking is permitted, you usually have to start from the park headquarters, which is accessible only by vehicle. Hitching is prohibited *inside* the parks, but hours spent waving your thumb at the entrance gate may result in a lift that takes you where you want to go. Plan on long waits and have plenty of food and water.

BOOKS

This section lists publications covering most of Southern Africa; see also p24. Books on individual countries are listed in the relevant country chapters. Note that many books have different publishers in different countries, and

that a hardcover rarity in one country may be a readily available paperback in another, so we haven't included publishers in this list (unless relevant). In any case, bookshops, libraries and online booksellers allow you to search by title or author.

FIELD GUIDES

Southern Africa's incredible floral and faunal diversity has inspired a large number of field guides for visitors and wildlife enthusiasts. In the UK, an excellent source for wildlife and nature titles is **Subbuteo Natural History Books Ltd** (☎ 0870-0109 700; www.wildlifebooks.com). International mail orders are welcome. In the USA, try the **Adventurous Traveler Bookstore** (☎ 800 282 3963; www.adventuroustraveler.com). In Australia, check out **Andrew Isles Natural History Books** (☎ 03-9510 5750; www.andrewisles.com).

Field Guide to the Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa by Bill Branch is the one to consult if you want to know what it is that's slithering underfoot – and whether or not it's dangerous.

South African Frogs by Neville Passmore and Vincent Carruthers has all the answers for frogophiles. It concentrates on South Africa, but includes most species found north of the border.

The Field Guide to the Butterflies of Southern Africa by Igor Migdoll isn't totally comprehensive, but you probably won't encounter a butterfly that isn't included in this guide.

Complete Guide to Freshwater Fishes of Southern Africa by Paul Skelton is a favourite with anglers.

Medicinal Plants of South Africa provides background information on regional medicinal plants; it's available from **Briza Publications** (☎ 12-329 3896; fax 329 4525; www.briza.co.za) in South Africa.

GENERAL

Raymond Bonner's *At the Hand of Man* discusses conservation issues and the destruction of African wildlife, holding that conservation will work only if African people see real benefits themselves.

Zambezi: Journey of a River by Michael Main is a very readable combination of history, geography, geology, anthropology, careful observation, humour, rumour and myth, following the Zambezi River through Zambia, Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, with side-tracks into Malawi.

GUIDEBOOKS

If you're looking for more in-depth guidebook coverage, Lonely Planet also publishes *South Africa, Lesotho & Swaziland*; *Botswana & Namibia* and *Mozambique* guides. If you're travelling the entire continent, you may want to check out *Africa on a Shoestring*. Lonely Planet also publishes guidebooks to a number of other African countries, as well as *Trekking in East Africa*, which includes routes in Malawi.

Another guidebook is *Hiking Trails of Southern Africa* by Willie and Sandra Olivier, which covers major backpacking routes in South Africa and Namibia. If walking is your game, the *Complete Guide to Hiking Trails in Southern Africa* by Jaynee Levy describes more than 350 trails in South Africa (plus another 50 or so in Namibia, Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Malawi), from short nature strolls to major expeditions in wild areas.

Pan-continental motorcyclists should grip the *Adventure Motorbiking Handbook* by Chris Scott. It contains lots of information on riding through Africa.

The *Illustrated Guide to Southern Africa* (Readers Digest) and *Secret Southern Africa* (AA of South Africa) are large-format books full of photos, maps and touring descriptions. Both books are recommended for motoring around the region.

HISTORY & POLITICS

Africa by Phyllis Martin and Patrick O'Meara is the nearest you'll get to a pocket library, with scholarly but accessible essays on a wide range of subjects including history, religion, colonialism, sociology, art, popular culture, law, literature, politics, economics and the development crisis.

Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent by Blaine Harden provides provocative and pessimistic reading on several topics, such as the failure of African political leadership. In any case, the author maintains that African values endure and will eventually save the day.

Chris Munion's *Banana Sunday – Datelines from Africa* contains humorous accounts of this journalist's coverage of various African wars.

Blood on the Tracks by Miles Bredin chronicles an essentially hopeless journey between Angola and Mozambique. It's a tale of war,

bureaucracy, corruption and inefficiency that neatly outlines the problems faced by modern Africa.

TRAVEL LITERATURE

The following suggestions involve several countries in Southern Africa (country-specific titles are mentioned under Books in the directories of individual country chapters).

Grains of Sand by Martin Buckley is a travelogue describing the author's travels through the deserts of the world, including both the Namib and the Kalahari.

In Quest of Livingstone by Colum Wilson and Aisling Irwin tells the story of two British travellers who follow the renowned missionary-explorer through Tanzania and Zambia on mountain bikes. It combines contemporary observations with flashbacks to Livingstone's own journals.

South from the Limpopo by Dervla Murphy chronicles the famously eccentric and beer-swilling author's cycling trip through South Africa. This is a sequel to *The Ukimwi Road*, which describes a cycling trip from Kenya to Zimbabwe.

BUSINESS HOURS

Standard opening hours vary slightly from region to region; specifics can be found in the Directory of each country. However, in general you can expect banks to open their doors on weekdays between 8am and 9am, and to close between 3pm and 3.30pm. On Saturdays banks close sometime between 11am and 1pm. Shops generally open from 8am or 9am until 5pm, and supermarkets in bigger cities tend to stay open a little longer – usually until 7pm or so. In some countries, such as Mozambique, shops often close for an hour over lunch. Cafés open as early as 7.30am and close around 5pm, often daily; however, some are closed on Sunday or Monday. Restaurants serve lunch from 11am until about 3pm and dinner from 6pm to around 10pm.

CHILDREN

Southern Africa presents few problems specific to children, and while health concerns are always an issue, food and lodging are mostly quite familiar and manageable. What's more, foreigners with children are usually treated with great kindness, and a widespread local affection for the younger set opens up all sorts of social interaction for travelling families.

In South Africa, away from the coast, many resorts, hotels and national park lodges and camping grounds have a wide range of facilities for children. Many families hire campervans in South Africa to tour the region. There are fewer child-oriented facilities in the other countries, but here the attractions usually provide entertainment enough: large wild animals in the national parks are a major draw, and even bored teenagers have been known to enjoy Vic Falls and its adrenaline activities. Namibia also lends itself to family travel by campervan, and the attractions – such as the wildlife of Etosha National Park, or the world's biggest sandbox at Sossusvlei – are entertainment in themselves.

In tourist hotels and lodges, family rooms and chalets are normally available for only slightly more than doubles. Otherwise, it's normally easy to arrange more beds in a standard adult double for a minimal extra charge. On public transport children are expected to pay for their seats unless they spend the entire journey on their parents' laps.

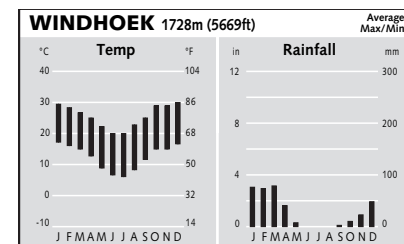
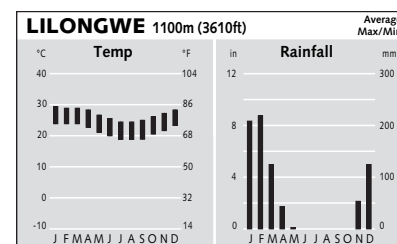
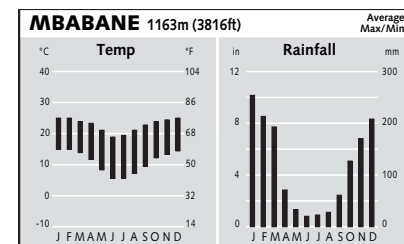
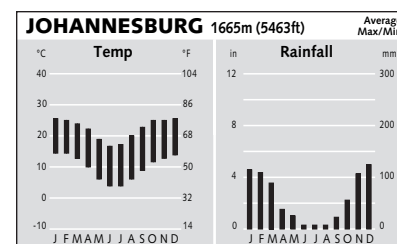
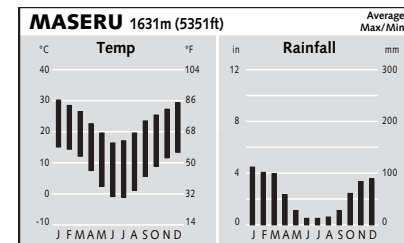
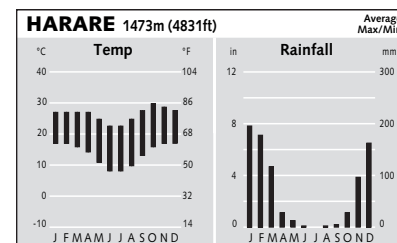
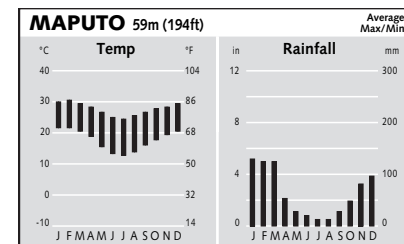
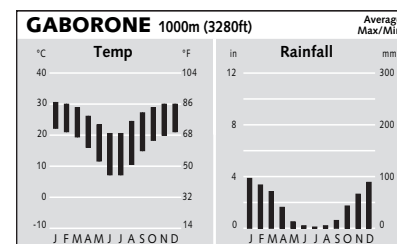
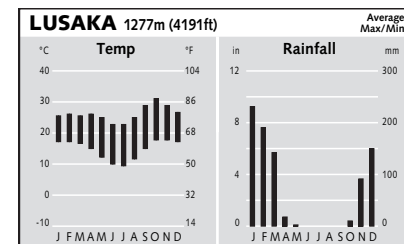
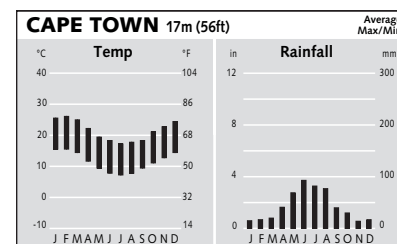
In Southern Africa, compared with some other parts of the world, there are few nasty diseases to worry about, and good (if expensive) medical services are almost always within reach; see p766 for more information on health. On the downside, distances between sites of interest can be long, especially on public transport, so parents may well need to invent creative games or provide supplementary entertainment. Children will normally enjoy having their own small backpacks to carry favourite toys or teddies, books, crayons and paper.

Outside cities and major towns in South Africa, do not plan on finding pasteurised milk, formula, or disposable nappies. They may be available sporadically, but this is the exception rather than the rule. Breast feeding in public is fairly common for locals, but in rural areas it's likely to attract significant unwanted attention for visitors.

For more advice and anecdotes, see Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children*. Also see the Directory in country chapters for more specific information.

CLIMATE CHARTS

In Southern Africa, summer runs from about November to March/April, while winter is from May to July/August. By March and April, temperatures and rainfall drop and by May, the



much drier winter season begins (snow may even fall on the highlands of South Africa and Lesotho). Through June and July the weather remains dry: warm on the coast but with a huge temperature range in the interior – from 20°C in the day to below freezing at night.

From August, temperatures begin to rise and by October, most of the region is hot, and the first rains are arriving in the northernmost regions.

In the Western Cape, which is the only part of Southern Africa to experience a Mediterranean (that is, winter rainfall) climate, the pattern is different. Here, summers are warm and sunny, while winter brings typically changeable and often rainy weather.

COURSES

Courses offered in Southern Africa generally focus on activities. South Africa is one of the world's top destinations for paragliding, and there are ample opportunities for beginners to learn the ropes. The **South African Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association** (☎ 012-668 1219; www.sahpa.co.za) can provide names of operators, and numerous schools offer courses for beginners.

For education of a far less active nature you can ensconce yourself in an atmospheric B&B in South Africa's Winelands and enrol in a wine-tasting course. Useful contacts include: **Cape Wine Academy** (☎ 021-889 8844; www.capewineacademy.co.za), which is based in Stellenbosch and runs courses in both Stellenbosch and Cape Town; and the Nose Wine Bar (p435) in Cape Town.

Scuba diving is also extremely popular throughout the region, and Southern Africa is one of the cheapest places in the world to learn. See the Diving & Snorkelling section (p734) for the best spots to dive in the region; there are usually a good choice of schools littered around the main sites. Schools in Malawi generally win first prize for best value, with the longevity and reputation to match.

CUSTOMS

See this section in Directory under the individual country chapters for customs information, which varies from country to country in the region.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

It is very important not to make sweeping statements about personal safety in Southern Africa. While some areas are undeni-

ably risky, most places are completely safe. Essentially, violent robbery is much more prevalent in cities and towns than in rural or wilderness areas. But even towns can differ; there's more of a danger in those frequented by foreigners than in places off the usual tourist track. Details are provided in the Dangers & Annoyances section of individual country directories.

The main annoyances you'll come across in Southern Africa are the various hustlers, touts, con artists and scam merchants who recognise tourists as easy prey. Although these characters aren't always dangerous, they can part you from your valuables. Awareness, vigilance and suitable precautions are advisable, and should help you deal with them.

Popular scams include young people carrying sign-up sheets, requesting sponsorship for their school, sports team, youth club, grandmother's liver transplant or other apparently worthwhile causes. The sheets will invariably include the names of 'generous' foreigners who have donated US\$100 or more. These are almost invariably a scam; ignore them and politely take your leave. People selling bogus bus tickets in and around bus stations is another scam to look out for. Always purchase your tickets from official sources, even if that's a hole in the wall with a penned sign above it.

In the major cities of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique it's advisable to keep your wits about you when using an ATM. There are dozens of scams that involve stealing your cash, your card or your personal identification number (PIN) – usually all three. The ATM scam you're most likely to encounter involves the thief tampering with the machine so your card becomes jammed. By the time you realise this you've entered your PIN. The thief will have seen this, and when you go inside to report that your card has been swallowed, he will take the card and leave your account significantly lighter.

Exchanging money and avoiding the sting of inflation in Zimbabwe is a particular annoyance to that country. See p684 for the lowdown.

Safety Tips

Some simple precautions will hopefully ensure that you have a trouble-free journey. Travellers who exercise due caution rarely have problems. The precautions suggested

in this section are particularly relevant to Johannesburg and parts of Cape Town, but it's worth reading them if you're travelling in other main urban centres as well.

- Be discreet with your belongings when on the street. Consider leaving your day-pack and camera in your hotel room if the room is safe.
- Don't wear jewellery or watches, however inexpensive they may be. Use a separate wallet for day-to-day purchases, and keep the bulk of your cash out of sight, preferably hidden in a pouch under loose-fitting clothing.
- Walk confidently, but not aggressively. Never look like you're lost (even if you are!). Don't obviously refer to this guidebook. Tear out the pages you need, or duck into a shop to have a look at the map to get your bearings.
- At night get off the streets and take a taxi – a couple of dollars for the fare could save you a lot of pain and trouble.
- Don't fall into the trap of thinking all robbers are on the street. Although most hotels are reputable, some travellers have left money in a safe, only to find that less reputable staff members with a spare key have helped themselves. Often this trick involves taking just a few notes, in the hope that you won't notice. To avoid this, store any valuables in a safe inside a pouch with a lockable zip, or in an envelope you can seal.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Embassies of most travellers' home countries (UK, USA etc) in Southern Africa are listed in the individual country chapters. Embassies are most plentiful in South Africa, where whole suburbs of Pretoria are a *Who's Who* of global representation (see p584). Where home countries have no embassy, often a consul is appointed, who is not a full-time diplomat but has certain diplomatic responsibilities. Australia, Canada and New Zealand have few embassies in Southern Africa, but there is limited emergency assistance available from the British High Commission. Also listed in country chapters are embassies, consulates or high commissions of Southern African countries in a number of home countries.

See p749 for important information regarding visas.

It's important to realise what your own embassy can and can't do to help you if you get into trouble. Generally speaking, it won't be much help if whatever trouble you're in is remotely your own fault. Remember that you are bound by the laws of the country you are in. In genuine emergencies you might get some assistance, but only if other channels have been exhausted. If you have all your money and documents stolen, your embassy might assist with getting a new passport, but that's about it.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

All the countries covered in this book are conservative in their attitudes towards gay men and lesbians, and homosexuality is rarely discussed in public. In traditional African societies, gay sexual relationships are a cultural taboo. In 2001, President Sam Nujoma of Namibia famously said:

In Namibia we don't allow lesbianism or homosexuality... We will combat this with vigour... Police are ordered to arrest you and deport you and imprison you... Those who are practicing homosexuality in Namibia are destroying the nation. Homosexuals must be condemned and rejected in our society.

While this may seem both alarming and excluded, observers see it – along with Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe's vociferous diatribes against homosexuals – as just a way of deflecting attention from greater governmental problems.

Officially, homosexual activity is illegal in all the countries in this book, except South Africa and Lesotho. Lesbian activities are ignored in some countries because officials aren't really aware of them.

This said, homosexual activity – especially among younger men – does occur. South Africa's constitution is one of the few in the world that explicitly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, and there are active gay and lesbian communities and scenes in Cape Town, Jo'burg, Pretoria and Durban. Cape Town is without doubt the focal point, and the most openly gay city on the continent. South Africa's longest-running gay newspaper is the monthly **Exit** (www.exit.co.za). The glossy monthly **OUTright** is for

gay males; *Womyn* is its lesbian equivalent. Both are available at CNA and other chain bookstores nationwide. The Gauteng-based magazine *Rush* is also worth looking out for; it's often available at gay venues. There's also a gay and lesbian link on the South Africa tourism website (www.southafrica.net). An excellent website providing accurate and updated information on legalities and cultural issues is www.mask.org.za.

In most places within Southern Africa, open displays of affection are generally frowned upon, whatever your orientation. Please be sensitive to local sensibilities.

INSURANCE

As a rule all travellers need a travel insurance policy, which will provide some sense of security in the case of a medical emergency or the loss or theft of money or belongings. Travel health insurance policies can usually be extended to include baggage, flight departure insurance and a range of other options. See p766 for greater detail about what you should look for in a good travel health insurance plan, and see p761 for information regarding car insurance.

Claims on your travel insurance must be accompanied by proof of the value of any items lost or stolen (purchase receipts are the best, so if you buy a new camera for your trip, for example, hang onto the receipt). In the case of medical claims, you'll need detailed medical reports and receipts. If you're claiming on a trip cancelled by circumstances beyond your control (illness, airline bankruptcy, industrial action etc), you'll have to produce all flight tickets purchased, tour agency receipts and itinerary, and proof of whatever glitch caused your trip to be cancelled.

INTERNET ACCESS

Most capital cities (and some large towns) in the region have at least one internet café, and many hotels and backpackers hostels also offer these services. Speed, reliability and hourly rates vary greatly; cities in Malawi, South Africa, Mozambique and Zambia have good access at reasonable prices, sometimes less than US\$1 per hour. Other countries are still catching up, and you'll generally find only expensive (up to US\$4 per hour) and slow connections. Rural areas in all countries are essentially devoid of internet access.

MAPS

The Automobile Association (AA) of South Africa produces a useful map of South Africa (as well as numerous South African area maps), plus others covering Botswana and Namibia. The maps are available from any AA shop in South Africa.

MONEY

Details on specific currencies and places to exchange money are given in the individual country chapters. All prices quoted in this book are in US dollars, apart from some prices in the Zambia chapter, which are quoted in Zambian kwacha.

The gap between the government-set exchange rate in Zimbabwe and the accepted exchange rate on the streets can have a huge impact on travellers' expenses in that country. See p684 for more information.

In all countries it's wise to rely on a variety of methods to fund your trip. Local currency, travellers cheques and a credit card will cover all bases.

ATMs

ATMs are readily available throughout South Africa and in cities and main urban centres in the rest of the region. If you're planning to travel for lengthy periods of time in rural areas, however, plan ahead as ATMs are still a foreign concept. There are a few ATM scams to be aware of, operating particularly in South Africa and Zimbabwe. See p744 for more information.

Black Market

In some parts of the world, artificially fixed exchange rates in the bank mean you can get more local money for your hard currency by changing on the so-called black market. Not only is this illegal, it's also potentially dangerous. In most of the region, currency deregulation has eliminated the black market, and Zimbabwe is the only country that still has artificial controls. If someone approaches you anywhere in the region offering substantially more than the bank rate, they almost certainly have a well-formulated plan for separating you from your money. In Zimbabwe, where a thriving – and very risky – black market still exists, you'll also have to beware of police stings aimed at foreigners attempting to circumvent their disastrous system. See p684 for more information.

Cash

Most travellers carry a mix of cash and travellers cheques, although cash is more convenient. The best currencies to bring are US dollars, euros or British pounds, preferably in a mixture. The South African rand is also widely recognised throughout the region, but it's not worth changing your currency into rand before converting it to kwacha, pula or whatever.

It's always wise to have at least an emergency US\$20 note tucked somewhere safe in case you find yourself suddenly devoid of all other possessions. Due to counterfeiting, few places accept US\$100 notes unless they have a light machine to check validity.

Credit Cards

Most credit and debit cards can be used in ATMs, which are found all over South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. In other countries, they're found only in capital cities and larger towns, and may not be reliable.

Credit cards work for purchases all over South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, and in tourist establishments in other countries. You can also use credit cards to draw cash advances (but even in South Africa this can take several hours).

Whatever card you use, it's not wise to rely totally on plastic, as computer or telephone breakdowns can leave you stranded. Always have some cash or travellers cheques as backup.

Moneychangers

Throughout the region, you can exchange currency at banks and foreign exchange bureaux, which are normally found near borders, in larger cities and in tourist areas. You can also change money at some shops and hotels (which almost always give very poor rates).

The easiest currencies to exchange are US dollars, euros or British pounds. At border crossings where there is no bank, unofficial moneychangers are usually tolerated by the authorities. It's always important to be alert, though, as these guys can pull all sorts of stunts with poor exchange rates, folded notes and clipped newspaper sandwiched between legitimate notes.

Tipping

When it comes to tipping, every country is different. Generally, it isn't necessary in

small local establishments, midrange restaurants, backpackers lodges, hotels or fast-food places, but in any upmarket restaurant that doesn't automatically include a service charge (which isn't obligatory if the service has been poor), it may be appropriate. There is a grey area between midrange and upmarket restaurants, because tipping is rarely expected from locals but may be expected of foreigners. On the other hand, wealthier Africans may sometimes tip even at smaller restaurants, not because it's expected, but as a show of status.

At safari lodges and on tours, everyone is expected to leave a blanket tip to be divided among the staff. Safari guides are typically tipped separately.

Taxi drivers aren't normally tipped, but may expect about 10% from well-heeled travellers; in larger cities, even backpackers may be expected to fork over a bit extra.

If you're driving – especially in cities – you are expected to tip parking guards, who'll watch your car while you're away (in a few cases, this is a protection racket, but they're mostly legitimate). However, there's no need to tip the guys who wave you into the parking space you were going to take anyway.

Travellers Cheques

It's wise to purchase a range of travellers cheque denominations so you don't have to exchange US\$100 in a country where you need only half that. When exchanging travellers cheques, many places want to check your purchase receipts (the ones the traveller cheque company told you to always keep separate), but carry them with you only when you want to change money. Just be sure to have photocopies of them, along with the international numbers to call in case of loss or theft.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

In South Africa, film (slide and print), cameras and accessories are readily available in large towns, and processing, including slide processing, is generally of a high standard. In Namibia, you'll find slide film in Windhoek and Swakopmund, but in other countries, availability of any sort of film is restricted to cities and tourist centres, and prices are higher. The best advice is to carry a supply of film and any special requirements from home.

The sunlight in Africa is intense, so most people find Fujichrome Velvia 50, Kodachrome 64 or any 100ISO (ASA) film perfectly adequate, with a 200ISO film suitable for long-lens or evening shots. Useful photographic accessories might include a small flash, a cable or remote shutter release, filters and a cleaning kit. Also, remember to take spare camera batteries.

Some African airports may have old X-ray machines, so it's always wise to request a hand check of your film and camera equipment. Even newer film-safe models can affect high-speed film (1000ISO and higher), especially if it passes through several checks during your trip (the effects are cumulative). Travellers coming from the US should carry all film and camera equipment in their hand luggage, as anti-terrorism X-ray machines for checked baggage are not film safe.

In all countries, be careful about taking photos of soldiers, police, airports, defence installations and government buildings. It goes without saying that you should always ask permission before taking a photo of anyone, but particularly so if you're in a tribal village.

Blank video tapes are available in capital cities and large towns, but qualities and formats vary, and African tapes won't work on North American machines. You can recharge batteries in hotels and lodges as you go, but you'll need a charger, plug adaptors and applicable transformers for the countries you're visiting. For more information, check out Lonely Planet's *Travel Photography*.

Transfer of digital images to CD is becoming increasingly popular in South African cities, particularly in internet cafés.

Wildlife Photography

To score some excellent wildlife photos, a good lightweight 35mm SLR automatic camera with a lens between 210mm and 300mm – and a modicum of skill – should do the trick. Video cameras with zoom facility may be able to get closer and digital cameras will perform all sorts of magic. If your subject is nothing but a speck in the distance, resist wasting film but keep the camera ready. An early start is advisable because most wildlife is active during the cooler hours. When photographing animals, take light readings on the subject and not the brilliant African background or your shots will be underexposed. The best

times to take photos on sunny days are the first two hours after sunrise and the last two before sunset, both of which take advantage of the low sun's colour-enhancing rays. Filters (eg ultraviolet, polarising or skylight) can also produce good results; ask for advice in a good camera shop.

SOLO TRAVELLERS

Solo travel in Southern Africa, whether you're male or female, is straightforward. While you may be a minor curiosity in rural areas, especially solo women travellers, it's likely that in most places nobody will even bat an eye. Times when you'd likely want to find a group to join would be for a safari (to cut costs), on hiking trails (many in South Africa have a three-person minimum for safety reasons) and at night. Solo women should always exercise extreme caution at night and avoid isolating situations. If you're hitting the pubs and bars in a major city it's much wiser and safer to go with a group. For more safety tips for women, see p750.

TELEPHONE

South Africa in general, and major cities elsewhere in the region, has good telephone facilities. Although local calls are relatively inexpensive, long-distance calls and international calls can be pricey. Aside from public phones, there are also private phone centres where you can pay cash for your call, but at double the rate of public phones. International dialling codes for the countries in this book are given in the inside front cover. For information on areas codes within countries, see each chapter's Directory.

Mobile Phones

In Southern Africa, mobile phones are very popular, due in no small part to the often dismal state of national landline service providers. Reception varies from country to country; see the Directory of individual countries for more information. Airports often have a counter where you can rent a mobile phone for the duration of your stay.

TIME

In the southern summer, Southern Africa is two hours ahead of UTC (Universal Time Coordinate, formerly called GMT, or Greenwich Mean Time). The only Southern African country with daylight-saving time is Namibia,

which turns its clocks forward one hour in September, and back one hour in April.

In the southern winter, however, the region is on the same time as British Summer Time (daylight-saving time).

TOILETS

There are two main types of toilet in Africa: the Western style, with a toilet bowl and seat; and the African style, which is a squat toilet with a hole in the floor. Standards of both types vary tremendously, from pristine to nauseating.

In rural areas, long-drop squat toilets are built over a deep hole in the ground, where waste matter decomposes naturally as long as people avoid depositing rubbish (including tampons or sanitary pads, which should be disposed of separately).

There's also a bizarre hybrid, in which an unplumbed Western toilet is perched over a long-drop hole. As you can imagine, the lack of running water can turn these into an unspeakable horror.

TOURIST INFORMATION

All countries in Southern Africa have national tourist boards, but their efficiency and benefit range from excellent to little more than a friendly smile. South Africa's tourist information centres are prolific and fabulous. Usually staffed by devoted locals, they are a great source of microscopic information for travellers. In Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia the tourist boards' websites are useful for preplanning, but the offices themselves don't provide very much enlightenment. See Tourist Information in the Directory of individual country chapters for more information.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

People with mobility limitations will not have an easy time in Southern Africa. Even though there are more disabled people per head of population here than in the West, facilities are few. South Africa stands out from its neighbours by the weight of disabled organisations it boasts; see p587. In South Africa and the capitals of some other countries, some official buildings have ramps and lifts, but these are probably not the sort of places you want to visit!

For the imaginative, Zambezi raft trips, mokoro (dugout canoe) trips in the Okavango

Delta (where at least one mobility-disabled person works as a mokoro poler), wildlife drives and cruises, lie-down sandboarding in the Namib Dunes (if you can reach the top on a quad bike), and other activities won't be inaccessible. In almost all cases, safari companies – including budget operators – are happy to accommodate travellers with special needs, so it never hurts to ask!

Most wheelchair users find travel easier with an able-bodied companion, and happily, travel in Southern Africa does offer a few advantages compared with other parts of the developing world: footpaths and public areas are often surfaced with tar or concrete, rather than with sand, mud or gravel; many buildings (including safari lodges and national park cabins) are single storey, and assistance is usually available on domestic and regional flights. Car hire is easy in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana and, with permission, vehicles can be taken to neighbouring countries.

Organisations

In the US, **Mobility International** (☎ 541-343 1284; www.miusa.org; 132 E Broadway, Suite 343, Eugene OR 97401) advises disabled travellers on mobility issues. It primarily runs educational exchange programmes, and some include African travel. Also in the US, assistance and advice are available from the **Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality** (☎ 212-447-7284; www.sath.org; 347 Fifth Ave, Suite 610, New York NY 10016).

In the UK, a useful contact is the **Royal Association for Disability & Rehabilitation** (☎ 020 7250 3222; www.radar.org.uk; 12 City Forum, 250 City Rd, London EC1Y 8AF).

Access-Able Travel Source (www.access-able.com) is a US-based site providing information on disabled-friendly tours and hotels in South Africa.

VISAS

Visa requirements change according to your nationality. More details about who needs what are given in the individual country chapters and on Lonely Planet's website (www.lonelyplanet.com), which also has links to other visa sites.

In general, travellers from North America, Commonwealth countries and most of Western Europe don't require visas for much of the region. To visit Mozambique, however, almost everyone needs a visa, either purchased at most points of entry or pre-issued from a

Mozambican embassy or consulate. The other exceptions are Zimbabwe and Zambia, where just about everyone requires a visa, but these can be purchased at most points of entry. Zambian visas are free if you're 'introduced' to the country by a Zambian safari company or accommodation option.

If you're from Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe or Latin America, you should check with the local embassies of the countries you intend to visit, as some may accept only visas issued in your home country. This may also apply to travellers of Asian descent (even those with a Western passport), who may require visas even though their black or white compatriots don't. Note also that some visas have limited validity – that is, in some cases you're required to enter the country in question within a specified time period.

Please note that by the time this book is printed there's a good chance visa conditions will have changed. In February 2006, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) announced a univisa system, to be theoretically introduced by the end of 2006, which will enable tourists to obtain a single visa for all countries within Southern Africa. Bureaucratic progress tends to move slowly in this part of the world, but at the very least residents of Southern African countries should enjoy bilateral visa agreements that were implemented in anticipation of the univisa, and allow citizens to move freely between states without a visa.

Other Documents

Depending on which countries you're visiting, you may need the following: a vaccination certificate to show you have had all the right jabs (see p766); a driving licence, and perhaps an International Driving Permit (for the rare occasions when it may be required to hire a vehicle, or for insurance purposes if you're buying a vehicle); as well as a youth hostel card and a student or youth identity card (such as ISIC), which may be good for discounts on flights, long-distance buses and visits to sites of interest (especially museums).

VOLUNTEERING

Unemployment in Southern Africa is high and finding work is difficult. Volunteer work is a more likely possibility, especially if you're interested in teaching or wildlife conservation. A good initial contact is Volunteer Abroad

(www.volunteerabroad.com), which has extensive listings of volunteer opportunities in the region.

The following agencies are also useful for long-term paid or volunteer work:

Australian Volunteers International (☎ 03-9279 1788; www.ovol.org.au) Places qualified Australian residents on one- to two-year contracts.

Earthwatch (☎ 1 800 776 0188; www.earthwatch.org) Places paying volunteers in short-term environmental projects around the globe.

United Nations Volunteers (☎ 228-815 2000; www.unv.org; Postfach 260 111 D-53153 Bonn, Germany) Places volunteers with qualifications and experience in a range of fields.

Volunteer Service Abroad (☎ 04 472 5759; www.vsa.org.nz) Organises professional contracts for New Zealanders.

Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) Canada (☎ 1-888-876-2911; www.vsocanada.org); Netherlands (☎ 030 23 20 620; www.vso.nl); UK (☎ 020-8780 7200; www.vso.org.uk) Places qualified and experienced volunteers for up to two years.

There are some excellent local, grassroots opportunities for travellers wanting to volunteer in Malawi. See Nkhata Bay (p189), the Chintheche Strip (p191), Monkey Bay (p200) and Cape Maclear (p203) for details.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Generally speaking, women travellers in Southern Africa will not encounter serious gender-related problems. In fact, compared with North Africa and the Middle East (especially Morocco, Egypt and Turkey), South America and many Western countries, the region is relatively safe and unthreatening for women travellers.

Southern Africa is one of the few places in the developing world where women can meet and communicate with local men – of any race – without automatically being misconstrued. That's not to say that sexual harassment against travellers never happens, but local white women (mostly South Africans, Namibians, Zambians and Zimbabweans) have done much to refute the idea that women of European descent are willing to hop into bed with the first taker.

That said, it's still rare to find local women travelling alone for no apparent purpose, and lone foreign women seen to be idly wandering around the country may be viewed as something of a curiosity, especially in remote areas.

Aside from this, attitudes towards foreign women travelling alone tend to be fairly liberal. Although you'll still get questions about what you are doing, and where your husband and children are, reactions are usually matter-of-fact.

When it comes to evening entertainment, both black and white societies in Southern Africa are very much conservative, traditional and male-dominated. Therefore, women travellers may face a few glass walls and ceilings. Many bars are male only (by law of the establishment, or by law of tradition), and even where women are 'allowed', cultural conventions often dictate that women don't enter without a male companion. If you ignore these conventions, be aware that accepting a drink from a local man is usually construed as a come-on (much as it would be in many other parts of the world). However distasteful that may seem to liberated Westerners, trying to buck the system may lead to an uncomfortable situation – or worse. The best maxim is, 'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.' Prevention in the form of common-sense precautions is well worth heeding: don't wander around alone anywhere at night, and during the daytime, avoid anywhere that's isolated, including streets, beaches and parks. To avoid attracting unwanted attention, it's best to solicit and follow local female advice on which places are acceptable. Additionally, many budget hotels double as brothels, and are best avoided if you're travelling solo. See the Accommodation section of country directories for more specific information.

It may be difficult to connect with some local women – especially older women, who may have received very little education and therefore speak little English. Similarly, women with young children are normally expected to stay home and attend to domestic duties, which leave them little time to socialise with outsiders. On the other hand,

in recent years an increasing number of girls have been permitted to stay in school while boys are sent away to work. Although there is a wide gap between male and female literacy rates, female literacy is becoming more prevalent all over the region and, as a result, many of the employees in government offices – including tourist offices – are educated, young to middle-aged women. In rural areas, most of the teachers and healthcare workers are women.

For women who do meet someone they like, or who wish to sample local hospitality, never forget that in Africa, HIV/AIDS presents a threat that's unimaginable in the West. Throughout the region, local sex workers are almost always infected, and men may see a foreign woman as a safe alternative. Don't be naive, don't do anything stupid and, at the very least, always use a condom.

There's also a very high level of sexual assault and other violence against women in South Africa specifically, the majority of which occurs in townships and rural areas.

While the countries in this region are considerably safer than some other parts of the world, hitching is not recommended and hitching alone is foolish. If you decide to thumb it, you should refuse a lift if the driver is drunk (a sadly common condition) or the car is chock-a-block with men (eg a military vehicle). Use common sense and things should go well.

Tampons and sanitary napkins are sold in pharmacies and supermarkets in major towns. They may also be available from shops at hotels and upmarket safari lodges.

Female travellers may like to contact the global organisation called **Women Welcome Women World Wide** (☎ /fax 01494-465441; www.womenwelcomewomen.org.uk; 88 Easton St, High Wycombe, Bucks HP11 1LT, UK), which fosters international friendship by enabling women of different countries to visit one another.

Transport in Southern Africa

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THINGS CHANGE

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

This section describes access possibilities to Southern Africa from other parts of the world. Regional access is described in the Getting Around section (p758). Details on travel between and around individual countries are provided in their respective chapters.

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Visitors require a valid passport to enter every country covered in this book. To accommodate visas and border stamps, you'll need at least one or two empty pages per country you intend to visit, especially if your itinerary calls for multiple border crossings. If your passport is close to full, get a new one or pick up an insert – but apply for it well in advance. If your passport is due to expire, replace it before you leave home, as some officials won't admit you unless your passport is valid at least three (or even six) months beyond the end of your stay.

For information on visas, see p749.

AIR

Most flights into Southern Africa arrive at Jo'burg (South Africa) and this is usually the cheapest access point for the region. Although not the most salubrious city to kick-start your travels, it is the heart of the new South Africa and change – be it good or bad – is in your face. The airport itself is in between Jo'burg and Pretoria, so it's easy enough to catch a bus in the other direction and stay in a more relaxing city.

Airports & Airlines AIRPORTS

You can fly to any major city in Southern Africa from anywhere in the world, but some routes are more popular (and therefore usually cheaper) than others.

From Europe most flights go through London, from where you can fly into most major Southern African cities; most other European capitals also fly to the region, but the main continental hubs are Amsterdam and Frankfurt. From America, Atlanta and New York have direct flights to Jo'burg. From Australia, Sydney and Perth are hubs for flights to Jo'burg and Cape Town, and there are also direct flights from Singapore, Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) in Asia. From Africa there are good links between major cities such as Nairobi (Kenya) and Jo'burg; other easy links include Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) and Lilongwe (Malawi), and Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) and Lilongwe, or Lusaka (Zambia).

The major air hub for Southern Africa is **OTR Tambo International Airport** (formerly Johannesburg International; code JIA or JNB; ☎ 011-921 6262; www.worldairportguides.com/johannesburg-jnb). It has a full range of shops, restaurants, internet access, ATMs, foreign exchange bureaus, and mobile-phone and car-rental outlets. Other useful airports for visitors are Cape Town, Windhoek (Namibia), Lusaka and Lilongwe. Gaborone (Botswana) is a pricey access point.

Victoria Falls (p618) is best accessed via Lusaka or Johannesburg and, although still accessible by air, it's likely that the frequency of flights and number of carriers will decrease dramatically within the next few years. It's possible flight traffic will pick up to Livingstone (Zambia) instead, especially if a rumoured airport expansion comes about.

Remember that your access point need not necessarily be the nearest point to your intended destination. For example, it's often cheaper to fly into South Africa, from where you can take a short hop to Harare, Windhoek or Lusaka for less than the price of a direct flight. On the other hand, bargain deals to Namibia, Zimbabwe or Zambia may be cheaper than a direct flight to South Africa. Advance research will greatly improve your chances of finding an economical airfare, so start looking early.

AIRLINES

Most major European airlines serve Southern Africa, including British Airways, KLM-Royal Dutch Airlines, Lufthansa Airlines, Swiss, Air France, Virgin and TAP Air Portugal. Additionally, Emirates, Kenya Airways, South African Airways, Air Namibia and LAM (Linhas Aereas de Moçambique) fly between Europe and the region, and unlikely sounding carriers such as Ethiopian Airlines often offer good-value services between Europe and many parts of Africa.

Although several airlines fly between the USA (Atlanta) and Southern Africa, many prospective visitors find it less convenient, but considerably cheaper, to fly via Europe. From Australia, Qantas and other airlines have regular services from Sydney and Perth to Johannesburg and Cape Town. Note that there has been a reduction in the number of airlines servicing Zimbabwe – Qantas and Singapore Airlines no longer offer a route to Harare.

See the Transport sections in individual country chapters for the list of the main airlines flying to and from that country.

Tickets

When buying your air ticket, you may want to check out 'open-jaw' deals – ie flying into one

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motorized travel generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the USA will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon-Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the level of greenhouse gases they are responsible for with financial contributions to sustainable-travel schemes that reduce global warming – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, support the carbon-offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

country and out of another. Sometimes though, even if you want to do a linear trip (starting in Cape Town and finishing in Lusaka, for example), it may be easier and cheaper to get a standard return (eg in and out of Cape Town) and a one-way regional flight (Lusaka to Cape Town) at the end of your trip.

Note that fares quoted in this book for international flights are full-fare economy. Always ask about seasonal and advance purchase discounts, and other special rates, and always check the airline websites for online deals. Some useful online ticket sellers:

www.cheaptickets.com
www.flightcentre.com
www.lowestfare.com
www.onetravel.com
www.priceline.com
www.travel.yahoo.com
www.travelocity.com

Jo'burg and Cape Town are the most popular Southern African stops on a Round The World (RTW) itinerary, and this usually means flying into one city and out of the other. Travel agents can also put together 'alternative' RTW tickets, which are more expensive, but more flexible, than standard RTW itineraries.

Africa

Many travellers on trans-Africa trips fly some sections, either because time is short or simply because the routes are virtually impassable.

The overland route between East Africa and Southern Africa is extremely popular, but it's also easy to find a flight between Nairobi and Jo'burg. Alternatively, it's a short hop between Dar es Salaam and Lilongwe, which avoids a gruelling overland stretch. Coming from Cairo (Egypt) or Ethiopia, most flights to Southern Africa go via Nairobi.

If you're travelling from West Africa, you have to fly as the overland route is blocked by turmoil in Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire). Travellers also tend to avoid Nigeria and Congo-Brazzaville. Options include flying from Accra (Ghana) or Dakar (Senegal) to Jo'burg. Flying from Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) to Jo'burg is also possible but less popular since the troubles in that strife-torn country.

Australia & New Zealand

Airlines flying from Australia to Southern Africa include Qantas and South African Air-

ways (SAA). There are direct flights from Sydney and Perth on Qantas, and from Perth on SAA, to Jo'burg and Cape Town (flying time about 14 hours from Sydney, 10½ hours from Perth). If flying between New Zealand and Southern Africa you must go via Australia. The best place to start looking for cheap deals are the ads in major weekend newspapers.

Two well-known agencies for cheap fares in Australia:

Flight Centre (☎ 131 600; www.flightcentre.com.au)

This agency has offices throughout Australia.

STA Travel (☎ 1300-783 035; www.statravel.com.au)

Offices are in all major cities and on many university campuses.

These agencies are also represented in New Zealand:

Flight Centre (☎ 0800 243 544; www.flightcentre.co.nz)

This agency has many branches throughout the country.

STA Travel (☎ 0508-783 872; www.statravel.co.nz)

STA Travel has a main office in Auckland, and has offices in Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

In addition, the following agencies specialise in Africa travel:

Africa Travel Company (☎ 02-9264 7661; Level 1, 69 Liverpool St, Sydney 2000, NSW)

African Wildlife Safaris (☎ 03-9696 2899; www.africanwildlifesafaris.com.au) Cobble together custom tours to Namibia and the entire region.

Continental Europe

You can fly to Southern Africa from any European capital, but the main hubs are Amsterdam and Frankfurt, and to a lesser extent Zurich and Lisbon (for Maputo, Mozambique). The most popular routes are generally the cheapest, which means that Jo'burg or Cape Town will normally be destinations of choice. Specialist travel agencies advertise in newspapers and travel magazines, so check there for advertisements before ringing around.

There are bucket shops by the dozen in cities such as Paris, Amsterdam, Brussels and Frankfurt. Many travel agents in Europe have ties with STA Travel, where you'll find cheap tickets. STA Travel and other discount outlets in major transport hubs include the following:

Airfair (☎ 0900-7717 717; www.airfair.nl) Netherlands.

Alternativ Tours (☎ 030 21 23 41 90; www.alternativ-tours.de) Germany.

Anyway (☎ 0892 302 301; www.anyway.fr) France.

Barcelo Viajes (☎ 902 116 226; www.barceloviajes.com) Spain.

CTS Viaggi (☎ 06 462 0431; www.cts.it) Italy; specialising in student and youth travel.

Just Travel (☎ 089 747 3330; www.justtravel.de) Germany.

OTU Voyages (☎ 01 55 82 32 32; www.otu.fr) France.

STA Travel Germany (☎ 01805-456 422; www.statravel.de); Switzerland (☎ 0900-450 402; www.statravel.ch)

UK & Ireland

Numerous airlines fly between Britain and Southern Africa, and you'll occasionally find excellent rates. The least expensive point of arrival will probably be Jo'burg, although an increasing number of flights arrive in Cape Town, which is a safer introduction to Africa.

London is normally the best place to buy a ticket, but specialist agencies elsewhere in the UK can provide comparable value. Also check ads in the travel pages of the weekend broadsheet newspapers, in *Time Out*, the *Evening Standard*, in the free online magazine *TNT* (www.tntmagazine.com) and in the free *SA Times*, which is aimed at South Africans in the UK.

Some companies listed under Tours (p758) also sell flights, and some of the agents listed here also sell tours and safaris:

Africa Travel Centre (☎ 0845-450 1520; www.africa-travel.co.uk)

North-South Travel (☎ 01245-608291; www.north-southtravel.co.uk) Profits at this experienced agency support development projects overseas.

Quest Travel (☎ 0871-423 0135; www.questtravel.com)

STA Travel (☎ 0870-163 0026; www.statravel.co.uk)

STA Travel has branches in London, Manchester, Bristol and most large university towns.

Trailfinders (☎ 0845-0585 858; www.trailfinders.co.uk) This popular company has several offices in London, as well as Manchester, Bristol and several other cities.

Travel Bag (☎ 0870-814 4441; www.travelbag.co.uk)

Travel Mood (☎ 0870-0660 004; www.travelmood.com)

USA & Canada

SAA flies direct from New York and Atlanta to Jo'burg (17½ hours), and this is generally one of the least expensive routings. To reach one of the other capitals, such as Lusaka, Lilongwe or Maputo, you can get a connection from Jo'burg. It may be cheaper to fly on an economy hop from the USA to London (on

British Airways or Virgin Atlantic) or Amsterdam (on KLM), and then buy a discount ticket from there to Southern Africa. Canadians also will probably find the best deals travelling via Atlanta or London.

North Americans won't get the great deals that are available in London, but discount agencies to watch out for include the following:

Air Brokers (☎ 800-883 3273, 415-836 8718; www.airbrokers.com) A consolidator that can come up with good rates on complicated itineraries.

High Adventure Travel/Airtreks (☎ 877-247 8735, 415-912 5600; www.airtreks.com) Specialises in round-the-world travel including Southern Africa stops.

Premier Tours & Travel (☎ 800-545 1910; www.premiertours.com)

Spector Travel (☎ 617 351 0111; www.spectortravel.com) Combines tours with discounted airfares.

STA Travel (☎ 800 781 4040; www.statravel.com) This organisation, which isn't limited to students, has offices all over the USA.

Travel Cuts (☎ 866-246 9762; www.travelcuts.com) The Canadian student travel association.

LAND

However you travel (by car, bike or public transport), if you're planning to reach Southern Africa overland, your first decision should be which of the main routes through Africa you want to take.

Bicycle

Cycling is a cheap, convenient, healthy, environmentally sound and, above all, fun way to travel. It can also be addictive. It's quite straightforward to take your bike onto a plane and use the bike to get around on the ground. For air travel, you can dismantle the bike and box it up. Bike boxes are available at airports and most bike shops. If you're willing to risk damage to your bike, it's also possible to deflate the tyres, remove the pedals and turn the handlebars sideways, then just wheel the bike up to the check-in desk (if your bike doesn't hold up to baggage handlers, it probably won't survive Africa!). Some airlines don't charge to carry a bike, and don't even include it in the weight allowance. Others charge an extra handling fee of around US\$50.

Outside South Africa, you'll have difficulty buying hi-tech European or American spares, so bring anything essential along with you, and know how to make your own repairs. Plan for frequent punctures, and take lots of spare inner tubes. Because automobile tyres

are constantly being repaired, patches and glue are available almost everywhere. However, it may be worth carrying a spare tyre, in case of a really devastating blow-out. For more on cycling, see p759.

Border Crossings

For information on specific border crossings between countries in Southern Africa, see the Transport section in country chapters.

The most frequented routes into Southern Africa are from Tanzania into Malawi at Songwe (see p233 for details) and from Tanzania into Zambia at Nakonde (see p676). If you're heading the other way, from Malawi you can buy visas at the border, but we've heard from travellers who have experienced some hassle from the Tanzania border authorities, so try getting your visa in advance.

The rarely used crossing points from Tanzania into Mozambique provide an excellent introduction to the region, but it's definitely more off the beaten track. From Tanzania, the main border post is at Namiranga. It's also possible to get your passport stamped further upriver at the remote village of Moçimboa do Rovuma, and there are border and customs officials at Palma and Moçimboa da Praia for those arriving from Tanzania by boat. It's also reportedly possible to get stamped in at the Rio Rovuma crossing between Lichinga and Songea (Tanzania).

Other countries bordering the Southern African region include Angola and the troubled Congo (Zaire). From Congo, the main border crossing is at Chilabombwe into Zambia. Due to safety issues, though, few travellers use this option.

The situation has improved in Angola with the end of the 27-year war in 2002. More travellers are crossing in from Namibia, and things have apparently stabilised, though you need to arrange your visa in advance before entering. See p392 for information on securing the visa. From Angola, the main border crossings into Namibia are at Ruacana, Oshikango and Rundu. A few intrepid travellers are also crossing the border between Angola and Zambia, but seek local advice about this.

Car & Motorcycle

Driving from Europe to Southern Africa is a major undertaking. The main points to emphasise include the incredibly long distances,

the appalling nature of most roads and the constant challenge of dealing with police and/or border officials. Overland drivers will have to be mechanically competent and carry a good collection of spares. You'll also need vehicle registration papers, liability insurance, a driving licence and international drivers' permit, as well as a *carnet de passage*, effectively a passport for the vehicle and temporary waiver of import duty, designed to prevent car import rackets. Your local automobile association can provide details.

Your home liability insurance won't be valid in many countries, and some require international drivers to purchase expensive (and effectively useless) insurance when crossing borders. In most cases, this is just a racket, and no matter what you spend on local insurance, you'll effectively be travelling uninsured.

You might want to check the website www.sahara-overland.com for information about crossing the Sahara.

East Africa

From Nairobi, the most popular route runs via Mombasa (Kenya) or Arusha (Tanzania) to Dar es Salaam (Tanzania). From here, drivers follow the Great North Rd, and those without wheels take the Tanzania–Zambia railway (Tazara; p676); both lead to Kapiri Mposhi (Zambia), which is within easy reach of Lusaka, Livingstone and Victoria Falls. Alternatively, get off at Mbeya (in southern Tanzania) and enter northern Malawi at Songwe (p233). Another option from Dar es Salaam takes you across the country to Kigoma on Lake Tanganyika, then by steamer to Mpulungu (Zambia), from where you can continue overland to Lusaka and beyond.

Other possibilities from Nairobi include travelling through Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi (currently not recommended, due to unrest), catching the Lake Tanganyika steamer from Bujumbura (Burundi; if it's running), and connecting with the previously outlined route at Mpulungu (Zambia). When the troubles have ended, this route will be a rewarding option.

North & West Africa

Although tensions are easing in urban centres, rural and remote areas remain dangerous in Algeria, and most trans-Sahara travellers still use the Morocco and Mauritania route into Senegal and the rest of West Africa. Due to

unrest, the route from Algeria into Mali and Niger is still not recommended. Once through West Africa, your route to Southern Africa will next be blocked by more unrest in Congo (Zaire). This means a flight – probably from Accra (Ghana) or Lagos (Nigeria) to Nairobi (Kenya), from where you can follow the route outlined under East Africa.

Northeast Africa

The Nile Route through northeast Africa starts in Egypt, and goes into Sudan (either via Lake Nasser or via the Red Sea from Suez or Hurghada); note, however, that these days travel through Sudan is not advised, especially southern Sudan, including the region bordering Uganda, anywhere around the border with Eritrea, and definitely not in the Darfur region in the west of the country, which has ongoing civil unrest. Most people fly from Cairo (Egypt) or Khartoum (Sudan) to Kampala (Uganda) or Nairobi, where again you can follow the route outlined under East Africa.

SEA

For most people, reaching Southern Africa by sea is not a viable option. The days of working your passage on commercial boats have vanished, although a few travellers do manage to hitch rides on private yachts along the east coast of Africa from Mombasa (Kenya) to Mozambique or South Africa.

Alternatively, several cargo shipping companies sail between Europe and South Africa, with comfortable cabins for public passengers. The voyage between London and Cape Town takes about 16 days. Contact **Strand Voyages** (☎ 020-7766 8220; www.strandtravel.co.uk) for details.

TOURS

Overlanding

Although overlanding across Africa from Europe or the Middle East has become quite difficult due to the various 'roadblocks' imposed by unrest, some overland tour operators still take up the challenge. Some begin in Morocco and head down through Mauritania, Mali, Niger and onward as far as possible. Others take the easier option and begin in Kenya. While these trips are popular, they're designed mainly for inexperienced travellers who feel uncomfortable striking out on their own or for those who prefer guaranteed social interaction to the uncertainties of the road. If you have the slightest inclination towards

independence or would feel confined travelling with the same group of 25 or so people for most of the trip (although quite a few normally drop out along the way), think twice before booking an overland trip.

Around Southern Africa

When deciding upon your preferred method of travel, the same thing about overland tours can very much be applied to tours around Southern Africa. If you feel inexperienced, are unsure of travelling by yourself or just a sucker for constant company, then tours can be a very good option. However, many find the experience quite suffocating and restrictive. Our advice, to hedge your bets, is to take a shorter tour and see how you like it – this gives you the option of either taking another tour or striking out on your own with the benefit of having visited some of the places you may like to spend more time in.

Literally hundreds of tour and safari companies now organise package tours to Southern Africa, but it always pays to shop around for details and deals. Especially in Europe, it's becoming increasingly popular to look for late bookings, which may be advertised in travel sections of weekend newspapers, or even at special late-bookings counters in some international airports. If you prefer a more independent approach, you can prebook flights and hotels for the first few nights, then join tours locally (see p764).

The best place to begin looking for reputable agencies are weekend newspapers or travel magazines, such as *Wanderlust* in the UK and *Outside* or *National Geographic Adventure* in the US. It's also useful to attend travel fairs or ask around discount travel agencies.

Speciality magazines for flower, bird-watching, wildlife-viewing, railway and other buffs may also include advertising for tours focusing on their own areas of interest.

Following is a list of possibilities:

AUSTRALIA

Adventure World (☎ 02-8913 0755; www.adventureworld.com.au) Organises tours, safaris, car hire and hotel packages all over Southern Africa.

African Wildlife Safaris (☎ 03-9696 2899; www.africanwildlifesafaris.com.au) Designs customised wildlife safaris around Southern Africa.

Peregrine Travel (☎ 1300 854 444, 03-8601 4444; www.peregrine.net.au) This Africa specialist cobbles together all types of adventures, for all budgets.

FRANCE

Makila Voyages (☎ 01-42 96 80 00; www.makila.fr)

This upmarket company organises tours and safaris all over East and Southern Africa.

UK

Discover the World (☎ 01737-218800; www.discover-the-world.co.uk) Exclusive wildlife-oriented tours to various sites worldwide, including a number of Southern African itineraries.

Explore Worldwide Ltd (☎ 0870 333 4001; www.exploreworldwide.com) Organises group tours through Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia, focusing on adventure and hands-on activities.

In the Saddle (☎ 01299-272 997; www.inthesaddle.com) Appeals specifically to horse aficionados, including a range of adventurous horseback routes.

Naturetrek (☎ 01962-733051; www.naturetrek.co.uk) This company's aim is to get you to where the animals are. It offers specialised wildlife-viewing itineraries.

Temple World (☎ 020-8940 4114; www.templeworld.co.uk) This sophisticated and recommended company organises middle to upper-range tours to the best of the region.

USA

Adventure Center (☎ 510-654 1879, 800 228 8747; www.adventurecenter.com) A travel specialist that organises budget to midrange tours and is the US agent for several overland operators, including Guerbag, Dragoman and Karibu.

Africa Adventure Company (☎ 800 882 9453, 954-491 8877; www.africa-adventure.com) These top safari specialists can organise any sort of Southern Africa itinerary.

Born Free Safaris (☎ 800 472 3274; www.bornfree-safaris.com) Safaris, trekking cultural tours and flights.

Bushtracks (☎ 800 995 8689; www.bushtracks.com) Private air luxury safari operator cobbling together a variety of unforgettable experiences.

Mountain Travel Sobek (☎ 888-687 6235; www.mtsobek.com) Offers package trips to Lower Zambezi and South Luangwa National Parks in Zambia, as well as trips to other countries in the region, like Botswana and Namibia.

Premier Tours & Travel (☎ 800 545 1910; www.premiertours.com) Premier sells discount tickets and organises inexpensive participation camping safaris all over Southern Africa.

Voyagers (☎ 800 633 4734; www.voyagers.com) Specialises in photographic and wildlife-viewing safaris.

Wilderness Travel (☎ 800 368 2794, 510-558 2488; www.wildernesstravel.com) Offers guided group tours with an emphasis on down-to-earth touring, including hikes, treks and other hands-on pursuits.

GETTING AROUND

This section briefly outlines the various ways of travelling around Southern Africa. For specifics, see the Getting Around section in each of the individual country chapters.

AIR

Distances are great in Africa, and if time is short, regional flights can considerably widen your options. For example, after touring South Africa for a while you could fly from Cape Town to Victoria Falls and then tour Zimbabwe or southern Zambia. Alternatively, fly to Lilongwe, which is a good staging point for trips around Malawi or eastern Zambia, or to Windhoek, which opens up all the wonders of Namibia.

Even within a country, tight schedules can be accommodated with short hops by air. Both domestic and regional flights are usually operated by both state airlines and private carriers, and except in Botswana, the competition generally keeps prices down to reasonable levels.

Sometimes the only practical way into remote parks and reserves is by air, and charter flights provide easy access to national park or remote lodge airstrips. Although these are normally for travellers on less restrictive budgets, access to the best of the Okavango Delta is possible only by charter flight.

Airlines in Southern Africa

The following list includes regional airlines with domestic and intra-Southern Africa routes. Note that many locals are extremely wary of using Zimbabwe's national carrier, Air Zimbabwe, because of a combination of fuel problems and the lack of foreign exchange to buy and maintain critical parts. For more information on airline safety records see the Transport section in the individual country chapters.

Air Botswana (☎ 267-390 5500; www.airbotswana.co.bw)

Air Malawi (☎ 265-1-620811; www.airmalawi.net) Connects Lusaka to Lilongwe and Blantyre.

Air Namibia (☎ 264-61-299 6000; www.airnamibia.com.na)

Air Zimbabwe (☎ 263-4575 111 www.airzim.co.zw)

British Airways Comair (☎ 27-11-921 0111; www.comair.co.za)

Linhas Aereas de Moçambique (☎ 258-1-426001, 465810; www.lam.co.mz/english)

Nationwide Airlines (☎ 0861 737 737, 011-344 7200; www.nationwideair.co.za) Useful Jo'burg to Livingstone service.

Pelican Air (☎ 011 973 3649; www.pelicanair.co.za) Useful service between Jo'burg and Vilankulo/Bazaruto Archipelago, some flights via Nelspruit.

South African Airways (☎ 27-11-978 1111, 0861-359722; www.flysaa.com) An excellent airline with many reliable routes around the region and beyond.

South African Express (☎ 27-11-978 5577; www.saexpress.co.za)

Swazi Express Airways (☎ 518 6840, 031-408 1115; www.swaziexpress.com) Connecting Manzini with Durban, and with Maputo and Vilankulo (Mozambique); charter service in Swaziland and surrounding region.

Swaziland Airlink (☎ 518 6155; www.saairlink.co.za) Flights between Jo'burg and Manzini/Matsapha.

Zambian Airways (☎ 260-1-271177; www.zambianairways.com) Zambian Airways has partnered with the no-frills KuluLa.com (a South African airline) and offers cheaper flights from Lusaka to Jo'burg and Cape Town.

Air Passes

The Star Alliance African Airpass allows flexible travel around sub-Saharan Africa including all the countries in this book except Swaziland, Lesotho and Botswana. It covers 25 airports in 17 different countries, and you can buy between four and 10 coupons (each coupon representing a single trip, ie Jo'burg to Windhoek). The Airpass allows for substantial savings, and flights are operated by South African Airways – see www.staralliance.com for more.

BICYCLE

On a bicycle, travellers will often be on an equal footing with locals, and will have plenty of opportunities to meet and visit people in small towns and villages along the way. Pointers on bringing a bike on the plane are found on p755.

For getting around, traditional touring bikes will cope with most sealed roads (and some good dirt roads) with little trouble, but narrow tyres are normally unsuitable and to get off the main routes, you'll need a mountain bike with fat tyres. On sandy roads, however, even balloon tyres won't help, and you'll wind up pushing the bike.

A cyclist's greatest cause for alarm will be motorists. Cyclists are usually regarded as second-class road users, so make sure you know what's coming up behind you and always be prepared to make an evasive swerve

onto the verges. For this purpose, a rearview mirror (handlebar or helmet mounted) will prove invaluable.

Other factors to consider are the heat, the long distances and finding places to stay. Aim to travel in cool, dry periods, and carry at least 4L of drinking water. If you get tired, or simply want to cut out the boring bits, bikes can easily be carried on buses or trucks – although you'll need to pay an extra luggage fee, and be prepared for some rough handling as your beloved machine is loaded onto a roof rack.

A good source of information may be your national cycling organisation. In Britain, the **Cyclists' Touring Club** (☎ 0870 873 0060; www.ctc.org.uk) provides cycling advice and also organises group cycling tours. In the USA, the **International Bicycle Fund** (☎ /fax 206-767 0848; www.ibike.org) organises socially conscious tours and provides information.

If you don't have a bike but fancy a few days' cycling, you'll normally be able to hire a bike locally, especially in tourist areas. Otherwise, local people in villages and towns are often willing to rent their bikes for the day. Ask at your hotel or track down a bicycle repair shop (every town market has one).

BOAT

Boat types and services in the region vary greatly from large ferries and cargo ships to traditional dhows plying the coastline of Mozambique and mokoros (dugout canoes) skimming along the Okavango Delta.

Based in South Africa, **Tall Ships** (www.tallships.co.za) has cargo ships between Durban and various Mozambican ports that sometimes take passengers; and **Starlight Lines** (www.starlight.co.za) is a good contact for connections to Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius.

The **Ilala Ferry** (☎ 01-587311; ilala@malawi.net) chugs passengers and cargo up and down Lake Malawi. Stops include Monkey Bay, Nkhota-kota, Nkhata Bay and Likoma Island in Malawi (see p234); and Metangula and Cóbue on the Mozambique side of the lake (see p298).

There is a ferry crossing between Zambia and Botswana (see p128), departing from Kazungula, Botswana, which takes vehicles. If you're on foot or with a bicycle, it's free.

BUS

Long-distance buses operate regularly between most Southern African countries. Keep in mind that prices quoted in this book are

AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE BUS – OVERLAND TRUCKS

Lots of companies run overland camping tours in trucks converted to carry passengers. Sometimes the trucks finish a tour, then run straight back to base to start the next one. Often, drivers are happy to carry 'transit' passengers on their way back to base. This is not a tour, as such, but can be a comfortable way of transiting between Vic Falls and Jo'burg, or Harare and Nairobi (Kenya), for around US\$20 per day, plus food kitty contributions. Those looking for rides should check around truck stops in well-known tourist areas, such as Cape Town, Jo'burg, Harare, Victoria Falls, Windhoek or Lilongwe or visit backpackers' hostels (where these companies invariably leave stacks of brochures).

for single fares, unless indicated otherwise. Most routes are covered by fairly basic, cheap and often slow services; major links include between Francistown (Botswana) and Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), Gaborone (Botswana) and Johannesburg (Jo'burg; South Africa), Harare (Zimbabwe) and Jo'burg, Lilongwe (Malawi) and Lusaka (Zambia), Blantyre (Malawi) and Harare. From Cape Town and Jo'burg, larger and more comfortable buses run to many destinations in the region including Maseru (Lesotho), Mbabane (Swaziland), Maputo (Mozambique) and Windhoek (Namibia).

The following are major bus companies operating throughout the region. They are generally safe and reliable, and standard facilities usually include air-con, video, sound system, reclining seats and an on-board toilet:

Greyhound (☎ 012-323 1154; www.greyhound.co.za)

Jo'burg, Cape Town, Harare, Bulawayo and Maputo.

Intercape Mainliner (☎ 0861 287 287, 021-380 4400; www.intercape.co.za) Extensive services with destinations including Jo'burg, Cape Town, Maputo, Windhoek, Victoria Falls and Gaborone.

Panthera Azul (☎ 011-618 8811, Maputo 021-302 077, 302 083; www.pantherazuul.com) Jo'burg, Durban, Nelspruit, Maputo.

Translux (☎ 011-774 3333; www.translux.co.za) Jo'burg, Pretoria, Maputo, Blantyre, Lusaka.

Keep in mind that for Zimbabwe, the long-distance buses suffer the same problems as other modes of transport – irregular supply

of fuel and spare parts. Breakdowns are on the increase and the number of buses and routes is decreasing.

For bus travellers, border crossings can be tedious while customs officials search through huge amounts of luggage. Minibus services may be more efficient, as fewer passengers will mean less time at the border.

There are also several international bus services especially designed for backpackers and other tourists. These companies normally use comfortable 16-seat buses and have helpful drivers, on-board music and pick-ups/drop-offs at main tourist centres and backpackers' hostels. Among these is the **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com), which links Jo'burg, Pretoria, Nelspruit and Durban with Manzini (Swaziland), from where you can get a minibus taxi to Maputo (Mozambique).

For more information on bus travel between countries, see the Getting There & Away sections under Transport in the individual country chapters, or seek out the latest information at backpackers' hostels and budget travel agents throughout Southern Africa.

Buying Tickets

In general it's always better to buy tickets in advance, over the phone, or by dropping into an office in person (you can also book online with some companies), although sometimes it may not be necessary. Contact the bus operator before your trip to see if advance purchase is advised. Sample fares include approximately US\$25 for Jo'burg to Gaborone, and about US\$75 for Cape Town to Windhoek; both one way. See the destinations in individual country chapters for detailed fare information.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Information on bringing your own wheels to Southern Africa is found on p756. More information on getting around, and other matters related to car and motorcycle travel, is provided under the Getting Around heading in the Transport section of individual country chapters.

Fuel & Spare Parts

Fuel and spare parts are available across the region, although both can be scarce in Zimbabwe at the moment. If you're driving in remote areas, such as Zambia, careful planning

is required to ensure you have enough fuel until you reach the next petrol station.

Hire

Car rental isn't cheap, but can be a very convenient way to travel, especially if you're short of time or want to visit national parks and other out-of-the-way places. Costs can be mitigated by mustering a group to share the rental and petrol, and will open up all sorts of opportunities. In all the countries covered by this book, to hire a vehicle you must be at least 21 years old (in some cases as old as 25).

A list of local car-rental firms is included in the Getting Around sections of country chapters. Firms are usually accessible via email, and it pays to book before you leave home. If you're visiting more than one country, check whether you're able to cross borders with a rental vehicle. This is usually allowed by South African companies, which will let you take vehicles into Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, as well as Zimbabwe, with payment of an additional cross-border fee (usually around US\$100).

Companies advertising the lowest daily rates will typically also require payment of a per-kilometre fee, so if you're doing a lot of driving, you'd do better to pay extra for an unlimited mileage deal. Also, check on the fees for other items such as tax, damage and insurance, all of which can add considerably to the final bill.

Generally, South Africa, Namibia and Botswana are the cheapest places to hire cars (around US\$40 to US\$50 per day) and Malawi isn't too bad. Zimbabwe is ridiculously expensive and in Zambia and Mozambique you're looking at a minimum of US\$100 per day for a 2WD.

In South Africa and Namibia you can hire campervans (RVs) that accommodate two to

six people. With additional payment, these come with as much equipment as you may need for demanding safaris. In most countries, you can also opt for a 4WD vehicle, which will typically cost around US\$150 per day with unlimited mileage.

Insurance

When hiring a car always check the insurance provisions and any excess that you may be liable to pay in the event of an accident. It's also worth checking if the insurance covers driving into other Southern African countries (depending on where you intend going) and driving on dirt roads for 2WDs. If you need insurance for your own car, see information about the AA on p763.

Purchase

An increasing number of travellers opt to buy a car, tour the region, then sell it at the end of their trip. Although you need a relatively large amount of money up front, you can expect to get at least some of it back, and travelling this way can work out a lot cheaper than car rental – especially if costs are split among several people.

For visitors, South Africa is the best place to buy a car (other countries place restrictions on foreign ownership, have stiff tax laws, or simply don't have the choice of vehicles). Also, South African-registered vehicles don't need a *carnet de passage* to visit any of the countries covered by this book. Travelling through Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland is easy, while for Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia you'll easily get temporary import permits at the border.

It's usually cheaper to buy privately, but for tourists it is often more convenient to go to a dealer. The weekly **Cape Ads** (www.capeads.com) is the best place to look for a private

TO GO OR NOT TO GO?

A dangerous traffic quirk in Southern Africa concerns the use and significance of indicator lights. When a car comes up behind a slow vehicle, wanting to overtake, the driver of the slower vehicle will often flash one indicator to let the other driver know whether or not it's safe to overtake. Logically, the left indicator would mean 'go' (that is, it may potentially be turning left, and the way is clear) and the right would mean 'don't go' (it may potentially be turning right, indicating that the way is not clear). Unfortunately, quite a few confused drivers get this backwards, creating a potentially disastrous situation for a trusting driver in the vehicle behind. The moral is: ignore the well-intentioned signals and never overtake unless you can see that the road ahead is completely clear.

BUSH DRIVING

While Southern Africa has a good network of sealed roads, driving on unsealed roads requires special techniques and appropriate vehicle preparation.

- For rough road conditions, you'll need a robust, high-clearance vehicle, but you'll have to engage the 4WD only when driving in sand or mud, or over boulder-sized rocks.
- In especially rocky conditions, have someone get out and direct the driver over the route of least resistance.
- At river crossings, always check the water depth and bottom conditions before starting across. It will be obvious that sand, stones and gravel are preferable to mud and muck!
- Make sure your vehicle is in good running order before you start. Carry tools, spares and equipment, including towrope, torch, shovel, fan belts, vehicle fluids, spark plugs, wire, jump leads, fuses, hoses, a good jack and a wooden plank to act as a base in sand. A second spare tyre is highly advised, and even a third if you've got room. You could also carry tyre levers, a tyre pump, spare tubes and repair kit, but mending punctures in the bush is much harder than the manuals imply, and should be avoided if possible. And of course you'll need the expertise to handle and install all this stuff...
- Wrap tools and heavy objects in blankets or padding. Pack supplies likely to be pitched around in strong plastic or metal containers, and strap everything down tightly on the roof or in the back. Keep breakable items in the cab. Once you're on unsealed roads, dust permeates everything – so tightly wrap food, clothing and camera equipment in strong dust-proof containers.
- When calculating fuel requirements, estimate your intended distance and then double it to allow for getting lost and emergencies. For serious off-roading, remember to allow for petrol consumption up to four times higher than in normal conditions – especially on sandy tracks.
- Carry at least 5L of water per person per day in indestructible container to allow for delays and breakdowns. Extra petrol should be carried in strong, leak-proof jerry cans.
- Take the best maps you can find, plus a GPS or compass that you know how to use. Take readings periodically to make sure you're still travelling in the right direction. To get an accurate compass reading, stand at least 3m from the vehicle.

Bush Tracks

Bush tracks rarely make an appearance on maps, and their ever-changing routes can utterly confound drivers. Some bush tracks will provide access to remote cattle posts or small villages

and then disappear, often to re-emerge somewhere else. Some tracks never re-emerge, leaving you stranded.

- Take care driving through high grass – seeds can block radiators and cause overheating. Dry grass next to the exhaust pipe can also catch fire. Stop regularly and remove plant material from the grille or exhaust.

Sand

In sandy conditions you may be following a faint track – often just the wheel marks of previous vehicles – or driving across completely bare wilderness. Either way, driving is easier if the air is cool (usually mornings), as the sand is more compact at these times.

- Tyre pressure should be low – around half that required for normal road conditions. To prevent bogging or stalling, move as quickly as possible and keep the revs up, but avoid sudden acceleration. Shift down a gear before you reach deep sandy patches, not when you're in them.
- Allow the vehicle to wander along the path of least resistance when negotiating a straight course through rutted sand. Anticipate corners and turn the wheel slightly earlier than you would on a solid surface – this will allow the vehicle to slide smoothly around.

Pans

Many of the rules for bush-track or sand driving apply here, but some extra points are worth making.

- First, never drive on a pan unless you know exactly what you're doing. If you do venture onto a pan, stick to the edges until you're sure it's dry.
- Even if the pan *seems* dry, it can still be wet underneath – vehicles can break through the crust and become irretrievably bogged. Foul-smelling salt can mean the pan is wet and potentially dangerous. If in doubt, follow the tracks of other drivers (unless, of course, you see bits of vehicle poking above the surface).
- If you do get bogged and have a winch, anchor the spare wheel or the jack – anything to which the winch may be attached – by digging a hole and planting it firmly in the muck. Hopefully you'll be able to anchor it better than the pan has anchored the vehicle.

sale. Also try **Auto Trader** (www.autotrader.co.za), which advertises thousands of cars around the country.

Although prices tend to be cheaper in Jo'burg, most people do their buying in Cape Town – a much nicer place to spend the week or two that it will likely take for the process. Cape Town's main congregation of used-car dealers is on Voortrekker Rd between Maitland and Belleville Sts.

Some dealers might agree to a buy-back arrangement – if you don't trash the car, you can reasonably expect to get about 60% of your purchase price back after a three-month trip, but you need to check all aspects of the contract to be sure this deal will stick. **Wayne Motors** (☎ 021-465 2222) will guarantee a buy-back price in advance. **Drive Africa** (☎ 021-447

1144; www.driveafrica.co.za) specialises in buy-back sales for tourists.

A recommended contact in Cape Town is **Graham Duncan Smith** (☎ 021-797 3048), who's a Land Rover expert and has helped people buy a 4WD in the past; he charges a US\$20 consultation fee and US\$25 per hour for engineering work.

No matter who you buy from, make sure that the car details correspond accurately with the ownership (registration) papers, that there is a current licence disc on the windscreen and that the vehicle has been checked by the **police clearance department** (Cape Town ☎ 021-945 3891; ☎ 7.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri). Check the owner's name against their identity document, and check the car's engine and chassis numbers. Consider getting the car tested – in Cape

Town, try **Same Garage** (☎ 021-434 1058; 309 Main Rd, Sea Point). A full test can cost up to US\$45; less detailed tests are around US\$25.

Cheap cars will often be sold without a roadworthy certificate. This certificate is required when you register the change-of-ownership form and pay tax for a licence disc. A roadworthy used to be difficult to obtain, but some private garages are now allowed to issue them (US\$30), and some will overlook minor faults.

You'll be lucky to find a decent vehicle for much less than US\$3000, and realistically, you should expect to pay around US\$3500 for a 10-year-old Toyota Corolla or VW Golf in reasonable condition. If you want to go off-road, a decent Land Rover will cost anything from US\$5000 to US\$10,000. Alternatively,

look for a 'bakkie', such as a 2WD Toyota Hilux, which should cost around \$8000.

To register your car, present yourself along with the roadworthy, a current licence, an accurate ownership certificate, a completed change-of-ownership form (signed by the seller), a clear photocopy of your ID (passport) along with the original, and your money to the **City Treasurer's Department, Motor Vehicle Registration Division** (☎ 021-400 4900; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri) in the Civic Centre on the foreshore in Cape Town. Call ahead to check how much cash you'll need, but it will be under US\$70. You can also get blank change-of-ownership forms here.

Insurance against theft or damage is highly recommended. The **Automobile Association** (☎ 086-101 0203; www.aa.co.za) will provide the

best advice. To purchase insurance, foreigners will normally need a South African driving licence (and in order to get that, you'll need an international driving permit).

Road Conditions

The good news is that most main roads in Southern Africa are in fair to excellent condition, and are passable for even small compact cars. In Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique, however, you may be slowed down considerably by sealed roads that haven't seen any maintenance for many years and are plagued with bone-crunching and tyre-bursting pot-holes. On lesser roads, standards vary considerably, from relatively smooth highways to dirt tracks (see the boxed text, p762).

Road Hazards

Whatever vehicle you drive, prepare to deal with some of the world's worst, fastest and most arrogant and aggressive drivers.

Tree branches on the road are the local version of warning triangles, and usually indicate a broken-down vehicle ahead. If you come up behind someone on a bicycle, hoot the horn as a warning and offer a friendly wave as you pass. This isn't considered offensive, and the cyclist will appreciate the heads-up.

On rural highways, always be on the lookout for children playing, people selling goods, seeds drying or animals wandering around on the loose. Livestock is always a concern, and hitting even a small animal can cause vehicle damage, while hitting something large – like a cow or a kudu – can be fatal (for both the driver and the animal). If you see kids with red flags on the road, it means they're leading a herd of cows. Slow down, even if you can't see any cows (especially if you can't see any cows).

These things become much harder to deal with in the dark. Additionally, many vehicles have faulty lights – or none at all – so avoid driving at night if at all possible.

Road Rules

In all the countries covered in this book, traffic officially drives on the left – but that may not always be obvious, so be especially prepared on blind corners and hills.

HITCHING

Hitching is a way of life in Southern Africa, and visitors may well have the opportunity

to join the throng of locals looking for lifts. While this is a good way to get around places without public transport (or even with public transport), there is a protocol involved. As a visitor, you're likely to take precedence over locals (especially with white drivers), but if other people are hitching, it's still polite to stand further along the road so they'll have the first crack (that is, unless there's a designated hitching spot where everyone waits).

Another option is to wait around petrol stations and try to arrange lifts from drivers who may be going your way. If you do get a lift, be sure to determine what sort of payment is expected before you climb aboard. In most cases, plan on paying just a bit less than the equivalent bus fare.

As in any other part of the world, hitching is never entirely safe, and we therefore don't recommend it. Travellers who hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

Within individual countries, public bus services range from basic to luxurious. In addition to the typically spluttering big buses, many countries also have minibuses, which are faster, run more frequently and perhaps are even more dangerous due to their speed. See the individual country chapters for more details.

In Southern Africa, there's a notable lack of long-distance shared service taxis (such as the seven-seat Peugeots that are so popular in other parts of Africa). Some travellers occasionally get a group together and hire a city taxi for a long trip, but this is rare.

In rural areas, the frequency of bus services drops dramatically. In such cases, public transport may be limited to the back of a pick-up truck (ute). Everyone pays a fare to the driver, which is normally comparable to the bus fare for a similar distance. This can be great fun – however uncomfortable – and it's often your only option.

TOURS

Travellers are faced with a boggling array of organised tour options in Southern Africa, and the only problem will be making your selection. In addition to the very convenient hop-on, hop-off bus services in South Africa, there are plenty of budget tours and safaris available to take you to the regional highlights.

You'll have the most options in Cape Town, Jo'burg, Victoria Falls, Livingstone, Maun, Windhoek and other places frequented by tourists. As with all tours, the range of options is enormous: they can last from two days to three weeks and can involve camping and mucking-in to luxury shuttles between five-star lodges. Vehicles may be private aircraft, Kombi vans, no-frills safari trucks or comfortable buses with air-con and chilled wine in the fridge.

For countries with a choice of locally based tour companies, a selection is listed under Tours in the Getting Around sections of those country chapters, with further choices also under some specific destinations. Some countries may have only a limited selection of operators, which are often attached to local travel agencies or budget hotels. For details, see specific destinations in the individual country chapters.

Local operators that arrange tours around Southern Africa include the following:

Barefoot safaris (☎ 265-01-707346; www.barefoot-safaris.com) Small group safaris, self-drive, trekking and sailing; covers Zambia, Malawi, Botswana, Mozambique and Namibia.

Dana Tours (☎ 258-21-497 483; www.danatours.net) Combined Mozambique–South Africa–Swaziland itineraries. Offices in Maputo and Nelspruit.

Kiboko Safaris (☎ 265-01-751226; www.kiboko-safaris.com) Excellent budget camping and lodge safaris in Malawi and South Luangwa, Zambia; also luxury safaris in Malawi and Mozambique.

Oceans, Islands, Safaris (☎ 021-702 0643; www.oceanislandsafari.com) This company and its sister company Wildlife Adventures – both Cape Town-based – are

good for upscale South Africa–Mozambique–Quirimbas Archipelago itineraries.

Wayfarer Adventures (☎ /fax 021-715 0875; www.allworld-vacation.com/wayfarer-adventures) Wilderness adventure travel throughout Southern Africa, including Land Rover tours around Namibia.

Wilderness Safaris (☎ 011-807 1800; www.wilderness-safaris.com) This company offers a range of tours in all Southern African countries. In addition to the standard luxury lodge-based tours in remote areas, it offers fly-in safaris and activity-based trips.

TRAIN

Rail travel around Southern Africa focuses on the South African network and its offshoots into Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Zambia. For example for train service between Mozambique and South Africa, the only current route is Maputo–Komatipoort, where you need to disembark at the border and change trains. Trains on the Mozambique side, however, are very bad and slow. It's much better to travel via train on the South Africa side, and then bus or chapa for the Mozambique stretch (Ressano Garcia to Maputo).

Currently the only cross-border railway services are the Tazara line between Zambia and Tanzania (see p676) and the **Trans-Namib** (☎ Namibia 061-298 2175; www.transnamib.com.na) 'Star-Line' between Windhoek and Upington (25 hours).

Travelling by train within the various countries is still a decent option – and it's almost always fun – but can be a slow way to go. For details, see under Train in the Getting Around sections of individual country chapters.

Health

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As long as you stay up to date with your vaccinations and take basic preventive measures, you're unlikely to succumb to most of the health hazards covered in this chapter. While countries in Southern Africa have an impressive selection of tropical diseases on offer, it's more likely you'll get a bout of diarrhoea or a cold than a more exotic malady. The main exception to this is malaria, which is a widespread risk in Southern Africa, and precautions should be taken.

BEFORE YOU GO

A little predeparture planning will save you trouble later. Get a check-up from your dentist and from your doctor if you have any regular medication or chronic illness, eg high blood pressure and asthma. You should also organise spare contact lenses and glasses (and take your optical prescription with you); get a first-aid and medical kit together; and arrange necessary vaccinations.

Travellers can register with the **International Association for Medical Advice to Travellers** (IAMAT; www.iamat.org), which provides directories of certified doctors. If you'll be spending much time in remote areas, consider doing a first-aid course (contact the Red Cross or St John's Ambulance), or attending a remote medicine

first-aid course, such as that offered by **Wilderness Medical Training** (WMT; www.wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk).

If you are bringing medications with you, carry them in their original containers, clearly labelled. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing all medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

INSURANCE

Find out in advance whether your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers, or will reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures. In most countries in Southern Africa, doctors expect payment upfront in cash. It's vital to ensure that your travel insurance will cover any emergency transport required to get you to a hospital in a major city, or all the way home, by air and with a medical attendant if necessary. Not all insurance covers this, so check the contract carefully. If you need medical assistance, your insurance company might be able to help locate the nearest hospital or clinic, or you can ask at your hotel. In an emergency, contact your embassy or consulate.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

The **World Health Organization** (WHO; www.who.int/en) recommends that all travellers be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio, as well as for hepatitis B, regardless of their destination. The consequences of these diseases can be severe, and outbreaks do occur.

According to the **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention** (www.cdc.gov), the following vaccinations may be recommended for travel in Southern African countries: hepatitis A, hepatitis B, rabies and typhoid, and boosters for tetanus, diphtheria and measles. Yellow fever is not a risk in the region, but the certificate is an entry requirement if you're travelling from an infected region (see p770). Consult your medical practitioner for the most up-to-date information.

MEDICAL CHECKLIST

It's a very good idea to carry a medical and first-aid kit with you, to help yourself in the case of minor illness or injury. Following is a list of items to consider packing.

- antibiotics (prescription only), eg ciprofloxacin (Ciproxin) or norfloxacin (Utinor)
- antidiarrhoeal drugs (eg loperamide)
- acetaminophen (paracetamol) or aspirin
- anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- antibacterial ointment (eg Bactroban) for cuts and abrasions (prescription only)
- antimalaria pills, if you'll be in malarial areas
- bandages, gauze
- scissors, safety pins, tweezers, pocket knife
- DEET-containing insect repellent for the skin
- permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents, and bed nets
- sun block
- oral rehydration salts
- iodine tablets (for water purification)
- sterile needles, syringes and fluids if travelling to remote areas

INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel health advice on the internet. The Lonely Planet website at www.lonelyplanet.com is a good place to start. The World Health Organization (WHO) publishes the helpful *International Travel and Health*, available free at www.who.int/ith. Other useful websites include **MD Travel Health** (www.mdtravelhealth.com) and **Fit for Travel** (www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk).

Some official government travel health websites:

- Australia** www.smarttraveller.gov.au/tips/travelwell.html
- Canada** www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index_e.html
- UK** www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAdviceForTravellers/fs/en
- USA** www.cdc.gov/travel

FURTHER READING

- *A Comprehensive Guide to Wilderness and Travel Medicine* (1998) Eric A Weiss
- *Healthy Travel* (1999) Jane Wilson-Howarth

- *Healthy Travel Africa* (2000) Isabelle Young
- *How to Stay Healthy Abroad* (2002) Richard Dawood
- *Travel in Health* (1994) Graham Fry
- *Travel with Children* (2004) Cathy Lanigan

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS

Prolonged immobility during flights can cause deep vein thrombosis (DVT) – the formation of blood clots in the legs. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. Although most blood clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some might break off and travel through the blood vessels to the lungs, where they could cause life-threatening complications.

The chief symptom is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and breathing difficulty. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention. To prevent DVT, walk about the cabin, perform isometric compressions of the leg muscles (ie contract the leg muscles while sitting), drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol.

JET LAG

If you're crossing more than five time zones you could suffer jet lag, resulting in insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To avoid jet lag try drinking plenty of fluids (nonalcoholic) and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) as soon as possible.

IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Good-quality health care is available in the urban areas of many countries in Southern Africa, and private hospitals are generally of a good standard. Public hospitals by contrast are often underfunded and overcrowded; in off-the-beaten-track areas, reliable medical facilities are rare.

Prescriptions are required in most countries in Southern Africa. Drugs for chronic

diseases should be brought from home. In many countries there is a high risk of contracting HIV from infected blood transfusions. The **BloodCare Foundation** (www.bloodcare.org.uk) is a useful source of safe, screened blood, which can be transported to any part of the world within 24 hours.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Following are some of the diseases that are found in Southern Africa, though with a few basic preventive measures, it's unlikely that you'll succumb to any of these.

Cholera

Cholera is caused by a bacteria, and spread via contaminated drinking water. In South Africa, the risk to travellers is very low; you're likely to encounter it only in eastern rural areas, where you should avoid tap water and unpeeled or uncooked fruits and vegetables. The main symptom is profuse watery diarrhoea, which causes debilitation if fluids are not replaced quickly. An oral cholera vaccine is available in the USA, but it is not particularly effective. Most cases of cholera can be avoided by close attention to drinking water and by avoiding potentially contaminated food. Treatment is by fluid replacement (orally or via a drip), but sometimes antibiotics are needed. Self-treatment is not advised.

Dengue Fever (Break-bone Fever)

Dengue fever, spread through the bite of mosquitos, causes a feverish illness with headache and muscle pains similar to those experienced with a bad, prolonged attack of influenza. There might be a rash. Mosquito bites should be avoided whenever possible. Self-treatment: paracetamol and rest.

Filariasis

Filariasis is caused by tiny worms migrating in the lymphatic system, and is spread by the bite from an infected mosquito. Symptoms include localised itching and swelling of the legs and/or genitalia. Treatment is available. Self-treatment: none.

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is spread through contaminated food (particularly shellfish) and water. It causes jaundice and, although it is rarely fatal, it can cause prolonged lethargy and delayed recovery. If you've had hepatitis A, you

shouldn't drink alcohol for up to six months afterwards, but once you've recovered, there won't be any long-term problems. The first symptoms include dark urine and a yellow colour to the whites of the eyes. Sometimes a fever and abdominal pain might be present. Hepatitis A vaccine (Avaxim, VAQTA, Havrix) is given as an injection: a single dose will give protection for up to a year, and a booster after a year gives 10-year protection. Hepatitis A and typhoid vaccines can also be given as a single dose vaccine, hepatyrix or viatim. Self-treatment: none.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is spread through infected blood, contaminated needles and sexual intercourse. It can also be spread from an infected mother to the baby during childbirth. It affects the liver, causing jaundice and occasionally liver failure. Most people recover completely, but some people might be chronic carriers of the virus, which could lead eventually to cirrhosis or liver cancer. Those visiting high-risk areas for long periods or those with increased social or occupational risk should be immunised. Many countries now routinely give hepatitis B as part of the childhood vaccination programme. It is given singly or can be given at the same time as hepatitis A (hepatyrix).

A course will give protection for at least five years. It can be given over four weeks or six months. Self-treatment: none.

HIV

HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is an enormous problem across Southern Africa, with a devastating impact on local health systems and community structures. The virus is spread through infected blood and blood products, by sexual intercourse with an infected partner, and from an infected mother to her baby during childbirth and breastfeeding. It can be spread through 'blood to blood' contacts, such as with contaminated instruments during medical, dental, acupuncture and other body-piercing procedures, and through sharing used intravenous needles. At present there is no cure; medication that might keep the disease under control is available, but these drugs are too expensive, or unavailable, for the overwhelming majority of those living in Southern Africa. If you think you might have been infected with HIV, a blood test is necessary; a three-month gap after exposure and

before testing is required to allow antibodies to appear in the blood. Self-treatment: none.

Malaria

Malaria is a widespread risk in Southern Africa. Apart from road accidents, it's probably the only major health risk that you face travelling in this area, and precautions should be taken. The disease is caused by a parasite in the bloodstream spread via the bite of the female *Anopheles* mosquito. There are several types of malaria; falciparum malaria is the most dangerous type and the predominant form in South Africa. Infection rates vary with season and climate, so check out the situation before departure. Several different drugs are used to prevent malaria, and new ones are in the pipeline. Up-to-date advice from a travel health clinic is essential as some medication is more suitable for some travellers than others (eg people with epilepsy should avoid mefloquine, and doxycycline should not be taken by pregnant women or children aged under 12).

The early stages of malaria include headaches, fevers, generalised aches and pains, and malaise, which could be mistaken for flu. Other symptoms can include abdominal pain, diarrhoea and a cough. Anyone who develops a fever in a malarial area should assume malarial infection until a blood test proves negative, even if you have been taking antimalarial medication. If not treated, the next stage could develop within 24 hours, particularly if falciparum malaria is the parasite: jaundice, then reduced consciousness and coma (also known as cerebral malaria) followed by death. Treat-

ment in hospital is essential, and the death rate might still be as high as 10% even in the best intensive-care facilities.

Many travellers think that malaria is a mild illness, and that taking antimalarial drugs causes more illness through side effects than actually getting malaria. This is unfortunately not true. If you decide against antimalarial drugs, you must understand the risks, and be obsessive about avoiding mosquito bites. Use nets and insect repellent, and report any fever or flulike symptoms to a doctor as soon as possible. Some people advocate homeopathic preparations against malaria, such as Demal200, but as yet there is no conclusive evidence that this is effective, and many homeopaths do not recommend their use.

Malaria in pregnancy frequently results in miscarriage or premature labour, and the risks to both mother and foetus during pregnancy are considerable. Travel throughout the region when pregnant should be carefully considered. Adults who have survived childhood malaria have developed immunity and usually only develop mild cases of malaria; most Western travellers have no immunity at all. Immunity wanes after 18 months of nonexposure, so even if you have had malaria in the past and used to live in a malaria-prone area, you might no longer be immune.

Rabies

Rabies is spread by receiving bites or licks from an infected animal on broken skin. Few human cases are reported in Southern Africa, with the risks highest in rural areas. It

ANTIMALARIAL A TO D

- A – Awareness of the risk. No medication is totally effective, but protection of up to 95% is achievable with most drugs, as long as other measures have been taken.
- B – Bites, to be avoided at all costs. Sleep in a screened room, use a mosquito spray or coils, sleep under a permethrin-impregnated net at night. Cover up at night with long trousers and long sleeves, preferably with permethrin-treated clothing. Apply appropriate repellent to all areas of exposed skin in the evenings.
- C – Chemical prevention (ie antimalarial drugs) is usually needed in malarial areas. Expert advice is needed as resistance patterns can change, and new drugs are in development. Not all antimalarial drugs are suitable for everyone. Most antimalarial drugs need to be started at least a week before and continued for four weeks after the last possible exposure to malaria.
- D – Diagnosis. If you have a fever or flulike illness within a year of travel to a malarial area, malaria is a possibility, and immediate medical attention is necessary.

is always fatal once the clinical symptoms start (which might be up to several months after an infected bite), so postbite vaccination should be given as soon as possible. Postbite vaccination (whether or not you've been vaccinated before the bite) prevents the virus from spreading to the central nervous system. Animal handlers should be vaccinated, as should those travelling to remote areas where a reliable source of postbite vaccine is not available within 24 hours. Three preventive injections are needed over a month. If you have not been vaccinated you'll need a course of five injections starting 24 hours or as soon as possible after the injury. If you have been vaccinated, you'll need fewer postbite injections, and have more time to seek medical help. Self-treatment: none.

Schistosomiasis (Bilharzia)

This disease is a risk when swimming in freshwater lakes and slow-running rivers – always seek local advice before venturing in. It's spread by flukes (minute worms) that are carried by a species of freshwater snail, which then sheds them into slow-moving or still water. The parasites penetrate human skin during swimming and then migrate to the bladder or bowel. They are excreted via stool or urine and could contaminate fresh water, where the cycle starts again. Swimming in suspect freshwater lakes or slow-running rivers should be avoided. Symptoms range from none to transient fever and rash, and advanced cases might have blood in the stool or in the urine. A blood test can detect antibodies if you might have been exposed, and treatment is readily available. If not treated, the infection can cause kidney failure or permanent bowel damage. It's not possible for you to infect others. Self-treatment: none.

Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is spread through close respiratory contact and occasionally through infected milk or milk products. BCG vaccination is recommended if you'll be mixing closely with the local population, especially on long-term stays, although it gives only moderate protection against the disease. TB can be asymptomatic, being picked up only on a routine chest X-ray. Alternatively, it can cause a cough, weight loss or fever, sometimes months or even years after exposure. Self-treatment: none.

Typhoid

This is spread through food or water contaminated by infected human faeces. The first symptom is usually a fever or a pink rash on the abdomen. Sometimes septicaemia (blood poisoning) can occur. A typhoid vaccine (typhim Vi, typherix) will give protection for three years. In some countries, the oral vaccine Vivotif is also available. Antibiotics are usually given as treatment, and death is rare unless septicaemia occurs. Self-treatment: none.

Yellow Fever

Although not a problem within Southern Africa, you'll need to carry a certificate of vaccination if you'll be arriving from an infected country. For a list of infected countries see the websites of WHO (www.who.int/wer/) or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (www.cdc.gov/travel/blusheet.htm).

TRAVELLERS' DIARRHOEA

This is a common travel-related illness, sometimes simply due to dietary changes. It's possible that you'll succumb, especially if you're spending a lot of time in rural areas or eating at inexpensive local food stalls. To avoid diarrhoea, eat only fresh fruits or vegetables that have been cooked or peeled, and be wary of dairy products that might contain unpasteurised milk. Although freshly cooked food can often be a safe option, plates or serving utensils might be dirty, so be selective when eating food from street vendors (make sure that cooked food is piping hot all the way through). If you develop diarrhoea, be sure to drink plenty of fluids, preferably an oral rehydration solution containing lots of water and some salt and sugar. A few loose stools don't require treatment but, if you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should start taking an antibiotic (usually a quinoline drug, such as ciprofloxacin or norfloxacin) and an antidiarrhoeal agent (such as loperamide) if you're not within easy reach of a toilet. If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours or is accompanied by fever, shaking chills or severe abdominal pain, you should seek medical attention.

Amoebic Dysentery

Contracted by eating contaminated food and water, amoebic dysentery causes blood and mucus in the faeces. It can be relatively mild and tends to come on gradually, but seek medical advice if you think you have the illness as

it won't clear up without treatment (which is with specific antibiotics).

Giardiasis

This, like amoebic dysentery, is also caused by ingesting contaminated food or water. The illness usually appears a week or more after you have been exposed to the offending parasite. Giardiasis might cause only a short-lived bout of typical travellers' diarrhoea, but it can also cause persistent diarrhoea. Ideally, seek medical advice if you suspect you have giardiasis, but if you are in a remote area you could start a course of antibiotics.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Heat Exhaustion

This condition occurs following heavy sweating and excessive fluid loss with inadequate replacement of fluids and salt, and is primarily a risk in hot climates when taking unaccustomed exercise before full acclimatisation. Symptoms include headache, dizziness and tiredness. Dehydration is already happening by the time you feel thirsty – aim to drink sufficient water to produce pale, diluted urine. Self-treatment: fluid replacement with water and/or fruit juice, and cooling by cold water and fans. The treatment of the salt-loss component consists of consuming salty fluids as in soup, and adding a little more table salt to foods than usual.

Heatstroke

Heat exhaustion is a precursor to the much more serious condition of heatstroke. In this case there is damage to the sweating mechanism, with an excessive rise in body temperature, irrational and hyperactive behaviour, and eventually loss of consciousness and death. Rapid cooling by spraying the body with water and fanning is ideal. Emergency fluid and electrolyte replacement is usually also required by intravenous drip.

Insect Bites & Stings

Mosquitoes might not always carry malaria or dengue fever, but they (and other insects) can cause irritation and infected bites. To avoid these, take the same precautions as you would for avoiding malaria (see p769). Bee and wasp stings cause real problems only to those who have a severe allergy to the stings (anaphylaxis), in which case, carry an adrenaline (epinephrine) injection.

Scorpions are found in arid areas. They can cause a painful bite that is sometimes life-threatening. If bitten by a scorpion, take a painkiller. Medical treatment should be sought if collapse occurs.

Ticks are always a risk away from urban areas. If you get bitten, press down around the tick's head with tweezers, grab the head and gently pull upwards. Avoid pulling the rear of the body as this may squeeze the tick's gut contents through the attached mouth parts into the skin, increasing the risk of infection and disease. Smearing chemicals on the tick will not make it let go and is not recommended.

Snake Bites

Basically, avoid getting bitten! Don't walk barefoot, or stick your hand into holes or cracks. However, 50% of those bitten by venomous snakes are not actually injected with poison (envenomed). If bitten by a snake, do not panic. Immobilise the bitten limb with a splint (such as a stick) and apply a bandage over the site with firm pressure, similar to bandaging a sprain. Do not apply a tourniquet, or cut or suck the bite. Get medical help as soon as possible.

Water

In most areas of Southern Africa you should stick to bottled water rather than drinking water from the tap, and purify stream water before drinking it.

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Language

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Herero/Himba	776
!Kung San	777
Lozi	777
Ndebele (isiNdebele)	778
Northern Sotho (Sepedi)	778
Owambo (Oshiwambo)	779
Shona	779
Southern Sotho (Sesotho)	780
Swati (siSwati)	781
Tsonga (Xitsonga)	781
Tswana (Setswana)	781
Venda (Tshivenda)	782
Xhosa (isiXhosa)	782
Zulu (isiZulu)	782

Due to colonial influences, English is an official language in every Southern African country except Mozambique (where it's Portuguese). English-speaking visitors should have few communication problems.

Afrikaans is also widely used throughout the region and, although it's often dismissed as the language of apartheid, it's the first language of millions of people of diverse ethnic back-grounds.

In Mozambique and parts of northern Namibia along the Angola border, Portuguese is the European language of choice.

In parts of Namibia, German is also widely spoken, but is the first language of only about 2% of Namibians.

AFRIKAANS

Afrikaans is often used for communication between members of different groups (eg Xhosa and Zulu, Herero and Namaa) who may not speak another common language. It's also used as a lingua franca in both South Africa and Namibia.

Pronunciation

a	as the 'u' in 'pup'
e	when word stress falls on e , it's as in 'net'; when unstressed, it's as the 'a' in 'ago'
i	when word stress falls on i , it's as in 'hit'; when unstressed, it's as the 'a' in 'ago'
o	as the 'o' in 'fort', but very short
u	as the 'e' in 'angel' with lips pouted
r	a rolled 'rr' sound
aai	as the 'y' sound in 'why'
ae	as 'ah'
ee	as in 'deer'
ei	as the 'ay' in 'play'
oe	as the 'u' in 'put'
oë	as the 'oe' in 'doer'
ooi/oei	as the 'ooey' in 'phooey'
tj	as the 'ch' in 'chunk'

Greetings & Conversation

Hello.	<i>Hallo.</i>
Good morning.	<i>Goeiemôre.</i>
Good afternoon.	<i>Goeiemiddag.</i>
Good evening.	<i>Goeienaand.</i>
Good night.	<i>Goeienag.</i>
Please.	<i>Asseblief.</i>
Thank you (very much).	<i>(Baie) Dankie.</i>
How are you?	<i>Hoe gaan dit?</i>
Good, thank you.	<i>Goed dankie.</i>
Pardon.	<i>Ekskuus.</i>
Yes.	<i>Ja.</i>
No.	<i>Nee.</i>
What?	<i>Wat?</i>
How?	<i>Hoe?</i>
How many/much?	<i>Hoeveel?</i>
Where?	<i>Waar?</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>Praat U Engels?</i>

Do you speak Afrikaans?	<i>Praat U Afrikaans?</i>
I only understand a little Afrikaans.	<i>Ek verstaan net 'n bietjie Afrikaans.</i>
Where are you from?	<i>Waarvandaan kom U?</i>
from ...	<i>van ...</i>

son/boy	<i>seun</i>
daughter/girl	<i>dogter</i>
wife	<i>vrou</i>

NAMING RITES

The actual title of several Southern African languages can cause confusion for visitors. For example, the language of the Basotho people (from Lesotho) is Sesotho. Usually, the prefixes ('Chi', 'Se', 'Isi', 'Oti' etc) simply mean 'language', but they're only used when actually speaking that language. To say 'I can speak isiZulu' is like saying 'I can speak Français'. When speaking English the prefixes are usually omitted. However, some languages, such as Chichewa, retain the prefix regardless of the language you're speaking.

Following are the the current official English designations for the predominant languages of Southern Africa, with their indigenous titles in brackets: Chichewa, Herero/Himba (Otjiherero/Otjihimba), Ndebele (Sindebele), Northern Sotho (Sepedi), Owambo (Otiwambo), Southern Sotho (Sesotho), Swati (siSwati), Tsonga (Xitsonga), Tswana (Setswana), Venda (Tshivenda), Xhosa (isiXhosa), Zulu (isiZulu).

husband	<i>eggenoot</i>
mother	<i>ma</i>
father	<i>pa</i>
sister	<i>suster</i>
brother	<i>broer</i>
nice/good/pleasant	<i>lekker</i>
bad	<i>sleg</i>
cheap	<i>goedkoop</i>
expensive	<i>duur</i>

Shopping & Services

art gallery	<i>kunsgalery</i>
bank	<i>bank</i>
church	<i>kerk</i>
city	<i>stad</i>
city centre	<i>middestad</i>
emergency	<i>nood</i>
exit	<i>uitgang</i>
information	<i>inligting</i>
inquiries	<i>navrae</i>
office	<i>kantoor</i>
pharmacy/chemist	<i>apteek</i>
police	<i>polisie</i>
police station	<i>polisiestasie</i>
post office	<i>poskantoor</i>
rooms	<i>kamers</i>
tourist bureau	<i>toeristeburo</i>
town	<i>dorp</i>

EMERGENCIES – AFRIKAANS

Help!	<i>Help!</i>
Call a doctor!	<i>Roep 'n dokter!</i>
Call the police!	<i>Roep die polisie!</i>
I'm lost.	<i>Ek is vellooer.</i>

Transport

avenue	<i>laan</i>
car	<i>kar</i>
freeway	<i>vrymaak</i>
highway	<i>snelweg</i>
road	<i>pad, weg</i>
station	<i>stasie</i>
street	<i>straat</i>
track	<i>spoor</i>
traffic light	<i>verkeerslig</i>
utility/pick-up	<i>bakkie</i>

arrival	<i>aankoms</i>
departure	<i>vertrek</i>
one-way ticket	<i>enkel kaartjie</i>
return ticket	<i>retoer kaartjie</i>
to	<i>na</i>
from	<i>van</i>
left	<i>links</i>
right	<i>regs</i>
at the corner	<i>op die hoek</i>

In the Country

bay	<i>baai</i>
beach	<i>strand</i>
caravan park	<i>woonwagpark</i>
field/plain	<i>veld</i>
ford	<i>drif</i>
game reserve	<i>wildtuin</i>
hiking trail	<i>wandelpad</i>
lake	<i>meer</i>
marsh	<i>vlei</i>
mountain	<i>berg</i>
river	<i>rivier</i>

Time & Days

When?	<i>Wanneer?</i>
am/pm	<i>vm/nm</i>
soon	<i>nou-nou</i>
today	<i>vandag</i>
tomorrow	<i>môre</i>
yesterday	<i>gister</i>
daily/weekly	<i>daaglik/weekblad</i>
public holiday	<i>openbare vakansiedag</i>
Monday	<i>Maandag (Ma)</i>
Tuesday	<i>Dinsdag (Di)</i>

Wednesday	<i>Woensdag (Wo)</i>
Thursday	<i>Donderdag (Do)</i>
Friday	<i>Vrydag (Vr)</i>
Saturday	<i>Saterdag (Sa)</i>
Sunday	<i>Sondag (So)</i>

Numbers

1	een
2	twee
3	drie
4	vier
5	vyf
6	ses
7	sewe
8	ag
9	nege
10	tien
11	elf
12	twaalf
13	dertien
14	veertien
15	vyftien
16	sestien
17	sewentien
18	agtien
19	negentien
20	twintig
21	een en twintig
30	dertig
40	veertig
50	vyftig
60	sestig
70	sewentig
80	tagtig
90	negentig
100	honderd
1000	duisend

PORTUGUESE

Portuguese pronunciation takes some learning. Guides have been included with the words and phrases below that should make things a lot easier for the uninitiated!

Portuguese uses masculine and feminine word endings, usually '-o' and '-a' respectively – to say 'thank you', a man will say *obrigado*, a woman, *obrigada*. Masculine and feminine are noted in this guide by the abbreviations 'm' and 'f' respectively.

Conversation & Essentials

Hello.	<i>Bom dia.</i>	bong dee-a
Hi.	<i>Olá/Chao.</i>	o-la/chow
Good day.	<i>Bom dia.</i>	bong dee-a

EMERGENCIES – PORTUGUESE**Help!**

Socorro! soo-ko-rroo

I'm lost.

Estou perdido/a. (m/f) shto perr-dee-doo/da

Where are the toilets?

Onde ficam ong-de fee-kam
os lavabos? oos la-va-boos

Go away!

Vai-te embora! vai-te eng-bo-ra

Call ...!

Chame ...! sham ...

a doctor

um médico oong me-dee-koo

the police

a polícia a poo-lee-see-a

Goodbye.	<i>Adeus/Chao.</i>	a-dyoos/chow
See you later.	<i>Até logo.</i>	a-te lo-goo
How are you?	<i>Como está?</i>	ko-moo shta
Fine, and you?	<i>Tudo bem, e tu?</i>	too-doo beng e too
Yes.	<i>Sim.</i>	seeng
No.	<i>Não.</i>	nowng
Please.	<i>Faz favor.</i>	fash fa-vorr
Thank you (very much).	<i>(Muito)</i>	(mweng-too)
	<i>Obrigado/a.</i> (m/f)	o-bree-ga-doo/da
You're welcome.	<i>De nada.</i>	de na-da
Excuse me.	<i>Desculpe.</i>	des-koolpe
	(before asking a question/making a request)	
What's your name?	<i>Como se chama?</i>	ko-moo se sha-ma
My name is ...	<i>Chamo-me ...</i>	sha-moo-me ...
Where are you from?	<i>De onde é?</i>	de ong-de e
I'm from ...	<i>Sou (da/do/de) ...</i>	so (da/do/de) ...
How much is it?	<i>Quanto é?</i>	kwang-too e

Do you speak English?

Fala inglês? fa-la eeng-glesh

I (don't) understand.

(Não) Entendo. (nowng) eng-teng-doo

Could you please write it down?

Pode por favor escrever po-de-porr fa-vorr es-kre-verr
num papel? noom pa-pel

I'm looking for a ...

Procuo ... proo-koo-roo-...

campground

um parque de campismo oong park-de kang-peezh-moo

hotel

um hotel oong oo-tel

cheap hotel

uma pensão oo-ma pen-sowng

I'd like a ... room.

Queria um quarto de ... kree-a oong kwarr-too de ...

double

casal ka-zal

single

individual ing-dee-vee-dwal

twin

duplo doo-ploo

Where is ...?

Onde fica ...? ong-de fee-ka ...

a bank

um banco oong ban-koo

the market

o mercado oo merr-ka-doo

a pharmacy/chemist

uma farmácia oo-ma far-ma-sya

the police station

o posto de polícia oo pos-too-de poo-lee-see-a

the post office

o correio oo coo-ray-oo

the toilet/bathroom (Men/Women)

a casa de banho a kaa-za de ba-nyoo
(Senhores/Senhoras) (se-nyo-resh/se-nyo-rash)

Can I pay ...?

Posso pagar com ...? po-soo pa-garr kom ...

by credit card

cartão de crédito karr-towng de kre-dee-too

by travellers cheque

cheque de viagem she-ke de vee-oo-zheng

Where is ...?

Onde fica ...? ongd fee-ka ...

Can you show me (on the map)?

Pode mostrar-me pod moos-trarrm
(no mapa)? (noo ma-pa)

How far is it?

Qual a distância daqui? kwal a dees-tan-see-a da-kee

straight ahead

em frente eng frengt

left/right

à esquerda/à direita a skerr-da/a dee-ray-ta

Which ... goes to ...?

Qual o ... que vai para ...? kwal oo ... ke vai pa-ra ...

(ferry) boat

barco (de travessia) barr-koo (de tra-ve-sya)

bus

autocarro/ ow-too-kaa-rroo/

machibomba ma-shee-bom-bo

converted passenger truck

chapa/chapa-cem sha-pa/sha-pa-seng

train

comboio kom-boy-oo

Is this the (bus) to ...?

Este (chapa) vai esht (sha-pa) vai
para ...? pa-ra ...?

What time does it leave?

Que horas sai? ke o-ras sai

What time does it get to ...?

Que horas chega a ...? ke o-ras she-ga a ...

A ticket to ...

Um bilhete para ... oong bee-lyet pa-ra ...

When?

Quando? kwang-doo

now

agora a-go-ra

today

hoje ozh

tomorrow

amanhã a-ma-nyang

0

zero ze-roo

1

um/uma (m/f) oong/oo-ma

2

dois/duas (m/f) doys/dwash

3

três tresh

4

quatro kwa-troo

5

cinco seeng-koo

6

seis saysh

7

sete set

8

oito oy-too

9

nove nov

10

dez desh

11

onze ongz

1000

mil meel

BANTU & KHOISAN LANGUAGES

As a first language, most Southern Africans speak either a Bantu language – which would include a Zulu, Tswana, Owambo, Herero, Chewa etc language – or a Khoisan language, which may be Khoi-Khoi (Nama), Damara, or a San dialect. Due to common roots, several Bantu languages in the region, including Zulu and Ndebele languages, as well as Sotho and Tswana languages, are often mutually intelligible.

Many native Khoisan speakers also speak at least one Bantu and one European language, usually Afrikaans.

CHEWA (CHICHEWA)

Chewa is the national language of Malawi and is also a very close relative of the Nyanja language spoken in Zambia – the two are mutually intelligible. It is a complex language: word prefixes and suffixes change according to context, so one single word

cannot always be given for its English equivalent. The most common forms are given here, but do remember that although these words and phrases may not be 'proper' Chichewa, you'll be understood. Most Malawians and Zambians will be pleased to hear even a few words spoken by a foreigner.

Conversation & Essentials

Bambo literally means 'father' but is a polite way to address any Malawian man. The female equivalent is *amai* or *mai*. *Mazungu* means 'white person', but isn't a derogatory term.

Hello.	<i>Moni.</i>
Hello, anybody in?	<i>Odi.</i> (knocking on door or calling at gate)
Come in/Welcome.	<i>Lowani.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Tsala bwino.</i> (lit: 'stay well', when leaving)
Goodbye.	<i>Pitani bwino.</i> (lit: 'go well', when staying)
Good night.	<i>Gonani bwino.</i>
Please.	<i>Chonde.</i>
Thank you/	<i>Zikomo.</i>
Excuse me.	
Thank you very much.	<i>Zikomo kwambile/kwambiri.</i>
Yes.	<i>Inde.</i>
No.	<i>Iyayi.</i>
How are you?	<i>Muli bwanji?</i>
I'm fine.	<i>Ndili bwino.</i>
And you?	<i>Kaya-iwe?</i> (to one person) <i>Kaya inu?</i> (to several people)
Good/Fine/OK.	<i>Chabwino.</i>

Numbers

Chichewa speakers talking together will normally use English for numbers and prices. Similarly, time is nearly always expressed in English.

1	<i>chimonzi</i>
2	<i>ziwili</i>
3	<i>zitatu</i>
4	<i>zinayi</i>
5	<i>zitsano</i>

DAMARA/NAMA

The Damara and Nama peoples' traditional lands take in most of Namibia's wildest desert regions. Their languages belong to the Khoisan group and, as with the other

San dialects, they feature several of the tricky 'click' elements (see How to Click, p778).

Conversation & Essentials

Good Morning.	<i>!gai/!oas</i>
How are you?	<i>matisa?</i>
Thank you.	<i>eio</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>engelsa !goa idu ra?</i>
Pardon	<i>mati</i>
What's your name?	<i>mati du/onha</i>
My name is ...	<i>ti/ons ge a ...</i>
I'm from ...	<i>tita ge a ...</i>
Yes.	<i>ii</i>
Goodbye.	<i>!gaise hare</i> (when leaving) or <i>!gure</i> (when staying)

How much is this?	<i>ne xu e matigo marie ni gan?</i>
Where is the ...?	<i>maha ... ha?</i>

Numbers

1	<i>/gui</i>
2	<i>/gam</i>
3	<i>!nona</i>
4	<i>haga</i>
5	<i>goro</i>
6	<i>!nani</i>
7	<i>hu</i>
8	<i>//khaisa</i>
9	<i>khoese</i>
10	<i>disi</i>

HERERO/HIMBA

The Herero and Himba languages are quite similar, and will be especially useful when travelling around Kaokoland and remote areas of north central Namibia, where Afrikaans remains a lingua franca and few people speak English. Most people, however, are delighted when foreign visitors attempt to communicate in Herero/Himba.

Conversation & Essentials

Hello.	<i>Tjike.</i>
Good morning, sir.	<i>Wa penduka, mutengua.</i>
Good afternoon, madam.	<i>Wa uhara, serekaze.</i>
Good evening.	<i>Wa tokerau.</i>
Good night.	<i>Ongurova ombua.</i>
Please.	<i>Arikana.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Okuhepa.</i>
How are you?	<i>Kora?</i>
Fine.	<i>Naua.</i>
Well, thank you.	<i>Mbiri naua, okuhepa.</i>
Pardon.	<i>Makuvi.</i>

REMOTE HIMBA

The Himba living in remote areas speak a slightly different dialect. Again, people will greatly appreciate your efforts.

Hello/Good day.	<i>Moro.</i>
Good evening.	<i>Huenda.</i>
How are you?	<i>Muwepe nduka?/Kora?</i>
Fine, thanks.	<i>Nawa.</i>
	<i>Ami mbiri nawa.</i> (polite)
Yes.	<i>Eee.</i>
No.	<i>Kako.</i>
How much do you want for this?	<i>Imbi mokosisa vingapi?</i>
Do you know the road to ...?	<i>Motjua ondjira ndjienda ...?</i>
Where is the ...?	<i>... iripi?</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Kara/Karee nawa.</i> (to one/many)

Yes.	<i>li.</i>
No.	<i>Kako.</i>
Where are you from?	<i>Ove ua za pi?</i>

Do you speak ...?	<i>U hungira ...?</i>
English	<i>Otjingirisa</i>
Herero/Himba	<i>Otjihimba</i>
Owambo	<i>Otjiwambo</i>

daughters	<i>ovanatje ovakazona</i>
sons	<i>ovanatje ovazandu</i>
wife	<i>omukazendu ngua kupua</i>
husband	<i>omurumendu ngua kupa</i>
mother	<i>mama</i>
father	<i>tate</i>
younger sister/	<i>omuangu</i>
brother	
older sister/	<i>erumbi</i>
brother	

caravan park	<i>omasuviro uo zo karavana</i>
game reserve	<i>orumbo ro vipuka</i>
hiking trail	<i>okaira ko makaendero uo pehi</i>
(long/short)	<i>(okare/okasupi)</i>
river (channel)	<i>omuramba</i>
road	<i>ondjiira</i>
rooms	<i>omatuuu</i>

Numbers

1	<i>iimue</i>
2	<i>imbari</i>
3	<i>indatu</i>
4	<i>iine</i>

5	<i>indano</i>
6	<i>hamboumue</i>
7	<i>hambomabari</i>
8	<i>hambondatu</i>
9	<i>imuvyu</i>
10	<i>omurongo</i>

!KUNG SAN

The click-ridden languages of the several San groups in Namibia and Botswana are surely among the world's most difficult for outsiders to learn (see How to Click, p778). Perhaps the most useful dialect is that of the !Kung people, who are concentrated in eastern Bushmanland in Namibia and around northwestern Botswana.

To simplify matters, in the rudimentary phrase list that follows, all clicks are represented by !k, as locals will usually forgive you for ignoring the clicks and using a 'k' sound instead.

Hello.	<i>!kao</i>
Good Morning.	<i>tuwa</i>
What's your name?	<i>!kang ya tse dia/!sidia?</i> (to a man/woman)
How are you?	<i>!ka tsey a/!siya?</i> (to a man/woman)
My name is ...	<i>!kang ya tse/!si ...</i> (man/woman speaking)
Thank you.	<i>!ka</i>
Thank you very much.	<i>!kin!ka</i>
Goodbye, go well.	<i>!king se !kau</i>

LOZI

Lozi is the most common Caprivian dialect, and is spoken throughout much of western Zambia.

Conversation & Essentials

When greeting a close friend, use *Lumela*, *mwana* or *Lumela, wena*.

Hello.	<i>Eeni, sha or Lumela.</i>
Good morning.	<i>U zuhile.</i>
Good afternoon/evening.	<i>Ki manzibuana</i>
Good night.	<i>Ki busihu</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Siala foo/Siala hande.</i>
Come in/Welcome.	<i>Kena.</i>
How are you?	<i>U cwang/W'a pila/W'a zuha?</i>
I'm fine.	<i>N'i teng/N'a pila/N'a zuha.</i>
And you?	<i>Wen'a bo?/Wena u cwang?</i>
Please.	<i>Sha</i> (only used with people of higher social standing)

HOW TO CLICK

Khoisan dialects (as well as several Bantu languages, including the Xhosa and Ndebele languages) are characterised by 'click' elements that make them difficult to learn.

The clicks are made by compressing the tongue against different parts of the mouth to produce different sounds. Names that include an exclamation point (!) are of Khoisan origin and should be rendered as a sideways click sound, similar to the sound made when encouraging a horse, but with a hollow tone like that when pulling a cork from a bottle. The other three clicks are made by quickly drawing the tongue away from the front teeth (represented by //); the tutting sound in English to indicate disapproval (represented by //); and a sharp pop formed by drawing the tongue down from the roof of the mouth (represented by ʘ).

If the lingual gymnastics prove too much, just render all the clicks as a 'k' sound.

Thank you.	<i>N'tumezi.</i>
Excuse me.	<i>Ni swalele.</i> (informal)
	<i>Mu ni swalele.</i> (polite)
Thank you very much.	<i>N'i tumezi hahulu.</i>
Good/Fine.	<i>Ki hande.</i>
OK.	<i>Ku lukile.</i>
Yes.	<i>Ee.</i>
No.	<i>Awa.</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>Wa bulela sikuwa?</i>
How much?	<i>Ki bukai?</i>

Numbers

1	<i>il'ingw'i</i>
2	<i>z'e peli or bubeli</i>
3	<i>z'e t'alu or bulalu</i>
4	<i>z'e ne or bune</i>
5	<i>z'e keta-lizoho</i>
6	<i>z'e keta-lizoho ka ka li kang'wi</i>
7	<i>supile</i>
10	<i>lishumi</i>
20	<i>mashumi a mabeli likiti</i>

NDEBELE (ISINDEBELE)

The language of Zimbabwe's Ndebele people is spoken primarily in Matabeleland in the western and southwestern parts of the country. It's derived from the Zulu group of languages and is not mutually intelligible with Shona.

The Ndebele of Zimbabwe and that of South Africa (also known as Southern Ndebele) are quite distinct languages. See the The 'Other' Ndebele, opposite, for some useful phrases in the South African variety.

Conversation & Essentials

Hello. (on meeting)	<i>Sawubona/Salibonani.</i>
Hello. (reply)	<i>Yebo.</i>
Welcome.	<i>Siyalemukela.</i>
Good morning.	<i>Livukenjani.</i>
Good afternoon.	<i>Litshonile.</i>
Good evening.	<i>Litshone njani.</i>
How are you?	<i>Linjani/Kunjani?</i>
I'm well.	<i>Sikona.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Lisale kuhle.</i> (when staying)
Goodbye.	<i>Uhambe kuhle.</i> (when leaving)
Yes.	<i>Yebo.</i>
No.	<i>Hayi.</i>
Please.	<i>Uxolo.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Siyabonga kakulu.</i>
What's your name?	<i>Ibizo lakho ngubani?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Elami igama ngingu ...</i>
I'm from ...	<i>Ngivela e ...</i>
sir/madam	<i>umnimzana/inkosikazi</i>
How much?	<i>Yimalini?</i>
Where is the (station)?	<i>Singapi (isiteshi)?</i>

Numbers

1	<i>okukodwa</i>
2	<i>okubili</i>
3	<i>okutathu</i>
4	<i>okune</i>
5	<i>okuyisihlanu</i>
6	<i>okuyisithupha</i>
7	<i>okuyisikhombisa</i>
8	<i>okuyisitshiyangalo mbila</i>
9	<i>okuyisitshiyangalo lunye</i>
10	<i>okuli tshumi</i>

NORTHERN SOTHO (SEPEDI)

Northern Sotho is spoken in South Africa's northeastern provinces.

Hello.	<i>Thobela.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Sala gabotse.</i>
Yes.	<i>Ee.</i>
No.	<i>Aowa.</i>
Please.	<i>Ke kgapela.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Ke ya leboga.</i>
What's your name?	<i>Ke mang lebitso la gago?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Lebitso laka ke ...</i>
I come from ...	<i>Ke bowa kwa ...</i>

THE 'OTHER' NDEBELE

The Ndebele language of South Africa is spoken in the country's northeastern region. It shares many linguistic features with Northern Sotho but is not mutually intelligible with the Ndebele language spoken in Zimbabwe. Here are a few phrases that may prove useful:

Hello.	<i>Lotsha.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Khamaba kuhle/Sala kuhle.</i>
Yes.	<i>I-ye.</i>
No.	<i>Awa.</i>
Please.	<i>Ngibawa.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Ngiyathokaza.</i>
What's your name?	<i>Ungubani ibizo lakho?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Ibizo lami ngu ...</i>
I come from ...	<i>Ngibuya e ...</i>

OWAMBO (OSHIWAMBO)

Owambo – and specifically the Kwanyama dialect – is the first tongue of more Namibians than any other language, and also the choice of the ruling Swapo party. As a result, it's spoken as a second or third language by many non-Owambo Namibians of both Bantu and Khoisan origin.

Conversation & Essentials

Good Morning.	<i>Wa lalapo.</i>
Good Evening.	<i>Wa tokelwapo.</i>
How are you?	<i>Owu li po ngiini?</i>
I'm fine.	<i>Ondi li nawa.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Tangi.</i>
Please.	<i>Ombili.</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>Oho popi Oshiingilisa?</i>
How much is this?	<i>Ingapi tashi kotha?</i>
Yes.	<i>Eeno.</i>
No.	<i>Aawe.</i>
Maybe.	<i>andiya manga.</i>
Excuse me.	<i>Ombili manga.</i>
I'm sorry.	<i>Onde shi panda.</i>
I don't know.	<i>Ombili mwaa sho.</i>
I'm lost.	<i>Ombili, onda puka.</i>
Can you please help me.	<i>Eto vuluwu pukulule ndje?</i>

Where is the ...?	<i>Openi pu na ...?</i>
bank	<i>ombaanga</i>
hospital	<i>oshipangelo</i>
pharmacy	<i>oaputeka</i>
police station	<i>opolisi</i>
post office	<i>opoosa</i>

telephone	<i>ngodhi</i>
toilet	<i>kandjugo</i>

soft drink, soda pop	<i>pumbwa okanar-nunate</i>
wine	<i>owaina</i>
beer	<i>ombilla</i>

Numbers

1	<i>yimwe</i>
2	<i>mbali</i>
3	<i>ndatu</i>
4	<i>ne</i>
5	<i>ntano</i>
6	<i>hamano</i>
7	<i>heyali</i>
8	<i>hetatu</i>
9	<i>omugoyi</i>
10	<i>omulongo</i>

SHONA

Shona is an amalgamation of several Bantu languages. It's spoken almost universally in the central and eastern parts of Zimbabwe. The 'high' dialect, used in broadcasts and other media, is Zezuru, which is indigenous to the Harare area.

Although most urban Zimbabweans have at least a little knowledge of English, many rural dwellers' English vocabulary is limited, so it helps to know a few words and phrases in Shona or Ndebele; see opposite). Even those Zimbabweans who speak English well will be pleasantly surprised to hear a foreigner attempt a few words in the indigenous languages.

Where two translations are given for the same word or expression in the following section, the first is used when speaking to one person, the second, to more than one.

Pronunciation

Shona, like Ndebele, was first written down by phonetic English transliteration, so most letters are pronounced as they would be in English. Differences of note:

dya	pronounced 'jga', as near to one syllable as possible
tya	as 'chka', said quickly
sv	say 's' with your tongue near the roof of the mouth
zv	like the 's-v' sound in 'is very'
m/n	before consonants at the start of a word, they're pronounced as a light 'm' or 'n' humming sound

TUMBUKA & YAO IN MALAWI

After Chewa, the two other principal indigenous languages of Malawi are Tumbuka (in the north) and Yao (in the south). Nearly all Tumbuka and Yao people also speak Chewa, and many speak English as well. Nevertheless, a few simple words in Tumbuka and Yao will be most welcome.

English	Tumbuka	Yao
Hello.	Yewo.	Quamboni.
How are you?	Muliwuli?	Iliwuli?
Fine.	Nilimakola.	Ndiri chenene.
And you?	Manyi imwa?	Qualinimye?
Goodbye.	Pawemi.	Siagara gani ngwaula.
Thank you (very much).	Yewo (chomene).	Asante (sana).
What's your name?	Zinolinu ndimwenjani?	Mwe linachi?
My name is ...	Zinalane ndine ...	Une linalangu ...
Where are you from?	Mukukhalankhu?	Ncutama qua?
I'm from ...	Nkhula khu ...	Gutama ku ...

Conversation & Essentials

Hello.	Mhoro/Mhoro.
Hello. (reply)	Ahoi.
Welcome.	Titambire.
How are you?	Makadii/Makadi-ni?
I'm well.	Ndiripo.
Good morning.	Mangwanani.
Good afternoon.	Masikati.
Good evening.	Manheru.
Goodbye. (if staying)	Chisarai zvakanaka.
Goodbye. (if leaving)	Fambai zvakanaka.
Please.	Ndapota.
Thank you.	Ndatenda/Masvita.
Yes.	Ehe.
No.	Aiw.
What's your name?	Unonzi ani zita rako?
My name is ...	Ndini ...
I'm from ...	Ndinobva ku ...
How much?	I marii?

Numbers

1	potsi
2	piri
3	tatu
4	ina
5	shanu
6	tanhatu
7	nomwe
8	tsere
9	pfumbamwe
10	gumi

SOUTHERN SOTHO (SESOTHO)

Southern Sotho is one of two official languages in Lesotho (English being the other). It is also spoken by the Basotho people in

the Free State, North-West Province and Gauteng in South Africa. It's useful to know some words and phrases if you're planning to visit Lesotho, especially if you want to trek in remote areas.

Hello.	Dumela.
Greetings father.	Lumela ntate.
Peace father.	Khotso ntate.
Greetings mother.	Lumela 'me.
Peace mother.	Khotso 'me.
Greetings brother.	Lumela abuti.
Peace brother.	Khotso abuti.
Greetings sister.	Lumela ausi.
Peace sister.	Khotso ausi.

There are three commonly used ways of saying 'How are you?' (followed by suitable responses):

How are you?	O kae? (sg) Le kae? (pl)
How do you live?	O phela joang? (sg) Le phela joang? (pl)
How did you get up?	O tsohele joang? (sg) Le tsohele joang? (pl)
I'm here.	Ke teng. (sg) Re teng. (pl)
I live well.	Ke phela hantle. (sg) Re phela hantle. (pl)
I got up well.	Ke tsohile hantle. (sg) Re tsohile hantle. (pl)

These questions and answers are quite interchangeable. Someone could ask you *O phela joang?* and you could answer *Ke teng.*

When trekking, people always ask *Lea kae?* (Where are you going?) and *O tsoa kae?* or the plural *Le tsoa kae?* (Where have you come from?). When parting, use the following expressions:

Stay well.	Sala hantle. (sg) Salang hantle. (pl)
Go well.	Tsamaea hantle. (sg) Tsamaeang hantle. (pl)

'Thank you' is *kea leboha*, pronounced 'ke-ya le-bo-wa'. The herd boys often ask for *chelete* (money) or *lipompong* (sweets), pronounced 'dee-pom-pong'. If you want to say 'I don't have any', the answer is *ha dio*, pronounced 'ha dee-o'.

SWATI (SISWATI)

Swati is one of two official languages in Swaziland (the other is English). It's very similar to Zulu, and the two languages are mutually intelligible.

Yebo is often said as a casual greeting. It's the custom to greet everyone you meet. Often you will be asked *U ya phi?* (Where are you going?).

Hello. (to one person)	Sawubona. (lit: 'I see you')
Hello. (to more than one person)	Sanibona.
How are you?	Kunjani?
I'm fine.	Kulungile.
Goodbye. (if leaving)	Sala kahle. (lit: 'stay well')
Goodbye. (if staying)	Hamba kahle. (lit: 'go well')
Please.	Ngicela.
I thank you.	Ngiyabonga.
We thank you.	Siyabonga.
Yes.	Yebo. (also an all-purpose greeting)
No.	Cha.
Sorry.	Lucolo.
What's your name?	Ngubani libito lakho?
My name is ...	Libitolami ngingu ...
I'm from ...	Ngingewekubuya e ...
How much?	Malini?

TSONGA (XITSONGA)

Tsonga is spoken in South Africa (north of Hluhluwe in KwaZulu-Natal) and in parts of Mozambique.

Hello.	Avusheni. (morning) Inhelekani. (afternoon) Riperile. (evening)

Goodbye.

Yes.
No.
Please.
Thank you.
What's your name?
My name is ...
I come from ...

Salani kahle.
Hi swona.
A hi swona.
Nakombela.
I nkomu.
U mani vito ra wena?
Vito ra mina i ...
Ndzihuma e ...

TSWANA (SETSWANA)

Tswana is widely spoken throughout Botswana and in some parts of South Africa (in the eastern areas of Northern Cape, in the North-West Province and in western Free State). There are clear similarities in vocabulary between Tswana and the two Sotho languages, and the speakers of each can generally understand one another.

The letter **g** is pronounced as a 'ch' in Scottish loch; **th** is pronounced as a slightly aspirated 't'.

The greetings *dumela mma* or *dumela rra* are considered compliments and Batswana people appreciate their liberal usage. When greeting a group, say *dumelang*. Another useful phrase, which is normally placed at the end of a sentence or conversation is *go siame*, meaning the equivalent of 'all right, no problem'.

Conversation & Essentials

Hello.	Dumela mma/rra. (to woman/man)
Hello.	Dumelang. (to group)
Hello!	Ko ko! (arrival outside a gate or house)
Goodbye.	Tsamaya sentle. (to one leaving)
Goodbye.	Sala sentle. (to one staying)
Yes.	Ee.
No.	Nnyaa.
Please.	Tsweetswee.
Thank you.	Kea lebogoa.
Excuse me/Sorry.	Intshwarele.
Pardon me.	Ke kopa tsela. (lit: 'I want road')
OK/No problem.	Go siame
How are you?	A o tsogile? (lit: 'how did you wake up?')
How are you?	O tlhotse jang?
	(afternoon/evening)
Come on!	Tsena!
Do you speak English?	A o bua Sekgao?
Does anyone here speak English?	A go na le o o bua Sekgao?
I understand.	Ke a thaloganya.
I don't understand.	Ga ke thaloganya.
How much is it?	Ke bokae?

Where is a/the ...?	<i>E ko kae ...?</i>
I'm looking for ...	<i>Ke batla ...</i>
a/the ...	
bank	<i>ntlo ya polokelo</i>
market	<i>mmaraka</i>
post office	<i>poso</i>
public toilet	<i>matlwana a boitiketso</i>
tourist office	<i>ntlo ya bajanala</i>
hotel	<i>hotele</i>
guesthouse	<i>matlo a baeng</i>
camping ground	<i>lefelo la go robala mo tenteng</i>

Numbers

0	<i>lefela</i>
1	<i>bongwe</i>
2	<i>bobedi</i>
3	<i>borara</i>
4	<i>bone</i>
5	<i>botlhano</i>
6	<i>borataro</i>
7	<i>bosupa</i>
8	<i>boroba bobedi</i>
9	<i>boroba bongwe</i>
10	<i>lesome</i>

VENDA (TSHIVENDA)

Venda is spoken in the northeastern region of South Africa's Northern Province.

Hello.	<i>Ndi matseloni. (morning)</i> <i>Ndi masiari. (afternoon)</i> <i>Ndi madekwana (evening)</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Kha vha sale zwavhudi.</i>
Yes.	<i>Ndi zwone.</i>
No.	<i>A si zwone.</i>
Please.	<i>Ndikho u humbela.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Ndo livhuwa.</i>
What's your name?	<i>Zina lavho ndi nnyi?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Zina langa ndi ...</i>
I come from ...	<i>Ndi bva ...</i>

XHOSA (ISIXHOSA)

Xhosa is the language of the people of the same name. It's the dominant indigenous

language in Eastern Cape in South Africa, although you'll meet Xhosa speakers all through the region. *Bawo* is a term of respect used when addressing an older man.

Hello.	<i>Molo.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Sala kakuhle.</i>
Goodnight.	<i>Rhonanai.</i>
Please.	<i>Nceda.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Enkosi.</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>Uyakwazi ukuthetha siNgesi?</i>
Are you well?	<i>Uphilile na namhlanje?</i>
Yes, I'm well.	<i>Ewe, ndiphilile kanye.</i>
Yes.	<i>Ewe.</i>
No.	<i>Hayi.</i>
Where are you from?	<i>Uvela phi na okanye ngaphi na?</i>
I'm from ...	<i>Ndivela ...</i>
I'm lost.	<i>Ndilahlekile.</i>
Is this the road to ...?	<i>Yindlela eya ... yini le?</i>
How much is it?	<i>Idla ntoni na?</i>

ZULU (ISIZULU)

Zulu is spoken in South Africa by the people of the same name. As with several other Nguni languages, Zulu uses a variety of clicks (see How to Click, p778). To ask a question, add *na* to the end of a sentence.

Hello.	<i>Sawubona.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Sala kahle.</i>
Please.	<i>Jabulisa.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Ngiyabonga.</i>
Yes.	<i>Yebo.</i>
No.	<i>Cha.</i>
Where does this road go?	<i>Iqondaphi lendlela na?</i>
Which is the road to ...?	<i>Iphi indlela yokuya ku ...?</i>
Is it far?	<i>Kukude yini?</i>
left	<i>ekhohlo</i>
right	<i>ekumene</i>
food	<i>ukudla</i>
water	<i>amanzi</i>

Glossary

Although English is widely spoken in most Southern African countries, native speakers from Australasia, North America and the UK will notice that many words that have developed different meanings locally. There are also many unusual terms that have been borrowed from Afrikaans, Portuguese or indigenous languages. This glossary includes some of these particular 'Afro-English' words, as well as some other general terms and abbreviations that may not be understood.

In African English, repetition for emphasis is common: something that burnt you would be 'hot hot'; fields after the rains are 'green green'; a crowded minibus with no more room is 'full full', and so on.

For useful words and phrases in local languages, see p772.

4WD – four-wheel drive; locally called 4x4

apartheid – literally, the state of being apart; a political system in which peoples were officially segregated according to their race

asimilados – Mozambican term for Africans who assimilated to European ways

assegaïs – spears; used against the colonialists in Zimbabwe

baixa – commercial area in Mozambique

bakkie – pronounced 'bucky'; utility or pick-up truck

barchan dunes – migrating crescent-shaped sand dunes

Basarwa – Batswana name for the San people

Batswana – citizens of Botswana

bemanti – Swazi learned men

biltong – a chewy dried meat that can be anything from beef to kudu or ostrich

bobotie – traditional Malay dish; delicately flavoured curry with a topping of beaten egg baked to a crust, served with stewed fruits and chutney

Boer – farmer in Afrikaans; a historic name for the Afrikaner people

boerewors – Afrikaner farmer's sausage of varying quality

bogobe – sorghum porridge, a staple in Botswana

bojalwa – an inexpensive sorghum beer drunk in Botswana that is also brewed commercially

boma – in Zambia, Malawi and some other countries, this is a local word for 'town'; in East Africa the same word

means 'fortified stockade'; in Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and much of South Africa, it's normally just a sunken campfire circle; it may be derived from the colonial term BOMA (British Overseas Military Administration), applied to any government building, such as offices or forts

boomslang – dangerous 2m-long tree snake

braai – a barbecue; a Southern African institution, particularly among whites

braawors – barbecue sausages

brötchen – little bread rolls available in Namibia

bushveld – flat grassy plain covered in thorn scrub

camarões – Mozambican term for prawns

camião – truck in Mozambique

campeamento principal – Mozambican term for main entrance

capulanas – colourful sarongs worn by Mozambican women around their waist

capuzinio – mission in Mozambique

casal – room with a double bed, for married couples, in Mozambique

cascata – Mozambican term for waterfall

chapa – word for converted passenger truck or minivan in Mozambique or Malawi

chibuku – local style mass-produced beer, stored in tanks served in buckets, or available in takeaway cartons (mostly in Zimbabwe and Malawi) and plastic bottles known as *scuds*; it's good for a quick euphoria and a debilitating *babalass* (hangover)

chili bites – spicy *biltong*, seasoned with *piri piri*

chipperone – damp misty weather that affects southern Malawi

Comrade – a Marxist title used mainly by the media, referring to black Zimbabweans, especially government officials; also Cde

Concession – a communal land area governmentally designated for use by a given commercial entity for a set amount of time – usually five years; a popular concept in both Namibia and Botswana

coupé – two-person compartment on a train

cuca shops – small shops in northern Namibia; named for the Angolan beer once sold in them

daga hut – a traditional African round house consisting of a wooden frame, mud and straw walls, and thatched roof (mainly in Zimbabwe)

dagga – pronounced da-kha; Southern African term for marijuana

dambo – area of grass, reeds or swamp alongside a river course

dassies – herbivorous gopherlike mammals of two species: *Procavia capensis*, also called the rock hyrax; and *Dendrohyrax arborea* or tree hyrax; they're in fact not rodents, but are thought to be the closest living relatives of the elephant

dhow – Arabic sailing vessel that dates from ancient times

difaqane – forced migration by several Southern African tribes in the face of Zulu aggression; also known as *mfeqane*

donga – steep-sided gully caused by soil erosion

dorp – a small country settlement in South Africa

drankwinkel – literally 'drink shop'; a Namibian or South African off-licence or bottle shop

drift – a river ford; most are normally dry

dumpi – a 375ml bottle of beer

duplo – term for a room with twin beds used in Mozambique

dwalas – bald knoblike domes of smooth rock

eh – (rhymes with 'hay') all purpose ending to sentences, even very short ones such as 'Thanks, eh?'

eumbo – immaculate Owambo *kraal*; much like a small village enclosed within a pale fence

euphorbia – several species of cactuslike succulents; most are poisonous to humans

fynbos – fine bush, primarily proteas, heaths and ericas

gap it – make a quick exit; often refers to emigration from troubled African countries

garni – a hotel in Namibia that lacks a full dining room, but does offer a simple breakfast

gemütlichkeit – a distinctly German appreciation of comfort and hospitality

half-bus – Malawian term for a bus with about 30 seats – to distinguish it from big buses or minibuses

heks – entrance gates, farm gates

high season – in most of Southern Africa, this refers to the dry season, from late June to late September; in South Africa's Cape regions, it refers to the dry season from late November to early April

highveld – high-altitude grassland

Homelands – formerly self-governing black states (Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana, Venda etc), which were part of the apartheid regime's plan for a separate black and white South Africa

Incwala – most sacred Swazi ceremony in which king gives permission to his people to eat the first crops of the new year

inselberg – isolated ranges and hills; literally 'island mountains'

Izzit? – rhetorical question that most closely translates as 'Really?' and is used without regard to gender, person or

number of subjects; therefore, it could mean 'Is it?', 'Are you?', 'Is he?', 'Are they?', 'Is she?', 'Are we?' etc; also 'How izzit?' for 'How's it going?'

joala – sorghum beer in Lesotho

Jugendstil – German Art Nouveau architecture prevalent in Namibia, especially in Swakopmund and parts of Windhoek and Lüderitz

just now – refers to some time in the future but implies a certain degree of imminence; it could be half an hour from now or two days from now

kalindula – rumba-inspired music of Zambia

kampango – catfish in Malawi

kapenta – an anchovylike fish (*Limnothrissa mioda*)

caught in Lake Kariba and favoured by Zimbabweans

karakul – variety of Central Asian sheep, which produce high-grade wool and pelts; raised in Namibia and parts of Botswana

kerk – church in Afrikaans

kgadi – alcoholic drink found in Botswana; a brew of brown sugar and berries or fungus

kgosi – chief in Botswana (Setswana language)

kgotla – village meeting place (Botswana)

Khoisan – language grouping taking in all Southern African indigenous languages, including San and Khoikhoi (Nama), as well as the language of the Damara (a Bantu people who speak a Khoikhoi dialect)

kizomba – musical style popular in Namibia

kloof – a ravine or small valley

kloofing – canyoning into and out of *kloofs*

kokerboom – quiver tree; grows mainly in southern Namibia and the Northern Cape province

konditorei – German pastry shops; found in larger Namibian towns

kopje – pronounced 'koppie'; a small hill or rocky outcrop on an otherwise flat plain

kotu – king's court in Zambia

kraal – Afrikaans version of the Portuguese word 'curral'; an enclosure for livestock, a fortified village of mud huts, or an Owambo homestead

kwacha – currency in Malawi and Zambia

kwasa kwasa – Congo-style rumba music

laager – wagon circle

lagosta – crayfish in Mozambique

lapa – large, thatched common area; used for socialising

lekolulo – a flutelike instrument played by herd boys in Lesotho

liqhaga – grassware 'bottles'

litunga – king in Zambia

location – alternative Namibian and South African word for township, usually affiliated with a rural town

lowveld – see *bushveld*

lupembe – wind instrument made from animal horn

mabele – sorghum, a traditional Batswana meal

machibombo – large bus in Mozambique

madila – thickened sour milk drunk in Botswana

mageu – a light and nonintoxicating drink made from

mielies or sorghum mash, drunk in Botswana

mahango – millet; a staple of the Owambo diet and used

for brewing a favourite alcoholic beverage

majika – traditional rhythmic sound

makalani – a type of palm tree that grows in the

Kalahari region; also *mokolane*

makhosi – Zulu chiefs

makishi – a dance performed in Zambia featuring male dancers wearing masks of stylised human faces, grass skirts and anklets

makwaela – a dance characterised by a cappella singing and sophisticated foot percussion performed in southern Mozambique

malva – apricot pudding of Dutch origin

mapiko – masked dance of the Makonde people

marimba – African xylophone, made from strips of resonant wood with various-sized gourds for sound boxes

marrabenta – typical Mozambican music, inspired by traditional *majika* rhythms

mataku – watermelon wine

matola – Malawian term for pick-up or van carrying passengers

mbanje – cannabis in Zimbabwe

mbira – thumb piano; it consists of five to 24 narrow iron keys mounted in rows on a wooden sound board

mbongi – holders and performers of a Xhosa group's oral history; a cross between a bard and a court jester

mealie pap – maize porridge, which is a dietary staple

throughout the region; also called *mielie pap*

mfeqane – see *difaqane*

mielie pap – see *mealie pap*

mielies – cobs of maize

miombo – dry open woodland, also called *Brachystegia* woodland; it's composed mainly of mopane and acacia *bushveld*

mojito – Cuban cocktail made of mint, rum, lime juice, sugar and soda

mokolane – see *makalani*

mokoro – dugout canoe used in the Okavango Delta and other riverine areas; the *mokoro* is propelled by a well-balanced poler who stands in the stern

mopane – hardwood tree native to Southern Africa (also called ironwood), highly resistant to drought

mopane worms – the caterpillar of the moth *Gonimbrasiabelina*, eaten as a local delicacy throughout the region

morama – underground tuber, source of water and pods have edible beans

mpasa – lake salmon in Malawi

msasa – small shrubby tree with compound leaves and small fragrant flowers

mujeje – rocks that resonate when struck

multa – a fine in Mozambique

musika – a Zimbabwean market outside the town centre; also called *renkini* in Ndebele

muti – traditional medicine

nalikwanda – huge wooden canoe, painted with black and white stripes, that carries the *litunga*

Nama – popular name for Namibians of Khoikhoi,

Topnaar or Baster heritage

não faz mal – 'no problem' in Portuguese; useful in both Mozambique and Angola

!nara – type of melon that grows in desert areas; a

dietary staple of the Topnaar people

nartjie – pronounced 'narkie'; South African tangerine

ncheni – lake tiger fish in Malawi

Ngwenyama – the Lion; term given to the King of Swaziland

n!oresi – traditional San lands; literally, 'lands where one's heart is'

now now – definitely not now, but sometime sooner than 'just now'

nshima – filling maize porridge-like substance eaten in Zambia

nxum – the San people's 'life force'

nyama – meat or meat gravy

oke – term for bloke or guy, mainly heard in South Africa

ondjongo – dance performed by Himba cattle owners to demonstrate the care and ownership of their animals

oshana – normally dry river channel in northern Namibia

and northwestern Botswana

oshikundu – tasty alcoholic beverage made from *ma-*

hango; popular in traditional areas of northern Namibia

outjina (for women) and **otjipirangi** (for men) – Herero dance in which a plank is strapped to one foot in order to deliver a hollow, rhythmic percussion

pan – dry flat area of grassland or salt, often a seasonal lake-bed

pap en wors – maize porridge and sausage

participation safari – an inexpensive safari in which clients pitch their own tents, pack the vehicle and share cooking duties

pensão – inexpensive hotel in Mozambique

peri-peri – see *piri-piri*

pint – small bottle of beer or can of oil (or similar) usually around 300ml to 375ml (not necessarily equal to a British or US pint)

piri-piri – very hot pepper sauce of Portuguese-Angolan origin; the basis for the Nando's chain's chicken concotions; also known as *peri-peri*

plus-minus – meaning 'about'; this scientific/mathematical term has entered common parlance – eg 'the bus will come in plus-minus 10 minutes'

pondo – ‘pound’, occasionally used in Botswana to refer to two pula

potjie – pronounced *poy-kee*; a three-legged pot used to make stew over an open fire. The word also refers to the stew itself, as well as a gathering in which a *potjie* forms the main dish

potjiekos – meat and vegetable stew cooked in a *potjie*

praca – town square in Mozambique

praia – beach in Mozambique

pula – the Botswanan currency; means ‘rain’ in Setswana

pungwe – all-night drinking and music party in Zimbabwe

relish – sauce of meat, vegetables, beans etc eaten with boiled *mielie* meal (*nshima*, *sadza*, *mealie pap* etc)

renkini – Ndebele version of *musika*

rijsttafel – rice with side dishes; Dutch interpretation of Indonesian *makan besar*

Rikki – small, open van; cross between a taxi and a shared taxi

robot – no, not R2D2 – it’s just a traffic light

rondavel – round, African-style hut

rooibos – literally ‘red bush’ in Afrikaans; herbal tea that reputedly has therapeutic qualities

rusvingo – Shona word for walled-in enclosures

sadza – maize-meal porridge

San – language-based name for indigenous people formerly known as Bushmen

sandveld – dry, sandy belt

sangoma – witchdoctor; herbalist

scud – plastic drink bottle

seif dunes – prominent linear sand dunes, as found in the central Namib Desert

setolo-tolo – a Lesotho stringed instrument played with the mouth

shame! – half-hearted expression of commiseration

shebeen – an illegal township drinking establishment (which may also include a brothel)

sibhaca – type of Swazi dance

Sperrgebiet – forbidden area; alluvial diamond region of southwestern Namibia

Strandlopers – literally ‘beach walkers’; term used to describe the ancient inhabitants of the Namib region, who may have been ancestors of the San or Nama peoples; occasionally also refers to the brown desert hyena

sua – salt as in Sua Pan, Botswana

sungwa – a type of perch in Malawi

swaartgevaar – Afrikaans for the ‘black threat’

tambo – fermented millet and sugar drink, popular in rural areas of Namibia

thomo – a stringed instrument played by women in Lesotho

timbila – a form of xylophone played by Chope musicians

township – indigenous suburb, typically a high-density black residential area

Trekboers – nomadic pastoralists descended from the Dutch

trouk – jail (Afrikaans)

tsama – bitter desert melon historically eaten by the San people; it’s also eaten by livestock

tsotsi – hoodlum, thief

tufo – traditional dance style from Ilha de Moçambique

tuk-tuk – Asian-style motorised three-wheel vehicle found in Durban, South Africa

uitlanders – pronounced ‘ait-landers’; foreigners

Umhlanga – reed dance; sacred Swazi ceremony

umuzi – ‘beehive’ huts

upshwa – maize- or cassava-based staple in Mozambique

Uri – desert-adapted vehicle produced in Namibia

veld – pronounced ‘felt’; open grassland, normally in plateau regions

vlei – pronounced ‘flay’; any low open landscape, sometimes marshy

Voortrekkers – fore-trekkers, pioneers

volkstaal – people’s language

Volkstaat – people’s state

vundu – Malawian catfish

wag ‘n bietjie – pronounced ‘vak-n-bee-kee’; literally ‘wait a bit’; Afrikaans name for the buffalo thorn acacia

walende – a drink distilled from the *makalani* palm that tastes like vodka

wandelpad – short hiking trail

waterblommetjie bredie – water-flower stew; meat served with the flower of the Cape pondweed

welwitschia – bizarre cone-bearing shrub (*Welwitschia mirabilis*) native to the northern Namib plains

xima – maize- or cassava-based staple in Mozambique, usually served with a sauce of beans, vegetables or fish

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ABBREVIATIONS

B	Botswana
FR	Forest Reserve
GP	Game Park
GR	Game Reserve
L	Lesotho
Mal	Malawi
Moz	Mozambique
N	Namibia
NP	National Park
NR	Nature Reserve
RP	Recreational Park
SA	South Africa
Swa	Swaziland
WR	Wildlife Reserve
Zam	Zambia
Zim	Zimbabwe

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