



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	SUS0.50-\$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.

A SOUTHERN AFRICAN SLICE**One Month / Cape Town to Windhoek**

A car is definitely your best bet for this mega road trip. After a few days in **Cape Town** (p415), including a stay at a township B&B, 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).

From here, continue east to the artists' enclave of **Montagu** (p447), 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, and **Cape Agulhas** (p446) for the thrill of standing at Africa's southernmost point.

From Oudtshoorn take the N12 north and then loop back towards Cape Town via the N1, link up with the N7 and head for **Namaqualand** (p464) to see the fabulous wildflower displays, especially good in August and September.

Keep tracking up the N7, cross into Namibia at **Voolsdrif** (p465) and head to **Hobas** (p385) to see the **Fish River Canyon National Park** (p385), a jaw-dropping natural sight that's also Namibia's premier walking destination.

Further north along the B1, **Keetmanshoop** (p378) has some colonial architecture; if this grabs you, head west along the B4 to surreal **Lüderitz** (p379), a coastal colonial relic. Heading back to the B1, turn north at the C13 and make a beeline for baroque **Duwisib Castle** (p377), well worth exploring, 70km south of **Maltahöhe** (p377), where you can stay on a working ranch. From there head to **Mariental** (p377), back on the B1, and it's another couple of hours to **Windhoek** (p314), the small, colourful and cosmopolitan capital city with its bracing highland climate.

Definitely for lovers of a road trip.

Even if you can't squeeze everything in on this 3000km-plus journey, you'll undoubtedly come away with an immense appreciation of this varied and remarkable region. If you're looking to make cuts, shave some kilometres off the Western Cape loop. To avoid white-line fever allow at least a month.

**ROADS LESS TRAVELLED****DUSTY ROADS & SHIMMERING WATERS** **Three Weeks to One Month / Lusaka to Nkhata Bay**

Start with a few days in **Lusaka** (p640) with its lively ambience and genuine African feel. Then head out on the highway to the beautiful **Lower Zambezi National Park** (p655), its beautiful flood plain dotted with acacias and other large trees. There's no public transport so you'll need a car, or organise a tour. Continue up the Great East Road to **Chipata** (p657), taking a break from the road at **Luangwa Bridge** (p657), roughly halfway. At Chipata check out the market and organise a trip to **South Luangwa National Park** (p658), the best in Zambia and one of the most majestic parks in Africa. From Chipata you can drive to **Mfuwe Gate** (p658), or minibuses make the trip to Mfuwe village. The really adventurous could try to reach spectacular **North Luangwa National Park** (p662), but seek local advice for this.

Then it's on to **Lilongwe** (p167), worth a day or two to check out the old town and the local Nature Sanctuary. Then strike north along the M1 to **Nkhata Bay** (p188), perfect for swimming, kayaking or just lazing about after some hard weeks on the road. Possible detours on the way to Nkhata include the gently rolling hills of **Kasungu National Park** (p196), and **Nkhotakota** (p196), to pick up some good-value crafts and to organise a trip to the wild **Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve** (p197), where you've a good chance of seeing elephants.



A 2000km route that could be done in a couple of weeks, but we recommend at least three weeks to enjoy this journey through the Southern African outback. Travelling in Zambia is a chance to get a taste of the real Africa, and the dusty roads will become a distant memory once you're lazing by the crystal clear waters of Lake Malawi.

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 **Cóbuè** (p284) on the other side of the lakeshore in Mozambique. Stay just south of Cóbuè 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 tackled 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 Mohembo. 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 Matswera 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 **Nkhotakota** (p196) you can sit under the tree where Livingstonia 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.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'

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.



You can buy, download and print individual chapters from this guidebook.
Get Southern Africa chapters>

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'